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THE SALMON RIVERS OF SCOTLAND

THE SALMON RIVERS OF SCOTLAND.

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Halkirk
CAITHNESS
Dornoch
Tain
Cromarty
Nairn
Inverness
Fortrose
Forres
Elgin
Banff
Cullen
Fraserburgh
Peterhead
Aberdeen
Montrose
Arbroath
Dundee
Perth
Stonehaven
Kinloch
Dingwall
Garve
Ullapool
Lochinver
Durness
Tongue
Bettyhill
Golspie
Brora
Helmsdale
Wick
Thurso
Sandwick
Stornoway
Tarbat Ness
Moray Firth
Dornoch Firth
Loch Broom
Loch Ewe
Loch Maree
Loch Carron
Loch Alsh
Loch Duich
Loch Hourn
Loch Nevis
Loch Shiel
Loch Ness
Loch Lochy
Loch Linnhe
Loch Leven
Loch Tay
Loch Lomond
Loch Fyne
Loch Ryan
Loch Doon
Loch Ken
Loch Maree
Loch Broom
Loch Ewe
Loch Carron
Loch Alsh
Loch Duich
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Loch Tay
Loch Lomond
Loch Fyne
Loch Ryan
Loch Doon
Loch Ken
SUTHERLAND
ROSS & CROMARTY
Ben Nevis
Ben Cruachan
Ben Lomond
Ben More
Ben Venue
Ben Ledi
Ben Vorlich
Ben Lawers
Ben Alder
Ben Macdui
Ben Avon
Ben Cairngorm

THE SALMON RIVERS OF SCOTLAND

BY

A. GRIMBLE

AUTHOR OF

"DEER-STALKING," "THE DEER FORESTS OF SCOTLAND,"
"LEAVES FROM A GAME BOOK," "SHOOTING AND SALMON FISHING,"
AND "HIGHLAND SPORT"

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PREFACE

In condensing into one book my four volumes of *The Salmon Rivers of Scotland*, want of space has necessitated the omission of the whole of the text illustrations, together with four chapters which endeavoured to deal with the salmon problems of the day.

As far, however, as information is concerned, this book contains the concentrated essence of the original four volumes, and I venture to hope that my readers may find in it *Saumon en papillote.*

AUGUSTUS GRIMBLE.

May, 1902.

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THE SALMON RIVERS OF SCOTLAND

CHAPTER I

THE ALNESS

Rises in Mr. Walter Shoolbred's Forest of Kildermorie, flows into Loch Morie, which is partly in the forest, and on leaving it enters the Novar property. There are, however, no salmon in Mr. Shoolbred's part of the river, as the fish do not reach Loch Morie; nevertheless, he maintains a hatchery capable of taking 80,000 ova; in addition to this the Alness District Board have another one on the lower reaches capable of turning out 100,000 fry.

After leaving Loch Morie the Alness has a rapid, rocky run of some fifteen miles, until it falls into the Cromarty Firth a little below the pretty village of Alness.

The angling is divided amongst the four lower proprietors, Ardross and Novar having by far the largest portion; the mile nearest the sea goes with Major Mackenzie's property of Dalemore and that of Teaninich, which he also rents. Then on the left bank Mr. Dyson Perrins' Ardross Castle estate comes in, while on the right Novar and Teaninich have the rest of the river; the four proprietors preserving their fishings strictly, and uniting to protect and improve them.

The river opens on the 11th of February, the Cromarty Firth nets come off on the 26th of August, and the rod

continues till the 31st of October. Though clean fish are got in the nets of the Firth at the opening of the season, the Alness itself is of no use until the first flood after the middle of June, and then salmon, grilse, and sea trout (fast becoming extinct) all ascend together. There are neither cruives, obstructions, pollutions, or disease, while the upper reaches have excellent spawning grounds. A fourteen-foot rod will be ample—indeed a trout rod will suffice, and when fishing this stream some twenty years ago I used nothing else, taking care to have fifty yards of reel line and good stout salmon gut, the last strand or two next the fly being somewhat finer than the whole line.

The fish run from seven to ten pounds, although each season some are got which scale from fifteen to twenty. Any of the small standard patterns will kill; perhaps the best are the Doctors, Jock Scot, and Childers. No waders are wanted, and the fly is the only lure used. The river rises and falls with such great quickness that only those residing on the spot have any chance of sport.

One of the proprietors writes:—"I am sorry to think our Highland rivers are going from bad to worse; indeed, unless united action is taken all over Scotland for the better protection of salmon and the establishment of hatcheries, our rivers will soon not be worth fishing. Poor as it has been, angling has yet added materially to the value of the shooting rents, and if the fishing is allowed to fall away to nothing, surely the shooting rents will fall also, and therefore it is to the interests of all proprietors to take the matter up earnestly."

This sensible letter only confirms the plain-spoken Report made by the Clerk to the Alness District Board to the Fishery Board for Scotland, and though dated as far back as 1895 and repeated in each succeeding Report, no steps have been taken by the Fishery Board for Scotland to remedy the evils so graphically described.

Thus as follows writes the Clerk to the Alness Board:—

"The systematic and wholesale poaching in the Cromarty Firth, by fishermen from Cromarty, is causing much loss. Last spring six boat crews (thirty men) were engaged in fishing for sea trout in the Cromarty Firth, inside the Sutors of Cromarty, with sweep or trawl nets about 200 yards long and with small meshes. They fish in much the same way as salmon fishers do, shooting out their nets and hauling them on the beach. They pretend to be fishing for flounders and other white fish, but it is well known that but for the sea trout they could not make anything of this mode of fishing. In consequence of the system of watching maintained by the Local Board this mode of fishing is now chiefly carried on at night, but the Board are practically powerless to suppress it then, as the fishermen are in great force, resist apprehension, can seldom be identified, and the sea trout are got rid of before a capture can be made. The Board have for some years been incurring an expenditure which involves a very heavy tax on the owners of salmon fishings in the district, in order to suppress this destructive and illegal fishing, but for the reasons referred to have only met with limited success. Unless the Fishery Board takes steps to prevent trawling of this kind there is grave reason to fear that the Alness will by-and-by cease to be a sea trout river."

A strong and clear statement like the foregoing, but published only in a Fishery Board Report, is not likely to be seen by either land or water thieves—the former, however, are very fully aware that the land police are an unfortunate fact, that they are capable and powerful, and able to deal with any land poaching. The water thieves, on the contrary, know from experience that the water police are incapable of preventing water poaching, and know that though they cannot defy and jeer at the laws while on land, yet when they are on the water, as matters are at present, they can treat the law with contempt.

There is only one other salmon river flowing into the

Cromarty Firth—the Conon. Perhaps if the proprietors of the two rivers combined together to suppress this poaching and to rent the Firth nets, and work them only long enough to recoup them their outlay, and pay six per cent. on the money invested, the angling of both rivers might be greatly improved. Good angling means the certainty of letting it for a big rent, or the certainty of great sport if the angling be kept by the owner. Of course he cannot eat his cake and have it, but in either case the increased profit or increased sport will pay a great deal better than the profit foregone on the netting after expenses and interest have been earned.

In the case of the Alness and the Conon, it is the latter river that would derive by far the larger share of the benefits, but that is a matter that should be easily arranged amongst the different proprietors of the two streams.

Prior to the purchase of Ardross by Mr. Dyson Perrins, this beautiful place was rented by Sir Greville Smyth. During that time his brother-in-law, Colonel Way, while fishing near the castle, caught a salmon of some nine pounds, which he at once carried up to the small loch in the grounds and turned it in. There it lived for two years, in the meanwhile daily growing blacker and thinner, until it died; one more proof that a land-locked river salmon cannot exist for very long in fresh water, even though there be a constant stream passing through, as there was in this case.

CHAPTER II

THE BERRIEDALE AND LANGWELL

THESE two Caithness streams, draining an area of seventy-two square miles, are best dealt with together, as at some two hundred yards from the sea they unite at Berriedale, after flowing entirely through the Duke of Portland's deer forest. The Berriedale, the more northern of the two, has a run of about twenty miles, which is just double the length of the Langwell, and the larger river holds slightly heavier and earlier fish, for clean ones have been taken on the 7th of March, while one of twenty-five pounds is the top weight ever landed by the rod. The fish of the two streams are easily distinguishable, and each breed keeps strictly to its own river.

It requires from eight to twelve hours' rain to put these waters into good ply, while a twenty-four hours' drought brings them, as far as sport goes, nearly as suddenly to a standstill, and in neither is there any angling until some distance up from the sea.

On the Berriedale the best killers are the Childers, Jock Scot, and silver-bodied flies of sizes ranging from one and a half to seven of Limerick hooks. A fourteen-foot rod is of ample length, and both rivers can be fished without waders. With regard to the nicest kind of rod for use on small rivers in which fish seldom exceed ten pounds, I have found it pleasanter to use a rather stout eleven-foot trout rod. There is hardly any labour in casting, and the fly can be placed to

an inch, and also delivered more neatly than with a two-handed rod. The fish when hooked has not water enough in these small streams to get more than twenty or thirty yards away, and though it will take a few minutes more to kill, that is of no great consequence. With this sort of rod no treble gut is required; the salmon gut is attached direct to the reel-line, the same as if fishing for trout.

In neither of these streams are there many sea trout; June, July and August are best for salmon and grilse, but unless the angler is a resident at Berriedale and prepared to take advantage of every rainfall, the chances of sport are not great during these months, which are usually dry ones. There are no pollutions or serious obstacles to the passage of fish, though about ten miles up the Berriedale there is a fall which they cannot pass in times of drought.

The season for nets is from the 11th of February to the 26th of August, but the rod may be plied till the 31st of October. The Duke's keepers do all the protection, but I was not able to ascertain whether they ever visited the sea nets before 6 A.M. on Monday mornings and made sure that the weekly close time had been observed and the leads duly removed.

When these streams are "right" each will give two or three fish a day to the rod. Lord Charles Bentinck had five one day, and on another occasion Miss Chandos Pole had four from the Rock Pool of the Berriedale. On the Langwell the best fishing is from a little above McEwan's, the Head Forester's, Cottage, some five miles from the sea, down to the Langwell Kitchen Gardens, a stretch of about three miles in which there are many pretty little pools. Salmon run from five to eight pounds and grilse from three to five, and about fifty fish a season are got from each river. The same flies that kill on the Berriedale are also good for the Langwell, but in addition there is a local fly called "The Stalker," with which the Duke got six fish one day.

The dressing is as follows :—

Tag: Silver twist and turn of yellow floss silk.

Tail: Golden pheasant rump feather.

Body: Darkish green mohair, silver twist or tinsel.

At Shoulder: Claret hackle with jay over.

Wing: Brown turkey, small jungle-cock cheeks, and two strands of blue macaw.

These rivers run into the sea through a bar of gravel, which, according to the Fishery Board Report of 1884, completely closes the access in times of drought. Gravel bars are, however, shifting affairs, and I am glad to say that when I saw it on the 9th of June, 1899, although there had been no rain for three weeks, there was just sufficient water coming through to let fish pass up as the tide rose.

The five or six bag-nets at the mouth of these two streams belong to Mrs. Dunbar, the widow of a son of the late John Dunbar, of Thurso fame, and under the guidance of Angus Henderson, kindly deputed to show me all he could by Mr. King, the Duke's factor at Berriedale, on visiting these nets I received an invitation from the head man—one Adam Macpherson—to proceed to sea with him and his men and visit the nets, a chance of which I gladly availed myself; but on this occasion, although they had not been looked at for nearly twelve hours, they were all empty, a fact for which Adam blamed the cloudless sky and the clear, still water.

These bag-nets, by some curious clause of the existing Estuary Bye-Laws, are fishing nearer to the mouth of these rivers than is usual, or indeed lawful, in other places. None of them were over four hundred yards from the mouth, two of them were certainly within two hundred yards — in fact I judged the distance at one hundred yards, but to make all certain I have named the longer one, as judging distance across water is apt to be deceptive; be this as it may, certain it is that nets fishing in such unusually close proximity to the mouth

of two rivers must greatly reduce the numbers of fish that would ascend them, and both have good spawning grounds.

The same report of the Fishery Board already mentioned states later on that "from six to eight thousand fish, chiefly grilse, are annually taken in this *District*," a somewhat puzzling statement, as only a few lines before it is expressly set forth that there is "not a single District Board in the County of Caithness." Probably the description is intended to apply to the united bag-nets fishing the mouths of the two rivers under discussion, and the rest of the eight miles of coast up to and north of the Dunbeath River.

During my stroll up the beautifully wooded banks of the Langwell, we met a ghillie exercising a fine team of black and white pointers, the wild deer feeding in the grassy strath below taking no notice of them. On reaching the head keeper's house, a little further up the glen, we found some fifteen stags, with horns about three parts grown, and of course still in velvet, lying on a grass plat in front of the kennels, and it was indeed an odd sight to see the keeper unbolt a door and let loose upwards of a dozen fine deerhounds. Out they dashed, bounding about in all directions, full in sight of the deer. Then a word from the keeper sent them all off into another grass field, the deer meanwhile hardly troubling to move. From here I was taken to the splendidly placed house of Langwell, with its wonderful sea view; and arrived there, a charming old housekeeper invited me inside. And now, if I had the pen of "The World" correspondent, who writes those amusing articles "Celebrities at Home," I could have written a long letter on "The Duke of Portland at Home." Suffice it, however, to say that of the many pretty things I saw, that which interested me most was a well set-up salmon of 62 lbs.! hauled ashore by Adam Macpherson from the Berriedale nets in June, 1894. Length, 51⅝ inches; girth, 29¾ inches. A magnificent specimen, which no angler could set eyes on without feeling a burning desire for a chance of

trying conclusions with a similar one. This big fish could hardly have wished to ascend either the Berriedale or the Langwell. Macpherson thinks he was a Norway giant that had lost his way; more probably, however, it was a Tay fish who had struck the shore very far north of his own river.

Close to this "sockdollager" there was a finely shaped fish of exactly half the size, taken by the Duke on the 28th of April, 1897, from the Englishman's Pool of the Garry of Loch Oich. Near this were two interesting specimens of natural history, one in the shape of a bee-eater, in fine plumage, killed in Langwell Gardens; the other being a pole-cat, now so nearly extinct in Scotland. Then came the billiard-room, a glorious sight to the eyes of any deerstalker, for on the walls hang a splendid collection of Langwell Forest heads, amongst which are many curious malformations; and here I could have lingered for several hours, but time was up, the trap was waiting, the sun setting, and the Ord of Caithness had to be negotiated, so with reluctance I came to the end of a day passed, thanks to His Grace's kindness, in one of the most beautiful and well-kept places in the kingdom.

CHAPTER III

THE BORGIE

THE total length of this pretty stream, in which disease has not at present made an appearance, is twenty-one miles, inclusive of the four lochs through which it flows. Draining an area of sixty-two square miles, it rises some six miles to the north of Altnaharra. After a short run its head streams flow into the narrow loch of Coulside, and issuing from thence, in a little more than a mile they expand into Loch Laoghoal, or Loyal, which is some five miles long, and united by short narrows first to Loch Craggie and then to Loch Slam. On leaving this last-named loch the river has a further run of nine and a half miles before it falls into the sea at Torrisdale Bay, about a mile to the west of the Naver. On this lower reach of the Borgie there is one considerable fall, which fish do not ascend before the middle of April; but after that date salmon and grilse are occasionally caught in Loch Slam, less frequently in Loch Craggie, and very rarely in Loch Laoghoal, and then only by trolling. The angling has greatly fallen off, for twenty years ago as many as seven fish have been got in Loch Slam in one day, while now that is about the take of the whole season, although the loch is much more regularly fished for salmon than in the old times. The fishing of the river goes with the Borgie shootings, and opening on the 11th of January for the rod, it may be fished until the 30th of September. The nets may not begin to work till the 11th of February, and have to stop on the

26th of August. No wading is necessary, and the river can easily be fished with a grilse rod. February and March are the chief months for salmon, the best lures being Jock Scot, Childers, Popham, and Yellow Eagle, sizes from 3/0 to No. 6. Grilse run in June and July, and are more partial to the charms of small silver or black-bodied flies, while sea trout, which are very scarce, affect the Zulu. In low water the worm kills well, but except on occasions when a fish is badly wanted it is rarely used. The yearly average take is seventy salmon and grilse, the former scaling ten pounds and the latter five.

Between Loch Slam and the sea there are some twenty casts, the best of which are perhaps "The Long Pool," "Brecku," "Black Bank," and "The Fall Pool." At present the mouth of the Borgie is worked by a net and coble, which is in the hands of the same syndicate of gentlemen that have the netting and angling of the Naver, and they do not begin work till May. Of late years there have been no very good takes to the rod, and three fish is now considered excellent, although in 1889–1891 six a day were common.

Late in the season the fish push their way right up into the stream falling into the head of Loch Coulside, where they spawn in good numbers, but as the parr or the smolts hatched there have to run the gauntlet of four lochs, each holding hungry brown trout, it is only to be expected that their numbers will be considerably reduced by the time they reach the sea, though perhaps not more so than if they had to descend twenty miles of a river equally well stocked with their natural destroyers.

Some years ago, from the middle of April, a few salmon used to be got in Loch Laoghoal by trolling, and at that time there were also plenty of Ferox in this loch, which now appear to have died out, as in recent years hardly one has been caught. All these four lochs in connection with the Borgie are open to the public staying at Altnaharra or Tongue

Hotels, and are *very* hard fished, while but little is done in the matter of restocking, and the incessant taking out and putting nothing in must sooner or later tell a tale of deterioration. It should, however, be mentioned that in all the inns on the Sutherland property there is hung up in a prominent place a request that anglers shall return to the water all trout under eight inches, a matter which on the whole is fairly well observed.

The Fishery Board Report of 1889 states that in the "Tongue District" (there is no such "District" named on their "Map of Districts" of 1894), which I take it includes the Hope, Kinloch, Borgie, Naver, and perhaps Halladale, the take of salmon has steadily decreased for the last three years.

The yield for 1888 of these five rivers and their coasts having been 1,817 salmon, weighing 21,161 lbs., or nearly a twelve-pound average, and 9,977 grilse of 52,409 lbs., or over five-pound average, and next follows a mention of a beggarly 199 sea trout of 330 lbs. As against this 11,794 fish, the Report then states that the rods of these six rivers killed 300 fish as their share. Surely a most disproportionate allowance! But there it is in black and white, and the accuracy of Fishery Board Reports cannot be doubted. In the above return the enormous difference in the take of salmon and grilse cannot fail to be noticed. Five and a half babies are killed to every adult! Surely that cannot be the right way to bring about an increase of any population?

The 1889 Report further states that "The Bye-laws with regard to the observance of the weekly and *annual* close time are not very strictly observed by the bag-nets" I can only say from personal observation that this remark is *not half strong enough*, for there are certainly several hundreds of bag-nets that throughout the whole season *entirely* disregard the law as to the weekly close time.

Mr. John Box, the Duke of Sutherland's factor at Tongue,

who is fully qualified by long experience to speak with authority, has for many years advocated that netting in this district should cease on the 15th of August, instead of on the 26th, by which means many more grilse would be left to ascend these rivers, and it is remarkable that nothing has ever been done to give effect to these strong and repeatedly expressed opinions. This Borgie is one of the rivers that I venture to think could be vastly improved at a small cost, which would soon be recouped by the increased value of both net and rod fishing.

When I visited it in June, 1899, a lengthy drought had reduced it to a mass of stones, and it was hardly possible to tell what it would be like when full of water, but thanks to the kindness of Mr. A. S. Bolton, of Moor Court, Oakamoor, who now rents the Borgie shootings, his keeper, Hugh Bruce, gave me much assistance, and that, coupled with the valuable help of my old friend, Sir J. Edwards-Moss, who rented Borgie for twelve years, has enabled me to speak with confidence of this pretty stream.

The last-named gentleman writes me as follows: "It is now some eight years since I wetted a line on Borgie, and therefore I cannot speak with certainty as to its present condition. The river is doubtlessly one capable of great improvement. About 1885 it fell away to almost *nil*. This was in consequence of an abnormal August flood in 1883, when three distinct thunderstorms met and burst about Ben Loyal. So heavy was the flood that new channels were cut, and the whole bed of the river torn up and altered and widened and thereby shallowed. In 1887 Mr. Brereton, who then was the Duke of Sutherland's factor, promised me £10 a year towards any improvements I cared to make, and this was continued for two years, but withdrawn on Mr. Brereton's resignation.

"In the meanwhile I had made certain quiet resting-places for the fish, and the annual take began to increase largely.

These improvements were chiefly effective in the early spring, as when a spate came, bringing down a lot of ice, I believed that fish were swept back to the sea for the want of shelter, and the still, deep holes I made enabled them to 'lie low' while the ice passed over their heads. As long as I had Borgie these dams were kept in good repair, but I understand that they have now been destroyed by floods."

CHAPTER IV

THE BRORA

RISES to the north of Lairg; drains an area of one hundred and sixty-five square miles, and after a run of twenty expands into Loch Brora, four miles long and nearly half a mile wide at the broadest part; issuing from the Loch, it runs another four miles and falls into the sea at Inverbrora. Opening on the 11th of February, it is usually well stocked with fresh-run fish on that date, and five, six, and seven fish a day are quite common events.

The whole course is through moorland country until it leaves the Loch, and then for half a mile, down to the Ford Pool, it flows through fir plantations, emerging again to banks of peat and heather until the sea is reached.

The Brora opens to rods and nets on the 11th of February, the netting season ending on the 26th of August, and that for the rod on the 31st of October; the river, however, might well be made available for the rod on the 1st of February, and closed to it on the 15th of October. I feel sure such a step would be welcomed by the anglers, while it would likewise be doing the river good service.

For the early part of the season—up to the end of March—an eighteen-foot rod will be wanted, as the river usually runs big then, while its exposed banks are visited almost daily by high winds, often accompanied by snow storms. When April comes and the water gets smaller, a rod of sixteen feet will do all that is required, and then in May a stout, single-

handed, ten or eleven foot trout rod will suffice. The gaff is generally used, kelts being drawn ashore and returned uninjured.

In the early months flies are dressed on irons ranging in Limerick sizes from 6/0 to 0, and later on from No. 1 to the very smallest double-hooked No. 11. Watson of Inverness dresses these latter very neatly and inexpensively.

The fly is the only lure used, and all the standard ones kill; Jock Scot, Childers, and the silver bodies for choice. There is also a good local fly invented by Donald Ross, who was keeper at Torrish on the Helmsdale for many years, but who has settled down to a farm on the banks of the Brora. Out of compliment to his old home he has christened it "The Torrish," and as it is a fine fly to look at, and a good killer, it is worth mention; but it is best dressed on a big hook and used early in the season during the time of heavy water.

Tag: Silver twist—yellow floss.

Tail: Topping and gold pheasant ruff.

But: Black ostrich.

Body: Lower half silver twist, with yellow hackle where silver ends. Upper half dark yellow mohair, silver tinsel, and yellow hackle at shoulder.

Wing: Bronze turkey, strands of yellow and red, swan and teal, jungle-cock cheek, and ostrich head.

Wading trousers are necessary for high water, though when the river is at a medium height, all the pools can be reached with stockings.

The river is fished by the respective occupiers of Gordonbush, Balnakoil, and Sciberscross shootings. Mr. F. C. Gunnis has had the first-named pretty lodge, just six miles out of Brora, for fifteen years, and to him I am indebted for my first cast on the river, together with the bulk of the information given herewith. Balnakoil Lodge, three miles higher up than Gordonbush and just opposite Pol Feddar and a little below

the Fall Pool of the Blackwater, divides the fishing right with Sciberscross, each taking three days a week. For several seasons Major Howey had Balnakoil and Mr. Hall Sciberscross, but the former gave up his tenancy, and now Mr. Hall is tenant of both places. The stretch from the Loch to the sea is fished by the two rods bank and bank about, and between them by the end of April they have often got four hundred fish in the eleven weeks. In the autumn, from the 1st of August, the tenant of Uppat Forest has the angling from the Loch to the sea for three or four days a week, the Duke of Sutherland keeping for himself the remaining days as may be arranged.

The first August floods bring sea trout into Loch Brora, but not in any great numbers. Whilst fishing for these with very small flies and a light, single-handed trout rod, Mrs. Gunnis hooked and landed a nice salmon of ten pounds, and Mr. Gunnis, on similar tackle, another of eighteen pounds; and on this fine tackle, and with the smallest double hooks, Mr. Gunnis lands a good few fish every summer.

From the commencement of the season the fish make at once for the Loch, and there they hang about until the first week in March, when they continue their upward course until they reach the Fall Pool of the Blackwater. The Brora does not hold many trout, and though there are a fair quantity in the Loch, they are so gorged with elvers that a fly has but little attraction for them. The Loch is divided into three distinct sections, united by narrows of sixty or seventy yards across. Ten years ago it was very rare for salmon to be got with the rod, but by dint of patient observation, Mr. Gunnis has gained a knowledge of the places they frequent, and every year he now kills some fish in the Loch.

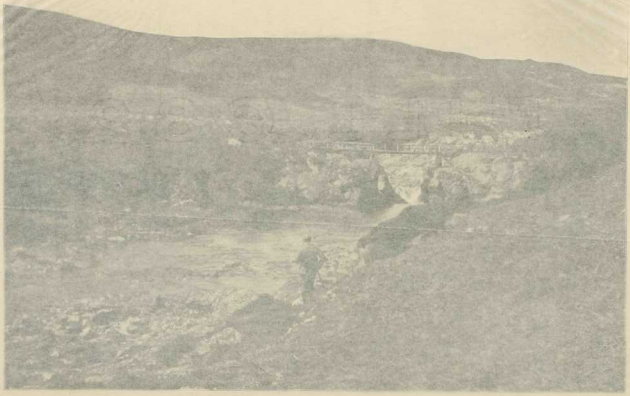
There are neither pollutions nor obstructions, and though disease has made its appearance at intervals, it has never wrought very great havoc. Spawning begins as early as the 10th of October (a fact much in favour of opening the river

for the rod on the 1st of February or even the 11th of January, the same as the Helmsdale, so close by), and is finished by the end of November. Kelts migrate about the middle of March, and have departed by the middle of May, and then, in May and June, the smolts go to the sea.

Three miles above Loch Brora the Blackwater pours in its very considerable volume of water; indeed, from above the junction this tributary plays a more important part than the River Brora itself, for the bulk of the fish ascend this stream, and but comparatively few pass up the Brora proper. Immediately above the loch is about three-quarters of a mile of dead water, into which, when the river above is low, fish gather in great numbers, and here, when there is a stiff breeze, they may be taken with very small flies. In this way Major Howey had seven one day, and on several occasions Mr. Gunnis has had his half-dozen. From the 1st of August Balnakoil and Gordonbush divide this upper water between them, beat No. 1 being from the Fall Pool of the Blackwater down to the Loch, and No. 2 extending from the top of the Fall Pool for a considerable distance up the Blackwater, in which the fish are beginning now to get somewhat off colour. They ascend the Fall Pool during the first week or so in May, and passing up they enter a rocky gorge, in which there are many good-looking casts; but, strange to say, in this bit of the water they seldom rise to the fly. Above this gorge the river flows through a widish strath, and here sport may confidently be expected. Just before the Blackwater joins the Brora is Pol Feddar, which, after the end of the first week in March—depending on the size of the water—is the best and largest of all the pools: on the 3rd of March, 1894, Mr. Gunnis had fish of 20 lbs., 19 lbs., 17 lbs., and 7 lbs. out of this pool.

The following statistics, taken chiefly from the fish book of Mr. Gunnis, will show the sport yielded by this river of late years.

In 1891—fishing from the 30th of March to the 18th of



FALLS OF THE BLACKWATER.

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FALLS OF THE BLACKWATER.

April—Mr. Gunnis and Mr. E. Lort-Phillips had eighty-four fish, seven of which came out of the New Pool on the 3rd of April to the rod of the last-named gentleman. In the same season, from the 20th of April to the 28th of May, Mr. Gunnis, fishing alone, had another sixty-two.

In 1892, from the 6th of April to the 2nd of May, Mr. Gunnis and his guest, Mr. C. Darley, had forty-nine fish.

In 1893, from the 3rd of March to the 18th of April, Mr. Gunnis had one hundred and fifteen fish, nearly the whole to his own rod. In that season, on the 21st of March, he had thirteen; on the 22nd of March, fourteen; and on the 23rd nine, or thirty-six in the three days!

In 1895 Colonel Clifton had the Gordonbush rod (which is sometimes let when Mr. Gunnis is in Somaliland), and from the 11th of February to the 1st of April he got fifty fish.

In 1897 Mr. Gunnis got sixty fish from the 11th of February to the 31st of March, and in April and part of May Messrs. Brand, J. Head, Heywood Thompson, and Major Hopwood had eighty-eight fish.

In 1898, from the 11th of February to the 31st of March the water was let to Mr. A. McCorquodale, who got just a hundred fish, the largest being 24 lbs.; while in April and May following Mr. Gunnis had ninety-seven others.

Twenty-nine pounds is the heaviest fish recorded to rod and line, and a forty-pounder to the Brora mouth net. But from the above statistics it will be seen that this river is a reliable one for sport—something will always depend on the skill and hard work of the angler, and on the state of the river. If, for instance, during March, the stones "should be coming up out of the watter," as the ghillie puts it, then, of course, sport must be greatly reduced. This, however, is not a very likely contingency, and I know of no stream that is more certain to give good sport in February and March than this one, while to anyone lucky enough to get a rod in it, there

is the additional attraction of a very good hotel at Brora, not five minutes' walk from the lowest pool.

Most of the pools are fine big ones, easily fished, but requiring a long line in times of high water.

Below the Loch.—Otter Pool, the Ford, Fannich, Rallan, the New Pool, the Stream, the Madman's, the Cliff, Bengies, the Cruive, the Rock.

Above the Loch.—Deadwater, Dyke End, Macdonalds, the Round Pool, Stocken, the Snag, the Flat, Feddar, the Stream, the Fall.

CHAPTER V

THE CASSELEY

THE Casseley—which is Gaelic for "the swift flood"—is another of the Kyle of Sutherland rivers, which, rising in the north-east slopes of Ben More, has a course of upwards of twenty miles, during which it drains seventy-five square miles of moor country before it falls into brackish water at the pretty little village of Rosehall, just below the mouth of the Oykel and some eight miles above that of the Shin. About a mile up the river there is a steep fall, which blasting operations have rendered passable for fish, and again higher up there are similar obstructions recently dealt with in a like manner. Although, however, the lower falls are readily ascended, fish rarely pass up before the end of May or the first week in June. In the mile or so of river lying below the Fall, fish are occasionally got as early as the middle of March, but April is the best month, although with moist weather May is equally good; at all times, however, rain is necessary, as the river runs down very quickly. From the falls to the Kyle the angling of the right bank belongs to Sir Charles Ross, of Balnagowan, who lets it to Mr. W. E. Gilmour, the owner of the Rosehall property and the opposite bank. The combining of the two sides has made a pretty bit of angling of an improving sort, while it has put an end to the unpleasant "racing" that formerly took place between the occupants of the opposite banks. Since I fished the Casseley with Mr. Gilmour in 1896, the upper falls have also been blasted, and a great extent of

fresh spawning-ground opened up, and this, combined with the fact of the Casseley being a Kyle of Sutherland river, leads me to prophesy with some confidence a great improvement in sport.

The nets at the Kyle mouth and in the Dornoch Firth are now leased by a syndicate of gentlemen (Captain G. W. Hunt was the originator of the scheme and managed matters until ill-health compelled him to retire, and he is now worthily succeeded by the well-known Mr. H. H. Almond), whose avowed object is (after they have recouped themselves their expenses) to increase the supply of salmon and to improve sport; in this they will doubtlessly be backed up by the new proprietor of the lower Shin, Mr. Andrew Carnegie, of Skibo Castle. Therefore, I think I am right in advising anglers to secure fishing on any of these Kyle of Sutherland rivers.

The rod season is from the 11th of February to the 15th of October—the 30th of September would be better—the nets cease to ply on the 26th of August; but there are none nearer than Bonar Bridge. For their working I will refer my readers to the chapter on "The Shin." The gaff is not permitted until the 1st of May, and as the banks offer but few gravelly places on which to strand a fish, a landing net is almost necessary. Any of the medium-sized standard flies will kill—Jock Scot, Childers, and Black Doctor are the local favourites—and no other lure is permitted; waders are not required, and a grilse rod will easily cover all the water. The average yield of both banks of this pretty mile of water is thirty to thirty-five fish of ten pounds; it is sometimes let for the spring, and as there is no inn at Rosehall, anglers stay at the Post Office, where they are made very comfortable. There are but six casts in this lower beat: nearest the sea is the Bridge Pool, above that comes Little and Big Lazy Pool —both excellent chances; above them is the Round Pool, a pretty sure cast; then comes another pool, with a Gaelic

name a great deal longer than the pool itself, and which I found wholly unpronounceable; and then the Fall Pool brings the angler to the top of the beat. Above the falls good sport is sometimes got if July be wet—the water there going with the Duchally property, rented for many years by Captain McTaggart, and owned by Mr. W. E. Gilmour.

CHAPTER VI

THE CARRON OF THE KYLE OF SUTHERLAND

THE Carron rises in the Forest of Inverlael, drains one hundred and twenty-two square miles, and, after a course of twenty miles, all in Ross-shire, falls into the Kyle of Sutherland, a little distance west of Bonar Bridge station. The Blackwater and the Calvie are the chief tributaries, and join the main stream, the former on the north and the latter on the south side, a little below Amat House. It is a quick-running river, with plenty of pretty pools and good spawning ground; but in the earlier part of the season sport is entirely dependent on rain or melting snow. It is easily fished, and the paths from pool to pool on either bank are well made and well kept up. The season opens on the 11th of February, closes for nets on the 26th of August, and for the rod on the 31st of October. The best months for salmon, which average 8 lbs., are March and April, and for grilse, average 5 lbs., from the middle of June to the end of August; but sea trout are not plentiful.

On the lower reaches of Gledfield and Invercharron an eighteen-foot rod may be used at the opening of the season, but a little later on one of sixteen feet will cover all the water with ease. The gaff is not prohibited, but kelts are always returned uninjured. The favourite flies, and they are the only lures used, are Jock Scot, Childers, and Sir Richard; but any other standard pattern will kill if dressed on hooks ranging from 2/0 to the very smallest.

Wading trousers would be required if this river was fished in the usual way; but it is understood between the opposite proprietors that the anglers on each bank shall confine their operations strictly to the pools that lie to the side of the water on which they are fishing—a very good arrangement, which it is to be regretted is not more universally adopted, for not only does it do away with the fatigue and unpleasantness of waders, but it also effectually stops any jealous racing for pools and the making of extra early risings so as to reach the river before the angler on the opposite bank.

By this arrangement, A, who has, say, the left bank, may be at work by 8 A.M. if he chooses, while B, who has the right bank, may breakfast at nine, smoke his pipe and write his letters at leisure, and then start for the river in the happy consciousness that the pools on his side have not been fished over by his more energetic neighbour.

Starting from the Kyle, the two miles nearest the sea on the right bank belong to Sir Kenneth Matheson, of Gledfield, and to his kindness I owe the pleasure of a long talk with old Lachlan Monro, a hale and most sensible old keeper of Sir Kenneth's, who has known the river for the last fifty years, and when he first remembers it it was easier to kill five or six fish in a day than one now. This he puts down to the improvements in netting; in the forties most of it was done by net and coble, and as in those days only shallow nets were used, fishing could only be prosecuted at half to low tide, and the fish had far better chances of entering the river than they have with the deep nets that now never cease working day and night, "one out, the other in."

Opposite Gledfield, about the first mile upwards belongs to Mr. A. Littlejohn, of Invercharron, who has the right of the net at Carron Mouth, a right which for the last four seasons he has very liberally abandoned in order to secure a better breeding stock of fish and better sport. About two hundred yards above Carron Bridge, on the left bank, the

Invercharron property ends, and Sir Charles Ross's Braelangwell Reach begins and goes up for nearly six miles.

These lower reaches of Gledfield and Invercharron are let occasionally, and for information on this head it is best to write to McLeod, the innkeeper of the Balnagowan Arms at Bonar Bridge, only a few yards from the station, and less than a mile from the river, for it is at this comfortable inn that the Carron anglers must stay. These lower reaches fish best in March and April (the 15th of March to the 20th of April is the picked time), and each should yield from twenty to twenty-five fish, although in an unusually bad season the take has not been anything like as high as that. The best pools in these lower beats are: The Boat Pool, nearest to the Kyle, Jetty Pools, Railway Bridge Pool, Whirling Pool, Raven or Rocky Pool, and hereabouts Invercharron water ends and Braelangwell begins and runs up for some six miles.

Then comes Gladfield Pool, Little Fall, Macgregors, Mackenzies, and here the Gladfield water ends and the Countess of Cromartie's Dunie reach begins at the Dunie Burn. This fishing is rented by Mr. Littlejohn, who lets it with Invercharron. Following this is the Clump Pool, Long Pool, Hiding Pool, Mrs. Ross' Pool, and then begins the Gruinard water, belonging to Mr. R. T. Coupland, which is some four miles in length, and holds the Corner Pool, Lower and Upper Bulwark, Ore's Pool, Gruinard House Pool, Stream Pool, Moral, the Keeper's Pool.

At the top of Braelangwell the Amat water, belonging to Mr. F. T. Gervers, commences, and here, after good heavy rain, plenty of fish may at times be killed, as many as twenty-two in a day having been taken by Colonel Long some thirty years ago. At the top of the Gruinard water Mr. W. Allis-Smith, of Glen Calvie, joins on, and here also in wet weather good fishing is to be had.

The Carron has neither obstructions, pollutions, or disease, and is one of the four rivers—the Shin, Oykel, and Casseley

being the other three—which will probably be altered for the better by the fact of the Bonar Bridge nets being in the hands of a syndicate of gentlemen, and further details of their objects will be found in the chapter relating to "The Shin." Suffice it to say that in 1897 all the Bonar Bridge nets were only worked five days a week, while during the latter part of the season they were only fished for sixty hours a week. In my opinion, anyone securing the lease of a beat on any of these four rivers of the Sutherland Kyle at the present price is pretty sure of increased sport, or of being able to sub-let at a higher rental.

CHAPTER VII

THE DUNBEATH

THIS small Caithness stream, which is wholly the property of Mr. W. S. Thomson-Sinclair, of Freswick, drains but twenty-three square miles of country, and from its source in the Dunbeath hill has but a twelve-mile run before it falls into the sea at Dunbeath, some six miles north of the Berriedale. The season is from the 11th of February to the 15th of October, nets coming off on the 26th of August. The best time for spring fish is from the middle of March to the middle of April, and these average about twelve pounds. It is, however, better for grilse and sea trout than salmon, July and August being the best months, and the average take is about fifty salmon and grilse. There are bag-nets on either side of the mouth, the right belonging to Mr. Thomson-Sinclair, and let to a tacksman. No wading is wanted—a small rod and small flies of the standard patterns are all that is necessary.

CHAPTER VIII

THE DIONARD

SOMETIMES called the Grudie of Durness, drains thirty-one square miles of very rocky, high ground, and rising at the foot of one of the steep cliffs of Meal Horn in the forest of Gobernuisgach, after passing through two small lochs expands into Loch Dionard—a mile in length and a half broad; on leaving the loch it has a further run of fourteen miles before it falls into the Kyle of Durness, and as the descent averages as nearly as possible one hundred feet to the mile—for the loch is 1,380 feet above sea-level—the run is very rapid. The three tidal pools are jointly fished by the tenants of the Durness and Gualen Shootings and the Durness Hotel, the latter monopolising the lion's share.

Above these tidal pools the water of both banks, for four miles upwards, belongs to the Durness Shootings, for many years past rented by the late Mr. Brown, of Burghwallis Hall, Doncaster, who is now succeeded by his son.

About a mile above the bridge the Durness march ends, and from there upwards the rest of the river and Loch Dionard are entirely on the Gualen Shootings, the small Lodge of which (originally built by one of the late Dukes of Sutherland as a refuge for anyone travelling this desolate road in winter) is beautifully placed, directly facing the stony heights of Ben Spionnen, and, like Durness, it has had but one tenant for many years—Mr. C. E. Austen-Leigh.

The fly is the only lure used, and they range in size from

1½ Limerick to the very smallest, the favourites being the genuine and the "blue" Jock Scot, the Green Highlander, the Doctor, and a local one called "The Brown Fancy," which is dressed as follows:—

Tail: Two turns of silver twist and gold pheasant tipping.

Body: Brown mohair picked out at shoulder. Gold tinsel. Mallard wing.

The season is from the 11th of February to the 26th of August for nets, with extension to the rod until the 31st of October. A grilse rod will do all the work. No waders are required for Gualen, though perhaps on the lower reaches of Durness a pair of knee boots would be of advantage to anyone desirous of keeping perfectly dry.

On the Durness beat there are fifteen casts and some "bitties," the best being "the Wheel," "the Bridge," and "the Rock." Fish rarely come into the river before the end of June, but after that date they arrive with the first spate, and if it lasts long enough they at once go right up to Loch Dionard, where salmon, grilse, and sea trout may all be taken in August.

The Durness beat, if hard fished, will yield an average of forty salmon and grilse each season; the former averaging ten pounds and the latter five, while one of twenty-eight is the heaviest fish yet recorded. In August, 1896, Mr. Brown had two fairly good days in succession, the first giving six and the other five fish. In September this lower water at times holds a lot of sea trout, some having been caught of five pounds, though the average is one and a half pounds, while from ten to twenty is reckoned a good day.

At the top of the Durness Reach the river begins to alter in character, the scenery becoming wilder, the stream much more rapid, and bordered by rough banks, along which there is some scrambling to be done, and from the start to the finish of the Gualen water angling is downright hard work. Although not large, the pools are numerous, each requiring neat and precise casting, the best perhaps being "Craggie"

and the Stone Pool. There is also a good cast on the stream between Loch Dionard and the small loch above, from which as many as seven fish have been had in a day, a performance which in July, 1898, was exactly equalled by Mr. Cecil Johnson, a friend of Mr. Austen Leigh. In the old times, however, Mr. Trevillian, the previous tenant of Gualen, often had days of fourteen, twelve, ten, and eight fish; now, however, there is but a very small chance of such good sport, though why that should be so is quite a puzzle, as for some years the bag-nets have been removed from Balnakill Bay, so that now the Dionard has no nets working nearer to its mouth than those of Loch Erribol on the east, while the nearest on the west are those placed a little to the north of Kinlochbervie on Loch Inchard, a distance of fully forty miles. Notwithstanding this and the fact of there being fine spawning grounds, and neither obstructions, pollutions, or disease, the angling is steadily deteriorating instead of improving. Can poaching be the cause?—for the steam trawlers, doubtlessly, poach many fish from the Kyle. Is the damage they do—to which must be added the milder depredations of certain yachts and bands of natives—sufficient to account for the standstill of this river at its lowest point, when all the surroundings should lead to certain improvement?

The Gualen rods, and they work hard, average about sixty salmon and grilse and eighty sea trout a season—not a very brilliant return for the labour involved. Only a heavy rainfall brings the upper waters into order, and as it runs down very quickly, to ensure sport it must be got to at once. To reach it involves a rough and wet two hours' tramp ere the rod can be put together; then the same journey has to be made at the end of the day, so it will be seen that angling on these upper Dionard reaches entails considerable hard work. A feature of the Kyle of Durness is the sea trout fishing in the salt water; at the half tides the currents run strongly, and in these the Durness Hotel visitors spin the natural sand eel

with great sureness. On July the 4th, 1898, Mr. and Mrs. Trickett got in this way in one day forty sea trout weighing ninety-two and a half pounds, and on the 28th of June another twenty-two weighing sixty-two pounds, the largest six and a half pounds, the smallest one and a half. Close to the hotel is also Loch Craspul, which at one period has evidently been connected with the sea, and in it there are fish which are doubtlessly land-locked sea trout, bright silvery fellows, very shy and tender in the mouth, and only to be deceived by the finest tackle and very small flies.

CHAPTER IX

THE FLEET

THIS small river, which drains seventy-three square miles, opens on the 24th of February, and is netted till the 10th of September (ten days more than it should be), and fished by rod till the 31st of October. Rising at an altitude of 750 feet above sea-level, after a run of twelve miles it falls into the Dornoch Firth, two miles to the south of Golspie. The mouth is crossed by a viaduct just a thousand yards long, over which passes the high road from Golspie to Dornoch; in this there are four arches with sluices, which keep in due bounds the currents of the river and the tides, the chief outlet being at the north end of the viaduct and within a few yards of the Mound Station. Above this viaduct the dammed waters form a reedy, swampy lake, and further up the lower part of the river is nearly all dead water, yielding but little sport with salmon, though at times sea trout are got. Fish do not enter the river until the first flood at the end of June or early in July, which is a curious fact, sandwiched as it is between the Brora and Helmsdale on the north and the Kyle of Sutherland rivers on the south, all of which are early ones. This little stream, however, has one peculiarity, without which it would hardly be worth mentioning as a salmon river, for it is the only place in Scotland where salmon are regularly killed by rod and fly in salt water.

About three miles seawards from the Fleet mouth is a

stretch of salt water called Loch Fleet, in which about an hour after the tide ebbs a current is formed, which runs with all the rapidity of a strong river stream, and in this salmon are taken with rod and fly.

A further feature of the Fleet is the remarkable salmon ladder at Torbol, on the Carnach, a tributary on which there is a series of falls some sixty feet in height, up which the fish have been successfully taken. The late Mr. Bateson, of Cambusmore—which is at present rented by Mr. Laurence Hardy, M.P.—was, I believe, the inventor and engineer of this, the first fish-pass (about 1864) that took fish up such a very formidable obstruction.

The total length of the pass, which cost £600, is three hundred and seventy-eight yards, the first one hundred and forty of which are very steep, up which the fish are taken by the ingenious principle of a ladder within a ladder, which provides two sets of pools, a larger and a smaller, in the breadth of the ladder, a large one on the right hand side with a small one on the left. In the step below the order is reversed, and the fish is thus enabled to pass alternately from shallow to deep, and *vice versâ*. At the head of the ladder a sluice regulates the water flow, admitting only what is required for the passage of the fish. Salmon, grilse, and sea trout ascended in fair numbers, and the waters above the fall soon became stocked and yielded sport to the rod.

The Cambusmore shooting on the south bank of the Fleet has the lower fishing of the river. Earl Amherst, at Morvich, on the north bank, and Mr. H. H. Bolton, at Rovie, have the remainder. The angler on the lower reaches of the Fleet is daily looked down on by the monument on Golspie Hill, erected to the memory of one of the late Dukes of Sutherland, the same duke who, at his own expense, emigrated so many of his crofters, greatly to their benefit; the tradition relates

that after the putting up of the monument some wag scribbled on its base the following lines :—

> There was once a great Duke of Sutherland,
> Whose crofters were fond of their motherland ;
> But to each one he said, your passage is paid,
> And off you must go to some other land.

I vouch not for the truth of this story, but at any rate the lines are rather funny.

CHAPTER X

THE FORSS, BY THURSO

Flows out of Loch Shurrery, and after a run of twelve miles through the properties of Westfield and Forss, in which it drains fifty-eight square miles, falls into the North Sea six miles to the west of Thurso. There are good spawning grounds above the Loch to which salmon, grilse, and sea trout ascend, and are there taken with the fly. From Westfield Bridge, five miles out of Thurso, down to the sea is about six miles.

At this bridge the Forss is narrow, shallow, and streamy, but as it flows through the green strath it opens out and forms plenty of pools, which about a mile above Forss Bridge become deep and still and require a good breeze for angling. Immediately below Forss Bridge come the falls of some thirty feet; but, as the illustration will show, they are so broken as to offer no serious bar to ascending fish, which make the passage from the left of the fall up the right centre.

From the Falls to the sea is about a mile—all dead water, which is good fishing on a day with a strong north wind blowing, though even should it be due south, so stagnant is this part that sport may yet be had by fishing the water up stream.

The river opens on the 11th of February with the usual close time for nets and rods, but inasmuch as the adjacent rivers both to east and west open for the rod on the 11th of January, it seems only fair that the same privilege should be given to the Forss, and it would be better for the river if it

FALLS OF FORSS.

CHAPTER X

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FALLS OF FORSS.

were opened to the rod on the 11th of January and closed on the 15th of October, instead of the 31st, which would save the lives of a good few spawners. The netting time should be maintained as at present, or, better still, be knocked off on the 15th of August instead of the 26th. March and April are the best months for spring salmon, and September and October for late fish; the former average ten pounds, the latter seven pounds. Grilse run towards the end of July and average five pounds, while there are but very few sea trout.

Any of the standard flies of medium size will kill, but of course the smaller the water the smaller the fly. A light grilse rod will do all the work, and no waders are wanted.

The Forss fishing is let with Forss House and shootings, from the 1st of August, the spring fishing being let separately, and anglers can get comfortable quarters at a well-built, modern farmhouse just on the west of Forss Bridge close to the river. Applications may be made to Mr. Alexander Mackay, at Forss House, of which he has a long lease. This house, so prettily placed by the Falls, has the advantage of being well timbered, which, in the nearly treeless county of Caithness, is a great attraction to all the small birds of the neighbourhood, and the rookery is of remarkable dimensions. This ancient house also contains the two-centuries-old wooden stirrup-cup of Forss; round it is carved, in curious letters and odd spelling—

ATT everey Bout
Drink it Out;

but as it holds more than a pint, it is to be hoped it was not filled with anything stronger than claret or ale.

The Fishery Board Report for 1883 says that in 1882 Macnicoll, the then keeper, had a day of eleven fish, and altogether a total of forty-six in six days; that in 1884 the take to the rod was two hundred fish, which had been gradually increased from fifty or sixty to that respectable total by the aid of a hatchery started some seven years earlier by Mr. Pilkington, and now removed to Sandside. The 1883 Report also

says that Macnicoll marked many smolts, some of which were got as salmon in the Duncansby head nets twenty-five miles to the east of Forss mouth. It is to be regretted the Report does not state the time that lapsed between the marking of the smolts and their being taken as *salmon*.

The fishing has gone off since the days of Macnicoll, and perhaps the removal of the hatchery has had something to do with it, for of late years there is no record of any take approaching two hundred fish. In 1892 two rods got one hundred and sixty fish in March and April; in 1894 other two had fifty; in 1898 Sir Redvers Buller and Colonel Wyburgh had thirty from the 1st of March to middle of April; and in 1899 John Black, the present keeper, did not make up twenty for the spring, which was only in accord with the poor sport had nearly everywhere else that bad season.

In 1892 Colonel Philpotts had the water, and after a blank fortnight he had two days of seven and five fish, the start of these good times being commenced with a false step and a header into deep water! but the gallant Colonel only laughed at his misfortune, quickly changed his clothes, and was then rewarded by the seven fish.

The mouth of the Forss is small, shallow and rocky. The bag-nets there are undoubtedly illegally fixed, and have been reported as such by Mr. Archer, but nothing has been done, except that the renter of the nets has offered Mr. Mackay an extra twelve hours' weekly slap, a compromise which, though he has accepted it, is, nevertheless, a bad precedent, and does not do away with the fact that the tacksman is breaking the law, to which the attention of the authorities has been directed by the Head Inspector of the Fishery Board, and no notice taken.

In connection with the Forss there is also one of those anomalies which may occasionally be found in other rivers, for, though Sir Tollemach Sinclair owns the whole of the last mile and a half of the left bank, he has neither netting nor angling right in the river.

CHAPTER XI

THE HALLADALE

SUPPOSED to take its name from a son of the first Earl of Orkney, one Halladha, who was killed in a battle in the Strath, and buried where he fell; the field is still pointed out by the natives, a deep, circular trench with a stone in the centre marking the burial-place of Halladha and his sword.

Draining an area of one hundred and eight square miles, this river rises in the Knockfin heights close to the Caithness border, and the same slopes that send out the Berriedale from their south sides discharge their waters as the Halladale on the northern ones. The river is the boundary between Caithness and Sutherland, and after a fairly rapid run of twenty-two miles it falls into the North Sea at Melvich Bay. There are no pollutions or obstructions, while the spawning grounds are good. In order to reclaim some lands from the river, the grandfather of the present Duke of Sutherland cut the lower part of it into a canal, and though he gained his object, he spoilt this part of the river for angling, for it is now useless except with a strong breeze blowing up or down it, but up for choice. In those days the land was worth more than angling, nowadays the angling would be worth a great deal more than the land. Heather-clad hills are on both banks of the water, which is divided into six beats, the two upper ones of but little use, as the river runs down so very quickly; the four lower ones contain a number of pretty pools, which will give fair sport in continuously wet weather, especially after the nets come off.

At present the beats are divided as follows from the top:

Forsinard Hotel has one rod; Forsinard Shooting, now rented by Mr. W. H. Fox, has two; Bighouse Shooting has one; Mr. Pilkington, of Sandside, has one; and Melvich Hotel one. They are fished in rotation, No. 6 being nearest to the sea. During the spring the rods of Forsinard, Bighouse, and Sandside are often let, and application should be made to the hotels at Forsinard or Melvich. As the top of beat No. 6 is fully fifteen miles from Forsinard, and the bottom of No. 1 is the same distance from Melvich, the angler will do well to come to an agreement about the cost of conveyance per week.

Each beat has a few good pools, the three best being "Foresel," "Havich," and "Ashel."

The best months for salmon are March and April, though the river opens to the rod on the 11th of January and closes on the 30th of September. The nets commence on the 11th of February and come off on the 26th of August. The Silver Doctor and Jock Scot, from medium to the smallest sizes, are the favourite flies. A grilse rod will do all the work easily; indeed, a trout rod will do it more comfortably. Knee boots or stockings may be wanted in the spring while the water is large, but as soon as it falls to a medium height no waders are necessary. The mouth is hard fished by half a dozen bag-nets and a draft net and coble; which were once very remunerative, but have now fallen off, owing to the excessive slaughter of fish.

The Fishery Board Report of 1888 states that from the net fishings of the Strathy and Halladale, which cover some twenty miles of coast, the yield of the three previous years was an average of nine hundred salmon and four thousand grilse—rough on the grilse, and a certain method of diminishing the supply of salmon. During these three years, which gave two thousand seven hundred salmon and twelve thousand grilse, the rods took less than three hundred fish from the two streams!

The Halladale is another of the rivers for which Mr. Box, the Duke of Sutherland's factor at Tongue, has so long, but,

alas! so ineffectually, advocated a shortening of the netting time by ten days, and making them cease to work on the 15th of August instead of on the 26th.

The average take of the river of late years is about sixty fish a season, rather under than over. In April there are a few sea trout to be got in the tidal water between Melvich Bridge and the sea; but this is open to anyone, and hard fished by the natives.

The Melvich Hotel is one of those trouting centres from which good loch fishing may be had by the public, for it can have the run of some thirty lochs, which are very wisely re-stocked each season with Loch Leven trout from the Brora Hatchery.

When I was at Melvich, on the 6th of June, the hotel was so full of trout fishers that there was not a bedroom to be had in it, and I was quartered out. It was the first of these hotels I had stayed at, but I found all of them about equally crowded. In Sutherland alone there are ten of these trouting hotels, all of them fairly well managed. They are those of Lairg, Forsinard, Altnaharra, Tongue, Durness, Riconich, Scourie, Altnacealgach, Ichnadampf, and Loch Inver.

The large sums spent by anglers for the privilege of catching loch trout surprised me greatly. At the lowest computation the hotel bill will come to 15*s.* a day; the ghillie is 3*s.* 6*d.*, with a further 1*s.* 9*d.* for his lunch; while more often than not there is another 5*s.* a day as a share of a machine. Here, then, we have numbers of fishermen paying from 25*s.* to 30*s.* a day for the privilege of catching from a dozen to four dozen loch trout, which, even with "hotel weights," barely average three to the pound, and in many cases very much less. The take will, of course, depend on the combined skill of angler and boatman, with the state of the weather. Between these ten hotels there are certainly a hundred anglers spending 25*s.* a day each, which

is £720 per week, and as the trouting season lasts for some sixteen weeks, they disburse in this county alone some £12,000 in pursuit of their sport! Yet there is a yearly difficulty in getting Parliament to make a close time for these little fishes that bring such large sums into places which would hardly be visited were it not for their speckled attractions. This calculation is much under the mark, for many of the trout fishers are accompanied by their families, and spend a great deal more on the hotel bill than my modest estimate of 15s. a day, for I met several families who must have daily spent ten times that amount.

On leaving Melvich I partly drove and partly walked up the Halladale to Forsinard, being much struck with the numbers and well-to-do appearance of the crofters' houses, of which there must be several hundreds, and it speaks well for them that cases of river poaching are few and far between. On my way I was interested by watching two families of peewits running about on a patch of short grass, the old birds looking on proudly until a "hoodie" appeared on the scene to make a dash for a breakfast at one of the young ones, a purpose which the united attack of the four old birds speedily defeated.

Forsinard Hotel is another of those trouting centres which are open to the public, worked very much on similar lines to Melvich. There are, perhaps, a few less available lochs, but the fish book with the stuffed trout in the hall bear witness that there is sport to be had. A ferox of ten pounds and a quarter taken from Badenloch by Mr. Priestley Edwards on the 20th of May, 1897, brown trout of six pounds and three-quarters and five pounds, and two others of four pounds, are beauties to look at. From Loch Sletill, near Forsinard, on the Bighouse Shootings, a gentleman and the keeper killed, some twenty years ago, one hundred and twenty trout, which weighed eighty-seven pounds. At Forsinard also the lochs are restocked each year from the Brora Hatchery.

CHAPTER XII

THE HELMSDALE, OR KILDONAN

Is one of the best, if not the very best, of the early angling rivers, so much so that in the beginning of the nineteenth century it is recorded that on the day before Christmas Day sixty clean salmon were taken from the Manse Pool at one haul of the net. Rising from several streams which drain the lochs lying around the foot of Ben Griam More, the two main ones unite near Kinbrace to form the Helm, which then flows for twenty miles, without obstructions or pollution, through Kildonan Strath, and falls into the sea at Helmsdale. Below Kinbrace it is joined by an important tributary, which drains a chain of lochs of some 2,500 acres in extent, of which Loch-na-Moin, the lowest, is counted as a "beat" on the river; and during its course the Helm, which remains in good order for several days after a flood, offers the angler every variety of casting, and will test his skill to the utmost.

The angling, which goes with the six shooting lodges on the banks, is entirely private and not let from the Sutherland Estate office. At times, however, when some of the shooting tenants cannot get north for the spring fishing, they let their rods to friends. At the present moment these shootings are held as follows:—

Auchintoul Lodge, or the "Burn Field," on the left bank, is rented by Mr. F. G. Nutting; next, some ten miles below it on the same bank, comes Suisgill, or "Roaring Burn," a lodge originally built by Colonel Hunt, afterwards rented for

some seasons by my old friend Colonel John Hargreaves, and now occupied by Mr. Leopold Hirsch. Five miles lower down and still on the same bank is Kildonan Lodge (Donan's Cell, an ancient Culdee saint), for many years in the possession of another old friend, the late Mr. Hamilton Bruce, and subsequently rented by Mr. T. Gardiner Muir, and at present vacant, owing to the sudden death of Mr. H. E. M. Davies.

While waiting on Kildonan Bridge in June, 1899, I met Andrew Ross, the keeper there, and in the course of a chat with him he asked me if I could suggest any explanation of a curious thing he had seen on the hill a few days before when watching a herd of deer. Not wishing to disturb them he had hidden, and while concealed, a hen grouse flew by, and settling near him, commenced to peck viciously at something. Anxious to see what it was, Ross rose suddenly and frightened her away, and on going to where she had risen from, there he found a newly-laid grouse egg partially destroyed. Ross was strongly of opinion the bird brought the egg in her claws, and did not lay it after settling, for she began to peck at the very moment she lit. Could this have been an old hen past breeding, that had taken an egg from the nest of a younger hen and was destroying it in a fit of jealousy?

Now, to return to the Helmsdale Lodges. Six miles further on is Torrish, "the Fort by the water," held for upwards of thirty years by Mr. Alexander Macfarlan, and to his kindness I am indebted for my first cast on the Helm, as on the 8th of June, 1899, he magnanimously gave me his turn on No. 6 beat, which, as the river was dead low, offered, from its many rushing, narrow streams, nearly the only chance of sport; and from the Rock Pool I took the two smallest grilse I have ever caught—just two and a half pounds each! So small did they seem to me that I would have it they were sea trout, and not until I compared one with the other was I fully convinced. When the two are laid side by side, it will be

seen that the sea trout has a straighter tail than the grilse, also he has more spots on both sides of the lateral line, while on the lower side the grilse seldom has any spots: there may be at times one or two, but never many.

The other two lodges are on the right bank of the river, the more northern being Badenloch, rented by Messrs. F. and J. B. Taylor, and the other, some twenty miles from Helmsdale, Borrobol, may be said to have had but one tenant ever since it was first let, for Mr. F. Sykes, the present one, succeeded to his father, who was the first occupant.

These six lodges divide the whole water into twelve beats, six upper and six lower ones, each getting two beats a day, to one of which they can send a friend. Kildonan Bridge is at the top of the lower beats, and is No. 6, and the rod having No. 6 on the lower beat has also No. 6 on the upper beat, and so on all down the water. Beat No. 1 is nearest the sea, and Torrish always starts the season on it and sets the rotation for all the other five lodges.

The river opens for the rod on the 11th of January, and closes on the 30th of September. The nets begin work on the 11th of February, and continue till the 26th of August; but I cannot help thinking it would be better for the river, and eventually show a greatly increased yield of fish, if the nets ceased on the 15th of August and the rods on the 15th of September.

The best months for salmon are March and April, and for grilse any time after the first spate that comes at the end of May. Salmon average ten pounds and grilse five pounds. In the early part of the season an eighteen-foot rod and heavy line, and wading trousers, will be required. In April a rod of sixteen feet will do, and then, after the middle of May, a stout trout rod is handiest; and further on there will be found a graphic account of what may be accomplished with so small a wand of attack. Fly is the only lure used; sizes ranging from 7/0 to 4/0 in the early months, and gradually decreasing

to the smallest double hooks. With the exception of the Blue Doctor, all the standard patterns kill, although Walter Mackay, the Torrish keeper, prefers the Black Doctor dressed with a guinea-fowl hackle at the shoulder, in lieu of the usual one of claret. Mackay always swears by an invention of his own, "the Torrish Favourite," a pretty fly which he dresses as follows:—

Tag: Silver twist; yellow floss silk.

Tail: Gold pheasant topping; black ostrich but.

Body: Yellow floss silk half-way, the remainder yellow and red mohair; silver tinsel all the way up; ginger hackle tied in half-way; guinea-fowl hackle at shoulder; bronze turkey wing with gold pheasant topping over.

"Joe Brady" is also a good killer, the dressing being nearly the same as that of "The Torrish," already described in the chapter on the Brora. The beats are divided as under, starting from the sea up:—

Beat No. 1.

(From the sea to Soliscraggy Bridge; best in big water.)

Flat or Black Pool; in 1895 Captain G. W. Hunt had ten fish one day from this. Marrel Pool, good in big water; Lower Caen Pool; Upper Caen Pool; Railway Bridge Pool; Sand Pool; Jones' Pool; Alder Pool; Stall Pool, best fished from right bank. Soliscraggy Pool; in 1895 Mr. Parker took fifteen fish in one day here: also a good grilse cast.

The whole of this beat fishes best in spring with plenty of water. At Soliscraggy Bridge, on the left bank, there is a pretty little cottage of the same name which goes with the Badenloch beat, while near it is Birchwood Cottage, which goes with Auchintoul, and from these two charming little houses the occupants of these respective beats carry on the spring angling.

BEAT No. 2.

(From Soliscraggy Bridge to Upper Torrish Park. Fishes best in Spring.)

Kilpheddar Pool; Eldrable Pool, fishes well on both sides; Gate Pool, best on right bank; Park Pool, best from left bank; Carew's Pool, best from left bank; Woody Pool.

BEAT No. 3.

(From Torrish Burn to the Big Tree on the left bank at the Big Bay.)

Lower Torrish and Upper Torrish Pools, two of the best on the river; Tail and part of the Big Bay.

A very fine beat in spring, from which ten to fifteen fish have often been had.

The late Mr. R. K. Dawson had fifteen one day, and Mr. Charles Ackroyd twelve.

BEAT No. 4.

(From lower end of Baddie Wood Pool to Killearnan Dyke.)

Baddan Pool; here in 1895 Mr. Macfarlan had fourteen fish in three hours. Stoney Point Pool; Dalhalmy Bridge Pool; Kelt's Den Pool; Dalhalmy Pool; Black Hole Pool; Killearnan Dyke Pool.

A very good beat during the latter part of March and first half of April. When the weather is cold fish do not ascend much above the top of this until early in March. In milder weather they pass up much earlier.

BEAT No. 5.

(From the Boat Pool to Kildonan Dyke.)

Killearnan Boat Pool; in 1895 eighteen fish were landed here in a day by Mr. Wood. Ewe's Neuk Pool; Foam Pool; Deible Pool—from this Colonel Hargreaves got seven one day, and Mr. Gardiner Muir a like number on another day. Short Pool; Whinney Pool; Kildonan Dyke Pool, a good beat in March and April.

Beat No. 6.

(From the Manse to Kildonan Bridge.)

The Manse Pool, one of the best; and on this pool the late Mr. Rutherford, an old Helm angler, once saw six rods each with a fish on; also from this and the two Rock Pools Mr. Ashworth landed sixteen fish one day, Mr. A. K. Dawson had a day of fourteen, and Mr. C. Ackroyd one of sixteen. The Little Rock Pool; the New Little Rock Pool; the Big Rock Pool; the Flat Pool; the Fall Pool; the Rock Pool—here the late Mr. H. E. M. Davies had a day of eight; the Bridge Pool.

As soon as the fish reach this beat it becomes perhaps the pick of the lot, for, in addition to being an excellent grilse beat, it is also not quite so dependent on rain as some of the others, there being many rapid rocky runs in it from which fish may be taken even in quite low water.

Upper Beat No. 1.

(From Kildonan Bridge to end of Suisgill Parapet. Above the bridge are a few fine streams.)

Rock Pool; Bathing Pool; Pool in the Wood, the best on the beat; above the wood a few streams.

Upper Beat No. 2.

(From lower end of Suisgill Parapet to the Island above the surface-man's house at Old Suisgill.)

Consists of five little pools opposite Suisgill House; several streams up to Suisgill Burn; opposite Old Suisgill Lodge; Old Suisgill Pool; small pools up to Island. Mr. Radcliffe had twelve fish one day off this beat.

Upper Beat No. 3.

Flats Pool, Dalvuie Pool, Borrobol Bridge Pool, Red Brae Pool, Dalcharn Pool, Lower Chancellor Pool, the Den Pool,

THE BALL POOL OF THE BELLINGHAM.

[illegible]

The Marrow Pools are of the best; and on this pool the late Mr. [illegible] and his friends once saw six rods [illegible] from this and the two Rock Pools [illegible] one day, Mr. A. K. Dawson [illegible] of sixteen. [illegible] the Saw Little Rock Pool; the Big [illegible] the Fall Pool; the Rock Pool—. [illegible] had a day of eight; the [illegible]

[illegible] this beat it boasts perhaps the [illegible] in addition to being an excellent grilse [illegible] as dependent on rain as some of the others, there being many rapid rocky runs in it from which fish may be taken even in quite low water.

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Flats Pool, Dalveuic Pool, Borrobol Bridge Pool, Red Brae Pool, Dalcharo Pool, Lower Chancellor Pool, the Den Pool,

THE FALL POOL OF THE HELMSDALE.

Upper Chancellor Pool, Gravelly Stream Pool, Kinbrace Park Pool, Kinbrace Bridge Pool. A very good April beat, from which, in 1896, a gentleman staying at Ross' Hotel, in Helmsdale, got eighty-one fish in ten days.

Upper Beat No. 4.

(From Kinbrace Bridge to junction of Badenloch and Auchintoul rivers.)

The Washing Pool—nine fish one day by Mr. H. Ackroyd. Black Bank Pool, Burnfort Pool, Black Pool, Junction Pool.

Upper Beat No. 5.

(From junction of rivers to Loch-na-Moin; a few small bits up to Crockan.)

Crockan Pool, a number of small pools and streams on this beat; Still Water Pool, twenty-two fish in one day by Mr. Buckley taken with a trout rod!

Upper Beat No. 6.

Loch Ach-na-Moin. Seven fish in a day by Mrs. Hick and Mr. Ashworth.

The Fishery Board Report for 1897 states that the bag-nets and river nets of the Brora and Helmsdale took nearly nine thousand five hundred salmon and grilse, while the six rods of the Helmsdale and the two of the Brora got with the fly under eight hundred, a remarkably disproportionate return, though not so great as in some cases!

The rents paid for angling are much heavier than those paid for netting, and having regard to this, it seems a short-sighted policy to let down the splendid sport hitherto enjoyed. A letter of the late Colonel Hargreaves to me, dated Suisgill, the 28th of May, 1893, tells that up to the 15th of the month about five hundred and twenty-five fish had been caught, "a miserably bad record for the river!"

"During January and February the river was frozen; then the weather turned very warm, and when the fish came they ran right through and took the Kildonan Falls on the 8th of March, fully a month earlier than usual."

"Disease, I am sorry to say, is rife. The total of the Suisgill rod to date is but one hundred and thirty-one fish."

In 1897 the six rods got four hundred and sixty-one fish.

In 1898, six hundred and seventeen fish.

In 1899, up to the 30th of May, only two hundred and fifty-eight! And the two best days were five fish a day!

So it is to be hoped that something may be done to improve the angling once more to the former standard of excellence.*

* Since these pages were penned the Helmsdale nets have been bought up by the tenants of the shooting lodges.

CHAPTER XIII

THE HOPE

THIS river, which drains eighty-one square miles of a most mountainous country, is formed by three small streams rising in the old Reay Forest, not very far from Gobernuisgach Lodge; these uniting form the Hope, which thence flows through Strathmore under the birch-clad slopes of Ben Hope for some seven miles, when it expands into Loch Hope—a lovely sheet of water about six miles long, and varying from two hundred to twelve hundred yards in width. On leaving the loch the river has a further flow of rather less than two miles to the sea, into which it falls on the east side of Loch Erribol—"the little town on a sandy beach." The angling of the river somewhat resembles that of the Awe, and between the foot of the loch and the sea it goes with Hope Lodge—prettily perched on a high bank overlooking the loch and the top part of the river, a somewhat inaccessible dwelling easiest reached by a yacht, and, failing that, only to be arrived at by a long posting journey of some seventy miles from Lairg, *viâ* Altnaharra, Tongue, and the Moin.

This river opens to the rod on the 11th of January and closes on the 10th of September, the netting season being from the 11th of February to the 26th of August. These dates are taken from the latest "Table of Annual Close Times," printed in the Fishery Board Report. But Duncan Ross, who has been keeper at Hope for several years, maintains that the river remains open to the rod till the 15th of

October. Why the salmon rod season of the Hope should commence on the 11th of January is a perfect mystery, for no clean fish are got before the middle of June. The Fishery Board Report of 1884 specially states "this is a late river, and that with it the late rivers begin." A few pages further on the same Report announces that "the Dionard is the first of the late rivers." But both statements are erroneous, for, as a matter of fact, the Kinloch is absolutely the furthest east of the late rivers; from Kinloch mouth to the east they are all early, to the west they are all late.

Mr. Archibald Young, a former Inspector of Salmon Fisheries, tried to account for this lateness and earliness by the relative temperatures of the river and the sea water. His theory was that rivers flowing into the German Ocean were early because that sea was a cold one, and that the higher temperature of the fresh water of the rivers tempted fish in search of warmer quarters to enter them early in the year; *vice versâ*, the temperature of the Atlantic, warmed by the Gulf Stream (does it make itself felt as far east as the mouth of the Kinloch?), being warmer than the water of the west coast rivers, therefore induced the salmon to stay longer in the sea. Mr. Young states that these west coast streams have short courses, with their fountain-heads at considerable altitudes, and in winter and spring, sometimes even in early summer, they are snow-clad, and then every partial melting brings down torrents of ice-cold water. But surely the amount of snow-water that pours down such rivers as Naver, Thurso, Helmsdale, Beauly, Spey, Dee, etc., must be quite as cold as any that comes down the west coast rivers, for much more snow falls on the east coast hills than on any of the high grounds of the west coast. The icy water of the north and east coast rivers must also flow more voluminously and continue to run cold for a longer period than any of the shorter streams rushing down Laxford, Inver, Kirkaig, Shiel, or Awe.

Again, on coming to the Lowlands, where there are no

high hills and comparatively little snow that lies for any length of time, we find rivers like Doon, Luce, Cree, Dee, Nith, and Annan, all of which are late rivers, but whose waters must surely be of a higher temperature than those of any of the named east and north coast rivers.

Thus, with so many contradictory facts to deal with, I cannot think that either the late Mr. Young or any one else has at present solved the question as to why some rivers are early and some late.

The best months on the Hope are July and August, and when the river is in full ply, an eighteen-foot rod and wading trousers are required. The best killers are Jock Scot and Silver Doctor, dressed on sizes from 2 to 6 Limerick hooks. Between the loch and the sea there are seven good pools, the most noted being "The Stable" and "The House Pool," and to fish the whole of them, down and back again, is a fair day's work. For this stretch the average take of salmon and grilse is about forty-five; in 1897 fifty-five were killed, of which the heaviest was twenty-four pounds. Although disease made its first appearance in 1894, yet the rod take is incomprehensibly small, if it be remembered that there are no bag-nets to the east within twenty miles of Hope Mouth, and none within forty miles on the west, and probably poaching by steam trawlers has something to do with this poor return; while the fact that also the sea trout fishing has been going steadily back for the last four years also points to poaching in some direction.

When there is a spate, fish take the worm freely, although neither phantom nor prawn is of any use. The flies for sea trout should be on the small size, not larger than No. 9, and any of the standard patterns will kill; mallard wing and orange body being the local favourite, together with the March Brown and the Zulu. Salmon are taken in the loch with the fly, both by casting and trolling it; other lures are of no use. The largest sea trout got on the loch was fourteen pounds, and the heaviest salmon twenty-two pounds. For five years the late

Lord Rutherford Clark had Hope Lodge, during which period his son, Mr. T. Rutherford Clark, averaged from Loch Hope just one thousand pounds of sea trout each season to his own rod, his best day's take being one of fifty-seven pounds.

Salmon pass right through the loch to ascend the Strathmore River at the head, and there, when there is rain, two, three and four fish a day are sometimes got, while later on this upper water is the chief spawning ground, though fish use both the loch and the river below it.* There are few prettier fisheries in Scotland than those attached to Hope Lodge if the sport could but be largely improved, and with the immunity from bag-nets that the river enjoys I am quite certain that it only requires careful observation to ensure that desirable end.

With regard to the close time, Duncan Ross writes me as follows: "I have never known a clean fish caught on the Hope before the 12th of June. I am certain it is a late river. Until 1889 it closed on the 10th of September, and I spoke to the late Duke about it. Lord Rutherford Clark got permission to fish until the 15th of October in 1889, and certainly the river should not be closed earlier. I am not sure if the Fishery Board comes further in the county than the Shin, so that the Duke can make local laws as he pleases; at any rate, the Fishery Board has nothing to do with watching the river in this part of the county."

Hitherto my travelling in these northern regions had been done by posting from place to place at the usual rate of *1s. 3d.* a mile, plus threepence per mile more for the driver. Sometimes the jehu was charged for in the hotel bill, sometimes he was not, and before I became aware of this difference in custom, on several occasions I paid the driver his mileage twice over, greatly to his joy and much to my astonishment at his very profuse thanks; it is therefore just as well to ascertain before starting if his fee has been included in the hire bill.

* Duncan Ross is my authority for saying that fish spawn in the loch, but "I hae ma doubts."

On the day I wished to quit Tongue, the dogcarts had all gone to the various hill lochs with the trout-fishers, so I had perforce to make my first acquaintance with Her Majesty's mail cart, and in it I started from Tongue for Erribol Ferry, *en route* to Durness, a cheap and comfortable ride of some twenty-six miles for six shillings, with a tip of half a crown to the well-mannered driver. The same journey in a dogcart would have cost thirty-nine shillings, so from this time forward I often tried the same method of progression, sometimes successfully, sometimes disastrously. A crowded mail cart on a wet day is horrid, and whatever the weather, it is still more horrid when it carries natives who have taken too much whiskey, and who when started produce bottles of it from their pockets and suck at them until they are incapable!

The Hope river is crossed by a ferry-boat working on a chain, and that negotiated, a further drive of two miles brings the traveller to Heulim Ferry on Loch Erribol, which here is some two miles wide. Of course on this day the heavy boat was on the other side, and as it was a dead calm, it was a case of patience while they rowed back. When at length the boat touched shore the luggage was quickly stowed away, and there seemed every prospect of a long pull across. As we started, however, there came a sound as of a gigantic boiling kettle, and a few seconds later half a gale was coming off the sides of Foinavon directly down the loch. Up went our sail, and lucky now that our craft was stoutly built, for it took us five tacks and nearly two hours to reach the opposite shore, and though there was a trap from Durness Hotel waiting to take us the remaining seven miles of the road, it was long past midnight before we reached that comfortable quarter.

CHAPTER XIV

THE INCHARD

This little river, the most northern on the West Coast, drains but sixteen square miles, and has its source in a series of lochs mostly grouped round the foot of "the white hill" of Foinavon, while the stony heights of Ben Arkle look down on the others. These lochs discharge their waters over a fall, at present impassable to salmon, into Loch Garbet More, which again empties itself by a mere burn into Loch Garbet Beg, out of which flows the rapid little Inchard, to discharge itself, after a run of rather less than a mile, into the salt water of Loch Inchard. As an angling river it is nearly worthless, for it is so full of rocks, and the run is so rapid, that, except just where it leaves the loch, there is hardly a resting-place for a fish. Salmon, grilse, and sea trout take it with a rush, and ascend with one run into Loch Garbet Beg with the first flood that comes after the middle of June; and here good sport may often be had, for as many as sixty salmon and grilse have been taken in one season by one rod staying at Riconich, a comfortable inn prettily placed at the head of Loch Inchard. From the 1st of July the angling of the loch is let from the hotel at the rate of £20 a month, limited to two rods; and for those who like loch fishing, I do not know of any better sport to be had for the money in Scotland. The Hotel Fish Book, which is kept with care and entered up daily, told me that in 1898, from the 14th of June to the 17th of September, Loch Garbet Beg yielded forty-one salmon and grilse, and just over six hundred sea trout, averaging one and a quarter pounds, the largest being six and a quarter pounds. As to the best

month, much depends on when rain comes; but, with the weather right, I would take from the middle of July to the middle of August as the cream of it.

In 1889 the then landlord of Riconich Inn reported to the Fishery Board a general falling off of salmon and sea trout angling in the district, which he unhesitatingly attributed to excessive bag-net fishing, coupled with the fact that the observance of the weekly close time by these nets was the exception and not the rule!! Loch Garbet Beg is a little over a mile in length and about a half in width. The fish pass up into Garbet More, but owing to its great depth they are not often caught there, and the chief take is in Loch Garbet Beg. In the small burns entering these two lochs the bulk of the productive spawning must be done, for though fish spawn in the river, the bottom is so rocky and devoid of gravel, and the current so strong, that it is doubtful if much or any of the spawn deposited there ever comes to maturity. A fourteen-foot rod will do all the work, and the standard patterns both of salmon and sea trout flies kill. With a good stiff breeze, size No. 2 Limerick hooks might be used for salmon, and from that to the smallest, according to wind and light. In addition to this salmon and sea trout loch the hotel has the right of fishing upwards of sixty brown trout lochs, for which no charge is made; there is also good sea fishing close by, and five miles up Loch Inchard the natives catch a good many sea trout in salt water by baiting with a herring liver. I did not see this done myself, but Mr. Smith, the present tenant of Riconich, told me that he had often witnessed it.

Not far from Riconich, on the Scourie Road, there is a fresh water loch emptying into the sea by a short burn, and as it is the lowest of a series of small communicating lochs, it would add to the Riconich fishing if money was spent in making an easy run for salmon and sea trout. Rough efforts have already been tried, and proved successful to a limited extent, as sea trout have been caught in the lowest loch, but not in the numbers they might be if the work of facilitating their ascent was properly taken in hand.

CHAPTER XV

THE INVER

Flows out of Loch Assynt, which is some ten miles long by one broad; it drains sixty-eight square miles, and after a run of six, falls into the sea at Loch Inver. Although not a very large river, during its course it offers the fisherman every sort of casting and many opportunities of testing his skill, as from "Garrarie," the first pool below Loch Assynt, right down to the mouth it is an angler's ideal river, and sad it is to see such fine water so very short of fish. At present the upper beat of the river goes with Tumore Lodge and shootings, and the lower beat with Glencanisp Forest, now occupied by Lord Brownlow; as, however, the shooting tenants rarely come north before the 1st of August, it has been arranged that up to that date the upper beat can be fished by visitors staying at Inchnadamph Hotel, and the lower one by those of the Culag Hotel at Loch Inver; at this latter place the lower beat is again divided into two, and a charge of twelve-and-sixpence a day is made for each beat as soon as the first fish has been caught on the lower one, which would be very cheap *if* there were fish to be got!

The season opens on the 11th of February and closes on the 26th of August for nets, and the 31st of October for rods, which is fifteen days too late. As far as the river is concerned, this opening date, like that of many other rivers, is an absolute farce, for it is but very seldom—I may say never nowadays—that clean fish are got before the end of May. The 1884

Report of the Fishery Board does mention that in one previous May two rods took thirty-nine fish in that month; but so greatly has the angling fallen away of late years that it is rare for a single clean fish to be got by the 1st of June. I fished the Inver on the 20th of June, 1899, and one salmon and one grilse was then the total take, although the river had been previously well tried; a take of thirty-nine fish now goes nearer to the total for the whole season than to that of any one month. I suppose rivers are opened on the 11th of February so that the coast nets near by may commence work; nevertheless the opening of rivers on the 11th of February, in which there is never a clean fish until well-nigh four months later, does seem an absurdity! The Dionard, the Kirkaig, Fleet, Kinloch, and Laxford are other examples in the county of Sutherland.* As times are at present, salmon and grilse enter the river together and come up with the first flood at the end of June or beginning of July, which, with August, is the best time. A grilse rod of fifteen or sixteen feet will cover all the water, while fine tackle and small flies are necessary, and a one and a half Limerick hook would be a *very* large fly, only to be used in big water; Jock Scot, the Blue and Black Doctors, Childers, and Green Highlander, all kill, while Lord Brownlow tells me that when the water is very low, he occasionally gets a fish with a sort of small red spinner with a plain turkey wing. In 1857, when I first fished this river, sport was very good, for from three to six fish a day was quite a common matter. Since those days the fish would appear to have changed their tastes, for we never took more than two sorts of flies with us. One dressed as follows was the favourite:—

Tag: Silver twist yellow floss silk.

Tail: Gold pheasant topping and blue chatterer.

Body: Dark blue floss silk, claret hackle and gold tinsel

* The 1862 Act requires that "The Annual Close Time for every District shall continue for one hundred and sixty-eight days." This has been interpreted legally to mean no more and no less than one hundred and sixty-eight days.

with wide spirals, jay at shoulder wing, mallard and two strands of blue and yellow macaw. Our other stand-by had exactly the same dressing, only the body was yellow floss instead of blue.

In those days, with these two flies we did great execution amongst the Inver fish, and we noticed one very curious thing. One of us, in sending for a fresh stock of flies, forwarded as a pattern an old one, which he did not notice had lost the short chatterer's feather from the side of the topping in the tail, and the fresh ones were of course sent without this adornment, which we thought could make no difference; but, strange to relate, we could kill no fish with this batch of flies! It may have been fancy, but we put it down to the absence of the little blue feather in the tail.

When the water is large, stockings or even trousers may be wanted on the upper beat, but these are easily dispensed with in summer time by those who are in good health, for in the hot weather of July and August it is a pleasure to wade, and if not going deeper than six inches above the knee it seldom does any harm.

The fish push up to Loch Assynt as the water permits, and there they are caught both with fly and minnow. The river has no obstructions or pollutions, while the spawning grounds are large and good; in fact, everything is so much in favour of the fish that the remarkable scarcity can only be attributed to the bag-nets on the coast, which have quite ruined the angling. This set of nets has for many years been rented by Mr. Speedie, of Perth. They consist of seven stations, commencing at Oldshoremore to the north of Kinlochbervie, and coming south to Clachtoll, not very far from Inver mouth.

Each station works a good many bag-nets. I could not find out exactly how many, but not less than five each. In 1890 their take was 1,677 salmon, averaging twelve pounds each; 8,031 grilse of nearly six pounds each, and 531 sea

THE MOUNTAIN WEST OF THE INVER.

with wide spirals, yet as double [illegible] and two strands of blue and yellow [illegible]. The silver tinsel by had exactly the same [illegible] only the body was yellow floss instead of blue.

In these days, with large [illegible] and great execution amongst the [illegible] one [illegible] curious thing. One of us [illegible] a [illegible] had lost the [illegible] in the tail and the [illegible] without this adornment, which [illegible] but, strange to relate, [illegible] It may have been [illegible] to the absence of the little blue feather in the tail.

When the water is large, stockings or even trousers may be wanted on the upper beat, but these are easily dispensed with in summer time by those who are in good health, for in the hot weather of July and August it is a pleasure to wade, and if not going deeper than six inches above the knee it seldom does any harm.

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THE MINISTER'S POOL OF THE INVER.

trout, all of which would have come to the Inchard, Laxford, Inver, or Kirkaig; in the same year the united take to rod and line of these four rivers was about two hundred fish!!

Of late years the average take of salmon and grilse is a little over a hundred fish, about equally divided between the tenants of the two shootings and the two hotels already mentioned, but verily I believe that the Duke of Sutherland could easily make the angling of this river yield him £1,000 a year without losing his netting rental, or, at any rate, but a very small part of it!*

On the Lower Beat, commencing from the sea, there are seventeen casts and some bits as follows: The Bridge Pool, looks very good, but is not of much account; the Carpenters Pool, a good cast, and here, in 1857, the author killed his first fish; the Rocky Pool; Little Rock Pool; Mill Pool, a fine big pot; Hog's Back Pool; Ladder Pool, so called from an iron ladder fixed at the tail, by which the perpendicular cliff can be ascended and a fish followed into Hog's Back—a fine bit of sport, requiring an active man to carry it through, and even then the odds are in favour of the fish; Grave Pool, so called from some large flat stones on the bank resembling gravestones. At the tail of this there is another iron ladder for the same purpose as the one described above; Pollan Pool—this is Lord Brownlow's favourite, and very good; Pollachree Pool; Scramble Pool, a big, fine pool; Corner Pool, not an easy one to reach dry-shod; Red Pool—from this pool, in 1897, Lord Brownlow's butler and gardener, getting leave for a cast, had the luck to take the two biggest fish of the season, thirty-one and twenty-six pounds; Island Pool, long, good, and pretty fishing; Dyke Pool; Whirlpool, one of the best; the Long Pool, also good.

Above this the Upper Beat begins with the Deer Pool.

* Since this was written an arrangement has been made with the Clachtoll nets for a longer weekly close time.

In this stretch the river frequently opens out into small lakelets; the water is shallower than on the lower one, and the best time is from the middle of August to the end of September, the Minister's Pool, the Narrows, and the Black Pool being the best casts. One of the features of the Assynt district is the great extent and number of trouting lochs which can be fished by anglers staying at the hotels of Culag, Inchnadamph, and Altnacealgach; they all lie on the last thirty miles of the high road from Lairg to Loch Inver, and for those who are fond of loch fishing each offers plenty of attraction. From Altnacealgach as many as 22,000 trout have been caught in a season, averaging three to the pound, while the other two hotels are not far behind this score. In some of the lochs there are ferox also to be got. The charge for ghillies is three-and-sixpence a day and one-and-ninepence for their lunch, which is rather too high for the food. However, the season is short, and it is a case of making hay while the sun shines.

I was much amused by the ghillie of a trout fisher who could not settle whether he would fish salt or fresh water. While his master went off to think matters over, Donald, with both hands thrust deep in his pockets, did his best to hold up the wall of the hotel. When his employer at last returned to say he would try the sea, Donald stolidly jerked himself upright and replied, "Well, sir, then I will just go west and get a bit piece." The kitchen was "west," and "the bit piece" half a loaf, with about a pound of roast beef and two glasses of whiskey.

CHAPTER XVI

THE KINLOCH

DRAINS seventy-three square miles of a very mountainous but grand country. Rising on the western slopes of rugged Ben Loyal, it flows out of Loch Derry, and has a short, tumbling run of three miles of pots and streams into the Kyle of Tongue. It rises and falls so rapidly that only those living on the banks can fish it with advantage. It is strictly private, the respective tenants of Kinloch Forest and Loch Loyal shootings having each a side of the water, which forms the march between the two places. It is a very late river, up which fish seldom come before the end of June or beginning of July; nevertheless, it opens to rod and net on the 11th of February; closes for nets on the 26th of August, while the rod can work on till the 31st of October. It can easily be covered with a light rod, and all the standard flies kill, but they must be small, and dressed on irons ranging from No. 2 to No. 6 Limerick hooks. No waders required. There are not many sea trout, or brown ones either. A friend of Mr. Lawson's, the late tenant of Kinloch, who now rents Loch Loyal shootings, had a day of five fish a few years back, quite a brilliant exception, for this is one of the most disappointing little streams in the North. From the end of July it swarms with fish, which (average, nine pounds) rarely take any lure, although every sort has been tried.

Mr. A. Balfour is the present tenant of Kinloch Forest Lodge—very prettily placed on the heather high up over the river. In addition to this fishing there is also the right of a

boat on Loch Hope, some eight miles across the hill by a pony-track. Salmon now ascend to Loch Derry with ease, though up till about fifteen years ago they could not do so, when the late Duke of Sutherland put a dam at the tail of the pool below the fall, and so raised the water to such a height as would let the fish up.

I stayed at Tongue Hotel to explore this river, and in the smoking-room I made the acquaintance of Mr. Speedie, the renter of all the Sutherland bag-nets of the west coast of the county. Naturally I tried to get him to talk salmon, and opened up the conversation by an allusion to the very bad season of 1898. Mr. Speedie did not seem in the least depressed by it, for he said he remembered seasons nearly, if not quite, as bad, which had in due course been followed by very good ones, and he confidently predicted a return of prosperity. Mr. Speedie likewise holds the opinion that in some rivers there are too many fish for the extent of the spawning ground, and that where such is the case they destroy each other's beds; also that in other rivers there may be too many kelts, and in that case they eat nearly all the par.

I hope Mr. Speedie is right in being sanguine of a return of good times. Certainly there is the recorded fact in his favour that in the three years of 1850, 1851, and 1852 but an average of twelve thousand eight hundred and fifty-nine boxes of Scotch salmon were sent to Billingsgate, whereas in 1862, 1863, and 1864 this average was rather more than doubled!

One of the features of Tongue is the sea trout fishing in the Kyle by spinning a sand eel, where some very good takes have been occasionally made.

On the 1st of June, 1891, the Bishop of Sodor and Man had thirteen sea trout, weighing fifty-seven pounds, or over four pounds each. On the 15th of June, 1899, but one sea trout of three pounds, and thirty pounds of loch trout, were brought into the hotel, these latter being some of the pinkest and best-flavoured I ever ate. This, however, was a period of drought, which probably had something to do with the smallness of the take.

CHAPTER XVII

THE KIRKAIG

WHICH drains eighty square miles of country, flows from a series of lochs in Assynt, the chief of which are Boarlan, Urigill, Cama, Veyatie and Fewin, this latter being the nearest one to the sea. The river also forms the boundary between the counties of Ross and Sutherland, and about two and a half miles from the sea the whole water is precipitated down a perpendicular fall of some sixty feet in height—a grand sight when there is a flood. As, of course, salmon cannot ascend, it is between this and the sea that all sport is had, including the deep, black, uncanny-looking pool at the foot of the fall.

There are twenty-three named casts in this short stretch of water, and if fish were only more plentiful, grand would be the sport offered by this river, with its rapid streams, boiling pots, and rugged banks; for I know of no other river in Scotland which requires such hard walking, so much scrambling and careful placing of feet, as this one. In many places the angler will have to descend and then again ascend very steep rocky banks for fully a hundred yards or more, and repeat the same process to fish the next pool, and as none of them are long or require much time to cast, the amount of hard work for the legs is out of all proportion to that called for from the arms.

Like its neighbour, the Inver, this also is a very late river, and of but little use before July, that month with August being the best time. More fish are taken, perhaps in September, but by then they are turning black. This river is also absurdly

opened on the 11th of February, closing for rods on the 31st of October, and for nets on the 26th of August, both dates being quite fifteen days too late.

A grilse rod and medium-sized standard flies will do all the work, and no waders are wanted; the fly is usually the only lure used, but at times a few fish have been got with a prawn.

There are no nets at the mouth, and no bag-nets nearer than Clachtoll to the north of Inver mouth, and yet these nets and those working at Stoer Point further north appear to sweep the sea of the fish that should come to the Inver and Kirkaig.

The Kirkaig salmon average eleven pounds, and grilse fully five, while there are hardly any sea trout. The usual take of recent years to the rod is from forty to fifty fish; in 1898 Mr. Langmore had the river for July and August, when he was thought very fortunate to get fifty-three salmon and grilse in that period; but this gentleman, in addition to being a good fisherman, was also a very hard worker.

At present the angling is let to Mr. Mackenzie, the landlord of the Culag Hotel at Loch Inver. He divides it into two beats, on which there is ample room, and charges twelve-and-sixpence a day to each rod. The angling is all done from the right bank, consequently it is a left-handed river; there is hardly any spawning ground, and it is wonderful how fish spawn in it at all. From the sea up the Fall the pools run as follows: The Rock Pool, not of much good; the Elders Pool, good and large; the Old Bridge Pool, a very pretty and likely one; Heather Pool; Island Stream Pool, a big water catch; Hazel Pool, very good in high water; Little Kirkaig Pool; Turn Pool; Wether Pool; Red Pool, and two streams below.

Here the Lower Beat ends, and without any time passed in "playing or landing" it will take three hours' hard work to fish it up.

The Upper Beat is rather more "scrambly" than the lower one. The Shady Pool can only be reached by a very steep

THE ARROW POOL OF THE KIRKAIG.

opened on the 15th at Portnaguy, closing for rods on the 31st of October, but for nets on the 26th of August, both dates being in the third week of the line.

A gaffer, and a good second standard fly will do all the work, and, if fish are scared, the fly is usually the only lure used, but in recent years fish have been got with a prawn.

There are no nets at the mouth, and no bag-nets nearer than Cadboll in the north of Inver mouth, and yet these are not those working at Stoer Point further north appear to escape the sea of the fish that should come to the Inver and Kirkaig.

The Kirkaig salmon average eleven pounds, and grilse fully five, while there are hardly any sea trout. The usual take of recent years to the rod is from forty to fifty fish; in 1898 Mr. Longmore had the river for July and August, when he was thought very fortunate to get fifty-three salmon and grilse in that period; but this gentleman, in addition to being a good fisherman, was also a very hard worker.

At present the angling is let to Mr. Mackenzie, the landlord of the Culag Hotel at Loch Inver. He divides it into two beats, on which there is ample room, and charges twelve-and-sixpence a day to each rod. The angling is all done from the right bank, consequently it is a left handed river; there is hardly any spawning ground, and it is wonderful how fish spawn in it at all. From the sea up the Fall the pools run as follows: The Rock Pool, not of much good; the Elders Pool, good and large; the Old Bridge Pool, a very pretty and likely one; Heather Pool; Island Stream Pool, a big water catch; Hazel Pool, very good in high water; Little Kirkaig Pool; Turn Pool; Wether Pool; Red Pool, and two streams below.

Here the Lower Beat ends, and without any time passed in "playing or landing" it will take three hours' hard work to fish it up.

The Upper Beat is rather more "scramble" than the lower one. The Shady Pool can only be reached by a very steep

THE ARROW POOL OF THE KIRKAIG.

descent and a hard climb up again—is often passed on this account; the Arrow Pool, very good; the Bow Pool; the Otter Pool, a fine one, which my ghillie would call the Orrter Pool; the Red Lamp Stream Pool; Little Fall Pool, a very big pot; Spring Pool, good; Lower Nettle Pool; Upper Nettle Pool; Lower Smash Pool; Upper Smash Pool; the Fall Pool.

All these last three pools are separated from each other by wall-like cliffs descending sheer into deep water. The angler has to scramble up and down to fish each one, and as the names tell, it is quite impossible to follow a fish out of the two lower. It is just possible to follow out of the Fall Pool by coming up the bank, but the proceeding is very unlikely to end with flying colours.

The approach to this last-named pool was, until lately, a really nasty one, requiring quite a gymnastic performance. After a few times one got used to it, but the first attempt always puzzled a stranger—so much so that a friend of mine slipped, fell, and bounded from the hard rock with a thud into the horrible, black, boiling pool below. Luckily he was not stunned or crippled, and being an extra good swimmer, with a very steady nerve, he came out none the worse; but had he not possessed these qualifications, his chance would indeed have been a poor one. The approach has now been made easier, and is nothing to be dreaded.

When there are fish in the river they may be seen continually jumping at the fall: a hopeless task, but a matter that the fish seem very slow to learn. The Kirkaig fish used to be considerably larger than those of the Inver, for when I was fishing the latter river in 1857 the gentleman who had the Kirkaig also lived at Loch Inver Hotel. I think it was Sir Wroth Lethbridge, but, whoever it was, I recollect he was daily bringing in three or four fish, amongst which would be at least one of fifteen to twenty pounds; indeed, they have been caught of much heavier weight, even up to thirty-eight pounds, though not of recent years.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE LAXFORD

DRAINS sixty-seven square miles of very rocky, steep country, and has its source in several burns running into the head of Loch More, up which salmon used to find their way in the spawning season, but now, owing to the scarcity, they are seldom seen. Loch More is some three miles long, and about a half wide. At the west end it joins on to Little Loch More just opposite the Forest Lodge, rented for many years past by the late Duke of Westminster. On issuing from this small loch, the river flows for about a mile through reedy, marshy ground, until it reaches Loch Stack, alongside of which, for about two miles and a half, is the high road to Scourie and Riconich. At Stack Lodge the river leaves the loch and has a run of about three miles into the sea at Loch Laxford. It is an angler's ideal river, with rapids and deep pools following each other in quick succession. For those who like hard work it is perhaps fished somewhat too easily, for no waders are wanted, while a good broad and well-kept path runs along each bank, the left one being the favourite.

The Duke of Westminster had the whole river, which is carefully preserved, and opens at the odd date of the 11th of February. I say "odd" because it puzzles me to understand why a river should be declared "open" at that date when it is a well-known fact that before the 1st of June a clean-run fish is hardly ever seen in it, and even the bag-nets of this coast do not begin work until the end of March. Is this date thus

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fixed so early in the year still continued in memory of the old times, when angling for kelts, kelt-spearing, etc., was a common form of sport and amusement?

The right of fishing by net and coble at the mouth was held by the Duke of Westminster, but not exercised, and though a watcher is kept there to prevent poaching, yet the crews of lawless steam trawlers often rob the loch of quantities of salmon and sea trout waiting for a rainfall to take them up the river. Like many another one, this renowned water has fallen on evil times, for the angling has steadily and greatly deteriorated during the last twenty years. The late Duke usually gave the fishing for July and August to Lord Leicester, and when he first fished Laxford it was not an uncommon matter for him to have eight or ten fish a day to his rod, while one of his sons coming behind him would have another four or five; in these days the take for the season used to be from two to three hundred fish, and now it averages from fifty to sixty!! *

Adam Macaulay, the stalker at Stack Lodge, has known the river for twenty-five years, and is acquainted with every stone, and tells me that there are not nearly one quarter of the fish on the spawning beds now that there used to be twenty years ago, when he was accustomed to see fully a hundred pairs in about the three hundred yards of beds below Stack Bridge, while from ten to twelve couple were the most he could count last year!

"The capricious Laxford," as the late Duke used to call it, although fed by two large lochs, yet rises and falls very quickly, for the surrounding hills are steep and the rain pours off them at once. Its salmon average eleven pounds, the grilse five and a half, and the sea trout one pound. It is but of little use fishing it before the 20th of June, unless there has been a spate just before that date. I fished it on

* Lochmore Lodge, with the stalking and angling, remains in the hands of the present Duke.

the 17th of that month with Adam Macaulay as guide, and a pleasanter one could not be wished for; the river was then low, and beyond rising one fish twice I saw no sign of salmon, and Lord Zetland had had a try a few days previously with no better success.

July and August are the best months, and then salmon, grilse, and sea trout all come together. Fine tackle, a sixteen-foot rod, and small flies of the standard patterns will do all that is necessary. It is seldom that any other lure is used, although one season, when Lord Cairns had Stack Lodge, he caught a few with the prawn; but by the middle of September the fish are turning colour, and certainly rod fishing should end on the 15th of October, if not on the 30th of September.

There are twenty-one good pools from Stack Lodge to the sea, and commencing with that immediately below the loch, they come as follows: Top Pool, a fine pool and one of the best; fished from a jetty. The Hon. E. Coke had five here one day. Stream Pool; Mrs. Coke's Pool, fishes best in big water; the Corner Pool; the Boat Pool; here Lord Leicester had a very big fish on for four hours, which broke off without ever being seen. Lord Anson's or the Island Pool, a deep still one; the Duke's Pool, the best on the river; the head of it is a strong rush through a rocky gorge which will fish even in very low water; below, it opens out into a splendid pool of some length. As many as fourteen fish in the day have been taken here, but not of late years. The Duchess Pool, also a sure cast, and fished from a jetty of half-circle shape; the Rock Pool; Lord Belgrave's Pool, a high water catch; Fern Pool, a long one; John Macleod's Pool, a rocky run; Mr. Leache's Pool—out of this Lord Henry Grosvenor took eighty sea trout one day; Claughton's Pool; Brae Pool, a good long one—here Lady Mabel Coke rose ten fish, which mostly came short, but four were landed. Lord Dudley's Pool; he had the fishing before the present

tenants; below this are the old cruives. The Shepherd's Pool; the Bridge Pool.

When Lord Cairns had Stack Lodge, he, on one occasion, arrived fishless at Laxford Bridge, after having flogged the whole water down. On looking over, he saw five fish lying near the surface, but not very close to each other, and happening to have a rifle with him, which he had given his ghillie to carry on the chance of a shot, he fired at the largest fish, which sank mortally wounded, and drifting to the tail of the pool was pulled ashore. On again looking over the bridge, he noticed three others of these fish all kicking and gasping in a state of semi-consciousness, evidently produced by the concussion caused by the discharge, or by the bullet striking the water, though it seemed impossible that from such a height such a small bullet, fired with a small charge of powder, could have produced this result, yet there were the fish; and as, just then, the Duke of Westminster's yacht appeared steaming up Laxford Loch, Lord Cairns, thinking His Grace would like a fish for dinner, gaffed one of them and gave it him as he passed. The other two fish shortly recovered and swam about quite right again.

CHAPTER XIX

THE NAVER

DRAINS one hundred and eighty-six square miles, and is the largest of the Sutherland rivers. It rises in several lochs draining into the Mudale and Vagastie streams, which flow into Loch Naver, out of which the river runs. Of these two tributaries the Mudale is the largest, and rising in the northern slopes of Ben Hee, it drains Loch Meadie and then has a run of some dozen miles before it loses itself in Loch Naver at the foot of Ben Clibreck. This loch is about six miles long, with an average width of half a mile. It is a very early one, with the best angling at the upper end, where as many as six spring fish have been taken in a day, while a few years ago one rod had fifty-two in seven weeks, mostly by trolling a phantom, though they have been known to rise to a fly. There are three boats on this loch: the hotel at Altnaharra has one, Mr. Baxendale has another with the Ben Clibreck shootings, and the third goes with Syre Lodge.

Late in the season fish ascend the Mudale to spawn and are occasionally caught, but as they are then getting black, it is but seldom the rod is plied on this tributary.

As the Naver leaves the loch it is joined by the Mallart or Mallard, another considerable tributary flowing out of Loch Choire or Corr, and from this point it has a run of some ten miles through a barren-looking country until it reaches Syre, when the banks become birch-clad, and after a further run of twelve miles it falls into the sea at the sandy bay of Torrisdale, about a mile below Bettyhill.

The rod season begins on the 11th of January and lasts till the 30th of September; the nets commence on the 26th of February, and come off on the 26th of August, quite ten days too late.

The best months for salmon, which average thirteen pounds, are February and the two following ones, the very pick of it being from middle of March to middle of April. The grilse, average seven pounds, begin to run as early as May and continue for the following three months.

The use of a landing net is not compulsory. In early spring an eighteen-foot rod and wading trousers will be wanted, which, as the season advances, can be exchanged for a smaller rod and wading stockings. No other lure than the fly is allowed, and in addition to all the standard patterns, the Yellow and Grey Eagle of the Dee is also a killer. In the early spring lures may be dressed on irons ranging from 7/0 Limerick down to 1½, and then from the end of April they fall to the very smallest sizes.

This twenty-two miles of river is divided into six beats. Two rods go with the Syre shootings, which were for the past eleven years in the hands of the late Mr. G. D. Stibbard, and are now held by Mr. Dankwerts; other two go with the Skelpick shootings, and the remaining two belong to Dalvina, a lodge nearly opposite Syre, until the 1st of August, when one of them goes to the tenant of Ben Clibreck shootings, at present occupied by Mr. Baxendale, the other remaining with Dalvina, but up till the 1st of August Mr. A. Brocklehurst has both rods.

At these three lodges anglers put up for the spring; the shooting tenants themselves usually being the anglers. Sometimes it happens that there is a sub-let, and anyone wishing to get a chance on the Naver cannot do better than communicate with Mr. Box at Tongue, who generally can say if there is likely to be a rod or two in the market. Whoever fishes No. 1, the top beat, on Monday, finishes on No. 6, the lowest,

on Saturday, which order lasts all through the season. The rod on No. 1 Beat will then commence on No. 2 Beat in the next season, and so removes down a beat every year; a very slow process, and it would be merrier for all if Sunday were counted as a fishing day, by which arrangement the man who had started on No. 1 on Monday and fished No. 6 on Saturday would, in imagination, fish No. 1 again on Sunday, and go to No. 2 on Monday.

Skelpick Lodge, in addition to its rights over the different beats, has also a separate and exclusive one of its own, extending downwards for some two miles of both banks, and commencing from under the Lodge. The tenant, Mr. Erle Drax, who has fished the Naver off and on for the past thirty years, tells me the six rod holders pay £600 a year for the angling, but to secure sport they are obliged to rent the netting, so as to give a chance for the fish to enter the river, and consequently the net and coble at the mouth is not fished till the 1st of May, and even then it is not worked on Wednesdays.

In June, 1899, I stayed at Bettyhill Hotel to visit the Naver, and on the evening of my arrival I joined the "look-out" party on the high cliff overhanging Naver mouth, and saw them net a few grilse. It so happened that evening I was attacked by a fit of sleeplessness, so a little after midnight, in search of a soporific, I stole downstairs to the coffee-room, where I had noticed a few books; snatching them up, I retreated to my couch and commenced to examine them. The first had the not very cheerful title of *Early Graves*, and was quickly discarded; the second selection was called *Elijah and Ahab;* while the inscription on the back of the third was *A Candle Lighted by the Lord*, and the three combined titles had the desired effect without a perusal of the contents.

Each beat of the Naver has from nine to thirteen good pools.

Beat 1 is from "Dalmallard" to "Dalharrold"; Beat 2 from

THE TOWER OFF A VERY ROCKY SHORE.

on Saturday, which is the rule all through the season. The rod on No. 1 Beat has then commenced on No. 2 Beat in the next season, and so everyone gives a beat every year; a very slow process, and it would be peculiar for all if Sunday were counted as a fishing day, by which arrangement the man who had started on No. 1 on Monday and fished No. 6 on Saturday would, if fishing on, fish No. 7 again on Sunday, and go on No. 8 on Monday.

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THE LOOK OUT AT NAVER MOUTH.

Syre Pool to Upper Craggie; Beat 3 from the Boat Pool to Dawson's Pool; Beat 4 from Ravigill to Achalmie; Beat 5 from Upper Carnasby to Dunvedin; Beat 6 from Dunvedin to Naver Bridge.

At the head of No. 1, near where the river leaves the loch, there are the falls of the Mallart, which have been laddered in recent years, so that the fish can pass up at any time. Before this was carried out they could only ascend at a certain height of water, which eventually came and took the fish up the falls to the spawning grounds. It is the opinion of some of the Naver anglers that this ladder has to a great extent spoilt this No. 1 Beat, for before the days of the ladder, when fish became numerous in the Fall Pool, as soon as they found they could not pass up they fell back into the top pools of the beat, where they gave good sport. Some are also of opinion that a dam above the Creich Pool, a little distance below the loch, would much improve the top beats, by forcing the fish that could not pass over it with a medium water to fall back and stock the pools below until a flood came sufficiently heavy to take them up. A dam of this sort was once made a little below the exit from the loch, and though personally I do not think that fish once arrived there would ever drop back to stock the pools much below, as expected, the question, as far as that particular dam was concerned, never had any chance of being settled, as the first flood washed it away.

With regard to this, I have frequently seen numbers of fish arrive in a fall pool to wait for water to take them up, and there they stayed, massed together, and, without dropping back to pools below, there they stood out the drought, waiting patiently till the rainfall came.

It is certainly a very curious thing that the Naver take each season does not grow better and better instead of falling off; there must be a reason for this, which certainly is not over-netting at the mouth. To the west there are no bag-nets, and to the east none for some distance. Probably

poaching coupled with the disregard of the weekly close time by the bag-nets are the causes. I believe it would pay the Naver, Thurso, Borgie, and Halladale to employ a couple of English keepers each season, who would have no scruples about visiting the coast nets on the Sabbath. I am certain they would at first find plenty of bag-nets setting the law and the weekly close time at defiance; but let the rods prosecute and prosecute, and listen to no excuses, and in a short time I believe they would be repaid handsomely for an outlay which, if shared between the rods of these rivers, could not come to a very large sum per head. Two clever men, provided with good glasses, could also do a good deal towards watching the movements of the steam trawlers.

The heaviest fish killed on the Naver weighed thirty-five and a half pounds, and was taken on the 6th of April, 1891, on Beat No. 6, with a "Warrior," by the late Mr. Percy H. Wormald.

In February, 1875, Mr. Alexander Machardy, fishing the Syre rod on Beat 6, had eight good fish in one day. Later, two anglers in the spring had eleven fish in one day. Mr. Pilkington, of Sandside, fishing the Dalvina rods, had a day of ten grilse and one salmon on No. 1, and General Lane had eleven others one day off No. 3. Also in this season of 1899 General Home had five fish on several days.

All these records are, however, not to be compared with the captures made forty years ago by the late Mr. Ackroyd, who afterwards moved to Badanloch on the Helm, for he frequently had twenty spring fish in a day to his own rod. The following are the takes of four recent years:—

1895	754 fish.
1896	306 ,,
1897	364 ,,
1898	401 ,,

while the season of 1899 was, I believe, the poorest of all.

John Mackay, the water bailiff, who has been on the river for over twenty years, thinks that the severe frost of 1895 did a lot of harm to the ova, and doubtlessly severe cold, by causing a river to run very low, leaves many spawning beds to be frost-bitten and destroyed, though that of itself would not, I think, be sufficient to cause the falling off. In the course of a chat with Mackay, he told me that when he first came to Naver there was a gentleman of the name of Marshall who labelled all the kelts he caught, in which operation he was often helped by a farmer living on the bank; later on this farmer moved to a holding at Rosehall on the Casseley, and there he saw an angler land a fish which had one of Mr. Marshall's marks on it, fully one hundred and fifty miles from Naver mouth; and happening later on to revisit Naver, he told the incident to Mackay.

CHAPTER XX

THE OYKEL

WHICH is Gaelic for "The high-rising river," draining one hundred and thirty-seven square miles, is formed by the junction of several small streams rising at the foot of Ben More in Assynt; these expand into Loch Ailsh, and the angling commences from the outflow of the loch, and extends for some eighteen miles through the property of Sir Charles Ross, of Balnagowan, until the river falls into the head of the Kyle of Sutherland at Inveroykel. Some dozen miles below Loch Ailsh are the falls of Oykel, up which fish are not supposed to go until the middle of May. The angling immediately above these falls belongs to the Loubcroy Shootings—"The Horse Shoe bend"—while those of Ben More have the fishing rights higher up. After a rainfall sport used to be good on these two stretches of the river, but of late years it has fallen off.

Between the falls and the sea there is some seven miles of good fishing, which is divided into two beats and fished alternately by Langwell Lodge and the rod—or two rods—staying at the comfortable inn at Oykel Bridge. In this interchange of beats the Sabbath counts as a day, as by so doing the order of fishing is duly changed each week, for unless this was done, whoever had Beat No. 1 on Monday would continue to have it all through the season.

Wading trousers are wanted. The fish average ten pounds, though they have been taken up to twenty-two. Grilse average from three to five pounds; sea trout a pound; and the

brown ones are lanky, black fellows four or five to the pound, not worth troubling about.

The fly is the only lure permitted; keepers and ghillies are only allowed to fish in the presence of their masters. A landing net must be used till the 1st of May, but these are served out to the hotel ghillies, so that there is no need for an angler to specially provide himself with one, although the local nets are perhaps hardly made large enough, or stout enough in the ring, or sufficiently long and stiff in the pole.

Of the beats below the falls, the upper one is reckoned the best in summer, especially so if it is a wet July—that abomination of the grouse shooter! The lower one offers the best sport in March and April. Though the river opens for net and rod on the 11th of February, closes for nets on 26th of August, and for the rod on 31st of October, quite a fortnight too late, yet there is but little chance of a clean fish before the middle of March, and from that time to the middle of April is the cream of the spring fishing, although as long as there is rain there is always sport to be had.

The top beat includes a couple of good pools on the Einig, a large tributary coming out of the forests of Rhidorrach and Corriemulzie, and joining the main river three-quarters of a mile below Oykel Bridge. The total length of this top beat is nearly three miles; commencing immediately under the falls there are three pots, short casts in rough water, which in July and August often hold numbers of grilse and sea trout. Shortly below is "George's Pool," so called from a stone on the bank ridiculously resembling the profile of George the Fourth; it is best fished from the left bank, and is rarely without desirable occupants.

This is followed by another pot just above the bridge, while below are four or five likely "bitties," all of them good in summer. Next is "The Washerwoman's Pool," a very good one of some extent, and fishing more or less in any

height of water. Below this is the Einig, or Junction Pool, which, as it has a gravel mouth, alters every season according to the severity of the winter floods, and therefore in some years it fishes much better than in others—a troublesome and tricky pool to fish, as there is both slack water and back water at the sides; nevertheless, it is always worth careful casting.

From here the angler on the south bank can turn up to the Fall Pool of the Einig, fishable only in low water, and then come down to the Einig Pool, which is good in medium water; and when in order neither of these beautiful catches should be passed. The drawback of fishing them is the uncertainty as to whether they have not been previously cast over, for the Loubcroy shooting tenant has a right on the west bank, and when there is a good chance, the keeper there is an early bird, so that it is as well to send on the ghillie, and let him find out from the dwellers in a cottage close to these two pools if it has been fished prior to the advent of the Oykel rod.

Returning now to the main stream, about three-quarters of a mile below the Junction Pool comes Big Scorabie, a perfect one to look at, but out of which it is rare to get a fish. The angler on the right bank is advised when making this trip to Big Scorabie not to attempt walking it in wading trousers, for he will have to pass up the "Bad Step," and though the ascent is not a long one, and nothing like so terrible as described by the late Mr. Black in his novel of *Prince Fortunatus*, it is sharp and steep while it lasts, and those not used to climbing are generally reduced to hands and knees the first time they try it, and once on all fours the small sharp stones quickly cut through the knees of the waders.

The extreme tail of Big Scorabie is sometimes good, and in April, 1896, I hooked and landed three fish from it in as many casts—the only ones taken out of it for many a day.

Next comes Little Scorabie—never without fish, and best worked from the left bank, where the Spey cast comes in handy. At the tail of this the upper beat comes to an end,

and the only pools on this section requiring wading trousers are the Junction and the two Scorabies.

Altogether there are seven good pools on this section, and some eight or ten odd corners, and as both banks are included in the beat, there is fair room for two rods in it who are friends, and not jealous of each other.

The lower beat commences at the top of the Long Pool, which in medium water is good at the head, while in high water the fish lie in the tail. It fishes from either bank, one side being as good as the other, but waders are required. Then comes the Round Pool, a small pot just above a moderate fall, which also has to be waded. Following this is the Rock Pool, fished from the bank on both sides, and good in all water, and perhaps the best on the river. Following this is the Narrows, a long stretch of easy wading from the right bank, and every yard of it good. From this pool in March, 1896, Mrs. Hunt took six fish one day. At the tail of this the Stone Pool commences, which must be waded from the right bank, but can be fished off the grass from the left one; also a very good pool. A little below comes Langwell Pool, close to the Lodge, and my special favourite, for it is a most fascinating one to fish; it is deep wading on the right bank, but is fished from the left off a high, steep cliff, from which the angler can enjoy the fun of seeing a fish "come." At the end of this pool is the wire suspension bridge connecting Langwell Lodge with the outside world, and the high road to Lairg and Loch Inver. Any angler who has this lower beat to himself need not bother with going further down the river, for in March and April the bulk of the fish lie between the top of the Rock Pool and the end of Langwell Pool. Thus, having fished one side of this water, it is best to cross and fish up the other one, and then, if there is sport, and some of the pools be tried with a couple of flies, it will take nine hours' hard flogging to get over it.

Some half-mile below Langwell Bridge comes the Whirl-

pool, which fishes best by deep wading from the right bank, but does not yield many fish. This is followed by the Brae Pool, running under high and nearly precipitous rocks. On the right bank there is only just room to get along, and the Spey cast is necessary to fish it properly. In high water the tail of this is a nearly sure cast; but in low water, though the top of the pool looks splendid, and fish can be seen splashing, it is not often that it gives one. Below this, on the left bank only, there is a long reach of casting from a grass meadow, which at odd times, in high water, yields a fish. This is followed by "The Cemetery," the tail of which in high water is a fairly sure catch, only to be reached from the right bank by very deep wading. Between this and "The Blue Pool" there is about a mile of useless water, and even when "The Blue" is reached it is not of much account.

Then comes "The Turn Pool" (also of no reputation), followed by Inveroykel Pool, a good one in big water, and out of which many more fish would be taken were it not for the long tramp between it and "The Cemetery," for this pool is a tidal one, and it may happen that the angler reaches it when the tide is too high or too low, and so have had his journey for nothing. The pool fishes best from the right bank, and no waders are required.

On the banks of this pool is the prettily placed shooting lodge of the same name, one of Mr. W. E. Gilmour's properties, and usually let each season. From this lodge these lower pools could be more easily and oftener fished, in which case they would doubtlessly show a better yield than at present, for they are but seldom fished by the anglers from above, and it seems a pity they should not go with Inveroykel Lodge.

Grilse begin to run in June, though the chief rush of these lively little fellows is in July. In 1895 the two rods staying at Oykel Bridge Inn got thirty-seven grilse and eighty sea trout in that month. A sixteen-foot rod is ample at any time, and the largest size of fly ever wanted is a No. 3/0 Limerick hook;

from that to the very smallest may be used. All the standard patterns kill. Childers and Black Doctor are favourites for morning work; but Butcher, Jock Scot, Dunkeld, or Benchill are all good. With the two last-named flies in April, 1896, I got twenty-seven fish in as many days. Anyone wishing to know the terms, etc., of the Hotel angling may be sure of an immediate reply by sending a line to the Oykel Bridge Inn.

From the foregoing remarks it will be seen that in the upper beat there is a long tramp from "Junction" to "Scorabie," and on the lower one a still longer journey from "The Cemetery" to "The Blue"; for this reason it is best to start out for the day's work in shoes or boots, except there be deep snow, and let the ghillie carry the waders, and then shift them off and on as occasion requires; indeed, on all rivers where trousers are necessary, and the pools some distance apart, it is far more healthy and comfortable to do the walking in shoes, and have the waders carried.

The Oykel, though dependent on rainy weather for sport, is a very pretty river to fish; many of its "bitties" requiring fine and accurate casting. One matter puzzled me very much. During April, 1896, I was every day on the river, and it was impossible not to notice that on each Monday and Tuesday there were always a certain number of clean-run fish to be seen between "The Rock" and "The Langwell"; by Wednesday or by Thursday these fish had all disappeared. Where did they go to? The natives assured me that they do not pass over the falls till the end of April. Had they gathered into the pools below the falls they must have been seen, for the banks are high, and with sunshine and clear water every stone in George's Pool can be inspected. For the same reason these fish also did not pass up the Einig; there remains only the alternative that they fell back to the salt water of the Kyle, or did ascend the Oykel Falls, the latter being more likely than the former.

The following extract from a letter sent me by Major

Burnell Milnes may perhaps support my theory that the fish ascend the falls earlier than is supposed, but for some reason yet to be ascertained they will not then look at a fly. The Major writes: "I have the fishing above the Falls for some six miles of both banks. The sport is about as bad as can be. Both my keepers are very good fishermen and have tried their hardest, and last year (1898) I think one fish was their take. A few years ago a friend went up for a fortnight in June, and though the water was in order, he was blank every day. For some undiscovered reason the fish, when they have got up the Falls, will not take until they get within a mile or two of Loch Ailsh, and there they begin to rise again. Everyone who comes to me in August or September tries hard at first and thinks he is going to catch a lot; the water looks nice, you see fish, and there are any amount of fine pools. But the result is the same, either a blank day or a few shy touches."

CHAPTER XXI

THE SHIN

DRAINS two hundred and twenty square miles, and is one of the most beautiful and most sporting of rivers, for, though smaller than roaring Awe, it much resembles it in character, as it also empties a big loch and has but a short run to the sea. Loch Shin, from which the river flows at Lairg, is some sixteen miles in length, with an average width of three-quarters of a mile, and consequently the river draining this large reservoir nearly always has some pools in good ply. From the point where it flows out of the loch to where it falls into the Kyle of Sutherland, three miles above Bonar Bridge, the Shin has a run of six miles, in which there is a total fall of two hundred and seventy feet, quite sufficient to make a rapid running stream. About four miles below the exit from the loch is a heavy fall known as "The Big Falls," which in spring is the top pool of the lower beat; and though it has been opened up, and fish can very easily ascend, it is rare for them to make the attempt before the middle of May. Prior to that date all serious salmon angling is carried on from Mackay's Hotel at Inveran, renowned for its comfort and pretty site on the bank of the Cruive or Home Pool.

From the Big Falls to the Kyle the distance by river is some two miles. Most of the angling is from the right bank, with the pools nearly continuous, a short walk or scramble round some projecting cliff speedily bringing the angler to a fresh cast.

The birch-clad scenery of the steep rocky banks is wildly beautiful, so much so that an American staying at Inveran Hotel recorded in the visitors' book, "Talk of the scenery of Killiecrankie Pass, why, the Shin licks it into fits!" The river opens, like the other streams of the Kyle, on the 11th of February, and can be fished by rod till the 31st of October, the nets ceasing on the 26th of August. March and April are the best salmon months, and June and July for grilse. Clean fish are always in the water on the opening day, and run from seven to thirty pounds. The angling is let by the month, and has been held by the same set of gentlemen for many years, and, except as a sub-let, a rod is very rarely to be had. From the 11th of February to the end of March the charge is £82 10*s.*, and all other months are £100, August and September reckoning as one month.

The fly is the only lure used, the landing net being compulsory till the 1st of May, and the hotel ghillies, John Ross and Hugh Sutherland, are both supplied with these, and are also both good fly dressers. The favourite lures are Jock Scot, Black Doctor—here called the Cromarty—Childers, Blue and Silver Doctors, and John Ross's invention, "the Brown Dog" —something like a Childers, and dressed as follows:—

Silver twist yellow floss.

Tail: Topping.

Body: Yellow mohair, picked out; silver tinsel. Half-way up body a claret hackle ending at shoulder.

Wing very spare of black and white turkey-bustard, two strands of yellow dyed swan, and sprig of gold pheasant ruff, with topping over all.

Blue chatterer cheeks.

Many of the other standard flies can also be used, the size varying from an iron of three inches down to the smallest double-hooked trout flies, according to the period of the year and weight of water.

As showing how tightly these beats are held on to, it may

The fresh-clad scenery of the steep rocky banks is wildly beautiful, so much so that an American staying at Inveran House recorded in the visitors' book, "Talk of the scenery of Kilbrackmin Pass, why, the Niagara wasn't nuthin!" The river opens like the other rivers of the Kyle, on the 11th of February, and can be fished by rod till the 31st of October, the nets ceasing on the 20th of August. March and April are the best salmon months, and June and July for grilse. Clean fish are always in the water at the opening day, and run from seven to thirty pounds. The angling is let by the month, and has been held by the same set of gentlemen for many years, and, except as a sub-let, a rod is very rarely to be had. From the 11th of February to the end of March the charge is £82 10s., and all other months are £100. August and September reckoning as one month.

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SHIN BRIDGE AND INVERAN HOTEL.

be mentioned that Dr. H. H. Almond has had February and March for seventeen years, Mr. Lake has held April for nearly as long, while the late Sir James Ferguson Davie had May for over thirty years, with Mr. Lewis D. Hall holding the August and September period for a considerable time.

From the loch to the kyle there are altogether thirty-five named casts and a good few "bitties," while the lower section has the advantage of being fishable without waders. There is just about three hours' smart work from the Big Falls to the sea, so that any fairly hard worker can easily fish the water twice, or even three times, in a day. Quite early in the year the upper pools are not of much account, a state of affairs which is reversed after June, when the lower ones are not productive.

To the friendly kindness of Dr. Almond I am indebted for my first cast and my first fish on the Shin, on the 27th of March, 1896. I fished from the Big Falls to the top of the Cruive Pool without a touch, and then had the luck to land a lively fish of eleven pounds. After this Mr. Almond joined me and fished down the pool again with a three-inch Silver Doctor, which quickly took the fancy of a bright eighteen-pounder, soon to be laid on the bank alongside of mine.

While fishing this pool I was greatly interested in the movements of a hoodie crow and its extraordinary tameness. On pointing this out to John Ross, he told me at this season of the year that particular hoodie did nothing else in life to gain a living beyond watching and waiting on a lot of Mackay's ducks, accustomed to paddle about in a reedy bit of river close to the farmyard, and where they were in the habit of nesting. Then, no sooner was an egg laid than Mr. Hoodie proceeded to discover and devour it. The audacity and trust of this crow had so pleased Mackay that orders had been given to leave it unmolested.

During the months of February and March, 1896, Mr. Almond, without fishing very hard, took sixty-eight salmon, of

which a score were twenty pounds or over, and the heaviest thirty—the lot averaging sixteen pounds; and between this, his best season, and a take of but eight in his worst season, there is a very wide margin. In April Mr. Lake has varied from twelve to fifty-nine fish in 1896. Sir James Ferguson Davie in May used to vary from thirty to fifty, averaging eleven pounds. June gives from twenty to thirty; July from ten to twenty salmon, and from twenty-five to forty grilse. In August, 1894, Mr. Lewis D. Hall had nine salmon and twenty-two grilse, and September gave him six salmon and sixteen grilse; but from "the twelfth" the rod was often discarded for the gun. The following are the takes for the seasons of 1892 to 1899:—

1892	220 salmon	weighed	2,900	lbs.
"	118 grilse	"	645	"
1893	101 salmon	"	1,150	"
"	22 grilse	"	115	"
1894	111 salmon	"	1,302½	"
"	134 grilse	"	741	"
1895	168 salmon	"	2,155	"
"	110 grilse	"	764½	"
1896	203 salmon	"	3,101	"
"	56 grilse	"	339	"
1897	152 salmon	"	1,999	"
"	88 grilse	"	454	"
1898	159 salmon	"	2,026	"
"	86 grilse	"	441	"
1899	108 salmon	"	1,380	"
"	5 grilse	"	23	"

Up to end of June.

For many years Lord Braybrooke had the month of July, but in the season of 1889, which was very dry, he did not get a single fish in the whole month, the river being at the lowest point ever remembered; and as the Julys that followed were not much better, his lordship gave up his rod in 1893.

Other successful anglers on the Shin at various times have been Sir Percival Heywood, Sir Archdale Palmer, Colonel Haggard, F. Bibby, H. Gair, I. Usher, and General Gunter.

The late Sir John Ferguson Davie told me his acquaintance with the river dated back to 1869, at which period the Little Falls were not blasted, and General Marriott, who then had the angling from the opening to the 1st of May, informed Sir James that he had never caught a fish above the Little Fall before the middle of April.

After these falls were blasted fish were got in "Fir Dam," above the Little Falls, at the end of March, and at the present time they are caught even at an earlier date. The heaviest fish Sir James actually landed in his thirty seasons was thirty-two pounds. He also had a lively reminiscence of a long fight with a "whopper" on the 24th of May, 1896, hooked in Fir Dam at 12.30 and eventually lost at 7 P.M.—a contest of six and a half hours. This fish only showed himself twice after being "on" for some hours, and on each occasion he rolled over "like a muckle big pig," as old Simon Frazer the ghillie described it.

The best day in May ever had by Sir James was in 1886, when he took eight fish, weighing ninety-eight pounds. One day in May, 1883, he had no less than nineteen rises in the day, only seven hooking and all being landed.

Now, from the foregoing statistics of 1892 to 1895, it will be seen the Shin has yielded nine hundred and eighty-four salmon and grilse, or an average of two hundred and forty-six fish each season, and reckoning that as six months, for the first and last few days of the season are not of much use, then the average take per month has been forty-one fish, which does not read very grand sport for the hundred pounds paid. Yet withal these forty-one fish are well-nigh a certainty, and experienced anglers are quite aware they might go elsewhere, pay more, and fare worse, so they stick to the Shin and take the luck of the seasons as they come.

Such a state of affairs, however, may well lead anglers to ask each other why they should not more often combine together,

and by renting nets or paying for an extra twelve or twenty-four hours' weekly close time, double their sport at a small increased cost? And this I am certain is feasible on many rivers. In 1898 the Duke of Sutherland sold to Mr. Andrew Carnegie, of Skibo Castle, the angling rights on the Shin from Gruid's Mill to the Kyle, a purchase which created a great flutter of excitement amongst the old rod holders, all of them expecting to get notice to quit; a pleasant surprise, however, awaited them, and in reply to an inquiry of mine Mr. Carnegie instructed his secretary to write as follows: "Mr. Carnegie desires me to say that he is not rash enough to make any changes in the Shin. Some of the renters have had it for thirty years, and if they were deprived of fishing the Shin, Mr. Carnegie is so enthusiastic a brother of the angle himself as to know that serious consequences might ensue, and he does not wish to have the collapse of any of these fishermen on his guilty conscience."

A very pleasant way of putting matters, for it is not everyone who is a keen angler that would have been so self-denying; Mr. Carnegie, however, is not quite out of touch with his purchase, and has made arrangements by which he can take a cast when he is at Skibo.

In 1897 all the Kyle nets, with the exception of those of Skibo, were rented by my old friend, Captain G. W. Hunt, with a view to the immediate improvement of angling, and the ultimate bettering of the netting; ill-health unluckily compelled him to give up in the year following, when fortunately another gentleman, Dr. H. H. Almond, stepped into his shoes with similar good intentions. He writes me: "For the last two years the Bonar nets have been taken off at 6 P.M. on Friday instead of Saturday, or to be even more accurate, they were this year (1898) taken off on Thursdays at 6 P.M. for March and April and fished full time in May. The two upper nets have also been put on later than they used to be, and have been fished very little in August, and

as a matter of fact in this season of 1898 they were only on for seven days in August."

The two years taken together, although not showing any profit, have made no loss, and therefore, had these nets been rented and worked for profit, the whole of the fish caught in the periods of fishing that were foregone would have been absolutely clear profit, for the men employed were paid the full week's wages, although they worked short time. This season of 1899 these nets are going to be worked full time for four months. One of the Bonar stations is to be left unfished, and it is not intended to fish at all in August; also all grilse from the highest up net are to be returned to the water, and from all the nets the last haul of each tide.

Here, O brother anglers, is something like a tacksman for you! Sad indeed to relate, he has not in all cases met with that support from you that he so richly deserves.

Starting from "The Big Falls," let us now fish the river down.

No. 1. This is a very deep pool, always holding fish from April on, and yields best in medium and low water; when the river is high it is not worth wasting time over. Some five years ago this fall was the scene of a somewhat serio-comic performance. A man from Lairg vanished, and was supposed to have been drowned in the Upper Shin, and on its being suggested that his body would be discovered under the rocky lip of the Falls, the County Council sent for a diver from Wick, who duly found the body and brought it to bank, at the same time reporting to the spectators that there was another one still under the Falls. On being urged to go down again and recover this also the diver peremptorily declined, and, sternly shaking his head, replied, "No, no; I'm just paid for the one," and getting out of his dress, off he went.

To return, however, to our fishing.

No. 2. "Poll Culag," a deep, rocky pool, fishing best in medium water.

No. 3. "Cromartie." Has a neck, centre, and tail. Of course in low water it is a case of neck or nothing; medium water for the centre and high for the tail.

No. 4. "Angus or Round Pool." Is best in lowish water.

No. 5. "The Rocky Cast," the stream above Firm Dam, and only fishes well in very low water.

No. 6. "Firm Dam" is a splendid pool to look at, and excellent when at a medium height.

No. 7. "Clarag" is good all the season through in fairly high water.

No. 8. "The Piper's Pool." Here the river can be crossed by a footbridge of wire.

No. 9. "The Little Falls," divided by a rock in mid-stream into upper and lower; the latter the best, and requiring a medium water. The upper is best in low water.

No. 10. "The Black Stone" is good all through the season in high water, and fishes well when the river is in such a high flood that hardly another cast is fishable, but it is a case of hold on or break if a hooked fish tries to leave the pool.

No. 11. "Little Clarag." A sure catch in spring in heavy water.

No. 12. "Macpherson's Pool." A made pool, named after a water bailiff, and good in spring with heavy water, when it fishes best from the left bank.

No. 13. "The Turn Pool." A good spring cast.

No. 14. "The Long Pool." Best in low water.

No. 15. "The Parson's Pool." Not nearly as good as it looks. I could not ascertain whether this reputation had any connection with its name.

No. 16. "Smith's Pool" fishes from either bank in high or medium water.

No. 17. "The Artificial Pool," so called from being formed by the construction of jetties. Is good in early spring, and is just above the bridge at Inveran.

No. 18. "The Cruive, or Home Pool," perhaps the best

spring cast on the water. It is certainly the longest, and, nearing the tail, quite a lengthy line can be used, and the Spey cast comes handy, as the bank behind begins to rise abruptly. From this pool Mr. Almond, in March, 1893, took a fish of thirty-five pounds before breakfast, the largest ever caught in the Shin.

No. 19. "Hector's Land" seldom yields a fish, but is such a pretty pool that it is always a pleasure to fish it, though to the imagination only.

No. 20. "The Garden Pool" is close to the Kyle, and in early spring one of the best for about ten casts towards the tail; but after the end of April it is of no use whatever. Here in March, 1896, Captain G. W. Hunt hooked a fish with a Silver Grey dresed on a two-inch iron, and no sooner did it feel the steel than, with one long, swift, wild rush, it tried to regain salt water. In hot pursuit went the Captain, but being brought to a sudden and painful standstill by getting hung up by the seat of his breeches in a barbed wire fence, the fish broke the line ere his would-be captor could get free. Ten days later John Ross was fishing this pool for Mr. Almond, when he landed a fine fellow of twenty-two pounds with Captain Hunt's Silver Grey still in his mouth.

According to the list of close times published by the Fishery Board, the rod can be plied till the 31st of October; but an understanding has been come to that fishing shall end on this lower beat on the 30th of September. On the upper beat also a somewhat similar arrangement has been made by which the rods stop on the 15th of October, but the whole river should, without doubt, be closed on the 15th of September. On the 1st of September, 1896, I saw five of the blackest, lankiest, and most ugly fish I ever set eyes on taken from a pool a short distance below Lairg. Therefore if they are thus bad at that date, what must they be six weeks later!

We will now take a stroll up the river above the Big Falls, and first comes—

No. 1. "The Boat Pool," which occasionally gives a fish in low water.

No. 2. "The Rock Pool." Also a low water one.

No. 3. "The Long Pool." The best high water catch on this beat.

No. 4. "Grief Pool." Fishes best in low water, and has a sharp ledge of rocks near the tail, amongst which the angler often gets cut, and hence the name.

No. 5. "The Ladies' Pool." Not a great favourite, but gives an occasional fish in high water.

No. 6. "High Rock Pool." A heavy water catch.

No. 7. "Lady Herbert's." A first-rate catch, and fishes best from the left bank.

No. 8. "The Meadow Pool." A good catch in a June flood, but difficult to follow a fish if it makes down stream.

No. 9. "The Grudie Pool." Pretty good in lowish water. This is the top pool of Mr. Carnegie's water. From here up to the loch belongs to the Duke of Sutherland, and this stretch of two miles is let for June and July to the Lairg Hotel, and from the middle of June on, if there be rain, good sport may be got. Everything depends on the weather, and with that right, the angler should average a fish a day for July. It is very easily fished, and a sixteen-foot rod will cover it all. In August and September Mr. Vernon Watney has the angling for four days of the week with the Tressady shootings, while the remaining two go with the Lairg shootings, held by Colonel Stanley Arnold, who also has the whole beat in October. In early September Mr. Watney has had as many as six fish, averaging sixteen pounds, in the day, and he also strongly advocates the closing of the river at the end of September. The following are the pools on this beat:—

No. 10. "The Stream" contains three good casts, and as many as five fish in a day have been had here.

No. 11. "Hector's Pool," a long dull one.

No. 12. "The Lady's Pool" is fairly good.

No. 13. "The Mill Pool," not of much use.

No. 14. "Lord Ellesmere's Pool."

No. 15. "The Tree Pool," good in medium water.

No. 16. "The Bridge Pool," the highest cast on the river, and close to Loch Shin; used to be very good in high water, but owing to some trees on the bank having been cut down it is now nearly useless. A few yards above this is Loch Shin, in which a few salmon are got each year.

CHAPTER XXII

THE THURSO

THIS famous Caithness river, the largest and longest in the county, drains one hundred and sixty-two square miles from its sources in the Knockfin Hills on the Sutherland border to its outfall into the sea at Thurso Bay. For the first twenty miles of its course, until it flows into Loch More, it is little better than a big burn; but on leaving the loch for the final run of twenty-four miles to the sea, it has all the importance of a river. As Loch More is but three hundred and eighteen feet above sea-level, there is only an average fall of some thirteen feet per mile, and consequently the bulk of the pools are slow-running ones, called "linns," of almost dead water, only to be fished to the greatest advantage when a steady up-stream breeze ripples their surfaces.

There are stone bridges at Thurso, Halkirk, and Westerdale, with various wire bridges for anglers, but the river can be crossed in almost any part with stockings, or even in the knee-boots which are mostly affected by the Thurso anglers. Before proceeding further it will be as well to relate a little of the earlier history of the river, which from time immemorial has been famed for the abundance of its salmon. There still exists the certificate vouching for the truth of the largest haul of salmon ever made. It is dated Thurso, August 23, 1792, and is as follows:—

"Mr. George Paterson, now Baillie of Thurso; George Swanson, shoemaker there; and Donald Finlayson, senior

BRAAL CASTLE.

fisher there, do hereby certify and declare that upon the 23rd day of July, old style, we think in the year 1743 or 1744, there were caught at one haul in the Cruive Pool upon the water above the town of Thurso, two thousand five hundred and sixty salmon. These fish were caught by a large net beginning the sweep at the Cruive, and coming down the stream to a stone at the lower end of the pool. The net was carried down the water by about eighteen or twenty men with long poles in their hands keeping down the ground ropes, and the fish were afterwards taken ashore by dozens in a smaller net. Each man got a fish and some whiskey for his trouble. We further personally certify and declare that we were personally present when these fish were caught.—Signed: George Paterson, George Swanson, Duncan D. F. Finlayson."

In more recent years, prior to 1852, these fishings were leased by Messrs. Hogarth, of Aberdeen, who netted Loch More and had the river cross-lined by ghillies, they being paid fourpence a pound for clean fish and keeping all kelts for themselves.

Then in 1852 a genius appeared on the scene in the person of the late John Dunbar, to whom Sir Tollemache Sinclair gave a long lease of the river, and later on also built him Braal Castle for the use of his angling customers. Dunbar was a favourite with all classes, a keen sportsman, well up in natural history, and a straightforward, honourable man; he could likewise enjoy a joke, and even make one at his own expense, as the following will show. Having one day to go to Thurso to appear against a tax which he thought he should not have been charged with, the anglers at Braal teased him by offering to make small bets that he would not be successful; accepting them all, he returned in the evening in high spirits, and met his tormentors, exclaiming, "Well, gentlemen, I won my case full easy, for they forgot to pit me on my o-ath!"

In those early days of the Thurso the log-book was not kept with quite the same neatness as it is now, but even at that

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In those early days of the Thurso the log-book was not kept with quite the same neatness as it is now, but even at that

date one reads of the doings of such well-known anglers as the late Lord Lovat, Sir Francis Sykes, Sir John Blois, Sir W. Gordon Cumming, and Messrs. A. F. Thistlethwayte, Corrance, Daubuz, Wilson, James Lamont, Francis Francis, Edmonds, Davidson, and Colonel Priaulx.

Up till 1855 the Thurso flies were dark, sombre-looking lures, but in this year Mr. Meiklam introduced the bright patterns with great success, he getting with the new lure fifty-six fish in one week, in which were days of nineteen and thirteen, and from that time on bright flies became generally used.

About this date also appeared on the Thurso Messrs. Frank Enys, Carew, S. Blair, Banbury, Sir Richard Musgrave, of Edenhall, Colonel Rocke, Major Traherne, and Captain Warriner. From 1862 the log-book is very well kept, and there appear the names of Sir Sanford Graham, Admiral Erskine, Captain H. P. Holford, and Messrs. Coates, Cunliffe, S. Barker, Adams, and the Rev. — Meyrick.

The Sunday get-up of the clerical gentleman afforded many a laugh to the Braal Castle anglers: a bright-coloured flannel shirt, a threadbare black swallow-tail dress coat, with a low-cut black vest, old and very short light-coloured trousers, red cotton socks, and slippers of green velvet! None the less, the parson was a "nailer" with his rod, and had likewise the wisdom to send Captain Holford to represent him at the kirk. One experience, however, was enough for the Captain, who returned to relate how the Precentor, no matter whether sitting down or leading the hymns, kept up an incessant, noisy, and profuse expectoration, only varied at intervals by taking huge pinches of snuff and then blowing his nose with his fingers.

In 1872, Colonel John Hargreaves and his son, Messrs. J. S. Virtue, Frank Hardcastle, John Wormald, Sir Henry Boynton, James Wason, and Lord Kilcoursie are in evidence, followed, in 1877, by Herbert Greg, R. D. Walker, A. C. Maitland, and G. Ashley Dodd.

It would perhaps be monotonous to give the take of fish for every year, extraordinary as some of them are, and to save space the records are given in periods of five years.

From 1853 to 1857:—2,473 fish of 10¼ lbs. average; in 1855 the take was 954.*

From 1858 to 1862:—3,149 fish, not quite 10 lbs. average; in 1860 the take was 1,041.

From 1863 to 1867:—3,570 fish, average 9¾ lbs.; in 1863 the take was 1,510.

From 1868 to 1872:—3,084 fish, average 10½ lbs.; and in 1869 it is duly recorded that Mr. S. Barker, being snowed up at Golspie on the 4th of March, walked from there to Braal—fully a fifty-mile tramp—his enthusiasm being rewarded later on by the capture of a fine fellow of thirty pounds; the first ever got on the Thurso.

From 1873 to 1877:—3,720 fish, average 11¾ lbs.; in 1874 the take was 1,240.

From 1878 to 1882:—2,392 fish, average 11¾ lbs.; in 1878 the take was 758.

From 1883 to 1887:—2,450 fish, average 11 lbs.; in 1884 the take was 820.

From 1888 to 1892:—2,433 fish, average 11¼ lbs.; in 1892 the take was 822.

From 1893 to 1897:—1,793 fish, average 11½ lbs.; in 1896 the take was 759; in 1897 the take was 195, which is the smallest ever known.

In 1898 the take was 389 fish, and in 1899 206. This gives a total of 26,379 fish to the rod in forty-seven years, or 561 fish per annum.

During this period there were many great days of sport, the best of which are well worthy of record. On the 9th of May, 1863, Mr. Daubuz had seventeen fish, Mr. Banbury

* Until 1857 there were fewer rods, but after that there were seven, and from 1870 there were eight. In 1858 the Loch and Beats 7 and 8 were let separately, and the fish got on them are not included in the log-book.

seventeen, Mr. Enys fifteen, and Mr. Edwards six, or fifty-five fish for the day; the two rods on the river being blank. In the same year, on the 11th, the loch rods had forty-five fish, and from the 24th to the 27th of May Mr. Enys had four successive double-figure days, totalling forty-one fish!

In 1864, on the 21st of April, Mr. Enys hooked two fish, one on each fly, on Loch More, and landed them both, the weights being eleven and a half and five and a half pounds.

In 1874, on April 13th, 14th, and 15th, Mr. F. Hardcastle had eleven, seventeen, and thirteen, or forty-one for the three days, the total of the six boats on the 14th being sixty-four fish, and as Lord Kilcoursie had ten on Loch Beg, and the rod on the Linn had two, seventy-eight were taken that day, and the total take for these three wonderful days was a hundred and ninety-two!

On the 27th of April six boats had sixty-four on the loch, and of these twenty-four went to the rod of Mr. Bayley, while the river rods had only three.

In 1876, the 8th of March, Mr. Enys had three twenty-pounders, and oddly enough a precisely similar day on the 18th of February, 1893: the only two occasions on which such a record has been made.

In 1892, April 25th, Mr. Ashley Dodd had a fish of thirty-five pounds, and was then just beaten by Mr. Greg a few days later, who had one of thirty-six pounds from the Linn on the 5th of May.

In 1894 a most extraordinary state of affairs prevailed, for from the 17th of April till the 14th of May not a fish was got on the loch.

In 1899, Mr. J. R. Walker, on the 20th of April, had a fish of thirty-five and a half pounds from Loch Beg. This season —the worst but one since 1852—gave a good many big fish, and from a like experience of other small yielding years, it would seem as if the fewer there were the bigger they ran. In 1899, out of the total of two hundred and six, twenty were

over twenty pounds. Since 1869 only fifteen fish of thirty pounds or over are recorded; but the yearly weight is nevertheless increasing. In 1863, the one thousand five hundred and ten fish averaged but a fraction over nine pounds, and amongst the lot there were only eight of twenty pounds or over. The present average may be taken at eleven and a half pounds, while many more fish of twenty and over are got each season.

The best takes of single days on the different river beats are as follows, No. 1 being nearest the sea :—

No. 1. Seven fish. Mr. F. Enys.
,, 2. Eight fish. Mr. Banbury.
,, 3. Seven fish. Colonel Rocke.
,, 3. Seven fish. Sir R. Musgrave.
,, 4. Eight fish. Mr. F. Enys.
,, 5. Nine fish. Sir Sanford Graham.
,, 6. Ten fish. Mr. Carew.
,, 7. Eight fish. Mr. R. D. Walker.
,, 8. Sixteen fish. Mr. Adams.
,, 9. Ten fish. Lord Kilcoursie. Loch Beg.
,, 10. Twenty-one fish. Mr. Bailey.
,, 10. Nineteen fish. Mr. Wormald.
,, 10. Nineteen fish. Mr. Meiklam.

In 1888 Mr. Dunbar died, and Sir Tollemache Sinclair took the river into his own hands; but in 1891 he let it again to a syndicate of six gentlemen, who have held it since. They are Messrs. F. Enys, Herbert Greg, R. D. Walker, J. G. Walker, G. Ashley Dodd, and A. W. Merry. They open Braal Castle on February 1st, and after fishing the river from there until nearly the end of March, they move up to Strathmore Lodge to fish the upper beats and Loch More. It is, however, one thing to open Braal on the 1st of February, and another matter to get there, for the Caithness snowstorms are very severe, as may be seen by the annexed illustration of the London express, drawn by three engines, charging a

snow block at Altnabraec Station on the 8th of March, 1895. Up to the present, the syndicate has not enjoyed any extraordinarily good season, their second one of 1892 being the best, when they had eight hundred and twenty-two fish. The last three years have been unusually poor, and average but two hundred and sixty-three fish a season. I cannot help thinking that this falling off may perhaps be partly accounted for by steam trawler poaching, and partly by the fact that the bag-nets to east and west of Thurso mouth habitually set the law at defiance, and except in places where the nets are easily approached and seen, the bulk of them observe no weekly close time from the day they begin to fish to the day when they are compelled to stop work. Putting aside the possibility of any other damaging contingencies, this of itself must tend to diminish very seriously the supply of fish to the Thurso.

I base my statement on facts previously proved, on my own observations and inquiries, and on the testimony of two friends of mine, who are both of them old anglers and know well what a bag-net is. Both were carrying telescopes, and during the course of a Sunday walk in June from Wick round the coast to Dunnet Head, they could easily see that as soon as they were clear of Wick every bag-net was fishing, though the sea was then, as it had been the previous night, as smooth as a mill-pond.

The Thurso Syndicate are also well aware of this lawlessness, and in 1894 they sent two trustworthy strangers to pay a surprise visit to some of the bag-nets. At Dunnet Station three were found fishing on Sunday; at Castle Hill Station there were other three. Round Thurso and Scrabster the leads were duly removed, but further off, at Mr. Smith's Station, two nets were fishing. In all they visited fifteen nets, eight of which were disregarding the weekly close time. Six of these were leased by Messrs. Hogarth, of Aberdeen, who, on being communicated with, said it was strictly against orders,

CHARGING A SNOWDRIFT.

snow block at Aberdeen Station on the 8th of March, 1895. Up to the present the syndicate has not enjoyed any extraordinarily good season, their recent one of 1892 being the best, when they killed eight hundred and twenty-two fish. The last three years they have averaged, poor, and average but two hundred and fifty-seven fish a season. I cannot help thinking that this falling off may perhaps be partly accounted for by more careful protection, and partly by the fact that the bag-nets at Dunnet and Wick of Thurso mouth habitually set the law at defiance, and scarcely in places where the nets are easily approached and seen, the bulk of them observe no weekly close time from the day they begin to fish to the day when they are compelled to stop work. Putting aside the possibility of any other damaging contingencies, this of itself must tend to diminish very seriously the supply of fish to the Thurso.

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CHARGING A SNOWDRIFT.

and that men were liable to dismissal and forfeiture of wages; that it was a hard law to hold a master responsible for his servants' actions when the master's back was turned. This is, of course, rubbish, for the law has ever held to the contrary —a fact which Messrs. Hogarth must have been aware of. Needless also to say, that none of the men were dismissed or lost any of their wages; and I charge the bulk of the tacksmen with conniving at this law-breaking and poaching by paying their men scanty wages and offering them so much extra per head per fish caught, which is tantamount to directly bribing them to break the law.

I really think this incessant bag-net fishing must have something to do with the fall off of the Thurso take, and believe it would pay the syndicate to make five or six such surprise visits each season, and to call public attention to all cases of detection, and to press such to a conviction. Needless to say, the persons chosen for the business must be strangers, and the same two should not be employed twice; but on this and the other matters connected therewith the syndicate probably know more than I do. Setting aside the risk of a spring snow block, the Thurso is easily reached nowadays, for one can leave Euston at 8.50 in the evening and dine at Braal or Strathmore the next day. In 1869 the limited mail from Euston did not reach Golspie till 6.30 the next evening, or some seven hours later than it does now, and this meant sleeping another night on the road.

With the exception of three miles on the right bank below Westerdale and about five on the left bank, the whole of the Thurso belongs to Sir J. G. Tollemache Sinclair, and though on these odd miles that are not his the respective owners have the right of using a net coble, it has been decided by law that this method of fishing does not also carry with it the right of angling with a rod.

The river is an early one, opening on the 11th of January and closing on the 14th of September. The nets immediately

round the mouth are rented by the syndicate, and are not worked. From the 1st of April to the middle of May is the cream of the angling; but at times continuous high winds so stir up the loch as to make it muddy, and when once in this state it remains dirty for a considerable time. Grilse begin to run about the end of May, and of these more can be taken with a trout fly than with anything larger. To fish the river with comfort three rods are required—one of eighteen feet for the spring, one of sixteen feet for the river from the end of April, and one of fourteen feet for the loch. The *short*, heavy double taper line invented by Mr. Greg is an excellent one, for it will send out a big fly in the teeth of a high wind, or send a small one lightly and truly to the end of an extra long cast of fine salmon gut. Both in the slack pools of the river and in the loch, fish are apt to take just as the fly is being lifted, and there are more rods broken here than on any other dozen rivers in Scotland. There is a story of a novice guest who, as one of the old hands ruthlessly put it, "could not throw a fly as far as a good Yankee could spit." He arrived with half a dozen rods, and three days later he wired his tackle-maker, "Send me a dozen salmon rods by return!" There is no compulsion to carry a net. The gaff is used, it being understood that kelts are to be hand-lined, lifted from the water, and returned uninjured. As to the Thurso flies, there are no such things as standard patterns; ranging from irons four and a half inches long to the very smallest, any bright-coloured combination of mohair, tinsel, hackles, and feathers will kill. The more yellow the better, as the water often is peat-stained, and then that colour shows more conspicuously than any other. Here is the dressing of two old flies that lie before me as I write, and each has seen service. The first is an excellently well-tied one of Mr. Enys —a nameless creature, which might well be christened the Enys, for that gentleman holds the honour of being father of the river.

Iron three inches long.

Tail: Red ibis, or dyed swan; one third of body gold twist, two toucan feathers, and a red but at the top of this; the remainder of body equal lengths of yellow and blue mohair with broad silver tinsel; a claret hackle with blue over it, and a gallina over that; all three at shoulder.

Wing: Long strips of brown turkey feather with red and blue macaw, covered with three jungle-cock feathers on either side, arranged so as to form a happy sequence.

The other fly was tied by Colonel Rock, and is simply a sort of "canary"; on an iron the same size as above.

Tail: Red ibis.

Body: Bright yellow mohair; silver tinsel and mohair picked out between the turns in an ascending scale; a yellow parrot hackle at shoulder, and the wing strips of bright yellow dyed swan, with two strands of red macaw over all.

This fly will kill in highly-coloured water in other rivers than the Thurso, for I put it on one day when fishing the lower Careysville water of the Blackwater in Ireland, and quickly got five fish with it.

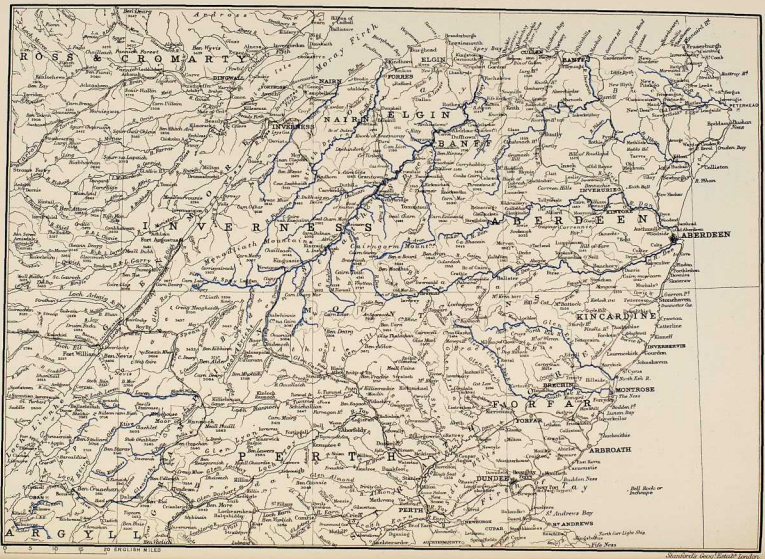
To the fly-tying amateur, therefore, the Thurso offers an endless field for inventions, but for February and March "big and bright" are the passwords to success. Any lure may be used, but the fly is the best, for those trying bait continuously have ever been the least successful. From the 1st of July, however, when the angling goes with the shootings of Strathmore and Braal Castle, no other lure than the fly is allowed.

At present the river is divided into eight beats, so that each rod has a daily beat on the loch as well as one on the river. Beats Nos. 1 and 2, nearest to the sea, are seldom fished after February. The weather cannot be too mild for the early fish, and is more often than not a great deal too severe for sport. Each beat holds plenty of fishing, and No. 7 is the most sporting of the lot. It begins some mile

and a half below Strathmore Lodge, and from its starting-point at "The Old Woman's Pool," "The Sauce Pool," "Maggie Stumpie," "Bridge Pool," "Long Pool," "Castle Pool," and "Devil's Pool," which is about half the beat, are all fine quick-running casts with very little, if any, dead water. The syndicate use fish-shaped wicker baskets for packing, procured from the Blind Institute at Hull, which are excellent for the purpose, and I venture to hope some of my readers may give them a trial, for they will do themselves and the Charity a good turn; they are cheaper than boxes, and are very quickly fastened up.

Loch More begins to be good about the end of March; it is a small, circular, shallow loch of some two miles in circumference, and about a quarter of an hour's drive from Strathmore Lodge. In taking what I trust may be only a paper leave of the Thurso—for I hope yet to see it once more—I must tender my best thanks to my friend, Frank Enys, for his kind help, and I am sure the rest of the syndicate will join with me in wishing him many tight lines for many years to come.

THE SALMON RIVERS OF SCOTLAND.



CHAPTER XXIII

THE AWE

DRAINS 271 square miles of country and empties Loch Awe, one of the largest of the Scotch lakes, into the salt water of Loch Etive at Bonawe, about a mile below Taynuilt. Like all rivers flowing from large lakes, it requires an extra long spell of dry weather to put it out of order, and a corresponding period of rain to flood it; therefore it is seldom so small or so big but what some of its pools will fish well. From the loch to the sea it has a run of three miles, in which at short intervals is a succession of splendid casts, offering the perfection of angling. From start to finish it is nearly all quick, strong-running water, in which there is hardly fifty yards that is not broken with patches of white spray and foam, formed by the stream as it rushes over and round rocks and boulders of all shapes and sizes. In this sort of water the most expert angler may perhaps be "broken" time after time, and many of his "twa-and-saxpenny flees" carried away. As a set-off against these drawbacks he will have the chance of hooking a whopper, and the fisherman has yet to be born who would shirk a fight with a monster for fear of losing his tackle.

Some twenty years ago I fished this river for seven days in July; during that time I hooked eleven big fish, the whole of them rudely giving me the cut direct. In spite of this defeat I yet thought I had had good sport, though freely mingled with very hard luck. In this series of eleven disasters I was not cut immediately the fish laid hold; several gave

twenty to thirty minutes of exciting play before dashing headlong down stream to make for the sea, and it was always in the broken white water at the tail of the pools that the parting took place; indeed on this river any fish that quits its pool and dashes down stream, at a pace that makes the reel shriek and the rod tremble, is pretty sure to cut the line, while on the catches which are not further than a mile from salt water, it is nearly certain that as soon as hooked a big fish will do his utmost to return to it.

I have always thought from the way they fought that these eleven lost fish were a succession of very heavy ones, which idea received some sort of confirmation when the late Mr. Baird, who then rented the nets at the mouth of the river, and is now succeeded by his son, sent me one of my own special pattern Blue Doctors that his men had cut out of the mouth of a thirty-three-pounder, netted a short time after and but a few hundred yards below where I had lost it.

The pools of the Awe want careful learning. All sorts of tricky casting are required to get the fly to hang on the lie of the fish long enough to give them a good view of it; and to do this effectually, twenty-five to thirty yards of line have often to be sent straight across stream, and then as the fly alights, the rod point has to be turned sharply directly up stream to make the lure swing and hang over the likely spot in a position to do business. For this sort of work the longer the rod the better. Colonel Murray, of Polmaise, uses a split cane of eighteen feet, made for him by Hardy Bros., and certainly the Awe should not be seriously approached with any rod of less than eighteen feet; the normal state of the water is very clear, and at least a yard and a half of single gut is necessary. The best flies are the Blue Doctor, Jock Scot, and Thunder and Lightning, which latter kills best when dressed with a light orange yellow hackle and the tinsel wound in wide spirals; the crimson or reddish hackle with the narrow turns of tinsel is not so good, although this is a dressing which

some of the tackle-makers use for the fly. The sizes range from 2/0 to the very smallest double hooks.

By a lucky chance I hit on an improvement in the dressing of the Blue Doctor, which has been attended with success wherever that fly is a killer. The alterations from the standard pattern consist in substituting a bustard hackle at the shoulder instead of the usual blue one, and dressing the wing *very* sparely with strands of gold pheasant tail and ruff, brown turkey, mallard, wood duck and red macaw, jungle-cock cheeks, and a topping over all—the last two adornments not being mentioned in the diploma of the standard Blue Medico.

A gaff may be carried all the season, although it is understood that kelts are to be "tailed" and returned unhurt; but these gentry have usually left the river long before serious rod-fishing commences. The fly is the only lure permitted on Lord Breadalbane's part of the river; on the Hotel water it is a case of do as you like. Prawns and minnows are, however, useless; the worm is deadly, but happily the Awe is so unsuited to its use, and there are so few who can fish it properly, that even on the Hotel water it is somewhat rare to see a bait-fisher.

Only a very few fish are got in April, although all those that are making for the Orchy must pass up the Awe. By the kindness of Colonel Murray and Colonel Thorpe, I fished the whole of the east bank during the first ten days of May, 1898, and, working very hard, I rose but six fish in that period—two did not touch, four hooked, three were landed, the fourth cutting me in the rocks on the far side of Pol Verie; an event which probably would not have taken place but for a most furiously sustained blast of wind accompanied by blinding snow, which was so strong as to put me on to my knees—an attitude of devotion hardly indicative of my real feelings!

During these ten days I could not, however, grumble at

my bad luck, for I had a hard-working friend with me, and the Taynuilt Hotel water swarmed with fishers, and their united take was one fish only.

In June sport becomes slightly better; but July (when the grilse are also running) and August are the two best months. Then in September the fish become dour and hard to tempt, while from the 10th of October onward they are really not fit to catch.

The Awe is another instance of many already mentioned of badly fixed dates both for the opening and the closing of the river. It opens on the 11th of February—in the name of common sense, why? for the nets are not worked before the middle of March, a clear proof that there are no fish coming into the river before then. The nets continue to fish till the 26th of August, and the rods till the 31st of October, and whoever fixed these almost universal dates was the worst foe, or the most cruel friend, that river owners and tacksmen ever had. If the nets ceased on the 15th of August, and the rods on the 15th of October, or even on the 30th of September, it would be far better for the ultimate interests of all concerned, for the amount of babies in the shape of grilse that are massacred in the eleven days between the 15th and 26th of August is enormous.

The Awe is one of the few rivers in which nets and cobles are ceaselessly plied at a distance of several hundred yards above the mouth, so that hardly a fish can escape them when the water is in good order! But baby slaughter is not exactly the best way to increase a population, and if the nets came off on the 15th of August and the rods on the 30th of September, the increased breeding stock thereby left would speedily tell on the future numbers of the splendid fish of this magnificent river. The proprietors and the tenants of the various shootings and hotels on Loch Awe are continually calling out for a lengthened weekly close time, and the same is strongly advised by the District Board; but nothing is done.

The "man at the mouth" pockets the money, the man at the source can "grin and bear it."

The hotels on Loch Awe should, however, have some limit placed on the number of boats they put on the water, for they have pretty well fished out the trout. When I first fished the loch from Ederline in 1857, it was an everyday occurrence for two rods to get from five to eight dozen fine trout of herring size, while now an angler will think himself lucky if he gets three or four dozen in the week.

The whole river can easily be fished without waders, for, although there are just one or two places where stockings would be of use, there is yet such a scope of water fishable dry-shod that it is hardly worth while troubling about missing a few short casts.

Grilse run from five to eight pounds, and salmon from ten upwards, and during July and August either a fish or a grilse per day should be averaged, which is just about what Colonel Murray's water has yielded of late years in the two months commencing from about the 20th of June. This is not so good as it used to be, but though the numbers have fallen off, there are always some big ones got each season.

With regard to these special prizes, it is curious how unevenly they are distributed; some men have the luck in a few seasons to kill one, two, or three fish of forty pounds or over—others go all their lives and never get a monster. In 1884 there was a keeper of Lord Breadalbane's who had fished this river for thirty years, and his heaviest fish was thirty-seven pounds; in 1885, he had one of forty-five pounds, followed by another of forty-six pounds a week or two later. The late Sir John Bennett Lawes took one of fifty-four and a half pounds out of Pol Verie. Colonel James Thorpe had one of fifty-two pounds out of the Inverawe Cruive, and several to his rod out of the Cruive Pool of thirty-six to thirty-nine pounds, but, tantalising to relate, never quite forty pounds.

The schoolmaster at Taynuilt had one of fifty-four pounds out of Cassan Dhu, the top pool of the hotel water, and fully a mile from the sea. I was out that day and met him at the Clay Pool on my way up stream; the fish was still going very strongly. "Foul hookit!" cried he as we passed, and little thinking he was fighting such a giant, and incited to fresh exertions by the sight of my straight rod and his bent one, I, unluckily, did not turn back to see the end of the fight, which eventually finished at Crubeg, the lowest pool on the water, and out of which it is impossible to follow a fish making for the sea.

This was a right good performance, of which anyone might fairly be proud; only a tall, active man could have carried it through, as in following from the Otter Pool into the Stepping Stones the water was up to the schoolmaster's chin, and at this part of the fight a man five inches shorter would probably have been beaten. Those of my readers who know the Taynuilt Hotel water will recognise I have not said one word too much about this remarkable feat. I also had the luck one day to get a splendid June fish of thirty-eight pounds out of the Long Pool, and as I was alone and had to gaff it for myself in deep water, I went home with my tail cocked!

At the Brander Pass, where the loch gradually narrows into the river, the scenery is wild, bleak, and rugged to a degree, and not until Archie McDonald's cottage (Colonel Murray's fisherman) is passed do the hills lower into pleasanter outlines to become by degrees beautifully wooded, though from the bridge downward the banks are in many places deep and precipitous, and afford some pretty scrambling.

From the top of the water down to the Three Ash Trees both banks are clear of timber; but nevertheless, on those days when the wind roars through the Pass, many a hook may be smashed on the bouldered banks.

The east side of the river, belonging chiefly to Lord Breadalbane and let to Colonel Murray, of Polmaise, is by

THE STONE POOL.

The schoolmaster on Tayside had a run of fifty-four pounds out of Cosies Pool, the top pool of the hotel water, and fully a mile from the top. I was on the day and met him at the Clay Pool on my way up stream, the fish was still going very strongly. "Fair to-day," said he as we passed, and little thinking he was talking with a giant, and incited to fresh exertions by the sight of my straight rod and his bent one, I splashed, the sun from back to see the end of the fight, which eventually resulted at Crubeg, the lowest pool on the water, and out of which it is impossible to follow a fish making for the sea.

This was a right good performance, of which anyone might truly be proud; only a tall, active man could have carried it through as we followed from the Otter Pool into the Stepping Stone, the water was up to the schoolmaster's chin, and at this part of the fight a man five inches shorter would probably have been beaten. Those of my readers who know the Taymuilt Hotel water will recognise I have not said one word too much about this remarkable feat. I also had the luck one day to get a splendid June fish of thirty-eight pounds out of the Long Pool, and as I was alone and had to gaff it for myself in deep water, I went home with my tail cocked!

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THE STONE POOL.

far the best part of the water. Here some of the pools have to be fished from planks carried out far into the river by the aid of iron stanchions sunk into large immovable boulders, the water at the bank running so deep as to make it impossible to wade out far enough to reach the lie of the fish. The first glance at these planks gives one the impression that this is an effeminate method of reaching the fish, evolved from the brain of some Sybarite angler.

There is a tradition of a wandering autumn tourist who once joined a fisher coming off the plank at Pol Verie, in which the September fish were splashing in all directions; he heralded his approach by exclaiming in an authoritative voice, "Well, sir, yours is indeed fishing made easy! But how is it you have caught nothing when there are such lots of fish?" Seeing that the remark was made in the good faith of ignorance, it was duly explained that the splashing fish had been a long time in the river and would look at nothing. This was followed by an invitation to come and try the pool below, which was also plentifully stocked; the offer was greedily accepted, and on reaching the Stone Pool, the angler handed his rod to the stranger and waved him on to the planks.

Now in this particular pool these boards are carried out to fully mid-water, and though starting at right angles to the bank, the end plank takes a nasty turn nearly directly up stream; thus on reaching the end the angler finds himself right out in the middle of the river, which, some six feet below him, swirls, foams, roars, and rushes like a mill race. The combined width of the two planks is but fifteen inches; they are ever wet with spray, and consequently slippery; likewise the two planks have an unpleasant way of not rising and falling together to the tread, which perplexes unaccustomed feet; moreover, it requires no prophet to tell that a tumble might easily be fatal.

Gaily the tourist, rod in hand, started from the shore. As

he advanced, shorter and shorter grew his steps, until at the beginning of the last plank, which turned so awkwardly up stream, he came to a halt, while to the dismay of the man on the bank, the butt of his pet rod was suddenly lowered into the water and used as a support; then with many tottering steps the stranger began to turn round, revealing a face almost as white as the foam racing below him. Having set his face shorewards, he then proceeded to straddle the plank, and in this undignified position he worked his way to land, exclaiming as he reached it, in tones of unmistakable relief, "Thank goodness, I am back again, for looking down on the running water made me so giddy that I could hardly keep from throwing myself in, and I see now it is not such a luxurious style of fishing as I thought"—and, indeed, rarely have I seen anyone go to the end of these planks for the first time without feeling more or less giddy.

We will now start from the top of the water on the east side or right bank, and fish down to the tidal pool below Inverawe House.

No. 1. The Brander Pool, belonging to Inverawe, and rented for many years by Colonel Thorpe, is a deep, black-looking water requiring a stiff breeze, and only fishes well from this right bank when the river is so swollen as to force the fish from the natural lie on the opposite side into the easy water running quite close to the Inverawe bank. When the water is at a normal height, the fish lie to the Innistrynich side, which is then an excellent cast. In this state of the river there is a spit of gravel running out from the Inverawe side, from which with wading stockings a better command of the pool may be had, care being taken to keep on the top of the gravel, as the sides run from the tread.

Charlie McDonel, the Inverawe keeper, has been on the property for many years, and tells me that when he first came to it the river used to fish very well in April. His

methods are somewhat primitive, for he uses neither gaff nor net, but kills his fish with one sledge-hammer blow of his very big fist.

One day, when chatting with him at lunch time, he told me how he made a curious capture of a grouse and a peregrine. He was sitting watching his ground for vermin, with his back to a big stone somewhat higher than his head, when a grouse dashed just over his cap and buried itself in the heather at his feet; the next second this was followed by the falcon in pursuit. McDonel's big hand fell on both—the robber's neck was twisted, and the grouse released unhurt.

A little above the top of this Brander Pool it was the good fortune of the late Mr. Muir, of Innistrynich, to hook with a fly and eventually kill a *salmo ferox* of thirty-nine and a half pounds—the heaviest I have been able to hear of.

No. 2. The Disputed Pool comes immediately below, and is so called because Lord Breadalbane and Mrs. Campbell, of Inverawe, each claim it and fish it, as the burn which divides the two properties is continually shifting its course. This is not a very productive pool or an easy one to fish, especially in a high wind, as it requires casting straight across, and the rod point turned up stream as the fly alights. It is, perhaps, the smoothest bit of fast-running water on the river, as there are but few big boulders. If, however, a fish does rise, the whole performance can be seen clearly.

In the middle of the stream, and about half-way down, there is a very large stone, behind which there is nearly always a fish. In June, 1890, Mr. G. W. Hartley, who rents the Innistrynich bank, here hooked a splendid fellow of forty pounds, which he eventually landed somewhere about the Seal Pool. The fish that are hooked in the Disputed usually come ashore without any desperate resistance, contenting themselves by sailing round and round the pool, and hardly running out thirty yards of line. If, however, it should make a bolt down

stream, it is a case of real hard work for the angler, with the odds greatly in favour of the fish.

No. 3. The Shallows are but a little distance below, require a fairly high water, and are fished from two sets of planks—worth casting, but not a very sure find in the spring, though late in the autumn they always hold a good few fish, and then the worm is nearly a certainty, though prohibited on Colonel Murray's side of the water.

No. 4. The Black Pool, a quarter of a mile lower down, is a good strong-running catch, easily cast, and seldom without a fish in it.

No. 5. The Seal Pool, about a hundred yards below, is very similar in character and reputation.

Here it is as well to mention that the opposite side, from the Brander to a little below the tail of the Seal, belongs to Mr. W. C. Muir, of Innistrynich. He holds two days a week in his own hands, and lets two with Hayfield House, and the other two go with New Inverawe. Mr. Hartley, who has the fishing of the opposite bank for three days a week, tells me that the five or six pools he has used to be very much better than they are—that of late years the droughts and hard netting below have combined to render sport very poor, and that ten years ago he used to get more fish from only two pools fished two days a week than he now gets from double the number of pools and another day. From the Seal Pool down both banks for a considerable distance are fished by Colonel Murray.

The next pool, No. 6, is Pol Verie, quite the best in the river—an easy pool to look at and fish in imagination, but yet requiring long and neat casting in practice. The water so runs that it is no waste of time to first fish it down with a short line and then with a long one, and this plan is absolutely necessary when reaching the end of the plank running out from where the bank casting ends. Fortunately fish do not often leave this pool to dash down the rough and broken bit

COLONEL MURRAY AT PÓL VERIE.

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[illegible] distance below, require [illegible] from two sets of planks—[illegible] in the spring, though [illegible] hold a good few fish, and [illegible] certainty, though prohibited on [illegible] water.

[illegible] quarter of a mile lower down, [illegible] easily cast, and seldom without [illegible]

No. [illegible]. The Seal Pool, about a hundred yards below, is very [illegible] reputation.

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COLONEL MURRAY AT POL VERIE.

of water at the tail. There are times, however, when all the coaxing and humouring in the world is useless, and then a trip from Pol Verie to the Stone Pool is more often than not but a prelude to a sad parting. Nevertheless, Colonel Murray and others have often successfully steered heavy fish through these rapids, to meet in the Stone Pool the fate they had fought so gallantly to avoid.

Now if the angler has started from the Disputed, by the time he comes off the plank at Pol Verie he will assuredly be ready for lunch, and the sight of the open door of the hut, with its deal table and Archie McDonald returning from an adjacent spring with a jug of water, will settle all doubts, and to put it in the language I once heard used by a touring "'Arry," "bite, swipe and pipe" will occupy the next half-hour. Personally, from ten to fifteen minutes is all I allow myself, and for a fishing maniac this is more than enough.

As the hut is entered, a long, narrow deal table faces the hungry man, on which is carved the outline of a forty-two-pounder caught here on the 20th of July, 1879. This is the oldest reminiscence of the hut. The captor's name is not given, but having regard to the date, it probably fell to the rod of Sir John Bennett Lawes or one of his guests. Close to the nose of this fish the points of the compass are neatly cut. With a fervent wish that a giant of the same size may fall to his lot, the fisherman seats himself so that while he eats he can command a view of the pool from the open door. On his left hangs a brown paper cutting of a forty-five-pounder—length, forty-seven and a half inches, and girth twenty-seven and three-quarter inches—caught here on the 17th of July, 1896, by Sir Robert Moncrieff, with the river marking nine inches on Colonel Murray's water gauge. On the wall at the back of the angler is the outline of another big one of thirty-nine pounds, taken from the Stone Pool on the 28th of June, 1892, with the river at twenty-five inches on the gauge; and as a pendant hangs one of thirty-eight pounds, got on the 28th of June,

1887, both being victims to Colonel Murray's long rod. There on the right is the tracing of a twenty-eight-pounder, also of the Colonel's, and one of twenty-seven pounds, a captive of Colonel Cokes on the 1st of August, 1884. Underneath comes a memorandum to the effect that on the 25th of August, 1886, Colonel Murray hooked a very big fish here at four o'clock in the afternoon, which broke him after two hours and three-quarters' exciting play. The latest memento of monsters is dated the 1st of August, 1898—a forty-eight-pounder, hooked foul by the back fin and landed by the Colonel in thirty-five minutes, forty-nine inches long, girth twenty-six and a half inches.

In addition to these and other mementoes of angling prowess, the walls are further adorned with various photographs of many well-known beautiful women. Thus surrounded by stirring reminiscences of sport, and gazed at by beauty, while watching the fish splash in Pol Verie, small wonder that the frugal lunch and pipe are more enjoyable than the grandest spread ever laid out on Goodwood Lawn!

Colonel Murray's usual catch is from seventy to a hundred grilse and salmon, taken between the 25th of June and the 7th of August. The latter have never averaged less than sixteen pounds, and have been as high as twenty-one pounds! There are also fair quantities of good sea trout in this river. The best fly for them is dressed as follows on sizes eight and nine of Limerick hooks: Tail, sprig of golden pheasant ruff; tag, two turns of silver twist; body, black, with wide turns of very narrow silver tinsel; black hackle; wings, dark mallard wing, not the mottled brown scapular feathers lying behind the wings. This, with variations of red and yellow bodies and hackles to match, are all the necessary sea trout flies.

In August they take well at night, and congregate chiefly in the Disputed, the Shallows, and Garravalt.

On leaving Pol Verie we come to—

No. 7. The Stone Pool, some two hundred yards below,

with a very good reputation, and, when once the angler can stand unconcerned on the end plank, a very pretty pool to fish.

No. 8. Passing downwards, next comes the Bothy Pool, so named from the ruins of an old bothy built in the rock at the very edge of the torrent, in which, years ago, the present Lord Spencer and his tutor used to camp; and tradition still tells of his lordship's great run from Pol Verie to the Awe bridge.

This is a short bit of fishing from an easy plank, but requires casting straight across, and the rod point turned sharply up stream, as the fish lie in the slack water on the opposite bank.

Just below this catch come the Three Ash Trees.

Nos. 9, 10, 11. Pretty streams of water, but not very good.

No. 12. Is the Colonel's Pool.

No. 13. The Yellow Spring.

No. 14. The Shepherd's Pool.

No. 15. The Meal Pool, with an uncommonly long plank high over the water, and bad to stand on in a high wind.

No. 16. Garravalt—"the rough burn"—is a fine stream, easily cast from a plank running parallel with the bank.

No. 17. Next, below the bridge, comes the Oak Pool, a splendid bit of water, which fishes from the bank on either side. Here, at the foot of this pool on the left bank, Colonel Murray's water comes to an end, and joins on to the Duke of Argyle's, which is let to the Taynuilt Hotel. From this pool, in August, 1899, Colonel Murray had a forty-seven pound fish, getting him out above the railway bridge on the left bank—a real sporting, scrambling bit of work, and in addition his second big fish in the month; and I doubt if any angler has ever before had the luck to get fish of forty-seven and forty-eight pounds during the first fortnight in August, before the removal of the nets, and when salmon are in their very best condition.

Below the Oak Pool, on the right bank, Colonel Murray

continues to fish down past Cassan Dhu, the Yellow Pool, and the Long Pool, near the tail of which Mrs. Campbell's Inverawe water joins on.

These three pools are, however, rarely fished by the Colonel or his guests, as they are ruined by being flogged to death by the numerous rods fishing the hotel water on the opposite bank.

Continuing our way down stream on the right bank, as the Long Pool ends, we come to the Little Otter—a "bittie" which is not of much account.

Just below lies the Big Otter, deep and smooth-running, at times a good catch, but one in which fish often rise without laying hold. Below this is the Red Brae, seldom without occupants, and inasmuch as when in order the hotel rods cannot reach the best part, the trouble of getting to it is often well rewarded. Then a further bit of rough going brings the Stepping Stones into sight, offering from the side now under discussion a perfect bit of Spey casting; but as this pool is fished every twenty minutes by someone from the hotel, casting it is a waste of time and trouble. When, however, the water is fairly high, the tail of the pool deserves careful fishing, as it cannot be reached from the opposite bank.

A little distance below comes Errochdt, a short but very likely cast, though to fish it from the east side stockings must be used or knees wetted; but here again this pool is fished to death by the opposite rods.

Going downwards, the Upper Cruive Pool is next reached, a fine cast which, thank goodness, the hotel "guests" cannot reach, and worth fishing closely. A few yards below is the Cruive Pool, so called because the Inverawe House cruive is fixed here, but it might almost as well be fixed on the top of Ben Cruachan, for three fish a season is about its usual catch, and the cruive dyke offers no obstruction whatever to the passage of fish. This pool also is ruined by the many anglers on the opposite side.

Below this comes the Clay Pool, offering a fine bit of Spey casting, and frequently yielding a fish. Then follows the Grey Pool, a long one fished from various jetties of remarkably smooth, slippery stones. This is followed by the Race Wall Pool, the upper part of which is a fair catch in autumn. At the foot of this is a weir, which offers no serious bar to running fish. Below this is Crubeg, also good in autumn, and the lowest pool not affected by the tide.

We will now retrace our way up stream to the Bridge, and crossing to the left bank, at a short distance below the tail of the Oak Pool, we reach Cassan Dhu, the top pool of the water let by the Duke of Argyle to the Taynuilt Hotel, a good but short cast of deep, black, oily water.

Next in rapid succession come the Yellow Pool, the Long Pool, the Little and Big Otters, the Red Brae, the Stepping Stones, Clay Pool, Grey Pool, Race Wall, and Crubeg, or thirteen catches in the whole extent of the hotel water.

Until the middle of July the three lower ones are practically useless, as before then fish do not rest in the pools that are so near to the sea. The hotel rules are as follows: The remaining ten pools are divided into *six* sections—which is not two pools to each rod; they are drawn for by lot every evening; each rod is expected to employ a ghillie, who fishes as soon as his master is tired. It often happens that there are more than six rods staying at the hotel, and then two rods and two ghillies are crammed on to one beat, and it is not unusual to find eight rods and six ghillies crowded on to the hotel water. This is a cruel wrong to the owners of the opposite angling, which can hardly be perpetrated with the knowledge of the ducal owner of the hotel water, so noted for his attainments and his love of fair play.

From the foregoing it will be seen that the hotel rods are far too numerous—a sentiment in which some of them also appear to share, if the evidence may be accepted of the following lines found in the blotting-book of the public room:—

To the Multitudes of Taynuilt Anglers.

Sad sight it is, and sorry while,
Garbed in every dress and style,
Down the birch-clad cliffs they scramble,
Along the banks in swarms they ramble,
By rock, by oak, by hawthorn tree,
Troop after troop are disappearing,
Troop after troop their rods are rearing,
While each and all are racing for
First cast on any pool of roaring Awe.

To make angling life endurable to the opposite neighbours, the hotel rods should be strictly limited to two, who should be charged a fair sum for the right, and no ghillie should be allowed to fish. At present the Taynuilt Hotel-keeper uses this fine stretch of water as an inducement for people to stay at his hotel and get salmon fishing for nothing—"Splendid salmon angling free to visitors." The greater the number of anglers, the larger the profits of the hotel-keeper.

I cannot understand the supineness of the proprietors of the opposite bank, for it is nearly certain that if they laid the matter before the Duke of Argyle the evil would be remedied; or, failing that, an eminent K.C. assures me that in his opinion the law would abate the nuisance, and not allow the hotel-keeper to fill his pockets at the expense of the opposite fishings belonging to Mrs. Campbell and Lord Breadalbane, which suffer both in value and reputation by the unsportsmanlike and greedy way in which the hotel water is fished.

In addition to the Taynuilt Hotel, there are others at Dalmally (from which spring salmon fishing in the Orchy may be had), Loch Awe, Port Sonachan and Taychreggan, all frequented by large numbers of trout fishers, who also have the chance of an occasional salmon on the loch. Thirty years ago the capture of a salmon on Loch Awe was almost unheard of, but now every season the number taken by trolling is on the increase, and it begins to appear that if salmon in numbers were allowed to reach the loch, the angling of June, July, and

August might possibly become as productive and remunerative as that of Loch Tay in the months of January, February, and March.

No doubt it is a tempting advertisement to read that the visitors to one hotel had ten thousand trout in a season; but the hotel-keepers are apparently blind to the fact that incessant fishing must result in a falling off both in the number and the quality of the trout.

Now the burns running into the loch offer easy facilities for the formation of hatcheries, but nothing has been done in that direction. For some years the Loch Awe Fishery Improvement Association did excellent work in watching the spawning grounds, killing pike, and introducing Loch Leven ova and fry, the expenses coming to less than £150. Subscriptions have, however, fallen off, and there is danger that this useful Association may die out. Surely it would pay the owners and renters of the hotels to make up the best part of this modest sum between them. The hotels almost owe their existence to the sums spent by the trout-fishers (see Chapter XI., "The Halladale," for estimate of sums disbursed by them). If the hotels die out, the owners suffer, so it is to the interests of both parties to do their utmost to maintain the trouting.

To return, however, to the Awe. With regard to its special features, its shortness, the volume of water, the number and size of the pools, and the heavy weight of the fish, I have always considered that it should be the premier and most renowned river in Scotland both for netting, sport, and profit.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE COE

A MOUNTAIN stream rising in the northern slopes of Buchaille Etive, in the Dalness Forest, which, after an impetuous run of five miles through the Pass of Glencoe, expands into the small loch of Treachten, two hundred and thirty feet above sea-level.

From the foot of this loch to Invercoe, where the river falls into the salt water of Loch Leven to the east of Ballachulish, there is a further run of three miles, rather more than one-third of which would be good angling if the fish could reach it; their ascent is, however, effectually barred by a sheer fall of some twelve feet. From below this to the salt water is about three-quarters of a mile, in which there are three good pools—One Pool, the Bridge, and the Tidal. Both banks belong to Lord Strathcona, the angling being strictly kept for the owner and his guests. July and August are the best months, no waders are wanted, while a grilse rod will cover the pools.

Jock Scot and Butcher are the two favourite flies, sizes from medium to the smallest. The average take is ten salmon of eight pounds, with the same number of grilse of four pounds; the take, however, of each season varies greatly according to the wetness or dryness of the two best months.

Cattenach, the keeper at Glencoe, tells me that scringing is on the decrease, and that the river mouth is also well watched. The falls could easily be laddered, and the fish

taken into Loch Treachten, though it is doubtful if the angling thus obtained would be worth the expenditure.

This river also yields an average take of two hundred sea trout of one pound, the best flies for them being small Jock Scots, Butchers, Zulu, March Brown, or any other flies with brown or yellow body and mallard wing. In some books and maps this river is called the Coe or Cona, but to avoid confusion the latter name is rarely used, as in the Earl of Morton's Forest of Conaglen there is a stream called the Cona, not very far distant, and falling into the northern end of Loch Linnhe.

CHAPTER XXV

THE CRERAN

Is a short, rapid river, draining thirty-five square miles of the hilly country lying between Ballachulish and the Dalness Forest. After a course of about six miles it is joined by the Ure, a small stream affording good spawning ground, though too small for rod-fishing. A little further down it enters the Loch of Fasnacloich, from the foot of which it has a further run of two miles before it falls into the salt water of the long and narrow Loch of Creran, some twenty miles to the north of Oban, the spring tides reaching to within three-quarters of a mile of the loch.

It opens for nets and rods on the 11th of February, closing for the former on the 26th of August, and for the latter on the 31st of October. Here we have one more instance of a too early opening, for the Creran is a late river, in which clean fish are rarely seen before the 1st of May. June and July are the best months, and the run of fish is usually over before August commences, so much so that the Barcaldine nets are generally taken off at the end of July, as they do not pay their expenses after that. The nets of Barcaldine to the south of Creran mouth, and those recently started on the Loch Nell property, near Eurka Island, take the bulk of the fish that would ascend the river. Thus the average take of the Creran and Loch Fasnacloich is brought down to thirty or forty fish, which includes those taken by

occasionally netting one pool in the river. They average twelve pounds, although in each season some are taken of twenty to twenty-five pounds.

A grilse rod will do all that is required, while nearly any of the small standard patterns will kill, and those most in favour on the Awe are equally good here, whether for salmon or sea trout.

The Creran itself can, however, hardly be called a salmon river as far as sport is concerned, for though they are at times taken with a worm by persons fishing for sea trout, there are but few, if indeed any, instances of salmon ever having been captured with the fly and the take to that lure, and, therefore, all the sport is in the loch, which, however, fish can only reach in times of moderate flood; for these reasons in a dry season nearly all the fish are caught in the sea nets or poached by the Oban scringers.

The right of fishing in the Loch of Fasnacloich belongs to Mr. J. C. Stewart, and has been rented for many years by Colonel Spencer Stanhope, C.B. In reply to inquiries addressed to him by the Fishery Board, Mr. Stewart, in common with all other West Highland proprietors, complained bitterly of the poaching of the Oban scringers; and though that was thirteen years ago, the evil increased rather than diminished, until about four years ago the chief of the Oban poachers and his crew of three were drowned one winter day, and the conservators of the Oban district becoming more active, the evil has somewhat abated. There are, however, plenty of the fraternity still left, and Colonel Stanhope cannot leave his nets to dry on the poles near the one pool he nets for fear of having them used or stolen.

I have thought it would be possible to erect a dam at the foot of Loch Fasnacloich so as to be able to cause a spate when fish were noticed splashing in the salt water at the mouth of the river, and the remarkable results obtained on the Grimersta river of the Lews should attract the attention of all

owners of streams flowing out of lochs. In this particular instance such a dam might possibly cause a flooding of the arable lands of Glen Ure, belonging to Mrs. Lucy, of Charlecote, and therefore nothing in this direction could be attempted without her consent and a careful survey.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE DEE

THIS Aberdeenshire river, the sixth largest in Scotland, drains an area of eight hundred and twenty-four square miles. It rises from two sources in Mar Forest: one, near the summit of Ben MacDhui, is close on four thousand feet above sea-level; and the other, at a nearly similar altitude, flows from a little below the top of Braeriach. From these two springs the Dee runs clear and rapid for over ninety miles, through every variety of Highland and Lowland scenery, and during its whole course there are no weirs or pollutions. Some ten miles below the fountain-heads there are a series of four small falls, called the Linn of Dee, which, however, do not offer any bar to the ascent of fish. Nets and rods commence on the 11th of February, the two seasons ending respectively on the 26th of August and the 31st of October.

Although there is no month in the year but what some clean fish come into the river, there are three great and distinct runs of fish, viz., that of the early spring, the summer, and the autumn. About the middle of May grilse and sea trout commence to show, while in March and April, and again in September and October, finnocks or whitling (the grilse of the sea trout) are very numerous in the lower reaches; these seldom come far up the river, rarely above Banchory, although I remember at the end of one April, in 1889, after a prolonged spell of high water, catching from under the Suspension Bridge at Aboyne a good dish of nineteen finnocks with the

natural minnow. Spring fish weigh from six to twelve pounds, but the average may be taken as ten pounds. In April, 1889, I had one from the north side of the Boat Pool of the Glen Tana water of twenty-five pounds, and every year a few of these heavy spring fish are got, though they are the exception. It would seem, however, that the average weight is very slowly but surely increasing, for when I first went to the Blackhall water in 1869, with the late Mr. Thomas Simpson, the average weight of the spring fish was but seven pounds, while nowadays it has increased to ten pounds; so there is a hope that in another thirty years it may become thirteen pounds, which would be a fine one. In contrast to the twenty-five-pounder from Glen Tana, I took in the February of that same season, from Bellwood Pool, on the Aboyne Hotel water, a salmon of four and a quarter pounds, the smallest I have ever caught or ever seen, and probably there are dwarf salmon as well as dwarfed people and animals.

The spring angling on these lower reaches, which are quite near the sea, is never of much account, though the sport they yield in autumn is excellent, for the fish of September and October, in lieu of pushing their way up stream, like those of the spring months, are content with a short journey, while they are much heavier, and will average about seventeen pounds.

The spring fishing commences at or about Durris Bridge; the autumn fishing commences about Dinnet Bridge, on the Glen Tana water, and gets better and better as it nears the sea—the very cream of it being, perhaps, from the top of the Ballogie water down to the end of the Culter water.

It has been repeatedly suggested that it would be better for the fish if the rod season began on the 1st of February, or even the middle of January, and closed on the 20th of October, which extension of spring fishing would be an ample compensation to the anglers for the ten days deducted from

the autumn season, and would save the lives of many fish nearly ready to spawn. If that were ordered, and the nets stopped on the 20th of August, instead of on the 26th, then verily I believe the sport yielded by this well-managed river might be nearly doubled, and advances obtained even on the enormously high prices already paid for the angling on it; also, if the river was opened earlier, it would probably lead to the framing of some rule rendering the carrying of a landing-net compulsory, for there would assuredly be very large numbers of kelts hooked, whose interests would have to be guarded. Indeed, it is somewhat remarkable that such a rule has not already been made. Good sportsmen, of course, "tail" their kelts, and return them uninjured; bad and careless ones allow the kelts to be gaffed and flung back to the water to die, for very few survive—and that is a practice that every gentleman should set his face against. Personally, I should like to see a law passed which would put a penalty on gaffing a kelt, and then anglers might be left to their own devices, for the use of a net necessitates an attendant, which is sometimes a bore. The bulk of the Dee kelts fall back to the sea during the months of March and April, and in that period there must be fully two thousand of them hauled ashore by the river rods.

In 1872 that wonderfully successful Association was formed which has made the Dee the best angling river in Scotland, and it is extraordinary that the splendid results attained have not stimulated the proprietors of other rivers to unite together and follow the example thus set.

The Association, with the Marquis of Huntly and the late Sir William Cunliffe Brooks at its head, was formed entirely with the view of improving the angling, which was then fast becoming worthless. Commencing at Banchory, seventeen miles distant from the mouth, one by one, as funds permitted, the river nets were leased and removed. In this manner, during the first ten years of its existence, the Association

spent nearly £4,000, until at length there were no nets plying in the river above the railway bridge at Aberdeen. In 1882 the good work was yielding a rich harvest, for in that season upwards of five thousand salmon and grilse were taken by the rods, and the collective value of the angling rents produced three times the amount of the former netting rents, while now their present value may be taken as exceeding £8,000, an enormous increase from the £1,000 that they were worth in 1871. From that time the Dee has never looked back. It has had its bad years and good ones, like all other rivers, with the difference that a bad angling season on the Dee means a nearly absolute dearth of sport on any other river. By degrees, however, the increase of the coast nets has begun to tell, and if the Dee is to maintain its angling reputation, the Association must now turn their attention in that direction.

The extent of the Dee District coast is eighteen miles, on which in 1882 there were one hundred and two bag and stake nets; in 1894 these had been increased to nearly two hundred, and in all probability at the present moment there are still more. In 1836 there were but four stake and two bag nets on the mile of sandy shore between the mouths of the Don and the Dee. In 1882 these had grown to eleven bag-nets and six stake-nets, and at the present their numbers have been again increased by the system of "outrigging."

The whole of the hundred miles of coast, from Fife Ness on the south to Peterhead on the north, is just one mass of nets, which are rapidly depopulating the Tay, the two Esks, Dee, Don, Ythan, and Ugie.

My opinion is that, were it not for the well-managed hatchery at Durris, the falling off on the Dee would be even more marked. From this hatchery ova from the Spey and Deveron have been hatched, and the fry turned into the river, with the view of bringing about an increase in the weight of spring fish; and though at present the experiment does

not appear to be attended with success, it must not be forgotten that any improvement in this direction can only come very gradually. Ova from the Tay would perhaps have yielded better results, as the fish of that river are heavier than those of the Spey or the Deveron, and run equally early.

The Dee is protected by a staff of about twenty-two bailiffs, and the united Boards of Dee and Don also maintain a steam launch to protect the coast, and since this boat has been put on, the poaching, once so prevalent at the mouths of these rivers, has almost entirely ceased—a result well worthy of special note by the proprietors of the West Highland rivers. Poaching on the Dee itself is, however, far from being extinguished, for the annual prosecutions are numerous and very rarely unsuccessful.

Most of the old Dee anglers regard April—which the natives call "Ap-rile"—as the best month of the season, but though there are then more fish, yet they appear less inclined to lay hold than those of February and March; indeed, if the weather is mild and springlike from the opening day, good scores may quickly be made as long as that state of affairs prevails, which is usually to about the end of the month. Then comes March, and though I suppose there are occasions when that month is a genial one, it has never been my lot to fall in with them, for deep snows and hard frosts have always reigned supreme and put an end to angling whenever I have found myself on Deeside in that month. From above Aboyne bridge the month of May is often very good, but so much depends on the store of snow on the hills and on the weather of January and early February that it is impossible to advise anyone exactly as to which will be the best month on any particular beat.

The Dee is fished with every description of lure: flies, prawns, natural minnows, gudgeons, and artificial spinning baits of all sorts are freely used. On some reaches the old

favourite, the fly, with its thousands of various patterns, will beat all lures, while on other sections the baits have the best of it; sometimes the fly will kill for half the day and then suddenly become useless, while for the rest of the day the bait will be seized with avidity.

To describe the Dee flies or the Dee tackle is unnecessary, for all the tackle makers are well acquainted with the numerous patterns. In the spring I seldom use more than three sorts—the Gordon, the Glen Tana, and the Eagles; though in May and later when the water becomes quite low one must fall back on very small double-hooked flies, of which the two best are the Blue Charm and Jock Scot. I have, however, remarked that there are sections on which certain flies kill better than they do on others. In the autumn the standard patterns are now used perhaps more successfully than the original Dee flies. In the spring, rods of eighteen feet, with stout tackle and heavy double tapered reel lines, are required, though as the end of April comes they may be laid aside for shorter rods and lighter lines. Trousers or stockings are wanted on almost the whole of the Dee. The Cairnton and Inchmarlo sections are perhaps the only ones on the river where every pool can be fished without the waterproofs.

The Dee fish are packed in every variety of manner. The deal box appears the favourite method with keepers and ghillies, for a few taps with a hammer completes the packing; the box trick is, however, often not satisfactory to the recipient, and I have known fish to taste of the smell of deal and sawdust; and likewise, if it be packed in straw, it will often taste of the smell of that material. Broom can generally be found all along Deeside, and that makes the best and sweetest packing of all; after the end of May flags can be found growing long enough, and these also make excellent covering.

From the head of the Duke of Fife's Glen Dee water, which commences some ten miles above the Linn, down to

Murtle, a short distance above Aberdeen, there are fifty fine angling stretches of water, in which there are more than four hundred named pools. Both sides of the Glen Dee water belong to the Duke of Fife, and are strictly preserved. The best months are June and September; the take from fifty to seventy fish. There are ten good pools on this stretch of water, all of which can be cast with a sixteen-foot rod. The best of them are Poll Dearg, Poll-na-Clarick, Dallvorar, Dubh Bruach (the Black Bank), and Chest of Dee. In these upper waters the favourite flies are Jock Scot, Mar Lodge, Silver Grey, and March Brown, dressed on irons varying in size from 3/0 Limerick bend down to the very smallest double hooks; the only other lure that is sometimes deadly is the worm, although it is seldom resorted to. Even as the King when Prince of Wales was our premier fisherman, so is his sister, H.R.H. the Princess Louise, our premier fisherwoman, for many are the salmon that have fallen to her rod amidst the wild scenery of the Dee banks above Mar Lodge, and her favourite pool just above the Linn once yielded twelve fish in the day to the keen and well-plied royal rod.

Next comes the Duke's Upper Mar water, extending downwards from the Linn on both banks for some seven miles; in this distance there are fifteen good casts, most of them kept strictly for Mar Lodge, though a few can be fished from the Fife Arms Hotel at Braemar. April, May, and June are all good, but which will be the best in any particular year depends entirely on the previous weather.

Below come the Upper and Lower Invercauld fisheries, the property of Mr. A. H. Farquharson. The upper water runs for some two miles on the left bank and for fully a mile on the right one, and has a dozen good pools on it. The lower water, though but a mile in extent, has often yielded wonderful sport. Both banks are usually let, the cottage of Clunie going with the south side.

It was on this fishery that in May, 1892, Sir Algernon

Borthwick and his son got one hundred and fifty-six fish in sixteen days, in which there was one day of twenty-five, a second of twenty-four, and a third of twenty. Later on, in May, 1896, in twenty-two days' angling Mr. Grenville Farquhar and Mr. H. Jefferson had respectively one hundred and fifty-three and one hundred and four fish, or an average of just over ten a day.

Next, on the right bank immediately below Invercauld Bridge, comes the Balmoral and Ballochbuie water, the opposite side, which still belongs to Invercauld, being let to His Majesty. On reaching Balmoral Bridge there begins on the right bank the Abergeldie water, the property of the late Mr. Hugh Mackay Gordon, and also let to His Majesty—the royal fisheries extending for between six and seven miles.

In the Abergeldie water there are fully fifteen good casts, of which Pol Slache, Corby Hall, Pol Mahalmock, and the Boat Pool of Clackenturn are the most noted; the two last-named fish in any height of water, and are perhaps the pick of the whole section. For the convenience of anglers there is a foot suspension bridge at the top of the Abergeldie water; further down, the old rope and cradle at Abergeldie Castle has been replaced by another wire foot-bridge, which is strictly private; and at the end of the water, a little below Polhollick, there is a third one.

His Majesty's Birkhall section follows on the right bank and goes down nearly to Ballater.

Returning up stream to Balmoral Bridge, the left bank still belongs to Invercauld, and for many years was let to the hotel at Ballater and enjoyed the distinction of being the finest bit of hotel angling in Scotland, for as many as three hundred fish have been killed in a month by the hotel rods, one gentleman getting one hundred and thirty-three fish as his share. This fishery has now been let apart from the hotel to a syndicate of gentlemen.

At the end of the Invercauld water, and on the left bank,

BELOW MOLLATUS, MONASTERY HOUSE IN THE DISTANCE.

Boisbeale, [illegible] one hundred and fifty-six fish in [illegible] one day of twenty-five, a record of [illegible] a total of twenty. Later on, in May [illegible] angling Mr. Grenville Farquhar and Mr. [illegible] respectively one hundred and fifty-[illegible] and four fish, or an average of just [illegible]

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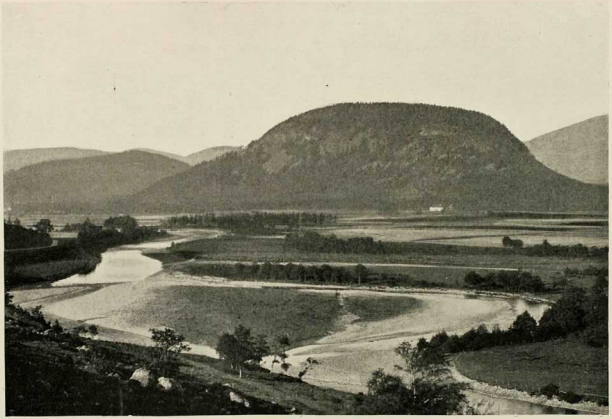


BELOW BALLATER, MONALTRIE HOUSE IN THE DISTANCE.

there comes the short section of Morven, belonging to Mr. Keiller, and about half a mile in extent—a streamy, low water angling, which fishes best in April, May, and June, and off which, when just "right," as many as seven fish have been taken in a day. Trousers are required, as the lie of the fish is on the south side of the river.

At the end of Morven, Monaltrie begins, and passing Ballater extends down for between four and five miles. This angling is also the property of Mr. Farquharson, and goes with the house and shooting of the same name. Of late years it has not yielded so well as formerly, when rented by the late Mr. Pickop, who made some very fine catches off it, chiefly with the natural minnow. The floods that have changed this water for the worse will doubtlessly, in due course, restore it to the old and better state. All anglings are more or less liable to these fluctuations, and if in consequence of a few bad seasons, and from no other cause, they fall in value, then is the time for the astute angler to get a lease.

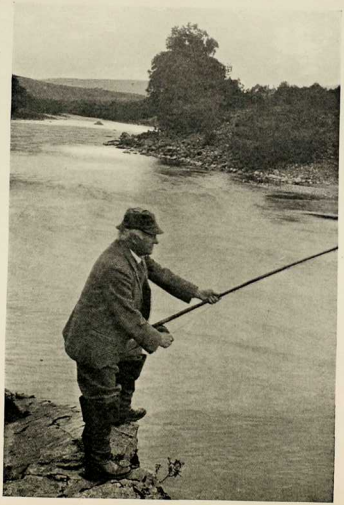
Returning to the right bank, as the Birkhall reach ends at the Muick burn, the Glenmuick water begins, which is at times called Pannanich, and extends down for three miles until it joins Glen Tana. In this distance there are eight good pools, the Lodge and the Garden being the two best. Sir Allan Mackenzie keeps it in his own hands. In low water trousers are necessary, but it fishes best when the river is so high that the pools can be cast from the banks. As Monaltrie ends on the left bank and Glenmuick on the right, there commences one of the finest stretches of the Dee, for joining on to the former comes Cambus o' May, while the far-famed section of Glen Tana begins immediately opposite. Cambus is now the property of Mr. Barclay Harvey, and extends between three and four miles down the left bank, until about a quarter of a mile below the pool of Tassack it is joined by Glen Tana.

There are eighteen good casts on it, the best being

Gordon's Clarick, the Boat Pool, Pol Sherlyss, the Long Pool, and Tassack, which is far away the best of the lot, and perhaps the very best pool on the whole Dee. As many as nine fish have been taken in a day from the Cambus bank, and three from the Glen Tana one. In 1887 I had the good luck to have the February angling of this water given to me, and as in those days Cambus had also the bank that now belongs to Glen Tana, I had the run of both sides; but as there had been no early floods to lead the fish up stream, I got but nineteen, nearly all coming out of Tassack. If there is to be real good early sport on this and the fishings above, it is essential there should be continuous big water and mild weather for at least several weeks before the opening day on the 11th of February.

Mr. Barclay Harvey usually lets the spring fishing up to the 31st of May. Mr. W. Baring had it in 1893, and in April took one hundred and one fish to his own rod, chiefly from the upper pools, they being just suited by the low water which prevailed during that month. Mr. Percy Laming followed in 1894, but that season, together with the two following ones, were moderate, both on Cambus and Glen Tana; 1897 was, however, a better year, for Mr. Laming, fishing alternate days on Cambus and Glen Tana, had from the middle of April to end of May one hundred and three fish to his rod, while the season following was also nearly as good. Therefore, according to the weather and the water, it may be safely said that Cambus will yield from one hundred and fifty to three hundred and fifty fish to the 31st of May. The chances of sport are fairly balanced between its banks and those of Glen Tana, which has much the best side in high water, but is nearly worthless when the river is small. With the spring fishing Mr. Harvey sometimes lets the pretty house of Dinnet, which is close to the station and the Boat Pool, and altogether there are few prettier bits of angling and scenery on Deeside.

Retracing our way up stream to the top of the Cambus



SIR WILLIAM AT POL SLACHE.

water, we will cross to the opposite bank, and on so the late Sir William Cunliffe Brooks' property of Glen Tana, which has the angling on the right bank of the same pools that are fished by Cambus on the left, until at—or, strictly speaking, a little below—the tail of Tassack and just below the Needle Rock (a big stone with a hole in it, through which the water flows) the Glen Tana angling embraces both banks, and extends downwards for between four and five miles. It is naturally divided by Dinnet Bridge into upper and lower beats, each of which will daily keep two rods hard at work. The Slache is the top pool, and when in order it is nearly certain to give a fish or two each day. A beautiful cast is this, to be fished dry-shod from the south side. In addition to this strong hold, there are fifteen other good casts in the upper beat, of which the Red Brae, Pol Bar, the Eagle, and the Mushroom are the best.

Below Dinnet Bridge the pools are not so numerous, but the numbers are fully made up for by their greater length and holding capacity. Of these the Boat Pool, the King Pool, and Waterside are the best, and this last-named catch disputes with Tassack the honour of being the premier one on the river. It was prized beyond all others by its kind owner, and on its bank he built the prettiest and most luxurious "hut" in Scotland, and many were the days when this fine piece of water yielded him from five to ten fish. An odd thing happened to him here one day. The pool was full of fish, but they would not lay hold. At lunch time Sir William called to his ghillie to take the rod and wind up, and in waiting for him to come, the hook sank to the bottom and hooked a fish by the back.

To tell of all the big scores that have been made on these two beats would fill up several pages. I remember that, some time in the eighties, Mr. George Whitehead and his son, fishing the upper beat, the father on the south side and the son opposite, had between them twenty-seven fish, no less than twenty

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falling to the minnows of the senior partner. In May, 1891, Mr. J. W. Leigh, M.P., had a day of fifteen. In 1893 Messrs. Douglas and William Barry had two hundred and one fish in twenty-one days, the heaviest scaling twenty-seven pounds. In May, 1886, one rod had twenty-five in the day; in May, 1891, there was a day of fifteen, and in March, 1892, another of twenty-one fish, and the respective totals of these three seasons were 945, 760, and 1,097.

Of late years these big days have not recurred so often, which I think can only be accounted for by the fact that there are not so many fish as formerly, not only in this particular river, but also in some of the others. There is nevertheless very regular and steady sport yet to be had, which is well shown by the fact that in the five last seasons Mr. Laming, in eighty-one days' fishing, including spates, etc., had only nine blank ones, a fact which speaks volumes for the certain and continuous sport to be had on this water, on which the average take for the whole season is about nine hundred fish, the bulk of them being spring fish.

A little below Waterside, on the left bank, Lord Huntly's Aboyne Castle water begins at Jock Fyfe, while the opposite one belonging to Glen Tana is let to the landlord of the "Huntly Arms" Hotel at Aboyne. These two sections run opposite each other to the middle of the island, just above the suspension bridge at Aboyne, a distance of over a mile and a half, in which there are eight good casts and some "bitties," Simmons, Lady Grace, and the Lorren being the best; while the casts at Upper, Middle, and Lower Pol Fontes offer choice opportunities for some very rough wading. The Lorren Pool is one of the best on the river, for it is never without fish, and is from Lord Huntly's side a most fascinating bit of casting.

As Glen Tana ends on the right bank, there begins the Huntly Lodge water, belonging to Mr. Heaven, which goes down for more than two miles and ends a little below the well-

ON THE GLEN TANA-WATER ABOVE DINNET BRIDGE.

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known Quithel, famous for many a fine fish, and frequently three, four, and five in a day have been taken from the stream at the head, or from the smoother and deeper-running water lower down. From this pool but a few seasons ago, at the time when Mr. T. Rolls Hoare rented Huntly Lodge, his daughter, quite a child, killed the heaviest fish of the season, thirty-four and a half pounds; and on another day this keen and hard-working young lady had three fish from Quithel which weighed sixty pounds. On the right bank this pool offers a fine bit of easy casting for a beginner, a natural bank of about eight feet high, with a clear background, running alongside the deep and "holding" part of the pool. On the opposite side the fish can only be reached by deep but easy wading, for the "going" is extra good.

Returning now to a few yards above Aboyne suspension bridge, the water on the left bank and opposite to that of Huntly Lodge is let to the hotel, and runs down for some distance below Quithel and overlaps the Carlogie water at the Long Haugh; the Three Stones, the Red Rock, Lummels, and Bellwood, with Quithel, being the best pools.

Now that the Ballater Hotel has lost the Invercauld fishing, I think the "Huntly Arms" at Aboyne can fairly claim to have the best hotel water in Scotland. The charge is from twenty to thirty pounds a month, and for this a friend of mine has had eighty fish to his own rod in a month, a result due both to fine fishing and the right sort of water. My own best month at the hotel resulted in thirty-one fish, with which I was quite satisfied; but even should sport be disappointing, the mere fact of having an ample beat all to oneself each day ensures content, while, if all goes well, the angler will think he has had a very cheap month of sport. The hotel usually also has the Upper Dess water, which joins on the left bank a little below Quithel, and passing Pitslug, goes down to the top of the Mill Pool at Lower Dess, both reaches belonging to Major D. F. Davidson. The last-named water is but a bare mile of the left bank, but of

the best quality, the Mill Pot and Jock Rae being very prolific in fish. In 1891 the late Mr. Pickop landed from these two pools, from 11th of February to 20th of April, just a hundred fish; and Major Davidson tells me that on the 16th of Febuary, 1899, he took four fish from the Mill Pot after five o'clock p.m., having previously fished this pool and the others several times without seeing a sign of a fish. "Why they responded at that late hour after refusing all day beats me, as it was a nasty cold evening," thus writes the Major, and his question is a regular poser.

Returning up stream at the end of Quithel, the Carlogie water joins and runs down on the right bank for some four miles, past and opposite to Upper and Lower Dess until it joins on to the Ballogie beat. At the end of Dess, the Kincardine angling belonging to Mrs. Pickering comes in on the left bank and goes down to below the Ferry at Kincardine o' Neil. Carlogie is essentially a high-water beat, and with everything right it is a very good bit of fishing from 11th of February to the end of April. In company with Mr. Charles Baily I fished this water in 1891, from the 11th of February to the 6th of March. We worked hard and got but nineteen fish. My game book says, "Frost, snow, gales, and low water nearly all the time"; and doubtlessly with better weather our take would have been more than doubled.

In addition to the pools opposite the Dess reaches, there are two fine ones—the Clay Pool and the Whin Bush—common to this and the Kincardine bank opposite: stiff wading from the Carlogie side, but "drawing-room work" from the other bank.

Below Kincardine comes Borrowstone, also belonging to Mrs. Pickering, who usually personally fishes both these reaches in the autumn, but sometimes lets them in the spring. This runs opposite Ballogie for some two miles, and has the same pools, only they do not fish so well from this side; it ends above Potarch Bridge, both sides of the Bridge Pool belonging

to Ballogie. Continuing down on the left bank, Mr. Duncan Davidson's Sluie comes next; under a mile in length, it holds four fair casts, of which Strathsiven is the best.

Returning up stream, as Carlogie ends, on the right bank Ballogie commences, both reaches belonging to Mr. W. E. Nicol, the former let for some years past to Mr. J. C. Haslam, while Mr. E. Drummond has held the latter for many years. Ballogie contains some three miles of most beautiful angling and scenery, in which there are a dozen good casts—the Three Gannets, Green Banks, and Potarch Bridge Pool being the best.

As Sluie ends on the left bank, there follows the fine stretch of the Woodend water, with its house close on the river and at the top of the beat. It belongs to Sir Thomas Burnett, of Crathes, and is always let, and extends down for some two miles until it joins Cairnton just above the Intake of the Aberdeen Waterworks. This section has yielded many good fish, both in spring and autumn, but there is some deep and rough wading in most of the nine or ten pools in it—Moral, the Green Spout, Scobech, which are the best pools, all requiring high trousers and a long line.

Returning once more up stream, as Ballogie ends on the right bank, there begins a property of the Crown, the Commonty, let jointly to Mr. Farquharson, M.P., of Finzean, and Mr. W. E. Nicol, and usually sublet by them. It is over two miles in length, and has the same pools as Sluie and Woodend down to the top of Moral on the right bank, where begins that famous section of Blackhall belonging to Mr. Hay, a magnificent reach of five miles, extending to Banchory Bridge and having opposite to it part of Woodend and the whole of Cairnton, Invercanny, Inchmarlo, and Kineskie. As Woodend comes to a finish, the Cairnton and Invercanny section commences at the Intake. This is one of the very best bits of the Dee, for though not much over a mile in extent, no waders are wanted, and the whole water is nearly a continuous

succession of pools, of which there are no less than twenty-two, the Intake, Ferrach, Glister, Rock Heid, Saut Fat, and Cannie Pool perhaps being the best. This fine fishing, with its pretty riverside bungalow, was held for many years by the late Mr. T. Turner Farley, and there is sport to be had from the opening day to the end of the season, while from this water came the heaviest fish of the river in 1899, a forty-one-pounder, which fell a victim to the rod of Lord Penrhyn.

Mr. Duncan Davidson's Inchmarlo comes next—a fine mile of water and seven good long pools, so that it is nearly all fishing, and no waders are wanted. The lower pool, called the Roe Spot, is the best on the beat, but only fishes well on the Inchmarlo part when the water is low. Unfortunately the march between this and the Kineskie water which follows comes in the very middle of the pool, and as in high water the lower part is the best, the tenant of Inchmarlo can only reach the likeliest part of the pool by coming right to the march fence and fishing the longest line he can get out into the Kineskie water; and it would save unpleasantness if a post were put twenty-five yards above the march on the Inchmarlo side, and below which the angler there should not come.

With regard to this pool, I never could quite make out from the natives what the real name is. I have called it Roe Spot because it is a spawning place for autumn fish, but some call it Rose Pot, Rose Spot, and the Roe's Pot, so those who fish Kineskie can take their choice. The Whinnie Brae, the Bughts, Bahore, and Sandy Havens are the remaining pools on this short but pretty bit of water, which requires no wading, and from which I have had as many as five good fish in a February day; while from Sandy Havens I managed to land a fish without a hook in it, for the fish coming short missed his mark, and in turning got the line under his pectoral fin, and the hook catching in it, a loop was formed round the fin, which held just as tightly as any barb. Both Kineskie, which

belongs to Sir Thomas Burnett, and Inchmarlo are let each season, and generally divided into spring and autumn lets.

We have now arrived at Banchory Bridge, and let it not be forgotten that from Moral, opposite Woodend, the Blackhall stretch has the angling of all the pools mentioned in the lower Woodend, the Cairnton, the Inchmarlo, and the Kineskie sections. If Mr. Hay is away during the spring, he at times lets some of the angling in this fine reach; and, excepting in very low water, the anglers opposite do not interfere with each other, for at that time of year the river is usually so big that the rods on each side have perforce to keep themselves to themselves.

Immediately below Banchory Bridge comes the short reach of Banchory Lodge, having Riverstone opposite—just one long pool of a few hundred yards. Next, on the left bank, comes Sir Thomas Burnett's Crathes water, which commences just below Banchory station, and goes to about half a mile below Durris Bridge, a distance of five miles, in which there are many splendid casts, especially in the autumn, although I have had some fair days in the spring, and in April, 1884, I had five fish from the upper Crathes water, and in 1885 the score of Kineskie and upper Crathes to the end of July was a hundred and four salmon, thirty-four grilse, and thirteen sea trout.

On the right bank below Riverstone comes Invery, with some fine pools, running opposite Crathes. It goes down for nearly two miles to the tail of the Floating Bank, which does not mean that the bank is afloat, but that from this bank it was the custom in days of the Dee rafts to float the felled timber.

At the end of Invery comes Mr. Baird's Upper Durris water, which begins at Birkenbad and goes down fully five miles, and is divided into two beats, one ending a little below Crathes Bridge at the Green Bank, and the other running down to just above Park Bridge and opposite the Park water of Mr. Penny, with the House Pool about half-way down

the beat. Both beats are fine stretches of autumn fishing; the Kirk Pot, Castleton, and the Park streams being splendid, and sure casts when the water is right. Park overlaps Durris on the left bank, and takes in the celebrated Keith Pool just below Park Bridge; from which I took in September, 1884, six heavy fish one day; while my host, Mr. E. Brydges Willyams, tied me on the upper water with other six of about the same weight.

Just above Park Bridge on the right bank the Lower Durris section begins, and from here down to the tideway the autumn fishing is usually good.

For the convenience of reference I have put down the various anglings of the Dee in the order in which they come from Mar to the tideway.

Water of Dee (Duke of Fife), 10 miles.	↓	Both banks.
The Mar Water (Duke of Fife), 7 miles.		Both banks.
Braemar	RIVER DEE	Bridge.
Upper Invercauld (Mr. A. H. Farquharson), 1½ miles.		Upper Invercauld, 2 miles.
Lower Invercauld, 1½ miles.		Lower Invercauld, 1 mile.
Invercauld		Bridge.
Balmoral and Ballochbuie (His Majesty the King), 6 miles.		Invercauld (let to His Majesty the King), 7 miles.
Balmoral		Bridge.
Abergeldie, 6 miles. (Let to His Majesty.)		Invercauld Water, that used to be let to the Invercauld Arms at Ballater, 9 miles.
Birkhall (His Majesty the King), 2 miles.	↓	Morven Water (Mr. J. M. Keiller), under a mile.
Glenmuick or Pannanich (Sir Allan Mackenzie), 3 miles.		Monaltrie (Mr. A. H. Farquharson), 3 miles.
Ballater		Bridge.
		Monaltrie, 2 miles.

Glen Tana, 3 miles.	*	Cambus o' May (Mr. Barclay Harvey), 3 miles.
		Tassack.
Pol Slache	*	
Glen Tana, $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles.		Glen Tana, $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles.
Dinnet		Bridge.
Waterside	*	
Glen Tana (let to Mr. Sandison, Huntly Arms Hotel, Aboyne), 2 miles.	*	Wire footbridge. Aboyne Castle Water (the Marquis of Huntly). The Lorren.
Aboyne		Suspension Bridge.
Huntly Lodge (Mr J. R. Heaven), 3 miles.		Huntly Arms Hotel, 3 miles.
Quithel	*	
Carlogie (Mr. W. E. Nicol), 3 miles.	RIVER DEE	Upper Dess (Major D. F. Davidson), 1 mile.
		Lower Dess (Major D. F. Davidson), under a mile.
		Kincardine (Mrs. Pickering), 2 miles.
Ballogie (Mr. W. E. Nicol), $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles.		Borrowstone (Mrs. Pickering), $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles.
Potarch		Bridge.
		Ballogie.
Commonty (Crown property), 2 miles.		Sluie (Mr. Duncan Davidson), $\frac{3}{4}$ mile.
		Woodend (Sir Thomas Burnett), 2 miles.
	↓	Cairnton (Sir Thomas Burnett), 2 miles.
Blackhall (Mr. James T. Hay), 5 miles.		Inchmarlo (Mr. Duncan Davidson), 1 mile.
		Kineskie (Sir Thomas Burnett), 1 mile.
Banchory		Bridge.
Riverstone, under a mile.		Banchory Lodge, under a mile.

Inverey (Mr. John W. E. Douglass), 2 miles.		Crathes (Sir Thomas Burnett), 5 miles.
	Birkenhead *	
West Durris (Mr. H. R. Baird), 3 miles.		Durris Bridge.
Durris, 3 miles.		Park (Mr. James Penny), 3 miles.
	Park Bridge.	
	*	Keith Pool
Lower Durris, 1½ miles below bridge.		Park Water, ¼ mile.
Tilbouries (Sir Cosmo Duff Gordon), 1½ miles.	↓	Drum (Mrs. Irvine), 4 miles. Boat Pool, Cairnton and Lawson Pools.
Altries (Mr. A. Kinloch).		
Maryculter (Sir Cosmo Duff Gordon), 1½ miles.	RIVER DEE	Culter (Mr. Duff of Fetteresso), usually let.
Kingcausie (Mr. A. J. Fortescue), 1½ miles.		Kingcausie, 1½ miles.
Blair College, 1 mile.		Blair College.
Heathcote and Ardoe (Mr. A. M. Ogston), 2½ miles.		Murtle (Mr. W. Dunn).
Banchory Devenick (Sir D. Stewart), 2 miles, partly netted.	↓	Inchgarth (Mr. W. R. Reid), ¾ mile.
		Garthdee, 1½ miles, partly netted.
Tideway.		Tideway.
	ABERDEEN	
	↓	

THE DEVERON CRUIVES.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE DEVERON

With a drainage area of four hundred and seventy-two square miles, rises on the western boundaries of Aberdeenshire, and, flowing through the Cabrach district, it has a total run of some sixty miles, during which it receives many small tributaries before it falls into the North Sea at Banff, over a narrow bar of shallow gravel, which offers a perfect place for the use of the net and coble. There are bag-nets on either side of the mouth as near as they may lawfully come; while some two miles up stream there used to be the Duke of Fife's cruives, which from time immemorial have been the subject of endless disputes and litigation, but, happily to relate, on the 11th of February, 1898, they were pulled down, the lengthy negotiations at last ending in their purchase by the upper proprietors. The removal of these cruives ought to be of the greatest benefit to the river, and as they are now gone for ever, it may be of interest to show what they once were like and what they now are.

The average take to the rod of the whole river varies according to the rain or drought of each season, and ranges from two hundred to five hundred fish, which latter number was reached in 1861. These figures, however, refer almost entirely to autumn fish, for so close did nets and cruives formerly work that it was quite a rare event for anyone to take a spring fish, and angling was not seriously prosecuted until the removal of the nets and opening of the cruives on the 26th of August.

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Since the destruction of these obstacles, the springs and summers that have intervened have been so remarkably dry that as yet there has been no fair opportunity of seeing what difference will be made in the spring sport. The river opens on the 11th of February, and has the usual close times, and unlike so many rivers on the West Coast, this opening date is rightly fixed, as it is an early river, and there are always clean fish at the very commencement of the season. It is also a river of big fish, for each season gives some of from thirty to nearly fifty pounds. May and June are the best months in the upper waters (always provided there is rain), and September and October on the lower reaches, for during the angling season the autumn run of fish does not ascend further than ten miles above Huntly. Wading trousers are necessary on most of the beats. Flies are rarely dressed on irons that are over two inches in length, the local ones being chiefly made up of variations of mallard and brown turkey wing with orange and yellow mohair, reddish hackles and gold or silver tinsel; most of the standard patterns will, however, be just as useful. For the lower reaches a rod of eighteen feet will be wanted, though above Huntly a smaller one should be used.

There are many fine beats on this river, and to describe each one minutely would perhaps be wearisome to my readers, so I have confined myself to speaking of a few of the best.

On the left bank the chief anglings are those of Beldornie, Edinglassie, Huntly, Mayen, Netherdale, Forglen, Carnoustie, and Duff House.

On the right bank are those of Cobairdy, Forglen, Armiddle, Dunlugas and Mountcoffer.

The Beldornie Castle water is some ten miles above Huntly, and this reach and all the other upper ones are famed for their trouting. The Castle water extends for some two miles on both banks, and then the left one has the angling right for a further mile and a half. In the whole distance there

are twenty-four named pools, the choicest of which are Crackit Pot, Intake, Crombie, and Hame Mill. May to October are the best months, and grilse may be met with any time when there is a spate during June, July, and August. A sixteen-foot rod will cover the water, and at times wading stockings are an advantage. From twenty to forty fish may be looked for, depending on the rainfall.

The Edinglassie or Glenmarkie water, situated some five miles above Huntly, extends to three miles on the left bank, and while offering splendid trouting, yet yields in favourable seasons from twenty to forty salmon from the many pools on this water, which can mostly be fished by a fourteen-foot rod without waders. The best pools are the Churchyard, Edinglassie Kale Pot, Wallakirk, and the Blue Rock.

The Ardmeallie water near Rothiemay extends for two miles on the right bank and about a mile and a half on the left. A rod of sixteen to seventeen feet will cover all the pools, of which there are nine. Prawn and gudgeon are sometimes used with success, and for the size of the river salmon run rather large. There are very few sea trout in the river, and one or two is all that can be expected. Since 1895 this reach, in common with all the others on the Deveron, has not done well; most of the anglers attribute this to the fact that in the winter of 1894–5 a portion of the Cruive Dyke was washed away and rebuilt in such a manner that it was almost impossible for a fish to pass it, the result being enormous takes by the netsmen below the dyke, and the consequent depletion of the salmon stock, and had that dyke continued in the same state, the Deveron would soon have ceased to exist as a salmon river. Now that it has been removed, there is but little doubt that the river will recover and again do well, though it must be some years before this can be accomplished. The signs, however, are encouraging, for greater precautions are now taken to preserve the fish breeding in the small waters above Huntly, and it only wants a slight lengthening of the weekly close

time to make this an excellent river for spring and autumn fishing.

The Mayen water is another good stretch which begins some few miles below Rothiemay, and goes down for nearly three and a half miles on the left bank, and nearly a mile on the opposite one.

From the 15th of July to the 15th of August is the best grilse month, from the 15th of April to the 15th of May is the best time for spring fish, and September and October for autumn salmon.

When dealing with this river, it must not be forgotten that, owing to its being entirely dependent on rain, it is one of the most uncertain; but with plenty of that, sport is almost assured, though it runs down very quickly owing to the good drainage system prevailing throughout its course. On this section the removal of the cruive has already made a difference, and some spring fish have been killed in each season—a matter which hardly ever happened before its destruction.

The Deveron is certainly, when in ply, a charming river to fish, whether for salmon or trout, but chiefly so for those who can live for some months on its banks and be ever ready to take advantage of a rainfall; the angler who comes for just a short time should possess more than the average supply of patience and equanimity. On this section the fly is the only lure permitted. The Silver Grey, Lady Caroline, and one or two varieties of Glen Tana and Childers are all very good.

The Craigston water, belonging to Colonel Pollard Urquhart, is near Turriff, and covers a mile of the right bank and about a quarter of a mile of the opposite one. August, September, and October are the best months on this section. Wading trousers are necessary, and a rod of eighteen feet is required to cover the water, Jock Scot, Lady Caroline, and Glen Tana being the favourite flies, though at times the worm is used with success. The three best pools are Scatterby, Stony, and the Boat.

The Forglen water, belonging to Sir Robert Abercromby, and opposite Turriff, is one of the best reaches on the river, as it extends to four and a half miles on the left bank, and three and a half on the right. Wading trousers are necessary, and with these the water can be covered with a sixteen-foot rod. The fly is the only lure used, the favourites being the same as those mentioned above. The average take on this section is from ninety to a hundred fish of eleven pounds. In September, 1891, one rod had eight in a day, while the largest ever got on this water was forty-two and a half pounds, killed in October, 1877. There are fifteen good pools, of which the Embankment, Ponend, Morison's, Lord Banff's and Ashoyle are the best.

The Dunlugas water, also belonging to Sir Robert Abercromby, is two and a half miles in extent on the right bank. Wading trousers are necessary, the fly the only lure permitted, and the average take fifty to sixty fish from the seven pools, of which the Boghead and Bogbraes are the two best.

The Mountblairey water of Colonel Morison is also a fine stretch, and extends for between four and five miles on the left bank, and for some six hundred yards on the right. June and July are best for grilse, and the latter part of the season for salmon. Wading trousers are necessary, and nothing but the fly is used. There are thirteen good pools, Wood of Shaws, Scatterby, and Thieves' Pot being the chief ones.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE DON

Rises 1,640 feet above sea-level in a peat moss in the high hills joining Ben Avon on the Aberdeenshire border. It drains five hundred square miles, and after a run of upwards of seventy miles, falls into the German Ocean a little more than two miles to the north of Dee mouth, in which short distance there are now twenty bag-nets and thirteen stake-nets at work, which is a very large increase on the number that worked there in 1850; and in my humble opinion no nets should be allowed to be fixed between the mouths of rivers running into the sea quite close to each other.

It is not very easy to deal with the Don as a salmon river, for there are so many conflicting interests that in discussing them it becomes impossible to please everybody. Its existing value as a salmon angling river is hardly worth mentioning at any point above about twenty miles from the sea. At Monymusk, for instance, in the eleven miles of fine water that belong to the estate, up to the 17th of August in last season (1899) not a single fish had been caught! Cruives, dykes, dams, and pollutions are rife in the lower reaches, and the manufactories abstract such large quantities of water from the river that, except in times of heavy floods, none goes over the dams, and the fish are hopelessly bottled up below. There is, however, no reason that the river should not be as famous for its salmon as it is for its trout. If the cruives of the Don could but be opened up and some limit placed on the quantity of water that

a mill or factory might legally take from the river, then probably the spring angling would speedily become worth having.* These cruives of the Don are described in the Reports of the Fishery Board as the most destructive in Scotland, and as giving the owners a virtual monopoly of the river.

There are dams at Kettock's Mills, Persley, Stoneywood, and Mugiemoss, and numerous paper mills and bleaching works, etc., empty their refuse into the river. All these matters were mentioned and complained of by the Fishery Board as long ago as 1871, while the upper owners have addressed endless complaints to the Secretary of State, but all to no purpose, for these obstructions and pollutions still exist. In 1888 the river watchers commenced to catch the autumn salmon congregated below Mugiemoss dam and conveyed them to the river above it; and in 1889 nine hundred fish were so moved up stream. The intakes of the mill lades are, however, so poorly guarded by hecks, that each season sees thousands of smolts killed by the mill wheels as they make their way to the sea.

On behalf of the cruive owners, of which there are several, it must not be overlooked that these cruives have existed for a very long period, and that up to about fifteen years ago they were a property of considerable value. Owing, however, to the obstructions on the river by the dykes of the factories and the large quantities of water abstracted by them for their various processes, and to the serious pollutions caused by their refuse, as well as by sewage, the cruive fishings have now greatly diminished in value; so much so, that during the last two seasons the whole take from the cruives and on the Nether Don nettings below has not exceeded two barrels a season —the barrel in this district being four hundred and sixteen pounds in weight, which probably represents less than one hundred fish in the two seasons! Compare this with the take on the Dee (but a few miles away) Fisheries of the Aberdeen Harbour Commissioners, which in 1896 amounted to over twenty thousand salmon and grilse, and even in the bad year

* Since this was written the Don proprietors have gained a verdict against Messrs. Pirrie for abstraction of water, which will, if ultimately successful, apply to all the factories. Leave to appeal has been granted.

of 1897 was nearly nine thousand. Statistics such as these show very clearly that there must be something radically wrong in the management of the Don.

The long-threatened litigation has at last been initiated, and proceedings are being raised by proprietors of fishings on the river with a view of having the pollutions stopped, and such curtailment made of the water abstraction by the factories as will at all times allow enough water to pass over the dam dykes to permit fish to ascend and descend whenever they like. The result of the Spey distillery refuse prosecutions will doubtlessly have a bearing on this case, but the question of the water abstraction is likely to be keenly contested, and probably some time will lapse before the matter is finally settled. The Don fishings run as follows—the mileages are only approximate, although not very much out.

RIGHT OR SOUTH BANK.		*LEFT OR NORTH BANK.*
Sir Charles Forbes.	→ To the Sea	Sir Charles Forbes. Castle Newe extends from source for 15 or 16 miles on both sides. Retained in his own hands. Fish sometimes got in October. Good spawning ground.
Glenkindie.	RIVER DON	Glenbucket, 3 miles. Poor salmon fishing. Let to Mr. Percy Hargreaves.
		Glenkindie, 4 miles. Not many fish. Old Mill and Bridge Pools the best. Belongs to Captain A. H. Leith.
Brux (the Hon. A. M. Forbes), 8 miles. Is sometimes let for autumn. Fine pools, but few fish.	→	Kildrummy, 8 miles. Belongs to and fished by proprietor, Colonel James Ogston. Roadside, Broombrae, and Newton Pools are the best. Glenkindie and Brux opposite.

RIGHT OR SOUTH BANK.		*LEFT OR NORTH BANK.*
Breda, 5 miles. Belongs to Mr. Neil McLean. Opposite to Braes o' Forbes.	↓	Braes o' Forbes, 8 miles. From Brig o' Mossat to Brig o' Alford. Good pool at Brig o' Alford and at Littlewood. Lord Forbes, proprietor. Let to Mr. McLean. Breda and Haughton opposite.
Haughton, 8 miles. Good fishing water, and fine pools. Miss Farquharson, proprietor. Opposite to Braes o' Forbes, Whitehaugh and Castle Forbes.	To the Sea	Whitehaugh, 3 miles. Commissioners of Woods and Forests, proprietors.
Monymusk, 10 or 11 miles. Sir A. H. Grant.		Castle Forbes, from Whitehaugh to Tillyfoure. Good pools in the Castle grounds. Boat and Castle Pools the best. Lord Forbes, proprietor.
Kemnay, 7 or 8 miles. Sheep, Burnhewie, and Mill Pool the best. Divided into upper, middle, and lower water. Mr. Gordon, of Manar, has the upper one. Mr. A. G. Burnett, owner.	RIVER DON	Tillyfoure. Good trouting. 2 miles. Monymusk opposite. F. R. Gregson, proprietor.
Monymusk.		Monymusk, 3 miles. Rainstone and Castle Pools best. In proprietor's hands.
Keith Hall, 2 miles. The Earl of Kintore, proprietor. Opposite Inverurie Burgh.		
Thainstone, 1½ miles. Keith Hall opposite.	↓	Fetternear, 4 miles. Fine pools. Brig and Mill Pools best. Kemnay opposite. C. S. Leslie, proprietor.
Kintore. Fine pools. Earl of Kintore.		

RIGHT OR SOUTH BANK.		*LEFT OR NORTH BANK.*
Kinellar (belongs to Aberdeen University), 1½ miles. Not much fishing.	→	Keith Hall, 2 miles.
Kinaldie, 2 miles. Moderate fishing. Wester Fintray opposite. Mr. James Milne, owner.		Manar, 2½ miles. Very good pools. H. Gordon, proprietor. Often let in autumn. Kemnay opposite.
Caskieben, 2 miles. Fintray opposite.	To the Sea	Inverurie Burgh, 2 miles. Fair angling; Polnar and Ardtannes best. Permission granted by Burgh Magistrates.
Beidliston, 1 mile. Mr. Philip, owner. Opposite Fintray.		Keith Hall, from Inverurie Burgh to Fintray House, about 10 miles, includes Balbithan, Ardtannes, and Wester Fintray, all properties of the Earl of Kintore. Intersected for about half a mile by Thainstone water. Would be splendid fishing if there were plenty of fish. Thainstone, Kintore Burgh, and part of Kinaldie opposite.
Pitmedden, 3 miles. Partly opposite Fintray and partly Parkhill. Mr. G. Thompson, owner.	RIVER DON	
Parkhill, from Pitmedden to Waterton. Mr. G. Thompson, owner.		Fintray House water lies between the end of the Keith Hall and beginning of Park Hill water, about 7 miles. Many fine pools. House, Cathal and Mill Pools the best. Lord Sempill, owner. Lord Playfair present tenant. Part of Kinaldie, Beidliston, Caskieben, Balbithan and Pitmedden opposite.
Waterton, about 2 miles. Opposite Grandholm. Fair autumn fishing, but it does not command the same pools as are on the opposite bank owing to mills. Let to Mr. P. D Malloch.	→	Parkhill lies between Fintray and Grandholm, about 5 miles. Good autumn fishing. Numerous fine pools. Pitmedden and Parkhill opposite.

THE DON AT INVERURIE, NEAR PORT ELPHINSTONE PAPER MILLS.

RIGHT OR SOUTH BANK.		*LEFT OR NORTH BANK.*
Mugiemoss, 1 mile between Waterton and the Cruives. Let to Mr. P. D. Malloch.	To the Sea	Grandholm, 4 miles. At times very good autumn fishing. Netted in netting season. Mr. W. R. Paton, owner. Let to Mr. P. D. Malloch.
Cruives of Don.	RIVER DON	Cruives of Don. Netted in netting season. Good rod fishing in autumn.
Nether Don.		Nether Don, 1½ miles from Seaton House to the sea. Good sea trout fishing. Netted during netting season.

The lower reaches of the Don are still and deep and abound with pike; those anglings that are rented by Mr. P. D. Malloch, of Perth, are let to a limited number of rods, and some years ago ten of them got an average of about seventy fish each in the two months after the nets came off. For many years past, however, the angling of the Don has fallen off so greatly that it has become difficult to gather accurate details of the numbers of fish caught. Fifteen years ago the Castle Newe water used to yield from twenty to thirty fish each season, and after the rod season ended plenty of spawners could be seen in these upper waters. On Kildrummy water from seventy to one hundred fish used to be captured, but nowadays nothing approaching this number are got, and it is rare even to see a couple of spawners on the redds of Roughmyre and Kildrummy, where formerly a hundred couples could easily be counted.

Of late years the whole of the spawning fish have been forced to pack into the Saugh and Benzie Pools below Mugiemoss and Stoneywood dams—both famous poaching places.

Wading trousers are wanted on many of the anglings. The local flies that kill on the Dee will kill here, though they should be dressed rather smaller; also nearly all the standard

THE DAM AT HOPEWELL, NEAR HOPE, CONNECTICUT, FROM MILLS.

RIGHT OR SOUTH BANK.		*LEFT OR NORTH BANK.*
Mugiemoss, 1 mile between Waterton and the Cruives. Let to Mr. P. D. Malloch.	To the Sea	Grandholm, 4 miles. At times very good autumn fishing. Netted in netting season. Mr. W. R. Paton, owner. Let to Mr. P. D. Malloch.
Cruives of Don.	RIVER DON	Cruives of Don. Netted in netting season. Good rod fishing in autumn.
Nether Don.		Nether Don, 1½ miles from Seaton House to the sea. Good sea trout fishing. Netted during netting season.

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Of late years the whole of the spawning fish have been forced to pack into the Saugh and Benzie Pools below Mugiemoss and Stoneywood dams—both famous poaching places.

Wading trousers are wanted on many of the anglings. The local flies that kill on the Dee will kill here, though they should be dressed rather smaller: also nearly all the standard

patterns will do quite as well, notably the silver bodies, Jock Scot and Gordon. The river opens on the 11th of February for rods and nets, closing for the latter on the 26th of August, and the former on the 31st of October. In addition to the fly, baits of all sorts are used, the natural minnow being the most successful.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE NORTH ESK

With a drainage area of two hundred and eighty-eight square miles, rises from three streams in Invermark Forest, two of which, the Lee and the Eunich, form Loch Lee, and after flowing from it in a good-sized stream for about a mile, are joined by the Mark, and from thence the water is called the North Esk.

From this junction just below the Manse of Loch Lee to the outfall into the German Ocean, a little to the north of Montrose, is a distance of thirty miles, in which the main stream is joined by many smaller ones, the chief of them being the Tarf, Turret, and Luther on the left bank; the Kenny, the West Water and Cruick on the right one. For its size this river is the most prolific of all the Scotch streams, and Messrs. Johnston, the Montrose tacksmen, have had as many as two thousand fish on the opening day in the few miles of water between Mary Kirk and the sea, while in 1874 the catch of the whole district was thirty thousand fish, though the usual average will be about twenty thousand, and, owing to the scarcity of grilse, the last three years have each been below this.

In 1882 the river was first seriously visited by disease, when some seven hundred fish were taken out and buried, and though since then this plague has greatly diminished, there is yet always a certain amount hanging about. In 1895, for instance, two hundred fish were removed from the river

by the watchers, the bulk of which were spawned ones; while in 1896 about five hundred fish were dealt with in a like manner.

There are three serious mill dams on the river, viz., those of Morphie or Kinnaber, Pert and Craigo; the two first-named are easily passable by *salmonidæ*, but in the last-mentioned one the "goil" has been badly placed and badly made, and consequently but few fish pass up. About four years ago an alteration for the better was effected, and since then a few more fish have ascended, though not in the quantities they should do.

It should be explained that the word "goil," which is not to be found in any dictionary that I have consulted, means a stone pass from top to bottom, and is entirely distinct from a ladder.

Mr. James Johnston, of Montrose, tells me he has a plan dated 1768 with the word "goil" in it, and that the term is well known in relation to fish passes, which makes its absence from all dictionaries the more remarkable.

It is this obstruction, in combination with the close netting of the river below, that is the cause of there being no spring angling on the upper reaches. Of course, after a flood, a few keepers and local anglers take a cast here and there, but there are no crowds of gentlemen eager to come from long distances and pay big rents for the spring angling, as they do on better managed rivers. I estimate this, having regard to the high prices good spring angling commands, as a clear loss of some £2,000 a year to the upper proprietors, for there are fully more than ten miles of good fishing water above Craigo which, if well stocked with spring fish, could be let with the angling right on both banks for £200 a mile for the first five months of the season; and as a matter of fact it would be easy to name many fishings which fetch a much higher rent.

In 1877 and in 1881 the upper owners had a taste of the good times that may be in store for them, as in both these

CHENGO GATE, NEAR [illegible]

by the watchers, the bulk of which were spawned ones; while in 1890 about five hundred fish were dealt with in a like manner.

There are three serious goil dams on the river, viz., those of [illegible], [illegible] and Craigo; the two first-named are [illegible] in the last-mentioned one the "goil" has been badly placed and badly made, and unsuccessful fish do not pass up. About four years ago an alteration [illegible] was effected, and since then a few more fish have [illegible], though not in the quantities they should do.

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Mr. James Johnston, of Montrose, tells me he has a plan [illegible] with the word "goil" in it, and that the term is well known in relation to fish passes, which makes its absence from all dictionaries the more remarkable.

It is this obstruction, in combination with the close netting of the river below, that is the cause of there being no spring angling on the upper reaches. Of course, after a flood, a few keepers and local anglers take a cast here and there, but there are no crowds of gentlemen eager to come from long distances and pay big rents for the spring angling, as they do on better managed rivers. I estimate this, having regard to the high prices good spring angling commands, as a clear loss of some £2,000 a year to the upper proprietors, for there are fully more than ten miles of good fishing water above Craigo which, if well stocked with spring fish, could be let with the angling right on both banks for £200 a mile for the first five months of the season; and as a matter of fact it would be easy to name many fishings which fetch a much higher rent.

In 1877 and in 1881 the upper owners had a taste of the good times that may be in store for them, as in both these

CRAIGO DAM, DYKE AND GOIL.

years Craigo dam was breached by heavy floods and masses of ice, and shortly afterwards the river became swarming with fish, and all the fisheries above the dam took from fifty to a hundred salmon with the rod, although as long as Craigo remained intact none of them yielded more than two or three, or at the outside five spring fish, which was an absolute confirmation of the damage done by Craigo dam!

This obstruction is the property of Miss Carnegy, of Craigo, and although it has been the subject of various lawsuits brought by the upper proprietors, it still remains a hindrance to the free run of the fish and a bar to the proper and fair development of the capabilities of this fine river. No improvement can be looked for until the Craigo goil is altered and made as good and efficient as that at Morphie dam, which may be regarded as a typical one of the best sort. Failing this, it is to be regretted that the upper owners do not club together and purchase the dam and make a gap in it, and probably any sum paid over and above a fair price would speedily be recouped by the benefits derived. Of course Craigo dam could only be purchased by agreement with the owner or owners, but if they were willing to sell, then I do not think the owners below Craigo could raise any valid objections to the abolition of an unjust and injurious monopoly, which has already existed much too long, and to which it is high time an end was put.

Each season the North Esk gives some very heavy fish both to the nets and the rods, the former as usual getting the largest, which range from thirty-five to fifty-five pounds. In November, 1889, a kelt was found dead in one of the upper pools which weighed fifty-eight pounds, and this was probably the heaviest fish ever got in the river, as if in condition it would have weighed close on seventy pounds.

The North Esk is protected by a powerful staff of well-trained watchers, the chief form of poaching being stroke hauling or "sniggering," for in times of low water the salmon

gather thickly in the pools and below Craigo dam, and then, though they will not rise to a fly, it is easy to sink a hook where they are thickest and strike home as soon as it touches a fish. Happily for some years past this practice has been on the decline, for the anglings have been let to good sportsmen, while the river watchers by their vigilance have to a great extent overcome this method of poaching by farm servants and others.

The sea coasts of the North and South Esks, which fall into the sea but five miles apart, are very severely netted, as will be seen when it can be stated that in 1882 there were in this five miles no less than one hundred and twenty bag and stake nets, or twenty-four in every mile; in 1894 these had been still further increased to one hundred and eighty, or thirty-six nets in every mile, or one in each fifty yards; but in 1899 these nets had decreased to one hundred and ten bag and fly nets and sixteen ware shot nets in the river, which latter are steadily worked in times of flood. The decrease in fixed nets has been caused solely by scarcity of fish, and at the smallest sign of a good year coming they would all be put on again. Of course they are not put down exactly at every fifty yards, as these nets are frequently "outrigged," which means that three or four or more nets are run out to sea one beyond the other.

The following are the fishings of the North Esk from its source: Lord Dalhousie has twenty-one and a half miles on the right bank and some seventeen miles on the left one, which is divided between the shootings of Invermark, Ferneybank, Gannochy, Millden, The Retreat, and Edzell, each of which will yield in favourable seasons a few autumn fish, the best chances on the whole reach being at Big and Little Gannochy Pools below the bridge, and at the Coble Pool above Edzell dam. Below this long length of water there comes on the left bank the Burn and Arnhall reach. This is followed by Dalladies, and then Stracathro joins on for a mile of both banks.

THE BOTHIE POOL OF CANTERLAND WATER.

[illegible] on the left bank comes the Inglismaldie section, [illegible] Kintore and let to Lord Digby, a mile and [illegible] water in which is the Dyke Stream, the Boat [illegible]; following this comes about half a mile of [illegible] Gallery and Pert has half a mile of this [illegible] Kirktonhill following, each with three-[illegible]. On the opposite or right bank is Mr. [illegible] Pert water, sublet to Lord Kintore, and [illegible]aldie, which stretch extends for about three [illegible] At the end of Gallery, Craigo joins on and [illegible] and a half with Lord Kintore's Canter-[illegible] a mile, the tenant of Canterland usually [illegible] angling of Craigo—the Kinnairdy Pool, [illegible], the Pantry, and Logie being the best [illegible] Morphie with two miles of each bank, the [illegible] and Pottaggs Pools, with the streams of Baillie [illegible] and Whemsey Braes being the best catches. Kin-[illegible] follows with three-quarters of a mile on both banks, the Laddie's Hole, the Flat, and the Concrete Pool being good ones.

Lord Kintore's rod fishings are the best on the river, and in some seasons very good sport is to be had. The one just ended, that of 1899, has been the worst on record, the Morphie gave but fourteen salmon and sixty-three grilse; Craigo and Canterland, nineteen salmon and sixteen grilse; while the angling of the whole of the rest of the river yielded but eighteen or twenty salmon and some fifty grilse. In addition there were some sixty or seventy sea trout taken in the whole of the fishings.

In 1897, four rods fishing the Morphie [illegible] had in three days, from the 21st of [illegible] fish, of which the largest of thirty [illegible] of Mr. W. H. Jones.

This river [illegible] the [illegible] the lower [illegible] the [illegible]

THE BOTHIE POOL OF CANTERLAND WATER.

Below this on the left bank comes the Inglismaldie section, belonging to Lord Kintore and let to Lord Digby, a mile and a half of good water in which is the Dyke Stream, the Boat and Bridge Pools; following this comes about half a mile of Balmakewan, then Gallery and Pert has half a mile of this bank; Hatton and Kirktonhill following, each with three-quarters of a mile. On the opposite or right bank is Mr. Lyall's Gallery and Pert water, sublet to Lord Kintore, and relet with Inglismaldie, which stretch extends for about three and a half miles. At the end of Gallery, Craigo joins on and goes down for a mile and a half with Lord Kintore's Canterland opposite for a mile, the tenant of Canterland usually renting the opposite angling of Craigo—the Kinnairdy Pool, Peter's Stream and Pot, the Pantry, and Logie being the best casts; next comes Morphie with two miles of each bank, the Grange, Dyke, and Ponnage Pools, with the streams of Baillie Middleton and Whinney Brae, being the best catches. Kinnaber follows with three-quarters of a mile on both banks, the Laddie's Hole, the Flat, and the Concrete Pool being good ones.

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In 1897, four rods fishing the Morphie and Kinnairdy water had in three days, from the 21st of October, twenty-four heavy fish, of which the largest of thirty-eight pounds fell to the rod of Mr. W. H. Jones.

This river opens for rod and net on the 16th of February; the latter coming off on the 31st of August, and the former

on the 31st of October. If these seasons were fixed to end respectively on the 20th of August and the 20th of October, if the weekly close time were extended by an additional twelve hours, if the goil of Craigo dam were made perfectly right, and if the fall called the Loup on the Westwater at Edzell were made easily passable, then in a few years angling on this beautiful river would be eagerly sought for both in spring and autumn, while the extra stock of fish let into the river by the lengthened close time and the fresh breeding grounds opened up above the Loup would speedily bring back to the netters the good times when they took their thirty thousand fish each season.

The best flies are Silver Grey, Jock Scot, Red Rover for dark water, and Childers. Bait-fishing is not prohibited, and minnows, prawns, and worms will all kill. Wading trousers are necessary.

CHAPTER XXX

THE SOUTH ESK

WITH a drainage area of two hundred and forty-five square miles, rises in the parish of Glen Doll, and is formed by two streams of nearly equal size, and each about seven miles in length. One of these, the Esk proper, rises below Cairn Bannoch, in Forfarshire, near the border of Aberdeenshire, and flows through the Forest of Bachnagairn, which is now part of Glenmuick; the other stream, the White Water, rising behind Tom Buidhe, and passing through the deer lands of Glen Doll. Below the junction of these streams at Braedounie it receives the waters of Loch Brandy and Loch Wharrel, the burns of Kennet and Glenmarkie, and several other smaller affluents, but it is not until after it receives the Prosen water a little below Cortachy, about twenty-two miles from the Cairn Bannoch source, that it becomes a fairly large river. From the junction with the Prosen (which, by the way, at times yields an autumn fish or two, though they are hardly worth eating) to Brechin is some fifteen miles, during which it receives the Noran water, and from that city to the tidal estuary, termed the Basin of Montrose, is about a further five miles, in which distance the Pow Burn is the chief tributary, while from the Basin to the open sea is another four miles; therefore, without following very closely every turn of the river, it can be roughly estimated that the South Esk has a total run of fifty miles. The chief rod fishing is below Brechin, and as the sea is neared both sea trout and finnocks become plentiful.

In 1870, when the late Mr. Frank Buckland visited Brechin, he reported this river to be the worst treated, but the best in Scotland, having regard to its size, for breeding purposes; for in those days the numerous dams on the river nearly totally barred the ascent of fish to the upper spawning grounds, so that it was only in very high floods that they could pass up, while in periods of low water they were forced to congregate in the pool below Brechin dam, where they were poisoned by the refuse of the manufactories. The Fishery Board of the district was, however, an active one, and urged by the representations of the Court of Session, it ordered the manufacturers to form purifying tanks for their refuse. The Town Council of Brechin established a farm for the purification of the city sewage, and the Fishery Board placed effective goils and ladders in the dams at Brechin Castle, East Mill, and Kinnaird, up which fish were seen passing a few hours after they were opened.

All nets were removed from the actual river by a mutual agreement between the Earl of Southesk and the other proprietors owning netting rights, though there is still a certain amount of netting done in one part of the wide estuary opposite Rossie Castle, near Montrose. The Earl of Dalhousie at the same time agreed to forego his cruive right at Brechin, while as the river is now protected by a strong staff of watchers, it is perhaps one of the best managed in Scotland. Poaching is somewhat prevalent, chiefly by snatching, which is but too common both on this and the sister river, the North Esk.

The result of the good management is shown in the steady increase of the rental of the North and South Esk district from £1,536 in 1874 to £3,149 in 1897. I think, however, this might be considerably augmented if the spring angling on both these rivers were made first-rate. As it is, the spring fishing of the Kinnaird water on the South Esk is not to be despised, and is regularly let and eagerly taken up by anglers; but the spring fishing of the North Esk is not worth paying for. Some of the anglers who live on the banks take an occasional cast

after a flood, and now and again they get a fish, but it would not be worth while to go on purpose or to draw a cheque for the privilege.

Now if the stock of spring fish in the South Esk were quadrupled and that of the North Esk multiplied several hundred times, there would be at least twenty to thirty miles of spring angling to put on the market, for really good rod-fishing is in ever-increasing demand, and has become more remunerative to fishery owners than the letting of their netting rights, as is amply proved by the statistics of the Dee and the Tay.

I am not advocating the entire removal of the nets from the mouth of the North Esk, and probably an extra twenty-four hours' slap both for coast and river would amply suffice to bring about the necessary improvement.

In 1891 the nets of the coast and the rivers of this district took no less than forty-two thousand fish, while the united yield of the two rivers to the rod was under nine hundred, or forty-six to one, and it must not be forgotten that the bulk of the rod fish were taken after the removal of the nets on the 1st of September.

Supposing that only twenty miles of quite new or greatly improved spring angling were forthcoming from the banks of the two rivers, and that each mile yielded an average of twenty fish a month—surely not an extravagant estimate—then the right of fishing both banks of each mile from the 15th of February to the 1st of September—five months—would easily let for £200 a mile. This would mean a capture of two thousand fish to the rods of the two rivers before the removal of the nets on the 1st of September, which would probably entail at first a loss of four or five thousand fish to the nets; but taking the average weight at ten pounds, and the average price at a shilling a pound, there would still remain a clear profit of £2,000 a year derived from the angling rents.

In addition, there is nearly the certainty that the first loss to the nets would be recouped a hundredfold as soon as sufficient

time had elapsed to permit the fry of the increased numbers of breeding fish to return as grilse and salmon.

The South Esk often yields heavy fish, and hardly a season goes by without net or rod reporting the take of fish ranging from forty-five to fifty pounds in weight. As the fish have now no difficulty in ascending the dams in times of water plenty, it is hoped that the angling above Brechin will improve very much.

From Brechin to Tanadice is some twelve miles by the river, in which distance there are about thirty-five pools, some of them very good, although in many cases they are too streamy to hold fish except when the water is very high. The anglings of this stretch are chiefly those of the estates of Finavon and Carieston.

From Tanadice to Cortachy is about eight miles by river, but much of it is boulders and shallows, and therefore not very good for angling; there are, however, fine big pools at New Mill, Inshewan, and Shielhill.

From Cortachy to Glen Clova is about fourteen miles, in which there are some fair pools for holding fish, especially between the Bridge of Ballgello and Rottal. Four miles above Clova the river divides, as already described, and from this point upwards it becomes too small for salmon angling.

It was only in 1898 that improved ladders were put on the dams below, and the dry seasons that have followed have prevented fish from ascending, but in any wet spring-times which may come in future there should be good angling on the Cortachy and Clova reaches from April onwards. Wading stockings are useful, and trousers on the lower reaches.

The chief flies are the Doctors, Silver Bodies, the Member, Popham, Thunder and Lightning, Red Rover, Bull Dog, and Jock Scot.

The river opens on the 16th of February for nets and rods; closes for the former on the 31st of August, and for the latter on the 31st of October.

BRECHIN CASTLE.

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BRECHIN CASTLE.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE ETIVE

THIS is an impetuous mountain stream draining thirty-eight square miles of hill country, rising in the small Loch of Mathair Etive in the Black Mount Forest, about a thousand feet above the sea, and two miles to the north of Kingshouse Inn, close by which it flows, to be shortly joined by its chief tributary, the Coupal, from which point to Dalness House it tumbles and rushes along a rocky bed through a wild, steep glen in the forest, and passes round the foot of the remarkable and well-known Buchaille Etive, with its stony, sugar-loaf summit towering three thousand feet above. On reaching Dalness House it dashes over a sheer fall of fully twenty feet, an effectual bar to the further ascent of fish, as the expense of overcoming such a formidable obstacle would never be repaid by the salmonizing of the waters above it.

From Kingshouse to Dalness is eight miles, while from the falls to the salt water of Loch Etive is another four. The angling of the Fall Pool belongs entirely to Mrs. Stewart of Dalness, but at the end of this deep, long pool Mr. Greaves of Glen Etive comes in. Both proprietors preserve strictly and give no leave to strangers.

It is somewhat remarkable that this little Loch Etive, which eventually sends its waters to the Atlantic, is barely a mile from Loch Gaincambach on Rannoch Moor, whose overflow reaches the German Ocean through the Tay, and therefore if the falls of the Tummel were opened up, the fish of the two coasts would very nearly meet.

To fish this river to any good purpose, the angler must either be a guest at Dalness or Glen Etive, for it rises and falls with great rapidity and has to be taken exactly at the right moment. It opens on the 11th of February, and has the same close times as others that open on that day, although as a matter of fact there are no fish until June and July. Having regard to the size of the stream, both salmon and sea trout are occasionally of heavy weights. No wading is required, while a fourteen-foot rod will do all the work, and any of the small standard patterns will kill—Jock Scot, Thunder and Lightning, and Blue Doctor for choice. Sea trout incline to a sombre-looking small fly with a black body, black hackle, narrow silver twists and wings of the wing of the mallard.

On several occasions I have sailed up to the river mouth from Kilmaronaig in hopes of finding it in order, but though there had been plenty of rain at our starting point on each of these occasions, the showers proved local ones, and the Etive was dry, so therefore I cannot say I have ever wetted a line on it. On each of these trips we fished the brack water (in fact, salt was hardly to be tasted) at the mouth of the river, and though there were plenty of sea trout and a few grilse splashing, we never succeeded in getting more than a couple, and as they were offered many different flies and phantoms, we came to the conclusion that in this locality they would not lay hold as freely as they do in some similar places; therefore anglers making trips to the head of Loch Etive from Taynuilt may be assured they will get but little, if indeed any, sport.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE EUCHAR

DRAINS some twenty-five square miles of hilly country, and is one more of those charming little rivers of the West Coast which issue from lochs, and have short, rapid runs to the sea. Rising in Loch Scammadale, for the first three miles it hurries along by banks of heather, bog myrtle, rushes and bracken, when it tumbles over a fall of several feet, from which point it seems to run with increased speed alongside the high road from Oban to Culfail through a mile of rocky gorge, until it falls into the sea close to the picturesque little shooting-box of Kilninver.

Except in times of drought the falls are not a serious obstacle to the passage of fish; they naturally hang about in the pool before making the ascent, and in the old days many a large haul was made here by the net. There are very few brown trout, and those so small that they are not worth catching.

The river opens on the 11th of February, with the usual close time, but no fish make their appearance until the beginning of June, when sea trout enter the river some time between the 10th and the 15th; about ten days later the salmon follow, and then at a like interval come the grilse. The whole of the angling goes with the Kilninver shootings, which belong to Lord Breadalbane, and have for many years been rented by Mr. W. R. Galbraith, who preserves it strictly. A fourteen-foot rod or a short, stout, single-handed one will do all the work; no waders are wanted, and the best flies are small Jock

Scots and Doctors, while, if the worm is used, it is often taken freely. From twenty to thirty fish, averaging ten pounds, are got in the season.

Loch Scammadale, a cold, dreary-looking loch about two miles long by a half broad, is twelve miles from Oban and eight from the inn at Culfail.

Kilninver Lodge has one boat on it, and by a recent arrangement I believe the Culfail Inn has another. As far back as twenty-five years ago this loch had a reputation for its baskets of sea trout; and incited by local stories of forty, fifty, and even a hundred having been caught in a day, and as at that time I had the small shootings of Ardconnel, near Oban, as soon as permission was kindly given I paid many visits to Loch Scammadale, always hoping to meet with one of these red-letter days, but ever returning disappointed, for in the whole of our trips fifteen sea trout to two rods was the best day, and frequently it was not more than three or four each.

The gardener at Kilninver, who knows the loch well, told us the best flies for it were "claret and mallard," "brown and mallard," and "green and teal." We tried them, together with some fifty other patterns, with the result already described.

There is no doubt that the angling of both the Euchar and Loch Scammadale is ruined by the hard netting in Loch Feochan during the fishing season, and by poaching by scringers after it has ended.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE FINDHORN

Rises in the deer forest of Coignafearn, in the Monaliadh Mountains, and after a course of from sixty to seventy miles, in which it drains three hundred and forty-six square miles of country, it runs into the Moray Firth at Findhorn. The chief tributaries are the Moy, flowing from the loch of the same name, and the Dorback, emptying Loch an Dorb. The best angling water is in the twenty miles lying between and commencing a little above the Bridge of Dulsie and ending at the top of the famous Sluie Pool, in which netting by boat and coble commences and is carried on with the greatest energy right down to the ever-shifting mouth of the Findhorn.

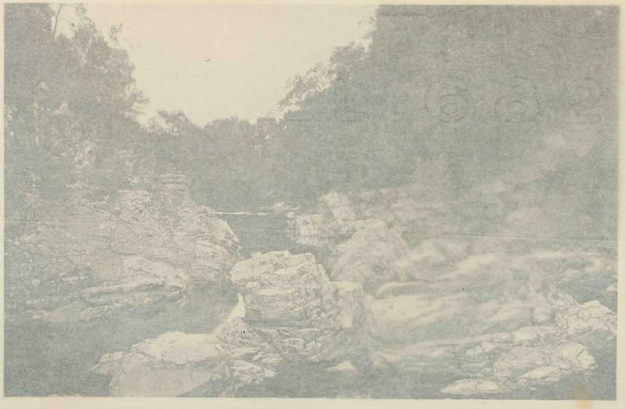
As far as spring and summer sport is concerned, this beautiful river is nearly a blank, for not only are the ascending fish caught in the river nets, but to the east of Findhorn mouth, in Burghead Bay, and to the west in Findhorn Bay, the whole coast bristles with stake and bag nets, which trap a very large quantity of fish, and naturally under such circumstances the owners of the twenty miles of good angling water which lies above Sluie are quite left out in the cold, for there can be no doubt that, if the river were even fairly well stocked, the angling would be valuable either for sport to the owners or for letting. In 1840 or thereabouts it was not uncommon for anglers to get from five to ten fish in a day. Thirty years later, in 1870, it came to be thought quite good sport if during the whole netting season every two miles of water gave a fish to the rod! That state of affairs still continues, and it would

now be impossible to kill as many fish in a whole season as were killed in a day in 1840.

The Sluie Pool has from time immemorial been famed for its netting, and from it there came the second largest haul of fish ever recorded. In 1648 the Earl of Moray wrote to his Countess that "in one night on the pool of Sluie alone thirteen thousand salmon were taken, and twenty-six scores at one draught." About the year 1800 this pool gave up three hundred and sixty fish in one day, but in 1842 it was reported that the total yield of all the pools for the whole season had fallen below seven hundred. But what can be expected when, in 1882, on the twenty-one miles of coast in the Findhorn district, there were one hundred and thirty-seven fixed nets, or one in every two hundred and seventy yards? Another example of that greedy and unscrupulous over-netting which, if not restricted, will eventually ruin alike our salmon fisheries and salmon anglings. The Findhorn estuary also requires revising, and should be widened; and if the limits on this and on all other rivers were clearly marked by posts, a good deal of misconception would be avoided, for the existing definitions of many of the estuaries are very puzzling reading.

Here is the description of the one belonging to the Findhorn. "A line drawn due North from the outermost of the two shipping piers of the Town of Findhorn as extends from High-water Mark outwards to two hundred yards below Low Water of Equinoctial Spring Tides; on the West a line parallel with and one and a half mile distant from the foregoing described line, and also extending outwards from High-water Mark to two hundred yards below Low Water of Equinoctial Spring Tides, and on the North a line of two hundred yards out from Low Water of Equinoctial Spring Tides, and connecting the outer ends of the two lines hereinbefore described."

Now, dear reader, if you want a puzzle to while away time



THE SLUICE POOL.

now be expected, or will we ever see, fish to a whole season as were killed in a few days ago.

The Spey, and its tributaries, have immemorial been famed for its salmon, and there is hardly a year passes the second largest haul of fish ever recorded, in which the Earl of Moray wrote to his Factor, Mr. Stewart, as the pool of Sluie alone thirteen [illegible] and twenty-six scores at one [illegible] this pool gave up three [illegible] day, but in 1842 it was reported [illegible] pools for the whole season had [illegible] But what can be expected when, [illegible] miles of coast in the Findhorn [illegible] hundred and thirty-seven fixed nets, or one in every two hundred and seventy yards? Another [illegible] greedy and unscrupulous over-netting which, [illegible] will eventually ruin alike our salmon fisheries and salmon anglings. The Findhorn estuary also requires revising, and should be widened; and if the limits on this and on all other rivers were clearly marked by posts, a good deal of misconception would be avoided, for the existing definitions of many of the estuaries are very puzzling reading.

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Now, dear reader, if you want a puzzle to while away time

THE SLUICE POOL.

on a non-fishing day, take pencil and paper and try and draw the Findhorn estuary. It will occupy you the best part of half an hour, and it is no certainty then that you will have solved the problem correctly; therefore, how can uneducated fishermen be expected to work out such an intricate matter?

Though the Findhorn opens on February 11th, the chief run of salmon is in April and May; grilse and sea trout follow at the end of June, the latter seldom passing above the Sluie Pool. Each season yields some heavy fish to the nets, but the average may be taken as twelve pounds for salmon, between three and four for grilse, and one pound for sea trout.

Sluie Pool is ten miles from the sea, the intermediate water being netted by Messrs. Hogarth for the first six miles from the mouth; above that comes the Earl of Moray's Darnaway Castle reach on both banks; next above, on the right bank, is Mrs. Ernald Smith's beautiful stretch of Relugas; above that, and still on the right bank, is the Earl of Leven and Melville's Glenferness, with Mr. Alexander Brodie's Lethen water opposite, and in possession of both banks as Glenferness ends; above this follows Earl Cawdor's stretch of the river for some miles on both banks; and, again, above this, on the right bank, come Corneybrough Clune and Dalmigavie, while on the left bank above the Cawdor water come Moy Hall, Tomatin, Kylachy, and Glenmazeran. But these upper reaches are not of much account, although in the spawning season the fish ascend to within a few miles of Coignafearn Lodge. The netting season ends on the 26th of August, and the rods cease on the 10th of October, though for several years past it has been urged by some of the proprietors that it should be continued till the end of the month. Nearly all the standard flies will kill, but Jock Scot and Butcher are perhaps the favourites; waders are not wanted except in times of spate; the gaff can be used all the season, and while on some of the anglings bait-fishing is not allowed, it is permitted on others, the worm being the most deadly lure.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE KINGLASS

THIS clear-running little river, which rises some two thousand two hundred feet above sea-level in the corrie at the foot of Ben Aighean and Ben Glass More—both of them high, stony hills of the Black Mount belonging to Lord Breadalbane—flows entirely through lands that are under deer, and one of the forest lodges, prettily placed on the river bank, is curiously enough built on ground which was once the centre of a lake. It is most strictly preserved, and kept exclusively for the use of the owner and his guests. The upper part is always a rapid, tumbling stream, which wet weather quickly turns into a roaring mountain torrent. About a mile above the lodge there is a sheer fall of some twelve or fourteen feet, and from this to the sea, a distance of seven miles, the river settles down into a somewhat smoother running water, in which there are fully twenty-five pools for salmon and sea trout, the best being those of the Rock, Maiden, Ford, Dog's, and the Bridge at Inverkinglass near the sea, where, about a hundred years ago, there was an iron-smelting furnace and a large pine forest, which by degrees was cut down to supply fuel.

The river opens on the 11th of February, and has the usual close times. No fish ever appear until with the first flood after the middle of June, but from then until the end of September fish run freely whenever there is water, and as the spawning beds are good and ample, there is space for a large stock. The first run of sea trout average three pounds, and from ten to twenty of these fine fellows are at

THE BRIDGE AND HOME MARKET LODGE.

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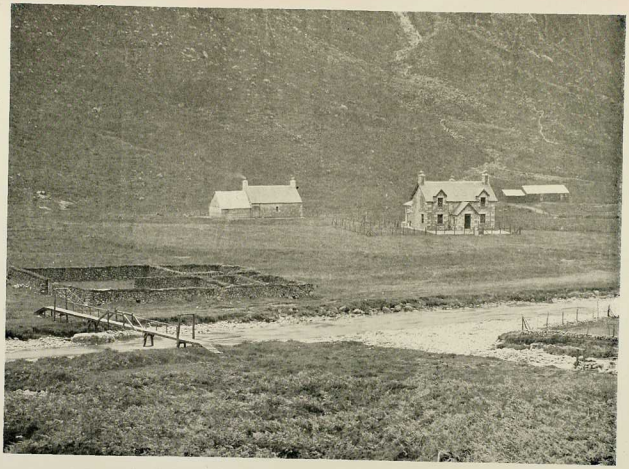

THE KINGLASS AND BLACK FOREST LODGE.

times taken in a day. Salmon do not run very heavy, their average being ten pounds, while none of over twenty have ever been caught. A light grilse rod or a stout one-handed trout rod will easily cover the water, and the same patterns of salmon and sea trout flies that are best on the Awe are also good here; the worm is freely taken, but very seldom used; no waders are absolutely necessary, but when the river is right, knee boots are useful to an angler wishing to keep quite dry-shod.

The Kinglass is fifteen miles across country from Bridge of Orchy, and eleven from the Black Mount Lodge on Loch Tulla; from Taynuilt it is best reached by water, though there is a wild and rough tramp of five miles along the shores of Loch Etive, but so quickly does the river rise and fall that it is quite possible for it to be in ply in the morning and hardly worth casting in the afternoon. Many years ago, when the Black Mount was let to the late Lord Dudley—a very keen angler—he kindly gave me leave for a day on the Kinglass during a July that I was spending on the Awe. Patiently did I wait my opportunity, and when at last a heavy thunderstorm came one evening, and my ghillie reported next morning that the Awe was about a foot up, I at once started off to tramp up to the Kinglass in expectation of a real good day. On arriving at the mouth we found it dead low, the storm having missed the hills which it drained, so after taking a walk up the river in a very depressed state—for a tramp of some twenty miles all for nothing *is* depressing—we hastened back for a late cast on the Awe.

In reply to inquiries addressed to him by the Fishery Board in 1888, Lord Breadalbane very wisely advocates a shortening of the rod season, and suggests that for the rivers of these parts the 10th of October would be a much more suitable closing date than the present 31st; he also unites with the other proprietors of the West Coast in complaints of the non-observance of the weekly close time, of the poaching by yachts, and of the "enormously increasing" poaching by scringing.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE LEVEN OF LOCH LEVEN

Flows entirely through lands that are under deer, for, rising in the Sword Loch in Corrour Forest, it pushes its way through a flattish country of peat moss until, after a run of some twenty miles, it falls into the salt water of Loch Leven. For the first few miles of its course it is called the Blackwater, and whether in flood or in drought its appearance well warrants the name. Up to a certain point it forms the march between Corrour and Black Corries, until, on passing the shepherd's house at Caïmb, and rounding the base of stag-famed Ben-y-Vricht, it becomes the march with Mamore Forest, while from the start to nearly the finish it is also the boundary between Argyll and Inverness.

About a mile from the sea there is an effectual bar to the passage of fish in the shape of a sheer fall of twenty feet, and as above this there are three others of a similar character, it will easily be seen that the cost of laddering them would not yield benefits in proportion to the outlay. The last six miles of the Leven are very rapid, the fall being close on one thousand feet!

The fishable portion of the river is therefore confined to about a mile of water. It is purely a spate river, and in dry seasons no sport can be got, but when in fishing ply it is a strong, rapid-running, sporting piece of water, on which a stout rod and sound tackle are wanted. No waders are required; small standard flies are used except in a very heavy spate. In September and October the worm is occasionally

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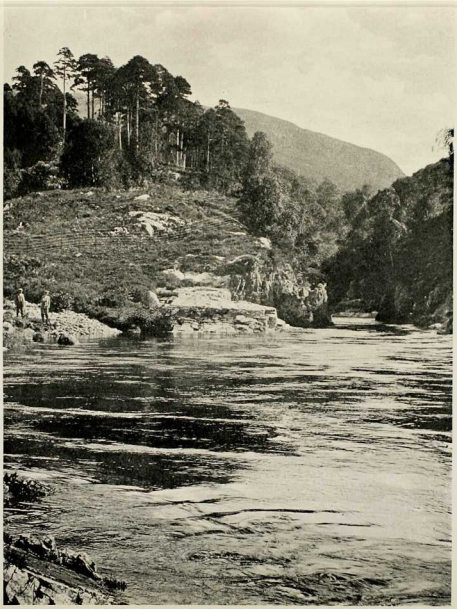
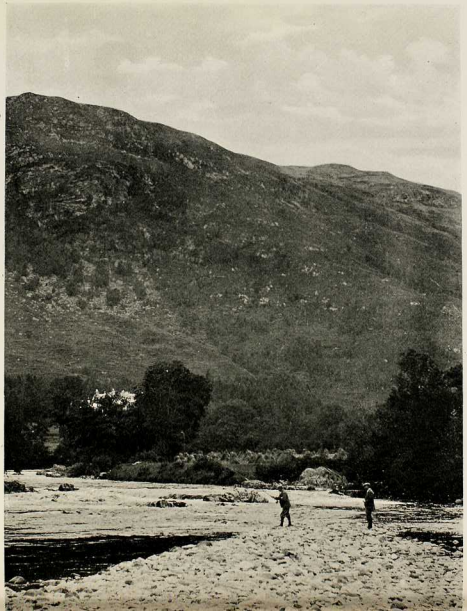
About a mile from the sea there is an effectual bar to the passage of fish in the shape of a sheer fall of twenty feet, and in places thereabouts there are three others of a similar character, a cursory glance being sufficient to show that the cost of laddering them would not [illegible] in proportion to the outlay. The last six miles of the Leven are very rapid, the fall being close on one thousand feet.

The salmon portion of the river is therefore confined to about a mile of water. It is purely a spate river, and in dry seasons no sport can be got, but when in fishing ply it is a strong, rapid-running, sporting piece of water, on which a stout rod and sound tackle are wanted. No waders are required; small standard flies are used except in a very heavy spate. In September and October the worm is occasionally



THE UPPER POOL



fished, and is fairly successful, while as the river gets low salmon are often taken with trout flies and trout rods.

The best angling time is from the first flood in July to the middle of September; the net and rod seasons are the usual ones for rivers that open on the 11th of February. The average take for the past eleven years has been 30 salmon and grilse, 247 sea trout, 1,800 brown trout, these latter not being got entirely in the river Leven, but partly in the lochs and burns forming its source, and are chiefly the little Highland ones. The river gives brown trout of three pounds and over each season. The sea trout are chiefly got in a tidal pool, and the finer the tackle and smaller the flies the better. Salmon average ten pounds, the top weight being one of thirty-five. Sea trout run from the usual herring size up to four and a half pounds, and every season there are a good many caught of from two to three pounds.

Although so short, the Leven abounds in fine pools, of which there are seven above tide mark, the best of them being:—

The Upper—one of the most certain, which requires a long line to fish it well; the tail is very rough water, in which a hooked fish must be carefully and judiciously handled.

The pool Below the Bridge is a slower running one, and is fished from both banks, and on the whole is the best on the river.

The Flatt and the Corner are close together, the last named being a favourite grilse cast, while the former, a very good pool, wants a long line and has a lot of eddy in it.

The Long Pool is a rough-running one, in which the fish lie close in to the side under the birch trees, and makes a pretty bit of angling.

The Blasted Pool, even when in the best order, is a disappointing one considering its appearance; it is easily fished, and at times holds a good few sea trout.

The Island Pool is altered a good deal with the floods of

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each winter, and of late years more so than usual, and fish lie in it less than formerly; it is, however, always a good sea trout cast.

In putting together these notes on this pretty river, which it must be mentioned is strictly preserved, I have had the advantage of the eleven years' experience of Sir John Gilmour of Montrave; while to the good and artistic photography of Lady Gilmour I am indebted for the illustrations.

Like the other rivers of the West Coast, fish are not so plentiful as they were in 1870 to 1875, in which last-named year my friend Mr. George Brewis got nine fish in one day, five on the next, and other three on the third day.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE NAIRN

SOMETIMES called the Water of Alders, drains one hundred and twenty-two square miles, and rises between Loch Ness and the northern slopes of the Monaliadh Mountains, and after emptying Loch Duntlechaig with the connecting lochs, it falls into the sea at the pretty little town of Nairn.

Prior to 1880 this was hardly worth calling a salmon river, for not very far from the mouth, at Nairn Mills, there was a weir which almost entirely barred the ascent of fish. In 1881 the upper proprietors formed a spirited combine and bought the mills, together with the weir, in which they promptly knocked a gap of twenty-five yards wide, the result being that before the close of that rod-fishing season three hundred fish were captured from the water above the weir that before the making of the gap had never yielded so much as a score.

The removal of the weir opened up such a large extent of new spawning ground, and let up such large quantities of spawning fish, that in a few years later the coast nets were reaping nearly all the benefit, and depriving the rods of anything like a proportionate improvement in the angling.

As a sop to the upper proprietors, the rod season was then extended from the 15th of October to the 31st, and though of course that gave the anglers more sport, the angling rents still remained unduly small as compared with those of the coast nettings. As usual, these nets are far too numerous, and are moreover permitted to fish within four hundred yards of the

Nairn mouth, which is much too close to allow a reasonable stock of fish to enter the river.

From Findhorn mouth on the east and Fort George on the west the coast line of the Nairn district is about fifteen miles, in which distance there are no less than one hundred and fifty nets at work. Their numbers should be reduced, and no nets should be worked within eight hundred yards of Nairn mouth, and either this should be done, or the weekly close time should be lengthened by twenty-four hours.

The Nairn is a fine angling river with many good pools and streams, which, if really well stocked with spring fish, would bring in a large sum for angling rents. There are always clean fish in the river on the opening day, the 11th of February, but the main take of salmon is in April. Sea trout run in June, and grilse in July. It is said that in 1882 fully six thousand fish were got by Mr. Brodie's nets, and the published returns of the whole of the nets are as follows:—

1893,	nets took	about	4,760,	rods took	175
1894,	,,	,,	4,250,	,,	250
1895,	,,	,,	9,000,	,,	294
1896,	,,	,,	6,000,	,,	175
			24,010		894

so that in these four seasons the nets got twenty-eight fish for every one that the anglers took.

Complaints have been made by the river watchers of the destruction of fry and smolts by the protected wild birds, but nothing has been done to lessen the evil.

Salmon ascend the river as far up as Brin, which property has about three miles of the river on the left bank; the following two are owned by The Mackintosh, Mr. Smithson, of Failie, joining on below for a like distance, when The Mackintosh again comes in for a further two miles, and then the Raigemore water in the same ownership follows for a mile. Next comes the three miles of the Culloden water, followed by a mile of Mr. Hugh Rose's Holme Rose section, below

THE RUINS FROM THE SUSPENSION BRIDGE.

Nairn mouth stands so much too close to allow a reasonable stock of fish to enter the river.

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THE SUSPENSION BRIDGE, SEEN FROM THE

which is the five miles of Kilravock, belonging to Major Rose, the last two miles down to the sea belonging to Brodie of Brodie, part of it being free to the public for sea trout and whitling angling.

Returning nearly to the top of the river on the right bank, and working down to the sea, Mr. C. D. Stewart's Brin property has also some three miles of this side, below which comes a mile of Mr. Guthrie's Flichity estate, which in turn is joined by Mr. W. D. Mackenzie's Farr section of two miles, in which is the Inverurie Burn, the best spawning tributary of the Nairn. As Farr ends, Mr. Smithson, of Faillie, comes in for about five hundred yards, and then The Mackintosh follows for the next four miles; then the Cantray Water of Major Davidson, let to Mr. S. G. Holland with the house and shootings, extends down for five miles until it meets the portion of the Holme Rose water on this bank. After that the Earl of Cawdor comes in with four miles, followed by a mile of the Geddes reach of Mr. S. M. Walker, and then Brodie of Brodie has the remainder of this bank to the sea.

August, September, and October are the best angling months. Salmon average about ten pounds, and grilse five. Sea trout run from the 15th of June, and average over a pound, very small Jock Scot and Zulu being the best flies; for salmon the silver-bodied flies, Brown Dog and Jock Scot, are the favourites. Bait-fishing is practised now and then, the worm being the most killing lure. Wading stockings are useful, and trousers are seldom wanted.

The best take by any one rod in 1899 was that of Lord George Campbell, who on the Kilravock and Kildrumie water took four fish one day, the heaviest being twenty-four pounds.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE NELL

A SHORT but pretty little salmon river in miniature flowing out of Loch Nell some four miles to the south of Oban, which, after a run of about half that distance, falls into salt water at the very head of Loch Feochan. When it is in good order, there are a succession of streams and pools which, if on a ten times larger scale, would make a perfect salmon river.

Loch Nell is a pretty oblong sheet of water more than a mile in length, and about a half broad. At its head it receives the waters of the Loanan, up which, in autumn, salmon, grilse and sea trout all make their way to spawn. The beds are excellent, and twenty years ago I have often seen fish on those lying a short distance above the loch.

The brown trout of loch and river are neither large nor plentiful, but five-and-twenty years ago there were always a certain number of salmon and sea trout in the loch. At that period I often fished both loch and river Nell, and could generally get, in the former, from ten to thirty sea trout, and at times a grilse. Twenty-seven sea trout was my best day—a salmon I never hooked; but three grilse of about six pounds each were captivated by the attractions of the old-fashioned "green and teal." If the river was in order, a grilse or two, or perhaps a salmon, was nearly a certainty, and I saw the cobbler who lived close to the old stone single-arch bridge fetch a twenty-pound fish out of the Bridge Pool with a little fiery brown sea trout fly.

Nowadays these sort of takes would be regarded as wonderful, and those who fish the loch or the river seldom do it twice, for the sport is poor in the extreme. The pretty little fishery is abused and called "dour," but it is the nets and cobles close to Nell mouth, and the nets further down Loch Feochan, and the Oban scringers, that should be blamed for its fishless state. From the time the legitimate nets come off, the last-mentioned pests poach these parts very hard. Close time makes no difference to the Oban fishmongers, who expose *salmonidæ* for sale for two months after the local nets have ceased to work, and were it not for the opportunity and inducement thus offered to the poachers by these pious tradesmen, who all go to Kirk twice every Sabbath, the scringing fraternity would not be nearly so active or so flourishing.

Shortly before the Nell falls into the sea it is joined by the Feochan, up which run sea trout and an occasional grilse, and in this stream there is also good spawning ground. The fishing of this, with the right of a boat on Loch Nell, and the fishing of the Nell between the bridge on the high road to Melfort and the sea, all go with Glenfeochan House and shootings. Above the bridge the Manse of Kilmore has about a quarter of a mile of the river, the remainder belonging to the Loch Nell shootings, which also have a boat on the loch.

Seeing how close this fishery is to the tourist paradise of Oban, and what high prices are freely paid for angling of any sort, it is remarkable that none of the hotel keepers there have tried to rent Loch Nell and the river, which, I believe, might easily be arranged; and then, by renting the nets at the head of Loch Feochan and working them at first only long enough to pay actual expenses, they would at once, by these means, send a plentiful supply of fish to the loch and the river. That accomplished, and as soon as it was known there was a good chance of catching a dozen or more sea trout or a grilse or two, the tourist anglers would be fighting for the chance of paying a pound a day for a man and boat on the loch! The

loch would take two boats, the river one rod; the three rods would bring in a clear fourteen pounds a week, after the lessees had paid the wages of two boatmen and a ghillie, and this would continue from the middle of June to the end of October; so that, after deducting Sundays, there would be twenty weeks of fishing, yielding two hundred and eighty pounds clear profit, to which would be added the profit made by the stay of the three rods in the hotel. From this would have to be deducted the rent of the net at the head of Loch Feochan, plus the price paid for the angling, but the combined cost of both would probably be easily covered by a hundred pounds.

Only let anglers be certain that they are casting over plenty of fish, and in spite of all climatic conditions being against them, and in the face of the repeated failures of those who have been previously fishing, then nothing will deter a fresh hand from taking his chance in the hope that the luck that has been wanting for others will yet be his. If such an arrangement were extended also to the nets working at the entrance of Loch Feochan, then the river Euchar and Loch Scammadale would share in the benefits, and there is but little doubt that both the proprietor and the tenant of Kilninver would support the scheme, and any sum they contributed would easily be recouped by letting the angling or by greatly increased sport.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE ORCHY

Rises in the Black Mount Forest, and after a run of ten miles, in which it receives the waters of several large burns, it expands into Loch Tulla, some two and a half miles in length, and rather over a half in width, and covering an area of six hundred and ninety-seven acres. The river has the peculiarity of flowing from nearly the middle of the south-west side of the loch, and from this point it has a further run of fifteen miles, until it loses itself in the waters of Loch Awe at Kilchurn Castle.

The angling begins where the river leaves the loch, and extends downwards for some ten miles. Nearly half-way between Loch Tulla and Loch Awe there is a heavy fall which separates the river into upper and lower sections, and the former is again divided into two fisheries, the topmost being the Black Mount water, extending from Loch Tulla to the Bridge of Orchy, which Lord Breadalbane preserves strictly and keeps exclusively for the use of his pretty Forest Lodge on the northern shore of Loch Tulla, and on this section are the Island and Elbow Pools—perhaps two of the best on the river. The lower beat from the bridge to the top of the falls goes with the Inveroran Hotel.

Below the falls, the angling of the right bank goes with the Dalmally shootings, while the Dalmally Hotel has the privilege on the opposite side. In April, May, and June nearly the whole of the fish remain in the pools below the

falls, and as many as a dozen in a day have been taken, although not of late years.

There is but little to tempt fish to stay in the lower four or five miles of the river, for it is chiefly shallow, fast-running water; but I do not think there would be much difficulty or any great expense incurred in making artificial pools by dams, in which fish coming into the river in a rapidly falling water would be glad to halt until a fresh rain came, the meanwhile giving anglers a chance of catching them.

The Falls of Orchy are fully twenty feet high, with almost a sheer drop, which for many years barred further ascent; as soon, however, as ladder-making was discovered, a most efficient one was made in the rock of the right bank, up which, in suitable water, fish now pass with ease to the upper reaches and Loch Tulla. I have not been able to find out what effect this had on the angling below the falls and on the general welfare of the river, but if the results could be definitely ascertained, they should be a guide to other proprietors who own fishings on rivers flowing from lochs above falls that are not yet opened up.

Until the falls are reached the river passes through rocky gorges and many pretty pools, which become stocked with the first flood after the middle of June, and on this part, from that time on, whenever there is water there should be nearly a certainty of sport. Some seasons past, one rod, fishing the Inveroran Hotel water, had fifteen July fish in eight days; another had five in one day of twelve pounds average, while in 1882 three rods got seventy-two fish in July, of which forty-nine came from the hotel water, and the balance from Lord Breadalbane's section. Of late years no takes of this description are reported, and I fear, unless some alterations are made in the Fishery Laws, that future takes must become even smaller than they are at present. The season opens on the 11th of February; nets come off the 26th of August, and rods on the 31st of October. With

ON THE BLACK MOUNT WATER BELOW LOCH TULLA.

regard to this last date, that is the only one to be arrived at from a study of the Close Time List, published by the Fishery Board, in which no mention is made of the Orchy, and therefore the close times that govern the Awe, through which all the Orchy fish pass, must be accepted as applying to that river also. I believe, however, I am correct in saying that Lord Breadalbane insists on angling being discontinued on the 10th of October, which is a very wise proceeding, and as he is monarch of all he surveys in those parts, he would be doing the river a further good turn if he likewise postponed the commencement of all angling operations until the 15th of March. There are seldom fresh-run fish before that date, but nevertheless the water is fished and many a kelt hooked—perhaps to be gaffed and thrown back, perhaps to die of the fatigue of the fight, or perhaps to find its way to the kettle.

In or about 1830 pike were unfortunately placed in Loch Tulla, whence they have descended the Orchy into Loch Awe, and by degrees have become such a nuisance as at one time to seriously threaten the very existence of salmon and trout. Then both the keepers of Lord Breadalbane and those of that excellent institution, the Loch Awe Improvement Association, began to wage war on them in every possible way; but though the crusade made a considerable reduction in their numbers, there they still are, and there they will remain. As showing how numerous they became and how fast they spread, I may mention that in 1857, less than thirty years after being placed in Loch Tulla, I was staying at Ederline House, quite at the south end of Loch Awe, fully thirty miles from Loch Tulla, and on one April day, which was too boisterous for the boat on the big loch, we caught by live baiting in Loch Ederline—a small loch joining Loch Awe—no less than nineteen pike in a few hours, the largest twenty-two pounds and the smallest six.

Later on, in 1864, I took with a spoon bait in one October day, eleven others out of the bay by the side of Kilchurn Castle.

[illegible] MOUTH MUDDY WATER BELOW LEON BOILS.

regard to this last date, that is the only one to be arrived at from a study of the Close Time List, published by the Fishery Board, in which no mention is made of the Orchy, and therefore the close times that govern the Awe, through which all the Orchy fish pass, must be accepted as applying to that river also. I believe, however, I am correct in saying that Lord Breadalbane insists on angling being discontinued on the 10th of October, which is a very wise proceeding, and as he is monarch of all he surveys in those parts, he would be doing the river a further good turn if he likewise postponed the commencement of all angling operations until the 15th of March. There are seldom fresh-run fish before that date, but nevertheless the water is fished and many a kelt hooked—perhaps to be gaffed and thrown back, perhaps to die of the fatigue of the fight, or perhaps to find its way to the kettle.

In or about 1830 pike were unfortunately placed in Loch Tulla, whence they have descended the Orchy into Loch Awe, and by degrees have become such a nuisance as at one time to seriously threaten the very existence of salmon and trout. Then both the keepers of Lord Breadalbane and those of that excellent institution, the Loch Awe Improvement Association, began to wage war on them in every possible way; but though the crusade made a considerable reduction in their numbers, there they still are, and there they will remain. As showing how numerous they became and how fast they spread, I may mention that in 1857, less than thirty years after being placed in Loch Tulla, I was staying at Ederline House, quite at the south end of Loch Awe, fully thirty miles from Loch Tulla, and on one April day, which was too boisterous for the boat on the big loch, we caught by live baiting in Loch Ederline—a small loch joining Loch Awe—no less than nineteen pike in a few hours, the largest twenty-two pounds and the smallest six.

Later on, in 1864, I took with a spoon bait in one October day eleven others out of the bay by the side of Kilchurn Castle.

This lot of fish, of which the heaviest was seventeen pounds all fought with far greater gameness than the ordinary pike of English waters, some of them running out with one dash from thirty to forty yards of line and then springing several times high out of water.

The Bridge of Orchy Station is now but three miles distant from the Inveroran Hotel, which, in addition to the river angling, also has the privilege of fishing on Loch Tulla, where salmon are occasionally got, and where before the pike came trout used to be plentiful, large, and of excellent quality. The best months for this hotel are from the middle of June to the end of the season, while here, as at Dalmally Hotel, angling is restricted to the fly only. On this last-named water the best time is from the beginning of April to the middle of June, and then from September to the 10th of October. All the flies that are good in the Awe are also killers here, and almost all of the small standard patterns can be used. No waders are wanted, and a rod of sixteen feet will cover the water.

Immediately below the Fall Pool in a short distance come the four next best pools, viz., the Big Stone, Tail of All, General's Rock, and Yellow Flag.

Sea trout are very rarely met with, and are certainly not plentiful enough to angle for.

Many years ago a curious way of catching fish used to be practised at Catnish, near the falls, where a rock obstructs the current almost from side to side. During spates a basket was fixed across the water rushing through the narrows thus formed, into which fish fell back when trying to leap the fall. This was once a common way of catching fish all over Scotland, and was used in most places where the natural fall of the water permitted; and tradition has it that before the making of the Caledonian Canal changed the level of the Achnacarry waters, near the house there was a basket of this sort, into which when the salmon fell it also rang a bell in the kitchen to let the cook know.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE SPEY

Rises in Loch Spey in Inverness-shire, but a short distance from the hills whose western slopes discharge their waters into the Atlantic. With a drainage area of a thousand and ninety-seven square miles, it is the largest but one of the Scotch rivers, and, after a run of about a hundred miles, falls into the North Sea at Garmouth. From its source in Loch Spey it flows for nearly forty miles through Inverness-shire Highlands, gathering volume from many a small tributary, until some eight miles below Kingussie it expands into Loch Insh, that beautiful sheet of water some two miles in length, by the side of which the Highland Railway runs to Inverness, offering to the sportsman an ideal panorama of hills, valleys, woods, and waters rarely viewed from the window of a railway carriage. There are stags on the hills, grouse on the moors, salmon and trout in the loch, roe and pheasants in the covers, partridges in the fields, and duck and snipe in plenty in the marshy, reedy shores of Loch Insh. Here, though salmon and trout are in plenty, yet they are "dour" in the extreme, and it is a rare event to hear of a capture of either by rod. The fishing rights go with the shootings of Dunachton (at present held by Sir John Austin) and with Invereshie, each of the tenants at times putting a net into the loch as the only way of getting salmon or trout for the table. Of recent years, however, these properties have foregone the exercise of their netting right in accord with an agreement made with the lower proprietors.

From Loch Insh to the sea is about sixty miles, and a little below Grantown the Spey leaves Inverness-shire to form the march between the counties of Banff and Elgin, or Morayshire; and here I must say it is a silly and confusing arrangement for one little county to have two names, for fancy the confusion that would arise if all followed the same plan!

The Spey angling commences about the top of Lady Seafield's Castle Grant water. Between Grantown and Loch Insh there are very few pools or catches, and though above Loch Insh a certain number of autumn fish are got in the main river and in the Feshie and the Tromie, the angling is not worth serious discussion.

The chief proprietors between Grantown and Fochabers are the Countess of Seafield, Sir G. Macpherson Grant of Ballindalloch, Mr. J. W. H. Grant of Carron and Wester Elchies, Mr. J. R. Findlay of Aberlour, Mrs. Kinloch Grant of Arndilly, and the Duke of Richmond. To his Grace belongs the last nine miles of both banks, from the Chain Bridge at Orton to the sea, and all anglers have heard of the wonderful numbers of fish netted in this reach up to the 26th of August, and of the splendid takes to the rod made on it in the autumn after the nets come off.

Up to 1851 this netting was let to Messrs. Hogarth, of Aberdeen, but in that year the Duke wisely took it into his own hands and voluntarily ceased to net on the 26th of August, instead of going on till the 14th of September, which was then the legally fixed time for nets and rods to come off; it was not until 1862 that the law was altered, and the netting season curtailed to the 26th of August, while the rod season was extended to the 15th of October, at which it has since remained.

The Duke permits no fixed nets nearer Spey mouth than Bear Head, three and a half miles to the west, and Port Gordon, two and a half miles to the east; the intervening six miles being fished by net and coble. Fortunately for himself,

the Duke owns all this foreshore, and can do as he thinks best, and a comparison of the extensive boundaries fixed by his Grace, with the scanty ones of four hundred yards on either side fixed for many other rivers as the limit of bag-nets, should open the eyes of our law makers as to the wisdom of the policy pursued.

The sea coast line of the Spey district extends for about thirty miles from Lossie to Portsoy; the bulk of the foreshore belonging to Lady Seafield and the Duke of Richmond, which perhaps accounts for the comparatively few fixed nets on it, only about eighty being worked. As is the case with almost all the other rivers, there are no statistics furnished by the Fishery Board Reports of the numbers of salmon netted on the coast and in the river.

In the 1882 Report there is a letter from Mr. Hogarth, a son of the one who used to rent the Spey nettings, in which he draws attention to the great decrease in the number of sea trout. In 1835 the take amounted to seventy thousand pounds, and from that date it fell off year by year until, in 1850—Messrs. Hogarth's last season—it was only eight thousand pounds.

"Things are just the same on the Findhorn," says Mr. H., for the firm also had the fishings on that river. "It is a curious idea of mine, but I think if we could kill more trout by using a smaller mesh during the months of June and July, we should increase the number of trout in the river. I think they eat each other up!"

With all respect to Mr. Hogarth, I cannot help thinking that it was his nets that ate up the big sea trout, and that having exterminated them, he would also have liked to have treated the finnocks in the same way; anyhow, Mr. Hogarth does not bring one particle of evidence to substantiate his "thought" as to the supposed cannibalism on the part of the sea trout.

About seven years ago the Duke of Richmond started at Fochabers one of the largest and best-managed hatcheries.

In November and December, 1895, no less than five hundred and seventy thousand ova were placed in the boxes, nearly the whole of which hatched out and were turned into the river in the following May, and there can be no doubt whatever that this hatchery does a great deal towards keeping up the stock of the river. The latest move in this direction, one which should be closely watched by other hatcheries, is an experiment of keeping the fry until they are a year old, and at Fochabers upwards of 100,000 are now being dealt with in this manner; and although it has entailed the additional expense of making fresh ponds, etc., and also a large extra amount of food has to be provided, there can, however, be little doubt that the experiment will pay right well, for no one can fail to recognise the enormously increased chance of coming to maturity that will thus be given the one-year-olds when placed in the river, as against the chance offered to fry turned out when only a few months old.

The Spey is likewise efficiently protected by a staff of close on fifty bailiffs, who duly caution anglers against taking smolts and par, and clearly explain the difference between them and trout. Youthful offenders usually escape with a caution, and since this stricter and better method of watching has been in vogue, trout anglers have done their best to avoid catching smolts and fry, and in nearly all cases have shown the contents of their baskets without being asked. Nevertheless smolts have been known to find their way into the angler's pockets, while his trout were dropped into his basket.

There are always clean fish on the 11th of February, the opening day, and fish have been known to spawn in the Fiddich as early as the 26th of September, and on the 3rd of October in the main stream; the chief run, however, of salmon and grilse is in May, June, July, and August. From the end of November to the end of April, and even later, kelts drop back to the sea, and very plentiful they are on all the reaches, from Carron down.

In 1892 two of us had in a few weeks—at the end of March and beginning of April—one hundred and seventeen from the Wester Elchies water, all of which were returned uninjured. Whether the kelts met with the same care on other reaches is doubtful, and it would probably be a good thing for them if the gaff was prohibited till the 1st of May.

For many years past there has been a certain amount of disease on the Spey, chiefly amongst the kelts and fish about to spawn; but the fungus of the disease is not fatal unless it enters the gills, and many fish may be marked by it on the body and yet survive. The Spey bailiffs are instructed to count all the genuine spawning beds—which would not include the preliminary scratches often made by a pair of spawners—in their individual districts, and the following interesting returns have been collected in the last ten years.

From 1889 to 1898 there were counted 48,012 beds, or an average of 4,801 cocks and 4,801 hens each season. In 1894 there were 7,214 beds, and in 1890 only 2,768, or a difference of 4,446 pairs of fish; heavy spates, and severe frosts, followed by thaws, bringing down masses of ice, account for these discrepancies, but the average stock, if the counting is nearly right, is clearly a good one. In the matter of breeding the Spey tributaries play an all-important part, for in their waters is most of the spawning done.

On the right bank are the Truim, Tromie, Feshie, Nethy, Avon (with a fifty-mile course and two large tributaries), the Livet and the Conglas, the Aberlour Burn and the Fiddich; while on the left bank are the Dulnan—once the happy hunting ground of the Speyside poacher—and the Burn of Tulchan. Late in the season fish may be caught in all these pretty little miniature rivers, and I remember a Feshie spate which yielded one September day six or seven fish to a guest of the late Sir Charles Mordaunt.

On the Tromie fish appeared with the first June flood, and in September I have frequently seen them close up to Gaick

Forest, but they were not fished for, as they were getting black, and there was so much work for rifles and guns to see to that the fish escaped all attention. With the first August flood the big trout quit Loch Insh and make for the Truim, Tromie, and Feshie in search of spawning ground, and at such times these big, fat fellows, which have been quite uncatchable in the loch, fall easy victims to a small Blue Phantom.

On the 1st and 2nd of October, 1890—two of the wettest days I ever saw—the late Colonel Hargreaves and I took, fishing only an hour or two each day, eleven of these Loch Insh fish which weighed forty-four pounds; six and three-quarters and six and a quarter the weights of the two heaviest.

The Superintendent of the Spey district in his 1891 Report makes mention of a matter in which I venture to differ with him. Says he, "The little blackbird with a white breast, locally known in this district as 'Water Jock,' should be shot down at all seasons, as he is looked upon with good cause as an ova eater." There is no doubt the water ouzel does eat some useless ova as it is carried down stream, but not much, and certainly it does not live entirely on salmon roe by harrying the bed of the fish. Its chief food is the water shrimp, and the extermination of these pretty, confiding, and nearly harmless anglers' companions is certainly not to be desired or encouraged.

In the Spey, as is usual, the nets have beaten the rods in the matter of big fish, though not so pronouncedly as in other rivers.

1892	the nets had	one of	50 lbs.,	the rod	50 lbs.
1893	,,	,,	,,	50 lbs.	,,	42 lbs.
1894	,,	,,	,,	60 lbs.	,,	44 lbs.
1895	,,	,,	,,	50 lbs.	,,	36 lbs.
1896	,,	,,	,,	44 lbs.	,,	37 lbs.
1897	,,	,,	,,	47 lbs.	,,	53 lbs.

From Castle Grant downwards the whole of the Spey should be good angling, for it abounds in fine pools and

streams, which if well stocked would make this river the best in all Scotland.

The Castle Grant water goes down on the left bank for some five miles, and this Lady Seafield keeps in her own hands; the opposite bank of Revach, of a like distance, and also Seafield property, is usually let.

Next comes the Tulchan water, let by Lady Seafield to Mr. Arthur Sassoon, and extending down for seven miles of each bank; the tenant usually lets it for the spring and keeps it in his own hands for the autumn. April, May, and June are the best months for salmon, and July for grilse. Wading trousers are required at nearly every pool. All lures are used. Gold and Silver Hiring, Jock Scot, and Dusty Miller are perhaps the four best flies. The grilse average about four pounds, and salmon fifteen. The take varies so very much according to the weather, etc., that it is hardly fair to name an average, but, roughly speaking, about one hundred and fifty fish should be got during the spring and summer—say up to the 1st of August. Twenty years ago a dozen fish were often got in a day, but since that time angling has fallen off greatly.

In fairly high water there are twenty-three pools on Tulchan, of which but eight remain in order when the river is low, the three best being the Rock, Spenock, and the Wood Pool.

As Tulchan ends, Sir George Macpherson Grant's Ballindalloch water begins and goes down for about five miles on each bank. The Castle water consists of about two miles on each side, the rest of the section being let to Mr. C. M. P. Burn with the Pitcroy shootings, which piece of water, though well fished, did not yield more than thirty fish in the extraordinarily bad season of 1899, though in average ones the whole Ballindalloch water should be good for one hundred and fifty fish by the 1st of August. Following this, the Knockando House water comes for three miles on the left bank and one mile on the right one; the two best pools being the Long

and Vrennan. Then comes the two miles of the Laggan on the left bank, with the Carron fishing opposite, each having a side of the celebrated Dalmonach Pool—one of the best on the river—and it was from this section that in 1897 the late J. Cruickshanks killed a fish of forty-two pounds, the heaviest ever got above Craigellachie Bridge. Although Carron is now but two miles in length, in the days of the uncle of the present owner "Carron" meant all Laggan, half Wester Elchies, and half Knockando; therefore it should not be overlooked that the yield of the Carron water of those days was very big as compared with what it is now.

Below this, on the left bank, comes the three miles of Wester Elchies, let for many years to that good sportsman, the late Lord Justice Archibald L. Smith, he sub-letting it in the spring and keeping it in his own hands in the autumn; a very fine stretch of water, Pol Brock, Pol-ma-cree, Delagyle, and the Boat Pool being grand casts.* Knockando, Laggan, Carron, and Wester Elchies, and the Aberlour Free Water all belong to Mr. J. W. H. Grant, and from the whole of them from two hundred and eighty to three hundred and eighty fish are got each season.

Perhaps the most extensive collection of flies ever owned by one man was formed by the late Mr. H. Grant of Wester Elchies; they were tied by himself, Mr. Charles Grant, and Cruickshanks, and many hundreds were kept in a large box made from the timber of the Old Gean Tree of Elchies, the trunk of which had a diameter of four feet.

At the end of Carron the Aberlour House water, belonging to Mr. J. R. Findlay, runs for about two and a half miles opposite Wester Elchies until it joins the half-mile of Free Water at Aberlour.

It is on record that in 1838 one Charlie Grant, an ex-schoolmaster at Aberlour, took a lease of the rod fishing from Aberlour Burn to Carron Burn—which comprises four miles

* Now rented by Mr. Reginald Abel Smith.

THE HOLLEN BUSH POOL.

of as good water as any on the Spey—for the large sum of two guineas! Below this Mr. Findlay's water goes down nearly to Craigellachie, where it is joined by the Inverfoldich water, a short reach of about two hundred yards. Wester Elchies comes to an end a little below the Broom Isle Pool, where Easter Elchies, the property of Lady Seafield, follows on the left bank, and goes down for three and a half miles until it joins that part of Arndilly lying on this bank, which reaches to the Long Pool, where the Countess again comes in and owns the Rothes section for a further three miles. Opposite, on the right bank, is the three miles of Arndilly, and the two of Aikenway (also Lady Seafield's). The Arndilly water belongs to Mrs. Kinloch Grant, and on the right bank begins at Fiddich Mouth Pool and goes to the Long Pool, where Aikenway joins it; it has fifteen good casts, the best being the Ladies' Haugh and the Pile Pool. Salmon average sixteen pounds and grilse five, and before the last three bad years this water used to give from fifty to nearly a hundred fish up to the 1st of August, and about as many more up to the end of the season. There are, at times, quantities of sea trout and finnock hereabouts, and twenty-five to thirty pounds a day have often been taken.

The Aikenway reach goes, on the right bank, from the end of Arndilly and the Long Pool down to just above Hollen Bush Pool; on the left bank it begins at the Green Burn Pool at the end of Rothes, and goes down to the Island. There are ten good casts on this water, Sandy Hills, Gean Trees and Sourdan being specially fine ones. Like Arndilly, this reach has not fished up to its former reputation for the last three years, but till the bad times began it used to yield about fifty fish up to the 1st of August, and from fifty to eighty more to the end of the season. Prior to 1895, days of ten fish to a rod, or eighteen to two rods, were not rare events in autumn, while one spring day Mr. W. S. Menzies had nineteen kelts and eight clean fish after twelve o'clock.

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As Rothes ends on the left bank and Aikenway on the right, Lady Seafield again comes into possession of both banks of the Delfur water, which runs down for two miles; it is let to Colonel Ralph Vivian, and contains some very fine pools, notably the Hollen or Holly Bush, perhaps the finest pool to look at on the whole river, and certainly one of the best. The nature of this pool well shows the necessity for the Spey cast, for there are plenty of others with the same steep banks rising nearly sheer from the water side. In the illustration, the angler in the pool is on the open side of it and can use the overhead cast, which would be impossible if he was fishing from the opposite bank with the high cliff rising behind him.

A little below Hollen Bush is the Twa Stanes, in which pool was drowned a servant of the late Mr. Little Gilmour, who then owned this fishery; below this comes the Beaufort, so named by Mr. Gilmour because the late Duke of that ilk, who was a keen fisherman, once took a very heavy fish out of it when visiting Delfur. The pools below this are Otter's Hole, Back o' the Broom, the Collies and the top part of the Boat o' Brig Pool, the bridge forming the march between Delfur and Gordon Castle.

Below this bridge comes two miles on each side of the Orton water; the banks, I believe, belong to Mrs. Wharton Duff, but the Duke of Richmond owns the fishing right. Though the sections I have named from Castle Grant downwards are the existing divisions of the Spey, on some of them there are many private arrangements with regard to various pools which no one is or can be aware of, except the parties actually concerned; but for all practical purposes my list of the Spey anglings can be accepted as correct.

We now come to the last nine miles of the river, and from Boat o' Brig to the sea both banks belong to the Duke of Richmond and Gordon, and whether for net-fishing, as long as nets may legally be plied, or for rod-fishing after the nets come

off, there is no question that this is the finest and most productive stretch of water in Scotland.

Into the netting question I do not intend to enter. The Spey, like all the rivers, has been gradually going back, both in the yield to nets and rods, although as a matter of fact it has not gone down so much as many rivers in which there are no nets. In my humble opinion it is not any given sets of nets that are reducing the salmon fisheries to extinction, but it is the vast and ever increasing number of fixed engines working round the whole of the Scotch coasts that are the cause of the mischief. There is no doubt that the Fochaber nets get a lot of fish, and bring in a large sum each season; but the fact that their past, present, and future owners are gentlemen who have been, who are and will be possessors in perpetuity is a guarantee that netting will not be unduly pressed, as it would be if it was in the hands of a tacksman with a short lease, who, as long as he filled his own pockets, would be quite indifferent about the eventual destruction of the fishery. Moreover, the fact that the Duke of Richmond and all his family, ladies included, are keen anglers, is a further guarantee that netting on his Grace's fishings would not be prosecuted to an injurious extent.

It must also not be forgotten that any netted river is certain to get close times other than the law provides. Each year there will be many days when floods, and sometimes ice, compel the nets to cease work, and these periods of enforced inactivity are the very times when fish are running up as fast as they can.

The arrangements for the autumn angling at Gordon Castle are as near perfection as possible. The fly is the only lure permitted. There are fully twenty-five pools, most of which require wading trousers. The best of them are Lord March, Alt Dearg, Green Bank, Dipple, Upper and Lower Bulwark, Corngabbie, Stynie, Chapel, Lennox Water, Rock, and Turn. Brachead is the lowest, and from here to

the sea the river is liable to great alterations each season from spates.

The Duke can send out from ten to twelve rods daily, and captures of from seven to eleven fish to a rod are by no means rare. In the years of 1886–7–8–9 there were over twenty fish killed which weighed between thirty and forty-five pounds. In 1887 Lord Berkeley Paget, who had previously fished the Gordon Castle water for many seasons without ever getting a thirty-pounder, not only made up for past bad luck, but established a record that I believe is quite unique, at any rate in Scotland, for on the 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th of October—in four successive days—he had a fish of thirty pounds each day, the largest of them being thirty-seven and a half pounds. In 1888, Lord Leconfield had in one day a forty and a thirty-four pounder with three others. In 1889 the Duke had one of forty-five pounds, and a few days later Lord Leconfield another of the same heavy weight. In 1891, the 13th of October gave fifty-six fish to fourteen rods. In 1886—the record year—the total take was eight hundred and nine salmon and two hundred and thirty-two grilse, or one thousand and forty-one in all. In 1892 the take was six hundred and seventy-four salmon and two hundred and seventy-six grilse. In 1895 Lord March had a day of twelve from the Long Pool, which weighed one hundred and sixty-nine pounds; another of a like number from Stynie, which scaled one hundred and eighty-four pounds; and a third day also of twelve, which weighed two hundred and forty-five pounds—a splendid average. On the 11th of October, 1895, Lord Walter Lennox made the record for one rod by taking from Bridge and Quarry fifteen fish, weighing two hundred and seventy pounds. The three best days are as follows:—On the 15th of October, 1886, fifteen rods had seventy-four fish; on the 23rd of September, 1892, fifteen rods had seventy-two fish; on the 11th of October, 1895, ten rods only had fifty-two salmon and twenty grilse—a truly remarkable day!

THE DUKE OF RICHMOND AND GEORGE SHANKS AT FOCHABERS BRIDGE.

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The following are the takes at Gordon Castle between the 1st of September and the 15th of October, for the ten years 1890–99:—

	Salmon.	Grilse.	Total.
1890	310	142	452
1891	512	377	889
1892	674	276	950
1893	541	164	705
1894	484	329	813
1895	360	336	696
1896	472	111	583
1897	346	149	495
1898	329	97	426
1899	189	256	445
	4217	2237	6454

The ambition of every guest at Gordon Castle is "to get into the smoking-room," for there on the walls are hung casts or models of all fish of forty pounds or over, together with the date, the pool, and the name of the lucky captor. Although the mere hooking of a big fish is a matter of luck, the eventual landing of it requires extra nerve and care, and whether fisherman or fish will be victor usually remains in doubt right up to the end of the fight. Many an angler may be seen puffing his pipe, talking and joking while he plays a twenty-pounder, who will be mute, nervous, and "all to pieces" while he plays a very big one, for he realises that *the* chance of his angling life has come at last, and anxiety for the result may undermine the judgment and quick decision usually displayed when in a difficulty. Small wonder, then, that Gordon Castle visitors are keen to get a smoking-room fish, for up to the present there are but nine winners of this Gordon Castle Cross, though there are many who have provokingly just missed it by a pound or two. Lord Leconfield was the first to gain a place in the room, as on the 6th of October, 1888, he had exactly a forty-pounder from the Lower Bulwark. In 1889 the Duke of Richmond joined him with one of forty-five pounds from Chapel Pool on the 5th of October; and six days later lucky Lord Leconfield

made his second appearance with a fish of just the same weight as the Duke's, and also from the same pool. Then for three years there is a blank, until in 1892 Lord Winterton makes his appearance on the 11th of October with a fish of fifty pounds from the Rock Pool. Next, in 1894, there is a double event recorded on the 6th of October, Lord March getting one of forty-four pounds from the Raik, and Mr. F. V. Mildmay one of forty-two pounds from Lord Algernon's Pool. On the 4th of October, 1897, Mr. W. G. Craven makes his entry with one of fifty-three pounds from Dallachy Pool. On the 5th he was followed by one of forty-two pounds from Stynie caught by fortunate Mrs. Arthur Sassoon—up to the present the only lady who has gained a footing in the smoking-room, although there are many other good fisherwomen both in the Duke's family and amongst his guests. Then on the 12th of the same month Lord Algernon Gordon-Lennox puts in an appearance with one of forty-four pounds from the Railway Arch. In the room there is also a monster of sixty pounds taken by the Upper Bulwark net on the 26th of August, 1894. These models of big fish are very cleverly done; one John Tully, carpenter, cuts out the wooden patterns, which are afterwards painted in a most life-like manner by Miss Russell, both artists residing at Fochabers.

The true Spey fly, like the Spey cast, differs from all others. The natives place much faith in the tinsel used, and it is common enough to hear one ghillie say to another after a study of the clouds and the light and the river: "Well, I'm just thinking it will be a 'gold day,'" or a "silver day," according to his observations.

The Spey flies are now dressed by most of the tackle makers, and nearly all are hackled with the Spey cock—a big, long, nondescript feather, with lengthy fibres, often turning "fluffy" towards the body end. These are got from a cross between the Hambro cock and the old Scottish mottled hen.

WELL KNOWN ON SPEYSIDE.

made his second appearance with a fish of just the same weight as the Duke's and also from the same pool. Then for three years there is a blank, until in 1892 Lord Winterton makes his appearance on the 12th of October with a fish of fifty pounds from the Lock Pool. Next, in 1894, there is a double event recorded, on the 8th of October, Lord March getting one of forty-four pounds from the Raik, and Mr. F. V. Mildmay one of forty-two pounds from Lord Algernon's Pool. On the 4th of December, 1894, Mr. W. G. Craven makes his entry with one of fifty-seven pounds from Dallachy Pool. On the 5th he was followed by one of forty-two pounds from Stynie caught by fortunate Mrs. Arthur Sassoon—up to the present the only lady who has gained a footing in the smoking-room, although there are many other good fisherwomen both in the Duke's family and amongst his guests. Then on the 12th of the same month Lord Algernon Gordon-Lennox puts in an appearance with one of forty-four pounds from the Railway Arch. In the room there is also a monster of sixty pounds taken by the Upper Bulwark net on the 26th of August, 1894. These models of big fish are very cleverly done; one John Tully, carpenter, cuts out the wooden patterns, which are afterwards painted in a most life-like manner by Miss Russell, both artists residing at Fochabers.

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WELL KNOWN ON SPEYSIDE.

Of course there is a breed at Arndilly, Wester Elchies, Gordon Castle, and a few other places on the Spey, but these are difficult feathers to get good elsewhere. Although these birds are good layers, their sharp breasts make them bad for the table; also they are not hardy birds, and thrive better in England than in the north, and do specially well at Goodwood. The hackle and the tinsel are wound on the reverse way—that is, if the hackle goes from right to left, the tinsel is turned from left to right. These flies, though not much to look at when compared with a Durham Ranger or any other "gaudie," are yet full of life and show in the water, and with them I have killed fish in every river in which I have tried them, and they are many. There are literally hundreds of variations in these flies; the best known, however, are the Purple (the "Purpy," as they call it), Green and Black Kings, Gold and Silver Heron, Black Dog, Gold and Silver Riach, Gold Green, Silver Green, Lord March, the Dallas, Lady Caroline, Lady Florence, and Miss Elinor—the three last names indicating clearly enough that lady anglers are numerous on the river, more so, I think, than any other, for from Tulchan to the sea there is hardly a fishery on which fair and skilful exponents of the Spey cast are not to be met with.

Geordie Shanks at Aberlour ties all the Gordon Castle flies, and there is no better exponent of the art, and several pleasant mornings have I passed with him in getting hints while chatting and looking over Lord March's fly book—the biggest and the fullest I have ever seen. At Aberlour also there lives one Stewart, who is A1 at making a Spey rod—an implement which, to the uninitiated, is both unpleasant to look at and to handle.

The Spey opens for net and rod on the 11th of February, and closes for the former on the 26th of August, and for the latter on the 15th of October.

For many years splendid Spey was much damaged by the discharge into its waters of the poisonous refuse of the many distilleries that had sprung up on its banks. This refuse—

known as "burnt ale"—was proved to be deadly to fry, par, and smolts, while all the salmon were made sick that were lying in the pools nearest to the point at which it made its way into the river. Often have I been fishing below the Aberlour Burn (on which there is a large distillery), with the water in fine order, when suddenly by a discharge of "burnt ale" it has been turned into a muddy yellow colour, accompanied by masses of horrid-looking froth floating on the surface and varying in size from a saucer to the top of a small tea-table. On these occasions all chance vanished of catching a fish in the half-mile immediately below. So great did this nuisance become, and so obstinate were the distillers in persisting in emptying this poison into the river, that the proprietors at length appealed to the law for protection. The Countess Dowager of Seafield led the van, and after a lengthy trial before Lord Kyllachy the distillers were signally defeated, and a horrible pollution put an end to. Now there are many other rivers suffering more damage from other kinds of pollutions than the great, strong-running Spey suffered from this one, and therefore the result of the Spey case should inspire all proprietors whose rivers are being spoilt by pollutions to at once commence proceedings, for the result must inevitably be in their favour; and to the Countess Dowager of Seafield and to the Spey proprietors generally, the owners of other rivers suffering from pollution are deeply indebted for having so patiently and so pluckily brought the matter to a successful issue.

CHAPTER XL

THE UGIE

A PRETTY little stream which "meanders" through an agricultural country, although not exactly on "a level with its fount," as did that impossible river once written of by Mr. Robert Montgomery. After a course of some twenty-two miles, in which it drains one hundred and thirty-two square miles, the Ugie falls into the sea a little to the north of Peterhead. The main stream is formed at Rora Bridge by the junction of the water of Deer on the south and the water of Strichen on the north, from whence the Ugie flows slow and deep for a further four miles through a pretty but somewhat flat country, and the angler on its banks in October will probably see more ducks and snipe than salmon.

There are not a great number of pools, and before the nets come off it is but poor angling. The best part of the river for salmon is from Rora to the sea, which belongs to Colonel Ferguson of Pitfour, on which reach in October, 1891, I fished for several days without so much as seeing a salmon or sea trout, though there was plenty of water. It must be stated in justice to the Ugie that in the previous season the river yielded fairly well in October, a friend of the author's getting five fish in a few days. The fly I was told to use as a certain killer by the head keeper at Pitfour was a very simple affair with an uncanny look about it, for it consisted of a silver body, no tail, a white hackle all the way up, with several turns at the shoulder, and a mallard wing, dressed on a trout hook of No. 7 Limerick size.

Salmon and sea trout both run heavy on the coast; and though the angling of the Ugie is not very grand, the netting is quite the reverse. In 1891 a sea trout of twenty-seven pounds and a salmon of sixty and a half pounds were taken in the nets.

	Salmon and Grilse.	Sea Trout.		Salmon and Grilse.	Sea Trout.
In 1896 nets took	5,800	800;	rods took	86	400
In 1897 „ „	2,500	700;	„ „	70	500

and from 1892 to 1897 the average season's take by the nets was 4,150 salmon and grilse, and about 1,000 sea trout. In the early part of the season, before the nets come off, they get quite fifty fish for every one that the rods catch, which is an unfair proportion, and should be remedied either by moving the nets further away from the mouth of the river or by lengthening the weekly close time.

This is also one of the latest of the East Coast rivers, for the first clean fish are not got until about the 10th of March, while the main run is in August, with the sea trout coming near the end of that month and early in September.

The Ugie opens for nets and rods on the 24th of February; closes for the former on the 10th of September, and for the latter on the 31st of October. It has been proposed that the rod season should be extended for a further fifteen days, a proceeding which would most likely cause the netters to ask for a further week's netting; and it would be better if the proprietors would combine to ensure to the river a fair and proportionate supply of seasonable fresh-run fish rather than seek to keep the rod fishing open later, for though fish caught in the late autumn yield a certain amount of sport, they are really useless as food, for they are nearly ready to spawn, and cannot in any way be compared with fish caught before the middle of September.

CHAPTER XLI

THE YTHAN

Rises from the Wells of Ythan, some eight hundred feet above the sea, in the Aberdeenshire hills, lying to the east of Huntly, and pursuing a winding, smooth-flowing course of about forty miles, falls into the North Sea at Newburgh, some fifteen miles to the north of the Dee. The Earl of Errol, Mr. Udny of Udny, and Lady Gordon Cathcart are the chief owners of the nettings, which are sublet to tacksmen; the other river proprietors are Miss Buchan of Auchmacoy, Mr. A. J. L. Gordon of Ellon, Mr. H. W. Gordon of Esslemont, Colonel Rae of Auchterellon, Colonel John Turner of Turner Hall, Mr. A. J. Forbes Leith of Fyvie, and the Earl of Aberdeen, who owns the best and largest share of the river, as it flows through his estate for some fourteen miles on both banks, from the borders of the Fyvie estate on the north to the boundary of the Esslemont estate. Over nearly the whole of this lengthy stretch of water his lordship most generously and freely gives permission by tickets, reserving only a small portion for himself and his guests at Haddo House.

On the upper part of this water there is a very pretty glen called the Braes of Gight, with which some interesting reminiscences are connected, the place having originally belonged to Lord Byron's mother.

The average take of fish to the rods on the whole length of the river belonging to the Earl of Aberdeen is about a hundred fish each season. From Ellon Bridge to Fyvie,

pike are rather numerous, though kept down as much as possible.

The Ythan is a famous netting river, and from three to five thousand sea trout, besides salmon and grilse, are usually captured, the chief run of fish being in August and September, though the sea nets begin to get fish from the 1st of March. In the tidal water at Newburgh there are about four miles attached to the Udny Arms Hotel, where at times good sport from a boat may be had with sea trout and whitling, upwards of a hundred having once been got in a day by two rods. Each season the Ythan nets, and sometimes the rods, get some very heavy fish. In 1892 Dr. Fowler, of Ellon, on Lord Aberdeen's water, had one to the fly of forty-four pounds (Jock Scot, Silver Doctor, and Butcher are the three favourites); and Mr. C. G. Smith, the factor, had another of thirty-six pounds; while the small museum at Haddo House contains a stuffed fish of fifty-one and a half pounds, which was found dead in a little backwater, where it had been left by a flood in January, 1895. It was a cock fish, and, had it been fresh from the sea, would have weighed but little short of sixty pounds.

The October fish are the heaviest, and, strange to relate, during the month of November there is always a large run of heavy fish, a fact which, in 1891, induced the District Board to petition the Secretary for Scotland to extend the rod season for a further fortnight, or at least ten days; under the circumstances this seemed a reasonable request, which, had it been granted, could have done the river no harm, for, in the opinion of many of those who live on its banks, there are each season more spawners in the water than suffice to fill the spawning beds, as is evidenced by the great numbers of cock fish found each season which are either wounded or dead from fighting. Perhaps had this extra ten days been granted to the rods, it might have been followed by a petition for a further ten days of netting, which it would have been difficult to refuse.

In 1889 the Fishery Board Report states that the sea nets took 5,620 salmon and grilse against 37 got by the whole of the river rods; this, however, was a season of great drought, which accounts for the enormous disproportion. In 1890 there were 5,227 salmon and grilse netted as against 70 taken by the rods; and in 1891, 6,528 were captured, and 300 fell to the rods, and this latter year may be taken as a fair average for both nets and rods. In 1892 and ever since, the lessees of the nets have refused to give any information to the Fishery Board of the numbers of fish caught by the coast nets of the Ythan district.

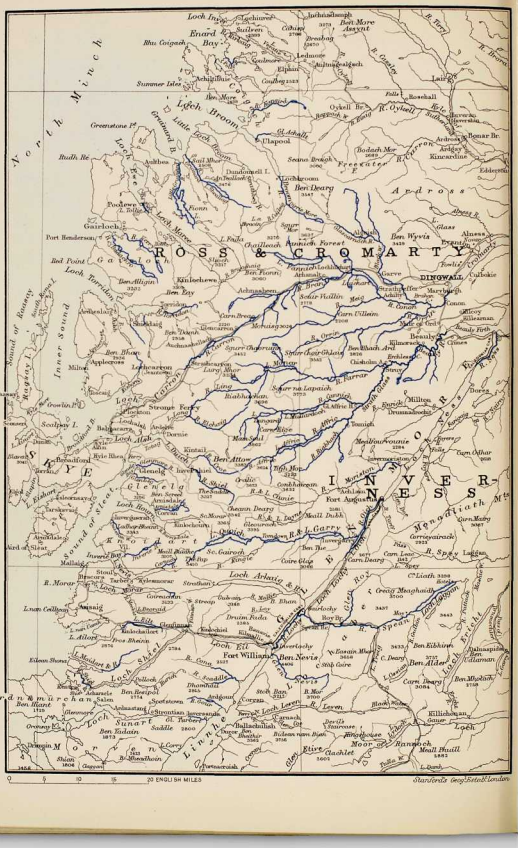
The takes of the years already given amount to a total of 17,375 salmon and grilse as against 407 to the rods, or forty-two fish to the netters for one to the anglers; it may, however, be taken for granted that the net fishings have not fallen off, or the lessees would have been complaining, and therefore the chances are that the sea catches have even exceeded the figures given, in which case the lessees may well feel somewhat bashful about making such returns of their gains as would perhaps lead to a rise in their rentals.

In face of the opinion held by many of the dwellers on Ythan side—*i.e.*, that there are already too many fish on the spawning grounds—the District Fishery Board have just put up a hatchery by the river side on the estate of Auchterellon, which will take 200,000 ova, the benefits of which will probably be wholly absorbed by the sea nets. Here then is yet another of the many instances of coast nets unduly depriving a river of a fair and proportionate stock of spring fish; and here, as in other places, the bag and stake nets should be set back from either side of Ythan mouth, or the weekly close time should be lengthened, and if that were done, then the spring angling belonging to the upper proprietors of the river would speedily become a valuable and realisable asset, as indeed it should be.

As I near the end of my second volume, rumours are

prevalent that a fresh Royal Commission is about to be appointed to revise the existing Salmon Fishery Laws; therefore at last the upper proprietors of salmon rivers may hope for some betterment of their present anomalous and hard position, and the public may likewise expect that salmon as a "food supply" will eventually become a reality, and not a mere empty form of parliamentary eloquence.

THE SALMON RIVERS OF SCOTLAND.


ROSS & CROMARTY
INVERNESS
DINGWALL
Loch Broom
Loch Ness
Loch Lochy
Loch Arkaig
Loch Eil
Loch Linnhe
Loch Leven
Loch Etive
Loch Tummel
Loch Rannoch
Loch Ericht
Loch Laggan
Loch Ness
Loch Shiel
Loch Sunart
Loch Tarbert
Loch Alsh
Loch Carron
Loch Maree
Loch Torridon
Loch Ewe
Loch Eriboll
Loch Fleet
Loch Shin
Loch Naver
Loch Assynt
Loch Ness
Loch Lochy
Loch Arkaig
Loch Eil
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Loch Sunart
Loch Tarbert
Loch Alsh
Loch Carron
Loch Maree
Loch Torridon
Loch Ewe
Loch Eriboll
Loch Fleet
Loch Shin
Loch Naver
Loch Assynt
Fort William
Ben Nevis
Inverness
Dingwall
Tain
Dornoch
Golspie
Brora
Helmsdale
Wick
Thurso
Lochinver
Ullapool
Gairloch
Portree
Stornoway
Tobermory
Oban
Inveraray
Dunoon
Rothesay
Campbeltown
Ardrishaig
Kilchoan
Mallaig
Kyle of Lochalsh
Kyle of Tongue
Durness
Scourie
Ullapool
Aviemore
Kingussie
Newtonmore
Grantown
Nairn
Forres
Elgin
Banff
Cullen
Fraserburgh
Peterhead
Aberdeen
Montrose
Arbroath
Dundee
Perth
Stirling
Dumbarton
Glasgow
Ayr
Stranraer
Dumfries
Kirkcudbright
Wigtown
Newton Stewart
Ballantrae
Girvan
Maybole
Dalmellington
Moffat
Lockerbie
Annan
Gretna
Carlisle
Penrith
Appleby
Kendal
Ambleside
Keswick
Cockermouth
Workington
Whitehaven
Ennerdale
Wasdale
Eskdale
Langdale
Grasmere
Windermere
Coniston
Ulverston
Barrow
Lancaster
Morecambe
Fleetwood
Blackpool
Preston
Chorley
Bolton
Manchester
Stockport
Macclesfield
Congleton
Crewe
Nantwich
Whitchurch
Ellesmere
Oswestry
Welshpool
Llanfyllin
Bala
Dolgellau
Barmouth
Aberystwyth
Tregaron
Llandrindod Wells
Rhayader
Builth Wells
Hay
Brecon
Abergavenny
Monmouth
Chepstow
Bristol
Cardiff
Swansea
Carmarthen
Haverfordwest
Fishguard
Cardigan
Aberystwyth
Pwllheli
Bangor
Conway
Llandudno
Rhyl
Mold
Wrexham
Shrewsbury
Ludlow
Leominster
Hereford
Gloucester
Cheltenham
Stroud
Bath
Salisbury
Exeter
Plymouth
Torquay
Dartmouth
Falmouth
Penzance
Truro
Bodmin
Launceston
Barnstaple
Ilfracombe
Taunton
Bridgwater
Weston-super-Mare
Cardiff
Newport
Pontypool
Abergavenny
Hereford
Ross
Gloucester
Worcester
Kidderminster
Bewdley
Ludlow
Shrewsbury
Wellington
Whitchurch
Chester
Wrexham
Mold
Rhyl
Conway
Bangor
Caernarvon
Pwllheli
Aberystwyth
Tregaron
Llandrindod Wells
Rhayader
Builth Wells
Hay
Brecon
Abergavenny
Monmouth
Chepstow
Bristol
Cardiff
Swansea
Carmarthen
Haverfordwest
Fishguard
Cardigan
Aberystwyth
Pwllheli
Bangor
Conway
Llandudno
Rhyl
Mold
Wrexham
Shrewsbury
Ludlow
Leominster

CHAPTER XLII

THE AILORT, OR AYLORT

DRAINS but some twenty-six square miles of hill country, and, after a short run of less than three miles, falls into the salt water loch of the same name at Kinloch Ailort, and opposite the Island of Eigg. It flows from Loch Eilt, a fresh water loch of some four miles in length, divided by narrows into three unequal divisions, the one nearest the sea being twice the size of the other two put together. Shortly after leaving the loch, the river expands into another small sheet of water, from whence it has a further run of about two miles to the sea.

The sea trout angling of the Ailort and Loch Eilt was at one time some of the very best on the West Coast, though of late years it has unaccountably fallen off, for there are no nets on the foreshore or at the mouth, while the protection is supposed to be efficient. The ravages of the seals are considerable, but that is an evil that has been present from time immemorial, and is not sufficient of itself to account for the falling off; and probably poachers are in some way at the source of the evil.

The river is easily cast, and a stout trout rod will do all that is required. Though there are about a dozen pools worthy of being named, only a few are christened, while smaller casts are numerous, many of which, if both proprietors agreed, could easily be improved by means of dams, etc. No waders are wanted; nearly all the small standard patterns will kill, such as Jock Scot, Thunder and Lightning, and the Doctor. There

are a few local flies, which can be obtained from Anderson, of Princes Street, Edinburgh; but they are not absolutely essential to success.

The right or north bank belongs to Mrs. Nicholson, of Arisaig, and the left or south one to Mrs. Head, of Inverailort, and by a happy agreement between the two proprietors, there is no netting at the mouth or on the foreshore.

The shore of the north side of Loch Ailort and the tidal water of the south side of the river belong exclusively to the Inverailort property; therefore, as the bulk of the fish wishing to enter the river keep almost entirely to this shore, which is shallow, shelving, and more suitable to their requirements than that of Arisaig, the owner of Inverailort has for the last forty years agreed not to exercise the netting right, but to take rod fishing from Arisaig in exchange. This agreement has still some years to run, and it is to be hoped in the interests of anglers that it will be amicably renewed.

The river opens on the 11th of February, and has the close times that are usual to that date. The angling is generally let through the various shooting and fishing agents, and is divided into summer and autumn seasons; the former being from the 1st of May to the end of July, and the latter from the 1st of August to the 22nd of October. The river itself rises and falls quickly, but Loch Eilt remains in good fishing order for some time after a spate.

One rod has had as much as forty pounds of sea trout in an afternoon, and these have been taken up to twelve pounds, though the heaviest ordinary size is from five to six pounds, and the smallest one pound. A salmon of twenty-three pounds is the heaviest ever taken, the usual size being from eight to twelve pounds.

The best sea trout flies are those of the Alexandra type, or very small Jock Scots and Doctors.

CHAPTER XLIII

THE APPLECROSS

Rises in Corrie Attadale, on the west coast of Ross-shire, and, after a rapid run of some ten miles through grand scenery, falls into the Inner Sound of Raasay at Applecross. At one time this property formed a portion of the vast estate of the Macdonnells of Glengarry, which, covering upwards of 150,000 acres, was bought *en bloc* by the late Duke of Leeds, and later on resold in three lots, the Applecross part being purchased by Lord Middleton in 1861, who at present owns the whole of the river, which, as it runs through the middle of his deer forest, is only fished for about a mile above the mouth, in which distance there are four good pools and some corners. It is strictly preserved, and is one of the very few of the West Coast rivers that has not altered very much for the worse during the last forty years. This is due to the fact that Lord Middleton neither works nor lets any fixed nets on his foreshore, while he has a sharp look-out kept for poachers in Applecross Bay. Convictions have been obtained on several occasions in face of great difficulties, for the poachers always come in the dark, and a very large area has to be watched.

The Applecross opens on the 11th of February; closes for nets on the 26th of August, and for rod on the 31st of October. It holds salmon, grilse, and sea trout, many of these latter being of good weight, and going as high as four pounds. The best months are July, August, and September; but sport depends

entirely on the time of the spates, and even when they come, the river rises and falls so rapidly that it can only be fished by those living on the spot. Jock Scot, the silver bodies, and, indeed, any of the standard patterns on small hooks, will kill; while a rod of from fourteen to sixteen feet will easily cover the water.

CHAPTER XLIV

ARNISDALE, CARNACH, GUSERAN, INVERIE

The Arnisdale, Carnach, Guseran, and Inverie are four short, typical West Coast streams, not very far apart, flowing into Loch Hourn, the Sound of Sleat, and Loch Nevis. The Arnisdale flows into the north shore of Loch Hourn, and has a sharp fall four miles above its mouth, which bars the further progress of fish. It is strictly preserved, as it runs entirely through the Arnisdale Forest, belonging to Mr. J. M. Phipps.

The Guseran flows through the Knoydart estate of Mr. E. Salvin Bowlby, and falls into the Sound of Sleat after a run of ten miles. From July to the end of the season, when in good ply, it yields excellent sport with salmon, grilse, and sea trout, especially with the latter.

The Inverie, another river of the Knoydart estate, flows out of Loch Dhulochan—a small, dark-looking loch, as its name indicates—and, after a run of three miles, falls into the salt water of Loch Nevis a little to the east of Inverie House. Some twenty-five years ago, when staying with Mr. J. Baird, who then owned Knoydart, another guest and myself took from Loch Dhulochan close on a hundred sea trout in the day, averaging just over three-quarters of a pound, and a salmon of twenty-two pounds. This take, however, was an exceptionally good one, though days of three dozen were common events, which happy state of affairs probably still continues.

The Carnach is a small stream, also on the Knoydart

property, of barely three miles in length, and runs into the head of Loch Nevis, and is reached from Inverie House by boat—either by a long pull of some ten miles with the oars, or by a steam launch. In spite of its short course, it holds a good few salmon and sea trout—many more, indeed, than one would expect—while it has some few nice-looking holding pools. Of this we had ample confirmation during my stay at Inverie, for our host, having heard one morning that the Morar poachers were coming to net the river during the ensuing night, very quickly determined to be in front of them, and, accordingly, he netted the stream during the day, and from it we took twenty-eight salmon and grilse, and nearly a hundred sea trout, mostly small ones, although there were a few of fully three pounds. Our catch was distributed amongst the inhabitants of the district, and when the poachers came, they had their trouble for nothing.

When there is water, each of these four streams offers fascinating angling; and, with any one of them in order, it is a treat to wander, rod in hand, in solitary happiness along the beautiful banks. I say solitary, because most anglers prefer to be alone and thrown on their own resources on these occasions; for even if, now and then, two or three fish have to be carried home on one's own back, the extra toils lends additional pleasure to such red-letter days. These four streams are all strictly preserved for the use of their owners and friends; but, even if leave was freely granted, or if they were open to the public, they are each of them so inaccessible as to be nearly out of reach. A stout trout rod will fish them all, and any of the small standard flies will kill—Jock Scot, Thunder and Lightning, and silver bodies for choice; sizes from No. 2 Limerick hooks to the very smallest.

CHAPTER XLV

THE BADACHRO AND KERRY

Two small streams falling into the salt water of Gair Loch, both of which formerly yielded good sport, but are now nearly fishless, and have fallen even to a lower ebb than the adjacent and larger River Ewe.

The Badachro goes with Shieldaig Forest, and has a course of about fourteen miles, during which it drains the two good-sized lochs of Vallich and Horrisdale, together with some ten smaller ones. Until a few years back the Badachro, at about two miles from its mouth, rushed over falls, which barred the further ascent of fish; when, however, Mr. C. D. Rudd rented Shieldaig from Sir Kenneth Mackenzie, he had these falls made passable at a considerable expense, and undoubtedly the experiment would have been highly successful, had not the bag nets—so much too numerous and so much too near to the river mouth—caught the bulk of the fish.

It is the same with the Kerry and the Ewe; for though the rods get a few fish each season, their take is not one-fiftieth of what it would be if these rivers received fair treatment. Three miles above its mouth the Kerry is blocked by a series of most formidable falls, which may be regarded as impassable; for though money and science no doubt could take the fish up them, the outlay would never be worth the benefits to be gained. The same flies that are used on the Ewe will also kill on these two streams. All three are, however, done for and ruined as far as angling is concerned, and nothing less than a jubilee would restore their ancient glories.

As far back as 1883, a gentleman wrote to Mr. Young, the Inspector of Salmon Fisheries, stating that he had counted thirteen bag nets in one mile of the sea coast, close to the Badachro mouth, and that the close time was never observed. He then proceeded to complain about the poaching carried on by the crews of yachts. Says he: "From my own personal knowledge I can speak of another serious evil, which of late years has grown apace. Yachts have greatly increased in number; they come about the west coasts in June, July, and August, and their crews, sometimes under the direction of the owner or hirer himself, sometimes without his knowledge, drag the mouths of the rivers at night and carry off the few fish that have escaped the bag nets. Before morning the yacht has generally disappeared. It is very difficult to stop these depredators, who come with more boats than one; and although I and my gamekeepers frequently watch the night through, and occasionally catch them in the act, yet many escape in the dark nights, having cleared out, if the season is dry, nearly the whole river's supply of fish, which were waiting at the mouth for a spate to ascend. I regret to say that it sometimes happens that, after having been warned off, and having promised not to repeat the offence, the same yacht's crew have again made another attempt during the same night."

Mr. Young had previously to the receipt of this letter received many similar complaints, for as far back as 1874 he drew up a circular on the subject and sent it to the secretary of every yacht club in the United Kingdom. In spite of that notice, this sort of poaching increased rather than diminished, and when it is remembered that there are over five thousand yachts in the United Kingdom, and that the west coasts of Scotland and the Hebrides are their favourite summer cruising grounds, it will be seen that the issue of such a circular was warranted, although its receipt caused a certain amount of indignation in some of the clubs. The evil still exists, for in August, 1895, when coming home from a belated

stalking trip on the hills at the head of the Glen Dhu, in Sutherland, I found a yacht's crew busy scringing the mouth of the stream that falls into the head of that loch. On seeing us come over the sky-line, the party hastened on board and steamed away.

Now, people who can afford to own or hire yachts are usually in a position to lay claim to the title of gentlemen, and would be highly indignant if they were called thieves or poachers; therefore that they should, either directly or indirectly, connive at this law-breaking has always appeared to me quite unaccountable, and I believe in nineteen cases out of twenty it is done without the knowledge of the owner or hirer of the yacht.

The mouth of the Kerry is very narrow and shut in by two ridges of rocks. Below comes a deep pool, into which the tide flows, then follows a beautiful bay with a gravel shore, formerly a pet place for the poaching operations of the crews of yachts, but now protected by large stones placed about it armed with iron hooks, which has stopped this unlawful netting.

In 1883 it was estimated that the take of salmon and grilse in this district was from seven to eight thousand, while the take to the rods was less than two hundred, or forty to one, which disproportionate allowance at the present time has increased nearly to one hundred to one.

CHAPTER XLVI

THE BALGAY, SHIELDAIG, AND TORRIDON

As these three streams fall into the salt water of Loch Torridon, they will be best dealt with in one chapter.

The Balgay flows out of Loch Damph, five miles long, and forms the march between Mr. C. J. Murray's Forest of Glenshieldaig and Captain the Honourable L. F. King-Noel's Forest of Ben Damph. It is but a little more than a mile in length, in which there is a sharp fall, greatly hindering, but not entirely preventing, the ascent of fish. Here, many years ago, was one of those pots or traps into which salmon fell back as they tried to leap the fall, and at that time fish were in such plenty that six or eight were often taken in a day. The stream is fished by the two proprietors on alternate days, both of them sparing no pains to make the fishing better, for as they preserve strictly, promiscuous applications for leave are useless. Now and again it yields a good bag of sea trout with a very occasional salmon.

The Shieldaig runs through the glen of the same name, and falls into Loch Shieldaig, a branch of Loch Torridon, which must not be confused with Shieldaig lying further north and close to Gairloch. It is purely a spate river, which under present circumstances gives no sport worth mentioning.

The Torridon falls into the head of the salt water loch of the same name, drains thirty-eight square miles, and is the largest of the three streams. Its waters are very clear, with a good many quick-running shallows, the whole of it belonging

to Mr. Duncan Darroch of Torridon, who preserves it strictly. This gentleman has had a lengthy experience of West Coast angling, and, always taking a lively interest in the subject, as far back as 1884 he drew up a memorandum on the matter at the request of the Fishery Board. A clearer, more sensible or convincing indictment against the increasing number of the bag nets and their non-observance of the weekly close time could not have been penned, and I regret want of space prevents me from quoting Mr. Darroch's letter *in extenso*.

It is to be hoped that the coming Royal Commission, to be appointed for the consideration of the working of the existing salmon fishery laws, will at any rate recommend the advisability of allowing appeals against many of the existing estuary lines, for Loch Torridon is by no means the only sufferer. With regard to the non-observance of the weekly close time, I have often thought that it would be worth the while of the Fishery Board to offer a reward for the invention of a method by which the leads of the bag nets could be removed mechanically. I am strongly of opinion this could easily be thought out and perfected at a small cost, and then made obligatory for the use of all lessees.

The three streams all open on the 11th of February, with the usual close times; but fish are very seldom seen before the end of April, the chief run taking place in June and July. A fourteen-foot rod will cover them all; no waders are wanted, and the same flies that will do on the Elchaig and its adjacent streams will prove killers on these.

CHAPTER XLVII

THE BEAULY

THIS fine river, with its tributaries, the Farrar, Glass, Cannich, and Affrick, drains two hundred and seventy square miles of country, nearly the whole of which is under deer. The Beauly proper commences at the junction of the Farrar with the Glass, the forest lodge of Struy (Streams) being placed just above the meeting of the two waters. From here the Beauly has a run of twelve miles until it falls into the Beauly Firth, a little below the picturesque small town of the same name and ten miles to the north-west of Ness mouth. A short distance below the meeting of the Farrar and the Glass, on the left bank, is the beautiful castle of Erchless, belonging to Mrs. Chisholm. None of the Beauly angling, however, belongs to it, for Lord Lovat owns the whole of the fishing on the Beauly, Glass, and Farrar, with the exception of a small portion of the Glass near Cannich. Below Erchless is Lord Lovat's pretty property of Eilean Aigas, with which there is about three miles of the Beauly angling on the left bank. On the right bank, about half-way between Erchless and Eilean Aigas, comes another beautiful domain of Lord Lovat's, Eskadale House, which has three miles of both banks, with a further three of the left one, and goes right up to the junction of the Glass and Farrar.

Three miles below Eilean Aigas are the Falls of Kilmorack, noted for their picturesque beauty and grand appearance in times of flood. They look a formidable obstacle to the ascent

THE FALLS OF KILMORACE.

CHAPTER XLVII

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Three miles below Eilean Aigas are the Falls of Kilmorack, noted for their picturesque beauty and grand appearance in times of flood. They look a formidable obstacle to the ascent

THE FALLS OF KILMORACK.

of fish, and certainly would be so but for the fact that there are excellent salmon ladders, which permit fish to run freely at all times, except in very low water. Though the whole of the Beauly angling belongs to Lord Lovat, it is chiefly below these falls that it is most vigorously carried on. From time immemorial the river has been renowned for the quantity and quality of its fish, and at Beaufort Castle there are old statistics still existing which show that the fishings were better in the early part of this century than they are now, demonstrating very clearly the damage done by bag and stake nets.

In the seven years inclusive, from 1809 to 1815, the average take of each season was 3,237 salmon and 5,525 grilse. In a like period, from 1856 to 1862, it fell to an average of 950 salmon and 3,293 grilse. From 1863 to 1869 this average rose to 1,304 salmon and 4,261 grilse. Now, if we compare the 1815 average, which gives a total of 8,762 each season, with the average of the 1869 period, which shows but 5,565 fish per season, we have a falling off of 3,197 fish every year. In addition to that great decline, it cannot be too strongly brought to the notice of those who make our salmon laws that the old statistics show thirty-two salmon for every fifty-five grilse, while recent ones only give thirteen salmon to forty-two grilse!

Now, it was only at the commencement of the present century that bag nets came into existence, and these figures show very clearly that as those fixed engines increased in number and efficiency, slowly but surely their destructiveness began to make itself felt. As they multiplied, so *pari passu* did the stock of all the rivers decrease. Fortunately, the estuary line fixed for the Ness and the Beauly is a right and proper one, and not made in the interests of the bag nets, and to curtail it would be to deal a serious blow to the stock and to the prestige of the two rivers. At present, the estuary is a line drawn from the Carse of Ardesier, on the south shore of the Moray Firth, to the Three Burns on the north one, and

the proposal to set it back seven miles would, if carried out, ruin both Beauly and Ness.

A little below the falls of Kilmorack comes Beaufort Castle, Lord Lovat's headquarters, so beautifully situated on the bank of the river, and certainly one of the best places in Scotland for all-round sport. The Castle angling begins immediately below the falls and extends down on both banks for about three miles, in which there are fifteen good pools and some "bitties." The best are the Bridge Pool, Fairy, Colonel's Stane, Mill, Mare's, Cruive, Charlie, Silver, Castle, Minister's, Island, Long Ridge, and Downie.

On this reach, in a favourable season, from two to three hundred fish can be got between the middle of June and the middle of October. It was here that the late Lord Lovat and Colonel Duff made the three celebrated scores in 1854. His lordship in eight days, between the 20th of June and the 6th of July, had 128 fish. In 1859 Colonel Duff, commencing on the 1st of July, had 106 fish by the evening of the 7th; and then in 1864 Lord Lovat, commencing on the 27th of June, had in five days 146 fish, or an average of just over twenty-nine a day.

In 1892 the report of the Fishery Board states that the take in the tidal waters of the district was but 457 salmon and 3,299 grilse; while the captures to the rod on the Beauly and its tributaries were 64 salmon and 536 grilse.

The river opens on the 11th of February, and closes on the 1st of August for nets, and on the 15th of October for rods. There are always clean fish on the opening day, but not so many now as there were formerly.

Lord Lovat is, however, doing everything he can to improve the river, and even minor details, such as the destruction of predaceous birds and the netting and shooting of seals in the Beauly Firth, are prosecuted with vigour, while special attention is directed to the preservation of spawning fish. In 1892, in order to increase the stock of fish in the river,

netting in the Cruive Pool during the months of June and July was discontinued, except for two afternoons in each week. In 1899 a hatchery was erected capable of taking 300,000 ova, part of which will be imported from other rivers; here, in the autumn of 1899, some 20,000 eggs of the land-locked salmon, imported from America, were successfully hatched out, to be eventually turned into some of the hill lochs on the Lovat property.

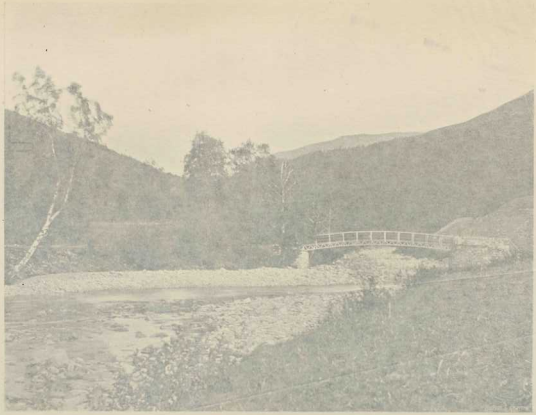
Returning to the junction of the Farrar with the Glass, the first-mentioned is the more northern stream, and, flowing from Loch Monar, it has a run of about twenty miles. As soon as there is a July flood there is fairly good salmon and grilse fishing, which the discontinuance of the netting already mentioned has done much to improve.

The Farrar is also a fine trout stream, the angling being strictly preserved, and belonging for some six miles to Struy Forest, while the remainder goes with Braulen Forest.

The Glass has a course of about ten miles, which is Lord Lovat's with the exception of a short stretch near Cannich owned by Mrs. Chisholm. Part of this goes with Struy and part of it is let with Guisachan Forest, and a few fish are always got each season, while the trouting is first-rate. The Glass eventually divides into the Affrick and the Cannich, the latter the most northern, and not well suited to salmon or trout from its rocky bed and impetuous course. The Affrick, which rises in Loch Benevian and Loch Affrick, is more adapted for holding fish. Both streams are entirely on the Chisholm estates, the angling going with the Forests of Invercannich and Affrick, and is strictly preserved. An eighteen-foot rod is wanted for the Beauly, on which, as there is no deep wading, knee boots or stockings will suffice. The fly is the only lure allowed, and as long as there is snow water none can beat the Snow Fly, with its peacock herl wing, blue body, and silver tinsel, and at that time of year in big water a 7/0 hook may be used. As soon

as the snow has gone, then any of the standard patterns will kill, dressed on smaller hooks, according to the size of the water and time of year.

On the Beauly March, April, and May are good months for salmon; the grilse run with them in June, July, and August, while up to the middle of October both may be caught whenever the water is right, salmon averaging about fourteen pounds and grilse about seven pounds. The five lowest pools of the river are tidal ones, let with Moniack Castle and Balblair House, each having alternate days on both banks throughout the season.



THE JUNCTION POOL.

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THE JUNCTION POOL.

CHAPTER XLVIII

THE BROOM

DRAINS thirty-seven square miles of very steep country, and, rising partly in the Dirrie hills of Braemore Forest and partly in those of Fannich Forest, its two chief streams flow from Loch Droma, in Braemore, and from Loch Bhraoin, on the Dundonnell property; their junction forms the Broom proper, and from here it has a run through the Braemore property of Sir John Fowler of about five miles to the salt water at the head of Loch Broom. The Loch Droma branch flows for nearly a mile through a remarkably grand rift in the rocks, with perpendicular walls some two hundred feet in height, while near the top of this chasm the river falls that distance in one sheer leap. At the end of this wonderful natural cutting the Loch Bhraoin branch joins on, and in the following five miles there are about twenty good salmon pools, a few of them being artificial ones made with much skill and at considerable expense. Indeed, no river on the West Coast has been better preserved in every respect than the one now under discussion; and yet, in spite of all the care and the money spent on it by the first baronet, the late Sir John Fowler, and again by his son, the Broom does not produce one-tenth or even one-twentieth of the fish it used to yield before the foreshores of Loch Broom became studded with bag nets.

In the Fishery Board Report for 1884, Mr. Young quotes a letter written to him by a gentleman who had known the river for sixty years, and he writes as follows:—

"When I began fishing in the Broom in early days there was no restriction. Everyone fished both with rod and spear. The rivers were swarming with fish, and on the Broom, when in good trim, I could get from eight to a dozen fish a day with the rod. With the spear I have taken sixty in a day, and could have got more. This would be about 1820, and I have not the least doubt that the bag nets are the sole cause of the scarcity of fish in the rivers here, along with poaching with trawls on the coasts at night."

I have ascertained that this letter to Mr. Young was written by Mr. Mackenzie, of Morefield, who was factor to Mr. Hay Mackenzie, the father of the third Duchess of Sutherland.

Lady Fowler—who has also kindly lent me the negatives of her excellent photographs of the Broom—tells me she often heard of the sport had by Mr. Mackenzie and old Mr. Davidson, of Tulloch, and that when they went spearing they used to be accompanied by thirty or forty crofters, who each received a fish for himself.

In answer to queries sent to him by the Fishery Board in 1883, Sir John Fowler wrote that, "The take of fish is gradually diminishing. Sea trout have almost disappeared. I impute this to scringing or trawling off the mouths of rivers by crews with long seine nets with a small mesh. Several crews from Ullapool and the district fish regularly during July, August, and September, near the mouths of the Broom and Ullapool rivers. When prosecuted, their defence is that they are fishing for herrings, cuddies, or white fish. Thirty years ago eight to ten fish a day to a rod was not uncommon on the Broom. Now from fifty to fifty-five are killed in a season, and about a dozen sea trout. Bag nets have likewise enormously diminished the supply of fish to this coast. The bye-laws regulating the observance of a weekly close time by stake and bag nets are only fairly well observed. The penalties should be more severe. The weekly close time is not sufficient, and should be increased to sixty hours instead of as at present

THE BRONX BRIDGE, 1894.

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THE BROOM BRIDGE POOL.

thirty-six. Either this should be done, or there should be a close time of a whole fortnight during the grilse run." Which last suggestion of the late Sir John Fowler appears an excellent one and well worth serious consideration.

Up till recently Sir Arthur Mackenzie, of Coul, owned about a mile of the lowest part of the left bank; but when he sold Inverlael to Mr. W. E. Gilmour, the fishing, of course, passed with the property, and now belongs to that gentleman, who is himself a hard-working, good angler.

The Broom opens on the 11th of February, closes for nets on 26th of August, and for rods on 31st of October. Clean fish are rarely caught before the middle of April, while July, August, and September are the best months. No waders are required; a fourteen-foot rod will cover all the pools. The fly is the only lure used, and Jock Scot, Thunder and Lightning, and the silver-bodied ones are the favourites, though nearly any of the standard patterns will kill if dressed on small hooks. The river rises and falls quickly. Fish average about ten pounds, and sea trout one pound. The best flies for these are the same as for salmon, only dressed very small.

CHAPTER XLIX

THE CARRON OF LOCH CARRON AND KISHORN

THE Carron drains seventy-five square miles, and rises in Loch Scaven, which lies between the stations of Achnasheen and Loch Carron close to the Dingwall railway; from thence it flows for six miles into Loch Doule, and, passing through it, has a further run of five miles to the salt water of Loch Carron. Pike are numerous in Loch Scaven, but less so in Loch Doule, though, of course, their presence does not tend to improve the angling. The middle waters, including Loch Doule and the Coulag Pool, the best one on the river, belong to Mr. Emerson Bainbridge, M.P., who recently purchased Achnashellach from Lord Wimborne, who, in his time, improved the angling considerably by employing a strong staff to watch the river mouth; nevertheless the angling is not what it once was, for Michie, the head keeper, who has known the river for many years, declares that since 1875 there has not been one fish in the river for twenty that formerly used to run up it.

From 1875 to 1884, both inclusive, the take to the rod showed an average of twenty-eight fish a season, and as that of 1883 was one hundred and twenty-two salmon and grilse, it will be seen how very small must have been the sport of some of the remaining nine seasons.

The Carron opens on the 11th of February, closes for nets on the 26th of August, and for rod on the 31st of October. Clean fish have been caught on the opening day, but the event is exceptional, and the main take of spring fish is in April and

May, while the grilse follow in July, with the autumn fish later on.

Mr. Bainbridge has the upper, more interesting and best part of the angling, while the lower portion belongs to Sir Kenneth Matheson, of Duncraig Castle. Glen Carron estate has the upper reaches, which are of a rather sluggish character, with deep pools of peat-coloured water in which fish lie even when the river is low, though they do not rise well to a fly.

The three lowest miles are let with Sir Kenneth Matheson's New Kelso shootings, at present in the occupation of Mr. Ralph Creyke, and to the kindness of Mrs. Creyke and Sir Kenneth I am indebted for much information.

When Lord Wimborne occupied Achnashellach, he secured from Sir Kenneth a twenty years' lease of the whole of the New Kelso anglings, together with the best part of those of Achnashellach; this lease expired in 1901, when the angling was added to Sir Kenneth's Forest of Attadale, at present held by Baron William Schröder. I believe Mr. Bainbridge preserves the river quite as strictly as did his predecessor, while no fixed nets are allowed by Sir Kenneth in any part of Loch Carron.

The pools of the New Kelso water have mostly low banks, which makes casting easy, while the catches themselves are of shingle and not of rock. Fine tackle and small flies are essential, for as the streams here run very clear, long casting is necessary. A fourteen-foot rod will do all the work, while in a flood knee boots or stockings are convenient, though the angler, on account of the clearness of the water, should at all times keep himself as far off the fish as possible.

There are some few local flies, but Jock Scot with the Blue Doctor will hold their own. The average weight of salmon is about eight pounds, and though sometimes they are got up to eighteen pounds, the heavy fish rarely rise well, though, when they do take hold, the light tackle and the small fly make most exciting sport. The sea trout are small, but nearly always fresh-

run, good fighters for their size, which varies from half a pound to a pound, and delicious for the table; heavier ones are got now and then, but the majority of the large ones pass through these lower pools without halting.

August and September are both good months—the first *small* and early flood in August is the cream of the time; a big flood is not good, as the fish leaving the pools spread themselves all over the river and are difficult to find.

If the New Kelso anglings are well fished, they should give from twelve to eighteen salmon with from three hundred to three hundred and sixty sea trout. The names of the chief of the New Kelso pools are, from the top: Lower Coulag, Little Bridge, Cruive, Old Woman's, and Long Pool—this latter the best of the lot, and one which was greatly improved by Lord Wimborne, who placed two groins at the lower end of it, which had the desired effect of deepening the water, and it is now a favourite one for salmon and sea trout. The highest spring tides just touch the lower end of this pool, below which are some sea pools, at times very fair for sea trout, but not regularly so.

In this neighbourhood there is also a small mountain stream, the Kishorn, which falls into the bay of the same name, an offshoot of Loch Carron. It flows from the hill loch of Gannaich, on the property of Sir Kenneth Matheson, and has but a course of five miles, partly on Mr. J. C. Murray's Glenshieldaig estate and partly on the Kishorn lands of Mr. John Stewart; it is entirely a spate river, which, when "right," will yield some sea trout and an occasional salmon any time after the end of June. It is strictly preserved and has the same close times as the Carron.

THE FALLS OF THE CONON.

CHAPTER I.

THE CONON

Can drain a little more than four hundred square miles of Highland country, and, rising from Loch Sherket, on the west coast of Ross-shire, not very far from the head of Loch Maree, it flows through Loch Rosque into Loch Luichart (which also receives the overflow from the large Loch of Fannich), a fine sheet of water about eight miles in length by about one in breadth at the widest part, in which, unfortunately, there are large numbers of pike. Soon after the Conon leaves this loch there is a severe fall of nearly thirty feet, and the taking of salmon up or round such a formidable obstacle could only be done at a considerable cost. A short distance above these main falls there is a smaller one of ten feet, while further up again, and above Loch Luichart, there is another sharp fall just below Loch Collie. To open up any one of these falls from below without treating all of them in a like manner would undoubtedly be a waste of money. It has, however, been estimated that the whole of these falls could be made passable for salmon at a cost of about £1,500, which expenditure, if incurred, would open up twenty miles of river, together with the Lochs of Collie, Rosque, Luichgowan, Achanalt, Luichart, and several smaller ones.

A few miles above the fall, the Conon is joined on the right by the river Meig, which rises in the [illegible] Mr. R. H. Combe's [illegible] the property of

THE FALLS OF THE OUSE.

CHAPTER L

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THIS river drains a little more than four hundred square miles of chiefly Highland country, and, rising from Loch Sherlet, on the west coast of Ross-shire, not very far from the head of Loch Maree, it flows through Loch Rosque into Loch Luichart (which also receives the overflow from the large Loch of Fannich), a fine sheet of water about eight miles in length by about one in breadth at the widest part, in which, unfortunately, there are large numbers of pike. Soon after the Conon leaves this loch there is a severe fall of nearly thirty feet, and the taking of salmon up or round such a formidable obstacle could only be done at a considerable cost. A short distance above these main falls there is a smaller one of ten feet, while further up again, and above Loch Luichart, there is another sharp fall just below Loch Cullen. To open up any one of these falls from below without treating all of them in a like manner would undoubtedly be a waste of money. It has, however, been estimated that the whole of these falls could be made passable for salmon at a cost of about £1,500, which expenditure, if incurred, would throw open twenty miles of river, together with the Lochs of Cullen, Rosque, Ledgowan, Auchnalt, Luichart, and several smaller ones.

A few miles below the big falls the Conon is joined, on the right bank, by a large tributary—the Meig—which rises in the forest of Auchnashellach, passes through Mr. R. H. Combe's forest of Strathconon, and on leaving it enters the property of

Scatwell, belonging to Sir William Bell; it has a total run of twenty-five miles, joining the Conon two miles above Scatwell House. The lower pool of the Meig is let by Sir William to the hotel at Strathpeffer, and visitors there can pay by the day or the week for the fishing. The Meig above Scatwell is strictly preserved, and no leave is given except to Mr. Combe's friends. This tributary gives a certain number of fish each season, but not a great many, and though a few are got in July, the chief take is from the middle of August to the end of the season, when fish are not very presentable.

Some eight miles below the junction of the Meig the Blackwater joins the Conon on the left bank, a tributary which is nearly as large as the main stream. The Blackwater drains Loch Garve, and a few miles below the outflow are the picturesque and tourist-haunted Falls of Rogie, which, though not an absolute bar to the ascent of fish, are yet a very great hindrance, which could easily be lessened by slight judicious blasting without in any way spoiling the beauty or the appearance of the falls. Below this, the pools of the Blackwater often show most excellent spring angling. Both banks, down to the junction with the Conon, a distance of about four miles, belong to Sir Arthur Mackenzie, of Coul, and are let to Major Stirling, of Monar. From the junction Sir Arthur owns the left bank of the Conon up to Loch Luichart, while below the junction the Coul property goes down to Moy Bridge, where it is joined by the Brahan Castle water of Colonel Stewart Mackenzie. On the right bank from below the falls the Little Scatwell estate has a short piece of the river extending to the Meig junction. Below the Meig mouth Scatwell comes in on this bank and goes down to nearly opposite the Blackwater junction, where Mr. Stirling, of Fairburn, joins on, and goes down to the Orrin junction, the remainder of the river to the tideway belonging on both sides to Brahan Castle.

From Moy Bridge to the sea is the best of the spring angling, in which distance are many fine pools, notably the

Kettle. The Brahan Castle water, which is usually let, shows once more how wise it is to make fine angling, regardless of a small prospective loss by the non-working of the nets; for in every instance where this experiment has been tried, it has always resulted in the angling being let for a far larger sum than the nets had previously brought in. Up to about 1888 the Brahan water was let for netting to Messrs. Powrie and Pitcaithly, of Perth, who, by netting hard at the cruives and a little below them, and at the river mouth, so depleted the Conon of fish that it was a rare event to see a clean one above the cruives before the boxes were opened and the nets taken off.

In 1890 Mr. Stirling, of Fairburn, in conjunction with all the other lower proprietors, leased the Brahan cruives and net fishings, and, by keeping the boxes open and not working the nets, the river was speedily restocked. From that time neither cruives nor nets have been worked, and the river now holds a high rank as a good one for the angler, while it is also a beautiful river to fish, as the scenery is picturesque in the extreme. No waders are required, the few pools that cannot be commanded from the bank being boated.

The main run of salmon is in March and April; grilse begin to show about the middle of May. There are, however, always a fair sprinkling of clean fish in the river on the opening day, and it has several times been suggested that the rod season should commence on the 1st instead of on the 11th of February. It has also been further urged that the use of the gaff should be prohibited until the 1st of May, and also that the Sea Birds Protection Act should be repealed so far as the common gull is concerned, as they destroy every year vast quantities of par and smolts in the tidal water—three reasonable propositions which should certainly be made law.

There is only one case of pollution on the Conon, caused by the Muir of Ord Distillery, from which large quantities of "burnt ale" are poured into the river—a refuse which has

been proved to be most poisonous to fry, par and smolts, while its presence in the river makes salmon and grilse sick, sulky, and disinclined to rise to the fly. The recent litigation on the Spey on this very subject has resulted in a declaration that the discharge of poisonous refuse into a river is illegal; therefore, should this nuisance still exist, the Conon proprietors, thanks to the action of the Spey proprietors, now have it in their power to do away with it without incurring the expense of a long law-suit.

There is a good hatchery near Conon Bridge, from which about seventy thousand fry of seven weeks old are turned into the river each season, and exchanges of ova have been made between the Conon and the Thurso and the Tweed. The result at present is uncertain; but some of the proprietors were against trying Tweed ova on the ground that the two rivers were so unlike in the character of their courses and their waters.

The Conon district extends from Tarbat Ness on the north to the West Sutor of Cromarty, in which is included nearly the whole shore of the Cromarty Firth. In 1892 the Fishery Board Reports began to publish the approximate take by cruives, nets and cobles, bag nets and rods, and for that year the estimate for the three former was 8,000 fish, while the rods took 730. In 1893 it was 14,000 netted against 400 to the rods; in 1894 it was 16,000 to 650; and in 1895 it was 27,200 against 800. Since then no returns have been published; but the statistics of the above four years show that the nets had about thirty fish for every one got by the rod, a figure which, though greatly in excess of a fair proportion, is not so high as on many other rivers. In this report of the rod fishing the take of the river Alness is also included.

The Conon is well protected by a permanent inspector with a staff of four bailiffs; poaching, however, is mainly carried on in the Cromarty Firth. In 1896 a boat's crew was prosecuted for fishing in the firth with a small mesh sweep net for fish

of the salmon kind. The case was clearly proved, and the crew, consisting of either four or five men, were fined 10*s.* each, with 20*s.* costs—a total of £3 10*s.* at the outside, which the illegal capture of two or three dozen sea trout with a few grilse would speedily recoup, and leave a handsome profit into the bargain. Magistrates apparently overlook the fact that all fines should be made so heavy as to preclude any chance of an ultimate profit being gained on an illicit haul. If this were done, then poachers, both here and elsewhere, would soon cease from troubling, leaving only the seals to take their place; and in this firth, and that of the Kyle of Sutherland, their depredations are very serious.

On the right bank of the Conon, five miles above the mouth, it is joined by another considerable tributary—the Orrin—which, from its shallow, gravelly course, is not a very good angling stream. A few miles above the junction there is a very severe fall of fifteen feet, up which, however, fish have occasionally made their way. At the foot of this fall there is the usual pool, in which fish congregate thickly.

From the Orrin Fall, down to its junction with the Conon, although part of the land of the right bank belongs to the Highfield property, Mr. Stirling, of Fairburn, has the sole fishing right; and a valuable one it has proved, as the netting of the Fall Pool has produced as many as a thousand fish in the season. Likewise, although Mr. Stirling does not own all the river banks above the fall, he yet possesses the sole fishing rights by virtue of an old charter; and therefore whether it would be wise to make these Orrin Falls more easily passable for salmon is a matter which concerns no one but their fortunate owner. A rod of eighteen feet will be wanted on the lower waters of the Conon, and one of sixteen feet on the upper ones.

On some of the fishings the fly is the only lure permitted; nearly all the standard patterns kill, the Doctors and Jock Scot being the favourites—sizes from 4/0 downwards.

As the Brahan Castle water is the only stretch of angling on the Conon that ever comes into the market, a few particulars may be of service. It is usually let from the 11th of February to the 30th of April. It consists of four miles of both banks, from the march with the Cromarty burn below Conon Bridge to the Orrin junction, and thence, on the left bank only, it extends up for a further two and a quarter miles.

In 1898 the take was ninety-six salmon and twelve sea trout during the period of the let, a day of eight being the best catch. In 1899 the take was sixty-nine salmon with six sea trout, but as the tenant did not commence at the opening of the season, many good fishing days were lost.

There is usually an agreement between Colonel Mackenzie and Mr. Stirling, of Fairburn, by which it is arranged to fish the Kettle Pool on alternate days.

It will be gathered from these remarks that in my humble opinion the Conon is a most improving and desirable river for the angler. The large number of fish already caught on the Brahan Castle water up to the end of March in the season of 1900, points to an extra good April and May. By the end of that month there will then be a great number of fish bottled up below the falls, which would distribute themselves over the great extent of fresh waters which would be available if these falls were opened up, when by avoiding the crowding together to which they are now subject, they would probably become good risers, yielding sport from June to the end of the season.

CHAPTER LI

THE CROWE, ELCHAIG, LUING, AND SHIEL OF LOCH DUICH

Of these streams, the Crowe and the Shiel fall into the head of Loch Duich, and the Elchaig and the Luing into the head of Loch Luing, which lies some ten miles to the north. Both these lochs are salt water branches of the larger one of Loch Alsh, which, having regard to its size and shape, ought to be called a bay instead of a loch. Its two offshoots, however, Loch Duich and Loch Luing, quite agree with the ordinary idea of a loch, for they are so narrow and so shut in by hills that they might well be taken for fresh-water lakes.

The Shiel, the whole of which belongs to Mr. Baillie, of Dochfour, is the most southern of the Ross-shire streams, with its course running quite close to the Inverness-shire march. On the left bank, near the mouth of the river, is Shiel Hotel, not a very easy house to get at, the best route being by steamer to Glenelg and a mountain drive of ten miles. The angling goes with the Inn—an old-fashioned one, but clean and comfortable, and capable of putting up eight or ten people, although the coffee-room is the only living-room. There is no charge made for the sport; but unless fish are plentiful, those that are caught are usually presented to the Commissariat Department of the Inn. The scenery is wild to a degree, for on the right bank the hills of the Five Sisters rise nearly sheer from the river, each of them being about three thousand feet high.

The Shiel has a total run of some ten miles, but the best of the angling is confined to the lowest one, in which there are

four good pools. The Bridge Pool is nearest to the sea and fishes from the right bank, a remarkably fine-looking catch for the size of the river, for it is both broad and deep, and holds more fish than any of the others, albeit the occupants of this pool are not free rising ones. Above this comes the Half Pool, which fishes from the left bank. A short distance beyond the top of this catch the river is joined by a big burn, up which sea trout run freely, and here with a worm they are often taken in some numbers, even up to four pounds in weight. Above this small tributary is the Captain's Pool, a long, streamy piece of water best worked from the right bank. A short distance higher up the river expands into Loch Shiel, a small and very weedy sheet of water, about a mile in circumference. Immediately below where it flows from the loch, though very swampy ground, is a black, oily, gliding stream called the Inkpot, a nearly sure cast in high water, or when the surface is ruffled by a breeze, and this one pool often accounts for half the fish killed in the season. It is, however, only a few yards long, and if a fish is hooked, "hold on" must be the order of the day, for it is not safe to let it go either up or down. Below the Inkpot proper there are some more short casts of the same sort.

It will be gathered from the foregoing that the lower half-mile of the river is rough and rocky, with the upper one full of reeds and rushes. There is a boat on Loch Shiel, where sea trout often take well; but, though salmon lie in it, and may be seen splashing freely, they seldom rise. For three or four miles above the loch the river is a series of slow-running deeps, connected by shallows, with no well-defined pools. The water is of great clearness, so that a stiff breeze is essential, when there is always a good chance of sport, even though there has been no recent rainfall. At the end of this reach of dead water rocky pools again commence, but are seldom fished, for report says these upper reaches are freely poached. Wading stockings are useful, but not absolutely

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THE SHIEL AND LOCH DUICH.

necessary. Fish average about eight pounds, and rarely exceed sixteen pounds. Plenty of sea trout of three to four pounds can be seen, but very few of these weights are caught, as for some reason these large trout do not rise well, the usual average being under a pound. One or two fish and half a dozen sea trout would be a good day when the river was right, although better ones have occasionally been recorded. Fish run up with the first July flood, and August and September are the best months. The favourite flies are the Doctors, Jock Scot, Thunder and Lightning, Silver Grey, Farlow's Black Prince, and the two unnamed ones in the chapter on "Glenelg."

The Crowe falls into the head of Loch Duich about three miles to the north of Shiel Inn. Remarkable for the clearness of its waters, this pretty little stream rises in the Kintail hills, and for the greater portion of its course belongs to Sir Allan Mackenzie, of Glen Muick, until, as it nears the sea, the right bank becomes the property of Sir Kenneth Matheson, while the left one is owned by Sir J. T. Mackenzie, and between these three proprietors the angling rights are shared. Inverinate bank has, however, the lion's share. The river is strictly preserved, the sea trout being the chief attraction, for the salmon angling is variable, and although as many as fifty fish have been got in a season, that number is far above the average take, the stream being essentially a spate one. It has the same close times as the Shiel, while the flies that are used on the one will do equally well on the other.

The angling of the Elchaig and the Luing are entirely on the property of Sir Kenneth Matheson. Both fall into the head of Loch Luing, within a short distance of each other, this salt water loch being a long, narrow, winding one of some six miles in length, with rapid-running tides. There are no bag or stake nets in Loch Luing, but, sad to relate, poachers are numerous, who get large quantities of fish both from the shores of the loch, from the mouths of the rivers, and even from the rivers themselves, unless very closely watched. They are a

bold set of men, rendered more so by the impunity with which they carry on their operations, and were it not for their evil doings, the two rivers would be nearly as plentifully stocked as they used to be forty years ago.

The Elchaig is the more southern of the two streams, and has about seven miles of good angling, although three miles from the mouth there are some falls up which fish easily pass by a ladder. It is entirely a spate river, which comes down with great fury when there is heavy rain. At such periods the falls of the Glomach tributary offer a grand sight, as they are quite the highest in Scotland, being close on three hundred and fifty feet. This river averages each season from twenty to thirty fish of ten pounds, and from one hundred and fifty to three hundred sea trout of one pound each. Waders are not required, and the same flies as kill on the Shiel will kill here.

The Luing has a run of about twelve miles, and rising in the small loch of Luie, near Loch Calvie—with which, however, it has no connecting stream—it falls into the head of Loch Luing, close to the mouth of the Elchaig. Two miles from the salt water there is a heavy fall of upwards of twenty feet sheer, past which very few fish ascend, although some attempts have been made to enable them to do so. Above these falls there are six miles of good spawning ground and pretty angling, with fully double the number of pools in the distance as there are between the falls and the sea. The fish of this river are handsomer than those of the Elchaig; for they are short, thick, fat fellows with small heads, while those of the sister stream are longer and thinner—a deficiency which anglers will most likely consider as more than compensated for by their being much freer risers. The average take of fish and sea trout is much the same as that of the Elchaig; also similar flies can be used. Both rivers open on the 11th of February, with the usual close times for that day.

All these four streams afford fresh instances of rivers being opened by law long before they are opened by nature; for there are no clean fish in any of them until April.

One side of the Luing and one side of the Elchaig go with Killilan and Glomach Forest, and the other with Attadale Forest, or rather Ben Dronaig. One side of the Luing also goes with Killilan, and the other with Dorisduan and Inverinate. Mr. John Hargreaves, who had Killilan a few years ago, writes me as follows about the angling of these two streams: "When the September rains did at last come, we had some good sport; friends and myself killing twenty-five salmon, with one hundred sea trout in the month. I had one good day, killing two fine stags, right and left; and then taking a rod, I fished down the Elchaig and killed three salmon, gaffing for myself and carrying them home on my back, as I had no man with me. If there is water, each of these rivers will yield twenty-five to thirty salmon in the autumn, with from two hundred to three hundred sea trout; and I am told that, with water, about the same number could be got in April and May. As the Luing was much farther off me than the Elchaig, I only fished it a few times when it was in order, but whoever went always had two or three fish. This river is nearer to Attadale Forest House, which is rented by Baron William Schröder, and was often fished by his son, who one day towards the end of September had no less than seven fish; but on both rivers they are turning rather red by that time. The Alexandra is the best sea trout fly, and with it I got some of over three pounds, though the usual run is from three-quarters to one and a quarter pounds. In the autumn, the small loch at the top of the Elchaig is full of salmon, although they are seldom caught there."

CHAPTER LII

THE EWE

THE whole of which belongs to Sir Kenneth Mackenzie, of Gairloch, drains one hundred and fifty-seven square miles of very hilly country, and empties Loch Maree into the salt water of Loch Ewe. It much resembles the River Awe in character, as it has but a total course of about a mile and a half, while all the pools can be fished dry-shod. The river opens on the 11th of February, closes for nets on the 26th of August, and for rods on the 31st of October. The chief run of fish is in May, June, July, and August; salmon averaging thirteen pounds and grilse six pounds.

The upper portion of the river contains a large amount of dead, deep water, wanting a breeze on it in times of spate, and there are three places in which fish rise. The first of these below Loch Maree, the Upper Narrows, is wide and shallow, opening out into a lakelet, where just as it widens, stone jetties are run out for the convenience of anglers. The wooded banks rise rather steeply behind the fisher, so that here the Spey cast comes in very handy. Some three hundred yards below are the Middle Narrows, widening out as they end into a small loch of great depth and which always holds fish. The right bank is wooded, while the left one is clear, with the bank low. In big water the fish lie close to the banks, and this cast may then be fished as low down as can be reached from the bank. About a hundred yards nearer the sea is the deep pool of the Lower Narrows, fishing best with heavy water.

The river proper now commences at the New or Upper Cruive Pool, fished from piers, the best cast being that near the end of the pool on the left bank. The fly should alight right on the far side of the stream, as the fish rise as it swings into the tail of the heaviest part of the current. In quite low water the upper part of the stream also fishes well. Next comes "McHardy's"—really more of a rough stream than a pool—which looks better than it is. Following this is the Grilse Pool, fished from the right bank only, and not as certain a cast now as it formerly was. Then comes the Holy and the High Wood, both fished from the left bank, neither being of much worth. These are followed by the Manse Pool, which is cast from the left bank, and is another case illustrating the deceitfulness of appearances. The middle pier is the best chance, for hereabouts there is often a big but dour fish to be seen. Below this, the river widens very much, and then, in high water, there is an excellent cast for running grilse. Lastly comes the Sea Pool, which can only be fished when the tide is out of it, and is best from the left bank. The fish, however, are here free risers, and often when hooked leave the pool for the sea, to which they can only be followed by going down a ledge of rocks passing under the bridge.

As matters are at present, the Ewe is always an uncertain river, for the angling has run down to such a degree that it would be absurd to talk of an average take. The deterioration has been very gradual, so that, though it is very poor angling now, it never has in recent times been very good. The falling off has also been by waves, so that, during its slow and steady degradation, there have been occasional years when the takes of the seasons—or, at any rate, the summer ones—have been almost as good as ever. The late Sir Kenneth Mackenzie's best day was a capture of ten grilse, and, as a young man, he fished the river a great deal. The best day in seventeen years had by Mr. J. H. Dixon was one of six grilse, while now

the angler who gets a fish a day in the best month is indeed lucky, for one a week is nearer the mark.

April is the best spring month, with July the best summer one. Later on in the autumn the fish are sulky, for even if they rise, they rarely lay hold. The spring fish run right through both river and loch, and pass up the Garry at Kinlochewe into Loch Clair, where they are got as early as April. Wading stockings or knee boots are convenient, though not absolutely necessary. Worm and prawn will both kill, and are not prohibited.

Sea trout are plentiful, the first run commencing about the end of June; some of these run up to five pounds, though half that weight is the average; then towards the end of July they get gradually smaller, until the finnocks appear. In fine weather and with low water the best time to get them is from nine o'clock to midnight; and, although this species of *salmonidæ* takes so well in the night, it is strange it should be so rare to catch either salmon or grilse in the half-light of a summer night, and, indeed, I know of no instance of this being done. For this work a black-bodied fly is the favourite, and it is wiser to use one only, and also to have two or three casts ready prepared in case of a tangle.

With the upper portion of the Ewe is also let about a mile and a half of Loch Maree, which rarely yields a salmon or grilse, but often gives some good sport with sea trout. For these the Green Drake, the Wasps, and the Black and Red Spiders are the favourites, dressed somewhat small. There are also numbers of yellow trout in the Ewe, some which grow to large size, though the average is a bare half-pound.

The four days of each week the angling is let with Pool House Lodge, at the mouth of the river; the other two going with Inveran Lodge, at the exit of the river from Loch Maree. In Sir Humphry Davey's *Salmonia* there is a long description of the angling on the Ewe nearly a century ago, and at that period, 1813, Sir Humphry gives only a slight preference to

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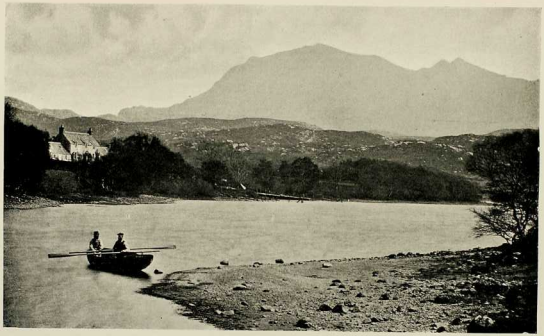

MOUTH OF THE EWE AND POOL HOUSE LODGE.

the Brora over the Ewe "for certainty of sport." What a change has taken place in the interval! In writing of the Ewe in 1813, Sir Humphry says: "If you could have seen this river twenty years ago, when the cruives were a mile higher up, then you might have enjoyed fishing. There were eight or ten pools of the finest character possible for angling, where a fisherman of my acquaintance hooked thirty fish in a morning. The river was then perfect, and it might easily be brought again into the same state; but even as it is now, with this single good pool and this second tolerable one, I know no place where I could, in the summer months, be so secure of sport as here—certainly nowhere in Great Britain."*

In the old days it was a common occurrence for the then Sir Kenneth Mackenzie to take twenty and more clean fish in a day—many of them of great weight—up to thirty pounds, which, as a writer of that period puts it, "afford such exceeding sport, frequently unwinding from sixty to ninety yards of line at a single burst, that anyone accustomed to kelt fishing can have little idea of the excitement!"

It is here, perhaps, worthy of remark that this is not by any means the only allusion made by old writers to kelt fishing as a form of sport recognised amongst our ancestors of from eighty to a hundred years ago, and it is possible that this sort of angling may have been the cause of so many rivers having been declared open to the rod on the 11th of February, although clean fish were never seen in them until one, two, and even three months later.

In 1820 the net fishing began on the 14th of January and continued till the 28th of August, in which period four hundred and fifteen salmon and two thousand seven hundred and twenty-seven grilse were killed. For that year the wages bill came to £25 18*s.*! besides £2 paid to one George Mitchell as "expenses for his vitals," with a further £3 10*s.* for "whiskee for the concern."

* In 1813 bag nets hardly existed.

Mr. John H. Dixon, who had Inveran for seventeen years, and took a warm interest in the subject, writes to the Fishery Board as follows:—

"During the ten years I have known the Ewe, I do not think the take of fish by rod has averaged more than forty salmon a season." [What a contrast to Sir Humphry's friend with his thirty hooked in one morning!] "Notwithstanding the recurrence of a good season in 1883, I do believe that the stake and bag nets are gradually but surely diminishing the stock of salmon, and I have no doubt that, sooner or later, the weekly close time must be extended. The bye-laws are not duly observed: there is no one to see that they are."

After a good spate the river keeps in order for a week or ten days. Nearly all the small standard patterns will kill, especially those most in use on the Tweed. The three favourites are a Black Wasp with rough pig's wool body, and then come Sir Richard and Jock Scot, dressed without jungle-cock cheeks, which are supposed by the natives to be unsuitable to the Ewe.

THE GARRY, ABOVE LOCH OICH.

CHAPTER LIII

THE GARRY, THE UPPER GARRY, THE OICH, AND LOCH OICH

These lochs and rivers drain about one hundred and fifty square miles of highland country. The fish-famed Garry is divided into upper and lower parts by Loch Garry. The upper one, rising in the Forest of Knoydart, after a rapid run of seven and a half miles, during which it is known as the Quoich, flows into Loch Quoich, a beautiful sheet of water, eight miles long and three-quarters wide, on the north shore of which is the picturesque forest lodge, rented for so many years by Lord Burton. On quitting Loch Quoich the Garry has a further run of ten miles, in which there is a severe fall, recently made passable for salmon, so that now fish can enter Loch Quoich and pass through it into its head streams.

Numbers of salmon do so, but nevertheless there are very few caught. At the end of this ten miles the river passes into Loch Garry, another large sheet of water about five miles long by a half broad; here visitors at the hotels of Invergarry and Tomdoun (the Brown Knoll) can fish, but though numbers of salmon pass through the loch on their way to the spawning grounds above Loch Quoich, the capture of one is quite a rare event. As the river quits the loch the celebrated Lower Garry commences. It has but a run of four miles ere it flows into Loch Oich, but in this distance there are many fine pools, and perhaps the best early spring fishing in all Scotland.

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Caledonian Canal lochs, which discharges its overflow through the river Oich, four miles in length, into Loch Ness. Up till the 1st of May the angling of Loch Oich, also four miles in length, is strictly preserved, and goes with the Lower Garry; after the end of April visitors at Invergarry Hotel can fish, but it is then nearly useless. Although the Garry is one of the earliest of the Scotch rivers, it is not opened until the 11th of February, and continues so up to the 31st of October; it would be for the benefit of the river and all concerned if these respective dates were altered to the 1st of February and the 15th of October.

The run of fish into the Garry—*viâ* the Ness, Loch Ness, and the Oich—is a truly remarkable one, for, although fish are often got by trolling in the western half of Loch Ness, it is a very rare event for a February clean fish to be caught in the Ness itself. The case of the Awe and the Orchy is somewhat similar, for though all fish must pass up the Awe to reach the Orchy in March and April, yet a capture on the Awe during these months is unusual. Probably the fish of the Garry and the Orchy are each bent on reaching their destination, and do not rest more than a few hours in either river, or if they stay longer, they are in no mood to take a fly or any other lure. There is also a great probability that these Garry fish run the Ness during the month of January before that river is open to the rod. At any rate there cannot be the smallest doubt that it is *viâ* the Ness and Loch Ness that the Garry fish come, and they are moreover distinctly different in shape from the Ness fish.

The usually accurate Badminton Library falls into a curious error with respect to this river, for in the volume on *Salmon and Trout Fishing* the reader is told that "the bulk of the fish come into Loch Oich *viâ* Loch Lochy, and so into the Garry!" At page 184 the Badminton volume reads as follows: "Who can account for the fact that when you cannot find, or certainly see, or rise, a fish on the Lochy in early spring, you can take

scores on the Garry of beautiful large salmon in prime condition?

"The shortest journey to the Garry is through the river Lochy and Loch Lochy, and yet fishermen will tell you that the fish in the Garry come from the East and not from the West coast (which is close by), and come all the way up the River Ness and Loch Ness, double the distance, to the Garry, and yet whilst they are caught there in numbers, not a fish can be seen or got on the Ness. In July and autumn, when sport is fast and furious on the Lochy and Ness, not a fish is to be seen in the Garry."

A more erroneous statement it is difficult to imagine, for before the making of the Caledonian Canal two miles of solid land divided Loch Lochy from Loch Oich, and at no previous time was there ever any connecting link. When, however, this waterway was constructed, a narrow canal was cut between the two lochs, and it is only by passing through this artificial stretch of nearly stagnant water, in which there are, at least, two ordinary canal locks, with gates and sluices, that a fish could get from Loch Lochy to Loch Oich. Of course fish could be transported from one loch to the other, and I do not say that it is absolutely impossible for a fish to make such a journey on its own account, but it is in the highest degree improbable that any fish has ever done this, and it is absolutely certain that no great quantity do so.

Nearly the whole of the Upper Garry, Loch Quoich, Loch Garry, and all the Lower Garry belong to Mrs. Ellice, of Glengarry, and her son, Captain E. C. Ellice, is the author of an interesting book about that country, called *The Place Names in Glengarry and Glenquoich and their Origin.*

Loch Oich with part of the river Oich are also in the same ownership, the remainder of the stream belonging to Lord Lovat. Fish do not ascend the Garry Falls before the end of June, and very few grilse ever appear, for but once in a lifetime passed on the river, and that once many years ago,

has old Angus Macdonell ever killed three grilse in a day. After the middle of May the Garry season can be said to end, though in some years a few fish may be got even a little later. The average weight is seventeen pounds; no wading is necessary, but fishing boots reaching to the knee are useful. The best take ever made was in 1884, when two rods took four hundred and twenty salmon by the end of April.

In 1892 two rods had one hundred and twenty-four fish with a fifteen pounds average; in 1893 the take was nearly one hundred, averaging sixteen pounds. In 1895 the Duke of Portland had the water and has kept it ever since; in that year the river was not fishable until the 8th of March on account of snow and ice, the latter being nearly twenty inches thick on Loch Oich; from that date to the 12th of April the Duke and Lord Berkeley Paget had in about thirty days' angling no less than one hundred and forty-two fish, the heaviest of which was thirty-two pounds, while the lot made the splendid average of seventeen pounds.

In 1897, from the 17th of February to the 10th of March, the same rods had fifty fish of fifteen pounds, while in 1899, from the 11th of February to the 8th of March, these two rods had but twenty-nine fish of seventeen pounds. It will be seen, therefore, how even this fine river varies in the yield, while it is also remarkable that, in spite of the splendid average weight, no fish of forty pounds has ever been taken, and up to date thirty-seven pounds is the top weight.

There are two carriage bridges across the river, one between the hotel and Invergarry House and another a mile below the falls, while lower down, about the middle of the river, there is a foot-bridge. The spates that come are seldom dirty, and the river is fishable as soon as she begins to go back. In the early part of the season flies dressed on two and a half inch irons may be used, the size decreasing as the water gets smaller and the season advances. No other lure is permitted in the river, but a Phantom minnow is used in

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THE UPPER MILL POOL.

THE LOWER MILL POOL.

Loch Oich. The favourite flies are: Beauly, Silver Beauly, Jock Scot, Silver Doctor, Gordon, Childers, and Wilkinson.

There are twenty-one pools on the river as follows, but those with an asterisk against them are only small places that fish in low water:—* Falls, * Otter's Hole, Little Crooked, Big Crooked, * Black Hole, Chest, Upper Mill Pool, Lower Mill Pool, Englishman, Dog, Shot, Rea Stream, Long, Cairn, Lunde, * Flag, Bridge, Point, Carry, House, River Mouth.

CHAPTER LIV

THE GLENELG

THIS pretty little mountain stream, which drains but sixteen square miles of country, rises in the high hills lying between the head of Loch Hourn and the head of Loch Duich, and after an impetuous course of ten miles falls into the Sound of Sleat, which separates Skye from the mainland, and is here so narrow that it might easily be mistaken for a broad river rather than part of the ocean.

The Glenelg falls into the bay of the same name a few miles to the south of Bernera Ferry, the very narrowest part of the Sound. For the first four miles of its course it has a rapid run through a succession of narrow gorges, forming deep and nearly inaccessible pools, with the banks thickly studded with stunted oak, rowan and birch trees. At the end of this four miles of wild scenery and rough water the glen widens, the river begins to flow more quietly, while the trees vanish; although as the small village of Glenelg is approached, the pine woods on the hillsides, and in September the still uncut bright green patches of oats and pasture on the banks, are somewhat Norwegian in character.

The brown trout of the Glenelg are not of much account, although at times a few good ones up to two pounds are taken near the tidal water.

Here, also, is another river opened at an absurd date, for the Glenelg season commences legally on the 11th of February,

with the same close times that usually go with that date. Nevertheless, fish pay no attention to the open door, never putting in an appearance until the first spate that comes after the middle of June, while it is usually July before they do come, when salmon with sea trout arrive together. The former have been caught up to twenty-two pounds in weight, but seven pounds is the average. The sea trout are also small, ranging from half a pound to a pound, although each season there are a few of from three to even four pounds that enter the river, but seldom taken with the rod. Sea trout do not lie much in the salmon catches, preferring to rest in the tails of the shallow pools. On the lower reaches the fly is the best lure, and the only one permitted; but on the upper ones, where the fly could hardly be used, the worm is sometimes very deadly.

This little river rises and falls with extreme rapidity, so much so, that in the same day it may actually be unfishable both from height and lowness, so that for good sport nearly incessant rain should fall; but when she is right in height and colour, the fish are sporting little fellows, somewhat light in weight in comparison with their length, but nevertheless very free risers. No waders are wanted; a stout trout rod, or a light grilse one, will easily cover the water. The favourite flies are the Doctors, Jock Scot, Thunder and Lightning, and Popham, and the more sparely they are dressed the more effective they will be. Number 2/0 is a very big water size, and from this down to the smallest double hooks may be used, according to the height of the river.

Mr. Hedley F. Norris, the popular Honorary Librarian of that excellent and cosy institution, the Fly Fishers' Club, in the Haymarket, has been a very successful angler on this river, for on more than one occasion he has had three fish in the day, chiefly with an odd-looking fly which has no name, but is dressed as follows, on a hook an inch long, and is also a capital sea trout fly when dressed quite small: Tag, silver

twist, orange floss; tail, fibres of G. P. tippet and rump feather; body, flat silver tinsel, ribbed with oval silver; hackle, Dorking or silvery dun, backed with a turn of summer duck; wing, tippet fibres veiled by mixed ones of heron and bittern, two short slips of wood duck; horns of blue macaw.

The two best catches are the Wood Pool, some two miles from the mouth, and Saliscraig, a mile higher up.

Sea trout take small salmon flies and a silver-bodied Zulu, while there is also an A1 fly of Farlow's for which I cannot find a name, but something of the Childers type, and dressed as follows: Tag, light blue floss; tail, small topping; body, yellow floss with fine gold tinsel; hackle, gallina; wing, sprigs of tippet veiled by brown mallard; horns, blue macaw.

The river belongs to Mr. Baillie, of Dochfour; and though the mouth of it is not at all hard netted by the lessee of the nets, the Skye poachers are continually at work on it, and to their depredations added to those of the crews of various yachts do the natives attribute the great diminution in the numbers of the sea trout, though, personally, I think the bag nets are the chief culprits.

The best months are August and September, and visitors at the Glenelg Hotel are entitled to fish the whole river free of charge. This, at any rate, has been the custom up to the present time, and though this year there has arisen a dispute between Mr. Baillie of Dochfour and the Glenelg minister, who claims the right of the glebe fishing, it is improbable, whichever way the matter ends, that the hotel will lose the angling.

A little more than a mile to the south of the Glenelg another stream of much the same size and character—the Glenbeg—falls into the sea. It also belongs to Mr. Baillie of Dochfour, and can sometimes be fished by visitors at the Glenelg Hotel if not let with the shootings.

CHAPTER LV

THE BIG AND LITTLE GRUINARD

ALTHOUGH it is no longer "a far cry to Loch Awe," it still takes a good deal of travelling to reach these two out-of-the-way rivers of the Ross-shire west coast, for, after arriving at Garve railway station, there is a drive of thirty-five miles to the respective inns of Aultbea and Dundonnell, the former, on the west, being ten miles from the river bank, with the latter a like distance on the east.

Both streams fall into Gruinard Bay, "The Big" a few miles to the north of its smaller namesake. The Meikle or Muckle Gruinard, draining fifty-eight square miles of hill country and rising in Loch Nidd, has a course of six miles, receiving the Minch tributary immediately before flowing into the upper end of Loch na-Shellag, from whence it has a further run of six miles to the sea.

Gruinard House, the property of Mr. A. H. M. Catton, is on the right bank, close to the sea; while further up, and only a quarter of a mile from the high road, comes the iron house that goes with Mr. Mackenzie's property of Dundonnell, the two proprietors fishing the river jointly. The high road crosses about a mile above the mouth. There is also a wire bridge just where it leaves the loch, while in low water it is fordable in several places. There is a fairly good path along either bank, the south one being the best. Although fish ascend above Loch na-Shellag, they are seldom fished for, as the streams are shingly and shallow, and therefore the angling is

confined almost entirely to the six miles between the loch and the sea, in which distance there are more than twenty fine pools, the best of which are the Top Flats, Shepherds, Harvey's, the Upper, Middle, and Lower Rockies, the Colonel's, Baring's Flat, Craig Pot, and Garden, which is the nearest one to the sea.

The angling, which is strictly preserved, was once indeed well worth looking after, but of late years the smallness of the fixed estuary, and the great numbers of bag nets in Gruinard Bay, have slowly but surely deteriorated the sport. In 1883, three good anglers had but two salmon and five grilse from the 15th of June to the 15th of July, which is the worst take ever recorded on this stream. Only fifteen years prior to that, one rod took twenty-one salmon and grilse from Craig Pool in a day, and up to 1858 a dozen fish a day were common, one tenant getting as many as five hundred salmon and grilse to his own rod in one season.

Mr. W. H. Baring, from Altbea, has the Dundonnell angling in the spring and summer months, and Mr. A. H. M. Catton's right in the autumn, when the tenant of Dundonnell House—at present Mr. Bankier—has the rest of the river.

The Gruinard is now a somewhat dour stream to fish, which may, perhaps, be accounted for by the clearness of the water. While most of the pools can be covered with a trout rod, there are others requiring even a longer line than can be comfortably put out with a rod of sixteen feet, but when the river is in order this length will be found most serviceable.

Although there are many pretty pools, the Craig Pool is the chief one, and in periods of spate it is almost alarming to see and hear how the water boils and tears amongst the big rocks as it rushes down the sharp descent to the sea. For many years the orthodox flies were the Ewe Wasp —a nondescript sort of beast, with a rough body like a Charlie, only brown instead of black, with a dull mixed wing

—the Black Doctor, and occasionally Jock Scot. Silver bodies were pronounced useless until a few years ago, when Sir John Edwards Moss had the river, on which subject he writes me as follows :—

"I must say I don't think much of local fishermen, except in places where there are 'rods' and beats, and consequently rivalry, not to say jealousy. Ghillies on such waters begin to think and observe, otherwise they have a fly or two which has killed fish, and they imagine they are the only ones. Take the Gruinard. I went there for a day in 1896 with a ghillie knowing but little about the water. The keeper on the river told me of the only three flies that were used. Well, the river was in order, the water clear and the sky bright, and as the local patterns failed to produce a rise, I put up a little double-hooked Silver Grey and at once got two fish, and from that day on nearly all the fish were taken with that fly. It was just the same on the upper river, where I had three fish the first day I tried the silver body, and that after the water had been previously well fished. Near the mouth sea trout also came to a silver body and teal wing, or to an Alexandra, and all this was in spite of the ghillies, who vowed silver bodies were useless, simply because they had never given them a trial. And this sort of thing goes on more or less on all the small rivers of the West Coast."

The Little Gruinard drains Fionn Loch, some eight miles in length by three-quarters in width, and not very far distant from Pool Ewe. Both loch and river belong to Mrs. Liot Bankes, who preserves strictly and lets the angling with Little Gruinard shooting. It has never been so prolific as the big river, although the large loch of Fionn should keep this stream in order for a longer period than the smaller one of na-Shellag can provide for the Meikle Gruinard.

Here also the same flies are used, while both streams open on the 11th of February, with the usual close times. June, July, August, and September are the best months on each.

Hardly any wading is necessary, though now and again stockings will be found useful.

The Dundonnell or Strathbeg is a few miles to the north of the Big Gruinard, and falls into the head of Little Loch Broom, a long, narrow arm of the sea. It has but a run of twelve miles, and with no loch to form a reservoir it is entirely dependent on rain. The angling, which goes with the Dundonnell shootings, is strictly preserved. August and September are the best months, and though formerly it was a noted stream for its size, it has shared in the deterioration which has fallen on all the West Coast streams.

CHAPTER LVI

KANIARD, OWSKAIG, POLLY, AND ULLAPOOL

THESE small but pretty streams are hardly of sufficient importance to require a separate chapter for the description of each; they are also close together, while the whole four belong entirely to the Countess of Cromartie. The Polly is the most northern salmon river of the west coast of Ross-shire; it goes with the Inverpolly shootings, and drains about twenty square miles of country, in which there are eleven large lochs, all of them, together with the river, being strictly preserved by the shooting tenant. The largest—Loch Skinaskink—is famed for the size of its brown trout. With an acreage of 1,638 acres, and with a circuit of over fifteen miles, trout of from twelve pounds to five pounds have often been taken by trolling a large phantom, while trout of three pounds were quite common weights. Hard fishing, however, has brought about the inevitable result, and a decrease in the number and the weight of the fish has slowly taken place—a natural consequence to be seen in many other lochs, from which the stock is continually taken, without any corresponding attempt at replenishment.

The head of Loch Fewin, which empties into the Kirkaig, and the head of Loch Achyle, which discharges through the Polly, are not half a mile apart, a proximity which has led many of the smaller maps of Scotland to make the mistake of marking a connecting stream between the two lochs.

The whole of the Polly lochs and river go with the

Inverpolly shootings, and are strictly preserved. Sometimes the shooting tenant, if unable to go himself, sublets the lodge with the angling from June up to the 7th of August. At times, also, the Inverpolly tenant has given the tenant of Culag Hotel at Loch Inver leave to send his visitors to fish the Inverpolly lochs, taking in exchange later on a day or two a week on the Kirkaig; but, of course, all arrangements of this sort depend entirely on the wishes of the occupant *pro tem.*

On quitting Loch Skinaskink the Polly, after flowing through two other lochs, has a winding course of two miles until it falls into the sea at Loch Polly, a branch of the spacious Bay of Enard. A short distance below the loch nearest to the sea there are some falls, above which the river divides into two branches, the larger passing over the fall, while the smaller one runs through a narrow channel with a comparatively easy gradient, to rejoin the main stream beneath the chief fall.

Acting on the advice of Mr. Archibald Young, in 1878 this smaller stream was deepened and enlarged by diverting into it the body of the main stream, and fish were thus enabled to pass into the loch nearest the sea, which they promptly did. Beyond this loch further progress is barred by a sheer fall of twenty-five feet on the stream connecting the second loch with the lower one, and, up to the present, it has not been thought worth while to incur the expense of taking fish up this obstacle, although the doing of this would stock the other nine lochs which lie above these falls, of which Skinaskink is one. It has been estimated that a Macdonald fishway could be put up for £500; but, even if it cost twice that amount, I believe the expenditure would repay itself, for the demand for angling, with the consequent increase in its value, is always growing larger.

The Polly opens on the 11th of February, and has the close times that usually go with that date; the best months

FOOT BRIDGE AT THE POLLY MOUTH.

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July, August, and September. Favourite flies — Butcher, Childers, Blue Doctor and Jock Scot, and nothing over an inch in length is ever used. No waders are wanted, for there are no pools on the Polly; it is all deep, stillish water, which is no use without a breeze, and the stiffer the better. Salmon never go over ten pounds, and grilse run four to five pounds. There are some sea trout, and Zulu and ordinary loch trout flies are freely taken, although, at times, the worm is the deadliest lure. In 1883, which was a very good year, between forty and fifty salmon and grilse were taken; but nothing so good has been done in recent seasons. Three grilse is a good day, and the average season will show eight or ten salmon, and about as many grilse.

A few miles to the west of Polly mouth there falls into the sea the short river of Owskaig or Garvey, which, rising in Loch Baddigyle, is connected with the larger loch of Owskaig by a short stream of about a mile. When the river leaves Loch Owskaig it is called the Garvey, and has a run of half a mile before it falls into the loch of the same name, the foot of which is within a hundred yards of the sea at high water mark.

These lochs and the connecting streams at one time yielded very good angling for salmon, grilse and sea trout; but the bag nets here, as everywhere else, have terribly reduced the stock of fish. Loch Owskaig is the main hold of the fish, for rarely, if ever, have salmon or grilse been taken in the river itself. July and August is the best time for sea trout, and in 1893, when Captain G. W. Hunt had Inverpolly, his brother-in-law, Major Arthur Gould, had a real good August day of one hundred and twenty-eight, ranging from one to four pounds.

Salmon have been heard of in Loch Baddigyle, the loch above Owskaig, but I believe have never yet been caught there. It is, however, a splendid loch for big brown trout, for by trolling one May day in 1893 Mrs. Hunt took

half a dozen of six and a half, six, five and a half, five, four and a half, and four pounds, and from this same loch she has also had ferox of fourteen, eleven, ten pounds, with many smaller ones. It will thus be seen that the Inverpolly shootings have a lage extent of salmon, grilse and sea trout fishing, together with the exclusive right of trouting on many fine lochs, and a sportsman with spare time could spend nearly the whole year in these quarters and find something to do every day, for there are a certain number of grouse (ten stags, I think, is the limit for deer) and a great number of woodcock to be got. These can be gone at, together with snipe and duck, until the end of February, and then by the middle of April the trout will be approaching condition, so that there will be but a six weeks' break in sport with either rifle, gun or rod. It should, however, be mentioned that the enjoyment to be derived from a stay at Inverpolly will be increased by the hire of a stout steam launch to take the place of horses and carriages.

The Kennart, Kaniard, or Canniard, has but a run of a few miles, and, rising from Loch Chroisk, in the Coigach hills, it falls into Loch Kaniard, an arm of Loch Broom. It is strictly preserved, though it yields but little sport now as compared to what it did fifty years ago. Fish can ascend for about seven miles. Two miles from the mouth it is joined by the Runie, up which fish also make their way for three miles. This is perhaps the better angling stream of the two, and is also earlier. The Junction or Claraig Pool is a beauty to look at, but better for sea trout than for salmon, which average ten pounds, a heavy weight for so small a stream.

In the very wet season of 1899, and therefore favourable for these streams, only eight salmon were got (the largest eighteen and a half pounds) and a few grilse, which was considered quite a good season, to which may be added from forty to one hundred sea trout. A red fly is a favourite one; waders are not wanted. The river opens on the 11th of

THE POLLY ICE INTERPRETS LIFOCK.

half a dozen of the year, a half, six, five and a half, five, four and a half, and four pounds, and from this same loch she has then two nines of fourteen, eleven, ten pounds, with many smaller ones. It will thus be seen that the Inverpolly shootings have a fine stream of salmon, grilse and sea trout fishing, together with the exclusive right of trouting on many fine lochs, and a sportsman with spare time could spend nearly the whole year in these quarters and find something to do every day. In them are a certain number of grouse (ten stags, I think is the limit for deer) and a great number of woodcock to be got. These may be gone at, together with snipe and duck, until the end of February, and then by the middle of April the trout will be approaching condition, so that there will be but a six weeks' break in sport with either rifle, gun or rod. It should, however, be mentioned that the enjoyment to be derived from a stay at Inverpolly will be increased by the hire of a stout steam launch to take the place of horses and carriages.

The Kennart, Kaniard, or Canniard, has but a run of a few miles, and, rising from Loch Chroisk, in the Coigach hills, it falls into Loch Kaniard, an arm of Loch Broom. It is strictly preserved, though it yields but little sport now as compared to what it did fifty years ago. Fish can ascend for about seven miles. Two miles from the mouth it is joined by the Runie, up which fish also make their way for three miles. This is perhaps the better angling stream of the two, and is also earlier. The Junction or Cluaig Pool is a beauty to look at, but better for sea trout than for salmon, which average ten pounds, a heavy weight for so small a stream.

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THE POLLY AND INVERPOLLY LODGE.

February, with the usual close times. The angling of both streams always goes with Drumrunie Forest.

The Ullapool has a run of ten miles, intercepted at about three miles from the sea by Loch Achall, which is over two miles in length by half a mile in width. To this loch salmon ascend freely, while as the spawning season comes they pass through it into the upper reaches of the river until further progress is barred by a fall. Its course lies entirely in the Forest of Rhidorrach, and is accessible from end to end, for there is a carriage bridge on the high road a mile from the sea, and another at the low end of Loch Achall leading to Rhidorrach Lodge; also foot-bridges at the head forester's house, midway between Loch Achall and The Lodge, and again at the fall already mentioned. The angling is chiefly between the loch and the sea, and consists of a dozen pretty pools, the best of which are the Loch Entrance, Ford, Ness, Cromartie, Oak, and Cregan. No wading is wanted, small flies of sombre hues are liked best, while a rod of fourteen or sixteen feet will do all the work. The season commences on the 11th of February. April and May are the best salmon months, and July for grilse.

The sport yielded by the Ullapool, like the other streams of this district, has been greatly reduced by the number of bag nets working round the adjacent coasts. Up to 1850 or thereabouts this river for its size gave some of the best angling to be met with on the West Coast, for it is recorded that it was not uncommon for one rod to take from ten to twelve fish in a day, which, as matters are at present, is probably something like the total of the whole season.

CHAPTER LVII

THE LOCHY, WITH ITS TRIBUTARIES THE ROY AND THE SPEAN

THESE three famous rivers are kept entirely for the rod; and as an instance of the sport they used to yield, the Fishery Board Report of 1883 states that their average season's take was then 1,200 salmon and grilse, and 1,600 sea trout. A splendid result, which has, however, not been maintained of late years. In a letter from the late Lord Abinger to the Inspector of Fisheries, he almost appears to foresee and prophesy this decrease, and certainly his long experience in the management of his salmon rivers ought to have ensured greater attention being given to his words by the authorities then in power.

The Lochy flows from Loch Lochy—one of the Caledonian Canal lochs—some ten miles long by one in breadth, but which does not drain any country east of the Canal locks of Laggan, at its head; therefore, it is only by means of the Canal, and by passing through these and other lock gates, that there is any possibility of fish travelling from the West to the East Coasts, or *vice versâ*.*

The right of salmon fishing in the loch was, and I think still is, claimed by both Mrs. Ellice, of Glenquoich, and by Lord Abinger; but salmon are now rarely, if ever, caught in it, although it is open to the public, and hard fished for trout by trolling. At one time the loch held plenty of fish, but that was before the making of the canal necessitated the forming of an

* See chapter on rivers "Garry and Oich," p. 254.

artificial outlet, which was so constructed as to be almost inaccessible to salmon. Thus Loch Lochy, and the River Arkaig flowing into it from Loch Arkaig, both formerly holding many fish, and providing fine sport with excellent spawning grounds, are now nearly fishless, which is a regrettable state of affairs. On leaving Loch Lochy the river has a run of between eight and nine miles before it falls into the salt water of Loch Eil, a branch of the lengthy Loch Linnhe.

The late Lord Abinger was, I believe, the first river owner to make the experiment of taking the nets off a large productive netting river at the risk of not being able to let the angling for as much (or more, if possible) as the netting rental brought to the estate. He removed all the cruives from the river, all the nets from the mouth, and leasing the sea nets on both shores of Loch Linnhe for several miles, he also caused them not to be worked. The Fishery Board Report of 1883 states this sea coast extended for sixteen miles of each shore of Loch Linnhe, and though that may possibly have been the case at the time of the report, the distance of each shore free of nets is now not so much. It is hard to judge distance from the deck of a fast steam yacht or passenger steamer, but recently I am nearly sure I have seen bag nets working much closer to the Lochy mouth than sixteen miles.

As a set-off against this leasing of the seashore nets, Lord Abinger keeps the right to take with a net in his reserved water any number of salmon or grilse, not exceeding a total of one hundred during the entire season. Also, during the months of March, April, and May, when the fish are running rapidly upwards, the proprietor reserves the right to fish any pools in the river when the tenant of that beat or his friends are absent from the country. The fish caught belong to the tenant, who is expected to arrange for their disposal by leaving instructions with the keeper. This right is most carefully used, and has never been known to interfere with a tenant's comfort or sport. It is not exercised if he is merely

away for a day, or even two, and is only brought into play when he is absent for several days in succession; neither would the right be exercised the very day before a tenant returned.

These rivers are let in beats as follows:—The Roy is let for the whole season, the Spean and Lochy as under:—

Beat No. 1. The head waters of the Spean to the burn at Corriechoillie, with one boat. (*a*) From the commencement of the season to the 9th of August inclusive; (*b*) from the 10th of August to the 31st of October.

Beat No. 2. The Spean from Corriechoillie Burn to Spean Bridge, with two boats. The periods of the let the same as stated in No 1.

Beat No. 3. From Spean Bridge to the head of the Pile Pool on the Lochy, with two boats. (*a*) From the 1st of April to the 31st of May, both inclusive; (*b*) from the 1st of June to the 9th of August, both days inclusive; (*c*) from the 10th of August to the 31st of October.

Beat No. 4. From the head of the Pile Pool to the tail of Garrybuie inclusive, with four boats. The periods of letting are the same as on No. 1.

Beat No. 5. From the tail of Garrybuie to the Dyke at Canal Pool, with four boats. The periods of letting are also the same as on No. 1.

Beat No. 6. From the Dyke at Canal Pool to the Suspension Bridge, with periods as on No. 1.

Beat No. 7. From the Suspension Bridge to the sea. From commencement to the end of the season.

The proprietor provides all preservation and boats, and supplies a paid keeper with each beat, except with No. 7; keepers and watchers are not to be taken from their duties on the banks of the river. Tenants are allowed to sublet, subject to the approval of the proprietor.

Nets, cross-lines, otters, spears and snatching are of course prohibited, and the water is to be used in a sportsmanlike manner, and fish captured with rod and line only. All fish

caught belong to the tenants, and the weight and number of salmon, grilse and trout are to be entered in a book by the keeper on each beat. Therefore, anyone contemplating a rod on the Lochy has only to write to the Factor at the Inverlochy Estate Office, and he will be informed at once as to the take of previous years on the beat he thinks of going to.

There are good hotels at Banavie and Spean Bridge; the former handiest for beats 5, 6 and 7, and the latter for 1, 2 and 3, while beat No. 4 is about half-way from either hotel.

There are also two good furnished houses that can be rented; one at Corriechoillie, suitable for beats 1 or 2, and the other at Camesky, for 3, 4 or 5.

It will be seen from this that the angling of the Lochy and the Spean is divided into six principal beats, each of which is let twice in the season; the earlier period being for practically the first six months, and the later one for about the last twelve or thirteen weeks. The rent of each beat, I am told, is £250; and seeing that the services of a man, the use of the boats, and the cost of preserving are all included, this does not seem excessive. It mounts up, however, to a total of £3,000, to which must be added the rent of the Roy, the third letting period on No. 3, and the rent of No. 7—perhaps altogether getting on to another £500. I doubt if the leasing of the bag nets on the seashores below Lochy mouth comes to over £300 a season, so that after deducting this expense, there yet remains a total largely in excess of any sum the netting ever brought in. Would that there were more river owners in Scotland who would give the late Lord Abinger's successful experiment a trial, for certain it is there are many who could follow in the same lines, increasing alike the value of their estates and the amount of their rent-rolls.

The Spean flows out of Loch Laggan, a good large lake eight miles long, and after a run of seventeen miles joins the Lochy at the celebrated Muccomer Pool—certainly one of the best in Scotland, from which as many as seventy fish,

averaging fifteen pounds, have been taken in a month by one rod. Owing to the making of the railway to Fort William, this fine pool became somewhat spoilt by railway ballast, brought down the Spean in times of floods; but this is probably only a temporary depreciation, for the spates must eventually wash down all the débris that exists, and then the following ones will doubtlessly clear out the accumulations from the tail of Muccomer, and so restore it to its original grandeur.

The Roy rises in Glen Roy, and has its source not very far distant from that of the Spey. It has a rapid run of about a dozen miles ere it joins the Spean at Roy Bridge, where there is a comfortable hotel. It does not flow from any loch, and therefore depends entirely on rain; as it runs down very quickly, it fishes best in a moderate spate, on the subsidence of which nothing can be done except with a worm.

The last few seasons have been unusually bad; but before then the river yielded well, many of the fish being very heavy, even up to forty pounds, these large ones being usually got towards the end of the season. But with wet weather, June, July, and August are the best months.

The 1896 Report of the Fishery Board states that the take on the Lochy for 1895 was below the average, and that the register of the exact numbers of salmon caught was not kept; that the first clean fish was got on the 30th of March; that the main take was in June, July, and August, with grilse appearing at the end of June, all of which dates can be accepted as applicable to every year within a few days. The Report further states that there were no prosecutions for poaching, although fifteen water bailiffs were employed.

The 1898 Report says that, though the take was below the average, 222 salmon, 357 grilse, and 1,742 sea trout were taken by the rods—a pretty good score for a catch reported as below the average!

In April and May, 1898, No. 3 Beat gave forty-five fish, averaging sixteen pounds; while in 1899, in the month of

April, it yielded just twenty others of the same good weight. In the autumn of 1899 No. 2 Beat, during September and October, gave forty-three salmon of twelve pounds average, and twenty-four grilse of five pounds, which figures may be taken as an approximate guide for all the other beats except No. 7, chiefly a tidal water, which naturally is not so prolific.

The Fishery Board Report also mentions that Lord Abinger has started a hatchery on the Cour, a small tributary of the Spean, falling into it at Corriechoillie Farm; also that it is thought there are now more fixed nets outside the estuary than at any previous time, which has *rather* an injurious effect. Personally, I consider that the increase in the numbers of the nets has a *very* injurious effect, which will increase year by year unless a longer weekly close time is not only decreed, but also duly enforced.

Here, then, in the increased numbers with the continual "outrigging" of bag nets, is the prime cause of the falling off in the Lochy and its tributaries. The poaching by scringing is a minor affair. That it exists is certain, albeit with the large staff of watchers there are no convictions recorded.

There are many instances in Scotland of salmon fishings that do not belong to the owners of the lands through which the rivers flow; it sometimes happens that A. may own the right bank and B. the left one of a river, while C. has a claim to the fishings of both banks with the power to enter the lands of A. and B. to prosecute his right. This is the case with Lord Abinger, who holds a charter granting him all the salmon fishing in the Lochaber district, which right for many years remained unquestioned. When, however, science appeared on the scene in the shape of gunpowder, blasting operations and fish ladders, the question of opening up the Mounessie and Inverlair Falls of the Spean naturally presented itself. The former falls are a few miles above Roy Bridge, and have a sheer drop of twenty-two feet; while the latter, four miles further up, are not quite so steep, though

sufficiently so to bar the passage of fish. Both these obstacles could, however, certainly be overcome, and if that were done, then nine miles of the Spean, the whole of Loch Laggan (with its feeder, the Pattack, up to the Falls of Pattack), the Gulbin River and Loch, with the three miles of Loch Ossian, would all be available for salmon—altogether about twenty-five miles of river and three lochs, one of which is eight miles long.

The falls of Mounessie and Inverlair used to belong, on both sides, to Colonel Walker, but on his death these lands were purchased by Lord Abinger. At Moy, some few miles higher up, The Mackintosh comes in; if he allowed Lord Abinger, who claims all the salmon fishing of the district, to open these falls without any previous arrangement, he might be giving the charter-holder a right to fish on his property, whilst he himself—The Mackintosh—would have no right to use a rod, although the bed of the river and the land on both sides belonged to him. Thus there is a deadlock as to the opening up of this large extent of salmon water. In my humble opinion, the Crown should open all such obstructions, claim the fresh fisheries thus formed, and offer them to the riparian owners at a sufficient rent to pay the expenses incurred. It is against common sense to contend that an old charter, dated long before the idea was entertained of artificially taking fish up apparently unsurmountable falls, could convey that which did not exist. When this old charter of Lord Abinger's was granted, it was not thought possible that fish could ever be taken up or round the Mounessie Falls; therefore the Crown grant could only apply to the salmon fisheries which then existed, and could not convey something which had no existence at the time the charter was given. The lawyers might make a fight over it, but I think common sense would win, although it would be much better if the two proprietors could come to some amicable agreement, as advocated by the late Lord Abinger.

FALLS OF MOUNESSIE.

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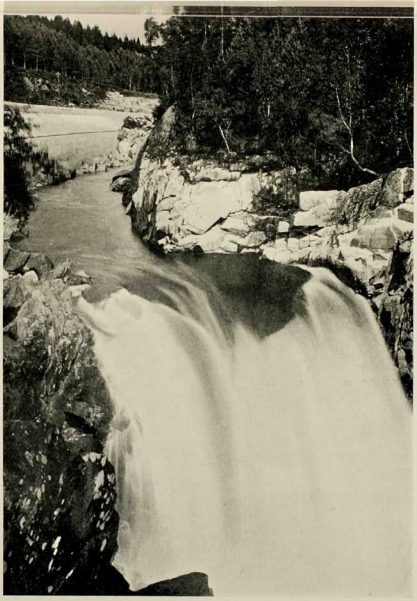

FALLS OF MOUNESSIE.

To revert, however, to the river. No. 3 beat is certainly the best of the six. The year before last, though not a good salmon year, Mr. J. Rolls Hoare and his daughter had three hundred sea trout from the Muccomer Pool in a few days. In the *Field* of November, 1899, it is stated that from No. 4 beat Mr. H. J. Mordaunt had in twenty days, from the 2nd of October, thirty salmon of twelve pounds, and forty-five grilse averaging seven pounds, the latter an unusually high scale.

Beat No. 7 is usually let to the Banavie Hotel, and can be fished by arrangement. There is but one salmon pool, and not much chance in that. Nevertheless, it is an amusing one to try for the first time. I remember, when *en route* for Caithness, having a day on this water in August, 1871. At the proper time, just before the beginning of the flood tide, I was rowed to a big rock in the middle of the stream, a little below the Suspension Bridge. Into it a stout iron ring had been fastened, to which our boat was tied; then letting out some thirty yards of line, the rapid current kept the fly near the surface, while by moving the rod point from side to side, the lure could be shown to every fish entering the river, for they never came into the pool without making a splash as they passed up the shallow at the tail of it. On that day fish were running fast, for certainly between fifty and eighty went by us in about an hour and a half, each one offering a certain amount of excitement as it neared the fly. At last one small fellow did lay hold, and was duly brought to the gaff; but it turned out the blackest, lankiest, and most uneatable-looking creature I had ever set eyes on. The ghillie said it was "just an Arkaig beastie"; but I doubt if he knew much about it, and being a Spean man, it is likely enough he tried to shift the responsibility for the uncanny creature on to another river.

On the tidal pools of this Beat 7 there have often been made some fairly good catches of sea trout. In 1890 the

take of salmon and sea trout from this beat weighed two hundred pounds, which may be accepted as about an average one.

The best flies for the Lochy are Black Doctor, Black Spean, Jock Scot, Lizzie, Peacock, Sir Richard, Thunder and Lightning, and Amethyst. The only one of these which is not commonly known is the last named, which is dressed as follows:—Double hook, size 6 and smaller; tag, two turns fine silver twist; tail, topping and sprig of ruff; body, one turn pale yellow mohair, two turns of dark amethyst-coloured ditto, two turns of black ditto; very fine double silver twist from tail to shoulder; black hackle from half-way up body; wings, two strips of common, mottled brown turkey. For sea trout, the March Brown and small Jock Scot are the most killing.

The deep pools of the Spean will take a slightly larger fly than those of the Lochy, and they can be dressed on irons ranging from sizes 3, 4, and 5.

The Muccomer is essentially a pool for small flies, dressed on double hooks, ranging from No. 6 as the largest down to the very smallest.

In quite early spring there is no fly kills on No. 3 beat so well as the Beauly or the Silver Eagle, dressed on irons of 5/0 and 4/0. At this season also the Devon minnow and the prawn will both kill, though the rocky nature of the river bed prevents the latter lure from being freely used. The most killing bait of all, when well fished, is the worm, nicely threaded on a Kendal bend hook, with the leads twisted on horsehair and fastened some thirty inches above the worm. This tackle will do great execution if in the hands of a man who knows the business. The chief art consists in the nice adjustment of the amount of lead to the strength of the water, followed by the successful manipulation of the bait over the rocky bed of the river. In this tackle the lead is fastened to the main gut line by a short piece of very thin

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The flies for the Lochy are Black Doctor, Black Spence, Jock Scot, Claret, Peacock, Sir Richard, Thunder and Lightning and Silverhoot. The only one of these which is not universally known is the last named, which is dressed as follows:—Double hook, size 6 and smaller; tag, two turns fine silver twist; tail, topping and sprig of ruff; body, one turn pale yellow mohair, two turns of dark amethyst-coloured ditto, two turns of black ditto; very fine double silver twist from tail to shoulder; black hackle from half-way up body; wings, two strips of common, mottled brown turkey. For sea trout, the March Brown and small Jock Scot are the most killing.

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THE MUCCOMER POOL.

gut or horsehair, as the lead hanging down is supposed to "bump up" the bait and prevent it from fouling. The thinness of the lead attachment is of course to save the breakage of the main line in the event of a bad foul. In spite of all skill, a day's worming on the Lochy is almost sure to entail the loss of at least a pound of lead with a good few hooks; so if the angler would avoid delay, perhaps just when the fish are taking well, he should have plenty of spare leads and spare hooks at hand.

Until quite recently the Spean and Lochy have been free from pollution; but during the last three or four years the village of Spean has begun to increase, bringing more drains to the river and larger rubbish heaps to the banks—these latter waiting to be washed down by the first spate that rises high enough to reach them. This pollution has already somewhat spoilt Long Pool, a short distance below Spean Bridge, which up till three years ago was generally good for a fish or two, and has now become nearly worthless, a state of affairs which is attributed entirely to the pollutions coming into the river above the pool, which either make the fish sick, or cause them to run through.

Although this nuisance is not at present a very serious matter, there can be no doubt that if Spean village continues to increase at the rate that it has done during the last three years, then ultimately this pollution might become very damaging, so it would be wiser if it was stopped now, when it is only a small affair.

A little to the south of Fort William and below Lochy Mouth the Nevis falls into Loch Linnhe, a rushing, leaping stream, tearing round the base of Ben Nevis. It is not of much account as a salmon or sea trout river, but in times of autumn spates it yields a few fish from the lower reaches, which are let by Lord Abinger to the Fort William Angling Club.

The Aline, Cona, Gour, Kingairloch, Sanda, and Scaddle.

These half-dozen small streams, whose united drainage area does not exceed one hundred and thirty square miles, are all in the Ardgour and Morven districts of Argyll.

The Aline or Gearrabhain is entirely on the Ardtornish property of Mr. T. Valentine Smith, who preserves it strictly. Though it is barely three miles long, it is the largest and best of the six. It falls into the head of the salt water loch of the same name on the east coast of the Sound of Mull. Up till about twenty years ago it used to give some good sport, and as many as five salmon and thirty sea trout have been caught in a day by one rod; it has the advantage of being supplied by Loch Ari-innis, in which formerly the sea trout fishing was also very good.

The Cona and the Scaddle flow through Lord Morton's deer forest. They unite about a mile before falling into Loch Linnhe, each of them yielding a few sea trout and an occasional grilse, both being strictly preserved.

The Kingairloch has a run of four miles, when a series of falls bars the further ascent of fish; it flows into Loch Linnhe, and is strictly preserved by Colonel Platt, the present tenant of the deer forest.

The Gour and the Sanda are both on the same property and in the same hands; the latter is the best of the three streams, as it flows from Loch Gour, but all of them yield sea trout and a grilse at times, though not a tithe of what they used to do thirty years ago. None of these little rivers require wading. Grilse average about six pounds, and sea trout a little under a pound, and any of the standard sea trout flies will kill, or small Jock Scot or silver bodies will do as well.

CHAPTER LVIII

THE MOIDART

A SMALL Inverness-shire stream, falling into the head of the salt water loch of the same name, and belonging entirely to Mr. R. Stewart, whose pretty house of Kinloch Moidart is close to the river mouth. Rising in the head of the glen of the same name, the Moidart, after a rocky run of five miles, enters the small Loch of Lochans, hardly a mile in circumference, and, passing through, has a further run of three miles to the sea, in which distance is comprised all the salmon angling.

In times of flood—and it is entirely a spate stream—salmon and sea trout ascend to the loch, where, though the former are seldom or never taken, good baskets of the latter are often made, in which trout of from three to four pounds are not uncommon.

Both stream and loch are strictly preserved, and are usually let with the house and shootings of Kinloch Moidart for July and the following two or three months. It is a somewhat inaccessible country, best got at by steamer from Oban to Salen, and then posting about fourteen miles.

No waders are wanted, and the flies for the Morar are good for this stream, which opens on the 11th of February, although no sport is to be had earlier than June.

CHAPTER LIX

THE MORAR

A SHORT, clear, strong-running stream falling into the Atlantic opposite to the Island of Rum. Although it has a course of less than a mile, it drains sixty-five square miles of very hilly country, in which is included Loch Morar, a fine piece of water forming a reservoir of fifteen miles long, and varying in breadth from half a mile to two miles; therefore this river does not run down so very quickly. The south or left bank is owned by Mrs. Nicholson, of Arisaig, and is usually let with the shootings of South Morar. The north bank belongs to Lord Lovat, and is always let with North Morar Lodge, both waters being strictly preserved.

Between the loch and the sea there are but three well-defined pools, of which the Fall Pool is the chief one. Here the river makes a perpendicular drop of several feet, but in times of fairly big water the height is reduced sufficiently to permit the free run of fish. It is from this pool that the bulk of them are taken, and though it is to be regretted that it is so absolutely useless to use any other lure than the worm, there is the redeeming point that, when once a fish is hooked, it is always a difficult matter to land it on account of the many sharp ledges of rocks with which the pool abounds, and the "cut direct" is of frequent occurrence. In this pool on clear days great numbers of salmon, grilse and sea trout can be seen sailing round and round, and then even the worm becomes useless. Anyone fishing this pool should take care to provide

BELOW THE FALLS.

[illegible] the under-currents make [illegible]

[illegible] fishing almost as good as [illegible] of the same size. As [illegible] sport requires long [illegible] can be attained. [illegible] nothing but rocks; [illegible] with three or [illegible] the proper [illegible] worthy [illegible]

[illegible] there [illegible] Island Pool, [illegible] and this is [illegible] The river is crossed here by the bridge of the main road, and from it, at certain states of the tide, large numbers of salmon may be seen waiting for a spate to take them up. Below this is a tidal pool, out of which, when it is dead low, a few grilse and sea trout may be sometimes got. Between the fall and the loch fish seldom lie, the water being somewhat shallow, while, as the Mallaig road runs close to the bank, the traffic is always a disturbing element.

Although numbers of fish pass into Loch Morar, neither salmon nor sea trout rise freely, and what few are caught are generally got quite at the upper end. North Morar Lodge stands on the shores, with Meoble Lodge opposite, belonging to which is a very fine piece of deer ground, celebrated for its heavy stags and fine horns, the property of Mrs. Cameron Lucy.

The Mallaig Railway will offer easy access to this hitherto somewhat unget-at-able country. The Morar opens on the 11th of February, but the best months are June and July. Fish average about ten pounds, but are often taken up to twenty pounds. A fourteen-foot rod will do the work. Wading

BELOW THE FALLS.

plenty of spare hooks and leads, for the under-currents make it difficult to avoid being hung up.

Here, then, anglers can get worm fishing almost as good as can be had on any river in Scotland of the same size. As far as my experience goes, this form of sport requires long practice before anything approaching perfection can be attained. A duffer will be worming all day and catch nothing but rocks; an expert working behind him will come home with three or four fish, and for this reason the skill necessary for the proper use of the "red eagle," as they call it in some places, is worthy of a better recognition than is usually given to it.

Below the fall, and when the river is on the big side, there is a fair pool for the fly. Then below comes the Island Pool, just at the junction of the fresh and salt water; and this is the most sporting of the three. The river is crossed here by the bridge of the high road, and from it at certain states of the tide large numbers of *salmonidæ* may be seen waiting for a spate to take them up. Below this is a tidal pool, out of which, when it is dead low, a few grilse and sea trout may be sometimes got. Between the fall and the loch fish seldom lie, the water being somewhat shallow, while, as the Mallaig road runs close to the bank, the traffic is always a disturbing element.

Although numbers of fish pass into Loch Morar, neither salmon nor sea trout rise freely, and what few are caught are generally got quite at the upper end. North Morar Lodge stands on the shores, with Meoble Lodge opposite, belonging to which is a very fine piece of deer ground, celebrated for its heavy stags and fine horns, the property of Mrs. Cameron Lucy.

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stockings are desirable, and the best flies are small Doctors, Butchers, Jock Scot, etc., and for sea trout those of the Alexandra type are best. As a specimen of the sport to be had, annexed is the bag made by Mr. Rowland Ward and friends from July 1st to August 10th, 1899:—Salmon, twenty-three, averaging ten pounds; five grilse of six pounds; 283 sea trout; 382 brown trout, which leaves the good average of three-quarters of a pound for the 665 sea and brown trout.

CHAPTER LX

THE NESS AND MORISTON

WHOSE head waters are over seventy miles from the sea, is a fine, broad, strong-flowing stream of about six and a half miles in length, and, while emptying Loch Ness into the sea, it drains upwards of seven hundred square miles of highland country. Into this loch flow the Garry, the Oich, the Moriston, and many smaller streams, while the loch itself is one of the largest of the Scotch lakes, being twenty-six miles long, with an average width of one mile; in some places it is of great depth, but it yet holds a plentiful supply of salmon, so much so that portions of it are netted, while in the early part of the season a fair number of fish are killed by trolling, chiefly at and near the loch head. Moreover, it is open to the public and can be fished from any of the hotels on its banks.

The River Ness is one of the earliest of all the rivers, and in years gone by it opened on the 14th of November, at which period fresh-run salmon were always plentiful for the Inverness dinners held on the 30th of the month in celebration of St. Andrew's Day. At present the Ness opens on the 11th of February, closes for nets on the 26th of August and for rods on the 15th of October. There are, however, several proprietors and numerous inhabitants of the district who would like to see the rod season commence on the 1st of February, or even on the 11th of January, and end on the 30th of September instead of the 15th of October. This is an experiment that might well be tried for a few years, and then, if it was found

injurious to the river, the old close times could be restored. Certain it is that in favourable seasons there are by the 11th of February plenty of clean salmon in Loch Ness and in Loch Oich, and even in the more distant River Garry. These fish must therefore swim the Ness some time before the opening day—most likely in the latter part of January or even earlier—and this is probably the reason that when the Ness does open it is so rare to kill a clean fish, as the run has already gone past. It is therefore likely, if this experiment were made, that the quite early angling of the river might be of considerable value, and there is really no valid reason why it should not be done and the proprietors given an opportunity of profiting thereby.

Fortunately for this fine river and the other beautiful lochs and streams that it supplies with fish, the estuary is one of the largest allotted to any river in Scotland, and if all streams had only been dealt with in the same fair and liberal spirit, we should not now be hearing the continuous outcry about the scarcity of salmon. A few riparian owners on the estuary have agitated, fortunately unsuccessfully, for a revision and curtailment in order that they might be able to make money by the letting of such fresh bag nets as the shortening of the estuary would make room for—that is, one or two people would like to be better off at the expense of a great many.

The Beauly river is also a sharer in the benefits conferred by this well-fixed estuary, which is some eleven miles below Ness mouth, and fully twenty from that of the Beauly.

The Ness is well watched, while the large and varied population living on its banks all contribute to render poaching very difficult, and for these reasons offences against the bye-laws are seldom heard of. The chief offenders in this respect are the numerous seals in the estuary, for whose suppression no effectual method has yet been devised. Their depredations are ably seconded by the many predaceous sea birds, whose ravages would, however, be fairly well kept under if the Wild Birds

Preservation Act were repealed as against them during the two months when the smolts go to the sea, for the very shallow waters of this estuary give these interesting and pretty robbers opportunities which they do not get in deeper ones.

There is usually a small amount of disease in the river, chiefly confined to autumn fish and kelts, which, however, has diminished since the town sewage was diverted from the Ness in 1889.

The river always yields some heavy fish each season, though I cannot hear of any that have exceeded forty pounds. August and September are the best months, for the October fish are turning colour. The best flies are Brown Dog, Thunder and Lightning, Black Doctor, and Dunkeld, the size governed by the state of the water. Bait fishing is not prohibited, and Brown's Phantom and par tail are the best lures. There is no record of the use of the natural minnow spun on Dee tackle, and probably, if it were tried, it would beat all other baits. Wading trousers are necessary, while some of the wading is nearly as bad as it can be.

Of recent years eleven fish to a single rod in a day is about the best record, but some fourteen years ago as many as thirty-four salmon were one day laid on the bank of the MacIntyre Pool before nine o'clock in the morning.

The average weight of salmon is about twelve pounds, and grilse seven pounds. There are plenty of sea trout, and perhaps ten of them are caught for every brown trout. They take the Blue Dun, the Mallard Wing, and the Landrail Wing; but for all these local patterns the angler cannot do better than go to such knowledgable makers in the town of Inverness as Messrs. Graham or Messrs. Watson.

From the point where the river leaves Loch Ness the angling of both banks for about two miles belongs to Mr. Baillie, of Dochfour; the bulk of it he keeps in his own hands, while letting a portion of the right or south bank with the house of Laggan. Below this comes Mr. C. Fountaine

Walker's Ness Castle stretch of about a mile on each bank, the Black Stream and Lady's Pool being noted casts, both usually fished from a boat, although the former can be fairly well commanded by wading. This is followed by the Ness Side Water of about half a mile of both banks, and owned by Mr. J. Godman, and then the Bucht Water of Colonel A. J. C. Warrand extends down to the sea, although Mrs. Innes has alternate days on the Little Isle Pool and the Silver Pool all through the season. The Friar's Shott is owned by the town, while some two hundred yards of the right bank of the Holm Water is the property of Mr. Angus Mackintosh.

As regards the town water, the Friar's Shott is really all that belongs to it, but by an old charter, from the Little Isle Pool to the sea is free to the public every ninth day, the first open day always being the first of the free days. Personally I have never been fortunate enough to be in Inverness on one of these free days during August and the following months, but I have heard fishers are so numerous that it is difficult to cast without danger of being hooked or hooking someone else, and that these occasions give rise to a good deal of fun and banter, and tend to a considerable consumption of whiskey.

The casts on this water are: The Red Brae, all boating; the Mill Stream, waded from either side; MacIntyre's, waded from either side; the General's Well, waded from left bank; Cross Hedging, waded from left bank, but dangerous; Little Isle, fished from either side; Silver Pool, fished from either side; the Friar's Shott is nearest to the sea.

The Garry and the Oich, which send their waters to the sea by the Ness, have already been dealt with in a separate chapter, which indeed they fully merit, and the only other salmon river emptying into Loch Ness is the Moriston, which falls into it on the north shore, seven miles below Fort Augustus. This is a river of considerable size, as it drains one hundred and fifty-eight square miles of the Ness basin.

THE MORISTON SALMON LADDER.

It flows from Loch Clunie, six miles long, and has a course of twenty-five miles. Up to 1870 a sheer fall of twenty-eight feet, half a mile above the mouth, formed an absolute bar to the ascent of fish. At about that date the late Mr. T. T. Stoddart, the well-known and enthusiastic Tweedside angler, called the attention of the Fishery Board to the ease with which the Moriston could be converted from a mere trouting stream into a fine salmon river. This eventually led to the construction, at a cost of £2,000, of a salmon ladder, which went round the fall with a length of two hundred and forty feet and a gradient of one foot in ten. Shortly after the completion of this fish-way, salmon were seen and later on caught on the spawning grounds above the fall. It was not, however, a great success, for between the foot of the fall and Loch Ness there is a stretch of water with very little run on it, and thus there was no good, strong stream to lead the fish to the mouth of the ladder. Therefore, for the ensuing seven years the river was not fished. It was, moreover, helped by a hatchery put up above the fall by the proprietor, and thus every chance was given to the river of stocking itself. In 1886, Mr. Grant, of Invermoriston, during June, July, and August, fished for three days to ascertain what signs of fish there were, when he landed two fish and lost another, besides seeing a good few more.

This celebrated ladder is perhaps the best defined of any in Scotland, and a view of it may be of interest to my readers. Before it was made, the pool below the fall was regularly netted. In connection with the new fishery formed by this ladder, it is noteworthy that the Crown made and established a claim in respect of it, and that the proprietor had to pay a small sum for a charter, although he already held one for the fishings below the fall, a fact which has a most important bearing on the proposed opening up of such large falls as those of the Conon, the Spean, and the Tummel.

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number of salmon had then penetrated to the upper waters and had there spawned, and then been killed by the local people. Not very pleasant reading, and indicating a state of affairs requiring the attention of the proprietor, who doubtlessly ere this has taken the necessary measures, for it is no use spending a large sum in making a ladder and a hatchery if the fish are destroyed as kelts in the upper waters.

CHAPTER LXI

THE SHIEL OF LOCH SHIEL

THIS river drains ninety-two square miles of highland country, including Loch Shiel, which of itself is some twenty-three miles long by rather less than one in width. My friend, Mr. Robert Stone, who has fished the north bank for the last ten years, has kindly written for me a description of the river, and his experiences on it. As his knowledge of the Shiel is far superior to mine, I am quite sure Mr. Stone's account will be more acceptable and useful to my readers than any I could give them, and annexed it is.

THE RIVER SHIEL

flows out of Loch Shiel, and after a short run of a little over two and three-quarter miles, empties into the south channel of Loch Moidart, an arm of the sea. In its course it forms part of the boundary between Inverness-shire and Argyllshire, and divides the Dorlin estate of Lord Howard of Glossop from Ardnamurchan, the property of Mr. C. D. Rudd; the north bank belonging to Lord Howard, and the south bank to Mr. Rudd. It is a sluggish river, as the fall in the two and three-quarter miles is only about twenty feet, and thus there is but little stream in the pools, and then only when a fair volume of water is coming down.

There are good roads and paths along each bank, and it is spanned by two bridges, both at the upper end. The old Shiel Bridge, which crosses the river at the head of the largest and best pool, will this year be closed as a public bridge, and in

place of it a new one, a handsome structure of three spans, is being erected by Mr. Rudd about a quarter of a mile higher up the river.

The Shiel opens for rods and nets at the absurdly early date of the 11th of February. The nets come off on the 26th of August, and the rods continue to fish till the 31st of October.

The best time for salmon is from about the middle of June to the middle of July; and for grilse from about the last week in June to the first week in August.

A few salmon begin to run at the end of May. Most of the heavy fish come up then, but if there is a fair height of water in the river, nearly all of them, and those that run early in June, do not rest long in the river, but make their way straight through to the loch.

Grilse usually show about the middle of June, coming up with the high tides due at about that time; and with a fair water coming down there should be a good run of them then, and again a fortnight later, and more or less with each high tide, providing the river is in order, until the end of July.

During August and September a few fish run from the sea, but most taken at that time are those that have settled in the river, and from then until the close of the season their numbers are increased, and the chances are better for getting heavy fish, as many of the salmon that ran up into the loch early in May and June have dropped back by this time into the river again.

The casts on both sides of the river can easily be commanded from the banks, so that waders are not required, while a sixteen-foot rod will cover all the water. There is no restriction as to the gaff; both it and the landing net are used. Fly is the only lure permitted, and dressed on Limerick hooks from 1 to 7 is about the range of sizes required, according to the height and clearness of the water. The patterns that kill best are Jock Scot, Sir Richard, Silver and Blue Doctor, and several of more sombre dressing, of which the two following are good :—

THE BOAT POOL, LOOKING TO THE OLD BRIDGE.

No. 1.—Tag, gold twist. Tail, small topping. Body, two turns dirty brown seal's fur, remainder black ditto; gold tinsel all the way up. Hackle, black from half way. Wings, two strips brown mottled turkey.

No. 2.—Tag, silver twist and blue floss silk. Tail, topping and sprig of mallard wing. Body, black silver tinsel. Hackle, black all the way up and jay at shoulder. Wings, brown mallard, blue macaw horns.

The darker flies answer better from August until the end of the season. Double hooks are not much in favour, as they catch and hold small weed more readily than single ones; and much of this weed comes down after a spate.

The bag nets that intercept fish running to the Shiel are all put out along the northern shore of Ardnamurchan, but none are placed within two miles of the mouth of the river or at any point within Loch Moidart: The river is a sluggish one, the only current to speak of in medium and higher water being in the Sea Pool, Cliff, the Gullet, and from the Boat Pool to Piper's Cottage; so that for successful fishing wind is necessary, the stronger the better, and with some north in it, blowing against the stream, is the best direction to have it from. To make up for this lack of current, some movement or "work" needs to be put into the fly when fishing the sluggish pools.

In its short length the river has no tributaries; it is simply the outlet for the waters gathered in Loch Shiel; and being somewhat constricted at the Old Bridge and Gullet, from this point its waters are given off gradually, and it remains in good fishing order for a week or more after a flood, and at such a time, never being much discoloured, it quickly becomes clear and bright again.

Being a summer river, one has had to consider the best way of packing fish so as to ensure their arrival in good order. I always have the flags in which they are to be packed cut a few days beforehand and opened out to dry. Then take care to have the fish wiped down with a cloth and under the fins, so

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as to leave no dampness whatever about it. Packed dry in dry flags, and sent away on the day they are killed, I have found that fish stand a two days' carriage in hot weather by rail or parcel post and arrive in perfect order; also fish that have been taken from the water by a landing net will always travel better than those that have been gaffed.

The best catch for a day to one rod I have heard of was made some years ago by the late Rev. Charles MacDonald, the priest of Moidart. Nine, I believe, was the number he got, and he also holds the record for having hooked, played, and *lost* the heaviest fish on the Shiel.

Father Charles, as he was called by everyone, a capital fisherman and charming friend, to whom I am indebted for many Shiel "wrinkles," delighted to relate how he hooked his fish in the Bridge Pool—a heavy chap—after twenty minutes' play the cast broke, he was gone, and he weighed thirty-three pounds.

Then after waiting to be asked, "Well, but how did you know his weight?" the answer came that in those days the river was scringed, and the nets being worked in this pool on the following day, "my fish was taken with my fly in its mouth."

During the ten years that I have fished the north bank of the river, six in a day is the best that has been done on it, by Mr. D. E. Glynn.

I have often had days of four and five, and my best catches in a week have been eighteen in 1898 and seventeen in 1899. I have usually fished it from the middle of June to the end of July. My take to my own rod was forty-nine in seven weeks' fishing in 1898, weights from twenty-four pounds to six pounds; and last year in the same time it was fifty-seven, ranging from twenty-two pounds to five pounds.

The Shiel salmon are beautifully shaped, small heads, deep in the girth, and heavy for their length, like the Awe fish, and the grilse are exceptionally good, running from nine to six pounds. Four and five pounders are comparatively few.

The Moidart empties into the same salt water loch—Loch Moidart—as the Shiel. The fish which ascend the former river, which has a much steeper and rockier course than the Shiel, are easily to be distinguished from those of the latter, being not such deep fish, and it is only occasionally that a Shiel salmon is taken in the Moidart and a Moidart fish in the Shiel.

The heaviest fish of late years was one of twenty-seven pounds, caught by Mr. C. D. Rudd in 1898. During my time of fishing the river my best is twenty-six pounds.

But to show the weight to which Shiel fish attain, Alexander Matheson, the gamekeeper at Dorlin, this last winter picked out of a shallow in the river a dead one, which measured three feet nine inches long. In condition this fellow would, I think, have pulled the scale at from forty to forty-five pounds. Also three years ago a dead fish was found on the shore of Loch Shiel, estimated at fully fifty pounds, the head of which is preserved and set up in Dorlin House.

Sea Trout.

Sea trout begin to run in May, the heavy ones (three and four pounders, and occasionally up to six pounds) coming up in that month and continuing through the greater part of June; finnocks in July.

When the water is very low, as it unfortunately is in some years, and difficult for even sea trout to make their way up to the loch, they remain in the river pools, and on a suitable day excellent sport with them is obtained, making up to some extent for the lack of bigger fish at such times.

The record catch was made by a friend fishing with me about the middle of June some seven years ago, and he had eighty-eight in one day, from one-third of a pound to two and a half pounds, all taken on small river trout flies.

On a breezy day, when sea trout are running and they are on the take, catches of twenty to thirty can be got, and

if it is a brightish day, a very small Silver Doctor for a tail and ordinary river trout flies are the best to use.

The Loch.

For salmon fishing in the loch from about the last week in June to the end of September is the best time, but sport is very uncertain. Trolling the phantom is mostly practised, but on suitable windy days a small salmon fly, size 4 to 6, is equally or more successful.

The loch is also fished for sea and brown trout, most of the big ones being got by trolling.

If the bag nets on the coast were up for an extra twenty-four hours at the end of the week—lifted at six o'clock on Friday night instead of six o'clock on Saturday night, and seen to that they were *really* lifted — I am sure that the coast, river and loch fishing would in a few years be greatly benefited. And the angling on the river would be still further improved if some of the large stones, removed from the pools to facilitate the working of the nets in the days when the river was scringed, were put back again to form lies for fish. This is needed especially at the Captain's and Garrison Pools. Fish would not then run through to the loch so quickly as they do now.

For its short length there are few rivers in Scotland that have a prettier course than the Shiel. Where it leaves the loch the mountain scenery is very grand, and at the mouth, where its waters are emptied over a succession of low falls into Loch Moidart, the surroundings are particularly beautiful. And from this end of the river I shall begin to describe the pools.

The head of these falls is at the tail end of the

SEA POOL,

which extends to about two hundred yards above this point, and is one of the few pools in which there is always some stream. It fishes in medium and high water, and the middle part of it is the best.

Fish often take just on the brink of the first fall, and can generally be coaxed into the deep part above. Sometimes, however, they will go back over the falls, down to tidal water again—at low tide a difference in level from where he was hooked of fifteen feet—and the following of him gives a run of close on one hundred yards over most difficult ground. Careful handling is needed to prevent being broken in negotiating a fish over these falls, and the satisfaction when he reaches salt water and you feel him still on is great.

This pool is one of the best on the river for sea trout.

About two hundred yards above the Sea Pool, at the bend of the river, is a short pool,

ST. COLUMBA.

Fish lie in it only when the river is very high—level with the banks. It is, however, always a capital hold for sea trout.

Above St. Columba there are shallows good for sea trout, that in very high water sometimes hold a fish, and then we come to the

ROAD POOL,

a most likely looking one, deep, and sandy, gravelly banks at the bottom of it. One feels that this pool should never be passed without being fished; but it is only once or twice in a season that any recompense is received for the time spent on the trial.

A little distance further on there is another likely looking pool alongside the road, which, in the days when the river was scringed, used to be fished with success by the rod. Since then weeds, which the working of the nets used to clear away, have grown over the bottom, and fish won't now rest in it.

Continuing on, and at a little over a mile from the mouth of the river, is the

CAPTAIN'S POOL,

about eighty yards long. Fish mostly lie in the middle, but vary their position according to the height of the water: in low and medium keeping to the Dorlin, and in high water

to the Ardnamurchan bank. They don't rest much in it until after the middle of July, and then some do; but few are taken, for the surface is nearly always as smooth as a pond. There is very little current at this part, and a belt of trees and brushwood all along one side of the pool prevents the wind from east, south, or west catching its surface.

When the river was scringed there were good returns from this pool, and to facilitate the working of the nets many large stones were removed from it. As the pool is deep, with a smooth, sandy bottom, I am inclined to think it would be of advantage if these stones were dropped in again to provide "rubbing stones," and behind which fish would lie and rest longer in the pool instead of running through. If this was done, and a judicious thinning of trees to give access to the wind, the Captain's Pool would, I am sure, give very much better sport to the rod than it does now.

More shallows for a quarter of a mile, and then we come to the

GARRISON,

another sluggish pool about two hundred yards long, but which, with a good breeze ruffling its surface, is one of the best on the river. The tail of the pool does not fish well, except in high water, and can only be cast from the grass plot on the Ardnamurchan side. The middle, opposite the stage put out from the Dorlin bank, is the pick of the pool, and can be cast from both sides. It always holds fish in low and medium water. The head of the pool is best when the river is high, and from the big rock on the Ardnamurchan side is a sure catch at such a time. The remarks on dropping large stones into the Captain's apply also to the Garrison Pool.

About two hundred yards above Garrison is the lower end of

CLIFF,

which extends for about three hundred yards. There is a good stream in this length, and several holes and depressions in which fish lie in high water. About sixty yards at the

upper end is the best; but it is useless fishing any part of Cliff except with a high river, while it can only be cast from the north bank.

A little further up, through a rocky gorge, the river flows very deep, and we are at the

ROCK POOL.

The wind catches the surface here when all other parts of the river are perfectly smooth, and fish are always to be seen in it. It fishes best in medium water, for when the river gets high, fish move up and lie off Grassy Point.

Further up, and just two miles from the mouth of the river, is the tail end of the

BRIDGE POOL,

the largest and best on the river. About one hundred and fifty yards long by eighty wide, there are seven separate casts around it: Grassy Point, Providence Pool, Between the Trees, Parapet, Gullet, the Big Rock, and the Upper Stage. Grassy Point, at the tail of the pool on the north bank, is nearly always certain for a fish in high water. At Providence Pool and Between the Trees fish don't lie much before the end of July. From the Parapet, standing twelve feet above the water, on a clear day, one sees a fish looming up from the deep, approaching the fly with more or less dash, too often for an inspection only. When there is little current, it is trying to keep the fly in motion at such a moment. Should you hook the fish, you may see his play and movements down into ten feet deep of water. The Gullet, good in medium and fairly high water, fishes best up to ten o'clock in the morning and after four in the afternoon. On one morning last year I had four fish—twenty-two, sixteen, fourteen, and six pounds—from the Gullet and Parapet before ten o'clock. During the middle of the day fish fall back to the deep part of the pool, and in very big water they do not remain at the Gullet, but hang off the Big Rock on the south bank. On this bank also is the Upper Stage, which commands the tail of the pool

opposite Grassy Point, and there is another stage lower down which is a good cast for big sea trout.

In the days when the river was netted, as many as a hundred fish have been taken from the Bridge Pool at one haul.

Mr. Rudd's shooting lodge occupies a fine site on the cliff above the Bridge Pool.

Passing under the Old Bridge, fish rest in deep water close to the steep rocks on either side, more particularly in the late months of the season, and then comes

THE BOAT POOL,

in which fish lie at all heights of the river, in low water keeping to the deep part of the pool, and in medium and high moving up to the bank at the head of it.

Commencing at two hundred yards above the Boat Pool, there is a stretch, about a quarter of a mile long, which is good only when the river is very high—level with the banks is just right for it. At such a time there are several good bits in it, the best being at below and above the New Bridge, opposite the Piper's Cottage, the Rock, and up to Corbett's Cottage.

Beyond this, for a quarter of a mile to where the river commences and Loch Shiel ends, is never fished for salmon.

The Boat Pool and stretch of river above it, last described, is fished from a coble, and the proprietors have an arrangement to fish this part on alternate half-days, the Dorlin rod fishing it in the morning, and the Ardnamurchan in the afternoon. The next day Ardnamurchan has it in the morning and Dorlin in the afternoon. The same arrangement exists for fishing the Gullet and Sea Pool, the casts on which can be commanded from either bank.

THE STAGON, WITH THE [illegible]

opposite Grassy Point, and there is another stage lower down which is a good one for big sea trout.

In the days when the river was netted, as many as a hundred fish have been taken from the Bridge Pool at one haul.

Mr Rooke's shooting lodge occupies a fine site on the cliff above the Bridge Pool.

Passing under the Old Bridge, fish rest in deep water close to the steep rocks on either side, more particularly in the late seasons of the season, and then comes

THE BOAT POOL,

in which fish lie at all heights of the river, in low water keeping to the deep part of the pool, and in medium and high moving up to the back at the head of it.

Commencing at two hundred yards above the Boat Pool, there is a stretch, about a quarter of a mile long, which is good only when the river is very high—level with the banks is just right for it. At such a time there are several good bits in it, the best being at below and above the New Bridge, opposite the Piper's Cottage, the Rock, and up to Corbett's Cottage.

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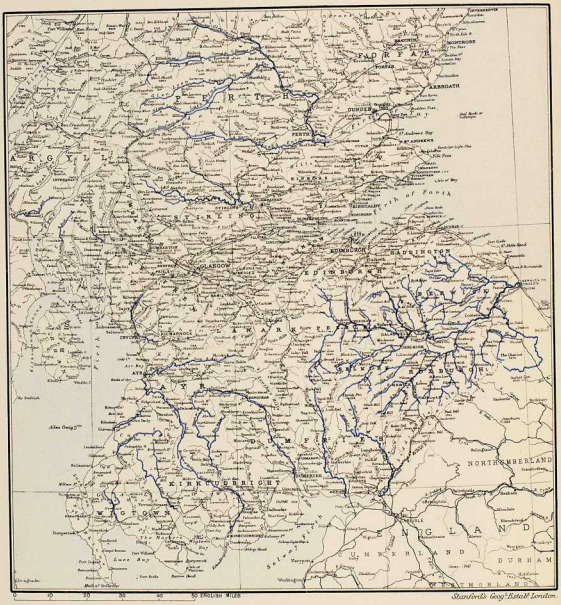
THE STAGES, WITH THE ROCK POOL AT THE CORNER.

THE SALMON RIVERS OF SCOTLAND.



CHAPTER LXII

THE ADD, ARAY, DOUGLAS, FYNE, KINGLAS, AND SHIRA

The Add, Avon Fhada, or Long River, drains fifty square miles of highland country, and rising in some marshes at Craignure, in the parish of Glassary, after a winding run of about twenty miles, in which it traverses the Moss of Crinan, it falls into the sea at Inner Loch Crinan, not very far from the western entrance to the well-known canal. The upper waters belong to Mr. Thomas Lloyd, of Minard Castle, while the lower ones, going with Lord Malcolm's beautiful estate of Poltalloch, flow through a favourite tourist district, and as the owner is well known for his genial good nature, he pays the penalty of his popularity by being so pestered with applications for leave to fish that he finds difficulty in keeping enough for his friends.

There are fully a score of bag nets working on either side of Loch Crinan mouth, while the shores of the inner loch, though pretty well looked after by the gamekeepers, are yet the favourite fishing grounds of the scringers of the district. The fish of the Add are not free risers, and there is never more than a portion of it in order, the rest being either too high or too low; also the tide affects the river a long way above the mouth.

So dependent is it on everything being just right that in 1898, though there were plenty of fish, not a single one was got in September and October by Lord Malcolm or by any of

his friends, for the river was up or down almost every hour, and never settled.

All the same, I can testify from happy experience that the Add is a most fascinating river. No waders are wanted, pools of all sorts are in plenty, the casting is easy, and a light rod of fourteen feet will do all the work, while the scenery surrounding the big flat Moss of Crinan has a peculiar charm of its own.

Fish do not run until the beginning of June, while at times they are very much later, even deferring their arrival until the end of August. Nevertheless, the Add is opened by law on the 15th of February, from which date nets may work till the 31st of August and the rods until the 31st of October. It has always been a better river for grilse than for salmon, and in the old days has yielded some large takes of the former. In the nineteen years from 1857 to 1875, there were 480 salmon and 7,321 grilse taken by the rods, or an average of 28 salmon and 385 grilse each season. The former run about ten pounds and the latter five. The two best years in this period were those of 1858 and 1862, the earlier one giving 992 grilse and 53 salmon, while the latter showed no less than 1,154 grilse and 55 salmon.

In 1862 an alteration unfavourable to the nets was made in the estuary, which is remarkable from its being the only case of the kind, as all other alterations have invariably been in their favour. Up to 1862 the Loch Crinan nets had averaged for the previous six years 47 salmon and 673 grilse; for the thirteen seasons following their mean take was 15 salmon and 255 grilse. The fly is the only lure used; Jock Scot, Blue Doctor, Thunder and Lightning, and other standard patterns all do well on the Add, if dressed on hooks from size one down to the very smallest.

The Aray, Douglas, Shira, Fyne and Kinglas are five small streams falling into Loch Fyne, each holding salmon and sea trout, which in former times were more plentiful than they

are now—all of them pretty little streams to fish when in order. The three first belong to the Duke of Argyll, and are preserved. The Aray—or the Water of Worship—has a swift run of about eight miles over a rocky bed, passing close to the Castle on its way to the sea. Three miles from the mouth there are a series of impassable falls, which it would not be worth while to ladder; therefore, angling is confined from below these falls to the sea, and that at one time it was pretty good will be gathered from the following anecdotes of David Edmistone, a whilom keeper at the Castle. They are narrated by Lord Archibald Campbell in his *Records of Argyll*, and run as follows:—

"One of the most striking men about the place was the head gamekeeper in bygone days, who talked the very best 'Scotch'—Lowland Scotch! He ended his days in Fifeshire, but I am not certain that he came from that county. He always wore a very tall white hat, popularly called a chimney-pot, also a high stick-up collar and necktie—the dress of the days of William IV. He had the finest set of teeth I ever saw, and as he was continually cracking jokes and laughing loudly at them, his teeth were always much seen. He had a ruddy, healthy colour, dark eyes, and a hooked nose, and was generally a character, whose sayings my father knew by heart and whose accent he had hit off.

"Dr. W. F. Cumming, commonly known as the 'Long Doctor,' had travelled with the Duke in Greece and other countries before my father married. The Doctor came to stay at Inverary, and was a well-known fisherman, and at one pool he and the Duke had each caught just the same number of fish. David Edmistone managed to attend to both fishermen, landing or gaffing the salmon as they were brought to bank. The Doctor fancied he saw some intentional carelessness in David's way of landing one of his salmon, and on the fish getting off, he turned and began with his well-known 'Gad, David, I believe you let that fish go on purpose!'

"Edmistone turned on the Doctor and said without a blush, 'G—d, Doctor! ye didna think I was going to let ye bate the Duke?'

"Greater loyalty to his chief could not have been more clearly shown by the most devoted Highlander.

"David also saved Mrs. William Russell, a daughter of Lady Charlotte Bury, from being drowned in the Miller's Lynn. He was attending her when she was casting from a plank placed between two rocks; something went wrong, and in a second the lady was in the torrent. David could not swim, and it was only after repeated and desperate efforts that he managed to lay hold of her dress just as hope was almost gone."

The Aray and the Douglas can be fished by visitors at the Argyll Arms Hotel at Inverary.

The Shira has its course through a beautifully wooded glen, and falls into Loch Fyne, two miles to the north of the Aray, while a short distance from the sea it expands into the Dubh Loch, a pretty sheet of water, which also can be fished from the hotel, but the river itself the Duke keeps in his own hands. The Douglas falls into Loch Fyne, four miles to the south of Inverary, the salmon angling being limited to a mile, to where the bridge crosses, by some nearly impassable falls.*

The Fyne and the Kinglas belong to Mr. Callender, of Ardkinglas, the former running into the head of the loch not far from Cairndow Inn. It is a larger and better river than either of the others, and holds many pretty streams and small pools in the last six miles of its course; its chief tributary is the Red Burn, about half as large as the main stream. Up till about 1890 the Fyne used to yield to the sportsmen who rented it with the shootings an average bag each season of from fifty to one hundred salmon and grilse besides sea trout, which has been reduced somewhat through the incessant poaching by

* The death of the late Duke of Argyll, which occurred shortly after this was first printed, may perhaps alter the fishing arrangements.

splash nets in Loch Fyne, helped by a bag net placed quite close to the mouth. The Kinglas has a run of about five miles, and can be fished by those staying at the Cairndow Inn, but sport is only to be had when it is just right.

These five Loch Fyne streams are all late ones, and though they open on the 16th of February, July, August, and September are the best months. A one-handed rod will cover them all, and small standard flies, such as Jock Scot, etc., are used.

CHAPTER LXIII

THE ANNAN

With a drainage area of three hundred and fifty square miles, unlike its near neighbour, the Esk, is entirely in Scotland. Rising in a range of high hills lying to the north of Moffat, on the borders of the counties of Lanark, Dumfries, and Peebles, with its source but a mile and a half from that of the Tweed, and only three and a half from that of the Clyde, it eventually falls into the Solway Firth about a mile below the town of Annan.

Its approximate total length is thirty-five miles, the upper waters flowing through a highland country, with the lower ones passing entirely through an agricultural district. On the way to the sea it receives—in addition to many smaller ones—half a dozen big tributaries: the Evan, Moffat, Kinnel, Ae, Dryfe, and Milk, up which salmon and sea trout make their way late in the angling season.

The Annan is said to derive its name from an old Gaelic word meaning "slow flowing," but that certainly does not accurately describe the upper waters, as for the first fifteen miles of its course it is a swift, strong stream, which only begins to flow more quietly after passing Johnstone Bridge, at the end of the Raehills property.

According to the Fishery Board Reports, in 1862 the yearly value of the netting was £673, and that of the angling £111. In 1882 the former had increased to £1,720, and the latter to £177. Thus, while the nets had augmented their value by

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£1,047, the angling had only gained £66, which clearly demonstrated that the nets were getting an unfair share of the fish.

Some twenty miles from the mouth the Annan passes close by, but has no connection with, the Castle Loch of Loch Maben, which is noted for being, with one exception, the only Scotch loch holding the vendace, a fish of the salmon family, but which never rises to a fly and is only caught by nets. It grows to about ten inches in length, has darkish fins, with greenish blue along the back and upper half of the body, with the sides and beneath silver white, dashed here and there with gold markings. These fish of this Castle Loch are netted for once a year, on the third Tuesday in July, by the Vendace Club of Dumfriesshire, the members dining together afterwards to consume their take, which is considered a great treat.

Although the Annan is free from pollutions, it suffers considerably from the various mill dams—or "caulds"—both on the main stream and on the tributaries. Of these obstructions there are fully fifteen, and though most of them are now made passable for running fish in times of water plenty, until that was properly done they formed almost insurmountable obstacles. The Brydekirk Cauld, situated on the Mount Annan water, owing to faulty construction at one time almost entirely stopped the progress of the fish to the upper waters, but the evil was remedied in 1897, and now fish ascend it easily. In many cases the mill lades and mill wheels were not provided with protecting hecks, and thus numerous salmon were trapped in the lades, while myriads of fry were killed by the wheels. During the last three years, however, these evils have also been greatly reduced, and there are now only a few cases of unprotected lades and intakes.

The Annan is a late river, but, nevertheless, the law declares it open on the 25th of February, although fish do not put in an appearance even on the coasts until April. The nets ply up to the 10th of September, while the rods fish to the 15th of November; but it would be better for the river and the fish

if netting ceased on the 31st of August and angling on the 31st of October, while, if the opening were also postponed until the 1st of April, the poor Annan might get a small chance of retrieving its reputation as a rod river. The numerous alterations that have already been made in the Annan close times are strong evidence that the ones most suitable for it have yet to be discovered.

The chief proprietors are Mr. J. J. Hope Johnstone, of Annandale and Raehills, Sir Robert Jardine, of Castlemilk, Mr. David Jardine, Mr. W. Younger, Lord Rollo and Dunning, Mr. A. J. Johnstone, of Halleaths, Mr. Brook, of Hoddom Castle, and Mr. W. D. Mackenzie, of Newbie and Farr.

For eight miles below Moffat the right bank belongs to Mr. Hope Johnstone, who, keeping in his own hands about a mile of both banks of the lowest part of his water, generously gives leave to the visitors and townspeople of Moffat to fish the remaining seven miles of this very pretty stretch; while on the opposite bank Sir Robert Jardine is equally liberal.

Many good reaches of the river can be fished on payment of small sums. The Duke of Buccleuch's anglings, together with parts of the Hoddom, Newbie, and Castlemilk waters, can be fished in this way. This latter stretch extends on the left bank for nearly three miles, from the Bech burn, a stream above Williamwalk Bridge, to the junction of the Milk: a water that is, perhaps, better for trout than for salmon, but yet there is a good chance of a fish any time when the river runs big after the nets are off. Good takes of herling may be made off it in July and August, especially by night fishing, which is not prohibited. On this stretch there are thirteen pools, viz., Ivy, Dungeon, Manse, Row Green, Buttress, Stag, Woodback, Shillholm Hass, Cauld Pool, Upper and Lower Crawford, Dillholm and Milkfoot. Wading trousers are necessary, and each of these pools will take about twenty minutes to fish properly.

Therefore, to the angler who does not wish to pay much for his sport the Annan offers a large extent of fairly good fishing. Naturally, where brown trout are concerned, these ticket waters are not stocked as plentifully as those reaches which are kept in private hands and lightly fished; as far, however, as salmon, sea trout, and herling go, every autumn flood brings fresh supplies to distribute themselves over the whole river. On the lower reaches, where the fish are fresher from the sea, they take the fly pretty well, and each season some heavy ones are caught, even up to fifty pounds. On the upper waters above Johnstone Bridge they do not rise so freely, and the worm becomes more killing than the fly.

The Annan is not a very well protected river, for there are only a few regular water-bailiffs, helped by some thirty gamekeepers, who are sworn in as such. If, however, a keeper has been attending his master all day in the field, or if he really properly sees to the many duties of game preserving, he will have but little spare time for guarding fish. Hence there is a great deal of poaching carried on with impunity both in the river itself and in the tributaries. It is on record that at Milkfoot, in one night's work, seventy-two spawning salmon were taken out with leisters; and tradition has it that the biggest of these was divided, the smallest half weighing thirty-three pounds, while the whole capture was salted, packed into barrels, and buried in a neighbouring moss until they could be removed safely.

Very few fish can enter the river until the nets come off, and the few that did get in owed it chiefly to an agreement that at one time existed between Mr. Mackenzie, of Newbie, and the upper proprietors. By this arrangement, Mr. Mackenzie, who owns the four and a half miles immediately above the mouth, agreed to discontinue netting, provided the owners above did the same, and for several years this worked very well, until the anglers of Annan and the so-called "four towns" declined to fall in with the scheme, as they hold a charter from

King James granting them a right of angling on this water in return for some loyal action.

As to spring angling, it does not exist. The local and other newspapers reporting the capture of clean fish in some numbers in March, April, and May are quite in error. Those who make these reports may credit them, because they know no better, and also they bring angling visitors to the Annan. As a matter of fact, these so-called clean fish are nothing more or less than well-mended kelts, which, although thin and lanky, put on a silvery appearance. Mr. J. Bell Irving, a sharp observer and a keen angler, tells me that in the ten years that he has had Mount Annan he has never seen a spring salmon in the river!

To fish the lower reaches properly, wading trousers are necessary, and an eighteen-foot rod will be wanted. Until the 1st of September minnows, worms, spoons, and other lures may be used, but after that date the fly only is permitted on the lower waters. Up to about fifteen miles above the mouth, salmon average eighteen pounds, grilse five pounds, and sea trout from one to two pounds. The local flies are peculiar to the district, most of them having wings of brown or grey turkey, with bodies of yellow, orange, red, and black mohair, and longish red or black hackles. The best of the standard flies are Jock Scot and the Black and Silver Doctors. The local sea trout flies have wings of brown and grey turkey, corncrake, missel thrush, woodcock and partridge, with mohair bodies, much like the local salmon flies. John Jackson, Queensberry Square, Dumfries, ties all these local patterns right well, and at a moderate price. Some of the Annan flies are tied on Kirby bend hooks, and in large waters size 18 may be used, which corresponds with the 6/0 of the Limerick bend, although the ordinary sizes are from an inch and a half iron to one of half that length.

In times of flood the Annan runs remarkably black and large, taking from twelve to twenty-four hours to come into

fishing order, when, though it remains black, it is yet clear, and in this state is at its very best for three or four days. The two principal anglings are those of Mount Annan and Hoddom Castle.

The former has been rented for the last eleven years by Mr. J. Bell Irving, who has taken the greatest interest in the river, and spared no efforts to improve the angling. This stretch commences at the top of Mount Annan Island and extends up to the junction of the Mein on both banks, a distance of about two miles, in which there are just a dozen good pools, two of which—the Back of the Wood and the Salmon Pool—are boated, the others, of which perhaps the best is the Island Stream, being waded with trousers. On this water, Mr. J. Bell Irving has on several occasions, after the removal of the nets, killed ten fish a day to his own rod, all with the fly and all fresh run; while Mr. W. O. Bell Irving had fifteen in two consecutive days; and here at any time after the 10th of September, when the water is right, sport is pretty certain.

The Hoddom Castle water, belonging to Mr. E. Brooks, and in which there are fourteen good casts, commences at the top of Mount Annan and goes up on both banks for two miles, until it joins the Castlemilk property. Here, in 1892, Tom Reid, one of Mr. Brooks's keepers, had a day of five fish, headed by one of forty-five and a half pounds, while another Hoddom keeper, Jock Dalzell, in the time of the late Mr. Sharpe, brought off a much more singular event, for one day, when ferreting the banks of a pool, he bagged a rabbit and a spring salmon at one shot, the fish happening to jump as he pulled trigger on the bunny, and being exactly in the line of fire, both were killed.

CHAPTER LXIV

THE AYR, IRVINE, AND GARNOCK

THESE three Ayrshire streams are hardly worth mentioning from the angler's point of view, for salmon are, as nearly as possible, extinct in their waters.

The Ayr is the largest river of the county, with a run of about forty miles. Up till 1896 there was no District Board, and for many years prior to the formation of one the Ayr was subjected to every evil to which a salmon river could possibly be exposed. There was no attempt made to observe the close times; smolts and par were caught by myriads, while in the lower reaches, as fish ascended the mill dams, they were gaffed by the mill hands. In the middle reaches they were poisoned by pollutions from chemical works and cotton mills; while, if a few lucky fish survived all perils, and succeeded in gaining the upper waters, they were certain to be destroyed on the spawning beds by the colliers. In addition, bag and stake nets were worked close to the river mouth, so small wonder the salmon were almost wholly killed off. Yet in or about the year 1810 there are records that tell of cartloads of fish being taken from this river by net and coble, while as late as seventy years ago this was one of the rivers where it was the custom of the farm servants on its banks to stipulate they should not be obliged to eat salmon more than three days in the week. At Catrine, sixteen miles from the mouth, there are dams which are impassable; but as the opening up of these would only take fish into a thickly populated mining district, where

it would be impossible to protect them, except at a very great expense, it has been proposed to concentrate all efforts for the restoration of the fish on the sixteen miles between Catrine and the sea, which admits of much easier protection, and holds many fine pools and spawning grounds.

The smaller streams of the Irvine and Garnock fall into the sea ten miles north of Ayr, and as salmon streams they are totally destroyed, though there are no fishing stations in the river, or in the estuary, or on the sea coast within six miles of the river mouth. Now and again, during a prolonged spate, a few fish are said to enter them, but only to be destroyed by poison as soon as the waters subside, and the fatal pollutions regain their strength.

In 1896 the Ayr County Council began to take steps to banish these deadly pollutions; and in doing this they ought to be successful, for since the Countess of Seafield gained her action, and compelled the distillers of Speyside to discontinue the pollution of the Spey, all other actions based on the same grounds must surely have a similar ending, and if the pollutions of these two pretty streams were once done away with, there would be nothing to prevent them from abounding in fish. But it would be wise, before the defilements were abolished, to have it made clear that nets were not to fish in the mouth or on the sea coasts nearer than they have hitherto done.

I may also say that in 1863, when quartered at Ayr one autumn, I fished each of these rivers many times without ever seeing a salmon in them.

CHAPTER LXV

THE CREE

DRAINS one hundred and seventy-two square miles, and, rising in Loch Moan, in Kirkcudbrightshire, its upper waters form the march with Ayrshire, while the lower ones define the Wigtownshire boundaries, and after a run of twenty-five miles it falls into the long and wide estuary of Wigtown Bay, five miles below Newton Stewart. It has many tributaries, some of which flow from lochs, while the river itself, five miles above Newton Stewart, flows through Loch Cree, two miles in length by about a quarter broad. A short distance beyond the head of this loch the Minnock, or Minnick, falls in, and becomes the larger and better angling stream, as it receives the waters of Loch Trool, which covers three hundred and twenty acres.

The very deep outlet of this loch is through a narrow gorge of some twenty feet wide, and here sluices have been placed by Lord Galloway so as to heighten the surface of the loch, and thus an artificial spate can be created when desirable. This has answered well, and has been the means of stocking the river and providing sport in times of drought.

About three miles above the junction the Minnick is obstructed by the Lynn of Glencaird; but as in the three miles below it there are nice spawning grounds, and no less than twenty-seven good pools, the opening up of this Lynn is not a matter of very great importance. On the Cree proper

there is also the Lynn of Bargrennan, which to a great extent bars fish from the ten miles of water above it, and also from Loch Moan. A certain number of fish get past, but not a great many; while as the Lynn Pool, where fish congregate in numbers, offers every facility to the stroke hauler, it is to be regretted that they are not helped up this obstacle by a ladder, if only to take them out of harm's way.

The Earl of Galloway owns all the Cree fishing from the mouth up to its junction with the Minnick, and also all that stream as far as the Glencaird Lynn. He also owns the left bank of the Cree from the junction up to Loch Moan, while on the right bank there are several proprietors. At the commencement of 1900 this river, together with the Minnick, was taken on a twenty-one years' lease by an association of six gentlemen, viz., the Duke of Bedford, Mr. John Cobbold, Mr. Alfred Gilbey, Mr. Alfred Harmsworth, Sir Herbert Maxwell, and the late Sir Greville Smyth. Each season this syndicate holds the fishings up till the 31st of July, after which they revert to Lord Galloway and the other proprietors until the end of the angling season. All the nets and coble have been taken off at a considerable outlay, in the hope of making a first-class fishery of these streams.

The Cree opens on the 11th of February, closes for nets on the 26th of August, and for the rod on the 31st of October. It is an early river, containing clean fish in February, although April is the best month for salmon, with June and July for grilse, the former averaging about twelve pounds and the latter five pounds; they rise well all the spring and summer, but badly in the autumn, except in the upper waters. A rod of sixteen to eighteen feet will be required, and the standard patterns kill—Black Doctor, Durham Ranger, Jock Scot, and Poynder for choice. Trousers are necessary in the main stream, but no waders are wanted above the junction of the Cree and the Minnick.

The lower part of the Cree and Loch Cree are infested by pike, their chief stronghold being a long stretch of dead water in the neighbourhood of Penninghame House, the tenant of which, especially if he be a member of the "Cree Crew," wages ceaseless war against them.

CHAPTER LXVI

THE DEE OF KIRKCUDBRIGHTSHIRE

DRAINS three hundred and sixty square miles, and is one of the most productive netting rivers of the Solway Firth. It flows from Loch Dee, a somewhat out-of-the-way loch in the west of the county, famed for its trout, but into which salmon cannot pass. After a run of twenty miles or so it joins a larger stream, the Ken, just opposite Parton Station, the two shortly expanding into another Loch Dee, from whence the Dee flows for twelve miles, a big river until, shortly before reaching the royal burgh of Kirkcudbright, it forms an estuary and joins the Solway Firth six miles lower down. The Ken rises to the east of the high hill of Cairnsmuir, and has a run, during which it receives the waters of the Deugh, of twenty-eight miles before it unites with the Dee, and at the late end of the season a few fish ascend both these streams. Below New Galloway the Ken expands into Loch Ken, five miles long and abounding in pike. From this loch about a hundred years ago came the largest of these fresh water sharks ever got in Scotland; it weighed seventy-two pounds and was killed by rod and fly by George Murray, a gamekeeper in the employ of the Earl of Stair, and the head is still to be seen in Kenmure Castle.

Below Loch Dee the river is fished in two ways peculiar to itself: first, by "yairs," some of which are owned by Captain Hope, R.N., of St. Mary's Isle, and others by the town of Kirkcudbright. These yairs are V-shaped wickerwork erections; a man sits at the point of the V with a net of peculiar shape

and construction, and as soon as he feels a fish strike, it is hauled up; the opening at the point of the V is about six yards in width. One set of yairs is used to fish with the flood tide and another with the ebb. Of course, these instruments are quite contrary to the general rule prevailing all over Scotland, except on the Solway, viz., that fixed engines for the capture of salmon within a river or estuary are illegal.

The second unusual method is the capture of fish by what is called the shoulder net. It is used in the numerous holes or pots in the rocky bed of the river lying between Tongueland and the tide, and is nothing more than a gigantic landing net, with a pole of twenty-four feet long, a net six feet deep, and a ring of five feet across from the pole, and about seven feet in breadth; it is used chiefly at night for searching all these pots, and after exploring one, it is raised by placing the pole in a wooden shoe fastened to the shoulder of the fisherman. It wants strength, skill, and practice to use it well, but in expert hands it is deadly. The most favourable time is when there is a run of grilse with a moderately small water; but the large hauls only last a few nights, as if the water falls the run of fish ceases, while if it increases and becomes really big the shoulder net cannot be used. Although, perhaps, this method of fishing does not do quite so much harm as is supposed, it is nevertheless a villainous poaching method of fishing which should not be permitted in any river.

Up till about 1870 there was a famous shoulder-net fisherman, one Richardson, who kept a book in which he entered all the fish he caught. Besides his regular wages, he got a penny extra for every salmon and a halfpenny for every grilse, and in four of his best years his book shows he took in—

	Salmon.	Grilse.
1838 . . .	546 ...	7074
1840 . . .	1007 ...	5415
1842 . . .	705 ...	6482
1843 . . .	1042 ...	4398
	3,300	23,369

THE DOACHS AT TONGUELAND.

With reference to these figures, the owner of the Doachs or cruives at Tongueland, three miles above Kirkcudbright, denies their accuracy, and maintains that these fish were not taken by Richardson alone, but in companies with others, sharing the captures and using other kinds of nets, than the shoulder net. This is probably the correct solution of these scores, which, even then, are astonishingly large. But it must not be overlooked that sixty years ago the poachers were so brag of big hauls and exaggerate them, while now everything is done to conceal such events.

The lower parts of the Dee are fished hard by net and coble, but not by so many nets as formerly, because one fisherman now has the whole fishing, and the fish can consequently be taken with fewer nets than when several parties worked it, which gave rise to great competition. About the same number of fish are got, but the river is not worried so much.

The fish that enter the Dee having thus escaped the nets and cobles, the yairs and the shoulder nets, have yet a fourth peril to pass ere there remains no other danger to face than the chance of being taken by the rod or sneaked by a poacher. I allude to the Doachs at Tongueland, loudly complained of by the upper proprietors as capturing the majority of the fish that have escaped the other devices and are making their way to the upper waters. These Doachs are the property of Mr. Murray Stewart, who claims to hold them by ancient and special rights, exempting him from the operation of the bye-laws regulating the construction and use of cruives and mill dams; and, as will be seen from the illustration, they are partly natural and partly artificial, practically forming a cruive dyke, which gives the owner the power of capturing the majority of running fish. They have been the subject of much litigation, and if the money spent in law had been applied to purchasing these obstructions with a view to blowing them up, they might probably have been removed long ago.

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June being practically blank. Then in July the grilse begin to run, and fish continue to enter the river till the middle of November. Salmon run up to thirty pounds, but average thirteen pounds; the grilse are remarkable for their size, many of them weighing ten pounds, while the average weight is eight and a quarter.

Well! what with sweep nets, yairs, shoulder nets, and Doachs, small wonder that there will be few fish left for the angler until these devices are forced by the law to cease working. One gentleman writes me: "The rod fishing on my property is practically useless until the nets, etc., come off." Another says: "It is only in the autumn that there are any quantity of fish in the Dee, but then they are so 'dour' and hard to rise, that it is only occasionally one comes to the fly." A third correspondent says: "The fishing in the Dee is very poor. Over-netting has been the great cause of the falling off, and the running fish that escape them are mostly caught at Tongueland Bridge in the pass."

The river opens on the 11th of February, closes for nets 26th of August, and for rods 31st of October. A sixteen to eighteen foot rod will be wanted on the lower reaches, the Annan flies will kill, and waders are necessary.

It is to be hoped that if the Cree Club turns out a success, a Dee Club may shortly be started in friendly rivalry; as matters are at present, it is not worth while going twenty miles out of one's way to fish this badly treated river.

In 1897 the clerk to the Dee District Board states the take of fish to all the kinds of Dee nets was 876 salmon and 1,900 grilse, so that there is no doubt a Kirkcudbrightshire Dee Angling Association would have material to work on if they could take some of the capturing devices into their own hands.

CHAPTER LXVII

THE DOON, GIRVAN, AND STINCHAR

THE Doon drains one hundred and twenty-six square miles, and rises in those high hills on the borders of Kirkcudbrightshire whose southern slopes send out the Dee and the Cree to the Solway. Its head waters spring from Loch Enoch, a desolate, rock-bound loch about 1,700 feet above sea-level, which sends a considerable stream into the head of Loch Doon, a fine sheet of water six miles in length, and covering 1,240 acres. From the foot of this loch the river rushes through a very narrow, rocky outlet into Ness Glen, on which of late years a good ladder has been placed, which fish ascend pretty freely, passing through the loch into the Enoch tributary. They are seldom caught in the loch, and perhaps a dozen each year would fully represent the total take to the rod. Below Ness Glen the Doon runs for about a mile through meadow land, and passing Dalmellington, it expands into Loch Bogton, a mile long and full of pike; from thence it has a run of sixteen miles until it falls into the sea, two miles to the south of the mouth of the Ayr. Between the embouchures of these two streams there are some fifteen or twenty bag and stake nets working, much to the detriment of both rivers, while in addition to this the Doon mouth is hard fished by net and coble.

The river is certainly capable of very great improvement, but as matters are at present it is hardly worth calling a salmon river. The waters of the loch could easily be stored up at a

small cost, and an artificial spate provided whenever necessary. If this were done, if the nets were removed from between the mouths of the Doon and the Ayr, and if the pollutions from collieries, ironworks and factories were suppressed, then there would be nothing to prevent this river from becoming one of the best, if not actually the very best, in the south-west of Scotland. In 1893, five hundred dead or dying fish were removed from the river, poisoned by one discharge of refuse from a pit of an iron company!

The chief proprietors are the Marquis of Ailsa, the Duke of Portland, and Mr. A. F. McAdam.

The river is quite an early one, which holds clean fish on the opening day, the 11th of February, though the main run of salmon is in August, with grilse and sea trout in July. There is an early spring run, and then in May, June, and July very few fish appear. The spring fish rise well to the fly, the only lure allowed on the Ailsa fishings, while the autumn ones are very dour and hard to tempt.

The Fishery Board Report of 1887 values the angling of the whole river at £300, and puts the rental of the nets at £150; but the Report does not state how these values were arrived at. The nets come off on the 26th of August, the rod ceasing on the 31st of October. It has been often suggested that the river might with advantage be opened to the rod only on the 1st of February, instead of the 11th, and closed for angling on the 15th of October instead of the 31st.

Wading stockings are wanted in some of the pools, a sixteen-foot rod will cover the water, and the ordinary salmon flies will kill.

The Girvan drains ninety-six square miles of country, and rises on Lord Ailsa's property in the small loch of Girvan's Eye, in the parish of Straiton, some eight miles above the village of that name, and after a course of thirty miles falls into the sea opposite to the well-known Ailsa Craig. The

name is said to be derived from a Gaelic word signifying "rough," a term which is certainly descriptive of the river. A few miles below Straiton village the Girvan falls over the Linn of Blairquhan, which fish cannot pass except when the water is big, and even then not in any numbers. The sea coasts at the mouth of the river—especially the four miles to the north of it—are netted with extreme severity, there being some fifty bag nets in that distance, commencing at only three hundred yards from the mouth, while nets and cobles are used in the river itself; so small wonder that the Girvan is hardly worthy of mention as a salmon angling stream.

Some years ago the lessee of the nets agreed with the upper proprietors to set them back to six hundred yards on either side of the mouth, and to discontinue the netting in the river; this resulted in many more fish being netted on the coasts and caught by the rods in the pools. Unfortunately this agreement came to an end, but it unmistakably showed what was wanted for the good of all concerned; and with this and numerous other similar experiences to guide them, it is quite extraordinary that the Government do not make laws for the better control of these greedy coast nets. Since the termination of this arrangement, the nets have again been placed only three hundred yards from the Girvan mouth, while the cobles have resumed work in the river. There are also numerous mill dams, which by degrees are being provided with good fish passes, while the mill wheels and lades are also receiving protection.

The watching of the Girvan is but moderate, for it is left to the keepers of the estates on the banks, and as in the autumn they are busiest with their shooting duties, just when there are most fish to protect, the work cannot be well done, and consequently poaching is common, and many are the stories told by the natives about such forays.

The chief proprietors are the Marquis of Ailsa, Captain

Hunter Blair, R.N., Sir James Fergusson, of Kilkerran, Sir Reginald Cathcart, of Killochan Castle, Mr. John Shaw Kennedy, Mr. Hugh Wallace, of Cloncaird Castle, and Mr. J. C. Kennedy.

The Killochan water is, perhaps, as good as any on the river, and typical of the other reaches. It extends on both banks for three miles, part of it being let to a club of anglers at Girvan, who permit the use of all lures. On this water there are nine pretty casts, which, sad to say, hold very few fish. When they are caught, salmon average ten pounds, sea trout two pounds, and whitling three-quarters of a pound.

The Fishery Board Report of 1896 says that "In the Girvan district but little interest seems to be taken in the salmon fishings. A Board has been formed, but it holds no meetings, employs no staff, and raises no funds. The fishings in this district merit more attention than they are at present receiving."

The angling is practically confined to the last six weeks of the season, the upper parts of the river being best for salmon and grilse and the lower ones for sea trout. One gentleman who knows the river well writes me: "The Girvan can scarcely be classed as a salmon river worth mentioning. It rises and falls very quickly, and the rod fishing is of little use till after the nets are taken off on the 10th of September; then the leaves very soon begin to fall, and are most troublesome." Another says: "I get a deal of amusement out of the Girvan, but very few fish."

The river opens on the 25th of February, closes for nets on the 10th of September, and for rods on the 31st of October.

Wading stockings are necessary on some of the pools, and a rod of fourteen to sixteen feet will cover the water. Flies, the same as the Doon.

The Stinchar, the most southern and perhaps the prettiest of the Ayrshire streams, drains one hundred and thirty-three square miles of the lands lying between the watershed of the

Girvan and the marches of the shires of Wigtown and Kirkcudbright. Rising in some of the upland moors of Barr parish, after a run of thirty miles it falls into the sea at Ballantrae, close to Bargany Castle, the residence of Major the Hon. North de Coigy Dalrymple Hamilton, who employs a watcher to look after his fishings and to see that the weekly close times are observed. There are no pollutions to speak of, and but very few mill dams, while those that exist do not seriously hinder the passage of fish, and altogether the Stinchar is an ideal small salmon river, with plenty of pools and streams and good spawning ground.

Sad to relate, bag nets are permitted within three hundred and fifty yards of the mouth, and the sweep net is freely used in the river; thus the severe and systematic netting of so small a stream prevents anything like a fair proportion of fish reaching the upper waters until after the nets come off on the 10th of September, for before that the coast nets get the bulk of the fish, and the nets in the river then capture most of those that have escaped the nets in the sea. The residents on the banks complain loudly that this incessant use of the sweep nets has nearly annihilated the sea trout.

For the last eight miles of its course the bed of the Stinchar, composed as it is of gravel, is liable to much shifting in times of floods, the mouth especially being subject to great alterations, and then, when a drought comes, what water there is trickles away through beach and gravel, and the entrance is entirely closed until a fresh spate cuts another outlet—an evil which could be remedied by a small expenditure.

Although this river opens on the 25th of February, it is a very late one, the first clean fish seldom appearing till the end of May or beginning of June, while the best and heaviest fish do not run till autumn, when they are said to be in good condition; but if that is really the case, they must differ from those of all the other rivers in Scotland, for I have never met with a September fish that could for one moment compare with

a March or April one. However, the river is netted up to the 10th of September, and the rods continue to be plied to the 15th of November.

For its size, this river yields larger fish than any other in Scotland. In 1882 the man at the nets had a cock fish of forty-four pounds and a hen of forty-two pounds; and Mr. Inglis, a brother of the factor at Bargany, had a day of three fish weighing thirty-three pounds, thirty pounds, and twenty-eight pounds.

As the sea coast nets are Crown property, it is remarkable, considering the ownership, that such severe netting should be permitted. The bag nets extend from Brennane Head on the north to Carsewell Point on the south, a distance of sixteen miles, in which there are about sixty of them. In 1887 they were rented by a Mr. Johnston, of Kirkcolm, who complained to the Fishery Board of damage done by trawlers; as it could not be settled whether the Crown was bound to protect its lessee, or whether the lessee was to protect himself, Mr. Johnston suggested as a sort of set-off that he was to have his netting season prolonged for a fortnight, and be exempted during the whole season from observing the weekly close time! Needless to say, both propositions were curtly refused.

The Fishery Board Reports of 1897 state that the nets took 298 salmon (one of sixty-two pounds), 210 grilse, and 114 sea trout, while the rods in the same year had a total of 41 salmon and grilse.

The other proprietors of the river are Mr. W. McConnel, of Knockdolian, Captain Hugh Hamilton, of Pinmore and Daljarrock, and Captain Hughes Onslow, of Alton Albany.

This last-mentioned stretch consists of about a mile and a half between Barr and Auchensoul. Here the Stinchar is very rapid, and owing to the too good draining of the sheep hills, in times of rain it rises and falls so fast that it is seldom in fishing order for more than a few hours at a time. On this section sea trout run fairly large, averaging three pounds; but

about a score of them, with three or four salmon, is the usual season's take, which is only a small thing to what it ought to be if the nets were set back from the river mouth.

The flies already mentioned will kill, a sixteen-foot rod is ample, and wading stockings necessary. From the foregoing it will be seen that river netting, pollutions, obstructions, and poaching are rife in these six Ayrshire streams; that the seventy miles of coasts into which they fall are netted with great severity, there being fully a hundred bag nets in the distance, some of which are working at from three hundred to four hundred yards of the mouths of these rivers. It is quite clear a change for the better is badly wanted; and I venture to think if the six streams were formed into one District, with the Marquis of Ailsa as President of the Board, that much might then be done for them. At present, the one hundred and fifty miles of good angling water that they possess between them does not realise £5 a mile!

CHAPTER LXVIII

THE EARN

DRAINS three hundred and seventy-six square miles, and, issuing from the loch of the same name at St. Fillans, it flows with a winding course for upwards of fifty miles through a richly agricultural and picturesque country, with many fine estates on its banks, until it falls into the Firth of Tay, a short distance above Newburgh.

Some authorities describe this river as a tributary of the Tay, but as the Earn falls into the estuary or Firth of Tay, where it has a width of two miles of brackish tidal water, I think it can hardly be regarded as an affluent of the river Tay in the same way as is the Tummel; and moreover it has not the same close times as the Tay; but however this may be, the river certainly merits a chapter to itself, for in point of size it is a considerably larger river than the Helmsdale, Beauly, Brora, or Thurso. The loch from which it flows is seven miles in length by a little more than one in breadth, and of great depth. Salmon can enter freely, but they are not often seen there, while the capture of one by the rod is quite a rare event—two somewhat remarkable matters, seeing what vast numbers of fish ascend the river in wet seasons.

The upper reaches run rather more swiftly than the lower ones, but throughout its whole course, when it is in angling ply, there is sufficient current to make pleasant casting, while ensuring to any hooked fish an increased power of offering a stiff

down-stream fight. So, without being a very rapid or roaring torrent, the Earn is yet far removed from the sluggishness of the middle waters of the Forth.

From the loch to Crieff Bridge is thirteen miles. From thence to Bridge of Earn is a further twenty-five miles, with another eight to the junction with the Tay Firth. The Earn opens on the 11th of February for rods and nets, the latter coming off on the 26th of August, while the former fish till the 31st of October. The streams of Ruchill, Lednock, Turret, Machany, Ruthven, and May are the chief tributaries. There are no pollutions, though there are several obstructions in the shape of cruive dykes and mill dams, all of which in times of flood are easily passable, although in periods of drought they are just the reverse. The first of these above the mouth is the Dupplin cruive dyke, which is about two hundred yards long, stretching across the river from bank to bank. The cruive is placed between two small islands, and has but one box, through which the current rushes with such force that fish cannot face it during the weekly close time. Thus, as soon as the nets come off, they gather together below the dyke waiting for a flood. When that does come, the weir offers no hindrance whatever.

I remember reaching Aberdalgie, to fish the Dupplin Reserved Water, on the 11th of October, 1891, only to find the Earn in a flood, which lasted for six days, and during the whole of that time fish ran up Dupplin weir incessantly. I spent most of these days at this weir, and no hour passed but what fifty or sixty attempts could be counted, one-third of which were successful. Morning and afternoon did this go on, and the keeper told me it was continued each night; and never before or since have I seen fish run so continuously for so long a period.

Above Dupplin and six miles below Crieff there is a nearly similar dyke at Strathallan, also fishing a single box cruive. Still further up there is the Dornoch Dam, in which Lord

Willoughby used to have a cruive, but which he has ceased to work, at the same time placing a fish pass on the dyke. All cruives confer, more or less, a monopoly, and more or less injure the fishings of the proprietors above them, but the cruive rights are held by such special and ancient titles, which have so often been sanctioned and recognised by the law, that they cannot be done away with without making compensation to their owners. Given the right of cruive fishing, then no one can interfere with it as long as it is carried on in conformity with the provisions of the bye-law.

However, it is neither the Dupplin nor the Strathallan cruives that prevent the Earn from yielding spring fish to the rod. The nets plying from the Bridge of Earn to the mouth are the culprits. Above this bridge there is no serious netting, though at times a haul of the net is made below Dupplin Weir, where as many as fifty fish have been taken out at one shot, but the nets here are not worked daily. There must be something to render the netting of the last eight miles of the Earn peculiarly deadly and easy, for there are sure to be spring floods, which in other rivers seriously interfere with, even if they do not wholly stop, netting operations. While as at such times it has been clearly shown that Dupplin Weir ceases to be any hindrance, the dearth of fish above it can only be caused by the severity of the netting below.

Sir Patrick Keith Murray, who owns the Ochertyre angling, writes me: "There is no record of any clean fish in the spring or summer; there is only sport after the nets are off and a heavy flood has occurred." The tenant of the Gask water also writes: "No spring fish has been caught for the last ten years."

A few notes on some of the best known of the Earn anglings will serve as a guide to the whole. Firstly, though, it must be clearly set forth that, as matters are now managed, salmon fishing on the Earn is to be had solely in September and October, while it is only in about every other season that fish arrive in the upper reaches before angling closes. Therefore,

it is of no use for anyone to make up his mind that he will fish the Earn in any given season, for if it is a dry one not a fish will he get. It takes two or even three good spates after the nets are off to bring the fish up to Crieff, and even then, unless the weather keeps moist, the river runs down very quickly. I have often thought the Earn might be "Grimersta-ed" by storing up the waters of the loch so as to be able to create a spate at any time. If a dam were made at the exit of the river from the loch, I do not think the proprietors below could object, although those above it might perhaps do so in the event of any portions of their lands becoming flooded by the heightening of the loch waters.

The Drummond Castle water—in a wet season a most excellent reach for sport—begins a little below Crieff Bridge at the Black Hole, and goes down on the south bank for about four miles, in which distance are the Basket Maker, the Clods, the Corner, the Wire Fence, the Temple, Lower Findal, Bridge Stream, Dornoch Dam, and the Boat Hole, some being cast from the bank, while others require wading trousers.

From Dornoch Dam, Mr. G. M. Kelson on one occasion took eleven fish with a small variegated Sun fly of his own composing. This is a pool of about two hundred yards of deep, slow-running water. It was a cloudless day, and after making each cast Mr. Kelson let the fly go wherever the current took it. On the following day, with a breeze and a cloudy sky, he captured other five fish on a two-inch Silver Doctor. The largest fish he ever got on this water was forty-five and a half pounds.

It is now so difficult for tourist anglers to obtain a fair chance of sport that they are much indebted to Lord Ancaster for the privilege of fishing such fine water by the payment of a moderate charge made by the day, week, or month, particulars of which can be had from the proprietor of the Drummond Arms Hotel, at Crieff. A ticket for September costs £3, one for October £7.

The Ochertyre water commences at Turret Junction and goes down for a mile. No waders are wanted. Fly is the only lure allowed. The take varies from nothing at all in a dry season to thirty or thirty-five fish in a wet one, averaging twelve pounds, but getting black in the last fortnight of the season.

The Strathallan water commences at Millearn Dyke and goes down for two miles on both banks, exclusive of about three hundred yards belonging to Innerpeffray on the north side.

With the exception of two pools which are boated, the rest are easily fished by wading trousers.

The water is divided by the Machany Burn into upper and lower beats. On the former there are only two casts, and the latter is much the best section, on which the first pool is called "The Gurl," fished from the bank on the north side and waded from the south; then comes Houston's stream, upwards of three hundred yards long, but which has not given up many fish for the last three seasons; next there follow in rapid succession the Bend, the Pot (small but very good), the Back of the Island, and Murray's Hole, below which Trinity Gask begins. The Bend and Murray's Hole are decidedly the pick of the Strathallan water. This part of the river is somewhat disappointing, for the fish are dour in these reaches, the last three seasons having yielded but sixteen, sixteen, and forty salmon and grilse.

As regards the size of fly best suited for this part opinions differ. The natives use large ones, but Mr. Whitelaw, who has had this water for the last three years, tells me he has been more successful with small ones, and probably here as elsewhere the locals don't know everything; at any rate, Mr. Whitelaw last season had a day of five fish to his small flies, while a local angler with his large ones was blank.

The Trinity Gask water consists of from three to four miles on the north bank, placed between Strathallan and Gask, having on the opposite banks the anglings of Strathallan,

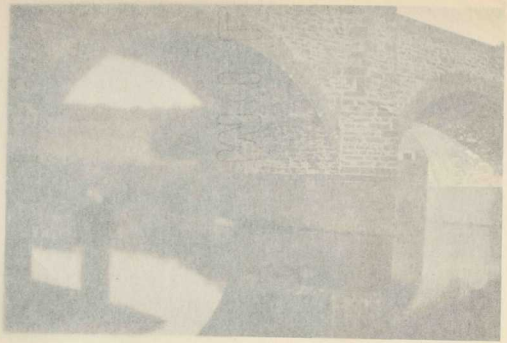
DALREOCH BRIDGE.

THE STEEP BRAE.

Auchterarder, and Lord Camperdown's property. There are nine good pools, some of which are cast from the bank, while others require wading trousers. The best catches are the Cascade, Boat Neuk, C. Pool, and Boat Pool. The whole of it is very pretty water. In 1878, some friends and myself had the fishing in connection with the Carim shootings at Blackford. It was a dry season, and I only fished one day, after an early September flood, when I got two fish of thirty-three and thirty-one pounds, and lost another heavy fellow. Then came more dry weather; and when the rain at last returned I was unable to be there. However, the rent in those days was not a serious matter; moreover, it was divided amongst four, and thus I was very well pleased with my only day on Trinity Gask.

The Gask Water lies on the north side of the river, between Trinity Gask and Upper Dupplin, while on the south side opposite to it is the Duncrub-property. Gask is about two miles in length, with Duncrub going down half a mile below it to the Dunning Burn. At about the middle of the water the two lairds are connected by the pretty old Bridge of Dalreoch, on the road to Gask House, an interesting place full of relics of Prince Charlie, and where Lady Nairn lived when she wrote "The Land o' the Leal" and other well-known Scotch songs, including the "Auld Hoose," which was then the house of Gask, but now only represented by a wall.

No [illegible] has been got on these anglings for many years past. Waving waders are necessary for some of the pools, or where they are down, and with the river once in good order they [illegible] for about a week. The best of them are [illegible] a [illegible] to fish nicely owing to its eddies. [illegible] the pick of them, has more current than [illegible] and always holds fish, which are usually heavy [illegible] being the last representative of the [illegible]



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The Gask Water lies on the north side of the river, between Trinity Gask and Upper Dupplin, while on the south side opposite to it is the Duncrub property. Gask is about two miles in length, with Duncrub going down half a mile below it to the Dunning Burn. At about the middle of the water the two banks are connected by the pretty old Bridge of Dalreoch, on the road to Gask House, an interesting place full of relics of Prince Charlie, and where Lady Nairn lived when she wrote "The Land o' the Leal" and other well-known Scotch songs, including the "Auld Hoose," which was then the house of Gask, but now only represented by a wall.

No spring fish has been got on these anglings for many years past. Wading trousers are necessary for some of the pools, of which there are seven, and with the river once in good order they remain so for about a week. The best of them are Hilton Haugh, a difficult one to fish nicely owing to its eddies; the Dam-breast, the pick of them, has more current than the other pools, and always holds fish, which are usually heavy ones—a thirty-two-pounder being the last representative of the "sockdollagers."

The Bridge Pool at Dalreoch is also a sure hold, and is best cast by wading from the Duncrub side; this is followed by the Red Brae, also waded, and the Chapel Bank, at the tail of which the Gask water ends and that of Upper Dupplin begins. On the south side Duncrub goes down to the Dunning Burn, the best cast on it and also on Upper Dupplin, the fish lying on both sides of the stream.

A good many ladies have met with considerable success casting from the banks of this reach, one fair angler taking no less than five in a day, while Miss Oliphant, a daughter of the late Colonel Oliphant, of Gask, was well known all along Strathearn for her skill with the rod. During the last ten years the best day on this water was in October, 1891, when three rods had just a dozen fish, the heaviest twenty-four pounds, but in that exceptional year four or five a day were quite common.

Here are the Gask and Duncrub captures to one rod only for the following years:—

1890	8 fish,	weighing	68	lbs.
1891	39 ,,	,,	503	,,
1892	18 ,,	,,	200	,,
1893	No water.			
1894	,,			
1895	20 fish,	weighing	231	lbs.
1896	14 ,,	,,	181	,,
1897	6 ,,	,,	62	,,
1898	6 ,,	,,	64	,,

There are a certain number of sea trout coming up in September, for which the best flies are the Green and Teal and a yellow-bodied one with March Brown wings and gold tinsel.

The Upper Dupplin water is about a mile of both banks, and is let with Dupplin Cottage. There are six good pools on it, of which the Dunning Burn and the May Pool are the best, and from this catch twelve fish in a day have been got.

The take for the season averages from twenty to thirty-five fish, usually of heavy weights.

We now come to a stretch of water that is certainly one of the best, if not the very best autumn fishing in Scotland, viz., the far-famed Dupplin Reserved Water, which commences at the Cruive Dyke and goes down for about one and a quarter miles on both banks, in which distance there are just a dozen fine casts. Immediately below the weir comes Back o' Dyke, followed in rapid succession by Dick's, Lord Dupplin's, Stank, Jetties, Minister's, Lord Kinnoull's, Wilkinson's Hole, Buchan Stream, Upper and Lower Buchan, and Sauchie.* From these pools some of the largest scores on record have been made, for when the water is right, from eight to twelve fish a day are often taken.

The late Lord Dupplin once had twenty-two fish in the day from the two streams of Dick's and Dupplin.

Mr. Brydges Willyams and Colonel Cornwall Legh, fishing opposite each other, had in a short day twenty-five fish from these same streams. Here, also, I had the luck to get the only forty-pounder of my angling career, from the south bank of the tail of Lord Dupplin's stream; it took a small Blue Doctor of my own dressing on a No. 4 hook. I was alone, so had to gaff him for myself just opposite the Dupplin kitchen gardens, some three-quarters of a mile below where the fight began forty-five minutes earlier; and as, after that ended, I got seven others, of from nineteen to eight pounds, it was indeed a red-letter day.

The whole of this water, with the exception of Dick's from the north bank, can be fished dry-shod. Like every other stretch of angling, whether good or bad, this one suffers equally with them all from the eccentricities of the clerk of the weather, and too much rain is just as bad as too little. The river here takes several days to clear from the effects of a real heavy

* Those who know these parts of the Earn will have no difficulty in recognising the man in the boat as Irvine, the popular and well-known head keeper at Dupplin.

flood, for as the banks are mostly of earth, they are liable to wash away in masses, and when that happens the water below is made extra muddy. Throughout the whole course of this river the banks want carefully watching and preserving, while those that show signs of "going" should be dealt with at once, for the neglect may entail not only the loss of a salmon pool or two, but an eventual heavy outlay where at first a small one would have sufficed to stop the whole mischief.

The Dupplin Reserved Water, with which is let the house of Aberdalgie, is now rented by Mr. A. Wynne Corrie, who, with his guests, took one hundred and forty-four fish out of it in the season of 1899; thirteen was his best day, while the two heaviest weights were thirty six and thirty-seven pounds.

The lessee of this section also usually has the right of a day or two a week on Dupplin Loch, a pretty circular sheet of water surrounded by woods, where the trout give fine sport and delicious eating; in fact, for the table they are the very best in all Scotland. They run from a pound up to four pounds—nearly three pounds is the average—so, therefore, the angler cannot expect to take several dozen of these big fellows in the day; but one three-pounder is worth a great many small fish, and thus quality more than makes up for quantity. I have fished this loch a few times, and my best day was five trout weighing seventeen pounds.

The Dupplin Lower Water begins as the Reserved ends, and goes down to a little below the Caledonian Railway Bridge. There are seven good pools on it, viz., Lower Sauchie, Condie, Sauchie Dyke, Mains, Forgandenny, the Ford, and Bridge Pool. It is chiefly slow-flowing water, which often holds very heavy fish—six to one rod in a day is the best ever done on it in recent years, and the average take is from forty to sixty each season.

With regard to the best flies for the Earn, as the river is hard fished by many anglers, there is scarcely a pattern that is not given a chance. The Doctors, Dusty Miller, Wilkinson,

DUPPLIN WEIR AND CRUIVE.

THE MINISTER'S POOL.

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THE MINISTER'S POOL.

Willyams, Jock Scot, Claret, Yellow and Blue Wasps, Shannon, Winterton, Benchill, with Mr. Kelson's Red Drake, D'Eresby, the Kendle, Black Fancy, and Variegated Sun Fly, are as good a selection as is possible. Personally, I hardly used any others than my own pattern of Blue Doctor,* the Willyams, and a Dusty Miller, dressed on irons ranging from two inches down to the very smallest.

For the past few years Sir Robert Moncrieffe has worked hard to carry through a scheme for improving the Earn anglings, by renting the cruive and net fishings, by putting easily negotiated fish passes in Dupplin and Strathallan Dykes, and by lengthening the weekly close time, so as to permit many more fish to ascend the river. Although this excellent idea is not actually an accomplished fact, I believe there is but little doubt that it will soon become one, and then the Earn will be turned into a purely sporting river, which, instead of giving only two months of autumn sport, will yield fish to the angler from the opening day on the 11th of February, and under such circumstances it should become one of the most valuable and most sought after of any in Scotland.

In taking leave of the Earn, mention may be made of an old agreement, which shows once again how cheap salmon were a hundred and fifty years ago. It runs as follows, and is dated the 17th of November, 1746:—

"I have this day let my fishing on the water of Earn to William Johnman, at the Boat of Innerdunning, for payment of eight salmon, or half a crown for each twelve grilses, or nine pence for each ten pikes and twenty trouts, or three pence for each. This agreement made before Will Gloag, writer in Dunning, and George Bruce, of Innerdunning."

To this is appended the following memorandum:—

"30th May, 1748.—Lent to Will Johnman 5*s.* 6*d.*, for which he is to repay me at St. John's Day, and I am to give him an abatement of the price of the salmon, because they are so cheap in Perth."

* See chapter on "The Awe," p. 109.

CHAPTER LXIX

THE RUEL AND THE ECKAIG, AND LOCH ECK

THESE two pretty streams drain the Cowal peninsula formed by Loch Fyne on the west and Loch Long on the east. The Ruel, which drains thirty-three square miles, unlike the Eckaig, has no loch to feed it, and rising in the parish of Kilmoden, it has a run of thirteen miles before it falls into the salt water of Loch Ridden, which opens into the Kyles of Bute, opposite the northern extremity of the island. Colonel Burnley Campbell, of Ormidale, and Mr. R. Campbell, of Glendaruel, are the chief proprietors, the former owning the lower water and the latter the upper.

The river opens on the 16th of February, the nets work till the 1st of September, and the rods fish on till the 31st of October. It is a late river, and neither salmon nor sea trout run until about the middle of June, while the cream of it is from the middle of July to the end of the season. The river is well off for bridges, there being stone ones at Bealach-an-draighionn, Dunans and Clachan, with various foot-bridges on the Glendaruel and Ormidale estates. A sixteen-foot rod will cover the water, and no waders are wanted. Most of the standard flies kill, medium-sized Jock Scot, Butcher, Silver Doctor, and Brown Turkey being the favourites, and they are the principal lures, although at times minnow, worm and prawn will be more effective.

There are plenty of pools in the Ormidale water, which extends for two miles on both banks, and a further mile on the right one. Many of these pools have no names; but Lynn-na-

THE COLLUSION POOL.

THE BUSH ABOVE [illegible]

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THE COLLUSION POOL.

THE RUEL ABOVE ORMIDALE HOUSE.

Cloich (the Bell Pool), the Goose Pool, and Cuil-allinsionn are the three best. This last named has been christened the "Collusion," partly for brevity and partly for the comfort of Sassenach tongues.

The river is well off in the matter of the netting arrangements, for Colonel Campbell owns the right on the west side of Loch Ridden, and wisely rents that on the east, so he is therefore always in a position to ensure a good stock of fish to the Ruel whenever the river is in order. Showery weather suits it best, though it runs right for fully two days after a summer flood, while in September and October there is usually quite enough rain to keep it going almost daily.

Sea trout average from one pound up to four, and salmon and grilse from seven to ten pounds. Twenty-three pounds is the heaviest ever got on the Ormidale reach. In 1882, Colonel Campbell caught on

August 1st	56 sea trout	62	lbs.
" 2nd	41 " "	22½	"
" 22nd	54 " "	42½	"
September 5th	40 " "	30	"
" 25th	28 " "	20	"
	219 sea trout.	177	lbs.

In 1883—

July 12th	9 sea trout	22½	lbs.
August 10th	33 " "	41	"
" 27th	27 " "	26	"
October 19th	7 salmon	53	"
" "	3 sea trout	1½	"

In this season the Colonel fished for twenty-two days, when his total catch was—

22 salmon	188 lbs.
178 sea trout	185 "

The large sea trout run first, and commence to come in July, although in some seasons they run smaller than in others: 1882 was a small year, while in 1883 they ran a better size. Nearly the whole of the above were taken with the fly—the

seven salmon with the same Jock Scot. Sport on this river is even better now than in the above-mentioned years, for in the days of these scores Colonel Campbell had not rented the nets working on the east shores of Loch Ridden, as in 1884 he went to reside on another property, and did not return to Ormidale until 1898, when, having the opportunity, he secured the monopoly of the netting; and under these circumstances, when the Ruel is in order, it is perhaps the best river of its size in these parts.

The Eckaig drains forty-one square miles, and flowing from Loch Eck, it has but a five-mile course ere it falls, at Kilmun, into the salt water of the Holy Loch, a branch of the lengthy Loch Long. The whole of the river, with the fishing rights, belongs to Mr. H. J. Younger, of Benmore, who preserves it strictly, and though that fact is pretty well known, yet hardly a day passes without his receiving troublesome applications for leave to fish. Sea trout run in May and June, salmon and finnocks in July and August, and grilse in June and July. Salmon average ten pounds, grilse six pounds, and sea trout one and a half pounds. They do not stay very long in the river, but pass up into Loch Eck, a fine sheet of water some seven miles in length by one in breadth.

There are two hotels—those of Loch Eck and Whistlefield—on its shores, each having the right of letting out boats on the loch from Mr. Leschallas, the owner of the Glenfinnart estate on the east side of the loch, the whole of the west shore belonging to Mr. Younger. The Loch Eck Hotel is the more southern of the two, but good sport is had from each of them.

The Fishery Board Report of 1891 states that

25 salmon	254 lbs.
8 grilse	48 ,,
198 sea trout	396 ,,
5 salmo ferox	26 ,,
249 loch trout	115 ,,

were caught by the hotel boats in that year, the heaviest salmon being twenty-five pounds, the heaviest sea trout four pounds, and the heaviest loch trout five pounds.

CHAPTER LXX

THE BORDER ESK

Rises on Eskdalemuir in the high hills dividing the counties of Dumfries and Selkirk, with a course of forty miles and a drainage area of four hundred and thirty-one square miles, of which three hundred and nine are in Scotland and one hundred and twenty-two in England. It falls into the head of the Solway Firth, eight miles to the east of the Annan. A few miles above Longtown it ceases to be a Scotch river and enters English soil, from which point to the sea is a distance of six miles.

The Esk has upwards of twenty tributaries, some of which hold salmon and sea trout, the chief one being the Liddel, which joins the Esk on the left bank three miles above Longtown.

The greater part of this river and its affluents is in the hands and under the protection of the Esk and Liddel Fisheries Association, a model institution formed in 1863, having for its proprietary members the Duke of Buccleuch, Sir Richard Graham, of Netherby, Sir Frederick Johnstone, and Messrs. W. E. Malcolm, Richard Bell, G. Mounsey, and Thomas Beattie. The Association issues season, monthly, weekly, and daily tickets at a very small charge, the cost of a whole-season ticket being but four guineas, which gives the right for nearly all the river and its affluents, and though some portions of both are kept by the respective owners for their own use, they are neither extensive nor numerous. Likewise

the Association rents the nets on the lower waters, and their removal has greatly benefited the angling, which is looked after by four water bailiffs, who also see that the rules are observed, the chief ones being that no bait or minnow fishing is permitted on the Esk and Liddel till the 1st of May, or after the 15th of September; that no angling is allowed between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m., and that no gaff be used before the 1st of April. Rod fishing on the tributaries closes on the 1st of October, but is continued on the Esk and Liddel up to the 31st of that month.

I have fished the water from Longtown to the tide, and venture to suggest that it would be to the advantage of all the ticket-holders if a strict rule were made prohibiting anyone from beginning to fish a stream below an angler already casting it. This was an experience I had to put up with several times in the two days I fished this water, but as I was only there for such a short time, I did not make any representations to the Association, although it would deter me from going there again.

In 1891, the secretary of the fishery, Mr. R. McGeorge, solicitor, Langholm, reported that the heaviest salmon caught was thirty-seven pounds, and the heaviest sea trout five pounds.

The Esk and the Liddel open for the rod on the 15th of February, but as the Esk suffers equally with the Annan from the evils already mentioned—although there are at times a few spring fish taken—the angling is not of much account before the end of July. June and July are best for sea trout, and July and August for herling. Wading stockings and a sixteen-foot rod will enable anglers to cover the pools.

All the small standard flies kill; perhaps the Silver Grey is the best, but for salmon and sea trout flies, the latter differing somewhat from the usual patterns, the angler contemplating a visit to these parts cannot do better than lay in a stock from Mr. Robert Raine, the tackle-maker of Botchergate, Carlisle.

Each season there is a certain amount of disease, but there are no obstructions or pollutions to speak of, and the river is one well worthy of the angler in want of moderate sport at a small cost, but the locals are very smart performers, and the stranger will have to work hard. However, here, as elsewhere, they don't know everything, and those who have gained their experience in many rivers will hold their own.

CHAPTER LXXI

THE FORTH AND THE TEITH

The first-named is the fifth largest of the Scotch rivers, and, draining eight hundred and eighty square miles, it is formed at Aberfoyle by the junction of the Duchray, which rises from Benlomond, and the Avondhu, which flows out of the well-known trouting lochs of Chon and Ard. From this junction to the salt water at Alloa it has a remarkably twisting run of about thirty miles. For the first ten, below the confluence of the head waters down to Cardross, it is fairly streamy and quick-running, and here, late in autumn, there are always some salmon to be met with, though not a great many. The Duke of Montrose and Major Erskine, of Cardross, are the chief owners of this part.

Below Cardross the river runs deep and sluggish, and for the next ten miles or so it is only fit for pike and perch, of which there are plenty. Then the Teith falls in on the left bank, and between this point and Stirling large numbers of fish are netted during the season, and not until the nets are removed is there any angling, though after that there are at times some good takes made by the rod. Nevertheless, the Forth at this part is by no means an ideal river to fish, being both sluggish and muddy; yet the angler has the consolation of knowing that he has a good chance of a fight with a real big fellow, for every year the nets get fish weighing over fifty pounds (fifty-eight pounds is, I believe, the heaviest), and the rods catch them from thirty to forty-five pounds.

There is a good deal of pollution at and below Stirling, which may perhaps account for disease being more prevalent than it should be, for in the two spawning seasons of 1895 and 1896, upwards of two thousand fish, chiefly cocks, were removed from the river.

The shores of the Firth are very severely worked by bag and stake nets, while the Firth itself is harried by the detestable hang nets.* The whole of these sea fishings are let for about £3,700 a season, and the Fishery Board Report of 1882 puts their average yield at four thousand salmon and one thousand two hundred grilse, while the rods got a total of two hundred of both kinds, but there must be an error in these figures, and probably the take of grilse should have been put down at twelve thousand instead of one thousand two hundred! Of recent years the net renters have refused to make any return of their takes to the Fishery Board, or to anyone else; this is information which the owners of the net fishings should insist on having; while it would also be greatly to the interests of the rivers and of the upper proprietors if every tacksman was compelled to make a return of the numbers of fish caught in his nets.

Fish cannot ascend far up either of the head-water streams of the river, there being severe and impassable falls on the Duchray and in the stream from Loch Ard. On this last-named water the obstruction might be overcome at a small cost, which would let fish into Loch Ard; but it has never been attempted, because a strong preference is shown for the Duchray water, and very few run up the Loch Ard river.

The chief angling of the district is on the Teith tributary, a clear, rapid stream with plenty of fine gravelly spawning ground, which the fish like much better than the muddy, dull-running Forth.

The Teith rises from two streams, the northern one issuing from the Braes of Balquhidder and flowing through Lochs

* Recently declared illegal.

Doine, Voil, and Lubnaig, and then rushing impetuously through the pass of Leny, joins the southern one at Callander, which flows through Lochs Katrine, Achray, and Vennacher. Therefore, from the junction of the two streams the Teith, receiving the overflow of these six lochs, keeps in good angling order for a considerable time, and from Callander down to Doune, a distance of about twelve miles, there are a series of fine streams and pools, whose chief owners are Lord Ancaster, Mr. J. B. Baillie-Hamilton, of Cambusmore, Sir Robert Jardine, and Mr. Buchanan Hamilton. Below Doune the Teith begins to flow slower and slower as it wends its way to join the Forth, until in the last mile or so it becomes very deep, with hardly any stream.

Between Callander and Doune, March and April are the best months for angling, and on this reach, forty or fifty years ago, the sport used to be first-rate; but nowadays, chiefly owing to Craigforth cruive and the netting below, it is not up to much.

The owner of one of the best angling stretches of the Teith bemoans the present sad state of affairs as follows: "I fear my experiences are now of little value. The poor river has been destroyed—or fished out. Twenty-five years ago I could catch a score or more of beautiful spring salmon with my own rod and without assistance; the bag this year (to the 12th of May, 1900) is *nil!* Twenty-five years ago there were about fifteen nets between Stirling and the estuary; now there are over a hundred! Here is a nut for the Royal Commission to crack."

Another gentleman writes as follows: "I and a friend some years ago rented a stretch of water on the Teith, below Callander, but it was so bad that the agents took it off our hands. Callander itself is full of the most arrant poachers. The water we had was very nice to look at, but devil a fish in it, and we never got one."

Below Doune, August and September are the best months.

THE INTERPRETER CROSSING

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THE CRAIGFORTH CRUIVE.

Salmon can push their way right up into Loch Doil, at the head of the Teith, but they are not often caught there, although Loch Lubnaig frequently yields fish to the minnow.

Wading stockings are useful in fishing the Teith between its exit from Loch Lubnaig and Doune. Any of the small standard patterns will kill, and a rod of fourteen feet will cover the streams and pools.

Both rivers open on the 11th of February, and have the usual close times going with that date.

The angling of both the Forth and the Teith is much spoilt by the Craigforth cruive, two miles above Stirling; not that the cruive boxes themselves catch such a vast lot of salmon, but the dyke obstructs the whole river and forces the fish to congregate below it, where they are swept up by nets and cobles.

The annexed illustration, for which I am indebted to the kindness of Mr. W. L. Calderwood, the Inspector of Salmon Fisheries, and which is copied from his Fishery Board Report of 1898, will show the formidable nature of this cruive, and it is good news to hear that in Mr. Calderwood's opinion there is some doubt as to its being legally placed. In any case its existence is very harmful to the rivers above it, and it seems a pity the upper proprietors do not subscribe together and buy it up.

I cannot leave this subject without congratulating Mr. Calderwood on the happy thought of illustrating his Reports by photography. The Fishery Board Reports ought to be read by every angler, but they have hitherto been somewhat dry perusal, which illustrations such as those given with the 1898 Report would render more amusing.

A little below where the Teith falls in the Forth is joined on the same bank by another considerable stream, the Allan, up which a few fish poke their way in autumn, and down which very few ever return, for the Allan banks are pretty thickly populated. It is not worth mentioning as an angling river,

and it would be just as well for the fish if they were barred from ever entering it.

It would hardly be right to take leave of the Forth District without a short mention of the Howietown piscicultural establishment, the most important in the kingdom. Started by Sir James Gibson Maitland in 1873, year by year he improved and extended it so cleverly and so successfully that it has ultimately grown into a large commercial business. Here salmon, Loch Leven trout, the fontinalis, or American brook trout, common trout and char are hatched and reared by thousands, for there are upwards of forty hatching houses and ponds covering many acres, from which millions of eyed ova have been safely packed and sent to distant parts of the world. In 1887 the manager reported the exportation to New Zealand of 576,000 salmon ova obtained from the Forth, Tay and Tweed districts, all of which arrived in good condition. Land-locked salmon and rainbow trout were imported in 1899, and previously Loch Leven trout had been crossed with salmon and recrossed again with Loch Levens, the cross proving fertile and producing the largest fry in the fishery, and thus it appears likely that trout may be considerably increased in size by introducing salmon blood without loss of fertility. Fish are kept for sale of all sizes up to several pounds, and it may interest my readers to know that trout ova usually takes seventy-one days to hatch, while that of the salmon requires six days longer.

CHAPTER LXXII

THE LUCE

DRAINS seventy-three square miles and falls into Luce Bay after a run of about twenty. It is formed by two streams, the Main Water of Luce and the Cross Water of Luce, which unite six and a half miles from the sea. The Earl of Stair owns both these upper streams, keeps them in his own hands, and preserves them strictly. Below the junction and down to the sea the Luce belongs on both banks to Mr. J. C. Cuninghame, of Dunragit, and this is the best part of the angling, being alternately shallow and streamy, with twenty pretty pools, of which the best are Puddle Hole, Twenty-ninth Stream, the Lady's Cast, Flynn's Took, Smiddyholm, Geordie's Dub, Gabsnout Took, the Long Pool of Craig, and Craig Corner. The Long Pool takes about an hour to fish, and the others less time.

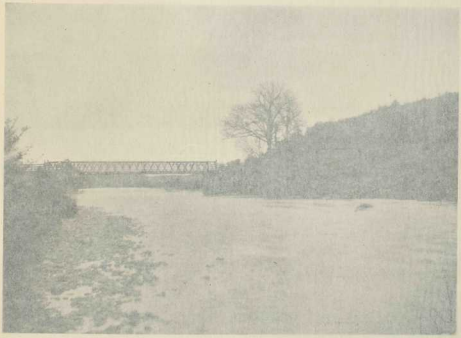
Wet weather suits the river, as, owing to the good drainage of the sheep pastures, it runs down very quickly. The standard patterns of flies are used, a sixteen-foot rod will do the work, and stockings are necessary. Eight salmon and grilse is the record score for one day on Dunragit water, where the salmon average ten pounds and the grilse six, while the heaviest fish ever caught on it weighed thirty-six pounds. In the first three miles of the river sea trout are often plentiful and heavy. Mr. Ashley Dodd, when he rented Balkail, had no less than a hundred in one night's angling, and it is to him that I am indebted for the following account of this wonderful catch, which is as follows :—

"A friend and I began fishing in the Puddle Hole on a clear, starlight evening between August 15th and 25th, over twenty years ago, at which time I rented the whole of the fishing rights from the then owner. As it became dark the sea trout began to rise well, and we had made a good bag, though nothing extraordinary, when my friend, who was going to shoot next day, retired about 11 p.m. I kept at it for another three-quarters of an hour, and then laid down till about one o'clock in the cottage of the water bailiff close to the Puddle Hole, which, by the way, was twice as big in those days as it is now. Beginning again in the same place, the fun recommenced about 1.30, and the average size of the fish that were on the rise was much larger than before. As it became light the rises fell off, and I had the bag counted and was told it was ninety-nine. By this time I despaired of another rise, but, spurred by the desire to make up the hundred, I went to a fast little run by a rock just above the pool, which was quite still water, and at once got into something heavy. This turned out to be the boss of the bag, weighing six pounds, and by the time it was landed the rays of the rising sun were beginning to show over Balkail Fell. Of the hundred, there were thirty which were over two and a half pounds, and the whole lot must have averaged one and a half pounds, but they were distributed quite early in the morning and were never weighed as a whole, and only the big ones were weighed separately."

In 1899, Mr. J. G. Walker, fishing from Balkail one night, caught over sixty sea trout of about the same heavy weights, while on the 16th of September, 1899, he also took from the Puddle Hole eight salmon and grilse, averaging seven pounds. From this pool also large takes of sea trout have been made by Lord Eglinton, Captain William Cuninghame, of Belmont, and Mr. Archibald Walker.

The Luce is a late river for salmon, clean fish rarely putting in an appearance before quite the end of July. Sea trout, however, commence to run in June. Both salmon and trout

THE PUDDLE HOLE IN FLOOD.



THE BOAT POOL, BOARLANE.

A friend and I began fishing in the Puddle Hole on a clear moonlight evening between August 15th and 25th, over twenty years ago, at which time I rented the whole of the fishing rights from the then owner. As it became dark the sea trout began to run well, and we had made a good bag, though nothing extraordinary, when my friend, who was going to shoot next day, retired about 11 p.m. I kept at it for another three-quarters of an hour, and then laid down till about one o'clock in the charge of the water bailiff close to the Puddle Hole, which, by the river was twice as big in those days as it is now. Beginning again in the same place, the fun recommenced about 2 p.m., and the average size of the fish that were on the rise was much larger than before. As it became light the rises fell off, and I had the bag counted and was told it was ninety-nine. By this time I despaired of another rise, but, spurred by the desire to make up the hundred, I went to a fast little run by a rock just above the pool, which was quite still water, and at once got into something heavy. This turned out to be the last of the bag, weighing six pounds, and by the time it was landed the rays of the rising sun were beginning to show over Balkail Fell. Of the hundred, there were thirty which were over two and a half pounds, and the whole lot must have averaged one and a half pounds, but they were distributed quite early in the morning and were never weighed as a whole, and only the big ones were weighed separately.

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THE PUDDLE HOLE IN FLOOD.

THE BOAT POOL, BOARLAND.

are large for the size of the river, which is fairly dealt with in the matter of its estuary, as on one side of the mouth there are no bag nets closer than 650 yards and none nearer than 1,300 yards on the other. There are likewise neither pollutions nor obstructions, and the Luce when in order is as pretty a little river to fish as any in Scotland. With regard to the Dunragit angling, it should be mentioned that Mr. Cuninghame keeps it in his own hands and preserves it strictly.

Considering that clean fish do not put in an appearance until the end of July, it is a puzzle to understand why the Luce should be declared open for netting and angling on the 25th of February. The nets fish to the 10th of September, and the rods continue to the 31st of October.

CHAPTER LXXIII

THE NITH

RANKS in point of size as one of the largest of the second-class salmon rivers of Scotland, but as it is one of the very worst treated, it is, perhaps, not surprising that its salmon fisheries are among the least productive. It drains four hundred and thirty-five square miles of moorland and low country, and rising in Ayrshire, not far from Dalmellington, after a course of fifty miles, in which it receives many tributaries, it enters the Solway three miles below the town of Dumfries. As it nears the sea the Cluden water joins on the right bank, which salmon ascend in numbers until their further progress is barred by the Rocks of Cluden, some four miles above the junction with the Nith.

The pool below the rocks is fished by a net fastened between two long poles, which elsewhere I have heard called a "poke" or "clap" net. There is a man to each pole, and, holding the net partially taut, they thrust it into every corner of the pool. As the fish see it, they dash out of the pool into the net, in which there is a pocket to receive them. The men can feel the fish strike the net, and raise it at once, bringing the poles as near together as they can. With this net, from this one pool, four hundred fish were taken in the season of 1881, fifty-six being the best day.

Now, some thirty years ago I have often helped to work a similar net on a more northern river. We did it, perhaps, once or twice in a remote glen, before the netting season was

ended, and only with a view of getting a fish or two for the house. But on each occasion we sent a keeper above and another below to warn us of the advent of the water bailiff, for we all *thought* we were poaching, and it was not until some years later that the open working of this sort of net on the Cluden told me our conclusions were erroneous. Well! if this style of fishing isn't poaching, it ought to be!

The Nith is one of the latest of the Scotch rivers, fish seldom coming into it before May or June. Nevertheless, it opens on the 25th of February, closing for nets on the 10th of September, and for rods on the 14th of November —oddly enough, one day earlier than the Annan close by. I am not the only one who wonders why!

A striking proof of this lateness was afforded on the 8th of December, 1883, when a considerable portion of the lower water was netted to get a supply of ova for Mr. Armistead's hatchery. The result was but one hen fish ready to spawn, and she was put back, as not one of the cocks was in the same condition, while all the other fish netted that day were clean and fresh run.

The main take of salmon is in July, while in August the bulk of the grilse are netted. The Nith always yields some heavy fish each year, generally one or two of forty pounds or over, and several between thirty and forty, with many others between twenty and thirty. In 1897 a forty-pound fish was caught by the rod, and in 1898 one of forty-three pounds was got in the nets.

The Nith also has the reputation of yielding the heaviest fish ever caught to the rod, as in 1812, on the Barjarg water, an old poacher, one Jock Wallace, hooked a fish in the Clog Pool about 8 a.m., and played it down to the Barjarg Boat Pool, where some workmen gaffed it for him at 6 p.m., when only two *hairs* of Wallace's casting line remained. The fish was at once taken to Barjarg Tower and weighed in the presence of Mr. Hunter Arundell, the proprietor, and he,

with some others who were present, signed a certificate of the weight, a copy of which is still in the family, testifying that this fish was sixty-seven pounds! Lucky Jock Wallace, with his line of twisted horsehair, and probably a home-made rod!

In addition to being injured fully as much, if even not more than is the Annan, by the whammle, paidle and other Solway nets, as described in the chapter dealing with the last-named river, the poor Nith is the receptacle of the Dumfries sewage and of the pollutions of all the numerous mills and factories both in the town itself and on the banks of the river above and on its tributaries.

A Dumfries tacksman in 1891 gave his evidence as follows to the Clerk of the Nith District Board: "When the river is low, I consider the pollutions the sole cause of deterioration. Scarcely a fish will run up, and I have seen them at the ford at the New Quay making back to the sea on Monday mornings after meeting the refuse from the mills. The dyes are plainly seen in the water: they are seen of various colours at different times—black, violet, drab—and at Castle Dykes I have seen several colours at one time. During the six weeks of drought I have seen the water black from bank to bank—so black that a piece of white paper could not be seen a foot deep; and what with the sewage and the mill effluents, the smell is so bad that I could compare the river to nothing but a stinking canal."

There are likewise upwards of twenty-five mill dams on the Nith and its tributaries, many of which being unprovided with fish passes are complete obstructions to their ascent, while such things as hecks on the mill lades are nearly unknown.

In his report of 1897, Mr. W. E. Archer indulges in some plain speaking, and writes of the Nith as follows: "It is not surprising that the salmon fisheries of the Nith are so unproductive, seeing the difficulties with which the parent salmon have to contend in ascending the river and the large extent of

DUMFRIES CAULD.

spawning grounds from which they are entirely excluded. During the open season comparatively few salmon escape capture owing to the serious obstruction caused by Dumfries Cauld and to the netting which is prosecuted below it. During the close season those salmon which succeed in ascending Dumfries Cauld are cut off by impassable obstructions from the spawning grounds in most of the tributary streams. In fact, since I visited Sands river in 1883 (Norway), I have not seen a salmon river where greater difficulties have been placed in the way of salmon reaching the natural spawning grounds in most of the tributary streams, or where, if steps were taken for the improvement of the fishings similar to those adopted on Sands river, they would be more likely to lead to the same successful results."

The Duke of Buccleuch, the largest proprietor, owns fully twenty miles of both banks. The best angling waters are on his Grace's property, and, commencing at Nith Bridge, close to Thornhill, they extend from there to the county march with Ayrshire. The cream of it is between this bridge and the town of Sanquhar, about a dozen miles of splendid streams, interspersed with ideal pools.

The six miles above Nith Bridge up to Enterkin Foot the Duke keeps in his own hands, the best pools perhaps being Red Brow, Scaur Foot, Boat Pool and Matthews Pool. The whole of the angling lying above that point he lets to the Upper Nith Angling Association at Sanquhar, who issue tickets to residents or to visitors for very small sums.

Likewise below Nith Bridge the Duke lets the angling to the Mid Nith Association, which goes down to the Closeburn march and includes the tributaries of the Scaur, Cample, and Shinnel.

Other stretches on the Nith lying below the Closeburn water, of two pools only, are Blackwood, with the Forest Head and Bridge Pools; no fish killed on these in 1899. Friar's Carse has only the Riding Stone Pool, which did not yield

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a fish last year. Portrack has one pool: two fish killed last year. Cowhill with two pools, the Boat and the Tooth, were both blank last year. Carnsalloch Water of Denholm's Wood and another pool were also both blank.

A gentleman who knows the river well writes me: "I am sorry to say the Nith is perhaps the worst river in Scotland for the impatient salmon fisher." Another excellent authority says: "It would be difficult to give an average of fish killed on any of the Nith waters—next to none would be the best description for them all. I am afraid that salmon fishing on the Nith is entirely done for. It is full of pike and grayling, which ought to be destroyed as far as possible, but the proprietors appear to take no interest in the river, few of them being anglers. For the last seven years it has been going back yearly, and 1900 was the very worst on record, and not a dozen fish killed on the whole river."

Wading trousers are wanted, and a rod of sixteen to eighteen feet. The flies are much the same as those in use on the Annan, viz., Brown and Grey Turkey and Gled. Jock Scot kills well at times, and probably most of the standard patterns would do so if they were given a trial, and if there were fish to lay hold of them. The Grey Wing is the favourite in clear autumn water with the leaves coming down.

For all the flies used on the Nith, Dee, Annan, and Esk, I can from long experience strongly recommend John Jackson, of Queensberry Square, Dumfries, who ties right well.

CHAPTER LXXIV

THE TAY, LOCH TAY, THE DOCHART, LOCHAY, LYON, GARRY, AND TUMMEL

THE Tay, the largest of the Scotch rivers, with a catchment basin of two thousand five hundred and ten square miles, only takes its name from where it flows out of Loch Tay, though its sources are fully forty miles distant from Kenmore, at the foot of that loch. It rises from springs and small streams welling from the slopes of Ben Lui, on the borders of Argyll and Perthshire. These unite a few miles above Crianlarich to form the Fillan, which flows into Loch Dochart, and issuing from thence as the River Dochart, it has a course of twelve miles and a catchment basin of one hundred and thirty square miles before it finds its way into Loch Tay, at Killin. On leaving Loch Dochart, the river becomes a fairly big stream, flowing through a beautiful highland strath—

> "Surrounded wi' bent an' wi' heather,
> Where muircocks and pliver are rife,"

while on the right bank high above the river runs the Oban Railway.

With the exception of a mile below Loch Dochart, on the north bank, which belongs to Mr. E. G. Place, of Loch Dochart, the whole river is owned by Lord Breadalbane. His angling on the north bank for the first five miles below Mr. Place's march goes with the Suie shootings, while that of the south side is let to Luib Hotel, and is free to visitors there, who get the run of the fifteen good pools contained in

this stretch. The last five miles of both sides of the Dochart go with the Auchlyne shootings.

Salmon commence to quit Loch Tay to push their way up the Dochart about the end of April, but from June to September is the chief angling time, though naturally the fish caught in the last-named month are then turning colour.

Sport is uncertain, for this is a spate river, rising and falling with rapidity; but in wet seasons it usually gives sport any time after June. It must not, however, be lost sight of that just at this period of the year there will often be a whole month of dry weather. As a set-off, the angler on the Dochart will find plenty of trout, which are carefully preserved, all undersized ones having to be returned to the river. Salmon pass up into Loch Dochart, and even into the Fillan beyond, though of late years there have not been so many seen in the loch as formerly.

Wading stockings are useful, a sixteen-foot rod will cover the water, while the fly is the only lure permitted, the standard patterns being used, from No. 1 to the smallest size. A little above Killin the river passes over a series of small falls, none of which are high enough to prevent fish from running up.

The Lochay has a course of fifteen miles and is a considerable stream, draining fifty-four square miles of hill country ere it flows into the head of Loch Tay, a little to the north of the Dochart. Two miles above the mouth there is a fall of some seventy feet, which absolutely bars the ascent of fish; and though the waters above are a perfect type of a small salmon river, with good spawning grounds, it is very doubtful whether the outlay necessary for making these falls passable would ever repay itself. It has been estimated that it could be done for £1,000, but I think the attempt would eventually involve the expenditure of a much larger sum.

The angling between the falls and the loch goes with the Morenish shootings, but there is no real salmon fishing on it, for they have never been known to take a fly. In the late

spring and summer a few red fish come up as far as the falls, when now and again one or two fall victims to the worm.

Loch Tay, which belongs to Lord Breadalbane, is about sixteen miles in length by one in breadth, and is the only large loch in Scotland in which salmon are killed in numbers by the rod. From old records kept at Taymouth Castle, it would appear that up till the year 1630 the Castle larder was supplied by the net. The first mention of rod fishing on Loch Tay is in 1632, when Duncan Campbell, in Creitgarrow, is cautioned that he "shall not burne a blaze, or shoot a wasp (leister), or put a wande on the water of Tay." The fly is useless, all fish being taken by minnow trolling, of which every sort and size are used.

The loch opens on the 15th of January, and is fished by twenty-one boats, distributed as follows: From Killin eastwards the first mile of the loch is reserved by Lord Breadalbane, and is fished by one boat; the Killin Hotel has six others, the Bridge of Lochay Hotel has three, the whole nine having the run of about seven miles of the west end of the loch. The Kenmore Hotel at the east end has six boats, the Ardeonaig Inn on the south side, and that of Ben Lawers on the north, each have two boats, the whole ten fishing from where the Killin march ends to within a mile of Kenmore, which is also about seven miles; and then again Lord Breadalbane reserves the mile nearest to the outflow and to Taymouth Castle. Sometimes these reserved portions are let, and at others the Marquis keeps them in his own hands, while in good years each of these beats has shown some wonderful sport for those who like this sort of angling. I remember arriving one February day in 1873 at Killin and meeting a friend coming off the reserve water there with a bag of eleven splendid fish, the smallest nineteen pounds and the largest forty-one pounds. But I believe there have been even better days than that; while the best week on record was made by Colonel Murray, of Polmaise, on the reserved

water at Kenmore, with thirty-one fish weighing six hundred pounds.

The following are the charges for the fishing: from the 15th of January to the 15th of April, for those residing in the hotels, 25*s.* a day, or £5 for the week, if taken by the week; after the 15th of April, 20*s.* a day, or £3 a week.

Gentlemen residing in the county of Perth, but not staying in the hotels, pay 5*s.* a day in excess of these charges.

When the applications for boats exceed the number that are available, two gentlemen may occupy one boat and use one rod each at a charge of 15*s.* each per day.

Anglers keep all clean fish, which are usually gaffed, although every boat is provided with a landing net for taking out kelts. A charge of 3*s.* 8*d.* per day is made for each boatman. Anglers are not obliged to provide luncheon for them, but nevertheless they all do so, and are only cautioned against making the "allooance" of whiskey too large. Each angler may use two rods, but he must fish for himself, keepers or servants not being allowed to do so. Thus a week's trolling in Loch Tay, with the hotel bill, will come to about £15.*

I once tried a week of it, having been frozen off the Dee in the middle of one February. Had it not been for the solicitations of a young friend whom I had taken up to Deeside to kill his first fish, I should have gone south to wait for better angling weather. However, he was bent on killing a fish somehow, and begged me to go to Loch Tay. In my six days I got only two fish, while he, a novice, who had never landed one, got nineteen, of which the heaviest was thirty-three pounds! Of course, a real good day of eight or ten fish would be exciting enough for anybody; but to sit cramped up in a boat in bitter cold weather day after day for nothing did not appeal to my ideas of sport.

Certainly the first rush of a Loch Tay fish is something

* In January, 1902, some of the hotels ceased to make any charge for angling on condition that the angler paid a sovereign for each fish he caught.

very grand, and unlike anything that takes place when one is hooked from the bank. There are already some fifty yards of line out, when away goes, perhaps, another fifty with one uncheckable rush—a result brought about by a double action, the fish running away from the boat and the boat running away from the fish, for in nine instances out of ten the minnow is seized when the boat is being pulled down wind, the minnow spinning more steadily than when the boat is being rowed against a stiff breeze. As soon, however, as the boat can be reversed and brought to follow the fish, there should be no doubt as to the result, for a phantom has so many hooks, while triangles take such a tight grip, that if things go wrong after once getting on terms with the captive, it may almost always be put down to bad management.

Here are the takes made on the whole loch since 1870, and it will be seen to what extraordinary fluctuations it is subject :—

Year.	Number of Salmon.	Average Weight.
1870	460	19 lbs. 13 ozs.
1871	114	19 ,, 14 ,,
1872	293	20 ,, 6 ,,
1873	779	22 ,, 13 ,,
1874	253	20 ,, 15 ,,
1875	913	21 ,, 14 ,,
1876	476	20 ,, 10 ,,
1877	869	20 ,, 2 ,,
1878	851	21 ,, 10 ,,
1879	356	22 ,, 12 ,,
1880	331	21 ,, 3 ,,
1881	347	20 ,, 15 ,,
1882	139	19 ,, 4 ,,
1883	461	19 ,, 11 ,,
1884	240	19 ,, 10 ,,
1885	398	20 ,, 8 ,,
1886	379	20 ,, 3 ,,
1887	227	19 ,, 5 ,,
1888	378	18 ,, 5 ,,
1889 } 1890 }	Not procurable, but not extraordinary.	

After 1890 the loch was opened on the 15th of January

instead of on the 11th of February, when eighty-one salmon were caught in the extended time, the total for 1891 being three hundred and twenty-five fish, with an average of eighteen pounds. From this date I am not able to give the total takes, but the proprietor of the Killin Hotel has kindly furnished me with those made from there, and if these numbers were doubled, it would not be far out of the actual total of the whole loch.

TAKES FROM KILLIN HOTEL.

YEAR.	NUMBER OF SALMON.	AVERAGE WEIGHT.
1892	140	18 lbs. 4 ozs.
1893	221	20 „ 0 „
1894	132	19 „ 3 „
1895	124	19 „ 0 „
1896	116	18 „ 9 „
1897	192	19 „ 0 „
1898	118	19 „ 0 „
1899	136	20 „ 0 „

From the takes of these twenty-eight years it will be seen there have only been four very big seasons, viz., those of 1873, 1875, 1877, and 1878, the total of the four showing three thousand four hundred and twelve fish, which would give an average of forty-three fish per season to each of the twenty boats fishing the loch.

The other twenty-four years give a return of seven thousand five hundred and thirty-five fish, or an average of three hundred and fourteen per season, which gives each of the twenty boats about sixteen fish apiece. The four bumper years were also very good ones on the river Tay, while, oddly enough, 1880, a record season on the river, was but an average one on the loch. During the many happy days I have spent on Tayside I have lost no opportunity of trying to get some explanation of the reason of the four big years and then their total cessation, but up to the present no one has been able to account for the phenomena, or why they do not repeat themselves. Many of the most experienced residents on Tayside

attribute the falling off to several causes: (1) The introduction of the hang nets, which took more fish from the estuary than had ever before been captured by the ordinary method of netting.* (2) The appearance in 1882 of disease in Loch Tay, by which large numbers of fish were killed. (3) A succession of mild winters continuing into February caused an absence of snow on the Lyon hills, making the river water warmer than the loch, thus diverting the run of fish from the loch to the Lyon, for there is no doubt this river holds more fish when its waters are of a higher temperature than those of the loch; nevertheless, the Lyon never yields any extraordinarily good takes to the rods in the spring, as surely it would do if the bulk of the Loch Tay fish ran up it. (4) That of late years the loch has not been so hard fished as it was prior to 1880.

Although these four reasons may help to explain the falling off on Loch Tay, it can hardly be asserted they entirely account for it. The season of 1900 was the worst on record, only eighty-nine fish having been caught in the whole loch, with a mean weight of eighteen and three-quarter pounds, the two heaviest, of thirty-nine pounds and thirty-five pounds, falling respectively to Mr. Paterson, fishing from Bridge of Lochay Hotel, and Mr. Holder, from Kenmore. This very poor total is attributed to the severe cold and low water of the early season, which stopped fish from running up, keeping them in the lower reaches about Stanley, where more were captured than for the last five-and-twenty springs.

Thus the angling of Loch Tay is the cause of a large sum of money being spent along its shores in the winter months. From the 15th of January to the 15th of April there is seldom a boat unoccupied, and taking these twelve weeks at £15 a boat per week, including the hotel bill and luncheons, etc., and assuming there are just twenty boats, the total comes to

* These hang nets have now been declared illegal by decision of the House of Lords, June, 1900.

£3,600, not to mention the money spent on travelling, and on rods, tackle, etc.

The Tay

For the first mile and a half after leaving the loch the Tay flows in a fine broad stream through the grounds of Taymouth, or Balloch Castle, as it is still called by the natives. History relates that when the Campbells wished to build a residence at the east end of Loch Tay, Acharn was the first place selected, and they began to work at a hill for a foundation. An old woman who had a few goats dwelt at the place, and she knew that when the castle should be built she would not be allowed to remain or to keep her goats there any longer. So she went to the Campbell of that day and said, "Cold is the place where you are building the castle; it will be exposed to every wind and storm." And he asked her, "Where would you build it?" "Where I should hear the thrush," she replied.

In those days people believed in superstitions, and they tried to ascertain where the thrush should be first heard. There was a field where McGregor was wont to keep his calves. It was enclosed with blackthorn and hawthorn, and there was a pass called the Pass of the Calves, through which they were put in and brought out. That was the first place in which they heard the thrush. The castle was built there, and it was called Caisteal Bhealaich (Pass Castle) by the common people, and Taymouth by the gentry.*

As the river quits the loch, it flows for a mile and a half through the Taymouth Castle grounds, with its avenues of stately limes planted with so much care by Sir Duncan Campbell of the Cowl, a bitter foe to the clan McGregor. Lord Archibald Campbell, in his interesting book already mentioned in connection with the Aray, gives the following translation of the old Gaelic "Song of Breadalbane," two of the verses running as follows:—

* From *The Records of Argyll*, by Lord Archibald Campbell.

'Loch Tay of the salmon
That come from the sea of rough waves,
Which is belly-spotted, small speckled,
And supplied with rough, strong fins;
Leaping to every false fly,
Seizing flies on the tops of the waves;
They are numerous in every pool,
Spawning in the water bottom of the land.

"Where was there seen in Scotland
A place that excelled Breadalbane of my love?
Whiskey and all would be found there,
Beer and brandy to drink.
What else would you desire,
Unless a bottle of wine or of rum?
Generously would that be obtained,
With bread and cheese supplied on the table."

The other verses of this song do not concern fish or fishermen, so I omit them; but, whoever the poet may have been, every verse makes it clear he knew what he was writing about, and fully appreciated both the good things appertaining to the domains of his chieftain and the generous hospitality dispensed at the castle.

Over and over again have I been present when a discussion has arisen amongst a company of Sassenach sportsmen as to which of the big Scotch properties they would take if they had their choice. Well, some would have liked to dispossess the Duke of Fife, others His Grace of Sutherland, or oust Lord Lovat from Beaufort Castle, or the Duke of Roxburghe from Floors; but for one who would have chosen any of these there have ever been three who would have taken the lands of the Marquis of Breadalbane.

But this is a digression, so let me return to the river, which, as it leaves the castle grounds, is joined by the Lyon, flowing from the loch of the same name on the borders of Argyll, some forty miles to the west of the confluence. To the Meggernie Castle estate belongs the first twelve miles, from Loch Lyon to Meggernie or Balgie Bridge, in which

distance there are many fine pools and streams, all holding fish after the end of May, and from most of them have I had captives in the happy days spent at Meggernie with the late Mr. Herbert Wood, prior to his purchasing the island of Raasay.

Three miles above the bridge and one above the castle are the Falls of Gallan, and from below them, down to the Bridge Pool, is the best of the Meggernie water, which in August and September will often yield a good many fish; hundreds could be netted, but the owner of Meggernie generously does not exercise his right. These Gallan Falls are a series of pots, one on the top of the other, and the fish have to work hard to ascend them. When they arrive at the foot of the falls, just as the water begins to subside after a spate, their difficulties are increased, and most of them pack up into these pots, there to wait for a fresh rainfall.

I remember once, when at Meggernie during an August drought, some of us were commandeered by our hostess to get a fish for the house; so after every device with the rod had been tried in vain, determined not to return empty-handed, we sent the keeper for his "clap net,"* and out of the very first pot we searched with it we got four fish. As this was more than we wanted, someone suggested we should confine the other three in a small stream flowing from the top of the falls and joining the river below. Wire netting was sent for, and we made a fine dam at the top and bottom of the narrow channel, and, after fixing the wire barrier effectually across it, we turned the other three in. As it seemed absolutely secure, we thought we might as well increase the stock, and so make a preserve of salmon to be always ready for the table. Then once more to work we went with the net, and in a short time over two dozen fish were safely imprisoned.

All went well for a week, during which the chef dished up salmon in all sorts of ways, when down came a great spate, and

* See chapter on "The Dee of Kirkcudbrightshire," p. 318.

MAGUIRE BRIDGE POND, THE SUMMER VIEW OF THE [illegible] CANAL.

MAGUIRE BRIDGE, AS SEEN ON ONE OF THE [illegible] WATERS.

Besides these are many fine pools and streams, all holding fish after the end of May, and from most of them I had sport in the happy days spent at Meggernie with the late Mr. Herbert Wood, prior to his purchasing the island of Rannoch.

Three miles above the bridge and one above the castle are the Falls of Gallan, and four below them, down to the Bridge Pool, is the best of the Meggernie water, which in August and September and often yield a good many fish; hundreds could be netted, but the owner of Meggernie generously does not exercise his right. These Gallan Falls are a series of pots, one on the top of the other, and the fish have to work hard to accomplish them. When they arrive at the foot of the falls, just as the water begins to subside after a spate, their difficulties are increased, and most of them pack up into these pots, there to wait for a fresh rainfall.

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All went well for a week, during which the chef dished up salmon in all sorts of ways, when down came a great spate, and

* See chapter on "The Dee of Kirkcudbrightshire," p. 316.

BALGIE BRIDGE POOL, THE LOWEST ONE ON THE MEGGERNIE WATER.

BALGIE BRIDGE, AT THE TOP OF THE INNERWICK WATER.

THE LYON AT INNERWICK LODGE.

the next day our preserve was [illegible]. The hose said it upset us right, so we had to [illegible] with sympathy from our hostess that she herself was [illegible] taking that view of the disaster.

Below Balgie Bridge begins the Innerwick angling, which, with the shootings has been rented for forty years by Mr. J. F. Underwood, and it is to his [illegible] I am indebted for the excellent photographs of this river. The Innerwick water, passing Roro Bridge, goes down for five miles, but the last mile and a half is only good for [illegible]. Before, however, this is reached there are [illegible] pools, viz., Balgie, Island, Minister's [illegible], Meadow Run, the Tree, [illegible], the Barn, all of which [illegible]. The Barn is the best of the lot, but in high water [illegible] are wanted, and it has to be [illegible] run pretty quickly through it [illegible] consequently the take is never [illegible] in the season is about the [illegible].

Next comes the Tomdhu water, [illegible] mostly on both banks. Beyond [illegible] Donald Currie's Garth Castle [illegible] eight good pools, of which the [illegible] Kelly and John Roy's, and took the Gun [illegible] to the end of April, during which [illegible] fish, averaging [illegible] Favourite flies being [illegible] and Lightning and Dusty Miller, [illegible] the Phantom (No. 8 size), the natural minnow and the [illegible] higher up and later in the year [illegible] of no use.

Below the Garth Castle water [illegible] permits the hotel at Fortingall to fish the remaining half and a half miles of his part of the Lyon, the charge for which is ten shillings a day for each rod, and up to the end of April this reach often shows good sport.

THE LYON AT INNERWICK LODGE.

the next day our preserve was empty! Our host said it served us right, so we had to console ourselves with assurances from our hostess that she herself was far from taking that view of the disaster.

Below Balgie Bridge begins the Innerwick angling, which with the shootings has been rented for many years by Mr. J. F. Underwood, and it is to his son that I am indebted for the excellent photographs of this river. The Innerwick water, passing Roro Bridge, goes down for five miles, but the last mile and a half is only good for trouting. Before, however, this is reached there are eleven nice pools, viz., Balgie, Island, Minister's, Upper, Middle and Lower Wall, Meadow Run, the Tree, Island Run, Roro Bridge and the Barn, all of which except the last can be fished dry-shod. The Barn is the best of the lot, but in high water wading stockings are wanted, and it has to be cast from the south side. Salmon run pretty quickly through this and the waters below, so consequently the take is never a heavy one, and from ten to fifteen in the season is about the usual thing.

Next comes the Chesthill reach of some six miles, mostly on both banks, followed on the north or left bank by Sir Donald Currie's Garth Castle water, two miles in length, with eight good pools, of which the pick are the Castle, the Rocky and John Roy's, and here the best time is from the opening day to the end of April, during which period from ten to fifteen fish, averaging eighteen pounds, are usually got, the favourite flies being Jock Scot, Blue Doctor, Thunder and Lightning and Dusty Miller, medium sizes; while the Phantom (No. 6 size), the natural minnow and the prawn all kill, though higher up and later in the year lures other than the fly are of no use.

Below the Garth Castle water Sir Donald Currie permits the hotel at Fortingall to fish the remaining four and a half miles of his part of the Lyon, the charge for which is ten shillings a day for each rod, and up to the end of April this reach often shows good sport.

From the top of the Garth march the angling of the right bank belongs to Lord Breadalbane, and goes with the Duneaves shootings.

On all these fishings wading stockings are desirable, though not absolutely necessary. On the lower reaches a rod of eighteen feet will be none too long, but for Innerwick and Meggernie a sixteen-foot one will be ample, while for these reaches two flies only will suffice, viz., Jock Scot for dark and big water, and the Meggernie for a clear low river; this latter lure was an invention of a keeper there and is dressed as follows:—

Tag: Silver twist.

Tail: Topping.

But: Black ostrich herl.

Body: Silver tinsel ribbed with flat silver twist.

Hackle: Black, put on at shoulder only, with fibres long enough to reach to the but.

Wing: Fibres of mallard, bustard, wood duck, and yellow, blue and red swan, jungle-cock cheeks.

About a mile and a half before the junction with the Tay, Garth water ends on the north bank, and Sir Robert Menzies comes in at Keltney Burn and continues down the Lyon until it joins the Tay opposite Taymouth Castle deer park, with a good pool at the Junction, and from thence to the east march the Menzies property runs for about a further five miles.

Below the Junction comes the Pipers, opposite to Tirnie Island, better for holding fish as the season advances. The next is the Carrie, a long pool of nearly a quarter of a mile, good at all times and seasons, while both banks are here owned by Sir Robert.

This is followed by Neil's Pool, better formerly than it is now, where the opposite bank is again Breadalbane property.

Then comes Bolfracks, best fished from a boat, but a good cast, especially at the beginning of the season.

Following come Balhomais and Farleyer, the former a short

SIR ROBERT MENZIES, BART., OF CASTLE MENZIES.

From the top of the Garth march the angling of the right bank belongs to Lord Breadalbane, and goes with the Dunevaven shootings.

On all these fishings wading stockings are desirable, though not absolutely necessary. On the lower reaches a rod of eighteen feet will be none too long, but for Innerwick and Meggernie a nineteen-foot one will be ample, while for these reaches two flies only will suffice, viz., Jock Scot for dark and big water, and the Meggernie for a clear low river; this latter fly was an invention of a keeper there and is dressed as follows:—

Tag. Silver twist.

Tail. Topping.

Tip. Black ostrich herl.

Body. Silver tinsel ribbed with flat silver twist.

Hackle. Black, put on at shoulder only, with fibres long enough to reach to the but.

Wing. Fibres of mallard, bustard, wood duck, and yellow, blue and red swan, jungle-cock cheeks.

About a mile and a half before the junction with the Tay, Garth water ends on the north bank, and Sir Robert Menzies comes in at Kelmcy Burn and continues down the Lyon until it joins the Tay opposite Taymouth Castle deer park, with a good pool at the Junction, and from thence to the east march the Menzies property runs for about a further five miles.

Below the Junction comes the Pipers, opposite to Tirnie Island, better for holding fish as the season advances. The next is the Cottie, a long pool of nearly a quarter of a mile, good at all times and seasons, while both banks are here owned by Sir Robert.

This is followed by Neil's Pool, better formerly than it is now, where the opposite bank is again Breadalbane property.

Then comes Bullracks, best fished from a boat, but a good cast, especially at the beginning of the season.

Following come Balhomais and Farleyer, the former a short

SIR ROBERT MENZIES, BART., OF CASTLE MENZIES.

cast, the latter a good long one, and here again both banks become Sir Robert's.

Then follows Dunskiag, a big pool, which must be harled, and is succeeded by the Island, Tay Bridge and Weem Park, the last on the Menzies estate.

Prior to 1860 all this fine water used to be good fishing, while between the pools there are capital spawning grounds. In those days the average take of salmon for the Castle use, helped by an occasional dip of the net, was about one hundred and fifty, and once the Carrie gave an angler eight salmon before breakfast.

Since 1862 the fishing has fallen off, for in that year an alteration was made in the weekly close time, which enabled the netting stations between Perth Bridge and Stanley to catch nearly all the fish.

Most of these pools can be cast from the banks, and hereabouts the best flies are Blue Doctor, Jock Scot, and Butcher, but when the river is large, natural and artificial minnows both kill, though the prawn is of but little use.

When Castle Menzies is let, this stretch of water always goes with it. It ends just above Aberfeldy, while Lord Breadalbane continues on the opposite bank for about a mile further.

Angling has fallen off very much, and now but from ten to fifteen fish are got in the season, averaging eighteen pounds. It is, however, hoped that if the netting above Perth ceases, as there is a prospect of its doing, then the whole Tay will be as full of fish as the Aberdeenshire Dee.

In that event it would certainly rank, as it ought to, as the premier river of Scotland, for whereas the spring fish of the Dee do not average more than ten pounds, those of the Tay would be eighteen pounds; and if these big fellows were to be caught in the same numbers as the smaller ones of the Dee, then the Tay angling would become of extraordinary value.

As that good sportsman, Sir Robert Menzies—so famed for his feats of endurance, and on whom advancing years appear to have little or no effect—is a warm advocate of the scheme, and as he has been a member of the Tay Board ever since its formation, the matter has every chance of going through, especially as he is strongly backed by the proprietors above Campsie Linn.

As the Breadalbane property ends, the Grandtully estate of Lady Douglas Stewart begins, and goes down for some six miles on this south side of the river. Opposite to it are the properties of Killiechassie, belonging to Mrs. Douglas; Cluny, belonging, with the next angling of Edradynate, to Mr. Stewart Robertson; Derculich, with its pretty house and many bathrooms; Clochfoldich, Findynate, Pitcastle, Inner Ballechin, Pitnacree, and Ballechin—all these ten properties are opposite Grandtully and share the same pools, each side, as is the custom all down the Tay, taking three days a week.

As Grandtully ends on the south side, the Duke of Atholl comes in; next is his Easthaugh property, followed by his two others of Kinnaird and Logierait.

Crossing to the north side and returning up stream, as Ballechin ends there comes the Eastertyre reach, and then the Duke of Atholl follows on, and the glebe claiming a small slice, the Duke's lands continue to the junction of the Tummel; and now, quitting the Tay for a short time, a few pages will be devoted to this river and its tributary, the Garry.

"Fast runs the sunlit Tummel,
  Strong from his wilds above,
Blue as the 'body of heaven,'
  Shot like the neck of a dove.
He is fresh from the moor of Rannoch,
  He has drained Loch Ericht dread,
And mirror'd on Carie's water
  Ben-y-Houlach's stately head;
He has mourned round the graves of the Struans,
  Hid in the night of the wood,

THE FALLS OF TUMMEL.

As this good sportsman, Sir Robert Menzies—so famed for his team of enthusiasts, and on whose advancing years appear as here, little or no effect—is a warm advocate of the scheme, and as he has been a member of the Tay Board ever since its formation, the matter has every chance of going through, especially as he is strongly backed by the proprietors above Campsie Linn.

As the Kinnaird property ends, the Grandtully estate of Lady Charles Thomas Hepburn begins, and goes down for some six miles on the south side of the river. Opposite to it are the properties of Kilmahoma, belonging to Mrs. Douglas; Chany, belonging to the Earl Kingston of Edradynate, to Mr. Thomas Stewart; Cluniemore, with its pretty house and [illegible] Grichlochlich, Finnlaystone, Pitcastle, Inner Farnan, Dunmore and Ballechin—all these ten properties are separate Grandtully and share the same pools, each side, or on the Tummel all down the Tay, taking three days a week.

As Grandtully ends on the south side, the Duke of Atholl enters on, first in his Faskally property, followed by his two estates of Kinnaird and Logierait.

Crossing to the north side and returning up stream, as [illegible] comes the Lassintyre reach, and then the Duke of Atholl returns on, and the glebe claiming a small [illegible] the fishers beats continue to the junction of the Tummel; and now entering the Tay for a short time, a few pages will be devoted to this river and its tributary, the Garry.

> "Fair was the maid Vipond,
> Young Jean his white shoon,
> Rose on the banks of Lassie,
> And the dew of a June.
> He, it died from the moor of Rannoch,
> He saw drained Loch Ericht dread,
> And mourned the Garry water
> Deep-Hunterich sorely bead;
> He has mourned round the graves of the Stuarts,
> Hid in the rape of the wood,

THE FALLS OF TUMMEL.

He glides by the pleasant slope
  Where our old Dunalastair stood.
Schehallion has heard him chafing
  Down by his sunless steep,
And has watched the child of the mountains
  Deep in his loch asleep.
He's awake! and off by Bonskeid,
  He has leapt his falls with glee;
He has married the swirling Garry,
  And they linger in Faskally."

Thus sang the late Mr. John Brown, the charming author of *Rab and His Friends.*

The TUMMEL first takes its name when it flows from Loch Rannoch, which is a big loch of ten miles long, receiving the waters of a great extent of country lying around and to the west of the head of the loch. After a winding run of some ten miles it enters Loch Tummel, also a good-sized piece of water four miles in length, and flowing from it the river runs past a portion of the Faskally property on the right bank with the lands of Allean and Bonskeid on the left, to where the Garry joins in some two hundred yards below the Falls of Tummel. In certain states of water a few fish—very few—ascend these falls, for they are seen above them every season, though rarely caught in a legitimate way, and as those that are poached are naturally not reported, the idea prevails that no fish make their way up. Few people angle for salmon above the falls, and, moreover, the fish that ascend them do not pass up till well on in the season. Still, some are caught each autumn by the rod, and in many cases are called "ferox" by the locals, who fear the interference of the proprietors of the salmon fishing rights if they were classed salmon.

The question of laddering these falls has often been mooted, and apart from legal or other objections by the owners, whose consent would have to be obtained, there are several matters to be taken into consideration. At present, fish seldom attempt the ascent till the end of April, and then only when the river is so small that it is not in running order, and the fish that try

the falls are those collected in the nearest pools. When the river is in running order, the rush of water at the foot of the falls is so strong that salmon wait further back, or take the Garry instead. Thus a ladder that would allow fish to ascend in all states of the water would be an expensive matter, but nevertheless an undertaking well worth carrying out, for if fish were above the falls in April, they would be pretty sure to give good angling, while the vast extent of breeding grounds that would be opened up could not fail in due course to largely increase the stock of fish.

In old days baskets were hung on each side of the falls to catch the fish as they fell back after making their leap to ascend. The Faskally basket was not nearly so successful as the Bonskeid one, which accounted for many fish, until removed in accordance with the 1868 Act, which rendered them illegal, and a good thing too!

Now and then a salmon jumps on to the top of the rock from which the Bonskeid basket formerly hung, just eight feet seven inches above the water when it is in its best state for making the attempt.

The basket trick showed that May and June were the most productive months, while fish were seldom got before the end of April or after July.

In this Fall Pool also, up till 1868, snatching was openly practised and looked upon as orthodox, and that good sportsman, the late Mr. Archibald Butter, of Faskally, would never own or acknowledge that the law had any right to interfere with a custom of such ancient date.

It has been alleged that if fish were given a free passage up the falls it would reduce the angling values of the waters below, but this is unlikely, as it is more to the interest of the rods to have the catches occupied by newly-run fish than by those which have been long in the river.

Of course, if what fish there were passed up and no others came forward to take their places, then undoubtedly the

angling values would suffer, but this is in the highest degree improbable.

Below the falls, on the left bank, Bonskeid holds the rights down to the Garry junction, a distance of some two hundred yards, which, short as it is, often yields a good many fish.

Faskally owns the side opposite, as well as both banks of the Tummel for several miles, and this portion as far as Cluny Bridge, half a mile above Pitlochry, is usually let as "The Faskally Water"—as fine a bit of angling as is to be found in Scotland, for the scenery is splendid, the casting, except from the Boat Pool, is all from the banks, and sufficiently difficult to make the angler pleased with himself when he has fished a pool well, while there is absolutely no wading required. More fish is the one thing wanted, and if they were forthcoming, it would be a very big rent that this beautiful piece of water would command. The extent is ample for two hard-working anglers, and three or four fish to each is now regarded as a very good day. In 1895 seven fish, weighing one hundred and thirteen pounds, were taken in a day, and in 1897 the same number was twice recorded. The best season for many years was that of 1891, when just over one hundred fish were brought to bank. The next best was 1898, when more than seventy shared a like fate. Although there are a good many of twenty pounds, the average weight may be put at fourteen. There are also a few of twenty-five pounds, and very rarely one of thirty pounds—two of thirty-three pounds, one from Faskally and the other from Bonskeid, representing the heaviest recorded weights. Grilse are not plentiful and scale about five pounds, arriving towards the middle of June.

The higher casts on Faskally, all of which are also fished from Bonskeid, are the Pot, Long Cast, and Greenbank.

Then comes Junction Pool, liable to continual alterations by the Garry floods.

Next is the Boat Pool, followed on the right bank by The Cave, Pol-na-bhearon, and Craig-an-dhalor, a good one for big fish, for from it came one of the thirty-three-pounders already mentioned, which was got by Captain Gaskell while taking a cast or two to try the rod of a friend!

The next two, Bonnybeg and Flottich, fish best from the left bank, reached by crossing Cluny Bridge just below them.

From this bridge, Fishers' Hotel, at Pitlochry, holds the remainder of the Faskally water, but on part of it the properties of Fonab and Dunfallandy, on the right bank, have also fishing titles. Here there are both bank and boat casts, and sport is generally pretty good, the natural minnow often doing better than the fly. There is about five miles of this water, divided into three rotating beats, the charge being 30*s.* a day, which includes a boat with the services of two men.

The remainder of the Tummel to its junction with the Tay belongs to the Duke of Atholl, who lets both banks with Easthaugh House, and its extent will keep several rods occupied, for the pools are large and deep, while the early-run fish stay here before the water is warm enough to tempt them into the rapid streams above. This part of the river is, however, owing to its gravelly banks, liable to great alterations in its channel year by year.

There are six good casts above Ballinling Bridge. Below this is the Junction and some pools on the Tay above it, which go with Easthaugh, and are always well worthy of the closest attention.

The Garry

is a rapid, rocky-bedded stream flowing out of Loch Garry near Dalnaspidal. It is joined at Struan by the Erochdie, and at Blair Atholl is further increased by the waters of the Tilt. A few miles below this it enters the Pass of Killiecrankie, to finally fall into the Tummel near Faskally House.

The Garry cannot be called a good salmon angling river,

as before the fish reach it they have to pass through the Tay and the Tummel, losing their freshness on the way, besides gaining knowledge of the dangerous nature of the many lures that have already been offered them. Then, when at last they reach the entrance of the Garry, they may find there is not enough water to take them over the broad and sloping gravel bank of the junction, or, perhaps, the temperature of the river may be unpleasantly low as compared with that of the Tummel. The thermometer sometimes shows a difference of five degrees between the two streams, and while the daily temperature of the Tummel hardly varies, being regulated by the outflow from a chain of lochs, that of the Garry rises four or five degrees, especially in low water with the sun beating down on its gravel shallows. Such variations induce fish to change their quarters at different hours of the day, while making them disinclined to rise.

Salmon are got in the lower pools in March and April, and even in February. These early arrivals, weighing from fifteen to twenty pounds, appear to be really Tummel fish which have chosen the Garry instead of trying the falls in the former river. Such visitors lie in the still deep pools of the Pass, and towards the end of April are joined by the real run of Garry fish, averaging about eleven pounds, which is followed by a general move for the upper reaches. Grilse, although not numerous, are more in evidence than in the Tummel, through which they seem to run quickly, and, arriving about the middle of June, they average from three and a half to four pounds. The fish can make their way up to Loch Garry as well as for some distance up the Tilt, but by the time they have done so they are hardly worth taking. A rod of sixteen feet will cover the water, while above the Pass wading stockings are useful.

North of Blair Atholl the angling is let to the shooting tenants of the Duke, who keeps in his own hands some of the water below Tilt Junction.

The remaining portions belong to Urrard and Faskally on the left bank, and Shierglass, Killieckranie Cottage, and Bonskeid on the right one.

The angling of that part of the Pass which goes with the Cottage and with Faskally offers difficulties, accompanied with a spice of danger, for the angler has not only to avoid hooking the trees behind him while keeping his footing on steep, slippery rocks, but has also in some places to follow a fish where progress seems hardly possible. Within living memory, and before the netting on the Tay and its estuary became so deadly, many more fish ascended the Garry and were taken by rods, nets, and leisters, and during that period of plenty two rods took with the fly in one day no less than eleven fish from a couple of pools in the Pass, while now it would require a whole season's hard work to make up a like number.

The chief pools below Blair Atholl are Shierglass, Essen, Dormie, Auldclune, the Boat and Bridge Pools; and then in the Pass the best are the Soldier's Leap, Three Stones, Insh, Blackrock, and Pulpit, while from Garry Bridge to the junction fish are seldom got.

From Loch Tay to the Tummel junction is some sixteen miles, in which most of the pools are boated, although there are a few that can be cast from the bank, and several that can be commanded by using wading trousers. Most of the catches are fine, long, splendid-looking places, ranging from one hundred to nearly three hundred yards in length. Although none of them are of any account after the end of May, it is indeed sad to relate that the take of the whole of this sixteen miles of water, from the 15th of January to the end of May, is under a hundred fish, or about six fish per mile, spread over four and a half months!

Now to return to the Tay—to Kinnaird water on the right bank and the Tummel junction on the left one. Here, on the left bank, Easthaugh ends and the Duke of Atholl's Dunkeld reach commences and runs for seven miles to Dunkeld Bridge,

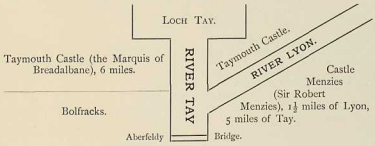
with his two miles of Kinnaird opposite, succeeded for a mile and a half by the Dalguise property of Mr. Stewart, when the Duke again comes in and goes to Dunkeld Bridge. The whole of this portion of the river yields a certain amount of sport both in spring and autumn, and the take for the whole seven miles may be estimated at a total of one hundred fish.

The Birnam Hotel reach extends for a mile below Dunkeld on the right bank, and then begins the Murthly Castle water, belonging to Mr. Scrymsoure-Steuart-Fotheringham, going on this side for four miles and on the opposite bank for one mile, when Mr. Murray's Stenton water comes in for a short distance, and is succeeded by Sir Alexander Muir Mackenzie's Delvine angling, running opposite to Murthly, as well as to the whole of the Upper and Lower Kercock water.

Then on both banks Meiklour joins on and continues for a mile on the left bank and two on the right. This is followed by the far-famed Stobhall reach of five miles, having opposite to it on the right bank the shorter but very good fishings of Ballathie, Taymount, Burnmouth, and Stanley.

As Stobhall ends on the left bank, the Earl of Mansfield's Scone Palace water begins, and goes down some five miles to a little below Perth Bridge, while opposite are Benchill, Redgorton (Battleby), Luncarty, Lower Redgorton, Bertha, Woody Isle, and Inch.

Here is the order in which the Tay anglings follow each other from Loch Tay to Perth Bridge; the mileages are approximate, but not very far wrong :—



RIVER TAY

Aberfeldy Hotel.

Grandtully Castle (Mr. Scrymsoure-Steuart-Fotheringham), 6 miles.

Duke of Atholl, 2½ miles. Let to Logierait Hotel.

Logierait

Easthaugh (Duke of Atholl), 1 mile.

Kinnaird (Duke of Atholl), 2 miles.

Dalguise (Mr. J. N. D. Steuart), 1½ miles.

Three pools; one is bank fishing—average 20 spring fish and 15 autumn ones.

Duke of Atholl, 3½ miles.

Dunkeld

Birnam Hotel, 2 miles.

Killiechassie (Mrs. E. O. Douglas), ½ mile.

Cluny (Mr. T. Stewart Robertson), 1 mile.

Edradynate, ¼ mile.
One very good pool.

Dercnlich, ¾ mile.
3 pools. Bank fishing.

Clochfoldich, ½ mile.
One pool.

From Clochfoldich on February 19, 1896, Major Isaacson took with a prawn a 42-pound fish, the heaviest killed in those upper waters for many years.

Findynate, ½ mile.
One pool.

From Findynate Mr. W. H. Johnston, of Dunros, killed a 32½-pound fish in January, 1900.

Pitcastle (Mr. J. Guthrie Lornie), 1 mile.

Inner Ballechin, ¾ mile.

Pitnacree (Dr. J. A. Menzies), ¾ mile.

Ballechin (Captain I. M. Stewart), ½ mile.

Eastertyre.

Duke of Atholl (Logierait Hotel).

Railway Bridge.

Glebe.

Easthaugh (Duke of Atholl).

TUMMEL JUNCTION.

Easthaugh.

Dunkeld Water (Duke of Atholl), 5 miles.

Bridge.

Eastwood (Duke of Atholl), 2 miles.

Murthly Castle (Mr. Steuart Fotheringham), 4 miles.		Murthly Castle, 1 mile.
Upper Kercock (J. Guthrie Lornie), under a mile.		Stenton (Mr. Graham Murray), under a mile.
Lower Kercock (Mr. Mitchell Thomson), under a mile.	↓	Delvine (Sir Alexander Muir Mackenzie), 3 miles.
Meiklour (Marquis of Lansdowne), 2 miles.		Meiklour, 1 mile.
		RIVER ISLA.
Cargill		Railway Bridge.
Ballathie (Colonel E. R. S. Richardson), 1½ miles. 10 pools.		
Taymount (Earl of Mansfield). Mr. C. A. Murray for the last thirty years.		Stobhall (Earl of Ancaster), about 6 miles. Let to Mr. P. D. Malloch, of Perth. More than 30 pools.
Burnmouth (Duke of Atholl). 11 pools.	↓	
Stanley (Mrs. Sandeman).		
Benchill (Duke of Atholl), 1 mile.		
Redgorton (Mr. J. Maxtone Graham). Let with Battleby House on a long lease to Mr. Archibald Coats.	RIVER TAY	Earl of Mansfield (Scone property), from 6 to 7 miles.
Luncarty (Mr. Burt Marshall), ½ mile. Battleby House.		
Lower Redgorton, 1½ miles.		
RIVER ALMOND.		Scone Palace.
Bertha (Colonel Murray Graham).	↓	
Woody Island (Earl of Mansfield).		
Inch (Sir Edward Richardson of Pitfour Castle).		
Perth		Bridge.
Free water.		Scone. Free water.

To describe in minute detail all the renowned anglings lying between Dunkeld and Perth would be wearisome to my readers. A few cursory remarks will suffice to give a general idea of the whole of them.

The Murthly Castle water yields fine sport in spring and autumn, and though the late fish are more plentiful, the splendid condition of the spring ones fully makes up for the difference in numbers. The banks of this fishing will long remain associated with the names of the late Mr. John Bright and the late Sir John Millais, both gentlemen having often fished here with great success.

The Meiklour water is another grand angling from which fair takes of spring fish are made, while those of the autumn are often extraordinary, for from ten to twenty are not uncommon, and as many as twenty-eight have been got in a day by one boat.

Ballathie, with its comfortable, pretty and striking-looking house on the banks of the river, is as pleasant a quarter as an angler can wish for. Just below the house is the famous Cradle Pool, the lower part offering a nice piece of Spey casting from the bank, and many are the spring and autumn salmon it has yielded.

In October, 1892, I had the good fortune to stay a week at Ballathie, and still retain a lively recollection of harling the top of the Cradle, with Gellatley, the fisherman, directing operations. It was the evening of the last day but one of the season; all day there had been an extra cold east wind, no sign of sun, and occasional showers. At four o'clock we were blank! Fancy that being the case on Ballathie on the 14th of October. In despair I put a big three-inch White Eagle, as used on the Dee, on each side of the outside rods, and no sooner did we come to the lie of the fish than both reels were shrieking at once; then a minute later both rods were straight and both flies had gone!

Well, I had other three Eagles, so on went two more, and

again both were taken at once, although this time one fish was brought to bank, the other departing with the fly. The loss having been made good, was followed by a single pull, when, a few seconds later, I was again cut. This reduced us to the last of the Eagles, which, sad to relate, met with the same fate as its predecessors. Thus in this pool six fish carried off five flies; and in just that one part of the Cradle the chances are the line will be cut, for the fish lie in a deep, narrow channel, each side of which is overhung by rocks with knife-shaped edges. Although the luck had been against me, I was somewhat consoled by hearing from Gellatley of a former Cradle angler who had once been cut sixteen times in succession! also I had saved a blank day, and made a convert to the merits of the White Eagle when used on a cold, dark evening.

No one knows the Ballathie water better than Gellatley, though he is slightly prejudiced in favour of an ugly fly called the Smith, and if ever ten minutes lapsed without a pull, there invariably came the question, "Hae ye a Smith?" He could also ply his rod as well as an oar; and on one midsummer day, when fishing for sea trout with a small fly, he hooked and eventually landed a fifty-pound fish.

In harling it is the boatmen, not the anglers, who catch the fish; and those who know the water, and who will work hard to thoroughly cover it, will make the rods lay hold of three fish for every one that would be hooked if the boat were in less experienced hands.

On the last day of the season I witnessed my host, Colonel Cornwall Legh, have a desperate fight with a big one in the lowest pool of the Burnmouth water, when skill combined with "hands" eventually laid a fine fellow of forty-four pounds on the bank.

For the past few seasons the Duke of Bedford has had Ballathie,* and in February, 1899, he and the Duchess had eleven fish of about eighteen pounds each in five days.

* Now rented by Lord Blythswood.

Taymount, belonging to the Earl of Mansfield, has been occupied for upwards of thirty years by Mr. C. A. Murray, one of the keenest and best of anglers, who has probably introduced more Tay fish to "the priest" than anyone else on the river. This is a fine piece of water with upwards of twenty good casts, divided into upper and lower beats.

Mr. Murray has had as many as twenty fish in a day to his single rod, and all taken by casting, and thanks to his kindness I am enabled to give my readers his recollections of this wonderful sport:—

"I happened to go to the water rather late that morning; it was a coldish day, with a thin wind and a little rain. I had the lower beat, and during my long experience I never saw salmon take in the same way, and I believe had I begun at my usual time I should have killed fully thirty; as it was I got sixteen salmon and four grilse, their weights being three hundred and fifty-five pounds, or an average of seventeen and a half pounds. I have had many other most excellent days during the long period I have fished this water, often getting twelve, fourteen, and sixteen fish in a day, all by casting."

Opposite is the lengthy stretch of the fish-famed Stobhall Water, which is rented, together with one beat on Benchill and one on Burnmouth, by Mr. P. D. Malloch, who sublets it in the spring to two rods, and in the autumn to eight. In 1899 these were Mr. J. W. Barry, the Duke of Bedford, Lord Blythswood, the Earl Cairns, Mr. Archibald Coats, Mr. Panmure Gordon, the Earl of Hardwicke, and the Earl of Warwick. This is undoubtedly the finest angling stretch of the Tay, yielding fair sport in spring, with extraordinarily good takes on the removal of the nets. There are between thirty and forty fine casts, the whole of which were formerly rented by the late Mr. Barclay Field. Here he and his two well-known fishermen—Joseph Panton and John Haggart—made many great scores; to the latter belongs the honour of killing with a Phantom perhaps the

heaviest fish ever landed by the rod in the United Kingdom, which weighed sixty-two pounds. Mr. Barclay Field also had the Ballathie shootings, and one day Panton was asked if he would come out and beat for the guns or go to the river; he chose the latter, and took thirty-three fish to his own rod! On returning from shooting, his master asked him if he had got as many fish as he wanted, when old Joe, being a man of few words, merely answered "Yes" and turned away, although anxiously waiting for the inquiry, "How many?" and chuckling to himself at the thought of what a sensation his reply would create. Mr. Field, however, forgot to put the question, an omission which to this day the hero of the big score has never quite condoned.

In 1899 Lord Blythswood, who has a long experience of the Tay, had the Islamouth beat of Stobhall, with one on Taymount as well, so that he had fishing every day in the week. In twenty-three days he got one hundred and thirty fish to his own rod, the largest of which was one of fifty-three pounds, hooked in the lower end of Sandyford Pool by a moderate-sized Black Dog. In the same period Lord Blythswood's guests had ninety-eight others, Mr. H. Praed getting a day of twenty-two fish, headed by one of forty-three pounds. The whole of these fish were caught by the fly and by casting; and on all the well-stocked autumn reaches harling is now only resorted to on those pools which cannot be fished in any other way.

Lord Blythswood is strongly of opinion that the Tay angling has been slowly but surely deteriorating ever since the netting time was extended in 1862 from the 21st to the 26th of August. To the uninitiated a week more or less may not seem of much account; but in that one week there are often several thousands of fish netted, which if spared would give a splendid stock of spawners to the upper waters.

On the Tay, what is practically the last heavy run of fish takes place with the Lammas floods, which generally come

some time in the first half of August. The season of 1899 was remarkable by their absence, for they did not arrive until the end of the month, and after the nets came off, with the result that the river became really well stocked.

From 1828 to 1852 the Tay was netted up to the 15th of September! During that period the rental fell every year, from £14,500 in 1828 to under £8,000 in 1852. There can be no doubt that had this close time been continued until now, then the Tay would almost have ceased to be a salmon river. The owners of the nettings, seeing what would happen, then agreed of their own accord to return to the 26th of August, which, up to 1828, had been the beginning of the close time for four hundred years. Later on this was altered to the 21st of August, and then, in 1862, it was once more most unwisely extended to the 26th, at which date it has since remained.

The above facts speak for themselves as to the enormous power exercised by the close time, and there can be no doubt it would be better for the river if netting ceased on the 21st of August; and this is one of the matters which is likely to be considered by the recently-formed Tay Syndicate.

On the 4th of October, 1883, Lord Ruthven took a very heavy fish from the Finford Pool of Stobhall, a little below Taymount—a cock fish fifty inches long and thirty in girth. His captor writes:—

"We had nothing heavy enough to weigh him with at the river side, so he was taken into Perth Railway Station, and weighed next day a trifle over fifty-four pounds, so he must have weighed considerably more when first taken out of the water. He was a very dull fish, and never showed after he was hooked. The fly was a No. 2 Jock Scot, and we landed him in about half an hour."

Colonel Harry Clarke Jervoise, on the 23rd of September, had another leviathan from this same pool, which was fully fifty pounds. "I never called it a fifty-pounder," writes the

Colonel, "though doubtless it was that and over when taken out of the water. Unfortunately I was unable to scale him until the following morning, twenty hours afterwards. He then weighed a little over forty-nine pounds. He was taken with a 2/0 Jock Scot at the tail of Finford Head, and was killed in about twenty minutes, though I had to cross the river to prevent his going through the rough water and rocks between Finford Head and Finford Stream. He was a beautiful fish, fresh from the sea, although without sea lice, in perfect order. Length, forty-eight inches; girth, twenty-seven and a half inches; breadth of tail, thirteen inches."

From these experiences of Lord Ruthven and Colonel Clarke Jervoise it will be seen that it is just as well to attack the autumn fish of the Tay provided with a steel-yard that will weigh up to sixty pounds, for it is rather a pity not to know the exact weight of such very heavy fish.

In my book of *Shooting and Salmon Fishing* there is given a method by which a steel-yard may be made to show the weight of any fish, and as the "dodge" does not seem to be well known to anglers, I mention it again. Suppose a fish is judged to be fifty pounds and the available steel-yard will only weigh up to forty pounds, then select a stone of over ten pounds, weigh it exactly, and tie a cord round it, the end of which pass through the ring at the top of the steel-yard and fasten it taut to the hook on which the fish is to be suspended for weighing. Then place the fish on the hook, and before its weight can tell on the indicator of the steel-yard it will have to raise the weight of the stone, and that added to what the indicator then marks will be the total weight of the fish. Thus a fifty-pounder having raised a stone of fifteen pounds will lower the indicator to thirty-five pounds.

I have never had the good fortune to be in a position to experiment with one of fifty pounds, but have often tested the loss of weight in fish of from twenty to twenty-five pounds, and "minnows" like these have always shown a decrease in

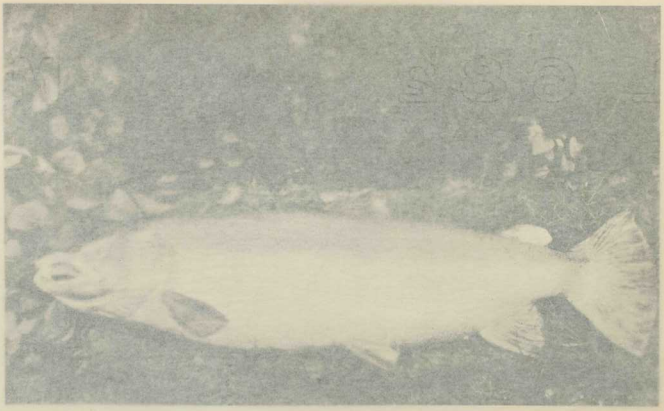
twenty-four hours of nearly two pounds; therefore, if the loss is in proportion to the weight, then a fish weighing fifty pounds twenty-four hours after his capture would have scaled fifty-four pounds at the river side. From the foregoing it will be seen that a beat on Stobhall, whether in spring or in autumn, leaves but little to be desired.

As Taymouth ends Burnmouth commences—a short stretch of ten pools, under a mile in length, but all of it good, the lowest catch being specially so.

Below Burnmouth, and still opposite Stobhall, the Stanley water comes in, on which there are many fine casts; and it was from the Mill Stream here that in October, 1895, Lord Zetland got his fish of fifty-five pounds with a Claret Major—length, fifty inches; girth, thirty inches—and through his kindness I am enabled to give an illustration of this fine fellow.

The Stanley Water also fished right well in the spring of 1900, for Mr. H. P. Holford had a beat on it for six weeks from the opening, and managed to average nearly a fish a day of seventeen pounds mean weight. As bad luck would have it, he happened to miss the best day, when old Joseph Panton took for him, on the 19th of February, six fish of 28, 18, 16, 13, 10, and 10 lbs.—a record day on Stanley at that time of year. Colonel Philpots had the other beat, and, I believe, did nearly as well.

Below Stanley and opposite the Scone Estate comes Benchill, where, high above and almost overhanging the river, is the pretty house of Summerhill, rented for several years past, with a beat on Stobhall and another on Benchill, by the Hon. Louis Greville, and, oddly enough, twice during his tenancy has the last day of his season proved the best. On one of these occasions fourteen fish were landed by himself and a friend. On the other, he gave the day to Lord Cairns, who had sixteen fish, weighing two hundred and sixty-six pounds. Benchill, though not a very lengthy stretch, is, from start to finish, of the highest quality. Especially is it endowed



SALMON OF FIFTY-FOUR POUNDS CAUGHT BY LORD ZETLAND.

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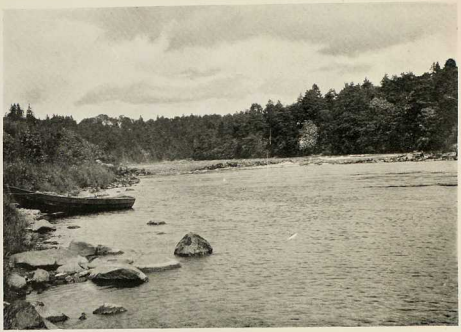
The Stanley Water also fished right well in the spring of 1901 for Mr. H. F. Holford had a beat on it for six weeks from the opening, and managed to average nearly a fish a day of nineteen pounds mean weight. As bad luck would have it he happened to miss the best day, when old Joseph Panton took the lion, on the 19th of February, six fish of 28, 18, 16, 15, 12 and 10 lbs.—a record day on Stanley at that time of year. Colonel Philipps had the other beat, and, I believe, did nearly as well.

Below Stanley and opposite the Scone Estate comes Benchill, where, high above and almost overhanging the river, is the pretty house of Summerhill, rented for several years past with a beat on Stobhall and another on Benchill, by the Hon. Louis Greville, and, oddly enough, twice during his tenancy has the last day of his season proved the best. On one of these occasions fourteen fish were landed by himself and a friend. On the other, he gave the day to Lord Cairns, who had sixteen fish, weighing two hundred and sixty-six pounds. Benchill, though not a very lengthy stretch, is, from start to finish, of the highest quality. Especially is it endowed

SALMON OF FIFTY-FIVE POUNDS CAUGHT BY LORD ZETLAND.



THISTLE BRIDGE POOL, WITH SUMMERHILL HOUSE IN THE DISTANCE.

THE BLACK CRAIG.

[illegible] which many heavy fish have [illegible]

[illegible] Water, in some seasons [illegible] just above the [illegible] Craig, a fine piece of bank [illegible] been covered, [illegible] the boat. It is easy to get into [illegible] pool, every without [illegible] is clogged. Here, I had some good sport by the aid of two-handed rowers.

A little above the Dron stop, Lunanty Station, Mr. Bort Marshall has about three hundred yards of the Tay, below which the Redgorton Lower Water continues down opposite Scone to Almond Mouth. Here also are some good casts, both from bank and boat. This Redgorton stretch is sometimes called the Burnaby Water, as both upper and lower beats go with the house of that name.

As Stobhall ends there follows the still lengthier reach of the Scone Water, belonging to the Earl of Mansfield, who is himself a very keen, hard-working angler, in which respect, however, he but follows in the footsteps of his father, the late Viscount Stormont, one of the best men, not only with rifle, rod, and gun, but in every sense of the term, that it has ever been my good fortune to know. Strong as a horse, active as a stag, hardy to a degree, in the terms of the old song, "A run one to follow, a bad one to beat," Lord Stormont had the gift of winning the hearts of rich and poor alike, and the recollection of his good-natured, kindly ways and pleasant smile is little likely to fade from the memories of anyone who had the privilege of knowing him.

Opposite to this splendid stretch of water, of which there are about eight miles, are the angling rights of Stobhall, Upper and Lower Redgorton, Lunanty, Perth, Wharry, Inch, and Inch. From the top of the Scone Water down to above the Woodly Isle the Earl keeps the angling in his own hands, and many

THE BLACK CRAIG.

with some fine bank casts, from which many heavy fish have been taken by wading.

Next is the Redgorton Upper Water, in some seasons second to none, its top pool, the Black Craig, just above the Stormontfield Breeding Ponds, offering a fine piece of bank casting from either side, and when they have both been covered, the middle of the stream can be cast from the boat. It is easy to put away three or four hours at this one pool, never without desirable occupants, and where, early in August, 1895, I had some good sport by the aid of the natural minnow.

A little above the Ferry, near Luncarty Station, Mr. Burt Marshall has about three hundred yards of the river, below which the Redgorton Lower Water continues down opposite Scone to Almond Mouth. Here also are some good casts, both from bank and boat. This Redgorton stretch is sometimes called the Battleby Water, as both upper and lower beats go with the house of that name.

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Opposite to this splendid stretch of river, of which there are about eight miles, run the anglings of Benchill, Upper and Lower Redgorton, Luncarty, Bertha, Woody Isle, and Inch. From the top of the Scone Water down to above the Woody Isle the Earl keeps the angling in his own hands, and many

and heavy are the spring and autumn fish that have come out of it. From Woody Isle to below Perth he generously gives permission to all who ask it, and it was on this stretch, two years ago, that Captain A. G. Goodwin had the luck to take a fish of fifty-five and a half pounds with a prawn. He hooked it just below Woody Isle, a little before six o'clock in the evening of the 28th September. The fight that followed was of unusual excitement, for in some way the thin reel line got hitched and broke, but was luckily caught just as it was slipping through the top ring, and the fish happening to be quiet at the moment, the line was speedily knotted together, though up to the end of the battle the passing to and fro of the knot through the rings was a source of continual anxiety. After fighting hard with great spirit for an hour and a quarter, in which time the fish struggled half a mile down stream ere it was thoroughly beaten, this splendid fellow met his fate. Captain Goodwin used one of Hardy's fourteen-foot cane-built, steel-centre rods, with a fine undressed line of the Manchester Cotton Company. The fish was fifty-five inches long with a thirty-inch girth, which agrees exactly with the measurements of Lord Zetland's fifty-five pounder.

For six miles below Perth anglers are not interfered with, and each season, after the nets come off, a good many captures are made from the bank or from boats. The heaviest fish ever taken in the Tay was got somewhere hereabouts by the nets of Messrs. Speedie, and weighed seventy-two pounds.

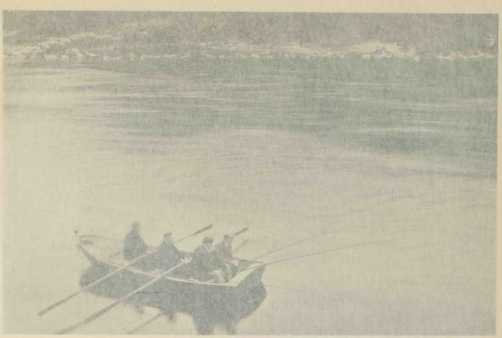
The best angling periods on the river are as follows:—

Loch Tay: from the 15th of January to the 15th of May. Very few fish enter Loch Tay after May.

Above the Tummel: from the 15th of January till end of May; April best. A few fish killed late in the season.

Between Tummel and Dunkeld: from the 15th of January to end of May; March and April best. A few fish killed late in the season.

From Dunkeld to Islamouth: good from the 15th of



HARLING, THE BENCHILL WATER.

THE AIKENHEAD POOL OF BENCHILL.

and heavy net the spring and autumn fish that have come out of it. From Wapda Isle, as below Perth he generously gives permission to all who ask it, and it was on this scale two years ago that Captain A. G. Goodwin had the best to take a fish of fifty-five and a half pounds with a prawn. He hooked it just below Woody Isle, a little before six o'clock in the evening in the 16th September. The fight that followed was of extreme endurance, for in some way the thin reel line got knotted and broke, but was luckily caught just as it was slipping through the top ring, and the fish happening to be quiet at the moment, the line was speedily knotted together, though up to the end of the battle the parting to and fro of the knot through the rings was a source of continual anxiety. After fighting hard with great spirit for an hour and a quarter, in which time the fish struggled half a mile down stream and it was thoroughly beaten, this splendid fellow met his fate. Captain Goodwin used one of Hardy's fourteen-foot cane built, steel-centre rods, with a fine undressed line of the Manchester Cotton Company. The fish was fifty-five inches long with a thirty-inch girth, which agrees exactly with the measurements of Lord Zetland's fifty-five pounder.

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HARLING, THE BENCHILL WATER.

THE AIKENHEAD POOL OF BENCHILL.

January to end of May; from the 15th of August to end of season very good. The autumn run does not pass above Dunkeld in any large numbers.

From Islamouth to Linn of Campsie—the cream of the Tay: good from opening till end of May, and in autumn from middle of July to end of season, June being but of little good.

From Linn of Campsie to Benchill: good from opening to middle of May, and from the 1st of July to close of season, numbers of grilse being taken on Stanley and Benchill.

From Benchill to Perth: good from opening till end of April, and in autumn from the 1st of August to the close of the season.

The flies used at the opening of the season are of the largest, the sizes being reduced as the season advances. The favourites are Black Dog, Nicholson, Butcher, Jock Scot, Poynder, Major, Sir Richard, Popham, Smith, etc. In the autumn much smaller ones are used, and almost every standard pattern will kill.

With suitable water the fly is the best lure, but there are times when the prawn or the Phantom will do execution when the feathers have failed. Deadly, also, is the natural minnow in those pools where the flow of the current permits its use, for it is waste of time to fish this lure in a stream that "tears" so hard at the bait as to keep it on the top of the water; and equally so to try it in a current so sluggish that it will not sweep the lure round at the full length of a taut line.

CHAPTER LXXV

THE TWEED

THE second largest river of Scotland, with a drainage area of 1,925 square miles, and a course of nearly a hundred, rises some five miles to the north of Moffat, in the range of high hills dividing the county of Dumfries from those of Peebles and Selkirk. For the first twenty-five miles of its course it is purely a trouting stream, salmon not ascending much above Peebles; while, as those that do arrive in the upper waters are never in any great numbers, or of any account for the table, serious angling—that is, angling which it would be worth while to rent at a good round sum—can hardly be said to commence before Ashiestiel Bridge is reached, some twelve miles below Peebles. About four miles below that town, at Cardrona, there are a couple of good catches, and lower down two others on the Elibank section, at the end of which Miss Mount Stuart Russell's Ashiestiel property begins, opposite to that of Laidlawstiel, belonging to Lady Reay.

The best cast hereabouts is the Gullets, just above Ashiestiel Bridge. Another pool—Gleddie's Wheel—is famous for the ducking got in it by Sir Walter Scott, Hogg, and some of their friends, by the breaking up of the boat whilst they were salmon spearing. The Yair water of Mr. Alexander Pringle then follows down for some distance to Russell's Rock, half a mile below Yair Bridge; on this stretch there are some seventeen good autumn casts, of which Needpath and the Yair Boat Pool are the best. Opposite Yair are the Tor-

woodlee fishings of Mr. J. T. Pringle, and those of Fairnalee, owned by Professor Pattison. Here the north side, both above and below Ashiestiel Bridge, is rented by the old and well-known Edinburgh Angling Club, who have their headquarters on the banks of the Tweed in a charming cottage called "The Nest."

The anglings hereabouts are not of much good until the middle of October, when fish usually begin to arrive, and from then to the end of the season it is just a matter of luck whether the angler hooks a "nigger," who has rested for long in the lower waters, or gets hold of "something" that has come pretty straight from the sea.

Next, on both banks, Mr. C. H. Scott-Plummer's Sunderland Hall water commences, and goes to Tweed Bridge at Ettrick Foot, where there is a fair cast, in addition to four others lying above it. The Ettrick itself is a tributary of considerable importance, with a course of fully thirty miles. Salmon enter it freely, and pass up to Yarrow Junction, two miles above Selkirk, the various anglings being strictly preserved.

The Sunderland Hall section is followed by the Gala or Boldside water of Mr. John Scott, which extends on both banks down to Gala Foot, and holds just a dozen fine casts, of which Boldside Wheel and Glen Mein are perhaps the best, while the top of this water may be regarded as the commencement of serious angling.

Then follows the Pavilion stretch, belonging to the Hon. Mrs. Henry, a daughter of the last Lord Somerville; it is three miles in length, on both banks, and reaches to a mile below Melrose. The angling (usually let with the house and shootings) comprises eighteen good pools, the three best, perhaps, being the Brig End, the Whorles, and Cowie's Hole—

> "Where Tweed majestically flows
> 'Twixt Abbotsford and fair Melrose,"

as sang that angler bard, the late Hon. and Rev. Robert Liddell.

Next is the Drygrange water of Mr. T. S. Roberts, usually let each season, and holding five nice pools. This is followed by the old Melrose water, owned on the south side by Sir William Ramsay Fairfax, of Ravenswood, which for the last five years shows an average of forty-five fish each season.

The north bank belongs to Miss Meikleham, of Gladswood, down to "Cromweil," where Colonel Haig's celebrated Bemersyde water begins, and continues down on this north bank for some distance, in which there are five good casts. It is essentially a high water angling. The top pool of Cromweil is rather dead water, but good late in the season.

The Gateheugh is a rapid shallow flowing over a rocky bed, in which there are a number of holes, each containing fish in autumn; and though remaining in order barely two days, when there are fish and the size is right, it is as sporting a cast as any on Tweed. From this pool Lord Romney took a thirty-seven-pound fish in November, 1899.

The Washing House stream is all too short, but is good when the water is getting on the low side.

The Hally Wheel Throat is a rare holding place—"never out of a tenant," and a sure cast in high water.

The Woodside is a pleasant cast in high water, as it can be commanded without the boat; but it holds few fish, and a beginner on it will be apt to hook more trees than anything else. This Bemersyde water has been rented for some years past by Mr. Walter Farquhar.

Below this and still on the north bank is the Dryburgh water of Sir William Scott, of Ancrum, let to the Dowager Lady Orr Ewing. Here there are seventeen pretty casts, and whenever there are plenty of fish in the Tweed, this section always claims its full share.

Below comes Lord Polwarth's Merton reach of twenty-two pools, the upper part being sometimes let, while the lower one is always in the hands of the proprietor. The first nine pools

have the right on both banks; then on the south side, for the next six pools, is the Maxton water of Sir William Fairfax, while the remaining seven are again Lord Polwarth's on both sides. Here the Cauld Pool, the Webbs, Crago'er, and Still Foot are all noted casts, both in spring and autumn.

John Younger, the well-known Tweedside shoemaker, politician and angler, who was born in 1785, states in his book of *River Angling* that in 1816, one John Haliburton, a farmer friend, rented the Merton angling for fifteen pounds a year "with a cow's grass"!

The Rutherford water of Sir Edmund Antrobus follows, and has eight pools, of which the Clippers is the lowest, while of Corse Heugh, the top one, Mr. Liddell sings:—

> "Three mighty fish I lost that afternoon
> In the 'Corse Heugh' (I can't ensure the spelling),
> It's the upper cast, a mile above
> The fisherman John Aitken's cosy dwelling."

This section is sometimes let with Rutherford Lodge, only a few minutes distant from the railway station of the same name. Like all the other anglings of the Tweed, it is not nearly so good as it was. There are two and a half miles of both banks, which in recent times have yielded as follows:—

1896 . . .	105 salmon	13 grilse
1897 . . .	55 ,,	13 ,,
1898 . . .	52 ,,	2 ,,
1899 . . .	26 ,,	42 ,,

We now come to the famed Makerston reach, belonging to Mr. Hugh Scott, with its fourteen fine catches distributed over a mile and three-quarters of both banks, which are usually let, Lord Wimborne being the present tenant.

"Hirple Nellie" (excusably turned by an English sporting paper into "Help our Nellie"), Red Stane, Side Strake, Doors, Nether Heads, Willie's Owerfa', and Kill Mouth, are all extra good; and once more to quote the rhyming Mr. Liddell:—

"These last five cataracts descend
Through walls of rock from end to end;
They're known conjointly as 'The Trows'
(Pronounced as if you were saying 'vows'),
But meaning 'Troughs'—you'd ne'er attain
The reason why, so I'll explain.
Lang syne a prehistoric man
Devised a raft of novel plan;
He took two troughs for feeding cattle,
Joined them with nails, or rope, or wattle,
And bevelled them, one end to be
In shape just like our letter V.
Then, if the stream were small and low
(Else it were suicide to go),
And poachers meant for salmon slaughter,
Either to 'sun' or 'burn' the water;
The leisterer stood with legs a-straddle
Across this queerish sort of saddle,
And when a luckless fish was seen
He speared it through the space between."

Here Mr. Liddell once had a day of twenty fish, averaging eighteen pounds. In 1873, the late Mr. Malcolm, of Poltalloch, got seventy-three in a week. Nowadays, that would be a fair take for the whole season, for in 1898 the catch was but fifty fish, followed in 1899 by a total of seventy. George Wright, the well-known fisherman at Makerston, and who has been there nearly forty-five years, attributes the falling off entirely to disease, and doubtless he is right to a great extent, while probably its greater virulence in the Tweed, as compared with its destructiveness in other rivers, is due entirely to the extra horrid and poisonous nature of the pollutions poured in from the manufactories on the banks.

Next comes the far-famed Floors Water, belonging to the Duke of Roxburghe, with its numerous pools spread over more than four miles of both banks. From the top one of The Slates to the lowest of Maxwheel—from which the late Duke once took in a day six salmon and twenty grilse—one cast is nearly as good as another, and while there is always ample room for three rods, in suitable water and windy weather

THE TWEED AT FLOORS CASTLE.

there is plenty of water for [illegible]. It was on this water that Mr. Arthur Fryer, in [illegible], with a Wharnecliffe the heaviest fish ever [illegible] on Tweedside. Unfortunately it was not [illegible] to Fisher Castle along with [illegible] of Mr. Fryer's Fryerian rod of [illegible]. It was then weighed in the presence of [illegible] Lord Kennaquhair [illegible] the great [illegible] the shoulders [illegible] fully [illegible] weighed.

[illegible] Fair on the [illegible] section of a [illegible] has the right to [illegible] for [illegible] England and [illegible] Spanish [illegible] Dub has the reputation of being [illegible] but like the other famous Pools of Tweedside, it [illegible] it is necessary.

Nearly opposite Kelso—famous for Fairies and his rods—and a little above the end of the Castle water, the Teviot, after a course of sixty miles, joins the Tweed on the right bank, salmon ascending it in considerable numbers, many of them spring fish, for which March and April are the best months, the Duke owning the chief four miles of the river from Ormiston Burn to Maxwellheugh Mill.

[1] For loss of weight, see chapter on "The Tay," p. 386.

THE CONFLUENCE OF FLOODS CREEK.

there is plenty of space for four. It was on this water that Mr. Arthur Pryor, in November, 1886, took with a Wilkinson the heaviest fish ever killed by the rod on Tweedside. Unluckily it was not weighed on the bank, but was carted up to Floors Castle along with fourteen other victims of Mr. Pryor's Forrest rod of eighteen and a half feet. It was then weighed in the presence of the Duke and the Duchess, Lord Hardwicke, Lord Kensington and Lord Lovat, and declared to be just over sixty pounds. The next morning at ten o'clock the shepherd, bringing in mutton, reweighed it and made it but fifty-seven and a half pounds.* There can, however, be no doubt it was sixty pounds when first caught and first weighed.

In the mile and three-quarters of the Floors upper beat there are nine good pools, the best being Blackstone, Shot, Slap, and New Stream. In the mile of the lower water there are seven others, of which the Coach Wynd, Garden Wall and Putt are the most noted. Below this comes the Ednam House section of a mile and a half, while each of these three anglings has the right on both banks. From where the Floors estate ends on both banks, it still continues down on the south one for upwards of four miles to Carham Burn, the march between England and Scotland. Part of this is the well-known Sprouston water, with its thirty-five pools, of which Sprouston Dub has the reputation of being the finest cast on the Tweed; but like the other famous Dub of Birgham, a strong breeze on it is necessary.

Nearly opposite Kelso—famous for Forrest and his rods—and a little above the end of the Castle water, the Teviot, after a course of sixty miles, joins the Tweed on the right bank, salmon ascending it in considerable numbers, many of them spring fish, for which March and April are the best months, the Duke owning the chief four miles of the river from Ormiston March to Maxwellheugh Mill.

* For loss of weight, see chapter on "The Tay," p. 386.

The north bank of the Tweed for three miles is then the property of Sir Richard Waldie Griffith, of Hendersyde Park, and goes down to the Eden junction. In this distance there are twenty-one pools and streams, the best being Mill Stream, Butterwash, Bushes, Scurry, the Dub, Slap, Little Davie, Mill End, Cottage Stream, Faulds, and Edenfoot, all fished from a boat, the best time in spring being from the middle of February to the end of April, and then in the autumn from the 15th of September to end of November, during which time about one hundred and eighty salmon and grilse are got each season, the former averaging eighteen pounds and the latter seven and a half pounds. The owner always keeps it in his own hands, and usually fishes it with two rods, though at times it could easily take a third.

The record on this water is held by Major the Hon. E. Bourke, who took from Sprouston Dub, on the 7th of October, 1895, seventeen salmon and grilse, weighing one hundred and sixty-nine and a half pounds. Numerous, however, are the good days recorded in Sir Richard's Fish Book, and by his kindness I am enabled to give a few of them.

In 1873, on the 13th of November, the late Sir George Waldie Griffith had thirteen fish, of two hundred and forty-eight pounds; and on the following day Mr. T. Taylor had a like number, totalling two hundred and sixty-three pounds. On the 9th of November, 1883, Sir Richard had fifteen, of one hundred and ninety-four pounds, all these three days being on Sprouston Dub.

On the lower water, in 1886, on the 13th of November, Mr. T. Taylor had a day of ten fish. On the 19th, the late Mr. Turner Farley, of Cairnton fame, had nine fish, making one hundred and eighty-two pounds.

In 1887, on the 12th of November, Sir Richard had eleven fish, and on the 25th other ten. On the 26th of October Captain Bridges had fourteen, averaging over sixteen pounds.

HUNTINGTON PARK.

THE GLADE—ON THE HUNTINGTON WALKS.

The north bank of the Tweed for three miles [illegible] property of Sir Richard Waldie Griffith, of [illegible] and goes down to the Eden junction. In this district there are twenty-one pools and streams, the best being [illegible] Bunnerwath, Bushes, Scurry, the Dub, Slap, Little [illegible] End, Cottage Stream, Faulds, and Edenfoot, all [illegible] a line, the best time is spring being from the [illegible] February to the end of April, and then in the autumn from the 15th of September to end of November, during which [illegible] the six years hundred and eighty salmon and grilse [illegible] season, the former averaging eighteen pounds and the [illegible] seven and a half pounds. The owner always [illegible] it is [illegible] each beats, and usually fishes it with two [illegible] though at times it could easily take a third.

The record on this water is held by Major [illegible] Heurtley, who took from Sprouston Dub, on the [illegible] Christmas days, seventeen salmon and grilse, weighing [illegible] and sixty-nine and a half pounds. Numerous [illegible] the good days recorded in Sir Richard's Fish Book, and by his kindness I am enabled to give a few of them.

In 1873, on the 13th of November [illegible] Waldie Griffith had thirteen fish, of [illegible] eight pounds; and on the following day [illegible] a like number, totalling two hundred [illegible] pounds. On the 9th of November 1881, [illegible] one hundred and ninety-four pounds [illegible] on Sprouston Dub.

On the lower water, [illegible] Mr. T. Taylor had a day of [illegible] Mr. Turner Farley, of Cairnbee [illegible] one hundred and eighty-two pounds.

In 1887, on the 12th of November [illegible] eleven fish, and on the 25th other ten. On the 10th of October Captain Bridges had fourteen, averaging [illegible] pounds.

HENDERSYDE PARK.

THE SLAP.—ON THE HENDERSYDE WATER.

SPROUSTON DUB.

In 1889, on the 22nd of November, Mr. T. Taylor had fourteen, averaging over eighteen pounds.

In 1891 Sir Richard had thirteen fish, totalling the same heavy weight; and in 1899, on the 21st of October, he had twelve, the latter score showing that there are still a few fish left in the Tweed.

As the Hendersyde property ends on the north bank, the Earl of Home comes in with the celebrated Birgham Dub at the top of his angling. On the south or English side of the river are the Upper and Lower Carham waters, let to the Earl of Home on a lease which expires in 1902, so that the Earl has command from both banks of twenty-eight splendid pools, their nearness to the sea ensuring a continuous supply of fresh fish both in spring and autumn.

In April, 1900, Lord Dunglass had ten fish during a week, five of which were got on the same day.

The big scores of the past that were made from Birgham Dub are associated with the recollections of many good fishermen, before whose names one has, alas! to write "the late," notably, Mr. Alfred Dennison, Lord Alexander Paget, and Mr. Malcolm, of Poltalloch, whose deeds are duly sung by Mr. Liddell in his "Lay of the Last Angler"; while he himself, in 1887, took upwards of two hundred fish from this one cast, when days of eight to thirteen fish were quite common events.

The Wark water follows that of Carham, usually let, and also the property of the Earl of Home; then Mr. G. T. Majoribanks comes in with the Lees or Lady Kirk water of eight good pools.

This is followed on the English side by Mr. Collingwood's Cornhill stretch, on which there are nine casts, all pretty good.

On the Scotch bank is the Earl of Haddington's Lennel water, commencing at Coldstream and going seawards for about a mile.

Below this comes the Paxton water of Colonel D. Milne-

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Home and let to Mr. Samuel Storey, which brings us to the tideway, where the angling is not of much account.

About a mile below Paxton House on the left bank the White Adder, noted for its trout, falls into the Tweed.

From the foregoing details it will be seen that the cream of the Tweed angling commences a little above Melrose and comes down to Coldstream—thirty miles of splendid water, the angling of which, if spring fish were only as plentiful as autumn ones, would bring in a far larger sum than is now obtained from the letting of the nets. Therefore, I can see no reason why the proprietors of the Tweed should not form a "combine" and follow the example of the Tay Syndicate.

The Tweed opens for the rod on the 1st of February, closing on the 30th of November—the longest open time of any river in Scotland. Netting begins on the 15th of February and continues till the 15th of September, and if that date were altered to the 1st of the month, the Tweed would soon be herself again.

The best angling months are February and the two following ones, and then from the 15th of September to the end of the season. An eighteen-foot rod is quite necessary, and knee boots for stepping in and out of the boats are required. As a gaff can only be used during the netting season, the landing net is nearly universally employed; likewise minnows, worms, and prawns can only be used during the netting period, a restriction which many anglers complain of as being unnecessary and vexatious.

Flies range in size from 6/0 to 9, these latter, which are of trout size, being tied on double hooks.

The favourites are Jock Scot, Wilkinson, Greenwell, Silver Grey, Durham Ranger, Blue and Silver Doctor, Dandy, Butcher, Sir Richard, Childers, White and Dun Wing, Toppy and Stevenson, though there are any quantity of other patterns that have been used successfully.

A lengthy, big river like the Tweed is sure to bring some

THE SHARPTLAW MILL STREAM,

With Newest Pattern of Punt Boat, and the late well-known James Kerse, Three Times Winner of the Professional Salmon Casting Tournament

THE SHARPITLAW MILL STREAM,

With Newest Pattern of Tweed Boat, and the late well-known James Kerss, Three Times Winner of the Professional Salmon Casting Tournament.

extra good fishermen to the front, and it cannot be dismissed without mentioning such names as Moody at Bemersyde, John Purdie, and John Richardson at the Pavilion, with George Wright, Hendrie, and Mark Johnson at Makerston, Sandie Purdie at Merton, Rob Kerss at Hendersyde, John Aitken at Rutherford, with Willie Scott and Robson at Birgham. These are (or were) all men admitted to be at the top of the tree in the handling of a rod or the management of a Tweed boat—fine hardy fellows and right pleasant companions, who were always ready to do their utmost to show sport, and as keen at it as if they themselves had the rod.

The falling off in the number of salmon is to be accounted for by hard netting by fixed engines round the coasts of the mouth, by hard poaching during the close time, by horrible pollutions, rendering disease more deadly than on other rivers, and by the improved methods of draining.

This latter evil is one, however, that admits of no remedy; the other three may be and should be easily lessened, and until that is done there can be no hope of once more seeing this splendid river what it was in the beginning of the last century.

First, the close time should be altered, and end on the 1st instead of on the 15th of September. Then, if *one* gunboat cannot protect the fish from the poachers, let the Government employ two or three, or even four, until the illegality has been suppressed.

As to the pollutions, the pollutors lie at the mercy of the proprietors, for every case of the sort is on all fours with the action brought by Lady Seafield and other Spey proprietors against the Speyside distillers; and with the decision given in this action staring them in the face, there are but few manufacturers who would care to confront the certain risk of defeat and the payment of heavy costs.*

From 1879 to 1892 there were 95,296 salmon, grilse, and

* See chapter on "The Spey," p. 208.

sea trout killed by disease and removed from the Tweed, which is much in excess of any other Scotch river, even allowing for the larger size of this one.

From 1808 to 1846—thirty-nine years—the average take of the nets was 140,000 salmon, grilse and sea trout.

From 1847 to 1885—another period of thirty-nine years—the average was 64,000, and nothing can indicate more clearly than these figures how much the river has deteriorated.

The most productive year of which any record exists was 1816, when 54,041 salmon, 120,594 grilse, and 62,074 sea trout were captured, or 236,709 fish. But then the Tweed and its tributaries can boast of no less than 320 miles of water frequented by salmon, grilse, and sea trout!

The proprietors of this river—and, indeed, of all the southern streams of Scotland—would warmly welcome a close time for trout, a matter so often talked of and so often nearly accomplished, but which has not at present become a fact.

In coming to the conclusion of my labours, I cannot help regretting that I have had so little space to give to this river, on which it would have been easy to write a whole book, as it fully deserves.

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