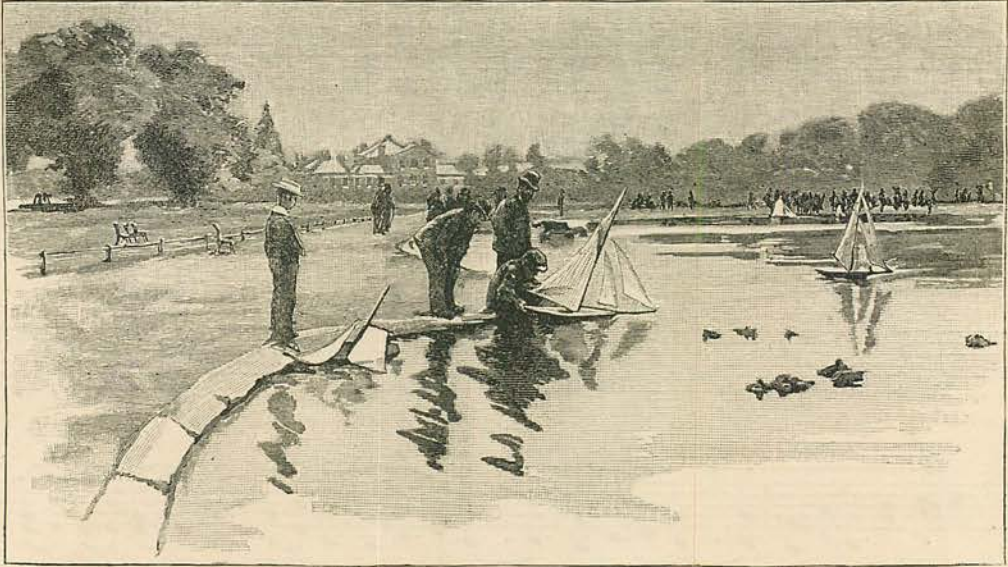


ROMANCE OF THE ROUND-POND.



AT THE ROUND-POND.

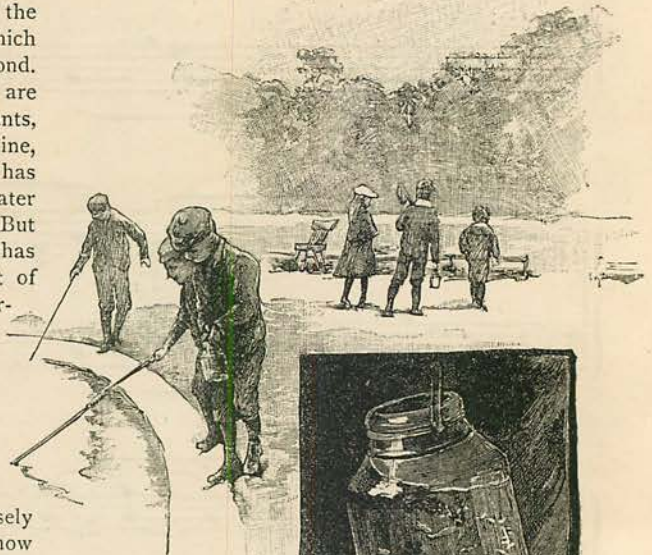


OF the many hundreds who daily frequent the Kensington Gardens care to trouble themselves about "the manners and customs" of the water-fowl which inhabit the Pond. Not that they are habitual tenants, for the Serpentine, further east, has at times greater attractions. But still, the Pond has a fair amount of resident water-

fowl, and to these we address our remarks. Beyond feeding them at its marge, and laughing at the cool manner in which a brood of ducklings will clamber up on to a becalmed yacht, nay, take a voyage should a breeze fill its sails, few care to inquire into the habits of the water-fowl at the hands of the intelligent keepers in charge.

Where all the ducks and their broods so closely resemble one another, it is marvellous to note how exactly a mother knows her own hatching, and how jealously and cruelly she persecutes an orphan or stray duckling which innocently seeks her protection. One day I carefully watched such a position, being attracted to the bank by the cries of the little stranger,

and its cruel treatment by its presumed mother. The poor little thing was "cheeping" piteously as it emerged from the frequent dive to escape the persecution of the mother duck, which pursued with feathers erect; the orphan dived, so did she, and the little

ROUND-POND
ANGLERS.

thing emerged more and more exhausted after each dive. At last matters reached a climax in the duck emerging from a dive with the orphan in her beak, seized by the neck. Giving it a rough shake, she threw it from her to one side, and with crest erect she swam away with her brood. The spectators rescued the exhausted duckling, and made it over to a keeper.

These ducks are mostly mallards (*Anas boschas*)

on the right hand side, looking southwards. But how do the tender broods of ducklings get down from their lofty nests in the Gardens? Their mothers, seizing them one by one by the neck, waddle downwards from branch to branch till the trunk is reached, and then each young one is dropped to the ground some ten or twelve feet. When each has thus been disposed of she flies down to the astonished brood, marshals it, and waddles off with the survivors to the



THE SWAN CHARGED IT WITH RUFFLED PLUMAGE.

descended from individuals placed on the water by the Ranger, the Duke of Cambridge; their proper feeding-ground is at the station of the Royal Humane Society on the Serpentine, and thither repair the strong birds daily, the weaker, and those with broods, remaining on the pond, and being fed by the visitors. At the approach of evening, these leave the water with their broods, and roost on the surrounding grass.

The nesting of these water-fowl is very wonderful, and few, who had not been eye-witnesses, would believe that they nidificate *in the trees of the park*. Two are special favourites; the fifth elm on the right hand side of the Broadwalk of the Gardens, below the slope, and a rugged trunk near the fountains of the Serpentine,

Pond, some hundred yards distant. I say survivors, because some are maimed by the fall, and are left to their fate by the cruel mother, and others die of concussion. This wonder has been frequently witnessed. Once on the Pond, the brood is at home.

Until quite recently, a swan was also on the Pond. He had incurred the futile wrath of the ducks by ruthlessly swallowing, at times, one or more of the ducklings; but ultimately, to their keen delight, judgment lighted on him in a manner quite unique, and, unless corroborated by eye-witnesses, incredible. A breeze was ruffling the Pond, and under its influence a toy yacht, in full sail, was tearing across while he was pruning his feathers in its centre. Apparently mistaking it

for a rival swan, or, in sheer mischief, he charged it with ruffled plumage, and received its bowsprit straight into his breast. He had not time to sing, as dying swans are said to, but expired from the unique injury. He has never been replaced, except, now and then, by a visitor from the Serpentine.

We must not leave the Pond without alluding to the excitement of the fishing season, which is well on in the summer, the fishers being the *gamins* of the neighbourhood, male and female; and the fished, the sticklebacks. The sporting papers open their columns to the skill and prowess of trout and salmon fishers; A., after a patient and wary struggle, has successfully brought a huge salmon to bank; B., on the other hand, has filled his basket with trout after two or three hours of fly-casting. But none record the wonders of

stickleback fishing, though its excitement brings enjoyment to hundreds of fishers, male and female. Here are no elaborate rods, reels, and flies; here no gigantic wading boots, nor wicker baskets; these fishers go forth with their twigs, thread, crooked pin, or small hook, a pickle bottle, filled with Pond water, to hold the captures, and a few earth worms dug out of the neighbouring turf, and then the sport begins on the margin of the Pond, and, with very slight effort, a dozen or more of these interesting and pugnacious little fishes are transferred to the bottle, and carried off in triumph to adorn and amuse, perhaps, the humble home with its marvels in nest building, so graphically described by the late lamented Rev. J. G. Wood.

R. F. HUTCHINSON, M.D.

BARBARA MERIVALE.

By ARABELLA M. HOPKINSON, Author of "The Probation of Dorothy Travers," "Vere Thornleigh's Inheritance," "A Woman's Strength," etc. etc.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTEENTH.

"ADIEU, BARBARA."



"THERE, sit down, Barbara; never mind the violin. Grace is out still, and will not be in just yet awhile, so we will enjoy a real good talk before you begin work. It seems ages since I saw you. Going abroad has certainly done you good; you look better,

and a trifle fatter, I think."

Barbara smiled. She had just returned from a month on the Continent with her uncle and aunt, Colonel and Mrs. Grey; the congenial companionship, the change, and the rest had benefited her greatly, and now she was seated in Mrs. Parry's drawing-room, braced and refreshed, to resume her lessons.

"You could not have gone for your holiday at a better time," continued that voluble lady. "Everyone has been in town, including myself and the girls, and Centrewood has been quite depopulated. And, oh! Barbara, I did long for you when I was listening to Malinowski; he is simply divine. But I must not begin talking music, or I shall never get through all I have to tell and discuss with you; and first and foremost, this affair of Mr. Richmond's. Did you ever hear anything so disgraceful as his conduct? Weren't you surprised?" looking hard at Barbara.

"Not very," answered Barbara, quite calmly and collectedly. The name of Richmond had no longer power to set her heart beating and her pulses throbbing. "I met them both and Lady Tancroft at Baveno, and although I only had a glimpse of them—

they went away the next day—I fancied, somehow, that there was something between them."

"Very unpleasant for him, meeting you. For aught he knew, you might have written to Miss Denzil, and told her you had met him and Miss Parton together."

"Yes, he tried to avoid me, which was easy enough; but even if I had written to Miss Denzil, there would have been really nothing to tell her. She knew he was abroad with Lady Tancroft, and there was nothing wonderful in Miss Parton joining the party. Lady Tancroft always likes to have a girl with her, and Miss Parton is a very cheerful, bright kind of girl. It seemed a most natural arrangement."

"Well, of course, he has behaved abominably, and there is no doubt that he is marrying only for money. I hear Miss Parton is immensely rich, and that altogether he is very far from high-principled. Colonel Parry tells me there are all kinds of stories afloat about him here in the village—but really I cannot help congratulating him on having broken with Miss Denzil. A cold, shallow woman, who thinks of nothing but dress; how could a warm-hearted, genial man like Mr. Richmond be happy with her? Impossible!"

"He knew what she was like before he was engaged to her," said Barbara sternly. "They were cousins, and extremely intimate."

"Very remote cousins," rejoined Mrs. Parry. "Oh, pray! don't think I wish to defend him. Of course, his conduct is atrocious, but really, I would as soon marry a statue as Miss Denzil; and I don't wonder at his getting out of it."

Barbara said nothing. She was not going to find fault with the man she had once loved, worthless and unprincipled as she knew him now to be, dead as was her love for him. But her heart was full of pity for Minnie, who had loved him, as she knew by instinct,