

FISH AS FOOD, AND FACTS ABOUT FISHING.

By MEDICUS.



HERE are two proverbs which one keeps on encountering almost every day *ad nauseam*. One is, "Prevention is better than cure"; the other is Mrs. Glass's—"First catch your hare." I cannot say that these

proverbs are devoid of utility; but to have them constantly dinned in our ears, or displayed before our eyes, is somewhat tiresome, to say the very least of it.

Nevertheless, pray forgive your "Medicus" for beginning this paper by saying, "First catch your fish."

Well, fishing is one of the few sports I myself really delight in, and as I believe health and nerve are to be found on the river's bank, by the brink of the lake, or afloat in a little boat on a summer's early morn or evening on the sea's heaving breast, I must be at least permitted to recommend fishing to my girl readers as a pastime.

There may be some of you who would object to fishing on the score of its apparent cruelty. I have no desire to lecture either on cruelty, or on death, or the mystery of pain. Suffice it to say that while the former should not exist, the two latter are bound up in the history of every creature that breathes. Indeed, every footstep we take out of doors means pain and death (or change of existence) to some of the lower forms of creation. I cannot take my spade to dig in the garden without cutting in two some harmless earthworm. I may feel for what I have done, but can neither help nor alter it, nor dare I say 'tis wrong. For here comes in the mystery of pain, which will not be revealed to me nor to any of us in this world, where we see "all dark and dim as through a glass."

There is no wanton cruelty in fishing as a rule. Fish are given to us for our use, and probably the death they die when taken out of the water is no more painful than that which would be their lot in it.

I may just add that when, fishing with the line, large fish are caught, they ought to be stunned by a blow. This your boatman can do; and I invariably kill trout as soon as taken out of the water.

Sea-fishing, either with the rod and line (bait or a white fly made of feathers or ever wool), is very enjoyable, and adds greatly to the pleasure of a summer holiday. All round by the coasts of Devon and Cornwall, and almost anywhere on the western shores of Scotland, but especially among the Hebridean Islands, sea-fishing may be had in abundance, and at no greater expense than simply the boat-hire. I could hardly recommend cod-fishing by the hand-line to my fair readers, great as the pleasure is of feeling a lordly denizen of the deep tugging at your line. I have been almost hauled out of the boat by such fish. But there are many other kinds of fish to be got by the rod and fly, fishing either from the boat or from the rocks.

I can, from experience, recommend the islands of Skye and Lewis for the extreme healthfulness of the climate in summer, the bracingness of the air, and the certainty of enjoying good fishing. If living in any country village or parish, the best plan is to make friends with some little sporting gillie. I have known boys not bigger than Commodore Nutt who were perfectly *au fait* in

busking hooks, in making and mounting lines, and in gathering bait, and who knew all the very best places to fish, both among the rocks and from the cobble. These wiry wee urchins were as faithful as dogs are. They would row the boat, and when the evening sport was over they would carry home the basket or creel, and the remuneration given, however small, never failed to make them jump for joy.

In fishing at sea it is best to dress for the occasion. A warm jacket of pilot cloth should be worn, and a skirt not easily soiled, for from some of the sea fish a slime comes off which turns white when it dries. The stockings ought to be warm, hand made, and the boots impervious to water. The sea air is not only extremely bracing and tonic, but towards evening it is apt to strike chilly, so beware.

If you were to climb any of the Scottish mountains, say, among the Grampians, you could count sometimes as many as from twelve to twenty little Highland lakes. They nearly all swarm with trout. They are preserved, but you will generally manage to obtain permission to fish. A light, strong rod and good line are to be used, with a suitable fly or two. Here again you would find a gillie handy, for he would, in all probability, know the sort of fly to suit the water and the weather.

I have fished all day by myself in a river and caught little to boast of. Next day I have been guided by a bare-legged urchin of some nine summers old to a tiny brown mountain streamlet, where I shortly filled my bag, where the trout positively seemed glad I had come, so wantonly did they leap to my flies.

Whether the air be bracing or not, fishing is a calmativè pastime. It is therefore eminently suited for all cases of nervousness caused by over-work and worry.

I must now speak of fish as food. I presume it is hardly my province to say anything about the cooking of fish. It is a pity, however, that more attention is not paid to this matter. I do not think I am wrong in saying that fifty per cent. of the fish served at our tables are good food spoiled. Boiled, they are too often over-done; fried, they are generally smothered in unwholesome grease.

There is one thing to recommend fish as an article of diet for thousands of work-a-day girls in this country, and that is its cheapness.

Granting even that it has not the flesh-producing constituents of beef and mutton, with vegetables and bread, fish will be found a most sustaining diet. No one, I believe, will say that the dwellers in seaside villages do not look as well as, if not better, than their beef-eating countrymen who dwell in the interior. The fresh air they breathe, you may tell me, largely accounts for their wholesome, healthful appearance. To some extent, perhaps; but you cannot live on air alone, be it ever so fresh and pure.

Yes, fish is cheap, not half the price of meat, and it is bound to be more so as time goes on. The wealth that lies around our coasts is hardly appreciated yet, and it is virtually inexhaustible, nor do fish require to be bred and fed, as do the cattle in our fields and the sheep on our hills.

Fish may be eaten by the invalid, and by the most delicate. Indeed, some dyspeptics are so weak in the digestive organs that butchers' meat cannot be partaken of without a feeling of great discomfort following, owing to irritation of the stomach caused by ineffectual attempts to break down and dissolve the meaty fibres. But judiciously

chosen, well-cooked fish will support life and health in the very weakest.

Different kinds of fish.—I myself dearly like almost every sort when properly cooked. When in Africa and India I was never tired of trying new kinds; very few indeed were inedible, and those few were taken from stagnant or semi-stagnant waters—quiet, lazy, sleepy, bottom fish.

Flying fish is the *most delicious of tid bits*. In taste they are somewhat between a herring and a salmon-trout, but far more delicate in flavour. They fly on board ships in the tropics when a light is displayed.

Porpoise belongs to the whale or *Cetacean* order—not fish, but sea-flesh of excellent flavour, especially if one is hungry.

Dare I mention shark? Well, I will not, though I have been glad to see it on the table before now. But to come nearer home, the dog fish belongs to the *Squalidæ* or shark family. He is no beauty to look at, and fishermen do not care for him. I do not know that these fish are eaten in England, but in the markets of the far north of Scotland you will find them smoke-dried like haddies, and wholesome, delicious eating they are.

Skate.—I have an idea some cruelty is perpetrated in the crimping process, so when I buy skate I buy one whole—only with the head off, for the countenance is not prepossessing.

Girls who frequent the sea-shore must be familiar enough with those small square, brown leather-like cases with four horns like a butcher's tray. They are called sea-purses, or skate barrows, for the young skate is deposited herein, but wriggles out when big enough.

But skate—especially, I think, when cold—is very good eating, and it is wholesome, nutritious, and easily digested.

I have been assured that skate or haddock (fresh) eaten with plenty of mustard is a panacea for rheumatism. I know it is a commonly adopted cure with some fisher-folk in the north. If it really does do good, it ought to be well known, and it is possible that the phosphorus contained in these fishes exerts a beneficial action on the system, while the mustard would induce an open state of the pores of the skin, or perspiration itself, thus enabling the blood to get rid of the superabundance of acid which is well known to be the primary cause of rheumatism. I shall be glad to hear from any girl, young or not young, who has given this "cure" a trial.

There is a fish which forms a favourite dish with Scotch people, but is seldom seen in English markets, though it is excellent food. It is the *Callionymus Lyra* or *Dracunculus* (the name may be difficult to swallow, but the fish is not). They call it the gowdie in the North, from its golden colour perhaps. I believe it is the skulpin of Cornwall.

For breakfast, if one is in good health, nothing can be better than the herring. Fresh herring should be eaten with vinegar and pepper. Salt or barrelled herring may be boiled, previously being steeped for a time in water. Mild, smoke-cured red herring makes a capital breakfast dish; so does the bloater; but best of all is the kipper.

We can buy kippered salmon for about five-pence a pound, and when not too salt they make a nice relish.

Then comes the dried haddock. Formerly the Scotch had most of the trade in this dainty, and even now nothing can compare in flavour to the Aberdeen, Whitehills, or

Bervie haddock. They are smoked; there is no sham about it. They are not stained yellow with turmeric, and subsequently painted with a kind of acid that gives them a smoky flavour.

Dried sprats form another delightful relish for breakfast, and they are always wondrous cheap.

But even for breakfast the delicate and the dyspeptic should steer clear of any oily fish, such as herring or salmon.

Some kinds of tinned fish are well suited for breakfast when the ordinary market kind cannot be got. Tinned salmon is usually excellent. Of course, there are brands and brands. I would advise a fair price being paid for an article that can be highly recommended.

Sardines are also excellent as a breakfast dish. I advise their being fried, and if a dust of curry powder be shaken over them while still in the pan, it will make them all the more palatable. They ought to be served very hot, and eaten with dry buttered toast, with vinegar or a squeeze of a lemon.

Another wholesome breakfast fish is the

dried fluke or dab. They ought to be roasted before the fire.

Fried soles* contain much nutriment; unfortunately they are dear fish. Tinned lobster makes a good breakfast dish also. For dinner, fish of almost any kind may be eaten, but the delicate should avoid oily fishes, such as the plaice, mackerel, or salmon. Invalids should eat only such things as turbot, brill, cod, haddock, mullet, and sole. They should make fish for dinner a fish dinner only, and not eat meat afterwards. But soup may be taken, and vegetables or a curried egg with spinach, and a little nice salad may follow, or even game or fowl may be allowed. But I repeat, most good is done when a fish dinner is a fish dinner.

And now a few words, in conclusion, about fish for supper. To commence with, I may say that many delicate people cannot eat fish of any kind with the evening meal without suffering from acidity and consequent sleeplessness.

* For the delicate or invalid, they must be filleted or boiled.

Oysters—a few, with brown bread-and-butter—come first on the roll. But oysters are dear. Lobster and crayfish are fairly good, but not over digestible. I really never consider a lobster worth the money that is paid for it.

A nice heavy little crab, properly mixed with mustard, pepper, and vinegar, makes a supper dish fit for an Oriental monarch. It is not indigestible; it is extremely nutritious, and delicious eating. And crabs are not expensive.

Eels.—Stewed eels are excellent for either breakfast or for an early supper. But dyspeptics must give them a wide berth. I seldom see the conger eel in this country. It is nevertheless, when well cooked, most wholesome and good.

Some potted fishes do well for supper, such as potted char or tinned codfish.

Well, we have a large variety of shell-fish, independent of the aristocratic oyster. We have whelks, limpets, winkles, mussels, and several others, all good, all nutritious, and digestible when well cooked.

To know how to cook fish well, attend a cookery class.

COURTLEROY.

By ANNE BEALE.

CHAPTER XLI. CHRISTMAS DAY.



AFTER storm, sunshine; after despair, hope. The Prettymans were at Summerlands again. They came almost unexpectedly, and everybody rejoiced, except, perhaps, Mr. Le Roy. But he did not put himself to any inconvenience about them, though he expressed himself bored by their near neighbourhood. Miss Heath came with them, and Mimica was not long before she paid them a visit. It was the end of November when they arrived, for they had been previously to the seaside, and they said they meant to have "A merry Christmas."

"Georgie will be down for Christmas," said Mrs. Prettyman. "Indeed, it was he who made us come. He says he saw nothing of you, Mimica. He went to Patrick's wedding, and has heard from him since he and Biddy reached Ireland. Of course, Mr. Prettyman has set them up, and Georgie couldn't do enough for them. He is the very nicest and most attractive, and—"

"Now, my dear, let Miss Marmont judge for herself," broke in Mr. Prettyman. "We are always in heroics when Georgie is mentioned. But he really is a wonderful young man, and brave as a lion. Isn't he, Miss Heath?"

"Certainly, Mr. Prettyman," said sententious Milly.

If Mr. Le Roy did his best to obstruct the intercourse between Mimica and her adopted brother, these friends tried to remove the obstruction.

George duly arrived for the Christmas week, and was a hero to the neighbourhood. Everybody called upon him and fêted him except Le Roy. He suddenly shut himself up again, and said the weather was too cold for visitin:-

when Mimica urged him to call at Summerlands.

"Besides," he added, "I did not know the Prettymans in town: why should I make their acquaintance here?"

"But you knew Mr. Hope!" she said.

"Slightly—as a boy. I hate young men."

Nevertheless, George came to Courtleroy, and by the fascination of his manners and the open-hearted simplicity of his mind, drew its master towards him in spite of his antagonism. The snow was on the ground when he paid his first visit, and Le Roy chanced to be seated within his screen in the hall. He heard the pleased welcome of Barber, and came forward to meet him.

"I must apologise for coming uninvited," he said, "but I wanted to thank you for so kindly sending me to Prestbury when I was here last; it gave me the opportunity of seeing something of Mimica. But I suppose I must learn to call her Miss Marmont now! It will be difficult, after so many years of intimacy."

In vain Le Roy sought for words to say that he considered the change indispensable; he caught the winning smile and frank look of the blue eyes, and could only smile in return. Mrs. Prettyman was right, nor man nor woman could resist George Hope. Mimica came in radiant with delight, and her uncle watched the meeting with something of envy, mingled with a kind of displeasure; he saw how George clasped both the hands, and how the eyes met in mutual and happy affection.

"They are only brother and sister, of course," he thought. "The disparity is on the wrong side, and he is so young."

"I am off again the beginning of the year," said George. "Whether to Africa, China, or India is not settled; but there are rumours of wars everywhere. I wish they would cease."

"And what would become of you?" asked Le Roy.

"I would turn my sword into a ploughshare," he replied. "The padre and madre would be right glad."

"He quite forgets his uncertain position," thought Le Roy.

He also forgot it as he began to talk to

George. The charm which had conquered him at the Crystal Palace won him now, and, before the visit was over, he found himself asking him to come again.

"Perhaps you will come and see us first," said George. "We have our little pride, and we should all feel that you really wished to see me, if you would come to Summerlands. Of course I shall be only too happy to come here under any circumstances."

Once more that manner and smile subdued Le Roy, and he promised to call on Mr. Prettyman when the cold was less severe. As to Mimica, she looked on, listened, and wondered. But no sooner had George departed than Le Roy regretted the promise he had made. Still, having made it, he kept it, and walked with Mimica to Summerlands the following morning. They found only Mrs. Prettyman and Miss Heath, and the visit was rather more awkward than agreeable; still, Mimica felt that the ice was broken. Mrs. Prettyman could talk of nothing but George, and Miss Heath's monosyllables did not help on conversation, so Mr. Le Roy was less communicative than usual, and Mimica was glad when it was over.

Christmas morning saw a large congregation at Courtleroy Church. The weather was frosty and clear, the Lestes had returned to their customary cheerfulness, and rich and poor rejoiced together on the festival which celebrates the birth of the gentle child Jesus. The church was prettily decorated, and even Le Roy seemed cheerful and more at home in the sacred building than he had been previously. George Hope was the "observed of all observers," and after service was surrounded by friends. The Carews were foremost in congratulations, and even his old enemy, Bully, now in the diplomatic service, welcomed him. But Montague was not there; he had caught cold, and had been advised to remain at home.

"A merry Christmas, Le Roy," shouted Sir Joshua. "I hear you have called at Summerlands, and want to know when you mean to honour us. It don't do to make cheese of one and chalk of another, you know;