



A P R I L.

FLY-FISHING, NEAR HADDON HALL, DERBYSHIRE.

"No man should in honesty catch a trout till the middle of March," quoth the father of anglers, quaint, philosophical old Izaak Walton; and, in obedience to their master, all true brethren of the angle have by long usage fixed the 14th of March for fly-fishing to begin. The leaf-buds now give out the first evidences of returning spring. Around the village church the jack-daw comes again—the marsh fitmouse begins to raise its note; and, of all nature's signs of spring—the most watched for by the trout-fisher, various flies appear. The trolling-rod now gives place to its more pliant compeer, and floats, plummet, snags, and gorge-hooks are supplanted by hackles and flies. All the mysteries of a fly-fisher's wallet are now displayed, with varied spoils of bird and beast lying ready to the angler's practised hand, as from their gaudy colours he contrives mimic resemblances of the insect tribes who flutter over rippling streams. And learnedly does the "Complete Angler" discuss these things, telling how to weave "the lower fur of a squirrel's tail with the wing of the grey feather of the drake—the hairs of Isabella: coloured mohair, and the wings of a bright mallard's feather"—and a hundred other such compounds for constructing "an admirable fly, and in great repute as a killer." Learned piscatorial disquisitions are indulged in, too, as to the flies best suited for each successive month; but here a golden rule presents itself. Let the angler watch the insects which hover over the stream where he seeks his sport—let him catch one and imitate its size, shape, and colour, and then he has the bait at which the fish will bite most readily. The fly-rod, says good authority, should be about twelve feet three inches long, and about fourteen ounces in weight. It must not be top-heavy, nor must it have too much play in the lower part, but the play should be just in proportion to the gradual tapering, by which there will be very little spring, till after about the third foot of its length. A rod too pliable is as bad a fault as being too stiff; and, from being too small, there is, of course, more liable to be top-heavy, which nine rods in ten are; the consequence is, they tire the hand, and do not drop the fly so neatly. Colonel Hawker has best described the proper mode of practising the art. He says, "In throwing a fly, raise the arm well up, without labouring with your body, send the fly backwards by a sudden spring of the wrist. Do not draw the fly too near, or you lose your purchase for sending it back, and therefore require an extra sweep in the air before you can get it into play again. If, after sending it back, you make the counter spring a moment too soon, you will whip off your tail-fly, and if a moment too late, your line will fall in a slovenly manner. The knack of catching this time is, therefore, the whole art of throwing well. The motion should be just sufficiently circular to avoid this; but if too circular, the spring receives too much check, and the gut will then most probably not drop before the silk line. In a word, allow the line no more time than just to unfold before you retreat the spring of the wrist; this must be done, or you will hear a crack, and find you have just whipped off your tail-fly. For this reason I should recommend beginners to learn at first with only a bob, or they will soon empty their own or their friend's fishing-book; and, at all events, to begin learning with a moderate length of line."

Thus much for the practice of fly-fishing, and now a word for our illustration of it. The angler here whips one of the best trout streams in England—the old baronial residence of the Vernons, the "Kings of the Peak," standing in picturesque stateliness upon a neighbouring eminence. The Wye flows at his feet—now all quiet and placid, floating a lucid mirror above its bright pebbly bed—anon dashing over some rocky impediment in tiny cascades, then coursing swiftly through a narrow, or streaming all impetuous down some sloping course, until again it floats placidly, as its waters expand and deepen. From its source near Buxton, through its course by Ashford, Bakewell, and Haddon, until it falls into the Derwent at Rowsly, it affords trout worthy of all the praises of old Izaak; while the scenery around is rich in variety of hill and slope and dale, with here and there rocks rising in

bold prominence, and giving that character to the landscape which renders Derbyshire one of the most interesting and picturesque of the counties of England.

QUOITS.

This game is much played during April. It does not depend so much upon superior strength as upon superior skill. The quoit has evidently derived its origin from the ancient *discus*; at the present day, it is a circular plate of iron, perforated in the middle, not always of the same size, but suited to the strength and convenience of the several candidates.

To play at this game, an iron pin, called a hob, is driven into the ground, within a few inches of the top; and at the distance of eighteen, twenty, or more yards, for the distance is optional, a second pin of iron is also made fast in a similar manner, and two or more persons who are to contend for the victory, stand at one of the iron marks, and throw an equal number of quoits to the other, and those nearest to the hob are reckoned towards the game. Having cast all their quoits, the candidates walk to the opposite side, and determine the state of the play, then, taking their stand there, throw their quoits back again, and continue to do so alternately until the game is decided.

The most skilful stroke in this game is what is termed *ringing the quoit*: that is, casting it in such a manner that the hole in the middle shall fall exactly on the top of the hob.

It appears that quoits are used as implements of war by the Seikhs, an independent and martial tribe in India. Captain Mundy says, "The Seikhs have a great variety of weapons. I observed the musket, matchlock, sword, spears of sundry forms, daggers, and battle-axe; but the arm that is exclusively peculiar to this sect is the quoit: it is made of beautiful thin steel, sometimes inlaid with gold; in using it, the warrior twirls it swiftly round the fore-finger, and launches it with such deadly aim, as, according to their own account, to be sure of his man at eighty paces."

ANGLING.

A SOCIETY has recently been formed, under the sanction of the Lord Mayor as Conservator of the Thames, for the purpose of preserving the fish of that river, by preventing the use of illegal nets, and putting a stop to other unfair practices, which have been long resorted to for their destruction. Deep has been staked, and other plans are in progress, to secure sport for the angler. If the society be supported as it ought to be by all who delight in the healthful and tranquil amusement, the Thames will, within a short period, become as unequalled for sport and enjoyment, as for its interest and beauty.

Upon the banks of the Thames the noblest of British worthies have lived, flourished, and died. Scarcely can we stand upon a spot that is not hallowed ground; or contemplate an object unassociated with some triumph of the mind. Thus the angler, while enjoying his sport, is revelling with nature, or with memory—the present, or the past.

Who loves not his own company,
Will feel the weight of't many a day.

COWLEY.

The increasing warmth of the weather, brings also increase of sport; with tench, perch, trout, roach, carp, gudgeons, flounders, bleak, minnows, and eels. Barbel, pike, chub, ruffe, and dace, spawn.

In April, the green tail and gravel flies come out: they are soon out of season, the former continuing not more than a week, and the latter about a fortnight. The black gnat, which continues till the end of May, and the stone fly complete this month's list.

The Aquatic Season commences; the various Yacht Clubs hold meetings and settle preliminaries for the matches of the season.