



THE PIKE.

## THE TYRANT OF THE LAKE.

**T**HE form of the pike (*Esox lucius*) indicates its great power and activity in its native element. It ploughs the water with extraordinary energy, and darts upon its prey with the velocity of an arrow; there is a sudden flash, circle after circle forms on the surface of the water, but all is still again in an instant.

No fish is more wary and watchful than the pike; shrouded from observation in his solitary retreat, he follows with his eye the motions of the shoals of fish that wander heedlessly along, he marks

the water-rat swimming to its burrow, the ducklings paddling among the water-weeds, the dab-chick and the moor-hen leisurely swimming over the surface. He selects his victim, and, like the tiger springing from the jungle, he rushes forth, seldom, indeed, missing his aim.

Of the daring and ferocity of this fish many authenticated instances are on record. Gesner relates, that a man going to a pond (where it seems a pike had devoured all the fish) to water his mule, had a pike bite his mule by the lips, to which the pike hung so fast that the mule drew him out of the water, and by that accident the mule angled out the pike.

And the same Gesner observes, that a maid in Poland had a pike bite her by the foot, as she was washing clothes in a pond. And I have heard of the like of a woman in Killingworth pond, not far from Coventry. But I have been assured by my friend, Mr. Seagrave, who keeps tame otters, that he hath known a pike in extreme hunger fight with one of his otters for a carp that the otter had caught, and was then bringing out of the water. Dr. Plot states, that at Trentham, Staffordshire, a pike seized the head of a swan, as she was feeding under water, and gorged so much of it that both fish and swan perished; the keepers, perceiving the swan fixed with its head under water for an unusual time, took a boat to go to the bird's assistance, but it was too late. Mr. Jesse says: "The present head-keeper of Richmond Park was once washing his hand over the side of a boat, in the great pond in that park, when a pike made a dart at it, and he had but just time to withdraw it." Mr. Jesse adds, that "a gentleman now residing in Weybridge, in Surrey, walking one day by the side of the river Wey, near that town, saw a large pike in a shallow creek. He immediately pulled off his coat, tucked up his shirt-sleeves, and went into the water to interrupt the return of the fish into the river, and to endeavour to throw it out on the bank by getting his hands under it. During the attempt the pike, finding he could not make his escape, seized one of the arms of the gentleman, and lacerated it so much that the marks of the wound are still visible."

Two gentlemen were fishing at Sheperton, for barbel, when the bait was taken by a roach, which, in its turn, was instantly seized by a pike. The line was drawn in, the pike continuing its hold upon the small fish till near the water's edge, when it suddenly leaped from its victim and threw itself on the bank, when both pike and roach were captured. The pike weighed 9lbs., and, on opening it, in its stomach were found three small

fish, a water-rat, and a young moor-hen. The voracity of the pike is connected with its rapidity of growth, which necessitates an abundant supply of nutriment, and involves at the same time extreme celerity of digestion. A young pike is recorded to reach to the length of about eight inches during the first year, to that of twelve or fourteen during the second year, and of eighteen or twenty inches during the third; after this its increase for several successive years, where stores of food are abundant, is at the rate of three or four pounds per year. Eight pike, of about five pounds each, have been ascertained to devour eight hundred gudgeons in three weeks. Some idea from this may be formed of the havoc this fish must make in the meres, lakes, or rivers, in which it is plentiful, and of the necessity of encouraging the breeds of inferior fishes, as the bream and others, for its due maintenance.

The pike not only lives to an extreme age, but attains to extraordinary dimensions. Pennant speaks of one ninety years of age, and Gesner notices a pike taken at Hailbrun, in Suabia, in 1497, with a brazen ring attached to it, or which was inscribed, in Greek characters, "I am the fish which was first of all put into the lake by the hands of the governor of the universe, Frederick the Second, the 5th of October, 1230." This fish must therefore have been at least 267 years old. It is said to have weighed 350 pounds.

In the lakes of Scotland and Ireland, pike weighing from fifty to seventy pounds have occasionally been taken, and Horsea Mere, and Heigham Sounds, two large sheets of water in Norfolk, have been long celebrated for the size and excellence of their pike, and also for their abundance.

It must not be supposed that the larger pike are, the better is their flesh for the table; Walton rightly says: "Old or very great pikes have in them more of state than goodness; the smaller or

middling-sized pikes being, by the most and choicest palates, observed to be the best meat."

In warm and sunny weather, the pike mostly swims near the surface, and may be often seen luxuriating in the sunbeams, lulled into a sort of slumber. It is not difficult at such times to draw a wire noose, fastened to the end of a rod or long staff, over its head or body, and land it by a sudden jerk.

Pike are taken by spinning or by trolling; and in large sheets of water, in Norfolk, by liggers or trimmers, that is, a baited hook attached to a line, secured to and wound round a float of rushes, a due portion of the line only

being free, and sufficiently secured from alteration by being caught between the rushes, or in a notch of a wooden float, sometimes used instead of the rush float. This is put into the water, and when the bait is seized by the fish, the jerk disengages the line from its slight security, and the whole is unwound to the float, which latter indicates the occurrence.

The jaws and palate of the pike are most formidably armed with sharp teeth of various sizes, the form of the body is elongated, and the dorsal fin is placed far back. The pike has various names in our language, as pickerel, luce or lucie, and, in Scotland, gedd. Pike, of small size, are often called jack.



## THE MALAGASY.

MADAGASCAR lies to the south-east of the African continent, and is as large as England, Scotland, and Ireland united. From north to south it is about 950 miles, and an average of 300 miles from east to west. It was first visited by Europeans about 360 years ago, though it had been known for centuries before to the Moors and Arabs, which people carried on with it a considerable trade.

The Malagasy consist of several tribes, but are now blended into one nation. There are two principal races—one of a black colour, with almost negro features; the other of a brown tint, with a Malay cast of visage. Of the latter are the Hovahs, who are a superior class, and the rulers of the land.

A civilised race are the Malagasy: their natural politeness is much commended by travellers. "They are a most courteous people," says one who lived among them, "and have often a

marked dignity and ease of manner not at all common in other lands. In journeying, as a passer-by sees an acquaintance at the door of his house, it would be rude to proceed without saying, 'Allow me to pass, sir;' to which the reply is given, 'Pray proceed, sir.' Then generally follow, 'How are you?' 'How is it with you?' 'May you live, and reach old age!' If it be a person of rank who is at his door, the address is, 'Is it well, sir?' and the common reply is, 'Well indeed.'" Travelling to distant parts is commonly performed in a sort of palanquin.

The Malagasy are generally temperate in their habits, and do not indulge in a great variety of food. A meal in the forenoon, and another at sunset—rice being the chief article on the table—are the usual daily allowance.

The dress of the Malagasy is very simple. The general warmth of the climate makes a European style of clothing, with its tight and close fit, very unsuitable, and the native dress is scanty, loose, and flowing. In the army or