

**RECOLLECTIONS OF FLY FISHING
FOR SALMON, TROUT, AND
GRAYLING, WITH NOTES ON
THEIR HAUNTS, HABITS, AND
HISTORY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649128037

Recollections of fly fishing for salmon, trout, and grayling, with notes on their haunts, habits, and history by Edward Hamilton

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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BY
EDWARD HAMILTON, M.D., F.L.S., &c.



ILLUSTRATED BY A MEZZOTINT ENGRAVING BY FRANCIS SEYMOUR HADEN, ESQ., AND FIVE FULL PAGE WOOD ENGRAVINGS FROM SKETCHES BY THE AUTHOR.

Second Edition.

LONDON:
SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, AND CO., LIMITED,
St. Dunstan's House,
FETTER LANE, FLEET STREET, E.C.
1891.

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“Thus shall memory often in dreams sublime
Catch a glimpse of the days that are over.
Thus, sighing, look through the waves of Time
For the long faded glories they cover.”

51760
H3
1891



PREFACE.

THEY be mighty partikler now-a-days, bean't they, sir? not like when I was a boy;" was the remark of the old keeper (man and boy on the river for forty years) who had been watching my vain efforts to inveigle a big trout greedily sucking in the natural fly and apparently totally regardless of the beautiful and perfect imitation I was persistently presenting to him, the only notice of which he deigned to take was an occasional turn of his head, just to satisfy himself that he was being imposed upon. I had tried him with the dry, the wet, and the sunk fly—had changed from one fly to another till I was tired—and had just given up the fruitless task as these words greeted my ears :

"Mighty particular, indeed, they are; it is

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evident that the higher education has extended to the trout; and the schoolmasters, in the shape of numberless fishermen, constantly presenting the artificial fly to their gaze, have taught these beautiful and bold members of the salmon family to distinguish the real from the unreal, and which knowledge, if effective means are not found, will in all probability enable the fish to beat the fisher. It is only when the May fly is on the water that the trout appear to lose this newly-acquired sense, and we then see the great lords of the stream taking almost any counterfeit of this fly; in fact at that time the trout appear to give way to the detestable vice of gluttony, and become idiotic."

What, then, is to be done? We must set our wits to work to circumvent this disregard to all our efforts at imitation, and the best way to do this is to record the experiences which all who throw the fly over salmon, trout, or grayling (if they observe as they should observe when at the river side) must necessarily acquire, for the benefit of their brother fly-fishers; thus many a wrinkle might be registered whereby the fisherman may still hope to keep the upper hand.¹

¹ There can be no better means of recording facts and experiences than by the "Fishing Gazette," which is published weekly, and is a most excellent channel of communication between fishermen of all denominations.

It is with this motive that the following pages have been put into print. As a fly-fisher for over forty years—at one time wandering on the banks of our southern streams, intent on “trouts bedropped wi’ crimson hail;” at another casting a line over the deep pools and glorious rapids of our northern rivers to lure the “stately sawmont” or dashing sea trout; or revelling in the beautiful valleys and streams where that “lady of the stream,” the thyme-smelling grayling, loves to dwell—I have jotted down, from time to time, hints and suggestions imparted by others, as well as observations of my own, on the fish, the flies, and the floods.

From long experience I have generally found that there was something to be learnt from my brother fishermen—some peculiar fad, some particular fly, some hint as to the weather or the water—which has helped me many a time, when otherwise I might have gone home with an empty basket; for the maxim holds good in the matter of fishing as in everything else: “The first step to be wise is to know that we are ignorant.”

Byron says—

“A book’s a book, although there’s nothing in it;”
and probably to many the present little volume may illustrate this line; but a little knowledge may sometimes be gained where least expected.

At any rate, I have put my notes together, and have done what Burns hinted Captain Grose would do—

“A chield’s amang you taking notes,
And, faith, he’ll prent it.”

To the kindness and generosity of my friend Mr. Seymour Haden, I am indebted for the beautiful mezzotint of a Salmon Pool, which he has engraved expressly for this work. Mr. Haden adds to his many accomplishments that of a most observant and successful fly-fisher.

The woodcuts are from sketches made on the spot by myself during some of my fishing expeditions.

