

**RED PALMER: A  
PRACTICAL TREATISE  
ON FLY FISHING**

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Red Palmer: A Practical Treatise on Fly Fishing by James Tayler

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**JAMES TAYLER**

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JAMES TAYLER.

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DEAR DR. BRUNTON,

I dedicate this little book to you, knowing that you have proved yourself to be one of the most skilful anglers of the present day; while all anglers who have the pleasure of your acquaintance know you to be a most genial and intelligent member of the craft, always ready to promote its interest, and to communicate the result of your great researches and experience to your fellow-fishermen.

Yours faithfully and respectfully,

JAMES TAYLER.

To J. BRUNTON, Esq., M.A., M.D.

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# FLY-FISHING.

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## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTION.

HAVING read papers on Fly-fishing before the Gresham and Islington Angling Societies, and contributed occasional articles to the fishing periodicals, I have been persuaded by some of the members of those societies to publish my ideas on the subject, and I now submit them to the public, premising that the following treatise is neither historic nor scientific, but simply an endeavour to communicate what nearly fifty years of practice and careful observation have taught me to consider as correct principles in a concise and practical form. Trusting that it will be received as such, and will be of some assistance to young anglers in cultivating that, which, we are assured by the highest authority on angling, is "an art worth learning."

In preparing this short treatise I have assumed, what is generally admitted by fishermen, that catching trout with an artificial fly is the highest branch of the piscatorial art; for, although some bottom-fishers and spinners claim that as much skill is required in their branch as is in fly-fishing, yet I think the palm must be yielded to the fly-fisher. It differs in many respects from all other kinds. The greatest care

must be taken not to scare the fish, either by the sight of the angler or his shadow, or by awkwardness in managing the rod, line, and flies. You have only to watch a fly-fisher and a bottom-fisher a short time to decide where the greatest skill is required and attained.

I recollect, when a very little boy, having a book, in which there was a coloured print of a trout, and underneath were these lines—

"Angler, mind well what you're about,  
If you would catch the cunning trout,"

and I suppose I must have profited by the advice, for in an old diary, kept by me in 1839, there is a record of my having caught four trout weighing 7½lbs. when I was thirteen years of age. But those were not caught with a fly.

The late Mr. Francis Francis, than whom there is no higher authority, says in one of his books, "There is far greater skill, caution, patience, and cunning required to delude a brook trout than is thought of in landing the noblest twenty-pound salmon that ever sailed up Tweed or Tay." And in further proof of this I will give an extract from that excellent little book, "Stewart's Practical Angler." The author says: "Everything combines to render fly-fishing the most attractive of all branches of the angler's art. The attempt to capture trout, which are seen to rise at natural flies, is in itself an excitement which no other method possesses. Then the smallness of the hook and the fineness of the tackle necessary for success increases the danger of escape, and consequently the excitement and the pleasure of the capture; and, for our own part, we would rather

hook, play, and capture a trout of a pound weight with fly, than one of a pound and a half with minnow or worm, where, the hooks being larger, there is less chance of their losing their hold, and, the gut being stronger, there is less risk of its breaking. Artificial fly-fishing is also the cleanest and most gentlemanly of all the methods of capturing trout. The angler who practises it is saved the trouble of working with worms, of catching, keeping alive, or salting minnows, or searching the river's bank for the natural insect. Armed with a light single-handed rod and a few flies, he may wander from county to county and kill trout wherever they are to be found."

In addition to the pleasure and satisfaction experienced in exerting the faculties necessary to capture the most cunning and cautious of fish, what can be more delightful in the sweet spring-time than to take one's rod and stroll away into the green meadows, by the side of the rippling brook, where the eye is gratified by the trees and hedge-rows which are putting forth their young leaves; where the sense of smell is refreshed by innumerable wild flowers and herbs, and where the ear is charmed by the soft "coo" of the wood pigeon, the tinkling of a distant sheep-bell, the cry of a partridge to its mate, or the occasional splash of a trout in the stream, which sounds alone disturb the silence? Well may Walton exclaim:—

"I was for that time lifted above earth,  
Possessed of joys not promised in my birth."

An all-wise Creator gave man dominion "over the fish of the sea, over the fowls of the air, and over every