

**FISH AND FISHING IN THE LONE
GLENS OF SCOTLAND: WITH A
HISTORY OF THE PROPAGATION,
GROWTH, AND METAMORPHOSES
OF THE SALMON**

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Fish and Fishing in the Lone Glens of Scotland: With a History of the Propagation, Growth, and Metamorphoses of the Salmon by Dr. Knox

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DR. KNOX

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LONE GLENS OF SCOTLAND.



WITH A HISTORY OF THE
Propagation, Growth, and Metamorphoses of the Salmon

Robert
BY DR. KNOX.

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PART I.

INTRODUCTION.

TO-DAY is the first of May. It is mid-day. The sun shines brightly on the smooth and gently flowing Thames, as its waters sweep from Kingston to Richmond. Half way stands the oak under which he who sang the "Hymn to the Seasons" sat gazing listlessly on the tranquil stream—emblem of his own mind. Sojourning long in a strange land he had adopted it for his own; its scenery, sky, river, people. He had exchanged the banks of the crystal Tweed for the still more placid Thames, and the peaceful highly cultivated vale of Roxburgh for a still more fertile land. They differ but little; and thus, whether on Tweed side or by Thames bank, whether at Roxburgh or Kingston, the bard from Scotland but not of Scotland, was an English poet; not so immortal Burns: your mind and your country were one. You alone pourtrayed in telling words the scenes of which I am about to speak. Ayr and Doone, Yarrow and Tweed, Annan and Nith, Gala and Ettrick; to the banks of these rivers and streams, and waters, let me lead the angler, and show him what true angling means.

I sit by Thames bank, but

"My heart is not here;"

neither is it in "the highlands," which is not a true angling country, but by the margin of lone and desolate Fastna, or by St. Bathan's ruined abbey, or by Chirnside Bridge, tempting with fly and minnow the spotted trout and silvery salmon. Here on Thames bank I see some one sitting in a boat, holding in his hand what resembles a fishing-rod. Do you call this angling? Yes; it is angling in England. Be it so; but it bears no resemblance to angling anywhere else. Even Izaak's angling is rather prosy, but compared with this thing in the punt, it was at least refreshing. Old Izaak! Model angler of a model nation; I should like to see one of your disciples fish the lone and desolate Fastna, with no resting-place between its eldrid bridge and Elmaford. How little does he know of angling who has merely fished the preserved streams and ponds of fat and prosperous England. A word on angling in England. I sojourned for a year or two in the south of England, a short way from the muddy banks of the Southampton water, in Hampshire; where the vine, uncherished by artificial heat, yet yielded tolerable fruit. Some friends, fond of angling for trout, invited me to accompany them to a preserved stream of the river which, descending from Stockbridge, unites at last with the Itchen, thus forming the Southampton water.

It was a warm autumnal day. My friend drove us in his handsome chariot and pair to the scene of action. From the proprietor of the estate and of the right to fish we had a hearty welcome, and proceeded at once to the banks of the stream. To me the scene was new, although a perusal of "The Complete Angler" had to a certain extent prepared me for it.

A gently flowing, quiet muddy stream, deeply fringed with sedge, and full to the brink, somewhat like a ditch about to overflow, meandered, if you will, through fat, artificially irrigated meadows. The pasture was knee deep, rank and marshy. Clumps of willows studded the landscape; here and there little wooden bridges crossing the deep irrigating canals, relieve the listlessness and monotony of the scene. On one of these there sat a reverend pastor of a class of which Paley was the type. He seemed weighty enough to be an archdeacon. A boy carried his angling apparatus and a seat for him to rest occasionally. He was in accordance with the scenery and the scenery with him.

Our party in the meantime tried boldly for trout, but were unsuccessful; nevertheless, it is certain that occasionally some fine trout are caught here, for the rivers of Hampshire are noted for the excellence, if not abundance, of their trout and salmon.

An esteemed friend, G——, of the Guards, a Saxon and an Englishman, assures me that English anglers must not be despised. They fish "under hand," that is the phrase, and take many *brace of trout*, where the overhand northern could take nothing. Very likely they know the temper of their own fish, and the character of their beck and rivers; the taste and habit of the fish of their own country. And in one respect they have the advantage greatly over most of the northern anglers; the fish they take, especially in the south of England, are as excellent as those of Scotland are generally worthless. The red-spotted river trout of England, frequenting the fresh water only, is, generally speaking, a much finer fish than the species usually met with in the Scottish rivers. The northern is a coarser fish, tasteless, colourless, or nearly so, in its muscle or flesh; the trout of the south of England is a handsomer trout, with pink-coloured flesh, and excellent to eat. This does not depend on the food, but mainly on their being specifically distinct. Nevertheless, the pink or pale *salmon-coloured trout* is also to be met with in many streams of Scotland; in the Tyne, the water of Leith, the Eden, as I shall afterwards show; whilst, no doubt, the coarser or Scottish kind is to be also met with in some parts of England, especially in the north. I have always heard that the trout of the Coquet are as worthless as those of the Tweed and its tributaries. But to return. A sumptuous dinner and choice wines awaited our return to the house of our host; the carriage was ordered about ten, and so we reached home without other fatigue than that of sitting three or four hours over our dinner and wine.

As I stood on the banks watching the movements of the Vicar, for such he was at the least, on the other side, and of my more active friends on this, I said to myself, "this no more resembles true angling than does yonder swelling upland with its patches of heath the desolate and lonely glens of the Lammermuir; the muddy stream before me, the silver, crystal Tweed; the air I breathe, stagnating over these fat meadows, the honey-