

**FRESHWATER FISHING IN  
GREAT BRITAIN  
OTHER THAN TROUT  
OR SALMON, PP. 3-87**

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Freshwater Fishing in Great Britain Other Than Trout Or Salmon, pp. 3-87 by J. P. Wheeldon

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**J. P. WHEELDON**

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*International Fisheries Exhibition*

LONDON, 1883

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FRESHWATER FISHING

IN

GREAT BRITAIN

OTHER THAN TROUT OR SALMON

116

BY

J. P. WHEELDON

LATE ANGLING EDITOR OF "BELL'S LIFE"

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CONFERENCE ON TUESDAY, JULY 31, 1883.

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LORD ABINGER in the Chair.

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FRESHWATER FISHING IN GREAT  
BRITAIN OTHER THAN TROUT  
OR SALMON.

I HAVE the honour to submit for your approbation a few remarks based principally upon practical knowledge, and having reference to the pursuit of angling for what are commonly called "the coarse fish" of this country.

This class of sport is, very deservedly, popular in the extreme, and day by day, I think, grows in the public estimation. The reason for such popularity is not difficult to find, inasmuch as in great towns, such as London, or indeed in any manufacturing centre, the man who either inherits or cultivates a taste for angling, becomes a student in a charming and health-giving pastime, not necessarily expensive to one of limited monetary resources, yet one which, followed out faithfully and observantly, is, I believe, the invariable means of developing any latent disposition to good. Coarse fish angling has also another distinction of its own. It is particularly the sport of the poor man. Salmon fishing, with all its gloriously moving incidents by "flood and field," is a branch of English sport nearly entirely confined to the wealthier classes. Trout fishing is almost, if not quite as exclusive. There is hardly a yard

of trout water within hail of any large town but what is at once monopolised, either by its owner, or by some one who can afford to pay a high price for the privilege of fishing it. In the case of the coarse fisher this state of affairs takes an altogether different aspect; because the very poorest amongst the community can, if he so pleases, and thanks to that binding law which is the result of long-continued user, hie him to the banks of such noble rivers as the Thames and the Lea, and there fish to his heart's content. I am not about to tell you that he is certain to obtain sport sufficient to repay him for his trouble and possible outlay. That is a question in these modern days, and amidst the riot and hurly-burly caused by those angler's pests—steam launches—and the greatly increased traffic of the river, which must always remain merged in obscurity, until, at any rate the close of the day. An acute mind will naturally reflect that the same ratio of reasoning applies to all classes of fishing, and I am by no means prepared to gainsay it. In the Thames, however, such a reflection comes home with tenfold force, and it only shows how keenly the love of angling is developed in the bosoms of many men, how patient and long-suffering fishermen are, as a race, and how content with the hope even of small mercies, when throughout the season the great railway stations are crowded every week with whole battalions of the rank and file of the angling army.

It is, however, at the London, Brighton, and South Coast Railway Station, and that at Liverpool Street, on the Great Eastern Line, that the most extraordinary sight in connection with the coarse fishermen of London is to be seen on every Sunday morning.

It may be that mention of the selected day may offend the "unco guid" section of polite society; but it must be

remembered, as a set-off, that nine out of every ten of the great crowd gathered round the Booking-Office window are recruits from the still greater host of workers with bone, muscle, thew and sinew, to whom loss of time during the working hours of the week means not only loss of bread, but perhaps the loss of some small delicacy to a sick and ailing child. Thus it would seem particularly hard to attempt restraint upon such men in the gratification of their simple pleasures, nor is it by any means certain that they do not imbibe far more real good through their vigil by the river's side, than if they had donned the carefully saved suit of go-to-meeting broadcloth, and dozed drowsily and drouthily over a drawling, doctrinal dissertation, delivered by a divine of the "Stiggins" type. Rest assured if there be a sick baby, the little one is rarely forgotten, and smoke-grimed Daddy, all the better and healthier in soul and body for his twelve hours' rest from the roaring forge, gathers her or him, as the case may be, a bomy bundle of wild blossoms which he takes home with him as the top-most layer of the cargo in his roach basket.

The approaches to either of the lungs of the great Wen which I have spoken of, are indeed a wonderful sight. Gathered there are pale-faced weavers from Spitalfields, with flexible delicate fingers, cane-chair workers, with hard and horny hands ; brawny, swart hammermen, and stout-limbed big-muscled strikers, both of them probably from some neighbouring foundry. Then there are dyers and curriers with the stain of their calling set indelibly on their skins, together with workers, perhaps from a white lead factory with that tallowy, unhealthy complexion inseparable from such a life of toil. Amongst these there are a few, but a very few, smartly dressed clerks with their sweethearts, and these probably eye the hundreds of fishermen wonder-