

**LINES IN PLEASANT
PLACES, BEING
THE AFTERMATH
OF AN OLD ANGLER**

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Lines in pleasant places, being the aftermath of an old angler by William Senior

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WILLIAM SENIOR

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"RED SPINNER."

[Frontispiece]

LINES IN PLEASANT PLACES

BEING THE
AFTERMATH OF AN
OLD ANGLER

BY
WILLIAM SENIOR
(“RED SPINNER”)

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INTRODUCTION

THE half a dozen or so of Angling books which stand to my name were headed by *Waterside Sketches*, and this is really and truly a continuation, if not the end, of the series. They were inspired by my old friend Richard Gowing, at the Whitefriars Club, of which he was for many years the well-remembered honorary secretary, and of which I still have the grateful pride of being entitled to the name of father.

Gowing had become editor of the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1874, and in his sturdy efforts to give it new life he looked round amongst the youngsters who seemed likely to serve him. The result was that he invited me to try my hand at something. He had read my *Notable Shipwrecks*, which the house of Cassells was at that time bringing out, and said that its author, known to the public as "Uncle Hardy" only, ought to be able to offer a suggestion.

The Stoke Newington reservoirs had about that time given me some good sport with pike, large perch, chub, and tench, and I had long been an angling enthusiast. Out of the fullness of my heart I spoke. I told him that fishing was my best subject; that if he would accept a series of contributions the direct object of which was to make Angling articles as interesting to non-anglers as to anglers themselves, I would be his man.

Verily I would not wonder if, in showing how botany,

agriculture, out-of-door life generally might be woven into the warp and woof of the fabric, I became eloquent ; for, as I have said, out of the heart the mouth spoke. So it was agreed, and for a while "Red Spinner's" articles graced the pages of the magazine, and they were by and by republished in *Waterside Sketches*. They afterwards gave me entrance to *Bell's Life* and to the *Field*, and a name at any rate amongst the brethren of the Angle, as to which I must not gush, but which is very dear to the musings of an old man's eventide. How much I owe to "Red Spinner" I shall never know. The name has followed me, and my brothers of the Highbury Anglers have adopted it, but last year, in honour of their always loyal, but I feel sure no longer useful President. I was much amused to find how it had also followed me to Queensland. During one of the Parliamentary recesses I went up country, the guest of a squatter who was afterwards in the Ministry, and he introduced me to a fellow squatter member in my surname as an officer of Parliament. Neither the name nor office meant anything to him. But when we were smoking in the veranda, and my friend mentioned, as an aside, that I was "Red Spinner," the visitor leaped to his feet, came at me with a double grip, and shouted a Scotch salmon-fisher's welcome, turning to my host and furiously demanding, "Why the dickens didn't you tell me so at first ?"

On another Bush visit an officer in the Mounted Police showed me amongst his curiosities a copy of *Waterside Sketches* half devoured by dingoes, and found with the scraps scattered around the skeleton of a poor wayfarer left at the foot of a gum-tree. To fly-fishers the name had an intelligible story of course, and it puzzled those non-anglers for whom I tried always to write. The scores of times I was asked "What

does 'Red Spinner' mean?' by ladies as well as gentlemen, told me how well I had kept the promise to the good Richard Gowing when those articles were arranged.

Journalism proper, now and henceforth for the rest of my life claimed me. It became my profession in fact; but it was always fishing that kept the longing eye turned towards the waterside. Somehow for a time the water was all round me, but I had not the means of learning the art at that time, nor of practising it. Somehow I was always being reminded that the fishing rod was to obtain the mastery by and by, but I had to wait a long while for the opportunity. At first I was in what may be called a good fishing country, but I seemed to have no say in it. I had no rod; no fisheries were open. Indeed, it was journalism that gripped me, and in those early days I followed the mastership of it very closely, for there was so much to learn, as I shall be able, I hope, to explain when any reminiscences that I am able to write call for it. That longing must meanwhile be kept open for some years to come.

Now, however, came the time when, as I have always considered, my real life began. It was my fate to be appointed representative of the *Lymington Chronicle* in 1858, when I was duly installed in its office in that town, engaged to look after the local news, the advertisements, the circulation; and especially it was my business to see that not a single paragraph was ever missing from the budget which I duly sent to the head office in Poole at the end of every week. But still there was no fishing, save in the river, where bass came occasionally to my hook in the tidal portions; and one of six pounds I remember as the best that came to me on the hand line. There was some talk once of a

visit that I was to pay to a trout river at Brockenhurst; but practically nothing came of it, nor did a casual chance which Lord Palmerston gave me at Broadlands, which was too far from my beat and altogether above me in its salmon runs. As for perch, which I had fished for as a boy, there were none to be heard of in the district.

In due time I was transferred from Lymington to Southampton, where I remember catching smelts, and nice little baskets of them, from the pier at the bottom of High Street. Next I went to Manchester, where there was less of such fishing as I required than before; and on a daily paper like the *Guardian*, journalism soon proved to be real business to engage my attention, and left me without the slight opportunities I found even with the *Lymington Chronicle* or *Hants Independent*. In due time fortune, as I thought, beamed upon me when I got an appointment on the *London Daily News*, which was then in its prime. Here I began to find what fishing meant, for very early, thanks to the kindness of Moy Thomas and his friend Miles, the publisher, who was one of the directors, I got a ticket for the famous New River reservoirs. I was here introduced to many members of the fishing club—men of the place—and became a member of the Stanley Anglers, where I won some prizes, and of the somewhat famous and somewhat high-class True Waltonian Society, which met at Stoke Newington. The general result of this was that wherever there was fishing to be secured I got it, and was seldom without opportunity of turning that longing eye of which I aforetime spoke to the waterside. I made pretty rapid progress too, for I became a well-known pike fisher at Stoke Newington, got large chub and much perch, and generally took various degrees in the piscatorial art.