



THE Journal for all interested in
Country Life and Country Pursuits.

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EDITORIAL NOTICE.

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GAME FISH FOR . . . THE THAMES

WILL Londoners awake one fine morning to find that their old Thames is once more a salmon river? A contributor to *Blackwood*, who writes on the subject with taste and sense, thinks that they may. We are inclined to agree with him, but the change will not come by itself, though the only members of the five millions of London's inhabitants who know why may be the ten thousand who fish the Thames as a pastime. It is almost certain that the fish will have to be hatched on a great scale on the upper parts of the river itself, and that it is by artificial rearing, in the first instance, and by regular and scientific restocking in the second, that the future salmonidae of our national river will be created and maintained.

We look forward to this happening in the near future with absolute certainty, because, as America and even New Zealand are about twenty-five years ahead of us in knowledge and success

in regard to the management of river fish, the fact will be brought home by slow degrees to our public. Also the value of sporting rights is increasing so fast that the possibility of providing really good fishing in rivers where there are now few or no game fish must occur to persons interested. But it means spending some money, and also learning how the business has to be carried out, both of which involve trouble, and make persuasion and example alike necessary before action will be taken. The example is to hand in the Northern United States, where, in 1897, 568,000,000 of eggs, of fry, and of yearlings were produced in the public fish hatcheries and turned into the rivers, most of these eggs and fry being those of salmon and trout. The results, so far as they can be reckoned, are about a sovereign in fish for a shilling spent in hatcheries. But this is, perhaps, not exactly a parallel case. Take, then, that of the rivers of New England, and of the great lakes whose waters are wholly or partly the property of the United States. On the former, exactly as in the Thames, the salmon had disappeared. In less than four years after the attention of the Fisheries Commission was turned to these streams, salmon were caught in nets in such quantities that they sold at 6d. per lb. In some of the great lakes trout had become so scarce that the net fishermen gave up trying for them. In three years the scientific, or rather business-like, public hatcheries had restocked these lakes so fully that the fishermen left off catching them because there was a glut in the market!

The present condition of the Thames is, on the whole, favourable for the reintroduction of the fish. Public feeling is so strong that it is fairly certain that no more pollution of the stream will be allowed above the tidal part. On the contrary, even the minutest tributaries are under surveillance, by a new Act, and down to the London river the Thames will soon be one of the cleanest streams in England. This means that all the early life of salmon and sea-trout will be passed under favourable conditions of water. The only doubt is whether the spawning-beds will not be disturbed by the wash of steam launches. The answer to this is, first, that no one knows where the spawning-beds of the old Thames salmon were; and, secondly, that modern management is absolutely independent of spawning-beds at all. Both these facts are a little surprising—the first as a matter of county history, and the second as a curiosity of natural history. On the Dart, for instance, or the Tweed, everyone knows where the great fish can be seen spawning any day in the right season. On the Thames the very tradition is lost. But wherever the bed is shallow, with a quiet stream and floored with gravel (and most of the Thames bed is gravel), there salmon and sea-trout can spawn. We shall have to know where to find the "ripe" fish, or else the modern substitute for spawning-beds will not work. This is to "strip" the ripe fish, keep and hatch the ova in trays, and when the fry have absorbed the umbilical sack and are really little fish, and not semi-embryos, to turn them out to take their chance. Experience shows that in the rough nursery of the river not more than ten per cent. of the eggs even survive as little fish at all, after which, of course, follow all the other dangers to the fry. If hatched artificially, not ten per cent., but ninety per cent. reach the "fry" stage.

The next difficulty is one which, ten years ago, seemed insuperable, but which probably will diminish, and will do so almost certainly if public opinion hardens a little more quickly than it has done lately. It is that of the pollution of the London river by London itself. We share the astonishment of the writer in *Blackwood* that, while ready to spend any money on little bits of garden and "lungs" of an acre or half an acre, the London public does not even care to keep its twelve miles of river, under its own eyes, clean and pure and beautiful. We are getting a little more particular, however, about the river we see, and have really done a great deal to lessen the vast outpouring of filth on the lower reaches where we could not see it. If the discharge of "sewage effluent" between Richmond and Hammersmith can be stopped, and the County Council further diminishes the sewage outfall at Crossness, and forces the gas companies on the Essex shore to cease poisoning the stream there, the other condition of salmon life—free migration to and from the sea—will become possible. Then, with the hatcheries at the top to make eggs into smolts, and the sea at the bottom to make smolts into salmon, we shall have a new fauna in the river, the most beautiful of all our indigenous fish, the largest and the best for sport and for the table.

A word should be said as to ordinary brown trout. These, as everyone knows, grow to a great size in the Thames, and are not allowed to be caught unless of a greater weight than what would be the maximum in an ordinary trout stream. What happens in regard to the existing Thames trout is that on the tributary streams a few fish work downwards and enter the Thames. There they find all conditions favourable, except that the river is over-fished. They also give up rising to the fly, because there are quantities of small fish to eat, though sometimes they do take a fly when in the humour. In order to make the Thames a river full of trout of all sizes a very much larger

Those amongst our readers who are yacht-owners should note that this year, for the first time, they will be required to pay what really amounts to an annual tax for the privilege of possessing their vessels. For by the provisions of the Merchant Shipping (Mercantile Marine Fund) Act, 1898, they will be mulcted in the sum of 1s. per ton (registered tonnage) on any yacht they may own of and above five tons registered shipping tonnage. In the case of unregistered vessels, the dues will have to be paid on Thames measurement. As the registered is less than the Thames tonnage of nearly all yachts, an additional benefit will accrue to those owners who possess the Government certificates of their vessels. The dues should be paid to the Collector of Customs at the Custom House at which the yacht is registered. Yachtsmen may congratulate themselves on the fact that the tax is not a heavy one, and further, as yachts are popularly considered to be great luxuries—although at times they most certainly are not—owners may consider themselves lucky in having escaped from any general Government imposition for so many years.

The Assamese shooting-party of the Maharajah of Kuch Behar, which ended on March 24th, has been a great success, though the bag of tigers was somewhat smaller than had been hoped for. The following are the exact figures: Three tigers, one black panther, seven rhinoceros, twenty-five buffaloes, and three bull bison (gaur), making a total of thirty-nine head of big game. Most of the English members of the party have now started for home, but some are still remaining to try their luck further, and will then go on to Kashmir. If proof were wanting of the completeness of the arrangements made by the Maharajah for the comfort of his guests, it would be found in the fact that a temporary post-office was attached to the camp! The post-marks therein affixed to letters will probably be eagerly sought by collectors of these objects. It will be a long time before such a truly royal shoot again takes place in India.

Some twenty years ago the name of Henry Kelley was as a household word on the lips of the comparatively few who at that time took an interest in rowing. Kelley was four times champion of the world at sculling, and won innumerable minor competitions besides. Now he is too old a man to earn a living at his profession, and has fallen on ill times. But a strong committee, including many of the notable rowing men, has been formed to help him. It is proposed to get up a fund sufficient to buy him an annuity that will permit him to go gently paddling down the ebb-tide of his years. The honorary secretary is Mr. R. G. C. Gridley, 106, Queen's Gate, S.W.

There seems to be quite a strong feeling among cricketers that the boundaries make run-getting too easy on the present grounds, and that perhaps some alteration in this respect, as it would give the batsmen the trouble of running out their runs, would put the bowlers on a better plane with them, and check the over-long scores. Over the well-known initials of "F. G." in *Baily's Magazine*, there is some discussion of the merits of a low boundary, some 100yds. from the wicket, all round the ground, within which boundary all hits must be run out. If the ball over-passes this boundary four shall be scored. That is the simple proposal, and though it sounds a little revolutionary, it is said that Mr. V. E. Walker and Mr. Alfred Lyttelton favour it. High authorities these; and except that it is novel, there is perhaps nothing to be said against it.

So the Eton boys have won the racquets again, after an interval of seventeen years. It is singular how very large has been the preponderance of victory on Harrow's side, the School on the Hill having won seventeen times to Eton's seven, while no other school has done better than Charterhouse, with three wins. Charterhouse and Harrow played a hard match this year. But it was Winchester that gave the winners their biggest task. In the final the Harrow boys did not play up to their form; but racquets is essentially a game in which class tells, and the Harrovians were outclassed from the start. The others found a great game right away, and kept it throughout. It is the general opinion that in Mr. Macnaghten Eton has one of the best, if not the actual best, all-round racquet players that has ever represented her, and his partner, Mr. De la Rue, is a strong player, whose strength would have been even more apparent had it not been always in comparison with that of Mr. Macnaghten.

Gathering in the reports of anglers from many parts of the country, it appears that sport with the trout has been rather better than one could have expected, considering the rough, cold weather. There has been little fly on the water, but fish have been moving, nevertheless, to the artificial fly. Nothing of any great note has been recorded. In the salmon angling business there has been very little doing, and we are still disappointed in the year's early promise. It is singular, after the mildness of the past winter, that trout seem to be later than usual in coming into condition.

The best bit of news that we hear, both from the angler's and from a wider point of view, is that the Test is now at a higher level by several inches than it has been for some years past. This is good news, in the first place for the angler, and in the second place it is good as evidence that we are likely to be spared the lack of water that was so vexatious last year in many country districts, and in part of London. Of course, we are made aware in other ways—by the volume of our small streams and the height of water in our wells—that the water-bearing strata are much better supplied than they have been; but we have heard no such good evidence as that given by the Test, a river that is really worthy of its name as a water gauger, for it depends little for its supply on surface water or tributary brooks, being fed mainly by the springs in the chalk stratum. It is by its evidence of a bountiful supply of water in the founts of these springs that it gives us a welcome hint as to the general supply in the water-bearing strata all the country over.

There is some chance that an aquarium for fresh-water fish may be started in London. The Crystal Palace Company are repairing their aquariums, and putting them into connection with the lakes, reservoirs, and fountain basins in the grounds; 50,000 trout eggs have already been hatched, and a beginning is made. We hope that the experiments will be carried out with energy. The company cannot be losers, if they rear and sell the fish, for they can get 2s. a pound for trout throughout the season, and their lakes and reservoirs would yield an income, with very little expenditure as a set off. Anything which awakens public interest in trout-breeding is of service to sport, and of economic value.

The Kennel Club Field Trials, which took place over the estate of Captain Pretyman, M.P., at Orwell Park, near Ipswich, last week, can hardly be described as successful. There was a fair entry, but the weather was by no means favourable. On Wednesday, although the sun shone brightly, and scent was not bad, it was not altogether pleasant. On the succeeding day there was an entire and unwelcome change, which to all alike quite marred the enjoyment of the proceedings. Unfortunately both for the spectators and for the photographic artist of *COUNTRY LIFE*, a perfect gale of wind, together with other uncongenial weather conditions, prevailed, and spoilt the pleasure of the onlookers as it prevented the operations of our representative. On Wednesday the judge awarded the first prize for the Field Trial Derby, for pointers and setters whelped in 1898, to Mr. Nicholson's Drayton Pilot. The first prize for the All-aged Stakes, which were decided on the second day, went to Mr. R. Crawford's Matfen, and the first prize for the Brace Stakes was given to Mr. F. Lowe's setters, Mabel of Kippen and Maud of Kippen.

A correspondent writes: "The fidelity of a dog to an old master was shown lately in a very touching manner at a little hamlet in Gloucestershire. A shepherd, George Kendall, had to give up shepherding owing to ill-health, and took to day-labourer's work instead, so had to give up keeping his sheepdog, the latter becoming the property of Shepherd Hall. Kendall became much worse in health, and several months went by, in which increasing pain caused great depression, and one morning after rising early—as was his custom—he was 'missing.' Shepherd Hall was going along the road with his dog, when he met Kendall's son, a lad, who asked him, 'Have you seen father? We can't find father.' Hall replied in the negative, and went on. Suddenly the dog leapt the wall at the side of the road and 'made for' a pond in the field. Here he stopped, and commenced barking in a curious enquiring tone, running backwards and forwards, keeping his eyes fixed on one spot. Hall followed him, and in the water the poor missing man lay, quite dead. Hall set off for assistance, but the dog would not leave the body, and remained watching by the pond till Hall returned with helpers and the dead man was carried home. Then the dog followed with drooping head and dejected looks, a true mourner."

Our Portrait Illustration.

LADY BINDON BLOOD, whose portrait, with that of her daughter, forms our frontispiece, is the wife of Major-General Sir Bindon Blood, K.C.B., whose name came so prominently before public notice in connection with the military operations in Chitral in 1895, and even more recently during the Frontier troubles in India early last year. The gallant officer saw service in South Africa and elsewhere, and was present at the battle of Tel-el-Kebir. Lady Bindon Blood's father, Sir Auckland Colvin, has filled several important offices in India and Egypt with distinction.

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