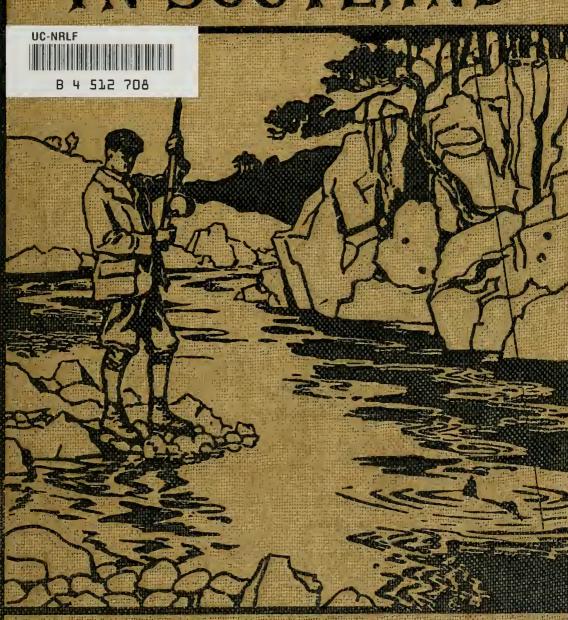
## FINGLING: SEHRIF IN:SCOTLEIND



BY ERNEST E BRIGGS

# ANGLING AND ART IN SCOTLAND

## SOME FISHING EXPERIENCES RELATED AND ILLUSTRATED

BY

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WITH 32 COLOURED PLATES

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

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#### CHAPTER VI

#### LOCH AWE

#### I.—DUNCAN OF THE LAUNCH

IVER fishing is generally acknowledged to require more skill, and to be a more varied and interesting form of sport, than loch fishing. There is something extremely attractive in wandering along the banks of a beautiful stream, with its numerous pools, rapids, or waterfalls, for they ever form pictures to delight the eye of the artist or angler. Even though the sport be indifferent, there

is always pleasure to be gained from the healthy exercise, and from the varied scenes which are traversed; and in the case of salmon fishing especially immense satisfaction may be derived from the knowledge that a pool has been fished skilfully and to the greatest advantage.

On the other hand, trout fishing from a boat, on a large and beautiful loch, affords fascinations that do not occur in river fishing, and which the devotee of that form of sport does not comprehend. On the loch you have the pleasure, probably, of the companionship of a fellow-angler; also the boatman—or gillie, as he is generally called in Scotland—who so often forms a most interesting study in human nature, and from whose characteristics much satisfaction may be gained.

There is a mysterious excitement engendered by the fishing of a large loch, with its rocky shores—its numerous islands and bays; for the bays often differ greatly in character one from another: one is sandy, another weedy or rocky, and each of them contains trout varying in size, appearance, or quality; while the excitement is augmented by the knowledge that possibly the next fish that rises to your fly may be a grilse, or even a salmon. Moreover, there is a feeling, when starting out in the morning, of unknown dangers to be braved—for wild storms frequently sweep these Highland lochs, approaching with great suddenness and with little warning.

Loch Awe, which is a large sheet of water,

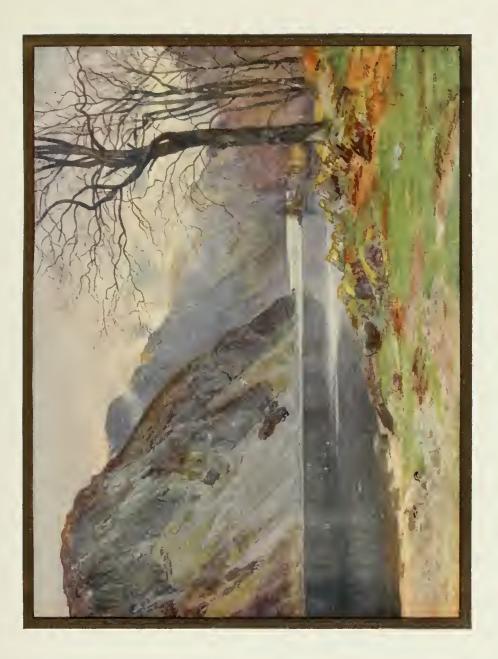
128 twenty-six miles long and about three in width at the widest part, furnishes to the angler all these exciting attributes. The scenery is most beautiful and varied; the loch is richly studded with many islands, and its shores are much indented, while the form that it takes towards the east end is interesting and peculiar. The peculiarity lies in the fact that the river Awe, which drains the loch of its water, runs out through the Pass of Brander at a point within five miles of the head of the loch;-for the east end must be called the head, since it is there that the Orchy (which is the principal feeder) empties itself into the loch. Thus the main portion of the lake, which stretches away towards the south-west for over twenty miles, is left without the influx of any considerable body of water. I believe that there are traces near Ford, at the south-west end. of an ancient river-bed, which seems to point to the fact that in some far-off, bygone age, the outlet was there, in the place where one would naturally expect it to be; and that, at a subsequent period, some great upheaval took place, which formed that awe-inspiring fissure that lies to the south of Ben Cruachan, known as the Pass of

Brander, and thus allowed the water to flow out



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toward the north-west, and so into the sea at Taynuilt.

There are several excellent hotels on the shores of Loch Awe, all of them much frequented by fishermen, but the principal one is the Loch Awe Hotel, situated at the head, and overlooking the estuary of the Orchy. It is a fine building, commanding a magnificent view, and during the season many tourists find their way there; but in the spring and early summer months it is given over to the angler. There are perhaps other hotels which are more conveniently situated for the trout fisher, but undoubtedly the Loch Awe is placed amidst the finest surroundings. The angler who stays there finds himself in what may be termed the mouth of the Pass of Brander when he has rounded Innischonan—a large island situated a mile and a half to the west of the hotel, and almost touching the mainland. From this point he will see an arm of water stretching away to the northwest for three or four miles, ever narrowing like a funnel as it recedes into the distance, until it becomes a restricted, gloomy strait, a couple of hundred yards wide, with high and almost perpendicular crags on the left hand, while the

precipitous slopes of Ben Cruachan rise abruptly to the right.

To reach most of the best fishing ground the wide end of this funnel must be traversed. This is often a precarious venture, as the storms from the west or north-west sweep out of the narrow gorge with incredible fury, lashing up the water into a veritable sea of foaming crests. The boats on the loch are fortunately very seaworthy, and the boatmen experienced, so that accidents owing to rough weather do not often occur, although appearances are sometimes decidedly alarming.

Mr. Fraser, the proprietor of the hotel, places a steam launch at the disposal of his guests during the greater part of the trouting season, for towing the boats to the fishing ground. A fleet of five or six boats may often be seen starting out of a morning, which causes at times some stirring episodes. At one period the launch was not very reliable. When half-way across the Pass, she would occasionally refuse to go, when, if the weather were rough, an indescribable scene of confusion might be witnessed. However, this boat was a most necessary institution, as otherwise the

time taken up in rowing to the drifting ground would have been too great.

The launch was usually anchored half a mile to the westward of the hotel, within sight of the terrace, which is perched high up above the water, and it was customary to wave a white cloth as a signal in a morning should she be required to tow any boat to the fishing. The young man who acted as skipper was decidedly interesting, and might even be described as an original character. He was generally known as Duncan of the Launch, to distinguish him from others of the same name who might be in the district. He was blessed (or the reverse) with a hasty temper, though otherwise his disposition was obliging and amiable. He would never grudge having to wait when he came to fetch the boats home in an evening if the fish happened to be on the rise; for he was himself an ardent fisherman, which caused him to be lenient towards the failings of that class of mankind. At times, however, he was a bit difficult to manage if rubbed up the wrong way. I can well remember one occasion when this proved to be the case.

The day was very stormy; in fact half a gale

was blowing from the north-west. In spite of the inclemency of the weather, we had determined to try our luck on the loch, and with the help of Duncan and his launch to cross the dreaded Pass, in order to fish certain sheltered bays on the farther side. No other party would venture forth that morning, and much cold water was thrown upon our project; nevertheless, as we could see steam ascending from the launch, we had the flag duly hoisted as a signal for Duncan to come to the pier. It was, however, one thing to hoist the flag and another to get Duncan to the pier. He evidently considered the weather not good enough.

After waiting for ten minutes, and seeing that no move was being made, we determined—like Mahomet and the mountain—to make our way to Duncan; for we concluded that he did not deem it wise to run the risk of bringing the launch along-side the landing-stage. Happily, we had a keen and excellent boatman who made no objection to facing the storm, and, each of us taking an oar, we started out in the teeth of the gale.

For a tough half-hour we struggled manfully amid the encouragements or jeers of the spectators, until we were within a hundred yards of our goal, when, to our horror, Duncan started the launch and steamed off down the wind to the pier. I could not truthfully say that we were pleased that our strenuous efforts should thus have been rendered futile. Nor did we find the good Duncan in an enviable mood when we arrived at the landing-stage;—but then he had just run the prow of his boat against the woodwork of the pier! It transpired that he had not yet taken in coal—which was certainly an adequate reason for his visiting the pier. The necessary operation of coaling completed, we made ourselves comfortable in the cabin, and, having attached our boat to the stern of the launch, ventured forth.

All went well until Innischonan was passed. We then found ourselves in the full strength of the wind blowing out of the Brander Pass, and the sea was so heavy that we hardly thought it safe to attempt the crossing, and suggested to Duncan that it would be perhaps wiser to turn back. But indeed he would not hear of such a proceeding. Being forced to come out against his will, he had determined that we should face the storm, whether we liked it or not. He also intimated, with much directness of language, that we must find our

#### 134 ANGLING & ART IN SCOTLAND

own way home, as he was not coming out again that day.

Perhaps it looked more alarming than was really the case. But at any rate the spray swept in sheets over the launch, drenching our skipper to the skin. He still, however, held on manfully to the wheel, with a grim smile on his face, expressive of joy at our discomfiture. Meanwhile, the unfortunate rowing-boat, which bobbed about like a cork in our wake, was shipping much water; and, added to this, we felt a vague fear, should many more waves break over the launch, that the engine fire might be extinguished. However, I have no thrilling tale of shipwreck to relate, since we not only arrived safely under the shelter of the opposite bank, but managed without mishap to get aboard the small boat. After this latter feat was accomplished, our first care was to row ashore to bale out the large quantity of water shipped during the crossing; our next, to make the best of our way to the sheltered bays on the Hayfield shore. In the end, things turned out more fortunately than might have been anticipated, for the wind gradually dropped, and by evening there was quite a respectable number of trout lying in the bottom

of the boat. But had the storm increased instead of moderating, and had Duncan adhered to his expressed resolve, we should no doubt have been placed in a most awkward position—for with the water in the state in which it was in the morning, it would have been quite unsafe to have attempted to recross the Pass in a small boat. It is a distinct advantage in favour of Loch Awe that the angler can always find some sheltered bay in which to fish, even on the windiest of days.

There is a story told of Duncan of the Launch, of how he went to act as gillie one day for a gentleman who was salmon fishing in the Pass of Brander. The main road from Dalmally to Oban runs along the water's edge on the north side, and it was from that bank that the angler was fishing. The pool upon which his efforts were directed was the one known as the Brander, a slow-flowing pool, where the water leaves the loch. Late on in the afternoon, not having had any sport, he relinquished his rod and went for a short walk. No sooner had the gentleman gone than a brilliant idea flashed through Duncan's mind;—why should not he himself improve the shining hour by taking a cast from the opposite bank? Now I

firmly believe that Duncan had no right to fish from that opposite bank; but he had a boat with him; moreover, nobody was present, so the fact did not deter him from acting upon his inspiration. There was subtlety in the idea; for the river is much too wide to cast across, and the fish in the Brander often may be induced to rise from one bank, when they cannot from the other. This was a case in point, for hardly had Duncan got to work than he felt a heavy weight come on to the end of his line, and he almost simultaneously found himself struggling with a salmon.

The salmon in the Awe frequently run to a large size. A season seldom passes without one or two of over forty pounds being landed, and Duncan's fish appeared to be one of them. Consequently, when the gentleman returned half-an-hour later he found his gillie on the farther side of the river, still battling with the salmon. There was no way of crossing over to assist in the fight, for the boat lay across the strait, peacefully reposing on the shore of the loch. Nor could Duncan coax the salmon back sufficiently far to enable him to reach the boat. A predicament such as this leaves little to be done beyond possessing the soul in patience.



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The Narrows at Innischonan. The same of the sa





Mr. Hartley, in his interesting book on "Wild Sports," tells us how a certain gillie, when fishing on the Awe, hooked a salmon which eventually leaped into an enclosed "pot" on the farther bank; and how the man stripped and swam the river and secured his fish. One can imagine the splashing struggle which took place in that small pool before the man finally overcame the salmon! It must have been a sight worth watching. The author then goes on to recount how afterwards, the inhabitants of the glen might have been scandalised by the appearance of a person clothed in naught but a salmon, walking over the railway bridge on his way back to regain his ordinary garments. Some such mode of action as that might have occurred to the gentleman as he watched Duncan struggling with his monster fish. But perhaps he could not swim. Indeed, though a man were able to swim, it would be asking too much of his enthusiasm to expect him to plunge through the cold waters of a loch in order to assist in securing another's salmon, however big it might be.

After a considerable time the patience of the angler waiting on the north bank gave out. He told his gillie that unless he could bring the fish

up to the boat he must break the tackle and let it go, as it was high time that they started to row back to the hotel. Duncan, however, would not hear of such a solution of the difficulty. He considered it unsportsmanlike. Moreover, he informed the gentleman on the opposite side that he might find his way back by road, alone, as he did not intend to part with that salmon before he was absolutely obliged. He only stipulated that the angler, on arriving at the hotel, should tell one of the boatmen of the awkward position in which he, Duncan, was placed, and ask him to come to his assistance with another boat—for, from what he had seen of the fish, he felt sure that it was an abnormally large one, possibly over sixty pounds in weight!

The angler promptly followed the first part of Duncan's advice. Perhaps he was a good deal annoyed at his gillie's conduct, and thought that he had had no right to fish from the farther side; or perhaps he thought he would administer a salutary lesson. Whatever the reason, one thing is certain; he calmly returned to the hotel and had dinner, and in due course went to bed, and omitted to mention to any one what had become of his gillie.

Thus the hours went by, and the unhappy

Duncan still held on pluckily to the great fish. Futilely he hoped that each moment would bring help. He was not a patient man; and as the slow night wore on and the dawn came, each succeeding hour only added to his smouldering wrath. At last, between six and seven in the morning, he gave up hope and broke the tackle, and returned home.

It was certainly a triumph for the salmon, which was no doubt a very heavy fish. Indeed its weight increased in the telling, during the ensuing days, until it became of a fabulous size. It is easy to imagine the withering contempt felt by the valiant Duncan for the angler who had left him in the lurch in such an unsportsmanlike fashion, and the stories he propagated amongst the other boatmen. There was little wonder that the unlucky gentleman had speedily to leave the hotel, in spite of his having just grounds for complaint.

#### II.-A HIGHLANDER OF A BYGONE TYPE

In former days the boatmen at the Loch Awe Hotel were very clannish. If a visitor offended one of their number, he fell under the displeasure of

the whole gang. I had the misfortune once to fall out with one of them through an absurd misunderstanding, and was consequently boycotted and unable to get a gillie to come out with me for several days; and in the end only got a man to volunteer who was a fresh arrival—one who cared naught for the vagaries of the others. Some of them were much addicted to whisky; one man especially, who was as smart and capable a boatman as one could wish to meet, entirely threw away his chances owing to that unfortunate failing. Taking them all round, however, they were trustworthy, experienced men, as they should be on a large and stormy lake like Loch Awe.

Old Archie, a quaint old Highlander, who had not at all times acted as a boatman, may be cited as an exception to the rule. He was short in stature, and stout, with little fat brown hands, and very short arms that stood out from his sides as though they had been fastened on too tightly at the shoulder joints. To see him seated in the stern of your boat, viewed from the coign of vantage of the steam launch when towing the boats to the fishing ground, was indeed a sight to rejoice the eyes, as his fat face and figure jellied about in

response to every movement of the boat as she bounded over the waves. When rowing, he took such tiny strokes that it was impossible for him to make much headway against any considerable amount of wind; consequently he always advocated stopping on the north or near side of the Pass of Brander, affirming that that was the best fishing ground.

However, Archie could not always keep on the safe side, and on one occasion he got caught coming home across the Pass. I happened to be in the bows of the boat at the time, the stern end being occupied by another angler and his wife. A strong north-west wind sprang up, which made it exceedingly awkward to row broadside to the swell; and by the time we had fairly reached the middle, a white squall came tearing down upon us, causing the waves to rise to an alarming height. Although it seemed advisable to relieve Archie of the oars—as he was evidently getting much excited—the risk of changing places was too great.

By that time the lady of the party, who was of a highly nervous temperament, had quite lost control of herself, and considered that every moment would be our last—in fact, she evinced a strong inclination to throw herself overboard. This latter circumstance caused what little presence of mind there still remained to the unhappy gillie to forsake him, and his face changed to the colour of oatcake. The only thing to be done was to run before the wind, steering our course through a narrow strait between two rocky islands. After an exciting minute or two the passage was safely negotiated, and we disembarked on the lee-side of the islands.

Old Archie immediately regained his self-possession, and rose to the occasion in firstrate style. His face once more took on its normal hue as he courteously handed the lady out of the boat, remarking as he did so—"Indeed, I assure you, Mem, there wass no danger whateffer!"

He then produced a small bottle of brandy, saying, "Now, Mem, you will sit down here, and perhaps you will take a wee drop of this sperrit! I always carry a little sperrit with me—not that I effer taste it myself, Mem, but chest for a case like this, when a leddy may feel a wee bit nerrvous."

One year Archie took service under a certain middle-aged Major, a capital sportsman, and a man of goodly proportions, so that the two of them made a fine pair in the boat. The Major was exceedingly amusing on the subject of his gillie; he considered that the entertainment culled from his society quite counterbalanced his deficiencies as a boatman. Archie used periodically to go to sleep at the oars as the boat drifted along the shore, while he still continued to paddle away with his tiny strokes, in order to keep the boat at the regulation distance from the land.

On one occasion, as they were fishing the north shore of the Pass, the Major abstained from putting into force any of his usual expedients for waking up his gillie—such as kicking the side of the boat, or firing off a soda-water cork—and permitted him to doze on. At last, as the wind was blowing slightly off the shore, the boat reached a point fully half-way across to the Green Island. The Major then roused Archie up, and drily asked him on which side of the loch they were supposed to be fishing.

"Cerrtainly, cerrtainly," replied Archie, by no means at a loss for an answer, "perrhaps we are a wee bit too far out from the shore; but indeed, Major, I hev seen the fesh take fery well here out in the deep waterr."

One day, the Major decided to go to Dalmally by the early train "to try" for a salmon on the

#### 144 ANGLING & ART IN SCOTLAND

Orchy, returning the following morning. Old Archie, so the Major informed me, begged so hard to be allowed to accompany him—he never having seen a salmon landed from a river—that at last the Major consented.

The gallant soldier was fortunate enough to bring back a couple of nice fish, and I had the good luck to meet Archie on the terrace immediately after their return to Loch Awe, when his face was a perfect study of consequential pride.

"Well, Archie," said I, "so the Major took you with him up the Orchy, I hear."

"Indeed, yes," replied he. "And who more likely, sir?—And who more likely?—Man and boy, I hev feshed these waterrs for forrty yearrs."

"Well, I am glad you were able to give the Major some sport," I said.

"Yes, indeed, sir, it is fery well for a chentleman to hev an experienced hand with him when he iss feshing."

Whether Archie gaffed the fish himself or not, I did not hear, but I should think probably not, as the Major would be sure to have a Dalmally gillie with him, a man on whom he could rely to know the water thoroughly.

#### III.—AN OLD PRACTITIONER

The gillies at Dalmally are firstrate fishermen, and have a most fervid love for their own special river, the Orchy, considering it to be much superior to the larger river Awe. Undoubtedly the Orchy is a very delightful river to fish when in ply, but your chance of sport in it is much more dependent upon the state of the water. After a spate, in the spring, it fishes excellently for several days. On the other hand, the Awe will keep in good condition for two or three weeks after a flood, and ought to be the best salmon river on the west coast. I say ought to be advisedly; for unfortunately the nets are worked much too hard at the mouth of the river, and the Taynuilt Hotel overfishes the water to an absurd extent.

I agree, I think, with the Dalmally gillies in their preference for the Orchy as a fishing stream; it is so delightfully moorland, and contains such a pretty series of charming little salmon pools. The Awe is wide, and stately, and rapid, but more difficult to fish. In the upper part, where it flows through the Pass of Brander, a man is hampered

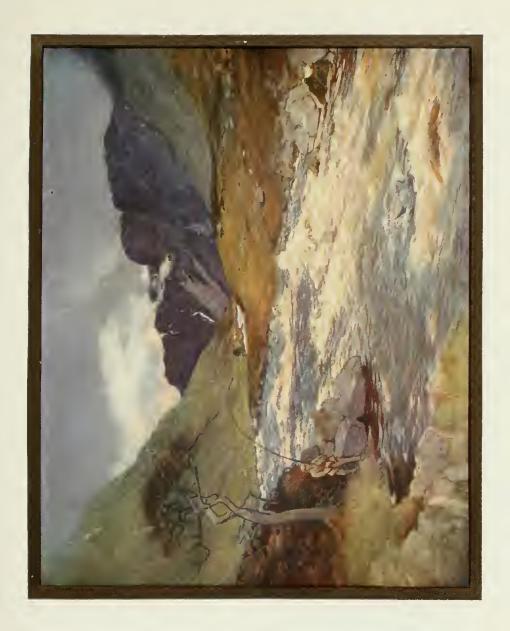
with great slopes of jagged stones rising abruptly from the water's edge, which immediately destroy any hook that may come in contact with them; while in the lower reaches it is deeply enclosed between wooded banks. The scenery of the river where it rushes through the Pass is certainly very grand and wild, and to hook and land a large salmon there, amongst the rugged water, is an event to be remembered.

In former years, when Mr. Fraser had the Dalmally Hotel, the right of fishing the best portions of the Orchy was reserved for his guests. Now, the present proprietor, Mr. MacLaren, only fishes the lower reaches of the river, which, strangely enough, afford little sport with salmon until the end of the summer. But Mr. MacLaren also rents perhaps the best stretch of the Awe, which he lets off to his visitors at so much a rod per month; while the Loch Awe Hotel has certain days in each week from the opposite bank. It is unfortunate that the Orchy fishing has been taken away from the Dalmally Hotel, as the Awe is so far away that it requires a motor to run the fishermen to the water-side, which greatly adds to the expense. Now, therefore, the Dalmally gillies have to be satisfied with the Awe whether they

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like it or not, as they find most of their employment on that river.

The well-known gillie John Campbell, who is a man of substance, is probably the best salmon fisherman at Dalmally. He is indeed one of the prettiest and neatest casters that a man need wish to see. He is a capital companion, being exceedingly well-informed; a strict teetotaller, and a pillar of the Free Kirk. None of the new-fangled ideas find favour with John. He swears by a good eighteen or nineteen feet salmon rod and heavy line. He despises the degeneracy of the modern school, with its preference for light fourteen to sixteen feet rods and tackle to match; and it is surprising—in spite of his short stature—how delicately, and with what precision, he can make the fly drop on the water, with the heavy weapon which he affects.

The brown trout is despised by him, as he considers that the only fish worth catching are the salmon and sea trout.

In spite of his being a devoted fisherman, Campbell also holds the singular idea that the only incident worth caring about in salmon fishing, is the hooking of the fish; and after that feat is accomplished, he feels no further interest or excitement in the playing and landing part of the business. When John made this statement to me, I questioned him further, suggesting, in that case, that it did not matter to him whether the fish were subsequently landed, or lost. But he then showed a certain inconsistency, inasmuch as he confessed that, after hooking a fish and handing the rod to another party, should the salmon break away, he would feel absolutely miserable for the rest of the day.

I have heard of other lordly sportsmen who consider, having hooked a salmon, that the ensuing proceedings have little interest for them, and merely hand over the rod to an attendant for him to despatch the fish—an action which is beyond the comprehension of most mortals. It is no doubt very well to feel that you have hooked a salmon nicely; but in about five cases out of six, the fish is invisible when he takes the fly, consequently there is very little skill exercised, or excitement gained, in the fact of hooking him. The skill lies in the casting, and in the management of the fish after he is hooked; and the excitement is caused by the wish to know what his size may be, and by the uncertainty of being able to predict what course of behaviour he may adopt to free

himself, before he is finally deposited upon the bank.

My friend Mr. Marjoribanks, the well-known minister of Stenton, than whom a keener angler does not exist, tells an amusing anecdote of one of the Dalmally fishermen, whom we will designate as Donald M'Crae. Mr. Marjoribanks, who was staying at the Loch Awe Hotel at the time—taking the services at the church - had arranged with M'Crae that he should accompany him for a day's fishing on the Orchy, on the following Monday. Not having his salmon tackle with him, he accepted the loan of some from a friend living at Loch Awe. The gentleman in question brought along the rod, flies, &c., to the hotel on the Sunday evening. The next morning, when the angler and his gillie arrived at the river-side, the rod was put together and the flies duly produced for inspection.

"These are very bonnie *flies*, Mr. Marjoribanks," said Donald, in his deep Highland voice.

"Yes, Donald, they are very bonnie flies; the fact is, they belong to Mr. ——, and the rod and line too; he brought them along to the hotel last night, and kindly gave me the loan of them."

No sooner were the words out of his mouth,

than the minister saw, by the cold glance of severity which flashed on him from Donald's blue eyes, that he had uttered an indiscretion.

"You don't mean to say, Mr. Marjoribanks," replied Donald, "that you made any arrangements for the fishing yesterday—on the Sabbath Day?"

"Well, Donald," returned the unhappy divine, "I don't exactly see anything wrong in Mr. ——walking to the hotel with a fishing rod, even though it did happen to be the Sabbath. I could hardly ask him to get up to come to the early train in order to give me the tackle this morning."

"Och! well!" ejaculated Mr. M'Crae. "It doesna matter—but it's a peety—ay, ay, they're bonnie flies,—but man!—we shall have no luck with the salmon the day!"

Whether the Sunday arrangements made any difference or not, certain it was that the angler had no sport; and, later on in the day, he left the rod in Mr. M'Crae's hands to see if he could tempt a fish to rise, meanwhile going for a walk up the hill-side. On his return, the pedestrian found Donald standing at the edge of a pool, with drooping rod, examining his fly with an air of the deepest dejection.

"Well, Donald, what is the matter?" inquired the minister.

"Oh, he rose fine!" replied Donald, with a sad shake of his head. "I had hold of him—and then he was away. I told you how it would be, Mr. Marjoribanks; we should have no luck with the fishing the day!"

### IV.—THE MINISTER AND THE SALMON

It was on Loch Awe, just opposite to the hotel, that Mr. Marjoribanks had his memorable battle with a salmon.

The weather had been dry that year for weeks. The head of the loch was full of salmon waiting for a spate to allow them to pass up the Orchy; consequently a good many boats were out daily, trolling backwards and forwards, for the chance of a fish. This, of course, necessitated Duncan of the Hotel (that paragon of head-waiters) keeping a sharp look-out from the terrace, in order to apprise the visitors at the earliest moment, should such an exciting event occur as the landing of a salmon. It therefore goes without saying, that, when the hotel was informed by the keen-eyed Duncan that

the worthy minister was actually playing a heavy fish within sight of the windows, a large crowd gathered as if by magic upon the terrace. Every point of vantage was quickly secured—many of the spectators being armed with opera-glasses, or other instruments for assisting the ordinary vision.

It was soon recognised that the fish was an exceptionally heavy one, for he continued to maintain his position deep down in the water. Indeed he showed little signs of making any decided movement beyond a constant revolution in a small circle, accompanied by a perpetual tugging of the line.

As the minutes slowly passed by, the excitement amongst the onlookers became intense. The enforced inactivity began to tell palpably on their nerves; so that, when a suggestion was made that possibly the minister had no gaff in the boat, the idea was accepted with the greatest avidity. Many eager hands forthwith rushed off to secure an implement with which to land the monster—anything, to allay the numbing sense of inaction which had well-nigh overmastered the crowd. In a very few minutes a gaff was forthcoming, and a gillie despatched to the assistance of the hero

of the hour, who, with grim and set face, still held on to the giant fish.

Presently, amid breathless excitement amongst the spectators on the terrace above, the minister exerted all his power, and gradually wound up the unseen leviathan to the surface of the water. As more pressure was brought to bear upon the fish, the line appeared to gyrate ever more rapidly. At last the top of the trace became visible, and—a shout of dismay burst from the agonised audience, as with a mighty CLOOP!! a big black bottle bounded out of the water, attached to the, now unhappy, minister's phantom minnow.

It was an abominable piece of bad luck. There was a small hole, near the bottom of the neck of the bottle, in which one of the triangles had caught, thus causing the bottle to tug and gyrate in the water, for all the world like a heavy and sulky fish.

It was adding insult to injury when some wag noised it abroad that the minister had "taken to the bottle."

Bottles are not the only things which may be caught when trolling in Loch Awe, for as a salmon loch it is distinctly improving; but for ordinary trout, trolling is not very remunerative work.

# 154 ANGLING & ART IN SCOTLAND

There are salmo ferox, too, but they are so few and far between that it is hardly worth while to spend much time in purposely trying for them. In dry weather, during May and June, a fair number of salmon are caught at the head of the loch; and from July onward many grilse and salmon may be met with on the Achlean shore, and at different places down the loch towards Ford. Indeed, in July and August the angler may cast a fly for grilse at certain favourite places along the shores with some chances of success, and troll a couple of minnows in between whiles. The salmon fishing ought to improve still further, since the nets at the mouth of the Awe are now not worked so hard as formerly. One year I was fortunate enough to hook a six and a half pound grilse, while casting for trout with fine tackle, and succeeded in landing it after an exciting battle. As for trout fishing, its season on Loch Awe is practically over by the end of June, and, although there is no scarcity of fish, they often show great dourness, and much skill is required to make a good basket.

Mr. Andrew Lang, in his charming "Angling Sketches," in the paper on Loch Awe remarks that little artifice is required in the angler when

fishing in a loch. But surely this is not so. No doubt, in a river, the good fisherman has a much greater pull over the duffer than in a loch, but, even in the latter, it is surprising the difference in weight which will occur between the firstrate angler's basket and that caught by the indifferent or even good fisherman. Put, for instance, Mr. P. D. Malloch in the same boat with another man -who, to all appearance, is a fairly good fisherfor a week's loch fishing, and you would find, probably, on an average, that Mr. Malloch would catch half as many fish again as the other man. It is difficult to tell wherein the difference lies. I believe, when fishing from a boat, that more fish are risen if a long line be cast, but in that case it takes greater skill to hook them. There is no doubt that a great deal of skill is exercised in the striking of trout in still water; and the angler must have quick sight and a delicate touch, so that he may be instantly aware when a fish is taking the fly, even below the surface. Those few seconds of hesitation so often lose the fish. Unlike a salmon, a trout requires to be struck instantaneously on sight, except on those occasions when he throws himself right out, or half out of water, 156

taking the fly on his downward course; in which case several seconds should be allowed before striking —by no means an easy thing to remember.

The skilful angler, too, may frequently succeed in tempting a trout, when taking the natural fly, to rise to the artificial, by dexterously and accurately dropping his fly into the ring caused by the rising fish, even though the surrounding water be as smooth as a sheet of glass. Nowadays, when trout are so highly educated, I believe that fishing with very fine tackle, and flies placed on the cast as far apart as possible, greatly increases the chances of success.

It has been said that it is not good to drag your flies through the water; and in river fishing there is no doubt that it is a fatal thing to do; but in a river there is a current which carries the fly for a considerable distance—farther, in fact, than if you were to drag it towards you—causing it, thus, to pass over many trout; besides which, it would be quite opposite to the natural order of things for a fly to swim strongly across, or against a current. But in a loch, if no motion is given to the fly, it simply sinks in one spot, and so loses the chance of covering much water. It is better

to allow the fly to remain perfectly quiescent for a few seconds, simply because a fly which is sunk deeper and drawn upwards is more deadly. Why should that be so? Probably because fish feed more on flies which are rising up through the water than on those which are floating on the surface. The deadliness of that destructive machine known as the otter, which drags along a series of submerged flies, would alone point to the fact that it is not detrimental to obtaining good sport on a lake to move the flies through the water at a fairly rapid pace. It is also a most noticeable fact, in some lakes, that more trout can be caught by trolling the flies behind the boat, than by casting. This is, fortunately, by no means always the case; in fact, in many places, that mode of fishing gives small results. But on a good many lochs, notably on a certain loch in Sutherlandshire, which I have fished, it is decidedly so. On this loch, many more fish can be caught by slowly rowing the boat along, with trailing flies, than by the most untiring casting. And in casting, the deeper the flies are sunk, the more likelihood is there of catching fish, for the trout, when they do rise, seldom break the surface of the water.

# 158 ANGLING & ART IN SCOTLAND

There is no need to go into the relative merits of the wet or dry modes of fishing the fly, which have been so often and so fully discussed elsewhere, except that I may remark that the dry fly is unsuitable for loch fishing, for the same reason that I find fault with the method of allowing the wet fly to sink in one spot without being moved; namely, because comparatively little ground is covered.

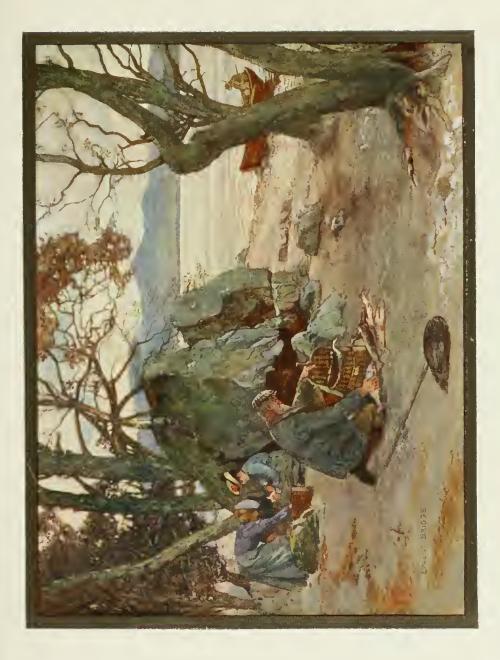
I suppose the trout fishing on Loch Awe is not, from all accounts, what it used to be forty years ago; but, as far as my experience of the loch goes, which has extended over a period of twenty-two years, I have found it quite as good of late as formerly. The fish are of excellent quality, and, generally speaking, most handsome in appearance, but always uncertain to rise; though in some seasons they take more freely than in others. In 1903 I fished the loch a number of times, spread over a period of two months, that is, during May and June, and found that I rarely obtained more than a dozen trout in a day; but in the gross takes the fish averaged fully three-quarters of a pound apiece (all caught on the fly), and the largest weighed three pounds and two ounces. Other seasons I have seen

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many bigger baskets, but never such a good average weight per fish. The best sport is perhaps to be obtained between Portsonachan and Ford, but I have usually fished from the Loch Awe Hotel, owing to the superiority of the scenery at that end of the loch.

What can be more delightful than a warm spring day, with a soft westerly breeze, spent among the islands of Loch Awe, trout rod in hand, amid the varied and unceasing cries of the many sea-gulls which wheel around, or lazily float on the surface of the water. It is good to lunch on the Green Island, where the gulls and curlews build, and where the daffodils grow amongst the tombs of the ancient Celtic burying-ground. Many fine trout lie around its shores; that bay to the southward, where a solitary great boulder rears its head out of the water, is a special favourite of mine. And if you lunch there you can in the afternoon cross over to the south side of the loch, and, if the wind be in the west, drift up the Achlean shore, and so finish up the day in Teatle Bay-or Ardteatle, as the boatmen have it-where you stand a good chance of landing a large fish to lay out on the tiled floor of the porch when you get back to the hotel, for

## 160 ANGLING & ART IN SCOTLAND

the admiration and envy of your brother anglers. Loch Awe is by no means to be despised. If the trout be dour, the loch possesses attractions that will compensate the fisherman for many blank days, and he might go farther and fare worse.

