

**A CAUTION TO ANGLERS; OR,
'THE PRACTICAL ANGLER' AND
'THE MODERN PRACTICAL
ANGLER' COMPARED**

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A Caution to Anglers; Or, 'The Practical Angler' and 'the Modern Practical Angler' compared by
W. C. Stewart

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W. C. STEWART

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1871
A
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OR

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AND 'THE MODERN PRACTICAL ANGLER'
COMPARED

WITH

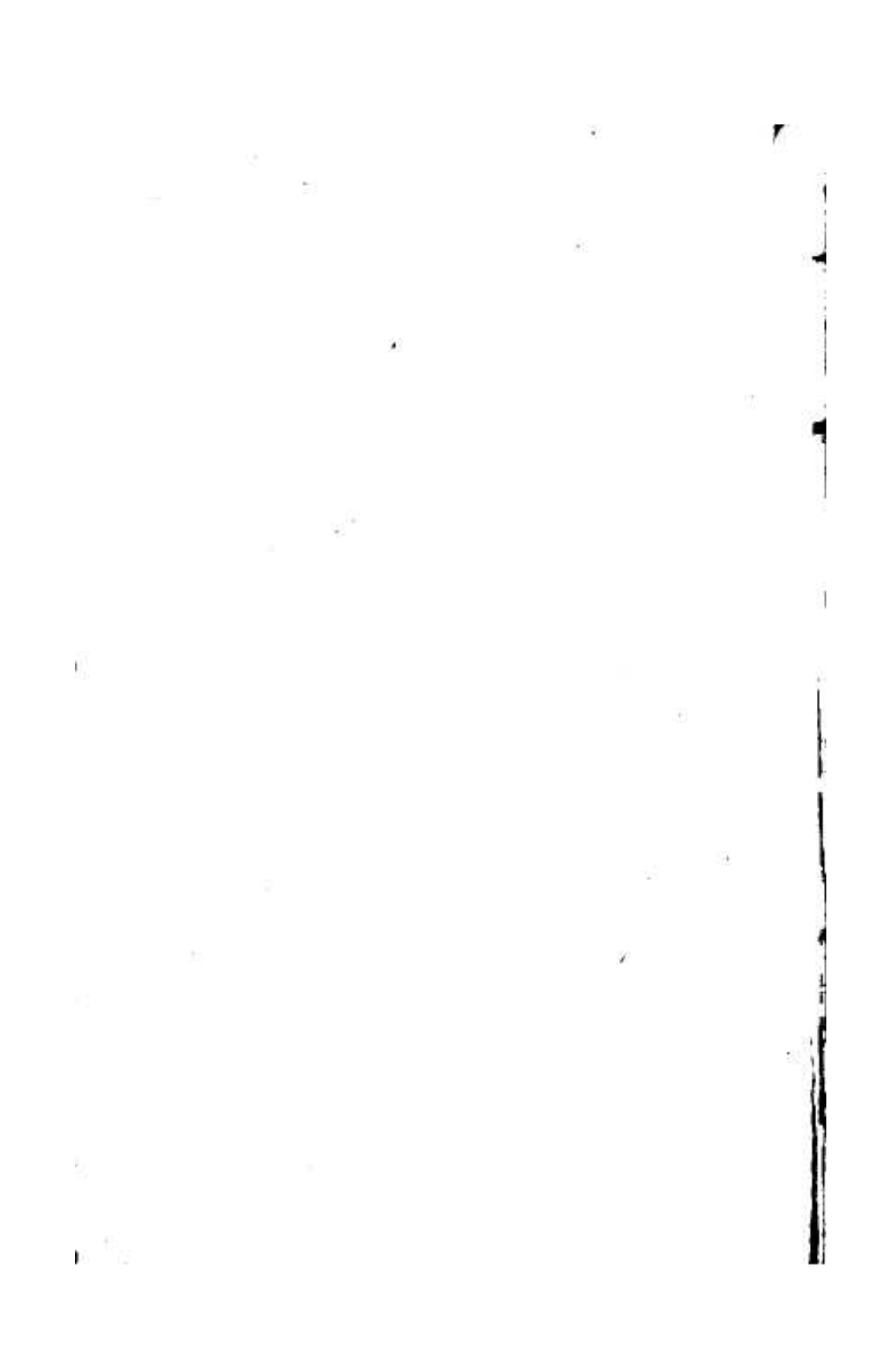
REMARKS UPON THE DECREASE OF TROUT
AND PROPOSED REMEDIES

BY W. C. STEWART

AUTHOR OF *'THE PRACTICAL ANGLER'*

EDINBURGH
ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK

1871



PREFACE.

THAT Mr. Pennell should write a book, whether he had any information to impart or not, is a matter of which no one can complain. That he should call that book, however, by a title so similar to mine, my publishers complained of to his, and requested them to alter it, as the similarity or title might lead to purchasers getting the one book when they wished the other. As they declined to do this, and I am afraid that, in spite of the discovery of a previous *Practical Angler*, any confusion in this way might be chiefly detrimental to *The Practical Angler* which goes by my name, I publish this pamphlet—portions of which have already appeared in the *Field*—to show that the similarity is almost entirely confined to the title, and that no two systems of fly-fishing could be more different than those advocated in *The Practical Angler*, and *The Modern Practical Angler*.

I am further stimulated to what is somewhat an ungracious task, by not having seen any

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review of *The Modern Practical Angler*, which thoroughly tears to tatters the web of absurdities in which Mr. Pennell has involved himself; most reviewers giving them the go-by lightly. The *Scotsman*, indeed, remarked that Mr. Pennell might safely be left to the mercy of his own arguments, and if all his readers were thoroughly qualified anglers it would be difficult to imagine a severer punishment; but as more of the readers of angling works are learners than proficient, and as they cannot so readily distinguish between the genuine and the counterfeit, I propose for their benefit criticising the system of fly-fishing and flies which its author expects to "revolutionise fly-fishing," and "write the epitaph of the present system of artificial flies."

I have also some grounds of complaint against *The Modern Practical Angler*, which will be fully stated in the following pages, and upon which I court the opinion of the angling community.

EDINBURGH, 27th March 1871.

A CAUTION TO ANGLERS.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR OF THE FIELD.

MODERN AND ANCIENT (?) PRACTICAL ANGLERS.

SIR—In your paper of the 17th ult. I notice a letter from Mr. H. Cholmondeley-Pennell, in which he backs up the views of fly-fishing down stream which he has advocated in his book, *The Modern Practical Angler*. As Mr. Pennell has alluded to me frequently in his book, and almost entirely in his letter, as an exponent of up-stream fishing, perhaps you will allow me space to say something in reply to his letter, and also to make a few remarks upon his book. First, then, for the letter. In it Mr. Pennell says the arguments in favour of up-stream fishing are :—

“1. That, as trout always lie head up stream, the angler fishing from below is less likely to be seen than one fishing from above.”

“*Answer.*—The position of the eye of a trout is such as to enable him to see much more readily anything above or on one side than in front of him ; and in rippling water, such as trout streams usually

consist of, the angler making moderately long casts will, for all practical purposes, be out of 'ken' of the fish, whether he stands above or below."

If Mr. Pennell in his rather vague answer means that trout see as well behind as in front, why does he in his book instruct anglers to throw a foot above a rising fish? why not throw a foot behind him? If Mr. Pennell admits, what every angler knows to be a fact, that trout see better in front than behind—nature having formed them for looking out for their food the way it comes, down stream—why does he attempt to answer the argument at all?

"2. That the angler striking from below is likely to strike the hook into the fish's jaws, whereas the angler striking from above is likely to 'pull the flies straight out of his mouth.'"

"*Answer.*—This is true as an abstract proposition, but as applied to the question of fly-fishing up stream is quite untrue. When the fly is being drawn straight down stream, the trout, rising from below, is forced, owing to the position of the gut, to *turn round before he can take the fly*; so that at the moment of rising the fish would be in precisely the same position with regard to the angler, whether the latter was fishing up or down."

In answer to Mr. Pennell's answer, it may be pointed out that an up-stream fisher never draws his flies at all, but allows them to float down as the natural insect does; also, that he very rarely casts

directly above him, but generally up and across. Mr. Pennell says (upon what grounds it is difficult even to imagine) that "the position of the gut compels the trout to turn round before he can take the fly." That is, that the trout sees the fly coming down stream, but also sees the gut is in his way; so he either bolts up stream or waits till the fly passes him, and then turns round with his head down stream and catches it. It is by no means clear why the gut should be more in the trout's way in the one position than the other; but most anglers will be of opinion that if the trout saw the gut he would not put himself to so much trouble to take the fly. Had Mr. Pennell stated that trout turned a summersault or two before taking the fly, it would be quite as probable in theory and correct in fact.

Mr. Pennell's answer to the third argument will be fully replied to subsequently, in taking notice of his flies and system of fishing.

Mr. Pennell in his letter adds :—

"Even, therefore, if it could be proved that somewhat more fish were to be taken by fishing up than down stream, anglers might well hesitate before they adopted the system. My own experience, however, leads to an opposite conclusion, and it is an experience corroborated, as I believe, by that of the great majority of anglers. Indeed, Mr. Stewart himself practically admits this when he states that