

**ANGLING; OR,
HOW TO ANGLE,
AND WHERE TO GO**

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Angling; or, How to angle, and where to go by Robert Blakey

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ROBERT BLAKEY

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[Front.

ANGLING.

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HOW TO ANGLE, AND WHERE TO GO.

BY

ROBERT BLAKEY,

AUTHOR OF THE "HISTORY OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF MIND," ETC. ETC.

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.. Fish

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ANGLING.

PART I.—HOW TO ANGLE.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS.

THE art of angling is one of the most ancient amusements and practices of which we have any record in the history of the human family. We read of it in the Old Testament; and in the records of ancient Egypt, Assyria, and the whole of the eastern section of the globe, once the seat of powerful empires, and of a civilized people, we have innumerable testimonies in their several sepulchral and architectural remains, that angling—as we angle at this day—was an art well known, and generally practised, both as an amusement, and as a means of support. In the polished and literary states of Greece and Rome we have still more pointed and irrefragable testimony of the high antiquity of the art. The bucolic writers of Greek poetry descant upon the subject in a variety of forms; while graver historians among that singular and enlightened people dwell upon the art as one firmly embedded in the permanent customs and habits of the nation. The literature of Rome likewise portrays the existence of the gentle art among the warlike conquerors of the world. Not only formal works were composed on the subject, but we find that the classic poets, both serious and comic, make many direct allusions to the amusement of the rod-fisher, and to the fish he was in the habit of catching.

From the Christian era, and during the first centuries of the decline of Roman power and conquest, we find that angling continued to be one of the common pursuits of many nations, then in a state of transition from barbarism to refinement and knowledge. Pliny wrote on fish; and Ausonius, between the third and fourth century, expatiates with rapture on the abundance of fine salmon that were caught in the "blue Moselle;" a river in France, that

flows into the Rhine on the northern frontier of the country. The old chroniclers and scholastic writers often mention the piscatory art; and the Church, then in full power, took the subject of fish generally under its own guidance, and regulated both the sport in taking them, and the using of them for food. In every country in Europe, where any degree of progress had been made in learning and civilization during the middle ages, we find numerous traces of fishermen and their labours, even long before the art of printing became known and practised.

It is now an established fact, admitted by all writers, that the English nation has been, from the earliest days of its history, the most distinguished and zealous propagators of the art of rod-fishing. And it is interesting to remark, in passing, that the historical memorials we possess, of the state of the angling art among the Anglo-Saxon tribes who first settled in this country, throw a great light on the origin of this striking predilection for the sport. The Anglo-Saxons, we are told, ate various kinds of fish, but the eel was a decided favourite. They used these fish as abundantly as swine. Grants and charters are sometimes regulated by payments made in these fish. Four thousand eels were a yearly present from the monks of Ramsay to those of Peterborough. We read of two places purchased for twenty-one pounds, wherein sixteen thousand of these fish were caught every year; and, in one charter, twenty fishermen are stated, who furnished, during the same period, sixty thousand eels to the monastery. Eel dykes are often mentioned in the boundaries of their lands.*

In the dialogues of Elfric, composed for the use of the Anglo-Saxon youth in the learning of the Latin tongue, we find frequent mention made of fishermen, and matters relating to their craft. In one dialogue the fisherman is asked, "What gettest thou by thine art?" "Big loaves, clothing, and money." "How do you take them?" "I ascend a ship, and cast my net into the river; I also throw in a hook, a bait, and a rod." "Suppose the fishes are unclean?" "I throw the unclean out, and take the clean for food." "Where do you sell your fish?" "In the city." "Who buys them?" "The citizens; I cannot take so many as I can sell." "What fishes do you take?" "Eels, haddocks, minnows, and eel-pouts, skate, and lampreys, and whatever swims in the rivers." "Why do you not fish in the sea?" "Sometimes I do; but rarely, because a great ship is necessary here."†

The historian Bede tells us, that Wilfrid rescued the people of Sussex from famine in the eighth century, by teaching them to catch fish: "for though the sea and their rivers abounded with fish, they had no more skill in the art than to take eels. The servants of Wilfrid threw into the sea nets made out of those by which they had obtained eels, and thus directed them to a new source of plenty."‡

* Dugdale's Monas., p. 244.

† Turner's Anglo-Saxons, vol. iii. p. 23.

‡ Bede, lib. 4.