

## **The King's fishing : done into verse.**

### **Contributors**

Mercier, Charles Arthur, 1852-1919.  
Royal College of Physicians of London

### **Publication/Creation**

London : Adlard and Son, 1913.

### **Persistent URL**

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/pym3yuqw>

### **Provider**

Royal College of Physicians

### **License and attribution**

This material has been provided by This material has been provided by Royal College of Physicians, London. The original may be consulted at Royal College of Physicians, London. where the originals may be consulted. Conditions of use: it is possible this item is protected by copyright and/or related rights. You are free to use this item in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s).



Wellcome Collection  
183 Euston Road  
London NW1 2BE UK  
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722  
E [library@wellcomecollection.org](mailto:library@wellcomecollection.org)  
<https://wellcomecollection.org>

748  
4/22?

# The King's Fishing

Done into Verse

BY

CHARLES MERCIER, M.C.C.



London

ADLARD AND SON, BARTHOLOMEW PRESS

BARTHOLOMEW CLOSE, E.C.

1913



C

00

MER

74. 7.

# THE KING'S FISHING

DONE INTO VERSE

BY

CHARLES MERCIER, M.C.C.\*

WITH

NOTES

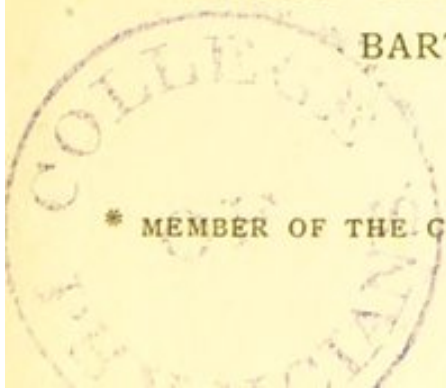
CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY

London

ADLARD AND SON, BARTHOLOMEW PRESS  
BARTHOLOMEW CLOSE, E.C.

1913

\* MEMBER OF THE CASUAL CLUB





STA COLL

ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS LIBRARY	
CLASS	C 08 MER
ACQ. NO.	21592
SOURCE	
DATE	

Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2015

## PROLOGUE

IN the Third Series of the Casual Club Papers—admirable papers read to an admirable club by its admirable secretary, Mr. H. R. Allport—there is an account, which purports to be translated from a French newspaper, of a day's fishing by his most gracious majesty, King George. It seemed to me, on reading this marvellously graphic narrative, that it was worthy to be enshrined in a more dignified and elaborate medium than the mere prose—heroic prose though it is—of Mr. Allport's translation, and I have endeavoured to place the gem in a more worthy setting.

I am a novice in the art of versifying, and had some difficulty in deciding on the most appropriate metre. Now the directness and simplicity of the narrative pointed to the ballad as the most appropriate; now the august station of the chief actor seemed to demand the dignity of the decasyllable; and now the *locus in quo* and the general atmosphere were so redolent of Scott, that his manner seemed



to be imperatively demanded. So evenly were the several claims balanced, that the only practicable solution was to employ them all in turn, and to leave the choice to the reader.

In assuming the character and functions of a poet, I have not hesitated to appropriate his privileges also. By the deserved title of poetic licence is understood the privilege, generally allowed to poets, of making what alterations they please in a story in order to fit it into their scheme and add to its attractiveness. Of this advantage I have freely availed myself, but I do not think I have taken any liberty for which a precedent could not be found. Did not Shakespeare make Hector quote Aristotle?

It may surprise those who read these artless lines to know that I have no practical acquaintance with the piscatorial art. All I know of it is a dim recollection of Izaak Walton, read in boyhood, and the account of the French narrator, who seems to have been an eye-witness of the King's prowess. The modes of catching fish that I have described are such as common-sense must necessarily dictate to those who follow an occupation that has, I must confess, no attractions for me. It is possible that in some of the minor details I may have been led into inaccuracy, and, if so, I trust that the reader will place the responsibility on me. His Majesty is too well known as an accomplished all-round sportsman



for any assurance to be needed from me that his methods are correct, or for anyone to take offence on his behalf if I have attributed to him any unsportsmanlike act.

Mr. Allport's account is as follows:

“I have been gratified by an article which appeared recently in a Parisian journal setting forth our present Sovereign's prowess as a salmon fisher. I have done a little salmon fishing myself, but King George's methods were quite new to me. Perhaps they would be equally new to King George. I append a rough translation of the more salient passages :

“It is an angler of the first force, this King of the English. Behold him as he sits motionless under his umbrella, patiently regarding his many-coloured float. How he obstinates himself (*qu'il s'obstine*) against the elements. It is a summer day of Britain — *c'est à dire*, it is a day of sleet and fog and tempest. But what would you have? It is so they love it, these others. . . . Presently, the King's float goes to disappear. He strikes. My God, but how he strikes! The hook is implanted in the very bowels of the salmon. The King rises. He spurns aside his *fauteuil*. He strides strongly and swiftly backwards. In good time the salmon comes to approach itself (*viens s'approcher*) to the bank. . . . Aha! The King has cast aside his rod. He crouches. He



hurls himself, *ventre à terre*, upon the body of his victim. They splash and struggle in the icy water. Name of a dog! but it is a brave laddie (*c'est un brave garçon*). The gillie (species of Scotch out-of-doors domestic) administers the *coup de grâce*. The King cries in a very shrill voice (*d'une voix bien haute*) "Hip, hip, hourra!" . . . On these days of a red letter His Majesty dines on a haggis (*qu'est que c'est donc, this haggis?*) and a whiskey grogs.'

"The writer of the article," continues Mr. Allport, "reminds one of the persons mentioned by the apostle of the Gentiles—'He has a zeal for truth, but not according to knowledge.'"

## THE BALLAD OF THE KING'S FISHING.

The King goes a-fishing. It was the noble George the Fifth  
 Walked forth to take the air.  
 His fishing rod he took with him,  
 A float, and eke a pair.

He sits him down. (The tense changes.) He sits him down the stream beside,  
 His rod is in his hand.  
 He sits upon a soft *fauteuil* ;  
 He does not care to stand.

And watches. And as he sits he eyes his float,  
 His float so green and red.  
 A silk umbrella he puts up  
 Above his royal head.

He scorneth the weather. And soon the fog begins to rise,  
 The rain begins to fall.  
 No notice takes the fisherman,  
 He does not mind at all.



- He goes on  
scorning.      The rain comes down, the wind gets up,  
                    The fisher does not care.  
                    However hard it rains and blows,  
                    He never turns a hair.
- He has a bite.    The tempest roars, the lightnings flash,  
                    The fisherman sits on ;  
                    Then jumps up with a piercing shriek,  
                    “ The float, the float is gone ! ”
- He executeth  
the usual  
preliminaries.    He grasps the rod with both his hands,  
                    He jumps into the air,  
                    He flogs the water into foam ;  
                    The salmon is not there !
- And strikes.      He strikes to East, he strikes to West,  
                    To any point he likes ;  
                    North-east by north, and south half west,  
                    My God ! but how he strikes !
- The author  
showeth his  
knowledge of  
conic sections.    He waves the rod above his head,  
                    With many a shake and swerve ;  
                    Until at last he bends it in  
                    A parabolic curve.

The feelings of  
the salmon  
and the dimen-  
sions of the hook.

The salmon feels the deadly hook  
Implanted in his bowel ;  
It is as long and flat and broad  
As any builder's trowel.

The King strides  
strongly and  
swiftly  
backwards.

The monarch rises in his might,  
His *fautueil* kicks to hell,  
Strides back a furlong in a trice  
And twenty yards as well.

The strange  
behaviour of the  
salmon.

The salmon is a wily fish,  
In sooth he would not die ;  
He clambers half way up the bank,  
Bear witness if I lie !

The King leaps  
to the assault.

The King has cast his rod aside,  
His tackle and his float,  
And with one flying leap he grips  
The salmon by the throat.

The combat.

And down the bank, and up the bank,  
They roll in combat grim ;  
And now the King is on the top,  
And now the fish tops him.



The inappro- As when the boa constrictor holds  
 priate simile, and  
 the paradox of The lion in his toils,  
 the boiling water. They splash about the river till  
 The icy water boils.

The author's O Fido Ponto Toby Tray!  
 rhapsodie. By all your names I swear  
 A braver deed no king has dared,  
 No king shall ever dare !

## FYTTE THE SECOND.

---

The wily gillie. It was the faithful gillie man,  
 (The past tense  
 is resumed.) A wily wight was he ;  
 His gaff was in his strong right hand,  
 His kilt came to his knee.

His comrades His comrades urge him to the fray  
 expostulate. As round about they stand.  
 (The tense  
 changes.) " You see the King has met his match,  
 " Why don't you lend a hand ? "

The gillie  
excuseth himself.  
(The tense  
changes back  
again.)

It was the wily gillie man,  
His simple story told.  
“ Gif I went in the black watèr  
“ I’d catch an awfu’ cold.”

The comrades  
insist.

They took away his claymore keen,  
His dirk and eke his targe ;  
They took him by his neckè’s scruff,  
And by his feet so large ;

He joins the fray.

Nor recked they of his mother’s prayer,  
Nor recked they of his scream ;  
They swung him forth, they swung him  
back,  
They tossed him in the stream.

His last prayer.

“ O mother, mother,” Dougal cried,  
“ Hear now my parting wish ;  
“ May I taste whiskey never more  
“ If I don’t get that fish ! ”

His subtle wile.

He felt within his sporran deep,  
He drew his mull thereout,  
He clapped a dose of sneeshin strong  
Upon the fish’s snout.



- The salmon is  
astonied. O then the salmon drew a breath,  
A mighty breath drew he ;  
As may inhale a monstrous whale  
That swims the southern sea.
- He prepares to  
sneeze. His eyelids closed, his sides puffed out  
His nostrils wrinkled up,  
His jaws and throat he opened wide  
As round as any cup.
- He sneezes. A-tishoo ! One tremendous sneeze  
Resounded far and near.
- The  
consequences. It caught the King full in the chest,  
It hit the gillie in the breast,  
It nearly deafened all the rest,  
It scattered them to east and west,  
It knocked them like a rinderpest,  
That salmon sneezed with such a zest,  
Upon the summer air.
- His  
disappearance. The King came back, the gillie too,  
They searched both far and near,  
They searched the stream from bank  
to bank,  
The salmon was not there !

Whither he went. Blown by his sneeze into the sky  
 Was gone that lordly fish.

What he scorned. He scorned to end his proud career  
 Upon a silver dish.

His fate. High, high above the lofty trees,  
 High, high above the hill  
 That salmon soared ; for aught I know,  
 He may be soaring still.

The fate of the gillie. It was a gloomy gillie man  
 Trudged home through sleet and snow,  
 For never more shall Dougal Dhu  
 The taste of whiskey know.

The feast. Now tourra-lourra and hip, hip hourra,  
 A merry measure. Back they go home to dine ;  
 Pairritch and haggis, which cooked in  
 a bag is,  
 And hot whiskey grogs and wine.

The moral. God prosper long our noble King,  
 And Dougal, long live he,  
 And when they next go out to fish,  
 May I be there to see.



IL PESCATORIO.  

---

Hence! loathed versifier,  
Of dulness and long tediousness born,  
December ninth at morn ;  
Thy books I long to put upon the fire,  
Or find some buttermilk,  
Who wants clean paper to enclose his good  
And appetising food,  
So much superior to thine arid fare,  
Which I could never bear,  
And let him take thy sheets to line his pan.

*(The remainder caret. See explanatory note in appendix.)*

## THE ROYAL ANGLER.

(AFTER SHENSTONE.)

---

The monarch is gone to the stream,  
His fishing rod held in his hand.  
He sits in a boat and he dangles his float  
To the strains of a beautiful band.

The fog and the rain make the air  
As sodden as sodden can be,  
But the King, as he sits in his chair,  
Says no king is as happy as he.

A fish with the hooks runs away,  
And feels in his bowels the spikes ;  
And the gillies all shout and they say,  
God Almighty ! How hard the King strikes !

Then turning himself round about,  
Swift and strong the King strides to the rear,  
Till the salmon climbs out with the hook in his snout,  
And looks at the King with a sneer.



A king can endure a good deal,  
And cares little what people may say,  
But when a cock salmon thus gives him his gammon,  
'Tis positive *lèse majesté*.

With a hop and a skip and a jump,  
The King has the fish by the throat ;  
And they roll up and down in the water so brown,  
And the chair topples out of the boat.

Oh Ponto ! most faithful of hounds,  
By your sacred cognomen I swear,  
Never was such a king did so splendid a thing  
When he might have sat tight in his chair.

Now Dougal the gillie comes down  
The honour and glory to share,  
With his net gives a grab, with his gaff makes a jab,  
But the salmon don't chance to be there !

'Twas the King that decided the fray,  
When he pitched the fish over his head ;  
And Dougal the gillie (it seems to me silly)  
Then beat it until it was dead.

Then "Hip hip hourra," said the King  
In a voice that excitement made shrill,  
"I don't know that ever a salmon so clever  
"Has needed such exquisite skill."

"In order to mark this event  
"Whiskey grogs shall be served all around,  
"And a haggis so good, the most nourishing food  
"That in all bonnie Scotland is found."



## THE VANITY OF RIVER FISHES.

## AN ODE.

(IN IMITATION OF DR. JOHNSON.)

---

Still aches the head that wears a royal crown,  
Migranous vapours weigh the spirits down.  
The weary mind to rest and recreate,  
Longs to tempt fishes to a ling'ring fate.  
Forth strides the King, his angle in his hand,  
Nor stays until he gains the silver strand.  
Far o'er the stream he throws his treach'rous lines,  
Then sessile on a soft *fauteuil* reclines.  
The circumambient atmosphere appals,  
Fog rises dank and pluvius moisture falls ;  
Though tempests rage and overwhelm his boat,  
Serene the monarch gazes on his float.  
As the King watches, vigilant and brave,  
Down sinks the float, engulfed beneath the wave.

Rising majestic from his downy throne,  
 Seizing the rod with vigour all his own,  
 With one strong jerk he tears the hook away,  
 Out of the bowels of his finny prey.

The servile train, observing from the shore,  
 Raise the loud pæan with approving roar—  
*Io Triumphe!* what a bit of luck!

Good God Almighty! how the King has struck!  
 Backwards the King with strong and rapid stride,  
 Seeks refuge from the swift advancing tide.

Can kings defy the tides' eirenicon?

Let Canute answer or let English John!

Foremost upon the billows dark and high,  
 Rides the fell salmon, fury in his eye.

"And do you call yourself," he cried, "a knight?"

"Come back you coward, come you back and fight!"

No need to send a second challenge forth,

Back turns the King in elemental wrath.

"And shall a king be bearded by a fish?"

"Prepare to end your days upon a dish;

"Nay, since than other salmons you are larger,

"Prepare to end your days upon a charger."

With scorn he spurns his fishing-rod away;



One great saltation brings him to the fray.  
 As by far Thule some tremendous whale  
 Lashes the ocean with prodigious tail,  
 As children rolling down a steep decline,  
 Their arms and legs about each other twine,  
 So does the salmon lash the turbid wave,  
 So does the King engage the combat brave.  
 Great Canis Major, in your starry sphere,  
 When fought a king an action so severe !

Now the domestic servitor beholds  
 His King enveloped in the scaly folds ;  
 Cautious advancing to the river's brim,  
 Keenly he feels each unprotected limb ;  
 Marks the hiatus where the kilt leaves off,  
 Marks the protub'rance of the swelling calf ;  
 Back from the combat prudently he hangs,  
 Dreading to feel the fish's deadly fangs.  
 So great Achilles could not choose but feel,  
 Tender and soft, his vulnerable heel.  
 " Dougal, you fool ! " expostulates his master,  
 " Can't you contrive to move a little faster ? "  
 " Ay," says the slave, in phrase uncouth and rough,

" May't please your Majesty, I'm near enough."  
 " So," says the King, " in solitude I strive ;  
 " One of us two shan't leave the field alive.  
 " Now to a stratagem I'll have recourse,  
 " Theral and despicable is brute force.  
 " See how his back I deep indigitate,  
 " Into his gills my thumbs insinuate ;  
 " This purchase gained (I might have gained before),  
 " Far o'er my head I'll throw him on the shore."  
 With a vast effort, first declining low,  
 High toward the heaven he hurls his hateful foe.  
 He in bright lightnings flashes through the sky,  
 Falls with a thund'rous thump : there let him lie.

Dougal advances, ever shrewd and wise,  
 Reads death approaching in the salmon's eyes ;  
 Waits till the fish is safe and surely dead,  
 Then with his gaff he hits him on the head.  
 " Hip hip hourra ! " the joyous monarch cries ;  
 " Hip hip hourra ! " the faithful Celt replies :  
 Shouts corresponding from the crowd arise.

" Since I return victorious from the field,



“ Hot whiskey grogs my cellarman shall yield ;

“ A luscious haggis every man shall share ;

“ Viand ambrosial ! eat and never spare.

“ Thou faithful Dougal, hear the joyful news,

“ *Next time you fish, be sure and wear the trews.*”

## THE LAY OF THE LAKE.

## I

The gillies all had drunk their fill  
Till some of them were very ill;  
A few, of different mettle made,  
Had quenched their thirst with lemonade;  
But most were lying on the floor,  
With happy smile and stertorous snore,  
When through the lofty servants' hall  
Paced the grey-headed Seneschal.  
The hoary Seneschal stood still,  
And thus proclaimed his master's will:  
"It is our royal will and wish  
"To-morrow's morn to hunt the fish.  
"To-morrow's morn, if we're alive,  
"We start at twenty after five."  
Thus spake, in hearing of them all,  
The hoary-headed Seneschal.

## II

Above the sounds of stertorous sleep  
Arose a murmur, stern and deep:



" Great Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled!  
 " Is yon a time to leave our bed?  
 " The Gillies' Union of Trade  
 " The strictest regulation made  
 " That gillies don't on duty go  
 " Till nine, or half-past nine, or so;  
 " Nor then, unless their fast they break  
 " On turtle brose and wedding cake.  
 " A pretty thing to strain and strive  
 " Before the clock strikes half-past five!"

## III

" Ho, varlets!" cried the Seneschal,  
 And drew his sword before them all,  
 " Bring out your chairman, bring him forth!  
 " And let him feel my righteous wrath!  
 " I'll teach him, in his monarch's hall,  
 " To beard a hoary Seneschal!"  
 With backward glance and furtive tread,  
 As one who seeks to save his head;  
 With staring eyes and pallid face,  
 As one who seeks a safer place,  
 Uneasy, toward the nearest door  
 The chairman fled across the floor;  
 But ere that refuge safe he won,  
 The Seneschal had got the bun.  
 A feint in tierce, a thrust in carte,  
 His steel had reached the caitiff's heart.

## IV

Soon as the Donjon clock struck five,  
 Like bees from out a swarming hive,  
 The vassals, not a moment late,  
 Poured from the castle's frowning gate.  
 An hundred gillies, stout and strong,  
 Carried their masters' rods along.  
 Another hundred, stouter yet,  
 Bore the keen gaff and landing net.  
 An hundred more, not quite so stout,  
 Carried the bait and tackle out.  
 Thus to the margin of the lake,  
 Some being only half awake,  
 Through mud and slush their way they take.

## V

The ground-bait men march in the van,  
 They carry gentles mixed with bran.  
 Nine and twenty gillies came,  
     Bearing worms in bags of leaves,  
 Nine and twenty of the same  
     Carried cakes of paste and greaves.  
 Next follow on in order due,  
 The live-bait gillies two by two.  
 A kettle slung between each pair  
 Suspended hangs in middle air,  
 Affording scarce such breadth of brim



As serves a dozen frogs to swim.  
 The rodmen follow, gallant band!  
 Each bearing in his dexter hand  
 A rod full twenty feet in length,  
 Unmatched in suppleness and strength.

## VI

And now, with slow impressive march,  
 From out the Donjon's gloomy arch,  
 In number due some nine or ten,  
 Come on the scene the tackle men.  
 The phantom minnow leads the way,  
 Will-o'-the-wisp that shines by day;  
 Some bear the floats of garish hue,  
 Pure white and scarlet, green and blue;  
 While others bear, in leathern books,  
 The paternoster's dreadful hooks.  
 Lastly, the King himself appears,  
 Surrounded by his House of Peers;  
 Duke and duchess, lord and dame  
 Of ancient line and lofty fame,  
 Attend the monarch at his wish,  
 With rod and line to hunt the fish.

## VII

'Twere long to tell what rods were broke  
 Ere six o'clock was on the stroke;

What lines were lifted in despair  
 When seven sounded on the air ;  
 Who failed a single fish to bag ;  
 Who fixed his hook into a snag.  
 Few were the anglers left at nine  
 With strength enough to throw a line.  
 And when, o'er marsh and reedy fen  
 The Donjon clock struck half past ten,  
 The monarch seated on his throne  
 Was left to throw his cast alone.

## VIII

Alone, but with unbated zest  
 The King indulged in joke and jest.  
 " And where's your hook, my lord," he cried,  
 " And where the fly so deftly tied ?  
 " And will you tell me, if you please,  
 " If trout and salmon grow on trees ?  
 " To throw your line in trees for fish  
 " Will scarcely fill your breakfast dish.  
 " Your grace ! what have you brought to land,  
 " With supple wrist and dext'rous hand ?  
 " Oh fie ! my lord, curse not nor ban,  
 " E'en though you land an empty can.  
 " Such things are useful in their way,  
 " 'Twill hold your grace's catch to-day.  
 " Sir Rufus, where's that rod so long,



" You said you purchased for a song,  
 " Split cane and greenheart, slim and straight,  
 " For which you gave but six and eight ?  
 " What ! broke in three ? Alas the day !  
 " 'Twas cheap and—fragile, as they say."  
 Thus lightly to the courtier tribe,  
 The King distributes jest and jibe.

## IX

But as he jests with serious air,  
 His own affairs demand his care.  
 As one eye on his float he kept,  
 The heart within his bosom leapt ;  
 For far beyond the reedy shore,  
 His float went down, to rise no more.  
 The monarch rose in all his might,  
 And kicked his things to left and right ;  
 A moment paused his line to feel,  
 That quivered like a line of steel,  
 A moment drooped his topmost joint,  
 Until the water touched the point,  
 Then breathing one short prayer for luck,  
 With all his force the monarch struck.

## X

Soon as the salmon felt the steel,  
 He shook with rage from head to heel.

Like arrow from a bow I ween,  
 Like shooting star at midnight seen,  
 As through the air the lightning keen,  
     The salmon leapt away.  
 Out ran the line with rushing sound,  
 The reel went whirring round and round,  
 No sinecure the monarch found  
     The part he had to play.  
 His point, that erstwhile drooped so low,  
 Before it wrought the salmon woe,  
 Was now decidedly *en haut*  
     And took its share of strain ;  
 The King stood firm with butt advanced,  
 And shaft inclined to rear ; it chanced  
 His difficulties were enhanced,  
 For drops upon the water danced,  
     It now began to rain.

## XI

The rain it raineth every day,  
 Especially up Braemar way,  
     And it was no surprise  
 That rain should fall and wind should blow ;  
 But when you fish it irks you so—  
     It gets into your eyes.  
 Be this, however, as it will,  
 The King now needed all his skill,  
     For O ! the fish was wise.



No trick or wile that fishes know,  
 As swimming high, or swimming low,  
     Or boring in the ground,  
 Or tangling up the line with weeds,  
 Or swimming in and out the reeds,  
     Or turning round and round,  
 To fray the line against a stump,  
 Or high above the lake to jump,  
     But what that salmon knew :  
 And safe to keep his tackle fine,  
 His trusty gut and silken line,  
     Was all the King could do.

## XII

And now the rain became a mist,  
 The mist soon turned to fog I wist  
     And sleet, and hail, and snow.  
 The weather in these northern isles  
 Is mostly rain, with snowing "whiles,"  
     As every Scot doth know.  
 The lords and ladies go away,  
 Explaining that they cannot stay:  
 Important business, so they say,  
     Requires them home again.  
 It's not the rain, they don't mind that;  
 No lady is so like a cat,  
 Or cares so much about her hat,  
     As not to love the rain;

But "duty, duty must be done,  
 "The rule applies to everyone,"  
 So some they walk, and some they run,  
 And some ride home amain.

## XIII

The King, however, plays the game,  
 And plays the fish; it's much the same  
 In this especial case.  
 With patient skill he marks at length  
 The gradual signs of waning strength;  
 Knows the stern joy which fishers feel  
 When fast and free they wind the reel,  
 And now he shifts his base;  
 Approaches nearer to the shore,  
 Enters the lake, and more and more  
 His line winds in apace.  
 At length within the murky tide  
 He sees the gleam of silver side  
 (Not silverside of beef).  
 Already glorying in his prize,  
 Weighs it with scales dropped from his eyes,  
 And with chagrin and grief  
 Finds that the monster that he guessed  
 At sixteen hundred pounds at least  
 Is no more than a score.  
 It was a bitter cruel blow,



And not a bit the less, although  
It oft had chanced before.

## XIV

His gillies two now calls the King,  
The landing net and gaff to bring;  
For jaded now, and spent with toil,  
Incapable his foe to foil,  
As floundering toward the bank he drew,  
The labouring fish strained full in view.  
Two gillies, famed for strength and speed,  
Attend their master at his need;  
One wields the gaff, and defter yet,  
The other wields the landing net.  
The fish awaits their ministrations,  
The King commands them to their stations,  
His voice resounds through fog and rain,  
He calls again, and yet again,  
O woe! alas! he calls in vain.

## XV

He who the gaff his business made,  
Was chairman of the gillies' trade,  
And but the very night before  
Had been stretched out upon the floor  
And on the carpet prostrate laid  
By hoary Seneschal's good blade;

While he who bore the landing net  
 Had gone to change his clothing wet,  
 And fortify himself from cold  
 With Highland whiskey strong and old;  
 And thus it chanced, the King alone  
 Must land the salmon on his own.

## XVI

Undaunted by his solitude  
 A moment deep in thought he stood,  
 Then flinging far his rod aside,  
 He waded deep into the tide,  
 Determining, should all else fail,  
 To seize the salmon by the tail.  
 As the keen osprey perched on high  
 Casts on the prey his piercing eye,  
 Then dives with swift unerring force,  
 And rises with his prey, of course,  
 With similarly piercing eyes,  
 The King sees where the salmon lies;  
 With similarly sudden dip  
 Seizes his tail in nervous grip.

## XVII

And now began a contest keen  
 The like of which was never seen.  
 The salmon kicks with mighty force,  
 Till the King thinks he's caught a horse.



And now the King seems to prevail,  
Now the fish nearly frees his tail.  
He churns the water into foam,  
Thinks of his little sams at home;  
Fresh vigour with the thought returns,  
Still creamier the lake he churns,  
For life he fights and not for fame,  
And all but wins that desperate game.

## XVIII

For, stumbling on a slippery rock,  
The King received a nasty shock,  
He barked his shin, he bruised his hip,  
But not for that relaxed his grip ;  
He dowsed his head in water cold,  
But not for that released his hold ;  
So little recks a sportsman true  
Of wounds or bruises, black or blue.  
And now the fish begins to fail,  
Less fierce the flapping of his tail ;  
Faint and more faint each jerk and start,  
Despair is settling in his heart.  
Too spent and weak to struggle more,  
His tail and fins all bruised and sore,  
Reluctant, he is dragged ashore.

## XIX

As sopping wet as anything,  
Dripping but happy stands the King.  
He looks upon his scaly prize,  
The light of triumph in his eyes.  
Forgotten are his bruise and grazes,  
He feels his heart as light as blazes.  
Fishing his bonnet from the lake,  
He wrings it till the stitches break,  
Then waves it like a jolly tar,  
And shouts aloud " Hip, hip, hurrah ! "

## XX

The Queen, who in her motor car  
Had watched the struggle from afar,  
As fast she hurried to the shore,  
The moment some who left before  
    To her the story told,  
In pleading accents voiced her wish,  
" Do, dearest, leave that horrid fish ;  
" Oh George, 'tis little that I ask,  
" My goodness gracious ! take this flask,  
    " You'll catch your death of cold.  
" You're such a rash and reckless body,  
" Pray take a little whiskey toddy,  
    " To keep the cold away."



The king, a twinkle in his eye,  
Gazed upward to the cloudy sky,  
And thus to her did say—  
“Of all the world of womankind  
“I do admire but one,  
“And you are she, my dearest dear,  
“Therefore it shall be done.  
“Jane Gilpin was a model wife,  
“Solicitous and kind,  
“But when her husband risked his life,  
“She left the wine behind!  
“How much more fortunate am I  
“That, when I’m not exactly dry,  
“My wife brings me a thermos ‘fixed’  
“With whiskey toddy ready mixed.  
“And now that I’ve come out the winner,  
“We’ll have, as I’m a living sinner,  
“Salmon and haggis for our dinner.”

## EPILOGUE.

My stylograph, farewell! The room grows dark,  
 On foolscap blue a deeper shade descending ;  
 The fire is out, at least there's but a spark,  
 The parlourmaid is o'er the scuttle bending.  
 Resume thy ebon cap! while I am sending  
 My manuscript to Allport for to see  
 These parodies and verses never ending.  
 They're meant to please him, but I fear that he  
 Will, 'ere he reads them through, bald-headed go for me.

Yet once again farewell, my stylograph !  
 Yet once again I lay thee on the shelf ;  
 And little reck I of the raucous laugh  
 May, silly, ridicule my silly self.  
 Much have I owed for thee, much coin and pelf,  
 Since first I purchased thee in Regent Street ;  
 And told the lovely and confiding elf  
 Behind the counter, that she was too sweet  
 To ask for payment ; and I sped in taxi fleet.

And as the flying taxi swift retreated,  
 Some Minions of the Law came after me.  
 'Twas now a pleeceman sadly overheated,  
 And now a 'tec disturbed at early tea.



As in the taxi comfortably seated,

I watched them through the window at the back,  
It seemed to me that she was badly treated,

And not improbably would get the sack,  
For trusting with a pen a literary hack.

## NOTES.

## CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY.

## THE BALLAD OF THE KING'S FISHING.

- Verse 5. *Never turns a hair*.—A colloquial expression signifying “maintains his equanimity.” Properly, “Never turns a hare.” The hare is a timid animal, easily diverted from its course by interjectional remarks and exclamations.
- „ 6. *Jumps up, etc.*—There is no authority for this in the original. It is an instance of poetic licence. Other instances will be found in the poems.
- „ 7. *He jumps into the air, etc.*—The writer is unfamiliar with the practice of angling. The operations described are purely conjectural, but are, he thinks, such as would naturally be performed in the circumstances described.
- „ 8. *He strikes to East, etc.*—His Majesty is an accomplished navigator, and would instinctively observe the points of the compass and conform to them.
- „ 11. *His fauteuil kicks to hell*.—This is not to be taken literally. Hell is a figurative expression, meaning a considerable distance.



- Verse 16. *Fido Ponto Toby Tray*.—It seems unlikely that a dog would have as many names as this, but the writer has a dog which answers to the names Satan Beelzebub Appolyon Moloch Belphegor; so called from his malicious propensities.
- „ 20. *Claymore*.—Scotch for broadsword. *Dirk*.—A dagger. *Targe*.—A bagpipe. Gillies habitually carry these weapons.
- „ 23. *Sporran*.—A pocket tied round the waist and used to carry fish and snuff. *Mull*.—Scotch for snuffbox. *Sneeshin*.—Snuff.
- „ 24. Professor Sir Skate York, K.C.B., objects that fishes do not sneeze. He admits, however, that he has never administered snuff to a fish, and therefore his objection has no weight. It is evident that this fish did sneeze, for the various effects could not have been produced in any other way.
- „ 26. *Rinderpest*.—A hurricane or tornado.
- „ 30. *The gloomy gillie*.—Too much sympathy should not be expended on the gloomy gillie. It is improbable that the vow was kept.

#### IL PESCATORIO.

- Line 3. *December ninth at morn*.—John Milton was born, as everyone knows, in Bread Street, Cheapside, on the 9th of December, 1608, between six and seven in the morning.

Line 11. This and the remaining lines are wanting. The muse of Milton took the hint conveyed so delicately in the opening line, and departed.

#### THE ROYAL ANGLER.

Verse 5. *Cock salmon*.—Quasi “the salmon that was cock of the walk.” The expression does not refer to the sex of the fish, which is unknown to the writer.

#### THE VANITY OF RIVER FISHES.

Dr. Johnson did not disdain the use of the ballad metre when the subject was appropriate, and the narrative direct. He was the author of that quatrain whose touching simplicity goes straight to the heart :—

I put my hat upon my head,  
And walked into the Strand ;  
And there I met another man,  
With his hat in his hand.

He is better known, however, by his imitations of Juvenal, and it is these that I have taken as my model.

Line 6. *The silver strand*.—In the eighteenth century, all strands were silver. Now they are chiefly mud. This accounts for the fall in the value of the rupee.



- Line 26. *Let Canute answer, etc.*—Canute's inability to control the tides is a matter of history. King John's baggage was ~~overwhelmed~~ in the wash. *lost*  
The same fate has overtaken the writer's shirts.
- „ 29. *And do you call yourself, etc.*—History is full of instances of the speech of (previously) dumb animals. Cf. Balaam, Gay, the Three Corbies, Lafontaine, the Three Bears, and S. Weller, *passim*.
- „ 45. *Great Canis Major.*—The dog star.
- „ 55. *So great Achilles.*—His mother dipped him, when an infant, in the Styx, thereby rendering him invulnerable. She held him by the heel with her finger and thumb, leaving the places they touched vulnerable, and in one of these places he was pierced by an arrow, and died of lock-jaw in consequence. If the foolish woman had held him by the hair, he might have been alive now.
- „ 70. *High toward the heaven he hurled his hateful foe.*—Note the sense of effort conveyed by the sounds. Cf. Pope—“Up a high hill he heaves a huge round stone.”
- „ 75. *Waits till the fish is safe and surely dead.*—The Scotch are renowned for caution.

#### THE LAY OF THE LAKE.

Canto I. *The grey-headed Seneschal.* A Seneschal is a house steward whose hair is grey.

Canto II. *Great Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled!*—A solemn adjuration, much used by the Scotch on important occasions.

*Brose*.—Scotch broth: a kind of soup, made of turtles, barley, and leeks. Sometimes called cockie-leekie. Leek is Scotch for onion.

„ III. *Varlets*.—The name usually given to inferior servants by grey-headed Seneschals.

*Got the bun*.—A Scotch idiom meaning “attained his object,” “effected his purpose.”

„ IV. *Donjon* or donjon keep.—A tower, so called because, Don John, King of France, was kept in one, after he was taken prisoner by Richard Cœur de Lion. The story of his rescue by Blondin, by means of a tight-rope, is well known.

„ V. *Gentles*.—The larvæ or grubs of the blue-bottle; so called to distinguish them from the grubs of the common house fly, which are called commons. Cf. Sir Walter Scott—“Come in your war array, gentles and commons.”

„ VI. *Phantom minnow*.—The ghost of the minnow (*Phoxinus lævis*), a killing bait for salmon.

*Paternoster*.—A complicated arrangement of lead and fish hooks. When stuck all over with feathers, it is called an artificial fly.

„ X. *From head to heel*.—Poetic licence again. Salmon have no heels.



Canto XV. *Must land the salmon on his own* (territory understood).—The action is supposed to take place in the Royal domain.

„ XVII. *Little sams*.—The young of the salmon is called the samlet, or little sam.

#### EPILOGUE.

Line 5. *As in the taxi comfortably seated*.—Mr. Allport points out that this and the following lines of this verse are wrong. The fifth line, he says, ought to rhyme with the second, fourth and seventh, instead of with the first, third and fifth. It appears to me that the lines are my own, to do what I like with, and I can make them rhyme as I please ; but in case there is any critic so meticulous—to use a word beloved of the ‘Spectator,’ and loathed by every English scholar—as to want the verse made like the others, I offer him the following termination :—

“ But through the rearward window I could see  
 They never had a chance to make a cop,  
 Or interfere with my remaining free ;  
 I had so neatly caught her on the hop,  
 And bought a stylo pen for nothing at the shop.”

[The reader is not likely to discover, until he reads the last two verses, that some of the incidents described in these poems are imaginary. It is right that he should now be told that these and some others have no foundation in fact. He may, however, rely on the information contained in the notes.]

## DEDICATION.

(I forgot to put a page at the beginning saying that I dedicate this collection to Mr. H. R. Allport, who furnished the occasion for it. He is too noble-minded to object to the dedication coming at the end.)

TO

H. R. ALLPORT, ESQ.



*Adlard & Son,  
London and Dorking.*

