Fly Fishing Alone *by Thaddeus Norris*

Thaddeus Norris, who Arnold Gingrich called the "American Walton," is widely regarded as the most important American angling author of the nineteenth century. His American Angler's Book, *first published in 1864, lasted far longer than most modern fishing books seem to, and was a monument of practical instruction. Norris deserves at least as much celebration, however, for his less practical contributions to the sport. Besides his enormously broad experience in angling, and besides his many useful hints (he was the first American angler of record to fish a floating fly), he was a thoughtful and companionable writer on angling philosophy. His sentiments regarding issues such as why we fish, or what constitutes good fishing, are more or less timeless. The following essay appeared in the* American Angler's Book, *and has been recognized as a milestone in the developing thought of American angling. We think that a good essay, like a good book, should be reprinted periodically, both to introduce it to new readers and to reacquaint old readers with it. There is no better candidate for periodic redistribution than Uncle Thad on "Fly Fishing Alone."*

With many persons fishing is a mere recreation, a pleasant way of killing time. To the true angler, however, the sensation it produces is a deep unspoken joy, born of a longing for that which is quiet and peaceful, and fostered by an inbred love of communing with nature, as he walks through grassy meads, or listens to the music of the mountain torrent. This is why he loves occasionally—whatever may be his social propensity in-doors—to shun the habitations and usual haunts of men, and wander alone by the stream, casting his flies over its bright waters: or in his lone canoe to skim the unruffled surface of the inland lake, where no sound comes to his ear but the wild, flute-like cry of the loon, and where no human form is seen but his own, mirrored in the glassy water.

No wonder, then, that the fly-fisher loves at times to take a day, all by himself; for his very loneliness begets a comfortable feeling of independence and leisure, and a quiet assurance of resources within himself to meet all difficulties that may arise.

As he takes a near cut to the stream, along some blind road or cattle-path, he hears the wood-robin with its "to-whé," calling to its mate in the thicket, where itself was fledged the summer before. When he stops to rest at the "wind clearing," he recalls the traditionary stories told by the old lumbermen, of the Indians who occupied the country when their grandfathers moved out to the "back settlements," and, as he ruminates on the extinction, or silent removal of these children of the forest, he may think of the simple eloquent words of the chief to his companions, the last he uttered: "I will die, and you will go home to your people, and, as you go along, you will see the flowers, and hear the birds sing; but Pushmuttaha will see them and hear them no more; and when you come to your people they will say, 'Where is Pushmuttaha?' and you will say, 'He is dead:' then will your words come upon them, *like the falling of the great oak in the stillness of the woods.*"

As he resumes his walk and crosses the little brook that "goes singing by," he remembers what he has read of the Turks, who built their bowers by the falling water, that they might be lulled by its music, as they smoked and dreamed of Paradise. But when the hoarse roar of the creek, where it surges against the base of the crag it has washed for ages, strikes his ear, or he hears it brawling over the big stones, his step quickens, and his pulse beats louder—he is no true angler if it does not—and he is not content until he gets a glimpse of its bright rushing waters at the foot of the hill.

Come forth, my little rod—"a better never did itself support upon" *an angler's arm,*—and let us rig up here on this pebbly shore! The rings are in a line, and

now with this bit of waxed silk we take a few hitches backward and forward over the little wire loops which point in opposite directions at the ends of the ferules, to keep the joints from coming apart; for it would be no joke to throw the upper part of the rod out of the butt ferule, and have it sailing down some strong rift. The reel is on *underneath*, and not on top, as those Bass-fishers have it, who are always talking of Fire Island, Newport, and Narragansett Bay.

What shall my ship be? The water is full, I'll try a red hackle, its tail tipped with gold tinsel; for my dropper, I'll put on a good sized coachman with lead-colored wings, and as soon as I get a few handsful of grass, to throw in the bottom of my creel, I'll button on my landing-net and cross over, with the help of this stick of drift-wood, for it is pretty strong wading just here. Do you see that rift, and the flat rock at the lower end of it which just comes above the surface of the water, and divides the stream as it rushes into the pool below? There's fishing in rift and pool both; so I'll begin at the top of the rift, if I can get through these alders. Go in, my little rod, point foremost; I would not break that tip at this time to save the hair on my head;—hold! that twig has caught my dropper—easy, now,—all clear—through the bushes at last.

When I was here last July, and fished the pool below, there was no rift above, the water hardly came above my ankles; now it is knee-deep; if there was less it would be better for the pool; but it makes two casts now, where there was only one last summer, and I have no doubt there is a pretty fellow by the margin of the strong water, on this side of the rock,—an easy cast, too,—just about eight yards from the end of my tip. Not there—a little nearer the rock. What a swirl! He did not show more than his back; but he has my hackle. I had to strike him, too, for he took it under water like a bait—they will do so when the stream is full. Get out of that current, my hearty, and don't be flouncing on top, but keep underneath, and deport yourself like an honest, fair fighter! There you are, now, in slack water; you can't last long, tugging at this rate; so come along, to my landing-net; it's no use shaking your head at me! What a shame to thrust my thumb under that rosy gill! but there is no help for it, for you might give me the slip as I take the hook out of your mouth, and thrust you, tail-foremost, into the hole of my creel. You are my first fish, and you know you are my *luck;* so I would not lose you even if you were a little fellow of seven inches, instead of a good half-pound. I imbibed that superstition, not to throw away my first fish, when I was a boy, and have never got rid of it. Now, tumble about as much as you please; you have the whole basket to yourself.

Another cast—there ought to be more fish there. He rose short,—a little longer line—three feet more will do it—exactly so. Gently, my nine-incher! Take the spring of the rod for a minute or so—here you are! Once more, now. How the "young 'un" jumps! I'll throw it to him until he learns to catch; there, he has it. No use reeling in a chap of your size, but come along, hand-over-hand; I'll release you. Go, now, and don't rise at a fly again until you are over nine inches.

Not a fly on the water! So I have nothing to imitate, even if imitation were necessary. Take care! that loose stone almost threw me. I'll work my way across the current, and get under the lee of that boulder, and try each side of the rift where it runs into the pool below the flat rock. Not a fish in the slack water on this side; they are looking for grub and larvae in the rift. Now, how would you like my coachman, by way of a change of diet? There's a chance for you—try it. Bosh! he missed it; but he is not pricked. Once more. Oh, ho! is it there you are, my beauty? Don't tear that dropper off. Hold him tight, O'Shaughnessy; you are the greatest hook ever invented. How he runs the line out, and plays off into the swift water! It would be rash to check him now; but I'll give him a few feet, and edge him over to the side of the rift where is slack water. That's better; now tug away, while I recover some of my line. You are off into the current again, are you? but not so wicked. The click on this reel is too weak, by half—he gives in now, and is coming along, like an amiable, docile fish, as he is. Whiz! why, what's the matter, now? Has "the devil kicked him on end?" as my friend with the "tarry breeks" has it. He has taken but two or three yards of line, though. How he hugs the bottom, and keeps the main channel! Well, he can't last much longer. Here he comes now, with a heavy drag, and a distressing strain on my middle joint; and now I see him dimly, as I get him into the eddy; but there's something tugging at the tail-fly. Yes, I have a brace of them, and that accounts for the last dash, and the stubborn groping for the bottom. What a clever way of trolling! to get an obliging Trout to take your dropper, and go sailing around with four feet of gut, and a handsome stretcher at the end of it, setting all the fish in the pool crazy, until some unlucky fellow hooks himself in the side of his mouth. How shall I get the pair into my basket? There is no way but reeling close up, and getting the lower one into my net first, and then with another dip to secure the fish on the dropper; but it must be done gently. So—well done; three-quarters of a pound to be credited to the dropper, and a half-pound to the stretcher—total, one pound and a quarter. That will do for the present. So I'll sit down on that flat rock and light my dudeen, and try the remainder of the water presently. I'll not compromise for less than four half-pound fish before I leave the pool.

These are *some* of the incidents that the lone fly-fisher experiences on a favorable day, and the dreams and anticipations he has indulged in through the long gloomy winter are in part realized. "Real joy," some one has said, is "a serious thing," and the solitary angler proves it conclusively to himself. He is not troubled that some ardent young brother of the rod may fish ahead of him, and disturb the water without availing himself of all the chances; or that a more discreet companion may pass by some of the pools and rifts without bestowing the attention on them they deserve; but in perfect quietude, and confidence in his ability to meet every contingency that may occur, he patiently and leisurely tries all the places that offer fair. What if he does get hung up in a projecting branch of some old elm, that leans over the water? he does not swear and jerk his line away, and leave his flies dangling there—it is a difficulty that will bring into play his ingenuity, and perhaps his dexterity in climbing, and he sets about recovering his flies with the same patient steadiness of purpose that Caesar did in building his bridge, or that possessed

Bonaparte in crossing the Alps, and feels as much satisfaction as either of those great generals, in accomplishing his ends.

If he takes "an extraordinary risk," as underwriters call it, in casting under boughs that hang within a few feet of the water, on the opposite side of some unwadeable rift or pool, and his stretcher should fasten itself in a tough twig, or his dropper grasp the stem of an obstinate leaf, he does not give it up in despair, or, consoling himself with the idea that he has plenty of flies and leaders in his book, pull away and leave his pet spinner and some favorite hackle to hang there as a memento of his temerity in casting so near the bushes. Far from it; he draws sufficient line off his reel and through the rings to give slack enough to lay his rod down, marking well where his flies have caught, and finds some place above or below where he can cross; then by twisting with a forked stick, or drawing in the limb with a hooked one, he releases his leader, and throws it clear off into the water, that he may regain it when he returns to his rod, and reels in his line; or he cuts it off and lays it carefully in his fly-book, and then recrosses the river. A fig for the clearing-ring and rod-scythe and all such cockney contrivances, he never cumbers his pockets with them. Suppose he does break his rod—he sits patiently down and splices it. If the fracture is a compound one, and it would shorten the piece too much to splice it, he resorts to a sailor's device, and *fishes the stick*, by binding a couple of flat pieces of hard wood on each side.

Captain Marryatt, in one of his books, says, a man's whole lifetime is spent in getting into scrapes and getting out of them. This is very much the case with the fly-fisher, and he should always curb any feeling of haste or undue excitement, remembering at such times, that if he loses his temper he is apt to lose his fish, and sometimes his tackle also.

My neighbor asked me once if Trout-fishing was not a very unhealthy amusement—he thought a man must frequently have damp feet. Well, it is, I answered; but if he gets wet up to his middle at the outset, and has reasonable luck, there is no healthier recreation.—But I have sat here long enough. I'll fill my pipe again and try the head of that swift water—If this confounded war lasts a year longer "Lynchburg" will go up to three dollars a pound, but it will be cheap then compared with those soaked and drugged segars that are imposed upon us for the "Simon-Pure," under so many captivating names. At all events *this* is what it professes to be, good homely tobac—Whe-e-euh! What a dash! and how strong and steady he pulls; some old fellow "with moss on his back," from under that log, no doubt of it. Is it line you want?—take it, eight—ten—fifteen feet—but no more if you please. How he keeps the middle of the rift! Don't tell me about the "grace of the curve," and all that sort of thing; if the bend of this rod isn't the line of beauty I never saw it before, except of course in the outline of a woman's drapery. Speaking of lines, I'll get a little of this in as I lead the fellow down stream, even at the risk of disturbing the swim below. It is the best plan with a large fish; I have Sir Humphrey Davy's authority for it, although I believe with Fisher, of the "Angler's Souvenir," that he was more of a philosopher than an angler. Talk of "dressing for dinner," when the fish are rising! Steady and slow, my boy, you are giving in at last—two pounds and a half or not an ounce! now I see you "as through a glass, darkly"—a little nearer, my beauty—Bah! what a fool I am! here a fish of a half-pound has hooked himself amidship, and of course offering five times the resistance he would if fairly hooked in the mouth, and no damage to his breathing apparatus while fighting, either; for he keeps his wind all the while. If he had been regularly harnessed, he could not have pulled with more advantage to himself and greater danger to my tackle in this rough water. I thought I had been deceived in this way often enough to know when a fish was hooked foul.

Now I call it strong wading coming down through that dark ravine; I must take a rest and put on a fresh dropper. And so my friend asked me if it was not very lonesome, fishing by myself. Why these little people of the woods are much better company than folks who continually bore you with the weather, and the state of their stomachs or livers, and what they ate for breakfast, or the price of gold, or the stock-market, when you have forgotten whether you have a liver or not, and don't care the toss of a penny what the price of gold is; or whether "Reading" is up or down. Lonesome!—It was only just now the red squirrel came down the limb of that birch, whisking his bushy tail, and chattering almost in my face. The mink, as he snuffed the fish-tainted air from my old creel, came

"Grand Falls of the Nipissiguit," the frontis illustration from Norris's **American Angler's Book.**
All other illustrations for this article are also from the Norris book.

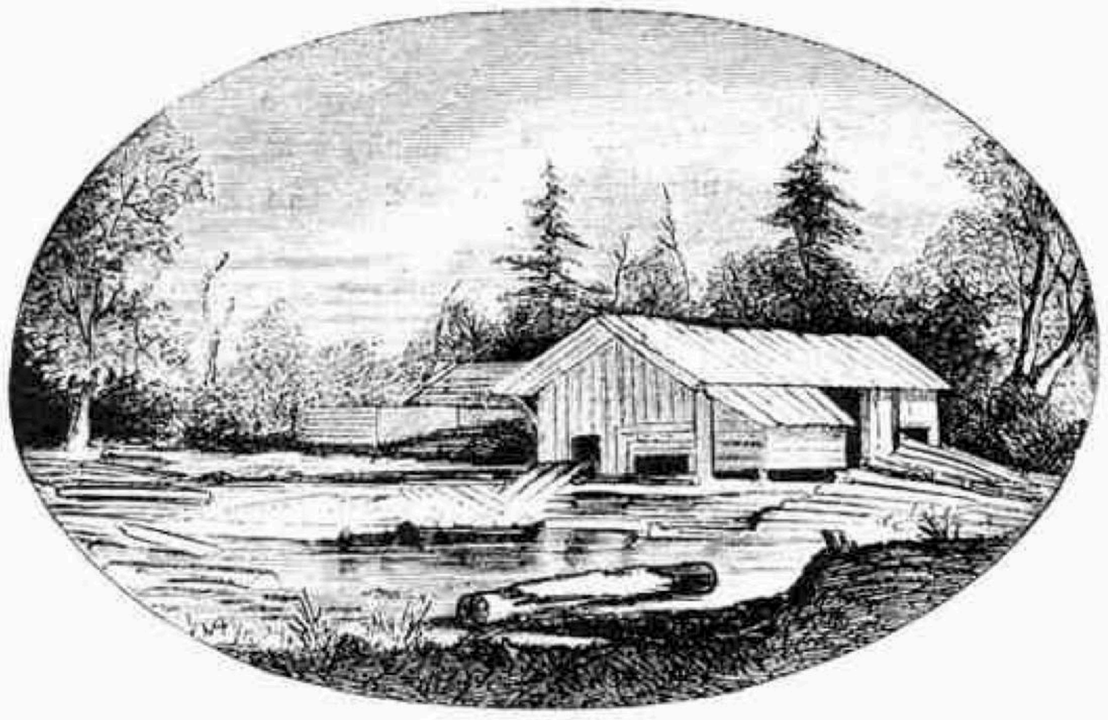
out from his hole amongst the rocks and ran along within a few feet of me. Did he take my old coat to be a part of this rock, covered with lichens and gray mosses? I recollect once in the dim twilight of evening, a doe with her fawns came down to the stream to drink; I had the wind of her, and could see into her great motherly eyes as she raised her head. A moment since the noisy king-fisher poised himself on the dead branch of the hemlock, over my left shoulder, as if he would peep into the hole of my fish-basket. The little warbler sang in the alders close by my old felt hat, as if he would burst his swelling throat with his loud glad song. Did either of them know that I am of a race whose first impulse is to throw a stone or shoot a gun at them? And the sparrow-hawk on that leafless spray extending over the water, sitting there as grave and dignified as a bank president when you ask him for a discount; is he aware that I can tap him on the head with the tip of my rod?—These are some of the simple incidents on the stream, which afterwards awaken memories,

"That like voices from afar off
Call to us to pause and listen,
Speak in tones so plain and childlike,
Scarcely can the ear distinguish
Whether they are sung or spoken."

But I must start for the open water below—What a glorious haze there is just now, and how demurely the world's great eye peeps through it! Trout are not very shy though, before the middle of May, even when the sun is bright. I have sometimes taken my best fish at high noon, at this season of the year.—I am as hungry as a horsefly, though it is only "a wee short hour ayont the twal." So I'll unsling my creel by that big sycamore, and build my fire in the hollow of it. If I burn it down there will be no action for trespass in a wooden country like this.

What boys are those crossing the foot-log? I'll press them into my service for awhile, and make them bring wood for my fire. I know them now; the larger one has cause to remember me "with tears of gratitude," for I bestowed on him last summer a score of old flies, a used-up leader, and a limp old rod. He offered me the liberal sum of two shillings for the very implement I have in my hand now; and to buy three flies from me *at four cents apiece.*—Halloo, Paul! what have you done with the rod I gave you—caught many Trout with it this season? Come over the creek, you and your brother, and get me some dry wood, and gather a handful or two of the furze from that old birch to light it with. I'll give you a pair of flies—real gay ones.

Dining *alone* may be counted almost the only drawback to one's taking a day to himself, and you are glad of any stray native who is attracted by the smoke of your fire. Your whiskey is beyond a peradventure, better than he has in his cupboard at home; he is invariably out of tobacco—a chew of a pipeful, and a swig at your flask, will make him communicative. If he has not already dined, he will readily accept a roasted Trout and a piece of bread and butter, and while eating will post you as to all the Trout-streams within ten miles. It is, therefore, a matter of policy to cultivate the good feeling of the natives, the boys especially, as stones are of very convenient size along the creek to throw at a surly fisherman. A few of "Conroy's journal-flies,"



which have occupied the back leaves of your fly-book for long years are profitable things to invest in this way, for three boys out of four you meet with, will ask you to sell them "a pair of fly-hooks," which of course results in your giving them a brace or so that are a little the worse for wear, or too gay for your own use.

If the fly-fisher, though, would have "society where none intrudes," or society that *won't* intrude, let him take a lad of ten or twelve along to carry his dinner, and to relieve him after the roast, by transferring part of the contents of his creel to the empty dinner-basket. The garrulity and queer questions of a country boy of this age are amusing, when you are disposed to talk. Any person who has sojourned at my friend Jim Henry's, and had his good-natured untiring boy Luther for his *gilly,* will acknowledge the advantage of such a "tail" even if it has not as many joints as a Highland laird's.

If there *is* an objection to a Trout-roast, it is that a man eats too much, and feels lazy after dinner. But what of that? it is a luxurious indolence, without care for the morrow—Care! why, he left that at home when he bought his railroad ticket, and shook off the dust of the city from his hobnailed boots.

What pretty bright Trout there are in this bold rocky creek! it would be called a river in England, and so it is. We Americans have an ugly way of calling every stream not a hundred yards wide, a creek. It is all well enough when the name is applied to some still sedgy water, which loses half of its depth, and three-fourths of its width, at low tide, and is bank-full on the flood. But speckled fellows like these don't live there. De Kay must have received some inspiration at a Trout-roast, when he gave them the specific name of "Fontinalis," and they are truly the Salmon of the fountain; for a stream like this and its little tributaries, whose fountains are everywhere amongst these rugged hills, are their proper home. What an ignorant fellow Poietes was to ask Halieus if the red spots on a Trout were not "marks of disease—a hectic kind of beauty?" Any boy along the creek knows better. And what a pedantic old theorist Sir Humphrey was, to tell him that the absence of these spots was a sign of high condition. Well, it may be in England, for the river Trout there, are a different species from ours. But I'll bet my old rod against a bob-fly that there is twice as much pluck and dash in our little fellows with the "hectic" spots. I don't wonder that Trout like these so inspired Mr. Barnwell, who wrote the "Game Fish of the North," when, with his fancy in high feather, he mounted his Pegasus and went off—"How splendid is the sport to deftly throw the long line and small fly, with the pliant single-handed rod, and with eye and nerve on the strain, to watch the loveliest darling of the wave, the spotted naiad, dart from her mossy bed, leap high into the air, carrying the strange deception in her mouth, and, turning in her flight, plunge back to her crystal home."

Julius Caesar! what "high-flying" Trout this gentleman must have met with in his time. Now, I never saw a

Trout "dart from her mossy bed," because I never found Trout to lie on a bed of that sort; nor "leap high into the air, and turning in her flight plunge back," as a fish-hawk does. In fact, I may safely say I never saw a Trout *soar* more than eight or ten inches above its "crystal home." I honor "Barnwell" for the Anglomania which has seized him—he has been inoculated with a good scab, and the virus has penetrated his system: but I can't help being reminded by his description, of the eloquence of a member of a country debating society in Kentucky, who commenced—"Happiness, Mr. President, is like a crow situated on some far-distant mountain, which the eager sportsman endeavors in vain to no purpose to reproach." And concluded—"The poor man, Mr. President, reclines beneath the shade of some wide-spreading and umbrageous tree, and calling his wife and the rest of his little children around him, bids their thoughts inspire to scenes beyond the skies. He views Neptune, Plato, Venus, and Jupiter, the Lost Pleides, the Auroly Bolyallis, and other fixed stars, which it was the lot of the immorral Newton first to depreciate and then to deplore."

But a gray-headed man who cannot tie a decent knot in his casting-line without the aid of his spectacles, should forget such nonsense. There is one consolation, however, that this "decay of natur," which brings with it the necessity for glasses in seeing small objects within arm's length, gives in like ratio, the power of seeing one's flies at a distance on the water; there was old Uncle Peter Stewart who could knock a pheasant's head off at fifty yards with his rifle, and see a gnat across the Beaverkill, when he was past sixty.

Here is the sun shining as bright now as if he had not blinked at noon, and such weather, not too hot and not too cold; I must acknowledge, though, my teeth *did* chatter this morning when I waded across at the ford.

"Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright,
The bridal of the earth and sky;
The dew shall weep thy fall to night,
For thou must die."

I'll start in here, for it appears there is always luck in the pool or rift under the lee of the smoke where one cooks his Trout. It is strange, too, for it seems natural that the smoke would drive the flies away, and as a consequence the fish get out of the notion of rising. But no matter, here goes. Just as I supposed, and a brace of them at the first cast. Come ashore on the sloping gravel, my little fellows,—eight and nine inches—the very size for the pan; but who wants to eat fried Trout after cooking them under the ashes or on a forked stick?

There are no good fish here; the water is not much more than knee-deep, and they have no harbor amongst those small pebble-stones. I have thrown in a dozen little fellows within the last ten minutes. I'll go to the tail of that strong rift below the saw-mill. The last time I fished it was when that lean hungry-looking Scotchman came over here from Jim Henry's; he had been sneaking through the bushes and poaching all the little brooks around, where the fish had run up to spawn, with his confounded worm-bait. This stream was low then and the fish shy; I had approached the end of the rift carefully and was trying to raise them at long cast in the deep water, when he—without even saying "by your leave"—waded in within a few yards of where they were rising, and splashed his buck-shot sinker and wad of worms right amongst them. I said nothing, and he did not appear to think that interfering with my sport so rudely was any breach of good manners, or of the rules of fair fishing. A Scotchman, to catch Trout with a *worm!* Poor fellow! his piscatory education must have been neglected, or he belonged to that school who brag *only* on numbers. I know a party of that sort who come up here every summer from Easton and bring a *sauer-kraut stanner* to pack their Trout in, and salt down all they take without eating one, until they get home. They catch all they can and keep *all* they catch, great and small. Bah! a poor little *salted* Trout—it tastes more like a piece of "yaller soap" than a fish. Such fishermen are but one remove from the bark peelers I found snaring and netting Trout in the still water below here, last August. I can just see their shanty from here. "Instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united!"

There is the sawyer's dog; if he comes much nearer I'll psychologize him with one of these "dunnicks"! But he turns tail as soon as I stoop to pick one up. Now for it—just at the end of the swift water—ah! my beauty—fifteen inches, by all that is lovely! He threw his whole length out of water—try it again—I can't raise him. This won't do. Am I cold, or am I nervous, that I should shake like a palsied old man because I missed that fish? Fie on you, Mr. Nestor, you who have run the rapids at the "Rough Waters" on the Nipissiguit, in a birch canoe, with a Salmon at the end of sixty yards of line, and your pipe in your mouth; I thought you had gotten past a weakness of this kind. But it will only make bad worse, and convince that Trout of the cheat to throw over him again; so I must leave him now, and get back to the log on that sunny bank and compose myself with a few whiffs, while I change my flies. It will be just fifteen minutes until I knock the ashes out of my pipe; by that time my vaulting friend will likely forget the counterfeit I tried to impose on him, if I offer him something else.

Now Dick gave me this for a meerschaum, and I have no doubt Mr. Doll sold it for one in good faith; but it is a very "pale complected" pipe for one of that family. I have smoked it steadily for a year, and there is only the slightest possible tinge of orange about the root of the stem. It is hardly as dark as this ginger hackle in my hat-band. However, it is light, and carries a big charge for a pipe of its size, and the shortness of the stem brings the smoke so comfortably under the nose—a great desideratum in the open air. The pipe must have been instituted expressly for the fisherman; it is company when he is lonesome, and never talks when he wants to be quiet; it concentrates his ideas and assists his judgment when he discusses any important matter with himself, such as the selection of a killing stretcher. No wonder the Indians smoked at their council-fires; and, as for the nerves, I'll put it against Mrs. Winslow's soothing syrup. What a pity it is that infants are not taught to smoke! What shall my stretcher be; that fish refused Hofland's Fancy; now let me try one of my own fancy. Here is something a great deal prettier; a purple body in place of a snuff-brown, and light wings from a lead-colored pigeon instead of a sober woodcock feather. What a pretty fly—half sad, half gay in its attire, like an interesting young widow, when she decides on shedding her weeds, and "begins to take notice." I'll change my dropper also—here it is; body of copper-colored peacock hurl, wings of the feather of an old brown hen, mottled with yellow specks. What a plain homely look it has; it reminds me of "the Girl with the Calico Dress." You are not as showy, my dear miss, as the charming little widow, but certain individuals of my acquaintance are quite conscious of your worth. Let me see which of you will prove most attractive to my speckled friend. So here goes—two to one on the widow—lost, by jingo! He looked at her and sailed slowly away. Has he ever heard of the warning that the sage Mr. Weller gave his son "Samivel?" Perhaps, then, he will take a notion to "the girl with the calico dress." Once more—now do take care! Ah ha! my old boy, you would be indiscreet, after all, and the widow has victimized you. Now she'll lead you a dance! Don't be travelling off with her as if you were on your wedding tour, for I know you would like to get rid of her already; but there is no divorce beneath the water,—you are mine, says she, "until death us do part!"

There you are, now! the three-minutes' fight has completely taken the wind out of you. That's the last flap of your tail; the widow has killed you "as dead as a mackerel." Acting the gay Lothario, were you? I know some scaly old fellows who play the same game ashore, stealthily patronizing Mrs. Allen, subsidizing the tailor, bootmaker, dentist, and barber, and slyly endeavoring to take off a discount of twenty-five per cent from old Father Time's bill. But that won't do, for folks of any discernment know at a glance those spavined, short-winded, shaky old fellows, who trot themselves out, as if they were done-up for the horse-market. Lie there, my Turveydrop, until I move down a little, and try under the bushes, on the opposite side.

With this length of line I can just come close enough to the alders to miss them. Dance lightly, O my brown girl, and follow in her wake, dear widow, as I draw you hitherward. Ah, ha! and so it is; there is one dashing fellow who sees charms in your homely dress. How he vaults!—nine rails, and a top rail! Did you ever know Turner Ashby? Not Beau Turner—I mean Black Turner. Did he ever straddle a bit of horse-flesh with more mettle? None of your Conestogas. There he goes again! How long have you belonged to the circus? But he can't run all day at that gait; he begins to flag, at last, and here he is now, coming in on the "quarter stretch." There you are, at last—died as game as a Dominica chicken. Once more, now. I knew it.—And again.

Three times my brace of beauties have come tripping home across the deep whirling rapid, and three bright Trout lie on the gravel behind me. I begin at last to long for the sound of some friendly voice, and the sight of a good-humored face. I must keep my appointment with Walter at the foot-bridge; so I am off. Some of the "Houseless" don't like this solitary sport. I know one of them who would as soon be guilty of drinking alone; but *he* is not a contemplative angler, and has never realized how hungry some folks get through the winter for a little fishing. May-be he has never read what William Howitt says, in his "Rural Life in England," about fishing alone. It will come home to every quiet fly-fisher. See what an unveiling of the heart it is, when the angler is alone with God and Nature.

"People that have not been innoculated with the true spirit may wonder at the infatuation of anglers—but true anglers leave them very contentedly to their wondering, and follow their diversions with a keen delight. Many old men there are of this class that have in them a world of science—not science of the book, or of regular tuition, but the science of actual experience. Science that lives, and will die with them; except it be dropped out piecemeal, and with the gravity becoming its importance, to some young neophyte who has won their good graces by his devotion to their beloved craft. All the mysteries of times and seasons, of baits, flies of every shape and hue; worms, gentles, beetles, compositions, or substances found by proof to possess singular charms. These are a possession which they hold with pride, and do not hold in vain. After a close day in the shop or factory, what a luxury is a fine summer evening to one of these men, following some rapid stream, or seated on a green bank, deep in grass and flowers, pulling out the spotted Trout, or resolutely but subtilely bringing some huge Pike or fair Grayling from its lurking place beneath the broad stump and spreading boughs of the alder. Or a day, a summer's day, to such a man, by the Dove or the Wye, amid the pleasant Derbyshire hills; by Yorkshire or Northumbrian stream; by Trent or Tweed; or the banks of Yarrow; by Téith or Leven, with the glorious hills and heaths of Scotland around him. Why, such a day to such a man, has in it a life and spirit of enjoyment to which the feelings of cities and palaces are dim. The heart of such a man—the power and passion of deep felicity that come breathing from mountains and moorlands; from clouds that sail above, and storms blustering and growling in the wind; from all the mighty magnificence, the solitude and antiquity of Nature upon him—Ebenezer Elliott only can unfold. The weight of the poor man's life—the cares of poverty—the striving of huge cities, visit him as he sits by the beautiful stream—beautiful as a dream of eternity, and translucent as the everlasting canopy of heaven above him;—they come, but he casts them off for the time, with the power of one who feels himself strong in the kindred spirit of all things around; strong in the knowledge that he is a man; an immortal—a child and pupil in the world-school of the Almighty. For that day he is more than a king—he has the heart of humanity, and faith and spirit of a saint. It is not the rod and line that floats before him—it is not the flowing water, or the captured prey that he perceives in those moments of admission to the heart of nature, so much as the law of the testimony of love and goodness written on everything around him with the pencil of Divine beauty. He is no longer the wearied and oppressed—the trodden and despised—walking in threadbare garments amid men, who scarcely deign to look upon him as a brother man—but he is reassured and recognised to himself in his own soul, as one of those puzzling, aspiring, and mysterious existences for whom all this splendid world was built, and for whom eternity opens its expecting gates. These are magnificent speculations for a poor, angling carpenter or weaver; but Ebenezer Elliott can tell us that they are his legitimate thoughts, when he can break for an instant the bonds of his toiling age, and escape to the open fields. Let us leave him dipping his line in the waters of refreshing thought."

Thus writes William Howitt. But there is the foot-bridge, and here are my little friends, the Sand-pipers. How often the fly-fisher sees them running along the pebbly margin of the Trout stream (as Wilson truly says), "continually nodding their heads;" sometimes starting with their peculiar short shrill note, from their nests in the wave-washed tufts of long grass, flapping along the creek sideways, as if wounded in leg or wing, to decoy the fancied destroyer from the nest of downy little snipelings. And there, where the waters of the noisy rapid finds rest in the broad shallow below, is one perched on a big gray boulder, as gray as herself. How lonely she seems there, like the last of her race, were it not that her constant mate is on the strand below, busily engaged picking up larva and seedling muscles for its little ones in the nest up the creek.