

PISCATOR “QUOTES”



"He that hopes to be a good angler, must not, only bring an inquiring, searching, observing wit, but he must bring a large measure of hope and patience, and a love and propensity of the. art itself; but once having got and practised it, then doubt not but angling will prove to be so pleasant, that it will prove to be, like virtue, a reward to itself."

IZAAK WALTON

*"And this is angling: a sport
that requires as much
enthusiasm as poetry, as much
patience as mathematics, and
as much caution as
housebreaking."*

**-James Rennie,
"Alphabet of Scientific
Angling, 1833."**

"Unless one can enjoy himself with the fly, even when his efforts are unrewarded, he loses much pleasure. More than half the intense enjoyment of fly fishing is derived from the beautiful surroundings, the satisfaction felt from being in the open air, the new lease of life thereby secured, and the many, many pleasant recollections of all one has seen, heard, and done."

CHARLES ORVIS, 1883

"What the angler. thinks: about in the evening. will not be only of angling, but of the scenes in which he has spent the day, I am often ashamed to think how much passes unnoticed in the excitement of angling, but the general impressions of light and colour, and of his surroundings, are never lost. Some is noted at the time, and some sinks into one's mind unconsciously and is found there at the end of the day, like a blessing given in great bounty to one who was too careless at the time to deserve it."

**-Sir Edward Gray of Fallodon, Fly Fishing,
1899.**

"...this business of the gear is really a matter for your - conscience. You can manage on surprisingly little, but there is practically no limit to what you-can accumulate-always with a specious 'reason' for buying it. I had better confess right away that I am a bad case of tackle-fever-and an infectious case, too, according to the wives of my friends. I love fishing-tackle and can almost never resist it. "The tools of our trade are beautiful examples of craftsmanship; delicate, responsive, steely, and true. Just to look up from my desk and see them standing around my walls, the rods I have fished with, is. to be set free of time and place. That is the rod with which I wandered high tors and moors. That is the wand with which I sauntered down the sunset-estuary. With that, I stumbled up the wild glen. With that, I slipped silently down the broad Severn in 1ny canoe. There is not a rod there that has not a story to tell. I glance. across at them and the imagination goes free. They are beautiful in their own right, and I love them. "But there is no reason to collect tackle, as some men collect objets d'art."

-From Maurice Wiggin's FLY FISI-IING, English Universities Press, 1958; with acknowledgements to the publishers.

**“SO YOU HAD A BLANK DAY ON
THE HOLSLOOT OR
WHEREVER?**

**The trout is no single, common,
identical, determined and
measurable fish, but rather ten
thousand tantalisingly distinct and
different devils.”**

**The Tarn and the Lake
Sir Charles J. Holmes**

"I fish because I love the environs where trout are found, which are invariably beautiful, and hate the environs where crowds of people are found, which are invariably ugly; because of all the television commercials, cocktail parties, and assorted social posturing I thus escape; because in a world where most men seem to spend their lives doing things they hate, my fishing is at once an endless source of delight and an act of small rebellion; because trout do not lie or cheat and cannot be_ bought or bribed or impressed by power, but respond only to quietude and humility and endless patience; because I suspect that men are going along this way for the last time, and I for one don't want to waste the trip; because mercifully there are no telephones on trout waters; because only in the woods can I find solitude without loneliness; because Bourbon out of an old tin cup always tastes better out there.; because maybe one day I will catch a mermaid; and, finally not because I regard fishing as being so terribly important but because I suspect that so many of the other concerns of men are equally unimportant and not nearly so much fun."

Robert Traver -Anatomy of a Fly-Fisherman

"Charles Waterman, in discussing the habits of the weakfish, which is so often confused with the so-called spotted or speckled sea-trout of the North American Atlantic Coast (neither of which is a Salmonid) says: 'I am inclined to feel that trout are fairly dumb. But they're extremely particular about what they're dumb about ...'"

This from his book Modern Fresh and Salt Water Fly Fishing. (One wonders if his remark does not apply equally to the Salmonids -including our own elegant creatures. Ed.)

**SO WHAT OF THE EXQUISITE IMITATION
YOU'VE MADE?**

"Watch a Chalk-stream fish inspecting a dun about which he is doubtful. His eyes are barely three inches from the fly, and often he will turn and follow it downstream with his nose practically glued to its body. This is an optical feat beyond our unaided powers. A fly two or three inches away from our eyes would be a misty blur. To view it as closely as the trout does, we need an intervening convex lens which will make us as short-sighted as the fish."

Dr. R. A. Lundie, writing in Chambers' Encyclopaedia of the spherical lens in the eye of a fish, says that it is 'of such extraordinary magnifying power that it has been employed as a simple microscope'

(From Sunshine and the Dry Fly by J. W. Dunne, 1950.)

Walton, quoting Pliny that "Antonia, the wife of Drusus, had a Lamprey at whose gills she hung jewels or earrings;" and Martial, a quatrain on tame fish, goes on (rather inconsequentially), "All the further use that I shall make of this shall be, to advise anglers to be patient, and forbear swearing, lest they be heard, and catch no fish."

(My italics, Hon. Ed.)

*God never did make a
more calm, quiet,
innocent recreation
than angling.*

**Izaak Walton
(1693-1783)**

"Let us admit it, the weather hardly ever is right for fishing - by that I mean, according to our own ideas of what is right or wrong. On ninety-nine days out of a hundred it is either too bright or too dull, too dry or too wet, and so forth. It is really remarkable how courageous and persistent we are in sticking at it. If we obeyed all the signs and orders, as indicated by the glass, we shouldn't go out more often than two or three times during the season."

**From The Evening Rise by H. M.
Bateman.**

**(And see picture on page 51 of Piscator
No. 118.-Ed.)**

"There is a direct correlation_ between the quality of a country's recreational activities and its number of trout fishermen."

**Dr. W. A. van Niekerk,
Minister of National Health
and Population Development .**

*"Fly-fishing is not a competition
with other men. The only
competitors are you and the trout.
And if you return unharmed the
prize you have trapped, then you
have both won".*

**From "Fly.fisher" by Jeremy
Lucas (Jonathan Cape 1986)**

"In a way, fly tying is trouting. Tying extends our understanding of nature. We seek the perfect pattern, even if the perfect pattern never exists. It matters only that we seek. We seek the perfect feather, the perfect method, the perfect theory. To the thoughtful tyer it is the quest and not the pattern that matters. And, in the search, fragments of fur and feather continuously transform into a new alchemy. Part of the pleasure of tying is discovery. So, we finally net more than trout. "We net knowing the spotted Callibaetis, the underfur of the muskrat, the scarlet flank of a rainbow and the peent of whispering nighthawks.

Darrel Martin writing in "The Art of the Trout Fly" by Judith Dunham (Chronicle Books, San Francisco, 1988).

"The time must come to all of us when memory is more than prospect. An angler who has reached this stage and reviews the pleasure of life will be grateful and glad that he has been an angler, for he will look back upon days radiant with happiness, peaks of enjoyment that are no less bright because they are lit in memory by the light of a setting sun."

Viscount Grey of Gaddodon. Fly-Fishing, 1899.

*The duration of the evening rise
is all too short, and the angler is
always conscious of the
approaching darkness when a
phantom voice will cry, "Time,
gentlemen, please!"*

**C.F. Walker, Lake Flies and
their Imitation, 1960.**

*“Have you heard the story?
You are lost deep in a forest.
You have a choice of whose help you
enlist to find the way out: a pink
elephant, a bad nymph fisher or a
good nymph fisher.*

*Answer: choose the bad nymph
fisher; the other two are figments of
your imagination”*

**John Roberts, Trout on a Nymph
1991**

"To some temperaments, fishing appeals most deeply as an approach to a web of relations that give shape and coherence to the natural world. Flyfishing in particular embraces the kind of minutiae that weave themselves into ever-enlarging contexts. A trout stream points backward to geology and atmospherics, to history and evolution; it leads forward to insects and fish, to hydrology and botany, to literature and philosophy."

**Ted Leeson, the Habit of Rivers:
Reflections on Trout Streams and Fly
Fishing 1994**

“There are those who wax indignant at the use of the wet-fly on dry-fly water. Yet it has a special fascination. The indications which tell your dry-fly angler when to strike are clear and unmistakable, but those which bid a wet-fly man to raise his rodpoint and draw in the steel are frequently so subtle, so evanescent and impalpable to the senses, that, when the bending rod assures him that he has divined aright, he feels an ecstasy as though he had performed a miracle each time.”

G.E.M.Skues - Minor Tactics of the Chalk Stream, A & C Black, 1910

“This, then, is the joy of what I have tried to describe: an art not without frustration; easy, but difficult to carry out supremely well (as Clausewitz wrote of war); perpetually filled with excitement and interest, because it remains an art, being only partially a. craft, and somewhat remotely a science; touching all sorts of stray activities outside itself, forcing the fisherman to extend his mental investigations even further and further, and yet force his physical skills to keep pace with them.”

**T.R. Henn - Practical Fly Tying,
A & C Black, 1950**

"The idea of greatness in angling goes way beyond catching fish. It is ultimately an amorphous quality, an affirmation of one's creativity, sensitivity, humanity. The catalyst is the fish. But the fish is otherworldly. Its medium is water. Trout are like dreams hovering in the elusive unconscious. In capturing one, if ever so briefly before release, there is that sense of revelation occurring when one awakens in the night, snatching a dream from the dark portals of sleep. To understand the fish, and its life interwoven with the biome of the stream, is to touch the divine process."

Kitty Pearson-Vincent, flyfisher, writer, photographer contributing to an article, "Why Woman Love Trout"" in the Spring 88 issue of "Trout", quarterly journal of Trout Unlimited

*“Eventually, all things merge into one,
and a river runs through it. The river
was cut by the world's great flood, and
runs over rocks from the basement of
time. On some of these rocks are
timeless raindrops. And under the
rocks are the words, and some of the
words are theirs. I am haunted by
waters.”*

**Norman Maclean,
“A River Runs Through It”**

THE FISH

ALTHOUGH you hide in the ebb and
flow of the pale tide when the moon has
set,

The people of coming days will know
About the casting out of my net,
And how you have leaped times out of
mind

Over the little silver cords,
And think that you were hard and unkind,
And blame you with many bitter words.

WB Yeats

"I guess it's important to remember that intelligence, humanity) courtesy, skill and heart exist whether one carries bamboo or cutting-edge graphite, and that the spirit with which we practice fly fishing means as much -even more -than the tools we use. And that reminds me somehow of what Sir Walter Raleigh said as he was prepared for the axeman. Asked if he'd like the block to face the east, whence his soul would shortly travel, he replied, in his last words: 'What matter how the head sit, if the heart be right'".

Nick Lyons, A Flyfisher's World

“They tell me that, when 70 years of age, Queen Isabella of Spain was asked by one of her closest ladies in waiting, then some 40 years her junior, when it was that people lost interest in sex. 'Oh', replied the queen, 'you'd have to ask someone much older than me. ' Fly fishing is like that. Once addicted you love it until your last days, if anything generally more so as the sun sets on your life.”

**David Scholes, Fly Life magazine,
Spring '98 .**

“With the exception of painting, nothing in this life has held my interest as much as fishing. Fishing with fly, bait, a handline; I don't much care. Fishing, in my estimation, is not a hobby, a diversion, a pastime, a sport, an interest, a challenge, or an escape. It is a necessary passion.”

Russel Chatham, Dark Waters, 1988.

“Above all these trout are exciting, since each successive stalk - before ever a fly is cast- is a thrill in itself. Nothing could give the lie more dramatically to the silly rumour that fishing needs patience. You can see strong men with nerves of steel and Victoria Crosses cowering behind bushes, sluiking with terror lest a 10-inch fish should see them. Those nerves of steel are at breaking point.”

**Dermot Wilson, "The Joy of Small Streams' Salmon, Trout and Sea Trout,
August, 1990.**

“Every river has its own music, from the tumbling woodwinds and flutes of a Catskill brook in its scarred bed of glacier-smooth granite and polished boulders to the serpentine beauty of a tinkling cutthroat creek in the wildflowers of some Californian meadow high above the timberline. Fishing such little rivers has a special poetry in itself. Their tiny riffles and pools have all the challenges found on bigger waters, and their shy trout pose all the familiar problems and add a completely fresh dimension in teaching a careless angler the virtues of stealth and patience. The small trout stream is a matchless classroom for the basic truths in all fly-fishing.”

From "The Song of the Little Stream" in Ernest Schweibert's Trout, E P Dutton, New York, 1978.

"Sixty years ago, Harding said, 'Unless we know how the trout sees the real fly, we shall miss, as likely as not, the essential features which our imitation should contain.' As the twentieth century draws to a close, we are hardly any closer than he was to finding the solution and the answer, if it is ever found, may have to wait for another generation."

"My hope is that that generation will not make the mistake of disregarding the lessons of history. Sir Isaac Newton, a contemporary of Walton's and one of the defining figures of the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century was generous enough to acknowledge his debt to his forbears in a letter to his fellow physicist Robert Hooke with the immortal words, 'If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.' The real triumph of angling literature and art across the centuries is that authors have not been afraid to build upon the work of others. In the age of carbon fibre and bar stock reels, where the last year's product is old hat and last century's is completely forgotten, it is rather pleasing to find that this tradition has survived, and so we can trace the scientific legacy of Alfred Ronalds through Edward Ringwood Hewitt and Colonel Harding to Vincent Marinaro, all the way to John Goddard and Brian Clarke. These are the giants whose shoulders the next generation will stand upon. Who knows how far they will see."

**Andrew Herd, *The Fly: Two Thousand Years of Fly Fishing*,
Medlar Press, 2003: ISBN 1 899 600 299.**

“I remember going down to my favourite reach of the Test on a glorious, late autumn, October day a few years ago. This was one of those days when the grayling only wanted a fly with red in it. I tried other favourites such as the Greenwell's Glory and the Beacon Beige and they would not look at them, but as soon as a Red tag drifted over them they shot up through five feet of crystalline water and the fly was taken. So long as I stuck with the basic rule of having some red in the fly, and the Red Tag in particular, I could not miss. “

David J Collyer, Fly-Dressing II, David & Charles, 1981

“I dare not guess how fly fishing and fly tying will change in another century. I only know that as we pass into this new world, we must take with us an enduring regard for nature and the past. The old writers and the old books trap some of the past.

Nevertheless, the past Jades and nature is fragile and fugitive. I hope there will always be places with wild fish and wild insects.

Like nature itself, fly fishing can only survive if we cherish the weeds and the wilderness.”

**Darrel Martin, The Fly-Fishers Craft,
The Art and History, The Lyons Press,
2006.**

*“Who but an angler knows that
magic hour when the red lamp of
summer drops behind blackening
hemlocks and the mayflies emerge
from the dull folds of their nymphal
robes to dance in ritual as old as the
river itself?”*

- AJ McLane

“When I talk of small streams I mean those diminutive waterways, usually high in the mountains. The description diminutive is not used loosely-the tackle is ultra light, the water is often thin, the trout small, everything you do or see is in close-up or else not seen at all. You tend to stand out in these streams, like Gulliver did in Lilliput. In fact, everything needs to be scaled down, expectation no less than presentation and tackle.”

Peter Brigg, Call of the Stream, Art Publishers, Durban, 2008.

***“There is a joy to using light
and ultra-light rods, small
streams don't so much demand
them as deserve them...”***

**Tom Sutcliffe, Shadows on the
Stream Bed, Platanna Press,
2009**

“There have been huge advances made by the major European national teams in the development of ultra-sensitive indicator leaders for nymph fishing in rivers and the coiled indicator section was a fantastic breakthrough. Greased, the coil sits high and proud of the water surface, with the nymph sinking only the tippet section of the leader.”

“There is one special property of the indicator coil, however, that helps in fly presentation with long leaders: it effectively acts as an air brake, dragging through the air while catapulting the nymph ahead of it. The coil is fired upstream, and as it drags towards the end of its travel through the air, the nymph and tippet shoot ahead of it, giving good turnover.”

Jeremy Lucas, Tactical Fly Fishing -A Guide for the Advanced and Competition Angler, Crowood Press, 2009.

“There will always be bamboo-rod makers, because bamboo possesses characteristics beyond other rod material. Bamboo has heart, muscle and sinew. A rod of bamboo is a living thing and you will never go to the river alone because the maker who fashioned it is always with you. All the engineering skill in the world cannot put heart into glass, metals or high technology synthetics. Pick up a sleeping bamboo rod and feel it come to life in your hand. Break the tip of a graphite rod and there's no harm done or felt except perhaps to one's wallet. There may even be a no-fault lifetime guarantee to mitigate such a loss. But snap the tip of a bamboo rod and one's heart breaks with it.”

Jordan the Rodmaker, a biography of Wesley D Jordan at CrossSouth Bend -Orvis, by William H Jordan, The Whitefish Press, 2011.

“I guess it is important to remember that intelligence, humanity, courtesy, skill and heart exist whether one carries bamboo or cutting edge graphite, and that the spirit with which we practice fly fishing means as much – even more – than the tools we use. And that reminds me somehow of what Sir Walter Raleigh said as he was prepared for the axeman. Asked if he’d like the block to face the east, whence his soul would shortly travel, he replied in his last words: ‘What matter how the head sits, if the heart be right.’”

Nick Lyons, A Flyfisher’s World.

“From time to time, most of us are stricken with the desire for big fish. In this pursuit we are lured to the lakes where such trout are more common, yet even should we fill fill the bag ten times with such monsters, how gladly we approach the quiet banks of the river again, rested by its serenity and welcomed by the voice of its movement.”

David Scholes, Fly-fisher in Tasmania.