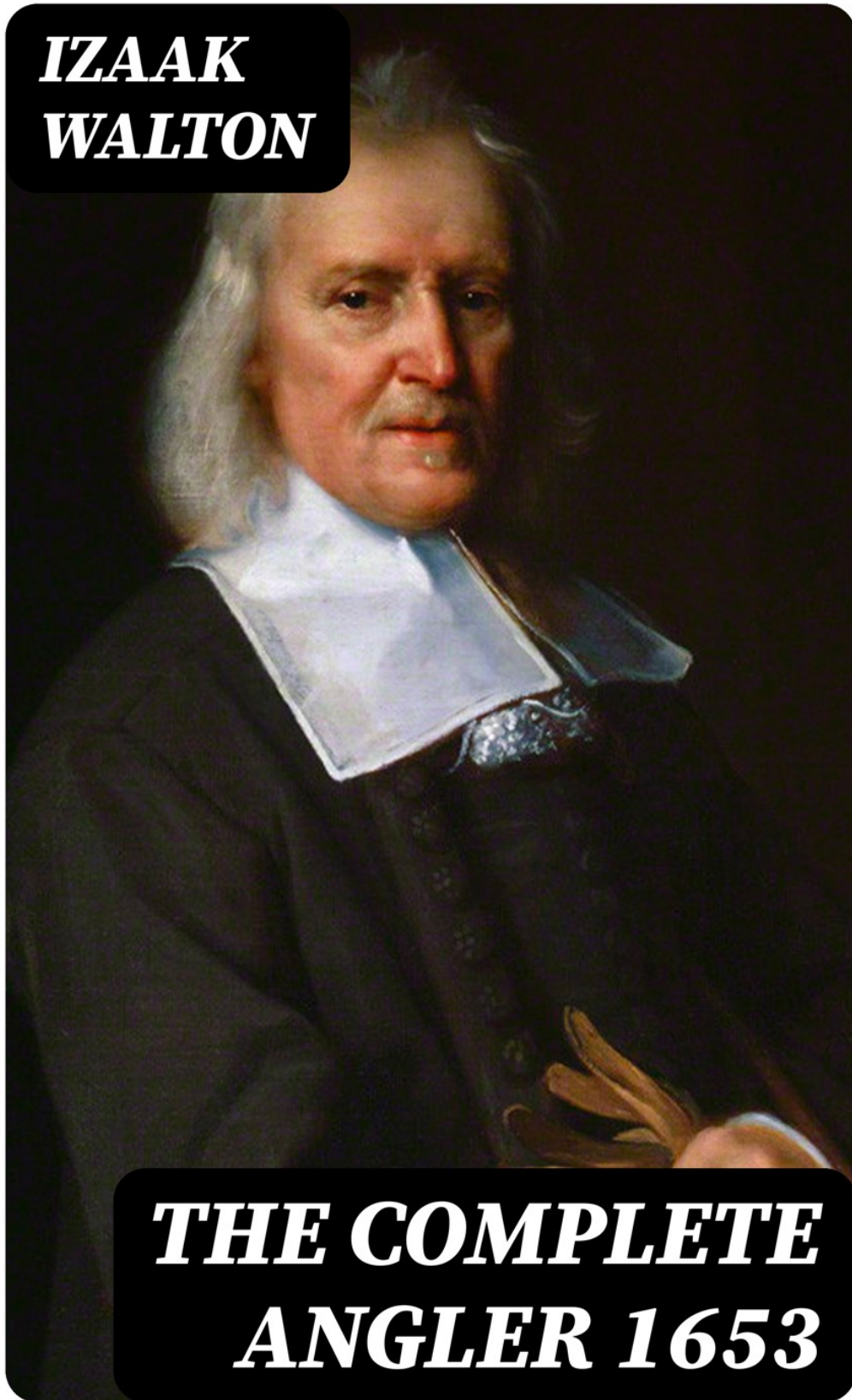


***IZAAK
WALTON***

A portrait of Izaak Walton, an elderly man with long, wavy white hair and a small mustache. He is wearing a dark, high-collared garment with a white ruffled collar. His hands are visible at the bottom right, holding a pair of brown gloves. The background is dark and indistinct.

***THE COMPLETE
ANGLER 1653***

***IZAAK
WALTON***



***THE COMPLETE
ANGLER 1653***

Izaak Walton

The Complete Angler 1653

EAN 8596547014836

DigiCat, 2022

Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info



TABLE OF CONTENTS

[PREFACE.](#)

[The Complete ANGLER.](#)

[OR, The contemplative Mans RECREATION.](#)

[CHAP. II.](#)

[CHAP. III.](#)

[CHAP. IV.](#)

[CHAP. V.](#)

[CHAP. VI.](#)

[CHAP. VII.](#)

[CHAP. VIII.](#)

[CHAP. IX.](#)

[CHAP. X.](#)

[CHAP. XI.](#)

[CHAP. XII.](#)

[CHAP. XIII.](#)

[FINIS.](#)

PREFACE.

[Table of Contents](#)

The "first edition" has been a favourite theme for the scorn of those who love it not. "The first edition—and the worst!" gibes a modern poet, and many are the true lovers of literature entirely insensitive to the accessory, historical or sentimental, associations of books. The present writer possesses a copy of one of Walton's Lives, that of Bishop Sanderson, with the author's donatory inscription to a friend upon the title-page. To keep this in his little library he has undergone willingly many privations, cheerfully faced hunger and cold rather than let it pass from his hand; yet, how often when, tremulously, he has unveiled this treasure to his visitors, how often has it been examined with undilating eyes, and cold, unenvious hearts! Yet so he must confess himself to have looked upon a friend's superb first edition of "Pickwick" though surely not without that measure of interest which all, save the quite unlettered or unintelligent, must feel in seeing the first visible shape of a book of such resounding significance in English literature.

Such interest may, without fear of denial, be claimed for a facsimile of the first edition of "The Compleat Angler" after "Robinson Crusoe" perhaps the most popular of English classics. Thomas Westwood, whose gentle poetry, it is to be feared, has won but few listeners, has drawn this fancy picture of the commotion in St. Dunstan's Churchyard on a May morning of the year 1653, when Richard Marriott first published the famous discourse, little dreaming that he had been chosen for the godfather of so distinguished an

immortality. The lines form an epilogue to twelve beautiful sonnets à propos *of the bi-centenary of Walton's death*:

"What, not a word for thee, O little tome,
Brown-jerkined, friendly-faced—of all my books
The one that wears the quaintest, kindest looks—
Seems most completely, cosily at home
Amongst its fellows. Ah! if thou couldst tell
Thy story—how, in sixteen fifty-three,
Good Master Marriott, standing at its door,
Saw Anglers hurrying—fifty—nay, three score,
To buy thee ere noon pealed from Dunstan's bell:—
And how he stared and ... shook his sides with glee.
One story, this, which fact or fiction weaves.
Meanwhile, adorn my shelf, beloved of all—
Old book! with lavender between thy leaves,
And twenty ballads round thee on the wall."

Whether there was quite such a rush as this on its publishing day we have no certain knowledge, though Westwood, in his "Chronicle of the Compleat Angler" speaks of "the almost immediate sale of the entire edition." According to Sir Harris Nicolas, it was thus advertised in *The Perfect Diurnall*: from Monday, May 9th, to Monday, May 16th, 1653:

"The Compleat Angler, or the Contemplative Man's Recreation, being a discourse of Fish and Fishing, not unworthy the perusal of most Anglers, of 18 pence price. Written by Iz. Wa. Also the Gipsee, never till now published: Both printed for Richard Marriot, to be sold at his shop in Saint Dunstan's Churchyard, Fleet street."

And it was thus calmly, unexcitedly noticed in the *Mercurius Politicus*: from Thursday, May 12, to Thursday, May 19, 1653: *"There is newly extant, a Book of 18d. price,*

called the Compleat Angler, or the Contemplative Man's Recreation, being a discourse of Fish and Fishing, not unworthy the perusal of most Anglers. Printed for Richard Marriot, to be sold at his shop in St. Dunstan's Churchyard, Fleet street."

Thus for it, as for most great births, the bare announcement sufficed. One of the most beautiful of the world's books had been born into the world, and was still to be bought in its birthday form—for eighteen-pence.

In 1816, Mr. Marston calculates, the market value was about £4 4s. In 1847 Dr. Bethune estimated it at £12 12s. In 1883 Westwood reckoned it "from £70 to £80 or even more" and since then copies have fetched £235 and £310, though in 1894 we have a sudden drop at Sotheby's to £150—which, however, was more likely due to the state of the copy than to any diminution in the zeal of Waltonian collectors, a zeal, indeed, which burns more ardently from year to year.

Sufficiently out of reach of the poor collector as it is at present, it is probable that it will mount still higher, and consent only to belong to richer and richer men. And thus, in course of time, this facsimile will, in clerical language, find an increasing sphere of usefulness; for it is to those who have more instant demands to satisfy with their hundred-pound notes that this facsimile is designed to bring consolation. If it is not the rose itself, it is a photographic refection of it, and it will undoubtedly give its possessor a sufficiently faithful idea of its original.

But, apart from the satisfaction of such curiosity, the facsimile has a literary value, in that it differs very materially from succeeding editions. The text by which "The

"Compleat Angler" is generally known as that of the fifth edition, published in 1676, the last which Walton corrected and finally revised, seven years before his death. But in the second edition (1655) the book was already very near to its final shape, for Walton had enlarged it by about a third, and the dialogue was now sustained by three persons, Piscator, Venator and Auceps, instead of two—the original "Viator" also having changed his name to "Venator." Those interested in tracing the changes will find them all laboriously noted in Sir Harris Nicolas's great edition. Of the further additions made in the fifth edition, Sir Harris Nicolas makes this just criticism: "It is questionable," he says, "whether the additions which he then made to it have increased its interest. The garrulity and sentiments of an octogenarian are very apparent in some of the alterations; and the subdued colouring of religious feeling which prevails throughout the former editions, and forms one of the charms of the piece, is, in this impression, so much heightened as to become almost obtrusive."

There is a third *raison d'être* for this facsimile, which to name with approbation will no doubt seem impiety to many, but which, as a personal predilection, I venture to risk—there is no Cotton! The relation between Walton and Cotton is a charming incongruity to contemplate, and one stands by their little fishing-house in Dovedale as before an altar of friendship. Happy and pleasant in their lives, it is good to see them still undivided in their deaths—but, to my mind, their association between the boards of the same book mars a charming classic. No doubt Cotton has admirably caught the spirit of his master, but the very cleverness with which

he has done it increases the sense of parody with which his portion of the book always offends me. Nor can I be the only reader of the book for whom it ends with that gentle benediction—"And upon all that are lovers of virtue, and dare trust in his providence, and be quiet, and go a Angling"—and that sweet exhortation from I Thess. iv. 11—"Study to be quiet."

After the exquisite quietism of this farewell, it is distracting to come precipitately upon the fine gentleman with the great wig and the Frenchified airs. This is nothing against "hearty, cheerful Mr. Cotton's strain" of which, in Walton's own setting and in his own poetical issues, I am a sufficient admirer. Cotton was a clever literary man, and a fine engaging figure of a gentleman, but, save by the accident of friendship, he has little more claim to be printed along with Walton than the gallant Col. Robert Venables, who, in the fifth edition, contributed still a third part, entitled "The Experienc'd Angler: or, Angling Improv'd. Being a General Discourse of Angling," etc., to a book that was immortally complete in its first.

While "The Compleat Angler" was regarded mainly as a text-book for practical anglers, one can understand its publisher wishing to make it as complete as possible by the addition of such technical appendices; but now, when it has so long been elevated above such literary drudgery, there is no further need for their perpetuation. For I imagine that the men to-day who really catch fish, as distinguished from the men who write sentimentally about angling, would as soon think of consulting Izaak Walton as they would Dame Juliana Berners. But anyone can catch fish—can he, do you say?—

the thing is to have so written about catching them that your book is a pastoral, the freshness of which a hundred editions have left unexhausted,—a book in which the grass is for ever green, and the shining brooks do indeed go on forever.

RICHARD LE GALLIENNE.

[Frontispiece Text:



Being a Discourse of
FISH and FISHING,
Not unworthy the perusal of most *Anglers.*

*Simon Peter said, I go a fishing: and they said, We
also wil go with thee. John 21. 3.*

*London. Printed by T. Maxey for RICH. MARRIOT, in
S. Dunstons Church-yard Fleetstreet, 1653.*

The
Compleat Angler
or the
Contemplative Man's
Recreation.

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FISH and FISHING,
Not unworthy the perusal of most Anglers.
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S. Dunstans Churchyard Fleet Street, 1653.]



To the Right Worshipful
JOHN OFFLEY
Of MADELY Manor in the
County of *Stafford*, Esq;
My most honoured Friend.

SIR,



*Have made
so ill use of
your former
favors, as by
them to be
encouraged to intreat that
they may be enlarged to the
patronage and protection
of this Book; and I have
put on a modest confidence,
A 2 that*

To the Right Worshipful JOHN OFFLEY Of MADELY Manor in the County of *Stafford*, Esq, My most honoured Friend.

SIR,

I have made so ill use of your former favors, as by them to be encouraged to intreat that they may be enlarged to the patronage and protection of this Book; and I have put on a modest confidence, that I shall not be denied, because 'tis a discourse of Fish and Fishing, which you both know so well, and love and practice so much.

You are assur'd (though there be ignorant men of an other belief) that Angling is an Art; and you know that Art better then any that I know: and that this is truth, is demonstrated by the fruits of that pleasant labor which you enjoy when you purpose to give rest to your mind, and devest your self of your more serious business, and (which is often) dedicate a day or two to this Recreation.

At which time, if common Anglers should attend you, and be eye-witnesses of the success, not of your fortune, but your skill, it would doubtless beget in them an emulation to be like you, and that emulation might beget an industrious diligence to be so: but I know it is not attainable by common capacities.

Sir, this pleasant curiositie of Fish and Fishing (of which you are so great a Master) has been thought worthy the pens and practices of divers in other Nations, which have been reputed men of great Learning and Wisdome; and amongst those of this Nation, I remember Sir Henry Wotton (a dear lover of this Art) has told me, that his intentions were to write a discourse of the Art, and in the praise of Angling, and doubtless he had done so, if death had not

prevented him; the remembrance of which hath often made me sorry; for, if he had lived to do it, then the unlearned Angler (of which I am one) had seen some Treatise of this Art worthy his perusal, which (though some have undertaken it) I could never yet see in English.

But mine may be thought: as weak and as unworthy of common view: and I do here freely confess that I should rather excuse myself, then censure others my own Discourse being liable to so many exceptions; against which, you (Sir) might make this one, That it can contribute nothing to your knowledge; and lest a longer Epistle may diminish your pleasure, I shall not adventure to make this Epistle longer then to add this following truth, That I am really, Sir,

Your most affectionate Friend, and most humble Servant,
Iz. Wa.

To the *Reader of this Discourse*: But especially, To the honest ANGLER.

I think fit to tell thee these following truths; that I did not undertake to write, or to publish this discourse of *fish* and *fishing*, to please my self, and that I wish it may not displease others; for, I have confest there are many defects in it. And yet, I cannot doubt, but that by it, some readers may receive so much *profit* or *pleasure*, as if they be not very busie men, may make it not unworthy the time of their perusall; and this is all the confidence that I can put on concerning the merit of this Book.

And I wish the Reader also to take notice, that in writing of it, I have made a recreation, of a recreation; and that it might prove so to thee in the reading, and not to read *dull*, and *tediously*, I have in severall places mixt some innocent