

W. BLACKER



***BLACKER'S
ART OF FLY
MAKING, &C***

W. Blacker

Blacker's Art of Fly Making, &c

**Comprising Angling, & Dyeing of Colours, with
Engravings of Salmon & Trout Flies**

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PREFACE.

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I know not how to apologise for submitting a Second Edition of this little Book to the notice of the Angling few, after the appearance of so many by clever writers, except the many calls I had for it, and a sincere desire of improving farther upon a craft that has not hitherto been clearly promulgated by a real practitioner; consequently my great object is to benefit and amuse my readers, by giving them something practical, which at the present time may be particularly wanted by those who love to make their own flies, whose wants, without doubt, will be found sufficiently supplied in this book; the tyro will appreciate it as valuable to him, and the senior angler who may, perchance, be in possession of it, and who may be singularly fond of making his flies, and amusing himself dyeing the hackles and colours, &c., will, I am persuaded, consider it a treasure.

My endeavours have been unceasing for many years past, in striving to please the great Salmon Fishers and Trout Fishers of this Country, and I must confess that my labours have not been in vain; they have generously conferred upon me their very kind patronage and good will, benefits for which I hold them in very great estimation. Under these circumstances, I have taken much pains to write the book in a befitting manner to suit their tastes and purposes, although my inability in many instances has been an obstacle, nevertheless with all my faults I claim the title of Fisherman, an humble and unimportuned name which no reasonable dispensation can deprive me of.

From my boyhood, I took great delight in ranging along the banks of the beautiful and romantic streams of my native land, Ireland; and having also been for many years a skilful Fly Fisher of no little commendation, in both Great Britain and Hibernia, it is my desire to impart to the world, plainly and easily, the knowledge I have acquired, that all those who wish to become masters of the art, may, by patience and practice, and a close adherence to the instructions I shall lay down, derive the fullest benefit from my experience.

I have endeavoured in the following treatise on Fly-making, to divest the subject, as far as possible, of all technicalities and superfluities; at the same time, I have entered into such full details in the construction of the Fly, that by adopting the process I have pointed out, and following the instructions I have given, the aspirants to the art of Fly-making may speedily become proficient.

In this little book there will be found nothing imaginary, but it is purely written from the practice of angling, so that I may without scruple, justly entitle it THE ART OF FLY-MAKING, ANGLING, AND DYEING OF COLOURS. It is also interspersed with many useful remarks that will no doubt agreeably entertain my readers.

No man has taken such pains to improve upon the angler's craft as I; on every article in the whole range of fishing tackle I have made some improvement on rods, flies, lines, reels, and tackle of every sort; and in these pages have left a lasting memorial of my handicraft to the fly-fisher, from whom I have hidden nothing that might retard him in his progress, and who will appreciate it for the great

deal of matter propounded in little compass to prevent incumbrance; that the lovers of fly fishing, which has superior claims, may have an opportunity of keeping it in their side pocket,—to be convenient and handy when on their piscatory excursions, the exercise and variety of which will be found advantageous to the health, and the calming of the mind—things not to be purchased; enjoying at the same time the harmonious notes of the warblers of the grove, and musing upon the diversity of the prospects around, while straying along the beautiful streams and vallies of this delightful country.

The list of flies I have given, will be found very valuable, and the tyro will take great delight in imitating these flies necessary for use, and suiting the colours exactly to each, keeping to their symmetrical forms as they appear with his light materials. This beautiful branch of fly-making, peculiarly my own, cannot fail to perfect the angler who is scientific and ingenious, the result of which will be never-failing success.

I have added to the art of fly-making full instructions, and the most approved receipts for dyeing mohair, pighair, feathers, and other materials most useful and appropriate for imitating the natural flies and stuffs the most killing for Trout and Salmon; and which will retain their brilliancy through all the vicissitudes to which they may be exposed.

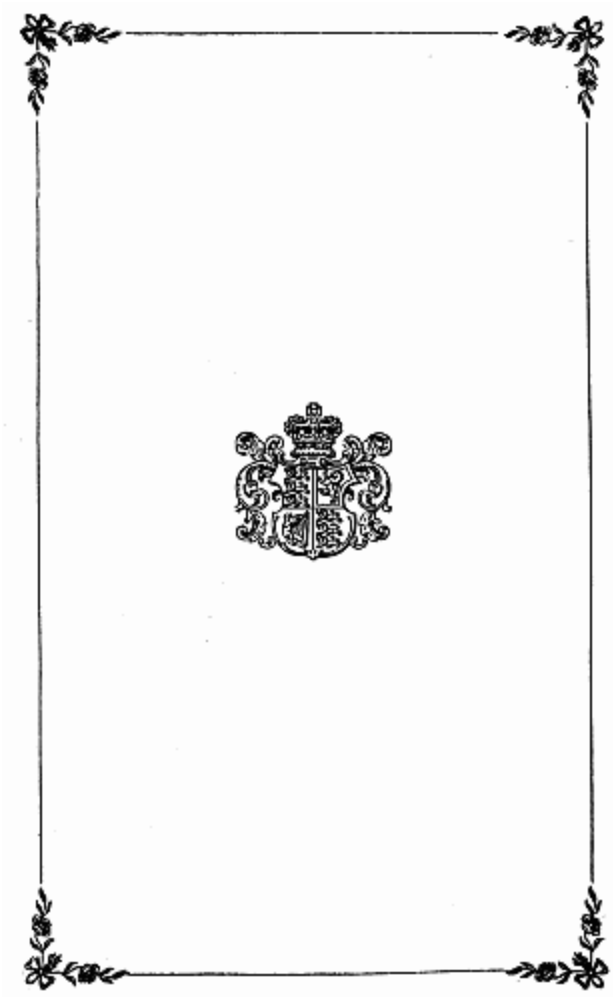
To bring the Engravings of the flies to the greatest perfection, I have stood at the elbow of the artist who executed this part of the work, that they might be turned out exact to my own models, which renders them and the descriptions more intelligible, as the shade in the fibre of

each feather is shown in the plate, in the clearest and finest manner imaginable, that it may be properly seen how these artificial flies are constructed,—the resemblance of those beautiful ones, the productions of the Great Author of Nature, that Trout and Salmon do love to feed upon.

I have also given the principal rivers of England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, with the flies best adapted to each, which will enable the fisher to have all things in readiness on his arrival at their localities, and sally out on the finny tribe fearless of disappointment; and for the younger branch of anglers, I have shown the various sorts of fish, with the tackle and baits best adapted to catch them.

The catechism of fly making which I have introduced will be found very curious and instructive to the young beginner, and will afford him every opportunity of retaining the whole process, that when rehearsed in the mind, and perfectly understood, he may apply, with more certain facility, the hand to both material and hook.

PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR,
WILLIAM BLACKER,
At 54, Dean Street, Soho,
1855.



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An Extract of a Review of William Blacker's Art of Fly Making, &c. &c. &c., taken from "Bell's Life in London," April 8th, 1855.

"THE ART OF FLY MAKING, ANGLING & DYEING OF COLOURS. BY W. BLACKER,—Mr. Blacker has been a celebrated trout and salmon angler from early boyhood, and he is known to be the best maker of trout and salmon flies alive. We have never seen such flies as his, for naturalness of shape, appropriateness of colour and for beauty and solidity of finish. In making flies he has "caught a grace beyond the reach of art," and this he exhibits in the *Sanspareil* work before us. It contains no fewer than seventeen engravings on steel and copper, of trout and salmon flies, in every stage of fabrication, from the whipping of hook and gut together to the finishing of the head. These engravings, every plate crowded with figures, are executed after his own

models and under his own *Surveillance*, and carefully and beautifully coloured, he standing, as he says, "by the artist's elbow." They contain coloured representations of hackles, wing-feathers, fur, silk, tinsel, in their natural state, and prepared for forming the artificial insect. His profusely illustrated instructions for making salmon-flies are entirely original there being nothing at all like them in any work extant, and he must be a dull scholar indeed, who shall not, after brief study of them, become his own salmon fly dresser. Mr. Blacker withholds no secret and spares no pains in developing by the aid of pen and pencil his own method, and we consider it the best, of making artificial flies for every variety of trout and salmon. He gives numerous, well-tried recipes for dying feathers and all other materials, the colours necessary for the successful operations of the fly-maker. He points out how rods are best made, the best sort of winches, lines and hooks, and proves himself a safe guide to the purchaser. He teaches how the rod, and line and flies, are to be used—the art of casting with them, how a river is to be fished, and how a fish, whether trout or salmon, is to be struck, hooked and landed. He describes the best trout and salmon rivers in the empire, the right season for fishing them, and gives an illustrated list of the flies, stating the materials of what they are to be made, that kill best on them. On flies, favourites of his from experience, he dwells with pleased and pleasing minuteness, and for the first time discloses how the "winged larva," a deadly invention of his own, is to be constructed. Never, was a book more honestly and conscientiously written. It glows with deep-felt enthusiasm for his art, and with a generous desire of

revealing everything that pertains to the perfect acquisition of it in all its branches. It is a work of great labour and long pains-taking, unique at all points, and no one could have written it but a practical angler of long, passionate, and devoted experience in the capture of salmon and salmonidæ, and of *ne plus ultra* perfection in the art of making artificial flies, and concomitant fishing tackle. The work is published by himself, at 54, Dean Street, Soho, and we recommend it more earnestly than we have ever done any other work of the sort."

An Extract from "Bell's Life," April 29th, 1855.

"I shall copy a few of Mr. Blacker's patterns as given in his recently-published and very valuable work, entitled *Art of Fly Making, &c.* He is by far the best flymaker I have ever known, and his opinions on flies and fly-fishing deserve the attention of us all. In the book just named he says of the Yellow Sally:—"This is the forerunner of the green drake or May-fly. The trout take this little fly freely if made after this description:—

"Body, buff-coloured fur and a small yellow hackle for legs round the head; wings of the buff-coloured feather inside the wing of the thrush. Hook, 13."

"Several ways of imitating the May-fly. First, Blacker's, as given in his *Art of Fly Making*:—The body of this beautiful fly is made of yellow green mohair, the colour of a gosling newly hatched, and ribbed with yellow-brown silk, a shade of light brown mohair at the tail, and a tuft of the same at the shoulder, picked

out between the hackle, the whisks of the tail three black hairs, three-quarters of an inch long; the hackle to be dyed a greenish buff (dye, according to my recipe, a silver dun hackle with bars across it, called a cuckoo,) or a light ginger hackle bordering on yellow. The wings, which should be made full, and to stand upright, are made of mallard's feathers dyed of a greenish buff, or yellowish shade; a brown head of peacock harl tied neatly above the wings on a No. 6 hook. The wings may be made of the tops of two large dyed mallard's feathers, with fibres stripped off at the butts of the stems, tied back to back. These feathers stand up well and appear very naturally in the water. Large-sized ones kill well in lakes, with bright yellow mohair bodies ribbed with gold twist.

"Second way, from A Handbook of Angling.—Body, bright yellow mohair, or floss silk, ribbed sparingly with light bronze peacock harl; wings, mottled feather of the mallard dyed a pale yellow green. They are to stand nearly erect, and to be slightly divided. Legs, a couple of turns of a red-ginger hackle; tail, three hairs from the rabbit's whisker. Hook, 5, 6, and 7.—Another way: Body, yellow-brown mohair; wings, mallard's feather dyed yellow, and black head; legs, yellowish hackle; tail and hooks as before. During the season of the May-fly, should the weather be gloomy, with a strong warm wind, I would angle with three flies on the casting-line of different sizes, and of colours slightly differing, buff, yellow, and yellow-green, and

one of them made buzz. The largest fly should be used as the stretcher; the smallest the upper bob."

An Extract from "Bell's Life," April 1st, 1855 "The Ondine" in the Book of the Salmon, by "Ephemera,"

"Gold tip; tail, small, brilliant topping, light blue tag; body, blue peacock harl, closely ribbed with fine gold twist; two joints of green trogan feather, and one of red orange hackle under the wings, and over their butts blue jay; wings, a careful mixture of fibres of bustard, silver pheasant, yellow and blue macaw teal, guinea-hen and golden pheasant tail and neck-feathers, surmounted by a topping; feelers, blue and yellow macaw, and bright peacock harl, head. Hook, No. 7 and 8. This waterwitch, sculptured originally by Blacker, is properly called "Ondine." The first time I saw it I nearly lost my senses, and was upon the point of becoming its victim.

"The May-fly and Phelim Rhu are best made by Blacker, of Dean Street, Soho; Phelim is one of his many good inventions. Dressed on the smallest sized grilse hook, it will on dark days and evenings, and in full water kill sea trout and large common trout in every locality. See a celebrated claret fly plate No. 4, page 108."

Prince Albert's Letter to the Author, enclosing £10.

Nearly eleven years have rolled by, since I sent a copy of the first edition of this work to His Royal Highness Prince Albert, who conferred upon me much honor by a favourable reply to it, at that time I took great pains to illustrate it with specimens of the most costly and beautifully executed salmon and trout flies imaginable, many of which were worth a guinea a piece. In this new edition for 1855 I have given numerous copperplates of these excellent killing flies superbly painted to suit the rivers of Ireland, Scotland, England, and Wales; such choice specimens are they that I think salmon and trout will not refuse them in any river in Britain, they are models of gracefulness, and will prove very attractive to the finny tribe, they are all general favourite flies of mine, and of the great salmon and trout fly fishers of the present day. The angler should never fail to try them wherever he roamed in rivers known or unknown to him, and succesful experience has given me an opportunity of recommending them with the greatest confidence, they have killed fish when they have been half gnawed away, and as a fisherman I look upon them with admiration although they are the work of my own fingers, I think I will not say amiss if I predestinate that the real enthusiastic fly fishers, nine out of ten, will be in love with them.

THE LETTER.

"Buckingham Palace, May 7th, 1844.

"Mr. Anson is commanded by His Royal Highness Prince Albert to enclose Mr. Blacker a cheque for ten pounds for the Work on Angling which accompanied his letter, the receipt of which he will have the goodness to acknowledge."

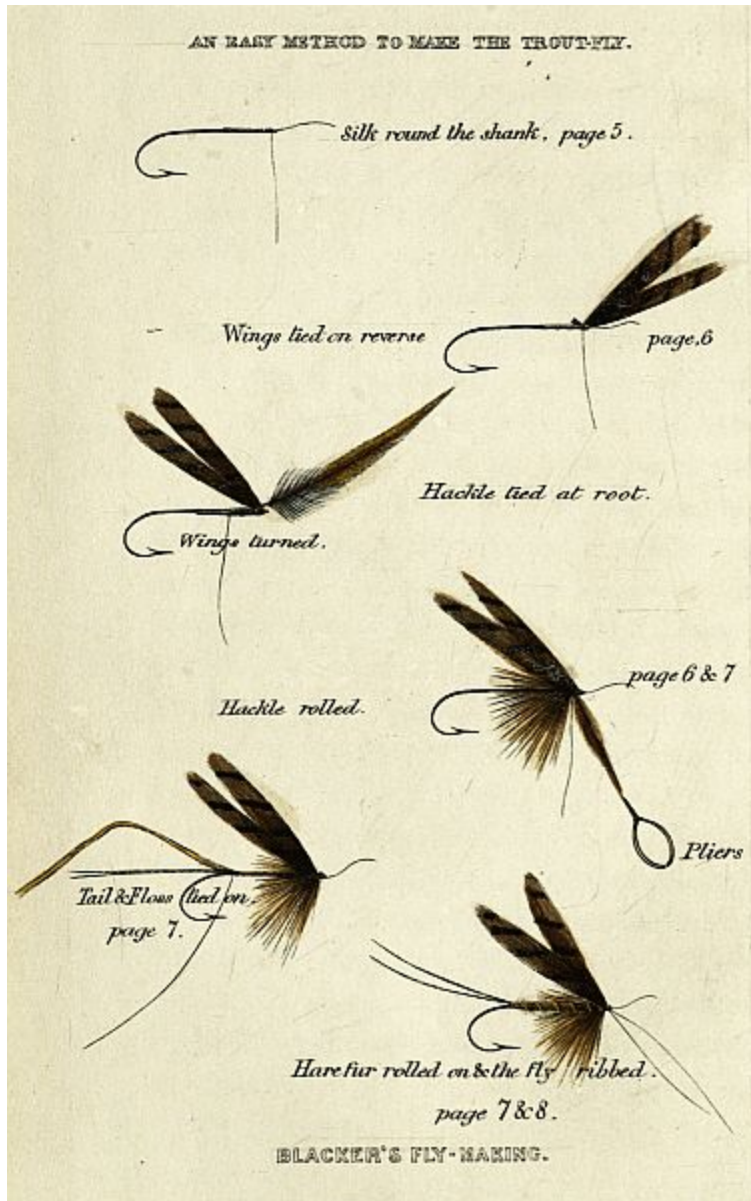
THE ART OF FLY-MAKING, ETC., ETC.,

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BY WILLIAM BLACKER.

To give something that will convey a durable and correct idea of Fly-making, Angling, and Dyeing of Colours to my pupils, is what I aim at, and desire they should understand: for when they are inhaling the fresh breezes on the river's bank, observing with delight the varied tints and delicate forms of the winged insects skimming the surface, and the sportive trout, pitching over and over, taking them down, this is the time, no doubt, when far from the din of a busy town they will thank me for my trouble in directing their attention to the proper shades, which is the most essential of all things in the Art to be considered. The amusement and pleasing recollections of the Fly-fisher, (when studying the various colours and materials necessary for the formation of the artificial fly—those fanciful ones which salmon take so freely, and the imitating, if possible, by the aid of these materials, those beautiful ones in Nature), will be infinitely more pleasing than can be well comprehended by a careless observer of the craft. Many a pleasant hour may be spent, that otherwise would prove tedious, when confined to quarters of an unfavourable day, far from home, looking over your dubbing book and tying a fly. It gives relief to the uneasy mind by calming the disorders that disappointments may have caused, and by cheering the hearts of those who pursue it as a relaxation and enjoyment. The recommendations on Angling are without number, and there is nothing can delight the heart of the fly-fisher so much as to see the fish rise at the flies on the surface of the water, and their beautiful appearance when landed on the bank;

this, with the varied scenery which the windings of the river presents to the imagination, as you roam along, are inducements that cannot fail to gratify the admirer of sportive fish and rushing streams.



I have seen, in days when the fish are not in the humour of taking, a fly tied neatly near the tint, somewhat gaudy, will unquestionably entice them to rise, and will decidedly be more advantageous than fishing without plan. In days when the natural flies are most numerous, the trout will not