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Eels.

That eels descend rivers to the sea for the sake of depositing their spawn in the brackish water of estuaries where the increased temperature of the water is favourable to their habits, has been long known. Aristotle alludes to the fact, and divers observers in modern times have recorded it. But do these eels ever again ascend the rivers, or do they remain in the sea and estuaries? At what season of the year are the eggs deposited? Is it *necessary* that eels should descend to the sea for spawning, or do they propagate their species in ponds and fresh water?

With regard to the question whether the eels that have descended to the sea from the lakes and rivers return again, or whether they remain in the brackish estuaries, we cannot give any decided opinion. Many persons have witnessed the ascent of countless thousands of young eels or elvers from the estuaries and the sea, and no one, we believe, has ever seen adult eels accompanying the elvers, or journeying by themselves. Yarrell says that the return of adult eels is shown by the habits and success of the basket-fishermen in rivers within the tide way, who place the mouths of their eel-pots up stream in autumn, and down stream in the spring. The question must still be regarded as problematic.

It is a most interesting spectacle to see the migration of the young eels from the sea, and wonderful are the instinctive efforts of these little creatures to surmount obstacles that would at first view appear to present unconquerable difficulties. Mr. Anderson, upwards of a century ago, described the young eels as ascending the upright posts and gates of the waterworks at Norwich until they came into the dam above. Ballyshannon is a very favourable place for the study of this curious subject, as we are informed by Dr. Davy, who makes the following interesting remarks on eels ascending rocks:—

‘AMICUS. This is indeed a curious sight. Here are some (eels) wriggling up a perpendicular rock. How is it they accomplish this?

‘PISCATOR. I believe they are able to accomplish it chiefly owing to two circumstances—their mucous glutinous surface favouring adhesion, and their form small and slender. None of these eels, you perceive, are more than two or three inches long, and slender in proportion. Watch one that is now in the progress ascending that perpendicular rock. See how it makes its tail a support, adhering by that, whilst it projects itself upwards; and this done, now adhering by its trunk, it draws its tail after it. These are its steps, and the asperities of the surface of the rock are its stairs favouring its exertions.’

The skin of the eel is remarkably tough. In the times of the ancient Ro-

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