



THE TROUT.

ALONG THE BANKS OF A TROUT STREAM.

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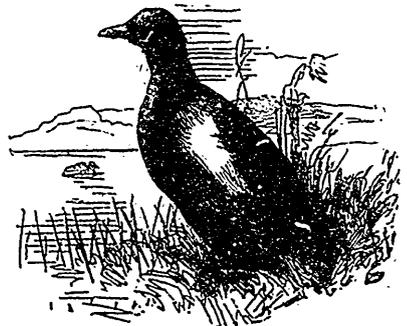
THE words call up a vision of a charming, limpid stream, rippling joyously along between bushy banks, overhung with pendent foliage, introducing the wanderer at its every winding to fresh scenes of rural beauty.

But my trout stream is not like that at all. It takes its hidden origin beneath a hill two miles away, and, after performing such useful duties as those of flowing through an extensive bed of watercress, mashing an acre or so of osiers, and turning a couple of mill-wheels, passes placidly on through the first stage of its long journey towards the sea. It does not ripple at all, like an orthodox trout stream; it only flows. Its waters are not particularly limpid; its banks are not even bushy, at any rate during the greater part of its course. Yet there is no path in the neighbourhood which so attracts me as that which runs through the fields by its side.

Such hosts of living beings are to be seen from it. Not only the trout, though there are plenty of them—fine, speckled fellows of two or even three pounds apiece, nearly eighty of which I once counted in less than a quarter of a mile of stream. They are not so shy as other trout of my acquaintance. They do not object to my standing upon the

bank and watching them for as long as I choose to remain. Perhaps it is that they are so very seldom disturbed. Times more than I should like to count I have passed along the stream, and never yet have I caught sight of the rod and line of the angler. And save for the periodical visits of the dredgers, who come with great rakes to clear out the mud and the weeds, they live their happy lives unmolested by man or beast.

There are coots without number, secure in the immunity from harm which for years past they have enjoyed in common with the trout. They come from a small lake into



DABCHICK.