

THE WORLD'S CLASSICS

IZAACK WALTON AND
CHARLES COTTON
THE COMPLEAT
ANGLER



THE WORLD'S CLASSICS

IZAAK WALTON AND
CHARLES COTTON

The Compleat Angler

EDITED BY JOHN BUXTON

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
JOHN BUCHAN

Oxford New York Toronto Melbourne
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

1982

Oxford University Press, Walton Street, Oxford OX2 6DP

London Glasgow New York Toronto
Delhi Bombay Calcutta Madras Karachi
Kuala Lumpur Singapore Hong Kong Tokyo
Nairobi Dar es Salaam Cape Town
Melbourne Auckland
and associate companies in
Beirut Berlin Ibadan Mexico City

Introduction copyright John Buchan 1901, 1935
Editor's Foreword and Chronology © John Buxton 1982

First published by Oxford University Press 1935
First issued, with new editorial matter, as a World's Classics paperback 1982

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means,
electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without
the prior permission of Oxford University Press

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way
of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired or otherwise circulated
without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover
other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition
including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Walton, Izaak

The compleat angler.—(*The World's classics*)

1. Fishing

I. Title II. Cotton, Charles

III. Buxton, John

799.1'2 SH433

ISBN 0-19-281511-3

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Walton, Izaak, 1593-1683

The compleat angler.—(*The World's classics*)

1. Fishing—Early works to 1800

I. Cotton, Charles, 1630-1687 II. Buxton, John

III. Title. SH433.A1982 999.1'2

81-16984 AACR2

Printed in Great Britain by
Hazell Watson & Viney Limited
Aylesbury, Bucks

THE WORLD'S CLASSICS
THE COMPLEAT ANGLER

IZAACK WALTON (1593–1683), ironmonger, biographer, and angler, was born at Stafford, lived much of his life in London (where he was a parishioner of John Donne) but spent the last twenty years at Winchester, where he is buried in the cathedral. In his *Lives*, as in *The Compleat Angler*, Walton shows his concern with the contemplative rather than the active life, and chooses to show his subjects striving, in their differing ways, to lead the Christian life. Fishing was 'allowed to Clergymen, as being . . . a recreation that invites them to contemplation and quietness', something which in the turmoil of the middle years of the seventeenth century Walton, like Marvell, must have found as hard to achieve as it was desirable. He was well-read, with a taste that he was not ashamed to admit old-fashioned, and in the year of his death he edited a poem which must have been written in his youth, by a connection of his second wife, John Chalkhill.

CHARLES COTTON (1630–87), country gentleman, poet, and translator of Montaigne, was born at Beresford Hall, Derbyshire, by the River Dove, where he built the Fishing House for himself and Walton. Author of *The Compleat Gamester*, 1674, and *The Planter's Manual*, 1675; in 1676, at Walton's invitation, he added the second part to *The Compleat Angler*.

JOHN BUXTON, Reader Emeritus in English Literature at Oxford and for more than thirty years Fellow of New College, has edited *Poems of Charles Cotton*, 1958. Among his books are *Elizabethan Taste*, 1963, *A Tradition of Poetry*, 1967 (including an essay on Cotton), and works on the countryside. He is General Editor, with Norman Davis, of the *Oxford History of English Literature*.

JOHN BUCHAN (1875–1940), first Baron Tweedsmuir, was born in Perth and educated at Glasgow and Oxford Universities. Statesman, biographer, and novelist he is best known for his adventure stories, which include *Prester John*, 1910, *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, 1915, and *Huntingtower*, 1922.

INTRODUCTION

I

IZAAK WALTON

IZAAK WALTON was born in the parish of St. Mary, at Stafford, on August 9th, 1593, apparently at a small house in the East Gate Street of the town. His father was a certain Jervis Walton, who, according to Sir Harris Nicolas, was the son of one George Walton, bailiff, of Yoxall, who claimed kin with the Waltons of Hanbury. The boy was in all likelihood sent to the Grammar School of Stafford, where he was taught the rudiments of a sound, if unconventional, education.

The early life of the young Walton has been made the subject of curious speculation and much cumbrous ingenuity. Sir Harris Nicolas discovered that he was bound apprentice to a certain kinsman, Henry Walton, a Whitechapel haberdasher; and the will of Samuel Walton of St. Mary's Cray in Kent proves the existence of this haberdasher, though it does not prove any connexion with the young Izaak. The only ascertained facts are that on November 12th, 1618, Walton, described as 'late apprentice to Mr. Thomas Grinsell', was made a member of the Ironmongers' Company; and that in his marriage licence with Rachel Floud, dated December 27th, 1626, he is described as of the 'Citie of London, Ironmonger'. So it would seem that the 'linen-draper in Fleet Street' theory must be relinquished, a thing bitter to the mind of the connoisseur in picturesque trades.

His first dwellings, if we may trust Sir John Hawkins and the parish books of St. Dunstan's, were in Fleet Street and in Chancery Lane, 'about the seventh house on the left-hand side'. He filled all the ordinary municipal offices as constable, juryman, grand-juryman, sidesman, and vestryman. He seems to have prospered in his trade, and to have speedily become a man of some social consequence. His marriage with Rachel Floud allied him with the episcopal family of the Cranmers, and we find him early in life an intimate friend of Dr. John Donne, John Hales of Eton, Dr. Henry King, and 'that under-valuer of money, Sir Henry Wotton'. On the 10th of July 1640, his wife died, and six years later he took as his second wife a Somersetshire lady, Anne Ken, a half-sister of the famous Bishop. She bore him one daughter and two sons, and, dying in 1662, was buried in Worcester Cathedral, where her husband's quaint and beautiful epitaph still preserves her memory.

In all the troubled years between 1644 and the Restoration, Walton seems to have remained in London, except for such occasional visits to the country as he could snatch from a busy life. In 1651 we find the peaceful and meditative angler engaged in an incursion into high politics. One of the King's jewels, known as the 'lesser George', was saved from Cromwell's hands by a certain Colonel Blague, who passed it from Mr. George Barlow to Mr. Robert Milward and thence into the 'trusty hands of Mr. Izaak Walton'. Blague meanwhile lay prisoner in the Tower, but on his escape he received the jewel and conveyed it safe to the King's hands. Clearly Walton was known as a staunch loyalist, and, clearly, too, he was still in favour with the other side; in all

ages it is the quiet, unpractical men who are the points of contact between parties.

From 1650 to 1661 Walton seems to have lived in Clerkenwell, but in December of 1662 he obtained from Gilbert Sheldon, Bishop of London, a forty years' lease of a new building, adjoining the house called the 'Cross Keys' in Paternoster Row. The house was burnt down in the Great Fire, but already Walton seems to have begun that life of visiting which characterized his last years, 'mostly in the families of the eminent clergymen of England, of whom he was much beloved'. He had apartments reserved for him in the houses of Dr. Morley, Bishop of Winchester, and Dr. Ward, Bishop of Salisbury. He spent the Christmas of 1678 at Farnham Castle, and it was under Morley's roof at Chelsea that in all likelihood several of the 'Lives' were written. In 1683 we find him again at Farnham, and on August 9th of the same year, being ninety years of age, he made his will. The document shows him a man of considerable property, with a wide circle of friends, a true bookman bequeathing his treasures considerably. On the 15th of December in the same year he died at the Prebendal House of his son-in-law, Dr. Hawkins. He is buried in the Cathedral, in a place in the south transept called Prior Silkstead's Chapel, and a large marble slab in the floor bears his epitaph.

Few long lives have been so free from conspicuous misfortune. He had sorrow in his own family, and to one of his peculiar temperament the Royalist reverses must have come as real afflictions. But in the main he lived his easy life of books and angling undisturbed. He attained to considerable prosperity. A humble tradesman at the start, he seems to have climbed to

the circle of gentle birth, and in a decree of the Court of Judicature in 1670 he is described as 'Izaak Walton, gentleman'. His friends were in the main of one ecclesiastical and political party, and one mental type. Leigh Hunt in a famous essay has analysed this quietistic temperament with a somewhat unusual acuteness; but it is wiser to grant its charm, while we admit its limitations. The strong rude wind of the outer world rarely disturbed those peaceful doves; gentle meditation, mild and sincere devotion, innocent pleasures—such was the order of their days. Hence the 'Lives' are models of perfect biography. Herbert, Donne, Hooker, Sanderson, all with this old-world, Jacobean flavour, churchmen all, members of the church quiescent, devout, learned, each with a quaint turn of wit, they lived and died as cloistered in their virtues as any Trappist; and if Mr. Donne in his hot youth lost his heart and loved like a Cavalier, why, it is the part of his biographer to justify and pardon. It is rarely that we find a man so well agreed with his intimates, so whole-heartedly in love with his friends. Such intimacies Walton found early in life, and in all the days of storm they were never broken. A man of letters pure and simple, the main incidents in his career are the dates of his book, and any attempt at biography is a monotonous chronicle.

CHARLES COTTON

Into the circle of gentle quietists Cotton comes like a swashbuckling and adventurous Cavalier into a Quaker's meeting. At first, we confess, the conjunction of Walton and Cotton is a thing to surprise. A bold and taking gentleman, who wrote not always

for edification, the scion of a great house, the intimate of Somers, full of the traditions which produced a Suckling, a Lovelace, a Claverhouse, and a Montrose, he seems a little out of place in an atmosphere of pious and lettered middle age. It is not till we find in the Derbyshire squire a genuine honesty of heart, a love of books, and some considerable talent of his own, and in the London citizen some feeling for other sport than that of drowsy meadows, that the contradiction is solved. It is probable too, that, as Lowell hinted, Walton, like Johnson, dearly loved a gentleman of blood; more, Cotton was the soundest of churchmen and royalists, and the owner of good trouting water; and, above all, he had known his father. But the paradox of this conjunction has given a chance for many homilies; and a certain exquisite and maidenly editor has hoped 'that Walton's serious occupations and intercourse with pious men of learning kept him happily away from companions where loose writings would be named, and that, ignorant of Cotton's vicious folly, he judged him rather by the truly beautiful sentiments breathed through the "Stanzas Irreguliers"'.

Clarendon has drawn the elder Cotton in his stately manner. 'He had all those qualities which in youth raise men to the reputation of being fine gentlemen; such a pleasantness and gaiety of humour, such a sweetness and gentleness of nature, and such a civility and delightfulness in conversation, that no man, in court or out of it, appeared a more accomplished person; all these extraordinary qualifications being supported by as extraordinary a clearness of courage and fearlessness of spirit, of which he gave too often manifestation.' He was a friend of Herrick,

Carew, Lovelace, Selden, and Davenant, and by his marriage with Olive Stanhope allied himself with the old Derbyshire houses of Cockayne, Port, and Stanhope. It is probable, though we have no proof, that the young Cotton went, like his father, to Cambridge, and left without a degree. At some time in his life he must have been a hard student, for besides considerable classical attainments he had a most unusual acquaintance with French and Italian. He married in 1656 his cousin Isabella, daughter of Sir Thomas Hutchinson of Owthorp, and the following year Sir Peter Lely in his famous portrait set down the dress and features of this young gentleman of twenty-seven. He is in armour, with a full-bottomed wig falling down to his steel cuirass, and a white cravat at his throat, a handsome open-air young man, with very honest eyes. In 1658 his father died, and he succeeded to his estates—an impoverished heritage it would appear, for he had twice to petition Parliament to break the entail in part, and current scandal shows him often in hiding from his creditors. His sole occupation was literature and the care of his land, and he seems to have made his Dovedale abode at once a quiet country retreat for himself and a hospitable house for his friends. 'The pleasantness of the river, mountains, and meadows about it,' says Walton with grateful recollections, 'cannot be described, unless Sir Philip Sidney and Mr. Cotton's father were alive to do it again.'

In 1675 he married a second time, his second wife being Mary, daughter of Sir William Russell, and widow of the Earl of Ardglass. The lady survived him, for he died of a fever some time in the February of 1687, only four years after the death of Walton.

His son, Beresford Cotton, seems to have espoused the Whig cause, for we find him commanding a company in a regiment of foot raised by the Earl of Derby for the service of King William.

II

The bibliography of Walton is the true form which the chronicle of his life should take, and no author has been more fortunate in his pious bibliographers. Thomas Westwood in his *Chronicle of the Compleat Angler* has provided all that one can need, and Mr. R. B. Marston has made an enthusiastic study of angling literature. The first edition was published in 1653, in the most troubled years of the early Commonwealth. Its full title was *The Compleat Angler, or the Contemplative Man's Recreation: 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 will go with thee.'"*—John xxi. 3. (London: Printed by T. Maxey, for Rich. Marriot, in St. Dunstan's Churchyard, Fleet Street, 1653.) The name of the author does not occur on the title-page, but in *The Perfect Diurnall* (Monday, May 9th to Monday, May 16th, 1653) we find the following advertisement:

'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 known Play of the Spanish Gipsie, never till now published: Both printed for Richard Marriot, to be sold at his shop in Saint Dunstan's Churchyard, Fleet Street.' Of this first edition the earliest printed copies contain a small printer's error—*contention* for *contentment*—in the last line

but one of the *Farewell to the Vanities of the World* ascribed to Dr. Donne. The second edition, which is if possible a greater rarity, appeared two years later, in 1655. This is practically the first edition of the book as we know it. The work was all but rewritten, its size was increased by more than one-third, and the interlocutors, who were formerly two (Piscator and Viator) are now three—Piscator, Venator, and Auceps. The erring Viator appears to our joy in the Second Part. The book was garnished with fine illustrations, and Mr. Marston has shown good reason for believing that the engravings were copied from the revised and enlarged German translation by Dr. Conrad Forer of Gesner's great work, *Latein erstmals beschriben*, printed at Frankfort in 1598. The third edition was issued in 1661, but before many copies had been sold the sale of the book was transferred from Richard Marriot to Simon Gape (near the Inner Temple Gate in Fleet Street), by whom the remainder of the impression was sent forth, with a fresh title-page, dated 1664. In this edition the chapter on the Laws of Angling appears for the first time. The fourth edition, which is a mere reprint of the second, was printed by R. Marriot in 1668. The last edition published in Walton's lifetime was the fifth edition of 1676. Sir Harris Nicola's falls foul of the changes made in this edition: 'the garrulity and sentiments', he says, 'of an octogenarian are very apparent, and the subdued colouring of religious feeling . . . is so much heightened as to become almost obtrusive.' Here Charles Cotton's 'Instructions How to Angle for a Trout or Grayling in a Clear Stream' appear for the first time. To certain copies of this edition there was also added

Colonel Richard Venables's *The Experienc'd Angler, or Angling Improved*; and in a letter to the author, who was a distinguished Parliamentary soldier and Commander-in-Chief of the Ulster Forces, Walton declares 'since my reading of thy book, I cannot look upon some notes of my own gathering, but methinks I do *puerilia tractare*'. When the third part was included the book was called *The Universal Angler*, but Venables's contribution dropped out in later editions.

In 1750, 1759, and 1772, Moses Browne, on the advice of Dr. Johnson, published three editions of the *Angler*. Browne takes scandalous liberties with the text, and in general represents the worst editorial tradition. Sir John Hawkins in 1760 prepared a much more valuable reprint. His edition is still the main fount of our biographical material as far as the authors are concerned, for he drew upon the researches of the famous antiquarian Oldys, the Norroy King-of-Arms. The editions of John Major in 1823 and 1824 are models of workmanship, but otherwise unimportant. But the great edition was that of Sir Harris Nicolas, which appeared in two imperial volumes in 1836, a book handsome in appearance and full of the results of the patient labour of years. Dr. Bethune's American edition is learned, dull, and marred by a consistent priggishness, but it is of great value to the student of Walton and the lover of fair books; while Mr. R. B. Marston's 'Lea and Dove' edition of 1888 is one of the most genuinely attractive ever issued. Of smaller reprints and foreign translations it is needless to speak; but Mr. John Lane's edition of 1897 deserves mention, if only for the beauty of Mr. E. H. New's illustrations.

The other literary works of Walton may be briefly noticed. They consist of his famous *Lives*, and a few poems, prefaces, and letters. He edited and prefaced with an elegy of his own the 1633 edition of Donne's Poems, and in 1638 he prefixed commendatory verses to *The Merchants' Map of Commerce*. In 1640 he issued a *Life of Dr. Donne* as a preface to a volume of his sermons, a Life which Dr. Johnson thought the best ever written. In 1643 he wrote some lines on the death of his friend William Cartwright, the poet; and in 1646 he seems to have contributed the address 'To the Reader' to Francis Quarles's *Shepherd's Eclogues*. In 1651 he edited the *Reliquiae Wottonianae*, and prefixed his famous Life of the author. In 1652 he seems to have written the usual address to the reader for Sir John Skeffington's *Heroe of Lorenzo*. At the Restoration he showed his joy in 'An humble Eclog, To my Ingenuous Friend, Mr. Browne, on his various and excellent Poems'. In 1665 appeared the *Life of Hooker*, prefaced by a letter from Dr. King, the Bishop of Chichester, in which 'Honest Izaak' is first used of the author. In 1670 appeared the *Life of Mr. George Herbert*, to my mind the finest of the five. The *Life of Robert Sanderson, Bishop of Lincoln*, was published in 1678, written when Walton was already far on in the vale of years. "'Tis now too late to wish that my life may be like his; for I am in the eighty-fifth year of my age; but I humbly beseech Almighty God that my death may; and do as earnestly beg of every reader to say Amen.' He may have written the pamphlet called 'Love and Truth', published in 1680, but many of the chief Waltonian experts have decided against his authorship. In 1683 appeared *Thealma*

and Clearchus, a Pastoral History, in smooth and easie verse, written long ago, so Walton says, by 'John Chalkhill, Esq., an Acquaint and Friend of Edmund Spenser'. Many will have it that this 'Jo. Chalkhill' is a fiction, and that Walton really wrote the verses, or, at least, as Mr. Lowell maintains, 'tinkered his friend's composition'.

In his own day, and in later times, Walton has been the mark for a eulogy which has scarcely been given to any other Englishman short of the very greatest. To Drayton he was his 'honest old friend'. To Cotton he was a 'second father', a master in angling:

But, my dear friend, 'tis so, that you and I,
By a condition of mortality,
With all this great, and more proud world, must die.

In which estate, I ask no more of fame,
Nor other monument of honour's claim,
Than that of your true friend to advance my name.

Of numerous poetical epistles addressed to Walton, we may notice the verses to 'Iz. Wa.' published as early as 1619 in the *Love of Amos and Laura*, by S. P., which some have attributed to Samuel Purchas, the author of *The Pilgrimage*. Indeed in his own day the single dissentient voice in the chorus of praise was that of Richard Franck, the Cromwellian soldier, who, having a taste for rough and moorland waters, had little patience with Walton's gentle pastoral. In the next century Johnson led the way in appreciation by saying that 'he considered the preservation and elucidation of Walton a pious work'; and he turned certain of the verses into tolerable Latin. So, too, Charles Lamb:—'Among all your quaint readings

did you ever light upon Walton's *Compleat Angler*? . . . it breathes the very spirit of innocence, purity, and simplicity of heart; . . . it would sweeten a man's temper at any time to read it.' Sir Walter Scott, in his edition of Franck, wished that 'Walton, who had so true an eye for nature . . . had made this northern tour instead of Franck, and had detailed in the beautiful simplicity of his Arcadian language his observations on the scenery and manners of Scotland'. Wordsworth has written two sonnets on 'Walton, sage benign'. To Byron, who was no fisher and not even a well-wisher, he is merely the 'quaint old cruel coxcomb'; and to Leigh Hunt, himself the most effeminate of men, he is something of the old woman. Among later appreciations we need only mention Mr. Lang's graceful epistle in the *Letters to Dead Authors*, and Mr. Lowell's acute and interesting essay.

Cotton's second part, as I have said, was added to the fifth edition, and ever since the two parts have been issued together. Cotton's letter, which accompanied his work, is as modest as can be. He lays no claim to the grace and wisdom of his master; but chance has placed much sport in his way, especially of the north-country kind, and the reader may find certain of his hints of use. He is the practical angler, writing without airs or postures for plain men by the riverside. His other literary works cover many fields. He wrote verses with a certain rude vigour and melody, sometimes attaining to something like poetry, as in *The Retirement* and *The Contentation*, and again sinking to sheer doggerel in *The Angler's Ballad*. In 1649 he wrote an elegy upon the death of Henry, Lord Hastings; and in 1654, in the spirit of the true loyalist, he attacked Waller for his panegyric

upon the Protector. He wrote many burlesques, the most notable being *Scarronides or Virgil Travestie* in 1664, a Voyage to Ireland in burlesque in 1671, and the *Burlesque upon Burlesque: or the Scoffer Scoff'd* in 1675. He translated Du Vaix's *Moral Philosophy of the Stoics*, Gerard's *History of the Life of the Duke of Espernon*, Corneille's *Les Horaces*, the *Commentaries of Blaise de Montluc, Marshal of France*, the *Fair One of Tunis*, a novel from the French, the *Memoirs of the Sieur de Pontis*, and—the work by which he is best known—the *Essays of Montaigne*. In addition he wrote a *Planter's Manual*, and he may possibly be the author of the *Compleat Gamester*. Cotton has not, like Walton, been the beloved of all later writers; but he has had his share of praise. His cousin, Sir Aston Cockayne, in a dedicatory poem, believes that his 'lines are great and strong, the *nihil ultra* of the English tongue'; and Mr. Lowell, a more unprejudiced witness, declares that 'Cotton was a man of genius, whose life was cleaner than his muse always cared to be. If he wrote the *Virgil Travestie*, he also wrote verses which the difficult Wordsworth could praise, and a poem of gravely noble mood addressed to Walton on his "Lives", in which he shows a knowledge of what goodness is that no bad man could have acquired. Let one line of it at least shine in my page, not as a sample, but for its own dear sake—

For in a virtuous act all good men share.'

III

The *Angler* has been so praised for centuries that a modern writer must refrain from eulogy and seek