

THE BLOODY DOCTOR

In the chapter titled "The Bloody Doctor (A Bad Day on Clearburn)" from "Angling Sketches," the narrator reminisces about their unforgettable experiences fishing at Clearburn Loch, a place notorious for its challenging fishing conditions yet irresistible due to its abundance of trout, a rarity in other local waters devastated by pollution and overfishing. The loch's untouched population of trout draws the narrator back, despite the many difficult days spent attempting to catch them. The chapter paints a vibrant picture of the Scottish landscape, rich in history and natural beauty, setting the stage for a day of fishing filled with anticipation.

The journey to Clearburn Loch takes the reader through iconic Scottish countryside, invoking the memory of poets like John Leyden and the legendary Walter Scott, enriching the narrative with cultural and historical references. Once at the loch, the narrator faces the challenges of fishing in this unique environment. The loch is surrounded by reeds and has a bottom fraught with treacherous springs, making it nearly impossible to fish effectively except from a small gravelly shore.

The day's fishing is initially slow until a sudden rise of trout creates an exciting spectacle, with trout voraciously feeding on an unusual insect the narrator cannot match with any artificial fly in their collection. Despite the frustration and the eventual cessation of the rise, the beauty of the landscape and the occasional interactions with local wildlife provide a serene backdrop to the narrator's efforts.

The climax of the fishing adventure involves a series of dramatic attempts to catch a particularly large trout, which the narrator humorously suggests might be the Devil, given its knack for staying just out of reach. The battle with the trout through the reeds is tense and ultimately unsuccessful, leading to a contemplative retreat tinged with the disappointment familiar to anglers—a mix of solace in nature's beauty and the

elusiveness of the perfect catch.

Through vivid descriptions and a deep appreciation for the lore of the Scottish borders, the chapter encapsulates the essence of angling as not just a sport but a spiritual journey, offering insights into the allure of fishing in such a storied landscape. The narrative weaves together the frustrations and joys of angling, the connection to the land and its history, and the eternal hope for that elusive, perfect catch, offering a reflective and immersive read.

