

Professor Hardy was fighting a losing battle with his memory. That morning—not an hour ago—he had thought of a metaphor. It had been something worthy of T. S. Eliot, he remembered that much, but the metaphor itself, no less than the context that had inspired it, he could not remember to save his life.

The Fever

Robert Petty

WERE this the winter of another century, a homely gent in lace cuffs and knee pants, with lantern and bell might well proclaim, "Hail all ye citizens of sound mind, beware, for a fever approaches which shall befall many of those among us. Take heed, for it strikes without warning, and hope of cure is at least two months away."

What is this affliction that lies beyond the scope of modern medical science? Can it be cured? The answer is no, for one of its identifying characteristics is that it becomes part of your blood. It can, however, (in medical terminology) be arrested, be made to lie dormant for two, three, perhaps even four months out of the year, those usually being from late October to mid-winter. From there, it starts gradually as a faint burning in the mind, which advances slowly at first, then more pronouncedly with every passing day, pounding, surging, burning, invariably reaching a crisis with the first or second warm spring breeze that blows from the south. From here, if all fares well for the patient and conditions are right, the fever will retreat, eventually subsiding with the passing of the summer, thus completing its cycle. In most cases, infection dates back to childhood. The important thing to remember, however, is that it is chronic, reoccurring every year.

There have been great advances made in the treatment of this ailment. Treatment consists mostly of physical therapy. Tools and implements have been supplied by such famous concerns as Shakespear, South Bend, and Heddon. Literature on improvement of methods may be found in such publications as *Field and Stream*, *Outdoor Life*, and *Sports Afield*. Diagnosticians and technical advisors date from Isaac Walton to Ray Bergman, Jason Lucas, and Ted Trueblood.

Laugh as you will, but look about you. That chap over there with the vacant stare in his eyes, whose wrist jerks intermittently; that professor at the pencil sharpener, turning the crank over and over as though he were waiting for it to lunge from his hand; that man you saw staring at the goldfish in the pet store's window, are all victims of the fever. Being a victim of long standing, let me offer a suggestion. It is one of the best I have found to date. Mind you, it

is no cure, but it does offer temporary relief. I should warn you, however, that in many cases the after effects are a bit toxic, leaving the patient with the previously mentioned vacant stare, and in some cases producing a reoccurring mumble, intelligible only to fellow sufferers. In any case, I proceed as follows.

Along towards the latter part of April, when the wind is from the southwest, the barometer doing its best to reach thirty, I get up about five o'clock and race the sun to a winding stream a few miles north of town. There is something nostalgic in the early morning murmur of a stream, something disconsolate yet gentle, taunting as if to say, "Follow me." Seining for minnows, however, almost always results in a trip in over my waders, and the chill of April water inevitably puts a damper on the tranquility of nature. Great expectation soon brightens such discomfort, and with a few crawdads thrown into the bucket I start upstream in search of a likely looking spot that might well bear a sign, "Smallmouth Cafe—Big Chub Minnows Served The Way You Like 'Em." There is the spot, over there where the ripples run out into a long hole as they lap the trunk of that fallen tree. The water is unusually clear for April. It will take a light leader—3 lb. test and five feet long. I reach into the bucket and bring out a minnow, a big one that will look like hotcakes and sausage to a hungry bass. With the minnow hooked through the lips, I throw him far up into the riffle, letting him swing down wide over towards the fallen tree. Suddenly there is a sharp tug, the instinct to jerk back, but not yet. I strip out line, faster and faster. "Give him a yard, five feet, ten feet—now is the time. Yank hard! Then . . ." This is the moment. This is the thrill: a taut line cutting the water, a flyrod held high, bent near its breaking point, a bronze flash that boils the water, sending rings to quake the arrowleaf in the shallows . . . But here I leave the story unfinished, for rightfully it is always unfinished. Unfinished as long as there are bent pins and willow poles, dry flies and split bamboo. Yes, unfinished from farm boy to purist, for this is the eternal fever. Say, that reminds me. It isn't long till April.

After the Toast and Tea

Maurice Kenny

AUNT MAY stood close to the bleeding hearts and plucked the dead blooms from the fat bushes. Slowly she began to lift a spray of the pink flowers and smelled the faint perfume. The May flowers were dying. Most of the pod-like blooms were wilting on tufts of grass, while only a few were nodding on the stalks toward the green. The air was scented with the delicate smells of lilac and purple snapdragon, and golden sun rays