

# Still Versus Grubs



BUZZ-Z-Z SANG THE REEL —

By PERRY NEWBERRY

"We will start early, say 5 o'clock, and climb way up Garsey creek. There should be trout there if they are anywhere. And we'll take lunches and stay all day."

Phil was planning for a fishing trip with his friend, Eben Holt, who was visiting him for the summer. Eben lived in Michigan and was a skillful fisherman on the inland lakes for the bass, perch and pickerel that frequent those waters, but he had never caught trout and this was to be his initiation into the mysteries of fly fishing. "I have cast for bass," he explained, "where we use a piece of pork rind for bait and throw it in among the lily pads. But we always used a long cane pole and a line just a little shorter than the rod. I've seen rods with reels, but I never saw any use for them. They are awkward to handle and are mostly for style, I guess, anyway."

Phil opened his eyes in astonishment at this remark, but he was too polite to dispute a statement of a guest. "He will think differently tomorrow night," he said to himself; "at least he will if there are any of those big ones that were there last summer."

Garsey creek was a small branch of the river that began its course far up in the San Hedrim mountain. Inaccessible, except after a hard climb, it had escaped the fate of the trout streams more easily arrived at and still contained many large, fine fish. Two hours of back breaking work over rocks and through mesquite brush brought the boys to the lower part of that stretch of the stream that they intended to fish and at sunup they were ready to make their first cast.

Phil showed Eben how to attach the fly to the leader, first selecting a brown hackle as best fitted for the early morning light. Then Phil, taking a place on a rock beside a deep pool in the stream, cast up against the current and let the fly drop in a little eddy just below the rapid where the stream broke into the pool. For a second he let it lie there, swung in a circle by the current, then he brought it toward him in little darts, imitating the motion of a bug on the water's surface. The fly was half way across the pool when "Splash!" a trout came out of the water and caught it in his downward plunge.

Phil struck hard and quick, that shortening of the line by a downward and forward movement of the rod butt. "Buzz-z-z-z!" sang the reel as the trout dashed away upstream. Phil gave him almost to the rock at the upper end of the pool, then headed him around by a quick move of the rod and a press of his thumb on the automatic reel. Back again, swift as he had gone away, came the fish, and the boy guided in his line with his thumb as the reel took up the slack. Now the trout was past Phil, going downstream as though there was safety some place below, and the boy was not at all sure that he was not right. There were certainly bushes and brush, and a moment's entanglement of the line would mean a break some place in the detaining tackle. Knowing the danger Phil

gave the butt and eased the strain with the reel. Then he began to draw the fish toward him. Slowly, with frequent pauses for short battles, the fish was led up close to the rock where his captor stood, and Phil bent down with the gaff to land him. But there was still another rush in the trout. Out he went and upstream again, to be turned as before and brought under the rock. This time Phil put gaff to gill and in a second a four pound Dolly Varden was quivering in his creel.

Eben had watched the whole process with intense interest and breathless excitement. The whole battle had not lasted two minutes, but it seemed to have taken hours. "Why didn't you pull him out at the start?" he asked. "You might have lost him a dozen times there."

"He wouldn't come out. Cast in over there where I did and see if you can't raise another."

Eben lengthened out his line as he had seen Phil do and made a cast; but the fly did not go half way across the pool. He was reeling in the slack when a trout, rising, took his fly and was down below the brush before he knew it. Around came his pole with a jerk that nearly took it from his hand and the trout was hooked by its own greediness. "Reel in! Reel in!" cried Phil. "He'll foul you in that brush and you'll lose him sure. Head him upstream!"

Eben would have been glad to follow instructions, but he was not used to a finny tiger on an eight ounce rod, and he could not. A moment later there was a snap and Eben's rod suddenly straightened out from its curve. The line had broken.

"Hard luck!" groaned Phil, but Eben laughed. "Not luck a bit, Phil," he said, "but lack of knowledge of the game. I'm out of my balliwick and don't know the rules. Let me cut a willow pole and tie on a double strand of this hair line you're using, and I think I can land a fish. That's what I'm used to."

"Better stick to the reel," Phil said. "You can get used to it in a little while, and these mountain trout won't stand being harnessed and dragged about by a rope."

Eben was already cutting a 12 foot alder, which he peeled and trimmed. "Every man to his trade," he said, cheerily. "I don't want to discourage you, Phil, but I am willing to risk my piece of cake that I will have more of these wildcats of the creek than you do when lunch time comes."

"I'm agreed; the cake is the prize, and to the victors belong the spoils. Whenever you are ready say the word."

Eben, when he had trimmed his rod, cut 16 yards of line from his reel and doubled it, giving it twist enough so that it would hold in one strand. Then he attached it to the pole, almost at the butt, and carried it up, looping it every three feet, and fastening it at the tip. "Now if the pole breaks I still have him by the line," he explained to Phil, who was new to this kind of tackle. There was still nearly 12 feet of line, twisted double, and to the end of this Eben attached a short leader and his fly. He chose a royal coachman, reject-

ing Phil's advice as to the proper fly. "I like the color," he declared, laughing, "besides, it isn't fair to accept any advice from the enemy. Remember, we are in a battle where the stakes are almost half a chocolate cake. Me and my willow pole and my bright, big fly are going after that cake as greedily as those trout took our flies."

"Which side of the creek will you take?" asked Phil. "You can have first choice."

"Side? I don't want a whole side. I am going to settle down right here, where I know there is at least one trout, and I'm going to finish this up before I move on. You may have both sides of the creek from here to its source."

"But, Eben!" said Phil, laughing heartily, "this is trout fishing, not spearing suckers. Honestly, they don't catch trout that way—at least, if they do, I never heard of it. You ought to whip every pool as we go along up."

"You go ahead and whip, and I'll stay here and see if that fish will come back with the brown tackle you loaned me. You might whip up one side of the creek and down the other, and join me here at lunch time."

"All right. Goodby, Eben; don't roll into the pool when you fall asleep," and Phil started on to the next hole.

Eben went a little way down creek, crossed to the other side and came cautiously back up, keeping well back, until he reached the rock just above the place where the trout that Phil caught had lain. Quietly he climbed up and looked down into the clear, still water below him. As he had thought, there were seven or eight big, lazy trout lying there, their fins barely moving as they held their positions. Eben dropped the fly on the water above them and moved it slowly across the surface. Indolently one of the fish rose and seemingly sniffed it, then dropped back to his place. "Don't seem to like it," Eben thought, as five minutes passed without any more interest shown in his bait. "I guess they are callous to these drug store chicken feathers. What can I get to tempt their dainty appetites?"

That started the Michigan boy on a bait hunting expedition, and he went over in his mind the various things he would use in his native haunts to make listless fish take the hook. "Frogs are dainties for pickerel," he said to himself, "and minnows for bass; sometimes bass will take earth worms when they won't bite anything else. Wonder if I can find some worms."

For a country boy to find worms in any land under the sun outside of the rays of the arctic sun is not difficult, and Eben was soon tearing a dead and rotten log apart and taking large, fat white grubs out of the heart of it. A match box from his pocket served as a receptacle to carry them in, and he went back to his position upon the rock, but sheltered by it from the view of the fish. He hooked a grub on the fly and let it sink slowly down.

One of the fish must have had his eyes very wide open, for he landed on that grub before any of the others had a chance. Eben struck quick, with that muscular Michigan strike which is ex-

pected to bring anything under five pounds flying over the fisherman's head. But this was not a perch or a lake bass, but the gamest fish that swims, bred in ice cold waters that make him strong and aggressive. The doubled silk line held and the hook bent but held. The trout came almost out of the water in pain and surprise at such rough treatment; then it decided to fight and turned back. The alder rod was green and tough and strong and Eben was all three. Round and round the pool went the trout at the end of 12 short feet of line and Eben held with both hands to a bending pole. Such energy on the part of a fish could not last long. It was furious while it was doing, but it grew less with each second. At the end of a minute Eben lifted an almost drowned fish from the water with his fulcrum and lever and put seven pounds of trout in his creel. Then he sat down on the rock and wiped big beads of perspiration from his brow.

"Phil was right, I guess," he said, after he had caught his breath. "These fish were not built for still fishing. There isn't another to be taken out of that pool for some time to come. My! what a battle!"

The pool above was Eben's next fishing place, and he approached it with the same caution as before and with the same result. An enormous old trout had evidently been waiting there, hungry for a fat grub. He swallowed grub, fly, hook and all, and the fight he made was very short. The hook was in his vital parts, and he was dead when taken from the water. Two more were added to his creel, when he heard Phil's halloo from up creek.

"Well, Eben, what luck with the methods of the east?" said Phil as he came out of the bushes.

"It isn't the method for the west, Phil, and I'm ready for lessons at casting with rod and reel. What luck did you have?"

"Fairish—just so so. Eighteen, but none as big as the one I took here. I guess he is the grandpa of Garsey creek."

"Then there is the great-granddad and his father," laughed Eben, emptying out his creel, while Phil gave a whistling "Whew!" of astonishment.

"You eat the cake, sure! Why, Eben, that is the biggest brook trout I ever saw taken."

"But it don't win the cake. It is numbers that count in this contest of methods, not size. Eighteen is the cakewalk number."

Phil laughed. "I don't see any way out of this but to call it a draw and each eat half. I've got the numbers and you have the size. And I guess we are both hungry enough to eat our jackets—I know I am."

This settlement of the battle was satisfactory to Eben, and the boys ate their lunch, dividing all equally, and during the afternoon Eben stood on the rock of the pool and made casts under Phil's direction. "If it isn't always the surest way, it is the best way," Eben said, "for it gives a chance to the fish and it gives sport to the fisherman."

"And what an appetite to both," said Phil.