

With the coming of the close season comes the frustration of inactivity. Most of us I am afraid, sling our tackle in a corner without giving it another thought until the seasons opening.

Somewhere about the beginning of May my first symptoms appear. At first they are intermittent murmurings - the most diligent psychologist would find difficulty in diagnosis - but in a short while the bug takes a hold of my system. By my bedside a small mountain of books appear, well thumbed and digested at this time of year. What Walker says on Carp and Tench is judged and balanced against the findings of Marshall-Hardy. Not that I ever adhere to their advice when once the excitement of tackling-up is upon me.

The next stage is the craving. A visit to the tackle dealer - not that I will buy anything - Oh no! He being a good angler is perforce a good salesman - He casts a little ground-bait in the swim, followed by an impeccably presented bait. "The latest thing in reels, Sir." I rise reluctantly, but finally in the height of my fever, I take - I am on! I tear away down stream. "No, I have all that I require in reels". He puts on pressure - "...but look at the smooth action and quick recovery!" - and just turns me as I make a valiant rush for the door. I am fast weakening and it is only a matter of time before he has me gasping on the counter, his first of the season. - Weight? £5 !!

This acts as a sedative, but a few doses of "The Fishermans Bedside Book" and the fever runs higher. I have now reached the stage where only frequent walks around local waters make life possible - even this finally proves useless. By this time my tackle is out, repairs and replacements which ought to have been done weeks previously are hurriedly and usually carelessly carried out. Now that I am within days of June 15th, come the sleepless nights - the tossing and turning of a fever-ridden body - the curses and natterings of a sleep-disturbed wife. Comes the delirium. Visions of calm pools in the cool of evening, with the delectable sucking of Carp beneath the lily pads. Visions of a cool morning, the mist reluctant to leave the surface and mysterious in the morning light.

At last the day! No sleep the previous night - tackle preparation - worm stalking on the lawn by torchlight - final checking through the small hours, and away before the faintest suggestion of the dawn, so far away in fact that having arrived at the water, discovered that the new reel had not been packed, tackled up by the light of a petrol lighter (Useless after dawn for it's designed purpose through lack of fuel), find that it is still no nearer to the dawn. But I am at least there at the water, on THE day. My wife can now look forward to at least a little increase of normality as the season wears on.

'Rutilus'