Excerpts from

THE PRACTICAL ANGLER OR THE ART OF TROUT-FISHING MORE PARTICULARLY APPLIED TO CLEAR WATER

BY

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NEW EDITION

WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTE BY

W. EARL HODGSON

AND INCLUDING COLOURED FACSIMILES

OF THE FLIES USED BY MR. STEWART

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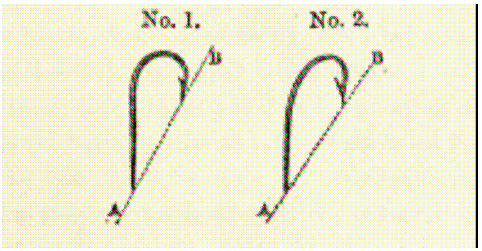
Hooks. - The two great points to be attended to in the selection of hooks are the bend, and the temper and durability of the wire. Great diversity of opinion exists as to what sort of bend is best adapted for hooking, and in order to please every one, a variety of bends are made: these are the round, Limerick, Kirby, and sneck bends. The two last may be dismissed at once, as they are not a whit better adapted for hooking than the ordinary round bend, and are much more difficult to bait. The main point, as we have already stated, being to hook a fish, the round bend appears to be the best adapted for that purpose. It is an error to suppose that because the point of the Limerick is more turned out, it is therefore more likely to take a hold when the angler strikes; on the contrary, the more the point of the hook is turned out, the less is the chance of hooking; there is certainly a greater probability of the point of the hook coming into contact with the mouth of the fish, but it merely grazes it and then starts off. The reason of this is, that when the angler pulls, the pressure upon the point does not pull it straight in, but sideways. The accompanying illustration will assist to explain this.



No. 1 is a round bent hook of the shape we use; No. 2 is a Limerick of the ordinary bend. When the point of a hook comes in contact with anything, the line being attached to the end of the shank, the pressure takes place in the direction of the straight line B A, so that in No. 1 the pressure will be almost in the same direction as the point; whereas in No. 2 it will be very nearly at right angles to the point, requiring three times the force to fix it, and rendering it exceedingly liable to start off and merely graze the mouth of the fish. As a proof of this, if the angler is using hooks which are not sufficiently tempered, he will frequently, after having fished for some time, find them bent out in the point, showing that the pull was so much off the straight line, that the force which was sufficient to bend the wire, was not enough to fix the hook. Whenever this is observed, the angler should restore the hook to its original shape by biting it between his teeth, as it will never catch a fish in that state. The point of the hook must not lie in exactly the same line as B A, because if it does, when it comes in contact with the mouth of a fish it will hardly take any hold at all; it must be so much off the line B A, that when it comes against anything it will press into it. In order to understand what we mean, the reader should take two dressed hooks of the same shapes as Nos. 1 and 2, and pull them against some soft substance, when he will at once see the force of these remarks.

We believe that with a fly dressed upon a hook of No. 1 bend, we could catch at least three trout for two we could catch with a fly dressed on a hook bent as No. 2, out of an equal number of rises. There are numbers of anglers who are of the same opinion, and would not use a Limerick hook on any account; and we have met with professional anglers, ready enough in general to accept of any kind of tackle, who absolutely refused to take Limerick hooks, as being of no use. Some anglers shorten the shanks of their hooks considerably, but this is highly objectionable, as it has exactly the same effect as having the point turned out, and if carried to any extent, renders the chances of hooking a trout exceedingly small.

The round bent hooks manufactured by Bartlett and Son, and Addlington and Hutchinson, can generally be depended upon for temper and durability of wire. The hooks of neither of these makers are exactly of the proper shape, being rather too much turned out in the points. Addlington's small sizes are, without exception, the best that are made, as they neither bend nor break, but are

somewhat difficult to get, as few fishing-tackle makers keep them. Bartlett's small sizes are liable to bend (a very bad fault), but the same objection does not apply to his large sizes, which we prefer to Addlington's, the latter maker's hooks, from No. 9 upwards, being too thick in the wire. It is a great improvement to get them japanned in the same way as the Limerick hooks, for if left with the blue steel exposed they are exceedingly liable to rust.

Bartlett numbers his hooks from 1-J, the largest size, to 17, the smallest. Addlington's numbers are from the largest trouting size to 00, the smallest. Being better acquainted with Bartlett's hooks than any others, when we speak of hooks in the subsequent parts of this volume the reader will understand that it is his sizes to which we allude. The following numbers of Bartlett and Addlington are about the same size:

Bartlett's Nos.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Addlington's Nos.	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3		2	1	00

CHAPTER V

FLIES, FLY-DRESSING, ETC.

THE practice of using artificial flies has undoubtedly had its origin in the necessity for imitating insects which cannot be used in their natural state. From the first rude attempt at fly-making of some ingenious angler, the art has gone on progressing, the number of imitations always increasing, and the prevalent opinion always being that, in order to fish successfully, the angler must use an imitation of one or other of the natural insects on the water at the time. In spite of the exertions of Mr. Wilson and Mr. Stoddart to inculcate an opposite theory, this opinion is still held by the great majority of anglers in Scotland, while in England it is all but universal.

Anglers holding these views rejoice in the possession of as many different varieties of flies as would stock a fishing-book, all of which they consider imitations of so many real insects, and classify under the heads of the different months when these appear. They have a fly for the morning, another for noon, and another for the evening of every day in the year, and spend a great deal of time in taking off one fly, because it is a shade too dark, and a second because it is a shade too light, and a third to give place to the imitation of some insect which has just made its appearance on the water.

During the summer months it is supposed that the varieties of insects are reckoned by the thousand, and we have seen several dozens of different kinds on the water at one time, all of which are greedily devoured by the trout. Those anglers who think trout will take no fly unless it is an exact imitation of some one of the immense number of flies they are feeding on, must suppose that they know to a shade the colour of every fly on the water, and can detect the least deviation from it an amount of entomological knowledge that would put to shame the angler himself, and a good many naturalists to boot. This opinion arises from the supposition that trout will not take anything readily unless they are accustomed to feed upon it, and consequently that they will not take a fly unless it has been on the water sufficiently long to allow them to become acquainted with it. Nothing can be more erroneous than this. Trout will take worms and grubs which they have never seen before. They will also take parr-tail readily, and they can never have seen it before; and in like manner with other things; and there is no reason why fly should be an exception.

We do not think it at all likely that trout can see the colour of a fly very distinctly. The worst light of all for seeing its colour is when it is placed between you and the sky, as the trout see it. And when the fly is rolled round by every current, and sometimes seen through the medium of a few feet of running water, the idea that they can detect its colour to a shade is highly improbable. Even granting they could, there is no reason for supposing they would reject it on that account. Flies of the same kind differ so much in colour that we could show the reader a May-fly almost black, and a May-fly almost yellow, and of all the intermediate shades.

It is singular inconsistency, that anglers, scrupulously exact about a shade of colour, draw their flies across and up stream in a way in which no natural insect was ever seen moving, as if a trout could not detect an alteration in the motion much more easily than a deviation in the colour of a fly.

The argument brought by anglers in support of these views is, that having fished unsuccessfully all the morning, they changed their flies and had good sport, or that when they were getting nothing they met with some celebrated local angler, who gave them the fly peculiar to the district, after which they met with success. We think that on most of these occasions the trout take better, not because the new fly is more to their liking, but because as the day advances they are more inclined to feed. We have frequently proved this by rechanging to our flies which at first proved unsuccessful, and have almost invariably found they were as killing as their predecessors. Other causes also operate. The thread of gut on which the fly is dressed is of more importance than the fly itself; and those professional anglers who haunt most southern streams, and whose “fail-me-never” is the only fly suitable for the water because they expect to be well paid for it take care to have their flies dressed on fine gut.

Such a difference does the gut make, that if an angler will take two threads of gut of the same thickness, but one of a glossy white colour, and the other clear and transparent, and dress two flies upon them exactly alike, the fly dressed on the clear gut will kill two trout for one which the fly dressed on the white gut will. The shape of the fly will also make a great difference, and really practical anglers, such as all those who make their living by it are, do not put a third of the feathers on their flies that some town-made ones have.

We have frequently got flies, which, we were assured, were exact imitations of some fly on the water at the time, and which the donors were certain would kill more trout than any other, but on trying them we did not find them so deadly as those we were using; and they killed quite as well, and sometimes better, two months before the natural fly came on the water, or two months after it was gone. We think it just possible that when a large fly, such as the green drake, remains a long time on the water, trout may recognise it, and when the waters are dark coloured and there is a strong breeze of wind, take an imitation of it more readily than any other. But in our own experience we have never found this to be the case ; and though we have frequently tried this fly so celebrated on English streams we have never found it nearly so deadly as our usual flies, even when the water was coloured; and in clear water it failed entirely, as all large flies will, for the obvious reason that their size enables the trout to detect their artificial character. Furthermore, we have killed more trout with this imitation in the month of May, before the real insects had made their appearance, than in June, when the water was swarming with them, which we ascribe to the circumstance that trout will take a larger fly in May than in June.

This opinion would not have been maintained so long, but that there is at first sight a degree of plausibility about it, and that it does not to any great extent interfere with the successful practice of fly-fishing. What is meant for an imitation of a particular fly may occasionally do good service; not because the trout see any resemblance between it and the fly it is intended to imitate, but because, if the size and colour are suitable, it will just kill as well as any other. And we believe the angler who has a different fly for every day in the season will kill nearly as many trout as the angler who adheres to three or four varieties the whole season through; but he is proceeding upon an erroneous principle, and losing both labour and time.

That trout sometimes take more readily flies of one colour than another is certain, and the reason of their doing so affords room for a great deal of ingenious speculation, but it is exceedingly difficult to ascertain satisfactorily. We think that to some extent a certain colour is more deadly, because it is more readily seen. In clear waters we have rarely found a black fly surpassed by any other, and in such circumstances a black fly is very easily seen. In dark waters a yellow-bodied fly, or one of dingy white colour, takes readily, being easily seen. And on Tweedside, in the month of July, just after sunset, a bright yellow fly is held in great repute, and such is more likely to attract attention

than any other. Mere caprice, however, and love of variety, may be the main reasons why the trout prefer one colour to another.

A rule to be guided by on this point is of little use, as the angler can always regulate the colour of his flies by practice; and in practice it has been proved beyond doubt that a black, brown, red, and dun-coloured fly, used together, and varied in size according to circumstances, will at any time kill as well, and even better, than the most elaborate collection arranged for every month in the year. If trout are at all inclined to rise, one or other of the above will be found inviting. It is quite clear that whatever the angler's opinion with regard to flies may be whether he believes that he must have an imitation of some insect on the water at the time, that he must have a fly of the same colour as the majority of those on the water, or with ourselves holds neither of these opinions ; if he has four flies such as those mentioned above, he cannot be very far off the mark, as these comprise all the leading colours of which insects generally are.

The opinion that it is necessary to imitate the particular fly on the water at the time has recently received the weight of Mr. Francis Francis support, who in advocating what may be called the English theory, gives a sort of side-wipe to Scotch anglers the drift of his remarks being, that though a small assortment of flies may do well enough in Scotch streams where little fishing goes on and anglers count their takes by the dozen, it will not answer in the much-fished streams on the other side of the Border, where anglers count their takes by the brace. If Mr. Francis views as to an exact imitation being necessary in English streams be correct, which we very much doubt, he will require to find some other reason for its being unnecessary in Scotland than this. In comparing the severity of the fishing in Scotch and English streams, it must be borne in mind that the former are, as a rule, open to the public, and that the latter, as a rule, are preserved, and fished only by a favoured few. If Mr. Francis will point out any stream in England, in which he thinks it worth while to throw a fly for trout, that is more and better fished than Tweed and its tributaries, we shall be very much surprised. And on behalf of Scotch anglers we repudiate with scorn the bare idea that it requires less skill to catch a Scotch trout than an English one, or that the former in any way receives an inferior education as regards flies, etc., to his English brother. In fact, we believe that in the before-mentioned streams the education of the inhabitants is as superior to that of the inhabitants of English streams as the education of the people of the one country is admitted to be to that of the other; and supposing the most accomplished believer in the English theory ay, even Mr. Francis himself engaged on a mile of Tweed along with twenty or thirty Galashiels weavers (by no means an unusual number), we question if his basket at the finish would illustrate very strongly the superiority of his theory and practice. We have met English anglers even in Scotland counting their takes by the brace, and not in much danger of going wrong in their reckoning either. Having relieved our feelings of this protest on behalf of Scotch anglers and Scotch trout, we must now consider what it is necessary to imitate, or what do trout take, or rather mistake, the artificial fly for. As before stated, we believe that, deceived by an appearance of life, they take it for what it is intended to imitate a fly or some other aquatic insect. In proof of this, artificial flies are not of much use unless the trout are at the time feeding on the natural insect. And an artificial fly will kill twenty trout for one which the feathers composing it, rolled round the hook without regard to shape, will. Nay, more; a neatly made natural looking fly will, where trout are shy, kill three trout for one which a clumsy fly will; and a fly with the exposed part of the hook taken off will raise more trout than a fly with the same left on. In the first case, the trout see no resemblance in form to anything they are accustomed to feed upon, and, unless very hungry, decline to seize it. In the second case, the resemblance to nature not being so complete in the one fly as in the other, fewer trout are deceived by it. The third case shows that trout can detect that a hook is an unnatural appendage.

The great point, then, in fly-dressing, is to make the artificial fly resemble the natural insect in shape, and the great characteristic of all river insects is extreme lightness and neatness of form. Our great objection to the flies in common use is, that they are much too bushy; so much so, that there are few flies to be got in the tackle-shops which we could use with any degree of confidence in clear water. Every possible advantage is in favour of a lightly dressed fly ; it is more like a natural insect; it falls lighter on the water, and every angler knows the importance of making his fly fall gently, and there being less material about it, the artificial nature of that material is not so easily detected; and also, as the hook is not so much covered with feathers, there is a much better chance of hooking a trout when it rises, We wish to impress very strongly upon the reader the *necessity of avoiding bulkyflies.*

The artificial flies in common use may be divided into two classes. There is first the winged fly, which alone, properly speaking, merits the appellation; and there is the palmer hackle or spider, by which last name we mean to call it, believing that if it resembles anything in the insect tribe, it is a spider. As a means of capturing trout, we rank them higher than the winged imitations. When trout are taking, winged flies will answer very well; and sometimes, but very rarely, we have found them more killing than spiders. But in the summer months, when trout are well fed and become lazy, or where they are much fished for, and become shy, we have found spiders much more deadly than the most tempting winged fly that can be made. Nor is it necessary to go very much out of the way to seek a reason for this; the hook is better concealed, and if made of sufficiently soft materials, the water agitates the feathers, and gives them a life-like appearance, which has a wonderful effect, and is of itself a sufficient reason for trout preferring them, without supposing, as some do, that spiders are greater rarities than flies, with a variety of other fine-spun theories.

By universal consent, feathers seem to have been fixed upon as the most suitable materials for imitating flies. Some years ago gutta percha wings were tried, but in every respect they are inferior. The selection of proper feathers requires some care; they should always be taken from the birds when in their full plumage, which is usually about Christmas. Among those considered most necessary are hackles, which are usually taken from the neck of the common cock. It is very difficult to procure them of the right colour, and still more so to procure them of the right shape. In a proper hackle the fibres should be longest at the root end, and taper gradually towards the point. It is not one cock out of twenty whose hackles merit the attention of the fly-dresser.

The hackle generally plays a very conspicuous part in the construction of trouting flies. The spider or hackle fly is made of it entirely, and in other flies it is used to imitate the legs of the insect. We, however, think the cock-hackle by no means deserving of so much attention as is bestowed upon it, being too stiff and wiry to represent the legs of an insect, and we prefer hen-hackles, or still better, the small feathers taken from the neck or outside of the wings of a variety of small birds. But these latter are not always to be had of the colour wanted, and cock-hackles are very convenient to fall back upon, but should be selected as soft in the fibre as possible. Amongst those most serviceable to the angler are the small feathers taken from the outside of the wings, as also from the neck and shoulders of the following birds: the starling, landrail, dotterel, mavis, grey plover, golden plover, partridge, and grouse. Of the foregoing, we consider the feathers taken from the cock starling the most valuable of all to the angler. They have a rich glossy black, which no other feathers possess, and we always use them in place of the black cock-hackle. Next to them we rank the feathers of a reddish-brown colour taken from the outside of the wing of the landrail, the only feathers which take the place of the red cock-hackle; and as it is impossible to get any quantity of these sufficiently small, we frequently find it necessary to have recourse to red hackles.

The feathers of the dotterel are also held in high esteem, but all those just mentioned may with advantage be substituted for the hackle in the formation of all trouting flies and spiders. Their superiority consists in their much greater resemblance to the legs of an insect, and their extreme softness. So soft are they, that when a spider is made of one of them and placed in the water, the least motion will agitate and impart a singularly lifelike appearance to it, whereas it would have no effect upon a cock-hackle. Spiders dressed of very soft feathers are more suitable for fishing up than for fishing down, as if drawn against the stream it runs the fibres alongside of the hook, and all resemblance to an insect is destroyed.

Killing spiders may be made of all the feathers we have mentioned, but the three following are all we consider necessary:

1st. The Black Spider. This is made of the small feather of the cock starling, dressed with brown silk, and is, upon the whole, the most killing imitation we know. We were first shown it by James Baillie, and have never been without one on our line ever since.

2nd. The Red Spider should be made of the small feather taken from the outside of the wing of the landrail, dressed with yellow silk, and is deserving of a very high rank, particularly in coloured water.

3rd. The Dun Spider. This should be made of the small soft dun or ash-coloured feather, taken from the outside of the wing of the dotterel. This bird is unfortunately very scarce; but a small feather may be taken from the inside of the wing of the starling, which will make an excellent substitute.

The only objection to spiders is, that the feathers are so soft that the trout's teeth break them off, and after catching a dozen or two of trout, little is left of them but the bare dressing, rendering it necessary for the angler to change them; and if the trout are taking readily, this has to be repeated two or three times a day. For this reason we always use winged flies, when they take equally well, which, if well dressed, will last a whole day or even two. For making flies, in addition to the feathers before mentioned, the wings of the following birds are necessary: Corn-bunting, lark, chaffinch, woodcock, and landrail. These are used to make the wings of the flies, but dubbing of some sort is also necessary to form the body, and for this purpose there is nothing better than the fur of a hare's ear, or, as it is usually called in Scotland, "hare-lug." A good hare-lug will make body for five or six gross of flies of all colours, from dingy white to dark black, but the mixed dark fur is the best. The fur of the water-rat is also serviceable to the fly-dresser, and is peculiarly suitable for small flies. The three following are the winged flies to which we are most partial:

1st. A woodcock wing with a single turn of a red hackle, or landrail feather, dressed with yellow silk, freely exposed on the body. For fishing in dark coloured waters, this fly may be dressed with scarlet thread.

2nd. A hare-lug body, with a corn-bunting or chaffinch wing. A woodcock wing may also be put in the same body, but should be made of the small light coloured feather taken from the inside of the wing.

3rd. The same wing as the last fly, with a single turn of a soft black hen-hackle, or small feather taken from the shoulder of the starling, dressed with dark-coloured silk.

An immense number of killing flies may be made by varying the wings and body, but nothing is gained by extending the number beyond those just mentioned, and we do not believe six more killing imitations can be manufactured. We have fished with flies of all kinds, and got flies from several of the best anglers, both amateur and professional, but have never found anything superior to these, and we can recommend them with great confidence.

For fly-dressing, in addition to the feathers, etc., just mentioned, a number of miscellaneous articles are necessary namely, brass nippers for putting on small feathers or hackles; a pair of fine scissors, curved at the points ; a needle for dividing wings and raising dubbing ; silk of all colours, the thinner the better, as it makes the firmer dressing; shoemaker's wax, and a mixture of resin and burgundy pitch, to be used when the colour of the silk is intended to be shown on the fly; hooks of all sizes, the bend to be particularly attended to. The size of hook should always bear some proportion to the size of fly, but the exact size of hook that will be most killing with a fly of a certain size is exceedingly difficult to determine. Some of the shop flies are dressed upon hooks so small, and rolled round with so much dubbing and hackle, that we would consider their chances of hooking one trout out of ten rises exceedingly problematical. We have frequently fished with a very small fly, say No. 15, and a larger fly, say No. 12, of the same kind, and found that though the smaller fly raised twice the number, it did not secure so many as the larger one. We have also tried dressing two flies of the same kind and size, one on a No. 14 and the other on a No. 12 hook. The No. 12 was of course very much exposed, notwithstanding which it did most execution. This should be done very cautiously; but by having hooks made a size thinner in the wire, they may be used one size larger with perfect safety. We have endeavoured to indicate the proper size of hook in a subsequent illustration.

Great care should be taken to select the finest and longest threads of gut for dressing flies on. When the waters are clear, fine gut is quite as necessary as good flies ; the finest gut, however lightly thrown, will sometimes alarm the trout.

Dressing a spider is a much simpler operation than dressing a fly, and therefore it is better to begin with it. Having selected a thread of gut and a hook, the next thing is to choose a feather, which, to make a neat spider, must be so proportioned to the size of the hook that the legs of the spider, when dressed, will be about the length of the hook. Before commencing, bite the end of the gut between your teeth; this flattens and makes it broader in the point, which prevents it slipping, a thing very liable to occur with small flies. Next, take the hook firmly between the forefinger and thumb of your left hand, lay the gut along its shank, and with a well-waxed silk thread, commencing about the centre of the hook, whip it and the gut firmly together, till you come to the end of the shank, where form the head by a few turns of the thread. This done, take the feather, and laying it on with the root end towards the bend of the hook, wrap the silk three or four times round it, and then cut off the root end.

What remains to be done is the most critical part of the whole operation: still holding the hook between the forefinger and thumb of your left hand, take the thread, lay it along the centre of the inside of the feather, and with the forefinger and thumb of your right hand twirl them round together till the feather is rolled round the thread; and in this state wrap it round the hook, taking care that a sufficient number of the fibres stick out to represent the legs; to effect this it will sometimes be necessary to raise the fibres with a needle during the operation. Having carried the feather and thread down to where you commenced, wrap the silk three or four times round the end of the feather, and if there is any left cut it off, and finish with a succession of hitch-knots, or the common whip-fastening. If the legs of the spider when dressed are too long, there is no remedy for it; cutting injures rather than improves them. This is a very rough and simple mode of dressing a spider, and does not make it so neat as if the feather were put on by a pair of nippers, but it is more natural-looking, and much more durable, as the feather is fastened on by the thread the whole way down.

A fly is more difficult to dress neatly than a spider. Having selected the gut and hook, take the feather of which you intend to make the wings, and stripping off as much as you require, fold it up, taking care that the lightest coloured side of the feather is outside, and lay it beside the other materials. It is quite common in fishing-tackle shops to see the wings put on singly that is to say, consisting of merely one fold of the feather. This makes a beautiful fly out of the water, but when once wet, is of little further use, as the fibres run together, and form a mere thread. The wings should consist of several folds of the feather, as then they keep their original shape, wetting improving rather than injuring their appearance.

In dressing a fly, commence in the same manner as in dressing a spider, carrying the thread up to within three or four turns of the end of the shank; then take the feather, of which you are to form the wings, firmly between the forefinger and thumb of your right hand, lay it to the bare end of the shank, whip the thread firmly round it two or three times, and then cut off the root end of the feather as close as possible. To put on the wings neatly, and make them lie properly, is the most difficult part of fly making, and care must be taken to lay them on so that, when fastened, they will be the proper length, as it does not do to cut them. The wings being now fastened on, but in the whole, divide them, and passing the silk between them, bring it up crossways. So far, the dressing of all

flies is alike, but the remainder of the operation depends upon whether the fly is to be dressed with a hackle or dubbing.

If it is to be made with dubbing, all that remains to be done is to take a little of it, and applying it to the silk with the forefinger and thumb of the right hand, twist them both together till the dubbing is thoroughly rolled round the silk; and in that state wrap it round the hook till the body of the fly is made, when finish as usual; then with a needle raise a few of the hairs of the dubbing, close to the head of the fly, to give it a feathery appearance. If the fly is to be dressed with a feather or hackle, after having put on the wings lay the hackle on as in dressing a spider, with the root end towards the bend of the hook; fasten it on and cut off the root end. Next take hold of the end of the hackle with your brass nippers, and turn it once or twice round the hook as close under the wings as possible; then wrap the silk three or four times round it to make it secure, cut off the remainder, and carry the thread by itself down to where you intend finishing. In a large fly it will be an improvement to put on a little dubbing of the same colour as the body of the fly, after having put on the hackle. The most expeditious way of dressing flies is to dress say a dozen of one kind at a time, selecting and arranging all the materials necessary before commencing. The following illustration shows what appearance the flies should present when finished.

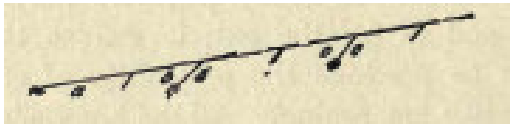
The first of the accompanying flies is a spider, the second a fly dressed with dubbing, and the third a fly dressed with a hackle. The reader will observe that these flies are very light in the make; that there is not more dubbing than covers the thread; that the hackle is put on very sparingly; and that the dressing is not carried far down the hook. Anglers accustomed to shop-made flies may think this is carried to an extreme, but we have met anglers using flies with sufficient dubbing on them to have made body for half a dozen flies, each fly more killing than the original; and as a last advice upon flies, we advise all anglers to use them very light. The spider is made rather more bushy than is advisable at first, as the trout's teeth would otherwise tear it away too fast. After capturing a dozen trout it will be spare enough.

It is exceedingly difficult by means of written instructions to make fly-dressing intelligible to the reader; a few lessons would do more than a whole volume of instructions.

It is very difficult to dress flies neatly, and unless anglers have plenty of time to devote to it, they would act wisely in purchasing their flies from professional dressers, who will make them to any pattern; but anglers should see that they are dressed to pattern. Since the first edition was published, our friends have shown us flies which they bought as being the kind we recommended, and as being tied on fine gut, but which were the identical bushy flies which we have devoted so many pages to warn anglers against; and as for the gut, it was so thick and coarse as to preclude the possibility of success in anything like fine fishing. All the knowledge of the habits of the trout, all the skill, all the energy, possessed by the most accomplished angler, are merely thrown away in the use of such tackle; no angler, not even James Baillie, could fill even a small basket in clear water with such tackle. We have given illustrations for the very purpose that anglers may compare their flies with them, but it is impossible that fishing tackle makers can take the care necessary to make proper flies, dress them on the finest gut, and sell them at the present price.

Several flies are always used together, and the method of joining them, or, as it is usually called, making up the fly-cast, is a point of some importance. The two things most necessary are neatness and firmness. We have before mentioned that the gut on which the flies are dressed should be the very finest, and it is equally necessary that the threads used to connect them be of the same description. The following illustration will assist us in explaining to the reader the proper mode of making up a fly-cast.

The thread of gut on which the tail-fly is dressed is here indicated by the letter a; those on which the bobs or droppers are dressed by 6and c. Commence operations by joining the ends of the threads of gut a and b together; you have now a fly at both ends. Next take a thread of gut and join it to b a few inches above the hook, then join the end of c to this,



and so on till you have got the required number.

The gut on which the droppers are dressed thus forms a continuation of the main line, and for this reason they should be dressed on the very longest threads. The droppers should hang down from the main line from two and a half to three inches. If the distance is increased, they are apt to become raveled with the main line, and occasion the angler considerable loss of time. The distance between the flies should be from twenty inches to two feet. If it is greater in rough water, the angler may pass over a trout without its seeing any of them, and there is nothing in the sight of two flies at a time calculated to alarm a trout.

Some works, when giving instructions for making a fly-cast, recommend that the first dropper should depend from the main line about three inches, the second, five, and so on, always increasing the distance when a fly is added. Their object, if we understand it aright, being, that in fishing, the flies are to be drawn along the water, so that the main line does not touch it at all, but merely the flies. This discloses a very erroneous method of fly-fishing. No angler with any pretensions to skill ever allows his flies, or even his line for yards above them, to create a disturbance in the water, nothing being more calculated to alarm a trout than seeing flies or line rippling the surface, which the flies must do if drawn along the water sufficiently fast to keep the main line out of it. A great many different methods of making up fly-casts are practised by anglers. Some append them by loops, but loops make such a show in the water that we never have one in any part of our line, and to have the droppers depended by them we consider perfectly suicidal. Others join the main line together by the single slip-knot which is drawn asunder, and the end of the thread of gut on which the fly is dressed having had a knot put on it to prevent it from slipping, is inserted, when the knot is drawn together again. In point of neatness this is less objectionable, but is apt to slip, as all single knots are. The neatest and most secure method is the one first described, and all anglers should adopt it.

The number of flies that should be used at a time is a matter upon which great diversity of opinion exists; some anglers never use more than three, while others occasionally use a dozen. If the river is so large that the angler cannot reach the opposite bank, he may use as many as he can throw properly; but if the river can be commanded from bank to bank, the propriety, under any circumstances, of using more than three or four is exceedingly doubtful. In such cases the opposite bank is the place where most trout are to be had, and if a number of flies are used, and they are all kept in the water, justice cannot be done to the tail-fly, which alone reaches the opposite bank, and has therefore the best chance.

The fly-casts should be joined to the casting-line by four or five lengths of picked gut, and the whole line should increase in thickness gradually from the flies to the rod; it is a great assistance to casting.

The only point connected with this subject which remains to be considered is the rod, and it is a very important one. The rod may be used either double or single-handed. If the river is large, and

the angler is not wading, a double-handed rod might be advisable; if he is wading, even in a large river, a single-handed one will be sufficient ; and in all rivers which can be commanded from bank to bank, either by wading or otherwise, it should always be used. For fly-fishing, where light throwing and quick striking are indispensable, a double-handed rod is an unmanageable weapon. With it the angler can neither cast with so much certainty, nor strike so instantaneously when he gets a rise, as with a light single-handed rod. It is also exceedingly difficult to regulate with it the amount of force necessary to fix the hook, the force necessary to move the rod being exceedingly apt to tear small hooks away from their hold. Besides which, it takes a much longer time to cast, and where repeated casting is necessary, this becomes a serious objection.

A light stiff single-handed rod, about ten feet long, will be amply sufficient for most waters. Those accustomed to use rods from twelve to thirteen feet may think this much too short, but a stiff rod of this length will throw a line farther than one of thirteen feet, made as supple as they usually are. And even in rods of the same stiffness, a couple of feet extra length will not enable the angler to throw much farther from him. For supposing he is using a line twice the length of his rod, he will have four feet extra length of line and two of rod, in all six feet. But then the rod in casting is never held straight out, but at an angle of about forty-five degrees; the line also makes an angle with the water, so that five feet is the utmost additional command of water gained, and this is much more than counterbalanced by the facility of casting with the small rod, and by its lightness; two feet extra length in a rod entailing at least a half more weight.

It is quite common among anglers to suppose that a twelve-foot rod will command twice as much water as one of six feet, but this is an error; and in order to explain this, it is necessary to consider in what the casting power of a rod consists. The first power in the casting of a line is the force with which it is urged forward; thus, if the angler uses a great amount of force, his line will go farther than if he uses a less amount. The forward motion is communicated to the line by the point of the rod, so that upon the rapidity with which the point of the rod moves through the air depends the motive-power applied to the line. We think the point of a six-foot rod may be sent through the air as fast as that of a twelve-foot one; and, therefore, if the angler was standing on an elevation of six feet, he could throw almost as long a line with the small rod as he could with the large one standing on a level with the water. But standing on the same level he could not do this, because with the short rod the line would come into contact with the water long before it had reached its full length; so that upon the altitude of the point of the rod, or the time the line gets to go forward without touching the water, depends the length of line that can be thrown.

Now, supposing the angler holds both rods in his hand, at a distance of five feet from the ground, the altitude of the point of the six-foot rod will be eleven feet and of the twelve-foot rod seventeen feet. But as substances fall faster every succeeding moment, instead of the times which the lines take to fall from the respective rods being in the proportion of eleven to seventeen, they will be nearly in the proportion of seven to nine; and since the length of line that can be thrown depends entirely upon the length of time it gets to go forward, seven to nine will also be nearly the proportion of the lengths of line that can be thrown. Now, if twenty-one feet is the utmost length of line that the small rod will throw, the large one will throw twenty-seven, or six feet more. Besides this, there are six feet additional length of rod. But as both rod and line are at an angle with the water, the whole gain will only be about nine feet additional command of water. Taking everything into account, the water commanded by the two rods will be very nearly in the proportion of twenty-five to thirty-five.

We are thus particular, in order to show anglers that the additional power of casting is proportionally less with every foot added, and that a ten- foot rod is really a very serviceable weapon. Even with a rod of nine feet we very rarely have occasion to exert its casting powers to their full extent. Flyfishing, if properly and quickly done, is hard work and the angler must on no account use a rod in the least degree heavier or longer than he can thoroughly manage with one hand.

The great essential, however, for the fly-rod is stiffness. We have already, when treating of rods, mentioned the advantages a stiff rod possesses over a supple one; and we may perhaps startle some of our readers, who are accustomed to consider a pliant rod indispensable for fly-fishing, by saying that a much stiffer rod is necessary for this branch of the art than any other. For reasons which will be afterwards shown, the flies should first fall on the water, and as little of the line with them as possible. To accomplish this, considerable force must be employed in casting, and the rod must be stopped pretty suddenly. If this is attempted with a supple rod, it would bend till it almost touched the water, and then recoil, throwing the line only a short distance. A supple rod may answer tolerably for fishing down with the wind, but for fishing up, or fishing any way either against or sideways to the wind, it is perfectly useless.