

Salmon Fishing in the Gulf of Georgia

Written for The Western Home Monthly. By Bertrand Vogel Comox. B.C.

THIS is no description of monsters that have broken heavy tackle and smashed reputations for veracity, nor of great fish those who travel report in out-of-the-way waters, but only for the joy there is in a good boat, a fine morning, and a valiant little fish that will battle right lustily for life and freedom. And the place is the stretch of water, in this particular part about eighteen miles wide, which lies between Vancouver Island and the mainland of British Columbia.

You would camp in the bay north of the Point and time yourself to rise in the small hours of the morning to row around to the reef. For the reef, long and narrow and covered with beds of kelp—a veritable garden of the deep—runs out from a mile below the Cape towards the opening between Texada and the nearer islands, where the water of the Gulf rushes out to the sea and flows in again with the returning tide. The best time is in July and August. Then the salmon come in from the sea and up the Gulf to ascend their native rivers in September and October. So

while those other pleasure seekers who make up your party remain rolled in their blankets, you build your fire for an early breakfast, and watch for the first sign of the coming dawn. Surely the crisp breakfast bacon never tasted so good, and since cocoa is more quickly made you do not wait for coffee.

When the first light breaks in the East you drag your boat down the beach, for the tide is halfway out and the water will be getting low over the bar.

Pausing to see that your outfit is complete, that you have your gaff for landing and the club for killing your fish, you push off. In a moment you are in the beds of seagrass, where you get out into the shallow water that your boat will glide over them the better.

All the surface breaks into phosphorescence with the ripples from your boat and your feet carry down silvery bubbles that rise and trail out behind you as you go. The sand of the bar is nearly uncovered and you send your boat over with a rush and climb aboard to the oars and the long row around the

point. The phosphorescence is still on the water and the wave from your bow is crested with pearly white, and with every dip of the oars it breaks out and flows off them in molten silver. It is a startling contrast, this white fire and the black water, lighted only here and there with shifting reflections and bounded by the black line of the wooded shore, still shrouded in darkness. It is very still, perhaps only the call of some solitary sea fowl far out on the water.

About the Point there are many boulders—great rocks that rise out of twelve or fifteen feet of water with their tops just awash and an ugly way of remaining hidden in the darkness when it is hard to judge distance, and the white face of the cliff that marks the Cape may be near or far.

But the dimness soon breaks into twilight and you row on with the freshness of the morning in your lungs, watching for the first light—which breaks out very high, showing that there are clouds over the mountains on the mainland, and you wonder what the day will bring.

Soon you are among the kelp. Long thin ropes rise from the bottom and end in thick knobby heads from which grow wide bands like leaves, three to five feet long, that lie on the surface and twist and curl as the water goes through them—for the tide is running now, and there is no little force behind it. Here and there a shorter kelp does not reach the surface, but stands like a slender torch with broad pale-brown flames that

rise slanting with the current and seem to flicker up out of the lower stillness. A few more strokes and it becomes thicker and you force your boat through masses of seaweed where the long slender stems have twisted themselves into cables and the tops drag on your boat as you pass. In ten minutes you are out. The edge of the field of kelp is clearly defined—a slightly waving line that runs out about a mile at right angles with the beach. Your hook and spoon go over, attached to your line with many swivels—a silver spoon that spins swiftly as you draw it through the water—and you turn and row out towards the end of the reef where more and more seaweed shows as the tide goes out. Will they bite? Or will your morning be a blank? You have an hour yet of the ebb and the time is right. You let the line run out through your fingers as you row and the quickness with which your first salmon strikes when the line is hardly half out, sends a thrill right through you. The savage rush with which he takes up the line promises well for a lively run of fish, but he is only a small one and is quickly brought in and your spoon is soon spinning again. Out to the point of the reef and halfway back and almost out again, and you wonder if your hopes will fail.

It is quite light now and the East is red—the flush of a windy dawn, though the sea is very quiet. And then they come. Two silver beauties of medium

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