

Autumn Salmon Fishing in British Columbia

Written for The Western Home Monthly by W. R. Gilbert

BRITISH Columbia proffers big things to the angler, but its gifts are not always sought in the most scientific way. Land pines take the place of fishing rods, and crude tackle does duty for up-to-date products of the gentle art. This is no reflection on the fish or on the rivers, but rather on the uncouthness of the sportsmen, who seem to be perfectly content if they manage to land a few of the noble fish, anyway, by hook or by crook.

When I passed up one of the rivers on a lovely autumn day and saw the fish breaking water in all directions, I could find nobody among the civilized community, that had even heard of the river being fished with a rod and line. When I landed and sought for the initiated Waltonian on the banks of the beautiful stream, I was equally unsuccessful in discovering that particular product. Even in the native Indian Reserve, where the mighty hunter was supposed to be tabernacled, I met with little encouragement. If it was fish I wanted, why, there would be no difficulty in netting me a few salmon, but to catch them with a rod and line!—that device was dismissed with an expressive shrug of the shoulders

way proceeded to mount both, selecting large sizes, in keeping with the fish that I saw breaking the water.

Another thing to ascertain was the particular line the fish were taking, as they passed up the river to the far off spawning beds, which were their objective. It was soon evident that they travelled along a definite course. This, no doubt, was the main current of the river, a thing difficult to discover in a breadth of half a mile in places. It was also important to know the deep parts, so as to avoid rocks and weeds, and other menaces to successful trolling. The great thing, however, was to get the spoon well among the fish, and soon after we turned, and the Indian began to pull up stream, we reaped the advantages of these preliminary observations.

The river was closely wooded on one side with shapely rocks bedecked with shrubs and berry bushes. Behind them was a fine range of mountains, some high enough to be snow-capped, which peeped out here and there, through breaks in the forest, others so far distant as to fade off into a mystic blue.

We soon found that we were not the only anglers—we passed a dugout with three Indian squaws in it, who were busy,

Speech

Talk happiness. The world is sad enough
Without your woe. No path is wholly
rough.

Look for the places that are smooth and
clear,

And speak of them to rest the weary ear
Of earth; so hurt by one continual strain,
Of mortal discontent and grief and pain.

Talk faith. The world is better off
without
Your uttered ignorance and morbid
doubt.

If you have faith in God, or man, or self,
Say so; if not push back upon the shelf
Of silence, all your thoughts till faith
shall come;

No one will grieve because your lips are
dumb.

Talk health. The dreary, never-ending
tale

Of mortal maladies is worn and stale;
You cannot charm, or interest, or please
By harping on that minor chord—disease.
Say you are well, or all is well with you,
And God shall hear your words and make
them true.

E. W. Wilcox.

—yet this river is within a stone's throw of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and every traveller to the far West crosses it by means of the railway. A little conceit is a useful thing, and I confess to possessing a sufficient dash of that commodity to determine to go my own way about things. I was fortunate enough to obtain the attendance of an Indian, who aided and abetted me in my scheme, although a rank sceptic as to the methods I proposed.

He had a broad steady boat, eminently adapted to the river, and though a paddle would have been more in keeping with the traditions of his tribe, he handled a pair of sculls with ease and efficiency. The first essential to successful salmon fishing is to know your river, and I proposed to row down stream, with the object of picking up such information as I could on the subject, although necessarily in a superficial way. It was quite evident from what I saw, that the river was deep, and if not sluggish, at least slow moving. There were no rapids or swirling eddies that suggested the advisability of mounting a fly. My knowledge too, of the spring salmon discouraged the application of the highest form of angling, as, so far as its history goes, that particular species does not patronise it. There was nothing for it, therefore, but trolling with a spoon or minnow, and as I was well provided with most forms of these lures, I straight-

"still" fishing with hand lines for nothing larger than trout. I asked what bait they used, and was informed that it was salmon roe. I judged from the depth of the water that fifty or sixty yards of line would not be too much for trolling, and firmly fixing the rods athwart the stern of the boat, awaited not the dawn, like Ulysses, but developments. The first of these declared itself in the snarl of the reel, the line for the same cause shooting across the stream. I seized the quivering rod, but on raising it, there was not sufficient resistance, to assure me that I had got hold of anything tangible. What often happens in other countries happened on that particular occasion in British Columbia—the fish had effected its release on the first run. Ten minutes afterwards, as the big spoon was flashing its silver and gold in the bend of the river, the rod was again brought into play, and this time the hooks had got a firm hold.

The fish continued to run for about fifty yards and then stopped suddenly, and tugged at the line in the fashion known as jiggering. I gave him a little slack, which he used in diving, going straight down several feet. Although the river was very deep it is advisable to keep a salmon as high up in the water as possible. I could not effect this at a distance, and the Indian backed the boat down until I got close to the quarry. I recovered all the line possible and applied

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