

101.—SALMON IN THE CLACKAMAS RIVER.*

By A. S. ABERNETHY.

[From a letter to Senator J. N. Dolph.]

I was engaged in salmon fishing in the Clackamas during the fishing season of 1886, from about April 10 until July 10. Most of the time we fished about 1 mile below the mouth of Clear Creek, where the hatchery was operated some years ago. During the three months named we caught about 900 Chinook salmon, with one boat and drift-net, and about five short set-nets. There were several parties fishing at the same time, and their average was about the same. One man, who put in a trap above the mouth of Eagle Creek, several miles above Clear Creek, claims to have caught about 75 per day. I am certainly within bounds when I say that within the time named there were 3,500 salmon caught by all the parties engaged in the business.

After the middle of July the fish became soft and unfit for market, so no more fishing was done; but they continued to run, and parties who went up as late as October 15 to fish for silver salmon caught large numbers of Chinook salmon too old to be marketable but full of spawn. For several nights one man got about 25 per night mixed in with the silver salmon. There was no fishing done in the river during the month of March, when the run was very large. The figures I have given refer only to Chinook salmon.

It might be well to call attention also to the other two varieties that frequent the river in large numbers.

The silver salmon runs from about the middle of September to the middle of December, and is almost equal in quality to the Chinook. It runs in the Clackamas, but appears to go no farther up the Willamette than the mouth of the Clackamas. I am told that it is not caught at Oregon City.

The steel-head runs from about December 1 to February 15, and is very abundant in the Clackamas. This fish is not so much in demand in the Oregon markets as is the Chinook; but sells very readily in all Eastern cities, where it seems to be generally preferred to the Chinook, and large numbers are shipped fresh, packed in ice.

There is very little time in the year when some one of the three kinds of fish is not running in the river; and a hatchery could be kept in operation nearly or quite all the year. I will try to get the actual figures of the catch of each kind of fish during the next season, which will perhaps furnish a better idea of the number than can otherwise be had.

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* For article by Mr. Barin on the same subject, see this Bulletin (1886), p. 111.