

28.—HOOD RIVER, OREGON, AS A PLACE FOR SALMON BREEDING.

By E. L. SMITH.

[From a letter to Mr. Livingston Stone.]

I would call your attention to a stream, not mentioned by you in your report on "Salmon Hatching," which may possess some advantages for propagating several varieties of the Salmon family. The stream to which I refer is called Hood River (the Dog River of Dr. Suckley), and falls into the Columbia on the south side, about 23 miles west of The Dalles. This river receives the drainage of the north and east sides of Mount Hood, and is for its entire length, some 30 miles, a rapid mountain torrent, carrying a large body of water nearly equal in volume to that of the Klikitat.

I wish to speak more particularly of the west fork of this stream, which has its source in and forms the outlet of what is known as Lost Lake, a triangular-shaped body of water, some 10 miles due northwest of Mount Hood. This lake is not less than 3 miles in circumference, is very deep, and abounds in mountain trout. About 12 miles from Hood River railroad station this fork unites with the main river. The waters of the west fork are at all seasons clear and cold, while the other branches of Hood River late in summer are colored with volcanic detritus. About 80 rods up the west fork above the main river is a perpendicular fall of about 15 feet, and immediately below the fall is a large circular basin of unknown depth. A few feet below this basin a bold mountain-stream falls into the west fork, falling several hundred feet in a few rods. Salmon, mountain trout, red-spotted salmon trout (*Salmo spectabilis* Girard), and Hood River silver trout find their way in large numbers to the foot of the falls, where their further progress is impeded, except at times of extreme high water. I have fished in many of the streams of Oregon, Washington, and Idaho, as far north as the forty-ninth parallel, as well as in those of Northern Vermont thirty years ago, and have yet to find any stream superior to the west fork of Hood River for the varieties and size of its trout.

Salmo spectabilis are found of very large size, probably 10 pounds or more in weight; but the fish most plentiful is what is known as the Hood River silver trout. This fish enters the river about August, I think, and is found there until the next spring. It resembles a small silver salmon, of the average weight of 2 pounds (though some are much larger), very fat, and most excellent for the table. It is singular that this fish is not found in any of the neighboring streams—the White, Salmon, Klikitat, &c.

It was not supposed that these fish would rise to the fly, but last

September I had excellent sport taking them in that manner. Many were so large as to carry away my tackle at the first onset. It seems to me that they would prove to be a most excellent variety for stocking many small rivers. They are very abundant and full of spawn in August and September.

As to the supply of large salmon in the west fork, I am not certain. On the bank I saw the backbone of one over 3 feet in length; and I saw the salmon jumping in the river, but cannot speak as to the variety or quantity.

With this exception, the locality I speak of possesses every requisite mentioned in your report. With slight improvement the road would be hard and excellent during the entire year. There is abundance of timber on the ground, and water can be conducted, if necessary, 200 feet above the stream. There are no settlers above, and none to interfere below the falls. It is an ideal place for a hatchery for several varieties of trout and salmon, but, as I stated before, I am not certain as to the numbers of the larger salmon. The climate is all that could be desired, with the exception of considerable snow in some winters. With this exception, I think it is as good as any place in Oregon. I would like to see a Government hatchery at that place. When I was at the falls last season the silver trout were trying to jump from the pool to the river above, but all that I saw failed in the attempt and fell back again. Dr. Suckley does not describe this fish in his report.

Eleven years ago I assisted in running the boundary line between Idaho and Washington Territories, from Lewiston north to the forty-ninth parallel, or international boundary. Our line crossed the Pend Oreille in plain sight and a little below the falls you mention, which are about 8 feet in height. Below the falls the river runs slowly for not less than 20 miles, as near as I can judge, before it forms a canyon. The head of the canyon must be some 10 miles below the old Saint Ignatius Mission. At the point of crossing we caught trout and a slender whitefish, but saw no signs of salmon. About the old Mission, now abandoned, were fine meadows of timothy and red-top, but the Indians are not to be trusted.

From the Little Spokane to the Pend Oreille River, following up the first-named stream, is a natural route for a wagon-road. Lake Kaniksu, the waters of which flow into the Pend Oreille above the fall mentioned, is a very beautiful body of water, estimated at 20 miles in length. The Indians have a horse-trail from the old Mission to this lake, where they dry and smoke large quantities of trout. If you have any ambitious tourist in mind who is desirous of exploring unknown lands, I know of no more interesting locality than this lake.

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