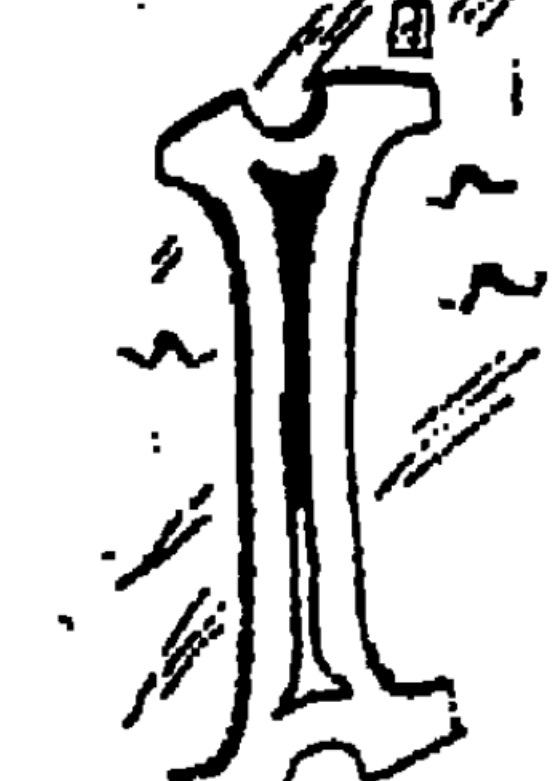


KIPLING'S DAY ON THE CLACKAMAS.

LANDING THE KING OF FISH, THE ROYAL CHINOOK SALMON.

Glowing Tribute to the Gomeness and Beauty
of Oregon's Celebrated Fish-The Pleas-
ure of a Lifetime.

"The race is neither to the swift nor the battle to
the strong; but time and chance cometh to all."



IHAVE lived! The Amer-
ican continent may now
sink under the sea, for I
have taken the best that
it yields, and the best
was neither dollars, love
nor real estate. Here,
now, gentlemen of the
Punjab Fishing Club
who whip the reaches of
the Tavi and you who painfully import
trout over to Otacamund, and I will tell you
how old man California and I went fishing,
and you shall envy. We returned from Tuo
Dalles to Portland by the way we had come,
the steamer stopping en route to pick up
a night's catch of one of the salmon wheels
on the river and to deliver it at a
cannery down stream. When the proprietor
of the wheel announced that his take
was 2230 pounds weight of fish, and not a
heavy catch neither," I thought he had. But
he sent the boxes aboard and I counted the
salmon by the hundred—huge fifty-pound-
ers hardly dead, scores of twenty and thirty-
pounders and a host of smaller fish. They
were all chinook salmon, as distinguished
from the "steel head" and the "silver side."
That is to say, they were royal salmon, and
California and I dropped a tear over them
as monarchs who deserved a better fate, but
the lust of slaughter entered into our souls,
and we talked fish and forgot the mountain
scenery that had so moved us a day before.

The steamer halted at a rude wooden
warehouse built on pilas in a lonely reach of
the river and sent in the fish. I followed
them up a scute-strewn, fishy incline that led
to the cannery. The crazy building
was quivering with the machinery
on its floors, and a glittering bank
of tin scraps twenty feet high
showed where the waste was thrown after
the cans had been punched. Only China-
men were employed on the work, and they
looked like blood-besmeared, yellow devils
as they crossed the rifts of sunlight that lay
upon the floor. When our consignment ar-
rived the rough wooden boxes broke of
themselves as they were dumped down
under a jet of water, and the salmon burst
out in a stream of quicksilver.

I was impressed not so much with the
speed of the manufacture as the character
of the factory. Inside, on a floor 30 by 40,
the most civilized and murderous of ma-
chinery. Outside, three footsteps, the thick
growing pines and the immense solitude of
the hills. Our steamer only stayed twenty
minutes at that place, but I counted 240
finished cans made from the catch of the
previous night ere I left the slippery, blood-
stained, scute-spangled, oily floors and the
offal-smeared Chinamen.

FISHING IN THE CLACKAMAS.

We reached Portland, California and I
crying for salmon, and a real estate man, to
whom we had been intrusted by an insur-
ance man, met us in the street, saying that
fifteen miles away, across country, we
should come upon a place called Clackamas,
where we might perchance find what we de-
sired. And California, his coat-tails flying
in the wind, ran to a livery stable and
chartered a wagon and team forthwith. I
could push the wagon about with one hand,
so light was its structure. The team was
purely American—that is to say, almost hu-
man in its intelligence and docility. Some one
said that the roads were not good on the
way to Clackamas, and warned us against
smashing the springs. "Portland," who
had watched the preparations, finally reck-
oned "He'd come along, too," and under
heavenly skies we three com-
panions of a day set forth, Cal-
ifornia carefully lashing our rods into
the carriage, and the bystanders over-
whelming us with directions as to the saw-
mills we were to pass, the ferries we were to
cross and the signposts we were to seek
signs from. Half a mile from this city of
50,000 souls we struck (and this must be
taken literally) a plank road that would
have been a disgrace to an Irish village.

Then six miles of macadamised road
showed us that the team could move. A
rillway ran between us and the banks of the
Willamette and another above us through
the mountains. All the land was dotted
with small townships and the roads were
full of farmers in their town wagons,
bunches of tow-haired, bogie-eyed trachins
sitting in the hay behind. The men gen-
erally looked like loafers, but their women
were all well dressed. Brown braiding on a
tailor-made jacket does not, how-
ever, consort with hay wagons. Then
we struck into the woods along
what California called a *camhuia reale*—
a good road—and Portland a "fair
track." It wound in and out among fire-
blackened stumps, under pine trees, along
the corners of log fences, through hollows,
which must be hopeless marsh in the win-
ter, and up aboard gradlons. But nowhere
throughout its length did I see any evi-
dence of road-making. There was a
track—you couldn't well get off it,
and it was all you could do to stay
on it. The dust lay a foot thick in the blind
ruts, and under the dust we found bits of
planking and bundles of brushwood that
sent the wagon bounding into the air. The
journey in itself was a delight. Sometimes
we crashed through bracken; anon, where
the blackberries grew rankest, we found a
lonely little cemetery, the wooden rails all
awry and the pitiful stumpy headstones
nodding drunkenly at the soft malleles.
Then, with oaths and the sound of rent
underwood, a yoke of mighty bulls would
swing down a "skid" road, hauling a forty-
foot log along a rudely made slide. A vil-
ley full of wheat and cherry trees succeeded,
and halting at a house we bought ten
pound weight of luscious black cherries for
something less than a rupee and
got a drink of icy cold water for noth-
ing, while the untended team browsed sagu-
ciously by the roadside. Once we found

A WAYSIDE CAMP OF HORSE-DEALERS,
lounging by a pool, ready for a sale or a
swap, and once two sun-tanned youngsters
shut down a hill on Indian ponies, their full
steels hanging from the high pummeled

saddle. They had been fishing and were
our brethren therefore. We shouted aloud
in chorus to scare a wildcat; we squabbled
over the reasons that had led a snake to
cross a road; we heaved bits of bark at a
vicious chipmunk, who was really the
little grey squirrel of India and had come to
call on me; we lost the way and got the
wagon so beautifully fixed on a khud-
bound road that we had to tie the two hind
wheels to get it down. Above all, California
told tales of Nevada and Arizona, of
lonely nights spent out prospecting
the slaughter of deer and the chase of men,
of woman, lovely woman, who is a firebrand
in a Western city and leads to the popping
of pistols, and of the sudden changes and
chances of fortune, who delights in making
the miser or the lumberman a quadrupli-
cate millionaire and in "busting" the rail-
road king. That was a day to be remem-
bered, and it had only begun when we
drew rein at a tiny farm house
on the banks of the Clackamas
and sought horse feed and lodging, ere we
hastened to the river that broke over a weir
not a quarter of a mile away. Imagine a
steep twenty yards broad divided by a
pebbly island, running over seductive "rif-
fles" and swirling into deep, quiet pools,
where the good salmon goes to smoke his
pipe after meals. Get such a stream amid
fields of breast high crops surrounded by
hills of pines, throw in where you please
quiet water, long-fenced meadows, and a
hundred-foot bluff just to keep the scenery
from growing too monotonous, and you will
get some faint notion of the Clackamas. The
weir had been erected to reap the Chinook
salmon from going further up stream. We
could see them, twenty or thirty pounds, by
the score in the deep pools, or flying madly
against the weir and foolishly skinning their
noses. They were not our prey, for they
would not rise at a fly and we knew it. All
the same, when one made his leap against
the weir and landed on the foot plank with
a jar that shook the board I was standing
on, I would fain have claimed him for my
own capture.

Portland had no rod. He held the gaff and
the whiskey. California snuffed up stream
and down stream, across the racing water,
chose his ground and let the gaudy fly drop
in the tail of a riffle. I was getting my rod
together when I heard

THE JOYOUS SHRIEK OF THE REEL,
and the yells of California, and three feet of
living silver leaped into the air far across the
water. The forces were engaged. The sal-
mon rose up straight, the tense line cutting
the water like a tide rip behind him and the
light bamboo bowed to breaking. What
happened thereafter I cannot tell. Califor-
nia swore and prayed and Portland shouted
advice, and I did all three for what appeared
to be half a day, but was in reality a little
over a quarter of an hour, and suddenly our
fish came home with spurts of tompor,
dashes head on and upwards in the air,
but home to the bank came he and the re-
markable reel gathered up the thread of his
life inch by inch. We landed him in a little
bay and the spring weight in his gorgeous
gills checked at eleven and one-half pounds.
Eleven and one-half pounds of fighting
salmon! We danced a war dance on the
pebbles, and California caught me round the
waist in a hug that went near to breaking
my ribs while he shouted: "Partner! par-
ner! This is glory! Now you catch your
fish! Twenty-four years I've waited for
this!"

I went into that icy cold river and made
my cast just above the weir, and all but
foul-hooked a blue-and-black water-snake
with a coral mouth, who coiled herself on a
stone and blessed imaledictions. The next
cast—ah, the pride of it, the regal splendor
of it! the thrill that ran down from finger-
tip to toe! Then the water boiled. He
broke for the fly and got it. There re-
mained enough sense in me to give him all
he wanted, when he jumped not once but
twenty times before the upstream flight that
ran my line out to the last half dozen turns,
and I saw the nicked reelbar glitter under
the thinning green coils. My thumb was
burned when I strove to stop-
per the line; but I did not feel it
till later, for my soul was out in the
dancing veir praying for him to turn ere he
took my tackle away. And the prayer was
heard. As I bowed back, the butt of the rod
on my left hip bone and the top joint dip-
ping like unto a weeping willow, he turned
and accepted each inch of slack
that I could by any means get in as a favor
from on high. There be several sorts of suc-
cess in this world, but taste well in the mo-
ment of enjoyment, but I question whether
the stealthy theft of line from an able-bodied
salmon who knows exactly what you are
doing and why you are doing it is not
sweeter than any other victory within
human scope. Like California's fish, he ran
at me head on and leaped against the line,
but the Lord gave me 250 pairs of fingers in
that hour. The banks and

THE FINE THING DANCED DIZZILY AROUND ME,
but I only reeled—reeled as for life—reeled
for hours, and at the end of the reeling con-
tinued to give him the bait while
he snaked in a pool. California was further
up the reach, and with the corner of my
eye I could see him casting with long casts
and much skill. Then he struck and my
fish broke for the weir in the same instant,
and down the reach we came, California
and I, reel answering reel even as the morn-
ing stars sing together.

The first wild enthusiasm of capture had
died away. We were both at work now in
deadly earnest to prevent the lines fouling,
to stall off a down-stream rush for shaggy
water just above the weir, and at the same
time to get the fish into the shallow bay
down stream that gave the best practicable
landing. Portland bade us both be of good
heart, and volunteered to take the rod from
my hands. I would rather have died among
the pebbles than surrender my right to play
and land a salmon, weight unknown, with
an eight-ounce rod. I heard California, at
my ear it seemed, gasping, "He's a fighter
from Fightersville sure," as his fish made a
fresh break across the stream. I saw Port-
land fall off a log fence, break the over-
hanging bank and clatter down to the peb-
bles, all sand and landing-net, and I
dropped on a log to rest for a moment. As I
drew breath the weary hands slackened
their hold and I forgot to give him the butt.
A wild scouter in the water, a minute and a
breast for the head waters of the Clackamas
was my reward, and the weary toil of reel-
ing in with one eye under the water and the
other on the top joint of the rod was re-
newed. Worst of all, I was blocking Cal-
ifornia's path to the little landing bay afore-
said, and he had to halt and tire his prize
where he was. "The father of all the
salmon!" he shouted. "For the love of
heaven get your trout to bank, Johnny
Bill!" But I could do no more. Ben's in-
sult failed to move me. The rest of the
game was with the salmon. He suffered
himself to be drawn, skipping with pretended
delight at getting to the haven where I would
fain bring him. Yet no sooner did he feel
shoal water under his ponderous belly than
he backed like a torpedo boat and the anar of
the reel told me that my labor was in vain.
A dozen times at least this happened ere
the line hinted he had given up that battle
and would be towed in. He was towed.
The landing net was useless for one of his
size, and I would not have him gaffed. I
stepped into the shallows and heaved him
out with a respectful hand under the gill, for
which kindness he battered me about the
legs with his tail, and I felt the strength of
him and was proud. California had taken
my place in the shallows, his fish hard held.
I was up the bank lying full length on the
sweet-scented grass and gasping in company
with my first salmon caught, played and
landed on an eight-ounce rod.

MY HANDS WERE CUT AND BLEEDING,
I was dripping with sweat, spangled like
harlequin with scales, water from my waist
down, nose peeled by the sun, but utterly,
supremely and consummately happy.
Ho, the beauty, the darling, the
daisy, my Salmon Bahadur, weighed
twelve pounds, and I had been
seven and thirty minutes bringing him
to bank. He had been lightly hooked
on the angle of the right jaw and the hook
had not wearied him. That hour I as
among princes and crowned heads
greater than them all. Below the bank we
heard California scuffling with his salmon
and swearing Spanish oaths. Portland and I
assisted at the capture, and the fish dragged
the spring balance out by the roots. It was
only constructed to weigh up to fifteen
pounds. We stretched the three fish on
the grass—the eleven and a half, the twelve
and fifteen pounders—and we gave an oath
that all who came after should merely be
weighed and put back again.

How shall I tell the glories of that day so
that you may be interested? Again and
again did California and I prance down that
reach to the little bay, each with a salmon
in tow, and land him in the shallows. Then
Portland took my rod and caught some ten

pounders, and my spoon was carried away
by an unknown leviathan. Each fish, for
the merits of the three that had died so
gaily, was hastily hooked on the balance
and hung back. Portland recorded the
weight in a pocketbook, for he was a real
estate man. Each fish fought for all he was
worth, and none more savagely than the
smallest, a game little six pounder. At the
end of six hours we added up the list.
Read it. Total, sixteen fish;
aggregate weight, 141 pounds. The
score in detail runs something like this—it
is only interesting to those concerned: 10,
11½, 12, 10, 9½, 8, etc.; as I have said,
nothing under six pounds and three ten-
pounders.

Very solemnly and thankfully we put up
our rods—it was glory enough for all time—
and returned.

WEPT IN EACH OTHER'S ARMS,
Weeping tears of pure joy, to that simple,
barelegged family in the packing case house
by the water side. The old farmer recol-
lected days and nights of fierce warfare with
the Indians "way back in the fifties," when
every ripple of the Columbia river and her
tributaries hid covert danger. God had
dowered him with a queer, crooked gift of
expression and a fierce anxiety for the wel-
fare of his two little sons—tanned and re-
served children, who attended school daily
and spoke good English in a strange
tongue. His wife was an austere
woman, who had once been kindly,
and perhaps handsome. Very many
years of toil had taken the elasticity
out of step and voice. She looked for noth-
ing better than everlasting work—the
chafing detail of housework—and then a
grave somewhere up the hill among
the blackberries and the pines. But in
the grim way she sympathized with her
eldest daughter, a small and silent maiden
of 18, who had thoughts very far from the
men's she tended and the pains she scoured.
We stumbled into the household at a crisis
and there was a deal of downright human-
ity in that same. A bad, wicked dress-
maker had promised the maiden a dress in
time for tomorrow's railway journey, and
though the barefooted George, who
stood in very wholesome awe of his sister,
had scoured the woods on a pony in
search, that dress never arrived. So,
with sorrow in her heart and a hun-
dred Sister Anne glances up the road, she
waited upon the strangers, and I doubt
not, cursed them for the wants that stood
between her and her need for tears.
It was a genuine little tragedy. The
mother, in a heavy, passionless voice,
rebuked her impatience, yet sat up far into
the night bowed over a heap of sewing for
the daughter's benefit. "These things I be-
held in the long marigold scented twilight
and whispering night, loafing round the
little house with California, who unfolded
himself like a lotus to the moon, or in the
little boarded bunk that was our bedroom,
swapping tales with Portland and the old
man. Most of the yarns began in this way:
—"Red Larry was a bull-puncher back of
Lone county, Montana," or "There was a
man riding the trail met a jack rabbit
sitting in a cactus," or "Bout the time of
the San Diego land boom a woman from
Monterey, &c." You can try to piece out
for yourselves what sort of stories they were.

RUDYARD KIPLING.