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# ROGUE RIVER COURIER.

An Independent Paper, Devoted Especially to the Interests of Southern Oregon.

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**A SPIDER OF THE SEA.**  
 The Huge Crabs Found in the San Francisco Markets.

C. F. HOLDER IN S. F. CALL.  
 When one has been living in the mountains for a year or so, dining on venison, jack-rabbit and quail, and breakfasting on the same reversed, with perhaps cotton-tail and Sierra Madre trout thrown in, dishes of a saline flavor come not amiss, and when I reached San Francisco the deviled crab that had been in my mind's eye for some time was immediately ordered. My experience with deviled crabs was hardly to be considered limited. I had eaten them on the extreme tip end of the Florida reef, where the water almost boiled in the sun, and all along the coast, even at the paradise of crabs, Old Point Comfort, and had done some "trading for shadders" on my own account, and knew just how hard a Virginia crab can nip; but when the waiter, with an ill-concealed smile, placed before me a crab carapace, containing deviled crustacean enough to satisfy four or five persons, I appreciated that indeed all things were large in California—trees, vines, man and mountains, not to speak of crabs. Our ordinary crab of the East, that is best served deviled, is about six inches long, but the monster that was before me must have weighed at least three or four pounds when alive.

These huge crabs resemble the English edible crab, though they exceed it in size, and remind me of a story that certainly shows that the latter has a certain amount of homing instinct that would suggest a no low order of intelligence. Most of the crabs that are brought into the London market are caught some way up the coast, even a hundred or so miles, and are generally caught by crews who work together and mark the animals as we do steers on the plains, toss them in a car, and when enough have been accumulated to make the trip to the London market pay, they are taken out or towed down, then assorted to their several owners and sold. Such a collection of over a thousand large crabs, all marked was on the way to London, when near the mouth of the Thames the vessel was run into, and all the crabs escaped. The crew put back, and five days later, thirty or forty miles away, on the original fishing ground, they began to take these marked crabs, showing that they had travelled back home—in other words, found their way along shore to their own feeding ground, over a country or bottom with which they were totally unfamiliar.

This singular occurrence excited considerable comment, and it was announced that this demonstrated that marine animals had certain localities that they rarely strayed from, a fact which has long been known to many. Marine animals are like those on land—some roam about at will, while others confine themselves to certain localities. Thus I have found the same fishes about a head of coral for several years in succession, and others about old wrecks and posts, showing that they had definite ideas about home or a permanent residence. The story of the homing crabs excited the interest of certain sporting noblemen, and the novel sport of a crab race was inaugurated. The crustaceans were taken ten miles from where they were caught, and after having been marked, to the number of several thousand, they were released, the terms being that the first crab that was caught on the old grounds should decide the heat. Each owner chartered at least twenty fishermen to watch for the crabs at the home stake, and in forty-eight hours after the start a crab with a triple nipped claw was caught, having covered the distance in that time; and it is said that a number of hundred pounds changed hands on the result of the race, that at least had the flavor of novelty.

On the island of Madagascar large white land crabs are very common, and afford considerable sport to good riders, who follow them on horse-back along the beach, and endeavor to kill them with long poles, used as lances.  
 San Francisco possesses two of the largest crabs in the country. One is in the collection of Woodward's Gardens, and the other is a strong card for a neighboring "musset" that pictures the unfortunate decapod as overturning a boat, and embroiling a crew of sailors in universal ruin. The crab itself is about twelve or thirteen feet across from the tip of one outspread claw to that of the other, and presents a truly formidable appearance, and is a remarkably fine specimen. The Woodward crab is somewhat smaller, but equally striking. A specimen in the Museum of Comparative Zoology, at Cambridge, and a large carapace or shell in the Museum of Natural History, Central Park, New York, are the only others that I know of in this country.  
 The thirteen-foot crab alluded to

would astonish the average crabber, but specimens of these spiders of the sea have been caught in Japanese waters, to which they are indigenous, that spread from the tip of one claw to that of the other twenty-two feet. The wader who accidentally stepped on one of these creatures would probably find it out sooner than Pontoppidan's fishermen, who went ashore on the back of a poule, and did not find out their mistake until the heat of their fire aroused the sleeping giant and it sank from under them.

A friend of mine who has caught the great crabs in Japanese waters tells me that they have a curious habit of leaving the water and coming out upon the beach at night, ostensibly to feed. In speaking of the crab, another observer said: "When I first saw the animal—and I think I am the first European that ever did see one—I was traveling in one of the northern islands, and in passing through a small fishing village I saw some enormous claws leaning up against the wall. They were so large, each being about twelve feet in length, that I thought they were made artificially, but the owner, a fisherman, told me that they were crab claws, and that they broke off a foot or so and ate the meat as they felt inclined. I, of course, became anxious to see one of these monsters alive, and an offer of coin of the realm resulted in a proposal to take me to the spot where they could be caught. The fishing ground was four or five miles around the bay, and, starting in the afternoon, with the fisherman and his two sons, we reached it by 7 o'clock, and spread a rude camp on the beach. According to our informant, the most favorable time was at moonlight, when the full moon lighted up the beach, and then at low tide the big crabs wandered up and down in search of whatever they could find. There was a new moon and ebb tide at 10 o'clock, and in anticipation of the event the fisherman posted his sons down the beach on some rushes, with instructions to give the alarm at the first crab that came up, and to move themselves down the beach; in short, follow the water up as fast as it went out.

"Whether it was the soothing influence of the seabreeze that came in from the bay, or whether we were tired from the long tramp over the rocks, I can't say; but, as it may be one and all fell asleep. How long we remained I don't remember, but the first I knew I found myself clutching the sand and listening to the most blood-curdling shrieks, intermingled with Japanese invectives, that it was ever my good fortune to hear. The old man started to his feet, and following him we rushed down the sandy beach to a black indistinct spot that marked the location of the boys. In a moment we reached them and the sight that confronted us would have astonished an American Indian. The boys were standing up, apparently entangled in the arms of some gigantic animal—a spider it looked like, but when my eyes became used to the darkness, I saw that either they had one of the big crabs or the crab had them, it was difficult to tell which. A moment decided this, and we saw that they had a crab, each one grasping a claw at least twelve feet long, that was waving to and fro despite their struggles. They cried to us to dispatch it, and it was all that I could do to prevent the old man from ruining the animal, but finally I succeeded in making them haul it high upon the beach, where I secured it by ropes, and I assure you it was a giant; not so large as my first estimate, but quite large enough. The body was about twice as large as a man's head, the carapace large enough for a hat for the Chinese giant. From this radiated the spider-like claws; the large biting ones being about ten feet in length, so that when spread out, the animal had a reach of about twenty two or three feet. The other arms and claws were proportionally shorter, but all adding to the spider-like appearance. When I learned what was the difficulty with the boys, I didn't blame them for making an outcry. It seems that they too had fallen asleep, and the big crab had come crawling along, and had gone fairly over them before they were aware of it; so that they awoke to find themselves fairly in the embrace of the inoffensive giant. Yes, I saved the specimen, cured it, articulated it, so that it could be taken apart, and shipped it home on a sailing vessel with some other freight, but unfortunately she was wrecked—and my crab found its way back to its native element."

Eastern people hear the magic word lobster in the cities from Los Angeles to San Francisco and are surprised to see a living crustacean like the lobster in all respects except the big claws and color. In other words, if the Atlantic lobster could be boiled until it was quite red, its big claws reduced to the size of the crawling ones, and its large

antennae greatly enlarged, it would represent the crustacean called a lobster on this coast. In fact, it is not a lobster, as the word is understood in the east, but what is known in the Gulf of Mexico as the crawfish. In the latter place they are extremely common, and I have seen a reef so covered with them in early morning that fifteen or twenty were in sight all the time. These were yellow, instead of the boiled hue that some of the Pacific specimens have, and were important factors in preserving the great coral heads, from their habit of undermining them, and so preventing the encroachments of sand, so fatal to the delicate polyps.

This crawfish is rarely eaten in the south, being of a coarse and tough nature, but as a bait it is extremely valuable, and the wily brown snapper, that looks with contempt at conch and other bait, rarely passes it by. The Pacific crawfish, though far behind the legitimate lobster, he of the big claws, is vastly superior to its Mexican cousin in point of flavor, and passes for the lobster pure and simple.

The crab, whose brains and minnows are under the same roof, is not considered the most intelligent of beings, yet I have observed them adopt precautionary measures that showed a certain appreciation of the law of cause and effect. In the tank that I had under observation were a number of what are popularly termed spider crabs, queer fellows, that resembled spiders in their long attenuated legs, while the body part was almost exact in its mimicry of a rock. The crabs have a wide range, and some species are found in the rocks off the Golden Gate. When the crabs were brought to me they were overgrown with moss and weeds of various kinds, so that it was quite impossible to see their backs, and it might have been assumed that, being very sluggish, the weeds had grown on them while taking a siesta, but this was not the case. Before placing the victims to popular science in the tank, they were thoroughly rubbed and scraped with a stiff brush until not an atom of algae remained, and in this condition they were dropped into the tank and immediately became conspicuous objects on the bottom. That they were aware of this was immediately evident, as their first thought was concealment, which was effected in an extremely novel manner. By hiding in the sand or rocks you will say—not at all; the crabs had a plan far more satisfactory, which was to assume the complete disguise of a moss-covered rock, and this they did by rapidly snapping off bits of weed from the rocks with their claws, then placing the severed portion to their mouths, where evidently some gelatinous substance was affixed, and then with an over-the-head motion the bit was raised aloft and the part pressed upon the crab's back; then another piece was plucked, and another, until in less than an hour nearly all the imprisoned crabs had planted upon their backs a mimic forest of weeds and were almost entirely concealed, and when their claws were drawn in not to be distinguished from the surrounding stones. This may be instinct, but the crab that originally invented it had a certain amount of intelligence to draw upon stored away somewhere under its hard shell.

**Hits the Nail on the Head.**

The mail system in many parts of Oregon instead of advancing with the country is taking a backward step and in many sections is becoming almost unbearable. Right here in Yamhill we have evidence of this, as for instance the discontinuance of the daily mail on the upper Yamhill. The Statesman in speaking on this subject says:

The prime object of the postal system is the accommodation of the public, but, under the present dispensation, the people of western Oregon can testify that, so far as their convenience is concerned, it falls far short of its prime object.

Here we have mail delayed in Portland, important and otherwise, sleeping for one whole day for want of a proper connection that could be made with a very little trouble.

This case is probably not so great an imposition as the case of the Yaquina bay mail, but many more people are concerned. In the case of Yaquina bay the mail is carried over most of the route in wagons, making numerous delays, although trains run through each way every day. The mail system of Oregon needs a very vigorous shaking up. Our people have been imposed upon by the idiotic whims and caprices of Vilas, and subjected to the exigencies of the weather and inconveniences of imperfect connection until forbearance has ceased to be a cardinal virtue of our dispositions. Although we have a great respect and awe for those in power and a great deal of patience with

**TO ADVERTISERS.**

Grant's Pass, so named after General Grant, is a county seat centrally located in Southern Oregon. It is a progressive railroad town of 600 inhabitants, and is the main supply point for a large portion of country devoted to mining, lumbering, agriculture and fruit-raising. Climate unexcelled.  
 The COURIER being the only paper published in Josephine county, with a good circulation in Jackson county, enables it to be one of the best advertising mediums in Southern Oregon. For rates, address THE COURIER, Grant's Pass, Oregon.

imperfect arrangements still we are at times tempted to stop and exclaim,  
 "O Lord, how long!"—[West Side Telephone.

You had better look out, Mr. Telephone, the editor of the Democratic Times will go for you. He has arrayed himself on the "easy side" of this question, and favors letting the mail contractors off almost any way to suit them.

[Correspondence.]  
**Our County Finance.**

ED. COURIER.—Sir: I observe in your issue of July 29th, the statement of the retiring County Clerk, showing an indebtedness of only \$13,000. This is a very pleasant report, and if it represented all of the obligations of our county, would indeed be very gratifying to the people. But let us inquire a little further into the true state of affairs and see if we cannot find them more serious than appears upon the face of the report and deserving of very careful consideration, and to some extent, alarm. The financial condition of our county as left by the retiring officers from the best information at hand is as follows:

Outstanding warrants	\$17,049 00
Less cash on hand	2,433 00
<b>Balance</b>	<b>\$14,616 00</b>
Bills allowed by the new board that should have been passed upon by the old board	200 00
Appropriate bridge will cost	2,700 00
Court House and Jail will cost over subscriptions and Miller's obligation	1,000 00
Interest on outstanding warrants as paid last year	1,500 00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$20,016 00</b>

This is an under, rather than an over estimate of the present condition of our county as left by the old officers. These are plain figures that need no comment in order to attract the attention of tax-payers.

The report for the previous year showed an indebtedness of \$10,824, while this year shows an actual indebtedness of outstanding warrants, less cash on hand, of \$14,616, a plain increase in our indebtedness of nearly \$4,000, without taking into consideration any improvements in any form. In other words, the simple running expenses of our county has increased our indebtedness in a single year, almost four thousand dollars. This was done on an increased assessment and a 2 1/2 per cent. tax. To pay the interest on our present debt will require a 2 1/2 mill tax. Our actual expenses under a most economical administration will require a 2 1/2 per cent. tax, state and school. This will simply maintain our present state of affairs, and trust entirely to future increase in the valuation of our county to lift the burden of debt. Is it not the part of wisdom for our present county officers to devote every energy toward curtailing expenses and keeping our finances in the best condition possible. It will not do to increase our indebtedness, and it certainly will not be a wise policy to increase our rate of taxation; for that plan will only result in driving out capital already here, and keeping out more that is so sadly needed for our development.

It is no part of my purpose to find fault with the retiring officers for what may seem to many of us very bad and profligate management, for they have been retired by the wishes of the people; but I call upon our new officers to guard with the utmost care, the finances of our county. Instead of finding fault with the past and creating animosities by unpleasant accusations, it is far better for us to turn our faces to the future and see what can be done to rectify past mistakes and lay the foundation for a better success in our public condition.

Believing it is always best to know the exact condition of our public affairs, I have given these facts for publication. I hope that our new officers will ponder well these figures, and realize that the welfare of all of the people of the county is in their hands, and that it is necessary in small, as well as large things, to be most seriously economical.  
 TAX-PAVER.

**Causes Which Lead to Failure.**

One of the reasons why farmers fail is the debts they contract, in advance of their crop productions. The farmer who crops on time and falls behind, which as a rule they do, and then again buys on time to bridge over the past year's failures, rarely ever catches up. The man who buys his credit with a lien and pays the per cent charged cannot expect to succeed. No business man expects such chances to bring success to the farmer, but it brings trade to the dealer; it brings the farmer into dangerous subjects; it brings to mortgage upon his homestead and finally brings him to a species of mental servitude, and brings him and his family to that very degradation that he has labored and striven to avoid.  
 —[Rural and Workman.