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*Nec araneorum sane textus ideo melior, quia ex se fila gignunt, nec noster vilior quia ex alienis libamus ut apes.*

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## THE FISHERIES.

### MR. PERLEY'S REPORT.

[Continued.]

#### THE MACKEREL.

The common Mackerel (*scomber scombrus*) abounds in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence, and is one of the chief objects of pursuit with the numerous fleets of American fishing vessels, which are to be found yearly in every part of the Gulf. The Americans begin fishing for Mackerel in the Gulf on the first part of July, and finish at the end of September; but the resident fisherman might begin this fishing earlier, and continue it until the very close of the season.

Mr MacGregor describes the Mackerel of the Gulf as being of much finer flavor than those caught on the shores of Europe.

It has been generally supposed that the Mackerel was a Fish of passage, performing certain periodical migrations—making long voyages from south to north at one season of the year, and the reverse at another; but the error of this opinion is now generally admitted. It is known with certainty, that Mackerel remain near the coast of England at all times, as they have been taken there in every month of the year. Mr Yarrell, whose work on British Fishes is of the highest authority, is of opinion that the Mackerel is not a migratory Fish; he says—“The law of nature which obliges Mackerel and others to visit the shallower waters of the shores at a particular season, appears to be one of those wise and bountiful provisions of the Creator, by which not only is the species perpetuated with the greatest certainty, but a large portion of the parent animals are thus brought within the reach of man; who, but for the action of this law, would be deprived of many of those species most valuable to him as food. For, the Mackerel, dispersed over the immense surface of the deep, no effective fishery could be carried on; but approaching the Shore as they do, from all directions, and roving along the Coast in immense shoals, millions are caught, which yet form but a very small portion compared with the myriads that escape.”

Although Mackerel are found in vast shoals along the whole eastern Coast of New Brunswick, and within the Bay of Chaleur, yet the quantity taken by resident Fishermen is so very limited, as not to furnish a sufficient supply for home consumption, and few indeed for export.

The Ports of the Province within the Gulf, exported 609 barrels of Mackerel, during the last 8 years.

This is a most “beggarly account” of a fishery, which ought to be in this Province, one of the most extensive and most lucrative. The export of 29 barrels only in the year 1848 is perfectly surprising, when it is considered that the season was one in which the Mackerel Fishery was more than usually successful. In August last, the waters of the Straits of Northumberland, from Shediac to Prince Edward Island, were perfectly alive with Mackerel. Off Point Escuminac, the American fishermen caught them with such rapidity, and in such quantities, that they were unable to clean and salt the Fish as fast as they were caught; and it was reported on the Coast, that they had sent on shore, and engaged some of the settlers at high wages, to go off to the vessels, and assist in these necessary operations.

Monsieur Leon Robicheaux, an intelligent native fisherman, resident on Shippegan Island, from whom the writer obtained valuable information as to the fisheries, stated, that although Mackerel were always plentiful during the season near Shippegan and Miscou, yet the resident fishermen were too idle to take them. He added, that they only caught a few as bait for Cod, or as the matter of sport, when sailing to or from their stations for Cod fishing.

The American vessels which prosecute Mackerel fishing near the shores of New Brunswick are fitted out in Maine and Massachusetts; they have two long voy-

ages to make in going to and returning from their fishing ground, yet they find it profitable. If it be profitable to them, how much more so could it be made by resident fishermen, who were spared the expense of costly vessels and outfits, high wages and long voyages.

The mode of fishing pursued by the American Mackerel Fishers who frequent the Gulf, is that with the line, called “trailing.” When a “schul” is met with, the vessel, generally of 60 or 80 tons burthen, is put under easy sail, a smart breeze (thence called a Mackerel breeze) being considered most favorable. It is stated by Mr. Sabine, of Eastport, who is good authority, that he has known a crew of ten men, when fishing in the Bay of Chaleur, catch in one day, 90 packed or “dressed” barrels of Mackerel, which could not contain less than 12,000 fish.

If no fish are in sight, the American Mackerel Fisher on reaching some old resort, furls all the sails of his vessel, except the mainsail, brings his “craik” to the wind, and commences throwing over bait, to attract the fish to the surface of the water. The bait is usually small Mackerel, or salted Herrings cut in pieces by a machine, called a “bait-mill.” This consists of an oblong wooden box, standing on one end, containing a roller armed with knives, which is turned by a crank on the outside; it cuts up bait very expeditiously. If the Fisherman succeeds, the Mackerel then seem willing to show how fast they can be caught; and the fishing goes on until the approach of night, or the sudden disappearance of the remnant of the “schul” puts an end to it. The fish are then dressed, and thrown into casks of water to rid them of blood. To ensure sound and sweet Mackerel, it is indispensable that the blood and impurities should be thoroughly removed before salting; that the salt should be of the best quality, free from lime or other injurious substances; and that the barrels should in all cases be tight enough to retain the pickle.

In those Harbors of Nova Scotia which are within the Strait of Canso, Mackerel of late years, have been taken in Seines, capable of enclosing and securing 800 barrels; and in these Seines 400 and even 600 barrels have been taken at a single sweep. The “drift-net” is also used; but as it is believed that this mode of fishing is not so well understood on the Coast of Nova Scotia, as on that of England, the manner of fishing near the latter, with the “drift net,” as described by Mr Yarrell, is given in preference:—

“The most common mode of fishing for Mackerel, and the way in which the greatest numbers are taken is by drift-nets. The drift-net is 20 feet deep, by 120 feet long; well corked at the top, but without lead at the bottom. They are made of small twine, which is tanned of a reddish brown color, to preserve it from the action of the salt water, and it is thereby rendered much more durable. The size of the mesh is about 2½ inches or rather larger. Twelve, fifteen and sometimes eighteen of these nets are attached lengthways, by tying along a thick rope, called the drift-rope, and the ends of each net, to each other. When arranged for depositing in the sea, a large buoy attached to the end of the drift-rope is thrown overboard, the vessel is put before the wind, and as she sails along, the rope with the nets thus attached, is passed over the stern into the water, till the whole of the nets are thus thrown out. The nets thus deposited, hang suspended in the water perpendicularly, 20 feet deep from the drift-rope, and extending from three quarters of a mile to a mile, or even a mile and a half, depending on the number of nets belonging to the party or company engaged in fishing together. When the whole of the nets are thus hauled out, the drift-rope is shifted from the stern to the bow of the vessel and she rides by it as at anchor. The benefit gained by the boats hanging at the end of the drift-rope is, that the net is kept strained in a straight line, which, without this pull upon it, would not be the case. The nets are “shot” in the evening and sometimes

hauled once during the night, at others allowed to remain in the water all night. The Fish roving in the dark through the water, hang in the meshes of the net, which are large enough to admit them beyond the gill-covers and pectoral fins, but not large enough to allow the thickest part of the body to pass through. In the morning early, preparations are made for hauling the nets. A capstan on the deck is manned, about which two turns of the drift-rope are taken; one man stands forward to untie the upper edge of each net from the drift-rope, which is called casting off the lashings; others haul in the net with the Fish caught to which one side of the vessel is devoted, the other side is occupied by the drift-rope, which is wound in by the men at the capstan.”

The following is a statement of the number of barrels of Mackerel inspected in Massachusetts in each year, from 1831 to 1845, inclusive:—

1831,	383,559	1838,	108,538
1832,	212,452	1839,	75,018
1833,	212,946	1840,	50,992
1834,	252,884	1841,	55,537
1835,	194,450	1842,	75,543
1836,	176,931	1843,	64,451
1837,	138,157	1844,	
		1845,	86,628

It does not appear what proportions of these quantities of Mackerel were caught in British waters; but it must have been a very considerable share, if an opinion may be formed from the numerous fishing vessels of Massachusetts seen on the coast of Nova Scotia, and within the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The falling off in the Mackerel fishery of Massachusetts apparent by the foregoing Statement, is believed to be in consequence of the decrease of the fishery on the American Coast; and this diminution in the supply, has enabled the Nova Scotians to export large quantities to the United States Markets at fair prices.

From all that has been stated, it must be considered settled, that the Mackerel Fishery as a branch of business, cannot be said to exist in New Brunswick, although the eastern shores of the Province and the whole Bay of Chaleur, offer the greatest facilities, and the most abundant supply of fish.

It is highly desirable that something should be done to encourage and promote this fishery, which evidently offers such ample reward to the energy, enterprise, and industry of the people.

#### THE SALMON.

Of those Rivers of New Brunswick which flow into the Gulf of Saint Lawrence, the two largest, the Miramichi and the Restigouche, furnish the greatest supply of this well known and delicious fish; but all the smaller rivers also furnish Salmon in greater or less numbers.—There are also various Bays, Beaches, Islands and Points of land along the Coast, where Salmon are intercepted by nets, while seeking the Rivers in which they were spawned, and to which Salmon always return.

The Salmon of the gulf are noted for their fine flavor; they are precisely similar to the *Salmo Salar* of Europe.

The quantities of Salmon in the Rivers Restigouche and Miramichi at the first settlement of the country, were perfectly prodigious; and although many are yet taken annually, the supply diminishes from year to year. And this is not surprising when it is considered that many of the Streams formerly frequented by Salmon are now completely shut against them, by Mill Dams without ‘Fishways,’ or those openings which the British Fishery Reports designate as “Migration Passes;” that in the branches of the large Rivers, as also in the smaller rivers, nets are too often placed completely across the Stream from bank to bank, which take every fish that attempts to pass—that “close time” in many of the rivers is scarcely if at all regarded—and that, besides the improper use of nets at all seasons, Fish of all sizes are destroyed by hundreds in the very act of spawning, by torch light and spears, at a time when they are quite unfit for human food.

The quantities of pickled Salmon in

barrels, exported from Dalhousie, Bathurst, Caraquet, Miramichi, and Richibucto during the last eight years, is 17,408 barrels, of which 11,702 were from Miramichi.

Since the establishment of regular Steamers from the Port of Saint John to Boston, large quantities of fresh Salmon packed in the ice, have been exported, and the commodity has greatly increased in value. If facilities of communication were created by railway, the fresh Salmon of the Gulf could also be sent abroad in ice, and their value when first caught would be three or four times as great as at present.

The exceeding value of the Salmon Fisheries of Ireland and Scotland cause great attention to be paid by the British Fishery Boards to the enforcement of most stringent regulations for their preservation and increase. With reference to the preservation of Salmon, the Inspectors of the Irish fisheries reported to the Board, in 1846, as follows:—“In illustration of the benefits of a steady perseverance in a proper system, we may allude to the Foyle, where the produce has been raised from an average of 43 tons previous to 1823, to a steady produce of nearly 200 tons, including the Stake Weirs, in the Estuary, and very nearly to 300 tons, as we believe in the year 1842.” The Inspectors also mention the case of the small river of Newport, County Mayo, which was formerly exempt from “close-season.” In three years after the Parliamentary Regulations were introduced and enforced, the produce of this River was raised from half a ton, or the utmost, a ton every season, to eight tons of Salmon, and three tons white Trout, for the season ending the third year.

The preservation and maintenance of the Salmon Fisheries of New Brunswick generally, is a subject well worthy of earnest attention. To prevent the destruction of the Fish during the spawning season, and by improper modes of fishing, as also to provide for the passage of the Fish up those Streams which they have formerly frequented, but from which they are now excluded by Mill-Dams, some further enactments are absolutely necessary, and more efficient means are required for enforcing the provisions of the law. The most valuable River Fishery of the Province is in a fair way of being rendered valueless, or wholly destroyed; and as the rivers are the natural nurseries of the Salmon, the fishery on the Coast will of course be destroyed also.

Large quantities of Salmon are caught every season on the Labrador Coast in stake-nets placed at the mouths of Rivers which empty into Bays and Harbors; these are split and salted in large tubs, and afterwards repacked in tierces of two hundred pounds each. A number of vessels from Newfoundland and Canada are engaged annually in this Fishery; but the American fishing vessels pursue it with great vigor and assiduity, and it is reported that of late years they have found it very profitable.

The quantity of pickled Salmon exported from Newfoundland, in 1845, was 3545 tierces, one half of which was the produce of the Salmon Fishery on the Coast of Labrador.

#### SHELL FISH.

Under this head may be enumerated Lobsters, Oysters, Clams, Muscles, Whelks, Razor-fish Crabs, and Shrimps, all of which are found in the Gulf in the greatest abundance, and of excellent quality. Mr. MacGregor states, that they are all equally delicious with those taken on English, Irish, Scotch or Norwegian Shores.

Lobsters are found every where on the Coast, and in the Bay of Chaleur, in such extraordinary numbers that they are used by thousands to manure the land. At Shippegan and Caraquet, carts are sometimes driven down to the Beaches at low water and readily filled with lobsters left in the shallow pools by the recession of the tide. Every potato field near the places mentioned, is strewn with lobster shells, each potato hill being furnished with two and perhaps three lobsters.