

THE STATE

OF THE

SEA-COAST FISHERIES OF IRELAND.

BY

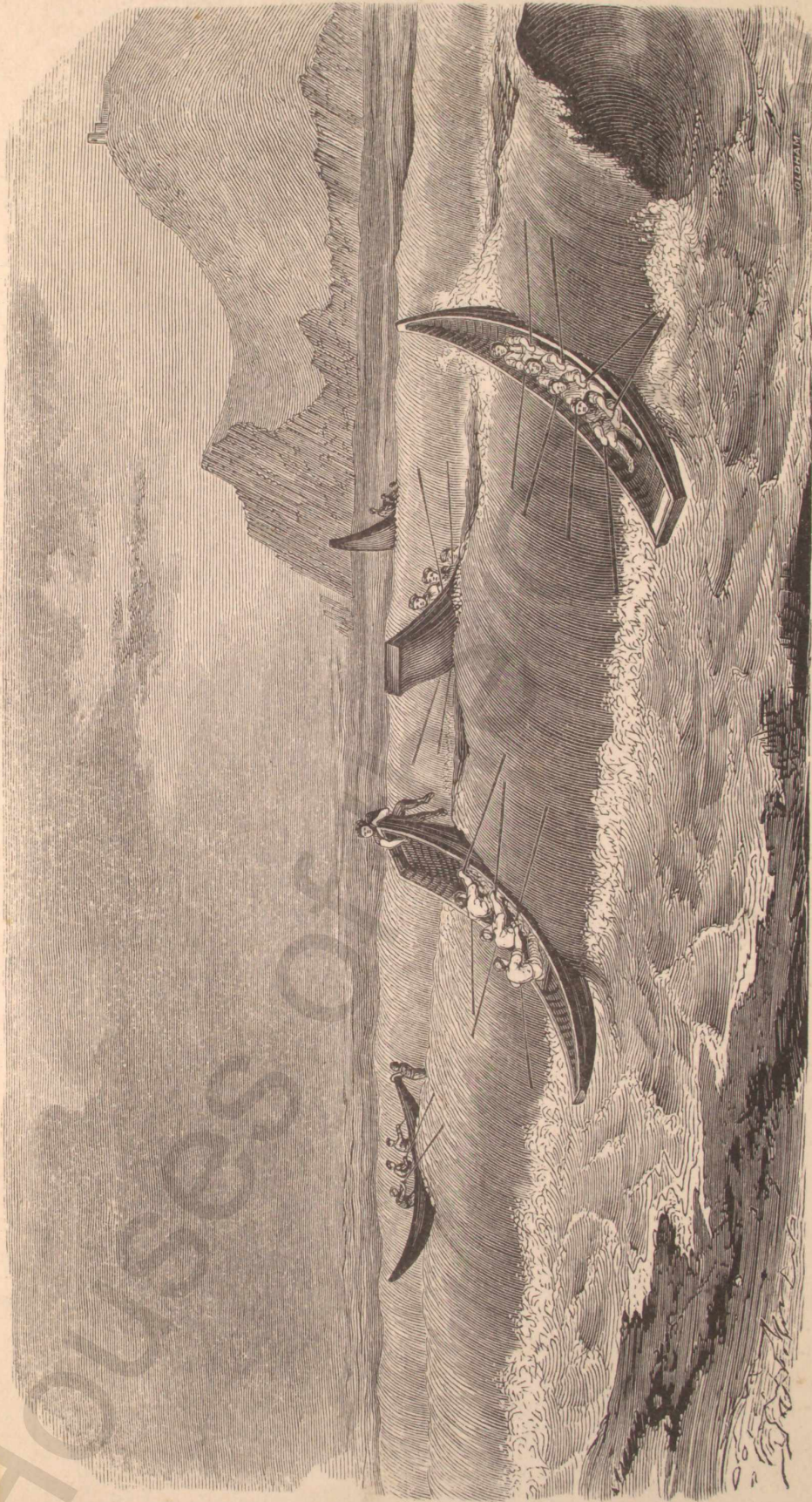
WILLIAM ANDREWS, M. R. I. A.





Houses of the Oireachtas





No. 3.—TO ILLUSTRATE MR. ANDREWS' PAPER ON THE SEA FISHERIES OF IRELAND.

CORRACHS BEACHING IN SMERWICK BAY, COAST OF KERRY, BALLYDAVID HEAD, EASTERN ENTRANCE OF THE BAY



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## SEA-COAST FISHERIES OF IRELAND.

BY WILLIAM ANDREWS, M. R. I. A.

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Read before the Royal Dublin Society, 3rd February, 1873.

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IN submitting this evening the statement with reference to the "Irish Sea Coast Fisheries," it must be considered as an adjunct to the Report of the "Trustees for Bettering the Condition of the Poor of Ireland," especially directed to the coast fisheries, who have just published their Transactions for the past year (1872).

As there are many points of interest and explanations which could not be embodied in that report—"the forlorn hope of the Irish fisheries"—I have ventured, as one of the honorary secretaries of that Society, to notice such in the "Proceedings of the Royal Dublin Society," as the proper channel through which every species of Irish Industry should be made known and encouraged. In doing so, it will clear much of the mystery that has ever been a cloud over that branch of national enterprise.

It is not necessary here again to allude to the importance with which the British fisheries have always been considered in past reigns, and by past Governments of British Legislature, and to all the Parliamentary Acts which have been discussed and passed for their better promotion, and it would be invidious to consider what has been done either for England or for Scotland in comparison to that of Ireland, for I have always believed that the fault rested with ourselves, and to our apathy and neglect of well-founded representations of the subject. I shall



therefore simply give an outline, commencing with the period when the Irish fisheries received a stimulus from Imperial Legislature in the year 1819.

It is an impossibility, previous to that date, to show, with any accuracy, the number of men, boats, and means employed in the fisheries, for documents so completely vary, that any statistics of the kind could not be depended upon nor maintainable. Indeed such views may, with propriety, be carried through all the returns from that period to the present time. The Act 59th George III., c. 109, with its several sections, did apparently an immense amount of good in stimulating the fisheries. Four Inspectors-General, one for each province, with station Inspectors, were appointed to see the several provisions of the Act carried out. A section of that Act, which gave bounties on tonnage, brought into play numbers of speculators, who rushed into competition with every species of craft, for the accounts of the fisheries for 1820 report an old brig of 78 tons, and trading sloops of 67 to 55 tons, clearing out for the herring fishery. Many of these vessels went to Scotland, bought their fish, dallying out their term of three months, and then returned, receiving the bounty. The fishermen who had entered their vessels considered they were justly entitled to the bounty by only wearing out their time. In fact, Mr. James Redmond Barry, the Inspector-General for the South, observed "that he never had considered the bounty system anything better than an encouragement to fraud and indolence."

The Reports of the Inspectors-General for 1820 and 1821, published in 1823, convey but little information of value, their knowledge of the fisheries of those days being rather antiquated; still, no question but that great zeal was manifested by the superiors and their officers in the promotion of the fisheries. W. H. King, Esq., Inspector-General, whose district extended from Killala Bay to Kerry Head, I had, when a boy, frequently met. He had been in the Royal Navy, and though knowing but little of the fisheries, he was most zealous in exploring some of the banks, off the coast, and advocated strongly the deep-sea fishery. It was he who suggested, in his Reports of 1820 and 1821, the cutting of a canal, the Bell Mullet, the narrow neck of land that divided Broadhaven Harbour from Blacksod Bay, and which was twenty years after undertaken and completed, as shown by the Nineteenth Report of the Commissioners of Public Works. It was a most important navigation to small boats, saving their rounding the wild headlands of Achill and of Erris, and at the time would have been of infinite use to the boats of His Majesty's cruisers in the prevention of smuggling. Fishing, at that period, was but a secondary employment to the men of the coasts, to such an extent was smuggling carried on. From the entire range from Loop Head to Hag's Head, on the coast of Clare, an iron-bound coast, were numerous fishing villages, in which resided a hardy race of corrach or canoe men. The banks off the coast gave the finest turbot and haddock, and two days' fishing in the week were suffi-



cient for all demands. Their canoes, by hundreds, were ever ready to launch on the appearance of a smuggler off Baltard, Malbay, or Liscannor, clearing out the smuggler's cargo of tobacco and brandy, hollands, &c., in a night's work. Large luggers, and the notorious "Big Jane," which was more than a match for the finest Cutter in the service, were always hovering off the coast. There were splendid cruisers on the look out; and I have seen in the Shannon the "Arab," "Sappho," "Gannet," and "Brazen," sloops of war, with cutters of a very large class—"Nepean," "Griper," "Vandeleur," and "Whitworth," and "Richmond" schooner. These smuggling canoe-men all swelled the Fishery Reports as men engaged in the fisheries, and others whose pursuits were picking kelp, poteen-making, and tillage. I recollect dining with Captain King on board the "Vandeleur" cutter, in Scatterry Roads, commanded by Lieutenant Napier, R. N., when information was brought of the "Fox" lugger (afterwards captured) being off Malbay. The "Vandeleur" immediately got under weigh, stood down the Shannon, but on rounding Loop Head, with a large second jib on, sprung her bowsprit in the heave of a heavy sea, and had to return. In November, 1823, both the "Arab" sloop of war and the "Big Jane" were lost in a heavy gale off the stags of Broadhaven.

It is not surprising, then, that the Reports of 1823 gave such a large increase from 1819, as to number in 1823, 27,142 vessels, and the men said to be engaged in the fisheries 49,448. The Act of 1824 reduced the tonnage bounty, and still further alterations of the laws were made in the year 1826, when the Act of 7 George IV. repealed all bounties to cease or expire on the 5th April, 1830. The speculating adventurers, who had principally provided large boats for claims of the bounty on tonnage, withdrew them from the fisheries, which left destitute a large number of men, and obliged them to seek other employments, while many emigrated, which relieved to some extent the distress that would have followed, though the latter were mostly land labourers; yet they had swelled the lists of fishery statistics.

At the end of 1829 the return of vessels showed the reduction to 12,611—the men numbering 63,421. The bounties that had been paid by the Government, distributed over a period of ten years, amounted to £151,390 4s. 7d.; but, independent of that sum, loans and grants had been largely made to the fishermen, sanctioned by the 66th section of the 59th George III., c. 109, which kept on a body of fishermen, and greatly aided them in the building and repairing of boats, and providing gear. It is to be regretted that that fund was not continued, for it enabled the poorer fishermen still following the fisheries to keep their boats in repair. A building loan fund, as suggested by Mr. Barry in 1821, would have had beneficial effects.

From 1830 to 1846 but little dependence can be placed upon the official Reports of the actual state of the Irish fisheries. The seasons were favourable or unfavourable—supplies of fish appeared good, yet this was chiefly owing to the uncertain and limited means of transit.



Still, the fisheries could not be considered in a healthy state, neither could dependence be placed on the statistics, which, in 1846, by the Nineteenth Report of the Board of Public Works, in which the return of the Inspectors of Fisheries is given, and which there states that the vessels numbered 19,883, and the men and boys 93,073. These vague statistics can easily be shown by the return made of native fishermen and boats near or within the range of Roundstone, county Galway, given in the Report for 1846, which states the numbers as 6,840 men and boys, and 1,530 boats of all classes.

The falsity of these kind of returns is strikingly exemplified by the evidence of Mr. Hart, of Clifden, county Galway, before the Select Committee of the House of Commons' Seacoast Fisheries (Ireland) Bill, 27th June, 1867, who, on the question of the coastguard officers' return for 1865, which gave 379 vessels and 1,393 men employed on the coast from Mason Island to Ruana, states in reply, that "there is not a vessel at all upon that part of the coast fishing; in fact, that the returns were inaccurate, and that the people or fishermen had not recovered the effects of the famine to show such an increase as reported." From information recently received from the north of Ireland, every species of boat had been returned as engaged in the fisheries, though the chief occupation was the collecting of seaweed, sand, &c., and other purposes for land service. Such views may be adduced as general around most parts of the coasts of Ireland, especially the remote districts.

During the year 1844 an attempt was made by the Loyal National Repeal Association, of which the late Maurice O'Connell, M. P., was chairman, and a Report published in the month of September, to show the amazing advantages that would result in the encouragement and prosecution of the Irish sea fisheries, and gave statistics of their state at that time. The committee suggested that an educational training of the fishermen and their families should be adopted, and that proper investigations should be carried out for the better knowledge, improvement, and protection of the fisheries—in short, "such branches of knowledge placed within their reach as must conduce to render them at once skilful and hardy in their own calling, teach them to respect the rights and properties of others, and increase and preserve their own."

In 1830 and 1831 potato failure and cholera gave some stagnation to the fisheries, but they recovered to some extent, until the climax of evil came upon them in 1847 and 1848. In 1846 the sad approach to this evil had manifested itself in the total failure of the potato crop, when the dire distress—more especially among the coast population—strongly interested Sir Charles E. Trevelyan, then Assistant Secretary at the Treasury, to alleviate, as far as possible, such misery; and through his recommendation a grant of £5,000 was sanctioned by the Treasury, from the Governors of the "Irish Reproductive Loan Fund"—for the formation of curing stations on such parts of the coasts where



destitution appeared the greatest among the fishermen. These were chosen in localities on the northern, western, and southern coasts; and curers were brought from Scotland to cure and to teach the system of curing fish. The stations, in several cases, were injudiciously selected. The Scotch curers, being only temporarily engaged, were indifferent (with the exception of Robert Brown, of Pittenweem) as to the success of their mission, or of the promotion of the Irish fisheries, and the fish in most instances were discreditably cured.

Roundstone, a station selected where such a large number of fishermen and boats had been returned, was obliged to be abandoned, and a subsequent Report of the fishery officials, mentioning this, states:—"Owing to the total apathy or inability of the inhabitants to avail themselves of its advantages." "In fact the soup kitchen had more attractions than hazardous exertions on a dangerous and exposed coast, so that few attempts were made to supply fish to the station." They were not fishermen or sailors, as the return already quoted supposed them, but mere sod-men.

It has been recently stated that those curing stations, when so peremptorily abolished, paid 50 to 80 per cent. profit. This is one of the misrepresentations too frequently put forward as Irish grievances that cannot be maintained. On the contrary, unfortunately, they were wound up with loss, and with unfavourable results.\* As I have already stated, several of the stations were injudiciously selected, to the exclusion of much more capable localities, and more favourably circumstanced for carrying out the intentions of Sir Charles Trevelyan—such as Dingle, where, as Mr. Donnell, Inspector of Harbours to the Commissioners of Irish Fisheries, reported—"The town contains a population of real fishermen exclusively employed in the fisheries."

At that period I visited the south-west of Ireland, and western parts, as I had for several years previously, exploring the coasts, and which made me well acquainted with the condition of the fisheries, and what would likely tend to their encouragement. In Killeany, Great Arran Isle, Galway Bay, there were twenty-five boats, of from ten to six tons, and fourteen canoes, manned by 150 men, who were all in the most miserable state, without clothes or food, and many able-bodied men had died of actual starvation, and such were the scenes in all parts of the islands. When, some years previously, I had explored Dingle Bay and the islands off that coast, I saw the capabilities of its fisheries, and how little the poor means of the fishermen had enabled them to turn to advantage. The numbers of able-bodied fishermen that were there, their sad state of destitution, and their utter incapability of benefiting to the extent their fisheries would yield to them, having only cumbersome open spritsail boats, which gave neither comfort nor protection

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\* The loss incurred in the attempt to establish these fish-curing stations, as per account rendered to the Commissioners of Audit, was £4,123 13s. 11d.



at sea, led to the formation of the "Royal Irish Fisheries Company." The objects and likely results were so satisfactorily put forward, the project received the warmest support of the late Admiral Sir Thomas Ussher, the Marquis of Lansdowne, and Sir Charles Trevelyan—the latter I met in Dublin with Sir Randolph Routh. So favourably, indeed, I may say was it entertained, that a number of eminent men became Patrons and Directors of the Company, and, finally, through the kind recommendation of the Earl of Clarendon, then Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and the Marquis of Lansdowne, President of Her Majesty's Privy Council, with the strong aid of Sir Charles Trevelyan of the Treasury, a Royal Charter of Incorporation was granted, by which the company assumed the title of the "Royal Irish Fisheries Company." So generously were the views entertained of benefiting the Irish fisheries, that all expenses of the Charter were waived by the Treasury, with exception of fixed and permanent fees of office, whereby fully to the extent of nearly £900 was conceded; the eminent firm of Barrington and Jeffers gave the benefit of their extensive experience; and all would have progressed well, were it not for the unfortunate condition of the country, in which, as the famine panic became less, the insurrectionary and alarming state of Ireland precluded all possibility of seeking, or rather calling in shares.

It has already been stated in a variety of Reports that the operations of the Company were commenced at Dingle, where everything progressed most favourably with the peaceable and intelligent fishermen of that place, until disputes and contentions with regard to trawling arose. This was occasioned by a number of trawl boats going there from Dublin, with the avowed object of breaking up the Company. At that time but little was known of the character of the soundings of Dingle Bay; the valuable Admiralty surveys, which have since completely worked out the whole coasts of Ireland, had not then attempted Dingle, consequently the entire of that bay had to be tested for trawling ground by the boats of the Company. When the invasion, I may call it, took place, only one small patch of clear ground had been traced; westerly of the Crow Rock, and extending westerly of Ventry Tower, with a stretch to the southward between those two points, of barely sufficient scope for four boats to work on—two belonging to the Company, and two native boats—consequently serious collisions occurred, and with the ever repeated clamour of the hook-men, destruction of spawn.

This gave the father of Irish Fishery Inspectors the opportunity of carrying out his long indulged and favourite hobby of boundary lines, thus continually fencing the bays from headland to headland around the coasts of Ireland. Through his investigations and Reports two-thirds of the Bay of Dingle were cut off against trawling and all further enterprise.

This prohibition induced boats to be sent to Galway, where a greater range of bay was open outside the boundary line than what Dingle could at that time give. Here again clamours, which were encouraged,



arose against the boats; all kinds of spawn and small fry were sworn by the hook-men to be destroyed. Numerous are the instances I could adduce, and specimens exhibit, of the absurdities of such views, and the manner the inquiries were entertained; but I will confine myself to one, Galway Bay, which may answer for all. I mention this the more particularly as the evidence given before the Committee of the House of Commons, Select Committee Sea Coast Fisheries (Ireland) Bill, 28th June, 1867, of the remarkable intelligence of Mr. O'Flaherty of the coastguard, and the strong impression made upon the minds of the fishery officials as to the small fish and spawn destroyed. Mr. O'Flaherty's Report was published in the Report of the Commissioners of Fisheries for 1852. Now, what were Mr. O'Flaherty's pretensions to such knowledge, or arriving at such, or claim to such intelligence? Mr. O'Flaherty states that he was out in the trawling cutter "Druid" eight days during the month of July, 1852, in Galway Bay, in which return he gives the fish taken and the quantities of small fish destroyed. He bottled up the slime from the fish off the deck as spawn. I was in Galway. In the first place, according to the declaration of the master of the "Druid," the intelligent Mr. O'Flaherty was only out three days, and he took the returns from the master of the "Druid" of the fish taken on other days. I was on board the "Druid" in a stiff breeze, and great swell in the bay off Black-Head. Mr. O'Flaherty was comfortably ashore. The fish taken were a large quantity of fine turbot, soles, brill, plaice, small dabs, gurnard, and hake. No small fish were taken of any of the kinds named; and Mr. O'Flaherty and the supporters of his views may be informed that no spawn of fish will be met with in July, at least of our white or round fish, and of turbot and soles, the spawning time being past.

Exhibited are instances of the ova of *Purpura lapillus*,\* *Ascidia virginea*, molluscs, which were averred to be spawn of fish, and ova from the Frith of Forth, stated to be the ova of the herring dredged in moderately deep water. This I cannot conceive to be other than the spawn of some of our pleuronectidæ. Herrings do not spawn in deep water. In such bays and inlets as Smerwick, Ventry, and Sneem, at extreme low tides in water pools and gulleys of those shores will be found myriads of the fry of the herring and the pilchard in the month of July; and they remain in the shoaler parts, until they attain a size to go into deep water.

Scientific men have even volunteered evidence somewhat surprising. However, no practical knowledge seems to have been brought to bear. Professor Van Beneden, a great author on some subjects, mentions that Norwegian Naturalists, who have been inquiring into this question, have reason to believe that the ova of the cod float about on the sea,

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\* This species of mollusc is very destructive to mussel beds.

† *Ascidia opalina* of Macgillivray, taken in 20 fathoms.



and are hatched there; and others, following such notions, state that they have captured the ova in a towing net; but none of these men of science ever saw the fry exude from the ova, or were satisfied that such ova were in a healthy or advanced stage of development to detect it to be the ova of cod. The ova of cod, haddock, ling, and hake, and even of herrings, will not float when in a healthy state of impregnation. The specific gravity will always cause the ova to sink, and remain undisturbed in such localities of the coast where instinct influences the fish to congregate and deposit the ova; hence it is, in certain seasons of the year, that these fish approach shoaler soundings for the deposit of ova. You will never meet fish in deep water soundings with ova developed; for thus in the winter months cod-fish are taken nearer the coast, and are sold in our markets full of pea, at the time they are most out of season. The finest condition of the cod and ling is throughout the summer months, taken in deep water, at a distance from the land. They are then in the best state both for the table and for curing. It is not right, without practical knowledge, to attempt to disprove views the results of practical experience. Off the coasts of Labrador and Newfoundland the finest codfish are taken. In the spring months, when, and after spawning, they are taken on the inner or shoaler banks; they after, to recover, retreat into deeper water, where the greater quantity, and finest condition of the cod, are met on the Great Bank in forty-five to sixty fathoms during the summer months. The withdrawal of encouragement to the British fisherman has resulted, by State support given by the French and Americans, to throw the whole advantages of those fisheries into the hands of the fishermen of those countries, while the poor British sailor has to content himself in smaller craft to an inshore fishery. In fact, Great Britain has yielded the interests of those fisheries, which were the pride of former reigns.

To return again to the "Royal Irish Fisheries Company," which had been working most successfully at Dingle for some years, it was thought desirable, as the project had been so completely tested and proved, to place it again before the public. A difficulty occurred with regard to the validity of the Charter, as there was a provision that, within a given time from the date of the Charter, a deed of settlement should be executed, and a copy thereof deposited, with a statement of amount of capital and shares, with the Board of Trade. It has been stated the causes which prevented compliance with this provision of the Charter, which the experience of the Messrs. Barrington led them to believe would, from the circumstances, be of no moment. The Right Hon. Edward Cardwell, then President of the Board of Trade, who was generally adverse to chartered companies, thought otherwise, and would not consent to a Supplemental Charter, though recommended by the Marquis of Lansdowne, and Lord Granville, President of the Privy Council—the Royal Charter, as Lord Lansdowne observed, being granted by the Queen in Privy Council, under



the Great Seal, was, though not legally valid, only in abeyance. Mr. Cardwell was desirous that his principle of a Limited Liability Act should alone be entertained.

From the time it was decided that a renewal or supplemental Charter could not be assented to, the Directors declined further to prosecute the fisheries with the views advocated by Mr. Cardwell; and thus terminated an undertaking that promised to be most flourishing, and of great benefit to the fisheries of the country. The Company then passed into other hands, who, unauthorised, traded in the name of the "Royal Irish Fisheries Company," broke up the establishment at Dingle, where its working had been favourably progressing, commenced a silly expenditure at Galway, with an utter ignorance of the fisheries, which resulted in total failure. This system of management may be generally applied to all companies where the necessary knowledge was not with those who exercised—or rather endeavoured to exercise—control in the management they had undertaken. The late Mr. John Good, well known as a thoroughly practical man, and proprietor of the finest trawl-boats on the east coast, when giving a Paper, "Notes on Trawling on the East Coast," remarked on the management of the Royal Irish Fisheries Company at Dingle:—"Mr. Andrews' labours were completely successful at Dingle up to the time of the project assuming another directory." No shares were called in, nor obtained, by the Directors of the original project. The subscriptions were voluntary for the payment of fees of Charter, preliminary expenses, and commencing operations, and with loans obtained through the "Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor of Ireland," successfully maintained its working at Dingle, and realised good value both in stock and plant. It should be mentioned that, through the generous interference of Sir Charles Trevelyan, the large stock of salt and plant at Valencia were handed over to the Company at Dingle.

This state of the fisheries leads to the notice of the "Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor of Ireland," which now may be justly termed the "Forlorn Hope of the Irish Fisheries." In the first part of this Paper I have alluded to the Report of the trustees of that Society for the past year, just published. It will be there seen the system of proceedings, and the amount of good effected around a great extent of the coasts of Ireland. The loans to fishermen, who are well recommended, and with approved securities, are granted by the Society free of interest, in sums from £10 to £500, repayable by easy instalments, extending over a period of from three to four years. The localities where the loans have been distributed are marked on the chart now exhibited. Of loans made by the Society, £10,796 6s. 1d. remain outstanding to 31st December, 1872, and which may probably be increased £3000 to £4000 more before the instalments repayable in May next are received, May and November being the periods for the repayments. Few losses have occurred, and those but small propor-



tions of outstanding instalments, arising from death or other uncontrollable causes.

I am proud here of the opportunity of recording the very high opinion entertained by the Trustees of the Honorary Secretary, George Kinahan, Esq., of Roebuck Park, whose unwearied zeal in the cause of charity, and thorough business habits, and financial intelligence, have carried out most successfully the minute and responsible labours of the monetary transactions of the Society from the date of his undertaking the office, the 5th June, 1861, which the elaborate accounts of the Society will amply testify.

The subject of loans adverted to in the Report referred to for 1872, is one of considerable difficulty, requiring much judgment as to propriety of allocation, and of safety and utility in distribution to applicants. Hitherto, through other channels, uncertainty of beneficial results and losses have occurred, and recommendations have generally tended as to doubtful advisability of such encouragement. In the management two very important points must be considered. First, the employment given to industrious fishermen, who are really occupied in fishing, and which would promote greater supplies throughout the country. Secondly, that such encouragement would, by forming a body of seamen, be of importance when necessity required their services. It has been suggested that such ends could be accomplished through the coast-guard, and that that service could greatly aid in the distribution and application of loans to the fishermen. Now, the nature of the coasts of Ireland and position of the fishermen are to be viewed. On many ranges of the coasts there are extents of wild and rocky shores, where there are neither shelter for fishing craft nor any resident proprietary that could encourage any system among the men, who are more a class of small farmers than fishermen, and who only in their shore boats take advantage of any fine weather when fish approach their localities. Though poverty may be great among them, they have no countenance, through absent owners of the soil, and even were security to be obtained by them, the loans would more likely be employed to the advantage of their little holdings than to the procuring of means for pursuing fishing.

Still there are many that demand our greatest sympathy—those (and there are districts that I could name) where the fishermen are detached in isolated places, whose only means of existence for themselves and families depend on their daily labour on a wild coast. These poor men have no holdings—no spot of land but that on which their cabins stand—yet with their corrachs they are daring and industrious. The question arises where are the securities for loans to such? The holders of land around their dwellings will not be; and they are unknown to the absentee proprietor. Can Government be called upon to subsidise these poor people, who are dragging out a miserable existence, but whose numbers emigration is fast thinning? During the sad times of 1846 Mr. Bertolacci, in writing to Mr. Leake, one of the official



trustees of the Irish Reproductive Loan Fund,\* on the application of money in loans to fishermen, says—"It is the most difficult part of my duty to report upon. All the shallow-water fishermen, and in some instances the deep-sea fishermen (where they are to be met with), are not (as on the English coast) solely fishermen, but as much potato-growers, remaining idle except when the fish actually comes into the harbours."

"As to the plans suggested by Sir James Dombrain and Mr. Barry, of lending money through the coastguard [continues Mr. Bertolacci], I cannot, nor would you were you to see this country along the coast, look upon it in any other light than as a theory, which practically could not be carried out, and I fear the funds would soon be returned as irrecoverable."†

Lord St. Lawrence, Member for Galway, who gave much attention with the desire of promoting the fisheries of that bay, found many difficulties in the way which opposed and impeded his good views. Three very able and clever letters from his lordship appeared in the "*Daily Express*" of the 1st and 16th of August, and 10th of September, 1867, when the subject of the Irish fisheries was much agitated. The absurdity of encouragement to these small farmers, as fishermen, was sensibly viewed. To sum up the inconsistency, every project was suggested for the promotion of the fisheries of Galway, and pecuniary aid tendered; but no security was forthcoming, and in the very best and most profitable season of the year, these so-called fishermen abandoned the fishing, and turned solely to seaweed cutting for the culture of the land.

The coastguard, or waterguard of former years, were of a different class of service to the present men. They were resident more amongst the people, and their stations were remote or detached. Many stations were in districts of a rocky coast of great extent, and I have admired

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\* The Irish Reproductive Loan Fund appears to have been formed from a balance in the hands of a Committee of contributors to a subscription, which had been raised for the relief of urgent distress in Ireland in 1822. Her Majesty granted a Charter, dated 4th June, 1844, to the Irish Reproductive Loan Institution: the Charter placed in the hands of Governors named therein a further sum of £45,000, and its accumulations, being also part of the balance of the above subscription, to be employed in loans to the industrious classes in the provinces of Munster and Connaught, of small sums of money, implements of labour, seed, and other raw materials, to be employed in husbandry, trade, or fisheries. The Trustees in Ireland were to allocate the money, and so rigid were the rules with regard to the repayment of those loans, that the Trustees were called upon to make good the outstanding loans, which were not recoverable owing to the distress occasioned by the famine years of 1846, 1847, and were it not for the determined line in their defence made by Lord Lucan (who was one of the Governors) the Trustees would have been made accountable. A balance of that fund and its accumulations still exists, vide Act 11 & 12, Victoria, ch. 115, s. 14.

† Vide Correspondence from July, 1846, to January, 1847, for the relief of the distress in Ireland and Scotland. Fisheries series (1847), page 18. The circumstances of the present time (1873) are similar.



in isolated positions the respectability and neatness of the men, and their families, which strangely contrasted with the wildness and misery of the country around. Most of these out-stations have been withdrawn, and more centralised, and new regulations under the Admiralty have established a fine reserve of seamen for the service of the Royal Navy.

The subject of loans was discussed before the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the taxation of Ireland in 1865, as to what had been, or could be, done to promote the Irish sea fisheries by Imperial legislation. Of this Committee General Dunne was chairman, whose indomitable labours to sift the evils by which Ireland appeared to suffer must be gratefully remembered. He endeavoured to trace what grants from the Treasury had been given in aid of that branch of industry. The little at the time that could be done for Ireland in the assistance to poor fishermen rested with the "Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor of Ireland," whose funds it is seen have been unreservedly exercised in furtherance of that good object. Still every available hope was looked to, which led to the evidence that an annual grant of £5000 was supposed to be in abeyance since the year 1830, being a grant sanctioned to Ireland by the 66th section of the Act of 59th George III., cap. 109 (12th July, 1819), continued to be held in force, made from the Consolidated Fund, under the 5th George IV., cap. 64 (17th June, 1824); and, again, the quoted Acts appeared to be maintained by 5th and 6th Victoria, cap. 106 (10th August, 1842), which enacts, by section 1:— "Provided always that nothing herein contained shall be construed to repeal any enactments or provisions of said Acts, or any of them which relates to piers or quays, or assisting poor fishermen, or any powers in respect thereof, now vested in the Commissioners of Public Works (Ireland), or any moneys applicable to such purposes in the hands of the Commissioners of Public Works; but all such enactments and provisions relating to piers or quays, or assistance of poor fishermen, and all such powers in respect thereof, or of the application of moneys applicable to such purposes, shall remain in full force and effect." Now, it was presumed that that section of the Act continued in force the 5th George IV., cap. 64, which in the same section of that Act gave to Scotland the annual grant of £3000, and which to the present has been charged each year as a Parliamentary grant by Scotland, under the 5th George IV., cap. 64, in "General Account for Piers or Quays." These views with regard to Ireland were warmly supported by the late Robert Longfield, Q. C., Member for Mallow (author of "The Fishery Laws of Ireland," 1863), and by Sir Edward Grogan, who were both on the Committee, and by the late Lord Chief Justice of Appeal, the Right Hon. Francis Blackburne. Others maintained that £13,000, granted by 1st William IV., cap. 54 (16th July, 1830), rescinded the grant of £5000 to Ireland; but it would appear that the £13,000 was sanctioned for the comple-



tion of fishery piers undertaken by the Commissioners of Fisheries previous to 1830. From 1830 the sum of £13,000 was to be disbursed in payments extending over five years, the annual sum each year decreasing until the fifth year, when £1000 would only remain to be paid; yet, at the termination of the fifth year, the close of 1835, an unexpended balance of nearly £12,000 of pier and loan funds appeared to be in the hands of the Board of Works.\* The Act of 1842 (5 & 6 Vict., c. 106, sec. 1), certainly states—“*Now vested* in the Commissioners of Public Works, applicable to piers or quays, or to poor fishermen.” Chief Justice Blackburne expressed (2nd December, 1865)—“The exclusion from the repealing Act of any enactments relating to piers, &c., vested in the Commissioners of Public Works, or any moneys in their hands applicable to such, would seem to have two distinct purposes. First, the preservation and retention of all enactments relating to piers, &c. Now, could there be any end or object in saving and perpetuating these powers, if the £5000, the means of executing them, were withdrawn? It seems to me that the perpetuation of these powers necessarily required that of the grant of £5000, without which they would be simply abortive. The second purpose is simple, that of fixing with the trust, and for the continuing purpose of the Act, the funds already drawn by and in the hands of the Commissioners. It would seem to be a violent and arbitrary extension of these words to hold that the Commissioners were to have no other means of executing the important trusts confided to them, and which were perpetual, than the balance of the fund that might have been in their hands when the Act was passed. The result seems plainly to be that the trust and means of executing it were to remain vested in the Commissioners.” The opinions of the law officers of the Crown were adverse, and therefore expectation rested.†

Fault appears to have been for not at the time persevering in seeking for Ireland the continuance of that grant of £5000, while, under the same Act, Scotland still receives her £3000; and which was, as the Hon. B. F. Primrose, Secretary to the Scotch Fishery Board, stated to the Select Committee of Seacost Fisheries (Ireland) Bill, confirmed by that Act, which gave the £5000 to Ireland:—“That Act passed in 1824; but (Mr. Primrose continued) we never got our money till 1828, and on asking for the amount which was due between 1824 and 1828, it was refused, because they said that we ought to have asked for it; so we lost four years’ money by not asking;” and Ireland lost £5000 a-year by not asking!!!

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\* Appendix to the First Report of the Commissioners of the Irish Fishery Inquiry (1836), pages 30 and 31.

† The opinion of the Attorney and Solicitor-General of England was—“The original grant of £5000 a-year is not now in force, or capable of effect.” Mr. Justice Blackburne, of the English Bench, expressed in a recent case—“He could not say the case was clear, for it turned on the construction of Acts of Parliament, and therefore nothing in it could be clear.” (January, 1873, Court of Queen’s Bench.)



Mr. Brady, inspector of fisheries, whose long connexion with the fisheries of Ireland and their official details, gave foundation of authority, stated before the same Committee, 3rd July, 1867, with regard to the portion of £5,000, £500 a-year to poor fishermen—"I think that sum has been available under the Statute since 1830, but it has not been claimed. There is nothing, in my mind, which repealed that provision of 5th Geo. IV., c. 64." Mr. Primrose further states, "that £500 a-year allocated to boats of poor fishermen (and which was applied in that way from 1828 to 1850) was given up upon his representation, as it was found to work so ill, and the entire grant taken for piers and harbours." It is not explained upon what principle a provision of an Act of Parliament could have been so dealt with, or differently applied.

We have been taunted with having received large grants to the extent of £90,000 for the improvement of the fisheries. Those sums were supposed to be given in consequence of the great distress occasioned by the potato failure in 1846, for in that year the Act 9th Victoria, c. 3, was passed for the object of employing the people, which allocated £50,000 for the encouragement of the sea fisheries, and as a source of employment and food, partly to be expended by way of loan, and partly by way of grant, in the construction of piers and harbours, and other works, on conditions and restrictions specified in the Act. In the following year a further sum of £40,000 was granted by Act 10 and 11 Victoria, c. 75, for similar objects and on similar conditions. The money was not to any extent applied for fishery objects or for employment of the fishermen, for no advances were made for boats, tackle, or other necessities for fishing, but for piers and harbours, which were equally constructed for commercial purposes, and for which repayments were levied on the districts and by contributions. Though ostensibly voted for immediate relief in the famine years, yet by way of grant £74,700 had only been expended, spreading over a period of eighteen years.

In any statements I have given, I wish it to be understood that I make no reflections on the Commissioners of Public Works, for whom I have great respect, as I am well aware of the stringencies of the Acts which controlled their public duties.

The next to be considered are the fishermen and the fisheries, and the most useful means of aiding and promoting them. I have stated that there are many returned as engaged in the fisheries of Ireland that have but small means of carrying them out, or that only turn their attention occasionally to such pursuits, being occupiers of small holdings or engaged in farming work. Are these, then, well-founded claimants for Government aid? Certainly not. The owners of the lands which they occupy or the absentee proprietor of the soil should see that they had that encouragement in their several tenures which would ensure comfortable existence for their toil. Those that demand our greatest sympathy are the poor corrach-men, who labour on the wild and rocky



shores of an exposed coast, yet are daring and industrious for the support of their families. They have no holdings save their little cabins, and occasionally a little plot of ground on the con-acre system, for which they are charged unreasonably high. Their inshore work cannot treat them as deep sea fishermen; yet if they were near established stations, where employment could be given, they would be energetic and useful as fishermen, and eventually as seamen. It would be desirable, as expressed by an intelligent English naval officer who had served on the coasts of Ireland, "If the fishermen were congregated into villages, and separated from farming pursuits, and the farmer to employ himself in tillage instead of fishing, it would benefit both parties." This will lead to the main point—the formation and true promotion of our fisheries—viz., the establishment of proper stations on those parts of the coasts where a general fishery can be successfully carried on throughout the seasons, and where there are such localities that would give shelter to a class of large sea-going boats, being the only means of turning largely and profitably to account our prolific fisheries, and of the formation of seamen, who should mainly depend upon such resources for employment. We must not at first rush too extensively into such a project; therefore the selection of a few points illustrating their capabilities may for the present suffice.

The stations to be selected would be Killybegs, Galway, Dingle, and Bantry. Of each I will explain in a general way their resources, and their connexion with important fishing localities. First, Killybegs. The harbour is well sheltered, and has a good depth of water. It is the safest and most commanding position on that part of the north-west coast, and where a station could be most successfully maintained. The enormous quantities of herrings that were formerly taken by the Killybegs, Inver Bay, Teelin, Kilcar, and Malinbeg boats, are supposed to have decreased; but it is not so—they are equally abundant, both the winter and harvest herrings. The large and safe boats, with deep and long trains of nets, both for the herring fishery and for mackerel, are wanting, for it is upon the early fishing of the season and in deep water that will chiefly depend success.

This is the case in all the bays or localities of the coast that I may refer to. Donegal Bay can be well worked throughout the winter season with good boats, as the stream of flood in the bay is scarcely perceptible. Cod fish, ling, hake, pollock, coal fish, are abundant, and would, with the herring, give large supplies for well-regulated curing-houses. Throughout the summer the fishery may be extended to a more distant range, as well for herrings and mackerel as for cod and ling, which are abundant off Tory Island, and large quantities may be taken from Teeling to Malin Head. Sheephaven may offer temporary shelter to run from Tory Island grounds, where there are fine turbot, and cod and ling.

In speaking of fishing grounds, which are erroneously termed banks, as they are mere variations of soundings, there are continuous ranges



along the entire of the north-western, western, and south-western coasts—many of them known to the local fishermen, yet few can tell their true compass bearings. These soundings vary at distances from the land, the depth generally from 35 to 60 and 80 fathoms. The recent Admiralty surveys have so accurately marked the fathoms of soundings and generally the character of bottom, that no difficulty can exist in making out the best grounds. A small dredge, with proper lead lines, will easily determine the nature of the soundings, proving the marine animals, the sandy, shelly, shingly, or other characteristics, which will at once decide the most likely grounds of resort of cod, ling, tusk, haddock, conger, and turbot.

At Galway, where such facilities of transit are at present, a fine fishing establishment could be formed. Off the Arran Isles and Greatman's Bay, on the Connemara coast, the winter herrings are abundant. Greatman's Bay would give shelter to large boats, as the holding ground is good. The mackerel and herring fishing of May would prove, with able boats and proper nets, most successful, long before any attempts are made to take them in Galway Bay, eastward of Blackhead. Stations at Arran and at Innisbofin Island, where the latter has good shelter, and sufficient depth of water, in Bofin Harbour, would give great advantages during the summer months. Herrings are plentiful. Turbot could be taken, and ling and cod off Achill. Off the Inniskea Islands, and N. W. of Innisbofin, and with a fine range extending to Slyne Head, where the Mark-na-Geeragh fishing grounds have plenty of ling, cod, and turbot. To be successful, the boats must be able and decked, with great extent of long lines, and with sunfish gear; for it is in that range those sharks appear, at the latter end of April and beginning of May, when their capture is easy.

Dingle would also yield abundant supplies. The grounds off the Islands N. W. of the Blaskets, and N. W. of the Great Skellig have abundance of fine ling, cod, tusk, hake, and conger, and splendid turbot inside the Great Skellig, and to the south of the Great Blasket. S. W. of the West Blasket, in fifty and sixty fathoms, large haddock are taken. Portmagee, Valentia Island, in connexion with Dingle, would yield great returns, as there are fine fishing grounds that have been tested from Bray Head to Puffin Island, and between the Little Skellig and the Lemon Rock. A valuable and productive herring and mackerel fishery in early summer is lost to the Dingle men for want of good luggers and long and deep trains of nets. Although a most extensive curing establishment could be formed there for the cure of ling, cod, and hake, as well as herrings, which they fully understand, yet their means being limited, they prefer trawling, which brings them, by the sale of fresh fish, prompt market returns. They do not cure any of the better kinds of round fish but hake, which are taken in abundance with hand lines during the autumn after the trawling is over.

Bantry, and Berehaven, would be other effective positions, herring fishing and a general fishery being productive there. There are



also other resources, such as seining for mackerel, mullet, scad, and pilchards, and lobster fishing early in the season would be remunerative; but lobsters are on more distant ground then, before the ova or coral, as it is called, are matured; they then are more plentiful near our rocky shores. There can be no hesitation in asserting but that a general fishery throughout the seasons can be established, and great stocks of cured fish could be realised, which would secure demand in this country, to the exclusion of the very large imports yearly made of Shetland, Scotland, and Norway cured fish; and which imports have been stated as reaching £100,000 a year.

Though numerically the fisheries would appear to have declined by the lesser returns of boats and men, yet the superior tonnage that are now in use along the entire range of the east coast, and at Kinsale and Dingle, must be considered, while the increasing exports of fresh fish to the English markets of turbot, soles, mackerel, and herrings, will go far to prove that the fisheries have not degenerated. Judge what Howth, Skerries, Balbriggan, Kinsale and Dingle, were some few years since, and see what they now present during a fishing season, and which would still further advance had they on the east coast safer shelter, and improved harbour accommodation.

An important feature must not be overlooked—our home market. Better regulations are much needed, and that market monopoly of the factors differently carried out. Until some interference for better control is exercised, the citizens of Dublin will never be supplied with the choicer kinds of fish at reasonable rates, nor the industrious fisherman properly remunerated for his hard-earned toil. The ready transit of fish should have accomplished more favourable returns to our coast fisheries.

To sum up what I have given in a general way, the fisheries of Ireland present a fine field of enterprise and profit, and in every sense of considerable importance—of enterprise and profit to those who can, with knowledge and prudence, grapple with the undertaking; and of importance, by ensuring greater supplies throughout the country, and which must also result by constituting skilful fishermen and good seamen. This, as I have observed, must mainly depend upon the separation of farming and fishing interests, for serious calculation must be made of the great want of field labour. The population, according to Mr. Dennehy, has during the past twenty-five years decreased 3,000,000 (63,995 Irish, by the New York immigration returns, having arrived there during the year 1872), and tillage crops have decreased the last twenty years 1,000,000 of acres. It is now easily seen why our local markets are so badly supplied, and provisions so exorbitantly high, for it was our small farmers of twenty to thirty acres (Irish measure) that kept up our stock of cattle (especially horses), pigs, &c. At the same time, there can be no doubt but that Ireland has materially advanced in improved breeds of stock, and in better means of agricultural pursuits (for which much is due to the Royal Dublin Society);



but that stock has not increased in quantity, though it may in quality, and of which the greater share passes from us to the markets of England.

In conclusion, a very serious consideration for the better and more certain improvement of our fisheries presents itself. You, Sir (addressing the chairman), must be sensible of the importance of the suggestions that I now venture to make. In the army and navy, in the staff, control, and civil services, in all branches of scientific professions, and in some of our leading banks, competitive examinations for the several branches of such services are necessary, and as each grade or step of promotion advances, the examinations in most cases necessarily become more extensive and more stringent. The Right Hon. Edward Cardwell, in an admirable speech, recently made at Oxford, expressed, "under the arrangements for the localisation of the army, provision would be made for the training not only of the privates, but of the officers." Then, Sir, is it not important that a training should be exercised with those that are advanced to a control in a public department, as that of our fisheries, and to which department the Acts of Parliament of 1869\* have given such imperative powers, over a branch of our national resources, which have so often been adverted to as a main feature of the country? Would it not be right then that in all future nominations a training for examinations should be exercised before appointments could be confirmed, and that merit alone should have the advantage? for if by those in authority rules and decisions be not framed and grounded upon scientific and practical knowledge, it will be vain to establish respect for the laws, or with the fishermen confidence in their control. The study of ichthyology, marine zoology, and animal physiology, should be made a scientific and practical course. The seasons and habits of fish, topography of our coasts, use and construction of charts, tides, and winds, should all form essential points to be thoroughly informed upon. As illustrative—in one of the early Reports an Inspector of Fisheries states, that "the harbour of Roscarbery is remarkable for large quantities of sand eels, a small fish somewhat resembling sprats"—fish of totally different generic characters and habits. In a prosecution for protection of valuable eel fisheries in the Shannon, where quantities of eel fry had been destroyed, a clever attorney so puzzled the evidence, and those that presided at the inquiry, that no one could prove that they were really eel fry. I will give one more instance—an extract from a letter of an Inspector of Fisheries, addressed to a fishery official in Norway, published in the Report of the Deep Sea and Coast Fishery Commissioners for 1865: "You know how deplorably ignorant we are upon many important points which are unsettled subjects of contention between the different classes of fishermen, and how very important it would be to be furnished

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\* 32nd Victoria, Salmon Fisheries (Ireland), ch. 9, 13th May, 1869; 32 & 33 Victoria, Fisheries (Ireland), ch. 92, 9th August, 1869.



with such practical information as should enable us to test, by the experience of other countries, the effects of those modes of fishing complained of here as over-exhaustive." "It is at length admitted that there is no possible reason why what we call seafish should not require, like salmon, a period of rest for reproduction and recovery."

I will wind up with a quotation from the "*Times*" of the 3rd of January last :—"We should like to see the Irish developing their splendid fisheries, and for our own sakes, no less than theirs. We wish every Irish railway paid as good a dividend as our best trunk lines. If Irish bogs can really be made to yield a cheap substitute for coals, that event would be among the most welcome of the year 1873. If such things can be done, and are not done, the fault will not be ours. The legislation of a hundred years since will not be repeated in these days. Ireland will have fair play, not to say more, and it rests with herself to turn to good and permanent purpose such opportunities as she is now obviously enjoying."

The Chairman (J. Pim, Esq., M. P.) said the subject was one of great interest, and there were, no doubt, some gentlemen present who wished to give them the benefit of the information they possessed on it. In some counties he was acquainted with, the farmers were successful in getting herrings in some instances to an extent that went a long way towards paying the rent. He thought there was a better chance now of employing fishermen to catch fish all the year round than formerly, because there is a certainty of a market, whilst many years ago fish were sometimes useless, and made into manure. He wished to ask, what was the present opinion in regard to trawling. In '48 a friend of his own was anxious to try trawling in Galway Bay, under the belief that it would be an improvement, but the people were very averse to it, in the belief that it would destroy the spawn. He wished to know was trawling as now practised in Galway paying, and what was the effect of it on the supply of fish?

Mr. Brady, one of the Inspectors of Irish Fisheries, said that the question of trawling had occupied his attention for more than twenty years. He was the first person to recommend the Board of Works to repeal the by-laws against trawling in Dingle Bay. He had a strong opinion with regard to free trade in fishing, but lately in Galway they had had a repetition of outrages by Claddagh men against the trawlers, and two boats had been set on fire. He had investigated the matter, and several Claddagh men were sent for trial. The evidence given at this inquiry was like all such evidence, very contradictory: every one gave evidence according to his bias, and no one knew better the danger of relying upon such evidence than Mr. Andrews. He decided that a series of experiments should be carried out, not like those of Mr. Fletchley, but every month in the year, every available day in the month, and every available hour in the day. He trusted these experiments would result in something practically useful. So far as taking up the spawn was concerned, he thought the allegations on this point were without foundation. The only question was, did the trawlers destroy any considerable quantity of small, unmarketable fish? If it turned out that on no day of the month did this destruction take place, he thought it would be the strongest evidence to induce them to repeal all existing by-laws on the subject of trawling. He regretted that the members of Parliament who endeavoured to repeal these by-laws were not successful, and that they did not get the support which was necessary. However they hoped to have at the end of the year such information as would enable them to give decided information on this point, particularly in regard to the question of taking the small fish. He agreed with Mr. Andrews on every other point. He believed the Society was indebted to Mr. Andrews for bringing the subject before it. There was hardly any question relating to the resources of Ireland that was of more importance than the development of her



fisheries. Ireland was selected as the fish-producing country, and the more facilities for piers and harbours of refuge the better. He was happy to say that this year the sea fisheries in Donegal Bay had been such as exceeded in extent the memory of the oldest man. But, as a rule, from the want of means, the poorer classes of fishermen were unable to capture the fish as plentifully as they otherwise might. In several places there were no herring-nets although plenty of herrings. In Killybegs, for instance, there was not a single herring-net. Loans administered judiciously was the only possible way of improving the coast fisheries of Ireland. Though Government had given them great powers, they had not given them an annual grant for the promotion of fisheries in Ireland. They should, therefore, do the best they could by avoiding throwing impediments in the way of fishing. He thought at one time there was about £5000 a-year due to them for forty years for the promotion of the coast fisheries, but he had looked through the matter, by the aid of the law officers of the Crown, and he had found that that was not the case, and that an Act of Parliament had decided, and that they had lost their money. It was an extraordinary fact that public fishing companies in Ireland had hitherto failed, and he was afraid that such companies would fail in the future. He would be sorry to damp the ardour of capitalists, if he thought their work would do good. Mr. Andrews attributed the failure of the Royal Irish Fisheries Company to the loss of the Charter. He (Mr. Brady) was at a loss to understand why the seal of her Majesty would improve a private enterprise. Perhaps Mr. Andrews would tell them how the abeyance of the Charter prevented the company working. If the company were established on sound principles, and were doing a good business, what did they care about a royal charter? If it could be shown that a royal charter would benefit the fisheries of Ireland, he would be most ready and willing to promote the application to the Queen to grant one for a company, but he thought the fisheries of Ireland should be developed in some other way.

Mr. John Adair thought there was no ground to look forward to failure in future enterprises, because we had failed in former ones.

Mr. Montgomery said there had been only two companies in latter years that had not succeeded. One was the Irish Sea Fishing Company, that spent too much money in boats and buildings, and the South of Ireland Fishery Company, that, out of a capital of £10,000 were paying £1,000 a-year in rents and salaries.

Mr. Blake said, with reference to the profits on curing establishments, 50 per cent. would not be too large a sum, and the society with which Mr. Andrews was connected was a good illustration of what might be done by careful management. When the ordinary fisherman made 25 per cent. beyond his outlay, he should make an equal sum to support himself, and that would be 50 per cent., about the same amount these curing-houses were realising. Mr. Andrews spoke of the ova of the cod sinking, and perhaps he would lead the meeting to imagine it was a general rule that it sank. But according to the opinion of Dr. Sars, the great Norwegian naturalist, it deposited its spawn on the sea. This naturalist found the ova floating on the ocean, and he believed it was intended that it should so float, as there were attached to the ends of it a small quantity of oil, which, being lighter than the water, showed that it was intended the ova should float. Therefore the trawl could do no harm: with the best trawl they could never take the ova from the bottom of the ocean, but they could get it in the ocean. He (Mr. Blake) believed that as a general rule trawling did no harm, for even when the fish do spawn in the bed of the ocean, they select places which cannot be touched by the trawl. He believed Mr. Brady's experiments had not resulted in taking up spawn from Galway Bay. Mr. Andrews had asked were the men who combined farming with fishing the men the Government should subsidise. He dissented from Mr. Andrews, when he said that half fishermen and half farmers never could effect anything. He believed the fisheries of Ireland would never be carried on successfully except by the half farmers and the half fishermen. There was no industry that required more the supervision of the people engaged in it than fishing. Every spare moment should be looked after, and the greatest industry observed to get the fish to market. When they came in the matter of companies, to pay a chairman, directors, and secretaries, who had no knowledge of the subject, and managers on the spot, and the men who draw their incomes



from the company, in every instance the plan would be a failure. Ireland being the most tempestuous country on the face of the earth, in many places for six weeks at a time, the boats could not go to sea, and the men became disorganised and demoralised in the public-houses. The result was they could not be got to go to sea when wanted. Therefore the coast should be fished by half fishermen and half farmers, or not at all. These men could spend profitably the time, when fishing was impracticable, on the land. Wherever fishing only was carried on, the place had become impoverished, and of this assertion he gave several proofs. It was his opinion that five times as much money as had been mentioned by Mr. Andrews could be profitably expended in loans. There would be a stronger argument in favour of Government loans, than the good Mr. Andrews' society had effected. He believed the country was very much indebted to Mr. Andrews for the zeal he had shown in the promotion of fisheries and the knowledge and enlightened views he had displayed on the subject.

In reply, Mr. Andrews was glad to learn from Mr. Brady, Inspector of Fisheries, that experiments, repeated throughout the seasons of the year, on all available days, were to be carried out, in order that it might be satisfactorily tested whether or not, by any system of fishing, injury was done to the spawn of fish, or the fry. It has been stated that spawn could not be disturbed by trawl-boats, or that proof of destruction had ever been established to that effect. With regard to fry, the regular trawl-boats engaged in that mode of fishing do not trawl in the shallow soundings, where fry resort during their early stage of growth; the injury would more likely be caused by the pole, or in-shore drag-net boats. Mr. Andrews had already explained why the Royal Irish Fisheries Company had not continued, though its success, and the principles of its working, were well established. No company can ever succeed, or maintain its expenditure, unless the nature of the coasts, and the seasons of fishing throughout are well understood. Success mainly depends upon a general fishery carried on throughout the year, for no project will be profitable that has only to depend upon one system of fishing, or rather is confined to the capture of one kind of fish, or the fishery of a season.

The Charter granted under powers vested in the Queen (1st Victoria, ch. 73), gave powers to the Company to establish and maintain stations at such places along the entire coasts of Ireland as the said Company shall from time to time select. Powers also to purchase land, and such wharfs, docks, houses, offices, and buildings, necessary or proper. The liabilities of the shareholders were restricted to all debts of the Company to such extent only per share, upon the shares held by them respectively, as shall then for the time being, not be paid up. The Company had also the power to borrow to the extent of £20,000, if necessary.\* The calculations made of the expenditure necessary for the station at Dingle, and the returns which the limited outlay had realised, warranted the Directors in considering the success of the Company as certain, under the provisions granted by the Charter; therefore, as the sanction of the Board of Trade would not be given for its renewal, the Directors declined to enter into any new arrangements or plans. Mr. Andrews did not wish to convey that Mr. Cardwell intentionally broke up the Royal Irish Fisheries Company, by not assenting to the continuance of the Charter, but merely that he was desirous (being averse to chartered bodies) to have the views entertained with regard to his Limited Liability Act.

With regard to Mr. Blake's, Inspector of Fisheries, observations, no doubt that well-conducted curing establishments would be profitable, but not in the manner carried on in 1846, though the prices of fish at that time were very low. The prices of cured fish at the present day were more than double, ling being £35 per ton, and upwards, and dried hake sold by the fishermen had brought £20 per ton.

\* Fees paid on Royal Charter, viz.:—

	£	s.	d.
To Secretary of State's office, and for passing the Charter, .	67	9	6
Attorney-General's office for Bill, . . . . .	36	15	0
Signet office, . . . . .	67	8	0
Privy Seal office, . . . . .	68	2	0
Patent office, . . . . .	96	19	8
Messengers, &c., . . . . .	1	11	6

Total of fixed Fees, £338 5 8



As to the views of Norwegian naturalists, with regard to the ova of fish, they were very absurd, for it has even been asserted that the ova of salmon floated down the river, until resting for hatching. Mr. Andrews did not this evening intend to enter into the science of the subject. Mr. Andrews was decidedly opposed to the combination of farming and fishing—at least to loans being made to such employments, for it was not unfrequently found that the moneys were more applied to the land than to fishing pursuits. The trustees of the “Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor of Ireland” had not more than £16,000 available or free, and which, according to the trust, was to be principally distributed in aid of, and promotion of the sea-coast fisheries of Ireland. Of that sum, already nearly £13,000 was outstanding, and more, as the season advanced, would be lent. No doubt, as Mr. Blake said, a considerably larger sum could be lent, and applications would be found from such as Mr. Blake advocated, from most parts of Ireland, but assistance to such applicants could not be considered either useful or safe as regards the fisheries. Of 50 canoes with three men to each, desiring relief, it is stated on reliable information, that “not more than the crews of 18 or 20 canoes are employed in fishing; the remainder are engaged at sea-weed, and the like,” and these applicants have no security to offer. As to the very tempestuous nature of the coasts of Ireland, Mr. Andrews had experienced all seasons, and he did not consider it to be more so than what the boats encountered in the North sea, and off the Scilly Islands. The Kinsale mackerel boats fished from twenty to forty miles off the land, where they frequently had heavy seas and strong tides to contend with. The well known first class hookers of Kinsale, when the men had the means of fitting them out, often fished to the westward of Cape Clear, and Mizen Head, and off the South-west coast. At Teelin station, Donegal Bay, there are 14 strong row-boats, with seven men to each, supplied with nets, &c., but they are not able to keep at sea, or go to the deep water fishing: able and well-found decked boats are required, with skilful seamen, that can fish in most weathers throughout the year.

The Chairman said that they were greatly indebted to Mr. Andrews, not only for what he had done on the present occasion, but for his exertions for many years on behalf of the fishing industry. With reference to the spawn, he (Mr. Pim) was glad that it was not within the reach of the trawler wherever it was. As to the half-farming and half-fishing system, he thought that the man who went to sea now and then, and benefited himself, benefited the country. He had no faith in companies for any object that was not too large for private individuals. It was very satisfactory that Mr. Andrews' society had been so successful in avoiding bad debts, and it was not clear that more money could not be expended in loans for the same purpose and with the same success. No doubt the work would require a great deal of care, for it was easy to see that in this country, as well as in any other, it was easy to lend money and not get it back.

The meeting then terminated.

THE END.