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# A SALMON FISHER'S REVOLT.

(THE NEW ANGLING ERA.)



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## A LETTER

ADDRESSED BY

THE EARL OF HOWTH

TO

THE IRISH FISHERIES INSPECTORS.

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London:

METCHIM & SON, 20, PARLIAMENT STREET, S.W.,  
AND 32, CLEMENT'S LANE, E.C.







## A PREFACE.

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Apart from the pleasures of sport in salmon and trout angling, a time has quite come to arouse the Irish public from the lethargy that exists in reference to the splendid contribution Irish angling is capable of presenting to the Industries and Local Commerce of Ireland.

Very few are aware that the public salmon and white trout fishing of Ballinahinch, in Connemara, is openly accepted to confer a benefit of £5,000 per annum on the neighbourhood, and especially on the poorer classes, nor are they aware, as carefully explained, salmon anglers (not residents) are worth, on the average, £1 per day through their personal expenditure to Local Commerce and Industry, and in the same ratio, trout or pike fishers are worth, say, 15 shillings.

Needless to expatiate on the increased desire of the English, at any cost, to secure good salmon or trout fishing; this angling passion is getting stronger every day. New railroads, new hotels are springing up, to encourage the tourist, and, as Lord Houghton observes, angling is the only amusement you can offer him; let him kill a salmon, you make him, if a novice, happy for six months, but apart from a few fisheries, such as Ballinahinch, that are free from commercial netting, &c., &c., the salmon angling has deteriorated down to nothing when the last twelve years' sport is compared to that of the twelve preceding ones, *i.e.*, 1871 to 1883, and the Inspectors of Fisheries are responsible for this.

Their Office was created in 1869. No records of salmon capture are kept, but I may assert the salmon increased for a period, but, with considerable want of foresight, the Inspectors were lavish in their distribution of licenses for salmon capture; the sum paid for them in 1869 was £6,444, and in 1893 it amounted to £10,509, and in 1894 a thousand more licenses were added.

Matters went on fairly well with the angling until about 1881, but with the increased demand for salmon in the markets, its captors improved their skill in catching them.

Many devices have become known, the improvement in net texture is perhaps foremost, and, although the fish are in the rivers, they are taken before they reach the upper angling waters.

This, of course, is simple loot. The salmon captors gloat over the spoils they have wrested from the anglers, and have been well backed up by the Fishery Commissioners.

### THE BLACKWATER.

I briefly take the Blackwater, Co. Cork, as a test river.

Previous to 1881 there was a splendid show of salmon all over the river and specially on the water at Careysville (I rented), after that the supply of fish decreased in the Summer fishing, and I gave up the water with regret owing to the sad dearth of fish.

The causes of this decrease have been explained.

The scarcity of the salmon in the Blackwater has increased in 1895, as proven by letters in the "Field," by official Inquiries held, by depreciation of angling rents, and by the testimony of owners of fishing tackle warehouses.

I now turn to the Railway fish traffic in Ireland for 1893, and find the three stations on the line of railway running by the Blackwater conveyed 123 tons of salmon. Cappagh, nearest the sea, conveyed 18 tons, Cappoguin 34, and Lismore some 70 tons of salmon; now Lismore is close to the tidal demarcation.

The nets in former years were made of a coarser material, nor were the captors of fish up to the skilful artifices they are now, and consequently, say in 1879, let it be 10 or 15 tons of salmon out of the 123 sent by rail would have escaped the nets, &c., &c., swam thirty miles and more up the river, and added largely to the stock of angling fish.

### A QUESTION.

The questions arise where were these 123 tons of fish bred that left Lismore for England? Where did they spend the first two years, nearly, of their lives? Where did the older fish pass the late Autumn and Winter? They all pass it in the upper waters of the Blackwater,



and of those of every river in Ireland, and the reader will scarce credit the injustice of taking away nearly all the salmon that in former years were let up; this complaint refers to most Irish rivers of importance.

The injustice is accentuated by the riparian inhabitants having it, as will be accurately described, in their power to destroy spawn, samlet and old salmon wholesale, and inflict very severe damage on the salmon fishery; and the case is still more embittered by this plunder on the part of the salmon captors, as it represents a loss of far over £10,000 per annum, through depriving the river of its full angling "custom," on the Ballinahinch scale of estimate. N.B.—I do not advocate salmon slaughter.

A close day, which lets all fish up free, in the week, represents, as fully explained, a tax of 20 per cent., and would vastly increase the supply of fish in the angling waters. A prominent question at issue is *whether or no* the extra close day in the week ought to be granted.

The Irish Inspectors' Fishery Report for 1895 only reached me at the close of last week. Its "*couleur de rose* Reports" on the improvement in angling in Ireland require explanation.

Last year was celebrated for its floods, and consequently the fish passed the nets, went over weirs, &c., &c., and easily stocked the rivers, but the desolation of Irish angling has returned to its normal condition this season.

The Waterford District, it is said, angling was greatly improved in 1894. In 1895, there are three or four Official Inquiries being held now on the sad want of fish in the angling waters of the different rivers.

I have fully dilated on the subject; it takes three or four successive years to form a correct judgment on the actual condition of a salmon river.

Another point. Ireland is probably one of the most backward countries in the world in reference to artificial salmon breeding, and there is no necessity for the jubilant opinions expressed over a few outputs of fish spawn.

I knew a gentleman, whose name was Andrews; that gentleman, who lived near Guildford, put down three million ova per annum in his Hatchery.



A friend of mine, Mr. Horner, went four hours' journey from Hombourg, this year, fished a stream as full as it could hold of trout.

The lease entailed three thousand young trout were to be turned down annually in every mile of it.

In Canada the Bay View Lobster Hatchery turned down in 1893 one hundred and fifty-three million young lobster's fry.

The Newcastle Hatchery, in Ontario Province, a Government Hatchery, turned down nine million of eggs (fish).

This is the way matters are carried on in Canada, and there the fisheries (all round) are worth from eighteen to twenty million dollars per annum.

The Canadians are the cleverest people extant in the management of their fisheries, and these pages are entirely devoted to our "following Canada," and totally setting aside our present principles for administering to the Irish Salmon Fisheries.

The Fraser River in Columbia, I am informed by Lord D., is about the same size as the Thames in water, but runs up to the Forks about, say, 300 miles.

The marvellous capture on its tidal waters is fully commented on.

In reference to a statement in the Report for 1895, on looking over the observations made by the different Conservators it certainly does appear salmon are worth more than 6*d.* per lb. on the average when at its lowest price.

HOWTH.

LONDON, *August 17th, 1895.*



# A SALMON FISHER'S REVOLT.

(THE NEW ANGLING ERA.)

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*To*  
HER MAJESTY'S INSPECTORS OF FISHERIES,  
IRISH FISHERIES OFFICE,  
DUBLIN CASTLE.

GENTLEMEN,

For several years of my life I devoted both time and energy to the pursuit of salmon and white trout angling in many waters throughout Ireland, and in return for those happy days I spent when salmon were far more plentiful than at present in angling waters, make an humble effort to try and rescue my angling brethren from the threatened ruin of salmon fishing in the upper waters of many rivers owing to the scarcity of fish.

The unwise policy of your Predecessors in office sacrificed every other interest in order to export as many salmon as possible to the English markets, with the apparent object of creating a Glory page in their Annual Report of the successes they had secured in their commercial statistics.

I am now referring entirely to your Inspector's Reports of 1894 (last year), and note, on July last, your Report for 1895 had not reached even a Parliamentary circulation.

Page 86 announces that £393,825 worth of Irish salmon was in 1893 exported to nine named English towns, and on this figure rests the Glory of your Report.

My knowledge of your Office runs so far back as the year 1869, and in that year, when a member of the House of Commons, spoke at some length on the new Irish Fishery Bill, which established it.

I can state in those days there was no token given that the



salmon angling was to be ruined in order to serve the English trade and English appetite.

The decline of salmon angling in very many rivers can, in the first place, be traced to the facility you gave to the increase of nets and fixed engines. This is proven by the fact that in 1869 the licenses for these fixed engines came to £6,444, and in 1893 it reached £10,509. Rod licenses ought to be deducted from each of these figures.

For a few years after your accession to office there was a fair supply of fish in angling waters, despite the increase of licenses, but from my casual observation there was afterwards a sudden decrease of fish, and I attribute this to the stimulus given to the exportation of salmon, which brought about new and efficient devices for killing fish in the open sea, in estuaries, and in fresh water.

I am not sufficiently behind the scenes to describe these new devices, but their reality cannot be denied, as they were exhibited in the Christiana Fishery Exhibition, and on the authority of a lessee of fishing water on a Norway river, they contributed, when used, to an increased capture of fish.

Fishing with finer threaded nets, more invisible to the fish, appears to have been the most destructive innovation. The increased number of nets and other engines, added to the vastly increased skill in capturing fish, form the causes of the deterioration of angling, owing to the fish being nearly all captured before reaching the upper waters.

Added to this, there stands the partiality evidenced by your Office when the riparian (or rod fishing) interests come in collision with what is termed the industrial and commercial community, as represented by nets and weirs.

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Before proceeding further with my narrative, let me give you a full assurance, gentlemen, there is nothing personal in my observations towards you; and I venture to accept you, with regret, as successors to the somewhat mischievous policy of your office, that has ever treated riparian owners and salmon fishers with great injustice.



Nor have I intruded in a factious spirit, as the following brief narrative will explain:—

So far back as the year 1879, just ten years after the creation of your office, I rented the well known Carysville Waters, on the Blackwater, county of Cork, for the summer fishing, from 1879 (from June 1st) until the close of the season for seven successive years.

For the first two years the salmon were very plentiful, but suddenly decreased, and the two last years there was an absolute dearth, and I, with deep regret, gave up my tenancy and set aside my rod, as I perceived Irish salmon fishing had seen its best days.

I have ever taken a deep interest in the river, and last year, as I can prove, felt my way to bringing before Parliament the dearth of salmon on the Blackwater for angling purposes.

Nor has the summer fishing in the river ever permanently revived, as in last spring you gentlemen held an Inquiry on the Blackwater Fishing, principally referring to the sad want of salmon in its angling waters, and as usual the riparian and angling interests on one side, and the interests of those who catch salmon by net and weir (and are presumed by you to represent commerce and industry), were directly opposed to each other.

The Inquiry lasted several days, but I have purposely avoided seeing the evidence or report, as I prefer trusting to my own experiences of the river.

Let me here insert, the award you made on the Inquiry incidentally reached me at Homburg about July 25th, through a gentleman who stayed there for two or three days.

#### AN EPISODE.

Your Inspectors were holding this Inquiry early last March, 1895, and it appeared in the "Times" of March 12th, that in the House of Commons an Irish member inquires of the Chief Secretary for Ireland when your Report would be issued, and the reply given was "The Inquiry had not closed, but the Commissioners "had but one object in view—the improvement of the Salmon Fisheries as a whole in a commercial and industrial point of view."



The words "*one object*" are extremely awkward for the riparian and angling interests, as it gives the fullest assurance the justice of their case will not have a hearing if it interfered with the presumed industrial or commercial interests.

A reference that will be made later on to the past records of your Office, will amply prove how correct was this reply, and how thoroughly you have discarded the most earnest plea of the rod-fishing community for even a crumb of justice to modify their cruel position, caused by the absence of salmon in the freshwater angling rivers, which are subject to netting and to fixed engines in their estuaries.

Riparian owners of land who have angling waters to let, rod fishers, and all those their presence so benefits, tourists, &c. &c., have now to give up all hope of ever seeing salmon and white trout fishing on most of our rivers restored to its former prestige, and blank despair is all that is left to them until changes are made in the present Act of Parliament which regulates Irish Salmon Fisheries.

#### EDUCATION.

Let me now turn to more peaceful subjects, and remind you that successive Lord Lieutenants of Ireland, Chief Secretaries, Privy Councillors, and Members of Parliament have received their education on the Irish Fisheries from the precepts supplied from your Office.

It is a presumptuous act on my part to propose expounding to these high and influential personages the erroneous way they have been educated on certain points by your Inspectors.

#### THE SALMON.

The Irish are not, as a nation, a fresh fish-eating people; the subject has been so argued out in former years it is unnecessary to say more. Added to this, salmon is a luxury far too dear for them to indulge in.

Some years past a Dublin fishmonger told me there was more



Irish salmon consumed at four days of Chester Races, about May 10th, than in Dublin since the open season for salmon commenced (February 1st).

On the other hand, the English appear to have an untiring appetite for salmon, and money to pay for it; but that is no reason, as will be explained, why Ireland should deplete her rivers and ruin her angling to gratify English luxurious appetites.

In the early season prime salmon may reach 4s. or 5s. in the lb., but when it reaches the retail price of 1s. in the lb., the fresh fish is even dearer than the tinned salmon that is imported from all parts of the world, and the supply is inexhaustible; at Fortnum and Mason's, the celebrated purveyors in Piccadilly, tinned salmon is sold at 10d. per tin or lb., and, at the Victoria Street Stores, the cheaper tins are sold at 8d. per lb.

Needless to add, the customers in these establishments are in the higher circles of society; no doubt tinned salmon of an inferior class can be purchased at a lower price; under no circumstance can Irish salmon be accepted as a necessary food, either in England or Ireland, as long as the tinned fish is available.

In the latter country, as will be proved later on, its national value is represented only when the salmon is caught by poor people with their own nets, and who receive the full sale price of the fish.

It is impossible to conceive on what plea of national benefit to Ireland you allow the fixed engines to assist in ruining the salmon angling of Ireland; they are the property of rich or speculative owners, who place the price of all fish captured into their pockets, and the sole national benefit, salmon merchants represent, consists in the wages they pay their employés.

#### THE SALMON CAPTORS OF IRELAND

number 13,395 men in 1893 (Report, page 88).

According to your Report, there are 2,468 of this number men who take out rod licenses and kill fish by angling that appear in this figure.



### THE SONS OF INDUSTRY,

at least in my calculation, number some 9,000 men. They fish with their own boats and nets, and receive the price of the fish for their own benefit. They are the class that receive full sympathy, as the price their fish bring is devoted to supporting their families and themselves, nor, save under one special point, is it urged any extra close weekly day should be imposed on them below the tidal margin.

### SALMON MERCHANTS.

My object is now to define owners of fixed engines, who do not catch fish with their own hands, but on very easy terms secure, in many instances, great profits out of the salmon, and can well bear an extra close day in the week when justice to the riparian and angling interests requires it, and the interests of the Sons of Industry.

I incidentally quote these engines thus—all salmon weirs, all stake nets, all bag nets, and some fixed draft nets.

In the official term, every net fastened for the time to shore or bottom is a fixed net. Let it be noted these engines employ very little labour.

The fatal bag net takes only four men, the stake and draft four, and the weir or crib only two men for every five boxes; yet some of these weirs bring in a profit of thousands per annum.

A comprehensive tabulated form in your Report gives full opportunity of calculating the number of men employed in accordance with sums paid for different licenses in each district, and it appears to me that on the list furnished of those who hold certificates for fixed engines, these fixed engines and salmon weirs only take about 1,200 men to work them; but let me add 200, to swell the total to 1,400.

There are a few fixed engines not included in the list, these are included in the sum total of license payers.

Men connected with fixed engines, as far as the capture of salmon is concerned, are not worked hard; as, looking to the fish caught, each tide appears to form their occupation as a general rule.

The individuals to whom these certificates were originally granted



form one of the most noble and influential societies in Ireland, there are marquises, earls, lords, baronets, J.P.'s, D.L.'s, bankers, and even Her Majesty's War Office in the illustrious list.

These wealthy or speculative representatives of fixed engines receive the price of the salmon that are at once sent to England, and, apart from wages paid to some 1,500 men for six months in the year, the salmon merchants can lay no solid claim to promoting industries or commerce of value to Ireland.

The middlemen representatives of these fixed engines are ordinary merchants, demanding no more sympathy in Ireland than dealers in hides, timber, &c., &c.

It is not the labour of their hands, as in the case of the Sons of Industry, that produces results; they toil not; Nature rears the fish, which are permitted to live by the forbearance of the riparian community.

#### NETTING IN FRESH WATER RIVERS.

The salmon, having escaped the many perils in the open sea estuaries, find themselves, at the end of the tideway, only to incur fresh dangers in the fresh water, from persecution by nets and occasional weirs.

They have left behind them the boat nets of the Sons of Industry, on whose behalf there is a full public sympathy.

Well, gentlemen, I am going to ask you a question.

In order to serve the interests of the Sons of Industry, what ought to become of these salmon, can you tell me?

As you hesitate to reply, let me say that these fish ought to be allowed, free of all river nets, on to the angling waters, and thence on to the spawning beds. After having propagated their species very abundantly, they would return to the sea, and next season ascend the river again, to fall a rich prize to the nets of the Sons of Industry.

#### SUPPLY OF FISH FOR ANGLING.

No matter how many fish ascend a river, if they are captured by nets and weirs, and none reach the fishing water, returns of the vast



number sent to the nine English towns are of no comfort to the unhappy angler.

I read, casually, in the "Field," a witness, at one of your inquiries on absolute scarcity of fish for angling, stated there had been no diminution of the take by the nets and weirs. If this statement proves to have been correct, more may be heard of it.

We are living in a period when undoubtedly efforts are made, to exaggerate any symptoms of sport on Irish Rivers, but it occurs pretty often one particular fishing has been ever fortunate, owing to some salmon crowding up on it, while the remainder of the river remains, as usual, barren of fish.

I note this occurs when dead water awaits the fish higher up, or where important tributaries pour into the main stream a short distance above the favoured resting pools, for above where the tributaries run in, the stream is weaker.

The Blackcastle Water on the Boyne, and the Carysville fishing on the Blackwater, fully exemplify my statement. In each case tributaries flow into the main stream a little above these favoured fisheries.

This Spring, two gentlemen fished the upper half of the Blackcastle Water, found it thoroughly stocked, and had first class sport for six weeks, while the other anglers on the Boyne were bitterly complaining of the bad sport and want of fish.

My authority is a J.P. and D.L., who lives on the banks of the river.

The Cork Blackwater tells the same tale. Two rods killed 63 salmon last February on the upper portion of the Carysville Water.

If there is a salmon in the river, he will be found at Carysville, but last February you were holding an inquiry on the scarcity of the salmon on the Blackwater.

A series of exceptionally high floods (or even one) give fish almost a free access up a river that in ordinary times would have fallen victims to weirs and nets. Even this small blessing to anglers may give a momentous fillip to sport; but the delusion is soon over.

Last year, 1894, late in June and early in July, mighty waters



poured out of Loch Derg on the Shannon, flooded the whole district between Castleconnell and Limerick, the current rushed over one weir, the tenants of Prospect Fishery could not even reach their angling water for a fortnight, and, of course, a great run of fish were free to run up the river. This season only seven fish were killed on one Castleconnell Fishery for the three weeks preceding May 29th.

A correspondent of a leading English newspaper described the run of peal as the greatest known "in the memory of man" up the Shannon in 1894; as the weir in question has been at least accredited to have once taken 1,000 peal in a day, the statement is not questioned, but his informant omitted to mention the exceptional floods were the cause of this marvellous run of fish, and, of course, the public accepted it that the fish had appeared under ordinary circumstances.

Last season the exceptional floods that interfered with netting increased the supply of fish for the time; in 1893 the barrenness of the angling waters were fully exemplified, equally so this year, 1895.

The supply of fish on a river ought to be taken in from three seasons preceding, say, January 1st of any year, a fact our Fisheries Inspectors too frequently overlook in their Reports.

In last year's Report there was no summary of the amount of salmon captured as a whole, much less for any individual river; the Canadian Fishery Administration in their Reports give a full account of the pounds of salmon taken in the different rivers, even to the fish captured by Wild Indians, equally so in Norway with a seaboard of over 1,000 miles. Landmark, the minister of Norway Fisheries, can place in his Report the number of fish, or the weight, taken in the principal rivers.

#### ROD FISHING.

The licenses for salmon rods are 2,468 in number, and may be divided into three classes—the poor professionals, residents living within reach of the angling water, and strangers.

I venture to estimate the upper, and independent middle class stranger, who leaves his home for the purpose of angling, spends on



the average (of the whole class) £1 per day on the industrial and commercial resources of the neighbourhood. This includes living in either hired houses, lodgings, or an hotel, fishing attendants, car drivers, and boatmen, as required. The two latter entail a heavy item.

The expenditure varies much in accordance with the habits and means of the angler. Mr. "P." furnished me with prominent evidence.

He is an English gentleman who fishes yearly in Ireland, and estimated, apart from the angling rent or tariff, his salmon fishing never cost him less than £1 per day, or often far more.

Mr. "O." narrated to me how he accompanied, last June, to the Westmeath lakes, this season for trout fishing their combined daily expenses for four days came to £9.

The expenditure in private hired houses is very heavy as compared to the number of rods fishing.

Mr. H. Sargent, in a brochure entitled "Sport a National Benefactor," replete with interesting statistics, states there are 50,000 individuals who go in for salmon angling in the United Kingdom, and calculates every salmon caught in Scotland on any high rented water costs the lessee of the fishery £5 at least. In his estimates Mr. Sargent does not include the living, &c., &c., of each individual angler as I have done, for most of the fishings in Scotland are let as a whole, or in hands of proprietors. There is a large amount of water in Ireland open to the public as compared to Scotland.

It is satisfactory to note the magnificent reserve we have of 50,000 all anxious to go salmon fishing.

The Ballinahinch Fishery in Connemara affords an illustration of the benefits conferred on a neighbourhood by angling. Mr. "P." was again to the front, and having fished there the most part of two summer seasons, he informed me it was a common observation this fishery conferred a benefit of £5,000 per annum on a very poor neighbourhood.

It may be termed commercial angling, as so much per day or week is charged for each rod. It is divided into twenty-seven



divisions for angling—that number of persons can fish daily, but six of the divisions are not of much account. White trout, that are in full force in July and August, form a great feature of sport.

There are several hotels available, and the whole scale of expenditure is heavy, entailing cars and boats, and a large item for preservation. To meet this, the best of the fishing only lasted for a short time, or for some two months, and an extended season of course increases the profit.

The proprietor of the fishery kindly sent me his estimates, and after paying all expenses he just obtained his own angling gratis. The £5,000 spent on the industries, &c., was just reached.

£4,000 would represent a fairer test to guide future estimates.

I was casually informed the whole rent of the fishery only amounted to £300 per annum.

The best sport, when all the rods are taken up, does not appear to last for much more than two months—July and August—when the white trout fishing is in full force. This Fishery is situated in the Connemara district, where nets and weirs are absolutely unknown.

#### IRISH TOURIST ATTRACTIONS.

Salmon and trout fishing is closely associated with the attractions necessary to induce English gentlemen to visit Ireland either as lessees of fisheries or casual visitors.

One water is often let to a series of tenants, as in my case at Carysville; several fisheries on the Shannon, I am informed, are available by the month, and with the desire to secure even tolerable fishing, it can be assumed the supply of English anglers is inexhaustible.

The great commercial and industrial test for Ireland is that every day the fisherman as described lives on the river or lake side, his presence is, on the average, worth £1 a day to the locality.

This fact gives salmon and trout angling an importance which it did not represent when there was a limited demand for fishing water in former years.

Lord Houghton, in his interesting Notice on Irish Tourists, that



appeared in the "National Review" of this month, July, dwells at length on the angling, and states "it is to fishing that travellers will "mainly look for amusement."

He expatiates on the large amount of open fishing water available, and occupies nearly a page in bewailing over the salmon poaching as a destroyer of sport.

"Snowfly," in "Blackwood's Magazine," March, 1895, writes, on Norwegian fishing:—"Never before was such a demand for salmon "water. Speculators take up all kinds of water direct from riparian "owners, beats on second or third class rivers, and even on those "that never did contain salmon. The prices demanded by these "enterprising gentlemen for their waters is marvellous," and, it is added, "the supply of angling visitors is inexhaustible."

This is surely pleasant reading for Irish riparian owners in Ireland, whose streams Nature could supply with any amount of salmon, and England can send over any amount of tenants to rent them, and whose presence would ensure a liberal expenditure for the benefit of the locality.

#### SALMON PRESERVATION.

Lord Houghton, referring especially to the county of Kerry, has denounced poaching on spawning beds in the fullest terms as the scourge of Irish fishing. It certainly is so in this county of Kerry.

In Norway, great value is placed in the preservation assured by lessees of angling. Equally so in Ireland are riparian proprietors and their angling tenants the best friends of the Sons of Industry when it is in the interest of the former class to preserve the salmon.

Mr. S. Roche, a well-known fisherman, who holds considerable extent of angling water on the Slaney, in the county of Carlow, remarked to me how he was standing with a Conservator on the river bank in winter, and pointed out to him ten salmon on the spawning bed; he observed, "but for my watchers, these fish and many others "would have been poached long ago."

The presence of lessees of salmon rivers on upper, confer a great boon on the captors of salmon on lower waters, by preserving the



fish during spawning time. Individual poaching can be checked, of course; not so when large gangs of men take part in it.

#### MISUNDERSTOOD.

Your Office appears quite in error in supposing it to be fatal to the salmon market interests to open out a free way for salmon to run up rivers, through the medium of an extra close day in the week, for the purpose of increasing the supply of spawning fish.

Here is a Norwegian story you may have heard of. Owing to over netting, the River Laager had its supply of fish sadly reduced, and in order to avert its total ruin the Government appointed four close days per week for the river nets, and, later on, a close time of three days per week was applied to the nets at the mouth of the river, and improvements went on until the take, irrespective of the coast nets, produced four times the quantity of fish as when Sunday was the only close day—*i.e.*, the fishing was more profitable with four close days than under only one in the week, and this occurred in a country where the one idea of the governing body was to produce as many salmon as possible, solely for mercantile purposes.

I quote the Fishery Inspector's Reports in New Brunswick, York County. "A Club represented by Mr. T. Logie spent over 700 dollars "in employing guardians to assist the Dominion guardians in the "protection of the Miramachi, thus rendering a very efficient service "which it is to be hoped will be continued next year."

Your Office has been slow to appreciate the benefits conferred when it is made worth while for lessees or owners of an angling fishery to preserve salmon, samlet, or spawn on a main river, or on its tributary streams.

When salmon began to diminish in British Columbia, a stringent code of Regulations was issued by the Canadian Government.

Article No. 3A stated:—"Drifting with salmon nets shall be "confined to tidal waters, and no salmon net of any kind shall be "used in fresh waters." Allow me especially to note this enactment.

A deputation from Columbia urged on the Canadian Government



no limit should be placed to the licenses for catching salmon. The reply they received was that the licenses apparently for all the number was not to exceed 500 in the Fraser River.

(Dept. of Marine and Fisheries Report, Canada, 1894, p. cxxvii.)

I give you these two examples from Norway and Canada to prove that when salmon are scarce what stringent terms are taken for the actual benefit of the fisheries, and the extra open day in the week, the wholesale reductions of licenses for a period, and total absence of capture for mercantile purposes is enacted in the waters above the tideway, are necessary hardships to peasant fishermen in order to ensure future prosperity.

Germany and Holland have lately entered into a treaty that the Rhine salmon are not to be captured for two months in certain districts during the summer when they are on the run, in order to secure a good supply of fish in the spawning beds in the upper portions of the Rhine.

Before alluding to a few Irish rivers, let me mention nearly all the references to Norway are taken from a valuable notice on the Fisheries that appeared in "Blackwood's Magazine" last March, signed "Snowfly."

I have also to explain, with the exception of those in Co. Donegal, the Ulster rivers are unknown to me and no reference is made to them; let me, however, note some 500 salmon rod licenses have been taken out in that province.

My object in referring to the following rivers is to endeavour respectfully to induce your Inspectors to give the public (let it be in your next Report) some sketch of your opinion on the prospects of average salmon angling in the future on these waters.

#### THE BOYNE.

The Boyne has splendid resources of depth of flowing water and fairly rapid streams fit to hold and breed any number of fish, but these facts have never been realised, and above the town of Navan, with splendid water available for miles and miles, I doubt if a supply sufficient to stock these waters were ever let up.



I resided at Blackcastle for two winters and spring (1877), and or one season was tenant of the angling.

There was a very fair supply of fish—great sport has been secured on these waters before and after my tenancy—but now the river has sadly deteriorated as a whole, for angling, and even Blackcastle has been almost a blank one year, as a tenant experienced after paying a heavy rent.

Complaints were made of over fishing at the mouth and in the estuary; the river itself, however, ever has been far too hardly fished by nets and weirs, and to these causes, even in more prosperous periods, may perhaps be attributed the want of salmon above Navan. An intelligent Scotch salmon merchant hired a water, and took every rough stone off the bottom of the river to assist the netting.

#### THE LIFFEY

is only mentioned as an instance of the salmon collecting and rising, I believe, freely at the well-known salmon leap at Leixlip; the public seldom read of a salmon being caught elsewhere.

As the polluted Liffey is about to be cleansed in its course through Dublin, its salmon ought to increase in numbers rapidly.

#### THE WATERFORD DISTRICT

represents practically the Waterford Harbour, an extensive estuary, commencing at Hook Point, and, running past the City of Waterford, it ends say at Coolnamuck, where the tideway reaches its limits; it takes a circuitous route, about 30 miles, and before reaching Waterford it receives the joint streams of the rivers Barrow and Nore, and from hence may be accepted as the lower water of the river Suir.

At New Ross, some 12 miles from the main estuary, the rivers Nore and Barrow join; the latter river is not of much account, owing to the large amount of dead water between the streams, and in my recollection was never quoted as a good salmon river, still this



year it has shown some sport, and one angler was much astonished at killing three fish off the reel on the Borris Water.

I was twice quartered on the estuary, once at Carrick, and on another occasion at Waterford with the Militia in 1855. In those days the estuary had full credit of being dreadfully overfished by cots and drift nets, and let it be on the estuary or in the rivers Nore and Suir, the whole district is now overnetted to the last extent.

A correspondent of the "Field" newspaper stated the licenses for salmon capture had been greatly increased on the Suir, even to double, and if this statement be correct, the action on the part of your Office was very rash.

In this limited Waterford area there are some 1,700 men working under 400 licenses (apart from the rod), and, needless to add, the rod fishing on the once celebrated angling river Suir is sadly deteriorated.

The riparian owners from Clonmel upwards have just sent in a memorial to your inspectors to inquire into the causes of absence of the salmon.

Rents for angling waters have gone down to nothing this season. One fishing, formerly let for £200 per annum, is now reduced to £40.

In the Cahir Park fishing streams, able to give fishing two and three rods, only eight salmon were captured up to June 1st this season.

Above Cahir, the angling was almost a blank early in this season, 1895. Last year there was a brief improvement, owing to violent floods that let the fish up, but it appeared to have little effect on the value of the angling rents, and I fear the correspondent in an English newspaper, already referred to, wrote rather *en couleur de rose* on Suir angling prospects.

During Lord Spencer's Viceroyalty of Ireland, Sir Courtenay Boyle and other members of his household rented the Knocklofts waters for a few seasons, and certainly had far better sport than has been lately produced.

The Nore, in the Co. Kilkenny, is, in its general characteristics, a very favoured river for salmon angling. No pleasanter streams can be found than those of Mount Juliet, &c., &c.



This unfortunate river, since the memory of man, has been persecuted in its fresh water by weirs and over-netting, and never had a fair chance given it of producing the angling records that ought to make it famous among Irish rivers.

I resided five winters and early springs on its banks, from the year 1856. The Inistioge Weir, the net fishing above it, and the Bennets Bridge poachers were, and are, constant sources of complaint.

Angling, with a very fair share of sport, was carried on briskly in those days, but now a resident writes it is not worth while taking out a license.

#### THE BLACKWATER

is a river I have had many summers' experience of, and can fully describe between 1879 up to about 1886.

It is practically a new fishery until about the year 1870, when the Duke of Devonshire was defeated in a well-known lawsuit.

As soon as the river was opened out, as I have heard, a large number of Sons of Industry collected from all parts, and with the natives formed the formidable fleet of net boat fishers that catch such vast quantities of salmon at present. I believe the Duke has some control over the number of licenses.

I feel convinced that on the comparatively narrow estuary which runs down from Lismore, salmon are especially easy to capture since river netting has made such progress and produced a finer class of net.

The river runs into the sea at Youghal.

The tideway ceases at Ballyeawest, below Lismore, where regular angling is accepted to commence, and, according to the statement of a resident, it affords, apart from the deviations of the river, good fishing up to Kanturk, a distance of from 45 to 50 miles.

The Blackwater has many remarkable characteristics ; it was by far the most prolific salmon stream I ever had experience of.

In 1879 and 1880, when at Carysville, and not only was the stationary supply in the stream abundant beyond belief, but the



procession of travelling fish was endless, and in fair conditions of water ; they passed up the Clondunane Ladder with as much ease as an old steeplechaser cleared a bush fence on any Irish course, otherwise the Carysville water would have been packed simply with fish.\*

The river is not broken up by violent tumbling, rocky streams or falls, but runs fast over a smooth bottom, and the stream itself "fishes" the angler's fly ; nor at Carysville was there any necessity for wind, and, unless the sun was in their eyes, the fish rose in bright weather, and in low water very small flies would tempt them. Unfortunately they take every sort of bait, such as worms, prawns, spinning fish, &c., with avidity. I, however, never angled in any river save with a fly, and my records of sport are poor.

In those days the Carysville water was not without rivals. Convamore water, far up the river, was said to equal it in the peal season, and a spot of water termed the "Tail of the Pool," also high up the river was constantly in "print."

Colonel E. Vernon, as killing an angler as can be found, previous to 1879 rented the Dunmurry water, and the sport I heard narrated was even better than that at Carysville.

After the year 1881, the constant supply of fish at Carysville began to fall off, and sport became more irregular in the summer fishing, owing to fish being less abundant at times ; but in the last two years of my tenancy came the desolation and constant scarcity, even to absence of fish on occasions, and, with great regret, I gave up my summer tenancy.

The spring fishing, when the water is heavy and fish have more opportunity of escaping the nets, did not suffer so soon.

This complete absence of fish did not come about without great

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\* This weir and its salmon ladder has over and over been violently attacked of late years as the cause of fish not running up the river ; when the pools below it are full of salmon either the new comers or the old inhabitants soon pass on, but when there is no crowding up of fish, as in past years, the fish do not care entering a long stretch of slack water created by the mill ; on this point the fisheries of Blackcastle on the Boyne, and those of Carysville are identical in their features.



captures of fish being effected in the lower waters, and, as I was informed, from fresh water netting being prosecuted with greater application.

One weir at Lismore, and two stake nets, represented all the fixed engines, and no doubt exists in my mind that the Sons of Industry learnt many devices for catching fish, and that the nets on the river were worked with unceasing energy, with relays of men (as I heard), and it is to these two causes, that arose simultaneously, I attribute the downfall of angling *now*, and *then*, on the Blackwater.

The "Field" newspaper has received endless correspondence this spring on the subject.

Now Carysville sport is not published, Blackwater sport is a blank in the river records of the fisheries all this season (1895).

Probably heavy rains are coming, and with sweeping floods a brief revival of sport may take place during the season.

#### THE BLACKWATER COMMERCIALLY.

The Blackwater, for the volume of its water, ought to contribute a larger amount of prosperity to its surrounding district than any river in Ireland.

The angling commences February 1st, and with a proper supply, as formerly, the fish would soon run to the upper waters.

May was not, in my time, a favoured month for angling, but from June 1st to the close of the season the fish were on the rise, under tolerable conditions of water.

With the eager desire manifest now to catch a salmon under any terms, the river, with fish in it, would, up to the last day of the season, have plenty of rods available.

On the Lochnane stream at Carysville a salmon might be caught with a fly any day (under fair condition of water) from February 1st to the end of the season, September 15th).

This tedious homily points out that for some seven months in the year the commercial results that could be secured provided the same amount of fish were in it as between the years 1875 and 1881 were available.



The towns of Lismore, Fermoy and Mallow, are all on the river, at convenient distances apart, and afford the best of accommodation in lodgings or hotels. Higher up is Kanturk, nor can the village of Ballyhooly, so famed in song, be overlooked.

Cottages and residences are also available along the river.

My tale of the angling attractions of the Blackwater is fully confirmed by the issue in 1893 of 282 rod fishing licenses to unfortunate people, very few of whom have had their hopes of sport realised of late years.

This number of rod licenses is only exceeded by the Limerick district, which can enumerate 341, and includes the Shannon together with other rivers.

Would you be surprised to hear, gentlemen, that taking all the circumstances under consideration, that with supply of fish that existed from 1875 to 1881 available, I estimate under the Ballinahinch scale the commercial and industrial benefits conferred on the environs of the river at between £25,000 and £30,000 per annum.

A gentleman residing near Mallow, wrote to the "Field" to say he could not get a bid for his angling water this season.

There are no fixed engines apart from the Lismore weir, and two stake nets on the Blackwater, and when the vast number of fish captured by the Sons of Industry and freshwater nets are compared with the few that are allowed to go up this 40 miles and more of splendid angling as described, it is nothing short of an open scandal this injustice should be allowed to continue.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS.

Having thus referred to the rivers Nore, Suir, Boyne, and Blackwater, let me casually note an angler's view of what is required to improve their fishing waters by the increase of fish.

The Blackwater has the most urgent claim.

The estuary from its mouth at Youghal Harbour entrance to Lismore, where the regular angling, I believe, commences, is about 15 miles, and the last half portion, according to the map, the river is comparatively narrow.



In low water and in summer weather the majority of salmon and peal are in the habit of floating up and down the estuary with the tide, day by day, and even week by week, the result is they are decimated on this estuary by the nets, and clearly an extra close day in the week commencing from May 20th to close of the season is not a hardship on the nets.

The Sons of Industry are not interfered with by fixed engines such as weirs, bag or stake nets, as their brethren on other rivers are, and in previous years large numbers of fish, as described, were allowed to pass up. In Columbia (Canada) no drift net can only reach across a third of an estuary.

The weir at Lismore can well afford another close day in the week, and the mischievous river nets are fairly not entitled more than to three open days in the week, when the industrial and commercial interests represented by the 282 licenses to rod fishers are taken into consideration.

Reducing the length of all nets is absolutely in your power, as your bye-laws clearly indicate.

#### THE BOYNE

All the weirs and all the river nets might be placed on an extra close day in the week, and also fixed engines on the coast around.

Nets on the Boyne cannot exceed 40 yards in length. Vide bye-laws.

The Boyne appears more hardly treated than any important river in Ireland in the curtailment of the length of its nets, both in the fresh water and below it.

#### THE WATERFORD ESTUARY.

The fixed engines and weirs, and all fixed nets on the sea coast, might surely bear an extra close day in the week.

The nets above the tideway in the Suir surely ought to have an additional close day in the week, or more, imposed on them, and these observations may apply to the Nore, which, in the memory of man has ever been cruelly treated by weirs and fresh water netting.



The Woodstock weir especially was ever a sad obstruction to the run of salmon, and the river is, or was, at least, severely netted.

Net poaching has always been rife from Bennet's Bridge to Kilkenny.

It is suggested river net-fishing should be only permitted from 6 A.M. to 6 P.M. on any river, as apart from certain Several Fisheries that can claim a right for night netting, notably Oldbridge on the Boyne.

You will perceive, gentlemen, under these audacious recommendations of mine, the Sons of Industry are left, save in one instance, intact. Although private advocacy would suggest in every instance their having an extra close day imposed on them, interfering with them at once creates a hot opposition among Irish Members of Parliament, but let it be noted these suggestions are greatly for the benefit of the Sons of Industry as they would clearly increase the number of fish available for their capture.

#### FREE SALMON ANGLING WATERS.

Owing to Lord Houghton's allusions to the large amount of free waters for salmon angling open to the public, I am tempted, although out of England and unprovided with sufficient authentic information, thus briefly to allude to them.

#### THE MOY, OR BALLINA RIVER.

Many years past I have fished at Ballina, on the Moy, and remember an ample supply of fish available on the lower portion of the river; near Foxford, a distance of 10 miles further up the river, the stream from Loch Conn runs into the Moy.

Attention is particularly directed to this lake and to Loch Cullen that joins it through that mysterious flow of water that ebbs backwards and forwards.

These lakes, united, are about 10 miles in length, and Loch Conn is justly famed for the free way salmon and trout rise to the fly or take baits on its waters; I have a remembrance of a point



running out in the lake from which an angler is said to have killed six salmon ; one example only is needed to prove how favoured it is by trout anglers at present.

Some three years ago, a friend of mine (Sir J. D.), went down there during the Whitsuntide holidays and found twenty-five brother fishermen installed in the Hotel, one had come all the way from Devonshire for a few days trout fishing.

The river is or was heavily netted, and I think two weirs obstruct the fish.

With fair play given to the salmon to reach the lake, and white and brown trout largely propagated artificially, this lake ought to prove a second Loch Leven (in Scotland), which Mr. Sargent, who is already quoted, considers "has more money spent on it than all " the trout fishing in Ireland put together " (owing to the numbers of anglers that frequent it).

Waterville, or Curran Lake, in the county of Kerry, is a very successful public fishery ; its conditions are exceptional, as the single weir that obstructs it at its influx into the sea is closed only three days in the week, and I believe there is no Queen's Gap.

I heard 100 salmon had been caught in one month early this Spring. It is also famed for its white trout fishing, that artificial breeding would greatly improve.

Loch Melvin, in Sligo, is another extensive lake salmon take freely on, and is, I believe, open to the public ; Lake Gill, close to Sligo, is a lake that years past formed a hot subject for debate in the columns in the *Field* newspaper between the late Colonel Whyte and your Inspectors.

Killarney's lakes and river are so well known it is needless to describe them, but an increased supply of fish on the River Launde and on the lakes would be fully appreciated by the numerous anglers that frequent the district.

The Galway river is connected with a wide expanse of public water in Loch Corrib, a lake that ought to afford good sport for trolling for salmon or trout, but every species of poaching is fully indulged in, such as killing salmon on spawning beds, netting, cross lines, without license, &c., &c.



The poaching appears to have mastered everything, as £95 was expended on prosecutions for illegal fishing.

The Galway salmon have scarce any impediments to obstruct or capture them previous to their leaving the open sea and reaching the fresh water, yet your Report gives a gloomy report of the whole district.

#### THE RIVER SHANNON.

One object in noticing this river and its tributary, the Maigue, is to prove the sweeping deterioration of salmon angling since your Inspectors came into office in 1869.

The late Colonel F.W. Fetherstone, of Derrahiny, has often dilated to me on the excellence of the Meelick (?) Waters some miles above Portumna Bridge.

Whether there ought to be an extra close day per week enforced on the fixed engines of the Shannon is a question of public interest, and the public had better plead their own cause, as this great expanse of water is at their disposal.

To give you some idea of the limited number of salmon now permitted to run up the Shannon, let me note that just three years (1866) before you came into office, one rod, Mr V., on a Castle Connell water, captured 900 salmon and peal in the one season.

In the month of June 359 were killed.

My unimpeachable authority states this angling has got every year worse since 1870, with two exceptions, in 1884, and it was fairly good in 1894; in both these years there were unusually high floods, and multitudes of fish escaped the nets, &c., &c., and came on to the upper waters.

The tale of "no salmon" is an oft-told one this season on the Castleconnell Fisheries, still there must be any amount of water in the Great Shannon under any circumstances to let up salmon or peal.

I have news told me how in one fishery there were only six fish killed previous to the three weeks of May 29th this season.

Let me direct your attention to the River Maigue, which flows into the Shannon estuary a few miles below Limerick.

This was once a well-known salmon angling river, but according



to the testimony of Mr. R., who was born on its banks, it has been totally erased from people's minds as a fishing stream owing to over-netting at its mouth and in the estuary, and consequent dearth of salmon.

#### THE FISHING INSPECTORS' REPORT, 1894.

In dealing with sea fisheries, it contains almost every detail of information wanting, and in some instances enters with a remarkable fullness on subjects of minor importance to the general public.

The Report on the Salmon Fisheries narrates carefully all fish transported by railway to England, but in a marked manner it runs too quickly over matters connected with salmon rivers, &c., &c.

It is much to be regretted, as already noticed, the full amount of salmon captured, not only in the sea and estuaries, but in individual rivers, is not included.

The Conservators of the different districts just make a casual observation on the angling which has now become a subject of general interest that more ample details would be more valued by the public.

#### ERRATIC SPAWNING SALMON

refer to those fish who, tortured and over-fished in the estuaries by nets, are taught by nature not to ascend the rivers until the close time has some time arrived and they can ascend the rivers in peace to spawn; needless to add, this proceeding is utterly disastrous to the angling interests and highly satisfactory to the salmon commercial interests.

My friend "P." has spoken a good deal to me on the subject referring to Scotch rivers for some two months in the close season, when the nets are taken off and close season commences.

On the Tweed the splendid rod fishing all takes place when the nets are up and the fish pass up in their hundreds over the fishing pools. Mr. G. B., who has fished much in the Tweed, tells me the fish are white and beautiful but soft and flabby to a degree, in fact, out of season.

On page 45 of your Report, 1884, Mr. Foley explains his Lismore



new artificial propagation, and he states, when catching salmon for the breeding, "the first run of spring fish were noticed and appeared "on November 17th to be in good condition," but such is the appearance of the Tweed salmon in November.

Another illustration I make is on the Maigue. If my informant is correct, no fish appear to come up from the Shannon estuary in the season. Your report states the spawning season of 1893-4 shows an increase of fish over previous years, and an increase especially observed in the Maigue.

Here we have evidence of an isolated river without salmon in the open season and in the close season the spawning beds are full of them. The correspondent in an English newspaper already referred to observed that the Irish salmon were running later in the season up the rivers.

Such formidable obstacles in the form of nets, engines, weirs and prominently fresh water netting that fish have to encounter on rivers with estuaries connected with them, that it will not be surprising if in a few years hence the habits of the Irish salmon will be entirely changed, and by instincts of nature very many will cease to run up the rivers until the close season. Perhaps my observations may be worth noticing in your next Report.

#### THE BYE-LAWS

represent amendments or changes made in connection with the exigencies changes required on different rivers; these principal features of importance rests on the appeals made by the Riparian or angling interests to have more opportunities given to the salmon to run more freely through the phalanx of fixed engines, weirs, and nets they have to encounter.

The applications and inquiries were numerous, but never—no, not once—can I discover, since 1870, a Bye-law suggesting either an extension, an additional close time, or reducing the licenses for salmon capture on any important river.

Your remedies were of a too trivial nature to really benefit the angling; and this fact, as I have before stated, more fully proves than



Mr. Morley's words in Parliament how fixedly determined your Office ever has been to preclude from their decisions any real justice to the upper or Riparian interests on any important river, or suggested it that I have ever seen.

Your Bye-laws are sometimes remarkable, such as forbidding people to shoot salmon on the Shannon, between Portumna and Athlone; this Bye-law was dated in 1871, and referred to a great wide navigable river, proving how plentiful salmon must have been in the Shannon. Your Office forbade nets more than 40 yards long between the town of Navan, on the Boyne, and the sea, while we read the Bye-law that on the Blackwater any net not over 170 yards may be used on the river.

I know portions of these rivers well, and, apart from times of floods, the Blackwater, at Carysville, is not a broader stream, in its narrower parts, than the Boyne at Black Castle.

*A Question respectfully asked*, why are nets, four times as long as those on the Boyne, sanctioned on the Blackwater?

A study of your Bye-laws is far more convincing than the Chief Secretary's statement of how angling interests are crushed out of your whole administrative code and system, and your Office seems utterly oblivious of the fact that the rod licenses (£2,468) represent all but a fourth of the sum £10,509 for all licenses—weirs, nets, &c.—in Ireland.

It is maintained, after paying this great proportion for licenses, it is your legal duty to look to their interests and arrange a proper supply when salmon are fairly plentiful for mercantile capture.

#### POACHING.

Lord Houghton in his tour in Kerry lays great stress on the amount of poaching that goes on, happily the river poisoning with spurge weed is principally confined to that county, and to give an instance of the ease any system of destructive poaching can be carried on without detection, the river Roughty in the County Kerry was poisoned ten times in 1893 (Report, page 50) although nineteen



water bailiffs had been employed in the district, in addition to ten in the service of the Board of Conservators.

The Galway district is, after the County of Kerry, probably the most poached district in Ireland.

It goes on in every form on Lough Corrib, and in the limited amount of spawning rivers, yet the Galway Hunt have the foxes well cared for by the farmers and peasantry—notwithstanding the damage they do to their poultry, &c., &c.

In your Report, page 88, you advocate severe Acts of Parliament are required to stop poisoning the Kerry rivers. They might assist to a certain degree in lessening the evil.

I have had great experience in dealing with the peasantry in preserving foxes, and in a wide district in Kilkenny under my special charge, on leaving the county there were three foxes in it for one when I took up the district.

A good word, kindness, and getting hold of the principal delinquents and paying them, form the true mediums for preserving foxes and salmon.

But money must be spent, and buying off the poachers is, I believe, the best medium for preserving salmon in troublous districts.

Giving a dance in a country village, which only entails the presence of a couple of barrels of porter and a fiddler, is an old Kilkenny foxhunting receipt for humouring the peasant.

Securing the goodwill of the peasantry, as Lord Houghton suggests, is one of the most important features in preserving fox, game, or salmon in Ireland, and to give a full example of the necessity I now break out into somewhat unlawful ideas to prove the power, as a body, the people have over the fortunes of successful salmon capture.

#### JUSTIFIABLE SALMICIDE.

Allow me to illustrate how totally the salmon supply of all Ireland is dependent on those connected with the upper waters and tributary streams of rivers. Let me clearly note, I do not advocate for a moment these proceedings about to be stated, but merely



illustrate, through them, how easy it is to injure severely most Irish Salmon Rivers.

I now transport you, gentlemen, two years in advance of our present date, and in imagination place in your hand the *Irish Times* of May 15th, 1897. You will read:—

*From our Mallow Correspondent.*

In these times, when half England has gone angling mad, catching a salmon is supposed to range as a supreme bliss, and any money will be paid for tolerable fishing water, either in or out of the United Kingdom; great discontent, and even more, has been evidenced by many Riparian Proprietors, and hosts of other interests, who have within their grasp a rich harvest of English money *if* the salmon as in former years made their appearance on the Irish angling waters.

Nowhere is this absence of salmon more warmly taken up than on the banks of the Blackwater, co. Cork, and a meeting was convened at Mallow a few days past which secured a full and representative attendance from the different towns and districts for thirty miles all along the course of the river.

The Chair was taken by Colonel Jawleyford, D.L., J.P., P.L.G., who thus opened the proceedings:—

GENTLEMEN,

As one deeply interested in the welfare of this neighbourhood, and as owner of considerable riparian property between here and Ballyhooly, it gives me sincere pleasure to take the Chair.

I am proud to state our town of Mallow may have a bright prospect before it as the great southern centre of sport, provided we can produce a fair supply of salmon in the splendid angling waters that reach twelve miles above Mallow and twenty below it.

There has been a great inclination evidenced by the English to come and settle in this locality. London doctors have begun to recommend the mild climate. A Syndicate is trying to secure numerous trout streams available—a new hotel has been proposed.

The fox hunting has been well supported, and the Head Quarters of two Regiments at Fermoy and Buttevant greatly increased the attractions of society.

That gallant young sportsman, Mr. Scattercash, of Evergreen Cottage, had determined to keep a pack of staghounds that, in addition to the fox hunting, would have proved a great attraction, but he and his companion, Mr. Longpurse, have decided on throwing up the seven years' lease of the house and water they took from me after the two good days' fishing I gave them last year immediately after the great flood that sent a great run of salmon up the river.

Other gentlemen who know all about the angling will explain to you how £30,000 per annum good money would be spent through the influences of good fishing in the district of the Blackwater, and in the towns that are on its banks.



I shall not trouble you further, and I call on Mr. Longsight, Secretary to the great Angling Society of all Ireland that is now fast developing itself into an important community.

Mr. LONGSIGHT: I have great pleasure in presenting myself as one of the Secretaries of the Angling Society of all Ireland, and it is my duty, accompanied by Mr. Sandy, a Scotch expert on fishing, to examine and consider all circumstances connected with the salmon and trout angling of all Ireland. Mr. Sandy reports in the most favourable terms of the characteristics of all the tributary streams of the Blackwater for the production of brown trout, and he notes especially the River Bride, now a public river, that in spite of many drawbacks affords such fair trout and sea trout angling.

With judicious artificial breeding of trout, and the rivers fairly preserved, no district could afford more pleasant trout angling.

The capabilities of the Blackwater for the production of salmon he says are without limit.

We have carefully looked over the reports on the splendid supply of fish that were on this water in former years between 1875 and 1880, and some time past made reports to our Society on the subject. They consider that the great number of fish now killed by the nets and the few allowed up into the upper waters for rod fishing, the most flagrant instance of injustice that exists in connection with Irish Angling. They urge that the Irish Fishery Inspectors are bound to afford or recommend better opportunities for a fair amount of salmon to run up to the angling water, and regret this responsibility has been quite set aside for many years by the Irish Inspectors of Fisheries.

The Committee of my Society urge strongly that, owing to the increased importance of salmon and white trout angling as factors to promote the industries and commerce of the country, the rod anglers are entitled to a far larger supply of fish than was ever accorded to them.

We fully sympathise with the 9,000 Sons of Industry who, working for six months in the year, earn for their families and themselves £270,000, at the rate of some £35 per man for their six months' work, and we further estimate that so great is the demand for salmon and white trout angling that, with the development of more fish in the rivers, the presence of the multitude desirous of fishing in public waters or securing private fisheries ought to secure a circulation of £200,000 per annum throughout Ireland.

Our Society is now employed in developing a scheme for utilising that splendid area of fresh water now available in Ireland, that, if thoroughly stocked, with the aid of artificial fish breeding, ought to develop a fresh source of benefit to the country, not only through angling but by transporting large quantities of the best fed brown trout and other fish to the English markets.

From careful observations that have been taken it appears the salmon are changing their habits on many rivers, and owing to the constant persecutions by



nets, &c., &c., they undergo, numbers run up after the closed seasons, and it is by this means only a good supply of fish is let on to the spawning beds. Our Society maintains so few salmon are let up during the open season to the upper portions of certain rivers, that it is to this late run of fish the present supply of fish on the spawning beds is largely due, but they are of no benefit to the angling interests.

They consider if this winter run of fish continues to increase, it affords an additional reason for imposing an extra close weekly day on nets, &c., &c., as it is clearly the over-netting that has caused this change.

Our great object is to secure this extra weekly close day on many rivers by a fresh Act of Parliament, and to have the river netting greatly curtailed, as it plays havoc with the angling, and deprives the spawning beds of thousands of fish, whose produce would indeed increase the number of fish captured by the Sons of Industry, and greatly add to the supply of fish on the angling waters.

It is in their interest to check this netting as it goes on, when the salmon are well out of their reach, and ought to have an open way to the spawning beds.

Our Society, considering the brief period of its existence, is in a very flourishing condition, and it is satisfactory to know we are receiving support and encouragement from the commercial interests, who are well aware how good angling encourages the English to pay prolonged visits to Ireland.

Let me assure you our Society will continue to take a deep interest in the betterment of angling on the waters of your beautiful Blackwater.

Mr. LONGPURSE, after noticing the following resolution, viz., "That salmon angling is the best inducement that can be offered to the wealthy English to visit Ireland," said: Gentlemen,—Allow me to state I am a Philanthropist by nature, a Liberal in politics, I am, furthermore, a worshipper of the great principles of Freedom and Justice as advocated by that great Statesman, Mr. Gladstone, whose marble bust, that I brought over with me, now stands in the hall of Evergreen Cottage.

Last year my cousin, Mr. Scattercash, and myself, met your respected Chairman in the train and he offered us two days' fishing as casual tourists. We had two pleasant days' sport killing four salmon, but little did we know one of the highest floods on record had lately taken place and let up a few salmon. We took out a lease for seven years of Evergreen Cottage and the fishing; we have only killed six fish since February 1st, and have determined not to return until the salmon revisit the upper Blackwater streams, although we are compelled to pay our annual rent.

Rattlecash, endowed with talents and wealth, pronounces himself an ardent supporter of the rights of man, and I regret to say, while supporting his great ideal principle on the second night of Cork Races last week he received a violent blow from a closed fist, which caused an abrasion of the skin of the nasal organ, and also a swelling with great discolouration under both his optics that prevented his being present here this afternoon; his noble spirit bursts with indignation



at these salmon you nurtured and cared for at their birth and early youth being taken away from you, and all ruthlessly captured and slain, and not even a fiftieth portion of them allotted to you after rearing and nursing these fish for two years from their birth. Oh! that dreadful sight witnessed by me when, to beguile the time, I spent two days enjoying the beauties of Lismore; strolling past the railway station I observed three wagons packed with boxes, and scrawled in chalk on the side of the wagons were the words, "Salmon, England." Yes, "Salmon, England." There they were, sent off in their thousands, and scarce any allowed to return to their native streams—sent for luxurious food to—excuse my emotion—(A Voice: Take half a glass of whiskey)—no, kind friend, water please.

Some perhaps destined to deck the orgies of a Haymarket supper; many more were allotted to torture the owners of unlimited appetites by night with terrible dreams and conscience disturbances. Oh! my charitable heart pities these poor victims.

I thought if that great Statesman referred to would only ponder over your position—compelled by cruel laws of your country to rear and cherish these salmon for others who have deprived you of the just share of them you once enjoyed, and urged on by love of gain to reap the whole harvest of lucre they represent, in order to pander to alien appetites.

That great master mind would perceive germs of injustice, and microbes of cruelty, that if in principle applied wholesale to the laws of a country would produce a upas tree larger than any he has ever yet essayed to cut down.

Scattercash is very bitter at losing his fishing, and having to pay five years' rent for nothing.

He urges in his poetic language we must depart, for if we remain we shall represent travellers in the desert, gazing in the distance on the beautiful oasis we shall never attain to, and that our dreams of salmon fishing are "bosh" (*yes*, that was the word he used).

He has wild schemes of assisting you to pay out these avaricious people in the lower portion of the river and estuary by killing all the salmon in the spawning season, and he will come over and help you; he says the rights of man principle urges him to do so.

I give no support to these dreadful counsels, dear me, no, for if carried out they would bring distress on the poor population between Lismore and Youghal, still it is wicked in any civilised country to place temptations to revenge before a community that have such just cause of complaint, and temptations figuratively as potent as ever were placed before mortals since the days of St. Anthony, to do what is wrong.

Kind friends, before I say farewell, let me tell you I have, for some time past, been accepted as the Liberal Candidate for the Constituency of Rottenboro; it is one my family and my name have long been associated with; my success is assured



at the next Election, and I hope to raise my voice in our great Senate of Parliament against these wicked proceedings, and hope to urge the claims you have that these beautiful salmon should again revisit their native streams to prove a source of profit to those around whom they were bred, and to impart joyous delights to those who follow the peaceful and healthful occupation of fly fishing.

Mr. TERENCE BARRY moved the following resolution:—

“The sons of the Upper Blackwater are Lords over its Salmon.”

I am here one of the oldest salmon fishers among you, and one who, some twenty years ago, caught eight fine fish at the Tail of the pool in one afternoon.

And where are the fish now? That is just what we have come here to know.

Not so many years ago there they were, and leaping in every twenty yards of water, and some people say there are plenty of them down below in the tideway, and we see the wagons going off full of them, as that kind and good gentleman, Mr. Longpurse, told you, going off, to feed the English, in all their wealth and grandeur, but what good is that to us? It puts money into the pockets of the owners of weirs and nets, and the Sons of Industry are able to earn plenty to keep their families and themselves just working for six months in the year, and why should they take our rights from us that we have enjoyed? Why should they not let the salmon up as they did in former years? Why should they catch them all and rob us? Is that fair play? Is that decent? If, by their new nets and their new tricks and goings on, they catch all the fish—I say why don't we get another close day in the week, and stop those river nets that catch the fish that are ours by right? And here we are now with any number of English ready to take the waters and pay well for them if the fish were there; ready to employ men to look after them, and pay their hotel bills and their cars, and taking residences and cottages, and spending their money all over the place like young Mr. Scattercash. No, all our salmon are to go off to England for Aldermen, rich manufacturers and gentry and London dinner parties, and not a fish scarce moves up beyond Clondunane, and are we to stand this work (cries of “No, No”). We are glad to see the English among us, and always give them good treatment—ask the Highlanders and the Rifles, the tastiest gentlemen in the British Army, if they were not tearing the hair out of their heads with anger when they got the route to leave Fermoy Barracks? If the Lord Mayor of London himself came over, I would be glad to hold his gold chain of office (which I hear he always wears), while he hooked and played a twenty pound salmon. If the English come over and enjoy the sport of catching our salmon we will give them a full welcome, but we wont send at least all our salmon over to them.

Why are we to rear and keep the young fish two years? Why are we to keep nearly all the salmon in the river for them in the winter months and get nothing in return? In former years they used to let plenty of fish up to us, and now scarce one when the fish are fresh from the sea and worth catching.



Now Terence Barry never was a hard man, and always had a kind heart to show, and sorry he would be to see his countrymen in want down the river and by the sea for want of salmon to catch, but I tell them we are not to be kept out of our money; there is £30,000 per annum waiting to be spent if we only had the salmon in our river. Well, gentlemen, we have nothing to lose now, for as far as getting money and employment for the people, or sport with the salmon, we might as well be residing on the banks of the Grand Canal as on the banks of the Blackwater.

Our neighbours down by the sea forget that we up here are angry, very angry, at losing all the profits the presence of these strangers living among us would surely bring, and they forget we are Lords over the Salmon; they forget the whole country is with us, and their spirit is well aroused at having all the salmon sent off to feed the English; not a sign of a fish in the river scarce until the close season, and before that many and many's the salmon (and the gentlemen would not miss them); honest boys who were just up to a bit of sport with a gaff or by an odd haul of a net could be getting their two and three shillings a pound early in spring for a few salmon, and Tim Hegarty, who lives in a little house in one of the back streets of Fermoy, always glad to produce the money. The people are ready, aye ready, to make a stir, and I hear there are tokens they wont go home with empty pockets if they do set to work and kill salmon, samlets and spawn, and although I hope the day is far off, if the work does begin and is carried out, those down the river may rest assured we will not in time leave them a salmon, and the little children by Youghal will be asking their papas and their mammas what sort of a fish a salmon was like.

Let these people have common sense, and remember it was by their new-fashioned tricks and nets they were able to catch all the fish that were shy in clear water of the old coarse nets, and they cannot blame us for making this stir, and they will find it better to have us friends instead of enemies if they let the fish up as before between 1875 and 1880; they will find us ready to preserve the salmon, the samlets and the spawn, and rich English lessees of fisheries ready to help us, and ready, I hear, to set up great fish breeding establishments, and before long there will be three salmon to one there is now.

Here are, Gentlemen, both sides of the case, and I think we would be acting in a fair and generous spirit if the proposal I have last named was carried out by us, but under no circumstances will we forget that the sons of the Upper Blackwater are "Lords over its Salmon." (Loud cheers.)

MR. JOHNSON having spoken to the following resolution, "That salmon angling "promotes the industries and local commerce of the district," the meeting then dissolved.—(*Irish Times*, 1897.)

Let me now illustrate how the spirit of the people connected with the fishery districts are justly aroused by the fish being taken away



from them in order to feed the wealthy English; this in fact is the strong point through which the riparian interest might advocate their cause and work on the impulses of the peasantry. Let me again anticipate history and quote from the *Irish Times* of March 2nd, 1898—

We regret to have to report in full on the wholesale destruction of winter salmon, young fish and spawn, that has taken place on the River Blackwater, County Cork, last winter. For some time past much angry feeling has been expressed in the towns and districts on the banks of the river at the absolute want of salmon on the upper waters of this once celebrated angling water, although it appears fish were fairly plentiful lower down the river, but were captured wholesale by the nets and sent off to the English markets, none were allowed to reach the upper waters. Last August placards were posted in the different towns of all the money that would be spent in the district if the salmon were only there to tempt the anglers, &c., &c. Leaflets were also issued. All these articles and notices were signed in broad type by "The Man in the Moon." The mysterious personage had clearly agents throughout the towns advising the people to stand this injustice no longer and to be ready to act under the orders they would receive.

Later on, very violent placards were posted on a market day in Fermoy, and also in the other towns, urging wholesale destruction of the salmon. A huge van, with one of its sides representing an English Civic Feast regaling off Blackwater salmon, and on the other were men standing by the river with their empty pockets turned inside out. The van was paraded through the country and appeared at fairs and markets.

Early in November, when the fish were collected in the pools previous to ascending the spawning streams, the threatened raid on the salmon broke out; the river was netted simultaneously in four or five different localities in one night, and the work continued until the fish ascended the streams for spawning.

Vast numbers of salmon had been taken out of the river, and it was anticipated the fish would have been speared on the spawning beds, but they were left unmolested save from the usual isolated attacks of the local inhabitant.

A long frost in January, which caused a shrinkage in the streams and lowered the bed of the river.

An onslaught was suddenly made on the well-known spawning beds in the streams; the spawn was uncovered and destroyed by heavy iron rakes with long prongs being passed over them in the shallow streams and on the main river, a strong rope was attached to either end of a chain with spikes protruding, similar to a chain harrow, covered a considerable portion of the water, and was worked up and down by men on each side of the bank, played havoc with the spawning beds.



A complete circle of scouts or watchers surrounded the culprits, who were forewarned by whistles of any coming dangers.

The police and watchers were incessantly harassed by gangs, who, without any net or engine, showed themselves by the river side, and fled when pursued, and, after a long chase, stopped and derided the police.

It is also stated small nets of thin fabric have been distributed through the country, for the purpose of netting the samlets at all seasons of the year in the streams. Some captures have been made, but no aggressive resistance is ever made against the police.

A crossbow was used when necessary to shoot a thin line over the river. This was attached to the rope and chain harrow, which was pulled across on either side of the river as required.

The rakes and other engines used were apparently made in England.

The police furthermore state the country around is so incensed at all the salmon going to England that they are ready to join in any undertaking that will further the destruction of the fish. The police also state that, without much risk of detection, the raking up of the spawn and netting of the samlets carried on in a quiet way can confer irreparable damage to the stock of fish.

This past season's work has caused the destruction of hundreds of thousands of salmon, both old and young, as well as many millions in embryo. Although the authorities are reticent on the subject, there are evidently mysterious influences connected with the "Man in the Moon" who furnish him with any amount of money.

In cases where convictions have been secured the culprits appear indifferent to going to gaol, and their families are well cared for.

An able advocate is always present at the Sessions when their cases come on, and sentences are of necessity very light owing to the precedent given of the ridiculously easy punishments passed on the Kerry River poisoners. It were quite time the law was amended to give power to magistrates to pass sentences adequate to meet such offences.—(*Irish Times*, 1898.)

I own to feeling ashamed to enter into these poaching details, but I have abstained from reference to salmon spearing or the spawning, a very deadly medium of destruction for that noble fish, it does so read like shooting a fox, in the sporting acceptance of the act.

The affinity between the fox and the salmon is interesting, the lives of both are absolutely in the power of the farmers and peasantry of Ireland.

I have fully illustrated that just as the farmers and peasants of the United Kingdom have the life of the fox, on which the great national sport depends, at their mercy, that likewise they have the



great industries and commerce connected with the life and presence of the salmon absolutely in their power.

### THE NEW SALMON ERA.

Let me now accept the task of illustrating the splendid commercial results attained in Canada, and also how the Norwegian Fisheries were saved from ruin by adopting "*The New Salmon Era System*," which runs thus.

The great object in both these countries is to allow the salmon as free a run as possible during the open season up the rivers so as to fill the spawning beds to the fullest extent with fish and thus increase the number of fish for capture. In Norway a hot feud exists between the salt and fresh water interests that apparently would not submit to any interference with the reduction of salmon licenses, and after great difficulty, when, from over-fishing, the rivers were depleted, Herr Landmark, in his capacity of Minister of Fisheries for Norway, in 1890 passed a measure to give three whole clear close days in the week both in rivers, in estuaries and on the coasts.

Legislation was framed on the successful experiments made on the Laargen and Suldal rivers. On the former it was proved most clearly that four close days on the rivers and three in the estuaries and coasts increased in time the supply of fish to such an extent that the capture on fishing a river with four close days produced a far larger supply of fish than when only one close day was allowed and fishing went on for six.\*

The advantage of giving fish the fullest access without interference to the spawning beds was admirably illustrated along that long range of lake and river boundary between Canada and the United States,

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\* Kindly observe, Gentlemen, how the peasantry of Norway were, for their ultimate benefit, compelled to work under such severe close time ordeal, not only on the Laargen but all over Norway; as soon as the fish get plentiful it appears the Radical party in Parliament reversed Herr Landmark's excellent enactment, as they dislike any restrictive regulations referring to angling or otherwise.



where the latter country indulged in "over-fishing" (in 1889) within the wide margin allotted to it, it is also proven as in the Province of Columbia where the marvellous improvement of the Fraser River over the Columbia River (United States property at its mouth) again brings "the New Era" to the front.

In Canada, when a river has become depleted of its stock of salmon, fishing licenses are largely reduced in number for a temporary period, and this at once increases the number of breeding fish. By a freak of nature down went the stock of salmon on the Fraser to an alarming extent. Alarmed at such an occurrence the Minister of Marine reduced the licenses to 500. His alarms were groundless, for next season proved most prolific.

The New Era feature rested in not allowing the fish to be captured for commercial purposes above the tidal limit. This of course sends fish, increased by thousands, to the spawning, just as the four weekly close day did in Norway, and the whole of the canning and curing business is done at the mouth of the rivers—at least in British Columbia.\*

So jealous were the Canadians of any capture of fish (apart from angling), that the Red Indians are not permitted to kill fish for mercantile purposes on the Fraser River above the tideway, but nowhere in Canada is there in the open season a check placed on angling.

#### CANADA.

It is to the Western Hemisphere we have to look for bright proofs of the successes of the New Salmon Era.

The virgin mind of Canada, unswayed by political bias, by ill-starred ideas of popular philanthropy (or through mischievous leanings towards class favouritism) was wrapt up in the one object of producing

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\* These observations are taken from the pages of the Canadian Fishery Reports, 1894. The real question at issue is whether any fish are taken in Canada generally above the tidal waters. None are captured above the tidal demarcation in nets in Columbia. If any error has been made on this point it will be corrected later on.



as many salmon as possible in her rivers, and allowing nothing to interfere with the work, while any check placed on her peasantry of temporary inconvenience by restricting the waters they were to fish in, or by limiting the number of licenses for a year or two, would ultimately bring its ample reward by trebling even the number of salmon bred on an individual river.

Alas! Gentlemen, what a contrast to your policy of increasing the number of licenses, of never applying a drastic remedy for a period, or even suggesting it, when the upper waters of any Irish river had been depleted of its salmon.

#### A HAPPY TIME.

Let me just explain what a salmon administration for five years in Ireland under the Canadian Government would bring about.

Picture the mighty Shannon with its fixed engines reduced and nearly all the salmon carried on as in Canada by the drift (or draft) nets, with its weirs and nets all done away with above the tidal water, and the salmon, after yielding a bountiful harvest to the Sons of Industry, in their thousands ascending the great tracts of water right away up to distant Loch Allen, and all open, even to the London public, to fish practically free and unrestrained.\*

Or if the nets and weirs were removed on the fresh waters of the Moy and the salmon let up without hindrance to Loch Conn, where the salmon yield so freely to bait or fly, for the full benefit of the tourist fisherman. Or, indeed, if all capture of fish above the tidal demarcation of the Blackwater and the river, with all net and weir fishing above the tidal water absolutely done away with and the fish let run free to Kanturk, think what a marvellous change would take place. Would the 9,000 Sons of Industry suffer if the New Era principles were introduced on every river and sea coast in Ireland? No, but greatly benefited by it. Would the amount of salmon imported to the nine towns of the Glory Page be lessened? No, but more than doubled in a few years.

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\* I cannot say to what extent salmon take bait or fly on the upper waters of the Shannon, but salmon stands for angling certainly exist.



What about the angling interests? Every river or lake-water available for salmon angling would be taken up in Ireland, every public water or lake thronged with anglers bravely contributing their average of £1 per day to the industries and commerce of each locality.

Under our present administration of the Salmon Fisheries it is useless to the angling interest, as the fish are all captured before they can reach the angling waters.\*

It is very difficult for a private individual to secure accurate statistics, and, doubtless, inaccuracies can be easily brought up, but these pages are dedicated to one object only, viz., to urge the necessity of a new Salmon Act of Parliament for Ireland.

One statistic I firmly adhere to, viz., that the wages paid to their workmen represents the sole contribution of any value made by the salmon merchant interests towards the industries and commercial enterprise of any value to Ireland.

Your Report of 1895 on the Irish Fisheries, which is just published (I have not seen it), is commented on in an editorial article of July in the "Irish Times." Straight as the arrow from the bow, the editorial pen of course "goes for" the Glory Page, and under the usual education your Office has inculcated to Irish Society, states that £466,672 worth of salmon has been exported to nine towns in England, an excess of some £66,000 over last year's, therefore the salmon fisheries are in a flourishing condition. I totally deny, Gentlemen, any such assertion, as it requires three or four years to judge of the condition of any salmon river. A change of capture to over 100 per cent. is recorded in Canada in succeeding years.

1893 was a very bad season owing to want of water, which checked fish coming. The capture of salmon fluctuates marvellously; as an instance, the take on the Fraser river was a million and-a-half dollars in excess of the previous season. Another item to rejoice

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\* The supply of salmon is not here questioned. On the Boyne there is an impression that artificial breeding increased the salmon for angling purposes; it certainly has not done so on the Blackwater.

The records of fish annually captured by the Oldbridge Weir will form a true test of the number of fish that run up the Boyne under ordinary conditions of water.



over was that the stock of breeding fish on spawning beds in 1894-95 was greater than in 1893-94. But 1894 was celebrated for the great floods in the Shannon, Suir, &c., &c., and aided the salmon to escape the nets, and enabled them to run clear over the weirs, if the Canadian system had been in vogue in Ireland for the last five years there would have been at least a dozen more salmon on the spawning beds for one that reached them on the average of seasons.

Few in Ireland have any experience of the vast number of fish a river is capable of producing and keeping when left to Nature's influences.

I have seen it, when a member of the Costelloe Club, Co. Galway, about 1848 and subsequent years.

Our waters extended through many lakes and streams.

No engines or nets interrupted the fish, but on the top of the first lake we placed a rack, like a comb, that let no fish up over one 1 lb. in weight. The multitude of trout in that one lake is marvellous; equally so, the sport.

The rack was taken up about September 10th, or later, and fish spawned all through the upper waters.

I am aware the salmon merchant's argument is, a certain number of fish will suffice for spawning beds, but Canada certainly contradicts this, and so do I, very decidedly; with poaching to deal with, as in Ireland, it is impossible to have too wide an extent of spawning beds to increase the number that may evade poaching raids in certain counties.

The salmon fisheries are without a statistic, apart from railway traffic, to guide the number of fish captured as a whole, or in an individual river.

I have to make a guess, and state that out of the £466,720 worth of fish captured in 1894. £250,000 were represented by the 9,000 Sons of Industry, who put in their pockets the price of the fish for their own benefit. Let us rejoice over this fact.

Accepted, the salmon merchants put in their pockets the price of the fish captured by the weirs and fixed nets, casually estimated at £216,000.



I now ask the Irish public a question:—"Whether do they consider these £216,000 worth of fish contribute as much to the prosperity of the country at the dinner tables of the well-to-do residents of the nine towns of the Glory Page as if they were swimming about in the upper waters of Irish rivers contributing to the supply of fish for angling and adding by thousands to the supply of fish on the spawning beds, whose produce would, on their return from the sea, make a splendid addition to the earnings of the Sons of Industry?"

The reply would prove interesting.

#### A NEW SALMON ACT OF PARLIAMENT.

In addition to the proofs already given me let me briefly narrate a few of the shortcomings of the present one.

#### NUMBER OF SALMON CAPTURED.

This Return forms the very corner-stone of all legislation under the New Era both in Norway and Canada.

Herr Landmark can tell us how many fish were captured over a coast line extending for upwards of 1,000 miles, he could quote the take in each of the rivers of any importance. Yet a Swedish friend tells me these Norwegians are a most churlish and independent people.

It is a treat to read Canadian fish statistics. The Falls of Niagara greatly reduce the number of Canadian salmon for the endless tracts of water the Dominion represents.

For every fish captured on the coast (including salmon) and on the vast inland tracts reaching from the Atlantic to the Pacific, an approximate Return is given, even the wild Red Indians' quota is named.

There is just one country where the Return (or approximate) cannot be collected, viz., Ireland.

Still, your Predecessors in Office are open to criticism for not



having urged successive Governments to add this simple clause to the Salmon Act—

#### HOLDERS OF SALMON LICENSES.

“ On or before the 1st February in each year holders of salmon licenses are required to send in to the Clerk of the District the said license was taken out in a Return of all salmon captured in the twelve months preceding January 1st.

“ A license holder neglecting to conform with this regulation, or sending in an incorrect Return, is liable to have his license suspended for a period not exceeding three years.”

#### THE BYE-LAWS AGAIN.

Your numerous bye-laws appear to contain a variety of light matters that have been the result of numerous Inquiries on snatching salmon, carrying gaffs, throwing stones at salmon, firing at them with guns, standing near fish passes, the clipping of a few yards off a net, drawing lines where netting is not to be allowed or forbidden; these are really trivial subjects for Inquiries, and do not touch the main subject of the want of supply of salmon.

#### TWO EXCELLENT BYE-LAWS

that run thus:—

“ Prohibiting use of all nets, and save landing nets or fresh water nets in fresh water portions of Rivers Snave, Coomhola, Mealagh, Oivane, and Carrigbay.”

#### CURTAILING LENGTH OF ALL NETS.

This is a very powerful bye-law if you used it.

You have the power, apparently, in order to increase the number of fish ascending the rivers, to curtail the length of draft or drift net even to ten yards.



Although legal, there are mischievous nets at Ballina that kill above their fair quota of fish. Why not shorten them?

It is shocking (I am informed) the way nets sweep the Maigue, near Killarney.

I state, respectfully but distinctly, a separate Inquiry apart from your Office is desirable to investigate the whole of your bye-laws, especially those relating to netting, and whether these powers have been justly exercised.

#### FUTURE PROSPECTS.

Inland Fisheries ought to have great prospects before them as factors for the benefit of Ireland itself. Apart from the benefits conferred by feeding England with its salmon and trout from lake and river, we have also the attractions afforded, in a limited degree, to the English to spend their time and money amongst us, but there is a great deal more to consider.

There appears a prospect that under the strain put upon the resources of every country to produce fresh fish equal to the demand, the current supply of the ocean will be diminished in future years.

Taking a brief notice of the subject, there is no country in Europe has such extraordinary advantages as Ireland, owing to its endless inland water resources, capable of rearing any amount of fish artificially, not only for marketable purposes, but also to bring the English over to us in far greater numbers than at present for angling purposes, artificial breeding will have to take a prominent part in the work.

There is, however, a danger ahead, and facts run thus:—

There are two legislative measures awaiting Ireland, one a Land Purchase Bill, the other a Local Government Bill, and there is the danger of either of these measures giving increased power either to tenants, or especially to the County Councils, to interfere in the Inland Fisheries.

A salmon or white trout will pass through perhaps three or four County Council Districts, and not even Solomon himself could devise a law how to make four County Councils exercise a just



rule over the salmon. Another point is how to deal with the extensive Lake Districts of Ireland ; for instance, Loch Derg borders on Cos. Limerick, Galway, Tipperary, and King's Co., how ridiculous having four County Councils to rule over this lake and its fish.

The moral of the tale is simple, viz., that Her Majesty's Government should bring forward an Irish Inland Fishery Bill that, in addition to dealing with present requirements, should also increase its authority over inland waters, so as to prevent any interference on the part of future County Councils in the fisheries.

There does not appear to be any advantage in promoting the cause of Irish salmon fishing with zeal until the intentions of the Government, as explained, have been made known.

We have the examples before us of Canada, and, in past years, of Norway, both illustrating the splendid results of a Government that can freely administer for the benefit of the fisheries without local interference.

The conclusion may be fairly drawn that under the rule of the Irish Government the supply of every sort of inland fish, salmon, white and brown trout, will be fairly doubled as compared to its numbers in a few years if the Local or County Councils are given authority over the fisheries.

#### NECESSITOUS TAXATION.

Let me notice "taxations" as the imposts of extra weekly close days, reducing the length of nets or number of licenses.

Referring to weekly close days, there are five open per week. If an additional close day is put on it means 20 per cent. taxation, if for half the fishing season, 10 per cent. taxation.

#### EXTRA CLOSE DAYS

are an absolute necessity, let them be permanent or temporary and any new measure ought to confer on the Irish Privy Council increased power of enforcing them or altering them, as circumstances require their change, on any individual river.



Very little sympathy was shown by salmon merchants on fresh water salmon captors when the riparian owners were deprived of their fish for angling purposes, and I may use a free pen in alluding to these classes.

Undoubtedly the salmon merchants and owners and representatives of fixed engines are well able to bear an extra close weekly day; there stands their list in the Fishery Inspector's Report as before stated, it contains Lords, Baronets, J.P.'s, D.L.'s, Gentlemen and Ladies of independent fortune, speculators, &c., &c.

The engines or nets require little outlay; their workmen are very limited for the value of salmon they capture. The fixed engine or net men get sparse quarter in Canada; the Deputy Marine Officer in his Report calls them "men who are pursuing other occupations than fishing, who merely devote an hour or two a day fishing these nets, and are not as fishermen steadily engaged in fishing;" salmon merchants secure their profits with an ease and cheapness no trade enjoys.

Save for stake nets the annual licenses are ridiculously low.

Surely this class of salmon captors can well afford to have an extra close day per week as required imposed on them.

Fresh water salmon captors who work above the tideway, as already described, by weirs and nets may be thus referred to.

The mischief is done to the Sons of Industry by their killing a vast number of fish that after visiting the angling waters ought to reach the spawning beds, and, of course, add to the number of salmon.

So mischievous even to commercial salmon interests is fresh water netting, that under ordinary circumstances it is scarce permitted under Canadian rule, but in the depleted condition of the upper salmon waters, as in Ireland, the fresh water captors would be required to cease salmon capture altogether for perhaps three years, and then allowed to take it up under a very limited number of licenses for nets, &c., &c.

Salmon capture on rivers by nets and weirs above the tideway is represented by a very small community, those most actively worked are connected with speculative salmon captors, and by others,



residents on the river side, who on their own account only fish a few hours in the day as people cannot drag nets all day over a narrow extent of water.

Taking into consideration the amount of mischief committed on the general prosperity of the salmon industry and angling interests, without a doubt the salmon captors in the fresh water can bear another weekly close day, as required, being imposed on them.

#### AN EXPLANATION.

Last April I ventured to place on the Notice Paper of the Upper House a resolution directing attention to the close time and other details connected with Irish Salmon Fisheries, it was delayed in order to secure fresh information on the subject, and in the meantime a Bill dealing with close time on the Irish Salmon was introduced into the House of Commons.

As the two Houses cannot entertain the same subject simultaneously, it was impossible for me to proceed, and I was compelled to remain silent or to address this letter to you, Gentlemen.

I have only to repeat there is nothing of a personal nature towards your Inspectors for a moment suggested.

I have the honour to be,

Yours faithfully,

HOWTH.

BRUSSELS,

*August 13th, 1895.*