

Canadian Natural History.

The Salmon.

(Salmo Salar.)

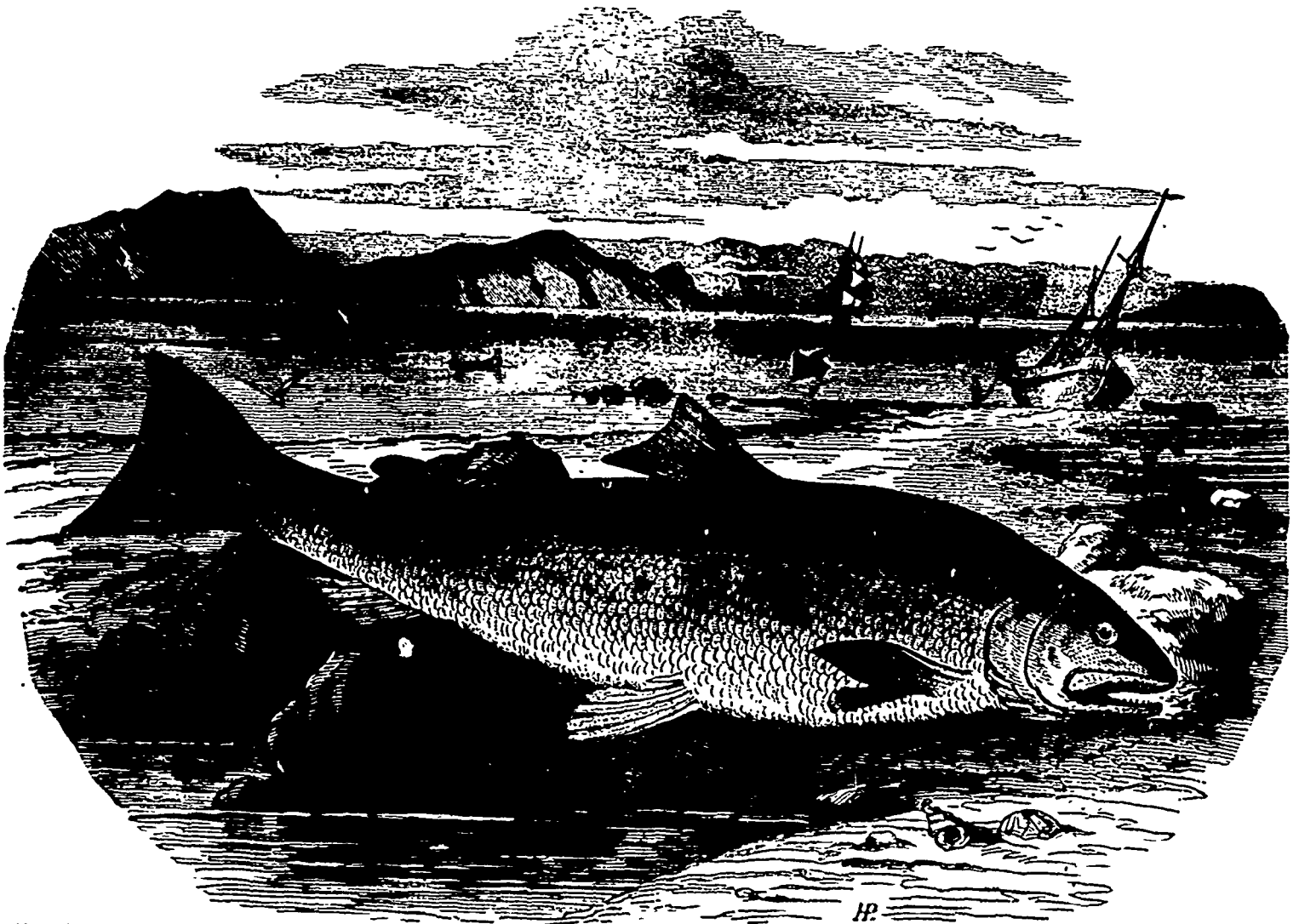
HITHERTO, in our sketches of Canadian Natural History, we have purposely confined ourselves to animals and birds. To have described our native fishes while the ice king held sway, would have been to deprive our readers of the immediate opportunity of verifying our descriptions by their own observations and researches. With the arrival of the genial summer-time, however, when our rivers and creeks are swarming with fish, and net and rod and line are put into requisition for the capture of the finny prey, the objection no longer holds good.

Among all fresh water fishes, whether found in the

is with their heads, thus displacing the gravel and forming their first parva. The excavation varies in depth from nine to eighteen inches, according to the nature of the material or the requirements of the situation, of which, no doubt, the fishes themselves are the best judges. When the trench is sufficiently deep, the female deposits in it the ripest portion of her ova, and the male sheds his milt among them. A careful observer may perceive both products falling into, and settling at the bottom. As soon as the respective deposits are made, another tilting takes place against the gravel, which has the effect of not only covering the ova deposited, but of forming another parva. They then drop down stream and rest, and soon after find their way to the salt water. By the time they reach the sea, much of their fine lustre—destroyed by the spawning process—is restored, and they are then known in Scottish parlance as "weel mended keltis." The majority of early spring

of the "parr" hatched together, all do not change into the second or "smolt" state at the same time. Frequent controversies have been waged on this stage of the Salmon's history, and few naturalists seem able to decide positively whether certain fishes are young salmon—or a distinct species to which the name of Parr has been attached.

In the second or smolt period, the scales, and many of the specific forms and colours of the Salmon show themselves. The fish now seeks the salt water, going down rivers to the ocean, and remaining there during winter. So salubrious is the sea, so enlarging the influence of its wide domain, that no sooner has a smolt of a very few ounces in weight been launched into that vast briny abyss, than it suddenly expands in growth, even as the children of the Anakim. In a short time it will weigh more pounds than it previously did ounces. After remaining absent a few months, they return to the fresh water. They are



old world or in the new, the Salmon deservedly occupies the first place. Its wariness, its subtlety, its strength, its determined courage and endurance, as well as the unsurpassed quality of its flesh, place it without a rival. The life-history of the Salmon is interesting, and some of its stages, even at the present day, are involved in considerable obscurity. Without presuming to advance any theory of our own, we will briefly attempt to record the history of a salmon from its earliest entrance on existence, until it has attained maturity, as ascertained by the best authorities of the present age.

The places usually selected by the parent fish for the deposition of her roe, or ova, are rippling fords or shallows, of not more than two or three feet in depth, where the gravel is clean and not too heavy, and the water clear and in constant flow. They begin by falling down a few yards below the chosen spot, and commence digging a trench, by tilting up against

fish, taken by rods, are keltis. So much for the old fish; let us now enquire after the spawn.

The period required for hatching the ova varies with the season and time of deposition. If spawned early, the fry appear in from 90 to 100 days. When they first emerge, they are very slender, but extremely agile little things, about three-quarters of an inch in length, and with none of their fins developed except the pectoral. Beneath the body, a comparatively large bag of beautiful transparent red substance—resembling a pale coloured currant—is attached to the abdomen, affording the young fish nourishment for several weeks. As the contents of the bag are assimilated, it gradually approaches in colour the roe of the body, and in from 27 to 50 days it entirely disappears. In this stage of its existence our young Salmon is called by several names—"parr" being probably the most popular. This period continues about one year, and it is somewhat remarkable that

then called "grilse," and have become sufficiently matured to breed.

The Salmon is emphatically the angler's fish. Possessed of a most rapacious appetite, he readily seizes the gaudy fly which the expert piscator has deftly dropped with gossamer lightness in a mimic whirlpool, or a circling eddy. The well-known "twist" of the angler's wrist fixes the barbed hook in the red gills of the scaly victim, and the struggle begins;—for not without fierce and determined resistance is the stream-monarch going to be brought to bank. The firm nerve, the educated eye, the most skilful and delicate manipulation are necessary if the tackle be fine and the fish large. Under such circumstances, hours are sometimes necessary before he is overpowered, and even then he must be piloted to the edge of the stream with the "eye of faith and the foot of instinct." We once, in a North of England stream, "worked" a fourteen pound Salmon by means of a