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THE SMOKING OF "HADDOCKS" FOR CANADIAN MARKETS—AN INVESTIGATION CONDUCTED AT THE MARINE BIOLOGICAL STATION AT ST. ANDREW'S, N.B.

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1. INTRODUCTION.

The production of finnan haddie is an industry of some importance on the coasts of the Maritime Provinces. This importance, however, is not national, in degree, as it is on the Scottish coast. There is not the demand on the market for finnan haddie "Made in Canada" that there might quite well be, if it were made to become the equivalent of the Scotch article of diet in flavour and texture. The processes used in both countries are somewhat similar, it is true, being based on the original method used in the little Scottish town of Findon on the north coast. Variations were introduced by the different fish-curers, which were considered expedient or profitable to them, but at times detrimental to the culinary value of the fish, upon which followed a lowering of both the market value and the demand on the market for this excellent foodstuff. The point of first importance in the Scottish industry was the improvement of the flavour of fresh fish, and, of second importance, was the preservation of the fish. These are in the reverse order in the industry as developed in this country. Many of the markets are far distant, and flavour has been sacrificed to preservation, but often inferior, second-rate or slightly tainted fish are used in producing the finnan haddie, so that the quality of the finished product is poor or, at any rate, not to be relied upon. The best of the catch is put up for exportation on ice, fresh, and until these first quality ones are used to make finnan haddie, the Canadian market will not increase its demand for them, the consumer preferring to purchase the fresh fish off ice rather than the smoked one of doubtful origin and quality. It is surely the part of wisdom to create the demand on the market by first producing a more excellent haddie, and then to encourage fish curers to reach and keep up that standard of excellence.

2. SCOTTISH METHOD.

The method of producing finnan haddies, as practised in Aberdeenshire, the most important Scottish centre of the industry, includes the processes of splitting, salting, and smoking.

"The fresh haddock is first treated by removing the head, splitting, eviscerating, and then giving an extra cut behind the backbone from the right-hand side in order to expose to view and facilitate the curing of the thick muscles of the back. This supplementary cut does not extend to the tail. The fish is then salted for half an hour in strong brine, and, after draining, is ready for smoking".¹ Peat and sawdust are used in producing the smoke; the fish, which are placed on sticks in tiers, and the other, receive constant attention during their short stay of five or six hours in the dense smoke which the peat produces.

Smaller fish are cured separately, the time of both pickling and smoking being diminished so that the flesh does not become tough—on the contrary, these lightly cured small fish are a great delicacy.

The Canadian method of curing differs in some important essentials from the Scotch, besides varying in minor details.

¹ Excerpt from H. M. Smith's "Note on Scotch Methods, etc." U.S. Commission on Fish and Fisheries, 1901.