The Industries of British Columbia: II---Fishing

(A. A. Milledge, Manager B. C. Products Bureau.)

Having dealt with Agriculture, we now turn to that other basic means of subsistence, the Fisheries of British Columbia.

The conformation of the coast of British Columbia is especially suitable for fisheries; the shore line is made irregular by many deep inlets and estuaries, and from the coast a feeding ground for fish in the shape of a sea ledge runs out from 50 to 100 miles before dropping away to ocean depths. The Pacific Ocean and the large rivers along its 7,000 miles of coastline abound in fish of all kinds, of which the most noted is salmon of various varieties, bred in British Columbia rivers, matured in the Pacific, and which regularly return after four years to the parent steams in immense numbers to spawn.

For the eleventh successive year, British Columbia has produced more fish than any other province in the Dominion of Canada; the fishery products last year having a total value of $18,921,100 or 51% of the total fishery products of the Dominion. In 1903 these prpoducts were valued at $4,748,365, so it will be seen that the industry has been steadily growing.

The total value of each principal species of fish taken in B. C. for the last year is as follows:—

Salmon	$13,130,000	Pilchards	$161,000
Halibut	3,918,000	Crabs	61,000
Herring	864,000	Clams	68,000
Cod	226,000	Oysters	33,000
Black Cod	121,000	Miscellaneous	395,000

Engaged in making the catch of this vast quantity of fish are 14 steam trawlers of 90 tons or over, 10 steam vessels of 30 to 125 tons, 172 sailing and gasoline boats 10 to 40 tons, 3271 sail and row boats and 3074 gasoline launches, making a total of 6631 fishing vessels representing an investment of $4,857,373.

Tributary to the taking of fresh fish is the Canning Industry, which gives employment to thousands of workmen. Engaged in the canning and curing of British Columbia fish are 1 clam cannery, 56 salmon canneries, 4 fish oil plants and 42 fish curing plants. The capital invested in these plants amounts to $13,607,000.

The first canning on a large scale took place in 1873, when two canneries on the Fraser River packed 8,580 cases of salmon. Since then the pack has risen until last year it totalled 1,290, 326 cases, an increase of 686,778 cases over the previous year; but although this was the fourth largest pack in the history of the province it was far less valuable than in many other years, due to the fact that 840,183 cases or 60% consisted of pink and chum salmon. Nineteen twenty-three has seen an even greater increase in the amount of salmon packed, no less than 1,341,681 cases being produced; of these 858,991 cases were of pink and chum, so that the value of this year's pack will be relatively the same. Most of the gain in the catch was made on the Skeena and Naas Rivers.

About 1890 the fishery for halibut was begun, and from 6,877,640 pounds in 1899 the catch has risen to 25,500,950 pounds, practically all of which was shipped from Prince Rupert; no less than 900 box cars were required to transport this enormous catch to its markets.

The coast of British Columbia also bids fair to rival the North Sea in the catch of herring, one firm this year having caught in the neighborhood of 50,000 tons or about 400,000,000 fish.

Whaling also plays an important part in the fisheries, 187 of these mammals being killed last year with a yield of 283,314 gallons of oil valued at $129,954. Among other by-products obtained were 326 tons of whale-bone and meal valued at $15,060 and 230 tons of fertilizer valued at $13,800. This catch includes whales of many kinds, sulphur-bottom, finback, humpback and occasional sperms. This year the catch totalled 377 whales with a corresponding increase in value.

Unlike other industries, care has to be exercised in regulating the annual catch of fish in order to conserve the supply. This is accomplished by the Government curtailing the fishing season, restricting the number of licenses issued, and establishing hatcheries. One reason for this great need of conservation is the serious depletion of the sockeye salmon, due partly to overfishing by the United States operators in Puget Sound through which waters the salmon pass on their way to the Fraser River, and more so to the dumping of rock in the Fraser River during the construction of the Canadian Northern Railway.

These hatcheries are a very important factor in taking care of the industry, for they greatly augment the annual production. Last year the Government distributed 110,671,921 fish eggs in the upper reaches of the rivers of British Columbia. Of these 84,789,624 were sockeye salmon. This year has seen a record collection of salmon eggs, a total of 30,702,000 sockeye salmon eggs being collected in the Pemberton district of the Fraser River alone, and a sufficient number of fish left to seed the spawning grounds. About 50% of the eggs collected will be used for seeding the areas of the Fraser River above Hell's Gate, Anderson-Seton Lakes system, the Shuswap Lake system and the Stuart Lake system. As the other hatcheries throughout the province show similar record collections, it will be seen that the salmon production is being well taken care of, and with judicious regulations being made and enforced, the industry should in a very short time resume a normal state.

It will be seen from the few preceding remarks that British Columbia stands possessed of a vast natural wealth of fish the equal in quality of any in the world. To insure the proper development of this wonderful resource, should be the aim of every true citizen.

The fisheries of this province give employment to nearly 15,000 workers directly, and indirectly to thousands more in the production of tin containers, building materials, food stuffs for use in the canneries, whaling stations, curing plants, etc. In addition the fish being of such excellent quality, is of great food value, comparing most favorably with other forms of edibles.

For these, if for no other reasons, every person in this province should insist upon being supplied with BRITISH COLUMBIA fish. By so doing, citizens will expand the present industries, give employment to more workmen, consequently increasing the population and encouraging new settlers to provide the necessaries of life for the workers in the factories. It will thus be readily seen that by developing the fishing industry the other industries of the province will in turn receive added impetus, and the movement will result in general prosperity for all British Columbia.

GEO. T. WADDS
PHOTOGRAPHER
VANCOUVER BLOCK
736 Granville Street
VANCOUVER, B. C. SEYMOUR 1002