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FISHING THE TOMMY-COD.

When the beautiful leaves of autumn have fallen to be covered by the white snow; when the stripped trees sway to and fro shivering in the wintry blast; when the rivers are bound by icy fetters—then the fishermen of St. Roch de Quebec improvise a village on the frozen bosom of the St. Charles.

In the early part of December, ere the ice is firmly taken, numbers of wooden shanties are placed in clusters in the neighborhood of the Palais Harbor, and the season of the tommy-cod fishing commences. It is short, but the most is made of it, for the slaughter continues day and night; at only short intervals have the poor fish any respite from their enemies; when the tide is low the onslaught ceases, and at that time a few only of the careless ones fall a prey to the baited hook. The numbers taken during the season are enormous, and fail not during the whole winter to supply, at a very cheap rate, the markets with a delicious eating fish. During the whole winter, I said, for in the month of April the frozen tommy-cods, as fresh as when first whipped out of the water, are to be purchased in the shops and the markets. During the season large quantities of barrels are packed with them, and kept in cold places till needed for barter. When Fridays and fast days come so often, and the long Lent adds to the demand, it would seem almost a special foresight on the part of the tommy-cods, to visit the improvised villages on the St. Charles.

And these villages are worth visiting; they are unique in their way, having merely a temporary existence of about three weeks. Thither the boys of Quebec, all provided with fishing-lines and some liver for bait, as well as a few sous to pay for the use and occupation of the hut (if scarce of cash they take with them a couple of tallow candles or an armful of firewood), proceed in the day time, and having gained admittance to one of the shanties, sit down to the amusement of fishing for tommy-cods; and rarely do they leave, after two or three hours' sport, without carrying home with them from six to ten dozen each. Thither, in the evening, the grown up boys and men proceed and spend the whole night in the same manner, leaving in the early morning with a load of from twenty to forty dozen each.

Late one evening—late in order to catch the right time of the tide—in last December, with two friends, I went to experience the excitement which kept so many from their beds in the cold nights of a Canadian winter. We provided ourselves only with a substantial supper, having been informed that all necessary fishing tackle would be at our disposal, *en payant*. It was a beautiful bright, moonlight winter night; the sky was intensely blue, and the stars shone brightly in countless myriads. No gaslights spoiled the scene by their flickering flame, and the dark shadows of the sombre-looking houses fell in fantastic shapes on the white snow-clad and deserted streets. The weather was extremely cold, and as we