

# Canada's Great Fishing Interests

BY PERCY ST. CLAIR HAMILTON

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The immense importance, and enormous value of the fisheries of Canada, are comparatively unknown to those not directly or indirectly interested in the business. Foreign countries, especially the United States, pertinaciously claim to any right or privilege, which by treaty, or other arrangement enable them to use what are properly described as Canadian Fisheries. Even though the actual places where fish are taken are beyond the territorial waters of Canada, by liberal modern interpretation, their advantage to the shores of the Dominion, and the fact that these shores form the natural, and most useful base of operations, makes the Canadian Fisheries the leading industry of the kind in the world.

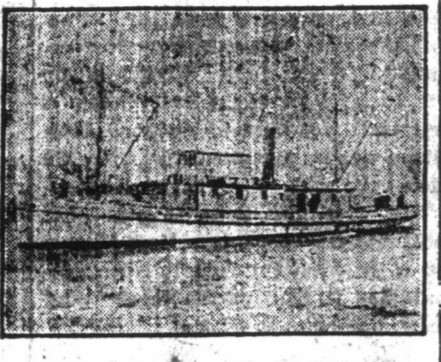
From the time of the early attempts of France to colonize in America, the rich harvest of the sea was the chief temptation. When the British "came to stay," France held out for, and received the right to a share in the fisheries of the British American coast. The British, however, gained the privilege of using certain parts of the Newfoundland coast during the fishing season. Fully realizing the value of the fishing industry, France to this day pays a generous bounty on every quintal of French caught fish sold in a foreign market.

The United States had been using the Canadian privileges, and Canadian waters for five years without permission, and an international commission at Halifax heard evidence, and awarded Canada and Newfoundland five and a half million dollars for that five years' use of the fisheries. American fishing vessels are now allowed the privilege of Canadian Atlantic ports to obtain supplies, and tranship their catches on payment of a tonnage tax.

The Government of Canada still holds the fishery award from the United States to pay their own Atlantic fisherman an annual bounty of \$1,000,000. It was not until 1877, but it was not until 1882 that the idea of using the interest for bounty purposes was acted upon. As a matter of fact, it was not until 1891 that the appropriation was increased to \$1,000,000. As a matter of fact, the appropriation from the first has been increased. Vessels are paid at the rate of \$1 per ton to the owner, \$6 to each vessel fisherman, \$5.50 per man to boat fishermen, and \$1 per boat to the owners. The number of vessels receiving bounty is about 800, with a tonnage of over 25,000. The number of boats is increasing, and something like 14,000 receive bounty. The total amount paid in bounties has reached nearly four million dollars.

**Produced Great Wealth.**  
The official returns of the value of the fish products of Canada since Confederation shows that the harvest of the seas, rivers and lakes amounted to over seven hundred million dollars. Yet these figures, enormous though they are, do not tell the whole story. Mr. L. Z. Jones, M. P., who has exceptional means of judging, told the British Association, at Montreal, in 1884, that the local consumption, was fully as much as that exported, hence the figures given officially would not have to be doubled in order to arrive at the true value of this enormous industry. Prof. E. P. Rice, Dominion Commissioner of Fisheries, estimates this value at only ten millions a year, and one has to guess that the official figures are at this lower estimate. However, it will be seen that the tollers of the water of Canada have produced \$1,050,000,000 since Confederation.

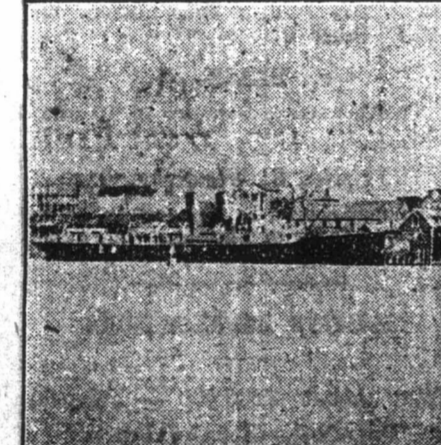
Considering these stupendous figures one begins to realize something of the value of an industry, in which Canada leads the world, and yet one which is carried on so quietly that few visitors have any idea of its magnitude. The Dominion, with its magnificent forests, ranks third among the world's wood exporting countries, Russia and Austria being the only countries exporting large quantities. Yet Canada's fisheries have given an average yield of three million dollars a year more than her lumbering.



A MODERN LOBSTER STEAMER.

**World's Lobster Supply.**  
Not only has Canada an immense fishery production already, but she is singularly fortunate in that some important branches which have become extinct. In other countries are still yielding rich returns to the Dominion. For instance, about the only important lobster supply the world now has left is that of the Canadian Atlantic coast. The most productive is that of the south shore of Nova Scotia, whence they can be transhipped at once to the United States alive. In British Columbia there are salmon fisheries of marvelous productivity, and in the far north bordering on the shores of Hudson's Bay, and the Arctic ocean, are the richest whaling grounds in the world, and the last some of the leviathans, walrus, sea trout, the inconnu, pike, sturgeon, and others also abound in these far northern waters.

Away back in 1870, the late Hon. Peter Mitchell, then Canadian Minister of Marine and Fisheries, wrote as follows, of the Dominion fishing interests:  
As a national possession they are inalienable, and as a field for industry, they are inexhaustible. Besides their general importance to the coun-



BANK FISHING VESSELS IN PORT OF YARMOUTH.

try as a source of maritime wealth and commerce, they also possess a special value to the inhabitants. The great variety and superior quality of the fish products of the seas and inland waters of these colonies afford a nutritious and economic food, admirably adapted to the do-

estic wants of their mixed and laborious population. They are also, in other respects, especially valuable to such of our people as are engaged in maritime pursuits, either as a distinct industry, or as a necessary compensation for defects of soil and fisheries to which British subjects have claims on this continent are of a peculiar value.

At that time the total yield of the fisheries of Canada only amounted to \$8,000,000. Today the estimated value is \$30,000,000 a year; the capital invested is about \$14,000,000; the number of men employed nearly 80,000.  
The largest single product is that of salmon, in British Columbia, east by the most prolific salmon fishery ever known, and giving an annual yield of over \$5,000,000. The fishery is one accompanied with comparatively no danger, and little hardship, climatic conditions being of the pleasantest, and the runs of salmon so plentiful as to seem fabulous to those who have not seen them. Indeed, at times on the Fraser river photographs have been taken to convince the incredulous, and it is no exaggeration to say that the fish were shown to be so numerous as to fairly conceal the water. The catch is very largely used for canning, and the tinned salmon of British Columbia is known in very land in the world.

**Cod Liver Oil for the World.**  
At one time the codfishery of Nova Scotia—carried on off the shore and on the banks of Newfoundland, and other prolific and convenient fishing grounds—was the largest in value, exceeding even British Columbia salmon. For instance in 1883, the cod catch was officially valued at over six and a half millions, while it is now under four millions a year. This is not due to scarcity of fish so much as the diversion of capital and energy to other branches of sea fishing, which prove more remunerative. The cod-fishing industry of British North America in Canada and Newfoundland is over three centuries old. The fine fish and marvelous stories of productivity taken to England by Sir Francis Drake, had much to do with stimulating the ambition of the British to become possessors of North

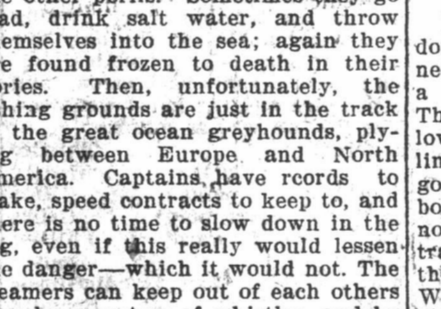
the ends being buoyed. Men in dories—flat bottom boats, which can be "steered" placed inside of each other to save space on the deck of the schooner—set the trawls, and periodically visit them, take off the fish, reload and set them again. This continues until bait runs out, or it is time to take the fish to port. The cod are split, salted and put in the hold from day to day. As they will take up a good deal of salt, and are not so highly esteemed as the "shore fish," which caught not far from land, are taken to port and dried without much salt.

The dangers of bank fishing can hardly be exaggerated. One only has to visit some of the fishing villages of Nova Scotia, and see the number of widows to realize the perils of the calling. Bank fishing is also largely dependent upon favorable wind and weather, and often lost much time. Recently, fleets of little motor boats are replacing the small boats, and are doing their best work in calm weather, which would have been completely tied up a sail-boat. The increasing price of gasoline is quite a tax on the fisherman, and they will be among the people who will derive great benefit through having denatured alcohol so cheapened by removing taxation and restrictions on manufacture, that it can replace the dangerous and expensive gasoline, and of especial importance to Canada, is the lobster. In olden times, these crustaceans were taken in a special net—an iron hoop, having a loose coarse net stretched across it. Pieces of fish were attached to the wire net, and the lobster was lured to the bottom. Periodically the net was raised, and the lobsters which had crawled on to it to eat the bait were removed.



A MODERN MOTOR FISHING BOAT.

**Murderous Coast Fog.**  
The causes of loss of life are varied, but fog is directly and indirectly the chief factor. Each dory is worked by two men, generally a fisherman and a boy. The fisherman is remembered that fog on the banks come up very suddenly. The men are unable to get back to their schooner, night shuts in, and they row hour after hour, often in the deadly cold of winter. When the fog lifts, or a sign of vessel can be seen, what trifle of food or water they had with them—if any at all—is soon exhausted, and starvation is added to the other perils. Sometimes they get mad, drink salt water, and throw themselves into the sea; again they are found frozen to death in their dories. Then, unfortunately, the fishing grounds are just in the track of the great ocean greyhounds, plying between Europe and North America. Captains have records to make, speed contracts to keep to, and there is no time to slow down in the fog, even if this really would lessen the danger—which it would not. The steamers can keep out of each other's way by a system of whistles, and by working by two can generally avoid collisions. But the poor souls in a dory—a mere speck upon the ocean, which can be neither seen nor heard by the lookout in a fog—they suddenly see a huge monster rushing at them; the thud of the engines and fastened to poles anchored with drowns the cries of the unfortunate, the impact is not even felt by the



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**How Lobsters Are Taken.**  
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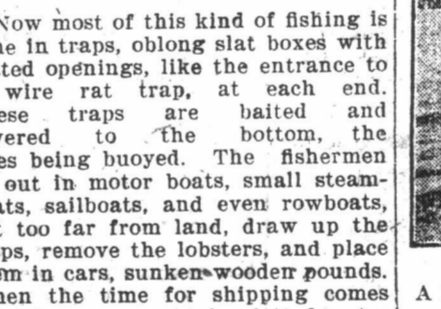
lantic coast of Canada. Great efforts are being made to restock the depleted lobster fishery of the New England coast, but those of the old world, once so prolific, are practically beyond redemption.



OLD STYLE HAND LINE FISHING FROM OLD PRINT.

**Motor Boat Fishing Now.**  
Shore fishing, while calling for skill, hardihood and bravery, is not fraught with such perils as the bank fishing. Until recent years, this work was done on the Atlantic coast almost entirely by men in small sailing craft, who used their own hands and feet, and got more bait and provisions, once a week or oftener. These sailing boats were necessarily dependent upon favorable wind and weather, and often lost much time. Recently, fleets of little motor boats are replacing the small boats, and are doing their best work in calm weather, which would have been completely tied up a sail-boat. The increasing price of gasoline is quite a tax on the fisherman, and they will be among the people who will derive great benefit through having denatured alcohol so cheapened by removing taxation and restrictions on manufacture, that it can replace the dangerous and expensive gasoline, and of especial importance to Canada, is the lobster. In olden times, these crustaceans were taken in a special net—an iron hoop, having a loose coarse net stretched across it. Pieces of fish were attached to the wire net, and the lobster was lured to the bottom. Periodically the net was raised, and the lobsters which had crawled on to it to eat the bait were removed.

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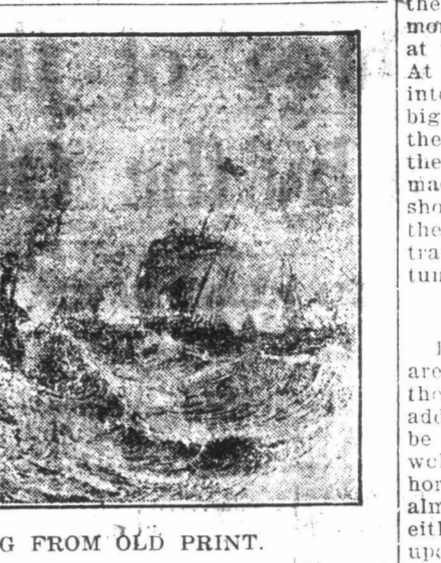


A MODERN MOTOR FISHING BOAT.

**Nova Scotia Fish Traps.**  
The fish traps so much used on the Nova Scotia coast consist of "leaders," viz.: a fence of coarse netting stretched right to the shore, with stones, and running out from the buoys and headlands. At the deep

end of the leaders is the trap proper, a big, round basin of net hung on poles, with only one entrance. The whole apparatus is based on the knowledge that mackerel only move in one direction, and never turn back in their tracks. The schools moving along the coast, and pursuing the squid, which are their food, come to the netting fence caused by the leaders, and head farther out where they swim right into the trap. If the fish knew enough to turn about, they would swim right out again, but as it is, they keep swimming round and round the traps right past the door they came in by, and where hundreds more are still crowding in the jam at the entrance of a big circus tent. At low tide the fishermen row out into the trap and dip up the fish in big, long-handled landing nets. When the wind is blowing on shore during the mackerel run big catches are made, but should the wind blow off shore for any length of time during the season when the fish are on their travels, the result would be unfortunate.

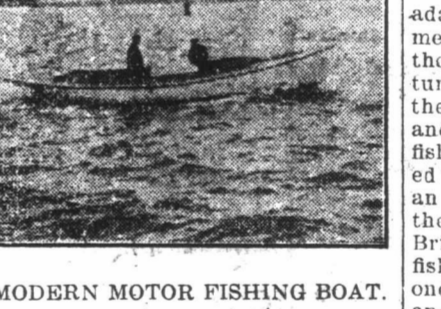
**Strange Sea Monsters.**  
Emptying the trap, when there are several hundred barrels of fish, there is an exciting experience, in addition to the mackerel there will be sharks, savage dog fish—the natives of the sea—sculpin, and other horrible looking sculpins, and in fact almost everything that swims, which either followed the mackerel to prey upon them, or were carried along by the crowd. The sharks and dog fish have to be fought and dispatched with axes and boat hooks. It is unwise to ship the salmon and they are supposed to be turned loose to continue their migration towards whatever river they are bound. There may be some fishermen who strictly obey the law in this respect, but as they bring a fine price in the Boston and New York markets about that time, and are among the most delicious salmon that grow, they usually reach the market, carefully packed in ice, and perhaps described as "white bass." The element of luck enters very largely into this mackerel fishery. One trap will make money, while another not half a mile away, and in what might be called a preferred location, won't pay wages. On one occasion a trap off the south coast of Nova Scotia took 1,000 barrels of mackerel in one night, while none other on the coast had anything considerable. Mackerel were worth \$20 a barrel—fresh on ice—in the New England market just then. The trap owners shipped their fish, a few hundred barrels at a time, from day to day, leaving the balance alive in the trap, and got pretty near the full value of their fish, instead of destroying the market by putting the whole night's catch on at once. It may be said, however, that \$20 for a night's catch of a mackerel trap is not sufficiently common to make all the fishermen rapidly wealthy.



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## WINDTHORST CITIZENS HOLD UP COAL TRAIN

**Conductor Refusing Their Request for Fuel, Nine Men Threw Rail Across Track, While Nine Other Men Shovelled out the Coal—Have Reported to C. P. R. Headquarters**

GRENFELL, Sask., Jan. 19.—When the train pulled into the new town of Windthorst, about twenty miles south of here, yesterday morning the entire adult male population was there to meet it. They asked the conductor for part of a car of coal and offered payment therefor, and, on being refused, nine of the men armed themselves with shovels and picks which had been hidden in the snow, boarded the car and shovelled out the coal, leaving sufficient to run the train to the next station and return to Reston; while the other nine threw a rail across the track in front of the engine and fastened it down with chains, and, despite curses and threats of shooting, prevented the crew from moving the train. They gave three names to the conductor, and one of them drove to Grenfell this morning and sent a report to the C. P. R. headquarters by mail, giving a list of the names and the amount of coal each one got and offered payment therefor. They are now awaiting developments, but will be able to keep themselves warm while doing so.

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