

operandi, not less a marvel of internal mechanism. Primarily, the business of the commercial company of British Columbia is to catch and sell fish. In the first place, the company buys from the fishermen at a fair market value. He does not have to hawk or peddle, or consign them. The local market is limited, and therefore the big market will be in the United States and Canada. The best fishing grounds are 600 miles north of Vancouver, the point of shipment. The principle of handling will be refrigeration throughout; cold storage at the fishing stations; cold storage on a line of fast steamers to Vancouver; cold storage on the fast express trains eastward; and cold storage at the principal points of distribution, east and south. This system of refrigeration can be utilized for general trade purposes, and thus be made remunerative independently of the fish business. The above refers to fresh fish, of which there are a number of varieties, the principal of these being the halibut, or giant sole, much prized in the eastern market. It exists in great numbers, is the best shipping fish known, averages from 100 to 200 pounds in weight, is firm in flesh, and makes a delicious steak. The salmon, of which there are six varieties, is illimitable in quantity and runs in all the inlets, rivers and streams of the coast. The best table salmon are the steelhead and tyhee or spring salmon. There are several varieties of cod and herring, sole, flounders, shad, bass, "skil," oolachan, sturgeon, haddock, smelts, anchovies, capelin, skates, crabs, clams, oysters, etc., in great abundance. Special reference may be made to one or two others of these. The "skil," sometimes called "black cod," is a new fish to commerce, but one of the most delicate and finely flavored known. It resembles a mackerel somewhat, is found in 150 and 200 fathoms of water and is very plentiful. It is of too delicate a fibre, perhaps, to ship long distances, but cured properly will eventually be one of the most highly prized of fishes. Then the oolachan (spelled in a variety of ways), sometimes called the candlefish, runs in enormous numbers at certain seasons, and is a delicious table fish, also very delicate in texture, but cured would make a very marketable "bloaters." The oil, too, of which the Indians extract great quantities, and use as we use butter, if refined should become an important article of commerce. The native oyster is small, but preferred by connoisseurs to the Eastern, and no doubt by cultivation is capable of much improvement in size. Clams are found everywhere along the coast, and at Alert Bay an industry in canning them has grown up, and the manufactured article is exceedingly good, and should be everywhere saleable. These above enumerated are, of course, independent of the salmon canning industry, which has been developed on a large scale, and is not capable of much further extension for the present.

The possibilities in the way of curing fish in various ways—salmon, halibut, cod, herring, "skil," sardines, oolachan, and so on—are very great, and a large demand exists for such products, but which, as yet, it has been impossible to supply from this end.

Another important item is the extraction of oils. The dogfish, found following the runs of smaller fish, upon which it preys, yields from its liver and body an oil, which, for lubricating purposes—more especially the liver oil—has no superior in the market. Two factories on the north coast are engaged in its production and find a ready demand. The liver of the ratfish, a marine monstrosity, found with the dogfish, also yields an oil of great economic value. Sharks, whales, herring, and the little oolachan

are likewise valuable for their oil producing qualities.

There are various other fish products known to commerce, which it is proposed to manufacture, notably fish guano or fertilisers, in which an extensive trade has grown up.

All these things the Commercial company being organized, propose to undertake, and much more. They will saw their own lumber out of the timber on their own lands, erect their own houses, make their own shingles, barrels and boxes, build their own boats and ships, and construct their own wharves; clear their own lands; prospect for and develop their own mineral properties; operate their own stores; trade with the settlements of the coast; hunt for seal and sea otter; and generally do all and sundry all these things which their hands find to do well and profitably for themselves and the colonists.

In such a complex industrial and commercial fabric as the one just outlined, besides being practical and founded on well known conditions of utility, it will provide for the colonists a diversity of occupation and employment, constituting an adaptation to a variety of pursuits and create labor at all seasons of the year.

An essential consideration in a scheme of the magnitude proposed will be the character of the colonists themselves, and as objections have been raised to the crofters as a class, from whom they will be largely, if not altogether drawn, some reference to them is necessary. Morally it is a significant fact of local repute, that on the Isle of Skye there was not, in a population of 30,000 people, a single serious crime recorded in a period of 400 years. It is urged that they are lazy and unsuitable as emigrants to a new country. These objections, however, are either the result of ignorance, or are inspired by special motives. In answer, I cannot do better than quote from "the Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners of Inquiry into the condition of the Crofters and Cottars in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland."

Sec. 224: While it is true that the physical conditions of life in the remote "parts of the districts in question, and the possibility of utilizing the means of modern progress, are far behind those of more favored parts of the country, it is "pleasing to know that the general character of the inhabitants is not so by any means. It may be said, on the contrary, that in no part of our Majesty's dominions are there to be found among the humble ranks of society, more intelligence, better manners, purer morals than in the remotest parts of the Highlands and Islands from the Mull of Kintyre to the Skaw of Mist in Shetland.

"340: * * * It would be difficult to replace them by another race of equal ability and worth.

"Sec. 341: It is not only in regard to fishing that the Crofting and Cottar population have a peculiar value. They constitute a natural basis for the naval defence of the country, a sort of defence which cannot be extemporised, and the value of which, in possible emergencies, can hardly be overrated. The sea-faring people of the Highlands and Islands contribute at this moment 4,431 men to the Royal Naval Reserve, a number equivalent to the crews of seven armoured war steamers of the first class, and which, with commensurate inducements, could be greatly increased. It may be added that most of the men incorporated in corps of militia and volunteers would be able to serve ashore and afloat with equal efficiency.

"Sec. 343: The Crofting and Cottar population of the Highlands and Islands, small though it may be, is a nursery of good workers and good citizens for the whole Empire. In this respect the stock is exceptionally valuable. By sound physical constitution, native intelligence and good moral training, it is particularly fitted to recruit the people of our industrial centres, who, without such help from wholesome sources in rural districts, would degenerate under the influences of bad lodging, unhealthy occupation and enervating habits. It cannot be indifferent to the whole nation, constituted as the nation now is, to possess within its borders a people, hardy, skillful, intelligent and prolific as an ever-flowing fountain of renovating life."

I can hardly give a higher or better authority than the foregoing, and we might incidentally mention that the daughters of these hardy fishermen would become excellent domestic helps in a country whose chief dependence for that purpose is now so largely drawn from the almond-eyed Mongolian.

Hitherto I have dealt with the project mainly as a speculation having a very wide field for successful development. I now desire to regard it as a necessity, not less national than and second only in importance to the building of the C. P. R.

All the available evidence goes to show that the west coast of British Columbia has wonderful piscatorial as well