

THE ACADIAN.

WOLFVILLE, N. S., SEPT. 16, 1887

The Wharf Siding.

During the past week the railway siding leading from the main track to the wharf has been removed and the track taken up. As near as we can learn, since the opening of the road Wolfville has been favored by this convenience, and our people are justly indignant that it has been removed without even an explanation of why it is done. This summer the siding has been used more than for several years, and the want of it now will be greatly felt. During the summer several cargoes of lumber have been shipped from here, coming on cars from Kentville which were shunted on the wharf and the lumber transferred to vessels. This industry we suppose will have to be abandoned, and the shipping done from some other port. The merchants of the valley have been in the habit for years of having their goods brought from Boston, New York or St. John by vessel to Wolfville and thence by rail to their destination. In the future the goods must either be trucked to the station or taken elsewhere. Large quantities of hard and soft coal come by vessel to Wolfville and are transferred from the vessels to cars on the wharf and sent farther up the valley. The expense of hauling the coal from the wharf to the siding will stop this branch of trade. There are only a few of the many inconveniences that our people must put up with to gratify the whim of the manager of the W. & A. R., and we have not even the satisfaction of being informed of the advantages to be derived by the road by the change. Whether it is, as some claim, the result of a desire to injure our town, or is done to save expense we know not, but in any case our people will be greatly inconvenienced.

The Shad Fisheries.

The importance of the shad fishery to many of our readers and the attention called to its decline in this Basin during the last few years is my excuse for asking for a small amount of space to add my comments on some of the recent literature on the subject. To use a perhaps somewhat trite saying, the ways of all fish must of necessity be to a large extent mysterious—and a large part of our so-called information is theoretical. We may say we have two sources of information, one the observation of the practical fisherman who studies the habits and characteristics of the shad for his own benefit, that he may more successfully capture them; the other the scientific man who makes the matter a study and who has in addition to his own more limited opportunities of observation, the knowledge derived from books and from the fishermen themselves. I will not mention the class of writers who having no knowledge of the subject rush boldly into print, advocating specifics with a confidence born of utter ignorance and a desire to write. Unfortunately with both scientific and practical observers there is a tendency to theorize, and the theory once formed the theorist will carefully collect and elaborate all favorable evidence, and either shut over or utterly ignore all to the contrary. Prof. Hind, in his recently published paper in the Windsor Tribune, says—

"It is a popular impression that the shad are migratory creatures, coming each year from far distant Southern winter quarters, such as the Gulf of Mexico, etc. This is a mistake, and the proof of this mistake is not wanting. It is true that the shad makes its appearance in the rivers flowing into the Atlantic from Florida, U. S., to the Memphiscreek and Miramich in New Brunswick in tolerably regular weekly succession, being later and later with the decrease in latitude. But this apparent north-westerly movement of the schools does not imply a coastal migration. It is only a spring migration from winter homes in adjacent sea areas to the nearest and most suitable rivers, and the migration seems to be determined by temperature. That there is no great coastal spring migration northwards is shown by the fact that the southern shad which enter the rivers from Florida to Delaware have their tails and back-fins tipped with black, which markings are not nearly so visible on the more northern shad. Then we have the Gulf of St. Lawrence shad, which formerly were found in large numbers in the Miramichi at the end of May and diminished schools still spawn in Gulf rivers. That the shad when introduced into a new sea area will rapidly increase is shown by the remarkable increase of this fish on the Pacific coast. From one introduction of the shad into the Sacramento river, this fish has spread to many of the rivers flowing into the Pacific as far north as Puget's Sound. A summer coastal migration in North Atlantic waters doubtless takes place to a limited extent, but this is confined to those schools which having spawned, follow the cold sea water against the current north-easterly. Thus the schools which spawn north of Cape Cod in May and June when they leave the river gradually swim north-easterly against the current towards and in the Bay of Fundy, and are taken in great and extensive quantities by seines in Minas Basin and elsewhere, as fish in prime condition without spawn in the latter part of June and July. These differ from the local schools which spawn in Minas Basin rivers near the end of May or early in June. These local schools probably come from their winter homes in the Bay of Maine."

Without wishing to enter the lists with an undoubted authority like Prof. Hind, it is perhaps not unfair to say that his facts do not seem sufficient to place the older belief among the fallacies of the past. Any observant fisherman who has had experience in tending seines in this Basin will say that among the different runs or even in the same runs there is a noticeable difference not only in the markings of the fins and tails, but also in color and shape of back and in the shape of head—so marked that in some instances it is contended they are different varieties. The fact of shad introduced into the Sacramento river spreading as far north as Puget Sound—a coast line nearly equal to half the distance from Florida to Cape Race—shows most conclusively that they are but obeying their hereditary instincts of a northerly coastal migration. The legends of shad spawning in past times in the rivers emptying into the Basin of Minas must be received with a good deal of caution. The presence of a school of shad in a tidal river might lead careless observers to frame this conclusion, that they were ascending for spawning purposes, when if caught and carefully examined it would be found that not more than one in a thousand contained spawn. That shad in past years were frequently ascended tidal rivers than at present, is altogether probable, and the reason is far to seek.

Shad, of all fish frequenting our waters, are perhaps the most sensitive and timid. They are peculiarly susceptible to loud noises. A thunder-storm being always immediately followed by a short catch in set seines and weirs. The passage of a steamer over a seine or weir being sufficient to prevent any catch for that tide. Again, there is a perceptible difference in the relative catches of day and night tides at the last of the season as compared with the first, showing that even during the short period of their visit their instincts teach them to avoid dangerous places. Thus the rude and primitive brush weirs of the Colequid Bay would be entirely useless in capturing the apparently wiser fish of this Basin, and even on the Colequid flats the catches vary greatly with the varying conditions of the water, wind, etc. Another strong proof of influence obstructions have on the hereditary instincts of shad is the fact that a seine or weir or new ground is more successful during the first few years than afterwards, as compared with the older seines.

Another factor that largely controls the catch of fish in these waters is the varying rise and fall of the tide. During the low tides the set seines and weirs take comparatively nothing, while to the drift nets in deeper water it is the time of their harvest, and we would almost be led to conclude that if the tides always rose to the same height the set seines would become useless, and are only successful now from the instinct of the shad being at fault from the unequal rise and fall of the tides. The temperature of the water has probably more influence on the catch during the season than is understood, the present season being a case of proof. During the month of July and the first part of August the weather was unusually hot, and shad unusually scarce; but during the latter part of August and first of September some quite good catches were made by those who didn't take up their nets. Observant fishermen know that the temperature of the water greatly affects the activity and vitality of shad when caught.

Of the two great instincts that control the course of all migratory fishes—the propagation of species and search of food—the shad in seeking our waters only obeys the last and lesser one; and it is only when driven by hunger that it is followed with the same boldness as the former—a condition entirely wanting in this case, as our waters seem to swarm with food. This is proved by the increased fatness at the last of the season, and the condition of the stomach of the shad, a small part of its internal economy, which is always distended.

From available testimony it is hard to say whether shad are feeding in numbers as voracious of our shores. Prof. Hind quotes statistics showing that the catch of shad in Nova Scotia for a period of eight years, ending with 1886, exceeded the previous like period. Whether the number of men, and capital employed, were equal, Mr Hind does not tell, and I have not the necessary information at hand. That, however, is an important factor to consider, for if the catch drops below interest on capital living wages the fishing may be said to be ruined. To consider for a moment some of the suggested specifics. In the first place we have to assume that for commercial purposes shad spawning in these waters are consequently any attempt at the better preservation of spawning rivers or the introduction of shad into them or other rivers emptying into this basin would be useless; especially under the present system of mill-dams and fish-ways that have almost driven alewives and smelt out of our waters. The present law providing for opening seines on Saturday night till Monday morning is not enforced, and if it was would be of very little use in some of the larger seines, and would involve such trouble and loss of time, when taken into consideration with diminished catches, as to practically stop

the fishing. The other two alternatives seem to be, the lessening the length of the great seines and increasing the distance now fixed by law between them, or, adopting a close season for a term of years. This last many fishermen would agree to as in many cases seines have been continued the few last years more to hold the ground than for any profit derived. The probability is that the near future will bring a marked increase, which, if it does not equal the prodigious year of 1879, will be sufficient to silence the grumblers for a short time.

Handcock Items.

A GAME OF "SHUFFLEBOARD"—A TRAGEDY—HOW IT CAME OUT.

Ainer, mainer, moner, mike, Puss, onlog or boner strike. Air, wair, rounce, nask, Riker, belker, we, wo, wack. Wan, too, three, Out, goss, aho.

I was it. We was over to Corby's las nite—a krowd uv us boys—and we was playin' shuffleboard. Weds bin havin a good many diffrunt games durin the evening, and it was gittin purty late when we komment the last game. The evenin shadders was beginnin to settle round, kind uv. Ef Ide gone rite strait home then I'd been all rite. Ide been the herer uv the hour. But I didnot—I lingered on. That was the mistake I made. Ide bin onkommon lucky durin evenin—nevered been it wunst—but with the last game my turn kum.

As a jovial thing I can adopt myself to circumstances and never let on, so I wotk up to the well-kurb, kool and kollekted, and komment. "Five—fifteen—twenty," says I, "twenty-five—thirty—thirty-five—forty," and kom' stands on till I get to fore hundred. Then in a lowd, shrill tone sung out, "Fore hundred—kummin'!" and started off in surech uv them.

I stole around the kornor uv the barn kosbully and lookt along the side, then krep erlong to the next kornor and kontinude on till I gut all the way around. But nobody semed ter be around nowhere. Then I went for the barn, krepin asharp lookout that nobody shoold git by to the well-kurb and so git in free. The cow-stabal was pride into, but they wusent there. Nuthur was they on the skaffold over the cow-stabal. Nuthur or was they anywhere else that I kud tell. I bekum disquised. Direkly I run agin a ladder ledin up to Lew's plun-house and klum it. But they wus nobody there but pljuns, so I klum down agin. This was gittin dekarurigin. I resolved that Ide look too or three more places, and then, if they wanted to hidle in sech outlandish places, Ide do the Gaspro on em and go home and let em hidle there all site. I klum up onto wun uv the big beams, krawid across the rick-shed, and jump out the uther nook uv the shed. Nuthur was they on the skaffold over the cow-stabal. 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