

**THE FISHERIES OF
CANADA, PP. 3-54**

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The Fisheries of Canada, pp. 3-54 by L. Z. Joncas

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International Fisheries Exhibition

LONDON, 1883

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BY

L. Z. JONCAS

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INTERNATIONAL FISHERIES EXHIBITION

AND 13 CHARING CROSS, S.W.

1883

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International Fisheries Exhibition,

LONDON, 1883.

CONFERENCE ON MONDAY, JULY 2, 1883.

Hon. A. W. McLELAN (Minister of Marine and Fisheries of Canada) in the chair.

In commencing the proceedings, the Chairman said Canada was a comparatively young country and might not be supposed to be as much interested in fisheries as some of the older countries, and some persons who had heard of Canada and the extent of the country and the diversity of employments would wonder why with so sparse a population there were any fishermen or any fisheries to speak of, when fishing as had been shown already was so much more dangerous and involved so much greater risk to human life than any other occupation. It was true that they had a large extent of country, and there was employment for all those who were there, and for all the millions who might come upon the land, but it was also true that although they had mining industries and although in the north there were vast forests from which lumber was sent to various parts of the world, although it was true that a comparatively small portion of the fertile soil was cultivated, yet it yielded abundance of the choicest food in its harvests and flocks and herds for all the people of Canada, and a large surplus to export; and the men who lived by the sea-side and on the banks of the rivers and by the lakes found so great a temptation to engage in fishing that they could not withstand it. He

believed they had as large a proportion of their people engaged in that occupation as any other country in the world. In the British Isles, where population was teeming, and every pursuit was crowded by people desiring to work that they might have bread, a large number were engaged in fisheries, but yet in Canada with their sparse population there were four times the percentage engaged in fisheries as were found here in the British Isles. Perhaps the mention of this fact might lead some people to expect too much from the paper which was about to be read, but as he had said before, Canada was but a young country ; the lecturer could not go back for centuries as Prof. Huxley did in describing the fisheries of the Mediterranean. Their grand-sires in the maritime provinces could give almost the whole history of the fisheries of Canada, and they told them how important a part those fisheries played in the settlement of the country. In those days when there were no railways, and no steam boats, supplies of food sometimes failed, but the settler always had something to rely upon in the fish which were to be found in the waters in front of his dwelling. He had heard of a good old clergyman who was greatly shocked at finding one day his little flock fishing on the Sunday, and insisting that the good old practice should be followed, of gathering a double supply of manna on the Saturday. He assumed this cause of complaint did not now exist, for a few weeks before he left Canada he had the pleasure of a conversation with a clergyman visiting Ottawa from Manitoba who told him that he had seen settlers going out in the winter cutting a hole in the ice and dipping fish out in a basket, but he made no mention of any desecration of the Sabbath, so that he assumed there was nothing to complain of in that respect.

FISHERIES OF THE DOMINION OF CANADA.

IF ever I have to regret not being familiar with the English language, it is on this particular occasion, when I have been chosen by my brother Commissioners to tell you something of the fisheries of the Dominion of Canada. But my fears are useless. If indulgence is to be met with, it is from a select audience, and I could not wish to come before a more select one than this is.

Being born in Canada, I have for the Dominion that affection that everybody feels for his native country. I have faith in her future.

I would have liked to have shown you how prosperous and flourishing she is beneath the glorious Britannic flag. I would have been proud to trace for you the rapid progress of that colony during the last ten years; but your time is valuable, and some one told me that I was not allowed to keep you here more than half an hour, and half an hour is rather a short time to go over three oceans and a considerable number of inland seas which are themselves small oceans. I will, therefore, confine my remarks to the Canadian fisheries.

In studying the history of England, in looking over the resources whence the greatness of this country—which we are proud to call our mother country—has arisen; we see that her commerce has been the source of that greatness. Furthermore, I may say, without fear of being contradicted, that the fisheries of the United Kingdom have been the basis of this commerce, and that England owes her present naval greatness to the hardy fishermen employed in these fisheries, and the comfort and happiness of

whom it is the object of this great International Exhibition to promote.

I have certainly not the intention of comparing Canada to England, but the fisheries of Canada can be compared with advantage to any other fisheries in the world, and I feel proud to be able to state here, that our young colony, following the good example of England, already ranks the fourth amongst the maritime nations of the globe.

When we consider the thousands of miles of coast open to the fishermen of Canada, the 60,000 hardy men who now devote their time and their labour to the development of our fisheries, the millions of dollars which these fisheries produce annually, and the always increasing number of emigrants that the old continent sends us every year, we feel that a naval greatness is also in store for us in the future, and we look to our fisheries, and to our fisheries alone, as the cradle of our future naval strength.

Consequently, the public men of Canada felt a great interest in this international exhibition, and have been glad to take part in it in the hope to acquire an amount of knowledge on fishery matters, which will be of value to our fishermen in developing this great industry.

The honourable gentleman who presides at this meeting, and whom the Canadians have placed at the head of the Department of State devoted to our fisheries, knowing of what vital importance they are to the future of the Dominion, takes a great interest in all matters relating to marine and fisheries, and not only has he recommended the Canadian Parliament to grant as much support as possible for carrying out the objects of this exhibition, but leaving aside, for a while, his important duties as Minister, he has been pleased to come here and see that the Dominion of Canada is thoroughly represented in England.

The Dominion of Canada, bounded on the north by the Arctic Ocean, on the east by the Atlantic, and on the west by the Pacific Ocean, has an area of four millions and five hundred thousand square miles. Over that wide area are found some of the most fertile tracts of land in the world. Grand forests offering an immense field to the timber trade, beds of mineral wealth that but few lands can boast of, and rivers, lakes, and inland seas teeming with apparently unlimited supplies of food fish. The fisherman of any country must feel at home when he comes to a land the waters of which yield him annually a good remuneration for his toilsome and hazardous avocation.

The fisheries of Canada can be divided into two great classes; the sea fisheries, and the fresh water, or lake and river fisheries.

The former are subdivided into the cod fishery, the herring fishery, the mackerel fishery, the lobster fishery, and the seal fishery. The latter comprises the salmon and trout fisheries, the white fish fisheries, etc.

The sea fisheries are carried on specially in what we call the maritime provinces, namely: Nova Scotia, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island, whilst the provinces of Ontario, Manitoba, and British Columbia are celebrated for their inland fisheries.

In the river and gulf of St. Lawrence alone, Canada possesses more than nine hundred miles of coast, along which are to be found, at different seasons of the year, a greater abundance and variety of fish than in any other part of America.

The shoals of cod-fish, mackerel, herring, etc., which approach our shores for purposes connected with the reproduction of their species are immense, and, I was going to say, inexhaustible.

Of all the fish named above, the cod, the mackerel, the herring, and the lobster, have especially attracted the attention of the fishermen of Canada.

The cod fishery being the most important and the most valuable, the one that gives occupation to the greatest number of men, employs the greatest number of vessels, and produces, commercially speaking, the most advantageous results, I will give it the precedence over the others.

I will direct your attention to the modes of catching and of curing that fish, its yearly value for the Dominion, and the different markets we send it to. The haddock (*Morhua aeglefinus*) and the hake (*Phycis Americanus*) being taken in the same waters, caught by the same means, and cured the same way as the cod-fish, will be comprised under the title of cod fishery.

The cod is so well-known everywhere that I may dispense with giving any description of it. Let it suffice to say that there are several kinds, of which the only one of any consequence to Canada is the common cod (*Gadus morrhua*) which is found along the coast of the Gulf St. Lawrence.

Speaking of the habits of the cod-fish I cannot do better than to quote here the words of the Honourable Dr. P. Fortin, M.P., now representative of the county of Gaspé, in the House of Commons of Canada, who has been for years commander of the armed schooner "La Canadienne" employed in the protection of our fisheries, and who is considered an authority in this matter.

"The cod inhabits cold and temperate climates. It is found along the coasts of Greenland, Labrador, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and the United States. Everybody has heard of the great banks of Newfoundland and of the immense quantity of fish to be found there."