

gates and there are the fish, which with a last mighty heave of all the strong arms, are brought, a shimmering mass, over and across the line which marks the outer boarder of the shed.

Young men from the United States fish hatchery, aided by some of the fishery people, lay eager hands upon the shad. Upon one section of the broad counters under the sheds being scores of shallow tin pans in which the eggs from the roe or female shad are skilfully pressed, the fish thus stripped being thrown back on the pile. The male fish are then stripped in the same manner, water being quickly poured upon the mixed mass, which is taken to the great hatchery at Edenton. It is because of this fishery and the careful work done, that North Carolina waters are the only ones in the country in which the supply of shad does not diminish. While this is going on the fishwives with quick strokes of their peculiar knives, are beheading and cleaning the herring, taken with the shad. The shad are immediately placed in the packing-boxes, with layers of ice, sent to the boats, taken to Edenton and shipped to the great northern markets. This fishery is known wherever the shad is known and its fish bring the highest price, shad taken in a beach seine being much preferable to those taken in set nets, for in the latter they are dead and eels play havoc with them.

The largest catch of shad ever made at this fishery was of six thousand and four in 1858, but in 1901 five successive hauls brought in a total of twenty-three thousand seven hundred and fifteen. The largest haul of herring was one hundred and eighty-eight thousand, which filled sixty-three stands. In 1876 a most remarkable haul of striped-bass or rock-fish, was made totalling thirty-eight thousand pounds, these fish running in weight from thirty to one hundred and eight pounds, many being as long as a man, the roe from one weighing forty-four pounds. The demand for these bass is large. In the old days sturgeon were regarded as a nuisance and the effort was to exterminate them, but some twenty-five years ago it was found that their roe was wanted in northern Europe for caviar and it was worth a dollar a pound. This led to almost extermination of these fish, so eager were people to catch them. In some of them seventy-five pounds of roe were found. Before the war sturgeon sold for twenty-five cents and in many cases were given away as a nuisance, as they broke the nets and caused trouble generally. The season of 1901 holds the record for shad, the catch totalling one hundred and forty thousand, four hundred and ninety-six, these filling seven thousand, seven hundred and seventy-six boxes. One season the price of shad fell so low that twenty thousand were hauled to the plantation and used as fertilizer. In fact in the old days herring and various other kinds of fish, were frequently used in this way in eastern North Carolina and a formula of some of the coast farmers was "a herring to a corn hill."

Striking as are the scenes in daylight at the fishery they are even more so when night comes on and under the shed the acetelyn gas lights flicker, one of these being of great power and looking like an eye of fire amid the gloom. There is the whinny of horses from the camp

back of the fishery and the lamp fires are seen on the little bluff. The campers have come to get the fish to take away and sell while fresh. It is a custom of this fishery to give after each haul a certain amount of whiskey to each fishing crew and this is always ready. It is corn whiskey, the kind the negroes like best, and without exception take it "straight" in deep draughts. They are under a tremendous physical strain while at work, so there are two "shifts," one gang working while the other sleeps. Thus day and night the work goes on. Time seems to have stopped still in Avoca and if old George Capehart could revisit it he would find hardly a change from the methods and manners he knew and loved so well so long ago. Everything has the flavor and the aspect of the "Old South."

It has been already stated that shad life is to a great degree a mystery. Down in the salt water sounds the writer has seen numbers of young shad, say six inches long, in the summer, rising in "schools" to the surface of the water. The herring is a mystery too. A young herring is far more than a rarity, and Mr. Walke, who for thirty years has been superintendent of the Avoca fishery, said he had in all that time known only one young herring to be taken in the seine. It was five inches in length. No end of theories have been advanced as to what became of the shad and herring and where their hidden life is spent. The herring are not artificially propagated. The shad fry are turned loose at the hatchery or at other points and that is the last of them until they come back as grown fish, ready to propagate their species, going as high up in the fresh water streams and sounds as they can. From this Edenton fish hatchery many millions of shad fry were taken a few years ago to the Pacific coast and there turned loose; a special train load of them in fact. For two or three years they seemed to have disappeared, but last season they appeared in great numbers. They are shorter and thicker than the shad taken in North Carolina waters and have a rather different appearance, due entirely to different environment, without doubt. Yes indeed, Pinehurst is close at hand to the best shad supply in the world.

FRED A. OLDS

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