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PAPERS OF THE CONFERENCES

Held in connection with

*The GREAT INTERNATIONAL
FISHERIES EXHIBITION*

FISH TRANSPORT

AND

FISH MARKETS

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY

SPENCER WALPOLE

LIEUT.-GOVERNOR OF THE ISLE OF MAN

LONDON

WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED

INTERNATIONAL FISHERIES EXHIBITION

AND 13 CHARING CROSS, S.W.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

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CONFERENCE ON TUESDAY, JULY 10, 1883.

J. H. FORDHAM, Esq. (Ex-Prime Warden of the Fish-mongers' Company), in the Chair.

THE CHAIRMAN, in introducing Mr. Walpole, said various papers had been read at these Conferences relating to fisheries, but the subject to-day was one which came home to all, and the Executive Committee of the Exhibition hoped that one of the outcomes of the Exhibition might be to facilitate or improve the supply of fish to the Metropolis, which could only be done by an efficient system of transport whereby the markets could be supplied, and by those markets being put on a thoroughly efficient and proper footing. He hoped this paper might throw some light on these important subjects as they would expect it to do, considering that the author was a gentleman who for some years held the important position of Inspector of Salmon Fisheries in England, and who had since been promoted to the distinguished post of Governor of the Isle of Man.

FISH TRANSPORT AND FISH MARKETS.

Mr. SPENCER WALPOLE:—The subject on which I have undertaken to address you to-day is in one sense a very large one. The question of fish transport and fish markets opens up indirectly almost every topic connected with

fishing and fisheries. If, however, I were to attempt any elaborate review of the fish trade of these islands, I should probably exceed my own powers and I should certainly exhaust your patience. Instead of doing so, therefore, I shall confine most of the remarks I propose to make to you this afternoon to some of the salient points connected with the internal traffic of fish in this country.

Before doing so, however, I should like to make one or two observations respecting our foreign trade in fish, because that subject, I think, is one which is not fully understood. Last year we imported into this country fish worth, in round numbers, £1,660,000, and we exported from the country fish worth £1,820,000. In point of value, therefore, the exports of fish almost balance the imports—there is no great difference between the two. In point of quantity, however, there is a very great difference. I believe that the amount of fish imported into this country was about 45,000 tons, whilst the amount of fish which we sent abroad probably reached 110,000 tons. The fish which we imported from abroad, at any rate that proportion of fish which the Board of Trade includes in their trade returns, consisted almost entirely of salt fish—most of the salt fish which we eat on the first and last days of Lent was presumably taken off the coasts of Norway and Newfoundland. But I believe there is a considerable import of fish which is not recognised by the Board of Trade. For instance, the large salmon which arrive in the autumn in London, which you may see in any fishmonger's shop in London, come from the Rhine. The lobsters which you are eating now come from Norway; whilst the American canneries, to adopt a word which the Americans have coined, send us large and increasing

quantities of tinned fish as food, which I cannot find any trace of in the Board of Trade returns. I imagine they are included under the general term of "Meat preserved otherwise than by salting." With respect to the export of fish, the exports consist also chiefly of salt fish, the great staple of export being Scotch herrings. I believe some 90,000 tons of Scotch herrings are sent annually to Germany and Russia. There is, however, a considerable export trade of other fish. For instance, large quantities of pilchards are exported from Cornwall; and a considerable amount of fresh fish is sent to the great continental markets. The question of fish transport has, I need hardly add, a close connection with these exports.

After these very few observations on the export trade, I should like to deal with the much larger question of the internal trade in fish. I see that an illustrious Duke, in a paper read at one of these Conferences, has estimated the gross take of fish in British waters at 615,000 tons a year. I should like here to bear my testimony to the extreme importance of the figures which the Duke of Edinburgh has given in that paper. His is the first attempt, so far as I am aware, to estimate approximately the amount of fish taken by fishermen in this country; and I can only express a hope that the example which he has set will be followed by his successors, and that as one Admiral Superintendent of Naval Reserves has shown that the coast-guard may be utilised for obtaining important information of this kind, the Government of this country will take care that the coast-guard will be regularly employed to obtain similar information. Now with respect to this 615,000 tons of fish, I find if we add to it the 45,000 tons which are imported from abroad, and if, on the other hand, we subtract from it the 110,000

tons which are exported from this country, we shall arrive at the consumption of fish in the United Kingdom, viz., 550,000 tons. That is the contribution which the British fishermen are making to the food of the United Kingdom. I know that large figures of this character make a very small impression on most people, and perhaps I shall make them a little more intelligible if I tell you that in point of weight 550,000 tons of fish are about equivalent to a drove of 1,500,000 oxen, and that they would supply every man, woman, and child in these islands with a dish of fish three-quarters of a pound in weight on one day in each week throughout the year.

I will now examine the Duke of Edinburgh's figures in another way. Of these 615,000 tons of fish, 372,000 tons are taken off the coasts of England, where I may say there are 42,000 fishermen ; 216,000 tons are taken off the coasts of Scotland, where there are 48,000 fishermen ; and some 26,000 or 27,000 tons are taken off the coasts of Ireland, where there are 24,000, or, according to the Duke of Edinburgh, 20,000 fishermen. The Irish inspectors estimate the number, I think, at 24,000. In other words, in England eight to nine tons of fish a year are caught for each English fisherman ; four to five tons are taken in Scotland for every Scotch fisherman, while rather more than one ton is taken in Ireland by every Irish fisherman. When I recollect that the Irish waters are swept by English, Scotch, and Manx fishing boats, and that consequently a large proportion of these 26,000 tons must be taken by vessels foreign to Ireland, I am a little at a loss to conceive what the 24,000 fishermen of Ireland are doing.

Of the 615,000 tons of fish, 110,000 are exported from this country ; 42,000 tons are carried direct by sea to Billingsgate ; of the remainder, 272,000 tons, or nearly

half of the whole amount available for the home supply is carried by railway to the internal markets of the United Kingdom.

If I have made these figures at all intelligible to you, you will at once see the extreme importance of the question of fish transit by railway. Of course the railways charge various rates for the carriage of fish. I believe I am right in saying that in some cases as much as from £9 to £10 a ton is charged for the carriage of fish to Billingsgate from the north of Scotland, while if you come nearer to our own coasts, probably about £2 10s. a ton on an average is charged for the carriage of fish to Billingsgate. A railway rate of £10 a ton is equivalent to a charge of very nearly 1*d.* on each pound of fish which reaches our markets; a railway rate of £2 10s. a ton would be equivalent to a charge of about one farthing a pound. Of course we are all interested in the provision of cheap fish. We are many of us in the habit of complaining that fish is dear, but I think that most of us have, perhaps, omitted to recollect that from one farthing to a penny on every pound of fish goes into the pockets of the railway companies of this country. If this charge be legitimate, and not excessive, of course nothing further need be said about the matter; the railways, on the contrary, are discharging an admittedly useful function in distributing this large quantity of food to the consumers, which could not by any possibility reach the market without their intervention. But there is a general feeling amongst many people that these rates are not moderate, and that they could not be charged if the railway companies were exposed to anything like healthy competition. I see that in the current number of the 'Nineteenth Century' Mr. Plimsoll has contrasted incidentally the rates charged by railway

companies for the carriage of coal with those charged for the carriage of fish: and certainly the contrast is a very striking one. To put it in a rhetorical manner, I believe that the railways carry coal from Yorkshire to London for about as many pence as they charge shillings for carrying fish from Grimsby to London. But of course coal is not fish. Fish being a perishable article, must be carried at a speed and inconvenience to the companies which is not necessary in the case of coal, and it is only fair and reasonable that they should charge some extra sum on this account. I therefore purposely abstain from contrasting two rates which are really dissimilar in themselves; but I should like to compare the rates which the railway companies are charging for the carriage of fish with the rates which they charge for the carriage of a commodity which is also a perishable commodity. I was looking a day or two ago at one of the railway manuals, and some figures struck me as being very surprising. I find the railway companies carry one ton of American meat from Glasgow to London for 65s., that they carry one ton of Scotch meat from Glasgow to London for £5, and that they carry a ton of fish from Glasgow to London for a sum which is somewhere between £6 10s. and £7. But this contrast, surprising as it is, does not represent the whole truth. The railways, in the case of meat, undertake to collect the meat in Glasgow free of charge, and to deliver it free of charge in the markets in London: but in the case of fish the rate only includes the actual charge from station to station, and does not include the cost of collection or the cost of delivery at Billingsgate. I own I think it is rather difficult to justify a policy of this description, which I am sure must be fatal to the public interests, and cannot be

beneficial to the interests of the railway shareholders in the long run.

But, having said this, I am not sure that I am prepared to agree with many of my friends who would have the Legislature intervene and fix the rates which the railway companies should charge. I believe the best authorities are of opinion that no mean is possible between allowing railway companies or other private companies to conduct their business in their own way, on the one hand, and taking the whole concern over into State management on the other. That is the alternative, and I do not think many of us would prefer the latter. I think, therefore, that in the long run we must be prepared to leave the railways alone. But, having said this, I think it is our interest to try to show the railway companies that the policy which they are pursuing is one which, in respect of themselves, is suicidal, and if they persist in pursuing it, it is our interest to take care that they shall be exposed to healthy competition, which shall insure the reconsideration of their present tariff. With respect to the interests of the railway companies themselves, I should like to ask the directors of the great lines, and especially the directors of the Scotch lines, to consider the consequences of the policy which they are pursuing. I have told you that according to His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh 216,000 tons of fish are taken in Scotland during the year; of this in round numbers 100,000 tons are sent abroad; 60,000 tons are sent by railway to the inland markets, and 56,000 tons are consumed at or near the coasts. Now, I should like to know why it is that Scotch fishermen send away ten tons of fish to the continent for every six tons of fish which they send to the inland markets. I believe the chief reason is the policy of the

great railways. I see that my friend Mr. Duff estimates, in a paper he recently published, that the Scotch fishermen can send a barrel of herrings from Scotland to Hamburg, or any of the German ports, for a charge of 1s. 6d., whilst it would cost from 5s. to 10s. to send the same barrel of herrings to the great inland markets by railway. If that be so, it is obvious that the railway companies destroy a large amount of traffic by the high rates they are charging for the carriage of these fish. Even railway companies, wealthy as they are, cannot afford to neglect a great traffic of this description. If they carry now 272,000 tons of fish, and if the average rate is only placed at £3, and I believe it might be placed much higher, the fish traffic is bringing them in a gross income of £800,000 a year ; and I cannot believe that either directors of railways or railway shareholders can be blind to a traffic which already yields a return of £800,000, and which is capable of very great expansion.

But if, unfortunately, we are unable to convert the railways to what I believe to be a true sense of their own interests, I think it is the interest of all of us to take care that the railway companies should be exposed to a healthy competition. Now, fortunately, it is easy to provide that competition of that kind should arise. To illustrate what I mean, I will turn from the case of Scotland to the case of Billingsgate. Of the whole amount of fish which comes to English markets, nearly one-third comes to Billingsgate ; therefore Billingsgate bears a very important share in a calculation of this character. Now in olden times Billingsgate used almost entirely to be supplied with fish by water, but since the introduction of railways it, until recently, was chiefly supplied with fish by land. In recent times, however, the excessive railway charges

have tended to develop the water carriage in its turn again ; and, at the present time, I believe I am right in saying that about 90,000 tons of fish reach Billingsgate by land, while about 42,000 tons reach it by water. Now it is admitted by a very competent authority that the fish which reaches Billingsgate by water arrives in considerably better condition than that which reaches it by land ; and it is also admitted that the rates of carriage by water are considerably less than the rates of carriage by land. I think, therefore, that we have the elements before us for creating a very healthy competition between water carriage and land carriage of fish. I do not mean for one moment to imply that I should endeavour to destroy land carriage for the sake of promoting water carriage, any more than we should destroy water carriage for the sake of promoting land carriage. I think the object of all of us ought to be to promote both kinds of transit, so that there may be a healthy competition between the two.

Of course you can easily see that fish can be brought by land to any portion of the metropolis ; but, from its very nature, a steamer can only come to a market on the waterside. It seems to me, therefore, essential that, whatever else be done, we should take care in this great metropolis that the main wholesale market of fish should be situated on the waterside. I know that there are many persons, who are quite justified from their position in expressing an authoritative opinion on the subject, who think it is desirable that there should be two wholesale markets in London—one for land-borne, and the other for water-borne fish ; but, personally, I am of a contrary opinion, and I should like, with your leave, to state very shortly my reasons for arriving at that opinion. I am quite sure it is the tendency of all trades at the present day

to concentrate themselves in particular localities, and I feel that it ought to be our policy to try to work with the tendency of trade, and not to work in opposition to it; if we find a trade endeavouring to concentrate itself in one place, it would be as unwise in us to endeavour to divide it into two places as to attempt that proverbially difficult task of trying to make water flow up-hill. It is obvious why trade tends to concentrate itself in one spot. It is obviously to the convenience of buyers in a wholesale trade that, when they go in the morning for their fish, they should be certain on the spot to which they resort to find all the fish on sale on that particular morning. In any other event it must occasionally happen that the buyers will go to one place, while the fish may possibly be in another, and that state of things must necessarily lead to a practice which, I believe, the Americans call cornering, which is certainly most injurious to the interests of the purchaser as well as the consumer. I think, therefore, that we ought to make it an object to have one great wholesale market in London, and that one great wholesale market should be on the waterside.

I do not know whether you have ever considered what the requirements of a wholesale market should be. They can be very briefly stated, and I will endeavour to explain them to you. In the first place, there should be ample accommodation afforded to all the buyers and sellers who frequent the market; in the next place, there should be ample standing room for the vans which bring the fish to market; and, in the third place, there should be easy access both for buyers and sellers. I should say at once that if Billingsgate provides adequate accommodation, which is extremely doubtful, for buyers and sellers, it is lamentably deficient in the two other requirements of a

wholesale market, viz., in the standing room for vans being unpacked in the neighbourhood of the market, and in access to and from the market.

You will probably ask me to express some opinion whether, under these circumstances, an effort should be made to improve Billingsgate, or whether, on the contrary, the market should be at once swept away or moved to some other spot in the metropolis. Now on that point I am not prepared to state an opinion. It does not seem to me to be one for me to pronounce a positive opinion about. The question is one mainly of expense, and must be decided by the Corporation of the City of London, who are the owners of the market. If the Corporation are prepared to incur the great expense which is involved in doubling the area of this market as it stands, and in widening Thames Street from end to end, then I should say by all means leave Billingsgate where it is, for the very sufficient reason that trade is a conservative thing, and it is very difficult to move a trade from any spot where you find it flourishing. But if, on the contrary, the Corporation of the City of London are not prepared to incur this expenditure, then the sooner they make up their minds to move the market to some suitable place on the river-side the better it will be for the fish trade, and the better for the public also. These are really all the remarks I have to make on this portion of the subject.

Before I sit down I should like to make one or two general remarks on the subject of fisheries. It is now more than sixteen years since my connection with the fisheries of this country began, and it is a little more than a year since my connection with them was severed. But I need hardly say I have not ceased to take an interest in the fisheries of this great country. On the contrary, my lot is

now cast in an island whose people are more dependent on fisheries than the people in any other part of Her Majesty's dominions. I believe the Isle of Man contains more fishermen, in proportion to its people, than any spot over which Her Majesty rules in any other part of the world. I need hardly say, therefore, that the change in my position does not diminish my interest in the fisheries of this country ; but I am often tempted to contrast the different position in which the fisheries now stand to that which they occupied when I was first connected with them some sixteen years ago. At that time, outside the circle of the fishermen themselves, or the people resident in the neighbourhood of the ports and rivers, there were, I think, very few people in this country who took any deep interest in the question of developing fisheries. At the present time, on the contrary, the greater portion of the people in every class of life seem to consider the development of the fisheries of this country as the one and main reason of their existence. Her Majesty's sons set a laudable example by attending public meetings on fishery matters, and by preparing and reading fishery papers at fishery conferences. A session never passes in the House of Commons in which almost dozens of fishing Bills are not presented for the consideration of the Legislature. Now I am often tempted to think that there is more danger to the fishing interests of this country, in the attention which they are now receiving, than in the neglect from which they previously suffered ; and I will tell you why, as the remark seems a little paradoxical. There are two classes of persons who are perpetually agitating and bringing forward proposals on the subject of fisheries. One of these classes seems filled with the constant apprehension that the fish in the ocean are likely to be almost immediately exhausted

by the operations of man. The other section of the community to which I have referred seems also to be filled with the notion that the fisheries cannot flourish without the direct patronage and encouragement of the State or individuals. I should like to say a few words on each of these points. On the first of them I should like to add my humble testimony, for what it may be worth, to the wise words which have already been addressed to you by my friend and late colleague, the President of the Royal Society. I do not believe that the fisheries of the ocean can ever be exhausted by any operations which man is likely to undertake, and I am quite sure that the ocean is producing still as abundantly the moving creature that hath life, as it did when the first chapter of Genesis was written. I do, therefore, hope that whatever may be the outcome of this Exhibition, and of these Conferences, that no steps may be taken to impose unnecessary restrictions on fishermen, but that fishermen may be left, in Professor Huxley's words, to go on fishing where they like, when they like, and how they like. I do not mean that there are not minor points on which an exception may not be made to the rule—exceptions may be made to most general propositions of this character, though as a general proposition, I desire to support as strongly as I can Professor Huxley's advice.

But I wish further to say a few words to those benevolent individuals, for whom I have the greatest possible respect, who are always endeavouring to foster fisheries where they do not exist, by a patronage which I believe to be fatal to their prosperity. The fishermen of this country have risen to independence by their own industry; do not do them, I beseech you, the disservice of teaching them to be dependent on your charity. We can easily

ascertain from past history what has come of patronage of this kind. During the last century the British Legislature, from the best motives, endeavoured to promote a fishery for herrings on the west coast of Scotland ; two societies, one of them with the Prince of Wales at its head, were formed for the purpose, and large amounts of money were subscribed, yet the objects of neither society were accomplished ; and, at the present moment, the west coast of Scotland is being fished, and will be fished by boats from the east coast of Scotland, where they had no aid of the kind ever given to them. I do not like to refer to the case of Ireland, for I have so much sympathy with that country that I do not like to seem to say anything which might be thought injurious to any Irishman ; but I cannot help saying that while you are endeavouring to foster Irish fisheries now by State patronage, the Irish seas are being swept by English, Scotch, and Manx boats ; by fishermen who have an hereditary aptitude for fishing, and into whose hands the fish trade is consequently passing. While, therefore, I am opposed on the one hand to the imposition of unnecessary restrictions on fishermen, so I am opposed on the other to all patronage simply as such, because I believe the best part of the British fishermen is the independence which they enjoy ; and God forbid that the independence which they have won by their own efforts should be taken away from them by the patronage of other people.

DISCUSSION.

Mr. BLOOMFIELD said he should have felt some diffidence in offering any remarks, but that he was supported on his left by a friend of his, a banker of Skibbereen, and there were one or two things he should like to say with regard to this question of transit. From the document issued by the London and North-Western Railway Company, he found that there were two different rates for carriage, one called the ordinary rate, and the other the owner's risk rate; the ordinary rate from North Wall to London was seven shillings a hundredweight, and the owner's risk rate five shillings and threepence a hundredweight; but in the case of a perishable commodity like fish, the latter rate was, of course, quite inapplicable; but it was not only the question of rates, but of delay which occurred, and his friend, to whom he had just referred, had been obliged to come to London in consequence of the number of complaints he received of the fish arriving late in the market. On one occasion he sent a man by one of the steamers going to Milford, and he found that when the steamer arrived at Milford at 7 P.M., 100 boxes of fish were discharged, but only a portion of them left at eight the same evening, and the remainder at half-past five the next morning; being left on the quay the fish in the interval were exposed to the rain, which washed all the ice out of the boxes, and very often the boxes were not unloaded for three hours after the arrival of the steamers. Yet the Great Western Railway Company admitted receiving as much as £20,000 in three months for this traffic during the run of the mackerel-fishing, and surely they ought to provide more reasonable facilities. In consequence of these

delays a large portion of the supply now went to Liverpool and other towns in the north of England instead of London; but even there the same kind of difficulties occurred. On one occasion, the railway company undertook to provide a special train; but though the fish was sent off on Thursday, it did not reach Liverpool till the Monday morning, and his friend received a telegram on the Tuesday: "Your fish were condemned this morning as unsuitable for human food." The only remedy suggested was competition; but how was poor Skibbercen to run steamers to London in competition with the railways. Mr. Walpole had referred to the small amount of fish caught by Irish fishermen; but he forgot that owing to the want of transit, immense quantities of mackerel were sometimes caught which never came to market. He had a letter which showed that 30,000 mackerel were caught in one day, but not one found a market outside the immediate vicinity of the place where they were caught. There seemed to be a very prevalent idea that the people in Ireland could do nothing; but he hoped before long this would be removed. The gentleman who read the Paper on the previous day, had referred to the west coast of Ireland, and said he knew the fish were there, but the fishing could not be carried on on account of the tempests. There was no doubt that there were very strong winds prevailing generally six to seven months in the year; but a very short time ago he heard evidence given before a Committee of the House of Commons by the head of the Poor Law Board, that fishing could be carried on there throughout the whole year. He was sure that the people of London would be glad to hear that these teeming waters of Donegal could be fished. It was not patronage that they asked for, but facilities of transit to convey the fish to the consumer, and

he was sure Mr. Walpole did not mean, when referring to patronage, to means of transit being facilitated by the granting of a certain amount of loans. It was the most mischievous thing that any person in Ireland was to be kept up by public loans or public works, at the same time it would be wrong for any Irishman to deny that the Baroness Burdett-Coutts had done a great deal for Irishmen in the south of Ireland. She had expended £10,000 in his friend's locality ; the people paid 10 per cent. on the loans, and paid it willingly. He trusted that two things would happen as the result of this Conference, first that people would be convinced that something beyond competition by water was required ; and, secondly, that no sort of patronage or assistance should be given beyond what was legally right. On his part, and on the part of his friends in Ireland, he earnestly thanked the Committee for these Papers, and only wished that the opportunity was more appreciated by his countrymen who called themselves patriots, and who certainly ought to take advantage of such opportunities for advancing the interests of their country.

Mr. SAYER said it was quite true, as the last speaker had said, that the carriage of mackerel was ten shillings a box, or five pounds a ton, and steamers had been put on for bringing mackerel from the west of Ireland and Skibbereen to the London markets, and the mackerel was brought until it was sold for less than the railway carriage. The carriage of a hundredweight of mackerel was 10s., and he had seen it sold as low as 8s. ; so that Billingsgate could take any amount of fish. During his experience of forty years, he had never known too much fish to come there. All they wanted was the approaches widened and the railway rates reduced, when there was no doubt

that nearly twice the quantity of fish would come. He was at Stornoway not long ago, and saw shipload after shipload being loaded for the Continent, nearly all of which would come to London if the rates of carriage were lower. The cost of bringing these to London was 5s. to 10s. per barrel, and if they were brought by railway they would be 12s., whilst they could be taken to the Continent for 1s. 6d. He thought there ought to be an agitation got up to secure something like reasonable rates for fish, for he considered it infamous that coals could be brought for 8s. 4d. a ton, when fish were charged 65s. He had waited on the railway companies time after time, and asked them to reduce their rates for Irish and Scotch fish, for both countries had a very great grievance in this respect. Steamers had now been put on to bring fish from the North Sea, simply because of the high railway rates, and on the previous day the first steamer arrived at Nicholson's Wharf with 1,000 barrels of herrings from Fraserberg. He hoped before the Exhibition had closed, something would be done by the Executive Committee, or by Parliament, either to take the railways into their own hands, or to provide for a uniform rate, because when you had a mackerel on your table it was of the same value whether it came from Ramsgate, Scotland, or from Ireland. They had all heard a great deal about a "ring," and about the evil doings of Billingsgate, but what had Billingsgate done? It had supplied 500 tons of fish a day on an average, at about $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. to 2d. a pound, the inexpensive fish, such as was being cooked in the School of Cookery, and supplied in the Exhibition at 6d. a plate. Billingsgate was the cheapest market in the world, and besides that there were forty markets round about London already; he referred to such markets as

Leather Lane, Whitecross Street, and Whitechapel—the kerbstone market, as he called it, where costermongers sold their fish at about 10 per cent. above the wholesale price at Billingsgate. The poor did get cheap fish, and the rich could, if they liked, if they would only do as their grandmothers did, take their basket on their arms and go with their money in their hands. But what were the fishmongers to do? They expected him to call at the house and ask, “Any fish to-day?” “No, not to-day;” and then he came again to-morrow, and perhaps got an order for a whiting or a sole, and perhaps he got paid for it, and perhaps he did not, after giving twelve months’ credit. They could not expect any fishmonger to do that without charging for it.

Mr. CAYLEY said he was not connected in any way with the fish trade, but simply spoke as a member of the public. Although Mr. Walpole declined to express any very strong opinion about the deficiency or otherwise of Billingsgate, he thought the inference to be gathered from his remarks was that Billingsgate was deficient in accommodation, but not in men of honour and enterprise. It was only fair to remember that Billingsgate was a very old institution, that London had increased in population, and consequently the demand for fish had increased to a very much larger extent than the accommodation at Billingsgate; this was admitted on all hands. He should be glad if Mr. Walpole would kindly state whether an opinion expressed in a daily paper some few days ago, as having his sanction and that of another gentleman who stood very high on this matter, was correct, that if the fish could be discharged some twenty miles down the river, and brought from there to market direct, instead of being brought up to the market in the ships, that that arrangement alone would probably

result in doubling the supply in twelve months. The answer to that question would make a material difference in the selection of a probable new market. He should not like to say that Billingsgate was going to be done away with in favour of a new market, nor did he think it would be a sensible thing to say, especially after the remarks of Mr. Sayer, a gentleman of very large business enterprise in Billingsgate, but he did think the tendency of that gentleman's remarks was rather different from what he intended. It seemed extraordinary that these Billingsgate gentlemen themselves did not enter into some understanding with each other to break through the extraordinary trammels which seemed to restrict their business, and to decide that they would compete with other markets which were springing up throughout England and the Continent, by determining that either they would have better accommodation at Billingsgate, or establish a new market. Mr. Walpole had inferentially indicated that at least it was possible that a new market might be constructed, and had indicated some points which were necessary to a fish market, but it seemed to him that those qualifications should be a little extended. The first and main thing was the geographical position, which should be as nearly as possible central, not, perhaps, in the centre of habitations, but in the centre of communication; then, if possible, there should be railway communication running through the floor of the market, there should be plenty of room for all the requirements of the market, room for buyers and sellers, wholesale, semi-wholesale, and retail, room for the public in as large numbers as thought proper to come; there should also be room for a promenade, shops, curing establishments, ice-house, and other things connected with the market. Then came the question where the locality

should be, and, if these rules were accepted, it seemed to him that pretty nearly indicated where this locality must be. If the locality were to be on the water-side, that limited it to the river, and if it were to be where the railways and the water met, there were but some three or four crossings, and if a space could be found for a market large enough where all these requirements met together, that seemed to be the place for the purpose.

Mr. SAYER said it would be quite out of the question to suppose that room for curing establishments could be connected with the fish-market ; one of his curing premises alone occupied an acre of ground. Fish was best cured as soon as possible after it was caught, and the sooner it was eaten the better it was.

Professor HUXLEY then moved a vote of thanks to Mr. Spencer Walpole. He had been struck in the course of Mr. Walpole's remarks with the fullness of knowledge, calmness of judgment, and clear reasoning, which made him so very precious to him as a colleague during the time they were associated together ; there was now an appropriate fitness of things in his being transferred from the position in which it was his duty to know about fish, to one in which he reigned supreme master both as to temporal and spiritual powers over a semi-amphibious population ; and he had listened with extreme interest to the address, and, so far as his inquiries had led him to deal with the particular subject of the paper, must express his entire concurrence in what had been said. On the other hand, it was particularly satisfactory to him to hear the addendum which he had been kind enough to make respecting the general policy of fishery and fishing, for he could not but feel that, since he had the honour of delivering the opening address at this series of Conferences, there were a great number of people

to whom he had taken somewhat the semblance of a red rag to a bull, so that whatever discussion he had happened to be present at until this one, there had been a vehement outburst of objection to the doctrine of not interfering when you did not know what you were about, which he had ventured to broach, and which seemed to him the simplest and most straightforward doctrine in the world. He should be glad to say a word on this topic, having by accident been absent on the previous day, when Mr. Shaw-Lefevre read a paper, though it was doing what he himself deprecated, dealing with a matter which was not exactly the one before the Conference. What he wished to say was this, that he did not come to the conclusion which he had advocated now for so many years, on the sort of grounds that actuated a *doctrinaire* man of science ; on the contrary, nothing could be more distinctly and emphatically practical than the reasons which first impressed on his mind the impolicy which existed twenty-five years ago, and which he was happy to think, with the help of his colleague, Sir James Caird, and Mr. Shaw-Lefevre, he had some hand in getting rid of. He would mention an occurrence which made an indelible impression on his mind. When he and his colleagues visited the Isle of Skye, the worst part of Ireland, that which was in the most depressed state, could not show a population in greater misery than the people who were to be seen within a mile and a half of Portreath. He had journeyed in many parts of the world and seen many savage people, but the population of New Guinea, about which they had heard so much lately, and where he had been a great many years, was vastly better provided with the comforts, decencies, and refinements of life than many of their fellow-subjects in the Isle of Skye were twenty years ago. He should imagine that

at that time the total earnings of one of those peasants, he might say his whole property and everything belonging to him would not come to more than £5. Certain interested parties in Glasgow some years before, for no other purpose that he could hear of but a desire to clear their own markets, had got a law smuggled through the House of Commons, where nobody cared anything about it, by which it was made penal to catch a herring during the three summer months of the year, a time at which herrings were swarming in innumerable millions. The Act was of so stringent a character that the mere fact of finding scales in the boat was sufficient to insure a man's conviction, and he was fineable £5 or more. That meant that he would be totally ruined or might be put in prison for doing this ; or even for the suspicion of having done it. Now there was not the smallest imaginable reason why that enactment should have been passed. It was a stupid, mischievous and utterly useless thing. Yet because there was no one of sufficient intelligence to understand the interests of these unhappy people they were fined and imprisoned in this way at a time when their children were starving, when their potato crop had failed. There were thousands of herrings within a mile of the shore, and a man might not take his boat out and catch the herrings, simply because of this preposterous law. It made such a strong impression on his colleagues and himself that they took the very unusual step of representing the facts to the Home Secretary, and telling him that if there were a famine in the Isle of Skye they washed their hands of all responsibility. He was happy to say that that abomination was cleared away and had never existed since, but it had made an indelible impression on his mind, and so long as he had the power to influence this matter in any way he would raise his

voice against the enactment of regulations which could not be shown to have any definite purpose, by which poor and industrious men were burdened and brought within the reach of the law and created offenders, fined and half ruined when no genuine ground could be shown for the law which had fined them. That appeared to be one of the worst forms of modern oppression. It was on that ground that he always ventured to advocate a most careful consideration of all laws and regulations with respect to fisheries, and he was extremely glad to find any one whose judgment he valued so highly and whose knowledge was equalled by that of very few persons now living, boldly coming forward and advocating the same cause. He begged to move a most hearty vote of thanks for the admirable paper he had read.

Mr. BURDETT-COUTTS, in seconding the motion, said he was sorry time did not admit of going somewhat at length into the important subject before them, but with regard to a waterside market he should like to point out one necessity which had been omitted, namely, that if the market were to be on the waterside it should be capable of being approached by vessels so constructed as to meet the requirements of stormy weather, in other words by large seaworthy vessels, carrying masts, and for that reason it would have to be below the bridges across the Thames. With regard to the proportion of water-borne fish, namely, 40,000 tons, as compared with 90,000 brought by land, he would also point out one peculiarity, namely, that the chief portion of fish brought by water was the cheaper kind, what was opprobriously called offal fish, though he strongly objected to such a word being used, especially considering that this kind of fish was eaten by 6000 people every week in the adjoining dining-room. At the same time

the prime fish, turbot, soles, and so on, were mostly brought by land. If in any way the transit of fish by water could be extended, one would extend in a corresponding proportion the food for the poorer classes of the Metropolis, and that seemed to him the important thing to do. With regard to Billingsgate, he did not wish to express any strong opinion, or to inquire into the reasons which led so many people to think that there was some artificial barrier which should not exist, but which did exist between the source of supply of this magnificent food and the consumers of it. It had been stated by a Billingsgate gentleman, to whom the Exhibition owed a great deal, and a member of the Executive Committee, that this large quantity of fish had been sold in Billingsgate day by day for $1\frac{1}{2}d.$, $1\frac{3}{4}d.$, and $2d.$ a lb. He could not stop to inquire into the reason, but he knew full well that none of that fish had reached the poor of London at that price, or anything like it. It was a new thing to a great number of the poor of London who came there and had a fish dinner for $6d.$, including bread and potatoes, and it was served in a much more expensive way than it would be necessary to serve it in their own homes; it was a new thing to become acquainted with these various kinds of cheap fish, and the reason for their ignorance was that they had no opportunities of purchasing them at a reasonable price throughout the Metropolis. He believed himself that this was caused mainly from the fault which Mr. Spencer Walpole had found with Billingsgate, namely, the want of approaches; but, wherever it was, there was a rising popular opinion, the mutterings he might almost say of a popular storm, which sooner or later, would be heard all over the Metropolis, and would insist on some improvement in the method of

distributing fish to the poor. One other remark he would make, which was almost forced upon him by a remark which fell from Mr. Bloomfield, and was also suggested by a portion of the speech of Mr. Walpole. He inveighed against the vice, as he might almost call it, of patronage, and he could not but think that his denunciation was somewhat sweeping. If in denouncing patronage he denounced merely careless charity, giving sums of money without exactly knowing the reasons or the objects for which they were given, or without tracing and following out the results which flowed from it, he was at one with him; but if, as he gathered from his remarks, he was opposed to patronage in the shape of help, he could not agree with him. If patronage meant the holding out of the helping hand to men whom fortune and circumstances had deprived of that helping hand, and who had nowhere to look for it, then patronage was not only heavenly mercy, but also an economical good. He should like to explain exactly what the Baroness Burdett-Coutts had done with regard to Irish fisheries. She found a district about Cape Clear peopled by brave and hardy men risking their lives, day by day and night by night, in miserably small open boats, and they were struggling to compete with those men in whose interests Mr. Walpole had spoken, those experienced and tutored fishermen from the Isle of Man and Cornwall and other English coasts. When she heard of this she did not believe in the common notion of their want of business capacity, energy, and industry. She trusted them to this extent, that she procured for them boats, something like those used by fishermen of other parts, and she enabled some twelve or fifteen of these men to join together, and to have for each crew a thoroughly seaworthy boat. The boats were not

given to them, they were lent to them, and in each case a legal mortgage was executed. The only other charity was, that she did not charge them interest. This was three years ago, and in stating what the result was he could not but pay a passing tribute to one man in the district, the Rev. Father Davis, to whom a great part of the success of the experiment was due. Every half-year a balance sheet was presented to him, showing how the half-yearly instalments were paid off, and on the one presented last April there was not one single £1 in arrear, with the exception of one man who had suffered great misfortune owing to the storms, and was a little behindhand. With that exception the whole of these men had paid their instalments, and were on the high road to own these boats, and he believed the gentlemen who came from that district would bear him out in saying that to a certain extent the face of that small and at one time benighted district had been changed into a prosperous and healthy one.

Major HAYES (Inspector of Irish Fisheries) wished to add a word or two with regard to a statement made by Mr. Walpole regarding Irish fisheries. He had expressed regret that they were doing so little in Ireland—that the take per head only amounted to about one ton as compared with five or six tons in Scotland, and a somewhat greater proportion in England. Now he did not think the quantity of fish captured should be judged of in that way, because immense quantities were caught in Ireland, where there were no railways or steam communication, and this fish was carried through Ireland by “cadgers” or “jolters,” people with donkey-carts, who supplied the surrounding country. Again, in dealing with Scotch fisheries, he should point out that Irishmen fished the

coasts of Scotland ; they sent very large numbers of boats from the east coasts of Ireland to the west coast of Scotland, and these men joined in swelling the total of fish taken by Scotchmen. He assumed Mr. Walpole would not be acquainted with little details of this kind, but it was well known in Ireland that the fishermen regularly fished in Scotland, and some of them went down as far as Yarmouth. They might look forward with great hope to the future of the fishermen of Ireland, for it was stated in the annual report issued a short time back, that whereas the mackerel and herring fishing-boats had increased on the part of the Isle of Man, Scotland and England about 50 per cent., these large and improved boats had increased 100 per cent. in Ireland within the last seven or eight years. Although an Irish official, he was not an Irishman, but he felt bound to stand up and say that he believed they were going a-head. He did not think they were looking for charity in Ireland. On the west coast they had laboured under a great disadvantage for many years, in fact always from the want of harbours, and a Bill was now before Parliament, not to give money from the Exchequer, but to give money which belonged to the Irish Church for this purpose, and he had been summoned to London for the purpose of giving evidence on the subject, and he could only say he had given the Bill the strongest support he possibly could, because he was satisfied that without proper harbour accommodation on the west coast, they could have no hope for any great increase there of the large high-class fishing vessels such as were found in the Isle of Man and Scotland.

The CHAIRMAN, in putting the resolution, said Mr. Walpole had proved to demonstration that very high charges, and without saying anything disrespectful to railway

directors, unreasonable charges were made for the transit of fish by railway. That was a matter to which public attention would, he hoped, be more and more directed, and that railway directors would see it to their interest to do something to promote the cheaper transit of fish to the London market. He had also referred to the somewhat vexed question of the London market, which had also been referred to by Mr. Burdett-Coutts and Mr. Sayer. He thought it only right to say, that as far as he had been able to judge, and during the last year he had some little opportunity of judging, he did not think the Billingsgate salesmen deserved the harsh things that were sometimes laid to their charge, for he believed they were, as a whole, an honourable body of men. Billingsgate was, after all, only the wholesale market; it was in a most difficult and incommodious situation as regarded the narrow streets by which it was surrounded; but surely the Billingsgate salesmen were not responsible for the width of those streets and the deficiency of access. The market was an open market, any one might go and purchase there, and though, no doubt, there was a great deficiency of markets where the poor could obtain their supplies, it would be hard on the Billingsgate salesmen to lay that to their charge. He hoped the question would be treated fairly and candidly, that no undue regard to vested interests would prevent the Corporation from doing what might be their duty with regard to providing suitable access to their own market, and that the Billingsgate salesmen would be willing to meet, as far as possible, the public demands, and that all might be done in a kindly and friendly spirit, in order to accomplish the object which they all desired, namely, the supplying of the poor of London with fish at a lower rate than heretofore.

The vote of thanks having been carried unanimously,

Mr. SPENCER WALPOLE, in reply, said there were only one or two remarks which it was necessary to comment on. With respect to the question put to him by Mr. Cayley, whether the paragraph with reference to the construction of a market twenty miles from London had been inserted with his sanction, he would only say that he was not aware that anything he had ever said or written conveyed any sanction of the kind ; and if Mr. Cayley asked him whether he should approve of such a position, he should feel utterly incompetent to give any opinion until he saw the exact spot on which it was intended to place the market, and the conveniences of access to it. He was a little at a loss to understand some of Mr. Bloomfield's criticisms, but, as far as he could follow him, they were both working in exactly the same direction. Mr. Bloomfield complained that the railway rates were excessive, in which he agreed with him, but he (Mr. Walpole) suggested that the true way of dealing with excessive rates was to provide adequate competition ; and if he might be allowed to translate a line in Horace, he would say, "If he knows a better way, let him tell it ; but if not, use this method with me." He knew of no better mode than by trying to provide competition ; he did not suppose even Mr. Bloomfield would suggest that the State itself should provide steamers to carry the fish from Skibbereen. With respect to the remarks which had fallen from Mr. Burdett-Coutts, and which had been partly seconded by his friend Major Hayes, he would say a few words. He should be very sorry if in anything he had said to-day he was thought to display any want of sympathy with Ireland or Irish fishermen. He ventured to say there was no person in the room, Irish or English, who felt more deeply for the

woes of Ireland than he did. What he had said about patronage he said designedly, and he would endeavour to make good some of his words. He was far from criticising the wisdom of the policy which Lady Burdett-Coutts was carrying out. He should be the first to acknowledge the wise and bountiful charity of that excellent lady, and he might say that he had a double interest in thanking her for what she had done, because she had had the extreme wisdom to go to the Isle of Man, where she was purchasing the boats she was sending to Ireland. But, if he might take a case from another country where no feeling would be mixed up with the argument, he would endeavour to show what he meant. The Germans, like the Irish, were endeavouring to develop their fisheries, and he would state what was going on in Germany. A society in Germany had built for German fishermen a fleet of twelve large vessels to fish in the North Sea. One of those vessels had been lost—it was lost some years ago—and, when he looked into the matter, it had never been replaced. The other eleven vessels lay most of the year idle at Emden, whilst, notwithstanding that the German Government imposed heavy protective duties to keep out Scotch, Norwegian and Dutch herrings, the whole of the German markets were now supplied, not by the vessels which the Germans had built, but by the Scotch, Norwegian, and Dutch fishermen. That was an instance to prove that industries which did not flourish of their own selves would not flourish because some one wished them to do so. He was one of those old-fashioned people who could not get out of his head that an industry which was worth having must be one that took its own root and grew by its own effort. You might grow a plant in the heated air of a hothouse, but it would never flourish like

the tree which struck its roots in the open soil. Having said this, he only wished to say again that he did not believe any one of his own countrymen, or any Irishman, would labour harder to try to relieve some of the deep woes which the Irish were suffering from than himself; but, as a general proposition, he would repeat that the true way of doing good to fishermen was by encouraging the traffic in fish and reducing the rate of traffic, or by encouraging localities to build and construct proper harbours; or again, by inducing a corporation like the City of London to provide better markets; but in any other respect he would say, free the fishermen from restriction, and do nothing to create fisheries by patronage.

Sir HENRY THOMPSON, Bart., then moved a vote of thanks to the Chairman, which was seconded by Professor BROWN GOODE, and carried unanimously.

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