THE SARDINE FISHERS.

A LEADING INDUSTRY ON THE COAST OF BRITTANY.

Catching the Little Fish in Nets 1,000 Feet Long--Work of the Curing Factories.

Early in April the sardine fishers along the coast of Brittany begin their preparations for the season's work. The boats are turned to the warm spring sun and calked, the nets which have been stored away all winter long are spread out on the sand, and white haired grandfathers, who are no longer capable of going to sea, bend over them with balls of bright new twine and mend the holes in the meshes.

In the last of the month, when the cherry trees are in full bloom, the fishers begin to watch for the bubbling of the sardines, far out on the waters of the sea, for they know that vast shoals of the little fish are on their way from the coast of Africa, up through the Bay of Biscay to the north, like a flock of migratory birds, and that they must be caught, if at all, as they pass.

Presently some old fisher thinks he sees the water ruffling as if the waves played on a bar of sand. The word spreads rapidly and the boats put out from the shore and race to the shoal. Sometimes in order to be on hand at the first catch fishers leave in the evening and anchor at sea. As the bubbling area approaches the boats spread out with the nets, which are about 1,000 feet long and four feet wide, between them. The lower edge of each is held down with lead weights and floated at the tops with corks. When the net is extended the water is "baited" by throwing balls of "roque" into it. As the bait dissolves and sinks the sardines rise and remain long enough to nibble it, and their doom is sealed. For this reason "roque" is a most important part of the sardine fisher's outfit. It is made of the eggs of mackerel and codfish mixed with clay and is rather expensive, costing from $7 to $17 a barrel.

As the shoal of fish reaches the region of the nets they are carefully inclosed and drawn to the boats. At nightfall the fleet returns to shore, each boat full of fish—if the day's catch has been ordinarily good—and the load is taken in baskets by the men, women and children, in a long procession, up to the cannery. Sales are made by the thousand, and the prices vary according to the size and freshness of the catch.

Inside the curing factories or canneries everything is bustle and confusion, for there must not be a moment's delay in cleaning the fish. All night long the work is carried on by the light of blazing oil wicks. For the most part the wives and children of the fisherman are employed at wages almost inconceivably small. The sardines are spread on long benches or tables, where salt is dusted over them. Then the women go along and snip off the heads with great rapidity. When the cleaning is finished a man gathers up the sardines and throws them into a big vat of brine, where they remain about half an hour. They are next washed in clear water and then laid out on screens to dry. As soon as their sides assume a peculiar parched appearance they are gathered up into a wire basket and dipped into boiling oil, after which they are passed along to the packers.

The little flat boxes so well known to commerce are taken one by one and filled from the glistening pile of fish, after which pure olive oil from the province of Bari, Italy, is poured over them and the tops soldered on. All of this work is done with a deftness and rapidity that is astonishing.

In the meantime a great caldron of hot water has been raised to the boiling point ready for the real operation of cooking the fish. The sealed boxes are thrown into it and left for two or three hours. If any oil appears on the top of the water the master workman knows that some can has not been properly soldered, and the loss is charged up to the man who did the work. A good workman will not lose more than two or three boxes in a hundred.

When the boxes are taken out the labels are put on and they are then ready for the market. Boneless sardines are especially prepared for the New York trade by several of the factories and they command a high price. Sardines are also canned with tomatoes, and in this form they are very largely exported to Mexico. Sometimes the oil in the cans is replaced by vinegar and sometimes by butter, but the sardines in these forms are never as good. The market price of sardines per case of one hundred boxes is about $10, delivered free of charge at Havre or Bordeaux. The total exportation to the United States reaches a half a million dollars a year.

The sardine season in Brittany lasts about five months and 2,500 boats manned by 15,000 sailors are engaged in the work. The employes in the factories number about 10,000 women and several thousand men and children. The industry originated in Nantes, France, in 1834, and the best brands in the world still come from there. Spain and Portugal send out a cheaper grade. Of late years a great many sardines are being caught and canned along the Pacific coast in this country. Japan and New Zealand catch and pack a good many sardines.

A DELUSIVE INSECT.

You Cannot Distinguish It From a Twig.

Unique among the insect creation are the stick insects, which have the peculiar gift of making others believe that they are inanimate objects.

This insect is commonly met with in the high, dry, yellow grass of Nyassaland, in South Africa. When it is in repose, with its legs stretched closely against its back, it is difficult to believe that it is not a dry twig. It is necessary to touch it in order to find that it is alive. The insects smaller and weaker than itself which do this are eaten as a reward for their inquiring spirit.

The twig insect undoubtedly lives by its shape, which helps to provide it with food at a minimum of exertion. It enables it to escape from all sorts of dangers. Other animals with a taste for insect food seldom detect it owing to its twig-like appearance. Moreover, it is hardly worth their while to trouble about such an elusive animal.

But no animal seems born to enjoy this life without worries and enemies. It appears that there is a curious and large toad that makes a specialty of finding twig insects. This toad would rather hunt twig insects than eat the juciest and most easily caught green flies.

The stick insect is a member of the mantis group, several members of which have remarkable qualities. One of them, perhaps the best known, is the praying mantis. When in repose it appears to be on its knees, and its forelegs are raised and clasped together like the hands of a person at a prayer. As it has large eyes, which it turns upward, its whole attitude suggests that it is engaged in earnest prayer.

The mantis family includes the leaf insect, the spectre insect and several others. They have the power of imitating leaves and blades of grass.

The mantidae have a narrow, compressed and elongated abdomen and a long thorax. The head is triangular, with two large eyes, three small stemmatic eyes and long bristle-like antennae. The wings fold in fan-like manner, and the wing-covers are long, narrow and thin.

The second and third pair of legs are long and slender and are used only for locomotion. The first pair are used as weapons of combat and instruments of prehension, and in the case of the praying mantis for the purpose of deluding the pious. One part of the leg closes on another so tightly as to cut like a pair of scissors. All the mantidae have a habit of waiting for their prey.

Many of them—as, for example, the stick insect—are very large. Some South American ones are four inches in length. They are usually very pugnacious, fighting much among themselves. A fight usually ends in one of the combatants losing his head. The victor eats the remains.

The Chinese catch specimens of one mantis family and set them to fight, betting on the result.

A New Epidemic.

Berlin is agitated over the outbreak of a new disease. It is said to be a humanized form of the foot and mouth disease well known as a malady affecting cattle. The only wonder is that humanity and the brute creation do not have more interchangeable ills than at present exist. People consume the milk of diseased cows, unconsciously, perhaps, out nevertheless the effect is just the same. They attend sick animals of all sorts, and seem never to dream that transmission of disease is possible. It is quite as easy to inoculate a human being with these germs as it is to produce the results of vaccination by bovine virus. While this epidemic is new in certain respects, it is said that there are continually recurring cases of it all over the continent. That there is not more of it is more remarkable when the utter indifference of the public to their milk and beef supply is understood. The disease is not unknown here, but there are at present no existing cases of it. With the high price of beef the only danger is that this article will be imported, and that we may be bringing into our borders the cause of some very serious maladies. The first manifestation of the illness are large blisters in the mouth, with a good deal of soreness and some fever. In constitutions weakened by disease various complications are brought about, and there is grave reason to fear that hitherto unknown forms may develop from it. Disease germs are liable to cross breed as well as other living organisms, and in this way perils that we know not of may follow swift upon the heels of carelessness.

A Hint Which is Quite Effective.

The night clerk in any big newspaper office has his hands full of work, but time and time again is bothered by the tramp who wanders in to get a warming. Ostensibly the visitors looks over the file to search with advertisements, but with bowed heads soon fall to sleep. The true tramp can go to sleep standing as long as the surroundings are warm.

A night clerk in a newspaper office has discovered a sure way of ousting these undesirable denizens without force. He keeps a small collection of the electric light lamps that have become useless. He waits until the tramp is dreaming his soundest, and then throws one of these innocent-looking globes at his feet. There is an awful explosion. The tramp looks around in wonderment and fright. The imperturbable clerk is hard at his books entering the last "ads" sent in, and the tramp "scoots," thankful to have escaped some greater danger.

The estimated total of our national and local taxation is $630,000,000.

WHAT IS A GOPHER?

Rat, Squirrel, Snake or Turtle, According to Location.

"If you should ask a man from the Illinois prairies what a gopher was, he'd tell you it was a gray squirrel that burrowed in the ground," said a man who seemed to know what he was talking about. "If you should ask the same question of a man from the prairies further west, he'd tell you a gopher is a striped squirrel that lives in holes in the ground.

"A Missouri farmer would declare that a gopher was a mole-footed brown rat that digs its way under the surface in that State. A man from Georgia would probably surprise you by the assurance that a gopher was a snake, and the Florida native would unhesitatingly inform you that a gopher was a turtle. And the funny part of it is every one of them would be right. A gopher is a gray squirrel that burrows, a rat that burrows, a snake that doesn't, and a turtle that does, according to the locality; but the most interesting of these is the burrowing turtle.

"This turtle is peculiar to Florida, and is an important factor in the domestic economy of the cracker population, for the cracker dotes on the gopher and thinks it is the finest thing in the edible line ever created. I don't agree with the cracker, for I don't like the company the gopher keeps in its character of turtle, and I don't see how anything can be good and habitually keep bad company.

"Strange as it may seem this Florida turtle doesn't like the vicinity of water, but selects the high, dry, sandy ridges for its home. The gopher digs a deep hole and a long one in the ground, and remains there all the time it is not out grazing, for this turtle is a grazer, living on the wild grasses that abound in its vicinity. It is never happy, though, unless its burrow is shared by a colony of lizards and a cheerful family of rattlesnakes.

"Find a gopher hole in Florida and you will find from one to half a dozen rattlesnakes and twenty lizards of all sizes, colors and degrees of hideousness, occupying it with the builder and owner of the burrow. The gopher plainly loves this deadly association, although it is itself as meek and harmless as a dove. No dweller in those parts of Florida where the gopher is found ever goes anywhere without a bag slung over his shoulder. This is to carry home gophers in, for he is pretty sure to find some of them pasturing.

"The moment the gopher is surprised it shuts itself securely in its shell and the cracker tumbles it into his bag. The gophers are also trapped by digging a hole close to the entrance to the burrow and sinking a barrel or box into it. When the gopher comes out he tumbles into the trap and can't get out. What terrapin are to the high-living epicure those gophers are to the Florida cracker."

The Dandelion.

The dandelion belongs to the largest, oldest, and most widely diffused order of plants. While other orders of plants have died out and become mere fossil remains in the rocks, this order has survived the geological changes of many different periods, on account of its power of adapting itself to those changes. And these changes in their turn have only made it better suited for all the varied soils and climates of the earth at the present day.

We find members of this order in every part of the globe, in places as far apart from each other as they can be. It is the prevailing and dominant order of vegetable life, the most highly finished, and the most successful family of plants. And the dandelion is one of the most perfect forms belonging to it.

It is the head and crown of the vegetable kingdom, as man is the head and crown of the animal creation, and it is curious how the highest type of plant always is found only where man, the highest type of animal life is found, and where he dwells or cultivates the soil. It is never found apart from him; it follows him wherever he goes—to America, Australia and New Zealand; and there in the new home it becomes a silent reminder of the dear old land he may never see again.

Fortified Paris.

To-day, Paris, regarded as a fortified center, is an intrenched camp, upon the margin of which are numerous new permanent forts. The circle formed by the line of these new forts, which are far outside the forts of 1870, is about eighty-five miles in circumference, and it contains about 580 square miles, not more than one-seventh of that area being built over, with a population of 3,000,000. The smallest possible circuit to be formed around it by an investing army is 100 miles, so that at least 500,000 men actually upon the spot would be required to undertake any serious operations for the reduction by siege of the French capital.

Writing a Telegram.

James Payn, the editor of the Cornhill Magazine, tells the following story: "An examiner at a seminary for young ladies requested one of them the other day to give him her notion of what sort of telegram she would send to her father in the event of her having met with a railway accident. He threw out no hints, but said it should be as brief as possible. This was the telegram: 'Dear mamma is killed. Jane (her sister) and I are in the refreshment room.'"

THE PERFECT WOMAN.

A Story of How That Event Was Realized.

In a book by Leon Gazlin, the French author, is the following pretty account of the distribution of the charms of the female sex by a fairy:

"To the Castillian, long and black hair, with which she might almost make a mantilla.

"To the Italian, eyes bright and ardent as a midnight eruption of Vesuvius.

"To the Turk, a form as round as the moon and soft as eiderdown.

"To the German, beautiful teeth and an earnest heart, profoundly inclined to love.

"To the English, aurora borealis to glorify or paint her cheeks, her lips and her shoulders.

"Afterward she gave gayety to the Neapolitan, wit to the Irish, good sense to the Fleming.

"But when this good fairy, who had served out all these female attractions to the daughters of Eve, had exhausted all her treasures, an attractive little figure came tripping up and asked for her share. 'And who are you, dear?' said the good fairy, rather surprised. 'O, I'm a Parisienne,' said the little lady. 'I'm sorry,' said the fairy, 'but I have given everything to your sisters; I have actually nothing left.' This caused great grief to the petitioner, so much so that the fairy took pity on her, and calling the other recipients of her bounty together, put it to them whether, as she had been so generous to them, they would not give a portion of her gifts to the little stranger, which they agreed to do. They each gave her a share of the fairy's gifts; hence the Parisienne, who, we are told, combines in a sufficient degree all that makes womankind delightful.

"The American was not present when these good things were being served out, for the very good reason that in that good fairy's time she hadn't been invented yet; but she was equal to the occasion. She had no idea of being left out in the cold. Like those fine old Milesian families who had a boat of their own at the flood, she got a fairy of her own, and told her to take the Parisienne for a model, and see if she could not improve upon her. Hence the American. Whether the American fairy was successful in fulfilling the instructions of her fair client I must leave to better judges to decide; but there is no doubt that original and copy are very nice."

"Joe" Jefferson's First Telegram.

Joseph Jefferson, the actor, tells a very amusing anecdote of the effect that the telegraph had on the people when it was first established. He says: "I received my first telegram in Cumberland, Md. I could not believe it, but there it was—a reply to my letter of the day before. I called at the office to inquire if it were really so. A small group of people had collected about the operator, all wearing a look of surprise and incredulity. We began showing one another our dispatches, and looking with respectful awe at the mysterious little machine that was ticking away as if worked by some mysterious spirit of the other world. The whole town was excited about it. If I were now to receive a message from the planet Mars, offering me a star engagement, I could not be more astonished than I was on that day."

Pensioned an Old Slave.

Clark County, Ga., has pensioned the old colored man, Rob Roy Harden, who belonged to Gen. Edward Harden, whom John Howard Payne visited in 1833, when he visited that section for the purpose of ascertaining for himself the true inwardness of the scheme of the General Government to transfer the Creek and Cherokee Indians to a point beyond the Mississippi river. Rob Roy, now old and decrepit, loves to tell of his trip from the Indian nation with Mr. Payne. The old colored man remained the faithful servant of Miss Mary Harden, Payne's first and only love, so far as is known, up to the time of her death four years ago. She had the original copy of "Home, Sweet Home," which was given her by the author. It is now in the possession of her niece, Miss Eva Jackson, of Athens, Ga.

Hypnotized by a Gem.

"I have often wondered," said an Eighth street jeweler, "at the fascination a brilliant big diamond possesses for some people. Last week I sold a diamond that weighed a little over five carats. Previous to the sale I had it in the window for a few weeks. A certain old couple used to come regularly every day and gaze for an hour at a time at the gem. It was a straw-colored diamond, but was very flashy. The old couple would invariably turn and keep their eyes on the stone as long as they were in sight, and seemed reluctant to leave. The next day after I had sold the gem the old couple appeared as usual, and the look of disappointment on their faces was keen and lingering. They scrutinized the corner of the window in a vain search, and when they failed to discover their favorite they moved slowly and sadly away."

Peculiar Properties of Toast.

The process of toasting is said to induce a peculiar chemical change in the bread, giving it a more appetizing flavor, as well as certain valuable properties.

Lake Superior miners expect to ship ten million tons of iron ore this season.

ON A CATTLE RANCH.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT'S WESTERN EXPERIENCES.

Good Advice Which the Would Be Cowboy Should Take Under Kindly Consideration.

Theodore Roosevelt, President of the New York Board of Police Commissioners, writes on ranching topics to the Pittsburg Dispatch. He says:

Probably every man who has had a ranch in the West has received a multitude of applications from people who wish to get on that ranch. Most Easterners seem not to know that a cowboy's business requires special training, and that a hardy, vigorous young fellow without any training can no more start in offhand as a cowboy than he could start offhand as a carpenter. Moreover, a man who isn't a good cowboy is worse than a nuisance, because the average cowboy needs ten horses for his work, and if he doesn't do the work the ten horses are wasted.

A man to be proficient in the business must not only be a good horseman, but must be able to rope well, to read brands, to understand cattle, and must have a good knowledge of plainscraft. Ordinarily the work does not imply long continued physical exertion, like the work of a woodchopper, but it is often very monotonous and it is also fraught with hardship and danger.

Nevertheless, in the spring, summer and early fall, the life is a very exciting and pleasant one for those who have mastered the work. There is an attraction in the wild, lonely country, and the entire freedom of an existence spent mostly on horseback. After one gets used to it the rough little shack seems comfortable enough, and for much of the year the ranch wagon is the cow puncher's home. To many a hardy, vigorous fellow the round up is ordinarily rather a picnic. The men are fed well, and though they do not have much sleep, yet the easiest of all forms of labor is sitting in the saddle; and the long rides in the morning to gather in the cattle, and the furious galloping and chasing round the herd when cutting out the beef steers and cows and calves in the afternoon, possess a very great charm for men fond of life in the open. Of course, even in summer there are unpleasant experiences. A stampede at night in a thunder storm is usually too exciting to be agreeable, and fighting fire is very wearing work, while there is always a liability to misadventure. A man may have now and then to make a dry camp; he may get injured by an unusually vicious horse, or be damaged in the rush of a stampeded herd, or be drowned in the quicksand of some treacherous plains river. Still, take it as a whole, in good weather the life is pleasant enough.

But in the iron winter work is very hard and very dangerous. The last roundups, which take place in November on the northern plain, are not agreeable. The nights are very long and the freezing misery of standing guard around a cattle herd and others not tend to make them seem shorter. In fine weather nobody wants a tent; but it is not pleasant after twenty-four hours' cold rain to toss the damp blankets on the sodden ground and creep into them. Of course, the tarpaulin has kept out most of the wet, but it does not keep out all, and then some nights there is a heavy snow fall, and when you throw back the tarpaulin in the morning the snow gets down the back of your neck, and much dexterity is needed while drawing on your boots and trousers not to let the snow get into the blankets. The ground is like iron after the heavy frosts; and though the horses, being worn down and thin, are much less lively and vicious than in spring, yet if they do "act mean" they are more liable to slip and hurt themselves, and more apt to hurt their rider if they throw him.

Early in December the last of the season's work ends. Most of the cowboys are discharged, and they may then go into town, or build a little shack and hunt for a livelihood, or stay around the ranches, doing any odd job that turns up for their board. A few, however, are kept on to ride lines and keep track of the cattle in the snow. These men must needs be of vigorous constitution and thoroughly able to grapple with every exigency of plains life, for they are certain to have some pretty rough experiences before spring if the winter is at all severe.

In riding lines each man has a definite beat. Of course, in good weather the task is a perfectly easy one. The rider lets his pony slog along until he comes to the end of his beat. If any cattle have crossed the line, he sees their tracks, and, following, rounds them up and drives them back into the country where it is desired they shall range during the winter. If no cattle come near the line, he simply goes to the end of his beat and comes back again. But if a blizzard catches him he may find it an almost impossible task to avoid getting lost. All landmarks are shrouded from sight, and while the blizzard is in its height it is out of the question to make head against it.

Of course if the day is a very bad one the rider won't go out at all, but often he has to take his chances and the snow may begin to fall and the wind to blow just when he is at the furthest end of his beat. Then back he comes over the long stretches of sand colored, lifeless prairie sward as fast as his pony can go. The snow comes first in puffs and little drifts—not the soft flakes of an Eastern snow storm, but fine ice dust which feels almost like sand when blown against the face. Heavier and heavier grow the gusts, thicker and thicker the snow clouds, and, finally, the storm moans and shrieks and drives the icy flakes in almost level lines. The rider is then lucky if he can find his camp. Unless he knows exactly where he is and unless the landmarks are very conspicuous it is out of the question for him to do so. His only resource is to drift before the storm, exactly as the cattle do, until he finally strikes some sheltered place under the lee of a big rock or in a hollow where there is a bunch of thick timber. Here he will dismount, tie his horse (which shelters itself all that it can and then stands with drooping head, tail toward the wind), and himself cower down under the horse blankets in the most sheltered spot he can find. There is no small difficulty to light a fire, and indeed unless the shelter is good such a feat is impossible. Without any fire, if the cold is at all intense, the man's chances for life are not good, but often the blizzards blow over almost as quickly as they arise. As a rule the cow puncher, who is very shifty and full of expedients, turns up at the home ranch or the line camps a couple of days later, perhaps a little frost bitten and certainly very hungry and uncomfortable, but not materially the worse for wear.

However, there are occasions when even veteran plainsmen succumb. A year ago last winter two men thus died in a blizzard not very far from my ranch. They had stopped at a horse camp, and while there a terrific storm blew up. After a time there came a lull and the men thought the storm had broken. Accordingly they rode off, intending to make a ranch on the Deadwood trail, far to the south. Not long after they had started the blizzard again began with increased fury. For weeks nothing was heard of the men. Then a rider hunting up strayed stock came across the body of one of them beside the body of his horse. They had been drifting before the storm until they finally came to a wire fence. By this time the man, in his effort to keep himself from freezing, was walking, and he must have got separated from his horse, which was a little distance from him. Both were brought up by the wire fence exactly as cattle are brought up, and there they stood and froze to death precisely as cattle do under similar circumstances. The man stood with his hands on the top-most wire, leaning straight forward, and in this position he had remained from the moment that the last spark of life flickered out in his breast until he was found. The horse had fallen down.

The other man never was found, but his horse was discovered by a round up wagon which went down on the Cannon Ball river, about one hundred and fifty miles off. One day the saddle band was joined out on the prairie by a horse with something queer on its back. The animal was very wild and difficult to approach, though it seemed weak, and it was some time before the cow punchers got their ropes on it. Its bridle was torn off, but the saddle still held, but it had been shifted and came down underneath it, and the cinches had cut deeply into the back. It was taken off, and the horse driven along with the saddle band, but it did not live to reach home, for one morning it was too weak to rise, and the round up wagon left it.

Happenings of this sort are not uncommon in the life of every ranchman in the Northern cattle country, and before any man takes up the business he should be sure that he has the courage and the constitution to stand the terrible strain of ranch work in winter weather.

Tale of a Poet's Woe.

A certain weekly newspaper in Vienna had until recently upon its staff a tame poet who had to contribute verses to every number dealing with current topics in a smart, epigrammatic way. His salary, according to St. Paul's, was a sum equivalent to about $10 a month, and he was content with this small remuneration so long as he was the "only poet" of this particular paper. When, however, he began to find its columns desecrated by the rhymes and epigrams of rivals in the same line of business, he addressed repeated appeals and protests to his editor; and then, finding (as most of us have done in our time) that this course was utterly useless, he decided to strike. But he omitted to give notice of his intention, so the editor brought an action against him and claimed damages. The idea of an editor going to law with a contributor because the latter refuses to go on contributing is a little difficult to grasp. Fortunately for the poet the court decided that the paper would really suffer no harm from the cessation of the defendant's contributions, and he got a verdict which was satisfactory to his pocket but not very complimentary to his verses.

Bound to Do His Duty.

A Newark (N. J.) politician has concentrated upon himself the ridicule of his associates because he discovered two dogs fighting in the street and arrested the aggressor, and actually locked the animal in a cell in the station house.

Electric Water Works.

The water works at Canandaigua, N. Y., will be operated by electricity, the power station being located on Canandaigua Lake, three and one-half miles from the pumping station. The capacity is estimated at 1,000,000 gallons per day each.