

but few in number and small in their range. They may be increased in number and in efficiency; and we believe it to be a public duty to call attention also to this aspect of the matter. We cannot do more than this; but it remains with those who have influence and leisure, as well as the courage to look a great social question in the face, to act at once—it may be to combine as an Association on a large scale for the improvement of the quality of our domestic service. Such a body as this would not fail to impress managers or directors of Institutions such as we have described, as well as the proprietors of registry offices, with the growing importance of the whole question, and their own moral responsibility to their supporters in regard to it. If the subject is approached, and the work carried on, with an earnest spirit, we are convinced that a revived order of things will be the result, and that the calling of a domestic servant will be restored to its rightful place in our social economy.

Let, then, such a good work be instituted, founded without sentimentality, and conducted on common-sense principles; let the organisers of this work not be merely content with having given it an impetus,

but continue steadfastly in looking after the respective needs of mistresses and servants, and following the after-career of the latter with continuous, watchful care. Let it be kept in mind, as a further incentive, how the moral well-being and the religious welfare of a girl are too frequently endangered by the temptations surrounding such a life as that which we recently dwelt upon, when speaking of the lower section of the "Business Girls of London," as described by one of themselves; and let us contrast with that painful but true picture the inestimable blessings of a home, and a mistress's wise and gentle care and solicitude.

Lastly, let it be early impressed on young girls that life is real, life is earnest, and that work is the natural lot of by far the greater portion of the human race, and that to the end of time there must of necessity be master and servant, employer and employed. There is no disgrace in honest toil, of whatever kind; it is only idleness and ill-performed labour that is really disgraceful. The highest praise and the noblest reward any of us can ever desire or hope for is to hear the Great Taskmaster say some day, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant!"

A TIN OF SARDINES.



of Cornwall forms an important branch of industry. Very little is usually known regarding either pilchard or sardine, and it may therefore prove somewhat interesting if we endeavour to give a brief description of the sardine-fishery, and of the preparation of these fishes for our tables.

A visit paid to Brittany, and a short sojourn on the coast of that charming province, afforded an opportunity of acquiring information regarding the sardine-

trade. Arriving at Douarnenez, the centre of the sardine-fishery, in August, we found that the usual festival of the fishermen was to be celebrated, on the Sunday after our arrival, at the little church of St. Jean, situated about a mile from the small town just named. As it happened, the Sunday was a bright, sunny day, and the natives flocked in large numbers to the church, where a special service was held, and where the benefits derived from the sea, and the importance of securing a blessing on the waters, were duly enforced by the preacher. Highly picturesque were the dresses of the women, who appeared in full holiday-costume, attired in white, with muslin shawls; the costume being completed by a wonderful cap of stiff muslin, which terminated above in a kind of double peak, and which rose to a height of about a foot above the head. We saw, however, none of the very gay and bright colours that are sometimes so conspicuously displayed in the holiday-dresses of the French peasantry, and which are well illustrated amongst ourselves by the rainbow-hues wherein our rustic population sometimes delights. The men were dressed in short black jackets—ornamented with a wonderful complexity of buttons in front—and knickerbockers of ample extent. A scarf was tied round the waist, and a large black felt hat of wide-awake pattern completed the male attire. The wooden *sabots* were worn by many; but, as it was a fête-day, leather shoes were very generally to be seen. Altogether, the crowd that Sunday afternoon at St. Jean was a highly picturesque gathering, and, sketch-book in hand, one might

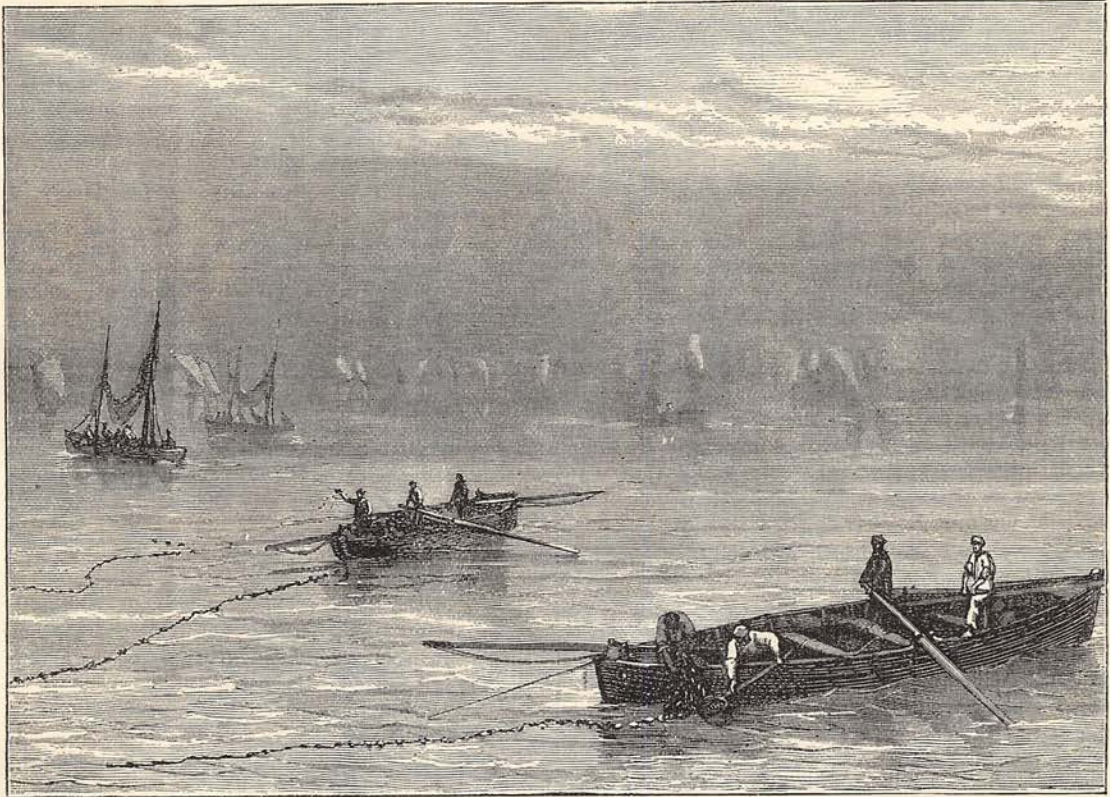
have found many nice bits of colour in the populace, and charming studies in the surroundings at large.

Soon the service is over, and a simple matter it appeared to be, but one, nevertheless, marked with extreme importance in the eyes of the simple Brittany fishers, whose religion thus enters intimately into the regulation of their outer and daily life.

A short survey of the dispersing crowd displayed a treasure in the shape of a fisherman who understood French fairly. It need hardly be remarked that the

But we tell the patron that we do not care for the discomfort, and that we are determined to see how the sardines are caught. So, with the air of a man who thinks that "he who wills must," the patron consents to take us as passengers, and promises to call for us in the evening at our hotel.

A fine afternoon unfortunately became overcast, and thunder-showers followed. Our worthy landlady hears of our project, and endeavours to discourage us from the undertaking. "What a night for fishers, let alone



SARDINE-FISHING.

inhabitants of Douarnenez and adjacent parts do not, as a rule, understand French, but speak the rough yet not unmusical Breton vernacular. And as this dialect is as utterly unintelligible to the average French scholar as the pure Aberdonian of the north of Scotland would be to the Londoner, it may be imagined we had luck on our side in finding a native to whom we could render ourselves and our project known. This project was that of going a-fishing with the sardine-fishers; and when we informed the fisherman of our intention, he at once consented to introduce us to his "patron," as the employer of fishermen and owner of a boat is named.

The patron thinks we are hardly in earnest at first. "Why should gentlemen wish to go fishing?" he asks. "It is a dirty avocation; and, moreover, the boats are out all night, and there are no cabins or saloons in the fishing-smacks."

the messieurs!" says the good lady; but, discouragement from humanity and the weather notwithstanding, we determine to keep faith with the patron, and when the fishermen call for us, nets on shoulder, on their way to the pier, they find us ready. The purchase of a bottle of *eau-de-vie*, through the entirely disinterested advice of the fishermen, completed our arrangements, and we were soon at the place of embarkation. The prospect is certainly not inviting, for the thunder rolls and the lightning still plays, whilst "the rain a deluge pours," as is most appropriately remarked in that fine old sea-song, "The Bay of Biscay;" and the noted bay itself is, of course, close by. Our smack lies off the pier at anchor, and when the small boat comes alongside, we drop into it, and shortly find ourselves on board the smack—a tidy, strongly-built two-masted vessel, not unlike the large herring-boats of our own coasts.

The patron tells us that he will not weigh anchor until one o'clock in the morning, and advises us to try to sleep during the intervening period, an extemporised hammock being formed for our accommodation by a sail suspended between two of the seats in the stern of the boat. It was now about eight o'clock, and we had, therefore, five hours to pass in the boat before the hour of departure. It was, of course, impossible to sleep with the storm raging around; but we made the best of our position. Patron and fishermen dozed around us, till the stir in the harbour, the heaving of anchors, the rattling of blocks and cordage, and the flapping of the sails, warned them that the fishing-fleet was beginning to get under weigh. We imitate the example of our earlier neighbours; our sails are hoisted, and soon we are scudding at a good rate before the wind across the Bay of Douarnenez, and in the direction of Brest.

A sip of tea serves to restore our physical equilibrium, and to drive off the stiffness of limb resulting from our nap; and the patron, warming under the influence of the beverage, favours us with a fishing-song, rolled out in lusty accents, and with a character and manner which would have delighted Mrs. Macquoid, or any other ardent admirer of Brittany and its folk-lore. The night air is somewhat chilly, but the cold grey dawn appearing on the horizon before us, and marking the advent of day, somehow causes us to feel less miserable than we might otherwise have been. We are not without company, for there are many other boats, the counterparts of our own, holding on the same course as ourselves, and our crew exchange salutes with such neighbours as sail near enough.

The true business of the sardine-fishery now commences, and nets and bait are got ready with despatch. The nets are about thirty feet in length and four feet in depth, whilst a row of corks fastened along their upper edge serves to float them. The meshes of the net are very small, and measure about three-quarters of an inch in extent. The bait consists of cod-roe, salted by way of preservation. It is noteworthy that this bait is imported from Norway, so that the interests of the sardine-fishery extend further than the bounds of Brittany, and far beyond the shores of France itself. The bait, as used, is of whitish-grey colour, is contained in small barrels, and appears not unlike soaked bread-crumbs.

The patron and his fishermen devoutly cross themselves on commencing work. The sails are first hauled down, and two of the crew betake themselves to the bow of the boat, where they each work a long oar, so as to keep sufficient way on the boat, and to keep thereby the long net, which the patron throws out at the stern, in a straight line with the vessel. The end of the net is firmly retained in the left hand of the patron, and with his right hand he throws the bait into the sea in the neighbourhood of the net. This fashion of attracting the fishes sometimes utterly fails, and, as the patron informed us, bushels of bait may be sometimes dispersed without effecting the desired end. For two hours our efforts to secure a haul were

unsuccessful. Then the patron ordering the sails to be hoisted, we sailed a few miles further, and then hauled down again and shot the nets once more. Success soon attended our efforts. We passed through an immense shoal of sardines, appearing as a trembling mass of silver, shooting through the sea. A plentiful distribution of bait arrested part of the shoal, and as we peered over the boat's side we could see the fishes, like silvery streaks, leaping hither and thither after the savoury morsels. These fishes, it must be remembered, are caught, not like herrings, within the net itself, as within a great pouch or bag, but as mackerel are caught. The sardines, in their eagerness to capture the bait, thrust their heads up to the gill-covers through the small meshes of the net. *Facilis descensus*—easy is the entrance of the sardine's head, but impossible of withdrawal; for the sharp gill-covers, like expanded springs, will not permit the escape of the head, and these fishes are thus literally caught by their necks.

Now the heavily weighted net is hauled in. No light labour is this part of the fisherman's duty, and we willingly lend a hand; the result of our united exertions being that sardines tumble into the boat by hundreds; and as two of our crew stand with bag-like nets supported on poles, and ladle those fishes that are likely to escape from the net into the boat, the cry with us for a time is "Still they come." Another net was meanwhile being got ready, and this is next thrown over; the patron baiting the net, and the two men at the bow keeping way on the boat with their long, sweeping oars.

The net which has just been used is taken up by a man and boy, and is smartly shaken, piece by piece, to rid it of the fishes which have been retained in its meshes. Hand-lines are also used by the sardine-fishers, but more as a means of wiling away the time than for any actual gain. We were furnished with lines, but the only prey which fell to our share was a big dog-fish which had been hunting after the shoals of sardines, and had been enticed on our hook by the sardine-bait.

After another haul or two of the nets, the patron feels satisfied with his morning's work. So we put about-ship, hoist sail again, and skim back to Douarnenez as fast as we may. "First back makes the best bargain," says the patron, and there seems at present every prospect of our making a good market of our perishable wares. During the voyage home the fishes are gathered into little baskets, each holding 200 sardines. We sail merrily into harbour, the sun shining brightly, lighting up the old cathedral-like spire of Ploaré Church, which overlooks Douarnenez in stately fashion, and which serves as a familiar landmark to the mariners of the port.

The cargo is soon unshipped after we have landed at the *quai*, and is carried off at once to one of the sardine-curing establishments which are to be found in plenty in the neighbourhood of the harbour. For each basket of sardines the men receive a small tally, or ticket, made of bone. The tickets are collected on a certain day, and are then regarded as so many

"promises to pay," the rate of remuneration being fixed at the market or prevailing tariff.

As soon as the fishes are brought into the curer's, they are covered with finely-ground salt, and are placed on long wooden benches, or tables, in what is called the *fritture*, or "frying-place." A number of girls sit on each side of these tables, their duty being to cut off the heads of the sardines with short knives. They then manage to skilfully gut the fishes, the operation in the case of each sardine being the work of a moment. The fishes are then allowed to lie in salt for a few hours, when they are ready for the important process known as that of the *fritture*. The interior of a *fritture* by night, when the girls sit awaiting the arrival of the boats which have been delayed by a storm or adverse winds, is a sight to be remembered. The long room is dimly lit by oil-lamps, and the workers sit along the sides of the apartment, industriously knitting socks or shawls. The long hours are beguiled by the chanting of some of the old songs of the province, each verse and its refrain being taken up by different singers, whilst the semi-chorus is chanted, often with high musical effect.

The chief objects of interest in the *fritture* are the large kiln-like stoves, or ovens, into which the flat iron pans containing the sardines are set in rows. After the fishes have been sufficiently cooked, they are placed in the tins or boxes in which they appear on our tables. The manufacture of these tins, it need hardly be said, forms a most important branch of industry at Douarnenez and other places on the coast of Brittany. The sea-shore is literally covered with the clippings, or refuse, of the tin-manufactories; and when the moon shines down on the Bay of Douarnenez, the soft light reflected off innumerable pieces of the shining metal imparts a very striking and somewhat weird aspect to the shore.

The foregoing is a brief account of a highly important industry, ranking next in importance only to our own herring-fisheries, or to the cod-fisheries of other lands; and the brief recital of even a few points in the history of such an industry may serve to show how numerous are the interests, and how varied the processes, through which our tables are provided with the luxuries, or even the necessaries of life.

OLD STREETS.

WHY, bless my heart! I hardly know you;
 Your altered faces look so strange;
 And yet, old streets, I too could show you
 As wild a freak of time and change.
 Since first ye seemed enchanted places,
 How many years have slipped away?
 The merry hearts, the dear old faces,
 The joys, the pleasures, where are they?

And where are they, the very houses
 That homed the gallant boys and true?
 Ah me! what spell the thought arouses,
 What fancies fill my brain anew!
 'Twas yonder somewhere—in the attic—
 Dick Dowland flourished long ago—
 Where stands that gleaming pile erratic,
 With fifty windows row on row.

What merry nights we passed together,
 Warm curtained from the biting cold!
 No fears of gout, or bills, or weather,
 To plague us in the days of old.
 No heed of years to follow after,
 Or how the world her favours flung;
 But song and smoke and happy laughter,
 And loving thoughts for old and young.

Where are ye now, ye jovial-hearted,
 That nightly met at pleasure's call?
 How have ye fared since last we parted?
 Has time dealt lightly by you all?
 And lead you lives as gay and jolly,
 As full of mirth, as free of care,
 As in the days of youth and folly,
 When all was bright and fresh and fair?

And you, O joy! O star, adorning
 The hazy past! O dream divine!
 'Twas here I met you every morning,
 And took your little hand in mine;
 Ah me! what wild and wayward guesses
 I've made about you, little pet;
 For voice and eyes and auburn tresses
 Stir somehow in my bosom yet;

And as I pace the mighty city,
 And gaze along the crowded street,
 I half expect to see you, Kitty,
 And hear the music of your feet.
 I half expect again to meet you
 In this the old accustomed place—
 Again with laughing lip to greet you,
 And look into your smiling face.

Old streets, old streets! a very preacher
 Ye are unto this heart of mine,
 A silent monitor, a teacher
 Whose precepts in the darkness shine.
 What time night-shadows close around you,
 I love to haunt your lonely ways,
 Again to shape you as I found you,
 And loved you, in the dear old days.

For buried glories start to being,
 And voices hail me as of yore,
 And airy forms no eyes are seeing,
 Come trooping to my side once more;
 And thus it is a song I sing ye,
 In memory of the far-off time,
 And all the pleasant thoughts you bring me,
 That never may be said in rhyme.

MATTHIAS BARR.