

of its president Dr. Joseph Hooker, "the eminent son of an eminent sire," shall have any cause to regret the selection which it has made.

### YARMOUTH BLOATERS.

We can trace back the history of the Yarmouth herring fishery to a date anterior to that of the Norman Conquest—there being records in existence to show that this fishery, among others, was subjected to legal supervision and regulation in the days of Edward the Confessor. A few centuries later the care of the clergy for the fishermen is evidenced by the fact that Herbert Bishop of Norwich, in the reign of William Rufus, built a church in the town of Yarmouth for their accommodation. In those old Catholic times fish was a general desideratum on fast-days, and the herring fishery flourished in consequence of the universal demand. By the time of Henry III., about the beginning of the thirteenth century, the Yarmouth herring fishery was known as the "worthiest in Europe." But though we may trace the herring as an article of food to a very remote antiquity, we cannot do the same with the bloater, nor does it at all appear when bloaters first began to be eaten, or who it was that first invested the herring with those sapid and savoury qualities which make the bloater, when eaten in perfection, so delicious. We have heard enthusiastic eaters declare that the bloater is an invention beyond the reach of art, and that its discovery must have been due to some fortunate accident, as in the case of Lundy Foot's snuff or Charles Lamb's roast pig!

But before eating your bloater you must catch your herring, or somebody must catch it for you; so, with the reader's permission, we will go on a short fishing trip. It is a mild evening in the middle of September, after a day of fair weather, with a steady gentle breeze blowing from the north. The lugger which awaits us lies, with a crowd of others, a little way out; and, jumping into a boat, we are not many minutes in getting alongside and boarding her. Then it is up anchor, trim sails, and off we go towards the deep sea. We have some dozen men on board, several of whom are not sailors by profession, or fishermen either, save during the herring season; but all are active handy lads and well versed in the business that has to be got through. Looking around us, we see a whole fleet of fishing vessels bound on the same expedition as ourselves, some already far out to sea, others following in our wake, and others again just about to start. The low sunlight gleams on their rusty sails, transforming them into sheets of flame, while their fitful reflections flash in broken splendour from the restless billows. But ere long the sun dips behind the dull land-level—the crowd of sails sink out of sight in the shadows of the gloaming, the surface of the sea grows black and dark, and the wild talk of the waves waxes louder as we get farther out into the open, and the breeze freshens.

So long as there is any daylight nobody thinks of shooting the nets, experience having proved that night is the fisherman's best opportunity; but darkness has no sooner set in than preparations are made for getting the nets overboard. Herrings are caught by means of nets suspended from the surface to the depth of some thirty feet, and having meshes not less than an inch in diameter. The nets are fifty yards long each, and ten or twelve in depth; and the object being to make a wall of net in the water of as great a length as possible to intercept the fish in their progress, the nets are joined

together as they are shot, and being weighted at bottom and buoyed at the top, present one unbroken barrier for the whole of their united length, which is often a mile or more. The mesh is large enough to admit the head of an average herring, but not the body; thus fish of a small size get through and escape, while the full-grown ones are detained by the net catching in the gill. Much alacrity is shown in getting the nets into the water as soon as all is ready, and the motion of the vessel has been sufficiently retarded by taking in sail—the men paying them out with striking rapidity, while the slow track of the lugger is marked by the floating buoys designating the position of the sunken snare.

Now follows a period of leisure, and if you choose you may wrap yourself in a boat-cloak and go to sleep for an hour or two, as many of the hands are doing. The skipper, you may note, is wide awake; he is in fact on the look-out for indications of fish, the presence or the absence of which his practised eye is skilful in detecting. By-and-by he signals one or two of the hands, who, at his direction, haul up a small portion of the net, by the appearance of which he is able to judge whether he has made a fortunate cast or the reverse. If, after an hour's waiting, the net came up blank, he would probably haul the whole in again and proceed to another ground. But such is not the case now—those silvery sparkles that shone out of the dark water were a suggestive sign of what is going on below, and he is well content to await the event.

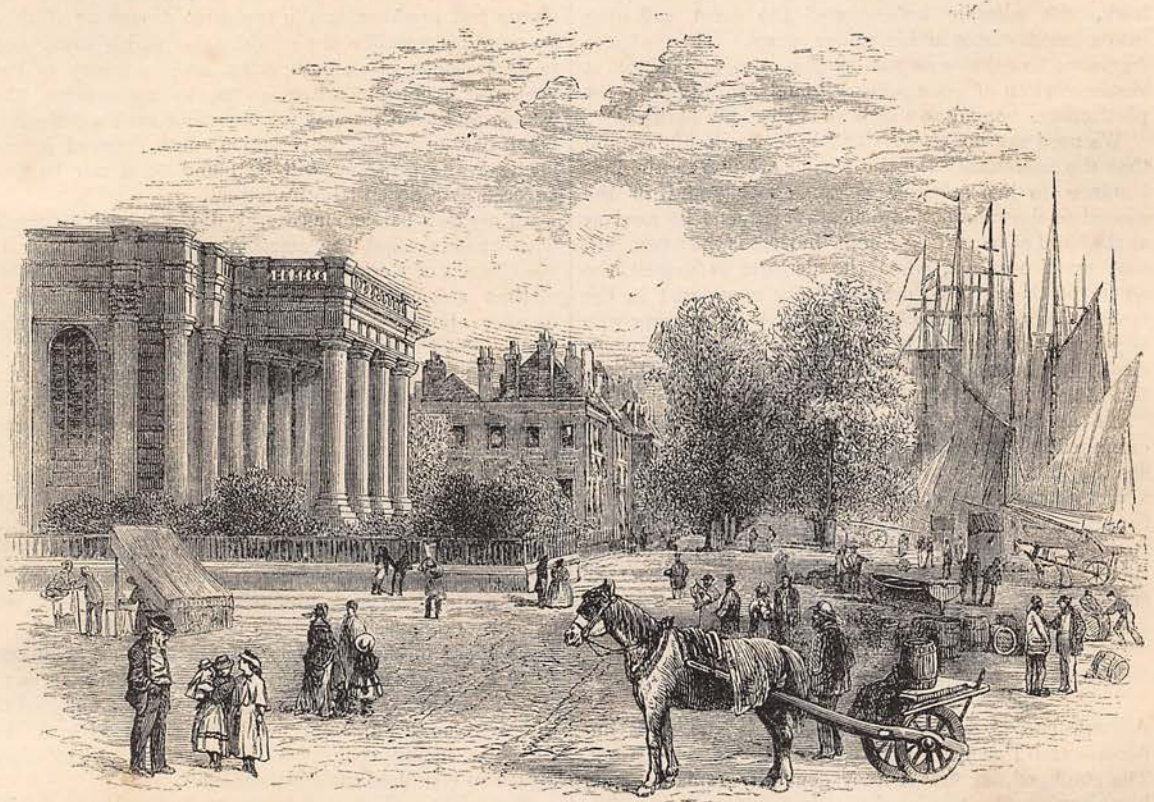
There is a faint glimmer of dawn in the east when the hauling in begins, and soon all hands are busily engaged in the work, and are moreover in high spirits at the sight of the "take," which is far beyond their expectations. Some parts of the net come up like a shimmering sheet of silver, being so crowded with fish that it seems a wonder they were not rent asunder. In other portions there are comparatively few, and in one place the net has been torn by the dog-fish, and numbers of the herrings mangled and destroyed. Such damage is too common to excite much remark, fisher Jack being little given to comments merely verbal, and contenting himself by knocking Mr. Dog-fish on the head whenever he can catch him. Hauling in a full "take," if an interesting process, is rather a slow one: every fish has to be extricated from the net as it comes over the side, and as fast as they come they are deposited in the "swills" with a plentiful sprinkling of salt, and stowed away below or on deck. It is broad daylight long before the whole of the nets are on board, and now, crowding as much sail as we can, we run for Yarmouth sands by the nearest track.

Arrived at Yarmouth, the herrings are taken on shore without loss of time, and if they are not already the property of some contractor or fish-curer, are submitted at once to public auction, the sale taking place either on the open sands or at some well-known sale-room. At the beginning of the season prices will run high, and a good proportion of the catch will be bought by the local dealers and hawkers, who will retail them for consumption while they are yet fresh. Also a certain proportion will be salted or pickled as white herrings—the cheapest form in which herrings find their way to the market. But the herring for which Yarmouth has been famous almost from time immemorial, is the "red," or smoked herring, an article known and appreciated throughout the whole civilised world, but only known in perfection by those who have eaten the Yarmouth bloater in its best condition—for as surely as "the child is father of the man," the original red herring was the father of the unrivalled bloater. Let us see how the "reds" are

manufactured, after which the preparation of the bloater will present no difficulty.

Red herrings are intended to keep good for a whole year, and are thoroughly cured with that view. As soon as the fish are brought on shore they are carried to the fish-house, where they are heaped on the stone floor to

comes the critical business of smoking: fires of wood in a green state are lighted on the floor, the wood most preferred being oak, though beach, ash, and elm are sometimes used; the fire must not be too quick or too slow, and needs to be well watched and regulated. To facilitate the smoking process the tiles of the roof are



YARMOUTH QUAY.

the number of tens or hundreds of thousands, and are plentifully salted. Here they lie for many days, until thoroughly saturated with the salt, and till all superfluous moisture has drained from them—the floor of the place being inclined for that purpose. When ready for the “hanging” process, they are shovelled with a wooden shovel into a large vat of water, and well washed, to cleanse them from the salt, scales, and dirt. As fast as they are cleansed they are taken out of the vat by women, technically called “rivers,” whose business it is to hang them on the “spits” for smoking, which operation they perform with wonderful celerity. The spits are round rods made of fir, about four feet long and a little pointed at one end; the point of the spit is inserted under the gill of the fish and comes out at the mouth, and in this way the fish are spitted at the distance of about two inches apart (so that no one fish touches another) until the spit is full. So soon as they are filled the spits are passed on from hand to hand to their proper places in the firing or smoke-house, which is a room, or series of rooms, about sixteen or eighteen feet square, and from twenty to thirty feet high, and filled up with wooden fixtures on framework supported by joists, for the reception of the spits. When the spits have been laid tier above tier, until there is no room for more, the tails of the lowest tier of fish will be about seven or eight feet above the brick floor. Now

laid so as to allow the smoke to escape, and there are ventilators under the eaves which can be opened or shut at pleasure.

The “reds” for home consumption require to be smoked for about twenty days, while those intended for exportation should be smoked for ten days longer. When the allotted time has expired the fires are extinguished, the house allowed to cool, and in a few days the cured fish are ready for packing in barrels. The packer receives from his assistant six or eight fish at a time as they are drawn from the spit, and lays them on their backs in tiers round the bottom of the barrel, the heads close to the side staves, the tails meeting in the centre of the cask. When these tiers rise above the ends of the side staves the fish are pressed down and the upper layer is put on with the backs of the herrings uppermost. In this state they are left to settle down, and in a day or two have sunk into the cask sufficiently to allow of its being headed: when this is done the “reds” are ready for the market.

Such being the genesis of the red herring, what is that of the bloater? Well, the fact is that the bloater goes through all the processes applicable to the “red,” but not being wanted to keep for a year, or even for a month, he is “put through” with much more rapidity, more careful ceremony, and with a tender regard for ultimate results. Note, if you please, that the bloater

is selected for peculiar treatment because he is the *élite* of his class—the largest, handsomest, most fleshy and corpulent, in all respects the aristocrat of the herring tribe—the only real specimen, in fact, of the “bloated aristocrat” to be found in the whole domain of natural history. Look at him as he lies in the dish tempting your morning appetite; mark his rich colouring, rivalling that of an ancient master—the deep olive tones on the back, the metallic brilliancy of the sides softening into a creamy hue in his under parts. Then what a fragrance he exhales as you lay him open, and hasten, at the instigation of your salivary glands, to pay him the posthumous honour to which he is so richly entitled.

We need say no more. The reader will understand that the fine qualities of the bloater are due in the first instance to his superior personal merit, and in the second to the prompt and delicate treatment he receives at the hand of man. So prompt, indeed, is the treatment, that upon occasion, when the demand is urgent, the whole of the several processes are completed in the space of ten or twelve hours, so that the herring who is joyously disporting himself to-day in his native sea shall figure to-morrow as the choicest viand of the breakfast table.

As an article of commerce, the bloaters are not crammed into barrels and sent across the seas. Rather are they laid loosely together in osier baskets containing a dozen or two each, and despatched by the quickest conveyance to the happy recipients. We must not forget to add, that to be enjoyed in their finest perfection they should be eaten at Yarmouth, while yet reeking from the smoke-house.

## MY FIRST CURACY.\*

### CHAPTER I.—SEARCH AFTER A CURACY.

A FIRST curacy, I have always held, is the most important step that can be taken in a clergyman's career. The stamp of his first curacy generally remains upon him during the whole of his ministry, and his after administrations are certainly much influenced by the circumstances of his earlier ones; indeed, his whole tone is tinged through life by the associations he forms in the first years of his ministerial office. Hence, then, the great importance of a careful choice in the matter.

Sometimes a sphere of labour opens naturally; at other times it is a source of great difficulty to know which branch in the ministerial office to choose, or for what particular field of pastoral work the candidate for orders is most suited. Of course there is a certain amount of risk to be gone through, for a man can never know positively that he is qualified for any particular post until he has attempted to fulfil its duties. Having, however, some general idea of what post is most likely to suit his peculiar individual temperament, the next thing to ascertain is also a very important one, namely, the disposition and character of the rector or vicar under whom the young minister will have to work. Much of the success or failure of many a man's subsequent ministry depends upon the direction and bent given him at first starting. Men are generally totally inexperienced when they enter the ranks, and therefore, unless they have a fit and judicious officer, they are liable to commit many serious errors of judgment, to say and do inexpedient things.

But above all other considerations, should unison in matter of doctrine be carefully ascertained before a

compact is concluded between the intended vicar and curate. If diversity of opinion in vital points is afterwards found to exist, how painful to the feelings of both will be the discovery! The usefulness of both will be greatly impaired, their influence will be nullified, and the parishioners suffer, in consequence of this lamentable dead lock in doctrinal matters. It is perfectly necessary for the well-being of a parish, that not only should its clergy pull together, but in the same direction; if they do not, disagreeables are sure to arise which must end in unpleasantness on both sides, and in injury to the people. A personal interview is, in my opinion, the easiest and readiest way of obviating such a difficulty, for in half an hour's conversation, more mutual agreement, or the contrary, will be found, than can be discovered by a dozen lengthy letters.

In my own particular case, I did not wish to work with what is called “an extreme man” of any kind. If the Church of England were to be divided into several distinct sections, it might be necessary to make a distinct choice; but I cannot approve of every particular detail in any of the so-called “parties,” and I wished in my first curacy to have some liberty to act upon my own conscientious views, within the limits of what I believed to be according to the word of God and the standards of the Church.

I felt myself also obliged to be rather careful concerning the size and population of the parish in which I was to work; for while, on the one hand, I did not desire a very restricted field for what energies I possessed, on the other, my health not being strong, I did not wish to be completely overwhelmed with the amount of duty required from me all at once. Some of my readers may fancy that I am somewhat fastidious when I go on to say, that I was rather particular as to the locality of my future scene of labours: I objected to the extreme north or south, nor did I wish to be whelmed in by coalpits on every side, or to bury myself in complete rural retirement.

Yet in the end, one of these conditions was my lot for the first seven eventful years of my ministerial life.

Having then settled in my mind what I considered I wanted, and for what post I thought I was fitted, I inquired among my friends, and stated my wants to my few clerical neighbours. These all kindly promised to look out for me. Now this “looking out” generally ends in no satisfactory result—at least I found it so in my own case, and I do not think mine was a peculiar one. It is the usual way of getting rid of a troublesome consultation about any situation or office, to say, “Oh, I will look out for you.” At the moment, the intention may honestly be to “look out,” but in the multitude of other concerns the promise is forgotten, and the applicant is left to look out for himself. So at last, being tired of waiting for answers from my friends which never came, I began to take in the clerical papers. I pored over the advertisements in the “Record” and the “Guardian,” and the “Ecclesiastical Gazette.” I answered numbers of advertisements in these and other clerical papers, but they all came to nothing.

At last I resolved myself to advertise, and having procured the services of a friend who was considered a capital hand at such things, he wrote my advertisement as follows:—

“Wanted a Curacy, with title to Orders for the September Ordination. The advertiser possessing small private means, stipend required £60 a-year. Views in strict accordance with the Prayer-book. Experienced in Sunday Schools, Evening Adult Classes, &c.”

This advertisement brought me no less than thirty-

\* The writer, now senior curate in a large London parish, thinks that his early experience may be useful to some of his younger brethren, as well as interesting to general readers.