

**INTERNATIONAL FISHERIES
EXHIBITION LONDON,
1883; APPARATUS FOR
FISHING; PP. 7-79**

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E. W. H. HOLDSWORTH

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APPARATUS FOR FISHING

International Fisheries Exhibition

LONDON, 1883

APPARATUS FOR FISHING

BY

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APPARATUS FOR FISHING.

IN the following pages it is proposed to give only a general account of the various kinds of apparatus which are employed for fishing, but an endeavour will be made to describe in an intelligible manner the principal methods of fishing, so as to enable the reader to understand something of the means by which our fish-markets are supplied, and constant occupation given to the large class of fisherfolk—many of whom too commonly have to spend their lives in the midst of dangers and hardships but little understood by the great mass of the public who look on a regular supply of fish as a matter of course, whatever the weather may chance to be.

An important distinction exists between sea fishing and freshwater fishing, which gives to each an interest peculiar to itself. Sea fishing is a great commercial industry. Freshwater fishing is mainly connected with sport and amusement. The first will therefore naturally claim the principal share of our attention, as being the means of providing a very large supply of wholesome food, and consequently of wide-spread interest. Some of the appliances for fishing being used in both salt and fresh waters, it will be convenient to consider our subject with reference rather to the different methods of fishing than to any distinction between the waters in which they are carried on, calling attention, however, as occasion may arise, to the use of particular appliances in the capture of freshwater fishes.

as well as of those found exclusively in the sea. We shall therefore roughly divide the apparatus into Nets, Lines, and Traps, and begin our descriptions with the important group of nets, which may be again separated into those which are movable, or fixed, when in use.

NETS.

a. Movable—Trawls, Drift, Seines, etc.

b. Fixed—Trammels, Set-nets, Bag-nets, etc.

Trawls.—Among the several methods of fishing in general use in our seas none is of more importance than that known in England as trawling, as by its means we obtain the greater part of the turbot, brill, and soles which are brought to market, and soles are very rarely caught in any other way. But besides the value of this mode of fishing in the capture of what are known as "prime" fish, its importance is even greater as a means of catching plaice, haddock, whiting, and other kinds of common fish, which, inferior as they are usually considered when compared with turbot and soles, yet are in great and constant demand in the market, and from the abundance in which they are caught, they can be sold at so low a rate as practically to be within reach of everyone. Another point of importance in trawling is that it is carried on throughout the year, although as a good deal of wind is desirable for its effective working, it is more generally productive in winter than at any other season, and therefore at a time when some kinds of sea fishing are difficult on account of bad weather.

There are two kinds of trawl-net in use, the beam-trawl and the otter-trawl; but the only one used by professional fishermen is the beam-trawl, and of that we will now endeavour to give a description; but an examination of

the net itself will be almost necessary to enable its construction to be clearly understood.

THE BEAM-TRAWL.

The Beam-trawl is a triangular, flat, purse-shaped net, with its wide mouth kept extended by a horizontal wooden spar called the "beam," which is raised a short distance from the ground by two iron supports or "heads," one at each end; the upper edge of the mouth of the net being fastened to the beam, and the under portion or lower edge of the opening dragging on the ground as the net is towed over the bottom. The size of the net used depends very much on that of the vessel that has to tow it, and the length of the beam of course varies with the size of the net. The total length of the net is usually rather more than twice that of the beam. In the large trawl vessels or "smacks," as they are generally called, the beam ranges from 36 to 50 feet in length, and the net in corresponding proportions. As there is an enormous strain on the beam when the net is at work, great care is necessary to select a good piece of wood for it. Elm is generally preferred, chosen if possible from timber grown of the proper thickness, that the natural strength of the wood may not be lessened by any more trimming or chipping than is absolutely necessary. If the required length and thickness cannot be obtained in one piece, two pieces are scarfed together and the joint secured by iron bands. Appearance here is not of so much consequence as strength and toughness to resist the strain to which the beam is exposed. It will be understood from what has been said that the purse-shaped net has one of its flat sides on the ground, and the mouth is kept extended by the beam lying across it; but in order to give room for the fish to enter, the