

THE FISHERIES OF THE GULF OF MEXICO.**By M. L. WOOD, U. S. N.**

It is my impression that when fully developed, as they doubtless will be some day in the near future, the fishing interests of the Gulf will compare favorably with those of the fishing banks of Newfoundland. At present, however, there is no comparison.

Another thing that will tend to make Gulf fishing a financial success is the apparently insatiable appetite of the Cubans for fish, either fresh or salted. Even now the shipments of fish, alive, on ice, and salted, each week from Key West, are surprising.

Now, of course, only small sailing vessels, badly equipped and with no means of keeping ice, and no facilities for obtaining it, go on the fishing banks, and in two days' time fill their wells with all the live fish possible, and load with salt fish. If there happens to be a favorable wind, some of the fish are alive, and some that have died are still in good enough order to be either sent north from Pensacola or Cedar Keys, or shipped to Havana from Key West. One of the most delicious fishes of the Gulf, the red snapper, does not live well in captivity, and does not take salt very readily. As for myself, I prefer the red snapper to almost any other fish, excepting the pompano, when fresh.

The "snapper banks," where the fish are caught, and several kinds besides snappers are caught together, are quite common in the Gulf; their location is always a difficult subject, excepting for a few of the well-known ones close to ports.

The number of "banks" is much larger than is generally supposed, even by the fishermen themselves, as each skipper always holds in reserve some favorite spot, and if necessary to prevent intrusion, will fish for hours with unbaited hooks when a supposed rival approaches.

Again, as there has been no supply, there is but little demand, and the fish caught near the northern Gulf coast bring very low prices. When a successful fishing vessel comes in the market is glutted, and at other times fish are scarce and the prices high.

At Pensacola some steps are being taken to handle the fish economically, but as yet nine-tenths of the fish—the best ones—are sent to New Orleans.

I believe the places for catching fish in the Gulf are very numerous, and the quantities of fish practically inexhaustible.

I also believe there is a sort of migration from one sort of bottom to another, depending upon causes which at present, owing to the lack of investigation, are involved in obscurity. This investigation, I very much fear, will not be undertaken or carried out successfully until the government takes it in hand. No private individual or corporation could afford to devote the time necessary to hunting up the rumored banks,

or examining a place from which the fish have gone to find out the reason of their departure.

There is no reason that I can see why, if the fish banks of the Gulf were as well marked out and the habits of the fishes as well understood as they are on the Newfoundland banks, the fishing interests of the Gulf should not develop enormously. By the refrigerator-car plan—both afloat and ashore—every city and town of the United States would become a ready market for a moderate supply of fresh fish. Such a plan would require the attention of capitalists to be drawn to its advantages, and these advantages would only show themselves when the sources of the supply have been accurately determined, and the conditions affecting the supply well enough investigated. This would require the location and the limits of each “snapper” bank to be practically determined, so that steamers fitted for refrigerating could make the rounds of a certain number of banks, and lose no time hunting a very indefinite spot, such as most of the snapper banks of the Gulf are at present.

U. S. S. GEDNEY,

Navy Yard, New York, May 17, 1882.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TRANSPLANTING CLAMS FROM THE PACIFIC OCEAN TO THE ATLANTIC.

By R. E. C. STEARNS.

(Letter to Prof. S. F. Baird.)

In relation to the transplanting of the West American clams, *Glycimeris generosa*, *Saxidomus aratus*, and *Schizotharus nuttalli*, to the Atlantic seaboard of the United States, I have to submit the following:

Immediately after the receipt of your letter of the 6th February, referring to the first species, and Mr. Hemphill's recommendation thereof as a valuable edible, I took the necessary steps to inform myself as to the best locality from which to obtain a supply, and subsequently made arrangements, which are now pending, for a supply to be sent me promptly by express as soon as the tides are low enough to permit the same to be obtained, and gave particular and explicit instructions as to the manner of packing, so that no lack of care need occur to prevent the successful transmission as far as San Francisco. Transmission is much more direct, and less time is lost, by forwarding from Olympia on Budd's Inlet (which appears, everything considered, to be the best place to obtain them), via Portland, Oreg.; Portland and Olympia being connected by rail, and the steamer communication between Portland and San Francisco being more frequent than by the Puget Sound steamers to San Francisco. The Portland market is supplied with *Glycimeris* from Budd's Inlet.