

175.—NOTES ON THE FISH AND FISHERIES OF JAPAN.

By CHARLES H. BALDWIN.

The Japanese are a very poor people, and you will probably realize it more when I tell you that the lower Government officials receive a salary of only 8 or 10 yen per month, and on this in many cases they have to support large families, pay house rent, &c. Ten yen is equal to \$6 silver. In fact, without the least exaggeration, were the inhabitants to eat three square meals a day, as we do, the nation would become bankrupt in less than three months. Fortunately rice and vegetables, their only diet, are cheap. Clothing and house rent ditto.

Fish is a luxury and dearer here than at home. They are to a great extent warm-water fish; at least, all that are caught in this section of the country. Spanish mackerel are quite plentiful. We have also the true mackerel, but for some unexplained reason it is never found fat in our markets. In fact, as we have them they are genuine leather-bellies, and the poorest fish in the market. Sharks, skates, and dogfish are eaten, in fact anything looking like a fish, no matter how far gone, will find consumers. Flounders, such as we used to catch at home from the wharves, sell readily here for about 15 or 20 cents.

We have two excellent species of salt-water fish, which I think would be appreciated by our fishermen, viz, the tar (*Sawanus margmollis*) and the sawara. The former is shaped something like the shad, but of larger size, often 2 feet in length. The meat is firm and white without any fat, but an albuminous jelly makes up for the lack of this and gives the fish a fine flavor. The sawara is shaped much like the barracuda and spotted in the same way, but is much larger, has some fat, and the flesh has a fine flavor.

The methods pursued by fishermen here in taking fish are very destructive and tend to make fish scarce. Very few are caught by hook and line, but mostly in drag-nets. Some time ago a friend of mine, editor of the local paper published in Kobe, whose father is one of the Government inspectors of salmon fisheries in Scotland, visited the salmon-trout fisheries on Lake Biwa. These fish, by the way, never go to the sea, although the affluent of the lake would permit it, but ascend the small streams running into the lake to spawn. At the mouth of one of the principal streams where the largest fishery is situated, we noticed a large net stretched completely across the river, and we asked how the fish could ascend the river. "We never allow any to go up," replied the fishermen quite naively. This we found to be the cause of the fish becoming scarce. The local government has now removed the obstruction. There is a fish-breeding establishment on the lake, under the direction of natives who learned the art in the United States.

KIYOTO, JAPAN, 1883.