

124.—OPENING THE BROAD AND OTHER RIVERS OF NORTH CAROLINA TO SHAD, BASS, ETC.

By FRANK COXE.

[From a letter to Hon. M. C. Butler.]

I have taken great trouble for the past six or eight years to get our rivers thrown open so that shad and other fish can come up as they did forty years ago in great abundance. My plantation is in the fork of Broad and Green Rivers, in Polk and Rutherford Counties, North Carolina, and after they join form Main Broad River, which, together with the Saluda, make the Congaree at Columbia, S. C. The streams I live on are now open to the ocean, as is evidenced by the run of shad at my place. For the last four weeks I have had all the shad and other fish, such as Southern black bass—known here as river trout—that I wanted. My mother, who is eighty years of age, says that when she was very young the river was plentifully supplied with shad and many other kinds of fish. I give these points to show that the rivers are open to salt water, and by referring to the maps you will see that we are nearer to the coast than by any other stream running out of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Ten miles above me is Hickory Mountain Gap, at the foot of Bald Mountain, where the shad have actually been taken in considerable numbers. I believe that it is now an acknowledged fact that shad and salmon must have highly aerated water to lay their eggs in or they will not hatch. Such water is to be found only in our numerous riffles and shoals, which the shad run to from instinct. Consequently the Cherokee Dam, which is about 30 miles below me on Broad River, and was built some forty years since, was the cause of the fish almost disappearing from the river below, as eggs deposited there would not hatch and the fish could not pass above it. Fortunately this dam has at last washed out, and we see the good effects of it in the increased quantity of fish from one end of the river to the other. If the run is kept open I am satisfied we will have one of the finest streams for fish on the Atlantic coast. I would like to have a million or two of shad put in here if possible. Landrum Station, on the Spartanburgh and Asheville Railroad, is about 12 miles from here, and I would have them brought over myself from there. The only trouble this season in protecting the fish has been with the dynamite cartridge. We have a gauger here for a small distillery a few miles below, who was seen throwing these cartridges in the river, which destroyed every fish, large and small, in 50 feet around; and when he was told he would be indicted, said he would like to see the State officer that could arrest him, and the trouble is that three-fourths of the people believe what he says.

GREEN RIVER, N. C., June 7, 1884.