

136.—PORPOISE PRODUCTS.**By GEORGE L. SPARKS.**

I forward to you to-day a box containing samples of porpoise products in the line of meats and sausage manufactured from the flesh of the porpoise. As far as I can learn, this is the first attempt ever made to utilize the product in this shape. I shall be able shortly to produce a superior article to what you will receive. This present stock was manufactured from flesh that had remained in salt for several weeks, owing to the difficulty in transporting, curing, smoking, &c., a new article. If I meet with any encouragement with the product commercially, I will erect the necessary buildings, machinery, and work the product up fresh on the ground. Our fishery is located at Hatteras, N. C., which we have secured by contract and purchase for a number of years. So far this season we have captured some 600 porpoises. If the weather had been favorable, with our appliances, we should have obtained about 2,000. This we expect will be the total for the season. I am considering the matter of sending some of the product to the New Orleans Exposition. We have sold some of the meat, but not as porpoise flesh, there being a certain amount of prejudice against eating it as such. However, I believe when properly brought out, that can be overcome. We are producing a very superior oil from the body and jaw; also an excellent article of leather, of our own tanning. The business being comparatively a new one to this part of the world, we experience considerable difficulty in making a market, especially with the meat product. I believe that in destroying the porpoise we are doing for all engaged in the fishing industry a great service. We have expended a large sum in learning the best way to capture and utilize this animal, and we believe we shall be successful. There was a porpoise fishing company at Cape May, N. J., which during its existence of some two years succeeded in capturing about 120 porpoises.

340 SOUTH FRONT STREET,

Philadelphia, Pa., February 19, 1885.

The following item from the Scientific American may be of interest in this connection:

Porpoise fishing for the oil alone has been carried on many years off the North Carolina coast. The process of rendering the oil is very simple, and the average amount obtained is from 6 to 8 gallons. The experiment made last summer by the Cape May company proved successful, \$3,740 being realized, it is said, from an outlay of \$1,000 in five weeks' fishing, and its facilities for taking porpoises will be greatly increased the coming season. The skin of the porpoise makes a very superior, soft, and pliable leather, and the estimated value of each individual for its oil and skin alone is placed at \$20. Last autumn it was discovered that the flesh made rather a savory dish, and it became so popular at the fashionable watering-places along the

coast that a Philadelphia firm recently made a proposition to take all that may be caught along the coast this season, with the view of working much of it into mince-meat. The Cape May company, it is said, will reject the offer, as it already has offers from prominent Philadelphia and New York hotels and restaurants, and it is believed that there will be a demand for the meat which cannot be met. The meat is red and juicy, and resembles in appearance beef, but is more solid, finer-grained, and very tender; much more like venison, which it resembles in flavor. They are taken in seines about 1,000 feet long and very wide, and when captured, if not already drowned, are killed by stabbing with knives. It would seem that the outlook for the success of a new and valuable industry being established along our coast is most excellent.

137.—ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ABOUT FATTENING OYSTERS.*

By JOHN A. RYDER.

(1) Oysters are not usually "fed" for market; they are sometimes taken from their original bed and carried to the "floats," where fresher water is allowed access to them. Absolutely fresh water would kill them. The fresher water is absorbed in quantity, and gives them an appearance of plumpness.

(2) In such a case they are piled up in mass on the float, but this will not matter; they may be scattered thinly over the float or on a bottom where somewhat fresher water reaches them.

(3) Oysters can be "water-swollen" in this way in twenty-four hours. It is a trick of dealers, resorted to to make their oysters more salable.

(4) The natural food of the oyster is small or very minute animals and plants belonging to widely different orders and classes, plants mainly, however, known as *diatoms*.

(5) There is no ready-made preparation put up for the purpose of feeding oysters. If there is it may be pronounced a humbug. I have heard of corn-meal being used, and some of it would doubtless be digested by the animals, but the way in which I have always heard of its being used is exceedingly wasteful, and the amount actually ingested by the animals as food during the short time they are fed is quite insignificant.

These matters have been somewhat fully discussed in papers by the writer of this, and published in the reports of the Commission, Census, and Geological Survey.

WASHINGTON, D. C., December 24, 1884.

* Writing from Biloxi, Miss., December 17, 1884, Mr. John E. Morrison made the following inquiries:

- (1) Are oysters placed in fresh, salt, or brackish water preparatory to being fed?
- (2) Are they scattered singly in the water or piled up promiscuously?
- (3) What length of time does it generally take to fatten them?
- (4) What is the best food for oysters?
- (5) Is there any preparation put up for feeding oysters, or is corn-meal the best for them?