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It affords me the greatest pleasure to see here to day this magnificent display of fish, oysters, game and agricultural products of every discription-another evidence of North Carolina's progress and industry. The two former products, if I may so term them, fish and oysters, have always been of singular interest to me. Not only their present condition, but their past history. Though not as old as the eternal hills, they are older than the human race itself, and I doubt not, but that they were among the very first foods with which the primitive man gratified his voracious appetite. Having been held even in those days in as great estimation, as at present; and doubtless destined so to be held, as long as man possesses a taste to be gratified; or till in the process of evolution, something better shall take their place, an exceedingly difficult feat, however to predict of evolution. And to those engaged in the pursuit, I shall say, that a calling more ancient and more honorable can not be found-ancient because they ~~are~~ probably of nearly equal age with habitable sea bottoms, and honorable because fisherman have the special sanction and commendation of the scriptures themselves. He would be a dullard indeed who should question the propriety of giving to the oyster a high place in the list of our resources, - natural resources I should have said, - for comparatively little has been done to develop this industry, until within the last few years, when its condition compelled the attention of those who had an eye to the future. *When* we come to think of the drain for the past half century upon this bounteous gift of nature, it must strike us as madness that the oyster has not entirely disappeared. But despite the bad management, the ignorance and extravagance

that have characterized many of those who have followed the pursuit of providing the world with this delicacy, a goodly stock of them yet remains, but to count upon a continuance of this state of affairs, without the exercise of prudence, energy and the bringing to bear upon the business all the light that modern science and experience have thrown upon the subject, would be the merest fallacy. This criticism I do not apply to the waters of North Carolina, as to the other parts of the Country, such as the Chesapeake Bay for instance, where the workers in the field, have many of them been of a type, ignorant and careless of the future. All the literature on this subject for many years has been devoted to the accounts and descriptions of the wonderfully prolific past of this region and its golden possibilities in years to come, provided; of course, that method and experience are brought to bear upon the cultivation of the oyster. While comparatively little has been said on the subject of North Carolina grounds, I have good reason to believe that no more favorable spot any where exists for the prosecution of this comparatively new industry, and this assertion is by *no* means the reckless speculation of an idle fancy. Our opportunities for oyster ^{cultivation} are simply unparalleled. In many other Countries, sea bottoms, or rather the bottoms of littoral waters have been put under cultivation, the same amount of which if applied to our own, would annually produce more oysters than have been taken along our whole shores for the past twenty five years. We have indeed a great future before us in this respect, but it is with this, as with every other industry in the world, it can be developed only by the exercise of good judgment, thrift and patience. But while nature has been liberal in the matter of the oyster, she

has been prodigal in the supply of every species and variety of fish which fairly swarm in the littoral waters of the State. Every where you have them in countless millions. The beautiful waters of the Albermarle, Currituck, and Pamlico sounds, and the rivers feeding them- the Chowan, the Roanoke, the Tar, and last but by no means the least your own Neuse, are destined to become, I think, great fishing grounds- sources we cannot but believe- of good profit and pride to the people of North Carolina. Indeed, in the development of this industry, which has already assumed enormous proportions, your City has by no means played an insignificant part. I am not as well informed touching New Berne's history in this respect, as I should be, but if what I have read be true, the people of the State, will not be unwilling to grant you that credit and honor so justly due to the promoters of every honorable and profitable industry. Prior to 1840 I am told there was not a drag net, or a professional fisherman in New Berne, and that Capt. Lewis was the first introducing a small net here, with great success, about the time above mentioned. Then follows the hand seines by Richard Felton 1846 and from that humble beginning have sprung your present stupendous proportions. As a fish market you take high rank, and if those caught in the vicinity of Beaufort by parties there resident, and having business connections in this City, be credited to New Berne, you have doubtless the most important market in the world. Indeed I know not of another place in the limits of North Carolina, where nature has been more bounteous. Not only does the sea furnish in abundance all its treasures, but the soil itself is no less beneficial, as witness the magnificent display of every thing

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that can be grown to advantage in garden or field. I have on more than one occasion, and beyond the confines of the State heard it said that the soil around New Berne would produce three or four crops of of some kind of truck annually, and that it was the garden spot of the country. But if the latter part of the assertion be not true, I see no reason to despair as to that point, for nature will surely continue to do for you in the future as much as she has done in the past, and that your citizens should fail in their responsibilities is scarcely to be believed since their ability to look after their own affairs, to improve every opportunity offered them, their thrift, energy and honesty of purpose, and above all their determination to persevere in the glorious principles of self government have been demonstrated in every page of her past history.