

ment that they had been treated most unjustly and unfairly by the F. O., that they did not intend to do anything wrong, that they had sent out their tugs and boats to the fishing grounds with the full expectation that licenses would be received in due course, that other fishermen had done the same, and that their boats and tugs had not been seized, although it was known to the F. O. at the time of this seizure that the other tugs and boats fishing at the same time and place had not received licenses; and further that they had been led into a trap by the action of the F. O., who had concealed from them the fact that their licenses were not likely to be granted, expressly in order to induce them to send out their tugs and boats in good faith in order that he might have an opportunity of seizing them. These representations having been made to the Department, the Nobles were met with the answer that numerous complaints had been made against them to the Department in former years, that it was stated and believed to be the fact that they had been convicted of violations of the Fisheries Act and Regulations, and in short that their conduct in other years had been such as to justify their being treated as outlaws, and that they could expect no leniency whatever, even if it was true that they had in this instance been harshly treated by the F. O., and that their offence was a merely technical one.

The Nobles strongly asserted that the statements made to the Department against them were for the most part gross slanders, that it was untrue that they had, as charged, persistently violated the law and had incited others to do the same, and that if any such charges had been made, upon a public investigation they could satisfactorily disprove or explain them.

So many and so gross were the charges which had been made against the Nobles in letters and reports to the Department, by the F. O., and perhaps by others instigated by him and by their rivals in the fishing business, that the Department felt justified in making public by a letter over the signature of James Hardee, Esq., Acting Deputy Minister of Marine and Fisheries, addressed to the "Owen Sound Sun;" a series of charges, stated in such strong language and in such general terms, that they could hardly have been justified had the Nobles been convicted a dozen times for various offences against the