

XIII.

THE VIEWS OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES AS TO THE PROPER EXECUTION OF THE ACT OF CONGRESS OF MARCH 3, 1887, OPPOSED TO THOSE OF THE CAPITALISTS WHO CONTROL OUR FISHING INDUSTRY AND REAP THE GREATEST ADVANTAGES FROM THEM.

The president of the American Fishery Union, in 1887, brought the subject of retaliation to the attention of the President of the United States, and insisted that it should be applied only to the exclusion of British-American fishing products from the markets of the United States. To that demand the President of the United States replied as follows :

EXECUTIVE MANSION,
Washington, D. C., April 7, 1887.

GENTLEMEN: I have received your letter lately addressed to me, and have given full consideration to the expression of the views and wishes therein contained in relation to the existing differences between the Government of Great Britain and the United States growing out of the refusal to award to our citizens engaged in fishing enterprises the privileges to which they are entitled either under treaty stipulations or the guaranties of international comity and neighborly concession. I sincerely trust the apprehension you express of unjust and unfriendly treatment of American fishermen lawfully found in Canadian waters will not be realized; but if such apprehension should prove to be well founded, I earnestly hope that no fault or inconsiderate action of any of our citizens will in the least weaken the just position of our Government, or deprive us of the universal sympathy and support to which we should be entitled.

The action of this administration since June, 1885, when the fishery articles of the treaty of 1871 were terminated under the notification which had two years before been given by our Government, has been fully disclosed by the correspondence between the representatives and the appropriate departments of the respective Governments, with which I am apprised by your letter you are entirely familiar. An examination of this correspondence has doubtless satisfied you that in no case have the rights or privileges of American fishermen been overlooked or neglected, but that, on the contrary, they have been sedulously insisted upon and cared for by every means within the control of the executive branch of the Government.

The act of Congress approved March 3, 1887, authorizing a course of retaliation, through executive action, in the event of a continuance on the part of the British-American authorities of unfriendly conduct and treaty violations affecting American fishermen, has devolved upon the President of the United States exceedingly grave and solemn responsibilities, comprehending highly important consequences to our national character and dignity, and involving extremely valuable commercial intercourse between the British possessions in North America and the people of the United States.