

ing, in lobster fishing stations, similar to the salmon fishing stations on other Canadian shores, and without reference to shore farm frontages?

I think the general feeling is in favor of paying an annual license fee for the sole occupation of a given distance of shore, which would bring lobster fishing under Sec. 13, Sub-sec. 1, of the Fishery Act of 1868, and would enable packers to claim the assistance of the fishery officers to prevent encroachment on the ground licensed. Assuming the power of the General Government to issue license there could be no difficulty in regard to new factories, but the question arises in how far existing factories built on purchased sites can be compelled to take out a license for protection of their station when they have not been hitherto protected from competition of site, but have been crowded into limits too small for their business.

A practical solution of the important question of lobster fishing licenses—as regards this Province only—would be to lay off the chart of the coast in “stations,” duly assigned with reference both to existing and future factories, and the taking out of a license to be optional with existing factories, according to the circumstances of each individual case. And such solution I beg to offer to your honor's consideration.

OYSTERS.

Illegal oyster fishing causes considerable trouble. Any person (excepting the fishery officers) can procure oysters in Charlottetown and some other places at any time throughout the close season. The general public appear incapable of believing that during close time shell fish are unfit for food. Wherever there is demand there will be supply, and as the restaurants are besought for oysters even during the hot days in summer, they manage to minister to the depraved taste of their customers. I was in hopes that the appointment of a special Warden for Charlottetown would prevent supplies being smuggled to the receivers in town, but as it somehow has not answered the purpose other arrangements will be required for next year.

Although it is to be hoped, even for hygienic reasons, that the vicious propensity of eating unclean shell fish may be educated out, there is a more destructive agency to the oyster fishery in “mussel mudding,” or the taking of oyster shells for lime. As matters at present stand the almost complete extinction of oysters in Prince Edward Island is only a question of time, and, unless circumstances altogether hostile can be reconciled, that time will be a short one. At present it is a tussle between the farmer and fishmonger, and the weaker will go to the wall. Let me take some pains to make this clearly understood by the Department.

The soil of almost the whole Province of Prince Edward Island is a light loam from disintegrated new red sandstone, so deficient in lime as not to effervesce with acids. There is no limestone to speak of. Crude stone for the few lime kilns at present burning has to be imported from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Anticosti. Agricultural lime is, however, an absolute necessity. Hence the immense value to the farmer of what is known as “mussel mud,” that is, the shells and marine deposits of old oyster beds, which supply a large percentage of the purest lime, the remainder being animal matter and marine alluvium, themselves valuable fertilizers. It is not saying too much to assert that the product of grass and grain has been increased one-third by the use of this mud during the few years since it began to be generally made use of. Twenty, not exceeding thirty, sleigh loads is the quantity used per acre. Last year the bulk extracted from the oyster beds could not have been less than 200,000 loads, at a rough calculation, and as it is now conveyed inland by railway the demand is vastly increasing. During the season of winter the cumbersome digging machines, worked by horse-power and each attended by two or three men, cover the oyster creeks like a scattered encampment.

The island coast is fringed by innumerable creeks—our so-called river mouths—over beds of sand, paved with patches of broken sandstone or with an alluvial mud, not soft enough to be called ooze. Many miniature bays present the like conditions. From time immemorial oysters have propagated on these floors. Like the coral worm the bivalves are continually building up reefs. The tides covering these