

## THE LOBSTER INDUSTRY.

The lobster fisheries on the Atlantic coast are, according to late advices from the Maritime Provinces, to be followed with unusual energy this spring. The ice has moved away from the shore in many districts and the fishermen are busy at work. New canning factories have been built since the last season, and it is expected that there will be a material increase in the output of canned lobsters this year as compared with 1896. The activity is due, in part, to the high values of canned goods as a result of the short pack last year. The Toronto market is practically bare of stock, with the exception of a limited quantity of half pound tins, quoted at \$1.50 per dozen. The number of men available for the fishing industry in the Maritime Provinces this year is somewhat larger than usual, as a result of the depression in agriculture. A recent letter from Yarmouth, N.S., says: "The lobster business in the vicinity of Yarmouth, N.S., is now rushing, and the catches are quite large, with the result that the fishermen are now receiving \$13 per crate, a cut of \$5 per crate being made in the last couple of weeks. About 40 schooners and 100 small boats may be seen working their traps off Cape Forchu. Some of the lobsters captured are very small, and a number of canning factories in the vicinity of Yarmouth have started operations." With the unusual activity reported in the industry, and the increased number of men and appliances engaged in the fisheries, the Government officers should exercise special care to secure the observance of department regulations.

## BRITISH COLUMBIA CANNED SALMON.

Two weeks ago we printed the substance of a letter written by C. Woods to the London, Eng., *Globe*, charging the British Columbia salmon canners with practices in the preparation of fish for the market which were more than likely to result in poisoning to consumers. Mr. Walter Morris has written to the *Globe*, and in a very able letter defends the interests of the canners. It is shown that Mr. Wood, the writer of the letter to the *Globe*, had some business difficulties with a canning firm in British Columbia, and to vent his ill-will against a single factory made a charge which involved the interests of the whole industry. One of the charges made by Mr. Woods was that the fish as brought in by the boats were allowed to accumulate until something like three thousand are on hand before cleaning and cooking. "A glance at our retort counts," writes Mr. Morris, whose factory appears to be the one specially mentioned by Mr. Woods, "is quite sufficient to disprove this, as we canned daily throughout the season with two exceptions only, and these at the early part of the season, when the weather was cool and the fish quite fresh. The absurdity of alluding to two or three thousand fish awaiting the process is seen when this number is easily got through in half a day, and our records show that canning went on for as low as 15 cases, with a capacity for 1,400 cases per day." The other charges made by the *Globe's* correspondent are also denied in their entirety by Mr. Morris. But something more than newspaper denials are necessary to allay the effect of the editorials published by the *Globe* and other British newspapers commenting on the several deaths from poisoning in the United Kingdom ascribed to the consumption of canned goods. The salmon factories of British Columbia should be subject to rigid Government inspection, and all the goods exported should bear the stamp of Government approval.

## THE CIGARETTE CONTRACT CASE.

Trade combinations assume many different forms; but they may perhaps, be divided into two main classes. Independent producers may unite to obtain certain ends of common interest, such as the regulation of prices, or limitation of the output of goods; or the producers may sink all their interests in a common undertaking. Combinations of the second class are not included under article 520 of the Criminal Code, according to a recent decision of Judge Dugas, in the Montreal Police Court. The case under consideration was that of the *Queen v. The American Tobacco Company of Canada, Ltd.*, and involved the legality of the "contract" system of trading. Under this method of business, the jobbers become practically the agents of the manufacturers, handling their goods to the exclusion of all others. The following provisions of the contract submitted by the American Tobacco Company to the jobbers, will illustrate the method by which this is accomplished:

Seventh—"If you do not discriminate against our cigarettes in favor of those of other manufacture, and if you do not sell or dispose of any of our cigarettes at less than the list price, and if, in all respects, you comply with the terms of this agreement, we will pay you a commission of two (2) per cent. on the amount realized by you from the sale of the cigarettes which we may consign to you."

Eighth—"If, however, you handle cigarettes of our manufacture exclusively, and do not sell or distribute, or in any way aid in the sale

or distribution of cigarettes of other manufacture, and if you, in all respects, fully comply with the terms and conditions of this agreement, we will pay you an additional commission of six (6) per cent on the amount realized by you from the sale of cigarettes which we may consign to you."

Judge Dugas decided that the contract did not come within the scope of agreements prohibited in section 520 of the criminal code. The decision was based upon two grounds. The compiler of the code has used the expression combining "unlawfully," and Judge Dugas held this to mean contracts unlawful at common law before the enactment of the code. This contract was considered not unlawful under the common law. The company was accused of conspiracy, but the Judge held that the company was simply "disposing of their own goods in the way that they think fit, which is a right which pertains to any citizen or legal person existing under our laws," in effect deciding that combinations of the second class into which we have divided them are not illegal. It is not probable that this decision will be accepted as a final interpretation of the provisions of the code, and we may expect the higher courts to express their views upon the meaning of the section.

## CALIFORNIAN DRIED FRUITS.

During the Easter trade Californian dried fruits have been in active request. The demand for these goods has naturally resulted in a quiet trade in canned fruits and other dried fruits, for which they are a substitute. The *California Grocer*, April 9th, says: "Currants have again advanced, owing to the shortness of stocks in first hands, and to the prospect of a diminished yield, which is due as much or more to the discouragement caused to the growers by unremunerative prices, as to the present warlike excitement in Greece. Since our last issue there has been some wholesale business here. In California products there has been a little movement, chiefly in the lower grades of peaches, which are now closely cleaned up: the remainder of this fruit in first hands is now very small and consists chiefly of the better qualities. Stocks of apricots are now also only nominal. Prunes are very dull, and the business passing is still in the outside growths at low prices. The quotation on Santa Clara 40-50 is reduced  $\frac{1}{4}$  cent. Raisins are slow, and the prices of 3 and 4 crown loose muscatels are clipped. All the talk about damage to the growing crops is, so far, downright nonsense.

## FOR GROCERS AND PROVISION DEALERS.

The available stock of currants in Greece is reported to be not over 5,000 tons, and the market there is strong with an advancing tendency.

Advices from Malaga are to the effect that stocks of Valencia shelled almonds are virtually exhausted, and there have been no further offerings from that source.

Stocks of Grenoble walnuts in the primary market are reported to be reduced to small proportions, and for what remains there higher prices are asked.

Toronto wholesale grocery circles are very quiet. Orders are limited in number and confined to small amounts. It is quite probable that the appearance of the tariff bill in the House of Commons next week may operate as a trade stimulant.

Zucca & Co. say of currants: "The market is firmer and if a duty of 2c. per pound becomes law not many currants will be imported hereafter to this country. Greece is too busy just now in preparing to fight her old enemy, the Turk, with arms, and the whole of Europe with diplomacy, to think of so small an affair as currants."

Advices from abroad as to rice note generally quiet conditions in English and Continental markets; prices are firm, as the diversion of Burmah rice from ordinary channels of trade to Bengal continues at the rate of about 10,000 tons weekly. Until this call shall diminish there is no hope for any modification in prices, and with any enlargement there would be a surprising and upward twist of prices. New Orleans telegraphs Louisiana crop movements to date. Receipts, rough, inclusive of amount carried over, 565,500 sacks; last year, 1,160,500 sacks. Sales, cleaned (estimated), 103,750 bbls.; last year, 242,500 bbls.

The Retail Grocers' Association of Toronto held their regular monthly meeting on Monday evening in St. George's Hall, with Mr. J. C. Bond, the president, in the chair, and a fair attendance of members. A deputation from the Retail Merchants' Association was present to solicit the aid of the society in suppressing the practice of giving coupons with cash purchases. The association decided to assist the Retail Merchants' Association at Ottawa in bringing to a successful issue the by-law for attaching the salaries of the civil servants. They also decided to put forth every effort to have a