

APPENDIX No. 12.

REPORT OF W. H. ROGERS, Esq., FISHERY OFFICER FOR NOVA SCOTIA,
ON THE YIELD AND VALUE OF FISHERIES, DURING THE SEASON
OF 1875.

AMHERST, 31st December, 1875.

To the Hon. A. J. SMITH,
Minister of Marine and Fisheries,
Ottawa.

SIR,—I have the honour to submit herewith the statistics of the condition and production of the fisheries in Nova Scotia for the year 1874, and beg leave to report as follows:—

The returns, I am sorry to say, show a considerable falling off from last year's, amounting in the aggregate to over one million dollars, and this decrease chiefly falls upon the following fisheries: mackerel, herring, salmon, cod and lobsters.

The short catch of salmon may be accounted for by the change in the law, which affected this Province by prohibiting the taking of these fish after the 15th of August, whereas formerly they could be taken in salt water as late as the 20th of October; thus curtailing the legal season by two months. Also, by an error on the part of one of the overseers in Inverness County in last year's returns to me, having put in the column of barrels the number of pounds taken; making the statistics show 1,900 barrels of salmon, instead of pounds, and having no means of knowing this fact at the time of making out my returns, I transcribed the amount as I found it.

Mackerel, herring and cod fluctuate greatly in their yield almost every year, and are subject to influences in their movements beyond the knowledge of the most experienced and intelligent fishermen of the country.

With reference to herring, however, there is a very general impression among fishermen that the bait used by lobster catchers in their traps so contaminate the water that herring will not enter the bays where these traps are set.

Overseers Anderson and Ryer refer to this fact in their reports, and in this connection I would most respectfully call your attention to Overseer Tory's views on the lobster fishery. It will also be seen that several overseers are of opinion that unless some further check is put upon the catch of these fish, the supply will soon be exhausted. I have no hesitation in endorsing these views; these fish being, moreover, unwholesome food during the season they shed their shells. Persons living in the vicinity of places where lobsters are caught, never think of eating them during that season, as they are unpalatable and unwholesome. I state this from my own personal observation, having lived thirty years in a locality where lobsters were abundant. If this be true, why should Government allow of fish to be caught, when out of season, to be sent all over the world to be eaten in an unfit condition? The adoption of a close season and a more restrictive policy with regard to these fish will not have the effect of putting an improved article on the market, but will preserve from destruction a very important branch of industry and commerce. The present almost unrestricted mode of conducting this business not only deteriorates the quality, but exhausts the supply and overstocks the market. The sooner lobster packers make up their minds to keep one or two months' close-time in midsummer, the better for them. I am quite sure it will have to come to that, or we may make up our minds to lose this fishery entirely.