

# FISH:--Some Thoughts on Canadian Fisheries and the Canadian Public

An Address to the Canadian Club of Regina, Saskatchewan, by Prof. Edward E. Prince.

**Chairman's Speech**  
Mr. William Trant, Barrister and City Magistrate, President of the Club, rose and said:—"Gentlemen, I have not before had the pleasure, which I now have, of introducing, as the speaker and guest of honour at our club luncheon, a native of the same town in which I was born, and one educated at the same school, though a year or two later, I think, than myself. Professor Prince, who is well known to all of us as the chief fishery official at Ottawa, had a brother at the same school about the same time, so that a jocular boast was current that we had 'two princes' attending the school. The brother to whom I refer, is present with us as a guest to-day at our luncheon. Professor Prince has for a good many years devoted himself to fish and fishery work, and for nearly twenty years has been Commissioner of Fisheries for Canada. In that capacity, and as a fishery expert, he has a world-wide reputation, and I am sure that he will have something important and of great interest to say to us to-day in his address on 'Fish.' Prof. Prince may have some fish stories to tell us. I have now the pleasure of introducing Professor Prince, of Ottawa, Chairman of the Alberta and Saskatchewan Fishery Commission."

the Canadian Club of Regina, I cannot pretend to emulate the distinguished orators, members of the British Parliament, in the interest and eloquence of the addresses with which they recently favoured this Club; but, if Mr. T. P. O'Connor aired Ireland's grievances, which I understand he did, I too have a grievance to ventilate, and if Mr. Henry Vivian advocated open-air recreation and increased amenities for the people in our crowded cities, I shall have something to say on behalf of healthful recreation for our citizens, as I propose to preach to you to-day the gospel according to Isaac Walton. (Applause).

**Introductory Remarks**  
My subject is "Fish," a somewhat vague and ill-defined theme, but by no means so difficult and unpromising as the subject suggested to the late Lord Idlesleigh (better known perhaps as Sir Stafford Northcote, England's Chancellor of the Exchequer) who was invited to speak to a Devonshire audience, and was told that he might address them on "anything." He decided to speak to them on "Nothing," and gave a profound and delightful discourse on the scientific, mathematical and philosophical meaning of the term "Nothing."

**A Grievance—Public Opinion Lacking**  
And now I shall proceed, at once, to tell you of my grievance. It is this. We Canadians, as a people, show a singular lack of

interest in the fish and fisheries of our country. We have anglers and fish enthusiasts, and a large body of fishermen, it is true, but I speak of the people generally, when I say that as head of the great Federal Fisheries Service of Canada, under the Minister of Marine and Fisheries, I have constantly felt how the Department's work has been hampered, and discouragement has come from the lack of support and interest on the part of the public. One reads of exciting Parliamentary debates in Ottawa, on tariffs, navies, and endless other topics, but whole sessions often pass without mention of fish and fisheries, or any discussion on so vast and so important a subject. Perhaps, like the late James Anthony Froude, in whose mind fish excited no interest, because these slimy, scaly, cold-blooded creatures were repulsive to him, our legislators find the finny tribe unattractive, in contrast to Froude's genial friend, John Bright, who was never so happy as when he was casting a fly on some Scottish salmon river.

**No Fish Stories**  
I feel bound to confess that, on this occasion, I have no fish stories to tell you, and, if I had, I have brought with me no credentials of veracity so that you might be compelled to believe them. I am unlike that aged wanderer or pilgrim, told of in mediaeval times, who asserted that he had lived for

several centuries owing to the use of an ointment, an "elixir vitae," which he smeared on his body. To prove his claim, he showed a tattered document or certificate from a Pope who died 300 years before, and thus established the truth of his story. I admit that the words of my eminent colleague on the International Fisheries Commission, President David Starr-Jordan, are well founded when he tells us that "as fish lie on the bottom of the sea, and trout lie in the streams, there can be no just complaint if the men who fish for them also lie."

**Vast Extent and Value of Our Fisheries**  
Gentlemen, I need hardly remind you that our fish are amongst the finest, and our fisheries the most varied in the world. They extend over an enormous area. They are not the fisheries of a single country like the fisheries of Germany, or Austria, or Norway, they are the fisheries of a continent, well-nigh as vast as Europe. Apart from the wide-spreading waters of two oceans, the Atlantic on the east, the Pacific on the west, the inland lakes and rivers which we possess, include more than half the fresh water of the globe. All these waters abound in fish.

Compared with the other great national industries of our Dominion they rank fifth. First stands agriculture, of an annual value of \$208,000,000; next mining, valued at about \$86,000,000 per annum; lumber recorded at \$80,000,000 to \$100,000,000; live stock, \$75,000,000; while the fisheries yield an annual return of from \$30,000,000 to \$35,000,000. These last figures are larger than those usually given in official reports in the Blue Books \$25,000,000 to 27,000,000) but official statistics have never given adequate credit to the fisheries of the more remote areas and the amounts used by Indians, Eskimos, Hudson Bay Posts, &c.

Further, while the Fisheries have an annual value less than half that of mining, they employ twice as many men; and, though lumbering yields every year three times the amount in dollars of the fisheries, yet the fisheries engage three times as many men. It must not be forgotten that other industries are essential to the fishing industry, such as sail making, net manufacture, boat building, the tin-ware industry, rope-making, and other trades, all of which depend more or less on the fisherman's calling.

**Value of Fishing Boats, Gear, &c.**  
Think for a moment of the great fleet required; at least 12,000 Canadian vessels being employed in fishing, having a value of \$2,620,000; also 46,000 small boats, valued at \$1,200,000; and nets, lines, lobster traps, &c., valued at \$3,000,000. Remember also that the body of men, no less than \$84,000 in number, taking part in the fisheries, would form the finest material for the Canadian Navy which has now started on its glorious career, and of which so much is at present being said. Britain, France and Germany, have realized how valuable the fishermen are, as being the best material from which to recruit their respective navies.

**Fisheries of England, &c.**  
While I claim that the fisheries of Canada take first rank owing to the variety of fish in our waters, and the fact that they are of the best species for food and for sport, I do not claim that the actu-

al money value per annum exceeds that of such countries as Britain, whose fisheries yield no less than \$45,000,000 yearly; or the United States fisheries, with a value of \$40,000,000 yearly; but even from a financial standpoint, our fisheries are a very great industry. For example, the Pacific salmon industry embraces no less than eight canneries, valued at over \$3,000,000, while the lobster industry is carried on in 750 lobster canneries on the Atlantic shores, having a value of \$450,000, and the freezing, smoking, and other fish establishments in the Dominion, are valued at not less than \$180,000 or \$200,000.

Of the annual yield, the Atlantic fisheries contribute 64%; the British Columbia fisheries 26%; and the Great Lakes 8%. But the extensive waters of the two Provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta have yet to be developed in a commercial fishery sense. These Western waters, it is true have been exploited, and, in some cases already over-fished; but the area is so vast, and there are so many lakes in a practically virgin state that the future will witness the growth of a great industry in these territories.

**Fishery Statistics**  
Imposing as are the figures I quote you, gentlemen,—and they are approximately true to the facts, for, as the late Professor Brown Goode declared in 1884, at the London Fisheries Congress, "the Department of Marine and Fisheries in Ottawa is one of the best administrative organizations in the world, and their methods of gathering and publishing statistics are admirable, there is nothing in the United States like it,"—yet, it must be admitted Canadian statistics are inadequate. I have given one reason already, namely the difficulty of ascertaining the amount of fish caught and consumed in remote areas by native tribes and by hunters and prospectors; but I cannot forbear pointing out that takes of fish secured off Canadian shores annually go to swell the fishery returns of some of the border States to the south of us. Such States as Maine and Massachusetts annually report catches of cod, of which a large proportion is really from the Labrador banks and the grounds off the Gulf of St. Lawrence, while the premier fishing state on the Pacific Coast (Washington State) owes 95% of its vast catches of fish each year to Canada, to the salmon bred in the Fraser River, and to the halibut secured in incredible quantities in Straits are almost entirely enclosed by Canadian territory, namely, by Queen Charlotte Islands, Vancouver Island and the mainland of the Province. These Straits, it has been asserted, are really high seas, but no one looking at a map of the North American continent, could for one moment consider such a claim as reasonable.

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