

No. II.—A MARINE SCIENTIFIC STATION FOR CANADA.

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At the request of the Minister of Marine and Fisheries the following report has been prepared embodying certain suggestions touching the foundation of a Marine Laboratory for the Dominion.

There is a growing feeling prevailing that our country, which in so many respects has taken a leading place among the nations in regard to fishery matters, especially in the administration of judicious fishery laws and regulations, and the accomplishment on an extensive scale of practical fishery objects such as artificial fish culture, should take a position of equality with other countries in the furtherance of marine and fresh water biological research. Proposals, indeed, have from time to time been made in this direction, and professors in our universities, as well as practical fishery authorities, have given strong expression to views in favor of a biological station for Canada, on the lines of such institutions in other countries. A period has now been reached, it may be justly claimed, when such a suggested scheme should assume practical shape.

Possessed, as the Dominion is, of perhaps the richest and most varied fisheries in the world, the exemplar to other countries in her elaborate system of fish propagation for the replenishment of the great lakes and rivers, and a pioneer in the hatching of that valuable crustacean, the lobster, it is not surprising that the necessity is now perceived for an institution devoted to the accurate investigation of fishery problems, the elucidation and final settlement of perplexing questions which have baffled practical men, the collection of exact observations on the food, habits, and life-history of fishes, and the accumulation in this way of useful scientific knowledge in order to promote the prosperity of our coast and inland fisheries.

There are few civilized countries which have not already established such institutions. That their value is appreciated is clear from the policy of Germany, which, notwithstanding her limited coast line, has several marine laboratories, and no sooner became possessed of Heligoland, so long a British possession, than a marine station was founded there by the German Government and equipped with all the appliances for aiding the fisheries of that empire.

Directly or indirectly under the auspices of the British Government, about half a dozen marine stations carry on valuable work on different parts of the English and Scotch coasts, at Plymouth, St. Andrews, Dunbar, Grimsby, Millport, and other places, while the splendidly equipped laboratories of the United States, France, Italy, Holland, New Zealand, Australia, and other lands are famous. These have made valuable contributions to our knowledge of fish and fisheries in various parts of the world. Why should the Dominion be unable to do her part in this great work? Is it because Canada offers less field, or has fewer difficult problems to solve in connection with her fisheries? On the contrary, it is no exaggeration to say that the work done in other countries could be far surpassed by Canada, and that our waters offer unparalleled opportunities for scientific research, with the certainty of abundant and valuable results. Prolific as our fisheries are, the infinitely varied character of our maritime resources has yet to be fully understood and developed, while legislation in regard to the fisheries would be no longer hampered by difficulties and drawbacks, were a body of scientifically ascertained knowledge available.

Sir William Dawson, Mr. J. F. Whitenaves, and their colleagues, by their investigations in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and Professor Ganong and others by researches in New Brunswick waters, have shown what a promising field for investigation exists. But the fact that year after year professors and bands of students from the United States resort to Canadian shores to carry on marine studies, preferring our prolific waters to their own, clearly proves, if proof were needed, that a Marine Station in Canada would be able to accomplish great results.