

## PRESERVATION OF LOBSTERS.

An alarming decrease in the lobster fishery is reported by the fishery officers. It is ascribed to over-production and wasteful capture of spawners and undersized lobsters. This is exactly the result apprehended in my report of 1873. The regulation adopted by the Governor General in Council on the 7th of July in that year, was fitted to preserve this valuable fishery from the destruction which had attended abusive practices on the coasts of the neighbouring States. But, as usual, the improvident greed of persons engaged in the business of catching and canning lobsters occasioned remonstrances against such wise restrictions. The parties who had embarked capital in manufacturing establishments, and the fishermen and others who profited by this extensive business, united in urging their own views and interests, and finally persuaded the Government to relax the rule and adopt another modified regulation, dated 23rd April 1874, which has proved of no practical benefit. In referring to the attempts then being made by interested persons to modify the former prohibitions, it was stated by the undersigned that the sudden and large increase of catch in 1873 was suggestive of over-production, and indicated the urgent necessity for economising and perpetuating the natural supply. The following extracts from the same report will show how clearly the injury was foreseen, and how anxiously we sought to avert it :—

“ It seems that excessive fishing has exhausted the lobster fishery along the north-eastern coast of the United States; and that the enterprise which was embarked in the same has now been transferred to Canada. Such being the case, if the same indiscriminate fishing should be practised on our coasts, similar results might occur. Doubtless, for a short time all persons interested would prosper, and the country may appear to benefit by the rapid and extensive development of this resource; but a period of reaction must necessarily ensue, commencing sooner or later in an enfeebled or exhausted condition of the fishery. If we would perpetuate such a valuable possession, it appears wiser to economise it in time than to be obliged later on to make extreme and costly endeavors to arrest its decline, or to restore it from complete exhaustion. There is nothing easier than to exhaust a shell-fish fishery, and nothing harder than to revive it. The oyster fishery of the country should serve us as a warning example. It may be regarded as nearly ruined by incessant working, whilst proper use of it might have preserved it to us at the least as a failing industry which special efforts could reclaim. The need of some timely precaution to preserve the lobster fishery seems to have induced the late Government to adopt a regulation on the subject in July last. This regulation prohibits the catching of immature lobsters and females in spawn, or any of less weight than one and a half pounds. Remonstrances against these prohibitions have been made from various quarters. The chief objections emanate from proprietors of the canning establishments, who find their supply of raw material somewhat curtailed. Minor exceptions are taken on behalf of the lobster catchers on the ground that the liberation of undersized specimens entails great loss and inconvenience, and in some localities the stock consisting of small sized lobsters, the limitation is entirely prohibitory. An enquiry into the whole matter was made during the past season, and has resulted in producing information of a valuable character which will be found in the Appendices to this Report.

“ It appears quite clear that some restrictions are indispensable. It is equally evident that whatever form such restrictions assume, they must occasion more of