

too rapid destruction of fish by judicious regulations, which, whilst protecting the fish, will not too seriously interfere with the fishing industries of the country.

First.—“The Indians, and the interests of the Department of the Interior.”

Voluminous evidence is given in the correspondence showing quite conclusively that the Indians on some of the reserves around Lake Winnipeg are suffering from the want of their former supplies of whitefish, which in past years were obtained readily and in great abundance; and notable instances are related where waters which at one time were teeming with these fish have now become very scarce, and fears are entertained that the usual supplies of fish-food for the Indians will soon be at an end, and that this has been brought about by over-fishing at the mouths of rivers by fish traders, who are permitted to carry on this excessive fishing regardless of consequences. It is also represented that unless this reckless system of fishing be discontinued these Indians, who are the wards of the government, will have to be supported by other means from the public funds of the country.

These are no doubt pressing facts, and must be so considered from an uninterested and practical comprehension of the state of affairs as they now exist. It is therefore expedient that the government should meet this subject in the spirit of reciprocity; as between the requirements of the Indian, the settler and the fish trader each have their rights and are entitled to full consideration as inhabitants of the country.

Second.—The statements made by prominent individuals and leading inhabitants of Manitoba are, that over-fishing of the whitefish in Lake Winnipeg is being experienced, and is steadily increasing, and that it should be stayed, in the interests both of the present and incoming inhabitants of Manitoba and the Northwest, and that the whitefish industry should be studiously husbanded. This advocacy for the preservation of the fishing wealth in Lake Winnipeg by the leading inhabitants of Manitoba should be sustained by the Department of Fisheries, in order to prevent a repetition of said experiences which are now felt in many of the waters in the eastern provinces, where over-fishing has brought depletion to such an extent as to be almost wholly beyond recovery.

Formerly this industry was pursued in the lower or southern parts of the lake; but the catch becoming much lessened there the fish traders have established themselves about midway up the lake, and at Selkirk island, at the head of the lake. The principal points for their operations at present are at Beren's island, Reindeer island, and the mouth of the Little Saskatchewan river, about midway of the lake, and at Selkirk island, near the mouth of the Big Saskatchewan, at the north end. Other places may be only temporarily fished; but the above named localities form the present headquarters of the fishing companies.

At Beren's island a good natural harbour is formed on the southern side. Here the two principal firms have each extensive ice-houses and freezing-houses, also landing piers for

their steam-tugs and barges; similar works, but less extensive are at Reindeer island and at Selkirk island. But the most extensive buildings and works are just at the mouth of the Little Saskatchewan river, where two companies each have large ice-houses, freezers and piers on either side of the mouth of this river, which is only about 100 yards wide.

The present mode of fishing by the companies is with gill-nets, which are fished at certain distances off the shores of these islands, varying from one to six and ten miles, according to the 'running' of the whitefish, as it is termed.

If severe storms prevail, which is very often the case in the open lakes, these nets cannot in many cases be lifted until the winds subside, which may not be for several days, in which case the fish in the meantime die, partial decomposition sets in, and they become unfit for use, and the whole catch, sometimes amounting to many thousands, are thrown away. Great destruction is caused in this way, and a question has arisen whether it would not be better to do away with the gill net and substitute the pound or trap net under certain regulations, as the pound net would not only save the fish which are lost by the gill nets, but would also raise the standard of the whitefish generally in the markets of the country; whereas it is now somewhat lowered by the many fish which are offered for sale that are unwholesome for food, by reason of the hemished fish whose injuries and defects are hidden by the freezing process. The pound net would no doubt be very acceptable to the fishing companies generally, not only to obviate the difficulties above mentioned, but on account of being less expensive in their general working.

The quantity of gill nets set in Lake Winnipeg in 1889 covered about 60 miles in length. These gill nets, though apparently small, and averaging but 6 feet in depth, are nevertheless from their many miles in length where set, very deadly engines, and capable of causing great havoc in circumscribed limits, such as small bays and rivers. As an evidence of this it may be stated here that in Lake Winnipeg, where only three fishing companies are carrying on the fishing trade, the quantity of whitefish reported to be shipped by one firm alone in 1889 amounted to 9,000 boxes of 130 pounds each, making 1,170,000 pounds, the other two companies making up a similar amount, thus showing that this small number of traders are capable, with the present improved methods of fishing, of capturing upwards of two and a quarter millions of pounds of whitefish in Lake Winnipeg during one short season alone, the greater portion of which passed directly out of the province, causing the home consumption of Manitoba and other parts of the country to be only sparsely supplied, and at high prices.

This taking of upwards of two and a quarter millions of pounds of whitefish by these fishing companies in Lake Winnipeg, more particularly that portion of the catch taken at the mouth of the Little Saskatchewan river, must, in the common sense reasoning of things, go to show, that originally intended balance of nature regarding these fish is being largely interfered with, and to such an extent