

What Lord Salisbury did actually say was that "the small catch and low prices obtained for the skins last year brought many of the owners of the sealing-vessels to the verge of bankruptcy."

It is perhaps unnecessary to dwell further on this part of Mr. Sherman's despatch, as it has been answered by anticipation in Lord Salisbury's despatch of the 7th May, to which no reply has been received, but in view of the fact that Mr. Sherman speaks throughout as if pelagic sealing were the sole cause of the alleged depletion of the herd, it may be well to again call attention to the conclusion there drawn from Dr. Jordan's estimates of the herd at different periods, viz., that the decline of the herd was much more extensive before pelagic sealing became general than it has been since.

Mr. Chamberlain cannot pass without notice the attack upon Her Majesty's Government for declining to consider an immediate revision of the Fishery Regulations established by the Arbitration Tribunal at Paris in 1893, as this attack forms so considerable a portion of the despatch, that silence might be construed by the United States' Government as an admission that Mr. Sherman's observations cannot be answered.

The expressed object of the arbitration was "the preservation of the fur-seals," and the Regulations adopted were framed with a view to "the proper protection and preservation of the fur-seal . . . resorting to Behring Sea."

From a perusal of this despatch of the 10th May it might be inferred that the "proper protection and preservation of the fur-seal" is identical with the suppression of pelagic sealing, and this view is consistent with the attitude maintained by the United States' Government from the outset.

In support of their views the United States' Government have departed from the noblest traditions of their country which had earned universal honour by their efforts to vindicate the freedom of the high seas.

The nation which is now so zealous for prohibiting the killing of seals on the high seas was, in 1832, with equal zeal asserting a claim of right for its citizens not only to kill seals on the high seas, but to land and slaughter them on the shores of a friendly nation. The Power which now reproaches Her Majesty's Government with "unneighbourly" conduct because they decline to abolish an industry the lawfulness of which has never been questioned except by the United States, and has, only four years since, been vindicated by the highest international Tribunal, did not shrink in 1832, when the United States' sealing-vessel "Harriet" had been seized for violating the territory of the Republic of Buenos Ayres in the pursuit of fur-seals, from landing an armed party at Soledad and carrying off the crew and cargo of the vessel, and from declaring that the seal fishery on those coasts was in future to be free to all Americans, and that the capture of any vessel of the United States would be regarded as an act of piracy.

The shores of the Pribiloff Islands are to-day just as much uninhabited as were the shores of the Falkland Islands and Tierra del Fuego fifty years ago, but no British subject has ever claimed the right to land and kill seals there as the United States' citizens did on the South Atlantic under the protection of the guns of a United States' man-of-war.

British subjects, and Her Majesty's Government for them, have only claimed the right of every subject of a free State to exercise their undoubted right of fishery on the high seas; yet, while exercising that right, British subjects have been seized, fined, and imprisoned, in the face of the protests of Her Majesty's Government. And now, after Her Majesty's Government, in their desire for an amicable arrangement with the United States, had agreed to submit to arbitration their claim to exercise a right never before disputed, and to leave to the Tribunal to determine when that right had been vindicated, under what restrictions it should, in the interests of both countries, continue to be exercised, and after they have ever since scrupulously adhered to those restrictions, they find themselves, notwithstanding these concessions and sacrifices, accused of unneighbourly conduct.

When the Award was made it was welcomed in the United States because it was believed that the restrictions were sufficient to render pelagic sealing unprofitable, and that the interests of the lessees of the Pribiloff Islands would not under the new condition of affairs be materially or injuriously affected.

When it was discovered from the results of the first year's fishery that the Regulations, severely as they pressed on the British industry, were not sufficient to destroy it, the United States' Government began to press Her Majesty's Government to agree to revise the Regulations. The same arguments as had just before been urged in vain upon the Tribunal were repeated. Pelagic sealing it was declared was suicidal, and the extermination of the fur-seal was imminent. Her Majesty's Government refused to agree to set aside an Award arrived at after the most careful deliberation by the Tribunal,