

*Lobster Fishery.*

The LOBSTER FISHERY demands some special remarks. For years past the true and earnest advocates of the fishery interests of the country have been apprehensive that the taking of such immense numbers of lobsters, great and small, in season and out of season, as were required to supply the great demand of the numerous canning establishments dotting our shores, must soon lead to the utter extermination of the lobster upon those shores. Already, indeed some time since, facts have shown that this apprehension was well founded. We find that over four million cans of lobsters were put up in Nova Scotia this season. These fish are becoming rapidly more scarce, and are found only of smaller dimensions than formerly, in consequence of which facts some of the canning establishments have already been obliged to close up business. This is more especially the case on the shore west of Halifax. Further east, where the ground has not been so much fished, the fishery is as yet more flourishing. Not only is the inordinate destruction of the lobster tending rapidly to its extermination upon our shores, but the prosecution of that fishery, and the great quantities of offal which it causes to be deposited in the coast waters, are proving to be seriously destructive to the other fisheries.

The clause relative to the lobster fishery, which appears in the regulations of all the counties, proves to be quite inadequate to the cure of the evil which it was intended to meet. After the most careful enquiries, both east and west, I am firmly of the belief that during the months of July and August the lobster fishers continue to take whatever comes into their nets and pots—soft shells, females with eggs attached, and lobsters of less than the prescribed dimensions,—without any regard to the law whatever. Many, perhaps most of the proprietors of canning establishments, with like disregard of the law, buy these lobsters. Where they refuse to do so the mischief is no less great; for the young fish thus taken die, are thrown overboard, and pollute the waters to the serious damage of other fisheries. It is simply impossible to prevent this illegal lobster fishing with the staff of officers now employed. To do this would require an active and vigilant warden to be constantly on duty at every lobster-canning establishment in the Province; and even then it is doubtful if the present law could be strictly enforced.

My views upon this matter are fully concurred in by those fishery officers who have had the best opportunities of seeing the operation of the law. Mr. Tory, the Overseer of Guysboro', says in his report:—"From the increase of lobster-canning establishments along the coast there cannot be a doubt that that fishery will, in a few years, be very materially injured and finally destroyed, unless proper precaution is taken to protect it. The present year has given ample proof of the over-fishing, by the immense quantity poured into the market, thereby depreciating the price, which has nearly caused ruin to those engaged therein, besides the fearful destruction in the catching of so many small ones and soft-shell ones during the warm weather in summer. I am credibly informed that nearly one-third of the lobsters taken between the 1st of August and 10th of September die before reaching the canning establishments, owing to the effect of the atmosphere upon the soft shell which a large portion of them have at that period, and thereby become useless for canning, and are thrown away. Also, the flesh at this season is so light that it takes three times the quantity to make the same weight that it does in the months of May and June. Taking these facts into consideration, and having a regard for the perpetuation of this fishery, I would most earnestly recommend that a restriction be placed upon the catching of these fish during the above-named period, &c. I would further recommend that the smallest sized lobster be not less than ten inches in length, instead of nine as now."

Mr. Anderson, Overseer of East Halifax, reports:—"Last year I refrained from giving an opinion on lobster fishing; this season I have given it my special attention. I consider necessary a special Act prohibiting the throwing of offal of lobster factories into the water, as it is positively detrimental both to the salmon and herring fisheries, as neither will frequent polluted waters. Many complaints