

# The Geese and the Golden Eggs

The Following Thoughtful and Suggestive Paper Was Presented by Mr. Henry Doyle at the Recent Canadian Fisheries Convention held at Vancouver.

Patriotic impulses make each race believe its nation superior to all other nations. Civic pride gives the inhabitants of each city, town or village an abiding faith in the supremacy of their place of abode over every other place. Individual interest causes each of us to consider our personal undertakings of more importance than any other undertakings, even though alike in nature and the object to be attained. We see the merchant absorbed in one branch of business endeavor to the exclusion of all other branches; we see farmers who specialize in one sphere of agricultural activity; and we see fishermen who are so interested in one division of their industry that they think it a waste of time to consider other divisions.

In a sense this is as it should be, for personal interest and civic pride are but stepping stones in the progress towards national greatness. But it possesses drawbacks as well as advantages. Our comparative blindness to the affairs of others lessens our knowledge and narrows our understanding. We do not fully learn the lessons taught by our predecessors' experiences; we do not profit quickly enough by the improvements of existing competitors, nor do we realize what the future holds for us as well as if our scope of vision was broader and our policies more farseeing.

There is less of this in the scientific professions than amongst other classes. No professional man depends on what he learns from his own practice to keep up with the times. All over the world the latest medical and surgical discoveries are heralded and described; special research institutions like that endowed by Rockefeller are seeking further knowledge for the health improvement of the human race; and the use and value of radium and X-ray treatment are known to doctors in every town and hamlet. Law societies give members of the legal profession full reports of cases from all sections of the globe to enrich their knowledge and aid them in their work. Great engineering feats are explained in detail in magazines covering their profession, and the discoveries in electricity and electrical engineering have been world wide in the spread of their miracle-like transformation of almost everything that affects our living conditions.

All this has been brought about by co-operation and by a realization that to look beyond the confines of our own horizon broadens our intellect and increases our understanding. We see what benefit it has been to scientific pursuits, and we cannot deny the advantages of adopting similar practices. But the question is, have we adopted this broad-minded policy in the sphere of industrial life?

With but few exceptions the answer must be; we have not. And none is this truer than of the fishing industry. The Cod fish aristocracy of Nova Scotia knows little and cares less of what the belted knights of New Brunswick oysterdom have accomplished, or yet can accomplish. The salmon knights of the Pacific probably never heard of the whitefish royalty of the Great Lakes country. And not only is this true of allied branches of the industry, but even in identical lines the worker in one area is indifferent to what occurs in other areas.

In the "Big" year of 1913 the catch of Fraser River salmon represented about 30% of the world's pack that season, being over 2,400,000 cases. Rock slides blocked the salmon from access to the spawning areas that summer, with the result that in the next season of that cycle—1917—the take of fish was but 560,000 cases, or about 6% of the world's production. This has been a national calamity, but did it impress itself as such on the fishing industry in general? Speak to a Skeena River canner or fisherman

and he will say it is too bad, but at the same time he remembers it has resulted in better prices for the Skeena product, and his sorrow becomes a complaisant one. Speak to a Columbia River or Alaskan salmon operator and he will admit having heard that there was a partial failure in 1917, and will ask how it is accounted for and what the prospects are for 1921. Mention it to an eastern fish man and he will likely inform you he never heard of either catastrophe or failure; indeed if he is frank he may add he did not know salmon ran in the Fraser River, or that there was such a river in Canada.

The same is true in all parts of the world, and of all branches of the fishing industry. We have no bureau established in which ideas can be exchanged; no recognized medium where fish knowledge of interest can be disseminated. We conduct our affairs in an isolated self-centred fashion, and, if we had our desserts, should be deprived of our businesses on the ground of criminal maladministration.

Criminal maladministration is not too strong an expression. If a lawyer violated the ethics of his profession he would be disbarred. If a doctor lost a patient through neglect due to ignorance he could be prosecuted. If an engineer was careless in estimating strains, and disaster followed, he would face imprisonment, and if, through ignorance, neglect, or folly, we destroy the fishery assets of the country, which are given us to administer so that future generations as well as our own would benefit by them, we deserve to be treated in like manner to the professional man who is faithless to his trust.

But, it is asked, in what way are we false to this trust? How can we be accused of neglect? What should we do differently than at present to administer our fishery resources properly? The answer is that we have failed to learn through past experiences what the future must face, and until we conduct our present activities with the maintenance of our fisheries as our paramount object we are not doing justice to ourselves or posterity.

Our greatest fault is we have not observed the handwriting on the wall, nor found it applicable to ourselves personally. A few examples will best illustrate this point. The seal fisheries of Newfoundland date back to about the year 1800, and the average annual catch in the first half of last century was over 200,000 seals. The banner year was 1844 when a total of 680,000 was taken. Since then steam has replaced sails for the propulsion of vessels and modern appliances have resulted in greater efficiency with less effort, all of which should have produced a larger number of seals than could have been looked for in the olden days. But instead of 680,000 or even 200,000 catches today, we find 100,000 considered a satisfactory season's work. In 1915 the take was 47,000 seals, in 1919 81,293, and 1920 with but 35,000, is the greatest failure on record.

A retrospective view, embracing the sealing industry from its commencement shows that beyond question the industry is threatened with extermination. That if the present drain continues there will be none of this trust left to hand down to posterity. But does the present day operator take this retrospective view? Does he realize he is complaisantly destroying one of the national assets, and is not even making an effort to retard the progress of such destruction? For answer I quote the following from an article which appeared recently in a Newfoundland paper:

"The seal fishery is a failure this spring. Next spring may pay up for the loss. It has been so in the past. We must take the bad with the good, because, after all, both the cod fishery and the seal fishery are a species of gambling, and the man who is not willing to risk is not worthy of gain. Besides there is the consolation that having had so many partial failures in the seal fishery the past seven or eight years, the industry is getting almost the benefit