

ever since the settlement of the country, which furnishes employment to a large number of industrious men, and by which Christchurch and its neighbourhood is largely supplied with fish. The reasons for which so strong a measure is recommended to the Government I understand to be (1) That continued fishing in Lake Ellesmere may interfere with the acclimatisation of salmon. (2) that it interferes with the breeding of the trout which has been introduced into rivers discharging into the lake; (3) that, owing to improper fishing, the supply of flounders is diminishing in the lake itself.

I cannot suppose that, in the opinion of the Government, the two first reasons would justify the suppression of an industry of the character and importance described in Mr. Durant's letter. The possibility of acclimatising salmon has been shown to be very remote. With regard to trout, I can, from personal knowledge of two of the rivers in question, state that the supply of this fish, in spite of two dry seasons, has been in no wise diminished.

With respect to improper fishing. I submit that if this really exists, it may be met by more stringent regulations, strictly enforced, and to this the fishermen raise no objection.

In any case I earnestly trust the Government will take no such extreme measure as has been suggested without much more complete information than is at present forthcoming. It should be remembered that the acclimatisation society is a perfectly irresponsible body, in no way authorised to represent public opinion, or entitled to speak with authority on so important a question as depriving a large number of industrious men of their livelihood. If the Government should at all entertain the proposal of the society I would respectfully suggest that a very full inquiry should be made into the facts of the case, either by one of the local governing bodies, or by some person specially appointed for the purpose. The result of such inquiry would, I believe, show that much less radical measures than have been proposed would be sufficient for all practical purposes.

I have, &c.,
JOHN HALL.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

Mr. T. W. DURANT to the Hon. Sir J. HALL.

DEAR SIR JOHN,—

Leeston, 2nd March, 1888.

I take the liberty of writing to you, to enlist your assistance on behalf of the fishermen on Lake Ellesmere. According to a resolution passed by the acclimatisation society on Wednesday (see report in Thursday's *Press*) it was decided to petition the Governor to close this lake against all net-fishing for two years. The fishermen down here are afraid the society will get the petition carried with the Governor. If this is carried into effect or made law it will throw fully two hundred able-bodied men out of employment, as well as be a large loss to the revenue of the country, and would also render a large number of families destitute. The fishermen for whom I am acting, and who asked me to write to you for them, are willing for the Government to enact heavy penalties for taking and selling trout, salmon, or any imported fish, and for selling undersized fish. The majority of the fishermen are a most law-abiding people, and have no wish to break any enactment made by the acclimatisation society as regards the size of fish. Mr. Boys, in proposing his resolution, states that the lake must be closed up, to allow the flounders to increase and grow larger. This theory and reason is only a side-wind to protect the salmon and trout, for it is well known that the largest flounders are caught coming in from the sea, as soon as the lake is let out into the sea. The fishermen's opinion is that the flounders go on to the Ninety-mile Beach to spawn, and the current from the lake into the sea, which is very strong, washes the young fry out into salt water, and they return in the shape of young flounders. This idea is proved by the fact that flounders are caught round the bays, and even at New Brighton. Also, I was assured to-day by several fishermen that nine and twelve years ago, before the lake was opened into the sea, it was impossible to catch any large flounders, and very few small ones either. I interviewed to-day (accompanied by three of the fishermen), the Hon. E. C. J. Stevens, who promised us to at once write to the Colonial Secretary on the matter. I think we showed Mr. Stevens what an injustice it would be to this large number of men. Messrs. Harper and Co. are drawing up a counter-petition to present to the Governor, which will be signed by all the people interested, and these men will feel deeply grateful if you will lend your valuable aid to frustrate the purpose of the acclimatisation society in this case. The following are a few facts connected with the above: The fishing industry on Lake Ellesmere employs two hundred men, twenty of these being on the lake, the remainder buying and hawking the fish in town. These twenty men own twenty boats, valued at £20 each; gear, including twenty nets to each boat, £50; and twenty carts and forty horses, valued at £30 each. A large number of the men on the lake are married, with families, and own respectable cottages. The railway derives a revenue averaging £1 a day for carriage of fish, and 10s. a day for passenger-traffic. Again, at the fish-market in Christchurch, at which an auction is held on arrival of the train every morning, a very busy scene is presented. On Friday morning there were twenty-five traps and horses waiting to buy fish, and the train this morning brought in from the lake sixteen boxes of flounders, two boxes of rock-cod, and three boxes of herrings, the cases of fish averaging 15s. each when sold by auction. So it will be apparent what an injustice would be done to a large section of the community if the lake was closed up.

Yours faithfully,
T. W. DURANT.

The ASSISTANT SECRETARY, Marine Department, to the Hon. Sir J. HALL.

SIR,—

Marine Department, Wellington, 7th April, 1888.

I am directed by the Minister having charge of this department to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 7th ultimo, with reference to the request made by the Canterbury Acclimatisation Society to close Lake Ellesmere to all net-fishing for a period of two years; and, in reply, I am