

It appears in some cases, however, that nets with 2½in. mesh, such as those adapted for mullet- or herring-fishing, are used, and, as a consequence, fish smaller than the regulation size are caught. How far this practice is carried we are not aware, but if to any great extent there is little doubt but that in course of time the lake will be entirely cleared of fish. If we are to be spared this misfortune a more systematic method of inspection must be devised, and a rigorous enforcement of the regulations insisted upon. If by this means it is found that a check cannot be placed upon this criminal destruction of small flounders, then the only plan is to close the lake against fishermen during certain months in the year. The penalty, by the way, for a breach of the regulations above referred to is not less than £1 and not exceeding £50; but it would appear that there is so little risk of detection that the severity of the punishment is a matter of small heed to those who wilfully set the regulations at defiance.

CONSERVATION OF FISH. (Extract from the *Press*.)

SIR,—

Colombo Street, 13th September, 1890.

I was glad to see that you brought the small flounders question before the public in your issue of yesterday. This system of fraud has now been carried on for a number of years; and, because I have tried to expose it, I have been subject to boycotting, and, consequently, my wife and family have had to suffer through my being unable to earn a living; and I am not young enough and strong enough to undertake lumping on the wharves, or I would have done so. The last case of flounders I purchased I found a number of undersized ones, which, being in my possession, meant a heavy fine. I returned them to the men who sold them to me, and they made a reduction of 2s., and I destroyed them. Where is our duly-appointed Inspector? Has he too many other positions to fill that he cannot find time to see to this business? Have the police or Customs any power? as I am certain that if the nets were looked after they are not according to the Act, which states that 4½in. meshes must be used. The mullet-net, 2½in. mesh, is extensively used for catching flounders.

Hoping that some one in authority will take the matter up at once,

Yours, &c.,

GEORGE TIBBS.

The Editor.

The Hon. Sir J. HALL to the Hon. the MINISTER of MARINE.

SIR,—

Wellington, 30th January, 1891.

Enclosed I have the honour to forward to you, for presentation to His Excellency, a petition from a considerable number of fishermen, residing on the shores of Lake Ellesmere, who have for many years earned a living for themselves and their families by the fishing in the lake.

It is true, as stated by the petitioners, that a cry has recently been raised in Christchurch in favour of either closing the lake fishing for a considerable time, or of largely altering the net used in the lake, so as practically to attain the same result. I beg to express an earnest hope that the Government will not sanction any such proposals until the necessity for them has been established by careful inquiry on the part of impartial and competent authority, and that at any such inquiry the petitioners may have a fair opportunity of being heard. There is good reason to believe that the diminution in the supply of flounders is largely due not only to the late dry seasons, but also to the frequent "letting out" of the waters of the lake, which is now done by the Railway Department to prevent the Little River Railway being flooded. The lake is opened for the purpose at a spot which causes the water, as it rushes to the sea, to carry with it not only a large number of the best fish, but also spawn which has been deposited on shingle-beds in the neighbourhood of the outlet. It has been pointed out that this would be largely obviated by making the outlet in a different locality, but, as the change would involve some additional outlay, the Railway Commissioners have declined to adopt it. The end to be attained is, however, so important that I trust some means may be found for overcoming the difficulty.

On a former occasion it was proposed that the Selwyn County Council should be requested to undertake an investigation into the whole subject, and I beg to suggest that this Council is a body which, from its composition, and the local knowledge of some of its members, would be well qualified for the task.

I have no doubt that the fishermen would willingly acquiesce in any reasonable proposals to which such an investigation might lead; and I would point out that, in the absence of any proper staff for controlling the fishery, it will be very difficult to enforce regulations of the necessity and justice of which the men themselves are not reasonably satisfied.

I trust that this question of so much importance to a large body of industrious and well-conducted men and their families may receive the early and earnest attention of His Excellency's Advisers.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Minister of Marine.

JOHN HALL.

To His Excellency the GOVERNOR of NEW ZEALAND.

THE petition of the undersigned fishermen engaged in the fishery of Lake Ellesmere, in the Provincial District of Canterbury, respectfully sheweth,—

That your petitioners have for many years, by hard work and much exposure, earned a livelihood for themselves and their families at the above fishery, which consists chiefly in the catching of flounders. That, owing to the very dry seasons which have prevailed of late in Canterbury, and the consequent shallowness of the lake, the supply of flounders has fallen off. That your petitioners notice that proposals have been made during the late election to stop the catching of flounders for a considerable time, or to increase the size below which they may not be caught to 12in. That these proposals emanate, in your petitioners' opinion, either from persons who are ignorant of the circumstances of the case, or from persons who are interested in suppressing the lake-fishery, with a view of fostering other fishing, in which they have considerable interests. That any such extreme measures as above mentioned are quite unnecessary, and would deprive of their livelihood a large