

men in the Province of Auckland alone out of employment. This prophecy of approaching exhaustion is by no means a new cry, and if regarded as a general statement can only be taken as absolutely ridiculous. At the commencement of the eighteenth century a bishop in the Old Country strongly impressed with the approaching decay of the herring fishery, directed a special prayer to be offered in every church of his diocese for its restoration and continuance. In the same year, says Mr. Walpole, that our Queen ascended the throne, I found a petition which had been presented to Parliament in these terms: that the fishermen of Ireland, Scotland, and Holland had found out the breeding-places of the herring, had resorted there to catch them, and since the discovery was made the fish generally throughout the west and north of Scotland had annually decreased. Now, it is a striking fact that at the very time this petition was presented the herring fishery was increasing year by year, and that its yield now is more than four times greater than at the time this gloomy prophecy was made. As regards fish being scarcer one year than another, I would call the attention of your readers to the fact that in the year 1880 rather more than 130,000 tons of fish came to the London market, while in 1881 the quantity rose to 193,996 tons. I may say that the mullet carries on an average 500,000 eggs, so we need not fear our mullet supply being exhausted. There are various causes for their being scarce at times, but there are more mullet on our coasts now than there were years ago. Pardon me for trespassing on so much of your space, but I could not let this pass without showing your readers the absurdity of having a close season for mullet, and the injustice of throwing the fishermen out of employment, besides taking from the public an article of food during the summer. I trust this matter will not be allowed to rest, but will be taken up by every lover of justice, and we shall still have our mullet, and the stock will not be diminishing."

In our impression of Friday last we published a telegram from Wellington stating that, as representations had been made to the Government on the subject, it had been determined to have a close season for mullet, during which the catching of that fish should be prohibited. It further stated that strong evidence had been furnished that these valuable fish do not now appear on our coast in anything like their former abundance. We are further told that the Government had taken much trouble "to procure all available evidence as to the increasing scarceness of the fish." We suppose we are expected to believe this as it emanates from Wellington, and from the Government. But it is difficult to take it all in. We publish elsewhere a communication from Mr. Bishop, of Customs Street, who ought to know if any inquiry at all had been made, and who says that he cannot find any one in Auckland who had heard anything about the proposal to make a close season until the announcement appeared in our columns. As to the mullet becoming scarce from the fishing that has been carried on, we simply do not credit the statement. If the few people now in New Zealand have already decreased the number of fish on our shores, when the colony is thickly peopled we shall not have a fish left. The assertion seems to us ridiculous. If it can be shown that during a certain portion of the year the fish are unfit for food, then by all means let fishing during that period be prohibited. But it is absurd to say that mullet are becoming scarce from over-fishing. In a matter of this kind there should be full publicity. It is of great importance, as it affects an article of food, and the means of livelihood of a large number of men. Who has collected the evidence that the fish are becoming scarce, and has determined as to the close season? We hear a good deal about promoting our fisheries, about forming fishing settlements, and encouraging large numbers of expert fishermen to come here. But how can we go on doing this if our coasts are already over-fished, and that the mullet is actually becoming scarce? Mr. Bishop says that the mullet carries five hundred thousand eggs, which is about one for every inhabitant of New Zealand. He adds, "There are various causes for their being scarce at times, but there are more mullet on our coasts now than there were years ago." At all events we protest against the secrecy with which this has been done. The evidence on which such a step is taken ought to be laid before the country, so that it may be seen if there is absolute necessity for it.

[Extract from the *New Zealand Herald*, 17th November, 1886.]

#### WHOLESALE DESTRUCTION OF FISH.

To the Editor.

SIR,—Five hundred bundles of flat-fish thrown overboard: call a meeting, elect a vigilance committee to protect the fish. Now, I have no knowledge of the particular five hundred bundles of flat-fish save through reading the letter of our respected citizen, Mr. Lewisson, in a late number of the *Herald*; but I feel sure the fisherman are not likely to catch fish and then throw them away if they could be sold, so I conclude the fish must have been unfit for human food. It is not to defend the parties that threw them away that I write this, but rather to express my surprise that men endowed with reason can think, in this nineteenth century, that five hundred bundles, or even five million bundles, of fish can have any effect on the number of fish in the sea. Nature is so prolific that the more we catch the faster they multiply. To illustrate my theory it will be necessary to state that in the month of August the fish were very scarce near Rakino Island, and my boats had to go up the Thames Gulf, nearly off Tapu. Here about ten boats (not all mine) could be seen, each manned by three men, hauling in fish as fast as it was possible to get them off hooks without barbs. Each boat would be from one to three miles apart, and the fish so thick that every hook has a fish on before it has time to go down 3 fathoms with 2 lb. of lead for a sinker. Now, what were those millions of tons of schnapper doing? Why, consuming flat-fish, soles, &c., at a rate that "wholesale" will not describe if we apply the word to the five hundred bundles alluded to. Nearly every fish caught would have more or less soles, eels, and flat-fish in their stomachs. If we think this over, and reason it out, we shall find that the number of flat-fish, &c., consumed by this shoal of schnapper would be many millions of bundles every minute. Now, the fish are again back at Rakino. What are they doing? Why, in place of eating one fish at a bite they are actually swallowing 500,000, more or less, at every mouthful—eating spawn of other fish by the ton. The wheel of nature is always turning, assuming different forms, never lessening the whole one atom, but so regulated by Him that fallen man is powerless to control or affect in the least. When I think of the wonders of the deep I am in the same fix as when I think of time and distance, as revealed to us by astronomers—lost in wonder. The fact is, the whole thing is beyond our power to control. In spite of all those facts I have alluded to, the Government are advised to proclaim a "close" season for mullet, thereby depriving a number of men of the means of living, and making their instruments of production worthless, in order that the next generation may not go short of mullet. It is all bosh! There is selfishness at the back of it. An inquiry should be held, *à la* Stark. In conclusion, I may explain that I am not interested in catching mullet. In fact, to take a narrow-minded, selfish view of the thing, it looks as if the close season for mullet would cause more demand for schnapper; but if we look a little deeper we shall see that true prosperity is only attained by making every other industrious person prosperous. Unless all the people are profitably employed, they have not the means of purchasing the wealth we are all engaged in producing. In my opinion, a "let alone" policy is the best policy to adopt, and in a short time we shall all fit into the grooves for which we are adapted. One year all the cry is, start fisheries, and the next year there is a howl to blot them out.—I am, &c.,

Rakino, 15th November, 1886.

ALBERT SANDFORD.

[Extract from the *New Zealand Herald*, 19th November, 1886.]

#### THE CLOSE SEASON FOR MULLET.—CORRESPONDENCE WITH MINISTERS.

A few days ago, on the statement being published that the Government intended to proclaim December, January, and February as a close season for mullet, Mr. Bishop, fish-salesman, wrote, questioning the necessity of any such measure. On the Hon. Mr. Tole coming to Auckland Mr. Bishop was introduced to him by Mr. Thompson, M.H.R., and after some conversation he promised to telegraph to the Premier asking him on what evidence the Government had proceeded in proclaiming a close season. The following correspondence was the result:—

"Memorandum for the Hon. Mr. Tole, Auckland.—With reference to your telegram of 12th instant, on the subject of the close season for mullet, I find that the Order in Council prescribing a close season was not issued until after strong evidence had been furnished that the fish do not appear on our coasts in anything like their former abundance. Communications recommending a close season were received from Mr. Moat, M.H.R., also from Messrs.