

will be of great value. There have been cases in which, in order to keep the price up, quantities of fish have been destroyed when the catches have been too large for the markets at the ruling prices, and in order to prevent such destruction of food the Act of last year provides that every person employed upon a licensed boat or any fish-salesman who wilfully destroys or causes to be destroyed any fresh fish fit for human consumption shall be liable to a fine.

The marine-fish hatchery at Portobello is approaching completion. The work is being carried out by a Board with funds provided by the Department, and the Board will receive an annual grant from the Department for the working of the hatchery.

Mr. J. Duncan, Inspector of Fisheries for Westland, resigned during the year, and Mr. John Marks was appointed to fill the vacancy. Four members of the Police Force have also been appointed Inspectors of Fisheries.

In several cases proceedings have been taken against persons committing breaches of the law, both in respect of fish and oysters, and fines have been imposed. In cases where boats and nets were forfeited, they have been returned on payment of redemption fees.

The work of hatching and rearing salmon in the hatchery at Hakataramea has been satisfactory. During the year 5,000 three-and-a-half-year-old quinnat salmon, 5,981 two-and-a-half-year-old sockeye, and 42,806 one-and-a-half-year-old Atlantic salmon have been liberated in the Hakataramea River; and there were on the 31st March 700 four-year- and 230,000 four-months-old quinnat, 2,000 three-year-old sockeye, and 4,200 one-and-a-half-year-old Atlantic salmon in the ponds at the hatchery.

The shipment of 300,000 quinnat-salmon ova obtained from the United States in January last arrived in splendid condition, and the loss in unpacking and hatching out was very small. The shipment of 1,000,000 whitefish-ova obtained at the same time was not, however, so successful. Half of these ova were hatched out at Lake Kanieri and half at Lake Tekapo, these lakes being considered to be the two most suitable ones that we have for whitefish. The ova were in two cases containing 500,000 each, and 70 per cent. of those in the case sent to Tekapo hatched out, whilst only 25 per cent. of those in the Kanieri case hatched. Both the salmon and whitefish ova came from San Francisco in charge of Mr. G. H. Lambson, one of the United States Fish Commission Inspectors, and the thanks of the Department are due to the Commission for presenting the ova to the colony, and for its courtesy in allowing Mr. Lambson to come over in charge of them. I would strongly advise that another shipment of salmon and whitefish ova should be obtained this year. As we have the hatchery, the cost of the salmon after hatching will not be much, as the same attendants are required when only part of the ponds are used as when they are all full of fish, and it would be advisable to continue to liberate a large number of fish each year for some time to come. It would be advisable to continue the import of whitefish-ova for at least two or three years. There would be very little expense after the arrival of the ova, as there are two hatcheries erected in suitable localities, fitted with all requirements for hatching, and there is no expense in feeding the fish, as they find their own feed after the yolk-sac is exhausted.

*Oysters.*—The Sea-fisheries Amendment Act which was passed last session provides that the open season for rock-oysters is to extend from the 1st May to the 31st October in each year, instead of from the 1st April to the 30th November as formerly, and that the annual fee to be paid for a license to take oysters is to be a sum not exceeding £2, as may be fixed by the Governor in Council. The Act also provides that the owners and occupiers of land fronting oyster-bearing foreshore may be granted the exclusive right to take oysters from such foreshore without the right being put up to public auction or tender. It is proposed to lease parts of the foreshore of the Hauraki Gulf under the Act, and Mr. Ayson, Chief Inspector of Fisheries, who has recently inspected the beds, is now preparing regulations for the leasing. Mr. Ayson's inspection of the beds in this gulf and in the Northern Oyster-fishery shows that they are recovering very well from the depletion which was caused by overpicking when they were last open, and they should be fit to be opened again next year. Settlers who obtain leases of the beds adjoining their property will find it in their own interest to see that they are not overpicked; but in order to insure that the conditions of the leases shall be observed, and that persons licensed to pick unleased beds shall observe the law, it would be advisable to appoint an Inspector for the Hauraki Gulf who should devote the whole of his time to the duties of the office, and in order to enable him to get about the gulf he should be provided with an oil-launch. The conservation of the beds would be well worth the necessary expense, and as under the Act above referred to the revenue from the leases and from ordinary pickers' licenses will be payable into the Consolidated Fund, it will provide the necessary funds.

The beds in the North Island which are open this year are those in the Tauranga Fishery, Ahipara Bay, Herekino, Whangape, Hokianga, and Kaipara Harbours, and the leased beds in Manukau Harbour. The Department was urged to open the beds in Raglan Harbour; but as an inspection of them, which was made by the Chief Inspector, showed that they were not fit for picking, the request was not acceded to, and the local constable was appointed an Inspector so as to give him power to prevent illegal picking.

Mr. Whitney has been licensed to occupy foreshore at Puhoi for the artificial culture of oysters, and he proposes to endeavour to cultivate the mud-oyster.

*Weather-reporting.*—Captain Edwin has continued to carry out the duty of making weather-forecasts and of issuing weather reports and storm-warnings. The Eastern Extension, Australasia, and China Telegraph Company having discontinued the free transmission of weather reports from Australia, arrangements have been made for the transmission of the required daily messages from Perth, Melbourne, and Hobart, *via* the Pacific cable, at an annual cost of about £46.

*Survey of Ships.*—During the year certificates for 264 steamers, 22 oil-engine vessels, and 11 sailing-vessels have been issued. A return of such vessels is appended hereto.

New regulations regarding the life-saving appliances to be carried by ships have been made, to bring our regulations into conformity with those issued by the Imperial Board of Trade, and to