

**98.—CONCERNING THE SALMON FISHERIES OF BRETAGNE, FRANCE,
AND THE NEED OF FISH-WAYS AND RESTRICTIVE LEGISLATION.**

The crawfish is not the only thing threatened with extermination. Our last article on the truly blameworthy tolerance of the administration in regard to poaching in our waters has brought us a letter from a resident of Finistère. We give his exact words, so as not to lessen the appearance of truth with which our correspondent has described that which passes under his eyes. He writes us:

"Affairs in this country have reached their limits. Salmon and trout are threatened with absolute destruction. Notice what takes place: Salmon ascend the river to spawn; at the mouth nearly all the fish are stopped by the nets of the fishermen of the maritime inscription, whose right to fish with seines extends in the river as far up as the tide ascends. There pass, then, only a few salmon, which the nets of the residents along the river will harass all summer. You see what is likely to survive for reproduction.

"Nor is this all. At the time when these unfortunate fish choose a spawning-place, and when they are easy of capture by any one with a grappling-iron, with a basket even, great numbers are caught; and they can be seen carried to market with their eggs flowing from their bodies like the water of a spring. Also, one now sees but few young salmon; and, as it is acknowledged that after their sojourn in the sea these young salmon return to the streams where they were born, you can judge of the final issue: our rivers after a short time will contain no salmon.

"The advantage of the fish-culturists lies in protecting the different species, and in aiding the processes of propagation. The English understand this and profit by it. Last year I saw in Aberdeen, a large city of Scotland, sea-trout weighing from three to four pounds sold at the rate of twelve cents apiece. Can any one pretend that our people would not be fortunate in sparing this wholesome and agreeable food for a like good market? On the other side of the department of Manche the mouths of the streams are allowed to be fished only every other day by the fishermen, including the fishermen of the coast as well as those of the streams; why should it not be the same with us? The salmon fishery should close on September 1 instead of October 15; but to make amends, it could open on January 1. Thus reproduction under normal circumstances would be assured; but on the condition, of course, of ascertaining by a strict inspection the manner in which the law is obeyed by those living along the streams.

"Fish-ways are unknown in our rivers of Bretagne. It requires, therefore, considerable water passing over the dams or slopes for the fish to be able to surmount these obstacles and continue their ascent.

Now each in emulation of the other obstructs its end of the river, in order to push into a kind of close passage the migrating salmon, which, of course, never go out except to die. Millers also need a word. They make of their mill-wheels the most deadly means of destruction. When young salmon were there, they would take them by basketfuls in one night, salt down these young fish scarcely as large as sardines, and in case of superabundance would give them to their hogs. See where we are! Almost nothing is found in all our river-basins. It is true that England, Scotland, Ireland, and Norway are willing to forward to us all the trout and all the salmon preserved in ice which the market of Paris calls for; but of course it is on the condition that we return them good French money, and this last commodity begins to become so scarce here that perhaps it would be better if we were keeping it for ourselves."

As we have the utmost confidence in our correspondent, we conclude that affairs in Bretagne are going exactly as they are in our streams of Central France, where, when the "prohibited" nets become too fatiguing to manage and insufficiently productive, they never hesitate to call in the aid of lime, of poison-berries (*Cocculus indicus*), and at present, above all, of dynamite. Sluggish species of fish and migratory species are alike quickly passing away, since nothing is done to stop it.

It will be with this plague—for it is one—exactly as it was with the phylloxera. In 1865, when the American plant-louse began its ravages among the rich vineyards of the Rhone, several hundred thousand francs were considered sufficient, following the example of Switzerland and Germany, to stop the career of the destructive insect.

The indifference with which it was treated costs the Government annually millions of francs, and causes a loss to agriculture of something like a billion of francs every year. Even so in ten or twenty years there will arise a statesman of genius who will discover that our rivers are depopulated, and that this depopulation constitutes a crime of high treason against the nation, because it deprives the people of an economical kind of food, growing without labor, and one which our hundreds of thousands of acres of water ought to furnish us at as low a price as it is furnished in Scotland and China. In his patriotic indignation this statesman will call all the fish-culturists to his aid; they will multiply breeding-basins; they will establish costly stations; they will restock the waters, rivers, streams, &c., with the prodigality in such matters which should characterize the acts of every Government; they will expend a hundred millions of francs to obtain with difficulty a result which should be reached immediately and almost "free of cost," requiring merely some employés to execute the laws which are now little more regarded than scarecrows. Is to allow such a thing as this an act of good government? In spite of our desire, which we share with all poor wretches, to be agreeable to the authorities, it is impossible for us with sincerity to answer yes.