

# FISH AND OYSTER NOTES.

The N. N. News (Warsaw) says this: "A correspondent writes: 'There has been no catch of oysters in this the Yeocomico this season. Mr. N. Z. Oakley & Bros., who planted 30,000 bushels of shells here last spring, have just thoroughly examined them and were unable to even find one oyster that had caught on them.'"

The simplest form of oyster culture is the preservation of the natural beds. This goes far ahead of any artificial breeding of the oyster. Incubator chickens may be more numerous, but they are not so good as the regular hen-raised chicks. Artificial oysters are like other artificial things—more art than nature. Let the culturist replenish the natural rock and get the natural oyster.—The Oysterman.

[FROM NORFOLK LANDMARK, OCTOBER 31.]

The outlook for the dredgers is unusually gloomy according to a statement made last night by Captain B. G. Doggett, of the Oyster Navy Police Boat Commodore Maury. Captain Doggett reached Norfolk yesterday from an extended cruise in the Potomac river, where the dredging season opened two weeks ago, and he talked very pointedly on the situation as it exists today in that vicinity. "There are more Virginia and Maryland boats on the Potomac river today than there have been for a number of years," said Captain Doggett. "Although the oysters are in a rather poor condition they are more plentiful in some localities than for many years past, but because of the depressed market the outlook is certainly gloomy for the dredgers. Certain it is that there is no dearth of oysters in Virginia, for the dredgers on the Potomac are receiving only twenty and twenty-five cents a bushel for their stock, which many of them have to take to Maryland to find a market at these prices. So slack is the market and the demand by the planters and shuckers that a number of the vessels have had their cargoes die on their hands before sale could be made. Oyster planters from the Eastern Shore and the Rappahannock and officials who have just cruised the Potomac are united in saying that there are twice as many oysters on the market today as there is demand by the planters. Notwithstanding the large supply of oysters throughout Tidewater Virginia the outlook is gloomy because of the exceedingly low prices—the lowest for years. The middle man has not come down any in his prices, but shucking houses are getting about eighty-five cents a gallon this year as compared with \$1.10 last year. In my mind the depressed condition of the oyster market is in keeping with the market as regards other products generally."

## THE POTOMAC SITUATION.

The stint of nature and the low markets by man (Republican "prosperity") have pretty nearly paralyzed the Potomac workers. "The Oysterman" has this squib about the upper seed beds:

"The freshets have played havoc with the oysters of the Potomac. The tongers report that they are all dead and have left those waters in disgust."

## THE OYSTER PROBLEM.

(DANVILLE REGISTER.)

The Richmond Times-Dispatch is very much perturbed over what it characterizes as the rapid extinction of the oyster industry in Virginia, and is discussing the subject as it sees it and, presumably to the best of its knowledge and belief, in a series of editorials on the subject. The editor of the T-D-ium is familiar with oysters on the half shell at his club, and with those in the soup, and he has probably eaten them when prepared in other forms, but in presuming to know the facts relative to the condition of the oyster industry and the causes of the alleged conditions and the most effective remedy therefor, he is laying claim to a knowledge which few men who have spent their lives oystering would dare profess. \* \* \*

The inconsistent point about our contemporary's contention is that it manifests so much solicitude about the poor, starving tongers who can find no oysters, and yet proposes to make conditions worse for them by further limiting the area from which they may lawfully take oysters. As we apprehend its position, it favors contracting the Baylor survey and eliminating therefrom what is not deemed productive bottom, the inevitable effect of which will be to limit the area from which tongers may take oysters. The fact is also overlooked that these poor starving tongers, for whom so much sympathy is expressed, are themselves chiefly responsible for the conditions said to exist, if they do actually exist. Who destroys the seed oyster and spat during the closed season, if not the tonger? Does the planter poach on the public bottoms during the closed season to get his seed oysters? That is not even alleged. Our contemporary charges that the State Fisheries Commission has not been successful in protecting the seed oysters against the depredations of the tongers who invade the public bottoms during the closed season, and it accuses the Commission of responsibility for the alleged expense to which tongers have been subjected in preparing for the season, by giving misleading information as to real conditions. This is flatly denied by the Commission.

## MENHADEN WORKING SOUTH.

Fishing steamers that happened to sight the run of fish going south last week caught good "jags." Boats at Bellows & Squires works caught over a million out in the Atlantic, and others did equally as well. These were the first caught for over a month. Small catches are reported this week.

Most of the steamers have "cut out" and it is supposed those now at work will continue the search only a few days longer.