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ANY FUTURE FOR NORTH CAROLINA OYSTERS?

In these columns last week was published an account of the returns of the oyster dredge boats, after the first week of the season in the North Carolina sounds, and the showing made by them in the way of oysters.

In addition to the quantity of oysters, the report of the dredgers in regard to the condition of the oyster beds was an appealing one to oyster dealers, canners and the oyster gatherers.

With one half of December passed the results are showing no better, and the oyster boats now arriving from the sounds have 800 to 400 bushels as the results of a week's work, when formerly this amount was gathered each day.

These oysters now sell at 70 cents per bushel, against 8 and 10 cents one year ago, and yet the increase of price on account of supply does not bring the oyster boats as much as did the greater supplies and lower prices of last year.

But a matter of vital importance to the oyster trade of this section, and to the State at large, what of the future of the North Carolina oyster?

The North Carolina oyster, nominally under State protection, has been ruthlessly and wantonly slaughtered.

The tongers say the dredgers were reining the oysters by taking up every thing, seed oysters, small oysters, and large oysters, draining the beds and exhausting them of their natural supply.

This as to the deep waters of the sounds. But how about the tongers? An examination of oysters brought by tongers to this market reveals the fact that they are well the dredgers are exhausting the beds of the shallower waters by bringing to market the very oysters which ought to be left to provide a supply for the future.

Beat loads of oysters, unmarketable, are brought to market. With proper inspection, what the law calls for and demands, these oysters, the natural seedlings, the only means of a future oyster supply, would be kept where they belong, in the sound waters.

But with no inspection, the oyster beds were skinned, and the future of the oyster can not be prophesied.

This season another fate has overtaken the North Carolina oyster. The August storm has driven the mud over the oyster beds and smothered the oysters, the results being shown by the pitiful receipts at oyster market points in this State.

Thus the oyster question in North Carolina. Beds ruined by lack of supervision on the part of the State's inspectors, and the neglect to take prompt and right means to avert all that is possible from the August storm, and build up for the future.

Government officials may not see the value of the oyster, but for the present oysters, and preserving oysters for the future may be begun, but until the oyster business is established and protected, unless the State inspects and supervises, the oyster business is a lost cause in North Carolina.

The oyster is a valuable commodity, and the State should be the guardian of the oyster beds, and the oyster gatherers should be protected from the oyster beds.

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