

FISHERMEN SUPREME

HALF of the world total of three million persons employed in fisheries are Japanese, who man one third of the world's fishing craft and take a like proportion of the total world catch. With rice and bean curd, Japan's 80,000,000 subsist mainly on seaweeds and fish. But the seas surrounding Japan have been practically emptied of fish for many years. So the Japanese must operate where they can. Wherever they go, they fish so that the ocean will be denuded unless other countries watch carefully.

The Japanese have developed the world's first floating canneries. These vessels, weighing up to 15,000 tons, carry machinery by which catches are cleaned and canned directly they are hauled in. They have an almost limitless cruising range, are weather-proof, and are able to fish off-shore where small boats are of no use. A typical instance occurred recently when Japan stationed her floating canneries just outside the three-mile limit in North Pacific and Alaskan waters. Using miles-long deep-sea nets to intercept the salmon as they

swam coastwards to pawn in Alaskan and Canadian rivers where they had hatched, the intruders threatened to deplete in a few years the richest waters in the world, where fishing had long been limited and regulated. For the moment they have been stopped, but that they will return surreptitiously to the attack, here and elsewhere, is quite certain.

As the Japanese are made to retreat from waters here, they descend on waters there. At this stage they are bestowing the benefit of their presence particularly on the south Atlantic, off Argentina and off Central America. Newcomers to the whale industry, they and the Germans can now claim a fifth of the total killing. The chief hunt is for the blue and fin whales, which were being exterminated at the rate of 30,000 a year until an international halt was called to the proceedings a year ago, when the season was restricted to three months and the harpooning of calves, immature specimens and females with sucklings ruled out.—*Ferdinand Tuohy, condensed from The Sphere, London.*