

214.—NOTES ON THE FISHERIES OF GLOUCESTER, MASS.

By S. J. MARTIN.

[From letters to Prof. S. F. Baird.]

SUMMARY.—Last week witnessed the largest receipt of fish at this port for several years, the total amount of codfish landed being 4,020,000, of which 3,080,000 pounds was brought from Grand Banks. One-half of the fish from Grand Banks was brought by Nova Scotia vessels. There were also landed 212,000 pounds of fresh halibut and 12,565 barrels of mackerel, including 956 barrels from the bay of Saint Lawrence. The 260 barrels of herring caught in nets and traps in the harbor have been sold to the fishermen for bait.

MACKEREL.—Small mackerel are plenty on the eastern shore, and extend from Mount Desert to Cape Sable in the Bay of Fundy and as far up as Grand Manan. Large mackerel are scarce on the New England coast, the amount caught being about 5 barrels out of every 100 barrels. The remainder ranks as No. 2, No. 3, and No. 4. They bring a low price, and sold yesterday at \$3.75 per barrel, with the large ones included in the lot. I hear from the Bay of Saint Lawrence from three to four times a week, and learn that the prospect for a large catch of mackerel is good. On August 12 and 13 the vessels made large hauls off Souris, Prince Edward Island, one vessel catching 400 barrels of mackerel in two days. Mackerel are late in North Bay this summer, owing to the length of time ice remained in the bay. The ice did not leave the bay until June 2, and the mackerel would not enter until the water became warm. I think the mackerel that have been seen at Green Bay, close to the strait of Belle Isle, were driven that way by the ice. The mackerel in the Bay of Saint Lawrence are very fat and large.

BLUEFISH.—Yesterday, as schooner Phantom was on its way out after mackerel, a school of fish was seen 3 miles from the mouth of Gloucester Harbor. A seine was set and 136 bluefish taken, which were sold for \$75.

HAKE.—Hake have been a failure this year, not enough being caught to supply the market.

SWORDFISH.—Swordfish have been plentiful. Last week 2 boats landed 25 swordfish each, from Jeffries Bank, the 50 aggregating 15,625 pounds, and sold at 5 cents per pound. On August 1 there were 4 swordfish brought in, and sold at 10 cents per pound.

GLOUCESTER, MASS., *August 17, 1884.*

CODFISH.—During the past week there have been eighty-seven arrivals from the fishing grounds, landing 1,878,000 pounds of salt codfish, two-thirds of which was brought from Grand Banks. There were

six arrivals with 165,000 pounds of fresh halibut. There were four arrivals to-day from Grand Banks. Four vessels from Nova Scotia sold their fish at \$1.60 per hundred pounds. The Grand Banks cod-schooner Ethel, of Nova Scotia, had 370,000 pounds of salt codfish, the largest trip of salt codfish ever landed in Gloucester by one vessel. This cargo was sold at \$1.65 per hundred pounds. The Gloucester firms will lose a great deal on the Grand Banks fish, as the Nova Scotia vessels are stocking the place with fish at low prices. I have known some firms to pay \$2.25 per hundred for Grand Banks codfish.

MACKEREL.—There have been landed 8,417 barrels of mackerel caught in the Bay of Fundy, and 3,551 barrels caught in the Bay of Saint Lawrence. There were shipped from Canso by rail 1,314 barrels of mackerel. The mackerel taken in the bay are of good quality, large and fat, three-fourths of the amount caught being No. 1, and the remaining quarter No. 2. No. 1 mackerel from the Bay of Saint Lawrence sold at \$13 per barrel, and the Bay of Fundy mackerel sold at \$3.75 per barrel, "as they run." Vessels from North Bay report mackerel schooling from Cape Canso to Cape Sable, and that they are of the same size as the mackerel in the Bay of Fundy.

GLOUCESTER, MASS., *August 24, 1884.*

MONTHLY SUMMARY.—The receipts of fish at Gloucester during the month of August were as follows: Eleven million eight hundred and twenty-six thousand pounds salt cod, 647,250 pounds fresh halibut, 147,900 pounds salt halibut, 41,322 barrels salt mackerel, 370 barrels herring, and 85 swordfish weighing 26,340 pounds.

The above fish arrived from the following grounds: George's Bank, 118 fares, 2,578,000 pounds salt cod and 46,050 pounds fresh halibut; Grand Bank, 41 fares, 8,380,000 pounds salt cod and 72,500 pounds salt halibut; Grand Bank, Banquereau, &c., 21 fares, 599,000 pounds fresh halibut; Western Bank, Banquereau, &c., 9 fares, 474,000 pounds salt cod and 5,400 pounds salt halibut; Bay of Saint Lawrence, 14 fares, 7,332 barrels salt mackerel; American shore, 88 fares, 33,990 barrels salt mackerel; shore fishing grounds, coast of Maine, &c., 314,000 pounds salt fish, mixed; swordfishermen, 85 swordfish, weighing 26,340 pounds; traps near Gloucester, 370 barrels herring, 100 barrels mackerel; off Gloucester Harbor, in seine, 134 bluefish.

The first arrival from the Greenland fleet, schooner H. M. Rogers, brings home 80,000 pounds salt cod from Flemish Cape, and 70,000 pounds salt halibut taken off the Greenland coast.

GLOUCESTER, MASS., *September 1, 1884.*

THE GREENLAND HALIBUT FISHERY.—I have gained the following information about this fishery, two vessels having arrived from that region during the past week. These vessels came home earlier than in former years and have left several vessels on the coast. The two schooners arrived are the M. H. Perkins and Herbert M. Rogers. The

former vessel fished in the usual grounds of Holsteinberg and brings home 80,000 pounds of fitches of halibut from Greenland besides 70,000 pounds of codfish taken on Flemish Cap. She reached Greenland July 12, about a week earlier than others of the fleet, and found fish at once, and having secured a full fare left Greenland August 2, which is about the date of beginning the fishery there in past years, the size of fish ranging about as usual. The weather was fine and no difficulty was experienced in fishing. She left on the ground the schooners Shiloh, Mist, Byron Hines, Mary E., Herman Babson, and the Sarah Putnam. The last-named vessel belongs in Beverly, Mass., the Byron Hines hails from Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, and the other vessels are owned in Gloucester. The particulars of the other vessels will be reported as fast as they arrive.

The Herbert M. Rogers fished on a new spot of ground in latitude $63^{\circ} 33'$, about 30 miles off shore from Candham or Codport; the water was from 60 to 84 fathoms deep; used halibut and cod for bait and found halibut abundant, securing a full fare of 70,000 pounds of fitches in fourteen days. This vessel had stopped on Flemish Cap on the way to Greenland and caught 80,000 pounds of codfish. She left Greenland July 28, having been there since July 14. This is the shortest time-trip ever made to Greenland, and by far the shortest stay on that coast.

ICELAND HALIBUT FISHERY.—Three vessels are engaged in the Iceland halibut fishery. They left Gloucester May 20, 22, and 24. They are the schooners Alice M. Williams, David A. Story, and the Concord. No definite information has yet been received from this fleet, although from meager reports it is expected they will secure full fares. The weather has been favorable. Will write about the trips as soon as they get home. They are expected any time now.

SWORDFISH FISHERY.—The fishery for swordfish off the New England coast this season is very prosperous. The fleet numbers 42 sail, hailing from ports all the way from Newport to Portland. The fishing began at the usual time and is likely to continue through this month. A number of the fleet have landed their catch here and found ready sale. In August 85 swordfish, weighing about 24,000 pounds, were shipped from here to New York and other markets. The first arrival here was on July 28. The fish were caught on Western Jeffries, and sold at 10 cents per pound. The fare was 28 fish, which averaged about 320 pounds each. This makes 113 swordfish landed here fresh, weighing about 33,000 pounds. The largest fish weighed 613 pounds, exclusive of head and tail, and was one of the first lot brought here. The price during August was from $4\frac{1}{2}$ to 5 cents per pound fresh, or \$12 per barrel salted. The salt ones were landed by mackerel vessels—about 20 barrels, or about 4,000 pounds, being the catch thus far of the mackerel men. This amount may be added to the 33,000 pounds of fresh. The weight of the fresh fish, as given above, is exclusive of heads, swords, and tails, so that the live weight of the fish would be much greater.

The season began off Block Island and gradually worked eastward, striking the southern part of George's and then across George's, and on the shore grounds, particularly Jeffries' Bank, where all of those landed here were taken. I have talked with the skippers of the vessels and they say this is the best year they ever had, both because the fish are plenty and prices good. The captain of the *Village Belle*, of Newport, who was here last week, Wednesday, said he caught 31 swordfish in a week's cruising off Noman's Land, all big fellows, and in one day he had 7 fish struck and captured. He sold the catch at Newport, as did many of the other vessels. He had just come here from his cruising south of Cape Cod. The fleet has been north of Cape Cod for the past fortnight or three weeks, and they are now cruising from abreast of Boone Island to Mount Desert Rock. The schooner *Morrill Boy*, of Gloucester, Capt. Russell Gill, fitted out for swordfishing July 16, and has landed since that date 40 swordfish, about 13,000 pounds, without heads and tails, realizing $5\frac{1}{2}$ cents per pound at Portland. The fleet now land much of their catch at Portland, which is the only market east of here. Some go to Boston. The only other landing places that I know of are New Bedford and Newport. I will report any further information I can gather about this fishery.

MACKEREL.—Mackerel are very abundant on the New England coast, though small in size. The price is very low, only \$3.50 per barrel, including the barrel—that is before they are packed. In the bay of Saint Lawrence, Gloucester mackerelmen have in some cases done well, securing full fares of large fish that sold for \$10 to \$11. The catch by the Gloucester fleet in the bay in August was between 7,000 and 8,000 barrels as against 33,000 barrels on this shore. The season bids fair to be a great one for mackerel. During the last few days they have been close in shore about Cape Ann. Traps along shore hereabouts taking large quantities were full of mackerel this morning, but no sale for them, as the canneries here have shut down. The cannery of J. J. Burns & Co. is probably permanently closed and the firm in litigation with numerous parties—a regular failure resulting from poor management. The factory of James G. Tarr & Bro. is closed for a short time on account of the low price of the canned product.

GLoucester, MASS., *September 2, 1884.*

The past week has been a busy one in some branches of the fisheries, particularly the mackerel fishery and the swordfish fishery. In the George's Bank codfishery the number of arrivals has been twenty-four, with fair trips. From the Grand Bank there have been several arrivals with full fares. The second vessel of the Greenland fleet to arrive reached here September 1 with 90,000 pounds fitched halibut and 50,000 pounds of cod. The sword fishermen have landed about 200 fish during the week, and report them still abundant westward of here.

The vessels in this fishery now number about 100 sail and are largely hakers, belonging along the Maine coast.

Mackerel have been very abundant, a large fleet arriving daily with full fares. The number of vessels arrived here the twenty-four hours with mackerel has been 30, with 12,230 barrels; of which 10,909 barrels were shore catch, and the rest taken in the Bay of Saint Lawrence. About 20 vessels are now in the bay. The catch there this year by the American fleet, numbering 49 sail, has been between 12,000 and 13,000 barrels.

GLOUCESTER, MASS., *September 8, 1884.*

215.—TRAPPING GASPEREAU IN TANGIPAHOA RIVER.

By J. DOCK. HARRELL.

[From a letter to Prof. S. F. Baird.]

We are also beginning to note the increase of the gaspereau in our river. Previous to the war they were plentiful, but during the war there was a system of trapping inaugurated, which in a few years almost exterminated them. They are white, resembling the buffalo in shape, and have been caught here weighing from 20 to 50 pounds. They have two bones imbedded in their head that seem to have no connection with any organ of the head whatever. They have been caught this size by means of a trap known here as a wing-dam trap. This is built with a strong fall to the mouth and latticed to allow the water to pass through; fingers extend back of the fall-board which prevent the fish from taking any side advantage of the current and force of water produced by the fall-board. The trap is generally placed in the middle of the river in shallow water, and a dam constructed on each side to the bank is built of stakes and brush in the shape of a letter V, with the trap in the center where the wings join. The dam is built to raise the water to a depth of 3 to 4 feet above, and allows no fish to proceed down stream without being caught. A current is produced in front of the trap so that if one of any size stops within 3 feet of the mouth of the trap, in the twinkling of the eye he feels himself going over the fall-board. Then there is no chance in the world for him to save himself. This is a system of trapping that should be a direct violation of the law.

Bass* are found to be on the increase here, and are discovered in numbers from 3 inches long upward. They are very game when hung with a hook.

OSYKA, MISS., *August 1, 1884.*

*A specimen sent was pronounced by Dr. Bean to be the fresh-water drum or sheeps-head (*Haplodonotus grunniens*).—C. W. S.