

11.—NOTES ON THE COD GILL-NET FISHERIES AT GLOUCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS.—1882-1883.

By S. J. MARTIN.

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

In 1878, 1879, and 1880 the vessels did well with cod-nets. Last year they did but very little with nets. The reason is that there were no fish inshore. The result was the fishermen thought nets would never be used again, and some sold their nets for drink and some let them rot. Some who had nets in the last part of the winter took care of them. This winter the tide has turned. Six weeks ago the haddock catchers caught from 15,000 to 18,000 pounds of large codfish on the western part of Cashe's in 60 fathoms of water, and these fish came inshore to spawn. When the spirling were here the boats went out on the rocky spots of the fishing ground and caught some large codfish, say 200 pounds a day; but the spirling failed, and when the boats went out with clams they caught no fish. Captain Gill three weeks ago went out and set 8 old cod nets and caught 1,500 pounds of cod, but some of the nets were so rotten that the fish went through them. Then he bought 12 nets from the Banks fishermen, and since that time he has landed 35,000 pounds of large cod. This is doing well when there is little or no bait. At that time there was one boat from Gloucester and one from Rockport; to-day there are ten sail from Gloucester and two from Rockport. All the nets that were in Gloucester have been bought up and some new ones brought from Boston. The schooner *Rising Star*, after fishing 10 days, has stocked \$1,100. A boat with 3 men went out, set 7 nets 4 miles from the shore, and came in this morning with 5,000 pounds large cod for one night's fishing. All the boats are doing well, and much work will be done this winter with cod gill-nets. Cod sold to-day at 3 cents a pound. The boat *Morrill Boy* has made \$100 a man.

GLOUCESTER, MASS., *December 6, 1882.*

The cod gill-net fishing has been a great success so far this winter. There have been landed at Gloucester 180,000 pounds of large cod which had been caught in nets. It is five weeks since they began to use nets. There are 20 boats, large and small, fishing with nets, and 195 nets are in use at present. A year ago all the fish caught in nets were obtained in Ipswich Bay, but this winter the greater part of the fish have been caught off here on the rocky bottom. The fish are large, averaging 21 pounds. Seven-eighths of those caught are males. There are two vessels that have made \$220 to a share. These cod bring a good price, being sold at 3 cents a pound.

GLOUCESTER, MASS., *December 20, 1882.*

The net fishermen have succeeded well in Boston Bay this winter. Six hundred thousand pounds of fish caught in this bay have been landed

at Gloucester. The most successful vessel has made \$380 since November 17; this was with 5 men and 16 nets. The fish all left the bay in one night. The net fishermen are getting ready to fish in Ipswich Bay. Two boats which are now there are doing well. The fish sometimes remain there until April 1. The total value of the fish landed at Gloucester by the netters, thus far, is \$15,000; 70 men and 140 nets have been engaged. The outlook for a prosperous winters' work is good.

GLOUCESTER, MASS., *January 11, 1883.*

There are 10 vessels in Ipswich Bay using cod gill-nets. They are using 15 nets to a boat and are doing well. During the last 20 days they have landed at Rockport and Portsmouth 230,000 pounds of large cod. Some of the boats have made \$110 to a share, with 8 men to a boat. The fish are in one small spot, and 150 nets are set on a spot of ground half a mile long and quarter of a mile wide. The nets are often set across each other, so that one man was obliged to haul 7 nets in order to get his own. Those on top get the most fish.

GLOUCESTER, MASS., *February 6, 1883.*

Net fishing is about ended for this winter; not more than two boats are now fishing with nets. The reason why the boats took up their nets so soon is because the nets were worn out, and they do not want to get new ones. Fish have been scarce during the past week, and the time for net fishing is short. The fish in Ipswich Bay are large. The schooner Blue Jay was in Rockport yesterday with 135 fish which weighed 4,134 pounds; these fish sold for 5½ cents a pound. I think the boats that have nets will do well; 5,000 pounds now is as good as 15,000 pounds in 1881.

GLOUCESTER, MASS., *February 24, 1883.*

The fishing with cod gill-nets in Ipswich Bay has been good during the last ten days. Some of the boats landed as many as 15,000 pounds last week after two nights' fishing. All the boats which took their nets up have gone with them to Ipswich Bay. The fish are very large and full of spawn. The crew of the boat Martha Jane shared \$92 apiece after fishing 10 days. This was with 8 men and 4 dories.

The net fishing for cod is done for this year. The amount of fish landed here which were caught in nets this winter is 2,335,000 pounds. These fish were weighed as they came from the water. During the months of November and December, when fish were plentiful, there were not many boats with nets, but in the latter part of the winter there were 21 boats fishing with cod gill-nets. If the whole fleet had used nets in the first part of the winter the catch would have been much larger. The number of vessels fishing with nets is 21. Six dories with cod-nets fishing out of Hamilton, with 3 nets and 2 men to a dory. Number of nets used this winter, 420; men engaged, 180. The nets are 50 fathoms long. The weather this winter has been rough for net fishing, the nets not being hauled more than two-thirds of the time. Three

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boats have nets down, but they have not been hauled this week. The nets are all used up. If the fish remain in the nets over twenty-four hours they are scaled; the sand fleas take the scales off and suck the blood out of the fish. Then they have to be sold for half price.

GLOUCESTER, MASS., *March 25, 1883.*

12.—THE AMERICAN PURSE-SEINE SUCCESSFUL IN THE HERRING FISHERIES OF SWEDEN.

By S. J. MARTIN.

[Letter to Prof. S. F. Baird.]

You will probably be interested to know that a purse-seine has been successfully used in the herring fisheries of Sweden, near Gottenborg. My son, Capt. George H. Martin, informs me that Andrew Swinton, who formerly fished from Gloucester in schooner Northern Eagle, returned home to Gottenborg in 1879, and writes to William Swinton, his brother, now living in Gloucester, to the following effect: "In the spring of this year (1882) I bought some twine and had a purse-seine made here in the same style as the Gloucester seines, and went off in a small craft to try it on the herring in this vicinity. I am doing first rate, and think the purse-seine can be used to great advantage in these waters. This is the first purse-seine that I know of ever being used on this coast." I can get more facts when William Swinton returns from a fishing trip.

GLOUCESTER, MASS., *October 17, 1882.*

I have seen Mr. Swinton and learned what I could concerning the use of the purse-seine in Sweden. This Andrew Swinton is a brother of the William Swinton who lives in Gloucester. He went mackerel fishing from this port for five years with seines; but went back to Sweden three years ago and settled there. In Sweden it seems that they catch most of their herring with drag-seines; but for the three years last past the herring have kept so far off shore that the fishermen could not reach them well with a drag-seine. Last winter Mr. Swinton had a purse-seine made, which was 840 feet long and 90 feet deep. This seine excited much interest among the fishermen. The first time it was set 50 barrels of large herring were caught. Mr. Swinton does not state how many herring he has caught during this summer, but says that he did well, and has made three times as much as any other fisherman in Gottenborg. He states also that next year there will be three more purse-seines used.

GLOUCESTER, MASS., *November 10, 1882.*