

---

**Vol. IV, No. 23. Washington, D. C. Aug. 14, 1884.**

---

**176.—DESTRUCTION OF FISH CAUSED BY NETS OF SMALL MESH IN LAKE MICHIGAN.****By G. A. SHELEY.**

I spend from six weeks to two months during the summer fishing with hook and line in this vicinity. While visiting the different fishing camps I have inquired as to the size of mesh used in pound fishing. I find it varies from  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches. The latter is proving very destructive, as they catch with the  $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch net all the smaller-sized whitefish and trout. Tons of these are destroyed yearly, until now the gill-net fishermen cannot catch one where they formerly caught hundreds. The cause of this is the destruction of the smaller fish, which are killed by being handled in the pounds. It will not be but a short time before whitefish will be as scarce in Lakes Huron and Michigan as they are in Lake Erie. Their disappearance in the latter lake is due to pound-nets and the small meshes used. I have inquired of fishermen and find that in their opinion net-fishing (at least the pound) should be discontinued during the month of November, as it is then that the fish go to the shoals to spawn, and in this locality you will find pounds set on both sides of the shoals and in such a position as to catch great numbers of the fish before they spawn.

The fishermen bring from one to three tons of whitefish to Mackinaw daily. Those who have been engaged in fishing, and are still fishing, state that the small meshes destroy tons of fish which if allowed to have their freedom would in a year or two become large fish. Fish which four years ago brought on the island about 4 cents per pound are now selling at 9 cents. The cause of this is the scarcity, and at the present time there are but a few points near here where any can be caught. I should think that, if not contrary to law to use revenue cutters for the purpose, it would be of great benefit to the consumer and the country at large to have one of these cutters ordered to inspect these nets and see that they use no meshes smaller than allowed by law, and also, if it could be done, to have the pounds removed from the vicinity of spawning grounds during the month of November.

Congressman Springer advised me to write you on this subject, as I am very much interested in the preservation of the fish in the lakes. Mr. Springer is at present visiting the island, and could assist you in obtaining information as to the facts I have stated.

CEDAR POINT COTTAGE,  
*Mackinaw, Mich., July 21, 1884.*