

59.—YOUNG MACKEREL DESTROYED BY SMALL-MESHED SEINES.**By B. P. CHADWICK.**

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

The destruction of young mackerel along our coast by the use of fine-mesh seines is enormous. I had long known that great quantities of young mackerel were destroyed by the fishermen, but I did not think that the amount was so great until I had given the subject an investigation. The number of mackerel vessels has very much diminished in the last twenty years.

The present method of our fishermen in seining mackerel is such that while taking over 500,000 barrels of good sizable fish, it causes a total destruction of over 1,000,000 barrels of young fish that have grown to one-third the usual size of fully matured fish. Could this number of fish be protected and caught when full grown, the amount would be 3,000,000 barrels; and at the present price of No. 1 mackerel (\$15 per barrel) the amount of \$45,000,000 worth of food-fish is no small item to our people. The hay crop of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Massachusetts is 3,150,000 tons. This crop has a market value of \$37,800,000. Now, if the farmers should destroy the hay crop annually, the effect upon agriculture in these States would be disastrous; and yet the present method of seining mackerel destroys \$45,000,000 worth of food-fish, and scarcely a voice is raised against it.

Mackerel vessels carry from two to four seines each. I have known a single seine to destroy a hundred and fifty barrels of young mackerel in a day in the taking of thirty barrels of marketable fish. If one seine does injury to this amount in a single day, what must be the effect of using the seines of a mackerel fleet of four hundred vessels for ninety days? The ocean is large, and mackerel are prolific. The spawn of a single mackerel is nearly 500,000. Were it not for these two facts, the end of mackerel fishing would soon be reached. As it is, the catch of No. 1 fish is small, there being scarcely any in the market, and these few selling at an exorbitant price. This condition is caused by the destruction of the young fish.

The subject is one that seems to call for immediate attention. Our fishing laws, as regards the coast fisheries, are in a bad condition, and need a thorough investigation; while all our regulations concerning ocean fishing should be well known and the grounds for their existence should be thoroughly understood.

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