

in a purely economic light, and to suggest a course of action in regard to these societies which I am inclined to think would tend to establish them on a satisfactory footing and promote their well-being, as it would operate in the direction of preventing the undue increase of small, weak societies, and thus strengthen and widen the sphere of usefulness of the larger and older ones.

WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND, June 1, 1886.

72.—AN ACT RELATING TO THE IMPORTING AND LANDING OF MACKEREL CAUGHT DURING THE SPAWNING SEASON.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That for the period of five years from and after the first day of March, eighteen hundred and eighty-seven, no mackerel other than what is known as Spanish mackerel, caught between the first day of March and the first day of June, inclusive, of each year, shall be imported into the United States or landed upon its shores: *Provided, however,* That nothing in this act shall be held to apply to mackerel caught off-shore with hook and line, from open row-boats of less than twenty feet keel,* and landed in said boats.

SEC. 2. That section forty-three hundred and twenty-one of the Revised Statutes is amended, for the period of five years aforesaid, so as to read before the last sentence as follows: "This license does not grant the right to fish for mackerel, other than for what is known as Spanish mackerel, between the first day of March and the first day of June, inclusive, of this year." Or in lieu of the foregoing there shall be inserted so much of said period of time as may remain unexpired under this act.

SEC. 3. That the penalty for the violation or attempted violation of this act shall be forfeiture of license on the part of the vessel engaged in said violation, if a vessel of this country, and the forfeiture to the United States, according to law, of the mackerel imported or landed, or sought to be imported or landed.

SEC. 4. That all laws in conflict with this law are hereby repealed.

Passed the House of Representatives May 21, 1886.

On July 29, 1886, Mr. Thomas W. Palmer, from the Committee on Fisheries, submitted to the Senate the following report:

This bill is designed to prevent the taking of mackerel by seines and purse-nets between the first days of March and June of the five years succeeding its enactment. It is urged with practical unanimity by the vessel-owners and fishermen engaged in this industry, and is opposed only by commission dealers in fresh fish.

* Here the Senate Committee on Fisheries struck out the words "open row-boats of less than twenty feet keel," and inserted the word "boats" instead.

The testimony taken by the committee shows an alarming decrease in the better grades of mackerel suitable for salting as food. The average yearly catch in amount for the years from 1809 to 1872, inclusive, was 166,184 barrels. The average yearly catch from 1872, the time purse-nets came into general use, to 1885, inclusive, was 201,204 barrels. It will be seen that the average annual amount caught for the last thirteen years is only about 20 per cent greater than for the sixty-four years from 1809 to 1872, notwithstanding the improved appliances which should have insured a vast increase in the catch, stimulated as the business has been by a greatly increased demand from a rapidly increasing population and improved methods of distribution. Far more to be deprecated than the deficient catch has been the deterioration in quality, as shown by the decrease in percentage of No. 1s.

In 1865 No. 1 mackerel was 59 per cent of the whole catch; in 1866 it was 64 per cent; in 1867 it was 58 per cent; in 1868 it was 51 per cent; in 1869 it was 31 per cent; in 1870 it was 21 per cent; in 1871 it was 40 per cent; in 1872 it was 40 per cent; in 1873 (the year that seines became generally used) it was 45 per cent; in 1874 it was 44 per cent; in 1875 it ran down to 25 per cent; in 1876 it was only 14 per cent; in 1877 it was 17 per cent; in 1878 it was 9 per cent; in 1879 it was 6 per cent; in 1880 it was 8 per cent; in 1881 it was 6 per cent; in 1882 it was 15 per cent; in 1883 it was 14 per cent; in 1884 it was 8 per cent; and finally in 1885 it was 7 per cent.

The fish taken in the time included in the bill, both male and female, are poor, unfit for packing, and not very acceptable for the table.

The schools appear on our coast off Cape Hatteras in March, and thence proceed northward, and spawn on the coasts of Massachusetts and Maine. On their first appearance the mackerel fleet meets them, and they are harried and harassed from that time until winter.

Although it is contended by some scientists that all that man can do will have no appreciable effect in depleting the ocean of fish, it is believed by many that the unrelenting pursuit mentioned above has a tendency to deflect them from their course or to prevent many from returning in subsequent years. This latter fact may account for the diminished percentage of No. 1 mackerel.

The whole mackerel fleet is owned in Massachusetts and Maine, consists of nearly 400 sail, employs about 5,000 men, and is now engaged in seining mackerel from March to November. During April and May of 1885 the catch was so great that it glutted the avenues of distribution, and many thousand barrels were thrown away. There is some conflict of testimony as to the amount of this waste, but it was probably between 60,000 and 75,000 barrels.

Your committee have amended the bill to allow fuller latitude to the taking of mackerel by hook and line, and recommend that the amendment be concurred in, and that the bill when so amended do pass.