

REPORT
OF
HER MAJESTY'S ACTING VICE-CONSUL GENERAL
AT CHRISTIANIA,
ON THE
COD & HERRING FISHERIES OF NORWAY,
FOR THE YEAR 1866.

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COD FISHERIES.

THESE fisheries are carried on all along the coast of Norway, from the Naze to the Varanger Fjord, close to the Russian frontier.

They are divided into three distinct fisheries, viz. Loffoden, Romsdal and Finmark fisheries, the most important of which is that of Loffoden, carried on among a group of islands of this name, lying a portion of the Norwegian coast from north latitude $67^{\circ} 20'$ to $69^{\circ} 20'$, occupying four degrees of longitude.

They comprise a number of islands, some of considerable magnitude, and collectively form the outer or western side of the West Fjord, where the great annual cod fishery is chiefly carried on.

This Fjord, which is the most extensive on the coast of Norway, has a communication with the ocean, independently of its 60 miles broad entrance, by numerous narrow sounds, through which the main receives and supplies the immense mass of water which flows in and out of this Fjord. In it the depth of water is so considerable that there are but few places where the lead will reach the bottom; on these it varies from 80 to 200 fathoms.

Near the coast there is a fishing bank of irregular breadth; it neither deepens nor slopes gradually, but consists of three terraces of different depths.

Nearest the land this bank has a depth of from 20 to 30 fathoms, extending for certain distance at that level, when it suddenly drops to between 40 and 50 fathoms, which, in a similar way, again extends some distance, when the third ledge or terrace appears, on which there are from 90 to 120 fathoms water.

It is on these ledges or banks that the extensive Loffoden fishery is carried on, affording, during three or four months of the year, lucrative employment to between 25,000 and 30,000 people.

The famous and undeservedly dreaded Maelstrom runs between the above mentioned islands, and is so little thought of by the inhabitants, that they pass and repass it in their frail vessels at all states of the tide, except at certain times in the winter season; and far from drawing in whales and other things that come within its range, it appears to be a favourite resort of the fish of the country, and the fishermen reap a rich piscatorial harvest from its bosom.

The greatest rate of the tide at the Maelstrom, in winter, does not exceed six miles an hour.

As is usually the case, the cod made its appearance at the Loffodens towards the end of December. From the commencement of the following month the inhabitants of these islands carried on a lucrative fishery; but as the weather during this month was frequently stormy, and the fishermen not numerous, the month's catch was unimportant.