

These investigations, which have been made with great care and patience, and, have extended over a considerable period of time, appear to prove that the winter cod, "*Gadus morrhua*," spawns in the open sea, at a considerable distance from the bottom, and that the spawn or ova do not sink to it, but go through the entire process of incubation floating about at no great distance from the surface. The same is believed to be the case with the haddock and mackerel, and the numerous other species of the *Gadus*.

It is yet doubtful how far this new discovery will affect the current opinion as to the injurious effect of the use of deep-sea nets; but it is clear that, should further research tend to the same conclusion as regards the herring, the old complaints against their use during the herring fishery will likewise become groundless.

The Government themselves have, at any rate, come to the conclusion that the fewer restrictions that are imposed the better; and the evident tendency of their legislation is to remove all existing barriers, and, leave to the individual full freedom of action to carry on the saltwater fisheries in the manner his expediency and experience may suggest to him.

Before quitting this subject, I should mention that the Commissioners are of opinion that nets which are placed out both up and down in the sea, (deep-sea nets and floating nets,) may, in narrow channels and waters, be placed out in such numbers and at different depths as effectually to impede the rising of the fish. Taking this view of the case, they propose to prohibit, in certain localities and cases, too early and indiscriminate casting out of nets at the Loffoden fishery.

The instances where injury is stated to have been caused by an injudicious use of certain nets appear to me not to be sufficiently authenticated, and may probably have been put forward by parties whose interest it was to prevent their wider application. When, therefore, regard is had to their immense importance as a successful fishing implement, and to the material loss, in a national economical point of view, which even their partial and qualified prohibition might entail, more conclusive data should be required before giving such prohibition the force of law.

As there is no Government inspection at the Romsdal and Finmark fisheries, it is not easy to collect reliable information concerning them. The first one is of minor importance: its yield, even in the best years, rarely exceeds five millions of fish, and figures but very little in the returns as an article of export. The take, this year, is estimated at about four millions of fish.

The second named fishery is of great importance to the trade between the province of Finmark and its Russian neighbour of the White Sea, and it is difficult to say to which of the two it is the more valuable.

The whole coast abounds in fish, and a considerable quantity is taken at a time of the year when it would be difficult for the Finmark fishermen to cure and prepare them for distant foreign markets; but the Russians make their appearance at this season, and purchase the raw fish as they come out of the water, weigh and count them on the decks of their vessels, and pay the Norwegians on the spot, in rye meal and other Russian produce. Several hundred Russian vessels yearly find employment in this manner.

The Russian Government consider this intercourse of such importance that they have specially exempted the Norwegian raw and salted fish from duty at the ports of the White Sea. The great encouragement that Government afford to the trade with Finmark has, no doubt, strengthened the belief that the Russians are endeavouring to obtain a permanent footing in the north of Norway.

Independently of political considerations, the commercial importance of an open-water port in these latitudes, and the right of direct participation in these lucrative fisheries, would make such an acquisition highly desirable. They possess, moreover, large tracts of inland forests in Russian Finmark, which lie unproductive, from want of available issues on their own coasts for the lumber, the only water outlet being the Pasvig river, which empties itself in the Varanger Fjord in Norwegian Finmark.

A few years ago, the Norwegian Government revised the laws regulating the Loffoden fishery, and rescinded the greater part of the restrictions which impeded its free prosecution. The Romsdal and Finmark, and Nordland fisheries were, however, not interfered with, so that the antiquated and illiberal enactments which hampered the first-named fishery, are, for the most part, still in force at the two latter.