

THE FISHERIES

From early times the fisheries have been of the greatest importance to the Icelanders. During the colonization of the country fish in firths and lakes constituted the main assets of the land, and there is little doubt that at first many of the settlers lived largely on fish, birds' eggs and other natural produce. In the fourteenth century fish became the staple article of export, and the fishing steadily developed till the end of the fifteenth century. For the next hundred years fish still retained its place as the chief commodity, but then a decline set in, and it is not till the nineteenth century, and more especially during the last fifty years or so, that any real development in this important industry is visible. As, however, official fishery statistics were not issued till 1897, this article will be devoted mainly to the growth of the fishing industry since the beginning of the present century.

THE FISHING FLEET

Up to about sixty years ago the Icelandic fishing fleet consisted almost exclusively of rowing-boats, and deck vessels were very little employed here till towards the close of last century. In 1876 the total number of open boats was 3208; that of deck vessels only 38, all very small. But during the subsequent 30 years their number constantly increased, particularly after 1890. Since 1905 this increase has been as follows:

Year	Sailing vessels	Motor boats of 12 tons and upwards	Trawlers	Other steamers	Motor boats of less than 12 tons	Rowing-boats
1905 . . .		165	1	3	1944	
1910 . . .		140	6	2	1724	
1915 . . .	95	40	20	6	391	1121
1920 . . .	39	120	28	2	355	1002
1925 . . .	11	201	47	27	394	811
1927 . . .	1	185	46	29	491	650