

1880.

NEW ZEALAND.

FISH-BREEDING ESTABLISHMENT IN THE COLONY

(CORRESPONDENCE RESPECTING THE MAINTENANCE OF A PERMANENT).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

No. 1.

The CHAIRMAN, Southland Salmon Commissioners, to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

SIR,—

Dun Alister, Wyndham, 27th February, 1880.

I have the honor to inform you that at a late meeting of the Southland Salmon Commissioners the following resolutions were agreed to: (1.) "That the Commissioners are unanimously of opinion that a further importation of the ova from England is required in order satisfactorily to establish them in the rivers of the colony;" and (2.) "That the Commissioners trust that the Government will continue its operations, and maintain a permanent fish-breeding establishment, until the rivers are stocked, on the present site of the ponds, if that can be retained on reasonable terms—by lease or by purchase; but, if not, in either way on some other suitable place, for the selection and acquiring of which the Commissioners request authority from the Government."

In a former letter to you I had the honor to submit some reasons in favour of the continuance of its fish-breeding operations by the Government, and have now, in support of those resolutions, some further observations to make for the consideration of the Government.

The general progress of the science of fish-culture is extending widely through the world. In various countries the Governments have established fish-breeding places to stock the rivers and keep up a supply of this valuable article of food, and in others, as in England and France, private enterprise has been both active and successful in the same direction.

A very instructive report by the Canadian Fish Commissioners (of 1877) has lately been reviewed in an Edinburgh newspaper, of which I enclose a slip, and from which a few particulars may be quoted. The report says that nearly every State in the American Union is now aiding the work of fish-culture by public grants and the appointment of Fishery Commissioners. A pleasant rivalry exists among the several States as to which will be the most successful in stocking rivers and supplying a food so generally and highly prized. The Canadians appreciate the benefits that will accrue to fisheries by artificially breeding salmon, trout, and other fish. The Canadian Government had seven fish-breeding establishments in 1877, which were maintained at a cost in that year of £5,000. Mr. Wilmot, the superintendent of these establishments, reports that the number of vitalized eggs in them in 1877 amounted to 36,694,000, which, added to the number of salmon distributed in various rivers in former years, amounting to 28,515,000, make a grand total of salmon eggs and fry, up to the end of 1877, of 59,209,000. In the spring of 1877 he says there were distributed from these places—Fry of *Salmo salar*, 5,451,000; fry of Californian salmon (*Quinnat*), 7,000; fry of speckled trout, 99,000; fry of whitefish, 7,000,000. The eggs laid down in autumn, 1877, were—*Salmo salar*, 6,004,000; Californian salmon, 40,000; salmon-trout, 1,000,000; speckled trout, 150,000; whitefish, 23,500,000. The whitefish, it is said, are bred so extensively to supply the great falling-off in the take in Lakes Ontario and Erie. On the Fraser River, where it might have been supposed the supply would never have been exhausted, the unrestricted slaughter of salmon has created alarm, as it is seriously affecting the extensive export trade in salmon, and the people have applied to the Canadian Government for a grant to erect a salmon-breeding establishment on a large scale on the Fraser River.

Now, seeing the supply of salmon in the American rivers, especially in those falling into the North Pacific, where their numbers were astonishingly great, is falling off so seriously that it is considered necessary to have recourse to artificial breeding in order to avert their extermination, how much more indispensable it is in this colony, where we have as yet had no proof that the imported salmon have bred in our rivers, to continue our fish-breeding operations until our rivers are fully stocked: indeed, the argument goes further, and points to the establishment of permanent breeding-places as auxiliaries to the natural operations in maintaining a full stock of fish in our rivers; and we may also gather the further lesson that, when we have naturalized this source of wealth, we should secure its permanence by protecting the fish against capture at improper seasons or by improper means. And the cost of such breeding-places need not be great: after a suitable site was obtained, buildings erected, and ponds formed, the salary of curator would be the chief item of annual cost. Salmon ova could be now obtained from England at a far less cost than the colony has heretofore paid