REASONS FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF THE PERCH INTO TASMANIA.

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As many persons in this and other Australian colonies appear to consider that the perch introduced into the colony will prove injurious to other and better fish, it may be well to place upon record the reasons for such introduction.

The rivers of Tasmania are divided into two very distinct classes, namely, those which are ever flowing, and take their rise in mountain streams or large lakes, and those which only run during the winter months, and in summer consist (like many Australian rivers) of a series of deep still pools. The first class are admirably adapted for the rock and rapid loving salmonidæ, while the second form a suitable home for comparatively still water fish, such as perch, carp, and tench.

The differences in these two classes of rivers are well marked by their indigenous inhabitants, the lively grayling *(Prototroctes murœna)*, closely approaching the salmonidæ in character, being present in the first class and absent in the second. The Derwent, South Esk, and Huon, and many of their tributaries, are good examples of the one class—the Macquarie, the Jordan, and the Coal River, of the other. No sensible man would compare salmon or trout with perch, but while there are in Tasmania hundreds of miles of rivers, and acres of lagoons and backwaters devoid of good indigenous fish, which will not produce salmon and trout, and will produce perch, surely the latter fish ought not to be altogether excluded.

Whenever they become numerous the perch will doubtless find their way to the rivers which produce better fish, but it must be remembered that in any given river the localities suitable for trout and salmon in the early stages of their growth are by no means those frequented by perch, and if the perch should occasionally swallow a few hundreds of young salmon or trout, the old salmon and their congeners will never forget to return the compliment on a far larger number of perch which produce young in such numbers as to supply a vast quantity of valuable food, and it is an undoubted fact that the salmon and trout do more injury both to spawn and fry of their own species than the perch.

In numberless rivers, salmon, trout and perch, are all indigenous, and each would be plentiful if fairly treated by their worst enemy, man.

As a mere question of sport, the introduction of perch will be regarded as a boon by a large number of people, for while comparatively few will like to incur the expense of salmon fishing or undergo the labour required to attain proficiency in trout fishing, numbers will follow a sport like perch fishing, which yields much recreation at little cost. So keenly is this felt by many English fishermen that while strenuous efforts are being made to increase the number of trout in the Thames, and to re-establish the salmon there, large sums of money are expended in affording protection to the perch and other white fish.

But beyond all this one strong reason for the introduction of perch is to be found in the fact that for purposes of artificial rearing, no food is so easily grown for the young salmon and trout in their earliest stages as the minute perch fry, each of the latter being not one twentieth the size of their devourers when those devourers first begin to feed.

At Huningue and Stormontfield the young fish are fed with boiled liver, pounded fine, but however carefully used, a quantity of this liver escapes the fish, and gets lodged in the gravel, where it decomposes and soon becomes a fertile source of disease and death. Even the young larvæ of the common blow fly, hitherto used at the Plenty, though somewhat better than liver, are apt to escape the fish and die, doing more or less damage to the water, but if a stream from a pond in which perch are hatching by millions is led through the water containing young salmon or trout, all the perch fry which are not immediately bolted, roam quietly about, doing no harm to the water, till their inevitable turn comes.

A lot of young trout hatched from the egg and fed in this manner during the winter of 1867 were turned out at four months old with a loss of only 6 per cent.