

7.—THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF TROUT-CULTURE.

BY W. L. GILBERT.

Probably no business ever entered into by the people had such flattering prospects of success and was, in its nature, so fascinating as the artificial cultivation of trout, and at the same time was so discouraging in the results attained. It was very easy to procure and impregnate the eggs and hatch the trout, but to raise them to market size was quite another thing, and those who were early in the business well remember the fine lots of healthy young trout fry hatched during the winter and placed in the rearing ponds in early spring, only to see them die and fade away as the dew before a July sun. It was, I think, the most discouraging business ever undertaken by man. Many gave it up disgusted, and many articles have appeared in public print proclaiming that trout could never be raised for the market economically. We are now prepared to show that trout can be raised in almost unlimited quantities. Massachusetts alone has facilities for raising millions of pounds annually, and this is also true of nearly every State north of Mason and Dixon's line. When we can take a spring-fed brook of, say, 100,000 gallons per hour capacity, and which in a state of nature did not produce 50 pounds of trout annually, and by applying scientific methods make it produce 20,000 pounds annually, some idea may be formed of the grand possibilities of trout-culture. Incredible as this may seem, it is none the less a fact.

It will thus be seen that the artificial cultivation of trout is no longer a matter of doubt. The business has now passed through the experimental stages, and all that stands in the way of its becoming one of the great industries of the people is the present arbitrary, unjust, and, I believe, unconstitutional laws of the several States which deny the trout-grower the right to sell his product in accordance with the demands of the market. If the expansion of trout-culture, so earnestly wished and worked for, is ever to be realized in America this stumbling-block of overprotection must first be removed. Remove this, legalize the business, grant to the trout-grower the same rights and privileges that are freely accorded to all other citizens and taxpayers who are engaged in an honorable and legitimate industry, namely, the right to sell their product when it is most needed, and trout farms will spring up all over the country, and this delicious fish will be raised in immense quantities and as cheaply as poultry, thus giving employment to individuals, profitable investment for capital, and a delicious food product during the winter months, when most needed.

When we take into consideration the vast possibilities of trout-culture, and also the fact that the supply of fish from natural sources is fast being exhausted, it seems a suicidal policy for any state or nation to pass and still persist in maintaining laws which shall in any way interfere with the development and expansion of fish-culture.

Allow me to say in closing that it seems to me highly appropriate that this Congress, which represents with such intelligence and ability all fishing interests of every kind of all the nations of the earth, should take the initiative in a matter of such vital importance to trout-culture; and I predict that if its efforts should be crowned with success it will receive the thanks of every friend of trout-culture in the land.