

**THE PROPOSED INTRODUCTION OF AMERICAN CATFISH INTO THE RIVERS OF BELGIUM.****By ALFRED LEFEBVRE.**

[From dispatch No. 41 of the vice-consul of the United States at Ghent, Belgium, to the State Department, transmitted to the United States Fish Commission.]

When Mr. Wilson was consul at this port he interested himself in a project for the improvement of the pisciculture of the country. The industries of Flanders, and especially of Ghent, concentrated, exhibited as they are in large manufacturing establishments, situated on the banks of the rivers and discharging their refuse into the water, render it unhealthy for the fish, and has resulted in their decreased numbers, if not entire disappearance in some neighborhoods. Mr. Wilson compared its situation to the rivers of Delaware and Schuylkill in the neighborhood of the city of Philadelphia, and expressed a belief that the catfish so common there would thrive here. He conferred with Prof. S. F. Baird, who confirmed him in this belief, and in the correspondence which took place between them, the feasibility of stocking these rivers with these fish seems to have been agreed upon.

Mr. Wilson opened a correspondence with the authorities of Flanders (which has been continued by me since his departure), and it, with other causes, attracted official attention to the subject and created much interest in it. Parliament took it up; a new law for the protection and propagation of fish is about to be passed (a copy of which I will send to the department as soon as it shall have been printed), and a committee appointed having general charge of the subject. Hon. E. Willequet, member of Parliament from Ghent, is a member of this committee; and, not wearying you with uninteresting details, I come to the immediate object of this dispatch, which is, that the committee desire to put Mr. Wilson's and Professor Baird's scheme into operation, and have, through Mr. Willequet, requested me to communicate through the department with Professor Baird and secure his aid and co-operation.

Mr. Wilson and myself have had many conversations with Mr. Willequet, the governor of the province, and other authorities, who are all in favor of the attempt. I inclose a translation of Mr. Willequet's notes, that they and a copy of this dispatch, if needed, may be transmitted to Professor Baird.

Arrangements have been made with the Red Star Line of steamers for shipment of the young fish from New York to Antwerp, if they can be put on board, and I will see that they are taken care of on their arrival. As you will perceive by Mr. Willequet's letter of the 22d July,

if he only can know when the fish will arrive he will have everything in readiness to receive them.

As to the work on pisciculture or ichthyology, alluded to, I would like Professor Baird to indicate one of the best, and I will procure it for the committee of which Mr. Willequet is a member.

GHEENT, *July 26, 1882.*

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TRANSLATION OF A LETTER OF MR. WILLEQUET, DATED 1ST JULY, 1882, TO THE UNITED STATES CONSUL AT GHEENT.

I have the honor to belong to the committee which has charge of elaborating the rules to append to the new law upon fisheries.

In the meeting of yesterday the committee received communication of the letters sent by your predecessor at Ghent, Mr. Wilson, to the governor of the province. These letters, among other obliging things, make the offer to supply our province and our country with the eggs or live young fish of an American species which, according to Mr. Wilson, would thrive wonderfully in the rivers of our provinces.

Mr. Wilson has been called to another post. I dare to hope that the United States consulate will preserve for our country, and especially for our Flanders, the good will shown until now, and I shall be very happy to be the medium to convey this kindness.

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TRANSLATION OF LETTER OF MR. WILLEQUET, DATED 22D JULY, 1882, TO THE UNITED STATES CONSUL AT GHEENT.

I hasten to answer your letter, and will begin by thanking you and the Government of the United States for the courtesy shown in this instance. I have taken notice of the communications of your predecessor, sent to the committee for the elaboration of the rules upon fisheries, and I am personally convinced of the efficacy of the indicated means to new-stock our rivers.

As soon as these rules shall be published, and this will be, along with the law, in about five or six weeks, I will take care to send you a few copies of both.

You will render good service to the public, first, by asking your government to let us have the young catfish of which you speak, and then, by letting me know the exact time of their arrival in Belgium, as it will be necessary to prepare for them, and this has to be done with care. I will make in this matter all necessary communications to the Government of Belgium.

It would be fortunate, also, if you could indicate a work upon pisciculture or ichthyology, which would allow us to study the question from the American point of view.