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### THE FIRST IMPORTATION OF TROUT

### THE EARLY HISTORY OF TROUT ACCLIMATIZATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

THE following is an account of the various steps that have been taken in the acclimatization of trout in South Africa. It is advisable to put this on record as the information which can now be readily procured may not subsequently be available, and interesting historical facts in the development of what promises to prove one of the most striking features of Colonial Rivers may be lost both for the historian and for those who may desire to repeat the experiment in other countries.

The International Fisheries Exhibition in 1883 was the means amongst other things of directing attention to an interesting new feature of the fishing industry, namely, the artificial propagation of the Salmonidæ, and the acclimatization of fish generally. Means were afforded for seeing the actual working of the hatchery, and representatives from various countries described the efforts that were then being made to foster this new industry. The Howietown hatchery was then in working order in Scotland; in

Canada they were turning out about 20 million of the Salmonidæ per annum through the artificial process; in America several rivers completely deprived of the Salmonidæ had been restocked, and the whole of the Pacific coast producing fish to the value of something like three million dollars a day, was thoroughly under the control of fish culture.

It was fortunate that a representative from the Cape should have had an opportunity at this exhibition of learning something of this new departure in fisheries, and of seeing the great benefit to this country that would follow by stocking its barren rivers with valuable fish, and that he should have taken the matter up with enthusiasm.

It was Mr. Lachlan MacLean who, beginning the experiment of trout acclimatization in this Colony, has, in spite of various difficulties and failures, proved its practicability. It is now in a fair way to complete success, and the rivers are being gradually stocked with valuable fish.

In 1884, Mr. MacLean, mostly at his own expense and risk, imported 20,000 ova, which were taken to the Waverley Mills, Ceres, with the assistance of Mr. W. W. Dickson, for hatching purposes. Although about 17,000 were hatched, nearly all were poisoned by the action of the soft water of the Breede River on the tin lining of the hatching boxes. A few got into the river, and may be still there. Three, however, were placed in a pond, and for a time they did well, but in February, 1890, they succumbed to the effects of heat, the water in the pond running too low. Some idea of the manner in which the trout thrive is furnished by the specimen—weighting 3 lbs.—which may be seen preserved in Mr. MacLean's office. The experiments were carried on under great difficulties, not the least being the high temperature of the water which had to be reduced by the use of ice.

Curiously enough, quite unknown to the promoters of this enterprise, a somewhat similar experiment was being carried out in the Eastern Province, but on a smaller scale. This, though resulting in a failure, served to draw attention to the whole question in that part of the Colony. In 1882, Mr. J. D. Ellis, of King William's Town, had imported a number of trout ova, but through unforeseen circumstances, the experiment was doomed to failure.

A similar attempt had been made by Mr. J. C. Parker, of Pietermaritzburg, to introduce trout into the Colony of Natal, but though he proceeded with care, the experiment proved equally unsuccessful.

Enough had been done, however, in the experiment at Ceres Road, to show that the rearing of trout from imported eggs was feasible.

The funds for these experiments were provided by Mr. MacLean and his friends, but he saw that in order to ensure success the matter should be carried on on a larger scale with better means at disposal for manipulating the ova and fry. Since 1884, he endeavoured to induce the Government to provide funds for further experiments, and the Honourable J. W. Sauer, who heartily sympathised with the efforts being made, on coming into the Ministry in 1890, placed a small sum of money on the Estimates for this purpose. Mr. MacLean was asked by Mr. Sauer (the Colonial Secretary), to conduct the experiments along with Mr. Trimen and Mr. W. G. Fairbridge, jun. The first task was to select a suitable place for a hatchery, and a portion of the Old Mill House at Anneberg brewery was chosen. The house belonged to Mr. A. Ohlsson, M.L.A., who readily granted the use of the place, and in addition assisted very materially in the details of the enterprise. The water was supplied from the Newlands spring, which was selected on account of its uniform temperature.

Early in the year 1892, a hundred thousand trout ova were procured from Mr. Thomas Andrews, of Guildford, through the Agent-General, who was instructed to send

out an expert who could devote his whole time to the experiment. Mr. Ernest la Tour was chosen for this post, and the consignment of ova was brought out under his care. Hatching boxes had been previously ordered to arrive a fortnight before the ova, to ensure that everything might be in readiness, but, unfortunately, they only reached Newlands twenty-four hours before the first lot of ova in charge of Mr. la Tour. In consequence, experiments as to the action of the water on the hatching boxes had to be conducted whilst the ova were actually hatching. Unfortunately the action of the water on the iron pipes produced rust, which had a very deleterious effect on the ova. A second consignment of ova was received by the "Tarter," but owing probably to lack of attention it was in a very bad condition and practically worthless. A third lot, however, by the "Hawarden Castle," arrived in good condition, and hatched out well. As there were no extensive ponds available, efforts were made to secure a better locality, and this was finally found at Jonker's Hoek, the property of Mr. F. G. Watermeyer, who took up the project with great interest, and afforded facilities for the experiment being carried out thoroughly.

The subsequent history of the efforts in the acclimatization not only of trout but of salmon and other fresh water fish, is contained in annual reports presented to Parliament.

It is due to the enthusiasm and energy of the early promoters that the first experiments attended with so many difficulties proved ultimately a success, and also that the matter was recognised by Government, and taken up seriously. It may be mentioned in this connection that on the matter coming up for discussion before the House of Assembly, Mr. Joseph Orpen (Member for Wodehouse) thanked Messrs. MacLean and Ohlsson in the name of the country for their unselfish and laudable efforts in this matter.

*(The above is taken from Trout Fishing in the Cape Colony, by D. W. Manning, J.P., F.R.G.S., 1908. Mr J. C. Parker succeeded in Natal with later importations.—Ed.)*