

**DECREASE OF FISH IN SQUAMSCOT RIVER, NEW HAMPSHIRE, ON
ACCOUNT OF REFUSE MATTER FROM GAS WORKS.****By S. B. SWETT, M. D.**

"Paul may plant," &c., but there will be no increase, as long as the refuse matter from gas works is allowed to flow into the streams.

In the year 1839 I went to Exeter, N. H., on Squamscot River, which is at the head of navigation, and had great sport in the next spring angling for white perch and striped bass, during one tide having caught a bushel with rod and line; the bait being young eels, of which I could scoop up a pint at a time in the holes in the rocks under the dam. After three or four years I found that there was great scarcity of bait as well as perch, &c., except dead perch, of which there were a large quantity floating on the surface of the river at every tide. The alewives began to appear in less quantities each year, and eels in the winter became very scarce, so much so that from a barrel a day, which for years had been an ordinary day's work for a man, a bushel was rarely secured. In 1837-'38 bass were so plenty during the winter in the river that they brought only one to three cents a pound, on the ice, and several teams from Canada and the north loaded there with them for a return freight at that price rather than go ten miles farther to the sea for frozen codfish as they had intended. The first haul of alewives made in the river in a seine amounted to 36 hogsheads, in the year 1818 or 1819, which is as many or far more than are secured now in an entire summer. As the perch became more scarce, as well as the bait and all other fish, I began to look for a cause, and found that the Exeter Cotton Factory had a small gas-meter to make gas for the factory, and the whole of the refuse was allowed to flow into the river, so that even with any bait it was necessary to go some distance down stream below the factory and the oily, tarry mass floating on the surface of the water in that region, to take any fish, and then very few were caught and less each year. After a few years a company started some gas works on the river one-half mile below the factory to supply the town, and dug a drain down into the river to discharge all their refuse thereby, and since that it is difficult to obtain a mess ever so small of fresh fish in the river within four or five miles of those works. Shad, bass, and occasionally a salmon, and once in the year 1860 a sheepshead of 7 lbs., were taken in the traps or weirs set for alewives; but even the alewife fishery is almost abandoned, and now not a dozen small eels could be secured under the dam where I could have secured a million in a day from 1839 to 1850 or 1860.

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