

174.—THE FISH OF DEVIL'S LAKE, DAKOTA.

By HENRY W. LORD.

[From a letter to Prof. S. F. Baird.]

Devil's Lake is about 50 miles long, and has a shore-line of over 300 miles. The water is slightly salt, very bright and clear, and in many places said to be very deep. The water has the greenish tint of sea water, and along the shore where the waves are beating and evaporating on the rocks and sand it produces the exact smell of the sea-shore. The only fish in the lake of any size are the common long-nosed pickerel of the eastern ponds and rivers (of the *Esox* family, I think). They are very numerous, and are caught in great quantities. Of small fish, the minnows are in vast numbers. The settlers all think that the minnows are young pickerel, but I am convinced that not one in a thousand is pickerel, though they look enough like them to suggest the idea. I think they are a little thrown back and come to maturity at about 2 inches in length. I also observe among them a very few of what are usually called shiners, so common in all eastern brooks, but have never seen any that were more than two and a half inches long. When I talked with you it seemed to be your opinion that the rockfish (striped bass, I suppose); so numerous in the Potomac, would thrive here. I have no doubt they would. You also thought the whitefish would do well. I have no doubt that the several varieties of landlocked salmon and lake trout would thrive admirably. Of course all kinds would be subject to depredations from the pickerel, but the millions of other minnows in the lake would at least divert attention from the new plant and give them good chance for escape. I think it would be very important to send a good supply of eels. I believe they would thrive prodigiously. They could not get away, as the lake is absolutely landlocked.

Directly north of the city, and 6 miles distant, are the Sweet Water Lakes, a group of lakes which appear, according to the map, to be connected. These lakes have no outlet. They extend about 12 miles in length, and cover much ground. They appear to be deep. There have been a few settlers on the banks for two or three years, and they all agree that there are no fish of any kind in these lakes, except very small minnows, which are, as I saw yesterday, very numerous. The water in these lakes is entirely fresh and sweet and pure. I think that a supply of black bass should be sent both for these fresh lakes and for the large lake. They will hold their own against pickerel or any other predatory fish. Eels would also do well in the fresh-water lakes.

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