The ancient Greeks and Romans, who paid extraordinary attention to the breeding of fish, may, to be sure, have known something of all his; but if they did, there knowledge did not descend to us, and is therefore to us as though it had never existed.

As to the means of protecting the eggs of fish from the accidents of the waters, or the voracity of its occupants, none of incontestable efficiency are described in books or known in practice; and the proof of this is, that in France aud Germany, England and Scotland, and indeed in every part of Europe, there have of late years been general complaints of the gradual yet rapid decline in the supply of various sorts of fish, not only in rivers, but on the coasts.*

With respect to what we will call the artificial production of fish—*i. e.* the taking by man of the female's eggs, and the fucundation of them by means of the male's milt, applied by him—the first idea of it was conceived no further back than in 1758. It was, we believe, the Count Von Golstein, a German naturalist, that the scientific world is indebted for this grand conception; as also for the first experiments which proved its truth. Having taken a female trout about to spawn, he pressed out her eggs, and then pressed on to them the milt of a male. After a certain number of days, he had the satisfaction of seeing young fish produced, which grew and flourished. Another German naturalist, Jacobi by name, made, a few years later, a similar experiment, with a like result; and, going a step further, he actually caused the milt to breed fish from the eggs of a *dead* female. In Italy, Spallanzani successfully experimented in a similar manner on the spawn of toads, and of certain descriptions of fish. At a later period, experiments were made with success on the eggs of salmon in Scotland by Dr. Knox, Mr. Shaw, and one or two others. And here in England the same sort of thing has been done.

But as we have already intimated, it never entered the mind of any of these great *savans*—nor of their successors—nor of the tens of thousands of persons who, in different countries, have made the natural history of fish a subject of study—that this way of breeding fish was something more than a simple scientific experiment, curious but useless,—that it was of practical and commercial, political and social importance, inasmuch as it might be made a new branch of commerce, which would add greatly to the national wealth, give employment to thousands, create an inexhaustible supply of cheap, nourishing, and wholesome provisions for all classes of the people—and be, in short, to rivers and waters what agriculture is to land.

For this glorious but singularly simple idea, the world is indebted to two humble fishermen, named Gehin and Remy, of an obscure village called La Bresse, in the department of the Vosges, in France.

---

* Macculloch mentions that in France the annual supply of fresh-water fish before 1789 was 1,200,000. It fell some years back to 700,000, and has diminished since. The decline in our own rivers is well known: and this very year we have had alarming accounts from Scotland of the falling off in salmon. The yield of salt-water fish on the English, Scotch, Dutch, and French coasts, is also far from what it was.