

REPORT ON SPONGES FROM THE COASTAL BEACHES OF
NEW SOUTH WALES.

BY THOMAS WHITELEGGE, Zoologist.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

[In August of last year (1900), the Trustees received from the Fishery Commissioners a very large donation of Sponges from the coast of New South Wales. The collection was made by the various Inspectors of Fisheries stationed on the sea-board, and the object in view was to ascertain the number suitable for commercial purposes, or that might be rendered suitable by cultivation.

After Mr. Whitelegge had made a preliminary examination, I became so convinced of the high importance of the suggested investigation, that I recommended he should discontinue the work on which he was at the time engaged—the description of the Crustacea of the “Thetis” Trawling Expedition, in itself a highly important piece of work—and solely confine his attention, for the time being, to the elaboration of the Sponges in question; this was at once approved of.

Throughout his labours I was kept well informed of the difficulties Mr. Whitelegge encountered, and on several occasions have consulted with him on intricate and debatable points. To arrive at anything like a satisfactory result, no other method than that adopted by him would have been successful. At the inception of the undertaking neither of us for a moment foresaw the amount of labour or trouble that the investigation would entail, through the unsatisfactory nature of previous researches on the Sponges of New South Wales.—R.E., Jnr.]

THE collection consists of about six hundred and thirty specimens; of these forty belonged to the commercial class, representing about twelve species and varieties, seven of which may be regarded as having an economic value.

In Dr. von Lendenfeld's Monograph of the Horny Sponges,¹ there are sixty-one species and varieties enumerated under the genera *Euspongia* and *Hippospongia*, both of which furnish the sponges of commerce. Of the sixty-one forms, thirty-five are recorded as occurring in Australasian waters, and seventeen of these are recorded for New South Wales; the remainder are chiefly confined

¹ Lendenfeld—Mon. Horny Sponges, 1889.