

is unsafe to run the risk of adding to any motion which the dredge may already have acquired, by attempting to drag it for any distance over the ground. The consequence is, that in those cases where the dredge does reach the bottom, it probably too often sinks at once into the soft ooze and remains clogged with a single "mouthful" until it is hauled up again. Sometimes a slight excess of movement in the vessel, from currents or from wind-drift, seems to give a vibratory motion to the enormous length of rope, and to keep the dredge tripping over the ground, so that only a few things are picked up by the tangles or clinging to the outside of the net. We must, therefore, bear in mind that only an infinitesimally small portion of the floor of the ocean at depths over 2500 fathoms has yet been explored.

Whatever may be the case at the extreme depths referred to, there can be no doubt that at depths which may be regarded as comparatively accessible, say a little above 2000 fathoms, the fauna is sufficiently varied. I give in Appendix B to this chapter a table taken from the Station-book, showing the number of occurrences of representatives of the principal groups of marine animals at the fifty-two stations at which we dredged or trawled successfully at depths greater than 2000 fathoms during the voyage. All the groups marked with an asterisk on this list were represented, having been observed and noted when the trawl or dredge came up. It is very probable that on going over the collection carefully it will be found that many, particularly of the smaller forms, have been omitted. The occurrences of fishes, of cephalopods, and of decapod crustaceans must be taken with a reservation; for it is not always possible to determine whether they were taken on the bottom, or above it during the hauling-in of the net.

The distribution of life evidently depends in a marked degree either upon the nature of the bottom or upon the conditions which modify the nature of the bottom. Thus over the