

One of the instructions given to me by the late Sir Wyville Thomson was, to include in my Report not only the species collected by the Challenger, but also those which from other sources are known to inhabit the deep sea. He agreed with me in the conclusion I arrived at from the materials then available, that a depth of 300 or 350 fathoms should be considered the boundary between the surface and deep-sea fishes, the fishes above that level belonging principally to littoral genera, whilst those specially organized for bathybial life appeared at or below that depth. Accordingly, almost all fishes captured by the Challenger at a less depth than 350 fathoms were included in my Report on the Shore Fishes.

However, the subsequent Norwegian and North American explorations brought to light instances of fishes with an unmistakably bathybial organisation occurring at a much shallower depth than the forms discovered by the Challenger, or, on the other hand, showed that certain littoral forms descend not only to 100, but even to beyond 300 fathoms.

It consequently seemed advisable to abandon the intention of limiting this Report to fishes occurring below 300 fathoms, and to adopt instead the 100-fathom line as the boundary at which, with the extinction of sun-light, the bathybial fauna commences, sporadically at first and largely mixed with surface forms. This line does not express a sharply defined boundary any more than any other depth, but it is chosen for the purposes of the present Report, in which a certain upper limit of the deep-sea fauna had to be fixed. In employing it I intend only to express the fact, that no fish not known at present to have occurred beyond the 100-fathom line, is admitted in the present Report; and, further, that no truly bathybial fish is known to live habitually above that line.