

THE
VOYAGE OF H.M.S. CHALLENGER.

ZOOLOGY.

REPORT on the HOLOTHURIOIDEA dredged by H.M.S. Challenger during
the years 1873-1876. By HJALMAR THÉEL. Part I.

INTRODUCTION.

WHEN, at the request of Sir Wyville Thomson, F.R.S., I undertook to work out the HOLOTHURIOIDEA dredged during the Challenger Expedition, I had not the least idea of the value and richness of the material confided to my care. But the first inspection made it evident that the forms from great depths, now displayed for the first time, were of the greatest interest by making it manifest that Holothurians are living there not merely in great numbers but belonging to many species, and that a large majority of them present certain peculiarities that render them strikingly different from the littoral forms hitherto known, and make them constitute perhaps the most characteristic group of the whole abyssal fauna. As will be seen further on, I have considered myself justified in placing them under a new order—*Elasipoda*,¹ equivalent to the *Pedata* and *Apoda* already known. Of that order I shall here give the systematic and anatomical description.

During the Swedish expedition to the Yenisei, in the year 1875, several specimens of a singular animal were found in the Kara Sea, on the north-east coast of Novaya Zemlya. On a closer examination it was found to be a Holothurid, which I have described² under the name of *Elpidia*, the single representative of a new family, the Elpidiidæ.

¹ This seems a more correct name than "Elasmopoda" used in the Preliminary Report.

² Memoire sur l'Elpidia, nouveau genre d'Holothuries. Avec cinq Planches. Présenté à l'Académie Royale des Sciences le 8 Mars 1876. Kongl. Svenska Vetenskaps-Akademiens Handlingar, Bandet 14, No. 8, Stockholm, 1877.