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THE SEA BOTTOM—ITS PHYSICAL CONDITIONS AND ITS FAUNA.*

It is hard to realize the fact that, up to a comparatively recent date, nearly three-fifths of the actual solid surface of the earth was absolutely a 'terra incognita,' a region as unknown as the poles, and as full of mystery as the center of the earth. Yet, if it be true that the sea covers nearly three-fifths of the surface of the earth, it is also true that its bottom, which is the actual solid surface of the globe, was, up to the middle of the century just ended, absolutely unexplored, excepting a very narrow strip around the edges.

For the purpose of our study this evening, we may define the deep sea as all that is deep enough to exclude sunlight and vegetable life in appreciable quantities from the bottom. We may safely assume that this limit is at a depth of about 150 fathoms. Sensitive photographic plates are said to be unaffected beyond the depth of about 125 fathoms clear water.

It thus becomes apparent that we shall have to include as deep sea almost all the area covered by the oceans of the world, there being but an inconsiderable strip around the edges that is within the 150-fathom line. The average depth is very

* Lecture delivered before the Nebraska Chapter of the Society of the Sigma Xi, February 14, 1901, by Professor C. C. Nutting, of the State University of Iowa.