

INTRODUCTION.

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SOUTH of the equator, few waters, if any, have been as thoroughly investigated as those of Port Jackson, and it has been proved that its fauna is an extremely rich one.

On the other hand, the fauna of the waters which break upon the Australian coasts as a whole has been but little examined, and while the seas of New South Wales have been better searched than those of any other part of the Continent, it needs but the slightest dip into our literature to become aware that such investigations have, for the greater part, been made immediately outside Port Jackson.

The only observations made in our coastal waters for scientific purposes have resulted from the visits of foreign equipped expeditions making Sydney a port of call. All local ventures have had a commercial basis, that is, they have been made in connection with the fishing industry, and even these are very limited in number, and for some reason or other so unsuccessful, that to-day not a single boat is engaged in trawling.

It is constantly remarked that trawling can never be a commercial success here, because either the fish cannot be obtained in payable quantities, or those taken are not of sufficient quality for table use. It is not my purpose to discuss this aspect of the question, but I would pertinently point out that we know practically nothing of the habits of the fish we wish to secure, and that small chance of supplying the deficiency exists until we have established a Biological Research Station with necessary corollaries. Many of the countries of Europe, and America, richly endow such institutions, and one need but look to the publications of their staffs to realise the amount of valuable work accomplished. To those interested I would recommend a perusal of the admirable work by Mr. J. T. Cunningham, M.A., published by the Marine Biological Association.*

Another cause of failure may be traced to the haphazard manner in which the experiments have been conducted. No complete submarine survey has been made, but in September and October,

* Cunningham—Marketable Marine Fishes, 1896.