

XXVIII.—DISTRIBUTION OF DUPLICATE SETS OF MARINE IN- VERTEBRATES, 1879-1886.

In the Commissioner's report for several years past, reference has been made to the work done by the U. S. Fish Commission in distributing to museums specimens of the lower forms of aquatic life; but as in no case has a detailed report been made, it has been deemed proper to present one at this time. Thus in the report for 1881 it was stated :

"The Commission has also made very large collections of aquatic animals, especially of fishes, shells, corals, crustaceans, star-fishes, etc., and after submitting them to a careful investigation for monographic research and setting aside a full series for the National Museum, the remainder has been made up into well-identified and labeled sets for distribution to colleges, academies, and other institutions of learning throughout the United States. The educational advantages of this last measure have proved to be of the utmost value and are thoroughly appreciated by teachers throughout the country. Applications for these sets are being continually received, and several hundreds of them have already been supplied, a number of persons being occupied for a good part of their time in preparing to meet additional calls. There is nothing which so much increases the interest in natural history as the opportunity of examining actual specimens of rare and usually unprocurable species, instead of depending upon descriptions or drawings; and as the possibility of obtaining these series becomes the better known it is quite likely that all the resources of the Commission for making collections, great as they are, will be fully taxed.

"The calls for these specimens are usually made through the member of Congress representing the district in which the institution is established; or, if made direct to the Commission, they are referred to the member for his indorsement and recommendation."

Again, in his report for 1884, the Commissioner said :

"The Fish Commission has been enabled to do a great deal incidentally in the way of promoting science and education; especially by the discovery of many rare forms of life in the waters, and by the accurate labeling and extensive distribution of duplicates of these objects to colleges and academies throughout the country; the reserve specimens, of course, going, under the law, to the National Museum."