EDITORIAL NOTE.

THE accompanying Paper by Mr. Whitelegge was published on the 19th April, 1890, as a Report to the Commissioners of Fisheries of New South Wales, and is again issued as Part II. of the "Records of the Australian Museum." The Trustees having given their permission, at the request of the President of the Commissioners, Mr. Whitelegge was specially deputed to investigate the so-called Oyster disease, and spent some time in the neighbourhood of Newcastle prosecuting his researches, which were continued and completed at the Australian Museum.

R. ETHERIDGE, JUNR.,
ACTING CURATOR.

REPORT ON THE WORM DISEASE AFFECTING THE OYSTERS ON THE COAST OF NEW SOUTH WALES.

By Thomas Whitelegge,

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At the request of the members of the Fisheries Commission, I, by permission of the Trustees of the Australian Museum, recently paid a visit to Newcastle with a view to inquire into the so-called oyster disease, which is caused by the presence of a small marine worm, identified by Prof. Haswell, of the Sydney University, as *Polydora (Lucodore) ciliata* (Johnston). On my arrival at Newcastle I was taken over the various oyster beds by Mr. Curan, the local Inspector of Fisheries, who did everything in his power to assist me. I am also indebted to Messrs. Gibbons and Anderson, two of the principal oyster lessees, for their kindness in providing me with boats and dredges.

The Infected Area.

Although the worm is very generally distributed, having been met with in various situations, from about half-tide line to moderately deep water, still the principal home of the worm appears to be on the mud flats about low-water mark. The oysters from this region were invariably infected with the worm, particularly those which lay loose on the surface or partially buried in the mud. Whilst those oysters which were fixed to some solid substance, and elevated ever so little above the surface of the mud were comparatively free from the pest.

During my stay I examined about fourteen oyster beds, which I need not particularize, suffice it to say that the worst are the bare mud-flats and the artificial beds in deep water. The latter are composed of oysters collected on the banks of the river, and probably the majority were obtained from the mangrove flats, as they would be more easily gathered, inasmuch as they are not, in that locality, fixed to any solid substance. From an examination of a very large series of these oysters, I am convinced that they were infested with the worm before their removal, as the evidence of disease was in nearly all cases deep-seated and below the lines of growth made after being laid down. The natural beds —only a short distance from the artificial ones—are fairly free from disease; and, further, they appear to overcome the worm when attacked, quickly enclosing it with a thick layer of shelly matter before it has time to establish itself. From what I ascer-