

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL.

WASHINGTON, *June 15, 1883.*

SIR: I herewith transmit to you the manuscript of a Review of the Fossil Ostreidae of North America, which, at your request, I have prepared for your Annual Report for 1883. The work is necessarily, to a large extent, a compilation of material that has already been published, but I have attempted to group that material in such a manner as to convey to the general reader an outline of the geological history of the oyster family, and the connection of the extinct with the living forms of oysters.

Two important parts of this work have been prepared by Mr. John A. Ryder and Prof. Angelo Heilprin, respectively. Mr. Ryder has prepared a concise life-history of the common living oyster of the Atlantic coast, which he has illustrated by original drawings of his own, and from material which he has prepared in connection with the United States Fish Commission.

Professor Heilprin has kindly furnished all that portion of the text which relates to the Tertiary and post-Pliocene oysters, which material is, in great part, the result of his special studies of the Tertiary mollusca of the United States.

All this work is, in accordance with your request, addressed to the general reader, rather than to the special student; but in doing this we have striven to avoid all scientific inaccuracy of statement. Like my contribution to your report for last year, this is a general review of the subject of which it treats, and not a revision or rectification of the forms which are enumerated and illustrated. Such a rectification is needed, but it must necessarily be deferred until another time.

The drawings, with the exception of the few that have previously been published, are from the pen of Dr. J. C. McConnell, who also drew the numerous illustrations for my contribution to your report for last year.

Besides the aid received from Messrs. Ryder and Heilprin, whose work appears under their respective names, I am also indebted to Mr. W. H. Dall, of the Coast Survey, and Lieut. Francis Winslow, United States Navy, for much information concerning the variation and distribution of the living oysters of our coasts.