

Notices of the Rare and most Remarkable
Plants in the Neighbourhoods
of Dunster, Blue Anchor,
Minehead, &c.

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I AM quite aware that in offering so slight a sketch as the present to the notice of this Society, I can give but a very imperfect idea of the rich and varied Flora of this part of Somerset. It is only after a careful enumeration of species, and by a comparison of their greater variety or frequency in the adjoining districts, that the Flora of any particular district can be correctly estimated. Were such comparison fully carried out between Somerset and Devon, I have no doubt that the number of species in this county would equal those recorded in Devon, and that this district, from its bordering the sea, would afford many species not found in any other parts of the county.

Commencing with such, I would notice *Cochlearia danica*, a plant which occurs in crevices of the rocks near the sea under Greenaleigh and at Bossington Point. *Arenaria pe-*

ploides grows, but very sparingly, on the Warren near Minehead, and I have noticed the salt wort (*Salsoli kali*) appear occasionally near the same spot. *Erodium maritimum* is exceedingly common in sandy and grassy places close to the sea; it also grows at some distance from it, on the summit of Grabhurst, on Minehead Hill, and on a wall near Alcombe—three rather unlikely situations for this species. *Erodium cicutarium* (common hemlock stork's bill) is frequent with white blossoms on Minehead Warren, and I remark that a similar change of colour is observable in the following when growing in the same locality—viz., *Lycopsis vulgaris*, *Cynoglossum officinale*, *Myosotis collina*, *Carduus arvensis*, and *Veronica chamædrys*. These, with the exception of the last named species, are all common with white blooms, though plants of the usual colours are likewise to be seen in the same spot. Some of the remaining peculiarly maritime plants of the district are, *Euphorbia paralias*, *Plantago maritimum*, *Triglochin maritimum*, *Juncus maritimus*, *Scirpus maritimus*, *Phleum arenaria*, *Glaux maritima*, *Salicornia herbacea*, *Schoberia maritima*, *Aster tripolium*, *Artemisia maritima*, *Armeria maritima*, at the mouth of the river Hone; *Silene maritima*, at Blue Anchor. *Trifolium maritimum* was observed by Mr. Babington when botanizing there some years ago. I may here remark that the Flora at and near Blue Anchor is particularly interesting. *Ophrys apifera* (bee orchis), *Ophrys muscifera* (fly orchis), *Habenaria chlorantha*, *Orchis pyramidalis*, *latifolia*, *mascula*, and *Listera ovata*, are among the Orchidæ that occur there. The other remarkable plants in that neighbourhood are *Chlora perfoliata*, *Vicia bithynica*, *Lathyrus aphaca*, *sylvestris*, and *Nissolia*. This latter also grows in the vicinity of Minehead. *Viburnum lantana* (mealy guelder rose) is common in the

hedge-rows about Blue Anchor. In the vicinity of Dunster the botanist has a good opportunity of studying the Rubi. I am assured by Mr. Lees, the well-known investigator of this genus, that the woods around are particularly rich in the various species. In the wood surrounding Conygar Tower I have collected *Rubus amplificatus*, *rosaceus*, *Sprengelii*, and all the commoner kinds. Near Boniton Wood, and in the woods along the Timberscombe road, occurs a peculiar species of raspberry, named *Rubus Leesii* by Mr. Babington, in honour of Mr. Lees, who first discovered it at Ilford Bridges, near Lynton.

The specific differences will at once be seen on examination with the common kind, *Rubus idæus*, which grows commonly in the same woods. They also afford *Rubus suberectus*, *rudus*, *fuscus*, *villicaulis*, *Lindleianus*, *amplificatus*, *vestitus*, *cordifolius*, and others of this interesting but, until lately, little investigated genus. *Melittis melissophyllum* grows in the woods on the road-side near Cutcombe, and *Mecanopsis cambrica* near Stowey Mill and in Culbone Woods, near Porlock. On Dunkery, the rarest flowering plant is one of the Orchideæ, *Listera cordata*. With the exception of Coddon Hill, near Barnstaple, this is the only station for it in the West of England. *Empetrum nigrum*, *Lycopodium clavatum*, also grows on Porlock Hill; selago and alpinum are in this district confined to Dunkery. The small patches of boggy ground that occur on the hills produce *Eriophorum vaginatum*, and *angustifolia*, *Drosera rotundifolia*, *Narthecium ossifragum*, *Erica tetralix*, *Hypericum elodes*, and other less conspicuous species. Bordering the little rivulets which take their course down the sheltered combes, may be observed one of the rarest plants of the district, and until the last few years only known as a native of Cornwall—this is the delicate

little creeping plant, *Sibthorpia Europœa* (Cornish moneywort). It generally grows associated with the tiny little ivy-leaved harebell, *Wahlenbergia hederacea* and *Anagallis tenella*. In these combes all the ferns common to such situations may be found ; *Athyrium filix-fœmina* in one or two varieties ; *Blechnum boreale*, *Lastrea oreopteris*, *dilatata fœniseeii*, and *Filix-mas* ; the incised variety I have gathered on Conygar Hill, in Periton Combe, and elsewhere. The other ferns growing in the district, but selecting other habitats, are *Asplenium trichomanes*, *Ruta-muraria*, *Adiantum-nigrum*. *Asplenium marinum*, I believe, grows under Bossington Point ; and *Asplenium septentrionale** has been found in the parish of Porlock, and "on the borders of Devon and Somerset." *Ceterach officinarum* may be seen on old walls at Stanton, Minehead, and Allerford. The incised variety called *Cambricum* of *Polypodium vulgare*, I have observed in Bossington Woods, and the several multifid varieties of the common *Scolopendrium vulgare* are frequent in the hedges about Minehead. *Aspidium angulare* in its various forms adorns the hedge-banks ; and *Pteris aquilina* (the common bracken) grows as far up the hills as cultivation is practicable,

* I am indebted to the Rev. G. B. Warren, of Exeter, for a specimen of *Asplenium septentrionale*, obtained from a station near Culbone, and which, I believe, is the locality alluded to by Newman in his *History of British Ferns*, as being "near Glenthorn, about six miles from the boundary of Devon." All the stations hitherto observed for the fern have been on the Somerset side of the boundary. In North Devon, Mr. Warren informs me, he has often searched for it, but has never yet seen or heard of it across the borders, though very probably it may be found on Countisbury or Brendon. *Botrychium Lunaria*, Mr. Warren further informs me, he has seen growing near Meyn Farm, and *Ophioglossum vulgatum* is said to be found in meadows near Selworthy. *Aspidium aculeatum* does not, I believe, appear in this district, according to a writer in the *Phytologist* for May, 1854, *A. angulare* and *A. aculeatum* rarely grow together in the same district ; and *A. angulare* is rare in the North of England, showing its tendency to be tender.

attaining the highest position in the cultivated region, or "Agrarian Region" of the author of the *Cybele Britannica*. On reference to my lists, I find upwards of 550 flowering plants and ferns recorded as growing in this district. Arranging these according to their "types of distribution," ten, or perhaps more, belong to the "Atlantic type"—that is, "species that have their head-quarters in the south-west of England, and run out northward and eastward;" two to the Germanic type, viz., *Ophrys apifera* and *muscifera*; and one only to the "Highland type," *Lycopodium alpinum*, which reaches its southernmost limits in this part of the county; three appertain to the "Scottish type," *Empetrum nigrum*, *Listera cordata*, and *Lycopodium selago*; 108 to the "English type," "species which have their head-quarters in England, especially in the southern provinces, and become rare and finally cease altogether towards the north." The rest, with the exception of a few of uncertain type, belong to the "British type," species which are more or less generally diffused throughout the whole extent of Britain.

The foregoing is necessarily but a hasty attempt at estimating the number of indigenous species; it neither includes varieties nor any species doubtfully wild. In the plants particularly specified, I believe I have named some of those most worthy of notice; but as there is no work published on the botany generally of this county to which reference can be made, I am in doubt whether I may not have called attention to species more universally distributed over the county than I am aware of. As regards the littoral species, possibly *all* those observed here range along the whole extent of the Somerset coast. In a short list appended to the *Natural History of Portishead*, I see the names of many such. In a county so extensive as this,

with such variety of soil and aspect, there is a very wide field afforded for the botanist, and it is not a little surprising, and much to be lamented, that there is no published Flora of Somerset, containing in its pages all the necessary information. In the literature of botany, county or local Floras become of much account—such, for instance, are Leighton's *Flora of Shropshire*, and Mr. Baker's recently published supplement to the *Flora of Yorkshire*—books the value of which are well known to botanists.

Before closing this paper, I would beg leave to suggest to persons interested in the science, the benefit which may accrue to its more complete study by their noting down the species occurring in their respective neighbourhoods, in the last edition of the *London Catalogue of British Plants*—the one generally employed for that purpose by English botanists.

The enclosing of commons and waste land, and progress of agricultural improvements generally, must unavoidably destroy the habitats of many rare plants, and in some instances lead to their extinction; such, I fear, is the case with *Chrysocoma lynosiris* and *Lobelia urens*, which used formerly to grow near Axminster. Therefore, it is particularly desirable that a record should be kept of rare indigenous plants. Some few species there are, such as *Veronica Buxbaumii*, which become naturalized in our fields by the agency of the farmer, who scatters the germ unwittingly along with his clover or other seed obtained from the Continent; and though the botanist may not look with an unfriendly eye upon the "foreigner," he still feels that it cannot make amends for our native plants, the growth of our native soil, introduced by no human agency, placed in their appointed spot by the Almighty will, flourishing for long years the "flowers of the waste," and

dying, at the approach of cultivation, like the Red Indian disappearing from his hunting-grounds before the advancing footsteps of the white man. But if the destruction of the natural vegetation of a country be a mournful sight to a botanist, no less is the re-appearance of vegetation over the ruined habitation of man a melancholy and interesting spectacle to all. The ivy, the same plant that hangs and spreads itself over the wildest cliffs, covers and supports the ruined walls with its evergreen mantle. On the proudest edifices of bygone days we see the lichens appearing :

“Those living stains which Nature’s hand alone,
Profuse of life, pours forth upon the stone ;
For ever growing where the common eye
Can but the bare and rocky bed descry.
These all increase, till in unnoticed years
The stony tower as grey with age appears,
With coats of vegetation thinly spread,
Coat above coat, the living on the dead ;
These then dissolve to dust, and make away
For bolder foliage ; nursed by their decay,
The long-enduring Ferns in time will all
Die, and depose their dust upon the wall—
Where the winged seed will rest, till many a flower
Shows Flora’s triumph on the falling tower.”

CRABBE.