

## Botanical Expeditions in the West

*Life and letters of Alexander Goodman More*

Achill and Inishkea.

(1872-1873.)

His long-interrupted "Supplement to the Flora Vectensis" had at last been completed and published in the Journal of Botany in 1871 ; and the "First Supplement to the Cybele Hibernica" quickly followed (June, 1872). He now looked forward to a fresh renewal of bird-work, and among his projects for the summer of 1872, he tells Mr. Harvie-Brown, was a search for the Roseate Tern. "The bird-stuffers tell me (he writes) that the bird has become much scarcer than it used to be." The bird-stuffers were indeed but too accurate, and the beautiful Roseate Tern, whatever it may have been in 1872, is now computed a "lost Irish bird." But he did not accomplish this quest, which would have taken him to islands of the eastern coast. Again he went to the West, to explore the shores of Mayo north of Clew Bay. He now paid his first visit to Achill, where he took some botanical expeditions with Mr. W. Pike, was shown a few plants of his favourite Mediterranean Heath, and shot a seal ; and on Friday, Aug. 23rd, touched at the small island of Inishkea, afterwards strangely connected with his story. In September, with his sister and a few friends, he enjoyed a tour in Switzerland, visited Berne, Zurich, Chur, Andermatt, the Eggischorn, Lausanne, and Geneva, and hunted butterflies, as of old, in the Alpine forests ; and in the winter he settled down again to ornithology.

He had now been nine years a resident in Ireland, and had every reason to congratulate himself on the comparatively excellent health he had enjoyed during that period. The tenth year was distinguished by an unfortunate occurrence, from the effects of which, it is believed, he never recovered ; and a touch of Fate's "irony" is not lacking from the arrangement of scene and circumstances for the one untoward adventure of his life.

On June 24th, 1873, he started with his friend Mr. J. F. Dillon (now Sir John Dillon) of Lismullen for a dredging and collecting expedition to Achill and the adjacent coasts. One of their great objects was to secure a Basking Shark. The weather proved singularly bad, so that work at sea was conducted only under the greatest difficulties. But his note-book contains many memoranda of matters to be looked after on shore, *e.g.* "Remains of whale are with Rev. Mr. Potterton of Lismore : Mr.— has a large piece of palate ; Mrs.—, in Belmullet, has also pieces of palate." Local details of this kind, assiduously picked up *en route*, were pretty certain, sooner or later, to be turned to account. And though, throughout this expedition, misadventures from stress of weather and kindred causes were of almost daily occurrence, the roughing process really exhilarated him, and he was perhaps never more in love than now with the storm-beaten precipices of the Atlantic sea-board and their hosts of feathered life.

Especially was he charmed with Achill, whom he thus apostrophises in verse : —

Sound of Achill ! Isle of Achill !  
Girded evermore in cloud :  
Shore whereon the fierce Atlantic  
Surf is ever beating loud.

Achill ! we have climbed thy mountains,

And have paced thy sands,  
And have loved thy cliffs so tall  
Better than other lands.

We have surveyed, with trembling eye,  
Doega's awful wall,  
And heard, from Keem's recesses,  
The angry Eagle's call.

Where Craughan towers proudly  
Above the western tide.  
And drinks the evening brightness  
Along his purpled side ;

Were the bright Sun uprising  
Gilds Slieve More with his joy,  
Half-lighting the close-crowded hills  
Of distant Ballycroy :

Around whose cliff the Raven croaks,  
And the screaming Falcons call ;  
And the gentle Gulls, in their robes so white.  
We have loved them one and all.

Ah ! who can tell the dear delight,  
On a bright fair summer's morning.  
To seek the Seal on the yellow strand.  
All toil and danger scorning !

He on a rock, stretched high and dry,  
Careless, no watch is keeping :  
Till the rifle-ball, with its shrill swift call,  
Shall awake the monster sleeping ;

And the giant Bull on board we'll pull.  
Though our crazy old boat is leaking,  
And we'll bear him away, a noble prey.  
And a prize well worth the seeking.

Then farewell, ye hills of Achill,  
Ye shores of Achill dear,  
Ye rocks, storm-swept in thunder,  
Ye waters blue and clear ;

And when another summer comes,  
With its sunshine and its joy,  
Again we'll sail to Achill,  
Again to Ballycroy.

It was sometimes easier to bid Achill "Farewell" than to leave her, as he found on June 27th when setting out for Belmullet.

“ Friday. Quite a gale of wind. Left the Sound at 8½, jibing the cutter in a dangerous manner. In a squall, split the storm-jib all in pieces, and took shelter under Bull’s-mouth, when we were taken ashore to the C. G. station. Thence to Colony in a storm of wind and rain, only too glad to find shelter at the Dugort Hotel.”

Next day he found that the “ ill wind” had not been absolutely unprofitable. “ June 28, Saturday. Hard gale in the early morning, drove back one boat which had started to meet us. While waiting, heard of a dead seal washed ashore, whose skeleton was secured from the fishermen after the skin and blubber had been removed. It was a fine middle-aged *Halichærus grypus*, measuring over 7 feet, and estimated at 2½ cwt. or more—‘ 20 stone.’ Left Dugort about 5.10 p.m., and had a lovely sail up Broadhaven Bay to Belmullet, where we found good quarters at Mr. Murphy’s hotel.” The skeleton of the *Halichærus* here mentioned is still an object of interest in the museum.

The sea still proved impracticable for dredging, and an excursion taken early next week to view the celebrated “ Stags of Broadhaven” occupied a longer day than the visitors had reckoned on.

“ June 30. Monday. Sailed at 10½ with a fine breeze. Met a heavy roll outside. Trusting to the captain that we should easily get back, we ran down before the wind and round the “ Stags” of Broadhaven. Saw no Gannets on the rock ; only a few sheep placed there by Mr. ——— . After beating against a lee tide for 2½ hours, bore away for Portacloy, where there is a narrow sandy strand and snug creek well sheltered from the S. W. Lunched on broiled mackerel at the C. G. With a guide made our way to ——— where the owner of the corragh declined to row us home, thence to the Sandy Point, passing a tumular graveyard, whence after firing six shots we were conveyed across the Ferry, and hospitably received by the clergyman, after which we walked across the bogs, in the dead of night, as far as ———, where through a window we observed Mr. ——— leaping from his bed, and followed by an alarming figure of a female in night habiliments, who however only lighted her dudeen and re-established herself in the family bed. Entering, we found the cows (4), calves (3), hens (several), brooding hen under the bed, and the pony turned out on the mountain. After ¾ hour the pony was captured, and brought into the house, where he nearly kicked D., and at last we started on bags of hay for seats,—the night drive crossed a flow-bog which had burst across the road some years ago—and reached Belmullet at 2 a.m. for dinner.”

The night whose somewhat fatiguing adventures form the subject of this extract was followed by a long day’s dredging in Broadhaven Bay ; and here the finest prize of the expedition turned up, in the shape of the huge marine worm *Chætoperus insignis*—its first recorded occurrence in Irish waters.

On Wednesday (July 2nd) he again dredged in Broadhaven, but “ got caught in a gale and had some difficulty in getting back to the Island.” Next morning “ blew a gale of wind and with squalls, so that our captain refused to sail” ; and Friday was “ again too rough for our captain,—so drove with Mr. Carey to see the Cliffs and old Fort or barrier wall of Dun-na-moe, opposite Eagle Island. It is on a small scale very like Dun-Aengus in Aran (Mem., Cæsar Otway describes it). Choughs, Rock Doves, and Gannets seen. Called on Mr. Potterton, who gave me the whale snout and some baleen for the R. D. S.” Next day “ Yacht still aground, so took a corragh and dredged in Blacksod Bay with no great success, . . . and got home drenched.” A drive “ to see the slipped or burst bog” on Sunday concluded the Erris exploration.

“ Monday, July 7th. Weary of waiting for fine weather tried to board our yacht, but were actually driven back, as the sea broke right on the bow of our corragh. So took car to Geasall with Mr. Carey. Thence crossed Tullaghan Ferry, and walked to Cleary’s Hotel at Ballycroy. Drove thence to the ferry at Cleggan, where we could not get the ferry-man to turn up, though we fired lots of shots and shouted all in vain for an hour. Repulsed from Mr. — — , we returned at 12, to sleep (two together) in Cleary’s Coffee-room on the sofa.”

They succeeded next day in regaining Achill, and spent a week in comparative quietude : botanized, fished for sea-trout, and one day “ rowed to the Seal-caves, and captured a young shag.”

On the 16th of July, they sailed together to visit the lonely island of Inishkea, about 8 miles north of Achill. At the present time, Inishkea is perhaps chiefly remarkable for her ruined church and shell-mound, and in calm summer weather is often visited by tourists from Achill, for the enjoyment of a day’s pleasure on the water ; but a different interest once attached to her, and her notoriety as a smuggling depot is well if not regretfully remembered. There was moreover another institution at Inishkea, regarding which almost as much reticence was advisable as in the case of the contraband industry ; and even now it is said to be unwise for him who touches at Inishkea to evince curiosity concerning a mysterious being called the “ Neve-ogue.”

But stories about the Neve-ogue had got abroad, and been seized on as proofs of the benightedness of the western Irish. The inhabitants of the island were represented as preserving, with great care, an image—once probably the figure-head of a ship, perhaps a relic of the Invincible Armada—which they believed to possess power over storms, and which, from time to time, they sought to propitiate with gifts of red flannel, wrapping each successive offering round it, till, according to one narrator, the “ Neve-ogue” was too distended in bulk to be enclaspd by a man’s arms. Other particulars, still less flattering to the islanders, were occasionally added ; and a letter headed “ Idolatry in the 19th century,” of which the Neve-ogue was the theme, had lately appeared in print. Common belief ascribed the authorship of this epistle to visitors from Achill. One effect of the outcry forthwith raised was the prompt demolition of the Neve-ogue, which, whatever may have been the truth about the homage formerly paid it, was now treated with scant ceremony, being seized by the priest and thrown into the sea. But the islanders were none the less fiercely indignant at the language which (they were assured) had been applied to them by the writer of the letter, and a bad situation prevailed at Inishkea.

It was a further unfortunate circumstance that on July 16th the principal inhabitant or “ king of Inishkea” was away from home. In his absence, the very fact which would otherwise have insured a friendly reception (*i.e.* Mr. More’s having been to Inishkea the year before) sufficed to create suspicion and even hostility. For then, as now, he had come from Achill. What more natural than to infer (as was actually done) that he was the writer of the offensive letter, returning to concoct materials for another !

Meanwhile, not dreaming of these gathering perils, the two naturalists quietly walked over the island, botanized, inspected the shell-mound, and made some pencil sketches, one representing the stone cross, and another the ruined church, which is supposed to be of great antiquity. They then returned to the village, and Mr. Dillon, going on a mission of exploration to one end, left Mr. More alone with the rods and guns at the other.

Whether or not such opportunity had been watched for cannot be said ; but in a few minutes a group of angry islanders were round Mr. More, and before he could gather the

meaning of the situation, a blow from a heavy piece of timber had stretched him on the ground. He was stunned ; and the assailants, leaving him unconscious, ran off towards the shore.

Frequently, in later years, Mr. More avowed the belief that he owed the preservation of his life at this juncture in no small degree to the promptitude and resolution of his friend Sir John Dillon, who, as he returned through the village, saw the people hastening to the shore, and was horrified to find his companion lying on the ground. Further molestation was plainly promised ; for a crowd gathered near the harbour, and when Mr. More, with his friend's assistance, was able to walk towards the boat, a shower of stones assailed them. Verbal remonstrance was useless, and Mr. Dillon raised his breech-loader, warned the people that he meant to protect his comrade, and shot two sea-gulls by way of illustration. The effect of the poor birds' fate was instantaneous. The islanders, who had never seen a breech-loader before, were filled with amazement, and needed no further warning.

Still, the adventures of the day were not over. His journal, after briefly mentioning that on this date he " sailed to Inishkea, got drawings of ruin, and was lynched," proceeds : " And returned in a gale of wind, to anchor at 12 of night under Slieve More. Sat in cabin till daylight, and wind abating were at last landed at grey dawn in a downpour of rain." Such exposure cannot, under the circumstances, have failed to aggravate the harm already done ; though, after a few hours' repose on shore, he went fishing in Keel River, and for the next fortnight continued his outdoor occupations, unwilling to concede that he felt the worse for his adventure. On shelves in the Natural History Museum are a number of bottles containing several different species of parasites [1] found on the sunfish, and labelled " Achill, 1873." His diary records his dissecting this sunfish, and finding its parasites, on Saturday, July 26th, ten days after the affair at Inishkea.

He was now alone, Mr. Dillon having been obliged to leave Achill on the 18th. But on the 29th a welcome visitor arrived in the person of Mr. R. M. Barrington, who stayed a few days, and noticed how far from satisfactory his friend's health really was. Mr. Barrington, on leaving Achill, lost no time in making Mr. Robert Warren aware of the truth, with the result that on August 6th (to quote the diary) : " On return (from fishing) I found my friend R. Warren come to meet me and take me back to Moyview for a visit." To Moyview he went, and had scarcely arrived when the threatened illness fell upon him.

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### Third Visit to Roundstone.

[1874.]

His illness at Mr. Warren's house proved a severe one, and the closing months of the year were a period of much anxiety to his friends. When well enough to leave Moyview, he went for further rest and change to Llanberis, and subsequently, in October, being still unfit for Museum-work, enjoyed a short tour in Switzerland, visiting Lausanne, Diableret, Aigle, &c. But he was still far from well when he returned to Dublin. From this time onward his intervals of ill-health were much more frequent than before, and he was never again equal to the same degree of sustained activity as in former summers.

He paid his third visit to Roundstone during the earlier part of his holiday in 1874, and discovered a new locality for *Erica mackaiana*, interesting as being the second in Ireland. But

the principal event of this summer was a “ field-day ” with Professor J. H. Balfour, spent in an organized hunt for another heath—the lost *Erica ciliaris*.

This heath had grown into a serious puzzle. The latest searcher of Craiggamorie had been Professor Babington, who in 1873 revisited Roundstone, but met with no better success in seeking *Erica ciliaris* than had befallen all other botanists since 1852. So an opportunity of accompanying Dr. Balfour himself to the spot where he believed that he and his party had gathered it in the summer of that year was too good a chance to be missed.

The expedition came off during the latter part of August, the other members of the party being Professor Dickson, of Glasgow University, and the Rev. A. Norman. Rather strangely, there is not a fragment of journal left by Mr. More relating to the period of this tour. But, although its results were inconclusive, he always attached a considerable importance to them, and several of his letters to Professor Babington bear on the subject.

Dublin, *October 17th, 1874.*

Dear Babington,—I daresay that you have heard from Mr. Balfour about our unsuccessful search for *Erica ciliaris*. But, at any rate, there is no harm in telling you that Balfour came down to Roundstone on purpose while I was staying there last August, and, with Professor Dickson and the Rev. A. M. Norman (a very good Zoologist, and also knows British plants, and has seen *E. ciliaris* growing in Dorset), we searched for one whole long morning examining every bit of ground that seemed likely, but could not find a trace of the heath ; and Dr. Balfour could not even feel *quite sure* of any particular place being the right one, so that it seems we are as far off as ever from settling that disputed question.

I found the *Naias* again, but only sparingly, and at the old place.

Altogether I was three weeks in Roundstone, and several of the people were speaking of your visit the year before. I think *Allium babingtonii* is becoming scarcer than it used to be, for I did not see any of it this time. After leaving Roundstone I spent three weeks at Malvern with my people, who have been staying there most of the summer. I did not go to Belfast, [2] preferring the rest and change of country life.—With very kind regards to Mrs. Babington, yours very sincerely,

A. G. More.

P-S.—The old specimens of *Erica ciliaris* in Trinity College are labelled as from near Craiggamorie.

The failure to rediscover the heath does not appear to have at all shaken Dr. Balfour’s belief that his specimens of *Erica ciliaris* had certainly been gathered somewhere between Roundstone and Clifden in 1852, and differences of opinion on this question, so important to Irish botanists, will doubtless for a longtime prevail, unless the plant itself should be rediscovered. But the conclusion which Mr. More felt himself compelled to adopt was that Dr. Balfour’s recollection was at fault on this point, and that some mistake and mislabelling of specimens must have occurred in 1852. He seems to have been a good deal impressed with the unlikely character of the ground (Ballinaboy, near Clifden) which Professor Balfour selected in preference to Craiggamore. In 1878, after twice again visiting Roundstone, he writes another letter on the subject, going rather more fully into details : —

Dublin, *February 23rd, 1878.*

Dear Babington,—I was very glad to see your handwriting, as it seems a long time since we exchanged letters. I still believe that there must have been some mistake made in labelling the specimens in Edinburgh, and that probably only *E. mackaii* was gathered. At any rate, neither you, nor Moore, nor I, nor Balfour himself, can find *E. ciliaris*.

Mr. Bergin has been dead for many years, and I once questioned his widow about the heath. She said that M'Calla took Mr. Bergin to show him (*one plant*, I think she seemed to say) growing on a stream close to or in the very village of Roundstone itself.

Now, the current tradition was that Bergin alighted from a car while driving near Craiggamore, and stumbled upon *Erica ciliaris* close to the road itself, having stepped across a bank or wall. This was in 1846, and as I think M'Calla was with him, I always thought he had perhaps played a trick upon Bergin.

At any rate the plant *at Roundstone* looks very suspicious.

Several specimens were sent to Mackay, and I never doubted that the alleged locality was close to Craiggamore hill, and I thought a little way from thence westward to Clifden. . . .

Now, when we drove with Balfour searching for *E. ciliaris*, he got down to try the very place I had fixed upon, and another not far from it, both of these being much nearer to Craiggamore than to the inlet of salt-water close to Clifden, which he chose at last, and which does not seem at all a likely spot, nor did it strike me then as having been much altered. In fact, I felt quite sure it was the wrong spot, and on the first day Balfour did not recognize [3] this place at all.

Still, it would be very strange if a trick was played in 1846, and afterwards a wholesale mislabelling took place with the same plant. We must look again this autumn, and I think it would be well to bring the history of the lost plant before the Association, and set some half-dozen good botanists to look after it. The kind of place is a sort of bank of peat, rising a little above the surrounding flat bog. You will easily imagine what sort of information might be elicited by leading questions put to the present occupier of the ground !

I believe I have some specimens left of the *E. mackaiana* from near Carna.

After his sixth and last visit to Roundstone he had still the same report to make. "I have never been able to find a trace of *Erica ciliaris*," he writes on February 19th, 1879. The heath, what ever may be the facts of its history, could not now be found anywhere in Ireland, and was excluded from the Irish plants in the next edition (1881) of Professor Babington's Manual. Besides Craiggamore and Ballinaboy, a third Irish locality had once been assigned to it ; but to the story of its discovery there certain details had afterwards been added, which made the acceptance of the record impossible. Of all plants. *Erica ciliaris* would perhaps be, to Irish botanists, the most appropriate emblem of caution.

If Craiggamore had its mystery, so had Carig-a-lauchaun. Among the "quadrupedal questions" talked over with Bell in November, 1855, was one which had since become as chronic as that relating to *Erica ciliaris*. This was the question of the occurrence, on the Irish coast, of *Phoca grœnlandica*, the Harp or Greenland Seal.

On September 25th, 1855, Mr. Henry Evans, then at Roundstone, had vented in a letter to More his disgust at the loss of a strangely marked seal, shot on a rock "at a place called Corrie-ga-la-hon—as far as can be expressed by an English pen,"—which, though badly

wounded, had contrived to struggle into the water and disappear. On reading the description of this animal, "like a white cow spotted with large patches of black," More had forwarded a drawing and description of the harp seal to his correspondent. "Truly (ran the reply) you are a great artist. The instant your picture met my eye, I mentally exclaimed, 'That is my fellow'." And Mr. Evans never wavered from the faith that "his fellow" was indeed a harp seal.

At that time the harp seal, now admitted to be a visitor—though a very rare one—to the English and Scottish coasts, was scarcely accorded a place among British seals at all. Two seals killed in the Severn in 1836 had been identified by Bell as harps, but his opinion was not universally subscribed to ; and these appear to have been so far the only recorded instances. So, if Mr. Evans was right, he could scarcely have got (or lost) a greater prize.

But anxiously as the resurgence of its carcass was awaited, "the ever-to-be-lamented lost harp" remained in the depths of the sea. The species therefore could not be added with certainty to the Irish fauna, though, on the strength of Mr. Evans' clear recollection of the "well-defined black saddle upon the white body," a sort of half-admission is accorded to it. [4]

But every visit paid by Mr. More to Roundstone was the signal for fresh exhortations to look after the Harp : and the quest of the "saddle-back" kept him constantly on the alert for peculiarly coloured seals. Once indeed at Kilkieran, [5] he was himself doubtful whether a seal of which he obtained a good view was not a genuine harp seal, though he thought it more probably only a young *Halichærus*. He never however obtained a specimen of the coveted rarity, which to the present day, like *Erica ciliaris*, awaits rediscovery at Roundstone.

#### Inish-Bofin.

[1875.]

The capture of a gigantic marine monster off one of the islands of Connemara, in April, 1875, recalled his attention to a spot he had often wished to visit. In his early correspondence (in 1855) with Mr. Henry Evans, a subject only second in interest to the seals of Roundstone was the great "sunfish," as big as a boat, of which Mr. Evans told him the Galway people spoke, and which was evidently different from the ordinary sunfish (*Orthogoriscus mola*), though as to what it was, neither of the correspondents could arrive at any opinion. He had since learned that this so-called sunfish was the great Basking Shark ; and the isle of Inish-bofin had since the date of his first visit to Roundstone been peculiarly associated (through the stories then told him) with the hunting of this giant fish.

However, it was no basking shark, but a huge cuttle-fish, with tentacles thirty feet long, that met its death at the hands of some Bofin fishermen on Monday, April 26th, 1875. An account of the capture, which appeared in a Galway newspaper, and was afterwards reproduced in the "Zoologist," reads more like a passage from one of the voyages of Sindbad than a bit of Natural History from the Irish coast.

On Monday last the crew of a curragh, consisting of three men, met with a strange adventure north-west of Boffin Island, Connemara. . . . Having shot their spilletts (or long lines) in the morning, the crew of the curragh observed to seaward a great floating mass surrounded by gulls ; they pulled out, believing it to be a wreck, but, to their great astonishment, found it to be a cuttlefish, of enormous proportions, and lying perfectly still, as if basking on the surface of the water. . . . The cuttle is much prized as a bait for coarse fish,

and, their wonder somewhat over, the crew resolved to secure at least a portion of the prize. Considering the great size of the monster, and knowing the crushing and holding power of its arms, open hostility could not be resorted to, and the fishermen shaped their tactics differently. Paddling up with caution, a single arm was suddenly seized and lopped off. The cuttle, hitherto at rest, became dangerously active now, and set out to sea at full speed in a cloud of spray, rushing through the water at a tremendous speed. The canoe immediately gave chase, and was up again with the enemy after three quarters of a mile. Hanging on rear of the fish, a single arm was attacked in turn, while it took all the skill of the men to keep out of the deadly clutch of the suckers. The battle thus continued for two hours, and while direct conflict was avoided, the animal was gradually being deprived of its offensive weapons. Five miles out on the open Atlantic, in their frail canvas craft, the bowman still slashed away, holding on boldly by the stranger, and steadily cutting down his powers. By this time the prize was partially subdued, and the curragh closed in fairly with the monster. The polished sides of the canoe afforded slender means of grasp, and such as remained of the ten great arms slashed round through air and water in most dangerous but unavailing fashion. The trunk of the fish lay alongside, fully as long as the canoe, while, in its extremity, the animal emitted successive jets of fluid which darkened the sea for fathoms round. The head at last was severed from the body, which was unmanageable from its great weight, and sank like lead to the bottom of the sea. The remaining portions were stowed away and carried ashore, to the utter amazement of the islanders. ... Of the portions of the mollusk taken ashore, two of the great arms are intact, and measure 8 feet each in length and 15 inches round the base. The two tentacles attain a length of 30 feet. The mandibles are about 4 inches across, hooked just like the beak of an enormous parrot, with a very curious tongue. The head, devoid of all appendages, weighs about 6 stone, and the eyes were about 15 inches in diameter.

The fragments of the great animal which were rescued from destruction by the writer of the above, Sergeant O'Connor, of the Royal Irish Constabulary, and which may still be seen in the Dublin Museum, were a valuable prize, for no such monster was known to have been seen on the Irish coast before. But the interest now aroused in the great Squid led to the unearthing of some quaint old tracts, which showed that a gigantic creature of the same tribe had been stranded on the shore of Kerry in the reign of Charles the Second. Both "Dinoteuthis proboscideus" (the name Mr. More provisionally bestowed on the Kerry monster), and "Architeuthis dux" (to which species he referred the Bofin animal) were made the subjects of articles which he contributed to the "Zoologist" this summer.

His old wish to visit Bofin was certainly revived by these occurrences. The Royal Irish Academy had voted him a grant towards the examination of the Flora of the West, and seeing that Inishbofin had recently yielded a fine botanical discovery in *Helianthemum guttatum*, he decided on that island as his field for 1875.

The earlier weeks of his holiday, however, were spent with his sister in the Engadine ; and perhaps none of his visits to Switzerland was more thoroughly enjoyed than this, which proved to be the last. At Pontresina he answered a letter received from Mr. R. M. Barrington, about the intended Bofin expedition.

Pontresina, Engadine, *July 17.*

Dear Harrington,—I was very glad to receive your letter, and there is no one whom I would sooner join in an expedition to Bofin than yourself. I have promised D. Moore, and am in a manner pledged to the R.I.A. to do something with their grant, so that I have taken only a one month's ticket for Switzerland, and must be back in London on the 5th of August.

Thence I propose to go on, as fast as I can, straight to Bofin Island, where I have no doubt that we may spend a pleasant and interesting ten days. ... I shall be very glad, indeed, to reckon upon your welcome company, in case you should not come to Swiss-land. If the weather should permit I should try to visit Shark and Clare Islands, and go back *viâ* Westport. I scarcely think I shall sleep more than one night in Dublin, but will let you know in good time. I fancy about 7th August will be the date.

His return home was followed by an illness of several days at Glasnevin. But on the 15th of August Mr. Barrington and he sailed together to Inish-bofin, and, of course, were not long in making acquaintance with Sergeant O'Connor—the donor of the Architeuthis—under whose capable guidance the exploration of the island was carried out. After four days spent in Bofin and Shark they left for Westport, taking midway the little island of Inish-Turk. A brief note to Professor Babington was sent from Bofin :—

Inish-Bofin, *August 20, 1875.*

Dear Babington,— All has gone off famously here. We have found *Helianthemum guttatum* in plenty ; *Spergula arvensis*, with glabrous seeds ; several *Rubi*, which I hope to send you presently, if you will kindly examine them. *Elatine hexandra* is here, also *Eriocaulon*, *Centunculus*, *Arundo epigejos*, &c., and the Flora will make a nice Report for the Academy. . . . Have you seen my papers on Architeuthis and Dinoteuthis ? Was it not singular that the “ very antient Irish monster” should have lain buried so long? My hooker is waiting at the quay, to sail for Westport, so adieu.

At Westport Mr. Barrington and he separated, the former going to Achill, while Mr. More went north to stay-over the Sunday with Mr. Warren at Moyview. On his return to Dublin he again found himself ill—too frequently now the result of any unusual exertion—and on the 28th went for a fortnight's sick-leave to Malvern, where his family had lately settled. A letter from Malvern (September 2) to Mr. Barrington shows that his thoughts were still in the west :—

Dear Barrington,—As Van Voorst is about to reprint my “ Bird Distribution” Paper from “ Ibis,” with additions, I hope that you will kindly consent to help me in your District, viz. IV., same as for Plants. What I want is a complete list of all the birds that *breed* in District IV., with words “ Reg” after those that breed regularly every summer ; “ Occ” after those which only nest at irregular intervals. Please mark also the *rarer* of the regular breeders with an “ R” after the “ Reg.” If you will kindly do this for me I shall feel greatly obliged, and all acknowledgment shall be duly given, as I did before, I think it will make a useful book. . . . Did you speak to Mr. Pike about sparing or *protecting* Eagles and Peregrines ? Does the Twite breed in Achil ? Does the Corn Bunting reach Achill in summer ?

An expedition into Wales was also taken, in a hope (which proved delusive) of trout-fishing equal to that of the Irish streams. He visited his old botanical friend Mr. Pamplin (once publisher of the “ Phytologist”) and from him obtained a list of birds breeding in Merionethshire, for the projected Essay. The expiry of his fortnight, however, found him still in such bad health that on his return to Dublin a further leave was granted, and his fourth visit (September 17th to October 8th) was paid to Roundstone.

From his Journal it appears that he continued ill at Roundstone, and perhaps did very little Natural History. A composition which he forwarded to the “ Galway Express” shows his still active interest in Inish-bofin, and refers to a tragic episode of the year 1873, connected with

the pursuit of the basking shark. It was suggested by the knowledge that a sum of money then collected by Mr. Brady (Inspector of Fisheries) for the widows and orphans of the drowned fishermen was now exhausted.

### The Lay of the Bofin Shark-Hunters.

[Supposed to be recited on the anniversary of the fatal accident which occurred in 1873, when five brave and industrious fishermen were drowned in following this dangerous pursuit, leaving their widows and orphans to depend for support on the charity of generous neighbours, and the compassion of the public]

We sailed from Westport westwards,  
A crew of eight stout hands,  
To hunt the mightiest shark that swims,  
The mighty shark whose tall black fins  
Sail slowly past dark Bofin's rocks.  
Or Achill's sunny strands.

For in Bofin there is wailing,  
In Shark are bitter tears,  
Shed for the brave who've fallen  
In the prime of their early years.

The purple sun is resting  
Far out on the western tides ;  
All motionless our hooker,  
As if asleep she rides.

But for us there is no resting.  
For us there is no sleep,  
Till we have slain the slayer,  
That monster of the deep.

The widow's wail is keening  
Too close upon our ears ;  
The yellow sands are salter,  
Wet with the widow's tears.

Then away ! with the early sunlight,  
While "vengeance" loud we cry ;  
Away ! to Ardillaun's lofty sides,  
'Tis there our chance we'll try.

Row ! row ! ye fearless oarsmen,  
Bend stoutly to your oar ;  
This is our day of vengeance ;  
Hark ! to the cheers on shore !

And though our hearts are swelling  
At the thought of yesterday,  
'Twill nerve us to remember  
That the shark is doomed our prey.

We're none too soon ; already  
Yon tall fin I can see ;  
Steady, boys, and silently  
Close with the enemy.

High in the bow the avenger stands,  
The spear raised high in his strong hands  
Which none but he can wield ;  
Beware, thou mighty shark, beware,

To him thou soon must yield ;  
For true and deep he has driven his dart  
Down to the very heart.  
Oh, raise not yet the joyful shout ;

Though red blood through the water spout,  
'Tis long before we'll wear him out ;  
His strength will last a summer's day,  
And this, my boys, is no child's play.

'Tis earnest battle now ;  
Ye heard our solemn vow ;  
The widows call.  
The orphans all

Are waiting on your spear.  
Vengeance at last is given  
For he brave who are gone to heaven ;  
Now, widows, dry your tear.

At last, he's dead, that monster strength.  
That might all strength defy.  
Ah me ! we've slain the slayer ;  
Must we ourselves, then, die ?

See, yonder the rising breakers  
Toss high their mane of foam ;  
Are we, then, lost my comrades.  
Or may we again see home ?

In Bofin, and along the coast,  
Ye yet may hear their fame,  
Who slew the tyrant of the sea  
And won the deathless name.

In Impaired Health.

[1876.]

Gradually his opportunities for field-work lessened, as his health each summer seemed more precarious than the year before ; but as yet he had no suspicion of any permanent injury, and

continued to plan further exploration, especially among those islands of the wild west coast, his love for which had already cost him so dear. The preparation of his Report on the Flora of Bofin afforded him great interest, and several letters refer to it. Professor Babington determined the brambles, though not without a little pressure, as the troublesome “barren” stems had somehow got mixed.

Nat. Hist. Museum, *Jan. 19th. 1876.*

Dear Babington,—Many thanks for your letter. I am glad that the parcel has arrived, but I am afraid that I cannot give you any further clue about the barren stems of the Rubi. Another time I will be more careful, but in the hurry and difficulties of our trip I scarcely had time to do more than I did, which was to secure in all cases the barren stem from the same plant. Still I hope you will not find the difficulty of re-uniting them too great, as it will be of so high an interest to know the names in such a remote spot.

I gathered some 300 species in four days, and I hope to print the whole list, and a comparison between the Schist flora of Bofin and the Limestone flora of Aran, which will be very interesting, as Bofin has about 90 species not found in Aran, while Aran yields (on about four times the ground) about 160 species not found in Bofin. So that the contrast is very striking.

I do hope that you will be able to manage the Rubi, for curiously enough *R. cæsius* and *R. saxatilis* are the only two known in Aran, and neither occurs in Boffin . . . . I have an *Isoetes* to send you from a lake in Bofin. It has all the look of, and slender tapering fronds of *echinospora*, but I can't make sure of the seeds.

For the coming summer he thought of exploring Clare Island, which lack of time had prevented in 1875. On returning in June from his usual few days' stay at Killarney, he wrote to Mr. Barrington propounding the idea.

Nat. Hist. Museum, *June 29th.*

Dear Barrington,—Here I am again, safely returned from Killarney, and very glad to see you, if you have time to look in. The weather was very fine, too sunny for much fishing, but I got usually about a dozen and a half each day that I went after trout. I did not find anything worth mention in the way of plants. The Bofin paper is in type, and to appear early in July — so Dr. Wright tells me. The *Carex* has not flowered, but is still barely alive. I think it must be *C. stellulata* ; at any rate I have made no mention of it in the paper. . . . Ogilby has got hold of a very rare fish, the Fox Shark, [6] which I hope we shall be able to secure for the Museum here. I am collecting information about Irish as well as British Bird Distribution, but how can one obtain reliable information from all the quarters of the country ? . . . . Could you manage to go with me to Louisburg and explore Clare Island as soon as Kirby comes back—say 10th or 12th of August ? It would be great fun . . . . Do you know, or could you get me, the address of the Fishing-tackle shop where Mr.— gets his flies ? I want to get a dozen of those black gutta-percha bodies that did so well at Luggala. The same colour answered at Killarney.

The Clare Island project, however, was postponed, and little botany was done this year.

In October (again on sick leave) he made his fifth expedition to Roundstone, and on leaving that favourite locality, revisited, after a long interval of twelve years, his old friends at Castle Taylor. Two days (October 17th and 18th) were spent amid the well-remembered scenes, and a drive was taken “to see Kilmacduagh,” where his exciting hunt after “three brown crows” had taken place twenty-six years ago. He was again on the *qui vive* for notes

on the birds of that neighbourhood (of which he had once, long ago, compiled a list) ; for he was highly desirous of including Ireland in his projected revision of the “ Bird Cybele,” and had now made considerable progress in the collection of information from British counties.

But the addition of Ireland to the area added largely to his difficulties ; still more so, the wish to include local statistics as to increase or decrease in winter. Above all, the problem how to check estimates on this latter subject, when doubtful of the accuracy of your informant’s judgment. He had not now the abundant leisure which formerly had enabled him, at Bembridge, to draw as it were the measure of each of his ninety-seven correspondents, and sift the grain from the chaff, for purposes of an investigation arduous enough, and yet much less so than his present one. How good soever his health had been, it is doubtful whether the *embarras de richesse* emanating from the “ too willing informant” would not, in this inquiry, have proved quite inextricable. With ill-health superadded, it is not wonderful that the investigation was never, on these lines, completed.

[1] *Tristoma coccinea*, *Lepophtheirus nordmanni*, *Cecrops latreillii*, *Echthrogaleus orthogoriscus*, &c.

[2] To the British Association.

[3] In another letter he says, perhaps with stricter accuracy, “ did not at all seem inclined to adopt it as the right spot, but we kept searching all the way back towards Craigga-more.”

[4] Lydekker (“ British Mammals,” p. 158) : “ A seal, shot in county Galway about the year 1856, is considered to indicate the right of this species to be included in the list of Irish Mammals.” See also Bell (“ British Quadrupeds,” 2nd edit., p. 254). It was on the 24th or 25th of September, 1855, that Mr. Evans shot his supposed harp seal.

[5] August 14, 1869.

[6] A specimen now in the Museum, presented by Mr. J. D. Ogilby

Life and letters of Alexander Goodman More, with selections from his zoological and botanical writings ; (1898)

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