

A land of discovery 1864 -1869

Life and letters of Alexander Goodman More

Fifth visit to Ireland.

[1864.]

A visit to Hollymount, Co. Mayo (August 1st—10th), concluded this summer's botanizing so far as Ireland was concerned. At Hollymount he gathered several species new to him, and was shown some interesting rarities, especially enjoying a day's botany on the banks of Lough Carra. But, perhaps, nothing seen during this summer left a more abiding impression than the majestic view from the Cliff of Moher. Two years later, in a letter signed "Hesperus," which he contributed to the "Zoologist" (vol. xiv., p. 4941), he thus referred to his recollections of the afternoon of July 26th, 1854 : —

How shall I describe the noble sight that burst upon us all at once, as we topped the rise of undulating turf, strewn here and there with yellow mountain pansies ? The feeling at first of familiarity, as if it had been a scene we had visited before, and then the gradual awe stilling the heart, as it broke upon the soul in all its reality and magnificence. The dark wall that has defied the wasting ocean beyond the reach of history or of man—bulwark of earth—champion of the land ! and the white birds, attendant spirits of the precipice, a whirling maze beneath, around, above, all with ceaseless clamour of affection and anxiety, not without reason. Marked you yon gang of men sitting in a group, who seemed so quietly at home, so thoroughly familiar with the wonders of the place ? They are not there for nothing. . . . The poor Kittiwakes pay a heavy toll, eggs from the nest and young birds from the rock ledge, noosed, as of old, with rod and snare by the dexterous fowler ; they are drawn up by twenties, tucked under the belt of that man now hauled up a mass of feathers. ... A little further, let us look elsewhere at the fluttering clamorous Gulls and circling Auks that start every moment from the cliff and describe short circuits, with now a succession of rapid strokes and now an even swinging flight, the Guillemots browner, the Razorbills blacker of the two, and the lesser Puffin also (called Parrot here) tunnels his way to a secure retreat in the turf of the slopes and ledges ; and the Chough you may chance to see, and the Jackdaw, and the Rock-dove, with earnest beat of its hurrying wings ; and they will tell you of the Eagle (*H. albicilla*) that shuns approach, and lays his eyrie beneath some overhanging arch, secure from plunder himself though he may not spare. And the gallant Peregrine, relic of chivalry, as thou wert its compeer, crossed he not our sight as we skirted the edge, well known by his stalwart form and knightly moustache ? How I rejoiced in the absence of the murderous gun ; else were the temptation perhaps too great. ... Is that a seal ? Your guide hesitates, for it is no easy matter to distinguish him from the rock on which he sits ; but they are common enough most days. Turn, then, your attention westward, ye naturalists and sportsmen, that like something larger than gnats or diatoms for your quarry ; not Scotland only is worthy an excursion. There are fewer species of birds, perhaps, and less variety breeding in the inland lakes of Ireland ; but for one grand feature—the precipice breasting the Atlantic—the place is well worthy of your notice, and the Irish highlands offer, too, a little-explored country.

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And now, once again, he was to try the effect as a health restorative of Irish air. Towards the end of February, 1864, at the invitation of their kind friends in the West, his sister and he

crossed over to Ireland, making his fifth visit to that country and to Castle Taylor. The completeness of the change was indescribably refreshing to him. It seemed as if the very sight of that vivid limestone flora, which, as he had long before said in his journal, seemed to smile as a friend wherever he met it, truly bespoke the kindness of the climate to one who loved it so well. Even now, though it was only February, he found, as his scrap of a journal notes, already “one flower of *Gentiana verna*,” as it were by way of a welcome.

All through March and part of April they stayed at Castle Taylor. “I rejoice to tell you that I am better in health now than I have been for a long time,” he writes to Mr. Newton (March 31st). “We have killed lots of Woodcock, and I have had shot at twelve Wild Swans here” (23rd). On the 24th the Mediterranean Heath, ever one of his favourite Irish plants, was “in beautiful (early) flower”; and the advance of *Sesleria cærulea* from “spikes one inch long,” on March 13th, till it was seen “with anthers exerted” on the 8th April, was noticed with special interest among the symptoms of the spring.

But while marking the progress of this and similar limestone-loving species, in a certain “large rocky pasture field west of the Nut-Wood,” where in former summers they remembered hunting the remarkable moth *Zygæna minos*, they now noticed something which turned out to be even more remarkable—an inconspicuous but evidently unfamiliar orchidaceous plant. It was not as yet sufficiently advanced in growth for examination; but (to quote his paper) “It attracted our notice by appearing above ground at a singularly early date, in a locality where we knew that *Orchis mascula* was the only early *Orchis*, and *Orchis mascula* of course it could not be.”

However, before the mystery of the little orchid could be unravelled, Mr. More left Castle Taylor to spend some few weeks in Dublin, and while there he took a step which greatly influenced his future life—“proposed an Irish Flora to D. M.” Thus in his journal he records the first projection of the “*Cybele Hibernica*,” the joint work of himself and Dr. David Moore of Glasnevin. The proposal was not long in being determined on. “Here am I,” he writes to Mr. Newton, May 12th, “in Dublin, in a fair way of becoming Hibernian. At least I have engaged myself as partner in a new Irish Flora or *Cybele*, which we hope may be published in about another year; and the explorations requisite to bring about this book will, I believe, detain me on this side of St. George’s Channel for the present. I hope in about another week to start for the west of Mayo, a very wild and interesting country, where I shall keep a look-out for birds as well as plants. But I believe it is not very rich in Ornithology. I have found here several of your friends. Dr. Perceval Wright has been especially kind, and it is to him that we are indebted for the prospect of raising the needful £ *s. d.* towards the publication of the Flora. Dr. Carte seems also to take great interest in birds. ... I am glad to tell you that my health is a great deal better this year, and I am looking forward with great hope to having some results to show for my trip into the far west. I am only waiting for some botanical apparatus which I am expecting from the Isle of Wight, and then too I shall be able to get at my papers again, and must get out the first part of the Bird-Distribution.”

The curious orchid now came into flower, and “my sister, following up the clue after I had left Castle Taylor, collected and dried several specimens, remarking that the little orchis was something she had never seen before.” He was not yet quite ready to start for Mayo, when he received one of these specimens, and noticed its resemblance to Reichenbach’s figure of *Tinea* (or *Neotinea*) *intacta*, a plant of Southern Europe and Northern Africa. But the identification was not to be fixed in a day. Indeed it was thought by at least one botanist to whom the specimen was shown that it might belong to *Habenaria albida*; so that even his hope of adding a new species to the Flora had been considerably damped, when in June, after

talking over the matter with his friend Dr. Moore, and coming to no conclusion, he left Dublin to spend the summer botanizing at Foxford, a village on the river Moy, the boundary between Districts 8 and 9 of the intended “*Cybele Hibernica*.”

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First visit to Roundstone

1869

In July he went on an expedition to Roundstone, where he spent a month dredging and collecting. He had long looked forward to visiting this part of Connemara, which, in spite of its remoteness and difficulty of access—having no railway station within fifty miles—boasted an almost unrivalled record in the chronicles of Irish natural history. For Roundstone was emphatically the land of discovery. Here was the place where *Erica mediterranea* had been first detected as an Irish heath by Dr. Mackay in 1830 ; where also the heath named in Dr. Mackay’s honour, *Erica mackaiana*, had been discovered by the local self-taught naturalist William M’Calla ; where, unless some singular mistake had been committed, a third remarkable heath, *Erica ciliaris*, had twice been gathered on Irish soil by botanists visiting Connemara ; where the delicate lake-plant, *Naias flexilis*, discovered by Professor Oliver in 1850, had still its only known locality in the British Islands ; where M’Calla had found those remarkable “nullipores” unknown elsewhere in British waters, *Lithothamnion fasciculatum* and *Lithothamnion agariciforme* ; where Professor Harvey, to his delight, had obtained the equally interesting alga, *Peysoneilia borealis*, new as a species to science and as a genus to Britain. Among the Crustacea and other forms of marine life Roundstone had also proved fertile in rarities ; in fact the vicinity of the little fishing hamlet was, as it still is, a happy hunting-ground to explorers in nearly every section of biology.

But apart from its general celebrity, Roundstone possessed one other association which greatly increased its attractiveness to Mr. More. No part of the correspondence of his early years had been more carefully treasured than were those “humorous letters” of Mr. Henry Evans, naturalist and sportsman, which had formed one of the topics of his conversation with Bell, on the “lucky Friday” of their first meeting in 1855. Many of these letters are dated from Roundstone, and contain lively descriptions of the writer’s experiences in pursuit of the “big game” of that part of the Irish coast, the *Halichærus grypus*, or Great Grey Seal. Roundstone and seal-hunting had ever since, in Mr. More’s mind, been inseparably associated, and he now eagerly looked forward to the chance of shooting one of these fine animals for the museum.

He was not destined, however, to fall in with any seals until some time after his arrival at Roundstone. Cruising in Roundstone and Bertraghbuy Bays and to some of the neighbouring islands, he accumulated great stores of sponges and algæ, shells, ascidians, urchins, starfish, Crustacea, &c., and noted down for use on future occasions all that he could glean from a veteran “sun-fish hunter” about the pursuit of that huge monster, the Basking Shark, among the westernmost islands. His best success was with the Ascidians, a group in which he had long taken an interest, and of which more than twenty species were now collected. In shore-pools on the interesting little isle of Saint Macdara he was pleased to again fall in with his old friend Montagu’s blenny, the fish which he had found a year ago at Dingle. Here too were “Shannies of a beautiful mottled green and white, like the granite on which they live”; and a rare shrimp, *Athanas nitescens*, of which only one Irish specimen is known to have been previously collected. [1]

The flora of Saint Macdara included the Primrose, which he found still in flower on the 27th of July. Some botany was also done on the mainland when the weather was either too rough or too calm for the hooker. With characteristic avidity to discover which was Professor Oliver's original locality for *Naias flexilis*, he searched many of the little lakes near Roundstone, besides that in which Dr. Moore was known to have afterwards found it. In this last, but nowhere else, he got the *Naias*; and though Creg-duff, as it is called, is somewhat nearer Roundstone than accords with Professor Oliver's description of his locality, the conclusion seemed at last to be fairly warranted that here was the plant's original and only ascertained Irish station. But *Naias flexilis* was not the only prize now obtained at Creg-duff. Beside the lake was growing, in some quantity, a grass not quite like any he had seen before. It was, as he at once guessed, a new addition to the flora of Ireland, *Aira uliginosa*. This species was not, at the time, known to botanists as actually growing in any part of the British Islands; but specimens preserved in herbaria proved at least its former occurrence in the east of Scotland; and the question "does it grow there still?" was asked in the current (sixth) edition of Babington's Manual. Mr. Baker, also, on the strength of the same facts, had endeavoured, in the Journal of Botany, to instigate a search for the lost British grass. But its turning up here in the wilds of Connemara was a botanical surprise. A few weeks later (in September) an equally unexpected discovery of the same grass in the south of England was made by Mr. H. C. Watson, at Fleetpond, Hants.

The exploration of Creg-duff took place on the 25th of July. On the 28th, when a dead calm stopped the hooker, he hurried off to another spot of at least equal botanical interest, the hill of Craigga-more, between Roundstone and Clifden, where *Erica ciliaris* was recorded as having been gathered, once in 1846 by Mr. J. F. Bergin, and again in 1852 by Professor J. H. Balfour and a party of his pupils, but of which other botanists, Mr. Babington included, had been unable to find the least trace. His search for this heath was entirely unsuccessful. "I walked (he writes) all round the hill, commencing on the left (east) side, following its low grounds. Everywhere *Erica mackayi*, but I could not see *E. ciliaris*. On flat spongy bogs, on low sloping banks, on hillocks amid the spongy ground, and especially along the south shore of the lake to the westward, grew *Erica mackayi*, scarcely yet in flower." From that day the importance of having a thoroughly exhaustive search made for *Erica ciliaris*, whose claim to be an Irish plant rests solely on the Craigga-more-records, was deeply impressed upon him.

But all this time there were no seals. Not till the last day of July, when he paid his first visit to Kilkieran Bay, some ten miles south-east of Roundstone, was he gratified with a sight of the wished-for game. In the afternoon of that day "I went up the harbour with two men in a small sailing boat, and soon saw a large seal (grey) give one or two rolls in a calm spot and then go under, 150 yards off. Another, on a rock 120 yards distant, wriggled off before we could get nearer. Showers of rain; landed and looked round an islet; landed again on a bit of the mainland; no seals there. But nearly at head of creek saw a seal sitting on a very low rock, often turning its white face towards us. Landed at back of the islet and tried to stalk up to within eighty yards, the nearest possible; but the seal was down wind and must have heard us, or seen the boatman, as it went off. Wind now right ahead, and strong; we were obliged to sleep at head of creek. Three seals seen, and not a shot fired."

The little port into which he had been driven for the night was Kilbrickan. Here, in the morning, he found the wind still very high. He bathed, and took a "lesson in Irish, under the sunny side of a house, sheltering from the squalls"; then "off for a dead heat in a sea all white—and heavy squalls falling now and then from the high hills. Perfectly drenched all of us, and the rifle: saw a fine Rone-More (this is the fourth) *rolling* himself among the breakers—a sign of storm; fired at a whitish seal on Evans Rock near oyster-bed—shot two inches

too high. This shot was fired in a rolling boat, from shoulder, seventy yards. The beast grinned at me between two rocks, but I let his body open before I fired. Mem., to shoot low in future. . . . Another, or the same Rone More we saw yesterday, was seen swimming here ; this makes six.” That night was spent at Kilkieran, and next day he returned to Roundstone. “ A lovely drive home past Ballinahinch ; all the Binboola Pins in full view—a glorious day with chilly wind. Shot a gosling Merganser with ball, just below Ballinahinch Bridge. Went to botanize, and found Naias again. To bed at 10, very tired.”

“ I have a bad cold caught in that pookaun from the spray and rain,” he writes next morning (Aug. 3rd), and the early part of the day being very rainy he did not go dredging, but “ practised rifle-shooting (with good success) ; wrote, and arranged specimens ; fished in Lough Creg-duff (fish sulky, though a fine breeze was blowing, and soft); called at monastery ; to bed at 11—bad night, as if overworked.” Next day, “ up and saw sun rise on Twelve Pins ; wrote many letters ; *Aira uliginosa* to London and Syme ; skinned the gosling Merganser ; called on Mr. — ; dined with Dr. — ; called with doctor at the monastery : saw Brother — and my friend Brother — , the blue-eyed kindly monk. Mem. to send ‘ *Cybele Hibernica*.’ A lovely evening ; clear, soft, and bright ; the hills perfect ; air like Isle of Wight. Very sleepy.”

It was now a fortnight since he had come to Roundstone, and his great wish to obtain a seal was unaccomplished. Next day he purposed another expedition to Kilkieran, and tired as he had been on the Wednesday night, on Thursday (August 5th), “ woke before dawn, and started at 4¼ for Urrisbeg; reached top at 5,” and made a list of the plants growing there ; then hurried down and embarked for Kilkieran Bay. “ Passed the monastery at 10.40 ; landed at Macdara for lunch ; then on to Mason Isle, where I saw one root of *Inula elecampane*, *Senecio jacobæa*, rayless ; pond full of *Hippuris* ; *Raphanus maritimus* ; *Eryngium* very large. A raised beach at east end, eight feet high, and with a kind of rude chamber containing (human) bones, topped with ten inches of solidifying shells and layers of periwinkles, &c.” Mweenish and other islands were visited, and a “ shallow sandy ford” between one of them and the mainland was explored as “ a very likely looking place,” but “ kelp-boats are now everywhere ; no seal was seen, and we landed shortly after sunset (at 8) at Kilkieran Quay. Both F. [2] and self were utterly done up with the fatigue of the long day and the early rising.”

How intently his mind was now bent on securing success is shown by the opening of next day’s journal : —

(*Friday, August 6th*). Our plan is to take inside Kilkieran Bay today. Then, Birmore and Corrig-na-mackan on Saturday ; if sufficiently fine, possibly to Eagle Rock. The Skiard Rocks on Tuesday. This to be the end, as there is too much weed-cutting at Carig-a-Laughaun rocks (which is otherwise a tip-top locality). If I am well and strong enough, and weather permits, I hope this plan will get a seal (*Halichserus*). It is now quite calm, and all my plans may fail ; but courage and care may yet do it. *Nil desperandum*.

(A) With Kilkieran we may take Casheen and Coonawilleen coming out at Kiggaul Bay ; or try Greatman's Bay.

(B) Corrig-na-mackan Rocks are best done from Kilkieran.

(C) The Skiard and Duagoodle from Roundstone in hooker. Four days wanted will, with a rest on Sunday, bring us to Tuesday, supposing weather fine. Then to Aran. *Sic*, man proposes.

“ Rone-More.”

[AUG. 1869.]

He had been up at dawn to secure the best boatman, enjoyed a dip in the sea, and breakfasted at sunrise. Starting at 6, on a beautiful calm morning, he at once saw a seal basking on a sunny rock, and after some careful stalking, got within 100 yards, shot at and hit him ; but the animal was only wounded, and made its escape. After that “ a Grey Seal playing in a bay” was seen, beyond range. This creature soon took alarm, and dived at sight of the boat ; and though after some patient manoeuvring he got near enough to take two shots, as it momentarily showed its head above water, its wariness was too great ; and by this time the noise had put the seals of the adjacent coves so much on their guard that little more sport was to be hoped for.

“ Only in the very furthest creek did we see any more seals. Three were then seen on rocks close to each other—two grey, one black. I took a 100-yards shot at a grey fellow on a rock : bullet struck rock 4 inches too low. Next stalked up to and pegged away at a swimming black head, 50 yards : when, to my great delight, I heard the thud, saw the body float—a struggle, and then he sank, spouting blood ; the whole water was crimsoned.”

The creek in which he thus bagged his first seal was the same (Kilbrickan) at whose head he had been storm-bound on the night of July 31st. So here, putting in at the well-known haven, he awaited the ebb of the tide to secure his prey. It measured 5 feet 8 inches, and was “ fat and plump, and a most beautiful skin, supposed to be ‘ rising 3,’ *i.e.* two years old.” Next day it was sent by-sea to Galway, and in the evening its slayer, housed in Kilkieran police barracks, composed the obituary of his victim in the shape of the following : —

Lament for Rone-More.

Rone-More is borne to Galway,
Roll'd in his bloody shroud,
And all Kilkieran's wild haven
Mourns wrapt in mist and cloud ;
For never more on rock or shore
That dark head shall we see ;
Rone-More, he was the stoutest seal
That swam the waters free.

More-Beg came down from Dublin,
A mighty oath he swore,
That without head of Rone
He would return no more.
Well has he kept his promise,
And proud is he to-day,
As in solemn march the mighty dead
Is borne along the quay.

More -Beg sailed in from Roundstone,
His rifle in his hand ;
The golden sun was setting

Along the yellow strand.
Athwart the lonely islands
That fringe our western shore.
Rone-More ! swift death is with him !
Thy doom is nigh, Rone-More !

Rone-More ! Rone-More ! beware him !
Beware his stealthy tread !
His step is on the war-path !
A price is on thy head !
Behind the seaweed crouching,
His hand is nerved to slay !
Alas ! Rone-More ! swim not so near !
Hide deep thy head to-day !

Alas ! Rone-More ! Thy mother
No more shall welcome thee,
Rolling her eyes in fondness
Thy dappled hide to see.
Slain is the stoutest swimmer
That swam Kilkieran's Bay :
Rolled in his shroud, Rone-More so proud
Is borne a helpless prey.

Slain is the stoutest swimmer
That ever breasted tide :
Too wide is now that narrow sheet
For all his youthful pride !
And ye who go to Dublin,
Ye there may chance to see
The heroes of my story—
Rone-More, More-Beg, and me.

The Rone of this ballad seems to have been really an unusually large Rone-Beg (*Phoca vitulina*). *Halichærus grypus* had not yet fallen to his rifle. Meanwhile a change in the weather prevented further pursuit of seals—"in truth (he writes) it is only sunny and calm days which suit the sport." The Carrig-na-mackan expedition was given up, and he returned to Roundstone by car. Kilkieran Bay lies almost opposite the Aran Isles, which he was to visit if possible ; but Aran was also impracticable for the present, and for nearly a week he remained at Roundstone, botanizing and overhauling the contents of the rock-pools when it was too rough to dredge. He again searched Craigg-a-more, as fruitlessly as ever, for *Erica ciliaris*, and another day took a boat to Carig-a-lauchaun and Hen Rock, supposed to be haunts of seals, where however no seals at all were seen.

At last bright weather smiled again, and on Friday (August 13th) he returned once more to Kilkieran, hoping yet to secure a *Halichærus* before crossing thence to Aran. Sailing along the coast, and dipping into likely creeks, they kept a good look out for seals, with little success, on the way to Kilkieran. "I saw a small seal (he says) near the Police-Barrack of Carna, and made a bad stalk of it, the canoe being carried out by a strong wind into full view at 120 yards." He fired, but without success, and saw no more seals that day.

For a whole week from this date he remained at Kilkieran, still in quest of Rone-More — a pursuit deserving to be styled “sport” in the strictest sense, since the odds, without any doubt, were immensely in favour of the seal. On Saturday, which seemed a favourable day, “fine and somewhat sultry, with light wind,” he saw altogether ten seals, but got shots at only two, of which he killed one—“a very shy and lively Rone-Beg.” On Monday he set out on a long-projected excursion. “Started at 10.40, one hour before high water, for the rocks called Carrig-na-mackan, to look for big seals.” He had heard much of the fame of these rocks, which lie out, far from land, in the Atlantic, as a haunt of the Halichærus. After five hours at sea he “landed, through dangerous surf, on Carrig-na-Mackan,” to find “Beta maritima of gigantic size,” and a few other common maritime plants. “Only these eight species,” he says, noting their names as methodically as if he had gone there to find them. On Tuesday, after visiting the local school in the forenoon, and noting that he had “found the reading and writing good,” he adds :—“Next tried for an hour for a shot at the dome-headed old Bull, sitting in a chink of a rock up to my middle in water. At last fired at 150 yards at his swimming head—a very near shave.” A few other shots were obtained the same day, but no seals were bagged. On Wednesday he had no better success, though eight seals were stalked or shot at ; and on Thursday he notes :—“Seals very wild in the bay.” “Shot at a head at 100 yards : a fair shot, but the head ducked as the bullet left the rifle. This was fired from boat. Then a shot from a rock, after an unsuccessful stalk.”

His arrangements had now all been made to start for Aran on the following morning. He had been a week at Kilkieran, and the only success obtained had been in the dredging, among whose most recent results he was pleased to find at last the rare shell, *Tellina balaustina*, scarcely expected at Kilkieran, which had disappointed him by not turning up in Bertraghbuy Bay, its reputed locality.

So on Friday, August 20th, he started for Aran, carrying with him the happiest memories of his life on the Connemara shore, where he had formed many friendships. It was disappointing, nevertheless, that all his carefully laid plans for securing the Great Grey Seal had been so completely baffled by the animal’s wary nature ; for this was his farewell to the haunts of Rone-More, except, indeed, for one (as it may have seemed) “forlorn hope.”

About half-way in his course to Aran lay the desolate islet known as Eagle Rock, which, being even more remote and difficult of access than Carrig-na-mackan, he had hitherto let alone. It was however reputed to be a seal-rock, and to-day it was to be tried.

“At 10.15 we started. Wind light, S.S.W. ; were off Dinish at 12.15, against a lee spring-tide. After a few tacks we reached Eagle Rock. Asking for information, we were told that there was a large seal then often seen there, and that he was seen there yesterday.

“Luffing up close to the Western Rock we (Old Ash) saw *his* head. He kept always close to the breakers, and only once left them to range up 200 or 300 yards along the island. He soon turned back to the breakers, and then he kept on showing his head close to the breaking wave.

“Soon I got a shot at eighty yards, and shot over a wee bit, because the gun hung fire as the hand was rising. Soon he showed again, after we had luffed and drawn up as close as we could to the breakers. His head rose once more amid the white spray. The second shot was fired. I heard the ball crash into his skull ; and he jumped up and rolled for one moment, and then sank. The blood rose immediately, reddening the white foam of the breakers, and we felt sure of him.

“ Coyne and I in the canoe went over him with the spear, but could not see him at all. Another boat was nearly dashed to pieces on the breaker rock ; and it took an hour before he was fished up. The blood had then ceased to run.

“ He weighs 3½ cwt. Measures 8 feet. Rone-More Thorang !—the biggest Bull on the coast. Has frequented the rock for six or seven or ten years.

“ His eye is clear lilac-brown, with very small oval blue-black pupil and a white ring round the lilac iodine-brown of the iris : from white to white 1½ inches across. His longest whisker four inches.

“ While the seal was being raised I caught some little medusoid, like a purple tadpole at end of a jelly-sac.”

(And here follows in the note-book an outline drawing of the “ little medusoid” which, he soon found, was *Salpa spinosa*—an addition to the oceanic mollusca of Irish waters.)

So, with the big seal on board at last, they went on in triumph to Aran, where the Saturday and Sunday were spent. But with such a cargo as Rone-More in charge, no time could be wasted. On Monday he took leave of Aran’s “ great open rounded bays, with caves overhung, and reechoing with the great dash of the rollers.” “ Left Aran Harbour in our small glothiogue at a quarter before 11. . . . About half-past 3 landed at Claddagh. Great scramble among the fishermen. Procession formed, and seal conveyed at last safely to the station.”

Few, but characteristic, are the notes (occupying one page of his little pocket-book) of the twenty-four hours spent in Galway. “ Tuesday, Aug. 24th. To Prof. King and the College. Mr. Noon, Galway, will send up seals’ heads and paws, and help me about the Sunfish. To the Salmon Weir. Saw Mr. M. and Mr. T., who kindly promised to help me about *Salmo gallivensis*, which is said to occur in May. Returned to Dublin by the 4 afternoon train. I now weigh 8 stone 8 lbs., *i.e.* 12 lbs. less than last winter.”

He carried back a huge store of still unsifted dredgings, skins, plants, and other prizes, to Dublin ; but uppermost in his mind was still “ the old solitary bull of Eagle Rock,” and this chapter may conclude with the lay in which he vented his delight at the fall of “ Rone-More Thorang.”

The Joys of Roundstone ; or, The Seal-Hunter’s Return.

Hurrah for the joys of Roundstone !
Hurrah for the boundless sea !
Hurrah for the rolling waters,
The Atlantic breezes free !

Hurrah for Carrig-a-mackan,
Lashed evermore with foam !
'Tis there the grey old Seal-King
So long has made his home.

Away to Dungoodle’s rock, so wild,
Who in danger oft would be !
And if we fail, and if we drown,

It shall be known in Roundstone town.
That Skiard must be our pillar-stone
Far seen across the sea.

And where the sun throws shadows long
Adown the evening wave.
Yon rocks are our inheritance.
They'll watch and guard our grave.

Hurrah for our watery war-path !
Hurrah for our fearless crew !
Hurrah for the deadly rifle
From which swift death oft flew !

Hurrah for Mongan, [3] following sure,
Like a sleuth-hound on his prey !
This is his hour of triumph :
He has tasted blood to-day.

To-day the Atlantic breakers
Rolled red round Eagle Rock,
While our wild shouts of victory
Out-rang the waves' loud shock.

For slain is the stoutest swimmer
That swam Kilkieran's Bay !
Slain is Rone-More, the big Rone-More,
Whom we so often tracked before ;
But, he is slain to-day !

That Great Grey Bull, so cunning,
With a head like a big old Bear,
Who amid the thundering breakers
Too long had held his lair.

And yet he fell at last, and so
Shall fall another Rone,
And we'll bear the spoils of Ocean
Again into Roundstone.

[1] Thompson records one specimen found in Clare in 1840. This record had escaped Mr. More's notice when he wrote ("Zool." (3), xiii., p. 236) : "I do not think that this pretty little crustacean, so like a miniature lobster, has yet been recorded as Irish."

[2] Mr. W. Frazer, F.R.C.S.I., had joined him at Roundstone.

[3] His head-boatman, Thomas Mongan, of Roundstone.

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

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