

HAMPSHIRE CLAVARIAS,

With a Supplemental List of Fungi,¹

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The entire mass of Fungi sub-divide themselves naturally into two great divisions. In one of these, by far the largest, the Hymenomycetes, the spores or reproductive bodies are naked or exposed; in the other and smaller division the spores are contained in bags or sacs called asci. Of Hymenomycetous Fungi the hymenium, or fruit bearing surface, is the most prominent feature. In some of these the hymenium is inferior and in some it is superior. It is to a group of the latter, called Clavaria, we wish to draw attention.

Clavarias have the fruit superior or encircling the club shaped or sometimes branched pileus, or what answers to the cap of the ordinary mushroom.

The British species grow on the ground, rarely on wood, they are fleshy and present considerable variety in colour; white, yellow, grey, violet are represented, and one is whitish with red tips. About forty are enumerated as growing in this country, of which the greater number might perhaps by diligent search be found. The searchers are apparently few, but a little information may possibly induce more to enter upon the subject. Springing up amongst the clean sweet grass of lawns and meadows, or amid the dead leaves of our woodlands, there is nothing but what is attractive about them. They are usually not more than 2 or 3 inches in height, and often insignificant unless forced into greater prominence by excess of wet, increase of temperature, or whatever may be the hidden causes at work which promote their growth. After the exceptional rain of October, 1891, they were markedly abundant.

¹H.F.C. Proceedings, Vol. i., parts i., 49; ii., 22; iii., 41; iv., 60.

This genus of Fungi bear the name *Clavaria* (*clava* a club) from the club like shape of many of its members. Of the various kinds we have representatives of each section into which the group has been sub-divided, but only those that have been already found within the borders of the county are here noticed.

The arrangement usually followed by which the group is broken up is easily remembered,

SECTION I.—Where the clubs are branched, divided again into the white and yellow spores

SECTION II.—Where the clubs are simple, with the stems fasciculate or tufted at the base.

SECTION III.—Where the club is simple and distinct at the base.

The specimens should be laid upon a piece of dull black paper or a slate for a few hours, when around and beneath the specimens will be found a discoloured patch, caused by the spores analogous to seed or fruit which the *Clavaria* has shed.

SECTION I.—Branched, or (a) spores white.

Amethyst *Clavaria*.—Violet, very much branched, the branches being round and smooth.

Fastigate *Clavaria*.—This is yellow in colour with slender stem, much branched but short.

Crested *Clavaria*.—Though often white is quite as often of a dirty dingy colour, the branches at the tip very acute or crested, oftener found in woods than elsewhere.

Cinereous *Clavaria*.—Grey, with a short thick tough stem, branchlets wrinkled and rather blunt.

(b) Spores yellow.

Golden *Clavaria*.—This, as its name indicates, is a yellow species, with stout straight branches.

Firwood *Clavaria*.—Dull and snuff yellow colour, easily known by its tendency to turn green when bruised, everywhere very common.

Reddish *Clavaria*.—Yellow, with the peculiarity that the tips of the branches turn red, an uncommon form, but found in the New Forest.

Flaccid *Clavaria*.—Slender, ochraceous, with branches converging, not unlike the second one above, but thinner.

SECTION II.—Clubs simple, stems fasciculate.

Spindle Shaped *Clavaria*.—This grows in rather dense tufts of delicate spindle shaped yellow clubs, these are hollow with the tips usually brownish, and a slender spinelike point.

Unequal *Clavaria*.—Common in grass drives in woods. The clubs are solid, more brittle, and yellow.

White tufted *Clavaria*.—In colour white, often found on lawns and pastures, the clubs are hollow, often yellowish with a white stem.

Smoky *Clavaria*.—The clubs smooth, straight, much attenuated downwards, a little compressed, and of a smoky colour.

SECTION III.—Clubs simple and distinct at the base.

Large Clubbed Clavaria.—This is the largest and handsomest of the group, sometimes reaching 10 or 12 inches in height, of a dull orange colour, internally white; usually found only in woods.

Lady Arden's Clavaria.—This is a rare species everywhere, but on two occasions we have met with it. It is about 6 inches long, very slender, rusty brown, with the clubs hollow.

It is difficult by description alone to give a clear notion of the specific differences among these little plants, occasionally the microscope must be appealed to, but by the exercise of care and patience it may not be impossible to recognize them, and so increase the pleasure of a country walk.

Of Clavarias as articles of food Dr. Cooke writes: "None but the largest are worthy of much consideration except as curiosities. It requires some effort to collect sufficient for a dish, and when cooked in the most approved fashion, there is no great compensation in delicacy of flavour, aroma or novelty of taste. Many Agarics to be found with less trouble at the same season would give greater satisfaction. There is however one advantage which they possess, and no small one, with timid people they are absolutely safe. If curiosity should prompt an effort to eat them they should be washed in lukewarm water and dried, then tied together in bundles like asparagus and cooked with butter, parsley and salt. After cooking they may be improved by the addition of a little cream, and dredging occasionally with flour."
