

NOTES ON THE FLORA OF ALVERSTOKE AND ROWNER.

BY MARTIN SNAPE.

These notes take into consideration the plants formerly noticeable as rare or scarce in other localities ; plants which have appeared for a short time ; and a few casuals and weeds.

The curious little Mousetail (*Myosurus minimus*) grew for a short time on a circular clearance about a young tree in Rowner Churchyard ; years before it had been abundant in a cornfield about a quarter of a mile distant. Sea Heath (*Frankenia laevis*) was fairly common on the north side of Haslar Lake ; it is now almost extinct. *Silene nutans* (Nottingham Catchfly) is still abundant on Browndown near Stokes Bay, but *Lotus angustissimus* is sought for in vain in its old habitat. *Lathyrus Aphaca* occurred in the dry ditch round Fort Elson, and *L. Nissolia* in that which surrounds Fort Grange ; both sparingly. The Samphire (*Crithmum maritimum*) found a perch in the joints of the masonry of the sea wall at Fort Blockhouse ; but it is less happy than it was, most of it was picked by a friend to whom it was shown in an unguarded moment. *Smyrniium Olusatrum* is plentiful on banks and hedgerows near the sea ; an old gardener once told the writer its name was " Sanders "—that when the former was young it was used as a vegetable. *Sambucus Ebulus* (the Dane-wort) forms a fine clump in pasture-land near Hardway, and grows in the hedge near it ; another plant of it, very beautiful when in flower, not far off, has vanished. *Senecio viscosus* occurred at Stokes Bay, but its place knows it no more.

Centaurea Calcitrapa still displays its prickles on Chark Common; it selected Clay Hall Lane for its abode—one of the least attractive lanes in the world, perfectly straight and between high brick walls—but an unfortunate tidiness on the part of the authorities scraped it out of existence. *Linaria repens*—Creeping Toadflax is not the prettiest of names—grows at Stokes Bay and Browndown, occasionally getting into gardens and railway banks; a particularly attractive tuft of it, giving a mass of its delicate colour, is near a signal box. *Salvia Verbenaca* made a purplish patch on the ramparts, which were built to defend Gosport in the 18th century, but it is less now than it was. A hedge of Cotton Thistle was planted below it by the Scotch Colonel of the regiment then in the New Barracks: it did very well for one season but did not establish itself. *Chenopodium olidum* has ceased to spread its unsavoury self over the shingle of Stokes Bay. The plants were not numerous and the War Department was active in its building at that time and place. *Euphorbia portlandica* is not as common as it was at Stokes Bay, but it is there yet. Butcher's Broom or Knee Hulver, as I heard it called in Sussex, is frequent, and in the old woods at Grange produces its fine red berries in some profusion. It is difficult to find the Twig Rush (*Cladium Mariscus*) on the site of Gomer Pond—Gamoorepond on a map of three centuries ago—on account of the reeds which are very tall and strong there, but there it is. *Spartina stricta* is in position on the south side of Anglesey Creek, but does not increase much; it is not as enterprising as *S. alterniflora*, which is rapidly taking possession of every mud flat and muddy shore in Portsmouth Harbour, and is as golden as a harvest field in the winter sun. It has plenty of space to cover. Hards—that is shingle where one may walk without sinking into the mud below it—are scarce: Hardway, Gosport Hard and Common (*i.e.* Portsea Common) Hard are examples. Nit grass (*Gastridium lendigerum*) is

often to be found on cultivated ground both in Rowner and Alverstoke. The craze for fern collecting has almost denuded the place of Filices. *Osmunda regalis*, which grew magnificently in a damp wood near Grange, is now seen only by the pond at Rowner Rectory. The Wall Rue (*Asplenium Ruta-muraria*) attached itself to the Rectory walls at Alverstoke as well as to the wall of Haslar Hospital, but was exterminated when repairs took place. There was a very old and tumble-down boatbuilder's shed by the Harbour Road, the roof was anything but watertight, and the damp came down the brick wall so regularly that moss made a bright green patch. The Wall Rue grew there luxuriantly, displayed all its stages of development from the minute prothallus up to the full sized fern, and was apparently well content with its indoor shelter.

The following are amongst those that abode their hour or two and went their way. *Anthriscus vulgaris* came up after some alterations near the King's Bastion at Portsmouth. As the gardens of the Domus Dei were formerly quite close to the spot and the plant was once cultivated as a pot herb, it is possible that the seeds may have come thence in the first place; before the walls were levelled, it is said to have been common on their slopes. It did not last more than a year. Something of the same kind happened on the sea wall at Haslar. A small railway was constructed running from Blockhouse to Fort Monckton, and, as soon as possible, a large crop of *Bupleurum tenuissimum* sprang up between the sleepers and beside the rails. It was very abundant for a few years then slowly diminished, until it was with difficulty that a few specimens could be found. The nearest locality was certainly four miles away—either at Portchester where it is frequent, or Eastney where it is sparsely scattered. *Papaver hybridum* flourished one year in cornfields at Rowner; so did hemp. Mithridate Mustard (*Thlaspi arvense*) endured for a season. Caraway found Gosport railway station a

convenient habitation for a short time. Henbane has a way of appearing in gardens and allotments; too often, when its name, suggestive of poison, is known, it is condemned forthwith. A poetic youth admired *Tradescantia* as a beautiful old-fashioned flower, and was afterwards startled to find that it had been uprooted by its indignant mistress as not being up to date.

A bank by the side of the railway across Haslar Lake was made up with blocks of chalk which looked as barren as unslaked lime, but they brought with them the seeds of several plants hitherto unknown in the parish, such as the Sainfoin and Salad Burnet, and they have made themselves at home. *Chlora perfoliata*, another chalk plant, is seen near Fryingpan Pond at Elson, just opposite Portsdown; it has not been there very long. *Verbascum Thapsus*—I have heard it called Blanket Leaf—is not often wild here, but occasionally intrudes its woolly leaves into borders and flower beds. *V. Blattaria* stayed for years near Gosport Road Station. No doubt it had come from an old garden close by. Very few escapes maintain themselves for long. *Malope* grew for some time near Fort Gomer where some houses had been pulled down to make room for earthworks. There are exceptions. Horse Radish is a troublesome weed in a field at Brockhurst, where Brockhurst Lodge once stood. The Lodge was built during the Napoleonic wars and a local tradition says that most of the men were pressed one morning as they came to work. Feverfew wanders from waste heap to waste heap. Tansy, which was fried with eggs and taken in springtime, holds its own by one or two roadsides, rather dry places. I have seen it elsewhere decorating river banks. Good King Henry (*Chenopodium Bonus Henricus*) is still scattered about the Farm at Grange, taking the place of Wormwood, so common in Welsh farmsteads. The Great Celandine (*Chelidonium majus*) is rare with us. I know of

only two specimens; one of those is close to the trellised porch of a house in Bury Road, very handsome, much admired by visitors, who generally ask what it is, thereby proving that it is unusual and possibly worth cultivating. The Caper Spurge (*Euphorbia Lathyris*) is often an uninvited guest, in gardens. *Artemisia campestris* and *Geranium sanguineum* are fixtures left by previous tenants.

Annual Mercury (*Mercurialis annua*) abounds in allotments on reclaimed land which occupies the bed of the Medway, the head of Forton Creek, which once was a tidal mill pond. Fool's Parsley (*Aethusa Cynapium*) is very common. *Circea lutetiana* (Enchanter's Nightshade) delights in spoiling the Lily of the Valley beds. *Senebiera Coronopus* is everywhere. *Digitaria sanguinalis* was a weed in an old kitchen garden in Forton Road, now built over. *Setaria viridis* was not very rare in cultivated ground, but it is difficult to know how it got amongst potatoes and cabbages.

*Lepidium Draba*¹ arrived at Rowner some years ago, I suppose from Portsea Island where it is abundant; probably a weed of the future, perhaps. *Lycium barbarum*, popularly known as the Tea Tree, may be another, for it scrambles freely in hedgerows and over waste land.

¹ The writer has recently found *Lepidium rudemale* at Hardway; it is very rare in Hampshire.