

Ellen Hutchins to Dawson Turner: 15th April 1808

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I have lately been so successful in finding sea plants that I can no longer resist the inclination I feel to trouble you with another letter and to send you a little of what I have met with in the hope that they may be interesting to you and that you will excuse the liberty I take. I have been disappointed in my expectation of finding Fucus cristatus in fruit. I went to the rock where I found it, but the winter storms to which it is greatly exposed have completely destroyed the plant for this season & have hardly left any appearance of it. I have got another plant which is less rare & seems to me a variety of it. Perhaps you may find some distinctions that I do not see. It is when recent less compressed and much finer in all its parts, has very much a jointed appearance so much that it is difficult even with a common magnifying glass to know that it is not a conferva. However a microscope shows directly that it is not really jointed but that the appearance of joints is caused by the reticulations of the surface of the frond being closer and smaller at certain distances than in the intermediate parts. I have not found any fruit in a vast many plants I examined. It is not easy to get a good specimen, it is so much injured by nests of little worms. I enclose one marked No 9, and another little plant No 10 that I am not certain about & should be glad to know if it is Fucus amphibius. It is not rare in pools along the shore. No 11 is not very common and seems distinct from young plants of any other any of the larger Fuci – The plant I enclose as an Ulva marked No 7 is not rare and grows to a much larger size than this specimen. The little thing marked No 8 is I believe, an Ulva though it has much the appearance of a Conferva when recent. I have some of it on glass & some on paper to send & have also very fine specimens of what I sent before marked No 2. We have in summer many varieties of Ulva dichotoma. I have got some specimens of Fucus esculentus but none to please me very much. I believe they are as good as can be got. I selected them from hundreds of plants but it is hardly possible to get a whole one & the small plants have not got the appendages at the base – Of Fucus tomentosus I have very fine specimens one 15 inches long. Some plants are greatly compressed & near half an inch broad. Those large compressed plants do not roll on the paper as I mentioned to you. It is only the small round ones that do so. I have not seen any appearance of decay in this plant nor is it after any storm thrown onshore. I have a plant that I was surprised to hear was published as a Conferva in English botany under the name of C verrucosa. Do you want any of it? Have you met with F canaliculatus in an inflated state? It is so common a plant in this country that the shore is as yellow with it in summer as the land is with Furze. We have F mamillosus, plicatus & rotundas but they are not very common. We have one or two varieties of F confervoides great plenty of F digitatus both varieties of bulbosus. I have a good small specimen of the last if you should want it – Conferva flocculosa grows here in the sea on small Fuci & Confervae, it has when recent a rich brown colour, but changes in drying to green. Yesterday I found Conferva aerea for the first time. I have some others whose names I do not know. I should like to know if you wish for more specimens of any of the plants I have sent you. I shall probably meet with most of them during the summer & I should be sorry to throw away specimens of any things that could give pleasure to persons interested in them – I have got plenty of Diocranum osmundioides; in what I have met with, the leaves terminate in a sharp point – I beg you to accept the assurance of the respect with which I am

your most obliged servant

E. Hutchins

Ballylickey
April 15th 1808