

**Ellen Hutchins and James Townsend Mackay, Trinity College
Dublin**

Transcription of the letters that survive from Ellen Hutchins to James Townsend Mackay (3rd January 1807, 1st February 1807, 15th February 1807, 6th September 1807, 10th November 1807). Originals held in the Herbarium, Trinity College Dublin.

Ballylickey
January 3rd 1807

Dear Sir

The stillness of the water yesterday tempted me to go to the rocks. I have found very fine plants of Conferva arbuscula (some of them I think in fruit) which I have pressed as dry as I could and enclose knowing that you wished much to have them in the best state for the purposes you mentioned. I think it will be difficult to draw them.

I enclose a little bit of the other Conferva you wished to have unspread. I can get fine specimens in fruit I think about the end of March not sooner. The very first I can find shall be sent. It would be much easier to make a drawing of it than the other. I shall be very glad to hear of the safe arrival of the things I sent you a few days past. When you tell me anything of them or any of the plants I have sent you, mention only the numbers of the last parcel and if you want the same of any of the former ones send me a bit of the plant you wish but I believe I shall be able to get you all you want by attending to those marked on the paper of specimens I enclosed and which you returned.

You may expect in the next parcel some good plants of C. arbuscula. It generally grows on small mussel shells. The other plant enclosed sometimes on rock but oftener on Fuci.

I wish much to get Mr Dillwyn's Conferva [his book, British Conferva]. Will you be so good as to let me know when it is published or if any part of it has already come out and the price, when I have this I can get a bookseller at Cork to get it for me from England. When does Mr Turner publish, are there to be plates [engraved drawings] in his work? I fear I am very troublesome asking so many questions.

I am to have the boat and crew all the next summer to go where I please so that you may expect a good parcel at the end of it, I have high hopes of adding to our collections. If I don't get something new I shall begin to feel what I think I have never yet been troubled with, envy, and then you know I must hate you with very good cause, you have had so much success.

Until I grow envious, you have my best wishes for its continuance.
E Hutchins

(Note written at top of page one)

These plants are I think in fruit perhaps more of the enclosed are in the same state. I had not much time to examine as the post is just going. The fructifications appeared to me in a little microscope like 4 or 5 little round bumps clustered on the tips of the branches.

February 1st 1807, Ellen to Mackay

Ballylickey
February 1st 1807

Dear Sir

*You will no doubt be surprised to see a parcel from me so soon again but as your pleasure in plants equals mine, I could not delay writing with the enclosed minute species of *Conserva*. I cannot find any description of it in *Withering* and as you wish to get the finer kinds in a recent state I could not omit sending it in this state. At first I thought it may be a very young plant of *C arbuscula* but upon examining it closely in my little microscope I found it quite distinct and in fruit, I got but little of it and of that little send the best and largest plants. It grows on small mussel shells, as I know the spot I found it growing now I can get more when we have spring tides with an easterly wind. Of what I have now remaining, I shall spread some specimens for you and shall take the very first opportunity the weather will allow of to get a good number of them. I also enclose a little more of *C arbuscula* in ?? I think the fructifications are very apparent.*

I am your etc etc
E Hutchins

I shall be glad to hear (as soon as you can conveniently write) what you think of the enclosed. Is not it an elegant little plant? How full of fruit. I am sorry I had not it to

send in my letter yesterday morn but it was after my letter was gone that I found it. I should go out again today to get more only the spring tides are past. Last night as I was going to sleep I got Turner's 'Synopsis'. I have sat up reading it and find I have done wrong by not sending you all the varieties I could of Fucus ??? and what I take for ceranoides of ??? And what I take for F. ??? I believe I have been quite wrong in these plants. I enclose a large variety of ceranoides as I think. I hope Mr T's work will be in English that I may be able to read it. Fucus esculentus is plenty here.

Ellen to Mackay February 15th 1807, (cross hatched on the left)

15th February 1807

Dear Sir

Since I wrote last to you I have got some six? plants and am again tempted to send them to you. I enclose a very small Conferva which I found growing on a small Fucus. I could not think of any safe way of sending it but inside of two little plates belonging to my little microscope.

I am afraid to put it on paper. If you put a drop of water on it and then place it in a microscope you will immediately see it plainly. Its manner of growth seems entirely new to me, perhaps it is a plant of some kind you are acquainted with. I found but very little of it. I enclose a small bit or another Conferva spread on paper. It is ?? ?? at this season in thick ??lumps. I sent you some of it last year but as the fine branches were all broken off by the storms it had a different appearance from this. I have some of it drying for you. You also have a small bit of a little Fucus in fruit. I got one small specimen of it and some of a small kind which I got one ?? of thrown up by the last violent storms, I found it just in the state you see in a matted lump.

(On inside left hand page)

..... I could not have any in it. I have found another Which I take to be Fucus subfuscus?? You shall have some of it. What is the little fringed plant enclosed? I have got 3 bits of it.

Fucus viridis I believe grows some where in this bay. I have got one small ??broken. bit of a plant which I think agrees with Mr Turner's description. Mr T thinks Fucus Ligulatus has not been found growing. It grows in this bay at Eagle Point perhaps you have seen it growing but unless you have cannot think how beautiful it is. It grows on the edges of very deep holes and as far as I could observe is always covered with water even at extreme low water. Its colour a beautiful glossy brown alive, when

put in fresh water it turns yellow and has a most disagreeable sickening smell. Do you wish to have more of it?

I have begun another collection for you and hope to have a large parcel soon. I have some specimens of a small brown Conferva (parasitica I believe) in fruit. I found it last summer on the branches of Fucus siliguosus and had it unspread like you marked on the packet of specimens you wish to have it.

I am determined to pursue the sea plants this year with all my might and wish to know the kinds you wish to have either dry or fresh. I am much obliged to you for your last letter. I fear it was some inconvenience to you to waste so long. How very eager my curiosity may be to hear of the plants. I should be sorry its fructification was inconvenient to you. As an instance of the amazing quick growth of sea plants, I shall mention that on the 3rd March last year I found a beautiful little Conferva in plenty and this year on the 29th January not the least appearance of it where I found it in such plenty.

I hope to do a great deal this summer and to add largely to our collections. My mother and brother are quite delighted with the beauty of the sea plants. I wish indeed that you could visit some of the rocks with me. I am very glad you liked the last parcel. As soon as I have any good quality specimens for you I shall send these and let you know. The weather here has been so stormy that I have not been able to get more of the last?? little beauty I sent for you however I have 3 specimens preserved. It bears drying better than I expected. The very first mild weather I shall get some more of it. Will you have specimens of Fucus dicchus?? And of the varieties of Lacinilus?? ? I hope in the summer to get some specimens of Fucus unclatis??

Will you have some of Fucus Kuscifolia?? ? I can get enough of it. I am in great hopes of having a plant of the Iccapins?? we got at Glengarriff in blossom this year. It was when I saw it in blossom one of the most beautiful things I ever saw.

Should the summer be a favourable one, I hope to go to many rocks on either side of the bay. I shall make every exertion in my power to collect plants. I expect to have a great many for Dr Stokes and for you.

I am Sir with many good wishes yours etc etc

E Hutchins

(Sideways in cross hatching)

A fisherman from Bearhaven told me that a kind of small tree grows on an island called the Bull off the coast. He says the roots of it creep in the crevices of the rock and that it is somewhat like cabbage. He says it does not grow anywhere else up the coast. The man is very intelligent but I fear not very strictly attached to truth that there is some plant growing on the island which is considered uncommon by the people of the country is certain. He has promised in the summer to send me roots of it and I am sure he will not fail to send them. He says it is evergreen but how can he know that with certainty I can't think as the island can only be landed on in the finest summer weather.

Ballylickey
September 6th 1807

Dear Sir

I have had the pleasure to receive your last letter. I am much obliged for the various things you have sent me, and for your intention of sending me plants. I am sure I shall be delighted with the ferns. They are so interesting. You have sent me three species of Phlox, inbulata, statonifina [?] and ovata. They have all blossomed and given me great pleasure. All the plants you sent me are growing finely.

I am not yet sure when my brother will go to town, but whenever he does go he will call on you. I shall have things to send by him.

Now to what I have done since you heard last from me. I have been longing to tell you of all the sea plants I have got, for beauty and rareness. I shall begin with Fucus Wiggii of which I have got in the same spot at different times 6 or 7 plants, and it seems here more plentiful than at Yarmouth. I cannot be mistaken as to my plant being the one described by Mr Turner as he had the goodness to send me a plate [engraved drawing] of it. I would enclose you a specimen but it is too precious to cut for enclosing, and I shall give you at least 2 in the next parcel. Of Fucus pendunculatus I have got one fragment of Fucus bifidus. Mr T sent me specimens of each. I hope to meet with more of them that I may be able to send you some. I have got for you beautiful specimens of Fucus confervifolius I have met with more of the little Fucus marked 21 but without any appearance of fructification I have got some curious varieties of Fucus laceratus. The plant marked No 26 is I think an Ulva. I have fine specimens of it in fruit. No 5 is also I am sure an Ulva. I got one little

plant of it yesterday the first I have met with this season. I think the seeds are separately scattered under the skin. I have no fear of not being able to get you fresh specimens as you wished but I much fear they will not reach you undecayed as it is a very tender plant. I have got Ulva verticillata a plant of whose beauty a dried specimen can give you but an imperfect representation (unless you have seen it in a recent state) tho it is very beautiful on paper.

I have an other Ulva a plant of great beauty too when fresh. I believe it a variety of Ulva rubens[?], but as I am a bad judge it may be perhaps a distinct species. I have got Conferva equistifolia very fine and some other kinds that I cannot make out, one of them is I think one of the most beautiful and elegant little plants I have ever seen. It preserves its recent appearance even after being dried. If you wish to have the specimens I have at present preserved for you let me know and I shall send them.

I think your curiosity must be animated to impatience I judged of your feelings on plants by my own.

At Glengarriff I have been most unfortunate the weather was desperately bad and as soon as it became better I was obliged to return to meet an old friend who was to visit us. All I got there was a few roots of Hieracium Sabaudum and some specimens of Lichen[?] physadis[?] together with three wettings [??] a violent tooth ache and some other misfortunes. I enclose a little specimen of an Hieracium (I believe it is) that I found on rocks in the bed of a river. I got but few specimens for drying as the plants are all mostly past flowering. What I have I can send you. I have plenty of roots if you should want any. I enclose two Lichens, one found in small quantity on the bark[?] of an old Elm tree, the other with a central root found on a rock in a rivulet. It will recover its colour if put into water. [text missing]phea lutea[?] rare. It grows in a [text hidden by sealing wax] in the country. Do you wish for dried specimens of a curiously forked variety of Blechnum spicant, with the leaner[??] and fertile fronds all forked some twice or thrice.

I have got you a specimen of Conferva No 3 in fruit. I never saw it in that state till very lately. I have just met with a good deal of Sertularia operculata. I enclose one beautiful little species different from any you have sent. I have not yet met with many fruits [?] what are the most likely situations for finding them in? I hope I may meet with some worth sending you. I shall carefully attend to them, they are so curious so interesting. I am sure I shall be greatly amazed with them.

I am in daily and impatient expectation of the work you recommended that I may learn some thing of them. I sent for it long ago but have been delayed & disappointed in not getting it sooner. I cannot expect that I have anything more to add than that I remain your obliged servant etc

E Hutchins

November 10th 1807

Dear Sir

I had written part of a letter to you two or three days ago with the Conferva enclosed and delayed finishing it until I should hear from you. I got your letter this morning and am glad to find you liked the last parcel. I had some Sertulariae to send you but forgot them indeed. I was very much hurried that day I made up the parcel and forgot to send you some specimens of Hieracium Sabaudum and the variety I mentioned of Blechnum spicant as you think the Hieracium I enclosed is murorum. I have been mistaken as I took the species of which I enclose a small specimen to be it. I sent you roots of that I enclosed and can if you should want them send some of the present species. I thought I sent in the last parcel a good many specimens of Fucus dasphyllus, but as you have not got them I must in my hurry have lost or mislaid them. However I can with the next things send you those I have for myself and replace them next season. I have been for a short time past pretty /partly[?] attentive to fresh water Confervae and I have met with a good many species. I shall have specimens of all I can get for you. I have already preserved a good many. I think the minute species marked No 44 must be flocculosa. Its magnified appearance so perfectly agrees with Dillwyn's plate. He describes his as a freshwater species, but this is found in the sea, even after drying the microscope will show its wonderful manner of growth.

No 46 found in a cavern is an elegant little thing. Do you recollect where you saw Asplenium marinum [?] on the shore near this place, here it grows and clothes the rocks most beautifully. Conferva Brodii [?] is pretty plenty.

I send you a good specimen of the Byssus I sent long ago. I have lately met with Conferva stricta. I shall be able to get you specimens enough next summer and I have now got some of C. Casta - the Conferva I sent you long since marked No 4 will after being long dried if raised from the paper and put in water recover its recent appearance. I have not seen any other kind recover but it.

I have some specimens of No 2 for you, good ones in fruit. It is very plenty in one little spot and no where else that I have seen.

I enclose you the specimens of Sertularia I should have sent by my brother. I have got ?Barkerhoal and have been endeavouring to make out the few species I have found. I hope I shall find many more. Whatever I can find I shall send you part of, if you should wish for more of any of these I now send let me know.

I am quite delighted with 'Dillwyn'. I have made out many species that I should not have known without it. I shall be very glad to hear whatever you can tell me of Mr Turner's work, the plates must be very interesting but alas for me the language is a sad thing and cruel Latin!

I am very glad that he has been so successful in Scotland, no wonder you should regret his visiting that country without you.

I was glad you have so soon an opportunity of sending him the parcel. It contains some of every thing I could get that was worth sending. Many of the specimens I had for my own collection, but I can replace them easily.

I am glad you see any alteration for the better in my brother. I who see him almost constantly am less able to perceive it.

I remain your

E Hutchins

I am quite vexed that I have not more seeds of Centunculus minimus to send you. I had a great many but unfortunately my little mice got into the room where I had them and soon scattered them all.

Thank you for what you say about the American plants.

Note with two specimens, one on either side of a slip of paper in the letter.

No 47 This grows in great abundance along the sea shore covering rocks and banks of earth that are washed by the sea in high tides, and over which fresh water runs at other times.

No 48 I believe this a *Conferva bipunctata* but I am not quite sure, when recent it is extremely slippery and gelatinous.