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3. *Remarks on the Flora of Caithness.* By ROBERT BROWN, Esq. of Campster.

This paper is an appendix to one on the same subject, read by me last January, an abstract of which is published in the Transactions of the Society (Vol. VI. p. 328). I have been able to add several plants to my former list, and many new localities for the rarer plants. I examined with renewed care the localities for certain plants regarding whose title to be considered native in the county doubts might reasonably be entertained.

The following are the principal additions made to the Flora, in all about forty species,—a few of the commoner of which had been inadvertently omitted in the former list:—

Ranunculus aquatilis β *trichophyllus* (Godr.), *R. repens*, *R. sceleratus* (Wick, Messrs Peach and Dr Anderson), *Fumaria parviflora*, *Raphanus Raphanistrum* (common), *Draba verna* (common), *Camelina sativa* (ballast heaps, Wick, &c.), *Sisymbrium Thalianum* (very common), *Sagina maritima* (common), *Radiola Millegrana*, *Agrimonia Eupatoria* (abundant), *Vicia sylvatica*, *Rubus saxatilis*, *Peplis Portula*, *Hippuris vulgaris*, *Myriophyllum spicatum*, *Epilobium palustre*, *E. angustifolium*, *E. tetragonum*, *Galium boreale*, *Centaurea Cyanus* (perhaps a colonist), *Arctium majus*, *Artemisia Absinthium* (native?), *Vaccinium Vitis-idaea* (common), *Veronica hederifolia*, *Stachys palustris* β *ambigua* (Sm.), *Pinguicula vulgaris* (very common), *Chenopodium Bonus-Henricus* (very common in some places along the seashore), *Polygonum lapathifolium* (on ballast, near Wick, Mr Peach), *P. amphibium*, *P. amphibium* β *terrestre*, *P. aviculare* (var. *littorale*, Link.), *P. Bis-torta*, *Rumex conglomeratus*, *R. crispus*, *Callitriche verna*, *C. autumnalis* (Walsen Loch), *Corylus Avellana*, *Luzula pilosa* (very common), *L. multiflora* and β *congesta* (*L. congesta*, Sm.), *L. spicata*, *Eleocharis multicaulis*, *E. palustris*, *Lastrea Orcopteris*.

Among the new localities for Caithness-shire plants, the following may be noticed:—

Petasites vulgaris.—When this plant was first observed in the county, I was inclined to consider it a true native, but a more accurate examination of the localities in which it is found has caused that opinion to be altered; and though apparently wild in several localities, it would appear to have been introduced at a former period.

Oxytropis Halleri.—Not uncommon on the edge of the sea-cliffs near Downreay.

Hieracium sylvaticum, β *maculatum*—Occasionally met with on the Brawlbin and Reay Hills.

Saxifraga tridactylites.—Very abundant on Dunnet Links.

Osmunda regalis.—This fern grows plentifully on the rocky cliffs of Dunnet Head facing the sea; but in such very inaccessible situations, that specimens can only be reached by means of a ladder.

Draba incana.—On a rocky cliff, four miles inland from Thurso, at Westfield Bridge; abundant and truly wild.

Dryas octopetala.—In the Messrs Anderson's excellent "Highland Guide," this is mentioned as the only rare Caithness plant, though without a station being given. During the last two years I have searched every likely locality, especially limestone rocks, which it affects, but have never seen a trace of it. Through the kindness of Mr Peter Anderson of Inverness, one of the authors of the "Guide," and the Rev. Dr Gordon of Birnie, who revised the lists of Highland plants, I have been favoured with

a perusal of the original manuscripts and localities, and I find that no locality is given for *Dryas*, and the introduction of it into the Caithness Flora must have arisen from oversight. Caithness, however, is not an *unlikely* locality for this beautiful plant, for it is got at Durness and Assynt in Sutherlandshire. It is found in Orkney, but passes over Shetland, and I think that it is found in the wild and mountainous Faroe Islands. At all events it is, I know, got in Iceland; and many of you may have seen it among the plants brought home from Port Kennedy, in the arctic regions, by Captain Sir Leopold M'Clintock and Dr Walker, of the last Franklin expedition.

Mimulus luteus.—Not uncommon about Thurso, and in a ditch near Walsen House.

Alopecurus fulvus, Sm.—Doubtfully distinct from *Alopecurus geniculatus*, L., and probably passed over for it. I saw a specimen got near the Salmon Pool, Thurso, which certainly corresponded exactly with specimens gathered by Mr Bedlington in Essex, although the question of the nativity is another matter.

Alopecurus agrestis.—Abundant near Thurso, and, to all appearance, truly wild.

Luzula Forsteri. UC.—This *Luzula* has never been properly established as a Scottish plant, nor do I expect that the present notice will be received with more favour than has fallen to the lot of its predecessors. Its north limit is acknowledged in England to be Cardigan, Worcester, and Essex; but a specimen was found on the banks of the Doune by Mr James Wilson; and Mr George Don said that he found it “in fir woods east of Forfar;” but these two localities, so far distant from English counties in which it is certainly known, have not been verified. I recorded it last session as having been found by Mr Dick near Thurso, and have this year, in company with Mr Drummond, very carefully examined specimens of the plant from this locality, both by comparison with English specimens and with the published description, and I believe it to be the true *L. Forsteri*.

Equisetum umbrosum.—This plant, if carefully observed, will be found to fold its branches slightly down in the cool of the evening, and again raise them under the influence of the rays of the morning sun. One of the characters given by some authors for *Equisetum umbrosum*, viz., that the verticils of leaves in the fertile specimens were further apart than in *E. arvense*, is erroneous, for I have seen specimens of true *E. umbrosum* in which the branches were so closely approximated as to present the appearance of a tube investing the stem, and specimens of *E. arvense*, with the verticils wide apart.

Since my last visit a new locality has been discovered by Mr Dick for *Hierochlœ borealis* on the banks of Forss River, about six miles from Thurso. *Menthanthes trifoliata* is common; and *Carum Carui* is found on Reay Links.

Mr Peach showed me specimens of *Polystichum Lonchitis* from the hills of Yarrow, near Wick, where also several other ferns grow. *Viola odorata*, *Anagallis arvensis*, and *Sesleria cœrulea*, have been by mistake entered amongst the Caithness plants.

Professor Balfour read the following note, which he had received from Dr J. Alexander Smith, accompanied by a peculiar knot taken from a beech tree:—

“According to promise I send you the knot, or rather excrescence from a beech tree. It was taken this autumn from the boll of the tree by a per-

son who was attracted by its rounded appearance, and so slight was its attachment to the trunk, that he knocked it off with a stroke of the hand. It appears to me to have been formed at the root of a branch which had died, with the exception perhaps of a small portion of the new wood and bark close to its origin from the trunk. From this part the new wood continued to be gradually deposited in many a twisted fold, covering the inequalities of the branch, and forming at last a shell or case enclosing the remains of the branch which had been broken off, and left only a small portion projecting from the boll of the tree, and the process of decomposition had gone on until nearly a complete covering was formed. Had it continued for a little longer time, the branch would have been healed by the remains of the branch being entirely covered over with the new wood. Part of the dead branch remains in the cavity of the knot; unfortunately, however, it has been in a great measure cut out by the knife."

Mr Keddie sent a specimen of *Hyssopus officinalis* from the walls of the old church of Killearn.

Mr William Ramsay M'Nab exhibited specimens of *Goodyera repens* from Banffshire.

13th December 1860.—Professor BALFOUR, Vice-President,
in the Chair.

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