



**Rowland Southern.**  
(1882—1935).

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**I**T is difficult to realize that Rowland Southern is no longer with us. He was so full of life, so young in his ways, and enjoyed so tremendously his work, his fishing, and his many outdoor activities. At the time of his death in Dublin, on December 13th, 1935, he was only 53 years of age.

Nearly all his working life was spent in Ireland. In 1902 he was appointed Assistant to the City Analyst in Dublin, but in 1906, realizing that his main interest was biology, he secured a post in the Natural History Section of the Irish National Museum. From this he transferred, in 1911, to the Fisheries Branch of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction and was one of the band of naturalists who, led by the late E. W. L. Holt, added so much to our knowledge of the fauna of the Irish coasts. Up to the outbreak of the war his interest centred chiefly on a systematic study of Annelid and other worms. His publications during this period amount to some seventeen papers, including six dealing with the fauna of Clare Island, in the survey of which he took an active part.

Rejected for active service, he was given, in 1917, the task of investigating the possibilities of the greater use of freshwater fish as food. This work took him to Lough Derg, where later there was established the Limnological Laboratory of which he was placed in charge, and from then until the time of his death his chief interest was the biology of fresh water.

Southern was a born systematist and when the lack of a botanist at the Limnological Laboratory compelled him to take up the study of the freshwater algae he familiarized himself with this large and difficult group with surprising rapidity.

When the Limnological Laboratory was closed down in 1923, Southern returned to Dublin and devoted himself to a close study of the salmon and trout fisheries of the Irish Free State, and the "*Angler's Guide*" to that country, with its mass of accurate information, was almost entirely his work. It was his intention to embody his many observations on the life history of the trout in book form and he was happily engaged on this in his spare time when death overtook him.

His gay smile and almost boyish manner and his keen enjoyment of sport covered a critical and painstaking scientific outlook, a fact not immediately appreciated by the casual acquaintance. Although a master of detail both in the laboratory and in the field, he was forever filled with "horrid doubts" that some small point had been overlooked and that perfection had not been attained. The exacting technique of nanno-plankton enumerations was performed with meticulous accuracy and methods were exhaustively tested before

adoption. That he was able to complete a series of weekly nanno-plankton "counts" from the River Shannon over a period of fifteen months, in addition to those from three other lakes, is a tribute to his pertinacity. His favourite and oft-repeated slogan at that time was: "A bug in the Log is worth ten in the bottle".

Work over, he would rush tumultuously from the laboratory shouting "Come on, let's catch a fish", and until the light failed would angle with equal zest for trout, minnows, rudd, pike, or even the very young fry, which he needed for experimental purposes. He was always cheerful and although apt to worry unduly over some trivial matter was rarely seriously put out. From a sudden immersion in the Shannon in mid-winter he emerged clutching his fishing rod, the picture of beaming good humour, and at the most mildly regretful for the loss of time occasioned by lighting a fire before which to dry his clothes.

He was a skilled dry-fly fisherman and although delighting in stalking and landing a good fish, he invariably measured and weighed it, took scales, and examined the stomach contents. On reaching a new locality his first action would be the determination of the hydrogen-ion concentration of the water and latterly a set of the necessary standards was always in his car. With the pH was systematically correlated the size of trout, the abundance of fish food, and the presence or absence of certain aquatic flies, and there is scarcely a river or lake of importance in the Irish Free State for which he had not these data. Observations stretching over many years, coupled with his extensive investigations on the River Liffey, led him to the belief that the difference in size of trout in acid and limestone waters is not due, as is generally alleged, to the greater abundance of food in the latter.

There are many friends and colleagues, who have known or worked with Southern for far more years than the writer, who nevertheless can count it one of the most fortunate circumstances that he shared with him for three years the cramped living-room of the houseboat *Changsha*, which was the official headquarters of the Limnological Laboratory. During that tragic period when Ireland was distracted by civil war and when access by road or rail to even the nearest town was difficult and dangerous Southern's optimism and courage never wavered. His capacity to extract the utmost pleasure from his work and the gift which he possessed so abundantly of communicating this to others made him an

ideal companion. It was impossible not to appreciate the critical mind, the broad, kindly outlook and the intense love he had for his adopted country. At all times in the years that followed he was ever ready with helpful criticism and advice and with his death we have lost a true friend and wise counsellor, whose presence inspired fresh conceptions and stimulated anew the spirit of enquiry.

A. C. G.