

gradually crowded out, or surviving only in special, favourable spots.

On different parts of the coast the mature phases of salt marshes wear a distinctive facies. Sometimes it is Sea Lavender (Statice), sometimes Thrift or Sea Pink (Armeria) that is the outstanding element, whilst in other cases the turfy *Glyceria* matrix holds its own in relative purity.

Another plant frequent on salt marshes is the Sea Purslane (*Obione portulacoides*), a low prostrate bush with glaucous leaves, which commonly outlines the banks of creeks. Occasionally *Obione* spreads over the marsh from its ordinary station, overrunning and obliterating most of the other plants (Pl. XVI, p. 176).

Indeed, no two salt-marsh systems are quite equivalent when their plant coverings are analysed in detail. To attempt to explain these things, which depend on many factors, is impossible at present. Food and climatic differences are no doubt partly accountable, giving this or that plant a relative advantage over its competitors, whilst what is termed the "historic factor"—whether the agents of distribution have brought a given plant on to the scene sooner or later—must also have an important bearing. It is probable that a certain species of plant will have its best chance of establishing itself in a marsh at a certain stage in the development of the marsh, and if at the critical moment its seed be not forthcoming the marsh will continue to develop without it, and this result will not be affected by any belated supply of seed.

A very characteristic region of the salt marsh is the *Juncus* zone, which commonly occurs on the rising ground adjacent to the dry land or sand dunes backing the marsh. *Juncus maritimus* and the lower-growing *Juncus Gerardi* are the characteristic species, and associated with these are other halophytes, of which the Sea Milkwort (*Glaux maritima*) is the most usual. The *Juncus* zone is overrun by the higher spring tides only. It is most tenacious and resistant of erosion, and doubtless has considerable mechanical value in screening from scour whatever ground happens to border the marsh, and is especially useful in protecting the foot of such readily erodible terrain as sand dunes. Except where salt marshes are in