

struction of the type trees, now growing on property which has been subdivided.

FIELD MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY.

AIRA SPICATA L.

KENNETH K. MACKENZIE

A very curious performance by Linnaeus was when in 1753 in his *Species Plantarum*, he gave the name *Aira spicata* to two widely different species. His first use of this name is found on page 63 where the name was given to an Indian plant (*Aira* No. 1) and his second use of the name is found on the immediately following page (64) where the name was primarily applied to a plant (*Aira* No. 7) from the mountains of Lapland studied by himself.

Linnaeus soon noticed his error and emphatically corrected it by giving new names to both species. The first plant he renamed *Aira indica* and the second he renamed *Aira subspicata* (*Syst. Nat.* ed. 10 873 1759). He was not, however, careful in his work, for we next find him writing *Aira indica* and *Aira spicata* (*Sp. Pl.* ed. 2, 94-5 1762; ed. 3 94-5 1764). Then we soon find him writing *Aira indica* and *Aira subspicata* (*Syst. Nat.* ed. 12 91 1767).

The first referred-to species was next transferred by him to the genus *Panicum* as *Panicum indicum* (*Mant. Pl.* 2: 184 1771) and there it has since remained. It must, however, be noted that the first *Aira spicata* of Linnaeus is the first binomial name which was applied to this species. It is an entirely valid name, although it is quite possible that the specific name "*spicatum*" could not now be used under *Panicum*.

The second referred-to species became universally known under the new name given to it by Linnaeus of *Aira subspicata* (*Willd. Sp. Pl.* 1: 377 1797) or by the name *Trisetum subspicatum* (L.) Beauv. (*Beauv. Agrost.* 88, 180 1812; *Kunth Enum. Pl.* 1: 295 1833; *Gray Man. ed.* 6 653 1885).

This course continued until 1890 when Richter (*Pl. Europ.* 1: 59) formed the combination *Trisetum spicatum* (L.) Richter. The name so formed has been taken up both in Britton & Brown *Ill. Fl.* (ed. 2) 1: 217 1913 and in Gray *Manual* ed. 7 139 1908. The fact that this latter name is invalid because based on a name invalid

because it is a homonym has been entirely ignored. The reason for this may be that there is an error in the *Index Kewensis* (1: 68 1893) in that the references to the Linnaean *Aira spicata* are given in reverse order to what they should be.

Under the American Code of Nomenclature with its emphasis on the invalidity of all homonyms and its recognition of page priority, there is no doubt about the invalidity of the name *Trisetum spicatum* (L.) Richter. The Vienna (Brussels) Code is typically vague and difficult of application, but as I read Article 51 (2) and Article 56 and the examples given the same results would be reached.

In this connection it may be well to point out that a statement made by Father Louis Marie in *RHODORA* 30: 238 (1928) 1929 concerning the type of the second *Aira spicata* L. is of very doubtful correctness. He says "one must go back to Scheuchzer, quoted by Linnaeus in his original diagnosis of *Aira spicata* to reconstitute the type of *T. spicatum*." It is true that Linnaeus cited Scheuchzer, as stated, but his type was a Lapland plant studied by himself, the habitat given by him being "Habitat in Lapponiae alpebus." The point may not be of any importance but as Father Louis Marie gives fourteen named varieties "departing from Scheuchzer's type," it may be of importance.

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MENYANTHES TRIFOLIATA, VAR. MINOR

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To one who from boyhood has been familiar with the common white-flowered Buck Bean or Bog Bean of Atlantic North America there comes a real surprise when he sees European plates of *Menyanthes trifoliata* L. In such works as Smith's *English Botany*, vii. t. 495 (1798), Baxter's *British Flowering Plants*, iv. t. 245 (1839), Mrs. Loudon's *British Wild Flowers*, t. 45 (1847) or Anne Pratt's *Flowering Plants and Ferns of Great Britain*, iv. t. 139 (1873) *Menyanthes trifoliata* is represented with flesh-pink to crimson corollas 2-3 cm. broad; but the plant generally distributed in quagmires, wet meadows and pond-margins of eastern North America has the flowers white or at most slightly purplish on the outside or at the tips of the corolla-lobes, and it is beautifully illustrated in natural color in the painting



Mackenzie, Kenneth K. 1929. "Aira spicata L." *Rhodora* 31, 194–195.

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