

NOTE ON THE PUBLICATION OF THE NAME *CUSCUTA TRIFOLII*

By H. K. AIRY SHAW.

The name *Cuscuta Trifolii* provides one of the best possible examples of how *not* to publish new names. It first appeared in *The Phytologist*, 1 (21), 467 (Feb. 1843), in an article entitled: "Note on a supposed New British *Cuscuta*; by Charles C. Babington, Esq., M.A., F.L.S., F.G.S. Communicated, with Additional Observations, by G. S. Gibson, Esq.*" The asterisk* indicated a footnote: "* In a letter to E. Newman."

The article consisted of a letter from G. S. Gibson, of Saffron Walden, Essex, to E. Newman, the 'owner' of *The Phytologist*, enclosing an extract from a letter from C. C. Babington to Gibson, "any part of which," said Gibson, "you [i.e. Newman] are of course at Liberty to insert in 'The Phytologist'."

It appears probable that the whole of Gibson's letter, with the whole of the extract from Babington's letter, were printed as they stood. Some quotations from Babington's part are illuminating. He was giving his views to Gibson on the *Cuscuta* which the latter had sent him. "... I suspect [it] will prove to be a new species . . . I am not, however, prepared to give it as new, without more acquaintance with it than I have yet obtained . . . I add the character of the plant, according to my present ideas . . . The provisional name that I have adopted is *C. Trifolii*."

"*C. Trifolii*, (Bab. MSS.) Clusters of flowers bracteated, sessile: tube of the corolla cylindrical, *limb erect*, scales palmately cut, converging; *calyx nearly or quite as long as the corolla*. *Calyx* and corolla *whitish*, with acute segments."

Now if anything is clear, it is that Babington himself had at that time no intention of publishing the name *Cuscuta Trifolii*. "I suspect . . . a new species;" "I am not . . . prepared to give it as new;" "The provisional name that I have adopted . . .", all plainly point to a mind not yet made up. Quite shortly afterwards, in his *Manual of British Botany*, which appeared in May of the same year (see *Phytologist*, 1 (25), 623, 1st June 1843; *id.*, (26), 636, 1st July 1843), he had decided to treat it as *C. Epithymum* β *trifolii* (*Man. Brit. Bot.*, 203).

It would seem, therefore, that both Gibson and Newman, and also G. Luxford, the 'avowed' or managing Editor (see Preface, p. vi), were much at fault in publishing this purely provisional name of Babington's, and the question arises as to whether the name was in any sense validly published. It is fortunate that the matter is of no great moment. Evidently the name cannot be cited as '*Cuscuta Trifolii* Babington in *Phytologist* . . .' Could one write '*C. Trifolii* Bab. ex Gibson . . .'? No, because Gibson did not express any views as to the status of the plant: he passed on Babington's remarks to Newman with

a take-it-or-leave-it air—"C.C.B.'s remarks . . . , any part of which you are . . . at liberty to insert . . ." He did not "definitely accept" the name, as required by Art. 37 of the International Rules (amended at Amsterdam, 1935), any more than Babington did. Choisy (1845, in DC. *Prodr.*, 9, 453), cited it as "*C. trifolii* Babingt. et Gibs." (pro syn. *C. minoris* β *trifolii*), but this is equally unjustifiable, for the same reason. Could we then write '*C. Trifolii* Bab. ex Newman . . .' or 'Bab. ex Luxford . . .', thereby bringing in the persons directly responsible for the *publication* of the name in print? No, because neither owner nor editor *definitely accepted* the name, or expressed any views on it whatever.

It would take us beyond the limits of this note to try to discover who first gave valid publication to the name *Cuscuta Trifolii**. We are only concerned here to point out the unfortunate circumstances that surrounded the original appearance of this name in print. The moral seems to be never to publish 'provisional' names of any kind—whether one's own or other people's! They invariably lead to disputes and uncertainty; indeed, it is probable that on the merits of the present case there may well be *quot botanici tot sententiae*!

*Actually it was probably Babington himself, in 1845 (May), *Suppl. Engl. Bot.*, 4, t. 2898; 1847, *Man. Brit. Bot.*, ed. 2, 216.