place those that ascribe the phenomenon to puffs of wind, illusion and accident. The most naive of all would seem to be "that complete synchronism in the flashing of a group of fireflies is a very rare accident, occurring when the flashes of individuals chance to come at the same time."[4]

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A CASE FOR PRIORITY IN BOTANICAL NOMENCLATURE

THAT the principle of priority once regarded as the basic rule for determining "validity" or correct "usage" in botanical nomenclature has somehow fallen in disrepute is but natural because of the many individual cases where hewing to the line has resulted in extreme confusion. To-day few deny the practical advantage gained by recognition of *nomina conservanda* in preserving names familiarized through use. It must be recognized, however, that acceptance of a particular *nomen conservandum* without taking account of older recognized homonyms may cause greater confusion than that which it is aimed to correct.

A case in point is a recent proposal by J. E. Dandy[1] that the name *Eriospora* (Hochst. 1851), as used for a genus of 4 or 5 species of Cyperaceae, be accepted by the coming International Botanical Congress as a *nomen conservandum* in place of a synonym, *Catagyna* (Beauv. 1819). This proposal does not take account of the fact that the name *Eriospora* was previously published for a fungus by Berkeley and Broome.[2] The fungus genus *Eriospora,* with only four known species, has a well-defined place in the technical literature. If Mr. Dandy's proposal be accepted at this congress this particular genus of fungi becomes nameless, contributing an added difficulty to the already overcrowded and confused mycological nomenclature —unless, of course, fungi be ruled out of botany, as is proposed by some.

In this era of specialization the taxonomist of seed plants, of ferns, of fungi or of what not, is likely to be familiar only with those genera included in his specialty. It is inevitable, therefore, that a specialist will fail occasionally to realize that his preferred generic name may be preferred also by the student of another group for an entirely different organism. If only the natural interests, preferences and prejudices of the phanerogamists or of the cryptogamists are to be considered each group would favor validating its particular pet name; but neither party desires to invalidate a well-established usage. Accepting either name, however, necessarily invalidates the other. Since both names may have an equally meritorious usage by different groups of distinguished taxonomists and there is no adequate means for obtaining a fair judgment as to which usage is the more desirable the two points of view are patently irreconcilable without recourse to priority. In view of these considerations it would seem that wherever homonyms have both attained a well-established usage we must hew to the line of priority in nomenclature if we would avoid useless and endless confusion.

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[4] Frank C. Gates, SCIENCE, 46: 314, 1917.

[1] *Kew Bull. Misc. Inform.*, No. 2, p. 83, 1935.

[2] *Ann. and Mag. Nat. Hist.*, Ser. 2, 5: p. 455, 1850.

ACUITY OF HEARING

THIS laboratory has recently reported a study of performance following the noon meal at tests primarily of mental functions.[1] This work indicated that early afternoon sluggishness among mental workers is probably a form of drowsiness, related to the shift of blood to the splanchnic region following a meal. The sluggishness was most when a heavy meal was eaten at noon, and was least when a dairy lunch of a common cereal, such as corn flakes, was eaten.

Further data, of considerable importance to acoustical workers, are now available. The lower auditory threshold for a tone of 256 cycles on the Western Electric 2A audiometer was determined for seven healthy young men within half an hour after they had finished their noon meal. All these subjects showed a dulling of their sense of hearing after they had eaten their noon meal.

This dulling was greatest on the days when they had eaten a heavy noon meal, the average minimum intensity which was audible being 7.0 decibels on the heavy meal days. On the days when the cereal lunch was eaten, the same men averaged 4.5 decibels as their threshold intensity. This is a difference of 35.7 per cent. greater acuity on the cereal meal days.

Oculists tell me they notice a similar dulling of visual acuity when eye examinations are made after a heavy meal. It is possible, also, that the senses of touch may be dulled after a heavy meal, since it is known that blood is then drawn from the skin to assist in the processes of digestion. The change in acuity of hearing, however, may likely be due as much to the relatively anemic condition of the brain following a heavy meal as it is to an alteration in the circulation to the inner ear itself.

This interesting and unexpected phenomenon associated with hemastatics not only throws light on some of the diurnal variations in human performance,[2] but

[1] D. A. Laird, H. Drexel, D. DeLand, K. Reimer, "Early Afternoon Sluggishness." Proceedings of the National Office Management Association, June 4, 1935.

[2] G. L. Freeman, "Diurnal Variations in Performance and Energy Expenditure." Northwestern University Press, Chicago, 1935.