

Aspergillus or What?

We have before us (*Science*, 1946, 103, 116) G. W. Martin's reproofs concerning our use of the generic name *Aspergillus*. We are quite familiar with the history of the names used for this group of molds. We are likewise quite aware that neither Wiggers in 1780 nor Link in 1809 knew that the perithecia they were using to describe *Mucor herbariorum* and *Eurotium herbariorum*, respectively, were developed on the same mycelium as the old *Aspergillus* which Micheli studied in his herbarium specimens. It is equally certain that Fries never bothered to study this subject—he left it just as Link did. By the time DeBary (1854) showed that the perithecia of *Eurotium* developed from the same mycelium as the conidial heads of *Aspergillus*, the number of species involved was considerable, and naturally only a few accepted the fantastic transfer of such strictly conidial forms as *Aspergillus niger* and *Aspergillus flavus*, which are cosmopolitan, to *Eurotium Aspergillus niger* and *Eurotium Aspergillus flavus*! If the ascospore forms were the only *Aspergilli* at stake, the advocacy of a strict interpretation of the letter of the arbitrary rule relating to the nomenclatorial precedence of the perfect stage might be tolerated.

Nothing is lost to taxonomy if, instead of abandoning nearly 100 years of study of the *Aspergilli* before *Eurotium* was concocted, we simply amend Micheli's description to show that here and there among this multitude of species and strains a few groups actually produce ascospores. No one who has examined as many herbarium specimens as we have in our search of the beginnings of the study of the *Aspergilli* can fail to grasp the idea that we have merely completed Micheli's diagnosis of his genus. We doubt if any worker has examined the treatment of these molds by Micheli, Wiggers, Persoon, Link, Fries, DeBary, and more recent workers any more closely than we have. We equally doubt if any other mycologists have examined half the number of strains of *Aspergillus* in laboratory culture, or from natural sources, that have been handled by us. We are convinced that more nomenclatorial stability is to be attained by adding recognition of ascus formation in sections of Micheli's genus *Aspergillus* than could be reached by perpetuating the mistakes of Link and the negligence of Fries.

We do not defer to any man in our loyalty to the ideal of stable nomenclature, but with a background of years of experience and the examination of thousands of natural specimens and pure cultures, we stand by the conclusion that the general use of *Eurotium*, *Sterigmatocystis*, *Diplostephanus*, *Emericella*, etc. would only add confusion and difficulty without serving any constructive purpose. Why should the worker have to deal with multiple genera when a single one, and the oldest, will suffice? International recognition of *Aspergillus* for both ascospore and conidial forms would constitute the logical and, we feel, correct solution.

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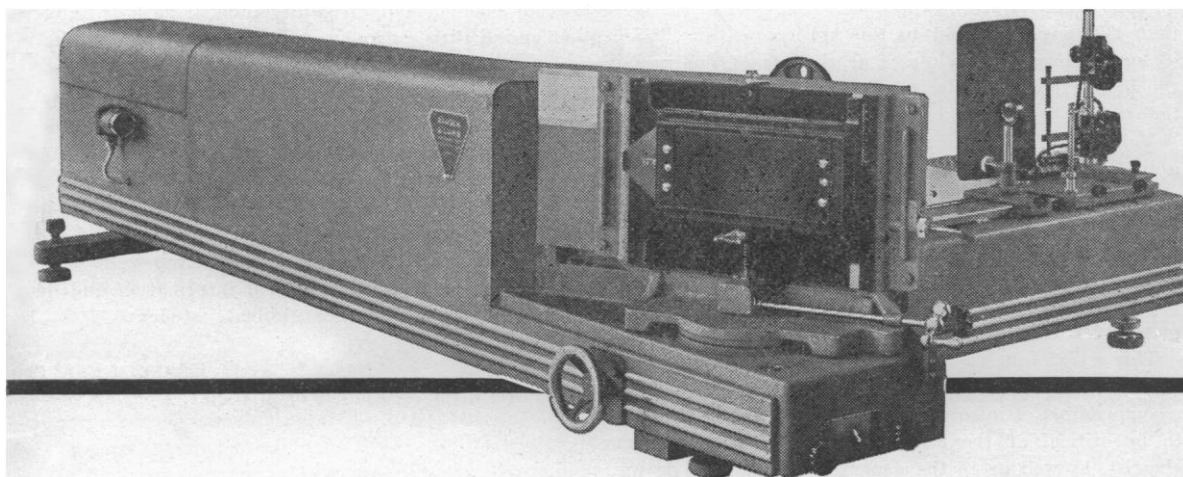
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