

LETTER No. 10.

Paris, July, 1906.

A list of specimens received from our correspondents during the past season will be published in our next letter. As many of them are common species, and have been received a number of times, we submit a few remarks on those that are most frequent. At the present time, excepting as to Gastromycetes, we claim no critical knowledge of fungi. There have been about *twenty-eight hundred* polyporoids "described," not counting the several hundred "synonyms" given by Fries. To get even a general knowledge of the subject will require years of study and investigation. From the United States alone there are about five hundred "species" recorded. Fungi are widely distributed plants. The fungi of Europe and the United States are practically the same. We do not question but the larger part of these twenty-eight hundred are synonyms, but it is a large task to find out what they are and to learn the species that are "good." We shall devote most of our time in the immediate future to work on the European species, for it is self-evident that as the first and most of the work has been done with European species, and as the American species are largely the same, one must first acquire a knowledge of what occurs in Europe in order to be in position to judge as to those of America.

There has been so much changing of names lately in the Polyporii that we feel it well to state our position in this regard. The most and best systematic work on Polyporus was done by Fries. His system and names have been in general use for two generations, and are familiar to all. We therefore feel that no attempt should be made to change them excepting in very exceptional cases. It has become quite a fad lately to look up dates of synonyms and shuffle the names around on such evidence. There is no merit in such work, and it produces nothing but confusion. One-half of the old "synonyms" are not true or are so vague that the truth can not be ascertained, and the other half are of no importance if they are true. This, of course, applies to the species considered by Fries in his latest work. As to the extra European species, some two thousand or more, they have been mostly described at four centers—Upsala, Berlin, London, and Paris. There are without question many reduplications of names. The only thing that can be done as I see it is to hunt up and study these specimens where they exist, and then take the first name, unless there are good reasons for not taking it. As to genera, the question is not so simple. The genus Polyporus is too large and should be broken up, but I feel that as much of the old should be retained as possible, particularly the four leading sections with which we are all familiar. Also the allied genera,

Trametes, Daedalea, etc., notwithstanding that the same plant often exhibits forms that "throw it into another genus." The leading ideas of the genera are simple and well known, and no system of classification can be devised that does not have its objections and "exceptions."

In Europe for the last twenty years there have been three men working on dividing the polyporoids into new genera. First, Karsten, then Quèlet, then Patouillard. Each has proposed his own system and his own names, and neither has met with much general favor, because, in my opinion, of the vast array of new names. Mycologists in general refuse to learn a new language in order to work with old plants. I think many good ideas are expressed in their work, but they would have been better received had they been used to subdivide the old genera, not to replace them. In America, Mr. Murrill is a little late in taking up the work, for most of it has been done before—at least three different ways. To rechristen the ideas of his predecessors and further add to the Babel of new names, is only making a bad position worse. As the European work has mostly failed to meet with favor for this very reason, I can foresee no other fate for the American. Most of my past work on the Polyporii has been in the line of collecting specimens, and sending them to authorities in both Europe and America for names. I have received so many conflicting opinions concerning the same plant that in many instances I do not know which to accept. I think that can only be decided by working out the problem in the museums of Europe.

We hope that our correspondents in America will continue to send to our Cincinnati address all the Polyporii they find. It is only from an abundance of material that any subject can be learned. We do not learn "species" in the museums of Europe. We learn them by studying them and comparing them and handling them. After they are learned we often recognize them from very inadequate specimens preserved in the museums. As at the present time we have such an imperfect knowledge of the subject, the following remarks are not offered as being of any critical value even on the most common species. However, as the work proceeds, we hope and expect to learn more.

Auricularia auricula-Judae or *Hirneola auricula-Judae*.—Probably our most common tremelloid. Grows throughout the world and is eaten by the Chinese. The common name, "Jew's ear," is a slander on the Israelitish nation.

Daedalea ambigua.—Frequent at Cincinnati on sugar maple trees. It is claimed, probably correctly, to have many names. I think the worst one yet proposed for it is "Aesculi," because a specimen so labeled is found in Schweinitz's herbarium, undoubtedly through some mistake. If descriptions count for anything it can not be "Aesculi," for not one syllable of the description of "Aesculi" applies to it. At Cincinnati it is always daedaloid, but *Trametes incana* is said to be the same thing.

Daedalea confragosa.—This is very common on willows and at Cincinnati on *Crataegus*. It is variable as to color and particularly as to the hymenium, being sometimes polyporoid, sometimes daedaloid, and sometime lenzitoid. It has more names than a Parisian Apache. Most of them are certainly only conditions, but there is a little *thin* form that seems to me

ought to have a separate name, and probably has several. In France it is usually called *Trametes Bulliardii* or *Trametes rubescens*. In America it has many names (cfr. Peck's 30th Report). I believe most mycologists now call it *Daedalea confragosa*, though that species is reported to have "ferruginous" context, and the old plates so referred do not seem to be our plant.

***Daedalea Juniperina*.**—Always called by Professor Ellis "*Daedalea Kansensis*, E. & E.," though I believe not published. The specific name "*juniperina*" is much more suitable for it, but it would require more than date dictionary evidence to convince me it is an "*Agaricus*" as recently stated.

***Daedalea unicolor*.**—A very common plant and quite variable at different ages as to color, hence the name is not always appropriate.

***Daedalea quercina*.**—Very common, especially in chestnut oak regions. It does not grow at Cincinnati on the red or white oaks. In Sweden it is also common. Some one has recently discovered that it should be called *Agaricus* (sic) *quercinus*, which is the source of much amusement, and I have heard a number of mycologists in Europe making sport of it.

***Favolus europaeus*.**—I learned this plant as *Favolus Canadensis*, but when I sent it to Europe (Cfr. Myc. Notes, p. 59) and learned that it grew in Europe, and was there called *Favolus europaeus*, I employed that name. It has the advantage of having been adopted by Fries, though neither name is very appropriate for a plant that grows in both countries, and *Canadensis* is "prior."

***Fomes carneus*.**—This is readily recognized by the rose color of the cortex. Whether *Fomes roseus* is the same, as is claimed by some and disputed by others, I do not know. It always grows on coniferous wood.

***Fomes Curtisii*.**—This plant has more of a Southern range, though I frequently get it from New Jersey. It is claimed to be only an unvarnished form of *Fomes lucidus*, but has always appeared to me very distinct.

***Fomes fomentarius*.**—Fries states it is common on beech. I think it does not occur at Cincinnati, where the beech is very prevalent. I have only collected it on birch, both in the United States and Sweden.

***Fomes fraxinophilus*.**—Grows only on ash, and not in Europe. *Fomes ulmarius* of Europe, which McBride suggests may be the same, is widely different.

***Fomes fulvus*.**—Found by me frequently at Cincinnati, only on the wild or "Chickasaw" plums. Recorded also on related trees, peach and cherry. It was determined for me by American mycologists as "*Fomes supinus*," and by Bresadola as "*Fomes fulvus*, Scop, not Fries." From its habitat it can not be "*Fomes fulvus*" of Fries's latest work, but I do not know what name he called it.

***Fomes ignarius*.**—In Sweden the most common *Fomes* on deciduous wood, but otherwise has no choice of host. It is likewise common in the United States.

***Fomes leucophaeus*.**—The very commonest *Fomes* in our country. It is so close to *Fomes applanatus* of Europe that I do not believe that any one would note the difference on a casual examination of the two plants, and it is not strange that the plant has been universally called *Fomes*

applanatus in most all American literature. European mycologists have been using the microscope on the spores of *Fomes*, and when I sent the plant there it was noted that it had smooth spores, while the spores of *Fomes applanatus* are rough. It was published in *Mycological Notes* in 1901 (page 60), which I think was the first time attention was drawn to this popular error which had persisted in American mycology up to that date. Recently it has been announced that L  veill   first called the plant "megaloma," but I think that is largely guess work, and I have thus far been unable to find any confirmatory evidence, but have found positive proof that L  veill   determined and published the plant as "*Polyporus applanatus*."

***Fomes pinicola*.**—Well named, as it grows usually on coniferous trees. Also has been the victim of a date dictionary and a very inappropriate name has been dug up for it.

***Fomes rimosus*.**—At least as it has always been known in American mycology and always so determined when I sent it to Europe, but it is now disputed, and I have no opinion on it. It grows very commonly at Cincinnati on the locust, but has never been found at Paris, where the locust-tree, known to the French as "Acacia," is the most common, introduced shade-tree there.

***Hydnum adustum*.**—Frequent in America, not in Europe.

***Irpex pachylon*.**—I learned this plant as *Irpex crassus*, the name applied to the American plant. Specimens I have sent to Europe have been referred to *Irpex pachylon* by both Patouillard and Bresadola. I do not know the European plant.

***Irpex tulipifera*.**—Called also *Polyporus tulipiferus* and *Poria tulipifera*. Said to be the same as *Irpex lacteus* and *Poria sinuosa*, concerning which I do not know. It is a very common plant at Cincinnati, particularly on the tulip-tree.

***Lenzites betulina*.**—A frequent plant in many localities where "birch" does not grow. Sometimes it is red-zoned. Usually it is the host of a minute species of greenish algae, which colors the pileus. Rarely I have received a beautiful, striate form that has been mentioned by Prof. Peck.

***Lenzites sepiaria*.**—This is a common species, but always on pine and other coniferous trees. The name is well established and generally used. Sometimes it takes a polyporoid form, or rather condition, I think. It can readily be recognized by its color.

***Lenzites trabea*.**—This is readily recognized from the habitat, as it always grows on deciduous wood. I learned it under the name *Lenzites vialis*, which has been mostly used in the United States. *Daedalea pallidofulva* is said to be the same. European mycologists to whom I have sent the plant are in accord that it is *Lenzites trabea* of Europe, a statement that has recently been disputed. I do not know.

***Panus rudis*.**—A frequent plant in the United States; a rare plant in Europe. It generally passed in American mycology under the name *Lenzites Lecomtei* until the error was pointed out (*Myc. Notes*, p. 60).

***Polyporus adustus*.**—A most abundant plant at Cincinnati on fallen beech. Very common everywhere, I think. I doubt if *Polyporus fumosus* is

distinct. A fragrant form is called *Polyporus fragrans*. The same form occurs in Europe, but there it has not been thought worthy of a separate name.

***Polyporus arcularius*.**—A very common plant around Cincinnati in the spring.

***Polyporus Berkeleyi*.**—The largest polyporus we have, usually at the base of oak-trees. It does not grow in Europe.

***Polyporus betulinus*.**—In birch regions a frequent plant and well named, for I think it is confined to the birch.

***Polyporus brumalis*.**—This plant reaches me very often from correspondents, but I have never collected it at Cincinnati.

***Polyporus elegans*.**—Frequent in northern stations (not at Cincinnati).

***Polyporus giganteus*.**—As generally known in the United States, though now disputed. My American plants have been so referred in Europe.

***Polyporus gilvus*.**—Very common and somewhat changeable. Widespread in the world, and tropical forms have received many names. Strange to say, it is not surely known from Europe, though Fries claims to recognize it as one of Sowerby's pictures.

***Polyporus intybaceus*.**—It has always been a puzzle to me whether this is *Polyporus intybaceus* or *Polyporus frondosus*, or whether these two are the same or different. Atkinson gives a good photograph of it under the former name. It is *Polyporus anax* of Morgan's flora, but *Polyporus anax*, the type, is *Polyporus Berkeleyi*.

***Polyporus lucidus*.**—The correct genus to which this plant belongs is now known as *Ganoderma*, consisting of species with "varnished" pilei and colored spores. Most of them, I think, are better called *Fomes*, but this species with us is not perennial, hence not properly a *Fomes*. It is therefore a question whether to call it *Polyporus lucidus*, *Fomes lucidus* or *Ganoderma lucidus*. It has been known, however, under the specific name "lucidus" for more than a hundred years, and it is purely chimerical to try to change that.

***Polyporus nidulans*.**—Rather a rare plant in my experience. A curious fact that is not generally known is a "chemical" test for it. Touch it with a drop of ammonia, and the spot at once takes a bright violaceous color.

***Polyporus obtusus*.**—Frequent and injurious on oak. A marked species with large pores. The late Professor Ellis told me it could be found in Schweinitz's herbarium under the name *Polyporus unicolor*, which I confirmed. Schweinitz badly described it, and gave it a worse name. When one has a choice between two names for a plant, one very good, the other very bad, and neither much used, I believe in adopting the better. Of more interest than the name, however, is the structure of the plant, for it is a *Trametes*, not a *Polyporus*.

***Polyporus picipes*.**—As I have always known it in the United States. Claimed now to be different from the European plant, which, if true, is unfortunate, as *Polyporus picipes* is an excellent name for it.

***Polyporus resinosus*.**—Usually known under this name as found in Fries, though I believe modern excavators have dug up older names for it. Very common at Cincinnati.

Polyporus sulphureus.—So called for many years and much the best name that can be applied to it. Common, late in the season.

Polystictus conchifer.—A most peculiar species, named by Schweinitz. It occurs only on elm, and does not grow in Europe.

Polystictus hirsutus.—A very common and a very variable plant. Around Cincinnati it is quite uniform, but many forms (?) reach me, and I do not know but that I am confusing more than one species.

Polystictus perennis.—A frequent species growing in the ground. A form in the Southern States has larger pores, and is known as *Polystictus parvulus*. I doubt if it can be kept distinct.

Polystictus pergameus.—A very common plant in the United States, usually growing on oak. It is claimed that as the original grew on pine it is not the same as the common species in the United States, and the name *Polystictus pseudo-pergameus* has been proposed. However, the plant is generally known as *Polystictus pergameus*. It is a curious fact that this is a very rare plant in Europe, and it was recently brought into the museum at Paris as a great rarity. It is called in France "*Polystictus simulans*, Blonski."

Polystictus sanguineus.—This is the bright-red species of the Southern States, and is close to *Trametes cinnabarinus* (which see). It is common throughout the warm regions of the world.

Polystictus versicolor.—The most frequent *Polystictus* that occurs and the most variable. New species hunters are wasting their opportunities. They should devote themselves to this plant, for they can make a "new species" out of every specimen they collect.

Trametes cinnabarinus.—The only red polyporoid in the northern United States. It is a question whether it should be called *Trametes* or *Polystictus*, and it is given both names in Saccardo. (Cfr. *Polystictus sanguineus*.)

Schizophyllum commune.—A very common species all over the world and in every country, hot and cold, where I have ever been. At Cincinnati it has a special liking for the maple. It has been known as "commune" for two generations, but recent date dictionary investigators have called it *Schizophyllum alneum*, in my opinion a stupid change for a plant that is the most common species, that occurs everywhere, and grows in many countries and thousands of localities where alder does not grow.

Stereum albobadium.—A very common plant at Cincinnati, but does not occur in Europe, I think. The margin is generally so slightly recurved it is more liable to be taken for a *Corticium*.

Stereum frustulosum.—If this plant does not have another generic name it ought to have. One who is familiar with other *stereums* would never suspect its relation to that genus.

Stereum ochraceoflavum.—It is of a Southern type. Common in Florida, but I have received it from New Jersey and once from Connecticut.

Stereum versicolor.—As I have always known the plant and as it is generally known. I think Professor Burt told me he had decided to call it another name, but I have forgotten what it is.

THE MYCOLOGICAL SITUATION IN AMERICA.

I have to write so many letters to my correspondents in reply to inquiries as to what literature to buy in order to study mycology that I feel it will save time to issue a printed letter on the subject.

Unfortunately there is no one book of much service. I always advise my correspondents to first buy Atkinson's "Mushrooms, Edible, Poisonous, etc." It is the best book we have. It is only a primer and does not consider one out of twenty of the agarics you will meet every season, but you can derive from it a general idea of classification. It is a difficult matter to get a "start" in American mycology, and I have reason to know that Atkinson had a hard enough time to learn what he knew at the time he wrote the book. So I believe he should have all praise for what he has done, not hiding the fact that there is a great deal of room to do much better as he learns more of the subject.

The next book of service is Miss Marshall's "Mushroom Book," chiefly on account of the pictures which are much better than the text. Like the preceding it is purely elementary and considers only a few common species.

Dr. Herbst's "Fungal Flora of the Lehigh Valley," Pennsylvania, is a very useful book because it considers many common plants that every one will meet. Unfortunately the illustrations are very poor.

When you have begun to get an insight into the genera, buy Stevenson's "British Fungi." It is chiefly a translation of Fries, but it is all the more valuable on that account. Fries was the great master of agarics in Europe, and universally held to be the best authority, but his writings are in Latin, and while they are the court of final resort, you will not need them until you reach the "new species" stage.

Massee's "British Fungus Flora," four volumes, is the latest English work and is largely used in England. The arrangement of the genera departs from all other works and it is so difficult to find anything in it that I rarely use it. It always reminds me of a house I saw on the Midway where everything was upside down.

The fungi of Europe and America are for the most part the same species, and thus any European work will be of service in America. It is my firm belief that the greater part of the plants in America that have been described as new species, are European plants not recognized. Failure to identify the American plants from the conflicting accounts and illustrations that have been given of them in Europe is to no man's discredit. To reach conclusions when working with agarics in Europe is a task difficult enough: in America it is impossible. If American mycologists had any practical way of learning the American names for the agarics they meet it would be a great help. There is but one man, in my opinion, to-day, who has a practical field knowledge of most American agarics and who could write a manual that would be of real benefit. That man is Professor Charles Peck, of New York. Most of his past time has been spent in issuing isolated descriptions. They are of very little service, and it is my experience

in America that about two out of three plants one meets agree with the descriptions just enough so that one thinks it may be the species, and differ just enough so that one doubts it. So that you are in a more uncertain position when you finish your determination than when you began it. This is the fault of the way in which the matter is presented. Professor Peck knows the New York plants and could write *systematic* work, presenting the plants by *contrast* and pointing out the differences between them so that they could be recognized. I think I reflect the wish of every American mycologist when I express the hope that he may undertake *A Manual of New York Agarics*. I use the word "New York" because it is the New York species that Professor Peck knows, and fungi are such widely spread plants that it would serve as a manual for the entire country. American mycology is embarrassed with a lot of "dried specimen" descriptions of agarics which for the most part are rubbish and should be crossed off the "literature." It is impossible for a man to draw up live characters from dead plants that lose the most of their real characters in drying. Such work only confuses the facts and should be ignored in any work that wishes to be of real service.

There is no series of plates illustrating the agarics of America. Such as have been issued in the New York Reports are poor and of but little utility. In Europe there are many illustrated works, so badly executed they help but little. Boudier's magnificent plates unfortunately include but very few agarics. Boudier's special study is the little Pezizas, a specialty of very little general interest. If he had devoted his talents to the agarics and issued six hundred plates of European agarics it would have been a practical solution of the agaric situation. And it would have been a popular work and have had a large sale. Nine out of ten mycologists are interested in agarics, and every one knows how poor the usual plate is.

Not counting Boudier, the best illustrations of the agarics of Europe in my opinion are the old works of Bulliard, Sowerby, and Greville, and in the Flora Danica. The most useful series is Cooke's plates because it embraces all common species and for the most part is fairly well done. If you have funds to buy but one series of illustrations, buy Cooke's. They cost about one hundred dollars. With all Cooke's faults, he did a great deal to popularize mycology in England, and I wish we had a Cooke in America.

Many years ago in Professor Gray's time, it was announced that the cryptogams of America would be worked up by Professor Farlow. It is an open secret that some excellent plates have been prepared under Professor Farlow's directions, but whether or not they will ever be published I do not know. We can only live in hope.

But all this is departing from the Polyporus subject. Favor me by sending such specimens as you find this season and I will advise you what I may know about them, and will try to learn more, and in time hope to present a work that will enable you to learn for yourself.

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