

A Note on *Genista fasselata* Decne.

BY

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Genista fasselata Decne. was first collected by N. Bove (1) in 1832 on Mt. Carmel, near Haifa, described by him as well wooded from base to summit, with forests of oak, terebinth, and laurel: the *Genista* was growing under this canopy. Bove's material was examined in 1835 by J. Decaisne (2), and he named this Mt. Carmel plant *Genista fasselata*, making Bove No. 488 the type of his new species.

Spach (3) in 1844 changed the name to *G. sphacelata*, presumably merely an alteration in spelling, since he still refers to Decaisne as the author of the species and cites Bove's material from Mt. Carmel as the type. He includes also material collected by Labillardière in Syria, near Tripoli, and by Aucher in the islands of the Archipelago. The species is illustrated by a very fine plate in Jaubert and Spach's *Illustr. Plant. Orient.*, 1844-46 (4).

Boissier (5), who later collected material himself from Mt. Carmel, again uses the spelling *G. sphacelata*, and in his *Supplement* (1888) he adds as additional habitats the mountains of Cyprus and the island of Karpathos. The Cyprus record is based upon material collected by Sintenis and Rigo and mistakenly named *G. acanthoclada* DC.; the Karpathos material was collected by Pichler. Post (7) also records the occurrence of our plant in Cyprus, at the base of the mountains.

In his excellent work on the flora of Cyprus, Holmboe (8) separated and described a new variety which he named var. *Bovilliana*, citing the material of Sintenis and Rigo mentioned by Boissier in the *Supplement*, and the material of Pichler from Karpathos along with material of his own. The principal diagnostic features of the variety are, the taller habit, the longer more slender twigs not so densely branched, the longer floriferous shoots, branched above the flowers and with a greater number of longitudinal striations, about twenty as compared with twelve in the type.

Holmboe continues to use the specific epithet *G. sphacelata*, giving "*fasselata*" as an alternative.

In the second edition of Post's *Flora of Syria* (9), Dinsmore returns to the name *G. fasselata* Decne., but does not mention the variety. He cites his own material from Mt. Carmel (Dinsmore, No. 1330); a specimen examined at Edinburgh is evidently a straggling form.

During the writer's service in Cyprus numerous specimens were seen [Notes, R.B.G., Edin., No. XCIV, October 1937.]

and collected. These included the common straggling form and an alpine form found near the summit of Troodos.

In the spring of 1936 an opportunity occurred of visiting Palestine and the slopes of Mt. Carmel. These are now occupied by houses with private grounds, some of which have been planted with pine and cypress. In these plantations some of the *Genistas* were seen still growing. Nothing remains now of the forest of oak, terebinth, and laurel described by Bove. All the plants seen were of the straggling form commonly found in Cyprus. It is curious that the plants collected on Mt. Carmel (AF 403) should almost exactly match the common straggling plant in Cyprus to which Holmboe applied the name var. *Bovilliana*. This coincidence strongly suggests that the variety is not sufficiently distinct to deserve notice. Neither Decaisne, Spach, nor Boissier records the height of the plant, merely mentioning it as a shrub, nor do they give the number of striations or the length of twigs. In Cyprus the writer has found this *Genista* growing up to about 10 feet high as a hedge (AF 395), and the specimen appears to be the typical plant rather than the variety. Furthermore, the number of striations seems to be variable on the same individual plant and does not form a good diagnostic point. Mt. Carmel material (AF 403), from 15-21 striations (average of 8 counts 17). Troodos material (AF 361), from 14-16 striations (average of 5 counts 15). Karpass material (AF 395), 14, 20, 20 striations (average 18). Paphos district (AF 283), 21, 22, 16 striations (average 20). Paphos Forest (AF 310), 15, 16, 17 striations (average 16).

In this connection it is worth mentioning that in Tab. 142 of Jaubert and Spach (4), which Holmboe mentions as being a good representation of the species itself, a section of a twig is figured showing 18 striations.

The length and the thickness of the branchlets are very variable, and with the branching of the twigs above the flowers appear to be related to the vigour of the plant. This is most noticeable in my specimen from Mt. Carmel, which has vigorous new spring shoots bearing flowers quite low down, with further growth and branching above. In Cyprus specimens it is less evident.

The general form of the plant at the lower levels in Cyprus is variable and is largely affected by grazing. The Troodos form noted by Holmboe, which is a dense low hemispherical shrub intricately branched and very prickly, is, however, a definite alpine form, constant in its shape, though free from grazing for two decades. This form only occurs over 5,000 feet, above the winter snow line. Holmboe stated that the Troodos form resembles the Syrian plant, but this does not appear to be true. Its occurrence on the summit of Mt. Carmel with an altitude of only 1,810 feet is unlikely, and Bove's reference to having found the type specimens under a forest canopy seems to bear this out.

It appears, therefore, that *G. fasselata* var. *Bovilliana* of Holmboe

cannot be distinguished from the type, nor does the writer consider the alpine form to be any more worthy of varietal separation.

The spelling *G. fasselata* originally used by Decaisne should stand in preference to the later alteration *G. sphacelata* as used by Spach, Boissier, and other writers. In the original description Decaisne repeated the spelling in the phrase "foliis abortivis squamiformibus fasselatis nigris," which makes an orthographic or typographic error doubtful. "Phaselus" or "faselus" is given in Ainsworth's Dictionary (1836) as meaning a little ship or pinnace, so that "boat-like," though not a good description of the leaf scales, is a better one for them than "withered," which "sphacelata" might suggest.

Genista fasselata Decne. appears as a good species in the Index Kewensis, whereas *G. sphacelata* Decne. is made a synonym of *G. acanthoclada* DC., though the writer is not aware of any good reason for such reduction.

Conclusion.

G. fasselata Decne., not "sphacelata" as given by Spach, Boissier, and other writers, is the correct spelling of the specific name of the species here discussed; while the variety *Bovilliana* Holmboe cannot be separated from the type by any permanent characters.

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