

NOTE

Theophrastaceae, a Family Wrongly Attributed to the Hawaiian Flora

BENJAMIN C. STONE¹

A CURIOUS ERROR in the stated distribution of a family of flowering plants, the Theophrastaceae, is found in two leading American textbooks of plant taxonomy, Lawrence's "Taxonomy of Vascular Plants" and Benson's "Plant Classification," both of which attribute the family to the Hawaiian as well as to the American tropical flora. Lawrence (1951:657) states (after the description of the family Theophrastaceae): "A family of 4 genera and about 60 species of the American tropics and Hawaiian Islands." Benson (1957:205) states: "The family consists of four genera occurring in the American Subtropics and Tropics and in Hawaii."

Since no representative of the family occurred anywhere in Hawaii as far as I knew, I made an attempt to track down the origin of such an attribution, which proved rather simple. *Jacquinia aurantiaca* Ait. is credited to the Sandwich Islands by DeCandolle (1824-1873) in the Prodrômus (8:150), and is also listed in the Index of Hillebrand's "Flora of the Hawaiian Islands" (1888); but on page 282 of that work is stated (in a short footnote after *Embelia pacifica*) the phrase, "most probably erroneously." Hillebrand continues: "It [i.e., *Jacquinia*] was supposed to have been collected by Menzies in 1796. The genus *Jacquinia* is entirely confined to America and easily to be

distinguished from *Myrsine* and *Embelia* by the monopetalous corolla, which is furnished at the sinuses with sterile staminodial appendages, in the manner of *Sapota*, the fruit being a berry with several small angular seeds."

The explanation evidently lies in the mislabelling of a specimen of *Jacquinia* collected supposedly by Menzies and cited by DeCandolle. I have not seen this specimen but presumably it originated from some part of tropical America; it is most improbable that DeCandolle could have mistaken any authentic Hawaiian plant for this genus.

Intensive exploration of the Hawaiian Islands since Hillebrand's day has failed to yield any member, or even possible relative, of the Theophrastaceae; so it seems clear that the range of the family is in fact exclusively American. No member of the family appears even in cultivation.

REFERENCES

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- DECANDOLLE, A. 1824-1873. Prodrômus Systematis Naturalis Regni Vegetabilis. 17 vols. Paris.
- HILLEBRAND, W. 1888. Flora of the Hawaiian Islands. London and Heidelberg. 673 pp.
- LAWRENCE, G. H. M. 1951. Taxonomy of Vascular Plants. Macmillan Co., New York. 823 pp.

¹ School of Biological Sciences (Botany Unit), University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Manuscript received June 15, 1967.

