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# Zoologischer Anzeiger

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## I. Wissenschaftliche Mittheilungen.

### 1. *Ascandra* or *Homandra*? A Test Case for the Rules of Zoological Nomenclature.

By E. A. Minchin, Oxford.

eingeg. 30. Januar 1897.

In No. 519 of the *Zoologischer Anzeiger* von Lendenfeld criticizes my recent action in retaining the generic name *Ascandra* for the species *Ascandra falcata* H., after having distributed the other species of Haeckel's genus *Ascandra* among the older genera *Clathrina* and *Leucosolenia*. Von Lendenfeld argues that according to the laws of zoological nomenclature, the correct-generic name of this species is *Homandra*, the name which he had already applied to it.

I can only say that, my object being to try and settle the correct name, according to accepted rules, of this species, and not to indulge in polemics, I am very willing to be convinced that the sponge in question should rightly be termed *Homandra falcata*. Nevertheless von Lendenfeld's arguments do not seem to me to make good his point.

Von Lendenfeld quotes against me § 26 of the German Zoological Society's Rules for the Scientific Naming of Animals, to the effect that if a genus be broken up into several new genera, the name of the old genus is to be retained for the species which is to be regarded as the type«. It is, however, not very easy to see how this rule

applies to my treatment of Haeckel's genus *Ascandra*, which dates from 1872, since I did not break up the genus into new genera but into two genera much older than the name *Ascandra* itself; namely *Clathrina* Gray 1867 and *Leucosolenia* Bowerbank 1866. Now von Lendenfeld seems to think that if an old generic name be used with a new diagnosis, it becomes a new genus, and that hence the names *Clathrina* and *Leucosolenia* as used by me are new genera. This idea is at once shown to be erroneous by § 23 of the German Rules according to which « a generic name is only valid when a known or sufficiently characterized species (or several species) is referred to it or when a sufficient diagnosis of it is given ». To apply this rule to the present case; the name *Clathrina* had as type species the perfectly well known and well characterized "*Grantia clathrus*" of Oscar Schmidt. Hence the name *Clathrina* was a valid generic name from the first and both Haeckel and von Lendenfeld violated all rules and customs of zoological nomenclature in setting it aside, as they have done, for *Ascetta* and other names. The name *Clathrina* as revived by me has as type the species *clathrus* O. S. and when so used it is in no sense a new genus, but is the genus *Clathrina* Gray, which has been a valid genus, according to § 23, for the last 30 years, and remains so as long as the type species is not altered. Exactly the same argument applies to the genus *Leucosolenia*, which had as type the very well-known species *botryoides* Ell. and Sol. and which therefore had equal right to be regarded as a valid genus since 1866.

The only conclusion to be drawn from the facts is 1) that the genera *Clathrina* and *Leucosolenia* as used by me are not new genera, 2) that therefore my action in dividing amongst these two genera the species, except *falcata*, of Haeckel's genus *Ascandra*, does not come under § 26, and 3) that in consequence the whole of the argument by which von Lendenfeld seeks to establish his genus *Homandra* falls to the ground. I hope I have at least shown that the case is by no means so simple as the tone, in which von Lendenfeld discusses it, might lead one to believe. It would be greatly to the advantage of science if those who have been instrumental in drawing up rules for zoological nomenclature, would condescend to pronounce a decision in cases where the interpretation of the rules presents difficulties. To such a decision every one would certainly give way, and thus only, it seems to me, could these discussions upon points of nomenclature come to a termination; discussions which otherwise can be continued for ever without any definite conclusion being reached.