GNORIMOSHEMA BRACKENRIDGIELLA (BUSCK, 1903), A VALID SPECIES
(LEPIDOPTERA: GELECHIIDAE)

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“G. [elechia] ? detersella” was described by James Brackenridge Clemens in 1860, with no indication of the type locality. Hodges (1986:36) suggested that unless otherwise stated, Clemens’ home and environs in Easton, Pennsylvania should be considered as the locality for his material. The type specimen of detersella, together with the rest of Clemens’ collection now reside in the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia (ANSP, type #7341).

Clemens’ original description reads as follows: “G. ? detersella. Head and face grayish fuscous. Labial palpi pale yellowish-white, with two fuscous patches on the middle joint, a very narrow fuscous ring at the base of terminal joint, a broad one near the tip, with the extreme apex whitish. Antennae grayish fuscous, annulated with dark fuscous. Fore wings grayish, very profusely dusted with dark fuscous, with a dark fuscous spot on the disk; cilia ochreous gray. Hind wings pale ochreous-gray; cilia pale ochreous. Feet annulated with whitish.”

Clemens also sent two specimens from his original series to Henry Stainton in the Natural History Museum (BMNH), where they still reside. Acknowledging their receipt, Stainton (1872) expressed doubts about their identity and thought that they were affiliated with the European Gelechia affinis Haworth, 1828 (now in Bryotropha). He also realized that Clemens’ name detersella was preoccupied by Gelechia detersella Zeller, 1847, and was in need of a replacement name. This was later accomplished by Busck (1903a) who proposed the name Gelechia brackenridgella as a replacement for detersella Clemens. At the time of his publication, Busck was unaware of the existence of Clemens’s material which was already in ANSP. He wrote: “… no types exist in this country [United States] of this species … Co-types of this species should be examined in British Museum, where the two specimens sent to Stainton by Clemens in 1860 presumably are found” (1903a). But soon after, in a supplement to the same paper (Busck 1903b), he clarified: “A very unexpected source of information has come to light in the discovery of the types of the late Brackenridge Clemens, in the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia. These types had been given up as lost, but were found a short time ago in an old-fashioned box, which had been put away in some out-of-the-way corner and forgotten. My delight in unearthing this gold mine for the student of American Tineina quite overshadowed my first very natural chagrin over the changes necessitated in my work”. Here, under the new combination “Gnorimoschema brackenridgella”, Busck wrote: “The type of Gelechia detersella, Clemens’ No. 75, was found in good condition, though lacking the left wings. It proves the species to belong to the genus Gnorimoschema Busck, and is very close to but distinct from scutellariella Chambers.” He went on to describe the differences between detersella and scutellariella, and concluded, “The removal of this species to Gnorimoschema may make the change of specific name questionable, but for the present I shall retain the new name”.

Over the years, the name brackenridgella was used as a valid name under Gnorimoschema (Smith 1903, Busck 1939), although Barnes and McDunnough (1917) and McDunnough (1939) listed detersella as the valid name and placed brackenridgella [sic] under it as a synonym. Forbes (1923) incorrectly identified a gall-making species on Aster from Magnolia, Massachusetts, as Gnorimoschema brackenridgella [sic] and compared it to several other gall-making species; these are a group of much larger moths with a completely different habitus.

In 1929 Meyrick examined and identified a series of 20 specimens collected by Herbert Simpson Parish from “Toronto, Muskoka, May–August” in the British Museum as brackenridgella [sic]. It seems that Meyrick’s concept of the brackenridgella was based solely on Clemens’ short description of detersella, because there is no evidence that he ever saw Clemens’ specimens in the BMNH. At the time, Stainton's world collection was maintained separately from the main world collection at the BMNH, and unless Meyrick specifically checked the former, he would have missed them. Meyrick re-described and transferred brackenridgella (as well as batanella Busck) under Phthorimae, stating “… I believe this to be detersella Clem[ens]; as it seems to be little known, and published descriptions are very imperfect, I redescribe it”.

Nearly 40 years later, after examining a male specimen from Parish’s series identified by Meyrick in BMNH, Povolný (1967) wrote, “The specimen of Phthorimaea brackenridgella [sic] is conspecific with