

## PHARMACOPŒIAL VEGETABLE DRUGS.

### SUMBUL

Musk root, *Ferula sumbul*, was first introduced into Russia as a substitute for musk, and was known in Germany in 1840 as a Russian product. Its history is to the effect that in 1869 a Russian traveler, Fedschenko (240), discovered the plant producing it in the northern part of the Khanat of Bukhara, 40° N. Lat. Sumbul has no authentic position in so-called "scientific" medicine other than that it crept into the British Pharmacopœia in 1867 as a substance that had been recommended as a substitute for musk in cholera.

### TAMARINDUS

The tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*) is a handsome tree indigenous to tropical Africa. It is also found throughout India, Java, and Yemen, and has been naturalized in South America as well as in adjacent tropical islands, such as the West Indies; also in Mexico, we having gathered it in La Paz, Lower California. The ancient Greeks and Romans seem not to have known the tamarind. If known to the Egyptians, it was neglected by their authors, although Sir Gardner Wilkinson (688) states that tamarind stones were found in the tombs of Thebes, a statement not confirmed, however, by specimens of the contents of tombs in the British Museum. The ancient Sanskrit writings mention tamarind, and the fruit was known to the Arabians as *Indian dates*, under which name it was mentioned by early authors, such as Avicenna (30) and others, including Alhervi (2), of Persia. Credit is given the Arabians for the distribution of the drug and its uses, it passing from them, with other Eastern products, into Europe through the famous school of Salernum. Tamarinds have been used in their native countries in the making of a cooling drink much relished by persons afflicted with fevers, in which direction they have been also employed in medicine throughout the civilized world. It would be better if the modern physician were more familiar with the grateful home-made drink that tamarinds afford the parched sufferer from fever.

### TARAXACUM

The dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*) is a plant familiar to all, being found throughout the whole of Europe, Central Asia, and North America, even to the Arctic regions. Although the word *taraxacum* is usually considered to be of Greek origin, there is no authentic record that the plant was known to the classical writers of Greece and Rome. The herbal, 1488, of Johann von Cube (173) gives it a position under the name *Dens leonis*. It is mentioned by Rhazes in the tenth and by Avicenna (30) in the eleventh centuries, and it was used in Welsh medicine in the thirteenth century. In domestic mediæval medication and as an ingredient of many popular American "bitters" and "blood purifiers" taraxacum was employed extensively. It yet enjoys a high reputation as a home remedy.

## PHARMACOPŒIAL VEGETABLE DRUGS.

### TEREBINTHINA RESINA

Turpentine. Oil of Turpentine. Resin.

The sticky juice of many trees, as the pine, the larch, and other coniferous trees, is known by the general name, *turpentine*, qualified by an adjective descriptive of its botanical origin or the country producing it; for example, Strasburg turpentine, Canada balsam, etc. This resinous, balsamic exudation has been used from all times as a balsam or pitch, or, when the wood of the tree is subjected to the action of heat, as a product of decomposition known as tar. This writer (1906) observed a fragrant oleaginous tar brought into Smyrna in sheepskins from the interior of Asia Minor, which enjoyed a domestic popularity in that part of the country. The Indians of North America employed Canada balsam as an application to wounds, it being an excellent antiseptic dressing for such purposes (see Indian Captivities, Guite's Narrative (198)). The distillate of the natural turpentine, had once a widely known domestic use in America as a remedy for worms, whilst the resin (rosin), which remains after the distillation of the spirit, is much employed in domestic treatment of the horse. All these forms of turpentine, as well as the empyrheumatic products of many related trees, have been known to the common people, as a rule, from the earliest records of history. The last issue of the Pharmacopœia of the United States, under the title *Oleum Terebinthina Rectificatum*, directs that the spirit obtained from the distillation of turpentine, usually obtained from the *Pinus australis*, be purified by redistillation from a solution of sodium hydrate.

### THYMOL

Thymol is a product of *Thymus vulgaris*, a native of Portugal, Spain, Southern France, Italy, and the mountainous parts of Greece. It has for several centuries been cultivated in England as a garden plant, and has long been known to yield a highly aromatic essential oil. Under the name *camphor of thyme*, an apothecary at the court of Berlin named Neumann, 1725, described this substance, which was called *thymol* by Lallemand (369a) in 1853, thus giving a name to a substance that, in little use in itself, had ever been valued in domestic medicine as well as by the medical profession in its natural association and combination as a part of oil of thyme. Under the name *oil of origanum*, oil of thyme has been a popular product obtained by the distillation of this herb, being used as an ingredient in domestic liniments and in veterinary medicine. Its use by the medical profession is even yet much limited.

### TRAGACANTHA

This gummy exudation (*gum tragacanth*) is a gift of Asia Minor, the shrub yielding it being very widely distributed. To locate exactly its first use would be to antedate historic records. It has ever been before the people in the cradle of humanity, where as a natural product



## PHARMACOPŒIAL VEGETABLE DRUGS.

it has always been employed. Theophrastus (633) three centuries before Christ, described it and located its origin. Dioscorides, a Greek writer, and Arabian writers gave it due attention. In fact, it would perhaps be as difficult to locate the first use of wheat as the first use of Tragacanth.

However, until a moderately recent period, only the knotty yellow or brown natural exudation was found in commerce. The natives learned next that by cleaning the bases of the bushes, incising the bark with a knife, ribbons of a pure white or semi-transparent nature could be produced. This is now the favorite form.

Tragacanth comes into Smyrna from the interior of Asia Minor, and from Persia and Armenia. Professor T. H. Norton described to us its collection about Harput, Turkey. Tragacanth of commerce is a conglomerate mixture, good, bad, indifferent, as obtained from the caravans. In Smyrna it is sorted into grades, based mainly on the color. This writer took much interest in the Tragacanth problem, and made many photographs of the Smyrna warehouses, where girls (Jewish) were engaged in sorting Tragacanth and nugtalls. Dealers in the one handle the other.

### TRITICUM

Couch grass, *Agropyron repens*, is a weed widely diffused throughout Europe, Northern Asia, the Caspian region, North and South America, even to Patagonia and Terra del Fuego. The ancients were naturally familiar with this grass with a creeping root-stalk, but it is impossible to determine the species valued by them. Dioscorides (194) ascribes to the decoction a value in calculus and suppression of urine. This use of triticum is corroborated by Pliny (514), and again occurs in the writings of Oribasius (479a) of the third century. Practically all the mediæval herbals figure the plant as in Dodonæus (195). As a domestic remedy triticum has ever been in common use, and is still, in the form of a decoction, much employed in mucous discharges from the bladder and in other affections of the urinary organs.

### ULMUS

"Slippery elm," *Ulmus fulva*, is a middle-sized tree found abundantly in the natural woodlands of the Central and Eastern United States, from Canada to the South. The Indians and settlers of North America valued the inner bark of this tree as a poultice; in certain skin diseases they used it as an external application, and as a soothing drink in fevers. In bowel affections they employed a cold decoction. Schöpf (582), 1787, refers to it as "salve bark." An infusion made by digesting the shredded inner bark of slippery elm in cold water, has (after the teaching of the Indians) ever maintained a high reputation in domestic North American medication in fevers, and especially in diarrheas connected therewith. The mucilaginous qualities render the powdered bark peculiarly adapted to the making of poultices, in which direction it was known to all the early settlers of America and was by them introduced to the medical profession.