

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.

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UVA URSI

Bearberry, *Uva ursi* (*Arctostaphylos uva ursi*) (Linné), which takes its name from the fact that its berries are eaten by bears and other animals, is a low evergreen shrub common to the Northern countries of Europe and America. The leaves, which are used in medicine, are an article of commerce in the northern sections of Europe, America, and some parts of Asia. Being used in tanning, in Sweden and Russia, according to Rafinesque (535), they established the well-known Russia leather. The astringent leaves were once highly valued in Europe, but have since fallen into disuse. The domestic employment of the drug introduced it to American medicine, Drs. Wistar, Barton (43), and Bigelow (69) recommending a decoction of it as a wash for leucorrhœa and as an injection in gonorrhœa and catarrh of the bladder. For these purposes, as based on its domestic employment, the plant has its professional record, but has never been very important in any school of medicine.

VALERIANA

The herbaceous perennial *Valeriana officinalis* is found throughout Europe from Spain to Iceland, extending also from the Crimæa, over Northern Asia, into China. It not only grows wild, but in England especially is cultivated as a drug plant. It was known to the Greeks and Romans, and the *wild nard* described by Dioscorides (194) and Pliny (514) is supposed to be a species of valerian, of which, in addition to the *Valeriana officinalis*, nine species are found in Asia Minor. The name *valerian*, however, was not used by the classical writers, occurring first in the ninth and tenth centuries. It is found in the Anglo-Saxon names of home remedies, and in domestic books as early as the eleventh century. Saladinus (570) of Ascoli, 1450, directed that the root be collected in the month of August. In mediæval days in England the flavor of valerian was considered by the common people a delightful addition to broths and pottages, Gerarde (262) in his *Herball*, 1567, remarking that the poorer classes of people in the north of England did not consider such forms of food worth anything without it. Strangely enough also the odor of valerian, now considered exceedingly disagreeable, was in the sixteenth century accepted as a perfume, and as a perfume it is still used in the Orient. In this connection we will add that we have known valerian to be a constituent of a perfume very popular with some ladies, but exceedingly unpleasant to some other people. In domestic medicine a tea from the root of valerian has been employed as a stimulant and antispasmodic in nervous diseases peculiar to females.

VANILLA

The conquering Spaniards found vanilla in use as a flavor for cacao among the Aztecs of Mexico, and naturally made this plant known to Europe. It was then described and illustrated by Hernandez (314), the "Pliny of the Spaniards," in his history of Mexico, who de-