

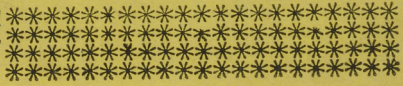


ABOUT
 PLANTS.

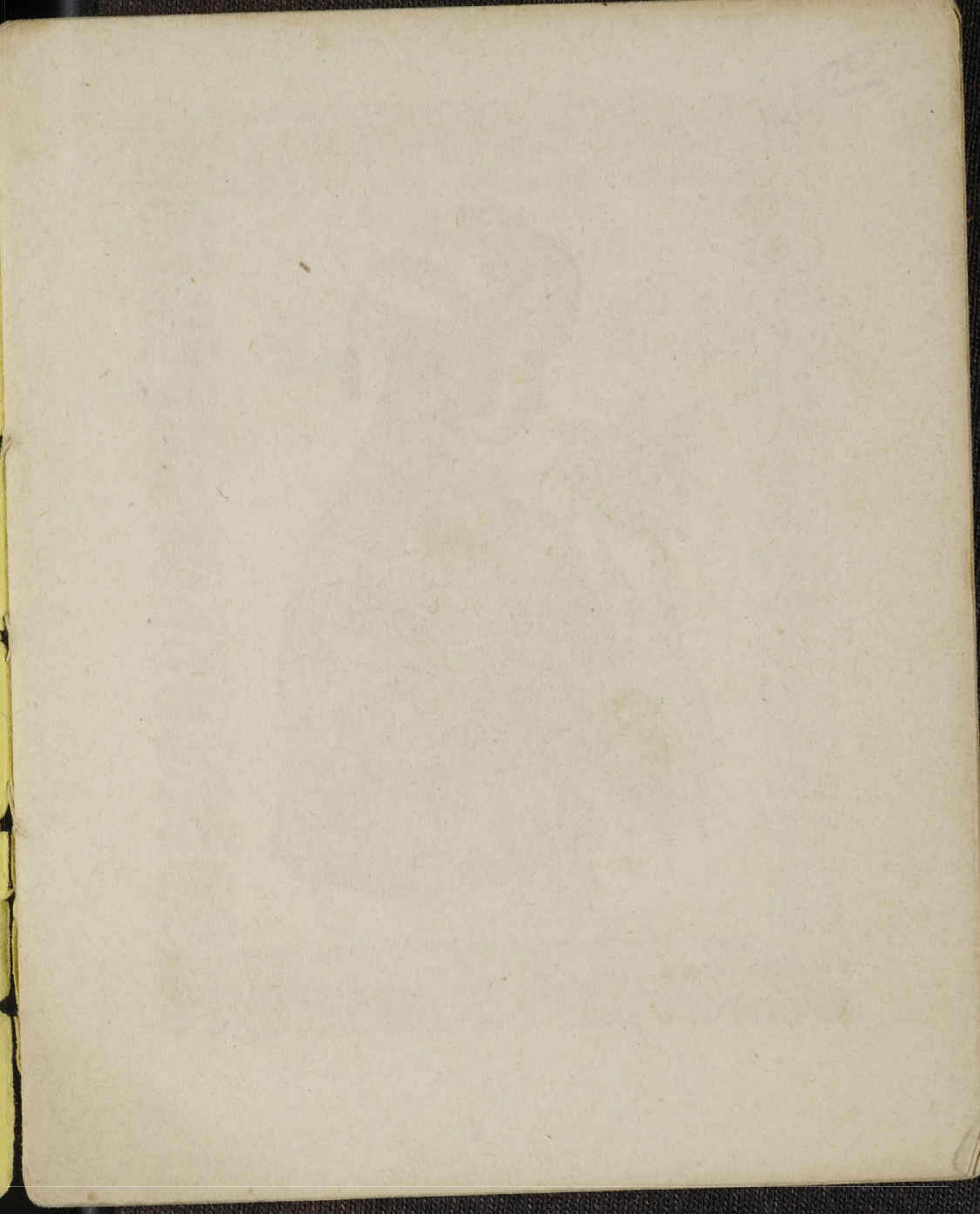
With Elegant Engravings.



WORCESTER:
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Mary A. Davis





ABOUT
PLANTS.

WITH MANY ENGRAVINGS.



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BOTANY, or the study of plants, is a very interesting study, particularly for young persons. We therefore present to our young friends in the following pages a number of elegant and correct engravings of plants, most of which are not common in this country, though the names are familiar to all. We also give short descriptions of each, which, although they contain some hard words, with some study will be understood.



FRANKINCENSE.

This was an aromatic and odoriferous gum, which issued from a tree, called by the ancients *Thurifera*. There are two kinds of incense—the male and the female; the former, which is

the best, is round, white, fat, and very inflammable; the latter is soft, more gummy, and less agreeable in smell than the other. Frankincense formed one of the ingredients in the sacred perfume, described Ex. 30 : 34; and was imported into Judea from Sheba.

It formed one part of the priest's duty, under the Mosaic economy, to burn incense in the holy apartment of the temple, on the morning and evening of each day; and on the great day of atonement, at the moment of entering into the holy of holies, the high priest was required to throw some incense on the fire in his censer, that the cloud occasioned by its burning might cover the mercy seat, lest perhaps, his curiosity being excited, he might be induced to inspect with too profane a curiosity that symbol of the Divine Presence.

CAMPHOR.

This tree or plant is a species of the Lamee, and is found in the East Indies; but

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the leaves do not exhibit the three strong parallel nerves of the Cinnamon and the Cassia. The whole tree has the strong odor of Camphor, and this substance is obtained by the distillation of the roots and small branches. The article is often employed as medicine, as a cordial and a stimulant. The camphor of the Sumatra is found concreted in the clefts of the bark of the camphor trees. It is also found in China and Japan, but the former is more highly valued. The camphor of China and Japan

is more frequently imported into this country than that of Sumatra.



CINNAMON.

Cinnamon is brought chiefly from the Island of Ceylon, in India, and has now been many years in use, in Europe and America, as a pleasant spice. It is the bark of the species of laurel, remarkable, with some other

species, possessing similar properties for its coriaceous leaf, marked with three strong nerves. It was originally found wild only, and in small quantities, at one part of the island ; but when the Dutch obtained a settlement there, they cultivated it in large gardens or tracts. The extent of these plantations will be perceived, when it is stated that 400,000 lbs. were obtained from them annually, and upwards of 5,000 persons were employed in the cinnamon business. The Dutch long had the monopoly of the article, and resorted to severe and even cruel measures to prevent the trade getting into other hands.

The cinnamon tree often grows to the height of twenty or thirty feet, and sends out large spreading branches. The leaves are first pendent and of a delicate rose color, afterwards they turn yellow and then green. The flowers are borne in panicles,

are small and white, partaking of the peculiar flavor of the tree. The fruit yields an oil, of which a kind of candles is made which are used by the Court in the kingdom of Candy.

When the tree is three years old, it affords a shoot fit to yield bark; but eight years of growth are needful before it can be freely cut. At ten or twelve years of age the tree is strongest, and the plants which grow in dry and rocky spots produce the most pungent and aromatic bark. The shoots are cut when about an inch thick: they are barked, and the epidermis scraped off. The bark is dried in the sun, when it curls, and the smaller is rolled within the larger. Cassia in its botanical character, is little different from cinnamon. In quality, it is much inferior, though often sold for it. It is commonly known under the name of Bastard Cinnamon.



THE CANE.

The sweet-scented cane, grows in Egypt, in Judea, and in several parts of Syria, but the best kind is found in Arabia and India. It was probably among the number of those plants that the Queen of Sheba presented to Solomon.

So powerful is its fragrance, that the air is said to be filled with a strong aromatic smell, even

while it is growing; and when dried and reduced to powder, it forms an ingredient in the richest perfumes.



FLAX

The use of flax is so ancient, that there is no account of its introduction. It has been cultivated from remote antiquity, throughout

a great part of Europe, Asia, and the North of Africa, for various purposes. Its native country is not certainly known; but it is found wild in Persia. The mummies of Egypt are enveloped with linen; and great quantities are made still on the banks of the Nile. The ancient Scandinavians and other barbarous people were clothed with it. The use of linen passed from Egypt into Greece, and thence into Italy. The root of this plant is annual; the stem is slender, and about twenty or twenty-four inches in height. The leaves are alternate, entire and linear; the flowers are blue, and consist of five petals, succeeded by capsules of ten cells, with seed. The seeds are mucilaginous and emollient; and an infusion of them is often used as drink in inflammatory diseases. They also yield an oil, known in commerce as linseed oil. Lime water and linseed oil form a good application for burns. A light soil is

most suitable for it, but it is raised on clayey ground.

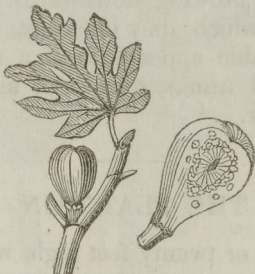


FIG TREE.

This tree is supposed to be a native of Asia, but is now cultivated in the south of Europe. Within a few years, it has been cultivated in the southern states, and in the northern is common as a green-house or room shrub. Of this genus is the famous Banian-tree, *F. indica*, with a summit three

or four hundred feet in diameter. The canopy is supported by natural pillars which the horizontal branches send out at intervals, which growing downwards, reach the ground, in which they take root, presenting the remarkable appearance of a single tree with several trunks, sometimes as many as fifty or sixty.

THE PLANTAIN

Is fifteen or twenty feet high, with a soft, herbaceous stem, and leaves often more than six feet long and nearly two feet broad. The spike of flowers, which rises from the centre of the leaves, is near four feet long. The fruit which succeeds is eight or nine inches long and above an inch in diameter, a little incurved, with three angles; the pulp of a sweet and luscious flavor. The spikes of fruit are often so large as to weigh



forty pounds. Gerard says that "the Grecians and Christians which inhabit Syria, and the Iewes also, suppose it to be that tree of whose fruit Adam did taste; which others think it to be a ridiculous fable." Others have supposed it to be the grapes brought out of the promised land by the spies of Moses. It is not considered a native of America, but is cultivated in every climate where it will thrive.

THE MANDRAKE.

There are two sorts of Mandrakes:—the female, which is black, having leaves not unlike lettuce, though smaller and narrower, which spread on the ground, and have a disagreeable smell. It bears berries something like services, pale, of a strong smell, having kernels within, like those of pears. It has two or three very large roots, twisted togeth-



ABOUT PLANTS.

er, white within, black without, and covered with a thick rind. The other kind, or male mandrake, is called morion, or folly, because it suspends the use of the senses. It produces berries twice the size of those of the female, of a good scent, and of a color approaching towards saffron. Its leaves are white, large, broad and smooth, like the leaves of the beech tree. Its root resembles that of the female, but is thicker and bigger. This plant stupifies those who use it; sometimes depriving them of understanding; and often causes such vertigoes and lethargies, that, if those who have taken it have not present assistance, they die in convulsions.

THE LIGN ALOE.

The aloe tree is a native of India, and grows to the height of about eight or ten feet; having at its head large bunches of



leaves, thick and indented, broad at the bottom, but narrowing towards the point, and

about four feet in length. The blossom is red, intermixed with yellow, and double, similar to a pink : from this blossom proceeds the fruit, round, like a large pea, white and red. But there is another description of tree, called the Syrian Aloe, which is a little shrub covered with prickles ; of the wood of which, perfumers (having taken off the bark) make use to give firmness and consistency to their perfumes, which otherwise would be too thin and liquid. Cassiodorus observes, that this is of a very sweet smell, and that in his time they burned it before the altars, instead of frankincense.

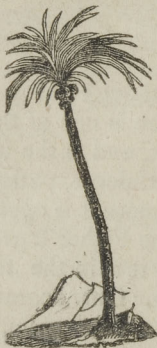
THE PALM TREE

Is an upright, tall, fruit-bearing, flourishing, and shadowy tree. It grows by the sweet springs of water, and continues long. It will not be pressed or bound downward, nor



grow crooked, though heavy weights be laid on it. This tree is one of the most famous of all the forest, and is the usual emblem of constancy, fruitfulness, patience and victory; which the more it is oppressed, the more it flourishes; the higher it grows, the stronger and broader it is in the top. One kind is the date tree. Our engraving represents the fruit of the date palm, growing, and

nearly ripe. The finest and best palm trees were about Jericho, En-ge-di, and along the banks of Jordan. Palm trees from the same root produce a great number of suckers, which form upwards a kind of forest by their spreading. It was under a little wood of palm trees of this kind, that the prophetess Deborah dwelt, between Ramah and Bethel. See Jud. 4 : 5.



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