

Alexandra Zivch

THEOPHRASTUS

ENQUIRY INTO PLANTS
AND MINOR WORKS ON ODOURS AND
WEATHER SIGNS

WITH AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION BY
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IN TWO VOLUMES

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MCMXVI

BOOK IV

OF THE TREES AND PLANTS SPECIAL TO PARTICULAR DISTRICTS AND POSITIONS.

Of the importance of position and climate.

I. THE differences between trees of the same kind have already been considered. Now all grow fairer and are more vigorous in their proper positions; for wild, no less than cultivated trees, have each their own positions: some love wet and marshy ground, as black poplar abele willow, and in general those that grow by rivers; some love exposed¹ and sunny positions; some prefer a shady place. The fir is fairest and tallest in a sunny position, and does not grow at all in a shady one; the silver-fir on the contrary is fairest in a shady place, and not so vigorous in a sunny one.

Thus there is in Arcadia near the place called Krane a low-lying district sheltered from wind, into which they say that the sun never strikes; and in this district the silver-firs excel greatly in height and stoutness, though they have not such close grain nor such comely wood, but quite the reverse,—like the fir when it grows in a shady place. Wherefore men do not use these for expensive work, such as doors or other choice articles, but rather for ship-building and house-building. For excellent

¹ εἰσκαπεῖς should mean 'sheltered,' but cannot in this context, nor in *C.P.* 1. 13. 11 and 12: the word seems to have been confused with εἰσκόπος.

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is also in its general appearance,¹ and the leaf is broader than that of the one and narrower than that of the other. So much for the Indian land.

In the country called Aria there is a 'thorn'² on which is found a gum resembling myrrh³ in appearance and smell, and this drops when the sun shines on it. There are also many other plants besides those of our land, both in the country and in its rivers. In other parts there is a white 'thorn'⁴ which branches in three, of which they make batons and sticks; its wood is sappy and of loose texture, and they call it the thorn 'of Herakles.'

There is another shrub⁵ as large as a cabbage, whose leaf is like that of the bay in size and shape. And if any animal should eat this, it is certain to die of it. Wherefore, wherever there were horses,⁶ they kept them under control.

In Gedrosia they say that there grows one tree⁷ with a leaf like that of the bay, of which if the beasts or anything else ate, they very shortly died with the same convulsive symptoms as in epilepsy.

And they say that another tree⁸ there is a sort of 'thorn' (spurge), and that this has no leaf and grows from a single root; and on each of its branches it has a very sharp spine, and if these are broken or bruised a quantity of juice flows out, which blinds animals or

³ *σμόρρη* conj. Sch. from 9. 1. 2; Plin. *l.c.*; *τῆ ἰλλυρία* Ald. H.

⁴ See Index.

⁵ *Asafoetida*; see Index App. (10). Plin. 12. 33.

⁶ *i.e.* in Alexander's expedition. Probably a verb, such as *ᾠσφραίνοντο*, has dropped out after *ἵπποι* (Sch.). *Odore equos invitans* Plin. *l.c.*

⁷ *Nerium odorum*; see Index App. (11). *cf.* 4. 4. 13; Strabo 15. 2. 7; Plin. *l.c.*

⁸ Plin. *l.c.*; Arrian, *Anab.* 6. 22. 7.

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even a man, if any drops of it should fall on him. Also they say that in some parts grows a herb under which very small snakes lie coiled up, and that, if anyone treads on these and is bitten, he dies. They also say that, if anyone should eat of unripe dates, he chokes to death, and that this fact was not discovered at first. Now it may be that animals and plants have such properties elsewhere also.

Among the plants that grow in Arabia Syria and India the aromatic plants are somewhat exceptional and distinct from the plants of other lands; for instance, frankincense myrrh cassia balsam of Mecca cinnamon and all other such plants, about which we have spoken at greater length elsewhere. So in the parts towards the east and south there are these special plants and many others besides.

Of the plants special to northern regions.

V. In the northern regions it is not so, for nothing worthy of record is mentioned except the ordinary trees which love the cold and are found also in our country, as fir oak silver-fir box chestnut lime, as well as other similar trees. There is hardly any other¹ besides these; but of shrubs there are some which for choice² seek cold regions, as centaury and wormwood, and further those that have medicinal properties in their roots and juices, such as hellebore squirting cucumber scammony, and nearly all those whose roots are gathered.³

Some of these grow in Pontus and Thrace, some

² I have moved *μᾶλλον*, which in the MSS. comes before *τῶν ἄλλων*.

³ *i.e.* which have medicinal uses.