

confists the improvement of this last canula, which I had principally in view in the rectification of the first.

XLVI. *An Account of the Cinnamon-tree,*
by Mr. W. Watfon, F. R. S.

To the Royal Society.

Gentlemen,

Read Nov 21, 1751. **I** TAKE the liberty of laying before you a specimen of the bark and wood of the cinnamon-tree, nearly of the length and size of an ordinary walking-cane, transmitted from our worthy member Mr. Benjamin Robins, now in India, to Dr. Letherland, who was so obliging as to put it into my hands for your inspection. And, in order to convey to you at the same time a yet more perfect idea of the tree itself, there accompanies it a small branch of this valuable plant from my own *hortus ficcus*.

Cinnamon, in the state now before you, is a great curiosity, and seen in Europe at present extremely seldom. Clusius tells us, that he saw two specimens of it. Anciently indeed it was often brought in this manner, *viz.* with the bark surrounding the wood; and it is believed by authors of very great credit, that the wood, not divested of its bark, as we now see it, or the bark stripped from the wood, was called by different appellations. And notwithstanding the various controversies, which have arisen in endeavouring

ing to fix properly these various terms, it did appear to the late Mr. Ray, that our cinnamon, the cinnamon of the antients, and the *cassia lignea* of the antients, were quite or nearly the same thing; and that they only had their difference from the soil, in which they were produced, or from the circumstances under which they were brought. Thus the younger branches of the tree with their bark covering them were called by the Greek writers *κινναμόμον*, *cinnamomum*, and sometimes *ξύλοκασία*, or *cassia lignea*; but when they were divested of their bark, which, by its being dried became tubular; this bark was denominated *κασία σύριγγξ*, or *cassia fistula*. But as, in process of time, the wood of this tree was found usefess, they stripped the bark from it, and brought that only, which custom prevails at this day.

Both Theophrastus and Pliny mention a very odd, and most undoubtedly a fabulous account of the manner of separating the bark from the wood. They say, that it is cut into short pieces, and sew'd up in a fresh hide; and that then the worms produced by the putrefaction of the hide destroy the woody part, and leave the bark untouched.

However the cinnamon, or *cassia cinnamomea* of Herman, the *cassia lignea*, and *cassia fistula* of the antient Greek writers might approach near each other, they were applied by the moderns to very different substances. By cinnamon is now always understood that only produced in Ceylon; by *cassia lignea*, the cinnamon of Sumatra, Java, and Malabar, much inferior, in every respect, to the former, tho' nearly agreeing therewith in appearance, and not at all woody, as the appellation seems to insinuate; and

and by *cassia fistula*, a fruit not described or used by the antient Greeks, and agreeing therewith in no one particular, only that both are vegetable productions: great care should be taken therefore, that this confusion is not productive of error.

Burman in his *Thesaurus Zeylanicus* takes notice of his being in possession of nine different sorts of cinnamon of Ceylon; the most excellent of which is that, which is called by the inhabitants *Rasse Coronde*, and is what is most usually brought to Europe.

What we now call cinnamon, is only produced in Ceylon, of which the states of Holland are in possession; and so jealous are they of this tree, which affords so valuable an article of commerce, that the fruit or young plants are forbidden by an order of state to be sent from thence, lest other powers might avail themselves thereof. And this they have been hitherto successful enough to keep to themselves; tho' in Ceylon, according to Mr. Ray, the cinnamon-tree grows as common in the woods and hedges, as the hazel with us, nor is of greater esteem with the inhabitants than other wood, but is used by them as fuel, and applied to other domestic purposes. I am apprehensive, that the prohibition of sending cinnamon-trees from Ceylon is of no long standing, as Paul Herman, who resided there some time, and was after his return chosen professor of botany at Leyden, tells us, in his *Hortus Lugduni-Batavus* published in 1687, that he sent several of these trees to some considerable persons in Holland, and that they continued also as well in the gardens of others, as in his own, for two or three years, and were kill'd by a severe winter. I am very credibly informed,

informed, that three of these trees in pots were presented to the late King William, by whom they were placed in the garden at Hampton-court, and were intended to be sent to Jamaica, as a country proper for their increase, under the care of the earl of Inchiquin, who was then going thither governor. But for want of attention these trees were left behind; and as the knowledge of hot-houses, as we now see them, was unknown, and the state of gardening otherwise extremely low, these invaluable trees were suffered to die here; whereas had they been planted in some of our islands in America between the tropics, in all probability before this time we might have been supplied from thence, and large sums been annually saved to the public, as great quantities of cinnamon are consumed in diet and medicine. I am,

Gentlemen,

Your most obedient humble servant,

London, Nov. 21, 1751.

W. Watson.