

THE POMEGRANATE

5. A. DE CANDOLLE¹ sums up the result of his painstaking investigation of the diffusion of the pomegranate (*Punica granatum*, the sole genus with two species only within the family *Punicaceae*) as follows: "To conclude, botanical, historical, and philological data agree in showing that the modern species is a native of Persia and some adjacent countries. Its cultivation began in prehistoric time, and its early extension, first toward the west and afterwards into China, has caused its naturalization in cases which may give rise to errors as to its true origin, for they are frequent, ancient, and enduring." In fact, the pomegranate occurs spontaneously in Iran on stony ground, more particularly in the mountains of Persian Kurdistan, Baluchistan, and Afghanistan. I am in full accord with A. de Candolle's opinion, which, as will be seen, is signally corroborated by the investigation that follows, and am not in the least disturbed by A. ENGLER's view² that the pomegranate occurs wild in Greece and on the islands of the Grecian Archipelago, and that, accordingly, it is indigenous in anterior Asia and part of the Balkan Peninsula, while its propagation in Italy and Spain presumably followed its cultivation in historical times. First, as stated also by G. BUSCHAN,³ these alleged wild trees of Greece are not spontaneous, but have reverted from cultivation to a wild state.⁴ Second, be this as it may, all ancient Greek accounts concerning the pomegranate relate exclusively to the cultivated, in no case to the wild species; and it is a gratuitous speculation of O. SCHRADER,⁵ who follows suit with Engler, that the Greek word *ῥοά* was originally applied to the indigenous wild species, and subsequently transferred to the cultivated one. As will be shown hereafter, the Greek term is a loan-word. The naturalization of the fruit in the Mediterranean basin is, as A. DE CANDOLLE justly terms it, an extension of the original

¹ Origin of Cultivated Plants, p. 240.

² In Hehn's Kulturpflanzen, p. 246 (8th ed.).

³ Vorgeschichtliche Botanik, p. 159.

⁴ I am unable, however, to share Buschan's view that the wild specimens of Iran and north-western India also belong to this class; that area is too extensive to allow of so narrow an interpretation. In this case, Buschan is prejudiced in order to establish his own hypothesis of an indigenous origin of the tree in Arabia (see below).

⁵ In Hehn's Kulturpflanzen, p. 247.