

that our genus *Curcuma* has nothing whatever to do with *Crocus* or saffron.

As regards Chinese knowledge of saffron, we must distinguish two long periods,—first, from the third century to the T'ang dynasty inclusive, in which the Chinese received some information about the plant and its product, and occasionally tribute-gifts of it; and, second, the Mongol period (1260–1367), when saffron as a product was actually imported into China by Mohammedan peoples and commonly used. This second period is here considered first.

Of no foreign product are the notions of the Chinese vaguer than of saffron. This is chiefly accounted for by the fact that *Crocus sativus* was hardly ever transplanted into their country,¹ and that, although the early Buddhist travellers to India caught a glimpse of the plant in Kashmir, their knowledge of it always remained rather imperfect. First of all, they confounded saffron with safflower (*Carthamus tinctorius*), as the products of both plants were colloquially styled “red flower” (*huñ hwa* 紅花). Li Ši-čen² annotates, “The foreign (*fan* 番) or Tibetan red flower [saffron] comes from Tibet (Si-fan), the places of the Mohammedans, and from Arabia (T'ien-fan 天方). It is the *huñ-lan* [*Carthamus*] of those localities. At the time of the Yüan (1260–1367) it was used as an ingredient in food-stuffs. According to the *Po wu či* of Čaň Hwa, Čaň K'ien obtained the seeds of the *huñ-lan* [*Carthamus*] in the Western Countries (Si yü), which is the same species as that in question [saffron], although, of course, there is some difference caused by the different climatic conditions.” It is hence erroneous to state, as asserted by F. P. SMITH,³ that “the story of Čaň K'ien is repeated for the saffron as well as for the safflower;” and it is due to the utmost confusion that STUART⁴ writes, “According to the *Pen-ts'ao*, *Crocus* was brought from Arabia by Čaň K'ien at the same time that he brought the safflower and other Western plants and drugs.” Čaň K'ien in Arabia! The *Po wu či* speaks merely of safflower (*Carthamus*), not of saffron (*Crocus*),—two absolutely distinct plants, which even belong to different families; and there is no Chinese text whatever that would link the saffron with Čaň K'ien. In fact, the Chinese have nothing to say re-

¹ It is curious that the Armenian historian Moses of Khorene, who wrote about the middle of the fifth century, attributes to China musk, saffron, and cotton (YULE, *Cathay*, Vol. I, p. 93). Cotton was then not manufactured in China; likewise is saffron cultivation out of the question for the China of that period.

² *Pen ts'ao kaň mu*, Ch. 15, p. 14 b.

³ Contributions towards the *Materia Medica* of China, p. 189.

⁴ *Chinese Materia Medica*, p. 131.