

This fact was already known to Theophrastus,<sup>1</sup> who gives this account: "Balsam grows in the valley of Syria. They say that there are only two parks in which it grows, one of about four acres, the other much smaller. The tree is as tall as a good-sized pomegranate, and is much branched; it has a leaf like that of rue, but it is pale; and it is evergreen. The fruit is like that of the terebinth in size, shape, and color, and this too is very fragrant, indeed more so than the gum. The gum, they say, is collected by making incisions, which is done with bent pieces of iron at the time of the Dog-star, when there is scorching heat; and the incisions are made both in the trunks and in the upper parts of the tree. The collecting goes on throughout the summer; but the quantity which flows is not very large: in a day a single man can collect a shell-full. The fragrance is exceedingly great and rich, so that even a small portion is perceived over a wide distance. However, it does not reach us in a pure state: what is collected is mixed with other substances; for it mixes freely with such, and what is known in Hellas is generally mixed with something else.<sup>2</sup> The boughs are also very fragrant. In fact, it is on account of these boughs, they say, that the tree is pruned (as well as for a different reason), since the boughs cut off can be sold for a good price. In fact, the culture of the trees has the same motive as the irrigation (for they are constantly irrigated). And the cutting of the boughs seems likewise to be partly the reason why the trees do not grow tall; for, since they are often cut about, they send out branches instead of putting out all their energy in one direction. Balsam is said not to grow wild anywhere. From the larger park are obtained twelve vessels containing each about three pints, from the other only two such vessels. The pure gum sells for twice its weight in silver, the mixed sort at a price proportionate to its purity. Balsam then appears to be of exceptional value."

As the tree did not occur wild in Palestine, but only in the state of cultivation, and as its home is in southern Arabia, the tradition of Josephus appears to be well founded, though it is not necessary to connect the introduction with the name of the Queen of Saba.

Strabo,<sup>3</sup> describing the plain of Jericho, speaks of a palace and the garden of the balsamum. "The latter," he says, "is a shrub with an aromatic odor, resembling the cytisis (*Medicago arborea*) and the terminthus (terebinth-tree). Incisions are made in the bark, and vessels

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<sup>1</sup> Hist. plant., IX, 6 (cf. the edition and translation of A. HORT, Vol. II, p. 245).

<sup>2</sup> E. WIEDEMANN (*Sitzber. phys.-med. Soc. Erl.*, 1914, pp. 178, 191) has dealt with the adulteration of balsam from Arabic sources.

<sup>3</sup> XVI. II, 41.