

and Turkish, likewise into Russian as *reven'* and into Serbian as *reved*. It is assumed also that Greek $\rho\eta\nu\nu$ (from *rewon) and $\rho\tilde{a}$ are derived from Iranian, and it is more than likely that Iran furnished the rhubarb known to the ancients. The two Greek names first appear in Dioscorides,¹ who states that the plant grows in the regions beyond the Bosphorus, for which reason it was subsequently styled *rha ponticum* or *rha barbarum* (hence our *rhubarb*, Spanish *ruibarbo*, Italian *rabarbaro*, French *rhubarbe*),—an interesting case analogous to that of the Hu plants of the Chinese. In the fourth century, Ammianus Marcellinus² states that the plant receives its name from the River Rha ('Pā, Finnish Rau, Rawa), on the banks of which it grows. This is the Volga, but the plant does not occur there. It is clear that Ammianus' opinion is erroneous, being merely elicited by the homophony of the names of the plant and the river. Pliny³ describes a root termed *rhacoma*, which when pounded yields a color like that of wine but inclining to saffron, and which was brought from beyond the Pontus. Certain it is that this drug represents some species of *Rheum*, in my opinion identical with that of Iran.⁴ There is no reason to speculate, as has been done by some authors, that the rhubarb of the ancients came from China; for the Chinese did not know rhubarb, as formerly assumed, from time immemorial. This is shown at the outset by the composite name *ta hwan* 大黃 ("the great yellow one") or *hwan lian* 黃良 ("the yellow good one"), merely descriptive attributes, while for all genuinely ancient plants there is a root-word of a single syllable. The alleged mention of rhubarb in the *Pen kin* or *Pen ts'ao*, attributed to the mythical Emperor Šen-nuñ, proves nothing; that work is entirely spurious, and the text in which we have it at present is a reconstruction based on quotations in the preserved *Pen-ts'ao* literature, and teems with interpolations and anachronisms.⁵ All that is certain is that rhubarb was known to the

HEMSLEY, *Journal Linnean Soc.*, Vol. XXVI, p. 355. There is accordingly no reason to seek for an outside origin of the Iranian word (cf. SCHRADER, *Reallexikon*, p. 685). The Iranian word originally designated an indigenous Iranian species, and was applied to *Rheum officinale* and *palmatum* from the tenth century onward, when the roots of these species were imported from China.

¹ III, 2. Theophrastus is not acquainted with this genus.

² XXII. VIII, 28.

³ XXVII, 105.

⁴ FLÜCKIGER and HANBURY (*Pharmacographia*, p. 493) state, "Whether produced in the regions of the Euxinè (Pontus), or merely received thence from remoter countries, is a question that cannot be solved." The authors are not acquainted with the Iranian species, and their scepticism is not justified.

⁵ It is suspicious that, according to Wu P'u of the third century, Šen Nuñ and Lei Kuñ ascribed poisonous properties to *ta hwan*, while this in fact is not true. The *Pen kin* (according to others, the *Pie lu*) states that it is non-poisonous.