

leaf of the king," and denotes the basil.<sup>1</sup> The plant is esteemed for its leaves, which serve for culinary purposes to season soups or other dishes, and which have a flavor somewhat like cloves. The juice of the leaves is employed medicinally.

Indeed, as shown by our word "basil," it was under this Middle-Greek name, which did not exist in the period of classical antiquity, that the plant became known to the herbalists of Europe. Thus the celebrated JOHN GERARDE<sup>2</sup> says, "The latter Grecians have called it *basilikon*: in shops likewise *Basilicum*, and *Regium*: in Spanish *Albahaca*:<sup>3</sup> in French *Basilic*: in English *Basill*, *Garden Basill*, the greater *Basill royall*, the lesser *Basill gentle*, and *Bush Basill*." D. REMBERT DODOENS<sup>4</sup> speaks of the *basill royall* or great *basill*, and says, "In this countrey the Herboristes do plante it in their gardens." There is much in favor of Sickenberger's supposition that the introduction of the basil into Europe may be due to the returning crusaders,<sup>5</sup> while the Arabic name adopted in Spain and Portugal suggests a Moorish transplantation into western Europe.

Two varieties are common throughout Persia and Russian Turkistan, — one with green and another with dark-red leaves.<sup>6</sup> According to Avicenna, it grows in the mountains of Ispahan.<sup>7</sup> Abu Mansur sets forth its medicinal properties.<sup>8</sup> It is further cultivated throughout India, Malaya, and China.<sup>9</sup>

W. ROXBURGH<sup>10</sup> states that *Ocimum basilicum* is a native of Persia, and was thence sent to the Botanic Garden at Calcutta under the Persian names *deban-šah* and *deban-macwassi*. According to W.

<sup>1</sup> POTT, *Z. f. K. Morg.*, Vol. VII, 1850, p. 145. Osmanli *fesligen* or *fesliyen* is likewise based on the Greek word. According to the Century Dictionary, the word *basil* is of unknown origin. The Oxford Dictionary cites from Prior, "perhaps because the herb was used in some royal unguent, bath, or medicine," — a baseless speculation, as in fact it was never used in this way.

<sup>2</sup> The Herball or Generall Historie of Plantes, p. 547 (London, 1597).

<sup>3</sup> Also *alfabega*, *alhabega*, *alabega*, Portuguese *alfabaca* (French *fabrègue*), from Arabic *al-habak* (*rīxāni*); the latter occurs in LECLERC, *Traité des simples*, Vol. I, p. 404.

<sup>4</sup> Nievve Herball, translation of HENRY LYTE, p. 239 (London, 1578).

<sup>5</sup> Cited in ACHUNDOW, Abu Mansur, p. 211.

<sup>6</sup> KORŽINSKI, *Očerki rastitelnosti Turkestana*, p. 51. SCHLIMMER mentions the two species *Ocimum album* and *basilicum* as occurring in Persia.

<sup>7</sup> LECLERC, *Traité des simples*, Vol. III, p. 191.

<sup>8</sup> ACHUNDOW, Abu Mansur, pp. 66, 90, 103.

<sup>9</sup> FORBES and HEMSLEY, *Journ. Linn. Soc.*, Vol. XXVI, p. 266; KING and GAMBLE, *Materials for a Flora of the Malayan Peninsula*, p. 702 (Perak, Penang, Malacca, perhaps only cultivated).

<sup>10</sup> *Flora Indica*, p. 464.