

The Canadian Horticulturist.

VOL. II.]

MAY, 1879.

[No. 5.

ON THE STUDY OF BOTANY.

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In every part of the world mankind depend on fruit trees or the herbs of the field for subsistence to a considerable extent. Plants furnish us with a large part of our clothing, and the principal ingredients of our *materia medica*. Architecture, the mechanical arts, navigation, and almost every branch of industry depend either directly or indirectly on the products of the vegetable kingdom.

As might be supposed, plants, shrubs and trees have been studied by men of intelligence and observation from the earliest times to the present day. In the Holy Scriptures we are told that Solomon "spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall;" and "a greater than Solomon" exhorted His followers to "consider the lilies of the field, how they grow."

Among the ancient Greeks we find that Hippocrates, about the year B.C. 409, introduced an enlightened system of medical study, connected with the study of plants. Aristotle, about B. C. 350, wrote a learned work on plants; and his disciple, Theophrastus, about B. C. 300, wrote on the same subject, and described nearly 500 species. The principal botanical writers among the Romans are Pliny the Elder, and Dioscorides, who both flourished towards the end of the first century of the Christian era. In the *materia medica* of Dioscorides about 700 plants are described, and the greater part of our old English herbalists are made up from his writings.

From the time of Pliny the Elder and Dioscorides to the end of the fifteenth century we can say nothing on the state of botany, as history is almost silent on that subject. At the beginning of the sixteenth century Brunfelsius, a German, published a work called *Historia*