

Essays on the history of herbal medicine

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History of phytotherapy

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#### SUMMARY

This article is the introduction to a series of articles on the history of herbal medicine. The reasons and reasons that prompted the author to write the series are given. The introduction provides general information about plants, their role in human life. Special attention is paid to plants with medicinal properties.

Key words: herbal medicine, plants, medicinal plants, herbs, sacred plants, sorcerers, healers, herbalists.

#### RESUME

The article starts a series of publications devoted to the history of phytotherapy. Introduction contains data about plants and their role in the life of human being. Special attention is given to the plants with healing properties.

Keywords: phytotherapy, herbal medicine, plants, medicinal plants, herbs, sacred plants, sorcerers, healers, herbalists.

"Nature ... is always right;  
mistakes and delusions come from people "

I.V. Goethe

Not so long ago, television aired another series of "revelatory" programs about traditional medicine (he took the word revelatory in quotation marks, because he was not entirely sure of the true purpose of these actions, not to mention their effectiveness). This time everything was well furnished. At the very beginning, the presenter reported, and the "scientific" (this time the quotation marks are more than appropriate) observer P. Lobkov, with his characteristic categoricalness, confirmed the sensational report that an astronomical amount of \$ 2.5 billion had been spent in the United States on research into the effectiveness of the whole a number of medicinal plants, from century to century, are widely used in folk medicine. And the researchers found that the centuries-old fame of natural remedies, to put it mildly, is greatly exaggerated and even falsified. Research results have shown that neither raspberry nor viburnum, neither onion with garlic, nor St. John's wort, and along with them thousands of other medicinal plants, have no moral right to be used in medicine, since the experiment failed to prove their effectiveness. The hooting on this matter continued for quite a long time and was supported by individual representatives present at the program.

Russian clinical pharmacology. And none of those present asked the proper question in this situation, cui prodest? (who benefits?), as the ancient Greeks said. And it would be worth asking. It is clear that a state, even such a super-rich as the United States, will never allocate funds for such a study, the pragmatism of Americans has long been known. Such money could only be spent by pharmaceutical companies that are constantly feeling the growing popularity of natural medicines among the population, which have passed centuries of people's expertise for efficacy and safety. Trusting the results of a publicized study is tantamount to years of instilling in us the belief that cheeseburgers are healthier for our health than borscht and porridge, that chips are healthier for us than jacket potatoes,

Do not forget that science and profit are difficult things to combine. I will cite one fact that is stubbornly hushed up. In not too distant 2003, the world community was agitated by the report that M. Rath, a well-known doctor of medicine in the West, filed a "Complaint to the International Criminal Court for genocide and other crimes against humanity in connection with the pharmaceutical business on diseases." At the very beginning of this document, he wrote: "Throughout the 20th century, the goal of creating and organizing the pharmaceutical industry was to control healthcare systems around the world by systematically replacing natural therapies ... with profitable synthetic drugs." The author convincingly argued the accusations. But what came of it? Absolutely nothing. By the way, recently from the Internet, quite widely covered the activities of this doctor in the field of cardiology, even mention of this document practically disappeared, not to mention its text. Cui prodest?

It makes sense to dwell on one more essential point. I have no doubt about the high degree of professional care with which American scientists have conducted their research. But at the same time, I am sure that medicinal plants were studied according to methods accepted all over the world, including in our country. Created by reputable scientists and thoroughly tested in practice for many years, they work perfectly and reliably in the study of synthetic preparations and preparations containing one biologically active substance isolated from a medicinal plant.

In pharmacognosy and phytochemistry, there was a period when only biologically active substances were recognized as acting in plants, the rest were scornfully called ballast ones. Fortunately, this misconception was dispelled quickly enough when it became clear that the so-called "ballast" is an absolutely necessary and very important component, without which the medicinal efficiency of a medicinal plant is significantly reduced. Moreover, it should be borne in mind that the totality of the acting and accompanying healing powers of a plant is something more than just the sum of its constituents. This alone creates difficulties in clinical trials of medicinal plants. And taking into account the fact that phytotherapeutic agents for the manifestation of their properties, in contrast to synthetic drugs

a certain period of accumulation is necessary, during which there is a summation and potentiation of the effect, their clinical studies do not fit into the general framework in any way. The eternal question arises - what to do? It is difficult and costly to create a system of clinical trials of medicinal products of natural origin corresponding to the realities, the income from them is negligible in comparison with synthetic drugs. It's easier to squeeze them into the existing system and throw up your hands in bewilderment if the expected effect is not achieved. It may be worth recognizing that the natural biochemical laboratory is incomparably richer than ours and its knowledge requires something other than the usual dismemberment of the whole into its component parts and their detailed study, eventually becoming like the character of the Krylov fable who did not notice an elephant in the Kunstkamera. Of course, it will happen sometime anyway,

I can not resist and quote Goethe's immortal "Faust": "Wanting to study a living subject,

In order to get a clear knowledge of him, the  
Scientist first expels the soul, Then divides the  
object into parts, And sees them, but it's a pity:  
their spiritual connection In the meantime,  
disappeared, carried away! " [1]

It was said more than two hundred years ago, but it sounds surprisingly relevant. The defense of herbal medicine does not mean that we should be content with its empirical essence, in which it has been for many millennia. On the contrary, we note with satisfaction that the number of scientists, employees of research institutes and departments of medical and pharmaceutical universities is growing day by day, who are doing their daily hard work to bring herbal medicine closer to evidence-based medicine. Of course, funding for these studies is orders of magnitude lower than the ordered American ones, nevertheless, there are already encouraging results, and herbal medicine is gradually moving into a new quality.

I am sure that this method of treatment will have a wonderful future. In the era of a rapidly rolling wave of chronic diseases, reliance on the omnipotence of synthetic drugs is extremely dangerous for the population, which is just as rapidly losing confidence in modern medicine. There is a real way to regain this trust. I am not calling for braking. At the speed with which the development of human society is taking place, it is not only difficult to slow down, but also dangerous. The task now is to break out of the floodlight along which our medicine is rushing like a hare. I do not want to be a soothsayer, but it seems to me that ahead -

breakage. But there are other ways, maybe less high-speed, but reliably leading us away from the abyss. Herbal medicine is one of these pathways.

Introduction

"There is healing power in herbs and flowers  
For all those who know how to solve their mystery "

V. Rozhdestvensky

When man appeared on Earth, she was not ownerless. Moreover, it was by no means representatives of the fauna that reigned on it, but plants that surpassed them in age and number. This is about them, the Nobel laureate playwright M. Maeterlink wrote: "The earth belongs to them from the beginning of the world" [2]. It is difficult now to judge whether a man would have appeared if there were no plants, but it is quite clear that he would not have been able to exist without the plant world.

Plants in all eras accompanied a person, as a caring mother helped him in solving fundamental issues of life support, providing food, clothing, warmth, air and much more. The importance of plants in the development of modern civilization is indisputable. Researchers highlight those plants that have contributed to revolutionary transformations in the life of human society. These are, first of all, four grains (wheat, barley, rice, corn) that play an everlasting role in human nutrition. Then there are cotton, Brazilian hevea rubber, chocolate tree, water-marsh plant cyperus papyrus, which gave man papyrus, as well as spices pepper, mustard, etc. There is also one medicinal plant in this list - cinchona tree, but, frankly, it would be fair to include in this group all plants used to treat diseases.

Moreover, speaking of them, one must bear in mind that, at least until the 20th century, they were the alpha and omega of any therapeutic treatment. As professor V.B. Prozorovsky: "Man appeared immediately with a bunch of medicinal herbs in his hand" [3]. It is clear that this is a literary exaggeration, but is it really so far from reality? Many ancient and medieval sages emphasized that nature laid in medicinal plants everything necessary for the treatment of diseases. Even now it is difficult to object to this. It is another matter that the reliance of world medicine on the omnipotence of synthetic drugs, a disdainful attitude towards the experience of previous generations, and in our country also blatant mismanagement, have led to the fact that much of the invaluable folk experience of herbal medicine has been irretrievably lost.

We must learn from the people to be careful and attentive to herbs. For humanity, since its inception, nature has been animate. Plants were often endowed with human properties, played a significant role in the period of totemism, albeit not as great as animals and the forces of nature. The spiritualization of the plant world was also characteristic in later times, which was reflected in numerous myths, legends, and tales.

Domestic researchers V.P. and V.V. The Butromeevs, calling herbs "the first kingdom of the living", write: "... herbs are the most complex, subtlest, amazing kingdom, one of the greatest fundamental manifestations of being" [4]. And the more you learn about the amazing properties and characteristics of herbs, the more true this statement seems to be.

Outstanding botanist K.A. Timiryazev, speaking about the remarkable properties of plants, especially emphasized their cosmic role. In the famous work "The Life of a Plant", he concluded: "The animal consumes that substance and that energy,

which are stored by the plant; in turn, the plant receives the energy it needs from the sun. A plant is a mediator between the sun and the animal world "[5].

Since ancient times, man has tried to penetrate into the inner world of plants. Aristotle, not doubting the presence of a soul in plants, denied them the presence of feelings.

The great Goethe, on the contrary, in his doctrine of metamorphosis brought the image of a plant closer to human knowledge, which allows one to comprehend the plant as a "sensory-supersensible being" [20].

The father of modern botany, C. Linnaeus, wrote that plants differ from humans and animals only by their immobility.

C. Darwin went even further, arguing that plants acquire and demonstrate their ability to move when this gives them an advantage in natural selection and proved the ability of plants to move independently.

At the beginning of the last century, the Austrian biologist R. Francais put forward the theory that plants can move freely, only this movement is carried out very slowly and is not caught by humans. Several decades later, the Soviet researcher, professor at the Timiryazev Academy I.I. Gunar, using the method of time-lapse filming, confirmed this assumption [6].

The latest research shows that plants emit specific vibrations, depending on where they grow, smell, color, and many other factors. It became known that plants react to sounds, in particular to music, and, presumably, to physical stimuli, up to painful sensations.

The amazing properties and abilities of plants are described in detail in the most interesting and voluminous book by P. Tompkins and K. Byrd "The Secret Life of Plants" [6]. One can agree with the facts and their interpretation set forth in it, one can discuss, but one cannot deny its cognitive essence, which allows us to strongly recommend it to readers.

At all times, man has tried to isolate from a large number of plants the most useful and help with the most common diseases. For example, medieval magicians and healers most often used 16 plants, each of which, in addition to the name, also had an indication of the scope and action (henbane is the herb of death, cornflower is the herb of charm, nettle is the herb of courage, lemon balm is the herb that restores strength, shepherd's purse - the herb of fertility, celandine - the herb of victory, sage - the herb of life, etc.).

Modern domestic authors V. Petrenko and E. Deryugin report on nine plants that are recognized by doctors around the world - aconite, incense, mandrake, elderberry, orchis, licorice, periwinkle, ginseng, ginkgo [7]. Of course, all the plants included in this list are widely used in medicine in different countries and peoples, but the value of this register would be much higher if the criteria for including a particular plant in it were known. In our opinion, this list is far from complete and can be significantly expanded, at least at the expense of, for example, St. John's wort, about which they say in Russia: "just as bread cannot be baked without flour, so without St. John's wort it is impossible to cure a disease."

Interesting, although scientifically and not very evidence-based work was carried out by the famous Soviet writer V.A. Soloukhin. In his excellent book *Herbs*, he tried to classify the data he obtained from various sources (though not scientific) on the medicinal properties of plants. And that's what he did. The most common healing effect of medicinal plants is a diuretic. Behind him is the pain reliever. In the top five, it also includes herbs that have astringent and laxative effects. Slightly inferior to them are medicinal plants with diaphoretic action [8]. And where are the heart, hypotensive, sedative, tonic, gastrointestinal? They are, of course, there, but not in the first positions. Why? I asked this question to members of the Moscow Phytotherapeutic Society, most of whom are highly experienced herbalists. After a little reflection, they came to a unanimous conclusion that the data presented fully correspond to the fundamental therapeutic effect of medicinal plants - an increase in the excretory, drainage function of the body, and its maximum detoxification. Sounds convincing.

Plants have always occupied a special place in the life of the peoples of Russia. People's appreciation of plants, especially medicinal ones, has always been high, heartfelt, and respectful. This was manifested, first of all, in the names, surprisingly accurately reflecting their purpose and properties, as well as the peculiarities of the attitude towards them. After all, say, as affectionately and trustingly as cornflower, bell, lyubka, priyata, iris, pansies, etc., you can only name a close and reliable friend. Very touchingly called in a number of places the same lyubka (night violet) - love-not-leave. The people (at the suggestion of the Russian agronomist Bolotov) gave the dry-sounding Roman grass a warm and dear name chamomile. And how much good-natured humor in popular names - dudelyashka (angelica), confused (crawls out early when the snow has not melted yet), woman's gossip (forest vetch), balabolka (forest reed), woman's mind (tumbleweed), etc. But completely different notes sound in the names of poisonous plants - goosemorus, bedrock, hemlock, scabbard, viper berries, stinker, wolf-killer, wild rosemary (from the old Russian wild rosemary - to poison). This also includes mad herb (belladonna), mad potion (dope). And it sounds completely irreconcilable - evil grass (water pepper), evil eater (poisonous buttercup). There are names that warn of the danger - poor man. There are herbs whose names contain indications for their use - warthog (celandine), keel grass (for the treatment of hernias), worm (common tansy), blister herb (ivy budra), boil grass (plantain), vigor herb, hemorrhoidal herb (tenacious bedstraw), fever (marshmallow medicinal) and even twelve fever fevers (angelica medicinal), hiccups, non-sickness (tarragon), etc. Sometimes the name was based on the similarity of a plant or its parts with something - the well-known bear ears (bearberry). The accuracy of folk associative thinking is sometimes striking. Wormwood, for example, is called widow's grass in many regions of Russia (its bitterness comes from widow's tears). The well-known valerian, which received its name from the Latin *vale* - health, in some places is called the herb of health, but more often - more understandable to the Russian people *averyanovka* (*averyanka*) or meow for the love of cats for her. One of the most ancient which got its name from the Latin *vale* - health, in a number of places it is called the herb of health, but more often - *averianovka* (*averianka*), which is more understandable to a Russian person, or meow for the love of cats for her. One of the most ancient which got its name from the Latin *vale* - health, in a number of places it is called the herb of health, but more often - *averianovka* (*averianka*), which is more understandable to a Russian person, or meow for the love of cats for her. One of the most ancient

medicinal plants - sage is often called the herb of life. Sometimes the origin of the names lies on the surface (barefoot - plantain), and sometimes hidden behind associations unknown to us, beliefs - burdock, burdock in a number of places is called a bear-grass, or because it accumulates strength in winter in order to grow quickly in spring, or from the legend of a kind bear, turned into a plant by an evil sorcerer. There are also names that carry a social meaning - in a number of districts the species of sedge is widespread - a beggar grass, so named because very poor peasants stuffed pillows and mattresses with it, while the more possessive used feathers of poultry for these purposes and the rich - their fluff [8, 9, 10].

Popular beliefs say that many herbs have magical properties. Hence their widespread use in all kinds of witchcraft rituals and manipulations, and not only in the long period of the so-called magical medicine, but much later. These properties of herbs were also displayed in their names.

- witch's potion (club-shaped baloon), likhodey (cruciferous gentian), satanic potion (golden buttercup), etc. One of the key figures in the legends of sorcerers is the fern (key-grass, firebloom, tear-grass, heat-color). The Croats still have preserved its pagan name - Perunov's color [9, 10].

It's time to digress from the main topic here. Since ancient times in Russia, persons using plants in their practice have been represented by two large groups: let us designate the first as sorcerers (magi, sorcerers, magicians, witches, witches, etc.), and the second as healers (healers, healers, healers, etc.) .). What are their significant differences? In the book "The Russian people, its customs, rituals, legends, superstitions and poetry" we read: "... the sorcerer is a renegade of the faith, does not wear a cross, does not go to church, the healer is a true Christian ..." [11]. This difference was reflected in the attitude of the people to both. Healers usually enjoyed recognition and were respected members of the community, sorcerers were afraid, their dwelling, usually located on the outskirts of the village, or even at a distance from it, tried to bypass. The famous Russian researcher of mythology A.F.

"And the sorcerers will all go out into the devilish  
stench, the Sorcerers - into the bottomless abyss,  
Sorcerers-soundrels - into the stinking blata; They will  
be eternal drowning,  
They will have eternal decay, They will  
have eternal suffocation "[12]

But within the limits of the studied topic, of course, we are interested in the question of the use of medicinal plants by these two groups. And here we see that the assortment, in modern terms, is very similar. A.P. While collecting material for the dissertation, Chekhov received a lot of information about folk medicine and noted, in particular, that witches on Lysaya Gora collect ferns, whiteheads, sage, plakun-grass, dope, Ivan da Maryu, thistle, plantain, wormwood and other herbs , widely used by healers [13]. True, sorcerers and witches collected and used these herbs for several other purposes, although they often engaged in healing. S.N. Ozhegov in the "Dictionary of Russian

language "defines witchcraft as" ... magical, mysterious techniques aimed at influencing the forces of nature, on people, to heal them or induce disease "[14].

At the same time, in the arsenal of healers there were many magical techniques, including the use of medicinal plants. It is no coincidence that both those and others were often called by the same name - zeleiniki. Thus, the annals mention the well-known doctor Agapit, who "was a doctor without compensation" and knew "what potion is used to treat every ailment."

Of course, the herbal medicine man is much prettier than the sorcerer. This is how A.K. Tolstoy:

"Panteley the Emperor walks through the field,  
And flowers and grass to his waist,  
And all the herbs before him part, And  
the flowers all worship him.  
And he knows their hidden powers,  
All good and all poisonous,  
And to all the good herbs, harmless, He  
answers with a bow of greetings,  
And those who are guilty grow up, So  
he threatens with a stick with a stick.  
He collects a leaf from the good, And  
he fills his bag with them And for the  
poor brotherhood  
From them, the potion makes  
healing. Sovereign Panteley!  
Have pity on us too,  
Your wonderful oil  
Pour into our wounds "[15].

Noteworthy is the name of the herbalist, shortened from Panteleimon. As you know, Saint Panteleimon is the patron saint of all doctors.

But not everyone and not always perceived the herbalists-herbalists so favorably. Figuratively speaking, many of them have walked on the edge of a knife all their lives. A harsh unflattering assessment is given to them in the well-known Sylvester's "Domostroy", in a number of state documents. At the end of the 15th century, Grand Duke Ivan III, suspecting his wife Sophia Fominichna (before marriage, Zoya Palaeologus, by the way, was the author of a voluminous work "Ointment", which repeatedly mentions medicinal plants and which researchers consider the first Russian herbalist, despite the fact that it is written in Greek) in anti-state affairs, the first thing he ordered was to drown the herbalists-healers close to it in the Moscow River. He quickly forgave his wife, but the herbalists - alas!

Representatives of the plant world, who have become objects of worship, deserve a special conversation.

If we talk about plants that were sacred to man, then, of course, one should start with the lotus, which was a sacred symbol of many peoples, several civilizations and religions. It was considered sacred by the ancients



Egyptians. According to their beliefs, all life on Earth originated on a lotus under the influence of the Sun. For the peoples of Ancient India, the lotus was also a symbol of the creation of the world. In ancient Indian myths, it is argued that Lakshmi, the wife of the creator and guardian of the world Vishnu, came out of the ocean with a lotus flower in her hand (in another version, she swam out of the ocean waters on a lotus flower). From Ancient India, the lotus as a sacred plant migrated to Buddhism, where it became the personification of the primordially of water, spiritual revelation, and wisdom. The fact that the Buddha chose him as a favorite flower testifies to him as a symbol of purity and perfection. Note that the throne on which the Buddha sits is always depicted as an opening lotus flower. Let's add to the above that in general Buddhism is more than all religions associated with the plant world. Mostly in Buddhism, trees are deified,

The lotus was also revered in Ancient Greece. The father of history, Herodotus, called the lotus sacred and miraculous. In ancient Greek myths, the lotus is referred to as the flower of the goddesses Hera and Aphrodite. Mentioned in myths and golden boats in the form of a lotus flower, one of which sailed Hercules.

At all times, the lotus was considered a sacred flower in China. There he always symbolized purity and chastity.

But amazing beauty, as in the case of the lotus, was not always the reason for the deification of plants. How beautiful the rose is! In Ancient Greece, it was a symbol of mystery, in Ancient Rome, it symbolized courage, and not everyone was allowed to adorn themselves with it (there is a case when a money changer who wore a rose was imprisoned by the Senate). We know from history how the opposing sides planted roses of different colors on their banner (the war of the Scarlet and White Roses). Rose is a symbol of ardent and passionate love among many poets, writers, composers, artists. But no matter how much this symbol means, it remains only a symbol. The same can be said about a wonderful plant - the orchid, about which M. Maeterlink enthusiastically wrote: "In these broken and strange flowers, the genius of the plant reaches its extreme limits and with an extraordinary flame melts the wall that separates the kingdoms of nature" [2]. This flower is deservedly called the aristocrat of the plant world. The Orchid family also includes the night violet (two-leaved lyubka) - a forest flower of the Central Russian plain, to which the enthusiastic lines of many Russian writers and poets are dedicated. And yet, these flowers are not called sacred.

The same can be said about the peony, which is the state flower of China, about the chrysanthemum that adorns the Japanese state symbols and coins, about the handsome lily of the valley, symbolizing belonging to medicine in the 16th-18th centuries in Europe, about the tulip covered with numerous legends, and about the lily, which, according to ancient Greek myths, has a divine origin (it allegedly arose from the milk of the goddess Hera, like the Milky Way).

And even a fern, whose flower of stunning beauty had the ability, according to legend, to endow the person who saw it with the gift of understanding the language of animals and birds, can be called the unconditional magical leader of the plant world, but not a sacred plant.

Another thing is the mistletoe, which is unsightly from the artistic side. She has been an object of worship in Europe since time immemorial.

First of all, this concerns the Druids - the priests of the ancient Celts - the largest barbarian people of Europe in the second half of the 1st millennium BC. Of particular interest to us is the fact that the druids were also healers, and the basis of their treatment was made by medicinal herbs. The druids called mistletoe

a name meaning "he who heals all." The mistletoe was collected in compliance with complex rituals (on the sixth day of the lunar month, the priest cut it off with a golden sickle and laid it on a piece of clean white cloth. Moreover, the collection of mistletoe was necessarily accompanied by a sacrifice).

The ancient Italians also worshiped mistletoe, but collected it on the first day of the lunar month. The inhabitants of the Swiss canton of Aarau considered the mistletoe a sacred plant. Residents of almost all parts of Great Britain and Sweden were in awe of the mistletoe.

Interestingly, in the non-European world, mistletoe is sacred only to the Japanese Ainu, who recognize it as a cure for almost all diseases.

It is natural that the Ainu consider the most effective mistletoe growing on willow, which is a sacred tree for them, while the Druids preferred mistletoe growing on an oak, the sacred tree of the Druids [16, 19].

In Russia, the folk names of many medicinal plants carry references to God, the Mother of God (most often), and saints. We meet God's mercy (St. John's wort), and Bogorodskaya grass, and Bogorodka, and Bogoroditsin's help, etc. [4, 9]. But are there any sacred among them?

Before continuing our research, I will cite an excerpt from a poem by the remarkable Soviet poet N.A. Zabolotsky:

"And I hear a familiar saying, How the truth  
has caused falsehood to fight, How falsehood  
has overcome, and the peasants Since then  
they have been offended by fate. Only far  
away on the ocean-sea  
On a white stone, in the middle of the  
waters, a book in gold shines, Beams  
resting against the firmament.  
That book fell out of some formidable cloud,  
all the letters in it sprouted in flowers,  
And in it is written by the hand of the mighty  
destinies The whole truth of the hidden land. " [17]

We are talking about the notorious "Pigeon Book" (by the way, the poem is called "Pigeon Book"), which some researchers attribute to ancient Slavic pagan folklore, and some even to Indo-European folklore. The original source of the book has not been found. It is believed that the first mention of it contains the "Life of Abraham of Smolensk" (XIII century). The people knew about her mainly from the "kalik passers-by". In the 18th century, "The Poem about the Pigeon Book

recorded by one of the first collectors of Russian folklore Kirsha Danilov. The book was first published in writing in 1848 by the famous literary figure P. Kireevsky. It is clear that the centuries-old existence under the conditions of the Orthodox tradition left an imprint on the content of the book, bringing it significantly closer to the religion of the Russian people.

In this book, structured in the form of questions and answers, we are interested in two positions: "What tree is there for all mother trees, what grass is for all mother grasses?"

The answer to the first question is: "Cypress is the tree for all mother trees." Interestingly, in the pagan version, the oak, the sacred tree of the ancient Slavs, was recognized as the main tree. But in a variant close to Christianity, it is the cypress that plays this role. As you know, a cross was made from cypress, on which Jesus Christ was crucified. For many centuries, cypress has been a material for making crosses, including those on the neck. It was the branches of the cypress that reliably hid the Mother of God with the baby Jesus Christ from the persecutors. In the northern regions of Russia, the role of cypress was played by its close relative, the juniper. Cypress (juniper) for the Orthodox is a symbol of the immortality of the soul, its branches line the last path of a person, it is planted in cemeteries. The Russian poet A.A. Maikov meets the "sad cypress".

The answer to the second question is: "Plakun-grass for all mother herbs." This is how it is explained in one version of the book:

"When they led Christ to be crucified, Then the  
mother of the Most Holy Theotokos cried, Dropped  
tears from clear eyes on the damp earth; Is it from  
tears from the pure  
Plakun-grass grew on the ground ... "

Pharmacognosters and herbalists know that plakun-grass is scientifically called willow loafer. According to popular belief, the main property of this herb is to remove the action of evil forces, to heal diseases sent by sorcerers. It was believed that this herb can swim against the current. Body crosses were made from its powerful rhizome. As far as the medicinal effectiveness of plakun-herb is concerned, according to some herbalists, it has an amazing property to enhance the effect of other herbs. In a number of localities in Russia, plakun-grass is an indispensable component of medicinal preparations. Moreover, it is believed that other herbs "work" only in her presence.

The centuries-old service of plants for the good of man is worthy of the most sincere respect and reverence. Unfortunately, we can say with confidence that we are clearly not using the enormous opportunities that medicinal plants offer us. And yet, the feeling of confidence that academic snobbery, arrogant neglect of the experience of generations will be overcome, and we will more than once appreciate the healing gifts of unfading nature, does not leave.

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