All of you will know cinnamon, a spice used in sweets and desserts. It is one of the oldest herbs, already mentioned in the bible, as an ingredient for ointment to be used in the Temple. Clearly, it was an expensive ingredient, fit for God.

Later in Europe, it was still expensive and thought as originating from “Arabia”. In fact, Arabs brought it to Europe and the origin was much farther in the east.

As with many expensive materials, cinnamon was used in the first place as a medicine. The medal of the apothecaries–guild of Middelburgh in Zeeland shows (in 1619), besides tobacco and sugar, two cinnamon–sticks.
Valerius Cordus mentions in his “Dispensatorium” of 1546 approximately 84 preparations with cinnamon as an ingredient. And 140 years later the Amsterdam Pharmacopoeia of 1686 has 30 preparations. And the “Formules Médicinales” of the Hotel-Dieu of Paris of 1783 gives only 11. Robert James, in his “New English Dispensatory” of 1747 has 2 pages dedicated to cinnamon: various uses both in medicine and cookery. It is classed then among the Stomachic and uterine medicines, an excellent Cordial, but, by being too often used, it has been found to bring on the same disorders.
In the 19th and 20th century cinnamon is still mentioned in all Pharmacopoeias but is used less and less frequently in preparations. In the “Commentary” on the Dutch Pharmacopoeia of 1880 it is used only as carminativum (in Pulvis and Spiritus Aromaticus), as anti-diarroicum and as an ingredient in medicines for uterine disorders. Also mentioned is the use as a corrigens for a bad taste or smell.

Nowadays cinnamon has almost completely disappeared from the Pharmacy, only to be found in the kitchen. With one exemption: the famous Laudanum
Sydenhami or Tinctura Opii Crocata, which is still prepared from Opium, Saffron, Cloves and Cinnamon.

The liquid Laudanum, which, as I said, I used daily, was prepared according to the following plain manner.

Take of Spanish Wine, one Pint; of Opium, two Ounces; of Saffron one Ounce; of the Powder of Cinnamon and Cloves, each one Dram; let them be infused together in a Bath two or three Days, till the Liquor comes to a due Consistence; strain it, and keep it for use.

From: The Whole Works of Dr Thomas Sydenham MD
Translated by John Pechey MD; London 1734

During those heydays of cinnamon in Europe of course the only part of the tree used here was the dried bark, during the drying-process transformed into brown sticks, in Latin “canella” which gave the French (and Dutch) word for it: canella/kaneel. Only this part could be transported over great distances without losing its “power”, its taste and smell.

And now over to Hermannus Nicolai Grimm. Born in 1641 on the then Danish (now Swedish) island of Gotland, he graduated as M.D. at Leyden and worked afterwards regularly for the Dutch East India Company, the V.O.C.

First a few years as a ship’s doctor, and then some time in Batavia. After that a few years in Neuremberg and back again to the V.O.C. And the first result of his stay on the island Ceylon was the publication of his “Laboratorium Chymicum” in 1677, a booklet (in Dutch!) describing a wealth of pharmaceutical preparations he made and investigated during his stay on that island.
In this tractate he sums up what ingredients he found on Ceylon and gives then a few preparations with those ingredients, starting with animal then vegetal and mineral simplicia.

And in this list the cinnamon–tree is by far the best, the “King of Trees”, in his opinion! He investigated every part of the tree, thus not only the well–known bark. The flowers, the leaves, the berries, the bark and the root, he describes 50 preparations in total, wherein all these parts of the tree are used. And he is quite enthusiastic about these preparations, declaring them often a lot better than the European equivalents.
An example: Essentia Cinamomi, is called by Grim "a real Balsamum Vitae", to be used with complaints of the head, the stomach and the uterus. It also regulates the menstruation and has great effects in deliveries and colic. It strengthens the Vital Spirits and the heart, much better than 20 different extractions of other herbs, usually applied without effect.

Or the Theriaca Ceylonica: with 18 ingredients it is not to be compared with the lengthy preparations from Europe. The snake-powder is also in it, but Grim puts 5 different cinnamon-based ingredients in it, and no opium. And he continues:

"And where are you now, you Theria–"merchants of the World? You’d better "order your Theriac from Ceylon where “they make it a hundred times better. This “is the real Theriac, 1 scruple shows as “much power as a whole pound of yours!"

Also you see that Grimm is using cinnamon externally as well, but using only preparations from other parts of the tree than the bark. In Europe cinnamon was never applied externally, but of course only the bark was known there.

For instance: the “Unguentum Nervinum”. A well-known preparation in Europe: Zwelfer mentioned it (in 1658) with a mere 23 ingredients, in the Wurttemberg Pharmacopoeia of 1741 it still has 23. But on the other hand, the London Pharmacopoeia has 20 (in 1677), the Amsterdam Apothecary of 1686 16, and the Dutch Pharmacopoeia of 1826 only 4. And in none of those preparations cinnamon was used!
Grim also prepares this Unguentum Nervinum but only with 6 ingredients, 4 of them cinnamon-derived and further elephant bones and Cornu Cervi. And
yet, he claims it will give better results in one day than the other known Unguenta will give in a week or a month!

\[
\text{Unguent. Nervinum.} \\
\text{Rec: Ol f. Fol. Cinnam. unci. s} \\
\text{Rad. Cinnam. unci. iiij.} \\
\text{Off. Elephant.} \\
\text{Curn. Cerv. an dr. iiij.} \\
\text{Ol Coel Bacc. Cinnam. unci. iiij.} \\
\text{Cere ex Bacc. Cinnam. iiij.} \\
\text{M F. Ungu.} \\
\text{Dit sa in alle Lammigheden, Kramp, of con-} \\
\text{vulsive Trecgingen, en andere Gebreken der} \\
\text{Senuwen, meerder hulp bewyzen in een dag,} \\
\text{als alle andere bekende, in een geheele Week} \\
\text{ofte Maendt.}
\]

H.N.Grim: Laboratorium Chymicum, 1677

And we will never know what the ingredients were in what was in his opinion the best preparation: Balsamus Cinamomi. Prepared from cinnamon–berries, no other fats or oils were added, it was green and butter–like and had perfect effects, both internally and externally. But he gives no recipe, for “it will be of great profit to the East–India–Company, as soon as it becomes known”. He was also thinking of his employers.

Why his enthusiasm for all these medicaments prepared with local ingredients? Possibly his own experiences in Batavia: V.O.C.–personnel had to be treated by V.O.C.–doctors and with medicines from the V.O.C.–pharmacy. And the latter provided all other V.O.C.–trading–posts in Asia with medicines, all of them imported from Holland. And as can be imagined, the quality of those medicines, after a voyage on sea for a few months, had deteriorated. And what also might have influenced him: the vast amount of very different products obtained from one tree. The leaves yield an oil,
smelling of cloves, the root yields a sort of camphor and the berries yield an oil, resembling juniper-oil and also a green fatty substance used in unguents. I think there is no plant mentioned in the European Materia Medica which yields so many different products.

In short: Grim wanted to treat patients with medicines made with local ingredients, freshly prepared and therefore more effective in his opinion. I guess he experienced often that the European medicines did not have enough effect and ascribed that to this deterioration.

But unfortunately for him, it was a fairy-tale. Although he did write a “Pharmacopoeia Indica” later, in Latin, in 1684, his advises were not followed by an augmented use of his cinnamon-tree, not in Europe, and in the “Bataviasche Apotheek”, an official Pharmacopeia for Batavia (1746) no influence of his ideas is perceptible either.
BATAVIASCHE
APOTHEEK

Waar in begrepen zijn zodanige
enkelde en gecomponeerde geneesmiddelen als 'er in de Hospitaals en Stads
Apotheek zullen bewaart worden.

BATAVIA,
Gedrukt in 't Casteel by 's E. Comp't Drucker
C. J. Weichberger, 1746.
Poor Grimm…..Cinnamon and fairies!

Cinnamon tree

oilpainting by Scott Cumming