

**ENGLISH PLANT NAMES  
FROM THE TENTH TO THE  
FIFTEENTH CENTURY**

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English Plant Names from the Tenth to the Fifteenth Century by John Earle

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*EARLE*

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ENGLISH  
PLANT NAMES

FROM THE  
TENTH TO THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

BY

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Oxford

AT THE CLARENDON PRESS

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## PREFACE

OF the manifold attractions in the Saxon Vocabularies, nothing has charmed me more than the native Plant-names, which have there been preserved in the most primitive form extant. For many winters these lists were to me as a kind of winter-garden, wherein I could botanize at the fireside and look at familiar plants through the eyes of remote ancestors. Wishing to impart this pure and exquisite pleasure to some friends of mine and friends of Saxon studies, I printed the following lists from the editions in the readiest manner without any idea of making a book. I made no revision of the texts, excepting a manuscript in the library of St. John's College, Oxford, which, through the kindness of the President, I collated with No. V. After the lists were thus hastily printed, I was encouraged to add indices and an introduction. The indices will facilitate such a comparison of the lists as will often enable readers to correct scribal errors for themselves. The research requisite for the Introduction has been more than would be



believed; and I was almost wearied, when Professor Price told me of the interesting manuscript at Pembroke College, the *Breviarium Bartolomæi*, by which my flagging interest was revived. But this fourteenth-century manuscript procured me what was still more valuable than itself, namely, the kind aid of J. L. G. Mowat, Esq., Fellow of Pembroke College, whose great knowledge of Plant-names enabled him to give me substantial help and many an ingenious suggestion. The occasional acknowledgments in the Notes are but an imperfect record of my debt to Mr. Mowat.

The fascination of Plant-names has its foundation in two instincts, love of Nature and curiosity about Language. Plant-names are often of the highest antiquity, and more or less common to the whole stream of related nations. Could we penetrate to the original suggestive idea that called forth the name, it would bring valuable information about the first openings of the human mind towards Nature; and the merest dream of such a discovery invests with a strange charm the words that could tell, if we could understand, so much of the forgotten infancy of the human race.

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