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Etymology of the botanical name “shepherd’s purse” in English and Latin

Etymology is known to play the important role in comprehension of history of the origin of a word, its functions in linguistics. It is worth focusing on the origin of the Latin botanical name of a plant *Capsella bursa pastoris*. This plant is known by the English name *shepherd’s purse* (literal translation from Latin).

The choice of research is determined by topicality of etymological studies. In addition, the plant *Capsella bursa pastoris \ shepherd’s purse* is widely used in medicine for heart and blood circulatory diseases or abnormal conditions (low blood pressure, nervous heart dysfunctions, headache, blood in the urine etc.). A number of scientists has analized *Capsella bursa pastoris* in linguistics (K. Blynov, N. Borysova) and medicine (H. R. Roberts, J. Warren and J. Provan), which emphasizes the fact of importance of the present research.

The plant got its name due to the form of fruits which resemble with a bag, wallet or purse. In a lot of scientific works it has mentioned that *Capsella* comes from *capsa* (bag). It is not quite correct if one use Latin dictionary. In the dictionary one can see that *Capsella* is a diminutive for *capsula* which refers to *capsa*. In ancient Rome words *capsella* and *capsula* were used for denoting a small box, a cover and, later, a wallet. *Capsella* meant a small box in a size of a locket. *Capsula* had the meaning a nice cover, box. In Rome there was a famous set phrase: *homo de capsula* (dandy, fashion-monger). The word capsa was used for bigger boxes than lockets or covers. Capsae (Latin Pl for capsa) were not huge. They denoted boxes for keeping things of middle size, for example handwritten books or fruits.

Nowadays the name Capsella remains according to historical tradition. It can not refer to the form of fruits due to size because capsella is a very small box like a locket. So far the second part of a name remains: bursa. The word bursa appeared in medieval Latin, then it has become widespread one in the XIXth century. Bursa means a bag or a wallet. It bore resemblance with a bag of a shepherd with all his things at work: shepherd’s plaid, horn, knife, lunch, some medicines for first aid. Therefore fruits of shepherd’s purse are similar to form of bursa, not capsella.

All the above mentioned leads to the conclusion that the linguistic view of English actualizes visual specificity of the name of the plant: resemblance of shepherd’s purse and the flower. As for Latin, such function is intrinsic for Latin *bursa*.

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