Bernardino Ramazzini

WORKS

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VALETUDINE
TUENDA
COMMENTATIO
BERNARDINI RAMAZZINI
In Patavino Gymnasio Practicae Medicinae
Professoris Primarii
SERENISSIMO MUTINÆ PRINCIPI
FRANCISCO ESTENSI
DICATA.

PATAVII, M. DCCX.
Ex Typographia Jo: Baptists Conzatti.
Superiorum Permissu, ac Privilegio.

1. Frontispiece of the first edition of De Principum, Padua 1710
The Health of Princes

(De principum valetudine tuenda commentatio, 1710)
De Principum Valetudine Tueda Commentatio

Bernardini Ramazzini

In Patavino Gymnasio Practicae Medicinae Professoris Primarii

Serenissimo Mutinæ Principi

Francisco Estensi Dicata.

Patavii, MDCCXVII.

Ex Typographia Jo. Baptistae Conzatti,
Superiorum Permissu.
Most Serene Highness

Having allowed myself to personally offer your Serene Highness my most humble greetings when I found myself in Modena two years ago, and at the same time having been able to admire the generous spirit with which You entirely live up to your father Francesco I, both in war and peace, I was taken by the desire, to pay honour to Your Name with some literary gift. And as you will not happily tolerate nothing being ready and, given that my health, which has stayed firmly at my side like an inseparable companion, was not flourishing, I did not want to begin too hastily on something that I should not think worthy of You. That desire remained impressed on my mind and I realized that I was vexed by a considerable worry, given that I did not have to hand a topic as I wanted, that would genuinely contain as much in the way of new ideas as of usefulness and that, most of all, would be becoming to princes born for the regency of the people as well as to others.

Finally, Fortune came to my aid and, as I was going through my books, as usual, the work of Marsilio Ficino Come salvaguardare la salute dei letterati (How to Safeguard the Health of the Literati) came to hand. It thus seemed to me that the subject I was seeking took form right there, prompting me to write an essay, Come difendere la salute dei Principi (How to Protect the Health of Princes). Certainly, on careful consideration, the health of no type of man is more unstable than that of a prince, and especially that of one in whose hands lies total power. This is certainly due to various factors, but mainly because of a life led with little moderation; for it is not so easy, as it is for common men, for those nourished amongst
delights and lavish tables to maintain that moderation and tenor of life that promises good health and longevity. There is no one who is unaware of the numerous servants who labour at fishing, hunting and wild fowling, and the great number of cooks who work day and night to prepare food for the table, sought out from all corners, seasoning it with mixtures not easily identified, such that these tables seem spread with regal splendour. So who, in the midst of such a great variety of banquets, in such great magnificence and among so many enticements to the unsated appetite, and above all when some great prince must be received, as often happens in the Este Palace, which is the most hospitable of all; who, I repeat, is able to be such a strict upholder of moderation as to behave with restraint and not savour something from each individual dish?

Nevertheless, the diversity of foods ingested, even in small quantities, is as much a factor that generates obstructions as is satiation with a simple food; indeed, it is not possible that not only different kinds of food, but opposites, should blend into a single whole and not cause great upheavals in the stomach. This is why nothing is more common than to see princes, even if previously in good physical condition, either lying ill or dying too young because of an excessively luxurious lifestyle not conducted as is proper. We can thus understand that certain particular illnesses have chosen to take up residence in palaces, such as colic, stones and especially gout, for which it is agreeable to relax in gilt rooms and in beds covered with purple.

You, Most Serene Prince, certainly have a great example of Temperance and All the Virtues before you in your Most Serene Father, whose life consists of a careful choice of habits, with which to compare yourself as in a mirror. Nevertheless, you will receive from this work of mine some precepts to regulate your health with moderation, living safely. It is not my will, however, to persuade you to follow excessively binding rules, as Ludovico Cornaro the Venetian nobleman did in his time; and, in this not yet mature age, you do not have to distress the condition of such an elegant and dignified body nature has given you by living in an excessively sober manner; nor, furthermore, on becoming more adult and born for the public good, may you always be permitted to choose the moments to ingest food: it is enough that you show proper measure, according to that famous saying of the comedian “nothing too
much, nothing too little”. So just as it is in your interest to enjoy impeccably good health, given that “life does not consist in simply living, but in being well”, and to outrun all the stages of our condition as mortals, so is it of great interest to the subjects to have a healthy, robust prince through to extreme old age, so that he may leave a successor destined to live even longer. So accept this gift of mine, whatsoever it may be, that I presume to present in homage to Your Highness, with the clemency that is typical of the Este family and is a family tradition, and show yourself to be the new master that all hope for; thus, on my example, the works of the men of letters who are inspired by Your Name, will hasten to your knee. So come along, enter into the ranks of those princes who think it distinguished and glorious to follow with favour the scholars of the Sciences and the fine Arts, and immediately get used to being invoked with petitions.

TO YOUR MOST SERENE HIGHERNESS

Padua, 1 September 1710

Your most humble, always indebted and devoted
Servant and Worshipper
Bernardino Ramazzini
I am able to imagine the reception this work of mine will be given by doctors, partly considering the fact that my publisher, who has always printed books at his own expense, categorically refused to do the same with this because, he says, the title is not such as to urge doctors to buy it. They much prefer books illustrating the cures for diseases to those dealing with the safeguarding of health; furthermore, the fact that very few doctors hope to be called to the court of their prince is also a factor. Although appreciating my publisher's reasoning, I decided to go ahead with my project, printing this work in the thought that I was doing something, useful even if for few readers.

Horace gave me reassurance in my decision: “Don’t concern yourself with having a crowd of admirers, but be content with few readers”.

In writing I set myself a single aim, that of doing some service, certainly not to receive praise. I have often had compassion for the condition of princes whenever they fall ill with some sickness. They enter into a condition of greater danger than that of other people struck by the same disease, because, even if they wanted to, they could not escape the cures of a multitude of doctors. If a prince is seriously ill, rather than trusting in a single doctor, the court and the court physician, each on its own account and for different reasons, call on the most famous, most experienced doctors, not only in the city but also from other countries. In short, writing on subjects that concern them, I believed I was doing something neither prosaic nor irreverent, but of certain use to princes, having recourse to that branch of medicine called preventive precisely to limit the need to have recourse to that other branch that concerns
itself with curing the diseases when these have already appeared. In the meantime, you, who do not scorn to read me, put what you will find into practice. Be well.