his thick skin. He died, however, of dropsy afterwards”. In this case there is no doubt the itchiness was an abscess, the fruit of a sick root in the viscera. As Vallès comments, the man made such excessive use of the thermal baths that he suffered from innate heat, thus stopping the secretion of the noxious humours that were being brought to the skin to be expelled. Otherwise, more likely is Martiano's interpretation that the waters were sulphurous and therefore, as he himself said, “Since the skin was thickened by the bath, the humours caused itching, and returned towards the liver, thus causing scirrhous”, which is why he then suffered from dropsy. It would have sufficed – and it is to this that he should have paid more attention – to take care of what was hiding within and not what had appeared on the skin.

XXXI. To link what has been said so far to our initial argument, this epidemic of scabies should certainly be placed in the category of abscesses as it is a result of the previous season with its excessive rainfall, as well as the poor diet caused by the increased cost of food. Galen says that in his days, when the people under the Roman Empire were tormented by famine and all crops were taken to the city, the farmers, who were left only ὀσπρια καὶ χέδροπα and even that in tiny quantities, were forced to eat the shoots of bushes and bulbs and were therefore afflicted by various skin ailments until the end of spring. Some of them suffered from erysipelas, herpes, scabies, impetigo or leprosy. In this outbreak of scabies, the use of topics was therefore not sufficient and those who did so and tried to eliminate the scabies with anti-psoriatics, either because they wanted to or were following someone's advice, did so at their own risk. I observed something remarkable in the city on this occasion. I know of many people who were so fed up with this terrible illness that they tried to eliminate it by using ointments during spring as well, but once the scabies had disappeared, they went down with fever and their urine was dark and cloudy. When the scabies then reappeared owing to the use of remedies that pushed the humours towards the skin, their urine became healthy. When the scabies then either disappeared or appeared once more, the same change was to be observed in their urine. Although I found this urine suspicious to say the least, along with a slight fever that seemed malignant, I remained optimistic about the reappearance of the scabies, and in all cases the patients survived the illness. A
possible reason their urine was cloudy once scabies returned might be because the acid that had abounded in the skin and caused the scabies could no longer transpire because of the fomentations and was therefore reabsorbed by the veins and mixed with the blood alkali, thus making the blood serum dark, in the same way that ink is produced when one adds a gall to a clear vitriol solution. However, I used the remedy proposed by Zacuto Lusitano and recommended by Ettmüller to successfully regenerate scabies more than once, simply by making the patient lie on the sheets of another person who had scabies. The most effective remedies, if not to eliminate scabies but at least alleviate it until summer, were those prepared with vipers. If it is therefore necessary to resort to internal remedies to eliminate scabies down to its very roots, the most effective way is the use of diaphoretics, just like in syphilis. These two diseases are so similar that they both respond to almost identical treatment. Thus, to eliminate scabies Van Heurne first purged the noxious humours and then recommended a brew made of Indian wood and salty water. He believes that this makes its easier for the impurities to be sweated out of the body.

XXXII. In the case of scabies and other cutaneous illnesses, some people shy away from viper remedies in horror, fearing the excessive heat and that the burn will be imprinted on the liver and the entire blood mass. I, however, shrink from the excessive use of coolants and I know of not one soul who, once they had swallowed cups of teas or after the prolonged use of serum and chicory preparations, was freed of scabies, no matter how flaky and dry it became. I also know that those suffering from scabies complain constantly of the excessive heat that burns them both internally and externally, but no heed should be paid to them. Even young boys, who were afflicted by chilblains because of the bitter cold, complained bitterly about the excessive heat in their feet, and rightly so since there was some kind of inflammation. Perhaps this was why they needed coolants on the chilblains. It is then up to the right-minded doctor to courageously attack the cause of the disease and correct the corrupt mixture of the blood, in particular using remedies that alleviate its acidity, for example those prepared with vipers or with an abundance of volatile salt. As far as the well-balanced combination of vipers is concerned (see Giovanni Battista Spontone’s Con-Echidnologia for more on the subject), experience
has shown that nothing is more effective than viper preparations to cure scabies and leprosy (if this is actually admissible rather than nourishing this inquiline enemy). We should therefore not worry too much that the viscera become warmer than normal, if it means that the germs of such a terrible illness are eliminated. However, the pleasure of scourging this plague, which provides such a wealth of observations on the subject, would never have ceased if this calamity had not been followed by another.

XXXIII. Spring was followed by a scorching summer, the like of which had never been seen before, especially in the dog days, when the excessive heat made the air incandescent and the temperatures climbed higher than ever before. There was repeated rainfall during this scorching heat but there were still no signs of it abating and it lasted throughout nearly the whole month of September. The Etesian winds did not blow at all this summer so there was absolutely no relief from this continuous heat. As a result, many animals, dogs in particular, suffered from rabies. Lightning struck more often than ever before and a farmer was struck; all his garments except his leather belts were burnt. He was stunned for days but then recovered without any treatment, and is still alive today. During this period an army of fevers suddenly attacked and raged throughout the population; at times, entire families were afflicted by fevers. Those who suffered most were those living in the parts of the towns where the roads are wider and the rooftops lower. All the soldiers in the fortress had to take to their beds with fever and the country militia had to be called to keep order. In the Jewish ghetto, where the streets are narrow, the houses high and the windows dark, hardly anybody fell ill, while in the previous years they had been the first to suffer from the summer illnesses. Although during the day they would drip with sweat while toiling under the sun, the country-folk, who are used to sleeping outdoors on their wagons, were more immune. Those who suffered most were the people living in towns, nearly all of whom had a small home and lived in cramped quarters. However, the illness was healthy, as these fevers were of the intermittent tertian kind and on the seventh day at the latest, after blood-letting had been carried out once or twice, sweating brought them to an end. This was the most profitable and glorious year for doctors as all their patients recovered unharmed. Nevertheless, their glory was diminished slightly
in the *thanasistatos* autumn that followed (extremely lethal) when the fevers lasted longer and sometimes became malignant. The wiser doctors recommended blood-letting and the use of cold water, while those who recommended other remedies because they wanted to appear to know better or to do perfume sellers a favour, recommended warmer cordials and often put their patients' lives at risk, as if they were “throwing oil on fire”. Lemon juice, the spirit of vitriol, of sulphur and the like proved excellent cordials, so it was possible to defeat this army of fevers using different strategies and weapons. Last year the enemy had to be provoked to fight, but this time it sufficed to withhold its attacks for a while and then strike back with sharp arrows in the form of acids. The blood that was let was foamy and yellowish, just like urine when it is saturated with bile. Many of those with fever, children especially, broke out in pustules that were efflorescences like prodromes of variola. Very few died of variola during the summer, but the numbers increased in autumn and early winter and those whose blood had been let were among them. Many of the tertian fevers then became quartan, and whereas the use of Peruvian bark proved ineffective in quartan and prolonged fevers last year, this year it was much more effective. Even those who suffered relapses were subjected to milder fevers, and before the onset of winter they had recovered completely. As soon as the heat began to abate, which was around the equinox, this febrile tempest seemed to subside until tranquillity was gradually restored, so that during the last two months of the year the doctors were nearly always on leave.

XXXIV. I believe the partial cause of this febrile outbreak is due to the excessive heat of the air, which thus favoured the excessive acidity of the bile so that it fermented with the pancreatic juice more than it should have, and this led to the febrile effervescence of the blood mass. It is not at all surprising that the mixture of the blood and all the fluids changed so rapidly. This is due to the strength of heat, which Van Helmont calls *relollea*. Every day we observe how many things that are by nature sweet become bitter with heat while others become sweeter. As Galen says, “When heated, milk acquires the sweetness that honey loses”. Once the summer has passed, wine, which preserves its natural sweetness throughout the winter and spring, becomes bitter unless it is kept in wine-cellar or cool places. Thus, both the heat and cold, wheth-
er they are immediate causes or occasional, stimulant causes, can provoke sudden changes in our bodies and upset the combination of the humours much quicker than one would expect. Lucian described the curious occurrence of a “tragic” fever (an appropriate name), which afflicted the inhabitants of Abdera in an instant. At the height of summer when it was extremely hot, the tragedian Archelaos put on a performance of Euripides’ “Andromeda” for the inhabitants of Abdera – most of them left the theatre with a fever, which became extremely violent in most cases and abated after one week of profuse sweating and nose-bleeds while they all seemed to be suffering from a strange mental affliction. According to the writer, “It seemed they all wanted to perform the tragedy, singing in iambic verses and in particular they were telling Euripides’ Andromeda in canticles, and during that tragic week the city was full of pale, emaciated people”. The same happened in our region. The excessive heat resulted in the townsfolk, who were closed in the narrow confines of their tiny homes, suffering from terrible fevers with mental upset, but which disappeared on the seventh day once sweating had been induced by generous blood-letting. This is why in patients who lived along the city walls or where the streets were wider, for example in the area called Herculea additio (great urban work carried out in Ferrara in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth), it was easier to make the fevers abate; while in the areas of the city where the streets were narrower and more winding, the inhabitants were afflicted less by fevers. However, one should not be led to believe that the city founders deliberately wanted the streets to be so narrow and winding, as they have been since ancient times in this city of Modena, paying more attention to good health than beauty. After having Rome burnt down, Nero wanted to reconstruct the city and make it even more magnificent, so his measurements for the streets and wider areas conformed to the grandeur of the empire, but by doing so, made it less healthy. According to Tacitus, it was clear that, “The ancient form was healthier since the narrowness of the streets and the height of the houses did not let the heat of the sun enter”. This is why the richer citizens and Jews who lived in spacious rooms with high ceilings suffered less from this febrile outbreak. Living and sleeping in spacious, airy rooms to recover the strength one has lost in the heat of the day is certainly of great importance in keeping away the summer illnesses. “Sleep well-cov-
ered in cold rooms" recommends Hippocrates, a saying I quoted in an earlier dissertation. Although even in winter one should sleep where the air is cooler because it is good for respiration, as long as the body is well-covered so that sleep is not disturbed by the cold biting one’s skin, this is even more important in the summer.

XXXV. Although the excessive heat in the air caused this epidemic of fevers, it also opened the way for the febrile material to disappear with the sweat through the skin pores. This had the advantage that once scabies was totally eliminated, the people once again looked healthier and were more vigorous. This terrible wave of illnesses would have stopped completely if the pustules had not stormed even more furiously when the heat was raging, afflicting not only the young, but also the elderly and pregnant women in particular, all of whom suffered from this disease. I shall say no more about the nature and causes of pustules, since so much has already been written by countless learned men. I shall limit myself to pointing out that those who suffered less in this variolar constitution, which peaked at the end of autumn, were those whose blood had not been let and who had been given no remedies whatsoever, placing their cure in the hands of nature alone. It is not surprising that blood-letting proved harmful. Indeed, according to Hippocrates “blood is smallest in production in autumn”, and due to the summer that has just exhausted the bodies, this is certainly what happened to us this year, since a person’s strength, already weakened by the previous summer heat, seems to yield immediately when blood is let and becomes less able to push the noxious humour towards the skin.

XXXVI. Whereas the use of cinchona was harmful in last year’s constitution, this year’s cycle was completely different and it proved more beneficial. This autumn one can see many sufferers of quartan fever wandering around the city, but all of those who resorted to this remedy recovered completely. Those who suffered a relapse recovered a little later. I would therefore like to recommend a prudent measure, but one that still needs to be confirmed by further observations: the use of cinchona is safer when the humours need to be slowed down rather than stimulated. Last year, owing to the cold, damp weather, no matter how dense and slow-flowing it was, the humoural mass needed to be stimulated and made to move. This summer, however, it tended more to spasms and was unable to
remain still and therefore needed to be restrained. This is why Peruvian bark was so suitable for stopping the force of the humours. For the same reason, the use of water which proved so harmful last year was of great benefit this year, as were all the acids, which proved better than the most famous cordials, because they overcame the strength of the alkaline parts. Indeed, it has been said that “alkalis are corrected with acids, and acids with alkalis”.

I have presented this scarce information on the constitution this year and despite the raging battles, I still felt it necessary to do so while the German troops are wintering here after having fought the French in the Piedmont region this summer. Furthermore, in view of the shortage of food, I fear that the coming year will bring another harvest of epidemic illnesses with it, a prophecy I find abhorrent.
Constitutions of the years 1692, 1693 and 1694 in the city of Modena and its territory

I. Returning to my original work, which was interrupted for various reasons but the main one being poor health, I shall briefly describe the diseases that were widely diffused in these three years in our area. I shall also include some other less common illnesses, which I believe worthy of note in the hope the wiser doctors will forgive me if their description is less detailed than it should be, as it is done with sincerity (particularly important in historical narration), in accordance with the wishes of God. I have decided not to treat the constitutions of these three years separately as I did for the two before, but rather to describe them together so that there is no need to repeat the same things, “repeating the same mistakes, much to the amusement of others”, since just one so-called “morbid” tragedy raged throughout these three years, and did not rear its head until the climate, which made all the seasons atypical, brought new diseases onto the scene.

II. Let us start with the constitution of the year 1692. The winter was relatively as expected with nothing unusual for our climate – first the northerly winds blew strongly for several days without bringing any snow so people began to fear the sown fields would suffer from the frost. However, once the winds had dropped, a little snow fell and the winter continued with the temperature and conditions recorded by Hippocrates, that is, it was neither too temperate nor too cold. The usual winter illnesses were then observed, for example, coughs, pleuritis, erysipelas, and apoplexy, in particular in those who had been tortured earlier by some serious illness. Nevertheless, most people recovered, with the exception of only a few of the more elderly, who were already approaching their deathbeds. During the winter there was nothing epidemic-like to be observed.
III. The spring weather also brought nothing unusual with it. Indeed, rainfall was modest and discontinuous, as if "answering the farmers' prayers", and the summer that followed was not as excessively hot as the previous year, nor was it too dry as there was repeated rainfall and the Etesian winds began to blow precisely at the right time. As a result, while not really fruitful, the harvest was sufficient to meet the public need. The same can be said of autumn, which passed as expected, ending the first part of winter with weather that was not too harsh. As regards the natural characteristics on the whole, the entire year was therefore relatively fine and undisturbed.

IV. However, the following year was anything but moderate and it proved to be completely irregular and unusual. During the whole winter the skies were clear and the cold not too harsh; there was no rain or snow and not just in the valley where Modena lies, but even on the highest peaks of the Apennines, which are usually white during the spring as well, showing their white peaks towards the Adriatic and Tyrrhenian Seas. The Gabello and Scultenna Rivers did not freeze over as in the past years, and this helped greatly to reduce the cost of food, since the grain merchants were able to transport abundant supplies from the near-lying regions up the rivers to feed our people and the German soldiers who are once again wintering with us. The winter therefore seemed more like spring, and when the latter arrived, with it came the winter, thus inverting the original sequence. Indeed, from the spring equinox until almost up to the solstice, the cold hardly ceased, with strong northerly winds and such heavy continuous rainfall that here and there the rivers flooded the fields after bursting their banks.

V. Everyone was now foreseeing a gloomy, unhealthy year, both because of the violent rainfalls, the breeding ground of disease, and because of the appearance of blight on the mulberry leaves, the prodromes of sterility, as the entire regions to the north and south of the River Po experienced in past years. In the same way, the summer then seemed more like spring until the dog days and, in our regions at least, it was strange to hear the nightingales singing instead of the cicadas. In addition, this mild weather, which is unusual for us in summer, was accompanied by incessant downpours. As a result, the ground was very humid and the temperatures relatively mild, so that all the crops grew to such heights and so well that any fears of an unfruitful year were dispelled. However,
everybody’s hopes were immediately dashed with the sudden appearance of blight. The cereals, beans and all kinds of legumes were immediately burnt as if they had been scorched by the sun. Both the townsfolk and country-folk were afflicted by this unexpected scourge and everybody was expecting a terrible shortage of crops, since the unfruitfulness of the past years had emptied both the public and private granaries and no help could be expected from the areas around Mantua or Ferrara because regions to the north and south of the River Po had also been affected by blight.

VI. However, this scourge not only destroyed the cereals, but also any fruit that the autumn usually brought with it. Indeed, unripe fruit could be seen scattered on the ground and in the midst of summer these very plants had even been deprived of their foliage. For the same reason, despite the initial high hopes, the grape harvest was expected to be extremely scarce. An air of gloom hung over everyone while the farmers were left with nothing but the sterile stems and stalks, and everyone’s blood froze at the thought of being without the gifts of Ceres and Dionysus. The main cause of this calamity was the cold, rainy weather. Indeed, whenever the summer is dry and scorching in these regions, there is no fear that the harvest will be scarce since Virgil’s saying seems to apply like an oracle around here: “Times of abundant threshing come with excessive heat”.

VII. The autumn then took over from the summer with its extreme heat and persistent dryness, thus eliminating the humidity of the earth after such heavy rainfalls. The heat did not abate until the beginning of winter, and even the latter did not follow its usual pattern but was fine and mild, and this is how the year ended. None of the seasons in 1693 therefore followed their usual pattern, but replaced one another and did not come when expected.

VIII. While the first part of winter was relatively mild, as I said before, the second part which saw in the New Year 1694 was harsh and bitter. Indeed, throughout the whole of January the northerly winds blew while the skies were clear, so the ground seemed as scabrous and dusty as in summer, which is highly unusual around here. The whole of winter then passed without even a drop of rain, but with the spring equinox the skies answered the common prayers and opened, with rainfalls that continued until the beginning of April. This was accompanied by such excessive heat that on April 5th, my thermometer went up to 70 degrees, which it does
not usually do even in the month of June. The rest of the spring and the entire summer continued with a total lack of rain and excessive heat. The autumn continued in the same way. However, although we can certainly say this year was drier and more scabrous than any other, it was not so unkind to the farmers as it produced a respectable harvest of cereals and wine.

IX. Someone is sure to say that I have described the weather in these three years in more detail than necessary since I have not touched upon a single argument in the seasons of any year that is pertinent to practical medicine. However, there is a reason for this as can be seen in the above as the conditions in these three constitutions were so different and uncontradictory. However, as the same epidemic broke out in this period, it is therefore evident that those who believe that the qualities of the air, i.e. the heat, the cold, etc. are sufficient explanation of the causes and nature of epidemic illnesses are misled, in the same way that widespread epidemic diseases are foreboded by past constitutions.

X. Hippocrates wrote about this. He says that if the winter is dry with northerly winds, and if the spring is rainy and mild, “the summer will necessarily bring with it numerous fevers and ophthalmias”. In the same way, after a mild and rainy winter, or a dry spring with northerly winds, women suffer from miscarriages while men suffer from intestinal ailments and dry ophthalmia. Although a devoted follower of the Hippocratic doctrine, so much so that he is said to have even used Hippocrates’ spurious books, Galen did not hesitate to say in his comment on the aforementioned aphorism that Hippocrates avails himself more of the rational method than observation and experience. In total disagreement with Galen’s interpretation, the learned Mercurial says that one must not believe such a learned man as Hippocrates ever said such a thing as he would never have said with such audacity that those illnesses “necessarily” appear if the climatic conditions are such, unless his reasoning and countless experience had taught him so. In his recent comments on Hippocrates’ Aphorisms, the famous Luca Tozzi says that what Hippocrates said was based on observation and repeated experiments rather than on fictitious evidence, without any reason to believe that this is what would have happened. Indeed, he admitted very frankly that he had observed that there were no acute diseases after a dry winter and rainy spring.
XI. It is a well-known fact just how much discussion the phrase “if the winter is dry and constantly chilled by the north wind, the spring rainy, and heated by the south winds...” caused amongst professors of medicine regarding the correct explanation of the twelfth aphorism, (third paragraph) with each scholar offering his own interpretation. Indeed, according to Manardus the word eudios should be eliminated as if it had been added by mistake, as he could not understand how that lexis, eudios, which he believes indicates serenity, agreed with the other words that describe a rainy, windy winter. Leoniceno, on the other hand, says that the word is to be found in all ancient codices and interprets it as quietness and mildness. This word caused such disagreement amongst those illustrious men that, to use Brasavola’s words in his comment on the aforementioned aphorism, although they are “held in such reverence for other reasons by many, seeing them dispute over something of such insignificance made one laugh when they went from reason to insult”.

XII. Everyone is free to have his own opinion and believe these diseases are the result of deviations in the natural course of the seasons. Ever since I have been studying the nature of epidemic diseases, however, I have observed that experience does not always correspond to the things that have been claimed with such emphasis and passion. Furthermore, something that saddens me is that I must admit having been a guest in this region for years. Indeed, while I understand that one can go ahead with no precise destination, I do not understand which path one should be following, without straying too far from what is just. If we look a little more closely, each brings with it some kind of disease that might be an epidemic, but is not considered such as it is in a less serious form, although this does nothing to diminish its nature as an epidemic. What I do find surprising, however, is that when there is an outbreak of some kind of epidemic, most doctors immediately resort to a wealth of generic methods based on some similarity the illness might have with one of another kind, without studying the nature of the illness or which method is best suited to curing it, and thus believe they have done their duty by offering an indistinct mass of remedies and frequent house calls. With its wish to be deceived, the world recommends such inopportune haste rather than prudent reflection and, as Sidonius says, such great talent and eulogies
unite those who “With little skill and rather too much zeal, kill a great number of patients with their haste”.

XIII. The epidemic that infested both towns and countryside during these three years with their greatly different constitutions was a purple fever or petechial fever as it was called. After having caused great devastation, it seemed it was about to retreat, but then attacked once more with even greater vehemence and violence. This fever first appeared around the spring equinox of the year 1692; at first there were just isolated outbreaks, but throughout the entire spring and part of the summer until the dog days, it then showed the true cruelty that had been lurking behind its mask of petechial fever. By the onset of summer this fever had ousted the purple fever and it did not return until the summer heat began to abate with the rise of Arcturus. This was also the case in the following years, though it changed its guise, but not its habits or nature. Indeed, the fevers that appeared without petechia at the height of the heat were all malignant, just like those that clearly showed the signs that appeared after death.

XIV. The fact that this fever was at its most aggressive after the full moon, and even more so with the new moon, then gradually abate as the moon reappeared was very interesting. This was also observed by other professors, which proved greatly beneficial in the prognosis and cure of these fevers. The question of whether the moon has a particular influence on epidemic diseases as if they were reacting to its changes and various phases is of considerable interest.

XV. The events on 21 January 1693 were very interesting. During the night there was a lunar eclipse and nearly all the ill died at almost the same time, which was when the moon was totally invisible. What is more, they died a sudden death so that the following day, everyone was overcome by fear when they heard the bells tolling as is the custom. I studied this unusual event and was surprised to find that Hippocrates made absolutely no mention in his works of solar and lunar eclipses. This is despite the fact that in his book On Air; Water and Places, Hippocrates, such a diligent observer of things and celestial ones in particular, said that both solstices were extremely dangerous, but the summer one in particular. He said the same of both equinoxes, and declared, almost as if it were an edict, that on such occasions medicines should not be administered, no
treatments given, and no operations undertaken. In his works he also said more than once that the rising and setting of the planets such as the Canis, the Pleiads and Arcturus should be observed, and mentions a comet he observed, which was followed by an earthquake. Indeed, nearly all practising doctors pay no more heed to the solar or lunar eclipses than they do to the normal opposition or conjunction of these same planets. As far as I know, they only person to describe a case of interest was Guillaume de Baillou in the first book of the Epidemics. He describes how several doctors were gathered in Paris to assist an illustrious lady who was ill. There was an eclipse of the sun while they were there, and they all went to the highest floor in the house so they could see the disappearance of the sun in a vase full of water, as was the custom. They were immediately summoned to the patient's deathbed as she seemed to be on the point of death during the entire eclipse of the sun. However, once the sun had fully emerged once more, her condition was no longer critical.

XVI. I myself observed a considerable change in the air during a solar eclipse on 27 June 1694, as I noted in my Barometrical Ephemerides, which I published the very same year. It was during a solar eclipse that the mercury in my barometer dropped two lines, so that in just one instant the air became heavier, thus showing the changes in the microcosm. Therefore, if Hippocrates believes one should pay attention to the equinox and solstice and avoid any serious interventions on patients, it is just as important that clinical doctors should focus not only their eyes, but also their minds, on the eclipse of the sun and moon. However, I do not want people to think that I believe the things we do should be guided by the various positions and configurations of the stars. Indeed, when the rage of a disease rears its head, one should pay more heed to the patient's urine than to the stars, as Manardus himself also said, and appropriate remedies should be recommended despite the astrological cycle, since, as Hippocrates says, "any deferral endangers life". However, in epidemic diseases that are frequently caused by celestial things, and where no treatment with a straightforward and safe method is known, it is not at all inappropriate to take such things into consideration. According to Hippocrates, as far as the human skin is concerned, "Nothing should be feared, nothing should be neglected".

XVII. Let us return to our main subject. The symptoms that ac-
accompanied this malignant fever before the petechia appeared were back-ache, headaches, deafness, dry faeces, a sense of torpor, breathlessness and general weakness of the whole body. However, aching in the back and the lumbar region were sure signs of petechial fever. Before the fevers raged openly, at the beginning of this malignant constitution, women, who pay closer attention to the symptoms of the illnesses than doctors themselves, would announce which kind of fever was approaching and would tell the doctors to be careful and not carry out excessive blood-letting. As the doctors would frequently ignore these forecasts, when the spots then appeared they had no choice but to accept the blame the women threw at them and their profession. However, if the faeces were dry and their cheeks were flushed, they would shout that the enemy had been routed, and they no longer had any doubt regarding the nature of the fever once spots could be seen in the throat. There is no doubt that during this extremely tenacious constitution of malignant fevers that raged for three years, the doctors had to fight just as much with the women as with the fevers so that, I am not ashamed to say, it was necessary (as I shall explain further on) to heed their advice and warnings, not so much to curb their impertinence, but because what they were saying was the result of their experience.

XVIII. Their pulse was weak and quite slow, their strength was greatly reduced from the very beginning, and they became weaker and weaker as the illness developed, until they were finally forced to take to their beds and remain immobile. In appearance their flesh remained unaffected and, what was remarkable, was the fact that if they did actually die from this disease, when they were finally given to the undertakers, they were still plump and fleshy, like the fat victims of death. These fevers assaulted those who were well-built and robust, both men and women, but not the elderly or those who were frail. At the onset of these fevers the cloudiness of the urine depended on the ferocity of the disease; the urine of those who recovered did not return to its natural state until the illness was over.

XIX. The spots would usually appear on the fourth and seventh day. If they appeared on the first day, nearly all the patients died. First of all they appeared on the neck, back and chest. It was observed that nobody was cured until the spots had also come out on the toe nails, while the ones on the upper parts of the body gradually disappeared. Those with spots that only appeared on their
chests and backs all died. Furthermore, the spots varied in colour and size, depending on the patient's appearance. Some were red, others pale, while others were dark; some were small while others were larger, some superficial and others so deep you could not see through them. These were particularly lethal.

XX. These fevers were accompanied by inflammation of the throat and, during the acute phase of the illness, this deteriorated into a white, ulcerous crust, which worried the doctors just as much as the fever. Since the patients refused all kinds of food and medicine because of this, and also believed they would recover once this storm of the other symptoms had abated, they all drowned in the same sea. Furthermore, these fevers did not cause as much thirst as is usually the case in acute fevers, and the patients complained very little, either because they were not thirsty or because their mind was ill without them realizing.

XXI. All of those who recovered from these fevers, either by fate or a doctor's help, could not say it was due to some kind of secretion when sweating, in their urine or in the other ways nature usually assists to overcome such a crisis. They owed their return to good health only to the appearance of the spots in the right place and at the right time, and to the fact that they developed over their whole body and then gradually disappeared. The consequences for those who also suffered from bowel disorders proved fatal. In the year 1693 in particular, petechial fever was accompanied by bowel disorders in the autumn, which was when terrible dysentery sorely tried the Jews. Seasonal fruits were blamed, as the Jews do not usually eat enough of this sort, but there might have been other, more serious causes.

XXII. Even those who had low fevers frequently suffered from hiccups, a symptom that was just as bothersome as it was fatal. Indeed, all those who suffered from hiccups while they had this kind of fever died. It was very rare that an autopsy was carried out on a man who had had hiccups, but in the cases it was, the ventricle was seen to be covered with black spots. Verminosis was more widespread in certain areas as well, and those who expelled worms via the mouth nearly all died.

XXIII. Some of them were no longer able to urinate as their bladder was continuously empty. This was observed especially in those with a weak pulse, as was the case with a young Jewish boy, who lived without being able to urinate for four days, freezing and
without a pulse. However, on the very day he died, although his whole body was frozen, this poor young soul was so robust and lithe in his movements that he got up and put on his clothes.

XXIV. A great many people became lethargic and groggy after these illnesses, and could not remember what had happened. It took many days for them to recover. The same happened to those who suffered considerable deafness while they had a fever. After recovering from petechial fever despite everyone's expectations, one merchant was stone-deaf for forty days, although he gradually recovered.

XXV. There were more funerals in the city than in the nearby countryside. The country-folk escaped the violence of this illness with greater success than the townsfolk without any remedy whatsoever, either because the air where they lived was healthier, or because they had no doctors. More than once Virgil's words came to mind: "Lucky those country-folk who make the most of what they have".

When epidemic diseases are raging, it is a shame that doctors do not pay more attention to the country-folk, who trust their parish priest more than their local doctor. If they did so and followed the excellent guidance of nature, they would not go so far astray and would be able to treat the patients in their care much better. However, since everyone devises their own rules in such cases, then applies them to the task in hand, and numerous different kinds of remedies are required for a common illness, once one has recovered, "One can ask oneself whether good health was restored thanks to the medicine or one's own body", as Celsus rightly says. However, there is no doubt that since a common illness has a common cause, the same remedies should also be common. All the country-folk I know of who recovered from petechial fever and whom I was able to speak to, told me that they were only cured once the spots had spread over their whole body even down to the limbs, which occurred on around the seventh day, and only then would the spots begin to disappear without any particular secretion of the humours.

XXVI. While this fever was raging in this city and the surrounding countryside, in the nearby hills and the areas of Sassuolo and Scandiano very few people were sick, and there were no outbreaks of this fever, which raged so violently in the higher lying places and even on the peaks of the Apennines as well as in our valley.