Fourth Chapter

How the lavishness of the table is not reconciled with good health; how frugal, simple nourishment is easily related to health and longevity; the significance of what Galen says on abrasion in the stomach is discussed; no one, regardless of stratagems, is able to decide on the precise quantity of food to ingest.

Among the results of studies into health, a rightful prize ought to be awarded to that warning of Hippocrates that says: “food should not sate”, which has nothing to do with having to eat little. Considering the two extreme situations, one more often sins in the sense of an abundance of food and rarely in that of a frugal diet. This is despite the fact that health, the real perfection and strength of the organism, requires the right measure that in a well defined balance favours and tends toward moderation. It is not my intention to describe the characteristics of the daily diet of princes, whose preparation is the job of a multitude of servants and is done not in a clandestine manner but with a certain amount of ostentation – it is enough to look at their incessant coming and going with an infinite array of dishes. The ancients assigned Asclepius two daughters, Hygieia and her sister Panacea, the first being the guardian of health, the other charged with restoring it in case of sickness. I have no doubt that if Hygieia were to observe the table of a prince, she would quickly distance herself from such a spectacle and so much ostentation and, not having anything to share with the royal diet, would yield her place to her sister, an expert in restoring health, so that she could fully exercise her role. Let us put aside the legends used by mythologists to conceal the mysteries from the ignorant multitude and recognize that there is no rock against which
the health of the prince crashes so ruinously as a lack of moderation in eating and drinking. It is indispensable that the physician of a prince devotes the utmost attention to this and admonishes him sufficiently, while there is still time, on the health consequences that result: the loss of well-being.

The extraordinary abundance of food with which the table of a prince is laid daily must be seen as the prime cause and reason of every evil, partly because it is itself capable of stimulating consumption. The same thing is not necessarily true of other distinguished men. The table may also be rich, but efforts should be made to ensure it does not induce excessive consumption. It must also be considered that the tastiest foods are also the most harmful. Indeed, as is usually said, and often happens, the corruption of something very good is pernicious; the stomach is not allowed sufficient time without food to digest the excess and this results in poor sleep, followed by an ill humoured state and poor nutrition.

Other negative effects derive from the way the foods are prepared and by their great variety; these cannot be uniformly attacked by the same gastric juices and neither can they be reduced by the other internal organs of the organism in the proper way, which is as a single form. The result is a contamination of the blood, which causes alterations of the bodily functions, precisely as Hippocrates says in his book *On Airs*: "Contamination of the blood leads to that of the entire organism".

What Hippocrates wrote regarding the waters of the greatest rivers, which he called treacherous and advised not to drink, must also be true of the great variety of foodstuffs. Their greatness is due to the confluence of many other rivers that flow through different regions, absorbing many different minerals, so that their waters inevitably contain substances that may be in contrast with one another and are therefore not suitable for human consumption. In the same way, when foreign substances of various types get into the blood, it is prevented, without violence, from assuming a perfect mixture, which is indispensable for ensuring that the various organs are properly nourished and can carry out their various functions. Horace wrote admirably on the same subject: "The mixing of different dishes, such as oysters and thrushes, even if pleasant, is destined to damage the stomach, making it bilious and producing catarrh".

The cause of the violent gastric pathology that affected the em-
peror Marcus Aurelius, which Galen named as abrasion of the food in the stomach, may probably be sought in such a situation. It is useful to repeat the description of the case left by Galen himself in his \textit{De precogn. ad posthumum}: "After having eaten, the emperor was struck by a pain in the stomach and his pulse was weak and fast. So the two doctors who had been called to his bedside initially decided that they had to treat this as a fever. Galen, called during the night, took his pulse and said with great candour, in the presence of the two doctors, that the emperor certainly did not have a fever, but that it was more simply a case of abrasion of the stomach by food. The emperor, in response, asked how it ought to be treated and Galen answered with the following words: 'I would prescribe drinking wine with pepper to any other person suffering the same symptoms, as I usually do; but to you of royal standing, to whom doctors usually recommend very prudent remedies, application to the abdomen of a woollen cloth soaked in warm wine flavoured with ginger is sufficient'. The emperor, struck by Galen's frankness, dismissed the two doctors, drank the peppered wine, and began to recover".

The argument on food reported by Macrobius, which is part of the custom of learned men of antiquity exciting their spirits by discussing the most diverse subjects, is interesting. The argument is between Disario and Eustachio, the former supporting the simplicity of food and the later, a defender of the taste buds, championing a variety of foods in the course of a banquet. Both make important points, but those of Disario seem more convincing and among these the following is of particular importance: given that any doctor would prescribe simple, light foods and not a great variety of foods to a feverish patient, why should this same simplicity so important for recovery not be adopted for maintaining health? Such a consideration may be completed by saying that the gastric juices cannot be so strong as to dissolve many very different foods ingested and so, necessarily, can digest some of them first, others subsequently, and others not at all. This is the same phenomenon we see with substances, such as nitric acid, that attack some metals, but has no effect on others. The same thing must be true for that whole variety of wines customarily imported from different regions to embellish and enliven the table of a prince. It may be observed that drinking different kinds of wine, even if not in large quantities, leads to
rapid intoxication. It is as if a conflict is caused between them in
the organism, similar to that which at times occurs between the re-
gions and nations from which they come. Not insignificant negative
effects result from drinking different wines even if from the same
region because, as Hippocrates says, we have an upset feeling for
some days before the stomach gets used to those wines.

It is not only the abundance of varieties of food and drink that
engages the most decisive battle against the health of a prince. If
anyone happens to come across a strange or extraordinary kind of
animal or fish in any part of the land or sea, it is destined to end
up on the table of some prince as a gift. This was the case with the
extraordinarily large turbot caught in the Adriatic, which not one of
the fishermen could number among his prey, and which was taken
with some difficulty by boat and sent to Domitian, who invited the
nobles to see it. Some of them claimed the fish had allowed itself
to be caught to pay tribute to the table of the prince, others that an
animal that came from afar must have signalled a great and illustri-
ous triumph for the prince, others still that a new Prometheus was
needed to make a pan big enough to hold it. It was in reference to
this turbot that Juvenal wrote: “Everything of rarity or beauty that
is in our sea belongs to the imperial coffers, wherever it swims; so
it will be given to the sovereign”.

In this regard, it must be recognized that a truly impressive lack
of moderation was shown by the Roman emperors at their feasts,
to which various names were given. Those of Augustus and Vitel-
lius were known as dodecatheos; at one of these, all the banqueters
were dressed as gods and goddesses, and Augustus himself was
done up as Apollo. Despite the feast being held in the innermost
part of the palace, it could not pass unnoticed by the people and, as
it was immediately followed by a rise in the price of foodstuffs, the
people were heard shouting around the city that the gods had eaten
and finished all the grain. A banquet such as this is to be scorned.
The banqueters, dressed as gods, stuffed themselves with a great
variety of foods, while the gods they wished to represent nourish
themselves exclusively on ambrosia and nectar, and furthermore are
almost always happy with a single kind of drink. Martial says this of
the god of gods: “Jupiter, sated with ambrosia, now eats nectar”.

In our days the tables of princes, to tell the truth, do not reach
such a level of vanity. Being prepared with a certain amount of care
and often taking place before the eyes of the people, however, it is difficult for a prince, even if of sober nature, to abstain, and at times he does eat foods that are new to him and precisely for that reason are almost never healthy.

So the prince should avoid not only satiation, but also a variety of foods, and accept in good humour the insistence of the doctor appointed to see to his health in advising him to avoid that which may rather gratify his own taste buds in the period of his greatest well-being; I basically do not agree with what Celsus says: “A healthy man who feels well should not depend on anyone, should not be subject to any law, and has no need of either doctors or treatments”.

I think this may be true for ordinary people, but not a prince whose good health is a bulwark of public well-being, while the opposite leads to many misfortunes. In order to observe moderation and simplicity of diet at the same time, it should be enough to consider that those who live longest and suffer the fewest diseases are the same ones who conduct a sober and frugal life and not those who live lavishly. The proof of this is provided by the old hermits who, nourishing themselves on dates and the roots of plants, lived to be over a hundred, as St Jerome mentions regarding Paul the Hermit and the Abbot Anthony. In more recent times, the example of the illustrious Ludovico Cornaro, the Venetian noble, must be noted. On having the premonition that he would suffer the same fate as his brothers, cut down in the prime of life, due to the same bad habits, he converted to a sober lifestyle and stayed healthy and strong in both mind and body and, at the age of 96, wrote an excellent book, The Advantages of a Sober Life, a work certainly worthy of commenting on, which I intend doing one day, if I have time.

I do not think anyone is able to give a single answer to the question of what foods, in what quantities, and at what hour are to be eaten, as there are so many foods, temperaments, natural dispositions, countries, habits and idiosyncrasies, as some specific predispositions are called. It is rather a case of consulting experience and literature. The stomach, being the natural judge, must be put to the test. Preference should then be given to those foods that are most easily digested, that are distributed most readily, and that nourish the organism well. So, at least from a general point of view, an indicator of the goodness of a food will be its easy digestibility and decisive nutrient value. On this it is worth recalling the lines of
Lucretius: “It doesn’t matter what food is used to nourish the body, as long as it is easily digested and spread to the parts and it is possible to retain the right moisture in the stomach”.

An enormous number of testimonies regarding food have been written, but I will consider only those that are closest to my reasoning and seem most suitable to me in safeguarding the health of princes; but I will deal with them in the next chapter. If one wants to maintain health it is necessary to first of all shun satiety, which is at the origin of obstructions and the cause of illnesses, and, secondly, a scarcity of foods, so the organism is not deprived of the nourishment essential to it. I do not intend claiming that foods be modulated only with regard to weight, number and quantity, but rather in order to reach that precise balance that prevents the stomach being distended and weighed down. Indeed, often when pursuing ends related to our taste and to pleasing flavours, we do not realize the heaviness of the stomach until we rise from the table. Saint Augustine has written wisely and in depth about this difficulty of identifying the right balance in the assumption of food in the fourth book of Against Julian: “Being about to satisfy that indispensable delight that allows our organism to reconstruct the energy consumed, who is able to explain why it is not vouchsafed to us to establish the right measure, to ourselves unknown, of what is indispensable for us, and what makes us exceed the exact quantity necessary for the maintenance of health, urging us rather towards that which we like most, making us decide that that which should be sufficient really is not, thus becoming slaves to smells and flavours and, furthermore, rather than thinking of acting for the good of our health, instead we do no more than satisfy our intemperate appetites? In this way greed crosses the confines of need”.

Fifth Chapter

The foods least suitable for maintaining health are those most prevalent on the tables of princes; some considerations on appetisers and main courses; the meaning to Hippocrates of meats that encourage equilibrium and to Aristotle of ethical wine.

The popular saying “practise what you preach” has a practical application in every kind of banquet and, especially, those of a prince. On these occasions the most nutrient foods and those most suitable for maintaining health are regularly ignored, while exotic, foreign foods that are difficult to digest or of low nutrient value are those most desired and sought after. Bread is the most common of all foods. Only some less developed peoples in the extreme north, known as ichthyophagists (fish-eaters), depart from this rule and live solely on fish. Bread is brought to the table of a prince first of all, but is generally also the last to be given attention, and it doesn’t matter whether it is “light, white, fragrant and made from premium flour”. Princes taste very little of it, they merely use it for wiping their greasy fingers. Bread is eaten in small quantities at all tables laid with sophistication and abundance, where its accompaniments are given preference. Indeed, even when our Lord fed four thousand men by multiplying seven loaves of bread and five fishes, the disciples filled twelve baskets with chunks of that bread; no mention at all is made of the fish.

Although the “gifts of hard-working Ceres” have such little success in the dining halls of princes, the same thing cannot be said of those of Bacchus, Pomona and the bounteous goddess of hunting. It is true that bread made with authentic grain, well leavened, kneaded and baked correctly is more nutritious and fundamental
than any other kind of food, such that it alone, with water, allows men to live.

“Bread and water is enough for men”, says Lucian. Juvenal, for his part, speaks of *panem et circenses* (bread and circuses); indeed, when the people have plenty of bread and amusement, they lead a happy life, as was once the case in Rome. In precisely this current year we have had to realize the extent of the calamity that has struck Europe with the famine caused by a very harsh winter, without equal in past centuries, that irrevocably froze the harvest. On this occasion the most worrying thought of good princes is how to procure wheat from any source and at any price to feed their subjects, like children.

What Hippocrates says in the first book of *The Epidemics* is important: “light foods have a short life”. This fairly cryptic expression has been comprehensively interpreted by Vallesius, whose first interpretation is that foods to be considered lighter are those that are easy to digest, in that they are more prone to transformation, such that, staying only briefly in the organism, they have a short life, precisely as the aphorism says: “that which nourishes quickly, is excreted just as quickly”. His second interpretation on light foods with a short life leads rather to considering that a poor diet is accompanied by a short life. Bread in the organism provides excellent nutrition that, by affinity, affixes and adheres firmly to the parts of the body and is thus unanimously thought the most suitable food for maintaining health and helping prolong life. It may also be said that well baked bread, like that eaten on board ship, does not perish easily, as do other foods like meat, fish and fruit. Kept for a long time, bread does not go mouldy and retains its full nutrient power. It is man’s principle, most widespread foodstuff and was also used by our forebears, as may be deduced from Ecclesiastes itself: “Water, bread and clothing are the basis of man’s life”.

It ought to be preferred to any other type of food, better if combined with others, which is why Verulamius rightly defined bread as the basis of nourishment. It will therefore be wise advice for a prince to eat suitably baked, well kept bread, soaked in saliva and combined with other foods in the right proportion, and not the recommendation made by Marsilio Ficino in the second book of his *How to safeguard the health of men of letters*; “The quantity of bread”, he says, “should be doubled drinking, tripled eating meat,
and quadrupled with fish”. This rule is very ingenious, but difficult to apply to those who are healthy and are not ruled by anyone, as in the case with a prince. Augustus had the habit of eating bread soaked in cold water to quench his thirst and, at times, ate a piece with a few thick-skinned grapes. According to Suetonius, “his habit was to eat when and where he liked, without waiting for supper”.

Chemists have begun to understand the number of essences contained in well leavened bread, because from its acid they extract volatile sprits and an excellent balsam for modifying the stomach juices. It is worth reading Ettmüller on this subject. For the reason given above, there is no food that suits the stomach better than bread. Among those who are well, no one shows intolerance to bread; furthermore, the desire of a sick person for bread is considered a sign of recovery. It is worth observing that while there are idiosyncratic cases, whereby some foods like cheese, apples, eggs and others are not tolerated at all, no intolerance has been shown for bread, apart from the case of the young Belgian girl spoken of by La Bruyere, who, at the age of 16, having never tasted bread, immediately became nauseous when she tasted some soaked in the buttermilk she loved so much. There is no lack of authoritative and reasoned evidence for the fact that those who eat little bread and lots of meat have bad breath. Indeed, as meat is by nature subject to rotting, if one eats too much it cannot but cause rotting juices. La Bruyere, in the sixth book of On Foods, refers to a man of letters, accustomed to eating a lot of meat and very little bread, who had fetid breath; on the other hand, of all the smells of foods none is more pleasant and capable of reviving than that of bread just out of the oven.

Princes almost always make enormous errors in the use of meats, scorning those of domestic animals and hankering after game such as venison, chamois and wild boar – which a satirical poet, to censure the extravagance of his times, defined as an “animal born specifically for banquets” – as these are not only different from the human temperament, but also difficult to digest. It is appropriate to recall what has come down to us in Hippocrates’ second book Of Regimen, where meats that are “heavy in the mouth, according to a criterion of equilibrium” are condemned. Marziano interpreted this fairly obscure passage as meaning that all meats whose weight is felt in the mouth, on the basis of a criterion of equilibrium, meaning that at the same volume they are heavier than other kinds, are
difficult to digest and heavy on the stomach. Such meats include beef, pork, and hare; the same is true of those types of seafood with harder or denser meat, and of water fowl. All these require a stronger stomach and organisms more accustomed to physical exercise than those of princes, who spend their days in idleness rather than pursuing physical activities. It must be added that such meats, heavier on the basis of a criterion of equilibrium, as is also shown by Santorîo's observations in Statistics, are accompanied by more difficult transpiration than that resulting from lighter meats, such as that of the sheep. The reason may be sought in the fact that such types of food, even if prepared so as to be tastier, induce the formation of thicker nutrient elements that cause blockages of the blood vessels and abdominal infarctions. This kind of meat, which is tougher, is normally kept for several days in order to make it more tender; it is also stored in ice in summer to marinade and ripen it. But this must not be seen as something positive as, once the process of marinading has begun, a certain quantity of the vital spirits is almost always lost. This must be what inspired Hippocrates to say in his second book Of Regimen that fresh meats are to be preferred as being healthier. In order to obtain more tender meat that is more easily digested, it is sufficient to press or beat it to break down the fibres, tenderising it and making it more susceptible to the digestive power of the stomach.

The meat of birds that fly freely and feed naturally is to be given absolute preference over that of animals raised in captivity, or domestic animals as they are called, which are fattier but less healthy, because they are allowed little physical activity. In short, preference should be given to those animals that transpire easily – as do sheep, according to the observations of the renowned Santorîo – and all the others that, according to Hippocrates, are lighter in terms of equilibrium and contain more airy parts. Princes should make more use of these, because they facilitate transpiration, given that their organism is little used to physical exercise. So it will be necessary that a prince, on whose sumptuous tables an abundance of various kinds of meat is offered, is guided by his own physician or by personal experience as to which meats are the heaviest and which are easiest to digest and are excreted more quickly. The same thing must be said of fish, which is available on some days of plentiful fishing in some seasons. All this because, becoming more sated and
moving on to cold dishes (or fruit, as the ancients used to say), further weight is not produced in the move to appetising foods.

“When hunger and desire for food have diminished, one then moves on, with much fanfare, to the second course”.

The first courses have not even been removed before new smells immediately arrive from the kitchen and a variety of other dishes is served, all able to once again reawaken already satisfied appetites. In a flash there is a metamorphosis, the table seems better laid than before. Such a custom is very old in the courts of princes, especially in Italy, which is the most exuberant country in all that has to do with luxury. The dishes of Syracuse more than those of other cities in Italy have always been highly renowned for their delicacy, which has become proverbial whenever delicious foods are discussed. Plato in his Epistle to the Relatives and Friends of Dion rejects that splendid life led in the banquets of Sicily and Italy and declares himself not interested in satisfying other similar pleasures. Atheneus, on his part, in his Deipnosophistae, numbers Italian dining halls among the richest and most sumptuous for every kind of delicacy.

Temperance and the possibility of maintaining health are put definitively into crisis by second courses. The various types of fruit, rarities, other vegetables and exotic fruits from the most diverse countries, gathered, if possible, from the garden of Alcinus, along with a whole range of things that the skilled hands of the cooks have learnt to prepare, are of a striking order and elegance of arrangement. The fatty meats of the first course having slaked the appetite, attempts are made with the second to revive it with sour foods. The lettuce prepared as a salad usually has an important role among the latter. Among the ancients and also among the common folk and people of our time it is normal to eat it with the first course. On this subject, Martial wrote: “Our forebears ended the meal with a lettuce; tell me why we begin with the lettuce?”

Regarding fruit, it must be noted that princes never eat it when perfectly ripe and whole. Either early or late fruits are presented at their tables on the basis of rarity and cost. Early fruits are more acerbic and encourage the production of raw nutrient elements, while late fruits are insipid and of no value or goodness. Hippocrates spoke of figs in the second book Of Regimen saying: “the first figs are terrible”. So it is necessary for the doctor to advise his prince to be cautious in eating short-lived fruit, such as summer
fruit; that which grows under *Ora and Opora*, Greek terms indicating the time of year, in the middle of which is the period of heat lasting 40 days. Galen speaks of these fruit in many of his writings, for example in the second book *Of Nourishment* and in the third section of the *Aphorisms*, where he says that they are subject to easy deterioration and, in summer, produce bilious diarrhoea. He also confesses frankly in *De Vitio, & Bon. succorum* of having been struck down twice by having eaten too much of them. I do not presume to entirely condemn consumption of this kind of fruit that nature produces precisely to quench the thirst and refresh the stomach that would otherwise require ice and cold water, in that season when “Procyon and the star of fierce Leo rage, and the sun that brings back the drought-filled days” (Horace).

As I have come to talk about ice, the lack of which on the table of princes would be considered a terrible thing, I will say that I do not disapprove of its moderate use as much as I condemn its misuse, which is extremely injurious. Actually, no one of good sense would ever approve of quenching the thirst with those drinks made from the juice of citron or lemon and sugar, turned almost to ice. The gut shivers and the stomach contracts as they pass, and thirst returns even stronger shortly after. “Cold causes thirst”, claimed Rathis in the twenty-first book of the *Fifth Treatise*, because it causes contraction of the pores of the palate and the saliva glands from which serous liquid is continuously produced. It is known that, in the course of banquets, the ancients had the custom of drinking cold water tempered with hot, as documented by Martial: “You ask for hot water, but I still haven’t got the cold!”

It is very odd that the ancients held hot water in such consideration, a privilege that our epoch has renounced. It is natural to think that the ancients used cold and hot water because the latter is capable of tempering and correcting the bad that can be caused by drinking cold drinks. The custom of drinking hot water was not, however, regarded particularly highly by Martial, who wrote: “He has the crops of Libya and the gold of the Ermo and the Tagus, and yet drinks hot water”.

If snow were used correctly and were the special gift of the divine benevolence, as jurists are wont to say when impelled by an excess of defence, it could be consumed both by the healthy and the sick to combat the terrible heat, especially in the hottest countries
like Sicily, the Kingdom of Naples and almost all of Italy. When little or no snow falls from the sky in winter, something that increases its price, that year is considered unlucky and there is no lack of observations that widespread sicknesses are more prevalent and more serious than in other years. The use of snow is lost in antiquity, and the Jews also used it, as shown by the Book of Proverbs: "As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters".

The Jews took snow from Mount Lebanon, of which Tacitus in the fifth book of his Histories says is the main mountain of that region and, "is amazed to say, in the midst of so much heat, shaded, it retains its snows" and feeds and swells the River Jordan in great abundance. There are no few benefits deriving from the proper use of snow, but the negative effects caused by its misuse are many and widespread. Hippocrates spoke of the latter in the fifth book of Aphorisms, 18 and 24.

Much care is needed with something that so pleasantly deceives the palate. It is difficult to abstain from drinking avidly when thirst torments and there is icy water at hand. The danger is greater if the organism is overheated. There is no lack of examples of people who, having taken iced drinks, have been struck by fainting, as if they had drunk poison, and then by sudden death. Such a danger can, however, be averted if drinks, although icy, are sipped in such a way that they are held briefly in the mouth and descend slowly through the oesophagus, thus rising in temperature. In this way the cooling is transmitted in advance of contact with the stomach. Such a precaution is firmly recommended by Cirnusaus in his excellent book Medicine of the Mind and Body, where he refers to often having recourse to iced water to restore himself after long and tiring physical activity that had overheated him, without ever having felt the slightest disturbance. The explanation lies in the fact that his palate could not withstand excessive cold and so he drank in small sips, very slowly. He notes, however, having seen many people who in similar circumstances had drunk beer avidly and abundantly and been struck by very serious illnesses from which they had difficulty recovering.

Nothing is more adverse, both overtly and insidiously, to the health of a prince than the excessive consumption of wine. Not only is his health at stake, but also his reputation and self-respect.
The examples of distinguished men who have been led to ruin by the habit of drinking to the point of obscuring their glorious exploits are sufficiently well known. It was the case of Alexander the Great, whose lack of moderation in drinking inspired Androcide, a man of great wisdom concerned with redeeming him, to say, as Pliny writes in chapter five of the fourteenth book: “Remember oh king, that drinking wine, you are drinking the blood of the earth”.

Cato, too, although a censor, was also reproached for drunkenness. A vice of this type cannot be kept hidden, all the more so if it is a prince who is affected. The fact becomes public and jeering begins, as in the case of Tiberius Nero, who was widely known as Tiberius Nero – Biberius Mero. Taken in moderation, wine brings advantages and reinforces the organism. But it is dangerous when that which is to be considered the right amount is surpassed. It is of the same nature as fire: nothing more useful, nothing more dangerous. Everyone knows how gout and kidney stones are common among the wealthy and princes. The phenomenon is such as to seem determined by inheritance. Lucian, in his *Tragopodagra* (Tragic Gout), draws up a long list of heroes celebrated by poets who were afflicted by gout. It is precisely experience that has led to us understand that wine, when drunk in excessive quantities, can provoke and foster both of the above diseases. Indeed, wine is rich in tartar, a hard, stony substance that is deposited on the joints. It follows that, if a prince really wants to banish extremely vexatious guests from his court, he will drink wine, but in moderate quantities, diluting it with water and avoiding those pure wines that are generally much extolled. Preference ought to be given to old, clarified or “frivolous” wine as it is called by Plautus in the *Cartaginese*. In such form it does not do harm (*edentulum – non mordeat*). Wine made from the grapes of the plain contains less tartar and is to be preferred to that of the hills. In short, the prize must be awarded to modest, ethical wine; that is, wine that also complies with moral rules. Allow me to pause on this term “ethical wine” used by Aristotle in his *Rhetoric*. Theophrastus in the sixth book of *Causis Plant* says that “such wine, which is lighter, is eliminated more speedily and is less apt to lead to vice”.

Gaza and Ermolao Barbaro give the same meaning to the term “temperate wine”. There are those who claim that ethical wine must mean filtered wine. So wines must be either temperate or light by
nature, or filtered and, so to say, purged, because, as Pliny says, "filtering attenuates the properties of the wine". Note must be made that, if left in the barrel, filtered wine does not ferment like other wines, which do not stop doing so for entire months and with great fanfare, especially if they are pure wines. Indeed, with filtration, the lees and tartaric material adhere to the sides of the filter. This must be the reason for the long fermentation in the case of unfiltered wine, but settling is not effective either if the wine is not skimmed; at that point the denser components settle to the bottom. It is worth noting that filtered wines that do not need clarification and are not ready in summer do not deposit tartaric material on the sides of the barrel. So barrels in which filtered wine has been kept will never be opened to obtain tartar, much used in medicine. Furthermore, such wine has the advantage of not having to be aged and may be drunk after two or three months. A wine of this type, made from prime grapes grown not in the hills but on the plain, in localities not far from the hills, will be ideal for safeguarding health and, as far as possible, preventing gout and kidney stones. I do not suggest that wines should not be present on the table of a prince, but that they not be of a type capable of threatening health; in other words, they should be wines that revive the vital spirits in the right way without negative side effects. Quite a number of kings and emperors have left indubitable proof of sobriety and temperance. Suetonius informs us that Julius Caesar was very modest in drinking and that Augustus, too, when encamped near Modena, sipped wine no more than three times during dinner. It is possible to infer the nature of the wine in the Modena area from these words of Suetonius. Augustus was very attentive to his health and of an exemplary sobriety; he drank three times during the meal, which immediately suggests that he knew the full-bodied nature of the wine made in the hills of Modena and that this was behind his singular temperance at that meal. The wines of the principality of Modena – Sassolento, Floriano and Speziano – are certainly every bit as good as the more famous ones of Tuscany. But this is not the only benefit that God has granted Modena. Indeed, as well as having excellent wines and salubrious air, that city also has very good water and, what is more important and contributes most to determining real happiness, it has always had, and conceivably always will have in future, excellent princes.