Thirteenth Chapter

The means of preventing some illnesses to which princes are subject more than other people.

In the same way that age, temperament, the seasons and places are associated with specific illnesses, so are the living conditions, both when these are the result of fate and when they have been adopted by necessity. Each person is struck by their own illness, as may be seen in those who perform a specific job; I have written about this in the Treatise on the Diseases of Workers. Gout, lithiasis and colic are the three illnesses, or better, the three tortures, that most commonly and seriously afflict nobles and princes. All three of these must be closely related, as they frequently affect the same person all at the same time. As Beverovicio notes in his De Cal. Ren. et ves., a man of letters suffering from lithiasis writing to his friend, a constant victim of gout, called him his brother-in-law, because they had married two sisters, gout and lithiasis. Furthermore, it was also possible that at times the wife of one gave herself to the other, with no suspicion at all of adultery. The same material, a putrescent juice produced by foods that the blood vessels carry to the limbs or to the kidneys, is the same efficient cause that, with the stabilising action of tartaric acid, leads to the formation of arthritis and lithiasis. There is general consent among writers on this theory that we can also read in Hippocrates' De Flabit: “there is a sole cause of all the illnesses, it is their site that differs”.

The same is true of colic, which is caused by the acid that stimulates the membranes of the intestine and not by the over-expansion of air. It has many affinities with the illnesses mentioned before and, as has often been observed, colic turns into gout and gout
into colic. There is a very interesting piece on this in Hippocrates’ *De humoribus*: “a subject had a pain in the right side of the abdomen, he was struck by gout and his colic went, cure of the gout, his colic returned worse than ever”; the same passage is taken up in the *Epidemie*, 6, 2.

It is sufficiently demonstrated that the illnesses mentioned are of the same kind and that they mainly affect nobles and princes. There are various causes for this: intemperate eating, an indolent lifestyle but, primarily, pure wines drunk to excess. This is why poets correctly represent Bacchus as the father of gout and Venus as the mother. There is no doubt that full-bodied wines contain much tartaric matter and unstable acids, all of which are needed to produce lithiasis and arthritis. So it is no surprise that their constant, immoderate use leads to the deposit of calcareous material and their calcification both in the kidneys due to narrowed veins and in the joints. This must be why inveterate drinkers of wine are usually afflicted by kidney stones and the pains of gout; Q. Sereno wrote this on the poet Ennio: “Ennio’s father, too, it seems, deserved this painful illness as a result of draining glasses”.

Gout and lithiasis are often observed to be a hereditary defect that persists within the same family for a long time, especially those of princes who can avail themselves of every kind of privilege and stimulus to conduct a less sober life. Such afflictions are in any case more common among these than other people and this is due to the fact that they maintain the same kind of lifestyle as their fathers.

Here prevention will be looked at, not cure. In pursuing this course, it will be necessary for the doctor to advise his prince to banish such pernicious guests from the court as soon as possible, as once they have been admitted and nourished for some time, it will not be easy to get rid of them. Nor will this be without some danger, especially in the case of gout, whose sudden expulsion usually causes more serious illnesses. Princes have every right to expect their doctor to be able to save them from this kind of affliction, rather than to cure it. These are illnesses about which Hippocrates used to say that they die with the victim and that, the more chronic they are, the more they rage. According to Beverovicio, a subject with lithiasis who had become old complained about his condition like this: “women become sterile with age, in my case age
makes me more fertile; indeed, either I give birth or I am pregnant, but if Lucina does not assist me in my efforts, I am lost.

In order to begin prevention it will be necessary to resort to a suitable diet and the moderate use of unnatural things. Food, when the organism is in good condition, should meet its need for nutrition, but not weigh it down or tire it. Variables such as age, the season and personal habits must also be taken into consideration. Indeed, if the diet was previously more abundant and varied, it will be necessary to move gradually to a more frugal, simpler one. Foods that are fatty and difficult to digest, as noted previously, must firstly be avoided. When the stomach does not fulfil its functions to perfection, the normal and favourable separation of the fatty parts from the chyle does not take place. The result is that the more harmful part that should be excreted passes through the lacteal vessels into the blood to then be deposited as a pathogenic material in the kidneys and limbs. Nothing revives the table of princes like fruit of every kind, elegantly presented. Acidic and sour fruit and that which comes from hilly and stony land is to be avoided, because it is rich in tartaric juice. It has been said that the same is true of some varieties of fruit, such as the pear, whose grains when chewed give the sensation of having sand between the teeth. In his De Morb. Princ. Pod., Tachenio disapproves of eating apples and other fruit because of the ease with which they acidify and rot. Hippocrates in his On Diet, 3,5, writes the following on this kind of fruit: “Apples are too harsh for human nature, it is therefore better to avoid them.”

In his comment on this line, Martial adds that, if apples are not well mixed and eaten with other food, the stomach does not digest them properly, and they are expelled in the same way they arrive. Princes should abstain from drinking wines that are too full-bodied, as these contain an abundance of tartar, as do those made from grapes grown on rocky land. It will be better to drink those from the plain that can be improved, as mentioned previously, by filtering to give a lower level of tartar. It is also necessary to guard against wines that are too light. A common error, often made by those who suffer from gout and lithiasis, is to think that, having to abstain from full-bodied wines, they are permitted to drink unlimited quantities of light wine. This, with regard to gout, has been condemned by Giovanni Crato in the Lib. 2. Conf, by Van Helmont in the Volupe Viv., by Ettmüller in the De Vegetab., and by others,
all of whom disapprove of light wines since, by increasing the acid content, they are able to produce the pains of colic, lithiasis, and gout. Moderate quantities of full-bodied wines, though diluted with water, are therefore to be preferred to light, acidic wines that are diuretic, and for this alone should be regarded with suspicion. Indeed, it is not at all desirable that humours are kept away from a section where we rather want them to be retained. Equal attention should be given to the choice of water, both for diluting full-bodied wine and for cooking, as water often contains calcareous material. Among the simple waters for daily use, those of Nocera are renowned; princes and noblemen go to the trouble of having these brought directly from the spring. The waters from the springs of Modena are not at all inferior to these, and on which I have written with reference to their admirable gushing and excellence.

Suitable physical activity is to be considered a great remedy for the illnesses we are discussing, as is amply demonstrated by those who live in the country and by artisans who are practically immune to gout. Celio Secondo Curione's story about the spider and gout, transcribed by Gaspar de los Rejes in *Cam. Elys. Quaest.*, 88, is famous. Once upon a time there was a spider who wanted to make a journey and gout offered to accompany him. When darkness fell, gout could no longer go on and stopped in the hovel of a poor man, while the spider continued until he came to a large, magnificent palace. The next day the two met up and both complained about their hosts. The spider told how he had not been able to even weave a web as he had been chased out by servants with brooms and had only just managed to escape with his life. Gout said that he had happened on a really uncouth host who ate polenta, drank weak wine and slept on a hard pallet, such that he couldn't do anything but stay awake all night. The two decided to exchange hosts. The spider would stay in the homes of poor people, and gout in the palaces and courts of kings. The effectiveness of physical activity is such that, even in the absence of a frugal diet, those who, being needy, have to do manual labour, seldom display the bad humours capable of nourishing gout and lithiasis as these are expelled with the sweat and the movements of the body. Moderation must be adopted with regard to all unnatural things. It is not advisable to abandon oneself to sleep on a very soft bed, because this is certainly not good for the kidneys. It is good to keep the abdomen empty,
as far as possible, considering that it is better to have an even moderately diarrhoeic bowel than a constipated one, given that the first excrements of the digestion are transferred to the blood and from this to the kidneys and the bladder. May I, at this point, recall a line of Plautus: “I want my stomach full, not my bladder”.

It will not be wrong, on some occasions, to resort to laxatives and blood-letting, but only when the signs of a redundancy of humours appear, but it must be said that it is not easy to keep these within acceptable limits, especially by those who have the best of all fortunes.

“Those who have to be treated with laxatives and blood-letting, should be treated thus in spring”, states Hippocrates in his Aphorisms, 6, 47.

The following are the words of Galen written as a comment on the previous aphorism: “We manage to cure many subjects with a long history of illness, resorting to evacuation we are also able to control incipient gout that has not yet caused the formation of pores in the joints”.

It is right to hope that, adopting all the measures that have been proposed here, it will be possible to prevent the appearance of these deadly diseases that primarily afflict princes.
Fourteenth Chapter

The rules for safeguarding the health of the prince during military expeditions and in camps.

Princes are not granted complete happiness on this earth, such as at least to be able to live in perpetual peace. At times they are forced to leave the court and undertake military expeditions, both to drive enemies away from their borders and to enforce their rights by arms. Considerable responsibility falls on the doctor, who must follow the prince to protect his health from all that can easily alter it and to properly safeguard it.

There are two main risks that can cause serious damage to health: a non-habitual lifestyle and worries. It would not even be thinkable that there should not be some change in the conditions and tenor of life. This is despite the fact that princes make plenty of preparations for their moves, taking with them all they think may be needed to maintain their privileges. But it is difficult to foresee and ensure everything. On the other hand, wars are largely influenced by luck or, better, by Divine Providence. But even if the utmost prudence and wisdom have been adopted, it is not possible to ensure that princes, who have to keep everything under control, are not afflicted by worries and troubled sleep, even if they have soft beds. Virgil speaks of Aeneas having such problems: "He wanted to sleep, but the thought of the deadly war disturbed his rest".

First of all it is necessary to think about the air, identifying the least unhealthy place for the camp in which the prince will stay. This must be away from valleys and stagnant waters, especially if it is necessary to lay siege to some castle. Those who expect to be besieged usually break the banks of any rivers in the vicinity in
order to flood the surrounding land so as to keep the enemy as far away as possible, who is then also assaulted by the resulting bad air. Naples was freed from a siege by the French army using a similar tactic once, precisely thanks to the waters made putrid and stagnant by the summer heat. Most of the army was destroyed and the commander himself, Lotrech, was killed. Camp illnesses are terrible; when they begin to spread they are able not only to kill, but also to entirely destroy a great army. There are three main causes of these: foul air, contaminated water, and unhealthy foods. These lead to the adverse fevers and dysentery known as camp diseases, about which many authors have described deadly examples that would be too long to relate here. The place where the prince takes up residence must be safe, both from the dangers of the air and the threats of the enemy. It should not be in the vicinity of the ordinary soldiers’ camp so that he is not exposed to the mephitic gases that emanate from this. The Jews gave themselves very precise laws to control the problems in camps deriving from excrement. It was forbidden to defecate inside the camps, such needs having to be performed outside in a trench that then had to be covered. The soldiers were provided with a pointed spade that they carried with them for precisely this purpose. I have read that the same tool was used by the Turks, who focused much attention on the hygienic problems of the camps, such that every soldier was given not only the necessary food, but also a certain quantity of soap with which they had to carefully clean the dirt from their body. It is apt to quote, at this point, the words of Deuteronomy, 23:12, 13: “Thou shalt have a place also without the camp, whither thou shalt go forth abroad: And thou shalt have a paddle upon thy weapon; and it shall be, when thou wilt ease thyself abroad, thou shalt dig therewith, and shalt turn back and cover that which cometh from thee”.

No less effort must be made to ensure there is plenty of good water, whether from a spring, a well or a river, but primarily of the best quality for making bread, cooking food, preparing cooler drinks in summer and for diluting excessively full-bodied wines. In the case of moving camp and having to undertake a long march, it will be necessary to carefully evaluate the amount of provisions required, considering among these the water necessary for the prince, which must be carried in glass containers. Concern for the good health of the prince is like nourishing the hope of victory
and achieving success. It must be considered that if he is safe and sound and in good health, the whole army is more united and morale higher. It is true that, in this field, there are insuperable limits to knowledge and the ability to forecast, such that commanders and all their troops end up suffering from hunger and thirst. Cato of Utica took the side of Pompey in that atrocious event that was the civil war. Being in Libya with his army he found himself in great difficulty due to an extreme shortage of water, such that his soldiers were dying of thirst in that arid region. In the end some scouts discovered a lake, but it was infested with a multitude of snakes that went there to drink. The soldiers did not even want to consider drinking this water, as they thought it was poisoned. When Cato learnt of this, he went to see them and encouraged them to drink the water convincing them that, apart from quenching their thirst, it would not have any adverse effect. Lucano puts in that leader's mouth such words used to address the soldiers that he is made to seem not only a philosopher, but also a doctor of our own times: "Soldiers, do not hesitate to drink this water, which is safe. The poison of snakes is dangerous only if it is injected into the blood. They transmit their poison with the blood and threaten death with their teeth. So drinking is not harmful. So he said, and drank that water that his soldiers feared was poisoned".

It is worth recording what happened to Brutus after the killing of the dictator. Plutarch, in Quaes. Con, 6. tells how he, besieging Durazzo, in mid-winter and with deep snow, was struck by ravenous hunger (which doctors relate to walking for long periods in snow), such as to lose spirit, while those carrying the provisions were still a long way off. The soldiers, feeling sorry for their leader, reached the walls of the city and asked their enemies for bread; they generously gave it to them immediately. Brutus was satisfied and, after he had conquered the city, accepted the surrender of those people with great humanity. Given that it is impossible to have every type of comfort in the camps as in the court, the prince must put up with heat, cold, winds, vigils and many other discomforts, and also, if at times it becomes necessary, sudden retreats. It is thus necessary to get used to all these eventualities so that the health is less affected by sudden changes. The prince ought to engage in daily physical activity, such as riding, even in unfavourable conditions, going around the camp on foot and spending the days
in the open air rather than in a tent. In this way the organism will gradually start to become accustomed to the fatigue and ravages of air and wind. There is no shortage of examples of kings and emperors who, although being used to the pleasures of the court, trained their body by daily exercise to tolerate any discomfort of military life without any damage to their health, no different to the ordinary soldiers. Henry IV, King of the France, conquered the kingdom with his courage and great patience, at times winning and at times losing. The French themselves admired him for his energy and the strength of his body, calling him the iron king. We have been able to more recently see a similar example in the person of his most serene highness the king of Sardinia, previously the duke of Savoy, who with no less strength of body and spirit for many years resisted the French army, which with devastating force had laid waste to his country. He found himself besieged in his palace, always active day and night, going here and there giving orders to counter his enemy’s moves and did not allow himself to rest until the enemy was driven off and the siege of his city lifted. At that moment he still seemed strong and in perfect health. It is impossible to lead a normal life in the camp, which is why the prince does not rigidly follow the dictates of medicine; as Celsus says: "Very different conditions are experienced, at times you rest, more often you have to be very active, today you eat, tomorrow you don't, at times to excess, at times not enough".

Despite this, temperance cannot be forgotten; it will be necessary to avoid too much food and satiety, and the drinking of excessively full-bodied wines. As military expeditions are usually carried out in summer, it is primarily the excessive assumption of full-bodied wines that weakens rather than maintains health. Plato, in the De Legib., (the passage is quoted by or in Lib. quod Ant. Mores seq. Corp. Temper.) forbids the use of wine in camps, and especially to those who are responsible for command.

Inactivity tends to predominate, especially in places being besieged. So resorting to amusements should not be neglected as these are able to offer considerable assistance in safeguarding health. All, whether good or bad, as Plato says in the Timeus, spring from the spirit and have beneficial effects on the body. Such is the case with those amusements that are most suited to a wise prince: conversation with learned people and men of letters who are brought along,
and the reading of books on various subjects. Reading history, both ancient and modern, is particularly indicated, from which both pleasure and instruction may be drawn. Reading the Holy Scriptures will also be very useful, such as the books of Kings; books on military subjects and moral philosophy will also be capable of providing excellent stimuli. Suetonius reports that Augustus, who represents a grey eminence for princes, maintained his habit of reading, writing and reciting in the camp near Modena, both at war and in peace. Julius Caesar interspersed the wars with the study of natural and heavenly things and, primarily, contemplation. Lucian has him say of himself: “In the midst of wars, I have always devoted myself to the study of the stars and celestial things”.

It will be good for morale to remove attention from the more serious worries, by at times playing at dice with one’s closest friends, also to gain familiarity with the vagaries of fortune. It seems appropriate to mention what Sidonius Apollinaris wrote of Theodore, the king of the Goths. The writer says of that king who used to play with the court nobles: “Having to play, in all that time he sets aside his authority as sovereign, in his lucky throws he is silent, in the unlucky ones he laughs, in the indifferent ones he gets angry, but in all he acts as a philosopher”.

With these and other amusements one feels relieved and prepared for any kind of event, knowing that a generous prince is said to “act and suffer heroically”.
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