

# THE DOCTOR ON THE STAGE

## MEDICINE AND MEDICAL MEN IN SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ENGLISH DRAMA\*

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### PART II †

#### CHAPTER III

##### RHYMES AND REMEDIES

Our bodies we commit to the physicians, who never themselves take any physic.—RABELAIS.

THE seventeenth-century man was more fortunate than are we. He had fewer diseases, or perhaps merely fewer names for diseases, and many more remedies for them. The first edition of the "London Pharmacopoeia" (1618) contained 1960 drugs. Of course most of them had only a psychological value, but it must have been comforting to think of such a well-stocked arsenal against disease.

Modern pharmacopoeias read like chemists' catalogues, the ancient ones like an interminable witch's song from "Macbeth." Among the 1960 remedies were 1028 simples or herbs with medicinal virtues, 91 animal and 271 vegetable preparations.

Worms, lozenges of dried vipers, foxes' lungs, powders of precious stones, oil of bricks, oil of ants, oil of wolves, and butter made in May. . . . The blood, fat, bile, viscera, bones, bone-marrow, claws, teeth, hoofs, horns, sexual organs, eggs, and excreta of animals of all sorts; bee-glue, cock's-comb, cuttlefish, fur, feathers, hair, isinglass, human perspiration, saliva of a fasting man, human placenta, raw silk,

spider-webs, sponge, sea-shell, cast-off snake's skin, scorpions, swallow's nests, wood-lice, and the triangular Wormian bone from the skull of an executed criminal.<sup>1</sup>

Modern *littérateurs* would find the "Pharmacopoeia Londinensis" an appropriate means to excite the queasiness of their readers, but to the old dramatists such witch's brews occasioned neither astonishment or satire. Too many of them had perhaps swallowed the crushed crabs' eyes of Gascoigne's powder or had been rubbed with Album Graecum to have found anything strange in mixtures which now seem to us far more revolting than the extracts of ovaries, testes, placentae, liver, pancreas, spleen, thyroid, parathyroid, adrenal and hypophyseal glands which our own scientific physicians inject into our veins.

In olden times the apothecaries had no monopoly on the sale of drugs. The greater part of the business, even then tremendously lucrative, fell to the grocers; and it was not until 1617 that the druggists succeeded in ridding the trade of the grocers by a charter granted by James I. "The Knight of the Burning Pestle" was produced in 1611, before the proscription, and in this play we

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find *Ralph*, a grocer's boy, discontented with his lot (*i*, 3):

But what brave spirit could be content to sit in his shop, with a flappet of wood, and a blue apron before him, selling mithridatum and dragon's water to visited houses that might pursue feats of arms, and, through his noble achievements, procure such a famous history to be written of his heroic prowess?

The "visited houses" refers to the plague, for England from about 1603 to the last great epidemic of 1665 was periodically afflicted with this terrible malady, and the juice of the plant called dragon's blood (*Pterocarpus draco*, Linn.) was a popular remedy for it.

Mithridatum was the Universal Antidote of the age. In that respect seventeenth-century England was indeed more fortunate than twentieth-century America, for although shotgun prescriptions are ubiquitous in black medicine-bags, their claims—and fulfilments—fall far short of universal. Luckily, however, we do have yeast.

Mithridatum was equally effective against poisons, the bites of venomous animals and the indiscretions of faulty diets. It was invented by the famous King of Pontus after whom it was named. Galen gives its history in his work "On Antidotes":

This Mithridates . . . in his eagerness to gain an acquaintance with almost all the simple herbs which antagonise poisonous substances, tested their powers on criminals who had been condemned to death. Some of them he found especially useful for the bites of venomous spiders, others of scorpions, others of vipers: then as regards poisonous drugs, some of his simples he found useful against aconite, others against sea-hare, and so forth. So Mithridates mixed these all together and made a single drug, hoping he would now have a resource against all poisons. . . .

And if one takes the drug daily, as did Mithridates himself, he will be quite secure against deadly poisons and the drugs called *deleteria*. Thus it is said that when Mithridates preferred to die by poison rather than become subject to the Romans, he could not find anything capable of killing him.<sup>2</sup>

Later experimenters, amateur and professional alike, added their own ingredients to the original Mithridatian formula; some, perhaps, like Le Sage's *Doctor Alvar Fanez*, "an eminent member of the Faculty" who wanted a journeyman:

He boards his family very handsomely, has everything comfortable about him, and gives very high wages; but he is a little too fond of experiments. When he gets a parcel of bad drugs, which happens very often, there is a pretty quick succession of new servants. (*Gil Blas*, Bk. 1, Ch. 17.)

Until by the middle of the seventeenth century mithridatum contained:

Myrrhae Arabicae  
Crocii  
Agarici  
Zingiberis  
Cinnamoni  
Spicae Nardi  
Thuris  
Sem. Thlaspios, ana drachmas decem.  
Seseleos  
Opobalsami seu Olei Nucis Moschatae per  
expressionem  
Junci odorati  
Stoechados Arabicae  
Costi veri  
Galbani  
Terebinthinae Cyptiae  
Piperis longi  
Castorei  
Succi Hypocistidos  
Styracis Calamitae  
Opopanacis  
Fol. Malabathri recentium, sey, ejus defectu  
Macis, ana unciam unam.  
Casiae lignae verae  
Polii monyani  
Piperis albi

Scordii  
 Sem. Dauci Cretici  
 Carpobalsami, vel Cubeborum  
 Trochisch. Cypheos  
 Bdellii, ana drach. septem.  
 Nardi  
 Celticae purgatae  
 Gummi Arabici  
 Sem. Petroselini Macedonici  
 Opii  
 Cardamomi minoris  
 Sem. Foeniculi  
 Gentianae  
 Flo. rosar. rubrarum  
 Dictamni Cretensis, ana drachmas quinque.  
 Sem. Anisi  
 Asari  
 Acori, seu Calami Aromatici  
 Ireos  
 Phu majoris  
 Sagapeni, ana drachmas tres.  
 Mei Athmantic  
 Acaciae  
 Ventruium Scincorum  
 Summitatum Hyperici, ana drachmas duas semis.  
 Vini Canarini optimi quantum sufficit ad solutionem gummi & succorum, nempe circiter uncias viginti sex.  
 Mellis deinde despumati triplum ad omnia, praeter vinum.  
 Fiat Electuarium secundum artem.<sup>3</sup>

If each ingredient represented a condemned criminal or a new journeyman, the century's confidence in its universal remedy was dearly bought.

But mithridatum was not as infallible as its composition was imposing. It was no cure for love-sickness, and there were poisons (perhaps unknown to the Pontine king, who therefore cannot be blamed for his antidote's inadequacy) which it could not invalidate.

*Canope.* Where, ladie, do you feele most your paine.

*Sapho.* Where no bodie else can feele it, Canope.

*Canope.* At the heart?

*Sapho.* In the heart.

*Canope.* Will you have any Mithridate?

*Sapho.* Yea, if for this disease there were any Mithridate.

*Mileta.* Why? what disease is it madame, that physicke cannot cure?

*Sapho.* Onely the disease, Mileta, that I have.

LYLY, *Sapho and Phao*, iii, 3.

In Beaumont and Fletcher's "Valentinian" the Caesar has been poisoned by *Aretus* (*v*, 1 and 2)

*Phidias.* It was not to be cured, I hope.

*Aretus.* No, Phidias,

I deal above his antidotes: physicians

May find the cause, but where the cure?

*Valentinian.* (Feeling the effects of the poison, to his physicians.

Drink, drink, ye dunces!

What can your doses do now, and your scrapings,

Your oils and mithridates? if I do die,

You only words of health, and names of sickness,

Finding no true disease in man but money,

That talk yourselves into revenues—oh!—

And ere ye kill your patients, beggar 'em,

I'll have ye flayed and dried.

Mithridatum was not the only universal remedy, however. Others promised even more far-reaching results and fulfilled even fewer expectations. But these were quack remedies and had no place on the official drug lists. The seventeenth-century Englishman was quite as gullible as his modern American cousin; and mountebanks, charlatans and quacksalvers flocked across the Channel to purvey their remedies as today their descendants cross the Atlantic to sell their knowledge to an equally credulous public. A foreign name and a foreign accent, then as now, often formed the basis of a successful and lucrative trade and an inflated reputation.

Ben Jonson outlines the whole procedure in "Volpone" (*Act ii, sc. 1*). I should have transcribed this scene in

full, for in it quackery is raised to the dignity of an art. But I must be content with reminding the reader that *Volpone* therein masquerades as a mountebank, one *Scoto Mantuano*, in order to catch a glimpse of his beloved, *Celia*. *Scoto* was by no means a creature of Ben's imagination. King James I in his "Daemonologie" writes of "the deuilles contract with the Magicians," saying of Satan (*Bk. 1, Ch. 6*):

As in like maner he will learne them manie juglarie trickes at Cardes, dice, & such like, to deceiue mennes senses thereby: and such innumerable false practiques; which are prouen by ouer-manie in this age: As they who ar acquainted with that *Italian* called *scoto* yet liuing, can reporte.

Thomas Nashe also mentions "*Scoto* that dyd the jugling tricks before the Queene," and adds that he "never came neere that abundant scholler Cornelius Agrippa one quarter in magicke reputation."<sup>4</sup> It is not on record, however, that the notorious Italian sold either of their Majesties a vial of his precious oil.

If Jonson's play offers us a fair basis for judgment, there was as much difference between *Scoto* and "these turdy-facy-nasty-paty-lousy fartical rogues, with one poor groat's-worth of unprepared antimony, finally wrapped up in several scartoccios (who) kill their twenty a week" (*ii, 1*) as there was between its author and the literary hacks who ground out the mountebanks' bills. But aside from his vocabulary and the charm of his manner *Scoto Mantuano* is the typical London quack of the early seventeenth century. They all recited an imposing list of miraculous cures, always performed, unfortunately, in foreign climes, and a still more remarkable list of diseases which they stood ready to cure with the aid of their nostrums.<sup>5</sup>

With a flood of awe-inspiring Latin terms the mountebank first bewildered, then frightened his audience, and to bring home the symptoms to the common understanding, he had his zany sing a popular ballad in which Anglo-Saxon replaced the learned tongues:

You that would last long, list to my song,  
Make no more coil, but buy of this oil.  
Would you be ever fair and young?  
Stout of teeth, and strong of tongue?  
Tart of palate? quick of ear?  
Sharp of sight? of nostril clear?  
Moist of hand? and light of foot?  
Or, I will come nearer to't,  
Would you live free from all diseases?  
Do the act your mistress pleases.  
Yet fright all aches from your bones?  
Here's a medicine for the nones.

Every mountebank, from that age to this, has burned his annual candle on the feast-days of St. Job and St. Fiage, the patron saints of the pox.

The famous oil, *oglio del Scoto*, is, of course, secret in composition, the fruit of many years' labor and of countless nights spent with books. Money could not buy it, and yet *Scoto* was

a man

May write ten thousand crowns in bank here.

Once again during the century a mountebank's disguise served the turn of an enterprising lover. In the second part of Mrs. Behn's play "The Rover" (*ii, 1*):

*Enter Willmore like a Mountebank, with a Dagger in one Hand, and a Vial in the other . . .*

This gentleman, also with the aid of a zany, sells a divine elixir, twenty-four drops of which will recall life to a twenty-four-hour-old corpse. In addition, he offers for sale a beauty-powder and a powder guaranteed to induce the most passionate love. Like the one in "*Volpone*," it is a scene drawn from the life.

Quackery has always been a lucrative business, and always will be; for the enlightenment of any group of people is inversely proportional to the number comprising the group. Sir John Suckling might write:

Religion

And liberty, most specious names, they urge;  
Which, like the bills of subtle mountebanks,  
Fill'd with great promise of curing all,  
Though by the wise pass'd by as common  
cozenage,

Yet by th' unknowing multitude they're still  
Admir'd and flock'd unto.

*Discontented Colonel, iii, 2.*

But unfortunately not only the "unknowing multitude," but also men who might have been expected to know better often lent their praises as well as purses to the quacks. The list of famous men and physicians who have thus exposed their credulity to the amused historian is a long one and well deserving of a chapter of its own. The British government itself was once a party to one of the outstanding quackeries of medical history. In the second quarter of the eighteenth century one Joanna Stephens discovered a cure for kidney-stone, and after curing duchesses and bishops as well as commoner clay for many years, she decided at last to part with her secret for a lump sum. A thousand pounds raised by public subscription did not tempt her, and Parliament took a hand. This august body appropriated five thousand pounds, and Joanna gladly sold—both her secret and Parliament. Dr. Richard Mead, the medical luminary of the day, wrote in retrospective sadness in 1751:

Nor can I avoid observing, though I am extremely sorry for the occasion, that some gentlemen of the faculty a few years since acted a part much beneath their character, first, in suffering themselves to be imposed on, and then, in encouraging the legisla-

ture to purchase an old woman's medicine at an exorbitant price; by vouching, that it was capable of breaking the stone in the bladder, and bringing away the fragments with the urine. This medicine is a composition of soap and lime made of different shells, which every body knows to be highly caustic.<sup>6</sup>

One wonders why a cure as ineffectual as Joanna's eggshells did not bring the wrath of many an unrelieved sufferer down on her head years before. But not all pains in the back are due to kidney colic, and the *vis medicatrix naturae* has always been the staunchest ally of the quack. It is ruefully admitted in the council-rooms of the physicians that when Nature heals, the charlatan gets the credit; when the patient dies, the medico gets the blame.

Physicians, however, have never been notable for their friendly feeling for those medicines not sanctioned by the Faculty. Aphra Behn turned the observation into an epigram:

Wits, like Physicians, never can agree,  
When of a different Society;  
And *Rabel's* Drops were never more cry'd  
down

By all the Learned Doctors of the Town,  
Than a new Play, whose Author is unknown.  
*I Rover, Prologue.*

A seventeenth-century preparation with a more modest history than Mrs. Stephens' nostrum was "green salve." Along with several other ointments it turned up on the stage:

*Lady Vaine.* No woman in England was more serviceable among her neighbors than I with my Flos Unguentorum, Paracelsian and Green Salve.

*Lovel.* And your Album Graecum, I warrant you.

*Lady Vaine.* That Album Graecum was a salve of my invention.

SHADWELL, *Sullen Lovers, ii, 1.*

Here the dramatist is taking a ribald dig at the healing pretensions of *Lady*

*Vaine* in claiming to be the originator of album graecum, a salve made of the droppings of a dog. This substance had both official standing and approbation. Taken internally or externally it was a specific for quinsies and inflammations of the jaw; Robert Boyle recommended it as a remedy for dysentery. This celebrated scientist, by the way, wrote a book called "The Skeptical Chymist," but he was much too credulous in lending his name and fame to quacks and their nostrums.

According to one *Fetherfool*, album graecum had still another use. He has just been beaten and tossed naked out of a bawdy-house. "I am oblig'd to Signior *Harlequin* too, for bringing me hither to the Mountebank's," he says, "where I shall . . . procure a little Album Graecum for my Backside."<sup>7</sup>

"Green salve" was sold in the time of Charles II by a quack-doctor named Pontaeus, who was, says Dr. Walter Harris (physician to William III in 1688), "the first mountebank who ever appeared on a stage in England."<sup>8</sup> So quickly was the illustrious Scoto of Mantua forgotten! Dr. Harris goes on to expose the methods of his unorthodox colleague: One of Pontaeus' assistants washes his hands in a ladle of molten lead, and in the presence of the shuddering spectators withdraws them horribly burnt. Quickly Dr. Pontaeus anoints the members with green salve, applies bandages and leads the anguished patient off the stage. The next day before the same expectant audience the doctor removes the bandages, and behold! the hands are well. The secret lay in the fact that the molten lead was merely quicksilver in a ladle painted red.

*Lady Vaine's* other ointments were less spectacular. Flos unguentorum was listed in the "Pharmacopoeia Londi-

nensis" of 1650, and consisted of resin, beeswax, suet, olibanum, turpentine, myrrh, mastich, camphor and white wine. Paracelsus was responsible for a salve made of human ordure which he called zebethum occidentale; this was also dignified by professional use.

The aforementioned Dr. Pontaeus also popularized in England a salve called orvietan, one of the notorious remedies of the time. In 1647 a merchant of Orvieto paid liberally for the endorsement of his drug by twelve members of the Paris Faculté. When the rest of this solemn body had news of the deed, it expelled the erring dozen by decree. Later on, however, the brethren were reinstated, but Gui Patin wrote with grim enjoyment, "No matter what they have been able to do since, the stain remains on them."<sup>9</sup> Molière must have remembered all this when he later sang the praises of orvietan with a satirical note directed towards the Faculté, for whose ineptness he had such contempt and scorn:

L'or de tous les climats qu'entoure l'Océan,  
Peut-il jamais payer ce secret d'importance?  
Mon remède guérit, par sa rare excellence,  
Plus de maux qu'on n'en peut nombrer dans  
tout un an:

La gale  
La rogne  
La teigne  
La peste  
La goutte  
Vérole  
Déscente  
Rougeole

O grande puissance  
De l'orviétan.

Admirez mes bontés, et le peu qu'on vous  
vend

Ce trésor merveilleuse que ma main vous  
dispense.

Vous pouvez, avec lui, braver en assurance  
Tous les maux que sur nous l'ire de ciel  
répand.

[Itch  
Mange

Scurf  
 Plague  
 Gout  
 Pox  
 Flux  
 Measles]  
 O grande puissance  
 De l'orviétan.

*L'Amour Médecin, ii.*

The origin of these secret salves was made as mysterious as the verbal powers of their discoverers could render them. Then as now, the secret of the nostrum's potency lay not in the ingredients but in the compounding of them. They were all mixed with a "science metaphysical," like the one below:

*Olympia.* Stay now, my lord; and will you save my honor,

I'll give your grace a present of such price  
 As all the world cannot afford the like.

*Theridamus.* What is it?

*Olympia.* An ointment which a cunning alchemist

Distilled from the purest balsamum  
 And simplest extracts of all minerals,  
 In which the essential form of marble  
 stone,

Temper'd by science metaphysical,  
 And spells of magic from the mouths of  
 spirits,

With which if you but 'noint your tender  
 skin,

Nor sword, pistol, nor lance can pierce your  
 flesh.

*II Tamburlaine, iv, 2.*

After the patent medicines, we come to more orthodox specifics. Their multiplicity is discouraging to anyone who would reduce this therapeutic chaos to order. Three hundred years ago medical diagnosis was in a rudimentary state, and prognosis belonged as much to the province of the prophet as the physician. But if diagnosis and prognosis were alike uncertain in the doctor's hands, his therapeutics were invariably his strong point. The physician may not have known the disease or its out-

come, but he was always ready with a treatment:

*1st Courtier.* What cures has he?

*Bawdber.* Armies of those we call physicians;  
 Some with clysters, some with lettice-caps,  
 Some posset-drinks, some pills; twenty con-  
 sulting here

About a drench, as many here to blood  
 him.

Then comes a don of Spain, and he pre-  
 scribes

More cooling opium than would kill a  
 Turk,

Or quench a whore i' the dog-days; after  
 him

A wise Italian, and he cries, "Tie unto him  
 A woman of four-score, whose bones are  
 marble,

Whose blood snow-water, not so much heat  
 about her

As may conceive a prayer!" after him,

An English doctor with a bunch of pot-  
 herbs,

And cries out "Endive and succory,

With a few mallow-roots and butter-milk!"  
 And talks of oil made of a churchman's  
 charity.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER, *Thierry and Theodoret, v, 2.*

Only a physician as wise and honest as John Radcliffe would look back over the course of his medical practice and admit that "when a young practitioner, he possessed twenty remedies for every disease; and at the close of his career, he found twenty diseases for which he had not one remedy."<sup>10</sup>

The pharmacopeia has already borne witness to the century's ample stock of remedies animal, vegetable and mineral. The origin of the use of simples for medicinal purposes belongs to remote antiquity. Sir E. A. Wallis Budge writes:

Primitive peoples believed that the first beings who possessed a knowledge of plants and their healing properties were the gods themselves. They further thought that the substances of plants were parts

and parcels of the substances of which the persons of the gods were composed, and that the juices of plants were exudations or effluxes from them likewise. Some of the ancients thought that certain curative plants and herbs contained portions of the souls or spirits of the gods and spirits that were benevolent to man, and that poisonous plants were the abodes of evil spirits that were hostile to the Creator—inasmuch as they destroyed His handiwork, man—and to man and beast.<sup>11</sup>

The Bible says, "The Lord hath created medicines out of the earth,"<sup>12</sup> and again, "He causeth herbs to grow for the service of man."<sup>13</sup> The Lord did not say that herbs grew for the service of the physician, and the omission is significant; for folk-medicine has always been in the main botanic medicine. The rustic inhabitants of the fields and forests were naturally drawn closer to the plants they saw growing around them as free gifts from Heaven than were the physicians who saw merely the dried simples in a dingy apothecary's shop. Thus we find that those best versed in the lore of medicinal plants were shepherds and farmers, wise-women and white witches. It was due to them rather than to the doctors that the old pharmacopeias were overflowing with the names of herbs.

This traditional bucolic knowledge appears in a scene (*ii, 2*) from John Fletcher's pastoral, "The Faithful Shepherdess":

*Enter Clorin, sorting herbs.*

Now let me see what my best art hath done,  
 Helped by the great power of the virtuous moon  
 In her full light. Oh, you sons of earth  
 You only brood, unto whose happy birth  
 Virtue was given, holding more of nature  
 Than man, her first-born and most perfect creature,  
 Let me adore you! you, that only can  
 Help or kill nature, drawing out that span

Of life and death even to the end of time;  
 You, that these hands did crop long before  
 prime  
 Of day, give me your names, and next, your  
 hidden power.

This is the clote, bearing a yellow flower;  
 And this, black horehound; both are very  
 good

For sheep or shepherd bitten by a wood  
 Dog's venom'd tooth: these rhamnus'  
 branches are

Which, stuck in entries, or about the bar  
 That holds the door, kill all enchantments,  
 charms,

(Were they Medea's verses) that do harms  
 To men or cattle: these for frenzy be  
 A speedy and a sovereign remedy,  
 The bitter wormwood sage, and marigold;  
 Such sympathy with man's good they do  
 hold:

This tormentil, whose virtue is to part  
 All deadly killing poison from the heart.  
 And, here, narcissus root, for swellings best:  
 Yellow lysimachus, to give sweet rest  
 To the faint shepherd, killing, where it  
 comes,

All busy gnats, and every fly that hums:  
 For leprosy, darnel and celandine,  
 With calamint, whose virtues do refine  
 The blood of man, making it free and fair  
 As the first hour it breathed, or the best air:  
 Here, other two; but your rebellious use  
 Is not for me, whose goodness is abuse;  
 Therefore, foul standergrass, from me and  
 mine

I banish thee, with lustful turpentine;  
 You that entice the veins and stir the heat  
 To civil mutiny, scaling the seat  
 Our reason moves in, and deluding it  
 With dreams and wanton fancies, till the fit  
 Of burning lust be quenched, by appetite  
 Robbing the soul of blessedness and light:  
 And thou, light vervain, too, thou must go  
 after,

Provoking easy souls to mirth and laughter;  
 No more shall I dip thee in water now,  
 And sprinkle every post and every bough  
 With thy well pleasing juice, to make the  
 grooms

Swell with high mirth, and with joy all the  
 rooms.

Gathering simples was a much more intricate affair than merely finding and plucking them. To have the proper vir-

tue they must have been gathered at certain times of the day and year and in certain phases of the moon:

Helped by the great power of the virtuous  
moon  
In her full light.<sup>14</sup>

Otherwise the plants were likely to be powerless to cure, or even, indeed, actively prone to injure instead of heal. The reader may recall chapters 49 to 52 of the third book of "Gargantua and Pantagruel," "How the Famous Pantagruelion Ought to be Prepared and Wrought," etc., which constitute a fascinating disquisition on the names, history and uses of various herbs.

Of all the vegetable remedies the most frequently mentioned by the dramatists was rhubarbe. It was the purge *par excellence* of the century.

*Belleur.* This I'll promise ye  
I will take rhubarbe, and purge choler  
mainly,  
Abundantly I'll purge.  
FLETCHER, *Wild Goose Chase*, iv, 2.

*Flamineo.* Are you choleric?  
I'll purge't with rhubarbe.  
*White Devil*, v, 1.

*Ferdinand.* Rhubarbe, oh, for rhubarbe  
To purge this choler.  
*Duchess of Malfi*, ii, 5.

*Macbeth.* What rhubarbe, senna, or what  
purgative drug  
Would scour these English hence?  
*Macbeth*, v, 3.

The French and Spanish were as fond  
of the same drug:

*Sganarelle.* Voici la belle nourrice. Ah!  
nourrice de mon coeur, je suis ravi de  
cette rencontre; et votre vue est la  
rhubarbe, la casse, et le séné qui pur-  
gent toute la mélancholie de mon  
âme.  
*Médecin malgré Lui*, iii, 3.

Truly, cry'd the Curate, he, with his

Second, Third, and Fourth Parts, had  
need of a dose of *Rhubarb* to purge  
his excessive Choler.

*Don Quixote*, Bk. 1, Ch. 6.

Scattered here and there throughout  
the plays are references to other vege-  
table remedies, far more common, how-  
ever, off the stage than on. For we shall  
be expecting too much to look for the  
"Pharmacopoeia" of 1650 divided into  
acts and scenes. Here are a few further  
references:

Liquorice for hoarseness:

*Wife.* Now, I pray you, make my com-  
mendations unto him, and withal  
carry him this stick of liquorice; tell  
him his mistress sent it to him; and  
bid him bite a piece; 'twill open his  
pipes the better, say.  
*Knight of the Burning Pestle*, i, 2.

*Carduus benedictus* (blessed thistle)  
for worms:

*Wife.* Faith, the child hath a sweet breath,  
George; but I think it be troubled  
with the worms; *carduus benedictus*  
and mare's milk were the only thing  
in the world for't.  
*Id.*, iii, 4.

Cinnamon water for indigestion:

*Coachman.* You must bring two dishes of  
chocolate and a glass of cinnamon-  
water.

*Witwoud.* That should be for two fasting  
strumpets, and a bawd troubled with  
the wind.  
CONGREVE, *Way of the World*, i, 2.

Asafetida for hysterics:

*Mirabell.* . . . is there a worse disease  
than the conversation of fools?  
*Mrs. Millamont.* Yes, the vapours; fools  
are physic for it, next to assafoetida.  
*Id.*, ii, 2.

*Lady Duncce.* Then for his person, 'tis in-

comparably odious; he hath such a breath, one kiss of him were enough to cure the fits of the mother; 'tis worse than assafoetida.

OTWAY, *Soldier's Fortune*, i, 2.

*Belliza* falls into a fainting fit, and *Gre-mia* cries:

. . . Ah me, help, help my Lady, cut her Lace, get some *Arsa foetida*, blew Inkle, or Partridge Feathers, and burn under her Nose.

SHADWELL, *Amorous Bigotte*, v.

Inkle was a linen thread or yarn which when set on fire smouldered with a strong smell; the odour of singeing fowl needs no introduction. *Sir Humphrey Maggot* remembered this when he was confronted by two strumpets in hysterics:

. . . Gad take me! hold the Gentlewomen, bring some cold water, and flower, burn some blew inkle and Partridge Feathers, 'tis my Ladies Medicine.

SHADWELL, *Scowrers*, i.

Turning from the vegetable to the animal kingdom, one's interest heightens as the scientific respectability of the remedies wanes. The fascination of the older therapeutics lies in the fantastic uses to which animals were put in the cure of disease. The basis for the use of live animals lay in the ancient Greek conception of illness as a dyscrasia or imperfect balance of the humors. The physician attempted to restore the normal balance by applying remedies contrary to the nature of the disease: "Contraria contrariis curantur." Thus continued fevers called for bleeding and draughts of cold water, the first removing the excess of hot blood and the second cooling the intemperate heat of the heart. Bodily debility, on the other hand, would by the same token be treated with heat, and preferably by the vital heat emitted by a living organism.

The body holds tenaciously to its normal temperature, and when a sick man begins to grow cold it is a sign that death is not far away. As a last measure to forestall the coming dissolution, the old physicians placed live pigeons to the feet of the dying man. When Katherine, Charles II's Queen, was believed at the point of death, Pepys wrote:

. . . Coming to St. James, I hear that the Queen did sleep five hours pretty well to-night, and that she waked and gargled her mouth, and to sleep again; but that her pulse beats fast, beating twenty to the King's or my Lady Suffolk's eleven; but not so strong as it was. It seems she was so ill as to be shaved and pigeons put to her feet, and to have the extreme unction given her by the priests, who were so long about it that the doctors were angry. (*Diary*, Oct. 19, 1663.)

The practice furnished the poets with a striking metaphor:

*Bosola*. I would sooner eat a dead pigeon taken from the soles of the feet of one sick of the plague than kiss one of you fasting.

*Duchess of Malfi*, ii, 1.

*Lady Duncce*. Bless us, to be yoked in wedlock with a paralytic, coughing, decrepit dotterel; to be a dry-nurse all one's lifetime to an old child of sixty-five; to lie by the image of death a whole night, a dull immoveable, that has no sense of life but through its pains! the pigeon's as happy that's laid to a sick man's feet, when the world has given him over.

OTWAY, *Soldier's Fortune*, i, 2.

And Sir John Suckling gives some advice to Jack Bond in a letter written in 1642:

. . . Marrying . . . would certainly cure it; but that is a kind of live pigeons laid to the soles of the feet, a last remedy, and (to say truth) worse than the disease.

Mice, too, had their medical uses. William Bullein prescribed for a nervous malady "a small young mouse rosted," and the good *Wife* in "The Knight of the Burning Pestle," a priceless repository of unofficial curative secrets, mentions another (*iii*, 2):

. . . Faith, and those chilblains are a foul trouble. Mistress Merrythought, when your youth comes home, let him rub all the soles of his feet, and his heels, and his ancles, with a mouse-skin; or if none of your people can catch a mouse, when he goes to bed, let him roll his feet in the warm embers, and, I warrant you, he shall be well.

According to the old physiology the heart was the site of heat formation in the body. Aristotle knew that the mouse's heart was of large size compared to the small bulk of its body, and consequently for its weight the mouse was an extraordinary source of heat. This has been proudly confirmed by modern experts on metabolism. Since chilblains are caused by excessive cold, application of the skin of this very warm-hearted little beast would by its sympathetic virtue supply heat to the affected limbs. Although one may suspect that warm embers would have proved more efficacious in the long run, one cannot but admire the logic of the sympathetic cure.

Still another animal, the human one, was used in Medicine, but dead, powdered and in the form of *mummi*a or *mummy*. Webster's two great tragedies are overflowing with ghastly and sinister medical metaphors, and "such unnatural and horrid physic" as *mummi*a fascinated his dreadful Muse.

*Gasparo.* Your followers  
Have swallowed you like *mummi*a and,  
being sick  
With such unnatural and horrid physic,  
Vomit you up i' the kennel.

*White Devil*, *i*, 1.

In a later scene *Isabella*, in an outburst of fury against the White Devil, cries:

To dig the strumpet's eyes out; let her lie  
Some twenty months a dying; to cut off  
Her nose and lips, pull out her rotten teeth;  
Preserve her flesh like *mummi*a, for trophies  
Of my just anger!

*Id.*, *ii*, 1.

True *mummi*a was made from genuine Egyptian remains, but like all precious substances was often adulterated or counterfeited outright. Bodies stolen from the gallows sometimes ended in sixteenth-century apothecaries' shops, but more often any simple resinous substance served the druggists' purpose. Ambroise Paré shrugged his shoulders (there was far more shrewdness than imagination in his make-up) and pointed out that *mummi*a from whatever source was equally valueless. But Sir Thomas Browne, always sympathetic to the fate of long-dead worthies, wrote in sonorous prose:

*Mummie* is become merchandise, *Mizraim* cures wounds, and *Pharaoh* is sold for balsams. (*Urne Buriall*, *Ch.* 5.)

Animal remedies were easily counterfeited. Thomas Nashe tells the tragic tale of *Doctor Zacharie*, the Pope's physician, whose parsimony led him to prepare medicines in stranger ways "than ever Paracelsus dream'd of."

Out of bones after the meate was eaten off, hee would alchumize an oyle, that hee sold for a shilling a dram. His snot and spittle a hundred times hee hath put over to his Apothecarie for snow water. Anie spider hee would temper to perfect *Mithridate*. His rumaticke eyes when hee went in the winde, or rose early in a morning, dropt as coole allome water as you would request. He was dame *Niggardize* sole heire and executor. A number of old books had he eaten with the moaths and wormes, now all day would not he studie a dodkin, but picke those wormes and

moaths out of his Librairie, and of their mixture make a preservative against the plague. The licour out of his shoes hee would wring to make a sacred Balsamum against barrennes. (*Unfortunate Traveller*, p. 339.)

As succeeding editions of the pharmacopeias dropped more and more animal and vegetable remedies from their rolls, an increasing number of chemical preparations took their places. As a typical example of one of the new spagyric specifics there was Hungarian vitriol, a solution of copper nitrate:

*Belinda*. Your ladyship seems disorder'd:  
A breeding qualm, perhaps, Mr. Heart-free:  
Your bottle of Hungary water to the lady.  
VANBRUGH, *Provok'd Wife*, v, 6.

This was one of the prescriptions sent by Dr. Sydenham to the apothecary's. This famous physician also used flos unguentorum in his practice, and dragon's water, that enemy of the plague which the *Knight of the Burning Pestle* sold before he won his spurs.

Urine was a fluid fertile in chemical aids to good health. Rabelais tells how "chemists extract the best salt-petre in the world out of sheep's urine," and in England:

*4th Madman*. Shall my Pothecary outgo me because I am a Cuckold? I have found out his roguery: he makes alum of his wife's urine, and sells it to Puritans, that have sore-throats with over-straining.  
*Duchess of Malfi*, iv, 2.

Both Glauber's and Rochelle salts were introduced into the materia medica in the seventeenth century, and then too hartshorn or ammonia-water began its long popularity as a remedy for faintness:

*Sylvia*. So far as to be troubled with neither spleen, colic, nor vapours, I

need no salts for my stomach, no hartshorn for my head, nor wash for my complection.

FARQUHAR, *Recruiting Officer*, i, 2.

*Lady Addleplot*. . . . the very thought of him gives me the vapours; prithee give me my Spirit of hartshorne.

D'URFEY, *Love for Money*, ii, 1.

*Lady Froth*. . . . My dear, you're melancholy.

*Lord Froth*. No, my dear; I'm but just awake.

*Lady Froth*. Snuff some of my spirit of hartshorn.

*Lord Froth*. I've some of my own, thank you, my dear.

CONGREVE, *Double Dealer*, v, 5.

From this touching conjugal dialogue one would never imagine that Lord Froth had just been presented with a pair of horns. Perhaps the fops carried spirit of hartshorn, not out of affected elegance, but for domestic episodes of this sort.

In another tale of extra-marital amour it was the cornuted husband who offered his confused wife a whiff of ammonia. *Mrs. Hackwell* and her friend *Nickum* have retired to a bedroom to lengthen old *Colonel Hackwell's* horns. The Colonel is tipped off by a revengeful serving-maid and surprises the pair in bed. "Ounds we are undone!" wails *Nickum*. Then inspiration seizes him. "Counterfeit a sounding fit," he whispers, whereupon *Mrs. Hackwell* groans and falls back on the bed while *Nickum* successfully draws the wool over the cuckold's eyes:

Oh Heavens she's gone! she's gone!  
Nay, you are come to late, wou'd no body hear me, when I knock't for help (as if I would have beaten the house down! poor Lady! I heard a noise in her Chamber; and found her upon the Floor, beating her self and

knocking her Head against the Ground. She has kill'd herself, I believe.

*Lettrice.* Oh Devil. Thou father of lies!

*Hack. Sen.* Oh my Lamb,—my poor Lamb—take my Keys! run, run for some spirit of Heartshorn, run—run.—

SHADWELL, *Volunteers, iv.*

But even more popular than ammonia for syncope was alcohol. There were many alcoholic cordials in use, particularly two called *rosa solis* and *aqua mirabilis*, and including of course *aqua vitae*. The use of these panaceas overflowed the bounds of medical propriety, and even the easy-going dramatists were scandalized at the amount of tipping which went on under the guise of a little *aqua vitae* or *mirabilis* for the stomach's sake. It was not drunkenness to which they objected, one gathers, but hypocrisy. The ladies were the greatest offenders and paid for their sins by frequent castigation on the stage. Thus Dryden in "Marriage a la Mode" (*iii, 1*) describes the visit of a citizen's wife to some country cousin "who treats her with furmity and custard, and opens her dear bottle of *mirabilis* beside, for a gill-glass of it at parting."

Apparently the bucolic gentlefolk found in alcohol a true remedy for the monotony of country life. There is a familiar scene in which we see two young girls railing against the dulness of country breeding which forced them to learn:

*Eugenia.* To make clouted cream, and whipt Sillabubs?

*Clara.* To make a Caraway Cake, and raise Py-crust?

*Eugenia.* And to learn the top of your skill in Syrrup, Sweat-meats, *Aqua-mirabilis*, and Snayl water.

SHADWELL, *Scowrers, ii.*

It must have required no mean skill, by the way, to have prepared *aqua mirabilis*, for Sir Kenelm Digby's recipe included a score of ingredients and a glass still with which to distil their essence. *Eugenia's* last remedy might have been included with mummy and mouse as an example of animal therapy. G. Hartman, "True Preserver and Rest. Health," 1682, mentions "Dr. Harvey his excellent Snail-water against Consumptions and Hecktick Feavers."

But this has led us away from two more feminine tipplers: the old widow *Belliza* who could hardly wait until her suitor arrived:

I shall never hold out without some *Aqua Mirabilis*, I grow so chill, and quake.

SHADWELL, *Amorous Bigotte, iv.*

And *Lady Ninny*, of whom said *Pendant*, "One may see by her nose what pottage she loves" (Field: "Woman is a Weathercock," *i, 2*).

The other sex came in for its share of the satirists' slaps:

*Sir Patient Fancy.* But oh, I'm sick at Heart, Maundy fetch me the Bottle of *Mirabilis* in the Closet, . . .

MRS. BEHN, *Sir Patient Fancy, iv, 3.*

Whereupon the old gentleman tipples his way into a very frolicsome and lick-erish state.

*Soranzo.* Then let me not in vain

Still feel the rigour of your chaste disdain:

I'm sick, and sick to the heart.

*Annabelle.* Help, *aqua-vitae*.

*Soranzo.* What mean you?

*Annabelle.* Why, I thought you had been sick.

FORD, 'Tis Pity She's a Whore, *iii, 1.*

*Emilia.* Some *Rosa solis* or *Aqua mirabilis* ho! for our generall coward's in a swoon.

DAY, *Law Tricks, iv, 1.*

*Mulligrub.* I'll hang him with mine own hands!

O wife! some *rosa solis*.

MARSTON, *Dutch Courtezan*, ii, 3.

Fabel. . . . Some *Aqua-vitae*,  
The devil is very sick, I fear he'll die,  
For he looks very ill.

*Merry Devil of Edmonton*. Induction.

A very drunken Sot  
The Hickock had got,  
Cause he drank *Rosa Solis* and *Aqua Vitae*:  
Such Latine drink that he  
Declines *Hic, Hoc*, very free,  
But such English words as wou'd fright ye.  
*Westminster Quibbles in Verse*.<sup>15</sup>

The caricature by Rowlandson of a midwife off on a professional visit with a bottle of brandy under a fat and frowsy arm finds a literary prototype here:

*Maria*. Does it work upon him?  
*Sir Toby Belch*. Like aqua-vitae with a  
mid-wife.

*Twelfth Night*, ii, 5.

The doctors themselves had a quaint belief in the power of alcohol to cure all ills. James Atkinson recalls that Asclepiades of Prusa "prescribed wine for himself, and for his patients, something to excess." Pliny relates that he died from a fall. Of him says the comical poet:

Wherefore to cure all his bruises and knocks,  
He was used to drink *vinum* orthodox;  
And one day did it so effectually,  
He dislocated his epistrophe.

Avicenna was another devotee of the wine-bottle; and the illustrious Jean Pecquet, the seventeenth-century discoverer of the thoracic duct, prescribed brandy for his patients and himself until his career tumbled down in ruins.

The therapeutic triumph of the century was not the popularization of brandy, however, but the introduction into Europe of Peruvian bark or cinchona. In the early days of the seventeenth century the Countess of Cin-

chon, wife of the viceroy of Peru, was cured of malaria by means of the bark of a certain tree. Brought back to Europe in 1632 by the Jesuits, this drug was forced to overcome the prejudice of a conservative medical profession opposed to anything new. Gui Patin, of course, expressed his disapproval to a correspondent:

This powder of cinchona has not any credit here. Fools run after it because it is sold at a very high price, but having proved ineffective it is mocked at now.<sup>16</sup>

This was in 1653. Two years afterwards cinchona was first sold and used in England. In 1658, as Cromwell died of his ague, it was advertised as "the fever bark, commonly called Jesuites powder," imported by James Thomson, merchant of Antwerp.

The credit is usually assigned to Dr. Sydenham for having introduced cinchona into medical practice in England, and for having overcome the initial prejudice against its use. Certainly we owe to him the classification of Peruvian bark as a *specific* remedy for intermittent fevers. It was a new and highly gratifying experience for the seventeenth-century physician to watch this drug cure an ague in hours, whereas under older non-specific treatments such fevers took weeks to disappear. There were elements of drama in such a contrast, nor did they escape the observant eye of the contemporary dramatist.

*Carlos*. Oh! madam! Marriage—

*Theodosia*. Is to love as the Jesuit's powder is to an ague; it stops the fit, and in a little time wears it quite off.

The allusion comes from the ever-attentive Thomas Shadwell's pen in "A True Widow" (v, 1), produced in 1679. It is indeed remarkable that the first widespread use of cinchona (in 1663)

was followed only fifteen years later by a beautifully turned epigram spoken from the stage. Normally the lag between a medical discovery and its appearance in the popular literature was then nearer a century than a decade, but Shadwell's peculiar genius provides us with more than one exception to this rule. "Og's" writing may have lacked finish, but it did not lack timeliness of appeal, and he was ever before his scribbling colleagues in turning Medicine's new tools into satire's new weapons.

A second reference to the bark comes from Congreve's "The Old Bachelor" (*ii, 1*), staged in 1693:

*Bluffe.* But! look you here, boy, here's your antidote, here's your Jesuit's powder for a shaking fit.

A more sober account of the standing of Peruvian bark is given by John Evelyn a year later:

I visited the Marquis of Normanby, and had much discourse concerning King Charles II. being poisoned.—Also concerning the *Quinquina* which the physicians would not give to the King, at a time when, in a dangerous ague, it was the only thing that could cure him (out of envy because it had been brought into vogue by Mr. Tudor, an apothecary) till Dr. Short, to whom the King sent to know his opinion of it privately, he being reputed a Papist (but who was in truth a very honest good Christian), sent word to the King that it was the only thing which could save his life, and then the King enjoined his physicians to give it to him, which they did, and he recovered. Being asked by this Lord why they would not prescribe it, Dr. Lower said it would spoil their practice, or some such expression, and at last confessed it was a remedy fit only for kings. (*Diary, vol. 2, p. 334.*)

The "Mr. Tudor" mentioned was Robert Talbor, a strong though quack-

ish contender for the honor of having first successfully prescribed cinchona in England.<sup>17</sup> It has been alleged, rather unwarrantedly, I think, that he stole his knowledge of the bark from Robert Brady, Professor of Physic at Cambridge, where Talbor was at one time bound to a druggist.<sup>18</sup> Gideon Harvey in one of his bombastic tirades called Talbor a "debauched apothecary's apprentice," but the fascinating Doctor Harvey was notorious in his day for his low opinion of his colleagues and his high opinion of himself.<sup>19</sup> Probably Talbor's main fault in the eyes of his professional brethren was his unprecedented success, which brought him eventually to a fortune and a knighthood, while poor Gideon tried his unavailing best to get elected to the Royal College of Physicians without taking the entrance examinations he considered beneath his dignity.

Thus far we have dealt with remedies animal, vegetable and mineral, but the century had spiritual ones also. Charms were an essential part of the armamentarium of every patient, and sometimes of the physician too. For example, the lady who felt a faintness coming on had the choice of a tot of brandy, a whiff of ammonia, or:

*Leonora.* I have within my closet a choice relic  
Preservative against swoounding, and  
some earth  
Brought from the Holy Land, right sov-  
ereign  
To staunch blood.

WEBSTER, *Devil's Law Case, ii, 3.*

Flowing blood could be controlled in as many ways. Aside from the Holy Earth:

There are about the house  
Some stones that will staunch blood: see them  
sought out.

*Nero Caesar, iii, 6.*

A magic rhyme:

Sanguis mane in te,  
Sicut Christus fuit in se;  
Sanguis mane in tua vena  
Sicut Christus in sua poena;  
Sanguis mane fixus,  
Sicut Christus quando fuit crucifixus.

Or more mundane methods:

*Lady Bountiful.* Let me see your arm, sir  
—I must have some powder-sugar to  
stop the blood.—O me! an ugly gash,  
upon my word, sir!

FARQUHAR, *Beaux Strategem*, v, 4.

*Bottom.* I shall desire of you more acquaintance, good Master Cobweb; if I cut my finger, I shall make bold with you.

*Midsummer Night's Dream*, iii, 1.

*2nd Servant.* Go thou; I'll fetch some flax and whites of eggs

To apply to his bleeding face.

*King Lear*, iii, 7.

Anyone would expect the credulous Pepys to be an authority on charms, and in point of fact he is. To round out his record of the year 1664 he gives five charms in verse: one for "stenching of blood" (already transcribed), two for a thorne, one each for a cramp and a burning. At the same time he is experimenting with a hare's foot for the relief of his troublesome colic, and on the last day of the old year he writes:

I bless God I have never been in so good plight as to my health in so very cold weather as this is, nor indeed in any hot weather, these ten years, as I am this day, and have been these four or five months. But I am at a great loss to know whether it be my hare's foote, or taking every morning of a pill of turpentine, or my having left off the wearing of a gowne. (*Diary*, December 31, 1664.)

And a fortnight later:

So homeward, in my way buying a hare and taking it home, which arose upon my

discourse today with Mr. Batten, in Westminster Hall, who showed me my mistake that my hare's foote hath not the joynt to it; and assures me he never had his colique since he carried it about him: and it is a strange thing how fancy works, but I no sooner almost handled his foote but my belly began to be loose and to break wind, and whereas I was in some pain yesterday and tother day and in fear of more today, I became very well and so continue. (*Id.*, January 20, 1664-65.)

On the following day:

To my office till past 12, and then home to supper and to bed, being now mighty well, and truly I cannot but impute it to my fresh hare's foote.

On March twenty-sixth of the same year Pepys is still well, and still undecided whether his health is due to his hare's foote, his turpentine pills or his sleeping without a gowne. Or to all together! The attempt to resolve similar questions had led many a more learned doctor a merry chase.

The stage provides many counterparts of Pepys' hare's foot.

*Duchess.* Fie, fie, what's all this?

One of your eyes is bloodshot, use my ring to't,

They say 'tis very sovereign.

*Duchess of Malfi*, i, 1.

*Mrs. Openwork.* Because Goshawk goes in a shagruft band, with a face sticking up in't like an agate set in a cramp ring, he thinks I'm in love with him.

MIDDLETON, *Roaring Girl*, iv, 2.

*Lady Squeamish.* Bring me a mask with an Amber-bead, for I fear I may have Fits tonight.

OTWAY, *Friendship in Fashion*, iii.

*Lady Addleplot.* . . . and truly I think Pearls are good against the Spleen.

D'URFEY, *Love for Money*, ii, 1.

There is a neat *double entendre* here. Perhaps pearls were helpful in affections of the spleen, but certainly a gift of the jewels was always efficacious in turning away wrath.

Rhymes to charm away diseases abounded:

*Playfair.* . . . get a rime  
To bless her when she sneezes.  
*Love Will Find Out the Way, ii.*

*Volpone.* I do feel the fever  
Entering in at mine ears; O, for a charm  
To fright it hence.  
*Volpone, iii, 2.*

Samuel Butler's "*Rosy-Crucian Sidrophel*" had a full supply to:

Cure warts and corns, with application  
Of med'cines to th' imagination;  
Fright agues into dogs, and scare  
With rhymes, the tooth-ache and catarrh.  
*Hudibras, ii, 3, 287-290.*

Charms for the toothache were particularly popular. Mr. Ashmole gave Aubrey one, and guaranteed it:

*To cure the Tooth-Ach: out of Mr. Ashmole's manuscript writ with his own hand.*  
*Mars, hur, abursa, aburse.*  
Jesu Christ for Mary's sake,  
Take away this Tooth-Ach

Write the words three times; and as you say the words, let the party burn one paper, then another, and then the last.  
(AUBREY, *Miscellanies*, p. 135.)

Evidently people were willing to go to even greater lengths to avoid the tender manipulations of the barber-surgeons:

*Delia.* He has worn gun-powder in's hollow  
tooth,  
For the tooth-ache.  
WEBSTER, *Duchess of Malfi, iii, 3.*

But, said a more perspicacious observer:

They inuented as many Enchauntments for loue, as they did for the Tooth-ach, but he that hath tryed both will say, that

the best charme for a Toothe, is to pull it out, and the best remedie for Loue to weare it out. (LYLY, *Euphues & His England, Works, II, 116.*)

In the broader realm of "med'cines to th' imagination" were the seventeenth-century faith-healers. The reigns of Elizabeth and her immediate predecessors abounded in medical and surgical amateurs. Jeaffreson mentions Sir T. Eliot, Sir Philip Parras, Sir William Gasgoyne, Lady Taylor, Lady Darrel, Sir Andrew Haveningham, an Earl of Derby, the Earl of Herfurth and James IV of Scotland; and in sad recognition of his own century's decadence he remarks, "The only art which fashionable people now-a-days care much to meddle with is literature."<sup>20</sup>

John Aubrey's "Lives" contain thumbnail portraits of a number of iatric amateurs. William Penn's wife was:

. . . virtuous, generous, wise, humble; generally beloved for those good qualities and one more—the great cures she does, having great skill in physic and surgery, which she freely bestows. (*Vol. 2, 134.*)

Of the Reverend William Holder's wife:

. . . Amongst many other guifts she haz a strange sagacity as to curing of wounds, which she does not doe so much by pre-sents and reciept bookes, as by her owne excogitancy, considering the causes, effects and circumstances. (*Vol. 1, 405.*)

Sir Walter Raleigh:

. . . he made an excellent cordiall, good in feavers, etc.; Mr. R. Boyle haz the recipe, and makes it and does great cures by it. (*Vol. 2, 182.*)

Judge Walter Rumsey:

. . . was much troubled with flegme, and being so one winter at the court at Ludlowe . . . sitting by the fire, spitting and

spawling, he tooke a fine tender spring, and tied a ragge at the end, and conceited he might putt it downe his throate, and fetch-up the flegme, and he did so. Afterwards he made this instrument of whalebone. . . . It makes you vomit without any paine, and besides, the vomits of apothecaries have *aliquid veneni* in them. He wrote a little 8vo booke, of this way of medicine, called *Organon Salutis*: London . . . 1659. (*Vol. 2, 206.*)

Sir Jonas Moore:

. . . Sciatica he cured it, by boyling his buttock. (*Vol. 2, 78.*)

Then there was the wife of Dr. Thomas Iles, one of the canons of "X<sup>t</sup> Ch." She was not only "a knowing woman in physique and surgery, and did many cures," but to her Thomas Willis owed the early training which culminated in enduring fame:

. . . Tom Willis then wore a blew livery-cloak, and studied at the lower end of the hall, by the hall-dore; was pretty handy, and his mistresse would oftentimes have him to assist her in making of medicines. This did him no hurt, and allured him on. (*Vol. 2, 303.*)

Leaving life for literature we find George Peele during one of his villon-  
esque adventures taking dinner at an inn, and:

. . . among other table-talke, they fell into discourse of Chirurgerie, of which my Hostis was a simple professor. *George Peele* observing the humour of my she Chirurgion, upheld her in all the strange cures she talked of, and praised her womanly endeavour; telling her, he loved her so much the better, because it was a thing he professed, both Physicke and Chirurgirie. . . . (*Merie Conceited Jestes of George Peele Gentleman.*<sup>21</sup>)

And on the stage there was *Lady Bountiful*, whose name now typifies the overpoweringly gracious lady irresist-

ibly soothing the ills of the helpless poor:

*Lady Bountiful*. Well, daughter Sullen, though you may laugh, I have done miracles about the country here with my receipts.

*Mrs. Sullen*. Miracles, indeed, if they have cured anybody; but I believe, madam, the patient's faith goes farther towards the miracle than your prescription.

FARQUHAR, *Beaux Stratagem*, iv, 1.

Farquhar's satirical attitude has been lost somewhere in the passage of the years.

There were professional faith-healers, too:

*Blaze*. . . . it will astonish you  
To hear the mervailles he hath done in  
cures  
Of such distracted ones, as is your  
sonne,  
And not so much by bodily Physicke  
(no!  
He sends few Recipes to th' Apothe-  
caries)  
As medicine of the minde.

BROME, *Antipodes*, i, 1.

"Medicine of the minde" was what *Sir William Ferrers* needed, whose in-  
amorata disdained his love on the en-  
tirely fictitious ground that he possessed  
"an ill-favoured great nose, that hangs  
sagging so lothsomely to your lips, that  
I cannot find it in my heart so much as  
to kisse you."

What, my nose (quoth he)? is my nose  
so great and I never knew it? certainly I  
thought my nose to be as comely as any  
mans: but this it is we are all apt to think  
well of our selves, and a great deale better  
then we ought: but let me see? my nose!  
by the masse tis true, I do now feele it my  
selfe: Good Lord, how was I blinded be-  
fore?

Hereupon it is certaine, that the Knight  
was driven into such a conceit, as none

could persuade him but his nose was so great indeed; . . .

Whereupon (his) Lady having conferred with a Phisitian that beare a great name in the countrey, hee undertooke to remove this fond conceit by his skill. . . .

The Phisitian being come, hee had filled a certaine bladder with sheepes blood, and conveyed it into his sleeve, where at the issue of the bladder he had put in a piece of swanes quill, through the which the bloud should runne out of the bladder so close by his hand, that he holding the Knight by the nose, it might not be perceived, but that it issued thence. All things being prepared, he told the knight, that by a foule corrupt blood wherewith the veines of his nose were overcharged, his impediment did grow, therefore (quoth he) to have redresse for this disease, you must have a veine opened in your nose, whence this foul corruption must be taken: whereupon it will follow, that your nose will fall againe to his naturall proportion, and never shall you be troubled with this grieffe any more, and thereupon will I gage my life.

I pray you Master Doctor (said the Knight) is my nose so big as you make it?

With reverence I may speake it (said the Phisitian) to tell the truth, and avoid flattery, I never saw a misshapen nose so foule to sight. . . .

All this we will quickly remedy, said the Phisitian, have no doubt: and with that, he very orderly prickt him in the nose, but not in any veine whereby he might bleed: and presently having a tricke finely to unstop the quill, the blood ranne into a bason in great abundance: and when the bladder was empty, and the bason almost full, the Phisitian seemed to close the veine, and asked him how he felt his nose, shewing the great quantite of filthy blood which from thence he had taken.

The Knight beholding it with great wonder, said, he thought that no man in the world had bin troubled with such abundance of corrupt bloud in his whole bodie, as lay in his mis-shapen nose, and therewithall he began to touch and handle his nose, saying that he felt it mightily

asswaged. Immediately a glasse was brought wherein he might behold himselfe.

Yea mary (qd. he) now I praise God, I see my nose is come into some reasonable proportion, and I feele my selfe very well eased of the burthen thereof; but if it continue thus, thats all.

I will warrant your worship (said the Phisitian) for ever being troubled with the like againe.

Whereupon the Knight received great joy, and the Doctor a high reward.

DELONEY, *Thomas of Reading*, p. 131 f.

There were malingerers, too, and gullible husbands who, better versed in merchant's wiles than woman's ills, cured diseases with remedies not found in the pharmacopeia. Such a one was that thrifty weaver, *Simon of Southampton*, in Deloney's tale, whose wife hankered after the fineries of London town. And when *Simon* offered her gray russet and good "hempe-spun cloath," she scorned the offering and straightway fell into a swoon, nor was to be removed from Death's door until the weaver promised her a *Cheapside* gowne.<sup>22</sup>

Even in that robust age there were hypochondriacs to keep the doctors busy:

He that for every qualm will take a recipe and cannot make two meals unless Galen be his God's good, shall be sure to make the physician rich and himself a beggar; his body will never be without diseases and his purse ever without money.

*Euphues and His England*.<sup>23</sup>

A Gentleman not richest in discretion,  
Was always sending for his own phisition.  
And on a time he needs would of him know,  
What was the cause his pulse did go so slow?  
Why (quoth the Doctor) thus it comes to  
passe,

Must needs go slow, which goes upon an  
asse.

*England's Jestes Refin'd and Improv'd*.<sup>24</sup>

A first-class example was one *Sir Patient*

*Fancy*, "an old rich alderman, and one that fancies himself always sick."

*Enter Sir Patient in a Night-Gown, reading a Bill.*

*Sir Patient.* Hum,—Twelve Purges for this present *January*—as I take it, good Mr. Doctor, I took but Ten in all *December*.—By this Rule I am sicker this Month than I was the last.—And good Master Apothecary, methinks your Prizes are somewhat too high: at this rate no body wou'd be sick . . .

MRS. BEHN, *Sir Patient Fancy*, ii, 1.

The scene is strangely reminiscent of *Argan's* opening soliloquy in *Le Malade Imaginaire*. Still, Englishmen may have been as subject as Frenchmen to delusions of disease.

Perhaps the most fantastic of the magical remedies of the time was the sympathetic powder of Sir Kenelm Digby. Its sponsor was one of the most fascinating men of the day. Aubrey, who was Sir Kenelm's fervent admirer, held him to be "the most accomplished cavalier of his time . . ."

He was such a goodly handsome person, gigantesque and great voice, and had so graceful elocution and noble addresse, etc., that had he been drop't out of the clowdes in any part of the world, he would have made himselfe respected. (*Brief Lives*, vol. 1, 225.)

At different periods of his life Digby was an admiral, a theologian, a critic, a metaphysician, a politician, an alchemist. His epitaph by Mr. R. Ferrar is not too eulogistic:

Under this stone the matchless Digby lies,  
Digby the great, the valiant and the wise:  
This age's wonder for his noble parts;  
Skill'd in six tongues, and learn'd in all the  
arts.

Born on the day he died, th' eleventh of  
June,

On which he bravely fought at Scanderoon.  
'Tis rare that one and self-same day should  
be

His day of birth, of death, of victory.<sup>25</sup>

However, one must not forget that another of Digby's contemporaries called him "the very Pliny of the age for lying." He was a man to be greatly admired or cordially hated; and he was both.

At some time before the middle of the century Sir Kenelm met a friar who was in possession of a marvellous secret and happily did him a favor, in return for which Digby received the recipe for the notorious powder of sympathy. This remarkable substance cured wounds when applied, not to the sword-thrust itself, but to a portion of the wearing apparel of the injured man or to the bandage with which the wound had been bound. Hence from the dramatists:

*Modish.* Have you receiv'd any hurt in your Face, that you cover it with your Handkercher?

*Forecast.* A slight one only.

*Estrange.* I have Sympathy-powder about me, if you will give me your handkercher while the blood is warm, will cure it immediately.

SEDLEY, *Mulberry Garden*, iii, 3.

*Scaramouch.* Why, Madam, he is run—quite thro the Heart,—but the Man may live, if I please.

*Elaria.* Thou please! torment me not with Riddles.

*Scaramouch.* Why, Madam, there is a certain cordial Balsam, call'd a fair Lady; which outwardly applied to his Bosom, will prove a better cure than all your Weapon or sympathetic Pouder, meaning your Ladyship.

*Elaria.* Is *Cinthio* then not wounded?

*Scaramouch.* No otherways than by your fair Eyes, Madam . . .

MRS. BEHN, *Emperor of the Moon*, i, 1.

Digby's secret, when it emerged, was found to be simply green vitriol (iron sulphate) recrystallized three times and dried in the midsummer sun. Samuel Butler takes a satirical crack at the whole business in 1662:

Learned he was in med'c'nal lore,  
For by his side a pouch he wore,  
Replete with strange hermetic powder,  
That wounds nine miles point-blank would  
solder.

By skillful chymist, with great cost,  
Extracted from a rotten post;  
But of a heav'nlier influence  
Than that which mountebanks dispense;  
Tho' by Promethean fire made,  
As they do quack that drive that trade.  
For as when slovens do amiss  
At other doors, by stool or piss,  
The learned write, a red-hot spit  
B'ing prudently apply'd to it,  
Will convey mischief from the dung  
Unto the part that did the wrong:  
So this did healing, and as sure  
As that did mischief this would cure.

*Hudibras, i, 2, 223-240.*

Sir Kenelm was linked to still another charming remedy—viper-wine, a decoction in high repute with the superannuated Lotharios who in later days would have submitted to monkey-gland treatments or the Steinach operation. It was well known that the viper is an extremely prolific beast, bringing forth, as Aristotle noted, twenty young at one birth. The implications are obvious.<sup>26</sup>

*Sempronius.* Your viper wine,  
So much in practice with grey-bearded gal-  
lants,  
But vappa to the nectar of her lip.  
*MASSINGER, Believe as You List, iv, 1.*

Vappa was "palled wine," a relatively innocuous drink. The lady was not as innocuous.

Sir Kenelm's connection with viper-wine is told in unblushing detail by John Aubrey. Digby's wife Venetia had been, before her marriage to the knight, the mistress of the Earl of Dorset who

. . . had one if not more children by her. He settled on her an annuity of 500 *li.* per annum<sup>27</sup> . . . which after Sir K. D. married was unpaid by the earle; and for which annuity Sir Kenelme sued the earle, after marriage, and recovered it.<sup>28</sup>

When Digby married his Venetia, much against the good will of his mother, "he would say that 'a wise man, and lusty, could make an honest woman out of a brothell-house.'" Lady Digby

. . . dyed in her bed suddenly. Some suspected that she was poysoned. When her head was opened there was found but little braine, which her husband imputed to her drinking of viper-wine; but spiteful woemen would say 'twas a viper-husband who was jealous of her that she would steale a leape. (*Brief Lives, vol. 1, 231.*)

But Aubrey had it on good authority that after her marriage Venetia redeemed her honor by her "strickt living." Certainly her husband was lusty enough.

It seems fitting at this point, as an emollient to the sensibilities of the modern reader, to say a few words about a favorite anaphrodisiac of the day. This antidote to viper-wine was camphor.

*Gomez.* But oh, this Jezebel of mine! I'll get a physician that shall prescribe her an ounce of camphire every morning, for her breakfast, to abate incontinency.

*DRYDEN, Spanish Friar, i, 2.*

In Mrs. Behn's "The Amourous Prince" (*iv, 4*) Lorenzo has gone a-whoring (as so many of her heroes regrettably do), and has tumbled into more than a lecher's share of trouble. "May I turn *Franciscan*," he exclaims, "if I could not find it in my heart to do penance in Camphire Posset, this Month, for this."

Then there is old *Lady Wishfort* who, dissembling her ardent desire to be remarried, protests:

If you think the least scruple of carnality was an ingredient—

*Waitwell.* Dear madam, no. You are all camphor and frankincense, all chastity and odor.

*CONGREVE, Way of the World, iv, 2.*

But to Sir Thomas Browne this quality of camphor was one of the vulgar errors. He writes:

That Camphire Eunuchates, or begets in Man an impotency unto Venery, observations will hardly confirm; and we have found it to fail in Cocks and Hens, though given for many days; which was a more favourable trial than that of Scaliger, when he gave it unto a Bitch that was proud. (*Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, Bk. 2, Ch. 7.)

From aphrodisiacs and their opposites, it is but a step to the broader and inclusive subject of love. It was the perennial complaint of the poets, abroad as well as in England, that love was one disease in which physic was powerless. The reader will recall *Sapho's* plaint in regard to mithridatum. Other remedies were as useless.

O ye Gods, have ye ordained for every malady a medicine, for every sore a salve, for every pain a plaster, leaving only love remediless?

*Euphues*.<sup>29</sup>

*Physician*. You are in love.  
*Jane*. I think I am: what's your appliance now?  
Can all your Paracelsian mixtures cure it?

MIDDLETON AND ROWLEY,  
*Fair Quarrel*, ii, 2.

*Chirurgion*. Courage, brave Sir; do not mistrust my art.

*Bruce*. Tell me, didst thou e'er cure a wounded heart?

Thy skill, fond man, thou here imploy'st in vain;

The ease thou givest does but encrease my pain.

ETHEREGE, *Comical Revenge*, v, 1.

*Une Bergère*. Votre plus haut savoir n'est que pure chimère,

Vains et peu sages médecins;

Vous ne pouvez guérir, par vos grands mots latins,

La douleur qui me désespère.

Votre plus haut savoir n'est que pure chimère.

*Le Malade Imaginaire*, Prologue.

Love is also a poison with a single antidote. But there were other poisons as well, fatal in a more literal sense. The old plays abounded in poisoning scenes, which as a rule run something like this:

(*Drinks poison*.)

[Then follows a soliloquy.]

(*Dies*.)

From the medical point of view such stage directions are not very enlightening. An allusion as explicit as the following is very rare:

*Flaminius*. . . . See that they want not,

Among their other delicates—

*Crysalus*. Mark that!

*Flaminius*. (*aside to Demetrius*)

A sublimated pill of mercury

For sugar to their wine.

*Demetrius*. I understand you.

MASSINGER, *Virgin-Martyr* ii, 1.

The subtle and mysterious poisons of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries owe their reputations as much to legend as to actual fact. Many of the deaths attributed to secret poisoning were probably due to appendicitis, intestinal obstruction, extrauterine pregnancy or a number of other pathological processes with which the diagnostic ability of the old physicians could not cope. Of the actual poisons used, arsenic early gained the popularity it still keeps, and with bichloride of mercury made up in potency what it lacked in subtlety. There is an interesting episode in Aphra Behn's novel, "The Fair Jilt," which illustrates a crude bit of poisoning but a clever bit of detective work. The tale is too long to quote in full in a chapter already stuffed with the best pages of the best authors. Suffice it that:

. . . the Doctors said, she (*Alcidiana*) had taken Mercury. So that there was

never so formidable a Sight as this fair young Creature; her Head and Body swoln, her Eyes starting out, her Face black, and all deformed.

After questioning cook, butler and footmen, the inquisitors arrived at the Page:

He was examined, and shew'd a thousand guilty Looks: And the Apothecary, then attending among the Doctors, proved he had bought Mercury of him three or four Days before; which he could not deny; and making many Excuses for his buying it, betray'd him the more; so ill he chanced to dissemble. (*Plays and Novels*, vol. 5, p. 255 f.)

It was fortunate for *Alcidiana* (who finally recovered from the effects of her mercury) that the *Page* was not as subtle as the *Doctor* in *The White Devil* (ii, I), who, *Flamineo* jeers:

will shoot pills into a man's guts shall make them have more ventages than a cornet or a lamprey; he will, poison a kiss; and was once minded, for his masterpiece, because Ireland breeds no poison, to have prepared a deadly vapour in a Spaniard's fart, that should have poisoned all Dublin.

According to traditional theory poisons were of two sorts, hot and cold; and their antidotes were respectively cold and hot. Thus:

*Benducar.* (to Dorax) I'm sure I did my part to poison thee,

What saint soe'er has soldered thee again:  
A dose less hot had burst through ribs of iron.

*Mufti.* Not knowing that, I poisoned him once more,

And drenched him with a draft so deadly cold,

That, hadst not thou prevented, had congealed

The channel of his blood, and froze him dry.

*Dorax.* Thus, when heaven pleases, double poisons cure.

DRYDEN, *Don Sebastian*, iv, 3.

*Colax.* As when the skilful and deep-learn'd physician

Does take two different poisons, one that's cold,

The other in the same degree of heat

And blends them both to make an antidote.

RANDOLPH, *Muses Looking Glass*, iv, 5.

*Gleopatra.* And love may be expelled by other love,

As poisons are by poisons.

DRYDEN, *All for Love*, iv, 1.

A kindred belief has been carried down the centuries in the proverbial "hair of the dog that bit you." Expressed in a more elegant fashion we have:

*King,* I'm stung, and won't the torture long endure;

Serpents that wound, have blood those wounds to cure.

OTWAY, *Don Carlos*, ii, 1.

And even more elegantly:

As hee which is wounded of the Porcuntine, can never be healed unlesse his woundes be washt with the bloud of the same beast: as there is nothing better against the stinging of a Snake, than to be rubbed with an Adders slough, and as he which is hurt of the Scorpion [must] seeke a salve from whom he received the sore, so Love onelie is remedied by Love, and fancie by mutuall affection. (GREENE, *Carde of Fancie*, p. 185 f.)

The belief in paired poisons, if traced to its source, would encounter there the ancient legend of the Ark; for the basis of the idea is not medical but mystical. Sir Thomas Browne states the orthodox case, but in the end his medical training asserts itself in a plaintive realization that Medicine does not always follow mathematical laws.

And though it also be true, that God made all things double, and that if we look upon the works of the most High, there are two and two, one against the other; that one contrary hath another, and poyson is not without a poyson unto itself;

yet hath the curse so far prevailed, or else our industry defected that poysons are better known than their antidotes, and some thereof do scarce admit of any. (*Pseudodoxia Epidemica, Bk. 7, Ch. 17.*)

Although one poison may have had its special antidote in another, there was one antidote which was effective against them all. This was the unicorn's horn.

The legends of the unicorn do not need lengthy retelling here. The animal was so swift of foot that neither horses nor dogs could overtake it. According to one school curiosity was the monster's fatal weakness. The sight of a virgin (so different from its bearded enemy, Man) proved an irresistible attraction, and hunters took advantage of the unicorn's weakness by disguising a beardless young man in woman's clothes. Then, when the animal timidly approached, the supposed virgin reached out a brawny arm and twisted off the precious horn. But according to another school of thought it was the virginal scent rather than sight which attracted the beast. This feminine effluvium acted as a soporific: the unicorn trotted up to the virgin, lay down with its head in her lap, and fell asleep. Here too sweetly scented boys took the place of the virgins, who after all were too valuable to be risked in such dangerous games.

In the Golden Age the unicorn lived at peace, for there was no poison in the world.

The unicorn did not put his horne into the streame to chase away venome before hee dronke, for then there was no suche thing extant in the water or on the earth. (NASHE, *Unfortunate Traveller*, p. 323.)

Later there was poison enough, and not enough unicorn's horn to go around.

Belief in the efficacy of the horn received a mortal affront if not quite a

mortal blow when the surgeon Ambroise Paré bravely published his "Discours, a scavoir, de la mumie, des venins, de la licorne et de la peste" (1582). In this book he categorically denied the medicinal virtue of what a later poet called "that most unvalued horn the unicorn Bears to oppose the huntsmen."

Paré's scandalized contemporaries replied in the only way possible: A material so costly must be potent. Otherwise would a Russian have paid half a million rubles for three small pieces of horn? Why, only a few years before Ambroise showed his ignorance the great Jerome Cardan, on his way from Italy to an important consultation in Edinburgh, stopped at Paris and was impressed by three things: the filthiness of the streets, the density of the population, and (most of all) with the unicorn's horn the King's physician showed him in the Church of St. Dionysius.<sup>30</sup> And Cardan was the most celebrated physician in all Europe and properly hard to impress.

In 1646 the author of "Pseudodoxia Epidemica, or Enquiries into Vulgar Errors," treated the subject with characteristically credulous skepticism. It was not so much the efficacy of the horn he doubted, as its genuineness. He was willing to believe that the horn of a real unicorn would possess all the traditional virtues, but he was not quite convinced of the actual existence of the animal.

There was, fortunately, a test for the genuineness of the substance:

*Isabella.* As men to try the precious unicorn's  
horn,  
Make of the powder a preservative circle,  
And in it put a spider.

*White Devil*, ii, 1.

If the horn was authentic, the spider found itself unable to pass the barrier.<sup>31</sup> An inquisitive budding poet put the

question to experimental test. Will Davenant:

. . . was preferred to the first Duchess of Richmond to wait on her as a Page. I remember he told me, she sent him to a famous apothecary for some Unicorn's-horn, which he was resolved to try with a spider which he encircled in it, but without the expected success; the spider would go ever, and through and through, unconcerned. (*Brief Lives*, vol. 1, 205.)

In seventeenth-century England, the unicorn's horn no longer maintained its once proud position in the esteem of physician or layman. Most of the dramatic allusions to the antidote carry a mocking note. Thus, in "Every Man Out of His Humour," *Sir Puntarvolo's* dog has been poisoned, and *Carlo* exclaims (*v*, 4):

'Fore God, Sir Puntarvolo, I am sorry for your heaviness: body a me, a shrewd mischance! why, had you no unicorn's horn, nor bezoar's stone about you, ha? Thus too *Medico de Campo*, an arrant mountebank, touts his own remedies in the following terms:

Pox of your old wives' medicines! the worst of my ingredients is an unicorn's horn, and bezoar stone.

RANDOLPH, *Aristippus*.<sup>32</sup>

And a discontented patient makes a resolve:

*Philargus*. His pills, his cordials, his electuaries,

His syrups, juleps, bezoar stone, nor his Imagined unicorn's horn, comes in my belly.

MASSINGER, *Roman Actor*, ii, 1.

Two scoundrelly surgeons talk over a case:

1. *Surgeon*. But let's take heed he do not poison us.

2. *Surgeon*. Oh, I will never eat nor drink with him,

Without unicorn's horn in a hollow tooth.

WEBSTER, *Devil's Law Case*, iii, 2.

What was called "the brother antidote, bezoar" was commonly linked in the allusions with unicorn's horn. Such stones were found in the intestines of certain animals, notably deer, and in medieval days had a reputation as an antidote second only to the rarer horn, while in the seventeenth century they had fallen into corresponding disrepute.

In spite of the comedies on the stage, the century's temper was a melancholy one, preoccupied with thoughts of mortality. Quack medicines, simples, spagyric remedies; live animals and dead organs; magic, charms and sympathetic powders; mithridatum and unicorn's horn—all might fail to cure; but one recourse always remained:

*Meleander*. The hangman's a rare physician.

All

The buzz of drugs and minerals and simples,

Bloodletting, vomits, purges, or what else Is conjured up by men of art, to gull Liege-people, and rear golden piles, are trash

To a strong well-wrought halter; there the gout,

The stone, yes, and the melancholy devil, Are cured in less time than a pair of minutes:

Build me a gallows in this very plot, And I'll dispatch your business.

FORD, *Lover's Melancholy*, iv, 2.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER III

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