



In this excerpt, a prominent Renaissance physician explains the importance of distinguishing Trebbiano from urine. Molière could have done wonders with all this, and I believe it should be viewed as though he had, in full Renaissance costume, and in an opulent palace setting worthy of Palermo *circa* 1540.



Del modo, che debbono tener li medici
nel praticare, & a che cosa debbono
auertire. Cap. XXIII.

L *A prima cosa, che dee fare il medico quando ua a uisitar l'ammalato, dee eſſer queſta, cioè, quando uole uisitarlo, dee entrar nella camera con grauità, & aſſetarſi appreſſo il letto, eſſaminar l'infermo, & interrogarlo bene del ſucceſſo della infermità: poi farſi portar l'orina, & uederla con ogni diligentia: & ueder ſe è orina humana, ouero ſe foſſe qualche ingāno, come molte uolte ſi ſuol fare a i medici, per prouarli ſe ſon eſperti nell'orine: e perche il popolaꝝzo ignorante non ſa mettere il medico al altro parangone, alcune uolte li moſtrano orina di animali, o altri liquori, che no ſono orina humana; come una uolta eſſendo io medico principante, & giouane, & mal eſperto, come molti ſogliono eſſer in (f.41.v) quei principij, che cominciano a medicare; fui un giorno chiamato a uisitar'una certa donna, la quale patiuu un dolor di uentofità nel corpo, done andai con quel maggior grauità, che fu poſſibile; & entrato, che fui, preſi la donna per la mano, toccandoli il polſo, dimandai poi l'orina: Ma una certa matrona, che era li, riſpoſe, & mi diſſe, caro Signore queſto è un dolore, che ſpeſſe uolte ſuol uenire alle donne, per cauſa della matre, & non mi pare infermità queſta da ueder orina, ma per adeſſo farete contento ordinarle qualche rimedio, & poi queſta ſera io farò ſerbar l'orina, che la potrete uedere; In ſomma il uedendo, che queſto era un dolor, come ho detto di uentofità, & maſſime per hauer il corpo aſſai alterato; le ordinai ſubito, che li fuſſero date tre drāme di genziana peſta ſottilmente a bere, con boniſſimo uino, & coſi fu fatto; & perche la genziana è di tal uirtù, che ſubito ſolue la uentofità del corpo a chi per bocca la piglia, quella donna ſubito, che l'hebbe preſa, fu ſanata per la uirtù di tal'herba. Di modo tale, che tutte quelle donne, che erano preſenti reſtarano marauigliate di un tanto beneficio coſi preſto: Ma pur quella matrona diſſe con l'altre donne, Queſto medico mi par pur giouane, & ha fatto tanta bella eſperienza: Ma certo non poſſo credere, che egli poſſi ancor eſſer eſperto in conoſcer l'orina; ma di gratia ui prego, che non diciate niente, perche come egli torna queſta ſera (f.42r.) io lo uoglio prouare, con moſtrarli un poco di uino tribiano, ilquale è colorito, come orina, & uoglio ueder ſe lui lo conoſcerà, & coſi fu fatto; La ſera, quando io andai, ſubito mi appreſentarono l'orina, che era uino, & io lo uidi coſi gialetto, &*

*diſi a quelle donne; Queſta orina coſi gialla, ſecondo Galeno, & altri autori, ſignifi-
ca humor colerico, & per tanto queſta amalata patiſce affai di colere. Mi riſpoſe
un'altra donna, & diſſe per mia fe, che uoi l'hauete indouinato, l'è coſi certo; perche
quel manigoldo di ſuo marito ua a femine, & è giocatore, & per queſto la fa pigliare
tanta colera, che mi marauiglio, come ſia uiua, & io hauendo finito il ragionamento
mio, mi partì, & laſciai la donna ſana, & ſalua, ſenza alcun dolore; Ma ſe quelle
donne ſi riſero di me, lo laſciò conſiderare a ciaſcuno. Ma pur Dio uolſe, la coſa per
eſſer infra donne, che tutte, o la maggior parte ſon cianciere, ſi diuulgò preſto, in modo
tale, che a me fu narrato il caſo, & quando io mi trouai ſcornato in quel modo, laſciò
conſiderare ad ogniuno, come io reſtaſſi quando inteſi tal gabaria: onde me ne andai in
caſa, & feci comprare circa dieci orinali, & ogni mattina faceuo orinare tutti di caſa,
per ueder le differentie, che erano in tra orina, & orina. Dipoi feci raccogliere orine di
cani, aſini, caualli, (f.42v.) muli, & altri animali, che poteuo hauere, & ne faceua
tutti li ſaggi, che mai era poſſibil fare, per non eſſer un'altro uolta gabbato nelle orine;
& di queſta coſa ne feci uno ſtudio grandissimo, & non fu fuori di propoſito; perche
dipoi io ſono andato filoſofando in uarie, & diuerſe parti del mondo, & affai uolte mi
ſon trouato in alcune città, doue ſon ſtati alcuni biſarri, quali hanno uoluto far ſag-
gio di me con moſtrarmi orine di caualli, liſſie, uino, aceto, & ſimil materie: Ma non
è lor giouato, perche preſto fui fatto accorto in tal materia, & mai piu è riuſcito a
neſſuno, che non ſia reſtato lui il burlato, & uituperato da me... (ff. 41r.-42v.)*

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Leonardo Fioravanti
De Capricci Medicinale. Libri Tre.
Venetia: Lodovico Avanzo, 1564

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SUMMARY - In this excerpt, the author, a well-known physician, explains the manner in which doctors should examine their patients, and also specifies what they must take care to avoid. He says that they should enter the patient's room with all due gravity, seat themselves by the sickbed, examine the patient, and question them closely as to the progress of their illness; they should then ask for a urine sample, and should examine it diligently to ensure that it is human urine, and not a trick.

Fortunately, he goes on to explain that when he first began his practice, he was called to cure a noblewoman suffering from a “painful ventosity of the body”; he entered her suite “with all possible gravity”, took the lady’s hand, examined her pulse, and asked for a urine sample. But a “a certain matron” who was present said that since this was an ailment common to women, it shouldn’t require a urine sample; however, if he would please prescribe a remedy, a sample would be ready when he returned that evening. He promptly ordered “three drams of gentian finely pulverized, in excellent wine,” which cured the patient then & there, to the amazement of all the ladies.

But that same matron, gossiping with the other ladies-in-waiting, said, “This doctor appears very young indeed, and while he’s done all very well on this occasion, I really don’t believe he’s already an expert in analyzing urine. By all grace I beg you to say nothing, but when he returns this evening, I’ll test him, by letting him examine a little Trebbiano wine, which is the color of urine; & we’ll see if he recognizes it.” “And,” Fioravanti continues, “that’s what was done. That evening, when I returned, they presented me with the ‘urine,’ which was really wine; and seeing how yellow it was, I said to the ladies, ‘This urine, being as yellow as it is, signifies, according to Galen & other authorities, the coleric humor, and means that the patient suffers from anger.’ One of the ladies responded, ‘But by my faith, how could you have known? It’s the truth! That rogue of a husband of hers chases after women, gambles, and makes her so angry I marvel she’s still alive!’”

So having finished his examination, he left; but then of course the ladies-in-waiting were convulsed with laughter, and “the matter being between women, who are all or mostly all gossips,” it was soon a story about town, and he leaves the reader to imagine how he felt, being scorned in this manner.

He responded by ordering that ten or so urinals be bought for his household, and every morning he had everyone in the household urinate, so that he could see the differences, as he expresses it, between urine, and urine. Then he ordered urine brought in from dogs, donkeys, horses, mules, and other animals, and made every examination of these samples it was possible to make, in order never again to be deceived in the matter of urine; “and I made an extraordinary study of this matter, and appropriately so; because I have since philosophised in various and diverse parts of the world, & many times I’ve found myself in some city, where tricksters have wanted to test me by showing me the urine of horses, or liqueurs, wine, vinegar, and similar substances, but their game was lost, because it was immediately & shrewdly found out, and never has anyone succeeded in becoming other than the object of ridicule himself, and the laugh has been on him . . .”

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“He (Fioravanti) studied medicine and practised in Palermo, but returned to Bologna where he was made a doctor. He published a number of works on medicine...Fioravanti was a chemist and pharmacist, and in his practise put unbounded faith in his specifics. The balsam which goes by his name, and which was in use until a comparatively recent period, is a very complex mixture.” *Bibliotheca Osleriana*, p. 236.

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