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I.I.S. Liceo «Concetto Marchesi» - Mascalucia (CT)

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- Recensioni

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KLAUS-DIETRICH FISCHER

A Few Glances at Medicine in Early Ninth-Century Germany

SOMMARIO
All'inizio del IX secolo quattro monasteri situati nella parte sud-orientale della Francia germanofona, Reichenau, San Gallo, Lorsch e Fulda, furono centri importanti per la trasmissione di testi medici latini. Iniziando dall'*Hortulus*, il famoso poema di Valafrido Strabone, in questo articolo si esamina più da vicino il manoscritto di San Gallo 878, codice miscellaneo messo in rapporto con Valafrido fino a pochi anni fa, e il manuale medico di Lorsch (*Bamb. med.* 1).
Parole chiave: *Sang.* 878, Valafrido Strabone, *De cultura hortorum* (*Hortulus*), manuale medico di Lorsch, farmacia medievale, cultura carolingia.

ABSTRACT
Early in the 9th century, four monasteries situated more or less in the Southeast of the German-speaking part of Francia, Reichenau, St Gall, Lorsch and Fulda, were important for the transmission of Latin medical texts. With Walahfrid's famous poem *Hortulus*, we take a closer look at gardening and the miscellaneous contents of the manuscript 878 at St Gall (linked to Walahfrid until a few years ago) and the Lorsch medical manual (*Bamb. med.* 1).
Keywords: *Sang.* 878, Walahfrid's *De cultura hortorum* (*Hortulus*), Lorsch medical manual, medieval pharmacy, Carolingian culture.

Dulcissimae memoriae Valahfridi Stroh (1939-2025)

1. *Walahfrid's* Hortulus *and the Medical Items in* Sang. *878*

Our journey into the past will start in an attractive little garden, tended by a monk whose devotion to gardening could have started in his early youth, about which we know, however, nothing. Our monk was born not long after the year 800, and he is busying himself in that garden in the twenties and thirties of the 9th century. If that had been all, we surely would not know about it, but he left a literary testimony of his activities in poetic form called *De cultura hortorum* in Latin[1]; the simplest and most idiomatic English translation would probably be *Gardening*. This poem – 444 hexameters in total – became better known under a name it acquired when it was printed for the first time, in 1510 in Vienna, a name that has stuck. It is *Hortulus*, which means not just 'little garden', but 'charming little garden'.

By now the reader will have guessed who the monk was, Walahfrid Strabo. In 838, he became the abbot of the monastery where he kept his garden; he had spent a number of years as a pupil of Rabanus (or Hrabanus[2]) Maurus at Fulda[3],

[1] See WALAHFRID STRABO 2023. Latin text and English translation also in GODMAN 1985, 222-225. Cf. in general BRUNHÖLZL 1975, 345-358.
[2] BRUNHÖLZL 1975, 325-341.
[3] On Fulda medical manuscripts in the 9th century, see FISCHER 2018.

and at the royal court, and he drowned while crossing the Loire in 849, approximately forty years old. Walahfrid the Squint-Eye (this is what the Latin word *strabus* means) was one of the foremost representatives of Carolingian culture in his age. He was a gifted Latin poet and also a scholar.

Walahfrid's monastery was located on an island in the top north-western fork at the end of Lake Constance, and 'rich island' is what its German name, Reichenau[4], means, Augia Dives in Latin; and rich it was, like the not-too-distant abbey of St Gall, when it came to manuscripts. We will return to one of their medical treasures later.

Just now, we will take a stroll and have a look around the garden. When people hear about gardens and monasteries, they tend to think, first and foremost, of medicinal herbs; which is not completely wrong, but far from correct. As Cassiodorus said when addressing his monks in his *Institutions*[5], recommending the third-century Roman writer Gargilius Martialis for those working in the monastery's garden: «Here you may find both nourishment and health (for your body)». Twenty-three plants make their appearance in Walahfrid's poem, and while he does not fail to recommend their healing powers in every instance, we notice that they have other uses as well: roses and lilies and iris as flowers; lovage, mint, chervil, sage and rue as condiments; melon, fennel, celery and radish to eat and to enjoy.

Walahfrid's poem is definitely not a laboured attempt at making dry Latin prose scan at whatever cost; it is a genuine work of art and a truly splendid testimony to the level that poetic Latin verse had reached once more, after a difficult period of some centuries' duration. We need only compare the verses written two hundred years earlier by Isidore of Seville, a native speaker of Latin (we will look at them in translation at the close of this paper). The best poetry in Charlemagne's reign, roughly a generation before Walahfrid, had been written by men who had received their training in places outside Charles's kingdom, Alcuin (Albinus) in England, Theodulf (Theodulus) in northern Spain, to mention two prominent members of the circle at Charlemagne's court. If we compare Walahfrid with them and with, say, his sometime teacher Hraban Maur, whose intricate poems on the Holy Cross (*De laude sanctae crucis*) testify to technical mastership, we will agree with Brunhölzl that Walahfrid had a natural talent which came to fruition at an early time in his life, if we look e.g. at the metrical *Visio Wettini*.

For gardening, Vergil was Walahfrid's model. In the *Georgics*, Vergil had left gardening for posterity to treat, and two agricultural writers took up the challenge, first Columella and then, more than three hundred years later, Palladius. While Columella gave a poetic rendering of his prose book, Palladius wrote on grafting, in heroic couplets, 170 verses in all.

In the opening lines of his poem, Walahfrid takes us far away from the

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[4] Traditionally founded in 724.

[5] Cassiod. *Inst.* 1, 28, 6: *de hortis scripsit pulcherrime Gargilius Martialis, qui et nutrimenta holerum et virtutes eorum diligenter exposuit, ut ex illius commentarii lectione praestante Domino unusquisque et saturari valeat et sanari.*

Reichenau, to the Gulf of Salerno, by calling gardening «the art of Paestum» (*Paestanae deditus arti*). Paestum, founded by Greek settlers and justly famous for its splendid Greek temples, was known, in antiquity, for its fine roses, which figure in the final section of Walahfrid's poem. He knew of course Vergil's *biferique rosaria Paesti* (*Georg.* 4, 119), «the rose gardens of Paestum, which bring forth roses twice a year»; they are part of the passage where Vergil leaves the poetic treatment of horticulture to others.

I believe that it is again Vergil who is responsible for another classical allusion in Walahfrid, when he calls gardening «the business of Priapus» (*curas... Priapi*). Priapus, the god of gardening, was responsible for protecting the garden from thieves, both in human and in animal shape, and for assuring their fertility, «Priapus of doubtful propriety» (*obsceni curas... Priapi)*, as Walahfrid calls him with his ancient epithet alluding to Priapus' erect member and his favourite pastime.

Priapus is of course also associated with male homosexual activity, but there is no reason whatsoever for speculating that Walahfrid himself was that way inclined. It makes better sense to see this once more as an allusion to Vergil, who in some antique biographies (e.g. that by the grammarian Servius) was credited with the authorship of the *Priapea* (*Poems for Priapus*); furthermore, Vergil had referred to Priapus in the passage in the *Georgics* (4, 11) just mentioned.

Another work from the context of gardening, a short poem *De rosis nascentibus* (*Budding roses*), is associated with Vergil and could well have been known to Walahfrid; at least, we know that a ninth-century manuscript containing this text was in the library at St Gall (397), which had close ties with Augia Dives, for which the famous *Plan of St Gall*, written at the Reichenau, is the most striking evidence.

Walahfrid's little garden contained, as we saw, apart from roses and lilies a number of herbs that could be used both in the kitchen and for medicine. The one exception is the gourd, because Walahfrid does not mention any pertinent medicinal uses, and his treatment of this plant is moreover exceptional because of its sheer length: it gets 52 verses, more than any other plant in his garden. If we disregard the introduction and the closing section of the poem, we are left with 363 verses dealing with plants, and then the gourd takes up even more than one seventh of the total. It is certainly the poetic centrepiece, an *èkphrasis* that, despite of its length, says nothing about its care and cultivation and very little about its use in the kitchen (139-142). Walahfrid's priority is quite obviously not teaching the gardener or the infirmarian, the monk who cares for his sick brethren, but poetry. Here is his description of the fruit (126-135):

> Whose astonishment can do justice to the sight of their fruit hanging here and there on the boughs? From every angle they look just as regular in shape as if you were gazing upon wood turned on a lathe, polished in the middle, and finished with a bow-drill. At first they hang attached to a slender stalk and the neck, which supports the massive body, is thin. Then they widen out to a great weight at the waist; they are all belly, all paunch; inside their cavernous

> confines many seeds, each in its place, are nourished, capable of promising a harvest comparable to the one before.

We can perhaps picture Walahfrid in our mind's eye sitting in his sunny little garden, unaware of the fact that there are things beyond this lovely little picture contemporaries would not have missed. Walahfrid's teacher at Fulda, Hrabanus Maurus, also talks about gardens and plants in book 19 of his encyclopaedia *De rerum naturis*[6] (*De universo*); one of his concerns was the allegorical meaning of things, especially if they were mentioned in the Bible. For Hrabanus, «The garden refers to the Holy Church, in which various kinds of virtues grow»[7]; and a little later he adds «The garden symbolizes the inward joys of paradise»[8]. He was speaking, of course, about that famous garden which features prominently in the *Song of Songs* of the Old Testament, a garden which he and his contemporaries could only interpret as a metaphor. But Hrabanus has something to say about gourds as well: «The gourd is a plant in need of support from others and thus an image for all weak and uneducated people that depend on others so that they can find support and will not fall down»[9].

Medievalists agree that Walahfrid not just wrote about gardening but was himself an active and ardent gardener. Proof seemed to come from some excerpts in *Sang.* 878, which Bernhard Bischoff had identified as an autograph of Walahfrid, a view challenged in 2022 by another specialist in palaeography, Tino Licht[10]. Irrespective of who was responsible for this manuscript, it remains an important document to be exploited in a number of ways. We shall in the following take a closer look at excerpts relating to medicine and gardening.

A section on winemaking for instance was copied from Columella's book 12, and another about peach trees from Palladius[11]. Palladius had, like Columella, written on agriculture in the 4th or 5th century, based on Columella (1st century) and Gargilius Martialis (3rd century). Palladius preferred arranging his material month by month[12] rather than by subject, as Columella had done, and judging by the number of manuscripts preserved[13], he was in Carolingian times much more popular than his model Columella. Cassiodorus (*Inst.* 1, 28, 6) had recommended both Palladius and Gargilius Martialis as well as Columella to those among the monks of Vivarium that had an interest in agriculture and

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[6] BRUNHÖLZL 1975, 331-333.

[7] Hraban. *Univ.* 19, 9: *Ortus enim sanctam significat ecclesiam, in qua varie species virtutum gignuntur*. Hrabanus Maurus follows the etymology suggested by Isid. *Orig.* 17, 10, 1.

[8] Hraban. *Univ.* 19, 9: *Ortus internae delitiae paradisi significant.*

[9] Hraban. *Univ.* 19, 9: *Cucurbita herba est, alieno egens sustentaculo que significat infirmos quosque et indoctos qui aliorum indigent solacio, quo fulciantur ne corruant*. See now also DOROFEEVA 2025, 377-380.

[10] LICHT 2022. The online description of the manuscript at e-codices.ch includes Licht's article in the bibliography but does not mention his arguments.

[11] *Sang.* 878 has been digitized, like many other medieval manuscripts in Switzerland, and the site e-codices.ch also provides information on catalogue descriptions and secondary literature, so the exact references to Columella and Palladius are given there.

[12] Starting with January in book 2; book 13 concerns December, while veterinary medicine, transmitted separately, is book 14.

[13] FUHRMANN 2020; RODGERS 1975b, 195-199 and 155-171.

gardening and perhaps were deemed too dull[14] for theology. It is rather surprising that in the *Sang.* 878 we do not see excerpts from Gargilius Martialis, and that of his agricultural work a mere four chapters dealing with quinces, peaches, almonds and chestnuts, survive in a palimpsest originally from Bobbio, now in the National Library in Naples[15]. It is just a matter of luck that this text palimpsested in Bobbio can be claimed for Gargilius Martialis, because one small section (1, 2) happens to overlap with the *Medicinae ex oleribus et pomis*, also by Gargilius[16].

It is remarkable that in a number of instances we encounter excerpts from antique medical texts in manuscripts earlier than the complete work itself, and this may be seen in some Carolingian manuscripts[17]. Apart from Gargilius, whose chapters on mint and catmint occur in the Lorsch medical manual (*Recept. Lauresh.* 3, 47), one might refer to passages taken from the *Medicina Plinii* in Glasgow, University Library, Hunter 96, the oldest complete medical manuscript in the British Isles, written in a centre with Visigothic connections either in northern Spain or southern France, in the late 8th or early 9th century[18]. Similarly, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 11219, a manuscript owned previously by the abbey of Echternach (on the border of Germany and Luxemburg) but written in northern France in the first half of the 9th century, transmits as part of a work called *Tereoperica, hoc est liber medicinalis, scriptus specialiter secundum philosoforum et auctorum inquisitiones*, sizeable chunks of Cassius Felix, an author from North Africa, who in 447/448 composed a succinct therapeutic manual[19].

It seems that this cut-and-paste approach can be traced back even further, to the later Roman Empire, and I have argued[20] that the evidence provided by a Latin veterinary manual called *Mulomedicina Chironis* and compiled perhaps in the early 4th century points to this technique having been used in human medicine even before that date, although our first relevant example from medical literature are the collections made by Oribasius, physician to Julian the Apostate, i.e.

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[14] Cassiod. *Inst.* 1, 28, 1 (*simplicitas fratrum*) may be interpreted in this way; similarly *Inst.* 1, 31, 2 (*si vobis non fuerit Graecarum litterarum facundia*) for monks working in the medical sphere but lacking the knowledge of Greek. It remains uncertain whether this presupposes the existence of Greek medical works in the library at Vivarium.

[15] Zainaldin 2020. It is sometimes, as in Mazzini's edition, referred to as *De hortis*, while the *Thesaurus linguae Latinae* prefers the siglum *pom. = de arboribus pomiferis*. Maire 2002, LXXII.

[16] On this author, see now Zainaldin 2020 with a full bibliography, and Fischer 2000. Brigitte Maire's Latin text (Maire 2002) was used by Brodersen 2022 for his bilingual Latin-German edition. For *LXI. De vino costato faciendo, LXII. Confectio liquaminis quod oenogarum vocant*, the unnumbered *De malis cydoneis suci confectio* and the *omfacomeli*, we still have to refer to the edition by Rose 1875, 209-212, who published these texts from *Sang.* 752 (572 in Rose 1875, 207 is a printing error, corrected in Rose 1875, 130, but the error was repeated in Sudhoff 1917, 296) and *Lugd. Voss. oct.* 92, both dated by Rose to the 10th century and called *optimi et antiquissimi*. Sudhoff 1917, 296 confirms that these additions were also found in the *Codex medicus Hertensis*, destroyed in the Second World War. See further Maire 2002, XXX. *Brux.* 2419 (mid-12th century) fol. 95v transmits only *LXI. De vino costato faciendo spleneticis* and omits the rest.

[17] Fischer 2001, 69-71 with note 1.

[18] See Fischer 2023, 127.

[19] Fraisse 2001, LXXV and López Figueroa 2011.

[20] Fischer 2009.

around the year 360 AD or later.

Walahfrid provides us with yet another example, excerpts from what circulated under the title of *Liber diaetarum Alexandri et aliorum*. This work provided dietary advice for a number of afflictions, and rather surprisingly, not only is the title correct, but we also know who was the Alexander that is mentioned[21]. Alexander came from an important Byzantine family and was born sometime in the early 6th century. His brother was the architect of the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, and there are probably few buildings of that size that have survived that long, for one reason or another, especially in a place where earthquakes are not uncommon. Alexander was a doctor and practised in Rome. His medical writings in Greek were soon translated into Latin[22], but arranged differently, and the *Liber diaetarum* was excerpted (with a few exceptions) from this translation. The very last chapter of the *Liber diaetarum* does not deal with dietary advice for specific diseases but with advice for healthy people and what they should eat and avoid during the four seasons of the year. This bit comes from one of the Latin pseudo-Hippocratic letters on the preservation of health, addressed to Maecenas, Antigonus or Antiochus[23]. For chronological reasons, one need not query the authenticity of these compositions. In Greek, a similar letter (obviously the starting point of the Latin tradition) is ascribed to the physician Diocles, and here chronology seems just to allow for this attribution to be possible, although, with arguments from its contents, there is no consensus among scholars whether it should be considered genuine or not.

In the context of Carolingian medicine, this is far less relevant than the fact that this letter, in various shapes and forms, was immensely popular[24] and, in the later Middle Ages, gave rise to a number of vernacular versions. In *Sang.* 878, the letter occurs twice, once following excerpts from the *Liber diaetarum*, where it breaks off, perhaps because it was realised that the letter had already been copied earlier on, and at the very beginning of the medical excerpts, where, however, neither author nor recipient are mentioned.

These little treatises cast in the form of letters aim at giving advice on staying healthy by paying attention to the change of the seasons and to any symptoms that may indicate problems with the four regions of the body. All this is rooted in the doctrine of the four humours, which is exposed at the beginning of the letter to Maecenas, together with the mentioning of the four basic elements fire, water, air and earth, and the four primary qualities hot, cold, humid and dry. The number four features again when the four parts of the body are discussed, head, thorax, belly and bladder. The discussion follows a common pattern, beginning with adverse signs pointing to disease, countermeasures, and the dire consequences threatening if one does not heed this advice.

At the end of the little treatise, four is again the decisive number when the four seasons are the focus. We are told when they begin and when they end, what

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21 See FISCHER 2017.
22 See LANGSLOW 2006.
23 FISCHER 2020.
24 FISCHER 2012.

to do and what to avoid. Let us look at what the letter specifies for summer[25]:

> Summer, then, begins on the 17th of June. From this point in time, there is an increase of bile that continues up to the autumn equinox[26].

Humoralism classifies summer as hot and dry, just like bile, and therefore you have to look for their opposites, i.e. cold and wet, to counteract any possible bad effects. This is the advice we find in the letter:

> Eat cold and sweet things [had it been known, icecream would have been appropriate] and do not fast on any account, and keep off the usual pleasures of Venus for ninety-one days until the autumn equinox on September 26th. From then on, the power of black bile is on the increase, and the humours thicken until the setting of the Pleiads, that is November 7th[27].

This season is cold and dry, just like black bile or melancholy, and you have to look for things that are hot and humid to balance this: «Make use of everything that is hot and exceedingly pungent, avoid intercourse and fast a great deal»[28].

If you were counting and did not get distracted by other information, you will have noticed that between June 17th and September 26th, there cannot really be 91 days, and that likewise September 26th is not the usual date for the autumn equinox. It is not just a problem of textual criticism and the cumbersome manner in which dates were still given according to the Roman calendar, reformed by Julius Caesar, 850 years earlier. Calendar dates were a major concern in Carolingian times, and before and after, and the reason for this was – religion. The feasts of the calendar of the Church had to be fixed to a certain date, i.e. a date that could not be set arbitrarily by humans but one that had cosmic, and religious, implications[29]. Which is why Charlemagne, keen on improving education in his realm and fluent in Latin, but not adept at writing any language until old age, made an effort to get a grasp of the system and exchanged letters on this subject with Alcuin after Alcuin had left the court. The science in question, and the books that dealt with it, was called *computus*, the action *computare*, and it is no coincidence that our computer shares the same lexical root.

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[25] The following quotes are mainly taken from the letter to Antiochus in the version in *Sang.* 878, p. 330-331. A different version is found in NIEDERMANN, LIECHTENHAN 1968, 18-25 (with a German translation). In *De temporum ratione*, ch. 30, Bede quotes it (with a few variations) as Hippocrates' letter to Antigonus (The addressee is called both Antigonus and Antiochus in our manuscripts).

[26] *Etenim XV kl. iul. incipit tempus aestivum. Ab ipsa hora incrementum fellis admittitur quod crescit usque in aequinoctium autumni.*

[27] *Frigidis utere et dulcibus et minime ieiuna et consuetis Veneris in totum abstine dies XCI usque in aequinoctium autumni quod fit VI kl. oct. Ab ipsa hora vis nigri fellis augetur, umorum crassitudo consequitur usque in occasum Plyadum hoc est usque in diem VIII id. novemb.*

[28] *Utere calidis et acerrimis omnibus et abstine a Venere et nimium ieiuna.*

[29] Bede (*Temp. rat.* 30) states that according to many church authorities Christ's conception and passion took place on the spring equinox and his birth at the winter solstice.

To quote Bernhard Bischoff: «For centuries, *computus*[30] continued as the most important field of scholarship apart from theology».

No surprise then that *Sang.* 878 had included some computistical texts. But let us return to the specific medical role of calendars. *Sang.* 878 features three of them. The first (p. 366[31]) is concerned with phlebotomy, here not as a therapeutic tool but for prophylaxis: «In April, let blood from the middle vein, to benefit conditions of the thorax and the lung, since at that time blood is on the increase...». And shortly after, the text says:

> From the 26th of September until the 26th of November, make use of purging and draw blood through scarification, because then all humours are ready and the worst phlegm and black bile increase, so that the bad humour does not get old, but is put out [lit. down]. Then you will be safe for that year, as long as you pay attention to food and drink. But the course of the moon and of time in general also has to be observed, that is the 1st, 5th, 15th, 20th and 30th day [of the lunar cycle]; on these days you must not let blood.

This is followed by a warning against purging and bloodletting during the dog-days[32], and both practices should also be avoided on a number of unlucky days that borrow their authority from the wisdom of ancient Egypt and are therefore called Egyptian Days (*dies Aegyptiaci*, p. 367)[33].

It seems that prophylactic purging and bloodletting were practised commonly and regularly to cleanse the body and to remove unwanted and potentially harmful residues in this way. The rationale behind this was that such residues could rot and thus bring about disease. The importance of purging and bloodletting is clear from the fact that the plan of St Gall provided a special building for these operations, and if you have not guessed already what purging meant, the fact that the building had an annexe with six latrines will leave you in no doubt how it worked. It also had a kitchen; monks undergoing prophylactic purging and venesection were entitled to eating meat; and a room for having a bath was nearby. Baths were, after all, another luxury only to be enjoyed by monks when they were old or infirm, and meat was definitely not part of the normal fare for monks.

Cutting a vein and preparing a purgative were activities that required skill, and practice, and we may well ask what provisions were made, especially in larger establishments like Corbie with some three-hundred monks, one hundred boys attending school, and a good number of lay dependents of the monastery. It is

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[30] See BORST 2006.

[31] Latin text in SUDHOFF 1914, 168, note 2.

[32] *Hi[c] sunt dies caniculares quos greci quignones* (κυνοκαύματα) *vocant.*

[33] *At dies egyptiaci sunt. Qui per totum annum servari oportent. Ut sanguis <non> minuetur potio non accipiatur ad solvendum· id est IIII non. Ian. VIII kl. feb. VIII id. feb. IIII kl. <kl. mar.> V kl. apr. IIII id. apr. XII kl. mai. IIII Non. mai. VIII kl. iun. IIII id. iun. XVI kl. iul. IIII id, iul. XI kl. ag. kl. ag. (!) III kl. sep. III non sep. XI kl. oct. IIII non octb. XI kl. nov. Non.* [illegible] *IIII kl. dec. III id. decb. XVIII kl. ianuarium.* More texts on the Egyptian Days can be found in WICKERSHEIMER 1966, 195 (*De diebus aegyptiacis*).

quickly assumed that monasteries, as centres of learning (which they certainly were, and were meant to be, in Carolingian times), also had physicians among the inmates, men who had studied the ancient texts and become proficient through long practice. Yes, there was Notker the doctor of St Gall, in the 10th century; however, the situation must have been different in the late 8th and the 9th centuries. To return to Corbie under its abbot Adalhard: we hear of two doctors, but they were lay dependents, not monks, and we have no idea what their qualification or credentials were. When we read in the *Formulae Salisburgenses* requests for a doctor, even for a Jewish doctor or a Slav (perhaps a heathen, god forbid!), we sense that the time for combining missionary work with medical services had not come yet. Monasteries would have had, depending on their size, accommodation for permanently sick and dying monks, even for acute cases (the *domus valde infirmorum* in the St Gall plan [*Sang.* 1092] may well refer to them), but the kind of care that a sick monk or pilgrim or dependent serf of the monastery would receive necessarily remains guesswork and would have varied from one place to another, and from one year to another. Aspirations and plans outlined on parchment, like the plan of St Gall, must not be confused with reality, about which we know fairly little.

The veil is lifted very occasionally, as is the case with a treatise on venesection now in the library of St Gall, but written in northern Italy, a region of utmost importance for the transmission of medical texts across the Alps into Francia. This manuscript was folded so that it could be transported more easily when the doctor was summoned to a patient some distance away from the monastery, and would have been dangling from the belt. The popularity of these treatises on venesection can be estimated from the number of manuscripts where we encounter them, and also from the great number of different versions. The text in St Gall is attributed to Hippocrates and partly in question-and-answer form. This was an ancient format which gained new popularity in Carolingian times. Thus, some of Alcuin's treatises were in dialogue form, but in the manuscripts we often chance upon other little-known pieces relating to medicine that fall into this category.

The pseudo-Hippocratic treatise on venesection describes the veins to be opened, how this should be done, how the wound should be looked after, and of course what had to be done if something went wrong, e.g. if the patient fainted, if an artery had been cut into instead of a vein, or if perhaps a nerve was damaged in the process. For many centuries, venesection was immensely popular, both as a preventive and a curative measure. In the high Middle Ages, some monasteries had a *minutor ministerialis*, i.e. an employee whose job it was (probably not the only task he was to perform) to bleed the monks regularly.

In *Sang.* 878, until recently referred to as Walahfrid's scrapbook, we encounter a few recipes loosely connected with the medical sphere, none of them remarkable and probably just copied at random to make use of some empty space. A larger group among them is for removing hair, but we should not be led to believe that Walahfrid or other monks were especially hairy and thus in need of a wide range of epilatories.

Much more interesting are a few lines that follow:

> The science of medicine is of the greatest use to men. It is divided into three branches: teaching (*doctrina*), reasoning (*ratio*), and practice (*usus*). Physicians by teaching are those who only study or teach and do not practise medicine; physicians by reasoning, on the other hand, are those who teach from experience; finally, physicians by practice are those who have learned from practice alone whatever they apply, not from written instruction [i.e. a textbook], as those common doctors.

As a philologist I felt a strong urge to look for the source of these pithy lines. Happily, we can now search a large amount of Latin literature, including patristic writings, on the computer, which is a great help. What I found was this: The beginning, about the usefulness of medicine and its three branches, was taken from a letter by Jerome (Hier. *Epist.* 53, 6, 1). But Jerome had used Greek words for the branches of medicine, τὸ δόγμα, τὴν μέθοδον, τὴν ἐμπειρίαν; and this may be rendered in Latin as *doctrina*, *ratio* and *usus*. Jerome, however, had in all likelihood been referring to something different, that is to the three branches, schools or sects which were the most important ones in late antiquity, i.e. the dogmatists, the methodists, and the empiricists. These schools or sects are also mentioned in the poem at the end of Marcellus Empiricus' *De medicamentis* (Marcell. *Med. carm.* 6) and in the poem by Sedulius Scottus which we will look at more closely later. Marcellus refers to the dogmatists (which at that time meant Galenists) with a synonym of *dogma*, i.e. *logos*, and the adjective *logicus* is indeed also used with this specific meaning. But the really startling finding that results from Jerome is that in a manuscript from the Reichenau und now in Zurich (*Turic. Aug.* 41), the Greek is distorted beyond recognition, but there is a Latin gloss, *in doctrinam rationem et usum*, just like in *Sang.* 878.

The close connection between the monasteries of Reichenau and St Gall, both located in the diocese of Constance, cannot only be demonstrated from *Sang.* 878 and the Plan of St Gall. There is another manuscript, written in St Gall towards the end of the 9th century (*Turic.* W 78), that must be brought into our discussion for two reasons: it contains the *Liber medicinalis* of Quintus Serenus, a medical poem running to more than 1,000 hexameters and attested in the Reichenau library at the time when Walahfrid was there. The manuscript also transmits a few introductory lines written by a certain Iacobus, who could well be the same as the notary at Charlemagne's court attested between 787 and 792. These verses link the *Liber medicinalis* and Charles: «Charles, the mild king who reigns orders that this (book) be made, so that in times to come knowledge may shine»[34]. This may be the clearest statement to make the heritage of antiquity accessible that we can link to Charlemagne's court. We know that the court library was sold after Charlemagne's death, in keeping with his testament, and

[34] 18-20: *qui regit, hęc fieri Karlus rex namque modestus / mandat, ut in sęclis rutilet sophisma futuris / legit enim famulus stilo animoque Iacobus*, fol. 57v, VOLLMER 1916, V.

therefore is difficult to reconstruct, but the courts of his successors continued to play a role in the transmission of texts.

The poem of Quintus Serenus, about whose life or other works nothing is known and whom we place, very tentatively, in the early 4th century, was much later, like Walahfrid's *De cultura hortorum*, a favourite with Renaissance humanists. The work is based on Pliny's *Natural History* and its later (prose) offspring, the *Medicina Plinii*. Quintus Serenus may not be well known any longer, especially as there is no English translation, and the last critical edition of the Latin text, with a French translation, was published in 1950[35]. However, among the cures that Quintus Serenus recommends is the Abracadabra (ch. 51), which most of you will have heard of at one time or another. As a concrete example of Serenus' approach, it may be useful to quote a few lines, for toothache (223-226):

> To endure the sharp pain of toothache is not easy, and all the more it is fitting to learn of a medical cure. Boil violets with wine and keep them in your mouth; likewise, chewing (leaves of) the wild olive tree with its astringent juice is beneficial[36].

2. *The Lorsch Medical Manual*

We now turn to another special case of the transmission of medical texts in Carolingian times. In German libraries, there are three medical manuscripts from that period which stand out. One of them, Phillipps 1790, now in Berlin, was written in France and came to Germany late in the late 19th century from the library of Sir Thomas Phillipps. Another (*Aug.* CXX) is in Karlsruhe, but had been in the monastery of Reichenau for some 900 years. It likewise had come to Germany from abroad. As we now know, it was written in Northern Italy, in or around Verona. Earlier than both, dating from the turn of the 8th and 9th centuries, is a manuscript that has been kept in Bamberg for close to 1,000 years[37]. It was written, as Bernhard Bischoff established more than forty years ago, in the monastery of Lorsch, located in the Rhine valley not all that far east of Worms.

It will be useful to recall some facts about this monastery before we examine this manuscript in detail. The scriptorium at Lorsch had an important role in the transmission of texts from antiquity; among medical texts that were not quite common because of their sheer length, Caelius Aurelianus and the Latin Oribasius must be mentioned. Scraps from both manuscripts survived in

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[35] Cf. PÉPIN 1950.

[36] *Haud facile est acrem dentis tolerare laborem: / quo magis est aequum medicam pernoscere curam. / Cum Baccho violas incoxeris, ore teneto. / Mansus item prodest sucis oleaster acerbis.*

[37] STOLL 1992. The manuscript became, in 2013, part of the UNESCO's Memory of the World programme. My article *Spätantike Rezepte im Lorscher Arzneibuch (Recept. Lauresh. / Bamb. med. 1)* will be published shortly in the *Festschrift* celebrating Vicenzo Ortoleva in «Commentaria Classica», with additional bibliography. A facsimile of the *Bamb. med.* 1 with a detailed description by M. Kautz and further bibliography can be found at https://bibliotheca-laureshamensis-digital.de/view/sbbam_mscmed1.

libraries in Zwickau (Saxony) and Berne (Switzerland). Lorsch's role was closely connected with the royal patronage it began to enjoy from 772 onwards, less than a decade after it had been founded by local nobility, Count Cancor and his widowed mother, in 764. Charlemagne was present when the church, dedicated to St Nazarius, was consecrated in 774. The royal palace at Worms, on the western shore of the Rhine, was fairly near, and Charles, being an itinerant king, would have stayed there often and probably also would have met there with representatives of the monastery, perhaps with the abbot himself. While the palace at Worms is no longer, Lorsch is proud of a building that still stands and, as some people believe, could have been seen by Charlemagne himself.

Let us now get back to the Lorsch medical manual. If Bischoff's guess about the poem of Quintus Serenus being copied at Charlemagne's court was correct, it is the second medical codex copied in Germany at Charles's behest. I said 'copied', and not 'composed', because I believe that whoever was in charge of the copying at Lorsch made but a minute contribution to it (if any) and would have assembled or compiled the Lorsch medical manual rather than written or composed it. For reasons which I cannot go into here, I am reasonably certain that this also applies to the very first item of the codex, a text traditionally referred to as the *Defense of Medicine*, published in 1913 by the nestor of German medical historiography, Karl Sudhoff. Sudhoff thought that the manuscript had been written in Germany, without, however, arguing the case, and he certainly was no palaeographer. There is no detail in this *Defense of Medicine* that would help us to link it unambiguously either to Germany or the period when the Lorsch codex was written. Gundolf Keil, instrumental for putting the Lorsch medical manual, in a manner of speaking, on the map by publishing a facsimile with an introduction and German translation, has maintained time and again that the *Defense* contains a statement of the medical policies of Charlemagne, whose wording and very ideas were, in Keil's opinion, to be credited to Richbodo, abbot at Lorsch from 784 until his death in 804. Although Richbodo must have been well connected with the royal family to be chosen as abbot for Lorsch, perhaps the most important royal monastery at the time, adding the bishopric of Trier a few years later when the incumbent, who had accompanied Charles on a campaign, died, the evidence for his intellectual capabilities rests on a few letters addressed to him by Alcuin, and on a commentary on the rule of St Benedict mentioned in the Lorsch library catalogue but not preserved. Richbodo had spent some time at Charlemagne's court when Alcuin was there and undoubtedly profited from Alcuin's teaching, and while Alcuin mentions Richbodo's enthusiasm for Vergil, he is silent about any inclination to medical matters. Consequently, we will conclude that Richbodo did have a chance of doing what Keil said he did, that is shaping a medical policy for Charlemagne while abbot of Lorsch, but there is not a single shred of evidence that Charlemagne had a medical policy, let alone that Richbodo was a kind of his minister of health (as we would say nowadays), who conceived and himself composed the *Defense of Medicine* in order to underpin such a policy.

The *Defense of Medicine* is the first among the introductory sections of the

manual. It is followed by a few verses borrowed from Isidore of Seville, written to adorn Isidore's cupboard containing medical books and the medicine cabinet. Further smaller items outside the main body of the Lorsch manual are the pseudo-Aristotelian *Problemata* (published by Valentin Rose; not connected with the much more extensive work preserved in Greek), *Egyptian Days*, a *Lunary*, a list of herbs and spices to be used in each of the twelve months, starting with January, and a long list of Quid-pro-quo's, i.e. alternative drugs you may substitute if the ingredient required in a particular recipe is not at hand. This is found on the last page of the first quaternio (fol. 8ᵛ) and ends imperfectly with the first item of the letter b, *bdellium*, although half of that page remains empty, so it must be assumed that the scribe did not go on with the list which is preserved in other manuscripts in full. The list itself seems to start from the Greek name of a drug and would therefore have been translated straight from the Greek. Keil interpreted it as an attempt at replacing expensive and exotic drugs with homegrown species (i.e. near Lorsch in the valley of the Rhine near Worms, south of Frankfurt), a claim not borne out by a closer examination of the text.

The quire following the gap begins (on fol. 9ʳ) with a detailed table of contents, divided into five consecutive tables of chapters referred to as *capitulationes* ('lists of headings'). This is a word we do not seem to come across in any other medical book[38] either contemporary or earlier. We are, of course, reminded of the *Capitulatio de partibus Saxonie*. From a simple 'division into sections or chapters', the word acquired the meaning 'treatise' or 'capitulary', the origin of our 'to capitulate' = 'to surrender'.

We must dwell a little longer on terminology when looking at the general heading: *Incipiunt capitula huius codicis qui a diversis medicinalibus libris ad diversa morborum genera excarpsatus esse in ipso curationum ordine omnibus evidenter manifesta ratione declaratur* (fol. 9ʳ). It is rather difficult to render this convoluted Latin with any degree of fidelity, preserving the clumsiness that is in the original: «(Here) begin the chapters of this codex which we declare to have been excerpted from several medical books for several kinds of diseases in the very sequence of treatments with a method that is clear to everybody». We meet a word that crops up a number of times in ninth-century manuscripts, *excarpsatus*, also *scarapsatus*, deriving from *excarpsum* 'excerpt'. If you cannot pay for the complete copy, you make excerpts, and this is clear from works like the medical digest that in the later Middle Ages circulated under the name of Petroncellus but was called *Tereoperica*[39], *Cures*, in our earliest complete version of book 1, or the *Liber passionalis*[40].

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[38] Cf. *MLW* (the article was published many years before the *Lorsch Medical Manual* = *Recept. Lauresh.*, which is why it does not occur there), *DMLBS* and the attestations in the *Corpus corporum*. In the manual itself, reference is made to the list of chapters as *titulatio* on fol. 39ʳ, a term also used in the heading of the five sections.

[39] This must relate to θεραπευτικά in some way. For Book I, there is a new edition by LÓPEZ FIGUEROA 2011. A few chapters of Book II can be found in DE RENZI 1854, 287-290. What de Renzi calls Book III are fragments of a Latin translation of Oribasius, see FISCHER 1994.

[40] Details in FISCHER 2007.

This table of contents for five separate books allows us to see how many recipes had been included originally, because now roughly one third of them is no longer present. The relevant pages were lost from the manuscript at some time we cannot specify. After the last recipe in the list, a few others (not listed) follow, as does the dietetic letter that the Greek physician Anthimus addressed to Theoderic, king of the Franks[41]. In the same way, whatever comes before these lists of chapters, i.e. the *Defense of Medicine* etc., is not recorded. The reason might well be that additions to the five *capitulationes* were made at a later stage, which may also be true of the glossary of drugs (fol. 15r-17r)[42] and the few lines from Vindicianus' letter to Pentadius following the *capitulationes*.

The claim that the recipes presented in the *capitulationes* are arranged in a rational order is not borne out by facts. I would suggest that they started as five independent collections of recipes in their own right and that they were later combined either at Lorsch itself or (as I am rather inclined to think) earlier in Italy, where the exemplar copied at Lorsch probably came from.

Occasionally these recipes are grouped according to the kind of preparation or type (κατὰ γένη), most often antidotes. This applies to the *capitulationes* 1, 3, 4 and 5. Most recipes in the second *capitulatio* follow the order from head to toe (κατὰ τόπους). The main difference, however, is that the remedies listed there are usually rather simple, i.e. based on one or only a few ingredients that are neither rare or exotic nor expensive. They are often called *euporista*, 'easily procurable'. Alf Önnerfors, the editor of the *Physica Plinii Bambergensis* from the *Bamb. med.* 2[43], had seen that three quarters of the second *capitulatio* had been excerpted[44] from the *Physica Plinii*, *Pliny's Natural Cures*. Its predecessor goes under the name of *Medicina Plinii*[45], and while its true author is unknown, Pliny the Elder's *Natural History* provided the lion's share of cures listed there[46]. Later versions added material from other sources which we sometimes can identify and sometimes not.

It may be a good idea to quote some examples to show what sort of recipes were copied, and probably tried out, and what exactly the difference between simple recipes and the more elaborate class of the so-called antidotes is:

> For pain in a breast or when they have swollen: You pound white horehound well and mix it thoroughly with very old hog's fat and spread it on. This suppresses the pain and prevents the formation of an open sore; if, however, the wound has to be opened, this will be brought about without a knife (*Recept. Lauresh.* 2, 67, 2 < Plin.

[41] LIECHTENHAN 1963, where it is ms. B, referred to with its earlier shelfmark *Bamb.* L III 8.
[42] *Glossario medico IV* according to BECCARIA 1956, 459, who lists editions of versions of this glossary in other manuscripts.
[43] ÖNNERFORS 1975.
[44] ÖNNERFORS 1963, 28-34.
[45] ÖNNERFORS 1964.
[46] German translation with Önnerfors' Latin text and a fairly full bibliography in BRODERSEN 2015, where the references to the *Natural History* are conveniently listed (BRODERSEN 2015, 191-200). ÖNNERFORS 1964 has them beneath the text. An annotated English translation, also with Önnerfors' text, is HUNT 2019.

> *Phys. Bamb.* 66, 2).
>
> Coughing is checked if you boil garlic in bean-meal until it dissolves and take this dish as food or with honey. This will cure coughs and purulent phlegm (*Recept. Lauresh.* 2, 58, 2 < Plin. *Phys. Bamb.* 57, 13)[47].
>
> (for laboured breathing) Water that collects in the clefts and hollow parts of a tree brings speedy relief if taken by mouth (*Recept. Lauresh.* 2, 66, 7 < Plin. *Phys. Bamb.* 65, 16).
>
> For broken ribs: Goat dung ground up in old wine and spread onto the broken ribs opens, draws forth [perhaps particles of bone?] and heals miraculously (*Recept. Lauresh.* 2, 101 < Plin. *Phys. Flor.-Prag.* 2, 35, 1 / cod. *Cass.* 69, p. 141a).

Such then are the recipes which I have referred to as 'simple'. All of them come from the *Physica Plinii*. The use of excrement, animal and human, and other ingredients that we consider unsavoury or classify as health hazards was commonplace. But what you should remember is that the recommendations are simple and inexpensive and undoubtedly based on experience. If we shout, all too quickly, 'superstition', we should remember that a placebo is quite often almost as efficacious as a real drug, especially in children; and this can also apply to very serious conditions like epilepsy.

Let us now look at a remedy styled an antidote[48]:

> **6.** Its preparation is as follows: cinnamon, 1 dram; if you have no cinnamon, bark of wild cinnamon, 2 drams; Troglodytic myrrh, 3 drams; saffron, 4 drams; common pepper, 1 oz.; long pepper, 4 drams; castoreum, 1 oz.; costmary, 1 oz.; galbanum, 1 oz.; opium from Thebes [in Egypt], 1 oz.; best quality storax, 1 oz.; spikenard, 1 oz.; honey from Attica, 1 oz. (if it cannot be had, the best quality carefully cleared of its froth). **7.** Boil the honey in the galbanum[49] on a slow fire, not a strong fire; boil the honey down further. Grind it with care for a very long time in a mortar and combine all drugs in a small (glass) container or a container made from *stagnum*. **8.** When you wish to administer it, give the size of a bean or a hazelnut as a potion, and three days before a woman gives birth, administer it with 12 drops of vinegar running down from your pinkie, making sure to administer it in a potion made from an infusion of bran.

[47] Plin. *Med.* 1, 24, 1; Önnerfors compares Plin. *Nat.* 20, 56. Now see also Plin. *Phys. Sang.* 234, 3.

[48] For the Latin text of this antidote in various manuscripts, see Fischer 2011. A version with German translation is in Marcell. *Med.* 20, 92. The numbers in the English translation correspond to Fischer 2011.

[49] Section 7 is in the two oldest manuscripts but missing from *Recept. Lauresh.* 3, 27. I would now emend *in galbano* to *in cacabo* «in a pot», because I cannot see the point of boiling honey in galbanum.

> Feverish patients should take it in hot water with the amounts of vinegar and honey specified above; patients with no fever take it in wine as specified above.

Originally antidotes were preparations to counteract poisons administered orally or through the bite or sting of a poisonous animal, literally 'given against'. Later on, antidotes became all-purpose medicines of immense popularity which, under the name of theriac (literally a remedy against 'poisonous animals'), were still stocked by European pharmacists in the 19th century. So what is this particular antidote supposed to be good for?

> **3.** It is appropriate for those who do not digest their food and keep repeating it in an unpleasant way, for stomachache, for pain in the side, for sciatica, for troubles of the bladder and the kidneys and for spasms in one's insides, **4.** for patients spitting blood and for coughs, for consumption and asthma, dysentery and sprue, that is flux from the bowel, for a sick liver and for twisting of the bowel; **5.** for conditions of the womb in women and for snakebite and the bite of venomous spiders and to get rid of all poisons and all that is around the chest and that is vomited.

Even if we meet a recipe like this one for the first time in Latin translation in the early Middle Ages, nobody would be inclined to suggest that a German monk could have prescribed honey from Attica or opium from Thebes in Upper Egypt, a place where poisonous snakes, scorpions and venomous spiders are much more common than in the valley of the Rhine.

Nevertheless, if sheaf after sheaf of precious parchment is used for copying such prescriptions, we will not be mistaken in assuming that these recipes were copied in order to be used in real life and not for antiquarian interest by historians of medicine *avant la lettre*. Still, nobody in his right mind would venture a guess when asked to state where and when and by whom these antidotes were compounded and used at the turn of the 8th to the 9th century.

As you saw, many of the ingredients of this and the other antidotes in the Lorsch medical manual are such that they could not be produced in central Europe or in the British Isles. If you needed them, you would have to import many ingredients at considerable cost and sometimes they could not even be bought for a lot of money. We happen to have a letter written by the Winchester bishop Cyneheard to Lull, who succeeded St Boniface in the see of Mainz. Cyneheard complains about the difficulties of obtaining *pigmenta ultramarina*, i.e. drugs from overseas[50]. While this is a case dateable to around 760, more or less

[50] *Et hoc petimus, si qua apud vos solamina, nobis necessaria vel ignota, spiritalis quidem scientiae sive in libris antiquis, qui a nobis non habentur, sive in aliis ecclesiasticis administrationibus, ut nobis libenter participare non negetis. Nec non et, si quos saecularis scientiae libros nobis ignotos adepturi sitis – ut sunt de medicinalibus, quorum copia est aliqua apud nos, sed tamen pigmenta* [ci. Jaffé, who however prints *sigmenta*] *ultramarina, quae in eis scripta conperimus, ignota nobis sunt et difficilia ad adipiscendum – vel si qua in aliis quibuslibet negotiis vel speciebus nobis necessariis providetis, communicare dignemini, ut fecistis villosam mittendo* (from letter 114, written ca. 755-756: *Cineheardus episcopus Vintoniensis* [ep. Vintoniensis, 754-780] *Lullo*

the time when Lorsch was founded (764), two centuries later a visitor from the Near East who came to Mainz in 973 was amazed at the range of foreign goods, including drugs and spices, then available in the Mainz market.

If a monastery was rich, it would be able to buy such supplies at a market, and even in large amounts. Evidence for this is a shopping list of the monastery of Corbie, for goods to be acquired at Cambrai, situated some 30 miles away in north-eastern France[51]:

pepper, 120 lb. (1 lb. = 12 oz.)
cummin seed, likewise
ginger, 70 lb.
cloves, 10 lb.
cinnamon, 15 lb.
galanga, 10 lb.
rhubarb from the Pontus, 10 lb.
costmary, 10 lb.
percrum (?), 10 lb.
spikenard, 5 lb.
salviola (Nardum celticum?), 10 lb.
mastix grains, 10 lb.
incense, 10 lb.
gotsumber[52], 10 lb.
prepared incense, if of good quality, 2 lb.
myrrh, 3 lb.
sulfur, 10 lb.
red ochre, 3 lb.
orpiment (= trisulphide of arsenic), 3 lb.
dragon's blood (a resin), 3 lb.
indium (indigo?), 3 lb.
sponges, 10
brimstone, 10
zedoar, good
styrax (an aromatic gum), 10 lb.
bees' wax, 600 lb.

Unfortunately, the date of this document is in dispute and ranges from the 8th to the late 10th century. At the end of the list there are some items only used for paints, and it is tempting to think of colourings for the illumination of manuscripts. Be that as it may, Corbie was a very important and large and also a rich abbey, and it would be wrong to assume that other houses would have had as much money to spend on exotic drugs.

Almost automatically we assume that the drugs used in recipes recorded in literary sources would be supplied by a pharmacy, inside or outside a monastery, where qualified personnel would be able to convert the text of the codex into a

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episcopo, MGH *Epist.* III, *S. Bonifatii et Lulli epist.*).

51 STOLL 1991, 188 with note 172.

52 *MLW* s.v. *cozumber*.

remedy. As it is, we know next to nothing about pharmacies and pharmacists before the 13th century, and for that reason I would like to draw your attention to a poem by Sedulius Scottus entitled *De quadam medicinali domo*[53]. When you read it, it is clear that an apothecary's shop is meant, very likely an apothecary's shop in Liège, Belgium, around 850:

On a certain house devoted to healing[54]
You, who desire the joyful gift of health,
swift as the hart[55] enter this magnificent building;
direct your step to it: here, I believe, is the path to health.
You may find here what Greece, our teacher, knows not.
So receive with joy the gifts of health-giving medicines;
thus will you gain your desire, thus you will go in triumph.

Medicine
This mighty queen has come down from ruddy Olympus,
giving gifts to all on earth with her health-bringing face.
She who victorious tames a thousand sick-pains,
and on her flower-crowned brow three lights shine,
and from her breasts flow so many streams of nectareous juices
with which she suckles and cures the earth-born multitudes.

Behold the abundant riches of Mother Medicine
that she brought with her from gardens of paradise:
In this row ointments exhale their holy fragrance,
better than frankincense and costly balm;
the second row gleams with fragrant antidotes:
whatever impairs your health, they drive out:
Our Mother, I believe, when she had come down from the sky,
brought them from the flowering garden of the Hesperides.
On the top row the products of the Mount of Olives
glow golden, mixed with healing juices of nectar.
Hail, holy house, Medicine's chief concern,
hope of many a man, full of fragrant goods.

It is clear that Sedulius was not making this up but pictured real premises, and

[53] Sedul. *Carm.* 2, 31, in MEYERS 1991; earlier edition by Ludovicus Traube in the *Poetae aevi Carolini*, vol. III, Berolini, apud Weidmannos, 1896, 197-198; see also BRUNHÖLZL 1975, 449-461.
[54] EVERETT 2018, 129. In September 2008, I gave a paper (entitled *In Sickness and in Health. Reclaiming the Classical Medical Heritage in Carolingian Times*) at the Center for Medieval Studies of the University of Toronto, invited by Dr. Nicholas Everett. To make sure that I wouldn't forget it on the train from London, Ont. to Toronto, I had mailed the text of my presentation beforehand. The fact that our English translation of the poems of Sedulius and of Isidore (see below) is almost identical is not explained by the fact that we both translated the same Latin texts (EVERETT 2018, 129, note 59 states explicitly: «my translation»). I delivered the same paper a few days later as The 2008 Clendening Lecture at the Department of History of Medicine at the University of Kansas, Kansas City, Missouri at the invitation of Dr. Linda E. Voigts. Professor McKitterick did not comment when I brought the similarities I just mentioned to her attention.
[55] EVERETT 2018, 129 writes 'stag' and introduces a few other minor stylistic variations.

this, I would maintain, is our earliest description of an apothecary's shop which antedates by centuries the famous statutes of Frederick II of Hohenstaufen in his reign of Sicily. The word 'apothecary' is derived from Greek ἀποτίθημι 'put away', 'store', and ἀποθήκη was a storeroom long before it turned into a pharmacy. If we look further, we discover that ἀποθήκη gave rise to a rich progeny, French *boutique*, Spanish *bodega* and *botica*. There was also a Latin word in use for a long time, *officina*, 'workshop', an apt designation at a time when pharmacists would compound, and not just store and sell, drugs. And many medicinal plants have *officinalis* or *officinarum* as part of their official botanical name, e.g. sugar, *Saccharum officinarum L.*

Sedulius' pharmacy displays containers in three rows (*ordines*), similar to what we might see even today in an old pharmacy. One of these rows holds ointments, *unguenta*, row no. 2 fragrant antidotes «to banish all that is contrary to health», as Sedulius puts it, and finally in row no. 3 we behold the gifts of the Mount of Olives, i.e. medicinal oils mixed with plant juices. These will be the various oils whose preparation is described in our sources; a manuscript from the abbey of the Holy Trinity of Vendôme, late in the 11th century, lists 41 varieties[56].

Sedulius represents just what a visitor could see, the space open to the public, but a proper workshop (*officina*) and storage space must also have existed. It is clear that Sedulius' establishment is not located inside a monastery, or at least not in that part that is off limits. Our natural curiosity, who ran the pharmacy – was it somebody's employee or an independent person; who went there to buy drugs; what did they cost; what was prescribed, all this is nothing that was of sufficient interest to Sedulius, otherwise he would have mentioned these details in his poem. And I am sure we would also have heard if this establishment was a novelty or a rare exception.

But rather than speculate, let us return to the very beginning of the Lorsch medical manual and the verses on drugs copied there. Just like Sedulius Scottus' poem, these verses, written by Isidore of Seville († 636), are rarely quoted by historians of pharmacy:

> 16 *St Cosmas, St Damian, Hippocrates, Galen*[57]
> Those famous masters whom medicine celebrates all over the world,
> these this image before you shows depicted.
>
> 17
> The doctor gets gifts as long as someone is ill;
> now his patient rises; no wine-jar arrives.
> Patient, pay doctor's bills in case your illness
> returns – nobody will run another time to help you[58].

---

[56] *Vindoc.* 109 fol. 130rb-132vb; see also STOLL 1992, 374-385.

[57] SÁNCHEZ MARTÍN 2000, 226-233 (with a Spanish translation). For an additional manuscript witness of *carmen* 19, see FISCHER 2005. The Lorsch manuscript (*Bamb. med.* 1), fol. 5r, has the text printed below in the Appendix.

[58] Reading *curret* instead of *currit*, which is required by the sense.

18
Doctor, assess the wealth of rich and poor;
their diverse fortunes should be treated differently.
If your patient be rich, let it be ripe time for gain.
If your patient be poor, a single payment suffices you.

19 *Inscription for the Drug Cabinet*[59]
Whatever fragrance the Arab brings for the altar, whatever the Indian brings, and whatever the wave of the Ionian sea conveys to us: Cinnamon, myrrh, leaves of nard, gleaming cinnamon bark,
balm, frankincense, sweet flag, and saffron from Corycus,
such things can great kings' drug-cabinets afford,
and a house overflowing with immeasurable riches.
We use the common plants that grow in our meadows,
that lowly valleys and high peaks produce.
So hail to you, holy mountains and lands of Spain,
For your gifts are health-giving, curing many ills.

20
Here fragrant frankincense lies, here cinnamon breathes,
both what the Chinese sow and what Yemen will produce.

21
Though many types of ointment are very pleasing,
nothing can be sweeter than nard and myrrh.

22
Though many types of ointment are made from flowers
nothing can be nicer than rose or violet.
Let fenugreek yield to them, let marjoram,
let even the unguent that comes from Cyprus yield.

23
Here you see sundry ointments Greece has sent,
but the great majority of us hail from Spain.

24
Little containers fired from fragile clay:
we contain drugs, but administer no poisons[60].

Pigmentarium in the title of Isidore's verses could refer both to a drug-cabinet and a special storeroom. After all, the Plan of St Gall refers to one room of the

[59] EVERETT 2018, 124. Everett cites the new edition of these verses (SÁNCHEZ MARTÍN 2000), giving pages 37-100 (EVERETT 2018, 124, note 40). Is this just a slip?
[60] EVERETT 2018, 124 translates *pigmenta gerimus, pocula nulla damus* «we contain drugs, and offer you nothing to drink». It seems he was not aware of Stoll's German translation (STOLL 1992, 65), «liefern keine Zauber- bzw. Gifttränke», which I feel is the correct interpretation. SÁNCHEZ MARTÍN 2000, 232 translates «guardamos drogas, mas venenos no damos».

infirmary as *armarium pigmentorum*, and *armarium* means 'cupboard'. The *pigmenta* that were stored could be exotic drugs or herbs collected in the vicinity, even grown in the monastery's own garden. I would not want to stretch the meaning of the verses to the point where domestic herbs are to be preferred. I rather think that this is a topical reference like that in the preface of Theodorus Priscianus[61], written probably very early in the 5th century.

If we trust Einhard, Charlemagne could not be said to have been fond of doctors; they told him to stay away from roasts and eat boiled meat instead, and we may compare the dietary advice of Anthimus and what he has to say about the predilection of Franks for uncooked *lardum* (not identified with certainty; some people even think this is ham, which I doubt; bacon has also been mentioned). All the same, Charlemagne lived to a ripe old age, all the more exceptional at that time, and was in good health except for the last four years of his long life, when he kept suffering recurrent bouts of fevers and at the end of his life developed a limp.

The picture would not be complete without a glance at the *Capitulare de villis*, because however controversial its date has been, it belongs to Charlemagne's reign. Its longest and final chapter 70 contains a list of all sorts of plants and fruit-trees, called 'herb garden' by some scholars and linked directly to a cultivation of medicinal herbs, limited of course to the personnel active on the royal farms and the needs of the royal household. In our day when 'green' medicine, interpreted as innocuous and devoid of the potential to harm or to produce unwanted side-effects, is rather popular with many of our especially health-conscious contemporaries, these orders for growing herbs appear very enlightened and attractive. Nevertheless, I do not think it would be correct to look at ch. 70 in this perspective. Leaving aside a number of fruit-trees, there are still more than seventy plants mentioned; and a considerable number of them cannot be identified with any degree of confidence, while other medicinal plants known from medical texts and mentioned there frequently are missing. As we saw earlier in Walahfrid's garden, many herbs can be used both in the kitchen and in the infirmary, and whoever wants to establish a link between a wish on Charles's part to assure the supply of medicinal herbs when drawing up the *Capitulare de villis*, should produce sufficient evidence. Walking through the gardens in Carolingian times, be it on a royal estate or at a monastery, will be beneficial because of its effect on our souls when looking, for instance, at roses and lilies and well-tended plots, and this will in itself no doubt be good for our health.

[61] Theod. Prisc. *Eup. faen.* 3: *neque enim dum aegrotus afficitur, adeundus est mox Pontus aut interiora Arabiae sollicitanda sunt aut storax vel castoreum vel reliqua quae orbis longinquus peculia habet. Ideo medicinam etiam in vilibus herbis parens natura disposuit, ut nullo vel loco vel tempore medendi desit officium, cum tutum possit esse remedium.*

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Appendix
Verses by Isidore of Seville

16. COSMAS DAMIANUS IPPOCRATIS GALIENUS

Quos claros orbis celebrat medicina magistros,
    Hos praesens scriptos pagina signat viros.

17
Sunt medico dona, quamdiu quisque laborat,
    eger iam surgit, nulla lagona venit.
Quod debes medico, redde eger, ne mala rursus
    occurrant, currit denuo nemo tibi.

18
Pauperis adtende medice censum atque potentis,
    dispar conditio dispari habenda modo.
Si fuerit dives, sit iusta occasio lucris,

si pauper, merces sufficit una tibi.

19
Quicquid Arabia, quidquid fert Indus odoris,
quicquid oceani pervehit unda maris,
Cinamomum, myrram, folium, casiamque nitentem,
balsama, tus, calamum, Coriciumque crocum:
haec possunt magnorum pigmentaria rerum
et domus inmensi proflua divitiis.
Nos viles fruimur pratorum germinis herbas,
quas humilis rura et iuga celsa ferunt.
Ergo sacri Esperidum montes et rura valete
nam multis curis munera vestra valent.

20
Hic odorata iacent, hic spirant cynama, thura
quaeque serunt Seres, quaeque Sabea feret.

21
Unguenti genera, dum sint gratissima plura,
nil nardo et stacten dulcior esse potest. [*desunt 3-4*]

22
Unguenti genera, dum constent florida plura,
nil rosae violae gratius esse valet.

23
Unguenta cernis varia, quae Grecia misit,
plurima Hisperia de regione sumus.

24
Vascula congregata fragili de pulvere creta
pigmenta gerimus, pocula nulla damus.

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