

AN HISTORICAL DOCUMENT RELATING TO THE PREVENTION AND CURE OF PLAGUE IN SPAIN IN 1600—1601.

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THE document, of which a translation follows, was discovered by me in the National Library at Madrid (Coll. Salazar, Vol. MSS. 3207). It reads :—

*“The Instructions and Ordinances that are to be observed during the Plague, and which were observed in Seville during the epidemic there in 1600 and 1601.*

The utmost severity is to be exercised in isolating the sick from the healthy, and all communication between them is to be severed.

The same severity is to be exercised in burning the clothes worn by the patient at the time when he was seized by the illness, and also the bed-clothes of the bed he used during the illness, even if he should recover.

The Hospital is to be of very great size, even though 15 or 20 houses may have to be given up to it. These are to be surrounded by an enclosure so that the patients can be treated with greater isolation and spaciousness, and that the servants should have bed-rooms free from any suspicion of contagion. The patients and all attendants of the Hospital are not to go out of its enclosure. Those who are obliged to supply the Hospital with provisions and other necessities are not to enter within the enclosure, but are to deliver them at the door to a person deputed to receive them. The persons who have to convey patients to the Hospital, and those who have to bury them, are always to be clothed in stiffened linen<sup>1</sup>. They are also to eat and sleep in the

<sup>1</sup> Bocaci : a kind of heavy holland stiffened with gum.

localities indicated to them, so that all persons can keep away to protect themselves from them.

In the pharmacy, very great care is to be observed principally in the preparation of the medicines prescribed for the illness, which remedies are to be delivered with much promptitude.

Rigorous care is also to be observed in avoiding localities suspected of infection.

*Directions for curing the illness of the Plague by Doctor Lefebure, the great physician, of French nationality, who effected cures in Seville.*

Your Lordship has ordered me to give a memorandum of the medicine that I employ internally as well as externally in curing the disease of the plague for the enlightenment and satisfaction of your Lordship and the physicians who are to judge, by the ingredients, the effects of the compositions that I employ in curing said disease, which are as follows :

In the first case, and before all else, the person attacked by the pest is to be given quintessence, or extract of saffron, pearls and corals, in liquid form, of the weight of one adarme or two at utmost, because it is a medicine that is a great cordial for invigorating and fortifying the principal organs which are those which suffer most through this malignant disease.

Secondly: The patient is to be purged with a composition made of gold, mercury and antimony, chemically prepared, which is named by the Ancient Philosophers, the Triaca of Metals, or the Elixir of Life, which, said Triaca, is the supreme drug for evacuating any deadly poison and principally that of the pest. The patient is to take the weight of 8 to 16 grains, made in the form of a tablet, or as an injection with sugar, and it produces an evacuation with such mildness and safety that the patient does not perceive any fatigue whatsoever.

This medicine can be given to patients of any age or sex, and it produces its evacuation at the beginning and ends with a sweating according to each one's disposition.

This is to be given for two or three consecutive days at whatever hour the patient may desire or require it, without his having to observe special hours. It can be taken when the patient is up and about, and were it not for the usually great debility of the patient, it would not oblige him to remain in bed. Beside being the sovereign remedy against pestilential fevers, it is a perfect remedy for the morbo gallico and many other diseases, as experience will prove.

Thirdly: During the increase, and until the decline of the disease, the patients are to be given to drink all the water they desire. In each half-gallon of this water a drachm of good oil of vitriol is to be dissolved. It would be much better if the water were distilled with cordial herbs, although this would be more costly. The water is, at least, to be clean and cold, as light as can be found and taken from a fountain or river.

Fourthly, and lastly: The topical and external medicaments to be used on the tumours or pustules of whichever of the three kinds, I ordinarily use that great and so celebrated plaster, named Paracelsus, which has attractive and resolvent virtues, and often brings the tumours to a state of perfect suppuration, as may be seen by the following ingredients of which it is composed: oxide of lead, vitrified; common oil; opoponax paste; bedelium; gummi-resinae galbanum; gummi-resinae ammoniac.; myrrh; *Lathyrus sativus*; incense; aloes; *Aristolochia rotunda*; yellow amber; colophony; oxide of lead; asphaltum; oxide of iron; oil of *Hypericum perforatum*; *Abies serpentina*; sulphate of mercury—of each a certain quantity, to be made, with art, into a plaster. As to the carbuncles and buboes that usually break out in the majority of persons affected with the plague, I cure them with oil of mercury, chemically prepared, for this has such a faculty for loosening the scabs of said carbuncles that it obviates the necessity of scarifying them, which process always causes much pain and inspires the patients with great fear.

In the case of other outward symptoms and accidents peculiar to this disease, I do not depart from the usual method, for the remedies for curing them are not of the first importance as are the above-mentioned medicines, which have to be taken into the body by the mouth.

(Signed) LEFEBURE.”

*Note.* The translator is indebted to Señor Don Martin Bayod y Martinez, Chief Pharmacist to H.M. the King of Spain, for the equivalents of the old Spanish names of the drugs employed.