[**Edward T. Porter**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2872-edward-t-porter/)

* Deck Hand
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* Location:Bremen, Germany
* Interests:-LIVE ACTION ROLE PLAYING/ LARP<br>-Sewing my clothes<br>-History<br>-Poker<br><br>Roles I Play in Larp:<br><br>Edward T. Porter (Pirate, 1760´s)<br>Weland Pommery (Pirate 1720´s)<br>Tadeo di Seda (spanish rennaissance swashbuckler)

[Posted December 28, 2006](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9533-seagoing-medicines/&do=findComment&comment=238377) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9533-seagoing-medicines/&do=reportComment&comment=238377)

Quote

Seriously, there were a few questions in "TWILL" we had been discussing on various medical issues...perhaps when you come across any info pertaining to them you would be good enough to post an update?

I´ve started to write down/translate it to english a roundup from the book I´ve posted pictures from [in this topic.](http://pyracy.com/forums/index.php?showtopic=9510)

As I said there, the book is good enough to become an overview but has almost no references! If someone is able to come up with sources to affirm/ disprove the statements... go for it! If it´s of interest for some of you I just continue the roundup in the next days with more information and recipes.

Vitamine deficiency, drinking water problems

With increasing longer seacruises, vitamine deficiency and fresh drinking water became one of the biggest problens. On some discoverer ships there was a proper mass mortality. Often the still unknown scurvy can be caused for that.

-In 1498 the portuguesian discoverer Vasco da Gama kept an account of deaths among his 180 crewmembers. 55 died off gingivitis, teeth loss or ecchymosis.

-1585 Admiral Sir Francis Drake had about 2300 sailors on board his ships and 600 died off vitamine deficiency.

-In 1600 Sir James Lancaster sailed to East India with 1500 sailors. 900 died within a fiew weeks.

-626 out of 961 crewmembers died in 1617 on board the british liner “Gloucester”

-In 1726 an expedition from Commodore Anson and Admiral Hosier failed, cause 90 percent of the fleetcrew died.

For the first time the surgeons Dr. Line, Dr. Trotter and Dr. Blane could offer usefull therapy and preventive measures. They suggested sauerkraut and citrons as standard food for sailors. The success was amazing. In 1780 there were 15000 scurvey patients in the Haslar military hospital. In 1810 there were only 2.

The supply with fresh drinking water caused problems for a long time. Drinking water on board was carried in wooden barrels. In between a short time the water started fouling and couldn´t even been drunk if it was thinned with strong alcohol.

Rainwater was collectet to amend the water stocks. People tried to cure water by admixture from lime, magnesium and thinned salt acid. At the beginning of the 19th century the problem could been solved with the upcoming of metal tanks in which water could been carried, destilled and filtered.

Therapy for gingivitis

You have to champ dried eucalyptus leaves and spit them out.

You have to massage your gingival with arnica tincture

You have to flush your gums with tea made from sage, oakrind or okra root

[**Red Cat Jenny**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/3475-red-cat-jenny/)

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  Diverse enough?  
  I's love to learn to sail and also surf. I grew up around the waters of LI. Cept for 2 yrs land lubbin in AZ. The pirate thing? When I was 6, I stole my brother's halloween tricorn pirate hat and proceeded to wear it for three months till it ripped and the string fell off. Needless to say the rest is history!

[Posted December 28, 2006](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9533-seagoing-medicines/&do=findComment&comment=238386) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9533-seagoing-medicines/&do=reportComment&comment=238386)

THANKS! The more the merrier.

I like to see the whole picture" and to really get yourself immersed, you need to see life from an authentic point of view. Which includes all aspects of everyday life. I think the more you understand about what ones life was like, the more you would be able to think from their point of view. I'm sure this isn't *news* to most of you.

I see experience, even if it's just in thought (ah daydreaming on the way to work again) as sort of a unique window on history.

Strangely it's like getting down on the floor to understamd what the house is like from a dog's point of view - something I did as a kid and it always stuck with me as bizarre as that may sound...it was a lesson in mental perspective,

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[Posted November 7, 2008](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9533-seagoing-medicines/&do=findComment&comment=328036) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9533-seagoing-medicines/&do=reportComment&comment=328036)

Briarrose Kildare and I have been talking off-line about medicaments from the period. She is actually interested in the herbal properties of the medicines, many of which are still thought to be valid today. Naturally, I am interested in the most lurid medicines I can possibly find, rather than the most useful. With that noble goal in mind, I am resurrecting this thread because I have stumbled across some really great examples in the book *Helps for Suddain Accidents Endangering Life* (1633) by Stephen Bradwell, self-proclaimed "Physition." This book is designed to be a sort of home-remedy manual.

"In the way of Cure [of poisoning], these also that follow are especially commended against all kindes of Poysons whatsoever. Viz.

*The Hoofe of an Oxe cut into parings*, and boyled with bruised Mustard-seed in white Wine and faire Water.

*The Bloud of a Malard* dunke fresh and warme: or els dryed to powder, and so drunke in a draught of white Wine.

*The Bloud of a Stagge* also in the same manner.

*The Seeds or Rue* [a hardy evergreen shrub], *and the leaves of [Wood] Betony* [an herb] boyled togather in white Wine.

*Take it, Scruples* (that is, fortie graines) *of Mithridate* [a supposed antidote against poison]; *of prepared Chrystall one dram* (that is, threescore graines) *fresh butter once ounce.* Mixe all well together: Swallow it down by such quantities as you can swallow at once; and drinke presently upon it a *quarter of a pint of the decoction of French Barley; or so much six shillings Beere.* Of this I have had happy proofe.

There is also another excellent course to be taken (besides all these) by those of abilitie, and that is; Take a found horse, open his belly alive, take out all his entrayles quickly, and put [Luke Skywalker] the poysoned partie naked into it, all save his head, while the body of the horse retaines his naturall heate: and there let him swett well.

This may be held a strange course [You don't say!]: but the same reason that teacheth to divide live Pullets and Pigeons for Plague-sores, approveth this way of Sweating as most apt to draw to it selfe all poysons from the heart & principall parts of the Patients body." (Bradwell, p. 15-17)

"Though it happenth very rarely; yet somtimes it has so fortuned, that some lying asleepe on the grasse with their mouth open (as many doe sleepe so) have had a Snake, some an Eft [Newt], one had a Slowworme crept in at his mouth into his Body: Any of these will much torment a man; but especially the last: Because therefore, I have knowne many take delight in sleepe on the grasse in the fields; and since such an accident may happen, I thought it not amisse to teach a helpe for the same.

While is yet in the Stomach, labour by vomiting to cast it out. If that prevalyle not, *Take the juice of Rue [evergreen shrub] mixed with your own urine:* and drinke a draught of it: and it neede require, drinke diverse of these draughts one within an hour of another.

*Marcus Gatinaria* commended the smoake of burnt old shooes received in at the mouth through a Funnell: Telling a man that had in vaine tryed many other Medicines: and with the use of this, avoyded the Viper downeward [from going into his intestines, I guess]." (Bradwell, p. 27-8)

There's more, but I don't want to give you too much at once.

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Here's a little scientific experimentation on folk remedies from the 14th century. BriarRose will like this one...

“For Bullets, I affirme, that they cannot conceive such heate, as to become causticke. For if you shoot them out of a Gun against a hard stone, yet you may presently take them up without any harme in your hands, though by striking up on the stone, they should become more hot. For combustions caused by Gun-pouder, I observed no speciall nor peculiar remedy, which might make their cure different from other combustions. To which purpose I related this ensuing history.

One of the Marshall of Montejan his Kitchin boyes, fell by chance into a Caldron of Oyle being even almost boyling hot; I being called to dresse him, went to the next Apothecaries to fetch refrigerating medicines commonly used in this case: there was present by chance a certaine old countrey woman, who hearing that I desired medicines for a burne, perswaded mee at the first dressing, that I should lay to raw Onions beaten with a little salt; for so I should hinder the breaking out of blisters or pustules, as shee had found by certaine and frequent experience. Wherefore I thought good to try the force of her Medicine upon this greasy scullion. I the next day found those places of his body whereto the Onions lay, to be free from blisters, but the other parts which they had not touched, to be all blistered.

It fell out a while after, that a German of Montejan his guard had his flasque full of Gunpouder set on fire, whereby his hands and face were grievously burnt: I being called, laid the Onions beaten as I formerly told you, to the middle of his face, and to the rest I load medicines usually applyed to burnes. At the second dressing I observed the part dressed with the Onions quite free from blisters and scoriation, the other being troubled with both; whereby I gave credit to the medicine.” (Paré, p. 140)

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[Posted December 13, 2008](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9533-seagoing-medicines/&do=findComment&comment=332215) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9533-seagoing-medicines/&do=reportComment&comment=332215)

No doubt you're wondering what what to do for hornet, wasp and bee stings. It takes a complicated medicine to cure such things, so I'll let Stephen Bradwell explain it for you.

"Sometimes these creatures leave not their sting in the place, but when they doe, the first course it to picke it out: And then, if it be a Hornet, as it is the more dangerous, so there must be the more care had of it.

If the Sting will not easily be gotten out, lay to it a poultis [poultice: soft moist mass, often heated and medicated, spread on cloth over the skin to treat aching, inflamed, or painful parts of the body] made of leaven, wood-ashes, and sallet [salad] Oyle mixed together. Or bath it with Childes urine good and hot. And when it is out, wash the wound with a little water & salt mixed with thte juice of *Rue* [strongly scented evergreen subshrubs in the family Rutaceae, native to the Mediterranean, Macronesia and southwest Asia]. Then burne it, or els sucke it as was sayd before: and after that, apply to it a little lint dipped in old *Andromachus Treacle* [a honey- or molasses-based antidote] mixed with Honey; and over it, as also over all the swelling, lay a poultis made of fresh Cow-dung mixed with Barrowes grease [hog's lard], or sallet Oyle." (Bradwell, p. 46-7)

"First therefore, the Sting [of a bee or wasp] is to be taken out, as is said, and presently the place to be annoynted with *Honey*, and covered from the ayre. If this prevaile not (as with most it doth) borune it, or sucke it: and applie Treacle of *Andromachus* or *Mithridate* [a complex remedy with as many as 65 ingredients, used as an antidotem said to be created by Mithridates VI of Pontus] mixed with *Honey*. Or, for the poorer sort, fresh Cow-dung or dogs dung mixed with sallet Oyle. And, if need be, give the partie some inward Antidote; such as have been before commended. Or else for present speed, *Take Garlicke boyled in white wine, or strong ale. Or els, the seeds and roots of Lillies boyled in Beere. Or the seeds of Mallowes [or Malva - a genus of herbaceous annual, biennial, and perennial flowering plants in the family Malvacea] boyled in water, and whitewine, with a little Vinegar.*

*Not long agoe I saw a young man stung in the eye-ball with a Bee, while he was too closely looking into the doore of the hive: But the Bee left not her sting there. Upon the place, I tooke a handfull of Carduus benedictus [blessed thistle] newly gathered, pounded it into a morter very fine, and mixed it with the white of an egge, so spreading it upon a pledget of flaxe, I laid it to the eye, and as it waxed dry, renued it twice. This Playster of Carduus is excellent to recover the eye if any venomous juice be spurted into it, or if the eye be hurt by a corrupt ayre, which the common people call baslting: It easeth paines; taketh away bloudy spots in the eyes; and is good for all burnings in, or about the eyes." (Bradwell, p. 48-9)*

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“This I have seen often in some of the *Dunkerkers* at Sea, who drank extraordinarily, and were full of drink at the time of their Sea fights. I could scarce ever cure any of them without allowing them Wine; and thereby their Spirits were kept up, and I had the liberty to bleed them as I thought fit. When these kind of people eat as plentifully as they drink, they then upon a sudden change of Diet labour under a *Crapula* [ Sickness caused by excessive eating or drinking], and are subject to Fainting, or have Colick, *Dysuria*, &c. and if the Wound happen in the *Abdomen*, it gives a suspicion (to those that are not well skilled in the Symptoms of Wounds) to think that it raiseth from the penetration of the Wound, where there is no such thing; and so by the perseverance in those Rules of the Patient suffers.

It hath been a common Saying, *A Hair of same Dog*, and thought that Brandy-wine is a common relief of such. What then must become of such a one,

\_\_

after a hard drinking for many months together, if he chance in heat of drink to be wounded, and from that time his Chirurgeon condemn him to Ptisan for a week together, nay two days? Will he not faint and languish, and his Wounds become indigested and inflamed? You may laugh at my pleading for them: but I hope you will consider I am a Water-drinker the while.” (Wiseman, p. 346-7)

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“The most common Simples with us in England are Comfry, Bugle, Ladies-mantle, Agrimony, Saniaclæ, Pauls-betony, Fluellen, Perwinkle, Mugwort, Plantane, Horse-tail, Adders-tongue, Avens, Cinquefoil, Wild-tansie, Vervine, Ground-ivy, Golden-rod, Herb-trinity, Centory, St. Johns-wort, Snake-weed, Knot-grass, Mouse-ear, Yarrow, Scordium, Strawberry leaves and roots, Tormentil, Bistort, Valerian, Red roses &c. Some of these are made choice of to be boiled in Water, or White wine, with an addition of Honey: of which sort you have sufficient examples in the Decoctum traumaticum of the Pharmacop. Lond. Their principal use is in Wounds of the Thorax and Abdomen: yet they are frequently prescribed in all great Wounds. Sometimes also, if the Disease run out to a length, we add Guaiacum, Sarsa, and Scorbutical Medicines. There are likewise Powders made of Crab’s-eyes, Coral, Nutmeg. &c. and Electuraries of some of the forewaid Roots and Herbs beaten up with these Powders.” (Wiseman, p. 347)

[**Ransom**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2401-ransom/)

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  I like to ride my horse doing Medieval gaming, and now mounted archery, and trail course challenges. I also garden, read, do artwork, write, make beaded jewelry for my Website "Found in the Ruins", and go on antique/junk crawls with my husband of 20+ years. I am somewhat of a costume making junkie. Now I make pyrate and steampunk costumes, as well as SCA costumes and horse bardings, and am having WAY too much fun....

[Posted January 25, 2009](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9533-seagoing-medicines/&do=findComment&comment=339697) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9533-seagoing-medicines/&do=reportComment&comment=339697)

I have been reading a lot about Capt. Anson and his circumnavigation in 1740. One of the accounts describes how the lice infestation got so bad, that each man was picking off his body up to a gallon of the little creatures every day. Would this infestation have been addressed by a ship surgeon or doctor, and if so, have you read anything concerning what the treatment would be?

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[Posted January 26, 2009](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9533-seagoing-medicines/&do=findComment&comment=339782) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9533-seagoing-medicines/&do=reportComment&comment=339782)

As regards parasites, the surgeon did mostly nothing. There was no connection between insects and disease by the doctors of the time. So they appear to have been regarded as a necessarily evil (on ships and in towns and everywhere else during period).

“It is difficult for us, nurslings of a soft age, to put ourselves in the old sailor-man’s place; to picture the life and turn of mind and thought of these unlettered fighters, starving or subsisting for weeks together on rotten meat and rum, flogged with a rope’s end at a tyrant captain’s whim, sore and bloated with scurvy and syphilis, scabrous with lice and the itch. The natural recourse of such men’s minds was drink, for that made merry men of poor tortured beasts.” (Eloesser, Leo, “Pirate and Buccaneer Doctors”, *Annals of medical history*, p. 52)

“It may seem strange to us that for centuries lice and fleas were regarded as ‘just one of those things’: their elimination as a domestic pest was not finally achieved until better washing facilities became part and parcel of daily life. Apart from their nuisance value, lice were, and still are, carriers of the dreaded typhus, about which more will be said later on.” (Thrower, William Rayner, *Life at Sea in the Age of Sail*, p. 83)

“…and every evening after we left work we was shut up in this dark stinking hole [in a Portofarino Castle], in which we were terrified with chinches (some call them bugs), which bit us and made our flesh come out in bunches, and lice we had in abundance; so lousy we were that the lice made a prey of us….

We were several nations of us together, and all lousy, and hardly time to kill them. When we had but a little time in the day, off went our clothes and to killing of lice, so that we were seldom idle; for the Turks’ opinion was that when we were idle we would be contriving how to make our escape: so by keeping us always employed would prevent the danger.” ” (Coxere, Edward, *A Voyage to the South Sea and Round the World in the Years 1708 to 1711*, p. 89)

In fact, quacks took great advantage of this discomfort to make a quick buck:

"In several issues of Benjamin Franklin’s Pennsylvania Gazette in 1731 there appeared an advertisement inserted by Franklin’s own mother-in-law, the Widow Read, who at the time was living at the home of her recently-married daughter and son-in-law:

* …the Widow READ, removed from the upper End of Highstreet to the New Printing Office near the Market, continued to make and sell her well-known Ointment for the ITCH, with which she has cured abundance of People in and about this City for many Years past. It is always effectual for that purpose, and never fails to perform the Cure speedily. It also kills or drives away all Sorts of Lice in once or twice using. It has no offensive Smell, but rather a pleasant one; and may be used without the least Apprehension of Danger, even to a sucking Infant, being perfectly innocent and safe. Price as a Gallypot containing an Ounce; which is sufficient to remove the most inveterate Itch, and render the Skin clear and smooth…

The exact composition of the Widow Read’s ointment is not now known, but it is virtually certain that the contents of her gallypots- and the most successful anti-scabies salves sold by the other quacks of the time- depended on their effectiveness of a high sulfur content."

(Williams, Guy, *The Age of Agony*, p. 197-8)

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[Posted January 27, 2009](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9533-seagoing-medicines/&do=findComment&comment=339974) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9533-seagoing-medicines/&do=reportComment&comment=339974)

Thank you, Mission. As ever, you are a font of knowledge.

I had rather suspected that would be the case, as the only thing I found in reference to dealing with vermin or lice was when they fumigated the entire ship and then scrubbed it down with a mixture of water and vinegar.

With that quantity of lice covering and feasting on each man, I would think anemia would be added to their long list of woes. Pour souls.

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[Posted April 30, 2011](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9533-seagoing-medicines/&do=findComment&comment=399216) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9533-seagoing-medicines/&do=reportComment&comment=399216)

I have said in the past that medicines are not my specialty, but I found this to be a nice general overview of some aspects of medicine with regard to wounds, so I am reprinting it. There's also some interesting notes on diet. (I am not, however, translating the medicines from Latin. That exercise is left to the reader.) Note that I am adding lines to the table and changing the font so that the table spacing reflects what is in the book. (Alas, the forum handling of spaces and standard font do not preserve spacing very well.)

“In all these Wounds, especially the Penetrating; tho *Simplers* have given each peculiar Herbs, their Cure when any Hopes remain, lays in one general Design; and that is, procering an easy languid Circulation: Whatever excites Uneasiness, (stirring or Medicine) puts the Blood in quicker Motion, irritates and does hurt.

The less the Bowels labour in their several Offices by a Subtraction of Meat and Drink, provided there is enough taken in to sustain Life, the better in these Cases goes on the Work of healing, indicated by the nauseating of a Patient, and may be proportioned by that: The Parade of many internal Medicines bring more Reputation to the Physician, than Service to the Patient when he does well.

To compass this, the best we can, is to observe an exact Regimen, large Bleeding, a quiet soft Position in Bed, a warm Air, keeping the Body soluble with

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Clysters or Suppositories; Hypnoticks now and then; Vulnerary Decoctions, and Diet of Vegetables. Externally may be required, Fomentations, Embrocations, Cataplasms; and as Danger abates, Terebinthinates and Balsamicks.

Vulneraria.

*Acetosella \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Gerristæ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Dactilæ*

*Agrimonia \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Hessop \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Viperæ*

*Brassicæ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Borage \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Limaces*

*Hederaterres \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Bigloss \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Lacti*

*Hyperic. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Endiv. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Cort. Ulmi*

*Puminar. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Porri \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Salviæ*

*Brooklime \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Sambuc. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Menth.*

*Smallage \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fiei \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Petrochin*

*Gochlear. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Passulæ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Alehoof.*

Some or other of these, may be made into Teas or Decoctions, adding a little White Wine for common Drink. Mr. [Joseph] *Wiseman* advises some of them in Broth, (*p.* 347.) with Eggs and Jellies.

Balsamica.

*Tea \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Eryngium \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Terebinth.*

*Chocolate \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Ammoniac \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Sper. Cæcti*

*Nuces Pistach. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Glycirriza \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Lupuli.*

*Pastinaca \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Cinnabar native. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Bals. Tolu*

*Gœpæ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Hordeum \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Benzoin*

*Lap. Hibernic. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Bals. Peru \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Sulphur*

*Amygdalæ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Bals. Capiv. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ G. Junip.*

*Cynosbita*

In the Course of these Cures if any inward *Hæmmorrhage* is apprehended, a Fever attending, or Sweats, there is not better Medicine than the Bark {scruple}ij. in a Bolus with *Syr e Mecon.* and repeated every 4 or 6 Hours.” (Atkins, *Navy Surgeon*, p. 169-70)

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[Posted June 4, 2011](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9533-seagoing-medicines/&do=findComment&comment=400789) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9533-seagoing-medicines/&do=reportComment&comment=400789)

Some of this stuff is so bizarre...you'd think I'd like the medicine part of this role better, based on the following concoctions. I think there is some form every whack-a-toonie type of ingredient that period medicine had to offer in this thing with a bit of the astrology hokum that tinged medicine at this time thrown in for good measure.

As for the Sympathy cure itself...I think this is the most thorough period treatment I've seen of that rather strange topic. It would make a nice bit for a re-enactment if you wanted to emphasize the strangeness of medicine at this time. (Although most of it was actually pretty mundane and not that far removed from techniques used as recently as the mid-20th century.)

This is all taken from the book *Chirurgia curiosa*, by Matthias Gottfriend Purmann, translated from "the original high Dutch" by Conradus under the guidance of William Cowper in 1705. The author also mentions breeches having pockets, which I consider significant.

"CHAP. V.

*Remarks upon Cures by Sympathy, and those perform'd by Transplantation*

It's very well known to the Learned World, that upon the Invitation of *Paracelsus*, who was the first Inventor of the *Sympathetical* Ointment, *Petrus Servius*, Professor at *Rome*, and the great English *Digby*, with several Physicians and Chirurgeons, set themselves on work to find out the true Preparation of it, that cured Wounds, only by applying it to the Weapon or Instrument that made it, or to some of the Blood or matter take out of the Sore; and since their Eyes were witnesses that it did perform these things, their next Inquiry was

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how this Medicine came to operate after so strange a Manner: which being a Nice Speculation, many have troubled their Brains to find out the reason of this particular Magnetical Quality, but to little purpose, having left it more intricate and perplexed than they found it, for among them all [*Sir Kenelm Digby*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kenelm_Digby) has only given tolerable reason to render its Operation intelligible, to to whose Learned Treatise I refer the Reader. Others have writ against it, and some think with reason enough, as *Williebrus Libavius*, but who can contradict Matters of Fact and daily experience; or how could I have called this Book [*Chirurgia Curiosa*](http://www.amazon.com/Chirurgia-curiosa-observations-operations-chirurgery/dp/1171002475/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1307194668&sr=8-1), if had said nothing of it? I shall therefore first give you the Preparation of the *Unguent*, and the *Sympathetical* Powder and conclude with a Remarkable Observation.

It [the unguent] is prepared in this manner:

*Rx. Axung. Procin. Sylv. ana {ounce}ij per dimid boram cum Vini Rubr. coquantur.*

After it has been boiled, pour it into cold Water, and reserve that for use which Swims on top, and throw away what sinks to the bottom. Then take Earth-worms well cleansed with Red Wine and Salt, and dryed in a Pot well and close covered. Of these *Worms*, take *{ounce}j. Cerebr. Porcin Sylv. Sandal Rubr. Mumiæ ana {ounce}ss. Magnet ppt {ounce}iij Hæmatit. {ounce}ss. Musc. é Cran. Human. {dram}ij. Misce f diligent. ad form. Unguent.* That Moss of a Mans Skull that was either kill'd or Hang'd, and gather'd when the Star *Venus* is in predominate, or at least two or three days after a *New Moon*, if it can be had, is thought very proper to be added to the other Ingredients. [back up in the recipe, you'll note that he lists 'Mumiæ.' This was a bizarre folk remedy - powder taken from mummies. You can read more about it on Wiki [here](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mummia).]

This *Unguent*, I had always with me in the Camp, and have often used it with good success. *Barbette*, a *French* Chirurgeon, omits the *Moss*, and instead of it employ's Man's Fat and Blood, and adds Oil of *Linseed* and [Oil of] *Roses* to it. I never made use of that, nor of several other Prescriptions which I have seen, being entirely satisfied with the Operation of that above inserted.

This Unguent is to be used in the following manner: Take the Weapon or Instrument wherewith the Patient was wounded, while it is Bloody, or instead of it a Stick put into the Wound that it may be Bloody. Anoint it with the Unguent about a hands breadth, and wrap it up in a clean Linen Rag or Paper, your hands being very clean, and then lay the Weapon or stick in a place neither too hot nor cold, two or three days after anoint it again, and so for four or five times, till the Wound is well. The Patient in the mean time must keep the Wound clean, and cover it with Fine Linen Rags, without applying any Medicine to it; but if it should chance to bleed very much, apply a peice of *Fuss-ball* to stopt it, and then proceed as before." (Purmann, p. 299-300)

"The *Sympathetical Powder*, to which is ascribed the same virtue with the *Unguent*; besides which, it also Stanches Bleeding; it prepared of the best *Hungarian Vitriol* and [*Tragacanth*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tragacanth), ground to a small Powder upon a Marble, each of them by themselves, and not in a Copper or Brass Mortar, lest it should attract some of their Noxious Qualities: When they are Powdered put them by themselves into a Paper, lay them in the Sun about the thirteenth of *July* when the Sun enters the Sign *Leo*, and continue it so till the twelfth or thirteenth of *August*, when the Sun enters *Virgo*; then remove them, mix them well together, and keep them for use in a Wooden Box Sir *Kenelm Digby* takes as much *Tragacanth* as *Vitriol*; but I find by experience that the *Tragacanth* is too much, and binds up the Virtues of the *Vitriol*; therefore a Drachm of *Tragacanth* is sufficient for an Ounce of *Vitriol*. When you design to Cure a Wound with this Powder, let some of the Blood of the Wound drop upon a clean Rag, upon which strew some of the Powder, wrap it up close and put the Rag with the Powder into your Breeches Pocket [**SAY! WHO WAS IT THAT TOLD ME BREECHES SHOULDN'T HAVE POCKETS!**]; and to the Wound apply nothing but a clean Linen Rag, which must be repeated every Morning and Evening, and so continue til the Wound is quite healed, and then throw all the Rags into a River. This Powder is also very good in Old Running *Ulcers*, cures *Stitches* and Pains in the sides, if the bigness of a Pea be given in Water of Elder Followers, without the *Tragacanth*. I could mention several instances of the Virtues of *Sympathetical Powder* if it were not for Fear of being to tedious and tiresome to the Reader." (Purmann, p. 301)

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[Posted June 5, 2011](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9533-seagoing-medicines/&do=findComment&comment=400800) (edited) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9533-seagoing-medicines/&do=reportComment&comment=400800)

On 6/4/2011 at 9:27 AM, Mission said:

how could I have called this Book [*Chirurgia Curiosa*](http://www.amazon.com/Chirurgia-curiosa-observations-operations-chirurgery/dp/1171002475/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1307194668&sr=8-1), if had said nothing of it?[/url]

B)[:D](http://pyracy.com/uploads/emoticons/default_biggrin.png)[;)](http://pyracy.com/uploads/emoticons/default_wink.png)

**Edited June 5, 2011 by Daniel**

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On 6/5/2011 at 11:47 AM, Daniel said:

On 6/4/2011 at 9:27 AM, Mission said:

how could I have called this Book [*Chirurgia Curiosa*](http://www.amazon.com/Chirurgia-curiosa-observations-operations-chirurgery/dp/1171002475/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1307194668&sr=8-1), if had said nothing of it?

B)[:D](http://pyracy.com/uploads/emoticons/default_biggrin.png)[;)](http://pyracy.com/uploads/emoticons/default_wink.png)

This really is a terrific book for my purposes. Not only does it look with detail into various procedures and lay out medicine doses and precise instructions, the author has a sense of humor as you can see. Still, he also says he relied on that medicine "in camp." (He means in a military encampment. He wasn't a sea surgeon, but he was a military surgeon during his career.)

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The predecessor to Smith Brothers!

"Moreover, I order'd the following Lozenges

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to be taken often, which indeed are the best I ever knew to stop Coughs which are occasion'd by taking cold.

*Take of Sugar-candy two Pounds and a half, boil it in a sufficient quantity of common Water till it sticks to the Fingers; and then add of Powder of Liquorice, Elecampane, the Seeds of Anise and Angelica, of each half an Ounce; of the Powders of Orris, and of Flowers of Sulphur, each two Drams; of the Chymical Oil of the Seeds of Anise two Scruples: Make Tablets according to Art, which let him always carry in his Pocket, and take one of them often.*" (Thomas Sydenham, *The Whole Works of that Excellent Practical Physician, Dr. Thomas Syndenham*, 10th Edition, 1734, p. 177-8)

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[Posted June 29, 2011](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9533-seagoing-medicines/&do=findComment&comment=401472) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9533-seagoing-medicines/&do=reportComment&comment=401472)

Here's some folk wisdom for you. (One would think this would apply directly to sailors.)

"...the evident external Cause of most Fevers is to be sought for hence, *viz.* because the Sick either left off Clothes too soon, or after being hot with Exercise, expos'd himself unwarily to the Cold; upon which account the Pores being suddenly stop'd, and and those Vapours retain'd, which would otherwise have passed thro' them, this or that sort of Fever is kindled in the Blood, as either the general Constitution, which at that time reigns, or that particular Disorder of the Humours is more inclined to this or that sort of Fever: and I verily believe more have died on this account, than by the Plague, Sword or Famine all together. For if any Physician shall inquire strictly of the Sick, concerning the first occasion of their Disease; if it be of the Number of those acute Diseases we have treated of above, he will almost always find, that either the Sick

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rashly left off some Clothes that he was accustom'd to, or that he expos'd himself suddenly to the Cold, when his Body was heated with motion, and that upon one of these accounts he was seiz'd with the Disease. Wherefore I always advise my Friends that they should never leave off any Clothes, unless it be a Month before Midsummer, or a Month after: I likewise carefully advise them to avoid Cold after being heated with Exercise." (Sydenham, p. 186-7)

Note that everything he deals with seems to have to do with humoral theory. Humors that cannot be passed through the pores or removed from the blood stream by other means get stuck there and create disease. This hints at one reason bleeding was thought to have helped patients - it removed the bad humors 'concocting' in the blood.

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[Posted August 29, 2011](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9533-seagoing-medicines/&do=findComment&comment=402538) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/9533-seagoing-medicines/&do=reportComment&comment=402538)

Ah, the King's medicine for indigestion. (Sounds like dessert.)

"I will not here recite all the Remedies which ought to be us'd against indigestion, and consequently against the Proclivity to the *Tympany* (gas-filled abdomen): the Medicinal Art furnishes us with an Infinite number, of which I shall mention only one called the *King's Ros-Solis*, by reason his Majesty [Louis XV of France] has for a considerable time used, and very well approved it: 'Tis thus prepared, in a Pint of Brandy drawn from *Spanish* Wine are infus'd for the Space of three Months, Anise, Fennel, Skirret, Carrot and Coriander Seeds, each an Ounce; to which is added after the Infusion half a Pound of Sugar-Candy dissolved in Camomile-Water and boil'd to the consistence of a Julep, and passed thro' a Strainer: The Dose of this is a Spoonful to be taken every Night when going to Bed. 'Tis an excellent remedy against the Crudities and Colicks of the Stomach, for it dissipates all indigested Matter and Wind, and fortifies the Nutritive Organs." (Dionis, *A Course of Chirurgical Operations*, p. 71)