

CAMILLUS RUBEUS (CAMILLO ROSSI), Medical and Cosmetic Recipes
In Italian and Latin, manuscript on paper
Central Italy, 1596

i (pastedown) + 108 + *i* (pastedown) folios on paper, watermark, at least two quadrupeds, one possibly a horse, one perhaps a dragon or griffin, within a double circle, no convincing matches in Briquet or Piccard, but slight similarities to Briquet 7476, griffin, Nassau, 1588, foliated in two series, modern foliation in pencil, top outer corner recto, 1-14, and then original or very early foliation, upper margin in ink, 1-94 (collation, *i*^s [structure uncertain, probably 1, pastedown, -2, cancelled blank] *ii*^s iii-ix¹² x¹² [-11, cancelled blank, stub remains, 12, pastedown]), no catchwords or signatures, no discernible ruling (justification, 84 x 67 mm.), written in an upright bookhand, influenced by humanistic script (but with teardrop-a, some use of round d, very thin strokes without shading, dotted 'i'), in nineteen- to twenty-long lines, edges of leaves darkened, stains in the lower third of the page through f. 51, with some additional stains in the upper margins, but text remains legible throughout. Bound in original limp vellum binding, sewn on two bands with head and tail bands (originally red and green?), once fastened with ties (remains of one tie visible on front cover), title lettered on spine in ink in a later hand, "Segreti manoscritti." Dimensions 118 x 95 mm.

This fascinating collection of more than five hundred recipes was copied by, or for the use of, Camillo Rossi (1561-1650) in 1596. Most of the recipes are medical, but cosmetic recipes are also included. The section on dentistry, with which the collection begins, is surely unusual. Important in their own right, these texts are also an invaluable source for the life of this sixteenth-century physician from Montegranaro, who is still almost unknown to modern scholars. Copied in a clear and easily read script, this manuscript is also notable for its very small format.

PROVENANCE

1. The manuscript is signed at the end, "Camillus Rubeus," with the date, "1596," below; although the "9" in the date has been very partially erased, this inscription is in the hand of the scribe, and must mean that this book was copied for (or even by) Camillus Rubeus in 1596. This is true despite the fact that the script, which is an upright bookhand, strongly influenced by earlier humanistic script, albeit with notable differences in individual letter forms, seems an unusual choice (at this late date, some form of cursive script or possibly an italic script is much more common). The watermark is not found in Briquet or Piccard; its identification in another source would be useful.

Probably copied in or near Montegranaro or Macerata, province of Fermo in the Marche region, about twenty-eight miles south of Ancona, and north of Ascoli Piceno. Most of the more than recipes are anonymous, but two contemporary authors, Nicolò Masini (1533-1602) and Franciscus Alphanus, a sixteenth-century medical writer from Salerno, are both cited.

2. Erased ownership note and stamp, upper margin, f. 1.
3. Erased dealer's annotation inside front cover; sold by Bloomsbury, Rome, March 27, 2012, lot 199.

TEXT

ff. 1-11v, *Tabula om[ne?]m que in hoc libello continetur et in numero paginarum inuenieris*, incipit, "Ad dentes dealbandos, c. 1; Ad firmandum dentem, c. 2; Aqua ad custodiendum, c. 2, A incarnar li denti, c. 2, Ad depilandum pilos ...; ... Unguento pro la melza, 70; Unguento ad omnia, 84; Unguento per la carnosita, 92," [ff. 12-14v, blank];

Table of contents with folio references, arranged alphabetically (by first letter); the list is selective and includes approximately 320 of the more than five hundred recipes in the book itself.

ff. 1-93 [original foliation begins here with f. 1], f. 1, *Per Incarnare li denti*, incipit, "R. aluminis rocce spice mire mastices ...; R. galarum ballaustiarum rosarum ...";

f. 1, *Per fermare li denti*, incipit, "R. fronde de cayerella florum roris marini...";

f. 1rv, *Conserua ad Idem*, incipit, "R. sang. drag. masticis ...";

f. 1v, *Conserua optima ei profetta*, incipit, "R. cinamomi nucis muse ...";

ff. 1v-2, *Ad dentes dealbandos*, incipit, "R. corallorum ...";

f. 2, *Ad firmandum dentem* ...; f. 2rv, *Aqua ad custodiendum dentem* ...; f. 2v, *Ad incarnar li denti*, ...;

The first group of thirteen recipes are all dental, including recipes to conserve the teeth, to whiten them, to make them firmer, and a water to preserve the teeth.

ff. 2v-3, *Poluere per l'arinella[?]*, ...;

f. 3, *Per guarir la sciatica*, incipit, "R. absinty camomille uitrioli fabollire ogni cosa con uino rosso perfetto et poni su la sciatica et probatum est";

A recipe for sciatica that includes red wine, and concludes that it is proven to work.

f. 3, *Poluere contra la scesa*, ...; f. 3v, *Per sanare le scrofole pol*, ...; f. 3v, *Vnguento pro lo stomaco et pro la uoce*, ...;

[ff. 3v-8, continuing with twenty-six short recipes for various maladies];

ff. 8v-9, *Per la memoria*, incipit, "R. rosarum incompletarum mirtillorum ... et est uerum et probatum";

Recipe for memory (presumably to improve it), concluding with the words that it "is true and proven."

f. 9, *Ad usum et caput confortandum secundum papam Innocent*, ...;

[ff. 9v-19, continuing with various medical recipes, including numerous recipes for the hair and skin, that we would consider cosmetic, ff. 13-16v];

f. 19rv, *Per la memoria del f. Ang. de Nap.*, incipit, "R. roris marini ...";

A lengthy recipe, again for memory, attributed to brother Angelo of Naples (?).

[continuing, ff. 19v-25v]

f. 25v, *Pillule Regis Rogerii quibus utebatur singulis diebus et modo utitur eis papae clarificant visum corroborant auditum confortant spiritualia singulis corporis [sic] superfluitates expellunt sanitates custodiunt et son senza guardia*, incipit, "Recipe calami aromatici ...";

This Latin recipe for a pill that King Roger (Roger I, d. 1101 or Roger II, d. 1154 of Sicily?) is said to have taken daily, seems to have circulated widely; recipes with similar rubrics are found in Cambridge, Queen's College¹⁷ (Horne 29), and in San Marino, Huntington Library, HU 1051.

[continuing, ff. 26v-93];

ff. 92v-93, *Ungumentum pro la carnosita*, incipit, "R. uitrioli romani auri ... Et utere cum candela ponendo dictum unguentum in loco carnositatis pro spatio unique hore uel paulominus ubi plus secundis positionem patientis," *Camillus Rubeus, 1596* [signed below the last line of text in the same ink, ff. 93-94, blank; f. 94v, blank with recipe added in a later hand].

Although in the modern world we usually think of recipes as instructions for preparing food, in the Middle Ages and well into the early modern era a "recipe" was understood in a much broader sense as a how-to instruction, usually brief, related to various crafts (including disciplines such as alchemy and medicine), as well as guides to making various things related to the household and agriculture. This collection of more than 500 recipes was made for a practicing physician Camillo Rossi (1561-1650) near the end of the sixteenth century in Italy.

Camillo Rossi (or Camillus Rubeus, the Latin form of his name), was born in Montegranaro in the province of Fermo in the Marche region on October 18, 1561. He received a degree from the University of Padua on September 17, 1585, and then returned briefly to Montegranaro, before moving to Rome to continue his studies in medicine, before returning to the March of Ancona to practice medicine. He was the author of at least one work, *De natura ortus viventium in communi tractatus Camilli Rubei a Monte Granario philosophi ac medici in Maceratensi civitate primarii ...*, published in Macerata in 1613, a lengthy and learned treatise on the origin of life, where he describes himself as a philosopher and physician. He lived until almost ninety, dying in 1650. His son, Giovanni Francesco, one of seven children, is said to have written an account of his father's life in Latin, published in Ancona in 1627, praising his father's miraculous cures and skill in diagnosis (we have been unable to find a record of this work; it is mentioned in Rossi, 1887, and in the online biography, see Online Resources). His life and career appear to be almost unknown known to modern historians of science and medicine.

Most of the recipes included here are medical, dealing with all parts of the body and treating a very wide range of maladies, from problems with the teeth, the eyes, the stomach, the voice, and specific illnesses, such as asthma (e.g. ff. 9v-10), as well as protection against the plague (e.g. ff. 11, 12-13, f. 19v, "*Pomo pro tenere in mano in tempore peste*," an "apple" to hold in your hand during a time of plague), against spleen, for sciatica, against migraine (f. 31v), and cataracts (ff. 34v-35), to name just a few examples; there are also several recipes for memory (f. 11v, and ff. 8v-9). Some of the recipes are cosmetic, for example recipes for whitening the teeth, for perfume, and

a "better perfume" (f. 19v), and numerous recipes for the skin and hair, including one for making hair blond (f. 15). Throughout, the mixture of Latin and Italian is notable; most of the recipes are in Italian, but Latin is often (although not always), used for the headings, and sometimes for the entire text. Some of the recipes conclude with affirmations that they have been proven to work; the recipe to cure sciatica on f. 3, for example, ends "hoc est probatum," and the recipe to cure the disease known as *squinantia* on f. 4 ends, "... hoc pluries est probatum" (this has been proven by many); the recipe on ff. 10v-11 for an obstruction, concludes, "et optima est" (and this is the best). There are recipes for "waters," ointments, powders, pills, and so forth, using various herbal and mineral ingredients. The recipe on f. 77v, however, prescribes prayers and Masses to St. John the Baptist.

The sources for these recipes deserve careful study; a preliminary check of a handful did not uncover any borrowings from the very popular published book of secrets by Alessio Piemontese (discussed below). Most are anonymous, but a few people are named: f. 19, "*Per la memoria del f. Ang. de Nap.*" [frater Angelus de Napolitanus?]; f. 78, "Item de fratre Egidio ..." [the philosopher and theologian, Aegidius Romanus, or Giles of Rome, d. 1316?]; f. 82v, Nicolò Masini (1533-1602), well-known physician, and professor of medicine (see online resources); f. 92, Franciscus Alphanus, a sixteenth-century medical writer from Salerno, author of *Opus de peste febre pestilentiali et febre maligna* ..., published in Naples in 1577 (see also 92v, and the 84v); f. 82v, "St. Gio. Francesco Mendoze"; f. 84, "Domina Villana"; f. 84v, Sister Louis ("sororis ludovice"), followed by the initials, "Alf" (for Alfani?, perhaps Franciscus Alphanus, or the twelfth-century doctor from Salerno, Alfanus); f. 86v, "Dominus Augustinus" (see also f. 89v); and f. 91v, "Joseph Cattanei in bastita[?]." It seems likely that this collection represents recipes that Camillus Rubeus learned from many sources, some of which were written, but many were presumably oral, including remedies used by other doctors, as well as popular folk medicine.

This collection clearly belongs to the tradition of recipe collections known as *Books of Secrets* (a later hand even wrote "Segretti manoscritti," on its binding). The most well-known of these books was the *Secreti del reverendo don Alessio Piemontese* ("The Secrets of Alexis of Piedmont"), first published in Venice in 1555 (Alexis of Piedmont was probably a pseudonym for Girolamo Ruscelli, 1500-1566), a work that included a very wide variety of different types of recipes, including remedies that he states were unknown to doctors, recipes for cosmetics used by the Turks, perfumes, oils, dyeing techniques, and alchemical secrets. This proved to be a tremendously popular text, printed in more than one hundred editions, and still being reprinted in the 1790s. Fifty-six editions appeared before the end of the century, and it was translated into French, English, Latin and German within ten years of its first appearance. Its success ushered in a veritable flood of such works, and "Books of Secrets" were established as a very popular genre into the eighteenth century. The Italian author Garzoni, writing in 1585, described the new writers of these books as "professors of secrets," searchers after things "whose reasons are not so clear that they might be known by everyone, but by their very nature manifested only to a few."

Camillo Rossi was evidently an important figure in his own sphere – important enough to publish a learned book, and to collect the recipes surviving in this manuscript. He has not yet been studied by modern scholars, and published records of his life are not abundant (see his own work, which includes an epigram on his life, Panelli, 1758, and Rossi, 1887). Yet he may fit into the category of an early "professor of secrets," a trained academic physician, but also a practicing doctor who relied on the remedies recorded in this manuscript. His son's account of his life – described as a work emphasizing his miraculous cures – seems to fit this picture. A

modern study of his life and career, made possible by the evidence of this manuscript, is called for.

LITERATURE

Eamon, William. "How to Read a Book of Secrets," in Leong and Rankins, eds., 2011 (cited below).

Eamon, William. *The Professor of Secrets: Mystery, Medicine, and Alchemy in Renaissance Italy*, Washington, D.C., National Geographic, 2010.

Eamon, William. *Science and the Secrets of Nature: Books of Secrets in Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1994.

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Rossi, Menicuccio, and Filippo Raffaelli. *Lode Di Firenze*, Fermo, 1887.

Smith, Cyril Stanley and John G. Hawthorne, ed. and transl. *Mappae clavicula: A Little Key to the World of Medieval Techniques*, Philadelphia, American Philosophical Society, 1974.

Thorndike, L. and Kibre, P. *A Catalogue of Incipits of Mediaeval Scientific Writings in Latin*, revised ed., Cambridge Mass. 1963.

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Voigts, Linda. "Multiples of Middle English Medical Manuscripts or the Englishing of Science and Medicine," in *Manuscript sources of Medieval Medicine: a Book of Essays*, ed. by Margaret R. Schleissner. New York, Garland, 1995.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Comune de Montegranaro (Camillo Rossi)

<http://www.comune.montegranaro.fm.it/index.php?action=index&p=241>

William Eamon, The 'Professors of Secrets' and Their Books

<http://williameamon.com/?p=567>

Lisa Roscioni, "Nicolo Masini," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 71 (2008)

[http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/nicolo-masini_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/nicolo-masini_(Dizionario-Biografico)/)

Recipe Books at the Folger

http://www.ampltd.co.uk/digital_guides/receipt_books_from_the_folger_shakespeare_library/editorial-introduction.aspx

University of Leicester, Tessa Storey, Italian Books of Secrets Database

https://lra.le.ac.uk/bitstream/2381/4335/3/Italian%20Books%20of%20Secrets%20Database_Study%20Documentation.pdf

Wellcome library, Domestic Medicine and Receipt Books

<https://wellcomelibrary.org/using-the-library/subject-guides/food-and-medicine/domestic-medicine-and-receipt-books-16th-17th-century/>

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