[Volume 1] Medical (*Recueil de diverses receptes bien experimentés contre diverses maladies*), Alchemical, and Artisanal Recipes
In French, manuscript on paper
France (Normandy), c. 1650, with additions dating c. 1650-1710

152 folios (with original foliation) on paper, ff. 1-137, watermark of a horn carrying the initials 'IC/DC' and suspended from a loop, ff. 138-151, watermark of a pitcher bearing the initials 'DH', lacking two folios, ff. 44-45, with the loss of the heading and first recipes of chapter 15, otherwise apparently complete, written in at least four hands and with multiple inks, with varying numbers of lines per page, in cursive script, with NINE INK DRAWINGS OF CHEMICAL APPARATUS AND FURNACES, ff. 138-151 is an added quire in a different hand, in good overall condition but clearly well-used. Bound in vellum with a flap secured with a cord and twine, "Livre de Remedes" written upside-down in ink on the front cover. Dimensions 200 x 170 mm.

A remarkable collection of several hundred medical, alchemical, and artisanal processes compiled from c. 1650 until at least the 1710s, continued in the eighteenth century in a second volume of 150 medical recipes. Begun as a medical prescription book, later owners recorded and illustrated (with nine drawings) predominantly chemical processes, focusing on metallic transmutation. The collection documents the admission of controversial Paracelsian and Helmontian pharmaceuticals into the conservative Galenic tradition and the persistent popularity of transmutation into the eighteenth century. These volumes offer a rare and strikingly coherent portrait of the changing content of chemistry and medicine in early modern France.

PROVENANCE

1. A collection of several hundred recipes written over a period of about fifty years by multiple writers in the second half of the seventeenth century in Normandy, France. The core collection of twenty-six chapters can be dated c. 1650, since a recipe for urinary calculus written in the earliest hand (f. 48) is attributed to "the late Monseigneur le Duc de Bellegarde," that is, Roger de Saint-Lary de Termes, who died in 1646. Residents of Houppeville (f. 60), Bocquemare (f. 62v), and Gonneville (f. 52v) are mentioned as sources of information, as well as "l'eau de Corrville" (f. 46*bis*v); all of these towns are located in Normandy. "Mr. d'Houppeville" (Houppeville is a suburb of Rouen) is also cited in the related volume described below, indicating the close connection between the two manuscripts.

2. The earliest writer provided the twenty-six chapter headings and the first recipes under each heading, but when doing so also left several pages blank for each chapter in order to allow for new material to be added as it was acquired. These blank pages were in fact entirely filled in by several later seventeenth-century hands.

3. Later hands also sometimes annotate the original entries. In some cases, particular medicinal recipes are noted as "bon" or "preuvé"; in other cases they are crossed out, presumably because they failed to have the desired effect. Many of the early recipes are augmented by later hands with further observations and instructions, for example, to advise a purge or other specific regimen before or after giving the prescribed medicine. The way this volume was used indicates that it was passed from hand to hand over a period of roughly fifty years, perhaps within the same family from generation to generation, with each owner adding to or amending the contents, often reflecting differences of personal interest. The family connections are suggested by the entry for "an unguent made by my late uncle" (f. 59).

4. The latest hands, which date closer to the end of the seventeenth century and perhaps into the first years of the eighteenth century, ignored the chapter headings and their classifications entirely, and used up any and all available blank space (including the fly-leaves and the insides of both front and back covers). Volume two (described below) almost certainly represents a continuation of this collection that was begun when the current volume no longer had any blank space for further additions.

TEXT

ff. 1-94v, *Recueil de diverses receptes bien experimentés contre diverses maladies*, a collection divided initially into 26 chapters describing preparations and treatments of a wide range of illnesses. Chapters 1-18 are classed by the region of the body affected: head, eyes, ears, nose, mouth, tongue, teeth, throat, chest, heart, stomach, liver, spleen, intestines, kidney and bladder, genitals, and arms and legs, following the customary "head to toe" organization of classical medical texts. Thereafter (chapters 19-24), the classification is by particular diseases: fevers, venereal diseases, gout, plague, diseases of women and children. Chapter 25, *De l'enbellicement du corps*, deals with cosmetics, face washes, skin lotions, methods of removing spots, and so forth;

ff. 95-152v, [Chapter 26], *Receuil de diverses secrets chimiques et autres*, contains the widest variety of entries ranging from the preparation of additional medicinal materials to that of chemical products, artists materials, and transmutational substances.

ILLUSTRATION

A notable feature of the volume are nine drawings and a table of chemical symbols.

Eight detailed ink drawings of chemical apparatus and furnaces illustrate the last chapter of the collection:
f. 104, "distillation by descent";

f. 104v "to draw the water of flowers with their color and odor";

f. 106v, "to make flowers of sulphur";

f. 107, "to make spirit of sulphur";

f. 114, "to make salt, oil, and spirit of sulphur";

f. 123v, A sublimatory and furnace;

f. 133, A special furnace;

f. 137v, A steam bath for distillation.

Another drawing, in the same hand, inserted in an earlier section:
f. 32v, A reverbatory furnace and distillation apparatus;

f. 137r, originally the last leaf of the volume, provides a table of chemical symbols.

Of particular interest is the fact that the original entries dating from the 1650s are almost entirely herbal in content, reflecting the use of a very conservative Galenic pharmacopeia, while the later hands turn increasingly to chemically prepared medicines along Paracelsian or Helmontian lines. The first hand records several famous preparations of the day, including *orvietan* (a complex composition for use against poisons, f. 28) and *theriac* (another complex antidote for poison, f. 80v). The style and format in which these earliest entries are written suggests that the author was a trained apothecary.

Later recipes, copied on pages left blank by the original scribe by several later seventeenth-century hands, do not show a similar style or apothecary's format, and depart from the traditional Galenic *materia medica*, or are not related to medicine at all. Many of these medicinal recipes employ antimony as an ingredient, indicating the ultimate acceptance of antimonial medicines in France (after a century of condemnation by the Paris medical faculty) only after Louis XIV was successfully cured in 1658 using *vin émetique*–wine containing a small quantity of dissolved antimony (Kahn, 2007, pp. 190-194).

The latest hands (on any and all available blank space, including the fly leaves and the insides of both front and back covers) record a broad miscellany of chemical processes. Only a few of these later processes are of medicinal interest; most deal instead with the transmutation of metals or other prized secrets of the era, suggesting that a later owner of the manuscript was decidedly less interested in medical preparations than in transmutational and other chemical processes.

The later recipes that filled in the originally blank leaves are very diverse. Only the earliest additions extend the medicinal topics signaled by the chapter headings. The majority of the later additions deal with transmutation and with artisanal operations. F. 38v (within the chapter on "Illnesses of the spleen") records chrysopoetic claims and cover-names about antimony: "Antimony is a hermaphrodite…the Dragon, the devouring Lion…" with references to Paracelsus and the supposed fifteenth-century Benedictine monk Basilius Valentinus. F. 50*bis*r [52r] (within the chapter for illnesses of the kidneys and bladder) describes the production of a "Mercurial saturnine antimonial dissolvent" from which can be prepared "an admirable medicine for both human and mineral bodies," that is, something both medicinal and transmutational. F. 82v contains a brief recipe for a pharmaceutical and references Joan Baptista van Helmont and his alkahest, a solvent capable of resolving all compound substances into their constituent principles (see Joly, 1996, pp. 308-330). Given all the work recorded in the later hands that deal with operations using heavy metals, these operators may have found useful the recipe (in an

early hand) on f. 77 for a remedy "against the trembling of the limbs due to having melted lead or mercury."

f. 33 gives a recipe written partly in cipher, where the five vowels have been replaced with planetary symbols. This simple replacement cipher hides a recipe "For reducing and transforming a sapphire into a diamond." The process involves wrapping an "oriental sapphire" in a sheet of iron (*feuille de mars*), enclosing it in a "container[?] of gold" (*B[oîte?] d'or*), and exposing the whole to a fierce fire for three or four hours. The same recipe also notes (again in cipher) that an amethyst treated analogously in a "container[?] of copper" (*B[oîte?] de venus*) will likewise be transformed into a diamond. The process was apparently not successful, and the recipe has been crossed-through. Both ff. 43-44 and 57rv record recipes for the manufacture of artificial gemstones beginning with rock-crystal.

Chapter 26 is both the longest and the most diverse in terms of contents. Many recipes are medicinal, and generally of a chemical nature such as a variety of preparations based in mercury. Others give directions for the making of varnishes (ff. 100-101) and pigments, including that of "purpurine" (f. 102), the famous "mosaic gold" (*aurum musivum*) of the Middle Ages, used as a gold substitute for manuscript illuminations, and for painting in various colors on glass. Others tell how to "give various colors to wax from Spain" (f. 101v), and how to prepare (from pigeon manure) a "lixivium for multiplying wheat" (f. 113). Another recipe (f. 99) promises to teach a "secret for perfuming all sorts of leather" using ambergris and musk boiled in fresh cat's blood. Yet others are for the preparation of various chemical products such as the flowers and spirit of sulphur. A considerable number deal directly or indirectly with metallic transmutation. For example, several promise the production of various "particularia" (transmuting agents less potent than the philosophers' stone, see Principe, 2013, pp. 112-113) for making gold or silver, and these end with the pious admonition "La gloire en doit rendu à Dieu" (f. 129v and 133v-134r). On fol. 116, the "perpetual mine" (*minere perpetuelle*), a famed and sought-after secret in the second half of the seventeenth century, makes an appearance. According to this recipe, a specially prepared mercury ("enriched with iron") is to be sealed in a flask and gently heated. After it turns into a powder, the dry material is divided in half; one half is heated strongly, yielding a quantity of gold, the other half is mixed with its own weight of more mercury and heated again in the flask until it too becomes a powder, which, as before, is divided in half and the process repeated. This protocol was reportedly able to be repeated *ad infinitum*, thus affording the alchemist a continuing supply of gold. F. 131v records the "Vegetable work of R. Lulle," a reference to a transmutationally-important solvent connected with the fourteenth-century writings of the pseudo-Ramon Lull, while f. 132v gives a recipe for the "potable gold of the philosophers" a reputed panacea prepared from the precious metal.

The last quire of the manuscript (ff. 138-[151]) was roughly stitched to the inner edge of the back cover and contains almost entirely medicinal recipes, and may have been acquired already written (until f. 149, it is in a different hand and ink than the rest of the volume) and then appended to the manuscript. Its "onguent admirable" is attributed to one Mr. Souvigny (f. 138v), a subsequent unguent is endorsed as coming from Mr. Charlin, while a "assured remedy to heal scrofula and ulcerous wounds" is cited as "from an Italian operator, and is well-approved."

[Volume 2] Recipe collection: *Receuille de plusieurs remedes tres excellens et mesme eprouvées*
In French, manuscript on paper
France (Normandy), early eighteenth century (after 1712)

39 folios (unfoliated), on uniform paper, watermark, a pitcher bearing the initials "IBH," apparently complete (collation i^{18} ii^{16} iii^{4}*, plus a wrapper for the first two signatures used as writing surface at f. 34 after the third signature was added to the back of the original bundle), unruled with small irregular margins, written in a single hand in cursive script with variable numbers of lines per page, without initials or decoration, ONE DRAWING OF AN AMULET, in good condition. Unbound (lacking covers) but sewn with a vellum cord. Dimensions 200 x 160 mm.*

PROVENANCE

1. A collection of recipes written in the early eighteenth century in France in Normandy as indicated by the text; there is a transcribed recipe dated March 1712 on f. 20, and internal references to specific places and practitioners indicates Normandy, particularly around Rouen, as the place of composition. Possibly a personal notebook compiled by a local physician or householder, and very probably intended as the continuation of volume one, described above, since both manuscripts cite "Mr Houppeville" as an authority.

2. Later additions in a different hand begin at f. 37.

3. This volume is accompanied by sixteen loose sheets and scraps bearing medical recipes, prescriptions, and doctors's orders in various eighteenth-century hands, the latest of which dates from the end of the century. Although these have no clear connection to the volume, they may represent the continuation of medical recipe collecting through subsequent generations of a family.

TEXT

ff. 1-39v, *Receuille de plusieurs remedes tres excellens et mesme eprouvées*, incipit, "Pour la fievre tierce, Prendre une poignée de Sauge franche …";

A collection of approximately 150 medicinal recipes and instructions. The contents are classed according to the illness to be cured: fevers, illnesses of the chest, of the kidneys and bladder, of the stomach, pleurisy, hydropsy, poisons, plague, vapors, bloody fluxes, burns, and so forth. Many recipes are attributed to specific people: Mr. Houppeville, Mr. Moreaux, the "English physician of Rouen," Mr. Thuiler, Mlle. Bailly, Sieur Marsoles de Motte "living at Eauplet near Rouen," the "physician of Chaudray," and M. Gaultier "celebrated surgeon of Rouen." Several are of special note, for example, the "pectoral syrup of the Hôtel Dieu in Paris" (f. 6v), the "vinegar of the four thieves," and the famous Baume Tranquille of "the abbé Aignan" (f. 21v), that is Nicholas Aignan, called Père Tranquille, one of the two Capuchins who maintained a laboratory in the Louvre in 1678-1679 in order to make medicines (See Rivest, 2018, pp. 275-295.

Most striking however are lengthy sections on the preparation and use of two famed and controversial medicinal substances of the 17th century: xenexton and the powder of sympathy.

Ff. 17v-20r give a detailed description of the preparation of xenexton, here called *crapoudine*. The author describes when (after dinner during a waning moon in summer), how, and where to find and catch a large toad, which is then suspended by strings tied to its hind legs until dead. The dead toad is dissected, dried, and ground to a powder. The toad powder is then enclosed in an amulet connected to three ribbons, of which the author provides a drawing. When a person fears having caught the plague, the amulet is to be tied to the patient's chest ("under the left breast above the stomach"), and if indeed the plague is present, vigorous sweating ensues and the poison of the plague is purged. The information given here is closely based on Joan Baptista Van Helmont's description given in his 1644 *Tumulus pestis* (*Burial-mound of the plague*). Xenexton was reportedly used successfully by the Helmontian physician and alchemist George Starkey to cure his colleague George Thompson during the Great Plague of London in 1665, although the same method did not work on Starkey himself a few weeks later (see Newman, 1994, pp. 203-206).

The powder of sympathy ("Pour faire la vraye poudre de Simpathie," ff. 29r-30v) was a material supposedly able to cure wounds at a distance, being applied not to the patient, but rather to the weapon that caused the wound or to a cloth smeared with blood (or occasionally pus) from the wound. Originally of Paracelsian origin, the powder of sympathy was also treated by Van Helmont, and a modified version popularized by Sir Kenelm Digby during his exile in France; see his *Discours fait en une célèbre assemblée…touchant la guerison des playes par la poudre de sympathie* (Paris, 1666). In the present manuscript, the recipe combines features of both the older, more complex composition--for example, powdered human skull--and also the streamlined version of Digby which relied on a preparation of vitriol (copper or iron sulphate).

[Sixteen loose sheets and scraps], Medical recipes, prescriptions, and doctors's orders;

These individual sheets include a "syrup of long life," a "tisane for asthmatics," "the remedy of M. Peliguy for rabies" (a chief ingredient is chicken manure), the Unguent of Nuremburg, prescriptions from "M. Larchesvesque medecin," and "a remedy that worked for me for sore throat." One sheet refers to materials relating to bilious colic excerpted from the "Memoires of the Academy of Edinburgh" and attributed to "Mr. Douglas, the able Scottish physician." This last item would refer to the *Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh* which began publication in 1788.

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Van Helmont, Joan Baptista. *Tumulus pestis*, in *Opuscula medica inaudita*, Amsterdam, 1648.

ONLINE RESOURCES

"Alchemy," in the *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*
http://xtf.lib.virginia.edu/xtf/view?docId=DicHist/uvaBook/tei/DicHist1.xml;chunk.id=dv1-04

Recipe Books at the Folger
http://www.ampltd.co.uk/digital_guides/receipt_books_from_the_folger_shakespeare_library/editorial-introduction.aspx

Wellcome library, Domestic Medicine and Receipt Books
https://wellcomelibrary.org/collections/digital-collections/recipe-books/

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