

IV. *A Letter from Dr Peter Silvestre, F. R. S. to the Publisher, concerning the State of Learning, and several particulars observed by him lately in Italy.*

Since you desire to be more particularly informed of the *Virtuosi* I have seen in *Italy*, and of the state of Learning there, chiefly as to *Natural Philosophy* and *Physick*, I send you this, that you may take as a Supplement to my former Letter.

When I came to *Padua*, I enquir'd for the most Eminent men of that University. But it happen'd to be in vacation time, when most people were out of Town. I was told that Signior *Pompeio Sacchi* was in *Morea* with the Proveditor General of that Country. I met at *Venice* Signior *Spoleti*, I had seen in *England*. He was just going to *Constantinople* with the Cavalier *Soranzo*, who was sent thither Ambassadour from the Republick. I could have wish'd to have seen at *Padua* Signior *Guilielmini*, who has been lately call'd up from *Bononia*. He is esteem'd an excellent *Mathematician*. Besides his two Books *de aquarum fluentium Mensura*, and his *Epistolæ Hydrostaticæ*, he has publish'd a Treatise that I send you, *Della Natura de i fiumi in 4^o*.

I writ to you I had seen at *Bononia* Signior *Sbaragli*. There is a Second Letter of his *de Recentiorum Medicorum Studio*, and *de Generatione Vivipera Sceptis*, &c. both printed at *Vienna*.

He is certainly a man of Wit and Learning; but I found at *Rome* and in other places most Physicians angry with him, for having abus'd the deservedly famous *Malpighi*. I took notice in the University of this Inscription made in commendation of the last. It

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is in the Upper Gallery upon a large *Basis* painted in *Fresco*, with some figures about it.

D O M.

Virtuti & fame in Ævum mansurae Inclyti Viri M, Malpighii, Medicinæ Professoris Celeberrimi, utraque Artistarum, Universitas P. Anno Salutis 1683.

And a little lower,

Miraris breve Lemma? Nomen ingens ornari negat: est satis referri. Jussum Cætera tacere Marmor. Omnis Malpighium loquetur Ætas.

I was acquainted at *Rome* with Monsignor *Tozzi*, Chief Physician to the last Pope, with *Sinibaldi*, *Bagli-vi*, and *Lancisi*. This shew'd me some Differtations he had begun to write, wherein he proves *a priori* the necessity and usefulness of *Bleeding*. He shew'd me also these *Malpighius's Consilia*, that I spoke to you about in my last, and some other *Opuscula*, he promis'd to send me, and among the rest an Answer to *Sbaragli's* Second Letter *de Recentiorum Medicorum Studio*. *Fabretti* dyed while I was there, above 73 years old. He was about a Description of ancient *Rome*, and of the *Ager Romanus*. It is to be fear'd this Work of his will be lost, or have the same fate with most Posthumous Works, which are generally very imperfect, the Authors having not had time enough to finish them. I had a very particular acquaintance with a Learned *Benedictine* Monk *D. Bernard de Monfaucon*. He had been sent from *France* into *Italy* by the *Congregation of St Maur*, to search into all the Libraries, and gather all the Works of the Ancient Fathers, that were never printed; and he told me he had found out some of *St Athanasius*, *St Basilins*, *St Gregorius Nazianzenus*, *St John Chrysostomus*, and other *Greek* Fathers, with a great many of the Writers of the middle age. He will publish his *Itinerarium Italicum*, and in another Volume give in the form of a *Spicilegium*, all these pieces he has copied.

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But what is more to the purpose, he designs to print a Catalogue of the MSS. of all the Libraries that are in *Italy*, and more particularly of those Libraries that hitherto have been less known: a considerable Collection of *Inscriptions* that never were printed, or else have been miserably debas'd in *Gruterus*, *Reinesius*, *Spon*; and lastly give an Account of some old Coins, ancient Weights and Measures, and several other curiosities relating to Sacred and Profane Antiquity.

I went several times to the *Roman College*, to see Father *Philip Bonnani*: He is Keeper of the *Museum Kircherianum*, where, besides many Antiquities, are to be seen some rarities of Art and Nature: *F. Bonnani* has added to it a great quantity of Shells, Ores and *Marcaffites*: He is now busie in continuing the *Bibliotheca Societatis Jesu*, begun by *Rebadeneira* *Sothwell* and *Alegambe*.

A friend of mine did receive a Letter from *F. Bocccone*, who is now at *Palermo*, and with it a parcel of *Gummi Sumach*. I have given you some of this *Gumm*. It is esteemed a great adstringent, and very fit for *Ruptures*, if applied in the form of a *Plaster*.

I was mightily surpriz'd when I came to *Naples*, to find a great many persons applying themselves to the *Corpuscular Philosophy and Mathematicks*. They own'd to be oblig'd for it to *Tho. Cornelius Consentinus*, who begun first to introduce them, and to *Leonado di Capoa*, who followed his steps. This great man died three years ago. I was acquainted there with Signior *Joseph Valeta*, a Gentleman who has a very good Library, and has learnt a little *English*, on purpose to understand *English Books*, for which he has a very great value. He lent me a Manuscript of his, that he will speedily publish. His design is to commend and encourage the *Experimental Philosophy*. I saw *Tho. Donzelli*, *Anello di Napoli*, *Ottavio Sandoro*, and several other learned Physicians. Signior *John Baptist Garnieri*, one of them has several *Consilia MSS.* of the famous

M. Aurelius Severinus, with some Papers relating to a second part *Severinus* intended to make *de recondita Abscessuum Natura*. He spoke to me of another Book; he did not know whether it had been printed or no. Here is the Title : *Il Medico al riverfo, e disinganno d'al Medico crudo, del M. A. Severino*. If any Bookseller would undertake a new Edition of *Severinus* his Works, I do not question but *Signior Garnieri* would oblige the publick with these.

I saw there also *F. Giann asi* a Jesuit, who has written *Piscatoria & Nautica*. His *Bellicorum Lib. xii.* just came out, and now in another *Poem* he is going to describe the Art of War by Sea.

I did not stay long enough at *Pisa* to be acquainted with the *Virtuosi* of that Academy. *Bellini* is now *Professor emeritus*, and Physician to the Grand Duke. *Del Papa* is Physician to the Cardinal *de Medicis*. Besides the Anatomist *Zambecary*, they spoke to me with great encomium of *Signior Paschasio Gianeti*, Professor of Natural Philosophy. I was several times at *Florence* with *Signior Antonio Magliabechi*; but *Signior Viviani* I did not see. He is very old. I send you a Book of *F. Grandi*, *Solutio Geometrica Problematum Vivianorum* in 4^o. This *F. Grandi* is now at *Rome*, in the Convent of *San Gregorio de PP. Camaldolensi*.

I met at *Genova* an old acquaintance of mine, *Monsieur Desnoms* a French man. He is Lector of *Anatomy* there, and Chief Surgeon to the great Hospital. I was very curious to see some of his preparations, and I must confess, I did wonder when he shew'd me not only all the *Muscles*, with the distribution of the *Nerves* and *Blood-vessels*, but even the *interna Viscera*, so finely done in *Wax* of the Natural Colour, that I could hardly distinguish it from a Corps newly in-balm'd. This has cost him a great deal of time and money. If there was half a dozen of these *Wax Carvings*, in several views, to shew at any time the structure
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of humane Bodies, it would not only shorten the study of *Anatomy*, but besides make it a great deal less nau-
tious to the Beginners.

I found upon enquiry that *Surgery* is but indifferently practis'd all over *Italy*. It seems very strange in that Country, where have been such eminent Men, as *Fabricius ab Aquapendente*, *Fallopins*, *Taliacotius*, both *Marchettis*, *M. A. Severinus*, &c. *M. Dufau*, a French Surgeon at *Rome*, having made with good success the suture of one of the Tendons *Extensoris Communis digitorum*, it was look'd upon by several *Italians* almost as a piece of Witchcraft. There is indeed a famous *Lithotomist* at *Florence*, Signior *Colechiani*; but in most even of the greatest Cities, they have only *Norcinos*. By that name they mean the Natives of *Norcia*, a little Town in the state of the *Pope*, where laying aside some few Priests, Lawyers and Tradesmen, all the people of the Town are bred up Operators for the *Stone*, *Cataracts* and *Ruptures*.

Since I have begun to speak of *Surgery*, I will communicate to you an observation I made upon the *Bronchocèle*, a distemper very frequent all over *Lombardy*, and *Savoy*. By the disposition of this tumor, I am satisfy'd it has principally its seat in the *Glandula thyroideæ*, and sometimes too, but very seldom, in the *Parotis Conglobata*. I could plainly see the *Parotides Conglomeratæ* were no ways concern'd. This I have observ'd in several *Bronchocèles* of a very great bigness. I conceive these tumors (that are generally attributed to the Water the People drink, that is melted Snow) do proceed a *Lentore Lymphæ*, which by degrees extend the *folliculi Glandularum membranosi*; and being there congeal'd, hardens them to that degree, that an inveterate *Branchocèle* is almost like a Stone. But why these Swellings are to be seen no where else, but in these glands of the Neck, it is difficult to give a good reason. It may be the natural conformation of the

glandula Thyroidea, (who being harder and of a more solid substance than other glands, give sooner a stop to the *Lympha Lenta & Viscida*) is the occasion of this tumour always beginning and settling there. Doctor Wharton *Adenograp. Cap. XVIII.* has taken notice of that difference of substance. *Quoad Carnem earum (Thyroidearum) substantiam, ea multo magis sanguinea est, quam cujusvis alius glandulae, viscidior quoque, solidior, ac similior Carni Musosæ. Hoc solummodo interest quod non sit fibrosa, sed potius glutinosa, quo nomine partes ejus firmiter inter se coherent, & cultello quoque inter secundum multum resistunt.* I give you only this as a Conjecture of mine, and leave it to your Consideration. I am,

Sir,

London, Octob. 15. 1700.

I send you herewith some Natural Curiosities I brought with me from *Italy*, for the Repository of the R. S.

Terra foliata Bituminosa. P. Boccone.

This Earth comes out of *Sicily*. It had a very strong Bituminous smell, when it was first given me; but being kept in a box with other Drugs, it has almost lost its scent.

Lapis Bezoarticus fossilis Siculus P. Boccone.

Gummi Sumach.

This was sent from *Palermo* by *F. Boccone*, who believes it is not to be found in *Italy*. He wrote that they made a Cerat with it very good for Ruptures.

Sal Montis Vesuvii.

This Salt is found in pretty large Lumps after Mount

Mount *Vesuvius* has spued out a vast quantity of Ashes. The great Rains that fall upon these Ashes makes a sort of Lees, which left in the hollow places are evaporated by the heat of the Sun, and there remains this Urinous Salt, whose taste is something like Sal Armoniac. It was very hard and solid, but I found it began to be moist in wet weather, so I keep it close in a Bladder.

Alumen.

At the *Sulfatara* between *Naples* and *Puzzolo* they make Alum in this manner. In Summer time they gather as much as they have occasion for of an Earth that is there in the middle of a large Area, and they keep it in a dry place. They put it in Lead Coppers of a good thickness, and pour upon it Rain-water, which is also impregnated with the same Mineral. For that purpose they take great care to dig some large holes to preserve in them the Rain-water, and they carry it to a large Cistern by the Coppers. There is now six of these, two large ones, and four of a lesser size. They take away the Earth when the *Lixivium* is made, and as it grows stronger by Evaporation, they put it from one Copper into another, till it is sufficiently evaporated. Then they take it out and convey it into a wooden Tub, where after it is cool'd, you see the Alum stick to the sides in the form of Crystals. But the most remarkable thing is, that these Coppers are plac'd upon some of the great *Spiracula*, and that without any expence in fuel, only by the violent heat of these effluvia the Evaporation is constantly made sufficient for that Crystallization. All this Laboratory where are the Coppers and the Cistern, with the Tubs is only til'd over. The Governours of the great Hospital of the *Annunciata*, who have been at the Charge of this ingenious Contrivance, do make now about three or four hundred pounds a year by it.

Sulphur.

All Summer long some Labourers dig up and down in several places of the same Area, as if it was in a Kitchin-garden, and by those means they give way to the copious sulphureous Streams that are within the bowels of all this Mountain. Then out of the superficies of that Earth by the means of Earthen Pots they sublime the Brimstone.

Sal Armoniacum Nativum.

At the mouth of the largest *Spiracula*, where is an excessive heat, and a continual noise and smoak, is found a sort of a Native Sal Armoniac: It seems the copious Steams come out in *forma liquida*, for if you put in a Key, a Sword, or any thing solid, these *effluvia* will stick immediately to it, and drop down like Water. All this Mountain ought to be extraordinary full of mineral substances, for we see these *effluvia* when they are sublim'd to the top of the *Spiracula* do stick there to Tiles or Stones, where they form this Salt, of which they gather yearly about two hundred pounds weight. It has much of the taste of the factitious Sal Armoniac, and as a Learned Physician told me, being still'd in a Sand Furnace, it yields a Volatile Urinous Spirit absolutely like Sal Armoniac, as to the sensible qualities, and all other effects: He only observ'd that Spirit had something aluminous in it, and that to correct it they us'd to add a greater quantity of quick Lime, or Sal Tartari, than in the common Spirit's distillation.