

Some Italian Precursors of the Royal College of Physicians

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In his *History of the Royal College of Physicians*, Sir George Clark mentioned the possibility of its foundation having been influenced by some foreign model, but he did not discuss the question in any detail. I have, therefore, decided to look a little more closely at the evidence to see what influence, if any, similar colleges in Italy may have had on its foundation, its government and its conduct.

When, on 23rd September 1518 Henry VIII gave the College its Lettres Patentés, he said that one of the reasons for desiring its foundation was the example that had been set by similar institutions in well-regulated cities in Italy. Of the founders of this College and of the early Fellows, a number had taken medical degrees in Italy, and the university most of these had attended was that of Padua. Two of the founders, Thomas Linacre and John Chaumbre, had both taken their doctorates there, and so also had John Caius, who codified the College's Statutes in 1555, and his contemporaries Edward Wotton, Thomas Bille and John Frier. In the sixteenth century, Padua was the university of the Republic of Venice, and Padua's College of Physicians was closely connected with the University. In the city of Venice, there was no university as such, but there were two Colleges, one of Physicians, the other of Surgeons. In addition to taking his doctorate at Padua, Linacre is believed to have spent some time in Venice and, though there is no proof, could have known of these Colleges. One of the members of the London College, listed in 1538, was the Venetian Agostino de Angostini, who may have taken his doctorate at the Venetian College. Thomas Vavasour, who was granted a licence to practise by the London College in 1556, certainly did. That there was a direct influence on the London College of these Colleges of Venice and Padua is, therefore, possible. When the London College was founded, they had already been in existence for some 250 years. Both the Paduan and the Venetian Colleges depended on the Republic of Venice in the sixteenth century, the Venetian College directly, the Paduan indirectly through the University, and to a certain extent their functions complemented each other. Padua was largely concerned in matters touching the University, Venice in all the affairs of a capital city. The statutes of all three Colleges exist as they were codified in the sixteenth century and so it is possible to make a comparison between them at that date.

THE SACRED COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS AND PHILOSOPHERS OF PADUA

According to tradition, the Sacred College of Physicians and Philosophers of Padua was founded in the middle of the thirteenth century, shortly after the foundation of the University of Padua as a result of the migration of students from Bologna in 1222. It received its first privilege to examine and confer degrees from Pope Urban III in 1264, and at that time it consisted of a President, twelve Professors and, *ex officio*, of the Bishop of Padua as Chancellor of the University, by whose authority all degrees were given. The earliest reference to the Statutes of the College dates from 1306 when they were confirmed by the Chancellor of the University, and all the professors and scholars of the University's medical school were ordered to obey its President on pain of excommunication. In 1368 it was enacted that the Statutes should be read and if necessary emended within eight days of the election of each new President. As the President then held office for four months only, this meant that the Statutes were read four times a year instead of the twice specified in the Statutes of the London College.

Statutes

The Statutes begin with a series of enactments concerning the religious festivals to be observed by the College. As is to be expected, the Statutes of the London College written down after the Reformation show no trace of any such provision. But this College had existed for some 30 years in a Catholic England, and it is very likely that a procession was organised at least on St Luke's Day, particularly as it is said in the Statutes that the President shall take precedence in the College itself and at funerals, processions and feasts. In Padua, processions to the cathedral were organised on the feasts of Corpus Christi and St Anthony, and on St Luke's Day to the church of Sta Justina, where the bones of St Luke are supposed to lie. On All Souls' Day they went to the church of the Capucines to hear mass for the repose of the souls of former members of the College. After these Statutes relating to Christian observances come those concerning the Christian duty of charity. If any member of the College should become so poor that he had not the wherewithal to clothe himself or pay for his burial, the College was to minister to his necessity. All those members who practised medicine (some taught philosophy in the University and not medicine) were required to visit free of charge any doctor of the College and its Notary, their wives and children, if they fell sick, unless they were sick of the plague, on pain of being expelled from the College for one year. Though not in the Statutes of this College, such of course has always been its custom. The next rule was not applicable to London but was enforced in Venice. Because of the College's desire to care for poor and needy students, either two or three of them were each year to be given their doctorates free, *amore Dei*. Two further decrees have no equivalents in the London College. One relates to heretics who are to be expelled and only re-admitted on recantation, the other

concerns the Jews who were neither to be admitted to any examination nor to be given any licence to practise by the College. The same prohibition obtained in Venice where there were indeed many Jews who were only licensed to practise the surgical operations of barber-surgeons. In England, it will be remembered, Jews were not admitted to Oxford and Cambridge until 1870, and consequently, since they could not take a medical degree, were ineligible for admission to the London College. In the early days the Jews who were admitted were, nominally at least, Christians, like the Portuguese Jew, Rodrigo Lopez, who was a Fellow in the 1560s.

Organisation

The City of Padua and its University passed into the jurisdiction of Venice in 1406. We do not know what effect this political change may have had on the Sacred College of Physicians and it is quite likely that nothing very much happened. On the other hand, a certain degree of Venetian influence on the organisation of the College cannot be entirely ruled out. The government of Venice was carefully designed to prevent the accumulation of power in the hands of any one man, the Doge, or of an oligarchy. How far it succeeded is another matter but, given this intention, it is not surprising to find a reflection of it in the manner of electing the governing body of both the Paduan and Venetian Colleges and a strong contrast with the Royal College. In London, the eight Elects, in a meeting which only they attended, selected one of themselves to be the President, and two of themselves to be the Councillors for the following year. In addition, they chose four Censors, who could be either Elects or Members of the College. The Elects were, therefore, the ruling few and constituted an oligarchy. In Padua and in Venice there were no Elects, and more power remained in the hands of the members of the College as a whole. In Padua the governing body consisted of the President, two Councillors, one Syndic and one Proctor. At a meeting of the whole College specially convened a fortnight before the retiral of the out-going President, all the members of at least four years' standing wrote their names on slips of paper which were then put into an urn and shaken up by the retiring President, and he whose name was drawn out by a student brought in for the purpose became President for the next four months. On the same day and by the same method of random selection, the two Councillors were chosen. To elect the Syndic, five names were drawn out of the urn and then put to the vote and whoever received most votes, and at least half the total cast, was elected. In his election, therefore, there was a combination of random selection with a limited amount of judgement and choice. Lastly, to elect the Proctor, each retiring officer nominated the junior doctor whom he considered most suitable for the office, and the five names were then put into a hat and the one whose name was drawn out by the President was elected.

The functions of these officers were in some respect similar to those of their

namesakes in the London College. The President had to defend the College's rights and privileges, keep its Statute books, preside over its meetings and impose certain fines. Unlike London, in Padua, the President did not keep the College's cash, for this was done by the Proctor. The President's chief duties concerned the organisation of the degree examinations for the University. Over these he presided and he had to choose the members of the College who were to dispute with the candidates. The whole College had to swear obedience to him and no one was allowed to precede him either inside or outside the College. The two Councillors acted as his advisers in the same way as they did in London. The Syndic's office was next in importance to that of the President, for he also had to watch over the interests of the College, prevent violations of the Statutes, record the marks given at examinations and prevent frauds. No College business could be done except in his presence and no one except the President could supply his place. The Proctor also had to be present at all meetings, to keep a list of contumacious doctors, to distribute the monies due to each doctor out of the examination fees, to keep an account book of the College's cash, if there were any, and to hand it over to his successor. He could spend nothing without the consent of the President but, with the consent of the Syndic, the President might authorise him to expend as much as 3 lire on College business. If more were needed, the whole College had to be consulted and a majority vote obtained.

In addition to these officers, the College employed a Notary who was chosen from the College of Notaries, and he had to attend meetings and take down verbatim the acts of the College and copy them into a book with an index. He also had to list the absentees, make the arrangements for the examinations, summon the doctors to attend and write out the questions that were to be disputed. His office was somewhat like that of the London College's caduceator at that date, but more important.

The officers of the London College who were lacking in Padua were the Censors, because most of the functions they fulfilled did not come within the scope of the Sacred College. As a body, it was not concerned with seeking out impostors or dealing with apothecaries and their drugs. At the examinations the College held, the various professors of the University who were members of the College were the examiners and they were chosen by the President for each particular occasion.

Examinations

As the chief business of the Sacred College was the conduct of examinations, many of the Statutes relate to the procedure to be followed. In every university at this time, the examination for a doctor's degree was made up of two parts, both of which consisted in the formal disputation between the candidate and the examiners of selected passages from the prescribed texts. At both examinations, the result was decided by the number of votes cast for or against the candidate. At

the final public examination, the whole College was supposed to be present, and the doctors voted on slips of paper saying *approbo* or *reprobo*, and the slips were then solemnly counted. The fees to be paid by the candidate before taking his examination were high. In 1562 they stood at over 30 gold ducats and were roughly the equivalent of 4,000 solidi, or four months' wages of a master-builder. In addition, the candidate was involved in considerable expense on the day on which he was ceremonially and publicly examined. He had to pay the Notary some 70 solidi to prepare the seating in the Cathedral, where the examination took place, and to summon the doctors to attend. He had to give a ring worth half a gold ducat (another 70 solidi at least) to each member of the College who was present, as well as scarves and fur collars and gloves to the less important people. It is not surprising that the University complained about the number of students who, having completed their years of study in Padua, chose to take their examinations in another university where the expenses were less. However, in addition to the poor students who were excused their fees, the sons and grandsons of all the regular members of the Sacred College were examined free. There still remained, however, the expenses involved in the ceremonial investiture with the doctoral insignia of cap and ring and the feast that followed. The London College was wise in prescribing that the feasts given by the Fellows and Candidates on their admission should be a 'frugal and fitting repast to the value of 40/-'.

Besides granting doctorates in medicine, and in medicine and philosophy, the Sacred College also examined candidates for doctorates in surgery. Only those who had studied surgery for two years and had practised it for at least one, could be admitted to the examination, which also took the form of a disputation on passages chosen from one of the prescribed surgical texts. The cost of this doctorate was about a quarter of that in medicine. Though not generally realised, a certain number of those practising medicine at this date held doctorates in both surgery and medicine, and they alone could practise both, for there was indeed a strict demarcation between the respective domains of the physician and the surgeon.

Admissions

By decree of the Doge in 1407, the number of members of the Sacred College was increased to 20, to include all the doctors of arts (i.e. philosophy and letters) and medicine born in Padua or the Veneto who were teaching in the University. By the middle of the sixteenth century, however, their number was considerably higher, though I have nowhere found any precise figure. In effect, anyone possessing the necessary qualifications might apply for membership. No one could be admitted unless he held a doctor's degree, was a native of Padua or the Veneto, was born in legitimate wedlock, was one whose family had paid taxes to the city of his birth for at least 50 years, and who had neither exercised any mechanical art with his own hands, including surgery, nor had been a schoolmaster. The only

exception was made for those who, though born elsewhere, had practised or taught medicine in Padua or Venice and so were counted as citizens. No one holding a doctor's degree from elsewhere could be admitted unless he took the College's doctoral examination. If, after being admitted, anyone took up a manual occupation or took a degree in civil law or in 'the other faculty of the university', he was to be excluded forthwith. Clearly, the College was concerned to maintain the social status of its members who were thus drawn from the families of solid tax-paying citizens, property owners, who might be gentlemen, or merchants or members of the professional classes, but never artisans. Only very rarely were exceptions made and it was against strong opposition that the surgeon and anatomist, Fabricius of Aquapendente, Harvey's master, was admitted to the College in 1583 after he had been teaching in the University for more than 20 years. Like the London College, the Sacred College of Padua formed the élite of the profession. The reference to those taking a degree in 'the other faculty' implies a degree in theology, for medicine, law and theology were then the only faculties of the University. It is interesting that the Statutes of the London College also exclude anyone who, after his admission, had entered religion.

The Statutes provide little evidence of the day-to-day business of the Paduan College, and even the Acts seem to indicate that it was more involved with the affairs of the University than of the City. Its members were, of course, concerned with the frequent epidemics of plague occurring in Padua, but as individuals practising in the City and not as an official body. It does not say much for those learned physicians that when they were consulted by the Sanità, the Public Health Department of Venice, early in 1576 as to whether the disease then infecting the city was plague, they positively denied it; but it happened to be one of the worst outbreaks of bubonic plague of the century. It lasted till the summer of 1577 and in Padua claimed about 10,000 victims in a population of around 36,000. If any sick person asked the College for a consultation, he had to pay the large sum of 20 gold ducats for the privilege, the fee being divided between the members of the College. If, in such a case, two doctors were appointed to give their opinion, whether they were in agreement or not, they had to give it within 15 days at a full meeting of the College specially convened and at which the opinion was discussed and voted upon. Occasionally, the College was consulted on judicial matters, as in 1587 when the physician, Girolamo Mercuriale, the surgeon and anatomist, Fabricius of Aquapendente, and the philosopher, Giacomo Zabarella, were called upon to decide on the virginity of a girl who had been taken with a young priest from Milan. Although they decided that no certain answer could be given, they obtained 100 ducats for the College by their decision. (The young priest was imprisoned by the ecclesiastical authorities and only released some time later on payment of a heavy fine.)

The Sacred College of Padua was not unique in Italy, for similar institutions existed in other university cities, such as Bologna and Ferrara, but it seems

unlikely that it served as a model for the London College in anything more than outline for, by comparison, the scope of its activities was limited. The activities of the College of Physicians of Venice, on the other hand, included many of those of the London College and extended beyond them.

MEDICINE IN VENICE

In the middle of the sixteenth century, the maritime Republic of Venice was more important in Europe than the small city of London. It was the centre of trade with the Middle and the Far East. It supplied the industries of the West with raw materials such as silk, cotton, spices, drugs and jewels. It dealt in fruit and wine and other products of its own colonies and in such necessary and mundane commodities as salt, grain and timber. At that time also it was the centre of ship-building in Europe and the bulwark of Europe against the Turk. It had extended its territories by conquest from the islands of the lagoon across the plains of Lombardy and along the Adriatic coast until, in 1548, the total population of its domains amounted to over one and a half million, and that of the City of Venice itself to some 150,000. A hundred years later in 1631, a rough count of the population of London gave an approximate figure of 130,000, from which we may reasonably conclude that when the Royal College of Physicians was founded the population of London was much smaller than that of Venice. It is not, therefore, surprising that the activities of the College of Physicians of Venice were more numerous than those of the London College, partly because it had to deal with a larger population and partly because it was more intimately connected with the government of the city.

From the thirteenth century, the exercise of all the arts and professions in Venice, including painting and sculpture, was subject to the magistrature of the Department of Justice known as the Giustizia Vecchia. The earliest known document relating to the control of this department over the medical services dates from 1258 and is an oath drawn up by the justices after discussion as to how the physicians, surgeons and apothecaries may legally exercise their arts within the Republic. Each physician and surgeon was required to swear that he would not undertake any cure unless the sick man confessed his sins (an obligation of which the Venetian College was to remind physicians many times in the years to come), that he would treat the sick and wounded lawfully and honestly, giving them counsel and succour and would not fraudulently prolong their sickness, and that he would neither sell nor allow to be sold any poison or poisonous substance. He promised not to keep company with any apothecary in such a way as to have a share in his profits from the sale of medicines, and the apothecary was forbidden to bribe any physician or surgeon to use his shop or promote his drugs. Any irregularity of which the physician or surgeon might have knowledge was immediately to be reported to the justices. Before he undertook any cure he was to inform the sick man of its cost and come to an agreement with him. A similar

oath was administered to the apothecaries, who were forbidden to sell any poison or abortifacient or to compound any preparation containing expensive ingredients except in the presence of the examiners appointed by the justices for this purpose.

By 1258, therefore, there must have been in Venice some kind of organisation consisting of men capable of making judgements concerning the practice of medicine and surgery, and of assessing the qualities of drugs. We do not know who these men were, but it is probable that they were some of the physicians and surgeons practising independently in the City or attached to the households of noble Venetian families, and who were well known for their successful practice and so consulted by the justices. In addition to these, there were others who were maintained by the City in its own service and of whom we first hear in 1306 when a *medicus* was appointed for public service at the expense of the commune. In 1324, 12 physicians and 12 surgeons were so appointed. Their salaries varied in amount and they may have been appointed to different departments (in 1333 we know that one was responsible to the Central Criminal Court and had to supervise the application of torture), but we do not know whether their services to the City were whole or part-time.

The Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons of Venice

It would seem most probable that the College of Physicians and the College of Surgeons of Venice both grew out of this consultative body. Both were already in existence in 1321 when the City passed an Act decreeing that no man might practise surgery unless he held a doctorate from some university, or at least some certificate to prove his ability, and if he had neither he was to be examined by the Priors of the two Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons and their respective Councillors. These Colleges did not need a charter of foundation, as did the Royal College of Physicians of London. The Corporation of the City of London was not the central power of the realm; indeed, during the Middle Ages it was frequently at odds with the King. The King ratified and gave legal form and existence to the wishes of his loyal subjects, but the College was not instituted and imposed from above on the City of London. Venice, on the other hand, being at the same time both the local and the central authority of government, could establish the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons in much the same way as she could and did establish and organise any government department, and the two departments with which these Colleges had the closest links were those of Justice and of Public Health. How central these Colleges were even in 1321 to the organisation of medicine in Venice is clear from the order then made that they were to meet together once a month to discuss all doubtful and difficult cases and to assist all those practising in the City with their help and advice.

The formal division between the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons occurred in the fifteenth century. As a result of various disasters that befell the City of Venice at the end of the fourteenth century, flood, fire, famine, war and

pestilence, the College of Surgeons was reduced in 1443 to one member, and so could not fulfil its obligations to examine and license those who wished to practise surgery. On 24th August 1443, the Government of Venice acted to reconstitute the College and ordered all those physicians who practised surgery and wished to continue to do so, to enter the College of Surgeons and elect from among themselves a Prior and Councillors according to the ancient rules, with the proviso that the same man could not hold either of these offices in both Colleges simultaneously. This mixing up of the two Colleges resulted in such confusion, and the College of Physicians protested so long and so loudly that, in July 1450, the Venetian Senate quashed the whole proceeding and re-established the two Colleges as separate entities. From then on as before, no man could be a member of both Colleges and those who held degrees both in surgery and in medicine had to make a choice. But the seven years of confusion were enough to upset the normal system of examinations for admission to the College of Surgeons, and the College of Physicians continued to claim the right to give licences to practise surgery. For years there were disputes between the two Colleges over their respective rights and privileges.

The governing body of the College of Physicians was much larger than either that of the London or the Paduan College, for so too was its membership. It consisted of a Prior, two Councillors, three General Syndics, two Special or Minor Syndics, one Treasurer, three General Assessors, and three Minor Assessors. The powers and duties of the Prior were similar in many ways to those of the President of the London College, but the manner of his election was quite different. At a full meeting of the College, summoned three days beforehand by notices hung up in the apothecaries' shops, three golden balls were put into a sack together with as many silver balls as were necessary to make up the total number of doctors present. The sack was then shaken and each doctor took out one ball. The three who drew the golden balls were the electors and they had to nominate, according to their consciences, three doctors whom they considered most suitable to be the Prior, the only requirement being that he should be 'a man of good condition and manner of life'. These three doctors were then balloted for by the assembly, and whoever received the most votes, provided that his total number was a majority of those present, was elected Prior. At the end of the sixteenth century, it was decreed that no one could refuse the office unless he had held it before or was over the age of fifty. This manner of election by the use of gold and silver balls was characteristically Venetian, as was also the balance between the randomness of the ballot and the exercise of common sense. It was in fact a very abbreviated form of the procedure involved in the election of the Doge.

On the same day and by a very similar process all the other officers were then elected. All held office for one year beginning on 15 September. The two Councillors with the Prior had to attend all the meetings of the College. The three General Syndics had to sit for one hour each day to hear disputes in matters

concerning the treatment of patients, the awarding of doctorates and the assessing of taxes. Together with the Prior and Councillors they were the effective governing body of the College who had to see that nothing was done to the detriment either of the College or of those practising medicine. They could rescind decrees, correct and confirm them and exact punishment from anyone contravening them. The two Special or Minor Syndics were the personal advisers of the Prior and were chosen by lot to prevent them from being his special friends. Because the Prior, though suitable, might be a poor man, the College's money was not kept by him but by the Treasurer, who had either to have possessions in Venice worth at least 200 ducats or be in a position to give sureties to that amount. The two officers who received salaries from the College and were not members, were the Notary and the Bidellus. The Notary was responsible for keeping the writings of the College, keeping the minutes of meetings and a record of receipts and payments, and for engrossing the privileges of the doctors and licenciates. The Bidellus acted as a messenger, summoned the doctors to attend meetings and denounced any who contravened the College's regulations.

In all of this there is considerable similarity with the regulations of the London College. The officers with no equivalent in London, however, were the Assessors, who were concerned with the levying of taxes imposed by the Venetian government. As the members of the College were taxed each in proportion to his income, each had to declare its total on oath to the three General Assessors who decided the amount payable by each individual. In addition to the general taxation which was imposed annually, the Venetian government also levied occasional or special taxes for different purposes, such as the maintenance of the army and navy in time of war. By a decree of the Doge dating from 1345, the two Colleges and all the physicians and surgeons practising in the City, were exempted from these special taxes in return for maintaining at their expense physicians and surgeons for the army and navy. The total amount required from the College for this purpose was divided among the members by the Assessors, again in proportion to their respective incomes. When the list of tax assessments was published each year by the Assessors, three members of the College were appointed as Auditors to hold office for 15 days to hear complaints about the list, and to increase or diminish the assessment if they thought that there was any injustice. But after the 15 days, no further complaints could be heard or changes made.

Physicians for the Fleet

The provision made by Venice for sending physicians and surgeons with its army and, in particular, with its fleet is of considerable interest because of the lack of any such organisation in England at this date. As early as 1317, the Republic sent a 'medical surgeon' with the ships on the occasion of a mission to King Edward I of England. During the fourteenth century she fought the Genoese, and in spite of

reverses, eventually won the supremacy of maritime power in the Mediterranean. Later she was engaged in defending her trade against pirates and her possessions against the Turk. Whereas in England the ships were chiefly used during the Middle Ages for commerce across the Channel or for carrying land armies to France, and neither undertook long voyages nor fought many battles at sea, the Venetian galleys engaged in combat and were at sea for longer periods. Their need for physicians and surgeons to accompany them was, therefore, greater than it was for the English fleet. During the sixteenth century, both the Colleges in Venice kept a close eye on the quality of those employed for the fleet and did their best to prevent abuses, although they were by no means always successful. On the other hand, the Prior of the College of Physicians himself, Giovanni Giacomo da Parma, went with the fleet in 1513, and in the following year the College complained that the Captain General of the Forces, Andrea Gritti, had chosen a physician who was too young and too inexperienced, and so refused to pay his salary. At that time Venice was fighting the Emperor for her very existence. Foreign galleys were in the lagoon and she had lost most of her mainland territories which she did not regain until 1515.

Admission and Degrees

According to the Statutes of the Venetian College, only those who held doctorates were eligible to be admitted, and if the doctorates had not been given by the College itself, proof of their authenticity had to be provided. Temporary licences to practise were given in the meantime. Somewhat later, all the professors of the medical school of Padua were admitted automatically. The original number of members was 25, and these were considered the 'regular' members; the rest were supernumeraries and their number does not seem to have been limited. When a 'regular' died, a supernumerary took his place. In 1567, there were 80 members of the College, a number far in excess of either the Paduan or the London College at that date. As far as I know, there is no suggestion that any man was debarred from membership of the Venetian College on the grounds of his family status.

As in Padua, the members of the College had to sit and speak in order of seniority of admission. Their conduct was governed by a number of penal statutes, several of which have a familiar ring. They were fined for non-attendance at meetings and examinations, or for coming late. They were fined for speaking out of turn, that is not in the order of seniority, for interrupting the speaker, and more heavily, for 'shouting presumptuously or in a furious voice'. And there were, of course, penalties for more serious offences. Any officer defrauding the College had to make restitution to double the amount and was liable to be excluded from the College for anything from one year to perpetuity.

The authority of the Venetian College to give degrees derives from a privilege given to it in February 1470 by the Emperor Frederick III and confirmed by Pope Paul II. By this it was empowered to create eight doctors each year in arts and

medicine, after they had passed the customary examinations. Many of those who did take doctorates in Venice had in fact followed the course of their medical studies elsewhere, and had merely chosen to be examined in Venice where a doctorate cost roughly one-third of the amount payable in Padua. But some provision was made for teaching, occasionally in the theory of medicine, but fairly regularly for the teaching of anatomy and the holding of anatomies. Anatomy had been taught in Padua as part of the curriculum of the medical school from 1429 according to the Statutes of the University. A decree of the Venetian Senate of 1321 orders the holding of the annual anatomy by the two Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons as it had been held 'from time immemorial', in order to improve the standard of surgery in the City. Not until 1582 did Lord Lumley and Richard Caldwell establish the Lumleian lectureship for this same purpose in the College of Physicians of London.

In addition to conferring doctorates in medicine, the Venetian College granted licences, after an examination, to those who, though well skilled, could not afford the fees for a doctorate. It examined also on occasion for doctorates in surgery, though for the most part these doctorates were granted by the College of Surgeons, the Prior of the College of Physicians being one of the examiners. Both Colleges jointly issued licences to barber-surgeons, sometimes to practise any kind of simple surgery that did not endanger life and sometimes to treat certain specialties only, such as tapping for dropsy, passing catheters, couching for cataract, drawing teeth and all kinds of dentistry, extracting bladder stones, and so forth. These licences cost 2 ducats, had to be renewed annually and were issued to men and to women.

Relations with the Sanità

Like the London College, the Venetian College also took steps to deal with empirics and imposters, and with about the same amount of success. Anyone caught practising without a licence was fined by the College and liable to be carried before the Justices of the City. There were strict rules concerning the conduct of the physicians in relation to the apothecaries, and concerning the apothecaries and their preparation of drugs, some of which could be prepared only in the presence of the Prior of the College of Physicians and his Councillors. In all these measures the care of Venice for the health of its citizens is clear, and much of the business of the College of Physicians was carried out in association with the department of Public Health, the Sanità. This department had been set up in 1485, after more modest beginnings in 1348 following the epidemic of pneumonic plague, the Black Death. It was on the orders of this department that the College sent one or more of its members on special tasks, such as visiting the prisons to care for the sick prisoners in time of war, or attending the galley-slaves or visiting the sick during the many epidemics of typhus, typhoid and bubonic plague that occurred in the City. It was in obedience to orders of the Sanità that

autopsies, at least of a partial kind, had to be performed on anyone dying unexpectedly to make sure that the cause of death was not plague. Until this was done no burial could take place. On the orders of the Sanità again, the flesh of swine and oxen had to be examined by the physicians before it could be offered for sale, if there was any suspicion that the animals had been suffering from some infectious disease. The quality of flour and bread had also to be inspected, lest it, too, should damage the public health.

Disappearance of all the Italian Colleges

Both the Colleges of Physicians of Padua and Venice disappeared with the re-organisation of medicine in Italy at the time of Napoleon. The function of the Sacred College of Padua as an examining body was taken over by the central authority of the University. The Venetian College disappeared without trace after awarding its final doctorate in the year 1806.

Influence of the Italian Colleges on the London College

To what conclusion can we then come about the possible influence of these Italian Colleges on the foundation of the Royal College of Physicians? Their aims and their intentions were alike in that they all sought to maintain the highest standards of medicine and medical practice. Their members were the élite of the medical profession and their social status was high. This is very evident in the case of Padua where physicians who had no connection with the University and lacked the necessary qualifications of birth and parentage to be admitted to the Sacred College could only practise by right of being members of the ordinary Guild of Physicians. The physicians of the Venetian College were permitted to wear the furred gowns and the silks and embroideries of the nobility, a visible token of their social standing in a City where the sumptuary laws were not entirely a dead letter. The London College, in the words of Sir George Clark, was 'an aristocracy of merit'. That being so, it seems to me that its founders might well have chosen as their model a college rather than a guild, and certainly not a guild of surgeons, for the social status of the surgeon was much lower than that of the physician in sixteenth-century England, where learned surgeons of the Italian type were unknown. But this would not prevent the organisation of the London College from having points in common with the guilds, as the Colleges of Padua and Venice also have. It is, however, difficult to say to what extent these two Colleges may have served as models. The Sacred College of Padua seems to have been too intimately connected with the University and not sufficiently metropolitan. Though in many respects the Venetian College is closer to London's Royal College, it differs from it in that from the very beginning it was forced by the political and social structure of Venice to be much more concerned with community medicine than the Royal College was to be for the first 200 years of its existence. That Venice led the world in public health is common knowledge.

The Venetian College of Physicians was inevitably involved with the Department of Public Health, for they were both built into the structure of the local government of Venice. London's assumption of civic responsibility for the care of 'the sick, poor, lame and impotent persons' in the sixteenth century was expressed in the pressure it exerted on Henry VIII to refound the hospitals of St Bartholomew and St Mary Bethlehem. The need for the establishment of a department of Public Health within the City of London on the scale on which it existed in Venice had not then been felt. And so the differences between the London and the Venetian Colleges derive chiefly from the social and political organisation of the cities in which they were founded. Perhaps the founders of the Royal College of Physicians chose a little of the organisation of Padua and a little of that of Venice, avoiding what they considered to be the too parochial nature of Padua and the too great involvement of Venice with the central government, and so selected what seemed to them most suitable for the needs of London. So wise were they in their choice that they set up an institution which has lasted for over 400 years.

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