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An Edition of

**The Book of Sovereign Medicines**  
**MS X3346**

compiled by  
John of Feckenham DD

DAPHNE E. LALOR

A thesis, in three volumes, submitted in fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English,  
University of Auckland, 1995.

## Abstract

This thesis is an edition of a manuscript of medical remedies, MS X3346 (now stored in the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington) which belongs to the Medical Historical Society of the Auckland branch of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians. The manuscript is one of five known copies of a compilation by a sixteenth century Benedictine monk, John of Feckenham, who became Abbot of Westminster during the reign of Mary Tudor. In the dedication to the manuscripts, which is almost identical in each, the Abbot states that 'This Book of Sovereign Medicines'<sup>1</sup> was collected by him for 'the poor who have not at all times the learned physicians at hand'. The scribal handwriting, and the names of various people in MS X3346, indicate that it was penned between 1665 and 1675, or about seventy-five years after Feckenham's death.

Research into the life of the compiler was undertaken, as was an overview of the medical ideas of the period, together with a study of the popular genre of which the Abbot's work was an example. Also included in this thesis is a provenance of the manuscript, a description of its state, a comparison of it with the other known copies, and the story of its donation to the Medical Historical Society.

A transcript of the manuscript was prepared, maintaining the scribal spelling, punctuation and capitalization as accurately as possible. Following this, a modernized version was made, aiming at a readable text. The layout of the original manuscript and the transcript was maintained as far as possible, to facilitate keying of annotations and comments to the text. The Oxford English Dictionary was used as the standard for spelling and grammar, and an attempt was made to conform to the principles used by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor in the compact edition of Shakespeare's Complete Works. A glossary was prepared defining herbs, ingredients, medical terms and so on. Annotations to the remedies indicate the same or similar examples in other works, especially in the Folger edition of 'This Booke of Sovereigne Medicines' (edited by E.R. Macgill in 1990). Also in the annotations are explanations of words and phrases specific to a remedy, and identification of many of the people mentioned in the work. Quotations from authors of the time of Chaucer to the modern day are included in the glossary and annotations to help define and illustrate medical terms and ingredients perhaps not familiar today. Early herbals were studied, especially those of William Turner and John Gerard. As Eleanour Sinclair Rohde (*The Old English Herbals*, p.98) has pointed out, Gerard was justly condemned by critics of his own time as well as modern ones for 'having used Dr Priest's translation of Dodoen's Pemptades without acknowledgement'. Nevertheless, this editor, like Rohde, has found such pleasure in Gerard's delightful language, his descriptions of plants, with their habitats and their virtues, that many quotations from his *Herball* have been included.

There is an index of authors and quotations, and also a general index to the contents of the modern version.

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<sup>1</sup> Named for convenience throughout this edition, 'The Book of Sovereign Medicines'.

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Daphne E. Lalor

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## Preface and Acknowledgements

In 1984 during a casual conversation between Dr David Caughey (then Chairman of the Auckland branch of the Medical Historical Society, of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians) and his houseman, Dr Eoin Lalor, mention was made of an old manuscript that had been recently donated to the Society. Reading the book was proving a problem, and it was thought it might be written in Early or Middle English. Dr Lalor suggested that as his mother was at the University of Auckland, studying Old English at Masters level, she might be able to tell them what it was about. She showed the photocopy which was sent to her to Professor MacDonald P. Jackson, and he advised that the manuscript was an early seventeenth century work, the scribal handwriting and abbreviations causing the reading difficulties. Fascination with the book led the houseman's mother to full time study of it, and this edition is the result.

My special thanks go to the Medical Historical Society for giving me the opportunity to study their treasured manuscript.

It is impossible to mention by name each of the people whose time and advice has been so freely given to me over the last six years. The staff of libraries, universities and research institutes, and also private persons, from various parts of America and Great Britain have all contributed. Individual thanks must go, however, to Elizabeth Rawson Macgill who edited the Folger Shakespeare Library copy of the 'Book of Sovereign Medicines'. Her transcript and notes have been extremely useful. In addition I would like to thank Laetitia Yeandle from the Folger Shakespeare Library for her letters of helpful, scholarly advice. Thanks are due, too, to the staff at the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington, to the research people in Bristol and Somerset Record Offices, and especially to the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine in London, whose Curator of Early Printed Books, H.J.M.Symons, spent unstinting time and effort at the British Library on my behalf.

To Dr Stephanie Hollis of the English Department at Auckland University go sincere thanks for supervising my work for the year that Professor Jackson was on leave, for her helpful advice, and her wide knowledge of Anglo-Saxon medical writings. I warmly acknowledge the time and help given by Dr W. Barnes and Dr W. Richardson of the Classics Department of Auckland University, who wrestled valiantly with the peculiar Latin of the scribe of this manuscript. On this same topic, heartfelt gratitude goes to Dr M.P.Earles of London, whose letters containing medical Latin translations proved invaluable.

My family and friends have always been enormously supportive and encouraging, especially my two special proof-readers and checkers, Helen M. Boland, and Margaret R.O'Dowd, without whose help omissions and errors would abound. The periods of concentration, the perceptive comments, the laughter, the companionship, and in particular, the hours of work will not be forgotten.

Above all, to Professor MacDonald P. Jackson, are due my profound thanks for his untiring supervision of this edition, for patient direction, and expert advice always given with gentle good humour, and without whose unflinching scholarship this thesis might never have been completed.

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### **Abbreviations**

ASE	Anglo-Saxon England
DNB	Dictionary of National Biography
EDD	English Dialect Dictionary
EETS	Early English Text Society Publications
L.P. 1618	Pharmacopoeia Londinensis of 1618
MED	Middle English Dictionary
OED	Oxford English Dictionary (Compact Edition)
RACP	Royal Australasian College of Physicians

MS(S)	Manuscript(s)
C	Cambrai MS 910
Folger or F	Folger MS V.b.129
H	Hunterian MS 93
S	Sloane MS 3919

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### Dating of MS X3346

Photocopies of the different handwritings included in MS X3346 were sent to Laetitia Yeandle at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington DC. She pointed out the difficulty of giving more than an approximation of dates of penmanship, but wrote that she considered that the main bulk of the manuscript (which accounts for all but ten remedies) dates from about 1650-1675.

The watermark on the manuscript paper is nearest to one from Cologne (Heawood No.552), dated 1654 (see below, Volume III, p.1, 'Description of the Manuscript', and also p.3, 'The Loose pages'). A section on bones, which does not occur in the other four copies of the Feckenham book, was found to derive from a 1665 edition of Friar Thomas Moulton's The compleat bone-setter (see below, Volume II, 'Annotations' to [MS Sig.C7r] 46/Title, Robertus Turner). Elsewhere, one remedy refers to the writer's uncle, Matthew Hazard, a minister in Bristol, who died in 1671 (see below, Volume II, 'Annotations' to No.586/Title and line12). In the scribal hand, but probably a late addition to the book, is a prescription of a Dr Dunning, who was known to be working in Dorchester in the 1690s (see below, Volume II, 'Annotations' to No.463/Title).

These facts indicate that the main part of this copy of Feckenham's 'Book of Sovereign Medicines' was probably written between 1665 and 1671.



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### **Editorial Principles.**

Square brackets at the top of each page are editorial additions, and indicate the manuscript page in terms of gathering, leaf, and side of leaf, thus: [MS Sig. A3<sup>r</sup>], where MS is an abbreviation of 'Manuscript', 'Sig.' is an abbreviation of 'Signature', and 'A3<sup>r</sup>' stands for gathering 'A', leaf '3', 'recto'; superscript 'v' is used for the verso of the leaf. The figure outside the square bracket is the page number as in the manuscript. In the transcript, where these numbers are missing or illegible, the probable figure is enclosed in angled brackets (e.g. 2<1>, <70>). In the modern transcript page numbers are assumed.

In the transcript, angled brackets enclosing points (e.g. <...>) indicate illegible letters and words, due to page damage, ink blots and so forth. Angled brackets enclosing letters or words (e.g. <e>, or <it>) are used for doubtful readings and interlined words, and these are marked with an asterisk and explained in the footnotes. Asterisks also mark the manuscript words which have tildes suggesting omitted letters. These, and which syllables they cover, are indicated in the footnotes. Square brackets ( e.g. [...]) in the transcript indicate deletions or alterations made by the scribe. Where possible the letters have been transcribed, but where these are illegible, points represent them.

In the modern transcript illegible letters and doubtful readings are corrected from the other manuscripts where possible. All textual changes are marked with an asterisk and footnotes explain the emendations. Spelling, capitalization and punctuation have been modernised, and all abbreviations silently expanded.

The manuscript's lineation has been retained in the transcript, and also in the modern version, to allow comparisons between the three. Where a line from the manuscript runs on to the next line its end is marked with a virgule, thus '/'. Marginal titles in the manuscript often run into the text proper. In this thesis these have been hyphenated, with virgules indicating the end of the manuscript lines.

Remedy numbering is an editorial addition, to enable cross references to the manuscript, to the two versions, and to the annotations which define herbs, identify people mentioned, explain the ingredients, and clarify meanings, unusual terms, and grammatical structures. Line numberings, noting every five lines, are on the right side of each page and are also editorial additions for reference purposes.

Sometimes in the manuscript there is a cross in the margin. Macgill suggests this indicates a remedy of special worth. No verification of this has been found, and the crosses are omitted in the modern version.

The large capital letters at the top of most pages are varied, and often elaborate, but they are transcribed uniformly in large bold form. When missing or replaced by words, the transcript footnotes indicate this.

Latin words and phrases are italicized. In the modern version, a desire to suggest correct or more conventional Latin has been resisted, as the scribal intention may only be guessed at. Attempted translations will be found in the annotations.

[MS Sig.A8r]9

This Booke of Concocted Medicines against  
the most Common & Known Diseases of men  
& women was by good report of Long Experience  
Collected out of Dr. Heeknam late a booke  
we mighte: & yet though for the year with  
not for all all times the learned physicians att  
hand s 11 11 11 11 11 11 11 11

To make Viniger in brief time

Take if gallons of white wine water; & fetch it  
to the halfe, and in hott; out there out iiii  
gallons of the better of wine kind of wine: & putt  
it in the frame but 12 dayes; it will be pure  
Viniger

Take Leek-seeds and stey it in wine: one whole  
day: & thou shalt have Viniger thereof

Take wyne and put it in an egg garden  
and stey it till it is fast: & pure; and put  
it in hott speething water: & with in short  
time you shall have good Viniger;

Characteres of the manner of writing of  
of physicians  
The manner of writing of physicians in writing of  
to be used  
to the writing of the apothecaries: this is the weight  
of the grain of whole make a Strugle; iii Strugles  
make a Dramme; viij Drammes make an ounce.  
ii ounce make a pound: a pound is marked thus  $\text{lb}$   
thus  $\text{ss}$  a dramme thus:  $\text{ss}$ : or thus to dis. an ounce  
dramme: or a sixteenth of an ounce thus  $\text{ss}$ : a grain thus  $\text{gr}$   
quart of measure thus:  $\text{q}$  halfe a Strugle  
is a Carrey pound weight -  $\text{ss}$