

**Veterinary manuscript in French (17th century)**  
dedicated to describing recipes for clysters to be  
applied on horses

[Rare Manuscript on Horse Veterinary, including: i) a late 17th or early 18th century major section on equine diseases and medical recipes, and finally ii) eight late 18th century pages with notes on farm administration as well as veterinary matters. First major body anonymous; second section includes a mention of a certain *Monsieur le prefet de la Charente Inférieure*]

1<sup>16</sup> 2<sup>16</sup> 3<sup>17</sup> 4<sup>16</sup> 5<sup>16</sup> 6<sup>16</sup> 7<sup>10</sup> 8<sup>2</sup> = 93 ff [ff 2<sub>2</sub> and 3<sub>1</sub> transposed]; pagination in period ink in the hand of the author of the main text: 1-34, 65-66 [f 3<sub>1</sub>], 37-64, 35-36 [f 2<sub>2</sub>], 67-172, 173-180. Pagination of last 14 pp. obscured or lost. Last two ff. are on a different paper stock, and may be singletons. Nicely bound *alla rustica*.

Remarkable French late 17 or early 18th century manuscript, in paper, clearly used as a working tool by veterinarians or, more likely, by educated farmers when dealing with health problems in the equine stud. The volume has unique characteristics that make it of special interest to scholars on the history of Euro-American quackery, magic, and veterinary medicine, and on Countryside Culture in Europe, especially in France. The volume is also a significant testimony of a particular graphic practice in peripheral European areas at that time, namely, that of copying out or summarizing published books.

The state of conservation of the set is good, considering that it is a volume that circulated, most likely, in rural areas, and was used as a recipe book. The paper shows signs of humidity and has only slightly deteriorated in the most exposed parts of the volume. The final pages are damaged in the corners, although only in a few margins the text becomes illegible. In regard to its contents, the volume is divided into two main sections, being one the principal body (ff. 1-172) and the other, a minor segment (ff. 173-186).

## **Main Section** **[Equine diseases and medical recipes]** **(pp. 1-172)**

The main section is informally entitled on its first page, *Livre de Remede pour les Chevaux*, followed by the subtitle, *Premierement / Extrait des clistaires propres au Grand hart de la Medecine des chevaux*, and is written by a single hand, from start to finish. Its author seems to be copying or summarizing recipes found in another (or other) volume(s), most probably printed, on equine veterinary medicine.

The text in this first section alternates, in general, three levels of hierarchy: a) main titles, b) intermediate titles, and c) paragraphs of a few lines. The composition of the pages, always

harmonious and patterned, is different in each case, and is achieved by the skill of the calligrapher, since neither dry lines nor rectangular marks or lines in pencil are noticeable. The manuscript text is distributed at an average from about 36 to 40 lines per page, in French cursive handwriting from the 17th-18th centuries, abundant in interlinear capital letters.

The historical value of the manuscript's main section can only be understood by looking at four concomitant aspects of early Modernity: a) Horse Culture, b) Equine Health Literature, c) the period of medical history that could be called "The Clyster Period" (1650-1800), and d) the complex coexistence between Manuscript Culture and Printed Culture during said period.

a) *Horse Culture*: From the late Middle Ages to the Industrial Revolution, the horse was the means of transport and hauling *par excellence* throughout the world, but especially in Europe. Hence, the health of horses was a major concern in every court or farm, which is why a complex culture centered around animal health and care gradually developed, comparable to the current "automotive maintenance mechanics". This first part of the volume features procedures to treat horses for any ailments, which can be implemented by any literate person with moderate practical skills.

b) *Literature on Equine Health*: The leading role of the horse became manifest in printed books, as it could not be otherwise, after the printing revolution in the second half of the 15th century. Thus, tens of editions and thousands of books about Hippiatric Science, the branch of Veterinary medicine devoted to horses, were published across Europe, with France being the leading country in that practice. Emblematic, in these series, are the following books, many of them reprinted more than once:

Pietro de Crescenti, *Ruralia commoda*, Augsburg, 1471

Manuel Díaz, *Libro de albeyteria*, Zaragoza, 1495

Lorenzo Rusius, *Hippiatria*, Paris, 1532

Jean Ruellius, *Opera della medicina de cavalli*, Venice, 1543

Conrad Gesner, *Historiae Animalium de Quadrupedibus viviparis*, Zurich, 1551

Jean Massé, *L'Art Vétérinaire ou Grande Marechalerie*, Paris, 1563

Giovan Battista Ferraro, *Scielta d'notabili avvertimenti, pertinenti a'cavalli*, Venice, 1571

Dionigio Grilli, *Raccolta di varii segreti per medicar cavalli d'ogni sorte d'infermità*, Roma, 1591

Carlo Ruini, *Dell' Anatomia et dell' Infermita del Cavallo*, Venice, 1598

Iehan Heroard, *Hippostologie, c'est-a-dire, Discours des os du cheval*, Paris, 1599

Horace de Francini, *Hippiatrique*, Paris, 1607

Jean Tacquet, *Philippica ou Haras de Chevaux*, Anvers, 1614

Nicolas Beaugrand, *Le Mareschal expert*, Paris, 1619

Francesco Liberati, *La perfettione del cauallo*, Rome, 1639

Jean Jourdin, *La vraye cognoissance du Cheval, ses Maladies et remèdes*, Paris, 1647

Samuel Fouquet de Beaupèr, *Traité des Remedes les plus utiles & necessaires pour la guerison des Chevaux*, Paris, 1663

Jacques de Solleysel, *Le Parfait Mareschal*, Paris, 1664

Juan Alvarez Borges, *Practica, y obseruaciones pertenecientes al arte de la albeyteria*, Madrid, 1680

Marino Garzoni, *L'arte di ben conoscere e distinguere le qualita d'cavalli*, Venice, 1692

Anonyme, *Les Maladies des Chevaux, avec leurs Remèdes*, Vannes, 1694  
 Jacques de Sollysel, *The Compleat horseman, or Perfect Farrier*, London, 1696  
 Dandolo Alvisé, *Trattato sopra le qualità del buon cavallo*, Padova, 1722  
 Antonio de Arriques, *L'art de panser & de guérir toutes les Maladies des Chevaux*, Paris, 1740  
 François-Alexandre de Garsault, *Le nouveau parfait maréchal, ou La connaissance générale et universelle du cheval*, Paris, 1741  
 Claude Bourgelat, *Éléments d'Hippiatrique*, Lyon, 1750  
 Jean-Pierre Capt, *Les admirables Secrets et Remèdes*, Geneve, 1760  
 Chalettes (attributed to M.), *Médecine des Chevaux, à l'usage des Laboureurs*, Paris, 1763  
 John Bartlet, *Pharmacopoeia Hippiatrica, or the Gentleman's Farrier's*, Eton, 1764  
 Pierre-Marie Crachet, *Exposition d'une nouvelle doctrine sur la Médecine des Chevaux*, Paris, l'an 2<sup>e</sup> de la République (1793)

These few works are just a sample of a much larger set, impossible to tackle in one single review. Among this vast literature, this manuscript bears relevant similarities with at least two works, namely, the *Traite des remèdes les plus utiles & nécessaires pour la guérison des Chevaux*, by Samuel Fouquet de Beaurepère, published in Paris by J. Le Gras in 1663, and the anonymous work *Les maladies des chevaux avec leurs remèdes faciles et expérimentez. Ouvrage très-utile à tous seigneurs, gentilshommes, escuyers, maréchaux, marchands de chevaux, laboureurs, cochers et tous others who ont des chevaux à gouverner*, printed in Vannes by Jacques de Heuqueville in 1694. Somewhat later, but equally close in theme and approach, is the work *L'art de panser et de guérir toutes les maladies des chevaux*, by Antonio de Arriques, edited by G. Jollain in 1740 (**Image I**). These three works include the type of recipes found in the described manuscript and also make use of the same exposition technique and method. Based on these similarities, there is no doubt that the manuscript's author drew from the field of veterinary medical literature.

- c) *The Clyster Period*: A large number of recipes for administering clysters stands out in this first part of the volume; they are arranged according to horse diseases, and set out in detail, including ingredients and proportions, and the method of preparation in each case. *Clystère* (a French word of Greek origin, κλυστήρ, meaning *syringe*) is the name given to an enema, a treatment based on salt water and a potion, generally made up of herbs or products from the food chain, administered to humans and animals, generally through the rectum, but also in the form of external washing. Clysters' preparation was the most common human and animal medicine practice in the 17th and 18th centuries. A metallic syringe, generally made of tin, was usually used for its administration, many of which have survived today. This recipe book contains a large number of clysters, presumably copied or extracted as a synthesis from printed books. Unfortunately, those books have not been identified yet. However, further investigation should help single them out, allowing us to draw new and valuable conclusions (**Images II-VI**).
- d) *Manuscript Culture and Printed Culture*: Various research groups have been studying European graphic culture in recent decades. An interesting chapter of these studies consists of the relationship between handwritten texts and printed texts. For a long time, it was held that printed texts replaced handwritten texts, the latter being earlier in chronological order. What

the comparative study of manuscripts and books in Modernity reveals is that on countless occasions manuscripts were copied from books. Moreover, sometimes the copies were not verbatim, but rather abstracts, which seems to be the case with this volume. It should also be remembered that access to published works was limited in peripheral areas, hence copying it by hand was often the only possibility of finding the required information. The second section of the volume, later analyzed, offers some clues regarding a certain rural area where the manuscript could have been used.

In short, the free and synthetic character of the author's approach to recording the recipes, added to the fact that very few works on equine veterinary medicine published in Modernity are currently available in PDF format online, have made it impossible to accurately determine the source text, though it is very likely to have been a printed one. A larger study conducted in relevant libraries that house books from the 17th and 18th centuries would, for sure, reveal both the mystery and the rich contribution of this historical document if examined systematically and academically.

In any case, halfway between magic and medicine, with practices of dubious effect presented in scientific language, this section of the volume constitutes a snapshot of rural veterinary medicine, and reveals the extent to which literate knowledge influenced French daily country life. Remarkable, on the other hand, is the scriptural work of the copyist or summarizer, since he (more likely a male) must have spent no less than three months of arduous work in gathering the recipes contained in this part of the volume.

Finally, the dating of this section can only be determined by identifying the source text(s). However, the physical characteristics, the calligraphy, the type of recipes, the method of exposure, the practical interest, the veterinary universe, etc., indicate that it was written between 1690 and 1750. Confirmation of such dates requires, as advised, further research, that is, going through the books that might have inspired the scribe author of this excellent summary of veterinary practice.

## **Additional Section** **[Farm Administration Issues]** **(pp. 173-180)**

On p. 173 a new section of this manuscript volume begins. It differs significantly from the preceding one as lists of expenses (mainly clothing), veterinary prescriptions and recipes, share a few disordered pages with miscellaneous notes on farm administration. On p. 175 there is a title that could possibly be interpreted as a signature: "Monsieur le prefet de la Charente Inférieure", and two dates, 1753 and 1760 (p. 177). These, however, are not sufficient to date the composition of the main body, since clearly all this section is a late addend; moreover, it could simply be a question of using clean paper in an already bound volume, or a booklet that was later attached to the main body, before binding.

Regarding the "prefet de la Charente Inférieure", it is clearly a regional government position, since the *Charente Inférieure* is the old name for the current Charente-Maritime County, in west



France, which borders westward with the Atlantic Ocean, southward with the county of Gironde, and northward with Vendée. It currently belongs to the Nouvelle-Aquitaine region, with the main city being La Rochelle.

As for the dates that we find in this minor section, they seem to coincide with the expected date of another annotation (p. 177) that describes an aromatic balm used in the Bohemian Campaign and prepared by the French Crown's doctors for the Regiment Colonel General of Dragoons. The Bohemian Campaign is a well-known belic episode that took place in 1757 in the framework of the war between the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Prussia, in which France was also involved, while the "Régiment Colonel-Général Dragoons" was a French cavalry regiment, created in 1668 and active until the revolutionary process in France started in 1789, within the framework of whose reforms it became the 5<sup>th</sup> Dragoons' Regiment (**Images VII-VIII**).

For these reasons, and also considering the appearance of the calligraphy and ink, it can be concluded that this second section was written between 1750 and 1770. The volume ends with the owner's signature, apparently from the end of the 18th century, completely crossed out (p.179).



This volume belonged to [Collection of Monsieur M.](#), a French collector who assembled an important library of scientific books, dismembered at an auction held at the Hôtel des Ventes de Royan, on October 5-6, 2022. The manuscript was then offered at auction under a very poor description, labelled as *Manuscrit sur les chevaux* (no. 560).

As a whole, the volume is an invaluable piece for the study of rural healing practices in France, the history of veterinary medicine, the development of graphic culture, etc. Its critical edition could well be the basic work for a doctoral thesis, or for the expansion of sources by research teams on the social history of hippiatrics, magic, quackery, veterinary and medicine. Without doubt, due to its rarity, its uniqueness, and its possible contribution to the history of science, this exceptional manuscript on Horse Veterinary is meant to become the new star of a university or private collection devoted to scientific subjects.

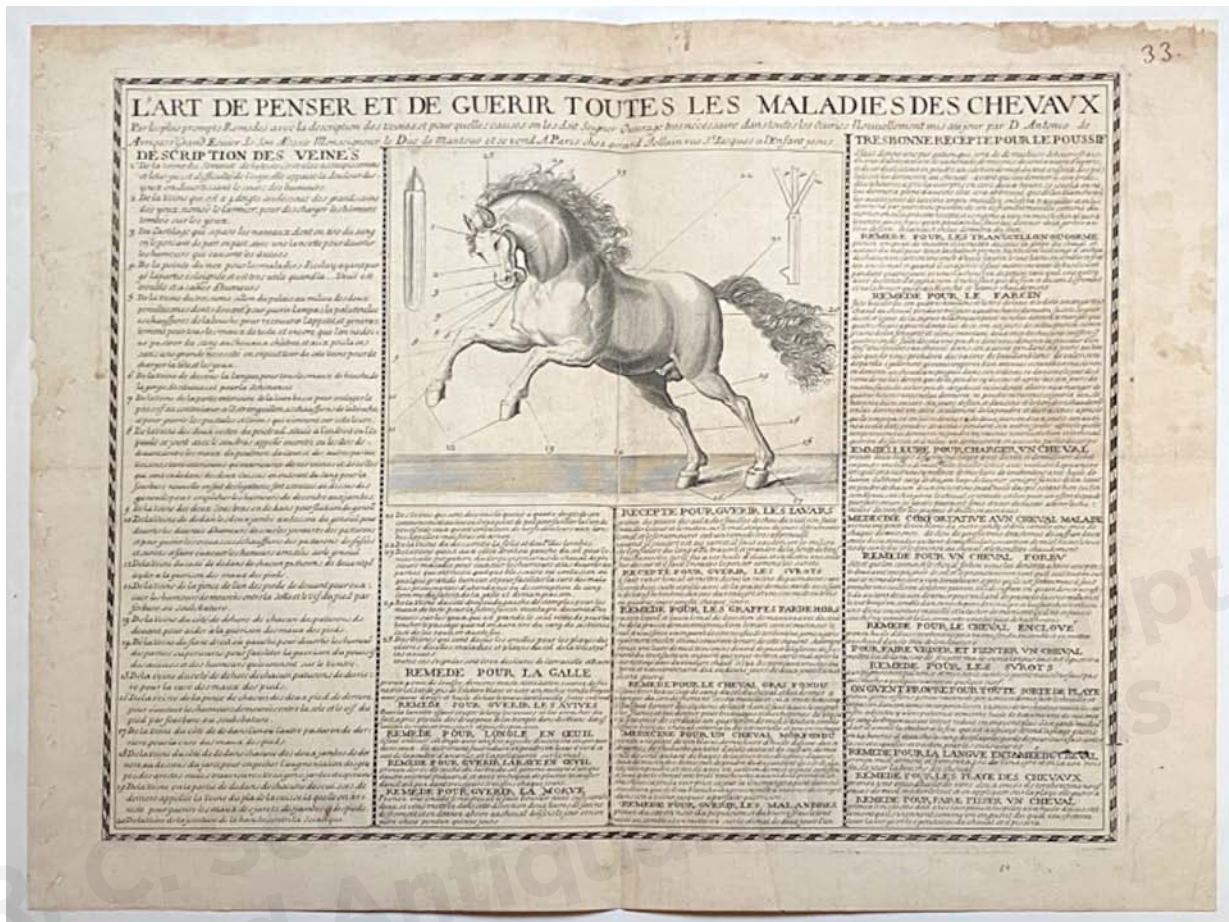


Image I

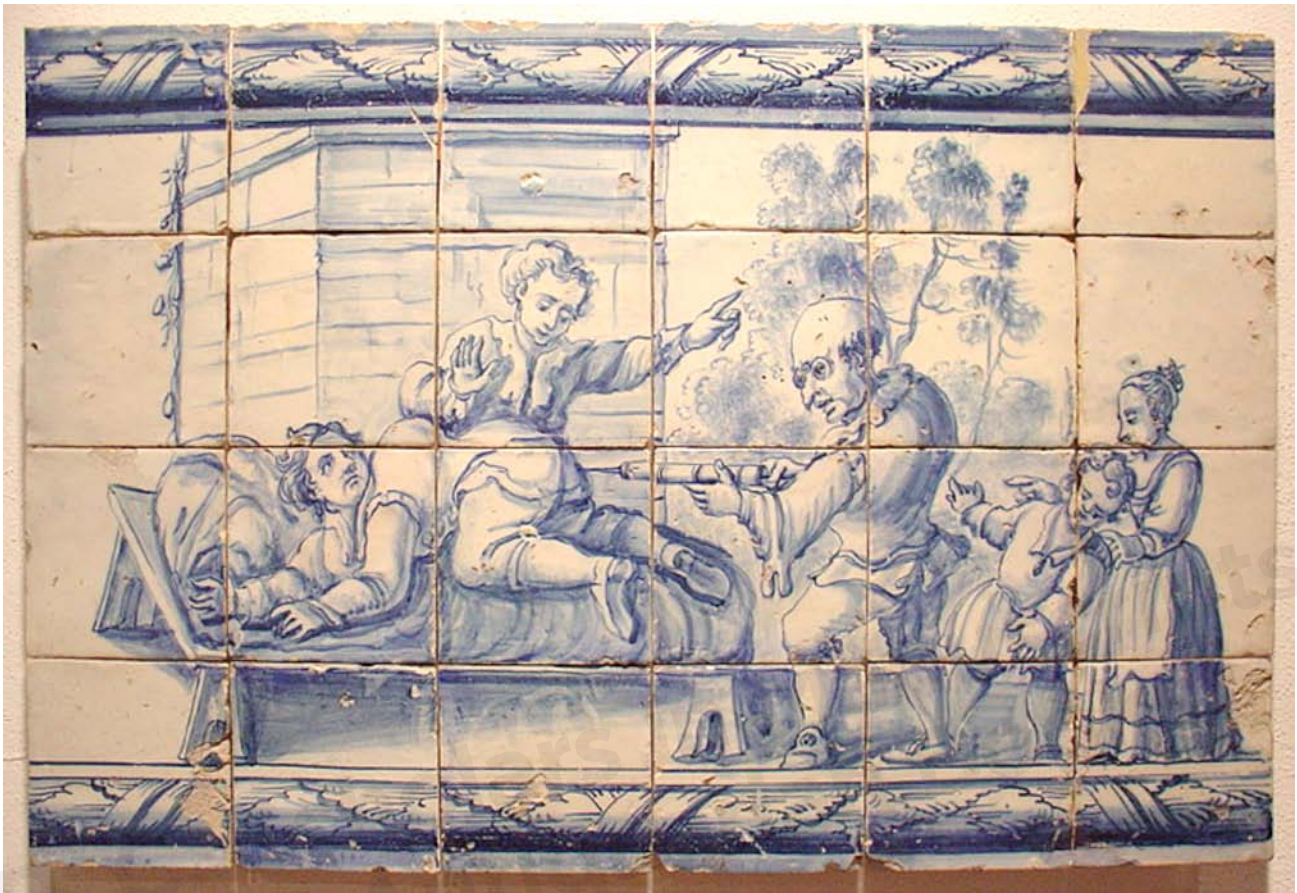
Affiche in-folio (46 x 60 cm), in four columns, illustrating a magnificent horse, taken from *L'art de panser & de guérir toutes les Maladies des Chevaux*, Paris, 1740. The poster describes 24 remedies for horse diseases.



Image II

Clyster application scene in the *Livro de la Menscalcia degli cavalli* Italian manuscript, early 15th century MS. M. 735, fol. 105r The Morgan Library and Museum (New York)





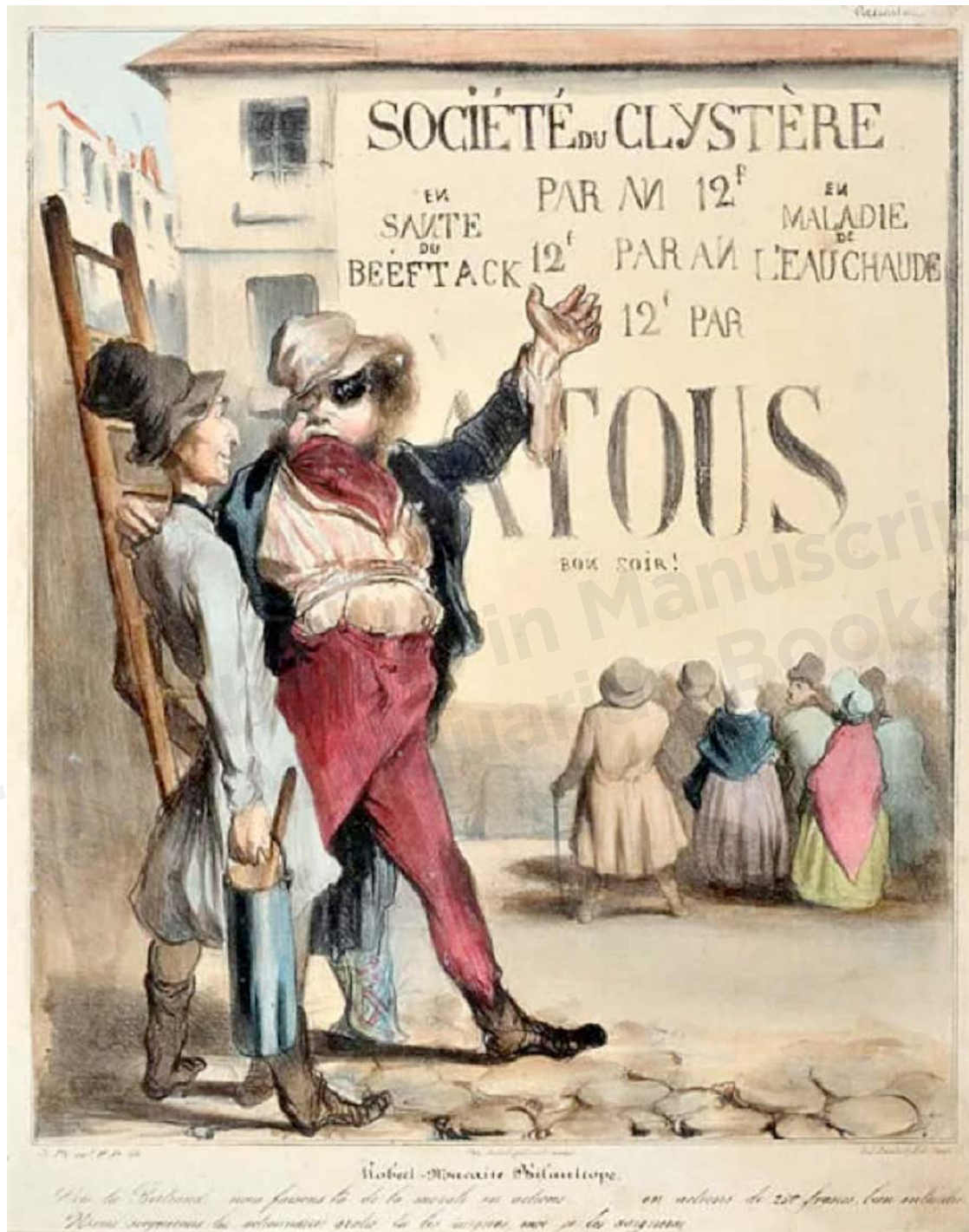
**Image III**

Application of a *clystère*, on an 18th century  
Portuguese mosaic  
Museu Nacional do Azulejo (Lisbon)



**Image IV**

Examples of 18th century clysters



**Image V**

Publicity portrait of Robert Macaire as Philanthropist, by Honoré Daumier (1808-1879).

Robert Macaire was a popular French healer.

The poster illustrates the offer of free clysters for an annual subscription of 12 francs.

Colored and gummed lithograph, ca. 1836-1838.

Collection of the Maison de Balzac, Paris

(Alamy Stock Photography)

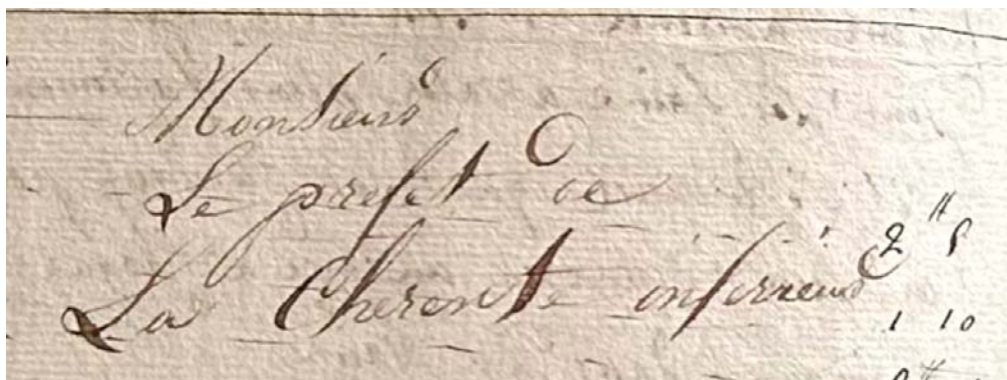




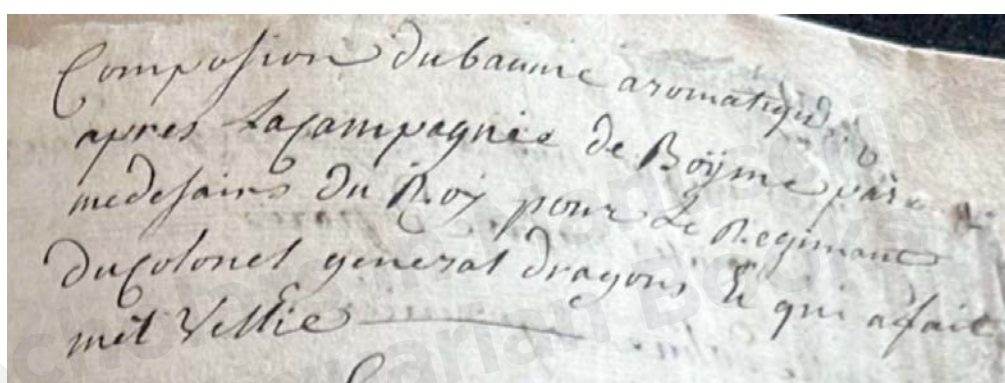
**Image VI**

“Le Curieux”, voyeurism scene during the application of a clyster, in an engraving by Pierre Malevre (1740-1803), based in an original drawing by Pierre-Antoine Baudouin (1723-1769).

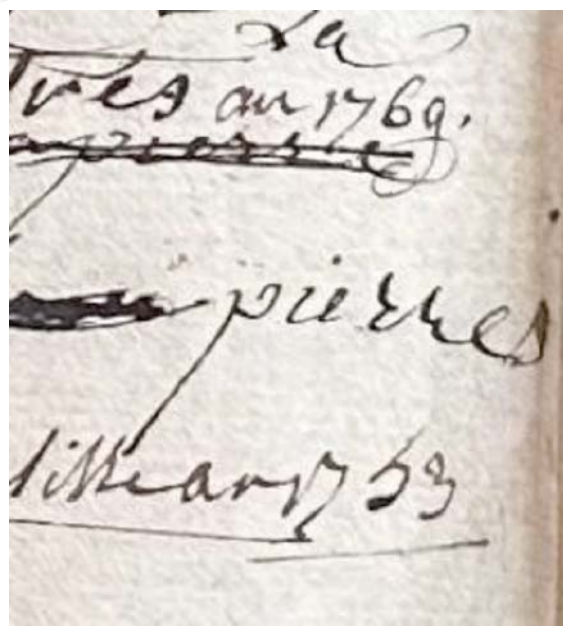
Widener Collection (Harvard)



Monsieur Le Prefet de  
la Charente Inferieure  
(p. 174)



Regiment du colonel  
general dragons (p. 174)



Years 1769 and 1753 (p. 176)

**Image VII**  
Ownership and Date Marks



**Image VIII**

Pennant of the Colonel-Général Dragoons Cavalry Regiment, created in 1668 and active until the beginning of the French revolutionary process