

THE
OBSERVATIONS
OF SIR RICHARD HAWKINS,
KNIGHT, in his VOYAGE
into the SOUTH SEA,
ANNO DOMINI,
1593.

Editor's Note: *These excerpts, taken with some spelling changes from The English Experience, Its Record in Early Printed Books Published in Facsimile (Number 49), Da Capo Press, New York, 1968, illustrate the commonality of experience with citrus fruits as preventive and curative of scurvy as early as the sixteenth century.*

SECT.XVL

Being betwixt three or foure degrees of the equinoctiall line, my company within a few days began to fall sicke, of a disease which sea-men are wont to call the scurvey.

The signes to know this disease in the beginning are divers: by the swelling of the gummes, by denting of the flesh of the leggs with a mans finger, the pit remayning without filling up in a good space. Others show it with their lasinesse: others complaine of the cricke of the backe, etc., all which are, for the most part, certaine tokens of infection.

The seething of the meate in salt water, helpeth to cause this infirmitie, which in long voyages can hardly be avoyded: but if it may be, it is to be shunned; for

the water of the sea to man's body is very unwholesome. The corruption of the victuals, and especially of the bread, is very pernicious; the vapours and ayre of the sea also is nothing profitable, especially in these hot countries, where are many calmes.

The best prevention for this disease (in my judgement) is to keepe cleane the shippe; to besprinkle her ordinarily with vineger, or to burne tarre, and some sweet savours; to feed upon as few salt meats in the hot country as may be; and especially to shunne all kindes of salt fish, and to reserve them for the cold climates; and not to dresse any meate with salt water, nor to suffer the companie to wash their shirts nor cloathes in it, nor to sleepe in their cloathes when they are wett

The second antidote is, to keepe the companie occupied in some bodily exercise of worke, of agilitie, of pastimes, of dauncing, of use of armes; these helpeth much to banish this infirmitie. Thirdly, in the morning, at discharge of the watch, to give every man a bit of bread, and a draught of drinke, either beere or wine mingled with water, that the pores of the bodie may be full, when the vapours of the sea ascend up.

That which I have seene most fruitfull for this sicknesse, is sower oranges and lemmons, and a water which amongst others (for my particular provision) I carryed to the sea, called Dr. Stevens his water, of which, for that his vertue was not then well knowne unto me, I carryed but little, and it tooke end quickly, but gave health to those that used it

The oyle of vitry is beneficiall for this disease; taking two drops of it, and mingled in a draught of water, with a little sugar. It taketh away the thirst, and helpeth to dense and comfort the stomache, But the principall of all, is the ayre of the land; for the sea is naturall for fishes, and the land for men. And the oftener a man can have his people to land, not hindering his voyage, the better it is.

I wish that some learned man would write of it, for it is the plague of the sea, and the spoyle of mariners. Doubtlesse, it would be a meritorious worke with God and man, and most beneficiall for our countrie; for in twentie yeares, since that I have used the sea, I dare take upon me to give accompt of ten thousand men consumed with this disease.

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Nutrition Reviews

November 1986

Number 11

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