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### **Przepisy na leki w „Sekretach Isabelli Cortese” (Wenecja, 1561)**

### **Recipes for medicines in The Secrets of Isabella Cortese (Venice, 1561)**

#### SUMMARY

Recipes for the medications comprised in the “Secrets of Isabella Cortese” (Venice, 1561) is a set of recipes for medications, cosmetics, “alchemic” formulas (e.g. etching the silver with nitric acid), as well as all sorts of tips related to various arts and crafts (i.e. how to make a green ink, how to have the page edges gold-plated in the books, how to dye animal hides, etc.). Books of this type actually attested to one of the 16<sup>th</sup> c. publishing fads, especially in Italy, where the consummate skills of Venetian publishers simply outclassed those of their peers from other cities across the country.

Nothing much is known about Isabella Cortese as a person, though. Considering that the word SECRETO just happens to be an anagram of the word CORTESE, it is quite likely that Isabella Cortese is simply a nickname. It might well be that someone from Venetian high society did not really want his aristocratic name to be in any way associated with this essentially democratic piece of work. The medications described in the “Secrets” comprise, *inter alia*, a scorpion oil against the plague, St. John’s wort as the treatment for the same disease, a glue to promote faster healing of the wounds, an omelette laced with a turnip juice for an ailing spleen, pills for the French disease (syphilis), etc.

Most of those medications originate in the homemade variety, while others are more “learned”, i.e. the ones that were supposed to be bought in a pharmacy (e.g. *Unguentum apostolorum*), and the so-called empirical drugs. The properties of medicinal components (ingredients) which are specifically referred to in the “Secrets of Isabella Cortese”, had been characterized in the *Herbarium* by Marcin Siennik (Krakow 1568), because the nature of all medical matter addressed there is identical with the one in the 16<sup>th</sup> c. “Secrets”.

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