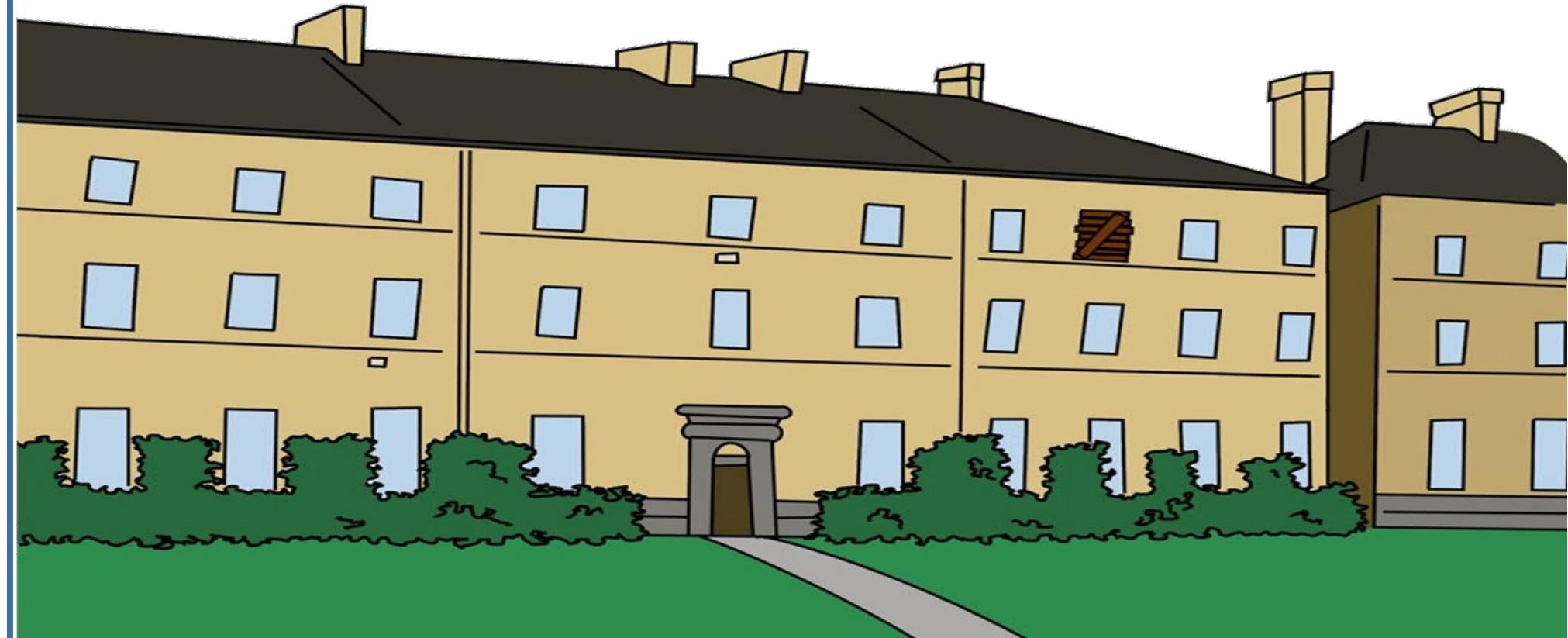


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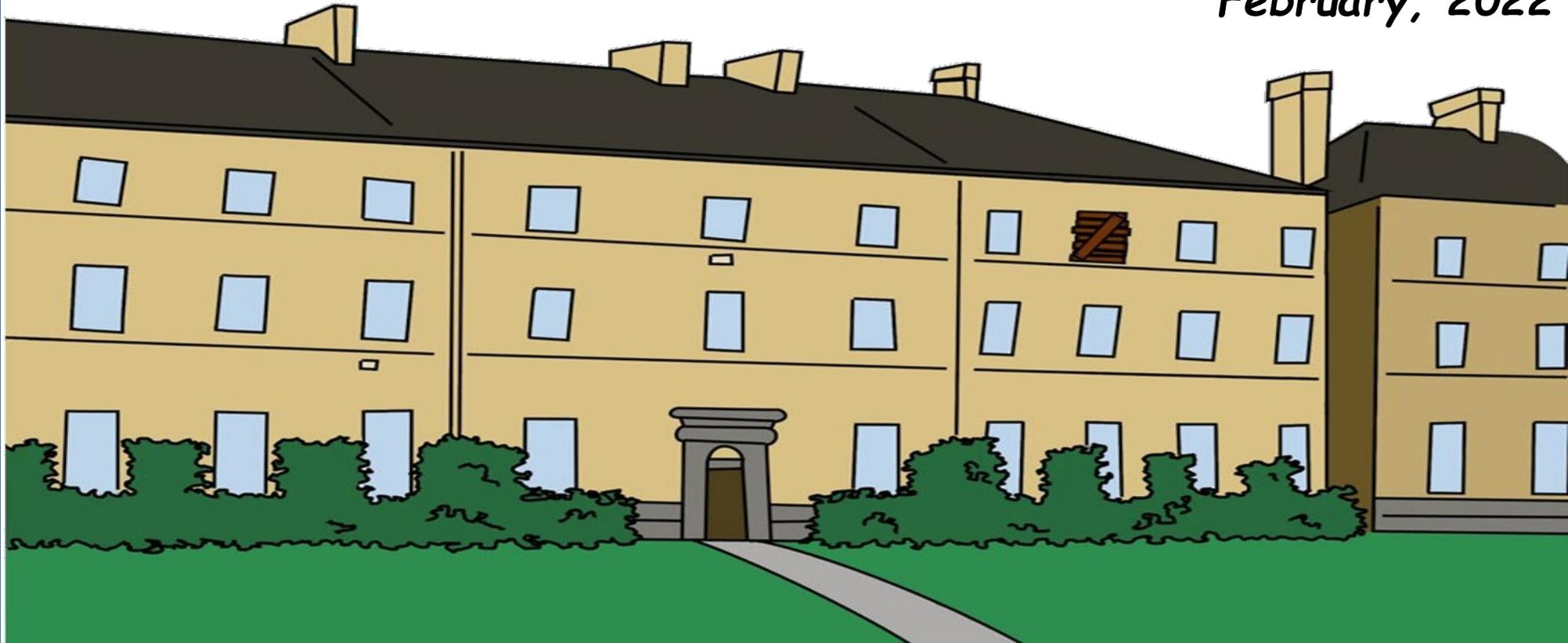
Presents

"The Life and Times in Victorian London"



Baker Street Elementary

*The Life and Times in Victorian London
068 -- For Medicinal Purposes -- The Use of Brandy --
February, 2022*





Welcome to topic # 068... today we will be looking at the use of brandy as a medicinal treatment in the Sherlock Holmes stories.

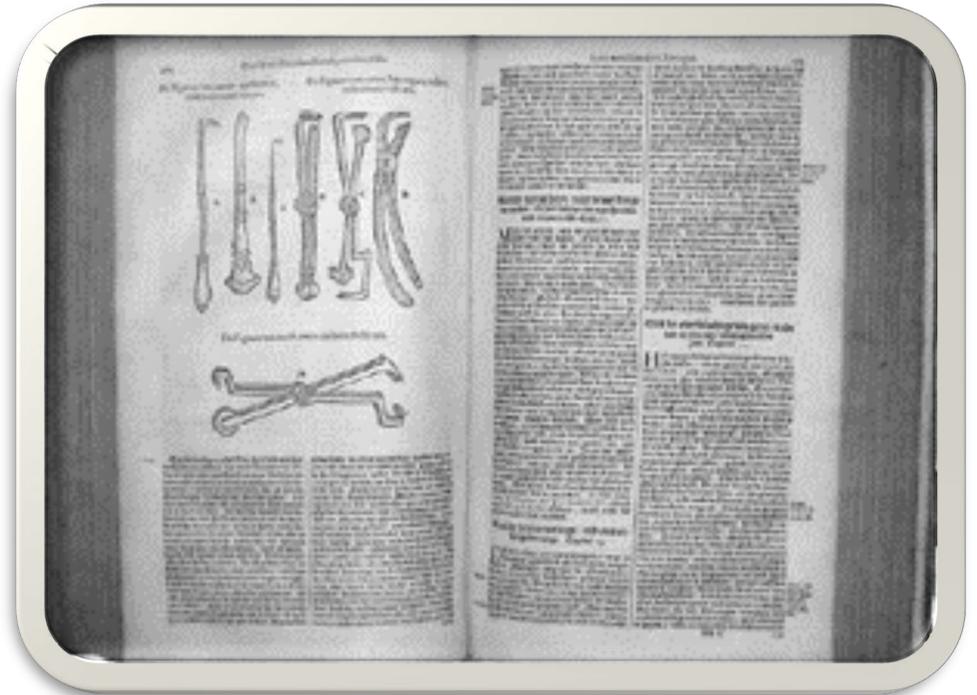




In twelve of the Sherlock Holmes mysteries, someone who experienced a shock or injury was given brandy to "bring color to their cheeks."

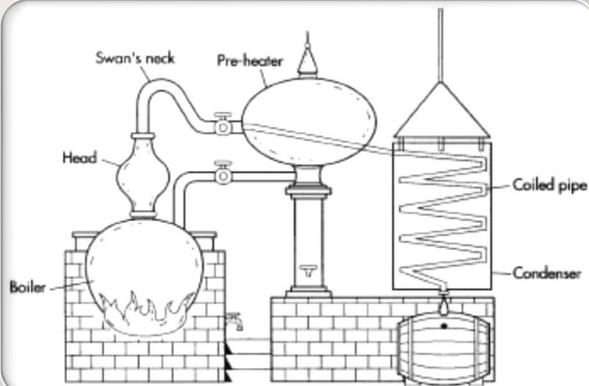


*By the reign of Queen Victoria, the use of medicinal
brandy was well established, having first appeared in
15th century medical texts as the treatment for
everything from emotional problems to deafness.*



Brandy was created by distilling wine or fermented fruit mash and came from the Dutch word brandewijn ("burnt wine"), which referred to the use of heat in the distillation process.

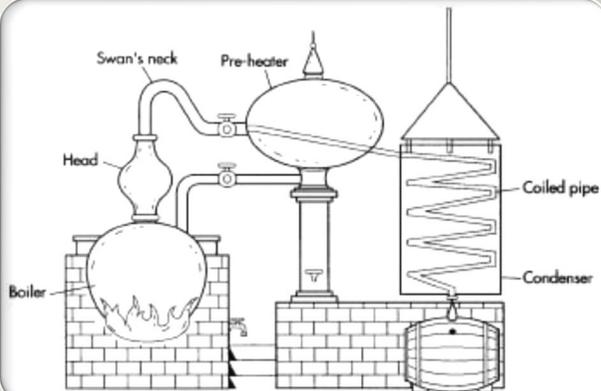




First practiced as a home industry at least as early as the 1100s, physicians and apothecaries had assumed the process by the late 1400s.

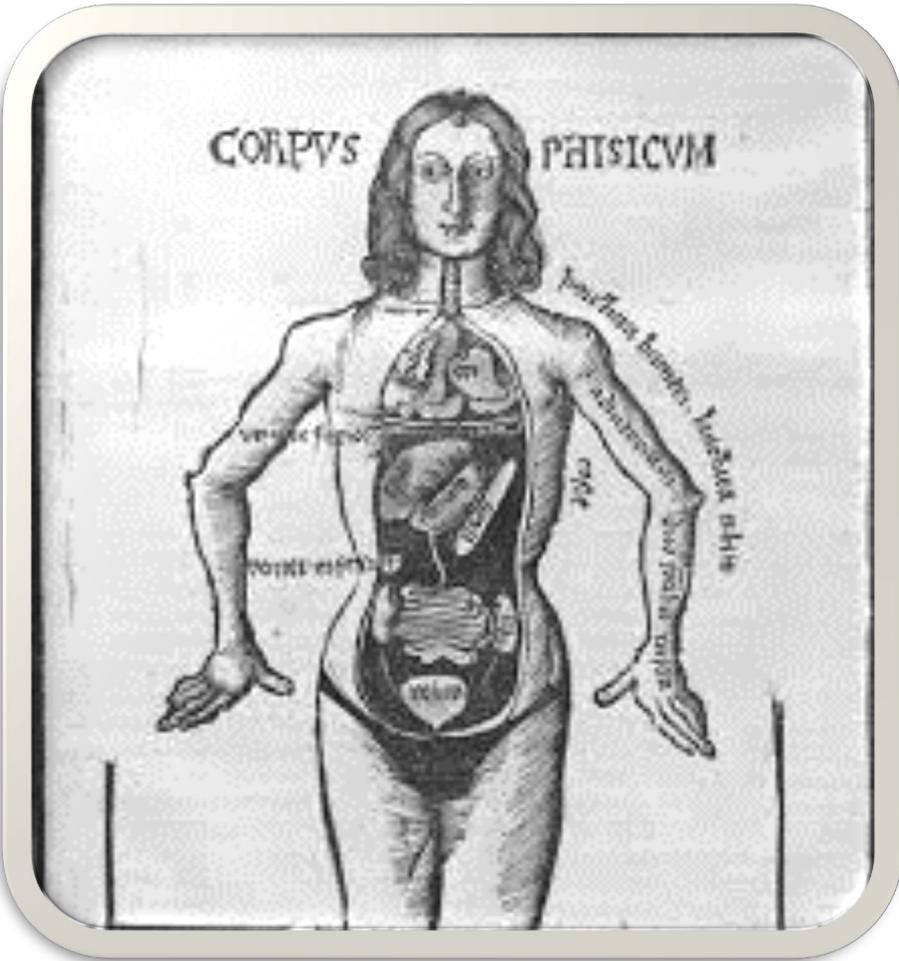


The use of heat to distill the product proved basic to Medieval beliefs related to the four elements (earth, water, air, and fire).



Hieronymus Brunschwig described in his books on distilling that the final product transcended the base elements to create a fifth element that was "the water of life."

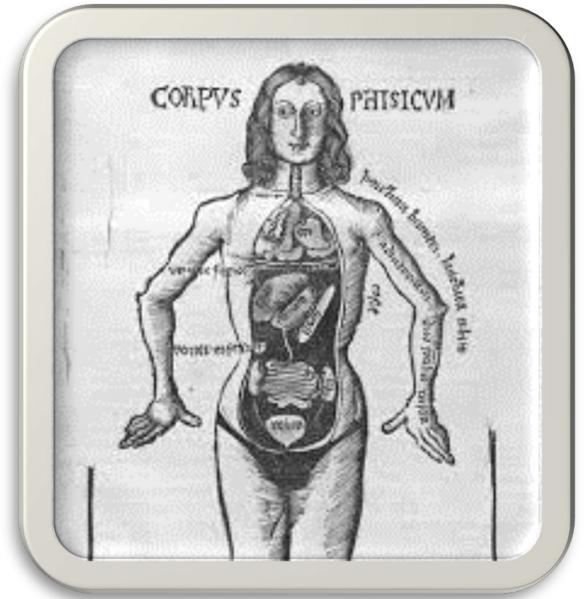




Brandy was considered to provide heat to the body and useful in the treatment of a number of ailments.



*Excessive use in the elderly,
however, could lead to
spontaneous combustion and was
not recommended.*



By the 1800s, brandy was accepted by the medical profession as both a stimulant and a nutrient.

Health Benefits Of Brandy

- Boosts immune system
- Relieves respiratory issues
- Helps in the treatment of cancer
- Helps in weight management
- Improves heart health
- Has anti-aging properties
- Cardiovascular benefits
- Helps in inducing sleep



While other alcohols (such as whiskey, rum, or gin) could replace it, physicians considered brandy the most pure of all distilled spirits.



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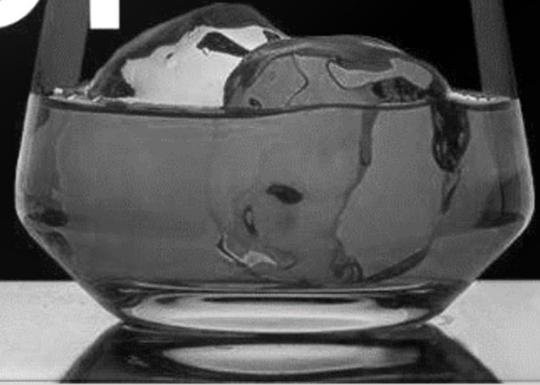


*Physicians would prescribe
brandy (or other liquors)
with water as a stimulant.*



BRANDY

- 🍷 Improves heart health
- 🍷 Slows down ageing
- 🍷 Reduces the risk of cancer
- 🍷 Soothes colds and coughs
- 🍷 Boosts immunity



BRANDY

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- Slows down ageing
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- Boosts immunity



Effects were described as bringing color to the face and increasing the heart rate and mental acuity.



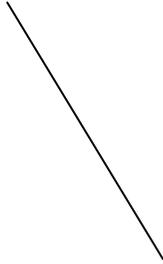


Greater quantities, however, were observed to serve as an anesthetic and decrease motor function.





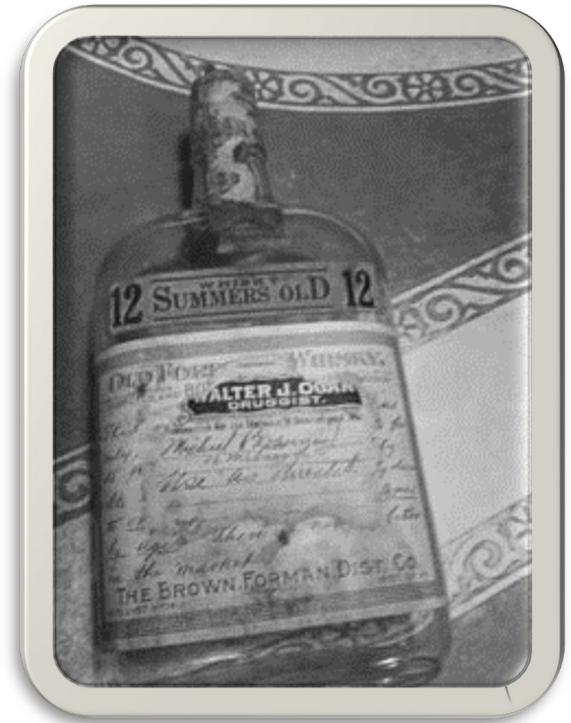
One doctor described prescribing brandy as a restorative, a sedative, and "soother of nerves."



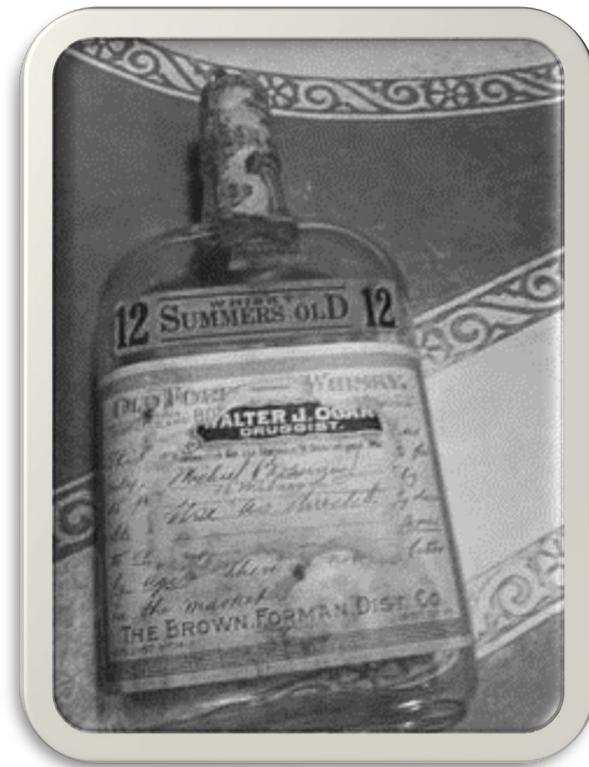
Alcohol, particularly brandy, was also recommended as a part of a patient's diet for those suffering from a variety of ailments, including cancer, diabetes, and other fevers (illnesses).



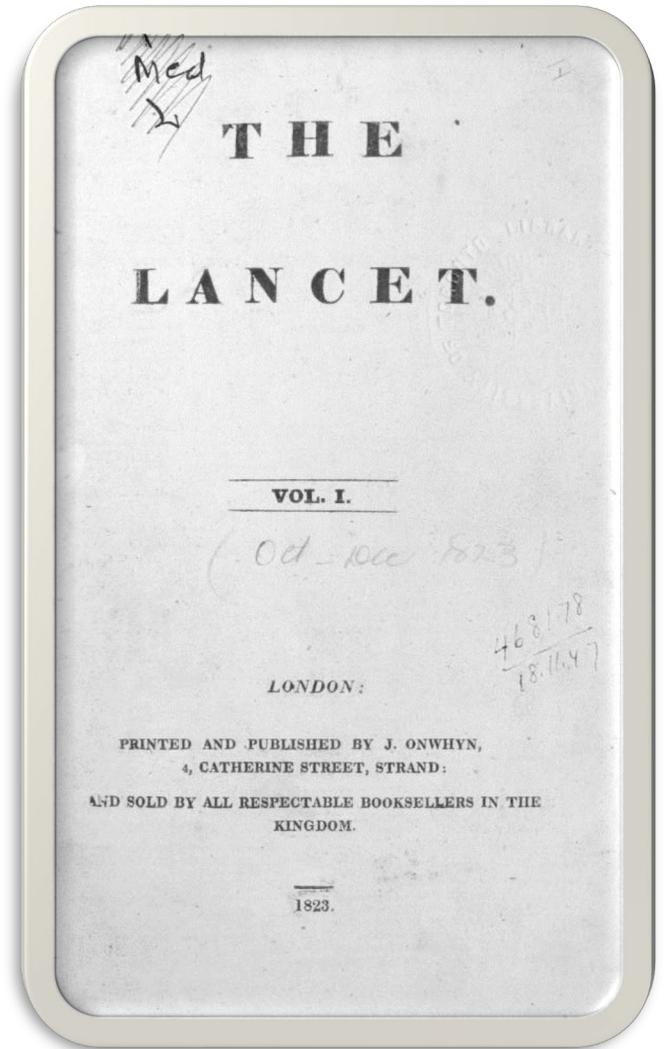
Because it was absorbed in the stomach, it required no digestion, and had a higher caloric value than some other foods.



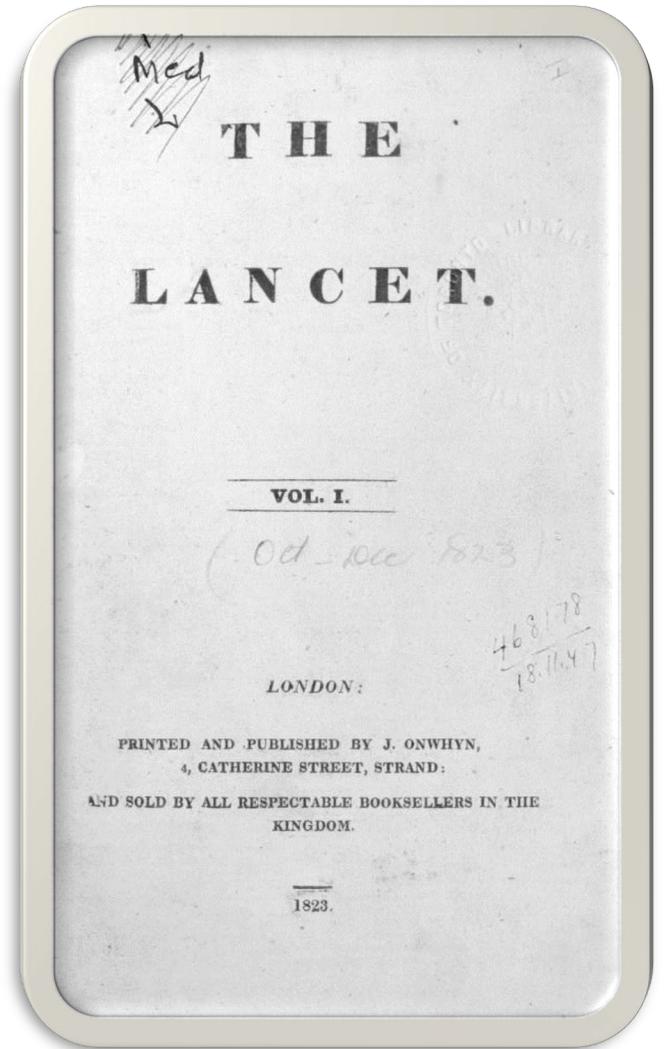
*For those convalescing,
alcohol was recommended as
part of the medical comforts
provided to the patient.*



Thus, pharmacists dispensed brandy as part of their formulary, and it was even labeled as such.



The British medical journal The Lancet carried advertisements for medicinal brandy directed at physicians and pharmacists as early as 1845.



At the same time, brandy and other spirits were recognized as leading to alcoholism, and the temperance movement questioned the need for its use in the treatment of diseases.





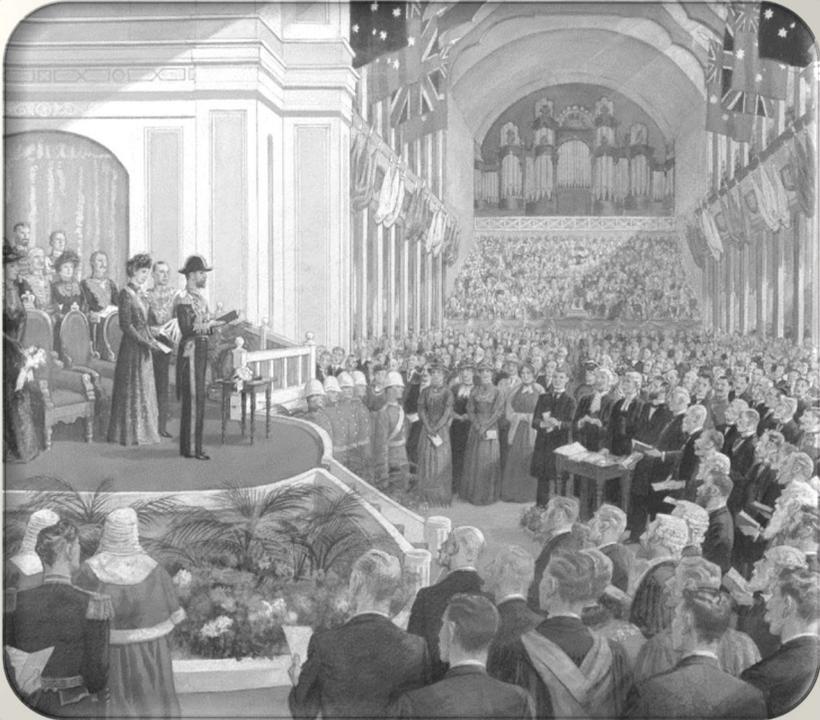
The London Temperance Hospital was recorded as having dispensed it only once in ten years of operation.



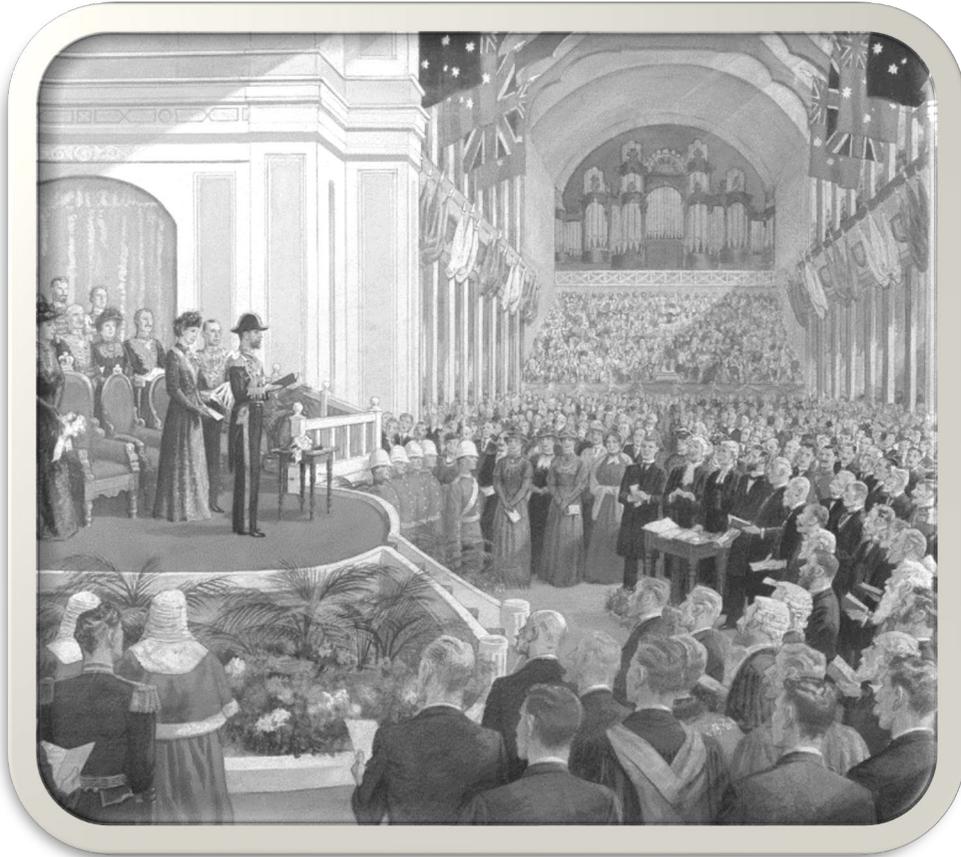
Thus, as lawmakers sought to control the sale of alcohol, they had to consider its recognized use in the medical community.



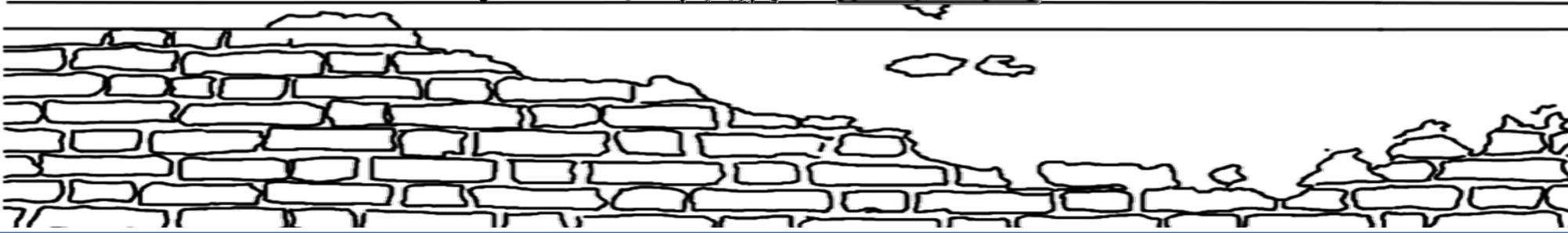
For example, the Australian Parliament debated the need to exclude pharmacies from a prohibition of alcohol sales on Sunday...



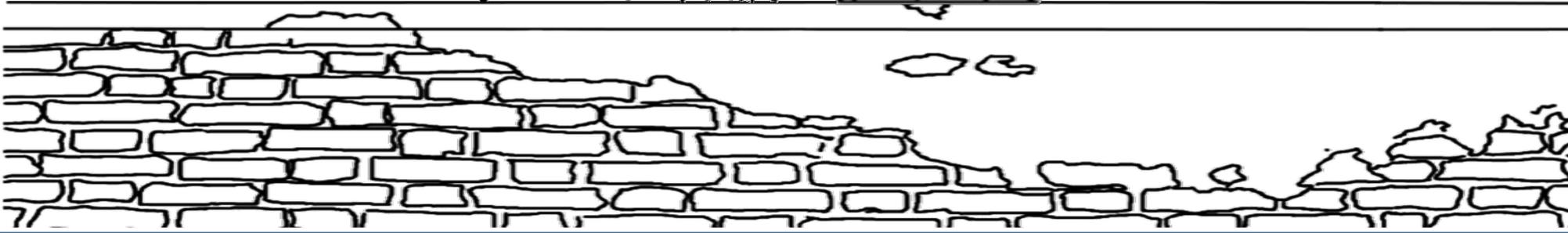
...noting that some would be tempted to dispense the liquor to those who were unable to purchase it elsewhere.



Perhaps the most controversial use of medicinal brandy and other spirits occurred in the U.S. during Prohibition.



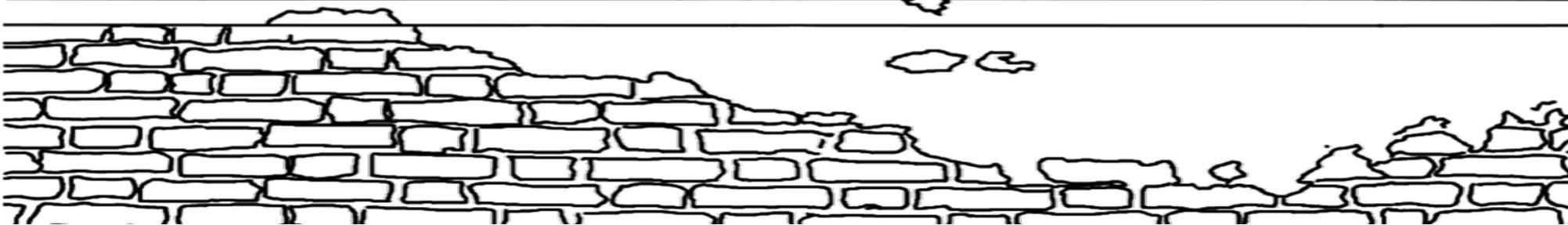
Following the passage of the Volstead Act in 1920 to its repeal in 1933, only physicians with special prescription pads...

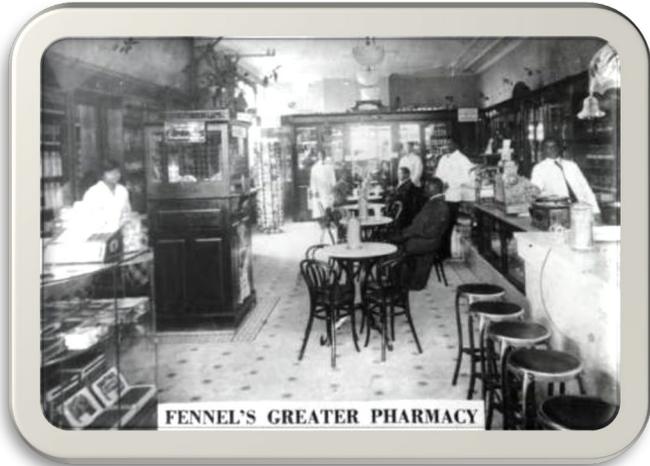


*...provided by the government
could write non-refillable
orders for one pint of
medicinal alcohol.*



*For the first time in the country's history,
the medical community actively opposed
governmental regulation of their ability to
prescribe a widely accepted treatment...*





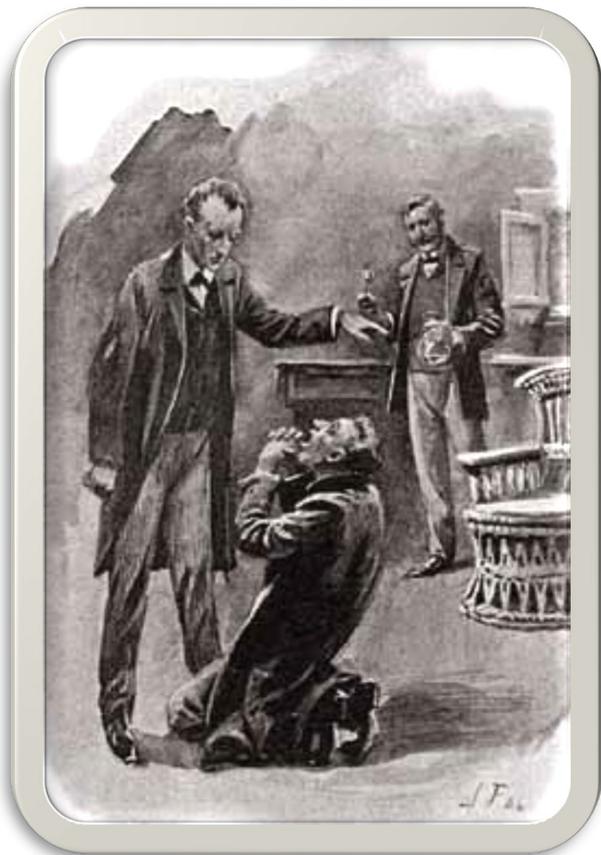
...and took the federal government to court to seek relief from its encroachment on their ability to treat patients.



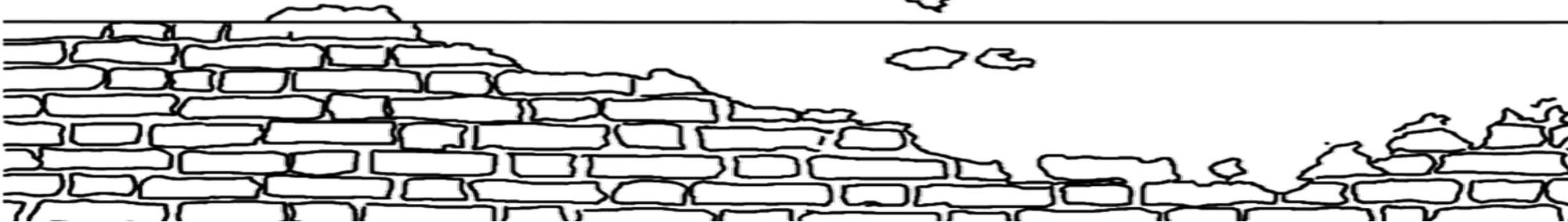
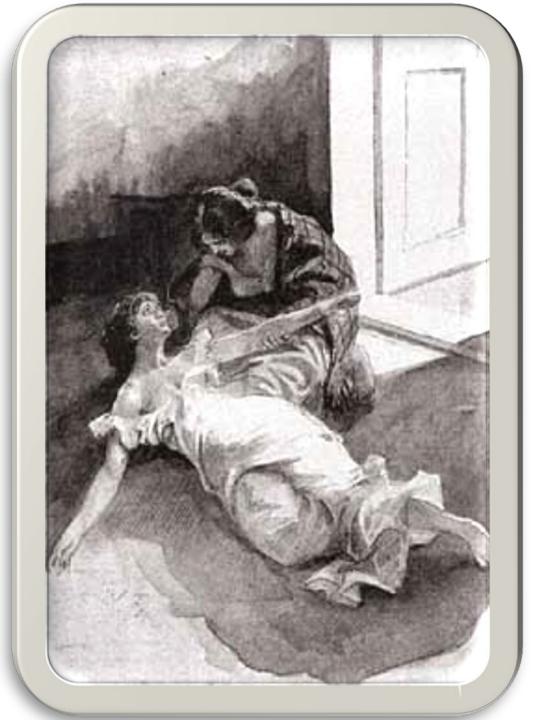
This had a lasting effect by creating an adversarial relationship long after the repeal of the 20th amendment.



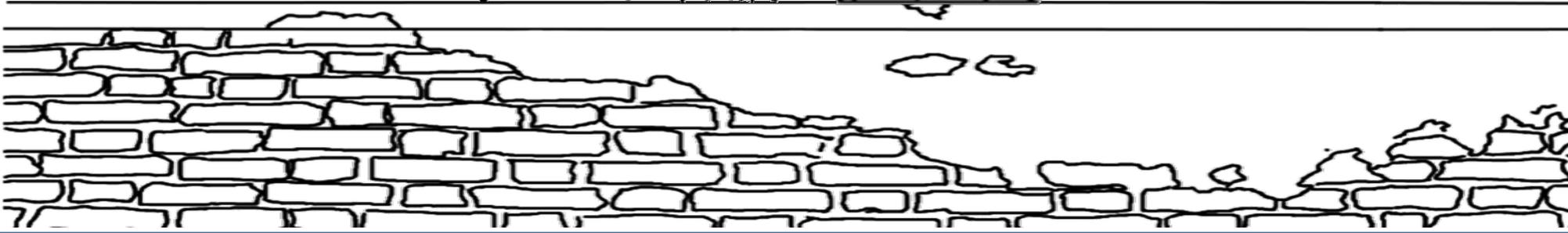
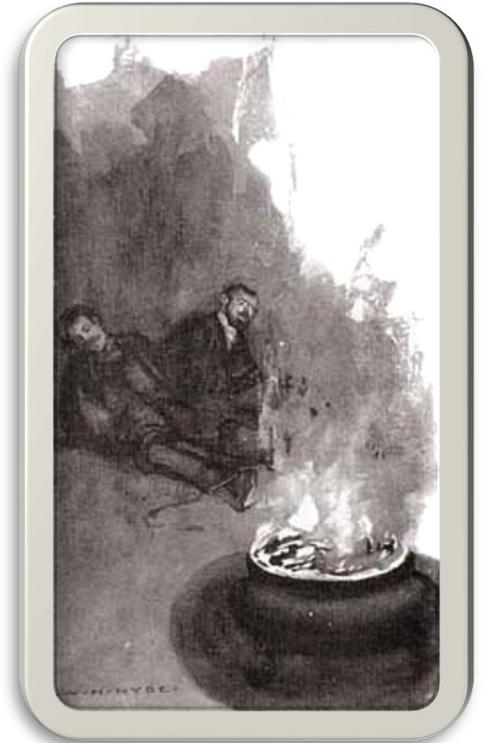
With the exception of one case where Watson had to run to a pub to fetch some brandy, in all the other instances, the medicine appeared in a flask, a doctor's bag, or a nearby tantalus.



And with the exception of Julia Stoner's bite from a swamp adder, a few sips or a dash of it in water or tea brought the affected person back from the brink.



*Apparently, even
brandy had its
limitations.*



*So we have completed
topic # 068 in our
series...*

*Yes, but we'll be
back with another
topic soon...*



References for this topic:

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- 2) <https://www.britannica.com/topic/brandy>
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- 4) Samuel Wilks, "An Introduction to a Discussion on the Effects of Alcohol," *The British Medical Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 1600 (Aug. 29, 1891), page 464
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- 6) Henry Guly, "Medicinal Brandy," *Resuscitation*. 2011 Jul; 82(7-2): 951-954.
- 7) J. James Ridge, "The treatment of disease without alcohol," *British Medical Journal*. 1883;2, page 1158.
- 8) *Parliamentary Debates*: 1885, Melbourne: John Ferrers, 1885, page 908.
- 9) <https://melnickmedicalmuseum.com/2010/04/07/medicinal-alcohol-and-prohibition/>



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"The Life and Times in Victorian London"

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STEVE MASON

