

## Glossary of terms used in Nicholas Feild's Bill

A Google search will find most things! A very useful source of information can be found at <http://www.cullenproject.ac.uk/> - The Consultation Letters of Dr William Cullen (1710-1790) at the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh

### **Anodyne Draught/Drops**

A medicine taken to relieve pain

*Take of liquid laudanum, twenty-five drops; simple cinnamon-water, an ounce; common syrup, two drachms. Mix them. In excessive pain, where bleeding is not necessary, and in great restlessness, this composing draught may be taken and repeated occasionally.*

*William Buchan*

*Domestic Medicine 2nd edition 1785*

**Cerate:** "A kind of stiff ointment composed of wax together with lard or oil and other ingredients. Includes 'ceratum album'." (The Cullen Project)

**Julep** is mostly known now as 'mint julep', a bourbon-based drink from the Southern States of the US. According to Wikipedia "a book by John Davis published in London in 1803, ... described [it] as 'a dram of spirituous liquor that has mint steeped in it, taken by Virginians of a morning.'" The same entry also quotes: "The mint julep was originally prescribed and appears in literature as early as 1784 [for] 'sickness at the stomach, with frequent retching, and, at times, a difficulty of swallowing. I then prescribed her an emetic, some opening powders, and a mint julep.'" (*Medical communications: Volume 1* - Page 242 by Society for Promoting Medical Knowledge, 1784). Nicholas Field's bill pre-dates that by nearly 20 years! The Shorter OED says: "A sweet drink especially as a vehicle for medicine; a medicated drink used as a demulcent [to relieve physical irritation] or mild stimulant" Also on Wiktionary "A pleasant-tasting liquid medicine in which other nauseous medicines are taken"

**Myrrh:** "It is also used as a stimulant and to increase menstrual flow. Myrrh is applied directly to the mouth for soreness and swelling, inflamed gums

(gingivitis), loose teeth, canker sores, bad breath, and chapped lips. It is also used topically for haemorrhoids, bedsores, wounds, abrasions, and boils."

"**Rhubarb** has a long history of herbal usage. The primary result of rhubarb root as an herbal medicine is a positive and balancing effect upon the digestive system. ...The root is used as an anticholesterolemic, antiseptic, antispasmodic, antitumor, aperient, astringent, cholagogue, demulcent, diuretic, laxative, purgative, stomachic and tonic. Rhubarb roots contain anthraquinones which have a purgative effect, and the tannins and bitters have an effect that is opposite that of an astringent.

When taken internally in small doses, rhubarb acts as an astringent tonic to the digestive system, when taken larger doses rhubarb acts as a very mild laxative. The root can be taken internally for the treatment of chronic constipation, diarrhoea, liver and gall bladder complaints, haemorrhoids, menstrual problems and skin eruptions due to an accumulation of toxins. ...Used externally, rhubarb root can be used in the treatment of burns.

People have further claimed that Rhubarb enhances the appetite when it is taken before meals in small amounts, that it also promotes blood circulation and relieves pain in cases of injury or inflammation, inhibits intestinal infections. and can also reduce autoimmune reactions."

(from <http://www.rhubarbinfo.com/medicinal>, accessed 6.10.19)

**Venice Treacle** (treacle) is the name given by English apothecaries to **theriac**, "the most expensive of medicaments" according to the entry in Wikipedia. *Theriaca andromachi* contained 64 ingredients which were pulverized and reduced to an electuary with honey and used as an antidote to poison.

"According to legend, the history of theriac begins with King Mithridates VI of Pontus who experimented with poisons and antidotes on his prisoners. His numerous toxicity experiments eventually led him to declare that he had discovered an antidote for every venomous reptile and poisonous substance. He mixed all the effective antidotes into a single one, mithridatium or mithridate. **Mithridate** contained opium, myrrh, saffron, ginger, cinnamon and castor, along with some forty other ingredients. When the Romans defeated him, his medical notes fell into their hands and Roman medici began to use them. Emperor Nero's physician Andromachus improved upon mithridatum by

bringing the total number of ingredients to sixty four, including viper's flesh, which proved the most constant ingredient. Greek physician Galen devoted a whole book Theriaké to theriac. One of his patients, Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius, took it on a regular basis. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theriac> accessed 6.10.19)

**Tincture of Castor and Sal Volatile:** According to “Domestic medicine or a treatise on the prevention and cure of diseases” by William Buchan (1784) this is used in the treatment of palsy (paralysis with involuntary tremors) “sal volatile oleosum, compound spirits of lavender and tincture of castor each half an ounce and mix these together and take forty or fifty drops in a glass of wine three or four times a day...” (p.478)

**Niter drops:** Niter or nitre is otherwise more generally known as saltpetre or potassium nitrate. “Nitrates have been known since prehistoric times and in the Middle Ages natural deposits were commercially exploited. The Chinese invented gunpowder around CE 800 and, with its appearance in Europe during the thirteenth century, potassium nitrate became strategically important. Demand increased further with the Agricultural Revolution of the nineteenth century and the use of nitrates as fertilizers. Natural sources were eventually supplemented by synthetically produced nitrate at the beginning of the last century.” (Therapeutic Uses of Inorganic Nitrite and Nitrate: From the Past to the Future, Anthony R. Butler, Ph.D. and Martin Feelisch, Ph.D.) Niter was used in the treatment of angina – “One of the oldest accounts of the use of niter in Chinese medicine is a treatment of what appears to be angina in an eighth century Chinese manuscript ...The patient is instructed to take niter, hold it under the tongue for a time and then swallow the saliva. The significance of the instructions is that under the tongue, even in a healthy mouth, there are nitrate-reducing bacteria that convert some of the nitrate into nitrite. So, if the patient follows the physician’s instructions fully, he or she will be taking in nitrite known to be a treatment for the alleviation of anginal pain.”

“[In a] book by Challoner, printed in London in 1584 and entitled ‘A short discourse of the most rare and excellent vertue of nitre’, ... [he] is concerned mainly with the value of niter in treating various dermatological conditions (‘diseases of the skinne’), including ‘tawnie steynings, freckles, duskness and

flegmatike evaporations'. It will, he claims, 'restore the skinne and complexion to the native bewtie'."

Another use is as a diuretic – "Nitrates have been used as diuretics for centuries. One of the first descriptions of the medical use of potassium nitrate for the treatment of dropsy (edema) is found in Thomas Willis' 'Pharmaceutice Rationalis' of 1674. While it was long known that relatively large amounts (grams) were required to achieve effective diuresis, the dose-response relationship was first established in systematic 'homeopathic provings' in 1825.

Researched by Mary Fielding

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