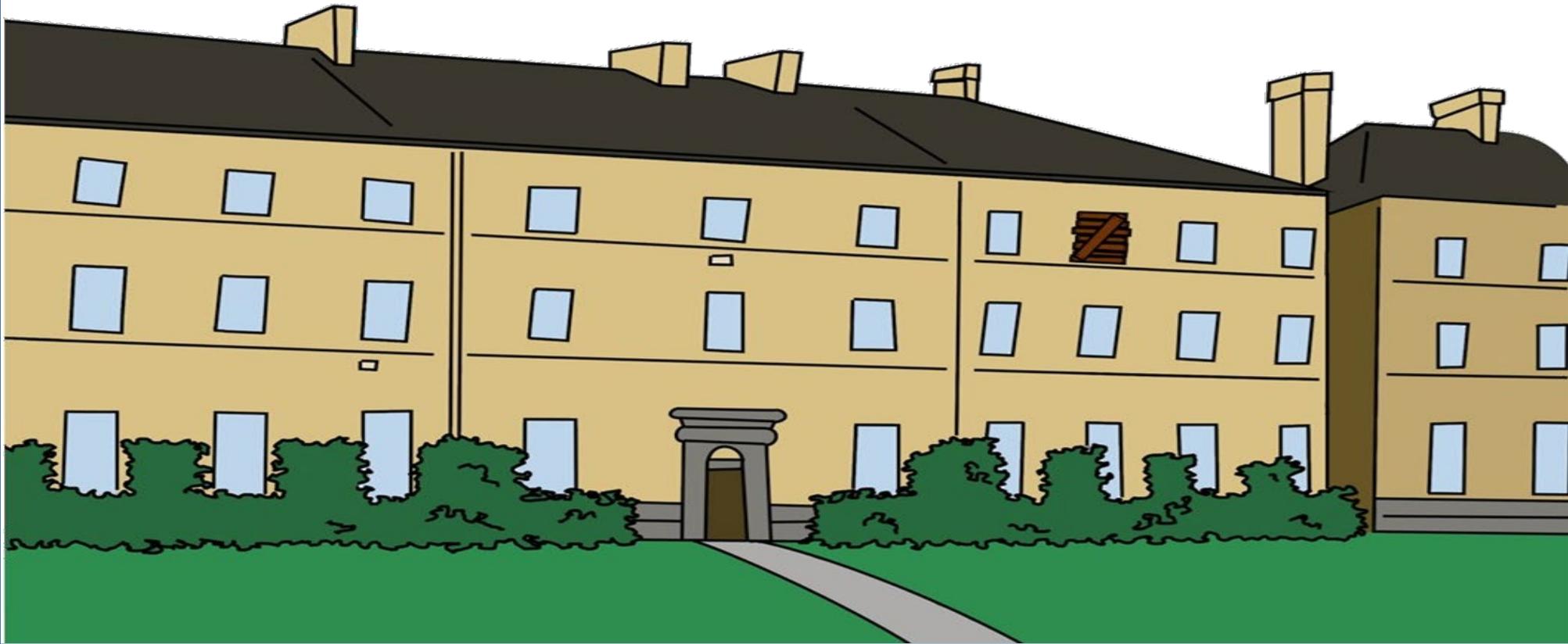


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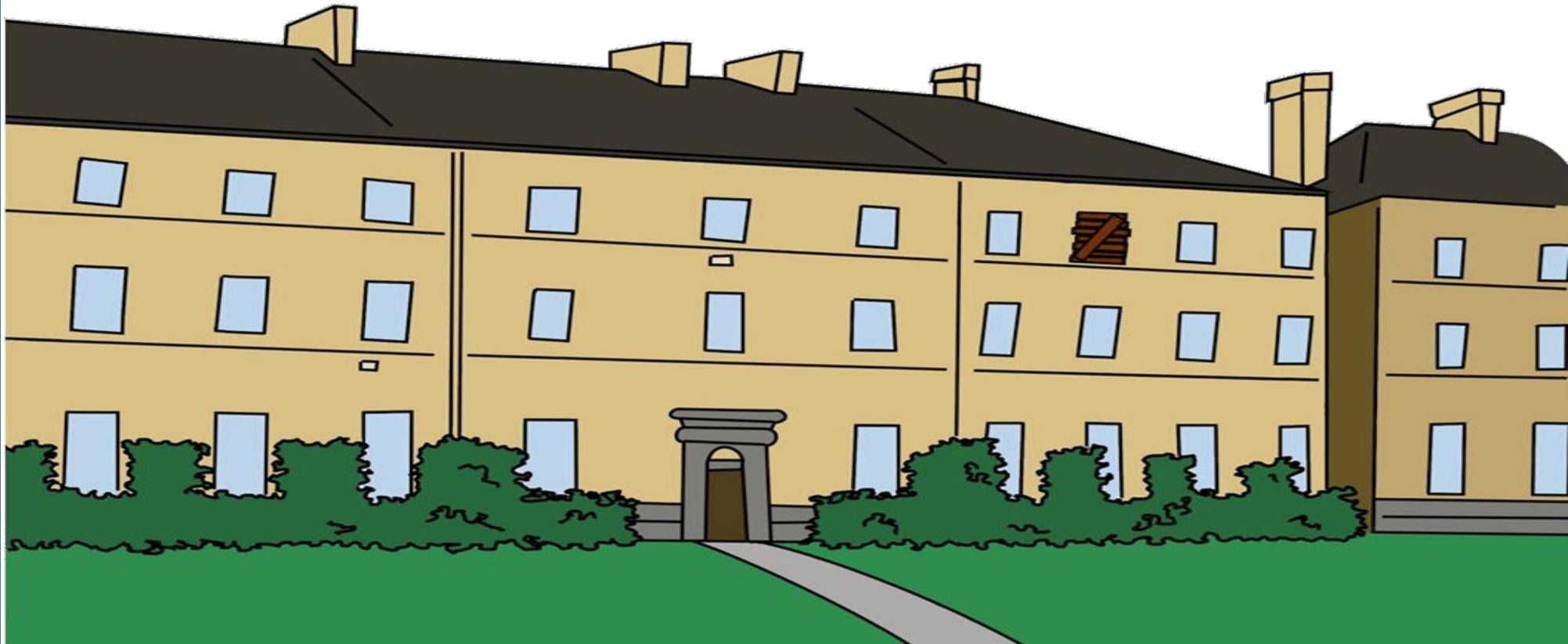
Presents

"The Life and Times in Victorian London"



Baker Street Elementary

The Life and Times in Victorian London
023 - A True Knock-Out - January, 2022



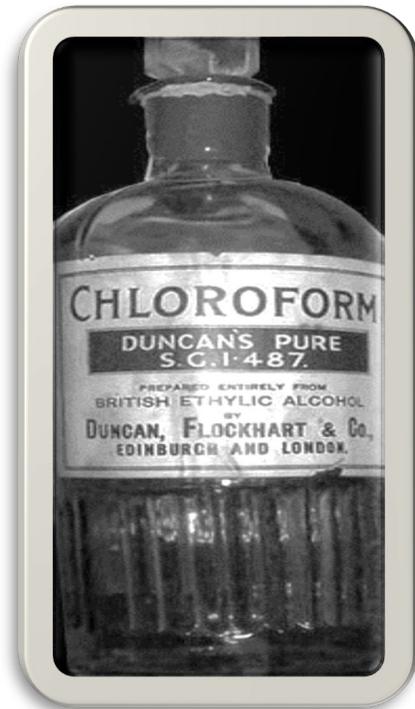


Welcome to topic # 023... Today, Master Gregson and I will look at the use of chloroform in crimes of the Sherlockian stories.





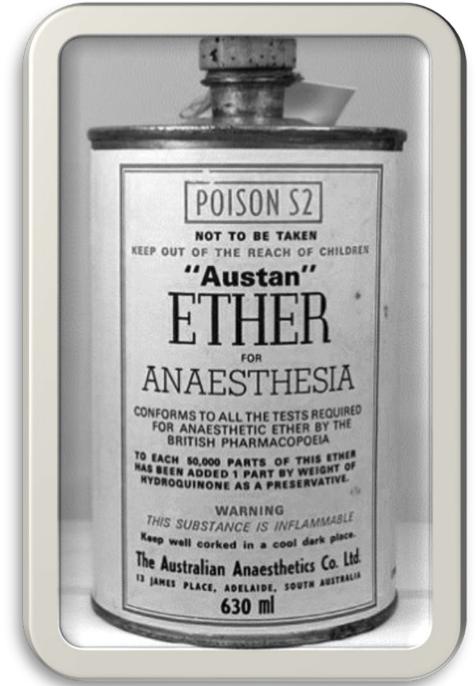
In three stories, someone is incapacitated by chloroform.



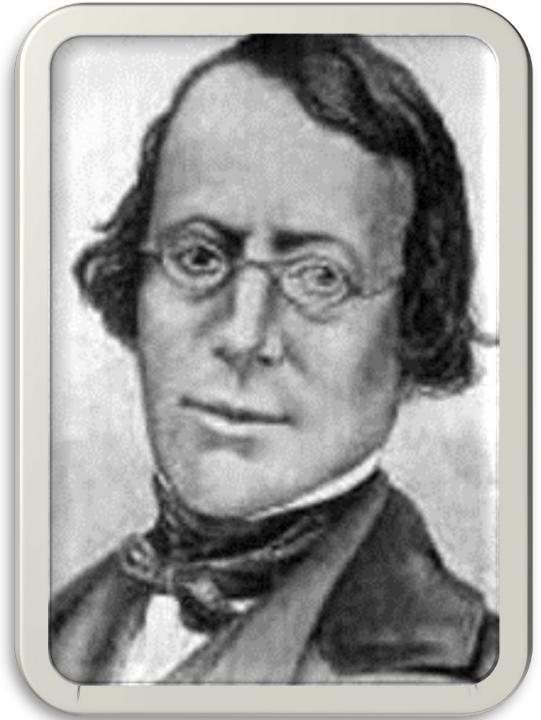
Lady France Carfax almost dies from breathing the fumes while hidden in a coffin, Holmes captures German agent Von Bork with a sponge soaked in it, and Mary Maberley is overcome with a rag held over her mouth.



While ether and chloroform were both developed and introduced as anesthesia at about the same time, chloroform achieved greater popularity and was more widely used throughout the 1800s.



In 1831, chloroform was developed almost simultaneously in the US by Samuel Guthrie, in France by Eugene Soubeiran, and in Germany by Justus von Liebig.



*Guthrie, however,
published his findings
first and is given credit
for the process.*

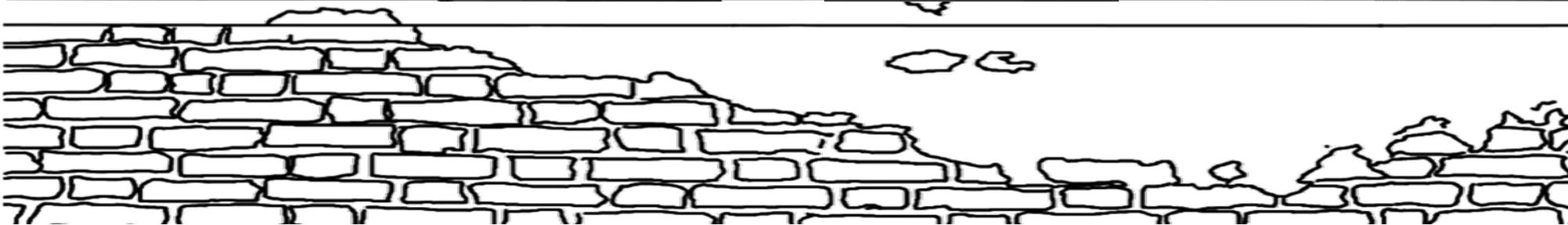




Seeking a cheap pesticide, he used a home-made distillation apparatus to create "chloric ether" from chloride of lime and whiskey.



Following its development, he freely shared the resulting pleasant-tasting spirit with his friends, which they imbibed a number of times over the next six months to determine its effects.



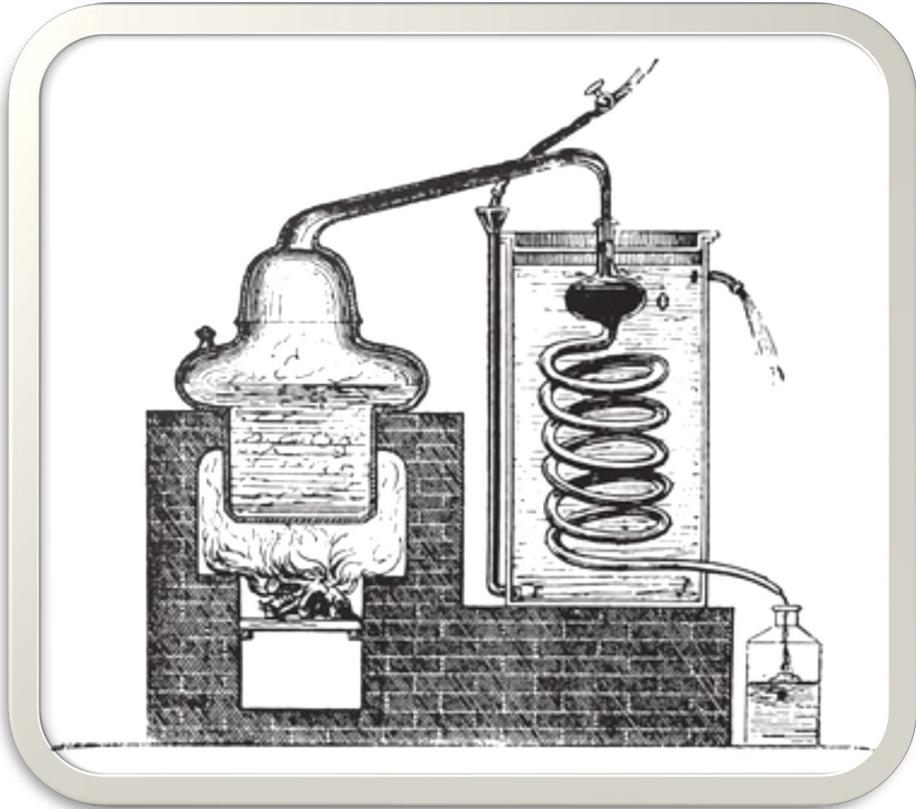
Following its development, he freely shared the resulting pleasant-tasting spirit with his friends, which they imbibed a number of times over the next six months to determine its effects.



The liquid came to be known as "sweet whiskey," ingested for its intoxicating effects as a nervous system depressant.



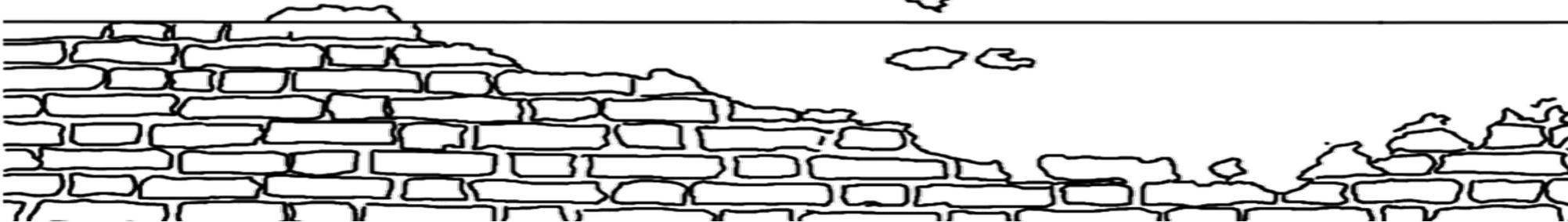
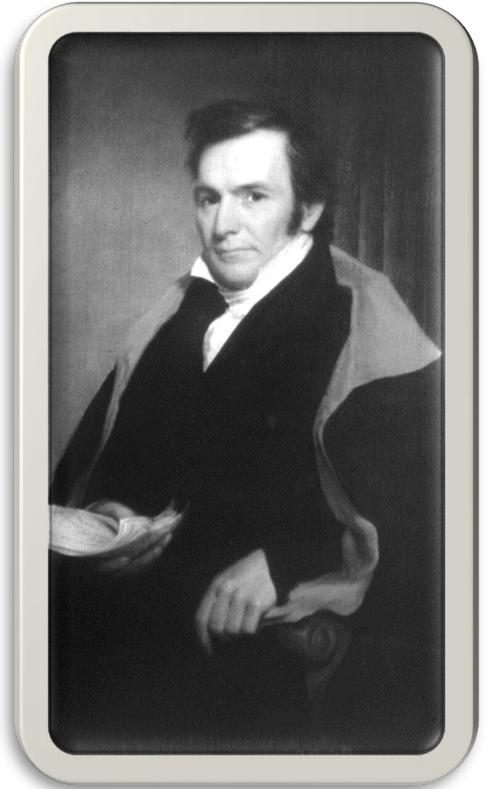
He considered it a stimulus, but did report to his daughter that she was the first to receive it to reduce her pain.



He also sent samples to a number of physicians for additional experiments as to its uses.



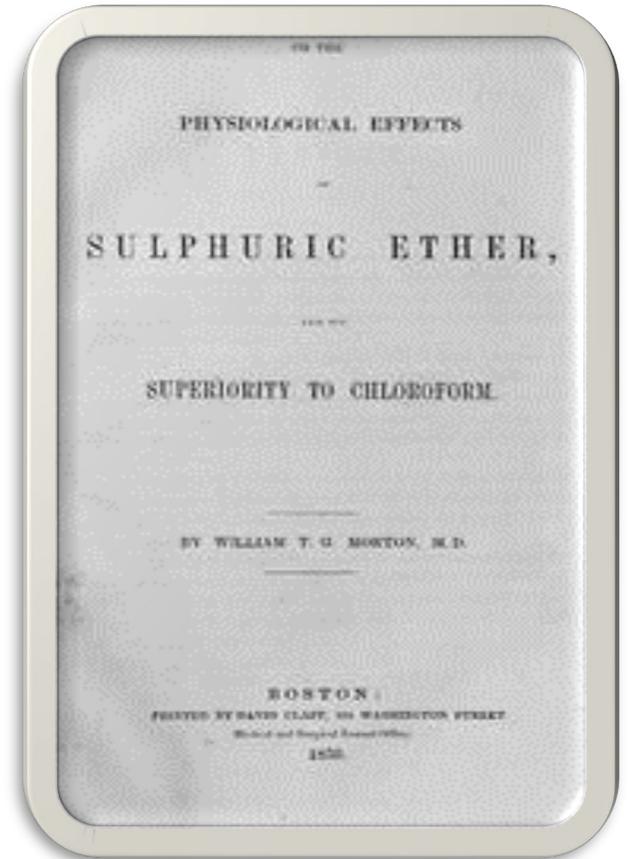
Dr. Eli Ives reported using it for asthma in 1832, but its use as an anesthesia was not determined until 1847...



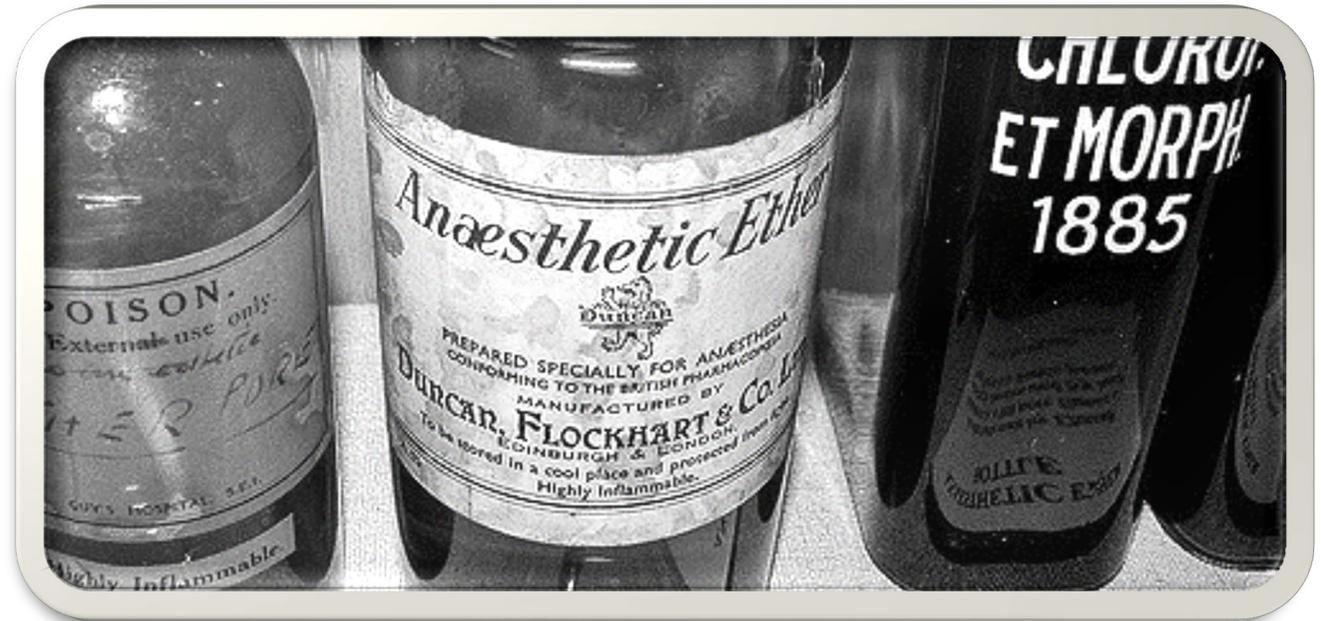
...when Dr. James Simpson and two other physicians opened one of Guthrie's sample bottles and inhaled deeply.

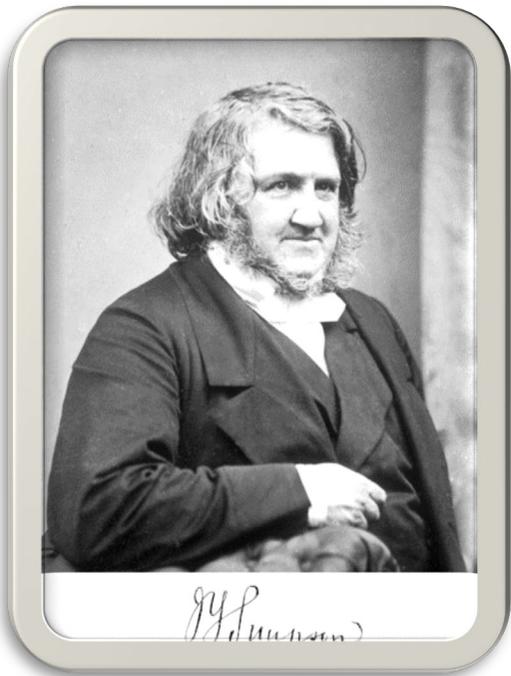


*When they came to the next morning,
they announced they had found a
substitute for sulphuric ether, introduced
as an anesthetic only the year before.*



While ether had also served as an anesthetic, chloroform gained greater popularity because it was faster-acting and non-flammable.

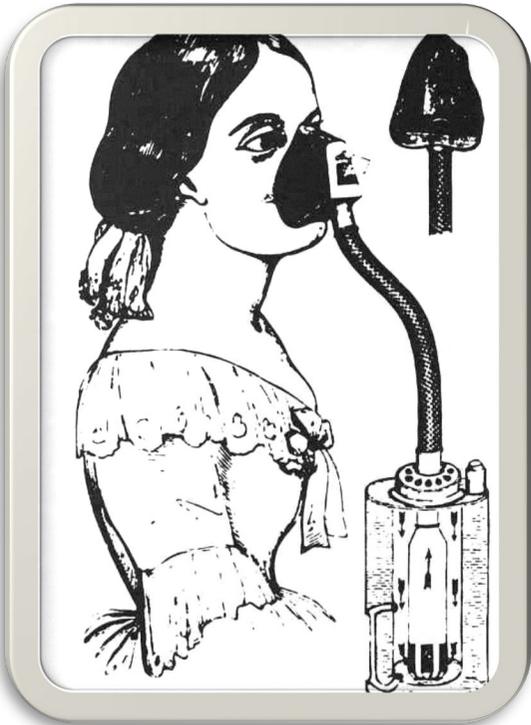




It was used extensively in the US during the Civil War and after Simpson used it on a patient during childbirth...



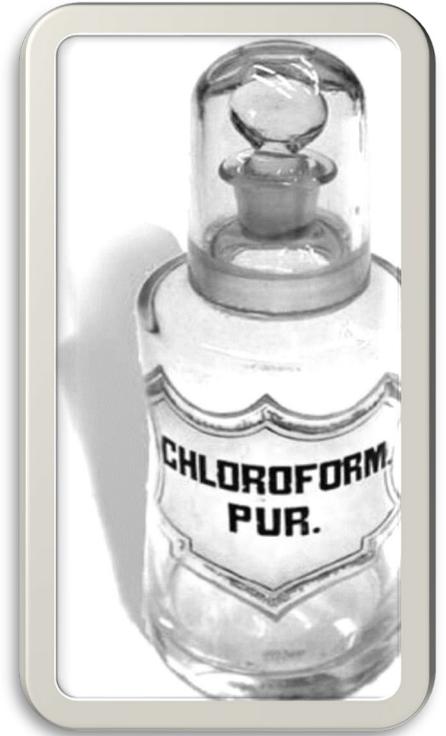
...it became popular enough for Queen Victoria to use it during the delivery of her eighth child, Prince Leopold, in 1853.



She inhaled the anesthetic from a handkerchief and declared afterwards, it was "delightful beyond measure," and never had she recovered so quickly.



Despite the royal seal of approval, the use of chloroform was not without risk or controversy.





The first fatality related to chloroform occurred in 1848 when a fifteen-year-old girl died after being administered the drug.



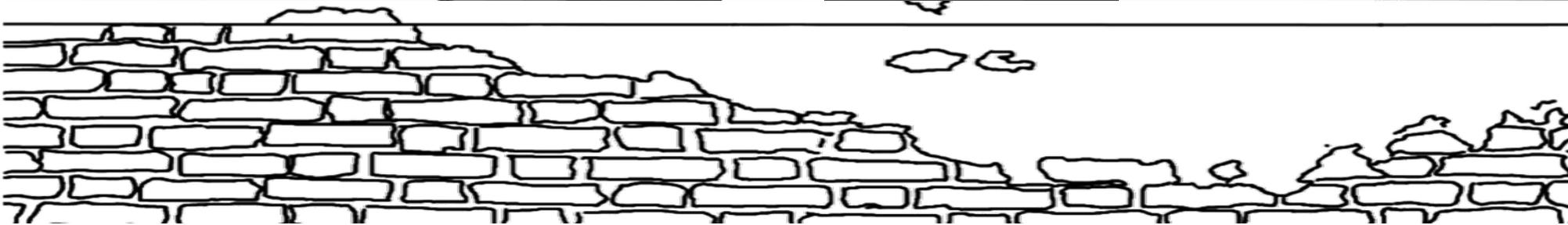
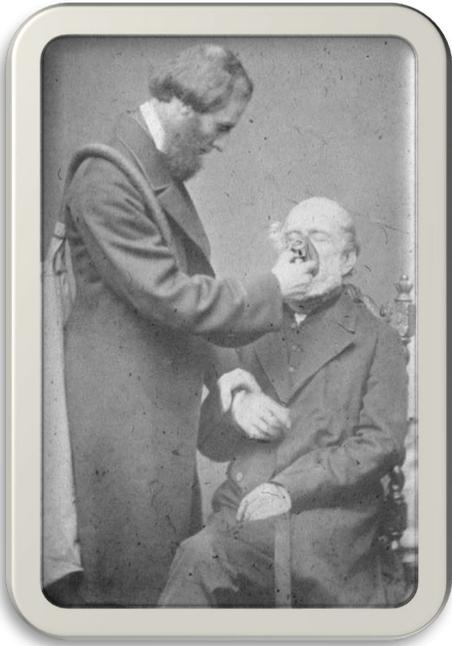
It was not until 1911 that it was determined chloroform caused cardiac fibrillation. While fatal complications were estimated at 1 in 3,000 to 6,000 administrations -- vs. 1 in 14,000 to 28,000 for ether...



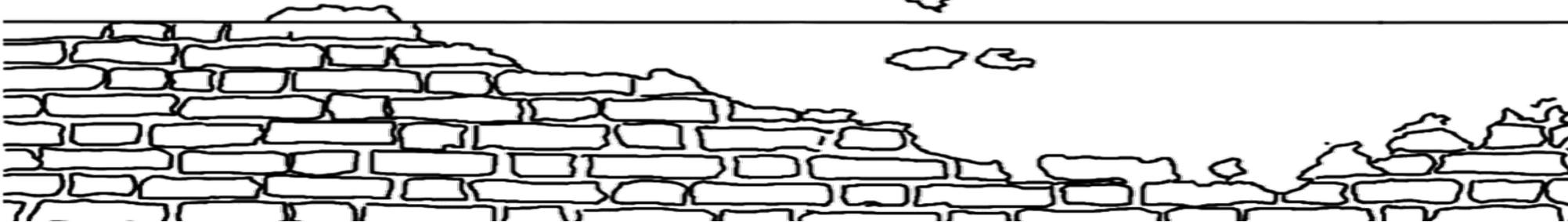
it was still the go-to anesthetic in the UK and German-speaking countries between 1865 to 1920, with 80-95% of all narcoses performed using the compound.



Chloroform's administration had always been problematic. Too much, and the patient died. Too little and the patient remained awake.



Decline in the use of chloroform occurred in the 1930s as inhalation equipment improved and anesthetics such as nitrous oxide were introduced for safer, more effective narcosis.

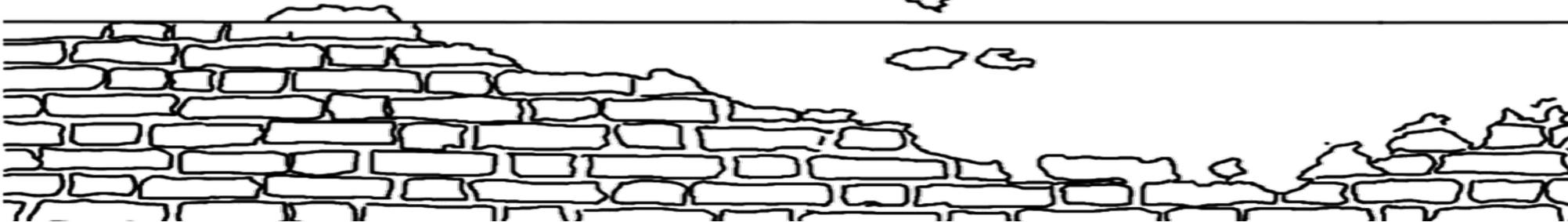


By 1976, the end of chloroform's use was officially marked by its removal from medical texts.

EXPOSING ^{the} MYTHS
#1: Chloroform



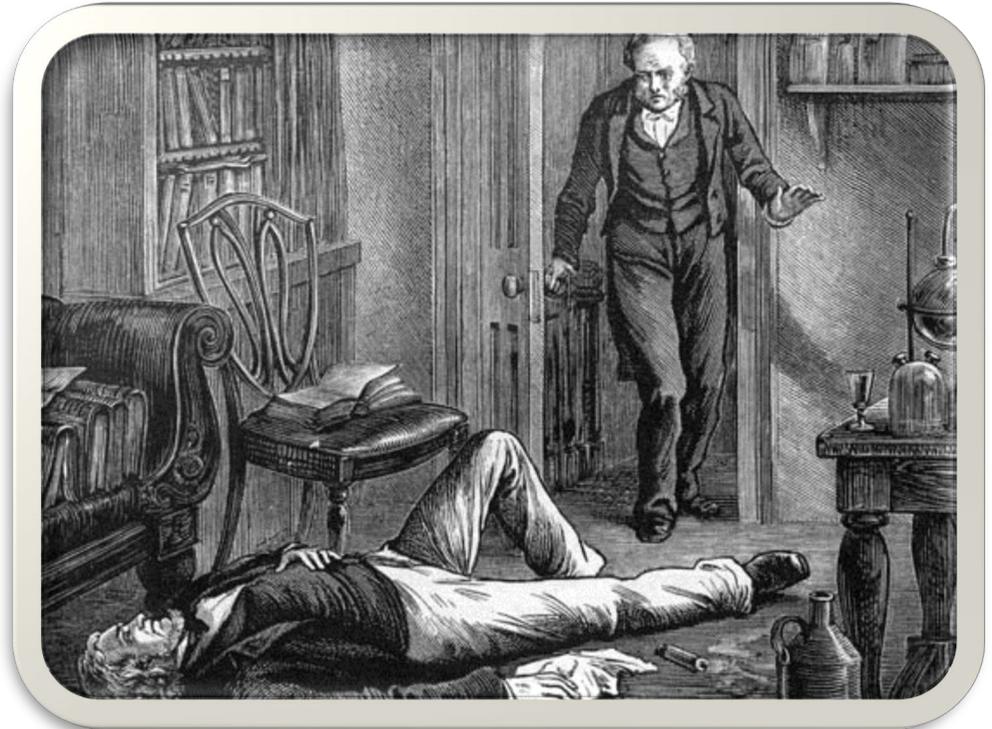
Current estimates suggest it can take as long as ten minutes for a person to succumb, but popular Victorian press and fiction propagated the myth of the compound's instantaneous effects.



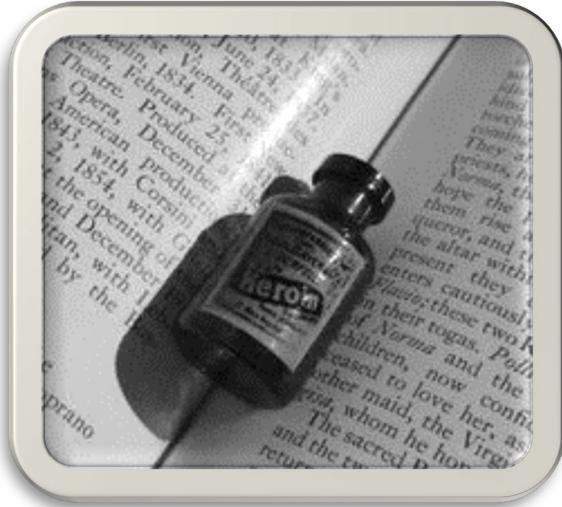
As for overdoses, Dr. Watson noted the use of ether to assist in reviving Lady Carfax.



*This was proposed by August Fabre in 1857,
but could not be shown to be effective in a
series of experiments and actually appeared
to aggravate the symptoms.*



Regardless, the allure of the drug's true benefits and uses led to chloroform's pervasive appearance among the criminal element in Sherlockian tales.



*So we have completed
topic # 023 in our
series...*

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



References for this topic:

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- 2) <http://www.history.com/topics/ether-and-chloroform>
- 3) <https://sites.lib.byu.edu/sc/2011/05/20/samuel-guthrie-discoverer-of-chloroform/>
- 4) A. G. Hart, "Chloroform Discovered by Dr. Samuel Guthrie, an American Physician," *St. Louis Clinique: A Monthly Journal of Clinical Medicine and Surgery*, Volume 19.
- 5) <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/1e2ce5d6-aad3-11dd-897c-000077b07658.html>
- 6) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Young_Simpson
- 7) <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/9487785>
- 8) <http://mentalfloss.com/article/56607/10-tv-and-movie-cliches-you-never-see-real-life>
- 9) Stephanie Snow, *Blessed Days of Anaesthesia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- 10) W.W. Morland and Francis Minot (eds.) *The Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, Volume LV. Boston: David Clapp Publisher, 1857.



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"The Life and Times in Victorian London"

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RUSTY MASON

&

STEVE MASON

