

# [Mr. Morden Case with Medicines] Dr. William James Almon

**Date:** The case began sometime in 1789, and includes correspondence up to November 1792. | 1790/01/01 to 1800/01/01

Contributors

Contributor Role

Author

Contributor Name

Dr. William James Almon

Publication Format

Manuscript

Type

Medicine

Symptoms

bile

bout

attacks

erysipelas

strangury

shortness of breath

anxiety

tightness

suffocation

cough

poor appetite

flatulence

asthma

restlessness

nausea

urinary trouble

irritable bowels

drowsiness

soreness

disorder

irregular pulse

Ingredients

fotid gum

laudanum

ether  
asafoetida  
gum ammoniac  
squills  
vinegar of squills  
bark  
vitriolic acid  
manna  
tartar emetic  
soap  
kermes mineralis  
opiates  
opium  
chalybeate wine  
antimonial pectoral mixture  
ammoniac milk  
water  
mineral water  
lime water  
foxglove  
leeks  
calomel  
wine  
horseradish  
mustard seed  
Madeira wine  
port wine  
old flock  
aromatic bitter infusion  
green broom  
cinnamon  
julep  
sago  
mercury  
mercurial pills  
quicksilver  
rose  
squill root  
cinnamon  
rose hip

Places  
Halifax  
Aylesford  
Nova Scotia  
Bedford Row  
London  
England

**Source:** Manuscript Notebook of Dr. William James Almon

**Institution:** Nova Scotia Archives | **Source Origin:** Almon Family Fonds | **Reference:** MG 1 / Microfilm Reel 10,045

## Description

In nine manuscript pages, Dr. Almon presents a detailed case study, with descriptions of symptoms and medicines used, of the illness and demise of one Mr. Morden of Halifax and Aylesford, Nova Scotia, pp. 223-31. The case study also includes transcriptions of correspondence from Dr. Reynolds of London, England, with whom Almon consulted about the case. The transcribed letters to Dr. Almon and to Mrs. Morden (via Mrs. Butler), include Latin prescriptions recommended by Dr. Reynolds.

## Transcription

Mr. Morden aged 53 Years originally of a sanguineous temperament but at present of a lax habit - during his residence in America, has been troubled bilious complaints and gouty Affections at different times. During the Year 1789 his Health was much impaired by frequent attacks, [Erysipelatous](#) Affections, Violent [Strangury](#) &<sup>cc</sup> till the beginning of May 1790 - when he complained of the Symptoms of a common [Catarrh](#), which was treated in the usual manner. On the 16 May about two oClock in the Morning he was suddenly seized with a great difficulty of breathing, a tightness and stricture across his Breast, great Anxiety was obliged to get into an erect posture, and have the Door and Windows opened to prevent him, from suffocating. I was immediately sent for; and upon my arrival took away twelve Ounces of Blood which procured him relief - soon after 5 [q<sup>rs</sup>] of the Fotid Gum were given him, and in the course of two hours, a remission took place and he became Calm -. As the Disease had now taken the form of a Spasmodic Asthma, our views of relief were directed to the prevention of these Spasmodic Affections, as well as to mitigate a teasing Cough. His appetite was bad, attended with great flatulency, the Body open, the Pulse little or nothing altered from the healthy standard. Pills composed of the Fotid Gum were given occasionally through the day, and upon the approach of the [Dyspnica](#), Laudanum, and Ether were administered seperately, and combined, these seemed to lessen the violence of the Fit, but afforded no permanent relief - On the 7.<sup>th</sup> June

a large Blister was applied to the breast which drew extremely well and was kept on the part

for several Days, but this did not afford the relief expected. Pills composed to [Assafotida](#), Gum Ammoniac and [Squills](#) were also given, in doses twice or thrice a day, which lessened the Cough, and promoted Expectoration, proved sufficiently laxative, and in the course of a few weeks, the Bark and Infusion, and Tincture with the Vitriolic Acid was given, with a view of restoring the Appetite and strengthening the system, as well as to check the copious Perspirations, which took place every Night, and which tended greatly to weaken him. He occasionally rode out, and by Midsummer was so much better, as to be able to remove into the Country for the change of Air and using Exercise \_ during his resident there (which was about 10 Weeks) the Perspirations at Night became more copious, the Debility consequently increased and in a short time his feet and Ancles began to swell; the difficulty of Respiration was become much greater, and he returned from the Country evidently worse.

On the 1.<sup>st</sup> November I was called to him early in the Morning, and found he had passed a restless Night, without Sleep, not able to lay down on account of his breathing being so difficult, and was obliged to keep himself in an erect posture as a means of procuring him ease \_ His Pulse low, Nausea, weight in the Chest, particularly at the Scrobiculis Cordis, & says, when he lays down, is sensible of a gurgling noise in the Abdomen, which is distended and appears to contain water; his Countenance is leucophlegmatic, passes his Urine in small quantities, which is high coloured; great Thirst, his Legs and Feet are Oedematous; but his Appetite in general was pretty good

good. He had taken two tea Spoonfuls of Ether before I saw him, which as usual had relieved the Dyspnoea \_ Soon after I gave him a solution of Manna and Tartar Emetic, which operated gently both ways. The next day I ordered him [Squills](#) combined with Soap and Gum Ammoniac in the form of Pills twice a day; and at Night an opiate with the [Kermes Mineralis](#). This Plan was followed daily and in the course of a short time, the

discharge of Urine was much encreased, tho' attended with some pain, his breathing much better and the swelling of his Leggs and Ancles greatly decreased, but he now complained of a great Itching over his whole Body, and a severe pain in the Calves of his Leggs \_\_\_.

Gentle Frictions were made use of.

Novemb<sup>r</sup>. 21<sup>st</sup> Still continues his Pills, has been taking the Chalybeate Wine daily for some time past, the fullness about the Chest and Abdomen has greatly subsided; but he was this Even<sup>g</sup>: attacked with Symptoms of Fever and a violent Cough, and it appears as if he had taken fresh Cold, notwithstanding he has not been out of the House for some time past. But the weather has been rainy for some Days - and consequently the House extremely damp. I gave him an Antimonial Pectoral Mixture which mitigated the Cough & Fever; but the paucity of Urine and swelling of his Legs again commenced, tight bandages were applied to his Leggs.

Decem. ~ 6.<sup>th</sup> His breathing is better, passes his Urine Freely, body open \_ but his Cough continues violent, expectorates a thin Mucus \_ I now gave him the Ammoniac Milk with [Squills](#), in lieu of the mixture ordered before. D<sup>r</sup>. Halliburton now Visited him with me from this time 'till the 1.<sup>st</sup> June 1791. During which time a variety of

Medicines were given, as Diuretics, [Corroborants], Mineral Waters, Fox Glove, Lime Water, & Decocti - on of Leeks; small doses of [Calomel](#) were also administered, but his bowels were too irritable to bear its use, the local applications, were Blisters and Scarifications to his Leggs - but the relief all these Medicines afforded, was very little, and we were obliged to have recourse to the Squill Pills before mentioned, as the only Diuretic to be depended upon -- after a short time this preparation disagreeing with his Stomach, an Infusion of [Squills](#) with Horse Radish & Mustard Seed in Wine was given him which promoted the urinary Secretion, similar to the Pills. I continued him in this course 'till August when he went again into the Country and returned the beginning of Novemb. ~ when his general Health seemed to be mended \_ though the Asthma and Dropsical Affection remained - He now changed his Wine from Madeira & Port to Old Flock, which agreed extremely well with

him, mended his appetite, and strengthened his constitution greatly \_ At the beginning of the year 1792 \_ the symptoms of his disorders were much lessened, his appetite extremely good, and seemed almost in a Convalescent state. This Truce was but of a short duration, for the Dyspnoea & other symptoms have returned, the Stomach rejecting the Infusion, the Vinegar of [Squills](#) has been substituted, and operates equally favourably in relieving his breast, increasing the flow of Wine, and lessening the swelling of his Abdomen & Leggs, but still no permanent relief is obtained, and the progress to a Cure is only Palliative. Notwithstanding the swelling of the abdomen and Leggs is much abated and has not gained ground for some weeks past, yet on the whole  
his

his other complaints are worse. The Anxiety and difficulty of breathing comes on almost every Night, and continues so severe as to prevent Sleep, and obliges him to continue in an erect Posture 'till Morning, when a remission takes place. During the Day he labours under a great drowsiness and propensity to Sleep, complains of a great soreness and pain in the Chest, a violent Cough, attended with a thick expectoration of Mucus, Loss of Appetite, flatulency, and an inability to use any bodily exercise. The going up or down stairs fatigues him greatly, and the whole system is much Debilitated. The urinary secretion is high coloured, and the quantity, in proportion to the [Squills](#) he takes. His body is open and the stools are laxative and watry. Laudanum lessens the violence of the Spasms, and generally procures sleep, the succeeding Night. Great attention has been always paid to keeping up his strength, by a good and generous diet, /Hock Wine &.<sup>cc</sup>/ on which more reliance has been made than by Medicine, for the Bark, Chalybeate, and other Tonics, have always disagreed with his Stomach and Bowels. The only Medicines which he now takes are the Vinegar of [Squills](#), & Laudanum, occasionally. And at times when the symptoms are not severe an Aromatic Bitter Infusion is administered with a view of strengthening his Stomach.

The above Case was given to his Son in Law M<sup>r</sup>. Dight who embarked for England in the ^MayPaquet. On his arrival he took D<sup>r</sup>. Reynolds / President of the College of

(Physicians) Opinion on it, and in August I rec<sup>d</sup> the following Letter from him on the Subject -

Bedford Row July 1<sup>st</sup> - 1792

Sir,

I have considered the case of my Friend Mr. Morden which you have drawn with so much accuracy, with great attention, and I am sorry to say with great regret, as I fear he labours under an Hydrops Pectoris. I very much approve of the mode of treatment you have adopted for him. It appears to me, that there is scarcely any Medicine of reputed efficacy in this disease, of which you have not made a trial. You observe that the Fox-Glove has been tried, but you do not say in what dose it has been given, nor how long it was persisted in. I have in several instances of Hydrops Pectoris administered it, with great success, and confess that I have never found any thing of equal efficacy. The preparation of the Digitalis which from experience I prefer, is the dried powder of the leaves. Of this I gave a grain three times a day, and gradually increase it to three or four grains three times a day I always add double the quantity of Pulvis Aromaticus to it or what has been usually called the species aromaticus- It may be given in the form of Pills, and a tea Cup-full of an Infusion of the tops of green broom, drank after each dose. I wish this to be tried and persisted in for eight or ten days. If in that time it does not appear, to excite the action of the Kidneys, and to increase the urine considerably, I would urge it no further, but beg leave to recommend the following

R. Hydrargyr purificati ?i.

Conser: Rosæ [?] ij probe simul tere in mortario marmoreo, donec globuli evanuerint, et adde pulv. rad. scillæ siccatae gr. X fiat massa in pilulas XV dividenda quarum sumat iij singulis noctibus.

R. Ligni. Quassiaë incis ?ij

Rad: Zingib: contus. ?j

Kali ppth [??] ?ss

Aquæ ferventis            Mi[sce] macera  
et liquorem frige factum cola.

R. Liquoris colati ?iss

Tinctur: Cinnamom. comp. ?j

F. Haustus bis quotidie sumendus.

If the Mercurial pills should purge him more than his strength will permit, a little power of Cinnamon may be added to the mass - and a little opium if absolutely necessary - but if opium can be dispensed with, I would rather with it to be abstained from, as I generally find that it diminishes the quantity of Urine. I particularly wish, that in the trial of the Fox Glove, opium and all its preparations may be avoided, if possible  
I am sir

Your obedient Servant -

J R Reynolds.

An extract of which I transmitted to Mr. Morden / who went into the Country in the latter end of June / and sent him the Digitalis in Pills as above recommended, with the Mercurial Pills - I visited him at Aylesford about the 15.<sup>th</sup> September, and he told me he had taken ten Fox Glove Pills, but that they did not agree with him nor produce the sensible effects the Vinegar had done \_ he appeared evidently to be losing [g]round - and soon after I was informed that all his [co]mplains increased, and he despaired of ever seeing again Halifax \_ he however made the attempt, and with difficulty reached Dobson's / about 15 Miles from Town / [o]n Saturday 26.<sup>th</sup> October \_ when I was immediately [s]ent for to see him; upon my arrival about 5 O'Clock P.M. I found him extremely low \_ much [o]vercome with fatigue \_ his pulse small \_ countenance greatly altered, and it was with difficulty [he] could relate, how extremely ill he was \_ some

warm spiced Wine was given occasionally as also Wine and Sago \_ and was put to bed where he got some Sleep during the Night, but wandered much in his mind, he was obliged to get out of bed several times in the Night, on account of his difficulty of breathing - On Sunday Morning he seemed somewhat better, took more Nourishment during the day than what he had done before, as also two doses of the Vinegar of [Squills](#), which did not vomit him as they used formerly to do, but produced some Diuretic effects \_ On Monday about One <sup>o</sup>Clock

PM. I visited him again \_ he had passed an extremely bad night, but was rational \_ his countenance much altered, his Pulse extremely irregular. Extremities cold and complained of a suppression of Urine, which had subsided two or three hours \_ and in all probability depended upon extreme debility \_ he was scarce able to articulate \_ I gave him several doses of a cordial camphorated Julep & he passed some Urine involuntarily which relieved his mind, he took also some Sago and Wine - but the fatal conclusion was evidently drawing night, his Pulse became weaker and weaker, the facies Hippocratica more strong, his Extremities colder and colder, and about three O'Clock he expired without a struggle and without a groan.

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Extract of a Letter from D<sup>r</sup>. Reynolds to M<sup>rs</sup> Butler dated London 7- Nov. 1792 - and forwarded by her to M<sup>rs</sup> Morden at Halifax - Feb.<sup>y</sup> 10 - 1793

“Upon the persuasion however that the dropsy of the chest is the most dangerous part of his disease, I have ventured to prescribe for that

and if what I now suggest should fortunately relieve him, in that respect means may be found of giving him strength, which M<sup>r</sup>. Almon will then particularly attend to -

Rx Pulv. Rad. Scillæ recens siccatae gr. xij

Cinnamom. subtilissime pulverat. gr. xxxvj

Conserv. Cynosb. q[uan]tum s[ufficit]

F[ia]t Massa in pilulas xij dividenda

quarum sumat i vel ii (si ferat ventriculus)

sexta quaque horâ.

JRR

Novemb. 7. 1792

For James Morden Esq.

If the pills do not agree, or if they do not relieve him, I wish him to try Tickells Other. M<sup>r</sup>. Tickell is an Apothecary at Bath, who prepares a particular kind of [E]ther, which he says has been of remarkable service in several desperate cases of water in the chest.

Translation

*[Latin recipe on bottom of sixth image and top of seventh]*

Recipe: 1 scruple of purified quicksilver,

2 [?] of rose conserves, mix together and grind in a marble mortar until the lumps disappear, and add 10 grains of dry powder of squill root. Make a mass to be divided into 15 pills. Take three of these every night.

Recipe: 2 drams of cut bitter-wood,

1 dram of bruised ginger root,

½ dram of [??] kali, 1The “kalis” include a wide range of potassium compounds (potash) used in medicine. The term comes from the German Kahle, for potash. boiling water.

Mix, macerate, and

keep the liquid chilled.

Recipe: ½ ounce of the prepared liquid,

1 dram of prepared cinnamon tincture,

make a drink to be taken twice daily.

*[Latin recipe on ninth image, lines 5-10]*

Recipe: 12 grains of fresh, dried, powdered root of squill; 36 grains of very finely powdered cinnamon; as much rose hip preserves as needed.

Make a mass to be divided into 12 pills. Take one or two (if the stomach can handle it) every six hours.

JRR

***Latin translation and transcription by Winston Black***

Annotations

**Erysipelatous**

A bacterial skin infection accompanied by a rash.

**Strangury**

Frequent and painful urination.

**Catarrh**

Excessive respiratory mucus caused by inflammation.

**Dyspnea**

Shortness of breath.

**Assafotida**

A powdered resin derived from giant fennel, commonly used in India. (Also Assa Fetida or Asofoetida)

**Squills**

Flowering bulbs used for a variety of medicinal purposes.

**Kermes Mineralis**

A compound of oxy-sulphides and antimony used to treat a variety of ailments.

**Calomel**

Mercury chloride, once used as a purgative as well as an insecticide and fungicide.

Mr. Morden Case with Medicines recipe from Early Modern Maritime Recipes:

<https://emmr.lib.unb.ca/recipes/251>