

King Charles II's doctor's bill, 1680

This document is one of the bills of Dr Christian Harel (or Harrell), who was one of the physicians at the court of King Charles II.

The King enjoyed a robust good health for most of his life and close inspection of this bill for the year 1680 reveals that only two items were prescribed to him - Queen of Hungary Water as a tonic and Tincture of Benzoin for the skin.

1680		
The Bill of Remedies furnished to his Majesty as also of what hath been laid out for the use of his Majesties Office and Laboratory by C ^r Harel:		
19 of May	Two quarts of Queen of Hungaris water - -	06 00 00
16 of June	one quart of Queen of Hungaris water - - -	03 04 00
	one quart of tincture of Benzoin - - - - -	01 12 00
17 ditto	one quart of Queen of Hungaris water - - -	03 04 00
1 of July	one quart of Queen of Hungaris water - - -	03 04 00
25 ditto	one quart of tincture of Benzoin - - - - -	01 12 00
20 ditto	one quart of Queen of Hungaris water - - -	03 04 00
10 August	Two quarts of Queen of Hungaris water - - -	06 00 00
10 September	one quart of Queen of Hungaris water - - -	03 04 00
	one quart of tincture of Benzoin - - - - -	01 12 00
29 ditto	one quart of Queen of Hungaris water - - -	03 04 00
16 October	one quart of tincture of Benzoin - - - - -	01 12 00
	Two quarts of the Queen of Hungaris water - -	06 00 00
9 of November	Two quarts of the Queen of Hungaris water - -	06 00 00
	one pint of tincture of Benzoin - - - - -	00 16 00
8 of December	three pints of Queen of Hungaris water - - -	04 16 00
	one pint of tincture of Benzoin - - - - -	00 16 00
	For the reparation of the Laboratorie and furni- shes the Bricklayers Bill - - - - -	00 00 00
	The Carpenters Bill - - - - -	00 14 06
	The Smiths and other Little Bills together - - -	05 17 04
	for Glasses and other instruments - - - - -	04 12 00
	for Glasses and other instruments - - - - -	03 15 06
6 of Jan ^r 1681	four pint Bottles of Queen of Hungaris water	06 00 00
	Three pints of tincture of Benzoin - - - - -	02 00 00
25 ditto	three pints of Queen of Hungaris water - - -	04 16 00
	one pint of tincture of Benzoin - - - - -	00 16 00
10 Feb ^r	one quart of Queen of Hungaris water - - -	03 04 00
7 of March	two quarts of Queen of Hungaris water - - -	06 00 00
	one pint of tincture of Benzoin - - - - -	00 16 00
4 of April	one quart of Queen of Hungaris water - - -	03 04 00
17 ditto	one quart of Queen of Hungaris water - - -	03 04 00
	one pint of tincture of Benzoin - - - - -	00 16 00
6 of May	one quart of Queen of Hungaris water - - -	03 04 00
10 ditto	one quart of Queen of Hungaris water - - -	03 04 00
	one pint of tincture of Benzoin - - - - -	00 16 00
		119 16 00

Queen of Hungary Water (also known simply as Hungary Water) was an alcohol-based perfume which was used as a tonic as well as a fragrance. The user was advised to drink it as well as to wash in it to receive the most benefit.

It was made by distilling alcohol with herbs and citrus fruits including rosemary, lavender, mint, sage, orange blossom and lemon.

Hungary Water remained Europe's most popular fragrance and remedy until the invention of Eau de Cologne in the 18th century. Versions of it are still manufactured today and can be used as a hair rinse, mouth wash, headache remedy and foot balm as well as a fragrance.

Tincture of Benzoin was a good antiseptic for the skin and for treating minor abrasions such as blisters. It could also be inhaled in steam to treat colds.

It is related to the present-day product 'Friar's Balsam'.

Its main ingredient is benzoin resin which is a natural substance obtained from the bark of trees in Indonesia which is mixed with alcohol to produce Tincture of Benzoin.

The heading of Dr Harel's bill indicates that he supplied the king with more than just his morning tonics:

"The Bill of Remed[i]es furnished to his Majestie as also of what hath been laid out for the use of his Majesties office and Laboratory by C. Harel."

Charles II was fascinated by science and became the patron of the world's oldest scientific academy, The Royal Society, in 1660, the year of his Restoration to the Throne. The king also had a home laboratory at the Palace of Whitehall and Dr Harel's bill includes several items for it (about half way down the page):

For the reparation of the Laboratorie and furnishes the Bricklayers bill £08, 14s. 06d.

The Carpenters Bill £05, 17s. 04d.

The Smith and other Little bills together £04, 12s. 08d.

For Glasses and other Instruments £03, 15s. 06d.

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