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F. WEST, London

A leather-covered travelling medicine case, with twenty-one (of twenty-two) bottles of various sizes, with printed labels, central red-leather box containing four turned-ivory pill boxes with printed labels and ink annotations and prescriptions, inscribed *H.R.H. The Prince Consort Oct. 14th 1861*, the lid with brass plaque engraved *H.R.H. The Prince Albert*, over seven further bottles, the rear compartments with green-glass ointment pot in leather outer case, ceramic spoon and four silk-lined, leather-covered prescription cartons with labels from *Squire, 277 Oxford St., London* and with ink prescriptions, the lid interior with pocket containing various prescriptions, the lid with carrying strap, tooled-decorations and labelled *Medicine Chest His Royal Highness Prince Albert - 12 1/4 in. (32 in.) wide*

See front cover illustration and details

PROVENANCE:

Francis Charles Augustus Albert Emmanuel, (1819-1861), Prince of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, The Prince Consort.

Prince Albert, consort of Queen Victoria, was born in Schloss Rosenau, the second son of Duke Ernest I, ruler of Saxe-Coburg and Luise of Gotha. From an early age he was groomed to marry his first cousin Princess Alexandra Victoria of Kent, niece of Kings George IV and William IV and heir presumptive to the throne.

Victoria ascended to the throne in 1837 and she and Albert were married at St. James' Palace in 1840. There was always a genuine love between the two and this was manifest by the nine children she bore. Albert began his life in Britain with frustratingly few duties or rights. Even the running of the household was kept from him. Many in this country did not welcome his arrival, and one verse of the day declaring

"... He comes to take 'for better or for worse'  
England's fat Queen and England's fatter purse."

*The Times* even commented on the Prince's youth, preferring the Queen he married-off to a "person of riper years".

In time, however, he was able to assume more and more responsibilities, partly due to his taking on the role of secretary to the Queen during her

confinements, but mostly due to his ability to handle widely varying tasks and subjects. During his twenty-four years in Britain he was involved in military and housing reform, diplomacy, agriculture and the arts. But perhaps his most well known feat was his direction of the Great Exhibition of 1851 and the subsequent development of what became South Kensington, as an area devoted to museums and academic institutions.

For the last two years of his life Prince Albert was ill. He fought constant bouts of toothache, rheumatic pain and stomach trouble. In December 1860 he suffered from a fever which he referred to as "the real English cholera". The workaholic Prince was also burdened with non-medical problems, including the deep depression of the Queen following the death of her mother, a possible conflict with the U.S. over the Civil War and finally the discovery of an affair between his son the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) and an actress.

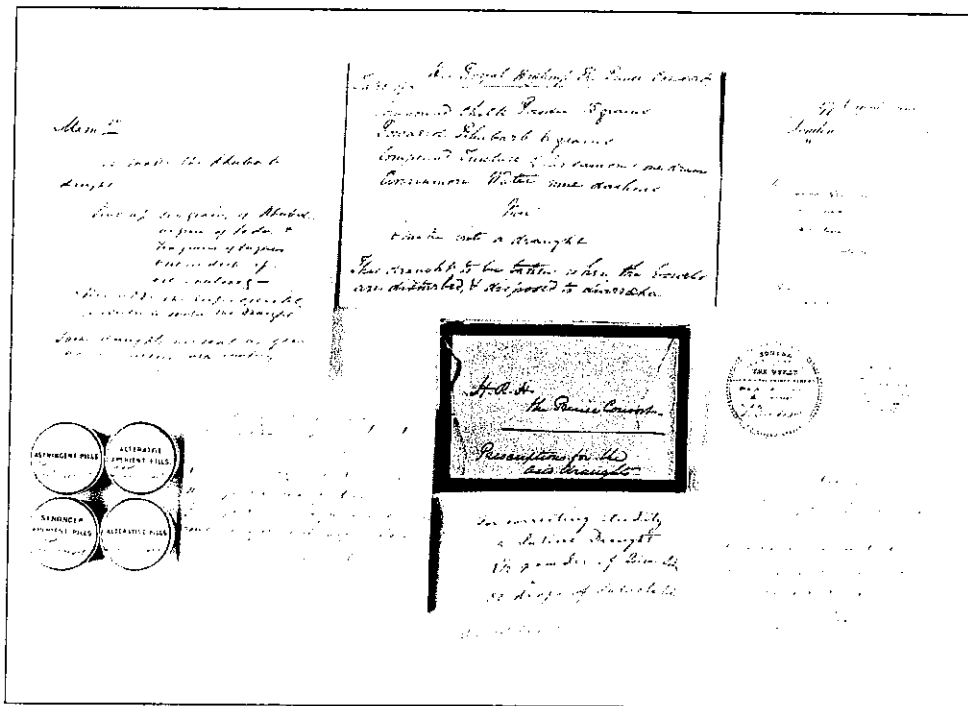
It was due to this that Prince Albert (already ill following a trip to Sandhurst) visited his son at Cambridge on 25 November 1861. He arrived back at Windsor very ill and sent for his doctor, who did very little apart from staying the night. By the end of the month he was rapidly becoming sicker, but insisted on being involved in the affair with the U.S. Over the next two weeks his condition deteriorated to the point that he was delirious with fever at times. He died on 14 December 1861.

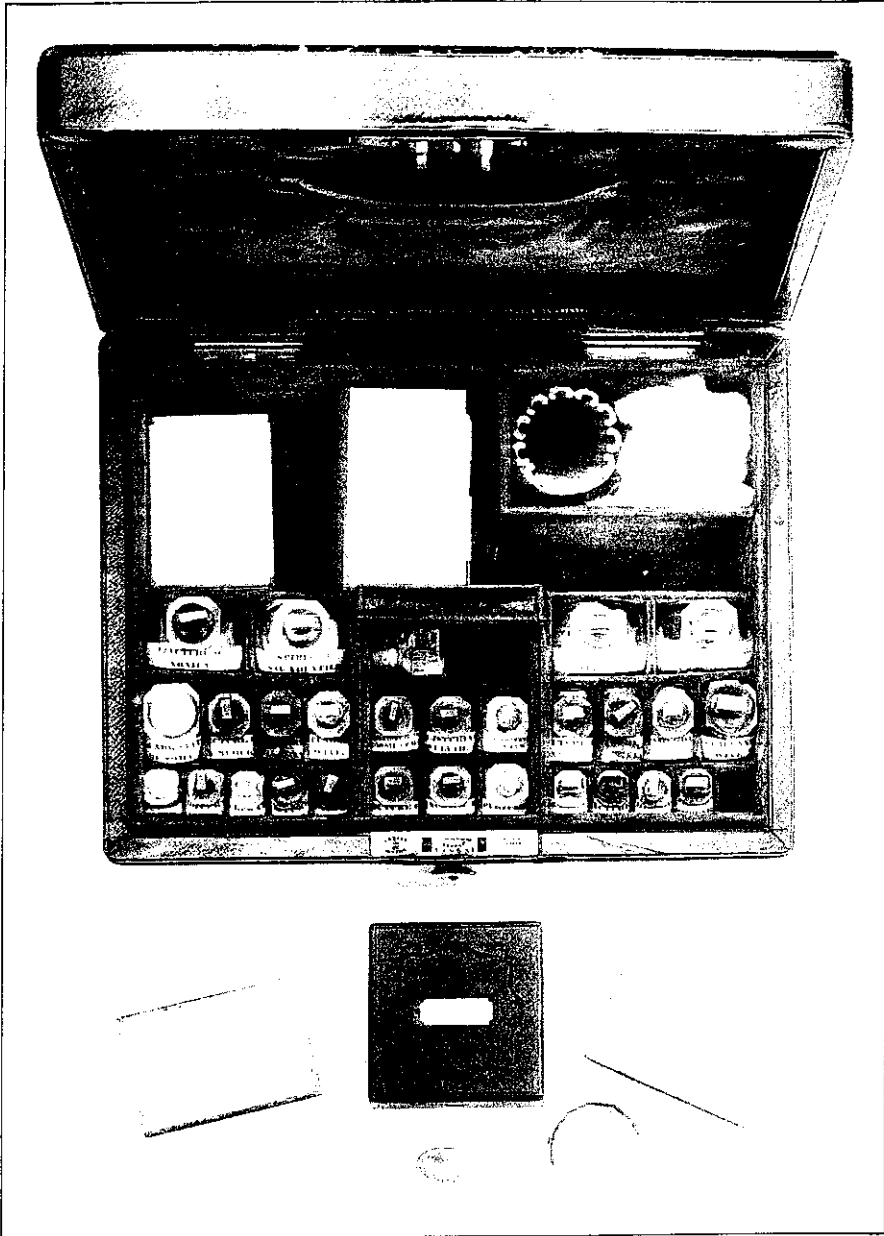
At the time, Prince Albert's death was believed to have been caused by typhoid fever, then a common disease. More recent interpretations of his death have offered other illnesses, such as renal failure or cancer, as the true killer.

It is interesting to compare the prescriptions that are present in the case with the known ailments he suffered. Many of the medicines seem to be for stomach and bowel disorders. One prescription for a draught containing powdered rhubarb, cardamons and cinnamon water states it should "be taken when the bowels are disturbed, & disposed to diarrhoea". Another "to be taken after every action of the bowels". The case also contains bottles for many of the drugs then used such as carbonate of soda, camphor, quinine and morphia.

As many of the prescriptions and medicines are dated between 1859 and October 1861, it may be safe to assume that the Prince reached for these cures as he began his final illness.

£1,200-1,800





Prince Albert

