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Cherubic Rescues by H. E. Meeker, M.D.: Cocaine Prescription and Safety-pin Extraction

A native of Burlington Flats, New York, Herman Elsworth Meeker (1866 to 1933) earned his M.D. in 1896 from Bellevue Hospital Medical College. Two years later he directed New York’s Odontunder Manufacturing Company of Fredonia to market its wares to patient Clifford Cobb. From the Wood Library-Museum’s Ben Z. Swanson Collection, the cover of the letter (upper left) advertises a cherub (lower right) delivering the blessed numbing of proprietary cocaine for Mr. Cobb’s oral or dental pain. In 1906, Dr. Meeker made national headlines for removing a safety pin from the throat of a cherubic 6-yr-old girl who had been misdiagnosed as having diphtheria. Appointed a captain in 1918 in the Medical Corps, Dr. Meeker served in Army camps during World War I in Georgia and Alabama before his honorable discharge in 1920. After returning to Manhattan, he went to meet his Maker (and presumably more cherubim) in 1933. (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists’ Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology.)

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