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ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS FROM THE WOOD LIBRARY-MUSEUM

Conjuring Childhood Dreams, Pond's Extract “Cures All”



Patients in the late nineteenth century often feared the expense and inconsistency of physician remedies, reaching for drugstore “cure-alls” instead. Store clerks in the United States handed out trade cards that advertised these “patent medicines,” some of which contained high levels of alcohol, morphine, or cocaine. Capturing the hope and innocence of youth, these cheerful collectibles became a scrapbooking favorite. In the example above, a popular trade card celebrates “Pond’s Extract: Vegetable Pain Destroyer,” brainchild of pharmacist Theron T. Pond. A dream of childhood imbues the image; an angel-winged girl holds a bright umbrella over a monocled boy on an iridescent seashore. “What’s on the back?” the card beckons (*bottom*). Its reverse unveils the acronym “POND’S EXTRACT” with its corresponding indications: “Piles, Old sores, Neuralgia, Diphtheria, Sprains, Eyes inflamed, Xternal Use, Tonsilitis, Rheumatism, Accidents, Catarrh, Throat sore.” A topical remedy of witch hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*) and dilute alcohol, Pond’s Extract was beloved for its skin-protectant and anti-inflammatory properties. In the early twentieth century, the T.T. Pond Company would also develop Pond’s Cold Cream, now considered a classic beauty product. (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists’ Wood Library–Museum of Anesthesiology, Schaumburg, Illinois. www.woodlibrarymuseum.org)

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