



Funny Bones

The image presented on the SynQuest homepage is a combination of the two lithographs that were used as covers for the original print versions of our catalog and are entitled “No Substitution” and “The Things Which Keep Him Busy”. The first depicts three pharmacists with skeletal heads preparing a prescription and the second a single pharmacist, performing the same. Both lithographs were drawn by Dr. Louis Crusius, a physician who died in St. Louis, Missouri on January 2, 1898. His reputation was made as a medical cartoonist (satirist).

This art was originally used in a 1901 calendar advertisement for the Antikamnia Chemical Company, first started in the late 1880's by two St. Louis drug clerks, Frank A. Ruf and Louis E. Frost. The company specialized in medicinal products sold under the trade name Antikamnia, from the Greek words, "Anti" and Kamnos," meaning "opposed to pain." The product claimed to cure any ailment: "from a cold, la grippe, rheumatism or neuralgia — whether it be toothache or stomachache, headache or 'that pain in the side'...It discriminates not in favor of the rich and powerful, neither does it depress the overburdened heart — duchess or nurse, bookkeeper or bluestocking, servant or society queen, it's all the same to Antikamnia Tablets — they relieve them all the plant on the pinched faces of pain the roses of health and joy."

Unfortunately, these acetanilide derivative medicines proved to have addictive and fatal side effects. As journalist Samuel Hopkins Adams wrote scathingly, "Acetanilid will undoubtedly relieve headache of certain kinds but acetanilide, as the basis of headache powders, is prone to remove the cause of the symptoms permanently by putting a complete stop to the heart action." Perhaps such gruesome advertising (the calendars were intended to be hung in the physician's waiting room) should have served as warning of the possible side-effects of the Antikamnia nostrums! Public outrage eventually prompted the formation of the US Food and Drug Administration, and ultimately spelled doom for the Antikamnia Chemical Company as well as other "pharmaceutical" companies, which specialized in medicines laced with alcohol, opium, cocaine and heroin.