



The Quack Doctor: Historical Remedies for All Your Ills

Caroline Rance

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From the harangues of charlatans to the sophisticated advertising of the Victorian era, quackery sports a colourful history. Featuring entertaining advertisements from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this book investigates the inventive ways in which quack remedies were promoted – and suggests that the people who bought them should not be written off as gullible after all. There's the Methodist minister and his museum of intestinal worms, the obesity cure that turned fat into sweat, and the device that brought the fresh air of Italy into British homes. The story of quack advertising is bawdy, gruesome, funny and sometimes moving – and in this book it takes to the stage to promote itself as a fascinating part of the history of medicine.

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Date : Published October 8th 2013 by The History Press (first published October 1st 2013)

ISBN : 9780752487731

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Format : Hardcover 224 pages

Genre :



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Clarry says

A wonderfully entertaining history of quack medicine! Thoroughly researched and presented in an easily digestible vignette format which is highly entertaining. I laughed out loud at some of the humorous plots people went to to sell their own remedies, and was given pause to consider how much of this is still going on today. A deadly serious topic, delivered in a witty matter with a sly smile of irony.

A highly recommended read for anyone with an interest in medicine or historical remedies. Rance keeps the contents light and entertaining while providing a complete reference list and index in the back - a hard balance to reach when writing on topics that have clearly been thoroughly researched!

Just remember... "When you're under the weather and you Google your symptoms in an attempt to convince yourself that you are about to die, spare a thought for Jean Landess..."

Plus, you'll get to find out why there is a duck with a man's head on the cover. (One of my favorite chapters.)

I am thankful to have won this book (signed by the author too!) from a Goodreads Giveaway.

Kate Mayfield says

Caroline Rance's masterful grasp of the absolute wonderment of medical advertising in the 19th century makes for a fascinating read. The author knows her intestinal worms, poisons, drugs and frauds. The well chosen illustrations, full of unintentional humour and intentional pathos are an eye-opener. Interwoven in the narrative are breathtaking moments of the reality of the times, as in the mother who kept her baby addicted to opium because any "interruption of her low-paid work could have meant starvation". Sobering indeed. A delightful and very accomplished book.
