



Engraved trade card.

C IS FOR CHEMIST

Siddall and Swann, Chymist's... Make and Sell all manner of Chymical and Galenical Medicinal, with all sorts of Druggs; Wholesale & Retail, at very Reasonable Rates. NB. The Elixir for the Asthma as also for the Gout and Rheumatism.

Author

SIDALL, [Richard]; [David] SWANN; and Robert CLEE

Publication date

[c1750-1785].

Publisher

at the Golden Head in Panton Street near the Hay-Market,

Publication place

[London],

Physical description

Engraved trade card.

Dimensions

245 by 185mm (9.75 by 7.25 inches).

Notes

Based at the Golden Head in Panton Street, Richard Siddall was a chemist and druggist, sometimes partnered with David Swann, during an interesting period of medical history. The mid-eighteenth century saw significant progress, as doctors were increasingly trained in the scientific method and

hospitals made more professional, but there was still a great deal unknown about the anatomy and its processes, bacteria, infection and the nature of diseases. Those who fell ill still relied on remedies with little basis in scientific fact, such as “the elixir for the asthma, as also for the gout and rheumatism” advertised by Siddall and Swann.

The image on the trade card also indicates that the chemists may have continued some of the alchemical processes historically used in medicine. The two men shown, perhaps intended to represent Siddall and Swann themselves, work in flowing robes and turbans with a definite sense of the exotic and mysterious about them, melting and distilling substances in brick furnaces, with alembic vessels scattered about their workspace. Although alchemy had become distinct from chemistry by the mid-eighteenth century, and alchemists were widely regarded as quacks, Siddall and Swann seem to have embraced its enigmatic appeal. Other exotic objects appear at the apothecary, including a crocodile, an elephant head, a rhinoceros head, a crab, coral, fish and shells. The entire scene is surmounted by a bust of the ancient doctor, Galen; the text below advertises that among their goods for sale are a range of “Galenical Medicines”.

The image is actually based on a painting by Jacques de Lajoue called ‘La Pharmacie’ which he painted for the Duc de Picquigny in 1735. Just three years later it was replicated in print in London by an engraver named Charles Nicolas Cochin, but the present card was engraved by Robert Clee, also of Panton Street, whose career spanned the mid-eighteenth century. Clee was well-connected and produced trade cards for a number of traders in the same area of London as Siddall and Swann.

Bibliography

BM Heal 35.64

Provenance

Price:

Inventory reference: 17964