

Ayer's pills for the digestive organs, Ayer's Sarsaparilla to fortify the body when a storm was approaching.

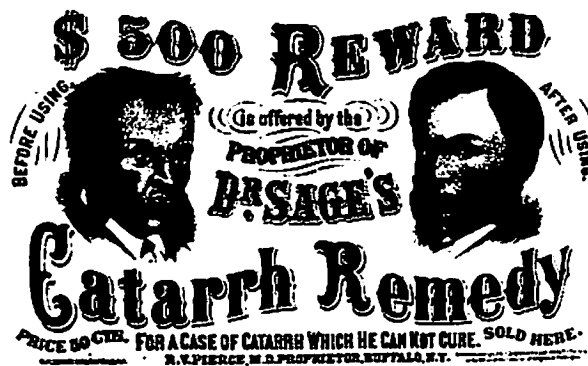
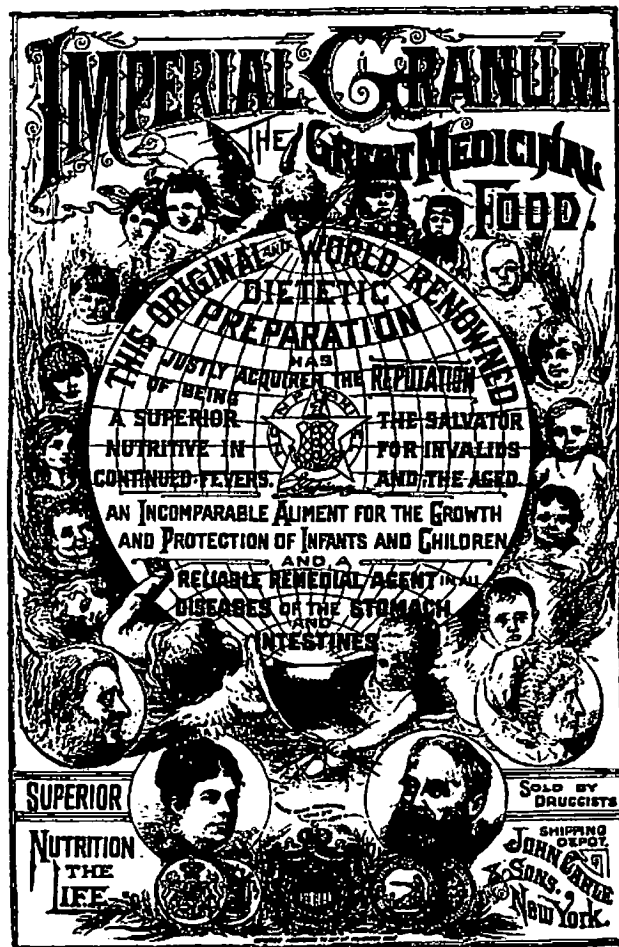
To relieve any fears of their product, The Insurance Medicine Company of Akron, Ohio, offered the astounding reward of \$500. in case of death resulting from the use of their twelve week treatment of Disease, Weakness and Decay.

The Perry Davis Company issued the dire warning of fatal accidents from scalds, burns, a kick from mules or horses and bad bruises from a slipped axe or knife and asked the question, "Have a bottle of Perry Davis' Pain Killer, ready for use?"

There were two facts about the patent-medicine business. Despite their wonderful claims, it was a fraud, and a dangerous fraud when it advertised nostrums for incurable diseases such as consumption (tuberculosis). Secondly, nearly all the most popular nostrums were loaded with hard drugs and/or alcohol. Dr. King's New Discovery for Consumption contained chloroform and opium, which quieted the cough for a short time, but left the tubercle bacillus to flourish.

The amount of alcohol ranged from the ladylike 18 percent in Mrs. Pinkham's Compound to a robust 44 percent in Hostetter's Bitters.

The patent-medicine industry from 1870 to 1900, with a cure for virtually every ailment, grew to tremendous proportions despite warnings from some that taking the medicines regularly was the starting of alcoholism and drug addiction. In 1883, The Commissioner of Internal Revenue spoke of the problem. "To draw the line nicely, and fix definitely where the medicine may end and the alcoholic beverage begin, is a task which has often perplexed and still greatly perplexes revenue officers."



Many of the newspaper patent medicine ads were artistic and lavishly drawn - for its day - as witness the large ad shown above.

By 1890, some 30 million Medical Almanacs were being distributed to a population numbering 60 million. One company boasted that its almanac was "second only to the Bible in circulation."