

The Fabulous Dr. Quackem

[Iowa newspapers frequently had five or ten patent medicine advertisements that took up from one-quarter to one-half a column. These were repeated week after week and month after month. It was hoped that the editors would be reimbursed for this space but undoubtedly this did not always happen. Most Iowa editors were outspoken in their opinions. Most of them also had a good sense of humor — as is revealed in the following account of a patent medicine man's visit to the editorial sanctum of the Iowa Valley Democrat at Marengo on September 4, 1861. Similar incidents occurred all over the country. The Editor.]

CERTIFICATE FROM A PATENT MEDICINE MAN

The editor in?

We were leaning back in our chair, dreamily building castles on the "monied basis" of a one dollar bill, which a delinquent had found it in his heart to pay in, in that comfortable state of mind between a "whale and a doze." Our feet were elevated upon the fender, and a promise of another warm meal during the week.

"Editor, sir?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, you are the feller I want to see. I'm Professor Quackem, of the Swashville Medekel Institoot, the inventor and sole PRO-prietor of a new medicine, the Great Horse Power Catherine, or Har Invigerator. Ever hearn on the article before?"

"Have not."

"Well I haint but just found it out myself, but it gese like ginger. It never fails. I'm sending it to all parts of kontenant: besides to South Ameriky and other places. It keeps in all climates. Everybody has har after they have tried it. But here are certifikits—all well authenterkated, know 'em all myself. May be you'll look at 'em?"

The little man handed us a well worn copy of the "Swashville Daily *Bugle*." The leader was devoted to the new discovery. We boldly, fearlessly, unhesitatingly pronounce it the diskivery of the age. We have been baldy from our birth, owing to certain troubles; but once using the Invigerator, kivered our head with a dense growth of har. Our friends are all astonished. Had the prophet known of this he would not have been called old bald head by the little ones, and forty and two of the little hopefuls tore into slivers by bears. We will let the Professor speak for himself:

"The way I diskivered this wonderful medicine was in this wise:

"I'd been out huckleberry'n, and when going home through the back pasture, where I keep old Brindle and Bob, my tew milking anemuls, I got kind o' tired like, and sot down on a bunch of weeds. They felt queer, and I rubbed some of them between my fingers. In less than ten minutes my forefinger and thum were kivered with fur, full out an inch long. You may well think that this

astonished me. I tried the weed on the other hand, and it produced har there, too. I jumped up from where I was a sittin, and what a sight. My New Drab doeskin pantaloons looked like the rump of a buffalo, with har three inches long. I did make for home about then. But an idea struck me. I tried the weed next day on the doorstone with great effect, producing a thick mat of mouse colored har in thirty minutes. I tried it on the chairs in the house and produced magnificent har cushions. Plowing up the weeds, the mould board of the plow looked like a steel gray musk rat, with handles to him. In digging out a woodchuck, I accidentally laid my iron bar upon the weed.—In the morning the carcass was kivered with har; and however incredible it may seem, I kept that woodchuck several days, and took twenty-seven full grown woodchuck skins, and a full coat of har on all of 'em. One of our Shanghai hens made a nest and sot in the same weed. Her eggs were covered with har, and the chickens came out with long har on 'em! I was sure that such a weed must be powerful, and so biled some on't down. The dish kittle was kivered with long, jet black har. I kept on experimentin', and by kemicrl kombarnations, produced the Invigerator, purely vegetable and always sure. I have seventy-five thousand certifikits from the bald-headed of all countries; but will read you only a few:

“PROF. QUACKEM.—This may certify that I

have always been bald, and have used up a barrel of common hair dye. I accidentally heard of your Invigerator, and purchased a bottle and carried it home in my overcoat pocket. The pocket was full of hair when I got home! I took the bottle and held it in the sun, where the shadow fell on my head. A thick head of chestnut colored hair grew out in thirty minutes, by the watch, all curled and perfumed. Send me twenty bottles by return mail. The call for the Invigerator is unprecedented. A neighbor of mine"—

"Excuse us, Professor," said we, [thinking that one half of seventy-five thousand, of that description, would be rather tedious to listen to, in as much as our time was valuable,] "to-day, and call again."