

# MAY WE KNOW OUR FOOD

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**D**R. HARVEY W. WILEY, Chief of the Bureau of Chemistry in the Department of Agriculture, has for years fought for the enactment of a law designed to protect the public against adulterated foods. After a decade of labor Dr. Wiley's efforts were crowned with success last June and as result there is on the statute books of the United States today what is believed to be the best pure food law in the world. Under its terms this act went into effect on the first day of January, and Dr. Wiley, at the request of the Illustrated Sunday Magazine, has given an interview upon the scope of that most important of all the acts of the present Congress. Dr. Wiley's statement follows:

The importance of the food and drugs act which went into effect on the first day of the New Year, is perhaps not fully understood. It is a more far-reaching measure even than the legislators themselves comprehended, but perhaps not more far-reaching than they intended. Its provisions are drawn on such broad terms as to let nothing escape, while they leave to the judgment of the Secretary of Agriculture the decision of very important questions affecting the wholesomeness of substances added to food and drugs. There is no provision in the bill against the presence of injurious substances naturally in food subjects, since it was not intended by the act to criticize the products of nature. The addition of deleterious substances by the manufacturer, however, is forbidden by the law. Where substances are added which are not deleterious, but which dilute or otherwise change the character of the food, they are not prohibited provided their presence is plainly indicated upon the label.

There are two ideas kept always in view in all the sections of the act, namely, the provision against misbranding and the provision prohibiting the addition of deleterious substances. It cannot be said that one of these features is more important than the other; they are given equal prominence and the offence against the law in each case is punished by the same penalties.

The act broadly defines food as consisting of all the substances commonly used as foods, beverages, drugs and condiments by human or other animals. It thereby includes in its provisions the protection of domesticated animals as well as human beings. Thus the adulteration of cattle food or the misbranding thereof is punished by the same penalties as those which attach to the adulteration or misbranding of human food. Misbranding is defined in broad terms as constituting anything upon the label which is false or misleading in any particular; and also goods which are not labeled at all are misbranded if they are imitations of or sold under the name of another article. Hence, the omission of a label and the selling of a food under the name of another article is as much a misbranding as if a false name had been placed upon the article itself. Adulteration is defined in several sections. The addition of deleterious substances has already been mentioned. The abstraction of any valuable ingredient also is an adulteration. Coloring, powdering or coating so as to conceal inferiority is an adulteration. In fact any sophistication of

a food product by which inferiority is concealed or by which any valuable property is removed, or the substitution of a less valuable for a more valuable property without notice are all regarded as adulterations. The presence in a food of any habit forming drug such as morphia, cocaine, chloral-hydrates, etc., or any derivative or preparation thereof also is an adulteration. Drugs are broadly defined in the act as any substance used for the prevention, cure or mitigation of disease whether taken internally or externally, whether for man or other animals. Thus domesticated animals also are protected against adulterated drugs or misbranded drugs as well as man. The United States Pharmacopoeia and National Formulary are the standards for drugs. Drugs may have, however, other standards if these standards are plainly printed upon the label.

No preparation may be sold in interstate commerce if it fails to bear upon its label the proportion or quantity of alcohol, opium, morphia, cocaine, cannabis, indica, or other habit-forming drug, or any preparation or derivative thereof. Thus the patent medicines which heretofore have been sold containing these injurious drugs no longer will be consumed by the public without knowledge of their dangerous contents, and this is a long step towards regulating traffic in promiscuous remedies not recognized by the regular profession of medicine.

The importation of misbranded or adulterated foods from foreign countries is forbidden by the act. Thus these foods never will be able to enter the country or be found in interstate commerce if the inspection at the ports of entry can be made sufficiently rigid. Foods which are forbidden sale or entry into other countries will not be permitted into this country if coming from such countries. The labeling of

beverages is an important feature under the bill. There can be no more "Chateau Yquem," "Johannisburger," or "St. Julian" made in the United States; there will be no more "Munich Beer" or "Pilsner Beer" made in the United States; the use of foreign names in any way to deceive or mislead is prohibited. The best that can be done in this direction will be that an American product may be labeled "A Type Of" the foreign article which it resembles provided that it really is a type of that article. We shall no more domestic "roquefort" or "cammenbert," but American products must stand on their own merits and must be sold under proper names, as should have been the case from the outset. If an American manufacturer desires to make a cheese in imitation of "roquefort" or "cammenbert" for instance, he may do so under the act provided he brand his goods as "imitation" and does not attempt to foist them upon the public as the original imported article.

Henceforward, brandy will be a distillation of sound wine properly aged in wood and not a concoction of neutral spirits and essences. Rum will be distilled from molasses just as it was in the days of long ago; whiskey will be a straight distillate of grains and barley malt, and not, as is too frequently the case now, a combination of high wines, flavoring extracts and prune juice. The law does not forbid, however, the making of mixed drinks of any description; provided they are wholesome and contain no added injurious substances, and are not made to imitate or stimulate any other article. They must, of course, be sold for just what they are. Such beverages will be required to be properly labeled so that the purchaser may know the character of the drink he is getting. The act is founded on the principles of common honesty and straightforward dealing, and cannot fail to be of as great advantage to the manufacturer who wants to do the right thing as it is to the consumer. The manufacturer, hereafter, will not be required to make a low grade article in order to meet the keen competition of the adulterated article, but he will have the open market for the straight goods. The man who makes the adulterated article also will have the open market, but only for his goods when they are properly labeled and when they contain no added injurious ingredient. The American people will be helped by this law both in their health and in their pocketbooks, and when they pay for an article they will know that it is of the character, kind and quality demanded, and not a base imitation thereof.

Substitution of one article for another has long been one of the curses of American commerce. Time after time we have heard of the sale of chicory for coffee, and even the people of Connecticut, as everybody knows, have been accused of manufacturing nutmegs out of basswood. Under this law substitutions will be prohibited and basswood nutmegs will find no market.

This law is more general in its application than the laws of any other country, and is a better law in most every particular, though not so drastic perhaps as those of France and Germany. It is, however, the most comprehensive food and drug act that has been enacted by any nation.