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PURE FOOD FOR ALL WHO SEEK IT



DOCTORED PRODUCTS MUST BEAR THE POISON LABEL

PROSPECTS of pure food and drugs were welcomed warmly, no doubt, by the several million men and women with disordered stomachs and impaired digestion, when the new national Pure Food and Drug law went into effect on New Year's Day.

"Now," they said to themselves and to each other, perhaps, "we are rid of the abomination of poisoned and adulterated foodstuffs, of impure and dishonest drugs."

"Our bread will no longer contain powdered alum; our meats will not be treated with sodium sulphite; coal-tar dyes and salicylic acid will depart from our jellies and jams. In the future our medicines will heal and not poison us."

Yes, if the consuming public forms itself into a committee of the whole to enforce the new measure of protection.

The title of the act may be misleading. It should be called an "Honest Food law," rather than a "Pure Food law." Under it adulterated products may be placed on sale as before, but the exact nature of each article must be stated upon its label.

Consumers are entitled to use what they wish, whether deleterious or not. But they are also entitled, when purchasing articles of food or medicine, not to have different, inferior or harmful articles palmed off on them.

To that extent only does the new law go—it seeks to insure honest dealing. The man who does not object to "doctored" products may have them at his will, but the purchaser who seeks pure foods and medicines has at last an official guide that points out baneful deceptions.

DURING the last quarter of a century the growth of commercial frauds, of adulterations in food and dairy products and in medicines and liquors has become so alarming that Federal and State Governments have been called upon repeatedly for measures of relief and protection.

Since 1889, when the first Pure Food bill was introduced in Congress, that body has been importuned year after year to extend its aid to the suffering public. Only after seventeen years

of constant agitation have the appeals been heeded.

No fewer than twenty-nine measures have been introduced in the House of Representatives, and twenty-seven in the Senate during that time, but some influence was always powerful enough to defeat them.

It was only after a tremendous struggle that the existing law was passed last summer, to become operative on January 1, 1907. That there should be any serious and organized opposition to the passage of a Pure Food law can only be explained by the fact that business methods attacked by the bill had become widespread and immensely profitable.

Recently a single State—Pennsylvania—made a determined crusade against a single product—glucose—with remarkable results.

It was charged that this glucose had been adulterated with poisonous sulphites, and that it was used very extensively in the manufacture of candies, especially of the kinds purchased by children.

Proceedings were brought against 435 dealers, and after costs and fines had been paid in 250 cases, the concern said to have produced the glucose surrendered. It announced that it would withdraw all the objectionable product from the State and would adopt a new process for the manufacture of glucose that would not

contain any sulphur dioxide.

"Your drastic action in enforcing your statutes has, in the aggregate, cost this company in the neighborhood of half a million dollars," wrote the president of the producing concern to the Pennsylvania health authorities.

What parent but is not glad to see harmful candies removed from the reach of his children; or, at least, to know that upon every jar or package of injurious candy hereafter must be plainly printed the names of the harmful elements? One would scarcely purchase for his little ones candy from a jar bearing the words: "Contains Poisonous Sulphites."

In an address before a section of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Professor L. O. L. Watters, an eminent New York chemist, declared that few articles of food, no matter how expensive, are free from adulteration.

"Labels have come to mean nothing," he said. "I venture to say it is almost if not quite impossible to obtain certain articles which are true to their names."

"I have found that in almost every case the vinegar sold at low prices is fortified by the addition of mineral acid. Cocoa is adulterated with an excessive amount of starch or with ground shells and sugar.

"It is an old story among food chemists that

ground coffee is duplicated by drying, baking and powdering hogs' liver, which is mixed with chicory and sufficient coffee essence to give it flavor. Whisky is sometimes manufactured from spirits by the use of 'heating oils' with various flavors and caramel coloring.

"The greater part of the gin consumed in this country has never been prepared by distillation over juniper berries, but is made by adding the oil to diluted spirits. Mustard is loaded with flour, tincture of Jamaica ginger is reinforced with capsicum and the greater part of our ground spices is adulterated."

As far as it can, the new Federal law is designed to prevent deception in the sale of all adulterated articles of food or medicine, or of articles that do not come up to the prescribed standard.

Every article sold must be clearly labeled, so that the purchaser may know the origin, nature and quality of the product offered for sale.

With these safeguards thrown about food and drugs, the consumer is left to work out his own salvation. As a general thing, he will still find adulterated products in the market, offered, no doubt, at a cheaper price than the goods of known purity.

He may take his choice; if he is willing to risk the impure article, the law cannot prevent

It can and does say to manufacturers and dealers that they cannot make and expose for sale anything containing injurious or inferior substances without that fact being plainly stated upon the labels that the articles must bear. These labels must be printed in English, and the letters must be large enough to be clearly discernible—conspicuous, in fact.

Perhaps it might be well, just here, to state that Congress has no power of police regulation in the several States. The new law is absolute in the District of Columbia and in the Territories; elsewhere it applies only to articles of interstate commerce.

SEEMS DESTINED TO DO GREAT GOOD

The manufacturer in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Illinois, Tennessee, California or any other State may continue placing adulterated and dangerous products on the market of his own State, and dealers may sell them as before, without having them bear the warning label. It is when such goods are sent for sale from one State to another that the law applies.

But even with this limitation the new measure seems destined to accomplish great good. When its intent and scope become generally known to the purchasing public the demand for articles known to be pure will, it is believed, force hitherto dishonest purveyors to supply better grades of goods themselves.

Take, for example, the case of a great food product factory with a national reputation and trade. It could not confine its sales to the State in which it is located merely in order to avoid meeting the requirements of the new Federal law.

To continue its sales in other States it must brand its product with whatever impurity or "doctoring" elements, if any, it contains. Should it contain no warning label, consumers will be convinced at once of its purity.

TO BENEFIT HONEST MANUFACTURERS

Undoubtedly such a confidence would lead to a greater demand for that special article than would exist for something else against which suspicion might be directed, so that, in time, the quality of all similar goods will be improved.

Some time ago a former brewer stated to the counsel for the Pennsylvania Dairy and Food Commission that much of the beer brewed in the United States nowadays contains:

"Sulphites of lime, as a 'cleanser'; tartaric acid, as a preservative; citric acid, as a flavor; benzoic acid, as an antiseptic; tannic acid, as a bleacher; salicylic acid, acetic acid and lactic acid, as preservatives; glucose, as a

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