

FOOD FAKES AND FANCIES.

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The large number of new food substances which are daily finding a place on the market makes a real problem not only for the inspector who must keep posted on all of them but more so for the average customer who no longer attempts to become informed on all the things he feels the need of purchasing any more than he feels the need of being informed on the qualifications of those for whom he chooses to vote.

"Best in the World." The buying world has become so accustomed to such extravagant claims as "fully guaranteed," "your money back," and many others, that it has learned to buy on faith. If the food is unsatisfactory it is usually avoided in the future and thus an elimination contest begins. Often it happens that the news of food frauds exposed by some investigating bureau never reach the man in the street and he continues to patronize a fraud because the high-pressure salesman has led him to believe this product is the "best in the world" and the halo thus developed for a commodity lingers in the purchaser's mind for a long time.

Fake Foods in Foreign Countries. There is probably less trouble from dishonest food in this country than elsewhere, due to the watchfulness of our food inspectors. According to a recent report from Paris, inspectors called attention to 728 articles taken for investigation and found 396 were falsified in some way. There was everything from watered milk, synthetic wine, and chocolate that contained no chocolate, to sugar that contained no sugar. There was coffee made from a mixture of wheat and chestnut flour and milk made from chalk, sheep brains, gum arabic, fat and sugar, probably the product of a French model of Ford's mechanical cow. There are few such flagrant food violations to contend with in this country. Many of those which require attention are borderland cases, as it were, which are concerned with foods of questionable usefulness or of uncertain value for money expended. Only a few of the more common will be discussed here, such as (a) foods of questionable vitamin value, (b) the mineral content of foods, (c) under size or weight of foods, (d) super foods and (e) breakfast foods.

Vitamin Foods. Among the vitamin foods widely sold at the present is cod liver oil which contains vitamins A and D in rather concentrated form. This has caused a wide demand for this oil, not only for human consumption but also for poultry and other live stock. The supply has been rather limited, hence the temptation has been great to mix this oil with vegetable oils which carry but small amounts of these vitamins.

It has been estimated that the so-called "cod liver" oil purchased for chicken feed alone during the past year was ten times greater than the total available supply of the pure cod liver oil. The vitamin value of this oil is often over-rated and the purchaser is usually dependent upon the standing of the company that sells the product.

Super Food. Santogen is a compound made up largely of casein and has been proclaimed as a scientific achievement,—a "gift from the Goddess of Health." It was proclaimed to have "700 per cent more tissue-building, life-sustaining nourishment than wheat flour," but laboratory analysis showed it to be less valuable than an equal weight of wheat flour. This food was concocted to attract people of wealth, as it was only advertised in high-class periodicals. Its extensive sales proved there are lots of suckers among people of means.

Mineral Foods. Have you had your iron today (or raisins)? is a question that has confronted nearly everybody in street cars, cigar stores and newspapers. It is a good question to raise, but a hard one to answer, as only a few foods contain iron in a form suitable for good assimilation. Thus onions and raisins both contain about the same percentage of iron (0.0006) but onions seem to be greatly superior to raisins and also to many other foods containing a much higher iron content when an attempt is made to select a diet suitable to replace blood iron which was given for transfusions.

Small Eggs, Underweight Bread and Butter. Another form of a fake is the selling of small eggs by the dozen where the law does not require them to be sold by the pound. This has developed into quite a business in some states, resulting in large numbers of eggs being shipped to regions where they can be marketed without danger of being rejected. Short weight in bread to consumers is estimated to have caused a loss of \$75,000,000 annually in the United States. Much of this loss occurs in cities where loaves which weigh only about 12 ounces are sold for nine cents as 14-ounce loaves. This is easily possible where few have scales that weigh accurately and fewer still can estimate the difference between a 12 and 14-ounce loaf. What has been found true for bread shortage also holds for weights in butter, especially for the 4 and 8-ounce sizes, which are most often found to be underweight. Here, as in many other food products, the safest plan seems to be in choosing as reliable brands as possible.

Breakfast Foods. Probably there are no articles of diet which cause the consumer more wonder as to their real value as foods than the large number of breakfast foods on the market. Can one depend on securing pep from a "pep" breakfast food? There are a large number of breakfast foods made out of wheat and widely advertised as highly nutritious foods, but after considerable investigation the writer has been unable to find one as valuable and nutritious as the wheat was before being treated, when measured by its ability to sustain the life of an animal. The bran breakfast foods have become quite popular in recent years, and sell at a price which would make agriculture profitable if the

grower got his share of the profits. However, the indiscriminate use of fibrous foods in overcoming constipation is questionable, as it seriously interferes with digestion, especially in the stomach, although it may serve to relieve constipation temporarily, through the increased bulkiness in the intestines of this large unused residue of the food.

Conclusion. In general it is questioned by Haldane whether any food product in a can or package is equal in food value and vitamin and mineral content to the raw materials from which it was derived. If this is the case it calls for more intelligent handling and careful research in foods if those living in cities far from the sources of the raw food material are to be maintained in health on a par with those located in the rural districts where much of the diet is composed of fresh fruits and vegetables. Many other examples of questionable foods might be mentioned but enough has been given to indicate that when the dollar goes on an adventure to a grocery store it is about as apt to meet a Waterloo as win a bargain battle.

