

EFFECT OF THE FEDERAL FOOD AND DRUGS ACT ON THE
WHOLESALE DRUG BUSINESS.

JOHN THOMPSON, PITTSBURGH, PA.

This paper is intended to convey some idea of the effect of the drugs act in general. I might cite cases where the new law had no effect except to compel the jobber to change his labels and conform to certain rulings, causing no changes to speak of in his methods of buying and selecting goods. I might also bring to your attention cases where the law caused an entire change of policy, just as in the case of retailers when narcotic laws are passed in the several states. The effect on some druggists is very great, compelling them to give up the traffic in the drugs affected by the legislation, but causing no inconvenience whatever to the great majority who refrain from the narcotic business from principle.

I think I am on fairly safe ground when I state that the greater portion of the wholesale druggists of the United States were conducting their business on honest lines and doing their best to supply pure drugs to the trade before the law of June 30, 1906, was made. But it must be admitted that much adulteration was practiced and that many impure drugs were marketed both through the well intentioned jobbers and those who make it a business to offer cheap goods without regard or care as to the quality.

The Food and Drugs Act has caused both the honest and the dishonest dealer to be more careful, especially the latter, with the result that the public is assured better and purer articles in oils and other crude drugs than they were before.

I will not attempt to detail the many changes that have taken place in the drug market, but will bring to your attention a few price advances to show that the drugs act has had its effect not only on the wholesaler, but the retailer, and the public as well, these advances being a pretty sure sign that the quality of the items mentioned has been improved. In 1905 asafoetida was quoted at 22 cents a pound. It is now about \$1.25, or over five hundred percent higher, the deduction being that formerly it was 75 or 80 percent not asafoetida. The actual cost of producing it has not largely advanced, and the demand is no greater than in 1905.

Gum tragacanth has advanced from about 80 cents to \$1.10, which is not so great a difference. I believe it is not so easy to adulterate tragacanth in the flake, which may account for its near purity of old.

Spanish saffron has jumped from around \$9.00 to \$13.00 or \$14.00 and it is most strange that the American flower has dropped from \$1.50 per pound to about half that amount. It looks as though there was no demand now for the home article as an adulterant and therefore not much sale for it.

Russian cantharides has advanced about 50%, manna 60 or 75%, and several other drugs in proportion.

The oil market is the most affected, the improvement in quality being very great. Oil of bitter almonds is 50% better, according to the price lists; oil

of anise 25%; cassia 50%; cubeb about 300%; erigeron 200%; fennel 25%; lavender flowers 80%; orange, both sweet and bitter, 25%; pennyroyal 90%; pimento 25%; rose geranium 100% and savin 100%.

On the other hand, oil of tansy has declined, but it is the only example I could find of a decided decline in price. Cod liver oil has declined greatly since 1905, but this is one of the drugs which, I believe, has never been much adulterated, the decline being due to lessened demand and greater production.

The law has affected sweet oil in the ruling that none but olive oil can be so labeled. This caused the wholesalers a lot of trouble when the druggist ordered "cheap sweet oil for external use" and got "cotton seed oil." He often raised a howl, with seeming cause.

The one feature of the law which affected the wholesaler more than any one else was its stipulations as to labeling. The label makers of the country got a good many thousands of dollars' extra business, making labels to conform to the rulings, and they made no fuss about it.

The wholesalers accepted the provisions of the law and, so far as I am informed, they believe it has made conditions better for the business, or at any rate has placed the manufacturing and wholesale drug business on a higher plane and has without question been a great benefit to the public at large. Our respected Congress probably had the public in mind when it passed the law, and the wholesale druggists, like most business men, are willing to accept and conform to any regulation that will tend to the betterment of the nation.

The law has had one very good effect on the wholesale business: it has made it much easier to buy pure drugs. Formerly many samples had to be rejected, and even large shipments had to be returned because they did not conform to the U. S. P. standard or to the standard made by the purchaser. Now the importers and manufacturers are more particular, and it is seldom that goods are received which do not meet the requirements.

The responsibility of the wholesaler is great, however, for he must know that his drugs are pure and is compelled to use every care and precaution in securing his supplies.

A MISGUIDED SWINDLER.

An enterprising swindler in England has recently been arrested for selling dried peas as "Little Liver Pills." They were sold on the assurance that they were "excellent medicine." Of course, dried peas are not an "excellent medicine" neither will they cure "liver trouble," but the same may be said of the many "liver pills" which contain drugs and are sold under claims even more fraudulent. The British swindler should have been better informed. When he desires to sell "liver pills" he should put some drugs in them—poisonous or otherwise, the kind doesn't matter. Then he can lie about his product to his heart's content and he will be immune from arrest. In fact, if he can sell enough of them he may look forward to a peerage. In Great Britain, as in the United States, it is not the mere act of swindling, but the method, that proves dangerous.—*Journ. A. M. A.*