

# New Safeguards for Buyers

By Loyd E. Harris

**T**HE conditions of American life have changed appreciably during the last three decades. The manufacturing and distributing of foods, drugs and cosmetics, three vital factors in our maintenance of health (and beauty), have become highly competitive fields of industry.

A great variety of menus may be served from the factory today, with little or no effort in the home kitchen. The manufacture of medicine has been taken from the apothecary to the factory. Truly we have become a nation of can and bottle openers.

The need of federal legislation to safeguard our health and purchasing power was sufficiently felt, as early as 1906, to cause the passage of a food and drug act in that year. Since its passage a mighty industry has developed. This is the cosmetic industry. (The 1938 wholesale value of perfumes, cosmetics and other toilet preparations, not including soaps, manufactured in the United States, was \$183,947,000.) We try to improve, and succeed at least in changing, our appearance from the color of our hair, including eyebrows and eyelashes, to the hues of finger nails and toe nails. A man of today has little idea as to what his wife will look like a year from now, even though he has the same one.

The individuals responsible for the Act of 1906 could not foresee the needs of today and the law was inadequate to cope with present problems. Accordingly, a measure to revise it was introduced in 1933. It took much effort on the part of government and consumer agencies to secure the approval of the new regulations. Finally the well known "elixir of sulfanilamide tragedy" drove the final needed blow and the new Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act was signed by the President on June 25, 1938. Very little publicity has reached the public about it; many may not even know of its passage.

The general provisions of the law were to become effective one year after its passage. Certain parts became applicable immediately; these including the provisions pertaining to dangerous drugs, new drugs and injurious cosmetics. The effective date of the labeling requirements was postponed by the last session of Congress until January 1, 1940.

The new law brings all cosmetics, except soaps, under supervision. Devices used in the treatment or diagnosis of disease, or that will affect the structure or function of the body of man are also regulated.

Because many individuals make pur-

chases on appearance, many deceptive containers have been placed on the market. Slack filling of containers, packages with false bottoms, and so on, are all misleading and are generally prohibited by the new law.

What is to be placed on the label where the consumer can read it?

All labels must give the weight, volume or numerical count in each package. (Certain items are exempt but they are of minor importance; i.e., a quart of fresh strawberries does not need to be labeled, but a crate must be labeled, giving the number of unit packages in it.)

The law provides for the establishment of a single standard of quality of a food and if any food does not meet the specifications it must be labeled as below standard. For those foods not having established standards, and which have more than one ingredient, the principal ones must be listed. False and misleading names and claims are prohibited. The chief of the Food and Drug Administration, which agency is charged with the enforcement of the act, recently released some thirty types that would be considered to be misleading when applied to cosmetics. A few of them are, circulating cream, contour cream, deep pore cream, enlarged pores preparations, eyelash growers, eye wrinkle cream, hair color restorer, muscle oil and wrinkle eradicator.

Drug package labels must have adequate directions for use and warnings against misuse and possible deterioration. The label of so called "patents" or non-standard drugs must list the ingredients in the formula but quantities need only be given when they may be dangerous or habit forming. Drugs that may be habit forming must carry the caption "Warning—May be Habit Forming." If claims are made that a cosmetic has remedial or preventative uses, it is classed as a drug and is subject to the labeling and other requirements.

"New drugs" cannot be introduced until adequate tests have demonstrated that they are safe for use. Poisonous drugs and injurious cosmetics cannot be legally sold.

To obtain the maximum benefits of the act the consumer must make some study of the statements that appear on the labels of Foods, Drugs and Cosmetics. Much information is now available on the packages in which we buy these products. It is up to you as a consumer to find out what this information means to you and your family and then apply it when making purchases.

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