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978-1-107-49484-8 - Canned Foods In Relation To Health: (Milroy Lectures 1923)

William Savage

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CAMBRIDGE PUBLIC HEALTH SERIES

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CANNED FOODS
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(*MILROY LECTURES* 1923)

BY

WILLIAM G. SAVAGE,

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CAMBRIDGE
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS
1923

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

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www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107494848

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First published 1923

First paperback edition 2015

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-107-49484-8 Paperback

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PREFACE

THE book consists of the Milroy Lectures for 1923 as delivered in February and March before the Royal College of Physicians, London, with slight amplification in a few directions.

While available literature has been utilized I have mainly relied on a systematic and detailed laboratory study of canned foods upon which I have been engaged, with the help of other workers, during the last four years, and upon what may be termed field inquiries which I have made, dealing with methods of manufacture in this country, the United States of America and Canada and with the degree and methods of supervision exercised over their manufacture, importation and sale.

The literature on the subject is not considerable considering its importance, while it is very scattered and much of it not very accessible. For the convenience of workers a bibliography is included.

The aggregation of a large percentage of civilized populations in great centres has necessitated revision of the methods of food supply. In consequence a striking phenomenon of the present century is the ever increasing extent to which the food of the community is presented to them not in the fresh condition but preserved, so that they have made available the food of periods of plenty and from areas of abundance. So far as this relates to decomposable food it is entirely a modern phenomenon only possible through the application of scientific knowledge. Is this drastic change one to be encouraged wholeheartedly or is it, like so many modern contrivances, fraught with its own menace and disadvantages which have to be eliminated or at least guarded against, before its benefits can be reaped?

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PREFACE

Of the many different methods of food preservation the procedure by which the food is preserved through being contained in hermetically sealed receptacles after treatment by heat is one which has increased by very rapid strides and the figures set out in the text show that the trade in canned goods is one of vast magnitude. The Great War caused an immense extension of their use and has supplied an object lesson—if one was needed—of the fact that canned foods have ceased to be a subsidiary means of supply and must be regarded as an essential source of food when large bodies of men or women have to be concentrated in a small area and subjected to conditions under which methods of transport are a primary consideration.

In view of their importance it is rather surprising that the matter has not received more general and detailed study from the Public Health point of view. In these Lectures I have attempted to give a comprehensive review, although of necessity somewhat condensed, of the whole subject of canned foods in their relationship to Public Health. The responsibility for any views expressed is entirely my own and these views do not, of necessity, reflect those of any Government Department with which I may have been associated.

Appendices I and II are two Reports by the author presented to the Canned Food Committee of the Food Investigation Board and included with their permission.

I am indebted to Dr Fitzgerald of the American Can Company for the illustrations on p. 126 and for permission to reproduce them.

W. G. S.

WESTON-SUPER-MARE.

October 1923.

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