

LABORATORY
OF THE
INLAND REVENUE DEPARTMENT
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BULLETIN No. 187.

DISTILLED LIQUORS, QUEBEC.

OTTAWA, September 15, 1909.

W. J. GERALD, Esq.,
Deputy Minister of Inland Revenue.

SIR,—I have the honour to submit a report upon certain samples of distilled liquors, collected in the Province of Quebec, during April and May of this year. This collection consists of 40 samples purchased as Whiskey, 40 samples purchased as Gin, and 20 samples purchased as Brandy, a total of 100 samples.

The inspection was made in consequence of a rumour to the effect that much spurious liquor was offered for sale in the province named. Instructions were given to procure samples at bar-rooms, and in such places as might be expected to furnish liquors of the lowest grades.

It is very satisfactory to note that none of the samples obtained give any evidence of being made, in whole or in part, from methylated spirit, or from wood alcohol; nor has the dissolved matter (See column headed "Extract") been found to contain anything of an objectionable kind. Indeed, with the exception of 8 samples, the whiskies may be described as containing only negligible amounts of dissolved matters; and may be considered as merely diluted alcohol. The dilution is in many cases carried to an extent such that two (2) samples are within 25 per cent of proof strength; and if we assume the legal validity of the limit for dilution of whiskey which obtains in Great Britain, 95 per cent of these whiskies would have to be declared adulterated by addition of water. More than 30 per cent of the whiskey samples fall short of containing half the alcohol strength known as proof. There can be no doubt that this constitutes a real fraud, and calls for legal redress. It will be noted that several vendors announced to our inspectors the fact of having added water to the whiskey they sold.

The Sale of Foods and Drugs Amendment Act of 1879 (Great Britain) permits the sale of gin at a minimum strength of thirty-five degrees under proof. Twelve (12) samples, out of forty (40) examined fall below this standard of spirit strength. None of the samples of gin reach proof strength, although two samples approximate it.

The samples sold as Brandy are with two exceptions up to the minimum spirit strength required by the British Standard.

The absence of any legal standards for spirits in Canada makes it impossible to pronounce upon the character of the samples now reported further than to say that they contain no methyl alcohol, and no substances that can be described as poisonous.

I beg to recommend the publication of this report as Bulletin No. 187.

I have the honour to be, sir,

Your obedient servant,

A. MCGILL,
Chief Analyst.