



Bad Whisky: The Scandal That Created The World's Most Successful Spirit

Edward Burns

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This is the new edition of a cult classic released at a time when the industry is once more addressing the problem of defining what constitutes Scotch whisky. This is a unique insight into the Victorian scandal which raged at the end of the 19th century surrounding the adulteration of whisky in public houses throughout the UK. Returning to contemporary press reports and Hansard, Edward Burns masterfully unravels the scandal which eventually resulted in laws being passed which created safeguards for what is now known the world over as Scotch. In 1872 Scotland's spirituous reputation as a purveyor of fine Scotch whisky was shattered when it was discovered that some public house whisky contained poison. The extent of adulteration was widespread with additives such as meths, shellac gum, sulphuric acid, and boot polish all being used to pass off spirits as 'Scotch whisky'. The North British Daily Mail took up the fight against the practice when, out of 30 samples of 'whisky' taken out of public houses, only two were found to be the real thing. With some of the most prominent figures in Scottish public life joining the fray, the battle was on to clear up Scotch. Set against a worldwide background of gross food and drink adulteration that saw the poorer classes slowly poisoned by what they ingested, the results of the in-depth investigation were hardly surprising. They were, however, dismissed by those in authority as the product of a young scientist's over-imaginative mind, and as a consequence the whole sorry affair was forgotten and allowed to fade with memory. The events disclosed in this remarkable book have not re-entered the public arena since that time. Given the importance of the topic, and the furore that followed the revelations, it is rather strange that little mention of them is made in any of the whisky books currently in print.

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