HARVEY W. WILEY SPENDS THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS IN THE MIAMI VALLEY, 1865–1866

by OSCAR E. ANDERSON, JR.

Harvey Washington Wiley, father of the Pure Food and Drugs Act of 1906 and a determined fighter for its vigorous enforcement, had numerous contacts with the lower valley of the Great Miami River throughout his strenuous life of eighty-six years.

Born in 1844 on a farm in Jefferson County, Indiana, and educated at nearby Hanover College a few miles down the Ohio River from Madison, Wiley spent his formative years in an area that looked to Cincinnati as its metropolis. As a young man he was frequently a visitor in the Queen City. In July, 1869, while waiting for the steamboat General Lytle to take him downstream to Madison, he strolled through the city, bought a copy of Comte’s Positive Philosophy, and marveled at the recently completed bridge across the Ohio. “I walked across the suspension bridge,” he recorded in his diary, “and realized as I never did before its magnitude and its grandeur.” In September, 1872, the young Wiley was again in Cincinnati, this time on his way east to study chemistry at Harvard. He had intended to leave September 20 on the early Baltimore and Ohio train, but a fog had forced the river steamer bringing him up from Madison to lay by for a while. This caused him to miss the morning train; but the delay gave him a chance to see Horace Greeley, then campaigning for the Presidency, who Wiley felt looked “contented and happy.” In the evening he went to the theater, as he put it, “to see the lowest phase of Society. I was not disappointed in my object.” In his maturity Wiley continued to visit Cincinnati. In 1907, when as chief chemist of the Department of Agriculture he had the task

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1Wiley was also a Doctor of Medicine, a professor of chemistry at Purdue University, a distinguished agricultural chemist, and late in life a contributing editor of Good Housekeeping.
2Wiley, Diary, July 12, 1869. Wiley diaries for 1869–74, 1878–79, 1885–86, as well as miscellaneous account and memorandum books are the property of his widow, Mrs. Anna Kelton Wiley, of Washington, D. C.
3Ibid., Sept. 20, 1872.
of determining whether foods and drugs were adulterated or misbranded, he spent several days in Cincinnati helping the United States District Attorney defend in the court of Judge A. C. Thompson the government rules on the branding of whisky.4

Among the citizens of Cincinnati Wiley numbered some of his most formidable antagonists. No forces that he had to combat were more powerful than the “rectifiers,” distillers who produced a beverage by blending neutral spirits with straight whisky or who simply took neutral spirits and added coloring or flavoring to give the appearance and taste of straight whisky. Wiley felt that such products should be considered misbranded when they went under the name of “whisky” or “blended whisky.” He favored reserving the name “whisky” to describe only the aged-in-the-wood distillate of the fermented mash of cereals. This doctrine was anathema to the rectifiers, and since Cincinnati was the great center of their industry, opposition to Wiley on this issue was intense there. As early as December, 1906, J. G. Schmidlapp, Chairman of the Board of the Union Savings Bank & Trust Company, wrote a letter of protest to his old friend, William Howard Taft. Schmidlapp told the Secretary of War that the Wiley position had agitated the distilling interests of Cincinnati and that their concern had spread to all related business interests. He felt that Wiley was not justified by historical and scientific fact and that the product of the rectifiers had at least as much right to the label “whisky” as the straight Bourbon of Kentucky. Though this matter was outside of Taft’s province, he referred the letter to President Roosevelt with the comment that he could rely on any statements of fact by his friend “Jake.”5

But Wiley had support as well as opposition from Cincinnati. Some of his most ardent partisans were to be found there. First perhaps was Charles Alfred Lee Reed, a gynecologist of renown, who as Chairman of the Committee on Medical Legislation of the American Medical Association arranged to have the nation’s physicians deluge Congressmen with telegrams in support of the

pure-food law. Reed, a good man in a fight, went to the famous 1909 convention of the Association of State and National Food and Dairy Departments at Denver. Here he attacked bitterly the work of the Referee Board of Consulting Scientific Experts headed by President Ira Remsen of Johns Hopkins University, a board which had controverted Wiley's conclusions as to the harmfulness of benzoate of soda when added to foods as a preservative. Another strong supporter of Wiley was John Uri Lloyd, pharmacist, student of eclectic medicine, and founder of that valuable collection of scientific works, the Lloyd Library. In 1909, when it was rumored that Wiley would resign from the Bureau of Chemistry, Lloyd wrote to urge him to stay at his post. To resign, Lloyd said, would only play into the hands of the enemies of the food law. Wiley should not abandon the American people in the emergency. In Cincinnati, as throughout the nation, women's clubs formed an important element in Wiley's strength. In May, 1912, after he finally resigned his post, the Woman's Club of the Church of the Advent in Walnut Hills forwarded to President Taft a set of resolutions expressing its regret at Wiley's separation from the public service and voicing its conviction that his principal opponents in the Department of Agriculture, George P. McCabe and Frederick L. Dunlap, should have been the ones to resign.

Harvey Wiley's first visit to Cincinnati was during the Christmas holidays of 1865-1866, when he spent his vacation from Hanover College at the home of his classmate, George Frederick Thomim, near Venice (also known as Ross), a small community one-half mile from the right bank of the Great Miami River about fifteen miles northwest of Cincinnati. The diary that Wiley kept on this trip recently has come to light. Its entries were written in pencil, now badly smeared, in a pocket-sized, leather-bound volume he called his "Hanover Note Book."
duced below just as he prepared them with all the defects of spelling and punctuation, though for clarity some changes in paragraph indentations have been made. One should not judge Wiley's ability to write by the imperfect orthography of this sample. The imperfections are the result of haste. Early in life Wiley developed a vocabulary and a literary style of which he became justly proud. This little travel journal is an interesting document not only because of the observations it contains on life in the Miami Valley, but because it is a subjective record of one of the first ventures of a Hoosier farm boy into the outside world.

Cin. Ohio, Dec. 21

It was bitter cold when we, Henry and I stepped off the boat ce matin. The wind fairly took our breaths. ([f] there is any such a word) However we managed to find a saloon, and get our breakfasts (pretium 50 cts) after which we took a stroll of an hour or two in the Queen City, which appeared to a cursory observer, like my self, "to be a right smart town," although there were so many houses that I could not get a fair view. But Phoebus how cold we were getting. Boreas was on a spree, and wasn't to be bullied into quietness even by old Sol himself.

If I had taken my ears for thermometers, I should have judged the cold equal to that produced by the evaporation of liquefied carbonic acid, while my phlebotomized toes even marked several degrees lower, but mercury being less sensitive or more stubborn did not indicate quite such a low temperature.

We spent the night in the city at Mr Newill's 1467 [?]

Although Wiley had been born just four miles north of the Ohio River, this was his first steamboat trip. Harvey W. Wiley, An Autobiography (Indianapolis, 1930), 83. On the first two pages of the Hanover Note Book is inscribed a poem in which Wiley pictured fellow passengers. Though undated, it seems likely that it was written during this vacation trip. Printed below are four verses.

As men sat round me whom I n'ere had seen,
Some with a pleasant, some a horrid mien,
Their characters me thought I saw portrayed,
As some by love, and some by hate were swayed.

Some reading were, intent on what they read,
For no confusion did they show their dread,
Their bodies only were upon the boat,
Their souls o'er other, wilder waters float.

One fine old gent, with specs athwart his nose,
Without remission looked towards his toes.
But though so still you might deem him asleep,
Of chilled draughts, his mind drank deep.

A contrast. A low born fellow next
Who e're at supper smoked, the table mixed.
To eat was his ambition but did combine
With human form the spirit of a swine.
Eastern Avenue, I very pleasantly, enjoying various games and *tête-à-tête* [sic] with Miss Talbert Henry's sister and Miss Newill. The streets of the city are very narrow compared with those of Indianapolis, and in the principal business marts much inconvenience arises there from.

**Saturday Dec 23.**

**Kate's Mills.**

Arrived here, my original destination last night, chilled from *'turret to foundation stone'* as Sir. W. Scott came very near saying. We left Cin. at 2 o clock P.M. in a "coach an' four," and after four hours of what would have been pleasant riding if it had not been for *this villainous cold*, as Billy says we made land successfully, and thawing a few (minutes) partook of a bountiful repast and proceeded to enjoy ourselves, *vide intentions*. Found George well, and apparently at home. I anticipate a pleasant time. *Necessitas est otii vitandum esse.*

Perhaps I might tell something de situ moribus, et populis, of this part of the *wide wide world*. It is some 5 or 6 miles from the steamboat landing, till you reach the high ground on top of the river hill.

After once completing the ascent I thought to have found a level stretch of country.

But not so, the country continued broken, and apparently rich. The country is very thickly settled someplaces allmost becoming a town, and every thing gives evidence of the prosperity and comfort of the inhabitants.

The mill is on the left bank of the big Miami river, a very good sized creek, and supplying an inexhaustable water power. The land on both sides of the river is very rich, commanding from $150.00 to $200.00 dollars per acre. It produces excelent crops of the cereals, as the fine grists brought to the mill will attest.

A fish box attached to the mill race, furnishes any amount of fish, without the trouble of hook and line. I am well pleased so far and have no fears for the future, the young *ladies* are models of industry and politeness, and it is hard to say where they most excel in the kitchen or parlor [.]

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13This was Wiley's first ride in a public omnibus. The bus came in from Venice in the morning and returned in the afternoon. *Autobiography*, 83.

14The construction of this phrase makes it difficult to judge what Wiley meant. Possibly he was trying to express his belief that leisure could only be enjoyed when it came as respite from hard work.

15It was reasonable for him to expect level country, for one encounters such as he travels west from Madison toward the Wiley farm near the little town of Kent.

16The coach no doubt traveled out Colerain Pike past Mount Airy, following the route of modern Highway 27.

17While visiting John Uri Lloyd in 1921, Wiley went out to Venice, but was disappointed to find both mill and dam gone and trees a foot and a half thick growing in the old race. *Autobiography*, 84.
Bis* Wiley as a Harvard Graduate, 1873
Decem. 24 Sunday

Went to church today with George and his two sisters, had a pleasant drive, and heard a splendid sermon from Mr. Hughes, which was truly eloquent. I could not agree however, to his total depravity, which he preached up rather strongly, but the majores partem (excuse the Acc. case) I heartily endorsed. He preached from the text “He has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light.” He first proceeded to rectify what appeared to be two contradictions in the text. 1st “abolished death” He reasoned, ‘we all see that death is not abolished every day we follow some one to the grove’ &c.

He then proceeded to show, that it meant, “to destroy the power of death, and make it no more a terror to those who love the lord &c. Next contradiction, brought life and immortality to light,” this he said was in some degree done in the covenant made with Moses, but in Christ every thing was brought out into the full light, which had before been seen only through a mist.

He then proceeded in the following order.

1st we are a ruined race, nothing good in us, without divine help doomed to an eternal Hell, and the other dogmas of that depravity, presented in their strongest light. 2nd God is holy, and his law inflexible. How then he asks are we to be saved? He enumerates 4 obstacles, to our eternal happiness, 1 sin, 2, death, 3 God’s inflexible law, 4 his infinite holiness. These points he brought forward, and elaborated in very forcible and eloquent manner. He is a good and eloquent speaker. After meeting, we drove about two miles N.E of Venice and dined sumptuously (as I do every day) at Mr. Harmon’s, a German, Democrat and Catholic, but withal very clever, and having a wife and daughter who are excellent cooks. (If the court knows herself) Coming home, we travelled a new road, coming by the other mill, and the house where George used to live in days of yore.

I enjoy myself beyond measure, and my happiness is only marred by the thought that it will soon be over, and two or three other things too numerous to mention.

Christmas come, and gone

I had a good time yesterday. The weather warm and pleasant, the mud soft and yielding, and everything lovely, with the goose hanging high.

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18The church was Presbyterian and still stands in Venice. The Wiley family belonged to the Christian denomination, the sect founded by Barton W. Stone, a frontier minister who became dissatisfied with orthodox Presbyterianism.

19Wiley later learned that Rev. Mr. Hughes, who was stone deaf, was his mother’s second cousin. Autobiography, 84.
In the morning I read wrote and walked. At noon I helped demolish a Turkey, with various other goodies. But the afternoon was the Ne plus ultra of pleasure. George and I procured a skiff, and rode about two miles up the river, to a place called Indian Creek, where the water washing away the bank is unearthing skeletons of the "red men of the forest. I secured part of a skeleton, which I propose taking with me. At night we drove about two miles down the river to the Witte Society, where were collected the elite of the country in great numbers. My enjoyment there was more of the inductive nature than of the direct, that is came more from seeing others happy. I like the society here very much, none of that stiffness and excessive politeness (the term is wrongly used) that is so characteristic of Han. and vicinity.

The young men I find kind and hospitable. The young ladies, beautiful and free from affectation.

To day we go again up the river on a boating excursion.

Decem 27

Yesterday we drove to Millvill, to attend a singing convention [,] got there as it was about over. Millville is a town of some one thousand inhabitants, situated 6 miles north of Venice, In Indian creek bottom.\textsuperscript{20}

No wonder the farmers are rich here, they cannot help it if they would.

The soil is equally as fertile as the bottom lands of the Ohio.

We dined with Mr. Whipple, a welthy farmer, who is now attoning for his good living, by suffering from chronic rheumatism.

I am surprised, where there is so much wealth with nothing to hinder the progress of education, That the people as a whole should be so ignorant. I haven't heard a single conversation, except on trivial matter, nor a single sentiment other than commonplace.

There are plenty of young people, of bothe sexes, whom I have become acquainted with, who have fine natural talents, and who only need the discipline of an education to make them useful men and women.

Yet they are wasting their lives away in pursuits whose benefits end with time and leave them nothing to begin eternity with.

\textsuperscript{20}Millville is also on Highway 27.
Jan 1 1866.

The first day of the new year [.] Intrinsically no more, than any other, day. Relatively of great Importance. It is the day when thousands of vows for reformation take effect, when those who do good ought to try to do better, and those who do evil cease therefrom. Tis a day that terminates thousands of engagements, and ushers in other thousands. Honest toil receives remuneration for past exertions, and cheering promises of reward for work to come. It is a day of mirth for the children, of hope for the youth of quiet contentmen[t] for the old.

Dealers in fire crackers rub their hands in excess of joy, and as they count over their increasing gains, say surely the evil days are yet far from us.

The students, happiest people of all, though but miserable book worms in the eyes of others, are of a truth experiencing their happiest days. Wherein said happiness consists it would take too long to enumerate, though divers parties, turkeys and love episodes might be readily guessed. All Hail then thou first of January 1866. Let this year be a year of improvement.

Jan 3, 1866.

Conclusion,

That is of my Holiday experience. We left Kate's Mills, George and I Mrs Thomin and Rickey, at half past six, yesterday morning. I had a nice ride to Cin. on top of the buss, but found myself rather uncomfortably cool at the journey's end. But two hours of brisk walking over the city restored the equilibrium of circulation. At 12.M. we took passage on the steamer U.S. also dinner. The capt not wanting to land us at Hanover, we stopped at Mad. Staid at Sudie's 21 about half an hour, and then took the road for Han.

A glorious walk we made of it, with a mudless road, a cloudless sky, and an overwhelming flood of moonbeams. Arriving here, we beat the "long roll" on the front door, and having made known our identities, we were ushered up into our old place once more[.] So ends my visit, begun so inauspiciously mid rain, and snow and sleet, ended so pleasantly on the pleasantest of pleasant winter nights, mid moonlight silence, and happy memories.

Though age may chill the fire of youth,
Break Memory's golden chains,
Remembrance of these days, in truth
Unchangeable remains.

### Sic transit otium memoriae. 22

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21Wiley’s sister Susan.
22"So leisure passes into memories."