

Your Money's Worth

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"Your Money's Worth" is not so valuable for the information contained there-in, as it is for the dissatisfaction it arouses in the mind of the consumer. The importance of this book lies in the fact that it shows the absolute necessity of some protection for the consumer.

At the beginning the author makes an excellent comparison; the consumer is compared to Alice, available commodities to Wonderland. Just as Alice was lost among the oddities in Wonderland, so the consumer is also lost amid the numerous commodities, good and bad, offered for sale. He may see at one counter seven, eight, or a dozen different brands of the same goods. He has only the advertisements to guide him in his choice. And they all say that each brand is the best, "the best that money can buy." The merchant is desirous of selling his goods, be they good or bad; he usually is ignorant of their qualities. So how is the customer to choose?

But this situation has a remedy. The United States' government, when it buys paint or some other goods, does not take a chance; does not depend upon any one man's judgment. It simply gets samples of each competing brand, and puts them under certain tests to see if they are up to the standard. Thus it is able to get not only the best, but to economize.

It is an easy matter for the government to make these tests, but it would be a little difficult for the consumer to do likewise. However it would be a simple and at the same time useful thing for the government to publish its findings. Such a service would be a great help not only to the consumer, but also to the honest manufacturer and even to the country. For such a policy would insure the consumer's getting full value for his money, would enable him to choose the best, and would eliminate all injurious commodities from the market. It would force the dishonest manufacturer from selling his goods; and so would give the honest man a better chance in his business. Thus there would be a higher standard for all goods; the manufacturer would be able to spend less on advertising and so could reduce prices.

Among many of these inferior goods there are also a great number of useless and even harmful ones, such as

face-lotions, quack-medicines, soaps, and so on. These medicines are advertised so that one would think they could cure any sickness. Usually they consist of nothing more than water, sugar, and coloring matter. People are easily misled by lying advertisements, and instead of consulting a doctor very often keep on using useless preparations until it is too late.

It very often happens that an inferior commodity is misrepresented as a high-grade one. For instance, some article is sent to be tested, and since everything submitted for tests is of good quality, this one is recommended. After having produced the goods on a great scale, the manufacturer may decide that he should receive greater profits. So he adulterates his product, and still advertising it as the one tested, sells it as much as before to his fooled customers, but with a greater profit to himself. Again, an article may be produced and not sell well. The producer can simply change the name, make it a different size, or raise the price a little, and then advertise it as a very exclusively used article. So the consumer is fooled; he must find out from experience.

One of the best means to extricate the consumer from Wonderland is "standardization." This word has become sadly distorted in meaning; a better might be "simplification." In many cases there are articles produced in all sizes and shapes. In most of these a few sizes would be sufficient. For instance, there are six hundred sizes of fire hose sold in United States. A dozen would be sufficient. Of course many goods have been simplified. Men's clothes do not differ a great deal in style. So could many other things be standardized. It would make for a great deal less trouble to the customer.

The United States government has established a bureau of standards which could be a tremendous aid to the consumer. Its original duties were to set a standard of weights and measures, but these have been gradually expanded. Finally it undertook the work of testing doubtful materials and devices for the government. For the last two years its findings have been published for the public benefit. Through this information the government has been able to effect great savings. This could easily be extended further so as to benefit everyone.

Lastly this book suggests one other way of remedying the situation. For example in colleges, in the laboratories,

students could be given these goods to analyze, and thus would not only be benefiting themselves but would also be aiding their fellow-citizens. Moreover the consumers might co-operate in establishing a consumers' laboratory. Then if the consumers bought only those goods recommended by these laboratories, the dishonest manufacturer would be forced out of business. The consumer then would find that he had escaped from the treacherous ways of Wonderland, that he had entered into a new world, a world freed from the traps and lures placed by men to get his money.



For truth has such a face and such a mien,
As only to be loved needs only to be seen.

—Dryden.

A man's best things are nearest him,
Lie close about his feet.

—Milnes.

The King in a carriage may ride,
And the beggar may crawl at his side;
But in the general race
They are travelling all the same pace.

—Fitzgerald.

Men are not flattered by being shown that there has
been a difference of purpose between the Almighty and
them.—Lincoln.

