

First it is claimed that even on the side of production the competitive system has failed. Everywhere about us is waste and inefficiency. Where no private profit is to be had, a service is not done, even though vitally necessary. Where profit is to be had, competitors rush in without number. We have many times as many middlemen as are necessary, a little grocery-store on every corner, where one good one would do. Contrast the planless distribution of milk by a score of competing dealers serving a single street, and the systematic distribution of mail by a central authority. Note the loss of effort and money in parallel railways, competing gas companies, duplicated electric-light or power plants. Count up the wastes of advertising. "The hatter in the Strand of London," declared Carlyle, and the socialist echoes him, "instead of making better felt hats than another, mounts a huge lath-and-plaster hat, seven feet high, upon wheels, sends a man to drive it through the streets, hoping to be saved thereby. He has not attempted to make better hats, as he was appointed by the Universe to do, and as with this ingenuity of his he could probably have done; but his whole industry is turned to persuade us that he has made such. He too knows that the quack has become God." In America this waste amounts to hundreds of millions a year.

Consider the constant lack of adjustment between supply and demand, the gluts here, the famines there. Haphazardly scattered produce prepare to meet the guessed-at wants of world-wide consumers. The adjustment is never exact. At times it fails utterly; we have crises and panics, periods of "over-production," when factories cannot sell their output and workmen cannot find employment.

The case for competition is no more favorable, it is urged, when we turn from quantity to quality of products. "Adulteration is a form of competition," was the frank apology offered by John Bright. The advance of science and original sin have made it possible to counterfeit almost every article of common household use, the more easily because of the lack of experience of the final purchaser. Even in Tennyson's day "chalk and alum and plaster were sold to the poor for bread," and the wooden nutmeg had rechristened a state. But the amateur and unsophisticated efforts of half a century ago pale before the accomplishments of to-day—the red raspberry jam which once was gelatin, aniline, and timothy seed; the prune-juice and fusel oil masquerading as whiskey; the chicory in the coffee and the pea-hulls in the chicory; the artificial oils in the flavoring-extracts; the labels we drink at champagne prices; the shoddy we are clothed in and the paper soles we walk on; the "Corot" on our walls with its paint scarce