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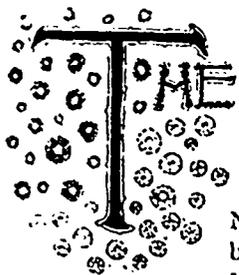
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**THE ABUSE OF COMPETITION.**



**T**HE ESSENCE of modern trade is competition. It is the warfare among the strugglers for wealth, although when all should be endeavoring to produce wealth, there would seem to be no necessity for much of the struggling. Nevertheless a healthy rivalry has always been regarded as an essential to progress.

It is when the rivalry becomes unhealthy, withering and destructive that it is regarded with aversions. Men seek to get more than their due share of this world's goods, and in their haste to be rich, use unfair methods. Competition is not being bounded in the present day with such restrictions as are necessary to keep it within bounds. The flood is rising fast; soon the banks will be overflowed and destruction will follow. After this the only way will be to make a new channel for competition and send it on into the Sea of Historical Forgetfulness.

But competition is now working certain evils, and the greatest of these from the stand point of business men is the demand for cheap goods. The consuming public seem to have an increasing appetite for cheaper goods. Goods that are sold as "all wool," contain perhaps 25 to 75 per cent. of cotton. "Pure wool" goods are fifty per cent. shoddy. All wool carpets are 25 per cent. cotton. Ingrain carpets are all cotton. All wool underwear is 40 per cent. cotton. Silk goods contain no silk. Solid silver goods are only triple-plate. Such is the course of

manufacture—the public has the appetite, and the manufacturers supply the intoxicant. Like strong drink, the more that is taken, the more is desired. Trade is fast coming to that point, when the genuine article whether it be wine, silver or woollens will not sell at all. When an article is shown to a man to-day, he says at once and first: 'Can I sell it for so much?' The seller says it couldn't be done, that the raw material would be worth that. Well then, this jobber, wholesaler or retailer says, "Get me an article similar to that to sell at so-and-so, and I will take all you can make in a year." The manufacturer says to himself, "Which is it, Money or Reputation?" and unfortunately it is usually decided in favor of money, and the cheap article is made. And it is placed on the market with a pretty face but a rotten heart, yet it sells, and the manufacturer makes money, the jobber makes money, the retailer makes money, but what about the buyer—here comes in the legal rule "Caveat Emptor," let the buyer beware. The world goes on with an electric whirl, driven by insane competition and down, down goes the standard of the consumer's purchases.

How does this affect the retailer? It affects him in this way. He secures a large and gaudy store, he hires the cheapest labor in the market; sells his goods on the narrowest margins; and sells all the meanest sorts of trash which people buy merely because it is cheap. The price sells, not the clerk. This applies only to retail business. But how long will the wholesale business stand the test? Would it not be better to secure better educated assistants for retail stores and handle the best goods only? What says the merchant of to-day in answer to that question? He says, 'you can do so if you wish, but as for me I abhor poverty and shall do as others do and grow rich.'

But the fault does not all lie with the public. There is an insane kind of competition which drives down prices without any benefit, except to the man who gets the cheap price. Two wholesalers start to sell a retailer his fall underwear, and one cuts 25 cents a dozen, the second cuts 50 cents, and finally the first sells at 5 per cent. advance on cost. Which wholesaler is benefited? The proper answer is, the one who lost the sale. This is unnecessary competition; foolish, absurd, insane. The same criticism applies to retailers and manufactures. Avoid recklessness, or you will soon find yourself on your uppers. There is no use being in business if you cannot make a decent profit. Make a good profit or make nothing. Make a good profit, or else in a short time you will be worth less than nothing. Avoid getting business for the sake of getting it, although it is perfectly proper to get money for its own sake or rather for the sake of what it will bring. Make money with honesty to yourself and towards your neighbor.