

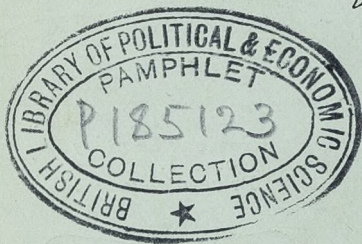
# Through Trade to the Co-operative Commonwealth

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BY ELEANOR BARTON, J.P.

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TO BE OBTAINED FROM THE WOMEN'S CO-OPERATIVE GUILD  
29, WINCHESTER ROAD, LONDON, N.W.3.

PRICE 1½d.

# C·W·S BRUSHES & BROOMS

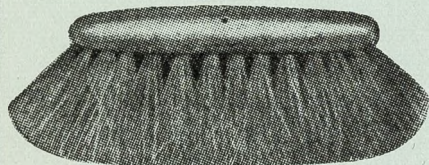
FOR EVERY PURPOSE.



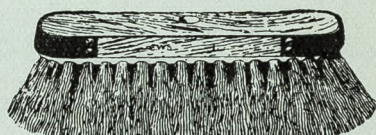
**"B" Quality.**  
No. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.  
Price 2/3 2/7 3/2 3/9 4/6 each.  
Good Hard-wearing Quality.



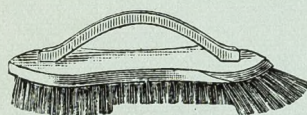
**"Lily" Quality.**  
Red Japanned Stocks.  
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Price 4/- 4/6 5/- 5/6 6/3 each.  
Warranted all Hair.



**Barrel Bassine Broom.**  
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Price 2/- 2/6 each.



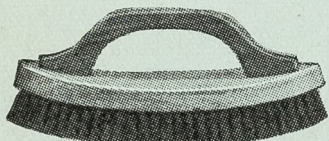
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Price 11d. 1/2 1/4 each.



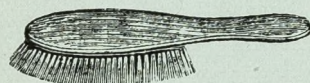
**Laundry Scrub.**  
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Price 3½d. 4½d. 5d. 5½d. 6d. ea.



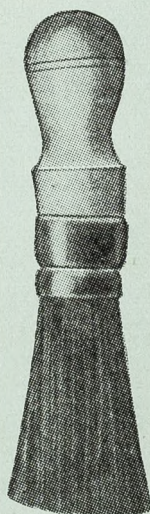
**"L" Quality Oval.**  
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Price 11d. 1/2 1/6 each.



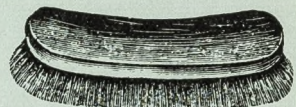
**Crescent Laundry**  
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No. 60. 80. 90. 120.  
Price 1/6 2/- 2/6 3/6 each.

For Particulars of Full Range of Brushes made by the C.W.S., inquire at Your Co-operative Society.

## Through Trade to the Co-operative Commonwealth

ALL the problems of to-day are, in some way or another, related to Trade, and every individual, whether conscious of it or no, plays a part in the scheme of business. In order to live at all it is necessary to consume, and the relation between the producer and the consumer is therefore one of the most basic and real of all human relationships. Because of this the consumer has a power which, expended in the right direction, is sufficient to control or even to change the foundations of society. Private traders are able to exploit the consumer because, as a rule, consumers are unorganised and their needs are great. The Co-operative Movement, on the other hand, a movement wherein the power of the consumer is organised, aims at uniting production and consumption for the welfare of the Community. This is the essential difference between Co-operative and Private Trade.

### CAPITALIST METHODS.

Competition in trade becomes keener day by day, and it is interesting, in watching its development in recent years, to study the methods employed by capitalists to exploit the consumer. Of all the devices used none are more striking than those connected with buying and selling. There are the snares of shop-window prices, which are about as beneficial to the customer as the spider's web is to the fly. "Will you walk into my shop?" invites the trader by a specially-priced article in his window, and the unwary customer accepts the in-

vation. But before leaving the shop the unfortunate purchaser has probably paid more on some other article than has been saved on the specially cheap one.

Another form of enticement is Sales. At one time this was the legitimate way the trader had of getting rid of his old stocks, and a sale was held once a year for this purpose. Now, however, things have changed, for after the annual sale came the half-yearly, winter, and summer sales, and these have given place in their turn to all kinds of sales at all times of the year. There is the White Sale, the Household Sale, the Stocktaking Sale, and sales of special articles from time to time. These are no longer held for the purpose of changing stocks, for special articles of all descriptions are manufactured for the purpose of making additional profit. Herein lies a new way of profit-making through trading on people's belief that sales mean bargains.

#### DECEPTION IN SALES.

Sales are not the only means by which people are taken in by the modern capitalist. Another favourite device is to use the name of a well-known article with an alteration slight enough to hoodwink people into believing that the new article contains the substance of the familiar one, whereas it is often not only inferior but of a totally different make-up. A striking instance of this was the manufacture of flannelette, which deceived many mothers of young children into thinking it contained at least a certain amount of wool. It was only when the attention of the public was called to its inflammability that mothers realised that it was nothing but cotton.

Again, when artificial silk was introduced the use of the abbreviation Art. Silk gave the impression that it was some particularly artistic kind of silk. To-day, it is known that it is not silk at all. Another instance of some years ago was giving the name of Butterene to a manufactured article resembling butter, which led to so much abuse that the law had to intervene and compel the use of the name Margarine, insisting that this name should be printed on the wrapper for the protection of the public.

#### CO-OPERATION AND PRICES.

There are many reasons why the public are taken in by capitalist devices such as these, and the chief one is that the temptation of seemingly low prices is so great. The whole question of prices is a basic one for the housewife, whose desire for cheapness in order to make ends meet is thus exploited. The fluctuation of prices, notable in the case of private traders, is one of the hardest problems she has to face, and is the cause of much anxiety. She finds to her dismay that in the most difficult times, in times of industrial depression, unemployment, or of strikes, prices will always rise to a level almost impossible for her to cope with. She also finds that whereas an occasional article is sold very cheaply for the sake of advertisement, in the long run the most trivial excuses will serve for the private trader to put up his prices. She does not always realise the effect that the Co-operative Movement has had, and is continually having, on prices. Not only are prices frequently forced down by the Co-operative Societies selling their goods at a cheaper rate than private traders, but Co-operation tends to stabilise prices throughout the country. Criticism is sometimes levelled against the stores charging higher prices than those of competing firms. Investigation has proved this to be wrong in almost every case when quality for quality is taken into account. In a Yorkshire town, for instance, where the housewife bakes the family bread, a complaint was made that the Co-operative Society's flour was 2d. a stone dearer than that of Messrs. So and So. This was immediately answered by a man saying: "Yes, but my wife gets a loaf of bread more out of the Stores flour."

#### EFFECT ON LOCAL PRICES.

There are many instances, too, of the direct effect of Societies upon local prices. To mention one of these, a Society starting in the milk trade prepared to sell its milk at a price lower by  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. or a 1d. a pint than local prices, and advertised the fact. The local milk dealers met together and sent a deputation to the Society asking them to bring their prices to a uniform rate with that

prevailing in the district. The Society explained that this price was the one they intended to sell at, with the result that the local dealers had to bring down their price also. In this way the Co-operative Movement gave not only cheaper milk to its own customers but levelled the price for other purchasers in the district. The latest example of milk prices being forced down by the Co-operative Movement is in the case of the new dairy at Kettering. The same action has also frequently been taken in the case of other articles such as bread, coal, soap, &c.

### THE RELIABILITY OF CO-OPERATIVE PRODUCTIONS.

In addition to helping the consumer with lower prices, the Co-operative Movement has led the way in the production of a pure and reliable article in all that it turns out. The fact that the price of goods must be the first consideration of many a housewife, because the saving of a few pence on one article means the possibility of another badly needed one, sometimes prevents her from paying the attention to quality that she would like to. Often the housewife buys cheap goods, feeling all the while that they may not be of the purity that she knows is essential to the health of her family. Outside the Co-operative Stores she cannot be sure that she is buying food that is absolutely pure, or other goods that are thoroughly reliable. As yet the law does not enforce sufficiently stringent purity tests, and if she has only the word of the private trader, whose goods have passed through many hands of which he often knows nothing, to rely upon, she is in a sorry position. In the case of Co-operative productions she can trace each article back to its source, and can, therefore, be certain of its complete reliability. The Co-operative Movement is not out for profit but for the good of the consumer, and has not the incentive to produce goods of an inferior quality to increase profits that a private trader has, and the products are consequently of the maximum value. This can be seen in an instance such as that of Nutrix Milk, where, instead of the mini-

mum amount of fat allowed by law being used, as in the case of other dried milks, the largest amount of fat possible is retained.

Nor is it only co-operators themselves who testify as to their productions. Given fair play and an unbiased judgment, Co-operative productions can compete favourably with the products of even the greatest capitalist concerns. Several examples of this can be given. A particularly interesting one is an incident that occurred in connection with the Hackney Borough Council in 1919. The subject of soap tenders was raised at a Baths Committee meeting, and several Co-operative members of the committee suggested that C.W.S. soap tenders should be asked for. Samples were received, but the soap was not accepted, as its price was 6d. per cwt. above that of another make. It was thereupon suggested by a co-operator that the next time tenders should be sent in numbered (but not named) and should be sent to the public analyst for analysis. This was done, and the C.W.S. soap, both bar and tablet, was found to be 82 per cent pure and 3d. per cwt. lower than any other. It was far and away the purest and best soap. The committee, and it must be remembered that this was not a Labour Council, consequently had no option but to order C.W.S. soap.

Another instance of this kind occurred in the case of tea. In 1925 and 1926 four contracts for a total quantity of 103,800lbs. of tea were given to the London Society by the West Ham Board of Guardians. These contracts were secured, again, absolutely on their own merits, for samples were sent to the clerk of the Council who sent them, unnamed, together with other samples, to an independent tea taster who declared C.W.S. tea to be the best.

### PUSHING CO-OPERATIVE PRODUCTIONS.

It is because of the need for the best quality of goods in every home, as much as for the development of the Co-operative Movement, that care should be taken to ensure that Co-operative productions are pushed in every store. It is often found even yet that the goods of private

manufacturers will be displayed in Co-operative stores, and C.W.S. productions given a second place. It is the business of the consumer as a co-operator to see that Co-operative products are sold, and, as a housewife, to demand them, so as to be sure that her family have the best. In the last resort the power rests with the consumer, who creates the demand, and with every co-operator insisting on co-operatively produced goods and consistently refusing to buy those of private traders the more the Co-operative Movement could produce, and the whole movement would be benefited in every way.

The matter does not, however, rest entirely with the consumer. It is true that the people who buy create the demand, and that if they do not get what they want they will go elsewhere; but it is also true that in modern trading the demand is, in the first place, generally created by the producer. People are constantly being told, by advertisements and by salesmen, what they want, and people who are told a thing often enough will generally come to believe it, even though it may not be true. Co-operative productions should be brought to the notice of every customer, first by advertisements and attractive displays in the shops, so that C.W.S. goods cannot fail to attract the eye, and, secondly, which is even more important, by the salesman. Co-operative salesmen can do a very great deal to increase the sale of Co-operative productions. The mention of some new variety, a word of favourable comparison, an illustration of certain qualities, may influence not only the customer but others with whom the customer comes in contact. Co-operation is a big idea, a great and far-reaching ideal, and it is not comprehended in a day, nor is it attained without careful thinking out and understanding. The art of salesmanship in itself is no easy lesson to learn, and the Co-operative salesman, in order to do justice to the Movement, needs a thorough knowledge of Co-operation in all its aspects and all it stands for. It would be of great benefit to the Movement if talks or classes for employees on these matters could be arranged with compulsory attendance,

even if only half an hour a week or so could be spared for the purpose.

### DIFFICULTIES TO BE OVERCOME.

The difficulties of salesmanship are being overcome, as is testified by the increasing number of societies and the swelling membership. By propaganda and other means the Movement is developing, and the lines along which it will progress on the retail side are clear. The Co-operative Movement, however, claims not only to sell but to produce its own goods and to control them from their source until they reach the hands of the consumer, and there are naturally many difficulties in the realm of manufacture. One of these is to compete with the modern manufacturer whose tendency is to specialise in the production of one particular article, "mass production." In the distribution of goods produced in this way the private trader has access to all selling firms, even, it must be regretfully admitted, to many Co-operative societies, who market his goods. Co-operative products can be sold only in the Movement, and are thus at a disadvantage. There are dozens of private traders in a town as compared with one society, with the result that privately manufactured goods are able to get a publicity that is not possible to those of co-operative manufacture, and people come to imagine that an article so well known as perhaps to be a household word must be better than the lesser-known co-operative article.

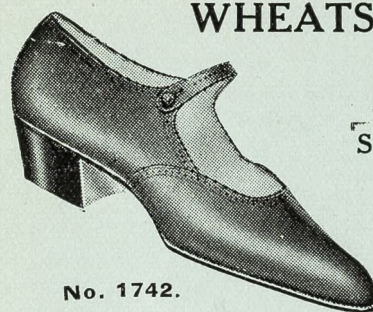
### THE CO-OPERATIVE EMPLOYEE.

The Co-operative Movement, based as it is on principles of human welfare, and being a Workers' Movement, claims that all work done under its auspices is done under the best possible conditions. In the case of the private trader this is always a matter of uncertainty, as it depends on the individual employer. In the case of the manufacture of clothing it is particularly uncertain because much work is done by outdoor workers, who are home workers, who are notoriously badly paid and whose homes cannot be healthy if turned into a workshop.

This is not only wrong from the point of view of sweated labour but is a source of danger to health, as there are well-known instances of infection being carried. In the Co-operative Movement, on the other hand, no home workers are employed and all materials are made in healthy workshops under trade union conditions. At Buckfastleigh, for instance, where suitings, dress materials, &c., are manufactured, there is a splendidly equipped factory where the employees work under the best conditions and at trade union rates. The same can be said of the Norwich boot factory, where light and fancy boots and shoes are made. In all co-operative factories, whatever the goods produced, the same holds true and the work is done under trade union conditions, whereas the worker who buys privately manufactured goods has no guarantee that they are not produced by sweated labour. If he honestly desires to improve the conditions of his fellow-workers, to decrease unemployment, and to ensure higher wages, he can find no more practical way of doing this than by buying Co-operative productions.

Ninety years ago the Co-operative ideal was first conceived, and after a long period of oppression and travail the time has come when success can be had for the asking. The Movement to-day is one of the largest trading concerns in the country, owned and controlled by the workers themselves, and a force to be reckoned with both nationally and internationally. It already supplies food, coal, clothing, houses and their equipment, insurance, banking, travel, and education to millions of people. What is needed now is a great push to enrol the full support of all workers in order that their every requirement may be co-operatively supplied, and thus take from the capitalist the power of exploiting the people's needs. Given this support the Movement will go forward to greater successes and wider achievements, and even in our own day we should see its fruition in a well-established Co-operative Commonwealth.

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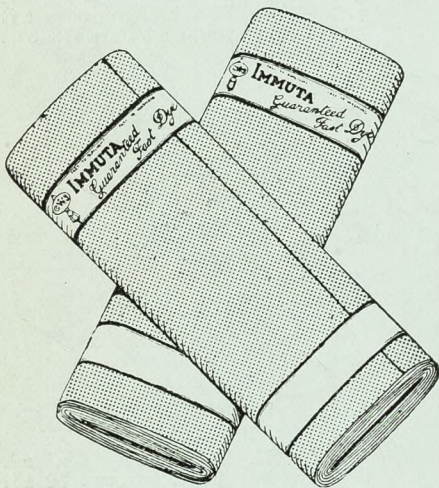
**Boys' Black Glaze Derby Boot.**  
Leather Lined. Machine Sewn.  
Prices: 10/11, 12/-, 13/6.

Boys Sizes:  
7 to 10  
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2 to 5

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