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two nice lots on which are beauti-
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town concerns under the honest though generally mistaken im-
pression that it can be bought from such houses cheaper than from
our home merchants, we have arranged to have Mr. David Powell
tell you in a series of stories how the people of many communities in
the Central West came to see the fallacy of this widely prevalent be-
lief.

Knowing our lines and our ability to meet competition if but
given the opportunity, we earnestly urge every open-minded con-
sumer to give careful consideration to the facts Mr. Powell will pre-
sent in these articles, which will appear in The Washington Stan-
dard beginning August 14. It will mean dollars and cents for you
and a bigger, better and more beautiful city for all of us to live in
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Sincerely yours,

J. E. KELLEY,
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WATCH FOR THESE ARTICLES EACH WEEK

**FACTORY COST EXPERT SHEDS
NEW LIGHT ON FUNDAMENTAL
PRINCIPLES OF MERCHANDISING**

GENERALLY LITTLE UNDER-
STOOD BY AVERAGE
PERSON.

False Theories Advanced and Ex-
ploited by Certain Class of
Merchants.

By David Powell.

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served.)

In a small city of Western Kansas
the incoming flood of catalogs and
the outgoing flood of money orders
had reached such proportions that
the merchants became convinced that
the commercial death was fast ap-
proaching; they saw the young men
go to larger cities and the felt that
the spirit of local pride was broken
and that the vital bonds of communi-
ty welfare were being slowly dissolv-
ed by the corroding acids of igno-
rance and greed.

Very fortunately however for the
future welfare of that little town it
contained one man who still retained
a spark of hope in his heart. He or-
ganized the business interests of the
city into a "Community Welfare
Club" for the purpose of fanning the
dying embers of home patriotism in-
to a living flame. The club was out
for everything that promised to help
the community but they could think
of nothing that would help so much
as for the old town to get back some
of the business it had lost to the
mail-order houses.

After thoroughly canvassing the
situation they became convinced,
that, as a matter of dollars and cents
the mail-order houses could not sup-
ply the community with its necessi-
ties and luxuries more cheaply, in the
long run, than could their local mer-
chants. Consequently they determind
to place the matter in the hands
of a specialist; a man who could
analyse a price and clearly demon-
strate the true values upon which it
was based; a man who could meet
the consumer on his own ground and
shoot facts at him straight from the
shoulder without giving offense.

The man selected for this work
had for many years been a factory
cost expert, and after giving the mat-
ter a great deal of thoughtful consid-
eration, he concluded that the most
effective way to convince the consum-
er of the wisdom of patronizing home
merchants would be to put before
them in a plain and convincing man-
ner the basic and generally little un-
derstood principles of merchandising;
the object in view being to make
clear the fact that it costs approxi-
mately the same to market an article
by way of the different methods of
modern merchandising—whether
from the shelves of the home mer-
chant or from the highly centralized
catalog houses of the large cities.

This man's experience had fitted
him to handle the subject in an ex-
ceptionally intelligent manner, and
the subsequent success of the under-
taking proved the soundness of his
theories. In the literature sent out
by the club, he begins with the man-
ufacture of an article and follows it
step by step to the hands of the ulti-
mate consumer through both the
mail-order and regular channels of
trade.

In proving the fact that the large
catalog concerns have comparatively
little advantage over other merchants

in buying their goods, he says: "The
modern factory, manufacturing staple
products, enjoys keener competition,
if possible, than any other line of
business. It must sell its products to
the retailer at a price that will return
the smallest profit possible that will
permit a reasonable return on the
money investment. Should the factory
put a price on its product that
would return to its stockholders more
than a fair rate of interest, either its
competitor would undersell it or new
capital, of which there is always an
abundance seeking investment, would
enter the field and eventually bring
the price of the article down to the
point that would return to the stock-
holders a rate of interest satisfactory
to investors in such securities. In
dwelling on this the purpose is to
show that under the present indus-
trial conditions the selling price of
a manufactured article is determined
solely by its cost of production.

"Every modern factory has a cost
system which shows to the fraction
of a cent the cost of their product
when it leaves the shipping room. It
must be sold at a certain figure to
pay a certain percentage of profit.
It costs no more per case to manu-
facture the ten cases for little John
Smith than it does per case the
thousand for the larger buyer, and if
both offer the same terms of payment
they will be charged approximately
the same price. The little John
Smiths scattered over the country
are the takers of the bulk of the man-
ufactured products of the country
and they are the ones the manufac-
turer has in mind when he puts the
lowest possible price on his product.
If, in quoting John Smith his regular
price—a price kept down by keen
competition, he is making only a
minimum profit, how can he by any
possibility quote a lower one without
seriously affecting his dividends?
Dividends are what factories are run
to make.

"Many catalog houses lay great
stress on their ability to sell an ar-
ticle at a low price because they 'owr
their own factory.' Is there any
good reason to believe that their fac-
tory can manufacture an article
cheaper than any other factory sim-
ply because they own it? Catalog
houses owning factories, and fac-
tories using the tempting phrase, 'We
sell direct to the consumer,' in reality
have no advantage over the independ-
ent retailer in so far as price is con-
cerned, because their product, when
it leaves the manufacturing depart-
ment, must be charged to the selling
department at exactly the same price
it would be charged to an independ-
ent retailer, were they themselves
not in the retail business. So you
see that the great stress laid on the
factory-owning feature by the larger
catalog houses is pure, plain, unadul-
terated 'Bunk'."

In explaining how such houses are
able to occasionally quote low prices
on standard goods of well known
makes he has to say: "Catalog houses
as well as other merchants, often
have opportunities to purchase at re-
duced prices, what is known to the
trade as 'job lots.' A factory may
discontinue the manufacture of a cer-
tain style, and having a large stock of
that particular pattern on hand, will
offer the entire lot at cost or even
less. While of course such merchan-
dise is of standard quality, it natur-

ally must have lost its desirability in
the eyes of the critical customer,
otherwise there would be no reason
for discontinuing the manufacture of
it. With this exception, and the oc-
casional opportunity they have of
purchasing bankrupt factory stocks,
the arguments and facts as presented
are incontrovertible."

In addition to gathering the data
contained in the literature and cir-
culating it, this man also went out
amongst the farmers as a "home
trade" missionary. Though he was
strong for home sentiment, he always
went straight to the point of the far-
mer's pocket book, and stood ready
to show the customer of the mail-or-
der house that, month in and month
out, he was actually losing money by
not trading with the home merchants.
In his figures he left nothing out of
his calculations—not a postage stamp
or an express toll escaped his eye. He
was up on the brands and qualities in
every line of merchandise. He took
samples of food-stuffs from the local
store and made side-by-side compari-
sons of them in the farm kitchens
with the foods bought from the mail-
order concern.

The club was made a social center
for the entire community, especially
for the farmers and their families.
Gradually a testing laboratory of a
crude sort was built up in the club,
and here many an argument as to
quality of goods was settled. The
consumer and the storekeeper were
both taught to be judges of quality
in almost all lines of goods.

Today the mail-order trade in that
community is on the decline, the cat-
alog is on the run; business and re-
sidence real estate in the city is slowly
advancing in price; the old town
looks good to some of the high school
boys, who are not so eager as were
some of their immediate predecessors
to shake the dust of the town from
their feet; and the entire civic life
of the community has experienced a
decided change for the better.

I. M. HOWELL



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of the Olympia Bank & Trust Co.

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