1931

We Are a Gullible Public

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Recommended Citation
Tomlinson, Prudence (1931) "We Are a Gullible Public," The Iowa Homemaker: Vol. 11 : No. 3 , Article 5.
Available at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol11/iss3/5

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We Are a Gullible Public

By Prudence Tomlinson

Babies Have Advertising Appeal

Then there is that instinctive fear impulse, which is more effective than we may perhaps realize. The lurid picture of a beautiful little home being gutted with flicking flames, while the distraught husband attempts a futile rescue of his wife and suffering innocent baby, . . . only one moral: Life Insurance. “And then I got My Phlio.” A burglar entering a moonlight window, swiftly approaching a charming Jenny Lind bed where the defenseless woman lies helpless, having forgotten to take her Ever-ready bed with her. The picture of a child, suffering untold torture with a scalding burn, her little face withering in pain. “And her mother had to send to the drug store, for she hadn’t any Unguentine in the bath-room cabinet. Good night, little children, we hope you sleep well!”

What kind of cold cream do you use? Would you use it if you knew of no one who found it valuable in keeping that school-girl complexion? Aren’t we all a bit chagrined to realize that the names of a few illustrious well-paid persons who we have heard of vaguely but know nothing of have more influence with us than the actual merits of the product they say they use?

Have you noticed the number of footmen that have been stealing into the Ford ads recently? That is part of a campaign featuring social distinction appeals. We are all more or less gullible to the lure of signs of health and social distinction, and the addition of servants, fine clothes, and other evidence of luxuries are subtle appeals to that failing.

Not only does advertising make articles seem more desirable to us, but through this medium we learn new things all the time. We are constantly acquiring new information. Right now, as you have read, “we are living in a scientific age.” There seems to be a regular mania for scientific research and investigation, and all that a company has to do to build up more sales volume is to make an invincible test, run a photograph of a white-swatthed, long-bearded “scientist” with the proper Viennese atmosphere, show a slide of something under a microscope, or send out a multitude of questionnaires with a “certified” audit census, and the purpose is achieved.

To show how subtly effective advertising is, turn a careful ear to the conversation of your acquaintances. You’ll be catching phrases of slogans and sales talk, and soon you’ll be listening to evidences of “copy” which appeared in the last issue of any popular magazine. Our vocabulary is particularly susceptible to new words of vague meaning, and we see them so often in print that we soon find ourselves using them without a very clear conception of their exact meaning.

A popular evening diverts himself in ad circles, so I’m told, is an advertising game, in which contestants are asked to recognize slogans and identify symbols. Advertising has become the means of putting over trade marks and educating the public to buy by this means of identification.

There is no doubt that this publicity scheme influences greatly your buying. We patronize stores that carry nationally advertised goods, and we feel, rightly, that a familiar trade name is a certain safeguard protecting our purchasing interests.

Are you a coupon fiend? Plenty of people make a hobby of filling out coupons and sending for booklets of information and sample products, and taking advantage of special offers. People have often wondered how large merchandising concerns can afford to offer these special services and accommodations. In reality (Continued on page 12)
We Are a Gullible Public
(Continued from page 4)

coupons form a basis for checking the effectiveness of an ad. The number of replies they get on a certain advertisement indicates approximately the number of people who have read the ad, based on an assumed formula for speculation. Not only do they obtain an estimate of the number of readers reached, but they also can trace the trend according to geographical distribution. Thus, if they receive replies from mostly Midwestern states, and none from California or the far west, they may deduce that something is wrong, and subsequently check on medium of circulation or the particular appeals made to local situations.

A great deal has been said about the harmful effects of advertising. Some have even gone so far as to say that advertising is a kind of social and economic evil; that it so induces people to acquire the luxuries and comforts that they read about as to have a definitely harmful effect. Such a contention that the nation is concerned chiefly with the getting of things and more new things, and that we are raising our standards too high. The desire of acquisition becomes so strong, they say, that people are tempted to go beyond their means in “keeping up with the Joneses,” and the Joneses in keeping up with the Smiths, and the Smiths with the Morgans and Astorhists, and so on and so on.

And then there are the people who contend that advertising is really responsible for the spread of the women’s smoking habit. Disappointing as it may be, the real reason for the “subtle” appearance of women in the cigarette ads was for an entirely different purpose. Cigarette ads were originally intended to appeal to men, and since it has been found statistically true that women are most appealing to men, the pictures of the “wholesome” good looking women were introduced to catch the attention of the men whom they desired to read the ad. It was only after women began smoking regularly that these girls in the ads were made to hold a cigarette in one hand while they held the dog’s leash in the other.

It is quite obvious that the fictional magazines could never be financed on subscription price alone, with their highly paid writers, their illustrations, expensive papers and color work. In one sense, it might be said that advertising has made possible good literature for the masses at a nominal cost.

But we have another argument in favor of advertising, and we think it’s the most conclusive of all. What would the girls in menu planning classes do without the new recipes and ideas for table arrangement if it wasn’t for the hard working advertising specialist? And it is quite certain that students in applied art would be in a pretty fix if they couldn’t cut up the ads for their note books.

All in all, it’s a great game, and a most interesting study, and we’re going to continue picking up our education from colorful sheets in the magazines and the “line” of our favorite announcer on the radio programs.

Let Who Will Be Lovely
(Continued from page 5)

brushing is almost as important as washing. Hasn’t your mother often told you that you should give your hair 100 strokes a day? And the brush and comb should always be kept scrupulously clean.

The fad for long gloves has been a saving grace for many a woman, for hands are perhaps the easiest things to neglect. Hot water and household tasks work havoc in no time. But hands respond so readily to a little regular care. It is a simple matter to keep a bottle of hand lotion near the kitchen sink. A piece of lemon will aid in removing stains and discolorations. Cream worked into the hands softens the skin of the hands soft, elastic and white. Massaging is excellent for scratchy hands. And not the least important item on the list is the weekly manicure. Between times the cuticle should be pushed back with an orange wood stick, and an emery board should be used on the nails. The newest thing for nails is a gold capped pencil with whitening, which is used to clean under the nails.

But of all the aids to beauty, rest is perhaps the most important. Too many homemakers plead that without a helper of one kind or another they do not have time to rest. But in these days of efficiency and budgets any woman should be able to plan her work so that she may steal away for at least 15 minutes every day, preferably directly after lunch. Work goes more smoothly if you relax for a few moments. Someone has said, "Catch the moment; use wisely, and the years will be friendly."

When It Was Very Young

MY, how the child has grown!
"Yes, and we’re so proud of her—"

Thus might the editor of the first Homemaker address the present editor. It has been 10 years since the first Homemaker was published. Prior to that time the Home Economics students conducted a department in the Iowa Agriculturalist. Starting with a circulation of 500, it has gradually worked up until now the Iowa Homemaker reaches 1,000 people, and has the distinction of being the only magazine of its kind.

Stories about styles of dresses and hats were featured practically every month in the early editions. The pictures illustrating these stories are rather antiquated and funny, but no doubt present illustrations will appear quite as laughable in another 10 years.

In 1922 an important department, "The Eternal Question," a page in which were asked and answered questions pertaining to various household problems, was introduced. Everything from how to treat resharpened for mildew to serving a simple dinner was handled adequately. Even such questions as how to keep fish bowls from cracking and inquiry as to the origin of sirlion steak were answered seriously.

Today’s regular feature, "The Mixing Bowl," is particularly interesting because it is just that, a conglomerate of bits about new things in the field of home economics. Alumnae Echoes was called "Who’s There and Where?" ten years ago. There