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THE STORY of the business life of almost any American town or small city over the last thirty years. Wellston is as universal as Middletown, and its Main Street is the familiar one of Sinclair Lewis' famous novel. Its economic change is recorded from the time when it was a self-contained unit, its stores self-owned and operated, its banks controlling the town's wealth, its factories employing the town's workmen without outside interference or domination. What happened to Wellston illustrates the causes of the crises which occur in American business today. The book has all the absorbing interest of a novel, for Mr. Sprague's protagonist, Peter Trent, talks directly to the reader, acquainting him with the typical businessmen of this typical city, their homes, their wives, their reactions to environment and life.





HIGH PRESSURE



JESSE RAINSFORD SPRAGUE

# HIGH PRESSURE

WHAT IT IS DOING TO MY TOWN  
AND MY NEIGHBORS



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THE BOOK LEAGUE OF AMERICA, INC.

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CL

TO MY WIFE



WITH THE exception of nationally known individuals and corporations, all the names and characters in this book are fictitious, and do not refer to any real persons, business concerns or organizations.





## Foreword

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**I**N THE United States we have always allowed business a freer rein than business is allowed in older countries. Perhaps an extra amount of freedom was advisable because we had a new country with so much to be done. But I believe the time is past when business can be allowed so much freedom without disastrous consequences. In this book I have tried to show what can happen in a typical American community as a result of allowing business an excess of freedom.

This book is not an autobiography, nor is it a fictional biography. Merely, I have set down things that I have observed during my own rather long experience as a businessman. The city that I call "Wellston" might be any American city.

We Americans don't have the sense of security that we used to have. All sorts of panaceas have been proposed to bring it back. But as far as I know, no one's panacea goes quite to the root of the matter. We can't have the old sense of security until something is done to curb the American practice of high-powered salesmanship.

With our production machinery in its present state of efficiency, the country can be glutted with manufactured products in two years or less. Then there is a depression. But as soon as signs of revival appear, business goes into high gear and again oversells its market. Then there is another depression. Just recently we have seen this demonstrated.

J.R.S.



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HIGH PRESSURE



## Barroom Manners

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**I**T MAY SEEM PRETENTIOUS for me, Peter Kent, retail merchant in a city like Wellston, to write a critical book about American life. Other men with far more literary skill have written books criticizing the American scene. But no writer, so far as I know, has been in as favorable a position as I. Because a merchant, more than anyone else, gets to know what the people in his community are thinking and doing.

In my thirty years as a jeweler on Market Street I have, you might say, grown up with thousands of families. A whole generation of boys and girls have come to me for their wedding rings, and a year or two later come again for baby rings. I have sold sapphire bracelets and pearl necklaces to married philanderers who leaned across the counter and whispered, "Don't say anything about this." Women who invested their husbands' life-insurance money in spurious stocks have come in and tried not to cry when they showed me their diamond engagement rings and asked me if I cared to purchase. I have been president of the Chamber of Commerce, and I have served on committees that tramped about the streets to solicit money for the Red Cross, for the Spring Carnival and for the Community Chest.

In a business way I have seen all sorts of changes.

When I came to Wellston, practically every business was owned by local people. The only outsiders I can remember were the two meat packers, Swift and Armour, and a branch of a Buffalo brewery. Now it is almost as much the other way. Market Street is like all other Market Streets in the country, with a J. C. Penney store, a Kresge, a Grant, a Grand-Silver, big places with double fronts painted every color of the rainbow and gold-lettered signs. Grand Union and A. & P. groceries are all over the residence sections. There are Burroughs adding machines, National cash registers and General Electric refrigerators. Down at the end of Market Street is Automobile Row with its Buicks, Fords, Hudsons and Plymouths.

Wellston people have changed, too.

One day last spring an old friend of mine, Mr John Powell, owner of the Powell Steel & Cutlery Works, came by my store and asked me to go driving with him. Half a dozen miles from the city limits, on the River Road, we came to the Newcomb place, a fine old New-England-style farmstead with the house, woodshed, horse and carriage barn all under one roof. The Newcombs were a prominent family in the early and middle Eighteen Hundreds, one of them being in Congress during the Van Buren administration and another going to the Civil War as a colonel of volunteers. A couple of years ago a Rumanian Jew named Rubenstein, who had a speakeasy in town during Prohibition, bought the place and turned it into a roadhouse. Rubenstein chooses to call himself "Teddy," though his name is Solomon. He has built a row of tourist cabins at one side of the old Newcomb lawn and has signs up and down the road, "Teddy's Cottages. Flush Toilets. 75 cts. per person."

A jazz band was playing in the farmhouse, and a lot of automobiles were parked in the back yard. Mr Powell suggested we go in and have a drink. He said he was



curious to see what kind of place the old Newcomb homestead had been turned into.

Half a dozen college boys and girls, home on Easter vacations, hung over the bar in the old Newcomb sitting room. The front and back parlors had been thrown into one, with a dance floor in the center, and customers sat at tables ranged along the walls. Rubenstein strutted about from one table to another with that peculiarly self-conscious air, half fawning, half overly familiar, that foreigners of his type have when they feel they are being socially successful with "real" Americans.

Young Donald North, of the rich lumber family, sat with his wife at a table just across from ours. She was Eleanor Holdridge before her marriage, a daughter of Judge Holdridge, one of our prominent lawyers. Neither she nor her husband was tipsy, though I presume they had had a drink or two. When Rubenstein came along, she called out:

"How's every little thing, Teddy?"

He squirmed with pleasure. "Oh, ev'yt'ing's all right. Not so damn lousy."

He drew up a chair and beckoned to a waiter.

"The drinks are on me, folks." When they had been served, young North jerked his thumb toward the musicians.

"Who's that new bastard you've got leading the orchestra, Teddy? I don't like him."

Rubenstein smiled. "He's just a sonofabitch I hired the other day, Don. I don't like him neither."

Mrs North broke into a gale of laughter.

"Then why don't you can him, Teddy? You say you don't like him, but you don't can the sonofabitch." She tapped him on the arm. "I'll bet you haven't got the guts!"

John Powell and I finished our drinks and left. I had

heard so much rough talk in recent years that I might have forgotten the whole thing if he hadn't brought it up. He didn't get around as much as I did, and I suppose it was pretty shocking to see a daughter of Judge Holdridge treating the fellow Rubenstein like a social equal and using gutter language as though she had been brought up on it. As we drove away from the place, Mr Powell remarked:

"Once when I was a young fellow, Peter, I went with a crowd into a house over in the red-light district. One of the boys thought he ought to be tough in such a place and began to swear. I believe he only said 'damn' two or three times, but the Madame threatened to put him out. She said such language would drive her gentleman trade away."

When we reached the city and drove through Automobile Row and up Market Street with its gaudy chain-store fronts, Mr Powell brought up the subject again.

"I wonder," he said, "if all these outside corporations that have been coming to town may have something to do with what we saw back there in the roadhouse?"

I asked if he meant to insinuate that National Cash Register or the Steele 5-cent-to-\$1.00 store taught young Mrs North her barroom manners.

He laughed. "Directly, no. But indirectly, yes. I'd say the real trouble is, we Wellston people aren't running our town any more. We're being run by Mr J. C. Penney, and Mr Young of General Electric, and Mr Henry Ford, and Burroughs adding machines, and Kelvinator refrigerators and the Grand Union Grocery Stores, the chain grocer. That makes a big difference."

That was about the last talk I ever had with John Powell, one of the finest men I ever knew. He died not long afterward. I have tried to continue his line of reasoning, and this is the way it seems to me:

We are, as John Powell said, being run by outsiders. The outsiders don't care anything about us except as a source of profit. To each corporation that has a branch in Wellston, we are just a tack stuck in a map in the sales manager's office. We are a blue tack if the corporation is making money out of us and a red tack if it isn't.

Now it is an axiom of salesmanship that a sailor with two or three drinks in him is a better customer than a sober college professor. A rowdy person spends his money more freely than a conservative person; and young Mrs North, out there in the roadhouse chewing gum, gulping down sidecar cocktails and swapping familiarities with a low-class Levantine, is a far more desirable person from the sales manager's standpoint than her ultraladylike mother, Judge Holdridge's wife, ever was.

If we had stayed the sort of people we were thirty years ago, we'd have been a poor lot of customers. And so, ever since Big Business began to invade Wellston, it has been the sales manager's job to make us as much like sailors as possible.

I am not bigoted enough to believe the sales managers are alone to blame for young Mrs North out there in the roadhouse. I have no doubt that she was willing to meet the sales managers halfway. It would have required a good deal of effort for Mrs North to live up to the standard set by her mother. It was easier and pleasanter to let down a little. No one will contend, I am sure, that a college professor gets as much sheer enjoyment out of life as a sailor.

I have been trying to clarify these things in my own mind, and that is why I have written my book. It is a record of the influences I have seen at work during my thirty years as a Market Street merchant.

## II

### Business Ethics and Private Ethics

---

**W**HEN I ESTABLISHED MYSELF in Wellston, you never heard any nonsense about money-making being a noble occupation. It was a pleasant, conservative city of about sixty thousand population. There were a good many wealthy families, but those that set the social standards were not necessarily wealthy. One had to have more than money really to "belong." Mrs John Powell, for example, never got into the inner circle, though her husband owned the Powell Steel & Cutlery Works and was worth five million dollars. Newcomers had to serve a long apprenticeship and were accepted only after it was found they could be counted on to uphold the accepted standards of taste.

In business there was something of the same situation. The factories and wholesale houses were mostly owned by men whose families had lived in the community a long time. The recently established Woolworth Five-and-Ten was the only outside-owned store in the retail district; all the others were owned and operated by local men. In each bank there were a president, who was generally the largest stockholder, a single vice-president and a cashier. Below these were only bookkeepers and clerks. Altogether Wellston was what most of us like to think of as a typical American community of the old regime, a little



snobbish, perhaps, but snobbish in a fairly good way. Anyhow, there was nothing cheap about it.

I remember the day I started my jewelry business as clearly as though it were yesterday. It was a Saturday morning, and the man from the sign shop, who had a drooping mustache and who was already a little tipsy, although it was barely ten o'clock, stood on a stepladder sticking white porcelain letters on my show window. Directly across the street I could see the Ideal Clothing Store, L. Goldberg, Proprietor, with work trousers and flannel shirts hung all about the doorway.

I went to my door to speak to the sign man, and a squatty man whose legs were too short for his body came out of the Ideal Clothing Store and crossed the street to where I stood. He said, "You are the new jeweler, yes?" and before I could answer he added, "My name is Goldberg. We should get acquainted."

He put out his hand. I wondered, as I took it, why Jews, who are so virile in other things, generally shake hands so limply. "A young man like you," Mr Goldberg said, "will do fine with a jewelry store. I bet you make plenty money."

He said he would like to see the inside of my store. At sight of my repair bench he cried, "Watches you fix, too!" His tone implied that my future was assured. "If my watch needed fixing," he said solemnly, "this minute I would give it to you to work on it."

Mr Goldberg bent over the showcase and exclaimed, "High-class merchandise!" as he pointed admiringly to my tray of Masonic, Elk and Knights of Pythias watch charms. I had laid in a fine stock of emblem goods because I expected to join several lodges, as soon as I could afford it, in order to secure the trade of the members. Mr Goldberg also admired an immense silver-plated washbowl and pitcher that stood in my wall cabinet among the pickle

casters and cake stands. Silver-plated washbowls and pitchers were a popular item then, and sold well to girls in red-light houses.

A small boy issued from the Ideal Clothing Store and came dashing across the street. From the curb he shrilled, "Papa, quick, a customer!" and dashed back again. Before following his son, Mr Goldberg reached in his coat pocket and drew out a handful of business cards that he stacked on my showcase.

"Me and you," he said earnestly, "should work together. When some man comes in here to have his watch fixed, ask him don't he need a suit of clothes. Hand him one of my cards and say I'm a friend of yours." At the doorway he flung back:

"I send you customers, too!"

I think I hadn't any resentment against Mr Goldberg for his one-sided proposal. I was experienced enough to know that business is a pretty grim affair in which men do the best they can. I had even a little sympathy for him because my chances to make money were so much better than his. I could join the Masons, or Elks, or almost any other lodge I chose, in order to help my business; but it was doubtful if Mr Goldberg could get into the smallest and poorest lodge in town.

Fred Marvin, of Marvin Brothers, Grocers, whose store flanked mine on the north, came out and joined me on the sidewalk. The Marvins were fresh-faced country boys with permanent smiles; Fred had an astonishing little fingernail a full inch long that he used to scratch the inside of his ear. As we stood there, a two-horse carriage with a Negro driver on a high seat turned into Market Street at the Wellston National Bank corner. The passenger was a fat, softish woman who held a parasol over her head, and even at that distance I could detect an air of immense self-satisfaction. The carriage stopped at Clark's

Drug Store, where the Negro picked up a small bell that lay on the seat beside him and gave three or four sharp rings. Old Dr Clark rushed out to the carriage, where he bowed and rubbed his hands ingratiatingly. Young Marvin told me the woman was Mrs John Powell, wife of the owner of the Powell works. She spoke a few words to the druggist, who dashed back into his store and then out again, carrying several small articles that he handed her with another bow. She dismissed the druggist, and the carriage came on down the street.

At the Robinson Furniture Company the Negro rang his bell several times before Mr Garvin Robinson came out. Young Marvin told me Mr Robinson was a Southerner and resented a nigger ringing a bell for him. It was a great joke up and down Market Street that once Mrs Powell sent the Negro on an errand while she talked with the furniture dealer, and the Negro told Mr Robinson to hold the horses while he was gone. Mr Robinson was always threatening to shoot the nigger's impudent head off, but he never did.

The carriage left the furniture store and came slowly down the street. Fred Marvin ran back into his grocery. For one breathless moment I thought Mrs Powell might stop at my place, but she went past to Marvin Brothers. In an instant Fred was at the curb with his pad and pencil, smiling broadly and scratching the inside of an ear with his long fingernail. She smiled back; but I had the impression that only a little of her smile was for him; that much the larger part of it was to show how gracious she could be.

When young Marvin finished taking her order, she said flatteringly, "I can always count on getting the best from Marvin Brothers." It seemed to me she was listening to her own voice; and there was just a hint that if Fred hadn't promptly grinned and said, "Thank ye, ma'am.



Thank ye kindly," she might have flown into a temper and never come to his store again.

For years Mrs Powell never missed her morning tour of the Market Street stores. She demanded flattery, and the merchants gladly supplied it, along with their merchandise. It wasn't a very pretty sight on either side.

I can take a highly moral attitude because I could never get Mrs Powell as a regular customer. She bought her jewelry from old Barney Hirschfield, whose store was next the Academy of Music.

By eleven o'clock the interurban trolley line began to bring women shoppers from suburban towns. Even Mrs L. Lammer, the milliner whose store was on the other side of me from Marvin Brothers, began to get an occasional customer. She was a garrulous woman whose principal creditor, a Pittsburgh wholesale house, periodically closed her up for debt, then extended her a further line of credit and allowed her to start over again. After each fresh start the wholesale house charged her 10 per cent more on her purchases to recoup its previous losses. Mrs Lammer's store was larger than mine, with two show windows; and the real-estate man held out to me that I might get her location when she should fail for the last time.

Wellston was a good business city, largely on account of the big pay roll of the Powell Steel & Cutlery Works, which was out at the far end of Market Street, half a mile from the retail district. The Powell mechanics were paid off at four o'clock Saturday. About noontime the works sent its wagon down to the Wellston National Bank for the pay-roll money. It looked like an ordinary grocer's delivery wagon, except that there was a screen at the back to keep the money from falling out, and two men sat on the driver's seat. People said one of the men was armed with a revolver, but no one knew for sure; and anyhow it would have seemed an empty gesture, because it was



absurd to think of a hold-up in Wellston. Things like that happened out West and in dime novels.

From the moment that the pay-roll wagon left the Wellston National Bank and started back to the Powell works, a sort of suppressed and nervous excitement gripped Market Street. You saw it first in the saloon section, down toward the Union Station. The bartender at old Hugo Sauer's came to the front of the saloon in his white apron and propped open the swinging doors with two stools. Then fat old Hugo himself came out and waddled the three blocks to the Diesel bank, had a canvas bag filled with money in small denominations, and waddled back to his saloon. He drew out \$1,000 every Saturday to make change for his customers. He hung out a placard that read: "All Size Money Changed. Big Glass Beer 5 cts." Saturday-night customers often ordered a glass of beer and laid down a twenty-dollar bill to pay for it, but old Hugo never grumbled.

Before the banks closed, all the saloonkeepers and most of the merchants provided themselves with small money. A few of the lesser merchants, too meagerly financed to get money from the banks, would be caught short later in the day, and you would see them dashing out of their stores and into the stores of their neighbors waving bills in their hands that they begged piteously to have changed.

At two o'clock all the clerks and employers were back from hastily eaten dinners. Some of the cheaper merchants set displays of goods on the sidewalks in front of their stores. Even the Wellston Department Store wasn't above setting a few seasonable articles in its two Market Street entrances; and the equally swanky Lake's Shoe Palace boldly put a table in its doorway covered with men's and women's bargains. The greatest Saturday display of all was made by two skinny Jewish boys, Ike and Sam Dubinsky, who occupied a tumble-down, one-

story building far up the street beyond all other stores and almost out at the Powell works. The Dubinsky boys moved their entire stock out on the sidewalk and hung suits of clothes all over the front and sides of their building. People used to go by that way to look at the display and laugh. The Honorable Isaac Dubinsky, present state senator from the Wellston district, often laughs at it himself, nowadays, when talking with friends.

At four o'clock the whistle at the works gave a long hoarse blast, and Market Street fell into an expectant hush. Everything seemed to stop. Even the newsboys shouted the *Evening Bulletin* less shrilly, and you could hear the whistle of old woman Horner's peanut roaster, at the corner of Fifth Street, a couple of blocks away. Merchants went to their store doors, trying to appear as though they were merely seeking a breath of fresh air, but by the way they kept glancing out toward the Powell works you knew what they were thinking about.

Ten minutes after the whistle blew, mechanics began to straggle out of the gate of the works, and the Dubinsky boys in front of their tumble-down store went into a perfect whirlwind of activity. They ran from one sidewalk table to the other, grabbing up a red flannel shirt here or a pair of trousers there, to thrust before the eyes of prospective purchasers, all the time gesticulating and shrieking, "Cheap, mister! Cheap!" at the top of their voices. Then the mechanics coming out of the works swelled to a regular tidal wave that filled the street from one side to the other as it came rolling toward the business district. It engulfed the Dubinsky boys and advanced to the Car Barn corner, then to the First Presbyterian Church and past it, and finally down to the very heart of Market Street. Little rivulets trickled off into side streets and into stores; but it was still a respectable stream that flowed as far as the block of saloons next the Union

Station and there disappeared for good. Wellston merchants voted in every election to keep the saloons in that one block. They claimed it was right and proper that the Powell mechanics should have to pass by all the Market Street stores before they could get to a drink.

It was nearly five o'clock when I made my first sale. A young woman, rather dumpy and without much style, stopped at my show window to look at a tray of silver belt buckles that I had placarded, "Sterling. \$5.00 each. Splendid Value." She came inside, and I got the tray from the window. I knew without being told she was from the red-light district across the tracks. The cigarette stain on her fingers told that. She wore two California gold dollars for earrings, so I knew she belonged in one of the "dollar" houses.

I tried to be particularly polite, because sporting-house girls were good jewelry customers, and if a jeweler pleased a girl she usually brought her gentlemen friends. As the girl looked at the belt buckles I said Robert Mantell was billed as Shylock at the Academy of Music that night and asked if she intended to go. She looked at me dumbly and said, "Shylock Holmes?"

Finally she selected a buckle, then went around the end of the showcase, where she lifted her long skirts and reached in her stocking for the money. In those days it was considered witty to call a sporting-house girl's stocking "the First National Bank." She handed me a five-dollar bill and went out. It was a brand-new bill, just the kind I had planned to frame and hang over the safe.

All the stores kept open late on Saturdays. It was nearly dusk and I was taking the jewelry out of my show window when I saw a man in clergyman's dress speaking with Fred Marvin in front of the grocery, and Fred was pointing in my direction. Directly the clergyman came in my store.



"I'm told you've just come to Wellston, Mr Kent," he said. "I want to make your acquaintance. My name is Harriss. Beverly Harriss." He shook hands so heartily that except for his clothes I would have taken him for a drummer.

I shall mention the Reverend Mr Harriss a great many times in this book. He is still pastor of the First Presbyterian Church. In all these years he has been very active in public affairs. He has a great many admirers; but there are a few people who believe Mr Harriss might have done more good if he had confined himself more exclusively to spiritual affairs.

At that time Mr Harriss was young, still under thirty, with clear-cut, regular features and that peculiarly sophisticated expression so often seen in men who appear in public a great deal. Without his minister's clothes he could have passed for an actor or a successful trial lawyer. He had fine, broad shoulders; and though I am nearly six feet tall, he topped me by a couple of inches.

I was always uneasy with ministers. During my Presbyterian childhood in my native New York State village I had been frightened many times by ministers who described the horrors of hell's fire. I said awkwardly, "I'm glad to meet you, Doctor."

He laughed pleasantly. "You mustn't call me 'Doctor.' Just plain 'Mister' is good enough." I knew he was English from his broad *a*'s though if I had been more experienced I would have known he didn't have quite the Oxford accent. It was more that of a bank clerk or an assistant in a first-class draper's shop.

"Here in Wellston," he went on, "they call me the businessman's preacher." I could see he was proud of the title. He wore a Blue Lodge Masonic pin on his vest and had an elk's tooth on his watch fob.

"I dropped in, Mr Kent, to see if I couldn't get you into my church. I'm keen on the young businessman. You see," he smiled, "I'm enough of a businessman myself to drum up trade occasionally."

I had never met a "business" minister before, or even heard of one, though I presume there were others before Mr Harriss. Since becoming a young man, my experience of ministers was limited to waiting on them in jewelry stores, where they generally asked for the clergymen's 10 per cent discount.

"I've never joined any church——" I began, when Mr Harriss interrupted:

"Oh, I know what you're going to say. You've never experienced a change of heart, and all that." He laughed pleasantly. "Very few of my businessmen communicants have, to be quite frank. They belong to the church as a matter of good citizenship."

He checked on his fingers the names of prominent communicants:

"Mr Eugene Henderson of the Wellston National Bank, Mr Frank Martin the wholesale grocer, Mr Thompson of the Wellston Department Store——"

He leaned toward me across the counter. "I've another member of whom you've probably heard." He pronounced the name almost reverently: "Mrs John Powell!"

I told him I had seen Mrs Powell in her carriage that morning.

"A splendid Christian woman!" Mr Harriss said.

"You have Mr John Powell, too?" I asked.

I thought there was a shade of annoyance in the way Mr Harriss shook his head. But in a moment he was smiling again.

"From your standpoint, Mr Kent," he said, "there's a *very* interesting situation in my congregation. It hap-

pens we've no jeweler. Old Mr Wilson of Wilson & Hunt is a Christian Scientist, and his partner doesn't attend any church. The Hirschfields of course are Jews."

Mr Harriss' voice sank to a genial whisper, and I believe there was a shadow of a wink.

"People who worship together on Sundays, Mr Kent, are quite likely to trade with each other on weekdays!"

After a little more talk Mr Harriss went away, leaving me in a slightly muddled frame of mind. "Business" ministers are common enough now; but, as I say, I had never met one up to that time. Business hadn't come in for the bath of glorification that it has had in recent years. The general idea was that money-making and religion should be kept pretty well apart.

Probably I should be ashamed to confess that when Mr Harriss went away he had my promise to attend his church.

It was time to close my store for the night. I took the watches and jewelry out of the showcases and stowed them in the safe, then covered the showcases with white cotton sheeting. I lit the gas; and as I took a last look around, I saw the sporting-house girl's five-dollar bill that still lay on my watch-repair bench.

I sat down and debated what to do. It was quite the thing for a merchant to frame the first bill he took in and hang it above his desk, where in later years visitors would see it and he would remark, "I was a poor young man then . . ."

But that didn't seem quite so attractive when I thought of the way the girl had earned her five dollars. In the end I decided not to frame the money, but to use it to buy half a dozen gold-filled hatpins I had seen advertised in the *Jewelers' Digest* that were guaranteed to sell at 100 per cent profit.

I have thought of the thing a thousand times since then,

and it seems to me a pretty good example of the difference between business ethics and private ethics. The girl's five-dollar bill wasn't good enough to have around me as a souvenir. But it was good enough to put to work where it would earn me more dollars.

### III

## Mass Production and High-Pressure Sales

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WHEN YOU HEAR BUSINESSMEN discuss the various panics that the United States has gone through since the Civil War, you will generally notice that they lay great stress on the panics of 1873, of 1893 and of 1929, as if those were the only panics that really mattered. Often they forget altogether to mention the panic that occurred in 1907.

I have sometimes heard it referred to lightly as "that little money panic." But to my mind it was the most important panic of all and had the most lasting effects. Life in the United States has never been quite the same since. The year 1907 marked, you might say, the dividing line between the old and new as far as America is concerned.

There is a logical explanation. What we know as "mass production" came into being during the early Nineteen Hundreds. Before that time the country was fairly able to absorb all the goods that factories turned out. But when hundreds of factories adopted mass-production methods and organized to turn out goods in ever larger quantities, the country couldn't absorb them all. By 1907 there was an immense accumulation of unsold goods. That was what caused the panic.

There was a choice of two courses: Manufacturers could limit production of things to the point where people



would voluntarily buy what the manufacturers produced. Or manufacturers could keep right on producing at top capacity and force their goods on people by high-pressure salesmanship.

There is nothing in Europe that corresponds to our high-pressure salesmanship. Businessmen in older countries, faced with the same situation, cut down production to fit their market. But American businessmen generally took just the opposite course. It was hard to realize that, after a century of expansion such as the world had never seen, there could be a limit to the country's purchasing power. Captains of industry quite naturally regarded any lessening of their market as willful stubbornness on the part of the public. For more than thirty years American business has insisted on producing for a market that doesn't exist.

When American factories organized to turn out goods on a mass-production basis, it was necessary to find some extraordinary means of forcing people to buy more freely. From a strictly commercial standpoint, it seems to me that business chose shrewdly when it began to use religion as a sales help. It was so in Wellston, and I presume it was so in other parts of the country.

I do not pretend that our churches were altogether free from the taint of money-making before the mass-production era. Perhaps the Founding Fathers made a mistake when they decided against a state religion. Anyhow, in America the churches have always been more or less at the mercy of rich communicants. Older readers will recall how Mr John D. Rockefeller and Mr John Wanamaker used to gain publicity by conducting Sunday-school classes. In Wellston we had a similar case in old Henry Diesel, the banker. Old Henry conducted the Bible class at the First Baptist Church and had his talk printed every Monday in the newspapers. Each summer he tendered his

students a picnic and marched at the head of a parade down Market Street to the Union Station to take the train for Silver Lake. Yet I never believed old Henry did these things entirely to advertise his bank. In his case, as probably with Mr Rockefeller and Mr Wanamaker, it was less to make money than to gratify the natural vanity of a very rich man.

I myself would be less than honest if I did not give credit to the First Presbyterian Church of Wellston for at least a part of my early business success. In the first two or three years of the Reverend Beverly Harriss' pastorate he had built up the largest congregation in the city and also made it the richest congregation. But both the Unitarians and Episcopalians stood higher socially. The Unitarians were looked up to because most of the intellectual people in town went there. There were also some high-class Jews among them, as at that time there was no Reformed synagogue. The Episcopalians were the dancing and party-giving crowd. Some of the socially ambitious Presbyterian women would have liked to become Episcopalians and were only held back because of fear they might appear awkward in trying to find the right places in the prayerbook.

The Methodists and Baptists were fairly equal socially, both being about as far below the Presbyterian as the Presbyterians were below the Unitarians and Episcopalians. If I had attended the Methodist or Baptist church, I might have gained some watch-repair business, but not much in the way of sales. Both congregations had a few rich men, but mainly they were the type that carried large Bibles under their arms when they walked to church Sunday mornings and wore flat-topped derbies and trousers that flapped about their legs. I never knew a Methodist or Baptist man who surprised his wife with the gift of a bracelet or a diamond ring. The rank and file in both con-

gregations were small-salaried men and wage earners. The Methodists had a good many foremen and sub-bosses from the Powell works, while the Baptists ran more to trade—clerical help in wholesale houses and better-paid store clerks.

All three congregations—Presbyterian, Methodist and Baptist—had rid themselves of the really undesirable classes by building “Second” churches out in the cheap parts of the city where the families of two-dollar-a-day manual laborers, journeyman barbers, railroad brakemen and occasional Negroes could worship humbly together.

As for the Catholic church in Wellston, I might as well have joined the Second Baptist out at the end of the Elm Street car line for all the business I would get out of it. Catholic worshipers were mainly servant girls and foreign laborers who got even less than two dollars a day. Most of the saloonkeepers were Catholic, but they were too sophisticated to let the Church guide their spending. They patronized merchants who could influence votes whenever local option was voted on.

Even if Mr Harriss’ church had not been the richest in the city, it would have been best for me in a business way. There seems to be an *esprit de corps* in Presbyterian congregations that tends to encourage an exchange of business among the members. I have noticed it not only in Wellston, but in other communities. In this respect Presbyterians resemble Rotary and other service-club organizations.

There is, I have always thought, something to be admired in this attitude. Presbyterians feel they are better fitted to run the world’s affairs and to maintain prosperity than Methodists, Episcopalians or those of any other sect. A Presbyterian, then, believes he is doing God’s work when he assists a fellow Presbyterian to become a well-to-do, influential citizen.



One day when I had been in business about six months I went to the Wellston National Bank with my deposit, and as I stood at the receiving teller's window I could look into the private office of the president, Mr Eugene Henderson, at the rear of the banking room. It was not yet the fashion for bank presidents and cashiers to sit up at the front entrance like clerks at a railway information bureau. When the teller handed me back my passbook he whispered that Mr Henderson wished to speak with me.

I always think of Mr Henderson as the ideal Presbyterian businessman. He was an elder in Mr Harriss' church; and on Sunday mornings he was wonderfully impressive with his brown full beard and long Prince Albert coat as he came up the aisle, passing the collection plate from pew to pew. If anyone had asked him, he would have said frankly that he believed God intended that there should be both rich and poor in the world and that the rich should rule. In business he was far from being a hail fellow, and was never known to go near a saloon; but he was so highly regarded that fully half the saloonkeepers in town kept their deposits in his bank.

He invited me to sit down and then remarked, "You seem to be doing rather well in that jewelry store of yours." I said I had no cause to complain, and he went on: "I notice you're a regular attendant at our church, too. That's good."

I didn't know he had ever noticed me at church, though of course I hoped he had.

"By the way," he suddenly inquired, "you don't employ any help in your store; what do you do when you have to come to the bank or do any other errand?"

"I do what I have to," I laughed. "I lock up."

He shook his head at this, then in a moment: "That millinery woman next door to you—Mrs Lammer. She isn't going to last much longer."

He merely stated the fact, coldly. I wondered if he might have shown some sympathy for Mrs Lammer if she had been a Presbyterian instead of a Baptist. "She's kited a couple of checks lately," he said.

He half turned away, as though the interview were about over.

"I just want to say," he remarked, "that when the Lammer woman *does* fail, it might be a good idea for you to rent the store. It's bigger than yours." I was on my feet when he added offhandedly:

"If you need to borrow a thousand dollars or so, I guess I can fix you up."

I never actually joined Mr Harriss' church, though I attended Sunday-morning services and generally went Sunday evenings. I did not go to week-night prayer meeting or Christian Endeavor, though it would have been to my advantage to do so. I felt that a line must be drawn somewhere. I will say for Mr Harriss that for a number of years he never tried to force conversion on me or insisted on my formally becoming a church member. Sometimes I wonder, remembering how keen I was to build up my jewelry business and outdo my competitors, what I would have done in case Mr Harriss *had* insisted.

An incident that occurred the first year I was in Wellston always sticks out in my mind as an example of the downright quality of public opinion at that time. One day some sign painters arrived in the city and began to paint an advertising sign on the blank brick wall of a corner building on Market Street. The sign was to advertise Bull Durham tobacco; and the painters produced the likeness of a huge bull, in which no detail of masculinity was omitted. As everyone knows, the figure was later used as a sort of trademark, and there stood for years, on the Duke family's estate in New Jersey, a lifesize bronze

replica of the bull that was so intimately connected with the building of the family's large fortune.

Possibly the bull had appeared previously in other places, but if so none of our citizens had seen it; the paint was scarcely dry on the Market Street building when all sorts of people—Protestants, Catholics and Jews—joined in an indignant protest. Old Hugo Sauer the saloonkeeper was more indignant than anyone. One night I heard him yell from behind his bar, "Ein hundred dollars I gif dot bull to take away!" A committee was named to take action. I would like to say we won a complete victory, but the best that could be accomplished was a compromise. The tobacco company sent other artists to paint a fence around the bull, and that was the way the animal appeared in later advertisements everywhere.

I was in business a little more than a year when my unfortunate milliner-neighbor next door, Mrs Lammer, became so involved in debt that the Pittsburgh wholesale house refused to carry her any longer. The referee in bankruptcy pasted his notice on her locked front door, her poor little remnant of hats and millinery trimmings were sold at auction, and Mrs Lammer's name was added to the list of Market Street tragedies. She simply dropped out of sight. No one knew what became of her, and no one particularly cared except a few of her more optimistic creditors who absurdly hoped she might start up in business somewhere else and make enough money to pay them.

I signed a lease on Mrs Lammer's vacated store room, then that night lay awake for hours wondering if I would ever be able to pay the one hundred dollars a month rent.

## IV

# High-Pressure Sales and Divorce

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IT IS PRETTY INTERESTING to notice the extraordinary steps that business has been obliged to take in its determination to force a market for mass-production goods. One old American taboo after another has had to go by the board.

Before the mass-production era, for example, the idea of using sex to sell merchandise was quite unthinkable. There was quite a celebrated case where a wholesale dry-goods firm in St Louis—the Ely-Walker Company—used a photograph of a young woman to advertise a union suit. It was a woolen union suit that extended from the young woman's chin to her ankles; and in addition her form was fairly well covered by a kimono. The advertisement appeared in a trade journal called *The Drygoodsman*. But the post-office authorities in St Louis held up the entire edition of the journal, and it was allowed to go through the mails only after grudging permission came from Washington.

If you look at present-day advertising, you are almost forced to conclude that nothing at all can be sold without sex.

One of the early exponents of high-pressure selling was Mr Patterson, who was for so many years head of the National Cash Register Company at Dayton, Ohio.



Mr Patterson's local agents were generally high-pressure men, too. Some time after 1907 a man whom I will call Hinchcliffe had the agency in Wellston for National cash registers, and a little later a local man, Abe Isaacs, took the agency for a cash-register concern that had the temerity to compete with the National. One day I noticed the two men in a hot argument right in front of my store. Hinchcliffe was a head taller than Abe; but suddenly I saw the Jew duck his head and use it as a battering ram against Hinchcliffe's stomach. They fought and wrestled all over the sidewalk and finally ended up in the gutter, where some citizens separated them. At the end Abe was biting his opponent and scratching his face with his fingernails.

It seems the Jew had been fairly successful in selling his machines. He was constantly running about the city to solicit business; whenever he saw an opportunity to make a sale, he would take a machine out to the prospect and leave it on ten days' trial.

Abe's office was a little hole-in-the-wall around on Third Street. Hinchcliffe, who was on Market Street, saw a chance to profit by the Jew's enterprise. Hinchcliffe hired a boy with a bicycle to stay across the street from Abe's place; whenever the boy saw Abe put a cash register in his buggy and drive off, the boy followed and learned where Abe's prospective customer was located. Then he bicycled as quickly as possible back to Hinchcliffe's office with the information. Hinchcliffe then carried a National cash register out to Abe's prospect and left it on trial. It was said he generally offered better terms and more often than not got the business. Anyhow, Abe's cash-register career didn't last long.

High-pressure salesmanship wasn't confined to manufacturers and wholesalers. It was quite noticeable how the retail stores speeded up their sales appeal after 1907.



Window displays were changed oftener, and some of the larger stores engaged professional display men to make their windows more seductive. Trade journals that formerly had not been much more than news sheets began to print "inspirational" articles telling merchants how to make more sales. At one time trade-journal authors strongly advised merchants to solicit women customers over the telephone. But this was something less than successful. So many merchants got to telephoning that it became a nuisance, and some women would slam up the phone when the call turned out to be a sales talk.

Perhaps I am seeing things where nothing exists; but I can't help believing that constant sales pressure of various sorts had a pretty radical effect on family life. For example, before the high-pressure era we had few divorces in Wellston; and when there was a divorce it was because the husband had strayed from the path of virtue, or, more rarely, because the wife had strayed. Before about 1910 I never knew of a divorce from any other cause. In the old days if people couldn't have luxuries, they got along without, and were reasonably contented. But as sales pressure grew stronger, some people began to crave more possessions than they could afford, and then trouble was likely to ensue.

One of my friends was a young architect named George Everett who came to Wellston about the time I did and set himself up in business. He got the job of designing the Merchants' Bank Building and the Y.W.C.A., and so did very well for a year or two. Meanwhile he married a girl from Albany to whom he had been engaged since his college days. But for three or four years after the 1907 panic there wasn't much going on in the building line, and Everett and his wife had to live pretty economically. For a while Mrs Everett entered into the spirit of the thing, and everything went along all right. Everett told me

afterward that he began to notice a change in her from about the time a big gaudy place called The Parisian opened up on Market Street. It was our first exclusive women's ready-to-wear store, run by a man named Morris from New York City. Morris himself was a high-pressure fellow, and he brought with him two or three saleswomen of the hard-boiled, sophisticated type, who worked on commission and who had a remarkable talent for making women customers who did not buy feel utterly cheap.

Young Mrs Everett became an habituée of The Parisian. Her husband's credit was good; they persuaded her to open a charge account, and she ran up bills that Everett found hard to meet. She developed a passion for buying things, not only at The Parisian but at other Market Street stores, and showed temper if her husband tried to curb her. Once they came in my jewelry store and she noticed a diamond pendant in the showcase. She asked to put it on and stood a few minutes in front of the mirror, admiring herself, then said, "Buy me this, George."

He smiled good-naturedly: "I'm afraid we can't afford it, my dear."

She snatched it off and shrilled, "I don't see why you can't make money like other men do!" then flounced out of the store.

There must have been other scenes of the same sort, because a few months later, when Everett was away on a business trip, she went among the Market Street stores and bought nearly three thousand dollars' worth of goods that she had charged to her husband. Then she went back to her people in Albany and sued for divorce and alimony.

Then there was the case of a poor little blond fellow named Garford, a \$125-a-month assistant teller in the Diesel bank. His wife ran hopelessly into debt, and he juggled his books to the extent of about a thousand dol-

lars to square up with creditors. When the theft was found out, and the detectives went one night to little Garford's house to arrest him, he shot himself.

As I say, I may be seeing things that don't exist; but I do know that divorces and domestic troubles in Wellston have increased at just about the same rate that high-powered salesmanship has increased.

I believe it is true, also, that high-powered salesmanship is responsible for so many women nowadays going in for business careers. Just lately I have read a book that gives the records of a class of Harvard men twenty-five years after graduation. It seems that about 40 per cent of the graduates' wives are working at jobs. A reasonable explanation is that high-powered salesmanship has made ownership of things seem so important that women go to work in order to increase the family income and so be able to buy more things.

But it doesn't always work out satisfactorily. The law of diminishing returns has started to operate; and it is very probable that some Harvard men are taking lower salaries today because their wives and other men's wives are holding jobs that formerly would have been held by men. So what is gained one way is lost in another way.

Speaking of marriage, I presume my ideas on the subject were about the same as those of other young white-collar men in the early Nineteen Hundreds. I shouldn't have cared to marry a girl who clerked in a store or who worked as a stenographer. A trained nurse, I would have thought, knew too much about the facts of life to be entirely desirable. I shouldn't have hesitated, perhaps, at a school teacher or a library assistant; though I should have preferred a wife who had never worked at all.

All of which was very priggish and unfair. But on the other hand, I wouldn't have married any girl for money; in fact, if a girl's family happened to be rich, that fact



would have been against her. And I would have considered any man who married a girl and then put her to work afterward to be about the lowest of God's creatures.

Anyhow, life was a good deal simpler when I first went into business, and people didn't need much money to have a good time. For one thing, there wasn't a "country club set" in Wellston, because we didn't have a country club. Now there are four country clubs, though about half the people who belong to them can't in the least afford it. The clubs are supported mainly by branch managers and high-powered salesmen of outside corporations who give expensive dinners and "blowouts" to prospective customers. It isn't much harder to become a country-club member now than to become a Y.M.C.A. member.

In the old days Wellston society had a reputation for being rather snobbish; and yet a young man who showed he knew how to behave among first-class people could go everywhere. There were a good many little home parties that cost no one any money to speak of.

I said in the beginning of my book that if we Americans had stayed the kind of people we were thirty years ago, it would be a sorry country for big business. I am reminded of it when I think of the parties we used to have. We didn't help taxicab manufacturers any, because a girl was taken to the party by some member of her own family; when the party broke up she was escorted home by a young man guest, on foot or by street car. We didn't support the cosmetic industry, because at no party I ever attended was there as much as a dime's worth of rouge, lipstick or fingernail paint. Girls coiffured their hair at home, so the hairdressing industry suffered. And even the richest girls had their dresses made by local dress-makers. Practically no money went from Wellston to New York City for factory-made ready-to-wear merchandise.

When you realize what indifferent customers Americans used to be, you can scarcely blame business for resorting to high-powered salesmanship.

I met the young lady who later became my wife at a little party given by a Mrs Bentley, whose husband was an official of the interurban trolley line. Miss Luley-Lee Harrison was a visitor from the Tidewater section of Virginia. Even if I hadn't known that, I would have guessed it from her speech. She said "pairfect" for "perfect," and "gyardean" for "garden"; and she had an easy and charming cordiality that made the local girls at Mrs Bentley's party seem stiff and reserved. When the hostess introduced us, she spoke to me as though I were some relative whom she had wanted to meet for years.

"It's my very first visit to the Nawth, Misto' Kent," she told me. "I've never been out of Virginia before. I feel just *terribly* adventurous. My own mother would as soon think of flyin' as to set foot on any soil but Virginia's."

"Of course you Virginians have a right to be proud of your state," I ventured. "When you think of George Washington, and Jefferson, and Madison——" I was trying to think of some other schoolbook Virginians when she interrupted:

"And Robert E. Lee. I'm named after General Lee myself. Luley-Lee. Lots of girls down home are named that way."

"It's a nice name," I told her. She said:

"I think Robert E. Lee was just next to Jesus. Don't you think so too, Misto' Kent?"

When I was working at the jewelry business in different parts of the country I once spent a few months in Lynchburg, so I knew how Virginians have built up an atmosphere of romantic aristocracy about their state that seems

pretty exaggerated to an outsider. But I felt there was a good deal to respect about it. Virginians were generally willing to back up their social pretensions. They weren't cheap. You felt that however much the rest of the country might be swept by commercialism and money-getting, Virginia would stand by tradition. Virginians knew how to be poor gracefully, and that is about as high a test as there is.

A little later I had a chance to talk with Miss Harrison again. I remarked, "You dance a lot down in Virginia, I suppose?"

She nodded. "Yes, I reckon we do. That is, most of the time. But of course every year or so there's a big church revival, and everyone gets religion. Then we don't dance for a while. Sometimes we go six months before we backslide."

"But I didn't know," I said, "that your church was against dancing. You're Episcopalian, of course?"

She threw up her hands, laughing. "How pairfectly funny of you, Misto' Kent. I just wish you could see the Episcopal church in our town. It's the *littlest* thing. They can't even afford a regular preacher." She added: "We're Baptists, Misto' Kent. All the Harrisons are. I reckon you might almost call us Hardshells."

I thought she was the most charming girl I had ever met. I hope it is not out of place for me to say I still think so, after nearly thirty years of marriage.

When the party was over, I found our hostess had arranged for me to escort the Virginia girl to the home of the Olivers in Locust Street, where she was visiting. The guests came out of the house in couples, saying good night to Mrs Bentley at the top of the porch steps. At the front gate some couples went one way and some another, each girl keeping at a decorous distance from her escort. But when I reached the front gate with the Virginia girl, I

felt her come close to me, and a moment later she tucked her arm into mine, simply and unconsciously as a child might do with a person she liked and trusted.

Miss Luley-Lee Harrison's visit in Wellston lasted another month; when she left for home, it was with the understanding that I should come to Virginia in the autumn to meet her family.



## The Chamber of Commerce Goes "Religious"

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**I**T SEEMS STRANGE NOW, when clergymen everywhere belong to advertising clubs, Kiwanis, Better Business bureaus and all other kinds of commercial organizations, that there should have been such a sensation in Wellston over the Reverend Beverly Harriss' becoming a member of the Chamber of Commerce. It was a year or so after the 1907 panic. In the current volume of *Who's Who in America*, Mr Harriss' autobiography contains the sentence, "One of first clergymen in U.S.A. to become active in Chamber of Commerce work."

A good many businessmen, including some of Mr Harriss' friends, thought he was getting into something not quite suitable for a minister. I remember being in the Wellston National Bank and Mr Henderson saying to me, "Just between us two I could wish the parson wasn't quite so keen about being the businessman's preacher."

And rich old Mr Eugene Carson the wholesale grocer, who was a Unitarian, was in my store having his watch repaired and said sarcastically, "I wonder if that damn Presbyterian preacher of yours believes he can mix Christianity with business and have it work?"

I think a man named Kilgore was, more than anyone else, responsible for Mr Harriss' taking such a radical step. Will Kilgore was a rather newcomer in Wellston,



a bustling, affable real-estate dealer, appearing much younger than his forty-odd years, who was always hurrying up and down Market Street as though his life depended on arriving somewhere in the least possible time. He joined the First Presbyterian Church as soon as he came to town and struck up such an intimacy with Mr Harriss that in less than a year he was elected an elder and a member of the financial board. Like all the other real-estate men he was an enthusiastic Chamber of Commerce member.

My own slight dislike of Will Kilgore was probably based on nothing more than prejudice. I knew him quite well, because when he first came to town he had his office over my store; and once, when out on some errand, I met him in front of old Hugo Sauer's saloon and asked him to join me in a glass of beer. A pious look came on his face, and he said, "Thank you, Mr Kent, but I never go in saloons." I mentioned this afterward to George Christman, another real-estate man, and he laughed: "Ask some of those Chamber of Commerce committeemen who went to Washington with Kilgore last month. They'll tell you if he ever goes in a saloon or not!"

If Mr Harriss was one of the first clergymen in the U.S.A. to become active in Chamber of Commerce work, his friend Will Kilgore was certainly one of the first executives to employ prayer as an instrument of salesmanship. Large sales corporations in New York and other cities have since used religion with extraordinarily profitable results.

When Mr Kilgore moved his offices from the rooms over my store, he leased a ground-floor location farther up Market Street that had been vacated by the Wellston Gas & Electric Company. There was a large brick vault in the office, and this made the place seem solid and important, like a bank. He promoted a real-estate addition

out at the edge of the city on the Interurban line, called Harmony Park; and as a side line sold shares in a Florida corporation that went in for grapefruit culture. Mr Kilgore employed a corps of canvassers to sell his grapefruit shares. Businessmen knew it was a highly risky investment; but the canvassers told prospects that a thousand dollars or so would, in a few years, yield the investor a comfortable living. Women school teachers and maiden ladies were the best prospects for grapefruit shares.

Each Saturday morning Mr Kilgore required his grapefruit canvassers to assemble at his office for a conference or, as he called it, an inspirational meeting. The canvassers were also required to bring with them any prospects who seemed interested in grapefruit shares, but who for any reason hesitated to take the final step.

One Saturday morning I went to the Kilgore office about a fire-insurance policy and asked to see Mr Kilgore personally. The girl apparently thought I had something to do with the grapefruit business, because she motioned me to a rear office. Once inside, I found I had blundered into an inspirational meeting, and as it was less awkward to stay than to get out, I sat down in a chair close to the door.

Will Kilgore stood on a little pulpit platform at one end of the room, addressing half a dozen canvassers who sat in the center. At one side, ranged along the wall, were several women prospects. I knew two of them, the Misses Emma and Jennie Hastings, retired public-school teachers, who belonged to the First Presbyterian Church. Another guest was the Reverend Mr Harriss.

Mr Kilgore spoke to his canvassers briskly and informally, occasionally quoting from the Bible. Once he said, "Seest thou a man diligent in business, he shall stand before Kings." He stated that diligent salesmanship was one way of benefiting humanity. As I remember, he made

no mention of grapefruit shares; but at one point he said, "When you make a sale of a worthy product you confer a blessing on the one who purchases."

He said this last with a slight inclination of the head toward the women prospects. At the end of his talk he remarked pleasantly, "We have with us today a very dear friend of mine, the Reverend Beverly Harriss. I am going to ask Mr Harriss to dismiss us with prayer."

As the minister stood up and raised his hand, Mr Kilgore turned about and flung himself on his knees, with his face in his chair, and all the canvassers did the same. The women prospects buried their faces in their handkerchiefs. I slipped out the door as Mr Harriss was saying Amen, and waited in the front office to see about my fire insurance. Will Kilgore and the minister followed in a moment, and I heard Mr Harriss say, "I always come away from these meetings, Brother Kilgore, feeling that American business is essentially religious."

Through the open door of the conference room I could see the grapefruit canvassers swarming about the elderly women prospects.

I know all this sounds very bad. It seems that a man of Mr Harriss' intelligence should have known he was being used by a slick promoter to further the sale of an extremely shaky investment. Mr Harriss had nothing to gain from it personally. The worst that could be said of him was that perhaps he was overly anxious to do a favor for a member of his church. Why, then, did he do it?

The only explanation I can think of, based on a good many years in business and observation of a good many clergymen who have become members of commercial organizations, is this: As a minister, Mr Harriss didn't know anything about business. Not knowing anything about it, he was easily taken in by a show of piety.

And in Mr Harriss' case there was an additional rea-



son for him to be taken in and to lend himself to a snide game. The reason is, he was an Englishman. When I say this, I am not reflecting on the intelligence or honesty of the English race. To be sure, I am unwilling to concede that Englishmen are so much more intelligent and honest than Americans as the English believe themselves to be; yet I freely admit a belief that the two races are about equal in those respects.

But Mr Harriss was an Englishman who had gone away from England. That, I believe, makes a difference. An Englishman coming to America is a little bewildered by our free and easy ways. Most of his English inhibitions and taboos seem not to be in operation here. He has to acquire a new set of values, and it is easy for him to choose the wrong ones without knowing they are wrong.

People from other countries have to serve a sort of rough apprenticeship when they come to America. Unconsciously we think of a German, or an Italian, or a Frenchman, as a funny fellow who will probably be crooked if he gets a chance. We watch him with a critical eye, ready, at the slightest excuse, to shout at him, "Hey, you can't do that!" But we don't watch an Englishman that way. He speaks our language and comes from the country where our best families come from, and we can't feel pleasantly superior to him as we do to other foreigners because he feels, and generally shows, that he feels superior to us. So we assume he will go right along and act just as good Americans do, if not better. We don't realize that in spite of it all he has only a partial understanding of our ways and traditions.

Doesn't that explain, I wonder, why an Englishman in this country will do things to get on in the world that a first-class American wouldn't? I don't mean things that would get him into jail, but things on the border line of ethics that he would never have done in England. Like

English-born Bishop Manning of the Episcopal Church using Chamber of Commerce methods to build his New York cathedral. Or Samuel Insull building his billion-dollar house of cards. Or a rich preacher like the late Mr Cadman writing a syndicated newspaper column featuring sex problems. And I am sure, getting nearer home, that it explains the case of the Reverend Beverly Harriss when he lent himself to the grapefruit project of his friend Mr Kilgore and his later activities in the Wellston Chamber of Commerce.

I myself had been a Chamber of Commerce member only a short time when Mr Harriss joined. It being so new to me, I felt rather proud of my membership, and that is probably why I remember it all so vividly.

We really weren't much of a chamber of commerce according to modern standards. It was before the days of high-powered commercial secretaries, and the practice of one town taking factories away from other towns had not yet become a science. We met twice a month in the Maloney Block on Market Street, in the third-floor hall that was also used by the Woodmen of the World. It was a long room with a red carpet, and our presiding officer sat on the little platform at one end that on lodge nights was occupied by the Woodmen Council Commander. Old Mr Akers, who ran a small private school for boys, was secretary and was paid \$15 a month.

At the close of the meeting that Mr Harriss first attended as a member, the presiding officer asked him to say a few words. He was very graceful and self-possessed; but of his speech I can remember only one phrase: "Through contact with you representative businessmen I shall learn the spiritual needs of the community."

Nowadays, of course, that is what every clergyman says when he joins Rotary or the Salesmanship Club; but

then the phrase sounded rather splendid, and it surprised me that some of the older Chamber of Commerce men seemed to lack appreciation. Old Mr Eugene Carson, who sat next me, muttered, "Damn it, I don't like it. It'll come to no good."

After that Mr Harriss seldom missed a meeting. And yet, I noticed, he never got very close to the members. He seemed to stand in awe of business as something he didn't altogether understand; and this made him uneasy with the storekeepers and bankers and wholesale merchants. They were uneasy with him, too, and were never quite themselves when he was around. He tried to be a hail fellow, but his laughing and joking was a shade too forced to be natural. I have always thought there was a touch of pathos in it. At the Chamber of Commerce meetings Mr Harriss seemed like a strange little boy in a new neighborhood who wanted desperately to get in with the gang, but didn't quite know how to go about it.

Yet as a speechmaker he was so superior to any of the ordinary members that he was pushed into the limelight considerably. He made the principal address at the annual banquet at the Hotel Erie that year, choosing as his subject, "Saul of Tarsus." Some of the younger Chamber of Commerce members were a little tipsy, and Mr Harriss won an enormous round of applause when he said Saul was the greatest salesman known to history and the first user of direct-mail advertising. That speech was such a success that later on he was asked to address the state convention of real-estate dealers and made another hit with his phrase, "Moses was one of the greatest real-estate promoters that ever lived."

The next year Will Kilgore contrived to get himself elected president of the Chamber of Commerce, and he appointed Mr Harriss chairman of the New Industries Committee. Everyone thought it was an empty honor be-



cause the Chamber had never gone after new industries. But Mr Harriss took it very seriously, saying he looked on his chairmanship as an opportunity to advance the cause of the Kingdom. "We must bring new factories to Wellston," he said, "so that the working people may come under the influence of our splendid schools and churches."

Some of the older members laughed about this and set it down as the remark of a preacher who ought to have kept to his preaching instead of mixing in business affairs. But there were others who weren't so critical. Probably the factory workers *would* be benefited by Wellston's churches. And anyhow the factory workers would spend their wages with Wellston's businessmen.

Not long afterward the *Morning Times* announced that the owners of the Phoenix Knitting Mill, located in the village of Newtown, would move their plant and workers to Wellston on the payment of \$100,000 bonus. It was suspected Will Kilgore was behind the scheme in order to sell land for the factory site at his Harmony Park addition.

As chairman of the New Industries Committee, Mr Harriss presided at the special meeting of the Chamber. He was enormously serious. When he said, "Gentlemen of the Chamber of Commerce, we are here to discuss a matter of great moment," it was almost as though he were asking sinners to give their hearts to the Lord. He was surprisingly intolerant of any opposition. Old Mr Eugene Carson spoke against paying a bonus to bring in a new factory. Mr Harriss tapped his foot impatiently; and at the end, when Mr Carson said, "Anyhow, it isn't fair for Wellston to take a factory away from a little town," the minister retorted, "Perhaps, Mr Carson, your wholesale grocery has a few customers in Newtown that you don't want to lose?"

The old gentleman shouted, "That's a damn poor argument!"

Mr Harriss said stiffly, "Let us not forget, Mr Carson, that there are higher things in life than making money."

I presume any minister in Mr Harriss' situation would have been tempted to be as intolerant as he was. In his own pulpit a minister mustn't be opposed; he can even call on the law to clap a man into jail who disturbs a religious service; and I can see how hard it must be for a minister to realize the same thing doesn't apply when he is on an ordinary platform. He naturally considers anyone who opposes him to be a willful sinner. School teachers, too, often display the same tendency.

I doubt if anyone but Mr Harriss could have successfully promoted the bonus-raising scheme. He had the advantage that the Chamber of Commerce was largely Presbyterian. Naturally his own church members were backward about opposing him, even though it was suspected that the whole thing was a scheme of Will Kilgore to sell the factory site and that Mr Harriss was unknowingly acting as Kilgore's cat's-paw. Mr Henderson, of the Wellston National Bank, a Presbyterian elder, took the floor and said he didn't believe it was wise to pay the Phoenix Knitting Mill people \$100,000 to move to Wellston, with no guarantee that the factory would succeed after it was moved. Mr Harriss shook his finger waggishly at the banker and said, "O ye of little faith!" and Mr Henderson didn't press his argument further.

Just before the vote was taken, a man named Henry Anderson, a Methodist and a competitor of Will Kilgore in the real-estate business, proposed that the balloting be secret. That would, of course, give the Presbyterians a chance to vote against their pastor without embarrassment. Mr Harriss said severely:

"Mr Anderson, the question is perfectly plain: Shall

we bring a factory to Wellston to the end that its workers may come under the influence of our splendid schools and churches? If a man cannot vote openly on such a question, I say he had best not vote at all!"

Poor Anderson's motion didn't even get a second.

"Let us now ask God," Mr Harriss said, "to direct our minds and hearts that we may cast our votes on the side of righteousness."

He had already closed his eyes and uttered, "Our Father," when old Mr Eugene Carson leaped from his seat and began to put on his overcoat. Mr Harriss opened his eyes. "We are in the presence of God, Mr Carson," he said. The old gentleman snorted indignantly and stumped out of the hall.

Mr Harriss forced a smile. "Brother Carson," he said softly, "is a Unitarian. He doesn't believe in God."

The vote was overwhelmingly in favor of the \$100,000 bonus.

People in Wellston still talk of the money-raising campaign that followed. Both newspapers printed front-page stories every day with screaming headlines and photographs of prominent Chamber of Commerce workers. Soliciting committees dashed in and out of Market Street stores and banks, climbed stairways to lawyers' and doctors' offices, went in automobiles out to the wholesale section. Everyone looked for bigger business when the knitting mill should come to town. One committee, led by young Johnny Martin of the hardware jobbing concern, collected more than a thousand dollars from proprietresses of houses in the red-light district across the tracks.

Mr John Powell of the Powell Steel & Cutlery Works furnished about the only disappointment of our whole campaign. There were half a dozen of us on the committee that called on him, and Will Kilgore, who was chair-

man, believed we could count on a \$10,000 subscription. Mr Powell asked an attendant to bring chairs when we were ushered into his private office and said genially, "Well, gentlemen, this looks as though I were about to part with some money. What's the cause this time?"

"Of course you've seen the papers," Will Kilgore began, "about the Phoenix Knitting Mill——"

"Oh yes, I know about that," Mr Powell said. "The Mill's in Newtown now, I believe. What's the idea of bringing it to Wellston? Think it will increase real-estate values?"

Mr Kilgore seemed a little confused. He was saying, "Why, it means progress, Mr Powell, material development and all that"—when the Reverend Mr Harriss cleared his throat importantly. I had thought all along the minister was a bit put out that he was not spokesman in place of Mr Kilgore.

"Of course, Mr Powell," he said in his deep voice, "we expect the new factory to bring increased prosperity. Yet that is not all. We are looking more on the spiritual side. We wish to bring this factory here in order that the workers may come under the influence of our efficient school system and our splendid churches."

"They've got good schools and churches in Newtown, haven't they?" Mr Powell asked. And then, before the minister could reply, he added, "I hope you'll pardon me, Mr Harriss, when I say this is a question you're scarcely qualified to discuss. It's business, you see; and a man of your profession isn't supposed to be up on business matters. I'd prefer to discuss it with these other gentlemen who *are* businessmen."

Mr Harriss' face flushed a deep red. There is no telling what he would have done if Mr Powell's wife had not been his richest parishioner. Mr Powell turned smilingly to us other committeemen.



"Now, gentlemen, let's talk this thing over. We're all businessmen together, so we can call a spade a spade without any hurt feelings. I'm sure we're all agreed on one thing: there isn't much room in business for brotherly love and all that. Business is a sort of polite piracy. That's so, isn't it?"

Will Kilgore laughed ingratiatingly. "Of course you're joking, Mr Powell. We know you don't run the Powell Steel & Cutlery Works piratically."

"If I didn't," Mr Powell smiled, "I'd be bankrupt in about a year."

No one answered this, and he went on:

"The Powell Steel & Cutlery Works never made a dollar that some competitor didn't want just as much as we did. Only, we were spry enough to get to the dollar ahead of anyone else. There's nothing very brotherly in that, is there? I'd say it borders on piracy."

Will Kilgore was determined to please the rich man. "But the generous way you treat your people," he put in. "You've never had a strike——"

John Powell seemed to be enjoying himself thoroughly. "A first-class pirate, Mr Kilgore, always looks out for his crew. That's part of the game. I run to New York, or Minneapolis, or London, and take a big order away from some competitor. That makes steady work for my crew at good wages. But meanwhile what about the competitor's crew? The chances are, a lot of them lose their jobs. So you see, it's only logical that the more piratical the business is, the better the crew fares."

Another of our committee spoke up. Wesley Thompson, of the Wellston Department Store, was a stiffish man who made speeches to young men at the Young Men's Christian Association.

"I am thankful to say, Mr Powell," he remarked,

"there are some lines of business that can still be operated according to the Golden Rule."

"Department store business?" Mr Powell suggested. Mr Thompson bowed.

John Powell picked up a copy of the *Morning Times* that lay on his desk.

"I notice here," he said, "that your store is offering some bargains because you made a fortunate deal with a manufacturer. That means you bought his goods below cost?"

"The advertisement states plainly," Mr Thompson replied irritably, "that the manufacturer needed money. We paid him spot cash. We are doing a favor to our customers——"

"At the expense of the hard-pressed manufacturer," Mr Powell interrupted pleasantly. I was the only committeeman who laughed.

After a minute or two Will Kilgore said, "What about your donation to the Knitting Mill fund, Mr Powell? After all, that's what we came for."

John Powell shook his head. "I'm afraid I can't do anything about it."

"But the Chamber of Commerce expects——"

"I know. But the Chamber of Commerce is doing something that's pretty piratical. It's stealing a factory from a village that needs it more than we do. To make it worse, someone has invented this rubbish about schools and churches. Trying to make piracy seem holy."

Mr Harriss tapped his foot on the floor irritably. Mr Powell went on:

"If you pretend that business is holy, you are just that much more tempted to be ruthless. When you get to the point where you say, 'I'll go ahead and make money so as to do God's will with it,' you're liable to stretch ethics pretty far."



Wesley Thompson was just opening his mouth to start one of his Y.M.C.A. speeches when Mr Powell ended with:

"About the only way to keep business decent is constantly to tell yourself, 'I know I'm in a piratical game. To survive, I've got to play it according to the rules in vogue. I'm sorry I have to do it. I'll try to play it with as little piracy as possible, and I'll never fool myself into thinking money-making is noble.'"

The Chamber of Commerce managed to raise its \$100,000 bonus money without John Powell's help, and the Phoenix Knitting Mill moved from the village of Newtown to Will Kilgore's Harmony Park addition just outside of Wellston. The Chamber of Commerce held a meeting at the plant the day operations began, and Mr Harriss offered a prayer in which he stated it was the first time in American history that an industrial plant had been opened with religious services. He predicted that the Phoenix Knitting Mill would pay large dividends on that account.

Some rather distressing things happened in the village of Newtown when the knitting mill moved away. The national bank failed, along with several Main Street businessmen. An elderly dry-goods merchant shot himself one night in his store, and the village newspaper stated that "Mr Sampson's rash act was the result of discouragement."

I wish I could say the Phoenix Knitting Mill did as well in Wellston as Mr Harriss predicted in his prayer. It ran a couple of years and then fell into bankruptcy. The building still stands out at the edge of the city with all the windows smashed and parts of the brick walls fallen in. I suppose you might call the project an artistic success but a financial failure.

## VI

### Tidewater Virginians

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**I**T WAS OCTOBER when I made my trip to Tidewater Virginia to meet Miss Luley-Lee Harrison's family. At Norfolk I boarded a shabby little side-wheel steamer that chugged out into Hampton Roads, past Old Point Comfort and into the open waters of Chesapeake Bay; then, after an hour's steaming, turned inland and nosed her way for another hour up a narrow, tree-lined creek that led to the village of Pocomac.

I had never been in Tidewater Virginia; and from day-break, when I stepped off the Pullman sleeper at Cape Charles, I had a sense that the people around me were different from people in every other part of the country. There were possibly forty passengers on the little side-wheel boat, white and colored, and as far as I could judge I was the only person from North of the Potomac River. The talk that I overheard was carried on in a lazy, slurring drawl that was not unpleasant. I realized that my own Northern speech, full of consonants, must seem to Tidewater Virginians unnecessarily harsh and energetic.

Much of the conversation was about Virginia and how superior it was to any other state, north or south. There had been a foretaste of it when I got off the Pullman at Cape Charles just behind a young woman who had

been visiting in Philadelphia. A swirl of wind enveloped her in a little cloud of dust, and I heard her say, "Anyhow, it's Virginia dust!" And as our little steamer out of Norfolk chugged across Hampton Roads, I heard one ancient gentleman in a Confederate hat remark to another, "One Virginian could always whup ten Yankees." As I passed from the cabin out to the forward deck, a youngish man who wore an Elk charm and was drunk, sprawled on a sofa and was telling a friend, "There's no gentlemen bawn nawth of the Mason and Dixon line!"

I was in the bow of the boat only a few moments when someone beside me remarked, "I reckon you're a stranger in these parts." Turning, I saw a little man with a knotty, humorous face whom I judged to be about forty years old, though he was the type that keeps a sort of small-boy youthfulness up to the seventies.

"I hope that fellow"—the little man indicated the tipsy Elk in the cabin—"didn't hurt your feelings any." I laughed and shook my head. "Because," the little man grinned, "he's only one generation from the Nawth himself. Father was a bricklayer from Michigan. Came to Pocomac right after the War and made money. So of course this fellow's got to be a super-Virginian."

The little man told me he was Dr Plummer, a Pocomac physician. But he added, "Unfortunately I'm not Tidewater born. I've only practiced in Pocomac fifteen years. And so, while people are kind to me and let me doctor them, they go a little out of their way sometimes to let me know I'm an outsider." When I asked where he came from, he pretended to be afraid to say it aloud. He whispered:

"Nawth C'lina. But don't tell anybody!"

When I said, "But what will Pocomac people think of me, Doctor, born in New York State? Isn't that a lot worse than North Carolina?" He shook his head:

"No, I reckon New Yawk and Nawth C'lina are about in the same category here in Tidewater."

The steamer chugged carefully along the twisting waterway, so narrow in places that overhanging branches almost swept the deck. There was low-lying farm land on either side, dotted here and there with small, cheaply built farmhouses, many of them unpainted. There was an occasional democrat wagon, drawn by mules, crawling along a rutty highway. The physician turned to me, his little-boy face twisted into a grin.

"You've been in Tidewater Virginia several hours now," he said. "What's your opinion of it?"

"It's not," I hesitated, "exactly what I expected——"

"I know what you expected," he broke in: "'Virginia, Mother of States and Statesmen,' and all that. Tall, imposing houses with white pillars and gentlemen riding around on horseback, directing crews of happy Negroes at work. Or perhaps unhappy Negroes, according to the way you look at it. At night, music and dancing in the big houses. Everybody quoting Shakespeare and Homer. Fine disregard of money. Elegance everywhere. Isn't that about it?"

He laid a hand on my arm before I could answer.

"The funny part of it is," he laughed, "that a lot of Virginians believe that way, too, in spite of the evidence. I reckon you've heard the expression, 'Every American has two states, his own and Virginia?'" I nodded, and the doctor went on: "They take that sort of thing seriously around here. If you want to hear them at their best, you ought to go to the annual Chamber of Commerce banquet in Norfolk or Newport News sometime."

He flung up his arm like a Chamber of Commerce orator and quoted: "If all the trees of all the forests of the world were felled and made into one great penholder; if all the metal in all the mines of the world were fused



into one great pen; this penholder and this pen would still be too small to record adequately the glories of Virginia!"

"That does seem a bit exaggerated," I told him.

"But no one laughs," Dr Plummer said, "or stops to think it's just a form of bragging. Once I heard a man tell an audience that when Williamsburg was the capital of Virginia it had an outpouring of genius greater than Athens in the Periclean age. I don't reckon many people in the audience knew much about Athens or Pericles, either; but they sensed that the speaker was praising Virginia, which meant he was praising them, so they liked it."

He apologized: "I reckon I shouldn't be talking like this to a man I've known ten minutes. But you see a Nawth C'linian living in Virginia has to let off steam once in a while. You mustn't think I don't like these folks, because I do. When you can get them to forget about being Virginians, they're as fine people as you'll meet anywhere, simple and friendly."

"Of course," I began bromidically, "life here in Virginia before the Rebellion——" I corrected myself: "I mean before the Civil War——"

"Don't mind me," the doctor laughed. "My part of Nawth C'lina was Union."

"The ruling class," I began again, "must have lived a pretty glamorous existence——"

The doctor closed one eye in a humorous wink.

"That glamorous existence," he laughed, "is a fine thing to talk about, but I'm afraid there wasn't a terrible lot of it. Anyhow, it stands to reason that everybody didn't have a grandfather who owned a thousand niggers and wore a stock and kept a pair of dueling pistols. A lot of people around here *think* they had grandfathers like that, but they're mistaken. Most of their grandfathers were just good, honest farmers and mechanics,



no more fashionable than farmers and mechanics anywhere else."

Even though an outlander I was a bit shocked. "But look here, Doctor," I said, "some Virginians must have grandfathers who were fashionable—men whom you and I would call polished men of the world. For example, what about George Washington?"

The doctor grinned. "I'll agree with everything you can say about George Washington except that he was a polished man of the world. I'd say he was just the opposite of that. More than anything else, George Washington was a first-class businessman. He was a wonderful bookkeeper. He didn't let a penny go unnoticed. Mind you, I'm not running down those qualities. I'm only saying George Washington wasn't the sort of man these people around here like to think their grandfathers were.

"I know it's terrible to come right out and say it, but if you go right through the list of Virginia heroes you'll find scarcely one who would qualify as an ideal grandfather; that is, if your ideal happens to be a grandfather who never worked, and who spent his evenings leading beautiful ladies through the measures of the minuet.

"Let's start with Jefferson. He was also good at business, and, like the Father of His Country, took the precaution to marry the widow of a very rich man. History says Jefferson was red-headed and awkward, and associated with ordinary people. I don't reckon he ever in his life walked through the measures of the minuet. Certainly *he* was no ideal grandfather. Next, let's look at Patrick Henry. Socially, he *was* pretty impossible. He grew up a clerk in a country store—just about the kind of a store you'll see around the square in Pocomac. Afterward he ran a country store of his own. When he failed at that, he worked in his father-in-law's hotel over in Hanover County. It would take a lot of imagination,

wouldn't it, to get much social prestige out of a grandfather like Patrick Henry? Or let's take Stonewall Jackson. Before the War he taught school over in Lexington. He was a deacon in the Presbyterian church and had a Sunday-school class. Can you see anything glamorous in the picture of a middle-aged man with a full beard stumping off to church every Sunday morning with a big Bible under his arm?"

The little North Carolinian was enjoying himself hugely. Finally I said, "Anyhow, Doctor, you'll have to admit there *is* one ideal grandfather. Robert E. Lee."

He threw up his hands. "Poor Robert E. Lee!" Then more seriously: "I say 'poor' because Virginians impose on him so abominably. It isn't fair, I claim, to take a man like General Lee and use him to bolster your social pretensions. But that's what they do. It reminds me of the way people yell their heads off when the band goes by playing 'Dixie.' They identify themselves for the moment with the Confederate army and feel they are braver and more dashing and more reckless than anyone else in the world. It's the same way about General Lee. Whenever his name is mentioned, all the Virginians present begin to identify themselves with him. For the moment they are noble and handsome, and have aristocratic families behind them and traditions of great landed estates with swarms of Negro slaves." He broke off to add wryly, "It wouldn't be so bad if Virginians, in this exalted state of mind, didn't usually contrive to let us Nawth C'linians and other Southerners know our places."

In a moment he was laughing again. "It looks to me," he said, "that you Nawtherners aren't quite as sharp as you claim to be. If you were, you'd make social capital out of *your* heroes, too. Because your Yankee heroes really are sweller than the Virginia ones. Now tell me: Who was the most polished, gentleman-of-the-world hero

of the Revolutionary War?" The little doctor answered his own question:

"Old Ben Franklin! As a ladies' man and *bon vivant* he could give George Washington cards and spades. Can you imagine the General going over to Paris and having intrigues with highborn ladies and all that? Of course not. The General simply wasn't up to it. From all accounts the General's intrigues were with ladies a shade or two darker than the French.

"Then let's look at another Yankee hero: Alexander Hamilton. I admit he didn't have any slaves or landed estates back of him, and not much family. But, Lord, what a swell he turned out to be! In Washington's cabinet he could always floor poor old Jefferson with that arrogant, aristocratic air of his. Hamilton even got killed in a duel, and no one can beat that for aristocracy. I can't understand why you Nawtherners don't make more use of him socially.

"While we're counting aristocrats, let's not forget old John Quincy Adams. I reckon he was about the most all-around aristocrat the country ever produced. He was better educated than Jefferson, and almost as rich as Washington. His father a president, he himself a president, and his son ambassador to the Court of St. James's! If the Adams family had lived below the Potomac, don't you suppose the Southern people would have got some social prestige out of it? But what do you Yankees do? Practically nothing. About the only Yankees smart enough to make use of the Adams family are the Jews who change their names to Adams from Moglewski!"

The doctor was still laughing when a long blast of the steamer's whistle announced that we were near Pocomac. Houses began to appear through the trees on either side, then a lumberyard or two, a sash-and-door factory with machinery rattling noisily, a schooner fastened alongside



a wooden platform where Negroes were cleaning fish; then suddenly the creek widened out into a sort of miniature lake where the little boat, after considerable tooting of her whistle, jangling of her bell and reversing of her paddle wheels, maneuvered alongside a dilapidated wooden wharf and was made fast.

A Negro hotel porter in a faded blue cap who stood on the wharf singled me out as his only possible client; before the boat was fully made fast, he had clambered over the rail and was in possession of my suitcase. Only then did he touch his cap and say, "Yessir, Cap'n. Robert E. Lee Hotel, Cap'n?"

I shook hands with Dr Plummer, then followed the Negro down the gangplank and up a dirt path that led to a narrow street a block long and thence to the public square of the village. A dozen or so farm wagons stood in the center of the square, the mules fastened to a chain that ran along a row of wooden posts; little puffs of dust were constantly stirred up as the animals stamped their hoofs to rid themselves of the clouds of flies that hovered about. The Pocomac County Courthouse occupied one side of the square, and around the other three sides ran a straggling row of buildings, with an occasional vacant lot, grown up in weeds. The Robert E. Lee Hotel, on the corner opposite the courthouse, was three stories high, and the Pocomac National Bank had two floors, but all the other buildings were of a single story, some with false fronts to make them appear higher. All the buildings had wooden awnings that extended out over the sidewalk.

Following my Negro porter, I glanced curiously into the doorways that stood open to the dust and flies of the square. The majority were general merchandise stores, carrying groceries, dry goods, men's clothing and tinware. Their customers were about equally divided between whites and Negroes. Over one tiny hole-in-the-wall was

the sign, "S. Berman, Watches and Jewelry"; and inside a pale, whiskered Jew sat at a workbench with a black magnifying glass stuck in his eye. I thought, half admiringly, "Who but a Jew would expect to make a living in such a place?" Next to S. Berman's was a drugstore with a colored glass bottle in each window and a tall prescription case at the back. Just inside the doorway a woman and a little girl, both in sunbonnets, sat on stools in front of an old-fashioned marble soda fountain. The gray-haired man who waited on them was stout and deliberate and wore an ill-fitting suit of clothes with stains down the front of the coat. As he handed his customers their glasses, he bowed ceremoniously; and the gesture seemed oddly at variance with the half-smoked cigar that he gripped between his teeth and the little trickle of tobacco juice that extended down his chin.

On the veranda of the hotel three or four men sat tilted back in their chairs, and all inclined their heads courteously to me as I passed. I waited at the desk, beneath a large lithograph of Robert E. Lee, while the Negro went to find the proprietor; directly Mr Dabney came out of the barroom wiping his hands on a towel, and after I registered he peered at the name and address through his spectacles, then offered his hand and said, "I reckon yo is might tired after all that travelin'. We sholy will try to make you comfortable." Mr Dabney's accent and pronunciation were exactly like his Negro porter's.

Half an hour later, shaved and with fresh linen, I quit my big, bare third-floor room, with its cheap oak bedstead and its pink-and-white bowl and pitcher, and went down to the office to speak with the proprietor. "I wonder, Mr Dabney," I asked as casually as possible, "if you can tell me where Mr Harrison lives, here in Pocomac."



The hotel man bit off a chew of tobacco and settled himself pleasantly in his chair. "Now that's a consid'ble question," he finally said, "because there's so many Harrisons around here. In fact a Harrison—Richard, his Christian name was—was one of the early settlers of Pocomac County. He come over from Williamsburg about 1760. He was a blacksmith by trade. He married a Miss Martin from Warwick County. The fruit of that union was . . ." My mind wandered while Mr Dabney named the descendants of Mr Richard Harrison and Miss Martin of Warwick County down to the current generation. At last Mr Dabney brought up with,

"This Misto' Harrison that you asked about. Do you know what line of business he's in?"

I had to say no. I recalled that Luley-Lee had never mentioned her father's business.

"You see," Mr Dabney droned on, "there's Misto' Fred Harrison who's superintendent of the sash-and-door factory, and his brother Henry, who's engineer on that boat you come from Norfolk on. Then, on the other branch of the family, there's Misto' Will Harrison, who's got a chicken farm about four miles——"

"I'm quite sure," I interposed, "the Mr Harrison I mean lives here in the village." I added, with a touch of self-consciousness, "He has a daughter, Luley-Lee."

The hotel man nodded. "I know who you mean now. Misto' Archie Harrison, the druggist. You passed his store when you come up from the boat. He has a daughter. Miss Luley-Lee."

I felt a slight accent on the "Miss," as if Mr Dabney meant to let me know how Virginia young ladies should be mentioned in conversation. But if a correction had really been intended, there was no ill will behind it; a moment later Mr Dabney smiled on me as he remarked, "Miss Luley-Lee sholy is a fine young lady. She comes

from a good Christian people." He added reminiscently, "Her mother was Miss Luella Davis from Isle of Wight County."

Following the hotel man's directions, I walked down a wide, dusty street, past the large First Baptist Church, South, and the very small Episcopalian church, until I came to the Pocomac Wagon Repair Shop; beyond that, Mr Dabney had said, would be the home of Mr Archie Harrison the druggist. It was a rather shabby house, not old enough, or substantial enough, to be shabbily attractive, set back in a deep yard and, like most of the other houses on the street, rested on yard-high wooden posts, partly concealed by wooden latticework. It was almost at the edge of the village; and as I opened the picket gate and walked up the gravel path, I could see, back of the house, a yard full of white Leghorn chickens and a cow grazing in a field beyond.

The door was opened by an elderly light-colored Negro woman in knitted bedroom slippers and an abominably dirty apron; when I asked for Mrs Harrison, she said, without inquiring my name, "Yessir, I'll tell her," then went to the rear of the house and called shrilly, "Gem'-man to see you, Mis' Luella!" Then she came back and said, "She'll be right in. Meantime make yo'self comfortable." Her Negro cordiality was quite attractive.

The room in which I waited seemed, to my Northern eyes, to indicate that Luley-Lee's people were anything but well off. There was no carpet on the floor, and the windows had only cheap green shades with no draperies. The five or six chairs were old and worn. A high, clumsily made secretary stood in one corner, apparently the work of some local carpenter of a past generation, with shelves for books; but the shelves were empty except for three or four pieces of china. The only reading matter in sight was a copy of the *Ladies' Home Journal* that

lay on the spindly oak center table. But then, surprisingly, alongside the magazine stood a solid-silver card tray with a heavily embossed border that I knew had cost considerable money.

I heard someone mount the steps of the rear veranda and walk briskly through the hall, and in a moment I rose to meet Luley-Lee's mother. She was fresh-faced and more than a little stout, and just a shade countrified in her actions. In the North I would have set her down as a farmer's daughter, probably able to milk a cow and in a pinch drive the hay rake, who had married a small-town man but never quite got used to village ways. When I introduced myself, she laughed pleasantly and spread out her palms.

"I can't shake hands right now, Misto' Kent, because I've been mixing my chicken feed. Those Leghorns certainly take a lot of waiting on."

I liked the simple way she said this. She was simple and unaffected, too, when I mentioned her daughter. "Misto' Harrison and I have talked it over," she said, "and we haven't any objections if you and Luley-Lee truly love one another. But of co'se"—I noticed her manner changed ever so slightly—"we had hoped she'd love some Virginian. It seems terrible, her going way up Nawth to live."

"But you'll come to see us often, Mrs Harrison," I said.

She shook her head. "I couldn't do that, Misto' Kent. You know I've never set foot on any soil but Virginia's, and I never will. It's a sacred principle with me." She sat up very straight, and the change of manner that I noticed before became more pronounced.

"I don't reckon, Misto' Kent," she said, "that any outsider can understand what it means to be a Virginian."

I asked if I might see Miss Luley-Lee. She went up-



stairs, and directly the two appeared at the top of the stairway, Mrs Harrison's arm about Luley-Lee's waist. They came down slowly to a few feet of where I stood, and then Mrs Harrison released her daughter.

"Remember, Misto' Kent," she said, "that the girl I'm handin' over to you is a child of Old Virginia." It was, I learned later, a custom of the country.

I was a little afraid, before coming to Pocomac, that my future father-in-law might be the hotel-advertisement type of Virginia gentleman who would say, "By Gad, suh," wear a goatee and talk about Southern hospitality. But within ten minutes after I went into Mr Archie Harrison's drugstore, I was sitting with him back of his prescription counter on the easiest of terms. Slumped comfortably back in his chair, with a half-smoked cigar between his teeth, he said simply, "If Luley-Lee is satisfied, I guess it is all right with me. Luley-Lee has got a lot of sense."

I have never known a finer man than Mr Archie Harrison. We were friends to the last day of his life.

Mr Ben Davis, Luley-Lee's grandfather on her mother's side, was in the drugstore when I called. He was a sprightly old gentleman of eighty, on a visit from his home in Isle of Wight County. He was repairing a drawer in the wall shelving when Mr Harrison introduced me. "Father's mighty handy with tools," Mr Harrison said admiringly, and the old gentleman answered, "I reckon I ought to do *somethin'* for you while I'm here, Archie."

I talked with old Mr Davis while the druggist was busy with customers. In the Civil War he served under Robert E. Lee. "I saw him once, pretty near as close as we are standing," he told me. "It was just a few days before Appomattox. We was marchin' along, and on account of a wagon breaking down we was halted. All

of a sudden I saw General Lee sitting on the ground beside the road, all by himself. He was getting ready to eat his dinner. He got half a loaf of bread out of a paper bag and a little chunk of butter that was wrapped in another paper. He had a big clasp knife, and he buttered the end of the loaf, and after he got it buttered, he cut off a slice. I never saw anyone do that before."

General Lee's method of cutting bread seemed to drive all other recollections of him out of old Mr Davis' mind. When I asked what General Lee looked like, he answered, "He looked just like his pictures, only not so slicked up."

My friend of the Norfolk steamer, Dr Plummer, came into the drugstore and tossed an opened letter to Mr Harrison. "It's from Emmett Dalby, up in New Yawk," he laughed. "Coming down to have me take his appendix out. Says he won't let any damn Yankee stick a knife in him!"

The druggist shifted his cigar. "I don't know, Doctor, but maybe I'd feel that way myself."

The physician saw me behind the prescription counter. He exclaimed, "Hello, what 're *you* doing here?"

"It's Luley-Lee, Doctor," Mr Harrison explained.

The North Carolinian put out his hand. "I congratulate you. She's a lovely girl." Then with a private wink he added, "But don't let her bring you down to Virginia to have your appendix taken out. There *may* be a Yankee doctor or so who's fitted by ancestry and social position to do the job."

He walked with me back to the Robert E. Lee Hotel and sat awhile on the veranda.

"Now you're going to be one of us," he said, "I'm going to let you into a secret. Virginia women don't know it, and I reckon they'd be first to deny it: but they're by far the stronger sex. If it weren't for the women, Virginia would be just another state, like Nawth C'lina or



Ohio. They've managed to keep themselves on pedestals by talking about chivalry and before-the-War grandeur and all that. So the men just take their word for it that women are goddesses, and act accordingly.

"But don't think the women aren't willing to make sacrifices to *keep* themselves on their pedestals. I've got a patient right now who's a grandmother, and she's so modest that she's never in her life taken a bath except in a kimono. There's another of my patients—she's forty years old and has children—who's probably going to die of intestinal trouble. Her husband's a lawyer, and she won't go to the toilet in the morning until after he's left for his office. When I scold her she simply says, 'I should die of shame.'"

"You haven't told me," I inquired, "if you're a family man yourself." The little North Carolinian's face became more small-boyish than ever.

"Being what I am," he said, "I needed someone strong to lean on. So, fourteen years ago I married Miss Susie Ford of James City County, Virginia. She's a distant kin of Mr Archie Harrison. She's the most loyal person I know, and the easiest to get on with. Whatever I do is just right, even if it isn't." He broke into a little laugh and added, "Virginia ladies, you know, never criticize their own. You don't know what a piece of luck you had when Luley-Lee said yes!"

Next day I had dinner at the Harrison home. Besides the family, there were old Mr Davis and an elderly spinster called Cousin Harriet, from Prince George County. I never quite understood her relationship to the Archie Harrison family, though she spent an hour before dinner explaining it to me and traced it through several generations.

When we were seated at table, Mr Harrison said a blessing in a hurried monotone, as though reading a phy-

sician's prescripton in his drugstore. Then Mrs Harrison rang a bell, and the aging Negro woman came from the kitchen. Though still in her knitted bedroom slippers, she waited on us with a considerable show of formality. The table was set with substantial solid silver, which seemed at variance with the other appointments of the home. I had yet to learn that in Tidewater Virginia, silverware came before furniture and carpets.

Cousin Harriet did her best to entertain me. "I was in the Nawth once, Misto' Kent," she said. "In the city of Washington."

I said I hoped she enjoyed it. Cousin Harriet pursed her lips. "A man there asked me if my family came over in the *Mayflower*."

Luley-Lee interposed: "Oh yes, Cousin Harriet, it's awfully funny the way you tell that story. Probably everything you said to the man is true. But perhaps Peter——"

Cousin Harriet went on relentlessly: "I told the man I didn't thank him for his question. I told him I was a Virginian, and that Virginia had a governor and a legislature long before Plymouth Rock was ever thought of. I told him that Virginia was the mother of presidents and the home of brave men and aristocratic women——"

"I reckon it was a mistake, Cousin Harriet," Mrs Harrison interrupted, "for you to go to Washington that time. You know it's *my* principle never to set foot on any soil but Virginia's." She added in a gently superior way, "I find it's best."

Cousin Harriet wouldn't be stopped. "I was only a little chit before the War," she said. "But I remember the life. It seems as though we were always going visiting, or that people were coming to visit us—always accompanied by servants. The ladies came in carriages, but the gentlemen rode horseback. Virginia gentlemen are born horsemen . . ."

Mr Archie Harrison, sitting comfortably at the head of the table, looked to me anything but a born horseman. Old Mr Davis, hard of hearing, leaned forward with his hand behind his ear, trying to catch Cousin Harriet's words:

"Of course, Misto' Kent, Christmas was the *real* time with us. Even the servants caught the spirit. Parties and dancing. All the people in their fine old houses——"

Old Mr Davis thumped the table delightedly. "You've certainly said it, Harriet. Houses *was* fine in those days. A sight better built than they are now." He turned to me: "I reckon I know what I'm talking about, Peter, because I helped build some of the best houses in Isle of Wight County. You know I served my time at the carpenter's trade, and I worked at it right up to the time I went off to war."

Luley-Lee laughed and patted the old gentleman's hand.

"I'm past eighty years old," Mr Davis said defiantly, "but I'd match myself right now with any of these so-called carpenters around here!"

Cousin Harriet almost shouted: "All aristocratic young Virginia men learned a trade in those days!"

I hadn't then, and I haven't now, any inclination to make light of Cousin Harriet's dreams about old Virginia aristocracy. The dreams might be quite different from actual fact; yet there is no question that they had their value. You knew that Cousin Harriet, and all the other Cousin Harriets of Virginia, would make pretty nearly every sacrifice to back up what they believed to be Virginia social tradition. They would never be cheap. And you somehow sensed that if Virginia ever should let down socially it would be bad, not only for Virginia, but for the rest of the country.

## VII

### Mr Harriss' Church-Membership Drive

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ONLY A MAN who was in business on some Main Street can realize how competition constantly grew in intensity during the years between the 1907 panic and the breaking out of the European War in 1914. Every businessman I knew felt it, and every one was puzzled. We hadn't learned that it was because mass production made it possible to turn out more goods than people could reasonably buy, and that Big Business was trying to force a market that no longer existed. I remember it was during that period that I first heard such typically American expressions as "go-getter," "high-powered salesmanship" and "sales resistance."

The United States was starting off on a unique business career.

European countries, too, reached the point where more goods could be produced than could be sold; but in Europe there has never been much attempt to force a market beyond reasonable bounds. With their long background, European businessmen knew instinctively that such a course must be disastrous in the end. But in America there seemed to be no limit to opportunity; we were used to seeing things go ahead by leaps and bounds as the country expanded, and it was hard to realize that expansion might not keep up forever. Even before



the 1907 panic we began to have a "success" literature. An author, Mr Orison Swett Marden, wrote a series of books with such titles as, *Every Man a King, He Can Who Thinks He Can*, and the like. These books had an enormous sale and helped to spread the belief that if a man wished to be rich and admired, all he had to do was to work hard, have an eye open for the main chance and keep ahead of his competitors.

But there are other reasons why European businessmen have been more conservative than Americans about forcing their goods on the public. In most European countries the aristocratic tradition still exists to the extent that business isn't considered quite respectable, or at any rate isn't considered genteel. I have made numbers of trips to Europe to buy merchandise for my store; and always I am impressed by the fact that so many heads of businesses whom I meet are counting on the time when they can clear their skirts of trade and retire to lead lives of leisured gentlemen. In this country we have almost nothing of that. The only cases I can think of are a few men who have made fortunes in breakfast foods, chain stores, or what-not, and bought estates in Virginia or South Carolina, where they play at being Southern aristocrats.

There is a still stronger reason for European business to be more conservative than ours. Over there the Church still has enough authority to hold down some business abuses. This is especially true in Roman Catholic countries. England has its State Church that does the same thing. It is getting a little ahead of my story; but I happened to be in London at the time of the Wembley exposition and saw a delegation of California advertising men arrive at the Waterloo station. It was Sunday, and all over London there was that decorous, respectful quiet of a typically British Sabbath. The advertising men came



out of the station a hundred or more strong, with their banners and humorous costumes, and lined up behind their brass band for a parade to their Piccadilly hotel. Some American advertising men resident in London arrived in time to stop the parade. I heard one disappointed marcher grumble, "Why, hell, if the burg is so damn quiet on Sunday, we'da got all the more publicity."

I am afraid it ill becomes me to complain that our American churches haven't done more to hold business within bounds. When I brought my wife home to Wellston, she had the idea that the Baptists were the leading denomination as they were in Tidewater Virginia, and she expected to join the First Baptist Church. At that time the First Baptist minister, Mr Wakeman, was trying to bring his church up to social equality with the First Presbyterian. He wore a swallow-tail full-dress suit in the pulpit at his Sunday-evening services. Luley-Lee attended Baptist meetings once or twice, and after that it didn't take much arguing on my part to convince her that socially she had little to gain by joining Mr Wakeman's church. She was a sensible girl; and when I explained how much richer the Presbyterians were, and how much better customers for jewelry, she exclaimed, "Peter, I think it's just terrible for you to talk that way!" but agreed readily enough to be a Presbyterian. She brought her letter from the Baptist church of Pocomac and became one of Mr Harriss' communicants.

I myself had never joined the church, though I attended regularly, and Mr Harriss and I were quite friendly. As soon as I became a fairly important merchant, he made me a member of his finance committee. Once in a while he would ask me when I intended to become a church member, but that was about all. Apparently he knew how I disliked intimate talk about my soul and all that sort of thing. Once, when an imported evangelist

held a series of meetings at the church, there was a Sunday-evening service with a lot of old-fashioned shouting and beseeching sinners to give up their hearts, and Mr Harriss came down the aisle to plead with different people; but when he came to my pew he merely shook hands and passed on. I was grateful to him for that.

I imagine it was Mr Harriss' Chamber of Commerce associations that made him so zealous in pushing his church-membership drive. When he first came to Wellston his church was one of the smallest in the presbytery; he had gradually built it up until it was second, only fifty members or so behind the leader. In his Chamber of Commerce work he had caught the spirit of competition, and it seemed the natural thing to beat his rival if possible, and to take the First Presbyterian of Wellston into the lead.

I saw right at the start that he had his eye on me. One night after a meeting of the church finance committee he followed me out to the Session Room steps and remarked, "What do you say to a little walk, Brother Kent?" I said something about having to run down to my store and hurried off. Another time he passed me on Market Street with his horse and carriage as I was going home and pulled up at the curb for me to get in with him. I said, "Awfully sorry," and dodged into a drugstore.

But when I joked about these things to my wife, she surprised me by coming out on the minister's side. Raised in Tidewater Virginia, where people talk about salvation as casually as about mint juleps or the prospect of rain, she couldn't see what I objected to. "You just stand up and confess your sins," she argued, "and then you're a church member. Nobody thinks any the less of you." And then, to show how simple it really was, she added, "If you feel like backslidin' later on, you can. In Pocomac nearly every man I know has got religion and then back-

slid into dancin' and drinkin' half a dozen times."

I knew plenty of businessmen who joined churches as a matter of course, just as they joined the Odd Fellows or the Chamber of Commerce. Some of them even stood up at revival meetings and talked about their souls, then next morning went down to their offices as though nothing had happened.

The way I felt about it, a church member couldn't decently be in business at all. Probably I was born literal-minded. When I was a boy I wouldn't give my heart to the Lord, though I was desperately afraid of hell's fire, because I thought if I gave my heart to the Lord I would have to give up swearing and other worldly pleasures. It never occurred to me that I might swear and go to heaven just the same. When I grew up and went into business, I felt the same way. I wanted to get along in business, to make money. But to make money I had to do things a dozen times a day that were just the opposite of what a Christian ought to do.

I know this sounds very bad. I have no doubt some reader is genuinely shocked. But let me ask the reader this: How long does the reader think he would stay in business if he behaved the way he promised to behave when he became a Christian? If he refused to buy as cheaply as possible and sell as dearly as possible? If he turned the other cheek every time? If he let clients go to a competitor because the competitor needed the money?

Unless the reader is in some locality that I know nothing about, his rating in Dun and Bradstreet would be far from first-class, and the sheriff would be just around the corner.

As for the Reverend Beverly Harriss, I couldn't get the idea out of my head that he wasn't being precisely Christian in his church-membership drive. There was too much of the Chamber of Commerce spirit about it. He



wanted the honor of being pastor of the biggest church in the presbytery. He was trying to beat some other pastor out of the honor. He was doing the same thing that I did when I tried to beat my competitor, old Barney Hirschfield, out of a diamond sale. But when I tried to beat old Barney I knew mighty well I wasn't being a Christian.

But leaving all this aside, there were things about "getting religion" in an Evangelical church that seemed more than anyone ought to stand. When you join the Masons you merely learn a piece that some member comes around to your house and teaches you, and then you recite it at your initiation. The Elks are even simpler. They blindfold you and make you do some ridiculous things, and then you are a brother. But when you join a Presbyterian, or Methodist, or Baptist church, you have to subscribe to bits of degraded sentimentality, like admitting that you are but a worm of the dust, when your common sense tells you it isn't so. You have to listen to phrases—"Blood of the Lamb," for example—that conjure up in your mind a picture of an untidy butcher shop. Worst of all, you have to claim to experience a mysterious something called Change of Heart—as though you allowed someone obscenely to fumble around in your insides.

At the very best it is pretty unattractive.

I will say for Mr Harriss that he didn't press me very hard until he had his membership drive well along and needed only a few more souls to make his church the largest in the presbytery. Luley-Lee and I had just moved into the Elm Street house when the minister called one evening to make a direct appeal. He had broadened out physically since I first met him, and had lost some of his English mannerisms; but some of the American mannerisms he had put in their place weren't, I thought, much of an improvement. He had adopted a booming, cordial



way of speaking and often ended sentences with a jocular "Ha! Ha! Ha!" When I helped him off with his coat in the front hall, he boomed, "My, how fine we are in the new house! Business must be good. Ha! Ha! Ha!" And in the dining room, where Luley-Lee sat sewing and the fox terrier lay dozing in his basket before the open fire, he said, "Charming domesticity. Home and fireside. Ha! Ha! Ha!"

I knew I was in for an embarrassing half-hour. But I was not so embarrassed but that I could appreciate the minister's technique when he abruptly abandoned his jocularly and brought up the real purpose of his call. It was the same technique, I realized, that I myself might employ toward a diamond customer. I might, to put the customer at ease, speak a few humorous words before I began my sales talk; but the sales talk itself must be deadly serious.

"If you only knew, Brother Kent," the minister began, "how for a long time I have dearly wished I might receive you into my church!"

All I could think of to say was, "Thank you, Mr Harriss."

"Your dear wife here is one of us," Mr Harriss nodded toward Luley-Lee. She giggled pleasantly.

"I think it's *pairfectly* ridiculous the way Peter does, Mr Harriss. He's just as honest as he can be, and he never gambles or anything, yet he won't join the church and take Communion. It's a mystery to me why he holds back." She smiled at the minister. "I tell Peter that joinin' the church just doesn't amount to a thing."

Mr Harriss' look of annoyance lasted only a moment.

"You know, Mr Kent, how anxious I am to make my church the largest in the presbytery——"

I felt that was a decided *faux pas* on the minister's part. It was as though I should say to a diamond cus-

tomers, "I want to sell you this stone so I can afford a new spring suit."

The minister went on: "The church needs men like you, Mr Kent. Young, successful businessmen with real influence in the community——"

I murmured again, "Thank you, Mr Harriss." The minister, I felt, was on sound salesmanship ground once more. A little judicious flattery goes a long way. But his next move was frightfully bad. He leaned over and took hold of my hand.

"Won't you say yes, Brother Kent? Say yes to your Savior?"

It was just the sort of sentimentality that always made me sick. I said awkwardly, "I'm afraid I can't say yes right now, Mr Harriss." I felt I ought to offer some justification. "You see, Mr Harriss, I couldn't conscientiously join your church. I don't believe in hell."

There was a shocked "Oh!" from Luley-Lee on the other side of the table. "Peter, I think you're simply awful! I don't see how you *dare* say a thing like that!"

Mr Harriss' face broadened, and for a moment I thought he might burst into one of his "Ha! Ha! Ha's!" He boomed, "We won't quarrel over that, Brother Kent. Sometimes I don't quite believe in hell myself." He added waggishly, "At least not the fire-and-brimstone kind."

Luley-Lee tittered.

"I declare, Misto' Harriss, you certainly are *broad!*"

I realized that the minister, in saying a church member needn't believe in hell, had outmaneuvered me. I fell back on another line of defense.

"You know I find it hard to believe, Mr Harriss," I spoke slowly and judicially, "that the Bible is the Word of God. That is, literally."

Mr Harriss smiled. "That's a question for scholars to decide. I'm receiving several people on profession of

faith next Sabbath morning. May I add your name, Brother Kent?"

I couldn't help admiring the minister's salesmanship. It was remarkable how he could make one concession after another, yet still press toward his objective. I could almost imagine Mr Harriss to be the diamond salesman and I myself the customer. Every time I found some fault with the stone, or said I wasn't ready to buy yet, he knocked a little off the price and then said confidently, "I'm sure you'll buy my diamond now!"

I cast about desperately for something that would disqualify me for membership in Mr Harriss' church. I said I doubted that man could actually be born again. I challenged the theory of infant damnation. I touched delicately on the incredibility of the virgin birth. I fell back at last on eleventh-hour conversion. I said I couldn't believe God was so unfair as to allow a man who was frightened into conversion at the last moment to go to the same heaven as a man who spends a lifetime in pious works.

It was discouraging the way Mr Harriss met one objection after the other with a smiling, "Many a splendid Christian believes as you do about that, Brother Kent." And when I grasped at the eleventh-hour-conversion straw, the minister shook a waggish finger and roared, "Doubting Thomas. Ha! Ha! Ha!"

Then I did what I should have done in the first place. I looked the minister in the face and said flatly, "I don't want to, Mr Harriss."

I felt sorry for him. I knew how important it seemed to Mr Harriss to make his church the largest in the presbytery—just as I wanted to make my store larger than Wilson & Hunt's, which was the Tiffany's of Wellston. No one knew better than I how it felt when a customer said a final no and backed away from the counter.

Mr Harriss didn't take his defeat well. A real salesman knows when to say genially, "Well, sorry you can't decide now. Perhaps better luck another time." But Mr Harriss wasn't genial. I thought there was a little irritation in his face as he waited a moment or two, then said, "Let us pray," and knelt down with his face in his chair.

It seemed to me unsporting to bring the Lord into it that way. It was as though I were to follow a refractory customer to the door and call to a policeman, "Hey, officer, come and see what *you* can do with this fellow!"

The minister prayed a long time. For politeness I knelt too and tried not to hear the embarrassing passages like, "O Lord, soften the heart of this brother," or, "May Thy Spirit turn this young man's thoughts toward Thee." I glanced across, under the table, at Luley-Lee. She was on her knees but had her eyes open and was looking at me through spread fingers. She smiled as though some amusing game were in progress. When the fox terrier, disturbed by my strange posture, got out of his basket and came to lick my face, she smothered a laugh.

Mr Harriss finished his prayer and was starting to argue further with me, when Luley-Lee came to my rescue. She said quickly, "I declare, Misto' Harriss, it was *pairfectly* lovely of you to come to see us this way. *Do* come again, right soon." She chatted brightly on indifferent subjects until the minister left. As the front door closed behind him, she said to me, "I knew you didn't want to hear him talk any more about joinin' his old church." Back before the fireplace she added admiringly, "I declare, Peter, I had no *idea* you knew so much about the Bible and infant damnation and all those things. Where there's room in your head for all you know, I just can't *imagine*."

I felt sorry for men who didn't have wives from Tidewater Virginia.



One morning, a few days after the minister's visit, a servant at the Powell home on Summit Avenue telephoned me at my store. Mr John Powell, the servant said, wished to discuss the purchase of a hall clock and would like me to come to his residence, bringing a clock catalog. If I could come, Mr Powell would send his carriage to my store.

Half an hour later I rang the doorbell of the big house on Summit Avenue. It had been built by John Powell's father and was the typical rich man's home of the Eighteen Seventies; red brick, square, with tall, narrow windows and a French roof that was surmounted by a wooden cupola, set far back from the street and with a lattice summerhouse at one side. The large grounds were enclosed by a cast-iron fence. It seemed as though there should be a cast-iron deer, and old Wellston residents actually could remember one, but it had been removed about the time of the Spanish-American War.

The servant showed me into the front parlor, which had the heavy walnut furniture of the Eighteen Seventies, and on the walls hung a set of four "Voyage of Life" steel engravings. In one corner was a Rogers group, showing President Lincoln signing the Emancipation Proclamation. To these had been added more items—apparently purchased by the present Mrs Powell—a French clock under a glass cover, a bronze female figure holding a cluster of electric bulbs, and an amateurish reproduction in oil of the "Mona Lisa" of the Louvre. The oriental rugs, even to my inexperienced eyes, suggested an Atlantic City auction-room source. Mrs Powell went there every summer.

Directly I was admitted to a smaller room at the rear where Mr John Powell sat at a small reading desk. "Sorry to put you to this trouble, Mr Kent," he apologized. "I'd have come to your store, only the doctor's

keeping me in the house a day or so." There was a simplicity about him that was very charming. As he turned the pages of my clock catalog, stopping now and then to look at an illustration, I thought that if he weren't so rich he might be an agreeable friend. At last he came to an illustration that pleased him; he laid his hand negligently on the page and said, "I'll let you order this one for me." He didn't even ask the price. That made me realize how rich he was. Too rich, I thought, for me ever to become friendly with.

But then he leaned back and remarked, "If you aren't in a hurry, why not join me in a drink? It's a bit lonesome to be tied up at home this way." He had the servant bring a couple of whiskies and soda, and almost before I knew it I had forgotten about his money and was as much at ease as though he were some man only a jump or so ahead of the sheriff.

Somehow the Reverend Mr Harriss' name came up—I believe Mrs Powell had mentioned my wife's name as a member of the Presbyterian Aid Society—and directly I was telling how the minister had come to my house and prayed for me and how embarrassing it was. Mr Powell smiled: "He came to see me, too."

I was surprised enough to blurt out, "You mean he came here and talked to you about salvation and all that?"

"Why not?" Mr Powell answered. "That's his business."

If I had been perfectly candid I would have said it seemed incredible that anyone should have the hardihood to talk to a man worth five million dollars about his soul. I couldn't help asking, "And did Mr Harriss——"

John Powell anticipated the question. "No, he didn't pray for me. I think he was getting ready to, but I stopped him."

I asked how. Mr Powell answered, "I told him I was too rich to be a church member."

He said this casually, just as he might have said, "I'm nearsighted" or, "I'm susceptible to colds."

"I told Mr Harriss," he went on in the same casual way, "that I've got far more than my rightful share of money. In fact, I'm indecently rich. But I don't intend to give it up. And as long as I feel that way, I'd only be a hypocrite to pretend I was a Christian."

I had never heard anyone talk that way before. I said bromidically, "But a rich man can do so much good with his money——"

Mr Powell laughed. "I know. That's the argument a rich man always uses: 'I'm aware it isn't Christian to have all the money I've got. But I guess the Lord will overlook it if I'm generous and give away some of it.'"

"Did you," I asked, "say that to Mr Harriss?"

Mr Powell laughed again. "No, but I'm afraid I said something about as bad. I said I thought there ought to be a law forbidding any man to pretend he is a Christian who is worth more than twenty thousand dollars!"

Years afterward John Powell told me he had never before opened up to anyone as he did to me that morning. He explained it by saying his talk with Mr Harriss had started him on a train of thought, and he had had time to develop it during the days at home that his doctor insisted on.

"Just between you and me, Kent," he remarked, "I think our friend the Reverend Mr Harriss is developing into a pretty dangerous citizen with his Chamber of Commerce work and his ambition to be the businessman's preacher and all that."

I said Mr Harriss might be a little too enthusiastic, but I didn't see anything dangerous about him.

"I might think the same way," Mr Powell said, "except

for a call I made once on a banker in Baltimore. He showed me a book with the names of the bank's customers in it. He had made a funny mark opposite an occasional name, and I asked what it meant. The banker said it meant, 'Pious. Watch him.' "

"But that doesn't prove, Mr Powell," I objected, "that all pious men are crooked."

"I don't claim it does. But I do claim that a pious man is more *tempted* to be crooked than a man who isn't pious. That is, if he happens to be a little stupid as well as pious."

"But I don't see——"

"Wait a moment. Let's suppose I'm a pious businessman and I have a deal on with someone that involves a lot of money. A situation crops up that requires a pretty delicate balancing of ethics. It's up to me to decide. Am I not likely to say to myself, 'I'm a pious man and ought to make this money. If I do, I'll use some of it to further God's work. The other fellow's a sinner and he wouldn't do that. So I guess I ought to decide in my own favor.'"

"Do you infer, Mr Powell," I said, "that Mr Harriss would decide in his own favor?"

"I never said that. I merely said that Mr Harriss is a dangerous citizen, with his running about in the Chamber of Commerce and his church-membership drive, as though he were sales manager for some kind of a factory. He's mixing religion up with business and making a lot of stupid fellows believe that money-making is a pretty noble enterprise. If you keep that sort of thing up for long, you're bound to have bad results."



## VIII

### Sales Quotas and Local Havoc

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**I**F YOU CHANCE TO GLANCE through the pages of almost any trade magazine that caters to Big Business readers, you are likely to run across a headline or two in which the expression "sales quota" is used: "National Refrigerator Corp. Sets Sales Quotas for Western Territory"; or, "Big Food Mfr. Boosts Traveling Men's Sales Quotas." In case you do not read trade journals, and do not know what "sales quota" means, I will explain.

You are, let us say, a manufacturer of wash boilers. Your factory is equipped to make one million wash boilers a year. Roughly, one boiler for each one hundred of population. You consult government statistics and set a "quota" for each separate unit of the country. If the state of South Carolina, for example, shows a population of one million people, you issue orders to your sales force that ten thousand boilers must be sold in South Carolina. If you market your product through local agents, each agent is required to contract for a certain number of boilers based on the population of his community. Should an agent fail to live up to his contract, you take the agency away from him and appoint a more active seller.

I believe it was in 1913 that I first heard of the sales quota. It was in connection with the Ford Motor Company's agency in Wellston.

There was a young German named Hans Frick, who kept an auto-repair shop back of the post office, and every fall raced his car on dirt tracks at county fairs, and who occasionally sold a car. But one day Hans gave the race-track customers an extra thrill by running his car off the track and being killed. A man named Floyd Gallup bought Hans's repair shop from the widow; the purchase included the Ford agency, and I believe Gallup paid \$500 for the whole thing.

One day I was lunching in old Hugo Sauer's place and met young Johnny Martin, of the wholesale-hardware family, who was all excitement over the new Ford dealer's affairs.

"They've got a new set-up down there," Johnny told me. "This man Gallup is obliged to sell ten Fords every month!"

I told Johnny he had better take another drink. "Where's Gallup going to find ten people in Wellston every month who can afford to buy cars?"

"But it's so, Pete," Johnny insisted. "I saw Gallup's contract."

"And if he doesn't do it?" I inquired skeptically.

Young Martin answered, "Then Ford kicks him out!"

I wouldn't believe it. "Who owns the Ford agency?" I demanded. "Does Ford own it, or this man Gallup?"

"Gallup owns it, of course," Martin said. "He invested his own money in it. That's the way Ford is going to operate all over the country. He sells the agency to some local man, and then tells the man how many cars he's got to sell."

"Do you mean to tell me, Johnny," I said, "that Henry Ford sits in his office in Detroit and dictates how many cars our people here in Wellston must buy?"

Young Martin nodded. "Not only Wellston, but Elmira, and Kalamazoo, and El Paso, Texas, and Billings,

Montana, and every other place that's big enough to have a Ford agency."

Young Martin was half admiring. "Don't you see," he went on, "what a slick scheme it is? It's a lot slicker than if Ford had a salaried man for agent. Because if a salaried man didn't sell enough cars, Ford could only fire him. The man would just lose his job, that's all. But the way Ford does now, he makes an agent invest his own money. If the agent gets kicked out, he loses his job and his business, too. A man will do some pretty hot selling before he'll let that happen to him!"

"It may be slick all right," I told young Martin, "but it'll never work." He asked why.

"Because Ford won't be able to get agents," I said. "Mighty few men who've invested their cash in a business will take orders slavishly from someone else for the sake of making a little money." I added patriotically, "Americans are too independent for anything like that!"

Later on I found I was mistaken. In a few years the Ford Motor Company was telling its agents in every town in the country how many Fords they must sell, how many tractors and Lincolns, and even how many subscriptions they must get for the *Dearborn Independent* magazine. The humiliating part of it was that Ford agents in other countries rebelled at these things and the Ford Company had to back down. European Ford dealers wouldn't submit to dictation the way Americans did.

Even before automobile manufacturers put their "sales quota" plan into operation and dictated to communities all over the country how many cars the communities must buy, other corporations had begun to establish direct factory branches in smaller cities. In Wellston we had Underwood and Remington typewriters, Burroughs adding machines, Otis elevators, Pittsburgh plate glass and

a dozen others. These factory branches were in charge of young men who took their orders from their home offices. The general result was that Wellston was being run more and more by outsiders, and business ethics were dictated by high-pressure executives who possibly had never seen Wellston and never would see it.

This changed atmosphere was reflected in the local stores. There was one Market Street merchant I knew very well—Frank Comstock—who had a bookstore for many years just below Fourth Street. Though he perhaps lacked hustle, he was a high-class, agreeable gentleman and had a good following among Wellston book buyers; it was always being said of him, "You can depend on Mr Comstock to tell you whether or not a new book is worth buying." As long as the popular novels sold for \$1.50, he made a respectable living. But then the Wellston Department Store put in a book department and advertised dollar-and-a-half books for \$1.08. Old Mr Comstock struggled against this competition for about a year, when his struggles were mercifully ended in the bankruptcy court.

I wondered at the time why a big concern like the Wellston Department Store should go out of its way to crush a little merchant. One night shortly after the Comstock bankruptcy I worked late at my store and on my way home encountered one of the department-store partners, Wesley Thompson, coming away from a Y.M.C.A. directors' meeting. He was treasurer of the "Y." I asked him how it was possible to sell \$1.50 books for \$1.08.

Thompson answered, "We lose money. But it brings people into the store, and then we sell them other things. It's good advertising, too. People think that because our books are cheap we must be cheap on everything."

Thompson called books "loss leaders." I had never



heard the expression before, though it became common enough afterward. But what impressed me most was that Mr Thompson, the Y.M.C.A. treasurer, seemed to think it was all right to promote "loss leaders," no matter what effect they had on someone else. I believe a few years earlier he would have looked at it in a different light.

There was another local bankruptcy which, while not as tragic as old Mr Comstock's, seemed to me significant of changing conditions. The S. B. James Wholesale Company had been in the James family for three generations and in its heyday sent its traveling men all the way from Binghamton on the east to Youngstown and Zanesville on the west, selling clothing, shoes and notions to crossroads and village storekeepers. The Wellston *Evening Bulletin* commented on the bankruptcy:

"We regret that our city should lose one of its old enterprises, yet it is an indication of American progress. Rural Americans nowadays demand the same 'style' merchandise as their city cousins. This automatically eliminates wholesale houses like the S. B. James Company. The crossroads merchant must purchase direct from manufacturers in the great style centers such as New York and Chicago. Rural America orders 'Full Steam Ahead!' American Business obeys!"

John Powell of the Powell works happened into my store the day this editorial appeared. He laughed, "Rural America my eye! The only ones to order full steam ahead are a lot of big manufacturers. They hate to think of any wholesaler making a profit. So they've begun to send their own salesmen to the crossroads and villages to steal the wholesalers' customers. It's just another case of big fish swallowing little ones."

For me the years just prior to 1914 held plenty of ups and downs. As far back as 1909 I heard that Wilson & Hunt, the "Tiffany" jewelers of Wellston, were having

trouble in paying their bills. I was sorry and even felt a little guilty, knowing my competition must have contributed to their embarrassment. I liked Mr Horace Wilson; that is, I liked him as well as anyone likes a competitor; and whenever we met there was quite a pleasant sense of friendliness. Old Mr Wilson had been in business more than thirty years when I first came to Wellston. He was a tall, spare man, soft spoken and gentlemanly, and had a big following among the old families. But he wasn't aggressive enough to cope with the newer style of competition.

I didn't much care for the junior partner, Wylie Hunt. He was bookkeeper in one of the banks before he went in with Mr Wilson, and in the store he spent most of his time at office work. He worried a good deal about competition. Old Barney Hirschfield's store was just across Market Street from Wilson & Hunt's, and Mr Hunt had a habit of standing behind a curtain at his front window with a pair of opera glasses, looking over at Hirschfield's to see what was going on. And after closing time at night he would wander along Market Street, stopping to examine the display in Hirschfield's windows, and then cross over to look at mine. Sometimes he inspected the half-dozen little jewelry stores that were on side streets.

Even if I hadn't heard that Wilson & Hunt were shaky, I would have known something was wrong from what I observed when I occasionally called on Mr Wilson. It was still an impressive store, with its big four-dial street clock, its fine mahogany showcases and expensive chandeliers; but I would notice, perhaps, only nine gold watches in a tray made to hold a dozen; there would be vacant places in the diamond ring trays; a silver tea set would be minus the cream pitcher. Either Wilson & Hunt felt too poor, or else their credit was too shaky, to keep up their stock. Once or twice I went by the store at night

and saw the partners back in the office with their heads together, going over sheafs of statements, with worry written all over their faces. I felt terribly sorry for old Mr Wilson, and even had a little sympathy for Wylie Hunt.

But then the holiday season of 1912 came on. I expected a big trade because the Powell works was extraordinarily busy and in November of that year was working nearly three thousand men. Mr John Powell himself, back from a visit to the New York office, told me I needn't be afraid to stock up, because the Works had orders for months to come. But then, on the first day of December Wilson & Hunt came out in the *Morning Times* with a full-page advertisement:

"This old firm, established 1872, announces its first cut-price sale and will offer its diamonds, watches and silverware at one third off regular prices during the entire holiday season."

I had counted on a December business of \$25,000; when New Year's rolled around I had done less than \$15,000. I had to ask several New York wholesalers to accept notes, payable in March, April and May. After that I didn't have quite so much sympathy for old Mr Wilson. As for Wylie Hunt, I could barely bring myself to speak to him when we met on the street.

Their cut-price sale failed to pull Wilson & Hunt out of their difficulties, and they were still desperately in need of money. They upset the local jewelry trade completely. Whenever people shopped around on some important purchase—a set of silver for some executive at the Powell works, or a two-carat diamond for an engagement ring—Wilson & Hunt would cut the price down to cost, or even less, to get ready cash. Neither old Barney Hirschfield nor I had a chance. Old Barney and I became quite friendly under our mutual troubles. But there was the



difference that old Barney was well off and could stand to lose money a long time, and I couldn't. I was worried all the time by the notes I gave my wholesalers. Every time a note fell due I could only pay a part of it and ask the wholesaler to renew the balance.

My sympathy for Mr Horace Wilson vanished completely. Although the old gentleman was a Christian Scientist, he was bothered by what unbelievers called rheumatism; and there was a story that when anyone asked him how he felt, he would exclaim, "Splendid!" and then, almost before the expression was out of his mouth, he would cry "Ouch!" and clap a hand to his rheumatic leg. Previously I never heard this joke without thinking it was pretty heartless; but now I laughed when people told it and even repeated it myself once or twice.

By the next autumn I was in a position where I needed sympathy for myself. One October morning a man from the Bradstreet office came into my store and asked for a financial statement. It was done diplomatically and with a "We're just checking up, Mr Kent, to see if there's been any change since we got out our last rating book," but I knew there was more to it than that. Some creditor of mine had asked for a special report. It might be a prelude to a lawsuit. My only hope was in a good Christmas trade that would permit me to clean up my back debts and get on a sound basis again.

Just a few days before Thanksgiving I was on the street car going down to business when I read in the *Morning Times* that Wilson & Hunt had voluntarily surrendered their business to creditors, and that Mr Manny Jacobs, the New York diamond importer, was in Wellston to decide on the disposition of the Wilson & Hunt stock. Mr Jacobs stated to the *Morning Times* reporter that he would probably sell the stock at public auction,



the sale to start after Thanksgiving and run through the holidays.

The minute I read this I realized the fix I was in. An auction sale at Wilson & Hunt's would kill my Christmas business. I would probably be in the hands of my own creditors by the first of the year. Acting on a sudden impulse, I jumped off the street car and went into the Hirschfield jewelry store.

Young Jake Hirschfield, trimming one of the show windows when I asked for his father, pointed to the rear office. The old man looked up from a packet of diamonds he was inspecting and smiled.

"Vell, vell, Mr Kent, it's good to see you. And vot brings you so early here?" After his fifty years in America there were still words Mr Hirschfield couldn't pronounce. Yet his next remark was typically American: "Ev'yt'ing okay with you, Mr Kent?"

"I suppose you've seen the paper," I said, "about auctioning off Wilson & Hunt's stock?"

Mr Hirschfield nodded. "I know all about it, Mr Kent." He threw out his hands in a Jewish gesture. "But vot can I do about it?"

"If there's an auction," I said, "neither you nor I will do any business this Christmas."

Mr Hirschfield repeated, "It's bad."

I spoke as earnestly as I knew how: "Why don't you buy the stock, Mr Hirschfield? Then there won't be any auction."

I could see the old man was impressed. He brightened up, all the Oriental in him stirred at the idea of so tremendous a deal. He called to his son at the front of the store, "Jake, come here. There's business to talk!"

The Hirschfield heir took his time to finish trimming the show window, then sauntered back to his father and

me. Though old Mr Hirschfield sometimes showed a trace of the Oriental, young Jake took immense pains that no Oriental should show in *him*. He was determinedly American. So American, I always thought, that he never seemed really American, but only seemed ashamed of his Jewishness. The combination Elk and Shrine button in his lapel was extra large and decorated with diamonds, and he wore a Blue Lodge Masonic watch charm. But for all his pains he sometimes slipped on words. When he came into the office enclosure he said, "What you want, Poppa?" I wanted to tell him that "Poppa" was Jewish.

Old Mr Hirschfield cried, "Vot you think, Jake? Mr Kent here wants I should buy Wilson & Hunt's stock so our Christmas trade won't be killed by auction."

"We've got troubles enough," Jake answered cynically. "Why should we buy a stock that invoices fifty-one thousand dollars?"

I thought how extraordinary it was how Jews always had inside information. I had just heard about it, but the Hirschfields knew the exact figures. Old Mr Hirschfield broke in:

"I know it's fifty-one thousand dollars, Jake. But there's fine merchandise in that stock. Diamonds, sapphires, even emeralds"—his oriental love of business for business' sake showed in his voice. He appealed to his son: "It wouldn't be necessary, Jake, a hundred cents on the dollar to pay."

"I don't care, Poppa, if there's emeralds and pearls, too." Young Jake had none of his father's absurd enthusiasms. "We're in business to make money. Nothing else."

The old man sighed. "I bet, Jake, that stock for fifty cents on the dollar I could buy, cash money. Maybe even less." But he didn't argue further; and I sensed it wasn't the first time in the Hirschfield family that the profit motive had stifled pure artistry.

"But look here, Jake——" I began.

Young Jake moved off toward a customer. He flung back over his shoulder, "We're not interested."

Old Mr Hirschfield said uncomfortably, "I guess it's better, Mr Kent, we should let the auction go on. We lose this Christmas trade, yes. But next year it's all right. There 'll be one less jewelry store in Wellston."

I walked down the street to my own store, humiliated at the repulse. "By a couple of Jews, too," I told myself. I thought of old Barney's remark, "one less jewelry store." I wondered if the Hirschfields, with their Jewish knowledge of everything, knew what a shaky condition I was in. Perhaps they were counting on *two* less jewelry stores in Wellston if the auction went on. Jews were great schemers that way. And that talk of old Barney's about wanting to buy the Wilson & Hunt stock was probably Jewish bunk!

I thought all those things and, I suppose, believed them. But at the same time I knew old Barney Hirschfield was as decent a competitor as any merchant on Market Street.

Among the letters on my desk was one from Fishler & Hawes, the Maiden Lane watch wholesalers. They held one of my notes that I had renewed two or three times. "We feel we have been very lenient in the matter of your account," the letter said, "and we trust you will find it convenient to settle in full by January 1st." The letter was polite enough, but it might be a prelude to turning my account over to a lawyer. I fell to wondering what I could do if I failed. I would get about \$25 a week working in someone else's jewelry store; but Luley-Lee and I had got used to living at the rate of \$4,000 a year. I might get a job traveling for some New York wholesaler, but there wasn't much future in that. I had seen too many superannuated jewelry travelers hanging about Maiden Lane and borrowing fifty-cent pieces from younger men.

About ten o'clock I put on my hat and told my help I'd be out awhile. On the street I decided to go down to the Hotel Erie; the barroom would be quiet at that hour, and I would have a chance to think while taking a drink or two to straighten out my nerves. As I walked from the hotel lobby into the barroom, there was only one customer at the bar. He was a fashionably dressed, bald man who stood with his right foot on the brass rail drinking a Scotch highball and talking with Gus Lieber, the German bartender. I stood beside the bald man to order a drink; when Gus set it out, he said, with the expansive hospitality of the old-time barman, "Mr Kent, shake hands with Mr Manny Jacobs. You two gentlemen are in the same line of business."

I remembered meeting Manny Jacobs once before, when I was in New York on a buying trip. It was in a downtown restaurant that Maiden Lane wholesalers patronized when they entertained out-of-town jewelers. Manny Jacobs was there with a customer from Butte, Montana, and when I went into the place he was half standing up at his table and shouting, "Waiter! A bottle of champagne and never mind the price. The best is none too good for any customer of mine!"

I didn't mention that incident when Gus introduced us. Manny Jacobs was a fine-looking man in spite of his baldness, well formed and athletic. Mentally, he was not the type either of old Barney or young Jake Hirschfield. Where old Barney was soft and ingratiating, Mr Jacobs was bold. And he had none of the nervous super-Americanism of young Jake. Manny Jacobs was neither ashamed of being a Jew nor proud of it. It was said around Maiden Lane that the girls whose apartment rents he paid were always blonde and Gentile, but no one knew if it was because of Jewish tradition or because he wanted to show he could crook a finger to girls of any



race. He backed Broadway shows and generally lost money; but people who knew him said he never minded that as long as he could astonish out-of-town buyers by saying, "I happen to own an interest in a musical show uptown. I'll write you a couple of passes for tonight."

It was said that Manny Jacobs lived at the rate of \$50,000 a year. He imported flawless diamonds and had some of the biggest jewelers in the country on his books. He was very liberal toward customers who were in trouble, and often extended credit when hardly anyone else would. In the Wilson & Hunt failure he stood to lose more than all the other creditors combined.

"It's reported, Mr Jacobs," I said, "that you're going to sell the Wilson & Hunt stock at auction."

"I guess I'll have to," he replied. "I'd rather sell it in a lump, but no one seems to have nerve enough to risk a few dollars."

"I hoped old Barney Hirschfield——" I began.

"Not a chance!" Mr Jacobs flung out his hand in disgust. He said to the bartender, "Set out a couple more drinks, Gus." Then he faced me: "Why don't *you* buy the stock, Mr Kent? I'll give you a bargain."

"It'd be a fine idea," I joked, "if you'd tell me where to get the money."

Mr Jacobs remarked, "Banks have money."

"You'll endorse my note, I suppose?" I said sarcastically.

"If you got a little nerve," he urged, "maybe you don't need no endorsement. Anyhow, it don't cost nothing to go to the bank and ask." He added with a hint of a jeer, "You ain't afraid of a bank, are you?"

It happened that I *was* afraid of the Wellston National, because I already owed money there. But I answered, "Of course not!"

Manny Jacobs grinned. "Come down to Wilson &

Hunt's store and I'll show you what a bargain I can give you. Then maybe you'll go to your bank and borrow a little cash."

He ordered a taxicab for the short ride. Before we left the hotel he went to the cigar stand and bought a handful of cigars at a dollar apiece and shoved two or three in my vest pocket. When we got out of the cab at the Wilson & Hunt store he flung the driver another dollar, though the fare was thirty cents.

There was a sign on the door that read, "Closed until further notice." It was dark inside, with the curtains drawn, and the place was deserted except for the two partners, sitting back in the office like mourners at a funeral. I went to speak with them. Wylie Hunt barely answered; but old Mr Wilson stood up to shake hands, wincing from his rheumatism but resolutely cheerful, as though sure it was only some little spiritual error causing his present troubles, and if he held the Right Thought everything would turn out all right. He said "Splendid!" when I asked him how he felt.

Mr Jacobs called out, "Snap on the lights!" and as the big cut-glass chandeliers lit up the room I had a chance to inspect the bankrupt property. The stocks of jewelry and silverware, though depleted, were first-rate. Combined with the goods in my own store, they would give me a wonderful selection, far better than old Barney Hirschfield's. The solid-mahogany fittings were impressive. There was no doubt that if I could buy the store I would be Wellston's leading jeweler.

"What 're you going to do about it?" Manny Jacobs was at my elbow. I answered uncertainly,

"Give me a day or so to think it over."

Jacobs pulled a yellow telegraph blank out of his pocket. "Tonight I wire for an auctioneer."

"You haven't named a price," I said.

Mr Jacobs waved an expansive hand. "Stock, fixtures, lease, everything, thirty thousand dollars."

I said, "Too high!"

Mr Jacobs protested: "Even that won't hardly pay the creditors."

"I'm not talking about the creditors." I told myself I must be hard as nails. "I'm talking about your price. It's too high."

"Twenty-eight thousand!" Mr Jacobs shouted.

I tried to make my laugh cynical: "Try to get that for it at auction!"

Several times Manny Jacobs broke off negotiations and ran toward the door to send his telegram. In the end he said, "Twenty-five thousand dollars."

Probably the hardest thing I ever did was to go into the Wellston National Bank that morning. I walked by the building two or three times, and when I did go in and ask for the president I half hoped he would be out. The Irish porter took me back to Mr Henderson's private office, and I blurted out nervously that I wanted to borrow twenty-five thousand dollars.

He looked at me over his spectacles. "Isn't this a rather extraordinary request, Mr Kent?"

I stumbled as well as I could through an explanation of the circumstances. At the end Mr Henderson said, "You know this stock inventories fifty-one thousand?"

I said old Mr Wilson had shown me the inventory sheets.

"Then it's all right," Mr Henderson remarked. "Horace Wilson is as fine a man as ever wore shoe leather. I'm sorry to see this thing happen to him."

After what seemed an interminable time, the banker said, "I'm going to help you out in this thing, Mr Kent. I'll loan you twenty thousand dollars. You can write Jacobs a check for that amount, and I'll cash it."

"But he won't take that, Mr Henderson," I said. "The stock's worth more——"

"Twenty thousand, Mr Kent," the banker remarked, "is the most I can lend you."

"I'd be ashamed to offer that," I said. "There's old Mr Wilson, you know. I've a little sentiment——"

Mr Henderson interrupted: "Sentiment hasn't any place in business, Mr Kent." He spoke in the same calm tone that he used when he prayed at the Presbyterian Wednesday-night meetings. I thought there was a hint of warning in his added, "Men who let sentiment influence them, Mr Kent, aren't good bank risks."

"But suppose," I persisted, "Manny Jacobs won't accept twenty thousand. What then?"

"In that case," the banker said, "he'll probably sell the stock at auction. It 'll go hard with you, I'm afraid."

When I went back to the Wilson & Hunt store, only Mr Wilson and Manny Jacobs were there. I signed to Jacobs that I would like to speak with him alone. He turned to Mr Wilson.

"Me and Mr Kent want to use this private office a little while. Do you mind?"

The old man limped out of the office and went to the front of the store, where he stood leaning against a showcase.

Manny Jacobs asked, "Did you make it?"

I answered, "Yes, but not twenty-five thousand."

"Then it's all off!" he roared. I said nothing, and in a moment he inquired, "How much?"

I tried to appear indifferent. "Twenty thousand."

Manny Jacobs leaped from his chair.

"It ain't fair to the creditors. It's robbery!" He grabbed my shoulder and pointed to old Mr Wilson, leaning against the showcase. "It's robbing that man, too! At twenty-five thousand there might be a little left for him."



At your price, nothing. Forty years in business and he goes out of his store without a cent!"

I looked away from old Mr Wilson. I said, "Sentiment hasn't any place in business, Mr Jacobs."

"Make it twenty-four," Mr Jacobs begged. I shook my head.

"Twenty-two?"

Old Mr Wilson limped from the showcase to a chair and sat down heavily. I had to remind myself how desperate my case was. In another month my creditors might be dickering over my own store. I said sharply: "Twenty thousand. Take it or leave it!"

Manny Jacobs stamped about the office, waving his arms and threatening every moment to telegraph for an auctioneer. Then suddenly he put out his hand to me and said pleasantly, "You've bought a jewelry store, Mr Kent."

I wrote a check on the Wellston National Bank, and Mr Jacobs gave me a receipt. Then he sat down at the desk, pulled a checkbook out of his own pocket and wrote a check, payable to "cash." I noticed the figures, \$500. He put this \$500 check in an envelope.

We went to the front door, where Manny Jacobs handed me the key. Mr Wilson went out with us. On the sidewalk Mr Jacobs handed the old man the envelope.

"Don't open it till you get home, Mr Wilson," he said. "It's just a little souvenir." Then he raised his voice, as I heard him that time in the downtown New York restaurant, loud enough for passers-by to hear:

"Manny Jacobs never forgets a friend!"

Right after Thanksgiving I advertised full pages in both newspapers:

"I have purchased the business of Wilson & Hunt and henceforth shall be located in that firm's old stand, 436 Market Street.

Having acquired their stock at the ridiculously low price of less than forty cents on the dollar, I am in a position to offer amazing bargains in diamonds, watches and silverware."

My opening day was grander than I could have imagined. A dozen New York wholesale houses telegraphed flowers, and Manny Jacobs' roses were bigger and more expensive than anyone else's. Fishler & Hawes wrote, "We congratulate you on your shrewd move, and if you need additional credit, we shall be pleased to extend it." The store was crowded all day with people buying Christmas gifts. Even Mrs John Powell, who had traded with the Hirschfields for years, got out of her carriage and came in to buy a set of cut-glass sherbet cups.

The only disagreeable thing occurred about three o'clock in the afternoon. I was standing inside the big horseshoe case, when I saw old Mr Wilson limping along the sidewalk. He waved his hand to me, and for a moment I thought he might come in. But then a man and a woman bustled up and asked to look at some diamond rings. The man remarked, "At the price you bought this stock, Mr Kent, I guess you can give us a bargain." Out of the corner of my eye I saw Mr Wilson wander off down the street.

## IX

### The Rise of Service Clubs

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**O**F ALL THE ASTONISHING THINGS that have happened since I have been in business, I would say the most astonishing is the rise of the so-called "service clubs" that exist all over the United States—Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis, Optimist, Civitan and all the rest. And I believe most people who make a study of these things will agree with me when I say it was the progressively sterner business competition that brought them into existence.

In a business way I made a mistake when I refused to join the Rotary Club when it was organized in Wellston. Young Jake Hirschfield became the Rotarian jeweler. The club was a big success and in a little while had more than a hundred members. Once I went as a guest to a luncheon meeting at the Hotel Erie. The Rotarians sang songs, and everyone called everyone else by his first name. There was a fine of ten cents for any member who said "Mister." A man named Louis Jernigan, who ran the Sunshine Steam Laundry, made a speech telling how he went after new customers, how he kept track of people's garments in the wash and how he collected old accounts. After this speech there were testimonials, on the order of an old-fashioned prayer meeting. A member would stand up and tell how he bought something from another member, or perhaps how he had influenced some

outsider to buy. Each testimonial got a big round of applause. After that meeting I knew Rotary would not be the flash in the pan I had imagined.

I heard of only one serious row between individual Rotarians. In summer a good many businessmen wore Palm Beach suits; and Louis Jernigan, the laundryman who made a speech the day I was visitor, claimed that members should send their Palm Beach suits to him to be cleaned. But Rotarian Al Wooley, who had a cleaning and dyeing shop, took the position that Palm Beach work was not a laundry job, but a dyeing and cleaning job. He threatened, unless the board of directors decided in his favor, to complain to national headquarters.

Later on the Rotarians adopted a definite program of philanthropy. First, they gave a picnic to the inmates of the Wellston Old People's Home. Next they raised money to equip a children's playground. Then the club announced an annual cash prize to the student in any local school who wrote the best essay on the subject, "What is Rotary?" Hardly a week passed but some club benevolence made the front pages of both newspapers, generally accompanied by photographs of prominent Rotarians. More than one member told me his business was helped by this free publicity.

When a man came to town promoting a similar organization called the Altruists, he had no trouble to find business and professional men who were anxious to join as a matter of self-protection. I was glad enough to become the Altruist jeweler. Later on, Kiwanis, Lions, Optimists and half a dozen other clubs were organized to take care of the men who had failed to get into Rotary and Altruist.

I hope the reader will not consider uncharitably what I write of businessmen in these pages. To earn a living is a grim affair at best. And, contrary to general belief, it is grimmer in a small city than in a big one. In New York



a businessman has millions of potential customers. If he chances to lose one, what matter? But to us businessmen in places like Wellston the gain or loss of a single customer can be deadly serious. We do the best we can. If sometimes that best seems less than decorous, I can only plead extenuating circumstances.

At the first directors' meeting of our Altruist Club, we decided to go in for philanthropy as the Rotarians had done, and if possible beat them at their own game.

The Rotarians had taken in a minister member, the Reverend Mr Wakeman of the First Baptist Church. He still wore his full-dress suit at Sunday-evening services. We went further and elected two minister members. The Episcopal Bishop, the Right Reverend Henry Markham, came under the classification "Religion, Wholesale"; and Mr Harriss of the First Presbyterian Church had the classification "Religion, Retail."

Our by-laws didn't expressly stipulate that Altruists must trade with one another, but everyone understood this should be done. At each meeting members would stand up and tell how they had thrown business to other members.

We engaged in a philanthropic war with the Rotarians. Each time they came out in the newspapers with some new benevolence, we matched it with one of our own. When they bought a pair of swans for the lake in City Park, we set up a drinking fountain in front of the courthouse. They laid out a baseball diamond for small boys across the tracks, and we provided a piano for the Y.M.C.A.

One of our benevolences turned out a little less than successful. We went in for the Big Brother movement after the Rotarians adopted the Boy Scouts. It was the Reverend Mr Harriss' idea. He made a speech to the club and pointed out the good we might do if each of us would

take some underprivileged youngster under his wing. Only he used the word "kiddies." I confess I was quite carried away with the idea. But, looking back, I can't decide if my enthusiasm came from a genuine desire to do good; or if, perhaps, I saw myself as a splendid, generous man whom some pinched small boy would admire and come to with his troubles.

People are still that way. I sometimes notice the faces of middle-aged scoutmasters out on hikes with groups of boys.

Some welfare official at City Hall picked out the boys to whom we Altruists were to be Big Brothers. I drew a rather engaging eleven-year-old Italian youngster named Giovanni, whose father was a day laborer for the city. The welfare official told me that, as far as he knew, Giovanni was a good boy except that he occasionally told lies.

I was a little handicapped as a Big Brother because my wife was not in sympathy with the movement. Once, when I spoke of having Giovanni at our house on a Sunday afternoon, she said firmly, "You and your Altruists can do any silly thing you want to downtown, but I'm not going to have any little foreigner who's never had a bath around *this* house!"

According to Big Brother rules, Giovanni reported at my store twice a week, when I was supposed to give him good advice. But I could seldom think of any; and it was not too agreeable to have him around, because he always gave off a strong, unwashed-body odor, mixed with the smell of Italian cooking. Sometimes I paid him a quarter or so to go on errands, and except that he occasionally romanced a little as to the reason for being gone an unreasonably long time, he was satisfactory enough. But once, when I sent him to the post office with a lot of letters to mail and money to buy stamps, he pocketed the money and threw the letters into a sewer hole. That was the

end of the Big Brother movement as far as I was concerned. Other Altruist members must have had unsatisfactory experiences, because the whole thing was dropped after a few months.

Later on the Rotarians promoted a benevolence that was hardly more satisfactory than our Big Brother movement. Competition in boys' work had become extraordinarily keen, because by that time Kiwanis and Lions had come into the field, and all the clubs were on the lookout for projects that would make front-page news.

Some Rotarian discovered that a number of poolroom newsstands around town were selling a magazine called *Naughty Narratives*, which I presume was up to its name, and that copies were getting into the hands of boys and girls in the city schools. The Rotarians devoted one of their weekly luncheon meetings to a correction of this evil.

The club had as guests that day a Boy Scout fife-and-drum corps and three boys in knee trousers sponsored by the Y.M.C.A. secretary, who was a Rotarian. These three boys were members of a juvenile uplift organization called "Hi-Y," which I understand is a sort of Y.M.C.A.-Christian Endeavor.

The Y.M.C.A. secretary was conducting a class in oratory, and one of the lads, named Evans, was his most promising pupil. The Evans lad was about fourteen and just about as unattractive as any other boy of that age who goes in for serious thought. He made a speech to the Rotarians that was probably of his own authorship, because it was composed mainly of generalities, as school-boy orations usually are. The *Evening Bulletin* reported it as a "remarkable effort for one of Master Evans' tender age." He condemned the magazine, *Naughty Narratives*, and in conclusion he said: "And now, members of the Rotary Club, I appeal to you to eliminate this evil



publication that is corrupting the minds of many and turning their hearts from that which is righteous."

After the meeting the Rotarians paraded to the City Hall, where it had been arranged for Mayor John Kane to receive them on the front steps. The Scout fife-and-drum corps led the parade, and next in line were the Evans lad and his two Hi-Y friends. Sixty or seventy Rotarians followed, some carrying banners printed with moral mottoes: "The Boy Is the Citizen of Tomorrow"; "Save the Youth and You Save the Future"; "Smutty Magazines Must Go." Young Jake Hirschfield carried the biggest banner of all, grinning self-consciously and half beside himself with pleasure at the publicity.

The Reverend Mr Wakeman of the First Baptist Church marched beside Father Clifford, the new Catholic priest. The Rotarians had captured Father Clifford at the time our Altruist Club secured Bishop Markham.

Mayor John Kane was a second-generation Irishman who was apt to be truculent after a few drinks. He had been drinking the day he met the Rotarian marchers on City Hall steps.

The Evans lad walked up to him and was beginning a speech about *Naughty Narratives*, when the mayor interrupted:

"Do you read the magazine, boy?"

The Evans lad was scandalized. "Of course not, Mr Mayor."

"Never read a single story in it?"

"Oh no, sir."

"Then how the hell do you know it's bad?"

Some bystanders laughed. The mayor faced the Rotarians.

"Look here, men. If there was a dead cat out in your back yard, I don't believe you'd send your children to bury it. You'd go and do the job yourself."



He pushed the Evans lad aside and started back into the City Hall. At the doorway he stopped.

"If this magazine's as putrid as you men claim it is, it's nothing for children to be mixed up in. It's a job for grown men. When you can come down here without small boys, I'll be in my office."

With that he disappeared. As far as I know the Rotarians never did anything more about *Naughty Narratives*.

I don't want to give the impression that I believe the service clubs are altogether a bad thing. Making a living in a competitive civilization is a grim affair at best, and anything is desirable that lightens businessmen's burdens. If service-club members would be content to do as they did at first—meet once a week to have a jovial hour and to plan how to help one another to make money—no one could criticize. It is when they go in for publicized uplift that the damage is done.

Because businessmen are necessarily amateurs at uplift; and amateur work in that line is apt to turn sour, just as amateur work in other lines turns sour. Everybody knows, for example, how Boys' Week is observed every year all over the country, when service clubs do all sorts of things for boys and have the proceedings recorded in their local newspapers. Probably the first clubs to go into that sort of thing got some valuable publicity for their members out of it. But now, with so many organizations engaged, the financial returns must be small. And what effect, I sometimes wonder, does it have on the young boys who are publicized? For a number of years the Rotary Club of New York City picked a boy and, during that week, took him about the city to make speeches, featured him at their own meeting, placed him in the mayor's chair at City Hall for a day and had his picture in the newspapers. The question is, would a fourteen-year-old boy, who had

all these things happen to him, ever be quite normal again?

I can understand the businessman's side of it because I am a businessman. Businessmen generally aren't very reflective, and when we found we could gain customers for ourselves by doing noble things publicly, we were more than human not to make the most of our opportunities.

Take my own case as an example. I made customers for myself whenever my name appeared in the paper as a member of the Altruist committee that was organizing a picnic for poor children, or whenever I marched in a parade down Market Street to open a boys' playground. People said, "Kent the jeweler must be a pretty fine fellow. We ought to buy Junior's gold watch from him." It was the same way with the Altruist lawyer, or stomach specialist, or ready-to-wear merchant.

Our clergymen members were our best business asset. When we marched down Market Street alongside Bishop Markham or the Reverend Mr Harriss, we were identified with religion. That made people think more than ever that we were honest and trustworthy.

And almost as much as the money, was the pleasure of being admired as splendid, big-hearted men.

Nowadays I never pass the Elks Lodge in Third Street without thinking how far people will go to win admiration. Years ago the Elks were simple, jovial fellows, many of them saloonkeepers, who sat around the clubhouse barroom playing pinochle and drinking hard liquor, and on meeting nights amused themselves innocently with their comic initiations. Now the Elks have a program of boys' work. It seems too bad.

Perhaps the strangest case of all was Mrs John Powell. Everyone knew she was a vain woman; but when I first came to Wellston, she seemed satisfied merely to be rich

and to have the flattery that the merchants up and down Market Street gave her on her daily shopping trips. I have it on the authority of my wife that Mrs Powell began to change about the time that businessmen began to organize clubs and advertise their benevolences. Luley-Lee saw quite a good deal of Mrs Powell at the Presbyterian Ladies' Aid Society and often came home with funny stories about how she squeezed more than her share of flattery from the Presbyterian women. Where the state of Virginia was not concerned, Luley-Lee had a keen sense of humor.

One year the Altruist Club set up a big Christmas tree in front of City Hall, engaged a brass band and distributed presents to a lot of poor children. Wesley Thompson, of the Wellston Department Store, played Santa Claus and handled the publicity. He was the biggest buyer of advertising in town, and the newspapers did a wonderful job for the club. They took flashlights of the Orphans' Home children arriving at the tree, and ran sob stories of how other poor kiddies—Little Joe, whose people lived out beyond the abattoir, or Tiny Maggie, whose mother took in washing—would have had no Christmas except for the splendid generosity of the Altruists!

There was a society of women in town, called the Christmas Cheer Committee, that always sent baskets around to poor families. Right after the Altruist Christmas tree Mrs John Powell joined the society and later on was elected president. She held the office a couple of years and each December had her photograph in the papers and granted interviews. But finally a hustling little Jewish woman, Mrs Cohn, ran against her for president and somehow managed to win. The *Morning Times* had a reporter at the meeting and gave a routine half-column to Mrs Cohn's election.

Mrs Powell was furious at being defeated, and still



more furious that the *Times* should have printed the news. I suppose it salved her vanity to invent the theory that it was all a plot and that somehow the *Times* reporter was mixed up in it.

Phil Johnson, the *Times* city editor, told me what happened next day. An office boy said Mrs Powell was in the reception room. She was stamping up and down, Phil said, her face red as a beet, and she opened up with, "Who wrote that article?" For a moment he couldn't think what article she meant, and she threatened: "That reporter. You've got to discharge him!"

Phil told her the reporter had done only a routine job, and that the paper had to print the news, whatever it happened to be, but she kept on saying, "You've got to discharge him!"

The reporter was a man named Marvin, who had a wife and a couple of children on his hands. Phil still tried to argue: "But, Mrs Powell——"

"Either you discharge that man," she screamed, "or else I'll make your paper lose the advertising of every company my husband is interested in!"

Phil said he had to think pretty fast. Mrs Powell's husband was interested in about half the companies in town. He knew John Powell wouldn't do anything of the kind, but Mr Powell was in New York, and there was no telling what the woman might do. Phil finally said, "All right, Mrs Powell, the reporter isn't to blame, but I'll do as you say."

"I want it done now," she shrilled. "I want to see you do it!"

So Marvin was sent for and discharged. Phil said he intended to get him a job on some other paper, but Marvin wouldn't have anything to do with him. Phil was pretty well broken up over the whole thing. It seems Marvin was in bad shape financially. "If it happened over



again," Phil told me, "I hope to God I'd be Christian enough to tell her to go to hell."

I suppose the moral to all this, if any, is that people will be more vicious over hurt vanity than over anything else.

Luley-Lee believes Mrs Powell was influenced by another Altruist Club stunt called "King for a Day." The club picked up a boy, somehow overlooked by the Kiwanians, Elks and all the others, who shined shoes around the Union Station, and chose him as king. The boy was outfitted with a robe and crown and driven up Market Street in a two-horse carriage. At each store owned by a club member the carriage stopped and the merchant gave the boy a present. At the hotel luncheon the boy sat at the head table and was attended by a special waiter. Both newspapers took photographs and ran front-page stories.

Luley-Lee told me Mrs Powell talked about this Altruist stunt at the next meeting of the Ladies' Aid and several times exclaimed, "How noble of those men!" At the same meeting the women discussed a member, Mrs Eugene Morris, who was convalescing from a long illness. She wasn't at all well off; her husband was bookkeeper at the Wellston Department Store, and everyone knew they were terribly hard up. But they weren't people who could be offered plain charity, and the Aid Society women wondered what they could do for Mrs Morris without hurting her feelings. Mrs Powell exclaimed every little while, "I *would* love to do something for that dear little woman!"

Luley-Lee and Mrs Powell chanced to walk out of the church together. At the top of the steps Mrs Powell stopped. She said, "I have it, Mrs Kent!"

Luley-Lee said, "Yes, Mrs Powell?"

"I've just thought what I can do for dear Mrs Mor-

ris." Her face, Luley-Lee said, was red like a turkey gobbler's from excited vanity. "I'm going to give Mrs Morris a ride every day in my own carriage!"

"That's nice," Luley-Lee said. "Mrs Morris will appreciate seeing you."

Mrs Powell glared. "I don't know that I can go in person. I'm a very busy woman, Mrs Kent. My private charities——"

"Oh, of course," Luley-Lee murmured. She said she could have stuck the vain old thing with a hatpin.

"That dear little Mrs Morris shall go for a ride every day," Mrs Powell said firmly.

A few days later Luley-Lee called on Mrs Morris.

"I'm in all sorts of trouble," Mrs Morris said. "Mrs Powell sends her carriage every day with the Negro coachman, William. But I find William expects a tip of at least half a dollar. If he doesn't get it, he's pretty disagreeable."

"I'd like to see any nigger in Virginia——" Luley-Lee sputtered.

"But this isn't Virginia," Mrs Morris said. "And I don't dare to offend him."

"Not dare offend a nigger!" Luley-Lee was shocked.

"He might complain to Mrs John Powell."

"And what," Luley-Lee snapped, "do you care about Mrs John Powell?"

"She's the Wellston Department Store's best customer," Mrs Morris said. "You know my husband works there."

"And would she——"

"I'm afraid she would."

After a minute or two Luley-Lee said, "So you can't do a thing except give the coachman his half-dollar every day?"

"That's all I can do," Mrs Morris answered.

The Altruists' King for a Day stunt also had an unfortunate ending. After his taste of high life the boy wasn't satisfied with his bootblack earnings, and the police picked him up two or three times for petty thievery around the Union Station. Eventually he was caught doing a house-breaking job and was sent away to the reform school.

I am sure most unbiased people will admit that work among boys is being overdone. Here in my own city there are eight or nine organizations that go in for "boys' work." Competition in that line is terribly keen. Just lately I heard a skeptic remark, "A boy has to run like a scared rabbit these days to keep out of the clutches of someone who wants to do him a good turn."

I make bold to suggest a project that Rotarians, or Kiwanians, or Shriners, or Altruists may find less competitive than boys' work and possibly just as beneficial. It is: to promote the reading of books.

We used to have four exclusive bookstores in Wellston, all carrying representative stocks. Now we haven't one. If a person wants to buy a book he has to go to the book section of one of our department stores. The same situation exists in a great many cities, even up to those of half a million inhabitants.

I don't mean to suggest that department stores aren't efficient vendors of books. Many of them are. But from the nature of the business, a department store can't give quite the same service to its community that the old-time bookstore did, or sell quite the same kind of books.

Our bookstores were victims of high-pressure salesmanship, as they were in other cities. I have already told how old Mr Comstock was forced out of business. The other three hung on longer. The last to go was George Warren, who was in business up to about a dozen years ago.

The hardest times for bookstore merchants came just



after the war, when the big chain-store companies began to compete for prominent Main Street locations all over the country. The result was an enormous increase in business rentals. One store in Market Street here in Wellston that in the old days rented for \$100 a month was bid up to \$700 a month and at that price was leased to a chain-shoestore concern.

Naturally, a bookstore couldn't pay such rents. Mr Warren paid \$150 a month prior to 1919. Then he was raised to \$250, a couple of years later to \$350, and finally to \$450. It was this last figure that broke him.

Perhaps Mr Warren might have survived if he had been more of a go-getter. He was a friendly, easygoing man, with a remarkable knowledge of ancient and modern literature. But he wasn't a good salesman in the modern sense. Once I went into his store to buy a copy of Sophocles' *Oedipus*. I wasn't sure whose translation I wanted. Mr Warren found he had a copy of Plumptre's translation, but said he personally liked Gilbert Murray's better. He thought I would like it better, too. Unfortunately he didn't have a copy in stock. He insisted on sending to New York to get the Murray book for me.

From the go-getter standpoint this was terribly bad merchandising. Nowadays in so many retail stores stock turnover is considered all-important, and the slogan is, "Don't order anything unless you absolutely can't make a sale otherwise. Sell 'em what you've got in stock!" When Mr Warren was squeezed out of business it was a distinct loss to our city. Because he was the kind of man he was, a good many people became interested in first-class reading who wouldn't have done so otherwise. Once, years ago, Mr Warren told me that a couple of hundred families in the city were taking a serious interest in their private libraries and regularly buying books. He didn't say so, but I believe half these families got their



first serious interest in books through acquaintance with Mr Warren.

At this point I can imagine some earnest Kiwanian or Rotarian saying, "Oh yes, we know the old-time bookstores have pretty well disappeared. We admit it's too bad. Probably our town *would* be a finer place if more people took a serious interest in books. But what can our club do about it?"

To that I would answer: Your club can do a good deal about it if the members would put into it the same energy that they put into Boy Scout and Hi-Y schemes. I believe the time has come when the old-time bookstore can be brought back. Main Street rents aren't as high as they were in the booming Twenties. And since the 1929 smash-up, when so many chain concerns went into voluntary bankruptcy so as to break their leases, owners of business buildings are inclined to accept a solid local merchant as a tenant, rather than some out-of-town corporation.

Quite possibly in your town there is some book-loving man who is trying to make a living in a little bookshop on a side street. Probably he isn't doing very well at it, because a book-loving man is seldom a business genius. Yet he might, with assistance, be able to make a success of a bigger place and give your town a bookstore service that would be of real cultural value.

Your club can give him the assistance he needs. Let your president appoint a permanent committee of your best business executives to advise him. Find him a good location at a rental that a bookstore can reasonably pay. Pledge him the trade of your membership. Do everything you can to foster book-consciousness among your club members and your acquaintances.

Or if there isn't a man already in business who seems competent to run the sort of bookstore you want, your

next best bet is one of your department stores. Go to the management and ask them to open a special book department. Ask them to put a scholarly man in charge who really knows books and cares for them, and allow him to run things in his own way. Even if the department doesn't show a direct profit, it will add to the store's prestige among people whose opinion is worth having.

If your service club—Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, Optimist—can influence even an occasional family to take its reading seriously and perhaps to lay the foundation of a modest library, it will be worth all the trouble it cost. It may be quite as valuable in an uplift sense as Boy Scout and Hi-Y work. Because it is a rare thing for a boy to turn out badly who comes from a family where books are read and talked about. Records of crime commissions everywhere bear that out.

## X

### The War Years

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WHEN the European war broke out in 1914, business everywhere in the United States went into a terrific slump. Everyone was frightened. You read in the newspapers every day of important concerns going into bankruptcy; concerns that were still solvent cut down expenses in every possible way. Scarcely any traveling salesmen were on the road. One day in November of that year the manager of our Hotel Erie told me that in a week exactly six traveling men had registered. Our Chamber of Commerce had circulars distributed all over the city with a big headline, "Don't Rock the Boat!" Everyone talked about a moratorium on debts.

The dull times lasted something more than a year. Then things began to pick up amazingly as war orders poured in from Europe, and by the time 1916 rolled around, business was booming as never before. It continued to boom until about midsummer 1920; prices went up; anyone who had anything to sell could sell it for more than he paid for it; during four years the United States was a businessman's paradise.

The largest month's business I ever did in my store was June 1916, partly due to general conditions and partly to the marriage of young Richard Powell, Mr and Mrs John Powell's only child.

Richard was twenty-three and had been in the office of the Powell works a couple of years. He had a strong religious bent. People were always saying of him, "He's as democratic as can be. Not at all like a millionaire's son." He planned a system of welfare work among the Powell mechanics similar to that at the Ford Motor works in Detroit, but his father wouldn't let him carry it out. John Powell was once quoted in the *Wellston Morning Times* as saying, "To my mind it is an impertinence for an employer to dictate what his employees shall do after the five-o'clock whistle blows." It would be a mistake to say young Richard Powell was popular around Wellston, but everyone respected him. He was active in Mr Harriss' First Presbyterian Church and took a leading part in the Young Men's Christian Association.

It has always seemed to me that in America we are less than fair to our millionaires. We take a certain pride in them but are at the same time a little ashamed of them. We have an uneasy feeling that the very rich are an affront to our democracy. And that is the reason, perhaps, why so many of our American millionaires go in for ways of life that they wouldn't go in for if they felt free to follow their own inclinations. Had young Richard Powell been born an English millionaire, he could have lived a life in keeping with his money. The English expect a rich man to act like one. They don't expect their dukes and earls to act like slightly religious bank clerks. But in America a millionaire, deprived by public opinion of leading a normal life, can only do one of two things. He can defy public opinion and go off the loose end, which is what many of our more spirited millionaires do. Those who are not so spirited go in for a sort of apologetic democracy. They finance uplift magazines, donate swimming pools and sponsor Y.M.C.A. drives.

Richard Powell's choice of a wife was democratic



enough to suit anyone. Florence Lange's father was old Fritz Lange, who had the bakery on South Water Street for many years; her mother was a Miss Cooper, daughter of a passenger conductor of the W. & E. Railroad. As long as old Fritz lived he made his family associate with Germans and attend the little Lutheran church. But when he died, leaving them in fairly comfortable circumstances, the mother and daughter went over to the First Baptist Church, where Mr Wakeman preached Sunday evenings in his full-dress suit. From the moment Florence became a Baptist she pretended not to understand a word of German.

She became one of that pathetic company of women who do the grubby work of Protestant churches in the hope of social advancement that usually doesn't come. Florence waited on table at Baptist church suppers and washed the dishes afterward. She climbed stepladders to decorate the church house for holiday celebrations. She served on committees that went up and down Market Street, begging merchants to advertise in church programs. She was a substitute Sunday-school teacher. She did everything that more fortunate Baptist ladies shirked.

After more than five years the miracle happened. Florence and young Richard Powell met during a drive for funds for the Young Women's Christian Association. All the Wellston churches participated, and Florence waited on table at the noonday luncheons for workers. I suppose Richard was attracted by her earnestness. She was three years older than he.

The wedding invitations were done in my engraving department. It was my new department, patterned after Tiffany's in New York. Under the flap of all the wedding envelopes I had stamped, "Kent, Jeweller & Society Engraver." It was clever publicity, because every person who received a wedding invitation was reminded that

Kent, Jeweller, also sold wedding gifts. Publicity experts call it "Advertising at point of sale."

Florence ordered twelve hundred invitations, engraved in the most expensive style. Mr Henderson at the Wellington National Bank told me that Mrs Lange sold the old bakery premises on South Water Street to give her daughter a wedding in keeping with the family she was marrying into. I hoped to sell the engagement ring, but Richard went to New York and bought it from Cartier, the big French concern. It was a six-carat, square-cut diamond and cost \$7,000. I tried to believe I didn't mind; but in my heart I am afraid I never quite forgave Richard.

I was disappointed again when Mrs Lange and Florence came in to select the bridal flat silverware. I waited on them myself and thought I had the girl satisfied. She had got to the point of discussing whether to have the flatware engraved with a single initial or a monogram, when her mother said, "It's foolish, Florence, to buy without looking around. You ought to look at Hirschfield's." It was just what cautious old Fritz Lange would have said. The girl didn't like it at all. There was a sharp little quarrel, but finally she followed her mother out of the store and across the street to Hirschfield's.

One of the Hirschfield watchmakers told my head salesman, Earl Watson, what happened over there. Old Barney met the two women at the front door and bowed. "This is a big honor, ladies," he said as he shook hands with them both. He and old Fritz Lange had been beer-drinking friends during the baker's lifetime. He said, as he escorted them to the silverware counter. "You should be happy, Mrs Lange, for the fine husband Miss Florence is getting. So religious young Mr Powell is, too."

The watchmaker said he could scarcely keep from laughing, because all that morning Barney and Jake had

been cursing young Powell and calling him a dirty low-life because he had bought the square-cut diamond from Cartier. When old Barney started to show his silverware patterns, he did another clever thing. He asked Florence if he might see the engagement ring. He stuck his eye glass in his eye and looked at it a long time, making all sorts of complimentary remarks. "Blue like the sky!" "A Premier, I believe it is!" He handed it back and said, "With a diamond like that, Miss Florence, you will be the society leader of Wellston."

Yet it looked as though old Barney would lose the silverware sale. Mrs Lange was inclined to buy from him, but her daughter wasn't. After some bickering they started to leave. Old Barney smiled and said good-naturedly, "Anyway, thank you for coming in." They had gone a few steps when he called, "Just a minute, ladies. I think of something!"

They turned back. Old Barney leaned across the counter to say earnestly, "I beg your pardon, Miss Florence. I was stupid." He repeated this two or three times. She asked what he meant.

"Your personality, Miss Florence. That's what I was stupid about."

"My personality——"

"You've got a wonderful personality, Miss Florence. You shouldn't have silverware like any ordinary girl. You should have silverware to express that personality of yours. I've got it!"

He ran to the rear of the store and brought a tray of knives, forks and spoons.

"It's called the Cleopatra pattern, Miss Florence," he cried. "She was a beautiful queen. Maybe you heard about her."

He maneuvered the girl in front of the big mirror



between two wall cabinets. "Let us see now, Miss Florence, doesn't the Cleopatra pattern express your personality!"

He posed her in different attitudes, his hands filled with pieces of silver flatware. At each change he held up a spoon, or fork, or salad server and yelled excitedly, "It does it, Miss Florence. It expresses your personality!" Though old Barney beat me out of the sale, I can appreciate his artistry.

Within the past month I have received a booklet from one of the largest silverware factories in the country recommending jewelers to use the same kind of salesmanship. "You must flatter the bride-to-be," the booklet says. "Tell her she has a wonderful personality. Then pick out some pattern in your stock and tell her it is the exact pattern that expresses her personality. Do that, and watch your silverware sales jump!"

I could really afford to lose the sale of Miss Lange's flatware. All the twelve hundred people who received wedding invitations felt obligated to send presents, and because the Powell family was so rich no one dared send anything cheap, or to shine up some old piece of silver lying around the house and send it, as with ordinary weddings. In 1916 silver candlesticks were very popular, and from my store alone more than a dozen pairs were sent to the bride.

My best sale was made to Mr John Powell. He came in the store one day and asked, "How good a silver dinner set have you?" I showed him my most expensive set—coffeepot, teapot and so forth, all on a massive silver tray—and he said casually, "I'll have you send it out to Miss Florence Lange, please." He didn't ask the price. I wondered how he liked the idea of having Florence Lange for a daughter-in-law. He stayed a few minutes to talk on different subjects and then went out with



his customary, "Well, good-by," accompanied by an awkward little wave of the hand. When he did that it always made me feel he didn't enjoy being rich and that at heart he was a shy and probably lonesome man who wanted to be friendly with people but was afraid his money stood in the way.

The wedding took place in the First Presbyterian Church, Reverend Beverly Harriss officiating, a circumstance that must have been very annoying to Mr Wakeman, the Baptist minister. Both newspapers gave the wedding front-page positions, and the write-ups were rather silly. The couple went to Atlantic City for two weeks. "That is as long," the *Evening Bulletin* stated, "as young Mr Powell feels he should take. Despite his youth he is an important cog in the family enterprise, and as the Powell Steel & Cutlery Works are enormously busy on war orders for several European governments, he deems it his duty to be back at his desk without unnecessary delay."

On their return the couple went to live in the old Harmon mansion on Summit Avenue that Mr John Powell had purchased for them, and the bride mailed a printed card to each person who had sent a wedding present:

"Thank you for the lovely gift that you sent on the occasion of my marriage to Mr Richard Powell. Your gift was much appreciated by both my husband and I."

My profits from the Powell-Lange wedding were enough to pull me completely out of debt. Dun and Bradstreet rated me above \$100,000, credit unquestioned. In January 1917 I was elected president of the Chamber of Commerce and held office until January 1919.

Those two war years remain in my mind a confused jumble of mostly unrelated events, some significant and

some so trivial that it seems ridiculous to remember them at all.

There was, for example, the case of Jake Hirschfield. Though only a few years younger than I, Jake was the first man in Wellston to go to the officers' training camp. I couldn't help a little resentment at the fulsome praise everyone gave him and the way he came home on an occasional Saturday night, bursting with patriotism, and waited on customers in the family jewelry store dressed in his army uniform. I was almost pleased when Jake, toward the end of his military training, was sent home in disgrace.

The story was that when the Regular Army West Pointer at the camp was addressing a lot of student officers, Jake waited for a pause and then piped up, "When do we start getting our hundred dollars a month salary?" The West Pointer barked. "For you, never. Get out!"

This happened on a Saturday. On Monday morning, back in Wellston, Jake went to the recruiting station and enlisted as a private.

He was sent to France, fought at St Mihiel and the Argonne and came home after the Armistice a sergeant and with a citation for bravery in action. His service left him quite deaf. Always afterward he had to cup a hand over his ear when waiting on customers. He might have claimed a pension. But he always said, "I didn't serve my country for the money that was in it."

It is a joke around town that Jake's deafness is an advantage to him because he can never hear a customer say no.

The whole thing was puzzling to me. I always supposed Jake's patriotism was nothing more than a form of showing off. But the way he said "*My country*" was pretty convincing. Yet how could any Jew, I often wondered, really care for the United States? Jews never get quite

a square deal. No matter where they live, they are snubbed and patronized. If a Jew has an American friend, he knows the American is always apologizing for him and saying, "I really like him. He's one white Jew." If a Jew goes exclusively with other Jews, people sneer, "Oh yes, Jews stick together." And if a Jew tries to go with Americans, they say, "Why is it Jews are always trying to push in where they aren't wanted?" Even in business a Jew has to be 20 per cent smarter than Americans to get anywhere.

The whole trouble, of course, springs from the fact that Jews are naturally harder workers than other people. Whatever business a Jew is in, he sets a hot pace for his competitors. In order to make a living, the Jew's competitors have to hustle harder than they want to. That is enough to rouse the worst instincts in any man.

Another recollection of the war period is of the time I was on a Chamber of Commerce committee, canvassing the Market Street stores and offices to sell Liberty Bonds. Between the Woolworth store and Mason's Hardware there was a stairway leading up to a photograph gallery kept by a poverty-stricken little German-American named Ernest Wiedemann. One of the committeemen said, "Shan't we go up and sell this fellow a couple of bonds?"

I said, "Oh, let's pass him up. He can scarcely pay his grocery bill as it is."

The committeeman started up the stairway, laughing:

"Look at the name. Wiedemann! You'd pass up a fellow with a name like that?"

That same day when our committee went into Hugo Sauer's place and said we had come to sell him some bonds, the old saloonkeeper shouted, "Sure, I buy bonds. Have a drink on me, chentlemens." And as we had our drinks, old Hugo stamped up and down in front of the bar, yelling at the top of his voice so everyone in the



place could hear, "Uncle Sam's bonds is better as money. I mean it. Better as money!"

It was pretty funny, if you wanted to look at it that way. But it wasn't so funny if you stopped to realize how scared old Hugo must have been to make such a fool of himself.

Then there was the time I was going up in the elevator of the Ellsworth office building. The car was crowded, and among others were two men who looked as though they might be tenant farmers, talking to each other in German. Another passenger was a pious little fellow named Archie Bates, assistant secretary at the Y.M.C.A. Suddenly Bates shouted to the Germans, "Stop that!"

One of the men asked, "Stop what, mister?"

"Stop talking German!"

The man answered mildly, "My friend and I always talk German to one another. Why must we stop?"

Little Bates thumped his chest and puffed out his cheeks. "Because *I* say so!"

My first impulse was to tell little Bates not to be an ass. But I realized it wouldn't be wise.

Another time, in front of my store, a crowd collected to watch a parade coming down Market Street. I stepped out to the curb and chanced to stand beside a woman I knew, Mrs Adelaide Stephens, an ex-president of the Women's Club and a prominent Daughter of the American Revolution. Just the other side of Mrs Stephens was a young Negro. The newspapers had been printing articles instructing men to uncover in presence of the flag; and as the parade went by, the men in the crowd took off their hats, generally with a self-conscious air. But the Negro was so interested in the parade that he forgot. Mrs Stephens screamed, "Traitor!" and struck him on the side of the head, knocking his hat into the gutter. He picked it up and slunk off around the corner, looking



as though he wanted to find a place where he could cry.

One night the Reverend Mr Harriss was speaker on a motor truck that was sent around town to sell Liberty Bonds. In the speech he delivered at Third and Market streets, Mr Harriss declared that after the war all German men should be sterilized.

Mr Joe Bladsden of Wellston was elected to Congress in the November 1918 election as a result of a speech he made to chambers of commerce, Kiwanis, Rotary, advertising and salesmanship clubs through the district. The speech was composed entirely of patriotic quotations. It began with "You can fool some of the people some of the time" and "You may fire when you are ready, Gridley"; then it went on to "Don't give up the ship" and "We have met the enemy and they are ours." After that, "Damn the torpedoes," "Don't fire till you see the whites of their eyes" and "We've just begun to fight." Mr Bladsden's only original phrase came at the finish, when he thumped the table and shouted, "America is NOT too proud to fight!"

Business was wonderful during the war. Every merchant on Market Street made money. Whenever a young man clerk was drafted into the army, the merchant usually filled his place with a girl at half the salary. People were so prosperous that not much salesmanship was needed, so girls did about as well as men. The hardest problem most merchants had was to get enough goods from their wholesalers. One item I was always short on was men's wrist watches. Every boy who went to war either bought a wrist watch for himself or had one given him.

Emblem rings were another fast-selling item. It appeared that every embryo soldier felt he would be safer if he went to France as a Mason, or Elk, or Odd Fellow, or Woodman of the World. Fortunately for the jewelry trade, army regulations forbade a soldier wearing a lodge

pin or button on his uniform. A Masonic or Woodman pin would have cost the soldier only a dollar or two. But he had to pay from \$10 upward for a good emblem ring.

There were a good many impromptu weddings, soldiers marrying girls a day or two before going away. Occasionally some minister preached a sermon against it, but without any appreciable effect. The day before Thanksgiving 1917, forty-two marriage licenses were issued at City Hall.

The Powell works had huge government orders and employed four thousand men. Market Street was like Christmas Eve every Saturday night. When it seemed that the end of the war was near, some businessmen showed signs of worry. You heard remarks like, "We shouldn't allow the Germans to surrender. Our army should crowd them right back to Berlin." One day, after Austria and Turkey had dropped out, a grocer named Osgood said to me hopefully, "Don't you think those Prussians are stubborn enough to keep it up single-handed till next spring anyhow?"

I became more friendly than ever with Mr John Powell during the war years. By then I was well enough off not to feel bashful toward him on account of his money. My position as president of the Chamber of Commerce gave me prestige, too. There was a \$6,000-a-year secretary who did most of the work, so my office was largely ornamental. Frequently, when government officials came from Washington, I met them at the Union Station in my car and drove them to the Powell works. Usually John Powell turned the government men over to Richard, who showed them about the plant. At the beginning of the war Richard wanted to enlist, but the authorities decided he would be more useful in the family business. He was enormously energetic, always at his office at seven in the morning

and frequently worked till midnight, besides serving on any number of church and Y.M.C.A. committees.

The Powell works had a government contract to turn out several million trench knives for use on the Western Front. One day, when I took some Washington men to the works, I noticed on the wall just above Richard's desk a little glass case with one of these knives in it. It was a vicious-looking weapon, with double razor edges and a sharp point. To disembowel a person, one only had to make a forward thrust, followed by a slight twist. Richard showed the exhibit to the visitors and explained some of the processes of manufacture. As he led the men away he said smilingly, "You see, gentlemen, we're doing our bit for democracy here at the Powell works."

John Powell came and stood beside me.

"Do you remember, Peter," he asked, "that a long time ago you were at my house and told me how the Reverend Mr Harriss had been to see you and asked you to accept the Savior and you wouldn't do it?"

I nodded. "And do you also remember," Mr Powell went on, "how I said Mr Harriss asked me to do the same thing and I wouldn't do it, either?"

He smiled grimly as I nodded again.

"It's mighty lucky I didn't. Because if I *had*"—he made an angry gesture toward the trench knife in its glass case—"because if I *had* accepted the Savior, I couldn't decently be having the pleasure of making a lot of money by manufacturing such a damnable thing as that!"

XI  
After the War

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EVERYONE WAS AFRAID there would be a terrible business slump the minute the war was over, but it turned out quite the reverse. Prices were unbelievably high and going higher all the time, but people bought just the same. I sold diamonds at \$800 a carat that were no better than the stones I sold at \$200 a carat when I first went into business. On one of my New York trips I was in Morris & Arnheim's, the big diamond importers, and asked Henry Arnheim, "How long do you expect these prices to last?" and he answered, "Don't you worry, Mr Kent. Four or five years more, anyhow."

He added, "If there *is* any sign of a break, we'll notify you. Then you can put on a sale and unload your high-priced stuff before Wellston people know anything about it."

I hope Arnheim's remark doesn't shock some non-business reader. Experienced readers know business is done that way.

Locally, everything seemed perfect. The Powell Steel & Cutlery Works employed as many mechanics as in war times, yet couldn't keep up with orders. All the businessmen I talked with believed the war had caused such a shortage of goods the world over that factories would be a long time catching up with demand. Sam Chadwick, who had a house-furnishing store next the Public Service



offices, said to me one day at the Altruist luncheon, "Give me two or three years like this, Pete, and I don't give a damn what happens. I'll be rich enough to quit."

Sam thought after he quit business he would devote himself to some worthy cause, like Boy Scout work or having a class in salesmanship at the Y.M.C.A. I thought it was a sign of the times that Sam planned to do something noble when he made his pile.

About the only merchant who didn't look at things through rose-colored glasses was old Barney Hirschfield. After Jake came back from France, the old man took things easier and occasionally dropped in to see me. More than once he said ominously, "Von of dese times on Market Street Yom Kippur it will be!"

Market Street did have its Yom Kippur, and scarcely anyone was ready for it. In May 1920 it was front-page news that Wanamaker's New York department store was putting on a 20 per cent reduction sale. Almost every day after that there were little items, usually buried in the back pages, announcing that some factory in Lynn, Mass., or Chicago, or Toledo, had closed down but was expected to open again soon. Trade was slow in Wellston during the summer, but most merchants believed it would pick up again in the fall.

The State Bank of Wellston failed in September. Merchants caught in the failure had to raise money and advertised cut prices. At first the reductions were 20 per cent, like Wanamaker's; then competition forced cuts of 25 per cent, and then 30. By Christmas half the stores on Market Street offered goods at half price. There were a good many failures. I came out better than most, but I estimated that my diamond stock had shrunk at least \$20,000 in value.

About the only man I knew of who did well was Mr Henry Ford. He shipped his overstock of cars to dealers

all over the country with sight draft attached to bill of lading. Dealers had to take them or stand the consequences. I heard of one dealer who sold only three cars from September to the end of the year, but had to buy 120 cars during that time. Then, in January, Mr Ford sent him a lot of extra cars that he had to find the cash to pay for.

One curious effect of the hard times was to increase the membership of the "service clubs," Rotary, Kiwanis, Altruist and so on. At first the big corporations that maintained branches in town forbade their branch managers to belong to these clubs. I remember one man, local manager for the old Wells-Fargo Express Company, who lost his job because he became a Rotarian and his superiors learned he had taken time from his work to march in a Rotary parade for some uplift cause or other. But when the postwar slump came on, the corporations began to encourage, if not actually to order, their branch managers to join. So about the first thing a new branch manager did when he came to town was to find out which service club might do him most good and then pull wires to be elected.

Local businessmen joined so as to get the trade of the members and to keep competitors out. One man in town, old Elias Wagstaff, ran an office-supply business with his three sons as assistants. Elias himself was Kiwanis, one son was Rotary, one Lion and one Altruist.

In Wellston the Altruist Club, with the possible exception of Rotary, was most desirable for a businessman. We had the two outstanding clergymen, Bishop Markham and Mr Harriss. People looked on the club as a semireligious organization. A merchant who displayed the Altruist emblem in his show window got considerable church trade that he might have missed otherwise.

I was always curious about the effect the club had on

its clergymen, and the effect they had on the club. With Bishop Markham there didn't seem to be much effect either way. Once, at a club luncheon, he blacked his face and did a Negro-preacher monologue, in which most of the jokes were about robbin' hen roosts and baptizin' cullud sisters. The bishop was a Marylander by birth and did the Negro dialect to perfection. But I noticed the Negro waiters weren't much amused. Of course, Marylanders, like most border states people, are desperately anxious to appear Southern and so are sometimes more cruel to Negroes than real Southerners. But I'm sure Bishop Markham wasn't that sort. He was merely trying to be a good fellow with his brother Altruists.

During the past few years so many writers have been poking fun at service clubs that I think it is time someone should stand up and tell facts.

Rotarians and Kiwanians and Altruists are not altogether the sort of fellows Mr H. L. Mencken used to write about in the old *American Mercury*. Some Rotarians and Kiwanians are just as sophisticated as some newspaper columnists or some members of the New York Dutch Treat Club.

There are two kinds of service-club members, realists and idealists. A realist will tell you he is in the club because he likes the fellowship and the change of eating in a hotel once a week. If you question him, he will say, "Oh yes, I know there's a lot of bunk about this Service with a big S. But I guess it doesn't do any harm, and anyhow I get a lot of fun out of the club." If you question him further he will admit frankly, "I get business out of the club, and I like that, too."

I can't see that that kind of a service-club member is any more of a hypocrite than, say, an editorial writer on a chain newspaper. They are both doing their best to earn a living.



But then there is the idealist service-club member. He is very much in earnest. If you were to ask him, "Are you in the club for the money that is in it?" he would say "No!" and believe it. He isn't imaginative. The most you could get out of him would be a reluctant, "If I *do* make a little money out of the club, it is only in proportion to the service I render."

Generally in a service club of one hundred members there aren't more than half a dozen dyed-in-the-wool idealists. But their earnestness gives them an influence beyond their numbers. It is they who are elected to office and grant interviews to reporters that are full of noble sentiments.

The Reverend Beverly Harriss was an outstanding idealist in our Altruist Club. Even in the beginning, when the object of the club was to swap trade among members, Mr Harriss was more earnest about it than anyone else. He came to meetings with a little notebook, and when it came his turn he would read, "Saturday. Purchased hat from Brother Leonard Bensel, \$4.50. Tuesday. Watch repaired by Brother Peter Kent, \$2.00," and so on. Behind his back the Altruists laughed good-naturedly at his super-earnestness.

Mr Harriss went out of his way to be a good fellow, but couldn't strike just the right note. His laughing and joking were overhearty. He was always saying, "I don't want to be treated differently because I'm a clergyman. I just want to be one of the crowd." But he never was that. The members jocularly called him "Doc" but were self-conscious about it.

I always thought it was a little pathetic that Mr Harriss should be so eager to appear a good fellow. We had a comic program once, where members raced from one end of the hotel dining room to the other and back again, each man carrying a spoonful of water. The racers who



made the best time and spilled the least water won prizes. Mr Harriss entered, and was surprisingly fast for a man of his size and weight. But at the last moment he stumbled and spilled all the water out of his spoon, and that made him eligible for the booby prize. It was a baby's lace cap; donated by Wesley Thompson of the Wellston Department Store. When this was handed to Mr Harriss he put it on his head, laughing uproariously, and wore it during the rest of the meeting. Everyone was embarrassed.

I have thought a good deal about Mr Harriss lately and why he was so eager to associate with businessmen; to be "one of the crowd," as he always put it. I hope what I say about him will not be construed as personal criticism. He happens, merely, to represent a tendency in American life that is having a pretty strong influence on everyone. In reality I am thinking of thousands of other clergymen as well as of Mr Harriss.

Do I seem too outrageous when I suggest that possibly a good many young men choose the preaching profession because they have in their make-up a more than average desire to be admired?

Preaching is a profession where a man can get admiration quickest and easiest. Other professions, too, attract young men who crave admiration—authorship, politics, the law, the stage—but there is a long apprenticeship before a man can command much attention. A minister commands attention from the moment he is graduated from divinity school and takes his first pastorate and stands up to preach his first sermon.

But after Beverly Harriss, or any other young minister, preaches a few years, is married and has a child or two, he finds there are drawbacks. The admiration of his women parishioners may still be satisfying, but the men never treat him as an equal. He is always overhearing

some man say, "Our pastor, Mr Harriss, is a splendid Christian"; or, "I respect Mr Harriss. He's very human." Never by any chance does he ever hear a man say simply, "I like Harriss."

Wouldn't that sort of thing finally get on the nerves of a man like Mr Harriss? And to make it all the worse, in between Sunday sermons he has to call on old ladies who serve him tea, and to address the Ladies' Aid Society and help arrange church socials and all that. Protestant churches are pretty cruel to their ministers. Mr Harriss doesn't dare to be normal. If he dropped into old Hugo Sauer's someday for a spot of rye and a lunch afterward, he'd be out of a job the next week. There must have been a thousand times in Mr Harriss' life when his vanity has been outrageously bruised and he wished he could quit preaching and get into some regular business.

A Catholic priest is much better off. A priest has the authority of the Church of Rome behind him. He can occasionally bully a poor parishioner and get an outlet for his vanity that way. I remember reading, in *The Damnation of Theron Ware*, how Theron envied the Catholic priest the way he cracked the whip over the heads of shanty Irish in his congregation. But a Protestant minister hasn't any authority back of him. He's got as many bosses as there are members of his church.

Wasn't that why, perhaps, Mr Harriss became so enthusiastic a member of the Altruist Club? At the meetings he was away from his old ladies, among businessmen who slapped backs and called one another by nicknames. It was flattering to be called "Doc." He enjoyed the talk at the tables about business and making money. It made him feel almost as though he were a businessman himself. It was all so different, such a relief from his regular life.

Is it any wonder that thousands of clergymen all over

the country have been going in for Kiwanis, advertising clubs, Rotary, Altruist, salesmanship groups, Optimist and all the rest?

Finally Mr Harriss became president of our Altruist Club. Some were opposed to electing anyone but a regular businessman, but the majority thought he was entitled to the honor on account of his enormous interest in the club. During several years he had a 100 per cent attendance record.

The day he took office, Mr Harriss delivered a prayer and asked Divinity to bless and guide the club during his administration. This embarrassed some members. Johnny Martin, sitting next me, whispered, "If Doc does that again it will be twice too many." But Johnny needn't have worried, because as club president Mr Harriss leaned backward in an effort to be a good fellow.

That year the Altruist district convention was held in Wellston, a dozen or more clubs sending delegates. Sessions were held at the Hotel Erie; and as usual during the Prohibition era there was an upstairs room of the hotel fixed up as a bar. Some local Altruists wanted to eliminate the bar out of regard for Mr Harriss' feelings. He was a militant Prohibitionist and several times had led the local police in raids on bootlegging joints. But finally the committee decided to have the upstairs drinking room and trust that Mr Harriss would hear nothing about it.

All went well until the last night of the convention. Mr Harriss made an able speech on law observance, and some visiting delegates who had been drinking thought it would be great fun to play a trick on him. They suddenly descended on Mr Harriss and blindfolded him and then, singing, "For he's a jolly good fellow," bundled him into an elevator and carried him upstairs.

They took off the blindfold in the drinking room. Mr



Harriss opened his eyes on a temporary bar covered with bottles and glasses, in charge of a man in a white coat. The room was filled with Altruist drinkers. For a long minute not a word was said. Even the convivialists had an uneasy sense of carrying their joke too far. There was an element of pathos in the thing. Mr Harriss seemed like a helpless little boy. His face showed he was really hurt. He made an effort to pull himself together and finally contrived a grimace that was meant to be a smile. He forced one of his hail-fellow laughs—"A good joke on me. Ha! Ha!"—and made his way to the door. On the threshold he turned and covered his eyes with his hands, peering waggishly between his fingers.

"I haven't seen a thing, fellows," he shouted. "Not a single thing. Ha! Ha! Ha!"

The Altruist style show was held soon after the convention. It was promoted each year by Altruist Wesley Thompson of the Wellston Department Store and held at a regular luncheon meeting with the wives of Altruists as invited guests. Some members weren't keen about the style show, but good-naturedly voted for it so as to help Wesley advertise his dresses.

Mr Harriss appointed me on the committee to arrange for the show. I was a little embarrassed, because I never could persuade my wife to attend. "In Virginia," Luley-Lee always said, "business and social affairs are never messed up together." Another committeeman was an Altruist named Martin Matlock, nicknamed "Matty" by the club members. Matty was agent for Detroit-Hercules Trucks; he was an enormously energetic fellow of the high-pressure salesman type, of whom we were getting so many in Wellston as more big corporations went into "direct" selling and opened local sales offices. Matty had to be high-pressure, in fact, to hold his truck agency. Following the example of Henry Ford and other motor



manufacturers, Detroit-Hercules arbitrarily set the number of trucks that had to be sold in every community and eliminated any dealer who failed to carry out orders.

Matty was compelled to sell 150 trucks a year. It was an almost impossible job to extort that amount of business from the Wellston territory, and Matty was always worried about losing his agency. He took to playing poker as an antidote for his worries, and it was said he wasn't quite as strict morally as a man with a wife and a couple of small children should be.

When our committee met to arrange the style show, Matty turned up with a brand-new idea. "Let's do something a little extra this year," he said. "Why not have one of the girl models dressed as a bride and put on a mock wedding?"

Some of us thought the idea a little daring. One committeeman joked: "Who's going to act the bridegroom, Matty? I suppose you'll do it?"

Matty took it seriously.

"I guess I'm a good enough Altruist to do anything I can for the club. That's my idea of service." He waited a moment, then said, "Yes. I'll act the bridegroom."

Everyone laughed at his seriousness. The committeeman remarked, "But you're married already, Matty. What about that?"

"All the better," Matty answered. "If I take the part of bridegroom, there won't be any scandal. There might be if it were some young single fellow."

"You're a brave man," the committeeman grinned. "What's your wife going to say?"

Matty winked. "For a long time," he said, "Mrs Matlock has wanted to visit her folks in Syracuse. I guess I'll have to let her go."

On style-show day, as usual, Luley-Lee refused to come with me; but nearly all the other Altruists brought their

wives. A roll of carpet was stretched from the door of the hotel dining room to the far end, where there was an improvised stage with wings. At the close of the luncheon Mr Harriss made a little presidential address. He alluded to the Altruists' wives as "our fair guests." Then Wesley Thompson leaped on a chair and announced through a megaphone that all gowns to be displayed were from the Wellston Department Store's ready-to-wear section.

The hotel orchestra played a little fanfare of music, and one of the department store's salesgirls came in the dining-room door and walked slowly along the strip of carpet to the stage. Wesley megaphoned, "One of our late-spring models. Note that skirts are much shorter!" Several Altruists guffawed. The girl blushed, and I felt a little sorry for her. She had been drafted from the store's book department on account of her good ankles.

The next girl was a different type, blooming and full-bodied. Wesley shouted, "A charming dance frock. Darling but chic!" The dress was cut low in front, and the girl's back was bare almost to the waistline. There was a roar of applause that the girl seemed to enjoy. She circled the stage twice before bowing herself out into the wings.

A dozen more gowns were shown, and then Altruist Thompson waved for silence. He megaphoned, "Our last exhibit. Extra-special. Watch for her!"

Everyone turned toward the entrance door. A smallish girl of perhaps twenty appeared. She was in a white satin bridal dress with a long veil and carried a bouquet of white roses. The orchestra struck up, "Here Comes the Bride," and Wesley Thompson roared, "Note the smart plainness of this bridal gown. It shows the figure to perfection!" Some of the men laughed. Her little round breasts were scarcely more than a child's. She

mounted the stage; but instead of making a circle and then disappearing, she stood still, facing the audience.

A man stepped briskly out from the wings to stand beside her, and the audience shrieked. It was Matty Matlock, dressed as a bridegroom, with a wing collar, cut-away coat and pin-stripe trousers. He grinned and waved his hand facetiously.

There was a moment's pause, and then the audience shrieked louder than before. Mr Harriss walked out on the platform and faced the couple. It was a part of the show I hadn't known anything about. I noticed the resolutely hail-fellow expression on Mr Harriss' face. It reminded me of the way he looked the night when the visiting Altruists dragged him into the upstairs barroom. He laughed nervously as he repeated some burlesque marriage lines and ended by comically pretending to kiss the bride.

The couple left the platform and walked the length of the dining room, the girl hanging onto Matty's arm. There was a lot of hand clapping at the serious way she seemed to take it all. I heard several Altruist wives say a girl with so much talent for acting ought to go on the stage.

Someone told me the girl had worked for several months as Matty's stenographer at his truck agency. It seemed that Matty had persuaded Mr Harriss at the last moment to perform the comic wedding ceremony. The girl's name was Martha Simpson, and her people ran a market-gardening place a mile or so out of town.

Later that year Detroit-Hercules put Matty out of business when he failed to sell his quota of trucks, and he left Wellston. Then it came out that the Simpson girl was going to have a baby. She explained it by saying, "Mr Matlock was always so nice to me, but I wouldn't do what he wanted me to do until after that wedding.



Of course I knew it wasn't a real wedding, but it seemed almost the same as one on account of a real minister. The minute the Reverend Mr Harriss came on that platform I knew I wouldn't hold out against Mr Matlock any longer."

All this seems pretty grisly, I know. You would naturally put the blame on Matty Matlock. But wouldn't it be fairer to blame the Detroit-Hercules Truck Corporation? Because it was Detroit-Hercules that arbitrarily decreed how many trucks our community should buy, and then sent a reckless, high-pressure fellow like Matty to carry out orders.

It wouldn't be fair to blame Mr Harriss. Being a clergyman, he didn't know exactly how to act in a club of businessmen. He was too anxious to please. You might say he shouldn't have been in the club at all. But he had his living to look out for, and the friendship of a hundred Altruist businessmen might be useful in case of any dissatisfaction at his First Presbyterian Church. To be absolutely fair, you ought to blame the church system that makes an American Protestant minister to fend for himself with slightly less economic security than a good book-keeper or a garage mechanic.

You might say the whole Altruist Club was to blame. But the Altruist Club itself was a product of the terrific competition that forced businessmen to form clubs to help one another make a living. Perhaps it sounds far-fetched, but I doubt if there would be any Altruist, or Kiwanis or other service clubs except for the situation that developed back in 1907, when production outran consumption and Big Business began to employ high-pressure tactics to force more goods on people than people could reasonably buy.



## XII

### Absentee-Landlordism

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OF ALL THE CHANGES that have taken place since I went into business in Wellston, one of the most important was the sale of the *Morning Times*, in 1926, following the death of Mr Ezra Thayer, its owner and editor.

The paper had been in the Thayer family since old James Thayer started it as an Abolitionist sheet back in the Eighteen Fifties. Under Ezra Thayer it had more than a local reputation. Newspapers all over the country quoted his editorials. He never allowed slang or any cheap expression in a news story, and he would never have a funny page. His circulation was only about twelve thousand, but the paper was by far our best advertising medium. Several times I tested it out in my holiday advertising against the *Evening Bulletin*, which was inclined to the sensational and had a larger circulation than the *Times*, but invariably I got better results from the *Times*. Merchants said it was because people accepted anything they saw in Ezra Thayer's newspaper as gospel truth.

The purchaser of the *Times* was Mr Herbert Sargent, owner of the Sargent chain of newspapers, located in small cities as far east as New England and as far west as Ohio and West Virginia. Mr Sargent was the son of a Methodist minister, a very religious man personally, who contributed to the support of the Anti-Saloon League

and the Methodist national committee on public morals. The Wellston Chamber of Commerce tendered him a banquet when he bought the *Times*; and in his speech of appreciation Mr Sargent said that under his ownership the *Times* would unswervingly support the Eighteenth Amendment and fight to the last ditch any man, no matter how influential, who sought to undermine it. Under Ezra Thayer the *Times* had been violently opposed to Prohibition; Mr Sargent's remarks somehow conveyed the impression that he had purchased the paper solely in order to elevate its moral tone. At that time a good many Chamber of Commerce men thought Prohibition was helping business.

It is getting a little ahead of my story; but when beer became legal in 1933, Mr Sargent announced over his signature that, much as he regretted it, he would allow the paper to accept brewery advertising. On account of the depression, he stated, the paper needed additional revenue to continue paying its employees a living wage. Mr Sargent was a multimillionaire.

But though Mr Sargent's remarks about Prohibition went well at the Chamber of Commerce banquet, another part of his speech turned out badly for him. Everyone knew he made his home in Baltimore and operated his newspapers from there. "But you may be assured, my friends," he said, "that at heart I am a citizen of this splendid community just as much as though I sat every day at the editorial desk of the *Morning Times*. From this time forward my spiritual home will be in Wellston."

The *Times* printed his speech on its front page. Possibly no one would have thought any more about it except for Duncan Munro, editor and part owner of the *Evening Bulletin*. Somehow Munro got hold of a copy of the *Millerton Courier*, a West Virginia daily that Mr Sargent had bought a few months earlier. The *Courier* printed

the speech that Mr Sargent made to Millerton businessmen at that time. It was the same speech, word for word, that Mr Sargent made before the Wellston Chamber of Commerce.

Munro ran an editorial in the *Evening Bulletin*, headed, "Morning Times Now Foreign Owned," and unmercifully jeered Mr Sargent for trying to make the same speech fit two different cities. Several times in the editorial he printed in large type, "'My Spiritual Home Will Be in Wellston'—Or Is It Millerton?"

Every day after that Munro ran similar editorials, some pointing out the evil consequences of outside ownership of a local newspaper, and some merely facetious, but all ending with, "'Wellston My Spiritual Home'—Sargent!" I imagine these editorials finally got under Mr Sargent's skin, because before the year was out he bought the *Evening Bulletin* and merged it with the *Times*, running it as an evening paper under the name of *Times-Bulletin*. Editor Munro engineered a good deal for himself and associates, selling the *Bulletin* for \$250,000, a third more than Mr Sargent paid for the *Times*, which was the better property.

I came to know quite well the man Mr Sargent sent to Wellston as manager of the *Times-Bulletin*. Albert Gish was a high-pressure, friendly fellow who at once flung himself into the life of the community. He joined the Chamber of Commerce, the Salesmanship Round Table and the Country Club. Being a Catholic, he affiliated with the Knights of Columbus instead of the Masons. Ordinarily this would have been a handicap, because Wellston was strongly Protestant; but Gish got around it by giving the Y.M.C.A. and the Boy Scouts an extra amount of publicity in his news columns. Because the Altruists had more advertisers on its roster than any other local service

club, he became an Altruist, though he told me he had been a Rotarian in other towns where he managed Sargent newspapers.

Gish and I became good friends. He was a more sensitive type than most managers for outside corporations who came to Wellston, and much more intelligent. That is, he was intelligent enough to be chagrined at the things he had to do to hold his job, and the others generally weren't. Two or three generations back his family was Austrian-Polish, and that was where his Catholicism came in. As a young fellow, he told me, he wanted to be a priest.

One day he came to my store with a copy of the *Times-Bulletin* and threw it on my desk. "Just to show you," he grimaced, "the sort of family journal I am running." He had been putting on a high-pressure campaign among the merchants, and the paper had twenty-four pages, a good share of it display advertising. There wasn't enough local news to balance the advertising, so it was necessary, Gish said, to fill in with syndicated material. There was a full page of comics, including Andy Gump, Jiggs and Maggie, Salesman Sam and the Hotel Stenographer. The comics faced the editorial page. Of the five editorials, four were written in Baltimore and worded so they might be used in all the papers of the chain. Gish had dashed off the one local editorial, headed, "Wellston's Splendid School System." There were two syndicated New York daily letters. One was by a Jewish young man, who told about the scandals, divorces, etc., among the Broadway actors, cinema stars and important gamblers and their ladies. The other New York letter was by a former Nebraska newspaper reporter, apparently proud of living in the metropolis. He described lunching at the Algonquin Hotel and seeing celebrated writers and editors, all first-name friends of his,



who were also lunching. Every two or three lines he interjected, "New York! What a town!"

I asked Gish jokingly what the policy of the *Times-Bulletin* was. He answered out of the corner of his mouth:

"The safest policy in the world, Peter. The *Times-Bulletin* stands foursquare for the sanctity of the American Home!"

The paper had another syndicated feature, a daily article by Reverend S. Parkes Cadman of the Central Congregational Church in Brooklyn. The English-American minister advised a distracted wife how best to recapture the love of her husband whom she suspected of illicit relations with his stenographer. Gish said the clergyman's column was a great favorite with Mr Sargent, and it had to appear regularly in all his newspapers. It was supposed to build circulation among religious people.

"Here's another favorite of the big chief," Gish said. On the editorial page, just under the "Statement of Ownership" paragraph there was printed in heavy type:

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

"The chief's adamant about that," Gish said. "There must be a fresh Bible quotation every day. Any manager of one of his newspapers who ran the same Bible verse two days in succession might as well hand in his resignation."

"Is it the chief's idea," I suggested, "that a Bible verse a day keeps the sheriff away?"

Gish smiled grimly. "Whenever I look over the files of the old *Morning Times* and compare it with the kind of a paper I'm getting out, I'm pretty well ashamed of myself. Old Ezra Thayer certainly gave the people of Wellston a gentleman's newspaper."

"Why not mention it to Mr Sargent sometime?" I joked. "Perhaps he thinks a gentleman's newspaper couldn't pay. You might convince him it could."

"I couldn't convince him," Gish said, "because he's absolutely right. The *Times-Bulletin* has got to be exactly what it is. It would go bankrupt in a year if he tried to make it a gentleman's newspaper."

"But the old *Morning Times*——" I began.

"The old *Morning Times*," Gish interrupted, "wasn't a chain newspaper."

"What difference does that make?"

"All the difference in the world. People used to read the *Morning Times*, and advertised in it, because Ezra Thayer's prestige was back of it. Everyone knew who he was and what he stood for. The paper had character. But how can the *Times-Bulletin*, which is owned by a man in Baltimore, and which everyone knows is run for profit just the same as an A. & P. grocery, have character? The only way I can get merchants to advertise in the *Times-Bulletin* is to show them a big circulation. And the only way I can get a big circulation is to bring it down to the level of people who can barely read. That's the reason for Andy Gump, the Hotel Stenographer, preacher Cadman's husbands who are running after women, and the like. If I dropped all that out of the *Times-Bulletin*, my circulation would fall off. Then I wouldn't get advertising. Then I'd get the sack."

Gish pulled a flask out of his hip pocket and took a drink. "You know, Peter, I thought once I was going to be a priest and spend my life serving God. But I'm serving absentee-landlordism instead. I'm running a newspaper that I'm ashamed of, and doing my best to lower the standards of decency in a town that's giving me my living."

He took another pull at his flask.

"I believe, Peter, it was old Talleyrand who said, 'A married man with a family will do anything for money.' I wonder how he knew about me!"

It was surprising, when I came to think about it, how far absentee-landlordism had come along in a few years. Corporation presidents in New York, or Pittsburgh, or Chicago, who had never seen Wellston and who would never see it, sat in their offices and figured what percentage of Wellston's income they should demand. Just recently I have read the proceedings of what is called the "Ford Tax Suit," that was brought by the government against the late Senator Couzens, formerly a partner of Mr Henry Ford; and it seems that as far back as 1913 the Ford Motor Company was setting "quotas" for towns and cities all over the country.

From then on all sorts of manufacturers began to do the same thing. They figured the percentage of Wellston's income they wanted, and ordered their branch managers to sell certain "quotas" on pain of losing their jobs. Albert Gish came in my store another day and remarked, "These big captains of industry must have heard about Talleyrand."

He pulled out a sheet of paper and showed me a list of local branch managers whom we both knew. He asked if I saw anything peculiar about his list. I said no.

"Look again, Peter," he said. "You'll see that nearly all these branch manager fellows are the sort Talleyrand mentioned—married men with families." He laughed sardonically. "The captains of industry, Peter, know who to hire when they want strong-arm work done!"

Gish said it was a comfort to him to know how much company he had.

About that time a German named Hans Kaufman started a butcher shop near where I lived. By some miracle of economy he and his wife had saved up \$600. On

his opening day I dropped in to wish him good luck. On his counter there was a huge cash register, and I said, "You must expect a big business, Hans." He answered, "Four hundred dollars I pay for dot machine."

"I suppose you can afford it, Hans," I said.

He replied, "It's better as going to jail."

I asked what he meant.

"Der chentleman what sold it to me said I must have it on account of der income tax. Otherwise I couldn't show how much money every day I take in, and then it would be bad. He said plenty of men iss in jail on account of der income tax."

Hans's creditors closed him up in a couple of months.

In some cases the "quota" system was forced on regular established merchants. Hart, Schaffner & Marx clothing was one example. The Wellston man who handled the line was obliged to buy a certain quantity every year. Occasionally a merchant was strong enough to resist manufacturer dictation.

One day I dropped in to see Mr Cyrus Reed, an old established, successful merchant who had a big stationery and school supply store a few doors above me on Market Street. He was sitting in his little railed-in office on the balcony of his store, and a young man, apparently a traveling salesman, was with him. Mr Reed asked me to sit down, saying he would be through with the other man in a few minutes.

The drummer was a college-graduate type of young man with a loud voice, who represented National Sporting Goods Company, the big New York concern. He had a sheet of paper in his hand and was saying, "But, Mr Reed, this order for football goods that you've given me amounts to only five hundred dollars."

"That's about what we sell every fall to the high school and grade schools," Mr Reed said.



"But I can't accept a five-hundred-dollar order," the drummer persisted.

I could see the old gentleman's face redden, but he said calmly enough, "Why can't you accept it? What's the trouble?"

The drummer fumbled in his briefcase and brought out a card that he handed to the merchant.

"You can see for yourself, Mr Reed," he crowed, "the firm's got you down for a thousand dollars."

The merchant threw the card in his wastebasket. "I've already told you," he said, "that the schools never buy more than five hundred dollars' worth."

The drummer leaned forward brightly. "But I've got a plan, Mr Reed, by which you can make the schools more football conscious. If you work it right, you can make them play midweek games too, instead of just Saturdays."

"I thought," the merchant observed, "the schools were to educate boys and girls, not to sell merchandise."

The drummer answered sternly, "The schools ought to help American business."

Mr Reed's jaw stuck out a little. "Suppose I don't buy a thousand dollars' worth. What then?"

"In that case, Mr Reed," the drummer said, "I shall sell the National line of sporting goods to some other merchant in Wellston."

For a pillar of the First Baptist Church Mr Reed's actions were astonishing. "Who in the hell," he demanded, "told you to say all this damn foolishness?"

"I'm acting under orders," the young man said firmly.

"By God we'll see about that!" The merchant grabbed the telephone and said, "Long distance." And in a moment, "Get me New York. The National Sporting Goods Company. They're on Fifth Avenue. I don't know the number. You look it up."

Directly there was a faint tinkle, and I heard the

operator's singsong, "There's your number." The merchant said, "This is Cyrus Reed, Wellston. I want to talk with the sales manager." Then after a pause: "I'm calling, Mister Sales Manager, to say there's a young squirt sitting in my office who's a salesman for National and who claims he's going to give the National agency to some other store unless I buy a thousand dollars' worth from him. What about it?"

There was a long pause. Mr Reed tapped his foot and glared at the salesman. Finally the sound of a voice came over the wire, and the merchant responded, "Yes, yes, I understand. You set 'quotas' for all your customers. But you make an exception of me. That's damn generous of you!"

He hung up the phone.

"And now, Mr Salesman, you take the order I gave you. And by thunder don't you ever come here again and tell me what I've got to buy!"

The salesman went away, and Mr Reed wiped the sweat off his bald head. Finally he laughed.

"Did you notice, Peter, how long that sales manager took to give me an answer? I knew what he was doing. He was looking in his rating book to see if there's some sporting-goods dealer in Wellston besides me whose credit is all right." He chortled over his victory:

"So you see, Peter, education had a narrow squeak. Our schools only escaped being made more football conscious because I've got first-class Dun and Bradstreet ratings, and my competitors are rated, 'Advisable to sell on C.O.D. terms only'!"

I have said one of the most important changes in Wellston took place when the *Times-Bulletin*, a chain newspaper, superseded our two locally owned papers. But I'm not sure if the chain stores haven't exerted even more influence than the *Times-Bulletin*. Right after the war they

began coming thick and fast. In one Market Street block, between Fourth and Fifth, there was a Woolworth, a J. C. Penney, a Kresge, a Grant, a Liggett, a Thom McAn and a Steele 5-cent-to-\$1.00 store. Sometimes I had to make an effort to remember how Market Street looked half a dozen years before.

I always felt sorry for the chain-store managers. They represented just about the last word in absentee-landlordism. An automobile dealer, or even a manager of a typewriter or adding-machine agency, could do about as he pleased, just so he sold the "quota" set by his home office. But the chain-store managers had to go by arbitrary rules made in New York, or Detroit, or wherever their home offices happened to be. I knew quite well the manager of the Steele 5-cent-to-\$1.00 store, a decent, middle-aged fellow named George Barton; he told me he had to trim his show windows from charts sent out by the company and that he would lose his job if he made the slightest change. He couldn't even move merchandise from one counter to another. One day he said to me, "I'm not expected to think. Headquarters does that for me."

Chain-store managers were constantly moved about. They seldom stayed in Wellston more than a few months. If a man made good, he was promoted to some larger place like Rochester or Pittsburgh; if he didn't, he was demoted to a small town or discharged. On Market Street about the only way to tell one chain store from another was by the color; red for Kresge, green for F & W Grand, yellow for Grant, and so on. The Kresge store attracted church people because Mr Sebastian Kresge gave money to the Anti-Saloon League. But his store sold cocktail shakers, wineglasses, fruit presses, etc. The Penney chain employed Protestant ministers to give lectures in towns where there were Penney stores, and the local Penney manager introduced the minister from the platform.



Old Cyrus Reed once remarked sarcastically, "Mighty clever, putting the Lord to work as an advertising agent!"

A store manager's job was apt to depend on the good will of his traveling supervisor. Luley-Lee became acquainted with the wife of one store manager through the Presbyterian Ladies' Aid, and the woman said that about once a month her husband brought his supervisor to their house to stop over Sunday. The supervisor, she said, was a pretty sporty fellow who made risqué jokes and had an eye for girls, and she was nearly worried to death every time he came, on account of her two young daughters. But nothing could be done about it, because they couldn't afford to offend him.

In the spring of 1927 the Chamber of Commerce undertook to raise a quarter of a million dollars to build a new wing on the Wellston General Hospital, and I served on one of the committees. We got \$20,000 from the Powell Steel & Cutlery Works, and John Powell gave \$10,000 personally. The five banks gave another \$10,000, and forty or fifty citizens subscribed \$500 to \$1,000 apiece. One disappointment was the *Times-Bulletin*. Mr Sargent sent word from Baltimore that he felt he did his full duty when he gave the hospital drive publicity in his news columns. We had two or three *Times-Bulletin* advertisers write him, and finally got \$250.

Besides my own donation I put in a week's time on the committee, and thought I had done my share; but one day the Chamber of Commerce secretary phoned me to come to headquarters, and there I found the directors going over the subscriptions. Wesley Thompson was president that year, and the minute I arrived he said:

"We're up against it, Peter. Subscriptions have about stopped coming in, and we're a long way from our quarter-million. See if you can help us figure it out."



We went over reports of committees and found every street in the city, residential and business, had been canvassed. Finally it occurred to me to say:

"Let's look at the Market Street records again. When we had the big hospital drive before the war, we got about a third of our money from merchants."

The Market Street records were brought, and we found that hardly a tenth of our money had come from merchants. The canvassing committee had made notations, "Chain-store manager asked us to call later." "Manager says if decides to subscribe will send check direct to Chamber of Commerce." "Will write New York headquarters and see what they will do."

Thompson asked Johnny Martin and me to go with him and call on some of the delinquents. As we turned into Market Street, Johnny chortled, "Looks like a circus parade, doesn't it?"

Market Street makes a slight curve between Fourth and Sixth; and it was easy to imagine that the chain stores, with their red, green and yellow fronts, were circus chariots. The occasional sober fronts of independent merchants, squeezed in between, could pass for animal cages. Johnny piped up again, "Isn't it astonishing how much the godly men who own chain stores know about sex?"

Wesley Thompson, a director in the Y.M.C.A., said, "Why, Johnny?"

"Because these chain-store fellows," Johnny went on, "work the same dodge that turkey gobblers and peacocks do. They know bright colors excite the female sex, so they paint their stores all the colors of the rainbow. Women get excited, and they have to work off their excitement somehow. So they run into the stores and spend money!"

Johnny and I followed Thompson into a store with a bright blue front and asked to see the manager, Mr Yardman. The air in the store seemed to have been breathed over a dozen times, and there was a stuffy odor from customers' clothing mixed with the smell of cheap candy and half-rancid ice cream from the soda fountain. A talking machine was going raucously at the counter where sheet music was sold, and two or three salesgirls were jazzing nervously to the music.

Mr Yardman came from the other side of the store, stopping to straighten the goods on a counter or two and picking up a few stray bits of paper from the floor. He was a youngish, precise man with a Woodmen of the World pin on his lapel. When Wesley Thompson spoke of the hospital drive he said, "I haven't forgotten it, gentlemen. I shall mention it to my supervisor the next time he comes to town." But Mr Yardman couldn't say when that would be. He said the supervisor came at irregular intervals.

Thompson said, "If it's so uncertain about your supervisor, why not write to your headquarters about a subscription?" Mr Yardman shook his head solemnly.

"That would be against the rules, gentlemen. Everything must go through the supervisor. Rules are rules, you know."

In the Kresge store a bald young man played the piano in the music section, and over his head was a sign, "Piece now playing: 'Hallelujah, I'm a Bum.'" Johnny Martin laughed and pointed to one of Mr Kresge's bargains. It was a pure aluminum cocktail shaker at fifty cents; or, as the placard said, twenty-five cents each for the top and bottom parts.

Mr Hudson, manager of the purple-front store next to Kresge's, couldn't say when he would let the Chamber

of Commerce know about a contribution to the hospital fund. He hoped very soon. He was a large, hearty young man, a college graduate, who had been in Wellston only a short time. "Fully half our managers are college men," he said; "and between you and me it's a pretty cute idea. Our people send circulars to colleges every June. You see, they can get a college graduate, twenty-three or -four years old, for the same wages they would have to pay some eighteen-year-old kid."

Johnny Martin asked, "Do these college graduates become store managers right away?"

Mr Hudson seemed shocked. "Of course not. We have to serve our apprenticeship first."

"How long does that take?" Johnny asked.

"If a college man is bright," Mr Hudson replied, "he can sometimes become a store manager in four years. But it's generally five or six." He chuckled. "Mighty cute of my people, don't you think, getting college graduates that way?"

At the Steele 5-cent-to-\$1.00 store I suggested that I go in alone to interview George Barton, the manager. He was in a little balcony office, and when he saw me he said nervously:

"Is it about the hospital contribution, Mr Kent? I can't give an answer just yet. I haven't heard from New York headquarters."

I sat down and hitched my chair close to his.

"Look here, George. I'm a businessman, and you don't need to keep anything back. Whatever your answer is, I'll understand. Did you write your New York people about a contribution?"

Barton was silent a long minute. Then he said, "No, Mr Kent, I didn't."

He reached in his desk drawer for a mimeographed

sheet of paper. It was addressed: "All Steele 5-cent-to-\$1.00 store managers." I read:

"This Corporation realizes that you will frequently be asked to contribute money toward various enterprises in the towns where you are located. Doubtless some of these causes are worthy ones. If you, as a store manager, care to make a personal donation, you are free to do so. But this Corporation cannot contribute. It believes local citizens should take care of their local charities.

"But you know, of course, that the Steele 5-cent-to-\$1.00 Stores cannot afford to antagonize the public. We realize the value of good will. Our President, Mr C. W. Steele, has given large sums to various causes, notably the Cathedral of St John the Divine in New York, the National Red Cross and the Japanese Earthquake sufferers. Should you, a local store manager, be unduly pressed for some donation, it will be advisable to mention Mr C. W. Steele's benefactions and state that Mr Steele has a sense of duty toward the world as a whole, rather than to some particular community.

"Should the above not be sufficient, you can say that if the Steele 5-cent-to-\$1.00 Stores were to contribute to local causes, we would not be able to sell merchandise at our remarkably low prices. This argument should be unanswerable."

I handed the document back to Barton. He began apologetically: "I might spare ten dollars personally toward the hospital——"

I said, "Forget it, George."

"But don't you think, Mr Kent——"

"I don't think anything, George. I know the fix you and these other chain-store fellows are in. You've got to promise to write your headquarters for a donation. But of course you don't write. You'd be reprimanded if you did. So you just make excuses and string things along till the hospital drive is over. Isn't that about it?"

"You know, Mr Kent, I'm a married man with a family——"

"I know that, and I'd do the same thing if I were in



your shoes. To show how I feel about it, George, why not put on your hat and we'll slip around to Joe's oasis in Fifth Street? A drink will do you good."

Barton shuddered.

"I'd lose my job in a minute if it were known I took a drink. Mr C. W. Steele is an awfully moral man."

It was on the tip of my tongue to say, "He's also a damn hypocrite," but I didn't want to hurt George's feelings.

### XIII

## Directors' Meeting

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I BECAME A DIRECTOR of the Powell Steel & Cutlery Works in the fall of 1925. One day John Powell came into my store and said he wanted to ask a favor of me.

"The first of the year," he said, "I'm turning the works over to Richard. I'm retiring. We're going to incorporate, and he'll be president. Richard's bringing in a couple of his friends as directors, and I guess I'd like to have you a director, too."

Until I knew John Powell, I wouldn't have believed I could ever be on a simple, friendly basis with a very rich man. I always felt that however much I might like a rich man, and however much he might like me, there would be a shade of self-consciousness between us; that he would always be afraid he might hurt my feelings by some display of riches, and I would always be afraid he might think I was running after him on account of his money.

John Powell himself once described the rich man's side of it:

"All this money I've got, Peter, is an awful nuisance. The men I would like to be friendly with hang off because they feel that when they associate with me they must spend as much money as I do, or else lose their self-respect. And the men who don't feel that way, I generally don't want to be friends with."

He had a theory that stupid men were the greatest money-makers.

"Suppose there's a dollar," he used to say, "lying on the floor there across the room. You and I both start for it. You happen to be a sensitive fellow, with some imagination; as you go for the dollar, thoughts about other things occur to you, so you don't go quite in a straight line. But I'm a thick-skinned, unimaginative fellow. I think of nothing in the world but that dollar. I go right to it. I've got it in my pocket before you're halfway there!"

He used to say he was hampered in the enjoyment of his money because he was a second-generation rich man. "You see," he explained, "a millionaire's money isn't much good to him unless he can use it to feed his ego. My father's money fed his ego because he was a self-made man. It made him feel he was smarter than other people. I suppose my grandsons—if the money lasts that long—will feel they are aristocrats. But I can neither boast that I'm self-made, nor that I'm aristocratic. I'm just the son of a mechanic who started a factory and made a lot of money out of it."

John Powell's father, old Jim Powell, came to Wellston in the Eighteen Fifties. The family had a forty-acre farm half a dozen miles from town on the river road. I think any reader who has ever lived on a farm will place the Powells socially when I say they were the sort of country people whose girls milked and occasionally hoed corn and potatoes; the boys did days' work around the neighborhood; if a boy left the farm, it was generally for a job on the railroad or to learn some mechanical trade like barbering or stone-cutting.

When Jim Powell first came to Wellston he worked in the old Erie Hotel livery stable and drove the bus between the hotel and the railroad station. After that he went with a man named Jackson who had a small machine shop, and

learned the machinist trade. Jim set up in business for himself in 1856, and when the Civil War broke out he was in position to solicit government contracts. In 1865 he had his first half-million.

He married a school teacher, Miss Clara Hickson, in 1866, and a year later their only child was born, whom they named John, after Jim's older brother who went to California in the '49 gold rush and was never again heard from. Apparently Mrs Jim Powell was a woman of force and ambition. She induced Jim to build the big house in Summit Avenue directly after their marriage and showed considerable restraint in furnishing it. She died when her son was eight years old.

John Powell told me once his mother must have had a strong sense of *noblesse oblige*, because at the time of her death she was preparing to leave the Methodist Church and become an Episcopalian. She thought it unseemly for a rich person to be a Methodist.

After his wife's death Jim brought an old-maid sister in from the country to run the Summit Avenue house. She seldom went anywhere except to church, and except for a few Methodist women no one came to call. Whenever there was a church conference in Wellston, the big house would be filled with small-town Methodist preachers. From what John Powell told me about his childhood, it must have been a rather grisly existence.

Old Jim decided his son should be a practical machinist and when the boy was seventeen packed him off to Scranton to learn the trade in the shop of one of his former workmen, a man named Shawkey. Young Powell lived in the Shawkey home four years, and it was there he met Effie Parks. She was a clumsy country girl, a distant relative of Mrs Shawkey, doing housework for her board while going to school.

John Powell married this girl. Long afterward old



Shawkey told someone his wife schemed it. Young Powell came home late one night and ran into the girl in the kitchen, dressed in her nightgown. Mrs Shawkey came charging out of her bedroom wrapped in a bed quilt and screamed that she would have no lewd goings-on in her house. Young Powell yielded to a foolish impulse; he said there was nothing wrong and that he and Effie were engaged.

He was twenty-one at the time, and a few weeks later, when he came home, he brought Effie as his wife. From outward appearances no one could imagine but that he was perfectly satisfied with her. He allowed her to spend as much money as she pleased and always treated her with old-fashioned, elaborate courtesy. When the two drove to the Market Street shopping district, everyone remarked how deferentially he assisted her out of the carriage and raised his hat as she left him to go into some store. There was never any gossip about other women, though some people who knew Mrs Powell wouldn't have blamed him if there had been.

I always thought it too bad that John Powell's son couldn't have been a little more like his father. This is not to deny that Richard had some good qualities. I should be the first person to say Richard was an exemplary young man. As I have already said, he was intensely religious. From the time he was in knee trousers he was always marching away from the Summit Avenue mansion with his Bible under his arm to Sunday school, or Y.M.C.A., or Christian Endeavor. He joined the church upon profession of faith when he was twelve. After he had become a young man, his father once said to me, half jokingly, "You know, I'm always uneasy when I'm alone with Richard. I'm afraid he'll talk to me about my soul."

I suspect John Powell thought Richard's religious zeal not quite appropriate in a gentleman.

Nearly all Richard's close friends were young Presbyterian business executives; and one of the men he asked to become a director of the Powell works was Douglas Henderson of the Wellston National Bank.

Douglas had come into the bank presidency on the death of his father, Mr Eugene Henderson. He was a booming young man, not long out of college, and under his direction the old bank building had been torn down and a new one in the form of a Greek temple, and looking exactly like other new bank buildings all over the country, put up in its place. Instead of using a private office, as his father had done, Douglas sat at the front of the bank, alongside the vice-president and cashier, and in warm weather all three wore belts and left off their vests. Once at a Chamber of Commerce banquet Douglas said he believed banking was a business, just the same as running a grocery store, and he ran the Wellston National on that theory.

He believed in advertising, too, and subscribed to some agency in New York that sent out each week some posters to paste on the Greek-temple columns in front. One week the posters illustrated a chauffeur, and the caption was, "I wouldn't be without my Bank Account." Another week the poster showed an optician, again it was a railroad brakeman, and so on. I always thought it was pretty shabby advertising for a bank to be doing. It was like the signs that a lot of churches use, produced by some concern in Boston called The Wayside Pulpit that specializes in uplifting mottoes like, "If you want to rise in the world, begin by raising the level of your own thoughts." But I suppose I have no business to criticize Douglas for the way he ran his bank, because his backslapping and

Greek temple and cheap posters seemed to produce results; anyhow, he worked his deposits up to more than eight million dollars, and his father never got above five millions.

Clayton Vance, another of Richard Powell's friends to serve as director of the Powell works, was a smallish, handsome man in his early thirties, also a Presbyterian, who liked to be called a Napoleon of business. When he first came to Wellston he announced that he intended to be worth a million dollars before his fortieth birthday. Most people thought this a joke, until Clayton began to demonstrate his abilities in the real-estate line. He managed to get hold of a good many long-term leases on Market Street store buildings, then ousted the old tenants and sublet to chain stores at big advances. He also married Florence Mallory, of the wholesale lumber family, who had a couple of hundred thousand dollars in her own right. Outside of business Clayton was intensely interested in his church work and the Y.M.C.A. and was a Boy Scout master. He never danced or played cards, and after marriage forbade his wife to indulge in either pastime.

The first meeting of the new board of directors of the Powell works was held directly after New Year's. That morning I drove out to the plant and parked my car at the side of the old-fashioned office building that Jim Powell had put up the year of the Philadelphia Centennial. As I was parking, I noticed the Reverend Mr Harriss get out of his Buick roadster a few yards further up the drive and walk toward one of the factory buildings. There was nothing surprising in this, because Mr Harriss often went to the plant to see Richard about the Young Men's Study Class that the two men promoted every Sunday morning at the Hotel Erie ballroom, where Mr Harriss acted as chairman and Richard made what the minister always announced as an "inspirational address."



Richard always had a good audience, mostly young men who hoped something might come out of it financially.

I knew John Powell disapproved of the Young Men's Study Class; in fact the only time he ever directly criticized Richard to me was when he remarked, "I wish the boy could realize it's only his money that gets him an audience." He added something about wishing Richard weren't quite so thick with "that damn preacher."

Old Andy Carew at the information desk said I was the first of the new directors to arrive. Richard Powell had gone over to one of the factory buildings but would be back directly. I went into the visitors' room, where the directors' meeting would take place. John Powell was there, standing in front of an oil portrait of old Jim Powell, painted just after the Civil War. It showed him with a fierce walrus mustache and dressed in mechanic's clothes, standing bare-armed at an anvil with a hammer in his hand; it was labeled, "The Ironmaster."

"I was just thinking, Peter," John Powell remarked, "how fashions in vanity change from one generation to another. If Father lived now, I reckon he'd be shown in a mortar-board cap on the campus of some college he'd bought a degree from. I guess I like him best as he is."

There was the crunch of a car on the gravel driveway outside, and directly Douglas Henderson boomed into the directors' room. He clapped me on the back. "How's the good old jewelry business? Sold any ten-carat diamonds this morning?" Then to John Powell: "By cripes, Mr Powell, but it's going to be funny not to see you bossing the works any more. But Richard 'll be all right. He's modern!" Douglas somehow gave the idea that if a person were modern, no more could be said of him.

Another automobile came into the driveway bringing Clayton Vance, the third director. He said, "Good morning, Mr Kent," in his precise, gentlemanly manner and



shook hands with John Powell. "It is *such* a privilege, Mr Powell, to be able to assist Richard this way. You're to be congratulated on such a fine, Christian son."

Knowing Clayton as I did, I wondered if he was really thinking about Richard's Christianity or about the ten-dollar gold pieces he would get for attending directors' meetings.

Richard Powell dashed into the room, out of breath. "Hope I haven't kept you gentlemen waiting. Had to run across to the plant." He was shorter than his father and inclined to stoutness. He shook hands with everyone, his round, amiable face beaming. "This is a big day for me. President of the Powell works! Thank you for coming." Poor Richard was one of those unfortunates who can never be entirely attractive. He was clumsy in his movements, and when he spoke rapidly, little pools of saliva gathered in the corners of his mouth.

John Powell asked us to seat ourselves about the directors' table, and called in his secretary, Miss Lyons, to take the minutes of the meeting.

"As you know, gentlemen," he said, "this meeting is scarcely more than a formality. I am retiring as head of the Powell Steel & Cutlery Works. I wish my son to be president of the corporation. Will one of you make a motion——"

"Oh, Father!" Across the table, Richard struggled to his feet, his face twisting with emotion like a person getting religion at a revival meeting. For a moment I thought he would run to fling his arms about John Powell's neck.

Mr Powell winced. He raised his voice: "Mr Kent, would you mind making the motion?" Richard sank back in his chair.

I said, "Mr Chairman, I move the election of Richard Powell to the presidency of the Powell Steel & Cutlery Works."

Douglas Henderson boomed, "I second the motion!" He added "By cripes!" to make it more emphatic.

"You've heard the motion," John Powell said, "which has been seconded. All in favor say 'Aye.'"

The vote was given, and John Powell vacated his chair. He made a little bow toward his son and said smilingly, "I reckon, Richard, you'd better sit at the head of the table. That's what presidents do, I believe."

Richard took a step or two toward the chair his father held for him. Suddenly he stopped, turned to the door and threw it open. The Reverend Mr Harriss sat in the outer office; Richard called to him and escorted him to the directors' table.

"I think it is fitting," Richard said solemnly, "that God's blessing should be invoked at this time. Mr Harriss will lead in prayer."

His father said sharply, "But, Richard! This is a business meeting——"

But Richard had already flung himself on his knees and buried his face in his hands. It seemed to me that Mr Harriss prayed for everyone connected with the Powell works, beginning with Richard, whom he called "this splendid young Christian leader," and on down through the traveling men, the office force and the mechanics. When he asked the Almighty to bless the board of directors, Clayton Vance murmured a gentlemanly, "Yes, Lord!"

The clergyman went on: "We believe, O Lord, that Thou will bless this corporation that begins its new regime with prayer. We believe there will be vastly increased dividends because of the Christian faith of those who direct its destinies. In the name of Thy Son. Amen."

Sitting in the chair next to me, Douglas Henderson muttered an ecstatic "By cripes!" when Mr Harriss predicted that Christian faith would bring greater dividends.

## XIV

### Advertising Experts

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**T**HE MODERN PROFESSION of advertising, you might say, was one of the by-products of the 1907 panic. If you will look over the files of newspapers and magazines prior to 1907, you will notice that advertisements were rather amateurishly plain and to the point, like, "Garland's Stoves and Ranges Are Best," or "Children Cry for Castoria." If an illustration was used, it was likely to be a picture of the factory, or a photograph of the president of the company. In those days manufacturers generally wrote their own advertisements.

But competition became so keen after the 1907 panic that a good many manufacturers felt they should make their advertising more effective and looked for help outside their own organizations. Advertising agencies sprang up in big cities like New York and Chicago that trained young college men to prepare manufacturers' publicity. Within a few years universities were offering advertisement-writing courses.

The young college men brought greater sophistication to advertising. Crude appeals like, "Tonight, Cascares," gave way to messages like, "Dr Edwards' Olive Tablets, the laxative of beautiful women." Illustrations also became more sophisticated. Pictures of the company president and the factory were eliminated, and illustra-

tions of pretty girls in provocative poses took their place.

Advertising men call these pretty-girl illustrations "attention-getters," and the tendency throughout the years has been for the girls to wear less and less clothing. I believe this has been overdone; nowadays there is often more stress on attention-getting than on selling merchandise. It doesn't seem to me efficient to use three fourths of a costly magazine page to show naked legs and torsos, and only one fourth to advertise the product.

I cannot believe there is much efficiency in attention-getters even though the subjects are fully clothed, as in the case of the socially prominent women, who are attention-getters for cigarettes, because your interest invariably centers more on the attention-getter than on the advertised product. You wonder how much they were paid; who arranged the deal and if there was much haggling; if the ladies sought the job, or if the job sought the ladies; most of all, you wonder why they did it, inasmuch as they are usually rich.

I saw once a list of names sent out by an agent who was in the business of securing attention-getters for advertisers. Jack Dempsey was the highest priced. His charge was \$1,000. But I imagine prices have gone up since then.

But, irrespective of price, I can't believe attention-getters are a good investment. I assume I am an average person; and though I have hundreds of times seen photographs of various well-known women on the back covers of magazines, I cannot at this moment remember what particular brand of cigarettes any one of these ladies is advertising.

From writing advertisements for manufacturer-clients, advertising agents began to serve in other ways; they selected the publications to be advertised in, conducted market researches and devised new ways of selling. An



advertising agency gets a commission of 15 per cent on all the money that its client spends on publicity; therefore some agencies will go to great lengths to hold a client's good will.

Once, during the Prohibition era, I was in New York City and happened into a suite at the Commodore Hotel where an advertising agency was entertaining three executives of a big Midwest manufacturing corporation. The advertising agency had provided a table covered with bottles of intoxicating liquors, purchased at bootleg prices. And not only that, but each of the three executives was provided with a lady companion.

The astonishing part of it was that the head of the advertising agency was an ardent Prohibitionist and at that time was serving on a nation-wide committee engaged in finding the best way to enforce the Eighteenth Amendment. It seemed too bad that a man should be obliged to sacrifice his deepest principles for a mere 15 per cent commission.

Advertising men naturally exert an enormous influence on people's lives, because they write the advertisements that people all over the country read every day. Then, too, advertising agencies are generally located in big cities, while most factories that advertise nationally are in smaller communities. For some reason, small-town people often have a slight inferiority complex toward big-city people. And so, when advertising men go out from New York or Chicago to visit the manufacturers whose advertising they handle, they are generally treated as though they had abilities quite beyond the ordinary.

Once I was in the offices of a multimillionaire corporation in eastern Pennsylvania, and two young men from a New York agency were there, having a conference with several corporation executives. As far as I could judge, neither young man had more than a certain big-city sophis-

tication to recommend him, and neither had any practical business experience whatever; but the executives were listening to their ideas with the greatest respect. I couldn't help thinking that if the young men had been employees of the corporation itself, they would scarcely have been allowed to look up from their bookkeeping or typewriting desks.

I can speak of these things through first-hand knowledge because of my connection with the Powell Steel & Cutlery Works. One day, a few months after I became a director of the works, Richard called me up at my store to ask me to attend a directors' meeting next morning. I caught a little undercurrent of excitement in his voice.

"Frederick Cravens will be here," Richard said. "You know who Mr Cravens is, of course? The big New York advertising man."

Everyone at that time knew who Frederick Cravens was. You could scarcely pick up an achievement magazine or a Sunday supplement without reading something about him. Before establishing his Continental Advertising Agency, Mr Cravens had been a professional money-raiser, and later a lobbyist in Washington, connected with the movement to bring about Prohibition. He was an accomplished writer, mainly on religious subjects. In his magazine articles he claimed the world could be remade through the use of paid advertising. "Give me the price of ten battleships," he frequently wrote, "and I will make war impossible forever."

Reporters always described Mr Cravens as the opposite of the old-time long-faced reformers. "He makes morality attractive," one interviewer wrote; and several times in the same article he used the phrase, "Mr Cravens flashed his irresistible smile."

Mr Cravens was an entertaining after-dinner speaker, too, and was often called upon to address gatherings

of businessmen. It was at a banquet of corporation executives that he coined the phrase that was so much quoted:

"Big business today is big because of its desire to serve, as contrasted with the big business of twenty years ago with its desire to get."

Since I had become a Powell works director, I had been called to half a dozen meetings to listen to different New York advertising men who solicited the Powell Steel & Cutlery Works advertising account. An item in *Publicity Herald* had intimated that the conservative old Powell concern was about to become an important advertiser.

Among the advertising experts who had already appeared before the Powell board of directors was Mr Charles Hauck, representing one New York agency. Mr Hauck was a stuffy, middle-aged man with a frightful yellow necktie who brought graphs that none of us on the Powell board of directors could understand, and tedious sheets of figures that showed the upward trend of the sales curve under certain conditions and the downward trend under certain other conditions. Then there was Mr Harry Devine, of Devine & Leonard, Publicity Engineers, who brought no graphs or sheets of figures, but a set of golf clubs and a dozen quarts of scotch whisky for entertainment purposes. Mr Devine made the unfortunate mistake of offering Richard Powell a drink. Metropolitan Advertising Associates of New York, Inc., sent two young Harvard School of Business graduates, bareheaded but intensely serious, who talked cryptically of Copy Angles and Consumer Acceptance.

But, young or old, stuffy or convivial, all the New York experts, except Frederick Cravens, who came to solicit the Powell advertising account had certain qualities in common: None had ever sold merchandise, or bossed a gang of mechanics, or figured overhead costs, or faced



a factory pay roll. Their plans for increasing the business of the Powell Steel & Cutlery Works were practically identical.

When Richard notified me of the latest meeting to consider advertising, I remembered what John Powell had told me about the celebrated Frederick Cravens. Mr Powell had been in New York and attended the corporation executives' banquet.

"The fellow Cravens really has charm," Mr Powell said. "You may believe he's a humbug and a first-class faker, but you can't help liking him."

"But *is* he a faker?" I asked.

John Powell laughed. "Not the old-time faker of melodrama. He wouldn't steal the papers or run off with the farmer's daughter. He's truthful, too, in a way. He just tells people what they want to believe, and then believes it himself. I think he was sincere when he told that whopper to the corporation executives about business being so much more unselfish now than it used to be. But of course," Mr Powell laughed again, "he was being agreeable to men who had money to spend for advertising."

I was in my jewelry store the afternoon previous to the directors' meeting, when a Pierce-Arrow car rolled up to the curb in front and a man alighted whom I knew, from newspaper photographs, to be the famous advertising man and author. The man came through the doorway to where I stood. He said, "I'm sure you're Mr Kent. I'm Frederick Cravens." His voice was deep and vibrant, and he laughed easily. He added, "I believe we meet tomorrow at the Powell Steel & Cutlery Works for a little business conference. I thought I'd better pay my respects in advance. Perhaps you'll be kinder to me."

He looked about the store. "Beautiful place you have, Mr Kent. Reminds me that I always mail some little gift back to Mrs Cravens when I go out of town." He



spoke to my cashier, Miss Merriam: "I wonder, young lady, if you'll do me a favor and select something suitable for my wife. Some novelty, perhaps. What price? Oh, let's say within fifty dollars. But if it goes a little over, it'll be quite all right." Miss Merriam brought a small gold coin purse. "That's charming. Mrs Cravens will love it, I'm sure. Thank you so much." He tossed some bills on the counter and wrote the mailing address, then turned back to me.

"I'm going to talk to you as one businessman to another, Mr Kent. It's no secret that I want the Powell advertising account. It'll be helpful if I know something about the gentlemen I'm to speak to tomorrow morning. I've heard of Mr John Powell, of course. But he's retired, hasn't he?"

I nodded. "Yes. His son Richard is president."

"Would you mind telling me about Richard?"

"He's an exemplary young man," I said. Mr Cravens laughed.

"Religious? Doesn't take a drink or swear? Never steps out a little?"

"After you've met Richard," I said, "you'll know."

Mr Cravens laughed again. "What church?"

"Presbyterian."

"I might have guessed," Mr Cravens commented. "In small cities millionaires are always Presbyterian. In big cities they run more to Episcopalian." In a moment he said, "What about the other directors?"

"There are only two besides me," I told him. "They're Presbyterians, too."

"Dear, dear," Mr Cravens said comically. "I've gone to a lot of unnecessary trouble." I asked what sort of trouble.

"I brought a lot of liquid entertainment," he answered,

"just in case some of the Powell directors might be thirsty. It's in my suite at the Erie Hotel." He added, "Perhaps you wouldn't mind joining me, Mr Kent?"

I said, "No, thanks," and Mr Cravens smiled. "No harm done anyhow." He lingered a few moments, then: "I'll see you at the directors' meeting, Mr Kent," and started out. From the door he turned back to speak to Miss Merriam, who was addressing the package to his wife.

"I wonder," he said, "if there's a good second-hand bookstore in Wellston?"

She directed him to Patman's, around on Fourth Street. When he had gone, the girl said, "Now why, Mr Kent, do you suppose he wanted a second-hand bookstore?"

"To get something to read," I suggested. She finished addressing the package.

"I should think a man who spends money like he does," Miss Merriam said severely, "wouldn't buy old second-hand books."

I was first at the directors' room at the Powell plant next morning, but directly Richard and Clayton Vance came in. As usual the latter was talking and Richard listening. Vance would talk earnestly for perhaps five minutes on some subject connected with the Y.M.C.A. or the Boy Scouts and then, with scarcely any pause, change to, "If you want to make some money, Richard, why not come in with me and we'll put up an office building on that lot next the old post office?" or, "The best proposition I know of would be a slice of that Riverdale property of mine." Richard was always good-naturedly attentive and at intervals would say, "You're probably right, Clay. I'll look into it." He did invest in quite a number of Vance's enterprises.

Douglas Henderson arrived. Then Frederick Cravens'

Pierce-Arrow rolled into the driveway, and old Andy Carew ushered Mr Cravens into the directors' room. He had a flower in his buttonhole and wore a beautifully cut morning coat and pin-stripe trousers. Yet there was no hint that he was trying to impress us with his superior sophistication; it was, rather, that he had business with men for whom he felt great respect and wished to appear at his best.

"You see, gentlemen," he smiled deferentially, "I've come quite empty-handed. I've no graphs, or charts, or ready-made plans to increase the sales of the Powell Steel & Cutlery Company." We knew he alluded to the advertising men who *had* brought graphs and charts and ready-made plans. "I am frank to confess that at this moment I haven't the slightest idea how to increase the sales of your company. I am an advertising man. I believe in advertising. But I would be false to my profession if I pretended I could perform miracles by the mere insertion of so many full-page advertisements in *this* magazine, and so many half-pages in *that* magazine."

He paused a moment, as though embarrassed at what he was about to say: "I hesitate, gentlemen, to introduce a personal note. I am a believer in heredity. I come from a long line of Puritan ancestors. I won't say that I have a New England conscience, because it happens I was born and grew up in the state of Ohio. But I inherit something that is perhaps even stronger than the New England conscience." He leaned toward Richard Powell and said confidentially: "I have a Presbyterian conscience."

"A splendid heritage," Richard said.

"And so," Mr Cravens went on, "I shall be glad to make a personal study of your particular problems and prepare a report. If I find that advertising will help your

sales, I shall recommend advertising. If not, I am the last man in the world to recommend that you spend a single dollar on advertising." He appealed to each director in turn. "That seems reasonable, doesn't it?"

Douglas Henderson, impatient at having so far been left out of the conversation, said, "It's reasonable all right. But, by cripes, it's the same thing all these other advertising men wanted to do. Market report, they called it."

"Isn't it curious," Mr Cravens said good-naturedly, "how some people cling to outmoded expressions? In my organization we don't make market reports. We make case studies. There's a difference."

"Everyone knows that!" Clayton Vance cut in. There was a little jealousy between him and Douglas Henderson.

Mr Cravens turned to Richard: "May I ask you one question of a personal nature, Mr Powell? And will you answer it without embarrassment?"

"Why, yes, Mr Cravens. Of course I will." There were times when Richard's simplicity was quite appealing.

"What I wish to say is this: A larger sales volume is not vital to the Powell Steel & Cutlery Works. It is rated a very wealthy concern——"

"Close to ten millions," Clayton Vance interrupted proudly.

Mr Cravens said "Thank you, Mr Vance," then turned to Richard. "Your family, Mr Powell, is sole owner except for the shares held by your three associates here. Certainly you do not need more money. Am I not right in supposing that you wish to increase your company's profits so as to be of greater service? In other words, isn't it in your mind that more money will enable you to do more good?"

"I confess I hadn't thought of it just that way," Rich-



ard replied with slow honesty. "But I think you're right. I hope so, anyhow."

"I knew it, Mr Powell!" Mr Cravens beamed. "So often, when a business firm calls me in to increase its sales, I hear nothing but 'Money! Money!' Money for its own sake. Still more money, when the firm's owners have too much money already!" He added with a wry laugh, "An advertising man's supposed to be pretty hard boiled, but some things are rather shocking, even to me!"

"You were saying——" Richard began.

"I started to say," Mr Cravens went on, "that it would be an honor to assist in building up the sales volume of the Powell Steel & Cutlery Works. I frankly ask you for the opportunity." He hesitated. "Perhaps I should step out of the room to give you opportunity to discuss the matter with your colleagues——"

"In case we decide to appoint you," Richard asked, "you'd want a contract, of course?"

Mr Cravens had already taken a step or two toward the door. He turned back and threw open his morning coat. The shabby top of a small book showed above the inner pocket. He drew it partly out, then let it drop again into its place.

"My mother, Mr Powell," he said slowly, "gave me a little book, years ago, when I left home. It is a copy of the New Testament. I base my business life on its principles."

He drew himself up and looked Richard in the face. "You have asked me, Mr Powell, if I would demand a contract in case you entrust me with your advertising account. My answer is, 'No.' I want only your confidence."

"You spoke of a market survey——" Richard began.

Mr Cravens smiled. "Pardon me, Mr Powell. 'A case study.'"

"Oh, of course." Richard smiled in return. "Case study. More modern."

Richard asked, "When could you submit your plan?"

Mr Cravens answered, "In about a week."

"Then that's settled," Richard said.

He adjourned the meeting. Mr Cravens thanked us all, and in a few moments his Pierce-Arrow whirled out into Market Street and turned in the direction of New York.

That evening when I left my store for home I turned into Fourth Street and stopped for a moment to speak with old Mr Patman in the door of his second-hand book emporium.

"Got a story to tell you, Peter," the old man chuckled. "Big Pierce-Arrow with a New York City license and a liveried chauffeur stopped in front yesterday evenin' and a man got out. Fine-lookin' man. Said he wanted to buy a second-hand New Testament. I said to him, 'Sorry, mister, but I haven't got one. There isn't much doin' in Bible and Testament literature nowadays.'"

The old gentleman paused to laugh. I said, "Then you didn't make a sale?"

"But I did. And that's the funny part of it. When I told the man I didn't have a Testament he said, 'That's all right. Let me have any book just so it's about the same size as a Testament. But it's got to be pretty old and shabby.' So what do you suppose I sold him, Peter?"

"I couldn't guess," I replied. "What did you?"

"A Pitman's Shorthand! The man shoved it in his inside coat pocket and went away in his big car. He asked for a Testament, and I sold him a Pitman's Shorthand. How's that for a joke, Peter?"

There was quite a crowd of us in the directors' room when Frederick Cravens came with his plan for adver-

tising Powell products. Richard had sent for Wesley Olmstead, manager of the Powell sales office in New York, and Sanford Barrett of the Chicago office. There were, besides, Mr Abbott, the Powell works chemist, and young Harvey White who handled the advertising that the works placed in trade journals that circulated among retail hardware merchants. Richard had also summoned several department heads and shop foremen. John Powell had excused himself on the plea that his presence might influence the directors' decision. But the Reverend Beverly Harriss had asked Richard's permission to be present; he was anxious to meet Mr Cravens, whose writings on ethical subjects he greatly admired.

Mr Cravens sat at a small table at the end of the room with two assistants from his advertising agency, whom he introduced as Dr Keeby and Mr Scudder. Dr Keeby, Mr Cravens stated, was his agency's psychologist, a man with a greater knowledge of reader habits than any other person in the advertising profession. Dr Keeby knew the paid subscriptions and the newsstand sales of all magazines, and what percentage of magazine readers read fiction and what percentage read articles. Dr Keeby was a bald, serious man with a round face and round glasses whom it was easy to imagine as going about peering over people's shoulders to learn their reading habits.

"I am going to ask Dr Keeby to tell you gentlemen," Mr Cravens said, "of his recent discovery in regard to the habits of people who read daily newspapers."

"The weather report," Dr Keeby announced, "is read by more people than any other feature of a newspaper."

Mr Cravens smiled.

"Dr Keeby's discovery," he said, "may seem trifling to you gentlemen. But to an advertiser it is vastly important. An ordinary man—I might even say an ordinary advertising agency—would at once conclude, 'If more



people read the weather report, then the best place for an advertisement must be right next the weather report'!"

He turned to his psychologist. "What, Dr Keeby, is your conclusion?"

"An advertisement next the weather report," Dr Keeby stated, "doesn't bring results. I've checked it."

Mr Cravens smiled again.

The psychologist said, "I made another discovery."

"And what is that, Dr Keeby?" Mr Cravens asked.

"Most newspaper advertisers," Dr Keeby asserted, "prefer right-hand page, first news section."

Mr Cravens made a little bow. "These are samples, gentlemen, of the services the Continental Advertising Agency renders its clients."

Mr Carl Scudder, the other agency assistant, was a young man in his twenties, but already with little puffs under his eyes that suggested an excess of conviviality. Mr Cravens introduced him as a Princetonian and added, "We recruit nearly all our youngsters from the great universities." He threw an arm across the young man's shoulder. "We call Mr Scudder our contact man, but perhaps 'entertainer' would be a better term. Whenever any client of the Continental Advertising Agency wishes to stage an unusual sales convention, or plans to entertain a group of valued customers, Mr Scudder's services are given without charge. Still another sample of what we do for our clients."

Mr Scudder acknowledged the introduction with a humorous little bow, and the puffs under his eyes were more noticeable than ever.

"And now, gentlemen, if you please," Mr Cravens said, "I will outline what I have in mind as an advertising program for the Powell Steel & Cutlery Works." He drew from his pocket a round, polished piece of steel, perhaps six inches long, and held it up between thumb



and forefinger. "Perhaps one of you gentlemen," he smiled, "can identify this article?"

An elderly shop foreman said, "Sure, I know what it is, Mr Cravens. It's one of our drills. Catalog number 555."

"Correct!" Mr Cravens cried. "And now perhaps one of you may be able to guess what I propose to do with drill number 555?"

No one answered, and Mr Cravens leaned forward to say impressively:

"I propose to build your entire advertising campaign around it."

After an astonished moment Richard Powell said good-naturedly, "I guess you'll have to explain that to us, Mr Cravens. None of us here knows much about advertising."

"Of course not. Otherwise I wouldn't be here." Mr Cravens repeated: "I will build your campaign around this little article. This drill, catalog number 555!"

Richard consulted a moment with the elderly shop foreman. Then he said, "But 555, Mr Cravens, is a very minor item. Mr Bartlett here says we turn out only a few gross a year. Our whole line, you know, comprises several thousand items."

"Of course I know that, Mr Powell. And that's the reason I've chosen 555 to carry your message. It's a symbol!" Mr Cravens smiled understandingly.

"I can imagine, Mr Powell, what you and your associates, strange to the art of advertising, expected of me. You expected me to bring samples of advertisements that read, 'Powell Tools and Cutlery Are the Best!' 'The Powell Trade Mark Is a Guarantee of Quality!' 'Buy Powell Products. Made Since 1856!'"

He hurried on: "That is not the sort of advertising, gentlemen, that the Continental Advertising Agency pro-

duces. We aim at originality. Freshness. Advertising that not only attracts the reader's attention, but makes him buy!

"After all, gentlemen, advertising has just one object: to sell merchandise. It is *not* to gratify the vanity of this or that factory owner who likes to see his name in print. Though I have," Mr Cravens smiled, "known some advertising men who sold advertising campaigns on that basis." He became serious again. "I repeat, gentlemen, that advertising's only legitimate object is to sell merchandise. Just that! And by selling merchandise, to make possible more employment, happier homes, more money for churches, for schools, for charity."

Richard Powell leaned forward intently. Mr Cravens seemed embarrassed at his own enthusiasm. "I feel very keenly about those things, Mr Powell. But I won't digress again. Successful advertising campaigns are a combination of hard sense and cleverness. A difficult combination, you say? Yes, but possible. One way to combine sense and cleverness in advertising is the creation of a trade 'character.' You know what I mean. A trade character like the Old Dutch Cleanser woman who chases dirt. The Gold Dust Twins. Wonderful sales potency! How many times have you yourselves been tempted to buy when you saw the Negro waiter with the Ham What Am?"

The elderly shop foreman interrupted curiously: "I used to laugh a lot over a funny character that was called Sunny Jim. He was always jumping over things. Whatever became of him?"

Mr Cravens hesitated only a moment. "Lack of synchronism between copy and product," he replied. "In advertising, synchronism is everything."

The elderly shop foreman nodded, as though he understood.

"And now, gentlemen," Mr Cravens almost shouted,

"I have a surprise for you. Prepare to meet Mr Drill!"

Young Mr Scudder drew a large cardboard sheet from a package that lay on the table and handed it to Mr Cravens. On it was an artist's sketch of a humorous old gentleman in knee breeches and a stock.

"Mr Drill himself!" Mr Cravens cried. "Of course, gentlemen, you recognize that instrument Mr Drill carries in his hand. It is your own drill. Catalog number 555!" He added, "The antique costume worn by Mr Drill calls the reader's attention to the fact that the Powell Steel & Cutlery Works was established in the Eighteen Fifties."

Young Harvey White spoke up:

"But men didn't wear knee breeches as late as the Eighteen Fifties, Mr Cravens."

"They didn't?" Mr Cravens laughed infectiously. "That's certainly a joke on our artist. I must talk to him when I get back to the office."

Young Scudder handed out another sketch. "And now," Mr Cravens announced, "we will see Mr Drill in action. The whole idea is that Mr Drill is so pleased with drill number 555 that he is always looking for something to drill. This sketch shows him in a boat with several other people. While they look the other way, he starts to drill a hole in the bottom of the boat! In the background, you notice, there is a large billboard painted with, 'Powell Tools and Cutlery Are the Best.' The billboard, in fact, will be featured in all the sketches. That's the way we get your message across."

Young Scudder handed out a third sketch. "This one," Mr Cravens chuckled, "shows Mr Drill in his home. Still intent on drilling something, he is about to drill a hole in his wife's goldfish bowl. Through the open window can be seen a billboard with the sign, 'Buy Powell Products, Made Since 1856.'"

"He couldn't drill that goldfish bowl," the elderly

shop foreman said. "Number 555 won't cut through glass."

"In advertising, as in any other art," Mr Cravens said severely, "some latitude is permissible." He received a fourth drawing from young Scudder.

"In this one," he smiled, "the humor justifies a slight tendency toward the risqué. Mr Drill is in a hotel bedroom. He hears a lady's voice in the adjoining chamber. He is about to drill a peephole through the wall! Out the window can be seen the top of a Broadway skyscraper with the electric sign, 'Powell Trade Mark a Guarantee of Quality.'"

He held up his last sketch. "I believe this is best of all. The scene is the outside of a prison. Mr Drill stands before the prison door, feverishly attacking the lock with his 555 Powell drill. He is intent on getting inside before the arrival of his mother-in-law, who can be seen in the distance running toward him. The billboard sign is, 'Powell Tools and Cutlery Cut!'"

Mr Cravens spoke briefly of successful advertising campaigns he had conducted for well-known corporations, then left the room with his assistants to wait the decision. There was considerable difference of opinion about his advertising plan. Richard was inclined to favor it; of the three directors, Douglas Henderson and I were against it, and Clayton Vance agreed with Richard. The elderly shop foreman, asked his opinion, remarked, "I won't say yes and I won't say no, but I think that there Mr Drill is pretty cute." It was really the Reverend Mr Harriss who caused the decision in favor of the plan. Mr Harriss said to Richard,

"It was splendid, what Mr Cravens said about happier homes and churches and charity. Certainly he has a high conception of the functions of advertising. A wonderful man, that. Wonderful!"



## XV

### European Pleasure Trip

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I HAVE made a good many business trips to Europe to buy diamonds and art goods for my store; but the trip I made with John Powell was the only one that I ever took purely for pleasure.

We had twenty-four hours in New York before sailing. There was a play on Broadway, dealing with newspaper life, that had in the cast an actual newspaper man, conductor of a column; and this gentleman's fellow columnists on the New York papers were quite outdoing themselves in self-conscious raillery. I suggested to Mr Powell that we see something else.

The play we did attend was another newspaper drama, all the scenes taking place in the city room of a metropolitan daily. It was an enormous box-office success. Many of the comedy lines centered about the men's toilet that appeared prominently in the stage setting. The lines comprised a number of profane words not heard on the stage before, and several little-boy obscenities.

Coming out of the theater, I heard a young college man with a fraternity pin and top hat say to his debutante companion, "What speakeasy do you want to go to?" and she replied, "Let's go to the place where Babe is bartender. He's cute." It was in the Prohibition era. A

policeman stopped a taxicab for a wrong turn and shouted goddamns at the top of his voice. In the expensive restaurant where we went for supper, customers in evening clothes called waiters "old scout." Waiters quarreled among themselves in the presence of their customers.

Next day we were in one of the side streets near Grand Central Station when vehicle traffic was held up on account of a parade coming down Madison Avenue. A band could be heard in the distance. Two armored trucks, carrying pay-roll money, were in the crush of vehicles. The trucks were miniature fortresses, with apertures in the sides for rifle fire, and manned by heavily armed guards. John Powell remarked:

"I suppose I ought to be used to those things by now. But I'm exasperated every time I see one. I wonder what my country is coming to."

We walked to Madison Avenue, where the parade was still passing. There were two bands, and one of them, in Salvation Army uniform, played "Onward, Christian Soldiers." A hundred Boy Scouts were in line, each carrying an armful of books. Several grown men marched with the boys. I asked a man on the sidewalk what it was all about, and the man said the parade was staged by the New York Bible Society. He identified one of the marchers as an Episcopal bishop, and another as a Methodist minister. A third marcher, the man stated, was assistant manager of the Roosevelt Hotel.

"Those books that the boys carry," the man told me, "are Bibles, and they're taking them down to the Roosevelt Hotel to put them in the rooms." He laughed. "A pretty slick advertising dodge, I call it, working the preachers and Boy Scouts and Salvation Army to advertise the Hotel Roosevelt free gratis." The man took off his hat as a flag went by. "There's no use talking, brother. You wouldn't find a thing like this anywhere in the world

except the U.S.A. The American businessman sure has got the world beat!"

John Powell and I turned back to Fifth Avenue and strolled to the public library at Forty-second Street, where we sat on a bench under one of the stone lions. Since leaving the Boy Scout parade, John Powell had said scarcely anything, but now he remarked, "I'm very fond of this spot. Just about here is where our old friend, General Washington, came so near being captured by the British."

I said I didn't know about it. "Why, yes, Peter. Don't you remember how, when he got his army across the East River after taking his beating at the Battle of Long Island, the British followed and landed almost at his heels? The Americans scurried through the fields up this way with the British after them, the General trying to stop his men, and, according to history, 'he laid about him with his riding whip, cursing roundly.' One of his officers grabbed his horse's bridle and led him out of it."

Mr Powell sat quiet awhile, looking down the Fifth Avenue incline as though seeing what he had described.

"If the British *had* caught the General," he remarked finally, "the chances are they would have hung him and that would have ended our Revolution. Possibly we'd still be a British colony."

"Not as bad as that, surely," I said.

"I'm not sure," Powell answered soberly, "if it would be bad at all. At least not as bad as it is now."

"But good Lord——"

"I admit I sound shocking. But you know, Peter, we haven't made such a good job of this country. We haven't proved we're capable of running our own show. Perhaps we need a boss."

"You'd better not let any D.A.R. lady hear you."

"I won't." Powell smiled. "I guess I've been thinking

about those armored trucks we saw back there and those guards with rifles. We're the only country I know of where money has to be carried around city streets in miniature fortresses. As long as that sort of thing is necessary, we can't be quite perfect, can we?"

"We've only had one hundred and fifty years," I joked. "Give us time."

John Powell turned to me. "Here's a question, Peter. Those armored trucks. And that parade of Boy Scouts and preachers and Salvation Army fellows. Do you see any connection between them?"

"The trucks," I said, "weren't as funny as the parade."

"Perhaps I'm seeing significance where there isn't any," John Powell said, "but to me it's perfectly clear that things like the preacher parade are precisely what makes it necessary to carry pay-roll money around in armored trucks."

"Do you insinuate," I suggested, "that the preachers had an eye on the pay-roll money?"

"Not quite that, I guess. But I do claim that the sight of the preachers marching down the street leads other fellows to think about the pay-roll money.

"You remember the man on the sidewalk said, 'A pretty slick advertising dodge.' Of course it *was* slick to rope ministers of the gospel into a hotel-advertising scheme. You might even feel a bit sorry for the ministers and believe they were being victimized, except that it was pretty clear they *wanted* to be roped in. I have an idea they thought it would be good advertising for *their* particular line of business to parade the streets with Bibles."

"But what," I began, "has that got to do with armored trucks?"

"I'm coming to that. In the parade back there in Madison Avenue the preachers were advertising a hotel.



Helping a hotel make more money. Just the same as, back home in Wellston, preachers help businessmen make money by joining the Altruist Club, Kiwanis, Chamber of Commerce and all that.

“Now isn’t it pretty natural that when an ordinary nine-dollar-a-week fellow sees preachers mix up in money-making affairs, he should say to himself, ‘Money must be mighty important or else those preachers wouldn’t take so much interest in it. I guess I ought to try and get more money myself.’ But the nine-dollar-a-week fellow can’t get more money legitimately. Perhaps he’s too lazy, or perhaps he isn’t smart enough. So what does he do? He takes a short cut. He slugs a bank runner, or holds up a stenographer girl going to the bank with her firm’s deposit, or shoots an installment-house collector. Doesn’t that partly explain why money has to be carried around in armored trucks?”

In England I never can decide whether to admire the English people or heartily to dislike them. At Plymouth, where Powell and I left the Cunard Liner, there was a disagreeable interview with the port officers because on my passport I had given my occupation as that of jeweler. It was only after a long siege of questioning that the officers could be convinced I had not come to England to seek employment at that trade. I felt there was a veiled hostility toward all Americans. But I excused it somewhat, when the passengers from our ship were gathered in the railway station, and a gentleman from South Bend, Indiana, set up a cackle at sight of the engine that stood at the head of a string of passenger coaches. He threw up his hands and cried waggishly, “My God, look at Tom Thumb!” When it started out of the station, he ran alongside a few steps, roaring with laughter. As he returned to his friends, he shouted, “Wha’dya reckon

these Englishmen would do if they saw one of our Lake Shore engines?"

John Powell and I walked about the town. It was a rainy, chill day; and it seemed to me that half the male population must be out of work. They were everywhere, standing about in their shabby clothes and caps and with a peculiarly resigned air that you never see in American unemployed men. They were quiet and subdued where Americans would have been aggressively noisy. And Americans wouldn't all have worn caps. Even the way the English unemployed kept their hands in their pockets was somehow different.

We stopped a day in Salisbury on our way to London. Except for the cathedral, I could have imagined myself in some pleasant old American town at about the time of Franklin Pierce's presidency. The White Hart Inn had bowls and pitchers in its guest rooms. There was a quiet orderliness in the streets. Suburban women with children drove about in pony carriages. It was market day; and the farmers who displayed their cattle and hogs in market square were red-faced, downright men like the farmers I remembered in my own childhood, before the foreigners began to move from factory towns out into the country.

I stepped into one of the High Street jewelry stores. It had a sign, "Established 1843," and like all the other jewelry stores the door and windows were curtained to prevent passers-by from looking in. The proprietor was showing engagement rings to a young man and woman. Though the young man appeared well-to-do, none of the diamonds the jeweler showed weighed more than half a carat; about the size, I reflected, that a book-keeper or a railroad brakeman in America might purchase. Negotiations were carried on exclusively between the two men, though there was a constant bleating from

the young woman of, "That's too love-lay!" and, "It's simp-lay gorgeous!" in tones that were a shade too high and enunciation a shade too precise to be quite attractive. As the couple walked out of the store together, the young woman kept her body bent forward to peer adoringly into the young man's face, looking as though at any moment she might leap down his throat. I have heard England called a man's country; I wonder if it might be the fault of the English women.

The jeweler, at first indignant when I said I didn't want to buy anything, became quite friendly when he learned I was in his own line of trade, yet prosperous enough to voyage across the ocean. "I presume you inherited your shop?" he asked. I said no, and he persisted, "You purchased an established business, then?" He could scarcely believe it when I explained I had started a little shop that grew into an important one in the course of a dozen years or so. I thought the jeweler would never stop exclaiming, "Fawncy that! Just fawncy!" Yet he did finally manage to say with great positiveness, "It couldn't be done in England."

"But mightn't an enterprising man——" I began.

"Oh dear, no. It's no good to be enterprising. When you start a shop in England,"—the jeweler spoke lugubriously—"you're just working for your grandson."

I had never seen anyone look so much like an artist's drawing as the sporting Englishman who boarded the train for London at Salisbury next morning and shared the compartment with John Powell and me. He was in his sixties, very tall and slim, with riding boots and trousers, shooting coat and hat. All this made it seem so astonishing when, with perfect unconcern, he settled himself in his corner, pulled a paper bag out of a pocket and made a luncheon out of an assortment of bakery goods.



He was as conversational as any American. He volunteered the information that he lived in London and had been down in the country to hunt. But that was all he said about himself, and he asked no personal questions, as an American would have been likely to do. Discussing him later, I was sure he must have a title; I thought only a lord would be independent enough to dress so gaily and yet eat out of a paper bag; but John Powell set him down as a prosperous London attorney or a manufacturer of some sort. The Englishman said he hoped sometime to visit the United States and see Niagara Falls; and once he asked, "Is it really true that in America you have no Royalist party?"

At Paddington Station in London the Englishman volunteered to secure some bit of information that John Powell asked for. He called a policeman and asked the question. The policeman mumbled a half-intelligible reply, and started to walk away. The Englishman said, "Officer!" and the policeman turned back sulkily.

The Englishman spoke in an ordinary conversational tone. "Really, officer, you weren't very polite. I'm a taxpayer, you see, so in a way I'm your employer. I'm entitled to good service."

The policeman said, "Yes, sir."

"Now I'll ask you my question again," the Englishman went on, "and we'll see if you can't do better this time: Where did you say that place is that I inquired about?"

The policeman pulled out his map of London and gave detailed information. The Englishman said, "That's fine, officer. Thank you very much."

He took leave of us, got into a taxicab and drove away. We never saw him again. I couldn't help thinking that in America we would have taken the policeman's impertinence, or else had a row with him.



Next morning after breakfast at the Cecil Hotel, Mr Powell left to visit the London office of the Powell Steel & Cutlery Works in Waterloo Road, and I walked down the Strand and Fleet Street, finally stopping for a drink at a saloon just off Ludgate Circus. When I ordered a scotch and soda the woman said, "Beg yer pardon, sir, but I carn't serve you." I wondered if the woman had heard about Mr Coolidge's Prohibition Congress' threat to enact a law forbidding bartenders in foreign countries to serve Americans. I said, "Why can't you serve me?"

"Because yer in the public bar," she answered. "There's them as objects."

For the first time I realized that the men around me wore caps and had cloths around their necks instead of collars.

"Come around to the parlor bar," the woman said, "amongst them of yer own clawss. Then I'll serve you."

To reach the parlor bar, I had to go out into the street and enter by another door. The woman charged a half-penny extra for drinks in her parlor bar.

Next day I went with John Powell to an office in Liverpool Street. As I waited outside the building, a bevy of Thomas Cook and Sons' tourists in charge of a guide came from around the corner and got into a charabanc parked at the curb. Among the tourists was the gentleman from South Bend, Indiana, who had been so amused at the engine in the Plymouth railway station. The charabanc driver waited for two horse-drawn carts to pass. A single policeman walked at the tail of each cart, and a tarpaulin was thrown over the load. The Cook guide announced:

"Gold bullion, ladies and gentlemen. Going from East India Docks to the Bank of England."

The gentleman from South Bend stood up in his seat

to look. As the small caravan passed, he cried, "Toting gold around like that! My God, what a country!" Then, quite overcome with patriotism, he sneered, "I'd like to see 'em try to get away with anything like that in the good old U.S.A.!"

I never expected to like England. Like most Americans of my generation, I had a lofty contempt for people who tolerated a king and an aristocracy. I suppose my feelings about the class system were based on the farce comedies I had seen, where a low-class fellow always said, "Thank you, sir," when a gentleman kicked him. But I found an astonishing number of English who seemed not to stand in awe of their betters, even up to royalty itself.

I could even see how a class system might work both ways, as when the workmen in the public bar objected to me because I was well dressed, and I had to go to the saloon bar for my drink.

Arthur Hopewell, the American who managed the Powell Steel & Cutlery Works business in England, told me that when he first took a house in London he engaged a manservant named Horace Clarkson. He always called him Clarkson. But one day he said offhandedly, "I wish you'd do so and so, Horace."

The man snapped to attention and said, "Not 'Orace, sir. Clarkson, sir. That's customary."

I began to realize what a delicate thing democracy is, and how easily it can deteriorate into something else. The men in the New York restaurant who called waiters "old scout" probably thought they were being splendidly democratic. But in reality they were taking advantage of their position. They didn't stop to realize that a waiter might not want to be called "old scout."

Then I thought of how at home in Wellston our Altruist Club employed a young widow, Mrs Lottie Coe, as secretary. She kept the club records and on meeting

days at the Hotel Erie took up the luncheon tickets. She was quite attractive, and the Altruists rather made a pet of her. They called her "Lottie" and joked with her a good deal. She always smiled and joked back, but of course she couldn't afford to offend anyone. She needed her job.

But whenever I found myself admiring the English class system too much, I bought a London *Times* or a *Morning Post* and read the servile inanities in the "Court News" columns. After the slight nausea passed, I was a better American than ever.

Individually, I didn't care for some Englishmen I met. One evening Mr Hopewell, the Powell representative, took me to a dinner of London advertising men. One man, when I was introduced, jeered, "I suppose now we'll hear how grand America is!" An American would never have said that to a foreign visitor.

There seemed to be a general idea that the rest of the world existed solely for England's benefit. At the same dinner another Englishman, after a half-hour's acquaintance, said blandly, "My son's just been graduated from college, Mr Kent. When you return to America would you mind bespeaking a place for him with some first-class business house?"

I thought how the British officials at Plymouth had held up my passport for fear I might be looking for a job in England.

Still, the English had a restraint about most things that I liked. Coming from America to England was, in a way, like attending an Episcopal church service after a Methodist revival meeting. Even in the saloons no one was ever noisy or trying to show off. If a man had a drink or so too much, he generally went to sleep. I never heard men in hotel lobbies or railway trains talk about

business or making money. Apparently those things didn't have the standing that they did in America. I couldn't imagine any English businessman getting English clergymen or English Boy Scouts to advertise his business for him by marching in a street parade.

In America there is nothing to hold a businessman back except his conscience. But in England the gentleman class runs things; and the gentleman class says:

"You business chaps are all right, of course, useful and all that. But remember, please, there are certain limits. Because, after all, this country isn't run solely to help you make a lot of money."

In the train that John Powell and I took out of London, people spoke almost in whispers. At Folkestone quiet English porters carried travelers' bags to the boat, touched their caps and said "Thank you, sir," as they pocketed the shilling that was given them. You had the impression they would have been just as polite if the donation chanced to be sixpence. The British male of all classes affects an elaborate, if sometimes spurious, casualness about money.

As the boat sidled up to the dock at Boulogne, a host of shrieking Frenchmen in leather belts and blue blouses clambered over the rails and snatched valises right and left from bewildered voyagers. They loaded themselves with astonishing quantities of luggage, boasting loudly of their strength, and staggered down the gangplank to the train. Whatever tip a passenger offered, the porter protested it was too little. "*Pas assez, monsieur!*" "*Pas assez, madame!*"

The train for Paris was crowded. Passengers talked at the tops of their voices, gesticulated, laughed, complained, jammed forward toward the restaurant car that was already *complet*. I remembered how, in my school geography, the page devoted to France began with, "The



French are a frivolous people, fond of light wines and dancing."

Night had already fallen when we took a taxi from the Gare du Nord to the small hotel in Rue Croix des Petits Champs kept by M. Pamphilon, an old friend of John Powell. M. Pamphilon was a dark, heavy man, a Provençal, who one could not possibly imagine had ever been fond of dancing, or even tried to learn. M. Pamphilon's heart was in his business. He showed us the *ascenseur* that he had just installed and the electric clocks that were in all the guest rooms. Only John Powell's firmness saved us a trip to the basement to inspect the new *cabinet de toilette* that had a marble floor and separate compartments for messieurs and mesdames.

Next morning I walked with John Powell to the Paris office of the Powell Steel & Cutlery Works in Rue de Rome, beyond the Gare St Lazare. On the way we stopped to exchange our English money for francs at the American Express Company and once more encountered the gentleman from South Bend, who turned out to be a retired drugstore owner by the name of Melish. He was in high spirits, telling anyone who would listen the story of his shrewd purchase of American Superpower stock that was advancing rapidly. He tapped Mr Powell on the shoulder and winked solemnly. "If you've got a thousand dollars, brother, take my tip and buy American Superpower. Then your trip over to this frog country won't cost you a cent!"

Mr Melish turned to another subject: "Have you noticed," he demanded, "what a joke the drugstores in this country are? I bet I could put half of them out of business in a year's time. I'd start a chain of about a dozen units at first——"

"You couldn't," Mr Powell told him. "In France a man isn't allowed to run more than one pharmacy."

Mr Melish's mind had but a single track. "I'd start about a dozen units at first," he repeated stoutly. "I'd fix them up in American style, big show windows, lunch counter, cigars——"

"The government wouldn't allow it," Mr Powell remarked.

Mr Melish manipulated his fingers as though counting out a roll of greenbacks. "I reckon," he said cynically, "I'd know how to deal with these foreigners."

Another man in the Express office was speaking of French cemeteries. He had just visited the Père la Chaise. "I'll tell the world that's the damnedest place!" He said, at home in California, he was in the cemetery business. "I've a notion to organize a company and come over here to show these dumb bells what a real cemetery is. Big place in the country, automobile drives, sprinkling system, permanent care guaranteed with sale of every lot . . ."

John Powell and I walked on to Rue de Rome. Near the Gare St Lazare a family of French country people, man, wife, three children and a maid in a white muslin cap, were lunching at a sidewalk table. A company of American young women came along, winners in the International Good Will Tour Contest sponsored by the advertising department of a big American corporation. The Good Will young women came to attention before the French family's table and chanted earnestly:

"One-two-three, who are we?

Amurricans, Amurricans, Amurricans.

Five-six-seven-eight, who do we appreciate?

France, France, France."

The Powell Steel & Cutlery Works representative, M. Pierre Duvergier, was a man in his late thirties from a Breton small-town family. His grandfather had been a

journeyman tinsmith; his father, proprietor of the village hardware store; M. Duvergier himself was a well-educated man, graduate of a school of engineering. He had his own plant, where he manufactured items of hardware, and handled the Powell line on commission. He spoke English rather like a Bostonian and knew several other languages. I wondered if he spoke them all as well as he did English.

M. Duvergier was quite a charming fellow whose chief fault was a tendency to mention frequently the superior qualities of the French people. He was a little like a Virginian, I thought. When he remarked, "Every person in the world has two countries, his own and France," it was almost like hearing some Tidewater person saying, with an equal lack of humor, "Every American has two states, his own and Virginia."

I was glad, a day or so later, to accept M. Duvergier's invitation to accompany him on a short business trip to visit hardware merchants in Brittany. As we went in a taxicab to the Gare des Invalides, M. Duvergier pointed out a number of elderly uniformed men, with leather satchels and huge hats like those of admirals, walking about the streets. The men were bank runners, making collections from merchants. "But it's quite safe," M. Duvergier said. "French people are so honest." He added, "In your country, Mr Kent, I'm told the banks send their money about in armored cars. How odd!"

That afternoon, in the town of Argentan, M. Duvergier remarked, "Have you noticed, Mr Kent, how intellectual the French nation is? In this little place of seven thousand people there are four splendid bookstores. How many bookstores would a similar place in America have?"

"At least a dozen," I answered unblushingly. For a full hour M. Duvergier scarcely spoke.

But at the Grand Cerf Hotel in Alençon that evening,



Monsieur said, "The people of this city were much incensed at your General Pershing during the war."

"I thought General Pershing——" I began.

M. Duvergier shook his head. "A regrettable *faux pas*. Your General Pershing delivered an address. He alluded to Alençon as a village."

"Was that a *faux pas*?" I asked.

"Alençon," M. Duvergier said, "is a city. An ancient capital. A center of lace making. I have relatives here. They were furious."

"It's evident," I laughed, "that there's a Chamber of Commerce in Alençon."

"The *chambre de commerce* originated in France," M. Duvergier said proudly. "Reign of Henri Quatre."

At Laval I accompanied M. Duvergier to a huge hardware store on a corner, whose blank wall was covered with paintings of hoes, rakes, spades and pitchforks. In one of the show windows there was a display of *outillage anglais*. In the other window was an assortment of the largest scythe blades I had ever seen. Inside, the proprietor, a dignified man with a black beard, was speaking to a farmer in a blue smock who smelled strongly of the barnyard.

"You tell me," the merchant was saying, "that you wish to become a client of mine."

The farmer nodded. "*Oui, monsieur.*"

"But you have always been a client of my competitor, further up the street."

"*Oui, monsieur.* But I wish to make a change."

The merchant considered a long minute. "Come back this afternoon, my friend. I will speak to my competitor. If he makes no objection, I shall be charmed to have you as a client."

I was sorry at last to part with M. Duvergier. The Frenchman was a companionable and rather merry fellow



where the glories of France were not at stake. He had read an amazing amount in Spanish and German. He could quote Shakespeare and knew *Huckleberry Finn* almost by heart. At Rennes he took me to call on the family of his cousin, M. Bompard, a prosperous contractor. M. Bompard's wife had before never met an American. Her questions and answers were translated by M. Duvergier.

"Is it really true," she asked, "that in America even the workmen have automobiles?"

I said many workmen had cars.

"And when a contractor—like my husband—constructs a new building, do his carpenters and masons drive to their work in these automobiles? And while they are at their work do the automobiles stand about like so many horses?"

I laughed and said, "Yes." I can't imagine why the mental picture invoked by Mme Bompard seemed so droll; but during the rest of my stay she intermittently interrupted the conversation by bursting out, "The carpenters! The masons! They leave their autos to stand about like the horses!"

There were two daughters, young women in their middle twenties; the older had been in London and learned to speak English. M. Duvergier left to take a train for Nantes. The Paris train that I was to take left later, and Mme Bompard said her daughters would be pleased to show the American gentleman about the town. I set out with the young women to inspect the rather commonplace cathedral, the Palais de Justice, the fine opera house and the Place de la Mairie. As we walked through the Place de la République, I said to the older girl, "Mightn't we go somewhere and have a cup of tea?"

She stopped abruptly; then translated to her sister. They looked at each other in an embarrassed way as

though there were something sinister in the question. I thought they must have misunderstood. I began: "I suggested a tea room——"

The young woman shook her head. "It's not done, monsieur."

"What's not done?" I was slightly irritated.

She had enough recovered from her embarrassment to speak naturally: "I understand that you meant kindly, Monsieur Kent. I know from books that in your country unmarried girls go to public restaurants with gentlemen. But here it's not to be thought of."

"Not even," I asked, "if the gentleman is nearly old enough to be the girls' father?"

She answered, "But this is France, Monsieur Kent."

It was toward midnight when I reached Paris. As I stood on the steps of the Gare Montparnasse, a charabanc filled with young men and women turned into the Boulevard. They were American college students on a round-the-world study and cultural tour. As the charabanc turned into the Rue de Rennes, they began to sing, "Hail, hail, the gang's all here, What the hell do we care . . ."

## XVI

### Installment Selling

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**I** DOUBT if many readers of this book realize how enormously the practice of selling things on installments has changed business in this country. And installment selling has not only changed business. It has changed people's characters, too.

Twenty years ago there were only three or four places in Wellston where goods were sold on installments. People of standing were ashamed to buy that way. It wasn't considered dignified. I think the general idea was that a man was a pretty poor stick if he couldn't wait until he had saved up the money and could pay cash. Automobiles were no exception. I recall a meeting of automobile manufacturers that was held in New York, and the proceedings were reported in the trade papers. The manufacturers were all against installment selling. Strong statements were issued by Buick, Cadillac and others. A Reo executive said, "The man who hasn't the money to pay for a machine has no right to own one."

Mr Leland, Cadillac general manager, said, "This company has no intention of ever considering the matter of selling automobiles on installments."

But then the depression of 1921 came on, and the automobile manufacturers who had said installment selling was bad changed their minds and began to finance

their dealers for installment sales. In a little while all sorts of other manufacturers followed suit. By means of high-pressure propaganda, installment buying became respectable. People who a few years earlier would have thought it a disgrace not to pay cash weren't ashamed to pay a dollar or two down and have the collector come around for the balance every week for the rest of the year.

But it was only in America that this happened. When I was in London with John Powell, I saw advertisements of a few furniture stores that sold on installments, but there was always the line, "Goods delivered to your home in vans that do not bear our name." Apparently English people still thought it was disgraceful to buy on installments.

In France it was much the same way. A Frenchman told me that the Belle Jardinière department store once started to sell on time payments but had to abandon it because Parisians made so much fun of it. Music-hall comedians would single out some well-dressed young man in the audience and remark, "*Ah! Un client de la Belle Jardinière, sans doute!*"

But why could American businessmen force a shabby practice on the public when European businessmen couldn't? The only way I can figure it is that we have given our businessmen so much more leeway than other countries. We haven't the keen and rather cruel sense of humor the French have; and we haven't the English gentleman class that says, "Look here, you business chaps! It's all right for you to make money, but you mustn't undermine British dignity, you know!"

But in this country I have read a statement of Professor Irving Fisher of Yale University: "The American practice of installment buying is a distinct aid to thrift"; and when Mr Herbert Hoover was Secretary of Com-



merce he stated that installment selling is the "backbone of continuing American prosperity."

I have seen so many things happen because of high-pressure installment selling. A couple of blocks from my home, a young man lived with his wife and three children. His next-door neighbor told me that one evening a furniture van backed up to the house and employees began loading the van with the furnishings. They left only one bed for five persons to sleep on. Then the young man himself came home, driving a new automobile he had just bought on installments.

Last year there was a series of small hold-ups around Wellston—a street-car conductor at the end of the Locust Street line, a grocer on Erie Avenue, a man walking through City Park—and when the police finally caught the bandit they found he was a young medical intern who had bought a car on installments to entertain the hospital nurses and needed cash each month to meet his payments.

I could mention a dozen other tragedies and near-tragedies right here in Wellston that came about because salesmen tempted weak or unworldly people to get themselves hopelessly into debt on the bait of a little down and a little a week. There might be some shadow of excuse if installment selling were any real help to prosperity. But it isn't. Leaving aside the opinions of Professor Fisher and Mr Hoover and speaking in plain business terms, how can you increase prosperity by forcing the sale of articles this year that won't be paid for until next year? The answer is, you can't. It is merely a synthetic prosperity until you have sold your customers up to the limit of their credit. Then you have to shut down your factory until your customers have caught up with their debts. When that happens enough times, there is a panic.

It all goes back, you might say, to 1907, when American businessmen refused to admit that our factories were

turning out more goods than people could buy and began to force goods on people any way they could. Competition for installment sales is so keen now that all sorts of devices are used to persuade people to go into debt. Some big corporations are using religion pretty freely. Just lately the Packard Automobile Company has had a billboard advertisement all over the country with an illustration of a wedding ceremony; and the clergyman is whispering to the bride that her husband can get her a new Packard for payments of only \$35 a month.

Every time I saw the advertisement I wondered if it was really kind of the clergyman to suggest that to the bride. Because it takes so little, sometimes, to stir up domestic complications.

One trouble about installment selling is that it is pretty hard to be honest about it. You are apt to run into a good deal of sales resistance if you let your customers know how much you are charging them for the installment privilege. So you have to resort to considerable trickery to keep them from knowing.

Let us assume, for example, that I am an installment dealer in electrical goods, and among other things I sell washing machines. I have one splendid machine that I sell on installments for \$100. But an occasional customer comes along who doesn't want to buy on installments and so, to get his trade, I put up a sign in my store, "Ten Per Cent Discount for Cash."

When I sell this customer a washing machine for \$90 I am charging him too much. My cash price should be at least \$25 less than the installment price. It costs me fully that much to sell it on time. There is the expense of keeping books over a period of a year, the wages of my collector who goes around to collect the weekly or monthly payments, and the occasional machine which I have to

get the sheriff to repossess for me when the purchaser doesn't make his payments.

I know all these things, but I don't dare to offer a cash buyer more than 10 per cent discount. If I did, I couldn't sell my machines to installment buyers. My advertisement in the local newspaper, "I Trust the Public," would be flung in my teeth a dozen times a day by indignant would-be installment buyers who learned that I trusted them, but charged them twenty-five dollars for the compliment.

Even the government recognizes this. Lately a communication from Washington stated: "When an industry goes on an installment basis, the cash price tends to rise somewhere near the installment price."

Several years ago a number of paint manufacturers combined to promote house painting on installments. They advertised, "Good News to Home Owners—10 Months to Pay." The plan called for the co-operation of hardware merchants all over the United States. Any householder who wished to redecorate his house could apply to his local hardware merchant, and the latter would supply the paints and arrange with a painting contractor to do the work. When the job was finished, the householder paid one fifth of the agreed price in cash and signed ten notes for the balance.

The advertisements stated that the householder would pay only 9 per cent above the cash price. Assuming, for example, the cash price for painting a house to be \$300, the householder paid \$327 on the installment plan. Apparently it was a splendid arrangement, quite open and aboveboard. But it had to be abandoned because of violent opposition from associations of hardware dealers.

Hardware men opposed it because the paint manufacturers juggled with figures when they advertised that a householder would pay only 9 per cent above the cash



price. In reality the householder was charged about 25 per cent for credit. He didn't get \$300 worth of credit, because he paid \$60 as soon as the job was finished. The most he owed, therefore, was \$240. He cut this down every month, and at the tenth month he owed only \$24. But he had to pay interest on \$300 for the entire ten months.

No reputable hardware merchant, naturally, cared to urge a scheme that was based on juggled figures. But there was an economic reason, too. Had a merchant gone into the scheme, he would be charging his customers a full dollar for only seventy-five cents' worth of paint and labor. The other twenty-five cents would go out of town to the finance company. The merchant, then, would be reducing the buying power of his own customers. They would have less money to buy plows and lawn mowers and kitchen ranges and ice-cream freezers.

Unrestrained installment selling is bad in a good many ways. It is bad in an economic way because it drains money away from the smaller communities. Every time a person in Wellston, or Wheeling, or El Paso buys something and pays the installment price, he enriches New York, or Chicago, or Detroit, or whatever city the finance company is located in that handles the transaction.

It is bad for people, too. I am sure a man who has the stamina to save up in advance for something he wants is a better citizen than the man who runs out and buys as soon as he can get hold of enough money to make the down payment. If I wanted to moralize, I could point out that the people who built up our country weren't the dollar-down-dollar-a-week sort.

Certainly it can't be good for the country to have so much of its business done on a system that almost automatically involves more or less trickery. The worst of it is that a great many reputable old business houses are



forced by competition to adopt policies that are on the border line of business integrity.

I won't mention names; but there is an example right in my own line where one of the oldest and largest watch manufacturers in the country has lent itself to a scheme that doesn't seem quite in keeping with its distinguished record.

This company fixes the retail prices of its watches. Each watch shipped to a retail jeweler has a printed price tag affixed. The jeweler is under obligation to sell the watch at that price. He makes only a modest profit. The customer who buys the watch is assured of a good time-piece at a reasonable price.

But installment dealers must have a bigger profit. It must cover the dealer's cost of bookkeeping, of collecting weekly or monthly payments, and of the occasional loss incurred when some purchaser skips out of town. So this American watch manufacturer now makes a special line for installment dealers. The watches are tagged with a factory price, just the same as the watches handled by regular jewelers. Only there is a bigger margin between cost and selling price. The installment dealer can say to a customer, "You see, this is the regular factory price. I charge you the same that a cash dealer does."

The catch in it is that it is a different watch. The customer doesn't get what he thinks he is getting. It seems a pretty sad thing for a reputable old American corporation to be mixed up in.

## XVII

### Direct Sales *vs.* Wholesalers

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**T**HE Powell Steel & Cutlery Works' "Mr Drill" advertising campaign fell short of expectations. After a year's trial, and the expenditure of a quarter-million dollars, the Powell sales were about the same as before.

One morning Richard sent me a note asking me to attend a directors' meeting to hear a proposal by Frederick Cravens. It was Mr Cravens' first visit to Wellston since he inaugurated the "Mr Drill" campaign, though from time to time he sent serious young publicity experts who asked questions that they generally answered themselves and then returned to New York to prepare reports. Dr Keeby, Mr Cravens' psychologist, also came two or three times to explain that all advertising is cumulative, and that when the "Mr Drill" copy had run a certain length of time there would be an abrupt rise in the sales curve.

At this time the Reverend Mr Harriss, though still minister of the First Presbyterian Church, was officially connected with the Powell Steel & Cutlery Works, with the title of Welfare Director. In that capacity he generally attended the directors' meetings. Richard took tremendous interest in the Welfare Department, which Mr Harriss modeled after the Ford Motor Company's in Detroit. Mr Harriss had men and women investigators working under him, and the joke around town was that

the Welfare Department knew when a Powell mechanic's wife was going to have a baby as soon as she did herself.

Frederick Cravens was, if possible, more attractive than ever when he appeared in the directors' room. He mentioned the "Mr Drill" advertising campaign and said, "I've come, gentlemen, to fling myself at your feet and beg forgiveness!"

The idea of Mr Cravens in his stylish morning coat and pearl scarf pin flinging himself at anyone's feet was so droll that we all laughed, Mr Cravens included. He went on:

"A frank confession, gentlemen, is good for the soul. I confess I've erred in planning your advertising campaign."

Richard spoke up good-naturedly: "We don't want you to feel that way, Mr Cravens. We're businessmen enough to know that all advertising is cumulative. Your Dr Keeby explained that. Only, we did expect a little improvement——"

"You'd a right to expect it," Mr Cravens cried. "You've been patient. You've spent your money without a murmur. That's what hurts most. You've trusted me——"

He turned and walked to the window, where the perfect tailoring of his coat emphasized the slight droop of his shoulders. Directly he came back.

"Your trust, gentlemen, puts an added obligation on me. I want to finish the work I've started."

"There's no reason why you shouldn't," Richard told him. "We haven't considered a change."

"Thank you, Mr Powell," Mr Cravens beamed. "And now, gentlemen, I'm going to outline a new sales program. But before I do that, I'd like to have your reactions toward the current advertising copy. Has anyone a suggestion?"

Mr Harriss cleared his throat. "If I might have a word, though of course I'm not a director——"

"Of course, Mr Harriss," Richard said encouragingly.

"I've been thinking," Mr Harriss said, "that our welfare work should be stressed in our advertising. Surely the public would be more inclined to buy Powell products if it were known what we are doing for our work people——"

Richard nodded his approval, and Mr Cravens cried, "Splendid!"

"We've a real advertising message," Mr Harriss went on. "Supervised playgrounds for the kiddies, Scout work for the youngsters, care for expectant mothers, home economics——"

"Splendid!" Mr Cravens cried again. "I'll set our copy writers at it the minute I get back to New York." He jotted a word or two in his notebook and asked, "How's this for a suggestion? 'Contented Workers Make Powell Products.'"

"I'd like," Mr Harriss ventured, "to feature our temperance program. You know we forbid our workmen to make home brew."

Mr Cravens scribbled in his notebook. "Good appeal for Methodist trade. Anything else?"

Mr Harriss spoke with extra seriousness.

"If other wealthy manufacturers were to go in for welfare work, it would provide lucrative employment for many worthy but unfortunate clergymen." He hesitated a moment: "I've written an article on the subject. I thought I'd send it to the editor of *Christian Fireside*."

"Better let me have it," Mr Cravens remarked. "I'll carry it around to *Christian Fireside* myself. I've some influence there."

Mr Harriss spoke stiffly. "I scarcely think my article needs special influence——"



"Listen, brother." Mr Cravens' words seemed suddenly to come out of the corner of his mouth. "The Jew that owns *Christian Fireside* isn't buying masterpieces for the fun of it. My advertising agency is in position to throw him business. But go ahead and mail your piece in if you want to."

"I'll think it over," Mr Harriss faltered.

"And now, Mr Powell," Mr Cravens flashed Richard his most attractive smile, "I'm afraid I've got to talk to you like a Dutch uncle."

Richard smiled back. "I guess I can stand it."

"I said a few minutes ago that I'd made a mistake in your advertising. That's only partially true. As a trade character 'Mr Drill' is all right. He'll be still better"—Mr Cravens bowed to the Reverend Mr Harriss—"when he carries to the public the message of kiddies at play, expectant mothers and all that. But the plain fact is, we've overworked our poor little 'Mr Drill.' We haven't backed him up as we ought."

"The people in our plant here," Richard said, "think 'Mr Drill' is quite amusing. I often overhear the mechanics speak of him."

"Very nice. But"—Mr Cravens spoke in a brisk, businesslike way—"it isn't selling merchandise. Pardon me if I use plain words. What the Powell Steel & Cutlery Works needs is salesmanship to back up its advertising. And when I say salesmanship, I mean just that. Hard-hitting, shirt-sleeve salesmanship!"

"We've never found it necessary——" Richard began.

"Pardon me, Mr Powell, but I know what you're going to say. Your merchandise is so well established that you've never had to do much selling. But that's past now. Competition's too keen. There's just one answer: speed up your salesmanship!"

"I'm afraid I wouldn't know how to do that," Richard

smiled. "You know our goods are handled by the leading wholesale houses in the country."

Mr Cravens' lip curled almost into a sneer.

"Really, Mr Powell, I'm surprised to hear you mention wholesale houses and salesmanship in the same breath. Don't you know there's no such thing as salesmanship in the modern sense when you sell your goods through wholesale houses?"

"You mean," Richard asked, "that the Powell Steel & Cutlery Works ought to change its seventy-five-year-old policy? That we should quit the wholesale houses and sell direct?"

"I warned you," Mr Cravens chuckled, "that I was going to talk to you like a Dutch uncle."

"I confess I'd never thought of it before."

"Then let's think about it now. Where do you suppose the automobile industry would be if it had tried to sell through wholesale houses? Take Henry Ford, for example. Wholesale houses for Henry? Not on your life. He had sense enough to keep everything in his own hands. He appointed an agent in every town and then told the agent how many Ford cars he had to sell or get kicked out. It worked! Where do you suppose the National Cash Register Company would be if Mr Patterson had gone around hat in hand and asked Mr Wholesaler to please sell his machines for him? Haven't you ever read about the stunts the Cash Register Company uses to keep its salesmen on their toes? I could name a hundred others."

"Our wholesalers have stood by us many years," Richard said. "I feel a good deal of loyalty toward them."

Mr Cravens leaned forward to touch his sleeve. "Do you feel more loyalty to your wholesalers than to your own workpeople?"

"Why, no, Mr Cravens. How do you——"

"You can do more business if you sell direct. That

means increased profits. Couldn't you use more money in your Welfare Department?"

"Why, yes, I suppose we could."

"Then why not do it? Do as other big corporations do. Sell direct to retail dealers and put every dealer under a quota. Say to him, 'Look here, Mr Dealer. From now on you'll handle a certain amount of Powell merchandise. If you don't, we'll cut you off our list!'"

"I know it's being done," Richard said. "But it seems a little high-handed."

Mr Cravens laughed. "Why, not at all, Mr Powell. You're really doing a man a favor when you put him on a quota. You're making him hustle. He earns more money for himself. He can do more for his family, send his children to college, give more liberally to his church."

Richard nodded. "It's worth thinking about, I guess."

"There's another angle to it," Mr Cravens' face shone with enthusiasm. "You can go into the installment game. Set up your own finance company. Start your dealers selling Powell products on the little-down-and-little-a-week plan."

"Like automobiles and washing machines and things like that?" Richard asked.

Mr Cravens laughed. "Precisely. You've no idea how profitable these finance companies are. You make money selling Powell products, and you make money financing the time payments. Coming and going, you win!"

Richard moved uneasily in his chair.

"It's really too big a subject to decide offhand at this directors' meeting. Anyhow, my father ought to be consulted."

"By all means, Mr Powell. But don't put it off too long." Mr Cravens tapped the table warningly. "There's no telling when some competitor may beat you to it."

"Father's in California right now," Richard said.

Mr Cravens remarked, "Don't forget, Mr Powell. The money you're spending on advertising can do only half a job without some good, hard-hitting salesmanship!"

The directors' meeting was adjourned with the understanding that Mr Cravens' plans would be considered on Mr John Powell's return. I left the office first; and as I was getting into my car, Mr Cravens came past with Richard and Mr Harriss.

Mr Cravens was saying, "I'm fascinated by this welfare work of yours, Mr Powell. I call it real, practical Christianity. I wonder if you and the Reverend Mr Harriss could spare time to show me the domestic-science school and the kiddies playgrounds?"

Next morning, as I was on my way from the store to the Wellston National Bank, I met Richard. "I just wanted to tell you, Mr Kent," he said, "that I took it on myself to change the Powell works' selling policy." He spoke in the elaborately careless way of a person who tries to convince himself of something he is not sure of.

"I thought we might as well go modern now as later." He laughed nervously. "Our advertising's doing only half a job without hard-hitting salesmanship to back it up. Frederick Cravens has recommended a man for general sales manager. Says he's a wonder. No nonsense about him. The man's name is David Bowman."



## XVIII

### High-Pressure Salesmanship and Crime

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**W**HEN John Powell retired as head of the Powell works, he told me he should never interfere in any way with Richard's management. But I believe he would have put his foot down on Richard's changing the works' sales policies if he had been in Wellston at the time.

Mr Powell was against high-pressure salesmanship of any sort. He especially resented the "quota" system, where corporation presidents sat in their offices with maps of the United States before them and dictated the number of automobiles, or washing machines, or oil-burning furnaces that must be sold in each county and township.

"The worst of this high-pressure salesmanship is," he remarked once, "that it's making the country a pretty rowdy place to live in. Every time a corporation trains a high-pressure salesman, it kills off a possible gentleman."

I told him he was carrying his theory too far. "Because after all," I said, "a man can be a gentleman——"

He interrupted, "But he can't, Peter. The first step in training a man to be a go-getter is to take the gentleman out of him. If he sticks to his gentlemanliness, you might as well give him up as a bad job."

Later on, when I saw at first hand the development

of a high-pressure sales force, I decided there might be some truth in this remark.

John Powell had a half-humorous theory that it was incongruous for a rich man to give money to education that he had made in high-pressure business. Once the *New York Times* printed an article describing a pretty curious affair in which a high-pressure sales manager was training young men to sell electric irons and washers from door to door for the General Electric Company.

At the same time the chairman of the board of General Electric was being featured in newspapers for his support of St Lawrence University.

"He isn't fair to General Electric stockholders," Mr Powell joked. "They ought to stop him."

"What's the matter with St Lawrence?" I asked. "Doesn't it educate——"

"Possibly it does, Peter. That's the whole trouble. Colleges are supposed to develop reasoning human beings. But high-pressure salesmanship doesn't want reasoning human beings. It wants fools. The more the better. If everyone in this country could be turned into a fool tomorrow, you'd see the biggest boom——"

"You're too subtle for me," I interrupted.

"Now look here, Peter. Let us say you're an automobile dealer, and you've got two prospects. One is an intelligent man who says, 'My old car still runs well. I haven't any use for a new one.' The other prospect is a fellow who listens respectfully when you tell him about some gadgets on the new model that he can astonish the neighbors with, and believes you when you say he owes it to the wife and kiddies to provide them with the very latest. Which prospect do you prefer?"

"I guess I'll have to admit," I laughed, "that a fool is the perfect consumer."

"Precisely, Peter. And so, when a high-pressure busi-

nessman gives money to education, he's really taking bread out of his stockholders' mouths!"

Sometimes I think high-pressure salesmanship may have had something to do with the case of young Victor Ginsburg, son of Nathan Ginsburg, who kept the grocery store in the small neighborhood business section near my home in Wellston.

I shall have to skip about the map considerably to make my meaning clear.

First, I must mention the occasion when the five-million-dollar buildings that old Mr Baker of New York gave the Graduate School of Business of Harvard University were dedicated. A class of more than two hundred young men, who had qualified in salesmanship, advertising, establishing sales quotas and similar subjects, was being graduated. In conferring the degree of Master of Business Administration, President Lowell said:

"By virtue of the authority delegated to me, I testify that you are well trained to enter upon one of the oldest of the arts and the latest of the professions."

I think every mature person will remember the sensation created by President Lowell's statement that business was at last a profession. It was front-page news everywhere.

The R. H. Macy department store in New York prepared a full-page advertisement and quoted, "Business the Latest of the Professions," along with its claim to sell merchandise 6 per cent cheaper than competitors, a claim that was stoutly disputed by other department stores.

Dr Glenn Frank, then president of the University of Wisconsin, wrote that business "is today writing a new Magna Charta for the race."

Mr Henry Ford stated, "Business will spread through and remake the world."

I have no idea President Lowell intended to create any such furore when he stated that business was the latest of the professions. I take it he merely performed a college president's routine duty. He hoped his speech would prompt other rich businessmen to follow old Mr Baker's example and give money to the Harvard School of Business.

Businessmen of every class were inspired by the idea that at last they were on a plane with lawyers, ministers and other professional men. The Prudential Bonding Company of New York issued a booklet entitled, "Moses, Persuader of Men," to advertise its plate-glass and automobile insurance, with an introduction by Reverend S. Parkes Cadman. On one page appeared the statement, "Moses was the greatest salesman that ever lived."

Mr Fred F. French, a New York real-estate promoter, was even more inspired than Dr Cadman or the Prudential Bonding executives. "The best example for a sales talk is the life of Jesus Christ," Mr French said to an interviewer. "He was the best salesman of all time. He said, 'Knock and it shall be opened unto you.' What he meant was, 'Keep knocking until the door is opened, and if it isn't opened pretty soon kick down the door.' That's my philosophy too."

I am sure young Victor Ginsburg, here in Wellston, was impressed by these things.

I called at the Ginsburg grocery store one morning on my way to business. Young Victor was just going out, rather sulkily, to deliver a package of groceries. It happened to be the time when the Eucharistic Congress of the Catholic Church was in session at Chicago, and a newspaper lay on the counter that had on its front page President Coolidge's message to the church dignitaries. Mr Ginsburg asked me if I had read the message.



I had read it. It was one of those literary efforts in which Mr Coolidge was at his best. He reminded the Catholic delegates of America's material prosperity and said, "in that direction we have been more successful than others." He also stated, "If America is advancing economically, it is because of the deep religious convictions of its people."

I was surprised to find that Mr Ginsburg resented the President's message. He said Mr Coolidge shouldn't talk so much about America being so rich and prosperous.

"It has a terrible effect on my boy Victor," Mr Ginsburg exploded. "Already Victor believes he is entitled to have everything like a rich millionaire. When he reads in the paper what the President says, he will believe it yet more!"

I knew already that Victor was the Ginsburg family problem. At eighteen he had acquired tastes beyond the power of his father to satisfy. At high school he associated with boys and girls of the best Wellston families. He was a handsome lad and enough of an athlete to make the basketball team. Young Victor gained enough social recognition to be admitted to a high-school guild that existed during Prohibition, known as the Ferrets. The Ferrets were students who broke into houses and stole liquor to entertain high-school girls. Frequently the Ferrets carried off other valuables found lying about the houses they broke into.

When young Victor quit high school and went into his father's grocery store, he had set his heart on owning a sport-model car. He said the Christian girls he went with discriminated against boys who had only family Chevrolets or Overlands. He also felt he must have a gold wrist watch of the make featured on the radio every night, and must wear nationally advertised clothes he saw illustrated in the magazines. His father thought these

were foolish ideas. Victor wanted fifteen dollars a week, but his father could afford to pay him only seven dollars. The boy was sulky and dissatisfied. I noticed that his father never left him in the store alone. Whenever Mr Ginsburg was obliged to go out, his wife always came to the store and made change from the cash register.

Mr Ginsburg explained further why Mr Coolidge's Eucharistic Congress message complicated his already serious family problem.

"Everywhere it's high-power salesmanship," Mr Ginsburg rasped. "Even the President says it's religious to be rich. No wonder it's got so that young fellows like my boy think they must buy lots of merchandise. It's going to make terrible things someday."

I asked Mr Ginsburg what terrible things he predicted.

"It's plain like the nose on my face," he said. "When the young fellows find they can't earn the money to buy all the things they want, they'll get the money anyway." Mr Ginsburg thumped his counter passionately. "They'll turn to extreme crime!"

I suppose if I hadn't known a good deal about young Victor Ginsburg's background I might have thought his father was merely indulging in a fit of Jewish emotion.

In the first place, Victor's parents were Jewish and foreign born. And in the second place, Victor grew up in an atmosphere entirely different from anything ever known before. High-powered salesmanship came into fashion about the time Victor came into the world.

High-powered salesmanship must have influenced Victor and other boys of his age and station in life. I have mentioned before how the Ford Motor Company was one of the first big corporations to set "quotas" for communities all over the United States. Mr Norvel Hawkins, a former Ford official, testified in court that the company

compelled a Ford dealer to canvass for his prospects by "ringing doorbells and introducing himself." This was more than twenty years ago, when Victor Ginsburg was a very little boy. Before that, canvassing was done by rather ridiculous fellows who peddled books or sewing machines, or by pitiful old ladies who tried to sell female remedies.

The Ford Motor Company made canvassing respectable. When the doorbell rang and little Victor Ginsburg looked out the window, he saw a well-dressed American executive who had just stepped out of a shiny automobile at the curb. This executive was not a man to be treated lightly by families of the Ginsburg class. He represented a great corporation. He was sent by Mr Ford himself, a great philanthropist who outfitted a Peace Ship and whose photograph was in every Sunday supplement.

Young Victor Ginsburg must have got the idea that Big Business had some special authority. I can conceive how, as Victor grew older, he still had this awe of Big Business. So much so, perhaps, that by the time he was in high school, when Big Business told him to purchase some article he felt he must obey. And if he didn't happen to have the purchase price, he might be willing to take desperate chances to get it.

Does this seem a bit farfetched? Not, I think, to anyone who knows anything about high-powered salesmanship. I remember once talking to a branch manager in Wellston. He was responsible for sales in the city and several surrounding counties. That year there was a strike in the railroad shops, and a long drought just about ruined the farmers' bean and potato crops. A good many Market Street merchants did scarcely half a normal business that season. The branch manager told me he explained all this to his home office and asked to have his



"quota" reduced until things should pick up. His superior wrote back to say that the branch manager should apply more intense sales pressure; if he couldn't make his "quota," the company would send someone who could.

Then I believe the local service clubs did a good deal to make young Victor respectful of business. For several years the Altruists ran a half-page "Go-to-Church" advertisement every Saturday in the *Times-Bulletin* that listed the names of Protestant, Catholic and Jewish pastors and the subjects of their Sabbath sermons. At the bottom of the page, in extra-large type, were the names of Altruist merchants, coal dealers, insurance agents and so on, who paid for the advertisement, and the line, "These businessmen deserve your patronage."

I can imagine young Victor Ginsburg reading this advertisement on a Saturday, and then a few days later standing at the curb in Market Street to watch some service club parade in which the Jewish rabbi, the Protestant minister and the Catholic priest marched alongside the merchants who paid for the advertisement. Young Victor would have been more than human, it seems to me, not to have got the idea that buying things was a sacred duty.

By the time Victor was a grown boy, people everywhere were pretty well trained to do what Big Business wanted them to do. I think the best example of this was the way American women were made cigarette conscious. It is so recent that everyone must remember it. In New York City on an Easter Sunday morning a Jewish publicity man assembled a corps of Broadway chorus girls, dressed to represent society debutantes, and marched them down Fifth Avenue just as crowds were coming out of the Fifth Avenue churches. The chorus girls, apparently coming out of Fifth Avenue churches also, all were smoking cigarettes.

Photographs were taken, and copies were sent to out-



of-town newspapers. By the next Sunday, rotogravure sections all over the country displayed the pictures with captions telling how New York society had at last set the seal of its approval on cigarettes for women. The response was amazing. In almost no time, newspapers that previously couldn't have been induced for any amount of money to print anything about women's smoking, began to run the "Keep Kissable" and other cigarette publicity.

The really subtle feature of the whole thing, it seems to me, was the Jewish publicity man's having his chorus girls march with church people on an Easter morning and so tying his project in with Christianity and the Resurrection.

There was another happening at about the same time that may have had something to do with shaping young Victor Ginsburg's ideas of life when he read about it in the newspapers. It was the Associated Advertising Clubs' convention, held in Philadelphia. There were a great many clergymen delegates. A Professor Wolfard of Marshall College spoke on "Spiritual Principles in Advertising," and a Mr Jamison of the American Sheet & Tin Plate Company made an address on "Advertising in Building a Bible Class." Reverend Christian F. Reisner presided over the Church Advertising Department.

The convention report also stated, "Each night cabaret entertainment was furnished the convention delegates from half past eleven to two. Part of the Atlantic City Beauty Pageant was also presented."

Young Victor might easily have got the idea that advertising and religion were in some jolly sort of partnership.

The question was, how far would Victor go to obtain the money with which to buy the things that high-powered salesmanship told him to buy? None of the college presidents, or big businessmen, or clergymen who encouraged

him to believe he should have the sport car and gold wrist watch did anything to provide him with money. The best his father could do for him was seven dollars a week and board, and even that was a strain on Mr Ginsburg, because a chain grocery had come into the neighborhood and was taking away his customers.

After working in the store a year or so, Victor disappeared, and Mr Ginsburg himself carried groceries around to his customers. Once or twice when he came to our house I asked about Victor, and he answered, "Our boy he's gone away. He don't write letters much, but I bet he's got a fine job somewhere, so well educated like he is by the high school."

Eventually the chain store cut into Mr Ginsburg's trade so deeply that about all he did was a little pie-and-sandwich business around noontime with working people in the neighborhood. I think we were about his last regular customers. Luley-Lee was quite fond of him because he was always so obliging and anxious to please. But then for two whole weeks Mr Ginsburg was gone from the store, and his wife carried on as best she could with the pies and sandwiches, delivering groceries after hours. She told everyone, "Ginsburg's gone on a visit to see our boy. Sure, Victor's doing fine." But one night when she brought Luley-Lee an armful of groceries she complained, "Ginsburg's spending money an awful lot where Victor is. We can't afford it, neither."

About a month after Mr Ginsburg came back from his visit to his son, I passed by the grocery store on my way to business one morning and saw a sheriff's bankruptcy notice pasted on the front. Later that day I happened to be in the Chamber of Commerce building and met Mr Ginsburg coming out of a Jewish lawyer's office. At first I thought he was drunk. His eyes were bleary, and when I said, "Don't worry, Mr Ginsburg, you'll get on your

feet again all right," he shook his head and answered:

"About the grocery store I don't worry none. Some think worse than that it is."

I thought he was going to say more, but he suddenly burst into a fit of Jewish wailing and walked away from me. I never saw him again.

It was nearly a year later that the affair was explained by the report of the State Crime Commission:

"Case No. 681. Age 21 years. Indicted for robbery with gun. Sentenced to prison for from four to ten years. No previous criminal record. Comes from good Jewish home. Drank occasionally. Has high standards of sex morality."

For a dozen years past the ministers here in Wellston, and especially the Reverend Mr Harriss, have been preaching sermons about the crime wave. In the beginning Mr Harriss believed it to be a temporary phase brought on by the excitement of the war. Then there was a period when he blamed it on people's defiance of Prohibition. For a time he attributed crime to lack of religious teaching in the home. At present Mr Harriss believes unemployment is responsible for crime. He terms gunmen "Children of the Lost Generation" and says they have turned to crime because industry has not been able to absorb them.

But that doesn't seem logical. England had a longer spell of depression than America, yet English crime has steadily decreased. France had hard times, too, but it hasn't a crime problem. My friend M. Duvergier has been sending me newspaper clippings in praise of La Belle France ever since I made the trip with him through Brittany; and his latest item concerned a certain Judge Métivier who went to hold court in some Department that had four hundred thousand population, and found there was no criminal case on the docket. In his cocky



French way, M. Duvergier underlined the comment that appeared in *Le Petit Parisien*: "It is the third time within two years that Judge Métivier has had no criminal case."

The only explanation I can see is that in the United States business has been given a freer hand than in any other country, and we have nothing to hold it within bounds. We haven't the cruel humor of the French people, who are always looking for a chance to jeer. I doubt if a Jewish publicity man would go far who chose an Easter Sunday in Paris to advertise cigarettes with a parade of chorus girls from the Folies Bergère. And it is hard to imagine that a lot of Church of England clergymen would defy British tradition and the discipline of the Bishop of Canterbury by allowing themselves to be used by an association of advertising men, along with cabaret entertainment and a Beauty Pageant.

Recently I read a statement issued by the New York State Crime Commission that seems truer than Mr Harri's theory: "A large proportion of crimes of violence can be traced to the efforts of businessmen who try to make luxuries seem necessities."

Anyhow, I am sure the Crime Commission's statement fits the case of young Victor Ginsburg.

It all gets back, it seems to me, to the law of diminishing returns. High-powered business seemed to have reached the ideal state. It could do about as it wanted. Most people were content to play the role of obedient consumers. But then an unexpected obstacle turned up. To be an obedient consumer a person had to have money. Those persons who didn't have money and couldn't get it legitimately, but still felt they must be obedient consumers, went out with guns and took it away from other people, just as young Victor Ginsburg did.

Business has to spend so much money nowadays to protect itself from the young Victor Ginsburgs that there



isn't much profit left. I saw in the paper one day that in Iowa the Bankers' Association has "purchased 3,700 rifles, pistols and sawed-off shotguns, and each bank has a masked machine gun that can sweep the entire floor." Even here in Wellston, factory-payroll money is carried in armored cars, and the chain grocery stores have to hire detectives to accompany the man who goes around to collect the stores' daily receipts. To mention an example in my own line of business, the cost of insurance on a shipment of jewelry is twenty times higher than in pre-super-salesmanship days.

Jake Hirschfield, across the street, has been obliged to resign from the Rotary Club. There are so many jewelry hold-ups that he doesn't dare to leave his store at noontime. While his clerks take turns going to lunch, he sits on a balcony at the rear with a revolver in his hand. It is too bad, because Jake was in line for the vice-presidency of the Rotary Club, and his name would have appeared in the *Times-Bulletin* almost every day in connection with the Kiddies' Playground that the club is promoting in City Park.

## XIX

### Number One Go-Getter

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**T**HERE IS NO DOUBT that David Bowman, the new Powell works' sales manager, was, as he called himself, a Number One Go-Getter. He was a vigorous man in his early forties, with a big, robust voice; and at the directors' meeting where I first met him he made it clear that he must have his own way without interference.

"Give me just one year, by God," he boomed, "and if I don't boost your sales you won't have to can me. I'll can myself!"

His first move was to organize what he called a "sizzling sales force" of more than fifty men to carry out the Powell works' new policy of selling direct to retail merchants. Formerly, when the works distributed through wholesalers, only three or four salesmen were required. Mr Bowman's new men were mainly young college graduates.

"The colleges are doing a damn fine job," I heard him say to Richard. "They don't spend any time learning the boys to be so-called gentlemen like they used to do. A boy coming out of college nowadays is full of that football-loyalty stuff that makes him fine salesman material. He looks on his sales manager as kind of a super football coach, and he'll run his damn head off trying to make good."

Mr Bowman's private office at the works adjoined the

one that Reverend Mr Harriss used as headquarters for his welfare work; and once, when Mr Bowman had been in session with a prospective salesman, Mr Harriss stuck his head in the door to say hesitantly:

"I wonder, dear Mr Bowman, if such rough language is quite necessary? I could hear you quite plainly in my office."

Mr Bowman whirled around in his chair and rasped out of the corner of his mouth:

"Listen, preacher. I aim to make money for this concern. I'm doing it in my own way. You keep your god-damn mitts off me and I'll keep mine off you. Then we'll be friends!"

After that, whenever the sales manager's name was mentioned, Mr Harriss would say:

"Really a fine man, Mr Bowman. Eccentric, of course. But efficient! Oh, enormously efficient!"

There was an element of pathos, I thought, in the compromises Mr Harriss was willing to make in order to hang on to his job as welfare director.

I used to wonder, too, what Richard thought of his new sales manager. For after all Richard was a rather lovable fellow, genuine in his desire to do good. It wasn't his fault that he lacked genius. I suppose he overlooked some of the things that David Bowman did, because Mr Bowman came recommended by Frederick Cravens. Richard admired Frederick Cravens extravagantly.

David Bowman's energy was prodigious. When he came to Wellston he rented the old Carlin house on Summit Avenue and gave stag parties there two or three times a month. He could put in a fourteen-hour day at the Powell works, go home to a party that lasted until four o'clock in the morning, and then be at his desk again at eight, apparently as fresh as ever. No matter what he was doing, he seemed bursting to do more. Generally

at his parties some of his guests played poker in one room, and others shot craps in an adjoining room. Mr Bowman managed to be in both games. As soon as a hand of poker was finished and cards were being dealt for the next hand, he would rush into the other room, fling himself on the floor among the crap shooters and give the dice a couple of rolls, shouting "Come seven, come 'leven" at the top of his voice. Then he would pay his losses or take his winnings and rush back to the card game.

For his poker parties Mr Bowman had a box of five-, ten- and twenty-dollar gold pieces that he used as chips. Sometimes he had his son, a boy of fourteen, sit in a game with the men. At school young Dave had the reputation of being a bad egg, particularly in the matter of girls.

There was also a Mrs Bowman, a faded, discouraged-appearing woman who seemed to count for nothing at all in the house. Johnny Martin, who sometimes went to the parties, told me that one night Mr Bowman was telling about some affair he had had in the New Orleans red-light district when his wife came into the room, and he went right on with his story as though she were a hundred miles away.

One morning, after a directors' meeting at the works, I passed by Mr Bowman's office, and he called out that he'd like to show me how he kept his salesmen on their toes. On his desk there was a box full of little red feather dusters, just arrived from a Chicago manufacturer. He was mailing a duster, he told me, to each Powell salesman. Along with the duster went a printed message, "Dust Your Territory."

I asked what the idea was.

He laughed good-naturedly. "My God, brother, but you *are* behind the times! Don't you know that high-pressure corporations all over the country use stuff like



this to pep up their salesmen?" He ran to a wall cabinet and showed me a box of imitation giant firecrackers. "Next week," he told me, "I'm sending every salesman a firecracker. The message will be, 'Make a Big Noise!'"

"It seems pretty childish," I said.

He laughed again. "I'm not disputing that, brother. But, my God, it seems to work!" He dived into a desk drawer and pulled out an envelope full of trade-magazine clippings. "You'll admit the National Cash Register Company is successful, won't you? Let me show you what *they* do."

He read one of the clippings: "The company's sales contest for last month took the form of an aeroplane race."

"An aeroplane race?" I asked.

"Why, sure. All the cash-register salesmen were supposed to be aeroplane pilots. Every time a man made a sale he was credited with so many points. The man with the most points won the race."

Mr Bowman read another clipping: "This month the company's salesmen are automobile racing drivers. The man with the best sales record will receive a cash prize."

He produced a third clipping. "My God, brother, here's a good one! In this sales contest the company doesn't give a cash prize to the winner. Can you guess what the company does give him?"

I said I couldn't imagine.

"A framed and autographed photograph of the president of the company!"

"But look here, Bowman," I said. "It's possible that sort of stuff might go with a group of Boy Scouts, but how can you expect intelligent salesmen——"

"Who cares anything about intelligent salesmen?" he interrupted.

"Apparently you do," I told him. "Anyhow, when you

hired salesmen for the Powell works you chose mostly young college graduates."

He threw up his hands. "I see you don't know much about modern salesmanship. Nowadays we want 'em dumb. The dumber the better."

"Then why college graduates?" I asked.

"Because they're the best for high-pressure work. Their legs are good and strong to chase prospects with, and they'll do all the damn-fool things I tell 'em to do." He waved an imaginary flag around his head. "They've still got the rah-rah spirit. Good old Alma Mater! Good old sales manager Bowman! Good old Powell Steel & Cutlery Works!"

"One hundred per cent dumb?" I suggested.

Mr Bowman roared.

"By God, you've said it, brother!" He controlled his laughter and leaned toward me solemnly: "You absolutely can't overestimate the dumbness of a bunch of boys just out of college."

From a copy of *Printers' Ink* Mr Bowman read me an account of a sales contest promoted by the Insulite Company.

It was called the "Billy Goat Contest." The company shipped a live, fifty-pound goat, express collect, to the Insulite salesman whose sales were lowest. Attached to the goat was a card that read: "This goat has halitosis, body odor, hangnails and a ravenous appetite."

The salesman was compelled to pay the goat's board. When some other Insulite salesman fell to lowest position, the first salesman shipped the goat to *him*, express collect.

The Insulite executive who wrote the article for *Printers' Ink* stated that the Billy Goat Contest "built up morale and enthusiasm tremendously."

The Powell Steel & Cutlery Works held its first sales

convention at the new eighteen-story Ambassador Hotel, just a year after Mr Bowman became the works' sales manager. The Ambassador was ultramodern, with a self-serve cafeteria in the basement and a coffee shoppe next Peacock Alley. Girl waitresses served in the main dining room, and the elevators were operated by girls who were obliged to wear tight-fitting green trousers that accented the hips and scant white waists that accented the breasts. There was a radio in every room that prevented sleep up to midnight.

From the number of Phi Beta Kappa keys hanging on young men's watch chains, the Powell works' convention might almost have been mistaken for a college reunion. Fifty salesmen had been brought to Wellston and quartered, four in a room, at the Ambassador. Frederick Cravens came on from New York with three or four people from his advertising agency. It was a two-day convention; a professional lecturer and former Y.M.C.A. secretary, Mr Arnold Swing, opened the first day's session with an address, "Salesmanship Through the Ages," and in the afternoon Mr Cravens spoke on, "Jesus Christ, Super Salesman."

I stopped at the Ambassador a few minutes on my way home that evening, and Mr Bowman, seeing me in the lobby, asked me to go upstairs to the entertainment room, where a bar had been set up and everyone was served free drinks. The Prohibition law was still in force. Young Mr Scudder of Frederick Cravens' advertising agency was in charge. When I went in he was sitting on the bar with his legs dangling, singing a piece that he called "The Short Man's Lament." His eyes were red and droopy like a St Bernard dog's, and he appeared tired almost to the dropping point; but I heard one of the salesmen say he had kept up a steady flow of dirty songs and stories since four o'clock that afternoon.

I attended the grand banquet held in the Ambassador ballroom on the last evening of the convention, sitting at a small table with Richard, Mr Harriss and the other two directors. Frederick Cravens and his publicity experts were together near by. A long table with fifty chairs ran down the center of the room to accommodate the salesmen. On the wall, at the lower end of the room, was a huge chart printed with the salesmen's names and salesmanship records.

Directly the hotel orchestra struck up "Onward, Christian Soldiers" and the salesmen came singing into the ballroom led by Mr Bowman. Each young man's place at the long banquet table was indicated by a place card, and when all were seated Mr Bowman went to the lower end of the room and pointed dramatically to the big sales chart. Everyone roared when it was seen that each man's seat at table corresponded to his sales record. The men who had sold most merchandise during the year sat at the head of the table and those with poorer records toward the foot.

I felt sorry for the salesman at the last place. He was a local boy named Milo Shotwell whose people were Episcopalians and had a greenhouse just outside the city limits. He was a serious, rather bashful youth whom I had known since he was in knee trousers. He tried to laugh when the other salesmen joked him about his tail-end position, but with no great success.

Mr Bowman came running to our small table and pointed to the salesman who occupied the place of honor, a large, thick-necked young man named Hugh Slater, who had a gold football on his watch chain and who sold Powell merchandise in Iowa and eastern Nebraska. Mr Bowman whispered to Richard, "Now for the big doings, chief." A Negro waiter who wore a flunkey's coat and silk knee breeches came from the hotel kitchen carrying



an enormous whole turkey on a silver tray. He set it in front of young Slater, carved and served the turkey, then stood with folded arms behind the champion salesman's chair. The orchestra played "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow" and everyone applauded. I happened to look at young Milo Shotwell at the far end of the long table. He was clapping his hands and laughing, and there was an admiring look on his face as though he enjoyed it as much as the champion salesman himself.

There was more applause when another uniformed Negro came in with another turkey that he cut in half and served to the two salesmen who were tied for second place, Henry Metz, of the southern California territory, and Horace Hilton who traveled Tennessee.

For the salesmen who sat further down the table there was a descending standard of fare. Half a dozen salesmen had lamb chops; the next half-dozen, portions of roast beef; then there were bowls of beef stew, chili con carne, vegetable plates. At length everyone was served except young Milo Shotwell.

There was a long pause. Finally a disreputable Negro in a ragged jumper and blue overalls limped in from the kitchen. He carried in one hand a small plate of beans and in the other a glass of water. He set these in front of the Shotwell boy.

Everyone roared. Salesmen up and down the line rolled bread into pellets and threw them at him. Champion Slater pounded the table and shouted, "Bronx cheer for the tail-ender!" Young Shotwell turned red and then white. He stood up and bowed to champion Slater, pretending it was all very funny to him, but he made a poor job of it.

Mr Bowman whispered to Richard, "Got to go now, chief. Watch for the next stunt." In a few minutes a waiter came through the kitchen door who wore round,

horn-rimmed spectacles, a great mop of hair that might be a wig, and a tangle of dirty whiskers that concealed his face. He wandered about, apparently very drunk, stumbling against chairs and interfering with the guests. He raised a laugh when he tottered up to Hugh Slater and grabbed a leg off the champion salesman's turkey. When the head waiter tried to put him out, he offered to fight. After a while he lay down on a settee and seemed to go to sleep.

It would have been funnier if the drunken-waiter act had not been so well known. I suppose even the youngest salesman knew all about it. An old New York vaudeville actor had made a living from it for years, appearing at corporation banquets and chamber-of-commerce celebrations. Everyone assumed that at the proper time the drunken waiter would turn out to be the New York vaudevillian, who would entertain with jokes and stories.

Richard made a short talk to the salesmen, perhaps a little suggestive of the Y.M.C.A., on account of his free use of the words "worthwhile," "group" and "service"; but on the whole it was an agreeable speech and unaffectedly friendly. The Reverend Mr Harriss spoke next, taking as a text, "Seest thou a man diligent in his business, he shall stand before Kings." He spoke much longer than Richard, telling of his welfare work among Powell employees and urging the salesmen not to neglect church attendance while on the road.

During the last ten minutes of Mr Harriss' speech the drunken waiter twisted about on his settee and several times yawned impatiently. Hardly waiting for Mr Harriss to finish, he leaped to his feet and tore off his wig and whiskers. There was a surprised "Oh!" from the salesmen. In place of the vaudeville actor they expected, it was Mr Bowman.

He said, "The fun's over, men," and added with a nod

toward Mr Harriss, "So's the sweetness and light. Now we'll get down to business!"

He strode up and down the salesmen's table:

"Just because the Powell works gives you a nice party, you bozos mustn't think you're teachers' pets. Men don't get attached to pay rolls for sentimental reasons. And pay rolls have a way of dropping men who don't produce."

He thumped his chest with both fists: "I want you men to get one thing in those craniums of yours. I'm your boss. And I'm not afraid to can any goddamn salesman in the world!"

Young Milo Shotwell at the foot of the table started nervously.

"I'm going to find out," Mr Bowman roared, "who in this bunch of so-called salesmen have got *guts!*" He seemed to enjoy the word. "*Guts*, I say. Because you've got to have *guts* to hold a job under me!"

He spoke a shade more mildly: "Now here's the proposition. Every one of you can sell more next year than you did this. I'm going to ask you to sell at least 25 per cent more."

He called over the salesmen's heads to Richard Powell, "That's reasonable, isn't it, chief?"

"Possibly so, Mr Bowman——" Richard began.

Mr Bowman hunched forward, both fists clenched.

"There you have it, men! Straight from the president of this company. And by God I'm going to see that his orders are carried out!"

He ran his eyes fiercely along the double row of salesmen.

"Listen, men. What's a lousy little 25 per cent? Any man who isn't a sneak and a quitter can do better than that. Who's going to say he'll increase his sales 50 per cent? A hundred per cent?"

He shouted to young Milo Shotwell: "What you say down there? Speak up. Expect to be tail-end all your life?"

"I hope not, Mr Bowman." Young Shotwell's voice shook. "But things are very bad out in South Dakota——"

Mr Bowman flung his arms in the air. "My God, men, do you hear that? I ask him to produce a little more business, and all I get is, 'Things are bad in Dakota!'" He roared at young Shotwell: "I'll see you later, young man. A sizzling sales force like this hasn't much use for a quitter."

The orchestra struck up "Pack Up Your Troubles." Mr Bowman stamped to the head of the long table and shook a finger in the face of honor salesman Hugh Slater.

"What about you, Champ?"

The honor salesman leaped to his feet and shouted above the music, "If I don't double my sales this year, I'll eat my shirt, by God!"

There was a burst of applause, and Mr Bowman turned to Henry Metz. "What 'll you do out there in the Los Angeles territory?"

Mr Metz shook his fist humorously at champion Hugh Slater. "I'm going to beat *that* lousy bastard!"

Mr Bowman thumped him on the back. "By God, that's man's talk. You've got hair on your chest!"

The orchestra changed to "Old MacDonald Had a Farm." Young Scudder at the advertising men's table leaped on his chair and squealed, "C'mon men, let's sing!"

Mr Bowman started down the line of salesmen.

"Who's going to say, like Henry Metz, that he's going to beat the lousy bastard that's ahead of him? Who's going to say he wants his quota raised for next year?"

One salesman after another raised his hand. Mr Bowman reached the end of the table and glared at young Milo Shotwell.



"What about you, tail-ender? Going to keep on whining 'Business is poor in Dakota'? Have I got to can you?"

Young Shotwell looked up at the sales manager and down at his plate. He was trembling all over. Finally he pulled himself to his feet and pointed to a salesman a couple of seats above him. He tried two or three times before he could say jerkily, "I'm going to beat *that* lousy bastard!"

When the banquet was over, I walked out of the ball-room just behind Mr Bowman and Richard Powell, and Mr Bowman was saying,

"A great show, chief, wasn't it? Just watch the sales from now on!"

Sales Promotion among School Children

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IT IS ASTONISHING how much in people's lives at the present time results from the fact that American businessmen refused to acknowledge, as businessmen in other countries did, that it is impossible for people to buy all the goods that mass production turns out. If you take a cross-country automobile trip, for example, you can't fail to notice how many magnificent school buildings there are in the most unlikely places. In some village of three or four hundred people you are apt to see a high-school building that would have been a credit to a good-sized city a few years ago.

Does it seem farfetched to say that the majority of these expensive buildings exist because of the intense business competition in the United States? Not, I think, to anyone who has taken an active part in the affairs of some community. There was a regular frenzy of school construction during the Nineteen Twenties. Towns and villages everywhere put up expensive school buildings as advertisements. The theory was that people would come to live in the town with the biggest schoolhouse, and that the newcomers would spend money with local doctors, real-estate men, lawyers and merchants. Along with this went a naïve belief that a more expensive schoolhouse somehow made for a finer brand of education; but

I am sure anyone who has ever belonged to a chamber of commerce or a service club will acknowledge that the educational part was never stressed to the same extent that the money-making part was.

During late years a good many big manufacturing corporations have been using the public schools to build sales volume. You can learn how it is done by glancing through some business publication that caters to a big-business clientele. I have just read an article in which the writer states that "the advertiser should find the point of contact between his product and the curriculum," and mentions the Wm. Wrigley Jr Company as having done a skillful bit of sales promotion among school children. The Wrigley corporation concentrates on seventh-grade geography students and distributes a pamphlet titled, "Chewing Gum—What It Is and How It Is Made." Along with the pamphlet is distributed a two-page picture map showing where Wrigley factories are located throughout the world. After reading this I wondered what luck, if any, Mr Wrigley has had in getting at the seventh-grade children in English, or French, or German schools.

Another writer in an American business magazine states that there are 26,400,000 children attending our public schools, of whom 14,678,400 are in elementary grades, and "they represent the most important group to be cultivated."

The Lifebuoy soap corporation has been one of the leaders in sales work among the schools. The magazine states that "over 900,000 children have taken part in these Clean Hands campaigns." Among other organizations that have pioneered among school children are the American Automobile Association, Bureau of Coffee Association, Hershey Chocolate Corporation, National Bis-

cuit Company, New Orleans Cotton Exchange and General Foods Corporation.

The Pure Oil Company employed an aviator named Jimmie Mattern to talk to school children throughout the country. At the end of his talks he invited the children to write to the Chicago office of the Pure Oil Company and get an autographed photograph of himself in his plane. With the photograph Mr Mattern sent each child a letter: "Whenever you are out driving and see one of those service stations with the blue and white sign in front, think of me. . . . When I'm in my plane I can't stop in mid-air to see what's wrong. I have to know my oil and gas is good."

Private schools never were a fertile field for sales work, and I presume that is why so many private schools have been forced out of existence. Here in Wellston we used to have a very fine girls' school, established by a gentlewoman named Mrs Temple right after the Civil War and continued successively by a daughter and a grandniece up to two or three years ago. All the old established Wellston families sent their daughters to the Temple School. I'm not qualified to say how high the brand of scholarship was; but girls who got their education there were unmistakably ladies. It was the Temple School graduates who set the social tone of the city.

It was always a wonder to me that the Temple School hung on as long as it did. Its attendance began to slump back in the early Nineteen Twenties, when towns everywhere began racing to see which could build the biggest schoolhouses and attract the greatest number of profitable new citizens. In Wellston we built our two-million-dollar central school in 1926. At that time our Chamber of Commerce and all the service clubs began to boost education intensively and used the slogan, "Every Wells-



ton boy and girl to high school and every high-school graduate to College." Families that formerly would have sent their daughters to the Temple School as a matter of course were afraid of being thought unpatriotic, and even of having their businesses boycotted, unless they sent them to public school. And the branch managers for outside corporations, who had been coming to Wellston in such numbers, weren't generally the type that valued private-school breeding in their offspring. The last year that Miss Mary Temple kept the school going, before being declared bankrupt, she had fewer than twenty pupils.

I hope I am as democratic as anyone; but I believe I can see where it isn't altogether a good thing to herd all classes of children together in public schools. I doubt, even, if our businessmen are making any money out of our two-million-dollar investment, now that every little village within a hundred miles has built a school nearly as big as ours in order to keep their citizens from moving to Wellston. About the only people who actually make any money from eliminating private schools and putting all children in public schools are stockholders of the big-business corporations that use the schools for advertising purposes.

I know the argument, of course, that this is a democratic country and that putting everyone's children together in schools makes for a democratic leveling out of classes. To be sure, there is a leveling. But the trouble is, the leveling is apt to be down, not up. When you put the child of an Episcopal minister's widow alongside the child of Joe the brewery truck driver, it is a pretty good bet that Joe's child will do most of the leveling.

Perhaps I wouldn't have such decided opinions except that I have seen at close range what an educational democracy can do under some conditions. Richard Powell

and his wife, the former Florence Lange, had one child, a girl whom they named Gloria, after some character in a Hall Caine novel, I believe. For a year or two after marrying into the rich Powell family, Florence went in rather strongly for culture.

The little girl was unusually attractive and from a baby was a great favorite of her grandfather, John Powell. I am inclined to think she was the only person Mr Powell really loved during his whole, lonely life. Certainly he couldn't have had any great affection for his wife; and while I believe he tried honestly to care for Richard, it was against reason that a man of John Powell's sensitiveness could be deeply attracted by poor clumsy, prosaic Richard.

All through her early years the Powell child attended Miss Temple's school. John Powell used sometimes to bring her into my store. She always let go his hand and came forward to make me a little bow and say, "How do you do, Mr Kent," and, as sometimes happened, when her grandfather set her on a counter while he transacted some business with me, she sat there with her small legs hanging over the edge, turning her head this way and that to look gravely around the store, but never saying a word until he came to take her down again.

She must have got her charming manners from the Temple School, because there wasn't much encouragement along those lines in her home life. Richard Powell was so immersed in his business and his Y.M.C.A. work and his inspirational talks to young men at the Erie Hotel Sunday mornings that he had little time for anything else. He didn't see a great deal of his child; and when he did, his attitude toward her, as nearly as I can describe it, was a mixture of grave concern for her soul, along with a lingering sense of shame that he had been sinful enough to become a father. I would say that Richard influenced

the child very little one way or the other; except perhaps to give her the impression that life was a pretty stodgy and unattractive affair.

The child didn't get much in the way of culture from her mother, either. Poor Florence Powell never progressed very far socially in spite of marrying into the millionaire family. There was always a little of the South Water Street bakery about her. I thought it was quite a triumph for the Temple School that the Powell child had very charming, deferential manners when she got so little encouragement at home.

But then the Temple School fell into bankruptcy, and it was a case of sending young Gloria to the local high school or to some Eastern boarding school. John Powell was all for sending her away, but Richard insisted on the high school. He said it wouldn't be showing a Christian spirit to do anything else, when the people of Wellston had made such sacrifices to build a wonderful educational plant.

I suppose it is natural in a city like Wellston, where so many foreigners have been getting jobs in our factories, that the public schools should be a bit rough and ready. And then the businessmen naturally feel that a school plant costing as much as ours should bring some financial returns. Every year the Chamber of Commerce finances the high-school football and basketball teams on trips around the state to play other towns and sends a crowd of rooters and a brass band along to whoop things up. It is considered good advertising for Wellston, though I never have been able to see why. Once we had a new school superintendent, a Mr Larkin, who thought that sort of thing interfered with the children's education and tried to stop it. It made such a row that the school board let him out after his first six months.

Anyhow, our high school wasn't the most suitable place



in the world to send a fifteen-year-old girl who had grown up in the Temple School atmosphere. Young Gloria Powell was bright and responsive and had a trusting attitude toward everyone she met that was quite appealing. Possibly she knew something of the facts of life, but if so, no one would have suspected it.

I suppose she was run after a good deal at the high school on account of her family's money. Naturally, it was the young go-getters who ran after her most; and, unfortunately, at the Temple School, where all the girls were from about the same social class, Gloria hadn't learned to discriminate. The chief go-getter at the high school seemed to be a big, buxom girl named Eva Snell, a year or so older than Gloria, whose father ran a movie theater on the far side of the railroad tracks. The two used to go by my store after school, the Snell girl always acting as though Gloria were her personal property. Sometimes three or four other girls were with them, and then they all walked abreast, swinging their hands and making people they met get out of the way and all chewing gum as hard as possible. I am sure poor Miss Temple would have fainted on the spot if she had seen it.

It was curious how young Gloria changed in various ways. Once she came in my store on some errand, and instead of saying, "How do you do, Mr Kent," as she did when a little girl, she called out carelessly, "Hello, there!" I understand young people nowadays consider that a chummy way of putting older people at their ease. And she just about shocked my Virginia-born wife to death one blustery November afternoon when they met on Market Street and Gloria said pleasantly, "Lousy day, Mrs Kent, isn't it?"

As time went on I noticed that a couple of high-school boys frequently passed my store with Gloria and the Snell girl. One was young Dave Bowman, son of the Powell



works high-pressure sales manager, and the other a lad named Garvin. Both were bad eggs. Chester Fentling, who had a trunk store in my block, was on the school board; and he told me they had been mixed up in two or three girl scrapes, but the school board had kept the affairs quiet. It wouldn't do, Chester said, to let the taxpayers know that sex could raise its ugly head in a two-million-dollar school plant.

Much as I dislike poking my nose into other people's business, I would have warned John Powell about the company his granddaughter was keeping, but he was out of the city all that winter; and there was no use saying anything to Richard about it, because he was too much wrapped up in his social-welfare work and his Sunday-morning talks to young men to pay attention to anything else. Then, too, it always seemed indelicate to mention anything connected with sex to Richard.

The rest isn't very pleasant to tell. In the spring of that year my friend Fentling told me the school authorities had discovered that a small crowd of boy and girl students were maintaining an apartment above a tobacco and candy shop, kept by a Negro woman on the street just back of the high school. Young Gloria Powell and the Snell girl belonged to the crowd. Fentling said the others had worked Gloria for money to fit up the place. The school board kept it quiet, so it never got to John Powell's ears. I was thankful for that at the time, but it might have been easier on him if he had heard about it. He would have been saved a worse shock later.

## XXI

### Bank Failure

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WHEN A CALAMITY TAKES PLACE that injures a great many people, the natural tendency is to look for a scapegoat; and when the Wellston National Bank failed in 1933, owing more than eight million dollars to depositors, nearly everyone held Clayton Vance responsible.

People remembered resentfully how he had always said he intended to be a millionaire before he was forty. Old stories were revived of sharp real-estate deals he had put through, and of his speculations in Market Street store leases whereby he had squeezed old-time merchants out of business in order to get bigger rents from chain stores. There was even some spiteful talk that his marrying the rich Mallory girl was just another of his sharp business deals.

Clayton really did have considerable to do with the bank's failure. At different times he had organized companies to buy up pieces of property in the city, and in each case paid only a small amount in cash, then borrowed the balance from the Wellston National. He was a director of the bank, which made it easy for him to borrow. When the prosperity bubble burst, and his properties weren't worth as much as the loans, he let the bank foreclose. Technically Clayton was within the law, so the talk of prosecuting him never came to anything.

But what enraged people most was that when the bank-

ing authorities called on the Wellston National directors to pay their share of the bank's losses, Clayton was able to show that he had deeded everything he owned to his wife more than a year before the bank failed.

It was always a mystery why Clayton Vance, ultra-pious as he was, should want to be rich. He never went in for pleasures of the flesh, like drinking or running after women; and he didn't seem especially to want to be admired for his money. He did indulge in a Rolls-Royce car and a chauffeur, but outside of that he was as little ostentatious as anyone I knew. He made Sunday-afternoon addresses at the Y.M.C.A. and was president of the Presbyterian Christian Endeavor. Clayton was no fool, and he must have known that those things didn't make him especially attractive.

I can only figure him out in one way. His piousness and his desire to be rich sprang from the same quality.

It was a sort of native cowardice. He was born with an excessive desire for security. He figured if he had a million dollars, well salted down, his future on earth would be secure. He also figured that a sure place in heaven would be reserved for him if he led in prayer and spoke at Y.M.C.A. meetings.

I think most pious rich men can be figured out in the same way.

Ever since the Wellston National failure Clayton has been a rather pathetic figure. He never walks up and down Market Street as he used to do. His chauffeur takes him to his office in the morning and comes after him at night. If he has an errand during the day, he goes by back streets. He still has his money, so he is reasonably sure of his future on earth. But on account of people's criticism he has had to quit the "Y" and the Christian Endeavor, so he can't be as sure of heaven as he once was. I know he must be worried.

After all, Clayton Vance's real-estate speculations weren't the sole cause of the Wellston National failure. Thousands of other banks failed without any Clayton Vances on their boards of directors. The fact is, simply, that banking had ceased to be as profitable as it once was.

It used to be that the banks in a town like Wellston pretty well controlled things. Now the banks play second fiddle to Big Business. They have to take what is left over.

I think it was back about 1919 that a friend of mine named Emmet Clark had a drugstore in Fourth Street just around the corner from Market. He was too genial a fellow to be a super-businessman and every once in a while would get behind with his bills, when he would go to Mr Henderson at the Wellston National Bank for a loan. He was owing the bank a thousand dollars when one day he conceived the idea of advertising "Prescriptions delivered to any part of city" and purchased a motorcycle for his Negro porter to make deliveries with.

At that time there was a daily sheet called the *Courthouse Reporter* that published news of bankruptcies, mortgages and all that sort of thing, including the names of persons taking out motor licenses. Emmet Clark's name appeared among the latter.

He had hardly got to his drugstore next morning when there was a telephone call asking him to come at once to the Wellston National Bank. Mr Henderson was waiting for him.

"I understand, Mr Clark," the banker said, "that you have been purchasing an automobile. Have you forgotten your note in this bank?"

Clark hastened to explain that it wasn't an automobile, but a motorcycle, and that it was for delivering prescriptions. Mr Henderson said:

"I'm relieved to know that, Mr Clark. Because if it was an automobile I should have demanded payment of your



note at once. Automobiles and notes in bank don't go together, you know."

The banker was a pretty important man in those days.

Beginning a dozen years or so ago, a number of things began to happen that made him less important. Installment selling was one of the things. When Big Business organized to sell automobiles and radio sets and oil-burning furnaces and electric refrigerators and all sorts of other things on terms of a-little-down-and-a-little-a-week, the local banker was left out in the cold and has never been able to get in again.

In pre-installment days, when you wanted an automobile, for example, you opened a bank account and kept adding to it until you had enough to pay cash for your car. The bank had the use of your money while you were saving it. Even after you bought your car the bank didn't lose the use of your money. The automobile dealer took your check right back to the bank and deposited it in *his* account. As far as the bank was concerned, it was only a case of changing a couple of names on its books.

But what happens now? You select a car and pay a little down. Perhaps, even, you choose some particular make of car because the dealer offers to take a smaller first payment than other dealers. Then you sign a paper that gives the dealer the right to take the car away from you in case you fail to make a payment. That, of course, is an admission that you aren't quite honest and that you wouldn't return the car voluntarily. I am sure that in pre-installment days you would have indignantly refused to sign any such paper.

But, anyhow, you sign. The dealer sends the paper to a finance company to be discounted. He sets a high enough price on the car to cover the finance company's charges. You never know exactly how much you pay for the privilege of buying on installments, because there are a lot of

items figured in like freight, fire insurance, theft insurance and so on. A second-hand dealer in town told me the other day that a time-payment customer paid about \$35 extra on a car that could be sold for \$150 cash.

But the local bank doesn't have a chance to make anything out of your installment purchase. The finance money all goes out of town. And when you take into consideration that radio sets and oil-burning furnaces and electric refrigerators and washing machines and all sorts of other things are being sold the same way, it isn't hard to see why so many banks failed when the prosperity bubble burst.

I figure that the Wellston National Bank's eight-million-dollar failure represented just about the amount that finance companies have taken out of town since high-pressure salesmanship came into fashion. It isn't exaggerating much to say that the Wellston National's failure, and all the other bank failures, resulted from American businessmen, back in 1907, refusing to admit that more goods were being manufactured than people could buy.

Of course, the Wellston National might have failed anyhow, even if installment selling and finance companies had never been invented. Almost as bad, from the bank's standpoint, were the chain stores that began flocking to town right after the war. Every time a chain store took a Market Street location and crowded out some private merchant, the bank suffered. The chain store never borrowed from the bank as the private merchant used to do. The chain store might keep an account at the bank, but it didn't allow the bank to make any money on the account. It never left any money in the bank to speak of. Frequently a chain-store manager deposited money at three o'clock in the afternoon and then that same evening before he went home checked it out to his chain's headquarters. All the bank got out of it was the "float" of the check.

Perhaps after a while there won't be any banks except in the big cities. If so, I wonder what will be done with the Greek-temple structures all over the country that optimistic bankers built during the prosperous era.

The Wellston National's Greek temple at the corner of Fourth and Market is already a little shabby and down at the heel. People stop to peer through the dusty windows at the empty interior, and there is a sign that reads, "For Rent Cheap. Will Alter to Suit Tenant," but so far no tenant has turned up.

It seems to me that high-pressure business has given us people in smaller places a rather shabby deal. It has drained our money away from us without giving us much of anything in return. I am sure there is no one who knew Wellston before the high-pressure era, and who knows it now, but who would say it was a pleasanter place to live in then.

## XXII

### Colleges Come to the Rescue

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**I**T IS PRETTY INTERESTING, in an industrial city like Wellston, to look around and pick out the changes of various sorts that are results of the New Deal. Or probably it would be more correct to say the changes that are results of the New Deal and the big depression. Because the two really go together. Without the depression, it isn't likely there would have been any New Deal.

Some changes are undeniably good ones. For one thing, people in general seem to have a little keener social sense than they used to have. Anyhow, if they haven't any keener social sense they know enough to keep still about it. For example, a man named Henry Seaver used to be in the printing business here, and worked up a big mail-order trade. He sold printed letterheads and envelopes all over the country. He belonged to the Altruist Club; and at the meetings he used to boast about what a clever financier he was. He said he could hire local girls to work in his printery for three dollars a week, while his mail-order competitors in big labor-union cities like New York and Chicago had to pay girls seven or eight dollars a week. He always said gleefully, "With my wage scale what it is, I can skin the pants off those big-city printers."

Seaver isn't in business now; but if he were, he would know better than to brag about his three-dollar-a-week wage scale.



Hardly anyone will deny that there was need for some kind of a change. Under the old regime, upper-class people had got into a complacent state of mind in which they took the inequalities of life pretty much as a matter of fact. Just before the 1932 presidential election my wife and I drove to Florida and stopped overnight at Charlottesville, Virginia. The University was getting ready to hold its annual conference of Best Minds, who meet to regulate the affairs of the world. I talked with a professor who was in charge of the arrangements, and he chanced to remark that he owned a couple of apple orchards near town and that he paid his laborers a dollar a day. I asked if he could get full-grown Negroes to work for that. He replied, "I don't use Negroes. I use white men." When I said it seemed pretty small pay for a man with family to live on, he said, "A dollar a day is the prevailing wage."

The hotel in the town charged six dollars a day for a small room with a single window. At that rate, if an orchard laborer was lucky enough to get a full week's work, he would have just enough to pay for a Saturday night's lodging.

For a while after the Bank Holiday in 1933, it seemed as though everybody was in favor of the New Deal. Businessmen from all over the country went to Washington to get government help, and no one suspected that Moscow Communists were working behind the scenes. When the NRA came on, it was pretty solidly supported. That was understandable, because under the codes captains of industry had a chance to fix minimum prices at which their products might be sold, and in most cases they fixed prices high enough to insure adequate profits for their industries. Chambers of commerce everywhere staged NRA parades that gave merchants opportunity to advertise their patriotism and their businesses. The New York City parade was the biggest of all. Mr S.

Klein, the Square Deal ladies' ready-to-wear merchant in Union Square, marched in person with several hundred employees; he had photographs made and displayed them in his show windows. I saw them there every time I went to New York, for months afterward. Mr Klein appeared very happy. He must patronize a good tailor, because his clothes fit beautifully.

It was only natural that a good many people should have been disappointed when the New Deal didn't bring back prosperity at once. In Wellston many of our leading citizens became Economic Royalists and fell to hating the President. When the young Louisiana physician assassinated Senator Huey Long, I heard a dozen businessmen remark, "It's too bad. The fellow killed the wrong politician."

What the depression really meant was that the flush times were definitely past. The theory was exploded that prosperity could be maintained by high-powered salesmanship. But it was pretty hard to abandon a theory that had been in vogue ever since the panic of 1907, and every once in a while high-powered salesmanship would break out in some unexpected place.

The college-education industry was about the first to put on a high-pressure sales campaign. The depression had hardly got a good start when the dean of the State University came to Wellston to address our Altruist Club. He pointed out that industry couldn't absorb all the young men who wanted jobs, so it was the duty of good citizens to send their boys to the university and keep them out of the labor market as long as possible. Other college professors made talks to other service clubs along the same lines. Newspapers reported speeches by college presidents all over the country that pointed out what a patriotic duty their particular institutions were performing in the economic crisis.

You can't, of course, blame the professors for trying to make life safe in their chosen profession; but I wouldn't say the results were entirely beneficial. A good many families took the sales campaign seriously and sent boys to college who were pretty well education-proof. A neighbor of mine here in Wellston, George Larkin, had two boys who got through high school only by the skin of their teeth; they were the type who might have done well clerking in a cigar store, but not at anything much higher. Mr Larkin had a small stationery store at the lower end of Market Street and wasn't too prosperous; but he and his wife determined the boys should go to college. His business couldn't stand the expense; when the boys had been away a couple of years, Mr Larkin's creditors closed him out. Through friends he was fixed up with a sort of charity job as doorkeeper at the Powell works. The last I heard of the boys, one worked at a gas station and the other was in a CCC camp.

The high-powered sales campaign for education has had another curious result here in Wellston, as I suppose it has everywhere else. Back in the prosperous Twenties a promising graduate stood a chance of being offered a job by some big corporation. He stood a chance, that is, if he wasn't a Jew. A young Jewish businessman told me recently that at Penn State College he got a form letter from a chain-store corporation asking him to state his qualifications, but at the end was this warning: "If you are a Jew, do not answer this." Be that as it may, not many graduates, Jewish or Gentile, are picked up by corporations nowadays; and so a good many parents fall back on another sort of wishful thinking. The idea is that Junior will form a college friendship with the son of some rich corporation executive, and through that contact the executive will take Junior into his business after graduation.



It may be a good scheme; but from my own observation it usually doesn't work. Too many young men go to college nowadays with the same idea; instead of "contacting" rich men's sons, they merely "contact" other contactors.

I know of only one case where it actually worked. The boy did "contact" a rich man's son and did get a job. He also married the rich man's daughter. I met her when the young couple came to Wellston on their honeymoon. She was already bossing him around as though he might be her servant instead of her husband. I hope I am wrong; but I am afraid in five years the boy will wish he had stayed away from college and taken a job in a garage or a machine shop.

The professorial high-pressure campaign for education has had still another effect. It seems to have given young people the idea that the main business of the country is to make life easy for them. Just lately I have read an excellent article by Mr Bruce Barton, a successful advertising man and now a member of Congress from New York City. Mr Barton tells of a group of young men and women who visited him at his Washington office. They were part of a delegation, come from all parts of the country to demand from Congress a subsidy to pay college expenses.

Mr Barton asked how much money they thought should be appropriated. One said three billions a year. Another said three and a half billions. But the question of cost did not interest them. They waved it aside. They asked: "Is it not the responsibility of the State to give every boy and girl the best possible start? And what better use for public funds than an investment in education?"

Mr Barton commented on this incident as follows: "What a startling contrast with my own youth! Would it ever have occurred to me to lay my troubles on the broad



shoulders of the national government? Of course not. Washington had nothing to do with our private tribulations. It was the business of Washington to manage the army and navy, deliver our letters, and that was about all."

I don't want to appear captious; but I think most people will agree that, in one way at least, the colleges aren't doing as good a job as they used to do. Formerly a boy who came back from college generally stood out a little from the boy who went to a job from high school. He had a little more social polish and spoke a better brand of English. Now there doesn't seem to be much difference except that college boys are apt to be a bit more rowdyish than the others. They have what Mr James Truslow Adams, writing in *Harper's Magazine*, calls "the mucker pose." A thing is either "swell" or "lousy." A friend is "a good guy." They "contact" a prospect. Just the other day I saw in *Printers' Ink* the advertisement of a young college man who sought a position with some advertising firm. He recommended himself as a man with Brains, Personality, Guts.

Recently the New York newspapers printed an interview with Dr Nicholas Murray Butler of Columbia University, in which he was quoted as saying that "colleges don't make gentlemen out of young men, and it shouldn't be expected of them." I happened to be in New York on a business trip, and a friend told me it would be worth my while to go up to Columbia and see what Dr Butler's university is doing in the way of business instruction.

I found my way into a room where a class in salesmanship was in session. The instructor was a young man who had been a salesman before coming to Columbia. When I told him I was a businessman, he welcomed me cordially and said he hoped I would profit by my visit. His pronunciation wasn't quite what one might expect in a

college instructor; he talked very rapidly, as though he were trying to sell a bill of goods and was afraid the buyer might interrupt to say no merchandise was needed.

The instructor had a class of perhaps thirty students. The main part of his instruction was to send pairs of young men to the platform to enact sales dramas in which one young man impersonated a salesman and the other young man a prospective buyer.

In the first drama the young salesman-student acted the part of a house-to-house vendor of Acme electric sweepers. He knocked at an imaginary door, and his fellow student came to ask what he wanted. The salesman pushed an imaginary Acme sweeper in front of the prospect.

"But I've already got a sweeper," the prospect said. "It's a Hoover. Is your sweeper as good as a Hoover?"

The salesman sneered. "As good as a Hoover? There's no comparison!" Then he went into a ten-minute talk to prove point by point that the Acme sweeper excelled all others, the Hoover in particular. It passed through my mind that if some philanthropic stockholder of the Hoover Corporation chanced to be within earshot, Columbia might stand a poor chance to be remembered in his will.

In another drama the classroom platform was supposed to be the interior of a wholesale textile house in New York. The student who acted the role of salesman was employed there. The other student acted the part of a Western merchant, come to New York to purchase stock. He went on the platform and said, "I'd like to look at some woolen piece goods." The salesman promptly shot back, "What's your name?"

The instructor asked me what I thought of the salesman-student's technique. I suggested that it lacked a bit in social aplomb. "If I myself were to ask to look at some merchandise," I said, "and the salesman demanded to

know my name the first thing, I would tell him that was none of his business and walk straight out of the place."

The instructor said there might be something in my point of view. But he added with spirit, "I'm not here to teach these boys social manners. I'm here to teach salesmanship."

Everyone knows, I suppose, that it is the job of a modern university president to get as many bequests as possible from rich businessmen. A good way to get bequests is to maintain schools of business where professors give instruction in salesmanship. But as a businessman with a good many years' experience, I can say there is no such thing as teaching salesmanship. The only equipment a good salesman needs is a thorough knowledge of the merchandise he has to sell and a gentlemanly manner toward his prospective customer. Anything else is mere fakery.

Once, when I was in London on a buying trip, I met an Englishman who is head of an exporting house that does business in South America. The man told me he had just taken his sixteen-year-old son out of a certain school in mid-term; the boy had come home for the Christmas holidays with an inclination to slur over his vowels and otherwise to speak in a rather sloppy manner. The boy had acquired the habit from one of the school instructors. The man was just starting out to visit different schools to find one where the boy would acquire better speech habits.

It seemed to me a rather fussy proceeding. But the man told me it was simply good business on his part. He intended to take the boy into his exporting house. In South America, he said, important businessmen are generally highly educated; they know English and speak it with special correctness because they learn it under very cultivated instructors. Should the Londoner's son, in charge of the Buenos Aires office, betray any carelessness of diction, the South Americans would set him down



as a second-rate fellow. They would draw the inference that his firm must be second-rate, too, and not desirable to do business with.

When I got back to Wellston I told the story to a lawyer friend whose son was just getting through high school. The boy's speech and manners were a bit rough and ready; Mr Mitchell thought it would be a good idea to send him to a college where he might get some of the rough-and-readiness polished off. He wrote to Harvard, Northwestern, University of California, Tulane and half a dozen other universities. In each letter he asked: Does your institution do anything about correct diction? Does it insist on a certain standard of speech as a part of the instructors' equipment, as is generally the case in English schools?

Mr Mitchell showed me the replies. From Harvard to California, and from Chicago to Louisiana, not one of the institutions paid any attention to good speech. In only one case did there seem to be any consciousness that good speech might be important in helping graduates to get on in the world. The dean of the department of English at Tulane wrote regretfully that it was difficult to inculcate careful habits of speech in an age that places little emphasis on the niceties of life. But in a spirit of helpfulness he added, "There are in the city one or two good teachers whom I could recommend and who could train the voice and develop careful, accurate habits of speech."

You can't, of course, blame university executives for trying to make life safe in their chosen profession. If they can get endowments from wealthy industrialists by promoting schools of business where salesmanship and kindred arts are taught, one can only wish them well. But it does seem as though they should try to make a better job of it.



## XXIII

### High-Pressure Selling Campaigns

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**T**HE high-pressure campaign that was designed to restore prosperity by sending young men to college, and thus keep them out of the labor market, pretty well failed of its purpose. Business grew worse instead of better. There was still more unemployment.

Early in 1932 our Wellston Chamber of Commerce staged an affair called "The Burial of Old Man Depression." There was a parade down Market Street out toward Greenlawn Cemetery, with a real hearse and coffin, a brass band playing funeral music and businessmen marchers with crepe around their hatbands. On the way back, the men discarded the crepe and the band played "Happy Days Are Here Again." The same thing with variations was done in towns and cities everywhere.

But these gestures didn't have much effect on the depression, either. By the next year some of the big national corporations were fighting for business even more fiercely than during the booming Twenties. Salesmen were bullied and scared into extraordinary effort. Occasionally some extra-sensational sales project got into print. One day a salesman in Toledo, Ohio, received a note written in an

uncouth scrawl and decorated with drawings of revolvers and knives:

"You have been picked by the mob to help in the biggest kidnap scheme they ever was get the rod oiled up and be ready when we say the word and don't talk we fix mugs what talks."

There was no signature. Three days later a second kidnap note came to the salesman. It said, "they is plenty jack in sight but you gotta be tough." The frightened salesman took the notes to the Toledo police. The police made an investigation, and the truth came out. It was part of a campaign promoted by the Automatic Washer Company of Newton, Iowa, to increase its sales. The persons to be "kidnaped" were merchants whom the company hoped to get on its books. As explained in a later letter from the company's sales manager, every time a salesman sold a bill of washers to a new merchant, he was credited with a "kidnap" and given a bonus of \$1.50.

Possibly because the scheme tied in so nicely with the Lindbergh kidnaping and other tragedies of the period, the Automatic Washer Company came out very well. The sales manager reported to the trade press that seventy-seven salesmen throughout the country earned their \$1.50 bonuses and secured more than two hundred new accounts for the company.

A great many plans, used by various corporations to stimulate depression sales, are described in business journals. At a convention of the De Soto Motor Corporation's salesmen, there was staged a drama in which four men, dressed in black, walked out upon the stage and each told a story of depression troubles. Then a doctor appeared who took the men in turn behind the scenes and presumably killed them all. Four revolver shots were heard. The convention chairman then asked the salesman audience, "Is there anyone else who is afflicted?"

The Norge Products Company, one of the largest manufacturers of refrigerators in the country, opened a sales contest by sending its salesmen photographs of a naked man. An accompanying letter stated that the naked man represented the salesman. The salesman could earn the privilege of clothing himself by selling certain quantities of merchandise. A certain number of sales entitled the salesman to wear a garter. Further sales entitled him to wear a belt, a shoe, a shirt, a pair of trousers and so on. The company held a banquet at the end of its contest. Each salesman had to appear at the banquet clothed only in the garments that his sales entitled him to.

I could describe a hundred big-business activities similar to these I have mentioned, merely by thumbing through the pages of various trade publications. Probably I shall be criticized for thus laying bare the less lovely side of high-powered business. But I believe people are entitled to know what is going on. Inevitably, business helps to set the social standards of any country; and it is particularly so in the United States. Life in general is bound more and more to become a grubby affair as long as our biggest and richest corporations continue to disregard the decencies of life in the scramble for bigger sales.

High-powered salesmanship isn't even good business. It can create temporarily what seems like prosperity, but isn't. Even the colleges are now feeling the effects of their high-powered campaigns of a few years ago. Lately I have read statements of President Conant of Harvard, (the university that first set up a department to teach salesmanship and real-estate technique) and President Hutchins of the University of Chicago; and both admit that the schools of the country oversold their market.

There isn't any difference in principle between high-pressure selling of education and high-pressure selling of merchandise. A manufacturing corporation can frighten

and shame its salesmen to the extent that they will trick merchants into overloading their shelves with goods. Then the merchants have to stop buying. Nowadays, with manufacturing plants equipped for mass production, two years of high-powered selling is about the limit. High-pressure installment selling by retail merchants may put off the day of reckoning a year longer; but eventually the time comes when business has to stop until merchants work off their surplus stocks and private citizens pay off their installments.

While nearly everyone admits that high-pressure selling is bad, no one seems inclined to do much about it. Many captains of industry, apparently, believe it is wrong when competitors promote high-pressure campaigns, but right when they themselves promote high-pressure campaigns.

In January 1938 the General Electric Company held a salesmen's convention at Bridgeport to promote its home-laundry machinery. The slogan was, "More Home Laundry Sales to Dealers—More Home Laundry Sales *by* Dealers." It was announced as an All-America sales drive, and keyed to a football motif. A sales specialist opened the convention from the platform by kicking a football the length of the auditorium. From a phonograph record offstage came sounds of a football game, bands, cheers, and the voice of Knute Rockne appealing to his squad. Mr John Wicht, manager of the General Electric home-laundry division, urged the home-laundry salesmen to go out and win. Then the sales specialist counseled the salesmen that they should practice washing and ironing; he proposed to set them an example. He spoke to a salesman in the audience: "Say, your shirt looks dirty. Bring it up here and I'll wash it." The salesman replied: "You'll wash my shirt? Like hell you will. I'll wash it myself." The salesman then went on the stage



and washed his shirt and ironed it before the audience of men and women.

It is pretty plain that the more high-powered salesmanship there is, the more frequently panics and depressions will come. It is also pretty plain that Big Businessmen can't or won't do much to stop high-powered salesmanship in their own industries. The worst offenders are industries producing merchandise that lends itself to installment selling—electric washers, automobiles, refrigerators, radio sets and the like. Manufacturers in those industries can push salesmanship to the limit without too much risk because their merchandise has a resale value; and the laws of most states permit a seller to retain title to an article after he has delivered it to his customer; he can take it back in case the customer fails to make all the payments. If you make it impossible to take merchandise away from a customer, you pretty well abolish the worst features of high-powered salesmanship.

Several years ago, when the depression was at its worst, our Wellston Chamber of Commerce held a meeting to consider the local situation. Several thousand men were out of work, and the only relief money came from voluntary subscriptions. These weren't very heavy, because our businessmen weren't in any too good shape at the time. Working people had tied themselves up with installment contracts that they couldn't meet, and their belongings were being taken away from them right and left.

At the Chamber of Commerce meeting I made a little speech in which I told how, in France, supersalesmanship is held down to reasonable limits. According to the Code Napoléon, when a French businessman sells an article on credit to a customer, and delivers it to him, the title goes with it. The article belongs to the customer. There is no trick of law by which the businessman can take it away from him. The French businessman must depend on one

of two things: either that his customer is honest and will voluntarily return the article if he finds he can't pay for it; or that the customer is financially responsible and can be sued in the courts and forced to pay. I suggested to our Chamber of Commerce members that a federal law, similar to that of the French, might go far to keep the United States out of the kind of a fix we were in.

My speech didn't go any too well. A man named Norton, who was in the second-hand automobile business, charged me with Communistic tendencies. He claimed he would have to go out of business if he couldn't put mortgages on the cars he sold. Norton was an Englishman by birth. He said there were already too many crooks in America who would buy a car and then skip out with it, and such a law would simply encourage more crookedness.

Later on my little speech found its way into print, and then I began to get reproachful letters from all over the country. The majority of writers were men connected with finance companies. Generally the letters were based on an ardent sense of patriotism: America had become great because our laws encouraged business; business, thus unhampered, had made our standard of living the highest in the world; through business enterprise, working people in this country enjoyed ownership of luxuries unknown to workers in other countries.

The severest criticism came from the headquarters of an association of finance companies. The secretary wrote me there was no French law such as I described, and held me responsible for spreading a false statement that might be detrimental to the association members' business. That made me pretty mad, and I took the trouble to get official verification of my statement from the French consulate in New York City and from the United States Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. But that didn't impress the executives of the association of finance com-

panies. They engaged an economist who wrote a three-thousand-word article saying it wasn't so, and they sent copies of the article to newspaper and magazine editors all over the country.

I let the matter drop. But sometimes, when I hear big businessmen say this country would be all right if Government would quit meddling in private enterprise, I wonder if Big Business can really be trusted to have things all its own way.

## XXIV

### Virginia Tradition Gives Way

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**M**Y OWN line of business gives a pretty fair example of the way people have changed during the years I have been in Wellston. In pre-high-pressure times people bought solid-gold jewelry or went without. If a man couldn't afford a gold watch, he bought a silver one. The idea of buying a "gold-filled" watch never entered his mind. It was the same way with table furnishings. Only mechanic-class people or boarding-house keepers bought plated knives and forks. Upper-class people used plain steel with bone handles until they could afford solid silver.

One day last year a man named Marsh, who is sales manager for the New England Silver Plate Corporation, came through Wellston on a trip to find out how the trade was responding to his concern's advertising campaign. I told him his advertising would find its hardest test in the Southern states where there isn't a large mechanic class. "You can call your advertising a success," I said, "if it persuades people in Virginia to buy plated ware."

He seemed surprised. "Why Virginia?"

"Because Virginians hold onto their aristocratic traditions," I said. It was a phrase I had learned from my wife.



Marsh pulled out a notebook and thumbed over the pages.

"Virginia doesn't seem any different from other states," he said. "The figures don't show any special sales resistance there."

It was shortly after this that I agreed to drive Luley-Lee down to Tidewater Virginia to visit her relatives. During her more than twenty-five years in Wellston she always spoke of Pocomac as "home" and planned how we should go there to live when I retired from business. "So as to live among quality folks," she said.

One day she was in a Market Street bookstore and saw a book on the counter called *Squad*. On the jacket the publishers had printed in large letters, "Damn Good!"

Luley-Lee came home in a sputter of anger. "I declare, Peter, life is gettin' positively indecent up here in your old Nawth. It seems like nobody thinks there are ladies and gentlemen any more."

Another time we went together on a trip to New York, and she happened to pick up a copy of an evening newspaper. Mr Bob Davis had reviewed a book by a man named Spencer, and his comment was, "My compliments to Spencer, whoever the hell he is." And on the same trip she saw a billboard on Broadway advertising a motion picture:

"4 Marx Brothers Will Give You a Big Belilaff."

But my wife's indignation at these things was nothing to what she felt when she began to see photographs of rich women used in cigarette advertisements. Generally she muttered something about Nawthern white trash and told me to hurry up and make enough money to retire on so we could go to live in Virginia where people had a little refinement.

We drove into Virginia by way of the Shenandoah

Valley. All through Pennsylvania there was scarcely a mile but that some young man stood beside the road wagging his thumb for a ride. Perhaps I am unreasonable, but hitchhikers always irritate me. A boy of my generation would have walked until he dropped before begging a ride. Every time I growled at the sight of some particularly obstreperous young man capering about to attract attention, Luley-Lee remarked reassuringly, "Never mind, dear, we'll soon be in Virginia."

But when we crossed the line and it turned out there were just as many hitchhikers below the Potomac River as above, she said, "I reckon they're just Nawthern riff-raff goin' to Florida or somewhere."

It was getting dusk when we approached Staunton, of a Sunday evening. Apparently the students of the swanky military school were returning from a week-end holiday, for all along the highway young men in the attractive Confederate-gray uniform of the school were standing at the edge of the concrete wagging their thumbs toward Staunton. But when I glanced at my wife and saw the look on her face, I didn't have the heart to say anything.

Next morning we were at Natural Bridge. We were a little sentimental about the place, because we had been there on our wedding trip and spent several days at the little wooden hotel, walking down into the chasm each afternoon to sit side by side in the cool shade of the great stone arch.

This time everything was changed. The entrance to the chasm is now through a huge curio store, and we had to skirt long counters of dolls and pin trays and fancy pillows and picture postcards before we could buy our admission tickets, which cost a dollar apiece. For another ten cents we could have ridden down the mountain in an automobile, but we preferred to walk and to try to recapture our feelings of twenty-five years before.

I realize that when people are filled with beautiful sentiment they are apt to be cross; and that may, perhaps, account for the incidents of the next few minutes.

We found the spot where we had sat on our honeymoon visit, but a neat settee prevented our sitting on the ground as we had done then. Crowds of sightseers passed up and down, carrying souvenirs purchased at the shop at the entrance. Two women of the stoutish, women's-club type plumped down on the settee beside us. Then suddenly, apparently from the rock above our heads, there was a burst of mechanical music. The tune was "Be Mine Tonight." The stouter of the two clubwomen murmured sentimentally, "How lovely!"

A man passed who seemed to be connected with the entertainment. Luley-Lee glanced, a little pointedly I thought, at the woman, then spoke to the attendant: "Couldn't that horrible noise be stopped a few minutes, so we can just sit and enjoy things?"

The man shook his head. "People like it."

The talking machine finished "Be Mine Tonight" and in a moment began "Oh, Promise Me."

Luley-Lee said, "Let's go, Peter."

The stoutish woman leaned over to say patronizingly, "You don't like music, then?"

"I do," Luley-Lee called over her shoulder. "But not this kind of music and not in this place."

"It's easy to see," the stoutish woman snapped, "that you're a Nawtherner. Us Virginians love music."

I took Luley-Lee's hand in mine. "It's better, dear," I said, "not to answer her."

But I was pretty angry myself, when we climbed the hill and made our exit through the curio shop, to find an advertising sign wired on the bumper of my car: "Visit Natural Bridge." I broke my knife getting it off, which made me angrier still.

As we drove through the main business street of Fredericksburg, we saw the huge sign that local enthusiasts have set up:

### “GEORGE WASHINGTON’S BOYHOOD HOME TOWN”

Luley-Lee sniffed: “I reckon a lot of carpet baggers must have settled around here.”

In Richmond a man was accosting pedestrians in front of the Chamber of Commerce building and giving away samples of chewing gum. We put up for the night at the big Broad Street hotel, where we had to eat in the cafeteria because the dining room had been discontinued. I had to ask to have our room changed on account of a noisy drinking party next door where the noisiest person intermittently shouted, “Virginia, mother of states and statesmen, by God!” At the hotel newsstand the girl said she handled twenty New York tabloid newspapers every day. At this last Luley-Lee muttered “It’s only Nawth-erners that read them!” but I thought there was an uncertain note in her voice.

I hardly knew Pocomac when I drove into town. There was an electric cross on the Baptist church along with the sign, “Jesus Saves.” The steamer from Old Point Comfort had been abandoned, but buses came through every two hours and stopped at Sadowski Brothers’ Filling Station, where travelers made use of the toilet facilities. Mr Archie Harrison, Luley-Lee’s father, had long been gone, and the place where his pharmacy had been was occupied by a chain drugstore. The Pocomac Chamber of Commerce was next door.

Mr Cofer, clerk at the New Robert E. Lee Hotel, said “All rightie” when I asked for a room and told me we had arrived just in time to enjoy the Inter-City luncheon



meeting of all the Tidewater Altruist clubs. He pointed out the Altruist district deputy who had already arrived and was standing in the hotel Palm Room with his wife. At sight of the gentleman Luley-Lee exclaimed, "Why, that's cousin Richard Harrison!" The district deputy was principal of a girls' boarding school in a neighboring county and was vaguely related—an eighth or tenth cousin—to Luley-Lee on her father's side.

She started forward to speak with him, but at that moment a newly arrived Altruist pushed ahead of her. He was a large, bald man with a prominent nose, and on his celluloid badge was printed his name, Abraham Fineberg, and his Altruist classification, Kredit Klothing. The district deputy shook hands and glanced quickly at the man's badge to make sure of the name. "Howdy, Abe," he said. "Glad to see you." He took his wife's arm and drew her forward.

"Abe, this is Virgie. Virgie, this is Abe."

Luley-Lee plucked at my sleeve and whispered, "Let's go on up to our room."

"But I thought you wanted to speak to your cousin," I said.

"I reckon I've changed my mind," she answered.

Our stay at the New Robert E. Lee Hotel was shorter than we expected. When we came in from a drive next afternoon Luley-Lee bought a magazine at the chain drugstore and started to read while I wrote a letter. After a while she rose abruptly and went to the window, where she stood looking out at the Pocomac public square.

I picked up the magazine that she had flung down and saw a full-page advertisement in colors. It was one of those advertisements that seem to reveal on the part of the advertiser an unbounded confidence in the brainlessness of his fellow men. Granting the truth of his belief, it was a skillful piece of work. There was a photograph

of two sisters, members of a family that has been prominent in Virginia social life for more than three hundred years. They were in evening dress; the text began:

"Cousins of a former governor of Virginia, they live on a famous estate on the James River."

Then there was a paragraph of action:

". . . made their debut in Richmond, but they take an active interest in their crops and are in the saddle most of the day, riding their acres."

Then a homey detail:

"They have five saddle horses, one of which is called simply 'My Horse,' but all their four dogs boast given names."

Then dialogue:

"'I enjoy Camels' flavor,' continued Miss Alice. 'Camels never make me nervous.'

"'Such a smooth, round smoke,' concludes Miss Mary.

Then the advertiser's forthright statement:

"Both sisters smoke Camel cigarettes and for different reasons."

I put down the magazine and went to stand beside Luley-Lee. It was on the tip of my tongue to make some joke about Virginia tradition, but I held it back when I saw she was crying.

"I wonder," she asked, "if we couldn't start for home this evenin'?"

I told her we could. She took my arm in both of hers and said, "I reckon you're about all I've got left now, Peter."

## XXV

### The C.I.O. Comes to Wellston

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UP TO a year or so ago, Wellston was an open-shop city. The Chamber of Commerce stressed that a good deal when campaigning for new industries. It was mentioned in the leaflets sent to manufacturers in different parts of the country; and the chamber set up billboards along the two main-line railroads that had the message, "Locate Your Plant in Wellston. Low Living Costs. Good Labor Conditions." Including our manufacturing suburbs, Wellston had grown to be a city of close to two hundred thousand people.

From time to time the American Federation of Labor organized some manufacturing plant, but generally the workmen got tired of paying their twenty-five-cents-a-week dues after a few months, and then the union died of its own accord. Several large concerns, like the Shuttles Valve Corporation and the Wellston Machinery Company, promoted company unions. In such case the management paid all expenses, so the union didn't cost the workmen anything. Theoretically, the men could send a committee to arbitrate wages and hours with the management; but the arbitration committee generally ended up by agreeing to what the management said was best.

The Powell works had one of these company unions.

Richard was tremendously proud of it. In his Sunday-morning talks to young men he often spoke of the close relations between his employees and himself, and said there would never be any industrial unrest if both sides would conduct themselves according to the Saviour's teachings. He shut down the plant one day each July for the union's annual picnic; and he made a point of dropping in at the union's monthly get-together party at Community Hall, where he wore his oldest clothes and discussed domestic problems with the workmen's wives. Yet I imagine the workmen would have been just as well satisfied if he had stayed away. Out of regard for Richard's disapproval of dancing, they couldn't dance; and what beer drinking was done had to be carried on outside the hall.

It wasn't until the latter part of 1936 that there seemed to be any serious threat to Wellston's industrial situation. The newspapers carried some pretty ugly stories of beatings and killings in Detroit and Chicago, and even in the small town of Kohler, Wisconsin; but most of our people believed the troubles were fomented by Communist agitators who took their orders from Moscow and stirred up the minds of a lot of ignorant immigrant laborers. It seemed unbelievable that anything of the sort could take place in a community like Wellston, where our leading men and most of our workpeople were of old American stock.

One day Gish, editor of the *Times-Bulletin*, came into my store and told me a strike was threatened at the Powell Steel & Cutlery Works. An agent of the Committee for Industrial Organization was in the city who proposed to organize the Powell employees. He had already signed up nearly a thousand Powell mechanics. He promised to get them a 25 per cent raise in wages; once he got the big Powell concern organized, it would be



easy to do the same thing in every other plant in the city. That same afternoon Richard Powell called me up and asked me to come out to the plant. He said he was very much worried over the strike rumors and wanted to talk it over. His father was in Europe at the time.

I found Richard upset over the prospect of a tussle with the C.I.O.; but more than that he was genuinely hurt at what he thought was ingratitude on the part of his workmen. Like so many big employers Richard had acquired, over the years, a sort of Jove complex; and like other big employers he didn't in the least know he had it.

"I simply can't understand this thing, Mr Kent," he said. "How can my men turn against me after all I've done for them? I pay fair wages. And there isn't another plant in the state that does so much in the way of swimming pools, gymnasiums, nursing service and all that sort of thing."

"It may be, Richard," I suggested, "the men would rather get a little bigger wages and pay for their own swimming pools and nursing service. Probably that's what the C.I.O. fellow's been telling them."

His round, good-natured face showed a trace of irritation. "My people don't need any outsider to tell them what they want. They've got their own union. If they've a grievance, they can always come to me."

"I know there's a company union," I said, "and I know you tell your people to send a committee to you whenever they want something done. But the men on the committee are apt to be a bit bashful. They don't want to offend the boss. If anything big is wanted, an outsider is a better man to do the talking. He isn't afraid of losing his job."

Richard answered firmly: "Since I have been president of this concern I do not recall a single case where a reasonable request was turned down."

"There was," I said, "the case of the open-door privies."

It was a mean little dig at Richard. When the new addition to the Powell plant was built a few years before, there was installed a row of workmen's toilets without doors. They were similar to the toilets provided for workmen at a great many modern industrial plants. It was a device for promoting plant efficiency. If a workman could shut himself behind a closed door while attending a call of nature, he might smoke a cigarette or read a newspaper on company time. But if he had to attend to his call of nature in full view of the public, he would naturally cut it as short as possible. The men grumbled among themselves about it, but never made a formal complaint.

To do Richard justice, I believe he was never enthusiastic over the open-door-toilet idea. He was more or less talked into it by a man named Donelly, one of the Continental Advertising Company's efficiency experts, who came out from New York several times while the plant addition was being built. I think Richard was also influenced in the matter by the Reverend Mr Harriss. The minister became business-minded to an extraordinary degree after he took charge of the Powell works' welfare activities. Any scheme that was tagged with the word "efficiency" could always get Mr Harriss' hearty support.

Just a shade of the Jovian complex crept into Richard's voice. "If my workpeople aren't satisfied with their toilet arrangements," he said, "they should come to me. They know I am a Christian employer."

"They're probably too modest to come to you over a thing like that," I told him. "But it's a pretty safe bet the C.I.O. fellow won't let modesty hold him back."

Richard was shocked. "Surely, Mr Kent, you don't

think he would exploit a thing of so delicate a nature? Mention it in public, and all that?"

"According to what Gish told me," I said, "this C.I.O. fellow is nobody's fool. If he thinks he can gain anything by yelling about open-door privies up and down Market Street, he'll probably do it."

I asked Richard how he came to know about the C.I.O., and he said one of his mechanics, a man named Harvey Wilkins, was keeping him posted.

"Stool pigeon?" I suggested.

"Oh, not at all," Richard answered. "Harvey's just doing what he thinks is his duty. His loyalty to me is simply beautiful."

I happened to know the mechanic. He was an elderly, easygoing fellow of old American stock, just the sort that chambers of commerce have in mind when they advertise "Good Labor Conditions." Harvey thought the sun revolved around the Powell works and the Powell family. I imagine he got around four dollars a day, but he would have been just as loyal at a dollar and a half. Once he came in my store with two or three other Powell employees to get a watch fixed; one of the men said something about wages, and I heard Harvey pipe up, "Oh, I'm satisfied. Somebody's got to be poor, you know." He held some kind of an office in a little Methodist church out at the end of the Pine Street bus line and exhorted at revival meetings.

"If all my people were as good Christians as old Harvey Wilkins," Richard sighed, "there'd never be any trouble."

"But unfortunately they aren't," I answered. "So I'm afraid you and the C.I.O. fellow are going to have a wrestling match."

Richard pulled two typewritten sheets out of his desk

to show me. Both were addressed to the employees of the Powell Steel & Cutlery Works. One sheet began:

"I hereby announce that all Powell employees will, effective at once, receive a 10 per cent pay increase . . ."

On the other sheet was this:

"For several years past the clerical workers of the Powell company have received an annual two weeks' vacation, with pay. I am now happy to announce that, beginning this year, two weeks' vacation with pay will be granted every Powell worker, no matter what his position may be."

Both messages were signed, "Richard Powell, President." He folded up the papers and said in a hurt tone:

"And to think, Mr Kent, I was just ready to announce all this to my workpeople when this C.I.O. nonsense cropped up."

"Why not announce it anyhow?" I suggested.

He replied sharply, "And reward ingratitude? Never!" He threw the papers in his desk and slammed the drawer shut.

"But look here, Richard," I said. "I'm not a big stockholder in the Powell works. I happen to be a director because your father and I are old friends. But I have a right to ask a straight question. What do you propose to do?"

"Nothing!" Like so many colorless people, Richard had a streak of stubbornness in him. He probably meant what he said. But I persisted:

"Right there in your desk you've got the ammunition that will run this C.I.O. fellow out of town in a hurry. Send those announcements to a printer and have him run off a thousand posters right away. Then tonight have



the posters stuck up all over the plant for the men to read when they come to work in the morning. Do that and you'll have the strike licked before it starts."

"They'll say I did it because I was afraid of the C.I.O."

"Not if you print on the posters that you'd planned it long before you ever heard any rumors of a strike. They'll believe you."

He sat quiet awhile, thinking. I thought I had him convinced. But at last he shook his head.

"I mustn't condone ingratitude, Mr Kent. But I shall pray for guidance. My Lord will show me a way out."

From his solemn expression I was afraid he might start praying then and there and ask me to join in. I told him I must get back to my business.

Within a day or so all Wellston knew of the threatened labor troubles. Everyone who owned anything was worried. For months we had been reading voluminous newspaper accounts of the C.I.O., what it was doing in this community and that, all over the country. Whether or not the newspaper stories were colored to fit editorial policies, as some labor sympathizers claimed, I am not qualified to say; but I am sure I do not exaggerate when I say that nine tenths of our well-to-do, property-owning people had got to the point where they looked on the C.I.O. as some kind of an evil monster that, if it had its way, would turn the country into a sort of Communistic Russia, with the low, dirty fellows on top and the cultured people starving to death.

In Wellston the situation was the more frightening because of the mystery surrounding it. Whoever the chief C.I.O. organizer was, he managed to keep his identity to himself. It was rumored he was a Jew named Minsky, but no one knew for sure. No one would rent a hall for C.I.O. meetings in the main part of the city; the only place to be had was an empty factory building across the

tracks, a quarter of a mile from the Union Station. But even this turned out to the C.I.O.'s advantage. If the meetings had been held downtown there wouldn't have been anything more mysterious than the sight of a lot of mechanics stringing up a stairway each night, quite as though they were going to their Woodmen of the World or their Loyal Order of Moose lodges.

But out at the old factory building the thing took on a different air. The place was dimly lighted with oil lamps, and there were no street lights for a couple of blocks. The long lines of men tramping there through the darkness every night made it seem as though something sinister must be afoot. It was really a godsend to the C.I.O. organizer that he was refused the use of the downtown halls. If he had planned it himself he couldn't have conceived a more perfect setting to play on the fears of the already worried citizens. All it needed was a burning cross to make it seem like the old Ku Klux era. Only this time it was the comfortable upper classes who were frightened, instead of a lot of poor Jews, Catholics and Negroes.

Our Chamber of Commerce was first to take up the challenge. The *Times-Bulletin* published the news of the C.I.O. invasion on a Monday; and the same edition carried a message from the president of the chamber, Edgar Baldwin, announcing a mass meeting for Friday night, at the Civic Auditorium. Perhaps I merely betray the jealousy of an ex-Chamber of Commerce president when I sometimes think it odd that Mr Baldwin should be a member of our Chamber of Commerce at all, to say nothing about his being president. He is manager for an automobile financing company in New York that buys installment contracts from automobile dealers.

Be that as it may, Mr Baldwin did get a big crowd of our best people out for his Friday-night meeting. A full-page advertisement, paid for by the Chamber of

Commerce, announced it as a "Protest Against Communism." The head of practically every manufacturing plant in the city was on hand, and most of them brought their wives. From the grim expressions on the ladies' faces it was apparent they were even more opposed to Communism than their husbands. Local wholesale houses, too, were represented pretty nearly 100 per cent. But the retailers were less unanimous. Owners of high-class exclusive stores were generally on hand; but most of the popular-price merchants and installment dealers, who catered to working-class trade, discreetly stayed away.

A huge American flag was draped across the back of the stage. In the absence of Mayor Boyle, Mr Baldwin presided. It was rumored the mayor found it to his convenience to be away from the city out of consideration for the feelings of working-class voters. Several prominent citizens were grouped about Mr Baldwin, among them Judge Lipscomb and Charles S. Cottrell, of the Shuttles Valve Corporation. Richard Powell was on the stage, too, looking terribly depressed. Religion was represented by six clergymen, who sat in a row at one side of the stage. They were all from big downtown churches. As in the case of the merchants, the ministers who shepherded working-class flocks stayed away. Perhaps they weren't asked; or perhaps they had their wives and children to think of. For the first time in its history Wellston's haves and have-nots were definitely divided.

Mr Quackenbush, of the First Baptist Church, formally opened the meeting with a prayer that dealt largely with the destruction of Christianity in Communistic Russia.

The clergyman was followed by a young man named Kavanaugh, from the Hotel Erie's orchestra, who played "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling" on a trombone.

Mr Cottrell, of the Shuttles Valve Corporation, read a prepared speech. He warned against Communism and



exhorted his hearers to select the right and follow on, letting the chips fall where they might.

At a sign from the chairman, Mr Harriss, of the First Presbyterian Church, stepped to the front of the stage and asked the audience to join him in singing "Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit Bag."

Judge Lipscomb made a short speech, as did two or three others. There was a round of applause when the chairman called on Richard Powell. But Richard shook his head and made a pitiful little gesture to indicate he couldn't make a speech.

It was a relief when Mr Baldwin stood up and read a formal resolution that pledged every person to "oppose Communism and all subversive foreign influence to the full extent of his or her ability."

The resolution was voted unanimously. The Reverend Mr Harriss then led in community singing, "There Is a Gold Mine in the Sky Far Away," and the meeting was adjourned.

I know all this seems unbelievably silly—silly and futile. Yet I have set it down precisely as it happened. The only explanation I can think of is that things in America are done that way now. We believe in gestures. We seem to have got a long way from the straight thinking we used to do years ago.

But if some reader is inclined to brush my account aside as an example of provincial naïveté, I would refer him to the columns of New York City newspapers of quite recent date. Twenty thousand New Yorkers gathered in Madison Square Garden to devise ways to combat the epidemic of gangster crime. There were speeches at that mass meeting, too. And music. According to the newspapers, in fact, a chief event of the evening was a song written for the occasion by Mr George M. Cohan



and sung by a radio baritone. It was entitled, "Good-bye, Mr Racketeer, Good-bye."

I doubt if you can scare off racketeers by singing a song at them, even in New York City.

A few days after the Chamber of Commerce meeting, Richard Powell phoned again to ask me to come out to the works. The C.I.O. organizer had sent word that he would call on him that morning. I hadn't been with Richard more than a few minutes when the doorman brought the fellow's card. Richard said to show him in. I confess that then I had the surprise of my life, and I know Richard felt the same way.

David Minsky was far from the burly, labor-union fellow without a collar that we expected to see. He was unmistakably Jewish, young, rather slender, with delicate hands and small feet. He wore a double-breasted blue suit that might have come straight from a Bond Street tailor. His handkerchief stuck out of the pocket just the correct distance, and there was a carnation in the lapel of the coat. I learned afterward that he was a lawyer, recently graduated from some New England university. His speech was that of a person who has a respect for words. He smiled at Richard genially.

"Of course, Mr Powell, you know what I'm here for. I see no reason why we can't come to an amicable arrangement."

Richard hadn't quite got over his astonishment. He said with a touch of awkwardness, "Of course, Mr Minsky. Of course."

Minsky pulled out a typewritten sheet of paper. "Here are our terms, Mr Powell. Do you care to read them now, or shall I come back later?"

"Isn't this a little high-handed, Mr Minsky?" Richard made no move to take the paper. Minsky laughed good-naturedly.

"Oh no, Mr Powell. Not high-handed at all. Just an ordinary conference between businessmen. Or perhaps I should put it in another way. Let's say I'm a salesman and you're a buyer. I've come to sell you the C.I.O."

"It's a strange sort of salesmanship, Mr Minsky." Richard was beginning to show exasperation. "You come in here with your ultimatum all typed on a sheet of paper——"

Minsky laughed again. "Don't call it an ultimatum, Mr Powell. It isn't that. Remember, I'm a salesman. I'm selling you the C.I.O. What's on this paper is my price list—the price I'm going to ask you for the merchandise that I've got to sell."

He held the paper up and pointed to the first paragraph. "Just look at this, Mr Powell. I'm offering you a bargain. A cut price, you might say. Originally I intended to ask a 25 per cent raise in wages for your workers. But I've made it a mere 20 per cent raise. Surely that's cheap enough?"

"The business can't stand that," Richard told him. Minsky pulled a card out of his pocket and consulted some figures.

"I have here, Mr Powell, your financial reports for some years back. Your concern earned a quarter of a million dollars last year, and almost as much in 1936——"

"But for three years before that," Richard broke in, "we scarcely came out even."

"Precisely, Mr Powell. And during those bad years a lot of your mechanics worked on short time. They scarcely came out even, either."

"It's necessary to build up reserves——"

"Certainly it is. Everyone should. I've been telling your workpeople that, Mr Powell. They must build up reserves. That's why they must have a 20 per cent raise."

The man's continued assumption of superiority was too much for Richard. He burst out angrily:

"You can talk about the poor workingman all you like, Minsky, but you can't fool me. It isn't the workingman you're here for. You're here for the money that's in it for Minsky. You claim that after you've lined up my mechanics you'll go after all the other plants in the city. I understand you charge your members a dollar a month dues. Out of the dollar, you take a quarter for yourself. Am I right, Minsky?"

The organizer raised a protesting hand. "*Mister* Minsky, if you please, Mr Powell. We're both gentlemen, you know."

"All right, then, *Mister* Minsky. Let's say you manage to get four or five thousand members. In that case you'd be drawing down a salary of more than a thousand dollars a month. A pretty nice income, I'd say, for a labor-union man!"

"You don't deny I'm worth it, Mr Powell?"

"No one can earn a thousand dollars a month unless he's in business."

"Aren't you forgetting, Mr Powell, that ours is a capitalistic country?" David Minsky accented the word *ours* just a little. "It's capitalism, Mr Powell, that made America the greatest country in the world. We Americans"—he accented the *we* a little, too—"go on the principle that every man is entitled to just as much money as he can earn in any profession he chooses. I choose to be a C.I.O. organizer. If you say I'm not entitled to earn a thousand dollars a month, then you're sabotaging the first principle of capitalism. You're sabotaging America. You don't want to do that, do you, Mr Powell?"

All this was said in a semi-mocking tone that got under Richard's skin. He thumped his desk and half shouted, "All that's just talk, Minsky. You're no real American.

Why don't you go back to Russia where you belong!"

So far I had been only an onlooker. But Richard was making a bit of a spectacle of himself; and I always had a sort of left-handed liking for him in spite of his clumsiness. I said to Minsky:

"Why not give Mr Powell time to think over your proposals? He hasn't read that paper of yours yet. When he does, perhaps some compromise will suggest itself."

Minsky bowed politely and laid his paper on Richard's desk. "If I come back day after tomorrow," he asked, "will it be quite convenient?" Richard nodded. But as Minsky reached the door he turned to say, "I'm afraid there won't be anything to compromise, Mr Powell. It'll be all or nothing."

Richard asked me what I thought of the fellow. I said I had a lot more respect for labor-union intelligence than I had before. If the unions would all use organizers like Minsky, they'd probably go a long way.

I wasn't present at the next meeting between Richard and the organizer, but Richard told me it was very brief. He told Minsky he couldn't agree to all the union demands, but was willing to leave disputed questions to an arbitration committee. To that Minsky replied, "Your family is worth ten million dollars. Where'll you find arbiters who can forget that?" Minsky was a little rougher than at the first interview. When he went away he said, "Tomorrow morning's the dead line. I'll be here at nine o'clock."

I was there next morning when Minsky came. He wore a tweed suit this time, but it fitted as beautifully as the first one. I couldn't help wondering who his tailor was. He spoke to Richard in about the same tone that a lawyer in a murder trial uses toward a witness for the opposition:

"Well, Powell, what do you say. Is it a strike?"

Richard began, "I can't quite see my way——"



Minsky pulled out his watch. "I'm giving you ten minutes to make up your mind. I'll wait outside."

The office door clicked behind him. Richard shook his head to signify he intended to stand pat. Neither of us said anything. As we waited we could hear the ordinary noises of the works in operation, the whirl of running machinery and the regular thump thump of the big trip hammers. Then everything stopped.

We walked across the driveway that separates the office from the works. The men were idling about their regular places, laughing and talking as though the whole thing were a huge joke. Some fussed with their machines, applying a bit of oil or tightening up a bolt. Richard spoke to men here and there, and they answered in the friendliest manner. Halfway down the line old Harvey Wilkins sat looking at his lathe as though he expected it might start up again any minute. He rose at Richard's approach and touched his forehead:

"I'm terrible sorry, Mr Richard. You know I didn't want to strike. I just had to go along with the others."

Richard patted his shoulder. "You're a good Christian, Harvey. You're my friend. Nothing will ever make me forget that."

The sit-down strike lasted through that day and the next. After that the men stayed away from the plant, apparently acting on Minsky's orders. For a week or two nothing much happened, except that there was a meeting every night in the abandoned factory building across the tracks, and every other person you met asked apprehensively how long you thought the strike would last. My friend Gish, of the *Times-Bulletin*, wrote a daily editorial condemning Communism and upholding the American flag. That was about all he was allowed to say, because the *Times-Bulletin* is a chain newspaper and must show a big circulation in order to get advertising. Working fami-

lies buy it on account of its double page of comics every day.

At the end of the third week there was a big shock when the five hundred mechanics at Charles S. Cottrell's Shuttles Valve Corporation voted to join Minsky's union. Mr Cottrell refused to recognize the C.I.O. and the men went on strike. A few days later the men at the Wellston Machinery Company's plant struck. Both these concerns were comparatively new to Wellston; our Chamber of Commerce had brought them to the city on the promise of good labor conditions. Their men were generally a rougher lot than the Powell works' people.

Richard made no attempt to run his plant, but both the others kept going with a few men who refused to quit and some workmen the managements were able to bring in from the outside. One night a watchman on the Cottrell premises was beaten up, and another night a gang threw rocks and smashed most of the windows in the machinery company's building.

The Powell works was first to be picketed. Apparently Minsky realized he stood to win or lose according to what he could accomplish there. One midforenoon men began to emerge from the C.I.O. headquarters and straggle across the tracks to the business district. There must have been a thousand or more, all carrying banners. The chief of police had refused Minsky a parade permit, but the men walked in small groups on the sidewalks on both sides of Market Street, out toward the big Powell plant. There was nothing provocative on the banners, merely messages like "We Want Better Wages," or "American Living Standards for American Workers." The same thing went on day after day. Out at the plant, the men walked round and round, singing and occasionally shouting half good-humoredly at Richard and the few white-collar workers in the office building. Outside of an occa-

sional scuffle with the policemen at the entrance gates, there was no violence.

The real troubles were mostly buried out of sight. Families of strikers naturally went on short rations, but that was not all of it. I never before realized what the American policy of high-powered salesmanship could do to people in a situation such as our city found itself.

Back in 1929, when high-powered salesmanship finally blew the New Era to pieces, there followed a time when it seemed big business might go on a more sane basis and be content to produce only the amount of goods that the country could reasonably absorb. Even the Ford Motor Company abandoned its rigid "sales quota" policy that fixed the number of cars that local dealers must sell; and Mr Sloan, of General Motors, announced that his company would, in the future, gauge its manufacture to the public's demand. A good many other manufacturers abandoned their former aggressiveness.

But two or three years later, when the worst of the depression seemed over, high-powered salesmanship broke out again. This salesmanship naturally concentrated on the people who are easiest to sell to. People of the wage-earning class are less sophisticated in business matters than other classes; they have, as a sales manager would put it, less sales resistance. Working people don't have much ready money; but they can be cajoled into going into debt. They will buy if terms are made to seem easy. So a new wave of installment selling swept the country that outstripped the installment selling of the Nineteen Twenties about as badly as one of Mr Ford's 1938 Lincolns outstrips one of his old Model-T Fords.

The big national mail-order house, Montgomery-Ward, tempted poor people to go into debt by announcing that it would sell things on time that cost as little as



ten dollars. Formerly twenty dollars was the low limit. Competition forced other corporations all over the country to extend longer terms and make the weekly or monthly payments smaller. It used to be the custom to sell only "hard goods" on installments—things that could be snatched back and sold over again in case the customer didn't pay; but now "soft goods" are sold on payments quite generally. The big country-wide chain clothing stores, like Bond and Howard, advertise "Ten weeks to pay." Wanamaker's, Lord & Taylor and other New York department stores exploit "budget plan" selling. Right on our own Market Street here in Wellston we have twice as many places where people are urged to go into debt as we had two or three years ago.

As our C.I.O. strike strung itself out week after week, I got a pretty good idea of what unrestrained installment selling can do to poor people. One day an electrician at the Powell works, named Bissell, came with his wife to see me and told me about their troubles over an automobile. They were decent American people whom I had known a long time. It seems they went to buy a second-hand car and had a hundred dollars to make a first payment with. But the dealer urged them to take a new car, saying it would be economical in the long run. "And really," the dealer said, "it won't make a bit of difference to you. You just make a few more monthly payments, that's all." The down payment on a new car was three hundred dollars, and the electrician and his wife didn't have that much. But they were so impressed by what the dealer said that they decided to raise the extra money. They had some furniture that they had just finished paying for. A fellow named Ashton, who is in the personal-loan business, agreed to lend them two hundred dollars, putting a mortgage on the furniture as security. But then the strike came on and they couldn't pay anybody any-



thing. The auto dealer took away their car, and the loan fellow took away their furniture.

You might say Bissell and his wife got what was coming to them, because they used so little business sense. But people who work with their hands generally aren't very sophisticated about business. They look up to businessmen as being socially a cut above them; they take what a businessman tells them pretty seriously. The auto dealer's argument, "just a few more monthly payments, that's all," was what got Bissell and his wife. It is the argument that installment fellows use a good deal nowadays when they want to persuade a workingman into buying more expensive things, on which there is a bigger profit.

We talk a good deal about the bad old times of thirty years ago, when captains of industry exploited the workingman by paying dollar-a-day wages. Now we pay the workingman higher wages and exploit him as a customer. Of the two, it seems to me, the latter is the more cruel.

When our strikes had gone on four or five weeks, some of the men began to be pretty rough, and apparently Minsky didn't much try to hold them down. They beat up more watchmen and smashed more windows. One day they staged a noisy parade down Market Street in defiance of police orders, and Minsky himself marched at the head of it.

I began to have quite an admiration for the fellow. Anyhow, he taught me to disbelieve the old theory that Jews are short on physical courage. He walked around the streets at all hours, immaculately dressed and apparently quite unconcerned, though he must have known there were plenty of people ready to commit assault and battery on him, or worse. He stopped at the Hotel Erie; one morning he stepped into the taproom and asked Gus for a scotch and soda. David Bowman, the Powell sales man-

ager, was there with three or four Powell traveling men, called in from the road on account of the strike. Minsky nodded carelessly and said, "How are you, Bowman. Join me in a drink?"

Bowman shot back, "I don't drink with a Jew bastard!"

Minsky slapped him in the face. As the men started to rush him, he grabbed the whisky bottle off the bar and swung it above his head. He said quite calmly, "If any Gentile bastard wishes to be killed, now's a good chance!"

Gus and his assistant dashed around the bar and got between them in time to prevent serious trouble.

Another day Minsky dropped into my store and bought a piece of jewelry he had seen in the window. He gave the clerk the address of a woman in Boston and asked him to mail it, then walked back to my office. He put out his hand with an ingratiating smile.

"I believe we've met before, Mr Kent—at the Powell works. How're things going out there?"

"Thanks mainly to you," I answered, "things aren't going any too well." He made a humorous bow.

"Thanks for the compliment, Mr Kent. Apparently you think my technique rather good?"

"Whether it's good or not depends on how your strike ends," I told him. "But I admit your technique is interesting, to say the least."

"I know what you mean. Interesting because I don't act like the labor organizers you're used to. Because I stop at the Hotel Erie instead of some greasy boarding house. Don't pal around with my strikers outside of business hours. Perhaps, too, because I'm a Jew?"

"Oh, not that——" I began.

He laughed. "Please don't use the old cliché, Mr Kent—how you've got several Jewish friends you're very fond of. Pet Jews, in fact. Every real American has two or three. Or at least he claims he has."

It was impossible to be angry with him. I said that what I couldn't understand was how he seemed to hold authority over his strikers when he held himself so much above them.

"That's the main part of my technique," he answered. "I don't tell the workmen I'm their labor organizer. I tell them I'm their lawyer. And I really am a lawyer, licensed to practice in Massachusetts. Now it's this way: When a mechanic or anyone else gets into trouble, he wants someone to help him out who knows more than he does. A superior person, you might say. It's all rot to think a workingman prefers a lawyer who doesn't wear a collar and spits tobacco juice and says 'dem' and 'dose.' If it's a serious case, like murder or mayhem, the workingman feels about it just as you and I would. We'd go to a high-class lawyer with a big office and an impressive corps of assistants, one who can high-hat the jury and the judge, too, if he thinks it will help his case.

"It's just that last that I'm doing here in your city. I keep a flower in my buttonhole and stop at your best hotel and wear better clothes than most of your citizens—for high-hat purposes. If you don't think it has its effect, remember how I led the parade down Market Street against police orders the other day. If I'd looked like an ordinary roughneck, I'd have been in the police wagon before I'd got half a block."

I told Minsky there was another thing I was curious about. "How do you feel toward these labor clients of yours?" I asked. "Have you got sympathy for them, or is it just the case of a lawyer doing the best job he knows?"

He answered less glibly this time, as though he were trying to figure it out.

"If you mean, do I love the dear workingman for his own sake, I guess I'd have to say no. Not any more



than I would necessarily love some fellow whom I might defend in a criminal court. I don't enjoy the workingman's company, either. Generally he smells of stale tomato soup and a half-washed undershirt. Still, I do have some sympathy for him. It's a tradition of my race, I suppose. We Jews know what it is to be exploited. And say what you will, your American working people are exploited more than in any other country in the world. The religious young Mr Powell out at the Powell works exploits them to gratify his ego. He gives them gymnasiums and swimming pools so he can feel he is a wonderful Christian character, sort of a Biblical Good Shepherd, in fact. But then he makes them sit in open-door privies so they won't lose time from their jobs. These so-called service clubs take up collections at their weekly luncheons to send Christmas baskets to the poor and are careful to have newspaper reporters present. It creates favorable publicity and helps the members' business. These installment merchants up and down Market Street do their exploiting more directly. They lie to the workingman when they tell him it doesn't cost any more to buy on time than for cash. They trick the workingman into going into debt. But before they deliver the merchandise they register the title at the courthouse so they can grab the merchandise back in case the last installment isn't paid."

Minsky laughed at his own earnestness, as though he were half ashamed of it. "I guess it's my natural Jewish sympathy for the fellow underdog that makes me let off steam this way."

I told him not to mind me. "But as long as you've been hitting the American businessman so hard, it's fair to remind you that your Jews aren't behindhand when it comes to exploiting the underdog. Fully half these installment fellows in the city are Jews."

"Quite naturally. People are prejudiced against us, so



we Jews have to scramble harder to make a living than Gentiles. We do anything we can. But there's one thing you must give the Jewish businessman credit for. He doesn't generally stay tricky all his life. He turns honest just as soon as he can afford it."

This observation didn't seem to call for any answer. Minsky went on to tell me he became a C.I.O. organizer because it is so hard for a young Jewish lawyer to work up a practice, no matter how competent he may be. He said a friend of his, a young doctor, was doing the same thing. They were both making more money than they could hope to do in a dozen years at their professions.

A day or so after this, Minsky provided a surprise for the Wellston public. His strikers appeared from across the tracks, in groups of a dozen or more, for their trek through Market Street to the Powell works. As usual, each carried a banner. But the sentiments on them were new. Mottoes like "American Pay for American Workers" were gone. Instead, one lot of banners had the message, "We Demand Doors on Our Privies." Another lot, "Powell Bosses Sit in Private Toilets. We Have to Sit in Open Privies." I noticed old Harvey Wilkins carrying one of these, looking terribly depressed. The men were laughing and joking at him. Twenty or thirty banners had crude charcoal drawings of open-door toilets. Finally, following the others at some distance, one striker came along with an extra-large banner, with an extra-large drawing of an open-door toilet with a man sitting on it. The round, serious face and horn-rimmed spectacles were unmistakably Richard Powell's. The motto was, "How Would *He* Like It?"

That day I walked home to luncheon and passed by the Powell works' main gateway. The strikers were milling up and down, old Harvey Wilkins among them. I paused a minute on the opposite side of the street; just

then Richard came out of the office building and walked toward the gate. Then I saw the striker with the extra-large banner wink at a neighbor and sidle up to Harvey. He said, "Won't you trade banners with me, Harvey? Mine's pretty heavy."

The old man answered, "Why, yes, certainly," and slung the big banner over his shoulder without looking to see what it was he was carrying. He was just in front of the gateway when Richard came through. He turned toward Richard, and his movement brought the caricature directly in front of Richard's face. The old man stood still and touched his cap respectfully. Richard glared at the caricature a moment. He rasped, "You Judas!" and pushed past.

Harvey didn't seem to know what to think of it. A striker took the banner out of his hands and showed him what was on it. Other strikers jostled around, roaring at the joke. As I went away I saw the old man leaning against the fence, looking like a dog that has been kicked.

The strike lasted a month longer. At the final settlement the men got about what they wanted. The Powell company union was abolished. A maximum of forty hours was prescribed for the basic work week, and time and a half given for overtime and holiday work. Minsky held out for his 20 per cent pay rise and got it.

But the casualties were pretty heavy. So many radio sets, and automobiles, and electric toasters and washing machines were repossessed that merchants were obliged to club together and rent the old market building back of the post office to store them in. Fully a dozen merchants failed. Yet I think Richard Powell stood the biggest loss. I can't imagine anything more shocking than suddenly to learn that three or four thousand men don't spend all their spare time thinking how wonderful and Christian-like you are.

## XXVI

### Vanishing Vision

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I HAVE SAID BEFORE that when I first went into business people seemed to see things with a clearer eye than they do now. No one, for example, thought of money-making as a noble enterprise. If a man amassed more money than he needed to live on, it was understood he did it for his own selfish satisfaction. He would just about have been laughed out of town if he claimed he wanted money only for the good he could do with it.

I was reminded of this not long ago when I was on a train going to New York City and overheard a fellow in the smoking compartment, who was somehow connected with Standard Oil, speak about the Rockefeller family's big real-estate development in Fifth Avenue.

"Isn't it magnificent," he exclaimed, "for them to spend millions on Radio City just at this time and create work for unemployed mechanics and laborers? I call it true Christianity!"

All his listeners seemed to agree with him. I couldn't help thinking how, if it had happened thirty years ago, someone would have piped up with:

"Yes, but how about the owners of other business buildings who are going bankrupt? There were plenty of offices for rent before the Rockefeller project was started. Do you think the owners of buildings whose tenants

are skipping over to Radio City call it true Christianity?"

Then there was the case of old Henry Diesel, whose bank stood a close second to the Wellston National when I first went into business. Old Henry was a pious man and had the Men's Bible Class at the First Baptist Church. He admired two other Bible-class leaders, Mr Wanamaker and Mr Rockefeller, and often spoke of them. You got the impression he liked to think he belonged to a sort of guild of rich Bible-class leaders. Each year Mr Diesel gave his class a picnic at Eagle Lake, when the class assembled at the church and paraded down Market Street to the Union Station. Mr Diesel marched at the head with a large Bible under his arm, looking very rich and pleased with himself.

One day just before the picnic the *Evening Bulletin* came out with a story that someone had written Mr Diesel an anonymous letter threatening to shoot him. Most people believed the letter was a hoax, but Mr Diesel took it seriously. He said to the reporter, "If it be God's will that I be taken, I have no fear. I am a Christian."

Then Mr Diesel got another letter, this one from two brothers, Earl and Manfred Hess, members of his Bible class. They were both clerks in the Wellston Department Store. They offered to march, one on either side of him, on the parade to the Union Station, to shield him from the assassin's bullet. Their letter ended: "Your life, Mr Diesel, is so much more important than ours."

Old Henry, fairly goggle-eyed with satisfied vanity, showed this letter to everyone who came into his bank. Everyone who knew the young dry-goods clerks knew they were about the last persons in the world to shield anyone from a bullet. They hoped Mr Diesel would send them a check, or perhaps offer them positions in his bank. They must have been disappointed when he sent them each a Bible, with his name on the flyleaf.



Up to this point the town had looked on the whole thing as a joke. If old Henry chose to elevate his ego and advertise his bank by running a Bible class, it was no one's business but his own. But then the police discovered the authorship of the anonymous letter. The Hess boys wrote it themselves. They confessed it was a scheme to scare Mr Diesel and then win his gratitude.

Then it stopped being a joke. People blamed old Henry, not the Hess boys. By using his Bible class to advertise himself and his bank, he put the idea into the boys' poor brains that money must be a marvelous thing, well worth taking chances to get. People were so indignant that old Henry had to drop his criminal charges against the boys. Eventually he had to give up his Bible class.

All this happened, as I say, nearly thirty years ago. I wonder, if a similar thing should happen now, would people reason it out as keenly as they did then? Or has business, through all these years, done such a good job at forcing people to be consumers that the ability to discriminate has been lost?

I could mention a dozen things fully as disingenuous as old Henry Diesel's Bible-class activities that are going on now and that seem to be accepted as a matter of course. For example, the Wellston *Times-Bulletin* is right now promoting what it terms "The Bible Contest." Its delivery trucks are plastered with advertisements of the event. Each day the *Times-Bulletin* prints a drawing that illustrates some Bible incident. People are invited to guess what passage in the Bible the drawing represents and send their guesses to the paper. Prizes for correct replies range from \$2 to \$200.

I presume everyone understands it is a scheme to sell more newspapers. The *Times-Bulletin* is using the Bible to make money. But so far I haven't heard anyone mention that. Years ago, I am sure, people would have men-

tioned it, if only to make fun of the newspaper's effrontery. In today's edition there is a letter from the rector of Calvary Church, commending the Bible contest. He writes, "Just at this time with the great need for religious awakening, this will be a powerful adjunct . . ."

Business seems to lean more and more heavily on religion as a sales stimulant. At present the Buick automobile company has a photograph that shows a crowd of people coming out of an Episcopal church. The men are in top hats and the women in Easter gowns. A late-model Buick stands at the curb.

From a sales standpoint the situation is excellent. The Episcopal church conveys an impression of aristocracy. A Presbyterian or a Methodist church would not be nearly so effective. The Buick at the curb gives the impression that Episcopalians who wear silk hats and Easter gowns favor Buicks. The only deception is that the people in silk hats and Easter gowns aren't Episcopalians at all, but ordinary citizens dressed up and hired for the occasion. The church was hired for the occasion, too. Ten dollars was what the church got out of it.

Just recently I read in trade journals of a scheme to use the churches on a truly national scale. It was called the "Goodwin Plan," and manufacturers of more than four hundred products joined it. The object was to sell merchandise to Christians. Each Goodwin Plan manufacturer grants a special cash bonus to church members upon evidence that they have purchased the manufacturer's product. The evidence may be "labels, box tops, sales slips, or whatever an individual manufacturer may designate."

It seems too bad that manufacturers can't trust Christians to be honest about their purchases, but insist on physical proof. Under the Goodwin Plan, Christians were offered a wide choice of products. There are Allen-A

silk stockings, Barbasol shaving cream, B.V.D. underwear, Champion sparkplugs, Diamond matches, Northern Paper Mills' bathroom paper, Scott's emulsion and Winget Kickernick Company's underdress for women. A late announcement lists also E. I. duPont de Nemours & Co. finishing division.

I doubt if the Goodwin Plan could have been organized thirty years ago.

There is only one way that I can account for the change. In America we haven't a class system as they have in Europe. We haven't an aristocracy that can say to business, "You mustn't push too hard, old chap. It really isn't done, you know." For years our churches did a fairly good job of keeping business in place. Of course there were always some who contrived to make religion pay, but their work was individual and generally amateurish. A minister could preach against business excesses without risking his position.

I don't know who the first minister was to join a chamber of commerce; but whoever he was, he started a movement that had pretty important results. And all his successors who joined Kiwanis and Altruist and salesmanship clubs and Rotary and Better Business bureaus helped the movement along. Just about the last curb on high-pressure business was removed.

## XXVII

### Vanishing Integrity

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I DON'T WANT to give the impression that I am against Big Business as such. In a great many cases a big corporation can give better service to the public and produce things more economically than a small concern. The damage is done, it seems to me, when the big corporation goes in for high-pressure salesmanship and uses its resources to force a market for its goods whether or not there is a legitimate demand.

One way that some big corporations have of forcing a market beyond legitimate demand is to scare their employees into extraordinary efforts—"putting a fire under them," as the saying goes. Our two biggest department stores here in Wellston are now controlled by outside interests. They are units in a countrywide department-store system. Every year the management tells each department manager how much profit his department must produce. The figure is set high enough so the department manager has to hustle to the limit of his ability to make it. If he doesn't make it, he loses his job.

I can't help thinking that such a plan puts too much of a strain on the employees' character. Few of us are so upright that we will strain a point of ethics now and then rather than be put off a pay roll.

A pretty good example occurred this season in a deal that a buyer for one of the big national mail-order houses engineered with the Powell Steel & Cutlery Works. The



buyer came to Wellston and asked the works to make up a line of samples of certain edged tools in original designs. He wanted them different from anything on the market, so there would be no competition from rival mail-order houses.

The Powell works set its designers and mechanics on the job. It cost a couple of thousand dollars to get up the line of samples. No formal contract was signed. There was merely a gentlemen's agreement that the buyer would not ask any other manufacturer to bid on the goods. If the finished samples were satisfactory, the mail-order house would at once commission the Powell works to go ahead and manufacture a large quantity.

The samples were shipped to the mail-order house. The buyer found them to his liking. But he didn't write to the Powell works to go ahead with the manufacture. Instead, he ordered an assistant to take the samples to half a dozen manufacturing plants in different parts of the country and see if anyone would make the goods cheaper than the price agreed on at the Powell works.

High-pressure business has pretty well destroyed the sense of economic security that we Americans used to have and that people still have in countries where business gauges its output by the public's ability to buy. Our business depressions are more violent than in other countries, and the good times in between are shorter. Our last spell of good times lasted less than two years.

I hope readers won't think I am against the present state of things because my own business happens not to be as flourishing as it once was. Jewelry merchants are at a disadvantage nowadays. There are so many stories of robberies and hold-ups that people are afraid to own expensive diamonds or pearls or emeralds.

All local merchants are handicapped in comparison with the chain stores. A lot of chain stores, for example,

went into voluntary bankruptcy after the 1929 slump so as to break their leases; then they negotiated new leases with their landlords at cheaper rent. A private merchant couldn't do that even if he wanted to. If I were to try it, I might as well quit business altogether. People would whisper to one another, "Did you hear about the shyster thing Kent the jeweler did? I guess he's a good man not to do business with!"

But the same people wouldn't pay any attention to a chain's avoiding its obligations that way. Not much is expected of Big Business in the way of ethics.

Speaking of myself, I could probably make as much money as I ever did if I were to go into the installment business. Installment stores are about as thick in Wellston now as chain stores, and they seem to do well. Of course, I would have to advertise "Absolutely Cash Prices," which wouldn't be true, and, "I Trust the Public," which wouldn't be true either, because I would register every sale at the courthouse, so that in case the purchaser tried to skip out I could have him clapped into jail. I would encourage poor boys and girls to start married life with the wedding ring not paid for, and I would do as second-hand automobile dealers do—stick placards on my goods that show the down payment only—to get people into the store, and then depend on high-pressure salesmanship for the rest.

I suppose there's nothing criminal about it. But at the best it's a cheap way to do business—cheap for the person who sells and cheap for the person who buys.

If the time ever comes when everyone buys everything at a-dollar-down-and-a-dollar-a-week, and I still feel as I do about the installment business, I suppose I might rent a little hole in the wall and repair watches for a living. The other day I joked my wife about it; and, as I presumed she would, she said that would be more genteel

than to be an installment merchant. In spite of her disillusionment about modern Virginia, Luley-Lee clings more tightly than ever to her old hero.

"You wouldn't find Robert E. Lee doin' a shabby thing for money," she said. "That's why he taught school after the War, instead of sellin' his name to that big insurance company in New York. It showed the kind of aristocrat *he* was!"

It is only a couple of generations since Robert E. Lee died, but apparently his way of thinking has gone out of style. The presidency of the United States is a higher office than General Lee ever occupied; but our two most recent ex-presidents and a presidential candidate became directors of an insurance company, and few people seemed to think Mr Hoover, Mr Coolidge, or Mr Smith did anything out of the way.

General Lee wouldn't accept the insurance company's offer, though the army he commanded was dispersed and he himself was out of a job. But now it is nothing unusual for ranking officers to quit the United States Army for Big Business salaries. One general, for example, is in the employ of a radio corporation; another general is with Sears, Roebuck, the Chicago chain-store company; still another general works for the California Brewers' Association. An army career does not, as far as I know, fit a person for salesmanship; so I assume it is mainly the advertising value of the army title that Big Business pays for.

It would be difficult to name all the wealthy women of the country who have sold testimonials to cigarette manufacturers.

There isn't any other country that I know of where people are so willing to sacrifice dignity for money. I think it isn't generally realized how fiercely business fights to create and maintain a cheap atmosphere in America.



It is to the advantage of business to have as many cheap people as possible, because cheap people are easily stampeded into spending money for things that business produces, while dignified people aren't.

Far be it from me to set up as a reformer. But during the years I have been in business I have had opportunity to observe goings-on that have changed my city, and my country, too, from a pretty fine place to live in to a place that isn't so fine. That gives me courage to suggest two or three things that might be worth trying.

In the first place, I suggest that a curb be placed on unrestrained installment selling. It can be done very simply by adopting the law promulgated by Napoleon the First of France. The Code Napoléon makes it impossible for the seller of an article to keep the title to the article after he has delivered it to his customer. The law doesn't in the least affect the extension of useful credit. Merely, it puts credit on a dignified and businesslike basis. When you deliver an article to a customer, you depend on your customer's honesty, or on his financial responsibility, to get your money. More important, this law prevents the exploitation of people who need to be protected from predatory business.

My second suggestion is that families of old American stock refuse to send their sons to colleges and universities that maintain Schools of Business and offer instruction in salesmanship and similar getting-on-in-the-world humbuggeries. It may be difficult to find such institutions, but there are still a few left.

My final suggestion, and perhaps the most important one, is that religion be divorced from business. Formerly the churches tended to hold business somewhat within bounds. But that was when ministers stuck to their rightful trade. When ministers began to mix in business, the influence of the churches was badly weakened.



There are more than ten thousand clergymen—Protestant, Catholic and Jewish—who in recent years have become members of purely business organizations. I suggest a personal appeal to each of these men that he resign his membership. The appeal might go something like this:

Are you sure, when you joined the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, Optimists, the Salesmanship Club, or the Advertising Association, that you acted wisely? I think I understand how you felt about it when you joined. You believed it would enhance your opportunities for service to take part in businessmen's activities.

But was that the only reason? Weren't you, perhaps, just a little influenced by the fact that it is a grateful relief from your somewhat circumscribed life to mix with businessmen and have them call you by your first name, and feel that you are one of them? I know it is a good deal to ask of you to give up this pleasure. Still, when you decided to enter the ministry you knew you would have to give up a good many things. It is a part of your sacred profession.

And even if it were true that you joined the Chamber of Commerce or the Kiwanis Club solely to increase your opportunities for service, it would scarcely make up for the fact that when you, a clergyman, join a purely money-making organization, you are, in a way, throwing the mantle of religion over money-making.

That is about as bad a thing as can happen. Because businessmen will go pretty far when stimulated by the idea that money-making is noble. I believe a great many of the cheapening tendencies that I have described in this book come from that.

Perhaps I feel extra strongly about these things because I have lately been in touch with a painful and tragic affair that seems to me to be a logical result of the way

we Americans have allowed our country to become a place for businessmen to make money in, instead of a place for people to live in.

It happened on a day when John Powell and I went for a drive and stopped again for a drink at the roadhouse called "Teddy's Place" that I described at the beginning of this book. About the same crowd was there—a sprinkling of married people, some college and high-school boys and girls, and three or four high-pressure salesmen for Wellston factories who were buying drinks for out-of-town buyers. I recognized one salesman, in charge of a particularly inebriated buyer, as a man named Lambkin, who was David Bowman's assistant at the Powell works. Lambkin had his good-looking wife along to help entertain.

John Powell and I left the place and went to our car, which was parked in the back yard, alongside a shed that in the old days was used to store farm machinery in. Hearing a commotion inside the shed, I went around to see what it was. Two drunken boys, both with bloody noses, were flailing away at each other with their fists. They quit fighting when they saw me and ran off toward the old orchard. They were the two high-school boys I had often seen going by my store on Market Street with John Powell's granddaughter. One was the Garvin lad and the other was young Dave Bowman, son of the Powell works' high-pressure sales manager.

By that time John Powell had joined me. Over in the far corner of the shed we saw a girl's figure lying on the ground with her clothing rumpled and her hair in a tangle about her face. It was Gloria Powell, dead drunk.

We got the girl in our car and drove back to town. I have never in my life felt as sorry for anyone as I did for John Powell. I am sure the shock killed him. He died just a few weeks later.











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