

Such a Smartness

How Herman Proved that He Had a Head for Business

By ED. CAHN

IT was an intensely hot day—Friday afternoon, at that—and, as all the world of cigar dealers know, that, in the best of weather, is a poor day for business.

Aaron Shinsky had just finished putting away some new stock, moistening the sponges in the cases, refilling the alcohol lamp, and replenishing the pile of free matches. He concluded his labours by dusting the counters for perhaps the tenth time that day. Then he washed his hands, pulled down his shirt sleeves, and mopped his brow, after which he sat down and wondered if the glaring sun would ever set, and customers come again.

Presently an exquisite, white-trousered, daintily manicured, straw-hatted young man stepped lightly over the threshold.

Aaron looked up hopefully, but when he saw who it was, his face fell. "It's Herman. That means another touch," he thought, and steeled his heart.

"Hello, Aaron," said the exquisite, in a voice which blended just the right proportions of familiarity and respect. "For such a hot day, you're looking fine, I must say. Gee! Get on to the nifty pink shirt of him, with plaits to it, too! Jimmy, what a stylishness. You look like a millionaire."

"Aw, cut it out, them hot airs. I ain't no millionaire, and I ain't good for no loans to-day, Herman, believe me. S's no good to ask me for nothings. Already I got done lending you money."

"Who said anything about money? All I want is a package of cigarettes. Jee—rusalem! Every time I see you, that's what you begin right away; you ain't got no money to lend. Anybody'd think I was trying to rob you," said Herman, in a heart-broken tone—enough to inspire compassion in a stone.

"You usually does it without tryin'—such an easy-ness I got it for my wife's relations," said Aaron, softening.

He went behind the counter, and took two boxes of the boy's favourite brand out of stock. "Here you are, my dearly beloved and highly perfumed kid brother-in-law; I'm tickled to death, I assure you, that you let me down so easy this time."

As he watched his wife's handsome and improvident younger brother fill his pockets with matches, and perch himself on the counter, his sternness returned, and he felt moved to follow his Sadie's instructions, and "give that boy a good talking-to."

In a normal state, he would not have dreamed of lecturing Herman on the error of his pleasant ways; as well reason with a humming bird, or argue with a butterfly. Aaron was short and stout, and the heat affected his temper, and warped his judgment.

"Why don't you get it a move to yourselves, and get you such a job, so you don't need to borrow money? Such a shamefulness—not to have it *mazumen* enough to buy cigarettes."

Herman showed his teeth in an impudent smile. He plunged his hand into his pocket, and drew forth a fair-sized handful of silver.

"Aaron, you go so fast, that if you was a joy rider, you'd be pinched for speeding faster than the limit. I never said I wanted a loan. I never said I didn't have no money, because, before I got a chance, you had already made me a present of two boxes of cigarettes—that's twenty cents saved."

Aaron made a dive for him, but he was too nimble, and sprang away, laughing.

"You see," he continued, "you and mommer and the whole family's got it into your heads I'm no good to work, and so I don't need to. Mommer lectures me—but at the end she gives me a check; and why shouldn't she? She's got lots of money. Sadie, just until lately, always is a good sister to me; and you, Aaron, are the best friend what I got. Why, you're *better* than a brother to me."

"What's this? Another touch?" interrupted Aaron, but Herman proceeded unabashed:

"Now, I say, every man to his talents. Yours, Aaron, is to make money, and you follow it for all you're worth; and everybody says: 'Oh, what a fine, steady feller that Aaron Shinsky is; he's strictly business.'"

"My talent is to spend money, and I try to follow it. I'm strictly pleasure. But do I get any credit? No! I should say not! Everybody says: 'What a good for nothing that man Herman Zudelstein is, anyway!'"

"Vat! A kid like you calling yourself a man!" cried Aaron. "You look like a human haberdasher

sign, more than like a man."

He swung Herman around until he was facing a long mirror set into the wall. "I want you should take it a good long look at yourselfs."

"You're a pretty kettle from fish to be talking like a society man in a best seller about talents for spending. How do you know what your talents are? You never tried earning money."

"Look at that there hatband what you are wearing. Such a loudness it's got, I wonder you ain't been arrested for disturbing the peace. Silk shirts maybe is all right for actors, but they don't look good on Jew boys, who has not got so much money that the Rothschilds are layin' awake night wonderin' how to keep him from getting theirs. White drowsers maybe is good for sissies—and look at that tie! It's too bright, Herman, even for a dark night when there ain't no moon."

Herman thrust out a neatly shod foot. "Ain't you forgot my shoes and socks? What's the matter with them?"

"The socks is too noisy, and the shoes is too expensive."

"Now, look here, Herman, you better stop tryin' to look like a peacock, and get you a job."

"What's the good? I can get all I need without a job. Mommer says she won't see me starve; Sadie won't forget me, so long's I'm her baby brother; and you, good old sport, give me cigarettes for nothing."

AARON swore in Hebrew, which Herman did not understand—having been too indolent to go to Sabbath school—so he lit a cigarette, and blew beautiful, perfect smoke rings, inspected his nails, and smiled at himself in the mirror.

"Dopus!" concluded Aaron. "I betcha that never did you make it fifty cents in your lifetime."

"Back up! Back up! You shouldn't excite yourself so in hot weather. I don't say about the fifty cents, but I did make twenty on you now."

"Right away jokes you make. That was a scheme, a trick. You didn't earned it."

"Same thing, I'm telling you," declared Herman earnestly. "Do the big financiers dig millions of dollars out of the ground from sewer ditches or brick-hod jobs? No—they leave for the yokels, what ain't got no brains, and has to make what they get from out of the sweat of their faces. The financiers they use it tricks, schemes, credit, Aaron. They juggle them together—and from out of their jugglings comes money."

"You don't say so. Vell, I calls that swindling, like a shell-game man makes it with three shells and a marble—and he gets it arrested sometimes, too."

"Shell-games men, their work is coarse—they are pikers. And for being pikers, they get pinched; but financiers they are too smart for that. If, now and then, one slips up and falls down, he gets it, instead of arrested, summonsed, and investigated, and let off for lack of evidence, and his picture put in the papers," said Herman wisely.

Aaron saw the fallacy of this, but knew the uselessness of trying to convince Herman against his will; for he was always as determined not to be convinced as a woman.

"Mebbe you're right, an' mebbe you're wrong—I don't say. Only show me that you can make good by so much as a dollar, either by hard work or by schemes, and I will have more respect for your ideas."

"That leads up to what I came to see you about," said Herman, in a businesslike tone that made Aaron stare.

"You an' everybody's been hollering at me for not getting down to business, and so I sez to myself to-day, 'I'll go down by Aaron's, and get him to fix me up a little line of samples from out of his cigar store, and I will take them out on the road, and sell them.'"

"What!" gasped Aaron.

"And," continued Herman, "I sez to myself, 'When he sees what a pile of goods I'll sell, and how pretty soon he has to hire more cigar makers to fill the orders I get; and then, after a while, how he moves to a larger place, and, later on, has the store uptown separate in a better location, and the manufacturing downtown, and he makes it more money than ever before—then I guess he'll say to himself, 'I done that boy an injustice. He's got a head on him like I never thought. I think, by golly,

I'll increase his salary, and give him more expenses money.'"

"That's a fine idee you got, Herman, I must say! Whatcha take me for? A filantrofist? I ain't setting the world on fire, I know; but all the same, Herman, I'm making a pretty good living for me and Sadie without no drummers."

"If I should send you out on the road, you'd smoke up all your samples, and, with your high-flyer idees about spending-money, have me busted up inside of a week from your expenses. No, sir-ee!"

"There is a business man for you!" cried Herman. "Treats a business proposition like it was a insult."

"I bet if a smooth guy what you never seen before in your life comes in here, and points out to you what a mistake you're making by grubbing along here in a little two-by-four place like this here—with a four-by-six factory, where you're turning out a A-number-one cigar what sells fine, and is a good article—instead of letting him take a grip full of your goods out of town and selling 'em for you on their merits and good points, you'd listen to him with all kinds of attention—not to say respect."

"Sure I would, because a business man don't come into a man's store dressed up like a cheap actor, and bum off him two packages cigarettes, stand himself up before the looking-glass, and give me all kinds of lip! Besides, when I ask him who he is, he can tell me, and show me what he's done before."

"Yah!" jeered Herman. "Like fun. 'Maybe it's all lies, anyhow. Besides, what's he doing out of a job, anyway, if he's such a wonder?'"

"Who?" said Aaron, bewildered.

"That business man you're telling me about. Weil, you know all about me, Aaron. I won't be taking out no samples under false pretenses."

"You ain't taking out no samples under no pretenses, and don't you forget it."

"You're a fine one; now I want to get busy, you won't let me. All right, you ain't the only one. I was only giving you first chance." Herman walked to the door, and Aaron, his always-soft heart already smiting him, followed hastily to soften his words.

Along the deserted street clattered a dingy bread wagon. The driver, a stupid-looking German, was making good headway.

"Gee!" thought Herman idly. "Sauerkraut looks like he's just heard of a place on the West Side where they are giving away beer and pretzels."

Just as the vehicle came abreast of him, and Aaron reached the door, a large, bobtailed cat elected to cross the street on business.

A thousand times had she crossed the street in peace and safety, and it did not occur to her now, at this late day, to suspect any danger. So she jumped serenely down from the curb, just in time to meet instant and tragic death beneath the wheels of the bread wagon.

The driver pulled up, and gazed with mild horror at his innocent victim. "Von cat less," he said to himself, and was about to drive on, when Herman descended upon him.

"Oh, the poor cat! What do you mean by driving like that? I'll have you arrested for recklessness. It was such a expensive cat, too. I wouldn't have taken twenty dollars to see it killed! You got to pay me five dollars for it!"

"FIVE dollars for a cat!" exclaimed the baker. "Nein! I wouldn't do it. I could not helupp it—it ain't mein fault."

"Not your fault? I like your gall! Whose fault was it? Mine, standing in my brother-in-law's store? Was it the cat's fault? Pretty soon you will be telling me that it was watching for your wagon to commit suicide by. You think that cat was crazy to die? No, sir—that cat was a happy cat, with a good home, perfectly contented until you come along and murder it. Five dollars it will cost you, and I am letting you off cheap."

Herman was the picture of grief, mingled with rage and determination. The German scratched his head, and turned to inspect the sad remains. "Why, it iss a damaged cat! Mit a bobtail!" he cried.

"Oh, such a ignorance! Damaged your eyes—that's a very valuable breed, what always has short tails. The shorter the tail, the more expensifer the cat."

"That's right," said one of the crowd that had gathered. "I seen one once in a cat show. They call them Manx cats."

"Sure," said his neighbor. "They named them after Hall Caine. He's from Manx."

"You're crazy!" said another. "He wrote—"

"There! You heard what the gentlemen said? They're very rare, too. You got to settle, that's

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