

The Woman Seller

The Story of a Crack Salesman Who Invades a New Territory—and Clinches His Prospect.

BY RICHARD CONNELL

PART III.

I changed the subject. I told him about my little boy, Ned.

"He's as husky a four-year-old as you ever saw," I told my neighbor. "Aren't kids a pest?" inquired Mr. Mulqueen.

"Only in the comic supplements," I answered, with a trace of asperity.

"My boy is the best fun in the world. Kids a pest? Wait till you have one of your own!"

"I never expect to," said Mr. Mulqueen.

"Then you'll miss just about the finest experience in life," I said.

"Well," said Mr. Mulqueen, "you ought to know."

"I do know. I know it's great to watch that kid of mine developing. Why do you suppose I talk myself hoarse selling cars?"

"For dough," suggested Mr. Mulqueen.

"Partly. But mostly because I want to give that kid of mine an education. Because I want to build up a business and give him a flying start in life. Why, Tim, my work has been twice as much fun since I've had that kid to work for."

"I know when to begin to call a man by his first name."

"He's a inspiration, that kid," I went on. "It's the real thing, I tell you."

"Well, you ought to know," said Tim Mulqueen. "Can he say 'da da yet?'"

"Why, man alive, he can say anything in the dictionary," I said proudly.

"And he can read 'cat,' 'dog,' and 'pig.'"

"I don't know much about kids," admitted Mr. Mulqueen. "I thought for the first five years that I did nothing but bawl."

"Ned never bawls," I said. "I have to admit that this was an exaggeration."

"You don't tell me?" said Mr. Mulqueen. "I answered questions about Ned for an hour."

"You boys mustn't tire yourselves talking," said Miss Quest, when she came in with our garble.

When she had administered the garble and gone, I called over the partition.

"Have you noticed what a pleasant voice our nurse has?"

"No, has she?" said Mr. Mulqueen. "I judged from his tone that I had derailed his train of thought. I suspected him of thinking about Ned and kids."

During our milk-toast breakfast next morning Mr. Mulqueen did not say a word. I was happy till I met you on the stairs.

"There's a lot of things about you," said Mr. Mulqueen, a strange, unwelcome silence in his cubicle. Then he broke out with:

"I wish some of the boys would come out to see me. I've been here a long time now, and no one has come near me."

"It's a long way out here," I reminded him.

"Your wife comes every day," he rejoined.

"Yes," I said, "but there's a lot of difference between a wife and a friend."

He said nothing more the rest of the morning, and I read my magazines. About noon I heard him say:

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"Notice what thick, handsome hair she has," I said. "It's as fine a head of hair as I ever saw."

"You don't tell me?" said Mr. Mulqueen.

"Miss Quest came in with our post-lunch garble. When she had gone out, Mr. Mulqueen remarked:

"They are nice."

"What are nice?"

"Her hair and her smile," he said. "He could not see my smile."

"And it's pretty the way she moves around," he admitted.

"What a wife that woman would make!" I said in the manner of the soliloquies of old-fashioned melodrama.

"What makes you think so?" he asked. "Was I wrong or did I detect the signs of awakening interest in his tone which every salesman learns to recognize and strains an ear for."

"Well, what qualities does the ordinary man look for in a wife?" I asked.

"Good nature, I suppose," said Mr. Mulqueen.

"Miss Quest is one of the best-natured persons I ever met," I said. "She looks after peevish, helpless patients all day and never loses her smile. What else?"

"Loyalty," said Mr. Mulqueen after an interval of cogitation.

"Miss Quest is faithful to her job. She hasn't missed a day in nine years, they tell me. And it's a hard job, too."

"Anything more?"

"A wife ought to be a good housekeeper," I supposed, said Mr. Mulqueen, after considering the matter a moment or two. "You know what I mean—neat, economical, and a good cook."

"You're full of evidence this minute that Miss Quest is a cooking cook," I said, "and the way she takes care of us and our rooms shows that she could keep a house snug and comfortable. As for being economical, I've heard that out of the little salary she gets here she's saved money. What else?"

"I wonder why she never married," mused my neighbor.

"She never found the right man, I suppose," I said carelessly. "Of course she's had lots of chances. I understand that there's a florist in Greenwich right now who is crazy about her."

Heaven forgive me the fiction. When Miss Quest brought my fever neighbor his baked potato that evening, I heard them talking together in low voices for some minutes.

"And none of the boys have come to see me," I heard him say.

"What a shame!" said Miss Quest, and there was real sympathy in her quiet voice. "Perhaps they don't know where you are, Mr. Mulqueen."

"Oh, they know well enough," he said, "but they don't care. Nobody cares."

"You mustn't say that, Mr. Mulqueen," she said. They talked some more. I didn't mind if she was late with my supper that night.

I made a quick recovery from my scarlet fever; I lost my skin rapidly and efficiently, and raised an entire new crop. My thoughts turned to golf and Dekkar Eight.

I talked to Mr. Mulqueen about Miss Quest; he seemed to enjoy the subject. Sometimes, around gable-time, I made snoring noises; I heard low-voiced conversation in the next cubicle. The day before I was to be discharged my wife came to the hospital with my clothes. When she pushed open my cubicle door, a low, regular, whistling-rippling noise from the adjoining room told us that Mr. Mulqueen was asleep.

"Helen," I said softly, "please knock that large red book off the table."

"Why, Phil, what in the world for?" she was wakened.

"Sssh, tell you later. Only do it," I whispered.

Helen knocked the book off the table. It hit the floor with a gratifying smack. The snoring in Mr. Mulqueen's cubicle stopped abruptly.

"My dear," I said to Helen, raising my voice. "I want you to ask cousin George to dinner at our house next Monday."

"Cousin George?" asked my wife blankly. "Have no cousin George?"

"Yes, Cousin George Winship of Perry Sound. Not Cousin George Stanton of Owen Sound," I said, making faces and motions at her. "I want him to meet Miss Quest."

"Oh, Cousin George Winship of Perry Sound," said my wife. "Certainly. I haven't seen old George in ages."

"I'm very anxious to have him meet her. She's a splendid girl. But aren't you afraid, Phil dear, that we'll disturb the man next door?"

"Splendid," agreed Helen. "Couldn't be better. I'd like to see him marry her. As graceful as any woman I ever saw."

"I'll have to watch," said Mr. Mulqueen, humbly, I thought. "I don't know much about such things."

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A splendid serial will commence next week, entitled "The Green Ray," from the pen of William Le Queux, the famous English writer of Mystery Stories. It is a tale of the British Secret Service during the Great War and holds the reader's enthralled attention from start to finish. Look out for the opening chapters of this exciting yarn in next issue.

"No fear," I said, "he's fast asleep. I'm glad you agree with me that Miss Quest would be a good match for Cousin George. The rich old rascal needs somebody to help him spend all the money he's making from his bee farm."

"Oh, is George a bee farmer now?" asked my wife. "Has he given up his poodle kennel?"

"His poodle kennel? Oh, by no means. He still has over a hundred poodles. He keeps two poodle clippers constantly busy."

"But, Phil, do you think Miss Quest will like him?" asked Helen with some difficulty.

"She's sure to," I said. "He's just the man for her. She won't be able to withstand that good moustache of his. She has as black as bold moustache as is only waiting for the right man to come along."

"Good old George," said Helen, "he'll get a peach of a wife in Miss Quest. He won't be slow in asking her, either."

"No," I agreed, "I shouldn't be surprised if it were a case of love at first sight, and a marriage in a month. Poodle fanciers are so warm-blooded and temperamental, you know."

"Good," said Helen. "I love to play matchmaker. I'll write to cousin George this very night."

"And I'll ask Miss Quest after supper," I said.

We heard a stirring in the next cubicle.

"Oh, I hope we haven't disturbed you," said Mr. Mulqueen, "but I'm not at all, not at all," he said gruffly, and his voice, I noticed, had lost its friendly joviality. He muttered something to himself. I thought it sounded like "poodle fancier."

Helen left, and I fell asleep, and snored with such obvious enjoyment that when Miss Quest came in with the mid-afternoon garble she did not wake me to administer it, but went into Mr. Mulqueen's cubicle and talked.

After supper, my last in the hospital, I said to Miss Quest.

"I hope you can come to see us some time. I know how dull it must be for you. When can you come?"

"Monday for dinner?"

"I'm not going to be here much longer," she said with her smile and a blush.

"No," I said. "What hospital are you going to?"

"I'm not going to a hospital," said Miss Quest. "I'm going to be married."

I met her in South Beach a year later, while I was demonstrating a Dekkar Eight suit there. She was wearing a green tricot suit and was pushing the largest perambulator I have ever seen.

(The End.)

Voices From the Sky.

Passengers by air liners of the future will, when weary of travelling, be able to listen to some musical star in London while they themselves are far out above the Atlantic.

This has been made possible by the wonderful progress made of late in the development of wireless telephony in relation to flying. Machines of the future will be as capable of being fitted with electrophones as are London clubs to-day.

Often a business manager sitting in his London office gets in touch with the principal of his firm when the latter is speeding in an air express to Paris. These voices from the clouds are as clear and distinct as if a telephone call had been put in to business premises in London.

Pilots will be able to switch on to a music-hall, or a court-room, and travellers will be able to listen to their favorite artists.

Boxing Gloves of Lead.

Boxing is one of the world's oldest sports. The noble art of self-defence was practised more than thirty centuries ago.

It was indeed a strong man's game. One hero, called Enclaudus, used to slay oxen by giving them one blow between the eyes with his fist.

Boxing gloves were in use even in those early days; but there was a difference. The glove of today is a padded affair designed to soften the effect of a blow. In former times it was meant to increase the force of the punch! It consisted of a strip of leather, reinforced with lumps of brass and lead, which was wound round the pugilist's fist.

Men were willing to fight, not for a purse of thousands of dollars, but for a simple laurel wreath! The boxing matches of those days were no joke, for in most cases the vanquished boxer was killed by the knock-out blow.

Tomato Wastes.

Tomato pulp, for catsup, pastes and soups, is obtained in the requisite pure state by putting the tomatoes into what is called a "cyclone machine," the material being forced through small holes in a metal screen to get rid of the skins and seeds.

More than 225,000 tons of tomatoes are pulped annually in Canada and the United States, the skins and seeds being thrown away. It is a lamentable waste, inasmuch as the seeds yield an excellent salad oil, which is also first-rate for paints and varnishes, being a quick drier. The residue from the oil press, mixed with the skins, makes a highly nutritious stock feed.



Woman's Interests

The Treatment of Colds in Children.

One of the most important of hygienic "don'ts" is "Don't neglect a cold." Most of us think a cold is a very disagreeable thing, and we let it go at that, without realizing that it is potentially one of the most serious of diseases.

In the first place, when it begins no one can tell what it may prove to be, or how it will end. It may be a simple cold that will last four or five days; it may be a left-over case of influenza—there is a good deal of that still; it may be the beginning of measles, or the first symptom of pneumonia; or it may extend into the acute stage, the ears, the nose, the bronchi, and cause no end of pain and trouble. It may even trench itself as a chronic catarrh and persist to the end of life. Therefore, the part of wisdom is to treat a cold—especially in a child—with great respect until you are sure of its identity and its intentions. Then treat it energetically; that is, treat the patient as you would treat anyone suffering from a serious disease.

The first thing to do—even before the disease has declared itself—is to put the child to bed in a sunny, warm and well-ventilated room and make him stay there. Do that even if there is only slight rawness of the throat, or feverishness, or nausea, or bone-ache and a general feeling of being out of sorts. Give a gentle laxative such as cascara or milk of magnesia or citrate of magnesia. If the cold proves to be a simple one, keep the patient in bed and every two hours give him a glass of water in which half a teaspoonful of bicarbonate of soda has been dissolved, and into which the juice of half a lemon has been squeezed. This is for adolescents; half as much is enough for young children. In the case of an ordinary mild cold no other remedy is necessary, and three or four days will usually be long enough in bed. Then the soda and the lemon juice may be reduced to a dose morning and evening, and in two or three days more the patient can go back to school.

In the case of a severe cold or of influenza stronger