

# The Woman Seller

PART I.

"Nonsense!" I said a trifle warmly. "A good salesman can sell anything." "Even Dekkar Eight?" asked Doggett. "Don't you hate a man who chuckles when he says something he believes to be funny?" "Anything," I replied coldly, "except, of course, Brimfield pianos. They need a hypnotist."

"Oh, is that so?" said Doggett. "Whenever Doggett comes aboard the 527 Stamford local I know that I am in for an argument on salesmanship. He once had his picture in a magazine, looking very serious and efficient over a caption that read: He Turns Music Notes Into Bank Notes—How Edgar Doggett Sells \$500,000 Worth of Pianos a Year."

Poor Doggett has never been the same since. He has become a caricature; he parades endlessly on what he calls "the art-science of salesmanship," and I love to contradict him. Like old Dr. Johnson, I wait until he has stated his case before I make up my mind which side to take. At bottom, Doggett and I respect each other's selling ability. I have sold him a Brimfield Grand, and he has sold me a Dekkar Eight. Incidentally, if you are looking for a light-weight car that will give you 23 miles to the gallon and will stand up under any kind of punishment, the Dekkar Eight at \$2,675 is—but I digress.

We argued furiously until Doggett got off the train at Mamoroneck, where he lives, and as is usually the case in such arguments, I remember only what I said. My logic may have made little impression on Doggett, but I succeeded in convincing myself that a good salesman can sell anything.

"What are the steps in a sale?" I remember demanding. "First the good salesman sells his man on the general idea. Second, he sells him on the specific product. Third, he clinches the sale."

I forgot what Doggett said. When I reached my home in Cos Cob I recalled my wife and young son, over our evening meal, with some of the snappy things I said in the course of the argument. All my wife said was:

"Phil, dear, you look flushed and tired. You are giving too much energy to those wretched old automobiles." "But don't you think," I persisted, "that a good salesman can sell anything?"

"I'm sure you can, Phil," she said. "You'd better go to bed early to-night."

When I woke up next morning my throat felt as if I had swallowed a raspberry. Usually in the bedroom I sing "Send Me Goshen at the River." I do this partly to assure myself that my selling voice is in shape for the day, and partly to signal my wife to start the coffee refrigerator percolating. But I could not go further than "Send Me Goshen."

There I stuck. My voice sounded like a sea lion's just before they throw in the fish.

In the bath I discovered that my chest was buzzing a bright straw-berry buzz. I mentioned these facts to my wife over our grapefruit. They appeared to alarm her.

"Phil, you go right to bed, straight back to bed," she said firmly.

"Nonsense, Helen. It's only a sore throat. A few gargles and it will be all right. I objected somewhat rancorously. "I've got to go to town to-day; there's a man coming in at ten who is just trembling on the brink of a Dekkar with a custom-built body. I'll push him over to-day sure."

"You'd do nothing of the kind," said my wife. "You'll go to bed."

One reason our married life has been so happy is that I know when to argue with Helen and when not to. This was one of the latter times. I was secretly glad to be sent to bed. I felt queer. There was a buzzing of bees in my head.

Dr. Keck arrived presently. He has

read somewhere that a great physician is taciturn and blunt.

"Tongue!" he greeted me.

I stuck it out.

"Ah, ha," he said in a pleased voice.

"Say ahhhh!" he said, peering into me.

I tried, but the best I could do was "Wurr-gg."

He felt my pulse and shook his head significantly.

"Lemmoseyourchest," he said.

I unbuttoned it.

"Ah, ha," he said, "a pretty case!"

"Of what?" I gasped.

"Scarlet Fever," he said.

Then he turned to my wife.

"Must go to contagion hospital."

Minimum of three weeks. It's the law. Light case. No cause for worry. G'day."

Half an hour later, swathed in blankets like a papoose, I was being carried in an ambulance over the Ontario hills to the remote and lonely contagion hospital.

They stowed me in a private cubicle, the only patient in the scarlet-fever wing, gave me a sheet-like substance for a gargle, and a glass of milk for a chaser, and left me to my thoughts.

A seven-foot partition divided me from the next cubicle. I ascertained that there were twenty-nine boards in it, counting from left to right, and twenty-nine counting from right to left. The bees in my head increased, multiplied, and swarmed. I fell asleep, and dreamed that I was selling Dekkar Eight to the King of Siam.

"Phil," said the king to me, as we sat in his luxurious private office, "you're some salesman. I take off my crown to you. Say no more. I'm 100 per cent sold. The Dekkar Eight is hereafter the official car of Siam. Wait a sec."

He picked up a gold telephone set with rubies.

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white robe that made her look like a lady barber, and permitted her to talk to me from the doorway, where no lurking germ could possibly leap off her. The scarlet-fever wing is cut off from the rest of the hospital by doors so we could converse in privacy.

"I was talking to your nurse before I came in," said Helen. "She's a dear. Don't you 'ike her?"

"Miss Quest is a corker," I said emphatically. "It almost repays me for having this fever and missing all the Dekkar sales to see someone who understands her job and does it as well as Miss Quest." I never thought anybody could give me a bath and make me 'ike it."

"Don't you go falling in love with her," warned Helen.

"No fear, dear," I laughed. "But I wonder why somebody hasn't long since. She's a beauty and a mother."

(To be continued.)

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"And Katie?"

"Oh, Katie has the gift no less than the others. In that case she was old enough to be anxious for the baby. But I've seen Katie attack the week's mending in the same spirit. I don't remember exactly what her game was, but I know she made a game of it. And if you can think of anything less like play than darning the stockings of three active boys, I can't. I told Mrs. Budd the other day that, if she'd give lessons on 'Making an Adventure of Drudgery,' I'd be her first pupil."

"I imagine her first assignment would be to make us work out our own plans."

"Probably it would," the neighbor agreed with a sigh. "Which would leave us exactly where we are now, wouldn't it?"

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