

THE TIN PEDDLER

He Was Chock Full of Romance

By F. A. MITCHEL

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Few persons are satisfied with their station in life or their occupation. I am an exception to that rule. I delight in my work, and yet I am only a tin peddler.

For heaven's sake, why are you satisfied to be a tin peddler?

For a paradoxical reason. I am full of Ideality and romance. Ideality and romance in a tin peddler! Nonsense!

Yes; listen to me and I will prove to you that there can be romance even in a tin peddler. And because there is romance in me I enjoy my work. It gives me opportunity to dream. For instance, I drive my peddling wagon along a road of a bright spring morning. The air is laden with the fragrance of opening buds. The birds are chirping in the trees, flitting here and there, one carrying a bit of straw, another a string, another a horsehair with which to build their nests. They are chattering at each other just as persons would do who were building a house. White clouds are rolling along silently on the horizon. On my left forest trees rear their topmost branches as if reaching toward the blue sky, where a hawk is sailing. On my right and beneath me lies a lake. Around about the country is a patchwork of farms dotted with houses.

I was driving my wagon one evening in October, looking for a place in which to spend the night. The woods were aflame with patches of yellow or scarlet. My eye was resting, as I supposed, on one of these, a deep red, but in another moment I saw that it was the setting sun shining on a windowpane. I drove on toward it and stopped at a little farmhouse beside the road.

Hitching my team to the post before the gate, I went to the door and knocked. There was no answer. Looking about, I saw no signs of life. I missed chickens scratching in the yard, children's playthings on the porch, the bark of a dog. The barn was closed and locked. The place was deserted.

Finding a window where the curtain, not hanging perpendicularly, left an opening through which I could look inside, I saw that the house was furnished. I was peering into the living room. There were a center table, a little library of books, a lounge, while in a fireplace were andirons on which were logs ready to be kindled.

The twilight was deepening and if I went on I might be obliged to ride miles in the dark before finding another place to stop for the night. By breaking a pane of glass I could unlock a window, raise it and effect an entrance. It remained to be seen if I could put my team into the barn. I succeeded in both. Having stabled my horses and fed them—there was fodder at hand—I entered the house. Having lighted the fire on the hearth, I explored every room. The beds were "made," though they gave evidence of having remained so for a long while. There were provisions in the larder, but time had rendered them useless. Fortunately I carried my own lunch hamper. After finishing my explorations I brought some water from the well and, sitting before the crackling fire, ate my supper.

For a long while I sat and dreamed of those who had occupied this house, and why it had been deserted. The appearance was not that of having been left temporarily. It rather gave evidence of having been left a number of years before. Who were these people?

I've heard it said that there are certain scientists who from seeing a bone can tell the animal of which it formed a part. So did I begin from my surroundings to form theories as to who had occupied this house. There were no toys; therefore there were no children. There were a few men's and a few women's garments; therefore there must have been a married couple. On the wall among other pictures was one of those stiff photographs one sees in the country—and, for that matter, among city folks—of a bridal couple. I inferred that it was a likeness of those who had occupied the premises. There were pictures of old and young persons, evidently the fathers and mothers of relatives of the bride and groom.

My first theory was that the house had been occupied by a young married couple; that one had died and the other had shut up the house just as it was and gone elsewhere. Secondly, I fancied that the couple who lived in it had quarreled and both left it to go away by different paths. Thirdly, not noticing the photograph of a sour looking old woman, I concluded that the family had been broken up by a mother-in-law. Humming in an old desk,

I came upon a check book, figures on the stubs of which indicated that the bank account it represented was largely overdrawn. This led me to a fourth theory—that the occupants had suffered from financial difficulty and this was the cause of the house having been deserted.

How many other theories I might have formed had my reveries not been interrupted I don't know. The interruption was a tap on a windowpane behind me. Quickly turning, I looked to see the cause, but apparently there was no cause. I was turned from my suppositions as to the former occupancy of the premises to wondering what had caused the tapping. I arose, went to the window, threw up the sash and, putting out my head, looked about me. Seeing nothing, I went back to my seat before the fire.

In a few minutes there came another tap. Turning again, I saw the cause. The flame on the hearth lighted up the face of a young girl.

Now, I maintain that there's nothing prettier on earth than a pretty girl, and when a lonesome bachelor in a house by himself sees a pretty girl's face at his window, illuminated by a firelight, it's the prettiest sight he ever saw. At any rate, if a vista of heaven had been opened to me I couldn't have been more delighted.

I whirled my chair around and sat enraptured. The window was just high enough from the ground and the girl just tall enough to show her face, but not the rest of her body. She could see me fairly well by the light of the fire.

"Who are you," she asked, "and what are you doing here?"

"I'm a tin peddler, and I stopped here for overnight."

"Is that all? I thought you must be a robber."

"I suppose a robber would be more attractive to you than a tin peddler."

"Not a nice tin peddler."

There was some encouragement in this. But I was curious to find out about the house I was in.

"Where did you come from?" I asked.

"From just over a rise in the ground. Our place is hidden by trees. I saw smoke against the sky and came to the hill to find out what it came from. Since it was from this chimney I thought I'd come on and see who was in the house."

"I'm very glad to see you. I'm curious to know how the premises happened to be left as they are. I've been forming theories about it. Perhaps you can tell me which theory is correct."

"What are they?"

"That couple," pointing to the picture of a bride and groom, "had just been married and come to live here. Is that so?"

"No; another couple just married did."

"Well, one of that other couple died."

"No; they're both alive."

"They had a spat and separated."

"No such thing."

"Then they were separated by that crusty looking old woman whose picture hangs there. She was the mother-in-law of one of them."

"Not at all. She is my mother and perfectly lovely."

"One more guess. One or the other was extravagant, and that broke them up."

"You're no guesser. None of those guesses is right."

"Well, tell me."

"My married sister lived here; that's all. Her husband's father died and left him a better farm. They had to go right off and left everything as it was. They've been trying to sell this one ever since."

"What do they ask for it?"

"I don't know, but I can find out if you want to buy it. Pa can tell you. You'd better come over to our house. We have a spare room."

Covering the fire, I went with the girl, met her father and mother and remained the night in the house. I apologized for breaking into the vacant place, which they said was under their care, and asked them what it was to be bought for. They named a fair price, and I told them they might write the owner that I would buy the property. Somewhat surprised, they asked why I wished that particular property.

"Because," I replied, "I am full of romance."

"What did you say your business is?" asked the old lady, she by whose picture I had judged her to be a mother-in-law.

"A tin peddler."

"Humph."

The girl who had discovered me laughed.

"And what are you going to do with it after you have bought it?" asked the old man.

"Live in it."

"But you're not married, are you?" put in the old woman.

"No, but I'm going to be."

I gave the girl a look, and she blushed. She was the only one present who suspected my intentions. The others had no conception of them.

The next morning before leaving I shook hands with them all, the girl's hand lying in mine longer than the others. I told them that I would be along that way again in a week and if they would have a deed for the

farm and everything on it just as I stood I would give them a check for it. Then I went to the barn, got my team and drove away. The girl looked after me rather curiously, as if she could not believe her senses, for without speaking a word to her I had made her understand that I wished her to marry me and set up housekeeping with me in the vacant premises. This she knew, but whether I would carry out the proposition was another matter.

That day week I was on hand and found a deed made out just as I wanted it. I had a certified check for the amount with me, and the transaction was ended. Then I drove away again.

I went by and stopped with my new made friends quite regularly after that, saying nothing to the girl about what was nearest our hearts till one day when I was going again I saw a tear in her eye. Then I put my arm around her and kissed her and asked her to set a day for the wedding.

Who says there's no romance in a tin peddler?

ORDINANCE NO. 551, SERIES 1911.

An Ordinance authorizing the Mayor and Recorder to enter into a contract with the Oregon-Washington Railroad & Navigation Company for a license to lay and maintain two sewer pipes, 30 and 18 inches in diameter, respectively across the right of way of said company, at the points described in Section No. 1, of this Ordinance and repealing Ordinance No. 501, Series 1910.

THE CITY OF LA GRANDE DOES ORDAIN AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1.—That the Mayor and Recorder of the City of La Grande, Oregon, be and they are hereby authorized to enter into an agreement with the Oregon-Washington Railroad & Navigation Company, for a license to lay across the right of way of said Company, at the following described points, to-wit: At a point 304.5 feet east of the mile-post 306, on the main line; also, at a point 879.6 feet northwesterly of said mile-post 306, on the main line of said railroad, two sewer pipes, 30 inches and 18 inches in diameter, respectively, for which the said City is to pay the said railroad Company, the sum of ten (10) cents per month during the continuance of said license, payment to be made as follows: On the signing of said agree-

ment and contract, a payment to be made up to and including the 31st day of December, 1911, and afterwards the sum of \$120, payable yearly in advance, on the first day of January of each year during the continuance of said license.

Section 2.—Ordinance No. 501, Series 1910, is hereby repealed.

Section 3.—This Ordinance shall be in force and take effect from and after its passage by the Council, approval by the Mayor and publication in one issue of the La Grande Evening Observer.

Passed the Council on this 6th day of September, 1911, by 8 members voting therefor.

Approved by the Mayor this 9th day of September, 1911.

A. L. RICHARDSON,

Mayor.

Attest: C. M. HUMPHREYS,
Recorder of the City of La Grande.

ORDINANCE NO. 550, SERIES 1911.

An Ordinance authorizing the Mayor and Recorder to enter into a contract with Smith Construction Company for the improvement of Connordale Addition to the City of La Grande in accordance with their bid heretofore accepted by the Council.

THE CITY OF LA GRANDE DOES ORDAIN AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1.—The Mayor and Recorder are hereby authorized to enter into a contract with Smith Construction Company, on behalf of the City of La Grande for the improvement of Connordale as provided by certain resolutions heretofore passed by the Council, and in accordance with their bid heretofore accepted by the council and in accordance with the plans and specifications provided by the Council of the City of La Grande.

Section 2.—This Ordinance shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage, approval by the Mayor and publication in one issue of the La Grande Evening Observer.

Passed the Council on the 6th day of September, 1911, by 7 councilmen voting therefor.

Approved this 9th day of September, 1911.

A. L. RICHARDSON,

Mayor.

Attest: C. M. HUMPHREYS,
Recorder of the City of La Grande.



The Gossard corsets. They lace in front, without belts, buckles, bands, straps or other contrivances. They are cut exactly like a surgical bandage. They gently support the organs, impel correct posture, deep breathing, correct position, both sitting and standing, and have beautiful artistic lines.

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Phone Black 1481 Corsetiere

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I have a proposition to handle a large territory for a good selling specialty on a four years contract with La Grande as the distributing point, but need an active, energetic partner of good character with office experience or outside hustling ability. Should have \$500 to \$1,000.00.

I believe a business paying \$10,000.00 net per annum can be easily developed.

O. S. WIGGLESWORTH,
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uggestions

Take two-thirds of a glass of cold sparkling SAM-O, add one-third of any of the following fruit juices: Lemon, Orange, Pineapple or Grape

"Measure it right and mix it together
It's good for what ails you in this kind of weather."

WANTED

A Couple to Wed at the UNION COUNTY FAIR

Valuable Prizes will be awarded the fortunate couple. A list of the prizes will be published later. Apply to - - -
Dr. Richardson