

# LITTLE NIFTY LESSONS IN SALESMANSHIP

## Lesson VIII.—The Language Question in the Foreign Trade —How to Get Away With It

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### PRE RAMBLE.

In this Lesson Proff slips us a bit of Rare Wisdom on the Language Question in the Foreign Trade. This is the most important question that the Foreign Salesman has to deal with next to choosing hotels and deciding where to spend Sundays.

The most highly polished Selling Talk that ever bounced off a salesman's bosom would fall flat and thuddy if delivered, say, in English before a Prospect who understood only Chinese or South Chicago.

There was a time when Proff himself averred that he could go anywhere in the world with only a knowledge of English and a Letter of Credit. Proff was negotiating at the time for a foreign job with a cautious Firm, and he needed the job and had to frame up some sort of defence.

Had this Firm ever seen Proff in Budapest trying to sell a Bill of Goods through a hum interpreter who got his wires crossed and kept talking English to the Prospect and Hungarian to Proff, they would have politely reminded Proff of the event, and then kicked a small hole through him. But they didn't. They hired him.

Perhaps it was this struggle against a hostile environment which furnished the necessary spark that fired Proff to Success. Perhaps, on the other hand, Proff's success doesn't amount to a yoniff burrah, any way you take it, and nobody wants to hear about the piffing thing.

Be that as she may, we are going right ahead with the Lesson just the same, and we hope that every Student will give Proff his double eared attention. Also please remember that no Student will be permitted to comb his whiskers aloud in the Class Room, or crack cartridges with his teeth.

up against a foreign customer whom he had known in the days when he could speak nothing but Probocia American. The customer, thinking Proff still similarly afflicted, would begin talking over a lot of confidential stuff with his partner in French or German, and all Proff had to do was to sit there and cop it all in.

In this way Proff used to find out what his Customers really thought about the Goods. Occasionally he found out what they really thought about him, but this book has to go through the mails, and besides it has nothing to do with the Lesson.

The foregoing little history of Proff's experience with the Language Question in the Foreign Trade is served up for the purpose of showing the Student a way out of the difficulty without tearing his clothes.

You can't expect to argue out the fine points of any line of goods if your Prospect doesn't know whether you are talking forward or backward or down the centre. Nor can you expect any Buyer who values his time to sit and wait until you dig up a Conversation out of a dictionary.

We knew a Salesman one time who claimed that he never had to talk at all about his goods. He said he always let his goods speak for themselves. Every

You can't stampepe your Foreign Buyer. All confidential tips about prices going up and the uncertainty of the steel market and all that sort of ball won't thrill him a little bit. He always takes his time as well as yours because he has got plenty of it and knows that you have too, and you might as well be sitting there talking to him as driving around town seeing the sights from a Cook's Yawn Wagon.

Foreign Buyer always listens attentively to what you have to say for your goods, and then he weighs and considers. After weighing and considering for about eleven years he decides he won't buy, and then you've got to begin all over again.

You never want to tell a Foreign Prospect how long you are going to be in his office all out of breath, stumble over a few chairs, empty the ink bottle on a white front and tell him you are leaving town on the 2 o'clock train and would like to get down to business if possible.

A good idea is to come running into his office all out of breath, stumble over a few chairs, empty the ink bottle on a white front and tell him you are leaving town on the 2 o'clock train and would like to get down to business if possible.

Of course it won't be possible, but you can at least get him to the weighing and considering stage, and that means several weeks saved on the deal already.

Now from what we have said on the Language Question in the Foreign Trade it must be inferred that a knowledge of languages alone will do the work. A Foreign Salesman must know a little something about the goods he is selling and what they are used for, and he must know how to approach a Foreign Buyer from ambush as well as in the open.

As a choice between the man who knows these things and the man who knows only languages the Former has got friend Latter fanned to a vapor. Many Firms think that Language is the Alfaifa and Omega of Foreign Salesmanship and so they send Abroad some Hicksville college Professors with a Prince Albert and Dirty Collar to sell goods for them. Other Firms think that Language cuts no sausage at all and so they delegate a noisy, perspiring ex-ringmaster who speaks only South Boston and doesn't care who knows it.

Both get in bad with the Foreign Buyer, who, as we stated in Lesson VII, is a peculiar piece of lettuce and wouldn't pass up the pleasure any old time of buying your flawless goods. If he didn't happen to like the banderlog selling them.

The wise Firm is the Firm that selects for the Foreign Trade men who know the Line when they see it in real life and who are socially experienced enough not to wear their earmuffs at tables or at olives with a nutcracker.

Then after selecting men with these qualifications the Wise Firm gives them a chance to learn a small assortment of languages.

A final tip: Don't get discouraged and jump off the pier if you seem to know less about a language the longer you study it. That's a sure sign you are progressing, and you should pull up your necktie so your collar button doesn't catch cold and be thankful about it.

If you have a son at College fiddling away at Latin and Greek between beers, tell him to cut out the junk and put in his spare time on French, German and Spanish. If he doesn't obey, send him a small bomb by parcel post. If you haven't any son, you need not waste your time on him. Send the bomb to the Faculty with their catcombed notions of Education.

When you are in a foreign country overheating your cylinders trying to express yourself, everybody helps you. When a foreigner is in America trying to express himself, everybody helps him to make an ass of himself.

We Americans are a bunch of raw necks, but we don't know it until we go Abroad. Moral: Don't be a cheap kiddier, or words to that effect.

With your kind permission Proff will now beat it for the hay. He has been up since 10 o'clock this morning, as he has to go down to the railway station to see a bunch of firecrackers off, and, like all good Knights of the Restless Sunday, Proff needs a bit of sleep occasionally.

Before blowing out the candle, we want to thank those Students who remained quiet throughout the Lesson. As for the knapop that threw the cheese omelet at Proff when he turned around to write on the blackboard, he will kindly remain after Class and translate the City Directory into Yiddish.

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# WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE WORLD OF ART



"Mater Amabilis," by Correggio, in the Crespi collection.

SPRING visitors to New York will find some fresh exhibitions to interest them. In addition to the work of the three painters on view at the City Club, there is an exhibition at Cotter's, and at Kraushaar's some new paintings have just been put on view. The Kraushaar exhibit shows paintings by James McNeill Whistler, Fantin Latour, Ignacio Zuloaga, Gustave Courbet, Alphonse Legros, Matthew Maris and other artists. The picture by Whistler is from the author's younger days. It is called "The Coast of Brittany" and Whistler was 31 when he painted it in 1861. Zuloaga is represented by the painting of a hermit who holds a book in one hand and a staff in the form of a cross in the other. Matthew Maris shows one of the three portraits of Isabella Agnus Legros, "Summer in Bourgogne"; Courbet, "Environ of Ornanis"; and Fantin Latour, "Toilet of Venus."

Among the pictures on view at the Cotter Galleries are works by Mauve, Metting, Monticelli and De Cock. The statue of Ralph Waldo Emerson which Daniel Chester French did for the Concord Free Public Library is placed in the centre of the main hall and stands against a background of book shelves. The visitor on entering the library sees first the full view of the face and figure. The statue stands in a gallery of such congenial associates as Henry D. Thoreau, A. Bronson Alcott, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Louisa May Alcott and Ephraim Wales Bull.

The difficulty in removing works of art from Italy seems to have been overcome in the case of the famous Crespi collection, which is to be dispersed in Paris beginning on Saturday. All the treasures of the famous collector are said to be in the rooms of the Georges Petit Gallery. Commandatore Crespi flourished in the decade from 1880, and his collection was one of the most important in Milan when the city was a mecca for lovers of art. The most authoritative of Italian critics devoted their pens to praising the collection, which became known throughout the world. The Italian pictures which compose it thus became known, although some of them have been removed by the action of the law against importing works of art and by private sale. It was not long after the death of its founder that the Crespi heirs decided to sell the collection.

Among the pictures which have been disposed of by sale is the "La Schiavona" of Titian, and those which the Italian Government has refused to allow to leave the country are a "Nativity" by Correggio and pictures by Moroni and Galacci. There remains in the catalogue a painting attributed to the great Leonardo, which must be present to add its cachet to any Italian collection of such importance. But there is a noticeable caution in the attribution. Other authenticated treasures are by such brilliant pupils of Leonardo as Boltraffio, Solario, Lulini and Gianpiero. The remaining specimen of Correggio is a "Mater Amabilis." A "Virgin" by Boccaccio, "Dead Christ" by Vivarini, "Sacred Conversation" by Bassati and works by Marzilli, Mansueti Palma, Paris Bordone, Moretto, Lorenzo Lotto and one from the atelier of Veronese are in the catalogue. Regarded as a remarkably fine specimen of the work of Francesco Trascia is "Santa Barbara," while there are other notable pictures by Flippolo, Sebastiano Ricci, Marco Ricci, Canaletto, Guardi and two Flemish specimens by Rogier

Van der Weyden and Hieronymus Bosch.

The Minneapolis Art Museum has just acquired "The Flight into Egypt," by Joseph de Patinir. The picture is regarded as one of the painter's best works.

Senator Clark has again contributed \$5,000 to be used as prizes in the exhibition of contemporary American art to be held in the Corcoran Art Gallery next December. No paintings will be received later than the middle of November. This is the fifth exhibition of the kind.

The San Diego exposition to be held next year will make a special effort to interest the artists of southern California by building a large gallery for their use.

The Hackley Gallery at Muskegon, Mich., has just acquired a painting by Richard Wilson, "the father of English landscape painting."

The collection of Baron Albert von Oppenheim, the descendant of him who wrote himself in the guests' book "O. de Cologne," is to be sold in the autumn and Dr. Bode, the Berlin expert, has written the most flattering appreciation of its beauties.

"None of Holland's great landscape painters are missing," writes Dr. Bode. "By Jacob van Ruysdael we find the 'Avenue of Beches,' one of the rarest, simpler motives of his Dutch home, which the artist paints with equal truth and charm. The collection contains also two splendid works by Meindert Hobbema, 'The Water Mill' and the larger 'Village Amongst Trees,' both painted in the '60s. The 'Bleaching Ground Near Haarlem,' which, according to the catalogue, is by Jan van Kessel, is very similar to the well known picture of the same subject by Jacob Ruysdael. The large picture of 'Winter,' by Aert van der Neer, is treated in an exceptionally broad manner. . . . The small, rapidly painted 'Interior of a Smithy' is unique as a subject."

The wealth of pictures of the Dutch school is astonishing. Scarcely one of the great masters is missing. At the top of the list are three pictures by Frans Hals. The kiltak portrait of a young, pretty, stoutheaded lady of Haarlem shows the brilliant rendering, the buoyant yet charming brushwork, which characterize the artist's middle period, about 1640. His sunny humor appears fully in the two round pictures of laughing, fair, curly haired boys, painted 'alla prima' with the greatest bravura. Thomas de Keyser of Amsterdam has a perfect masterpiece, a half length portrait of a young man and his wife. A Rembrandt is a study of a young girl's head dating from the '50s, while almost all the small masters are well represented. "Pair of Toppers" possesses in a high degree the delicate coloring and finish of execution, in which this artist excels. Jan Steen's 'Scene in a Public House' is a typical example of the artist's humorous rendering of Dutch life, and Adriaen van Ostade's 'Three Toppers,' although small in size, belongs to this painter's best work. By far the most important genre picture in the collection is the 'Mother With Her Children,' by Pieter de Hooch, of his early, rare and precious period, dated 1658."

Nothing was more interesting a score of years ago in the reococ church of St. Lorenzo in Genoa than the silk tapestry which used to cover the walls. Its cherry brocade featuring a glow of unusual warmth over the interior. But the real object of attraction for tourists was the Holy Grail kept then in the sacristy. It was broken even in those days and to any but the eyes of the faithful it was to its historic and religious associations rather than to its beauty as a work of art that its great fame was attributed. Its history was, however, most picturesque and its antiquity was never disputed even when its merits as a work of art began to be questioned. When in 1191 the crusaders under Baldwin I. penetrated the mosque of Cesarea, the ancient temple of Herod, they found a wonderful green tinted octagonal dish which was then believed to have been fashioned out of a single emerald, a century later James de Voragine, Archbishop of Genoa, the author of the Golden Legend, declared the vessel to be without doubt the Holy Grail. According to the Archbishop's chronicles the victors of Cesarea had divided the war booty into three parts. The first comprised all the land of the city, the second all movable treasure and merchandise and the third was the emerald dish. The Genoese crusaders under Guglielmo Embriaco chose the latter as more valuable than all the other spoils. Since the thirteenth century the grail became the most venerated relic of Genoa. It was preserved with the most reverent care in the Chapel of St. John the Baptist of the San Lorenzo Cathedral. A guard of honor selected from the most noble Genoese families was formed for its protection. The severest penalties were imposed for touching the grail with a touchstone or any other object. It was the popular belief that the vessel was not made by the hand of man, but that Christ himself had fashioned it miraculously out of common clay on the day of the Supper. Others maintained the view that its origin dated back to the times of the Queen of Sheba. It was asserted that she presented it as the most precious gift among all her treasures to King Solomon in Jerusalem, by whom it was used in the ceremony of the Paschal Lamb. However much opinion differed as regards the origin and composition of the relic, there was no divergence on the point that the grail was the most prized possession of the mighty republic, nay the greatest treasure in all Christendom. Sceptics did not dare to raise their voices until the eighteenth century, when some French visitors, on close inspection, claimed to have discovered air bubbles in the glassy substance of the basin. Napoleon did not overlook the Grail of Genoa. He ordered it to be conveyed to the Cabinet of Antiquities of the National Library in Paris. A special committee was then appointed of members of the French Institute of Sciences and they after prolonged examination, declared the vessel to consist of mere colored glass of very little intrinsic value. When Napoleon's spoils, after his final defeat, were returned again to their rightful owners the grail was, up 1815, restored to its shrine in the Cathedral of Genoa, but much of its mystic atmosphere had vanished, never to return. Lately the view was almost universally accepted that although the extreme antiquity of the dish was not disputed—it is now said to be of old Oriental, probably Phoenician, origin—it had never been employed as a table utensil, but had probably served as a priest's hand rising basin or as a sacrificial vessel for casting fragrant substances upon the altar.

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All Proff had to do was to sit there and cop it all in.

THERE are those who believe that the Spoken Word is not necessary to perfect understanding between two people. This may be true when the two people are of opposite sex and fairly young, but if you are trying to sell a Bill of Goods to a bowlerheaded Scotchman with wove-whiskers and pampas grass shooting out of his ears you'd better not rely wholly upon Mental Telegraphy as your medium of understanding.

On the contrary you'd better say something about your goods, and not merely look the part, if you expect to sell him. And this holds good whether your Prospect happens to be a Scotchman or an approachable Buyer.

What we mean is that the Spoken or Written Word is almost always necessary in effecting a Sale. Here and there you may find a Customer who will buy if you just make motions, but even then it depends upon what kind of motions you make. There are some Lines that you couldn't get anybody to buy if you motioned for a shotgun.

But generally speaking you have to talk to sell goods, and in order to talk so that your Prospect can understand you you've got to talk a language that he can understand.

Englishmen twirling their mustaches are supposed to speak the same language as Americans. But this is a mistake. Any well bred Englishman will tell you so. The better bred he is the more impolitely he will tell you.

The first time Proff canvassed an English Prospect he couldn't get the gentleman at all, and the gent couldn't see Proff. Proff talked through his hat, but so they got on each other's nerves. The result was that Proff lost the Sale, and the Englishman lost the opportunity of buying Proff's exceptional goods.

Even Proff's prices and discounts were without meaning, being served up in Dollars and Cents instead of L. S. D., or B. V. D., or words to that effect.

In those days when Proff entered an office he would invariably ask if there was somebody within hailing distance who could chatter in English. Usually there was a Prize Linguist somewhere about the premises. They'd dig him out of the warehouse or the ashbarrel, or out of a neighboring restaurant where he waited on table, and when he'd come forward he'd understand about as much English as Proff did of Bagdad Irish.

These gazabes were in the habit of throwing the bluff before their Boss when they were there with the lingo, and while Proff often ached to expose the bluff and set the Boss straight he couldn't do it because he had to file all chatter through the gazabe himself, and naturally the news would be censored before it reached the Boss or suppressed entirely.

Proff next tried Professional Interpreters, but his experience here was likewise all to the cactus. A Professional Interpreter is a knapop with a week's beard who hangs around the hotel and hands you his card every time you come out of the Bar. Sometimes you get a whole pocketful of these cards in a few hours. The Professional Interpreter usually knows as much about Business as a longshoreman does about needlework. When you take him to see your Cou-

toner he keeps his hat on his head and his cigar in his mouth.

Of course you wouldn't expect him to keep his cigar on his head and his hat in his mouth, but you would naturally expect him to take his hat off and his cigar out. When he does do this he doesn't know where to set them down, and this all takes up valuable time and causes embarrassment, especially if he sets the lighted cigar on the Prospect's ear.

Now for some reason or other Proff used always to manage to connect himself with concerns whose goods required more or less technical knowledge on the part of the Salesman, and since Proff knew about as much of things technical as an A. D. T. boy, his explanations to the Professional Interpreter were consequently always highly illuminating.

So much so in fact that when Proff would get through a thirty minutes exhortation, consisting of eulogy, air punching, Salome dances and other common Revival stuff, the Interpreter would turn to the Customer and translate the whole bundle of bull in three words.

This always made Proff sore, and once or twice he suspected that instead of translating what he had said the Interpreter had told the Customer that Proff was bughouse and to let him rave.

In fact it was this utter helplessness in the presence of a Prospect that made Proff determine finally to cut out interpreters altogether, and study languages himself and be his own little interpreter. Proff saw a sign in a window, "French taught while you wait," and he went in and took the Course, but forgot it on the way out. Then he bought a book called "Easy French Lessons," or "French Lessons for the Easy," or something like that.

This book showed how to pronounce various French words so that nobody could understand them, and it also gave a list of popular French phrases on the left hand side of the page and their equivalents in English on the right hand side of the page. For instance, on one side would be the French expression, "Comment allez vous," and on the other side the English translation, "Please pass the butter," and so on.

But Proff couldn't find anything in the book suitable to say to a Prospect when you wanted to sell him a Bill of Goods. You couldn't very well tell him to pass the butter when he was sitting there in his office waiting to hear you shoot off something about your goods. Besides, there wasn't any butter to pass, even if he had been willing.

Proff also got to thinking that perhaps there might be a lot of questions coming up in the course of a canvass that would require answers not to be found in the set phrases of any old book and so after shunting about for a while longer he decided to go straight to a good peddler's School and wise himself up on French and German from prow to rudder.

Proff did get so he could sell goods in French and also German, provided first that he could waylay somebody who wanted to buy the stuff, and second, that the Prospect didn't make him speak English just to get a little practice in the language game himself. Every once in a while Proff would run

man never afford to do that. If he ever let his goods speak for themselves they would give away all the family secrets in five minutes.

We knew another Salesman who claimed that the less he said about his goods the better. He said he had a Line that made everybody else just to look at it and he didn't consider it good policy to make matters worse by talking about it. He was trying to sell hair-cloth undershirts to Boston neurotics.

Such cases, however, are the exception. Generally speaking, you've got to throw a lot of Tall Talk in order to make sales, particularly in the Foreign Trade. Some Foreign Salesmen have been known to talk a whole set of office furniture to sleep before their Prospect would come across with even a sniffing sample order.



The spoken word is not necessary to perfect understanding between persons.