

THE PLAIN TRUTH

ARE YOU INTERESTED

in knowing the plain, unvarnished facts about the methods employed by some of the solicitors and salesmen who ring your door bell?

If so, it will pay you to read the article on Page 3 of this paper.

THE MANCHESTER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

BELL RINGERS PREY UPON EMOTIONS TO SELL THEIR WARES

Chamber of Commerce Warns Against Questionable House-to-House Canvassers— Cites Experience of "Mrs. Smith."

Pictures have a strong appeal to the human mind. This is particularly true of a picture of some known place or familiar face, and more especially is it true of a portrait of some friend or relative who has departed this life, or perhaps the first picture of the youngest member of the family.

The psychology of this appeal has long been understood and commercialized. Variations of this seemingly universal mental reaction toward photographs have been exploited, had their day, and been forgotten. One exception to this rule, however, is that of the enlarged portrait with its more or less ornate and pretentious frame which is so familiar to everyone. As long as most of us now living can remember, these enlarged portraits in deep gilt frames have adorned the walls of homes all over the land. Surprising as it may seem, the appeal of this sort of art treasure is as strong today as ever. The human heart seems to yearn

for something of this sort and an enlarged portrait of Baby Jane or of mother and father seems to fill a real want in the average human life.

Recognizing this as a perfectly natural human emotion, the Manchester Chamber of Commerce wishes to warn the Manchester public against the manner in which this human emotion is being commercialized and exploited by self-styled art studios throughout the country.

No less than three such organizations are at present operating in Manchester, and the following is an actual example of the methods which the representatives of one such organization have employed. This is more or less common to all of them and will undoubtedly be recognized by many people who have been approached.

The names used are, of course, fictitious.

Mrs. Smith, most anywhere in Manchester, is busy with her household duties and her mind is fully occupied with the task in hand. The bell rings and upon opening the door, she is accosted by a pleasant spoken man or woman who represents himself (or herself) as an agent for the Golden-Opportunity Art Studio. This wonderful organization, it seems, proposes to give to Mrs. Smith, absolutely free of cost, a beautiful enlargement of any portrait or snapshot that she will let them take. Mrs. Smith says, "No, she has no such picture and does not wish to buy any enlarged portrait." She may even tell them that she has no money and cannot afford to pay for any enlargement, whereupon she is again assured that this picture is given her absolutely without expense, the only cost to her being the actual material used in producing the picture.

Pressed for an explanation, the agent very glibly tells Mrs. Smith that the Golden-Opportunity Art

Studio employs a large number of expert portrait draftsmen and painters, but that their business is increasing so rapidly that they are forced to educate new draftsmen and painters, and for this purpose have sought out the most skillful and talented young students that they can find, and are training them in the work. In order to give them practice and enable them to reach the high state of proficiency which their firm requires, this campaign is being put on and the picture which Mrs. Smith will presently turn over to the agent will be used by these students as practice work, hence the lack of all cost except for material used.

The agent produces some really high-grade portrait enlargements for Mrs. Smith's inspection, and immediately she visualizes the baby's picture or some friend's picture done in this style. Unless she is wise to the trap being set for her, she eventually turns over to the agent a photograph, which the

agent immediately proceeds to rave over as a wonderful subject, and which would produce an exceptionally fine picture.

Mrs. Smith may, or may not tell her husband when he comes home at night. The chances are that it's hubby's picture and she keeps it a dark secret, fully expecting to give him a pleasant surprise when the work is completed.

In the course of time, a second representative calls, asking if Mrs. Smith has been approached and if the previous agent has collected any money. He impresses upon Mrs. Smith that agents are not allowed to collect any money until the finished work is delivered. Mrs. Smith's mind is thus set entirely at rest and any misgivings she might have had are done away with.

Eventually a third representative of the company calls and submits to her, a sketch which is in all probability nothing in the world except a very faint solar print, hastily sketched in. Mrs. Smith is not very enthusiastic over the sketch, but the agent glibly informs her that for a small additional payment they will have one of their skilled operators fill in the picture in colors, and he submits samples. Mrs. Smith is in all probability persuaded to agree to additional expense for producing a more finished picture and in the course of time this same agent or perhaps another, calls with the so-called finished picture.

In some cases, if Mrs. Smith is lucky, and none of the cases re-

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ported to the Chamber of Commerce seem to have been lucky, the finished work may bear some slight resemblance to the original photograph. If it does, the agent's work from here on is comparatively simple, and he proceeds to tell her how much improved the work would be by the addition of a proper frame and what a pity it would be if this wonderful work of art were not properly framed and hung on her wall.

The cost of the material and labor for the finished picture varies with circumstance. It may be \$3.98 or \$14.76, or some arbitrary figure which sounds convincing, but the price of the frame is another matter, and usually brings the total cost up to \$18 or \$24. In the case of the particular Mrs. Smith that this story is concerned with, the original sketch was very poor. The finished painting was equally unattractive and she used every argument that her courage would permit to avoid accepting it, and paying for it, but the agent finally made elaborate promises to remedy the eyes and to improve the mouth, and make it in every way satisfactory, all the while having over the high quality of the work and telling her that one of their highest paid artists had personally executed the portrait, and as a final argument to break down her resistance, the agent tells Mrs. Smith that the works of several highly skilled artists are to be placed on exhibition in the Chamber of Commerce rooms and that a prize is to be offered for the best picture, this prize to go to the owner of the picture. Of course, Mrs. Smith's picture is, in his opinion, the best which would be exhibited, but in order to take the prize it should have a suitable frame, and the particular frame in question, will cost Mrs. Smith \$14.90. The original amount paid for the picture was \$3.98 so that the completed work would cost Mrs. Smith \$18.98.

Incidentally, it is usually the practice to deliver these pictures made on a curved mount. The agent uses this as an argument to assure the customer that no local

farmer can supply the necessary curved glass to give this the best effect, and that his firm is the only one equipped to supply this character of frame.

When the finished framed picture is finally delivered, Mrs. Smith doesn't like it, she isn't pleased with it, she is satisfied in her own mind that she has been drawn into a trap from which she does not know how to escape and usually ends up by taking the picture and paying the price. Sometimes she may have the courage to refuse to take it, and then, of course, she receives the customary threatening letters from so-called collection agencies, which are in reality written in the office of the Golden-Opportunity Art Studios, and in the end she usually pays, puts the picture away, and charges the whole affair up to experience.

The foregoing is a recitation of an actual happening within the past month in Manchester. This woman had the courage to tell the Chamber of Commerce. There are probably dozens and even hundreds of others who will never tell.

The Chamber is interested for two reasons: In the first place this particular agent told a deliberate falsehood, and deliberately misrepresented the facts in stating that an exhibition would be held in the Chamber of Commerce rooms. As a matter of fact, the Chamber has been seeking connection with these agents for some time, but has never been able to catch up with them. The local police have been notified and anyone having an experience similar to Mrs. Smith's should either call the Chamber of Commerce, or call the local police.

The advice of the Chamber to anyone who really wants an enlarged portrait made, is to go to some dealer of known reliability and where they can get what they pay for.