

## THE FLIVVER

In the early twenties the road to Salt Lake City was paved but narrow and occasionally hazardous for automobile travel. Rural garages along the way were mainly converted blacksmith shops, and few and far between at that.

Clem had acquired very little auto mechanical know how and, for that matter, was not the best driver in the county either. Most of the time he preferred to let others do the driving, but when the occasion required it, he took to the wheel.

On one such occasion a buying trip was made to Salt Lake City to the wholesale house. He was in excellent spirits as he loaded his wife and two little boys into the Model T two seater touring car and started out for the big city.

"Dellie," he said, "this is a first rate day for a run to Salt Lake. No likelihood of a storm at all. Let's all have an enjoyable time together. You keep the boys in hand so that I can attend to the driving."

Having been born and raised in Salt Lake City, a trip home was always a welcome relief from the rural humdrum for his wife Della, but : "he couldn't constrain a reminder that last time they had gotten only part way before the "tin lizzie" broke down.

Clem didn't appreciate Dellie's frequent reference to the car as a "tin lizzie," he preferred to call it the flivver. This time, however, he ignored the slight and chose to merely assure her that he had had everything seen to. There should be no trouble.

"What about the tires?" she said, "they're always a worry."

"I've looked them over front and back, and they're in good shape. We should make it down and back without any mishap."

And so it was that the first part of his prophesy came true. The overnight stay in Salt Lake proved to be pleasant enough and the automobile's performance would have been a source of great satisfaction to Henry Ford, himself. Half way back, though, cruising along at a risky thirty-five or forty miles an hour a front tire blew out right in the middle of nowhere. The machine veered to one side and then the other, wandering back and forth across the highway until Clem finally brought it to a stop on the shoulder of the road.

After he had collected his wits he said, "Pshaw what a nuisance," and climbed out to survey the damage, muttering a few uncomplimentary remarks about an inventor who had a one-sided mind and would build a car with no door on the driver's side, only on the passenger side, requiring that he either climb up

on the seat and over the side or climb over the legs and toes of the other passengers to exit through the door on the other side.

The ugly gaping hole in the tire was beyond repair. Maybe the tube inside could be patched, but he'd have to get it off to find out. He had a spare tire but it wasn't mounted on a rim, merely strapped on to the running board. That meant he would have to take the tire and rim off the wheel, remove the tire from the rim, take the tube out of the tire, and patch the tube if it could be patched. Then he would have to put the tube in the spare tire, wrestle it on to the rim, and mount the rim and tire back on to the wheel.

It all added up to hours of unpleasant hard work and delay. With one great show of contempt he hauled off with a hefty kick at the ailing tire. He missed the tire and the rim and his big toe mashed into a spoke of the wheel. Roaring out with the loudest "confound it" the family had ever heard from him, he danced around on one leg for a moment evincing a series of "confound its" between groans and yelps.

The unpleasant task still had to be seen to and his misery was compounded by the throbbing of the injured foot. Nonetheless, in a matter of hours they were on their way again. Clem attributed all of this not to the will of the Lord, but to the workings of the devil. "Old Nick's more than got it in for us today," he commented.

however, the manipulating of the gear and brake pedals on the old Ford was more painful than hobblin.; around fixing the tire had been, and by the time they finally reached home, he had removed his shoe because of the swelling of the large toe. He had to be helped into the house.

While he suffered this indignity along with the pain he hobbled around for two weeks with one crutch. The day after the incident, however, he was confined to the house. While the pain besieged him, he sat with his foot elevated on a pillow. He refused to call the doctor simply because he didn't care to admit how it had happened, and Della was sworn to secrecy.

With very few exceptions over the years Clem was never seriously ill. He simply didn't allow himself the pampered luxury of being sick. To be home then, in a sick room almost more distressing to him than the ailment itself. He insisted on going back to the store the next day, although that presented another problem, how to explain the infirmity and the need for a crutch.

By Tuesday evening a new complication had developed, not in the injured foot, but in the account being circulated. Della returned from Relief Society happy to report that Clem had no need to worry about people finding out the real cause. She had heard of the sisters explaining to the group working around the quilting frame, that brother Clem was no doubt suffering from the gout.

This seemed to satisfy everybody and no one had put her on the spot for further details.

Maybe nothing more will be said about it if we let it go at that, she said.

"Confound it Dellie, why didn't you set the matter straight?"

"Why Clem, you told me not to tell anyone how it really happened."

"Pshaw, I'd rather they'd know the truth than think it's the gout.

Those old biddies will have it all over town that I've been out dissipating somewhere."

Dellie solved the problem by telephoning two maiden aunts to report Clem's condition and mention in passing how it all had come to pass. By the next day everybody else was enjoying the funny side of the incident, and Clem's own sense of humor came to his rescue when he was told that someone had suggested that he buy a pair of those new fangled pointed shoes so he could aim better next time.

It was a lot easier to live with the truth. "It's better this way," he admitted to Dellie.