

which I did, having the man go out with me, however.

My house has a driveway at the side, with a stable at the end of the lot. The carriage-shed was quite large enough for the car, and the approach easy, though there was just enough rise to necessitate going in under power. I was a trifle nervous, but if I wanted to use the car it was the first thing I had to learn, so, after I had turned into the drive, I stopped the machine, gritted my teeth, threw into first-speed, and went at the stable. I recollect closing the throttle, pushing out the clutch, and putting on the brake hard. And I was in!

"When you get a little more expert," said the man, "you can go in on high. It won't be necessary to change."

Fatal remark! It cost me a pair of broken lamps and a damaged radiator, to say nothing of a sprained shoulder and a skinned face. But "that's another story."

That evening it rained, and we did not go out. I spent the time reading my book of instructions. I am not a mechanic. In half an hour, I discovered that I knew nothing about my machine. In an hour, I was completely befuddled. Half-time gear housing, oldham coupling, front universal shaft, dope cup in front transmission bearing, spring shackles, brake-rod counter-shaft, parallel-rods, steering-gear, connecting rods—all were as meaningless to me as the cuneiform inscriptions. Light oil for the engine, heavy oil for the transmission and differential, non-fluid oil for the dope cups!

With a vague despair, I put down the book, to find my wife watching me.

"What is it dear?" she asked, coming over beside me.

"I'm a trifle thick-headed," I answered. "I don't seem to understand much about the car."

"I thought you said you were getting along famously," she answered, surprised.

"I did," I admitted, "but I think now I lied. I don't know enough about it even to let it stand in the stable."

She laughed, a little soothing laugh, and wound her arm around my neck.

"How like a man!" she said, putting her face close to mine. "I will wager, dear, that in a week you will feel as much at home with the car as you do with your—books."

"It won't be your fault if I'm not," I replied, drawing her down beside me.

The next day was a holiday. After breakfast and a glance at the morning paper, I took my book of instructions and made for the stable. I would run the car just out of the shed into the full light, and see how much of the workings I could comprehend.

I got it out all right, which pleased me. Then, having shut off the power, I opened the hood, and book in hand, proceeded to examine.

In five minutes I was so confused I could not have recognized a buggy from a traction engine.

Pistons, crank shaft, cam shaft, intake and exhaust manifold, connecting rod, cylinders, fly wheel, valve cap gasket, and so on, and so on! There they were—pictured in the book, with a designating mark to indicate every one of the one hundred and ninety-nine separate parts of the motor! But I could not find them.

I sank back on the grass in a helpless, half-maudlin condition.

"Oh, Lord!" I said, thoroughly dejected. "I wonder if I can sell it."

Happy thought! I got up and sneaked into the house. No one was in the library. I closed the door carefully, and called up the Rameses garage. The man I bought from answered.

"This is Mr. Randolph, who bought a car from you recently," I began.

"Yes, Mr. Randolph; what can we do for you, sir?" same back.

"How much will you give me for my car?" I asked.

"What's that?" said he.

"How much will you give me for my car?" I repeated.

"Why, what's wrong?"

"There's nothing wrong with the car," I answered. "The wrong is with me. In plain words, I'm afraid of it."

He protested.

I would hear to nothing. I wanted to be rid of it. I insisted that he take it off my hands at once.

"Well, you know, it's a second-hand car now," he said; "and the best I can allow you is a thousand dollars."

"A thousand dollars!" I gasped. "A thousand dollars! Why, the car hasn't been run a hundred miles!"

"It would not matter if you had run it but five miles," he answered. "It's a second-hand car all the same, and a new one costs us only fifteen hundred."

Better give it to me to sell—if you insist on selling. I can get you a better price that way than to buy it myself."

"Send right out and get it," I snapped.

"I'll send out in the morning, Mr. Randolph—this is a very busy day with us—but you'd better reconsider, sir."

"No; send out in the morning!" and I rang off.

I went back and looked at the car sullenly. Thank Heaven, it would go in the morning! I should be glad to get

it out of my sight. I picked up the book of instructions, and regarded it, in anger.

I did not see Helen approaching—until she spoke to me.

"Well, how is it now?" she said cheerfully.

"It isn't at all," I replied. "It's worse than ever."

"Don't be discouraged, dear—you ran it out all right, didn't you?"

"Oh, yes; I ran it out all right. But how am I going to get it in the shed again? How am I ever to take care of it? Look! Did you ever see so many parts?"

She took the book and glanced at it.

"But why do you have to learn all this immediately?" she asked. "Why can't you learn a little at a time?"

"That is only a quarter of it—look at the rest of the book!" I exclaimed. "I

don't understand it. I never can understand it! The truth is, I'm afraid of it."

"What is it that you don't understand?" she asked soothingly.

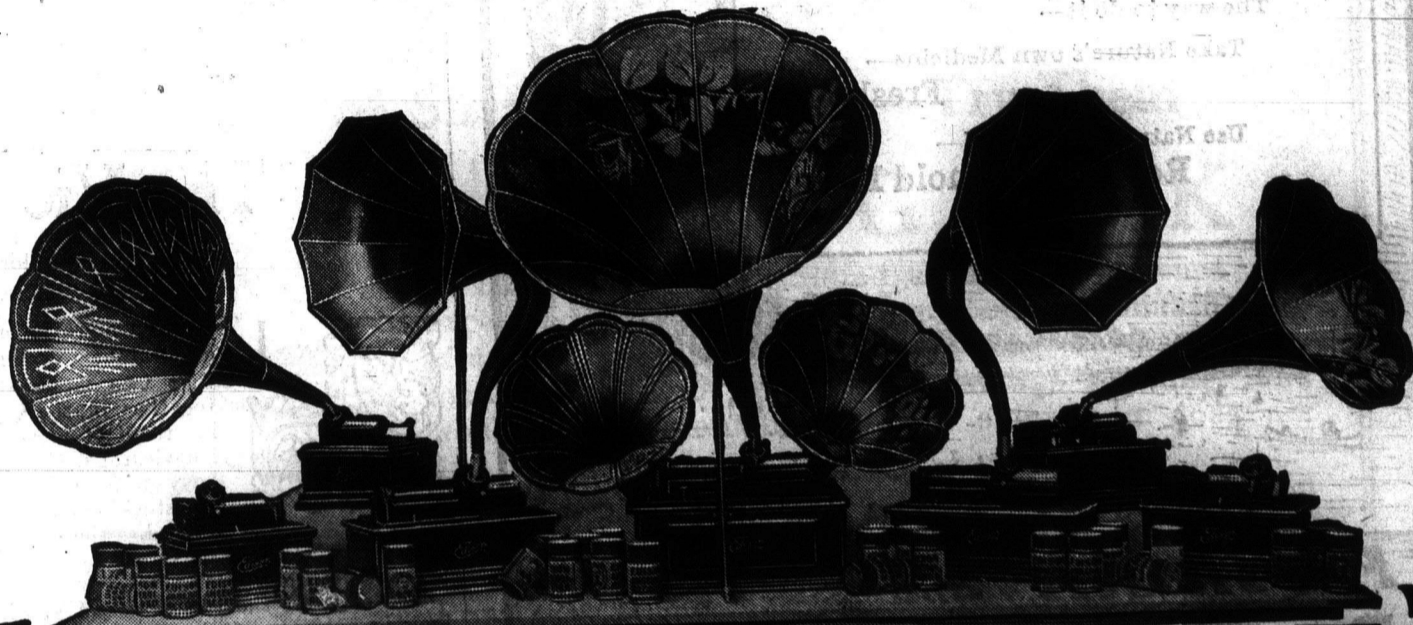
"Everything—the theory of it, the working of it. I understand nothing about it."

"Then, the first thing to do is to have some one explain it. It must be simple. Look at the thousands of men who have cars!"

"Do you call that simple?" I cried, pointing to the book.

"No, not when you look at everything at once. I know nothing of mechanics, but I'm confident, if you start at the proper beginning and work forward, in regular order, it is simple enough."

"I'm going to sell the car," I said doggedly. "I've told the man to come for it in the morning."



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