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THE Automatic Road Agent

By WILLIAM WALLACE COOK

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I CAN never forgive Klippon for the way he deceived me in the matter of that automatic road agent. Up on its completion I was led to believe the machine was nothing more harmful than a motor cow-boy, and when the mask fell my faith in my versatile friend was shaken to its very foundations.

That Klippon in a most salutary way was hoist of his own petard did much to restore the status quo ante of our cordial relations. That I myself was involved directly in his rescue from a scheme of comprehensive lawlessness was of small moment, considering the beneficent results of the aforesaid rescue.

Great guesses, I suppose, spin their glittering webs in the dark. At any rate, Klippon's ingenuity when at highest pressure withdrew into some lair where it could be alone with its original inventor.

In the present instance the lair was the rear room of our adobe dwelling in Matanzas, N. M. From that room came all day long and far into the night a mellow "clink" of hammer on anvil, and against its closely curtained windows struck sporadic gleams of a portly figure.

The while he worked on in mysterious silence I slaved at the printer's trade to keep him in funds for material. So great was my trust in his ability that I handed over my wages every Saturday night without question. Whenever Klippon showed himself he was grimy with smoke and dust, grumpy, but complacent.

"William," he remarked as we sat over one of our frugal meals, "the machine I am building is going to prove a ten strike. Money? My dear boy, we shall take in the coin hand over fist. Today you are to give them two weeks' notice at the printing office."

"Are you ready to tell me what the thing is?" I inquired.

"Not yet. In two weeks, however, it will give me great pleasure to inform you fully."

During the next fortnight Klippon surprised me by allowing me to retain my wages. On the night I severed my connection with the Matanzas Mercury he took me by the hand and led me into the room where he had been laboring for the last three months.

Before me was a skeleton motor car, small, compact—little more than wheels and platform, with the necessary box to house the machinery. But the car itself was only an insignificant part of my friend's amazing machine.

Welded to it and springing one with the vehicle was a monstrously in the form of a steel man; not a whole man, merely the head, trunk and arms, but on a gigantic model—the half of a nagog.

This latter day centaur was a hideous conception. Its vacuous face and staring eyes sent uncanny shivers creeping through my nerves, and I turned away with a gasp.

In each hand the semihuman clasped a long barreled Colt's revolver. The steel arms were jointed, and Klippon was lifting them about and moving them this way and that when I turned my back.

"So that is what I have been putting my wages into for the last ten weeks!" I exclaimed, perhaps a trifle bitterly. "I had expected myself into the belief that Klippon had been solving the problem of aerial navigation, and my disappointment was keen."

"Klippon's Motor Cowboy," my friend explained triumphantly, "primarily designed to benefit the cattle industry and, incidentally, Marcus Klippon and his friend, William Quinn."

"When charged with electricity, this machine will think, act and do everything but talk for a period varying from twenty-four hours to a week, depending upon the amount of energy used by the car."

"But the revolver?" I cried.

"All cowboys have revolvers," he answered, as if thought, evasively.

"It seems poorly designed to meet the requirements of a cattle range," I ventured, musingly over courage to continue my examination of the odd contraption.

"You don't understand these things, William," said Klippon calmly.

"If you'd explain how a patent cowboy is going to make money for you hand over fist, I think I could understand that."

"You'll have a practical demonstration of that tomorrow," he returned.

Next morning Klippon shook the late waterfowler and requested me to arise and dress with as much dispatch as possible. While getting into my clothes I stole a glance into the rear room.

The motor cowboy was gone, his departure having been accomplished by means of a seven foot beach in the adobe driveway swept Klippon with a questioning glance.

"I pushed it down to the power plant," said he, "and filed it with electricity. It's now away on trial."

"I should like to see how it stands the test," I observed.

"So you shall, William. There are two hours ahead of the sun, and when we have had our breakfast we will ride out into the country and watch operations."

"Don't you have to go with it?" I queried.

"If my car had to go with it," he responded, "the machine would not be a success. My plan as to the work to be done is imparted through a series of push buttons. There my respectful ally comes, and the machine, of its own volition, does the rest."

We rode about five miles, not toward any track but the open country. The sky grew dusky and the rocky hills. The night grew dark and with it my apprehensions.

There was a heavy strain in Klippon's makeup, and most of his legs were undertaking to do the work of his arms.

"Klip," said I severely, "if there is anything crooked about this you can count me out."

"William," he retorted, "don't read me any of your homilies. We're not going to do anything crooked. We're simply going to watch and observe what happens."

He looked about him critically. The trail threaded a rugged ravine at that point, with shadowy lurking places gauged from the slopes on left and right.

"This is the place," he proceeded. "We will climb that hill, hitch our horses over the brow of it, and then take up our stations behind convenient boulders."

"Why the bowlders?" I asked.

"Have't you a right?"

"I never saw such a fellow!" he interrupted crossly. "Consider yourself under my orders, William, or else point your cynic for Matanzas and go back to the printing office. It loo' to me as though your plebeian ideas were wedded to type sticking and twenty a week."

I accepted the rebuke meekly, and we hitched our horses on the other side of the hill and screened ourselves behind rocks commanding a view of the trail.

We had not been ten minutes in hiding when the stage from the gold camp at Pell's Notch trekked into sight on its way to the railroad at Matanzas.

"Watch," whispered Klippon, "and don't get excited."

The stage came merrily on, an express messenger on the seat with the driver.

At the messenger's feet was a strong box which I knew must contain a treasure in placer gold. Between the messenger's knees was a rifle.

As I kept my wondering eyes on the vehicle the four horses attached to it were shot back in their traces and then shot up in the air. The driver exploded a yell, and the messenger, quick as chain lightning, brought the rifle to his shoulder.

A report followed, and a musical ring followed the report—a ring that, through some weird acoustic effect, sounded for all the world like a tiling, ironical laugh.

Swerving my eyes the other way along the trail, I beheld the so called motor cowboy planted in the path, both weapons leveled at the two on the stage. A red card lettered in white had abruptly materialized at the front of the car, "Hands Up!"

I was spellbound—too much so for recrimination. All I could do was to crouch behind my bowlder and keep my fascinated eyes on the tall fellow.

The automatic pulled trigger, and the messenger's hat flew off. The messenger emptied his magazine over the horses' heads, and a chorus of those eerie laughs echoed up and down the ravine.

By then the stage horses were fairly under control, and the driver elevated his hands. The messenger, who had lost a lock of hair by a second bullet, followed suit.

"The 'Hands Up!' card vanished, and another took its place. 'Deposit Valuables in Iron Basket in Front of Car.' 'Jump!' widened behind the driver. 'What sort of a holdup is this anyhow? That looks like the old job himself. Why don't you say something, you fellow with the gun?'

A black card jumped viciously into sight. "Your money or your life!" Hurry!"

This was immediately followed by the other card naming the place for the deposit of valuables and was emphasized with a third shot from one of the Colts, the bullet slinging past the messenger's ear.

"Don't shoot!" cried the messenger frantically. "You've hit my hat, and the hat, and that bullet got my wing-sling hand."

He clambered down from the stage, pulled the strong box after him, dashed it to the car and heaved it aboard. All the while Klippon's eyes were kept his covered with one of the revolvers.

"Pushing back to the stage, the messenger regarded the box. There came a slow knock on the door, and the messenger hurriedly looked out from the still into a narrow alley in the hills.

The driver's long whip fell across the back of the horses, and the stage jumped on toward Matanzas like a cannon ball. There were no passengers on the stage, and the messenger's eyes were kept looking back at the scene of the ultimatum's execution.

"Klippon," said I, finding language here that the ultimatum was over, "you have betrayed my trust in you, and that's the end of our acquaintance. Why didn't you tell me it was a motor highwayman in the first place?"

"Don't get so high over me, William," answered Klippon. "I have been with you for years, and you have never once suspected me. I think that Klippon's acquaintance with you is a most remarkable thing. I have been with you for years, and you have never once suspected me. I think that Klippon's acquaintance with you is a most remarkable thing."

A teacher in explaining the different kinds of sentences to her class, asked what it would be if she said, "I am looking for a man."

"I don't know," "but I think it would be the truth,"—Larson Standard.

Mothers need have no anxiety in continuing to give Chamberlain's Cough Remedy to their little ones, as it contains absolutely nothing injurious. This remedy is not only perfectly safe, but it gives much relief, and it is a world wide reputation for its cures of coughs, colds, croup and can all ways be relied upon.

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ROAD IMPROVEMENT

SOME POINTS BY MAINE'S COMMISSIONER OF HIGHWAYS.

How to Secure a Dry Surface. Straightening the Grade of a Road. Importance of Drainage—Hills on Highway Repairs.

The first annual report of the department of highways of the State of Maine has been issued by Commissioner Paul D. Sargent. It is a voluminous document and contains much of interest. Here are some interesting excerpts:

"Country roads in general may be improved in the following ways: By cutting out the bushes and grubbing out the roots. By straightening the graded portion of the road and taking out the short, sharp and dangerous corners and curves. By widening the roads. By improving the drainage. By cutting down the hills.

There are miles of our country roads upon which no marked improvement can be made until the bushes are first removed. Indeed, the thorough removal of these bushes would be of great value to the roads in allowing the sun and wind to dry the surface early in the spring. When bushes are removed the roots should be grubbed out and both bushes and roots pulled neatly and burned as soon as dry.

Under no circumstances should they be thrown into the side ditches, back against the fence or upon adjoining land. Highway rights of way should present as neat appearance as do the railroad rights of way, and if the above suggestions are followed in performing this work and a little care taken in cleaning up after the work is completed our roadways can gradually be made permanently attractive.

There are in nearly every town stretches of road made up of several short courses, and before improvement is undertaken on any of these, all short, sharp corners and curves should be eliminated as far as possible.

Many of our roads present a crooked appearance, which in reality the location is a straight line, the crooked having been made when the road was graded to relieve the builders from grubbing out a stump or removing a bowlder. If improvement is contemplated on a road in this condition, the first step to be taken is to straighten the grade so that the finished road will bear the marks of good workmanship. By the use of a few stakes for lining up new work, road commissioners will, in widening roads, be able to make use of all of the old grade and have a good straight road.

A poorly drained earth road will wear better if wide than narrow, as the traffic will then be more evenly distributed over the surface, and in consequence there will be less liability of the traffic forming deep ruts during the muddy season. These ruts increase in depth rapidly and are exceedingly detrimental to any road.

For three or four months in the summer season many of our country roads are pleasant roads to travel. During the spring and fall, however, these same roads are in many instances almost impassable. This condition cannot be removed, the water must be kept away from them and that which falls on them speedily taken away. Subdrainage will keep the subsoil water away from the road foundations and proper crown and surface drainage will carry away the water in depth under their surface. We believe there is no one thing which will return better results for money expended on roads than will drainage.

Next to securing perfect drainage attention should be directed to reducing steep grades in order that the benefits arising from improving other portions of the road will not be lost by the inability of teams to haul a full load up the grades. It should be determined positively that no better route can be obtained around the hill before money is laid out on the hill in permanent improvements, as it will probably be necessary to change the location after such permanent work has been done.

Cutting off the tops of hills and filling at the bottom will be the only way of reducing grades where the old location is followed. One-half of the road may be excavated and scraped out at a time, which will allow the location after such permanent work has been done.

When the tops of hills are filled and the bottom is scraped out, the location of the road will be improved. It should be determined positively that no better route can be obtained around the hill before money is laid out on the hill in permanent improvements, as it will probably be necessary to change the location after such permanent work has been done.

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GIANT MAGNETS.

The Operation of Lifting Monsters Leads With Them.

The peculiar properties of an electric current often lead one to fancy that it may perhaps be employed with the spirit of intelligence, so mysterious are its inner workings.

A most curious use of electricity is the adoption of lifting magnets in machine shop and mill practice. An electro magnet in its simplest form consists of a piece of soft iron wound with a large number of turns of insulated copper wire. When an electric current passes through the windings of wire the electric force are converted into magnetic forces and the coil of wire and core of soft iron assume all the characteristics of a common steel magnet.

The operation of lifting magnets is quite simple. The magnet is attached to the crane hook, and the ends of the wire forming the coil are connected directly with the dynamo. The crane is then swung so that the magnet is suspended directly over the metal to be removed. The magnet is then lowered until it comes in contact with the object, the current is turned on, the magnet is raised and the mass of metal to be hoisted clings to the magnet.

When the load reaches the desired point it may be dropped without first lowering the magnet or it may be lowered, the current shut off and the electro magnet needs no help to load or unload, and the work can be done in half the time with a saving of from three to four men.—New York Herald.

THE BLOUSE.

Its Name Came Originally From Palestine, in Egypt.

The savans of Palestine, in lower Egypt, in ages past stood foremost among sunny lands where the culture of indigo and the manufacture of fabrics dwelt with it were the principal industries. In the middle ages, when the Crusaders landed on the coast of Egypt, they noticed that the women of Palestine were wearing a certain article of dress which they called a blouse.

The name of the blouse was given to the fabric, and this was retained by the French production, but contracted to blouse, which later on was changed to blouse (pronounced bluse). The blouse worn by English male peasants is a similar garment and, though it is not written in history that the blouse crossed the channel, it is probable that it was introduced into England from the fact that in other times the blouse was now and then called a "blouse."

This, fair ladies, is the origin of the garment of our warmest affection, to which we have loyally clung for years in spite of many ruthless destructions and will continue to do so until the end. To improve other portions of the blouse, it is not called a blouse or "blouse," it is not of aristocratic lineage.

Landor and Wordsworth. Walter Savage Landor was an intemperate person in words and hated Wordsworth. Were there ever more contemptuous words than those of Landor in referring to Wordsworth? "Patience and patience are the qualities of a panicle and thus far he attained his end. Let him place the accessories on the table lest what is helpful and clammy grow into duller secretion and moisture viscosity the more I mistake it." In Landor's letter to Ralph Waldo Emerson he writes: "We must have an opinion on authors which he never had read, Plato for instance. He speaks contemptuously of the Scotch. I praised a line of Scott's on the dog of a traveler lost in the snow (if I remember on Skiddaw). He said it was the only good one in the poem and began instantly to recite a whole poem of his own on the same subject."

Buttons are certainly as ancient as the sleeve of Troy, in the sixth century before our era, for both in that unfortunate city and at Mycenae, Dr. Schliemann discovered pieces of gold, silver and bronze which could have had no other use than that of buttons. In medieval times the clothing of the common people was generally fastened with wooden pegs of the type and form of those resorted to in emergencies by the country boy of the present day. Buttons covered with cloth were prohibited by George I, in 1720 to succeed in the manufacture of metal buttons.

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