

the standard specifications and were particularly well manufactured, and bright, clean stock.

"I think I can work those off for you, Mr. Peets," he announced presently, "although it will be absolutely impossible to me to secure an order within thirty days. It's too early in the season for the trade to figure on any excess requirements, you know."

Henry Peets signified by a dolorous wag of his sawdust-laden head that he realized Mr. Pitcher spoke only too truly.

"However," continued Pitcher, "I might try a little speculation on this stock and buy it outright from you. As the matter stands, it's dead stock on your hands, and ruining you. You ought to be glad to get out at cost."

"Get me out and see!" A flash of hope lighted up his worried visage, and Peets named a price that was so astoundingly low it almost caused Reuben K. to fall over backward.

"Give me a thirty-day option—" he began, but Peets interrupted.

"I'd love to," he said, "but I've got to have some money, Mr. Pitcher."

Pitcher reflected that to-morrow would be Saturday and it occurred to him that the weekly pay-roll was bothering the manufacturer. Also, the longer he reflected on the opportunity before him, the greater became his insane desire to risk his all on this one deal. He stood an even chance to clean up at least five thousand dollars within ninety days, and oh, how badly he needed that extra five thousand in his business! It was too good a chance to let slip.

He turned to Henry Peets. "I'll take it—the whole works—now," he said weakly. "And I'll give you two-thousand five-hundred to-day, two-thousand five-hundred upon delivery of stock to a steam schooner and the receipt by me of the bill-of-lading, and the balance thirty days after delivery on the wharf in San Francisco."

"Sold," yelled Henry Peets. He removed his shabby hat and knocked the sawdust off it. It was plain that he had received a new lease of life, and before his enthusiasm should abate, Pitcher had rushed him back to his office, drawn up the contract of sale, and written his check for twenty-five hundred dollars. There is something about the sight of ready money to a bankrupt that sweeps away ordinary business precaution, and Henry Peets did not even pause to question Pitcher's ability to pay for the balance of the order in case his prospective customers should default. Peets had no time for that. He was too anxious to get the stock off his hands, for he feared the arrival of the sheriff at any moment, and five thousand dollars was five thousand dollars! As a matter of fact, it was ten thousand to poor Peets, and he could scarcely sign the agreement with Pitcher, so profound were the joyous tremblings that assailed him in the knowledge of at least temporary relief.

As for Rube Pitcher, the moment the awful deed was done and he realized his impulsiveness and weakness in the face of an opportunity to gamble at long odds had left him between the devil and the deep sea, so to speak, he grew hot and cold by turns, and for a moment was tempted to strangle Henry Peets and take the fateful check away from him. He had sufficient intelligence left, however, to conclude that Peets would not long survive the pressure of his debts, so he made no further overtures for the selling agency of that box mill. On the contrary, he promised himself fervently that if he got through this deal with a whole skin, he would eschew boxes for the rest of his natural life.

Concluded in the next SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

# Does Your Car Get on Your Nerves?

*Why Have a Car at all, If You Can't Have Comfort?*

**D**O YOU come in from a run with your muscles tired and your nerves in a knot? Do your friends need a rest after riding with you? Does your wife prefer staying at home, because she can't enjoy the wearing, pulsatory shocks of your car? Is the rear seat constantly shaking with comfort-destroying vibration—even on good pavements? And have you thought that shock absorbers, easier springs, or deeper cushions might cure the discomfort?

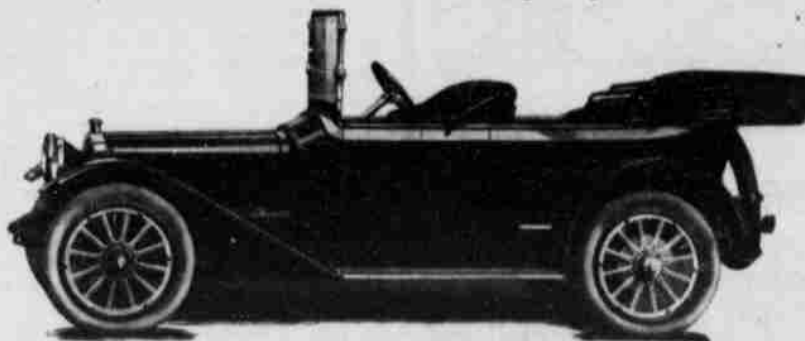
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