

# "Four Hundred and Ninety"

A Continued Story

*by*

W.C. Durant

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## "Four Hundred and Ninety"

A Continued Story.

By W. C. DURANT

### PART I

AS I settle down in my quiet office, with no sound in sight save the constant and rapid ticking of about twenty Underwoods, to write this interesting and thrilling story, I am possessed of the firm and abiding conviction that "Four Hundred and Ninety," figuratively speaking, will be one of the events of my rather eventful life and that "Four Hundred and Ninety," the story, will prove of sufficient merit to cause its acceptance in serial form by every worthy publisher to whom it may be offered.

Playwrights and authors of long experience agree that every play and story must be written around a name, and the wise selection of the name or title is of the utmost importance. In my case this has been no exception to the rule. Not less than *three score and ten* names have been suggested and discussed and the gentle reader knoweth not what he hath escaped.

"FOUR HUNDRED AND NINETY"

Everything from "430" to "500" was considered, with "Four Hundred and Ninety" as final choice.

(Note by Cost and Accounting Department: "Four Hundred and Ninety" will permit of reasonable concessions to dealers, allowances for policy account, expenses incident to national publicity campaign, rebates or dividends to customers and reasonable profit to the manufacturer.)

Wishing to clear up any possible question of a doubt in my own mind as to the suitability, if not the originality, of the title to my story, I made inquiry of a very dear (expensive) friend who dropped in to borrow tea, who met me thus:

His questions—my answers—are hereby made a part of this copyright.

He: You call it "Four Hundred and Ninety"; what does it mean?

Me: It means \$490.00, the price of a motor car.

He: What is the make?

Me: "Chevrolet," the latest model.

He: Is it a good car?

Me: It is.

"FOUR HUNDRED AND NINETY"

He: What are the general specifications?

Me: Wheelbase, 102"; wheels, 30 x 3"; weight, 1,700 pounds; 20 H.P. motor, with magneto; capacity, five passengers.

He: Has it any special features?

Me: It has.

He: What are they?

Me: The Spring Suspension, the Steering Gear Mechanism, the Rear Seat Arrangement, the Clutch Collar, the Hub Cap Retainer, and the Motor are unlike those used on any other car built.

He: What about the Springs?

Me: Double-acting, shock-absorbing springs, reinforced top and bottom of center leaf. Rides like a cradle and holds the road at all speeds. (*Patent pending.*)

He: What advantage in Steering Gear?

Me: The lightest, cheapest and most reliable steering gear ever applied to a motor car. Can be controlled with your little finger. Will turn the car in twenty-foot circle. Absolutely unlike anything ever used in steering gear mechanism. (*Patent pending.*)

"FOUR HUNDRED AND NINETY"

He: What novelty in the Rear Seat Arrangement?

Me: A section of the back of the rear seat is removable, permitting the person occupying the center sitting to relieve the "hip and shoulder" wedge. This allows a 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ -passenger car to be converted into a 5-passenger car with comfortable seating capacity. (*Patent allowed.*)

He: How about the Clutch Collar?

Me: This is worth its weight in gold. Ask anyone who owns, uses, drives or deals in the Chevrolet car. (*Patent allowed.*)

He: What about the Hub Cap Retainer?

Me: A neat and unusual device, permitting quick attachment of the hub cap and materially reducing the weight of the hub. (*Patent pending.*)

He: Has the car any other special features?

Me: Yes. It has an all-steel body, with flush sides and concealed hinges. The doors fit like a glove and so do the metal parts. This car will not at any time make a good "rattle for the baby."

"FOUR HUNDRED AND NINETY"

He: This all listens very well, but how does the "Four Hundred and Ninety" compare with others of the same price?

Me: Modesty prevents. The car will tell its own story. I can safely say that a pattern has been set.

He: You have designed other good cars. Is this up to your usual high standard?

Me: "Four Ninety" is my masterpiece. With the assistance of Mr. Arthur Mason, Mr. A. T. Stuart, Mr. John Trumble, Mr. Fred Hobensee and others, I did it all myself.

He: How long have you been at work on this car?

Me: Nearly two years.

He: How did you happen to build it?

Me: I recognized that there was a demand for a good-looking, easy-riding, well-made, powerful car at that price—something better in appearance, finish and detail than heretofore obtainable.

He: Is it a speedy car?

Me: It is; very. Fifty miles an hour with ease, if you care to drive that fast.

"FOUR HUNDRED AND NINETY"

He: Will it climb hills?

Me: It is a wonderful hill climber. The Chevrolet "ROYAL MAIL" has defeated everything in its class. "Four Hundred and Ninety" will do even better.

He: Do you expect to continue this price indefinitely?

Me: No; the price will be reduced as economies in manufacture are obtained.

He: I suppose you obtain enormous economies when you reach big production.

Me: No. Beyond a certain point there is no economy in volume.

He: Do you expect to protect your dealer in territory?

Me: Most certainly. Protect the dealer is our middle name.

He: Will you impose unreasonable conditions upon your dealers in the way of deposits and specifications?

Me: We will not. We do not wish to work under high pressure. One of our many mottos is "Live and let live," and our instructions to our employees and associates, "Do not do your work too hurriedly, but do it well."

"FOUR HUNDRED AND NINETY"

He: Why a continued story?

Me: I do not wish to exhaust the subject at one writing. "Four Hundred and Ninety" is to be a continued daily story.

He: How long will the story be continued?

Me: Many years. The price may be reduced, but the model number will still stand.

Noticing that my friend appeared somewhat worried, I excused him, and looking at my watch, concluded to call this the first chapter.

*(To be continued in our next.)*

P.S. I forgot to say that the car has crown fenders and we get 24 miles to the gallon of gasoline.

P.S. P.S. I also forgot to say that where steel is a part of the construction we are using Vanadium and nickel steels almost exclusively in this car.

**T**O BUILD a satisfactory car to sell for \$2,000 is not a difficult task. To build a satisfactory car to sell for \$490 is quite an undertaking. Cars ordinarily sold for \$490 are not satisfactory because they are built in enormous quantities and under great pressure, lacking refinement of detail, which, regardless of price, is now required in every automobile.

*Lift the leaf and you will see "Four-Ninety"*



*"By this sign ye shall know it"*



*"FOUR HUNDRED AND NINETY"*

**CHEVROLET MOTOR COMPANY**

*Dealers and Service Stations Everywhere*

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Flint, Michigan

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Tarrytown-on-Hudson

