

VII. The Lincoln Highway

THE FIRST PERSON to whom Carl told his dream of a transcontinental highway was his partner, Jim Allison. "The automobile industry should be willing to finance a road across the country," said Carl. "Think what it would do for the American automobile!"

There was no Highway Commission then, and no public funds to pay for the building of such a road. Half of the states spent absolutely nothing on road building. As for political backing—Carl had no faith in it at all.

He began sounding out more friends on the subject. He wrote letters to influential men, suggesting the building of the road.

On September 24, 1912, Carl wrote his friend, Elbert Hubbard: "As you know, Mr. Hubbard, the highways of America are built chiefly of politics, whereas the proper material is crushed rock, or concrete. We believe one magnificent highway of this kind, in actual existence, will stimulate as nothing else could the building of enduring highways everywhere that will not only be a credit to the American people but that will also mean much to American agriculture and American commerce. Will you pitch in and help?"

The sage of East Aurora would, indeed. He came to Blossom Heath to talk the idea over. I remember how he and Carl lay, belly-down, under the apple trees eating their way through pink watermelon slices supplied by the beaming Galloway, while they planned the highway. Hubbard was the first prominent writer to put the power of the written word behind the transcontinental road. Other friends suggested that it be called