

HENRY FORD HURT IN CRASH AS OTHER CAR UPSETS HIS; PLOT TO KILL HIM SUSPECTED

HURLED DOWN STEEP BANK

Two Men Apparently Had
Lain in Wait Near
Dearborn Plant.

VICTIM STAGGERS HOME

Rushed to Hospital After Two
Days, He Undergoes Operation
and Is Reported Doing Well.

SEARCH FOR MISSING CAR

Ford Official Says Identity Is
Known—Army of Detectives
Assigned to Seek Occupants.

From a Staff Correspondent of
The New York Times.

DETROIT, March 30.—An apparent attempt to kill Henry Ford by two unknown men who drove a heavy touring car into the Ford coupé in which the automobile manufacturer was riding alone on Sunday night was revealed today. The big car crashed into the Ford machine midway between the Ford works and Mr. Ford's estate in Dearborn, twelve miles from this city. Mr. Ford is now in the Henry Ford Hospital at Dearborn, painfully injured.

Persons close to Mr. Ford are convinced that the crash was the result of a deliberate attempt to kill him. When William J. Cameron, editor of The Dearborn Independent, was asked his idea as to this, he said:

"I would not say that it was a deliberate attempt to assassinate Mr. Ford. You can draw your own conclusions. A great many men are investigating this, and we believe that the Studebaker car that followed Mr. Ford and drove him off the road is known."

Mr. Ford in his coupé had just passed the bridge spanning the Rouge River when the second automobile at high speed smashed into the rear of the coupé. The bridge is fifteen feet above the river and an embankment slopes down from the bridge approaches. The coupé containing Mr. Ford tumbled down the embankment and hit a tree. The touring car sped off with the two men, who had lain in wait at the gates of the Ford plant for Mr. Ford. They are being sought.

Mr. Ford, after an undetermined period of unconsciousness, staggered a quarter of a mile to the lodge gates of his estate, the gatekeeper telephoned to Mrs. Ford. She ran down the graveled path, and she and the gatekeeper supported Mr. Ford while he walked 200 feet to his home. A fine drizzle was falling at the time.

Now in Henry Ford Hospital.

The automobile manufacturer, who is 64 years of age, was in Henry Ford Hospital at Dearborn tonight. There it was said that his "condition cannot be said to be serious in any way." The surgeon attending him said that Mr. Ford had sustained a slight concussion of the brain and that for a time after the crash he had spat blood and had suffered from transient hemoptysis (passage of blood in the urine). He underwent an X-ray examination at the hospital this afternoon, but nothing was disclosed as to whether the negative indicated internal injuries. He will be in the hospital for at least two weeks.

All news of the incident was suppressed until just before noon today, when newspaper men began to make inquiries based on vague reports. Then Mr. Cameron issued a formal statement, which further investigation by reporters filled in at certain points. No mention was made of the deliberate attempt by the two men to drive the coupé with Mr. Ford in it off the road. Nor was it disclosed that the men had parked their car outside the Ford plant and then followed the motor maker.

Mr. Cameron and Clifford B. Longley, general counsel to the Ford Motor Company, refused to amplify or clarify the formal statement. Subsequently, however, the facts were disclosed, and a statement by Dr. R. D. McClure, senior attending surgeon at Henry Ford Hospital, itemized the extent of Mr. Ford's injuries.

The reason advanced for the secrecy arose from the \$1,000,000 suit for libel which Aaron Sapiro filed against the automobile manufacturer. Mr. Ford was scheduled to take the stand as a witness tomorrow or Friday, and Mr. Cameron said that the statement had been withheld because of the "unavoidable and unfounded inferences that may be drawn." A postponement of the trial seems to be inevitable tonight.

Text of the Formal Statement.

The formal statement issued by Mr. Cameron read:

At 8:30 P. M., Sunday, March 27, a Ford coupé driven by Henry Ford and occupied by him alone was forced off the south drive of Michigan Avenue a few feet east of the Rouge River Bridge and plunged down a steep embankment into a tree.

Mr. Ford states that he was forced over the embankment by a car which

came upon him from behind as he emerged from the driveway of the Ford Laboratories at Dearborn. After a period of daze or unconsciousness Mr. Ford walked with difficulty several hundred feet to the gatekeeper on his estate, who summoned Mrs. Ford. Dr. R. D. McClure, chief surgeon of the Henry Ford Hospital, was immediately called and remained with the injured man until Tuesday night, when he was removed in an ambulance to the Henry Ford Hospital, where he is now undergoing treatment.

There has been a minor operation. Because of the lawsuit now in progress and the unavoidable and unfounded inferences that may be drawn, the facts were withheld from the public, although communicated to the court Monday morning. Today, however, it developed that the newspapers had somehow obtained information, and a statement is issued.

Mr. Ford strongly deprecates the suggestion that the accident was the result of intent on any one's part.

At present Mr. Ford is resting easily, and no serious complications are expected.

On Sunday night Mr. Ford had gone to his garage, taken out his coupé and driven alone to the Dearborn offices, where only watchmen were on duty. This custom of going about alone at all hours has caused concern to his friends, but no amount of counsel has availed to change it. As a result, only the garage man and Mrs. Ford knew that he was out, until the gatekeeper's alarm following the accident.

Dr. McClure's Bulletin.

The bulletin issued at the hospital read:

Mr. Ford's condition cannot be said to be serious in any way. He suffered a slight concussion, from which he has completely recovered. He had also rather severe contusions over the ribs and back, with considerable strain of back muscles.

The operation referred to in the press statements involved a fixation of the chest and back by splinting. Complete rest for a period of about two weeks is indicated.

R. D. McCLURE, M. D.

A second bulletin, issued at 9:15 o'clock, the last for the night, read:

"Mr. Ford's condition is excellent. No complications have developed and indications are none will develop. He is resting easily.

The distance from Mr. Ford's home, which is set far back from Michigan Avenue and amid trees, to the laboratories attached to the huge plant in Dearborn is about half a mile. Although the broad, double-drive avenue is usually heavy with traffic virtually at all hours, it was bearing a lighter burden on Sunday night, owing to the rain which was falling. Mr. Ford, driving the coupé, set out for the laboratories directly after dinner.

The estate and the plant are well guarded day and night, especially the laboratories, in which research in motor engines for automobiles and airplanes is under way. So far as can be ascertained, none of the guards saw the arrival or departure of Mr. Ford, but if they had witnessed it, it would have passed from their minds, owing to his habit of going alone and at all hours about the plant.

Seen by Two Youths.

When the automobile manufacturer left the laboratories some time after 8 P. M. and drove through the gateway, turning east for the drive back to his home, two men who were parked in the avenue in a Studebaker car started the engine and followed. The identity of the person or persons who saw the waiting machine and its occupants start off in the wake of the small Ford car was not divulged to newspaper men. The car was seen, however, by Ernest Wilhelm, 20 years of age, and Carl Makovitz, 19, of 232 Michigan Avenue, Dearborn. They saw Mr. Ford and his car go down the embankment, but they said they had not seen the actual contact of the cars.

According to information obtained by reporters, the big car came up directly back of Mr. Ford as he drove over the River Rouge bridge. As soon as he cleared the span the touring car crowded into the smaller car. The larger car struck the coupé on the left side and spun it around so that the hood pointed down the bank. The Ford went over a six-inch curbing at the side of the brick-paved roadway and head-on down the fifteen-foot drop. The coupé went between two trees, with barely room to avoid hitting one or the other of them. At the bottom the car struck another tree. The impact tore a section of the bark away. Meanwhile, the heavier car sped off in the direction of Detroit.

Flaw in "Hit-and-Run" Theory.

An early theory, advanced in the official silence of the Ford attorneys and Mr. Cameron, that the automobile maker might have been the target of a "hit-and-run" driver, possibly one partially under the influence of intoxicants, failed to account for the wait of the men near the laboratory gate through which Mr. Ford had to issue.

The two youths, Wilhelm and Makovitz, were some distance behind the two cars. Wilhelm, who is a clerk in a Dearborn fruit store, had invited Makovitz out for a test ride in a new Ford car he had just purchased. The two youths had toured the streets of Dearborn and then set out for a clear bit of road to try out the speed of the new machine.

As they approached the concrete bridge over the River Rouge, they saw a coupé just ahead of them. The young men said that they thought there were two persons in the machine, but that their attention had wandered from an attempt to verify this idea when they observed the bright newness of the coupé, shown dimly in the light of their headlights.

Another thing quickly distracted their attention. This, they said, was a bigger car, which passed them at a high speed. Both said they were intent on crossing the bridge in their own car and did not pay much attention to the machines ahead.

Wilhelm and Makovitz did not give heed to what was happening until they had crossed the bridge. They then saw the coupé go down the embankment after having turned at right angles to it. The coupé came to a stop when the left front wheel struck the tree.

Saw a Man Step From the Wreck.

The youths told the Dearborn police that the lights in the car remained on and that the engine continued to run. A man stepped from the machine and began trying to push the car. Wilhelm and Makovitz thought from this and from the fact that they were convinced that the car held a second occupant, who apparently was unhurt, that the occupants of the coupé had attempted a hold-up and had been driven off the highway.

Convinced that a hold-up had been attempted, the youths reported at once to the Dearborn police. They returned in a short time with a policeman, who found the motor off, the lights on and no one about.

Both men were questioned on Monday and today by the police and their car was examined. The police said they were satisfied that Wilhelm and Makovitz had given all the aid they could.

Meanwhile, according to an authoritative source, Mr. Ford, suffering from severe shock, cuts and bruises, set out to walk the quarter mile between the scene of the crash and the entrance to his estate. There are a few houses nearby, but all are far back from the avenue, which at this point runs through the suburban-rural section intervening between Detroit and Dearborn. Mr. Ford got within sight of the two tall fieldstone pillars that mark the gateway to his grounds

and caught the attention of the gatekeeper. How he did this was not disclosed.

He was assisted to the small home of the gatetender, who telephoned to the main house. Apparently it did not occur to the gateman to telephone for an automobile and rush the injured maker of millions of automobiles more quickly and in more comfort to the main house. Instead, the man got Mrs. Ford on the telephone. She ran down through the rain to the gates and helped the man assist Mr. Ford to his room. Ray Gallinger, farm manager for Mr. Ford, was notified, and Dr. McClure was sent for. The physician remained at the Ford home until the removal of the patient last night to the hospital.

X-Ray Examination Necessary.

Mr. Cameron was asked whether the removal of Mr. Ford to the hospital had resulted from an unfavorable change in his condition. He said that he had been taken into the hospital owing to a decision to submit him to an X-ray examination. He said that all of the facilities for the examination were more readily available at the hospital, which Mr. Ford founded, than at the home.

Mr. Cameron was asked about the line in his formal statement, "Mr. Ford strongly deprecates the suggestion that the accident was the result of intent on anyone's part." It was pointed out to him that no definite knowledge of the injury to Mr. Ford had existed generally until the statement had been issued, and that no theories as to whether the collision had been planned or was inadvertent had been offered. Mr. Cameron was disinclined to make a statement for publication on that.

In reply to questions, Mr. Cameron said that a description of the larger car had been included in an earlier statement he had prepared, but that the description had been deleted as likely to "give a clue" benefiting the two men sought.

It was learned elsewhere that the editor and the attorneys appearing in the trial had been bound not to give out any more information that appeared in the formal statement. At the hospital information on Mr. Ford was confined to Dr. McClure's bulletin.

FORD STOCK EFFECT SMALL.

Canadian Company Shares Decline on News of Auto Crash.

Word that Henry Ford had been injured in an automobile accident in Detroit reached Wall Street early yesterday afternoon. The Ford Motor Company of Canada is the only stock of the Ford interests listed in New York, this being dealt in on the Curb and, therefore, the market effect of his accident was not appreciable.

The shares of Ford Motor of Canada, however, declined fifteen points to the low and last price of \$425 per share, but the selling was very light, and fluctuations usually are wide in this stock. Its high price for the year was \$500.