**LIZZIE TO THE RESCUE**
Harriet Lummis Smith
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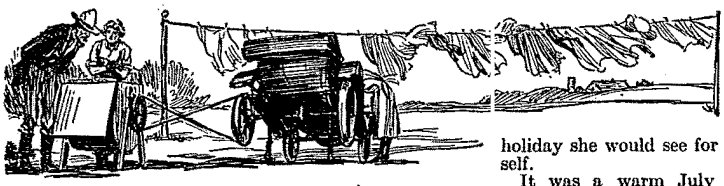
# LIZZIE TO THE RESCUE *By* Harriet Lummis Smith



THE purchase of the washing machine had been a long, hard pull. Any sacrifice that can be carried through in the first glow of enthusiasm is comparatively easy; the test is in holding on through monotonous weeks and months.

Innumerable little sacrifices had built up the savings-bank fund that was to put a washing machine into the Dillingham farmhouse. There was nothing spectacular about any of them. June lopped off the alluring dish of ice cream from her luncheons, walked home after many a tiresome day to save car fare and washed her underclothes in the wash basin and dried them before the register to keep down her laundry bills. If ever she grew a little tired of economizing she had only to think of her mother bowed over a washtub and her resolution instantly revived. Mrs. Dillingham's back was a little bent as if the washtubs had come so close together in her life that it hardly paid to straighten up between them.

There was something festive about a washing machine, June thought. A large electric shop near the building where she worked displayed one in the window, and she stopped before it once or twice a day to watch the swirling water and the clothes jumping up and down like children at the seashore. Without doubt that spectacle helped June to keep up with her sacrificing till the fund in the savings bank was sufficient.

It was a great day for her when she made the purchase and ordered the machine shipped home. That night she sent her mother a joyous letter explaining how easy her work would be without washtubs. It was hard to imagine the farmhouse on a Monday without a row of tubs on the long bench in the kitchen, pools of soapy water on the floor and the dismal tattoo of clothes rubbed against the washboard.

Mrs. Dillingham's answer came a week later. She said the washing machine had arrived and was wonderful, and that June was the best daughter that ever a woman had!

The girl was a little disappointed that her mother's next letter said nothing about lightened work. She asked her when she wrote whether the washing machine were running well and warned her to be sure to let her know if anything went wrong. Her mother's next letter came a little late, and it did not answer any of her questions. June had discovered that her correspondents generally forgot to answer the questions that she asked. She made several further attempts and then gave it up. When summer brought her two weeks holiday she would see for herself.

It was a warm July day when June reached home for her vacation. Her uncle and her mother met her at the station in the small car that Mrs. Dillingham had unwittingly won at a county fair by purchasing an admission ticket the number of which a blindfolded boy later drew from a glass bowl. The car had proved very useful, though June was sure that everyone had more advantage of it than the rightful owner had. Mrs. Dillingham could not drive her car, and, if ever she wanted to go to town or to a neighbor's, she was likely to find that her brother needed it, and she fell back on the old buggy. June's first homecoming since she had gone to the city to take a position was an important event, and Uncle Horace showed his sense of its importance by donning a coat and driving to town to meet her.

When June reached home she acted like an irrepressible boy just out of school. She hugged Loyal, the buff collie, who leaped on her in an ecstasy of welcome. She ran from room to room, luxuriating in her sense of homecoming. And finally in the big shed behind the kitchen she came upon the washing machine. She stopped and looked it over suspiciously. Her face suddenly shadowed.

"Why, mother," she exclaimed with a queer tension in her voice, "how awfully new it looks! Do you mean you've been using it for six months without taking any of the shine off?"

Mrs. Dillingham's attempt to smile was rather pathetic.

"Why, the fact is, dear," she said, "I haven't used it yet."

"Not used it! Why, mother!" The reproach in June's voice was so poignant that Mrs. Dillingham looked distressed.

"It does seem hard, dearie, when you spent so much money for it. But Uncle Horace thought that if I used his engine I might get the milking machine out of order. And he would be in a dreadful fix if anything went wrong with that."

June walked away, not trusting herself to reply. The farm had belonged to her grandfather, who had left it to his two sons, June's father and her Uncle Horace. When her father died her mother had inherited his share of the farm, but to all intents and purposes she was only a housekeeper for her brother-in-law; her rights were never recognized. The most irritating part to June was that her Uncle Horace was a kind-hearted, upright man who would have been appalled at the suggestion that there was anyone whom he did not treat fairly.

By supper time June had sufficiently recovered her spirits to be interested in the neighborhood news. The following Monday, it appeared, was a day of special importance, for a distinguished citizen, the most famous man of the village ten miles away, was coming back to spend twenty-four hours with his old friends and neighbors. There was to be a barbecue, a brass band and several speeches of welcome—altogether a great occasion.

"You and your Uncle Horace can go," said Mrs. Dillingham to her daughter. "It'll be nice for you, for you'll see everyone you know."

"What about you?"

"I don't believe I'd better go. It's—it's wash day," said Mrs. Dillingham, a little confused over bringing up a subject with such disagreeable associations. "I don't generally go anywhere on wash day."

"Why not postpone wash day till Tuesday?"

The suggestion did not find favor. Every day in Mrs. Dillingham's week was so full that to postpone the work of any day, from Monday to Saturday, put her hopelessly behind. She said as much stammeringly, and June listened in silence. Just how to manage it she did not know, but she was determined that her mother should enjoy the barbecue. She would gladly have stayed at home and done the washing in her place, but she knew Mrs. Dillingham would be aghast at that suggestion.

Monday morning the household was astir even a little earlier than the ordinary farmer's family in midsummer. Uncle Horace attended to the most pressing work of the farm and took the milk to the creamery. On his way back while he was still at some distance from the house he caught sight of a car standing in front of the woodshed. There was something singular in its appearance, though just what was wrong he could not make out.

"What in Sam Hill!" ejaculated Uncle Horace as he slapped the lines against the backs of the stolid gray horses. "I hope June hasn't been trying to run the car and wrecked it. Looks as if something had happened."

He noticed with astonishment as he came nearer that several of the clotheslines were already full of garments fluttering gayly in the brisk breeze. Mrs. Dillingham seldom had any clothes on the line till nearly eleven o'clock. But just then Mr. Horace Dillingham made a discovery that left no room in his thoughts for anything else.

In spite of its peculiar position the car had not been wrecked. The back had been jacked up, a tire removed from a rear wheel, and a rope, passed round the wheel, was revolving with the throb of the engine, thus conveying the power to the washing machine a few feet away. The washer was making up for its long period of enforced idleness. The soapy water was fairly riotous. Uncle Horace recognized some of his own garments in the maelstrom, and they were bobbing about with an abandon that seemed to him almost indecent.

"What in thunder—"

"Mother's going after all," said June, disregarding her uncle's excited beginning. "She wouldn't leave the clothes, so I decided to hurry through the washing and have it on the line before we started."

"Why, we ought to leave here by nine o'clock!"

"Yes, I suppose so. The washing will be done before that."

Uncle Horace looked hard at the car, the unwonted position of which suggested an animal about to kick. "I don't believe it's any too good for that car, using it to run the washing machine."

June smiled at him. "Well, anyway this machine belongs to mother, if the other doesn't. And it's going to be used to make mother's work easier for her. Think of having the washing on the line by nine o'clock, Uncle Horace! Why, generally mother's toiling away till the middle of the afternoon. You know that."

Uncle Horace continued to eye the car with disapproval. "If anybody wanted to go anywhere in a hurry," he said, "it would be mighty inconvenient to have a car out of commission."

June nodded. "The sensible thing," she said casually, "is for nobody to plan to use the car on Monday, not till afternoon anyway."

At ten o'clock the Dillinghams left for the barbecue. Mrs. Dillingham, arrayed in her Sunday best, seemed a little dazed. As long as they were in sight of the house she kept looking back to the full clotheslines, where sheets and pillow cases, towels and tablecloths were swinging in the July sun. The colored things were already sufficiently dry for ironing and had been taken down and packed into the clothes basket.

"Seems like a miracle," exclaimed Mrs. Dillingham at last. "Here it's

*"Why, mother," she exclaimed, . . . "how awfully new it looks!"*

DRAWINGS BY T. VICTOR HALL

Monday, and here I am, starting off as if I were a lady of leisure. And my washing all on the line, if you please!"

June found her mother's hand and squeezed it. "Mother darling," she said in a voice distinctly audible on the front seat, "I suppose we'd all feel lost if we didn't have work to do, but it's a pity for anyone to become a drudge. There are all kinds of machines now for helping women out, machines that wash dishes and vacuum cleaners and electric irons and lots of others I don't even know the names of. You've never had a great deal of good of your car, but I shouldn't wonder if we'd found a way to make it help out."

The barbecue proved a pleasant affair. The meat, cooked for twenty-four hours, was so tender that it fell apart at a touch and, moreover, was savory and delicious. The band played with vehemence; the speakers indulged themselves in impressive oratorical flights; and the distinguished citizen, returning for a few hours to the scenes of his boyhood, seemed to remember everyone, which added much to his popularity. But June knew that her mother's chief pleasure in the day was telling every woman she met that her washing was on the line.

"I couldn't have come if June hadn't given me a washing machine," she explained to each. "Well, yes, I've had it some time, but this is the first day I've really used it."

The automobile engine was pressed into service the following Monday, and Uncle Horace, who had to go to town unexpectedly to replace something broken in the mowing machine, had to wait half an hour till the car could be excused. He drove off looking thoughtful.

They had company to supper that night. Wash day, instead of being the hardest day of the week, had become one of the easiest. Of course Mrs. Dillingham talked about the washing machine, because she seemed to find it hard to talk of anything else, and presently the guest remarked, "Now with an electric iron you'd be fixed."

Mrs. Dillingham looked doubtful. "June's fixed it so the car runs the washing machine, but I guess it couldn't run an electric iron, could it, June?"

"That won't be necessary." The words were in Uncle Horace's impressive bass, and as they all looked at him he continued, "I stopped at Stebben's today to see what it would cost to have electricity put in. It's quite expensive, but I guess it saves in the end. Anyway it's not sensible to have the car out of commission every wash day."

When June came home the following summer the electricity had been installed. A vacuum cleaner and an electric iron were part of Mrs. Dillingham's equipment, and she had much to say of the relief of having no more kerosene lamps to clean and fill. "Housekeeping these days is child's play compared to what it was a year ago," she declared. "And you're the one to thank for it."

"Me?" cried June. She looked through the window at the car, which was a little more battered and shabby than a year before, and burst into a ringing laugh. "Don't thank me," she protested; "thank Lizzie!"