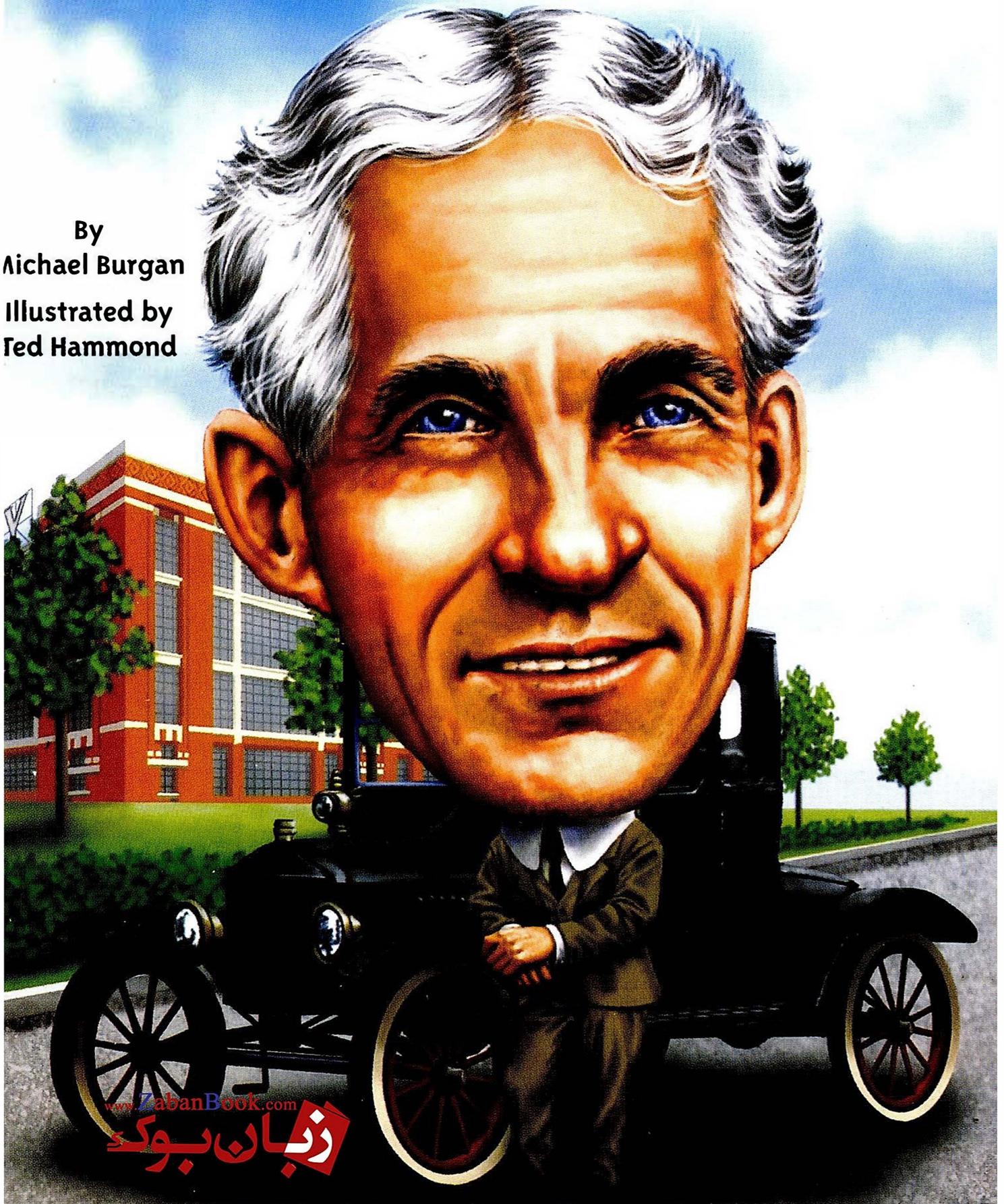


Who Was Henry Ford?

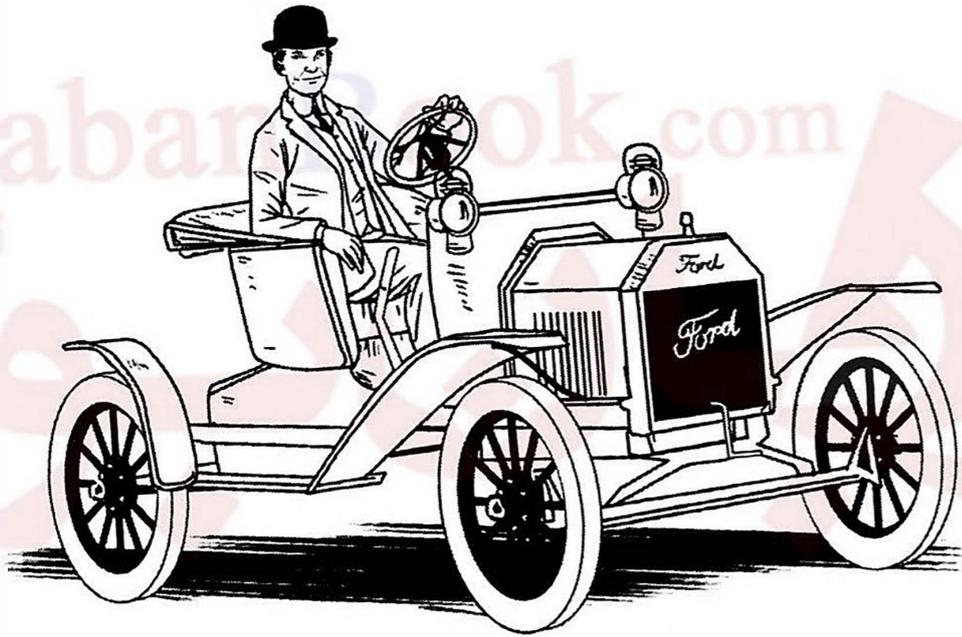
By
Michael Burgan
Illustrated by
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Who Was Henry Ford?



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Illustrated by Ted Hammond

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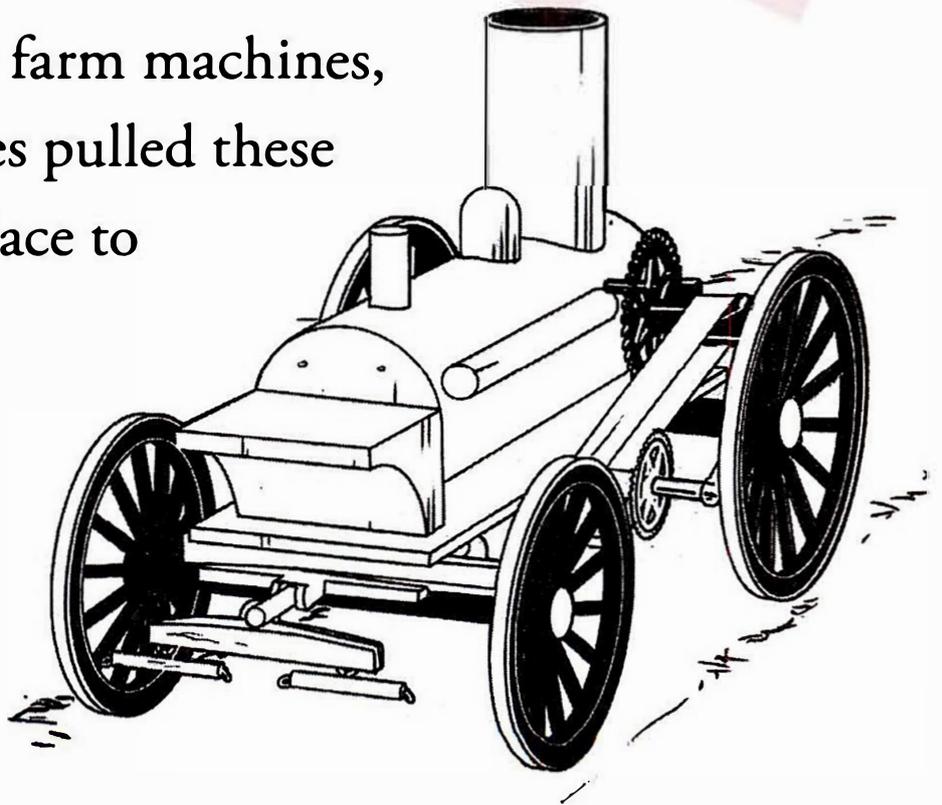
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Who Was Henry Ford?

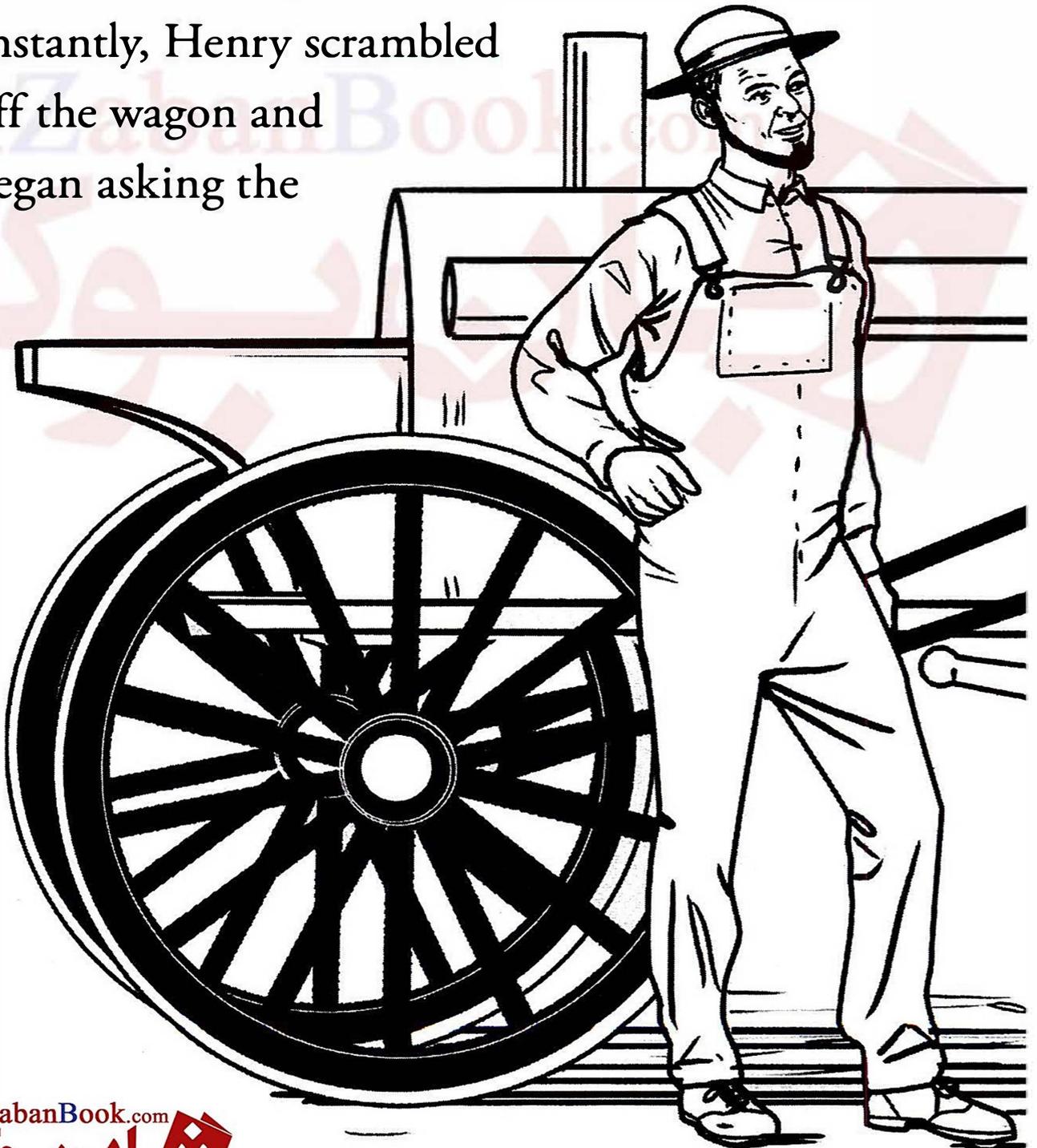
As a young boy, Henry Ford had always been fascinated by mechanical devices, such as watches and wind-up toys. But nothing prepared him for the sight he saw in 1876 on a Michigan dirt road. Twelve-year-old Henry watched a small cart roll along. The cart was carrying a steam engine. Farmers used steam engines to power farm machines, and usually horses pulled these carts from one place to another. But the owner of this “road engine” went one step further.



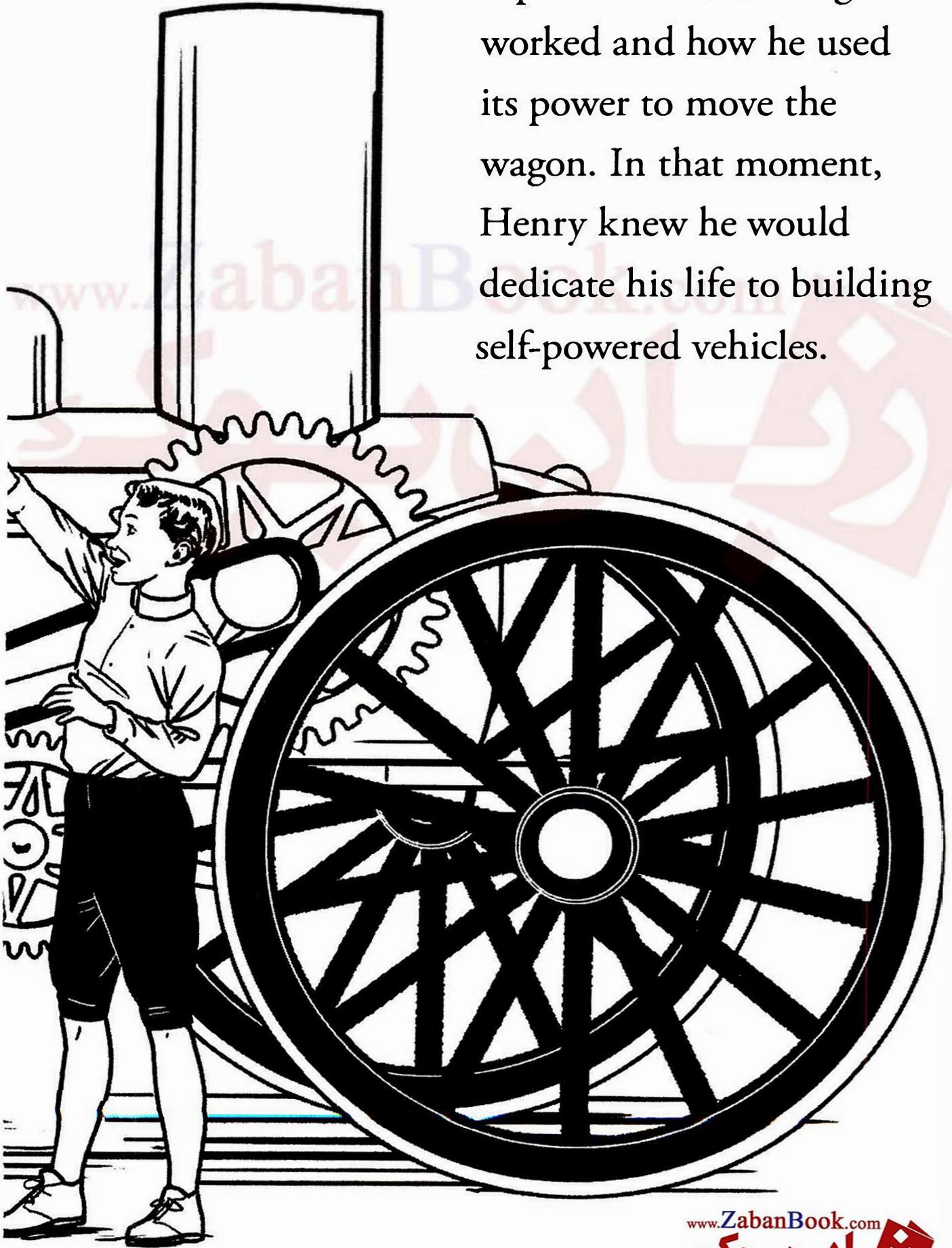
By connecting a chain from the engine to the cart's wheels, the cart rolled down the path under its own power! Henry was amazed!

The farmer who owned the road engine moved to the side of the road to let the Fords' horse-drawn wagon pass.

Instantly, Henry scrambled off the wagon and began asking the



farmer questions about his machine. The farmer explained how the engine worked and how he used its power to move the wagon. In that moment, Henry knew he would dedicate his life to building self-powered vehicles.



Eventually, Henry built the most famous car ever: the Model T.

From 1908 to 1927, the Ford Motor Company sold more than 15 million Model Ts around the world.

Henry Ford helped people move beyond the horse and the road engine toward a more modern world filled with fast and powerful cars.

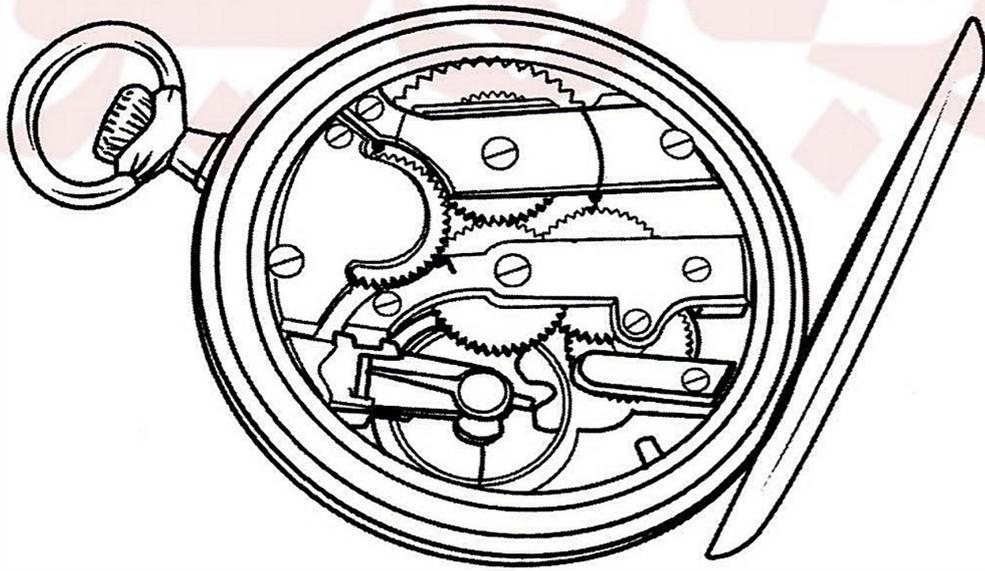
Chapter 1

The Young Mechanic

Henry Ford was born July 30, 1863, on the Dearborn, Michigan, farm that was owned by his parents, William and Mary Ford. The couple had five more children over the next ten years: John, Margaret, Jane, William Jr., and Robert.



As a boy, Henry went to a one-room schoolhouse. There he showed an early interest in practical jokes. He was also good at solving math problems in his head. But Henry's greatest love was studying mechanical objects. When Henry was seven, a worker on the family farm took apart his watch to show the boy how it ran. Henry immediately began to learn everything he could about watches. He made his own tools from bits of metal he found around the house and explored the inside of any watch he could find.



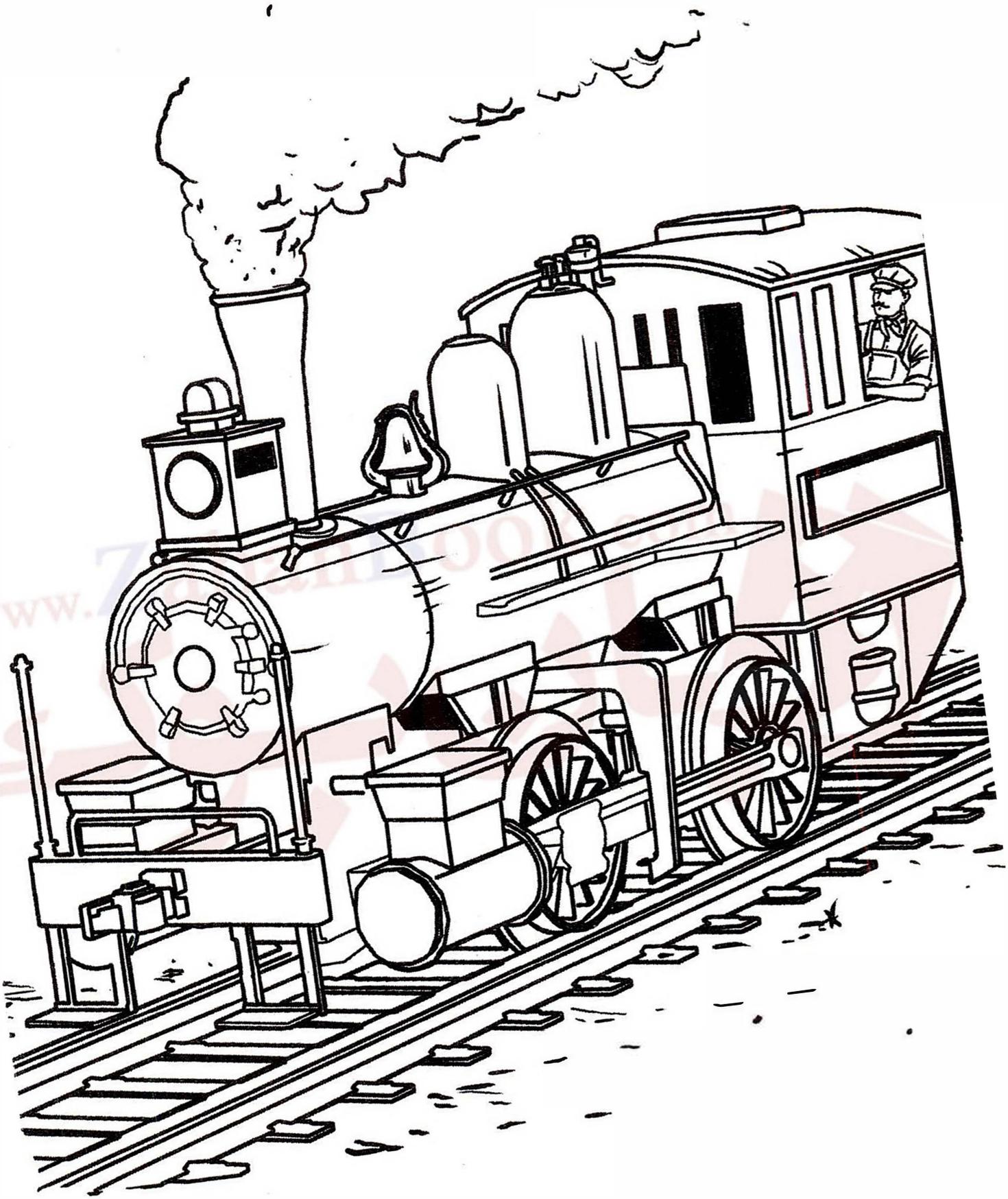


By this time, he had taught himself how to repair broken watches. During school, he sometimes worked on his classmates' watches, hiding them behind a textbook as the other

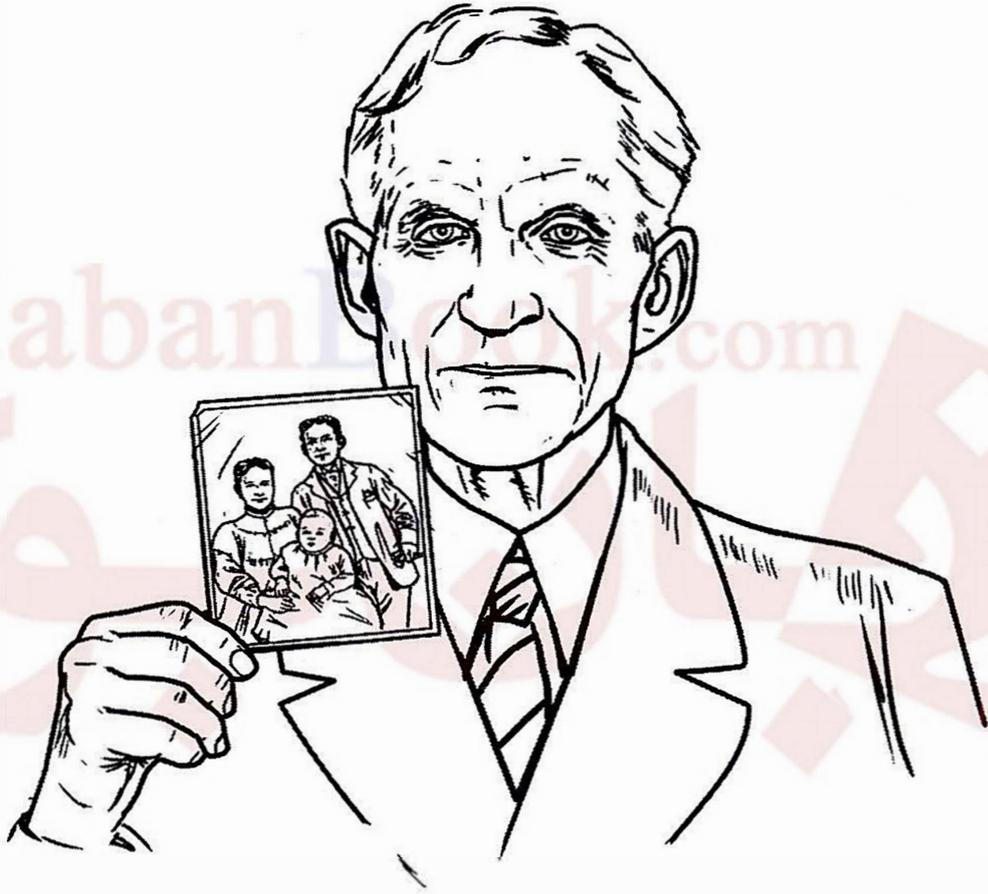
students worked on their lessons. At home, Henry also loved to take apart wind-up toys. His younger brothers and sisters fought to keep their toys away from Henry. To Henry, toys were just “practice”—tiny machines to open up and study.

Henry’s fascination with machines only grew. On trips to nearby Detroit with his father, Henry had seen steam engines on trains. A common source of power for machines of the day, steam engines burned coal or wood in a boiler to heat water until it created steam. The power of the expanding steam, held in a metal container called a cylinder, was then used to move some piece of machinery, like the wheels of a train. Steam trains could carry people long distances, but for most local travel, people relied on horses—or their own feet.

Back in Dearborn, Henry carried out a small experiment. With some friends, he built a miniature steam engine, but the device exploded,



As World War II went on, Ford's health began to worsen. He suffered another stroke in 1941, and his mind was not as sharp as it once had been. He sometimes had trouble remembering the names of people he knew well. In 1942, Edsel developed

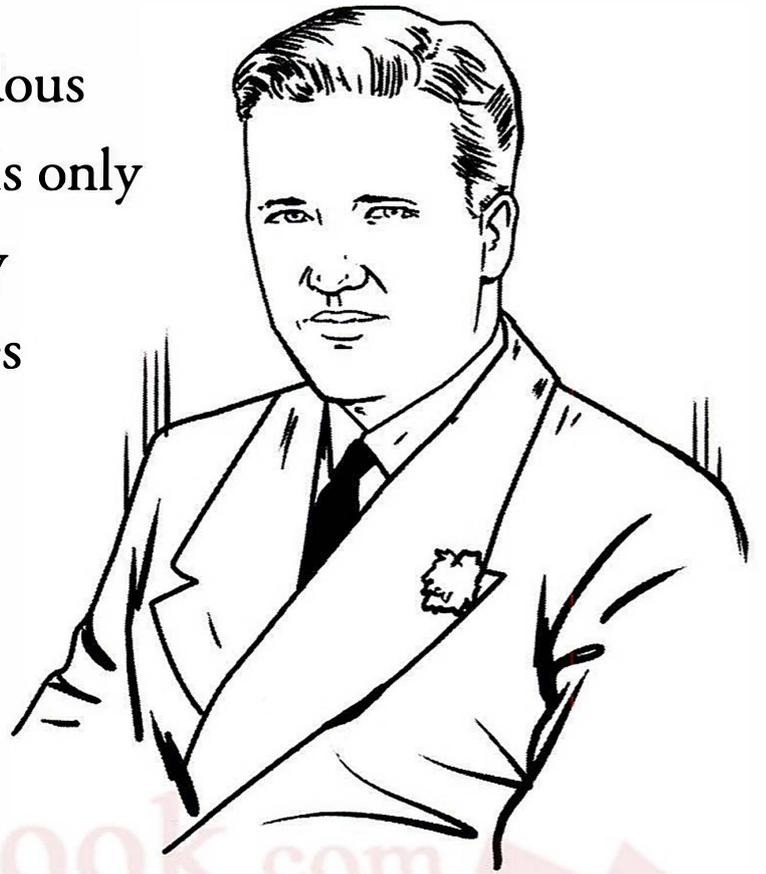


stomach cancer. Early in 1943, Edsel Ford decided that he was too sick and weak to battle his father anymore. He made plans to leave the company. But before he could resign, Edsel died.

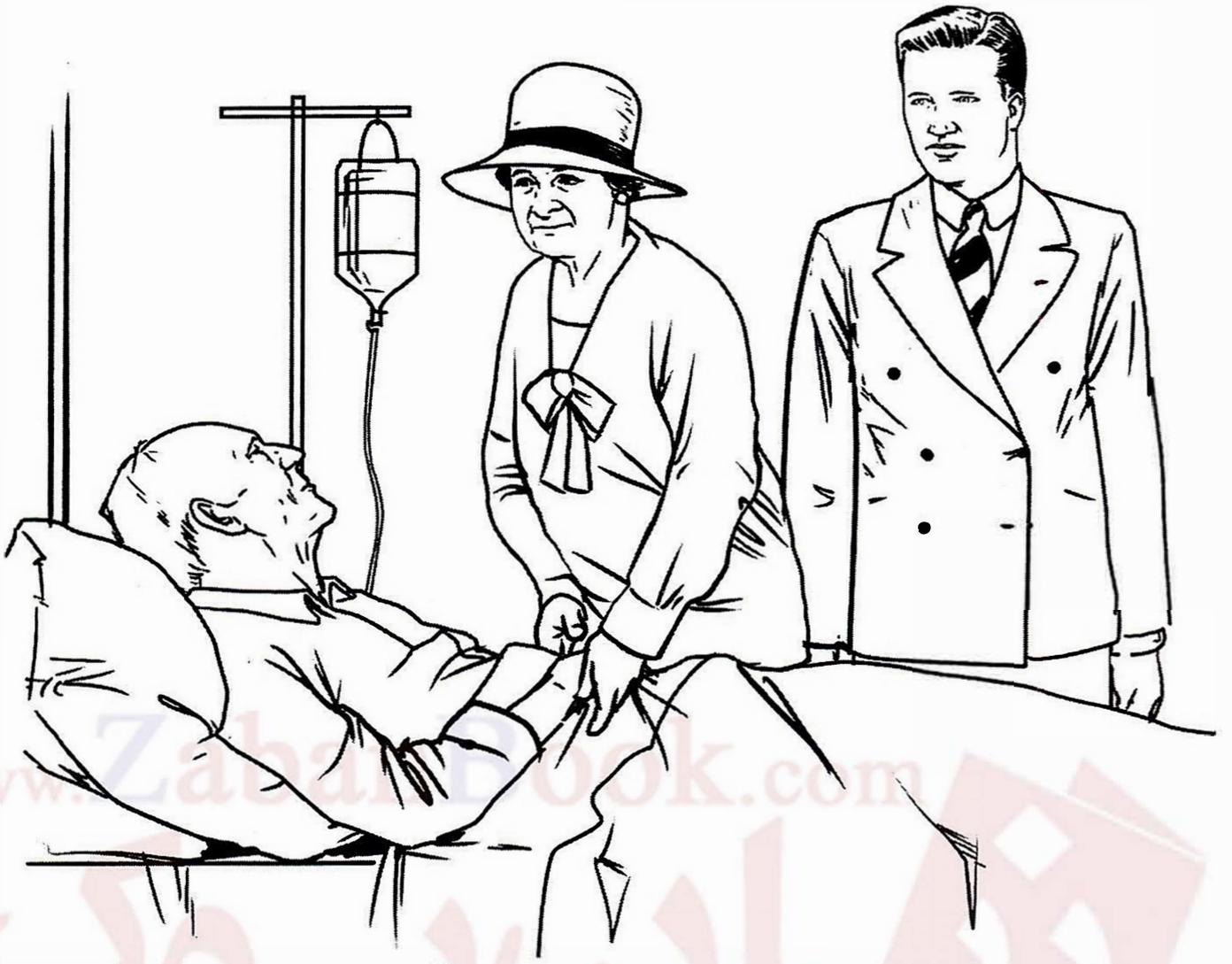
Henry felt a tremendous loss with the death of his only child. He spoke tenderly about his son, sometimes crying because he had treated Edsel so harshly.

With her son gone and Henry growing old, Clara Ford played a key role in the future of the Ford

Motor Company. In June 1943, Henry once again took over as president of the company. Clara and Edsel's wife, Eleanor, suggested that Henry II run the company instead. But Henry was stubborn. He never had trusted anyone else to run his automobile empire, and so he resisted their idea. When Henry II finally did come work for the company, learning on his own how the company ran, his grandfather mostly ignored him.



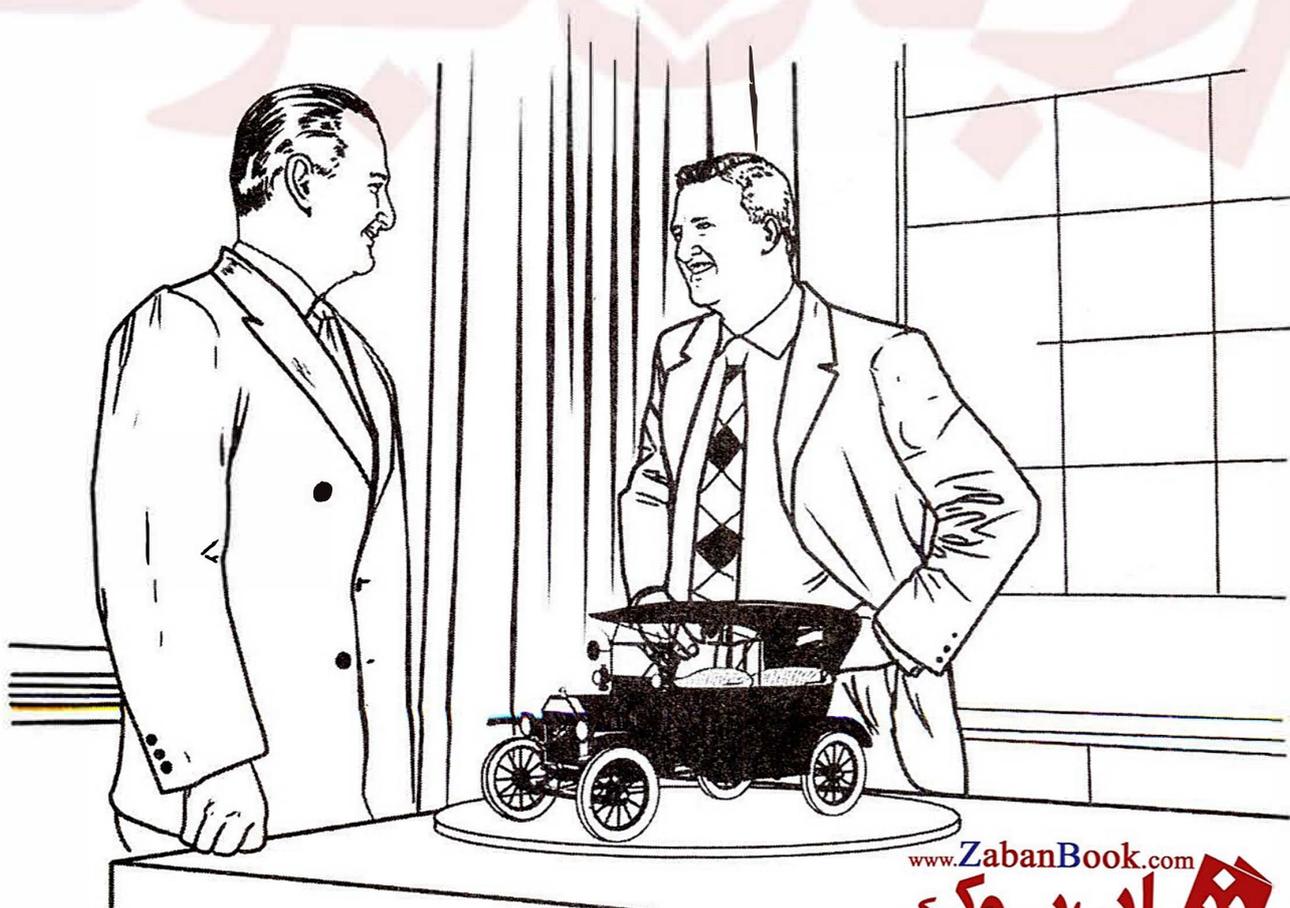
HENRY FORD II



As World War II was coming to an end, Henry's health grew even worse. He suffered another stroke, and he forgot more and more things. Henry II went to visit his grandfather and said it was time for him to step down as head of the Ford Motor Company. Clara was there to support her grandson, and she said, "Henry, I think young Henry should take over." The elder

Ford still did not want to quit the company. After all, he had put almost his whole life into making and selling cars. But finally he agreed that Henry II should take over.

In 1945 Henry II became president of one of the largest companies in the world. It had 120,000 workers and was worth more than \$1 billion. Soon it would begin making cars again, and it would find many eager buyers. World War II was over. People were ready to buy new homes and new cars. Henry II, and later his brother Benson, would keep Ford one of the world's major automakers.



Henry Ford lived his last few years quietly at home. On April 7, 1947, a blood vessel broke in Henry's brain, and he began to cough violently. The coughing fit caused severe bleeding in his brain, and Henry died. Clara was by his side, as she always had been. Two days later, 100,000 people came to Greenfield Village to honor him.



Americans cherished Henry Ford for all he had accomplished during his lifetime, including making the automobile part of their daily lives.

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