

## Fast Automobiling.



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### The Sport Carried Too Far.

To break the record is the mad desire of humankind, and this has been the greatest record-breaking year in the world's history.

Leading the race is the automobile. A racer over a perfect stretch of road in England reached 86 1/2 miles per hour, and even more remarkable than that, Barney Oldfield, the American expert, drove a machine around an oval track a mile in several seconds less than a minute.

Already the automobile has overtaken the locomotive.

The road engine is even with the rail engine.

And its speed is only in its beginning, for automobilism looks forward to a 100 miles an hour as an easy certainty. That is Mr. Oldfield's prediction, and he does not set his limit at a century mark. We shall soon have prophets who will want the automobile to make a mile in 30 seconds.

In the meanwhile, automobiles are increasing by the thousands.

The factories are turning out new machines daily, and new factories are being built and old factories are being enlarged. There never was anything like it.

The bicycle craze swept the country, but the automobile craze is far more intense and far more sure of being permanent. Nothing but the flying machine can displace or discourage it.

For those who have machines or who intend getting machines this universality means that they must be allowed to do about as they please on the roadways, and that those who do not have machines or who do not intend to get machines must get out of the way.

But there are two sides to this question.

Let us go back a little.

Roads are for all the people. When they were first established there were no favorites. Everybody walked on equal terms and with equal safety. The few did not have the rights. The roads were

for the many.

But as civilization brought its inventions and its new modes of transportation conditions changed.

Then the many had to fight to keep the few from monopolizing the advantages.

That fight has come through the centuries, and it will go on through all time.

We had trouble keeping the bicycles where they should be—they even wanted to crowd the pavements and the footpaths. Special laws protecting the footpaths had to be passed.

Trolley lines came and tried to grab the highways. They sought the property of the people without paying for it, and most people wish they had kept them off the roads even when they do pay for their franchises.

Now the automobile is the worst grabber of all. There is no concealment of its intention. Read the papers devoted to the machines and you will find articles every

week advising all automobilists to get on the right side of the politicians so as to obtain more liberal laws in the matter of velocity.

They want to run without regard to safety. In their enthusiasm they call those who oppose them as mossbacks and dullards; say they are opposed to progress, and that, as the automobile has come to stay, it is no use to try to keep it within bounds.

Those who do not own automobiles and who object to flying engines on the roads, which belong to all, also feel strongly upon the matter. Some of them are aroused to the fighting point. For instance, the other day the farmers in a section near Chicago held a meeting after a particularly disastrous accident from a break-neck performance of an automobile, and decided to carry shotguns in their wagons and to shoot if the automobilists persisted in their speed madness and in frightening horses and injuring women and children.

Impartial judges from the bench have condemned the racers on the public roads as being little less than murderers.

In cities the problem comes up daily in the police courts and in the hospitals.

Women, children, old people—all kinds and classes—suffer. There is a new fear—the fear of the fool in the racing engine let loose on the public thoroughfares.

No wonder there is an acute feeling of resentment against the automobile. Its racing fools are responsible.

The roads still belong to the people, and, so long as they value the safety of their families, they are going to fight for the few privileges they have left.

It is not a fight against progress—it is a plain, sensible, necessary measure of protection.

At the same time we must fully and fairly recognize the fact that the automobile is a permanent thing. It is a wonderful addition

to the comfort, convenience and proper use of the world. It gives health and it saves time, and it is one of the best agents that man has ever devised for pleasure and business.

To attempt to confine it by petty laws is the height of folly. At first some of the cities tried to keep it out of the parks, which soon failed. Some people would restrain its use from certain streets; that, too, will be unavailing.

Common sense must decide, as it always has to decide in matters of this kind. For a while the laws will vary and conflict, but in the end there will be a compromise which will yield the largest good to the majority.

Fifty thousand automobiles are now in use in the United States. Fifteen hundred are being added to this number every month. They are carrying people, delivering goods, performing the missions of recreation and business. They take owners to their offices, and they have crossed the continent.

An automobile trip to the North Pole has been seriously suggested.

The practical point is that the machines may become cheaper after the present demands are filled. Once the bicycle sold for \$150. Today it figures in bargain sales. It may be that way with the horseless carriage.

When the average wage-earner can afford his automobile he will get more out of life. Just now he feels bitterly against the machine because the few reckless drivers have made it unpopular, but, if he looks ahead a bit, he will appreciate the wisdom of giving it fair treatment in the making of road laws, for the time will come when these laws will affect his own interests.

Entering into this spirit of fairness, the automobilist should not ask more than is required for the safety of the road. More than that is not only a general danger, but an injustice that cuts deeply into the sentiment which has fought for the freedom of the highways ever since civilization began.