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**ON BEING AWAY
FROM HOME**

This is written in the northern part of Pennsylvania, prompted by the things encountered away from home. After running around in the country between here and North Carolina the conclusions forced are that the things left behind are about as good as the new things encountered up this way. The stranger who did not know the fussy habits of mankind might think the chief end of men is to buy gasoline and run about, and he would not be far wrong. For of all the incessant running up and down the earth that is seen on the great highways even the Devil in the Book of Job was an example of staying quiet at home. From a front porch on a country road one evening last week I counted 198 cars passing in about 25 minutes. It looks as if the whole uneasy world wants to get to some other place in the next three minutes, although the flow of traffic the other way indicates that everybody at the same time wants to get back.

Pennsylvania has a traffic police system. The traffic could not exist without such a system. Here are three states, New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania, that together have over three million cars on the roads and enough to move probably one-seventh of all the population of the United States at one time, or six times as many people as are in all North Carolina. That all this traffic could move under the hap-hazard system of our state is impossible. So traffic laws are rigid, and they are therefore simple, and what is important they are obeyed. I have not seen a traffic policeman in the two weeks since I left home, but I can see clearly that their presence is felt. All that idiotic recklessness of driving that is so common on North Carolina roads seems up here to be held in check by the knowledge that while the police are not visible they may pop over the hill any minute, and that they stand no monkey business.

The whole atmosphere of the road is different. You do not see that smart fool cut in ahead as you are about to meet a car from the other direction. He knows a traffic policeman may catch him at it and arrest him. Drivers keep their own sides of the road, come around curves under control, down hills at safe speed, and observe the cross road rules. You stay on the right of the road, and watch the right side of your side. The left is watched by the man going the other way. Slow down signs are plain. Danger signals mean what they say. And drivers have a decided respect for the traffic police, who do not argue the case.

And there is the whole benefit of the Pennsylvania traffic police system. They have the authority, and everyone knows they have it and will enforce it. They have the one job and it is to make the road safe, and if they fail they lose their job. So their authority is respected, and it is safer to drive in Pennsylvania with over a million cars than in North Carolina with less than half as many. But the driver in Pennsylvania cannot make the law. It is made and he is asked to obey it. If he does not he gets his lesson, and the result is that the driver feels safer in Pennsylvania and he is not in the least discommoded, for the law, is made to make driving safe and enjoyable, not to hamper or vex.

One of the most striking examples of the good results of enforced road laws in Pennsyl-

vania is seen where the passing of narrow places or detours or obstructed new work is met. In our state everybody wants to crowd into a tight place and hog the way through. In Pennsylvania the man who tries to cut in out of his turn or on the wrong side, or who makes a wrong play to the disadvantage of other travelers is liable to arrest, and the penalty that follows. So the traffic is easier and much safer. One thing particularly noticeable is the absence of that effort to run around a car as it is about to meet another. It is permissible to pass a car going the same way only when no car is coming the other way, and the way that rule is observed is striking to a man from North Carolina.

I will go back home a positive enthusiast concerning a good law for the creation of a state highway police. One that will be enforced and with a good force of patrolmen under a good head.

Our road system is the best one I have seen. Our roads are better located and better engineered than I have seen in any of the states from Carolina to Canada, and in that respect I believe we lead the world. But Pennsylvania and New York set us an example in safety, brought about by good road laws, rigidly enforced by capable police, which we can follow to great benefit. A Pennsylvania man tells me that it is cheaper to hire police than to pay hospital and funeral bills, and a New York man says police are also cheaper than automobile repair bills. North Carolina is so keen in seeing that a bad road is too great an expense to tolerate that I have hopes that our state will also see that reckless and lawless driving is also too expensive. To arrange a funeral a day from automobile accidents in North Carolina, would pay the hire of a lot of highway police. The thousands of injuries to people by the accidents cost enough to pay all the rest of the police. And the damages to cars is big enough to pay double the fund that would be needed.

A highway police for North Carolina will be not only a great step forward in making our highways safe, but it will next to the good roads themselves be the greatest money saver of any new thing recently established, for state police will cut down by hundreds of thousands of dollars the present great outlay for funeral bills, hospital bills and repair bills, a thing few have thought about. Automobile accidents form one of the big costs of automobile operation. A good state police system will cut that cost by hundreds of thousands of dollars, besides saving many lives and thousands of serious injuries.

I am confident we have the best system of roads in the union. But I fear we have one of the worst systems of operating them. And after seeing the methods followed in Pennsylvania and New York, I can imagine no reason why in our state we should tolerate our present inefficient murderous system any longer. The next legislature ought to provide a really efficient state police, one that will enforce good road laws, stop the slaughter on the roads and the destruction of cars, and make travel more of a pleasure and less of a danger and dread.

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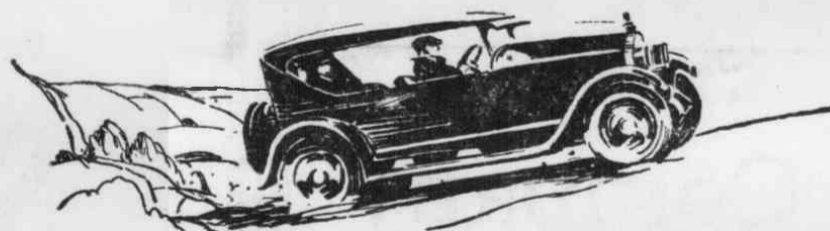
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