

What Shall the Speed Limit Be

William H. Hotchkiss.

It is only a question of a few weeks before Sheridan Road will be once more a race course for automobiles. The following discussion of the question of speed which appeared in a recent issue of "Outing" will interest many of our readers, those who own automobiles and those who spend their time dodging the "infernal machines."

How fast may a motor car be permitted to travel on our public ways?

Surely, few questions could be more difficult. None, to legislators and the police, so bristles with complications.

At the outset, there is the very newness of the problem. For a score of centuries man's highways have been traveled only by the slow-going horse and fairly snail-like man. Suddenly, in a decade, the motor car, at speeds exceeding the one by five and the other by ten-fold, has invaded this sacred domain. It has worked, or, perhaps, more correctly, is working a revolution where revolution, from centuries of undisturbed use, seemed impossible. The roads, it was thought, belonged to men and horses. Steam threatened to shatter this belief a century ago, but the very necessity of a steam-making engine forced the first road machines to ways and rails of their own. Of late, other machines capable of road travel have been devised, and man and horse have suddenly awakened to resentment for the new intruders. Nothing like them, no conditions, such as they create, have before pestered those who make and those who enforce the laws. Naturally, legislators and the police are puzzled. Being puzzled, habit has often been the judge, and motoring man has suffered.

Permissive speed, to those who view the problem broadly, is a question of temperament, of environment and of point of view.

By temperament, I mean that difference of man from man in a score of ways, a tendency to let nerves, rather than judgment, be master; recklessness and its opposite, recognition or heedlessness of the rights of others, age, sex, and what not. Some men we all know, from their very natures, would drive the most temptingly speeded car at all times in entire safety to the public and themselves. Some other men, not a few women and more boys in their teens are so constituted that in their hands a six horse-power runabout becomes a nuisance and a menace. 'Tis said that the Parisian police are permitted to exercise their judgment, and required to arrest only those whose method in driving indicates a temperament either negatively heedless or positively dangerous. If so, the Parisian law-makers are wiser than we. Indeed, I venture to assert that nine out of every ten motor car accidents, chronicled with, it must be said, unwise gusto by the sensational press, are traceable to those peculiarities of the man behind the wheel which we call temperament.

Then, there is environment. In the streets and the neighborhood of the large eastern cities, motoring has become so common that few horses and only about twice as many horse drivers take fright at the approach of what to them five years ago was a road demon. Familiarity has already worked the revolution; each—the man, the horse and the motor driver—has accepted the new conditions, and the world moves on as before. In such localities, present permitted speed should be high, rather than low. In other localities, where the new road-car rarely penetrates, the opposite has been thought the rule. Indeed, it is so thought in at least two of the States, both of which have regulations requiring a motor driver, on meeting a horse-drawn vehicle, whether requested to or not, to stop until his equine majesty shall pass. While in some localities the authorities have so far violated the law of the land, not writ in books, but in the history of our Anglo-Saxon race, as to prohibit men in motor cars from using the public ways, that are as much theirs as

their horse-driving neighbors. This matter of environment, too, is recognized in most of our motor laws by clauses which, while defining the limits in miles per-hour, also prohibit any "rate of speed greater than is reasonable and proper, having regard to the traffic and use of the highway." Thus, the rate of a mile in six minutes is the lowest required in the streets of New York; yet the conditions which surround the environments of a motor car in that city's narrow business thoroughfares would often render him who drives only a mile in ten minutes, technically, as well as morally, a violator of the law. On the other hand, most motorists assert, and with right, that on a country road, without crossings and with no other vehicle or a pedestrian in sight, a speed of forty miles per hour is as lawful as the legal rate of twenty. Conditions make laws; conditions also, in the minds of unprejudiced jurors, excuse the violation of them.

The complexity of the problem increases as men consider it from different points of view. The motorist's goes without saying, and need not be stated. Point of view was the early difficulty of the horse driver, even in the centers of population, until he learned his lesson from the horse he drove, and, accepting the new conditions, changed his point of view. The street boy's point of view has yet to be changed, and rides in the hated intruders will do more towards changing it than laws and "cops." So also of a vast majority of the dwellers in our cities. There is but one way to change it. Cheapen the cost of motor cars so that, while all may not own, at least all may ride. With all this, legislation has naught to do. Time is the healer, the educator.

Indeed, in its final analysis, who is so wise as to make laws which will solve this problem? Most of the States have tried it, and motor cars have been tagged and dogged and their drivers trapped and fined. It goes without saying that many of these drivers were nuisances and deserved their punishment. But the remarkable fact is that, save in the metropolitan district and in the city of Chicago, in no State or city, where motoring has become sufficiently common to have taken its proper place as the newest and best means of transportation devised by man, are speed restrictions, or, indeed, any other legislative restraint, save that requiring numbering strictly observed or seriously enforced. The public is beginning to recognize, as it did of a bicycle, that the speed of a motor car is a matter of temperament and environment, rather than of law. The motorist has recognized present conditions, and, in the interest of a better understanding, has consented to, nay, framed and urged, laws containing restrictions in which he did not believe. He now looks forward to the day, not a decade hence, when present restrictive legislation, even if still on the books, will be as much a dead letter as the famous blue laws of Connecticut, and the only rule regulating the use of the public ways by all citizens will be that which holds each strictly accountable to the other for any use that shall endanger that other's life, limb or property.

The coming of that day, to put the lesson concretely, depends, in my judgment, on the rapidity with which our manufacturers, while improving their product, bring their prices within the reach of the millions to whom a motor car is now not merely a luxury, but the badge of the envied rich.

Local Option Sunday

Upon the suggestion of the pastors of Chicago who, to the number of five hundred, at a union meeting, issued a call to the state, the Anti-Saloon League of Illinois is preparing for discussion of the Local Option Bill in every pulpit in Illinois on January 20th, and now expects not less than two thousand churches to take up the question.

The League has supplied every pastor with a special pamphlet gotten up for this purpose with an

advance copy of the full text of the bill and all information necessary in preparing a discourse upon it. The League further recommends that in addition to the consideration in the individual churches at the morning service, there shall be mass demonstrations and union meetings at night in every community, to be addressed by the pastors and prominent laymen.

The object of this is to arouse the people to let the legislature know by letters and otherwise, that the church people are in earnest on the Local Option question, and will support them in voting for the bill.

The League will move on the scene of legislative action and mass its own entire force of ten expert men at Springfield on this day, and occupy the pulpits of the capital city churches.

In addition to this widespread discussion, the League will also be assisted throughout the entire session in the dissemination of information by a syndicate of religious and reform papers published or circulating largely in the state, with an aggregate weekly circulation of over three quarters of a million, which has been formed for the purpose of securing prompt and accurate information of the progress of the Local Option campaign in the Illinois legislature.

An Evening Prayer

WE beseech Thee, Lord, to behold us with favor, folk of many families and nations, gathered together in the peace of this roof. Be patient still; suffer us awhile longer to endure, and (if it may be), help us to do better. Bless to us our extraordinary mercies. Be with our friends; be with ourselves. Go with each of us to rest, if any awake, temper to them the dark hours of watching; and when the day returns to us, call us up with morning faces and with morning hearts—eager to labor—eager to be happy, if happiness shall be our portion—and if the day be marked for sorrow—strong to endure it.—Robert Louis Stevenson.

A Primer of Literature

Carolyn Wells.

WHAT is the literature of today?

W Fiction.

How is fiction divided?

Into historical novels and nature books.

What is a historical novel?

One that shows no trace of history or of novelty.

What is a nature book?

A volume of misinformation about animals.

Because they are in fashion.

Why are nature books popular just now?

Mention some recent nature books.

"The Lions of the Lord," "Pigs in Clover," "The Octopus," "The Blue Goose," and "The Sea Wolf."

What are the best selling books?

Those which sell the best people.

What is a magazine?

A small body of literature entirely surrounded by advertisements.

Why is a comic paper so called?

Because it's so funny that anybody buys it.

What is a critic?

A Critic is a man who writes about the books he doesn't like.

What is poetry?

Lines of words ending with the same sound.

What is a minor poet?

A poet not yet twenty-one years of age.

What is a major poet?

There isn't any.

What is a publisher?

A man who is blamed if a book doesn't sell, and ignored if it does.

—Metropolitan.