

# THE MOTOR CAR

## As an Aid to Crime

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**W**HEN I wrote not long ago on crimes committed with and for the bicycle, not a few patrons and owners of automobiles asked me if I had come across any misdeeds committed with this new means of locomotion. I replied in the negative, rather imprudently I must confess, because I did not reflect at the moment, that although evil doers in Italy have not adopted an instrument as yet little used and decidedly too expensive to be within the reach of such a needy class as our thieves, the thief of other countries is, not always poor; and as certain regions of Europe, England especially, are increasing in wealth and tend to the association of capital, this progress has been imitated by the thieves, who are adopting more expensive means to attain their ends, and to accumulate capital with a view to better carrying out their designs.

Thus, international thieves, who chloroform them on the special trains in order to rob them at their ease, as well as those who in the first-class hotels penetrate the walls near the beds of travelers occupying adjacent rooms and stupefy them by means of small tubes filled with ether, all belong to a distinguished class of criminals of aristocratic bearing. They are well supplied with money, and carry luggage of a showy appearance calculated to prevent arousing suspicions in the minds of hotel proprietors or of their intended victims.

### Aristocratic Thieves

**A** FEW months ago there was discovered at Moscow a band of thirty international thieves, who had nicknamed themselves "aristocratic" just because they disdained undertaking robberies where a sum of less than half a million was at stake. In winter they occupied a magnificently furnished suite of rooms in the town, in summer villas fitted up with telephones, baths, greenhouses, costly equipages, and gardens filled with the choicest plants. The chief of the band, Radzikovski, owned a walking stick worth a thousand rubles. It was indeed their luxurious and fast mode of living which drew the attention of the police to these fellows; and one night their summer residence was unexpectedly surrounded, they were arrested, and large sums of money, plate, and jewels, all spoils of recent robberies, were seized.

It is well known that London and Paris house breakers associate in order to increase their capital, and thus are able to replace the clumsy and heavy jimmies and pick-locks common to the ordinary thief by diamond-pointed instruments of extreme delicacy, which can be contained in envelopes no larger than a cigar case and are extremely expensive.

Thus, it is only too natural that the automobile should be used, or rather misused, by



the criminal, who represents a group of individuals singularly inclined to favor innovations. In fact, there is a spread of swindles and defamations by telephone, revenge by means of photography, frauds through insurance, highway murder with an electric apparatus, which knocks down pedestrians with one blow, bank-note forgeries by means of the most up-to-date apparatus, the utterance of spurious coin by means of radium, the breaking open of safes by dynamite, and better still with acetylene and liquid oxygen, and the assassination of the Russian royal family by explosives and electric wires.

It was therefore to be supposed that evil doers would seize upon the new vehicle, as it permits of the complete concealment of the face and person, thereby preventing any awkward curiosity on the part of the police, and, above all, it allows of a speed of fifty miles an hour, by which means the thief can place himself and his booty at a considerable distance long before the robbery has been discovered. On the other hand, as the motor car is an expensive vehicle used only by the wealthy, it dispels all diffidence or suspicion on the part of servants, porters, etc., and facilitates access to those in high places. It may therefore be easily understood that it is the prosperous law breaker, guilty of swindling, fraudulent bankruptcy, etc., as well as thieves banded together in companies, who have recourse to the automobile.

### Escaping by Automobile

**T**HE first individual who, to my knowledge, made use of this means of escape in Italy was an examiner, accused of peculation. This man traversed the whole of Italy from Rome to the Tyrol in company with a friend, who steered the car, at the very time when active steps were being taken for his arrest; and his flight was so well concealed that nobody would have found it out had not the friend revealed it afterward. Furthermore, two years later, the same man returned to Rome in exactly the same way, which enabled him to sign a notarial act necessary for his trial, and depart from the country without leaving any trace of his passage.

Casale, the assassin of the advocate Bianchi at Perugia, had arranged to escape in a motor car as soon as the crime was committed, but was stopped by the police. Gallay, who swindled the Banque d'Escompte out of nearly a million, was able to flee with his sweetheart and booty from Paris to Havre with his sweetheart noticed; whereas, the fact of hiring a yacht to take him to Brazil was sufficient to reveal his destination and facilitate his arrest.

A rich Italian banker, who was wanted for fraudulent bankruptcy, was enabled to flee from a town in Romagna to France, changing un-

observed from car to car, and employing a still more impenetrable mask than that usually worn by motorists.

And as we are in the banking world, I may mention that a swindle and robbery was perpetrated at Paris by an astute criminal, aided by the motor car. This individual had deposited an important sum of money at the National bank, and a few days later he called at a banker's in a neighboring town, where, on pretense of settling an urgent debt of honor, he demanded a big sum, which he guaranteed by a check on the National. The banker, having ascertained by telephone the name of the depositor and the genuineness of the deposit, handed over the amount requested, whereupon the sharper sped in his car to the National bank and withdrew the deposit a few hours before his creditor handed in his check, and by means of the same vehicle succeeded in placing himself out of reach of the police.

Still more frequently does the automobile play a part in the abduction of girls, generally with their consent, but sometimes without. Such cases occurred in Sicily, at Naples, and at Paris, some being followed by marriage, others by the restoration of the girl, and one by her murder. Recently a celebrated singer, a married man of forty, with three children, while staying at his villa at Vallembrosa, made love to one of the daughters of a rich manufacturer. He took this family for a tour around Florence, Leghorn, Montecatini, and back to their villa in his twenty-four horse power automobile.

### A Motor Car Abduction

**D**URING this trip, his illicit passion being discovered, he was upbraided both by his wife and the girl's mother; and on taking leave of them, he ordered the chauffeur to have the car in readiness for him toward midnight. At the time appointed he set off, but in company with the misguided young woman, with whom he escaped to Bologna, arriving there at five in the morning. After taking some refreshment, they proceeded to Ferrara, and reached Padua at eight, where the chauffeur was told to return to Florence. It was not until then that the latter discovered, at least so he asserts, that he had been aiding in an abduction. The lovers, who gave a false name at the hotel, left for Venice, and here all trace of them was lost until they reached Vienna, when after a short time the young woman returned to her parents and the singer to his art.

Last year cases occurred in which the automobile was employed as a means both to accomplish a robbery with impunity and to escape from all investigations; and it may interest motorists to learn that the victim was a patron of this form of sport, Count De Ossel by name, who threw his villa at Médan open to the members of the Auto Club. One morning about eleven o'clock he received a

