

# GASOLENE GOSSIP

By HANK CALDWELL.

## Motor Stealing as a Business.

This is the open season for automobile stealing. The car thief operates most successfully in October, November and December. These are the months in which the automobile owner who wishes his car stolen gives the car thief perfect liberty.

Possibly you do not believe there are car owners who keep their machines out of dead storage as late as possible in order to give the thieves all the time they need.

Possibly you do not believe that if the thieves fail to burn them some of these owners go so far as to burn their machines for the insurance. But this is so.

Much to the disgust of a number of such owners in greater New York, who were looking forward with considerable pleasure to a visit from the car thieves before Christmas, the police recently succeeded in uncovering a nest of these robbers and rather knocked the bottom out of the stealing season.

Five men were captured, and through these arrests the police have been able to trace nearly half a hundred cars stolen in New York since the present season opened.

Since April 14 last 256 cars have been stolen in greater New York and 189 recovered, and 85 arrests have been made. This may appear to be a small number of arrests in proportion to the number of cars reported stolen, but it frequently occurs that two men will get away with a dozen or more cars before they are caught.

All automobile thieves work in gangs. They work for the most part in the residential sections, preferably the suburbs.

In the last round-up, which was made by Detective Sergeant T. S. Hughes and his squad of men detailed from Police Headquarters to the office of the District Attorney, it was found that the thieves obtained most of their cars in the Washington Heights section of Manhattan.

This is a hilly district, and the car owners there have been in the habit of leaving their machines headed downhill, with the front wheels turned into the curb.

They could not leave their machines in a more inviting position. The thief comes along, kicks the front wheel away from the curb, lets off the brake, and the machine rolls quietly down the grade. When it has rolled away from the owner's house the thief throws in the clutch, starts the motor and is off. Before the owner can notify the police his car is on its way to another state.

When he gets to a convenient place the thief usually attempts to either change or obliterate the manufacturer's motor and car numbers and puts on new license plates.

If owners who do not care to have their cars stolen, or who are at least interested in getting them back if they are stolen, would place a secret number in an obscure part of the car it would be possible for the police to send these numbers out with descriptions of the stolen machines, and it would be of assistance to garage dealers and second-hand dealers to spot stolen cars which are offered for sale.

The automobile thief is, as a rule, hard driven for a purchaser, and if he offers the machine too far below its market value suspicion is immediately directed toward him. He therefore prefers to drive the stolen car directly to a dealer with whom he has an understanding.

Where a gang of thieves can establish a "fence" they baffle the police for a long time. The proprietor of the "fence" will help them to disguise and dispose of their cars, and it is almost impossible for the police to get any track of the machines until they have been so completely changed that even the original owners could not identify them.

The police are largely dependent upon information which they get from second-hand dealers, garage keepers and proprietors of repair and paint shops. Were it not for the tips given by these men very few cars would be recovered.

Our very defective system of registering cars in the office of the Secretary of State is a serious handicap to the police. A thief can walk into the State Automobile Registration Office and make out an application as an owner for a set of license

plates. He swears it is a new car, gives any motor number he likes, pays his fee and walks out with the plates under his arm. He may not have a car until he steals one, and then he uses his new plates.

The Secretary of State has no power to refuse the application, although the license clerk might suspect the applicant of being a motor thief. Neither is the Secretary of State authorized to attach the numbers or even determine whether or not the applicant has a car.

For this and many other reasons the records of registration in the office of the Secretary of State are useless to the police of any city in the state when running down a license number on a stolen car.

## After "Fake" Motor Leagues.

I hear the American Automobile Association, which is composed of state automobile associations, which are composed, in turn, of city and county automobile clubs, is going into the reforming business and will proceed to show up some of the fake motor leagues and associations.

It is high time a representative organization went after these schemers, and it is pleasing to know the A. A. A. feels strong enough to do the job. The Tribune has frequently called attention to the many fraudulent leagues and associations which exist in almost every state, and has warned motorists to pay no attention to their alluring letters and circulars.

They have caught thousands of motor owners for membership fees, which range, according to the nerve of their promoters, from \$1 to \$10.

And the amazing thing is, these enterprises continue to increase in number, and not a few of the early ones are still in existence and doing business with a dragnet.

They usually appeal to that inherent weakness of all motorists to save on supplies, tires, etc. Their lists of accessories include practically everything that a motorist is compelled to buy, from gas and oil to tires and standard accessories.

They approach you with the finest kind of references and can often refer you to a prominent man in your locality, who has been a member of their organization for years, and who buys everything he uses from them.

If you take the trouble to look up these references you will probably get an excellent report and hear that these men really do buy through them and are more than satisfied.

The references they use are, of course, only "plants." They select, for example, a well known doctor near your home. He was landed for reference purposes, and when he sends for supplies they get him what he wants and sell to him below cost. If it is a standard article they pay cash for it and let him have it at a loss to them.

Naturally, he is going to boost their game, and he may really believe that everybody gets the same treatment accorded him.

As a matter of fact, few who give up their membership fee ever get anything and soon stop trying.

The busy business man who is stung for \$5 or \$10 does not bother, as a rule, to follow the matter up. He may be ashamed to let his friends know he was so easy.

In addition to supplies, a few of these leagues offer insurance or legal services when you get in trouble.

It is an excellent move on the part of the A. A. A., and it is to be hoped that this association can at least make a dent in the automobile co-operative league game. It is hardly possible to break it up entirely, because the motorist has developed into a public target, and he would get sore if one of the sharpshooters did not hit him once in a while.

## Tuning Up for Big Race.

It was unfortunate that Ralph De Palma was compelled to withdraw from the Harkness Trophy Race, which is to be run at the Sheephead Bay Speedway on Election Day.

He said, after giving his Mercedes a test against Aitken's Peugeot, that the car was too swift for his car in its present condition. He meant the team of four Peugeots.

We all wanted to see a good go between De Palma

and Resta. The withdrawal of De Palma leaves it a sure Peugeot victory, as Eddie Rickenbacher (Maxwell) could hardly be expected to beat four of a kind unless they all burned up.

Barney Oldfield is on the Pacific Coast and does not contemplate taking part in this championship event. The Stutz cars, which performed so well in the Astor Cup, are temporarily, if not permanently, out of the game, and there is no hope of getting the Mercers out again this year.

There are no counter attractions in the sport line to detract from the event, and as the race will doubtless be over early in the afternoon the spectators will have an opportunity to return to the city in time for dinner and in ample time to take part in the election festivities in the evening.

In order to entertain those who will arrive at the speedway before 2 o'clock, the management has arranged a few air stunts by Juan Domenjos, the Brazilian birdman, and Bob Burman will try for

The first hearing was held last week, when the Bronx Garage applied for a writ of mandamus to compel the Fire Department to issue a permit to conduct a garage. The company has complied with all the requirements of the department except to put in an oil separator.

The device prescribed by the department is supposed to separate oil from the waste water and keep the sewers free from oil and gasoline. There is a theory that gasoline in the sewers causes the explosions which frequently blow manhole covers into the air.

The garage owners have produced experts to prove that this theory is false, and they maintain, in addition, that the prescribed separator does not separate all of the oil and gasoline from the waste water.

The device is rather expensive and difficult to keep in order. If the Fire Department should enforce the law to the letter many of the little garages in the suburbs, where only a few cars are stored and where the proprietor is working on a small margin of capital, would have to close down.

The automobile owner is not now interested in the controversy between the Fire Department and the garage owners, but if the department wins the owner may be taxed in an indirect way by his garage keeper to pay for the separator.

In the opening chapter he quotes liberally from a Mr. Homer, of whom we cannot find any mention in the best American motor trade directories.

"That the arts of carriage making were considerably advanced," says the historian, "in Homer's time or before is conclusively shown by mention in the fifth book of the 'Iliad,' where the advantage of using a different metal for the bearing than that used for the axle is clearly indicated in the assembling of Juno's chariot:

"By Ithaca, ever young,  
The whirling wheels are to the chariot hung  
On the bright axle turns the hidden wheel  
Of sounding brass; the polished axle steel  
Eight brazen spokes in radiant order flama."  
"These wheels undoubtedly were cast in a single piece just as the one-piece steel wheels used many heavy trucks to-day, and there is some indication in the text that they were even turned, or in some manner machined on their circumference."

The following quotation shows plainly the existence of the conception of self-propelled vehicles in Homer's time. He describes Juno as seeking aid from Vulcan, the lame blacksmith, and—  
"There the lame architect the goddess found,  
Obscure in smoke, his forges flaming round,  
While bathed in sweat from fire to fire he flew  
And puffing loud, the roaring bellows blew.  
That day no common task his labor claimed  
Full twenty tripods for his hall he framed,  
That placed on living wheels of massy gold,  
(Wonderous to tell) instinct with spirit wild  
From place to place, around the bleas'd abodes  
Self-moved, obedient to the beck of gods."  
—Hlad, 18th Book.

## First History of the Industry.

At last the American automobile industry is to have its history written. I thought James E. Doolittle was to be the first historian of the industry, and only recently he told me he expected to have sample volumes ready for the national automobile shows, in January.

But now comes David Bancroft, editor of the trade papers owned by the United Publishers, Inc., with the first instalment of his original and only authentic history of the automobile industry of America.

The first section is published in "The Automobile" of October 28. It is the intention of the editor to issue the history serially in "The Automobile" and later in book form.

Our automobile Bancroft opens up with the statement that the gasoline automobile in America dates back to 1891. The first electric automobile, he says, dates back to 1884, but the practical start of the electric vehicle industry, he says, does not go back of 1893.

"In writing the history of the automobile in America," he says, "it is almost paradoxical that there is no first. Each man had been preceded by work which led up to his efforts and which, if he knew of them, undoubtedly assisted him materially. In passing judgment upon the work of the various people care must be exercised to note whether he was an originator or whether he was simply a sporadic worker, who did very little outside of his single effort and who added very little to the final result; or whether he was persistent and kept his work going ahead until it did finally affect the entire industry."

"Judged by these standards, we find that, although the automobile industry could have been developed many years earlier, using the material at hand and using no new devices whatever, it was not until certain persistent individuals came along who, having taken up the work and put their hands to the plough, continued until the industry became influenced by their work. Judged by this standard Charles E. Duryea, Elwood Haynes and Alexander Winton were the pioneers in the gasoline vehicle work; Morrison & Salom were pioneers in the electric, and S. H. Roper, followed by George E. Whitney, was the steam pioneer. R. E. Olds, Henry Ford, King and others followed close after, as did Woods and the Stanley brothers."

The historian has been working, with assistance, for several years, he says, and plans to have his work complete within a year.

It is not likely the entire work will be as serious and dry as the first instalment. The author evidently preferred to lay for himself a matter-of-fact foundation before launching into the lighter side of his subject.

We are led to believe that he has searched for his material in strange and foreign places.

It may be out of place to jump on our energetic historian so early, but I think he has made a mistake which it might be well to correct before his book is bound. So far as we know, there never was a man by the name of Homer who played an important part in the development of the American automobile industry. He evidently meant Samuel McKee, of the Mahan advertising agency in Indianapolis, which handles several accounts, including the Cole Automobile Company advertising. Mr. McKee has been reported from time to time as a poet, and he may be distantly related to the Mr. Homer whose works are quoted by Mr. Bancroft, but his relationship was very distant. Further than this, I doubt if Mr. McKee's verses are worthy of special notice in the first chapter of the History of Our Great Motor Industry.

## "Dollar Gas" Predicted.

Paris, for the first time since the war began, is short on gasoline, and the price has gone up to 42 cents a gallon. Quite a few garages have refused to supply customers at any price, and others sell only two or three gallons at a time to one man.

It is said the military authorities have requisitioned the supply of nearly all the large refineries. It is thought the government intends to increase its aeroplane activities and desires to have on storage a large quantity of gasoline.

American refiners have frequently expressed the opinion that should the European war last much longer there will be a call for American gas in Europe which would send the domestic price up to the skies. One large dealer with whom I talked last week told me he would not be surprised to see gas in America selling for a dollar a gallon before the close of 1916.

## Motor Companies Make Millions.

Astonishing stories of prosperity continue to come from the big automobile factories. During the past week the directors of the Ford Canadian company decided to recommend a 500 per cent stock dividend to shareholders. Each shareholder is to receive six shares of the new stock for every share he now holds. The net earnings of the company for the past year were \$3,200,000 and the surplus is now \$7,000,000.

The surplus of the Packard company is reported at \$3,713,747, a gain of nearly \$2,000,000 over 1914. During the past year the company built 30,000 trucks and passenger cars, and the assets are now more than \$22,000,000.



Harkness trophy and the five drivers who will compete for it at the Sheephead Bay Speedway on Election Day, November 2.

The drivers are, left, top to bottom: Eddie Rickenbacher, Maxwell, Dario Resta, Peugeot; John Aitken, Peugeot.  
Right, top to bottom: Ralph Burman, Peugeot; Bob Burman, Peugeot; Ralph De Palma, Mercedes, who withdrew from the race Friday because his car is not in good shape. He may give an exhibition time trial in an English Sunbeam.

Although Harry Stutz told me before the Astor Cup that he was through, at least for the year, I thought he was joking, and when he carried off the big money and the cup every one who is interested in motor racing hoped he would let his team out for the Harkness trophy race, but he is sticking to his word and has his cars locked up at the factory.

The speedway management has wisely cut down the cost of admission to the race on Election Day, and it is thought there will be a crowd of at least twenty-five thousand.

new world's records with the old Blitzen Benz, with which he won fame in Florida several years ago.

De Palma may give an exhibition in the English Sunbeam, with which he made a time trial last Friday.

## Garages Fight Fire Department.

New York city garage owners have carried their fight against the oil separator, which is required by the city Fire Department, into the Supreme Court.

# MOTOR MEN AND MOVIES

## George H. Phelps Made Dodge Advertising Mgr.

George C. Hubbs, assistant general sales manager of Dodge Brothers, just before leaving on a business trip to the Pacific Coast announced the appointment of George H. Phelps as director of advertising.

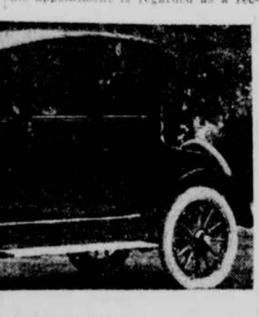
For the last year Mr. Phelps has been assistant to Mr. Hubbs, who has filled the position of both assistant general sales manager and director of advertising. His duties as chief assistant to A. I. Philip, general sales manager, have made such demands on his time that the greater part of the work of the advertising department has developed on Mr. Phelps.

The promotion of Mr. Phelps to the head of the department is in recognition of the way in which he carried the responsibilities placed upon him.

Mr. Phelps will in future have charge of all advertising and sales promotion work.

Russell Huff, for fifteen years chief consulting engineer of the Packard Motor Car Company, will assume the office of chief engineer at the plant of Dodge Brothers on November 1.

Mr. Huff is widely known in motor car circles as a seasoned engineer, and his appointment is regarded as a recognition of the big part he has played in the development of the automobile.



New Oldsmobile Four Passenger Coupe Which Lists for \$1,720, Shown by Cutting-Larson Co.

Arthur V. Lyall, formerly vice-president of the Electro-Chemical Rubber and Manufacturing Company, has been elected vice-president and a director of the Stewart Automobile Company, distributors of the Allen Car. Mr. Lyall will take charge of the sales. The company has planned an active campaign, covering New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.

J. L. Larkin and H. A. Minturn, for several years with the Haynes, have gone over to the new Sun Motor Company, of Buffalo, which was formed a few months ago by Messrs. Crawford and Hoffman, who were in the Haynes organization for a number of years.

Chalmers dealers from all parts of the country will hold a convention at the factory on November 15, 16 and 17. It is expected that more than five hundred will be present.

Ray McNamara has just completed a remarkable road test for the Maxwell company. He drove from Detroit to Indianapolis in 8 hours and 58 minutes and returned in 10 hours and 42 minutes, a total distance of 622 miles. The last express of the Big Four Railroad, which makes this run daily over a slightly shorter route, has a record of 10 hours and 25 minutes, or 1 hour and 27 minutes longer than the Maxwell record. The car used by McNamara was one of the first 1915 models turned out by the factory, and is said to have run more than 17,000 miles before it made this time between the two cities.

Frank F. Weston has taken the New York agency for the Auster tonneau windshield, a supplementary shield, which is attached by an adjustable bracket to the rear of the front seat. This is a refinement which has become popular in Europe and is rapidly gaining ground in this country among motorists who go in for all the comfort possible in an open car. Mr. Weston has opened a salesroom at 1547 Broadway, where he sells both to the trade and direct to the car owner.

The Michelin Tire Company has placed a universal tread tire upon the

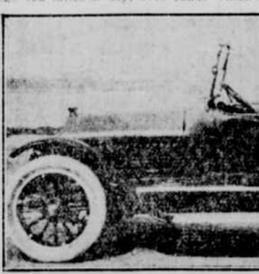
market, which is attracting wide attention. Although the company has been experimenting with this tread for several years very little has been known about it in the trade. It now develops, however, that the buses of the Brunswick Motor Company, operating daily

present a great variety of surfaces. The treads were also tested for two years on a heavy touring car which is operated by the factory at Milltown, N. J. This car runs more than a hundred miles daily, except Sundays.



Ray McNamara, in Maxwell Which Broke Road Record Between Detroit and Indianapolis

on routes between New Brunswick, N. J., Metuchen, Plainfield and South River, Old Bridge, Spotswood, Englishtown and Freehold, have been equipped with the Michelin universal tread tires for a long time. These vehicles average 192 miles a day, over roads which



The National Newport Limousine Brougham Being Shown by the Postner Motor Car Co.

combination of the Michelin racing type flat tread and a raised tread of the suction type. The general construction and appearance of the new casing suggests wonderful strength, and the suction feature is extremely practical and effective on slippery paving.

The latest addition to Automobile Broadway is the Empire car, which will be handled by the McFarlan Sales Company, at 1898 Broadway. The Empire line is composed of a four-cylinder listing at \$895 and a light six at \$1,095.

The six has a wheel base of 120 inches and a distinctly up-to-date, roomy body, with rolled cowl and convex sides. The interior of the body is of the parlor car type, with individual front seats and aisleway. Although the standard clearance is maintained, the car appears to set low and has a racy line.

The engine is 8x5 inches and develops 46-horsepower. The weight of the car has been kept down to make for economy of tires.

The four has an engine 3 1/2 x 5 inches and develops 40-horsepower. The wheel base is 112 inches. The Empire company has recently acquired a large plant at Indianapolis, has been admitted to the National Automobile Chamber of Commerce and is preparing to turn out the new models on a large scale.

The Paige company, which has been having a jubilee, reports that the sale of cars for October already shows an increase of more than 600 per cent over October of 1914.

The King company has brought out a new five-passenger eight-cylinder at \$1,150, which is \$200 less than the model which came out a year ago. The motor of the new car is larger than that of the old one and there are several mechanical refinements.

additional charge of 1 1/2 cents a mile for monthly mileage in excess of 650. Another feature is the arrangement for time payments.

## Ward Electric Extends Its Offer to Merchants

Excellent success has been achieved in the special sales campaign carried out this month in behalf of the Ward Special, a 750-pound capacity electric delivery wagon. This campaign and the special offer made with it were restricted to greater New York, nearby New Jersey, Long Island and Westchester County, and was to end on October 31.

So many inquiries have been received, however, that it was impossible to attend to them within the allotted time. At the unanimous request of all the co-operating companies, the Ward Motor Vehicle Company agreed to extend the period of the special offer to December 4, which is the final day of the forthcoming Electrical Prosperity Week.

There are a number of special features connected with this novel sales campaign. The work is jointly shared by the manufacturer and the electric light and power companies operating in the territory covered. The vehicle in whose interests it is conducted is the first low-priced electric placed on the market. The price—\$875—includes a year's rental of Thomas A. Edison's well known storage battery. The rental charges for the battery after the first year will be \$10.50 a month, with an

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## Senior Bros. 1875 Broadway New York

Senior Bros., 1875 Broadway, Eastern Distributors for the new Pathfinder twelve, expect the first shipment of the new model within a few days. Those who have had a demonstration in this car at the factory say it will put many other twin sixes on the market to sleep in the matter of speed and on the hills. As soon as the car arrives in New York it will be put through a certified test for speed on the Sheephead Bay Speedway and on all of the hills in Manhattan which are used by local agents for demonstration purposes.

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## Automobile and Steamer Rugs

Use also as Carriage, Porch, Lounge, Hammock, Tent, Camp, Yacht and Power Boat Rug—Extra Bed Comforts.

A Big and Attractive Line FINE ALL-WOOL SHAWLS MACKINAW ROBES

Beautiful Weave Designs and Colorings All Wool—Self-bound (best bound) Fine Styles—Soft, Warm Fabrics—3 1/2 to 7 lbs. \$4.65—\$4.74—\$4.84.

COLD WEATHER STUFF OUR SPECIALTY—Extra Large and Heavy. Thick, Warm Fabrics.

THE BECKMAN COMPANY 3167 FULTON ROAD, CLEVELAND, OHIO

NORTHERN OHIO BLANKET MILLS. In Your Dealer Does Not Handle Our Line Apply Directly To Us For Color Plate Catalog and Price List.

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