

# The Motorist

(By "Petrol.")

It is reported that Baron Henri de Rothschild will shortly make a trip into "darkest" Africa. His car will be followed by a 60-h.p. Mercedes, which has been transformed into a sort of tank car, and will carry about a ton of gasoline.

An English exchange says that an American lady, Miss Hockenhall, has just taken delivery of a 200-h.p. racer, built to her order by M. Bellamy, of France. It has eight cylinders, 7 1/2 in x 7 1/2 in. The car, which has a calculated speed of 115 miles per hour, was built especially to break the kilometre record.

S. F. Edge, the leading English racing motorist, who by the way is a native of Sydney, contributes a very interesting article on motor car racing to a London magazine. Mr Edge states that very few of the public can have an adequate conception of the enormous amount of care requisite in building a racing car. It is, in fact, only possible to realise it when you have travelled on one. A vehicle progressing at the terrific speed of a racing car seems to exaggerate the effect of the smallest impediment to its advance. You are moving, say at eighty or more miles an hour, and you suddenly encounter a bump in the road. Immediately the car leaps a clear foot into the air. Its weight brings it to the ground again, and it strikes with a percussion so terrible that nothing but the strongest and most faultless construction could save it from falling to pieces. And this is by no means a rare occurrence. It takes place thousands of times in every race, and yet at the end the car seems none the worse for it.

The preparation of a racing car is full of interest. One of the great difficulties a manufacturer has is the margin of weight, as, if he was to make all the vital parts as strong as he considers they should be to withstand the terrible strain to which a racing car is subjected the car, instead of weighing under a ton, would scale something like two tons. Accordingly, every small detail of it, even down to the merest nut and bolt, has to be examined with the minutest care, and it is sometimes extremely difficult, when the car is complete for the road, to discover what part of it can be lightened in order to get under the required weight. Only very expert and special men are put on to this work, and as these men earn very high wages, the cost of building cars is far beyond the price at which a car could ever be sold.

When the car finally comes out on the road, it is taken over by the driver who will eventually drive it in the race. Trials then take place over a good piece of road, which is measured, and tests are continually made with the car until the best results are obtained. For, in spite of the mathematical accuracy with which the building has been carried out, it is only after repeated experiments that one can arrive at an exact knowledge of what the car is able to perform. Shortly before any big race arrangements are usually made so that competitors can try their cars over the actual course of the race. These trials are of the utmost value to the motorist, for driving round

a course on a touring car, and driving round it at racing speed are two entirely different things. Everything appears to be different; the landscape puts on an apparently new aspect. Corners which you supposed were gradual bends assume a bewildering sharpness, hills up which one toils on a touring car seem on a racing car almost like downward slopes, and one is at the top before one really remembers striking the ascent. This is a place where experience comes in. It may happen, and frequently does, that there is a turn or bend just over the brow of the hill. You are unable to see it until you come to it, and it has to be negotiated at top speed. Such things make you keep your wits about you.

The ways in which different competitors study the course are varied. Some who wish to become acquainted with a difficult corner will dismount from their car and go over the road on foot. Others prefer to try the course in the reverse direction to that in which the race will be run, but this is a plan which is not generally adopted by the most experienced racing men.

In addition to the actual trying of the racing car on the course there is a great deal of detail work in connection with supplies of petrol, oil, spare parts, food and drink. These matters are entrusted to special men stationed at different points of the course, and the man on the car must know exactly where all these men are, and how far he is from each control. The men so employed are trained to be particularly quick at replenishing the petrol or oil tanks and looking after the tyres. For the tyres the most experienced men of the tyre factories are engaged on the course, as in the event of any repairs to be effected every second is of importance.

When the day of the actual race arrives all arrangements are gone over again to see that proper supplies of necessaries are at their respective stations, and that the men are in their positions ready for the cars as they arrive.

The mechanic who is carried on each racing car, and who usually occupies a place crouched down on the floor, looks after all the arrangements for taking in supplies of fuel. He also attends to the matter of providing the driver and himself with refreshment. This is highly important, for as the usual length of the Gordon-Bennett Race is about 350 miles, and it is of course extremely exhausting work driving at such high speed for hours on end, nourishment of some kind is absolutely necessary. The food which racers fancy during the race varies. Each driver has his own particular notion of what he thinks he is able to drive best on, but, as a rule, he makes his selection from a menu which includes small sandwiches of practically raw meat, beef lozenges, fruit of all kinds—especially bananas, which are very sustaining, chocolate, etc.

Besides actually driving the car after the start has taken place, it is the driver's duty to know, as far as possible, the position of his competitors. He must know, that is to say, how many minutes they are either ahead of him or behind him. This, of course, is easier in a race which takes place on a circular course than on a straight road like that from Paris to Bordeaux, but in order to have this information it is necessary to place

at each point on the course men who do nothing else but let their respective teams know the position of the other racers and their fellow countrymen. This knowledge of where one is in a race is extremely useful. The cars are always started at so many minutes' intervals, the nature of the course usually determining the number of minutes. If the race is taking place on a circular course, the point must be taken into consideration that the first car may arrive at the starting-point after having made its first circuit before the last car has started, and the times have to be so adjusted that this does not take place. This method of starting the cars at intervals is rather confusing to spectators, as they have to work out a little sum to find the position of each car, but it would obviously be the height of folly for a number of cars to be started together. There would probably be as many accidents in the first 100 yards as there were cars.

It is generally towards the end of the race, after having driven hour after hour that a driver's experience and nerves are required. He may have had trouble with his car for some reason, and may have been delayed some minutes, and he knows by the position of his rival that he has so much farther to go and so many minutes to make up. It is in a critical period like this that the cool-headed driver scores. The inexperienced driver frequently drives his hardest at the start, with the result that he soon becomes tired, and not infrequently too becomes a little careless at the same time. He does not pay so much attention as is necessary to the turning of a corner, and before he knows what has happened the car is in the ditch or off the road and he is hopelessly out of the race. The driver's attention must never be allowed to be distracted for one moment from his car or from the road, but the point perhaps at which his nerve is most required is when he comes up to any car and wishes to pass it. Both cars are driving perhaps at seventy miles an hour and the road is not too wide, and as generally speaking the dust is so thick that it is quite impossible to see the car which he is attempting to pass until he is quite close up to it, it will be readily understood that the manoeuvre requires no little skill and judgment to bring it to a satisfactory conclusion.

According to the Knowles Automobile Company, of Melbourne, whose figures are based on over 5000 miles of running in each instance, the total cost per mile of running a motor car, and this running includes petrol, lubricating oil, motor grease, electricity, wear of tyres, repairs and renewals of motor parts:— For a 6-h.p. car it works out at 1 3/4 d per mile; for an 8-h.p. car at 2d per mile; for a 12-h.p. car at 2 3/4 d per mile. In these costs petrol and tyres represent four-fifths of the total expense. It is certain that a 15-h.p. car would not cost more than 3 1/2 d per mile, a 20-h.p. car more than 4d per mile, and a 30-h.p. car more than 5d a mile to run. Compared with expense of maintaining horse-drawn vehicles to seat the same number of passengers, the self-propelled vehicles cost just about one-half as much for upkeep. Other advantages offered are too well known to need comment. With the use of solid rubber tyres on the rear wheel the cost of running could be reduced by 1/4 d per mile.

Before the Institution of Engineers and Shipbuilders in Glasgow Mr A. Govan, of

the Hozier Company, has been giving a paper on motor cars, in which he said that the improvements of the future would lie along the line of acceleration of speed and reduction of weight. Prejudice against automobilists did not exist in the minds of the rising generation, and this was a good point in favour of the early popularisation of the car. One of the best hopes for the future was the fact that all users were displaying a passionate interest in automobiles. He referred to the fact that at the present time upwards of a million workmen were engaged in France, directly and indirectly, on the production of the motor cars, and looked forward to the early development of Scotland along almost equally wide and prosperous lines.

## Miscellaneous Announcements.

Under this heading we are prepared to insert advertisements of motor cars and other goods for sale, and other miscellaneous announcements of a like character. The charge for each insertion is 2s 6d for thirty words or less, and 6d for every six words or less in addition, and a discount is offered of one free advertisement in a series of thirteen, i.e., a 2s 6d advertisement will be inserted thirteen times for £1 10s, etc.

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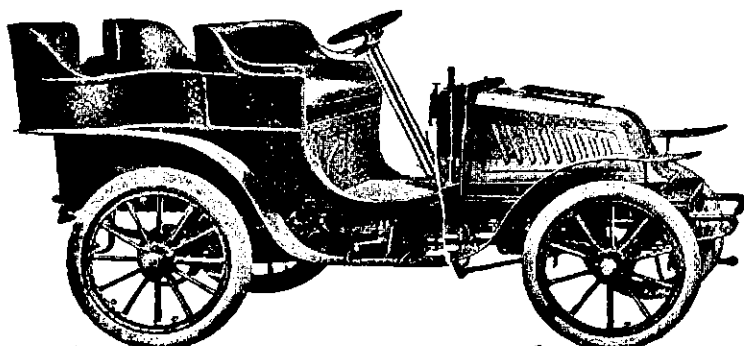
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