

Motors, Motorists and Motor Matters.

An American owner has given exact figures of the cost of running his seven-passenger car for two and a-half years—distance, 30,000 miles:—

The statistics show the items of direct cost, which vary directly with the mileage. Cost per mile: tires, 5 cents; gasoline, 2.7; lubricating oil, 0.2; incidentals, 0.9; total 8.8. The car averaged about 1,000 miles a month, and a yearly average of $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles on a gallon of lubricating oil. Leaving out the interest and depreciation, which is largely a matter of judgment, and assuming the car to be owned in a New York city suburb and that it made an average of 1,000 miles a month, the following sums up the cost for a year: Tires, £100; gasoline, oil, acetylene, and repairs, £100; chauffeur and rental of private garage, £260. Total, £460.

At a first glance it might seem that this is a rather costly business. It would seem that £450 for a year's running is a big sum. But a little consideration will show that this is not so. To start with, the car was a heavy a full-powered car that carried seven passengers. In the second place the distance run for the money was 12,000 miles, and the total cost per mile (including everything in the car, chauffeur's wages, and rent of garage) works out at about ninepence. The same amount of haulage by horses, over the same distance, would almost certainly have cost more, and the elements of speed and convenience would have been lacking. And it will be seen at once that a light-powered car of good quality, driven by its owner on an average of, say, a hundred miles a week, would cost very little for actual maintenance. Always assuming that the owner could drive. So much depends on the skill and care of the driver.

There can be little doubt that a great deal of the blame bestowed on motor-car manufacturers is primarily due to this defect of bad driving; and there is equally no doubt that a big proportion of the worst accidents are directly traceable to the same cause. The careful man will not attempt to drive his own car until he can drive well. The man who attempts to drive before he has obtained an adequate knowledge of the car is doomed to smash and disappointment. It is fully time that the public realized the stupidity of the still prevalent idea that any fool can drive a motor-car.

Here are points of interest to settlers in the 'way-back districts where mud is plentiful and roads are bad. That is the case in the middle West of the United States, where very few of the roads are metalled, and the mud lies inches deep for days after rain. To meet these conditions, the motor-manufacturers have introduced the buggy type of automobile. The wheels are 36 inches in diameter, with $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch solid rubber tires. All the machinery is carried above the axles, so as to give the greatest road clearance. The tires are wedge shaped, so that in thick mud they cut their way down to solid ground, and then forward through the mud. A double chain drive with 52-tooth sprockets on the two rear wheels and 8-tooth sprockets on the jackshaft gives considerable leverage

for heavy pulling. A very elastic transmission is used to ease the machinery, so that the chance for breakage in rough places is materially lessened.

* * *

From America comes a useful automobile accessory in the form of a combination six-volt cigar lighter, and incandescent repair lamp, made by the Metal Specialties Mfg. Co., of Chicago, Ill., has now been on the market for two years, and has proven itself to be a most useful article for automobile and electric vehicles. The lamp is six inches in length, and always at your elbow. A cigar, cigarette, or acetylene lamp is easily lighted going 60 miles an hour. The repair lamp is very handy for purposes of inspection. The ten feet of cord attached is sufficient for exploring any part of the machine. Its use leaves the hands free.

* * *

The world is still waiting for that amazing electric motor of Mr. Edison's, which is to run 300 miles on one charge. Meantime, electric cars are much better than they used to be. Five years ago, the average was 25 miles on a battery charge. Today, in the best cars, it is from fifty to eighty miles. The electric is not intended for high speeds, though it will go higher speeds than any road-law permits. But it has other advantages. It is economical, safe, noiseless, smokeless, dirtless, and it gives off no offensive odours. For city work, it is probably the cheapest car on the market, so far as running cost is concerned.

* * *

What shall be done in emergency when a universal-joint breaks? Which means, generally when the pin or bolt breaks, obviously, the thing is to get a temporary bolt that will go through. But this is not always possible. In that case, wire has been made to serve. Bunch your wire in as thick a bundle as will go through the hole, splay out and turn over the ends. Then drive with the utmost caution and chance your luck. It has been done with success.

* * *

A test hill is being constructed on the Brooklands track—275 feet long, an average rise of one in six, with a stiff pinch of one in three near the top. Official road trials being no longer legal in Britain, this test hill at Brooklands will be extremely useful to motorists. Its convenience is obvious.

* * *

In England, although motor offences are steadily decreasing, there is a proportionately heavy increase in fines imposed. The local authorities it seems, have come to look on motorists as a source of special revenue, and are bent on killing the goose that lays the golden eggs. One begins to understand more clearly every day why the stupidity of English local authorities has passed into a proverb. And the lesson of it all is—If you want sane magistrates, pay them.

* * *

Mr. H. V. Colver made a world's motor-cycling six hours record at Canning Town, England, on the 21st January, despite the fact that bad luck with his tires caused him to stop six times. He rode a seven-h.p. Matchless. His record ran: first hour, 47 miles, 1,690 yards; second hour, 96 miles, 110 yards; third hour, some tire trouble. At 141 miles he was inside record time. Tire trouble at 144 miles put him again out-

side the record. At 231 miles he was again leading the world. He kept the lead and finished at 270 miles, 1,170 yards. The previous record—268 miles, 285 yards—was made a month earlier by Mr. O. C. Godfrey. One hears so little about motor-cycling these times, that facts like these are refreshing to read. The motor-hog in the past has never been more obnoxious than when he bestrode a motor-cycle, and the fact unfortunately damaged an excellent and exhilarating form of sport.

* * *

Even in England, the Police sometimes get the worst of it where motorists are concerned. At the Radcliffe Police Court, George White was summoned for unlawfully using a locomotive which did not consume, as far as practicable, its own smoke. The evidence for the prosecution was that on December 11th the driver allowed smoke and vapour to be emitted from the engine for a quarter of a mile, to the annoyance of pedestrians and others using the road. After being stopped by a policeman the engine was restarted without any emission of smoke. The defendant called evidence to show that the engine was of the most modern construction, and that under normal conditions no smoke or steam could be emitted. Any such emission must have had a temporary or accidental cause. The driver said the fire got low while he was taking in water, and one result of the firing up was the emission of steam, but no smoke.

* * *

The magistrates' clerk agreed that under the Act by which the summons was taken out the driver could not be proceeded against for carelessness. The case was dismissed.

* * *

The present British Government is a very tricky one. The Home Secretary has just announced that any conviction under the Motor Car Act will render a person ineligible for an old-age pension. A conviction may be for a very slight offence for which a chauffeur would be in no sense personally responsible, it will be at once apparent that this decision of the Government is flagrantly unjust. Among drivers of taxicabs in crowded areas, to take one instance, slight offences may easily occur. The drivers are generally very sober, industrious and deserving men, and to take away from them the one thing Government provides for the worker in case of infirmity is an abominable thing. Anti-motor hysteria is still at its height.

* * *

The Nail of Destiny.

For the want of a nail the shoe was lost,
For the want of a shoe the horse was lost,
For the want of a horse the rider was lost,
For the want of a rider the battle was lost,
For the want of the battle the Kingdom was lost—
And all for the want of a horseshoe nail.

But this, my child, as you doubtless know,
Was a number of hundred years ago.

Brought down to date the facts are these:
The general chooses to ride at ease
In a new six-cylinder automobile,
And he punctures the tyre of his off-front wheel;
So the battle goes bump—not for the lack,
But because of a smallish carpet tack.

* * *

Mr. George Alexander tells a story in the "Era Annual" illustrating the humour of