

a London cabdriver. "Being in a hurry to get home from the theatre a few days ago, I walked to the corner of King Street. An old cabman with his hansom was the first on the rank, but I shook my head at him, and called a taxi. As I approached it the hansom cabby said: 'So, Mr. G. A., you've no use for 'osses now; but you'll 'ave to 'ave one to take you on the day you're buried.' 'I went home in that hansom after all.'"

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While tracing in the dynastic histories of China the numerous allusions to a curious chariot in which there was an arrangement for registering the distances traversed, strongly suggestive of the modern taxi-cab. Dr. Giles, Professor of Chinese at Cambridge University, has recently unearthed a complete specification of its mechanism, according to which it is quite possible to reconstruct such a vehicle. It appears that these taxi-cabs, to use a convenient term, were first mentioned under the Chin dynasty (A.D. 265-419), and from that time down to the middle of the fourteenth century frequent allusions to such vehicles, known as "measure-mile-drum-chariots," are to be found in the dynastic histories. Under the year 1027 A.D., and again under the year 1107 A.D., full particulars are given as to their construction, the number of wheels, their positions, the number of cogs on each wheel, &c., being all definitely stated. On completing a translation of the specification, Professor Giles placed it in the hands of Professor Hopkinson, of the Engineering Laboratory, with the satisfactory result that, from a specification recorded by the Chinese some 900 years ago, Professor Hopkinson has constructed a model of a wheeled vehicle which accurately registers the distance traversed. At each li, or Chinese mile, which is about one-third of an English mile, a drum is struck, while at every tenth li a bell is rung.

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The marauding policeman is not yet a pest in the path of motorists in New Zealand; but his time is coming. As motoring increases in a country like this, oppression of motorists will follow naturally, as the night the day. Then we shall have constables stating on oath what some luckless motorist's speed was. If the reader is ever in that quandary, let him compel the constable to say how many yards the car went in so many seconds. Divide the yards by the seconds, and multiply by two; and you will have approximately the miles per hour. This little formula has more than once worked the overthrow of constables on oath. In one case in England, it was proved that the constable was swearing to a speed of 150 miles per hour.

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Over in America, in certain districts, the police have introduced what are known as "Glencoe bumps" for the undoing of motorists. These are raised, brick-built footways across the main road, four inches high in the centre, and cambered to the outer edge. When a motor-car going anything over eight miles an hour strikes one of these pleasant obstructions, it leaps and bucks. Before motorists grew wise, many springs were broken, and many passengers thrown out. Now the locality of the bumps is known, the public opinion is against one of the most barbarous police tricks that even America has seen.

Some idea of London's traffic may be gained from a few figures published recently. During the first three weeks of this year, the London General Omnibus Company, Ltd., took £30,709 in fares; and during the first two weeks of the year, the London County Council's Tramways took £34,228. As many other companies and corporations are operating, these figures only stand for a small part (comparatively) of the whole traffic. Cabs, motor-cabs, tubes, shallow railways, and the various other great bus companies are not touched.

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In England, steps are being taken for the protection of deaf cyclists. The suggestion is that they should carry a plain distinguishing badge and number—only to be supplied on full inquiry. Overtaking a cyclist bearing such a disc, motorists and others would be required to drive with special caution. Which is all very well, and certainly humane. But why should deaf persons cycle at all? It would be just as sensible for blind men to go mountaineering among crevasses.

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Motor Industry in Australasia.

Mr. Ben H. Morgan, special trade commissioner of the Manufacturers' Association of Great Britain, has something to say in his latest report regarding the prospects in Australasia as regards commercial motor vehicles, tractors, and traction engines.

"There will be a good market for motor delivery vans within the next few years in Australia and New Zealand, but very little headway seems to have been made with them up to the present time. Petrol and paraffin can be obtained at prices very similar to those prevailing at home, while, though horses are comparatively cheap, fodder, strange to say, is dearer than in England. The cost of stabling and labour is also higher. Another consideration is that at times of the year it is difficult to work horses in the streets owing to the excessive heat. Under these circumstances there is no doubt that motor vans will be very largely used in the near future.

"Lorries are also growing in favour, not only for distance work, but for handling goods between the warehouses and docks, which one finds in such magnitude in the large cities in Australia and New Zealand, countries which are to a very great extent, dependent on external trade. Owing to the condition of the roads motor waggons and lorries are not used to any great extent outside of the towns and suburbs.

"The recent years of prosperity which Australia has enjoyed has placed her agricultural industries in a strong position and owing to the dearth of labour and fodder the Australian is enterprising enough, and what is more has the means to purchase any machinery that will show him a saving in the cost of production. For this reason it will be found that there is a good market for tractors and traction engines, especially the former, but the farmer prefers a paraffin engine in preference to petrol driven. In many districts owing to the sandy nature of the soil a traction engine is too heavy, while the lighter traction can be got about much more readily.

"There is certainly business to be done in the large towns in motorcabs and cars for street work, as well as in motorbuses. In the main street of Adelaide there are always to be seen a number of cars for hire. Those I saw were of various designs, from 8 h.p. to 25 h.p., but were all fitted with Cape cart hoods. On my putting questions to two of the proprietors, who had a number of cars in use in this trade, I found that they were doing an extremely good business. I do not think there are motor cars for hiring in the streets of any other towns, but at several places I was questioned as to the most suitable British motorcab available. Several schemes are now on foot to start a cab service in Sydney and Melbourne, and British firms should be extremely active, as I found two foreign firms already looking into the business, and one had booked the first order for 15 cabs for Melbourne. There is also a small amount of trade to be done in motorbuses, al-

though the failure of the Melbourne motorbus service has raised a good deal of prejudice against this type of vehicle.

"The Manufacturers' Association will be glad to give any of its members interested full information about any of the items referred to.

"One caught little more than an impression of the state of foreign competition from the official statistics available, owing to the difficulties which statisticians have to contend with in the way of "classification," and "country of origin" which it is almost impossible to trace. The following, however, are the figures for 1906 for Australia, as recorded under certain headings:—

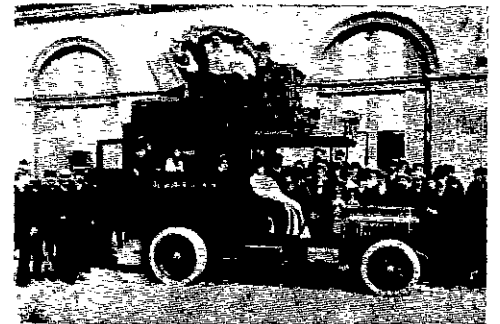
Classification	United Kingdom	France	Germany	United States
	£	£	£	£
Motors ...	95,233	46,627	9,161	7,776
Vehicles, n.e.i.	7,996	20	5,406	11,856
Minor articles for vehicle ...	4,888	210	486	8,282
Vehicles, n.e.i. parts thereof	31,526	1,373	1,970	25,404

"The last three items might, and possibly do, refer in a measure to horse as well as motor vehicles, while the last item though including motor parts obviously refers principally to parts of horse vehicles, as used in the manufacture of vehicles locally."

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Travelling Theatricals.

The inevitable has happened. Theatrical companies will no longer depend on the railways for their journeys from town to town. They will be able to time their departures and arrivals to suit themselves. Their baggage will go from theatre to theatre with one handling only. A big company in France now does all its travelling in a De Dion motor-bus, with the roof specially arranged to carry the properties. The bus runs smoothly and at high speed. There are no worries about strayed trunks and overcrowded trains. It is safe to assume that companies travelling in Australasia will soon be following this excellent example.



This reminds us of the adventures of Captain Fracasse, the hero who Theophile Gautier thought would one day immortalise him. When the Captain started from his home in the same poverty stricken condition as the later and far more famous hero D'Artagnan, he fell in with a troupe of strolling players, and had many adventures, humorous and otherwise, in his memorable trip through the provincial towns of mediaeval France.

Messrs. Norman Heath & Co., have supplied two County Councils during the last month with Straker Waggons. These are Horowhenua and Waiau counties. The machines are of the latest type, but have been fitted with winding drums, so that they can haul themselves out of river beds and soft places. They are both to be used for remodelling the county roads and it is anticipated they will soon pay for themselves.