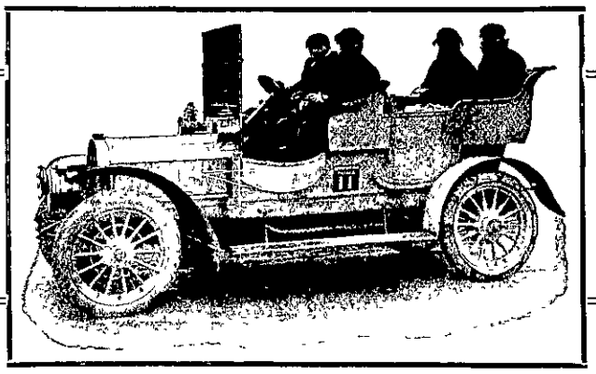
Motors Motoring



N.Z. Motor-Cycle Reliability Trials.

The Judge's decision on these trials will not be available for about a week.

Mr. J. C. Bidwill, the winner of last year's hill climb and reliability trials, has the sympathy of all, as he put up by far the fastest and best climb to the last corner, when he skidded and fell within 50yds of the finish. He re-mounted and finished, but naturally spoilt his time Mr Bidwill rode his twin cylinder Mountaineer, which carried him through the 200 miles without a fault.

Mr. L. A. Edwards, winner of last year's trials (open to all classes), also on a twin-cylinder Mountaineer, put up a splendid non-stop performance to Levin on the home journey, where he had the misfortune to spring a leak in his benzine pipe.

The little Motosacoches surprised all by their successful running, and although only 1¼ h.p., they saw many of their bigger friends left by the wayside during the 200 miles run, which has been criticised as one of the severest 200 miles of road in any civilised country. The behaviour of the lightweights generally was the surprise of the event.

Motor Causerie.

Continued.

What a mistake the French made not to hold their Salon this year. Their reason was that a bad season called for retrenchment; but they will surely regret the day that they let London get in ahead, for the English manufacturer now is wide awake and intends to hold the lead.

The Olympia show has proved several important things and foreshadowed several changes. First it establishes the popular car as the 12-18 h.p.; it offers the worm drive, the en-bloc engine, front wheel brakes, detachable rims and wheels, and comfortable bodies, and it tentatively holds out pneumatic suspension, instead of pneumatic tires, spring wheels and slide-valve engines for the approval or otherwise of the public.

The sliding gear is paramount, but I can tell you that there is, at this very moment, a new system which will shortly be made public. I may be able to give the details I hold next week; for the present, however, I am bound to secrecy. I will divulge this amount of news, namely, that it is being heavily backed by a couple of New Zealand engineers.

Carburettors have been left to two or three firms to perfect, and the Claudel-Hobson, White and Poppe, and G. L., are much in evidence. The Claudel-Hobson is splendidly designed and calculated with mathematic accuracy to give the best results at all speeds. That reads like an advertisement, but it really is genuine admiration.

It would be invidious to mention any one stand as having attracted more attention than another, but I can at least say that the working diagrammatic model of the Silent Knight engine caused a regular block in the traffic.

The A.A. are at a loss to know what course to pursue next year to fight the police trap nuisance. The recent decision of the Appeal Court, in a case in which a scout had been fined for obstructing the police "in the execution of their duties," has scored the doom of this invaluable department of the A.A. The line of argument taken by the A.A. was that if a scout warned motorists that they must not exceed the twenty mile limit he was actually helping the police, since he was preventing the law being broken, an ingenious and sound argument; but the Appeal Judges took a practical view of the matter and decided that it amounted in fact to an obstruction. Whatever the ethics of this test case are, the fact remains that police-trapping system is wrong and constitutes a regular scandal. I know of dozens of cases of careful motorists who, through exceeding twenty miles on an open, empty road, have incurred penalties of from £3 to £10.

The correspondence in the motor press includes several plans to warn motorists of the existence of a trap. One man writes to suggest that all cars should carry confetti and throw a handful out if he discovers a trap! Another thinks that a system of signalling passing cars would be possible;; and yet another proposes to erect signposts, like gallows, with a corpse in "blue" suspended. This affair, he says, could be just stuck in the ground inside the fence line at each end of a trap.

The most practical idea I read of was to put pressure on the authorities and get them to adopt the colonial "reasonable speed under the existing conditions" regulation; and I agree with this.

The Silent Knight success has apparently turned every second man into an engine inventor, and the new patents are legion; and also, in many cases, of doubtful utility. This coming year promises to evolve at least half a dozen really good departures for the poppet valve engine.

The Stanley Clyde Show, 1909,

(*Our London Correspondent.*)

The Agricultural Hall, Islington, is the venue of cycledom when the Stanley Show is on, and this year has drawn crowds as big and critical as ever. In many ways a change has come over the show, and visitors could not fail to notice the extraordinary amount of interest taken in the motor cycles. That sounds the keynote, the motor-cycle is in the ascendant and the "push" bike merely marking time.

Of course many small improvements are noticeable in these latter, 3-speed hubs are more popular, the "All Black" cycle is utilitarian to a degree, being covered in Xylonite sheathing all over the usually plated parts; but here the novelties cease, and we must join the little knots that crowd round the motor cycle stands. And this is a healthy sign, for it is brought about by a variety of reasons, which, briefly put, would include: "Standard" design, variable gears and free engines, fewer freaks, and altogether very few bad conceptions of design. A novice, let loose with a few £10 notes in the show, could hardly have made a mistake.

But the real point that struck me was the almost universal cult of the variable speed gear, or pulley.

Taking a steam engine as the model of flexibility, its petrol brother is the essence of the reverse, and I will be dogmatic to the extent of stating that only within a very small range of revolutions is the petrol motor at all efficient. It is therefore logical and necessary to provide some means of changing the ratio of engine speed to road wheel speed and so increasing the torque when occasion demands.

And why is this not recognised more fully? It is recognised, but there are two reasons why it is not fulfilled; first, because the mechanical difficulties in the way of making a suitable change-speed gear on a belt-driven machine are very great, and secondly because till quite lately the supine manufacturer has merely catered for the acrobatic "running start" and "jump off and push" youth, while he neglected the staid and stable class which is now taking up the sport of motor cycling.

That the mechanical difficulties of providing a machine with (1) a free engine, (2) change gear, (3) all operatable from the handle bar, are great is witnessed by the fact that hardly two makers use the same system, and, moreover, they are divided into three distinct schools: (a) Those who favour the handle-bar controlled pulley (a precious small sect unfortunately); (b) the epicycle, two-speed clan, and (c) the car-type of sliding-gear and cone clutch, such as the F.N. and T.A.C.

My conversations with exhibitors led me to the conclusion that the handle-bar controlled pulley is what is wanted, but the difficulties of providing such an article with all the necessary characteristics are astonishingly great.