

## AUTOMOBILES SAFER THAN HORSES

THE greater efficiency of the automobile—both the motor truck and the pleasure car—as compared with horse drawn vehicles has been clearly demonstrated during the past five years. And as a logical development of this greater efficiency, the automobile has proved itself a much safer proposition. In this connection we quote in part from a letter from H. W. Perry, Secretary of the Good Roads Committee of the National Automobile Chamber of Commerce published in a recent issue of the *New York Times*.

It is at least open to debate whether the automobile and motor truck have complicated the traffic problem. If it were not for these vehicles it is probable that the traffic situation would be much worse than it is. The London Police authorities have come to the conclusion that it is congestion rather than speed that is the most prolific cause of accidents, and they cite the fact that more accidents occur in one square mile in the heart of London, where traffic must perform travel at a walking pace and where traffic is regulated by an enormous force of policemen, than in any other equal area anywhere in the Kingdom. Fewer accidents occur at other points in the city where the rate of movement is much higher and where a large number of vehicles pass in a given time. As a result of these observations the London police are bending their efforts to speeding up the traffic.

It is well known by users of motor trucks and delivery wagons that each of these units does as much work in a day as three horse-drawn wagons. If the 7,810 commercial motor vehicles now registered in Greater New York were taken off the streets, their place would have to be filled by 23,340 horse-drawn vehicles. Does Mr. Clowes or any one else believe that the change would tend to relieve the congestion or simplify the traffic problem? Suppose, further, that the 37,197 passenger automobiles registered in the Greater City were replaced by a sufficient number of horse-drawn carriages and cabs to perform their service, or even by an equal number of such vehicles. Is it conceivable that the traffic situation would be any less complicated? All motor vehicle interests agree that the number of street accidents is most deplorable, and are desirous of a solution of the traffic problem. Wherever a genuine effort is being made to find a just solution through the appointment of a Traffic Commission to study the matter without prejudice, the automobilists are most willing to cooperate by having a representative act on such a commission. Several representatives of automobile interests are, in fact, acting on such commissions, or have offered to do so. But no just solution can be obtained by the publication of figures and statements that tend to place all of the blame for the increase of accidents upon the motor vehicle. Such reports have a decided tendency to inflame the public mind against an improved mode of travel and haulage that is bound to predominate more and more until eventually horse traffic will be almost wholly displaced in the heart of a great city like New York. As this transition goes on, of course the number of automobile accidents will increase, until finally nearly all of the accidents will be caused by motor vehicles and street cars, and none, or relatively very few, by horses and wagons.

That the reports calling attention to the increase in accidents and showing that the increase is due to the automobile do inflame the public mind is shown by the publication of a letter printed in one of the metropolitan newspapers last week from a correspondent, probably not identified with any organization, who advocated that pedestrians "be allowed to carry revolvers that they could loosen up and have handy every time

they cross the street." Any citizen writing such rantings, and any paper publishing them, is guilty of encouraging lawlessness instead of lending influence to suppress it. Perusal of dozens of other "letters to the editor" printed during the last month or two proves that the publicity that has been given this subject has not served to develop calm judgment. Further evidence of the effect upon the public mind of the agitation against the motor vehicle is seen in the fact that 114 automobile bills have been introduced in the Legislatures of nine States within the last six weeks. It is obviously unfair to condemn automobilists as a class because some drivers show an inhuman disregard of law and life. The individual criminal is the one to be punished.

The reports emanating from the National Highways Protective Society do not reflect that "thorough study of the facts" that one would expect of a statistician. The simplest analysis of the record of accidents for the last three years compared with the number of motor vehicles, trolley cars, and horse-drawn vehicles in use during those years proves that the increase in fatalities is due almost entirely to the increase in the number of vehicles. The ratio of fatalities to the number of motor vehicles has remained constant, whereas, on the contrary, the ratio of accidents or fatalities to trolley cars and horse-drawn vehicles has increased. Proof of this statement may be found in the following table, in which the society's own record of fatalities and their classification are compared with the reports of motor vehicle registrations by the Secretary of State and such figures as are available from reliable sources showing the numbers of electric cars in operation in the State each year. Unfortunately, the writer has not yet obtained figures relating to horse-drawn vehicles. There is good reason for believing, however, that there has been an actual decrease in these. Official figures show that there were 4,000 fewer licensed horse vehicles in Chicago last year than in 1910, and there can be no doubt that there has been relatively as great a decrease in New York City:

RELATION OF HIGHWAY FATALITIES TO VEHICLES

	1911.	1912.	1913.
*Automobile fatalities.	274	348	451
Motor vehicles registered . . . . .	83,000	107,262	133,500
Deaths to 1,000 vehicles . . . . .	3.3	3.25	3.37
Trolley car fatalities. . . . .	176	213	187
†Electric cars in use. . . . .	29,863	29,481	28,205
Deaths to 1,000 cars. . . . .	5.9	7.28	6.31
Horse and wagon fatalities . . . . .	203	205	202

\*Includes persons killed by motorcycles, by United States mail trucks, and as a result of children roller skating, hitching, and playing in the streets.

†Includes elevated and subway cars.

The foregoing figures indicate that as traffic conditions become worse as a direct and perfectly natural result of the increasing volume of traffic, the operators of motor vehicles are becoming more careful and more observant of traffic regulations. This is borne out by observation, which will show to any unprejudiced observer that as a whole the drivers of automobiles are much more alert and careful than the drivers of delivery wagons and horse-drawn vehicles.

In a careful analysis of the records of street accidents in Chicago, as reported to the Police Department and the Coroner's office, the Coroner of Cook County, Ill., has found that the horse-drawn vehicle has caused twice as many fatalities as the motor vehicle during the last four years per mile traveled.