

PHYSICIANS AND THE AUTOMOBILE.

ROCHESTER, MINN., March 25, 1901.

To the Editor:—A recent request for information as to what is the best automobile for physicians' use urges me to give my experience. I have taken a great interest in the horseless carriage during the past few years, making several trips east to investigate them at exhibitions, and using a steam buggy during the past season with considerable pleasure.

The electric carriages are the easiest managed, the cleanest and least noisy. They have great objections in their weight, which causes them to pound over rough pavements, also in their short range of mileage, and in requiring special facilities for charging, which will limit their use to the city physician.

The gasoline carriages have more or less unpleasant vibration, and the higher power vehicles are clumsy in construction. The horse power has been gradually increased from three to nine to enable them to go through mud and climb the hills. Their main trouble is in the electric sparking device, which will be understood by those physicians who keep their medical batteries in order. In Europe, gasoline automobiles are in the lead, while in this country they are in a rapid transition stage of both engine and power transmission. The firms which appear to have the best outfits have none running, but the models, though many are under construction.

The steam buggy is the cheapest, lightest and most elegant for the amount of power developed. It requires the most attention from the operator, in spite of the many automatic additions. It slips and slides about in the mud in a most disagreeable manner, while in cold weather there is trouble from the freezing of the pipes and the necessity of keeping the barn warm. Reports from eleven steam vehicle operators, given in a recent edition of the *Automobile*, gave an average of over \$100 for repairs in 2000 miles for each buggy.

The small wheels used in most automobiles require good roads for comfortable riding. At this time, my opinion is that steam is the most sure power, yet the rapid advance in gasoline engines will undoubtedly make them the most convenient in another year.

Automobiles at present are more or less of a pleasure vehicle for good roads, their perfection not being such as to warrant the physician who purchases one in selling his horse.

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