

# AUTOMOBILE HISTORY OF A DOCTOR

**A**LTHOUGH motor vehicles for road have been known to occasionally put in their appearance upon this mundane sphere for one hundred years back, or more, the actual automobile of luxury and utility has a historic record of only fourteen years. Until the introduction of the pneumatic tire and ball bearings, no development of any importance was even possible in motor vehicles for ordinary wagon road use. Since that time, evolution from crudeness toward perfection has been rapid and sure. The Seldon freak and the Stanley steam buggy opened the eyes of men who have the faculty of peering into the future, and they saw with prophetic vision the perfect (not yet) automobile as it spurned panoramic vistas of dirt made roads with the speed of the locomotive, and the comfort and safety of the old "one horse shay."

As a country physician. I very early in the automobile days began to realize the wonderful utility of a satisfactory motor vehicle for the country visits of my profession. Having had some education and experience in mechanical engineering, I soon became enthusiastic, even to crankiness, and in the year 1893 I placed an order for a steam "Mobile" with the Mobile Co. of America, located at Tarrytown, N. Y., for use on the prairie roads of South Dakota in my practice.

This was the first automobile ever used by a physician in country practice west of the Mississippi river.

Of course, it did not give very good satisfaction, being a pioneer in automobile mechanics. The problems of "trouble on the road" had not been worked out, and yet I look back with fond remembrance to the many pleasant experiences, and some not quite so pleasant, but yet amusing, which go to make up the very life of an automobile enthusiast.

Public sentiment was not overwhelmingly in favor of my presence on the roads with my "devil-wagon," and equine jealousy prompted many threatened tragedies for which there seemed to be no other excuse. My greatest mental alarm came when I met a woman driving a single white horse. Just why a white horse

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should be more troublesome to get safely by than one of any other color I have never been able to explain, but it remains an undisputed fact. As to the woman, any one who has had any experience with that sex can account for my disturbed mental condition. Sometimes she would scream and throw the lines over the dashboard; sometimes she would try to turn the outfit around in a space not at all sufficient for that operation to be done safely, and sometimes she would whip the horse into a frenzy and have a disastrous runaway, for which the automobile was not at all responsible.

My first visit to Sioux Falls, that pretty little city made famous by its

ing the street, I pushed the disgraced automobile (I was not allowed to use the motor) over two blocks to a livery barn, where the horses laughed as I ran it in for safe keeping until I could find some way of getting out of town without interference by the police. Sioux Falls has changed some since then. Now, hundreds of her leading citizens glide along her beautiful streets in expensive automobiles with no remonstrance by the lynx-eyed cops, and the horses scarcely turn their heads when they hear the "chug, chug" of the "traction engines," or the low musical echo of the siren horn.

Probably the writer was the very first person in the world to use an automobile hunting prairie chickens. With a pointer dog trained to ride in front, early morning trips were made beyond the reach of livery rigs, where full coveys of unfrightened birds awaited our coming; and then the rapid run home with the game strung on the dash and back of the seat to show the beauties of automobile sport.

All good things come to an early end, and one evening, while returning from a trip to the country with my team, my wife called my attention to a dense cloud of black smoke arising from the center of the village, some two miles away. It certainly indicated a fire in

the town, and I hurried the team with some anxiety. My first thought was that some one had set fire to my barn to maliciously deprive me of my automobile, and my surmising proved to be true to fact. When I reached home, my barn and contents were all in ashes. The twisted wheels and tangled irons of my "pride of the prairie" in the smouldering ruins almost brought tears to my eyes, for the pleasant rides as well as the "troubles on the road" had endeared that pioneer automobile to my heart. "Automobile fever" had fastened itself upon my very being, and before the ruins had become cold arrangements were made to secure another machine.

Since then I have owned six different makes of automobiles, but the noiseless, swinging, gliding action of my old steam buggy has never been entirely replaced.



Dr. A. D. Hard Ready for a Visit

alacrity in dissolving domestic infelicity, was an event long to be remembered. The forty-five mile trip was made over velvety prairie roads in less than two hours, and slowly motoring up Main street, with the urban natives all gazing open-eyed (and mouths) at the strange sight, I stopped at the curb in front of a large business house where I had a few purchases to make. I had been in the store not more than five minutes when I heard a gruff voice asking where the man who owned the steam wagon was to be found. The obliging clerk pointed me out to the big policeman who had asked the question, and I was told in a very emphatic manner that I must get that "steam wagon" off the street at once, as they did not allow any "traction engines" on Main street. With an audience of fully two hundred block-