

AUTOMOBILE TOPICS

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competent person appointed by the board to make such examination. The racing board may require the promotor to pay the expenses of its representative who makes the examination.

Was the Pimlico track "investigated" and pronounced safe for drivers and spectators? It makes small difference that the accident referred to was not caused directly by any defect in the track; the very fact of their being improperly banked is an invitation to disaster such as occurred.

Three years ago, when track racing was at the height of its popularity, a succession of sickening accidents occurred and wrought such an impression that action was taken that resulted in the suppression of the dangerous sport except on a few outlaw or obscure tracks. The big clubs, such as those at Buffalo, Cleveland and Detroit, which had been giving successful meets each year drew back and quit the game forever. The seal of condemnation was placed on such contests and clubs, press and public, with practical unanimity, declared that such dangerous and valueless sport should cease. In the short, sharp campaign which led to this abandonment AUTOMOBILE TOPICS took a leading part. It then made its stand, declaring that such exhibitions as those at Buffalo and other cities in the summer of 1905 should not be permitted to be repeated. Since then it has sincerely and vigorously fought all attempts to resuscitate the so-called sport.

All speed contests in which high-powered automobiles take part are dangerous. All possible precautions can be taken and the chances of accidents thereby lessened; but they are lessened merely, not removed. Against this danger stands the good to be accomplished. On the road there is a propriety in holding speed contests, for automobiles are made to use on the roads and the determination of the power (for power and speed are almost synonymous) possessed by a given car is a matter of importance. But the driving of cars on horse tracks tells nothing and means nothing. It is not even sport. The monotony of road races is broken only by accidents, and spectators come to look for them and are disappointed if they do not occur.

Now, right on the threshold of the 1908 season, is the time to block horse track racing. There are contests enough scheduled—road races, hill climbs, tours and the like—to satisfy the most inveterate lover of the sport. To add to them races on circular, insufficiently banked, improperly surfaced horse tracks is to invite the fatalities that will surely occur.

"America for Americans" is a pretty good battle cry, and it will undoubtedly carry weight in quarters where surface patriotism is popular. But it is scarcely consistent, and under the circumstances it is very far from being a happy choice of terms. Everybody knows that the A. A. A. wants the entries of foreign cars, just as do all of us who feel solicitude lest the Vanderbilt race become a national instead of an international event; while there is a suspicion at least that Judge Hotchkiss's organization has been bidding for the support of the foreign clubs.