

Home from the Gordon Bennett Race.

WHEN the big White Star liner Celtic swung into her dock in the North river, New York, last Saturday, she had on board Joseph Tracy and Herbert Lyttle, of the American Gordon Bennett team, and the tire experts, besides others in the trade who had gone over as spectators.

In the little group that waved greetings to the waiting friends on the dock were O. E. Schaaf, of the Pope-Toledo interests; Carl Fisher, of Indianapolis; Al Poole, who acted as mechanic on the Locomobile racer, and Clifford Myers, of the Diamond Rubber Co.

Those who had followed the fortunes of the American team in the cable and mail reports were naturally eager to get the personal impressions of the contestants. Questions were put and answered as rapidly as the exhaust of a racing car, until the customs formalities had been finished and the group scattered to resume the humdrum of everyday affairs.

"How does it feel to start in the classic Gordon Bennett?" was asked Joseph Tracy, who piloted Dr. Thomas' Locomobile car in the great event.

After a reflective pause he replied: "It doesn't feel very different from starting in the Vanderbilt or any other road race. Of course, in an international event one realizes he is representing his country, and not merely a particular car, and that his performance will be watched by a great number of people of many different nationalities.

"The fact that the race occurs in a foreign country does not affect one as much as you might suppose, for the reason that you know that if any repairs have to be made you cannot call on any one to assist you outside of your mechanic, who in my case was Mr. Poole.

"Getting your car out in the gray of the morning does not affect you particularly, except that you feel 'out of place' for quite a while. As a matter of fact, you don't feel thoroughly at home until after the car has been started and is well under way."

"What about the feeling of being in competition with drivers of international reputation?" was asked.

"Of course, you do not attempt to hide the fact that you are up against the greatest drivers in the world," he replied; "neither do you try to jolly yourself thinking that you might win by chance. You just know that you have got to fight, and fight against fellows who have been doing this kind of thing for several years."

"Did you get to the Grand Stand before any of the cars had been started?"

"No; three or four cars had been started when we got there. As a matter of fact, we did not come right down to the line. They told me that we would see numbers on the fence corresponding to the numbers on the cars, and that we were to line up opposite my number; but I could not

find any numbers. By the way, after the race some of the French papers printed a statement that we did not get to the starting line on time. This was not so. We came to the line on time. Just as we got down to the line the second car started. We were then but a short distance back. Then the car No. 17 started, and I had five minutes. I then let my car roll down to the starting line."

"What were the surroundings at the starting line?"

"In general they were about the same as at the Vanderbilt race. The scene at the roadside was practically the same, with the usual number of people rushing around, and the usual amount of rumors as to what had happened to the drivers who had started before me. There was about a score of Americans at the start. They crowded around and shook hands, told me to be careful, and not to get 'rattled,' wished me good luck, and such like. Among them were Clarence Grey Dinsmore, Mr. Nelson, of the Pope-Toledo Paris office; Mr. Myers, of the Diamond tire; O. S. Johnson, of the Automobile Club of America; Mr. Thomas, treasurer of the Locomobile company; A. J. Moulton and E. T. Birdsall, of New York, also Mr. Petard, one of THE AUTOMOBILE representatives. There seemed to be a hundred photographers about, and all were busy taking pictures."

"Did you get away without any hitch?"

"Yes, we got away very nicely. I started on the first gear and made a comparatively slow start, owing to the fact that I had only two speeds, my intermediate gear having been broken before the race on my way down from Havre. After starting I probably went about a hundred yards down hill on the low gear, and went into my high gear without any trouble, but it was rather slow in picking up speed, because by that time we were going up hill and it was a big jump from the low to the high."

"Do you think there is any advantage or disadvantage in starting as a late number in such a race?"

"Yes, there is a disadvantage from the fact that the time that must elapse between your starting time and the finish of the race is less than the time of the earlier starters. For instance, seventeen cars started before me, which meant about one hour and thirty minutes, and we had just that much less time to complete the four rounds in. Of course that wouldn't make any difference in the case of a car that met with no mishaps and was fast enough to win."

"How far did you get without any trouble?"

"To Rochefort. We made pretty good time, too, but nothing like the time that we made in the second and third rounds. We had not been around the course in a racing car before, and for that reason did not know

they were numerous. There were a lot of bad ones even before reaching Rochefort."

"At Rochefort?" suggestively.

"Well, when we got to Rochefort we were halted for about fifteen seconds while one of the officials put a ticket in our box. After we had started up again, and gone a few hundred yards, we struck a 'hairpin' corner and broke our right-hand chain. We then pulled to one side, and commenced to repair the chain."

"The road here was fairly wide, and Thery passed us going at a pretty good speed. We were laid up with this repair for about twenty minutes. It was really a bolt where the chain was joined together, and this was broken in one of the links, so we had to punch it out. It was rather a nasty job, but we finally got it out and put in the new one."

"After this what happened?"

"We ran on then to just beyond Lastic, where we stopped at our supply station and took a new chain aboard. Then we went on and stopped at the Pontgibaud control just behind the Napier. We were held up four minutes to let this car get clear of the narrow road ahead, but while the officials were solemnly counting off the seconds Earp was just around the corner, out of sight, fixing his gasoline tank, which had come loose. We finished that round without any trouble, and passed the grandstand going about seventy-five miles an hour."

"No, you could not distinguish anything at the stand. Just a blur of faces and waving handkerchiefs back of the fence."

"What happened on the second round?" repeated Mr. Tracy. "Why, at Rochefort, just after leaving the control, the clutch collar seized. First I knew of it, there was a tremendous racket under our feet. That reminds me we had had to take out the floor boards to get the car under the weight, and so my feet were hanging in the air except when they were on the pedals, and toward the end it got pretty tiresome; in fact, after the race stopped I could not walk for a few minutes after getting out of the car."

"But about the clutch collar: When the noise started I tried to stop the car, but couldn't get the clutch out. The throttle had been adjusted so as not to close altogether, and the only way to stop the motor was by the cut-out button on the wheel. I got my finger on the button all right, and almost immediately saw that we had to go around the hairpin corner where we had broken the chain on the previous round. It was impossible to keep my finger on the button, as I had to swing the wheel so much to get around, and every time my finger slipped off the button the motor started up and drove the car ahead. We had an exciting few moments until I got the car into the straight and stopped it just alongside the fence. Our troubles on the corner were aggravated by the action of the

brakes, which I was compelled to jam on tight.

"After stopping we found that the clutch collar had seized, and we effected a temporary repair that enabled us to get the clutch out if needed, but at the risk of altogether disabling the clutch mechanism.

"Afterwards?" Well, I drove the car without drawing the clutch except at the controls—simply using the throttle—when we stopped and started the motor.

"After we got the clutch trouble straightened out we got along very nicely until we came to Lastic, where our supply station was located. Here we decided that, as our right back tire was pretty badly worn, we would have a new one put on, and while the tire was being changed we took on some water and gasoline."

"How did the clutch trouble affect your subsequent driving?"

"It made the driving very difficult, and also compelled me to go much more slowly than I could have done, for the reason that I had to take the corners on the high gear and without drawing the clutch. We got around to the grandstand again, but had considerable trouble coming down the last chain of hills into Clermont on this account. The throttle was adjusted so as to just keep the engine turning over, and usually when a turn was encountered it was too sharp to be taken at the speed the engine would drive the car, even when turning over slowly, so I had to use the cut-out button on the steering wheel. The steering wheel had to be moved so much and so often that my fingers slipped off the button many times, and the motor, of course,

started to run and drive the car at critical points when the speed due to momentum was as high as was safe.

"When we reached the grandstand again I noticed that the stretch of road in front of it was very much cut up. A lot of small stones had worked up to the surface, making steering very unsteady at high speed.

"On the third round we got to the tire control, about one and one-half miles beyond the grandstand. We stopped to put a shoe on, and were then told that the race would end at 4:30 o'clock. It was then about 2 o'clock, so we decided we would put on a complete set of tires, so that we would not have to stop again, as by that time we had gotten to know the course. Then we started out after having bathed our faces with cologne, which was suggested by Mr. Maudsley, of Coventry, and which was very refreshing indeed. Nothing more happened after that. Everything was going fine, even when we got past the hoodoo Rochefort turn, and on to Laqueuille. There they told us that the race was over."

"Did you come back to the grandstand then?"

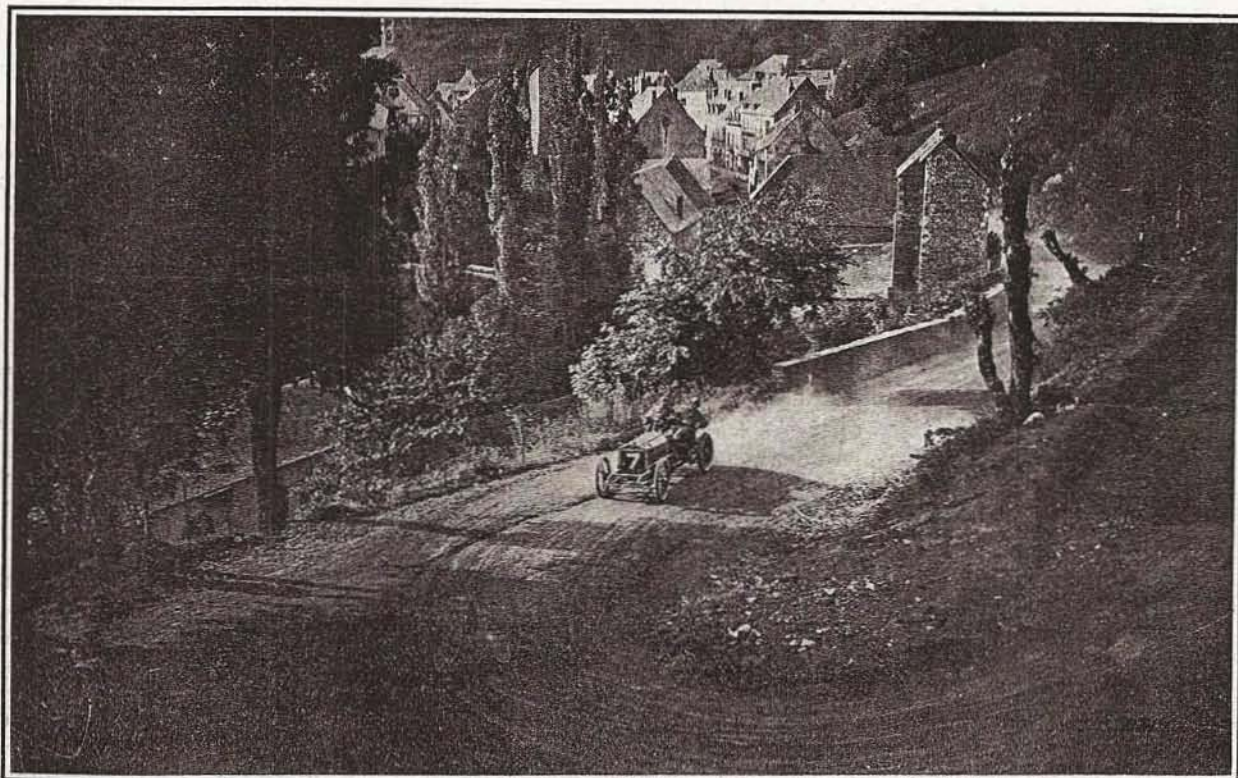
"No; they would not let me drive back immediately, so we pulled off to one side of the road. One of the men at the control, Mr. Fenton—who is connected, I believe, with the English Gladiator car—gave us some roast chicken and champagne. I never ate so fast in my life. I was ashamed to ask for more. After stopping here for probably half an hour an official came along and informed us that the course was open, and then there was one devil of a stampede to get on the course. All the cars that had

been lined up along the road were driven out on the course. Everybody seemed to get out on the road—thousands of people and hundreds of cars."

"From your own experience, was there much passing or repassing on the road during the race?"

"No, not very much. Some of the French papers stated that the French drivers were blocked by the Americans, but the only French drivers who passed me were Théry and Callois. I had instructed my mechanic to keep a sharp outlook and tell me whenever anyone was overtaking us, so that I could turn out and let him pass. In both instances, when Théry and Callois passed me, the road was fairly wide and I pulled to one side and let them go by. When Théry passed I went after him to see if I could hold him. I found I could do so easily on the straights, but not on the turns.

"We also raced with Burton on the second round. After passing Lastic he went by just before we started, and then we passed and repassed each other several times until we got to the tire control just beyond the Grand Stand, more than halfway round the course. His car was faster than mine, and then he knew the course, and could drive where we could not, as he had all of his gears. We started waving hands at each other toward the finish. We also passed the Napier three or four times, and they also passed us. At one time Burton passed us on a corner. He seemed to be going too fast to get around safely, but by braking he managed to slow down and get around without mishap. I saw pieces of stuff flying off his wheels, which appeared



HAIRPIN CORNER AT ROCHEFORT ON AUVERGNE CIRCUIT WHICH PROVED TO BE A HOODOO FOR THE LOCOMOBILE RACER.

to me to be rubber from his tires. About half a mile further on we passed him putting on a new shoe.

"No," said Mr. Tracy, in reply to an inquiry, "there was no particular danger in passing. The cars were about five feet apart, I should say."

"Did you experience any other troubles?"

"Yes; in the second round the dust began to get underneath my goggles and into my eyes. The dust was not in clouds, but was rather a kind of fine mist. It was hardly visible, but still it was there, and was made very unpleasant by the tar they had put on the road, which gave it a sort of caustic effect. It very much interfered with my sight. On the third round my eyes began to pain me very badly, and after the race, when I got back to the garage, I could hardly see, and had to go to a drug store and get them attended to.

"It was reported that Théry had had his goggles made by an eminent Paris oculist. A man cannot be too particular about his goggles. In a race like this the goggles should be made to order, and particularly made to fit the face. Earp also had trouble with his eyes, and I saw him in London ten days after the race and he was then wearing smoked glasses. It was common talk in Paris that Théry's eyes are ruined as a result of the elimination trials and the Gordon Bennett race."

"How about grub during the race?"

"Well, Poole put some chocolate into my mouth occasionally on straight stretches, and we drank some water while we were fixing the clutch collar in Rochefort."

Asked how his car behaved in general, Mr. Tracy replied:

"The brakes acted finely. I only used the foot brake—hardly ever used the hand brake, except in coming into a control, for the simple reason that I could not know when we were going to strike a corner when one would have to use both hands in steering and wish he had another one in order to swing the wheel about. If the foot brake had given out it would have made our run very much slower. The radiator system and ignition worked perfectly, and the engine did not miss fire a single stroke."

"Was the scrutiny of the officials at the weighing in very close?"

"Yes, very. They inspected everything, counted leaves in the springs and stamped the wheel hubs. One had to answer a whole lot of questions; they had papers to be filled out about the weight of the car, size of the wheels, tires, springs, method of ignition, size of cylinders, kind of carbureter, whether automatic or not, kind of cooling device, the manner in which the engine was oiled, the kind of clutch, and what it was faced with; kind of gear box; how many speeds and brakes. You had to satisfy two lots of inspectors; the government officials had to know if the car was thoroughly safe to go in a race on the public highways, and you had also to satisfy the race officials that the car complied with

the regulations. It took two hours altogether to get through.

"Some of the drivers had spare cars, all of which were weighed in and numbered the same as the cars driven in the race. These spares were provided so that in case anything happened before the race proper they could be substituted."

"How did the Auvergne circuit compare with the Vanderbilt course of 1904?" persisted the inquisitor.

"The Vanderbilt course was child's play compared to it. In the Vanderbilt course turns were the exception, but in the Auvergne the turns were the rule, and one would wonder what was the matter when he came across a straight stretch. There is a great difference between trying to get familiar with a course eighty-five miles long and one only about thirty miles long. With a course like the 1904 Vanderbilt one could afford to be less familiar for several reasons. In the first place, lack of familiarity with the Vanderbilt course would not necessarily mean that it would be dangerous to race over, but would simply mean one would lose a little time on the turns. But with the Auvergne circuit, not knowing it was absolutely dangerous even at low speeds. Another thing is that if you did not know this Auvergne circuit you would lose much more time on it, as there are so many corners, and all sorts of corners, whereas on the Vanderbilt course there were but four turns. The loss of three or four seconds on each of the several hundred corners on the Auvergne circuit would amount to a whole lot of time, and easily lose a man the race. In our own case, even had we experienced no tire or mechanical troubles, we could not have made very fast time in the Gordon Bennett, as I had no experience on the course in a racing car, and the first round, especially, we had simply to feel our way."

"Did you have any chance to let the car out on the way down from Havre?"

"Yes, we had some fine sailing then. The roads were perfect, and there were no obstructions. There was a row of trees on either side of the road, and nearly all the way we did nothing but sit up and let her go. As we ran along at about eighty miles an hour the trees looked like a fence, and when you met a countryman with a wagon he invariably turned out. There were hundreds of machines on the road, all going as fast as the motors would permit, and good accommodations everywhere for men and machines."

By this time Mr. Tracy showed signs of fatigue, and it was suggested that perhaps American chicken tasted as good as the kind they raise at Laqueuille, even if the fizz water was three thousand miles away from the place of its origin. He agreed.

James Bjorkman has his automobile so well trained that he comes down town these days. Many people saw it for the first time to-day.—*DeKalb (Ill.) Review.*

France and the Vanderbilt Cup Race.

Special Correspondence.

PARIS, July 21.—Although France has announced her intention of not taking part in the Gordon Bennett race of 1906, it is not yet known whether or not a race will be held, as no meeting of the parties interested has yet been called. Since the winning club refuses to organize next year's contest, the future of the cup will have to be settled by an international meeting in conjunction with the donor of the trophy. The object of France is, avowedly, to kill the Gordon Bennett trophy, the conditions under which it is run being considered too prejudicial to the French industry.

The question now being discussed is: Should not the same line of action be adopted toward the Vanderbilt cup as has been followed in the case of the Gordon Bennett trophy? France is bound to take part in the 1905 Vanderbilt race, the five cars having been chosen at the eliminating trials last month and the engagements officially made. It is urged that the Automobile Club of France pass a resolution similar to the one adopted in connection with the Gordon Bennett race, namely, whether France wins or loses the Vanderbilt cup in 1905, she will not take part in this event in 1906.

Excepting that the number of cars allowed each nation is increased from three to five, the conditions for the Vanderbilt cup are in every respect similar to those of the Gordon Bennett trophy, against which so much French opposition has been raised. One great annual international automobile race is certainly preferable to a number of international events. France, however, desires that this crowning trophy—whether it be the Gordon Bennett, the Vanderbilt cup or her own Grand Prix—should be run on the lines of proportionate representation, in which she would obtain a larger numerical standing than other nations on account of the greater importance of her industry.

Next year the Vanderbilt cup race will be run in the country to which the 1905 victor belongs. Should France be successful this year, she would be bound by the regulations to organize the 1906 contest in this country. This, it is pointed out by the advocates of proportionate representation, would re-create a state of affairs against which France has long been protesting. To avoid this, the only course open is to declare before the race is run that, whatever may be the result, France will not compete in the 1906 Vanderbilt race under its present conditions.

With the rising importance of America, Germany, England and Italy, all of which countries are willing and eager to run in the Gordon Bennett or Vanderbilt races, it will probably be difficult for France to stick to her present line of action. The coming battle of the cups is certain to be keenly fought and watched with interest by the whole automobile world.