

# THE AUTOMOBILE—A MIRACLE OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Hampton's Magazine

58

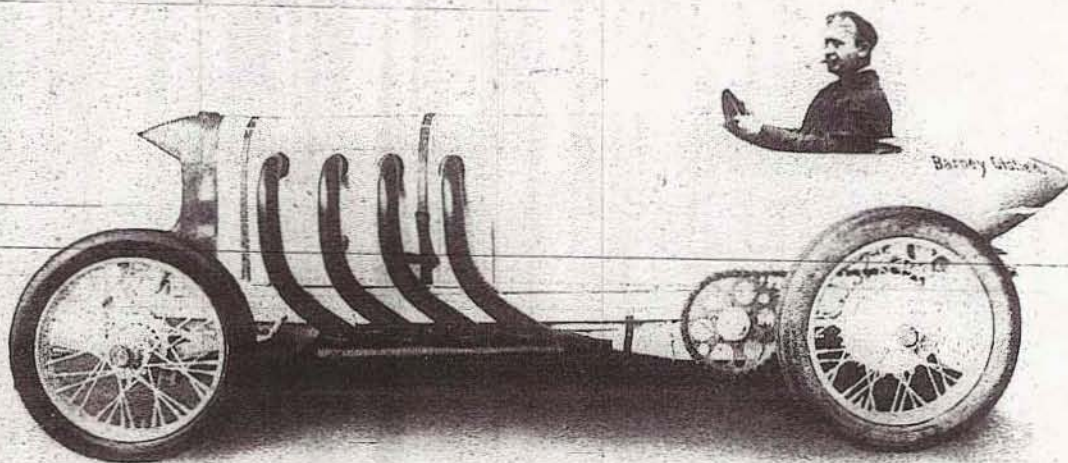
mass of steel that fairly flew over the beach.

"I have realized my life's ambition," he remarked, biting off the end of a cigar after his 131-mile-an-hour ride. "I have traveled faster than any other person in the whole world. I have shot along the rock-like sand of Daytona Beach at a greater speed than any of the wise men believed was possible without encountering disaster.

"I believe I am calloused to the ordinary dangers of automobile racing, but there was a new dread and fear for me. The limit of speed! I was going faster for mile after mile than scientific automobile engineers figured could be attained without the tires

For 131 miles an hour is almost a million times as fast as it looks in print. It is as near the limit of speed as humanity will ever travel."

So much for Oldfield on the beach. But of the other three kinds of automobile speed contests—on road; on motordrome; on dirt track? Of these the road race easily takes precedence in the sport of the speed kings. Every section of the country where motor cars are in general use has its annual big event. While Eastern folk are made temporary speed fanatics by the Vanderbilt Cup and Grand Prize races, Californians through the courses watching the decision of the Portola and Oakland



BARNEY OLDFIELD IN HIS CURIOUS CARTRIDGE-SHAPED CAR, WINNER OF WORLD'S MILE AND TWO-MILE SPEED RECORDS AT THE RATE OF TWO MILES IN LESS THAN A MINUTE.

being thrown off the wheels by centrifugal force. The loss of traction was startling. Fully a third of the distance the wheels were off the ground. The front wheels were shooting up and down in a weird dance that caused me to shut down my motor until they again held the sand.

"I would wait for a particular stretch of beach and then I would let the great old car have its head. Down would go the throttle and the spark would be advanced well along. Then we would shoot through space. I would begin to choke. Everything before me would be enshrouded in a haze and I would suddenly feel as though I were in the middle of a nightmare and about to jump off some mountainous precipice. Then I would shut her down. I had driven faster than humanity ever traveled.

Cup races, and thousands of Middle Westerners arise at unwonted hours in the morning to watch the cars whirl by in quest of the Cobe Cup—a race held last year in Cook County and to be held this year on the Indianapolis Speedway—and the Grand Rapids trophy. This year over one hundred such speed contests are being held in this country.

On man and machine alike the road race is the most gruelling of all speed contests. For instance:

It was during one of the early morning try-outs of the 1908 Vanderbilt Cup race. A gathering of motorists, eyes heavy with sleep, were watching the racers bellying round the Jericho turn. Suddenly, a big red machine roared out of the faint early morning light, swerving its cometlike course into the deceitful bend. The heavy



FELICE NAZZARO, EUROPEAN SPEED RECORD HOLDER.



ROBERTSON'S CAR WHEN IT WAS FIRST RUN TO THE PUBLIC.