

"Well, it's chances I'm taking," he murmured, "but I'll let you across the street if you promise to sneak down the first alley, and keep off the boulevard!"

And sneak down the alley we did, like a pair of criminals with a price on our heads, to find, six blocks to the north, a friendly haven in a livery barn.

This was the welcome that Chicago gave the motor car some forty years ago, and if you want an example of consummate irony, I can add that the last time I saw the officer of this episode twelve years later, he was wearing the yellow wheel of the traffic squad stitched onto his coat sleeve and pressing a ticket on some luckless motorist who had violated the thirty-minute parking ordinance.

But not all my memories are so mid-Victorian as these.

I can find in the fresher and more recent years of my career as a proctor of gasoline-scented competition many episodes just as outstanding—episodes that I recall with infinite joy, so fortunate do I deem myself in being a humble part of them.

One afternoon, for example, in the closing years of that dramatic decade wherein Ford and Haynes made their entrance upon the stage in the rôle of pioneers, there came to my office—then moved to New York—a most engaging young man.

At the moment of his visit, I was contemplating plans for an auto racing meet to be run over the historic sands of Daytona Beach, in Florida—a speed carnival that had attracted no small measure of public interest, due largely to the fact that the Fiat Company of Italy, had sent a team of cars and drivers, headed by the mighty Cedrino, across the Atlantic to hurl a challenge to distance and time, and to write world's

records there that not even the changing tides would soon erase.

The instant that I rested my eyes upon him, an utter stranger, I had a fairly accurate gauge of his character. He was the personification of fine, wholesome and splendid youth, and upon him was an unmistakable stamp of good breeding. For he was a fellow of natural poise and courteous deportment, attired natively yet inconspicuously, and spoke with a soft modulated voice.

He introduced himself as David Bruce-Brown, a student at Yale, but he was too much the true gentleman to add that he was the scion of a very wealthy and socially prominent New York family. His code, in fact, did not tolerate braggadocio of any sort.

"I was wondering, Mr. Wagner," he said, "if you would mind telling me when the Fiat team is leaving for Florida?"

And when I replied, and asked why he sought the information, he made of me a confident.

He told me how interested he was in the sport of auto racing, and that he wished to become a racing driver; that he was the owner of a curved-dash Oldsmobile, but had had a taste of real speed at the wheel of a friend's car, a French Renault. His mother, however, had other and less dangerous aspirations for him, and he had decided to make the Florida trip without her knowledge. His boxing instructor at Yale, a most obliging fellow, had loaned him enough money to pay the railroad fare, one way, and his hotel bill for the length of the meet.

Thus this romance of a speed-infatuated youth was to be culminated in an elopement, with Daytona as its Gretna Green.

While he won my sympathy with his enthusiasm and