

As for the far-reaching benefits that have been accrued from automobile racing, more than 25,000,000 motor cars on the highways of our country today offer the most eloquent testimony. The materials of which they are made, the designs that underlie them are tested on dirt track and challenging hill, on road racing course and speedway—the invaluable research laboratories of the automobile industry—and not found wanting.

In this acid test for steel and rubber, men have been killed, it is true. But they were not sacrificed to make a red holiday. Splendid fellows, all, they are the martyrs of Motoria, worthy of honor and respect. They did not ride in vain. They gave the most precious thing they had to give—life—that millions might travel with infinite peace of mind and in comparative safety.

That I should take no little pride in my connection with such a creditable sport and from mingling with such a distinguished company of sportsmen is a most natural consequence, but that I should attempt to write about it is something else again. For I am not a writing man, either by training or inclination, and the Johnson of the heavy foot is deserving of a more accomplished Boswell. All that I can hope to do is to roam through fields of memory, recalling incidents that mark these glorious and colorful thirty-five years, and set them down haphazardly, just as they flash across the mind, with no endeavor to marshal them in orderly or chronological array, as a professional author would do.

Even now, I'm wondering just where to start these unscholarly reminiscences, and, in this quandary, my common sense tells me, "At the beginning," which seems a most logical bit of advice.

To follow it, I must beat back along the trail of

yeasty years to the fall of 1899, for it was then that I made my debut as an automobile race starter. The old Washington Park track in Chicago, historic in turf annals as the locale of the Chicago Derby, was also the scene of my "coming out" party. Four steam cars—two Locomobiles, a Mobile and a Milwaukee—were scheduled to meet in a five-mile race, and the promoters of the event called upon me to send them away, probably because I had been starting bicycle races for the previous thirteen years, and they figured that my experience with the man-powered two-wheelers might serve me in good stead in conducting a contest between those weird contraptions that were then the wonders of a skeptical world that looked upon them with amazement, yet hailed them with derisive jeers.

I accepted the assignment in the nature of a joke; as an opportunity to officiate in a novel capacity. At least, it would be an adventure that I could brag about to my grandchildren when I became a slippered pantaloon, and warn them incidentally, not to put too much faith in the wild dreams of impractical theorists.

For I, too, was one of the great skeptical majority. Three years before, when officiating at a bicycle meet in Peoria, Illinois, I had run afoul of Charley Duryea, who led me, protestingly, to a machine shop where he was experimenting with a gasoline engine, which belched menacing flames and malodorous fumes.

Above the din of this fire-breathing mechanism, Duryea shouted in my ear:

"Wag, this is going to revolutionize transportation. The day is coming when people will be riding around in horseless carriages just as they ride around on bicycles now!"

"Sure," I hollered back, merely to humor him, but