

Jim Coffroth, the turfman, and one day, several years ago, he persuaded Oldfield to go down to Tia Juana for the races. The original plans were for a one-day trip, but three days elapsed before they returned to Los Angeles, where Barney read in the papers that he was about to be sued for breach of contract for failure to drive in a dirt track meet at Sacramento the day before. Now, if there is anything that can put fear into the heart of Oldfield, it is a policeman or a court of law, and he had no intention of submitting peacefully or otherwise to such an ordeal.

"Jim," he told Coffroth. "I'm going to get out of town so they can't get service on me. And it's up to you to square this for me. You got me into this mess. Get me out of it."

So giving Coffroth the address of his secret sanctuary, Oldfield went into seclusion as fast as taxicab and train would carry him. Several days later, Barney received the following cryptic message from the turfman: "Justice has triumphed."

Oldfield, so the story runs, read the telegram three or four times, scratched his head with a perplexed finger, and then hurried over to the telegraph office and sent his wire:

"Hire another lawyer and appeal the case."

Which is just what you or I or any other sane man would have done under similar circumstances.

In relating these three stories, I realize that I haven't done full justice to "the master driver of the world." Nor would I have him think that I estimate his worth alone on his ability to bring a smile to my lips. He has won my admiration and respect by other qualities that have made him what he is today and what

probably he will always be, the most famous of all automobile speed kings.

In so designating him, I gladly shatter a rule that I've long adhered to—never to apply the superlative adjective to any race driver, never to name one as the most fearless, another as the greatest on the road, and a third as the best on the speedways, for such a rating would be based on personal opinion alone, and personal opinion is never without an ingredient of bias. Instead, I hold that there is glory enough for all, and who am I to deprive each and every one of them the enjoyment of such glory to the full?

Barney Oldfield, however, is a marked exception to my good and wise rule. He has made his name the synonym for automobile racing, through achievements that need no word of praise from me, by a sense of showmanship worthy of Barnum and Belasco. In fact, should I yet be living when the final trumpet blows and speeding to reach the pearly portals before they close, I will not be the least surprised to have one of the celestial traffic cops stop me and growl:

"Say, who in hell do you think you are? Barney Oldfield?"

For such is the fame of Barney Oldfield. His name is so linked with speed at the wheel of an automobile that it has become the byword of the traffic-choked boulevards and highways.

To me, the name of Oldfield is associated with many pleasant memories ever since that day in 1900, when I made my New York debut as an automobile race starter at the old Empire City track and gave Barney the checkered flag of victory at the end of that unbelievable smashing mile race.