

THE MOTOR CAR AS A UTILITY

By FRANK H. ROWE

"H'E'S the limit."

A group of automobile men talking in a Toronto hotel the other day turned a full stream of ginger-and-mustard conversation on that usual personification of wisdom—the family doctor.

The use of an automobile as a utility was under discussion. The immense value of a motor car to a practicing physician was commented upon.



"But did you ever see anyone abuse a motor car like a doctor?" said one man. "My car is a suitable type for doctors and I sell lots of them, but whenever I do my troubles begin."

"Talk about abuse!

Why, all doctors seem to think is necessary in running a motor car is to crank it, jump in and let-her-go. They come back to me in all kinds of real trouble—for example, engines seized and cylinders scored, for lack of oil. I know of one man who drove over to my place and said he couldn't stop his engine. Would you believe it! his cylinders were red hot and igniting the gas as fast as it came from the carburettor. Cutting out his ignition wouldn't accomplish anything and he'd monkeyed with his throttle mechanism so that he couldn't prevent his engine from sucking in a supply of fuel.

"And as for adjusting and looking the machine over occasionally for loose nuts and bolts, doctors never do it. Of course things go wrong but it's all the maker's fault. Submit him a bill for repairs—submit it in detail—and what happens? Why he will let a patient suffer while he comes down to your place to call you a thief and a robber! Then he goes home and makes out his own bill as your family doctor and it always reads 'for professional services rendered.'"

How much of all this is fair I am not prepared to say, but one thing is sure—more and more the physician has come to be dependent upon the automobile. It extends his field and it holds his patients. If he is located in a city he finds the ever-shifting city population disintegrating his practice, and if he hasn't this year ready means for overcoming distance, it gets away from him. Furthermore, a car adds to his prestige (don't smile), it produces a sense of satisfaction in many a mortal breast to have the physician drive up in a stylish car.

To the country physician with his long drives over bad roads and in all weather, the motor car is a wonderful help, and as a life-saver it deserves the Victoria Cross. Compare the deadly slow method of answering an emergency call over miles of country in the old days with the swift flight of the country doctor's car of to-day and it is easy to appreciate what a valuable utility the car has come to be in this branch of professional activity.

TO the real estate man the motor car is more than a utility—it's a mint—an El Dorado. Willingly will he pay occasional fines for breaking speed laws where it brings his Lonesomehurst lots within five minutes of somewhere. The car has proved invaluable for taking a prospective customer to suburban properties. Frequently a customer is to be shown several properties, perhaps far apart. He can take his wife along and the real estate man wants him to do it—he wants no chance for a postponement of decision till he "talks it over at home." In city work, too, the real estate agent finds the car invaluable for, in an extremely short time, he can carry a "prospect" around to a dozen places and be back again for another man.

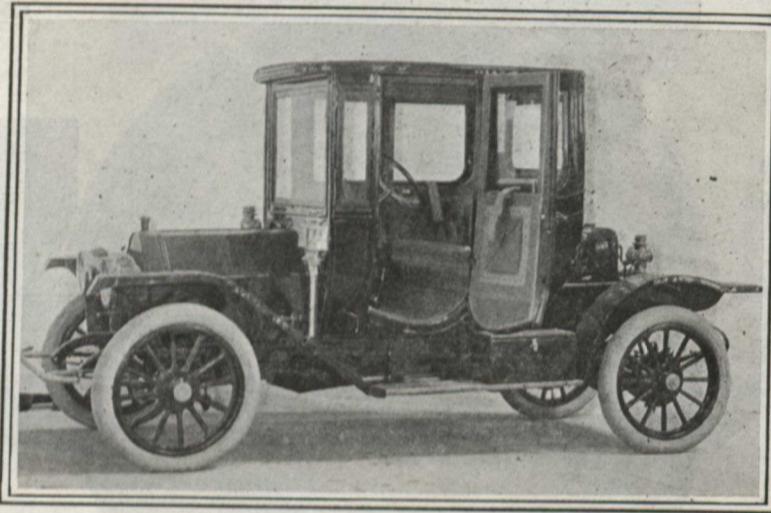
As a utility proposition, however, perhaps no one has come to appreciate the automobile more than the house employing a city traveller. Given a good salesman and a good automobile and one man will thoroughly cover a territory once indifferently covered by three. It's a matter of minutes to reach a man who once required an hour. In the old way a salesman arrives in an office with a heavy sample case, red in the face, out of breath, soaked in perspiration and hating his job. Delightful mood in which to approach a customer! In the new way the salesman carries his heavy samples in the back of his car and when he arrives he feels and looks like a gentleman. Frequently, too, there is a special attraction at the warehouse, the store or the fac-

tory—a new shipment just in, or perhaps a job lot, going fast. The handy motor car enables the salesman to take the customer to headquarters, show him the goods and get him back again with but a trifling loss of his time.

And this same advantage of operating cars as a convenience to customers is taking hold strong in Canada with manufacturers.

Many a mill and factory is situated some distance from the depot and the customer who comes from a distance to look at a machine or other product must secure means for reaching the factory and getting back, and must consume valuable time on the road. In addition, the impending sense of the danger of losing his train makes him anxious to get away and in a far from satisfactory mood for profitable business. The manufacturer who can meet his customer at the station with a motor car, rush him to the plant in half the usual time and then assure him that the car will be ready to take him back in plenty of season for his train, puts the customer in a comfortable frame of mind at the outset and assures a chance to talk business.

Then there is the automobile livery business, a distinct development. The investment in touring cars, limousines and landaulets for livery purposes in the cities reaches a big figure, this, too, leaving out of consideration the capital tied up in taxi-cabs and motor busses. Purchases in Canada of cars for this purpose range from single cars to batteries



A Russell coupe, 30 horsepower, popular with physicians.

of ten or a dozen on a single order. A good idea of this business, when reliable cars are used, may be had from the experience of a Toronto liveryman operating but one seven-passenger car. His mileage in two years has amounted to 65,000 miles, at the end of which time he disposed of the car for over a third of its original price.

Good business has made the motor car a utility, and, whatever the business may be or where it is located, it is finding out fast that it cannot afford to be without one.

The improvement of the motor car has made all this possible. In the early days motor cars cost so much money and were so unreliable that nobody could afford to touch them but the rich, and they only as play-things.

Now the first cost and cost of maintenance are where they ought to be, the service a car will give is a matter of proven figures, and any one of many good makes will give fair returns on the investment.

And as cost has come down, service has been built up—the service of the motor car manufacturers to the customer. Important as this is to the owner of a strictly pleasure car, it is vital to the owner who uses his car in his business. To him a lay-off of days means serious handicap and often actual loss. He must have a car whose maker can be reached quickly in an emergency and with

standardized parts for quick replacement.

This, together with the character of the product, is a strong feature in the development of the motor car in Canada as a utility. Factory and branch depots throughout the Dominion have paved the way for the sense of security which buyers have rightly come to demand. In consequence the increased use of the automobile as a utility has developed enormously in Canada in a very few years.

NATURALLY the first question asked by one who considers a motor car from a utility standpoint is how much it will cost and what is its cost of upkeep.

To answer these questions positively is plainly impossible. Cars vary so widely, not alone in quality, but in type, that the price varies correspondingly, and the buyer has every need to exercise judgment. The roadster type of car has become very popular with the city traveller and the physician, although the enclosed coupe for the physician is held in highest favour. The touring car is better for the real estate dealer for reasons already outlined and it likewise has the advantage of being more acceptable for private use.

As to cost of upkeep, too much cannot be said in favour of buying a good car, for upon its quality this cost rests almost absolutely (barring accidents). There is less mystery in the public mind to-day regarding the automobile than ever before, and perhaps less excuse than ever for the purchase of a car on faith. Many makers of cars have had years

in which to demonstrate their fitness or unfitness, and reputations are established. As with many rapidly developed industries, however, there have come into existence less reliable products, and it should be remembered that long established reputation of the product and its makers should be one of the most important guides. There is no back alley short-cut in the automobile business whereby a high grade product can be reached in some wonderful way without reasonable cost and therefore reasonable selling price. Nor is there the great margin of profit per car so popularly supposed. In an automobile intended for utility purposes quality is plainly of great importance if the car is to be reliable and a money-maker for the house.

An interesting instance of the use secured from a "utility" car is the record of one owned by a Toronto real estate firm. This car has now been in continual operation since February, 1910, covering in that time 43,000 miles.

A country physician in Ontario over exceptionally rough roads informs me that his regular average is about 1,000 miles a month.

Another real estate car operating in Alberta has covered 30,000 miles in a year; while an instance is on record in Australia (to which market Canada ships many automobiles for utility and pleasure use) where the average mileage of a car in exceptionally hard service has been over 100 miles every 24 hours, or over 36,000 miles a year, perhaps a unique record.

Of the motor truck I have made no mention as being outside the scope of the present article. Its economic success is too well known to question. In Canada the motor truck yearly becomes a more familiar traffic feature, but its adoption is less striking than the marked transition of the motor car from a pleasure vehicle only to a business proposition.



The new method of transport now being adopted by the Canadian Army.