

# BACK TO THE OPEN ROAD

**T**HE romance of a road—there is no more fascinating topic than this in all the history of geography.

Thousands of years ago, deer and bear and fur-clothed man silently wore a path through the silent forest. To-day the tooting automobile rushes along the same pathway. Between them, if the route happened to be in England, came, epoch after epoch, Celt, Roman, Saxon, Norman; trader and troubadour, friar and pilgrim, mercenary in armour going to war and gallant in velvet going to love, men in coaches and Kitchener's army—all going the self-same way as the first deer that forced its way through the forest from one drinking place to the next.

From the beginning, when first things moved upon the dry land, they have moved along practically the same lines, for those were the lines of least resistance. Chance had nothing to do with it. The first deer wanted what the last man wants: water and the places where grass grows. And the first deer wanted as the last man wants, to get from one place where these things are to the next by the easiest and quickest route. Therefore the print of the motor tire is over the spore of the deer. Where there was water and grass, to-day there is transportation and farming. Where these meet there is a city. Between two such places of maximum advantage there is a road as in the beginning there was a trail between one pasture and another, between one hunting ground and the next. Are we not to-day just deer and wolves, those who take from the earth and those who take from them their concentrated grass? The route that was easiest for the deer and the panther is the easiest for the waggon and the motor truck. As for the stone-age man, so for the motor-cycle the most level route is the most easily travelled. Therefore the highway runs where the trail ran.

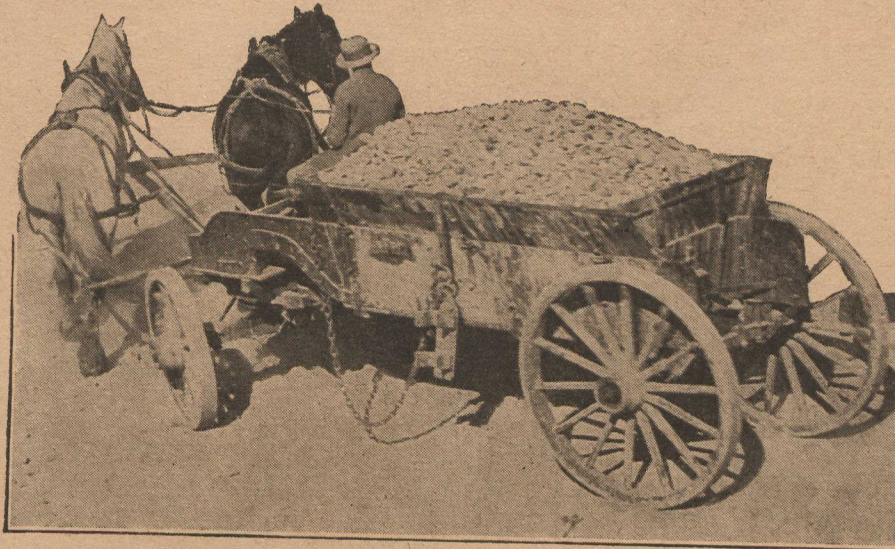
In Canada the redskin followed the game trail from one hunting ground to another. The coureur-du-bois followed the Indian. The fur trader and the missionary trod the same path. The pioneer simply widened it to make room for his ox waggon. The township put stones on it. The county macadamized it. The province will cement it. The Dominion will nationalize it.

From the discovery of Canada until the advent of the steam engine, the roadway was of secondary importance only to the waterway. Along it, and along it alone, came news, supplies and travellers. Back along it, and along it alone, went grain to the grist mill or waterway and furs to the city. It was the one connecting link between clearing and settlement, between settlement and civilization. Steam robbed it of its prestige. Gasoline is giving it back its importance. The loads and the travellers that left buggy and waggon for freight car and day coach are coming back to the road in automobile and motor trucks.

**E**VERY year the flood of traffic is flowing back from the railroads into its old channels of the highways. Every year more men revolt from the despotism of the time-table in favour of the freedom of the steering wheel. Every year more strongly the leather of back seats sucks away those who sat upon railroad plush. It is the call of the open air. It is the advance of the democracy of travel—to every man his own time, his own speed, his own destination. It is the revolt of free will against universalism. The open road, with its new lure of the auto, is wooing the traveller back from the interloping railroad, and the traveller is returning to his old love.

One result of this return of the traveller is that provincial legislatures all over Canada have been busy for the last ten years, and are still busy this spring, enacting laws to make the highways fit to

*Gasoline is Giving Back to Country Roads the Traffic of which Steam Robbed Them; Therefore, all over Canada, Provincial Legislatures are Trying to Supply the Motorists' Demand for Better and More Roads*



By HEW TRILL

bear the renewed strain upon them. In this they are not in advance of the need, but are rather frantically trying to keep up with the demand. This is true in Europe also.

**I**T is well worth mentioning in this connection that the ever-increasing American automobile tourist traffic represents a ductile flow of wealth that Canadian governments have come to recognize as one that must be tapped to flow along Canadian roads. Therefore, in Quebec and Ontario and other provinces of the Dominion, laws have recently been passed granting reciprocity in motor licenses. This has been done to enable American travellers to come and spend their holiday money in Canada without the annoying necessity of taking out Canadian licenses.

"During the last year, since automobile license exchange with the United States went into effect, it has been estimated that upwards of 50,000 foreign cars entered Ontario, conveying probably 200,000 people," says a memorandum from the Ontario Motor League, presented to the Government this session by the president in support of the provincialization of a highway from Windsor and Detroit on the Michigan border to the Quebec boundary. "If the expenditure of these visitors were only \$5 each, on the stay averaging a single day, the money left in this province by these visitors would be \$1,000,000. The building of a trans-provincial highway would induce thousands of motorists to visit this province and to spend considerable time here which would mean that a very considerable amount of money would be spent in this country by motor tourists from the United States. In fact, it might be shown that the revenue to the people from this source alone would be sufficient to justify the building of this highway."

The Province of Quebec, in the last five years, has spent upwards of \$20,000,000 in constructing over 2,000 miles of improved highway. It has cut the great King Edward Highway through to the American border from Montreal, to tap the American motor traffic on the improved roads of the Eastern States. And to carry it on to Quebec, it has built a highway along the shores of the St. Lawrence to the city of Quebec.

New Brunswick and Nova Scotia each have their systems for supplementing local effort with provincial grants. In the prairie provinces, where there are no county organizations, the provincial governments have undertaken the work of opening the country by main trunk lines running perpendicularly to the railway lines. This is done under general schemes of payment dependent on the degree of settlement.

In British Columbia, where the natural scenic advantages of the country are realized as special bait

for the American tourist, the problem presented has been a particularly difficult one. The country is sliced up by mountain ranges into isolated districts where alone population is possible. To connect these fertile valleys by motor roads, the Government has spent \$15,000,000.

**O**NTARIO, at the present session of the Legislature, is considering a Provincial Highways Act. By it the central government will take over a large proportion of the cost and all the responsibility for a system of trunk roads from Windsor to the Quebec border with laterals running all over the province. The province, in this legislation, recognizes that it is unjust and inequitable to leave upon municipalities the cost of constructing and maintaining highways wide enough and good enough for the motor traffic, which simply passes them by as so many spots on the landscape. Supplementary legislation, also introduced at this session, provides for the betterment of county feeders to these interprovincial highways and for the provincial control of

those portions of such roads as run through scattered municipalities.

Every province in Canada in the last ten years has developed a highway department of the provincial legislature. In this Ontario led the way. Highway legislation has not induced the traveller to return to the road, it must be remembered. The return of the traveller has forced the governments of the provinces into action.

The commercial traveller, also, is taking to the automobile for his rounds in country districts where railway connections are difficult and tedious. That is the beginning of the return of the trader. The Ford, too, takes the farmer to the city department store now, when ten years ago the buggy would have taken him and his wife to the village "emporium."

And speaking of farmers, an argument which delegations to governments all over Canada make when they are advocating good roads, is that they will reduce the price of living in the city by enabling the farmer to bring in his produce himself. Already along the Hamilton-Toronto highway, in the summer time, may be seen the auto-trucks of progressive fruit growers taking apples and strawberries from farm gate to tradesmen's entrances. This is a development capable of infinite expansion, and every advance in it adds to the importance of the road and detracts from that of the railroad.

The fact of the matter is that the auto-truck is beginning to rival the freight car as successfully as the motor is rivalling the Pullman. Manufacturers, too, are beginning to wake up to the fact that they need no longer grovel to those despots of industry, freight agents. They begin to realize that they do not need longer to wait his unimpeachable pleasure. They can load their goods on an auto-truck in their own yards in Hamilton, say, and then, in their own good time, deliver them to their customer's door in Toronto. It is a case of "Be your own freight agent, by the no-change, no-reloading, no-delay route—and make your own schedule of charges."

But one thing is necessary for the very great development of his system of delivery all over Canada, and that is good roads and more good roads.

**T**HERE is one great logical development of the good roads systems of the various provinces that still remains to be decided. That is a trans-continental highway. It is as logically inevitable as was the linking up of the township road to the county system and that to the provincial highway. With the improvement of provincial roads all over Canada, the linking up of these roads to form a motor road from Halifax to Vancouver becomes every year more feasible.

(Concluded on page 26.)