



The black of the water makes the dark of night look light by comparison. An unfamiliar ford adds spice to midnight motoring



A bridge in the distance, and the turn of the road—which? Getting lost at night is easier than getting found again

## MIDNIGHT MOTORING

By C. H. CLAUDY

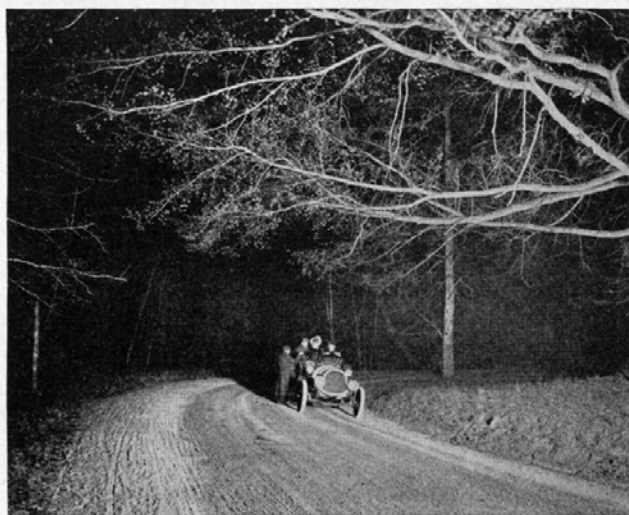
Photographs by the author

THAT the man who discovered that acetylene gas was to be obtained simply by pouring water on calcium carbide could have dreamed that he thus made possible the night-time pleasure of thousands, in the human race's nearest approach to flying, is an absurd supposition. Nevertheless, to this gas, and to the bright, white light which it throws, motorists owe the possibility of enjoying one of the keenest delights of this swift modern Pegasus, and by its means they are enabled to go swiftly where otherwise speed would be a reckless invitation to suicide; they are able to see and find a road which would otherwise be more or less problematical in location, and are able to enjoy, without apprehension, rides which otherwise would be nervous work.

When the railways first came into existence there were protests galore from people fond of the old order, mostly to the effect that the iron horse took from the pleasure of travel all of its romance, and made of it a thing commercial, mechanical, scientific and exact, rather than fantastic, romantic and adventurous. Yet to-day the railway has a romance all its own, and who shall say it is not the equal in picturesqueness of the older romance of pillion and post horse, stage and relay, and roadside inn? So with the automobile. The invention is so new, so much a plaything still, that its mechanical wonders and conveniences loom large before even the public which does not own or operate; but with its newness and its scientific marvels, it has already its own atmosphere of romance, and nowhere is this more evident than in running at night.

It is moonlight and October. The scent of autumn flowers is in the air; the cool night breeze plays and caresses the unprotected faces. Beneath you murmurs the exhaust, a soft, low note of contentment. The wheels spin noiselessly, save for an occasional pebble tossed upward to

a mud-guard. The coil buzzes faintly—so faintly and so constantly that, like the tick of a familiar clock, its very presence is a silence and it must be listened for to be heard. Ahead is darkness, pierced with a flaming arrow of broad, white light—brightest on the road and casting strange, indefinite shadows to the right and left. Trees seem painted scenery against a velvet background, standing out in startling distinctness, albeit with



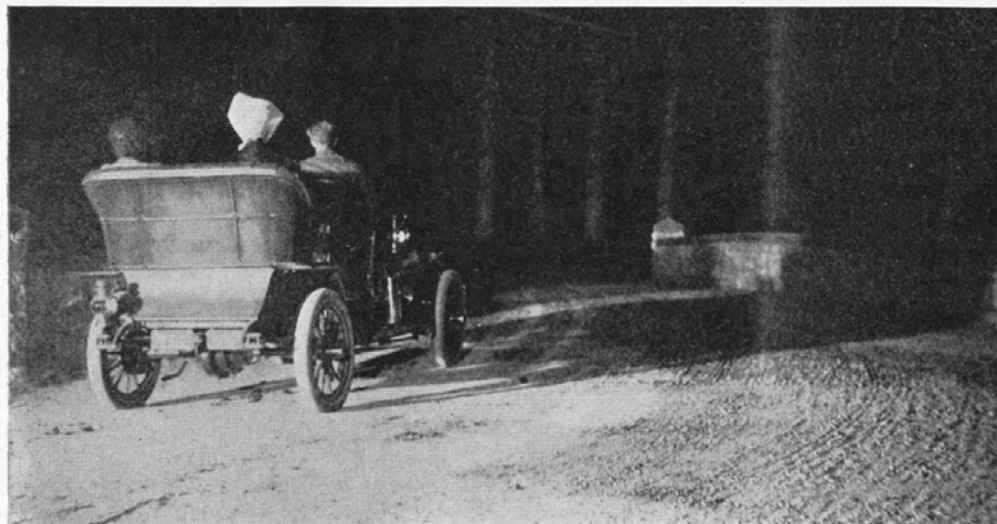
Flat, painted scenery against a velvet background—an illusion of acetylene lamp lighting

but two dimensions; this is a two dimensional world through which we plunge headlong, our forward movement being but the paradoxical third dimension which seems a living lie to our eyes; we see but length and breadth, and never thickness, in the trees, the bushes, the very hillocks and thank-you-marms in the road beneath.

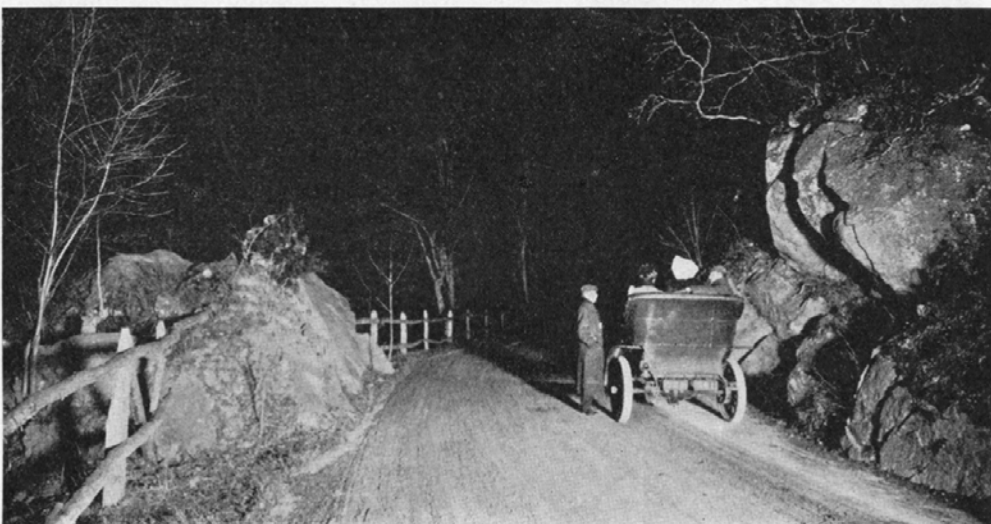
Here, too, is a point to note—the lights play strange tricks with our eyes. Ahead yawns a

mighty chasm, deep and black and forbidding. The uninitiated puts on the brake hard, and stops dead on the edge of—a thank-you-marm two inches high! The expert plunges ahead to certain destruction, apparently, but he knows this strange freak of the projected light—knows that it magnifies the little to the great and that the chasm must seem great indeed to indicate a real hole.

What are the requirements for a successful night run? Nothing but the car, the people, and the will. If the weather is cool, a hatchet for firewood; if the road is unfrequented and solitary, a lunch—and that is all. All, save perhaps the ability to leave behind all thought of daily life, and live, instead, the life of the moment, the life of absolute irresponsibility and detachment, the strange, free life of being altogether outside of things mundane and in a world all one's own. For this night running is like no other running, winter or summer, fall or spring. There is the sense of novelty—it will not account for the feeling. There is the sense of strangeness and unfamiliarity—it will not account for it. There is the changed appearance of everything, making the most familiar road seem new and strange, and the unfamiliar road a way to nowhere—a road without direction, without end, without distance—simply a road, which unfolds from some giant's roll in front, as we wish it, to roll up again behind us and disappear. It is a thing momentary, of our own instant's living, and not at all a thing of earth to be made with machinery, taxed with tolls and smoothed with iron rollers. Yet this will not account, either. The feeling of detachment, of being suddenly transplanted to another world, of belonging neither to the earth below nor the heavens above, of sliding, quietly, smoothly, through space, knowing not whence and caring not whither, is begotten of our own imagination, aided by contradictory natural conditions—light in dark



"An insane desire to go on and on forever, at increasing speed, into that big, mysterious dark, always just ahead, always just beyond reach"



Eliminate the automobile and you have the stage setting for the Brocken scene in Faust. The acetylene rays search out such pictures at every turn





On cool nights a roadside fire may be built with stray sticks and a little gasoline



The hidden fire, shining on the branches, produces a display like fireworks



"When the trees appear and disappear like the magic of some conjurer's trick"

ness, speed in rest, and sight which is not of things plainly seen, and is altogether too strange and weird to describe or picture adequately. Ask any motorist who is not afraid of his own car, and he will tell you, perhaps in better words than mine, of this charm, this eerie pleasure, which comes only with the night run.

Speed? Who shall tell of speed? Not I, nor, I fancy, you, nor any one not gifted beyond his fellows. When the road stretches out fair and white and long and smooth—when the throttle comes open all of itself, and the spark creeps, creeps back, slowly but certainly—when the low hum rises to a subdued patter—when the patter rings and merges into a note of music, and the musical note rises, hoarse and throaty, into a muffled roar—when the trees appear and disappear like the magic of some conjurer's trick—when the lamps flicker and dance and the road spins by

beneath you like some Titanic ribbon spun for your pleasure, and is reeled into the machine by magic hands beneath; when the hands grip the seats and the hair blows back—when the roar of the air in the ears precludes all other sounds, and the consciousness of the exhaust is but that of vibration—then at last you know for what you live, and why, and the meaning and the riddle of your living are made clear. Tell you? I wish I could. But when the throttle closes, the spark goes forward, and from an insane desire to go on and on forever, at increasing speed, into that big, mysterious dark always just ahead, always just beyond reach, then sanity comes back, and with it, perhaps, fear, and the vision of speed flies on and away. Perhaps it is always flying on, this riddle, and it is only by fast running that we can overtake it and read it.

But we haven't stopped yet. Ahead, as we run, suddenly two flaring eyes appear, bright and

unwinking, and growing larger at an alarming rate. Suddenly a counter noise to that of our exhaust is heard. There is an instant's glimpse of white faces and shining brass, and another machine has come into our ken—some one else who knows the charm we had thought all our own.

A little farther on and in an instant you, irresistibly impelled, lean forward. The machine is stopping suddenly, too. Looking ahead you see a rearing horse, a white-faced man struggling at the bit, and in the shadow, perhaps, a woman. Out jumps your driver and throws the lap-robe over the lamps, and the terror-stricken horse becomes as quiet and as peaceable as a lamb, and is driven docilely by the cause of all his fright. Here is where the motorist is, all unwillingly, in the wrong. The very lights he carries, which let him see that into which he must not steer, and the

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road, and the passers-by, blinds a horse and terrifies him, and it behooves all who ride at night to ride gently where horses are, and to remember that it is the light that they fear, not the machine, and to cover the lamps as speedily as may be when opportunity offers. So you may pass to your grave uncursed, and even, if the horseman be fair-minded and not afflicted with motorphobia, blessed.

If you are not too grown-up for picnics, in the most modern style, there is much of pleasure to be found in the roadside fire, the coffee made on the spot, and the lunch you have brought. Make your fire sufficiently far from the machine to be safe, should gasoline leak. Light your fire by throwing a little gasoline or alcohol over the pile of wood, and all the troubles of kindling and damp wood are eliminated. It is a pretty picture, this fire in the woods; in the dim shadows looms the gigantic shape of your machine, and beyond that lies the velvety blackness which, hiding all that day reveals, holds forth to you the charm of mystery.

I recall reading in an ancient treatise on alchemy, in a discussion of the philosopher's stone, that life and sanity were dependent on light, and that when we had no light, we were, for the time being, somewhat dead and somewhat insane! This seems sufficiently ridiculous, but certainly as far as night automobiling is concerned, we are, if not insane, at least in not just the frame of mind we are when riding in full daylight.

I recall covering seven miles of unknown road, rocky and rutty and jolty, and thinking that it needed mending. It was very dark, and the search-lights but picked us out a path. Later we returned over this same stretch of road in the day-time. We covered the seven miles, going, in the dark, in thirty minutes. It took us over an hour returning in the day time, and we wondered with our hearts in our mouths, how ever we had managed this place in the dark. For it was a road of boulders, and on either side a deep, deep ditch. Had we known of the ditch,

we would have crawled. Could we have seen the boulders we went over, we would have feared. As it was we went over with merely slight discomfort. Will the head boy in the class of motor psychology please answer as to the why?

Everything you do in a motor at night has its own particular charm. If you ford a stream, looming black and forbidding as it tinkles at the edges over uneven stones, you are fording some earthly Styx, and wonder where is Charon's prototype—perhaps you are he! If you get lost, you are lost indeed, not merely off the track. I once wandered disconsolately around half the night in a net-work of roads which crossed and recrossed, trying to find a way out and a man to guide me. When at last I accomplished both, I learned I had been going around and around, and discovering always an old road for a new one. I was reminded of the man in Tramp Abroad, who got lost in his bedroom and discovered a wilderness of chairs on which to bark his shins!

When the sun has just gone down, and the afterglow is fading, and you are racing for town and supper—that is one of the magic moments of automobiling—when it is just dark enough to see that you need lamps, and not dark enough to light them! The other moment is in the wee, tiny hours of the morning, between one and three, when the moon shines bright, when the road is deserted, when all the houses are dead and all the people are asleep, when the cattle and the horse have ceased their prowling, when there is never a noise or a motion or a light to break the illusion that you and you alone are the sole inhabitant of a lonely world.

Then, if the road is good and your time is long, you let the machine go, and the blood in you leaps and exults and you faintly writhe in your seat with the joy and the splendor of it all. Here is a town, the ghost of itself, everyone soundly tucked up in bed. Your exhaust thunders in echo against the buildings on either side, unless you are charitable enough to shut it off!

Beyond a dog barks—perhaps he races out at you, hounds madly along beside you for a tod, and then you have him, his doggish protest growing fainter and fainter in the distance.

The moonlight, and your acetylene lights, show the road for a mile ahead, yet only for a couple of hundred feet is the seeing to be trusted. Moonlight looks so bright, and is really so dim, it does not do to trust its exposition of the way beneath you.

Hills are steep neither in the climbing nor the coasting, and any driver will bear me out when I say that any well regulated automobile of good birth and breeding climbs better at night than by day. In the old bicycle days we used to be told that this ability to ride better and harder and faster at night was subjective and psychological. I wish I knew where the bump of psychology was located on the motor, but it only works at night!

You may have toured a thousand-thousand miles. You may have ridden summer, winter, fall and spring. Your motoring may have been over good roads and bad, pikes and lanes, in civilization and in savage lands. But until you have ridden from midnight well into the dawn, over a road you have never seen before, and felt the magic touch of the new night-wind, seen the fairy gilding of the moon from the top of a speeding machine, and watched the fiery javelin of your search-light pierce to the heart the ever-reviving, mysterious curtain of night, you cannot say you have known all that motoring can teach.

# SUGGESTIONS ON AUTOMOBILE DRIVING

By JOSEPH TRACY

IN CROWDED city thoroughfares, an automobile driver must not only drive carefully himself in order to avoid accident, but he must also keep a sharp lookout for carelessness on the part of others. For instance, it is extremely disconcerting, especially to an inexperienced driver, to see a pedestrian suddenly dart out from behind some post or perhaps another vehicle and get directly in the way of the car, possibly with his back turned to it. A vigorous use of the horn is not always safe under such circumstances, for it is not uncommon for the person hearing it to stand stock still meditating which way he ought to jump, until the coming car must either strike him or collide with something in order to save the reckless pedestrian. It may be gratifying to one's vanity to see in the daily papers such headlines as "Rammed Brick Wall to Save Pedestrian's Life," but gratification does not pay for the damage to the radiator and lamps. The only real safety lies in having the car under absolute control every second.

The horn is a much-abused instrument—not only by those who swear at the excessive honking, but also by those who squeeze the bulb every few yards, believing that the best way to clear the road is to keep up a constant serenade. It is an excellent object lesson for the tyro to see how some cars go through the maze of vehicles on a busy street quietly and unobtrusively, perhaps without a single sound from the horn, but with caution, the drivers preferring to slow up a trifle to let pedestrians get comfortably out of the way rather than by hastening their already quick steps to dodge what they are very apt to describe later as "one of those (adjective) automobiles." And somehow the quiet drivers, who will almost invariably be found to be men of experience and perhaps experts who think nothing of driving a racing car at seventy or eighty miles an hour on a clear road, will get through quite as quickly as most of the noisy, blustering ones. A short time spent in watching cars go through traffic in this way will be far more instructive and interesting than pages of advice.

The horn is of the greatest value on country roads, though this fact is not always appreciated; this is especially true if there are many turns in the road, making it difficult or impossible to see far ahead. Of course, it is most unwise to rush at full speed around such turns; the car should be slowed down to such a pace that it can easily be stopped within the limit of vision, and at the same time the horn should be vigorously sounded to give warning to those who may be on the road out of sight around the turn, perhaps approaching from the opposite direction. It is one thing to dodge a vehicle going in the same direction, or a slow-moving vehicle or pedestrian coming from the opposite direction, but it is quite another matter to dodge a swift-moving automobile coming from the opposite direction, especially if on the wrong side of the road, as it may be—you cannot tell till you see it. The horn, vigorously used, is a valuable auxiliary precaution in such cases.

Lamps should be used with consideration. Almost everyone knows how distressing it is to be suddenly blinded and bewildered by the glare of an acetylene headlight of the type commonly used on automobiles, and how difficult it is to keep cool and do the right thing if the car carrying the light is moving fast and there are other vehicles to be looked for. Automobilists rarely seem to give this point the consideration it deserves and often drive through well-lighted city streets, where the search-lights are unnecessary, sending ahead long beams of paralyzing brilliancy, to the discomfort and possible peril of drivers, pedestrians and horses coming from the opposite direction. When driving in the city the search-lights should be turned out; the side lamps are quite sufficient under such circumstances. On country roads, where the light strikes approaching vehicles a long way ahead, every precaution should be taken to avoid inconveniencing drivers and horses. It might be a good thing for the automobilist to put himself in the place of the pedestrian, just for the sake of the experience, and try to "navi-

gate" while facing the pitiless glare of the headlight of a rapidly-approaching car. It is safe to say he will always be more careful with his lights if he once tries this experiment. Do not try to turn down the light of an acetylene lamp, for the clogging of the minute holes in the burners is sure to follow. When the lamp is in use the gas should always be turned on so as to give a normal fan-shaped flame. And when extinguishing the lamps, do not merely turn off the gas and allow the flame to die out gradually, but blow it out after turning off; otherwise the sinking flame is apt to cause the sooting up and clogging of the burners. The clogging of one hole of the burner usually means that the other flame will be left free to shoot across and impinge on the reflector, or on the glass front of the lamp, with the result that the reflector may be damaged and its efficiency reduced by the destruction of part of the reflecting surface.

Consideration for other users of the roads will suggest that the exhaust cut-out be used only when it can trouble no one, or when really necessary; that the exhaust be kept as free as possible from smoke and odor; that only a fair share of the road be occupied while driving, and that those who desire to pass, or to overtake while going at a higher speed, be given plenty of room to do so; that when others are overtaken they are not covered with dust any more than can be helped; that persons in trouble with horses—or in any trouble, for that matter—be assisted and courteously treated, especially ladies, who are apt to be rather helpless in such cases; that when driving on a narrow road the car should be kept as much as possible to the right all the time; that when stopping for any reason the car be moved off the road, if this can be done, and if not, that it be kept as far to the right as possible;—and so on, almost indefinitely. This will serve to give the automobilist an idea of the treatment he should accord to others who use the same roads that he does, and also the treatment he should expect, in turn, from equally considerate fellow-automobilists.