

### MOTOR-CAR AS A CRIME BREEDER.

The motor car has brought to us many advantages which are appreciated. We must however admit the undeniable fact that the motor-car is the most prolific source of crime and danger that exists in our cities and towns today. Fortunately it has not yet become so bad in the country.

The crime and danger are largely, perhaps entirely, preventable if motor-car drivers and the general public become educated so as to avoid the risks which now are being run at every moment of the day. This education it appears is a slow process. We claim however to be, and doubtless we are law abiding citizens. If people could only realize the large extent to which they are contributing to law breaking it would be the first step towards eliminating the motor-car menace. It is as with each law a question of individual responsibility. Every one who leaves a car unlocked is morally if not an accomplice at least an accessory before the fact of theft. We must all be cognizant of the large number of foolish and often criminally disposed young fellows who prowl about our streets and to whom an unlocked motor-car is an irresistible temptation. All cars should be locked both inside and out when left standing unoccupied even for a short time. Locking outside seems to be inadequate. A car should be locked both inside and out. Even then there would be an occasional theft but if so locked the stealing of cars would be reduced to a minimum. We could get on then with fewer policemen as their time is largely taken up with stolen cars and what is done by and with them.

It is so incredible that even apart from the insurance risk so few people are conscious of the magnitude of this evil. Some figures may not be out of place. We are compelled to use the Toronto statistics as we have not access to any others but the same applies in proportion to population in all cities and towns:—

1927—

Cars stolen .....	2,225
Cars recovered by police .....	2,141
Number of prosecutions .....	271
(of these 35 were juveniles)	

## 1927—

Convictions .....	120
Sent to prison .....	71
On probation .....	29
Pending or remanded for sentence	20

The offence of car stealing is increasing. Consider the following comparison:—

	1927	1928
January .....	144	236
February .....	122	233
	—	—
	266	469
		266
		—
Increase .....		203

Many of the stolen cars are seriously damaged before recovery and cost the owners a great deal of money. It is also a well known fact that nearly every case of hold-up, banditry, burglary, house breaking, etc., is carried out by means of stolen and usually high-powered motor-cars. We may at once set down the stolen car as a general thing the result of, shall we say inexcusable or criminal carelessness on the part of the driver.

Side by side with carelessness in looking after the car is recklessness in using the car. No doubt there will be some unavoidable accidents in our speeding up of traffic, whatever precautions are taken. There is though not the slightest justification for the 4,067 traffic accidents which occurred in Toronto in 1927 and proportionately the same figures elsewhere. The regulations are slowly being tightened up. There are many persons driving motor cars on our streets today who are no more qualified to do so than to drive a locomotive. Mental disability, bad eyesight, defective hearing, lack of caution and other faults exist which should deprive them entirely of their right to drive. They manage to secure licenses and imperil the public and children in particular who from time to time become their victims.

It is shocking to read that in Toronto in February alone there were seven persons killed in motor (so-called) accidents. It reminds one very much of the juggernaut. There are so many other offences committed by motorists against the law that we have been

compelled to establish a regular Traffic Court which is held every day. In 1927 this court had 19,606 cases before it. Counting the sitting days of the year at 300 this would make over 65 offences against the law daily throughout the year.

One would almost think to read over the list that human ingenuity had set itself to work to invent a variety of methods of breaking the law in motor-cars. The list for 1927 affords material for the thoughtful consideration of every citizen, especially the motorist:—

No lights, etc. ....	3,363
Reckless driving .....	1,752
Glare lights .....	861
Drunk driving .....	165
Defective brakes .....	576
Disobeying stop signs .....	1,649
Passing standing street-car .....	595
Immoderate speed .....	10,645
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Total .....	19,606

One cannot look this over without concluding that these are every one not only against law but contrary to common sense. The figures would be unbelievable if they were not official.

When will a man learn, for instance, that any day he takes a drink he should leave his car in the garage until the following day. Our experience in court justifies advising such a course. There were 147 convictions here in 1927 for being drunk in charge of a car. In our General Sessions of the Peace opening this week more than one fourth of the cases are from motor-cars, criminal negligence, stealing cars and drunk in charge of a car. In five of the criminal negligence cases the injuries inflicted were fatal.

Our civil courts are being glutted daily with lists of damage actions arising out of motor-car collisions. It is safe to say that nearly every second case is one of that class. In our County Court Jury sitting beginning this week there are 43 cases of which 37 arise from motor-cars. In the non-jury list there are 102 cases, 26 of them motor-car cases.

If our people who pay taxes could be brought to realize that the expense of policing our city and carrying on the courts is enormously increased by preventable motor-car cases we would doubtless turn our attention more specifically to stamping out this evil.

We are glad to be able to say that the large proportion of motor-car drivers are careful except in leaving cars unlocked. The time may come when the man who leaves his car on the street unprotected so that it may be stolen will be placed in the dock beside the one who has stolen it. If a few were so tried together it would reduce stealing very quickly.

In some of the States the police by direction take a motor driver to the morgue and compel him to look upon his dead victim. Curiously enough people who are quite sensitive about crimes in general are very callous with regard to motor-car crimes.

We greatly need an educated public opinion on this matter. Motor drivers who offend against the law should be made conspicuously unpopular.

E. COATSWORTH.

Toronto.

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SANCTITY OF AN OATH.—A Calgary correspondent sends us the following:

Recently a Chinese client consulted his solicitor about an assault. As the solicitor was leaving the city the same day he gave the Chinaman instructions to go himself to the Police Station and lay a charge. On the solicitor's return the client called to report. Asked if a summons had been issued he said it had. Asked what he had done to get it issued he said, "Me smellum Bible!"

*Quaere*: What idea did he get of the oath?