

**THE AUTOMOBILE:
ITS SELECTION,
CARE AND USE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649069385

The Automobile: Its Selection, Care and Use by Robert Sloss

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
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ROBERT SLOSS

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BY ROBERT SLOSS

OUTING
HANDBOOKS



NEW YORK
OUTING PUBLISHING COMPANY
MCMXII

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BUYING AN AUTOMOBILE

THE AUTOMOBILE

CHAPTER I

BUYING AN AUTOMOBILE

CHOOSING a car is by no means so esoteric a task as choosing a wife, since, of course, there could never be as many nice cars in the world as there are nice girls. But there are enough of the former to quite bewilder any one who approaches the array of them for the first time with serious intentions. I venture to put it thus because of an apt illustration furnished by an acquaintance of mine who chose his wife and his automobile at the same time.

He had driven considerably in hired or borrowed cars before he met the lady at the New Jersey seashore home of a friend who was entertaining both of them for the summer. When the host saw how things were going, he turned over to the young folks a light runabout which had been prac-

tically constructed for himself the year before. It was built for two, and the young lover soon became expert enough to manage it most of the time with one hand. At any rate, he finally persuaded the girl to marry him then and there and to spend the honeymoon in touring back to his home in Pennsylvania, using that very automobile, which he induced his host to sell to him.

Benedick spun along the level New Jersey roads with the exhilaration that can be felt only by a man in love with a girl and an automobile at the same time. But when he reached the hill country of his native State he learned that love at first sight is a safer guide in choosing a wife than in choosing a car. The smart little runabout did not spin any more, and as it ran more and more slowly and laboriously, his enthusiasm ebbed.

The car became more and more reluctant to take the steep, loose-surfaced roads of Pennsylvania. It was "stalled" repeatedly on steep hills, and when finally, on a particularly rough stretch, it broke a front spring, Benedick, with a sigh of relief, took his bride the rest of the way by rail and left the car to follow in the same way.

At home, the car was repaired, and after some months of similar unsatisfactory experiences, young Benedick sold it, having learned how to observe the three cardinal rules in choosing a car, in accordance with which he subsequently pur-

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chased another. It still gives him and his young wife the delights which he anticipated from the first one.

To be sure, two of these cardinal points were negligible in Benedick's case. In the exalted frame of mind in which he purchased the car, he did not care how much it cost, nor did he dream of ever needing an automobile built for more than two. He did not, however, pause to consider the work which the mechanism would have to do on the roads where he wished to use it. Neither its gearing nor power was suited to road conditions in Pennsylvania, though both would have been perfectly adequate on the exceptionally good New Jersey highways. The car itself, though built like a watch, was so lightly constructed that its range was practically confined to the vicinity of the country home of the man from whom he bought it.

Our friend's experience suggests a word in passing in answer to the question whether it is better to buy a used car instead of a new one. If used carefully and not too long, presumably a car has a record to its credit, but it is only the experienced motorist who knows how to discriminate here.

Even if the amateur can induce an expert machinist to look over the second-hand car and assure him that it is not defective or badly worn, he is likely to fall into the fallacy of purchasing a heavy touring car simply because he can get it