The Immense War Engine Controlled by the Czar; Unique Peasant Soldiery and Wild Riders of Russia

THE outcome of a war between Russia and Japan has long been a matter of interest to students of the situation in the far east. That such a struggle would come sooner or later has been predicted for many years. On its result would depend not only the future of the countries immediately involved, but also that of China and most of Asia contiguous thereto. By the peculiar terms of the alliance between Russia and France and the similar provisions in the agreement of Japan with Great Britain the probable involving of these two nations in the struggle has also been discussed. Such a contest therefore is not the simple matter that would at first appear, as its outcome would almost certainly affect the destinies of the chief nations both of Asia and Europe.

In a discussion of the possible result of such a contest a consideration of the national character of the two peoples most immediately concerned is interesting. On the one hand, the Japanese are progressive, frank and open, partaking more of the characteristics of a western nation than of the very extreme of the orient which geographically they occupy.

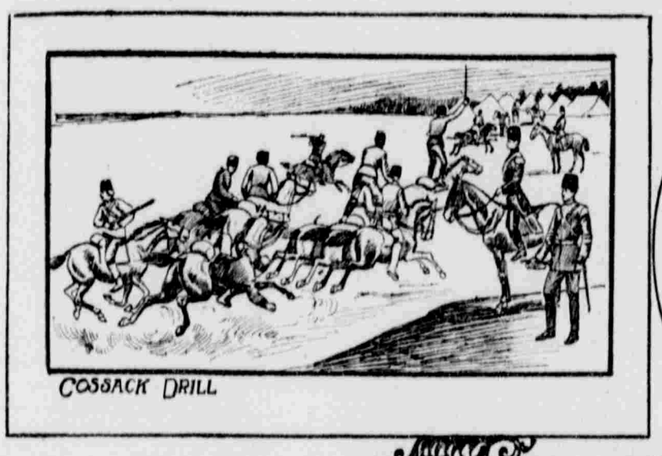
Set over against this lack of concealment on the part of the Jap is the air of secrecy that surrounds all things in the empire of the czar.

Russia is the mystery of Europe, the unknown quantity in the world equation. Peculiar in her language, government, her religion, her literature, even in the very structure of her society, she stands apart from the rest of the world, not of it, and yet to a great extent controlling its destinies. Unconquered in a physical way, the spirit of her institutions is uncomprehended. Her diplomats are trained in the art of concealing her hand even more than are most diplomats. It is her apparent policy never to announce any part of her programme until it is accomplished. She is thus a constant enigma to the remainder of the European powers. This veil of mystery extends over her military affairs. As a result her army, while the largest in the world, is the least known. Because of the spy system extending to every part of her immense empire and the close scrutiny of the acts of all foreigners it has been difficult for outsiders to learn aught of her military establishment excepting things of the most general and superficial character.

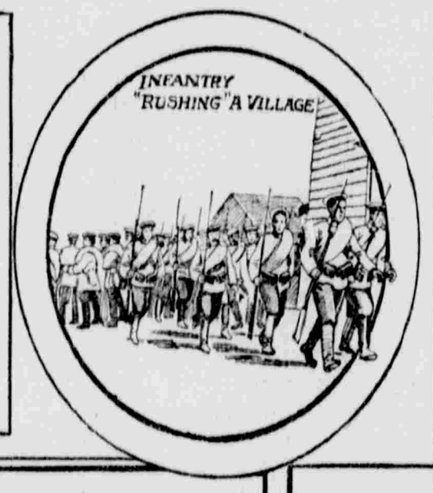
Russia has the greatest army on earth. It consists of over 1,000,000 men in times of peace, which may easily be increased to 4,000,000 in the event of war. The magnitude of the czar's military establishment may be realized if one considers the fact that the Russian army even on a peace footing contains more officers alone than the American army has of both officers and men.

It is an anomalous condition that this immense engine of war is the force that actually maintains the peace of Europe. It is the uncertainty in regard to the possible attitude of Russia that holds in check other nations. Czar Nicholas, whatever may be said as to the genuineness of his peace protestations, thus is unquestionably the instrument through which peace is maintained.

On a peace footing, as at present constituted, the armies of the czar are made up of about 62 per cent infantry, 12 per cent cavalry, 14 per cent artillery, 3 per cent engineers, 3 per cent commissariat and departmental troops and 6 per cent Cossacks. These proportions give but little idea, however, of the relative importance of the various arms of the service. While by no means the largest numerically, the most conspicuous and effective portion of the army is the cavalry, together with the kindred though irregular body of troops known as the Cossacks.



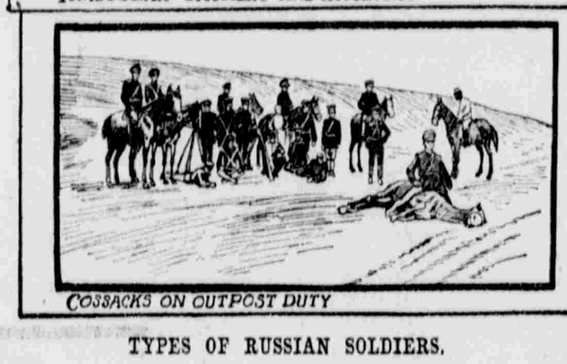
COSSACK DRILL



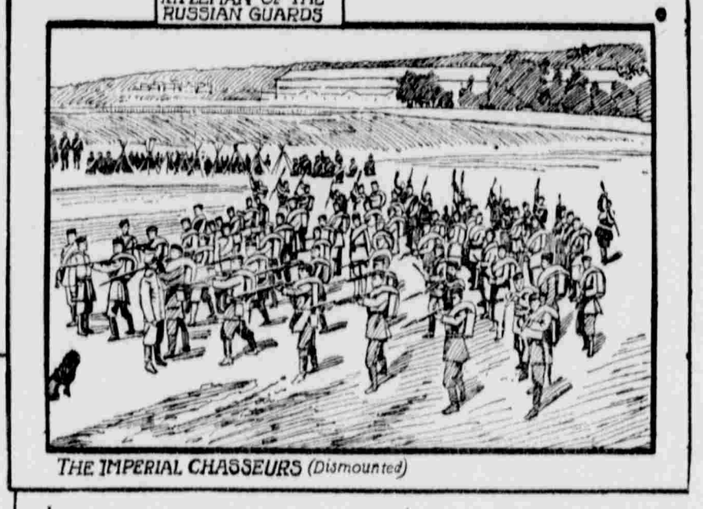
INFANTRY "RUSHING" A VILLAGE

RIFLEMAN OF THE RUSSIAN GUARDS

IRREGULAR CAVALRY AND INFANTRY



COSSACKS ON OUTPOST DUTY



THE IMPERIAL CHASSEURS (Dismounted)

TYPES OF RUSSIAN SOLDIERS.

In fact, Russia places chief reliance on her war horses. Of these there are 4,000,000 in the empire that have had actual training in the army and that can be requisitioned in case of emergency for cavalry duty. It was General Rotislav Nadejew, the walking war delegate and agitator of the empire, who said, "As England depends on her gigantic vessels of war, so Russia depends upon her horses."

It is impossible for the mind to conceive what a cavalry of 4,000,000 means. The American civil war, the most gigantic struggle known to modern times, only involved 2,800,000 men, yet here is one nation prepared to throw on a single side nearly twice that number in cavalry alone.

And the horsemen! They have no equal in the world, these wild riders of Russia. It is probably due to the great plains and the vast distances to be traversed that the Muscovites are veritably reared in the saddle. Certainly there is no other people who so love the horse, who so cultivate him and who have such mastery over him. As a result the Slavic empire has almost half of the horses of the world. As another result the men ride like cowboys. The horses are all swift, the common cab horses being superior to the carriage teams of this country and even the plow horses being rapid trotters.

Of all the Russian horsemen, however, the most picturesque, daring and the fiercest are the Cossacks. While there are only about 150,000 of these in the army, they are by far the best known of all the soldiery of the czar. It is said that every Cossack can ride standing like a circus athlete. He can fight in almost any pose from the back of his mount or at almost any speed. Like Tennyson's eagle, he strikes as the thunderbolt and is away. It was the Cossack that so harried the starving and freezing army of Napoleon during the black horrors of the retreat from Moscow. He gathered up the silver and gold that had been sacked from that city when thrown aside by the wornout French because too heavy to be longer carried. These Cossacks are stationed all along the frontier in Europe and Asia and in the event of a war in the far east would be prepared to swoop down on China, creating indescribable havoc in her thickly peopled provinces, for these fierce and fearless horsemen know not mercy. They are professional killers who love their trade.

Every year a million men become eligible to enter the Russian army. As only about 300,000 are required, over two-thirds of the available must be exempted or excused. Every district has its recruiting board and makes up its quota for the various arms of the service.

Exemptions from entering the army are many and various. These are, first, physical disability; second, when the candidate is the breadwinner for a family; third, medical men, chemists, teachers, members of learned professions, proficients in technical studies, etc. (this applies only in times of peace, of course); fourth, those exempted because of special circumstances. All these causes serve to disqualify nearly half of those that apply. If the remainder amounts to more than the district's quota choice is made by lot. About 7 per cent of the male population of each district is thus taken each year. This is not the holiday affair it proves to be with our own national guard, but is rather serious business. The men are conscripted, and a wooden lock is placed on the leg of each. Amid the lamentations of relatives, the conscripts are loaded into wagons and taken to the nearest recruiting station. Arriving there, each man first passes into the hands of the doctor, thence to the military barber. If successful in the medical ordeal the top of the applicant's head is shaved, if unsuccessful the back. The rejected candidate is truly unfortunate. He is thrust out without any clothing, his apparel dumped out after him, and he is allowed to dress in the cold. Then every soldier is privileged to kick and cuff him as a mark of contempt for his physical disability. Even with these indignities, however, the rejected are happy enough, for have they not escaped the hell of the most despotic army discipline on earth?

Those who are accepted are the truly unfortunate. The soldier in the ranks receives only about $4 per year, is sometimes whipped to death, must give unquestioning obedience and is inured to a life of privations and hardships such as are known in scarcely any other army in the world. This, however, is not felt so much by the Slav as it would by other races, for he has been used to these things from his youth up. The mass of the soldiery is composed of the peasant, or former serf, class, the members of which are illiterate, unaspiring, stolid, slavish, but withal hardy, courageous and singularly devoted. In fact, no nation on earth has the solidarity that marks Russia. With all its divergent elements, it is still the most completely knit together of any empire now in existence. The Muscovite is taught the submergence of self. Obedience is the prime virtue. It is drilled into the citizen that he exists only for the czar.

The Russian is gregarious in a marked degree. The communal life has existed in his villages from time immemorial. This sort of rough, elemental altruism is carried into the army and is in fact its distinctive spirit. It marks the Muscovite soldier as peculiar. It gives him a certain stolid bravery which was recognized in the famous remark of Napoleon that "it is not enough to kill a Russian soldier; you must also push him over."

This habit of personal effacement, of blind obedience, of almost slavishness, is shown nowhere more plainly than in the manner of the private soldier in addressing an officer. He stands rigidly at "attention" with his hand at his cap throughout the entire conversation. He never presumes to answer a question with a direct "yes" or "no," but with a qualified "quite so" or "not exactly so." He invariably uses the title of "your excellency" or "your illustriousness" or "your nobility" or even "your high nobility."

From one standpoint this habit of implicit obedience makes the Slav the ideal soldier; but there is a reverse side to the shield. Slaves never make good fighters. An army of them may be a good military machine so long as led, but let their general be stricken down, and the men, having no self reliance, become a leaderless mob, easily stampeded and bewildered into absolute stupidity.

Stealing is so common in the Russian army that it goes unpunished for the most part, the officers themselves frequently sharing in the spoils. Next to this petty thievery—in fact, dependent upon it—the great vice of the Muscovite soldier is vodka, a form of rye whisky of the chain lightning variety. Easter, Christmas and all religious and other holidays are celebrated by prolonged debauches. But the drinking is by no means limited to these days. It is indulged in on far slighter provocations or even without provocation at all unless the hard and unattractive life may be regarded as a sort of perpetual provocation.

A long line of soldiers will invade a drinking place, and the first man will appropriate a mug, pitcher or anything else that he can snatch without being observed. This he conceals in his large sleeves until he can pass it to the end of the line, thus rendering detection well nigh impossible. These stolen articles are then sold, and with the proceeds more vodka is bought. Travelers in Russia say that the drinking is really encouraged by the agents of the czar. One of these, a member of the famous secret service, will mingle with a gang of the men and in a loud voice call out: "Let's drink, comrades! The more we drink the greater may be the amount of taxes collected by our father, the czar. The more money in his coffers the sooner the campaign will be opened. The campaign of horses, the campaign of glory! We will ride over to Berlin and beautiful Vienna. Who will hinder us?"

In a like vein one can imagine these agents now urging their "comrades" to drink on the prospect of riding to Pekking and Tokyo.

The most elementary amusements are amply satisfying to the child mind of the average Russian soldier. He is fond of music, but it is of the most rudimentary kind. If one learns to play two or three of the simplest melodies on a rude sort of instrument he is in as great raptures as is the music loving German with the rendering of Wagner by a Berlin orchestra. Singing, however, is the popular form of diversion in the Muscovite camp. In turn it enlivens the long march across the snow swept plains or becomes a thing to stir men into deeds of daring on the field of battle. These songs are really indescribable. Sung with a peculiar monotonous intonation, sometimes even accompanied by soblike tones, when, suddenly bursting forth from the throats of an entire "singing brigade," the effect is weird and often thrilling beyond power of description.

The diet of the Muscovite in the field is as simple as his amusements. It is largely vegetarian. Cabbage soup, potatoes, peas, beans, macaroni and various kinds of porridges are the staple foods. These, with the black rye bread and occasionally a small amount of meat, make up the army fare. Yet, like the Roman soldier, who also lived on a vegetable diet, these men can endure hardships such as the ordinary civilian can scarcely conceive. The "moving kitchen" is one feature of the Russian camp that is unique and that is being copied by other European armies. It is what its name implies, a veritable kitchen on wheels that accompanies the army on all its marches, as indispensable as its camp equipages, its artillery and its ammunition—in fact, it supplies the ammunition for the human war machines, furnishing dynamic force that when released in time of battle is hurled against the enemy with terrific effect.

Russia has never been defeated, if the rather inconclusive Crimean war be excepted. Steadily, resistlessly, she has spread her domains over Finland, over Poland, over Turkey, over Manchuria. Even the matchless genius of a Napoleon was unequal to the task of penetrating this human mass. No nation of either ancient or modern times has ever been so unified, so organic. No great nation is so far north, and the north always conquers the south. In the event of a world war who can tell the part that these immense and unconquered armies of the czar may play?

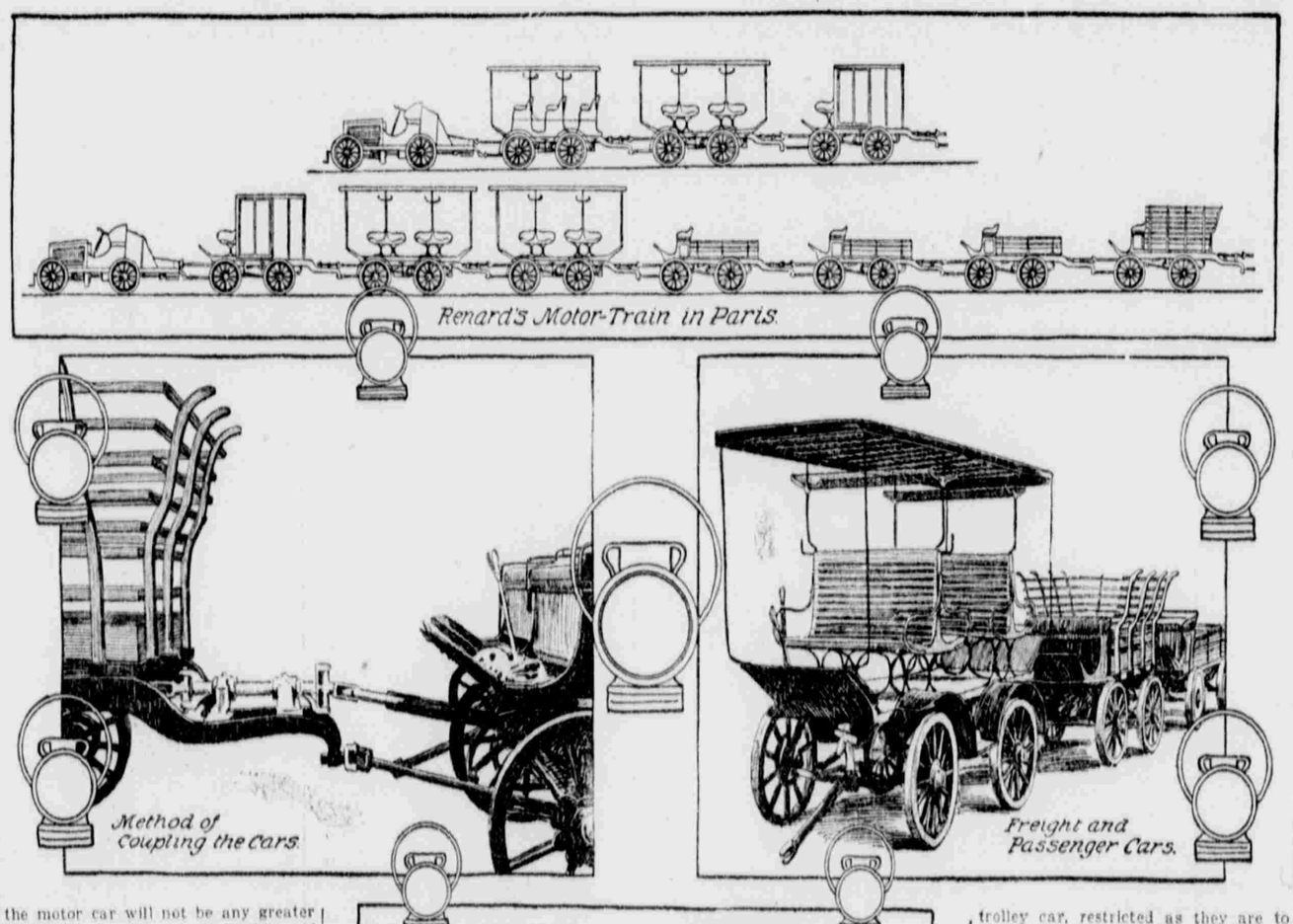
J. A. EDGERTON.

The Automobile Train as the Successor to the Railway; An Invention Which May Revolutionize Transportation

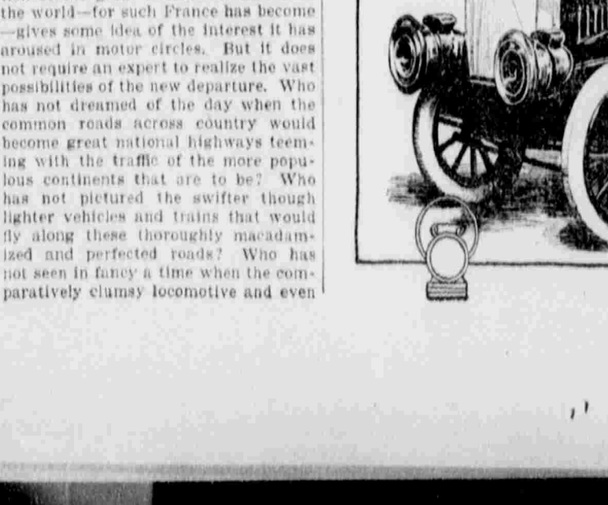
AT the recent automobile show in Paris was exhibited a new type of automobile train that it takes no very great stretch of imagination to believe may mark a new departure in transportation. This exhibit, which was easily the feature of the entire show, is the work of Colonel Renard, who is well known in French automobile circles as an inventor and motor enthusiast. The machine is the result of years of patient thought and effort and has several features which are noteworthy. The first of these is that it runs without rails. It is thus adapted to any sort of road that is practicable for ordinary automobiles. This in itself constitutes a revolution in previous methods, the only prior automobile trains ever contrived having been confined to the rail system.

Even more noteworthy than the absence of rails, however, is a wonderful coupling device that enables the engineer to make every car turn a curve on the same arc as that described by the locomotive. It will be readily seen that without some such contrivance the use of a train without rails would be impossible on account of the tendency of every successive car to draw nearer to the center of the curve, thus preventing anything approaching a short turn being made in a narrow or crowded thoroughfare. Withal this coupling is very simple and easily made, which, considering the third feature of Colonel Renard's invention, makes his achievement the more remarkable. This third feature, also connected with the coupling device, is a contrivance by means of which the locomotive turns two wheels on each of the cars of the train. A jointed revolving shaft passes along underneath the axles, transmitting the power to the successive vehicles. This shaft is jointed and unjointed with the same facility as the coupling, thus rendering the making up of the train no more difficult than joining the cars and connecting the air brakes of the trains on an ordinary railway.

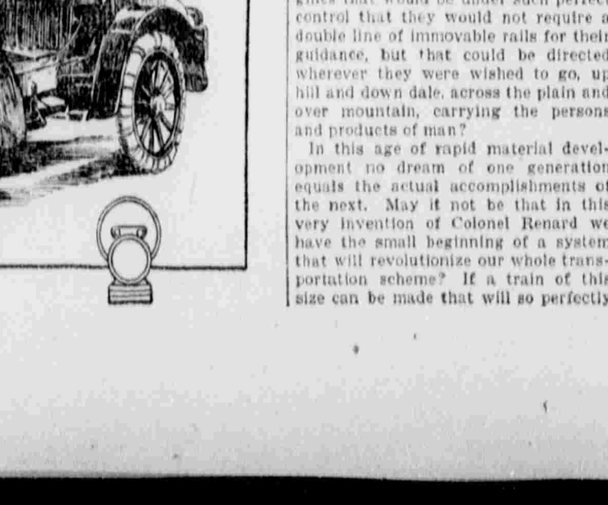
These new motor trains are made for the handling of both passenger and freight traffic. The passenger model, with two cars and a van for baggage, attains an average speed of about twenty-two miles an hour, while a mixed train of twelve cars, mostly freight, makes twelve miles. It is thought that the motor train will prove especially adapted to the hauling of market produce, and if so it will solve a long standing problem. The weight of the train is comparatively light, one made up of a dozen cars being only about ten tons. The expense of manufacture of the motor car will not be any greater than that of ordinary automobiles of similar size and construction, while the other cars cost still less.



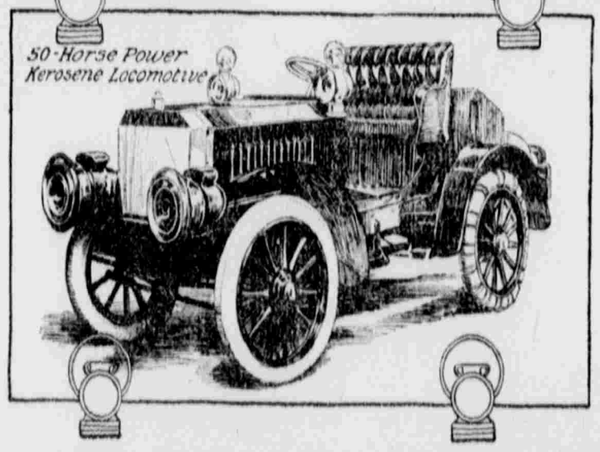
Renard's Motor-Train in Paris.



Method of Coupling the Cars.



Freight and Passenger Cars.



50-Horse Power Kerosene Locomotive.

The fact that this train constituted the chief feature of the annual exhibition of the great automobile nation of the world—for such France has become—gives some idea of the interest it has aroused in motor circles. But it does not require an expert to realize the vast possibilities of the new departure. Who has not dreamed of the day when the common roads across country would become great national highways teeming with the traffic of the more populous continents that are to be? Who has not pictured the swifter though lighter vehicles and trains that would fly along these thoroughly macadamized and perfected roads? Who has not seen in fancy a time when the comparatively clumsy locomotive and even trolley car, restricted as they are to the rail system, would be supplanted by methods of transportation accompanied by less dirt and noise and marked by more deftness and responsiveness to the hand of man, by engines that would be under such perfect control that they would not require a double line of immovable rails for their guidance, but that could be directed wherever they were wished to go, up hill and down dale, across the plain and over mountain, carrying the persons and products of man?

In this age of rapid material development no dream of one generation equals the actual accomplishments of the next. May it not be that in this very invention of Colonel Renard we have the small beginning of a system that will revolutionize our whole transportation scheme? If a train of this size can be made that will so perfectly respond to the will of its operators, why cannot larger and larger ones be constructed? If a speed of twenty-two miles can be achieved with a first invention why may not later developments and improvements bring this speed up to that of the locomotive or even to that of the yet more rapid single automobile?

When the marvelous strides made in this department of modern machinery are considered no prophecy that could be made for the future of the motor train, however improbable on its face, would seem impossible of fulfillment. This appeals to one with all the more force when it is considered that the real development of the automobile began only seven or eight years ago. It is true that some attempts toward steam road vehicles were made as long ago as 1824, but these were soon abandoned, and the matter was allowed to slumber for seventy years. The leaps and bounds by which the automobile has gone forward since 1894, the year that saw the beginning of its modern development, are almost beyond comprehension.

The beginnings of the automobile train are of still more recent date, going back but little over a year. There are only two attempts in this line that met with sufficient success to be worthy of mention. Both of these trains ran on rails, and both, by the way, were invented in Paris. One was the work of M. Serpollet and was operated on the road of the Mediterranean company. With a clear track, it was said that this train could make ninety-three miles an hour and seventy-five even on an up grade. The cars weighed thirty-two tons each, but even that great weight was considered an advantage over the locomotive, which often reaches the enormous weight of 90 or 100 tons.

Another attempt was made in June of last year on a road leading from Lyons to Paris. The train consisted of three automobile carriages, carrying forty passengers each. A normal speed of 100 kilometers per hour was reached, or about sixty-three English miles.

Even these efforts, with the partial success that attended them, were thought by many to herald the supplanting of the locomotive. What, then, shall be said of this later and greater accomplishment of Colonel Renard, which demonstrates the possibility of doing away with the railroad itself and of guiding a dozen automobiles coupled together and doing it with the same facility and security with which one automobile was handled before?

The resemblance of this the first train ever run successfully without tracks to the first train ever run successfully with tracks is sufficiently striking to be suggestive. That was the locomotive built by a certain George Stephenson in England a century or more ago. It marked the beginning of a new era in transportation and incidentally in human progress. Does this later invention mark the beginning of another departure, not as radical, of course, but still far reaching in its effects? Is the automobile to drive from the highways of commerce not only the horse, but the locomotive and the trolley? Is the road of steel which as the great artery of trade has so largely taken the place of the old dirt road and turnpike itself to give way to an improved and perfected form of the dirt road and turnpike again?

Considering the recent wonderful development of the various forms of motor vehicles, where is the man bold enough to answer these questions in the negative?

TRUMAN L. ELTON.

FRENCH LEAVE.

The origin of the phrase "French leave" is traced back to a custom, begun in France and imitated in England, common enough in the eighteenth century, of going away from a social gathering without taking formal leave of host and hostess. This is clear from two extracts written in 1775. The first is from Chesterfield's "Principles of Politeness," "As the taking what is called a French leave was introduced, that, on one person's leaving the company, the rest may not be disturbed, looking at your watch does what that piece of politeness was designed to prevent." So also Jekyll: "French etiquettes are precise to a degree. I will allow that taking French leave is easy and natural; but, on the contrary, there is more formality in entering one assembly here than in taking the round of routs for a whole winter in London." As a disclaimer to this derivation the French, on their part, have the phrase "se retirer a l'Anglaise" ("to take English leave"), with the same significance.

MOMMSEN'S ABSENTMINDEDNESS

There are many stories told of the absentmindedness of the late Professor Mommsen, the German historian. On one occasion he was with his son, then a boy of ten, in a street car. The latter fidgeted about so much that the professor, who was lost in thought, turned sharply upon him and asked him his name. "The same as yours, sir," was the answer. The onlookers, who had grasped the position and recognized the diminutive figure of the distinguished savant, were vastly amused. Another instance is recorded when the professor was discovered composedly deciphering Roman inscriptions by the light of a candle while his hair was on fire.