



Automobiles



BE A DARE DEVIL? NOT FOR ME

Pretty Girl Says She Will Have None of It, After One Trial.

OVER THE VANDERBILT COURSE

Donor of \$500 Trophy Goes Ninety Miles an Hour, but Says She Has Had Enough of It—Never Again for Her.

BY MABEL McCANE.

Not for me—no, not in a million years—this life of a dare-devil. I've had my fill of "shaking dice with death." I had rather become a chorus girl and take to the one-night stands.

But that is not my story—the telling of what I would rather do. What I want to do is tell what I did. Here goes:

Last Tuesday at 4 o'clock in the morning I went around the Vanderbilt Cup race course in a Marmon racing car that went ninety miles an hour with Ray Harroun, the driver, who won all kinds of races on road and track.

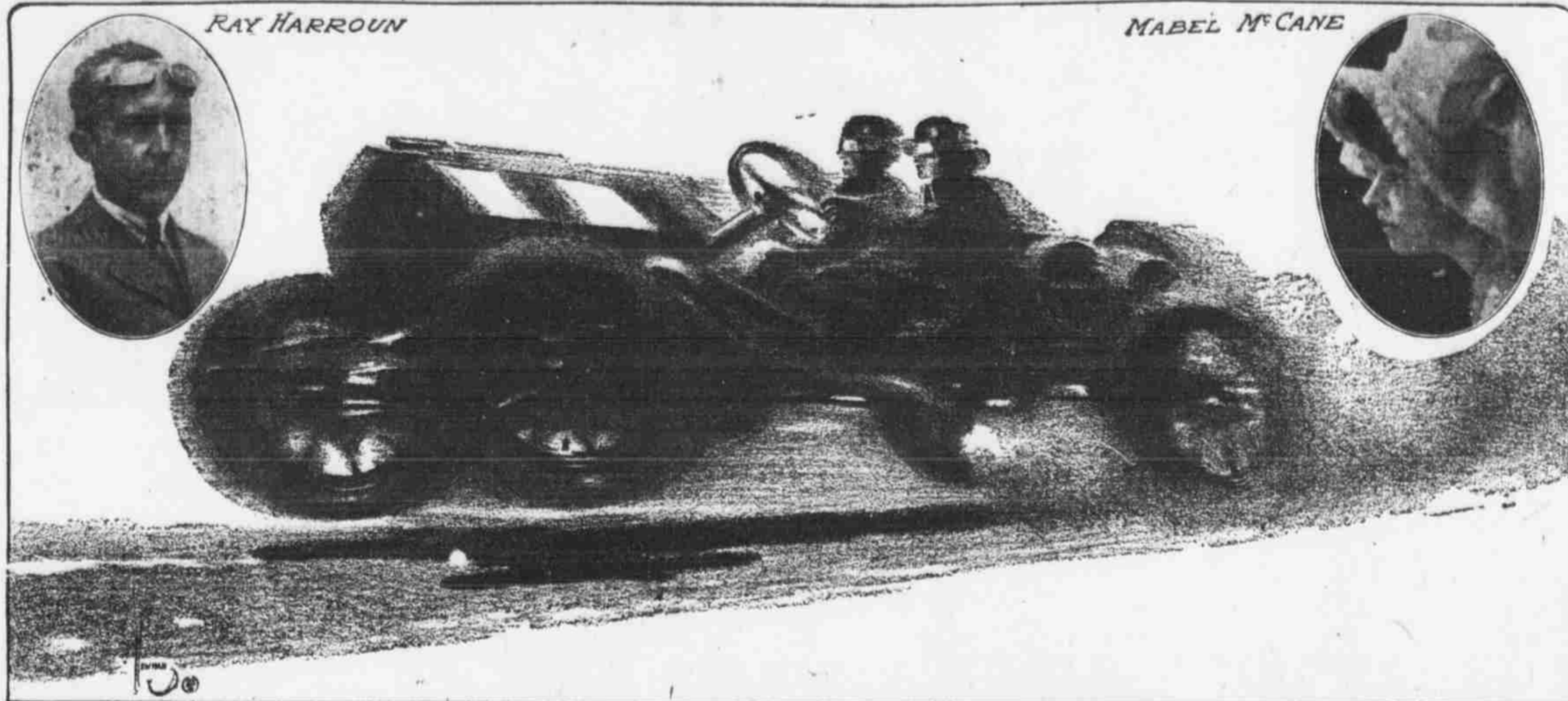
That's just a preliminary crow for I'm proud of myself that I can't see straight and so lame that I can hardly write. My shoulder is all bruised up and one of my knuckles is calloused where I hung on and I have just exactly twelve new freckles that I got from the wind. What do you think of that? How did it happen? Well, it's quite a long story, but listen.

For a long time I had been afflicted with the speed craze. I had even given a pretty trophy which cost me \$500 for the races run at New Orleans last Mardi Gras. And I felt that I ought to have some racing experience. Hence when a newspaper woman friend offered to get me the assignment to make a trip in a racing car at a speed which the dare-devils make in races I was simply tickled to death. So it was arranged, that I was to go with my woman friend to the Marmon racing camp, spend the night there and then get an early morning run.

Ray Harroun and his Marmon has a record that places them in the limelight as champions. They have been first in many great races, some being the Wheatley Hills and Atlantic Trophy events of last year; the Los Angeles hundred mile championship; the Wheeler & Schobler trophy; the Atlantic Speedway trophy; the Remy Brassard and other noted affairs of this year. He is a regular dare-devil. While I—oh, I am just a little girl with a voice which sounds from some stages. But to my story.

Late Monday afternoon Mr. Harroun and the others came for me and we started for the racing headquarters. Mr. Harroun is a quiet, dark man, with eyes that look at you, but don't seem to see you. He is slender and has slim, muscular hands, and every vein and muscle in them seems made of steel. He never makes a useless movement with them. In repose they are the stilled hands you ever saw and when busy the quickest and most capable ones. He comes as near saying absolutely nothing as any man I ever met, and his mouth is a firm line. But his smile is sweet.

Like Scene from a Novel. About half way out a storm came up. It thundered and lightened like everything and we had to turn in at a farm house. We ran the automobile under a shed and then my woman friend and I went into the house



while the men stayed outside. I wish I could describe how that farm house made me feel.

It was just like the kind you read about in the books, where a girl lives in a country home and a city man comes and wins her and she leaves the lamplight of the old farm parlor for the brilliant light of the stage and the music of the old organ her father had gone without a threshing machine to buy for her for a swing of the orchestra music, and will you believe it, there was a daughter about 18 years of age, with a pretty, winsome face, and she looked at us just like the country girls in books look at the city ladies who stop in for a glass of milk.

She and her mother, who had that tired expression of most women who live on farms, took us into the "best room" and then stood and talked to us shyly until one of the men came in and said we'd better be going on.

It poured a blue streak all the rest of the way, and if it hadn't been for our rubber coats we would have been soaked through. As it was, we got pretty wet and hungry—my goodness, I was so hungry I could have eaten a live rat and, the rest were as hungry as I.

As soon as we got there we had a nice thick potterhouse steak, hashed brown potatoes, combination salad, and a lot of things, and we felt better.

After our meal they told us to get right to bed as they would come for us at about 1:30 in the morning.

I had drank coffee for my dinner and I wasn't a bit sleepy.

"It'll be a whole lot easier," I said to my friend. "For us just to sit up until it's time to get up. I don't mind staying awake, but I do hate being waked up just when I'm having a lovely sleep. So you sit in that chair and I'll sit here and we'll talk until they come for us."

She commenced to turn down the beds with a firm hand.

"We'll do nothing of the kind, you little goose," she said to me. "Don't you know you need every minute of rest you can get? Now get in bed immediately and go to sleep. If you don't you'll be as nervous as a witch in the morning and I won't let you go around the track."

There didn't seem to be any way out of it, so I went to bed, and I heard a clock strike 11, and I heard it strike 12 and 1:30. Then I went to sleep. Then—"oo-oo!" somebody said. I thought it had something to do with the dream I was dreaming and I just turned over. Then somebody came clattering against a window somewhere and I sat straight up in bed, as wide-awake as I could be, and as mad as a hornet. I do hate to be waked up!

Reason for the Early Start. My friend was dressing. "It's 3:30 and we'll have to hurry," she said. "They have called us later than they expected to!"

"Later!" I rumbled. "I don't see any sense in getting up at this time, anyhow. Why in the world can't they go around their old track at a respectable hour?"

"I know why. It's because there's a law that won't let them go fast on the track, which is just a country road after 7 o'clock. But

you know how it is—you simply have to fuss sometimes."

I popped out of bed and slipped into my clothes. I was just about to wash my face when somebody yelled from the top of the stairs: "Hey, there, aren't you ever coming?"

"Come on," I said to my friend. "If they can't wait for me to comb my hair or wash my face, I don't care." And so we went out.

It was just beginning to be light and in the semi-dusk the touring car looked like a big, black bug on a smoky window pane. We were to go in this car to a little all-night restaurant and get coffee and then from there to the garage where the racing car was. The other woman was already out shivering in the cool air.

It was still drizzling a little and the roads were fearful.

"That track'll be a fright," I heard a man say in a low tone to Harroun. "Just told yesterday, you know, and with this rain—danger—skidding—better wait—"

The driver didn't say anything, just looked straight ahead, and then for the first time I began to realize what I was up against. I remembered what I heard an automobile man say last year, talking with some people about the Cup race.

"A man never goes over a racing course in one of those cars at a high rate of speed but that he takes his life in his hands and laughs at fate. No matter how skillful the driver or how careful, there is always danger of something going suddenly wrong with the car, and the slightest thing

is apt to send him to eternity."

I thought of my family and gulped. Then I said, "Well, you idiot, here you are and you've got to stick it out!" And just then we came up to the garage and all got out.

Mr. Harroun disappeared inside. Presently he came out looking like a different person. He had on a blue suit of overall stuff and a queer rubber cap that came way down over his forehead to his eyebrows, with tabs that came over the ears. There was a string that faced it and tied it tightly under the chin. On the top of it was a tab with a hole in it and he had a handkerchief tied by one end. He was carrying a queer rubber coat and a cap just like his for me.

I had to slip the coat on over my head and then tied up under my chin. There were elastic through the ends of the sleeves that make them tight about the wrists. The coat came to my ankles and I had a handkerchief in my cap, too. Mr. Harroun snapped a pair of goggles around my head and then fixed his own.

Ready for the Course. "Pull them down when we get to the course," he said briefly, and then turned away to do something to the long crouching racer that had just been wheeled out by a couple of mechanics. The thing began to below and let off steam as he touched it here and there, and then to quiver all through at length. He turned to me.

"Come," he said, and held out his hand and he helped me into one of the two seats in front. When I had first looked at them I had thought I never could stay in for

there wasn't brace or anything, but once in I knew that I couldn't fall out, for the seats are deep and are built so that they tip back, and once in you are in for good until some one helps you out. On the back of his seat was an iron bar for the other person to hang on to. There's where I caloused my knuckle.

Then he climbed in by me and we started without a word. The others were to follow us to the course in the touring machine.

As I looked at him it came over me suddenly that he had changed utterly, and I knew then that I had nothing to do with a human reasoning man. I was sitting beside something to whom nothing in the world meant anything but speed. He had become a demoniacal part of the mammoth, crouching piece of mechanism of which I, too, for a time must be a part, and I had toered to argue with him about possible danger or endeavored to have him desist for the time, I might just as well have pleaded with the pounding, powerful machinery which responded to his hand on the wheel.

Start of Wild Ride. We rushed through the sleeping town and out into the outskirts and came to where a big white banner hung suspended. Big black letters on the banner said it was the race course. Mr. Harroun turned his face toward me for the fraction of a second and a smile flashed across his face. "The beginning," he said, and his face grew tense. "Put down your goggles." He slipped down his own with one hand; touched something with the other hand at the same time. The machine leaped forward like a

live wild thing; hid a puddle, and skidded from one side of the road to the other, hit another puddle and zig-zagged back, and for a minute I believe I was unconscious, for a bucketful of mud and water struck me straight in the face, blinding me, and the wind deafened me even to the roaring of the engines.

For a minute, then, everything flashed through my mind as they say it does through the mind of a drowning person.

"For what does it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"—a Bible verse I learned at Sunday school, pounded through my mind.

Just then another bucketful of mud, and oil, and water brought me to my senses. I gulped and put up one hand to rub my goggles to clear them; but it didn't do much good, for we were going so fast that everything was a blur, anyhow. From that time on, though I couldn't help but realize the danger, for the machine was skidding fearfully, I made myself think such things as:

"I wonder if it's going to rain? Isn't it lovely getting up so early in the morning? I wonder what we'll have for breakfast? Oh, there's a chicken," etc. In this way I managed to keep my muscles relaxed and keep my nerve. It's a funny thing how when you're really in danger you can argue with yourself when you are a perfect idiot at times when there's not even a possibility of your getting hurt. A glance at Ray Harroun showed me a mud-splashed, gleaming-eyed demon with crusted hands working on the wheel, and I looked away quickly.

At last, after what seemed an eternity, it was over and we drew up at the place from which we had started and where the others sat waiting for us. My friend was crying and the other woman's face was white. The other man and the mechanic were sitting quietly, not saying a word. We were so covered with mud that we didn't look human.

I had a queer, terribly quiet feeling, and a sensation as if something inside of me had broken and I was going to be all down in a heap. I don't know what would have happened to me if Mr. Harroun hadn't said quietly just then:

"Little girl, you've got a lot of nerve."

I sort of gasped.

"So've you," I said tamely. "How do you feel?"

"As usual," he answered, smiling a little. "but until now I've felt like Almighty God. I always do when I'm on the course, going at top speed, knowing that I control all this power and that my slightest touch is the master touch to this machine."

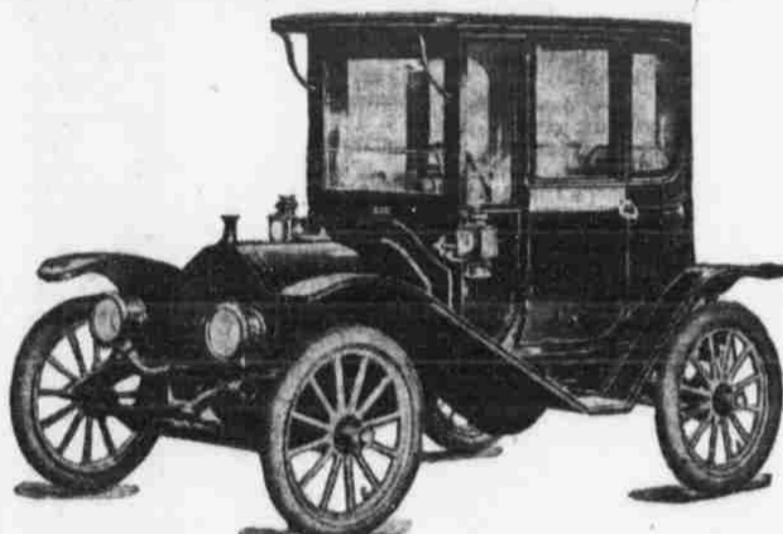
Then he helped me out and we went over to the others, and laughed them into a cheerful frame of mind. Then we went and got cleaned up and had breakfast. Some other Marmon drivers were there and I heard one ask Mr. Harroun how the run had been. You know I told you it was the first to start the training. He shook his head.

"Had condition," he said, briefly. "I'll not go over it again until its packed. The car skidded from start to finish. You'd have thought we were making a survey for a rail fence."

Even at that we made the twelve and some odd miles in about eleven minutes. But I'll never do it again.

"But it isn't my soul I'm going to lose—it's my life," I thought.

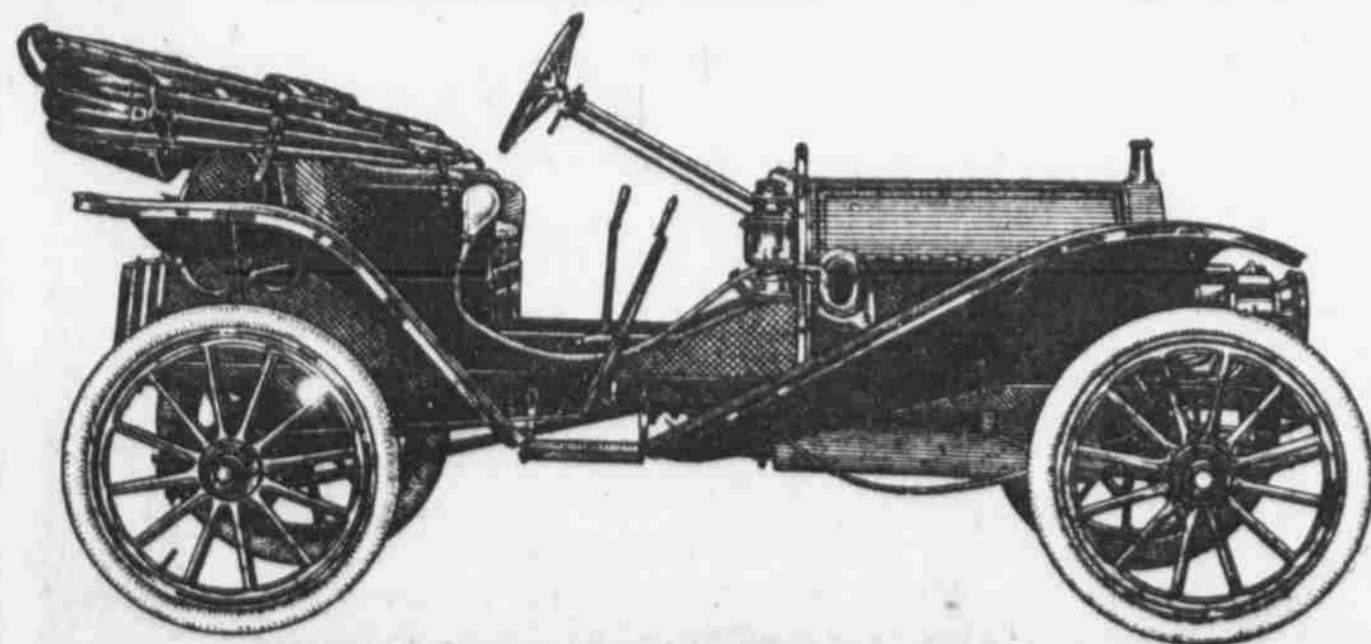
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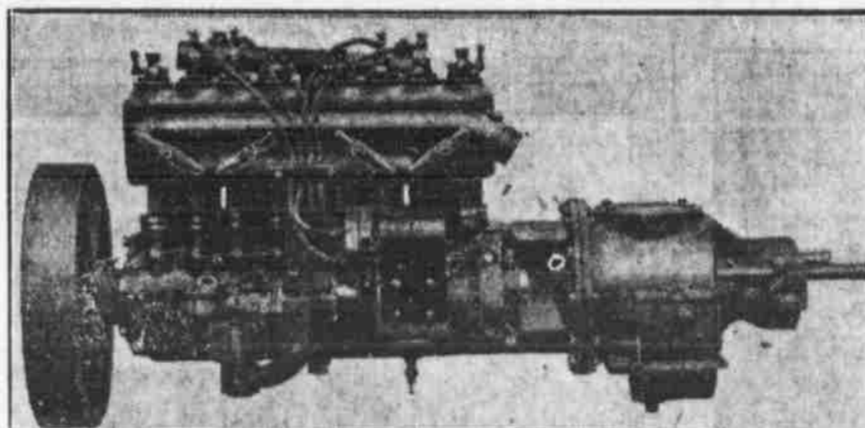


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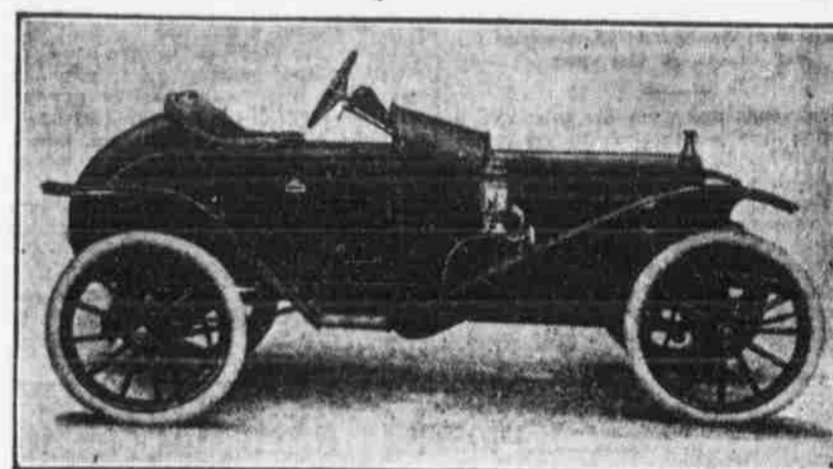
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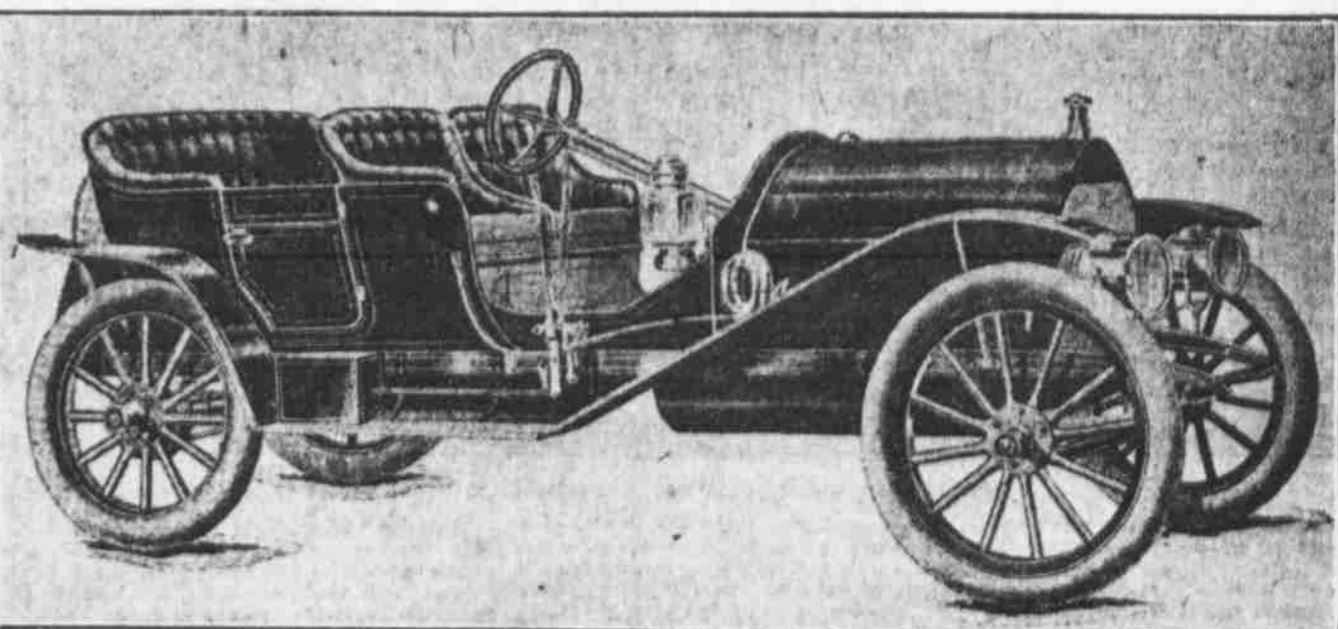
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