

Concentrating

By James J. Montague.

I had been reading one of those editorials which tell you how to succeed. The way to succeed, the editorial said, was to concentrate. If I could shut all distractions out of my mind, and devote it exclusively to the thing I was doing, I should get it done. If I got everything done I was trying to do, provided they were all good useful things, I should succeed.

It struck me that there was a good deal in that editorial. It stood to reason that distractions were disturbers of mental traffic.

If somebody had rushed in just as Eli Whitney was groping around for the idea of the cotton gin and told him he had been summoned for jury duty, he probably would have lost the idea, and the average suit of all-wool clothes would still be selling for around \$350.

If when Sir Isaac Newton was still rubbing his head where the falling apple had hit it, the bulldog belonging to the orchard had stepped out and frowned at him, we should still see nothing remarkable in the fact that balloons go up instead of down.

If when James Watt—but I had proved my own point. Concentration was a great thing.

So thereafter I tried to concentrate. But it wasn't half so easy as it sounded. I began to wonder how the man who wrote the editorial had learned to do it. After I had practiced it for a week without getting the swing, I began to wonder if he ever had learned it, and was about to write and ask him, when another of his editorials on the same subject came along.

This one was a sort of sequel to the first one—a second lesson so to speak. It admitted that concentration wasn't acquired without a struggle, and advised people who hadn't any gift for it to concentrate artificially, which is to say to shut out distractions by doors and bolts for a while, until it began to come naturally. That sounded to me like good common sense. So I went home to try it.

Chance for a Tryout.

Just at that particular time I was trying to make the amounts on the stubs of my check book agree with the amount the bank said I had checked out of my deposit account. It was hard work, for I am one of those men who can add the same column of figures three times and get a fresh and surprising answer every time. I probably would get still more fresh and surprising answers after subsequent additions, but I never had the patience to add the column more than three times.

It struck me that there was a chance for a test of the concentration theory. If by concentration, however induced, I could make my own figures and those of the bank agree, it would prove that I could concentrate. After that success would be mine with practically no trouble at all.

So, taking my check book, my fountain pen, and a pad of scratch paper I retired to an attic room and began to concentrate.

I was getting along fine when the telephone bell rang. Thinking of course somebody down stairs would answer it, I continued to concentrate. But they didn't answer it. It rang again—three short rings this time. There was a pause. I sat back and waited. Perhaps central would give it up and tell whoever was calling that the party didn't answer, or that the line was out of order.

But she didn't. She rang again. She rang for 18 seconds, which is a very long time. Still nobody answered, although I could hear them moving about downstairs.

Followed a silence. I had long ceased to concentrate by this time, and had begun to wonder if the telephone message might not be important. The more I wondered the more I thought it might be. At last, able to endure the suspense no longer, I slammed down the check book and started down the stairs. When I got to the telephone I found a man there. He was from the telephone company. He was making central ring the bell to see if it worked all right. I could have told him that, and I wouldn't have needed the aid of concentration to help me work out the answer, either. I went back upstairs and resumed my labors. There was a weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth below stairs three minutes after I started. The baby had Tommy's foot ball and wouldn't give it up.

I got the foot ball, propitiated the baby with a lump of sugar, warned both children that I was concentrating, and went back upstairs.

Silence is Disturbing.

I had hardly resumed my addition when there came a knock on the back door. It was a gentle knock at first. Then it became bolder. Nobody answered it. The head of the house must have gone out. Tommy and the baby were probably on the front porch, where they couldn't hear it.

If the knock had continued I could have kept on concentrating perhaps, but it didn't. It stopped. And I began to fear that it was some porch climber who had merely knocked to assure himself that nobody was in the house. Doubtless now he was at work on one of the back porch windows with a jimmy.

I went downstairs and found a lady who wanted to know if we had a vacuum cleaner. I told her we had and went back upstairs.

Once more I got out the pen, and bent over my task. Then a motor car drove up to the front gate, stopped, and the horn began to blow violently. I gathered up the check book and the fountain pen and the paper pad and went downstairs. I have not concentrated since then, and am placed in solitary confinement as the result.

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Wife Prefers Prison Cell

To Her Husband's Home
Westfield, Mass., Dec. 11.—Offered the choice between two years in the House of the Good Shepherd and returning to her husband, Jennie Rogalski, 17 years old, chose the cell.

"I would rather spend 100 years in the House of Good Shepherd than one day with that man," she told the court, which a short time before had tried her for forgery.

She said she had been forced to marry Cosmo Bianchi of Hartford, by her father at Rocky Hill, Conn., and that she had only lived with him three days.

Announcing Oldsmobile 4

Built to Extend the Fame of a Good Name

SPECIFICATIONS

Model 43A

Check carefully the special quality features that bear on easier riding and greater safety, such as the unusual length of wheel base, the added strength of frame and cross members, the extra long springs and low center of gravity. Note how the whole car is cradled for better balance and comfort.

The accessibility of the motor and of all parts that may need occasional adjustment, is a pleasing element of easy care and low after-cost.

Wheel Base—115 inches.

Weight—2765 pounds.

Engine—Four cylinders cast en bloc; valve-in-head type, detachable head. 234 cu. in. displacement. Develops over 40 h. p. on block test.

Lubrication—Force and splash with pressure gauge on instrument board. Chassis lubrication, Alemite grease cup type.

Electrical System—Three unit, with six-volt, 15-plate storage battery.

Gasoline Feed—Vacuum feed with gasoline tank suspended at rear of frame.

Frame—Cold pressed steel, seven-inch maximum depth channel section. Five cross members.

Spur Axle—Spiral bevel type.

Springs—Semi-elliptic. Front, 36-inch; rear, 54-inch.

Body—Streamline. Long unbroken sweep of lines.

Upholstery—Box pleated, best quality of fine-grained black leather.

Instrument Board—Walnut, with nickeled instruments mounted flush.

Tires—Straight sides, 32 x 4. Non-skid on rear wheel.

Finish—Best coach work, applied by brush and rubbed down by hand.

The Oldsmobile "4" is now ready for your inspection at our salesrooms.

And it will pay you to approach this car with an open mind and to satisfy yourself as to its very apparent better value.

So firm are we in our conviction that this addition to the Oldsmobile line crowns every previous idea of moderate-priced four-cylinder value, that we prefer to leave the verdict to your personal inspection.

See this car. Observe its evident virtues of permanent style, sane design and sturdier construction. Note how it retains the same pleasing lines, the same close attention to body details that have always emphasized Oldsmobile beauty and comfort.

Ride in the car. Drive it yourself. Because when you actually drive the car yourself or ride in it you will appreciate that these surface excellences are but outward signs of its unseen virtues.

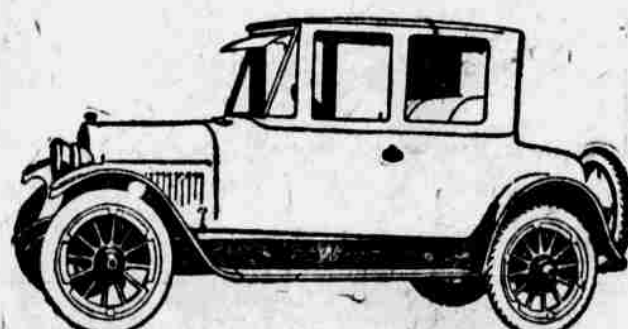
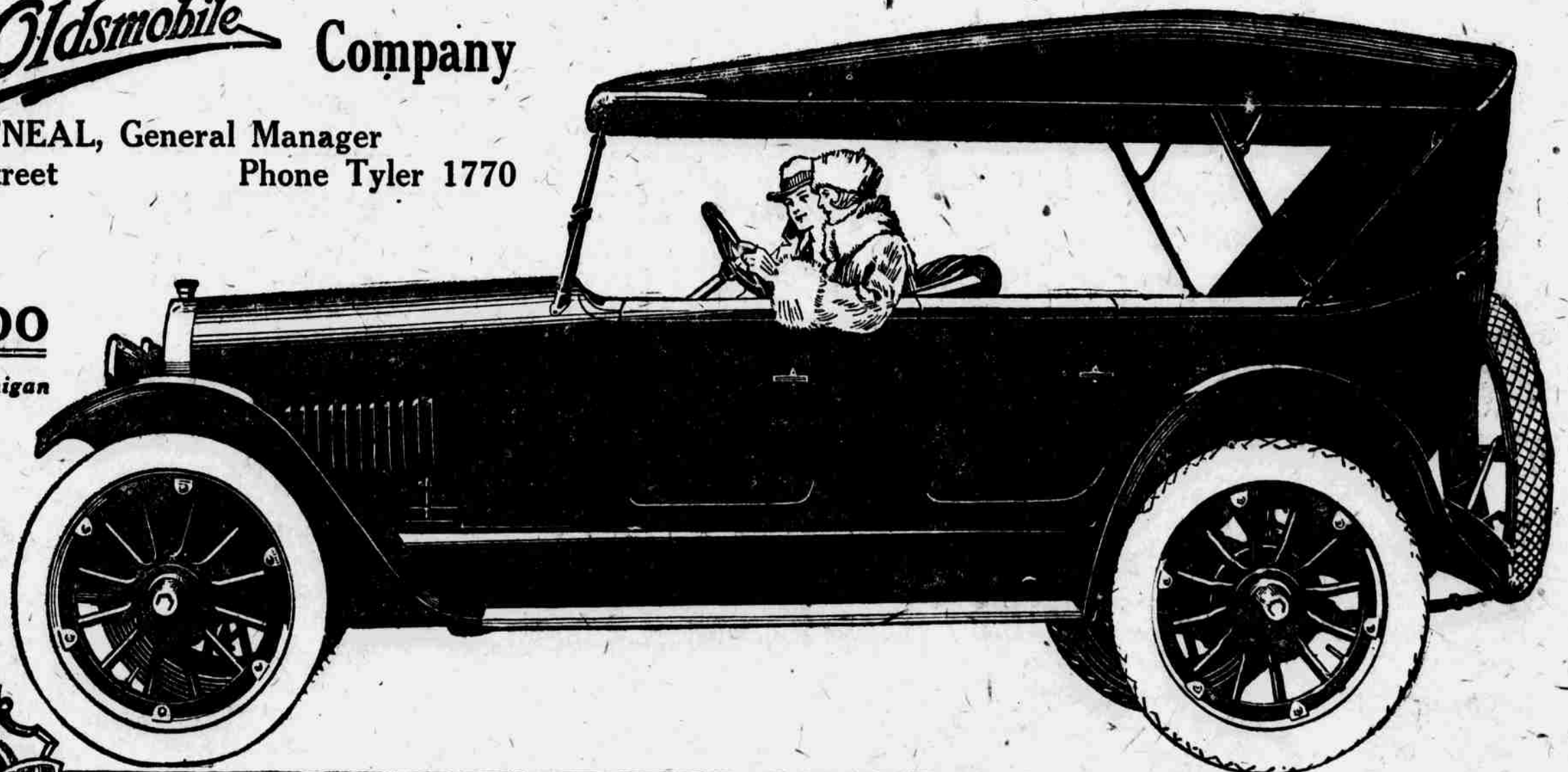
In looking over the Oldsmobile "4" we purposely ask you to forget any preconceived standard you have had of value. Because we believe the Oldsmobile "4" is going to sweep aside every precedent of four cylinder goodness that you may have had of any car of like class.

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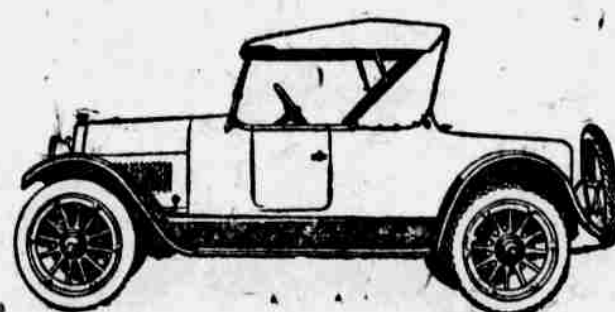
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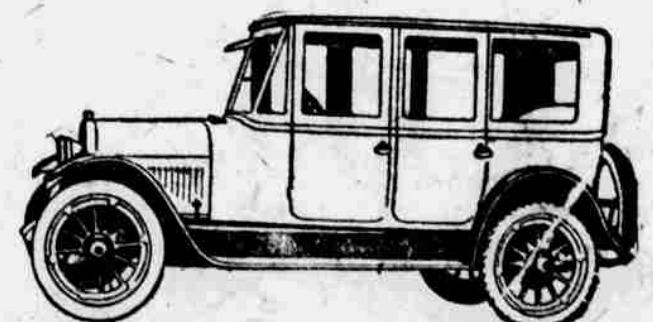
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