



ENTIRELY dominated by the technical in every detail of genuine progress the automobile does not present its true face to the public, and never will until a new one shall have grown up prepared to treat automobile technique as a matter-of-fact portion of its education. Lying so close to everyday life automobilism may hereafter compel the public to study its principles, but it is perhaps more probable that in general its patrons will be content to learn the operation of automobiles without understanding their mechanism any more intimately than they now understand the mechanism of a sewing machine or the anatomy of a horse.

The past month has been rich in disclosures of scientific and constructive progress, mainly in evidence at the two exhibitions held in New York, but to the casual observer the progress was substantiated mostly through the highly finished appearance of the exhibits, which bore testimony that the makers considered the experimental stage as passed and the business era opened. Strong financial names on the letter-heads of companies whose backing had previously been an uncertain quantity, point in the same direction.

THE performances of the vehicles within the exhibition buildings were followed by the public with evident astonishment at the absence of noise and odor in some of the gasoline motor vehicles; and the trembling of these vehicles which was formerly so disagreeably prominent was very much reduced.

It should be a matter for patriotic congratulation that it was in five strictly American constructions that this shortcoming had been most victoriously overcome; in three of the cases by means of a very high grade of workmanship and a painstaking balancing of the engines, and in two cases by adding a throttling system permitting the operation of the carriages at slow speeds with very small explosions. The throttling systems used in these two cases were radically different in principle but produced

about equal results, promising much for the gasoline carriage of the future.

THE French importations of this type were decidedly bolder in outlines than the home products, and the public seemed to appreciate them more and more on closer acquaintance. One large American firm builds in the same style: large, clean-cut new outlines resembling nothing that horses ever drew; and the public liked them, too.

The steam carriages, monotonously uniform in style—surreys and phaetons, phaetons and surreys, with one omnibus and here and there a prosaic delivery wagon—all highly efficient, noiseless and agreeable to ride in, were the objects of deeply interested inquiry. The makers are preparing to manufacture them in rapidly increasing quantities, but their average price and their average weight are much higher than last year.

Familiarity with electric carriages, upon the streets, seemed to have cooled the public's fervor for them as an object of exhibition, but several unusually small and very convenient electric runabouts with as much space for carrying purposes as required, and weighing little more than 500 pounds, won admiration.

THESE shows were considered highly successful by the exhibitors, affording them an excellent opportunity for comparing notes; and most of them received the impression that it would be desirable to commence active manufacture at once. A strong impetus in this direction was received, and the effect of it must soon be felt in the market. Another effect will be the discouragement of amateur automobile building; the hopelessness of which becomes very conspicuous.

The shows were an epitome of all that has been going on in the automobile world, and overshadow in importance the fast journeys between New York, Newport and Boston which several owners of imported gasoline vehicles made during October, with minor mishaps due to wretched roads.

Our public refuses to take those vehicle and road-racing exploits seriously, in which it requires a twelve to twenty horse-power motor and two to four thousand pounds of material for the transportation of two persons with little or no baggage. While highly interesting to a *chauffeur emballé*, whose vision of automobilism is one of fancy, they do not seem to point the way to those useful results which the American business man likes to keep within his visual angle, even though he depart on an errand of fashion or caprice.