

EDITORIAL

UNDER THE AUTO'S TAIL.

By DANIEL DE LEON

WHATEVER crimes the wealthy class of the land may commit and successfully throw the blame for upon the working class, there is at least one set of crimes they can by no manner of means escape full culpability for—a set of malpractises described by George Rice in the reliable *Scientific American* under the heading “How Automobile Numbers Are Concealed.”

The working class owns no autos. Neither do they speed in them. It is the Roosevelts, the Vanderbilts, the Tafts, the Justice Blanchards, whose names regularly appear in the columns of their own plutocratic press as speed-law wreckers. Thrilling are the details described—and pictured—by Rice, of how these gentry “protect” themselves by juggling with the numbers of their cars, their only means of identification.

One of the commonest and simplest practises is to give the number plate a copious coat of oil. In this condition it collects such a bed of dust that it is to all intents obliterated. Other devices, however, require a little more preparation.

Two ways are shown of dropping the number plate off its hooks, and dragging it along the ground, where it is of course invisible, until the “danger” is past. Another scheme is borrowed from the revolving signs on street cars. Different numbers are painted on different sides of a square block; by the pull of a cord a fictitious one can be substituted for the real one while a pursuing constable is winking. More prosaic is the method of escaping detection by lowering a metal plate with one false figure on it, over some one figure in the true number. Finally, mechanical dexterity finds no difficulty in leading an outlet pipe from a special steam or gasolene cylinder down to the number plate, whereby the occupants of the car can at will obscure their designation by squirting an impenetrable spray upon it.

In view of the practically daily killing or maiming of persons by speed-mad

automobilists; in view of the growing insolence of the set, going even so far as publicly to demand that the streets be reserved to them from the children, this business fraudulently escaping the consequences of their manslaughter is exposed most timely. While the Boy Scouts are being drilled in the ideals of loyalty to one's employer and those in authority, this exposure reveals those "in authority" once more as inherently defiers of the law, and arrant cowards to boot.

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