

nervously, stiffened beside me. "The snow seems to be coming in the windows," she pronounced mincingly. She sucked in a mouthful of smoke and expelled it immediately with a small explosion. Both men in the front seat turned around and watched me as I cranked up the window. Since leaving the plane, the woman had drawn an incongruously wide line across her mouth with lipstick. In the pale green light that came to us filtered through snow from the terminal building her mouth looked purple. "Really!" she muttered.

The man with the deep voice kept turning around to stare back at the terminal building, and we waited in silence once more. Tired as I was, I did not even look forward to sleeping. For me the tedium was almost entirely devoid of interest, appetite, or emotion. It was meaningless time, empty time, and the only thing I felt at all was a weak hatred for the other passengers.

"I wonder what keeps us waiting so long," said the soldier.

"Can't somebody do something?" the woman demanded resentfully.

The man with the deep voice stubbed his cigar out in the ash tray and devoted himself for several minutes to staring back at the terminal building before he gave it up and lighted another cigar. "I never should have let him get away with it," he said softly. The motor was running all the time.

**F**INALLY there were voices, and we all looked to see who was coming. The driver was walking rapidly toward the limousine carrying a small aluminum suitcase, and trotting along beside him, looking up into his face earnestly, came the short, fat man in the big hat.

"So that's who kept us waiting so long," said the woman, settling back triumphantly. "So that's who it is," said the soldier. The man with the slight stutter grunted. "No human consideration for anyone else whatsoever," the woman reminded us.

After the trunk had been slammed shut behind us, the driver opened the door beside me, pulled up the second jump seat, and stood back to let the last passenger get in. But before the short, fat man got in, he examined the driver's face carefully.

"And I could get a cab right away?" he asked.

"Yes, yes, you could get a cab right away," said the driver, his tone suggesting that he had already answered the same question many times.

The man who had delayed our departure peered into the dark limousine suspiciously before taking his place on the jump seat in front of me. Only the stutterer met the newcomer's eyes, and then he looked expectantly at his companion. But the man with the deep voice was staring straight through the windshield in front of him. Nobody said a word.

The driver got in and we started

on our way, with one loose chain clanking tiresomely against a fender above the soft sound the tires made pressing down against the dry snow. The short, fat man sat sideways in his seat, his face almost pressed against the glass. At first I thought that he was merely watching the view, trying to get a glimpse through the windows of houses where for some reason there happened to be people still up at that late hour. But each time the limousine passed under a street lamp, as it did with rhythmic regularity, I could see that he was weeping, biting his large lower lip cruelly in an effort to control his trembling, contorted features.

## Science Marches

### Backward

ROBERT BENDINER

**I**F YOU'RE one of those nervous souls who wonder whether science hasn't got a little too big for its breeches, you will be pleased to know that scientists are beginning to wonder about the same thing.

At a recent session of the Institute of Traffic Engineers, the men who plan the motorized, or major, part of our lives were plainly worried—and with good cause. For years, they said, they had been busy riddling our great thoroughways of sharp curves, intersections, traffic signals, and pedestrian crossings. And now that they have just about perfected the dream highway, what do we cursed humans use it for? To dream. With all the natural hazards removed and mile after mile of beautiful road stretched before him, a man can, and often does, have his toe on the gas and his head in the clouds. And if he suddenly hears a horn close to his ear, as likely as not it's Gabriel's.

So, said the traffic engineers, there's only one thing to do—start moving backward. And they fell to work devising nuisances and discomforts to substitute for those they had so painstakingly removed. Anything, they said, to "jostle the motorist out of his reveries."

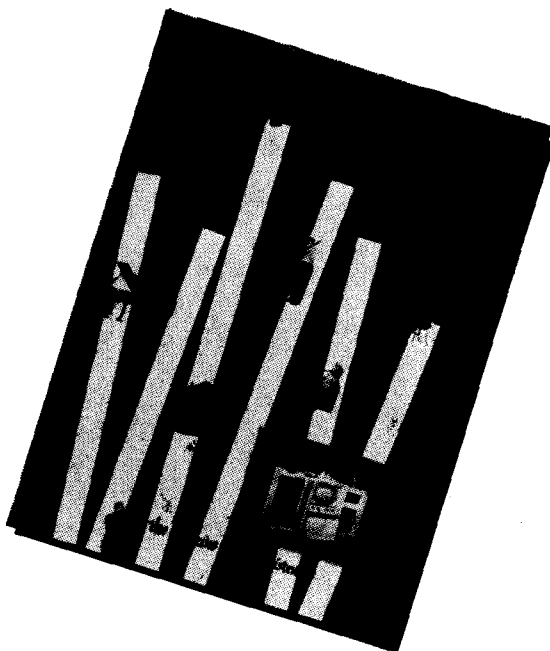
One suggested serrated concrete patterns to keep the driver awake with non-rhythmic sounds. Another suggested special-band radio broadcasts, presumably with New Year's Eve sound effects. But it was left for Charles J. Murphy, director of traffic engineering for the Automobile Club of New York, to say what probably was on everyone's mind. "We must begin," said Mr. Murphy in what surely marks a turning point in our civilization, "to think in terms of antiquing" our great express arteries.

**I**F IT IS to our welfare to have synthetic bumps, ruts, and twists in our roads, how about a little antiquing elsewhere? We might start out with the cars themselves—just a little unstreamlining here and there for safety's sake. One manufacturer might bring out a model with the "new conventional gearshift that keeps motorists busy." A competitor would follow up with more radical innovations, like the springless chassis and buckboard seat. And eventually we could work down, or up, to the de luxe two-cylinder four-horsepower job, complete with blow-out tires and hand crank.

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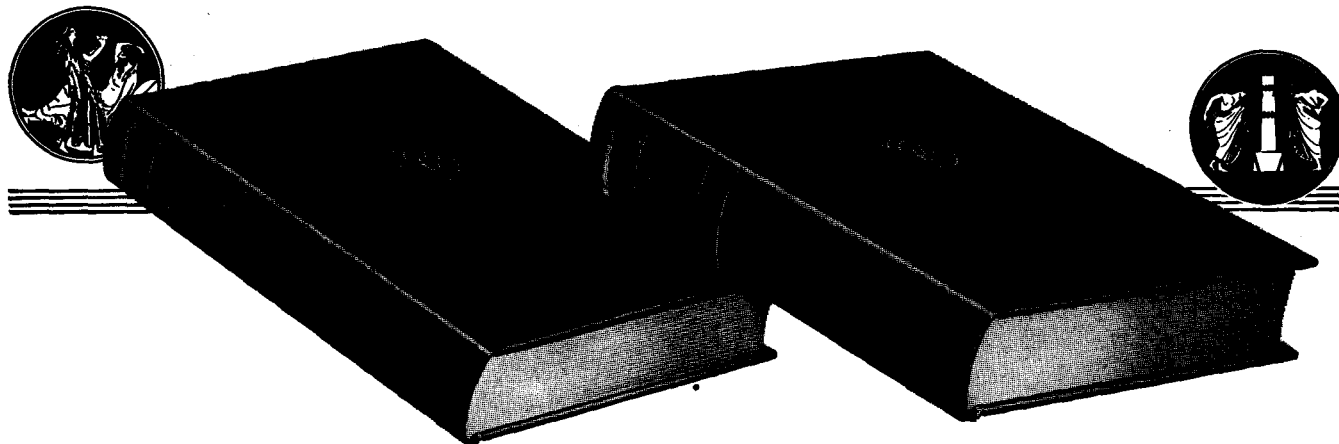
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