

OPEN FORUM

This column is published to encourage interchange of ideas on railway signaling subjects. Letters published will be signed with the author's name, unless the author objects. However, in order to encourage open discussion of controversial matters, letters may be signed with pen names at the request of the author. In such instances, the correspondent must supply the editor with his name and address as evidence of good faith. This information will not be disclosed, even on inquiry, unless the correspondent consents.

Stop, Look and Listen

To the Editor:

Without having any intent of discounting any of the fine qualities of the average motorist in regard to his appreciating positive and informative control and regulation, as outlined in an article entitled, "Modernizing Crossing Protection with New Safety Features," which appeared in a recent issue of *Railway Signaling*, the writer, both as a motorist and a railroad signalman, feels that the traffic engineers of the motor clubs are not doing their sponsors a favor by placing all of the blame for crossing accidents on the railroads and the protective devices.

Admittedly, there is much to be done toward modernizing existing crossing protection systems and installing new systems. The very fact that the rather comprehensive programs of crossing protection installations carried out the last two years throughout the country did not even make a "dent" in the grade crossings to be protected, should serve notice on the motorist that even under the most favorable conditions it will take a long period of time before all grade crossings will be equipped with "ideal" protection and that in the meantime, to conserve life and limb at railroad grade crossings, other measures will be required.

The article referred to above points out that 75 per cent of the accidents due to cars striking the side of a

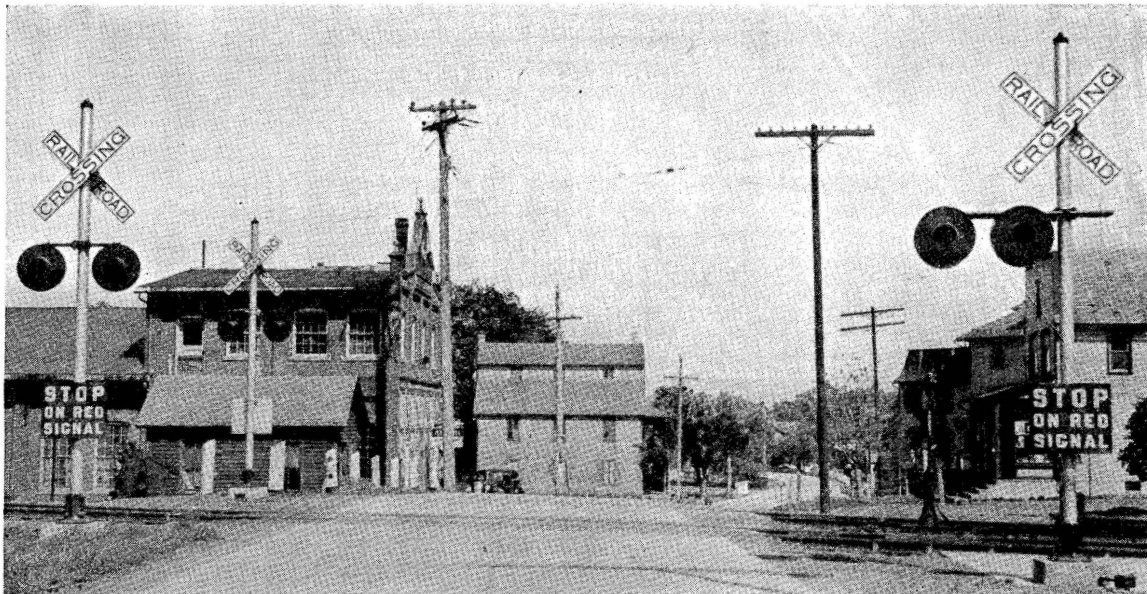
train occurred after dark. It would not be surprising to learn that the other accidents would follow nearly the same ratio. The writer recently attended a meeting sponsored by the Safety Commission in a large city and at that time was surprised to learn that the best car made today, equipped with the best headlights, will provide safe night driving only at a speed *not in excess of 35 miles per hour*. Inquiries made later substantiate these figures as being authentic from a safety standard. The writer is wondering how many other motorists would be surprised to learn this and why such information, including definite knowledge as to how many feet it requires to stop the car they are driving at a given speed, is not passed on to the motorists. It is safe to predict that with definite knowledge of this type available to the motorists, much care will be exercised in negotiating the approach to a railroad track or other hazardous location.

It is hard to understand why the average motorist should object to the "old railroad stop sign." Thousands of arterial stop signs are in use in every large city. The motorist accepts them as being placed there to be complied with, compelling him to stop and look. Why should he then object to the use of such signs at a railroad grade crossing where greater danger exists?

In this article, as well as in the publication referred to above, reference so far has been made only to the fatalities which occurred at railroad grade crossings or approximately five per cent of the total fatalities involving automobiles in 1935. It is safe to predict that, while the other 95 per cent were not killed at railroad grade crossings, the circumstances under which a high percentage of these accidents occurred, were very much similar in nature to the grade crossing accidents where poor judgment on the part of the driver, rather than excuses for being "fooled" by the operation of warning devices are the cause of the accidents.

If the hazards to life and limb at railroad grade crossings are to be eliminated, the motorists must be educated to do their part and be willing to give a train on a right-of-way the same consideration as other obstacles in the path which it is found wise to avoid.

MOTORIST-RAILROADMAN.



Flashing-light highway-railroad crossing signals on the Lehigh & New England at Danielsville, Pa.