VI.—MOTOR VEHICLES.

The earliest motor vehicles were propelled by steam, the history of the gasolene motor car commencing with the successful construction of a gasolene engine by Daimler in 1884. Until 1900 France remained the headquarters of the industry, possessing in that year more than half of the 10,000 cars in operation in Europe, while in the United States the number of cars was only about 700. Shortly afterwards, the invention of the Ford car resulted in a keen competition to bring motor cars within the reach of the average man, profits being secured from large production rather than high prices. Detroit became the centre of the automobile industry of the United States and the Canadian side of the Detroit river became the headquarters of the Canadian industry. As a consequence, the population of such border towns as Windsor, Walkerville and Sandwich greatly increased between 1911 and 1921, while Ford City, which had no existence in 1911, had 5,870 inhabitants in 1921. Problems of regional location have resulted during more recent years in a gradual shifting of the centre of the industry, and the Toronto and Oshawa districts now rival in importance the older established centre on the Detroit river.

Like many other inventions, the motor car commenced as a toy, then as a luxury of the rich, while now it ranks as a comfort of those in moderate circumstances and may even become a necessity of life to the masses. Of late years it has been increasingly used for economic purposes; to-day the great majority of cars effect substantial economies in time or in money for their owners, partly or wholly offsetting their cost of upkeep. In the past few years, the motor truck—the freight automobile—and the motor bus have assumed considerable economic importance, and are now separately classified in Table 34 of this section.

In a recent government report the statement is made that "the automotive transport industry is just beginning to be a factor in the transportation of passengers and freight in this country. Railways have found that the handling of less than car-load lots of freight is often unprofitable business; it follows that commercial trucks are being used in greater numbers to carry lighter shipments of property between some of the larger centres served by adequately surfaced highways" While the increased passenger and freight rates are probably a main cause of the comparatively slow increase in recent years in railway traffic (see Table 8 of this section), there can be no doubt that motor vehicles are now carrying much of the short haul traffic formerly carried by steam railways. In addition, a certain amount of traffic formerly carried over water routes has been diverted to these more modern carriers.

The automobile manufacturing industry in Canada has made very rapid growth since its beginning about the year 1905, two of its chief tendencies during the period having been a consolidation of smaller firms into large units and the adoption of large-scale methods of production, similar in many ways to those of the United States industry. A brief statement of its history, with statistics of production, etc., is to be found on pp. 432 to 436 of the Canada Year Book, 1924.

Registration.—The increase in the use of motor vehicles in Canada has been very rapid. In 1904 the number of motor vehicles registered in Ontario was only 535. In 1907, 2,130 motor vehicles were registered in six provinces, and in 1908, 3,033 in eight provinces, the motor car being at that time prohibited in Prince Edward Island. From these small beginnings Table 33 shows an increase to 836,794 motor vehicles in 1926, an increase over 1925 of 108,789, or more than the total number of motor vehicles registered in 1915. In Table 34 are given the numbers of motor vehicles registered by provinces in 1926, classified as passenger cars, commercial cars or trucks, motor buses and motor cycles.