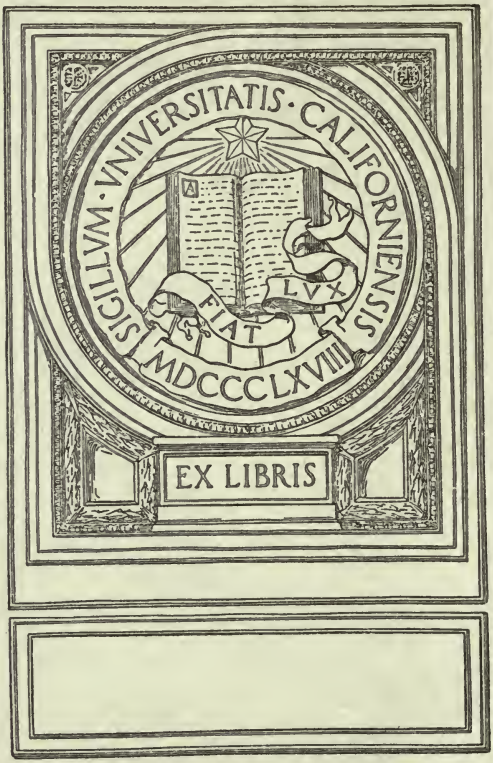
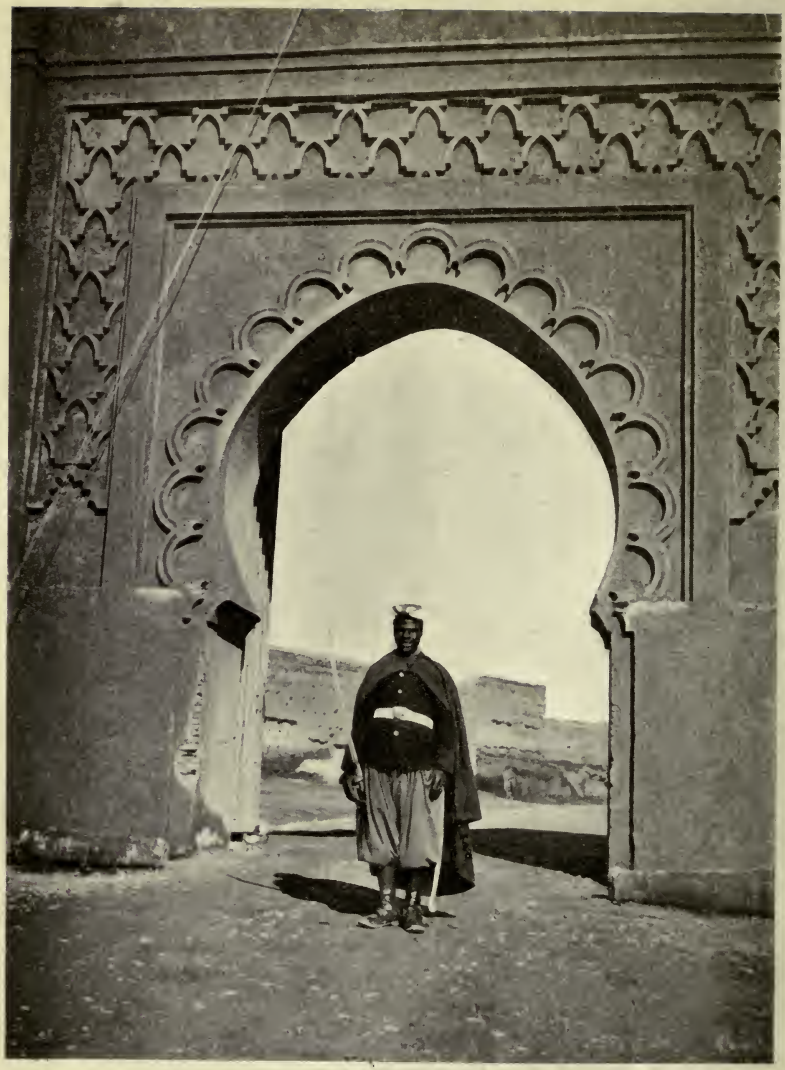


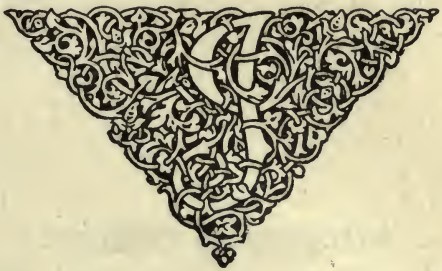
THE ADVENTURES OF IMSHI



A Sentry of Fez the Impenetrable.

THE ADVENTURES OF IMSHI

A TWO-SEATER IN SEARCH OF THE SUN



BY

JOHN PRIOLEAU

WITH MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS
FROM PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE AUTHOR

JARROLDS
PUBLISHERS (LONDON) LTD.

To

VISCOUNT NORTHCLIFFE,

WHOSE UNFAILING HELP AND ENCOURAGEMENT HAVE BROUGHT ME THE HAPPINESS OF THE GREATEST ADVENTURE LIFE CAN OFFER, THE ADVENTURE OF THE OPEN ROAD, I GRATEFULLY DEDICATE THIS BOOK.

JOHN PRIOLEAU.

LONDON.
April, 1922.

PREFACE

TO some of the readers of the following pages I feel, unlike most writers of travel books, that I need offer no apology for adding yet one more to the swelling army of these. They have brought it upon themselves.

During the six months when I drove my car from London to Genoa, from Genoa to Marrakesh, from Marrakesh to Kairuan, from Kairuan to Gibraltar, Seville, Madrid, the Pyrenees and home through France, I was the embarrassed recipient of scores of letters from kindly folk all over the world asking me to put into a book with pictures the adventures of Imshi which I have had the honour to describe in the columns of the *Daily Mail* as we went along. I have tried to give them what I thought they asked for.

To the other readers I have only one excuse to offer. I believed that that very considerable body of the motoring public of Great Britain and Ireland who, with me, look upon a car, and especially a post-war car, as something which should be fit to take its owner all over the world where roads exist, might like to have first-hand evidence of motoring conditions in the Countries of the Sun since the terror of war swept over them. I have no notion of attributing to Imshi the qualities of an explorer. With the possible excep-

tion of Southern and Eastern Morocco, every country I saw on my absorbingly interesting journey has been visited again and again by world-tourers before the war. But there may be some who, with old dreams in their hearts of good times dead and gone, would like to consider the possibility of having new ones.

These, then, are my apologies for this faithful if slightly incoherent record of the best motor wander I have had in twenty well-spent motoring years.

John Prioleau

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CHAPTER I

FROM CALAIS TO CHALON-SUR-SAÔNE

GISORS (NORMANDY),
December 21.

I HAVE just begun what promises to be one of the most delightful adventures of my motoring life. I have started out in my 10-h.p. two-seater Imshi, whose mileage has already reached nearly 13,000 in ten months' driving, and I am trundling quietly over Europe to see what has changed on the great roads since 1914, to find out how good a thing it is to bring one's car abroad, to describe the evil with the good—and to have as pleasant a time as possible.

I do not suppose any expedition had so depressing a start as mine. All my alleged friends having wired at the last moment that they could not join me on a motor stroll through Southern Europe, on the grounds

that they had a bridge-party in Aberdeen or business in Colombo, I left London two days ago by myself, but comfortably hedged about with the benevolent protection of the R.A.C. touring department.

* * * * *

Before me lie—how many thousands of miles to be covered with nothing but a green canvas bag on the seat at my elbow? No matter. I shall have, with the help of St. Christopher, the company of the great roads and hills and seas and of the cheery folk who live there. Whatever may happen to me, I shall not be bored.

But I hope I shall not often be so wet as I am to-night. Sunday in England was not a nice day. Sunday night at Dover, where I had to pay an exorbitant hotel bill, was about as cheerful as Kensal Green. On Monday, after a good deal of fuss, Imshi and I embarked and, as if to wish us luck, a watery sun looked out for an instant from a crack in the black clouds. But by the time the weary business of clearing the car at Calais was

over, so was the sun's gleam of good temper. Three-parts drowned, I lay that night, in the ancient phrase, at Boulogne.

* * * * *

Poor Boulogne! She is not what she was. I knew her well before the war, when she was a sort of suburb of England; and during the war, when she had to shelter about 1,000 times more people than was possible, and did it. To-day she is a city of mud which somebody else has made and who is never coming back to clean it up. And her hotels are empty.

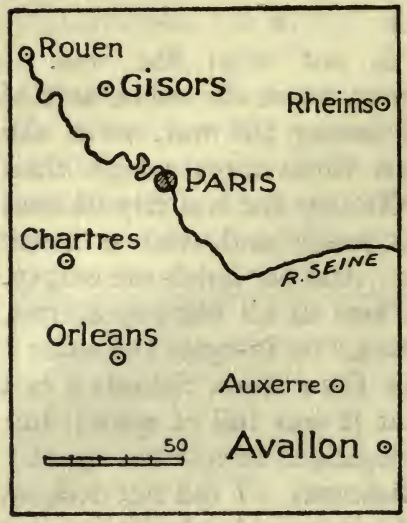
Do you remember that best of all war-spy stories, "The Man with the Club Foot," by Douglas Valentine? Well, I slept last night in Frau Anna Schratt's evil hotel. I do not mean that it was full of spies; but its atmosphere of damp, suspicious sorrow was exactly that of the Schratt establishment. I did not feel, as I got into bed, that anybody would murder me for my driving licence; but I felt that I was expected to commit suicide before sunrise.

Fortunately the general depression (ugh! I can feel it now) had communicated itself to the bill, and I was charged only 14 frs. 50—a pound buys 59 frs.—for a centrally heated bedroom and coffee and rolls in the morning. I dined passably at another inn for 26 frs., including half a bottle of poor white Burgundy. I found that inn, a very well-known one, after half an hour's anxious search for somewhere where somebody else besides myself was dining in Boulogne. I have felt far less lonely in the Sahara.

* * * * *

I could not shake off the mud of Boulogne from

my tyres because its consistency and quantity forbade it, but I skidded away gratefully this morning and, after a terribly cold drive over frozen, rainy, thawing and freezing roads, mostly snowy, through Abbeville and Auneuil, I crept for shelter from the torrent into Gisors. The roads, about 110 miles of them, have been, on the whole, surprisingly good. Between Montreuil and Abbeville they are bad, rough and potholed, but from Marseille-le-Petit (fancy such a name in Picardy!), through Beauvais, I could travel as fast as Imshi can move. Which is not particularly slowly.



I am very glad to be in Gisors. It was here you may remember, that Richard I, then Count of Anjou, committed sacrilege in the most glittering and Angevin manner, by snatching his bride from Gurdon at the altar itself—having himself, a week before, bestowed her hand upon the wretched man. Whence an infinity of sorrow for Richard and his beautiful but stolen Jehane de St. Pol.

I do not really believe the church still exists, but I shall pretend it does and, tourist-like, gape at the very altar-steps whence Lion-Heart plucked his countess from the hand of her lawfully betrothed

and, before the horrified priests, bore her before him on his saddle-bow to one of his fastnesses. Where, in the event, he was besieged by his infuriated papa, Henry II of England.

* * * * *

I have no wish to be unduly disagreeable to any fellow-motorist in England who reads this, but I feel bound to put it on record that I have bathed, literally bathed, wallowed in sunshine. It has not been warm sunshine. On the contrary, it has been peculiarly sharp and biting, but at any rate it proceeded from a blue sky, and all the woods and valleys and hills of this beautiful France smiled and laughed, and I laughed with them till even the cheerful peasants by the roadside stared once more at the mad Englishman.

* * * * *

My departure from Gisors (my Richard I church is no longer among its attractions, by the way) was fraught with disaster. The only shower of the day began to fall as I pushed Imshi's tarnished nose out of the hotel yard. I cursed Fate and carried on. Two hundred yards down the street the petrol-pipe limply severed its connection with the tank, and I was left with a silent engine and a spouting tank.

I need not say, to those who have motored in France, that practical help was forthcoming in less than five minutes. Nobody stared or gathered round or made inane remarks. A mechanic aged perhaps 19 arrived from the blue, seized the offending pipe, remarked rapidly that it was in this kind of misfortune that life, in *his* experience, chiefly consisted, disappeared, and in less than a quarter of an hour,

on my honour as a motorist, brought the thing back beautifully soldered.

* * * * *

While I re-established connection between tank (now wholly empty) and carburettor, we held animated conversation. There was nothing in international motordom with which my cheerful youth was not familiar. The prices of the best British cars (he had seen one yesterday for sale at 175,000 frs. (at present about £2,910), unemployment in Birmingham, Coventry, Lyon, Barcelona and Turin; the deterioration of roads and tyres; the bad workmanship found in the cars of really great makes of all nationalities; the peculiar horror of modern French petrol, its price, and the probable future in eternity of those who sell it—all came under his rapid survey.

He spotted everything of note in Imshi in one eagle glance, made remarkably able criticisms, praised honestly and without flattery, started her up for me, charged me diffidently 1 fr. (about 4*d.*), and departed as unexpectedly as he came. If ever I should need a chauffeur I shall come to Gisors and offer this child gold to enter my service. The worst of it is that, if he accepts (which I doubt), others will, on hearing of his attainments, offer him still more gold to leave it. And I shall lose him.

* * * * *

Imshi is drawing so much attention that it is becoming embarrassing. Our modest crawl through crowded streets and our lively rush up long hills make us an object of public interest. To-day two large

and important-looking persons subjected her to that close scrutiny which is welcomed, without introduction, by all brothers of the road. They compared her with others, patted her back axle, asked if she was "represented" in France, started the engine, raced it, tore up the floor-boards, and in general behaved as if I were not present. It was a great compliment that no apologies were offered. None was asked. They left, shouting that it was the best car of its class they had ever seen. Upon inquiry it appeared that they were the big local motor agents.

Later I met a large section of the French army brazenly joy-riding in "W.D." cars and I felt like royalty. They *all* wanted to look.

* * * * *

I am making my southing. The day after to-morrow, with decent luck, I should be smothered in white dust instead of yellow and black mud, and I shall have exchanged the cold poplar trees for the pines and the olives. I shall believe it when I see it.

Here is what my night at Gisors cost me. My hotel bill came to 39 frs. 10 c., which at dinner included a pint of "very special" Burgundy, disinterred and decanted for me by mine host himself; a particularly special glass of brandy to match my excellent coffee; as good a double bedroom as I have ever found in any hotel, the best and most smiling of attendance—and central heating. I therefore ate and drank of the best which France could give me, slept in the most utter comfort, stayed my morning need with coffee and rolls, housed my car—for about 16*s*.

And, as Pepys would say, all merrie.

FONTAINEBLEAU.

There are one or two places in the world, as far apart, sometimes, as the poles, where, for no definable reason, odd Englishmen feel completely at home, although their surroundings are as foreign as may be. Port Said is one, Malaga another, Trieste a third; but for a real funkhole—for that is what it amounts to—commend me to Fontainebleau. That is the place where, first among the "unobserved exits" of Europe, a man may sit among friends, bereft even of acquaintances, where life is set to a gay measure, where, for the best company of all, he has the royal forest of France.

To me Fontainebleau has always been a town of good hope and augury. In the earliest days of motoring one used to arrive in Paris (from London) by a variety of routes, but one never dreamt of avoiding it or of crossing it in the day. The proper procedure was to leave Paris for the south some time in the afternoon, and spend the night at Fontainebleau. It was like looking up an old friend unexpectedly, only more so. The long, decent street, with its pleasant shops and bustling *cafés*, its three great hotels, each superlative in its degree—the excessively expensive, with antiquity (stags' heads in hall included) attached and charged in the bill; the quiet, charming, but almost equally costly "hotel of first-class"; and the noisier, cheerier, less pretentious, but infinitely more amusing common or garden pub, where the cooking is really very much better than at either the "Stag's Head," or the "First Class," and where you can, even to-day, buy a bottle of red wine which is

fit to drink, and which does not masquerade absurdly in a list of "grands vins"—it is all very real, very human.

Fontainebleau never changes. Chars-à-bancs come and go where diligences used to plod, but the ways to Chailly-en-Bière, Barbizon, Grez, Bourron and Moret are just the same. Stevenson wrote what sometimes seem fantastic pictures of the artist's life near Fontainebleau. And yet, yesterday evening, in a cutting wind, as I drove Imshi along the last mile towards the Obelisque, I passed a man, wrapped to the ears in a goatskin coat, painting, heaven knows by what inspiration, the dying embers of a December day vaguely glowing between the tree-trunks of the forest. It was nearly dark, it was bitterly cold, it was a good hour's walk to Barbizon; where, I took pleasure in supposing, he would dump his easel in the hall of the inn managed by Siron's successor and fall to, with double appetite, on what was left of supper by the less conscientious disciples of Manet. He was a sign, superfluous but welcome, of Stevenson's unfailing grasp of reality. I knew, as I drove my 1920 motor-car along the glorious aisles of that most imperial forest, that the man in the hairy coat was to all intents and purposes Myner, Norris Carthew, or even Jim Pinkerton himself, engaged "heart and soul" on a conscientious forest effect.

It is a quaint place, Fontainebleau. As a showplace it is really a dismal failure—thank heaven. The Palace is poor, vague, rambling, without form or definite intention. It is beautiful in a way, tedious in many. It might serve as "the big house" in a

dozen show towns of Europe. It is devoid of character. And on it Fontainebleau depends not at all for its own attractions. The charm of Fontainebleau lies, in equal degree, between its own self, as a shining example of what a dignified French town of antiquity can be, and the beautiful company of trees which surround it and invade its less wary by-streets. Have you ever been so happy as to spend a few nights in Fontainebleau in nightingale time? There is, just then, no place in the world like it. For miles the forest is alive with the most beautiful music vouchsafed to man to hear.

Last night there were no nightingales. But the main street was alive with the horizon blue uniforms of the smartest gunners in France. People from Paris and other unimportant centres came and went in cars, stayed or passed by; but they were not of Fontainebleau. Only those who had come from much farther off to pay her a visit of ceremony on their way south were worthy of Fontainebleau's notice. There is only one Fontainebleau in the world, and you should not forget it.

On your way south, intent on reaching that precious frontier where the dust begins and the mud ends, where man's speech sounds like a mixture of Italian or Spanish or both, where people smile when they swear, do not forget to spend a night in Fontainebleau-in-the-Forest. It reigns alone, remember. No forest owns to such a sovereign; no town can boast of such a greenwood court.

CHALON-SUR-SAÔNE.

In the ordinary course of events, I should have

nothing to say about Chalon-sur-Saône. It is not a town which lends itself to glowing descriptions. It is cold and dirty and neither north nor south.

Yet I have much to say about it. I arrived at lunch time to-day, after a beautiful but bitterly cold and wet drive over the hills of the Côte d'Or, and over the last six miles of execrable road broke both front springs and sprang numerous leaks in my radiator. Behold me, then, at 1.15 in the last stages of despair. How on earth was I to find two new springs and the proper kind of person to fit them and caulk my spouting radiator in Chalon at 2 p.m. on Christmas Eve? Well, I am writing this at 5.30 p.m., and Imshi is dozing snugly in the hotel garage with two virgin front springs, a watertight radiator, and (don't forget) four new split pins.

* * * * *

What happened was that I found *the* garage I have been looking for for years. Like a lame duck, poor Imshi waddled and groaned, weeping hot tears, up a hill to the never-sufficiently-to-be-advertised garage of Monsieur B. Rogier.

"Broken springs?" said he. "Tut, tut. Yes, quite so"—rather in the manner of a confidential family doctor. "Springs are rather at a premium just now," he went on, "as anybody coming from Chagny (12 miles away) at more than 5 miles an hour usually needs a full set. Still, we will see what can be done."

He shouted commands, and a youth sped out into the slush on one of those crazy featherweight bicycles only to be found in France, and I entered into con-

versation with the foreman's 10-year-old and explained all about motoring in England. I did it, I trust, with a suitable grin, but my heart was in my wet boots. The lad's father joined us and said he had not the smallest hope of finding any springs in Chalon to fit my car, but that if the worst came to the worst he would, with his own hand, rob the car of a customer who would not, with luck, be back for a week.

* * * * *

To be brief, the youth on the bicycle found the springs. "I stole them," he cried, brandishing them aloft—and fell off. "They were already sold," he yelled in ecstasy, "but I seized them and here they are." Instantly things began to move at speed. I have never seen, even in France, so many people do so many things at once in so small a space with such absolute success. They all smoked, including the child who had charge of the split pins, and they all joined into the exhausting conversation I maintained on the outskirts of the fight—not foolishly or impertinently, but because they wanted to know what garages were like in England. It was a very remarkable scene.

At 5.15 p.m. I paid a bill of 76 frs. for five men's time for four hours, 2.50 for something soldered, 100 frs. for two new front springs, and twopence for four split pins. Total, 178.50, or, roughly £3. The work was beautifully done, and I have seldom enjoyed an afternoon so much.

* * * * *

That's the sort of garage for me, cigarettes and conversation notwithstanding. I never once asked

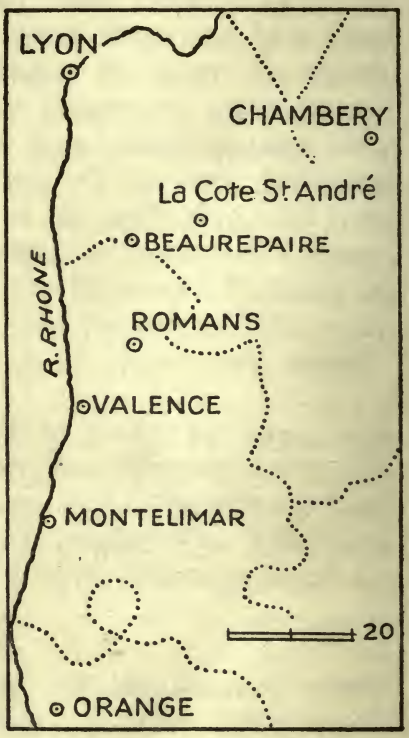
that things should be hurried ; in fact, I said I supposed I should have the pleasure of staying several days in Chalon. The answer was: "You will leave this garage at 5.15 precisely, all mended."

CHAPTER II

FROM CHALON-SUR-SAÔNE TO ORANGE

La Côte St. André, Isere.

I HAVE spent some odd Christmas Days in my time, but this is the oddest. I am scribbling these notes, for lack of other material, on the back of a road map (to be copied, later, in more luxurious circumstances on proper, real paper), in the tiniest village pub, in a quaint hamlet, on the top of an ice-bound hill. I have dined, but not on turkey or anything like it. The Heir-Apparent Presumptive of the House (aged 4) is sitting on my knee, demanding loudly that I should "make music."



At intervals, frequent ones, he leaves me and opens the one door of the establishment and admits invigorating blasts of Polar air. From time

to time Madame of the House and I exchange sympathetic remarks on the care of the young and the cost of living, and I try to screw up courage to get between the frigid and no doubt damp sheets of the State Bed which sullenly awaits me above stairs.

* * * * *

I have not spent a really nice Christmas Day. A terrible cross-country journey from Chalon-sur-Saône (I shall have a good deal to say later about the merits of sticking to rough but main roads) has brought me to this quaint summit. Frankly, had I known what sort of night lay before me, I should have driven on and on in the dark, crashing over potholes and humps, till I got somewhere a little nearer the south.

Never mind. I think I have persuaded Madame (a strong-minded woman, if ever there was one—but I wish she'd send her child to bed before 9 p.m.) to let me have two cans of hot water to put in Imshi's radiator to-morrow morning. And then, south lies my course, south to the sun and the dust, out of these cold, grey, slushy Burgundy hills.

The sun has shone all day, and, to my infinite regret, the moon is silvering the hillsides as I write this—a reproachful invitation to the road. Why did I not go on? No matter. Grandmamma is blowing a tin trumpet to distract the attention of the heir-apparent from his desire to put the mangy family dog into the one and only stove. I am steadily trying to make myself drunk on something they call brandy. It resembles paraffin with a touch of hairwash, and I can do nothing with it.

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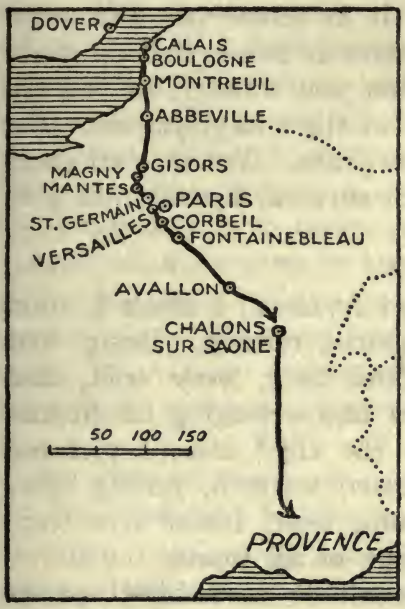
The muddy roads were alive all to-day with Christmas folk going to church in the morning and, after lunch, very deviously going home again. It is a very beautiful land which lies between Bourg-en-Bresse and La Côte St. André, but I never wish to drive a car over its roads again. (The Christmas tin trumpet has now passed to the heir-apparent. The change is not for the better.) I would once again urge all motorists who can do so to bring their cars to France, but I would counsel them to use the main roads as much as possible. Some of these resemble river-beds, but reasonable inns are dotted along them at easy intervals. I have driven 220 kilometres to-day, and I have only seen one reasonable halting-place. To-morrow I make all speed for the high road at Valence, and, so help me St. Christopher, I will not leave it again.

* * * * *

Every day I get a stronger impression of the almost universal French conviction that we in England are infinitely better off than they. It is only when I touch on the subject of no coal, no wood, no butter, and a few others of the charms of post-war life in "rich England" that they begin to confess themselves "misinformed by the newspapers."

At this point I feel compelled to cut short this entry. In one very small room are seated, as near as possible to a stove, grandpapa, grandmamma, papa, mamma, daughter, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, heir-apparent, family dog—and your humble servant. The last is not at all in the picture. He is writing (obviously a futile and suspicious occupation) and the

others are Christmassing. I will make a dash for the damp bed. But I wish I knew how they get merry on what I am swallowing with such reluctance.



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We have had rough times, Imshi and I, since I last wrote. Steady, drenching rain, unspeakably bad roads, with occasional stretches of newly built joy, a spasmodically choked petrol filter for her, and a royal cold for me.

Yet we are full of beans, and although our average speed would be leniently regarded by the worst of the Kingston magistrates (it comes to well under 15 miles an hour), we crash forward cheerfully towards the sunshine which we both feel must be just over the next hill. First, for the benefit of those who may perhaps follow us (and it is well worth it), the roads between Boulogne and Montreuil are quite decent; between Montreuil and Abbeville bad; between Abbeville and Gisors fair. A little farther on, between Magny and Mantes and St. Germain-en-Laye, they are simply superb, polished billiards tables for smoothness; between Versailles and Corbeil abominable;

and, with a few good patches, very rough between Fontainebleau and Avallon.

There are times when you can open the throttle as far as it will go and sit in serene comfort while the car devours the kilometres as flames lick up shavings. There are hours when you wonder, as you try to keep her at 12 m.p.h., whether anything movable or unscrewable is still in its place. Yet it is all great fun, and, provided we both survive, I would not give up one hour of it.

* * * * *

Yet stay. My evening at Avallon; I think I could spare that. It was, of course, raining. Being four o'clock, it was nearly pitch-dark, very cold, and Imshi's choked petrol filter and a longing for human intercourse all led me to the chief inn. I pictured myself in cosy, central-heated warmth, jawing nineteen to the dozen with mine host, Imshi in a comfortable stable, out of range of all frosts.

Avallon! What a lamentable township! Something had gone wrong with the town gas and it only worked once in every eighty seconds. It was wetter than anything I had ever seen, and twice as cold. I dripped into three chemists' shops (all in the dark) before I could find one who could sell me a tablespoonful of eucalyptus. Only one of the merchants I visited was cheerful—the tobacconist from whom I bought some five-sou stamps.

"Ah," said he, "you are writing abroad, eh? Perhaps your correspondents are luckier in not being in Avallon!"

* * * * *

Yet the cheerfulness of the Frenchman of the plains is wonderful. The last two or three days I have talked to all sorts of people, from innkeepers to policemen, from chestnut-sellers to civic dignitaries, from officers in hotel messes to every kind of person remotely connected with motors. And not one of them has the hump. They are not having a very good time in France, although in some ways they are luckier than us. But there is a most striking sense abroad of determination to make the best of things.

After all, they seem to argue, this is only the result of the last war. We've had lots of wars before and we shall have lots more again. It was uncomfortable after '72. It is uncomfortable now. But there's nothing to make a real fuss about.

* * * * *

One thing impresses me very much, perhaps because, for the moment, I miss no opportunity of getting as much comfort as possible! And that is, in so many words, that your Frenchman will not tolerate makeshifts or substitutes. No margarine for him, thank you! Butter, if there is any (and I've not failed to find it in the smallest roadside inn), but if there is none—then, dry bread. No chemical or vegetable mixtures go down here.

One man I talked to for an hour, who complained that the Englishman had everything and the Frenchman nothing, was flabbergasted when I told him a few—a very few—cold facts about "best new-laid," "fresh," "cooking," and just "eggs." He was deeply moved, especially when I touched gently upon the subject of rationed Government butter.

"How, then, do you manage your omelettes?" said he. "We have, most of us, abandoned their manufacture," I replied.

"And your coal, of which you have millions of tons?" I told him. Something in my manner evidently induced him to believe me. He sighed deeply and passed on to other themes.

The pluck and cheeriness of the French under very unpleasant conditions (butter and eggs are not everything) are amazing. I have not yet heard one man really grouse. Yet things are not really as they should be. Here and there you come across the old-time, common-sense comfort and well-being of pre-war France, but more often you meet stark need. This "last war" is a more serious affair than was 1872. Yet I have not found any of the miserable, aching restlessness which we suffer at home. Perhaps it is, in part, because a Frenchman's idea of heaven is to stay at home—ours to "get away."

In the meantime I should like it to be known that in my bedroom there are four windows and three doors. I am not warm.

But soon, very soon, I may be beating my clothes to get the good southern dust out of them. . . . Ah! that will be an epoch, believe me! My feet will also be dry.

ORANGE, PROVENCE.

Take a large map of France and trace the course of the Rhone from about Lyon to the sea. Looking north, you will see on your left hand the Auvergne mountains, sloping sharply to the river; on the right,

foothills and highlands leading up to the Alps and Switzerland.

I saw these things to-day as they are, much as you may guess at them on your map. After much rather dreary sloshing about the side roads bordering the vineyards (there is no other English word which describes my method of progress along a succession of farm lanes), I came suddenly forth, at 3,000 ft. above the sea, upon a little shelf, and saw it all. It was really my first sight of the Promised Land of the south. Ever since I left bleak Calais I have been nursing the thought of the supreme moment when I should realize that at long last I was in the real south.

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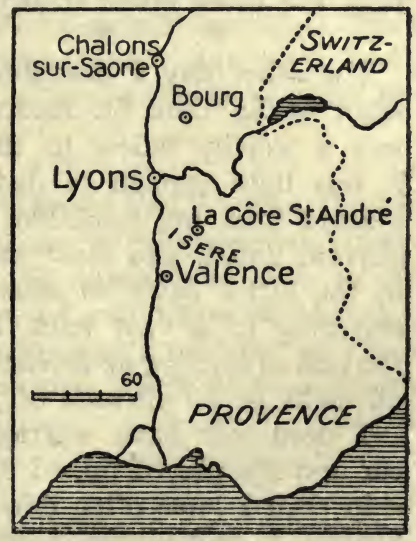

Never could I have hoped for so dramatic a vision. Gone were the grey-black, muddy roads, the barren hills (few things are in reality so hideous as vineyards out of season), the cold slush and murk of Burgundy. Before me lay what seemed like half France—straight white roads, the solemn company of cypresses, brown-tiled houses, oxen, olives—but why go on? It was the real south at last.

Opposite lay the Auvergnes, behind me the august

Alps, between a rich plain severed by the uproarious Rhone. I must have been able to see 100 miles at least. I do not know how long I sat spellbound by the sight.

Immediately below me, about 1,000 ft., lay the hamlet of St. Martin-le-Puy, the starting-point of all that part of my pilgrimage which promises best. I could trace my coming road, mile after mile, into the blue distance of the valley where the great national road comes down to Orange along Rhone side. I do not very much like the way I have come here from the north, but all my discomforts and trials were forgotten in a moment before this incomparable view. It is not often given to anyone to see such a thing.

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The other day I described how I kept Christmas night at La Cote St. André. Boxing Day morning was a worthy fellow to the occasion. As soon as it was light enough to distinguish grey from black I arose from my tomb-like bed and, unwashed, unshaven, unfed, and most uncomfortable, I crept out in the bitter dawn to where my beloved Imshi lay shivering in a vast barn, and addressed myself to the task of starting up an engine which had lain exposed all night at an altitude of 3,000 ft.

I need not have worried. Imshi is a well-bred car and she played up. I started her with less hardship than I have often done in England at sea-level. Swiftly I packed the luggage, swiftly brought her round to the door of the dreadful inn.

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And who do you think met me, at that bleak hour,

when father, mother, son and daughter were snugly in their beds? Only one person in France is indicated: grandmamma. Grandmammas must, it is to be supposed, do something for their living, and it is obviously their job to speed the parting guest even if he does elect to go away at such an hour. She was there, with the business smirk. Monsieur would take no coffee before starting? No. Monsieur would take nothing, thank you, except his leave.

With a face of stone and an eye of steel the lady made out a bill which, accustomed as I now am to the generous calculations of post-war innkeepers, made me gasp. I said no word, but paid like a very willing lamb. I would have paid her twice as much to get out of range of her puissant presence. They were not born yesterday in St. André. At least, grandmamma was not. They do well to give her the job of night-porter.

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And then for the road, Imshi and I, down the hill to Beaurepaire and Romans; to the brown and green plains; to the Rhone. So anxious were we to get away from the influence of grandmamma that not only did we forget breakfast and lunch, but we made a slight mistake in our road, which took us up 17 miles of superfluous mountain and down 15 miles. It was Imshi's first introduction to real mountaineering, and I am very well pleased with her. It was very trying, being a good deal steeper than the average military road in France; and the hairpins, regular as telegraph-poles, were extraordinarily acute. But we did very well, and she gets full marks.

One hundred and sixty miles to-day, between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. It doesn't sound much, but we crossed two mountain ranges, and for at least 30 miles travelled on second speed on the level, over the most infamous roads.

CHAPTER III

FROM AVIGNON TO MENTONE

AVIGNON.

I HAD meant to write weightily of Avignon; to dwell on its popes, its palaces, its river, and its bridge which, you will no doubt remember, succumbed under the strain of supporting the citizens while they capered on it. At least that is how I have, since tender years, connected the pictures of a broken bridge, labelled "Avignon," with a nursery rhyme taught to me by my governess, which ran, guilelessly:

> Sur le Pont
> d'Avignon,
> Tout le monde y danse, danse, &c., y danse en rond.

You must be careful, in Provence, to pronounce *danse* "dancer," as if it were an English substantive. Mistral is dead, but no doubt I may be called to account.

As a matter of fact I want to refer you, for information about Avignon, to a quantity of educative works, aptly dedicated to the whole subject, and tell you, instead, about Jules, Marcel and Célestin. You know them all three, quite well, though you do not, for the moment, recall their faces. They are the people who get 5 frs. from me every morning. They are

those who used to wear wasp-coloured waistcoats and carry feather-dusters. Is it still in doubt? Then I must begin at the beginning.

Imshi has an engine which, when hot, is remarkably efficient; but, when cold, a perfect terror to start on the evil fluid sold as petrol in France. Since I left the frozen acres of the Pas de Calais I have adopted a system—the system of J.M.C., Jules, Marcel, Célestin. In every French hotel I have ever stayed in there has never failed to produce himself an aproned Herakles, ready to do anything from frying a trout to posting a letter. He is practically always either Jules, Marcel, or Célestin. Him it is the lady of the desk shouts for immediately after you have written your name in her register; he it is who receives with a smile worth a louis, the last 2-fr. paper voucher you cede to the assembled staff on your departure. Jules, Marcel, or/and Célestin occupy the same position in any self-respecting French provincial inn as the roof. They are indispensable.

My plan is as follows. I call J., C., or M., as the case may be, immediately on my arrival and after Imshi has been unwillingly thrust into some dark and frigid corner, I say to whichever it may be, Jules, Célestin, or Marcel: "At 8.30 to-morrow you will bring me, in large cans, boiling water, and you will continue to bring it till I tell you to stop." At the appointed hour cans of steaming water begin to collect round my car. I fill the radiator once and again. I then set the throttle to the usually correct angle, and advance the spark to the point where it will, with luck, fire the engine.

J., M., C. are (or is) by this time agog with eagerness to help. I do not discourage them. I address them thus: "My children, to him who first wakes this engine to life I will give 5 frs.—here they are." I display the repellent piece of paper with which France now conducts her commerce, and, with a feeling of natural sympathy, turn my back. From time to time, as I smoke my *caporal* cigarette, Jules, Célestin, or Marcel casts himself upon the ground beside me and moans. I pay no outward attention, beyond gently crackling the 5 fr. note.

Eventually the thing is done, and J.M.C. comes to me, wiping his brow, and saying, "Ah, la rosse!" He gets 5 frs., piles my luggage on, and I leave him, still cursing my car. Don't you think it is worth 1*s.* 9*d.*, at current exchange? I do—for me, if not for J.M.C.

Avignon is a very charming city, and it has delightful memories for me in bygone days. It is cursed by a particularly virulent form of mistral wind, but it possesses a good inn, and it is a classic halt on the way south. Jules, Marcel and certainly Célestin are to be found there on any day of the week. They are a strong breed, these.

CANNES.

This is a very pleasant place for the motorist. It is undoubtedly pleasant for others as well, but they scarcely need be considered, as, so far as can be seen, they are in an invisible minority. Cannes, indeed the whole Riviera, is a motor show. There are cars

from all over Europe, but of the foreigners by far the largest number are the British. The familiar G.B. plaque is easily first.

To us brethren of the road the only part of Cannes which really matters is, of course, the pass over the Esterel range to Fréjus—and that does not really begin within the limits of Cannes. Cannes itself is delightful and, with its harbour and quaysides, its flowers and its general air of respectable age, has an atmosphere denied to any other Riviera town. But when motorists think of Cannes they think of the glorious Esterel.

What a mountain road it is! I came over it in the late afternoon the other day, when the setting sun was staining the pines a deeper crimson than the road itself. I have driven over that pass at noon, in the early morning, at midnight, with a May moon turning it into fairyland, but it has never seemed so beautiful as it did the other evening. Under you is the last perfection in road engineering—round you a scene of forest wildness of unsurpassed beauty.

It is not a road to be trifled with. It is, like all French military roads, scientifically graded and at only one or two hairpin bends is the gradient steeper than 1 in 10 or so, but the road is none too wide and just now at least 5 ft. of it have been cut off by long stretches of piled metalling. This it is as well to remember, especially at night, as there is only just room in some places to pass another car. Powerful lights and a penetrating horn are essential, and at all times you must drive, as they say, with all four ears and eyes before you.

What is it that gives Cannes its charm? It has, of course, a terrific moment in history. It may almost say of itself, "If I, Cannes, had not been there at the proper time, there would have been no Waterloo!" On its sunny quay one Napoleon landed on the first of his last hundred days. Practically speaking, the Little Corporal marched from Cannes to Quatre Bras.

But, resplendent as it was, that episode does not suffice to explain Cannes' charm. It is something in the air, mild, dignified, decent. It is probably because you can't define it that you feel it.

Monte Carlo.

I wonder if there is any common resort of civilized man so utterly unchangeable as Monte Carlo? It is like a mould. Other moulds are made and patterns are changed, but the original mould remains as it was until it is destroyed. I sincerely hope that Monte Carlo will never be destroyed. It is an international institution, and is only part of the Riviera by an accident of geography. It is Monte Carlo, and it would be precisely the same if it were in Poland or Nebraska. But I do not think it will ever be changed.

After a lapse of a good many years I have once more arrived at Monte Carlo, *via* my old and dear friends Fontainebleau, Larochepot, Grignan—that extraordinary inland Gibraltar of Provence, Avignon, and that model mountain pass, the Esterel. As I came down in Imshi through the dark over the last spurs of the hills into Cannes, I expected—I do not know why—to feel a thrill, a throb of regretful remembrance—a foolish, "Ah, then—and *now*!" feeling.

Well, no such manifestation occurred. Mechanically I picked up my landmarks, stored in my memory over fifteen years, the Roman amphitheatre at Fréjus, the Auberge, half-way through the Esterel, the three specially steep and dangerous corners on that incomparably beautiful road, the lights of Napoule—picked them up, and forgot them. Soon I was in that narrow street of Cannes, uproarious with yellow trams, out again by the waterside, where the yachts lie dozing at anchor, and engaged once more on the difficult navigation of that very overrated road, the Corniche.

It was all just the same. There was, at intervals, a smell of stocks in the air, a clanging of hurrying trams, the sizzling of the overhead wires, the sudden darkness of a mile of unvilla'ed road, the glare of motor lamps, the cold glitter of Nice (how well I remembered the penetrating chill of it!), Beaulieu—and then, quite suddenly, the steep climb up from the Condamine, and the years vanished like mist. Exactly as they have always been lay the Casino, the Hôtel de Paris, the Hermitage, the gardens with their absurd, hand-reared flowers, the little, neat, clean Bond Street, probably the most expensive street in the world, running east and west at the top. Behind, the whole dark mountain side was jewelled with lights. Some of them may belong to new houses, new hotels, but they are just the same as they were before.

A huge moon was rising, exactly as if in response to the call-boy, and beginning its celebrated Dance of Pearls with the waiting sea. Nothing, nothing was changed. The air was crystal for clearness, charged heavily with the indescribable scents

which, like the Call of the East, drag men by irresistible attraction just once more to the Courtesan of the Seas. Everything was in its place, the stage set once more for the play which has been played for nearly forty years without a change in the cast. Nothing could be more utterly theatrical than Monte Carlo. Nothing theatrical could be so beautiful; nothing theatrical more studied, more elaborate, better drilled. Monte Carlo is the most perfect piece of artificiality in the world. And that is not intended as an impertinence to this diamond star on the anklets of France. The artificiality which succeeds is as worthy of a place in a gallery of pictures as a North Atlantic winter storm, Niagara, or the desert at sunset. It may not, cannot, impress you so deeply, but there is no dismissing such a consummate example of art for effect's sake as Monte Carlo. It is something real.

The artificiality of Nice is a tawdry imitation. It has no solidity. Nice is untidy. Here and there, there are several places where are signs of cheeseparing methods; where the third-rate has been good enough. Here and there Nature herself has been allowed to strike a discordant note, has not been properly relegated to the background, where, like a company of picked chorus-girls, she serves only to show off the finished beauty of the leading lady of the piece.

That is eminently her job at Monte Carlo. The mountains which frame Monte Carlo are of the wildest and most unkempt kind. (What art was his who staged the tiny town!) But they are not allowed to encroach on the furbished streets of the Principality.

The only time they are allowed to share a little of the glare of the footlights is after dark, when they put on their jewels and group themselves in glorious masses of shadow round the Dancer of the Cities of the World.

FROM ENGLAND TO MENTONE.

No, Monte Carlo will never change. She may put on more diamonds—always, of course, in good taste—she may leave off her old rubies, she may even suffer a little, a very little elderly spread. But for ever and always, to our sons' sons and their daughters' daughters, Monte Carlo will just be as she is to-day—the very last word in costly artifice.

MENTONE.

The first stage, to the Riviera, of my long journey about Europe in Imshi is done.

I have exchanged the Channel for the Mediterranean and, after one of the most strenuous yet interesting motor runs of my experience (about 800 miles), I am sitting basking in hot sunshine, gazing in the direction of Africa, while the car is undergoing such a wash as she has never had. The mud of Kent, seven pro-

vinces, and goodness knows how many departments of France is being cut off her in young landslides. The trees display ripe oranges in a theatrical manner. The sky is a dazzling blue, the houses are a blinding white. There is a gorgeous smell of wood smoke and onions and other delightful things in the air. I am also perfectly warm.

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And I ponder upon the week which is behind me, the seven days of grimness which separate me from the quay at Calais. And I say to myself, "Honestly, as a light-car owner, was it worth it?" And I answer, honestly, "Yes. It was well worth it."

Mind you, winter motoring across the plains and hills of France to-day is not in the least like what it was before the war. Those who mean to bring their little cars over this year must remember that speed, except in very rare circumstances, is out of the question. The owner of a 40-h.p. car, who has just arrived here, tells me that the journey from Havre took six days.

Well, I came in my 10-h.p., weight about one-third the big one, in seven, counting the half-day lost at Chalon-sur-Saône, when new front springs were fitted. And I started from Calais, which should count at least another day's run.

I have, once or twice, been able to go fast in Picardy, near Fontainebleau and between Aix-en-Provence and Brignolles, where the roads have just been scientifically rebuilt and are even better than they were before the war. On the other hand, I took one hour and thirty-five minutes to go from Orange to Avignon—

a level, national road, straight as a ruler, distance 28 kilometres.

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For the present most of the main roads south must be avoided. They are practically impassable for any but lorries. You must often take to secondary roads; and here you must be careful to plan your daily run so that you shall arrive at nightfall somewhere where a decent lodging can be found. Let no man set at naught my experience at La Côte St. André on Christmas night. If that route be followed take every precaution to *sleep* at Bourg-en-Bresse. The next day you can, with decent luck, reach Romans, or even Orange, where good accommodation abounds.

Petrol is easy to get, but I have not always been able to find the kind of engine oil I wanted. Petrol is bad, but not intolerable. What is called "Tourisme" brand is the only kind to use.

These, then, are my experiences as far as the Riviera, and I have enjoyed every moment of them—or nearly. In bygone days I used to drive, comfortably, in an 18-h.p., 40-h.p., or 60-h.p. car from Paris to Mentone in two and a half or three days. Now I do it in six. No matter. I have seen a great deal more of France than I used to do in the days of "the accelerated service."

But one thing, above all, I would impress on the Riviera-bound—bring with you a spare pair of front springs. You may not want them, but if you do you will, as I did, want them "mighty bad."

Springs or no springs, do not be deterred from driving your car to the Riviera rather than taking

the train. Take plenty of time, remember the days are short and the nights very long, do not drive at night, and you will, like the children, "see what you will see." It will be very nice indeed.

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I nearly forgot the most important information of all—practically the whole of the Riviera sea road, from Fréjus to Mentone, is good. I drove the last odd 60 kilometres from Cannes to Mentone, in the dark, with one headlight (it was one degree better than useless, in that it showed up patches of white stones just in time for me to dodge them), through Nice, Beaulieu, Monaco, Monte Carlo, and round Cap Martin, in 2 hours. And this, incidentally, included going off the road at Roquebrune (owing to that headlight) into a hole between tram lines a foot deep and two feet across—and getting out again. No damage was done, except to the speed indicator drive, which is now definitely out of business. So you see that no fears need be felt about the roads on the Riviera itself.

And, wherever you go, you are made most royally welcome. France takes you and your car to her great heart.

CHAPTER IV

RIVIERA GARAGES—THE STONE AGE—STORMS AND ART POTS

MENTONE.

IT is just as if the war had never been. I say that perfectly sincerely—from an owner-driver's point of view. Since Imshi and I arrived here and after we had each rested a while from the rigours of a cross-country journey in winter we have driven quietly, in a dignified manner, about the extremely pleasant places which lie between Cannes and Italy, and there does not seem to be the smallest change anywhere.

The roads themselves are, on the whole, quite as good as they were years ago. There are perhaps more and better-equipped garages. It is a little difficult to remember; but, at any rate, the needs of the owner-driver are luxuriously attended to. I cannot remember ever meeting with such prompt attention, eager civility, efficiency, as I have this last week. If you ask for anything, from a tin of oil to the services of a skilled hand (to work, mind you, under your own instructions), you get it immediately.

These garages are, for the most part, excellently run. They are light, well-built and airy, and all the

most important ones have the plant and staff to deal with any sort of breakdown or replacement, at practically any moment of the day or night. Here are two examples which have recently been quoted to me at the Garage Delaunay-Belleville, Mentone, one of the best-equipped and most "fashionable" garages on the coast, run by a firm which has branches here and at Evian in the summer. An owner was charged 300 frs., about £5, for making two new front springs and the work and time required for fitting them. Another bill I have seen from the same establishment was for 330 frs. for a pair of first-class acetylene headlights by the leading makers, specially sent from Paris, a new pair of lamp-irons to hold them, and the necessary time and labour for fixing them in position; £5 10*s*. for a pair of headlights and irons! I have myself bought an excellent mechanical Klaxon, of a kind unobtainable in London, for 89 frs.—say 30*s*.

But perhaps the greatest attraction to the motorist from England is the prompt and businesslike manner in which orders are carried out and, above all, the unfailing zeal and cheerfulness of all concerned. It is a positive pleasure to hand your car over to the alert foreman and leave the rest to him. You are perfectly safe in doing so. A swift yet comprehensive examination of the car will be made, a detailed report handed to you in an incredibly short space of time, together with an estimate of the cost, and, unless something really terrible has to be done to the car, you will be driving her again, "as good as new," after a delay so short as to seem miraculous. And you may, in nearly every instance, be absolutely

confident that the work has not been scamped. The true engineer's conscience resides in these Riviera garages, from the foreman down to the boy who is allowed to be under the car and reverently wipe the oil and mud from the bottom of the gear-box.

There can be few, if any, places in the world where the real meaning of the word "motoring" is so completely understood as on the Riviera. The whole of France is, of course, and always has been, a land where the casual motorist and his needs are better understood than anywhere else, but it is on the Riviera where the whole business reaches the plane of a fine art. From Toulon to the Italian frontier the whole country seems to have been planned exclusively for the entertainment of the motorist, the roads designed and constructed for his special benefit, the best repairers to have hastened to the spot in readiness to do anything that may be required of them, from vulcanizing a tyre to rebuilding an entire chassis.

Nobody would say that the ledge running east and west under the sheer sides of the Maritime Alps could be described as an ideal motoring country. There is scarcely a mile between Antibes and Ventimiglia without a dozen blind corners, and the mountain roads are, to an ignorant or careless driver, among the most dangerous in the world. They are in reality the safest mountain roads that the wit of man can devise, and, on the whole, the most perfectly constructed and maintained; but if you are not accustomed to the real military hairpin bend your first day's experience of Riviera motoring may prove rather startling. Yet in spite of the fact that every kilometre calls for

the greatest possible caution, and that it is only the cleverest drivers who will (with considerable difficulty) average more than 20 miles an hour on more or less level roads between any two given points, and decidedly less over the hillsides, the Riviera remains indisputably the great playground of the world of cars.

And what a place it is for a hill-loving car. People say it is dangerous. Of course it is—if you drive dangerously. It is an unending succession of blind corners on the level; the same, plus hairpin bends, on the mountains. But if you realize this and drive accordingly, I know no place to equal the Riviera mountain roads for extracting the last ounce of joy out of driving a willing car.

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To take only one instance—the road from Mentone to Nice by La Turbie. It is hackneyed as is the Portsmouth Road to Guildford. Yet who can say that he has ever swung round that last corner on the way up which suddenly shows you the Valley of the Var hundreds of feet below the snow-capped Alps, the sapphire sea, the curving bays, the red-roofed towns, without new delight? Who has ever looked upon that gorgeous view without a catch at the heart?

I remember in past days, when cars were different, it was the earnest endeavour of every owner to get to La Turbie in, I think it was, less than half an hour, Forty-h.p. cars did it in twenty minutes—20-h.p.'s in twenty-five. The whole run to Nice had to be accomplished in an hour. With what grim determination we swung round the "Coudes brusques," how we saved inches off each turn, how earnestly we stole a few seconds

there, a moment here, in order to announce, truthfully, that we had reached the Place Masséna at noon exactly!

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Great days they were, and it is with very real gratitude that one sees how little the scene has changed. Perhaps we get to Nice a little faster (I wonder?); but whether we do or not, the busy, merry, bustling, dusty roads, both along the shore by Beaulieu and Eze, and over the hills, are just the same. Very few things have been left untouched by the war; very, very few of those which amused us in holiday time. As an old Riviera-motorist, I cannot say how moving it is to find our old playground so like its old self.

To-day I drove my 1920 motor-car along a 1921 seaside road and paid a call on a man who is 100,000 years old. Only his bones are left, but there seems, among savants, to be no argument about his age.

He, and his family of three, one a mere stripling of 99,985 years, are at present resting at a place called the Rochers Rouges, on the Italian frontier, between Garavan and Ventimiglia. They probably need repose, as there is every evidence that they walked here from Africa, taking, more or less, the course of the Algiers steamers which run from Marseilles. It happened that at the time of their journey the Mediterranean did not exist. There were marshes and forests between Mentone and Algiers, full of lions and elephants and woolly rhinoceroses.

My elderly friend brought some of the elephants with him, as well as deer and wild horses and other pleasant beasts. Bits of them are to be seen in the neat little museum in which their late owner reposes,

together with a wonderful array of flints and strange ornaments. He himself, a manly, well-developed figure nearly 7 ft. in height, sleeps in a glass case surrounded, most properly, by his stud, his elephant flocks, his rhinoceros herds, and his late wife's necklaces. He is quite the most startling person I have ever met.

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In the tombs of the kings of Egypt I have gazed with awe upon the features of the great Rameses, thinking that he must have been born shortly after Adam. I have tried to count the piled centuries on the Pyramids and among the towering glories of Karnak. But this evening——! Egypt? Egypt with her scarcely cold remains is a thing of yesterday. My friend with the variegated live-stock, who strolled across from Kairuan or Khartoum or Nigeria to Mentone (Alpes-Maritimes), France, puts Egypt, Baalbek, Assyria, even mighty China herself in the kindergarten class. He belongs to that rare and exclusive society known as the Stone Age.

One is abashed before the accumulated mass of Time; yet, within a minute, with characteristic tourist impudence, one is prying into the home life of the poor man as if one were looking over his cave with an order to view from the local house agent. Stone and its relations were the main facts in his life. You see the immense flint knife he held in his hand when he died, the flint hide scrapers, the flint engraving tools. Yes, engraving tools—the little, delicate, razor-sharp chisels, about an inch and a

half long, with which he made his sketches and wrote his business letters on the enduring granite.

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Stone, or a form of it, also buried him when dead. They did not bury him as we do. Indeed, that is a feature of palæolithic times, which shows that people in those days had none of our morbid funeral ideas. There is a concise record of one respectable father of a family who, when finally dead, and I fancy they were a hardy, long-lived community, was lightly covered with a few handfuls of pebbles, some peroxide of iron, and a few fish-bones. Thus decently buried, he remained in the family cave, undisturbed by, not in the least disturbing to, his sorrowing relatives and their descendants. He lay where he died, until he was found, some time later, by a nineteenth-century archæologist.

The fish-bones served as a kind of antiseptic embalming compound. They contained (as, of course, every child of the Stone Age knew) the equivalent of sulphuric acid. This burnt away the flesh rapidly and cleanly, leaving the gentleman's bones as I saw them to-day, just before lunch. They were a tidy people.

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I feel I know them well, and I wish they had left some records of their roads across the Mediterranean. I want to go to North Africa with Imshi, and it would be interesting to study the roads between the Rochers Rouges and, say, Biskra, in B.C. 99079. I dare say they were not so rough as my path may be, 3 miles above them, on the rolling billows of the Gulf of Lyons.

I am afraid one family came to an end rather suddenly. The kitchen fire is there and before it the day's lunch was keeping warm. They were going to have a small leg of elephant and probably wild-horse cutlets. The bones are there for you to see, stacked round a good-sized heap of slack. I wonder what convulsion of mountains and sea led to the waste of that lunch, or whether the current Hun suddenly needed prompt attention.

In the meantime excavation work is going on at the mouths of these caves, and any day another and less parvenu family may be found. At the time when my friends flourished their eligible caves must have been on an Alpine summit. Then the Mediterranean put in an appearance and turned them into seaside villas. Below the present sea-level there may be brought to light traces of an Age of Man unguessed at, incalculably old. These narrow cracks in the red cliffs near Mentone may be but the door to discoveries which will alter all our ideas of time and decide, one way or another, the Darwin theory. Conceive the excitement if in the flat below, so to speak, a tailed family is found!

CAP D'AIL.

I wish I could, just once, in a sentence, define the charm of the Riviera—on a sunny, windless day. This must be, I suppose, the fifth year I have driven a car down to this strange seaboard, and although I am invariably filled with joy at the first sight of the "wine-coloured sea," and the astonishing habitations which are scattered along its broken edges, I am completely at a loss to say why. The Riviera is a mass of

incongruities, of anachronisms, of exaggerations, of amazing examples of what man, in the shape of an architect of villas, can accomplish in the very teeth of Nature—abominations, outrages on every canon of taste, yet bewilderingly suitable, strongly attractive.

The front of my hotel at Mentone faced southwards upon the blue sea, a dazzling back drop seen across an orchestra and stage of palm trees and red roofs. That was an ordinary, not to say commonplace, view. The back of the hotel abutted violently on to the precipitous side of a stony, scraggy mountain, sparsely decorated (mostly in the wrong places) with stunted olive-trees, a very few umbrella pines, decaying cottages, hanging on by their teeth to some giddy ledge, a hamlet or two of incredible age, and a large quantity of rocks and stones. From a back window one new to Riviera scenery would gaze in astonishment, first at the P.L.M. railway, about on a level with the hotel; above that a kind of tilted Sahara; above that a sham stone balustrade, poised on art-green pots with a dazzling glaze on them; still higher either a "Moorish" villa, with Japanese summerhouses, above, below, on each side of it; or upon a perfectly enormous hotel one serried mass of terraces. In either case, there would be a garden as a very literal background; the kind of garden which has lifts instead of paths; and a small forest of orange trees covered with ripe fruit.

Much higher up would come yet more art-green or blue pots, yet more wedding-cake villas, yet more colossal hotels. In the crevices left by these eruptions, Mother Earth would glare savagely forth, threatening

the art pots with her ageless rocks, scowling furiously over the very chimneys of the "Imperial International Palace Hotel." Miles away, the eternal Alps sleep frostily above the whole jumble. Anybody who saw this ridiculous yet delightful show would think, in the first place, that Gilbert and Sullivan missed their greatest opportunity in not composing *Ridiculosa: or the Duke of Capo d'Aglio*; and, in the second, that it behoved him to remove very swiftly from that place before an obviously imminent earthquake, engineered by a justly infuriated Minerva, swept the whole box of toys into the sea.

It is the sunshine which does it. Under that glorious glare and warmth these confectionery dwellings, these insolent art drain-pipes (some are obviously imported direct from the houses of Artistic Chelsea in the day of *Patience*), take on a reality, a life which seems, on dull days, past belief. You take the most violently savage mountain, of the least accomodating kind, on which destructive hurricanes may and do rage at any moment, and on its grim eyebrows you airily poise every possible sort of unsuitable building. Dusty and untidy cactus pushes its way insolently between you and your bazaar creations and bursts out in angry clumps along your Regent Street balustrades. The tents of an army bivouacking for a single night do not seem less permanent; yet the cactus and the rocks are drilled and disciplined, lifts and staircases are set among the crevices, dreadful statues pose under tamarisk, cedar, and cypress, and—behold, Sugar Town has invaded Nature, occupied and rendered her absurd. And the effect is simply charming.

What the effect is when the sun goes in, inky clouds sweep in furious attacks from the crests of the Alps, and that bitter, deadly wind begins to blow, I have never troubled to ascertain. On those occasions I do as they do in Ridiculosa : I take cover, if feasible, in bed, and there remain till the sun shines once more on the art pottery. In that way a bad *mistral* is very like that thriving descendant of the Plagues of Egypt, the *Khansîn* wind. One is cold and the other (generally) hot ; but both have the effect of a pestilence on the native. Both empty the streets in record time. There is no arguing with either a *mistral* or a *Khamsîn*, and pretending they are passing discomforts. One might as well try to reason with a volcano, or explain away an earthquake. The *mistral* wind is a force. It is, in fact, the unchained devil which lives among the barren summits, the serpent in this toyshop Eden, the Bogyman who keeps the dwellers on the Riviera up to a reasonable standard of goodness. If we did not always go in fear of this terror which hurls itself suddenly out of a sapphire sky, rends and devastates, and retires leaving you a limp and penitent rag, there is no saying to what depths of Lotusland ease we might not comfortably sink on the Riviera. As it is, most of us cast an anxious eye on the northern mountain tops at all hours of the day, to see if the terrible banners of the *mistral's* heralds are being run up.

Cap d'Ail, the Cape of Garlic, cowers under the Dog's Head Peak, and tucks itself away as far as possible under the shelter of the ridge which carries the Corniche road between Beaulieu and Monaco.

It is an odd little place ; unique, I think, on this part of the coast, for having a promontory on which neither enamelled hotel nor castellated villa is built. You may not believe it, but there are two, if not three, fields in which something useful is preparing to grow, a yard or two of stone wall, and an actual farm. It's perfectly absurd. I have not made a close inspection of this portent for fear I should discover, too late, that this is the *dernier cri* in Ridiculosa residences, that the farm is the villa of a profiteer and the green fields camouflaged dancing floors. But the illusion of rustic simplicity is complete—from the Corniche road.

CHAPTER V

THE ROAD TO ITALY

ALASSIO.

IT is very pleasant to be on the road again and to be driving my adventurous Imshi into new places.

The Riviera is a glorious place, a mine of beautiful things to see, and I am looking forward keenly to passing through it again in a few days, but just now the call of the road is very loud, and I am delighted to be ambling along this exquisite coast, luggage strapped on behind, passport and permits handy in a door-pocket, the wide world before my car's wheels.

Between San Remo and Voltri lies one of the most beautiful and fascinating 100 miles of coast road it is possible to find. It is amazing how frontier lines affect scenery. It is not that, having passed the official limits of one country and entered upon another, the people, their architecture and their customs change; the very earth, sea and sky seem sensibly to alter. It is so in the case of France and Spain; very much so on leaving Germany and entering Austria; still more when you leave Germany for Holland; but most of all does the abruptness of the change strike you when you drive a car from Mentone to San Remo.

Ventimiglia, or Vintimille (according to your taste), is a neutral town, smacking strongly of both France and Italy, and, although owing allegiance to the latter, of so mixed a parentage as to have practically no characteristics. But drive a few miles farther on into Italy and you leave behind you everything that suggests France, particularly everything that suggests the French Riviera.

The French and Italian Rivieras have each their devoted adherents. The one is extremely beautiful, abundantly rich, and terribly tidy. The other has a wistful loveliness, a happy-go-lucky "take me as you find me" air, an unstudied holiday look which appeals very much to the motorist sated with the ordered charm of the Cannes to Monte Carlo highways and by-ways. The contrast is vivid. On the map, and perhaps from the sea or an aeroplane, the country looks just the same. Liguria used to extend, I think, from Spezia to Cannes or thereabouts, if not Marseilles, and at one time may probably have worn much the same general appearance. To-day nothing could be more different than the surroundings of, say, Beaulieu and those of Porto Maurizio.

There is, especially on a day of grey skies or wind and sun, an extraordinary suggestion of Cornwall and the West Coast of Ireland in these Ligurian headlands. It may sound fantastic, but I have the authority of my Irish travelling companion for one part of the theory and of the two of us for the rest. As we drove along, one of these violently sudden Mediterranean storms burst upon us, the wind veering wildly from the north-east to the south-west, and knocking up a sea in

an hour which spent itself on the red rocks in breakers worthy of the Atlantic. As we watched the masses of foam flung toweringly up against the low cliffs, sometimes sweeping across the road and drenching us, and listened to the dull boom of the smitten rocks, we could, with no great stretch of imagination, have fancied ourselves Falmouth way or on the scarred coast of Connaught. On the French Riviera the sea is decently confined within neat limits, and you seldom see the combers' end. Here you have mile after mile of uproarious beach, all foam and thunder and flying spray. The temperamental Mediterranean is allowed its hysterics on the Italian Riviera.

It is altogether a sea road. You drive through fishing village after fishing village, boats drawn up on the road itself, nets out, half the population hauling in the day's catch, a tarry, fishy, delightful smell over all. At nearly every town you drive your car under the overhanging stem or stern of a ship which is building in the narrow gap 'twixt road and sea. Some are 300-ton sailing ships, destined for tramping round the Levant, some considerable steamers, preparing to join the swelling Italian mercantile marine. At Porto Maurizio, Albenga, Vado, Savona, and smaller places you hear the unending rattle of the riveting of plates, the more deliberate, dignified hammer on the oaken ribs of a brig.

I suppose the climate must have something to do with it, but the very vegetation changes abruptly when you enter Italy. Olives give place to pines, roses to mimosa. Somewhere near Diano-Marina and Marina d'Andora (did you ever hear such delightful

names for sea villages ?) there is a little precipitous valley which ends in two tiny headlands in the sea. The inner sides are one blazing mass of mimosa, framed in tamarisks. Against the dark blue sea the effect is extravagantly beautiful. Tamarisks and magnolias, huge eucalypti, umbrella pines stand sentinel along the road. In some places the public walk is sheltered only by palms, which obviously suffer from the attentions of the sea ; at others the noonday sun is tempered by alternate tamarisks and pepper trees, two of the most beautiful things that grow. They look as if they had escaped from Kew or the Royal Horticultural Society's holy preserves at Wisley ; but just outside their shadow are spread fathoms and fathoms of fishing-nets, drying in the sun, while their owners smoke contemplative cigarettes with their backs against the knotted boles.

The road itself is perhaps not very good from a purely motoring point of view. The Italian road-mender is still under the impression that steam rollers are superfluous so long as wheeled traffic continues to exist. Where the road is in need of re-metalling he deposits large areas of broken granite, ready to be rolled in by him who wishes to pass that way. Consequently one's course in a motor-car is devious. Nor is it by any means always possible to avoid undertaking the absent steam roller's duties. But potholes are few and innocuous, and as it is a sheer waste of time to drive anything but slowly along this glorious coast road, the stones do not really worry one.

There is no difficulty or trouble experienced in tak-

ing a car into Italy from Mentone, if you are provided with triptychs. The customs officers at both French and Italian frontiers are civility and efficiency personified, and the formalities to be gone through are formidable only in name. The business is done swiftly and with the utmost cordiality on both sides. If you feel inclined to forget a 10 or 20 fr. note on the table, for the benefit of the cheerful soldiers who never worry sensible motorists, do not do it coarsely, or it will be returned to you. Both French and Italian *douaniers* are, I am sure, delighted to drink your excellent health, if the invitation is tactfully made, but in any case they regard it as no part of their daily duties to create or refuse to smooth away difficulties for allied motorists who wish to loiter along this enchanting sea-way.

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It has been a mimosa day. As soon as we crossed the frontier and rolled upon the soil of Italy the mimosa began. Great trees of it overhung the road, flooded the gardens of the villas, pervaded the whole country. The schoolboys in the streets carried great bunches of it, and every table in the restaurant where we ate our excellent lunch was adorned with a glorious clump of it.

I do not understand the silly stories about the horrors of motoring on the Italian Riviera with which I have been steadily stuffed since I reached Mentone. I heard every kind of traveller's tale about the difficulties of getting across the frontier, the shortage of petrol and food, the vileness of the roads, and the hostility of the peasants to motorists. As far as Alassio

at all events (half-way to Genoa), the whole thing is moonshine.

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The whole day long we met nothing but smiles and courtesy from the peasants, carters, muleteers and all the floating population of a great road. In fact, the carters (an international breed, passionately attached, the world over, to the wrong side of the road) were extraordinarily prompt in moving over to let me pass. A grin, a lift of the hat, a "Buon' giorno"—where is this hostility?

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As for the shortage of food, that is the silliest tale of all. There is plenty of everything ordinary people generally need, both in the shops and in the hotels. We lunched in the Mimosa Room at Ospedaletti on delicious eggs and rice, such as you do not always get in the dearest West End restaurants in London, a fat grilled chicken, with sauté potatoes and salad and cheese, for 20 lire—about 4*s.*—a head. A bottle of excellent Chianti cost us 12 lire (2*s.* 6*d.*), two special coffees 5 lire (1*s.*), and two glasses (generous ones) of imported French brandy 10 lire (2*s.*). A tax brought the total to 77.40—roughly 15*s.* 6*d.* for two.

I have not yet had to buy any petrol, but in every town we passed there were at least two or three shops in the main street at which it was on sale. It costs about 4*s.* a gallon. The Government controlled price is about 70 lire (14*s.*) for a tin of 18 litres (nearly 4 gallons), but outside the large towns you have to pay 80 lire (16*s.*). It can be bought at any established garage, and there are any number of these.

Signs of Italy's rapid recovery from the war were frequent all along the road. New houses, new hotels (I can hardly recognize my old friend Alassio), plump grinning children, hale old folk, busy little shipyards round Porto Maurizio, rich flourishing cultivation, and, last, but very far from least, the indignation of the hotel proprietors at the stories told in France and England of the country's destitution. "Short!" snorted mine host this morning. "We're short of nothing. Things cost a good deal, but we have as much of everything we want as France has. It is a malicious lie, propaganda to keep people from coming to Italy this year."

What fun it is to be on the road again! My companion has one imperial reply to any suggestion or hint that the best-laid plans may not produce the anticipated result. "It does not matter," says he. "Nothing matters—in a land yacht. I simply don't care. Nobody knows where we are and they can't get at us. Why worry?" And we don't.

GENOA.

To-day's drive from Alassio to Genoa has been one of the most beautiful I have yet had on this entertaining adventure. The gale of yesterday blew itself out in the night in torrents of rain and squalls which shook the hotel and pounded the sea-wall with great combers from the Balearic Islands, and we woke to limpid sunshine and a turquoise sky.

Very early we packed ourselves into Imshi and slid out on to that wonderful sea-road to Albenga and Savona. After twenty-four hours of unceasing downpour of tropical violence, aided and abetted by

thousands of impromptu cascades off the mountain-sides, it would not be quite truthful to say that the road itself was at its best.

There was a remarkable quantity of mud to deal with, and there were moments when Imshi took charge of the situation and found her own way. Yet as far as Voltri (20 kilometres from Genoa) there was really very little to complain of. It is certainly true that you cannot drive fast on these roads, as much owing to the blind turnings as to the surface, but it is equally true that nobody in his senses wants to.

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It was a delightful drive, because we did as we pleased. We had meant to get to Genoa for lunch, but at a fascinating village called Noli, with a glorious castle on a hill, we saw a huge seine net being pulled on to the beach. So we waited an hour and a half in the glorious sunshine to see what luck the fishermen had had.

From our point of view the delay was well worth it. The beach at Noli is one of the most charming places in the world and the red-capped salts who live on it the best of company.

The glorious sunshine baked our backs, and, according to its custom, lobstered my face; there was no wind and the whole world was at peace. But the net produced a woefully small catch, and after shaking our heads sympathetically we drove on through Vado and busy Savona to a funny little place called Celle, where we descended upon the one tiny inn of the place and demanded to be fed.

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That was one of the best road-lunches I've ever eaten. Celle is not London or Paris; I doubt if it is even Paisley. But we devoured with hungry greed large slices of delicious Bologna sausage, fragrant with garlic; enormous sardines out of a tin labelled, in English, "Canned in Portugal," which were better than any alleged embalmed sardine either of us had met since the war; a masterpiece of an omelet, cooked in Lucca's best oil of olives; excellent cheese and a splendid bottle of Asti Spumanti.

The bill, including the Official State tip, came to 44.75 lire—about 9*s*.

The Official State tip is one of the most remarkable and progressive institutions I have ever met. The law forbids tipping in Italy. It is no question of "spirit and letter"—the practice is absolutely prohibited. In its place 15 per cent. is added on to your bill.

It works splendidly. You are not bothered by having to grease half a dozen outstretched palms as you leave, and the owners of the palms are perfectly satisfied. They really are. I wonder if we shall ever reach such a pitch of common sense at home?

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All day we have been searching and searching in vain for some convincing sign of the destitution of Italy, of which such tales are told. There is no such thing in this part of the country. We must have passed a dozen small shipyards, at every one of which work was going forward briskly. The land under cultivation is fat and well-liking, the people are the

same, there is no shortage of food, or of anything else which makes life worth living.

And now, as I write this, I look out of my hotel window, perched on a great cliff, on to one of the richest cities in the world. The beautiful harbour is crowded with ships of all kinds, from tramps to Transatlantic liners, the streets are full of merry people, the shops gorged with good things to eat and drink. This is my fifth visit to Genoa, my first since the war. The only difference I can see is that it is larger and more prosperous than ever.

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I have only one grumble to make, and that specially for the benefit of other small cars which may come this way. The road from Voltri to Genoa is extremely bad. There is no disguising the fact that it is high time the existing Road Board of Genoa were replaced by people with less mediæval notions.

The floods of mud made matters a little worse, perhaps, than they might normally have been, but those 20 kilometres, through Pegli, are an example of scandalous neglect. The road is so potholed that the whole surface has sunk far below its proper level, leaving the formidable tramway lines sticking out like railway lines. At one point I was forced to back the car over them in order to get clear.

After all—what does it matter? Nobody worries and the sun shines. It gives its whole mind to the business. There never was winter sunshine in Europe like that in which we are revelling these adventurous days. I'm never cold. Think of that!

CHAPTER VI

GENERALS CÆSAR AND NAPOLEON, MAKERS OF ROADS

CAP MARTIN.

ABOUT 1,000 ft. above my head, as I write this, stand two pieces of grey granite, cylinder-shaped lumps by the roadside, bearing faint traces of lettering and figures. In themselves, they are uninteresting to the point of vacuity, and, moreover, they do not obtrude themselves upon the public and tourist eye. Yet, to an ardent roadfarer, they are imbued with a life, a feeling, a reality which nothing else on the Riviera roads can claim. They are Roman milestones, and anyone skilled in such matters can no doubt read off to you the precise distance in leagues from this point above Monte Carlo to mighty Rome, as easily as you or I at 50 miles an hour can shout into our companion's ear "York—18" as we flick past a milestone on the Great North Road.

Think of it! Past these two faded, battered stones how many dusty legionaries have trudged, casting a weary eye at the figures which told them that they were—shall we say—432 miles from the joys of the centre of the Universe, 432 miles nearer—York?

The road along which the cohorts marched is still there. Like all Roman roads it scorns gradients and dashes boldly up and down hill, regardless of contour. It is pretty stony and full of rather terrific potholes; it is narrow, and, for heavy traffic like catapult units, it must have been as dangerous as any minor Alpine pass is to-day. But it is a real road, a road built for the business of empires, a road of unflinching courage.

Along that road and past those milestones Cæsar marched, leading a nation in arms to add uncounted jewels to the crown of Rome. Cæsar and perhaps Trajan, certainly any of the Roman governors of that rude yet profitable isle of Britain. Road and milestones have watched a procession of the mighty in history, from the days when men were detailed for duty on the great wall against the little Picts (Decius, leader of the Eighth Cohort, took final leave of Roma Dea when his orders came for Ebor and beyond) till that little grey-coated figure from Corsica came by that way to call most of Europe to heel. Fifty feet above the stones, running almost parallel with the Roman road, lies the gem of the roads in the Maritime Alps, the upper Corniche which Napoleon hewed out of the everlasting rock between Mentone and Nice. The grey slabs of stone, with their faint Roman figures and letters, have seen the beginnings of most things which have mattered in the world.

What roads they are, these of the lower Alps! Superb examples of engineering, they carry you safely and easily, allowing you an average of speed as regular as a clock, from valley to valley, from pass to pass. Some are or seem to be more difficult than others.

The short corkscrew climb from La Turbie to the famous Monte Carlo golf links at Mont Agel, and the tricky one up from Monte Carlo itself to La Turbie, are cases in point. Neither can really compare with Napoleon's imperial military road past the Roman stones, yet both are wonderful examples of French thoroughness and ingenuity. Some of the hairpin bends on the last mile to Mont Agel are, to those who dislike the sudden realization of great height, distinctly uncomfortable. It is really nothing but your imagination, but as you climb higher and higher and the trees along the roadside drop out of sight and give place to low parapets of stone over the top of which you see nothing but space, bounded by the sea thousands of feet below, you begin to wonder if the safety of the French military road has not been a little exaggerated.

It is only that, as it were, the rungs of the ladder are more exposed. The road's gradient never alters, the sharpness of the corners remains constant. Yet, without a background of trees or rocks, each perfect "elbow" seems steeper and more sudden than the last, and it is with a quite absurd sense of relief that you finally emerge on to the summit.

And what memories these and the lower roads hold for us! People used to bicycle madly from Monte Carlo to Nice along the Corniche. Conceive it! It is a very good 30 kilometres of very dusty road. To-day there is less dust, because a certain amount of tarring has been accomplished, but at no time could it, in our eyes of to-day, have been called a pleasant ride on a push-bike. Then came the great,

strenuous adventures with the pioneers in motor-cars, when people driving cars with tube ignition offered up special prayers against following or side-winds, lest their flaccid engines fainted by the roadside. Followed the first of the 1921 car's real distinguishable genuine ancestors—wonderful old Panhards, Georges Richards, Mors and the great Mercédès, the car which was justly known as the car " ten years ahead of its time." Each had its own virtues, its peculiar and generally terrifying vices, but the extraordinary thing was that, although none of these or any others were made nearer to Nice than Lyons, and most of them saw the light a good deal farther North or East, one and all had to " come out " on the Riviera roads and during the Riviera Season. Properly to launch a startling new model of car on the roads of Europe, you had to put it through a kind of unofficial social test on the roads between Cannes and Ventimiglia. Mention any famous make of car or any famous driver to a veteran of the road and he will instantly reply : " Rather ! I remember X—— taking the first 28-h.p. they turned out from the Promenade des Anglais to La Turbie in thirty-eight and a half minutes, and covering a kilometre on the Cagnes road in one minute—the next day." Yes, the next day. Those wonderful old cars needed a deal of nursing, and one star-turn *per diem* was about their limit.

CHAPTER VII

GOLF IN THE CLOUDS—THE ROCK TOWNS—HIS CELSITUDE, CAPTAIN BARBAROSSA

MONTE CARLO.

I WROTE yesterday about the road up to Mont Agel golf links, and this morning Imshi and I went up that wonderful ladder to lunch there. Two thousand five hundred feet sheer above the enamelled roofs of Monte Carlo a golf course has been deliberately carved out of an Alpine summit. Before the Mont Agel links were made there were nothing but the usual stone-faced terraces supporting little ledges of agriculture. Thousands of pounds were spent in removing these, in more or less flattening the mountain-top, and in blasting a superb motor road out of the stony, precipitous hillside.

Monte Carlo demanded its golf links and, short of laying out a course through the streets of the principality itself, the only practicable spot was the most handy Alp.

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Here, where the moufflon and the golden eagle and the hoopoo still watch you in mild surprise, you drive your ball straight at a range of snow-clad peaks 10,000 ft. high. They are a good many miles away, as s indeed every neighbour of Mont Agel, but there are

days when you fancy you can carry them. Wherever you turn you look out upon immense distances, upon the Alps on one side and upon a vast expanse of sea on the other.

A keen mountain wind blows across from the snow-peaks and your breath comes frostily as you climb over the abrupt bumps of this remarkable course. Just above you lies the fortress of Mont Agel, once the most important in France (it is 5 miles round), a stern, forbidding hill of masonry, sleeplessly watching sea and hill and valley. With one exception everything round you is wild, fierce and lonely, and nothing suggests golf or any pastime of civilization.

That exception is the club-house, where, before your 18-hole round above the clouds, you sit in extreme luxury and lunch greedily, lengthily, and astonishingly cheaply. It is no affair of cold ham and bread and cheese. It is the same sort of lunch as they are getting in the most expensive restaurants down there below among the palms and flowers of Monte Carlo.

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Here is to-day's menu, headed, "Golf de Monte Carlo. Golfeurs":

Hors d'œuvres.
Sole frite au Citron.
Entrecôte Sauté Sully.
Celeris à la Milanaise.
Fromage.
Fruits.

It is impossible to design a better lunch; nothing could have been better cooked or served. We ate it in a big bow window from which one could watch

the cloud battalions attacking the sweeping over the great mountain crests, and the shifting lakes of sunshine creeping up to Corsica over 70 miles of the Mediterranean.

The charge for players is 10 frs., about 3*s.* 6*d.*, and for non-players 15 frs., about 5*s.*, and the whole thing, restaurant, service and fare, is of the very highest and most expensive class. And outside the plate-glass windows the eagles and the snow keep company. A motor-bus brings you up for 5 frs. from Monte Carlo.

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After lunch Imshi and I dropped slowly down the zigzag road to La Turbie, followed the Mentone road to Roquebrune, and so along the lower Corniche into Monte Carlo. From the great freedom of the Alpine peaks, where the really important people are the wild sheep and the ravens and the eagles, we slid down in half an hour to a town of roses, mimosa, palms, glittering hotels, gorgeous motor-coaches—and the Casino.

The Casino at Monte Carlo is the only thing in the post-war Riviera which rather disappoints me. The charm, the fascination of the rooms is no longer the same. The monotonous voices of the croupiers, the tables, the crowds are unchanged, but something very vital is lacking. There is no money. When you heard in the old days a croupier tap a pile of gold and notes amounting to a small fortune and cry "A qui la masse?" you were thrilled, even if it were somebody else's "masse."

But I cannot get excited over bone counters. It does not comfort me a bit when I hand a dull, orange-

coloured chip to the croupier and ask him to put it on 23, to hear him reply, "One louis on the 23." I do not believe it is a louis, and even if 23 turns up (which it has as yet omitted to do) the addition of 35 more yellow chips to the "louis" leaves me almost cold.

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It is, of course, an excellent scheme for the Casino. You buy a handful of chips and cease to regard them as money. People who might think twice about staking in 1,000 fr. bank-notes or a musical cascade of gold pieces throw these dull bone things on to the cloth as if they were—what they are. Whence, no doubt, a considerable increase of income to the proprietors.

No, Monte Carlo gambling without the ceaseless chink of gold and silver, without the beautiful crisp crackle and snap of "fat" notes, is disappointing. It makes no real difference, perhaps, to your seasoned gambler or your system fiend, but to the casual passer-by, with no wild schemes against the bank, with only a wish for amusement, the coloured counters make a tame appeal.

And overhead, above the clouds, at the top of that royal road, golf is being played against a background of eternal snow.

NICE.

For the last few days Imshi and I have been off the well-worn paths of the average winter Riviera motorist. We have abandoned the coastwise roads and the crowds and the glittering towns and have betaken ourselves to the rock towns, which are perched,

like sentinel eagles, on the lower summits of the foothills between Cannes and Italy.

Gorbio, Eze, Vence, and, above all, wonderful St. Paul du Var, that perfect example of a mediæval walled city of the hills, what a contrast they make, standing each on its island rock, its aged walls dropping sheer down to the terraced vineyards, the orange groves (now, alas! terribly ravaged by the frosts of a month ago), the winding white roads and the grey-green richness of Provence.

There can be few better experiences than to drive, as I have done, out of the blatant, noisy, moneyed streets of Nice and climb up through the beautiful sun-bathed hills from Cagnes to St. Paul du Var and the famous canyon La Gorge du Loup. The superb road twines about the hills among the glorious green of the olives (they look like blue mist at a distance), and the strange, ancient towns show up suddenly round corners and across deep valleys like ships from a sea-fog.

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The valley of the Loup and its neighbours have as bloody pages in their fierce history as any town of Europe. For centuries war raged across and through these lovely gorges, followed by pestilence and famine. Archbishops and princes took and sacked these towns, rebuilt them, lived in them till plague or another spin of the wheel of fortune turned them out. The whole countryside is nothing but a string of hill-forts, every vineyard, every potato patch round their feet a drenched battle-field.

His Celsitude Barbarossa, Emperor of Pirates, the

Highest Dignitary in the Congregation of Buccaneers, came on a visit of business to Eze and Roquebrune. From his snug harbours at Alexandria he smelt the riches of the Provençal walled towns, set sail with his galleons, and, landing probably at Monte Carlo, took and bled them white.

The taking of Eze numbs one's imagination. The rock on which it is balanced rises sheer up 950 ft., the path leading to the narrow gateway being so steep that only humans and donkeys have ever used it. Barbarossa was a bit of a Hun in his spacious Elizabethan way and he arranged for the betrayal of Eze. The gate was opened to him, but he had only a handful of his sea-cavaliers, hidden among the rocks, ready to leap into the gateway.

Can't you imagine the Homeric fight which raged in the narrow, echoing guardhouse, up the tortuous little streets, in the tiny squares? Can't you imagine the panic when the figure of the First Pirate of Europe was seen by the inhabitants towering above the swirling, eddying, surging fight? Napoleon's swift descent upon and conquest of whole countries at a time could not have compared for terrorization with the sudden appearance of Barbarossa, comfortably supposed to be "resting" in Egypt.

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That is the real, the unadvertised charm of this beautiful Riviera. Cannes, Nice, Beaulieu and Monte Carlo are all delightful modern towns, charming places for the winter, full of comfort and entertainment. But they are not the real Riviera. That magic land lies a few miles back from the sea, lifted

a thousand feet or so on to the knees of the Alps. Here it is that at every 10 miles you come across what I heard a companion describe as raw, bleeding lumps of history. These tiny brown and yellow cities of the precipices, dotted unexpectedly about among the olives and oranges and roses, are landmarks of the world's history, signposts to the past.

There is no need for a motorist to spend one idle or unprofitable day on the Riviera. There is something interesting or beautiful to see every day of one's stay. And the best of it is that, in nine cases out of ten, you go to see places and things which are never mentioned in the highly coloured advertisements of the Côte d'Azur. At the present moment I feel I have been living in another age, and I am unable to describe a tenth of what I have seen. If you are suddenly whisked out of Nice into the days of the Crusades and Louis XIII and Charlemagne and other remote periods, and you find things almost exactly as they were left by the last ambitious princeling a few centuries ago, it takes time to readjust your views on life. Just now I am mesmerized by the resplendent Pirate King. Barbarossa and his skull-and-crossbones crew is the man for me.

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A day among these places is one of the greatest motoring joys. You drive over beautifully made roads, with never a gradient to call for more than half-open throttle, and your car is content. You see, as you can see scarcely anywhere else, the rich beauty of the Provençal hills, with their infinite succession of lovely views, the fat plains sloping gently up

to the fierce scarps of the mountains, and every now and then a glorious glimpse of the snowy peaks of Savoy and Italy, glowing against the turquoise sky.

Sunshine, sunshine, hot, dazzling sunshine, white dust, smiling peasants speaking a warm southern tongue, oxen, mules, enormous, grave donkeys, castellated cities of an almost forgotten age, the white, twisting road, climbing and falling over hill and valley—that is Provence, that is the Riviera which is not advertised, that is the Riviera to come and see.

And at convenient intervals there are always to be found excellent inns and little roadside restaurants, where they give you the best things to eat and drink, and where you sit and dream of the fierce glories of the past—soaked and doubly soaked in life-giving sunshine.

CHAPTER VIII

THE EVENING HOURS—THE GOLDEN ROAD—SOME ADVICE

ST. RAPHAEL.

THERE is one advantage, in 1921 motoring abroad, in view of the possibility of bad roads, and that is that night driving becomes, in unfamiliar districts, a thing to be avoided.

I do not mean that night driving, of itself, is best left alone; on the contrary, there is no moment in a long stage so utterly fascinating as the hour which follows the lighting up of the great searchlights and the steady drone of the car along a white tunnel of light of its own making. The world has gone to supper or to bed, and for mile after mile the white road unrolls itself between the inky walls of darkness on either side, empty of all save perhaps a cyclist or a benighted reveller plodding homewards. The smell of the night air comes intoxicatingly to one's nostrils, and, some say, to the engine, and you seem to drive through a new and enchanted world, a world awaiting the magic word to turn itself into its real shape. Those of us who have driven, in any country, from dusk to dawn, will know the magic of those hours of darkness, the glories of the change when

first the dawn and then the top rays of the sun begin the wonderful transmutation of the whole world. To the old motorist the most moving moments of the twenty-four hours are when he lights his lamps and when, with many more miles before him, he puts them out and drives in the crystal light which throws no shadows.

Nowadays it is wise to forget these things. We are all, us motorists abroad, in a new and unexplored world, and our once faithful maps are only of service actually to show the way and the distance to our destinations. They do not tell us where the road is dangerous. We shall learn in time or, what is much more probable, the Government of France will restore the roads to their old glories. In the meantime, it is best to arrange to stop driving at dusk. You may drive along 20 miles of perfect road, and, without a hint of warning, plunge on to the most devastating mass of stones and potholes. Well, the very best or most costly of cars are only cars, and are distinctly vulnerable. If you have the ill luck to break an axle or a spring over one of these unexpected stretches, you will, in all probability, remain there for the night.

You will, therefore, quickly get the habit of stopping for the night when, in winter, it is yet early. At first, on this tour, I resented it. In the north of France and Burgundy and the Dauphiné, I felt that stopping the day's drive at 4.30 p.m. was absurd. Now I know better. The two or three hours which follow the ceremony of putting the car to bed for the night are delightful. There are the shops to see,

the tobacconist (sometimes rather a disappointment these days), the newspaper-stalls, where you buy every paper you think you can read and a dozen you can't, the stationer's where you mechanically buy another map and some postcards, the motor-shop, where you buy unnecessary delights for the car, just because they look so nice, and, finally, the principal *café*, where you sit, with a *consommation* before you, and view the world. It is by then only six o'clock or so, and the world obligingly parades itself before you. That is the place to hear the world's politics discussed, that is the place where, in the South especially, the shape of a President's nose or the question as to whether his wife is a crown to him or not, give rise to more vivid discussion than the Agadir affair (a stupid, unimaginative thing at best) ever did; that is the place where you suddenly come upon great France at home—in her *chez soi*, in her dressing-gown, if you will, but France speaking her mind, France wholly at ease.

Or, if you like, you have a couple of hours in your comfortable French bedroom, where you can write letters. Why is it that in the least ambitious French bedroom there is always that which you never find in its English provincial rival—a decent table at which a man can write, with both elbows spread out? They are very pleasant, those hours before you go down to the excellent dinner below, especially if you have been driving fairly hard all day. You lazily study the map, to-day's run and to-morrow's; you have a glorious hot bath; you make plans; you hold long and exhilarating conversations with the various

domestics who burst in at intervals, eager to see to your comfort (France has *no* servant problem), and you enjoy yourself amazingly. When the summer comes, with its 9 p.m. sunsets, no doubt I shall drive furiously till the bats and owls protest against the indignity of my headlights; but until March is past and done with, give me my pre-dinner ease, my time, as the Spaniards say, to eat the air. I do not care whether I write down 30 or 300 kilometres in my day's entry in the road-book. One does not motor to-day in distances, but in pleasure and satisfaction.

St. Raphael is one of the places in the world which does not change. My window looks out upon the harbour where, as always, a few fishing boats and a disreputable tramp steamer drowse at anchor. Nothing happens; nobody in their senses wants it to happen. The sun shone all day in extravagant splendour, dying in a Turner effect of crimson and orange and lemon which painted the mountains the colour of glowing charcoal. Now the stars are glistening in cold points of light on the tiny ripples of the bay. The tramp may or may not weigh anchor to-morrow; if she does, she may go as far as Toulon, or Marseilles, or Callao.

> On no condition,
> Is extradition,
> Allowed in Callao.

She may even go to Indo-China, or she may stay where she is, indefinitely. Is not that enough? To sit in sheltered sunshine and weave a sea romance about the hull of a dingy little hooker: to take her in imagination to Tahiti, or Colombo, to Newcastle or

Hamburg—what more can you want? And the best of it is that, although one will always remember her and the grubby look of her, one will never know for what port she will one day clear. The Spanish Main? I shall never know. For to-morrow I shall have cleared myself. But I shall always, in the back attics of memory, wonder where she went. That is the worst of ships, and the places where they gather together. They do not obtrude, but they never leave you alone. And that is the inward joy of motoring—that you see great events in suspension. You do not see the beginning or the end. You are provided with a story to dream all your life.

* * * * *

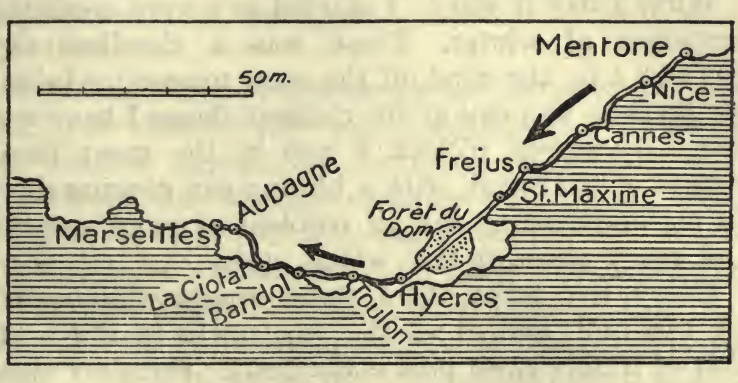
AUBAGNE.

This adventure of mine is ruining my sense of proportion in beauty. Looking back over the notes I have made since that dark, wet and shuddery day when Imshi and I left Calais just on five weeks ago, I see I have had an average of about three "most beautiful drives" a week.

I am sorry. I cannot help it, but I must add to their number. For the last two days I have rolled gently along the broken coast of Provence from Mentone to Aubagne, squeezing round the sharp headlands, dipping, now and then, into the warm pine-scented valleys, running sometimes within a yard or two of the sea in some little forgotten cove, and I am stuffed with scenery such as I thought only existed in books—and untruthful books at that.

This road is La Corniche d'Or. It begins near Cannes and follows the sea to St. Maxime. There it

turns inland and goes through a fairyland called the Forêt du Dom, and comes out again at Hyères. There is another bit of it, sometimes called the Little Riviera, between Bandol and Marseilles, passing through La Ciotat. To my great regret I had to leave this last part out. The road is in an appalling state, and as I have a most particular appointment to keep in Marseilles (of which more later) I dared not risk it.



My battered old St. Christopher medal (which was most generously returned to me by the new owner of my pre-war car after an absence of five years) is on the dash, and I have a smaller edition which never leaves me, except in my bath—but still, I felt it would be silly as well as ungracious to tempt the Gods of the Road too far. So I took the higher and the less stony way.

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Most motorists, even those who have not motored in France, know the run from Cannes to Fréjus by what used to be known as the New Corniche but has

now been given this splendid name. It used to be the most dangerous road in France, a perpetual succession of blind corners round which the young bloods of the period used to drive to the terror of sober citizens. It has now been considerably widened, and none of the hairpin corners is really dangerous. I used to think it the most beautiful road in the world till yesterday, when I went on into the Forêt du Dom and over the great highlands to Aubagne.

What a day it was! I started in a very creditable imitation of winter. There was a cloudless sky, but at 8 a.m. the wind off the snow mountains behind St. Maxime was one of the chilliest things I have ever met. By eleven o'clock I was in the great broad valleys of the forest, with a blazing sun pouring down on me and making the air redolent of pines and ilex and every pleasant tree which grows.

Every few miles there stood among the trees a big saw-mill, and of all the nice smells in the world that of freshly sawn pine is the best. There are thousands of cork-trees here, and I met many carts laden with enormous slabs of the bark. Except for the whine of the saws and the creaking of the carts' axles there was no sound in all this beautiful place.

* * * * *

And here I met another English light-car of a well-known make. I was sliding down a wide, white curving road running round the huge valleys, and it was climbing up it, full of merry people (far too many of them for the size of the car). We exchanged a kind of wireless signal meaning "Fancy seeing *you* here! Well, why not?" and went on. I have

now seen two other British light cars since I landed in France, and *six* motor-cycles only in France and Italy. Six in a month's driving over 2,300 kilometres! What must a Frenchman, new to England, think of any English high road on his first introduction to it!

Yes, it was one of the greatest days I have spent and not the least part of it was the leisurely climb up from Ollioulles to the top of the great plateau and down the other side to Aubagne.

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Only one thing spoilt the perfection of it all, and that was due to my own carelessness. I cannot too strongly impress on my fellow light-car owners and others the *absolute necessity* for ensuring that you get the best petrol *in sealed cans*.

A sour-faced woman sold me a tin at Hyères labelled "Tourisme," but it was not sealed, and it had just been filled up with the disgusting stuff they call "Poids lourd"—paraffin and water. Consequently my engine knocked furiously on the smallest provocation and I had constantly to come down to second speed when, with decent petrol, I could have been doing 30 miles an hour on top. When I finally used up the last drop of this pernicious mixture and put in a real tin of "Tourisme," it was like driving a different car.

Insist upon seeing the seals broken yourself. If they are honest folk they will do it without being asked. But *never* put anything into your tank which comes out of any but a sealed tin. That way madness lies.

Imshi and I are on the eve of the third part of our splendid adventure.

This week, if all goes well, we shall both be on the way to "an African port," by a road where there is no dust, where no petrol is needed, and where the front springs give way, as subjects for deep thought, to other considerations.

We hope to embark in a steamer which will take us down the east coast of Spain, through the Strait of Gibraltar, and round the corner into the Atlantic.

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I notice with amazement that the pamphlet describing the advantages of this method of reaching Africa dwells on the fact that four-fifths of the voyage is "sheltered from rough weather," on the grounds that as far as Gib. you are in the Mediterranean. As one about to embark on his twenty-fifth crossing of the most treacherous and false-faced sea in the great Seven, I take leave to regard this statement as an insult to one's intelligence. Sheltered indeed! The shelter of the Mediterranean is equivalent to the mercy of the serpent, the homeliness of the North Pole. I don't know how Imshi is feeling, poor child, but I am arranging for the supply for myself of every comfort and protection against this smiling Judas. I know it of old. Sheltered!

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Before leaving the beloved soil of France I should like to give my fellow light-car owners who contemplate bringing their cars over to this glorious country some practical advice, based on post-war experience.

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First of all, equip your car in the most complete manner possible. Knowledge of the machine will tell you what is most likely to need replacement, but in addition let me urge you to carry the following: A complete set of new spare springs, the front ones having an extra leaf in them.

Have them ready for instant fitting; that is to say, take the trouble, by actually fitting them to the car beforehand, to see that they are strictly and truly interchangeable.

A spare magneto, with couplings, ready to drop into place. A spare contact breaker, a spare petrol-pipe, and such "specials" as one or two spare connecting rods, big ends, gudgeon pins, and piston rings. Your own experience and the maker of your car will tell you if it is wise to add clutch plates, gear-box bearings, and spare gear pinions. Remember that in the Alps you may be constantly on second speed, with a heavy load, sometimes for half an hour or more at a time, a score of times every day. It tells.

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You need not bother about brake linings or anything which is not "special" to the car. French mechanics can and do make anything you ask for. And here I contradict myself and beg of you to carry plenty of fan-belts. Any saddler can make you a dozen—I possess three beauties, made by a little man in Mentone. But he made them too late.

It was a sad tale. The most important passenger Imshi has ever carried was wellnigh scalded to death. It was her first (but not, I hope, her last) run in Imshi. We climbed up from Monte Carlo to the

mountain golf links at Mont Agel, a matter of forty-five minutes' steady second-speed work, at perhaps 15 miles an hour, a hairpin bend every 100 yards. About a quarter of the way up the fan-belt gave way, and five minutes later the radiator was giving a life-like imitation of a geyser.

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After two feeble attempts at repairing the belt and two efforts to carry on, filling up with water every mile, my guest transferred herself to her own car, which was following, and I remained with a flushed and overheated Imshi on the mountain side. I then discovered a spare belt, but as it was several inches too long and I had no fasteners (I confess the crime, humbly) I conceived the brilliant notion of soaking it in the still rumbling water of the radiator in order to make it shrink.

I put it in—and it fell in, out of reach. It is there to this day. Apply your nose to the orifice and you are greeted even now with a smell of stewed leather.

In despair I attempted an apparently hopeless repair of the broken belt with thin copper wire. The suture hit the undershield as it went round, but it held. And, believe me or not, it is there to-day. Why it still holds on I cannot conceive. But who am I to interfere with the workings of Providence? I have bent the undershield so as to make it clear the belt, but otherwise I have not touched it.

I hired a small boy with a bent wire to fish for a whole day for the belt in the radiator. He did not even get a bite.

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Yes, take plenty of belts *of the right size.*

On the other hand, do not bother to take many spare tyres. They are cheaper than in England, and the best cord-built French ones are as good as any sold. Things like sparking plugs and the components of every known carburettor are obtainable everywhere.

Unless the arrangements have improved, do not cross by Dover and Calais, but by either Boulogne or Dieppe or Havre. The formalities (all very simple) take a long time to go through at Calais, and I was sold the worst petrol I have ever known, under the name of the best—and charged for it. Avoid Calais. Get a route made out for you by the R.A.C., stipulating that, so far as is possible, main roads are used. Accommodation is sometimes difficult to find on side-roads, and not always very good. On main roads it is invariably excellent and to be found at every 20 miles or so.

Lastly, do not expect to drive fast. Remember that France is still under repairs, and although some parts of her glorious roads are as good as they ever were, many hundreds of miles are still lorry-destroyed. Be content with 100 miles a day or less. After all, there is no hurry when you are land yachting. The days of "fast times" are dead and gone. These are the days of true enjoyment.

But do take plenty of fan-belts.

The sheltered Mediterranean will now interrupt my narrative for a week or two, but I hope to describe new things in my next letter.

CHAPTER IX

A SEA-CHANGE—THE ADVENTUROUS OLD LADY—THE SMELL OF THE EAST, AND THE SHIP'S CAT

S.S. *Doukkala*,
IN THE MEDITERRANEAN.

IT is very pleasant to be on ship-board again, rolling gently over the (at present) blue and warm and good-tempered Mediterranean.

Imshi is below hatches, comfortably bestowed, so I am informed by the super-cargo, and I am enjoying the utter, fat laziness of life in a comfortable steamer. One of these days—about Saturday, I believe—we shall arrive at Casablanca, and my calm will then be rudely shattered while I watch the car being dropped overside into a lighter and deposited on an African beach.

Till that moment arrives I take no thought for the morrow, or anything except the next meal-time.

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We are something in the way of pioneers, Imshi and I. It was the first time the Customs officials at Marseilles had ever dealt with a triptyque or a touring car for Morocco, and I am bound to say that there was a good deal of fuss over nothing. I could not for a long time persuade the officer-in-charge that

I proposed eventually to return to France with the car. He stamped my triptyque as having "definitely left France," and it was only after lengthy explanations that he was induced to do the thing properly.

"People who take motor-cars to Morocco never return," said he. I thanked him for his words of good cheer.

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For the benefit of those who are thinking of bringing cars to Morocco from Marseilles, this is what happened:

I booked a passage and space for the car by the Paquet Company. They were exceedingly civil and obliging and sent a member of the firm with me when I drove down to the wharf. I paid 879 frs. (say £16 5*s*.) for Imshi and 765 frs. (£14 4*s*.) for a single first-class passage for myself. I also insured her specially for the voyage against damage, theft, and loss, with Lloyd's, for about £3.

On the quay I was told to take out the magneto and unship the windscreen, to remove everything removable. I did my best, but I took a risk with the magneto and screen and left them in position. If it is possible for such things to be stolen from a car standing in a reputable steamship company's wharf, with a whole squad of night watchmen on duty, it is time the port police of Marseilles were given some more congenial and less difficult occupation.

I write with rather uneasy bitterness, as I do not, as a fact, know whether the car has been rifled or not, and I shall not know until Saturday. She is at the bottom of the hold and I cannot get near her.

I received much courteous assistance from the

R.A.C. representative at Marseilles, Mr. Basden Smith, who helped me nobly through the Customs formalities and insured the car by telegram.

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Marseilles, where I spent three days before embarking, was not at its best. I confess it is a town I dislike more every time I revisit it, especially when there is a perishing mistral blowing, as there was this time. I have known it for seventeen years, and have walked up and down the Cannebière more times than I can count, waiting for steamers to take me east or west. It has, to my possibly prejudiced mind, only one really good point—its numerous and excellent restaurants and the bewildering variety of extraordinary shellfish you can eat in them.

You can eat them on the pavement, if you prefer it. Marseilles must be the original home of the winkle-barrow and the whelk-stall. The street corners round the old harbour are a wonderful sight, with the piled masses of oysters and mussels and periwinkles and cockles, and hundreds of things one never sees anywhere else. I did not eat any cockles, but I had fried cuttle-fish one day, oysters and mussels (*à la marinière*—a perfect poem of a greedy dish, a flawless sonnet on what is locally called the Fruit of the Sea), and, of course, bouillabaisse.

The latter, I always think, is strong men's meat, and is to be approached with caution. Let us leave it at that. My bouillabaisse days are over.

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We are a very full ship's company. I believe the Paquet steamers are always crowded, and it

is very necessary to book your passage at least a fortnight ahead. The *Doukkala* is a clean little ship, if somewhat antiquated, and the better-class cabins are light, comfortable, and well ventilated.

The food is excellent, but, as in most French mail steamers, one eats it at the rather tiresome hours of 7 a.m., 11 a.m., and 6 p.m. I wonder why life at sea must be differently arranged to life ashore. In the *Doukkala* the day lasts about eighteen hours and one is hungry at such strange times.

Sitting next to me in the dining-saloon is a woman for whom there is not one dull moment on board. She is on her way from Paris to Safi (a place in the far south of Morocco), and not only was the journey to Marseilles the first she had ever made of more than half an hour's length, but until she stepped on board the *Doukkala* she had never so much as set eyes on the sea. I thought such people lived only in books. The whole business of ship-board life and of our leisurely progress through such incredible quantities of water keep the poor old soul open-mouthed with astonishment. What she will think if we meet any bad weather, Heaven knows. At present her view is that there is undoubtedly more room at sea than in that terrible express train ("Luckily, monsieur," she confided to me, "the journey only occupied sixteen hours. It might have lasted sixteen days!") and that there is less noise.

She is, however, firmly convinced that the whole affair is in the highest degree foolhardy, and it is my private impression that she goes to bed with her boots on.

S.S. *Doukkala*,
STILL AT SEA.

There is only one subject of conversation among us—the amazing splendour of the passage we have, so far, enjoyed. We are still in the Mediterranean, but to-morrow we shall be out in the Atlantic and maybe a different tale will be told.

The old dame who has never been to sea before has made a number of thrilling discoveries, all of which she has solemnly imparted to me. The first, and by far the most important, is that there are rats on board. Actually rats seen "swanking," as she says, on the deck.

"It's incredible, monsieur. In Paris there are rats, but they keep themselves in the drains of the city. They do not permit themselves to promenade themselves hither and thither as if they were at home. Besides, it is well known that they are the cause of plague, and it is equally well known that if it were not for the lions Africa would be depopulated by plague."

I ventured to inquire how the lions helped in the matter. "But, monsieur, those who do not die of plague are infallibly devoured by the evil beasts."

Her second discovery is that seagulls are non-eating creatures, and that it must be a bitter disappointment to them when the cook throws empty sardine tins overboard. "I cannot conceive why the good God made them," she murmurs, gazing fascinatedly at the cloud of wheeling wings astern.

And her last, and best, is that the credit of the *Doukkala's* present most fortunate and auspicious voyage is wholly due to the stokers.

"They should be suitably rewarded," she said warmly at luncheon to-day. "Every one on board should subscribe a few sous for the poor fellows who have brought us so far and in such safety and comfort."

"What would you buy them, madame?" I asked. "They should each drink a good bottle of champagne. They deserve it." Whereon she inquired of the table steward the price of a "modest" brand of champagne, and on being told that quite a modest bottle could be had for 30 frs. she was delighted.

"There you are, you see! A penny each and we could buy three big bottles for the stokers." Her grief at hearing that there are fifty or sixty stokers, instead of three, was pathetic. "But there are only two or three on a railway engine," she wailed. "I saw them myself when I came in that terrible train all the way from Paris to Marseilles. It's ridiculous to have so many in a ship, which obviously goes much slower."

It will be with real regret that I leave the *Doukkala* to-morrow (or the next day). Among scores and scores of ships of all sizes and kinds and nationalities I shall always remember her as having the very best stewards I have ever known in any line. I have been largely and pleasantly overfed, and I have only two criticisms to offer the Paquet Line. One is on the disadvantage of beginning the day about three hours too early; and the other is on the drawback of turning both smoking-rooms (the only sitting-rooms on board) into day nurseries from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. The French child is a charming infant, at times, but it is possible

to tire of his society, especially when, as so very often happens, he indulges in his favourite game of being naughty. My fellow-passengers are less susceptible to the prolonged and ear-splitting yells which arise about every quarter of an hour, but I have seen the *Doukkala's* smoking-room emptied by one babe, as by a typhoon—including even the bridge players.

All yesterday we strolled gently along the rocky coast of Spain, finally raising the big Cape of Gata. To-morrow we shall pass Gibraltar, and then take a turn to the left into the Atlantic. And very soon after that I shall know the worst about my Imshi. Has she been robbed of everything by Marseilles dock thieves; are her wings crushed in like egg-shells (an amiable suggestion of a fellow-passenger); will she still go, or will she and I camp miserably on the beach at Casablanca till somebody comes from somewhere and rescues us?

I pretend to take an interest in the *Doukkala* and her voyage. I do not care a fig for either. I am consumed with anxiety about my child. As the moment approaches when clumsy cranes will swing her outboard and drop her either into a surf boat or the intervening ocean, and I shall feverishly tear open the bonnet, my nerve simply leaves me. I see that if we are to make many more voyages together I shall have to get her a yacht.

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The smell of the East came in over our bows—very soon after we had passed Gibraltar, and we knew that, although the next town, "straight along," was Boston, Mass., U.S.A., and that a dozen miles

off lay Europe, we were still within the confines of that land and of that great diversity of peoples which stretch without a break from Cape Spartel to Hong-kong. The "West," as distinct from the "East," is a scattered, untidy, indeterminate place, full of violently different things and people, none of them in the slightest degree related by any outward sign, all of them having characteristics so markedly in opposition to each other, that you cannot truthfully describe them as anything but "not Eastern."

Then came Tangier, with its white and pale blue houses, set in what seems such orderly array; its green gardens enclosing quiet palaces; its lovely crescent bay, backed by the swelling green hills behind, facing Gibraltar and the East. It is easy to give Tangier guide-book names—it is difficult to avoid the most obvious. Sentinel of the mighty East, this little town stands on the threshold of the Atlantic; an outpost of its own Empire, just a little farther off than that other which guards the road to its scattered peoples. It is odd that Gibraltar should be in the Mediterranean—that most eastern of Western seas—and Tangier practically in the same ocean which washes the shores of New England.

It is a quaint place, a land island, rather like Athens was before the northern railway was opened. Except at considerable risk of discomfort, you cannot reach or leave Tangier save by sea. You may enter it from the south, or the Spanish zone, on muleback, but it is not easy to do so in anything with wheels on it. I should like, eventually, to drive Imshi to it from Rabat, chiefly to avoid the worry of embarking

a car into a steamer at Casablanca from lighters, which pitch and roll with infernal activity on the lift of the Atlantic; but I am told that the attempt is not worth the risk of irreparable damage to the car. So the next time I see this pleasant place will be again by way of its charming, if rather inadequate, harbour. I am looking forward greatly to that time. A variety of irritating circumstances prevented my going ashore to-day, and I have, with the assistance and sole company of the ship's cat, who finds my writing-paper a suitable place for a prolonged siesta, watched hour by hour the sloping sun change the face of the little city almost beyond recognition. Eastern sunlight! What a gift of God! What a thing to strengthen a man's heart!

The captain has arrived, has boxed the ship's cat's ears, pinched it all over its gross body with one enormous hand and in a single lightning movement—attentions which it seems to appreciate—and has given me a brilliant *rêsumé* of its character, habits, and probable ancestors in one long, rapid string of highly flavoured *lingua franca.* I am indeed in the Pleasant Land again. Overside the big lighters grunt and creak, and jostle against the steamer's ribs; the cargo-derricks scream and whine and cough as they swing outboard piano-players and mowing machines and soap; and the warm air is filled with Levantine oaths. It is a strange place for a man on a motor tour, but very, very pleasant.

Presently we shall, if Allah wills, put to sea again. We shall creep out between the Pillars of Hercules, and abandon ourselves to the long swing of the huge

Atlantic rollers, which burst in thunder on the coast of Africa. The stars will glow like suns all night—already you think you can touch them, they seem so real and so close—and as the ship shoulders her way carefully over the swelling sea-hills, I shall "hear the long-drawn thunder 'neath her leaping figure-head."

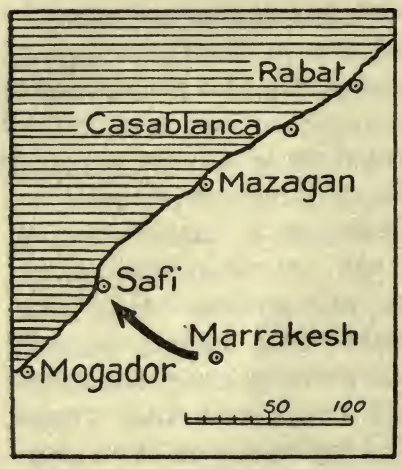
On my left, just out of sight, Africa; on my right, 4,000 miles of seas; below me, my car, in which I hope to see so many new things in a land where, as they of the Faith say, "the air and the water are good."

CHAPTER X

CASABLANCA—THE DOCTOR, THE FIRST MATE AND IMSHI—A NICE MARKET

CASABLANCA, MOROCCO.

VERY far west, with the Atlantic surges within earshot, I have once again come East. And it is simply glorious. Just how glorious I cannot say, as I have only spent twelve hours in Casablanca so far, and they have been so fully occupied with Western affairs that I have only been able to notice the sunshine and the white houses and the smells—above all, the eternal lotus-smells of the East. This odd, mushroom town, with its cinemas and motor-cars leaping out of the dust of forgotten ages, is of the ineradicable East. And I am most content. I smell saffron. You know what that means.



First of all I must immediately report that my

Imshi is hale and hearty. The Paquet Line did their noblest by her. It was, in part, due to my being vaccinated. The French Protectorate of Morocco decrees that you shall produce, before you land in this apparently delightful land, a certificate to say you have been vaccinated within the last six months.

In order to meet the convenience of passengers, the Paquet Company arranges for a doctor to perform the operation during the voyage. I knew this, having been told so several times, but at the hours when the ship's surgery was not only open but also congested with unscratched passengers, I was generally comfortably asleep in my cabin.

Consequently I came upon the doctor, one of the kindest and most genial of genial Frenchmen, just when the poor man was probably saying to himself, "And that's that—now they can *all* have small-pox, so far as *I* am concerned"—meaning that the voyage's work was over.

He obligingly scratched my arm, wrote out a certificate, refused payment, and, upon my rendering him the trifling service of translating an English letter to him, "spoke to" (as they say) the First Mate about Imshi. I can never be sufficiently grateful. The poor thing (Imshi, I mean, not the First Mate) was full fathom five below assorted cargoes, and it was a common rumour about the ship that the mad Englishman who had brought a car to Casablanca without any intention of selling it, but simply with the fantastic idea of driving it about the country, would wait many days before his car was extracted from the bowels of the *Doukkala*.

The First Mate (they call him the Second Captain in French ships—I like our way best) was a man of his word. He said, "Go ashore and lunch comfortably." It was then 8 a.m., but he meant well. "At 4 come to the docks, and you shall find her." I did, but I should never have got her out of the tenacious grip of the Shereefian Customs alone.

I was helped by a motor friend, to whom I had a precious card, of the proprietor of the garage at Mentone where Imshi lived for near a month. Such is the confraternity of motordom. Conceive it! I dragged this delightful man from his last ten minutes' work on a Saturday afternoon at 3, mesmerized him into a car (containing a huge tin of petrol for Imshi), and, without knowing quite how it happened, found him doing for me, in two and a half hours, what it takes him three days to do for his own firm.

From 3.30 to 5.20 p.m. he toiled for me. Imshi lay on the wharfside (and oh, how glad I was to see and touch her again!), but before I could take her away I had to pay the Government of Morocco a deposit of nearly 2,000 frs. (nominally £80). Mercifully I did have just about that amount on me, but it was a near thing.

The paying of the 2,000 frs. was nothing. It was the age-long struggle with the morose indifference of a horde of modern Government officials welded on to the aloofness and inscrutability and general maddeningness of the Levant. "Two days, monsieur," they said, one and all, "two days at least before you may receive your carriage. Remark, it is to-day Saturday—

and the afternoon at that. To-morrow is Sunday. The day after is Monday. Yesterday was Friday" —a shrug.

"What do they mean?" I demanded of my new-found friend. "There's only one Sabbath per week in Moslem countries."

"Oh," said he, "on Fridays, as you know, no Mohammedan works. On Saturdays no Jew works. On Sunday no Christian (or anyone else) works; and by Monday the English have got into the habit of it, and *they* don't work! So if you don't land here with your car early on Tuesday morning, heaven knows when you will get her out. Come on, let's go for that aged Arab again!"

Well, he accomplished miracles, and by getting my lonely Imshi out of pawn before the gates closed at 5.30 p.m., lost a day's duck shooting. Like the good fellow he was, he never gave it away, and I only found out by accident what his generosity in attending to my tiresome business was costing him. I have never felt so ashamed of my selfishness before. I am glad my car is in a proper home again, but I would far rather she had stayed a week among the bales and crates and trucks than that my friend should have sacrificed his weekly shoot.

All of which leads me to the real subject of this chapter. Let the R.A.C. at once and immediately and without further delay arrange with the French and Moroccan Governments for the extension of the triptych system to this country. From what I hear on the very best authority, Morocco is a motorist's paradise. The serpent that guards it at present is

the Shereefian Customs officer. If I had not been helped by one learned in the ways of serpents I should without doubt have waited four or five days before I could have got my car.

And if it had not been for the kindly doctor and the nice First Mate of the *Doukkala* I should certainly have spent some of Casablanca's innumerable Sundays in nail-gnawing misery.

When you come to Morocco with your car take special pains to travel in the *Doukkala*, and, if you are in trouble, rely on the Compagnie Générale de Transports, Casablanca.

I am going to like Morocco most fearfully.

* * * * *

Casablanca is one of the cheeriest towns I have ever seen. It is noisy but not clamorous. The Arabs amaze one with their brisk, smiling ways, their excellent manners, and their surpassing grasp of the French tongue. It is, of course, the eternal East, but it is the East learning new and engaging ways. The servants in the hotels are extraordinarily efficient, civil and obliging. They call you "Thou," which, to one used to other parts of the great hemisphere, is at first a little startling. You are not addressed in the third person, as Presence, or Excellency, or Lordship. "Toi" is your label, and, as the spirit is right, where is the harm? "So thou hast not *yet* counted thy dirty linen? Then I must do it for thee. Have no fear." Thus my fezzed *valet-de-chambre* to me this morning. A friendly land. A dockhand did call me "Effendi" yesterday, when I tipped him, but I think he must have been a mongrel.

And then, the Medina! Has anyone, unfamiliar with Morocco (1921), but wholly at home in any other part of the Near, Middle and General East, ever seen a *medina*, an ordinary, original native quarter not only used and regarded by Europeans and strangers alike as the city itself—Lombard Street and not Putney High Street—but actually paved, swept, garnished, cleaned and rendered practically non-odorous?

Within a few yards of where the big shops, the offices, the hotels, rear their flaming neo-Moorish "fronts," bounding the new Place de France, is the wall of the real Casablanca, a grim rampart, having four or five of the familiar arched gateways in it, and a big, blue-tiled clock tower. Outside this wall you find grubby, ramshackle, crazy tenements clustered round concrete splendours from Paris. Motor-omnibuses start from the Place de France for every town in the Empire. Superb *cafês*, resplendent shops, taxi-cabs (as good as our best), everything of the newest and most expensive and most Western, crowd and push and elbow among the reluctantly departing remnants of Casablanca's original suburbs.

Pass under one of the archways and you enter a different world. The narrow, crooked, winding streets, the overhanging houses, the sudden glimpses of unsuspected gardens, the old, old doorways, with a doorkeeper, almost as old as themselves, squatting in the sun at their threshold, the shops, the little tiny eating-houses where they are frying black beans and doing a roaring trade, the little white open spaces, the fronds of a conventional palm conscientiously sticking out over a blank wall—all these things we

have seen and known and laughed at and loved for years. The Casablanca variety has, perhaps, a new charm in the Atlantic as a background. Now and then, as you wander about this new but most familiar city, you come across views of the blue ocean and of its enormous breakers throwing up towers of foam, which you may not find in other *medinas*. But otherwise there is nothing new.

It is in the people who live in the Casablanca *medina* and in those who do business in it that the difference lies between this and any other native town in the Kingdoms of Sunshine. I wandered round it nearly all day long, from the brisk, early hours when it was all one merry roar of voices, through the noonday rest, when the chiming brass cups of the water-seller made the only sharp sound in the empty streets, to the afternoon when the place came to life again for an hour or two; and all the time I was conscious of something very unfamiliar. I walked upon excellent paving stones, clean and devoid of offence; there were no smells save, at midday, those of a most pungent cooking; and a good half of the shops were real European. Banks, consulates, offices, provision dealers, bear names of world-fame; every one of note and importance does business in the *medina*.

I called on the British Consul, who, appropriately, lives in a positive picture of a streetlet, called the Rue du Consulat d'Angleterre; found, behind a garden, the British post office next door, and 50 yards farther on, a bookshop of a kind such as you only find in the capitals of Europe. Inside this shop were books which I happen to know were printed

only a month or two ago. Next door was a vendor of fried beans, probably a Bulgarian by origin, dealing out great savoury platefuls to hungry customers, driving his trade in a nook which might have dated back to the Crusades. Eastern leather-workers, bicycle shops, slipper makers—"established," perhaps, 500 years ago—typewriter agencies established certainly not earlier than 1914—butchers, bakers and candlestick makers of all beliefs and nations, all squatting or standing to their work, according to their breed, under the cold stare of brass plates announcing the place and hour of business of Messrs. Smith, Bros., Son, and Co. of the Agence Unetelle, of—need I mention it ?—Papadadourilis Frères.

And in and out of the gates of this magic wall motor-cars and motor-cycles flit unconcernedly. They push their way through the tiny streets, blocking the traffic, unnoticed by anyone. They are obviously of far less account than a donkey with cabbage-laden paniers. They are just Casablanca.

Casablanca is the one city of Morocco from which you cannot escape (if you would) going north or south. Whatever happens, whatever your plans, "Casa," as it is called, sticks out of the middle of the scheme like a lighthouse. Well, I have tried to describe it to you, but I must tell you about the market-place. I should never have seen it if it had not been that this morning there occurred one of the most terrible disasters in Casablanca, a catastrophe which shook the place to its bottom foundations. For several hours—about twelve—there was not one single drop of petrol to be had.

You may think this a trifle. In Morocco it is a disaster. All communications worthy of the name incontinently cease. For instance, Imshi was all ready, packed to start for the warm south, at 8 a.m., and, behold, a bare pint of inferior liquid was all we had. We could not start.

"At eleven o'clock, monsieur," said the woman in charge of the petrol shop, "at eleven I promise you two tins—but not before. A ship is bringing some, but, doubtless owing to the tempests, it is late."

* * * * *

So I wandered into the market and was delighted. Large open courtyards, all white stone with deep arched verandahs, gay with oranges and flowers and cabbages and every nice thing that grows. Everything as clean as possible, no disgusting Covent Garden horrors lying on the ground, light and air, sunshine and deep shade, colour and restfulness.

All the Casablanca housewives do their own marketing, followed by an Arab "boy," aged anything from 8 to 80 years of age. He carries the basket, into which madam piles the eggs and the cheese and the lettuces and the tomatoes and the squawking hens, and, according to his age, plays marbles, smokes, or drops off into the easy sleep of old age, as occasion offers.

Casablanca market is one of the nicest and most human places I have ever seen.

CHAPTER XI

RABAT AND THE ROAD TO IT

RABAT, WEST MOROCCO.

I HAVE not made any entry in the diary of this delightful journey for the last three days for the simple reason that I couldn't. Imshi and I have been in Morocco only five days, three of which we have spent in Casablanca making arrangements about dull things like communications with Europe, money, supplies of petrol, and rooms at various hotels in North Africa.

Yet what we have seen has been so interesting and so new, *really* new, and, above all, there has been so much of it, that, as they used to say at the time of the Great Exhibition, "my pen refuses its office."

Three times since I wrote to you about the miracle of getting Imshi out of the Customs have I doggedly sat down to give a sensible account of the day's doings; three times have I torn up the silly stuff I have written and gone out to see yet more nice things. This evening I am bound to make some sort of record, as Imshi has just finished her first Moorish run, and that is an event. It was not a long run, only about 55 miles from Casablanca, but it was, naturally, one of the

most interesting we have ever made together. It was all the newest of the new to me.

The passers-by on the road were not new, the engaging creatures. They wear wonderful hoods over their fezzes, and their *burnous* or cloaks are nearly always of heavy white blanket stuff, instead of the gaudy clothes you see 1,000 miles farther east, in the valley of the Nile. But it was the same warm, guttural speech, the same leisurely, graceful walk, the same smiling cheerfulness, the same sun-worship as still, at times, makes me ache in every thought for Egypt the Blessed.

* * * * *

What was mint-new was the road itself, and that kept distracting my attention from other things. It is the very last word in absolutely first-class, 1921, European road engineering. Wide, straight as a die on the level, beautifully graded and curved on the hillsides, it is one of the roads of the world.

In case you did not know it practically all the passenger traffic of Morocco, between Mogador, Marrakesh in the south to Rabat in the north and Ujda in the east, is by motor-coach. There are light railways between most places, but the journey by them usually takes at least twice as long as by "autobus." So every one goes by road and, as a consequence, the big ones, such as that of to-day's run, are about as lonely as the Brighton road on a Saturday afternoon.

It is a wonderful sight to see the regular departures, at different hours of the day, of the "*trains de luxe*" (which are high-class touring cars of most nationalities), "*rapides*" (motor-coaches), and "*omnibus*" ("auto-

Second Class on the Road from Rabat to Fez.

The Rif Mountains.

bus," i.e. lorries glorified into a sort of diligence), from the Place de France at Casablanca for all parts of the Shereefian Empire. They are all invariably packed to their utmost capacity, and they are driven just about as fast as they will go.

Consequently the roads suffer a little, and the very high standard set up by the French Protectorate half a dozen years ago or less cannot always be maintained.

* * * * *

There are stretches on the Rabat road which are rather bony, so to speak, and here and there you come across mild potholes. But still, as the advertised time between the two cities is two hours, you will understand that I am being hypercritical in mentioning these things. With several stops for photographing and a leisurely gait to allow for staring at all the pleasant things to be seen I took only two and a half hours over the fifty-five miles.

That was what took my eye off Morocco and Africa and glued it persistently on to France and General Lyautey. The road is the finest example of French road building and it is entirely due to General Lyautey, High Commissioner and Resident-General, that, within a space of six years, Morocco has a national road system second to none. Before that she had none at all. Will the Ministry of Transport (Roads Department), London, kindly note ?

In a long and absorbing talk I had this morning with a member of his staff, I was told that the General, speaking of the prime necessity for roads in all countries but more especially in those being newly developed,

remarked that it is quite useless to open a shop unless your customers can reach it. What a lesson to some of our Over-Seas Administrations! Kitchener knew it when, in the first year of his reign in Cairo, he "ordered a road" from Cairo to Alexandria. There had not been one since the days of Cleopatra, if then. Imagine no road between London and Liverpool. It is an exact parallel.

* * * * *

All day I have been trying to fix an impression in my mind of this splendid drive, and I think it comes to this. On my right wild flowers of every colour and variety growing in ridiculous luxuriance on the gentle hills which slope up to the horizon in a succession of soft greens and greys. I love all flowers, but I am a shocking duffer at recognizing them or their names. Most of these African things were either tall, pale irises, delightful things, or like marguerites, things like blood-orange buttercups. Every now and then you get huge masses of cacti but hardly ever a palm tree. And everything round you is green and young and fresh.

On my left the clamour of the Atlantic. For miles in front and behind you see the huge, glistening rollers bursting in clouds of white foam on the beach and reefs, and all along the edge there hangs a perpetual, shifting, iridescent mist of fine spray, sometimes 50 ft. high above the sands. Over it all a radiant sky of African blue and a sun-warmth which hits you between the shoulders like an old friend.

"Balek! Balek!" Look out, look out! As you

Rabat.

The Long Red Walls of Rabat.

come into a town it is always "Balek! Balek!" And as you pull up for the night in this marvellous twelfth-century stronghold, all crimson ramparts and snow-white houses, it is the politest and most friendly people of the East who greet you.

A great day to mark in Imshi's road-book.

They call Rabat an Oriental place, but it is difficult to accept the description. So far as certain outward appearances go, manners, customs and picture postcards, it is no doubt a Western fragment of the East. In fact, its architecture, the first thing, perhaps, to impress itself on you, is a good deal more consistently Eastern in character than many towns from 2 to 10,000 miles to the east of Rabat, especially in the less ancient quarters.

The Medina, or native town, dating, I suppose, from about 600 years ago, is a replica of other medinas —clean, white, with little narrow, crooked streets, flat roofs, an occasional tousled palm-tree, some beautiful public drinking-places, each with a glowing mosaic of blue and green tiles. The smell of the East lingers enchantingly in its shady retreats, and the musical hum of Eastern voices resounds in its crowded lanes. But I do not think that there is very much of the spirit of the real East about Rabat, and it will be interesting to see what the French and the modern Moors will make of it in twenty years' time. It is far too efficient, far too wideawake for the languor of the East to exist long in it.

Morocco is a place which continually makes you contradict yourself when you attempt to write about it. I said just now that the architecture is Eastern.

As a matter of fact, when I drove my car in through the great ramparts to-day, I found myself in a city which may possibly have been Eastern in origin, but was undoubtedly of that period of the Middle Ages which seems, in the rare pictures we have, to have been international. Easterners may have lived within the shelter of those ramparts, may even have built them, but you feel that it was in and about just such places as Rabat that the history of Europe was written 1,000 years ago, written in rivers of blood, to the crash of arms, the ring of steel mail, and the creaking of unstable thrones.

To-day you have these glorious walls surrounding an ordinary Moslem town, while outside them is growing, day by day, yet one more solid, lasting, incontrovertible proof of the undying energy of France, the new European quarter, the centre of which is to be the Residence-General of the Republic's pro-Consul. Round the official Government buildings are springing up villas of the type one reads of in imaginative novels—long, low, white buildings, strictly Moorish in style, thoroughly in keeping with the place, yet without a touch of meretriciousness. It is perhaps that which pleases one so much about Rabat ; there is no pretence, no affectation, none of that conscientious aping of the most flamboyant period of Eastern architecture, which is such a weariness to the eye elsewhere. The houses have deep stone verandahs and balconies and tiled porches, because the climate demands them, and not because their builders are dreaming of Haroun al Raschid. Rabat is not a 1921 garden city from the Arabian Nights. It is just a very beautiful Moorish

town, dating from the twelfth century, each part in keeping with its surroundings.

Everything French in Morocco is common-sense and practical. The roads are superb, for example (a point which is of more than passing interest to me just now), as finely conceived, and as splendidly built as any in France. Along their splendid length the life of Morocco, of most of North Africa, pulses incessantly. Every one, from the peasant to the great notables (barons, I heard them most aptly termed) who maintain private armies, uses these glorious roads; every one travels. Eight years ago there was nothing but a haphazard system of sandy tracks connecting the villages and cities; to-day you can drive your car or ride your motor-bicycle, from Marrakesh and Mogador, through all the chief towns to Fez and the Algerian frontier, with no more difficulty than you drive it from Plymouth to Aberdeen.

CHAPTER XII

THE ROAD TO THE SOUTH—THE FERRY AND THE CAMEL—AZEMMOUR—MOORISH HIGHWAYS

ON THE WAY SOUTH.

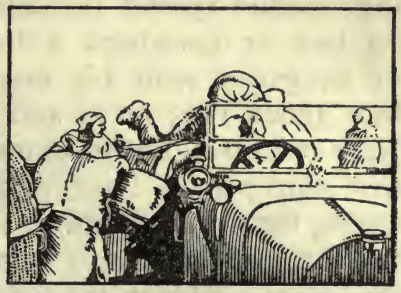
IN my last notes I think I explained that I had seen and was seeing so many new and delightful things that I was incapable of putting down my impressions on paper. This pleasant but exhausting condition of affairs continues.

Since then I have driven Imshi another 120 miles along these astonishing roads, and although, for reasons which will appear later, I am not particularly comfortable at the moment of writing, I have seldom liked anything so much as my drive back from Rabat to Casablanca and on to Azemmour and Mazagan. And I still have indigestion of the eye and mind.

Rabat left on me an impression of savage, red, mediæval ramparts, with an incongruous but dazzling effect of delicate Moorish decoration on their frowning gateways; of a clean blue and white native town; of a long white European street, all carved wood balconies and beetling roofs; of size. The size of Rabat is most disturbing. Most of us have our school-made notions of the size of mediæval towns—about as big as an average English village. I am not going to commit myself to figures, but the extent

of the Rabat walls, from the Kasba to Chella and along the south side, seems to me to equal the full area of any town like Reading. And I think I am right in saying that Rabat was, in the thirteenth century, very far from being the big city of North Africa.

And still I cannot get on with my narrative at a proper speed. I told you last time about the wild flowers on the Rabat road. Well, on the road to Azemmour they simply riot. The Bond Street florist who successfully introduces the orange-coloured buttercup will make a fortune. But his nurseries will never grow them as they grow here, in thick, blinding carpets for miles and miles, spreading a path of old gold from the green hills to the edge of the Atlantic.



A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE CAMEL THAT ATE THE TYRES.

Early in the afternoon Imshi and I crossed a river in a ferry-boat to Azemmour. We were not alone. On the contrary, there were nineteen donkeys, three camels, and about fifty cheerful people packed on to one very small raft, which was borne precariously on three antique boats. The whole contrivance travelled sideways, beam on, that is, which may explain why we took eighteen minutes to cover about 100 yards.

It was great fun, and one of the camels was delighted with my spare tyres. He had behaved very badly earlier in the voyage and had refused to sit down like a properly behaved camel. Furious bubblings went

on, but when, by accident, his tongue touched a steel-studded tyre (the menagerie was in and out of Imshi most of the time), he steadily licked this delightful new thing and was as good as gold, till we all disembarked, amid yells and brayings and gurglings, on the other side.

This exquisite little walled town of Azemmour drowsing through the centuries on the riverside, as untouched to-day by European influence as it was when the Carthaginians first developed it as one of their rather special markets, could only be reached on foot or horseback a few years ago. The Duke of Braganza with his merry Portuguese rode this way about 1513 or so and took it for his uncle, the King at Lisbon, but it returned to its rightful owners a bare thirty years later, and resumed its gentle sleep among the rustling gardens which run up to the great ramparts on the river's edge. To-day a great motor road from Knitra in the far north to the snow-capped Atlas Mountains in the south skirts the fat eastern bastion, and motor-cars and camels, donkeys and diligences, uproariously await their turn to cross the river Oum el Rebieh on the absurd ferry. But Azemmour sleeps on undisturbed. It is quite untouched by these unholy manifestations of an age of which it is still unconscious.

The newest of the new, the latest comers to the great world's company of highways, the roads of Morocco are already places of adventure, have already in their short life of seven years or so taken on that great atmosphere of romance which to your true traveller informs even a muddy farm lane in Essex.

The Captain of the Ferry, Azemmour.

It is not so much because they run between mediæval cities of strange charm and unfamiliar beauty, cities which were, to most of us, scarcely more than names on the map a dozen years ago. Their splendid miles run west and south to Mogador and Marrakesh, east to Fez and Ujda on the borderland of Algeria, and they are daily alive with motor-cars.

You are never lonely on a Moorish road. You may drive for half an hour over a land empty of life, stop for five minutes to eat garlicky sausage, and drink vehement Spanish wines, and at once find a dozen delightful new friends. Every one stops to ask after your health, to commend you to the protection of God, to see if your car has any really intriguing feature. And you can give no greater pleasure than by the trifling offer of a lift to the next post or town. One of these days Morocco is going to be the Model Motoring Country of the world. It is not so very far off that now.

To me, this morning, sitting peacefully on the toolbox of my car, fishing sardines out of their tin with the uncertain aid of Marie biscuits, entered suddenly seventeen brigands. They looked exactly as if they had just taken their call at Drury Lane (which is, of course, why I recognized them at once as real brigands), and they appeared with the same startling unexpectedness. You can generally see at least half a mile or more before and behind you on a Moorish road, and I ought to have had warning, but I suppose the struggles entailed in opening a sardine tin with a cold chisel and a pair of pliers had blinded me to my surroundings. Anyhow, there they

were, eight of them on foot, nine of them mounted on mettlesome donkeys. I was completely surrounded; but there was nobody to photograph me in my deadly situation.

On inquiry it appeared that they only looked like brigands. They were shepherds and farmers and small traders; brigandage was a pastime unfamiliar to them, and ransom was as nothing to them. Two of them accepted the rather ferocious black cigarette one smokes here, and the conversation became general. Seventeen persons at one and the same time asked an eighteenth intricate and searching questions in a language with which he was but imperfectly acquainted. They all wanted to know (*a*) whether the car had broken down, (*b*) where I was going, (*c*) how fast I could drive, (*d*) whether they and their nine donkeys could have a lift. They were the very nicest brigands I have ever met, and nothing could have given me more pleasure than to have embarked the whole crew. Unfortunately I could only have taken one brigand, and, I am afraid, no mettlesome donkeys, which might have given rise to unrest. So I lied as fluently and convincingly as I could about an apocryphal friend who was chasing a certain very beautiful kind of Moorish butterfly on the hill yonder (he was quite mad, I was careful to explain, and therefore specially protected of Allah), and with innumerable expressions of mutual esteem

PASSENGERS ON TO AZEMMOUR FERRY.

and affection, we severally implored the Prophet to guard the other fellow as the apple of his eye, and the cavalcade proceeded towards Mazagan.

Imshi went fast to-day for the first time since—well, I cannot remember. It was a glorious road and a glorious day, and although the petrol she was given was unutterably abominable, she played up and pretended it was the best.

She is comfortable now in a splendid Mazagan garage owned and run by an Englishman, but I have dined horribly in a very nasty semi-European inn, and I am writing this literally by the light of a solitary dip.

There is always consolation, and it came even to-night at the end of an infamous meal, in the shape of marmalade such as neither Dundee nor even Oxford ever dreamt of. I shall buy a ton of it. It is a wonderful thing.

CHAPTER XIII

MARRAKESH—THE VALUE OF PETROL TINS in ARCHITECTURE AND DECORATION

MARRAKESH (MOROCCO CITY),
S. MOROCCO.

WE have come as far south as we can, Imshi and I. We could, I believe, crawl a few miles nearer the towering Atlas Mountains along a very unrecommended mule-path, but on the whole we prefer to regard Marrakesh as our "Farthest South" in Morocco.

I confess I should like to look at my old friend the Sahara once more from the summit of an Atlas pass, but as the range as far as one can see in either direction is cloaked in snow I do not think it would be a sensible scheme to try the trick. Besides, distinctly anti-motor tribes, not to say anti-everybody-but-themselves, are reputed to inhabit those frozen fastnesses; and I am quite comfortable in Marrakesh. I have no passionate desire to provide the plot for another "Don Q." serial. The picturesque life in a two-seater has its limits.

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It was a great day when I drove here from Mazagan, a day I am likely to bear in mind for some time yet—

at any rate until my sun-scorched face has grown some more skins. Let those who bring their cars to Morocco and drive them due south into the eye of the noonday sun, when there is a gentle breeze coming off the snow-peaks of the mountains, a breeze which you think so charming in its cool caresses and which is really like a blunt razor in its effect on your basted

cheeks—let them, I say, send all dignity and decency to the deuce and plaster themselves thickly with any chemist's face-dope they can find. Otherwise the agony on the following morning passes all fleshly pains. I thought, in my folly, that I knew something about sunburn. I find, with tears, that I am scarcely grounded in the elements of the matter.

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Face-frying apart, it was a splendid drive, over beautiful flower-carpeted hills, along a road which was so excellent that we covered the 123 miles in four hours and a quarter, running time. Actually, of course, I took six hours over it, stopping to picnic weirdly on strange eatables, to photograph, and to try to air my small stock of Arabic on my fellow-travellers.

It only goes a very short way, my Arabic, being of the debased Egyptian currency, and scanty withal. Yet I could manage to avoid flagrant ill-manners with shepherds and teamsters and market gardeners, and, with perhaps too much ease, make them laugh. They seemed to be amused at my well-meant attempts to give the small coins of everyday speech what I conceived to be the real Moorish pronunciation.

In only one phrase have I any success. The words for "Thank you" are beautiful, rich, round, heart-felt: "Barak allahou feek." There is a deep satisfaction in closing a conversation with such a set of syllables. I feel I can say "Thank you" with any man now. I say it very often, also "Go with God," which is as nice a farewell as I know.

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Besides the human beings on this fine road were, once more, my orange-crimson flowers, fields and fields of a new burning purple kind, white lilies (or so I thought them) on the little ponds, and yet more irises. Orange, white and purple, the land stretched out on either side like some magic carpet. When I got here somebody said (as somebody always does in a new place) "Ah, but you ought to have come here in March

when the wild flowers are out." I stared at him in wonder. Is the man blind?

There were also storks and flamingos and egrets, but they were annoying creatures. So long as Imshi was moving they would stand within 20 yards of her as impassively as their miserable relations in the "Zoo," looking as if they were the sole inhabitants of this earth. Stop, or even slow down, as I tried to do a score of times for the sake of a photograph, and they would spread their red, black and white wings and flap carefully but firmly out of range.

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After three hours' steady climb over a gradient so gentle that only the aneroid tells you of it, I came suddenly out, at 2,000 ft., between two spurs of rock and saw before me, for the first time, the Atlas Mountains. Towering 15,000 ft. up into the sky, their snow-clad peaks all crimson and gold and deep, deep blue in the evening sun, they stood like a mighty rampart between rich Morocco and the illimitable waste of the Sahara.

Sixty miles away they were, at least, across a great plain, fat with cultivation, all awave with acres and acres of palms. In the middle distance lay Marrakesh, the African city; Marrakesh, the untouched, the unspoiled; the city of pleasure, through forgotten centuries, for the dwellers in the desert beyond the hills.

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Marrakesh (which really is the origin of our word Morocco) is terribly old. Archæologists who only dabble in the fringes of time recognize it as that modern

Roman town Bocanum Hemerum. Goodness knows what it was before then. To the Moor of to-day it is interesting, apart from the never-ending show of snake-charmers, jugglers, tumblers and scorpion eaters in the great market-place, as being officially recognized as the Moslem capital in 1062 by the first of the great Almoravide dynasty of rulers, the mighty Yusef-ben-Tashfin, who came from the Sahara. Some of Yusef's walls are still there.

Imshi and I drove through a mile or two of its suburbs, the open streets, which lie between the inner and the outer walls (the extent of these Moorish cities is positively confounding), but beyond the Jemna el Fna, where everything under the sun is bought and sold and where the amusements are, we had the grace not to push our impertinent way.

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It is true that the Jemna el Fna boasts in one corner a cinematograph hut, which does a roaring trade, but, except for this and one other thing, I could find in the city no sign of European penetration. At all hours the tumblers, the jugglers, the dancers, the story-tellers, and the snake-charmers give their apparently unending show before an enraptured audience. Marrakesh is the city of amusements for all the peoples of this end of the Sahara, and, so far as I could gather, its season is continuous.

Apart from the Jemna el Fna, there are hardly any show places to visit, which is, perhaps, one of the reasons why I found Marrakesh so charming. Too many show places are exhausting, and by diverting attention from the real thing, the life of the city,

tend to spoil the picture. The newly-discovered tombs of the Saadian Cherifs, who flourished in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, are well worth examination for the extravagant wealth of mosaic and arabesque which covers their walls and domes.

The other important attraction of Marrakesh is the Bahia Palace, and it was here that I found the second sign of European penetration. The door by which visitors are admitted is entirely covered by what, at a distance, looks like silver plates, with a curiously regular design showing in relief. It is while the visitor is awaiting admittance (incidentally I awaited it in vain, and never saw the back of that door at all) that he grasps the fact that they are Shell petrol tins hammered flat and nailed in a neat pattern over the whole surface of the door. Just before I left England I saw Shell tins being made at Fulham. The next time I set eyes on the familiar trade mark was yesterday, at the foot of the Atlas Mountains, tacked on the door of the super-luxurious town house of a vizir of the late Moulay Abd el Aziz, one Ahmed Ben Moussa, the son of a palace negro slave.

The real show pieces of Marrakesh are its dark streets, its swarming African population, and its constant stream of country cousins from beyond the hills, come to see the latest attractions in sword swallowing, scorpion taming, and fire eating. Besides these the exquisite art of the Saadian tombs, the mighty Kasba, even the petrol-tin decorated door of an African millionaire's villa, shrink to insignificance.

The whole immense city is one labyrinth of tunnelled alleys, one leading into another, under houses, round

blind corner after blind corner, nearly always out of the sunshine. And what beats me is that there are, practically speaking, no smells. You know the southern proverb, "Where there is no sun, Death enters." That is a cold, scientific, hygienic, departmental, municipal fact—as any harassed health officer will tell you, east of Marseilles. There must be acres of Marrakesh where the sun has never shone. Yet there is nothing the matter with Marrakesh. I give it up.

It has been delightful wandering about this Sahara city, and I shall be sorry to go. Imshi will also be sorry to leave her palmetto garage—a lean-to against a fragment of mediæval rampart, quarter-roofed with palmetto leaves. There is no shelter at all, really, and the crazy old wooden gateway can be kicked open by a child, in spite of its venerable padlock. But we like it, both of us, much better than rich places with lifts and electric light and light-fingered loafers.

CHAPTER XIV

A LUNCH PARTY—SMAÏN AND BRUM—THE ROAD TO SAFI—THE TOLL OF THE ROAD

I GAVE a luncheon party to-day, and I hope I shall give many more while Imshi and I are in Morocco. I never enjoyed one more, either as host or guest.

It was, of course, on the road. Luncheon is rather a doubtful business in Morocco except at the hotels in the big towns, and I always buy odd sorts of provisions and eat them happily by the roadside rather than be bothered with a very indifferent meal in an inn. It is a plan which I find leads to a considerable weekly consumption of sardines and Lyon sausage, but as both are excellent of their kind, why worry? To-day there was a distinct spread. I had simply spent money like water, buying not only real French sardines and imported sausage, but also a most glorious tinned *pâté de foie gras*, biscuits as well as bread, and a slab of chocolate. It was a very good thing I did, because I had no idea we should be three instead of one, and it would have been awful to have had a shortage in the kitchen. In an ordinary house that kind of accident is bad enough—in a car it is sheer calamity.

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My guests were two small boys in charge (at

intervals) of about two hundred very large and alarming cows. I suppose they were not really so enormous, now I come to think of it, but Smaïn and Brum were so very small compared with them. Smaïn was the one with a swell striped shirt. I could not get much more than a grin and "'brahm" out of my other guest when I asked his name, but I expect it was Ibrahim or one of the many variants of Abraham. Anyway, he was Brum.

They arrived just as I was laying out the freshly opened sardine tin on the near wing and disposing the *pâté* and the chocolate on top of my suit-case. Like all Moors, they had the best of manners and they passed me with scarcely a glance at the luncheon-table, but politely saying, "Es-salam" and adding, for the benefit of the foreigner, "Bonjour." They took their detestable cows into a neighbouring pasture, told them to behave themselves, and sat down a good 50 yards away to see what would happen.

What happened was that they came to lunch. I hope I shall not be considered guilty of conceit when I say that they enjoyed themselves. The *pâté* they esteemed chiefly because they had never eaten such a thing before. They were very careful to ask me, begging my pardon first, if it contained pig in any shape. I was able to convince them that they would suffer no contamination from eating it, nothing worse perhaps than a tummy-ache, but it was a difficult moment when, having eaten half of it, they wished to know what animal became so delicious after death.

* * * * *

I knew one form of Arabic for goose and also for

duck. I tried both without success. Then I tried bird, but with no better luck. Finally I pointed to a large and elderly stork who, just like a governess I once had, was watching the proceedings with sour disapproval from across the road. It was an inspiration, and Brum stopped eating in order to jeer at the governess about it.

The sausage course was naturally not for them and I had the tact not to offer it to them, but the sardines and the chocolate and the biscuits gave them enormous pleasure. Their manners were simply charming.

When they had split the last sardine they tossed up, verbally and with amazing rapidity, for the supreme joy of licking the oil out of the tin. Smaïn won. They then asked if they might keep the tin, and also if they might examine the pieces of wrapping-paper which I had, with disgusting untidiness, allowed the wind to blow about the road. When they were quite sure that there was nothing left they came and very gravely, very courteously thanked me, said a quantity of things which I was deeply disappointed not to grasp, refused cigarettes, and returned to bully their cows.

I do hope they will come again another day—they or other Brums and Smaïns. I will never go out again without two large tins of sardines and a pound of chocolates. I cannot guarantee that there will always be *pâté*, but nice oily sardines of the best kind I promise there shall be. A tin of these is a box of happiness to a Moorish infant.

SAFI, MOROCCO.

If, as a motorist, you yearn for the reviving savour

of contrast, let me recommend you to come to Morocco. Within the past few days Imshi and I have wandered vaguely between the East and the West, between Africa at its darkest and Europe at its latest; between a very nearly tropical spring, all hot, burning sun, and a temperature which would not have been out of place in an English winter.

North Morocco, between, say, Mazagan and Rabat, is so green and fresh and Devonshire-like that the very rare palm tree looks out of place. Marrakesh is pure Sahara, all palms and sand and dust and dark faces and complete indifference to other people's affairs. As I write this a thick heavy British rain is drenching the green fields and blotting out the sea, and there is more mud on General Lyautey's imperial roads than is at all convenient. It is also extremely chilly.

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Yesterday, or rather the day before, I was walking briskly from the Commanding Officer's beautiful place of work in Marrakesh City to my hotel. The distance is nearly two miles, and there is no shade at any part of the road. I wore the following extra garments: two winter vests, one extra heavy Shetland woolly *under* a flannel shirt, a very heavy sleeved Cardigan waistcoat under the waistcoat of my suit. I walked fast in order to keep warm, for it was only 11 a.m. I arrived at my hotel just comfortably warm. An hour later, when the wicked little wind off the snowy Atlas peaks had dropped and the sun had got in some really serious work, there was nobody in the Continent of Africa happier than myself. I was excessively

hot. And I continued in this blissful condition till 4 p.m. when a sand-storm sprang up from the north, veiling the tossing palms in thick swathes of sand, filling the air and the ultimate recesses of one's clothes and belongings with sand, and turning an August noon into a January afternoon.

The storm ceased with much the same suddenness as its understudy does at Drury Lane in "The Garden of Allah," and I drove four-fifths of the way to Safi next day in rollicking spring weather, all blue sky and fat white clouds sailing across it and blowing flowers. Then the glass fell (about an inch, it seemed to me) and I got into Safi soaked and shivering. I do not know whether the Moors regard the weather as a subject of conversation, but if they do they need never be at a loss for something to say.

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It is a splendid road from Marrakesh to Safi. I am keeping a very careful record of these extraordinary African highways, and I see that I have put down "V.G." opposite this sketch. I also notice that my average running speed, for a whole day's run, was about 28 miles an hour, from door to door. I suppose I shall get used to it soon, but, at the end of a fortnight's driving in Morocco, it still seems incredible that one can do these things easily and comfortably, and that hundreds of people do them every day, giving to the miracle no more thought than does your British merchant to his London to Manchester non-stop express train.

And I cannot imagine why there is a car left in the whole of Morocco which will go. Nowhere have I

seen cars so scandalously overloaded. Disreputable-looking old relics as well as new elegancies howl along the roads with six and eight full-sized Arabs in them, and the only cars you meet which are not simply bulging with people are the Army cars.

And they all drive just as fast as it is possible. To-day I came on to one short patch of very worn and potholed road. It was a bad one, and I slowed down to 10 miles an hour and felt rather guilty at that. Past me, with a yelling Klaxon and in a cloud of dust, rushed a large car with eleven people packed into it, at certainly 30 miles an hour. I am glad she doesn't belong to me. I think she must be a costly plaything; but I suppose she is really an excellent investment.

* * * * *

I had a long and absorbing talk with the manager of a big motor transport company last week, one of the companies which maintain absolutely regular daily services between north and south with touring cars and motor-coaches. There was a large and sad pile of tubercular engines lying in the yard, some bearing very famous names.

"Corpses all," said he, waving a hand tenderly at them. "Victims of Moroccan summers. You cannot drive *any* engine, French, English, American, Dutch, or Chinese, at full speed over a 200-mile stage with the thermometer at 120 in the shade, for more than a definite and limited period. At the end of that period your engine becomes—that," pointing to a venerable relic, all cracks and fissures, "just junk."

"How, then, do you keep things going?" said I, full of the distressing curiosity of the British tourist.

"We buy new ones, chiefly American," he replied. "They are not so good, but when they overheat they just stop because the valves don't close. But they don't seize up. They are more likely to melt. You get out and wait till she cools off."

* * * * *

Just at present I have no such fears for Imshi. The thermometer is a long way off 120, and since we are on our way to the slopes of the Lesser Atlas Mountains I do not think we are likely to suffer from overheating. At any rate, there is no risk of it in Safi to-night. On the contrary, I am wondering how long it will take me to start the engine to-morrow on "gasolene," the second-grade (i.e., tenth rate) stuff one must put into one's tank. I dare say I shall get warm in the process.

Safi is a remarkably beautiful old town inside some fine walls. It is a remnant of the Portuguese era, and although I cannot truthfully call it a luxurious seaside resort, it is a place which demands a visit. Like all Moorish towns I have seen (except Casablanca), it is most picturesquely situated. The old town itself lies in a fold of the hills, crowned with very fine crenellated battlements, and all its narrow, winding streets lead down to the tiny harbour, which is overlooked by the "Sea House," a stern little Gibraltar of a place which shelters the fishing boats from the fury of the south-westerly gales.

CHAPTER XV

FEZ, THE IMPENETRABLE CITY

IT is some days since I have been able to continue the narrative of this splendid Moorish adventure, as, soon after leaving Safi and Rabat for the East luck turned the wrong way and sent us rain.

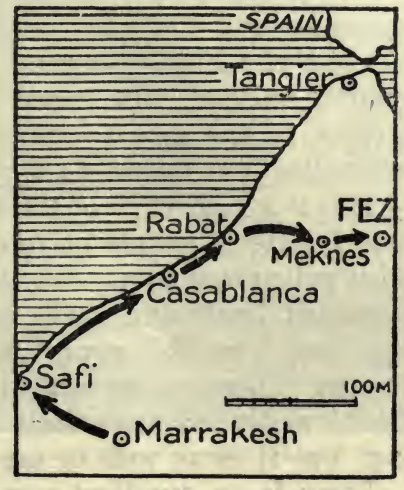
For three days and three nights it has rained without stopping for a minute, and rain in Morocco is the real thing. It is a terrific, steady downpour which drums on the roofs with the noise of war. About once in every half-hour there arrives a tremendous squall which seems to hurl solid sheets of water at you. And with it all there is a penetrating chill which makes you long for fireplaces and central heating and other things not as yet to be found in Fez. I have seldom felt so cold. We were lucky in one thing, however. After a pretty rough drive of 129 miles from Rabat we reached the outskirts of this huge and wonderful place at sunset, before the rain had begun, and although subsequent happenings were rather picturesque than pleasant, I would gladly have gone through much worse rather than miss such a thing.

Fez is enormous. With its three separate towns, its unending double lines of immense ramparts climbing and falling over the hills for 13 miles round, its

Fez the Impenetrable.

countless great gates, its mere extent bewilders you. Arrive at its western fringe in the evening, as we did, and see an infinite perspective of battlements and towers and fortresses against the dying light, girdling a city which seems to fill the whole land, and you will realize that you are looking at something of which there is no copy in the world.

As we came in sight of the huge arched gateway which leads you into the Mysterious City we passed a story-teller. His audience were grouped round him in a half-circle, some sitting on the ground, others motionless, in glorious poses, on a crumbling wall. He was a born actor, and his gestures, his voice, and the amazing restraint of his performance were carrying his hearers off their feet. No Irving or Bernhardt ever moved a house more deeply.



Something of the man's power reached us in Imshi as we came slowly past, and very foolishly I stopped her 50 yards away so that we might enjoy this beautiful glimpse of the life of the East as it has been since Bagdad was the city whence all the best tales came and will always be till there is no more East. Our intrusion (heaven knows it was not meant impertinently) was regarded with ill-favour, and to my infinite

vexation the audience began to slip away by twos and threes and the teller of tales to lose the thread of the story. We had spoilt the picture. A few moments later it was dark and we had crept into Fez, an endless labyrinth of streets, so narrow that there was only just room for the car to squeeze past the tiny shops and to avoid touching the surging crowds which jostled round her. A dozen times, it seemed to me, I scraped her round impossible corners, through narrow arches leading into black mazes peopled with half-seen ghosts. Another inch of wheel-base and the business would have been impossible. As it was, we left a good deal of white paint on the inner walls of Fez where the long-suffering wings were forced along them.

At the end of half an hour of this we were led out again beyond the walls, and after failing completely to find the hotel we wanted, we stumbled on the quarter-finished, but clean and comfortable Hotel Regina in the new town—a matter of 7 miles from where we had meant to stay.

This is a 1921 copy of the old East. My companion and I have a couple of rough brick cubicles, roofed with galvanized iron. We get at them across a yard in which Imshi and other cars sleep at night. It is the real "packed serai," and I infinitely prefer it to any other arrangement where I cannot have my Imshi under my immediate eye. Morocco is charming, but it is as well to use locks and keys.

There is an excellent restaurant next door, and if it were not for the rain we should be even more contented than we are.

Chopping Firewood for Supper in our Fez Caravanserai.

My Companion for three weeks surveys with pride his work as Luggage Man.

The rain is rather a serious matter. It is flooding the roads and in many places rendering them impassable. Nasty stories are brought to us every day by lorry drivers who have ploughed through from Meknes or Taza of cars left axle-deep in the mud, of broken axles, of *pannes* innumerable.

"You will not get 10 kilometres along the road to Ujda till the sun has shone two days," says the driver of a huge motor-coach from Algiers, who has arrived three and a half hours late on a 75-mile run. As he has got here I do not quite see why Imshi should not do as well as he. But the roar of falling waters on the galvanized iron and the dense veil in which Fez is swathed are not too cheerful.

We refuse to be depressed, however. Although we cannot see it, we are in Fez, the City of Secrets, the least known, the most mysterious of all Eastern cities, and Imshi has brought us here.

* * * * *

The worst of motoring in Morocco is that you cannot keep up with things. Every hour, every mile is packed with new impressions, new places, new people, and one needs a couple of secretaries, insomnia, and several brains to make even a decent pretence at a diary. There is far too much to see and not nearly enough time in which to notice it.

For example, how can I, a child in these matters, begin to try to describe Fez to you? I have been here three or four or five days—I forget exactly how many—and beyond realizing that Imshi and I are in a city which, for most people, exists only in dreams and imaginative and unreliable guide-books, I have

no concrete impression of this imperial capital save that of size (huge size), miles and miles of narrow streets, roofed with bamboo-sticks, a super-superb view of the whole swarming place from the hill-road which rings it, and the enslaving smell of the East.

For me, Fez will remain one of the really big cities of the world; a city of three cities, the new, the Jew, and the old; a place where all the faces you have ever tried to draw, from Shylock and Othello to Cortez and the discoverer of America, pass before you in a maddening variety of shapes, each superb of its type; a piece of the East, perfect, inscrutable, apart, jealous of peering eyes, living neither in the past nor the present nor the future—simply by the will of Allah, as it has done since the Prophet framed the laws by which the Faithful must rigidly rule the conduct of life; but above all a place whose real secrets will remain locked in those endless streets till our latest and most startling "discoveries" have crumbled into dust.

IN THE JEWS' QUARTER, FEZ.

It is with something more than curiosity or even awe that one first gazes on Fez the Impenetrable; it is almost with a kind of fear. For so many years

back in history this amazing city has been a secret locked in the hills of Morocco, so many tales have been told of it, so very few people have ever set eyes on it, that to one's imagination it has become a sort of Western Forbidden City, as mysterious, as inaccessible, as unreal as the Celestial town at Peking. Fez! It has always been a name to stir the dullest imagination, and the strength of its magic lay always in the fact that, a very few political incidents excepted one could never say with any exactness what on imagined went on within its mighty walls.

It still has that magic, and it will always have it. You drive your motor-car to-day from the coast through Meknez to the Impenetrable City and, if so disposed, you may stay at an hotel which can only be reached on foot through a quarter of a mile of streets and alleys scarcely a couple of yards wide. You may go anywhere, practically speaking; you may poke your inquiring Western nose into the business of the most reserved town in the world; you can hire cabs and drive flauntingly through two of the three towns which make it up; but although you can do all this and more with as much ease, comfort and security as if the place were London, you will never pierce through the air of solid indifference which sheathes Fez like steel mail and makes of it a city where time is not, has never been.

It is beautiful in a way very few cities are beautiful. The three towns lie hidden among olive-clothed hills, ringed and ringed again with miles of red ramparts. It glows sometimes under the sunshine with a thousand colours, sometimes as white as pearls. It never looks

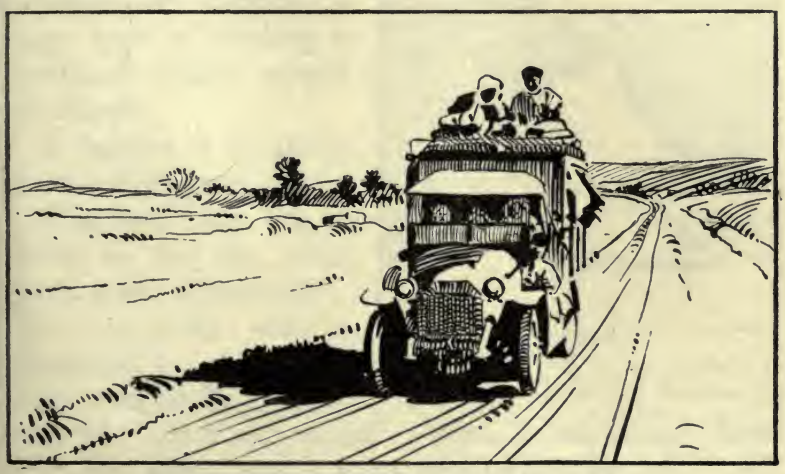
the same two days running. It is terrific in size, not only in actual extent (it is over six kilometres long) but in the proportions of its open spaces. You walk through one of its innumerable gates and find yourself in a square, walled in by ramparts, so vast that the people walking in it look like dwarfs. Its gates, its towers, everything built are on a huge scale. It is a very fitting capital for an empire.

Nothing very mysterious about this, you may say. Yet mystery, secrecy, unassailable aloofness is in every stone of it, in the faces of its peoples, in the very air you breathe. Walking through the labyrinth of double walls round the Mellah, the quarter of the Jews, you instinctively think of massacres, but you cannot for the life of you be more precise. These huge stone alleys, with double right-angled turns every hundred yards or so, can only have been made for the stern disciplining of those who lived inside them. You can see hapless hordes driven screaming through them on to the waiting blades at each corner. There is no escape. On many and many a red day since the ninth century the narrow, blind runs between the 60 ft. walls must have echoed to the cries of doomed men. That much hits you in the face like—a blow from an arquebus, for instance. Yet though the manner of death is obvious, the reasons for it and the personality of those who dealt it and of those who met it in those dark places are hidden from you. Fez seems to draw her impenetrable veil over the story of her bloody deeds as her women muffle their own faces in the streets. You know, as you go shrinkingly between walls, that tremendous things were done

A Gateway of Fez.

here; but you will never know more. That is Fez.

Somewhere in the middle spaces is General Lyautey's Residency, and it is, I suppose, unique as the dwelling of any administrator and the place of his administration. It is a sketch from the Rubaiyat, a water-colour of glowing tiles, orange-trees, onyx fountains, arcades, green bronze doors, roses, mosaic-floored courtyards, olives and cypresses. Never was there such a garden, never such a perfect Moorish palace. You feel heartily ashamed of yourself for bringing your tourist presence into those beautiful rooms and walking with your muddy boots over the dazzling old tiles of the courtyard, but even shame is a small price to pay for the sight of the hills and ramparts through the roses and oranges. It is the most gracious place imaginable, and it is every Persian and Arabian palace you ever dreamt of brought to life, perfect in every detail. It is the House Beautiful.



THIRD CLASS, SLOW TRAIN, FROM FEZ TO TAZA.

Then you go outside and find more savage ramparts, walls, forts, keeps, miles of them hemming in the Secret City. It is a city of walls, of traps, of dark corners, a place planned for swift killing. And it is one of the most beautiful places in the world.

Fez, to a sympathetic, unlettered world-wanderer like myself, must always be a riddle like the Sphinx. To intelligent historians, I dare say, it is merely a matter of deduction based on a reasonable degree of familiarity with such tedious subjects as ethnology and its like.

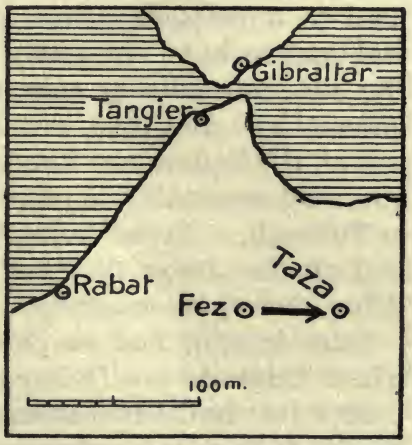
That sort of thing (and I've heard it issued generously and at large) will not do for us. Fez is and represents all one has ever known or heard of Bagdad, Cairo, Damascus, Teheran, and Delhi. After four days (or is it five ?), I have the impertinence to offer this definition to the Learned Ones.

CHAPTER XVI

TAZA

TAZA.

HAVING grasped the fact that (*a*) I could not understand Fez in less than a lifetime, (*b*) I had not the time to spare, I tore my companion ruthlessly from its enchantments and, thrusting him firmly into Imshi, started away yesterday morning for Tunis. This place is at a considerable distance from Fez, but we hope to reach it one of these days, and, in the meantime, we talk glibly about having our clothes washed or buying a new tyre or sending a postcard—when we get to Tunis.



I believe it is about 1,000 miles from here.

The road from Fez to Taza is, for the most part, quite abominable. We are told, with a prodigality of detail, how singularly bad it can be "after the rains." Well, it has rained hard for some days, and I hope never to drive over such

a 75-mile nightmare again. A hot, blazing, burning, face-frying sun overhead, the most beautiful, fresh green mountains all round (very like the Scottish Lowlands), and the most terrible travesty of a road underneath. Our average speed was about 12 miles an hour for the whole distance.

Mind you, the road has excellent intentions. It was built only a year or two ago, and General Lyautey's administration do their best to keep it in order. It began life well, but, as we in England can understand only too well, it has early fallen a victim to the lorry, the touring motor-coach, the daily motor-stage, and the incorrigible Moroccan "speed merchant." A wonderful piece of mountain-road engineering, it is, in a wet state, almost impassable.

Upon six several and distinct occasions did I hear something hit the back-axle casing hard. I am getting used to unpleasant noises and to unwelcome bumps and crashes, but I still retain enough decency to dislike the idea of shifting submerged boulders with my differential. But then, with the help of St. Christopher and all the Gods of the Road, Imshi is a car with which you may reasonably hope to reach Tunis, Timbuctoo, or Tuticorin. At the moment of writing the differential and all the things that matter are still in place and doing their jobs manfully. Touch wood!

Since leaving Fez we have come into the country where brigands are (I hope falsely) supposed to be. I have just heard two splendid stories about the road we are to take to-morrow in Imshi. The first is that the reason for the vileness of the road is the passion of the local brigands for murdering the road-menders.

The second, far more resplendent, is that the mail-coach was held up last week between here and Taurirt and 60,000 frs. peeled off the passengers. Now:

1. The first lacks local and authoritative confirmation. It is an ordinary lie.

2. The second is a hash of a similar tale of what happened near Algiers three weeks ago.

3. The source of this Odyssey is a hired chauffeur anxious about his tips.

Taza is a bleak little spot, little more than a military post, and a quite uninteresting village. It is set among hills, and the citizens of every other town in Morocco will tell you that it always rains there. It is high up and cold and, so far as my own short experience goes, it rains a good deal at Taza. The Transatlantique Company have an hotel there to enable their motor-caravans to break the long journey between Ujda and Fez, a long, low stone bungalow in a walled enclosure. There is no garage or coach-house. Your car is drawn up outside your bedroom window and there remains. Personally I liked the scheme, as one could keep an eye on her—a rather necessary thing to do, with petrol at 90 frs. a tin and magnetos at 1,500 frs. apiece. And in this connection I received a shock at Taza, the kind of delightful surprise in which Morocco excels. I woke at some dark and unearthly hour to the weary sound of descending rain—and something else. In the hood of Imshi I carry a petrol funnel, for the excellent reason that there is no room for it elsewhere. The sound I heard, which brought me in one mad leap from my bed to the window-sill, was the sound of a petrol funnel falling on stone flags.

Bursting open the shutters in a kind of frenzy I saw dark figures round my car, and a lantern. Convinced of the absolute worst, I climbed on to the sill, and, before committing my shivering person to the deluge, yelled a futile and furious inquiry as to what was doing and who was doing it.

It was the chambermaid who, good soul, had roused the night watchman at the first signs of rain, and dragged him out into the night in order to put the hood of the car up. In so doing they had dropped the petrol filter on the ground. For this they both apologized.

The next morning I lay in bed and listened to the conversations I have heard so often in wayside inns at home and abroad. There were three cars drawn up at the edge of the terrace, under the bedroom windows, all getting ready to start.

"I bought her four months ago . . . 35,000 frs. in Casablanca . . . delighted . . . climbs like a bird." And then the inevitable, the expected, "I haven't put a spanner to her. She will touch 100 kilometres an hour—easily." Murmurs of polite belief. I put an eye to the shutters and saw a car of which I know something. One of the facts about it of which I am quite convinced is that it will not exceed 50 miles an hour. And another is that if you go about in it without a spanner for four months you will regret it. But it was delightful to listen to the old, old tale, and especially to listen to it, word-perfect, in a stone bungalow at Taza, Morocco, where the housemaid goes out, unbidden, into a downpour in the dead hours to see that the hoods of cars are up. Was there ever such a nice land?

CHAPTER XVII

WET CLAY—THE EDGE OF ALGERIA—FOUR CITIES

TAURIRT, MOROCCO.

WE have seen a good deal of official local colour, Imshi, my companion, and I, since I last wrote—it seems years ago—at Taza. We have met no brigands, but all three of us have added appreciably to our knowledge of bad roads, and two of us, Imshi and myself, of what a well-made car can put up with on occasion.

Imshi is still as she was when we left Taza, except that she is red and yellow instead of white, triply coated with mud and clay. Her maker could ask for no finer advertisement, and I am sure that if a crystal-gazer had shown him a picture of her lurching across what is politely called "the track" to Guercif, he would have enjoyed it less than we did.

The track is marked on the map, but I regret that no other traces of it could be found on the day we left that rather sad and rainy post of Taza. For a few miles we followed a good road, well metalled, well graded, not too terribly potholed. At a certain point (about half an hour's run from Taza) it ceased to exist. An enormous monolith announced that what followed was the official "Taza Ujda Piste,"

—and, as it were, waved us on. Upon which we took to the desert. It was not, of course, the real desert, but it was a remarkably life-like imitation. The only distinguishable objects in view were, on the left, the Riff mountains, perhaps 20 miles away; and, on the right, the Lesser Atlas Mountains. A string of telegraph poles completed the picture. The rest was clay.

Clay! Miles and miles of wet, cold, clinging clay, looking exactly like sand at a distance and feeling exactly like clay (wet, cold clay) underfoot. Here and there shy rocks ventured to obtrude their bashful solidity into the world of slime; now and then a miserable shrub or even a shivering palm-tree stood out like the dry land for which Noah searched so hungrily. But it was the Flood—in clay.

I am anxious to meet the man who compiled the existing road-guide to Morocco. He describes the way from Fez to the Algerian frontier as "a good main road." Later on he becomes less self-confident and confesses that his good main road traverses "undulating and clayey regions, scarcely practicable to automobiles after the rains."

Well, I think he might have said so at first. As I explained (at some length, I am afraid) in my last letter, it has been raining. It has been raining as I have never seen it rain before. Floods, sheets, torrents of rain, for five days, and five nights. I was told (and I told you) that rain was a serious matter in Morocco. It is. And that is why I am so proud of Imshi.

Everything on wheels has been held up, the wildest stories have been buzzing about of the fearful events

Imshi, the Piste and the Author.

The Piste : Fellow Motorists in Distress.

on the "good main road," of the ghastly ends which have overtaken cars on the way east and west. I do not believe any of them; but I am quite sure that, even if she falls to pieces as I write this, Imshi is the best and bravest of little cars.

After we had ploughed our way (largely on first and second speed) through several thousand miles of clay, we came to a quantity of river-beds. We liked those. At all events they were dry. Bounding from rock to rock and from hole to hole was quite a pleasure after the clay—the wet, yellow, dull, cold, slimy, treacherous clay. I know all that it is necessary to know about clay—for ever.

And so it went on. At intervals we stopped (rather a risky thing to do, as your car may begin to dig herself in), and took photographs of my once beautiful white Imshi in these unusual surroundings. Each time we got into the car again our shoes brought in more and more clay and deposited it on to the heaps which were there before.

Presently we came across a car which had plunged into a more than ordinarily deep marsh of the nightmare stuff. They signalled to us wildly to keep far to the right, and we crept cautiously up something which might have been, in its normal state, a river-bank, but which had, at any rate, good firm shingles and flints on its surface.

We tried to help with first-aid in the shape of fetching piles of rushes to put under the bogged car's wheels—incidentally ruining the water-jump in the steeple-chase course laid out for the amusement (in fine weather) of the French officers of the neighbouring

post—and, after much physical exercise by ourselves, the owner and occupants of the car, and four natives who had been sent to dig her out, she was painfully prised out and set on more or less dry land again. She was lucky.

And so we arrived, not at Ujda, for which we hoped, but at Taurirt. We got here at about 3.30 p.m., but as no cars are allowed abroad after dark on this road, and we could get no certain information about the condition of the "good main road" for the next 62 miles to Ujda, we decided to stay the night here.

My companion is delighted with it. He says it is exactly like a Wild West nightmare come true. "All galvanized iron and naphtha tins," says he exultingly. Personally, I am not attached to it. The galvanized roofs, the naphtha tins, and the sheep and goats in the yard, picturesque enough in their way, do not compensate me for the fact that it is very cold and extremely dirty. No matter, Imshi has done great deeds to-day, and there is always to-morrow.

Morocco is not one country, but a string of countries, all different. There is the cosmopolitan gate to it, Casablanca. Drive south along the coast and you come to glimpses of sixteenth-century Portugal and bits of mighty Carthage at Azemmour, Safi and Mogador. Turn east and south and you come to the dusky splendours of Marrakesh, with its warren-maze of dark streets, its splashes of glorious colour, its immense age and dignity, its African shoddiness and squalor, its African, if noisy, tranquillity. Marrakesh is a place which bewilders you at first sight, which keeps

its charms jealously veiled from prying eyes. It is a place of immense personality, but it is not until you have left it a week or two that anything like a picture begins to form in your mind. Marrakesh is one of the places which catch tight hold of your heart with unfelt fingers and tug at it, now and again, till the end of all your days. There is light and warmth: the sky over Marrakesh is of that spaciousness and depth of which we know nothing farther north. At Marrakesh the stars at night hang over the humming city like lamps, and seem almost within a hand's grasp. It is embowered in a sea of palms, a sea which breaks, to the south, on the red and yellow foothills of the Atlas Mountains. The air is the air of the Sahara cleaner than the Seven Seas, and in it your sight is miraculously doubled. There are no blurred edges about Marrakesh.

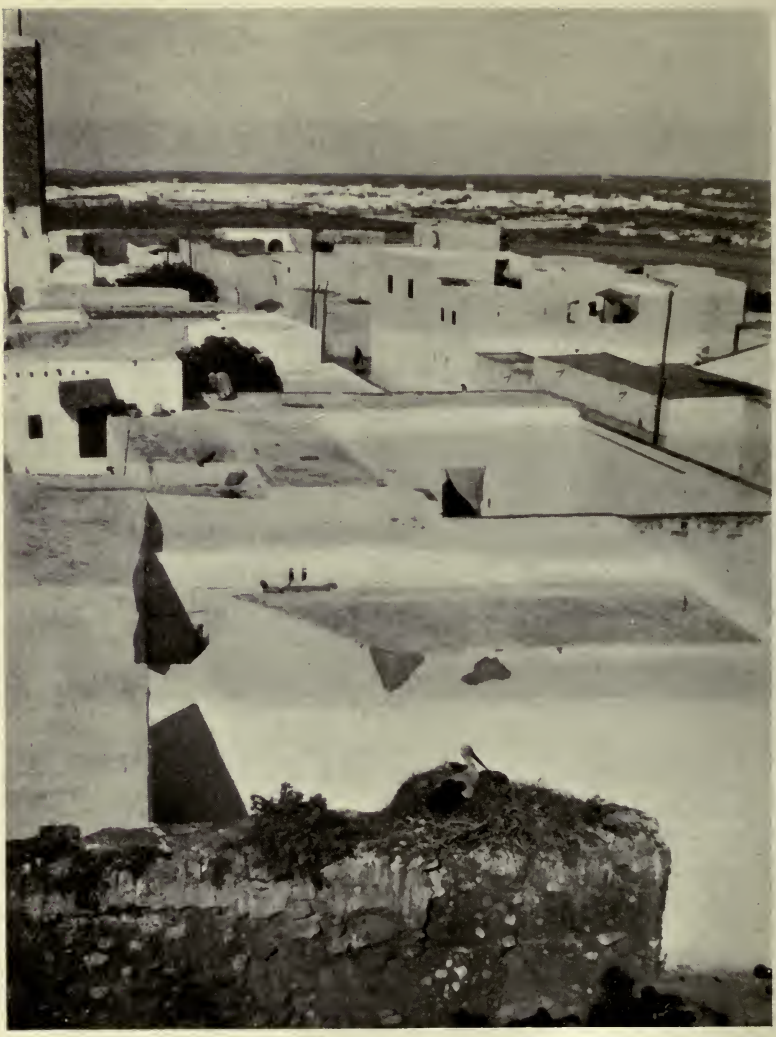
African, did I say? Yes, and a host of other things. I called on the Colonel commanding the division, and, after wandering blindly through a labyrinth of streets so narrow that the sun can never reach the beaten earth, I was led through half a dozen cavernous gateways into a smiling courtyard, all tiles and fountains and lemon trees, up a Stygian dark staircase, and into a palace which must certainly have served as the scene for an Arabian night's tale. In an orderly-room, such as cannot exist elsewhere, all arches, columns, windows set high up near the domed and frescoed ceiling, steps, dais, alcoves, perspectives, the whole rich with the colours of jewels thrown from the stained-glass windows, I was received by a distinguished officer of the French Army who, in literal

truth, put himself at my complete disposal. I need not search far for contrasts: within, the khaki and Sam Browne, framed in an Arabian palace; without, the bustle of the city, which draws all men of the desert to her enslaving arms.

North, again, you have beautiful, neat, efficient Rabat, a picture of the past, a very solid symbol of the excessively energetic future. Red walls, storks' nests, white houses, blue Atlantic, emerald-green hills, and a New Town of the first order. There are old Moroccans (Europeans who have lived for years in Morocco) who affect to sneer at Rabat. They do not find it sympathetic, and I am puzzling my brains to see why. They say it is not Morocco, and point to Marrakesh and Fez.

Ah! There it is. Even they, who have lived in these cities so long, unconsciously admit my argument. Not Rabat, not Marrakesh, not Fez, and most certainly not Casablanca, are Morocco; but all of them are the land in which I have the good fortune to find such an irresistible attraction. Search the world and you will not find cities so utterly different and unlike as these four. They are called, on the map and under the benign protectorate of France, Morocco; but they are really just themselves, beautiful, distinctive, characteristic capitals of separate lands, linked up and bound together into one empire by French tact and energy, fused into one community by that best of all civilizers—the open road.

The road in Morocco! To describe it as it deserves is not for the casual motorist. All he can say, dumb



A Stork's Eye View of Rabat.

before the sight of Something Really New, is that a system of nearly universally excellent roads enables him to drive within ten days to towns and places which were practically inaccessible before the war, except perhaps by mule or other tedious and perilous vehicle. The macadamized track takes his car at 40 miles an hour through country and past folk to whom such things ten years ago were unknown; who use them to-day with as little concern as they pile sacks on an ass and ride the creature into town.

The Moroccans (by whom I mean Moors, Berbers, Arabs and Europeans living, happy folk, in this gracious land) are inveterate, incorrigible, and insatiable motorists, to the manner born, but the foreign motorist is rare. The "Transats," the vast caravans, engineered by the Transatlantique Company, which sweep periodically between Ujda and Casablanca in monumental chars-à-bancs, can hardly be called motorists. They are merely occupants of a special train, and they have circular tickets. Your Moroccan takes the hazard of the road in a ramshackle Ford, moaning for the scrap-heap, as a duck to water. The Moor is a motorist.

And in his crazy, disreputable, horrible Ford or his new and sparkling Rochet Schneider, he goes from Marrakesh of the Palms and Sun and Sand to Fez; Fez, the pearl of all old cities; the Impenetrable; Fez, past question, the Incomparable.

How can a man write decently and soberly of these things, let alone accurately and sensibly? It is more than a week since I saw Fez, and already the spell of

this immense city is on me. Morocco? Nonsense. Like the Brazils it is the Moroccos. And I wish I knew which of them it is which will one day drag me back. I wish I knew.

CHAPTER XVIII

ALGERIA AND DEADWOOD DICK

THE motorist wandering about between Taza in the east and Mogador in the south can confidently expect anything to turn up which is not in the guide-books, and which nobody has mentioned to him as a likely contingency. He will drive over most excellent roads on one day; on the next will be fording streams, getting sunk in morasses of wet sand, and rolling and pitching over potholes and ruts of pantomine proportions; and on the same day he may be once more raising a cloud of red dust at 40 miles an hour over a national road. Neither guide-books nor personal information are of much use, and the only way to find out the truth about a road is to drive over it oneself.

The weather may do anything unexpected, with the caprice of an English spring. This is called the "Season of the Rains," and I am quite willing to accept the term. It seems to be suitable. At the same time one will be told that it seldom rains at this time of the year, but that it may do so. In any case it will always rain torrentially when one of the weather-wise has announced a dry spell. And when it rains in Morocco life on the road becomes a sheer impossibility. East of Meknes, for example, two days' rain

will render the roads practically impassable, while one day's sunshine will turn them from rivers and lakes of hopeless mud into properly conducted highways again. But do not count upon the next day's sunshine.

The temperature is another factor in life on the road which is apt to complicate things. One has to remember that the farther south one goes, the colder it will be. Marrakesh I shall always remember as one of the coldest places I have ever known. For three hours in the middle of the day a blazing sun will make things quite pleasant, but during the remaining twenty-one one yearns for fur coats. The breath from the Atlas snow peaks reminds one of that tiny wind of the Spaniards, which will scarcely stir a candle flame, yet kill man in an hour. It is impossible to wear too many clothes.

Then the unexpected is always turning up in one's search for hotels. You may spend one night in a "palace" establishment, where there are not only bells and people to answer when you ring them, but baths which you can have filled with real hot water. Also the electric light generally works. The next day you camp in a stark, echoing stone bungalow, where the water supply is maintained entirely by converted kerosene tins, laboriously carried to and from a spring outside by a small boy; where yellow dips take the place of electric light and the evening meal is, as Rupert Brooke said, "many-tasting."

You never know your luck with Moorish inns, except in one respect—you will always find a smiling welcome and, however rude the fare and the accom-

modation, the proprietor and his staff will do their cheerful best to make things pleasant for you. You only need a little philosophy. Morocco is a country where great things will be done in time, but where you must sometimes expect very little indeed. After all, what does it matter? One does not bring a motor-car to a land which has only just joined the company of countries on one's visiting list, and hope to find it full of international luxuries.

The only real drawbacks, so far as my experience goes, are the uncertainty of petrol supplies and the shocking quality of the stuff when you get it.

I said that motoring in Morocco was a new thing, but to judge by the utter nonchalance of every living thing in the country, down to the youngest camel in a caravan, you would suppose that motor-cars had been invented there. Everybody uses them; nobody pays the smallest attention to them. If you are driving alone, or have a seat to spare, you will certainly be hailed by a pedestrian and asked to give him a lift along the road, but he will be no joy-rider. He will ask for a lift either because he is tired or late for an appointment, not for the sake of motoring. It took us in Europe about fifteen years to reach this practical, if rather dull attitude; it has taken the Moor about five.

Still—in face of the glaring fact that the roads are alive with motor-cars of every kind; that practically all human transport is by motor; that the Transatlantique Company run a regular service of motor chars-à-bancs between Casablanca and Algiers and have started hotels all along the route to house the petrol-

caravans—still, I say, motoring in Morocco has not yet lost the bloom of youth. All sorts of very new and mediæval adventures may befall you on the long stretch from the Atlantic at Rabat to the Algerian frontier at Ujda. You may not drive at night, for example. Notices are up in the post offices to the effect that the Colonel commanding that particular post (after Fez every place on the map is virtually a military outpost) will "invite" those drivers who find themselves on the road after sundown to pass the night in the seclusion of his post—an invitation which may be regarded as Royal rather than Republican. This, the notice goes on to point out, is necessary if "vexatious incidents" are to be avoided.

Then you have, in Eastern Morocco, the beautiful person in a scarlet or blue cloak, a huge white turban, with a rifle slung across his back, who rides his horse as if the two of them had been born as one. He belongs to the picture-books of youth, but he is here in scores, and he helps you not only by keeping away brigands and other fabulous monsters, but by doing some extremely skilful sheep-scaring when you are held up by flocks. He shouts, he gallops furiously round you and the amazed muttons, he performs prodigies of horsemanship (why is the Moorish road patrol not a film-star? He is much better than any broncho-buster that ever rehearsed at Los Angeles), he smiles all over you like a sunrise—and then races the car, two of him, as a rule, for a mile or more, just because life is such fun.

Motoring may not be such a new game to the dweller in Morocco, although even he cannot have played at

it properly for much more than half a dozen years, but it is really a new one to the visitor from across the sea who does not grumble at unavoidable discomfort, who likes people rather than things, and, above all, who likes them picturesque, kindly and smiling. Morocco is the land of smiles, the place where scowls are unknown. How can you seriously worry over the facts that there is seldom any edible butter or bread, that meat in remote villages may remind you of camel or goat, that washing, as a habit, must be abandoned sometimes for days at a stretch, when every brown face you meet breaks out into smiles as warm and as natural as the noonday sun? There are not many lands where the smiles outnumber the frowns.

TLEMÇEN, ALGERIA.

If I ever said anything remotely approaching the disagreeable or the critical about the Moorish Customs Department, I wish to take it all back. Yesterday we crossed the frontier into Algeria, and I had to demand the repayment of nearly 2,000 frs., which I had paid for the privilege of landing Imshi at Casablanca. In support of my claim I had nothing but a miserable scrap of paper with an illegible sum of money mentioned on it, a stamp and the county index-letters and number of the car

hastily added to the margin, as an obvious afterthought. A most civil and obliging officer explained to me that I should have had quantities of other documents, but that nobody could expect "Casa" to have any sense. He thereupon paid me my 2,000 frs. on the flimsiest possible evidence that the car was the one in question. He also promised that if ever I came back along that road and past his most sensible office, the business of readmitting me to Morocco would not take twenty minutes, and expressed a pious hope that the Shereefian Government would be bullied into accepting the Triptyque system as soon as possible.

After her adventures among the river-beds and fords and her paddle over the desert of wet clay, Imshi was delighted to find herself on a real road once more. When we left Taurirt, the strange rock fortress looking for all the world like a battleship with its two great wireless masts at either end, we found an excellent metalled road awaiting us, which took us over 60 miles to Ujda in two hours and a half.

It is a beautifully made road, and it is kept smooth by camel-rollers. Every now and then you come across the warning sign "Cylindrage," which anywhere else means "Steam-roller at work," and when you turn the corner you see a team of smirking camels very slowly and reluctantly hauling a kind of hand roller backwards and forwards over the stones. It must be a painful business for the camel, rather like walking out to bathe at low tide over shingle, but he gets some of his own back by taking his own time over the job. And a camel's time may be a very long one.

Ujda, the eastern frontier town of Morocco, is chiefly remarkable for the number of small boys who swarm round every car with yells for the appointment of watchman while the owners have luncheon. "Garder, garder!" they scream, and hurl themselves on to the running boards and climb on to the back springs like flies on jam. They were having a splendid time yesterday as there were at least half a dozen cars in the town. When we came out after luncheon we found three claimants for the fee, and it was a deafening affair. It was finally settled, but one young man was very persistent in his demands. He had nothing to do with Imshi at all, and his behaviour was sheer highwaymanry. When we had explained this to him his reply was, "Well, give me that box of sardines then." "Why?" I asked in astonishment. "Because I like them."

It is perfectly impossible to be cross with Moors of any age.

And so across the frontier, along a super-excellent road to Lallia Marnia, the Algerian frontier-post, where again we met with the greatest civility and the promptest attention to our wants at the hands of the Customs officer. It was here that we heard the first news of the outer world since leaving Fez. It was given to us by the officer, and it was this: "The Allies have mobilized. We march on Berlin *to get that money out of the Boche ourselves.*" It was unfortunately too good to be true.

* * * * *

I wonder what qualities of earth and air they must be which give the western Algerian mountains their

glowing colours. Like other mountains elsewhere, they consist of rocks and fields and trees and, now and then, snowy peaks, but nowhere will you find such amazingly green fields, such richly crimson rocks and soil, such a spread of dazzling hues. It is probable that the eucalyptus trees have much to do with it. They stand in beautiful little spinneys, in noble avenues, in sunlit glades at every mile of the road, and their silver trunks and feathery leaves are a perpetual joy to see. They are magnificent in size, many of them as tall as good-sized poplars. Oaks, pines, cedars, tamarisks, olives and eucalyptis make, under the blue sky and the sparkling light, a clothing for the hills and a frame for the green and Devon-red fields which blaze like jewels. And, here and there, in just the right places, the perfect relief and contrast of cypresses.

A water-colour painter would go mad with despair anywhere between Tlemçen and Descartes. Between the Plains of Mleta in the north and Lamoricière the hills of the Tessala range, which rise to about 3,000 ft., would provide him with every opportunity for verifying the inadequacy of his palette, and in the superb gorges which carry the road from Ain Fezza to Wed Chouli along their precipitous flanks he would probably bury his work and burn his easel and brushes.

Apart from the terrific grandeur of its surroundings the road in Algeria is a very peaceful, a very quiet, a very homely place. A Frenchman is supposed to have said of us that wherever we go we make a little England; that Frenchman, if ever he existed, could

never have been to Algeria. The Algerian road, nearly all the Algerian villages, practically all the Algerian towns, are not like France—they are France. It is not a question of saying to yourself, "This might well be the road from Clermont-Ferrand to Bourges, or from Chartres to Rouen." Except that the names are different, it *is* the road to Bourges. Algeria is an exceptionally lovely part of France, with some Arabs living in it.

Yes, there is little doubt that I have returned to France, fat, comfortable, sensible. "They are barbarians over there," said the Customs officer at the Algerian frontier post, pointing over his shoulder at Morocco; "they have no comfort, there is no solidity, no permanence. I have a brother in the army there who tells me unbelievable stories of the sad life one leads there, without gaiety, without resources." I had the hardihood to say that I had found Morocco and those who have the luck to live in it, the most uniformly cheerful place and people I had ever met. He stared. "Monsieur is English," said he at last, politely. "It is doubtless nothing to you that the abominable tin roofs over there leak and that you cannot drink a good glass of wine. For myself I prefer tiles and an *ordinaire* which allows itself to be drunk without risk. Civilization, in fine. Yes, you have only to follow the route No. So-and-so to Oran and Algiers. It is a good one, have no fear. It was built by Napoleon III." I will not hastily confirm the last statement, though I suppose it may possibly be true. At all events, to look at, it might easily have been built by Napoleon I.

The road continued super-excellent, and after an easy climb up through beautiful wooded hills over the Col du Juif, we came out at this historic French outpost of empire. It is a charming little town, founded in the eleventh century by that Saharan Napoleon Yusef-ben-Tashfine, whose walls still stand at Marrakesh, and during the whole of the Middle Ages the capital of Central Morocco. To-day there are few traces left of these shadowy times, and it is a little French provincial town, very neat, very shady among its planes and eucalyptus trees.

Our hotel stands just outside the walls, an excellent wooden bungalow built by the Transatlantique Company and managed by the most obliging and courteous people. It reminds me rather of Norwegian inns, especially as the hills all round are densely wooded, very close to us, and full of the music of falling water. The air is also decidedly northern in feel, as Tlemçen stands 2,800 ft. high, and the radiators are going briskly in every room.

We hear rather depressing tales of the roads between here and Oran, our next stop. It has been raining again, and the mountain sides are flooding the lowlands, it seems. I am quite prepared to believe that, but I have given up listening to tales of roads. They so very seldom have any relation to facts. All the same I shall make my long-suffering companion get up pretty early in the morning.

ORAN, ALGERIA.

Our ears are ringing with brigand stories, of mail-coach hold-ups, of masked men, of desperate affrays between the Moorish frontier and Algiers. Dead-

wood Dick has suffered or is possibly temporarily enjoying a reincarnation as an Algerian highwayman, and the whole province of Oran is buzzing with the tale of his misdeeds.

You may remember that we were asked to swallow a lot of—well, technical improbabilities last week, and that we chose a simple Saxon phrase to describe them. It seems, if one may believe not only what road-users say but also the local Press, that what may have been a lie in Morocco is unfortunately a fact in Algeria. Brigandage is a fashionable pursuit just now. The story of the Algerian mail-coach being stuck up and the passengers effectively relieved of their money seems to be founded on perfectly respectable fact. One of the victims tells the tale with fine dramatic effect in a column and a quarter of an evening paper, which closes his account with a list of the people whom it dislikes and who it suggests are the Deadwood Dick family.

Private cars are held up and the roads in sparsely populated districts are pronounced to be distinctly insecure. And nobody asks the British question, "Where are the police?"

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They certainly are not obtrusive on the roads between Tlemçen and Oran. In Morocco, especially east of

Fez, you can hardly drive a quarter of an hour without meeting a mounted patrol, usually with a French officer in command. So far as I remember we did not pass any sort of guardian of the law when we drove down to Oran. Panic is contagious, and I rather think that the motorists of Oran are slightly infected. I left Imshi last night at a most palatial and excellent garage, and this morning the proprietor of this Paris-like establishment warned me most solemnly that if we take the sea-road, by Ténès, to Algiers, we shall meet with regrettable incidents.

"Well may you yell for help," said he ghoulishly, "when at many places you are 60 or 70 kilometres from any human habitation. Nobody will answer." We do not want to go by Ténès and have never meant to go any way except by Orléansville, and so I told him. But it was no good.

"Ah, by Orléansville, eh? By the great lonely main road which follows the railway? Well, all I can say is, you must be doubly armed," and he smacked both his hip-pockets in a most bloodthirsty manner.

* * * * *

We were both rather sad and depressed at Tlemçen yesterday morning when we left. In spite of some rather purple adventures in the way of vanished roads and camel-tracks and strange nights' lodgings and a certain difficulty in getting things to eat we miss Morocco.

Algeria, or what we have seen of it, is beautiful—extraordinarily so. The road down from Tlemçen through the mountain gorges is magnificent and the scenery keeps you dumb with delight. But I miss

the smiling Moor and the new, fresh feeling of that ancient land which has in half a dozen years or less become a motor land. Nobody says "*Barak allahou feek*" here or anything nice. They say "*Merci*" and "*Bonjour.*" It is more convenient, perhaps, but dull in comparison with the rich incomprehensibilities of the Moor.

Still, it is pleasant to have such a road under you as that from Tlemçen to the foot of the mountains, where the car runs as if on a concrete pavement, a perfect example of what France can accomplish in the way of road-building when she has a mind to it. The last 80 miles through Sidi Bel Abbes into Oran are very bad, owing to the destructive combination of rain and heavy lorry traffic, but I hear that all the roads in the plains of Oran province are generally very indifferent.

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Oran is a delightful little town, though I dare say it would be annoyed to hear itself so described. It lies in the arms of a most beautiful bay, with a couple of great headlands protecting it east and west. Its streets are clean, well-built, cheerful and extraordinarily noisy. It has a cathedral with a peal of bells which, for sheer power and resonance, puts all Venice in the shade. You must be very sleepy to get through your first night in Oran without a break every quarter of an hour.

CHAPTER XIX

THE ART AND PRACTICE OF SITTING DOWN

AN ALGERIAN ROADSIDE.

ONE of the most important things to learn how to do properly when you are making a long motor cruise for the first time is how to sit down. I do not mean the physical act of taking a seat, nor do I want the phrase put into inverted commas. One does not say sneeze or walk in quotation marks; yet neither is more common than the necessity, in motor touring, for sitting down.

For the benefit of those who have not yet left hearth and home for an indeterminate period, bound only to the proper objects of their affection or solicitude by vague and usually unreliable telegraph addresses, I should explain that it is absolutely necessary, on a really long tour, one, say, of three months or more, to sit down at least once a fortnight. If you do not sit down properly, your tour is a failure, and is certainly bound to be much curtailed.

Reduced to a definition, to sit down is to rest; but it means much more than that. There is all the joy of anticipation, to begin with. You look at your

maps on Monday, see a large, a comfortable, an interesting, or a beautiful town or village 300 or 400 miles from where you are, and you announce, "On Thursday we shall reach this spot and we will sit down in it." Thenceforward all the minor mishaps of land yachting lose their sting, even to punctures, carbonized engines, and the loss of the last clean shirt. "Never mind," you say happily, "we can make it all good on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, while we are sitting down." "But suppose we can't buy a shirt or get an inner tube vulcanized at Sitdownham?" objects the fussy member of the party. "Then," you reply kindly, "you yourself will go by train to the nearest centre of activity where both these objects can be attained, and attain them."

And so the intervening days pass in great content. You idle splendidly, shirking all the jobs which ought to be done to the car, squandering clean collars and handkerchiefs like water. "On Thursday," you say to yourself, in a kind of ecstasy, "on Thursday and several days after we will refit, on Thursday we sit down." Then the great day comes, and all through it you drive care-free, your usually rather well-regulated motor-mind completely unbuttoned, as Beethoven used to say. You do not even care if you arrive at Sitdownham at midnight; nothing matters, for now we sit down.

The process begins deliciously immediately on arrival. The hall porter, if there is one, or the proprietor, asks you how long you will stay. "I have no idea," you reply magnificently. "Shall we say a week—or a year? We will discuss these trifles

some other time. Where is the very best garage, please?" And you drive your muddy, disreputable, battered car into a really well-kept "auto palace" (I should have said that this or a private coach-house is the first essential of Sitdownham), and order her a lavish wash, with extra special metal-work burnishings, floor-board cleanings, and general tonic and beautification. "For to-morrow morning?" asks the man. "Oh, yes; for to-morrow—some time. I'll look in and see how you are getting on." You have not the slightest intention of going near the place for days, but it is so pleasant to order things you don't want.

Then there is the stroll back to the hotel, in your filthy clothes, your muddy shoes, and your general look of having been left out all night for weeks. The trim, clean, respectable passers-by smile at you and you smile back, tasting in anticipation, every moment more succulently, that superb point in time when you will tear every rag off you and disappear into a steaming bath. Then comes the joy of making a pile of dirty linen and seeing the terrible thing disappear under the housemaid's arm, of handing over your car-suit to an alert and intelligent valet for refreshment and renovation, of laying out and gloating over beautiful clean things, of putting them on slowly and lovingly, finally, of descending into the streets fit to be seen.

Then you take your exposed Kodak films to be developed ("No hurry about it," you say, Orientally), and you shop riotously and happily; you stare at passing cars and wonder what they are for; you go

to the theatre, or you buy seats and don't go; you lunch and dine at irregular hours; you behave with perfect irresponsibility; you make plans with the single intention of doing something else. Above all, you leave your car alone, and, if you do excursions, you do them by hippo-mobile or by electric train. That is sitting down.

It is a blissful performance, but, like everything else, it very soon cloys. I have sat down all over Europe and now I am doing it in immense content in Africa, but I find that six days is the outside limit. At the end of the fifth day, however nice Sitdownham may be, you begin to fidget with maps, to pack furtively, to pay unnecessary visits to your car, lonely in her silent splendour, to look out for handy provision shops, to buy more films for your camera. It is our old friend, the call of the road, getting to work again, and with a sudden and violent change of mood you decide that Sitdownham is an over-rated and inadequate town, and that the only place where happiness and comfort are to be found is the roadside. "I hate these international Imperial Palace hotels, with their lifts and bath-rooms and grill-rooms," you say, untruthfully but sincerely. "Let's start at seven to-morrow and get away."

You do, and life is bliss for ten days. Then it is all to do again.

The secret of successful land yachting is a little of everything and not too much of anything. Just as more than a few days in upholstered civilization, with baths to be had at the mere pressing of a bell-button, make you long for the picnic life and the

hazards of the road, so too long a stretch of "getting on" takes all the savour out of the adventure. You must not do it for long, but, to be happy on the road, you must sit down now and then.

CHAPTER XX

ALGIERS AND THE ROAD TO BOUGIE

BOUGIE (N. ALGERIA).

SINCE I wrote from Oran, Imshi and I have been through every variety of travel and climate. From what I have seen of it, Algeria is a compendium of every motoring condition to be found where roads exist. We have panted gratefully in hot sunshine, shivered miserably in cutting winds on mountain-tops, groped our way blindly through cloudland, and splashed soddenly through rain-flooded roads at sea-level. A very beautiful land, and simply chock-full of surprises for the motorist.

I hardly know where to begin. We have seen so much, missed so much more, and absorbed so little of the splendours of the mountains and plains which lie between peaceful Oran and Bougie.

After a pleasing but not very exciting drive through Orléansville, where (despite fearful travellers' tales about intolerable discomfort) we slept comfortably and in cleanly fashion, we arrived in Algiers. Here a pause took place—necessary and lengthy—a pause during which we did a great deal of beautiful resting and had our clothes and ourselves washed. For that I shall always be grateful to Algiers. I do not think,

except for a brief and tantalizing interval at Oran, that either of us had had a bath since we left Casablanca, certainly not more than two washes.

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I hope to see Algiers again and to get some idea of its charms and attractions. To be perfectly candid, I found it, at first blush, an over-rated place. It is clean and tidy, sober, industrious, early closing if not early rising, dull. I am afraid I missed its famed beauty, and I am quite sure I missed its renowned warmth. Mustapha Supérieur, where the richest people live, is a suburb on a hillside, with a regular tramway-car service. I thought it, I hope unjustly, commonplace and tiresome.

Somebody has said or written that Algiers is a suburb of Marseilles. I do not agree. Algiers is much nicer than Marseilles could ever be, but I do see what the man meant. It is a genteel seaport.

If, as a motorist, you are in search of a town where the motor reigns supreme but where there is a complete atmosphere of "terminus," where everybody seems to be perfectly content to remain where he is, permit me to bring Algiers to your notice. There you will find, especially in the Rue Michelet and those quarters which climb slowly up from the General Post Office through Mustapha to that elegant Norwood, Mustapha Supérieur, more garages and motor shops of the super-palatial kind than, I verily believe, exist in London itself.

They positively swarm, with their immense plate-glass fronts, their red carpets, their india-rubber—or perhaps natural—palms, and their glistening rows of

cars for sale. Business must be really brisk, despite the rather pathetic notices of sacrificial reductions and "new prices, very attractive," which are placarded about over the shiny cars. The streets of Algiers are simply alive with cars.

I wish, as a wandering stranger anxious to like everything, I could "place" Algiers. It is, so far, an inscrutable town; I cannot decide exactly why it is here at all, nor exactly where its highly-advertised attractions lie. It is certainly a good motoring centre. From Algiers you can very conveniently get to pleasant places like Blida and Cherchel and Hammam Rhira, and, by spending a night away from your quiet Algerian hotel, cross and recross the range of the Grande Kabylie Mountains—one of the most beautiful motor runs in this part of the world. Excellent trains take you east, west and south; motor-chars-à-bancs do the same. From Algiers you can go to Great Marrakesh in South Morocco in the same car and be adequately shepherded all the way by the Transatlantique Company. In a word, every facility is afforded you for leaving Algiers.

Perhaps that sounds a spiteful thing to say, but it is not meant so. People do not seem to leave Algiers at all. They arrive early and they remain late, and I cannot imagine why they do either. I would very much like to know what it is in this pleasant, well-built, comfortable, modern, accessible French town which induces people in large numbers not only to come from a long way off and to stay a long time, but also to bring their motor-cars—and use them as taxis. It is evident that some very potent charm lies hidden among the trees and streets of Algiers.

One has always heard the phrase "wintering in Algiers"—even oftener than "wintering on the Riviera." Is it the social life? If so, is this more engaging than that of Cannes or Florence? Is it the climate? Surely not; to a Londoner, fresh from fog and frost and darkness, Algiers is a heaven of light and mildness. But its best friends cannot say that it is really warm in winter or that it compares favourably with the Riviera, 400 miles farther north, the other side of the superfluous Gulf of Lyons.

It has a fine bay, whose arms are wooded slopes, and it has a very attractive harbour, a small one, next door to the one which matters, the one where the steamers lie. Behind Mustapha Supérieur there is a pretty valley which can be entered by road from the eastern end of the Rue Sadi Carnot. It brings you, eventually, as does nearly every street and road in Algiers, to the hotels and villas of Mustapha Supérieur. Add gardens, many, many tramways, and a pleasant view over the town and bay (the former boasts a good many factory chimneys and other material evidence of progress and prosperity), and you have, I think, a fair picture of the West End of Algiers.

I hope I have not, unwittingly, spoken ill of this agreeable place; above all, I hope nobody will think I have sneered at it. It is only that, its almost Cranford-like atmosphere apart, I am puzzled to understand why people go there. Perhaps I am unusually dense and it is just because of these things that Algiers has for so many years counted its faithful lovers in thousands. It is certainly not blatant; it is anything

but vulgar; it has its gentle attractions. It possesses, for example, a most excellent eating-house (I cannot give it a better name, take it which way you will), an oyster and fish stall at the bottom of the quiet smelly steps which lead to the Pêcherie. In semi-darkness, amid fishy reminders of every age and sort imaginable, sitting on a kind of stage set at an angle of about 10 deg. to the street, you eat the best oysters and lobsters and langoustes and mussels in Africa, served to you by the most attentive and entertaining host.

Still, I cannot put a finger on the charm of Algiers. I am comfortable here, moderately well fed in a moderately good "Palace" hotel; from my bedroom window I have a pleasing prospect of wooded hills, red roofs and blue sea. But I have not yet had the luck to find the soul of Algiers. It obviously has one; witness the perfectly contented expressions on the faces of those who come and stay for months on end.

Yet I believe I have stumbled on the explanation, and it is the unobtrusiveness of Algiers which makes its charm. It is utterly unlike any other town on the Mediterranean, because it is so well conducted, because its behaviour is beyond reproach. It is the Cranford of North Africa. Dull people perhaps call it dull; its lovers say nothing. They are content to live in one of the best-behaved, most punctilious cities in the Seven Seas.

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I left Algiers this morning in painful circumstances. There was a great deal of oil on Imshi's brakes, and

that abomination of Progress and Civilization, an "urgent" telegram, had, at the very last second, torn my stable companion from my side. The luggage was strapped on, the hotel servants, in their full strength, tipped, the bill, after a slightly acrimonious discussion, settled, and, I give you my word, Imshi's engine running—when it fell on us out of the blue.

We met the blow in silence, unstrapped half the luggage, muttered aimlessly. "So long," and so parted—he, bag in hand, to some detestable steamer bound for the frozen north, I, with anæmic brakes, for the road to the south. The decorous, well-conducted passers-by of Algiers saw, if they had a mind, a superb example of the well-known British phlegm. Personally, I nearly wept.

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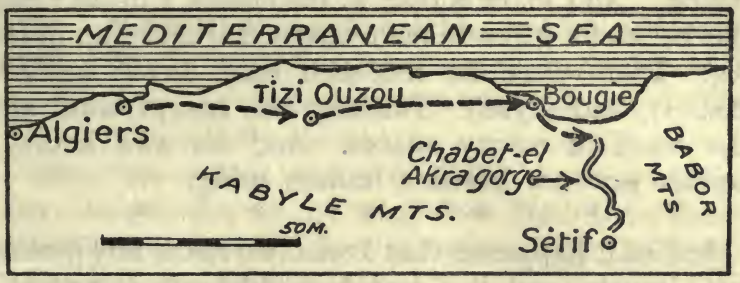
For the benefit of those who bring their cars to Algeria I should like to issue one principal warning. There are quantities of others which I shall mention later, but the one I am chiefly concerned with now is this: Do not expect anyone to give you any reliable information about roads, their condition, state, or anything about them. Algiers contains more resplendent motor shops and less useful news about motoring than any city I know.

Before starting I consulted a "leading authority" about the road to Bougie, where, by the help of St. Christopher, I sleep to-night. I was told that the first few miles out of Algiers were bad. Even if I had not already read this in the excellent Michelin guide, I think I might have guessed it. What I did not guess; what, to my disgrace, I did not read;

and what I was not told was that about 60 of the 150 miles lie across the Kabyle Mountains and that I had two passes to cross, one of them 4,000 ft. high.

These trifles reduce the average speed of the fastest cars, and I have never raced the dark as I did to-night. Instead of strolling comfortably into Bougie at about 4.30 p.m., I arrived with illegally unlit lamps at 6. 30, my soul full of bitterness against the "leading authority." You may not drive after dark in these parts (Dick Turpin and Co., Unlimited, as usual), and Bougie was the only place in which I



could sleep. I made Imshi move over the last 15 miles as she has never moved before.

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It was really a piece of wonderful luck, my choosing this Tizi Ouzou to Bougie road. It carries you straight over the principal mountain range in Algeria. I saw little of it, but what my bewildered eye fell on was immense. The road is one of the most thrilling I have ever met. For nearly two solid hours Imshi snored away on second speed until I was hypnotized by the drone of the gears, the bite of the mountain air, the never-ending curl of the road, the parapetless

corners, and the overpowering sense of tremendous height.

After a time I got well into the clouds—inky ones, dry, but black as night—and the next half-hour was as fantastic a period as I ever wish to know. The road is very narrow, and on the left-hand side there is a sheer drop of about one, two, or three thousand feet, according to where you are. On the right there is usually a rocky mountain-side, but there are places where, apparently, there is a valley in between.

It may be 6 ft. or 600 ft. wide—I have no means of telling. All I know is that, in the clouds, I drove along the back of a gigantic razor suspended miles up in the fog. There were the half-seen road, Imshi (a little clearer), and myself. Nothing else except wind and the smell of empty spaces. And for two hours I neither saw nor heard a human being.

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And so it happened that I was two hours late getting into Bougie, and if I had had only one puncture I might have slept with the eagles. I am extraordinarily glad I didn't. Bougie is a delightful if noisy little town, and the Hôtel d'Orient is a palace of comfort to me. I can see the ground, and things on each side of me. Also I know, because I can hear and smell it, that I am almost at sea-level.

CHAPTER XXI

THE MONKEY GORGE—THE TEETH OF THE DESERT—BRUMMAGEM BISKRA—ARCHIBALD

SÉTIF, BABOR MOUNTAINS,
ALGERIA.

MONKEYS and eagles, palms and snow, lazy sunny beaches and windswept peaks, canyons and gorges, vineyards and wheat-fields, avalanche-sheds and fat cities of the seaboard—these are a few of the quaintly assorted things I have seen to-day on my long, slow climb from Bougie, basking among its palms, to excessively chilly Sétif, among its frost-bitten rocks.

My last letter was from fat Bougie. It is a fat little town, and its sleek plumpness calls for a plain description. It lies—sprawls, rather—in the sun on the western end of one of the most incongruously beautiful bays I have ever had the good fortune to see. The colours, as I saw them on a half-sunny, half-cloudy morning, are different, but the rest is pure Norwegian fjord.

Looking back at it all from 5 miles away and a little above it, I thought it was as nearly Norway as is decent in the Mediterranean. The mountains come sheer down to the sea, the ships lie close in to

the houses, there is a smell of wood everywhere, you cannot move a step which is not either up or down a hill.

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The town itself is perched on a shelf of rock above the sea, obviously to avoid getting its feet wet—fat little hole. All its vulgar, necessary, money-producing affairs are below, such as docks and works and so on. It has a little square terrace, half "Grande Place," half-promenade, about as big as a pocket handkerchief, from which the good citizens of Bougie can regard, dry-footed and secure, the turbulence of the Mediterranean and the rich unseemliness of their daily bread 100 ft. below. At night this absurd little square reminds one irresistibly of Malta, of Venice (heaven knows why), and, most of all, of that other terrace at Monaco. I thought it charming, and I got a crick in my neck turning every other minute to look back at fat little Bougie when I drove away east and south this morning.

It was a red-letter drive. For an hour or so I skirted the bay, running round wooded headlands and over nice red cliffs. Then, at a place called in Arabic the Market of the Wood Sawyers, I turned to the right and, with hardly a moment's warning, entered the place where all the fairy stories were written. It is a huge, terrifying gorge, where the road squeezes timidly between armies of rocks 3,000 ft. high. They let you in fairly easily, these gaunt files-on-parade, but as you go on their ranks close in and close in until there is nothing left but a strip of sky straight

overhead, the strip of road underneath, a rushing, tumbling river, and just you.

Every now and then you come to a beautiful concrete-built artificial tunnel, sloped so as to let the snow and rocks and stones of avalanches miss the road, but otherwise you and the monkeys have the place as it has been since the beginning of all things.

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Yes, monkeys. There are lots of them, but they are not all or always at home. I was amazingly lucky and caught glimpses of them flitting about among the trees over Imshi. There may have been more at home than I knew of, but the serpentine road, with its incessant blind corners and its steady uphill pull, kept my eyes more strictly on business than I should have liked.

And then the golden eagles! Three of them put up a special performance for my benefit. At the sound of the car they came out of some eyrie in the sky and pretended to be ravens. They looked exactly like the ravens are supposed to do in "Siegfried," flapping, black and ill-omened, across a chasm. Then the sun caught their glorious wings and turned them to burnished gold. Round and round, in huge circles, they planed without a flicker of a pinion, till I felt I ought to applaud or at any rate say "Thank you" politely.

Imagine a passage, say 50 yds. wide, with walls 1,000 yds. high, twisting and turning and never letting you see more than an inch or two of sky, and these splendid things wheeling over your head. Gaunt, savage rock, with here and there stunted

olives and live oaks; a foaming torrent; the air which lives only in untouched spaces; monkeys and eagles, in their own place; and the most perfect motor road. That is the Chabet-el-Akra Gorge, the best Algeria has to show, I am stolidly told.

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And now I sit, super-wrapped in woollies, as near my bedroom radiator (which is quite cold) as possible. After the monkey-gorge came a funny little place called Kerrata, where I lunched excellently at a spotless inn. Then came the sort of mountaineering I am getting used to in Algeria. You simply climb and climb and keep on climbing, and you never get to the top—till you have given up all hope. Imshi put her back into it (and I can never tell how good she has been), and we abandoned ourselves to the hairpin-bend business. Forests, woods, plantations, crops, and finally scattered trees dropped behind us till, at over 4,000 ft., we shared the world with a few sheep and a multitude of rocks.

Only a little lower lies Sétif, but although the hotel radiators are mockeries and the evening breeze has filled the streets with hairy sheepskin coats, I am more glad than I can say that I came this way. I am beginning, but only just beginning, to realize what Algeria has to show the motorist who does not follow the advertised routes.

EL KANTARA, ALGERIA.

El Kantara, where I write this, is called by the Arabs the Mouth of the Sahara. It consists of a handful of cottages, a post office, and the best inn I

The "Teeth of the Desert," El Kantara.

have met in Algeria, huddled between the grim sides of a gorge.

To my thinking "teeth" is a better description of the savage rocks and boulders which overhang the place and through which you get your first sight of the desert. "Mouth" implies something soft, and there is less of that quality about El Kantara than any place I have met in my wanderings.

The drive down here from Sétif the Shivery was the first really dull run I have had in North Africa. I came by the new road which skirts the Batna range to the west and joins the main Constantine-Batna-Biskra road at MacMahon. This saves a few miles on the orthodox way by Corneille and Pasteur and you avoid a fairly strenuous hill climb rising to 5,000 ft. The surface in dry weather is excellent, and except for a few minor river-beds one must crawl over, it may be classed as quite first-rate.

But it is a very depressing drive. A kind of imitation Sahara envelops you, a Sahara of clay, empty of life, bare of any sort of vegetation worthy of the name, lacking the faintest tinge of colour. It was, of course, raining when I came down, and I had a sufficient number of exciting moments keeping Imshi from slipping off the macadamized centre on to the octopus-clay on either side. Let your back wheels hover for only a second in this terrible stuff, and without help you will remain there till the weather dries up.

I had meant, like all tourists, to stay at Biskra. Most fortunately, there was no room. At least, none under a roof. I was offered, by telegram, a tent. Now tents are all very well in their way, but I do not

consider their way lies in wet clay, with the thermometer at 50. So I refused, and by amazing good luck found accommodation at the Hotel Bertrand at El Kantara, about 33 miles north of Biskra.

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It is a quite perfect motorists' inn, and it is only by the unwilling exercise of enormous will-power that I am prising myself and Imshi out of it to-morrow, to take the road for Tunis. It is a small, two-storied bungalow, built on two sides of a courtyard; it has balconies and orange trees and an excellent kitchen garden, whence arise delicious radishes and onions and things; and it has two quite flawless motor-houses, so arranged that if you have any work to do on your car you do it in light and comfort. All things considered, I put down Monsieur Bertrand's little hotel as the best so far.

From the teeth of the gorge, 100 yds. from the inn, you look out south on the Sahara as from a window, 1,700 ft. above the sea. Purple and blue and crimson, the Aurès Hills lie out before you, looking sometimes like tumbled heaps of treasure in a sea of gold. There is a little river running down through the gorge into the oasis below, and all day and night you hear the music of its waters over the rocks and falls.

Two little villages lie on either side of the stream, among the date palms, the Red and the White, and in them you see real Algeria, innocent of touristry. There you are met with real, natural manners; there you do *not* meet that curse of this beautiful land, the professional guide. The houses are made of

The Red Village, near El Kantara.

mud bricks, the mosque is a shed, the people are so poor that they ask you for a cigarette. But it is real Africa—it is no relation of Biskra. There is "nothing to see"—thank heaven.

Of course Imshi and I went down to Biskra. It appears that you cannot, in decency, come to Algeria without going to Biskra. It is a sour, ungracious thing to run down any place which pleases a great many people, but—well, really, I cannot for the life of me see why this wasps' nest of touts and guides, with its indifferent hotels and its air of sham and "Brummagem ware," should have captivated anybody who had ever seen anything remotely approaching the real thing. The celebrated street of the Ouled Naïls is a (mercifully very small) slum of the lowest description, half Levantine, half European in appearance, wholly without character. The ravishing inhabitants may or may not originate from the Ouled Naïl district (I believe some of them do), but their place of business might be found anywhere between Naples and Marseilles—only better done. I had the extreme good fortune to be shown Biskra by somebody who is a kind of unofficial King of Algeria. He won't let me mention his name, but I do not think it will be long before this Englishman, whom every native on the way down from El Kantara greeted by name, who knows the family histories of everybody he meets, who, alone among Europeans, can go into any mountain village between here and Tunisia as an honoured guest—it will not be long before the world hears all about him.

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Two things I liked in Biskra, one I saw and one I am to have soon. The first was the market, which is genuine, in that real Algerian stuff, from carrots to carpets, is sold in it. Outside in the main street there is the usual deadly Indian shop, selling every kind of rubbish, including those terrible patchwork mats showing Egyptian hieroglyphics—remarkably suitable for Algeria. But in the market you can buy such things as genuine camel's-hair burnouses, the finest kind of motor-coat lining in the world.

The other thing I liked is a charm which is being specially prepared for me by a very distinguished Marabout. It is to protect me and Imshi "against all perils and bandits of the road on our journey." This is *not* a tourists' stunt; but I am not allowed to say more. This morning I went to the Red Village here and, with extraordinary difficulty, bought an old silver charm-case to carry it in. The difficulty lay in persuading the silversmith to sell it to me.

He is the worst salesman in the world. He squatted there in his tiny shop making a silver chain and, at intervals, pointing out that the charm case was broken, old, valueless, ugly, silly. Eventually it changed hands for 12 frs. 50 c. That is the difference between El Kantara and Biskra. With what screams and protestations, amid what a bedlam of noise and lies should I have bought an imitation case for 50 or 100 frs.

I am most grieved at leaving El Kantara, and I shall do my best to snatch a couple of nights here on my way back from Tunis. It is a very charming place, and it is the real thing.

Besides, I hate to leave Archibald. I am certain that Archibald will catch cold and get indigestion as soon as my back is turned. Archibald is a great anxiety. He is only 11 days old, and he is a Barbary sheep. The unofficial King of Algeria owns him. He was found and caught on the hillside the other day in a hunter's cloak, and he has, at present, two goats as foster-mothers, and puts in the rest of his time with a feeding-bottle.

Before Archibald there was Gilbert, whom I never knew. Gilbert overdid the feeding-bottle business, had a pain in his little inside, and passed away. So you can imagine with what solicitude Archibald is measured hourly for rotundity. Yesterday was a day of gloom. Archibald shivered, complained of the cold and lacked dash. It was awful, and the strain brought us all very near the breaking-point. To-day he is excessively impertinent and tiresome, and we are no longer anxious.

He is an enchanting little beast, the exact colour of the desert, with enormous black eyes. He is far more kid than lamb, and much nicer than either. And the terrible part of it all is that he and his kind are practically never reared by humans. Witness the end of Gilbert.

CHAPTER XXII

CHARMS AND SPELLS—CONSTANTINE

"FIVE-in-your-Eye," says the Arab when he suspects you of putting the Evil Eye on him, and he mechanically spreads the five fingers of his hand.

Imshi can now always say "Five-in-your-Eye" much as the suburban traveller says "Season."

She has a potent charm which keeps off devils and other inconvenient persons. It has nothing whatever to do with the charm now being prepared for me by the Marabout of Biskra. That is a work of holy Islam and is not a fit subject for superstitious discussion.

"Five-in-your-Eye" is a little engraved silver hand which is going to live on Imshi's dashboard. It is flat and about 2 in. long and looks much like a conventional lotus or acanthus leaf, such as you see in the design of temple capitals at Karnak. It was sold to me by a person I had only read about before in fairy tales—a hooded crone. If you have on you, within reach of your fingers, a little silver hand like Imshi's, you need not seriously fear the Evil Eye. You mechanically touch the dangling charm and all immediate danger is averted.

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The Hooded Crone who sold me "Five-in-your-eye."

The Hôtel Bertrand, El Kantara.

I met my hooded crone in an oasis, and, believe me or not as you please, she was carrying a bundle of faggots on her shoulders. I have never seen anyone look more like a witch. I have no wish to impugn the old thing's character, but if she is not a certificated working witch she is wasting valuable time. She must be at least 100 years old, and she need buy nothing in the way of props or make-up.

She offered me a quantity of silver, jingling things, some bangles which I wish I had bought to put round Imshi's steering column, and various objects of virtu which did not appeal to me. The Unofficial King of Algeria was with me at the time, and he picked out "Five-in-your-Eye," and said Imshi would like it. That, of course, was enough, and after a period devoted to business pure and simple I became the possessor of this rather uncanny little gewgaw.

THE ROAD WHICH RUNS ROUND CONSTANTINE. THE RUMMEL LIES 700 FEET BELOW IN THE CLEFT—OUT OF SIGHT.

The witch took barely her due—I think it was 3 frs. At any rate, whatever its value, I hope that St. Christopher, whose battered medallion lies next to it, will take "Five-in-your-Eye" in good part. For his sake, as he knows very well, I would throw every charm in the world overside.

But he is a great saint and, as the First Roadfarer, has no prejudices. So I am not really anxious. "Five-in-your-Eye" will probably amuse him enormously. He has taken care of me and my cars so long (about eighteen years all told) that he must know that I am setting up no heathen idols on my dashboard.

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We have in England a cold, fish-minded way of affecting to laugh at what we are pleased to call local superstition. Let me tell you that this point of view will not work in Africa. What is obviously a childish hallucination in Hampstead or Newcastle is sober reality under this immense blue sky. You can disbelieve a lot of truths you do not understand as you strap-hang homewards, but you will learn to believe everything in Africa.

And by the measure of your capacity for belief will your mental outlook be judged.

In Algeria, especially in the south on the skirts of the desert, and in Tunisia charms of all sorts abound. A chameleon's skull is a most valuable specific against the manifold evil spirits which roam the air searching for easy game, and in most villages you will see a mule's skull clamped to a house-top or on a palm-tree.

Who are we of the dark, frozen north to laugh at such things, who know nothing of them? If they do nothing more (and this is pure supposition), they at all events bring comfort to those who believe in them. Is that nothing?

CONSTANTINE, ALGERIA.

I feel to-day like the schoolboy who was annoyed about Napoleon. He had had for years to make

The Great Road through the Sahara.

a pretence of absorbing vast quantities of information about the wars that notable officer conducted, but until he came across an unofficial document, in the shape of a novel, which described the Little Corporal's doubtless maddening habit of pinching your ear to gain your undivided attention, the First Consul was about as real to him as Edward III.

"Why has nobody told me about this perfectly good person before?" he exclaimed in wrath, and proceeded to read Napoleon until he took Honours in the subject, wrote monographs, and became a burden to his friends.

Why has nobody told me that Algerian scenery is a heady mixture of Austria, Switzerland, Norway, the Pyrenees, and the best bits of Scotland? That it is quite different from any of them? That it is (when fine) a sort of mosaic of colours? Above all, why was I not taught, at the receptive age, that Constantine is a town unique? It's a perfectly good place, like Napoleon.

Properly to appreciate this extraordinary city you should arrive at it as I did yesterday in Imshi from the south. For quite a long time after I left El Kantara the road ran through the suburbs of the Sahara, sandy wastes, with hardly any green thing growing. It was all uphill to a dismal little town called Batna, where the wind blew in piercing squalls and everything looked wizened and frozen. I had decarbonized Imshi's engine at that most excellent Bertrand inn at El Kantara, and she was at the top of her form. Otherwise I could have wept at the bleak squalor of it all.

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Then, by imperceptible degrees, the whole land changed. Green succeeded yellow, flowers and trees took the place of rocks, and before one could realize it one was in a land of smiling plenty, all olive-trees and pines and cedars and fat farms and sleek beasts.

And, quite suddenly, like the conning-tower of a submarine, there arose Constantine before me.

The guide-book says that Constantine is built on a high rock, that a deep gorge surrounds it on three sides, that it has a lot to do with Constantine the Great, and that the French took it, after one terrible failure, in the thirties. Just the sort of thing a guide-book would say.

I don't care a farthing for Constantine the Great or for the no doubt enthralling history of the town up to the time of its capture by the French. All that really matters is that this town is perched on a rock nearly 700 ft. high, that the sides of this rock are absolutely perpendicular and that if you dislike heights you had better live elsewhere.

Nowhere can you go in Constantine without, so to speak, stepping on to a narrow balcony which looks out over about 100 miles of rolling green hills, below which the torrent Rummel foams and fights among huge boulders, just within sight, not within earshot. It looks like a second-rate gutter.

There is a superb road running round the rock (the hem of the town), amply garnished, I am glad to say, with stout iron railings. From a score of points on this road you can, if your head allows it, look straight down between the toes of your shoes on to space, space filled at sunset with wheeling storks.

Have you ever watched a stork taking the evening air on the wing, from a couple of hundred feet straight above his back?

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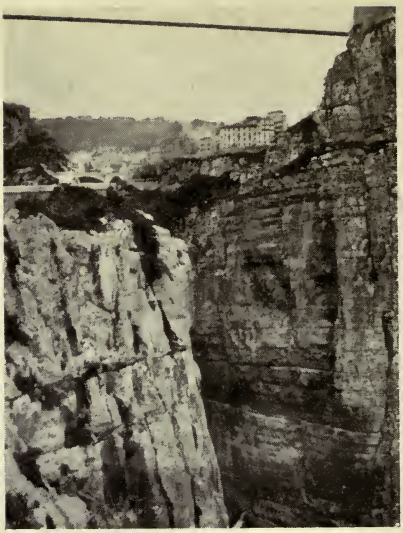
This same solemn guide-book tells you another solemn fact about Constantine. After describing the general situation as highly vertiginous, it remarks that the southernmost point is about 660 ft. lower than the northernmost point, and that only 1,200 yds. separate these two points. The Kasba is about 2,500 ft. above sea-level, Sidi-Rached (the other end) about 1,700 ft. And it goes on to say that the new suspension bridge, over which Imshi crept like a cat in the wet, is 650 ft. above the Rummel.

Add the fact that you can only get into the place from the south by the enormous viaduct (a successor, I need not say, to a Roman), and you will realize why, not having been told about it before, I walk about Constantine gasping and holding on to things.

It must be rather a terrible thing to live in such a place, knowing that 600 ft. below your bedroom window the Rummel awaits what chance may fling it. The sides of the gorge are, as I said, quite perpendicular. They are close together, and very little of God's light enters that place. When the Duke of Nemours hurled his four brigades at this Gibraltar of the skies in 1837 the fight was carried on from house to house till the vanquished fled into the Kasba at the top, tried to escape, and fell into the waiting Rummel.

And on the top of this place of death you find *cafés* and excellent shops, and at least one good, clean hotel. There is a bandstand, a monumental post

office, two shady squares, millions of shoeblacks, the daily papers. You can, if you turn your back to the world, imagine yourself in Algiers or Oran. But if you persist in looking overboard, as it were, you look out and down over emptiness. Storks, hawks, and, later, grey rocks and green hills. Look straight down and you see the silver thread which is the Rummel, questing, nosing, groping with cold fingers round the hungry boulders. Not so very long ago it was well fed, the Rummel. It remembers that day.



The Bridge across the Chasm at Constantine.

The Mouth of the Sahara.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE CURSE OF ALGERIA—HELL—THE TUNIS ROAD

A MOTORIST, wandering alone and at the single call of fancy in new places, has one supreme advantage over any other class of tourist or globe-trotter. He has at his immediate disposal the means of swift escape from places which bore him or from people who seem likely to do so. He need not consult railway guides or worry about catching trains. He simply goes away, in his car, from those places or persons, with a completeness and irrevocability which must be very good for them.

I have lately very often been glad that I am driving my own car and can, at need, drive furiously away from guides. I do not care for guides anywhere, but least of all can I bear with them in Algeria. Some guides are, no doubt, excellent fellows, well instructed, civil, and blessed with the rare gift of being able to impart knowledge gracefully and in an interesting manner. But here these are simply lost in a flood of amateurs of the most noisome description. The trade of guide seems to be national in Algeria, with its horrid precepts implanted in the young at the earliest possible age. It is impossible to enter any considerable village or town in a motor-car without

being overwhelmed by a yelling swarm of little ragamuffins who scream their anxiety to earn a franc-note by showing you the way to an hotel or a garage. I suppose that from these lowly beginnings they gradually climb to that eminence which permits them to order their employers about and to enter their bedrooms without invitation.

A guide is a wonderful person. When he catches your shrinking eye at the hotel door and proffers his services and a pocket-book full of certificates and testimonials from dukes and less august persons, you may be in the presence of a scholar or a fraud, a man whose whole life lies in the things he wishes you to see and enjoy, or a charlatan who knows nothing and whose chief preoccupation (after the question of payment) is the amount of the commission he will get from the shops which he persuades you to patronize. But, whichever he may prove to be, he is really a very terrifying creature to the lonely traveller in search of impressions rather than statistics and historical data. To my mind the perfect guide is he who speaks only when he is spoken to, who never offers you a mosque or a panorama unasked, who can tell you about both if necessary, and who keeps other gadflies away. Unfortunately, he is very rare, and the other sort very numerous. Yet I met to-day one guide who pleased me. I was looking at a particularly fine view from the rocky heights of Constantine, comfortably happy in the belief that there was no guide within half a mile of me to tell me what to look at or how many kilometres one can see on a fine day. A voice fell on my ear. "It is a fine view, that!"

I looked round and saw a precocious urchin, obviously a candidate for honours in the Guides' School. Wearily I went through the formula to the effect that I agreed with him but required none of him. He stared carefully at me, and remarked, "Yes, it is a fine view; et toi, tu n'as l'air de rien." I have never yet been told by a guide, except possibly in languages I could not understand, that in effect I looked like nothing on earth. He should go far, that boy.

The subject of guides naturally reminds one of the one place in Africa where they abound in more terrible fecundity than any other. I do not know what the township of Biskra owes Mr. Robert Hichens for having written a book about it, and for having, with Miss Mary Anderson, staged a play, but I am sure both ought to get imperial royalties out of the hotels and guides of that much-visited resort. Tourists pour into the place, agog to see what they call "the Garden of Allah"; they remain a few days; are cajoled into buying a deal of imported rubbish, sold as local; and, in the end, depart with immense enthusiasm, their places taken, while yet warm as it were, by the next batch. Biskra is most excellent business.

It is, moreover, superbly advertised. I first met it in an Algiers garage, where I saw on the enormous back of a char-à-banc, brilliantly illuminated by the headlights of a car, the words: "To the Garden of Allah and Back." If I had not already suspected that Mr. Hichens's most successful novel had probably ruined Biskra, I was sure of it then. The wicket-gate to the "Garden of Allah" it may well have been when

Mr. Hichens first saw and wrote of it. To-day it is an incubator of guides, eager, insistent to show you what their own detestable existence spoils. El Kantara enjoys, I believe, the fame of being the original scene of another of Mr. Hichens's books—*Barbary Sheep*. It was only about three o'clock in the afternoon, cold, grey, and I think, raining when I arrived there. There was not a cat stirring. I put Imshi away, and walked out into the street (which consists of three houses, two on one side and one on the other), and was instantly greeted with the words: "Sir, if you are a friend of Mr. Rubberchichenge"—but the rest was lost in a torrent of my own profanity.

Really, it is intolerable that any book should so spoil one's holiday. I congratulate Mr. Hichens on a most successful work, and I feel sure that he himself views with horror the devastation it has worked. Could he not now write a novel showing how the Evil Spirit of Biskra is the Guide who shows you the Landon Garden and calls it the Garden of Allah, whereas the Garden of Allah is the name given, in all grimness, to the real Desert of Sahara by those who know something of the matter?

LES CHÊNES, TUNISIA.

The worst of keeping a motoring diary in North Africa is that too many nice things happen all the time. It is a sheer impossibility to keep the thing anything like up-to-date. It would need pages to tell you half of the delightful places I have seen. All I can do, in the intervals of making hasty sketches, is to urge everybody who can to bring his

car to this magnificent motoring continent as soon as possible.

Imshi and I began the fifth episode of our wanderings this morning, when, at a place called, in Arabic, the Fountain of Slippers, we left Algeria and entered the country of His Excellency the Bey of Tunis. Ain-Babouch was the spot; Ain means spring or fountain, and a babouch is a yellow slipper. But even so I give no guarantee with this free translation. It may and very likely does mean something quite different, just as Ain Drahm, the next village, probably does not mean the Fountain of Silver.

Ain Drahm is my postal town. I say mine, because I alone and in state occupy the whole of an enormous hotel. It is perched about 3,200 ft. up on a mountain side, and from it you look out over miles and miles of oak-clad mountains. It is known as the Hôtel des Chênes, near the Camp de Santé, and it halves the honours with the Hôtel Bertrand at El Kantara for being what an inn should be.

Host and hostess come out to greet you, stooping low under the little oak saplings which swarm round the place. "Is that Monsieur Prioleau?" said madame. (I had wired for a room.) "But we are delighted to see you. Have you eaten? No? Well, nothing is easier." Host hurried off to the kitchen, while madame showed me the way to the garage—a brick shed among the little oaks.

"It freezes here, and monsieur would be prudent to empty his radiator." As both our breaths were smoking at the moment I could easily believe her. It is mid-winter here, bitterly cold under a blazing

sun. I left Bone this morning at 8.30 a.m., uncomfortably hot. I must invent a patent African motoring wardrobe, suitable for all temperatures from 80 to freezing-point.

And then at ten minutes' notice (they expected me at night and not at 1 p.m.) I was gorged on the following lunch. A cold *pâté* of the most intriguing kind, with huge lumps of prize butter. An omelette, a trout, and a cutlet, with green peas and potatoes. There was also veal, but I could eat no more. You will, of course, disbelieve the trout, but it is true. They had so cooked him that his skin was unrecognizable, but I think he was a rainbow. He certainly was not a brown trout.

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And with it all, as the best sauce in the world, such friendliness, such warm-heartedness from the entire household. A blazing fire of oak logs is roasting my back at this moment, and my bed is piled high with the most beautiful white fleecy blankets. The hotel belongs to me—at any rate, for the moment. When you come to Tunisia do not forget Les Chênes. It is one of the nicest places in the world. But bring your winter clothes. It is much more like Argyllshire than Africa.

And another place you must remember is Hammam Meskoutine, half-way between Constantine and Bone, near Guelma. It is a neat, self-contained, bijou hell. I lunched there twenty-four hours ago in an August swelter, momentarily expecting death by infernal misadventure. The place is a bathing establishment, in a sweating little valley, built round a

hot spring which roars and bubbles out of the rocks, dimming the blue sky with steam and filling the world with a terrific smell of brimstone and sulphur.

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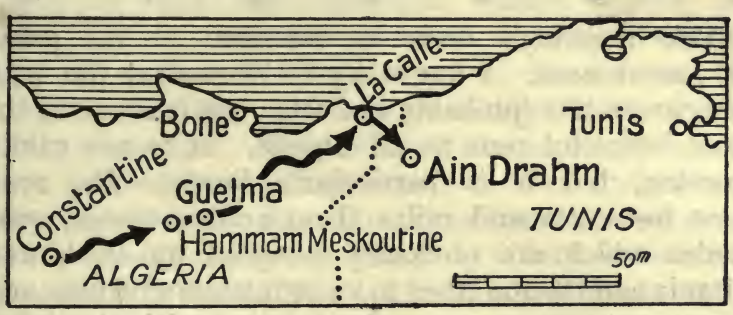
The boiling stuff appears out of little pools on the top of a cascade, and trickles down what were once rocks. Now they are stalactites or worse. When the sun shines they are, chiefly, pink, black, yellow, purple, orange and snow white. Every now and then the devils within take a rest and things are fairly



quiet. The next moment columns of steam go up, the arresting smells take a new lease of life, and everything, including the solid earth, seems to be boiling again. It is a cheerful spot.

The legend goes that the pink and purple rocks were once the wedding guests at the particularly unhallowed marriage of a high personage, and that their punishment was to become petrified and to suffer in perpetuity something with boiling oil in it. It would have pleased the Mikado.

You eat a most admirable lunch in a well-appointed hotel. It is 100 yds. from the sizzling inferno.

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It is a hopeless job to attempt to describe the daily scenery. Yesterday, near the Valley of Hell, it was like Abergavenny, magnified about a hundred times. Then I came down some of the Tyrol Alps and took to a long, straight road (21 miles without a swerve), which I remember meeting near Orléans, in France. Bone, where I stayed the night, is an unpretentious seaport in an enormous bay. I remember it chiefly for its excellent Hôtel d'Orient and the continuous noise in the streets all night. I left early.

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This morning's drive is described in the guide as monotonous. I am sorry to contradict the man who wrote this (probably in Paris), but it is one of the most beautiful runs in all Algeria. It is not wildly exciting, but it is particularly lovely. The road runs for miles and miles though olive woods, past glades which are obviously occupied by Puck and Titania and Oberon (they have little pools with lilies and irises), out into open moorland dotted with blue lakes fringed with eucalypti and alive with egrets, back into valleys between blue mountains. Finally, just above La Calle, you turn a corner and see the Mediterranean glowing like crushed sapphires.

To-morrow, "Inshallah," we go to Tunis, and afterwards to Carthage. This is a very pleasant land.

CHAPTER XXIV

AFTER MARIUS—BOTTLED NATIONS—TUNIS

CARTHAGE STATION.

IN at least one important respect Marius, the Roman, was luckier than I. He, if history is to be believed, came to dream over the ruins of Carthage, I, at a later date, to look at them without rancour. It is true that he had only a rock or a pile of stones from which to do his dreaming, whereas I have a green-painted iron bench, the property of the Tunis Tramway Company; but Marius had something to dream over; I have a pleasing prospect of a tramway station, a museum, some villas, the Mediterranean Sea, and a little green hill. All that is identifiable of the Carthage which General Scipio so efficiently destroyed is, I understand, bottled in glass cases, neatly arranged in rooms, period by period, clearly labelled and ticketed and programmed, all nicely tidied away in the Lavigerie Museum.

I have not been to this Morgue.

Things in glass cases, however precious, rare or remarkable, do not thrill me in the least, and I would give you the lot, museum, cathedral, and Roman remains, for just one brick or stone left untouched where it lay when Captain Regulus, that great Roman

gentleman, suffered the penalty of not being a Hun. But of that grim and bloodthirsty merchant-city there is nothing left, in its proper place, by which you may say, "Here or near here stood Hannibal when he held his last parade of the armies which rotted at Capua."

I prefer my green-painted bench, where I serenely await the return tram to Tunis. When a nation has been so completely destroyed as to have nothing left, save what will go into a specimen-case, what is, in effect, nothing but funeral remains, it is better, I think, to pass by, and keep such dreams and fancies as one may have had from one's childhood undarkened by the suggestions of the tomb. Nobody is interesting when dead, and Carthage is the most completely dead thing on earth—the Carthage of Marius that is. Marius could, no doubt, picture the city as it was before Scipio and his legions began to take trouble over it, and from his pile of stones could testify that men and women had lived and died there within a year or so. He had not to refer to coffins and cerements and winding-sheets to verify the fact that he was on the site of one of the greatest powers the world has known. It is a terrible thing when a great people have so utterly disappeared that you must dig in a cemetery in order to reconstruct a picture of their lives. Will Macaulay's New Zealander pass on from London Bridge to Kensal Green in order to form a just appreciation of the British people?

Far better than all the contents of Cardinal Lavigerie's Museum I like the little green hill I can see from my bench. It was from here that Queen Dido

saw the departure of that Prig of all the Ages, the Dutiful Æneas. From here, on her funeral pyre, she saw the headland round which this begging emigrant, this super-Joseph, fled, with his cadging crew and craven galleys.

Tunis is a cheerful town of the most Occidental kind, full of wonderful motor shops. I believe there existed a Tunis in later Roman times, a third-rate Carthage, a place to which all the failures went in order to have another try at the difficult game of life. It has shared the fate of its superior neighbour. The grim Roman's wish has been fulfilled as no wish has ever been before. Indeed, indeed, *deleta est.* The French city which rears its stuccoed villas and flats on the site is quite one of the nicest in North Africa, but, except for the western suburbs, there is nothing to suggest that it ever had a predecessor, Punic, Roman, or Turkish. The way in, from Béja, along the Sook-el-Ahras road, is quite delightful, in spite of the spider's web of tramways. There are white mosques and little shops with grave Tunisians sitting within, and pepper trees shading all. But so strong is the influence of Tunis the French that you get a vague impression that the whole thing is an accident—that it is a suburb which has mistaken its way, that it will move on and be gone to-morrow.

Yet Tunis is not disappointing. It is really a delightful town ; only—it is not in the least what you expect it to be. Somebody in Algiers babbled to me about "another Fez, a western Cairo." He cannot have been to either of those, and probably not to Tunis.

I have allowed several days to elapse since my arrival

in Tunis before trying to put down my impressions of this most surprising town. I am not quite sure what I or any other gaping tourist expects to find, but I am quite sure that an excessively modern city, laid out on the American rectangular plan, more violently Western, for the most part, than Algiers, had no place in my dreams, at all events.

Tree-shaded boulevards, a magnificent open Place de France, an enormous theatre, glittering *cafés*, tramways to everywhere, shops unequalled in excellence south of Nice or Lyons or Paris, and motor establishments of the most superb order. That is the Tunis that meets the traveller from the West. Just at the entrance, where the road from Béja comes in, there is a faint, a very faint suggestion of what Tunis may once have been like, but it very quickly disappears, and the latest example of modern Franco-Italian towns overwhelms you. I say Franco-Italian advisedly, as there is, outwardly at all events, quite as big an Italian element here as French. I do not know why this should have rather surprised me, but it did.

There, then, you have new Tunis, comfortable, up-to-date, progressive—not in the very slightest degree Eastern. Behind the Porte de France lie the celebrated bazaars, and they are worth walking through between nine and eleven in the morning. They are organized with almost chilly thoroughness, each street and mart being correctly and clearly labelled in French—the Bakers', the Butchers', the Shoemakers', the Perfumers', the Tailors', and so forth.

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Perhaps it is hardly fair to make the comparison,

but after Fez, Marrakesh, Meknes, even Casablanca. the bazaars of Tunis seem to have lost their souls, They look and feel like a not very carefully staged scene. They are so obviously under the eagle and sanitary eye of a stern, Parisian-minded municipality. They are, for the north of Africa, important, and I believe a great deal of wealth flows through their winding, sheltered alleys. But I always have the feeling when I walk through them that the next turn will show me a taxi-cab rank and that I can ring up Algiers from any of the shops.

What is especially charming about Tunis and its surroundings is the rich man's villa. They remind one a little of the nice houses round Rabat, in Morocco, with their green-tiled roofs and verandahs, but they have an indefinable air which definitely stamps them as something apart. They are not Moorish or Algerian, they are Tunisian, and, although it is hard to describe, there is a decided difference. They are not at all pretentious, yet there is a richness of ornamentation, of detail, a careful blending of colours in tile-work, which gives them great distinction.

Western Tunisia is a land of contrasts. The people are very grave, not to say sad, of face, poorly-clad in picturesque rags. Where there is cultivation the land is rich, richer than any I saw in Algeria. Yet there are few villages, and those of the poorest description ; one town only, Béja ; and the road is, generally speaking, bad, neglected and forlorn-looking. Tunis swarms with motor-cars, but you rarely meet more than a couple in a day's drive 50 miles away from the town. Except for the herds, there is very little life

on the high-road west of Tunis. For miles it runs through rich green plains to Souk-el-Arba from Béja, straight as an arrow, flat, empty of any sign of animal or human existence. The riches are there, but there is no outward sign of them.

CHAPTER XXV

KAIRUAN AND THE ISLAND OF LOTUS-EATERS

KAIRUAN, TUNISIA.

IF I wrote of Biskra as a show of shams got up to gull the miserable tourist I wish to make handsome amends in the matter of Kairuan, the little Holy City of the Tunisian plains.

Years ago somebody, whose name I have never yet discovered, sent me, across 3,000 miles of land and sea, one of those luxurious picture-books of the beautiful places of the earth, really intelligently illustrated with water-colours by some well-known painter, of Tunis and Kairuan.

It came at Christmas time, and for years it held an honoured place on my bookshelves. I had never been to Kairuan and, so far as I knew, I should never go there; but it was a beautiful book, and the text was written with such a love of the subject that I could never muster the common honesty to return it to the bookseller in London whose label it bore, who had, in all likelihood, made a mistake in his addresses—I hope the real owner will forgive me. I would return it now, if I could, but it was lost during certain events between 1914 and 1919. The book was bound in white vellum, and it had a little impres-

sion of Kairuan's skyline stamped on the cover in gold. Kairuan is white and gold—all blinding white houses, set in a haze of golden sunshine, framed in boundless prairies flaming with golden wild flowers.

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You expect it to be a city of the desert, lost in the shifting Sahara. It is a real African city, a little like a sketch of Fez, a little like Marrakesh, a little like Omdurman, a little bit like Cairo. It is familiar yet wholly new ; and I think it is mostly new because you come to it along a long, straight, white road across green prairies which seem to have no end. You see it miles away, like a little white cloud.

And, if such a thing can still be, it is absolutely untouched, the real city as it always was, as real as mighty Fez.

It is one of the holiest cities in all Islam. It has eighty mosques and the tombs of eighty saints. It contains one spacious mosque (the Great Mosque), which is worth seeing, and one very venerated mosque, that of the Barber, which, for the moment, is not.

The tale runs that the Barber was a friend of Mohammed and always wore three of the hairs of the Prophet's beard. It is known, in the vernacular, as the Mosque of Sidi Sahab—the Holy Friend. His tomb is on view, but unless one has a passion for coloured glass balls and other terrifically tawdry symptoms of devotion it may be avoided.

Personally I did not object to the glass balls so much as to the fact (I am open to correction) that the entire mosque dates, at the earliest, from the seventeenth century. Seeing that Mohammed flour-

ished in the seventh century A.D. our friend the Barber must have lived to a ripe old age.

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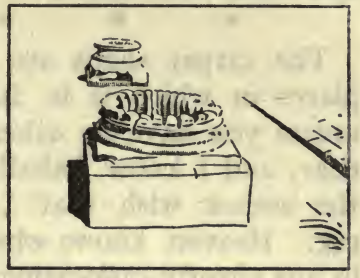
But it is not the mosque of the deathless Barber nor that of the Swords (period, nineteenth century), nor even that of the Great Mosque (period, third century, if printed words may be believed), which you should waste time over in Kairuan. It is Kairuan itself, its engaging streets, all shaded by pepper trees, its old doors, its open squares where a man can buy everything he needs and pay a few pence to see real snake-charming, tumbling, fire-eating and scorpion-taming; and, above all, and first and last, its bazaars.



A WELL-HEAD IN THE GREAT MOSQUE AT KAIRUAN. THE MARKS ARE THE CENTURIES-OLD SCORINGS OF BUCKET ROPES.

How can Tunis have the face even to whisper the existence of its *souks*, when 100 miles or so to the south you can see the Kairuan *souks*!

Apart from the ordinary commerce of life the Kairuan bazaars make a speciality of two things, yellow slippers and carpets—both delightful. The *souks* are all in long white plastered tunnels, with square holes in the roof at intervals, through which glorious shafts of sunlight strike down on the white-clad figures of the merchants, sitting in long rows outside their shops.

The whole place is extraordinarily dark, lit up

dazzlingly here and there by stray gleams of sunshine and by splashes of daffodil yellow from the piles of finished slippers and from the skins hung on the walls from which the slippers are made. It is all yellow and black and white.

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The carpet shops are not so vivid, but they are places in which it is fatal to linger with money—unless you have no other use for it. Things are *not* dear, and I know I shall carry with me to the grave the useless wish that I had bought a certain old rug. Heaven knows where I should have stowed it in the already suffocating Imshi—but I do wish I had bought it.

Then there are the saddlers' shops, where you can buy the most superbly decorated horse-trappings ever seen. On my way home I met a splendiferous horseman, obviously preening himself over something. I stopped the car and displayed my camera. "Thou wishest to photograph me," said he, affecting surprise. "Wait, then, till I have all ready"—and he fussed with his bridle amd his horse-clothing and his rifle and his cloak till his justly indignant horse began to object with vigour.

I got a probably poor snapshot of this desert Brummell, but I had the sense to admire his saddle. "Beautiful!" he snorted, in the manner of Humpty-Dumpty over his tie. "I should say it was! It's the most beautiful in all Tunisia!" He had just bought it at Kairuan.

And still I have not told you the secret of Kairuan's charm. It is that you, a stranger, may wander

The Locksmith's Shop at Kairuan.

happily round its fascinating bazaars without once being bothered by touts or guides, without once being importuned to buy. Indeed, if you want to ask the price of anything that takes your eye, you must, if you cannot do it in Arabic, call in an interpreter. No Kairuan merchant demeans himself by shrieking at you in pidgin-French.

No amount of guide-book panegyrics can give one an idea of the hot charm of this little walled sanctuary in the Tunisian prairie. It is dazzling white, and the sun seems to live in its winding little streets. Outside the walls a keen wind blows across the sea of green, a wind which can be very searching; but inside the gate and along by the shop doors and in the dusty, crowded market-place all the warmth of Africa seems to have settled down, and you pass in a stride from a very chilly March to a reasonable July.

It is not in its mosques or even in its four-score saints and their four-score shrines that the attraction of Kairuan lies. It is in its own everyday life under the little low-hanging pepper trees, in the bazaars, in the streets. Kairuan is not yet tourist-ridden. The perfectly delightful shops in the bazaars still sell real Tunisian stuff, and not imported rubbish from Birmingham. I except, of course, the inevitable Manchester cotton goods; those strangely printed fabrics have, one imagines, permeated every inhabited inch of the globe, and are bought and sold where the compatriots of their manufacturers will never be seen alive. You can buy real carpets and rugs and saddles and saddle-cloths and yellow slippers in Kairuan,

and you can still buy them for the amount they are worth, at the price, more or less, at which they are sold to Tunisians. The whole thing is, at present, genuine.

Back at Sousse in the evening you sit in one of the two *cafés* on the wharfside and hear all the sea tongues around you—lingua franca, Spanish, Norwegian, English, Italian, French, and the Scots of the engine rooms of all the round world. Captains and mates, engineers and stokers, all the sea people drinking and smoking and discussing precisely the same things as they have done, and will do, at Newcastle, Hong-Kong, Baltimore and Swansea. This place is called Sousse. That is the only difference.

Just over the horizon, not very many miles away, lies the real Island of the Lotus-Eaters. It exists, and one can actually land on it and hold speech with the inhabitants. I shall not go—not for the reasons which kept me from the doors of the museum where the poor remnants of mighty Carthage lie embalmed or tinned, but because I hate having a dream shattered. The island of Jerba may be all that Flaubert painted it and more, lotus may still be the staple diet of the colonists, but I would rather not run the risk.

It is all guide-book cowardice, really. I have been reading a very indifferent work which deals with the islands round this coast, and I have come to the conclusion that the whole business of guide-book compilation must be put on a new footing. For example, Jerba, the Island of the Lotus-Eaters. What does one find in this depressing volume? Half a

A High Road in Tunisia.

Imshi in Kairuan.

page of close print describing (*a*) how difficult it is to get there in a small sailing boat in contrary winds; (*b*) how many francs it costs; (*c*) the complete lack of food or lodging; (*d*) the poverty of the sponge-fishing industry; (*e*) the futility, in other words, of attempting to visit the place. At the very end comes a brief remark to the effect that Jerba is the Lotus Island. Surely that sentence alone is all that any proper guide-book should print. Of what interest is it to hear that you must pay 2 frs. 50 c. (after bargaining) in order to spend several hours in failing to make the island? Why tell one, in one breath as it were, that while they ate (or even still eat) lotus they also fish for sponges? The whole thing is the lotus; the rest of the information merely serves to put you off badly.

A motor-car is certainly, in its own peculiar way and within certain definite limits, the magic carpet *par excellence* which shows you the things of the world, but many days spent in it, with many nights' study of guide-books, make one very suspicious of the official "sight." For every mosque or church or fortress or heap of ruins you make pilgrimage to, there must be a score of far more real things which you see on the road, which are not mentioned in the books. It is only now and then that you drive confidently to a famous object of interest, but it is every day that you pass the others and delight in them. People who write these works should be very careful with their enthusiasms, bearing in mind that the same person who reads the first chapter on an entire continent may also read the last, and that if he is passionately

urged on page 301, as I have been in the book in question, to go and see the new post office (*circa* A.D. 1915), he will probably disregard the entreaties, on page 306, that the Roman amphitheatre should not be missed.

CHAPTER XXVI

RAIN IN AFRICA—THE DEATH OF ARCHIBALD

PHILIPPEVILLE, ALGERIA.

I HAVE not written up my diary of this motor-stroll through North Africa for some days, the reasons being that from the south or middle of Tunisia you must come back to the inevitable Tunis by the same road as on the outward journey, and that it has been raining again.

I hope to condense the most useful portions of my African two-seater experiences into a short chapter which may help those who come after. That will be presently. In the meantime, there is no harm in warning light-car owners that one thing and one only arrests your progress to any part of this delightful country, and that is rain, rain such as falls during the regularly ordained rainy season ; such, for example, as is falling deafeningly, unceasingly, terribly, at this moment.

I left Sousse (where I stayed in order to see that gem Kairuan) in blazing sunshine and arrived at Tunis in a thunderstorm, which went on for three hours, and in rain which fell like a solid thing. The next day I waded back through Béja and up through the cork-wood hills to Les Chênes, where I was again received as one should be.

And it continued to rain. I crossed the Tunisian frontier next morning at 8.30 and was instantly relieved of 67 frs. by the Algerian Customs officer at La Calle. It appears that France has invented a new law in my absence and motor-cars must pay for the right to live.

And it went on raining. And the roads became rivers, and the rivers became Niagaras. Nor did it stop raining.

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It was very annoying, because I could see nothing of the superb scenery between Hammam Meskoutine, where I slept one night in immense comfort, and Philippeville, where I see nothing but rain and mud. I went through Constantine again, because I think it one of the most superb places ever built of man—but I groped my way through it. The rain blurred the whole picture.

This is my only "grouse" against Algeria, but I want to make it quite clear for the benefit of any small-car owner who regards rain from the English standpoint—as a wetness only—that you cannot with any certainty plan to drive 100 miles a day if it is raining; that you would be wise to make it 75; and wiser still to wait till the drenching is over.

It does not last more than a day or two at a stretch, but while it is raining, particularly in the hills (of which Algeria is chiefly composed) motoring is best abandoned. Apart from the discomfort and missing the scenery, there is always a working chance that a flooded river may bar your path effectively and at a most inconvenient moment.

Find a comfortable inn or a nice place, preferably both, and exercise philosophy. It is much better to drive 150 miles in beautiful weather, seeing beautiful things, three days late, than to crawl, 50 miles at a time, in sodden discomfort, crouching under a hood, seeing nothing but falling rain—and, having unpacked and repacked twice unnecessarily, arrive at your destination at the same time.

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This reads in rather depressing vein. It is certainly not so meant. I only wish to warn those who have only read of Algeria as a "Land of Sunshine" and have not yet driven a car through it, that there is another side to the picture.

And, while I am on sombre subjects, Archibald is dead. You remember, Archibald was the Barbary lamb I knew at El Kantara, who had been deserted by his mother (she must have been a "step") and found by a shikari on the hillside. At a halting place yesterday a mutual friend of Archibald's and mine, a man who was at the Hôtel Bertrand when I was, came up and without preamble said, "Archibald is dead."

The day after I left El Kantara, he told me, Archibald's new father and mother went to the races at Biskra, leaving the child behind. He caught cold and died. He should, of course, have gone to Biskra too. But these are stilted days, when a man cannot take his Barbary sheep, even on a lead, into the enclosure or paddock at a tuppenny meeting like Biskra.

Poor little Archibald. He was a nice kid, but I dare say he would have lived a sad life as a full-grown

mouflon in a private Zoo. I hate to see wild things caged, and perhaps it was all for the best. But what with the rain and the death of Archibald, life is not at its rosiest.

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Madame, behind the desk, says that it will be fine to-morrow, without fail.

The man in Imshi's garage, a saturnine, gloomy creature, who is vulcanizing an inner tube for me, says that it may stop raining.

The infant who is shining my shoes for me says that the bad weather is finished "for ever." Why repine?

To-morrow, wet or shine, I take the road to Djidjelli and along the new coast-way to Bougie. To-morrow! There is, thank heaven, even in our darkest hours, always to-morrow.

BOUGIE, ALGERIA.

Algeria is a glorious country for motoring, but, as I said before, it gives one indigestion of the eye. The scenery is so varied, all of it so beautiful, from the comfortable fields and orchards of the valleys to the snow-capped mountain passes, that one needs a hundred pairs of eyes to take in even a tenth of it.

I thought, till yesterday, that I had really exhausted the stock of beautiful drives, and that there was nothing fresh to see. My drive from Philippeville, by El Milia to Djidjelli, and on to my old friend Bougie the Fat (as plump as ever) was as new a delight as any I have yet had. The lady behind the desk, the gloomy garage-man, and the small shoeblack at Philippeville were all perfectly right. It stopped raining the day I left, and Imshi and I sailed up over

the passes between St. Antoine and El Milia in a world all newly washed and sparkling with diamonds under a new blue sky. This mountain road is one of the least strenuous I have met, but one of the very best for surface. It is a drive you simply must not miss.

The only disadvantage is one which is very common in this country, and that is that you have about 100 miles to go before luncheon. There is no inn between Philippeville and Djidjelli. However, by starting as I did at eight punctually you can be eating your excellent luncheon at the Brasserie de la Glacière at one o'clock.

And after luncheon you take the new coast road round the Bay of Bougie, which is the pride of all Algeria—and rightly so. It is rather like the Corniche road on the French Riviera, all carved and blasted out of the rock. Every few minutes it squeezes round some ledge over the sea, through a tunnel, and out again past a great waterfall whose spray splashes over the car as you pass.

Wild boar and monkeys live here, close to caves full of stalactites, and whenever the rocks open out and let you have a glimpse of green valleys, you see acres and acres of narcissi and anemones, all blowing in the merry spring sunshine, with clouds of white egrets wheeling overhead.

To look at it you would think this wonderful road had been made fifty years ago. It cost, in some places, £2,400 a kilometre to build, and its bill for repairs is enormous—and never-ending. Every now and then one or other of the waterfalls swells by a few million gallons and carries away the road. Not

nearly all of its possibilities have been explored yet, and all sorts of stalactite wonders may be brought to light as the blasting goes on.

A little more than half-way between Djidjelli and Bougie I passed the entrance to the great monkey-gorge, the Chabet-el-Akra, at Souk-el-Tnine. I had no time even for a short run up it, as I had done 117 miles and still had 22 more to cover before dark, and the setting sun was already staining the cliffs blood red. I was very sorry to have to miss a sight of this terrific place at dusk.

As things turned out it was perhaps just as well that I did not turn off. Five miles farther on Imshi's petrol pipe took unto itself a hump and some foreign substance which defied every possible scheme for dislodging it, and I had, then and there, working in a frenzy of hurry against time, to fit in a new pipe. Will some expert in the properties of solids and fluids kindly explain how solid matter, at least one-sixteenth of an inch in girth, can get through fine gauze —*and* chamois leather? Also, why these things always happen just before lighting-up time?

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With the arrival of the fine weather just a little of Imshi's wonderful luck deserted us. Somewhere or another on the road, while we were gingerly fording a swollen stream, we hit a large submerged rock with the off-side front shock absorber, and hit it hard enough to bend the shock absorber 2 in. out of truth. It ceased its functions as an absorber of shocks and, in due season, owing to the fact that the front spring was practically jammed tight, the

middle leaf of the spring gave up the struggle and broke in half.

It does not matter seriously, as all can be put right at Algiers, but it makes me drive pretty warily.

And we had two punctures early in the day, leaving me with no "spare" for over 100 miles. But seeing that, as I write this, I am comfortably settled in a dry room overlooking Bougie Bay, and that skilled persons are having a horrid time with tyre-levers and vulcanizers and chalk and oily mud and jacks and pumps, and that I am not, I cannot complain of the luck. But I do most fervently appreciate the forethought of Imshi's maker who, on December 18, 1920, insisted on my carrying a spare petrol-pipe.

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By the way, I have a modest warning to offer anyone who comes to Bougie and stays at the excellent Hôtel d'Orient. This inn is built on a street of the most precipitous kind, and it is as well, before beginning the descent, to see that your brakes are not oily. The last time I was here Imshi's brakes were not innocent of grease (it was my fault for over-filling the differential casing and no blame attaches to her), and a slightly painful scene took place on our arrival.

I had taken on board one of the usual mass of small Arabs who scream round you as you enter Algerian towns to show me the way. Presently we began the perilous descent of what seemed to me, in the dark, to be Porlock Hill.

"There, there! On your right is the hotel, with the lamp!" yelled the small Arab. I was fully aware of the fact, but, despising my frenzied pressure

on both brakes, Imshi passed slowly and quite firmly onwards.

"Stop, stop!" he screamed, in an ecstasy, a delirium of excitement. "One has arrived! Look! Hôtel d'Orient! We shall pass it!"

"We have, my child," said I sadly, "and we shall be lucky if the matter rests here," perceiving, in the blackness below, a sparkling of lights which seemed to indicate much distance.

By what I still have the conceit to regard as some skill I brought Imshi's offside front wheel against the kerb of that fell street so that she stopped without damaging anything. And drew breath again.

The *patron* and madame and boots and the *maître d'hôtel* were all gathered in the doorway, attracted by the screams of the Arabian child whom I now hurled from me with violence.

"It is here! We thought you did not see the hotel sign!" cried madame, easily beating her lord in such a contest.

"I did, madame. It was my car only which was blind——" and I wiped the sweat from my own eyes.

To-day my brakes are properly dry, but nevertheless I shall steal a lump of wood out of the coach-house to block the wheels with to-morrow morning while the luggage is being loaded.

I have no desire to see my Imshi plunge into the bay, *via* the very solid houses at the bottom of this infernal precipice. People have no right to build hotels in such places.

CHAPTER XXVII

A DISH FOR HEROES—SUGGESTED TOURS—ALGIERS AS IT SHOULD BE

ALGIERS.

HAVE you ever, on Good Friday, or any other day, eaten cold salt cod and a mayonnaise made of garlic? If not, do—and then abandon the habit.

It is wildly exciting, delicious in the act of consumption, unutterably frightful afterwards. But I am not sure whether it is not worth it. I lunched off it yesterday at the inn at Bouira, on my way back here from Bougie, and I have made a large and indelible entry in my road-book to that effect. I had, in the stress of travel, forgotten the association, in Roman Catholic countries, between salt cod and fasting, and I was rather surprised when the waiter beamed with pleasure at my agreeing to eat it. "You will eat it?" said he, smiling all over. "Really? Bravo!" "Why not?" said I, in the careless manner of heroes. And I did. Believe me, it is a dish for heroes, and heroes only. The mayonnaise looked and felt like the most perfect subtlety ever produced by the first kitchens of Europe—airy, creamy, ephemeral; a real work of art.

Spread on a lump of cold, salt cod (in itself no meat for babes, let me tell you), it suddenly galvanized you into startled life. Was it delicious—or fearful? Which? Like Alice in Wonderland with her mushroom, I nibbled at it, saying anxiously, "Which way? Which way?"

Then, as the first consignment goes down you say, "It's scrumptious," and, when the salt cod is finished, finish off the rest of the sauce on bits of bread.

Later on you scratch garlic off the endless list of things you don't mind eating anywhere. A brief, crowded hour, very glorious—but only one.

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Imshi and I ended up the eastern part of our North African journey in fitting manner by taking a valley road instead of one over the interminable mountains and coming back to Algiers through yet another sort of scenery—a land of great, brimming rivers and what are politely called fords.

We came from Bougie along the superb road which follows the River Sahel, a stream which is sometimes about half a mile wide. Just now it is a roaring torrent of chocolate, with whipped cream on the top, and it has spread itself in every direction this last week under the influence of these terrible spring rains.

Twice we had to cross either it or its friends the Dous or the Djemaa, without the usual assistance of bridges, and it was no doubt a diverting spectacle for others. You are running along a quite perfect high road, smooth, beautifully metalled, wide, correctly furnished with milestones.

Without any warning whatever it dips down a slope and breaks off short, like a plank sawn in half, at the edge of a torrent. The other half of the plank is exactly, geometrically, opposite, perfect in every detail to the water's edge. It only remains for you to cross the interval.

The intervals were not very deep, fortunately for me. I have grown rather skilled of late in judging the distance between the tops of waves and the bottom of Imshi's magneto. She can, if you go slowly, wade in up to her hub-caps—a matter of 14 in., I suppose. I had one rather terrible moment when, looking anxiously overside, I saw the water creep up and up till the hub-caps were hidden.

I dared not slow down for fear of her sinking into the mud; I dared not go faster lest the "bow-wave" should flood the magneto. I was remarkably glad when we scrambled up the other side.

But it is a beautiful drive and, for scenery, I really prefer it to the northern route, by Tizi Ouzou and either Fort National or the Col de Tagma, where I groped blindly in the clouds three weeks ago. The only drawback to any of these three is the terrible state of the road for the last 25 miles into Algiers by Ménerville, Belle Fontaine, Alma, and Maison Carrée.

It is nearly all extremely worn cobbled pavement, and, at the end of a 200-mile drive, it is really distressing. It is well worth making a long detour and avoiding it.

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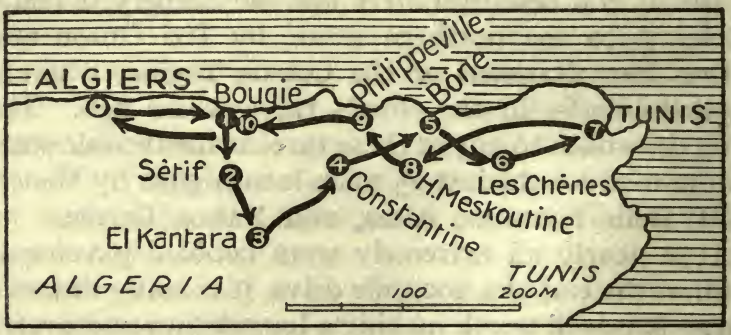
As I have finally left Tunisia and Eastern Algeria, perhaps a few hints on planning a round trip may be

useful to those motorists who are new to this engaging part of the continent. In the first place, you must resign yourself to the absence of decent, reliable maps. It is incredible, but there is hardly a road map worth buying, or, at any rate, that I could buy between Tlemçen and Tunis. The Taride map is useful as a general sketch, but it is on far too small a scale and it is often misleading.

The Government of Tunisia publishes a large and imposing map, which is sold for 14 frs. I could draw a better myself after a week's experience. The Guide Michelin (*Les Pays du Soleil*) has only skeleton maps, but its itineraries are, as a rule, fairly reliable. Do not rely on the descriptions of road conditions in either this or the *Guide Bleu* (Hachette) to Algeria and Tunisia. It is not the fault of the editors, but of the African climate, which transforms, in twenty-four hours, a perfect road into an impassable morass.



This, then, is what I recommend a light-car owner to do, if he takes as his base Algiers. The asterisk refers to hotels, see below:

1. To Bougie,* *via* Ménerville. Tizi Ouzou, and

Fort National.* This takes you over the bad stretch near Algiers, but if you wish to go over the Grande Kabylie Range, it is unavoidable.

2. To Setif,* *via* the Chabet el Akra.

3. To El Kantara,* whence you can visit Biskra and, by spending a night at Batna, the ruins of Timgad.

4. To Constantine.*

5. To Bône,* *via* the Col des Oliviers, St. Charles and Jemmapes.

6. To Les Chênes* (Tunisia).

7. To Tunis,* for Kairuan and the south.

8. If you do not wish to go so far as Tunisia (or, in any case, on the return journey), to Hammam Meskoutine,* either *via* Morris and Mondovi, on the road from Tunisia, or *via* Penthièvre on the road from Bône. It is 5 kilometres off the main road between Guelma and Constantine, about 19 from Guelma.

9. To Philippeville* or Djidjelli.

10. To Bougie.*

11. To Algiers, *via* Akbou, Bouira, Bertville, Tablat and l'Arba.

This makes a total of a little under 1,900 miles, exclusive of visiting Timgad and Kairuan.

There are good hotels (that is to say, clean, well-run, where the food is good) at all the places which I have starred, but you must not expect too much. Electric light is not by any means universal, any more than are bathrooms. Look upon them as inns, remember you are motoring in fairly remote places, many of them a long way from big shopping and marketing centres, and you will not be disappointed.

Last and most important of all, expect at least one mountain range per diem to lie between you and your bed. Never, in any circumstances, plan to average more than about 20 miles an hour. You won't.

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The roads of Algeria are excellent except near the big towns. Those in Tunisia are good in the south, but the only possible one into the country from Algeria, *via* Ain Drahm and Béja, is very poor, especially when it is wet.

ALGIERS.

I have been taking three days off in Algiers, partly because I simply had to have some clothes washed (this is a serious problem in Africa); partly because Imshi's tyres have reached that age where pruning has become necessary, and general overhauling and re-stocking; but mostly because I wanted to make sure about Algiers being as dull as I first thought it.

To that end I have abandoned the costly and exclusive if not aristocratic heights of Mustapha Supérieur and descended into the far more entertaining, a little less costly, and infinitely more comfortable ordinary town of Algiers. And, although it is Bank Holiday and there is half a gale blowing and the washing has not come home as promised, I hereby humbly apologize to Algiers for mistaking it for its suburb.

It is as though one new to the Metropolitan area were to condemn the Haymarket on the strength of knowing Highgate.

Perhaps my bedroom has something to do with my sudden conversion. It consists of one large bedroom, one larger bathroom (with every imagin-

able kind of beautiful tap, all clearly labelled and all working), and one roof, flat, which is twice as big as the lot put together. On this roof are tables and chairs, and on these and on me the sun shines every day till after three o'clock, when, owing to the mistaken situation of the city or the hills behind it, it conceals itself.

I have never been so comfortably lodged before. To be in a self-contained flat on a roof overlooking the bay, with the whole life of the harbour under your eye, above the noises and above the dust; to be waked by the sun hitting you in the face in the morning, and to roll in his glorious warmth for the next nine hours; to descend, when so disposed, to eat in the best restaurant in the town—oh yes, I was certainly unjust to Algiers.

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I am seeing it again under the worst conditions—at holiday time. All the shops have been shut for three days and will reluctantly and only partially re-open to-morrow. Yet I find the streets gay and pleasant to walk in, the shops attractively disposed, the people merry and of a sunny disposition. It was warm when I arrived on Good Friday, and it is, as I said, always warm in my flat, but the north-east wind has sprung up and I'm afraid it is spoiling the people's holiday a little. It has a searching nip which reminds one of January rather than the end of March.

Still, most people smile, even in their upturned coat-collars.

* * * * *

While Imshi is being lovingly washed and having the more furiously rattling and flapping bits of her tightened up in one of the best-conducted garages I have ever been in, I have sat on my roof or on the sea wall behind the Rear-Admiral's house (a beflowered sun-trap) and considered very seriously the following problem: Is a two-seater a trans-continental car for a maximum of two persons or is it not?

At present I think it is not. When I left Algiers three weeks ago for Tunis, I left two-thirds of my kit behind me. Now I have picked it up and—I have serious doubts about two-seaters on trips lasting several months. There is extraordinarily little room for extras in any two-seater, to say nothing of one weighing 16 cwt.

Two people, on such a trip as mine, cannot reasonably do with less than a good-sized suit-case each, and a large waterproof sack, in which unwanted coat-linings and shoes and maps and things are kept, between them.

There must be carried as well, in Africa, a certain weight and bulk of spare parts; two, if not three, spare wheels; one, but better two, 4-gallon tins for spare petrol and another for oil; and room must be found for roadside meals.

Furthermore, one must always be able to carry two extra tins of petrol (they hold about 3¾ gallons each) strapped on the running boards. It is not wise to go, say, from Meknes to Tlemçen (about 340 miles) without enough and more to see you through. There are periods, sometimes of two or three days, when you may be completely marooned for want of petrol.

Then you have already tool-boxes and perhaps acetylene generators, which encumber the running boards. Remains remarkably little room for anyone.

Except for a brief three weeks or so I have been alone on this delightful adventure, and so I have been able to fill the seat beside me with bags and inner tubes, and the space where my companion's legs would otherwise have gone with petrol and oil tins. But if you are to be two, I really believe it is better to have a light four-seated car.

The back seats are used for luggage and the back floor-boards for petrol tins, and one can always throw oddments "into the back" at the last moment. With a waterproof cover to go over the whole, the back seat of a four-seater is the best luggage grid.

But you must make up for the loss of the lock-up two-seater tail, in which you keep your spares, and the only way you can do that is to have big, stout metal boxes on the running boards, and your running boards are already fairly congested with tool-boxes and generators or accumulators. Besides, where are you going to carry your spare wheels, which, in a two-seater, are slung at the back?

* * * * *

It is really a serious question, and with the pile of gear lying before me as I write this, I find it more serious every moment. You may and do lose quantities of things on a trip like this, but you need not deceive yourself that you are thereby eased of impedimenta. You pick up and buy and bring away twice as much as you lose. When I think how nearly I light-heartedly bought a carpet (a *carpet*!) in Kairuan,

and gaze at two-seated Imshi, thronged with petrol-tins and suit-cases and sacks, with one door permanently shut and the other threatened, I come to this decision: for one person, a two-seater can be made to do. For two, nothing smaller than a four-seater.

Perhaps I am wrong. I am sure that the next time Imshi is flitting up a long hill at 30 miles an hour, in that engaging way she has, I shall reject with horror the idea of piling more weight on her. Still, I confess I have very often kicked myself for not getting a four-seated Imshi while I was about it.

Of course, when I got her, fifteen months ago, I had no idea that she and I would spend months at a time wandering about Europe and Africa. Still, I think I would recommend to my fellow light-car owners a small four-seater when it is a question of mountains and deserts and other unfashionable regions, for more than a month.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE BEST ROADSIDE INN OF ALL

TÉNÈS, ALGERIA.

IMSHI and I have to-day tumbled upon perhaps the nicest of all the halting-places in all our African wanderings. We are on our way west again to Morocco and lending, for once, an ear to the stories of roads good and bad, beautiful and dull, with which Algerian motordom rings daily; we left Algiers by the far-famed coast-road to Ténès by Cherchel.

It is perfectly abominable for the first 20 miles, as are all the roads round Algiers, but after that it is excellent, and there is no doubt about the beauty of the sea-road. It is not wild, like the road from Djidjelli to Bougie, but it gives you a succession of extremely pleasant prospects—rather like the south coast of Devonshire, all red rocks and little bays with deep, dark blue water, pine trees, oaks, olives, and miles and miles of daffodils and wild flowers. It is a peaceful little road, a road on which to linger with lunch baskets and cameras.

I had telegraphed for a room at the Hôtel Transatlantique, and when I got to the fringe of the village I saw a large sign on a tree "Transatlantique Camp-

ing," with an arrow pointing away to the little fir-wood.

That is the hotel, and it is perfectly charming. In this spinney, which runs down to the beach, the company have set up a wooden bungalow, which serves as a dining-room, and a score or more of tents. My tent was No. 12, and a piece of paper had already been nailed to the pine tree in front of it, with my name and number.

They are tents of the first order, these, and I could quote you half a dozen "de luxe" hotels where I have lain in far less comfort, peace and quietness. Each has a raised brick flooring, about 3 ft. above the ground, and is divided into bedroom (with two beds) and dressing-room.

There is electric light laid on, but, like so many things in North Africa, the light itself will be, as madame in the bungalow said, "For next year."

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Beyond the bungalow is a little garden, a perfect riot of irises under the firs and pines. There are no chairs, only hammocks. You choose a likely-looking hammock and watch the sea over the nodding heads of the irises, while the wind makes that delightful sleepy noise it can only manage with firs and pines. Isidore de Lara wrote a once-famous song called the "Garden of Sleep," which he is said to have composed in a field of poppies in Norfolk. He had much better have come to Ténès.

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When I had put Imshi to bed in her own tent (a magnificent marquee, proudly labelled "garage")

A Corner of Kairuan.

The perfect Motor Inn: The Camp at Tenes amid trees and wild flowers.

and had slept sufficiently among the irises, I went in to dinner in the wooden shed. This is what we had, in our camp:

Crême Marie Stuart.
Mérot de Rocher, poché, sauce hollandaise.
Pommes nature.
Jambon braisé aux épinards, sauce madère.
Haricots verts au beurre.
Gigot d'agneau rôti.
Salade.
Bavarois vanille.
Fromages.
Fruits.
Café.

That's what comes of roughing it under canvas.

I am writing this, extremely full-fed, in my tent, with no noises round save those of the breakers on the beach, the wind in the trees overhead, and, alas! the rattle of rain on my green roof. Still, it is so delightful to be sitting among the trees, with the tent-flaps hooked back, and to smell the smell of green things, and sea, and freshness, and, above all, to hear no noise, that, rain or no rain, I promote my Ténès tent to the Order of the First Class Motoring Inns.

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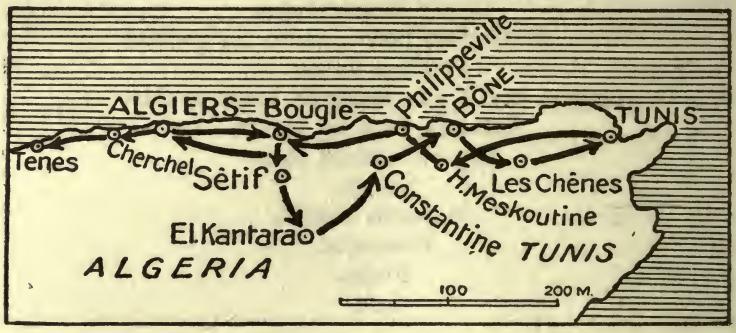
I made a friend to-day on the road from Cherchel. His name is Mohamed, as he pointed out several times, and, at the time of our introduction, he was sitting on the roof of the family tent. He wore, with tasteful absence of ostentation, his father's fez; but, in view, no doubt, of either the warm spring day or the passing need for economy these hard times, nothing else.

He was about three years old, and why they let him sit on the top of a tent I cannot imagine. He cheered like anything when he saw Imshi coming



MR. PRIOLEAU'S ROUTE IN ALGERIA AND TUNIS.

along, and yelled "Ana Mohamed! Ana Mohamed!" "I am Mohamed! Mohamed am I?"

I said, "All right, it's nothing to write home about. I know somebody else called Mohamed. So there." He grinned all over his fat, little person and continued his litany. I took a snapshot of him, but that was the end of the conversation. The sight of the camera threw him into convulsions, and his yells were so piercing that I left hurriedly, fearing an attack *en masse* by the family.

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Now that I am getting near the end of my Algerian journey I am getting gloomy again. I hate "going away." I am delighted at the prospect of getting back into Morocco, but I shall miss these splendid mountains with their glowing colours. Imshi and I have covered just about 3,000 kilometres in Algeria and about 1,000 in Tunisia in thirty-five days, and although the

rain has been rather a trial, the whole journey has been a real delight.

It is all quite different from Morocco in every way. Algeria and Tunisia are full of ancient, established civilization, while Morocco is full of possibilities of every sort of adventures. There are plenty of adventures awaiting the motorist in Algeria, but they are more of a European kind, the sort you might meet with in France and Italy.

Judging by my own experience this year and by what all sorts of knowledgeable people have told me, I should say that the best time to bring a car here is in or after April. During February and March it rains a great deal, and rain is a deadly thing in a mountainous land. Also, to be perfectly frank, it is pretty cold.

I do not know who started the fable that Algeria has a good winter climate, but I can tell you his Biblical alias. Since I left Morocco I have worn more and thicker clothes than I have ever done in England in winter—and I am, unfortunately for me, an extremely chilly body. Let those motorists who come here before early summer bring their warmest clothes and, except in a very few exceptionally sheltered spots, be prepared for much lower temperatures and much wetter weather than they will find on the French Riviera, for example.

Let them realize this and also the fact that the average hotel in small towns is decidedly what the guide-books call "modest"—pretty indifferent—and all will be well. It is a fascinating country for motoring, one unceasing feast of glorious scenery,

and, except in the plains, the roads are excellent.

Do not expect the Riviera, with its comforts. You will find infinitely finer scenery and enough of it to keep you busy driving for a couple of months without going to the same places twice. That is, I think, better than " Palace " hotels !

Also, you will find excellent garages almost everywhere.

CHAPTER XXIX

BACK IN MOROCCO—THE POWER OF "FIVE-IN-YOUR-EYE"—SOME WARS, AND A SAINT

TAZA, E. MOROCCO.

IT is very pleasant to be back in Morocco again —a land of smiles and good humour. After a series of adventures and misadventures I crossed the frontier at Ujda yesterday, and an hour later met a mounted patrol. A subaltern was in command and there were sixteen troopers, each leading a spare charger. It was in the heart of the most desolate part of Eastern Morocco, all wet clay and grey skies and nothing else.

Imshi and I were splashing our way once more across that deadly waste called the *piste* [track], and I was not perfectly certain that I was on the right course (nothing is easier than to miss your way and lose yourself in this region), so I asked for directions.

The officer was singing, and his men were making their own appropriate noises. So I knew I was back in Morocco. He smiled as if he had not a care in the world, told me what I wanted to know, and went on his way singing. Algeria, as a country, is much more beautiful than Morocco (except for its towns),

but people do not sing there in just that care-free way.

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It has been a most eventful drive from Ténès (Algeria), most of the events consisting of thunder-storms and punctures. The "spring storms," as they are pleased to distinguish them, broke, and five of Imshi's tyres withdrew from public life within twenty-four hours. I got desperate and decided that I would drive from Ténès to Sidi Bel Abbes in one stage—306 kilometres (190 miles). Life was very variegated. I did it and paid for my presumption by having to lodge in the worst and dirtiest hotel in Africa. Avoid it.

I am not quite sure that St. Christopher is going to allow "Five-in-your-Eye" to stay on Imshi's dash. Since this sort of Arab *monkey's paw* ("Five-in-your-Eye" looks like that) has taken its place next to my old and beloved medallion, the luck has gone. I am not complaining (St. Christopher knows I'm not such a fool as to do that), but the last two days have consisted of a dreary round of punctures, bursts, buying of new and unsuitable tyres, waterspouts, unmentionable road surface, and, finally, the complete destruction of my wind-screen.

This is really a trial, but it might have been a good deal worse. The road between Ujda and Guercif had subsided under the week-long torrents of rain, and half a dozen hay-carts, with ten mules each, had been held up all day in front of a chasm in the road, which was being roughly stopped, as you stop a tooth, with sacks full of stones.

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I stopped Imshi a few yards behind the last one and stared angrily at "Five-in-your-Eye." "This is your fault," I snapped at it. "You monkey's paw, you! I shall take you off and give you to a mule to eat."

"Will you?" said "Five-in-your-Eye." And at that moment the mules harnessed to the cart in front of me backed suddenly—and a hay-bale reduced the wind-screen to smithereens. I was bathed in broken glass from my hat to my shoes, which were full of it. Of my excellent wind-screen there was absolutely nothing left but the frame, and the floor-boards of the car looked as if Suffragettes (pre-war) had floated by.

I now freeze when the wind is ahead, and all my December clothes have been dug out of their lairs. I have had two more punctures, a choked petrol-pipe (this in the very middle of the sloppiest part of the *piste*, east of Guercif), a broken running-board stay, and Imshi has developed an early morning reluctance to keep going which is quite new.

Only one more annoyance, and, before St. Christopher's very eyes, I tear "Five-in-your-Eye" off the dash and give him to a mule. I hate mules.

Meantime, I have evolved a wind-screen out of a gaily coloured oilcloth table-cover which I bought in the Other Shop at Taza. There are only two: one is the Shop, the other is the Other Shop. It has a placard which says "Nouveautés," and you can buy Paris frocks in it, as well as oilcloth and mattresses and balls of pink string.

Imshi is not looking her best.

Never mind. "Five-in-your-Eye" may be innocent, and anyhow it is splendid to be back in Morocco, in spite of it all.

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I found the non-recommended inn at Guercif excellent, by the way. I had a very clean, little brick-and-plaster room, and Imshi was, so to speak, tethered to the doorpost—which is what I like. The window was glazed with oiled paper, glass being rare and expensive in the *piste* country.

When I arrived the household was engaged in buying firewood, and all the firewood merchants and all their wives, and all their sons, and all their daughters, to say nothing of all their friends with *their* belongings, were comfortably camped round the house. So that no man could go either in or out. And there was a very considerable noise.

The son of the proprietor armed himself with a terrific stock-whip and, so far as I could see, laid about him properly. "Out of the way, dogs! Take your loathsome wood and selves hence. Fissa! Seer!"

If possible, the noise was slightly increased, but as everybody smiled in Morocco fashion, and all lent a hand to clear a way for Imshi, I suppose the stock-whip was a "prop" and innocuous. But it was most impressive.

They went on buying wood for hours, and when they had bought it the sellers carried it past my paper window for endless ages, and stacked it in the most unexpected places in the yard—on the tin roofs, for instance, and round the well, so that nobody could get any water.

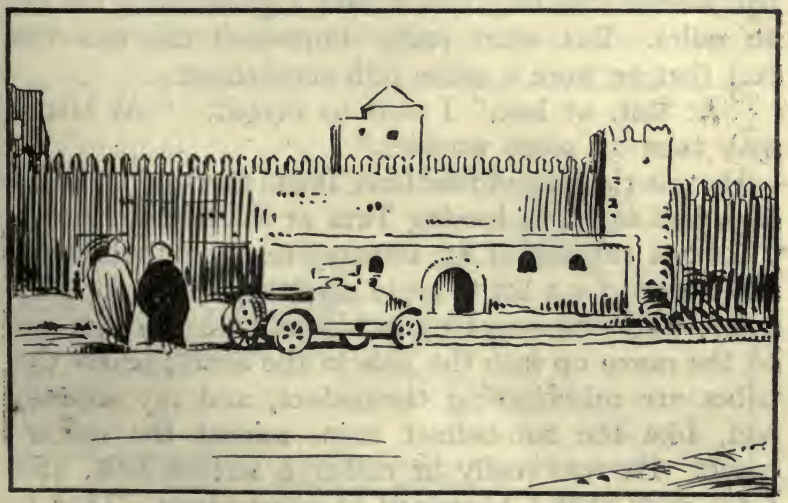
Imshi and the Chassis of a Predecessor.

Part of the Road between Meknes and Knitra. It was impossible to drive on either the left or the right on account of the foot-high ridge. Imshi staggered, in double tight-rope fashion, in the middle.

Eventually the stock-whip came out again, this time amid cheers, and everybody went to bed, smiling. I *do* like Morocco.

At seven o'clock I was invited to pass into the "restaurant" for dinner. It was a perfectly good restaurant and differed from any other I have seen in having a ceiling made of bamboo sticks.

Next morning they cleared away the wood round the well, lowered a bucket, and filled Imshi's radiator for me. The son of the house climbed on to the roof (a giddy height of about 9 ft.) to look at the weather, pronounced it good, and saw me off the premises with every punctilio.



A GATE OF MEKNES.

MEKNES, MOROCCO.

Within twenty-four hours Imshi and I have found summer. At Taza and everywhere else before we

reached that frankly dreary spot it was bitterly cold and as often as not raining. I am sitting in my shirt sleeves at an open window, beautifully hot and tormented by flies. There is not a cloud in the bluest of blue skies, and the power of the sun (that African sun I have so long and so earnestly chased) puts all idea of sight-seeing out of the question.

On my way here from Fez this morning I picked up a local European. He may have been Portuguese, but there's no telling. He had five words of French, and as I have none of his own language, whatever it may have been, it took some time for me to reach the fact that he had lived all his life in Meknes. He had missed the daily coach, and I gave him a lift for 20 miles. But what really impressed me was the fact that he wore a white pith sun-helmet.

"At last, at last," I said to myself. "At last I may take off some woollies."

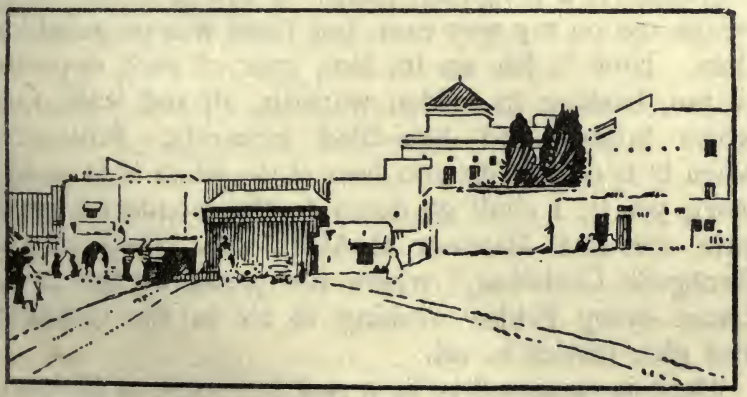
He was the second roadfarer Imshi carried. Yesterday, just as I was leaving Taza at the horrid hour of 7 a.m., a captain of an infantry regiment hailed me and begged for a lift to some mysterious spot 20 miles away, where he was to join his column. Troops are on the move up into the hills in the south, where the tribes are misbehaving themselves, and my captain had, like the sun-helmet man, missed the motor-coach. He was really in rather a serious hole, and I am very glad I happened to come along. That is what every one does in Morocco. If you miss the "train," which is the motor-omnibus, you sit by the roadside till a motor-car comes by and gives you a lift. The real train (my friend explained to me), the

steam-thing on lines, is not to be relied upon. "It sometimes gets there, if it does not run off the lines more than three times. But for the most part it does not arrive."

* * * * *

I told you in my last letter how that abominable "Five-in-your-Eye" had behaved and how I had sworn to give him to a mule on the next misfortune. He had not long to wait. Twenty miles from Fez, where I had meant to lunch, the very latest and newest of my new tyres picked up a nail an inch long. At the same instant an unavoidable heap of rocks hit the front axle and reduced the number-plate to fragments.

I got out, and as I walked round to get out a spare wheel I noticed that the offside back wheel was as



A GATE OF MEKNES.

nearly off as it is possible to be. Some wit, with a keen sense of the ridiculous, had unscrewed the holding-nuts, I suppose. I do not know. But before I even put a jack under the car I took my biggest

and fiercest screw-driver and with one twist flicked "Five-in-your-Eye" off the dashboard and into Morocco. And that's an end of that, as R. L. S. said of the blue-behinded ape.

There followed a period of tyre trouble of such agony that, when the dust of battle had died down, I fell into bed at Fez (not at Meknes) at 7.35 p.m. and knew nothing of this vale of tears for eleven hours. This morning I received a bill for vulcanizing five inner tubes and "remounting" two complete tyres. I was also told that no tyres of my dimensions are obtainable this side of Casablanca.

Question for African motorist: How many brand-new tyres, mounted on spare wheels, ought I to carry?

* * * * *

Meknes is a delightful place. I saw it about seven weeks ago on my way east, but there was no sunshine then. Now it lies on its long spur of rock opposite to me, basking in golden warmth, all red walls and white houses and blue-tiled minarets. Presently, when it is cooler (do you hear *that*—when it is *cooler*, mark you!), I shall go down to the wonderful great gate, the Bab Mansour el Aleuj, the "Gate of the Renegade Christian," where the pasha of the town comes every Friday evening to sit in the entrance and give justice to all.

There is supposed to be a real live saint at Meknes, the Moulay Ahmed el Ouazzani. He began life as a gardener and made a considerable sensation by escaping from a toolshed, into which he had been locked, leaving bolts and bars intact.

For years he lived by the wall of an old Moorish

house, without any shelter. In 1915 somebody put up a tentcloth over him and in 1917 a tomb was built in which he lives. He is said never to have touched money, which he despises, and to live entirely on alms. Lately he has had a disciple attached to him who begs for him.

All this I have been told, but the sad fact remains that I cannot find anyone who will lead me to this holy man. I do not suggest that he does not exist, but he is difficult to—shall we say?—interview. He shuns publicity.

I shall make one more effort to-morrow, on my way through the town to Rabat. Perhaps he will be visible at 8 a.m. in his tomb.

That is to say, provided all the tyres have not gone down in the night.

CHAPTER XXX

MOTORING HINTS—THE PERFECT SHOPPER—THE TRIUMPH OF A PRO-CONSUL

RABAT, MOROCCO.

IT is a hateful thing to go away and to say good-bye, and Imshi and I must do both this week. The African part of our long motor wander is practically finished, and in a few days we must take ship from Casablanca and begin the sixth chapter of our adventures.

I am looking forward immensely to this, but also looking back with great joy on the eleven weeks I have spent on the roads between Marrakesh and Kairuan. There has been every sort of motor adventure, some a trifle strenuous but most of them perfectly delightful. I do not regret one mile out of the four thousand Imshi has covered in her travels between the Atlantic and the Levant. Before leaving Africa, my fellow light-car owners at home who are thinking of bringing their cars out here for the first time may like me to condense my experiences into modest advice. It is very easy to get to and away from Morocco or any part of Algeria and from Tunis, but just how to plan a comfortable tour is not so easy,

unless you are prepared to do the whole double or single journey from Morocco to Tunisia.

On the whole, having listened to a great deal of sound advice from experienced inhabitants, I think the best scheme in motor-touring North Africa is to take it in two separate journeys, the principal reason being that the spring weeks are so very much the best in both the East and the West.

Along the whole coast the best time for motoring is between April 1 and May 15. Before then it is rather cold and you have the rains, and after that it is too hot except in the mountains, and you cannot possibly do the whole thing in six weeks.

This is how I should plan the trips, supposing that in each case you land in Africa in the first week in April:

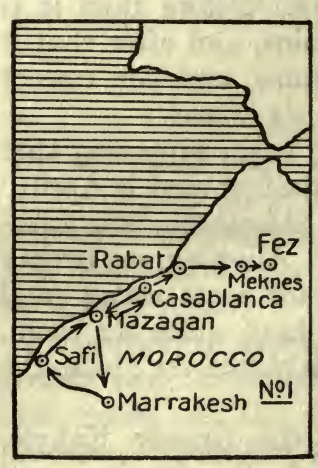
No. 1.—Casablanca, Mazagan, Marrakesh, Safi, Casablanca, Rabat, Meknes, Fez. Allowing, say twenty non-driving days all told for sight-seeing (and Marrakesh and Fez should have quite six each), this trip should end at Casablanca on about the thirtieth day.

No. 2.—Oran, Ténès, Algiers, the Grande Kabyle, Setif, El Kantara, Timgad, Constantine, and either back to Algiers by Philippeville, the sea coast to Bougie, and the Col de Tagma, or to Tunis and Kairuan, leaving Africa at either Tunis or Bône.

Of course, if you feel adventurous and have the time, then I certainly advise the whole run from one end to the other; but if you have only a month or two, then take half. The one fatal mistake in African motoring is to hurry.

To be quite candid, the drive from Fez to Tlemçen is not worth doing for its own sake. The scenery is rather dull compared with the rest, and as far as Taurirt the road is very bad. If the weather is dry and the *piste* (track) feasible, you can do the journey in three days. If it is wet, you may be ten over it.

Practically everywhere else in Africa the rain, detestable though it is, will not prevent your getting along. In East Morocco it simply puts a stop to all



road traffic, and you are forced to wait till it ceases and the sun has had a day or two to dry things.

* * * * *

Now for hotels and garages and supplies. In Casablanca, Rabat, Meknes and Fez the Transatlantique have good hotels, but except at Casablanca you cannot rely on getting accommodation in them if one of the company's motor caravans is in the neighbourhood. At Fez I recommend chauffeurless

motorists to stay in the new town at the Regina, which has a garage and where you are most excellently fed.

At Marrakesh I was well cared for at the Hôtel du Pacha in the new town.

Garages (repair shops, that is) are still in their infancy at Morocco, at any rate as regards efficiency; but I can heartily recommend two—that of Mr. Leblanc, an Englishman, at Mazagan, and that of Señor Antonio Atalaya, a Spaniard, at Casablanca. Elsewhere it is best to get hold of a local motorist unconnected with the industry and ask him to advise you where you can get repairs done.

I had forgotten to mention the also excellent establishment of Jego and Du Perroux at Rabat, which is lucky in having a most alert and intelligent French foreman who sees that things are properly done and run.

Petrol can now be got almost anywhere, but it is wise to carry a good spare supply. At one period the long-suffering Imshi carried 17 gallons, five in the tank and twelve on the running boards. When you reach a country inn, have no shame in taking your spare tins with you into your bedroom. Every one does it, and seeing that it costs anything up to 170 frs. a "case" (36 litres), it is best to remove temptation. For which reason have good padlocks on everything movable.

Tyres of all sorts can be bought at list prices in all towns.

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Finally, you must not expect inns in lonely dis-

tricts to provide you with more than bare necessities. Morocco is very young and things are only just beginning to modernize themselves. You have to rough it a little at times.

Algeria abounds in good garages, splendid roads, and moderate to poor hotels. It is wholly civilized and, except that distances between comfortable resting-places are often long and nearly always extremely hilly, you need take no more thought for the morrow than in France itself.

In Tunisia the roads in the south are superb, but in the north a good deal cut up.

In Tunis there is an excellent garage in the Avenue de Carthage, called Auto Palace, and I came across a tidy little place at Sousse, opposite the Hôtel Lavit.

To sum up, I should put the different parts of North Africa in the following order of interest to motorists :—

1. Morocco (Marrakesh to Fez).
2. East Algeria (Algiers to Constantine or Bône).
3. Tunisia (Tunis and the south).
4. West Algeria (Tlemçen to Algiers, along the coast).
5. East Morocco (Fez to Ujda).

From one end to the other is about 2,000 miles, taking in Biskra and Kairuan, but of course one can drive far more than this if Algeria is thoroughly explored.

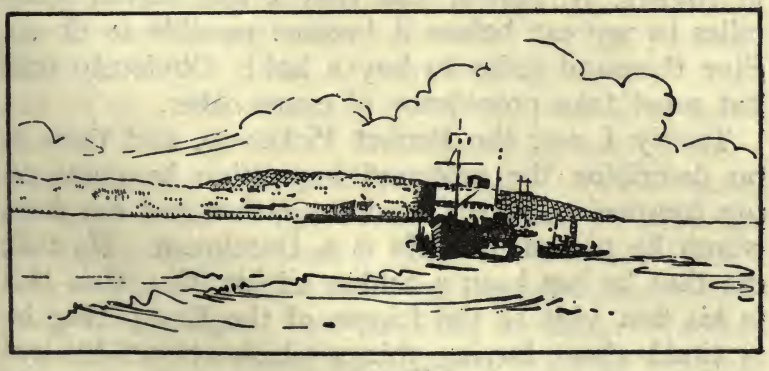
Remember that in January, February and March in Morocco it is very often as cold as in Europe, or at any rate as chilly, and that thick clothes are indispensable. In Algeria, except on the coast, it is cold everywhere up to April, and in the mountains well

after that. But no amount of cold can distract your attention from the things and the people you meet in what is one of the most splendid motor lands in the world.

The whole thing is a glorious adventure.

TANGIER.

There is no doubt that motoring gives a zest to shopping in any country, but especially out of Europe. The mere fact of having arrived at a given town by motor-car, just one halting-place out of fifty or a hundred on a long journey, seems to invest the simple act of selection and purchase with a new charm. You buy things at home in frozen calm; abroad, on a motor-tour, buying anything, from a stick of shaving soap to an alleged antique, is full of excitement. You unconsciously picture yourself displaying the fag-end of the soap to an awed friend in a few months' time and saying carelessly, "Hullo, here's the soap



TANGIER.

I bought at Timbuctoo," or telling another that the vessel containing the bitters he is adding to his pre-

dinner drink, is an old Roman tear-bottle which you picked up while you were having a tyre repaired at Syracuse. You never buy a real antique; you pick it up. Anybody can buy a thing, but to pick it up you must at least be credited with special knowledge.

Personally I must confess that I have done no picking up worth mentioning on this motor tour; all my business transactions have been buying. Yet there is no question but that the objects I have acquired by common purchase in the accepted manner have, in my eyes at any rate, an air denied to their rivals bought in London. One of my most treasured purchases is my Algerian hat. It bore, before I tore it out, the label of a distinguished London hatter, and is in every way the best kind of hat. It is true that you cannot easily find its like in the parent shop, because it has a wide brim; but that is nothing to the fact that I bought it, not in Piccadilly, W.1, but in Algiers, N. Africa, and that I had driven 5,000 miles in my car before it became possible to do so. Five thousand miles to buy a hat! Obviously that hat must take precedence of every other.

To-day I met the Perfect Picker-up, and there is no describing the profound impression he made on my companion, myself, and the father and son from whom he picked up. He is a Dutchman. He tells me that he has been a soldier all his life; that this is his first visit to the fringes of the East; that he is timid about buying things which attract his eye and appeal to his undoubted taste and knowledge of Eastern arts and crafts. He speaks the most perfect French I have ever had the fortune to hear on the lips

of any but a Frenchman; his English is sound, but not brilliant; he knows one word of Arabic, a word which helped him greatly to pick up successfully. It is the word "maboul," which means colloquially fathead.

He wanted silk, hand-made prayer rugs; he wanted them from a certain rather doubtful shop; and he wanted them cheap. He was almost ostentatiously successful. He did not bargain; he used fierce insults, caresses, jests, irrelevancies, self-pity, in one amazing, inchoate flood of verbiage. Having told the father that he was the son of a thief and given the same information to the son, he told them an anecdote which set the Birmingham brass finger-bowls ringing with the laughter of his audience. Like lightning his mood changed, and he allowed himself to admire, as if absent-mindedly, the beauty of the fabric and the quality of the texture of those rugs. At the first word from the son in praise of his own wares, the Picker-Up was off on a new line. "Yes, I know," he said, with a world of sorrow in his voice; "don't rub it in. I'm *maboul*. Every one knows it, but I cannot help it. (No, I'm dreadfully sorry, but I cannot give you £8 for that pink rug. You are going to sell it to me for £5.) Do you know what happened to me in Fez last week? Ah! You didn't know I was in Fez? Well, I was, and I bought twenty-eight carpets and rugs. Yes," nodding dolefully, "twenty-eight the *maboul* bought." Sensation among audience. "Well, after the last was bought I had a crowd of little boys following me about wherever I went, crying 'Voilà la poire! Look at the *maboul*.' It

was a terrible ordeal—I cannot run the risk again."

Then, ferociously, "Pack up the rugs, thief. Am I to wait all day? I sail for Cadiz at noon. By the way, did you ever hear . . ." and another story convulsed his opponents.

And not once did he use that worn-out dodge, the feint of departure. From the outset he made it perfectly clear that he and the rugs would leave the shop together. He was quite, quite perfect, and it is my earnest hope never to do business with him.

Imshi and I had an uneventful voyage from Casablanca to Tangier, but a wonderful piece of luck arranged matters so that I saw the return in triumph (there is no other possible expression) of Marshal Lyautey, the great French Colonial soldier who is regarded as the maker of French Morocco, from France, welcomed by all the great barons of Morocco.

It was extraordinarily dramatic. They had built a triumphal arch at the entrance to the Place de France, the main open space of Casablanca, through which the Resident-General rode with his staff. It was an impressive scene, because it was simple. A score of glittering uniforms, magnificent chargers, blazing sun, and a whole city crowding its roofs and balconies.

Then formal speeches from the civic dignitaries and the Marshal's reply, standing on a little dais in the middle of the Place. A pause, and then at a gallop through the arch poured eight hundred barons and kaids and chiefs from every corner of the Empire, with their followers, thundering past the solitary figure in the blue uniform.

Kings, Barons, Knights doing honour to Marshal Lyautey at Casablanca, April 14, 1921.

Saddles and saddle-cloths embroidered in gold and silver on every colour from deepest orange to pale primrose, from amethyst to pink, from indigo to forget-me-not, wonderful belts on glorious coloured clothes under the universal white cloaks, splendid horses, every man carrying a gun over his right arm —it was a sight to make you rub your eyes.

They shot out from under the arch in little groups of six or eight, some followed by slaves on foot, but there was scarcely twenty yards' interval between the groups, so that one looked down on a continuous torrent of glistening colour, one's ears filled with the roar of hundreds of hoofs. From the arch to the Marshal's saluting base it was a bare hundred yards, and there was hardly as much beyond to pull up in. Yet every man passed the dais at a hand gallop.

Not every man. There were barons from the bleak, hungry hills in the east and the south who had no gorgeous trappings, no silky-coated horses. One of the last groups and one of the most impressive counted two old men and a slave, dressed in tattered rags. They had, I think, an old musket, and they passed the saluting base at a footpace—for they rode tiny donkeys.

Yet they were great lords, rulers of men in a hard land where life has no sort of embroidery. They were barons of Morocco, and whether they greeted their Viceroy on half-starved donkeys or on the finest thoroughbred in Africa, whether they wore crimson silk or patched cotton rags, they were of the company of kings.

In the afternoon there was a Powder Play, in which

all the great men took part. I was in despair, because I could only see it from the deck of a steamer which was taking me to Europe; but even so, it was a fine thing. Hundreds and thousands of white burnoused figures in a solid mass. Through the middle a narrow lane, down which every half-minute there galloped twenty Moorish knights abreast.

I could see them thunder past, their guns go up, a bursting cloud of smoke, and then, in an unbelievably short distance, the dead stop. Then the noise of the guns drifted over the water to one's ears.

CHAPTER XXXI

FROM TANGIER TO CADIZ

HAVING once more driven the length and breadth of this most desirable land of Morocco, and being on the point of leaving it, I am once more tormented by the vain desire to set down in words its attraction, once more hopelessly beaten before I can make any sort of beginning. Where lies the extraordinary charm of Morocco? In its wonderful cities? Yes, of course, to a certain extent; but they are the capitals of little realms in themselves, and differ the one from the other as does Exeter from Aberdeen. Of none of them can you say, "This is real Morocco"—but you must say it of them all.

Does it lie in the infinite variety of town and countryside? Algeria's scenery is unsurpassed in diversified beauty, but her towns are, with the exception of Constantine, negligible. I do not mean that they are not pleasant in themselves; Orléanville, for example, and Bougie are distinctly pleasant little places, but neither they nor any of the others of North Algeria bear any relation to the country. You could transplant them to France, just as they are, and be at no expense to make them fit into their

surroundings. They are just small provincial towns, rather poor in the goods of this world, not very tidy, dull. They have no character, or rather no characteristics which single them out from the general ruck. Constantine owes its attraction wholly to its marvellous situation, perched 700 ft. on a rock like a front tooth, guarded darkly at its feet by a torrent fighting its way through a sunless gorge. The new town itself could be plumped down anywhere between Bayonne and Lille, Nantes and Mentone, without exciting remark.

For the exact opposite come to Morocco. Not one of her few but splendid cities really resembles its neighbour. Nothing could be more utterly different than the four Makhzen, the Imperial cities, Marrakesh, Meknes, Rabat and Fez. Each is a capital—till Marshal Lyautey came to build order out of chaos, a capital of a State generally at war. In very little do Safi, Mogador, and Mazagan resemble each other. Azemmour is a dream-city, remote, apart, an old picture, a fragment of the sixteenth century which has been overlooked by the invading armies of Time and is still left untouched by their passage.

Yet, although these eight comprise practically all the cities of real Morocco (I do not count international Casablanca and Tangier, nor Taza, nor Ujda), and the gaps between them are often pretty big, you have only to come here in a motor-car to realize that the word Morocco means more to you than the delicate grace of Azemmour, the awe of mighty Fez. In comparison with Algeria the countryside is monotonous; in reality it is full of charm and novelty. Except in the far south, at the foot of the Atlas, it is not

exciting, but it is never dull. Fez sits, like Rome, on and among hills; but, luckier than Rome, her hills are a feast of glorious green, olive groves and orchards, gardens, woods, tumbling streams rioting over their slopes in splendour. Meknes, only thirty-eight miles away, lies on a narrow spur of rock in the bed of a green valley, like a ship in the trough of a sea. Rabat has green hills, a winding river, red cliffs, and the breakers of the Atlantic; Marrakesh a forest of palms, rich plains, and the Atlas Mountains; Mazagan, Safi, Azemmour and Mogador the sounding beaches and the flower-carpeted downs behind.

The attraction of this patch of Africa is very strong. Merely to catalogue its beauties, dryly and in crude fashion to set each in order, fit for translation to a shilling guide-book, makes one realize that Morocco takes equal place with those countries which cannot be visited once only. The waters of the Nile are not more powerful in their call than the hills and cities of Morocco, and, like he who drinks those, the wanderer to Fez and Marrakesh must return to be re-enchanted.

CADIZ.

Imshi and I have been through some fairly violent changes of local atmosphere and colour during the last week. From the glittering splendour of the Moorish Powder Play by the Barbary Knights and Barons at Casablanca, in honour of Marshal Lyautey, we passed over-sea to Gibraltar, an outpost of Empire, a Spanish town with a dash of Devonport and Aldershot.

It seems odd that after her variegated life of 18,000

odd miles in England, Scotland, Wales, France, Italy, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, Imshi should find her most strenuous mountaineering here. I had always regarded Gibraltar as a kind of motoring station, a place whence you started for somewhere else. It never dawned on me that one could drive a car above the town. I have now done it, and I hope never to do it again. Somebody said I ought to drive up to Europa Point, and I set out lightheartedly to explore the Rock. Getting to Europa Point was fairly simple and the gradients only called for first speed half a dozen times. It was when I saw what appeared to be a fine road running level along the face of the Rock just above me that the real thing began.

I asked a passing soldier if and how I could get "up there."

"Any of these roads will take you," said he. "Bit of a hill, there is."

There was. After a deceptive half-mile of level, tree-shaded road, I turned up a place called Willis Road. While it still ran between houses, this absurd ladder, Imshi had to take to bottom speed and quite a generous throttle. Then it got steeper. And then steeper. And then came double hairpin bends of such acuteness that it was touch and go whether I could get round them.

Had I wished to give it up and turn back it would have been impossible, as the road is scarcely 10 ft. wide. The sea dropped lower and lower, the ships shrank to chips of wood, Morocco grew bigger and bigger across the Straits, which dwindled to a river—or so it seemed to our frankly horrified eyes.

And then it got much steeper. It was really rather a horrible sensation, a kind of fly-on-the-wall feeling —a fly with greasy feet.

"What's going to happen?" asked my companion rather faintly.

"I don't know," I snapped back.

Imshi was behaving superbly and climbing furiously, but by this time the throttle was wide open, and her driving wheels slipped now and then.

And still the infernal precipice went on, eternally on, the track looking absolutely perpendicular in front of the bonnet. Then one last hair-raising bend (I dare not guess at the gradient on the corner—it was fantastic), and we arrived at the end, a blessedly flat place, where the road stops and where one can turn round.

Here we left Imshi and scrambled up the path to the famous galleries. They are, of course, extraordinarily interesting, but I'm afraid I could not keep my attention on the accomplished marvels of the eighteenth-century R.E. Every time I looked out of a casemate in the face of the Rock I looked down 1,000 ft., sheer to the sea or the town. And I thought of the drive back down that Jacob's Ladder. Had I "cold feet"? I had. The coldest ever known.

But of course we got down all right. I suppose our average speed was about a mile an hour or a shade over, but the brakes did not catch fire, they held the car and nobody was the worse for it. By mutual consent I drove so that not more than 2 in. separated the edge of the front wing from the stone parapet.

Now that Imshi and I are down at comfortable

sea-level again, I can look back on these events with increasing calm. But you may fill St. George's Hall, where the big guns are, to the roof with all I want, yet except on foot, I will not even dream of going near it.

From Gibraltar we went to the Reina Cristina Hotel at Algeciras, Spain. If you forget Algeciras (an easy feat) you might imagine yourself in England, at any of the gilded hotels which shelter the rich week-ender; at Hindhead, for example, or Crowborough. Indoors you are very nearly, if not quite, in Surrey or Sussex or Hampshire. Out of doors you are in an extremely trim garden with a superb view of Gibraltar across a mile or so of blue sea. It is not England; it is certainly not Spain. Here I dallied awhile and, I think, wasted my time. If I had it to do again I should certainly drive direct from Gibraltar to Cadiz. Algeciras is one of the very few places, if not the only one, on this long journey of mine which has left no impression. Very comfortable, in some respects; very pretty; pleasantly warm; to me, at any rate, sodden of climate—and, to put it frankly, dull.

* * * * *

Yesterday I dug myself forcefully out of this hybrid establishment and Imshi out of a most excellent garage in the town, where she had lain *perdue* for four days and nights. (I had not even had the energy to go to see her.) She was in a kind of home-made hen-coop, made of soap-boxes and things, but it was hers, and hers alone, and I do not consider three pesetas

a night dear for a private lock-up, the key of which reposes in the proprietor's pocket.

Then we took the high road, and in a mile Surrey was left behind, and we were in Spain. The road to Cadiz, which is quite fair in most places, winds at first over a long, easy hill which reaches a height of about 1,000 ft., I believe. From the top you can see a good deal of Morocco, across the Strait. Somebody said he had seen the peaks of the Atlas on a clear day, but as they must be at least 300 miles away I do not accept this with much enthusiasm.

From the top the road drops down in loops and twirls to Tarifa, and thenceforward to Vejer-de-la-Frontera and Cadiz it runs through low-lying valleys, all smiling with olives and oak-trees. It was extraordinarily pleasant to be on the real road again, after the voyage from Casablanca, the agonies of watching Imshi being landed at Gibraltar in company with forty-two head of cattle (the party in their lighter looked charming), the gymnastics I did over the Rock roads, and the sheltered unreality of Algeciras.

* * * * *

I wish Bartholomew's, the map makers, would come south and make decent maps of all the glorious places I have been to. Since I embarked at Marseilles for Morocco, I have not come across one road map which was worth the paper it was printed on. A "half-inch" contour map of Spain and North Africa would sell for almost any absurd sum. I am moved to this long-contained explosion by my first sight of Vejer-de-la-Frontera. My Taride map of Spain having drawn the road from Algeciras and Tarifa as nearly

straight and devoid of hills leaves you to suppose Vejer to be in the plains. It is not.

It is a dazzling white rock-town, not unlike Eze, on the French Riviera, perched on, clinging to a tremendous rock, rising up sheer from the banks of the River Barbante, like another Constantine. I eyed the "road" which leads to the town with caution, and, as it appears to average about one in two and to consist of loose boulders, I left Vejer unvisited. But even from below, perhaps specially from below, it is a beautiful place to look upon, a real mediæval rock fortress. And, as I said, blindingly white.

Just after leaving Vejer you get a slight shock—that is, if you are still capable of being thrilled by old tales of old wars. A signpost on your right says "Medina-Sidonia." Medina-Sidonia! That unfortunate "temporary" admiral of the Spanish Armada, thrust by Philip into a job for which he, of all living men, must have been least fitted; a clever office-man, if ever there was one, who might, as Chief of Staff in Madrid, have saved Spain from her most costly extravagance, but, as a "salt," doomed to failure. It was with a possibly ridiculous feeling of awe that, some 350 years after the poor man had paid his reckoning, I should drive pert Imshi so close to the estates of one of the most unhappy dukes who ever lived, and one of the most famous.

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And now, with enormous content, I am back in my old friend Cadiz, the Silver Dish, as the Moors called it, a glistening white patch in a huge blue bay. The warm sun shines down on its long, narrow streets,

where every window has a balcony and every balcony a mass of flowers. Spotlessly clean, smelling at every turn of the salt Atlantic, white, inexpressibly gay, Cadiz is a standing contradiction to the theory that modern Spain is sad and gloomy.

PLAZA DE MINA IN CADIZ.

All day the island city hums to the sound of men's voices, for practically no wheeled traffic is allowed in it. At night the stars look down on those splendid balconies, on the flowers, and on the high combs and black veils of the women sitting in them. And you hear more laughter and see more smiles than in any city I know. He would be an unreasonable beast who could not spend a happy life in White Cadiz of the Flowers.

Few places in the world can have had so many names given to them, so many extravagant similes applied to them as Cadiz; few can have deserved them so richly. The "Silver Cup," the "word *white* written in white ink on blue paper," "La Joyosa y Culta," the "Venice of Spain"—one cannot find fault with any of them, except perhaps, that none of them give you a real idea of the magic charm of this white island city dreaming at Spain's Land's End.

Undoubtedly the way to enter Cadiz is by motor-

car. I called it an island just now, but it is really a peninsula, although the effect is exactly that of an island. The only way in and out is by a road which is carried on an immense dyke, a sort of natural viaduct, running out a good eight kilometres from the mainland proper. So for two or three miles at least you have the Bay of Cadiz on your right and the Atlantic on your left, with the towers and spires of this most beautiful and smiling town rising out of the blue before you. I believe I have hit on the secret of Cadiz charm—it is, above all rivals, a smiling city. Houses, streets, plazas, people, all smile. The place just now is a riot of flowers, which hang out of the countless balconies like cascades, and under the noonday sun the vivid colours against the white houses make you blink.

The Venice of Spain? Yes, I think that name, too, will pass. There is quite a decided atmosphere of Venice about it, an atmosphere which is not wholly due to the blessed quiet of the streets, their narrowness, and, here and there, their likeness to the Merceria. Venice shows you unmistakably, in her darkest corners, that she is one of the few cities of the world whose history is built on the sea and by the hands of Merchant Venturers. You get exactly the same idea in Cadiz. Cadiz is obviously a place specially meant for the fitting out and seeing off of argosies, for their welcome home, for the cult of the sea, in short. The wharfs lie some way back towards the mainland, and not even the sound of a hammered rivet or a siren reaches your ears; but still, even as you walk down the charming little Calle Calomela, the Bond Street of

Cadiz, you feel the presence of ships, the tug on your heart of the great open seas.

And the ships of Cadiz go to such extraordinarily suitable places. Is not Cadiz the very port of embarkation for Mexico? Are not Cuba and Hy Brasil, Ecuador, and the Spanish Main the proper places for a Cadiz ship to make? It would not be at all the same thing if they went to New York or Cape Town, or even Buenos Aires. I dare say some do, but you need not notice them. They cannot be real Cadiz ships.

Perhaps the nicest bit of Cadiz is the Plaza de Mina, a charming tree-shaded little square, very close to the great sea wall on which the Atlantic combers hurl themselves with all the weight of the open ocean behind them. It is the most noiseless square I know in Europe, except, perhaps, in the evening, at the hour of the *paseo*, when the children play touch round the trees and their nurses flirt with the red-and-blue soldiers of the garrison on the old stone benches.

And all along the straight, narrow streets, where the flower-laden balconies almost meet over your head, you get glimpses, through great nail-studded doors, of cool marble-floored or tiled courtyards, with fountains and little galleries running round, and more and yet more flowers—the *patio*, the most Spanish as well as the most charming part of a Spanish house.

Why is Cadiz not a "popular resort?" I am, to-day, very glad that it is not so; but I cannot imagine why the great army of sun-hunters has missed it. Its climate is soft and warm, and the sun seems to keep his specially bright rays for Cadiz. The

Hôtel de Francia is an excellently-managed establishment, with a very good chef, and the shops in the Calomela and Duque de Tetuan supply everything you need. There are delightful excursions by sea for the adventurous, long days of quiet exploring for the others. You can get to it direct by train from Madrid and Seville; by sea from Tangier; by motor diligence (a good one) from Algeciras. The latter method is probably the best, as you can connect with the Gibraltar-calling liners either outwards or homewards.

CHAPTER XXXII

TIME IN SPAIN—HOW TO EAT—SEVILLE

ONLY a very short experience of motoring in the south of Spain will be enough to convince the most matter-of-fact, rule-governed person in the world that the Spaniard alone has realized the value of time, has learnt the art of "how and when" in the most important respect; he knows, as nobody else in the world does, when to eat.

Meal times in Andalusia are joys for ever: "Lunch hour, 12 to 4.30; dinner, 7 to 10," is a notice I see stuck up in my hotel. It is a silly notice, useless, misleading, and smacking of bureaucracy. You can lunch whenever you like, and dinner is a meal which seems to spring eternal from inexhaustible cooks. There must be a moment when the dishes which emerge from the kitchen cease to be lunch and become dinner, but I have not yet succeeded in identifying it.

The Spaniard is absolutely right in devoting practically twelve out of the twenty-four hours to eating. His lunches are, I think, the best and most interesting in the world, a very good second being the lunch you get in a New York club. It is only right that you

should not only have plenty of time in which to eat the delicious things set before you, but that you should be able to choose the exact, the psychological moment for eating them.

"Have some of these," says the waiter, substituting, as a slight concession to foreign prejudice, a tooth-pick for his cigarette, and waves a long list. Wonderful *hors d'œuvres* are planted thick round your table, with these glorious olives and (just now) regal radishes. Never have you tasted radishes like these, crisp, snappy, hot as fire, enormous. Then come eggs in every known form from omelettes with pimentos and potatoes and onions and tomatoes bursting through their fat, glistening sides, to plain fried and boiled. Then a fritura of fish, generally that king of small fishes, the fresh sardine, and the standing dish of rice—*Arroz* à la Sevilla, Cadiz, Hôtel de France, España, Andalusia, anything you like. There was never a pilaff in the world to compare with the daily *arroz*, a golden pile of fat rice, full of spice, pimentos, saffron, oil, and unrecognizable, but highly gratifying, fragments of birds and beasts. Rice is the most shamefully neglected luncheon dish in England where it seldom appears except as a cold slab of depression with that nastiest of national concoctions stewed prunes; or as a sort or wet blotting-paper for mopping up curry-juices.

This amazing meal concludes with cutlets or steaks or some form of meat, and the inevitable but delicious Seville oranges. With your cutlet you are given salad, but you have to be brought up to the Spanish dressing, I think, properly to appreciate it; in any

case, you must be a bold and fearless eater to grasp the beauty of Spanish salad oil. It is of an extreme potency, and has a taste quite of its own. You know the *ensalada* is on its way to you long before you see it If, as happened to me often lately, you arrive at your chosen hall at 3.30 p.m., having started driving at 7 a.m. on a cup of coffee, you order lunch with the calm certainty that every detail of it will be as excellent as if you had ordered it at 1.

Time has truly been put in his proper place in Spain. It is a thing of no account whatever, a figure of speech, a form of words, an anachronism. People work, I suppose, in big cities like Madrid and Barcelona and Bilbao (though I shall believe it when I see them doing it, and not before), but in Southern Spain there is at no hour of the day any vulgar or distasteful display of energy. I spent a couple of days last week in one of the largest towns in South Spain, and for quite half that time I was convinced that there must be a local holiday. The street and *paseo* were thronged at all hours of the day with people having nothing to do, or at all events taking immense pains not to do it. The long, slow hours drift by, and nobody does anything. The street remains packed with spectators of the passage of that fabulous monster Time.

SEVILLE, SPAIN.

Few things in life are so nice as dreams come true, very few so scarce. For me, revelling in hot, sunny, red and yellow Seville, all my hopes and dreams of Spain have come true. It is exactly what I hoped it would be like, quite different from what I feared

and what every one tells you who has only been to Spain in the dark, cold months.

They say, these depressing people, that there is no colour in Spain, that it is a land of gloomy faces, of lost hopes, of poverty, of sullen resignation. The cure for this malady is twenty-four hours in Seville at fair-time. Imshi and I arrived here, it is true, after the Feria itself was officially over, and all the gay booths and the Venetian masts and the strings of lanterns on the road in from Cadiz were being packed up till next time. But the spirit of the fair goes on just the same and, to look at the crowded streets, there seems to be no reason why it should ever stop.

There is no colour in Spain? This morning, in bland ignorance of what I was in for, I strolled gently out of my hotel and walked towards the post office, a distance of perhaps 400 yds. Before I reached its doors I had been rushed, surrounded, swamped, overpowered by a horde of Carmens, all in yellow and scarlet satin, with black lace shawls, with great back combs, with mantillas, with scarves like rainbows, with fans, with flowers behind their ears. Carmens, complete to a shoe-buckle.

It appears that Seville was holding a flag-day in aid of some deserving cause, and the flags were little blue paper flowers stuck on bent pins. These were planted in my bosom, from my collar to my waist, as the banderilla is planted in the neck of the bull in the ring. For each flower you drop a coin into the hand of the Carmen who stabs you with it. By the time I had done my business at the post office I looked like a bank of forget-me-nots. An acquaintance

suggested "A butcher's shop at Christmas," but I prefer my own simile. In any case I reached the hotel penniless and was received with mockery by the hall-porter.

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The whole place is really and truly very much like the first act of *Carmen*, except that there are no toreadors, in costume at all events, and that the men wear the great flat-brimmed Welsh-looking hat of South Spain. There is a certain amount of black in the picture. Some of the less youthful of the Carmens are dressed in black and a certain proportion of the men, but they help to throw into higher relief the dazzling mess of colour. Mess is the word; it looks like an artist's palette gone mad.

It is a pleasant city, is Seville, but I do not recommend it, at Feria-time, to anyone whose nerves are not of cast-iron. Nobody goes to bed, so far as I can see, and, so far as I can hear, everybody makes as much noise as possible all the time.

All the world and all his wives were arriving and departing when Imshi and I crawled in, a shamefaced pair, grimy with dust. Dust! I've never seen dust before in such billowing, choking clouds as live on the Spanish roads. All the way from Sherry-town (Jerez, where the Bristol cream comes from) the road itself was excellent—better than any I have met since Tunisia. But the dust lies thick on them like snow, and even a couple of peasants jogging to town on their mules will raise a cloud which hangs over the fields like smoke.

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We are no longer fit for civilized society, Imshi and I. We are, both of us, irretrievably filthy, in rags, long-haired, abominable. We arrived at the door of the Inglaterra Hotel in Seville and found a crowd of expensive, fashionable cars parked round the square, all nicely washed and brushed, all looking as if they cost even more than their owners had paid for them.

Little we cared! The haughty people who attended to us were shocked and showed it. We were filthy and laughed. For if you cannot laugh you had best not come to Seville. Laughter is, to-day, at any rate, the common coin of speech. The last time I saw Seville was in February, before the war, and I admit that there was a difference. The time to come to Seville is in late April. Winter is never so terribly obvious as in southern countries.

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Rolling gently in a motor-car round the pleasant or famous places of what the Michelin guide facetiously calls "The Countries of the Sun," one finds it a little difficult to place Seville in the list; there does not seem at first sight to be any comfortable notch in one's general impressions into which it can be fitted. For a city which apparently wears all its heart and charms on its gaudy sleeve it is not easy to classify.

You arrive for the first time, in all probability, with one of two fixed ideas about it: (*a*) That it inspired the first scene painter of Bizet's opera; that it will be all tambourines and castanets and bull fights and haughty cigarette girls; and that you had

better be jolly careful what glances of admiration you allow yourself to cast at the imperious damsels who, in the intervals of cigarette-rolling, divide their time between stabbing you with jewelled knives and dancing very stampy dances. (*b*) That it is a modern manufacturing town with a fictitious reputation for stage gallantry.

If you arrive when Seville is holding high festival during the Feria and is slightly off its balance, you may, for say the first twenty-four hours, be led to believe in the *Carmen* theory. They certainly do crackle castanets frequently; guitars render the late hours melodious; there is much gay colour, and, as in *Carmen*, nobody seems to have anything to do except look extremely picturesque and continue so to do. Nice red and yellow flags flap over your head, the sun shines in specially southern manner, the noise of Seville enjoying itself ceases neither day nor night for one single instant, there is no room in any of the hotels, and the price of everything is automatically doubled.

Then two days later, as for Macbeth, comes your fit again. You go down to the banks of the Guadalquiver and you see huge factory chimneys and smell the smells they represent. You walk in the Gran Capitan or the Sierpes and you see the most 1921 kind of banks and offices and clubs. You climb up to the top of the Giralda tower and look out over a flat, prosperous, electric-tramway'd, workaday city, with not a toreador in sight. And you say, "This city is a fraud. It is pleasant, it looks nice, and I'm glad I came. But it is, none the less, a hollow fraud.

Carmen was written in Paris and its scenery painted on faked descriptions by 'Our own correspondent.' Neither Merrimée nor Bizet was ever within 1,000 miles of it." Then you come down again (a much more disagreeable process than going up) and go back to lunch, the castanet-dagger theory completely abolished.

Ah! but wait a little. Wait till, in the cool of the evening, you wander out again afoot and lose yourself in the little by-streets and come out, surprisingly, by the great river, and steer a tortuous course for the Cathedral and sit awhile on a stone bench outside the Alcazar. Then you shall find a new Seville. It is not quite a *Carmen* Seville, not quite a Dundee one, but it is eminently a place about which operas or anything else could be written. Stroll out on to the bridge of Isabel II and look at the ocean-going steamers. In most respects they are normal vessels; they are only unusual in being moored under the shade of trees growing on the river banks, blossoms and twigs dropping on to their grimy decks. Is there any other manufacturing city in the world which has, as it were, parks for docks?

Round the terrace on which the Cathedral stands are lines of ancient pillars, here and there two of them brought so close together that only the reasonably slim can get through. There is no doubt some perfectly sound architectural reason for this, their existence and their formation, but as you sit outside this mighty church, which seems to radiate a kind of soft pink light from its stones, you feel that the only people who could give you a satisfactory

explanation are Don Juan and the Barber. As the sun sets and the big stars begin to glow these heroes become very real, and the Seville of taxi-cabs and "palace" hotels, of telephones and screaming railway engines, suddenly becomes the stuff of dreams. Confidently you sit on your bench and await the certain arrival of the entire cast of the *Marriage of Figaro*. Nobody else in the world seems real.

Seville is elusive because it is the strangest hotch-potch. It is *Don Juan* and *Figaro* at night, slightly *Carmen* by day (the women dress the part charmingly), subtly Moorish all the time. Even while you await the amative Don and the barber who probably first invented the art of forcing his customers to answer his unceasing chatter, you unconsciously expect to hear the Muezzin call the faithful to prayer from Giralda. Giralda has two sisters, almost exact copies, one at far Marrakesh, the other at Rabat, and she can hardly claim to be of infidel origin.

In fine, you simply do not know what to make of Seville. Of this only are you quite convinced—that it is a city of fairy-tales; and there are very few of those left.

CHAPTER XXXIII

A CHAPTER OF GLOOM.

MANZANARES, SPAIN.

IMSHI and I have, it appears, eaten the sweets of Spain (or most of them) in our journey through smiling, well-ordered Andalusia. We are now paying for this by having to swallow the medicine of Central Spain. It is a bitter draught.

This is a chapter of accidents, a list of sorrows, a tale of unrelieved gloom, and I only write it in the hope that other light-car owners, who do not know this part of the world, may take heed. Andalusia is delightful, New Castille may be, but Ciudad Real and its adjoining provinces is no land for little cars.

It was a glorious day of golden sunshine when we lightheartedly left Seville for Madrid, *via* Cordova and the Sierra Morena. All the country round Seville is charming, swelling green downs, not at all unlike Wiltshire, with nice olive orchards and big shady trees along the road, which itself is excellent as far as the boundaries of the province, a little beyond Ecija, and I laughed to myself for joy in it all. That was the last time I had any occasion to laugh.

At a place called La Carlotta two things happened —the road simply went to pieces and degenerated

Cordova Cathedral-Mosque.

from the first class to the twentieth; and the petrol tank, weary of bumping and crashing, sprang a very serious leak. These were only warnings of what was coming, and I pushed on into Cordova without worrying very much.

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At Cordova I dismounted the tank, and, as it was to appear later, had it very badly soldered. The sight of the empty gap where it lives moved me to dangerous energy. I had off the cylinder-head and scraped off the carbon. This is a very easy affair. It is, as always, putting things back again which causes one to repent one's rash vigour. I spoilt two gaskets (rather a serious loss), spent four solid hours trying to make the water-pipe joint watertight, and collected eleven painful wounds on my hands.

Not content with this I actually had the raw beginner's temerity gratuitously to adjust the back axle driving-pinion. I put back the tank, cleaned my wounds, patted myself on the back for a conscientious lad, and went to dinner.

The people in blue overalls who haunt garages in South Spain are baffling. You first see half a dozen youths, who crowd round and help much as the clown in a circus helps in rolling up carpets. They all smoke, especially if there is any petrol about. These you must banish. The curious thing about Spanish garages is that while nobody will offer to do the slightest thing to help you, everybody will unostentatiously perform little services unasked. You may drive your car into the garage and inadvertently stop the engine. Not a soul will offer to start it for

you: all will watch you unpack yourself and get out and do it yourself. On the other hand, in a place where this had happened three times running and I was in a simmering rage, one man hammered out the many dents in my wings, painstakingly and well, while another made a clever and skilful repair of a broken hood-stick, and a third went round the car filling all the grease-caps. All three disappeared as soon as they had finished. When you find a good Spanish mechanic you cannot find fault. But I must confess he is elusive.

The next day I left Imshi alone and saw Cordova, on foot and in peaceful laziness. It is a place which contains, for me at all events, a splendid surprise. It is, of course, the mosque-cathedral. I always heard that it was one of the architectural marvels of Europe, but one hears that about so many things that I did not expect to be much moved.

THE MOSQUE CATHEDRAL, CORDOVA.

It is simply superb, and I wonder if I dare suggest that (except at Mecca) there is no mosque this side of Jerusalem to compare with it? Imagine a pall of darkness above your head, a kind of night out of which grow hundreds and hundreds of double round arches in red and white stone, supported on one thousand columns, every single one different, made of marble and porphyry and jasper, and a score of different materials.

In the middle of this dark forest is the cathedral itself, consisting of a magnificent choir and chancel, in themselves of mighty proportions. They are beautiful—but they spoil the forest. It is as if you put a large pearl into a pattern of perfect rubies.

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Cordova I remember as the last place where I knew peace of mind. A quarter of an hour after I had started for Madrid the petrol tank repair gave way, and during the next 85 miles I made six attempts to reduce the leak with sticky tape. At La Carolina, therefore, I stayed the night and had the tank properly repaired in the workshop of an amiable lead-mine owner. I do not recommend La Carolina. It is a mining village and reminded me of La Côte St. André, where I spent Christmas night. It is very grim.

It was thrust upon me as "the best between Cordova and Madrid." It was a great deal rougher than anything I met in Morocco. Yet it was a cheerful little place. My bedroom was in what was magnificently called the annexe or "succursale"—a cottage in the next lane but two—and quantities of people helped to bring the luggage from the car into it. The same people, headed by a gentleman who, throughout the proceedings, sang loudly and without pause, accompanied me, a merry band, to the lead-mining shop. The singing gentleman, who appeared to be the knut or bean of the village, judging by his killing ways with everything we met in petticoats, suddenly betrayed a knowledge of French, not at all profound, but still workable, and forthwith decided that I was his long-lost brother.

Many hours later, when the deliberate business was over and the car ready for the road, the songster suggested that "we" should go for a drive. But I was adamant, if such an expression can be used of a person resembling boiled string, and he relapsed into disappointed song and took me, with the rest of the *cortège* (this time a good word), back to the hotel. Here I made two discoveries: the first, that he was the son of the innkeeper; the second, that he was an extremely efficient, single-handed waiter. His talents were, I regret to say, thrown away on one of the worst meals I have ever had to face.

Still hopeful, I left at seven this morning. You must know that from Cordova the road is as bad as it is possible to be, and I do not think I averaged 10 miles per hour. Between La Carolina and Valdepeñas, over the mountains and through the gorge called the Precipice of Dogs (43 miles), it is practically impassable. I really do not know how I forced Imshi through the foot-deep ruts, the banks of sand, the dry water-courses, and I would not make the attempt again for all the gold of Ophir.

Between Valdepeñas and Manzanares it is a shade better. I had ample time to examine it carefully. Two miles from Valdepeñas my ill-considered meddling with the pinion bore rich fruit. The bevel-gear ceased to revolve and with a fearful noise as of everything stripped and smashed Imshi stopped dead. She would reverse, but she would not (could not, poor child) advance.

Shaking with panic, I meddled with the pinion again, and we went forward. Ten miles farther on

we ceased to function again. The near driving-wheel, with its brake-drum and differential shaft, had freed itself of the ball-race nut and was 8 in. away from the axle-end. It took me an hour to get all straight again, and to find out why it had happened. The man at Casablanca who fitted new brake-springs had reassembled the shaft and drum without locking the nut.

While I worked an old peasant watched. At the end of an hour he said this: "Señor, do you not think the train is quicker?" and went away. I skinned my last remaining knuckle.

I have now twenty-eight wounds.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE ROUGH ROAD TO MADRID—THE EVERLASTING TERROR OF A FANATIC

MADRID.

AFTER all our piercing agonies of the last few days, Imshi and I were granted a peaceful if unexciting drive from Manzanares to Madrid. A really terrible night in the local inn intervened. Let no motorist ever be so foolish as to stay in this deplorable village. The filth is unspeakable, the conditions not to be put into print.

I believe they are not mentioned in polite society (why, I cannot imagine—there is nothing improper about their name), but I hope I shall be allowed to mention them in this letter—bugs. Not, for modesty's sake, for one moment to be confounded with fleas. Just ordinary, natural bugs. I bear the scars of four encounters. Is that enough?

I suppose I ought to have been enormously amused at the circumstances of my arrival in Manzanares and at my reception in this Black Hole of Spain. Perhaps I should have been if I had not spent over seven hours struggling, under a pretty powerful sun, with the troubles I recorded in my last letter. As it was, I was

so weary that trifles like having to unload and carry upstairs my own luggage, having to do without water either for drinking or washing purposes, because none of the five "servants" of this pigsty found these services to lie within his duties, went unnoticed. But it must have been very funny—for somebody else. The five servants were all present and correct at tipping-time next morning, but I was seized with a sudden access of short-sightedness, and I departed in a stony silence. Having had every request completely ignored and having had to cart my gear downstairs again, I saw no real reason why I should fine myself for these delights.

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Enough "grouse." I only do so as a warning to fellow-motorists. Spain is a great country, but, like every other, it has its drawbacks. And these are its country inns. They are impossible. So far as I can see they are rather worse than they were in the days of Arthur Young—and he was a philosopher.

My departure from Manzanares began badly, but it was a false alarm. For the first 5 miles there is no road at all—just sandy tracks wandering aimlessly over the plain, more or less in the direction of Madrid. Then they resolve themselves into a high road, a very bad one, but still an unmistakable thoroughfare.

After Villarta de San Juan the road leaves the province of Ciudad Real and enters that of Toledo and, as far as Tembleque, it is quite good. Tembleque is a fascinating little place with a wonderful little colonnaded square and a very old wooden gateway with two open stories on it. I have never seen any-

thing quite like it anywhere, and I raged because it was raining and I could not photograph it.

Then came La Guardia, a troglodytic mountain village. You climb up over a hump and drop down into a little valley whose sides are solid rock terraces. On and in the sides of these terraces are the "houses" of the citizens—half Irish cottage, half cave. They were all much pleased with Imshi, it seemed, and several dozen women gathered round her and fought for a place in the picture which I took of them all.

Immediately after La Guardia you drop down into another valley and then begin a long and dusty climb up on to the edge of the great central plateau of Spain, that arid, bleak, and desolate country in which Philip II chose to establish Madrid as capital of all the Spanish kingdoms. It is a dreary land, but here and there you see the windmills at which romanticists may still tilt. It was all round here that Don Quixote roamed in search of adventure. The miserable man even looked for it at Manzanares, in the Campo de Montiel.

Then, after 20 miles of suffocating dust, billowing up through the floor boards, hanging like a dry waterspout over the car, I slid parched, exhausted, filthy beyond words, into Aranjuez and ate and drank amid civilization, almost weeping with gratitude.

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Aranjuez is a sort of cross between Windsor, the Trianon and Maidenhead. It is a decayed royal village, where kings once built 100-roomed cottages for fun, where people drive in cars for luncheon to-day. If you go there do not forget the restaurant Las Delicias.

A Young Troglodyte. A Village in Old Castile where the Inhabitants are Cave-dwellers.

The Alcazar, Seville, from the Roof of the Cathedral.

It is all that its name sounds like—a charming little hutment overhanging the river, embowered in trees and flowers, where they give you an excellent luncheon, with a bottle of sound Rioja (not the red ink imitations of La Carolina and Manzanares) for eight pesetas.

In this shady retreat I subsided for an unknown number of hours. Madrid, I knew, was still 37 miles away, but I cared nothing. I was perfectly willing to spend the night in my chair at Las Delicias. I knew I should occupy it alone. The cool green river strolled by, birds sang softly, somebody played the fool with a motor-boat in the far distance, Pedro, the waiter, brought me heavenly things to drink, all iced and soothing. I slept.

On my way into Madrid I was held up no fewer than five times by the Civil Guards, each time having to produce all my papers. I don't know why this was, and, after Las Delicias, it struck me as a silly way of spending a fine evening; but they were very polite, and when I translated my Christian name for them they were delighted. In five Government records I now appear as "Juan."

The last post was more serious and I had to pay five pesetas for the privilege of entering Madrid.

It is very cheap. Never have I been so glad to see any city as this gay and beautiful Madrid. Baths; soft, *clean* sheets; bells to ring and people who answer them; carpets on which you may walk barefooted fearlessly; solid, clean comfort. Like the Frog Footman in *Alice*, I shall stay here, on and off, for days and days.

MADRID.

I have been told several lies about Madrid. The first was that Madrid is "a large, ugly town, on the rectangular plan, of no interest or beauty." The man who told me this astounding lie also reinforced it with the remark that it is "worse than Manchester."

Madrid is one of the most attractive places I have ever been to in my wanderings. It is no more rectangular than London, and it reminds one of Manchester about as much as does Venice. Both contain dwellings and canals. The Paseo del Prado, which corresponds to the Champs Élysées in Paris, is a magnificent avenue of enormous width, with rows of splendid shade trees on either side and all sorts of flowering trees in the middle. Just now it is a blazing riot of chestnuts and wisteria, with half a dozen others I cannot identify, all pink and white and mauve.

Alongside runs the Buen Retiro, a fine park, just now at its best and most fresh and springlike moment. A dazzling sun shines down on masses of fine public buildings, and on the gayest streets you will find anywhere. The Calle de San Jeronimo is officially supposed to be the Bond Street of Madrid, but I prefer the Gran Via, which may be taken as Piccadilly. It is wide, and has the luck to run up and down hill, so that you are always seeing it at a fresh angle. Here are as fine shops as you will find in any capital.

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The other lie was about the women. "Oh, the women of Madrid have no national look at all—they are dull and ugly. If you want to see the Spanish

woman at her best you must go to South America" —or somewhere else equally handy.

The women and the girls of Madrid are nothing less than ravishing, from the flapper to her silver-haired grandmother. I have never seen so many pretty women in any given city nor such a high average of beauty. It is, honestly, a rare thing to meet a girl or a woman of almost any age who does not make you exclaim, "What a beautiful face!" Until the other day it was expected of you to do so. A pretty face, with these extraordinary laughing eyes of Madrid, brought your hat off and a murmured compliment. You could say, bluntly, "What a beautiful face," or, more subtly, "May your mother be blessed."

But now, it seems, the law has forbidden this charming custom, and the beauties of Madrid must go by amid admiring silence. I wonder if they will.

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I have been spending long hours in the company of other faces as well, the endless, fathomless treasure of pictures in the galleries, and, as a natural consequence, I am in a state of collapse. I thought it would be easy to see the best ones first and then take the rest afterwards, but the miles of walls glowing with the masterpieces of the world past which you must walk in order to get at your particular painter simply make havoc of your plans. Apart from which, the galleries of the Prado are anything but conveniently arranged, and not more than two-thirds of the pictures are more than half illuminated, having their backs to the light.

But the Velasquez! I am simply drunk on Velas-

quez. All the nightmares of my drive from Cordova, all my misgivings about the one before me to San Sebastian, fade away before the living colours, the limitless power, the infinite and bewildering variety of this miracle-man. There are others near his, but Velasquez's portraits and his big pieces, in my quite uneducated view, simply kill them.

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I shall have time to go again and again to this place of treasure, for Imshi is being overhauled. She has done 19,000 miles without having her insides attended to once, and after the protests of the back axle last week I thought it wiser to give her a spring cleaning. I find that a certain small bolt in the differential gear had sheared and a good deal of destruction ensued—mercifully only to a big nut and collar, which were reduced to a handful of ugly scrap.

This handful had evidently lived in the differential casing, in company with the driving gear, for an unknown number of days or weeks, and there can be no higher testimonial to the material put into the Imshis than the fact (plain for all to see) that no damage whatever has been done. When you think that one bit got caught between the crown-wheel and pinion and, at 15 miles an hour, stopped the car as dead as if she had hit a mountain, and that nothing gave way and I drove on 130 miles, you will not wonder at my pride in Imshi. And the compliments that are showered on her by the most excellent French mechanics who are attending to her are music in my ears—though I knew it all before.

Another thing I am having done is the fitting of

new brake-linings, but after 19,000 miles I really cannot complain of this as an extravagant item. For the guidance of her makers, as well as of fellow-Imshi owners, I propose (if all ends well) to give an exact list of the repairs and replacements which have been necessary during my wanderings in Europe and Africa. This will be when I publish the name of her make.

EL ESCORIAL.

There never was such a land of violent contrasts as Spain—at any rate, for the humble two-seated motorist plodding diligently along its extremely diversified roads.

Perhaps your South American millionaire, of whom I have seen and heard quite a lot within the last week, soaring expensively through from San Sebastian to Seville in his sleeping-car—he doesn't go very much faster than Imshi, let me tell you—may find it much as other lands. He throws an unheeding glance at it from a restaurant-car window, and probably thinks he is in Italy and ponders for about three seconds on the painful lack of scenic variety. Italy or Norway; it is all one to him.

During the fat, lazy, delightful week I spent in Madrid the weather pretended to be of practically every sort except north winter. I had blazing sun, spring showers, May east winds (of a specially British blend which sent me hot-foot upstairs for a woolly), and splendid, bracing, tonic mornings when the sunshine seemed like a magic distillation of gold and the air like a pre-war champagne.

I know of no air like Madrid's best in May—except

perhaps that of New York. Breathing it in huge lungfuls you feel like Alexander—sulky because there is an insufficient supply of worlds to conquer. There is nothing you cannot do on a fine spring morning in Madrid.

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Then they came and said that Imshi was ready to take the road again. They said a great many other things besides that, but as they were all fulsome compliments on her sturdy construction and her general fitness after the last four months' trials I omit them.

At the appointed hour I took charge of an Imshi, whom I scarcely recognized. She was clean to begin with, clean even by fashionable Madrid standards. That, I knew, would wear off, and I was much more intrigued by her uncanny noiselessness. Absolutely nothing rattled; every single flapping wing and stay had been beautifully re-bolted and re-nutted and screwed up tight, and we positively skimmed up the Paseo del Prado like a "demonstration" car in Hyde Park.

This delightful state of affairs will also wear off, I know, but it is extraordinarily restful while it lasts. I am not sure that "voluntary" noises (noises that do not indicate mechanical ills) are not the most exhausting of all the trials one has to bear on a really long tour. They do not really matter—but they are simply maddening in their effect on the general nervous system. And they *all* sound like big-ends gone.

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Then we packed ourselves up once more, took the high road for the north, and found a country as differ-

ent from the south as it is possible to imagine. Really fine, well-made, well-kept roads, wide, tree-bordered, properly disciplined, led us up a long, long slope practically invisible to the eye, but perfectly perceptible by the engine. I had not gone 10 miles out of the 28 to the Escorial before I began to worry about it, but when I finally arrived at this astonishing hamlet and found that we were about 3,500 ft. above sea-level, I understood why Imshi seemed to sulk. Collarwork is a mild way of describing this drive.

The village of El Escorial is delightful, a quaint little place, gay with white chestnuts along its *paseos* and in its squares. The principal *paseo* lies beneath my window, and over the tops of its blossoming trees I can see, across 28 miles of wild rocky hillside, the trim pink and white outline of Madrid, with the road falling to it like a wind-blown ribbon over the grey hummocks. Behind me towers that gaunt and terrible Stone Prayer, offered up by Philip II, the Escorial. Palace, monastery, church, burial-place of kings, monks' cell—it terrifies your imagination. It is probably vandalism to say so, but the Escorial seems to me the most terrifying building in the world, an example of the most dreadful use to which granite has yet been put.

Unrelieved gloom, immensity without grandeur, speechless sorrow without real dignity, melancholy personified, a miracle of architecture wasted, this vast, icy celebration of death and decay looms over Spain like a curse.

Philip II, husband of Bloody Mary of England, knew how to rule, how to live like a king, how to die

like one. That a man who conceived so resplendent a venture as the Armada could have planned and built such a thing as the Escorial! Perched on a shelf of the cold, grey Guadarrama Mountains, storm-swept, a remote yet ever-present menace, it stands, a frightful sign of everlasting punishment.

If for nothing else, my ordinary, cheerful, sane, happy-go-lucky brother motorist, it is well worth while bringing your little car to Spain. The Escorial will make you realize that you were sent into this world to do your best to cheer it up. Philip II built a gigantic road-sign in everlasting, cold greystone, saying:

"This way to eternal regret."

Architects may rave over the Escorial, but the rest of us weep. There is no hope in Philip's Stone Prayer. Nothing but the chill of the grave. It is Death itself.

CHAPTER XXXV

OVER THE GUADARRAMAS TO SAN SEBASTIAN

VALLADOLID, SPAIN.

ONLY twenty-four hours separate me from an average decent English summer and the average English January.

In my last letter, written in frozen horror in the far-reaching shadow of the Escorial, I forgot to mention the important fact that it was cold—not just summer-cold, but really cold. There were four fat blankets on my bed at the excellent Reina Victoria Hotel, and I was sorry there were not six. The air had a bite in it which belongs to January and not to May.

This morning I went out at eight o'clock to wake Imshi to life, and found her, too, suffering from the change. I was sharply reminded of the dark, dank days when she and I left England on this adventure just before Christmas. The oil on the cylinder walls resembled treacle-and-glue, and I got nice and warm before I could persuade her to sit up and take notice. Yesterday morning I was happy, if moist, in the sun-bath of the Prado at Madrid. At this moment a little gentle breeze, a mere zephyr from the north-west, is going through my clothes as if they were

gauze, and the sensible citizens of Valladolid are wrapped to the eyes in heavy woollen cloaks.

One of these days I am going to draw a new and original map. It will be called "Map of Places where it is Really Warm before July." It will resemble the Bellman's chart in the "Hunting of the Snark." It will, I fear, be an absolute blank.

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I continue, in spite of a good deal of experience, to wonder why people insist upon lying about roads. It seems such a peculiarly futile, useless species of falsehood. A man I met in Madrid gave me some really excellent advice about my road north, and I have no complaints whatever to make about it. But I did venture to say, upon hearing the names Villacastin and San Rafael, "Ah, over the Guadarrama?" "No, *not* over the Guadarrama!" said he, quite indignantly.

Well, I didn't mind one way or the other. In spite of his superior knowledge I knew that a large and extensive range of mountains called the Guadarrama stretched across *all* the north-west, north and north-east roads from Madrid and that, short of shipping Imshi in an aeroplane, those mountains would have to be climbed.

Besides, who were we to object? Did not one General Napoleon, in one of his amazing flashes of personal magnetism, urge a frozen and dispirited army over these very passes? He thought that Wellington was somewhere north-west of Segovia, whereas that doubtless infuriating person was at Salamanca or well west of that, and that terrible chase over the

bitter Guadarramas was all in vain—the penalty of a mistake by the Intelligence Department which the latter in due season no doubt had ample cause to regret.

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I do not know how cold it was when Napoleon crossed the Guadarramas, but I hope for the sake of his men it was not much colder than it was this morning at the summit of the Col de Leon—5,000-odd ft. up. It was not snowing, though the horrible stuff was lying in thick patches on the slopes above me, but it was quite cold enough for it, and when Imshi and I crept shuddering into the bitter black clouds which lay on the upper reaches I expected the very worst.

Now why couldn't the man say that I had a good 14 miles of mountaineering to do? I didn't mind, as the road is super-excellent, and although the gradient is at times a good deal stiffer than on the French military roads, there was nothing to worry about. But if you do 14 miles out of 90 at an average of 12 miles an hour it is apt to spoil any calculations based on the supposition that the whole 90 are level miles.

In any case it does not matter at what hour you arrive at a good Spanish hotel. At any moment between 12 and 4 or 5 luncheon is going briskly forward; between 5 and 9 you can have almost anything served; and from 9 up to an hour I have not yet verified (being myself in bed well before 11) dinner is in process.

So I have long ceased to bother about times and hours. The only one with which I am at all concerned is that of sunset. At or before that moment Imshi

and I must be lodged for the night. That is my only object in the day's struggle.

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There is an immense difference between the country north and south of Madrid. At the risk of being heavily disbelieved I wish to put it on record that between Seville and the outskirts of Madrid—350 miles—I saw one touring car and one lorry. I mentioned this to a member of the committee of the Spanish R.A.C., and he did not appear to be so much surprised at that as at my daring to persuade him that Imshi had actually traversed the Cordova-Valdepeñas-Manzanares road. He said it was quite impossible and that if I had done it, it was a miracle, and that was an end of it.

This side of Madrid there are plenty of cars, though I had the chilly Guadarramas to myself this morning. Anyhow, one often sees the cheerful sign "Gasolina y Aceite" ("Petrol and Oil") in villages, the roads are real ones and not river-beds, and there is a very pleasant feeling that you are not a pioneer. Being a pioneer has its good points, but when it is a question of essentials like petrol and oil its drawbacks become prominent.

The country north of the Guadarramas is much nicer. It is pretty bleak, and there is a plentiful supply of green moss-covered rocks; but there are colour and form about it, whereas the country between Valdepeñas and Aranjuez is really too dreary to pass muster.

BURGOS, SPAIN.

People have a way of talking about this extremely

mixed-up country as "Old Spain." They speak of it as if it were still in the sixteenth century and likely to remain in that picturesque epoch.

While Imshi and I were in the far south (it seems incredibly far away to-day and our visit there incredibly distant), I could not understand this point of view. Andalusia is old, of course, but so is London. You do not deliberately talk of "Old London" when you are walking down St. James's Street—at least, not in the same sense. Now that we have come north into Castile and other ancient kingdoms I begin to see the reason. Appropriately enough, from my present point of view, the first thing which pushed the clock back a few hundred years was a milestone. Nearly all the way from a little south of Madrid to Burgos there stands, roughly, every 3 miles a tall obelisk by the roadside with the distance to the next town carved in leagues. I do not remember seeing this anywhere else in my European wanderings.

As often as not, the figures are Roman, and they make a delightful contrast with the fat, white kilometre stones which have since been put up by a modern Government.

It has been a very pleasant and peaceful drive from Valladolid, over really excellent roads. The country is still very bleak and forbidding, but the golden sunshine makes even the grey and barren hillsides smile. And then there were the bridges. I am one of those lucky people who love bridges of all sorts, whom a fine old stone viaduct will cheer up for hours on end. There are two which filled me with joy—one at Torquemada, long, straggling, wending

its anything but straight way over the Arlanzon, and the other at Cabezon. They fitted in very well with the league-stones.

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Burgos is, to be frank, rather a depressing and depressed-looking town, huddled round its cathedral. Its weather-reputation is the worst in the world. "Nine months of winter," say the Spaniards, "and three months of inferno." In Spanish this little saying goes neatly: "Nueve mesas de invernio, tres de infernio." I can well believe it. My own idea of the inferno being a place where it is always cold, I could rewrite the line and make it twelve *de infernio*.

Snow falls here at the end of June. It was not falling the other day, but there was a shiver in the wind on the shady side of the street which said very plainly that we are a long way from July.

The cathedral is a glowing jewel of Gothic work, spoilt here and there by tawdriness, rather rambling and incoherent (like Seville, if I may venture the vandalism), but redeemed for ever by its superb lantern. In spite of the poor, modern, Munich-made stained glass which has taken the place of nearly all the old stuff (destroyed about 100 years ago), this wonderful climax to one of the world's architectural treasures lifts the whole building on to a plane of its own. There is nothing like the lantern of Burgos.

All sorts of exciting things happened in this terribly cold town, from the birth of the Cid to its siege, five times in less than two years, by Wellington. The Cid, known since the days of his ruthless and treacherous if brave record, in the eleventh century as the

hero of Spain, is buried in Burgos, his historic remains having at one time (for no apparent or sensible reason) been sent on a tour to Germany.

That is one mystery about him; the other is, to my mind, why people insist upon pronouncing him Kid and not Sid. Cid is simply a form of Sidi, the Arabic for lord, or, nowadays, plain mister.

Another person, renowned in equally misty days, is buried in Burgos—Eleanor, queen of Alfonso VIII and daughter of that monster of depravity, intelligence, ability and success, Henry II of England. Here, too, Edward I of England was knighted by Alfonso the Learned—a quaint conceit, to my ribald ideas. An anointed King of England being dubbed knight, possibly one of a crowd of candidates, by a lesser than he whose nickname in all probability originally ran "Alfonso the Prig."

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Yes, I see why people talk of "Old Spain." It is because of the extraordinary absence of anything tangible to remind you of the times between, say, Isabella and Ferdinand and Wellington—which is to-day. At first sight a Spanish town (outside Andalusia) is rather a shock. There is the "old"—a cathedral or a castle or both—and round their feet struggles a heterogeneous mass of eighteenth-century hovels and twentieth-century cafés. There is seldom a visible link between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries. Links exist, of course, and the good guidebooks will tell you how to find them. But they do not show themselves as they do in other parts of the world.

And in this connection let me offer a useful warning to motorists in Spain. When you enter a town of any size, from a horrible hamlet like La Carolina or Manzanares (of accursed memory) to a place like Seville or Burgos, hire a small boy to stand on the step and show you the way. Some Spanish towns, notably Seville, Valladolid, and, above all, Cordova, are simply maddening mazes to find your way out of or into, and the coppers you bestow on the pilot are very well spent.

SAN SEBASTIAN.

Not the least picturesque and interesting institution in romantic Spain is the official, uniformed, Governmental brigand. The motorist on the highway from north to south is held up, I should imagine, far more frequently in 1921 than was his grandfather in 1821. These are no "Don Q.'s" who waylay him; he and his car are not seized and borne swiftly, after a useless struggle, into a mountain fastness, whence he is invited to dispatch urgent letters to rich relatives advising them, under pain of receiving by registered post an ear or a thumb, lately the property of the writer, to hand £10,000 to "a man carrying a bunch of violets."

The modern brigand is generally a most resplendent person in a cocked hat, a very smart uniform, wearing sometimes a sword, always carrying a rifle; the other fellow wears any old thing. He is turned out simply anyhow, and his only marks of distinction are a vast sombrero and a heavy black cloak. Then his methods are crude and theatrical and his organization often very poor. His staff may plan a desperate coup, which

may fail and, in its collapse, drag him and his entourage to jail—possibly, if people are careless, to the cemetery. The desperado in the shiny cocked hat never fails, and the only person upon whom the shadow of the prison-gates may fall is yourself. If you put up any sort of resistance or rashly decide upon flight your fate, if not so expensive, may not be unlike that of Don Q.'s victims. You will certainly be boarded and lodged free for some time to come.

Two or more of these brigands are ambushed in a species of rustic police-station on the boundary of every province, and you fall into their hands with the helplessness of any tenderfoot. Their official position is that of tax-collector, and their duties are to mulct the motorist in odd sums varying from two to five pesetas for the privilege of entering the erstwhile kingdoms of Castile, Leon, Navarre, and so on. To display an International Driving Licence, a special permit to drive your particular car into every corner of Spain, or the receipt for the sums deposited with the Spanish Government for these things, is quite useless.

"Yes, Señor," said one charming robber yesterday, in reply to my protests. "I see, as you say, that you have paid for the right to import your car into and drive it in Spain. But I read nothing in all this about the province of Leon. It will be two pesetas, I shall also require to see your passport and all your papers."

A little farther on I unconsciously left the province of Leon and entered another. Out dashed a black-avised old lady with an enormous red flag and, stand-

ing in front of my car like a toreador, with both arms stretched out to arrest my flight, screeched piercingly for her male conspirators who were lunching in a cottage. This time I said one word only, "Cuanto?" Like a shot the largest brigand (who had on a sort of cap of Liberty made of scarlet wool) replied "Five pesetas," and held out his hand. I handed him the ransom, which dropped, perhaps temporarily, into his trousers pocket. That was the beginning and the end of the business.

Never speak slightingly of motor mascots! As from to-day I solemnly declare that I owe allegiance to one and one only, the unique and priceless St. Christopher. All others have feet of clay and are full of unknown perils.

You may remember an abominable piece of witchcraft I put on my dashboard in Algeria—"Five-in-your-Eye"—and the calamities which followed its fatal entry into the family. It began with smashed windscreens and tyre troubles, went on with brake failures, continued with carburettor nightmares, proceeded with destroyed hoods, kept things going with loose back wheels and afflicted rear-axles. The tale of disaster swelled to incredible proportions till, in Madrid, I paid skilled men, four in number, to take most of Imshi to pieces and strive to eradicate the trouble, to exorcise the malignant spirit.

I thought they had succeeded, when I left for the Escorial, and although my child was not going very well on the next day over the Guadarramas, I put it down, like a fool with a new car, to fancy. It is *never* fancy. Anybody who drives the same car for

long stretches knows at once if anything is wrong, just as he knows whether a headache or any other of his own bodily breakdowns is imagination or not.

I know now what it was that made Imshi suddenly lose power near the tops of hills and knock in a way which made me ill. It was a thing which happens once in a blue moon, and no fault of hers or her maker's —an intermittent short-circuit in the magneto. It is, as you know, a very rare event. But "Five-in-your-Eye" thought of it all right. "Five-in-your-Eye" hoped to land me in a horrible mess in the mountains of Navarre, between Burgos and this Spanish Ilfracombe; but the little brute reckoned without St. Christopher, and I managed to reach San Sebastian.

The manner of our arrival was painful to me, in so far as I had enough energy to care, and very diverting to the good citizens. After a perfectly beautiful drive through the hills of Navarre, over the absolutely best road I've driven over since the war, I came down to a village near Tolosa. Full of fussy solicitude, I stopped at the village bicycle shop to buy oil—which I did not really need. Imshi also stopped (her engine, I mean) with rather suspicious alacrity. I remember having a subconscious qualm over that.

The oil bought, it became necessary to start the engine. Not a sign of any kind of life. All the usual dreary procedure was followed, without the slightest result. Finally I got her going by being pushed, by the assembled and exceedingly obliging villagers, violently down a hill backwards. It was raining torrents all the time.

The next forty minutes will remain an indelible

picture (by a homicidal lunatic) in my memory until death. I could only keep the engine firing by driving extremely fast—and there were many villages and much cattle and quantities of corners, and the darkness was coming on. During this period, if you will believe me, the fan-belt broke, the klaxon ceased to work, and the bulb of the horn came off (like the best china with the housemaid) in my hand. I kept saying to myself, "If I can reach San Sebastian—if I can reach San Sebastian!"

I did—and just as I was congratulating myself that the worst was over two suicidal idiots who must have been stone-deaf (my usually noiseless Imshi was yelling at the top of her voice at about 1,200 r.p.m.) stepped off the pavement in front of me. The engine instantly stopped—for the night. About half an hour later, after an interlude upon which I do not care to dwell, we both reached our hotel, towed by the hotel omnibus. That final degradation was suffered mutely by us both—by Imshi because she was dumb; by me because I was too tired to care.

But it amused San Sebastian enormously.

Oh, there's no doubt about it—you must be very careful what mascots you adopt. They are very, very powerful for both good and evil. There is only one who is a gentleman and who is a match for the lot—St. Christopher.

This morning an extremely hot-tempered but intelligent mechanic fitted in my spare magneto (ah! you'd forgotten that, "Five-in-your-Eye"!) and disembowelled the old one. Imshi is once more *en état de partir*, and I start for France to-morrow. Whether

we shall succeed in reaching the frontier, distant 13 miles, is another matter. I have a feeling that I must have a clean dashboard before the ill luck goes. The marks of "Five-in-your-Eye" are still visible on the varnish. And in the meantime I am fully prepared for every possible disaster. I hate "Five-in-your-Eye," but I fear him more. He has not done with me yet.

Apart from these sorrows, I had a most agreeable day, full of incident. For one thing, I had a large train moved out of my way. It was at a level crossing, blocking the most important highway in Spain, and it appeared to have gone to sleep for several weeks. There was simply nothing doing.

Then I found a foreman kind of man, and in my amateurish and by no means intelligible Spanish I asked him point-blank to take his nasty train away and let Imshi get by. He yelled deafeningly at an unseen being who was apparently playing knuckle-bones on the lines under the coal-tender. He emerged and blew the engine's whistle devastatingly for, it seemed, ages.

"The stoker is in the canteen. He has much thirst," explained the foreman. "He will now come."

He did, and together they removed the train—forty-seven trucks of it. I felt like a director. Spain is sometimes perfectly charming.

CHAPTER XXXVI

MOTORING IN SPAIN TO-DAY—BIARRITZ

HENDAYE.

TO-DAY Imshi and I leave Spain and begin the seventh stage of our long journey. We have not "done" the whole of Spain, partly because the roads would not have allowed it, partly because such a thing as trying to see the whole of a country every mile of which breathes history at you cannot be attempted in the course of a set motor journey, no matter how leisurely. Spain is not "done" in one month or even six.

Speaking entirely as a motorist and not as an archæologist or sight-seer, what do I think of Spain as a place to explore in a motor-car? Well, I think that it is High Adventure in every sense of the word. When you cross the frontier you must leave behind you a lot of prejudices, but you must be sure to import a good stock of imagination. Enthusiasm will be given to you every hour.

Spain, from the motorist's point of view, is partly 1921 and partly mediæval—and you never can be sure which side it is going to show you next. In the extreme north, say from Valladolid to Irun, and in the south, from Ecija to Algeciras, the roads are as

good as our own best, except that they are not tarred. In the centre you get stretches of a few miles which are excellent oases in the desert of scores and scores of miles of pure nightmare.

It is no good mincing matters. When a Spanish road is bad it is worse than anything I have ever attempted in Italy, East Morocco, or 1920 France. I took a photograph of a stretch of road between Meknes and Knitra which I had to traverse. I honestly never thought I could get Imshi over it. Well, between Cordova and Valdepeñas there is a stage, nearly 30 miles long, which is worse. As I told you, the Spanish R.A.C. could hardly believe that I had managed to do it.

If it is any comfort to me I can always brag to myself that I have "done" the worst roads in Spain, which is probably the same thing as saying the worst roads in civilized Europe, and I urge all motorists who come new to the country to get advice from the Real Automovil Club, Madrid.

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I should like to express my great gratitude to the R.A.C. (British) representative there, Señor Carlos Resines, who gave me the most useful information about my journey north, supplied me with the best printed itineraries I have ever seen, and abused me properly for not telegraphing to him from Seville for advice before starting north from Andalusia. He told me that the only possible route to follow from Seville is by Jaen, Murcia, and Albacete—a fairly long detour which would certainly not occur to the ordinary new-comer.

Having settled the route question (not forgetting that you must never, except in short stages, reckon on a higher average than at most 20 m.p.h.), you have to deal with incidentals such as hotels and garages and general road conditions. You can get petrol and oil in any decent-sized town, but really good hotels are few and far between. Even in places like Burgos, a day's drive from Biarritz, the standard is not too high; in most smaller towns the inns are, as the secretary of the Madrid Automobile Club said to me, nearly impossible.

The thing to do, therefore, for your personal comfort is to arrange your daily drives between large towns.

Garages, comprising really efficient workshops, are as rare as good hotels; in fact, rarer. I had experience of only one between Gibraltar and San Sebastian, in Madrid; and that was run by Frenchmen. It is not surprising, as motor touring seems to be very much in its infancy in South Spain. Between Seville and Madrid, a distance of about 350 miles, I saw only one touring car and one lorry; and I was a week on the way.

You must not depend, therefore, on local resources for any but the simplest repairs. For example, in my pet abomination, Manzanares, there are something like 20,000 inhabitants, the most superb café-casino I ever saw, the filthiest and worst inn, and no garage of any description.

In Seville, Cadiz, Miranda el Douro, and the like there are decent places where you can leave your car and have small repairs carried out, but I should prefer

to reserve any really important work for Madrid.

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Finally you must early realize the supreme fact that mules and donkeys and very often horses in Spain are apt to forget the rule of the road, are generally less than half broken, and always behave as if they had never seen a car before. The mules are by far the worst. On mountain roads it is of the utmost importance to drive slowly and with great care, as any corner may reveal a huge flock of sheep or a dozen mule teams—heavy carts with six or eight mules apiece. When these decide to behave like mules, chaos and very likely disaster ensues in the twinkling of an eye.

And with that you have the worst of it. Make up your mind that Spain is unlike any other country; get the best advice on roads from the Spanish R.A.C.; carry plenty of spares; drive slowly; take all the time you need, and you will enjoy every moment of your tour in Spain. It is full of beautiful things to see, but you must not expect very much beautiful country between Burgos and Cordova. The Garden of Spain lies in Andalusia.

A final word of advice—either speak Spanish or take somebody with you who does. It is the one and only language of the country outside Madrid, Seville, and Cadiz, and ignorance of it is a serious handicap. Imshi and I got through, as others can; but our path would have been a great deal smoother if I had possessed more than my two-dozen words of very impure Castilian—a very recent acquisition at that.

BIARRITZ.

Yesterday Imshi and I crossed a frontier for the eleventh time since we left London on that murky black Sunday before Christmas. It may be said that we have acquired the frontier habit, and that if we stay much more than a month in one country we have a feeling that we are being waited for at some roadside office or on a wharfside, where my international papers, of immense mass, are scrutinized, stamped, examined again, signed, stamped, looked at for the last time, stamped, verified—and, after a pause full of veiled meaning, stamped and handed reluctantly back to me.

Yesterday we left Spain, a mixture of regret and hope. Regret, because we were leaving one of the most historically interesting countries in the world—hope, because I find it impossible ever to enter France without that sentiment. During the last eighteen years I have, to my enormous happiness, been given many opportunities of seeing France in a motor-car. I think I know her roads east and south of a line drawn from Brest to Poitiers and Bordeaux pretty well, and I have landed myself and a car at one or other of her Channel ports I don't know how often, for trips lasting any time between a literal week-end (before the war, please) to a six months' "loaf." And never have I put foot ashore and started up my engine without that perfect sense of content, which I choose to call hope.

The very sight of the French Customs-house at Irun filled me with joy. Imshi was absurdly pleased

with her new magneto and was running better than she has for many weeks.

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The road from San Sebastian to St. Jean de Luz is in superb condition, and the fresh green country of the Pyrenean lowlands, all in new leaf, all bursting with spring riches, gave me the background for a very memorable drive. It was not a fast run, as I had to stop so often to look at the hills and the mountains, to smell the tall hedges; above all, to listen to the ripe Béarnais accent of the peasants, an accent as distinct as a language.

If you do not know the Pays Basque or the remarkably "fruity" French they talk here, lose no time in bringing your car to one of the most human and enchanting places in the world. I am, of course, prejudiced, having first seen Biarritz and Pau and the glorious country between them at the critical age of five years and having spent most of the next ten years here. I am therefore probably blind to its faults—if any.

Personally, I see no faults in the Pays Basque or the Béarnais, that jovial, red-faced, smiling human, who always begins his sentences with "Té!" and ends them (on departure) with "Arrichatz"; who is the first gossip of Europe; the first braggart; who lives in fat comfort on the green and purple slopes of the lower Pyrenees, beside the most picturesque sea in the world; who is, in short, an absurd but wholly priceless person. He adds to the joy of life.

At the same time, although every minute spent in the half-familiar, half-strange streets is a delight

to the ear, I reserve my judgment of Biarritz (1921 model). I remember a very different Biarritz (1887-1898 model) and I miss a great deal. In those days it was a little place where one could live all the year round on very little money, where it did not matter a bit if you had any or not, where everybody knew everybody.

Now it is enormous and seems to be divided equally between hotels of international fame, garages of unequalled splendour, and hairdressers' establishments. And by no means everybody knows everybody. There are too many of each kind.

Yet, so far as I have got, I think some of the old spirit of Biarritz remains. People come and sit outside the town hall (which happens, oddly enough, to be within twenty yards of Miremont's, the most famous cake-shop) at twelve o'clock, just as they did, in order to advance *en masse* upon the cakes and the cocktails and the *foie-gras* sandwiches—with unlimited gossip attached.

As in old days, you treat the streets of Biarritz, the Place de la Mairie, the Rue Mazagran, and the rest just as your own. A ridiculous municipality may believe them to be the property of the Republic, but that's all nonsense. They belong to Us. And Us is those who know Biarritz. I leave Imshi where and how I please, and nobody cares. (London police, please copy.)

At the same time I observe things of which I do not at present approve. I drove up to what used to be the golf links this morning and found about seven villas, with macadam roads and tamarisk'd

gardens attached, occupying the 13th and 14th greens (1894 plan). An immense hotel has sat down on the 11th green, and the splendid "rough" of the 12th hole, which we called the Grouse Moor (because it had heather), is buried beneath new streets.

Biarritz has "come into money," and I am not quite sure yet whether it has borne that acid test. I don't want to be hasty, and I shall, I hope, find out a great deal about that and many other things between here and Cambo and Pau and Lourdes and St. Jean Pied de Port and Luchon and far Tarbes and Carcassonne before I deliver the weighty verdict of an old "Biarrot." But I confess that some of the new rather depresses me. I like simplicity (with comfort, of course), and we *were* simple, as well as comfortable. Now it seems expensive and a little complicated. I hope I am wrong.

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In the meantime, it is simply delightful to be here. There is no sea anywhere like the Biarritz sea, whether in sunny or stormy weather. It is alive as no other sea is, and when you see it only slightly annoyed you feel that it is only by its peculiar favour that Biarritz, with all its villas and hotels and shops, is saved from being engulfed at any moment. When there is a sou'-wester blowing you wonder how the solid rocks can keep their place.

There are many ravishing cars which people drive in untrammelled and obvious enjoyment. They say it is the dead season. There is no such thing in Biarritz, nor ever was. Biarritz now, as then, has no seasons. It is just Biarritz—utterly unlike any other place in

the world. Unique. "Gran' diou vivang! C'est Biarritz—té!"

BIARRITZ, FRANCE.

Last week I think I said that I was very glad to be back in Biarritz again after an absence of a considerable number of years. I find this an understatement of the case. Imshi and I are simply revelling in it.

There is so much to do, so much to see in and round this weather-beaten town that I do not see how we are going to get through anything like a programme before the great summer rush begins, when all fashionable Spain and South America hurl themselves in high-powered cars into the place and pay fabulous sums for cottages.

Just now things are, from a Biarritz point of view, fairly quiet, and it is possible to get rooms in hotels or even to hire a small house—till July. After that, heaven help the stranded house-hunter. Other popular resorts are demobilized, as it were, during stated periods. Biarritz can only said to drop back out of the line and "rest" for a few weeks between "pushes." During the summer push, I am told, pandemonium reigns—a pandemonium of congested delight.

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This is really the best time to make acquaintance with the town and country which Edward VII introduced to the august company of Fashionable Resorts. The excellent roads are not crowded as they are later on and one can get about the neighbourhood in comfort and find accommodation at hotels in the Pyrenees.

May is delightful at Biarritz. Everything is green and fresh and springlike, and the glorious woods I have driven through every day are at their best. The drives round the town are, in my eyes, unequalled. In a quarter of an hour you can have left behind the unceasing bustle of the Place de la Liberté and the Rue Mazagran and be breathing in the splendid bracken smell of the Bois de Boulogne (a hackneyed name for a beautiful spot), drifting or sailing on the lake below Mouriscot and offering temptation to the immense pike who live in its depths.

You might be a hundred miles from a town on this lake, so deep is the peace breathed over it from the wooded hills about. It is a strange spot, full, according to local legend, of ghosts. They are, for the most part, the ghosts of soldiers drowned in these deep waters. What soldiers they were, of whose army, in what battle they fought, or when they perished are matters which I have never been able to find out. But it is certainly a handy place for drowning people in large numbers.

I know few places in the world so beautiful as the shores of this little lake. High banks, all overgrown with bracken and ferns, stand on each side of the narrow, winding lanes, while above and beyond them are little clearings in the oak woods lit up by sunshine, like windows in a great cathedral.

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Turn north, up the lighthouse hill, and you come to the pine woods which stretch from the top of the cliffs above the Chambre d'Amour to the bar of the River Adour, near the racecourse. Here too is a

lake which is as remote from modern improvements as Mouriscot, a lake in whose shallow margin small boys may practise the best kind of navigation.

You paddle all day in summer in sun-warmed water and know the very rare joy of being within a yard of your fore-and-aft schooner when she is beating the other fellow's cutter, the lee bulwarks awash. Of course, as a responsible shipwright, you have provided, by a proper amount of ballast, against capsizing. But even if that ultimate disgrace befall it is no disaster. In a moment you have piped all hands on deck, manned the pumps, shortened sail, and are after him again.

The lake in the pine woods is the best place in the world for sailing boats. The very best of all. Why does nobody invent a cure for growing up? Life with a 15*s*. schooner or even a clockwork steamer (with one funnel and a detachable key) is really worth while.

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I made a great number of resolutions when I began this long journey of mine, and I have broken quantities of them. Of the few which remain whole the chief one is that I should publish the names of those hotels or inns which I believe to be the kind the ordinary comfort-loving, economical motorist needs.

There have not been many, for I do not, of course, include the "palace" class of hotel. This is often excellent, generally expensive, and always as obvious as the town hall or the village pump. Anybody can find them, but the kind I am interested in is the small hotel where they feed and lodge you well,

look after you properly, and charge a reasonable amount.

I found one in Normandy, the Moderne at Gisors; another at El Kantara, Algeria, the Hôtel Bertrand; a third, Les Chênes, in Tunisia. And now I have found a fourth, and in this place of "palaces." The Hôtel du Rond Point, Biarritz, is one of the best and most comfortable little hotels I have ever been in anywhere.

It is kept by a Basque (once a butler in an English family) and his English wife, and it is the nearest thing to "a home-from-home" I know. It is exquisitely kept, the food is really excellent, and there is nothing M. Heguillor and his wife will not do for you. It is years since I have been so comfortable. All things considered, I regard it as one of the very best hotels I know. It is simple and quite first class. I recommend it, after a good deal of experience, most heartily.

CHAPTER XXXVII

FROM BAYONNE TO THE PYRENEES

LOURDES.

IMSHI and I have, for the time being, left the very mundane delights of New Biarritz and have begun a gentle and most pleasant expedition among the foothills of the Pyrenees. In an earlier letter I think I confessed to a violent prejudice in favour of the whole beautiful land of Béarn, but now that I have, after a great many years, taken to its roads again I cannot allow the expression.

There can be no prejudice in anyone's admiration and sympathy for the Pays Basque. Just at this moment, in spite of cloudy weather, it is looking its very best, its fields a riot of fresh green, its trees creaking audibly under the weight of blossom and fat, new leaf, its rivers torrents of snowy foam, its hillsides glistening with waterfalls. Never was there such a joyous land. The air was heavy with every sort of delicious country smell, but in itself as light as the best champagne. A lot of it went to Imshi's head and most of my recollections of the last stretch into Pau from Orthez are of a long green tunnel of great plane-trees spanning a straight white road—both decidedly blurred. For the first time for a good

many weeks the throttle was nearly wide open on top speed, and every advantage was taken of the fact. In spite of the rigours and trials of the last five months Imshi was able to put up a very comfortable 45 miles an hour.

It was a most restful sensation. If you have had to content yourself for a couple of months with a general average speed of 15 miles an hour, with an anxious ear straining perpetually for the sound of broken springs, you revel in a quarter of an hour's hogging over a wide, straight, flat road, with no side-roads or "blinds" or pot-holes.

* * * * *

Hungry as we were, we were sorry when the suburbs of Pau, where luncheon awaited us, brought us down to the old crawl again. Pau, unlike Biarritz, has a distinct and decided season, and it shows it. It is not the season just now, and, to be frank, the place is dowdy. Never, to my thinking, interesting in itself, generally rather dull, Pau in curlpapers is frankly depressing.

After luncheon we took on a passenger. We were wandering about in search of a certain kind of chocolate, said to be procurable in Pau alone, when we passed a baker's shop in whose window sat an enormous tabby cat. "I wonder if she's got any kittens?" said my companion suddenly and for no reason—and disappeared into the shop. A quarter of an hour later one Squiggles was added to the party, a little black and white lump of fur, with a pink nose and a bottomless thirst.

Squiggles is cheap, to us, at 5 frs., however monstrous

the profit she represents to the banker's wife. She has taken to motoring with enthusiasm and, in spite of her stupendous thirst, prefers the tropical heat of the floor-boards, exactly over the exhaust pipe, to any other place. Nothing surprises her, nothing has yet succeeded in alarming her. Her age is stated to be two months and her assurance is unbounded. She is very plain, poor dear, having ears like a bat's, but she is certainly a Personage. It is perfectly impossible to ignore Squiggles in a car.

* * * * *

There are two ways of getting to Lourdes from Pau, the first and recommended one by Coarraze and Betharram, the second by Soumoulou and Pontacq. I have driven along both roads and, except that the first follows the Gave and is very attractive for the last 12 miles into Pau, I prefer the Pontacq route, which is less crowded with villages and has a much better surface.

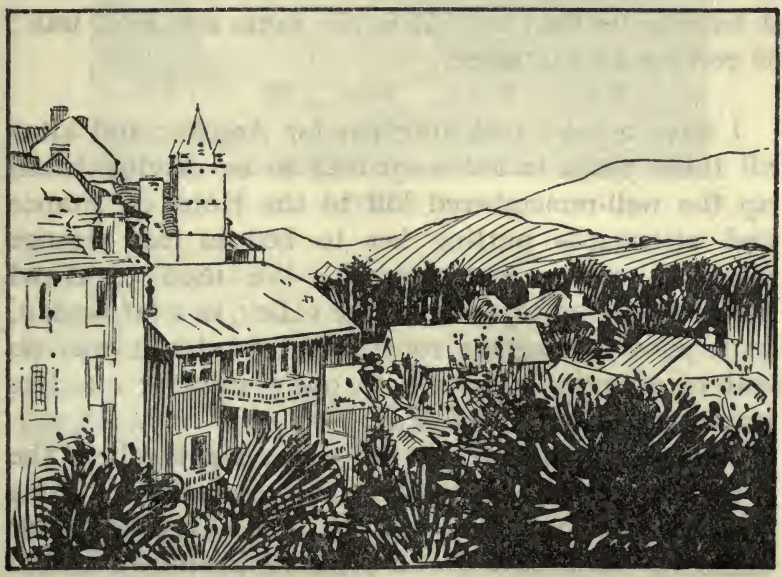
Lourdes, the Miracle Village, is packed with pilgrims to the famous Grotto All day the air resounds to the prayers of the people, and the long curved stairways, sweeping down to the doors of the Basilica, are black with crowds waiting for the hoped-for miracle. The streets of Lourdes are hateful with their interminable lines of shops full of medals and statues and grotesque images and pictures, and the rows of women who sit on the kerb with bundles of candles and importune you to buy do their best to cheapen the place and make it as commercial as possible.

But real Lourdes, the Lourdes you feel, is not to be judged by these pitiful standards. Lourdes is

the most wonderful example in the world of faith. You breathe faith in the air—the whole place is Faith.

ARGELÈS, THE PYRENEES.

We have discovered, Imshi and I, the Village That Won't Grow Up. It is perfectly delightful to wander about these most beautiful Lower Pyrenees, looking out for places one knew years ago and finding new



ARGELÈS VALLEY.

ones, but up till now every one of my old friends among the Basque villages has shown signs of increasing age, the elderly spread, or of renewal of youth —whichever way you like to put it.

New houses built, old landmarks obliterated, things they call improvements (like telephones, for instance, or a more or less regular train service instead of a

quite vague diligence, and electric-lit hotels) have added years to most of them, but Argelès, that lucky village which lives in one of the most beautiful valleys of the Pyrenees, the valley of the Gave de Pau, is exactly the same to-day as it was twenty-five years ago.

You can telephone from it if you like and there is certainly electric light, but otherwise there is not a wrinkle on its face. It is the same age as it was; it refuses to get older.

* * * * *

I have a very real affection for Argelès, and after all these years it felt very odd to be driving Imshi up the well-remembered hill to the Hôtel de France and afterwards putting her to bed in that strange establishment a motor-garage. We used to crawl up from Pierrefitte, down in the valley, in a fat landau, with piles of luggage roped on behind. It was no end of a business getting to one's summer quarters here from Biarritz, via Pau.

Except for the two or three cars staying here the little village street is the same as ever. This morning I was waked by the sound of a car bubbling gently below my window and of a pleasant bustle. I looked out and saw the nicest sight in the world—people idiotically happy, packing rods and luncheon baskets and creels and landing-nets and waterproofs into a car, bound for a stream or a lake among the mountains. The trout fishing used to be very good about here, but I am told that some of the best brooks have been ruined by the new dye-works and one must go much farther afield to find a likely stream.

A Pyrenean Road.

Road and River in the Basque Country.

Anyhow, fish or no fish, I am quite sure that British car-load had a good day. There is no other kind of day available when you have a car, a rod, and a river in the smiling Pyrenees. They came back beautifully late for dinner and were received with perfect good temper by Mme Perrafitte, of the Hôtel de France—just as we were. Everybody is always in a good temper at Argelès. It is one of the best funk-holes in the world—a place where there is perfect peace and where nobody worries you.

My bedroom, with a large balcony attached, looks out across the garden over the whole valley, from the northern gate towards Lourdes to the snowy peaks at Gavarnie, in the south. Just at present I consider this to be the most beautiful view in the world, but I daresay it is only because I love it.

* * * * *

I know of few gardens I like better than the little long-grassed wilderness below my window. An old flight of steps leads down from the house into a patch of green in which everything imaginable grows. Here are a few of the things I can count from where I sit —willows, palms, bamboos, laurels, yellow irises, wistaria, Scottish firs, pears, spruce, hazels, walnuts, chestnuts, and roses. There are quantities of other things, including a gorgeous tree with a thick, heavy purple and white blossom rather like a giant wistaria, but I have no idea what they are.

At the bottom of my delectable garden is a tiny little stream about 10 ft. wide. There is a bridge over it and a bench on the bridge, and I know no nicer place in which to sit and watch the dying gold

and crimson of sunset fade off the tops of the mountain, and the cool darkness flooding the valley from the eastern peaks. The little river is only about a yard deep, but it tears along in the most terrific hurry, as if it were the Rhone itself, and the big islands of yellow iris are kept in a constant state of agitation.

There is a water-rat which lives under the bridge, and the bushes at the water's edge are full of thrushes and blackbirds who sing very good glees and catches to the lively accompaniment of the little river's scherzo. I don't see how I am ever going to go away.

* * * * *

From Argelès you can start on all sorts of delightful adventures, either by car or on a mule. There is scenery enough to satisfy the greediest, and all kinds of little places to visit, like Barèges, Cauterets, Eaux Bonnes (a beautiful but, I believe, extremely strenuous drive over a 7,000 ft. pass), Eaux Chaudes, Bagnères de Bigorre, Tarbes, the great French horse mart, and snowy Gavarnie, where I hope to go tomorrow.

Then there is fishing, and, of course, the great Pyrenean game of izard-stalking. The izard, an extremely shy and highly inaccessible but otherwise nice beast, is a kind of chamois, and finding, stalking, and shooting him are very lively occupations. None but the lean and hardy should attempt it.

If you like climbing other than by car, there is a variety of handy peaks round about, including the mighty Pic du Midi—the Mont Blanc of these parts.

In fact, I should think there are more delightful occupations available in more exquisite surroundings

The Valley of the Gave, Pyrenees.

than in any other corner of Europe. Just now the weather is rather bad, a specially cold and wet May having followed a specially warm and dry April, but, generally speaking, the climate on the northern slopes of the Pyrenees is delightful in spring, summer, and early autumn.

The Pays Basque is a neglected beauty-spot of the world, and at the moment I am very glad it is so neglected. Imshi and I have it practically to ourselves. Later on, in July and August, Argelès and Cauterets and Luchon will be crowded with people thirsty for the glorious mountain air and that peculiar Pyrenean smell—a mixture of bracken and roses and fresh green things and running water, which, once sniffed, is never forgotten. At present I regard the scenery within the limits of my view as my personal property. A pleasant, home-like feeling.

GAVARNIE, THE PYRENEES.

Have you ever followed a river from its mouth to its source in a motor-car? It is a most delightful experience. Imshi and I came up here to this grim rampart of snow and ice without realizing that we were chasing the Gave de Pau all the way. And the Gave de Pau in springtime is one of the most picturesque and variegated rivers I know.

You see it broad and full of importance at Pau, not navigable by big ships but still very much a river. Then you see it grow smaller and more tempestuous, gathering a crowd of wild friends about it in the shape of waterfalls as you pursue it between the gorges of the Pyrenees, till finally you see its first appearance

in public near the great Cirque de Gavarnie, the horseshoe of rocks and ice and snow, a frozen, petrified Niagara, which stands like an impassable barrier between France and Spain. The Gave de Pau has a brother, the Gave d'Oloron. They meet at Peyrehorade, and thenceforward to Bayonne and Le Boucau, where some of them fall into the Bay of Biscay, they call themselves, for no apparent reason, the Adour. For a few miles west of Peyrehorade they announce themselves, like a new company, as The United Gaves, but at Orthevielle they dissolve partnership and call themselves the Adour—"branches at Bayonne and in the Landes."

WHERE THE FAT TROUT LIE IN A MOUNTAIN STREAM.

The road from Bayonne follows the Gave de Pau practically the whole way, and I saw the whole wonderful transformation scene of a mountain river after heavy rains. At Peyrehorade and Pau, and even at Lourdes, the water was thick and muddy the evening I came up. Then the rain stopped, and the next day's short run to Argelès showed us a much more cheerful stream.

* * * *

To-day the drive from Argelès to Gavarnie has been like watching a piece of the best magic. As the

sun came out and the way got steeper and steeper the shouting Gave got clearer and clearer till close to the foot of the glacier it sparkled like a torrent of emeralds with a spray of diamonds round every rock. And its voice grew from a murmur to a thunderous clamour which rang in our ears like the roar of the cataracts of the Nile in flood-time.

It is a most beautiful hill-road which carries you along the Gave, past St. Sauveur, over the tremendous bridge of Napoleon III (that most efficient Transport Officer), and so up through the wilderness of green rocks called Chaos to Gavarnie. The gradient is nowhere severe, but it is a long stretch of collar-work for well over 25 miles, during which your engine is pulling hard all the time.

Before and behind you enchanted valleys open up undreamt-of loveliness. Green velvet mountain-sides laced with the silver sparkle of hundreds of waterfalls of every size from little crystal trickles at which you can fill a water-bottle to deafening, thunderous cascades falling headlong hundreds, thousands of feet on to green rocks amid billowing clouds of spray mist, gleaming like opal-dust in the sunshine.

You climb and climb amid these wonders until, with startling suddenness, you leave the last trees below you and enter on the wild loneliness of the rocks which stretch up to the snow-levels. Then, at a turn of the road, you see the Cirque de Gavarnie towering above your head, its jagged parapets blanketed in the everlasting snow.

* * * * *

Later on in the year you can stay comfortably at

Gavarnie itself in the new hotel, but just now you must content yourself with a lunch at the small and rather indifferent inn which keeps open most of the year. The best plan is to take lunch with you, as the food here is poor and the charges decidedly exorbitant. We did not know this and braved the perils of the local lunch. It was very bad.

I do not think that you will find anywhere else in the Pyrenees a drive which shows you so much of the extraordinary beauty of these royal mountains as the 35 odd miles between Lourdes and Gavarnie. You see at Lourdes something of the rich lowlands rather like part of Ross and Herefordshire, and without a dull or neutral mile you successively pass every sort of Pyrenean scenery from the warm valleys, jewelled with wild flowers, to the frozen wilderness of glaciers 7,000 ft. above them.

The Road to Gavarnie.

The Virgin's Rock, Biarritz.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE HOMEWARD TRAIL—THE SECRET OF IMSHI

CAMBO, PYRENEES.

LOTS of delightful things have happened to me and Imshi during our long wander in Europe and Africa, but one of the nicest happened to-day when Imshi received, by telegraph, a poem from a car called Maud.

Maud has spent the winter at Pau and has apparently been bored—but here is her elegiac telegram, addressed to Imshi at the Hôtel du Rond Point, Biarritz;

"My Imshi dear, you're now so near,
And yet I may not see you here.
Sweet sister true, don't misconstrue
If greetings, then, I send to you.
Your journeys I have followed through
And lived them over all anew.
For you must know, in dullest Pau,
You've helped me pass a winter slow.

Now once again the road I take,
The dust of Pau for good to shake.
Dear comrade car of far renown,
Should you come to this same town,
It's here folk walk along the street
As if they could not lift their feet—
In drowsiness quite lost and slow—
One kindly thought on me bestow.

MAUD."

I sympathize with Maud. Pau always makes me feel as if I couldn't lift my feet, but neither I nor Imshi could have put the sodden sensation so appositely.

Maud is American, which explains it. The crisp air of Detroit, Mich., makes her conversation illustrative.

Following for Maud, as they used to say at G.H.Q. :—

> "*Say, Maud, your wire*
> *Just tickled me to death!*
> *My! do you fire*
> *These rhymes with every breath?*
> *It's great! It listens easy,*
> *Perfectly good, high-toned, and breezy.*
>
> *This child's no pote*
> *As you have seen for sure.*
> *Plain prose, you'll note,*
> *Comes snappier. My poor*
> *Muse knocks, blows out a shoe*—*
> *Shake, Maud, the laurels are on you.*
>
> IMSHI."

How extremely pleasant it is to wander aimlessly in a car after a long period of set programmes. Last week I left Gavarnie and Argelès and pushed out into the blue. After a couple of days of happy loafing about the lower Pyrenees, back along the road to Bayonne and Biarritz, I have settled for the night at Cambo.

Cambo was a name to conjure fishermen with. In days gone by it was quite a long way from Biarritz—the sun of the Pyrenean solar system—and one came here for weeks of fishing. It was a pleasant,

* Blowing out a shoe is good American for bursting a tyre.

lively little village, with a humble but excellent riverside inn where people with the sensible sort of rod, the right kind of fly and the proper style of talk, used to gather from all parts of Great Britain, France, and Ireland. If we didn't kill many trout, we enjoyed life amazingly. There were few trains and no motor-cars.

Now cars have brought poor shrinking Cambo almost to the very suburbs of Biarritz, but it has inexplicably fallen into decay. I suppose it is too close to the unceasing uproar of Biarritz gaiety to be real "country," too far to take part in it. Presently Cambo will either disappear altogether or become a postal address such as Cambo-Biarritz. In the meantime it is fading, wilting, and, properly to mix the metaphor, it is full of ghosts.

POITIERS.

After weeks of dignified loitering about the more southern and lazier end of Europe, Imshi and I have suddenly begun to hurry. We are on our way home at last and, for the time being, at any rate, we are eating up the big French highways at a most respectable speed.

It is a most peculiar sensation. For a long time I have seldom done more than 70 or 80 miles in the day, nursing the car tenderly over the long stretches of bad road, taking my time to look at all the pleasant things and people by the wayside. I was slower than a Spanish train, and if possible more unpunctual. It was most agreeable. To-night I face the astounding fact that I have covered 300 kils. (180 miles) in

one day's driving of eight and a half hours and well over 200 on the next. I had forgotten that people still did such things. Years ago, of course, we all flew madly over the face of Europe, barely slowing down to eat and sleep; dancing, stop-watch in hand, the terrible Dance of the Milestones; but nowadays, I thought, we are grown more placid in our ways. It seems I am wrong. All day I have been half-consciously watching the face of my long-suffering clock and the little white specks among the roadside grass which are the kilometre stones. I have, if you like, been hogging.

* * * * *

The road from Bayonne to Périgueux, roughly 180 miles, is one of the most beautiful I know. For close upon a hundred miles it runs through forest. Hour after hour you skim between pines and oaks, the air full of the voices of birds and of the smell of sawn wood. For the first 25 miles, as far as St. Vincent de Tyrosse, just south of Dax, the surface is very bad, but thereafter, through Mont de Marsan, Casteljaloux, Marmande, and Bergerac (where *Cyrano* came from) it is almost up to pre-war standard, and you can go as fast as you like.

Imshi has appreciated it all immensely and has shown her gratitude by running better than she has ever done on this trip. Cars are funny things, and nobody will ever understand them. Why should this now almost venerable vehicle suddenly pretend she is brand new and delight the very road-weary heart of her owner? I have done nothing to cheer her up—most of the time I have been too busy resting.

She has really been distinctly neglected. Yet all yesterday and to-day she has behaved almost too perfectly. I grow suspicious.

* * * * *

It is all famous country between Perigueux and Poitiers, Richard Lion-Heart of England owning and ruling it in his peculiarly Angevin manner. As Count of Poitou, Poitiers was of course his chief stronghold, and it must, in the days of bows and arrows, have been a fairly formidable place to take. Not much is left of the Middle Ages here to-day, and I cannot say that I find it very easy to make a picture of Richard I in 1921.

It is a different story, though, at Chaluz, the village about 20 miles to the south, where Lion-Heart was killed. He took the hamlet and one of the two towers which stood sentinel on either side, and committed the possibly kingly but certainly most unknightly act of hanging the Viscount of Limoges, who had bravely defended it.

The viscount's tower is there to-day, and the sight of its stalwart girth, crumbling and ivy-grown, but still imposing, made the whole story very real to me, as I passed it in Imshi, 1921. It happened nearly 700 years ago.

* * * * *

History (official, but not necessarily 100 per cent. reliable) reports that Richard was slain at the attack of Chaluz by de Gurdon, a red-faced Norman knight whose bride the King is said to have stolen. Mr. Maurice Hewlett, most pleasant of historical writers, says that he was murdered by an Arabian assassin

sent from the Lebanon, and that de Gurdon slew the assassin. I like that much better, and really, after seven centuries, I think Mr. Hewlett has just as much claim to know the rights of the matter as anyone else.

* * * * *

Lion-Heart's country is extraordinarily beautiful. For miles and miles it is like a magnified Kent, park-land and forest spread in gorgeous array over gently swelling hills. Like Kent, I think the Limousin and Poitou are the garden of France.

* * * * *

THE SECRET OF IMSHI.

Our great adventure is at an end. Imshi and I are back in England after six months of chequered glory on the roads and tracks of France, Italy, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Spain, and I cannot truthfully say that I am pleased. That is the worst of good times in a car—they always come to an end.

Months ago, very soon after we had reached our first stopping-place at Mentone, a score of people wrote to ask of what make Imshi was. Since then there has been a steady demand among my correspondents for this vital knowledge, but I said I would wait till the very end of the journey before disclosing it.

Imshi is a 10-h.p. 1920 Morris-Oxford 2-seater. Here are a few particulars about her.

Engine.—4 cylinders, bore and stroke 69.5 × 102.5 mm. Treasury h.p. rating, 11.9 h.p.
Gear-box.—3 speeds.
Weight.—16 cwt.
Wheelbase.—8 ft. 6 in.
B.H.P. at 2,800 r.p.m., 22.

On good roads I have reached a speed of well over 50 miles an hour on top gear. She is very well sprung, especially on the rear axle, and her general noiselessness in running has been commented on dozens of times since we came abroad. Seven people have wanted to buy her from me outright, then and there, two of them very anxious to conclude the deal in the streets of Casablanca.

Her total mileage to-day is about 21,000 miles, of which about 7,000 were run in Europe and Africa since December 19, 1920, the remainder being run over every sort of road in Great Britain. During the whole of that period she has only had the valves ground in once and the engine scoured of carbon five times.

* * * * *

Looking back over these really very strenuous months since Christmas, I find it difficult to write calmly about Imshi's record. We had troubles, as any car in the world would have, but I honestly believe her to be a car quite out of the ordinary. I doubt if any light car has ever been asked to go through such experiences and emerged without a serious collapse. She has done days and days of literal plough-work over mud and rocks and sand in Spain and Africa, using only first and second speeds—days when I expected every moment would bring a smash.

I have driven cars of all sorts and sizes over most of the "navigable" roads west of Budapest since 1903, and I have had a certain insight into the limitless horrors that can happen to the best-found cars. Had I known, before I started on this splendid adventure, what lay before me I should certainly have

said that very few, if any, big cars could get through —most certainly no light car.

Well, Imshi has not only got through but got through with flying colours, and I consider her to be a great credit to the British motor industry. I do not see how I can pay a bigger or more sincere compliment to her designer and maker, Mr. W. R. Morris. It is, like all real compliments, not a compliment but the cold truth. I think that the British industry owes a great debt of gratitude to Mr. Morris. He, in the person of Imshi, has shown unmistakably the super-excellence of the British light car.

* * * * *

I do not, being a fairly old motorist, pretend that Imshi cannot be bettered. There is no car, nor ever will be, of which one can say that. Nor is there any car which, after nearly 14,000 miles of remorseless work, could undertake such an expedition, without any preparation whatsoever, and carry it through without minor breakdowns. If there is such a car I should very much like to make its acquaintance.

Here is a list of the repairs and replacements which were found necessary to this most remarkable little car *after she had done* 13,000 *odd miles without any and without preliminary overhaul for the tour:*

At 13,850	miles:	—Petrol-joint repaired.
,, 14,150	,,	Two new front springs fitted.
,, 17,000	,,	One new leaf in front spring.
,, 19,000	,,	Two new brake-springs. Two new steering-pins.
,, 19,550	,,	Nut and washer holding off differential ball race replaced.
		Four new brake linings.
		One new spring-leaf.

At 19,985 miles :—Magneto overhauled and repaired.
„ 20,110 „ Off-side front spring-clip replaced.

I do not, of course, count the trivial roadside adjustments which are inevitable in every car.

* * * * *

I particularly wish to lay stress on Imshi's unpreparedness for this rush into the blue, if only in bare justice to Mr. Morris, who was casually informed, by telephone I think, forty-eight hours before I started, that Imshi was off into the wilds. I remember asking him to send me some valve springs. His reply was to send two of his best engineers to London with a perfect "dump" of spares of every possible kind. The only ones I have used have been gaskets, one petrol-pipe (a "spare" beyond price in Africa, let me tell you) and a magneto. The remainder of the beautiful stock is untouched.

The more I consider this record the more remarkable I find it. And when you add the patent fact that the engine and back axle make no more noise to-day than they did a year ago, that the back-springs are as they were when originally fitted to the car, and that there is scarcely any backlash in the steering, you will, I am sure, forgive my repeating that I think Imshi is one of the best cars ever built. We have been through a good deal of rough weather, she and I alone, and she has never let me down. "Non-Morris" parts have, but never Imshi herself.

The 1920 Morris-Oxford engine is one of the four absolute best I have ever had to deal with since 1900. Practically no compression has been lost in eighteen

months' hard driving; you can arrange things so that the slow running is as nearly noiseless as it is possible to be; and it will accelerate and "rev" (detestable but useful word) in exactly the same inspiriting fashion as, among other qualities, persuaded me to buy the car in January, 1920.

Imshi has made good.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE KIND OF CAR TO HAVE—THE KIND OF TOUR TO HAVE

WHAT are the essential qualities of a motor-car designed for world-touring to-day? They are, I am convinced, very different from those with which we should have been content ten years ago, when the roads of Europe could roughly be classed as first-class or very bad. Most of us kept to the first-class ones, which meant that we laid the course of our holiday jaunts to France, Holland, Austria, parts of Germany, and the north of Italy, avoiding, except in special cases, the *pavé* of Belgium, the south of Italy, most of Spain. Africa scarcely entered into our calculations at all.

Nowadays, the terribly debased standard of the roads of the world has brought us face to face with a simple situation. If we cling to the velvety perfection of the pre-war Continental highway and attempt to plan our tours thereby, we shall not get much farther than Folkestone pier. If we decide, as we certainly should, to forget our old-time reverence for average speed and to care only for the places we can see and the adventure of reaching them, a far wider field is open to us. Ten years ago we drove across Europe with the painful punctuality of steam; to-day

we cruise about, subject to bad roads, in precisely the same manner and degree as the sailing ship is subject to wind and weather. You never know when we shall get there.

Adopt the proper frame of mind and you will find yourself regarding the broad expanse of Europe, or such portions of it as are not still at war, with no more misgivings than the skipper of a Cape Horner noting the mileage from Liverpool to San Francisco.

But for this new motoring in the new wilds you must have a very good car indeed, a car which is designed to resist the greatest possible strains, in every conceivable direction. Many a car which will run like the proverbial sewing-machine for years on smooth home roads would "crash" badly after a couple of months of the wild. It is not the fault of the maker, who designs his cars for stay-at-home folk; it is merely that wholly new conditions demand a different sort of car. The entire chassis must be as robust as it is possible to make it within reasonable weight-limits; the engine power must be a little more than up to the work normally expected of it; every part requiring adjustment or replacement must, at all costs, be properly accessible; the brakes must be beyond criticism in every detail; and last, and perhaps most important of all, the suspension must be as good as it is possible to make it.

"France and Morocco are strewn with broken springs," said a garage proprietor to me the other day. "To break your front springs is a far commoner disaster than to burst a tyre." I am quite willing to believe it. The freshly-repaired roads of France and

Spain and Africa are excellent, the others very bad indeed, and it is essential to nurse your car over them —sometimes at a maximum speed of 10 or 12 miles an hour for long stretches.

Nothing can be left to chance in a properly designed world-cruiser—which is what every car should be to-day. No nut should be left unpinned unless there is some irrefutable argument against it; until you have tried it you cannot even guess at the havoc only six weeks' driving over devastated roads will work amid all things unscrewable. It should be absolutely impossible for any nut to loosen itself voluntarily; for any part to become detached without your own aid and intention.

These are the main necessities in a world-cruiser, and without them you are in for unceasing trouble. Secondary necessities are, in my view, a gear-ratio rather on the low side; three spare wheels; a four-seated body (whether for one or four occupants); as many and as solidly built tool and spares lockers as can be accommodated; and two petrol tanks, one holding 6 gallons, mounted in the dash, the other holding at least 12 gallons mounted on the chassis. After these you may add speed indicators and clocks and mascots to taste; but your car must be well found. If she is not, the limits of her utility to-day are the coast towns of Great Britain. She will never be a world-cruiser.

Far from the least entertaining part of a long motor journey in one part of the world is, in the occasional intervals of comparative repose, the planning of new campaigns in another. These may never materialize,

but it is remarkable how soothing an occupation it may sometimes be, when things are going awry either with your car or with life on the road generally, to forget all your troubles of one tour in the contemplation of the potential joys of another.

As I have shown, you have a world of earnest thought before you in the designing and fitting out of the car of your dreams, the world-cruiser which is to carry you up the banks of the Nile, from Colombo to Peshawar, from San Francisco to Baltimore. Even if it be only for a leisurely stroll round France it is enormously amusing to compose the Perfect Tour in the Perfect Car. When you are in the middle of a considerable expedition and have the hard-bought experience of months behind you, you joyfully fill sheets of foolscap with treasures of wisdom. That they would probably prove impracticable counsel does not disturb your equanimity in the least; you know quite well all the time that you are drawing pictures in the fire and that you will never know either the Perfect Tour or the Perfect Car.

Yet there are still tours to be made which, without being anywhere near perfect, are sufficiently original to deserve careful consideration. The plan of most motor tours is governed by one of two conditions: the state of the roads, or the attraction of the places they lead to. I suggest that a new system be adopted. Instead of saying, "Let us drive to the Riviera," why not put it this way: "Let us make a visit of inspection to all the mediæval towns and castles of Provence; let us see for ourselves what sort of realm it was over which King Réné the Good ruled."

Or, if you please, "Let us seek out all the Velasquez or Raphaels or Goyas in Europe." Or, again, "Where are the best Gothic cathedrals? Let us find them." By making the object of your tour things, or people, instead of places, you should with reasonable luck see the best of all three.

I once took part in a motor wine tour of France, when three of us slipped across the Channel (no phrase less melodramatic or silly can express the apologetic atmosphere of our travel) and hurried to Burgundy, to the Côtes du Rhône, where we were for the first time introduced to a godlike fermentation called Chateauneuf du Pape; to Bordeaux and to Champagne. Where we stayed, there we drank, not in excess, but in sheer, glorious greed. Our maps gave us a succession of pleasant drinks, connected by roads. We returned home at the end of our month with super-educated palates, which were the bane of our lives till their fine sense had been properly blunted by the wares of British restaurants. But we brought back with us a new understanding of France. The red and white wines of France play a part in her resplendent history which cannot be imitated, alas, by even pre-war whisky and the best of Scottish ale.

That is the worst of trying to write about motoring. At every paragraph you are held up and diverted from your course by a town, a dish, a village, a wine, a mountain, a vintage, a river or a roadside play which insists upon having the whole of your attention. There is nothing on the glowing roads of the world which doesn't matter. The eager, thrusting life of every

people is shown to you in its every aspect on the roads. In a day's run you may pass through two lands as different in character as are Connaught and Kent. Yet it is all the great glad world, and the road binds it all into one.

THE END

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