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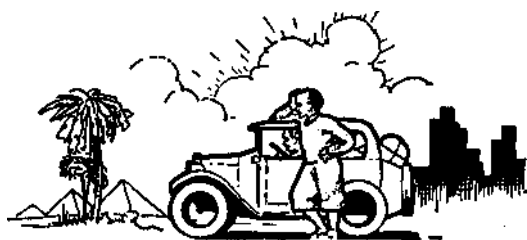
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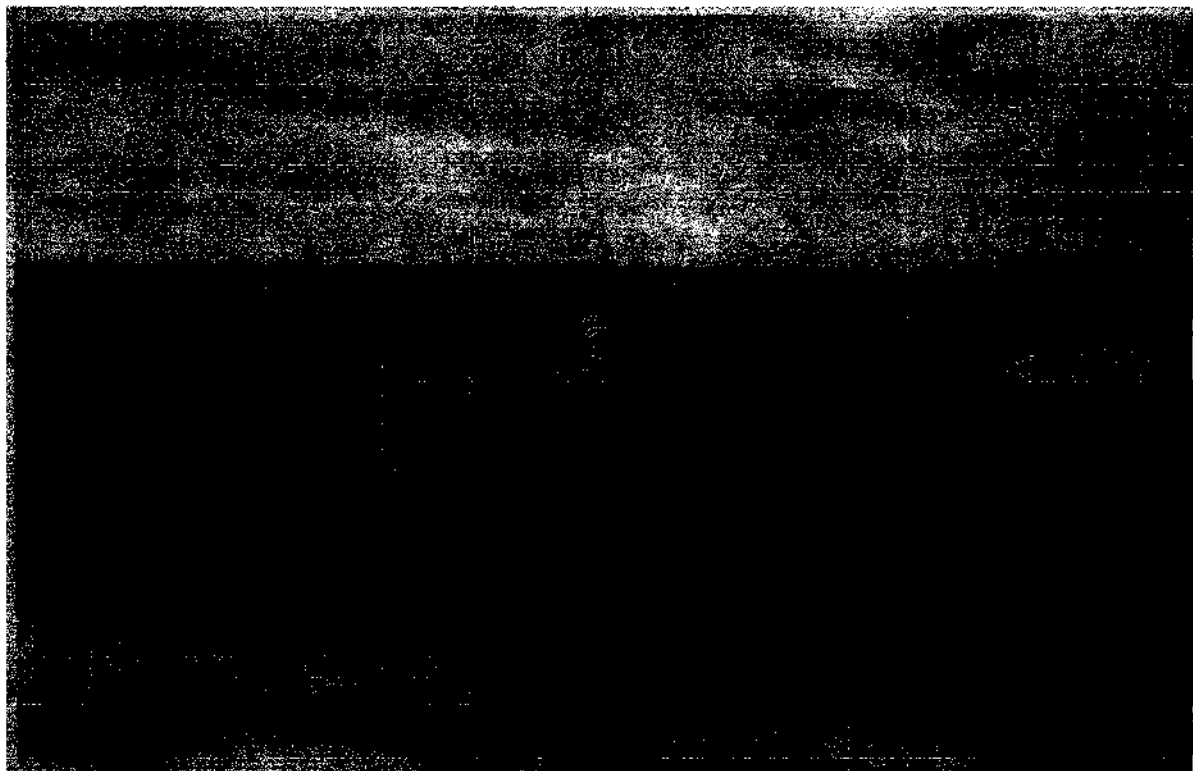


ROUND  
THE WORLD  
IN A BABY AUSTIN



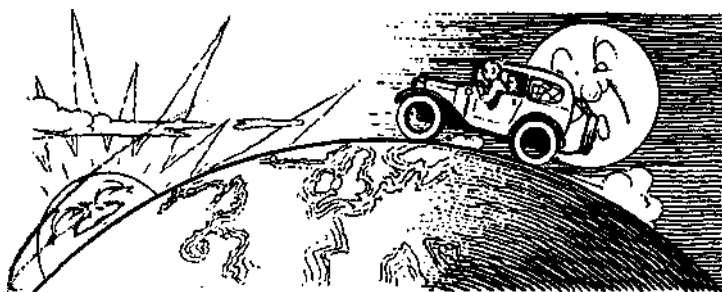
Here's to you, my dear Dick—  
our adventures in a nutshell!  
Rather a large nutshell, I fear,  
but I trust you'll find the contents  
digestible and be able to enjoy a  
laugh or two with me once more.





At the Grande Canyon—H. MacQ., "Emily II" and Dick.





# ROUND THE WORLD IN A BABY AUSTIN

BY

HECTOR MACQUARRIE

Author of " We and the Baby,"  
" Tahiti Days," etc.

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## PROLOGUE

THE barometer was dropping. The sea was shoaling dangerously. It seemed best to get up what steam we could, and to make for the open sea.

And this, because explanations are so often tedious, is the only reason I offer for our adventuring round the world in a Baby Austin.

Our idea was to travel eastward from Sydney, always eastward when possible, until we should reach our starting-point again.

"We" are Dick Matthews and myself. The editor of an Albanian newspaper, the *Gazeta e Korces*, summed us up neatly when, after referring to me as a writer, he added, "But Richard Matthews is a young and good-looking man."

And into the "we" I think should be packed our small car, Emily, merely named (after David Copperfield's little friend) to distinguish between her and a new Baby Austin Dick had acquired. Until her naming, Emily had been referred to by the garage men as "the old Cape Yorker," which seemed irreverent in view of her past triumph. She was the first car to reach Cape York, the most northerly point of Australia at the tip of the Cape York Peninsula. No other car has been able to follow her trail.

We left Sydney towards the end of May, 1930, crossing to New Zealand in the Union Steamship Company's *Maunganui*. After spending more than two months motoring in New Zealand, we left Wellington in the R.M.S. *Tahiti*, bound for San Francisco.

New Zealand, our homeland incidentally, deserves more time and attention than I can give it now. There-

## PROLOGUE

fore I think it better to ignore New Zealand, to maintain the form of this book which I want to be the record of two ignorant persons. If I wrote about New Zealand I should be like a normal middle-aged husband writing a critical biography of his normal middle-aged wife, not without affection yet full of discernment.

I want my readers to travel with us, to be " us " if they can; to see through our eyes without worrying their brains too much—a warning I offer at once, that I shall never try to give useful information about anything whatever. I merely offer Dick, Emily, myself, and the journey as we enjoyed it.

I rather spread myself over the shipwreck which opens my story (it was the only shipwreck we had), because until this experience I had always wondered precisely what it felt like to be on a sinking ship, and I am certain there are many people who are equally curious. I shall try to be almost completely self-revealing, showing how I appeared to myself, not, let us hope, as I appeared to the other wretched passengers. It may seem merely the record of a great fear, but probably most other normal men and women would feel precisely as I did.



BOOK ONE

THE WRECK







## CHAPTER ONE

S O S

WE left Wellington on the R.M.S. *Tahiti* bound for San Francisco, via Raratonga and Papeete, at three o'clock on Tuesday, August 12th, 1930. At about four-thirty on the following Sunday afternoon (local time) the *Tahiti* stood bolt upright on her sinking stern, and slipped to the bottom of the sea. We had withdrawn before this happened. Emily had not!

It has occurred to me since that the *Tahiti* offered warning. At the time I saw dignity in the incident—the beautiful vessel slowly freeing herself from the steel cables which bound her to the Wellington dock, the whirl of (machinery heard faintly, the occasional shout from the bridge, and the clouds of escaping black smoke curling from a glowing red and black funnel—a normal enough proceeding, admittedly, merely portentous on this occasion by the saxophone at the lips of a third-class passenger hidden in the bows!

I believe now that had we been able to read correctly that mournful wailing, broken by an occasional hiccup-like sob when the saxophone player took breath, we should have given the engineers a tip about their starboard propeller shaft and gone back to Wellington with the pilot. It really looks now as if the *Tahiti* was bidding good-bye to the land, a final good-bye!

We crossed the 180th meridian on Wednesday, August 13th, and were therefore given an extra thirteenth—two thirteenths in one week, which some people thought ominous, later!

However, we managed to pass the unlucky numbers safely. The weather had been slightly unpleasant off the

## THE WRECK

New Zealand coast, but the steep, breaking seas had gradually calmed to a big, lazy roll, not the ordinary ocean swell so much as a succession of big waves which lazily divided near their crests without breaking into spume—the kind of sea of which one might say, "There has been wind here, or there will be wind! "

On the night of the fourteenth Dick and I went to the small bar on the deck above ours for a pot of ale. When Dick signed the card, he recalled our firm intention to pay cash for everything on this trip, to avoid a surprising bill at San Francisco. We had almost decided to ask the steward for our past cards, to pay them off that night; but it meant a trip to the cabin for more cash, and so we decided to let the matter rest until the next morning. The incident is unimportant, yet it remains fixed in my mind; possibly my Scots blood is exulting; more probably it is interesting as the only occasion I know of when procrastination proved the thief of hard cash—our past cards were never redeemed!

We went to our cabin, rather in the bowels of the ship because we could afford only the cheapest saloon accommodation, and turned in. In my berth and about to sleep, I remembered I had not said my prayers. "You'd better say them," I said to myself, "in case of a shipwreck!" My Scots caution was not strong enough to make me hop down from the berth; I compromised under the quilt!

At 2 a.m. the next morning the *Tahiti* was steaming along at a good speed over the still broken swell—an efficiently run liner with an extremely complex organization, actually a small section of the modern, safe, civilized world in temporary motion. A light was seen two or three miles off, a common oil lamp burning on the foremast of an ocean tramp. The aristocrat of the Pacific and the peasant of the ocean may have exchanged greetings as they passed; it was known that the cargo ship's name was *Penybryn*, and that she was making for New Zealand.

At 4 a.m. the *Tahiti* gave an ominous shudder; the engines stopped, and the vessel lost way. Followed a pause of some anxiety for the officer on the bridge. A few

## S O S

seconds later a greaser from the engine-room tore hastily up the bridge companion-way.

"The second engineer's compliments, sir," said he: "the b——y tail-shaft's broken, and the old b——d's sinkin'!"

The common oil lamp on the foremast of the *Penybryn* instantly assumed supreme importance; but it was now thirty-five miles over the south-western horizon, and cargo ships seldom keep more than a short wireless watch once in every twenty-four hours.

Although some people had been awakened and were slightly alarmed, most of us were still asleep when the captain gave orders to have the passengers mustered on deck.

Dick had felt the shudder, but I knew nothing until Walker, our bedroom steward, switched on the lights in our cabin and said quietly, "Captain's orders, sir; and will you dress and go on deck. There's been trouble in the engine-room—no need to worry."

"Whafis it, Walker?" I asked, sitting up in my berth; "trouble in the engine-room! Why should that make us dress, and——" I had slipped to the deck.

Dick in the lower berth was yawning and rubbing his eyes.

"We don't quite know. Tail-shaft has broken, sir. But you should dress, in case——" Walker had gone.

I knew perfectly well that a captain will never muster passengers on deck before dawn without excellent reasons, but Walker's method of conveying the order had been so reassuring that I felt fairly safe in dressing partially and hurrying to the boat deck to get more information.

The ship had stopped, of course, but the boat deck seemed much as usual in the dim light. No other passengers were on deck. I was beginning to suspect a false alarm when bright lights began flickering from the wireless-room: "Dot—dot—dot! Dash—dash—dash! Dot—dot—dot!" The *Tahiti* was screaming for help; she was sending out an S O S!

It was impossible to question the officers who occasion-

## THE WRECK

ally entered the wireless-room, or hurried from it to the bridge. Walker had mentioned the engine-room as the seat of trouble, and so I clambered on to the engine-room skylight and looked down.

Within a few seconds I was back in our cabin urging Dick, who was still slowly dressing, to hurry. I said as calmly as possible, although I was conscious of slight hoarseness, "Perhaps you had better hurry. The engine-room is filling. The engineers and firemen are shoulder-high in water. It looks like the boats, and we're nearly five hundred miles from land."

And as I spoke, I could still see that engine-room—the two lengths of cylinder heads—the gratings and iron ladders, and below, men struggling about in dank water rushing from side to side as the vessel rolled. I could hear that awful, sombre sound water makes in a dead ship.

"It looks like the boats!" I repeated.

"What fun!" said Dick; "we shall land on a desert island!"

"There aren't any about, unfortunately," I said.

"The lights look a bit queer," remarked Dick casually.

Our cabin lights were definitely fading. Occasionally they flickered.

"The water is reaching the dynamos," I said, stuffing my overcoat pockets with as many tins of tobacco as possible.

"Passports and letters of credit!" said Dick, delving in a suit-case.

The lights gave a brilliant flicker and went out finally. The porthole became a lemony moon. We struck matches for a final glance around the cabin, and then hurried up the grand companion to the boat deck where most of the passengers were now gathered.

They stood in a pathetic little group, bunched near the vestibule doors. We had made friends with but few of them—Bishop Bennett of Ao-te-roa (the Maori Bishop of New Zealand) and his sister, a mature young man who was always exquisitely turned out and who was going to

## S O S

Hollywood to make talking pictures, a witty Roman Catholic priest with a delightful Irish accent, and a man whom we called the delicate millionaire. We had had a deck-tennis acquaintance with two or three others. Now, we all met as friends. Mercifully, there were only two or three children.

The question, " What has happened? " was often asked; but the answer, " The tail-shaft has carried away! " conveyed very little.

" The breaking of a tail-shaft shouldn't be enough to——" one man began. Obviously he had not looked down the engine-room skylight. Had I not looked down myself I should have been puzzled by all this excitement over a broken tail-shaft: it is not an unusual accident. It was impossible to worry the ship's officers with questions; we concentrated on the stewards!

Ignorance of the sea was fortunately rampant—what the sea in destructive mood can do with the largest and most efficient piece of human mechanism out of control.

" The ship is anchored, of course! " I heard one man say. Anchored! In water three miles deep, five hundred miles from land.

One elderly American lady of slightly exuberant temperament sat very comfortably on a mental position which evidently seemed quite logical to her. " If the ship's in trouble, she should make instantly for a port! " she suggested.

" Her machinery's broken down; she can't move," a man explained.

" Then another ship must come instantly and take us off this one! " said she decisively, taking a deck-chair and placing her handbag on her knee. She might have been pausing on a jetty, waiting for an approaching ferry.

A definite light was now growing stronger in the east. The day was dawning. What, I wondered, had this day to offer us?

I was watching the other passengers, studying the effect of what I believed promised to be an awful situation. Most of them were more puzzled than alarmed. Bishop

## THE WRECK

Bennett appeared very grave, but perfectly composed. His usually jolly, middle-aged sister who, like the Bishop, has a strong admixture of English blood, seemed like a small girl bravely bearing possibly the amputation of a dolly's head by a cruel boy. Their *rangatira* (chiefly) blood was standing them in good stead. The Roman Catholic priest was chatting rather more gaily than usual. The mature young man was immaculately turned out, but wore an expression of bitter pessimism. The delicate millionaire seemed more delicate; his friendly eyes sparkled behind the thick lenses of his spectacles.

A shilling dropped either from my pocket or from the delicate millionaire's. "Yours?" I questioned.

"Don't know," said he, "but name it I "

"Heads!" I guessed.

"Heads it is!" offered another passenger, picking up the coin.

"Nonsense!" I said; "I'm pretty sure it's not mine," and I nodded towards the delicate millionaire.

"No, no!" said he excitedly, even a thought hysterically. "It's your luck—*your* luck; you must keep it—don't give your luck away!"

From this I decided that my luck meant being saved vaguely at his expense. He would die of exhaustion on a raft looking perfectly awful; I should be picked up from the same raft off some rocky islet, half famished and looking worse.

Some kerosene lanterns hooked to the deck-houses gave a poor sort of light, which became more depressing as the yellow glow in the east spread. Finally it was possible to see that the liner was definitely down at the stern, now rising but heavily on the big rollers which crept menacingly towards her.

"Would anyone like a taxi?" It was Denis O'Hara, the deck steward, who could be playful without being familiar—a thoroughly nice boy whose well-cut profile and dark eyes were as attractive as his name.

"We'd rather have the R100," laughed a man.

"Oh," said Denis with studied carelessness, "the



## S O S

captain says will you all put on warm clothing." He repeated the request more definitely.

Although some of us appreciated the design in the boy's initial playful remark, we were all slightly alarmed.

"The boats?" we questioned.

"Oh, no, but it's well to be prepared." Denis glanced at us quizzically and withdrew. I have often thought a steward's calling makes for misanthropy.

When all the women and most of the men had gone to their cabins for more clothing, Dick and I clambered on to the engine-room skylight. It was very dark below now, and for a second I thought the place abandoned until a torch flared up between the two rows of cylinders. It was held by an oily-clothed man making a bow-wave as he struggled through the dark water. I watched the swirling water closely. It had gone down appreciably.

"The water's gone down a lot," I said to Dick; "they're controlling it. It really looks as if we're going to avoid a lot of bother and discomfort—getting into small boats and bobbing about on the ocean, starving and thirsting, seeing women die, and being anxious and upset."

In my heart, I said, "Thank God we're saved."

"Saved from what?" came the question from somewhere within me, possibly from that lonely spirit which I, like every man and woman on that ship, might now have to meet.

"Oh, death—drowning!" I faced it a little sulkily at first. "Well, we've all got to die some old time; might as well be now as later on!"

I was watching that terrifying black water rushing from one side to the other of the dim engine-room as the vessel rolled.

"Of course"—I was still trying to quieten that questioning spirit—"if that kind of thing—death—comes, it will be most important to meet it nicely. I hope things won't be awkward; there may be others—who will see!"

My knees felt wobbly as I climbed down from the skylight.

"Anyway," said Dick, "the weather is good for it."

## THE WRECK

I was less secure about the weather. From years of experience in the South Seas in small vessels on the ocean, I knew that the big roll showed wind about somewhere, and much of it. And I also knew that a serious wind, enough to change the broken rollers into angry, determined seas, would defeat every effort to keep the *Tahiti* afloat. She might sink within a few minutes. Some of us might survive in life-boats; many of us would not. We were much too far from the land—five hundred miles; nothing very much in a big liner, but a long, long way in small boats manned by modern steamship men. We were literally at the mercy of Nature; some of us believed we were in the hands of God.

I did. He alone, if it were His will to save us, could keep that usually troublous area of ocean just calm enough to permit the crippled vessel to float until help reached us.

The sun rose in a glory of molten gold. "A light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death," I thought as I walked along the deck to the other passengers.



## CHAPTER TWO

### BALING

"COFFEE in the dining-saloon!" announced the deck steward.

We looked at him closely. Did this mean the boats? Were they going to give us good, strong coffee to strengthen us for the ordeal? Denis was smiling cheerfully, too cheerfully: we were not going to a parish tea!

However, we were going back down the grand companion; a fairly safe position was being retaken. Evidently a crisis had passed: the ship would not sink just yet.

In the dining-saloon all the stewards were ready to welcome us with beaming faces. Like Denis, they might have been parish workers helping at a meat tea.

There was plenty of food on the tables—biscuits, cakes, bread and butter, and a profusion of fruit. I noticed a taste of salt water in the coffee, but said nothing. "Nice rich milk, this morning!" said Bishop Bennett, pouring a thick creamy fluid into his coffee; but neither he nor any of the others saw anything to alarm them in the rich milk. Evidently they did not know that a ship with weeks of life before her offers her passengers thin white-wash. The creamy milk was a sinister sign.

I felt little inclination to eat. It occurred to me to wonder whether a condemned criminal might escape if he refused the rich breakfast of the last morning. Probably not; and so I struggled with some bread and butter and put an apple in my pocket.

The other passengers were most cheerful, making facetious remarks with great success, and deceiving no one. The mature young man achieved a perfectly horrible joke when we all got up to go out. "Why," he

## THE WRECK

laughed, gripping the chair in front of him and slightly rolling his eyes in horror, "it could be much worse. We might be working our way out of this saloon with water up to our waists." He began breasting imaginary water, gripping chair after chair as he struggled to the door. Even in a talkie his work would not have been convincing, but it conveyed an alarming picture to some of us. One or two gasped, "Ha, ha! "

On deck once more, Dick and I returned to the engine-room skylight. We watched the swirling water, and measured it. It was now barely six inches deep, and when the vessel heeled over, forcing the water to one side, we could even see the criss-cross pattern on the oily engine-room deck plating. But the four engine-room hands, daring to take a spell, comforted us most. They were sitting quite comfortably on the grating half-way down, drinking pink tomato soup from a large round dish. They seemed to be chatting happily. One looked up and smiled.

"All right, now?" I asked with my lips.

He nodded. "Got any fat cigars up there—or a bottle of whisky?" he shouted, and we laughed a reply.

But the request had slightly modified my reassurance. The ship could afford to offer rich milk; passengers could part with fat cigars and bottles of whisky (if they had any) for a similar reason!

Nevertheless, we felt able to talk with great confidence to the other passengers. The crisis had passed, we explained. The propeller shaft or the tail-shaft had certainly broken; there had been a great inrush of water along the tunnel through which the shafting passes to the stern. Then we had been in great danger; now the water was under control. If anyone wanted to see he had only to look down the engine-room skylight; the greasers were having breakfast—pink tomato soup.

The elderly American lady seemed deeply interested.

"I wonder if the cook put a rind or two of bacon in it?" she asked, glancing at the other women as sisters; "it makes such a difference—gives it snap, I think. Other-

## BALING

wise, unless your stock is strong, tomato soup is mighty dull—so thinnish! " The other women stared at her in rather comic amazement. She merely swept the horizon with her sharp old eyes, looking for " another ship."

Returning to the subject of the accident, and I was given flattering attention, I said that I felt certain the damage would soon be temporarily repaired, and that we should be going along shortly towards Raratonga on one engine.

"I knew," said the old lady triumphantly, "I knew! The ship's doing the only possible thing—making for a port to get herself repaired. There'd be no sense in drifting out here, now would there? "

"Not at all! " we admitted.

"Of course," she went on, "I understand exactly what you mean about the propeller reins breaking."

"The propeller shafts! " corrected one of the women.

"Well, the propeller shafts—but what I want to know is, where is the rock—the rock we were nearly wrecked on?"

I was questioned more closely by some of the older men, notably those who had wives and children. Hiding the embarrassment of ignorance, I spoke with decision. I think I was convincing; almost I convinced myself; but behind all this plausible argument, I felt doubt. There was something else, something sinister and dangerous which might be clearly read in the anxious face of the captain when occasionally he appeared on deck, walking hastily towards, or from, the wireless-room.

Dick managed to get one news item. He was told that the cargo vessel, *Penybryn*, was not many miles distant. Every radio in the Pacific was shrieking to her to turn back. She had not replied. It was hoped that she had heard and was unable to reply; but it was very unlikely that she would know of our need until eight o'clock that evening when her daily wireless watch began. It was trying to think of her chugging along on her course, widening the distance between us at every turn of her

## THE WRECK

propeller. Other ships were rushing to our aid, but none of them could reach us within two days.

Gradually, as the time passed, the group which had remained partially complete near the vestibule doors, broke up. Nervously at first, but soon with gathering confidence, people began walking about the deck. The most heartening news was given by the mature young man who came from his deck cabin with his chin slightly powdered and a general air of one playing an elegant man about town in a clever English comedy. "They're setting the table for breakfast," he said. He almost ruined all when he drew our attention to the unusual amount of curling black smoke rising from the great red funnel. "Banking the fires—they always do that! " he remarked with a slightly pessimistic shrug.

"She's an oil burner! " said Dick shortly.

"Exactly! " said the mature young man, but I have no idea what he meant beyond a desire to keep his nautical end up.

Another glance down the engine-room skylight showed us the plates quite free of water. There was an ominous bubbling and hissing at the base of the steel bulk-head between the engine-room and the after-holds, but the situation seemed completely under control.

All danger had obviously passed, we decided, and quite gaily we ran down the grand companion to our cabin. We were the only passengers on the cheapest saloon deck, three flights down from the boat deck. Our nearest neighbour was the printer who had a small cubby-hole amidships. The stewards' "glory 'ole " was immediately aft of us. It was an intimate, neighbourly kind of deck.

We even dared to bath, but now with exquisite organization. Fully dressed, even with overcoats, and carrying a life-belt in one hand and a towel in the other, we nipped into the bathroom and undressed like fire-brigade men, each item placed so that it could be donned quickly, or gathered into a bundle for a run. The process was quite exciting, but there was no luxurious lingering **under** a warm shower.

## BALING

Back in our cabin, greatly comforted because Walker had made our beds, we had finished shaving when we heard some commotion outside our door. Evidently trunks were being moved. We heard Walker talking and the voices of women. Looking out, I saw our steward shepherding a couple of women into the cabin opposite. He came into our room and shut the door.

"Second-class passengers," he explained; "water had got into their cabin, and——"

"Really! From the engine-room, of course?"

"No, not from the engine-room——" Walker hesitated,

"Then——?" I recalled the salt water in the coffee.

"I don't know, sir—but breakfast will be served soon." He smiled (the parish worker smile) and added carelessly, "You'd better bring your life-belts with you; I believe they won't let passengers into the saloon without them. Just a precaution——!"

There we were again: back from safety to danger! Water in the second class, and not from the engine-room! The second-class cabins were on the same deck as ours, some distance aft, probably aft of the engine-room.

"D'you think it's all right?" A young woman had opened the cabin door opposite. She was trying very hard to smile, but tears were not far behind her eyes which were blue and friendly.

We explained about the engine-room, and she was completely reassured. We ended with a few plain remarks about the broken tail-shaft.

"My friend and I got *such* a fright," she said, in the relieved tones of one who had escaped exciting danger. "The stewards were pumping with a hand-pump outside our door when we got up; there was water, a lot of water, in the passage. Did the ship strike a rock?"

Evidently women required a rock for their shipwrecks. Which was unfortunate, because we could not offer them even the tiniest pebble. A rock, of course, would have settled our fortunes one way or the other. It was plain that we should soon be very tired of being neither dead

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nor alive. There was much too much temperamental ocean around.

There were only forty saloon passengers, but the alliance with the second class trebled our numbers. They had evidently brought their help with them; there were several strange stewards in the saloon.

When the mature young man reached the dining-saloon, making a very creditable entrance, his usual seat opposite ours was occupied. He stood behind it, looking down through the head of the wretch in it with a faint note of surprise. There was no result. He registered amazement; finally he shrugged his shoulders, and fell among the vagabonds at a side table where he ate his meal in deep pessimism.

The captain had evidently ordered, "Keep the passengers cheerful!" The chief steward had therefore (presumably) said to the second steward, "Get the gramophone going—put on lively airs!" The second steward had instantly called to him the man who usually kept the slightly asthmatic system of gramophones fed with records at luncheon and dinner, and had commanded, "Give 'em a bit of music—keep it going with lively stuff!"

He obeyed, to the letter—full blast! A great favourite which recurred again and again was,

*Around the corner, and under the tree,  
The gallant major made love to me.  
He kissed me once; he kissed me twice.  
It wasn't quite the thing to do but, oh, gosh! it was nice—  
Around the corner, and under the tree——/*

Discipline never slackened in the stewards' department, but it was now tempered with slight carelessness about non-essentials and much good nature. I am fairly certain many of the stewards lent personal gramophone records for the breakfast concert.

The hearts of some frightened souls may have been cheered; it filled others with dark fojebodings, helping



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them to recall many a shipwreck story: how the band played, "Nearer my God to Thee," how Miss Travers, the heroine of the wreck of the ss. *Magnolia*, gamely played lively airs on the saloon piano until dragged away a few minutes before the vessel sank. She should have been dragged to the scaffold. I speak as a shipwrecked person, not as a newspaper reader.

You can't—you simply can't! Only one melody will keep a man steady in the awful moments of waiting. It is played in his own heart, insistently and softly. It is the courage he himself brings to it, God help him! An orchestra of a million pieces can only drown his shrieking if his defences have fallen.

We had not forgotten our little car, Emily. After breakfast, when there seemed every chance of the ship remaining afloat for some hours, I slipped down through the now deserted steerage to the iron door leading to the hold where she was stowed. The iron door filled me with uncertainty; if someone shut and barred it (it led also to the main hold) I might be effectively trapped. But once down the iron ladder and near our little car, what courage I had returned.

Her paint work and nickel were gleaming; her badges were shining in the dim light. In fact, she still smelt of polish, and the soft cloth I had used the day before hung over the windscreen. Automatically I took the cloth and began rubbing gently.

Ridiculous, I know. But that little car meant much to me. She had often shared great danger with Dick and me before; she was associated in my mind with some of the happiest moments of my life. Her strength and ability to "keep going" had more than once saved our lives.

I recalled the night in Sydney when my petty troubles seemed overwhelming. I had gone to her garage, ostensibly to polish her, but really to think out things—to find a way out which would not appear defeat. She suggested the magnificent idea, the journey around the world—to forget small difficulties by making for myself a big one—in a word, to forge\*: hunting fleas, and to go for a lion.

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"But d'you think you can do it, old girl?" I had asked. "You look pretty enough with your new enamel and fresh loose covers; but they merely mask many a scar—you're getting a bit old!" Like the Tar Baby, little Emily said nothing, but she seemed to let me know plainly enough that at least she could start, that she could but try.

And now her wheels were securely bound in the hold of a sinking liner. How I hoped, just then, that the *Tahiti* might be safely towed into some port.

On deck once more, I found many of the passengers trying to carry on as usual. Some of the men were definitely pale, but lips were often smiling and uttering cheery remarks even when eyes were dull and expressionless. Occasionally there were slightly revealing verbal lapses.

A man joined me at the deck railing from where I was watching the great blue rollers in which the ship's stern sat so heavily: they were beautiful, and I feared them. Said he, "If we could only know how we stand—what the trouble really is, the depth of it! It's all so tentative, so very *tentative*." I think he meant tantalizing, that our swinging from alarm to reassurance, from something like despair to hope, on a measureless field of danger, was tantalizing.

They had not yet managed to raise the *Penybryn*; she, our best hope of rescue, was still chugging away from us. The *Tofua*, then in the region of Samoa, was making for us at full speed. There was talk of the *Makura*, due that day at Papeete. But unless the *Penybryn* should hear of us, there seemed no hope of rescue until Monday; and it was still Friday!

With the engine-room dry and now a hive of reconstructive industry, I could not, for the life of me, understand why the ship's people kept us ready for the life-boats; why each boat was being stored so carefully with blankets; and why (very alarming!) the chief steward had placed his charming little canary in his life-boat. Not that it made any difference to the canary; he sang as well

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in the life-boat as he had been singing in the lounge vestibule throughout the voyage.

But some of us were soon to know the worst.

Dick and I were standing at the after-end of the boat deck watching some sailors removing the hatches from the hold below us. A good deal of interest was shown by the ship's people when the work was completed. We joined them, and looked down into the hold.

All was now clear. The *Tahiti's* position on the ocean surface was extremely "tentative." The hold was two-thirds full of water. The *Tahiti* was like a cat with a broken back, crawling along on its forepaws to an inevitable end. Glancing at the south-western horizon from whence the big roll was coming, I saw that it was clear. Only while it remained clear could we count on comparative safety.

Floating on the water in the cargoless hold, was an awkward assortment of timber, large beams and broken-up wood. Whenever the vessel rolled this unwieldy mass rushed across and landed with a hammering smash against the ship's side, threatening to burst her plates. Guided by the bos'n, the sailors made every effort to fish out the larger beams. They had little success, and the crashing went on.

"But she should be all right for a long time," I said hopefully to one of the junior officers. "There's a strong bulkhead between these after-holds, all full of water, I presume?" He nodded. "And the rest of the ship beginning at the engine-room."

"The strain on the bulkhead is very great," he whispered; "there's an awful lot of water leaning against it which has the effect of a hammer when the vessel moves. It might collapse at any minute, and then——! All the pumps are needed to keep the engine-room dry," he added; "we're going to try to bale out this hold to relieve the strain. Perhaps you had better not wait here," he went on kindly; "other passengers may come, and we don't want——! "

We returned dutifully to the boat deck above, but the

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after railing exerted irresistible fascination. Fortunately for our peace of mind, we could not quite see into the hold. We watched the big derricks being moved into position—an awkward task on a rolling ship; and we seldom left the railing until the winches were working two great buckets which began dropping into the hold and bringing forth gallons of foul-looking water. Two or three men appeared with ordinary hand pails, dropping them into the hold at the end of lines. This little touch of the seaside was soon abandoned.

Indeed the main baling operations were a trifle pathetic, although a passenger offered a comforting explanation which we accepted gladly.

"That water came through from the engine-room at the first rush," he said. "True, there is danger of the bulk-head breaking—the whole weight of the ship is on it when the bow is up on a wave; but it is actually now only a matter of getting the water baled out of that hold. Then we should be perfectly all right."

We therefore learnt to believe that safety depended on the success of the baling, and there seemed no reason why, given time, the water should not be discharged like ordinary cargo.

The man was quite wrong, as a matter of fact. The water in the hold came, and was coming, from the smashed plates probably in the region of the stern tube, but this we did not know.

We watched for some hours, making signs to the men working the winches and derricks. They invariably signalled a happy affirmative when we made signals and gestures, asking if the water was going down. Our greatest feeling of relief came when we could no longer hear the ominous thuds against the vessel's side plates.

"Getting the water down all right," we told each other; "there's not even enough to float that timber." Thus we climbed back to safety, being ignorant of the fact that they were not getting the water down, that it was gaining on them. The timber floated less dangerously on the deck above; the worst of it was jammed under that deck.

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Presumably most people understand the bulkhead arrangements on a ship. Actually, a modern vessel is subdivided into sections by steel partitions. Stout doors, which may be closed from the upper decks during an emergency, permit communication under normal conditions. The *Tahiti* must now be imagined as one quarter full of water, kept in that quarter by the steel partition between the after-end of the engine-room and the two after-holds. The ship's bulkheads were in good enough condition, but they were never designed to resist the mighty force of water indefinitely. The weight they were resisting was never constant; the immense mass of water in the two empty holds literally hammered this bulkhead as the vessel rose and fell in the heavy swell. Our comfort, even our lives, depended on this engine-room bulkhead which, alas, showed signs of weakening from the beginning—water hissing between the plates, and great bulges developing.

The ship's stewards were responsible for the baling. A simple enough business alongside a dock, it was now both arduous and dangerous while the vessel rolled; and they were not used to such work. Stewards in *deshabille* invariably look a trifle pale, but after a few hours' baling some of the *Tahiti* men appeared in a consumptive decline. They spent their rest hours on the boat deck, passengers being delighted to see them reclining on the once sacred deck-chairs. I saw one thin, delicate-looking lad stretched on a deck-chair in what seemed a state of collapse. His face was pallid, and mauve shadows had gathered beneath his closed eyes. I heard him murmur in a sweet, petulant kind of voice to a passing mate, "No tea and toast, thank you, steward; and don't worry to call me when the ship goes down. I shall have passed away in my sleep!" Which was startling until I saw a slight drooping at the corners of his mouth when the mate's reply, a hearty volley of abuse, reached him. The mate only permitted himself to laugh when he had got round a deck-house. These Australian stewards behaved like Tommies in a bad piece of trench. A sense of fun never failed them. For nearly

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fifty hours, the sound of their laughter mingled with the clanking of the great buckets and the rattle—rattle—rattle of the winches. It was all music to our ears.

And so the morning passed. We had been warned to keep our life-belts near us, but as we went in to midday dinner, we were ordered to put them on. "Merely until they get the water baled out of No. 3 hold," we told each other, as we tried to eat nicely with that elderly-aunt-like bulge on our chests.

As the afternoon passed, we became more reassured. The day was so beautiful, just pleasantly warm, and the south-western sky—the danger-point for us—remained perfectly clear. I tried to sleep in a deck-chair, and I might have enjoyed forty winks if I had not been so interested in a steward marching along the lines of life-boats with a great bread-basket under his arm. Into each boat he threw half a dozen sanitary rolls!

The ship had been organized as a section of civilized society before the accident; now an equally efficient organization kept her something between a kindly prison and an aristocratic lunatic asylum. Passengers were never allowed out of sight, and what amounted to sentries were posted, not too obviously, on the landings of the grand companion. Dick and I were not altogether popular when we occasionally visited our cabin.

Going there towards four that first afternoon, we saw a kerosene lamp burning in the printer's cubby-hole. We paused to yarn. Bending over his frame was the printer, composing with some difficulty and great enthusiasm the menu for the evening meal.

"It's a bit of a job, sir," said he, "to get the dinner—er, I mean tea—menu printed in this light."

"Oh, why bother? "

"It's no *bother* I That's what I told the second when he said a written menu would do. A *written* menu! " The printer threw a world of contempt into the word "written." "I always think," he added, selecting a decorative lead for the top, "that a well-printed menu gives the finishing touch to a meal."

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We agreed, and expressed regret that one of the more important offices on the ship—the printer's room—should be amidships, away from portholes, and down on the lowest deck. It made printing most difficult when a ship was sinking.

The printer laughed a little and added, " It might help to keep people from worrying."

And it did. The menus were much more effective than the gramophone concerts.

Towards the late afternoon another alliance was arranged: the third-class passengers were brought up to us, and I met " the three good souls." The three good souls were three middle-aged women, each with a small family of half-grown boys and girls. They instantly established headquarters on a sofa immediately within the promenade deck doors. From this sofa they seldom moved. Although their bodies seemed stiff and inert, their eyes were very much alive with something combining a little personal alarm with a world of anxiety for their children. One of these women had faded red hair, very obviously the mother of a boy of perhaps fourteen whose head might have done for a port light. For him she was most anxious. She was a big woman, I suspect from the Highlands, and this made the care her two small red-headed daughters showed for her, very pathetic and altogether charming.

We became very friendly, and it was a great relief to offer them a few words of comfort whenever I passed. They were quickly responsive when I tried to assure them that a broken tail-shaft was nothing very much in the day's run of a vessel.

Perhaps I was less successful with the red-haired soul who, looking at me with searching eyes, breathed, " We are in the hands of God! " She pronounced it " Gawd " in the way of the Highlands.

" And we're all asking Him to look after us, aren't we? " said one of the others.

" Why, you've only got to look at the south-western sky," I agreed, " to see that He is: not a cloud! While the

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breeze remains gentle, we cannot sink; and every minute brings the rescue-ships nearer."

At five-thirty a gong was beaten for our evening meal. The saloon was now crowded. The most monstrous sight was the red-headed boy in the captain's seat. Only the older stewards were on duty, the younger men being needed for the balers. Our young fellow had been replaced by a thin, ascetic-looking man with the voice and mien of an old family butler. I was looking through the menu (beautifully printed) when this man began, in precise tones, "Upon an occasion like this, sir, it is best to choose simple dishes; anything made up cannot be good." I therefore chose grilled pork sausages.

Incidentally, the *Tahiti's* chef was behaving like a hero. Under normal conditions he is a great man who hardly ever sees a pot; but now, having been turned out of his great galley when the pumps which fed the galley fires with crude oil were needed in the engine-room, he had marched with a small staff to a disused little galley in the crew's quarters, where he was gamely cooking for nearly three hundred people, making every effort to produce meals of creditable variety.

At a favourable moment I asked the elderly steward, "Ever been shipwrecked before?"

"Four times!" he whispered, bending over respectfully with a mustard-pot.

"Is this situation serious?"

He shook his head and smiled grimly.

"One of the most trying experiences in a shipwreck," I recalled having heard, "is the crying of children." Children who had come from the third class were soon crying very bitterly in the *Tahiti's* dining-saloon that evening, drowning the gramophone which was still shrieking hoarsely, still occasionally telling of the gallant major—"around the corner and under the tree."

We finally rose from the table; and leaving the turmoil of humanity, the anxious-faced mothers and the crying children, we climbed the grand companion to the boat deck.





## CHAPTER THREE

### FIRST NIGHT

**S**TANDING casually immediately without the boat-deck vestibule was Denis O'Hara, the deck steward. He might have been lurking, rather confidently, to catch a thief or, more happily, to meet Kathleen O'Neil. As we stepped on to the deck he remarked carelessly, " Oh, you're in No. i boat, sir—this one! " He pointed towards the nearest boat.

" And Dick—Mr. Matthews? " We were anxious not to be separated. I foresaw perfectly horrible anxiety with Dick in one boat and myself in another.

" The same! " said Denis instantly, assuming non-chalance as the other passengers came on deck.

He walked amongst the people like an efficient shepherd gently culling sheep, giving each the number of his boat, and doing it so cleverly that nobody was alarmed, although he knew that a few minutes earlier the bulkhead had developed a bulge which, unless the desperate shoring-up operations were successful, would force the abandoning of the ship. Denis was probably obeying a taciturn order from the chief steward. " Tell them their boat numbers; and don't frighten them while you're at it I "

Not knowing what to think, and becoming slightly alarmed, we remained in a small group near the vestibule doors watching the sun dropping to the western horizon. A sunset at sea, nearly always a majestic sight, had always been associated in my mind with the last division of a sea day—a quick cocktail, a quicker dressing for dinner, dinner with a long menu and not much you could eat with honest appreciation, slightly bad coffee and a yarn or a game of bridge in the smoking-room; then bed. All that was now

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gradually being lost in coming darkness. All that we could now safely call our own we carried with us on the boat deck, near the life-boats.

Came darkness, and we were now a trifle dazed and pathetically obedient like sheep. The kerosene lamps hooked to the deck-houses were lighted.

A few minutes later the large flock had subdivided into small flocks, each gathered near a life-boat. I presume an order had been given; I did not hear it. I simply found myself near my life-boat. An unearthly silence was upon us. Even the great ship seemed to be waiting in deadly silence.

Soon now we should be down on those dark waters, and we looked fearfully at the life-boats.

Some minutes passed, and still we waited. An officer came quickly from the wireless-room; there was whispering, and again, like sheep, the small groups broke up and were scattered about the deck. A crisis had passed; they had managed to shore up the bulkhead.

About two hours later we saw parties of seamen engaged near the boats. "The sailors!" it was whispered; "they're getting the boats ready!"

In a perfectly nonchalant manner these men went about their business. Usually such jolly, shy kind of fellows—painting deck-houses and scrubbing decks in the morning—they now appeared sinister in the dim light. They removed the canvas-topped lids from the boxes containing the spare rope from the davits. One of them seriously shocked a yachting passenger by placing the box lid the wrong way up on the deck. "Most unlucky!" said the yachtsman, turning the lid over; "I've been a yachtsman for thirty years—and *I know!*"

What precisely he knew just then, we could **not** say, neither did we care very much. However, he added very little to our gaiety just then by remarking, "Once we're away from the vessel in the boats we should be all right; it's the *launching* that's so ticklish. I once saw a life-boat **full** of people being launched from a sinking vessel and"—he hesitated—"well, perhaps I had better not say—but it was an **awful sight!**"

## FIRST NIGHT

It was, we were certain. He need not have hesitated. He had painted a vivid picture of one set of life-boat ropes fouling while the others ran out. We could see all the people being spilled out into the sea. I heard their shrieks I

Having completed their preparations, the sailors stood about in small groups talking in hoarse whispers.

"Is it serious? Are we now going into the boats?" I asked one of them.

The man looked startled, and glanced at one of his mates who said, "Wot the 'ell d'you think we're 'ere fur?"

The long minutes became longer hours. At intervals great trays of coffee and biscuits were brought by the stewards. The coffee helped, but the cheery, brotherly attitude of the *Tahiti* stewards helped much more.

After a time we became almost inured to mental strain. Dick even tried to sleep on a life-boat cover which had been flung on the deck. He offered me a place beside him, and I found that by loosening my life-belt the back section could be brought up to form an excellent pillow. But rest was out of the question; all I could now drag from life was pipe after pipe of tobacco as I marched up and down the deck, occasionally pausing to chat with other passengers sitting near their boat stations.

A period of comparative calm began. During this Dick managed to glean some reliable news from an engineer friend. The baling operations had not been successful. They continued merely in an effort to relieve the strain on the bulkhead, now in a very critical condition. Wireless communication had been established with the *Penybryn*; at last she had turned and was coming to our assistance, but she dared not make more than economical speed because she was short of coal. Unfortunately, the *Tahiti* had been drifting away from her at about two knots an hour. She was fairly certain to reach us the next day.

At eleven o'clock the wireless men rigged a loud speaker on the deck for our amusement. We heard the Wellington (New Zealand) announcer giving the news of the day. News about the local stock market was not a bit interesting,

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but our excitement can be imagined when the announcer began, " About the R.M.S. *Tahiti*——" I noticed the fingers of a wireless man creeping towards the switch; evidently we should not hear too much. " About the R.M.S. *Tahiti*, I have just telephoned the Union Steamship Company. I am told that a Norwegian cargo vessel, the *Penybryn*, expects to reach the stricken ship at noon to-morrow. I'm afraid there is no more news. \* The Moon is Low, 'tis Time for Love,' " continued the announcer with hardly a break, " sung by Miss Ethel Smith, accompanied by the Midhurst Orchestra—" The Moon is Low, 'tis Time for Love '—Miss Ethel Smith! " Followed the beat of a piano and the sob of a violin, and a woman's voice.

And curiously, at that moment, the moon was low from the *Tahiti's* deck—on the south-western horizon, rising from a fleecy bed of clouds and staring at us sadly. But we had no time for love that night; we wanted, simply, time to live!

We were very much on edge now. I had no serious objection to dying, dying suddenly, at any rate; what filled me with terror was the thought of the closing scenes in the drama which seemed to be working up to its climax—the women and children, the older men, their exposure in the life-boats in any change of weather.

" Poor souls—poor souls! " I often thought, trying to forget the more disturbing thought—myself, and how things might be faced at the end.

Yet all the people around me appeared composed, and they were very brave. It made one proud to be human. The business was so long, so drawn out—so "tentative! "

Curious thoughts passed through my mind. There was Dick, young and comely, with, I had believed, a delightful future, because people loved him for his glowing manliness and his cleanness. He made me think of my many friends who had found perpetual youth and beauty on the ugly battle-fields. Often I had envied them, thinking how unpleasant it would be to find one's legs getting stiff and rickety, one's hair whitening or disappearing—in a word, getting old, hideous, selfish and useless.

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Now that might be avoided, and all one's worry about accumulating enough money to avoid the workhouse seemed so futile. My teeth had been bothering me. They needed much expensive attention, but our available cash had been needed for the trip round the world. Well, I had not spent the money on the dentist—and what a good thing that was.

Of course, there was God to be thought of. What about Him? Certainly I had been thinking prayers to Him; but what about the future life? Now was the time to repent.

Yes, I had repented, had done so early that morning, more sincerely, more honestly than the "in case" bedside evening prayer under the quilt the night before.

Did I now promise to serve Him faithfully and truly if I escaped drowning or being eaten by the sharks cruising around? No, because I shouldn't—I knew I shouldn't after the first few days.

Did I promise to try?

The question was unfair; my present situation could be later regarded as abnormal. The question came under the heading of undue influence.

It would have to be like this: I'm sorry I haven't been better. It's pretty rotten sometimes here, and He knows it is. I can do one last good thing. I can refuse to take the mean chance of getting right with Him by claiming what I have no right to claim. I am angelic now on this ship, because I have not the slightest desire to be devilish. I am serious because frivolity would be monstrous and obnoxious. He must take me as I am, with hardly a feather to make up the poorest angel's wing.

Came midnight, and the sheep were still resting about the sheep-yard, waiting in the semi-darkness.

"All passengers to their boat stations! All passengers to their boat stations!"

The sailors stood to. The sheep formed into their small flocks. The silence was complete; the great **funnel** rising above us with its curling black smoke seemed to be listening.

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" But I don't know what to do. What shall I do? " It was the old lady talking to the seaman near her.

" It's all right, ma'am! " said the sailor gruffly, yet kindly. " At the right moment the captain will issue his instructions in a clear, ringing voice."

" What's that—the captain will——? "

" Issue his instructions in a clear, ringing voice! " repeated the sailor, with a faint note of reproach. The old lady was evidently not much of a reader!

And again we waited, dim figures whose life-belts caught what light came from the kerosene lanterns, clutching rugs and coats which sometimes hid bags and small treasured possessions.

Again that heavy silence!

" Like a sheep dumb before her shearer! " I thought.

" Another crisis," I whispered to Dick, " and I think it's passing—the pumps are still going, and they haven't abandoned the baling."

" Passengers will go below to the promenade deck and take up positions below their boats."

The order was definite, and very quietly, without undue haste, the little flocks broke up and filed through the vestibule doors, down the grand companion and out on to the promenade deck.

And now we were looking up at the keels of the life-boats. When should we hear the shriek of straining ropes? The boats would soon be down, swinging alongside the deck railing; we should get in and then down—down to the dark, muttering waters below, to begin a new phase, to live life brought down to bare essentials. And the moon still gazed at us sadly.

" The moon is low—'tis time for love! "

Gradually the waiting people began whispering. " I hope both ends work together—when we're going down! " I heard.

" Bill, you're an ass to wear white sand-shoes! " came another whisper. " Didn't you see the sharks this afternoon—and look at them now! See the flashes of phosphorus—their tails lashing the water! They always

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snap at anything white at night. Take off your shoes, throw them in the boat when it comes down."

Waiting again! The long, white keels still above!

Hurry—quick! For God's sake let's get this thing over! Let us down—starve—anything, but wait.

Still waiting! All down the long deck the small flocks of docile sheep.

"All passengers in the lounge! All passengers in the lounge! "

The sheep obeyed and were mustered in the big lounge, once a charming room with chintz-covered chairs and comfortable sofas, small tables with grey silk covers, and rose-shaded lamps; but now, untidy, dark and sombre, smelling of orange peel, stale coffee, food and kerosene.

With burning, anxious eyes, always ready to obey, never to question and seldom even to speak, the heads of the sheep were all turned expectantly towards the lounge doors. There was no thought of a respite; at any moment, we believed, the captain would appear and "issue his instructions in a clear, ringing voice."

The big room was overcrowded, and very soon it became stiflingly hot and foul-smelling. Some very brave sheep used their brains and opened the windows. And still we waited.

"I think another crisis has passed," Dick whispered. "They'll be throwing us into the damn boats one of these times by mistake! "

"Ladies and Gentlemen! " It was the chief officer at the lounge doors. "Ladies and Gentlemen—please don't worry—we've just heard the Norwegian vessel will be alongside in the morning, so we're going to try to hang on for the night; we *should* be able to hang on for the night."

The officer paused; we could barely see his anxious face in the dim light.

"Try to rest! " he went on gently, "try to rest! This is one of the occasions when we have, luckily, plenty of boats—boats to burn. And if we have to call you, we shall want the women and children first."

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The wreck of the *Tahiti* was developing true to form. In thousands of newspapers throughout the world within a few days millions of eyes would be reading the words, "The order was, all women and children first! " I wonder how many lives have been sacrificed to this noble tradition of the sea? Take our own case. Until the order came, " We shall want the women and children first/" every person in the lounge could have reached his boat position within a few seconds. After the order was given, no one had the foggiest notion what he should do. Obviously, there was not a man on that ship who would not have sacrificed his hope of safety for the smallest baby; but no tradition of the sea, no matter how noble, can be more effective in an emergency than honest drill, you knowing your small corner, and I knowing mine.

"Women and children first! " repeated the officer.

" But my babies—my babies—I can't leave them—you can't take my babies. I must——"

It was the foreign gentleman from the third class. His wife had died in Sydney a few weeks before the ship sailed, leaving him with two small tots and an infant. A young peasant woman travelled with them, but she was frightened into inert uselessness. They were travelling to Serbia to the man's mother.

" You see, if you take my babies, they±——" moaned the man.

" There'll be plenty of men to look after your babies," said the officer, who was quite ignorant of the man's story and, like the rest of us, a trifle intolerant of " foreigners." " It is the British tradition! " he added sternly; " don't argue! "

The squashed Serb sat back in his chair and thrust a feeding-bottle into the mouth of the baby he was nursing. The baby shrieked at once, not liking the salt water in the milk.

The situation was becoming distinctly unpleasant. Dick and I finally stole out to the grand companion near the lounge doors where we could smoke without fear of asphyxiation. Through the open doors came the cries



## FIRST NIGHT

and whimpering of children, and the murmur of whispering voices. That lounge was packed tightly with fear. Its aura flowed through the doors and enfolded us.

And now we could be disturbed very easily. The Roman Catholic priest was kept rather busy. At intervals men and women would go to him and talk in whispers for a few moments; they would then withdraw into the shadows. He was preparing them, but the process was arranged with so much delicacy that no one was disturbed. Bishop Bennett's sister had been a little frightened, but the Bishop had reassured her. "All is well," he said. "I don't think our time's come yet; and if it has, we have God's assurance——" "I know—I know!" she replied. "I'm ready, but there's only one thing troubling me—only one thing." "What is it?" asked the Bishop gently. "If," said she, "I could only know who George will marry when I'm gone." George is her almost elderly husband. Incidentally, Bishop Bennett told this story at a big *tangi* at Rotorua a few days ago. It received a great laugh from the crowd, but two or three of the old *wahines* whispered, "Pooh—who'd have her old man, anyway!"

The sound of running feet on the deck above the lounge would make us stand up, ready for the order, "All passengers to their boat stations!" The slight commotion caused when the good stewards entered with trays of coffee and even cases of fruit would cause our hearts to beat rapidly. We drank our coffee slowly, some of us, being often certain that the moment we had finished the order we feared would come.

What I learnt to dread most was a general breaking down of the defences we had all raised—panic! There had been too many shocks; the stifling lounge was not helping. The pumps controlling the intricate sanitary arrangements of the liner had ceased to function.

"My God—now it begins!" I whispered to Dick when a slight commotion in the lounge was followed by a faint hysterical laugh.

There was a stifled scream as a confused movement

## THE WRECK

began near the door. A woman was helped out; she appeared grey and terrible in the dim light. Two stewardesses were with her in a second. They placed her on the step below us.

"Quickly! " came an order; "jam her head between her knees I "

I could hear the click of her neck as her head went over, her short greyish hair almost touching the deck.

" Out on the deck—quick! Take her out on the deck! At once! "

An officer who had appeared from nowhere was giving the orders, and the stewardesses obeyed him, rapidly and effectively and, it seemed, mercilessly, without the slightest sign of sympathy or tenderness.

We had to admit the efficacy of the procedure: a normal display of sympathy might have helped others to reach the breaking point; but the incident was ugly. Evidently they were not going to have panic on the *Tahiti*, although some of the precautions lacked imagination, and seemed calculated to suggest panic, I thought. We were really very docile sheep.

Slowly the minutes passed. Curiously, the hands of my wrist-watch seemed to go much faster on the down grade, the minutes between one and six were shorter. No one slept. I dare say we were all thinking of that bulkhead, praying that it might hold until daylight.

And then gradually the lounge windows emerged from the darkness; the kerosene lamps became yellow. It was the dawning, the end of a night whose terrors cannot be described. Some of us died many deaths that night in a fear more hard to face because it was a community of fear.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### TWENTY—FORTY—EIGHTY!

WHEN the morning offered enough light to see about us, Dick and I ventured on to the boat deck. The sailors, those rough sinister figures of the night before, were sprawling near each of the life-boats sleeping like children. The fellows whose boat was nearest the games locker had packed themselves into it, like tidy bananas in a crate. The stewards were still baling, and they were still laughing and chipping each other. The hum of machinery could be heard in the engine-room. Altogether the ship still lived "tentatively." The stern had sunk a trifle lower and seemed more disinclined to rise when the big waves crept up. Passengers were obviously *de trop* on the boat deck; we soon went below.

In a very honest effort to be helpful, I produced a startling contretemps in the Serbian *menage*.

As we passed into the lounge, noting (with great comfort) that a sailor was sweeping the grand companion, I saw that the Serbian gentleman was sitting open-eyed with his small family around him, all sound asleep.

"How're the babies?" I asked.

"Sleeping now!" he said.

I saw that two little tots had been made comfortable on my coat and rug, and taking a chair near, I proposed to make some attempt to sleep. A few minutes later the Serb began waking up his family.

"Oh, don't wake them!" I urged; "I don't want my coat."

"But," said he, staring at the other passengers who were developing the sheep movement towards the doors, "we must now go to the boats."

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" Nonsense! " I laughed; " they're sweeping the stairs," and I reached the doors with the leading sheep in time to hear some of them say wearily, " We haven't to go to the boats; they're sweeping the stairs."

But great damage had been done to the peace of the Serbs. The awakened baby was demanding food, and its bottle was empty. Whenever the poor man thrust the rubber nipple into the infant's mouth, there was a sigh of joy to be followed instantly by a yell of protest. It was obviously food, not comfort, the baby needed.

Taking the bottle I nipped down the companion to the deserted pantry, the poor father calling after me, " If there is a leetle sugar—two small spoons full, please——"

I mixed the milk myself, tasting the warm water to be certain there was no salt. Sugar was a difficulty, but eventually I found what I believed to be fine castor sugar in a saucer. It was fine table salt, as a matter of fact! I thrust two teaspoons full down the neck of the bottle, replaced the nipple and hurried back in triumph.

"Ah—you are good—thank you!" said the Serb, casting grateful dark eyes upon me.

"I put sugar in," I said, "but you'd better shake it! " He did.

The bottle was then thrust into the baby's hungry little lips. Its small hands clutched the bottle, and all was peace for about three seconds, three draws.

It is impossible to forget the expression which then crept over the infant's face. It combined surprise, horror and the utmost fury soon to be expressed in the most distressing howls as it literally spat out the bottle. The process was repeated three times, with similar results. Finally the nurse took charge, glancing at the father contemptuously.

First she placed the baby comfortably on her lap, crooning gently to it. There was an immediate response, the baby was quiet. Then she held the nipple near the baby's mouth, and the baby's chubby little hands went up to grip it. Finally, with an angelic smile, she put the nipple in her own mouth and took an honest draw.

I was about to say to the Serb, " That's how it should

## TWENTY-FORTY-EIGHTY!

be done; men don't understand these things," when the nurse, muttering something perfectly blood-curdling in her own language, flung the bottle savagely on the deck and began spitting copiously.

"It is all salt—all salt!" translated the wretched father.

I rushed back to the pantry and tasted the "castor sugar." I thanked heaven it was merely table salt. I thought it best to steer clear of the lounge for a while; I left the matter in the hands of a stewardess who said afterwards that she nearly had a fit when I told her.

They brought us coffee and biscuits, and from the lounge railing we could see them sweeping the dining-saloon, getting ready for breakfast. It was delightful.

I met the chief officer on the grand companion. "Look here," he said, "you might let them all know that we've just been talking with the Norwegian; she expects to be with us a little after noon."

"I say, old chap," I replied, "is that really true—really true? They're apt to believe me; I don't want to destroy my credit."

"Dinkum!" said he, which is Australian for a strong affirmative.

I gave the glad news to each tired little group in the lounge. They clapped their hands; I might have been an item. Some believed me!

The three good souls were on their sofa. I told them. The big red-haired woman thanked me with her eyes, and glanced towards the red-headed lad. For his sake, she was glad. Otherwise, all had been well with her. She agreed with me, with her eyes, that the red-headed lad was rather enjoying it, but that her Highland imagination had pictured what might have been.

Breakfast was a delightful meal, like a joyous picnic. "No milk in my tea, please," I heard Dick say to the steward; and it was delightful to think that he could choose, that he could even have hot tea, and served respectfully, too. The milk was almost dangerously rich; there was a great profusion of fruit, and the simple food was

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cooked excellently, all capped by a fascinating menu with delightful lines and decorative leads.

Let the ship sink! The day was delightful, the wind not nearly enough to put white caps on the big rolling waves. There were plenty of boats, anyway—and now, at the worst, it would only mean a few hours in them. The barber, it was said, had marked down his goods to a fraction of their cost, offering pretty sunshades, suitable for a water excursion, at bargain prices. He could not find even a prospect, but they were very pretty sunshades.

Gone were the terrors of the night. A radiant day of hope had dawned.

"The Norwegian is coming; she'll be alongside at about two! 'A little after noon, they said; that should be about two. We should see her smoke at noon." Faces were smiling; despair had gone.

"They say they may be able to save our light luggage; and look, the sea is much calmer—getting calmer and calmer—just arranged for us. Really, it's extraordinary the way things have worked out. It will make it easy getting across to her. Thank God we shan't have to spend another night on this ship. Oh, wasn't it awful? Another night would about——"

There was a great running to and fro with suit-cases, people searching eagerly through their big trunks, selecting what they valued most, and jamming this into suit-cases until hasp trouble became general and ropes were in demand. It was quaint to see the more wealthy women looking through enormous trunks dangling with pretty frocks, trying to select what they loved best. The morning passed quite gaily. Dick and I owned a small motion picture camera which would take standard size film in spools of eighty feet. The hope which now grew of retrieving our fortunes by taking shots of the vessel and the coming rescue was modified when we realized that we had only eighty feet of raw stock left. However, there were two spools only partly used which had jammed. Dick thought of retiring into a blanket dark-room with a nail file—a useful tool when our spools jammed.

## TWENTY—FORTY—EIGHTY!

Much in the way of business had been missed. A short poignant shot of the captain in bed receiving the first news of the accident would have been most valuable. We could have asked him to rehearse this later in the day; he might not have put us in irons! Then the fainting women in the lounge the night before!—a wonderful touch of reality: most valuable! However, a flash-light would probably have revived them instantly, making the powdering of noses of vital importance. We had missed a great deal; we determined to be more alert in future. I now photographed a few of the women with the still camera. All efforts to make them register terror and alarm failed signally, and the result was a pleasant picture of smiling girls, quite valueless as property!

We were offered an excellent midday dinner, but we were much *tjoo* excited to spend much time on that. Soon we were all on the boat deck, most of us armed with glasses which swept the south-western horizon for the column of smoke we longed so much to see. We had been given no further official information, but that did not matter; the Wellington radio had said quite plainly, "A Norwegian cargo vessel expects to reach them about noon."

At about two o'clock I saw the purser hurrying along the deck from the wireless-room to the bridge. "Any news?" I asked.

"Twenty miles off!" he said.

"Twenty miles off!" I told the other men; "just over the horizon really."

"She's probably doing about seven knots," said one of the men; "seven into twenty goes about three times. It's now just after two—that will make it about five-thirty; it gets dark here soon after six—she's just in time—a close thing. They can get the women and kiddies over before dark."

I was in the lounge chatting with some of the women-folk when the chief officer appeared. "We're going to fire a rocket, ladies and gentlemen," said he; "don't be alarmed if you hear an explosion."

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"To guide the Norwegian," we said; "of course she might be a bit out in her reckoning."

Up went the rocket, leaving a quaint little cloud high in the sky.

"They'll see that twenty miles off—easily," said the yachting passenger.

In our joy, it seemed to us that the Norwegian was practically alongside.

"Of course she won't have much accommodation—just a cabin or two; but we'll be able to sleep on the decks. They'll be iron, too—what fun!" Some of us felt an impulse to chuckle like boys.

Now that we were all safe, we decided to open a subscription list to show the ship's company our gratitude. The delicate millionaire tactfully asked to be allowed to place his name at the bottom of the list; it seemed so decent of him! We thought it slightly snobbish of the wealthy merchant to object to a second-class lady being on the committee, but she was rather a gas-bag when you came to think of it—now that we were safe! And, of course, she was a second-saloon lady, and not nearly so well turned out as the wealthy merchant's wife who occupied (had reoccupied) one of the best cabins.

The night with its horrors had passed. We were now no longer men and women praying to God to help us, to save us from the awful thing. We were again members of society; but not for long!

A queer hush had fallen on a small group of men near the vestibule door; one of the officers had been with them.

"There has been a mistake," they said quietly; "the Norwegian is forty miles off—not twenty—forty!"

"Six into forty goes about seven times—seven hours! That means ten o'clock."

Another night of darkness on the waters—in that awful lounge. But no—not quite a night, just about half.

"I'm afraid your little Emily is not a good mascot after all," said the delicate millionaire.

"We're not sunk yet!" I replied. I told him how Emily had once before been on a sinking ship off Brisbane.



## TWENTY-FORTY-EIGHTY!

The *Arafura* had lost a propeller and had run into a hurricane. Her situation was almost hopeless, but the other propeller had kept her head up to the wind, and she won through—because Emily was on board!

"Well," laughed the delicate millionaire, "I promise to fill her radiator with champagne if she takes us out of this."

Dick and I paid our little car another visit about this time. We tied back the big iron door before going down the iron ladder.

"I think she'll get us through all right, Dick," I said; "she'll reach Birmingham——"

"I hope so," he said. "They'll have to do a lot of work on her clutch before we tackle the deserts of Asia."

He opened the bonnet and glanced over the engine as I had often seen him do in days which now seemed a million years away.

Emily had some valuable souvenirs on her. I thought of removing them. "Only—in case!" I quickly said to myself; but the mischief had been done! I had shown lack of faith.

Back on the boat deck we immediately sensed that atmosphere of fear which we had learnt to know. Elderly men were sitting quietly in chairs, looking pale and older. There was a strained expression on all faces now.

"Any news?" we asked.

"The Norwegian, they've just heard, is eighty miles off—not twenty, not forty, but eighty. They've been making for our original position; we've been drifting at the rate of two miles an hour. We're still drifting at that rate; it means sixteen hours—at least sixteen hours."

"And they say," whispered another passenger, "that with all the weight of water in the stern, and the bows empty, she may break her back at any minute. And they don't know whether to put us in the boats and risk death for some of the women through shock and exposure—or to hang on!"

Down to the depths we had fallen again. Upon melancholy occasions like this it might be expected that

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many would think of a strong brandy or a double whisky at least. There was no drinking that I knew of on the *Tahiti* during the trouble, and yet most of us were used to the more or less ocean travel habit of a cocktail before meals and a whisky and soda after dinner. I think we knew that nothing external could help the spirit of courage we had all called to our aid; perhaps we feared the inevitable reaction. The bars were closed, anyway; but drink would not have been difficult to get had we wanted it.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### LAST NIGHT

I DO not know how others felt; I merely know that I tried not to care.

You could not, you simply could not, permit events to play with emotions any further.

The *Penybryn* was evidently going backwards; she would reach us stern-first in about five months' time if we waited. Secretly I suspected that both ships were insecure regarding precise knowledge of their relative positions. I centred what hope I permitted myself on the small island steamer *Tofua* which we knew must reach us on the Monday. In the boats, we should probably make for Raratonga, now about four hundred and twenty-five miles to the north-east, and the *Tofua* would pick us up on the way.

The *Tahiti* could not live; the mighty struggle to keep her afloat must very soon reach the point of exhaustion; the limit of man-power and human endurance could not be far off.

The sun was sinking towards the western horizon, now a mass of not altogether kindly clouds. There was a presage of wind, and I thought much of it. As the vessel rose on each big wave there began that creak—creak—creak which is not an unhealthy sign on a well-found ship, but which sounded ominous on the dying *Tahiti*.

The joy of the past morning was now demanding its toll; although much more tired, we were less able to rest.

The nice little discussion which had arisen regarding the disposal of the money we had collected for the ship's people was completely forgotten. They must still give to us; we could give them nothing. And there were no first-

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class passengers now, no second class, no third class; we were now souls without any physical precedence.

Incidentally, I had never before regarded my soulship as giving any peculiar advantage until I said to Denis O'Hara that afternoon, "I think you stewards have been splendid, really splendid, the way you've dealt with us. We've appreciated all of it."

"Then perhaps, sir, we *are* souls!" returned Denis, with a slightly quizzical expression in his dark eyes.

"Why of course you are," I laughed; "what d'you mean?"

"Have you ever noticed," said Denis, "how in newspaper accounts of wrecks they say, 'The ship sank carrying twenty souls with her, and six members of the crew'?"

We had an evening meal. As we entered the dining-saloon our life-belts were inspected, to see that they were tied correctly. The fuller bosomed women must have felt extremely uncomfortable. The life-belts made our chests hot, engendering a kind of prickly heat which was most annoying. There was not much conversation in the saloon; few of us made any serious attempt to be hearty.

After tea I spent a few minutes with the three good souls, now back on their sofa. The large, faded blue eyes of the red-haired woman were slightly troubled, but only because of the red-headed boy. Nothing in the sea or on the earth could hurt her personally, I saw. The two others drew strength from her; they were less strong, more feminine, I think. "Life can't hurt you," she seemed to tell them, "unless you let it!" And they were trying not to let it. Oh, if one could have done something for them; but there was nothing, except the drug of lies, and that could not be used without fighting God.

The sun went down as we sat in the dimly lighted lounge. Another night was beginning.

For a time, as darkness gathered, I sat in the corner of a sofa. I had determined to make my mind a blank. The climax must be faced. To think of escaping, to harbour hope, was merely asking for disappointment. I would sit with the others and forget everything.

Around me were more man a manured men and women gathered into little groups, whispering—whispering—whispering. I felt that aura of fear upon me, and it was stifling. The people around became a dim grey, quivering mass. One had to do something.

"Dammit—why worry about yourself. Life has given you everything you have wanted and more! You're nearly middle-aged. Why be a poltroon at the end? Put your finger up to your nose at this thing. Live while you can live—and cheer up these poor devils, if you can."

"Look here," I called out, "what about some community singing? Might cheer us up a bit."

"Oh, yes—do! Let's! What a good idea!" The voices were quite eager.

Sir Hugh Allen volunteered as pianist. "What shall we have first?" he asked, taking the piano-stool. "'Swanee River' to start with?"

The opening bars were played charmingly, and the singing began. I had hoped to retire once more within myself, but I was soon faced with a terrible duty. If the community singing were to be a success, Sir Hugh, the master of music, must be removed. He enjoyed as much success in the role of Tahiti'-lounge-community-singing-accompanist as the most eminent surgeon on earth would enjoy cutting heavy firewood with his lancet. Two violent opposites met—a perfect accompaniment and a very bad chorus. It is fatal to be a good musician if you want to lead ragged community singing; it's not playing that is needed; it's hammering and crashing and personal yelling.

I said to Dick, "I think I'd better play—I can crash out chords, bad, but I can crash them; and I can yell."

The suggestion shocked Dick, and his reply, an extremely polite "Ye—es!" said much more, or less, than that.

I was squashed for a moment, but the chorus was slowly dying. I therefore struggled through the crowd to the piano just at the moment when fortunately, Sir

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Hugh was getting up. He evidently appreciated his limitations as a bellowing bull, and there was no time to train the chorus.

We now began with "I Love a Lassie"—a great and terrible success with ghastly chords and crashes, titivated up with imperfect little incidentals. Followed "Pack up Your Troubles"—how I thundered that! How we all bellowed it; and it did us good. Then in more sombre, but not uncomfortable mood, "There's a Long, Long Trail A-winding" and "There's an Old-fashioned House," some of the lads from the third class making free with words rhyming with "house" including "louse." Great fun!

I struggled on for a long time, but lack of sleep, sheer funk, anxiety, and presumably fatigue and depression (at the best it seemed impossible for Dick and me to carry on with the world trip) finally made me so hoarse that I could no longer lead the chorus, and even my fingers became tired.

"There's a young lady here who'll oblige; she plays—perhaps you want a spell?" It was the saxophonist who had played the *Tahiti* good-bye the day we left Wellington—a dark, comely young fellow called Frank.

And so the young lady took the piano-stool while the young fellow removed his saxophone from its rich leather case.

Their choice was more topical than mine. They began with "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep." The saxophone came very much into its own, and should have torn the *Tahiti's* other propeller out, and sunk us without more ado. However, Frank and the girl loved it all, and their friends were not a bit depressed. We superior persons were highly amused, but not obviously. We chuckled quietly, and the room was fairly dark. The nature of "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep" hardly makes for a rousing chorus; but folks joined in, notably in the heavy sombre passages—"Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep! "

Still maintaining that topical note, Frank and the girl next played us "Asleep in the Deep." The chorus went

## LAST NIGHT

very well, all of us getting in the last bits with great effect:

*Sailor beware! Sailor take care!  
Danger is near—so be-ware—be-e-e-ware!  
Many brave hearts are asleep in the deep—  
So beware!*

And the effect was excellent, although there was a good chance that within a few hours, if the weather changed, which it now looked very much like doing, many of our brave hearts would be sound asleep in water three miles deep, or inside the bellies of sharks.

There was something charming about Frank and the girl's work: Frank adoring his saxophone, the pale little face of the girl at the piano full of pride in her playing before so many people, and not making many mistakes. She had forgotten her fear.

" 'The Rosary' ! " someone called out. " It's so nice with the sax.l "

The boy and girl were a trifle insecure here, the latter not getting her notes collected together for the big chords at the opening in time to keep up with Frank, who went on regardless! "The Rosary" was rather haunting, literally.

A flippant superior person called out, "What about 'Nearer my God to Thee'?" and those who happily understood laughed as loudly and as gaily as they dared, to help the superior person out, although I do not think he knew he was "in." And no irreverent laugh could have been more reverent in effect. One of God's greatest gifts is plain common sense. To have sung the beautiful hymn would have been to outrage common sense. It might have comforted some; to others, the majority in that lounge, it would have meant the breaking-point. The laugh reassured many a frightened soul; I shudder to think what it prevented in that crowded lounge: panic and hysteria, probably.

The singing and playing died out, and the hours passed. We were finally cowed, at bay! And we were

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so very tired, and yet unable to sleep a wink. I again felt that curious impression of tangible fear—a quivering of the dim air above the grey mass in the lounge. And now that the singing had ended, the babies took over and did their best. The ship was pitching more; the creak—creak—creaking became more ominous.

"If they put us in the boats shortly, there'll be some fun!" Dick whispered.

Once a tall steward came round with a great tray of coffee and biscuits.

"The boats, at last!" we decided, but now without lively terror. "This coffee is really now meant to hearten us—oh, well, it doesn't matter!"

Possibly the young fellow sensed this impression, for after serving each little group, he would say cheerfully, with a flash of his teeth (he had some gold ones in front), "I'll be round again about eleven; watch out for me!" Despite our boasted resignation, it was positively delightful to suspect there might be an eleven o'clock, not in the boats.

The life-belts often produced weird effects in the lounge. Unattractive and deforming in daylight, they now appeared as pillows on the chair and sofa backs. You could see the dim outline of a body which ended in a pillow. The body's head seemed detached, and perched on the pillow like a coco-nut. Occasionally you could simply make out a chair, a pillow, a head, and no body at all.

We learnt to hate our life-belts. They became the outward and visible sign of a great fear. One young woman who told us she was a free lance journalist had assumed the proportions of a whale. She said, "Without three or four frocks, I am lost in a hard world; they won't permit baggage in the boats; they can't very well undress me—Fve got four frocks on!" In addition she wore a cloak over her life-belt, and moved about like a hermit crab.

Rumours were flying about now. During those moments when the Norwegian was expected at any minute, the ship's people had lost some of their reserve;



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we therefore knew more about the *Tahiti's* condition than was perhaps good for us. The fear of the vessel breaking her back with the terrific weight aft and empty holds forward was not really absurd. It would have been extremely unpleasant to find ourselves spilt out from the foggy lounge into the cold sea.

I had returned to a sofa immediately within the lounge doors when a sharp explosion was heard, followed by a gleam of light across the lounge windows.

"A rocket!" some of the men shouted. "A rocket! The Norwegian—it must be the Norwegian—let's go and see!" There was a rush from the lounge.

"No," I whispered to the women near me, "don't believe it yet—wait!"

We waited almost breathlessly.

Some men returned. "We've seen a light—the Norwegian is coming!" they said.

"Wait a little longer," I urged; "you can see anything you want badly to see on the ocean at night."

Other men returned. "Go on!" we heard; "there's no light; it was a falling star you saw."

More of the men came back, some certain they had seen a light, others equally sure they had not, these latter laughing a little bitterly when they said, "They've seen the Rio!"

I decided to look for myself. As I passed up the grand companion I met the chief officer. "Is there a light?" I asked. But he, noting the crowding men at the lounge doors and the anxious faces of the now thoroughly roused women peering through, smelt panic. In unmistakable tones he shouted, "Back to the lounge—back to the lounge, at once!" A thoroughly good fellow, the *Tahiti's* chief officer, he wanted so badly to keep us calm and tranquil, but since we always were perfectly calm and outwardly tranquil, much of his effort was wasted. Had we been a calm ocean, we might have regarded him as a typhoon, and roughened up at once. But we were merely poor frightened sheep.

But the *Tahiti* continued firing rockets, and glorious

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flares began burning from the bridge. The peasant of the ocean was returning slowly over the south-western horizon. The aristocrat of the Pacific was waiting very humbly.

We were saved.

The common oil lamp on the foremast of the cargo ship *Penybryn* was coming slowly over the south-western horizon, "clad," it seemed, "in the beauty of a thousand stars." Soon she was waiting a few cable lengths away, rising and falling on the still kindly sea, eager to offer us succour. But a more commodious passenger vessel promised to reach us at dawn, and it was thought best to make the transshipment in daylight. The *Penybryn*, God bless her, stood by.

I shy at an anti-climax; my story of the wreck is the story of a great fear; and fear was left behind in the poor old *Tahiti's* lounge when at last, actually when the passenger vessel was on the horizon the next morning, the bulkhead collapsed and the order came, "Women and children first!" Followed less than an hour in the life-boats, an exciting ascent to the hospitable decks of the passenger vessel, and then a very sad spectacle—the actual sinking of the *Tahiti*. Imagine how we felt when we saw her, not many cable lengths away, slowly fling her lovely bows into the air and then, with rather an accusing, agonizing roar from her funnel, she slipped below the water.

Bishop Bennett called us all to the music-room. We prayed a little, we sang a little, and then we repeated with the Bishop:

"So when they cry unto the Lord in their trouble: he delivereth them out of their distress.

"For he maketh the storm to cease: so that the waves thereof are still.

"Then are they glad because they are at rest: and so he bringeth them unto the haven where they would be.

"Oh that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness; and declare the wonders that he doeth for the children of men."

## BOOK TWO

## FRESH START







## CHAPTER SIX

### THE PACIFIC

THE rescue steamer eventually carried us back to New Zealand where we found a startling market for the motion pictures Dick had managed to shoot, the still pictures I had taken and the articles I was able to write. We became quite rich. Indeed, if the *Tahiti* had not sunk, I suspect we should have been bankrupt in the region of Calcutta.

Never was such a wreck; it is true we could hardly have done without it.

With poor little old Emily's insurance as a fairly strong foundation, we were soon able to buy another Baby Austin, a smart modern young thing of dim blue which we called Emily II. Emily II was naturally more capable of making the great journey than her dainty little grandmother; but although she never failed us, she has not yet succeeded in winning from me more than honest friendship based on respect and admiration; something of my heart—my car heart I suppose I had better add on behalf of common sense—lies at the bottom of the Pacific.

Precisely a month to an hour from the time we had left Wellington in the *Tahiti*, we were on board the R.M.S. *Makura* of the same line bound once more for San Francisco, via Raratonga and Tahiti. A few minutes before the vessel sailed, the Austin factory representative in New Zealand showed us a pleasant cable from Sir Herbert Austin. This gave us Emily II; and we were instantly more than a hundred pounds richer, for we immediately telegraphed to the agents in Auckland who had sold us the car at cost price, asking them to credit us with that amount, a useful nest-egg which gave comfort in lean days.

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Four days out we naturally thought particularly of the *Tahiti* with poor Emily inside her, for we were now near the spot where, I believed, she lay on the ocean bed. I tried to imagine Emily's condition. She had been lashed so efficiently to the deck of the hold where they had stowed her that, even if the vessel turned turtle a few times before reaching the bottom, she would not have been badly smashed. Most of the men who heard us discussing the old ship's condition at the bottom of the sea seemed to enjoy exercising their imagination on the *Tahiti's* liquor store. One man in the *Makura's* smoking-room gave it as his reasoned judgment that the vessel was squashed to pulp.

"Pressure, great pressure, at that depth!" he said. "She is ironed flat—a tangled mass of steel and iron. This would happen, or begin, before the champagne and beer bottles in her cellar could have time to burst. The sea bed is three miles below us here!" he added impressively.

"Which," said Dick, with a remarkable semblance of confidence, "would prevent the ship from ever, or only by chance, reaching the bottom. The drawing power of gravity," he added, with an expression worthy of a science master, "would gradually be modified as she descended. Pressure from all directions would eventually keep her suspended two miles down, possibly, when all air had been ejected."

"Oh, rot!" shouted a long-necked man, thrusting his head through the porthole behind us; he had been listening to the argument from the deck. "Tommy-rot!" he repeated. "The ship sank, and she hit the bottom with a moderate thud; and I don't mind if all the champagne and beer bottles in her cellar burst with the pressure. She's at the bottom, all right," he added confidently, "because that's where a ship should go when she sinks; it's common sense."

It certainly seemed more restful to me.

The *Makura's* tail-shaft remaining intact, her boilers not bursting, her people being careful not to set her on fire, and her bows keeping away from rocks—no accident would have found us entirely unprepared (Dick had plenty

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of raw stock for the motion picture camera) on the stretch of ocean between Raratonga and New Zealand—we reached the former island safely and went ashore with the Resident Commissioner who had invited us to be his guests.

Raratonga is one of the more beautiful Pacific Islands. Mountainous peaks descend to a surrounding strip of heavily wooded, fairly flat, fertile country. The barrier reef and the fringing reef meet so often that the occasional stretches of lagoon are reef-locked for vessels of any size. The mail steamer anchors precariously on the edge of the fringing reef off the settlement called Awarua on the leeward side of the island. People go ashore in barges, occasionally with some trepidation.

The climate, of course, is tropical, but never seriously unpleasant; the dry season can be delightful, and the wet, although a trifle steamy, is not really hard to bear. The natives are more akin to the Maoris of New Zealand than to the Tahitians who live so much nearer; indeed, although intercommunication between New Zealand and Raratonga must have been very rare and extremely hazardous before European settlement, the Raratongans call themselves Maoris and speak a remarkably similar tongue. The average Raratongan is darker than the average Tahitian, perhaps a trifle more energetic, and while always friendly and good-natured, he is a thought less charming. It is, of course, difficult to judge to-day. The Tahitians, under French rule, sing their Swan Song (they are a dying race) with French vivacity; the Raratongans, still affected by an earlier missionary regime (less poetical but as uncompromising as the Law of Moses) under an honest, if unpicturesque, New Zealand Government, sing a Moody and Sankey hymn very tunefully. The Raratongans may not get as much fun out of life as the Tahitians, but evidently their veneer of New Zealand respectability cum missionary piety is helping them to enjoy longer days on the earth.

Not but what the Raratongans can be very naughty indeed, sometimes—notably when a party of them brew a petrol-tin of fermented orange juice and make merry with

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it in a hidden valley. They try very hard to keep the picnic a secret, but are defeated by their own infectious laughter and hearty singing when the orange juice takes charge, literally forcing the policeman to go up to arrest them. A local police officer told me that to arrest Raratongans around a petrol-tin of fermented orange juice is both heart-rending and delightful: they remain such cheery gentlemen with it all and so very hospitable. Delightful children are the Raratongans; missionary influence may tend to repress, but it is an honest, well-meaning, tidy kind of repression, tidy like bottles of soda water stowed in a well-kept store—not objectionable unless opened carelessly.

The Raratongan atmosphere of respectable contentment, while doubtless admirable for the natives, is not exciting for the average traveller, notably when accommodation is poor and of the small town kind. When the unfortunate, deadening (apparently unavoidable) effect of prohibition is felt even by the most temperate people, few visitors escape boredom. That, however, is merely the traveller's point of view, and of no importance whatever in the preservation of a delightful Polynesian race whose chances of survival are increased a thousandfold when liquor is banished.

I gained the impression during the few weeks I spent on Raratonga some time ago that amongst the white population the sheep are sharply divided from the goats, the sheep being very white indeed, and the goats, in the opinion of the sheep, anyway, very wicked and skittish. The sheep established themselves during the early missionary days when the native government was definitely theocratic and the goats were firmly kept away from the pastures; they are still powerful. Doubtless very good people, it must be difficult for them to escape the inevitable narrowing effect of insular life. They seemed a bit tucked-up, spiritually and mentally.

Finding many of my old native friends dead, and the rest absent from Awarua the day the *Makura* called at Raratonga, Dick and I joined a swimming-party, arranged



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by the Resident Commissioner. We motored some miles to a good lagoon with a sandy beach. Unfortunately the weather was rather windy and showery, and the lagoon water was actually chilly; bathing was therefore not particularly amusing. There is nothing much in the incident beyond, perhaps, a little touch of humanity and a warning not to eat too much and to fight the middle-age spread doughtily; but the very stout middle-aged gentleman who joined the party invariably swims across my mind whenever I think of that afternoon at the lagoon on Raratonga.

He wanted to swim very badly, and he hovered near the hut where we were changing with a melancholy light in his cheerful eye. "I'd like to have a dip, y'know," he sighed to our host, "but——"

"Why not?" said the Resident Commissioner. "Plenty of swimming togs here!"

"Oh, I've left my"—he mentioned some kind of belt, the name of which I did not catch—"on the ship; it's too far to send back for it."

"Hard luck!" said the Resident Commissioner sympathetically.

The Resident Commissioner must have known the value of his belt, for he seemed to dismiss all thought of his guest swimming. However, it soon began to look as if the very stout middle-aged gentleman would take a chance. He began looking over an assortment of swimming suits hanging from pegs. "This," he remarked, taking down something in bright green and black stripes, "seems a big one. And," he added thoughtfully, "if I take it quietly—if I take it quietly, I might——"

"Stout fellow!" I remarked to Dick as we walked towards the beach. ("True!" said Dick.) "He wants to swim very badly. I hope nothing happens on the beach! What's the thing he left on the ship? Did you hear?"

"An abdominal belt!" said Dick. "A kind of combined belt and sling, I suspect," and becoming technical, and **not** leaving much to the imagination, or perhaps **too much**, he gave some excellent **information about abdominal**

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muscles, based on his early experience on his father's farm. I gathered that abdominal muscles could hang on better than they could lift; that a very fat bullock had a more comfortable time than a very fat man. Not having stiffness like a shelf bracket, for instance, in the case of a stout man, they required assistance in the way of stout linen harness supporting a comfortable sling, notably when the supporting effect of strong clothing was missing.

Possibly our nerves had not yet recovered from the *Tahiti* wreck. I know that marine accidents—sinkings, running on reefs, and fires at sea—were never far from my mental horizon at this time; and I also know that I feared the worst when a few minutes later the very stout middle-aged gentleman stepped delicately down to the beach in bathing kit—a monstrous, a comic and (surely) a sad picture of one who looked well enough in ordinary clothing. However, I soon felt reassured. After successfully launching himself, the very stout middle-aged gentleman seemed perfectly at home in the water; he was soon merely a comely head propelled happily along with a useful breast-stroke. He had an estimated draught of about four feet; but the lagoon soon deepened to a fathom. The sea-bed being happily free of jagged coral, even an unexpected grounding on the soft sand would produce nothing more startling than a gentle caress. I did not see him dry-docked; he probably came in under his own steam.

We left Raratonga late in the afternoon, and two days' steaming brought us off Tahiti and Moorea. As the *Makura* cruised smoothly along the outside of the barrier reef to the passage off Papeete, the passengers gathered on the promenade deck to watch the little town emerging from its valley and clustering trees.

"Papeete! " I sighed, and glanced at Dick, who returned my gaze with a dumb appeal in his eyes. "Papeete! " I murmured a thought louder, and perhaps determinedly.

Dick now smiled sympathetically; but it was overdone: **he clearly knew how hopeless it would be to stop me. I**

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might add here that when we were leaving Papeete the next day, now watching the little town folding itself up in its valley and clustering trees, Dick said, "Have you been to San Francisco?"

I had not and admitted it.

"Thank heaven I " said he.

"Thank you! " said I.

"To be serious," he went on slowly, "I think it's going to be so much nicer for both of us—to explore new places. When you begin telling me about a place before we reach it, and saying how marvellous it is and all that, I begin by hating it. It's stupid, I know—but there you are I "

I had suspected this long before the day I began boring him as the *Makura* cruised along the Tahiti reef; but I thought he might live it down; and anyway, like the little boy asked why he had broken all the windows in an empty house, I can only plead that it "faskinated" me. I went on:

"D'you see that point of land running out a mile or so on the other side of the town?" (Dick nodded) "Taunoa! That's where I lived for nearly nine months in a palm-leaf hut."

Dick seemed at once interested. "Did you grow a scrubby beard?" he asked. "And wear a battered straw hat and ragged bags, and take to drink with another beach-comber and get mixed up with dark women, and then get saved by a pure maiden you had known in happier days?"

But that availed him nothing. I might have said, "Dick, I am not a talkie!" and he might have replied, "Oh, no!" escaping the dead water of boredom invariably welling from the mind of an "old hand" of any place, as he paddled us off down the fresher stream of frivolity. I know Tahiti well; he did not; he simply had to submit. I went on:

"To the right there—you can just see the roof beyond those dark green trees—are the old French barracks. I ran a hospital there during the epidemic; but I've told you about the hospital before, haven't I?"

"Yes: often!"

"That's where it was. That long red house on the

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water-front was, and probably still is, the Annexe to the Tiare Hotel, the famous Lu'wina's hotel. If you stayed at the Annexe, you were cool at night, but breakfast, after a walk to the Tiare, depended largely on the kind of party the hotel maids had enjoyed the night before. They got up steam better towards luncheon."

"Huh! " said Dick.

"That's the Roman Catholic Cathedral with the spire; you can just see the top of Government House. The last time I was there I went to say good-bye to the French Governor, talking to him from the garden while he remained entrenched on the veranda. I was alive with 'flu germs, and the Governor did not want any. He asked courteously for my address, so that, he said, his Government might reward me for running the hospital. Seeing a roseate vision of a ribbon in my button-hole—the Legion of Honour—I said that my parents might be pleased, but that I—I made a modest gesture. He evidently forgot."

"You've mentioned that before too!" said Dick gently.

As a matter of fact, Dick was not being seriously tortured. He is the most perfect listener in the world; he can look interested and amused and remain perfectly quiet without allowing a word to get much farther than the outer wall of his ear-drums.

"Sorry! " I remarked. "Now we're getting near the reef passage. D'you see the small island, a sandbank with coco-nuts growing out of it? That's the quarantine island. Old Queen Pomare used to live on it, or sleep on it during the warm weather to escape the mosquitoes and pests of the hot nights. She was very fat. Her people used to go ashore where Papeete now is to get water. It was cleaner then—pretty filthy, now, that creek; it carries off the town drainage. 'Pape' or 'papee'—I'm not quite sure which at this moment—means water; you pronounce it something like 'parpy.' I have heard that the whole word means the place whence they carry water in pots or baskets—a lot to pack into one word, don't you think? "

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"I think," said Dick charmingly, "that with all these people on deck, I shan't have to wait long in the stuffy barber's shop for a hair-cut; my hair's long. I'll go below—cheerio!"

By a fortunate chance, Emily II had been stowed on the hatch above an empty hold which the *Makura* people wanted to fill with copra. They therefore drew her forth and dropped her temporarily on the wharf. Negotiations with the very courteous French officials freed us from customs formalities, and Emily II was pushed to a store in the centre of Papeete to get her tank filled with petrol. Here she was soon the centre of an interested crowd.

Papeete could always produce an amusing crowd; but now the gathering of gracefully clad Tahitians, anaemic Chinamen and traders in indifferently laundered ducks was enriched by a peppering of artistic Americans. I had been admiring the stockings on the legs of a lad whom I decided must be a very clever young painter—they were so violently criss-crossed in so great a variety of colour that it was impossible to give his short shorts, his graceful shirt and picturesque wide-brimmed hat all the attention they called for—when he mentioned my name with so stinging a note of disdain that I felt like a **prodded** sea anemone. I immediately recalled having met **him** on Long Island some years ago, a camp follower of an enthusiastic, uncompromising literary set of stern young people who called themselves the younger generation. It was interesting to note that time had not blunted the offensive and defensive weapon of disdain he used so pathetically years ago.

A vivacious, rather weather-beaten little woman **was** hovering around Emily's bonnet, saying nice things about her in a rapid, picturesque American way. She **wanted** us to sell her what she called "the cutest little bus **that ever** run on tyres." We regretted and made merry with her. I was chiefly struck with her magnificent string of **pearls**, which I thought might be from bivalves because **of the** obviously genuine diamond **and** emerald rings, **beautifully set** with **large** stones, **on** her **pretty sunburnt hands**. She

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wore a perfectly fresh and beautifully ironed, faded, blue cotton frock which might have cost half a crown; and her old straw hat was even less in keeping with her rich jewellery which she probably wore to preserve it from thieves. She was most attractive, and full of charm.

"D'you know who she is?" whispered the lad in stockings fretfully.

"No idea!" I replied lightly, although expecting another prod.

"She's Mrs.——" and he mentioned a name I was sure I had heard somewhere, "the wife of——" and he repeated portentously a name I was now sure I had seen written up somewhere or other. "He," added Stockings with terrific disdain (for me), "writes for the *Saturday Evening Post*!" And when I had swallowed this he said incisively, "Therefore, you'd better sell her your car; she'll give you a lot of money for it."

Poor Stockings was speechless with disdain when we naturally continued to refuse to sell Emily II. He shrugged his shoulders as who should say, "What *can* you expect——?" and turning on his heel his stockings and himself went marching contemptuously along the street. I heard later that he had learnt to paint, and promised well. If he can start an artistic cult in which the people in pictures all look like disillusioned housewives being offered slightly tainted meat by amiable butchers, he should be a conspicuous success.

The *Makura* spent too short a time in Papeete to permit the gaining of useful impressions. Since the prohibition regime began in the United States, many Western Americans find comfort on the island. These people, not necessarily fond of drink, have brought money and more conventional ideas, much to the annoyance of the artistic souls eager to express themselves boldly without fear of criticism. The French atmosphere should always keep Tahiti gay and amusing. According to the accounts given to us by those passengers who allowed themselves to get loose ashore, the place seems packed with little drinking gardens and cabarets; but the other side of the picture, a dying

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nation of delightful people, dying beneath the weight of a rapidly spreading population of Chinese allowed to enter by a quite heartless Government, seems not so cheerful to those who love the Tahitians.

The remaining weeks of the journey, over a sea as smooth as glass, were uneventful. We awoke one morning to find the ship anchored off the San Francisco docks.





## BOOK THREE

## THE UNITED STATES







## CHAPTER SEVEN

### DOWN THROUGH CALIFORNIA

DICK had called himself a farmer on his passport. Had he called himself a seagull inspector, he could not have amazed the immigration authorities more. They looked over him; they frowned, and said what amounted to, "Tut, tut!" Then they asked him how much cash he had, and the truth being lean at the moment because we had left the bulk of our capital in New Zealand, they were even more disturbed. It seems that the term "farmer" is applied in the United States to Southern European peasants, low Orientals, and the poor white trash who scratch a living from the soil near great cities. However, because he was a well-dressed, clean-looking fellow, they gave him three months in the country with the prospect of a longer term if he applied later. I sailed through more comfortably, but the result was the same—three months with an option. Emily II was given three months too, without the exhausting customs formalities which were later to turn our hair grey; indeed, never in my life have I endured less bother in entering a foreign country than in San Francisco.

Emily II had not been registered in New Zealand; she had travelled from Auckland to Wellington on dealer's plates; and this promised to create some difficulty because, while California is delighted to give overseas visitors a free temporary licence, this free licence is based on the home country licence. We suggested registering the car in California, and taking a local number; but this could not be issued without the production of what they called a bill of sale, a receipt issued locally for the car's purchase. "What are we to do?" we asked.

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The answer was not official, but it was typical of Californian good nature, and we followed the advice given. By chance we had kept Emily I's registration receipt, and we pasted this on the windscreen, also choosing her number to paint on the blank plates fore and aft. To complete the picture, we added a neat "N.Z." before each number, and thereafter found ourselves giving little geography lessons whenever we paused and the inevitable crowd gathered to admire what they called the "cute little car." Many people who live on the route we followed across the United States now know, if they have not already forgotten, that (a) "N.Z." stands for New Zealand and definitely not "New Zersey," as one waggish waitress in Louisiana suggested; (b) there is a place called New Zealand; (c) it is not a state of the United States; (d) it is down in the Pacific in the general direction of Australia and not near Sweden; (e) the inhabitants are not all coloured and are civilized, and that—here we enter the political field—(f) the inhabitants are quite devoted to King George V, and the thought of having a president has never entered their heads.

Having been assured again and again that the Americans fly to lectures like bees to blossoms, and being a veritable sprouting garden of motion picture film and lantern slides, we now proposed to enlighten and entertain the people living in the towns along our route by giving lectures on our earlier adventures. The enterprise, we decided, must clear at least £1,000—enough to carry us well on our way. Indeed, we had felt so secure about this, that we had left the bulk of our capital in New Zealand with the quaint hope that it might stay there to cure the financial exhaustion we foresaw at the journey's end. We could, we knew, always cable for money if necessary.

And alas, we did cable, often! Our lecturing hopes were not realized; the Americans only allowed us to enlighten and entertain them twice, when we earned £12, precisely enough to pay for the damage done to Emily II by a drunken citizen in a small motor-truck who forced us to fly rather rapidly into a ditch. Given time and the

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judicious laying out of a little money, the scheme might have enjoyed success; the country is highly organized, and any idea not effectively treated by the main digestive juice of organization has the fate of green apples temporarily inside a small boy. We should have paused in San Francisco and bought ourselves a manager; but because we wanted to get on, and because the earning of money on the way was not really a vital necessity, we decided not to risk capital at this stage of the journey. Dick threw the idea out of his head after Los Angeles; I only dropped it overboard when the Cunarder was carrying us down the Hudson.

And, of course, we did earn £12. The scheme, too, was rich in experience, notably in one big city where some well-meaning friends tried to push us down the throats of the citizens. None of the citizens suffered; we were not even considered as food, but the atmosphere around us became charged with spasms and convulsions of so unusual a kind that it might be as well rapidly to run through the story as a warning to others: (a) never to offer an unorganized scheme to organized people, and (b) never when living with organized people to have much business association with unorganized local people who are outlaws and dangerous. I outline the story here to disguise its geography; it did not happen in California, to which I shall return; and it can only be an outline because there is not time to explain it fully, and, as a matter of fact, however I may tell the story, the result will be the same—unbelief or confusion. Little biographies of the people in the story emerge most curiously and inevitably. The city is called Extown.

Mr. Swoff had made much money in a middle western city. While he was making money, his wife became demented. He paid her off and began divorce proceedings. He came to Extown and bought an agency and hired a confidential typist. Falling in love with the confidential typist, he proposed to marry her. She said, "Okay!—when your divorce is through." He said, "You're looking a bit tired; here's a roll of notes and a new eight-

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cylinder car: take them and enjoy a vacation! " She said, " Okay! " and a few days later wired from the winter resort, "Married this morning—love! " This made Mr. Swoff very depressed indeed.

Mr. Swoff had two assistants, Eugene and Bob. Eugene was very handsome with a pallid, moonlight kind of complexion, big brown eyes, shining, smooth hair which he brushed firmly across his head, a beauty spot (too nice to be called a mole) on his cheek, and a well-set-up figure. His mother was a very good woman who lived in close seclusion because at irregular intervals she had fits which made all her relations run to her. His wife was very handsome; she was a sensible girl who loved Eugene much, much more than her mother did. Her mother was a social secretary, not one particular rich person's social secretary, but the head of an efficient bureau which produced the *debutante* daughters of the *nouveau riche*, supplied the right kind of guests to new climbing hostesses, and generally saved wealthy people a lot of trouble. She, who had successfully launched hundreds of maidens, was powerless, she felt, to save her daughter who was stuck on the ways. Eugene lived in a great Scottish castle some miles from Extown. The great castle was packed with very old family heirlooms, tapestries, and ancestors staring fixedly down from very old frames. Eugene had not enough money to live in a great castle regularly; he had really meant to hire the castle gate lodge, but the lady who owned the castle said, " Oh, why not take the castle? I'm going away for a long time. I'll leave the cook, the butler and my husband—but don't you take much notice of him! " Eugene's wife was very surprised when she found herself living in the great castle, although life with Eugene should have long since flung her well beyond surprises.

Dick, Emily II and I enter shortly.

Mr. Swoffs other assistant was a simple, stout young man with a husky voice. He was fascinated by Eugene. His wife was not.

To Mr. Swoffs office came the Widow from Oklahoma.

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She had a fortune of about £50,000. She wanted to be a "socially prominent" in Extown, but might have been dissuaded from this if Mr. Swoff had asked her to marry him, because she liked his nice soft face and gentle manners. But although he found her comforting, Mr. Swoff did not ask her to marry him, because if he had married her he would only have had to divorce her when the confidential typist needed a new car and had divorced the man at the winter resort. So the Widow from Oklahoma went about in mourning, talking rather ignorantly in whispers. Eugene said to her, "Come to the castle and live with us!" She said, "Okay!" Then he said to Mr. Swoff, who was thinking so hard about the confidential typist and his pursuit of her that he had become pale, "Come to the castle, Mr. Swoff, and live with us." And because Mr. Swoff knew he could be temporarily soothed by the understanding whispering of the Widow from Oklahoma who was nearer his age than the typist, understood him better, and could discuss lumbago and other middle-age inevitables without feeling chilly, he said, "Okay!"

Eugene said to the Widow from Oklahoma, "You must invest your fortune in an annuity and double your income!" She said, "How?" He said, "I will introduce you to Alice Gofer's husband. Alice has a big apartment at the Regal, the largest and most fashionable and most select hotel in Extown. George Gofer is managing director of the biggest insurance company on earth." She said, "Okay!" He said, "It will be a good social contact for you, anyway."

When Dick and I arrived in Extown, Eugene said to us, "If you've got a snappy lecture with lantern slides and motion pictures you should clean-up big." Bob said, "You sure will," and cleared his throat hoarsely. "What a pity Mr. Swoff is pursuing the typist just now," said Eugene, and he told us all about him. "But," said Eugene, "he leaves everything to Bob and me; so well carry it. Come and live with us at the castle." We said, "Okay, for to-night, because to-morrow we must go on to

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pay a visit in the country; but we'll come back for the lecture/'

The butler at the castle received us amiably, and although he did not say, "Gee—I feels mahself kinda cluttered-up with dese queer folks!" I am certain that is roughly what he felt in his simple negro way.

After luncheon, Eugene laid all his cards on the table and said, "You come back in one week's time, and lecture at the Regal. Alice Gofer will make all the people at the Regal flock in to hear you at two dollars each. Five hundred people at two dollars each make one thousand dollars!"

Eugene's wife said, "Mother will help!" but Eugene said, "It will be a miracle if she does anything to help me," and his big brown eyes looked sad and lovely, and so his wife comforted him.

Eugene then said, "The Widow from Oklahoma will finance us; what a pity Mr. Swoff is still pursuing the typist, otherwise he would. She has made him funny in his ways, and very nervous, poor man."

Eugene's wife's mother, to whose bureau we went with Eugene's wife, said, "They must sit in my box at the big charity ball on Friday. Where will they have the lecture?" "In the Regal auditorium," said Eugene's wife. "How awful!" said Eugene's wife's mother. "It is an ice chest, and downstairs—but I'll help, dear! How is Eugene?" she asked pleasantly, but in her heart she said, looking at her dear handsome daughter, "Oh, I wish I could push him off the earth in a nice social way; all the machinery of my efficient bureau would be used if it would do any good, but it won't."

And that night Dick and I slept in an old, old room of that old, old castle with old, old tapestries and old, old ancestors staring down from old, old frames in an old, old bed as big as a house in which Queen Elizabeth had slept before the bed came from old, old England; and in the night, three times, young Eugene walked across our room, and each time I thought it might be the castle owner's husband turning, because he had been threatening to turn



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lately, but had only reached the stage of placing fire-tongs in the way of Mr. Swoff and Condyl's crystals in the Widow's wash-basin.

When Dick and I came back at the end of a week, Eugene and Bob were surprised to see us. They said, "Howdy, boys!" and waited for us to go on. We said politely, "Oh, the lecture, to-morrow night——!" and waited for *them* to go on. "Well," they said, "we've been snowed under with work, and——" They'd forgotten about the lecture!

So I said charmingly, fearing to work them up again, "We must now go back to our hostess and finish our visit!" "Oh, no!" said Eugene. "We said we would have a lecture, and we shall have a lecture—in the Regal. Alice Gofer will run them all in—it's simple——" "Oh, thanks, no!" I said; "you have not time." But Dick said, "Oh, we might as well—if they think they can!"

We could not go to the charity ball because Eugene's wife's mother had taken some bad gin in a cocktail at the home of some very old friends whom she was taking to feed at the house of a wealthy client because they knew their grandparents intimately by repute. Its awful effect was only felt at the client's house where the gin was very good indeed, so they had plied her with good gin, and whenever she became conscious she moaned, "More gin!" and she'd been in this condition for two days and expected to be all right in three more—very unusual for her, Eugene thought, because she only got like that towards the end of sabbatical months.

Mr. Swoff had sprained his ankle tripping over some antique Highland swords, arranged in a dark passage near his room, and had retreated from the castle while the owner's husband grinned malevolently from a turret—an insult which Mr. Swoff would not have noticed if the owner's husband had not switched on and off the lights outlining the turret where he lurked.

The Widow from Oklahoma had wiped her face with a sponge in which were delicately hidden thousands of Condyl's crystal grains wrapped in egg skin. She had

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taken a flat, but still wanted to invest her fortune in an annuity. She was negotiating with Alice Gofer's husband who had a big, red, he-man face and a thick neck.

Eugene's mother had had a fit, and Eugene's wife had rushed to her aid.

At eight o'clock the following night, Emily II was resting on a magnificent carpet in the magnificent Regal lounge near the door leading down to the great auditorium, which had three children sitting in its front row only. A notice urged people to hear Dick and me for two dollars.

At eight-fifteen Eugene went to Alice Gofer's apartment. At eight-twenty he returned with a bleeding cut on his handsome brow. He explained:

"Alice is mad! (meaning angry). When I went in she said, 'Where's George—quickly, tell me!' 'I don't know, Alice,' I said. 'You do! Don't lie to me!' she screamed; 'he's out in the car with the Widow from Oklahoma!' 'Yes,' I said, 'I put that little business his way.' 'Oh, did you?' she yelled. 'Little business—little baggage, you mean!' And then George appeared at the door, 'What's up?' he asked, but she wouldn't answer him. She burst into tears, and threw an alabaster statuette at his head and the pedestal at me; it hit me——"

"I think," said Eugene, "we scheduled this lecture too early; let's alter it to nine?" and he did so.

At nine a nurse appeared, boxed the ears of the children in the auditorium and carried them off to bed.

Eugene said gaily, "How absurd of me! Why, of course, we must catch the after-theatre crowd!" and he altered the notice to ten-thirty.

At ten-thirty he said, "Eleven will be the best time; then we'll be rushed!" and the notice was altered to eleven.

At eleven we packed up and went home to bed. Eugene disappeared in the night.

The next morning we were saying good-bye to Bob and his wife in one of the main streets of Extown. A negro was attracted by Emily II and placed his hand on her shining bonnet. "Take your hands off!" snapped Bob;

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and when the negro failed to withdraw or to crumple up, Bob punched him on the jaw.

Because the negro had put his hand to his hip pocket where I am fairly certain I saw the butt of a revolver, and began foaming savagely at the mouth and making all kinds of blood-curdling threats, Bob thought it best to take cover in a shop door whence he peeped round at the negro who was making some very shocking remarks. During a lull, we managed to bundle Bob and his wife into their car; and as the car drew rapidly away, the negro waved in the air a safety razor blade neatly fitted into a piece of wood, shrieking, "I'll carve out his heart I I'll—I'll carve out his liver and even his kidneys. I'll—oh, I'll carve—I'll carve him into mincemeat! "

And Emily II pursued her journey round the world.

When I told the above story to our hostess, pouring it forth like a sack of coals going down a chute, she said, "Gracious! You boys need a nurse. But don't," she urged, "write that up; it will give people a monstrous impression of this country, and that would be unfair, don't you think? "

She is, of course, perfectly right; any charming, handsome near-lunatic like Eugene could produce an equally mad farce in any country. We must now return to California.

We passed down through California from San Francisco to Los Angeles in October. People who love the Golden State presumably do not realize how ugly, even repellent, it can be to a stranger towards the end of the year when months of bone-dry weather have killed every green thing not carefully irrigated, and when a film of dust has soiled much which may seem fresh and gracious at a better time. To the east of us, beyond burnt-up meadows, were sharp, brown jagged mountains, with slopes slightly clad with shabby scrub, pleasant enough in the soft glow of sunset, entrancing when sharply outlined against a Californian moonlit sky, but hard, dusty, and unlovely in the endless glare of the sun. Occasionally the road followed the coast,

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but the Pacific I know and love so well, the radiant ocean which rolls up so magnificently in its clean blueness at Manly and Bondi near Sydney, which offers the perfect contrast to our golden cliffs of Northern New Zealand, and upon which for many years I have sailed past many a seeming "island of tranquil delight"—this Pacific off California, had lost all its pride of beauty and flopped lazily on to the dusty brown shore like thin treacle. Distant islands had curbed it; shallow stretches of sand-banks had undermined it, and great forests of waving seaweed had trapped it and chained it a few yards from the shore.

Judging from the road map, our journey south to Los Angeles promised to be a way of romance. The names of towns seemed so attractive—San Jose, Salinas, King City, Paso Robles, Santa Margarita, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara—but I have merely a vision of that excellent road and the decent traffic cops, very dusty towns thirsting for rain and adorned with dustier untidy palms, an occasional ancient mission left high and dry like a dried-up dead fish, and countless cafes telling of "eats" in the way of hot dogs and pig sandwiches.

We put up each night at an auto-camp. Auto-camps occur at intervals of a few miles on all western main highways. For a sum averaging a dollar, a clean little cabin with attached garage is offered. The cabin may be merely one room with a kitchen alcove. Gas for cooking and electric light are not charged for; there is always running water, sometimes both hot and cold, and near the centre of the camp is a large bathroom with shower cubicles. Some auto-camps have charming little cafes where a simple meal may be bought at low cost, and there is always a store. Blankets and linen, kept in disinfectants when not in use, may be hired. No limit is made to the number occupying an auto-camp, but there are seldom more than two double beds in the living-room. The architecture and general design varies: an auto-camp may be a village of log cabins in a small pine forest; it is sometimes a square of stucco Mexican huts; it may be a Swiss village of quaint little chalets, or an uncompromising collection of simple

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ridged sheds. Even heating is not forgotten; each little cabin has a stove with kindling and firewood ready if the night should be cold.

Interest in our little car grew daily as we travelled south. The attitude of the men and boys who fired hundreds of questions at us when we paused for " gas," or stopped outside a store to buy provisions, was always brotherly. Upon two occasions, once in California and again in Texas, an Irishman tried to twist the lion's tail.

We found the first Irishman, or son of an Irishman, outside a store on the southern side of a very steep mountain up which we had climbed with great difficulty because of the big load we were forcing poor little Emily II to carry. We had answered a few hundred questions fired at us from the inevitable crowd; we were not above exaggerating Emily II's prowess, and we were about to draw away in the glow of rather artificial achievement when a stout, rosy-cheeked man of late middle age stepped forth and asked (with an expression which seemed to say, " If you tell me a lie, I won't believe it! "), " But how did you manage the——? " He mentioned the name of the mountain behind us whose name I have forgotten. " Which one of you got out and pushed, or did you both have to? " he asked with a very cunning expression.

" I beg your pardon? " I said politely. " How did we manage the what? "

" The big hill, the mountain you've just come over! " he replied rapidly, glancing at his friends as who should say, " These are Dead Sea apples; puncture them and they bust! "

I turned to Dick with a puzzled, questioning expression and then towards the rosy-cheeked man. " Was there a hill? " I asked quickly.

" Of course there was," he spluttered a little peevishly, until an infectious guffaw from the crowd warned him. Then throwing back his head he laughed heartily, but not convincingly. " A n Englishman with a sense of humour! " he shouted. " Gee—an Englishman with a sense of humour—the first I've met! "

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This almost restored his position as the village wit; he should have been content, but he hoped to turn the tide completely in his favour. "I was nearly an Englishman myself," he said amiably. "Thiee days before I was born my mother was in Canada. 'Pat' she said to my dad, 'get me across the border for the love o' Mike, or we'll have an Englishman in the family!' The dad rushed her across the border, and I was born five miles from it—on the American side! A close shave!" said the rosy-cheeked man, glancing at his friends for sympathy.

But with dancing eyes and a friendly, mischievous expression they looked to us for a retort. Unfortunately, nothing very bright would come. I merely said severely, "Your mother was evidently a very thoughtful, kind, far-seeing woman!" It was clear to the crowd what I meant; the laugh was all on our side.

The ancient Spanish missions of California had always interested me; therefore when we reached San Miguel we paused near the dried-up old adobe building and obeyed the notice asking visitors to beat on an immense bell if they needed a guide. From a crumbling doorway emerged Brother Pamphilus, like a jolly moon rolling out from behind a dull cloud. He wore the brown habit of the Franciscans, with heavy sandals on his feet and a thick cord around what would have been his waist if he had had one.

"You would like to see the——" he began; and then observing Emily II sheltering under a beautiful pepper tree he exclaimed, "What a cute little car!"

Having told him all we knew about Emily II and as much as possible about ourselves, we followed him to the doorway of the chapel, the only portion of San Miguel still completely whole; but the good brother found great difficulty in concentrating on his piece, which he began pouring out in the changeless fashion of guides the world over.

"Mission San Miguel Archangel, like all the Californian missions, was projected by the venerable Father Junipero Serra—a cute little car!—but it was not until July 25th,

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1797, that the aged Father Presidente Fermin de Lasuen, with the assistance of Father Buenaventura Sitjar—from New Zealand, eh?—a long way to travel!—and the troops destined to guard the new establishment, in the presence of a great multitude of pagans of both sexes whose pleasure and rejoicing exceeded their expectations, thanks be to God, blessed the water, the place and the great cross—sixty miles an hour that little car will go—Gee!

"The buildings are made of adobe—baked mud; the timbers were hewn from the neighbouring forests and shaped by the Indians who also forged the nails. The rafters are—Poof—poof, poof, poof!" said Brother Pamphilus, imitating (badly) a car exhaust, "I think that little car burn up if she go sixty miles an hour, eh?—bound with raw hide—look, you can see—a cute little car, and you call it a baby-car; you must buy it a baby-carriage if it gets tired on the long journey." Brother Pamphilus collapsed with laughter, and led us into the chapel.

Unfortunately, it was impossible to appreciate the chapel. It was a forest of light scaffolding holding the roof, the beams of which were threatening to collapse through the ravages of white ants. The chapel may have been gay and cheerful in its youth; Brother Pamphilus spoke with enthusiasm of the frescoes; but its architect must have been forced into length to gain space through the limitations of adobe and the difficulty in getting long enough supporting beams, and the proportions are poor. There is a charming little high pulpit reached by a quaint staircase; there was one jolly old chair in the sanctuary, but it may have come from a Hollywood antiquing factory; the altar was a dusty, tawdry mass of violent decoration.

In the midst of the dryness and dustiness, a very modern, highly coloured statue of St. Teresa stood with the inevitable bouquet of flowers. Brother Pamphilus told us all about her, how she had lived a beautiful life, and how, believing that she would be canonized, she had hoped God would allow her to scatter flowers of kindness

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and mercy on the poor of the earth whom she had loved. "You would be surprised," said Brother Pamphilus in pleasant, boyish tones; "you would be surprised," he repeated, raising his voice to a high pitch, "what benefits may be gained from St. Teresa." It was one of the charming, kindly impressions Brother Pamphilus left with us.

He finally led us to some other old rooms in the main part of the convent, showing us where a murder had been committed when the place was in secular hands. He had post cards and little books for sale, but his attitude was far, far from being mercenary or even decently business-like. Indeed, I bought one book from him, and fortunately remembered to pay for it a few seconds before we left. Brother Pamphilus was agreeably surprised.

San Miguel Mission had remained deserted for many years; it is only recently that two Franciscan monks have reoccupied it. Once extremely rich, the centre and owner of a vast estate, it now must depend almost entirely upon the offerings of tourists, and nearly every penny earned in this way goes towards its restoration.

The mission at Santa Barbara, which we visited the next day, has never left the hands of the Franciscans. It has an interesting museum and a rich treasury. The monk who guided us was in striking contrast to Brother Pamphilus. He was a precise ascetic (or dyspeptic) with a cold, wintery manner. As he led us through the convent garden, a dank, eerie plantation of sombre green trees for the most part, he said, "I will now show you where the dead old Franciscans are laid away. Some people," he added with a wry smile, "think all old Franciscans are dead!" The mortuary, a low building at the far corner of the garden, was like a monumental mason's store, with the tombstones in bins. The walls were lined with tablets, actually the ends of the cement, drawer-like graves into which they push the dead old monks. Above the garden doorway to the chapel a dank-eyed skull looked down upon us. It had been the centre of the conventional skull and crossbones, but one of the crossbones was miss-



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ing, and this had the effect of making the skull's eye-sockets look very sinister indeed. The monk gave us some precise information about the mission's work in Indian days, and then paused suggestively below a notice fastened to a big black tree-trunk which urged us to give the guide at least a quarter. Recalling how eager Brother Pamphilus had been to be photographed with Emily II, we asked the Santa Barbara monk if he would like to be photographed with her near the chapel. "It is too much—too much!" he said icily; but I am certain he was not referring to the offering Dick had made on behalf of our expedition.

On the whole, these old Californian missions were interesting in themselves, but disappointing in effect. They have long out-lived their use, and appearing hundreds of years older than they are—the effect of weather on adobe—they have a slightly artificial atmosphere. They seemed a little absurd on that teeming Californian highway with its Hot Dogs, Hot Dogs and more Hot Dogs (thin sausages between slit rolls); its Eats, Eats and more Eats, in big letters and small; its Pig Sandwiches and its Barbecued Sandwiches; its dusty citrus groves; its great walnut orchards, vineyards, and lettuce plantations; its oil-fields, and—all the romance of modern rushing life, against which the dead old missions have no chance whatever. A returning Californian Rip Van Winkle might be deceived into believing that the heretics who occupy California to-day affectionately remember Father Junipero Serra who designed this chain of missions as rest-houses on the highway south from San Francisco. Statues of him with upraised finger appear at intervals along much of that highway to-day. There he is in a chocolate-coloured habit, with a nice pink face and ecclesiastical features and tonsure complete, advertising and helping to sell the products of Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians and other heretics! They evidently sell him by the dozen in Los Angeles. I saw a score of him parading stiffly in a plasterer's yard in the doubtful society of a dozen well-built and scantily-clothed ladies (also in

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plaster), who were doubtless ready to advertise skin cream or to decorate the doorways of cinemas.

We left Santa Barbara soon after noon, expecting to reach the outskirts of Los Angeles, less than a hundred miles distant, before dusk. Convinced that the better hotels would be very expensive, and not wanting to lower our prestige by putting up at a cheap one, we had decided to find a good auto-camp within twenty miles of the city. A vague country address is so much better than a definite poor town one, but apart from keeping-our-end-up considerations, we preferred the freedom and convenience of an auto-camp where Emily II could live near us, and where serious unpacking would be unnecessary.

A few miles south of Santa Barbara we paused to inspect some oil-rigs stamping most energetically a few chains from the road. The man in charge explained that they were only exploring that field. "If," he said, "you want to see oil activity, stop at Venice." Therefore, instead of following the main highway into Los Angeles, we branched to the west and made for Venice. We were soon close to the coast, passing through seaside resorts of a most unusual kind. One settlement might have been a toy village built by a mad child. Each house was doubtless exquisitely fitted and magnificently furnished; each house may possibly have been an architectural gem of its kind; the colour scheme applied to each house may have been charming or interesting; but because all the houses shouldered each other, and each one was built in a different fashion with flat roofs, rounded roofs, high-peaked roofs, normal roofs, square windows, round windows, oblong windows, latticed windows, dormer windows, oriel windows and bow windows, while each owner had followed his own taste in paint, one's brain had no way of accepting an impression, and the result was mental biliousness. Hot dog and pig and barbecued sandwich cafes had now to share the highway with real estate agencies, occupying the most exciting offices, displaying the most ingenious antiquing; but the agency which occupied the crumbling walls of a frightfully old Welsh castle wall, complete with

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strangling ivy and wallflowers, had left nothing more to be said. On all sides appeared the most frantic preparations for play and enjoyment; but no one seemed to be playing or enjoying himself.

The afternoon was drawing to a close when we reached Venice, a tangled mass of ugly seaside dwellings divided by roads without side walks and only just wide enough for one car to pass. The sea was not apparent as we threaded our way through the narrow, not over clean, streets to a veritable forest of oil-rigs on the far half of the town, evidently intent upon stamping Venice out of existence. The man farther north had spoken of "oil activity"; had he said "oil hysteria" he would have been more accurate. There were hundreds of tall oil-rigs, separated from each other by hardly more than a few feet, and it seemed almost as if each oil-rig was owned by a different company. Certainly every fifth well shrieked gaily in the gathering dusk the name of the company working it in letters gaily picked out in electric bulbs of every colour.

It seems that oil had been found in a seaside section, and instantly seaside sections, no matter how small, had been bought up and companies floated. The earth could not, in its most exuberant mood, supply enough oil to keep one tenth of the wells flowing, and the field manager of one little nest of wells with whom we chatted (introduced by Emily II), admitted this.

"Then many of the speculators who pay for all this activity will be ruined!" I suggested.

"Oh, not ruined," he laughed; "most of them just have a flutter; and, of course, some of the wells will pay handsomely."

This man was a decent, amiable, helpful kind of fellow; and during the moments when we succeeded in switching his mind from Emily II, who had won his heart, he gave us some interesting information. His own boring had not as yet produced oil. "When once the wells begin flowing," he said, "most of our troubles are over; it's the framing of reports before that, to keep the shareholders happy and generous, which bother one more

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than anything else. Fortunately, most of them live in the East. I suppose when you ask a cop where you can park that cute little bus, he says, 'In your pocket! "' The cream of this jest was in his native pronunciation of " pocket "—" parket."

He was a nice man, and with a clear enough eye and healthy enough skin to assure one that he was also a temperate man; but he had been drinking some vile liquor which gave the impression that he had been dry-cleaning his lungs with a mixture combining turpentine, methylated spirits, kerosene and fermented strawberry jam. It was necessary to step nimbly aside occasionally.

We pursued our way towards Los Angeles, only to discover ourselves practically in Los Angeles; for Venice, like Santa Monica, Culver City and indeed Hollywood, has been practically absorbed by the conglomeration which is loosely called Los Angeles. We decided that our best plan would be to cross the city to the main northern highway, to go on until we found a good auto-camp. We had an adequate supply of cash with us, but as we motored through the gaily lit streets and along the broad avenues and boulevards, we became seriously depressed and felt weirdly homeless. Occasionally we asked for directions, but the crowds which instantly gathered around Emily II disturbed us, and no one seemed to know how to help us. We were in Los Angeles proper several times; once or twice we shot through and around Hollywood; we passed great studios with facades softly glowing in hidden footlights; once we motored up a quiet avenue shaded by spreading pepper trees hiding the daintiest villas, one of which, we were certain, had Ruth Chatterton in it, or maybe Gary Cooper. The lights shining from charming windows, through pretty shrubs and palms rising like fountains from a soft green sea of lawn, depressed us even more. We paused and asked directions from an elderly lady in black who was passing along the footpath. She knew very little, but her voice was kind and motherly.

" You are strangers here? " she asked. " I hope," she said gently, when we had admitted that we had but just

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arrived, "that your pack is full; because many young fellows coming here have a very bad time, and——"

I saw the workhouse doors opening to receive us at that moment, but I heard myself explaining that we were motoring across the United States to New York, on our way to England, that we would only be in Los Angeles for a few days.

"Then your pack must be very full," she said; "I'm glad."

I was glad myself at that moment to know that we would not be starving for a while, and we recommenced the dashing about. Incidentally, the streets in American cities, away from the boulevards and avenues, remain almost entirely free from pedestrians at night-time. In searching for an address, it is therefore useless to depend on passers-by for information.

It must have been in the neighbourhood of eleven o'clock when, thoroughly tired out, we drew up at a cafe on what proved to be the Santa Monica Boulevard. A bright-eyed, friendly young woman served us good coffee and sandwiches.

"You're foreigners, aren't you?" she remarked, when we had settled on our stools in front of the circular parapet of a counter, which she seemed to be defending with hissing trench mortars and gas cylinders.

"Yes—from New Zealand," we said.

"New Zealand!" The girl looked very puzzled indeed. "Now where's that? I've never heard of it!"

We told her.

"Down in the South Seas—gee!" she exclaimed, "where they do the hulahula—gee! Yet"—and she glanced in particular at Dick, who is fair and blue-eyed—"you're not black, and you"—still looking at Dick—"speak quite good English. *In a way!*" she added as an afterthought.

We asked her about an auto-camp; and as good luck would have it, she was able to direct us to an excellent one a few miles along the boulevard. For the sum of two dollars, we were given a small stucco cottage and a garage.

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The living-room was large and well furnished; there was a large bathroom with hot and cold water and a fine kitchen. It answered our purposes excellently, but would we be able to say to Ruth Chatterton, " Oh, we're staying in the country! " if she should ask us where we were putting up? We wanted to meet the stars of Hollywood; we were still eager to impress a lecturing agent if one could be found; would it not have been wisest to risk an honest sum *on* first-class accommodation? Dick as treasurer of the expedition thought it best not only to think of Hollywood in Hollywood, but also to consider New York, London, Paris, Rome and Constantinople and the rest of the world which could only be paid for if we showed grim care now.

Los Angeles had looked gay and charming in the sunshine of its electric light; daylight showed us something unfinished and with a vague atmosphere of insecurity. It seemed at times to be shrieking with growing pains. On all sides the preparations for pleasure were being made, but no one seemed to be hilariously happy; beauty in many a gracious building pleased the eye in itself, but a hideous hot-dog cafe telling of luscious hamburger steaks (said to be minced horse) or pig sandwiches or barbecued sandwiches deformed the next section, and there was no comprehensive beauty. A garden, with brilliantly green lawns kept alive by hidden rose sprays connected under the surface with a network of pipes, reproached the next section which was hard desert, and had been hard desert since the creation of the world.

We motored at once to the Los Angeles Austin agents. An American company had been recently formed to manufacture a relation (very distant) of Emily II. This company was apparently not connected in any serious way with the British company. Baby Austins, called Bantams, were being manufactured under licence, whatever that means, and when we were in Los Angeles, this company was struggling to get a footing in the car market. The struggle was naturally accompanied by a vast amount of advertisement; but it did not occur to us to think that we might be

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connected with this effort. As a matter of fact we were, definitely; and this, in a country where advertisement is poured forth freely and lusciously, killed our chances of giving professional lectures at universities and schools even if we had been well organized.

The Austin agent received us hospitably, and we were able to use his office as headquarters for the advance into movieland. His telephone switch girl was soon trying to connect me with some old friends prominent in the motion picture world, whose addresses and telephone numbers had sunk with my "Where is it?" on the *Tahiti*. It seems amazing to relate, but for a long time we could not get within a mile of one of them. Prominent motion picture people never have their telephone numbers in the book; they even change their numbers frequently, we were told; and they seldom even allow their number to be confided. The idea is to preserve a little peace in the home.

Eventually I managed to reach the ear of the secretary's secretary of a director who (the director) had been an intimate friend in New York. The secretary's secretary said politely, "Mr. X is rehearsing at the moment; we dare not disturb him, but if you will leave your telephone number, we can leave a message for him, and he will call you up." alas, our auto-camp had no telephone, and Mr. X became most important to us when we heard he was directing a picture in which one of the great stars expected to shine. I said, "Mr. X is a great friend; I have just come from abroad; I know he will want to see me, and unfortunately I can't give you a number, because I'll be moving about to-day." "Then I'm sorry," said the secretary's secretary. "He'll be annoyed if you don't take him a message!" I said firmly. "What's the trouble?" snapped another voice, the secretary's. I explained. He simply had to send a message through to Mr. X. "I'm a particular friend of his," I said. "We hear that nearly every five minutes," said the secretary; "if you can't leave a telephone number, there's nothing we can do!"

We learnt later that X was very much in the throes of his rehearsal, eating and even sleeping at the studio, tear-

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ing at the ideas floating through his clever brain like a starving dog offered a hundred bones at once. In this condition a motion picture director of prominence (only of prominence) is as safe to approach, even if you're his mother, as a bull-dog bitch having pups.

The day was ending as we slowly motored back to our auto-camp. There seemed not the slightest chance of meeting Ruth Chatterton, Gary Cooper or anybody else for that matter. But our usual good luck had not deserted us.

Before leaving New Zealand in the *Tahiti* a friend had said, " My mother and sister live in Hollywood; do look them up I " Failing to find a card, he wrote an address on the back of an old envelope which I put in the breast pocket of the coat I was wearing. " I'll write and tell them you're coming," he added. I confess I had forgotten the incident until that night when we were driving back to Santa Monica. I felt in my breast pocket (of the coat I had worn during the wreck) more or less mechanically, and drew out the envelope with the address written on it. We therefore put in as much time as possible over dinner and then drove to the address near Beverley Hills.

We were expected, and my conscience was smitten when I saw how very welcome we were, for it was only by chance that I had recalled my New Zealand friend's kindness. There was a perfectly beautiful middle-aged lady with rosy cheeks and charmingly arranged grey hair; there was a married daughter who had inherited her mother's soft, rich skin, who, when we had settled down and given all possible information about nieces and nephews, said, " Now what can we do to help? "

We told them of our plans and how we wanted to meet people and to go about.

" I can do a certain amount," said the daughter; " but I think you must meet Snowy Baker. Don't you think Snowy Baker will be the best person to help them, mother? "

Mother agreed.

" Audrey knows Snowy better than I do," went on the



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daughter; "they'd better meet her first, I think. I'm lunching with her to-morrow," and she explained Audrey; "you'd better call at her home at about three." We were given a necessary address.

Our new friends were Canadians; the bond of Empire was very strong that night in Hollywood, and we came in for a share of the beautiful mother's adoration for her son who is rather exiled in New Zealand. I described her grandchildren whom she had never seen; fortunately they are uncommonly handsome, so that I had not to worry about Dick who is always a slightly grinding brake on my natural exuberance. We asked if an auto-camp address would affect us in any way.

"No, not in Hollywood," was the reply; "you may work all day as a lift man, and if you have brains and are trying to get on, you may dine with Doug and Mary. Snobbishness of that kind is unknown here."

A few days in Hollywood convinced us that our friend was perfectly right.

The next afternoon at three, we knocked at the door of a beautiful little villa, which shortly burst open and exposed a rosy-cheeked, very strongly built small boy and a shaggy Airedale. The boy was merely interested; the Airedale was smiling broadly. They both turned and ushered us into a spacious living-room, built rather like a small college dining-hall with a gallery at one end and an immense Gothic window at the other. Our friend of the night before introduced us to Audrey, but the Airedale played an important part too as he walked in between and around Dick and me, wagging his tail and still smiling broadly. His name was Rags.

Audrey, whose husband had been a motion picture leading man, saw at once, she said, that Snowy Baker was the man we would have to meet; and then began a little chorus of praise of the gentleman which made me feel I should hate him on sight. Sensing this, Audrey said, "I know what you feel; but wait until you meet Snowy."

She then told us about him. He had represented Australia in the Olympic Games; he was a useful boxer, a

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first-class polo player, at home in the water, a footballer, a runner, and there seemed no game at which he did not excel. " But he's much more than all that," said Audrey. " Jeanette Stratton-Porter summed him up when she said that God must have lost the pattern after making Snowy, because He'd made no other. You'll love him—as we all do! "

We met Snowy the next day at luncheon at the Riviera Country Club, and we saw him first from the windows of the grill-room. "That's Snowy! " said Audrey, pointing to a little patch of vivid blue moving about near the stables three or four hundred yards down a hill—a man's jersey worn above light riding-breeches. Incidentally, the view from that window was intensely interesting. Below us stretched an immense golf-course of brilliantly green turf; it might have been a gargantuan lake of *creme de menthe* spilt unaccountably in a desert, for as far as the eye could see the country was otherwise burnt crisp and powdered with dust. A network of underground pipes fed little revolving sprays; imagine the cost!

The small patch of vivid blue had become larger. Within a few minutes Snowy came into the grill-room and Audrey was introducing us. She, thoroughly sophisticated yet forced always to suppress a charming natural diffidence, had changed. She was pleased, like a small girl. Beyond conventional greetings, he said very little to us to begin with; he was a little shy and had no self-assurance. There was none of the usual, " Well, boys—glad to meet you; welcome to the Riviera Country Club; have a good time, boys! " Incidentally, I had always felt secretly flattered when we were addressed as " boys." As a matter of fact it is American for blokes, fellows, men, old tops, and septuagenarians. In the delightful play, *In Green Pastures*, which we saw later in New York, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob with long flowing white beards and a bit uncertain about the knee-joints were urged, in heaven, to—" Have a good time, boys! "

Determined to be critical—one had to be, after all the praise lavished on Snowy—I searched for something to

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criticize; but not for long. This quiet man was too unpretentious, too simple and wise, to think anything but well of. When I knew him better he said what amounted to, "It's a bad thing to be dumb; but no man is more attractive than ' the fellow who appreciates the measureless possibilities of silence. "

I have sometimes wondered whether he gave serious thought to his appearance; if so, he had appreciated the measureless possibilities of silence in a man's kit the first day we met him. Very little escapes my eye, I fear. I knew that his riding-boots were of the best quality and that they fitted comfortably and perfectly; his white cord riding-breeches were well cut, stainless, comfortably worn and quite unobtrusive. The simple blue jersey, his polo colours, was there merely to control a fine, manly chest. The short sleeves showed two honest sunburnt arms. His face, burnt copper, and glowing with health, was not comely in the ordinary sense of comeliness; yet his eyes were true blue, but again not particularly attractive in themselves, merely honest and kindly. His hair was almost white, a very light buff shade; it was strong and parted firmly towards one side. No kit could have been more perfectly balanced; the white breeches toned with the snowy hair; the blue eyes deepened in colour with the blue jersey; and yet the general effect was unobtrusive, careless in design apparently, and, if I may use such a phrase, eloquently silent.

It seems impossible to pass Snowy without all this detail. On what proved a magic journey around the world, I met no one like him, no one who so completely won my respect, admiration and love. I can safely add, too, that I have never met anyone in my life more approaching perfection.

Snowy is in the middle fifties, fifty-five, if I remember rightly.

He had been a famous Australian athlete, and had drifted to Hollywood somehow or other. When we met him, he was the manager of the Riviera Country Club. In addition, he owned about a score of polo ponies and a dozen hacks. He gave riding lessons, and people could

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hire his hacks and ponies. He earned an adequate income, all he needed; he could accumulate a fortune in money if he wanted to. He talks for ten minutes every week over the *Los Angeles Times* radio. He persuaded me to share that ten minutes with him one day. My voice broadcasts better than his; my command of English is greater; but a second after that ten minutes, the telephone wires were burning with people calling up "Uncle John" to talk about Snowy's remarks on sportsmanship. "Will you tell Snowy that my little boy—he's bedridden—liked to hear about how that other little boy fell off the horse and was hurt badly and said he'd just have to get up again because it would make him rugged." And messages came from old men and women, rather pathetic little messages, some of them. I got, "Who's the Englishman?" I might have been a nit on the feather of an eagle; but I didn't mind a bit; I could comfortably admit hardly being much more, and I don't usually feel like that towards other people.

I had imagined that his ten minutes' talk must be worth a considerable sum of money to him; but he refuses to accept a penny. "You see," he said, "if they paid me, they might think they'd *bought* me!"

Snowy is responsible for the charming impression Hollywood left on my mind. When I now read those sordid little stories of silly, sensation-hunting young women getting themselves mixed up in unspeakable brawls, I see a lovely young creature sitting in Snowy's room at the stables, telling him all about it and positively enjoying the return of cleanliness and innocence which he seems able to bring about.

He lives with people all of whom smoke, many of whom drink often to excess, some of whom swear like bargees, and a goodly number of whom are temperamental, heartless, egotistical and artificial; but Snowy, whom they all love, never soils his lips even with a harmless damn, he does not smoke, and drink fails to interest him. An excellent recipe for a prig or a bore, admittedly; but I can say even worse than that: near Snowy, a pipe,

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not often absent from my lips, seemed slightly unnecessary; somehow one's tongue omitted the harmless enough cussing most men use in ordinary conversation one with another; you had to think clean thoughts; you could never be mean or cunning near Snowy; and he sent me flying back through the years to hero-worshipping, boyish days. He showed an example of fine, clean manliness; and the brotherly, affectionate, kindly, understanding attitude he showed us was not less compelling when we realized that he could swim better than any one of us, that he could play polo in any first-class team, that he'd forgotten more about horsemanship than any of us knew, that his courage was superb, and that he could probably fight the lot of us, and make mincemeat of us with one of his arms tied.

Life now became full of movement; and had we been able to stay longer in Hollywood, presumably we should have met most of the motion picture people. Unfortunately, those we wanted particularly to meet were away. Ruth Chatterton, an old friend of Audrey's, was in Santa Barbara making a picture; we thought of motoring there, but the visit would occupy one complete day, and there was so much to do in Hollywood. Gary Cooper was away in the mountains in the throes of a snow picture. Snowy gave us a letter for Douglas Fairbanks.

We reached Douglas Fairbanks through his trainer, which was much better than reaching him through his publicity agent. He was rehearsing, but when told that some friends of Snowy Baker wanted to see him, he came out at once. His attitude towards us was completely disarming. He seemed rather pleased and a little surprised that we should be interested in meeting him. I had imagined rather a big man with a placid, careless kind of personality. As a reality and not a motion picture, he is a small, perfectly built, swarthy-skinned man bubbling over with both mental and physical energy. His mind seemed to work faster than his tongue could express his thoughts. He knew all about Baby Austins, and discussed them intelligently. He had heard much about New Zealand, the Government of that country having sent him

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some reels of beautiful motion pictures, urging him to go out, to see for himself. There had not been time, he said. He gladly agreed to be photographed with our expedition, and if we were insecure about our own cameras, we might use his. Then, while I sat in the car, he leapt over it and Dick worked our motion picture camera. After arranging for us to explore the studio, he dashed back to his rehearsal and we saw him no more. A notice in the studio car park read, "Reserved for Miss Pickford's car." That was the nearest we got to Mary. It occurred to me to think how shocking it would be if she lost all her money and could not afford to have a car and was forced to step into a tram with darned stockings.

We heard a great deal about Mary Pickford. Audrey said she was really very sweet, and uncommonly clever. She had, according to Audrey, learnt French in six months and spoke it without an American accent. Unquestionably, Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford are respected in Hollywood, which says a great deal, for the place is alive with invisible ears, and eager, microscopic, even X-ray eyes are as plentiful as sand grains in the Sahara Desert. The newspapers bring them in whenever possible. While we were in Hollywood, an elderly plutocrat smacked the face or punched the jaw of another elderly plutocrat in a fashionable restaurant. A *passe* lady was mixed up in the sordid business. Douglas and Mary happened to be dining at the restaurant. The newspapers gave them the doubtful honour of flaring head-lines in an unsavoury story with which they were not connected in the slightest degree, and probably sold two extra editions.

Hollywood attracts all sorts and conditions of clever men and women. It seemed definitely international to me, with a slight English bias. One evening we met a beautiful Dutch girl who told us she had joined a class designed to help motion picture people to enunciate clearly for the microphone. The instructress was definitely not English. One day she was explaining the different sounds the vowel "o" may demonstrate. She gave the usual

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sounds with the addition of "ah." The Dutch girl questioned this. "I have not heard of 'o' being given 'ah' before!" she said. "What about 'job'?" replied the teacher.

Gene Stratton-Porter built herself a beautiful house on the hills near Hollywood a few years ago. No trees were disturbed on the section chosen, and every effort was made to make the house blend with its surroundings to avoid distracting the birds. Unfortunately, the old naturalist did not live long to enjoy her home. The house is now occupied by her daughter, Jeanette Stratton-Porter Meehan. Audrey's villa was very much Dick's and my home; but the Stratton-Porter house at Bel Air was something of a home too. One Sunday evening we showed our motion pictures there to an audience consisting almost entirely of picture people, the projector being worked by one of the leading directors. We repeated the performance the following Sunday evening when some managers had been roped in. The same picture people had loyally turned up, and they positively collapsed with infectious laughter at all my jokes, but I think they overdid it, notably when the very good-natured, beautiful granddaughter of Gene Stratton-Porter laughed brightly a second or two too soon. Incidentally, the managers were very interested, but nothing could be arranged quickly, and no definite promises were made.

There is so much that I might tell of Hollywood, but three-quarters of the world still lie before us, and I must hurry on. I think I might end the Hollywood section with our last morning there, spent (happily) with Snowy and about twenty children. He had arranged a riding party, and as usual, two or three new pupils had arrived for their first lesson. I was riding near one of them, a girl of about ten, mounted on quite a spirited pony. She seemed happy enough until we began negotiating a narrow pathway where the ponies began crowding each other, and inexperienced young legs were getting crushed. A small girl became terrified and began squeaking, notably when her pony began biting its neighbour. "Oh, my goodness

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—oh—it's going to buck me off. Oh, dear——Oh——! " She had dropped her reins and was holding on to the arch of the saddle. I was hurrying to help her, when the superior young person on the next horse turned to her and said bitinglly, " Well, if you 'kant' ride—get off and walk! " " Oh, get off yourself! " snapped the small girl, and clenching her teeth, and looking fearfully at the nodding head of her pony, she gamely gathered up her reins, and carried on quite well.

A small boy—he could not have been more than seven—tumbled off when his pony was bumped by another. For a moment there was some danger of his being trampled; in fact, he was kicked slightly. Snowy appeared instantly, and stood near him without making any obvious attempt to help. " D'you think, Ned," asked Snowy, " you'd better go home? " " No, Snowy—I'll—I'll get up again! " Snowy gave him no more than a professional leg up, and then said off-handedly with no suggestion of patronizing, " You're a man, Ned! " We all looked at Ned with great respect as the little fellow, with an angry-looking bruise on his stout young leg, rode proudly off. Even the vixenish young females were impressed.

As we left the stables for the last time, Snowy called out, " I wish I were coming with you, boys! " and we heard ourselves shouting back in the tones of hero-worshipping schoolboys, " We wish you were, Snowy! "





## CHAPTER EIGHT

### ACROSS THE UNITED STATES

I PROPOSE to hurry across the United States. I fear to bore. The place is, anyway, a shocking bore since prohibition in some inexplicable way took the heart out of it. I say that, too, quite confidently, although it would not disturb me seriously if all the alcohol in the world evaporated; and as a matter of fact during parts of the journey, far from finding it difficult to get drink (had we wanted it), it was difficult to avoid giving offence by refusing to drink the vile stuff we were offered with, of course, the most hospitable intentions.

However, the journey was not always uninteresting; we saw the Grand Canyon; we traversed the Mohave Desert; we passed along avenues of live oaks mysteriously, and very beautifully, festooned with Spanish moss near the Gulf of Mexico; and the autumn tints in the Carolinas and Virginia surpassed in beauty anything I have ever seen of this kind in the world.

It is obviously necessary to offer a few dry details at this, the beginning of the first section of the land journey round the world; and I proceed to do so as rapidly as possible.

Dick did most of the driving, because he likes driving; and being infinitely better at it than I am, having a wealth of experience behind him, a quick eye, courage, and generally an ability to win that important odd trick when the motoring game becomes critical in tight corners, the chances of being held up or impoverished by an accident (they call them " wrecks " in the U.S.A.) were reduced. In our adventurings Dick and I never take unnecessary

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chances; we have always realized the importance of treating our car with exquisite care on perfect roads, never then accepting all she is willing to offer and thus running the risk of weakening parts from which we expect the utmost when the road is difficult and dangerous.

Emily II, like her late grandmother, is an ordinary open touring car; and except that she is plastered rather lavishly with automobile club badges (which we think a little vulgar, but have not yet thought of abandoning), and is decorated with a few extra fittings in the way of a good clock, a gleaming nickel spot-light and other pretty gadgets, differs in no way from the ordinary Baby Austin. Because there were visits to pay in the eastern American cities, and of course at Home (Britain) it had been necessary to bring more kit with us from New Zealand than the adventure would otherwise have demanded. We shipped much of this across the continent in two small trunks, carrying with us a large suit-case which we shared. A useful lunch basket, heavy grey blankets and good New Zealand travelling rugs completed Emily II's burden. We had thought of replacing the small tent we had lost on the *Tahiti*, but we abandoned this idea when we saw how cheap and convenient the auto-camps were. We averaged somewhere in the region of two hundred miles a day, always aiming to start before nine in the morning, and seldom motoring after sunset. While I cooked breakfast, invariably bacon and eggs, Dick prepared the car for her day's work, examining all parts carefully, and really preparing her for the time looming ahead when her mettle must be proved. I washed up the breakfast things and packed the lunch basket while Dick stowed the rugs. Our midday meal was simply biscuits with either coffee or tea from a thermos flask. We generally dined, simply and adequately, at the auto-camp cafe; occasionally we bought a couple of pounds of steak and other fixings for a mixed grill and consumed the lot. With some modification, this routine was followed all the way round the world.

There are at least nine main continental routes across the United States. They turn and twist a little, and

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threaten to get lost in towns and cities, but being efficiently numbered at intervals of a few miles, there is no danger of missing the way. Reports of the condition of these highways concentrate in the main state automobile club offices. Because winter was at hand—we left Los Angeles late in October—it seemed best to choose a southerly route. We simply mentioned this to the clerk in the Los Angeles Automobile Club office, adding that we should like to see the Grand Canyon, a glimpse of Mexico over the border from El Paso, New Orleans and Daytona Beach in Florida, where we proposed to run Emily along the famous beach. He instantly turned out—like a penny-in-the-slot machine—a veritable library of maps and cards which he began treating with coloured pencils. He shot us away on the highway numbered U.S. 66 to Holbrook in western Arizona, marking the point at Williams where we might turn north for a space to the Grand Canyon; from Holbrook he diverted us to U.S. 70, dropping us suddenly to U.S. 80 which passes through El Paso. He kept us faithful to dear old U.S. 80 for hundreds and hundreds of miles (we had become quite attached; these great highways seem to have definite characters, and U.S. 80, although traversing some very dull plain country through Texas, was a friendly old chap), until we reached Shreveport on the Red River in Louisiana, whence we fell south to New Orleans on U.S. 71—an odd number, showing that the highway goes north and south. At New Orleans he drove us along U.S. 90, surely the most gracious highway in the world, for it follows the Gulf of Mexico for a time and is nearly always a dim lovely avenue of live oaks festooned with that remarkable Spanish moss—a species of lichen, I presume, which hangs in mighty Dundreary whiskers, yards long sometimes, on every branch of a tree. This Spanish moss should be depressing, for it is a dim grey-green and waves about in the air like funeral drapings; but there is so much of it, and it is so utterly careless where it attaches itself, being apparently as pleased to dangle from telegraph wires as from the more comfortable tree limbs; and learning that it asks nothing but a lodging from the

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trees it adorns, one decides that it is really very lovely, and not depressing at all. A pet little whisker of it lived quite comfortably dangling from one of Emily II's hood struts for a long time, but it passed away in the cold of north Virginia. U.S. 90 carried us to Florida.

Audrey (our Hollywood hostess) motored with us a few miles the morning we left Los Angeles. If her spirits were as low as ours when at last we said good-bye, she must have felt very sad indeed. Dick's spirits sank to zero. He is like that. Secretly a cat on hot bricks when we pause for a day or two—always eager to move on—he invariably clothes his spirit with a garment of deep mourning the first day out if we have made good friends during the pause. It is the penalty he must pay for comeliness and strength. They like him instantly, and because he knows how to be silent, they show him at once that they do; and he basks in this incense very comfortably, finding me a good enough mate on the road in Emily II, but inadequate as incense. He recovers after an hour or two, although I have known these low spirits to persist for as long as twenty-four hours when the incense has been particularly sweet. Yet I must not give a wrong impression; I presume it would be impossible to find a less vain or conceited man than my friend; it is simply that he has a definite appreciation of motherly love!

Dick, being in low spirits, was unable to enjoy the Mohave Desert that first day; but I, more hardened to parting, and, anyway, always looking over the top of the world, appreciated every moment we spent flying along a perfect road through a world of glorious colour. It was impossible not to think what this trail must have meant in covered wagon days—a very hard, dry nut to crack—lined as it must have been with the bones of men and beasts; but apart from its superb beauty, the Mohave is now hardly more than an incident on the transcontinental journey. A superb panorama in pastel shades unfolded as we flew along—distant mountains, bare and probably very cruel, varied in colour from soft purple to a dim rich blue; nearer mountains were either golden brown or pale yellow; and

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over all there was sometimes a soft blue haze lent by the cloudless sky. The glare was sometimes very trying; during the midday hours it was almost unpleasantly warm, but we wore motoring goggles, and coats could always be taken off. I can never forget that cloudless sky and the gorgeous colour which enfolded us as, with a perfectly running engine, Emily II sped along, proudly discounting the cruel threat offered by the hard earth on each side of us, sprouting all kinds of tyre-killing cactus with needle-like spines, and the hardly more hospitable sage-brush. In a waterless waste of hundreds of miles we gave no thought to drink, and the lunch basket merely carried our midday meal. I had always imagined a desert to consist of sand. Evidently I was mistaken. In our journey round the world, we crossed three great deserts and over odd patches of desert country; but while sand occasionally occurred and caused us trouble, we learnt to fear it as unusual. Fine gravel and hard rocky ground were most general in our experience.

The Mohave was the most cheerful desert we met. There is a constant stream of motors coming and going along its truly perfect highway, perfect in the Californian area, anyway; and petrol stations occur at intervals of a few miles. There are even auto-camps, but they appear less frequently than on other highways, and owing to the cost of water, they are not so clean nor so efficiently run. We spent the first night at Amboy, a Santa Fe railway station. On the auto-camp was written in flaring letters, "Come to our cabins—the ocean is 'comeing'"—a rather refreshing lapse for an American who usually seems so eager to dispense with unnecessary vowels. Until I realized that the invitation was meant more particularly for people travelling from the east who would naturally come to the ocean the next day if they paused at Amboy at the day's end, I thought this might be a threatened deluge: I believe the ocean had come to Amboy a few million years ago! As a contrast to Audrey's Hollywood villa, the Amboy auto-camp was a little startling. Dick turned in in the lowest spirits.

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The desert highway was alive with exciting advertisements and signs. An auto-camp or a petrol station with its attendant cafe was always a comet with a double tail of bright information stretching for miles along the highway in both directions. " Eat at Norman's—and keep your wife for a pet! " (doubtless heard before) might occur again and again, until it led to the one-storied shack of Norman who allowed his customers to know tactfully (with a notice) that he preferred cash, " Credit department upstairs: take the elevator! " And, of course, there was no upstairs, nothing but that cloudless sky and the pale blue haze above that glorious colour—red and yellow, and rich browns, and the dark powdered green of the cactus and sage-brush.

A simple " Eats! " was sometimes the climax to a few miles of " Eats ahead." I liked best the lazy, " Lez Eat! " which often occurred as a delicate suggestion a few miles on each side of a cafe. Pygmies dancing on a stage as big as the world!

It was definitely not cheap advertisement; it was certainly never objectionable. Perhaps it was the touch of the ridiculous overwhelmed by the sublime—the clown with the roving commission adding just that something to the superb beauty of the formal ballet.

Ed, presumably an abbreviation for Edward, gave rather a glowing touch of nature at a point where the desert becomes mountainous near the trail. Ed's signs began simply with, " You're coming shortly to Ed's! " They gradually became more articulate and quaintly human with, " Free air and water at Ed's; I answer five hundred questions daily—ask me another! "

The highway climbed a fairly steep hill. On its summit, perched on a jagged rock, stood a beautiful aeroplane beacon. Below us stretched a mighty valley bounded in the far distance by coloured mountains. The vast plain in the valley clothed in powdered green seemed to be humming a quiet chant, worshipping the mountains in their coloured robes, and the mountains were quietly listening. At a point where the highway met the plain below us,

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there occurred an outcrop of quaintly shaped mounts. Across one little pudding-shaped mountain—"Poor little mountain!" perhaps you say—was written in immense letters composed of whitewashed stones—"ED'S."

While Ed's fame was self-imposed and palpably self-arranged, he showed all the modesty of a great celebrity. After a few moments with him, it was impossible not to like him. A man in the middle thirties, I should imagine, he was comely in a non-assertive way. His station was carelessly decorative—a long, straggling series of low sheds in a cactus garden, the petrol pumps giving a splash of colour to what otherwise might have been a trifle drab. He had one pet cactus rising without a single off-shoot to something like eighteen feet.

As we drew up, Ed shouted, "Dad—here's one of them!" meaning a Baby Austin, almost unknown in the desert, although the new Bantam Austin was then becoming slightly known. With something of a bustle, Dad emerged and shouted with a confident chuckle, "I'm going to get a pair of them!" At which we all laughed, Ed with a slight drooping of the corners of his mouth and a soft chuckle; the older man had made it clear that he proposed to wear Austin's as shoes. Dad was distinctly an Italian, but infinitely more human than the average American Italian. It was very obviously a mutual admiration society of two, and charming; Ed was keeping Dad young, and Dad was enjoying a box-seat at Ed's performance, only making a remark occasionally. Ed's accent was southern and attractive.

We called for lemonade, and entered a store which was something of a museum with glass cases and rabbit wire-netted shelves containing curios in the way of old Indian cave drawings and odd bits of quartz. Above a big ice chest was written, "No—I don't sell it, although I *do* look suspicious!" Presumably Ed is often asked if he sells liquor. He was ready with drooping lips and a pleasant, mischievous smile when we glanced at him after reading this notice. "They blame me," he said gently, "for everything that goes wrong on U.S. 66 He would not

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admit having composed the notice himself; Ed was always non-committal and very modest.

"He tried to commit murder the other night! " said his father reprovingly, while his boyish eyes danced mischievously and his strong white teeth shone through his short black beard.

"Murder! " we exclaimed.

"Oh—just in the legs! " explained Ed with a modest, disarming smile.

" But, who—what—how? "

" The owner of the legs was directing them towards my property," said Ed with the same modest, disarming smile; " he wanted to fill a couple of two-gallon cans he carried in his hands. I saw his car—without lights—stop around that bend, so I waited until the legs were between me and the moonlight. Then I let 'em have a charge from my shot-gun—six in one leg and seven in the other: thirteen! He was out of luck."

Although he spoke so softly and charmingly, Ed created a perfectly vivid picture of the incident.

" If he was short of cash, and wanted gas badly to get home, I'd have given him some," continued Ed. " I don't like charging, with a shot-gun, for gas before I sell it! "

Ed's father was quivering with amusement during this turn, obviously knowing the story well yet still filled with appreciation.

" What did he do then? Did he run away? " I asked rather fatuously.

" He couldn't! " admitted Ed sadly; " he just had to sit there until the sheriff came along and gave him a ride to hospital."

" Did they gaol him, or anything? " I asked.

" Oh, no! " said Ed lazily; " the sheriff asked me if I wanted to make a charge; but I said I had—in the legs! " At which Ed's father gave up repression, and straightway burst his sides in merriment.

A less cheerful incident occurred at Needles on the banks of the Colorado. A pale little clerk who had been courteous and helpful in the telegraph office came out to



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the car and joined the already large crowd shouting questions. He was almost a hunchback and hardly five feet tall; his skin was pale, and his big dark eyes showed a struggle against pain. "Come away from that car, Ernie!" shouted a yokel with a silly laugh; "you hide it." I recall at this moment the added expression of pain which swept across that poor little man's face.

The Colorado River is a big, ugly stream of clay and silt-laden water where the highway crosses it.

We were now in Arizona, possibly the least fertile and presumably the poorest of the states. This poverty was reflected in the highway which had changed from beautifully graded concrete to what they call locally "wash-board," an apt enough image of those miles of maddening corrugations which must play havoc with the workings of a small car. The country, still desert, became more hilly and slightly more settled. Gold is found here, although judging from the decaying batteries and deserted workings, enthusiasm in its search has evidently waned.

Near the summit of one rust-coloured hill was sprawling a fairly large gold-mining town called Oatman. Although it wore the stain of decay, the town spirits were ably kept up by one Lou, who evidently owned an auctioneering mart and second-hand shop upon which he had plastered many amusing notices: "The wind blew; the bully flew; for information, see Lou!" and in more direct language, "Oh, I buy and sell any damn thing!"

We had stopped opposite Lou's, near a grocer's shop; but in a cheerful, good-natured way, Lou was determined not to be ignored. While we were answering the inevitable questions asked by the men and women who had gathered near the car—very decent men and women of the type common in our own New Zealand small towns—we heard an amazing sneeze which echoed and re-echoed up the quiet street. Despite its thunderous sound, it yet remained a perfectly human kind of sneeze. "Old Lou!" said the men around the car, glancing across the street where a stout man, with rather a conscious smile, stood near a doorway. Lou obliged with two or three more

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sneezes which we enjoyed very much, and then he treated us to a few yawns, rather ceremonial kind of yawns, as loud as the sneezes and as quaintly human, but followed up with a little comedy; for at the end of each yawn, Lou seized a small hand-bell and rang it rapidly with the definite suggestion that since we were all so very tired, we'd better knock off for the day. "Lou!" the men near us grinned, trying not to laugh; "he's a card!"

We left U.S. 66 duly at Williams, and made the quick rush northwards to the Grand Canyon. I plead the excuse of lack of time when I say that I do not propose to write at any length about the Grand Canyon. The truth is that I dare not.

I recall at Williams a weary old Irishman standing with two young Americans near a petrol station. He had told us about the golden days in Arizona's past when, he said, five-dollar bills might be picked up in the streets. "I wish those days would return now!" I laughed. "Oh," shrilled the old Irishman, in an Irish-political-speech-on-Ireland-wrongs kind of tone, "there's nothing here for an Englishman—nothing here for an Englishman!" "Not even courtesy from an Irishman?" I asked—a cold smack on the face which the old fellow might well have been spared. Then a rush northward on rising land towards tall pines which gradually enfolded us in a mysterious silence, over a highway lined, after a time when we entered a cooler climate, with shrubs dyed a vivid scarlet with autumn colour. There was a gracious gateway to the National Park, a beautiful road leading to what seemed a tea kiosk; and then below us—the Grand Canyon!

No words at my command can express what I saw, what I felt, at that moment. A gnat had been given the wings and strength of an eagle. I found relief in banality. "Dick," I said, "it's like a rainbow cake!" You could not, you simply could not, accept all that coloured beauty of "motionless unreality" (lifted from the guide-book!)—the great silent space, the layers of red, yellow and brown in a thousand capes, bays and little mountains—pools of

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green on little plateaux far below where grass seemed to be growing—shadows dark as night, purple and mauve shadows, slowly moving with the sun—splashes of light, pools of sunshine; and all in a haze, sometimes mauve, sometimes a soft blue and sometimes pink. A pantheist must have knelt and worshipped.

With the best part of one day and the morning of the next, we had to be content. What, therefore, could we see of this vast thing of beautiful colour which extends for more than sixty miles, is from four miles to eighteen miles wide, and slightly more than a mile deep? Really very little: an afternoon on the north rim watching the canyon from half a dozen look-outs, and a short tramp a little distance down the trail leading to the Colorado River, which appeared an insignificant muddy stream emerging at odd moments far below us.

We made use of the local auto-camp; but the people of the hotel were interested in Emily II, and they begged us to "give a talk" after a church service in the ball-room. We agreed, and all might have been well if the preacher had not spied us lurking on the veranda outside the ball-room at the moment when he had but reached the third heading of his discourse; for he threw down his hand almost instantly, and shouting exultantly to his flock, "Our boys have come; our boys have come!" he turned towards us and continued too, too brightly, "Come in, boys—come——!" Dick went; a bolt from the blue and a bolt from the pulpit leave him equally unconcerned; but I flew to a Hopi Indian castle in the hotel grounds and shuddered for a second, finally entering the ball-room with those guests, a distinct majority, I fear, who had not felt the need for spiritual uplift at the Grand Canyon.

From the Grand Canyon we motored to the edge of the Painted Desert and across the Petrified Forest, doubtless interesting and wonderful, but rather an anticlimax after the Grand Canyon. It took Nature forty million years, so the guide-book said, to petrify the great pine logs which are found strewn over a wide area; the fallen trees had been waterlogged, each vegetable cell being replaced

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by silica, iron and manganese-laden water and then subjected to great pressure; but Dick and I decided that Nature might have been much better employed when a small chunk of this petrified wood flew from under the wheel of a passing car, striking Emily II fair on the wind-screen, and leaving a neat hole less than an eighth of an inch in diameter. Another chunk wounded her on the radiator, fortunately without drawing lymph.

The roads improved in New Mexico, and we crossed what is presumably the southern section of the Rocky Mountains, but without being aware of any serious rise and fall. El Paso is a handsome, modern American kind of town for the most part, falling away and becoming Mexican—shabby, dirty and sinister-looking with no touch of romance—where it reaches towards the Rio Grande; and I am afraid I can never again enjoy the recitation "Lasca," because instead of the wide torrent rushing between precipitous, fern-clad banks of my imaginings, we found only an excessively dirty, clay-laden stream as ill-looking as a sewer.

Leaving Emily in El Paso, we crossed the frontier and spent a few hours in Juarez; but again we were disappointed. Of course it is absurd to judge a big country in a pestiferous little frontier town; but I had hoped even this little glimpse of Mexico might not shatter my preconceived notion of life as it is lived there, gleaned from novels and short stories. I had vaguely imagined a more fitting setting, something kaleidoscopic in the way of whitewashed shrines, gory religious pictures, sombre crucifixes at cross-roads, stabbings and resultant blood-stains, with a few savagely handsome mantilla-clad sefioritas with slight moustaches, stamping about dancing the tango when they were not fiercely shooting the men they loved (or hated) with silver and tortoise-shell inlaid revolvers. I saw, and walked about, a dusty little town inhabited by (largely) cross-eyed men and women, the former in soiled denims, the latter mostly swathed in dingy black; and an unusual number of soliciting street-walking girls heavily and inexpertly daubed with make-up

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—and not a mantilla or slight moustache amongst the lot of them.

We remained in Juarez but a few hours. Returning across the bridge and through the turnstile on the American side, we were seriously startled when we found our legs grabbed and our trouser pockets felt by hands coming from United States officials who were crouching under the turnstiles. The liquor supply at the frontier control had evidently run out; the poor fellows wanted a nightcap; we were sorry we could not oblige! It was quite refreshing to find Emily II clean, shining and wholesome, waiting for us in the auto-camp garage in El Paso.

We crossed the great plain of Texas over excellent roads. Petrol became delightfully cheap, varying between sixpence and ninepence the gallon; and the auto-camps, which had been steadily falling off in comfort and efficiency, almost reached the Californian standard. The people we met in the small towns and villages were kindly and courteous, and might have been Australian or New Zealand rural folks.

At a small town called Baird near the southern centre of Texas, where we paused near a cafe after sunset, three or four boys gathered about the car and asked questions. They seemed respectable lads, and we had no misgivings when we left Emily in their charge and entered the cafe. They had gone when we returned, and we were rather touched when we found a small silk British white ensign on one of the seats; but the patriotic fervour we enjoyed in the thought that Britannia rules the waves vanished when we discovered—some miles beyond Baird—that our fine camera had been stolen, and that my expensive motor-ing goggles were really lost this time. The loss of the camera was a serious blow. I wrote to the Baird Chief of Police from the next auto-camp, but up to date I have received no reply. Baird is infamous in the history of our journey in that it marks the only town in the world where property was stolen from our car.

We passed through Fort Worth and Dallas. At Dallas

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we attended a rehearsal of *Hamlet*, which was being produced by a local Little Theatre society, directed by an enthusiastic young Englishman. The manager of a small group of cinemas was playing *Hamlet*, and exquisitely, I thought. A little man, with an insignificant Jewish face, he seemed to quiver with life the moment he began his lines, enunciating perfectly and pushing well home every word he uttered. He might have been overwhelmed by Ophelia, who was a very big young woman and who constantly spoke of " M loyd "—a horrid American massacre of " r " which puts a Britisher's teeth on edge—but her sincerity and earnestness forgave everything. Polonius, a university professor, tried to arrange a lecture for us at the Dallas University; but the University had arranged a " pep meeting " on the only night available. It seemed that Dallas simply had to beat a rival university at football a few days later, and it was most important that all the students should be full of " pep " for the combat. I do not know how they set about it; it sounded like a German family singing a morning hymn of hate.

We spent a day and a half in New Orleans, merely enough to enjoy but a fleeting glimpse of its beautiful boulevards and avenues. There is probably more to explore in New Orleans than in any other city in the United States; but we had to be content with a delicious little French dinner in the old French quarter and a few hours watching the " Ole man river " Mississippi rolling along to the end of its journey. New Orleans recalled Lyons; but the great French influence in the former is not now very apparent. We seemed to be stumbling on romance when we discovered that the agent to whom our mail had been directed had gone out of business. We were directed to a house in what had once been a fashionable quarter of the town. We knocked at the door of an immense palace-like mansion which seemed on the verge of collapse. An old, old woman in old-fashioned, shabby clothes led us into what had once been a magnificent drawing-room with Persian rugs now laden with dust and badly moth-eaten, a gorgeously painted ceiling stained

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with damp, and delicate mural paintings veiled by cobwebs. Dry-rot and borer were fast eating away the beautiful old furniture. We heard her tottering footsteps re-echoing throughout the house; but she returned with our letters, and we were forced to leave without knowing what it was all about.

There is a convention almost general throughout the United States whereby the person who sells you anything must say after receiving your money, "Come again! " or "Hurry back! " It is synonymous for "Thank you! " of course. When we paid our bill at the New Orleans auto-camp office the old woman in charge seemed seriously annoyed with us for not remaining longer. The little office was heavy with the awful odour of boiling cabbage which could not escape through the closed windows. "Hurry back! " she snapped at Dick when he handed her the money; "Hurry back! " It might have been a cruel slap in the face; but Dick bowed slightly and withdrew, remarking gently that he did not think he would hurry back very fast in case the good woman had not finished eating her cabbage.

We crossed the Mississippi Delta on U.S. 90, over rather waterlogged country, finally reaching the shores of the Gulf of Mexico where inland people have seaside houses—charming villas nestling, it seemed, on the edge of a rich forest. Each villa has a long, thin pier running out into the gulf, creating rather a quaint effect in perspective as one looks along the shore. The highway was something of an avenue formed largely by the tree called locally "live oak." I had only seen this tree before, on the stage—that fabulous monster of a tree which a scene-painter loves to produce—an immense gnarled trunk with mighty limbs and fine lace-like foliage stretching half-way across the stage and meeting the branches of the similar tree on the other side. The live oak is precisely that. These beautiful trees are fully appreciated, and at some points U.S. 90 actually swung round to avoid disturbing particularly beautiful specimens. They have an acorn slightly smaller than the English kind, and are evergreen; the leaf

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is small, a very dark green, tough and shiny. They are the most friendly, jolly trees I know of.

We passed through Mobile (gloriously adorned with live oaks), the seaport the state of Alabama boasts on the small shoulder it thrusts at the Gulf of Mexico, entering western Florida at Pensacola. As we passed through Pensacola, an important naval airport of the United States, I remarked to Dick, "What a pity we're in such a hurry; I'd like to spend a few days here!" I did not imagine that my wish would be gratified, that the following morning at 2 a.m. we should be re-entering Pensacola on the hard driver's seat of a motor-lorry with poor little Emily II perched up behind us, Emily II seriously wounded and badly strained, and in a condition almost hopeless in view of our absence from spare parts. The story is sad from all points of view.

A timber worker's wife had had a baby that morning. The timber worker was on half pay, not earning enough to keep his family well clothed or even well nourished. In his small motor-lorry, the timber worker had driven to the nearest town where, I am sorry to say, he had imbibed rather too much of the local moonshine. With a couple of friends he was driving along the highway sadly thinking of his wife, his new baby and the smallness of his pay just then. He was about to pass the turn-off leading to his hovel when one of his mates said, "Ain't yer going home, Joshua?"

"Gee!" exclaimed Joshua, and swiftly spun his wheel without bothering to look round, without getting into the centre of the road before turning (a regulation in the U.S.A.) and without even putting out his hand.

"Gee!" the three men in the motor-lorry exclaimed when they saw something very small on four wheels flash in a mad circle in a vain effort to reach the turn-off—poor little Emily's driver doing his best, choosing between certain death and a slight chance, and only thwarted by a horrible stump at the edge of a ditch.

It all occurred so quickly, that I still remain unconscious of what actually happened. I recall Dick, whose face was very pale, looking reproachfully at the timber



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worker and saying, " Why, oh why, did you do that? " The timber worker had not many ideas on the subject. I was too amazed at our marvellous escape from serious injury to have many ideas myself.

Began some difficult hours. Emily's off back wheel was practically pulped; her body was seriously cracked; her steering arrangements were twisted out of shape, and her front springs hung in festoons. Bits of her littered the ground. The motor-lorry was not insured; and we were only insured against third-party risks; we heard about the timber worker's new baby and his poverty. We were eventually towed to the nearest little town, half a mile along the road. Here a serious financial difficulty arose. We had four fifty-dollar bills and fifteen cents in cash, and the townspeople refused to believe for a long time that the fifty-dollar bills were not counterfeit. They smelt them; they rubbed them; they gazed at them through magnifying glasses; they called in friends; they held meetings; and finally the landlady of the hotel agreed to give us twenty dollars and the use of her husband and his motor-lorry in exchange for one of them. The husband and his motor-lorry carried the expedition back to Pensacola, where Dick, with some fine American workmen, took poor little Emily to bits and then proceeded to put her together again. Unfortunately they were held up by a completely smashed aluminium steering housing, and it looked for some time as if we should have to wait until a fresh one could arrive from New York, or even from England; but an English ex-naval artificer said he would give welding it " a go," and although the task looked hopeless, he succeeded, Emily, a rather sick little Emily, seemed able to crawl to the coast, and the journey was recommenced. We were very interested during these anxious days to hear the chuckles of admiration of the American workmen during the process of taking Emily to bits. English workmanship received enthusiastic praise, and its perfectly genuine expression reflected, we thought, very highly on these Pensacola men.

Although we spent four or five days in Pensacola, I saw little of the place; I could see nothing but that smashed

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aluminium steering housing, and even when that was repaired sufficiently to make driving possible with great care, I could see only bankruptcy on the horizon somewhere between Jacksonville and Washington. Although the motor engineers in Pensacola were most considerate to us, and kept the cost of the repairs as low as possible, we were working on a very narrow margin.

However, our usual luck did not fail us; I think I mentioned earlier in this history that the proceeds of a lecture given at a big high school in Florida just paid for the repairs.

We travelled south to Daytona. I drove slowly along the beach while Dick photographed poor little Emily; I dared not go fast lest the steering housing should collapse again and force us into the sea like the Gadarene swine; but the result—I don't know what Dick did to the camera—shows Emily going at rather more than twice the speed of the Bluebird, and people speak with great respect when they see it.

We thought Florida charming, infinitely more lovely than California; for in Florida the vegetation is rich and luxuriant, and the people are much less buoyant and overwhelmingly prosperous. St. Augustine is a beautiful old city; and Jacksonville, where we spent two or three days, while apparently not so old, is a gracious, kindly city with the most delightful avenues of live oaks and chestnut trees. Good fortune brought us into close contact with two Jacksonville gentlemen, for whom we still retain a warm affection. We were charmed initially by their accent. One had a most intriguing way of using the word "howdy," to which he added, if the sentiment demanded it, either "boy" or "brother." Occasionally he altered the position of his "boy" or "brother" to give variety. For instance, if you told him that you had slipped on a banana skin he would merely say, "Howdy I" but if you added that you had sprained your ankle he would exclaim, "Howdy, boy!" and if you explained that in consequence you had missed your train and the chance of seeing your great-grandmother pass away, he would shout, "Howdy,

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brother I " " Boy, howdy! " was used to express sympathy with a more desperate situation. He had a great variety of " howdies "—gay " howdies," sad " howdies " and exultant " howdies "; but with it all he was such a dear, good, brotherly fellow—really brotherly, not offering us that hypocritical, formal *blaa* which the northern business man turns out and which deceives no Britisher after the first shock, that we both loved him, and even became attached to his " howdies."

We followed the coast highway northwards—through Georgia, the Carolinas and eventually to Virginia, where we abandoned the life of the highway with its auto-camps, good and bad, but usually bad as we crept northward, and became comfortable in the home of an old friend in the fox-hunting country.

This was the beginning of a series of visits which we continued to pay until we left the United States. We had no adventures; Emily, still able to carry on mildly, carried us from home to home.

In view of the fact that I am not writing a book as thick as the Oxford Dictionary, I think we had better now abandon the United States, merely remarking that the friends I had made many years ago were as strong and good as ever; and reuniting with them was to me the finest experience of our journey.

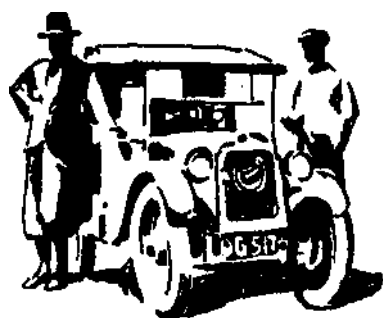
We spent two or three days in Washington, then in the grip of late autumn, making it rather difficult to convince Dick that here was a very beautiful city. Philadelphia, which I like best of all American cities, could hardly have seemed more attractive. New York, which I had not seen for ten years, had become even more startling.

A few days before Christmas, Dick, Emily and I went on board the Cunarder *Aurania* bound for London.



## BOOK FOUR

## ENGLAND







## CHAPTER NINE

### HOME

ON a bleak, foggy morning—one of the last of the year—the *Aurania* nosed her way into the King George V docks on the Thames. The charming home the ship had offered us for ten cheerful days was falling away before what seemed an uncompromising spring-cleaning inflicted by the once attentive stewards who were now dashing about, hauling great bags of linen along alleyways, whisking tablecloths from tables, rolling up carpets, and creating so general an air of social insecurity that Dick and I were glad to find refuge on the upper deck, despite the raw morning air and a light chilly wind which made our teeth chatter, and a foggy drizzle which seemed to wander into every corner of the ship.

"Awful, isn't it?" I said, glancing at the foul dock water through which the ship was slowly wading, at the maze of hideous smoke and fog-stained dock buildings gradually besieging us, and at the other great ships leaning sadly against the wharves on each side of us—very handsome, well-painted vessels, yet now, it seemed, without a kick in one of them.

Dick laughed.

"I suppose it is," he said slowly, arranging more comfortably his woollen scarf upon which a kind of hoar frost had formed; and then, turning to me rather shyly—Dick instinctively stifles sentiment—"but d'you know, I don't mind a bit!" He paused, and gazing down at a denuded banana bunch gradually being pushed through the dock gates with a mass of other floating rubbish, he added quietly, "I think—because it's England!"

I felt precisely the same. We were like children awake

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on Christmas morning, unaware of freezing toes, merely knowing that at last we might grasp the rich gifts we had anticipated in a journey half-way round the world.

And we were not disappointed. Dick expected to love England, and he loved England; it is some years since my colonial heart was completely won, but arriving with him I found myself falling in love again. I should explain here that nearly a century has passed since Dick's great-grandfather left Home, and in the interval his line has united with other blood, some Irish and some Polish (no Scottish, alas!); and my parents were Western Highlanders, from Mull, without much feeling one way or the other for the Sassenach. The truth is, of course, that we were actually drops in the vast wave of invincible affection always flowing from the outposts of the Empire to the Empire's heart.

I am fully aware that I am being sentimental, that I am laying myself open to the charge of employing rounded phrases in an effort to inflict jingo; but it is perfectly true that both of us were welling over with a love and affection for the Homeland, not affected by that depressing December morning nor even seriously modified by our rather casual initial reception.

And this feeling was so strong that it hurt a little; it even hurts at this moment when I try, vainly, to express it.

I should like to wander through pages and pages, telling of England; but I dare offer but a few fleeting impressions which I hope may not seem too disjointed. The journey across Europe, Asia and Australia back to New Zealand is a long one, and we must soon get on with it.

We were in no hurry to go ashore. Emily II was bound to delay us, and the ship was more comfortable than the great dock sheds below. The inevitable newspaper men, we believed, would soon be rushing us to earth, eager for the story of the two crusaders who were showing the world that a British car could face anything, anywhere. There might be someone to meet us, we thought; and we could be found most easily on the ship.

Many smartly turned-out men now began running up



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the gangway from the dock; but they all seemed to know precisely what they wanted; none of them rushed to the purser's office to ask eagerly, "Two fellows from New Zealand—going round the world in a Baby Austin—where are they? "

"A telegram—a letter! " we said, as the letter-rack began filling up; but there was nothing for us, and we returned to the deck.

The slight wind had died down, or was trapped somewhere in the maze of ugly buildings; the fog had thickened, and the misty drizzle seemed to be soaking the ship like so much blotting-paper when at last, after abandoning all hope of seeing our pictures in the *Daily Mirror*, we went down the gangway to find out what they were doing about Emily II.

Near the foot of the gangway a slight, very respectably dressed young man in a bowler hat mentioned our names.

"I knew you at once," he said with a modest little bow, "from your photographs! "

He explained that he had been sent by the Austin Motor Company to offer us assistance. He said that he had a large car which we might use to take ourselves and our baggage to an hotel, urging us not to worry too much about Emily II because his people were used to struggling with the customs and were perfectly willing to help.

The young man in the bowler had no gushing welcome to offer; after the first impact he was a little uncertain what to do about it. I had the general impression that he thought us promising, that he was taking little mental notes with which to amuse his young lady that evening, and that the said young lady was a steady but very pleasant little body who was content not to expect too much delirious excitement from life.

"Yes," he repeated finally, and rather proud of his discernment, "I knew you at once from your photographs, and"—turning to me with a modest little smile—"I've read your book about the journey to the **north** of Australia"—and then as an **explanation** for this **extra-**

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ordinary procedure—"there was one in the office, and I picked it up when there was nothing else to do, and d'you know"—there was a delightful note of surprise in his voice—"it was quite interesting! Amusing, really!" he added **primly**.

I think he was slightly ashamed of so much feeling. "Of course, *abroad*" which as far as he was concerned was obviously that very unimportant part of the earth's crust not England, "abroad, anything might—" and then he stopped suddenly. I think he was going to add that anything could happen abroad, and for that reason should not be regarded as very significant; but it had quickly occurred to him that after all we had escaped from "abroad" and it would never do to wound our sensibilities.

We guessed that the young man in the bowler was not one of the directors of the Austin Motor Company; in fact, we were fairly certain that he was a junior clerk; but we were wise enough to know that he was essentially a Londoner of the London painted for us by our parents. Not that I ever heard my father or mother say much about London; they thought much more of Oban; but I have long since adopted other people's parents who speak lovingly of England. Dickens knew many respectable young men in bowlers very much like our friend. Anyway, he offered us all the excitement of a discovery.

I'm afraid we were not above pulling the young man's leg, pulling it rather obviously because he was most attractive when slightly abashed, and when—this after we had reached a most violent stage of familiarity—he reproved us modestly with a most delightful chuckle and an occasional, "I say—you do go on, now don't you!"

"About money," said the young man diffidently, "er—have you any? I mean, English money!"

"A little," we admitted; "we brought some from New Zealand."

"Oh, from abroad!" said he with a gentle suggestion that while shark's teeth or beads made a very jolly kind of coinage and would naturally pass "abroad," in

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England——1 "Will they take it **here?** " **he asked** uncertainly.

We said that we thought it might pass, that it had the King's head on it, and Britannia on the back of the pennies.

"Indeed! " smiled the young man, not altogether convinced; "but I thought you had a president or something funny like that abroad! "

"No," I said, "we haven't got a funny president; we certainly have a perfectly delicious Prime Minister in our circus of a parliament, but no comic president. You know," I added impressively, "King George is our king too! "

"Oh, quite! " he agreed; but he did not convince me that he admitted our right to much more than one of the smaller hairs on the King's head.

We soon discovered that Emily II would not be allowed to come home without a struggle, which may seem curious in view of the fact that she had left London hardly six months earlier in a big crate; but her return was so unusual a proceeding that only the filling-in of countless forms could save the customs people concerned in her re-entry from possible questioning. They began work with a will, and very amiably; but they could promise nothing that day, and so we decided to follow the advice of the young man in the bowler to allow the Austin Motor Company to grapple with the early part of the struggle.

We now turned our attention to our personal baggage.

I had anticipated no difficulty; but I was soon the centre of a set-to which left me thankful that I had not been dragged before the magistrates (at the best), broken on the wheel, or drawn to Tyburn. A red-headed young man very obviously from Glasgow conducted the search through my suit-case and big trunk. I had some tobacco, but was unable to declare the precise amount. Believing that it was permissible to bring two pounds into England, and knowing that I had slightly less than that amount, I had made no attempt even to smuggle a pouch full, merely remarking to the red-haired lad that he could see

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for himself. I think the fact that my store was found divided—an unopened pound tin in the trunk and the partly used tin in the suit-case—roused his suspicion to fever heat; he accused me of smuggling and led me, as if in chains but protesting volubly, to his immediate superior. My assurances of innocence regarding the tobacco were the more earnest, because to my amazement I saw near the top of the suit-case a large green wicker hamper literally packed with expensive American sweets and candy, a Christmas gift from an American friend, which I had forgotten to declare. With his mind firmly fixed on the tobacco, the red-headed young man was staring at this hamper (it was bound with an elaborate red ribbon) without seeing it, thank heaven. The immediate superior replied to my assurances by remarking that he must take a very serious view of the case.

" And what does that mean? " I asked.

" The Police Court! " said he.

Our welcome to England was not now lacking spirit. However, I saw at once that only tactful conduct could save me from a lot of bother, and the green hamper with its red ribbon would most certainly damn me in the Police Court. I therefore spoke nicely to the immediate superior, and explained what Dick and I were doing. He was interested in a mild way; he finally decided to overlook my fault, and charged me nineteen shillings duty on a pound and a half of tobacco.

I remained bland only until my baggage was safely passed and locked, actually until the green hamper was safely hidden, and then I turned on the pair of them, and cussed them so blithely that the red-headed lad was reduced to sulky explanations and abject apologies, and the immediate superior to laughter. The young man in the bowler shivered in the offing, taking mental notes at a great rate, and evidently longing to explain to his countrymen that after all we came from " abroad I "

Our friend drove efficiently, and he knew his way back to the West End very well, but as a dragoman he was distinctly inadequate. I found myself repressing more

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excitement when the city became familiar, and since the young man in the bowler, like many Londoners, seemed to know remarkably little about the city, it was impossible not to explain things to Dick. "The Bank of England, Dick—the Mansion House—there's the dome of St. Paul's——"

Noticing a quizzical smile on the face of our friend, who was obviously wondering how an Abroadian could know slightly more than he knew himself about this part of London, I said in explanation, "You see, we keep photographs of all these famous places in our wigwams—rolled up in bark cloth; our tribal chiefs expose and explain them on Wednesdays! "

"Indeed! " he said, and the quizzical smile deepened. His mental note at that moment was, "The older and more chatty one knows more than he should about London. There is mystery here. I shall solve it shortly."

Near St. Paul's I said, "I think we might have a bite to eat; are there any forests near where we can hunt a hind, or slaughter a pig? "

The young man glanced at me searchingly, but refused to rise.

"You see," I explained, "we New Zealanders like to kill our own meat and to toast it over a wood fire if we're not in too great a hurry. We drink the blood—warm, from a horn flagon or a wooden trencher."

"Oh, you do go on—now don't you?" laughed the young man in the bowler, making a mental note to this effect, "You simply must laugh at the chatty one; he says such wild things—comic, in a way I "

Ale in England is infinitely better than the best we can produce "abroad"; and even English ale in Australia and New Zealand seems to suffer seriously travelling. Therefore, when we had parked the car down a side street and had found our way into one of those small city hotels with an attractive mahogany bar and found ourselves armed each with a pot of beer, I found it impossible not to say, "Dick, this is the first ale I've drunk for ten years! "

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Said he, looking over his mug with cheerful eyes, "It's the first I've ever tasted! "

"Er—don't you have ale—abroad? " asked the young man in the bowler in a normal kind of voice which was probably hiding an attempt to make me, at least, serious. "Of course/' he went on, "you have prohibition or something funny like that, abroad! "

"We have to—simply have to," I said earnestly; "people are so passionate, so lawless, abroad—all going about armed to the teeth with clubs and spears. It would never do to let them get worked up; they might start playfully tapping each other on the head or pricking one another with their spears—all in fun, of course, but one thing would lead to the other; you know the kind of thing—and then——! "

"Oh, you *do* go on—now don't you?" laughed the young man in the bowler, and I had my reward.

We lost him temporarily when we reached the Austin Motor Company's office in Oxford Street; but at odd times he came back into our lives during our stay in England. We could not number the young man in the bowler amongst our more prominent or fashionable friends, but he was far from being the least important, or the least lovable. He never failed us; he had that quality of faithfulness which, in my experience, is found more generally amongst Englishmen than amongst any race I know of.

We spent two or three cheerful days in town before going north to Birmingham to the Austin Motor Works where they had kindly offered to overhaul the car, to prepare her for the long journey across Europe, Asia and Australia. The accident in Florida had made this vitally necessary.

During these first days I must have bored Dick very seriously with my constant remark, "Isn't London beautiful—really beautiful? People who have not been Home imagine fogs in a crowded, ugly, big city, but look"—as we were walking across St. James's Park from the Horse Guards towards the Mall—"Big Ben there—the towers and

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spires of Westminster Palace and the Abbey—the charming Horse Guards; and that beautiful long avenue with the tidy trees is the Mall—and there's Buckingham Palace ahead—unusually clean! See the Royal Standard—the King must be in there somewhere! " Dick, of course, was fascinated; and I was refascinated by the street life of the working people shown in and around thousands of quaint stalls in side streets, as interesting as any Eastern bazaar.

And people are so polite. We used to chuckle whenever we saw the notices in the great shopping streets, "Pedestrians, please cross here! " none of your "Pedestrians must cross here! " which we might use in New Zealand. And a traffic policeman in Moorgate actually stopped the traffic to explain carefully a direction to us, bending over our little car with the most fatherly expression; and none of the drivers in the waiting cars showed the slightest impatience.

We went to the Zoo one Sunday, forgetting that only members and ticket-holders are allowed to enter on the Sabbath. The man at the turnstile had hardly uttered his polite regret before a gentleman—I use the term advisedly because it describes perfectly the quietly dressed middle-aged man we saw approaching—said quietly, " I'll sign! " And he signed and walked rapidly away with a quiet little bow. The incident made the Zoo more delightful, and we said, " England, of course! "

During these days, we often heard ourselves saying wonderingly, and a little gleefully, " They can't—they *simply* can't! " meaning that the American people in New York could offer nothing compared with London—absurd of us, of course, for the two great cities are so utterly different that they may not be compared; but we colonials are apt to be ridiculously jealous in our care of London's fame.

I propose now to close these impressions of England—alas, we had not time to go to Scotland—by writing a little of our week-end at Cambridge (my university), of our visit to Birmingham, and of Sir Herbert Austin; after

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which we must begin what is really Emily's part of the story, the long journey across country, or largely across country, back home to New Zealand.

As we motored along King's Parade to my college in Cambridge, I said to myself, " Dick is going to be surprised. The porter will know me by name instantly; with a nice combination of respect and friendliness he will most certainly say, ' Good evening, Mr.——,' and it will seem as if I came down last week instead of—well——! Not knowing porterly ways, Dick will think—' Ha! he may be a rotten motorist, but he has left his mark here—and Cambridge is Cambridge! ' " I saw my prestige strengthened.

I had not yet confided in Dick that all porters know the names of all undergraduates, past, present and, I almost think, future; this knowledge is given unto them. It is difficult to say how they know. Possibly in some hidden crypt they keep an immense map of the world with countless little flag pins. Some secret organization keeps them *au fait* with the movements of all members of their colleges. Imagine the porterly excitement when a flag starts tearing across the world! The flag is stuck tentatively in London where it quivers a little. " Mr. Smith will be here to-morrow! " warns the head porter to his underlings.

The world may have beaten Mr. Smith with iron rods or lashed him with serpents; he may, stupidly, have allowed himself to be despised and rejected by other wretches; but when he enters his old college porter's lodge and hears the respectful and kindly, " Good afternoon, Mr. Smith! " the world has changed for him, if only for a space, and if he has not reached heaven, surely the home of divine understanding and sympathy, he has reached something akin to it. Your parents die; your sisters and brothers marry; your home dissolves, and for the rest of your life you are conscious of loss when you have time to think about it; but Cambridge never leaves you, and if you are moderately true to yourself and keep in touch a little, it remains a home.

We pulled up at the porter's lodge and entered the



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gates. The porter was not there! A man who had been a porter's assistant's boy in my day stood at the desk.

"Er——" I began.

"Good evening, Mr.——," said he, mentioning my name without a blush.

"How did you know? Where's the porter? Of course, it's vacation time," I said.

"You mean——" he mentioned the name of the porter of my day. "He's dead."

"Oh, I'm sorry," I said.

"You see, sir, his wife died; and that broke him up—and he died."

"I didn't know he had a wife," I began a little irritably; "did she live here? "

I think the man knew what I meant. The porter was an immense man with rosy cheeks and a big moustache. His pleasant, rather boyish, blue eyes were a little like those covered buttons used in old-fashioned upholstery—because his rosy cheeks were so plump. He nearly always wore a bowler hat. He often reminded me of old Bible illustrations of the Rich Man's supper; and it is almost impossible now to imagine him with a wife in the sense of a helpmeet or "better-half! " He seemed to stand so squarely on his own feet; he was so richly complete in himself. But he had a wife—I learnt more details from a don—and her death spelt the end of existence for him; he literally faded away.

"She was a very fine woman! " said the man in the porter's lodge, dispelling my vision of a faded, thin female drifting along like a piece of straw in the wake of the powerful steam-tug driven by the big porter.

The man now busied himself on our behalf. He seemed to take it for granted that we would be offered rooms in college. "Mr. S——," said he, very cleverly mentioning the name of a don whom I knew intimately, "is up; but he's out to tea at the moment."

Because we wanted to leave very early the next morning, it seemed best to let the man find lodgings for us. This he did within a few minutes, leading us to rooms in

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Market Place, where the landlady was divided between pleasure in letting them and discomfiture in being found unprepared " for gentlemen! "

I might add, before leaving Cambridge, that a week or two later my college invited Sir Herbert Austin to be its guest while Dick and I were there. By a lucky combination of circumstances, we were able to show him the side of Cambridge which I have known and loved—the simple, brotherly, charming and wholly friendly side; we refused to treat him as the great man he is, remembering that, after all, he is human. (" We " came into the picture at the initial reception because Sir Herbert arrived at seven when the dean, the college host, was forced to take chapel; the dean would have been perfectly cheery, doubtless, but he is a dean of tender years and might have taken refuge in being conventional.) However, Sir Herbert confided to me before going to the hall for dinner, " Er—I like this place," said he quietly, and he smiled in a friendly human way when he added, " it's so—well, er—not a bit like Oxford I " Which made me wonder if I'd let my college down. But as the young man in the bowler might explain it away—I come from "abroad! "

From Cambridge we motored in the general direction of Birmingham, reaching the home of an old friend in Derbyshire towards the late afternoon. My friend had been given a baronetcy at a moment when he would have infinitely preferred a new wooden horse, or any other kind of toy delightful to a boy of two. With the baronetcy came a rather small but beautiful estate and an immense Adam mansion complete with Gobelin tapestries, old pictures and beautiful furniture. The income from the estate was not enough to support even a child of two in the Hall, and even when the child became a boy of thirty (when I saw him last) it was still inadequate. However, he had enlarged one of the estate cottages near the great house and in this he enjoyed week-ends with his wife and family, spending the balance of his time accumulating a new fortune for the family. He had sold his great-grandmother (a Romney portrait of her) and had used the

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proceeds to join a growing business which had duly grown and was growing. His wife had helped, too, by having elderly relatives who had died and had left her odd little fortunes, odd London houses and much old furniture; and the general upshot is that they expect soon to move into the Hall—all very romantic to us Abroadians who thoroughly enjoyed roaming over the great house, hearing of all the plans to remove the paint from the exquisite Adam carving, and becoming suitably indignant with a past tenant who had monstrously turned the Adam dining-room into Jacobean at vast expense. This caitiff had made a fortune from coal, or iron, or brass, or something—so what could you expect? He *would* turn an Adam dining-room into Jacobean; and he was not to be excused even if he had purchased truly old panelling and a genuine chimney-piece, falling away, incidentally, with the beams in the ceiling which even we could see were too obviously antiqued. Secretly, I thought the enlarged cottage much more charming than the Hall, and although it seems nice to hear of one old family moving in when so many are moving out, I doubt if my friends will be happier. These old mansions were a product of an age which could support them without strain on their owners. Almost everything—food, drink (the Hall has a picturesque brewery), linen, and sometimes even cloth—were produced on the estate, and the vast staff of servants needed to keep the great house in order came also from the place, and wages were low. Taxes, too, were less disagreeable. That age has definitely passed.

I was amused in watching the enthusiasm shown by my friend's wife in enlarging and decorating the cottage which seemed to be visibly swelling into a mansion. Said she, glancing at her eldest son, " It will make a good dower house! "

A little after noon the next day, Emily II tried to enter the main gates of the Austin Motor Company's works at Longbridge, a few miles from Birmingham, but was instantly driven forth by the works policemen. **We** parked her at the **usual kerb**, and left her weeping bitterly

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in a horrid combination of rain, sleet and fog. Those policemen would have driven her forth with equal firmness had she come from the moon. Orders are orders in England; and odd cars are simply not permitted to enter the Austin gates without a permit. However, she was soon rescued from the ditch without and given a stall to herself inside the gates when the powers-that-be heard of her arrival. The incident was depressing to me because at the time I had a shocking cold in my head, being forced to travel with many more handkerchiefs than I owned.

We were treated very kindly at Longbridge. When we left a week or two later, we were convinced that we had said good-bye to friends, really friends; and Emily II bore startling evidence of the effective generosity of the people we met. Apart from overhauling her exquisitely, they had added a magnificent tucker-box to her back—a thing covered with dim blue leather to match her colour, with gleaming plated locks, and fitted with useful shelves and trays; the people who make the air cushions for Austins made us useful sleeping-bags fitted with air mattresses and lined with warm wool; a clock, and a good one, came from those who make clocks for Austins; a luxurious spot-light came from the lamp-makers; even a table was fitted in front of the passenger's seat, and there were many other useful contrivances. In fact we were laden with so many proofs of kindness that it looked, judging from Emily II's springs, as if our chances of reaching the other end of the world under our own power were very slight indeed.

Although this kindness was so effective, I am forced to admit that it was rather a gathering kind of kindness; it was totally lacking in facade. American business methods are not very popular in Australia and New Zealand, but I think we have absorbed some American *blaa*, notably in the motor trade. Australian and New Zealand car salesmen, and even the agents themselves, wuff-wuff at you most delightfully when you drop in: well-cut clothes, love, the customer-is-always-right kind of thing, suave courtesy, gentility—all are recruited for the massed attack, to which,

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however, you become accustomed and rather like. No one wuff-wuffs at you in Longbridge; but if you have eyes to see, and you haven't got too bad a cold in your head, or haven't used up all your handkerchiefs, you will gradually find something much more satisfying than all the wuff-wuffing that was ever wuffed!

We met Sir Herbert Austin the next day. The actual works (I'm ashamed to say works always bore me, although I flatter myself no one would suspect it) where Austins are turned out by the yard, were very much what I thought they might be; perhaps the executive offices were more simply furnished and less sumptuous than what one might have expected, but the presiding genius, Sir Herbert Austin, surprised me most because he was not a bit like what I had imagined him to be.

Without any good reason, even after I had seen photographs of him, I had absurdly persisted in imagining Sir Herbert Austin to be something like this—a kind of essence of all the car people I had come across: a tall, slight man with a pointed beard and with a slightly artificial air, one who wore well-creased lavender trousers and a too beautifully fitting coat with tails, who had a town house in Mayfair, a manor in the country, a steam yacht and a stable of thoroughbreds. This man seldom bothered about soiling his hands and collecting smuts in Birmingham; just occasionally he dropped in at the factory and nonchalantly chatted with the heads of departments whom he despised faintly, signing a few whopping big cheques for himself and presiding in a most dignified manner at board meetings. Otherwise he was more happily engaged at his London club, or yachting off the Riviera coast, perhaps even risking a few thousands at Monte Carlo. Despite his nonchalance and cultured air, this man saw through you at once—the explanation of his wealth—and was a person to be reckoned with.

The Sir Herbert Austin we met is, however, a very different kind of man. He wore a simple blue serge suit and a bowler hat, covering and sheltering, we soon saw, an exquisite mechanical brain and an invincible and well-

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controlled mass of energy, an unpretentious man in love—rather coldly in love—with his work, and apparently with few interests outside his factories.

I felt a little sorry for him. Here were we, dashing about the cheerful world, getting wrecked, seeing Hollywood, the Grand Canyon, Florida, New York and the rest—all our days delightful days—thoroughly enjoying a little fame because we drove a famous little car which this man had made.

And what fun was he getting out of life? We heard that he rises at six and is at his factory sometimes before seven, and until luncheon he has not one moment's rest. He is home to dinner at seven whenever possible, and after dinner, not the drawing-room or the smoking-room, but the drawing-board where his brain is worked until bedtime solving new mechanical problems, working towards perfection, for until perfection is reached there can be no letting up for the motor manufacturer.

Unfortunately Dick was not with me when I saw Sir Herbert to say good-bye on behalf of the expedition when we were leaving. He noticed this at once. "Where's the other boy?" he asked rapidly.

With a mental note of gratitude for the "boy," I explained that Dick was visiting relatives in the north. I then became conscious, without any reason that I know of, that Sir Herbert was lonely and really very tired, for, after all, you may work, and work, and work, and reach the topmost mountain of success; and what is really the answer for you personally? I heard myself saying, I suspect very much to his embarrassment, "Look here, Dick and I don't give a row of beans whether you're Sir Herbert Austin or not"—after which I achieved a silly kind of chuckle, but persisted, because all I could give him was an assurance of affection, and I know of no greater thrill in the world than to hear that even a humble soul likes and appreciates you—"we like you; you've been awfully decent to us. Emily all fitted up, and overhauled and not costing us a penny, and—well, you know, you simply can't go on; you'll wear yourself out, and we can't afford to lose

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you. We want to think that you're relaxing a little—not working so hard——"

He glanced down at his papers for a moment, and for a few minutes I should have been glad to have been able to unsay my raving; and then he said in a normal kind of voice, " Now on this journey home to New Zealand, don't worry about stunting or doing anything er—*wild!* Choose a route which will be useful to write about—so that you can produce a book which a man might pick up"—he paused, and seemed to add as an afterthought—" *and read!* "

I thought I might try, and said so. I then got up to go. Sir Herbert followed me to the door. " Say good-bye to the other boy for me," he said; " and don't take any risks—look after yourselves! "

Because I detest risks of any kind and never take them if I can help it, I naturally said with a faint swagger, " Oh, well, we've er—got to! "

" Then," said he—and he was most human at that moment, and I knew I had not misread him—" I shall go on working hard! "

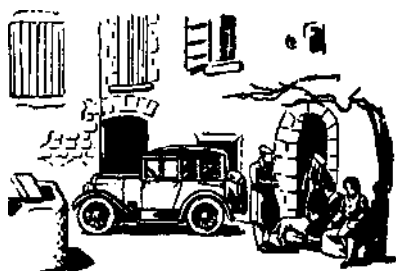
A great man, one of the greatest in the Empire to-day, one who has fought a noble fight and has gained victory; for he has shown the world that a product of British brains and British workmanship cannot be excelled. That is what I think, anyway, and I have not an unobservant eye, nor am I deaf.

And that is all I dare write about dear England. Towards the end of February we motored to Folkestone, spent the night in a seaside boarding-house with aspidistra in its vestibule, and travelled by the cargo boat to Boulogne the next morning. There was a very long journey before us, but we did not give it much thought; we could conceive of nothing to stop us. Having made the journey, I now wonder at myself.





## BOOK FIVE THROUGH FRANCE TO ITALY







## CHAPTER TEN

### FRANCE

OUR journey through France, and indeed through Italy, was like a journey made in a starlit night. The stars were beautiful; we could see that; they sang charmingly, but the words of their song escaped us, and we could learn little about any individual star. The distressing fact that we had but a smattering of French, and much less Italian, made us practically deaf and dumb. Therefore I hesitate to compete with my readers by offering detailed information about this stage of our journey; I shall have more hope of surviving when we leave eastern Europe!

While I may serve my purpose by trying to talk poetically about the stars, I fear I can say little about the sun. Except for a brief spell of moderate warmth and sunshine along the Riviera coast, the weather remained cold and wintry even until we reached southern Italy. This weakened any temptation to delay; but, in any case, we could not very well spend the rest of our lives motoring across the world, and it seemed best to hurry when speed was possible on good European roads. We had, too, to think of the seasons in India, and to remember the last formidable stage of our journey, that across the continent of Australia from Darwin down to Brisbane, which is only possible during the "dry" when the bush tracks are suitable for a car. We had to aim at reaching Darwin not later than July.

A few dry details are necessary. By depositing £50 and a banker's guarantee for a further £20 with the excellent London A.A., we apparently satisfied the maw of the customs authorities in the European countries

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through which we must pass, including even Turkey. Dick, who made all these arrangements, and who knows more about them than I do, held a veritable library of papers which he called a triptique. He presented samples to the customs at the frontiers entering and leaving, retaining signed copies which he immediately sent off to the A.A., never neglecting this duty, because until all the papers were returned the £50 could not be released.

We used English number-plates with the addition of an immense G.B. attached to one of our rear mudguards. In English-speaking countries we were invariably asked what G.B. stood for, and we always established an initial reputation for wit by replying, "Gor' blimey!" adding, or the questioner added, "Great Britain, of course."

We left our passports and some money with the A.A., and they returned them to us decorated like stamp albums, and with all kinds of quaint writing and characters decorating their pink leaves.

Emily II was a complete unit. She carried a kitchen, a bedroom (an excellent waterproof tent), beds, blankets and clothing; she was also, poor thing, an efficient workshop with a fair stock of spare parts. Her springs were almost flat; she was laden well below the Plimsoll mark, but we could not reduce her load by even a pound until we should reach warm weather. However, we paid dearly for this cruelty later on in the journey; it is against the nature of even the best springs to be kept flat, and it would seem that they are more liable to burst with annoyance when the weight has been removed than during the moments when they are kept firmly down.

We proposed always to camp after landing in France; but our ignorance of the local languages made this difficult and embarrassing to begin with, and we actually camped but once in France and never in Italy. There is little room, anyway, even to spread a tent near the highway in Italy; every square inch of earth, like every man and woman, seems to be intensely engaged producing and reproducing.

After lunching in Boulogne, we began a slightly round-

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about journey to Paris via the northern battle-fields. I had not been back since the war.

As Emily II shot through Hazebrouck towards Armentieres, I began imagining the scene shortly to be played in the rue Vert where my battery had enjoyed a very gentle baptism of fire. The reunion with Madame of the old farm-house, the *patron*, and the slovenly daughter Marie-Louise, promised to be quite jolly, and a little sad. I offer this mental picture of a not very mute, but quite inglorious, subaltern Napoleon's return to the scene of his first battle, if, of course, you can call three or four months' country life, punctuated with a little thunder and lightning, a battle. It has the merit of making a more poignant story than what actually happened.

Emily II moves slowly along the rue Vert, preferably at about seven in the evening. Unusually quiet, I am sitting forward in my seat with eyes shining sadly as I take in each feature of the old gun positions where we had all been so happy. I think of the Germans in their trenches far beyond the tall poplars, rather decent old Germans who made the nights lovely with their Very lights and who disturbed us but seldom; I hear again the muttering of cannon in the distance, and the occasional rap-rap-rap of machine-guns.

Emily II draws up at the farm-house gates. "Wait!" I whisper to Dick. "I must see if they remember me; they should. Dear me, Marie-Louise must be fatter and thirty-five."

I enter the gates and walk delicately along the banks of the midden.

"Ha!" I think, "the same old smell—awful! But——"

I knock at the door. I hear the scraping of chairs across the tiled floor. The door opens a little and that silly old brigand of a farmer pokes his shaggy head through the slit of light near the top.

No, he has not shaved to-day; he will, though, on Saturday night. His hair has not been brushed for a week. Has he bathed in the midden? **Probably!**

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"How d'you do?" I remark, with a flashing smile.

"M'sieur——?" questions the farmer, peering at me.

"You don't know me? You don't remember 1916—the English battery?" (I speak in French—bad—which I will not inflict here.)

"M'sieur——!" The patron grins in his old silly way, but he does not know me.

The door opens wider and the monstrous lop-sided figure of Madame appears in echelon with another slightly less lop-sided and less monstrous figure—Marie-Louise: dear me!

"Madame—surely——!" I begin.

"*Tra—la, la, la!*" trills Madame; "but it is—it is M'sieur Smit!"

I am disheartened. "No, it is not Monsieur Smith——" I begin.

"*Tra—la, la, la!*" repeats Madame as who should say, "How absurd of me to forget the face of my own sister!" "But it is M'sieur Jons—come in, M'sieur—come in—*Tra—la, la, la!*"

And I enter, convinced that a better light will have a better effect on Madame's memory, that she will see that I am neither Monsieur Smith, Monsieur Jones, nor yet Monsieur Robinson. We were such good friends, and had I not lived in her house for nearly five months, sharing her joys and sorrows—and her fear, and that midden?

Monsieur *le patron* descends to the cellar for wine while I take a chair and smile into Madame's eyes.

And says she, "Madame Jons was ill when you were here last, M'sieur—she is better, yes?"

And then I tell them my name; but I am forced to work hard to take them back to 1915.

Thinks Dick, who has been brought in, as he looks about the great kitchen, "Why, this is a French farmhouse kitchen, the scene of my brothers' war yarns; I must tell them when I get home; and what nice wine!"

And the wine is good, with body in it; and we make merry in the great kitchen, our joy only modified by the all-pervading smell of the midden.

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But time is passing; these French farming folks retire early, and we must soon find that amusing old inn in Laventie. "Don't follow me, Dick," I murmur as I rise. "Excuse me a minute or two," I whisper to Madame, who looks sympathetically towards me. "You understand, Madame!" I say quietly.

And as I negotiate once more the midden banks, all of good concrete but quite dangerous, I say to myself, "I'm orderly officer to-night; I must inspect the guard. I do hope I shan't find Gunner McBean, the sentry, warming himself at A gun-pit fire," and I wander about that old orchard where our guns were hidden; and think, and think, and think!

"I'm not dead," I whisper to the leafless apple trees; "indeed, I'm very much alive; but am I not a ghost haunting the earth where I lived? But how can you be a ghost," I ask, "when your body still lives?" A lamp shining from one of the farm-house rooms falls on the leafless apple trees; and I am answered. Oh, good-bye, Youth!

What really happened that first evening in northern France bears, alas, no relation to the vision. We motored over much maddening *pave* to Laventie near Armentieres. Although it was yet early in the evening the place was in abysmal darkness, and it was with some difficulty that we found an inn which proved to be new, ugly, filthy and pitiable—pitiable because of the innkeeper's wife, a woman with hips like an ox, and a tired, pale face; one who produced immense fair sons with hips as big as her own, unfinished kind of models, they seemed, whom an energetic sculptor could have moulded into something strong and comely by a more judicious arrangement of the clay, reducing the ears, pressing the head here and there, giving a slight touch to the lips, shaving the nose a trifle and dragging clay from the hips and crowding it cleverly to the chest and shoulders. Peasants are occasionally like that, nearly beautiful. It could be seen at a glance that the innkeeper's big wife was a hopeless muddler, with her work never finished; yet her big, sad

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eyes (like a middle-aged cow's) inspired pity even to the extent of allowing us to forgive the corpse of an omelet she laid out on our plates.

The innkeeper was a tall, thin, dark man with a wiry black moustache. He had a giggling manner and an evident desire to tell shocking stories about *les Tommees*, none of which we understood. During the course of the evening, which we spent in the bar-room drinking a little beer at about a halfpenny a glass, I said to him, "And there is really nothing left in Laventie of the war. It is past, the war; and it is sad, a little bit; is it not? "

"There are yet some bugs left from the war, M'sieur! " said he, adding (I think) with a hearty guffaw for the benefit of the peasants at the bar: "they survived all the bombardments! "

And when the next morning we tried to find the old gun positions, we failed hopelessly, possibly because we did not try hard enough, possibly because I felt (without any evidence) that Dick was getting rather bored with all this old soldier business, but largely because for the life of me, I could not recall at that moment the name of the road, *Rue Vert*. The country is very flat, and depends for distinction on its farm buildings; but all the romantic old ruins I had known, ruins, although habitable, long before the German guns played havoc with them, had been replaced by commodious red brick dwellings.

And it was very wet and cold. On the whole, I felt it best to cling to the vision.

We motored through Armentieres to Ypres. I had regarded Armentieres during the war as a dead little city; but it seemed infinitely more dead that March morning when Emily II picked her way through its lifeless streets. Unquestionably war is a bad thing, and without doubt the land where it occurs is the scene of pain and misery; nevertheless it has a very enlivening effect even on the non-combatants; and I must admit that I secretly regretted the Armentieres (of Mademoiselle).

Ypres was even more disheartening. The cathedral is



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now completely rebuilt, and in a few hundred years may be beautiful again; at the moment it is as interesting as a new-laid egg. The ruins of the Cloth Hall stand as a memorial, I understand, to German "Rightfulness"; and they look very frightful indeed, not to say extremely untidy and a little absurd in the bustling market-place. We motored through the gracious Menin Gate to Hill 60, where a few pathetic yards of trench are more or less maintained by the farmer who owns the land, and who probably owns the wooden shack built to tempt the patronage of British pilgrims called "No Man's Land Canteen."

I began to regret this return to the battle-fields. Of course it was good to see how well the farmers had dug themselves in again with their fine new red brick dwellings; that might have been expected, but there was slight pain in the thought that glorious local history had been effectively rubbed out with stable manure. But great events seldom remain significant on the actual scene of their accomplishment. "He is not here I" said the angels to the women at the sepulchre. "They are not here!" can be said with significance when pilgrims to the battle-fields look for a sign.

There was a beautiful moment at the Menin Gate that evening. Alone of all the fine war memorials we saw, the great arch is definitely apropos because it is used and is a gateway to the main city. The names of fifty-five thousand British soldiers whose bodies were never identified, or lost, are inscribed on the arch. The Menin Gate is composed of names; and, being immense, it echoes and re-echoes the slightest sound like the nave of a vast cathedral. All day long the names repeat the pattering of sabots and wooden-soled shoes, the grinding of motors, the rumbling of carts and wagons, the whispering, the gossip and the laughter of passers-by; but for a few moments each evening all traffic is stopped and the names are soldiers once more.

Dick and I stood in the rain at the Ypres side of the gate watching the four Belgian civilians take their places

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near the centre of the arch. They were evidently working men and nondescriptly clad, but the little Belgian policeman with his immense helmet, alone at the far end of the gate, standing at the salute, might have been Mars seen through the big end of a telescope.

Imperceptibly the air became charged with emotion for me. Dick, so significant in my life for some years, might have been a lamp-post. He did not exist. The Belgians were playing the Last Post.

"Ta—ta-a-a——" and the fifty-five thousand names replied, "Ta—ta-a-a——"

The dust of some friends lay scattered near. Why, Emily II might have churned up what had once been youth, life, courage, carelessness and joy—swaggering in khaki, shining Sam Brown belt and gleaming buckles; they were very young when I was very young; my dust might have been scattered there too!

Perhaps it was; for what had this absurd dashing about the world in a Baby Austin to do with that me of the khaki and Sam Brown belt? Who was Dick, anyway? We did not know him! I did not know him when I *lived*. I had not to worry about the cost of a room in Ypres in the Great Days—nor in Paris or London, for that matter! We simply marched up to the hotel clerk and——

"Ta—ta-a-a——" and the names dreamed into whispering silence as the Belgian peasants placed their bugles under their arms and slouched off.

Returning to our hotel, we paused at a brightly lit lace shop. "You may be dust," I said to myself, "but lace may be carried and smuggled easily; deadness as an excuse for an empty-handed arrival home may not be understood." Therefore I bought lace, had an amusing chat with the girl at the counter, and gradually came to the conclusion that there are some advantages in not being too obviously dust.

We saw several fine war memorials on our way down the old battle line; but it was often difficult to escape a suggestion of irrelevance in that intensively cultivated

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area, surrounded, as some of them are, by new red brick houses in what seem very new villages. Signs directed us to Neuve Chapelle, to Festubert, to many another name engraven on the hearts of people at home; but the places themselves now seemed utterly detached; they cared not a jot. We paused at the vast German cemetery near Lens, with its dim garden of black crosses, reading many of the names and wondering how long the wooden crosses would last: quite long enough, probably!

We reached Paris at about eight o'clock, and chose the first moderately respectable hotel we saw, leaving Emily II in a garage opposite. Discovering after dinner that we were within a stone's throw\* of Montmartre, we thought we might see something of gay life despite the rain and cold which suggested bed and rest with greater propriety. We had no idea how to set about this, and after an uncomfortable stroll along the rain-swept streets we reached the obvious conclusion that sinners unite with saints in preferring to stay indoors on a stormy night. We had crossed the street with the intention of returning to our hotel when we heard the sound of gay revelry escaping through the chinks of fast-closed doors guarded by a doorkeeper.

We paused, and at once the music became more enticing, the laughter more infectious. Two champagne corks popped. "Ah," we thought, "if we could only share all that fun; but dare we afford it?"

While we discussed this point, the gay hum of conversation and the infectious laughter sobered down a trifle. It seemed at the time as if the gay spirits behind the closed doors were anxious lest we abandon the notion of entering. Occasionally, it livened up a bit, as if now persuading us.

We approached the doorkeeper and asked the cost of admission, and while we preferred our request the happy noise within almost ceased, only to break forth more gaily when we discovered that the entrance fee was really very little even with the donation for the doorkeeper. While we yet lingered, a gay French song began which was

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evidently appreciated by the revellers within. Between verses there were wild shouts of approval, and hardly repressed chuckles when the singer made a good point. The song ended with a burst of applause which seemed to say to us, "Come on—come in!" But more inviting were the occasional ripples of sweet girlish laughter, the rattle of plates, the tinkle of glasses and the now almost continuous popping of champagne bottles. That cabaret on that cold, damp night seemed packed with human warmth and joy; and so we paid our money and went in.

Except for three peasant boys sitting shyly at a table in one corner of the cabaret, the place was empty! The effects had been produced by the manager, an elderly rascal in brown velveteens, by the waiters and waitresses, by the orchestra, by a mature young woman dressed like an Augustus John model grown middle-aged but not stout, and by a baritone.

They carried on with the good work while we were there. Apparently the doorkeeper signalled the approach of likely customers as he had signalled ours, when the elderly rascal in brown velveteens worked his people up to a high pitch of enthusiasm, producing effects himself in the way of plate rattling, glass clinking and cork-popping, when he was not nipping down to the door to see results. He was most courteous to us, asking if we were lonely and whether we would like the company of his very pretty nieces for whom he would send instantly if we so desired, because they dearly loved the English. Then he asked me if I were Dick's father, which I thought unnecessary; and I decided not to like him because he had a face like Mr. Pecksniff! A fierce little woman with tightly drawn hair bore down on us, and uncompromisingly demanded our order. We chose beer. She charged us five times its value, but we dared not argue lest she slap our faces.

We must have seemed full of possibilities to the **old** rascal in velveteens, for we were both well turned out and obviously new chums; but we thought it best to **put all doubt to rest in his mind, and in ours, by bidding him**

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good night. As we got up to go, the waiters and waitresses, the Augustus John model, the baritone, the fierce little woman, and the elderly rascal accompanied us to the door singing a gay good night chorus, producing quite a respectable crowd in the shaft of light when the door opened, and making our exit most tempting to other passers-by. I noticed a kindly, sisterly and brotherly expression on the faces of both the baritone and the Augustus John model when they bade us good night, which went to my heart. I felt certain the old rascal had them in his toils in some way; he was of that kind of old man who "can," if you know what I mean. The Augustus John model seemed an articulate version of Conrad's Lena, although the personality of the baritone was more mobile than Heist's. There was nothing to be done about it, however I

We spent the next morning wandering about Paris in the rain, seeing what we could in the brief time funds would permit us to stay, and, of course, seeing very little. However, we saw Notre-Dame and much of Les Invalides, but not Napoleon's tomb because the chapel is closed until noon. At three we were in the glorious palace at Fontainebleau with the three French *bourgeoisie* ladies and a nice fat guide who knew five words of English including "nix," all gleaned on the battle-field!

The beautiful, fascinating and intensely interesting immensity of Fontainebleau naturally impressed us; but curiously, what remains most firmly fixed in my mind is the quaint picture of Catharine de Medici's little dogs with Catharine, incidentally—more than a score of them, and all faithfully limned with their names written near them; jolly, friendly little names they all had too, suitable for such jolly, friendly little dogs, and not too well-bred either. I became more convinced that Catharine de Medici was not nearly so black as she is painted. Alive to-day, she would doubtless be a valiant member of the anti-vivisection society; but imagine how she would feel towards the vivisectionists—the traditional Catharine, anyway! Imagine her chagrin when she realized her inability to burn them

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at the stake. I can see her as a competent secretary of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Dumb Animals; possibly she would have been more merciful to her alleged victims had they been dumber!

We spent the night at Auxerre, once packed tightly within walls on a hill, but now spilling over so seriously that the beautiful gateways of the city are becoming crowded, but they still remain beautiful. I began to understand here why old buildings of charming architecture in France lack some of the attraction similar buildings have in England. Cleanliness is the answer, I think. The glory of Notre-Dame and many another French church would be more apparent, I was going to say more digestible, if they were all given a thorough spring cleaning, their ornaments, statues and carving polished and cleansed and the altar lace and hangings thoroughly washed, blued, ironed and cleverly mended where necessary. Even if they concentrated on the altar lace, it would be something. Nothing seems more destructive to a beautiful effect than an atmosphere of neglect before neglect has reached its inevitable climax when, of course, Nature steps in to cleanse with her rain, to sweep with her winds and to adorn with green velvet moss and lichen which she always keeps well mended.

We ran into a snow-storm soon after leaving Auxerre. Quite serious snow-drifts began forming across narrow parts of the road which was now following undulating country; but there was nothing else to do but to push on with the hope of passing through the storm. Occasionally we could only see a few feet in front of us, notably when gusts of wind filled the air with fine snow blown from the drifts. At one point we were charging through a particularly bad drift when poor little Emily gave up the struggle and paused until I could get out to push. This was very fortunate, for she had hardly stopped before we heard a faint bleat and a French Baby Austin dashed at the snow-drift from the opposite direction and kissed Emily lightly on the bonnet. It was a charming little Rosengarde, the French brand of our little car; but the storm was too

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unpleasant to permit more than a slight exchange of greetings with the men in the other car. We each backed and charged on our way. A Frenchman with bristling moustache in a big black car passed us going down a hill whose skiddy surface we were negotiating very delicately. He reached the bottom with great eclat, and then instantly turned completely round and looked at us impudently with his big glowing lamps, after which he shot into a ditch. We offered aid, but some peasants instantly appeared with three big horses, quite capable of pulling him out. One hopes the peasants had not spread treacle on that piece of road.

We spent the next night at Lyons which we reached after dark. While Dick took the car to a garage, I followed the hotel porter into a lift which began ascending very slowly with occasional terrifying jerks.

"These foreign lifts I " I thought resignedly, and began trying to follow the porter's rapid flow of conversation. He was heavily scented and most engaging; and he had so much to say that he stopped the lift between floors to get it all out before the end of the journey upwards, which seemed short to him, evidently, but rather long to me. I felt as secure as a wingless bumble-bee perched on a spider web. I thought of screaming for help or a gas-mask; but he had no intention of suffocating me with cheap perfume, being a gentle beast with merely a child's curiosity in a foreigner. I know he asked if I were married, which seemed too searching a question to be answered just then, and having no interest in his fair cousins who liked the English, I said sternly, "*Allons!*" at which he leapt to the rope and the lift shot to our floor, stopping with a particularly terrifying series of jerks.

There is much which I should like to tell about the journey southward from Lyons, of the Rhone and the towns and villages which adorn its banks; there is much more I should like to know; for what could we learn, dashing along at more than forty miles an hour, pausing merely to eat or to feed Emily with petrol? We spent less than an hour in Avignon, actually in the old palace of the

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popes, and Avignon deserves weeks of exploring; we could merely pass on our way, carrying a vision of the beautiful ramparts, and asking ourselves how on earth the old popes managed to keep themselves warm during winter in that frigid old castle.

Said Dick, after Avignon, " We've simply got to camp to-night; we can't go on paying *counts* every morning and last out I " Nor could we!

Therefore at a small village called Senas we bought sausage, cream cheese and eggs; and choosing a beautiful old farm-house near the road with some sheltering trees and hedges, we pulled up while I went to ask permission to camp on the place. Two youngish men whom I found in the farm-yard had less idea what I was talking about than I had of what they said in reply; but generally I gathered that the answer was a tentative negative. They evidently spoke a patois. Noting that they were more puzzled to know what I was at than inhospitable, I led them out to Emily. I began chatting most volubly in evil French, hoping that in the quantity there might be a little quality. They may have thought I spoke fashionable Parisian French; Dick seemed to think that they learnt to regard me as a deaf mute, one who spoke much without saying anything—you know how deaf mutes give tongue; at any rate they both stared at me with the deepest interest while I spoke, finally shrugging their shoulders good-naturedly, and this we took for permission.

After settling ourselves in the shelter of a hedge, I went for water to the farm pump in the courtyard. It was becoming dark, and I was insecure regarding the precise position of the pump. Noting a lamp burning in what seemed a sheep-fold forming part of one side of the courtyard, I went over to ask directions from a stout young woman who seemed to be engaged with a small bunch of sheep. Having gained the necessary information, I became interested in the curious performance going on in the sheep-fold. The incident is, I think, quaint.

The fold was large, but much of its space was occupied by a circle containing what seemed clover and hay tightly



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packed. This left a circular way around the fold like a circus ring. The sheep, about a score of them, seemed to be slowly making their way around this circle, grabbing food as they passed. A low hurdle barred the pathway at the far side of the fold, and here a man knelt doing something or other to the sheep which seemed highly unusual. At intervals the young woman would grab a sheep and hand it to the man, and at once could be heard a series of squirts: squirt—squirt—squirt—squirt—about a score of them, ending with a longer one which had the quality of a climax. Followed an anti-climax in the way of a few gentle little squirts, after which the sheep leapt the low barrier and grabbed a mouthful of clover. The young woman thereupon handed the man another sheep. I looked more closely and saw that the sheep, ewes, were being milked. The circle idea puzzled me, and I abandoned the idea that this was a continuous performance—sheep getting milked, allowed to accumulate from the centre circle of food, and then enjoying another turn—as possibly ridiculous. I returned an hour later for more water, and the sheep milking was still going on; I began to think the idea was not quite so ridiculous. To a New Zealander, milking a sheep seemed absurd enough in itself. For a reason which I shall relate, I was up at the crack of dawn the next morning and again seeking water. The wretched sheep were still being milked!

It was no good; I simply had to have the question settled once and for all, and there were tributary questions, as for instance—when did the man and woman sleep?—when did the sheep sleep?

Now fully alive to the perils lurking in my French when employed to ask questions about sleeping accommodation, I began asking the stout young woman a few carefully phrased questions. She gave a hearty affirmative to each; it was therefore obvious that she had not understood one of them. I tried again.

"Do these sheep spend all their time going round that circle? Do you never stop milking them? **When** do you **and the man sleep, or don't you?** "

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The last question was evidently the only one she understood, and apparently she had not appreciated its innocence, or its modesty. She blushed, and spoke to the man. He stood up and gazed at me with rather a cold light in his eye. The woman bent over a sheep and sank her good-natured face in its wool; her body was quivering, I hoped with amusement.

I made a fresh attempt; it was impossible, as it would have been rude, to abandon a difficult situation. Obviously I had unintentionally insulted these good people. I had more success; a little pantomime helped, and my questions became quite clear. The effect was amusing. The young woman and the man dropped their sheep and bent double laughing, the former finally rushing with merry screams into the farm-house from which there instantly debouched the two young farmers, their sister and their aged mother, who in turn became convulsed with laughter when they heard my questions. The old lady recovered first; she evidently thought all this laughter at my expense might be embarrassing. She went into the farm-house and returned with a small white cheese, explaining that it was made from sheep's milk, and urging me to accept it. I gathered that the sheep were milked like cows, twice a day. I have since wondered why the question should have been raised at all; it was the circle which had inspired the suggestion and the coincidence of always finding the sheep being milked when I called for water.

Dick and I had an awful night. "Ha!" we had said when the tent was spread, the beds blown up and the blankets arranged, while the excellent petrol stove was making the sausages and sliced tomatoes sizzle, "this is the life for us—the open, free life in God's fresh air. No startling *count* to-morrow morning; we can last out financially for years at this rate!"

Two strong hot-water bags had been supplied with the beds. "Shall I fill one for you, Dick?" I asked.

"No!" he snapped a little contemptuously, but I was not deterred as far as my own was concerned. I have long since appreciated the advantages of artificial warmth in

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a sleeping-bag, even if it be only a rock warmed at the camp-fire or a whisky bottle filled with boiling water. It gives one a good start on a cold night.

I was awakened at about 1 a.m. by faint grunts from Dick. He was evidently unhappy. "What's the matter?" I asked.

"Is there any water in camp?"

"Not a drop; d'you want a drink? There's tea in the thermos."

He said that he was not thirsty, adding that he thought hot-water bags ladylike and ridiculous; in fact he used some slightly improper language about them, remarking irrelevantly that if there had been any water in camp he would have boiled it and put it in his water bag to heat his blank bed which was blank-well frozen.

Since my bed was still pleasantly warm, I offered him the water in my rubber bag, and this he finally accepted, heating it up on the petrol stove and pouring it into his rubber bag with many grunts of contempt.

The general disturbance and opening of my sleeping-bag had allowed much frozen air to penetrate; there were several degrees of frost that night; and after an hour or two I found myself awake and very cold. Dick therefore handed over his bag, the contents of which I boiled up, only to find himself half-frozen an hour or two later. In desperation, he finally poured the boiling tea from the big thermos into his hot-water bag and managed to get through the night. But for neither of us was there any temptation to linger in bed after dawn, and it was still dark when I picked my way across the frozen grass to the farmhouse pump. I should explain that we had only one blanket each, not nearly enough for a freezing night, and comfortable life in America and in England had softened us.

We saw the Mediterranean first at Frejus, which we reached in the early afternoon.

A short paean of praise should now be sung to that lovely picture of green, brick-red and blue, which was the Mediterranean that day.

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It is sung.

However, a chorus might be added—"Wintering on the Riviera! " *ad lib*, with emphasis on the "wintering." All the people we met were enjoying brisk walks, and many of them were very well wrapped up indeed. We felt no temptation to abandon our heavy Harris tweeds and thick woollen scarves. There were, however, signs of spring. The Australian wattle was shyly blossoming; and as we drove along the lovely coast, the perfume of carnations sweetened the air a little. Carnations are cultivated commercially here and sent all over Europe. We saw many acres of them in patches from the highway, and felt a little sorry for them, because they seemed to have been conscripted and were forced to parade like painted wooden soldiers.

I found myself regarding their cultivators in rather a ghoulish light, imagining these money-grubbing peasants bending over their unhappy charges and hissing in French, "Blossom, you little beasts, or I'll cut you back! "

I should like to have whispered, "Yes, blossom as quickly as you can, my dears, because if you do, you'll soon be lifted from this manure-soaked soil and sent to some cheerful florist's show-case in London where, in a lovely crystal bowl, in nice fresh water, with hundreds of other charming blossoms, you should be very happy indeed. And after that, perhaps a pretty drawing-room, in the warmth of a blazing wood fire, with handsome women and strong men to admire you and cheer you up! Of course, the garbage pail after that, my dears—but, 'every dog', you know——! "

We proposed spending a day or two at Cannes, a most difficult and dangerous name to pronounce, by the way, because if you say "kans " you're quite wrong, and if you say "kan " you're nearly right, while if you say "kahn " you feel genteel and insecurely superior. We had two friends in the neighbourhood: one a tennis star who is lovely, and another, a French girl who writes successfully, and who is very amusing. We knew that the former, who was expecting us to appear at any time, would say lightly,

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" Oh, stay here—quite a good hotel; I don't think there is anything better in Cannes! " and that the latter would glance at us whimsically and remark, " You are, as usual, 'ard up; or you must be economical—*bien!* There is—what you call—oh, yes, a boarding-'ouse—*pension*, eh?—near 'ere, kept by a woman who is clean, a bore—and English! "

Always remembering the necessity of being able to pay for accommodation in Calcutta and Singapore, thousands and thousands of miles ahead of us—a tiresome thought—we decided first to call on the latter, who was also aware of our approach.

Fifi, whom we had met on the Cunarder, had kept in touch with one half of our expedition with enthusiasm, purely sisterly; and with the other half by adding polite postscripts to her letters, " My regards to——" My own impression, possibly false, was that the half who received the regards was more interested in Fifi than was the other half towards whom sisterly affection generally flows so freely that it is apt to be accepted with a composure which must be maddening, and stimulating, to the sisters.

Fifi has a name which occupies almost a line of newspaper, and a father who is a viscount of the *ancien regime* with a calm, browsing kind of sense of humour, a sense of humour—delightfully exaggerated in Fifi—which she is apt to strain to the breaking-point occasionally.

Fifi is interesting herself, but chiefly because she finds other people so diverting. The romance of a young man and a maid would bore her; but the awful heartache and strain endured by middle-aged folks trying sedately to recapture the emotion of youth fills her with interest, exquisitely hidden curiosity, and cruel amusement which she only half hides by almost the suggestion of tears in her large mischievous eyes. For instance, if you're a middle-aged man on board an Atlantic liner, possibly travelling alone, and filled with longing to look at the phosphorus with a gay, young widow, and if you succeed and fail, and fail and succeed, and become depressed and **middle-agedly** peevish, stamping about the deck while the

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widow tries vainly to ensnare the handsome, callow youth—all that is not wasted; the fragrance of your little joys and sorrows is not lost in the desert air of shipboard when you have Fifi sitting sedately with her friends in a corner of the palm garden. You hardly notice her; you merely know from the souvenir menu that a French viscount is on board with his daughters. They have a reserved table in the dining-saloon, and keep largely to themselves. But nothing has escaped Fifi, and your story is read aloud to her intimates and made quite funny, to be followed by other stories, all human, but only slightly more human than vaguely improper.

"Why haven't you married, yourself, Fifi?" I asked her one day.

"Ah!" she sighed, "because my 'eart is broken a long time now!"

"Dear me!" I murmured; "tell me about it; I hope it hurt you—the way you pry into other people's hearts!"

"He was 'andsome; he loved me," said Fifi, "and I loved 'im; but I 'ave no money, nor has he—much. His family have a *conference*, and they say, 'No!' and so——!" Fifi shrugged her shoulders.

"But you're only twenty-two!"

Fifi thanked me with a mischievous and appealing glance and added, "Yes—when I am in Paris my aunts say, 'Now, Fifi, you must marry; there is Monsieur——; we shall arrange a *conference*?' but I say, 'No!' because my 'eart is broken!"

Fifi's heart may have been broken, but it is impossible not to be impressed with the toughness and elasticity of the repaired article. We knew, as we drove up to her sister's villa, that her curiosity in our other friend at the smart hotel would torture her unless she could know everything about our relations with her, not so much at once, as after judicious pumping and keen observation. In truth, we could only tell of a friendship of years: of tennis, tennis and more tennis; of a slightly sententious attitude towards unadorned middle age; and of an overpowering devotion to a long-legged husband and a small

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boy. There was no gold in that earth for Fifi the indefatigable miner. The invention of a romance had no chance of convincing more than the extreme ends of the shiny wisps of hair near Fifi's ears; a silence, cleverly shorn of every obvious effort to hide a story, would annoy her most, and we determined to be silent. But if—ah, if there had been the suspicion of an intrigue between the smart lady and Dick, or even me! *Tra—la, la, la!*

Fifi had found a suitable *pension* for us; as a matter of fact, Dick had asked her to when he last wrote, and after a short greeting and a promise to return to the villa for dinner, we drove to the *pension*.

It was very clean, agreeably cheap, and like a mausoleum; the big Englishwoman who managed, or owned, it had come to Monte Carlo with a vast fortune, she explained romantically. Her size and obvious strength, and her detached method of telling the story of her clipping and consequent disillusionment, conjured up for me the picture of an ostrich, a strong bird, who had once grown glorious black feathers, cavorting about the veldt most gaily, and a little absurdly, with her rich feathers flopping in the breeze above her muscular, bluish legs. But inevitably they had cornered her and clipped her without hurting her much, and now, regarding her lack of dazzling feathers, she was forced to remark, "Well, even a little down is worth having! "

The lady was discreetly dressed, but in her presence I remained convinced, somehow, that her nether limbs were muscular and bluish, with little pin-feathers sticking out at intervals.

When the good woman had settled us in our room, Dick remarked lightly, "I think I'll have a bath; er—where's the bathroom? "

The lady started. She ran to the window and straightened a curtain. When she turned round again, she was more composed, like a schoolmistress ready to drive home a lesson.

In the meantime, Dick had seized a towel and dug out his sponge-bag.

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"On this floor, Mrs.——? " he began.

She gave the position of the bathroom. The bathroom was on the second floor, and she might have added, "Lisbon is near the mouth of the Tagus River." It was necessary for her pupils to know that Lisbon was on the Tagus, but any thought of one of them straightway packing up and marching to Lisbon could not occur to her. Dick, of course, was not a pupil; but if even he thought of marching to Lisbon, surely he must visit Cooks' and decide on a route, and there would be other formalities. The lady asked for the date of Dick's possible arrival at the bathroom. He replied that he thought he'd have a hot bath straight away. The lady became desperately calm. The bathroom had been engaged, for some days, she said, by a lady who was expected any minute.

Dick thereupon threw down his towel and sponge-bag and remarked that he would bath after the lady had finished, if, he wisely added with an ingratiating smile, it would be convenient for Madame. The capitulation was accepted graciously; the lady who had engaged the bath was not too obviously killed, and Dick made the journey with due ceremonial.

We dined with Fifi and her sister. Said Fifi with a melancholy glint in her big brown eyes, "D'you remember that pretty widow on the ship who——" followed a few details which brought the widow to our minds, "well, she is 'ere. To-morrow, or the next day, Mr. Jones—you remember her *friend* on the ship?—will join her and her aunt who is with her."

"You didn't know her, Fifi? "

"But no—I did not! " Fifi was slightly amused at the suggestion.

"I suppose you spoke to her because you'd been on the ship with her; or she spoke to you—very natural! "

"Oh, but no! " said Fifi.

"Then, how do you know all this? "

"She was in the post office sending a telegram to Mr. Jones. I was in the post office. She did not recognize me."



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"And you looked over her shoulder and read her telegram! How perfectly disgusting, Fifi!"

Fifi was shocked at the accusation. "Oh, I could never do that—*nevai*rel!" I noticed that her sister was not a bit impressed with the denial.

"The lady?" explained Fifi, "wrote her telegram; she was finishing when I came in. She gave it to the man, and went out. I am in the box where she writes her telegram, for I am sending a telegram too, and I open my bag for the money. My bag has a big mirror which falls over on the blotting-pad when I open the bag. In the mirror I see the telegram written by the lady—from the blotting-pad. I have seen it before I know."

"How long are you staying on the Riviera?" asked Fifi's sister.

"We want to get to Monte Carlo to-morrow night; we ought to leave here after luncheon to-morrow, I suppose."

"Then you must lunch with us," invited Fifi.

"Thanks, but we can't; we have a friend staying in Cannes whom we must see to-morrow; we'll have to lunch with her."

Fifi blinked her eyes and glanced lazily first at Dick and then at me. We returned the glance with perfect composure.

"It's no good, Fifi," I said, "you'll learn nothing about her."

"No!" said Fifi.

We had a pleasant evening. Fifi, in a suspiciously obvious way, pumped us, and succeeded in drawing not one tiny drop of information. As we left, she said, "So you will lunch with your friend to-morrow. I think, perhaps," she added, gazing at me mischievously, "in her own room. Had not Deek better stay and lunch here? He would not like to be a what you call—a strawberry!"

"I won't be a gooseberry!" said Dick stoutly.

"We'll lunch in the hotel dining-room or grill-room," I said; "why shouldn't we?"

"I don't know; I just think; perhaps your friend have a boil on her chin—or something!"

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"She is not," I said, "the kind of person to have boils on her chin. Well see you in the morning, Fifi."

"Think of the *count* we should be paying this morning had we come here first!" said Dick sombrely, after we had sent up our names to our other friend in her beautiful Cannes hotel the next day.

"Hello!" said she, emerging from a staircase. Around her chin was arranged a pretty silk scarf; she looked like a fresh nun. "I've got a boil on my chin; maddening!" she said.

We lunched beautifully with her in a sitting-room; we learnt all about boils on chins: how they first appear, how much they hurt, and the awful pangs they give when a girl tries to play tennis with one; but we did not learn, and we have not yet learnt, how Fifi knew about this particular boil.

The meal, I might add, was like Christmas Day in the workhouse for us. You can have no conception what it means to sit down to a copious table d'hôte (at a rich friend's expense) when all your other meals are chosen with more regard to their cost than to their flavour and quality.

We reached Monte Carlo at about seven in the evening and found an hotel which looked much better than it was, but which cost remarkably little. The copious meal at Cannes permitted us to dine lightly and economically at a small café; and each with a hundred and twenty-five francs in his pocket, we made our way to the Casino.

The famous rooms were different from what I had imagined them to be. There was no question regarding the strength and beauty of the panelling and heavy curtains; but the general atmosphere was a trifle sombre, I thought—definitely not heavenly, and more definitely not hellish, perhaps slightly more funereal than festive. The attendants might have been rather mature grooms-men at a wedding, but with equal propriety, they could have been mourners at the funeral of a prominent old man without near relatives.

The people at the tables that night were, of course,

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interesting. The majority were middle-aged; many were elderly. Nearly all of them had notebooks, and when a number was called out after the rattle-rattle of the ball around the wheel, it became an event of vast importance to be duly noted. There was a complete absence of heartiness. It was a waste of time to smile when you apologized to the person you slightly disturbed when placing your money on a number, and much more useless if, by mistake, you began gathering up another's winnings. Dick's money lasted precisely ten whirls of the wheel; the seventeen he "had a hunch" about turned up after his last ten francs had been raked in. I, more cautious, played luxuriously with lesser risks and delayed the moment of final ruin which came more than ten minutes after Dick's rout. Half an hour after entering the Casino we left it with empty pockets, slightly amazed; we had not anticipated breaking the bank; a mere two or three thousand francs had been all we had expected to win.

We walked around the terraces in the moonlight. Very, very beautiful: yes; but more exciting was a quaint scene we enjoyed as we passed along a secluded avenue. One usually associates an expansive waistcoat, a gold watch chain, and a stout, elderly gentleman with a white moustache and florid complexion with a foaming pot of ale and a beefsteak; but a nice man like that sitting under a beautiful pepper tree, perched rather on the edge of his form, was clutching a young girl. She looked like a nice little dinghy housed on the after-deck of a stout barge. Propriety was not outraged in any way; but in some quaint way the rakish angle of the elderly gentleman's bowler, surely bought in Manchester, made the scene even more improper than comic. As we passed, the girl looked up at us and grinned most eloquently. "Silly old ass, isn't he?" she seemed to say quite plainly; "but don't blame me too much, boys!" at which the gentleman gave her a hug with a movement like a concertina, and we passed on our way back to the hotel where we played backgammon until a late hour.

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At the close of the backgammon session, we decided to push on into Italy the next morning, to abandon Monte Carlo as unprofitable; but with the dawn of another day came Hope. And something stirred in me. Could we possibly allow the Prince of Monaco to grow fat on our wealth, on our two hundred and fifty francs—enough to buy at least twenty good meals in our slightly synthetic scheme of eating? Dick, the treasurer, said with a slow smile, "Let's push on and forget it! "

However, he finally agreed to pay the ten francs for the passport which permits one to enter the rooms, refusing to risk another franc of the expeditionary funds, but willingly enough accepting an IOU for another hundred francs, urging me, when he handed over the notes, to kiss each of them good-bye.

The Casino was less crowded, and I managed to find a vacant chair near the wheel. I lost ten francs instantly, and became depressed and detached. Dick, standing on the other side of the table, shrugged his shoulders. He was very obviously "telling me so! "

"Much better," I agreed, pushing ten francs on to 13, and another chip on the middle dozen, "to have gone on our way."

I heard a slight sigh behind me and looked up. A mature young woman was watching the wheel anxiously. "Here's a sad story! " I thought; and in the process of working out the story I forgot all about the wheel until I heard the man shout, "Treize——"

"Thirteen! " I thought; "ha, that's the middle dozen! I've won! " and I began gathering in the spoil, ignoring the masses of wealth joining my forgotten counter on 13.

"That's yours—yours! " whispered the young woman excitedly.

I think I ejaculated; I know the usually sombre faces around the table broke into smiles, and the man at the wheel said something funny in French which made many of them laugh.

"Give the croupier a couple of chips! " ordered the young woman; "and now take your friend to the bar and

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give him a drink. Don't play any more this morning," she urged sensibly, " because you'll lose it all. Come back this afternoon I "

" I will not I " I said; " I'm going to win some more."

And I did. I lost occasionally, but I nearly always won on the lesser risks. I financed Dick occasionally, but he had no success whatever.

This depressed me. We have shared so much, and I could not help sharing the effects of his bad luck. My exultation in winning so often was therefore modified, and I finally took the advice of the mature young woman, an Australian, judging from her accent, and left the table.

I began chatting with the young woman from Australia. She had no sad story whatever. She was secretary or companion to an elderly lady who risked twenty-five francs every morning. If the old lady won, she usually slept after luncheon and remained in an excellent humour until bed-time. But if she lost at once, her temper was villainous for the rest of the day. The wheel which brought me fortune had doubled the old lady's ten francs, the young woman said; and the sigh was explained.

We began walking towards Dick who was watching a table near the centre of the room. Before we could reach him, she ran forward to the table where they were playing another kind of game, quickly returning and whispering rapidly, " Quick—give me forty francs; I'll double it for you! "

" Cozened out of forty francs! " I thought; " well, it might have been more; and what are forty francs? " I felt my chip-laden pockets and walked towards Dick. But I had hardly begun—" Look here, Dick—we *do* have adventures "—when the young woman dashed up to us with her honest Australian face beaming, eager to hand over eighty francs. I urged her to double the eighty francs; but she regretted that she could not do this. It was only when—and she explained something or other about the appearance of certain numbers—that you could double an investment. We wanted to give her luncheon or tea, but she refused.

## THROUGH FRANCE TO ITALY

We left Monte Carlo before noon. I was convinced that I was leaving a fortune behind me. I am still convinced. Sometimes before sleeping I imagine myself at that table, firmly ignoring the advice of the young woman. I see the chips piling up beside me, only being reduced when Dick cautiously takes away a load and changes them into currency. An anxious expression is creeping over the stolid features of the man at the wheel. People gather near my chair. I scatter chips hysterically about the table; they nearly all win; only my chips on numbers, but not on the number which comes up, are raked in by the croupier. The veins swell in my forehead.

"Watch! " I hear whispered; "not often do you see this; the bank's going to break! "

I place ten thousand francs on *rouge*; a miserable kind of gamble, but I have a "hunch." *Rouge* it is; and the bank is broken! That last ten thousand was the last straw the bank could stand.

I gather up my winnings; Dick calms me with his steady smile; he takes my arm and I lean heavily on his as I totter—and then I take two aspirins, for otherwise I might not sleep for hours after a dream like that.



## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### ITALY

WE knew we were in Italy at once after passing with great ease through the hands of the customs people at Grimaldi, because the visible world seemed crowded with King Victor Emmanuels, Crown Princes of Italy, many Mussolinis, and a good sprinkling of Gabriele d'Annunzios—soldiers and officials, of course, in the uniforms worn by these great personages when they have their photographs taken. Incidentally, one soon becomes tired of uniforms in Italy. I think the feeling is largely sympathetic. One begins imagining how these poor fellows must feel having to dress up every day with their beautiful cloaks and hats which look very fashionable, if it is believed that rather large hats are being worn now, or that hermit crabs are in the mode. As a matter of fact, I believe they rather enjoy it, but what I can't understand is how they can go on enjoying it.

The *carabinieri* are a glowing exception. No man in his senses could object to wearing their uniform every day of his life. Presumably the *carabinieri* are policemen whose duty it is to keep the peace. A burglar will not often annex property when the sun is shining on the loot he longs for, and even a full moon will deter him; but do we say, "The sun and moon keep the peace?" No! Rather do we talk of the strength and warmth of the sun, and the beauty of the moon; and when I think of the Italian *carabinieri* I think of warmth and beauty.

The hat of the *carabinieri* is particularly fascinating. It is of blue felt of the type worn by Napoleon, but even smarter and more charming because of the scarlet and gold cockade which decorates the front, firmly pushed back, of course. As the *carabinieri* stroll along—always

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in pairs—their hats naturally move with their bodies, and these lovely things are seen above the heads of the crowd turning towards each other, bowing gracefully, quivering a little, and carrying on proudly, wonderfully sensitive to the slightest emotion.

This hat might, if it dared, despise the mere man below it; but around the man is a voluminous navy blue cloak reaching well below his knees and lined with rich scarlet. If that cloak were skimpily cut, the hat might look down its peak (if it had one); but the cloak is a great circle of beautiful cloth and falls with the utmost grace. Nor may the cloak be too proud, for it merely shelters and enhances the beauty of tight-fitting blue breeches with wide scarlet stripes reaching to gleaming Wellington boots. Fine feathers, of course, make fine birds; but not in the case of the *carabimeri*. They are fine birds as such, for evidently the biggest and most comely men are chosen for the corps; and the fact that you never see one in a hurry or ever looking official and stern adds to the attraction they exert. I should hate to be an Italian maid in love with one of the *carabinieri* if he did not love me; it would mean the Tiber!

I expressed this admiration more than once to an Italian friend in Rome, and whenever I did so he chuckled frivolously. "I must laugh," he said, "when you mention the *carabinieri*, because we never talk of them unless there is a fire in the street." Evidently an Italian joke is hidden here somewhere.

Dick and I loved Italy. We could not say so very eloquently because, to begin with, we only knew about five words of Italian; but our attitude was clearly read by the people we met, and we enjoyed in return a happy reward. English exiles in the cheaper *pensioni* urged us to refer to Mussolini if we discussed him, as "Mr. Jones," "Mr. Smith," or some other such name. "The place is alive with spies!" they warned shudderingly; "so be careful!"

Had a spy been hidden in Emily Il's tucker-box as we drove through Italy, he would simply have heard, "Wonderful man, Mussolini; you feel he is, somehow—a



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Master, eh? I wish we had a New Zealand edition in New Zealand! " And had there been another spy sitting next to us in a cinema in Rome he would have merely heard us shrieking, " *Viva Mussolini—viva!* " with the rest of the mob. " *Viva Mussolini!* " sounds so much better than " *Viva Mr. Jones!* " does it not?

As a matter of fact there were no spies hidden in Emily II's tucker-box; we should have detected even an invisible Italian spy, through his garlic-laden breath. Incidentally, we were told that garlic has immense food value; therefore one must congratulate the Italian people in choosing it as a daily, even an hourly, item in the national menu. However, had there been raging a fierce blight in the garlic crop just before and during our journey through Italy, we should have found grave difficulty in expressing sincere sympathy to our Italian friends.

Our judgment of Signor Mussolini was admittedly formed intuitively, based insecurely on impressions gained as we passed through the country, with no opportunity to hear unbiassed opinion. Nevertheless, it would take a great deal to disturb my humble opinion that Signor Mussolini is of the greater men in Europe to-day. Loyalty forbids me to say that I think him the greatest. He has evidently made the discovery that it is not enough to call a spade a spade: a spade must be used without any talk whatever. Cultivating his garden, he plunges his spade firmly into the earth without worrying too much about the worms he slices in the process. Poor worms! Yes, but you really can't stop for worms when the roots of every weed must be turned over and killed, and when there is so little time in a man's life. Democracy, he has evidently seen, is a magnificent plant—which has gone to seed. It was being cultivated, improved, manured, pruned and budded to the point of exhaustion. What, therefore, shall the harvest be? Bolshevism?

"No!" said Mussolini, not because Bolshevism is in itself bad, but merely because it simply won't work, or because it works madly and tries to ignore the importance of control.

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And so, while all the other politicians are handing the people the garish though really very withered flowers of speech—endlessly talking—he confines himself to a very few sensible remarks and goes on with his digging. Incidentally, he is personally one of the gentlest of men. I happened to be with one of his intimate friends when the American general made that silly speech about II Duce running down a child in his motor and not stopping to offer aid. She seemed to think the incident merely demanded a shrug and an amused smile, because as she said, "He wouldn't run over a cat if he could help it, and if he had run down a cat, he would stop to see what could be done."

Before ending this highly unnecessary little adventure into the realms of politics, I am forced to add that the lesson driven home for us by Mussolini is that there's too much talking going on. It may have been all right before the days of the telegraph and wireless; but nowadays a man has only to be insulting, rude and palpably stupid, and if he is prominent enough, he can set the whole world yapping with him. Mussolini says, "Shut up!" Wise people in Italy hear the command of an efficient master; but those who do not, shut up nevertheless. Without doubt, Italy is happier in consequence. Therefore, "Viva Mr. Jones!"

We spent our first night in Italy in a weird little town, which seemed to have been carved out of a great chunk of cement which had by chance rolled down to the shores of the Mediterranean. The people seemed to live like ants in a highly complicated ant-hill—in vaulted crypts, in caves, in tunnels and in eyries near the sky. The inn was at the outer edge of the ant-hill, with its bedroom windows looking into the sea.

Before going in to dinner, we wandered about the place, exploring the weirdest passages and tunnels, longing to be able to gossip with the people who invariably smiled at us politely. We eventually entered a cafe, which might have been a beautifully vaulted chapel in the crypt of some ancient Gothic church. In Italy, Italians do not seem dark,

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probably because they are not exposed to a contrast with Saxons; therefore the good fellows drinking their *chianti* in the cafe differed only from the men we had been used to seeing in the bars of our own country in that they did not speak English. They looked quite as sociable and on the whole were much more temperate. They were obviously eager to hear our story, but apart from words of greeting, and a polite phrase or two, our Italian was limited to "*Multo stanco*," which we had learnt from an Italian green-grocer and had remembered, because it sounded slightly indelicate, although it simply means, "very tired." It is obviously a useless phrase for beginners because it can do nothing for you beyond, perhaps, commanding a little sympathy which you generally need much less than a room with two beds in it, at not more than so many lire, a dozen eggs, or a loaf of bread. Still, when you've got it, and it's nearly all you have, why not use it?

Dick and I were discussing the adventures of the day over our *chianti*, which cost about a penny a glass, when we saw that our companions in the cafe could control themselves no longer; they simply had to hear our story. We gathered that we had been established as English; and we saw that one of their number was being urged to go for an interpreter whose name was, inevitably, Antonio. When this man had hurried out, the others began breathing hard, knowing that soon they would be able to talk. I therefore yawned a tremendous yawn, and having stretched my shoulders, I turned to Dick with a sigh and remarked, "*Multo stanco—multo stanco!*"

I regretted this instantly, for the cafe and all its occupants seemed to rise around us like the candlesticks, the table decorations, the dishes, and the guests at the coronation dinner of Alice through the Looking-Glass—all talking at once, screaming kindly words of hospitality, laughing boyishly at themselves for not knowing how well we spoke Italian. Fortunately, they could not wait for answers, and for a time we managed to maintain their conversational fever by nodding, smiling with a great show of teeth, murmuring, "*Si, si! Grazia—grazia!*" and lap-

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ping up our *chianti* with a great show of eloquence. We saw that we should inevitably be stranded like fish on the sand within a few seconds, but just before the crisis, in marched a fat little man shouting delightfully, " I spikky te Engleesh! " And we were saved.

The difficulty with Tony's English was its quantity, which was much more in evidence than its relevance; and I think his friends found him inadequate as an interpreter. He had been a green-grocer in New York, but some years had passed since he had had an opportunity to speak much English. Before Tony's entrance had lost all its effect Dick and I got up to go. I glanced regretfully at the good fellows, yawned, sighed and again remarked, " *Multo stanco!* "

" *Si, si—si!* " they all murmured understandingly; and we withdrew to our inn, having made quite a creditable exit.

Said the landlady of the inn, " We have English people here—Signor Robinson and his friends; you will meet them at dinner."

Judging from the roll in the landlady's voice when she mentioned his name, Signor Robinson was evidently a personage. And he proved to be such, very much so. On paper, he can merely be called the chauffeur-nurse-secretary-director-friend of an Englishwoman and her invalid daughter, one who performed all his duties with enthusiasm and efficiency; but he was full of personality, and not without charm, rather modified for us when we saw that every movement of his lithe body and each snap of his intelligent dark eyes said plainly, " Home was never like this! " He boldly rode down his ignorance of cultured English, and had established himself with his employer as a " character " and with the inn people, he himself thought, and we had no reason to doubt his success, as a personage. He monstrously threw his weight about the inn passages, but his attention to the invalid girl notably when he carried her down the narrow inn staircase and placed her gently in her chair at table could not have been more delicate, while his flow of spirits and buoyancy, not to say fearlessness, kept a happy smile on her pale face throughout the meal.

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She offered us a share of him when she heard that we were motoring along the coast through Genoa to Rome. "Robinson has done that," she remarked; "he can tell you what to see." She glanced hopefully at Signor Robinson, who began instantly.

"In Genoa—don't miss the cemetery; git one look and you'll 'ave to 'ave another. The mass-soul-ehums—mass-soul-ehums and mass-soul-ehums—dozens of 'em! "

The invalid girl looked sweetly at us, and her big eyes explained that Signor Robinson connected the masses which are said for souls with the occupants of a mausoleum; hence the name!

"And Rome——" she began.

"Oh, in Rome—don't miss the church of the 'Capoochims '—chapels all made of dead monks' bones—harches of pelvises, walls of skulls, candlesticks of thighs, and haltars 'eld up with harms—and monks, quite dead, tacked up to the walls with the skin on their faces just crackin'—bits of 'air sticking on—and——"

It sounded most fascinating, and we promised to see that chapel.

But this report of Signor Robinson's speech does not do him credit; it must create a false picture; he was not a bit silly, and was obviously a treasure to his employer. He assumed complete and efficient control of our movements, relieving us of much trouble without, as far as I could judge, knowing much more Italian than we knew. After dinner he piloted us to a gay casino some miles distant, where we lost every lira we had with us, being unable even to tip the cloak-room attendants. Not that the attendants cared after Signor Robinson had flashed his bright eyes at them, and sprinkled them with his few words of Italian. Home was never like Italy to Signor Robinson.

Nature having failed to supply the people living in the country south-east of Genoa with feathers and down, like ducks, they make up for this neglect by all having umbrellas without which, judging from our experience, they never venture forth. March is, perhaps, a particularly wet month. It began raining just before we entered

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Genoa, removing any temptation to pause even to "git a look at the mass-sow/-ehums," and it continued drizzling for the rest of that day.

The country seemed populated with umbrellas and people. All pedestrians carried immense green umbrellas which might be used either to shelter the head from clean rain or the body from the foul slush flung into the air by passing motors. Men on little donkeys carried large umbrellas which sheltered both; horsemen carried umbrellas; wagons were fitted with them; and the highway seemed merely a setting for an umbrella procession. The moment Emily Il's engine was heard, down would crash the umbrellas to the ground, and we would merely see rather angry dark eyes staring over the top, ready to disappear before the slush from her wheels could blind them. Clean umbrellas were rare. The rain had never time to get an umbrella free from mud before it was given a fresh stratum; nevertheless the rain tried very valiantly.

We passed through Pisa and saw the Leaning Tower, the beautiful marble church and the exquisite marble baptistry. Probably because it was not the usual season for tourists, the place seemed guide-ridden. We could never afford guides; or perhaps it is truer to say that we economized in this direction—rather a mistake, I now think, for they do not ask very much, and even if they do ask much, they never get it. We had resisted six guides in the church and Leaning Tower, and we felt we had thwarted a few more in the baptistry, which stands apart from the main church, until one of them came gaily to us as we admired the exquisite font. He asked if he might sing to us. The request seemed harmless.

"Do!" we said politely; and so he sang, uttering long, piercing notes which echoed and re-echoed, finally achieving a beautiful chord which remained floating delicately about the vaulted ceiling of the lovely building long after we had sighed our pleasure, and even after we had placed a lira in the hand of the guide. However, it had drifted to the home of echoes before we had finished our slight argument with the gentleman who thought a lira not

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enough. He wanted two. Dick offered to sing him a stave in return; but he seemed unable to appreciate this opportunity.

We spent the next night at Siena, a crowded little walled city with the narrowest streets, the most spacious town square, one of the most interesting old cathedrals in Italy, and a *palazzo pubblico* of immense size and superb beauty. But again the need for haste robbed us of a wonderful opportunity; I could merely dash about the town while Dick had Emily II's oil changed and herself efficiently greased. We lodged in the Pensioni Senesi, once the palace of the family called Senesi who were great in their day, according to a faded little Englishwoman we met there, and who used to quarrel with the other noble families living within a few yards of them, pouring boiling oil on the heads of their enemies and being drastic and rude in many another medieval way. These Italian palaces are not quite what one imagines them to be. They all have courtyards; their entrance gates were built for defence; but allowing for difference in climate and temperament, many a house called a *palazzo* is less significant architecturally than many old houses in Bloomsbury. An Italian house will be called a palace with the slightest provocation.

We dined in what had been the Senesi music-room, a graciously proportioned apartment decorated with stucco cherubs twanging harps and blowing pipes. These cherubs looked very, very young; alas, the lines of women sitting at the tables which stretched along the room, all so neatly dressed, many with pretty white hair charmingly arranged, seemed, in contrast, not so very old as so very tired of wandering down the last interminable lane of life.

What a story those little fat cherubs might tell—of the savage Senesi twanging their harps while the offspring of the serfs in the palace cellars yelled and fought (I am insecure about the Senesi and their harps, but not about the offspring of their serfs); and of the disillusioned English gentlewomen with excellent appetites and with prettily arranged white hair finding the Pensioni Senesi,

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"Quite good, my dear—and so reasonable! " But after all I should think it would be much better to be a disillusioned English gentlewoman with a small income than a stucco cherub with a fat little stomach, bulbous legs and other fixings, playing a stucco harp or blowing a stucco pipe. The disillusioned gentlewoman will die; the cherub must crumble up while he is yet young, and so very young!

In attempting to return to the Pensioni Senesi and Dick who was waiting for me, eager, as usual, to get on, I took a wrong turning down one of the narrow passages and began a process of wandering through a maze of tunnels, none of which took me within view of the *pensioni*. I could ask for a direction, but could never understand the replies given. Eventually I found a polite officer who, appreciating my plight, made some clever signs which seemed intelligible. I saw clearly that I had to turn round and to go in the opposite direction until I reached cross-roads, that I must cling to the street I was on. "*Sempri, sempri, sempri!*" said he, with an appropriate gesture. Bursting to thank him, and very much relieved, I heard myself replying, "Thank 'ee! Thank 'ee! Thank 'ee! "

After a very interesting journey, knowing nothing and, of course, understanding less of the history-soaked country through which we passed, over now magnificent roads, we reached Rome at about eight o'clock that evening, very tired and in the lowest spirits because we had no idea where we should spend the night. We wanted a respectable *pensioni*, but we had no idea where to look for one.

The road eventually brought us to the gleaming Victor Emmanuel II monument where the Italian unknown soldier is buried. Near this we bought unnecessary petrol hoping the man at the petrol station might direct us. The man was a boy, who could only blush and grin when we tried to drag information from him. We therefore shot up a side street, and saw below us the dim outline of the Colosseum, but no *pensioni*, or anything that looked like one. We went on, dashing along wide streets, exploring lesser streets, only to find ourselves cast up again



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at the Victor Emmanuel II monument. We finally paused in the beautiful Esedra Square near the railway station. The only thing left for us to do was to go to a good hotel where they would doubtless speak English, ask for a room and its cost, and finding it too expensive, politely withdraw after gaining the address of a modest *pensioni*.

These naive negotiations began at an excellent hotel in the Via Regina with a name like a musical direction. The cost of the cheapest room was three times the amount we expected to pay. "Very reasonable/" we admitted, "because this is a smart hotel; but we are making a long journey and dare not pay so much; perhaps you could tell us where we might find a *pensioni*"

They instantly reduced the price of the room, but not enough to satisfy Dick; and because they showed no signs of doing anything better, we withdrew to the car and became more depressed.

But before we could draw away, the porter rushed out to us. "What do you want to pay?" he asked in good Cockney. We told him. "Oh," said he, "we'll fix you up."

We were now presented to the proprietor, a very good-looking man with a complexion as smooth and beautiful as a girl's. "You know," he said seriously, "we never let a room at that price—but you're English, and," he added with a glowing smile, "so's my wife." He won our hearts.

The next morning after breakfast we were besieged by reporters and photographers. The hotel proprietor took charge of the proceedings, which assumed for him the importance of a levee. Incidentally, we saw a way of making a slight return for his kindness by firmly refusing to be photographed anywhere but in front of the hotel.

There was a slight hitch at the opening of the interview. We both thought the hotel proprietor had said with a questioning note, "You are sorry to be in Italy?" and our immediate reply was a hearty, "Not at all!"

I do not know how the mistake arose; a page-boy, the hoot of a motor or a grinding tramcar had evidently interrupted the proprietor; anyway, if the next question

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had not been, asked sadly, "And why don't you like Italy?" we should have suspected a hitch merely from the troubled expression in the dark eyes around us. Fortunately we thought of the reply made by Alice to the Duchess when asked how she liked playing croquet with the Queen, "Not at all—because she is so likely to win that——"

"We don't like Italy," we said, "because it is so beautiful and so very interesting; because we like the Italian people and——"

The proprietor poured all this out with tremendous verve, using "multos" and "issimos" by the dozen.

"And because you have Signor Mussolini and we haven't—and we can only pass quickly through the country, a matter of a few days, merely seeing without having time really to know——"

That seemed enough for the proprietor, and off he went again with a rich declamation which should have brought tears to the eyes of the reporters.

"You mentioned Signor Mussolini," said the proprietor with a slightly nervous glance.

"Oh, we're jealous, because we haven't got him in Australia and New Zealand."

"That is true," admitted the proprietor oracularly, apparently forgetting the reporters; "Signor Mussolini is very good for Italy, good for Europe and"—with a slight smile—"for America—and the whole world! "

After this the interview followed the usual lines, questions about ourselves, our past adventures and our future plans. The good photographers had grave difficulty in photographing us with Emily II and the proprietor outside the hotel, because, whenever they had us well focussed and looking pleasant, a tramcar would dash up—the street was very narrow—and drive them back to the kerb. Their persistence won the heart of the proprietor; he agreed to the suggestion that at least one photograph might be taken near the magnificent fountain in Esedra Square.

Pictures of us with the proprietor (who was much

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better looking than either of us, and therefore helped) and, of course, Emily II, appeared in all the Italian illustrated papers, and the interview was given a prominent place in the Rome newspapers, being copied by other newspapers all over Italy.

We spent our first morning in the neighbourhood of the Colosseum, exploring the surrounding ruins of ancient Rome. With an archaeologist to explain things, I could not imagine a more interesting morning; we had no guide, and I must confess to some boredom. I think we both felt that it would be nice to say that we had been here. Otherwise, the vast area of untidy ruins was depressing, and I fear it is a little daring of me to think that ancient Rome outrages the form and beauty of Rome.

However, midst all this ruin and decay, we, or perhaps I should say I, because being a Celt, I am much more emotional than Dick, "more of a silly ass!" he might say, found a spark of curiously glowing life in the skeleton, awful to look at, of a good woman. The church of St. Frances of Rome—*Santa Francesca Romana*; it sounds so much more beautiful in Italian—seems part of a ruin near the Colosseum; and by a lucky chance it was the day of her festival.

I could write much about this: of the men selling candles a few yards from the church doors, of the beggars at the doors, including a lunatic with a deathly sallow face throwing fits and foaming distressfully, of the beautiful little church with its gleaming shrine below the High Altar, where a white-robed monk accepted candles to burn at the shrine, being so pressed for room, that he could not give even the longest candle more than a few minutes of life, and chiefly of the love and affection these Roman people evidently bore Santa Francesca; but I dare only mention that curious moment when, having temporarily abandoned the quite untenable position of an uncompromising Protestant, I stood with others in a narrow passage in the crypt of the church looking at a skeleton in a glass case, a skeleton more awful at first because it was **completely clothed**, dressed to the smallest detail like

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an ordinary nun. Skeleton hands rested on the nun's habit, and on the marriage finger a ring with a gleaming jewel shone. It was impossible not to shudder at first. I began watching the faces near mine. There was no sign of repugnance as there was no sign of religious hysteria; I could sense only love and affection. "Santa Francesca! " I could hear whispered occasionally, " Santa Francesca! " I found myself carried away with this very sincere and touching devotion. Love had changed that awful skeleton into a good woman; I felt that I knew her, that I liked her. She had become a friend in some curious way; and although I now find the position of a Protestant tenable enough if I want to protest, I—it seems very presumptuous—still number Santa Francesca Romana amongst my friends. " Santa Francesca Romana! " To hear an Italian say that is to hear music.

One of the fathers from the monastery of St. Frances blessed Emily II, sprinkling holy water on her bonnet and invoking the protection of the saint in the name of the Trinity. He gave us a beautiful little enamel and silver medallion of St. Frances and this, placed on a prepared bar in front of the windscreen, went before us throughout the world. It remains with Emily II until this day.

Were my Presbyterian father alive, the story of the above incident might distress him. " Popery, popery! " he might exclaim, and recall Bloody Mary; but he is enjoying, I know, eternal rest, or whatever those who faithfully serve their God enjoy, and where he now dwells there is no room for hate, but rather a warm welcome for that human love and devotion shown by these simple people of Rome for Santa Francesca Romana.

We spent an interesting hour in the church and crypt of the church of the Capuchini. Signor Robinson's picture of the crypt chapels was not overdrawn. More than half a dozen little chapels are composed entirely of the bones of past monks of the order. Bodies which had mummified after eight years' interment have been placed in niches, fully clothed in the habit of the Capuchini and look awful enough. While not understanding the idea, it is impossible

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not to be impressed with the possibilities of spinal vertebra when employed to produce an Adam-like effect on a ceiling; and the fact remains that the chapel draws thousands of visitors who are charged a small fee, thus making it possible for the Capuchini to carry on with their charitable labours. We were told—I cannot vouch for the truth of this information—that monks remained buried in the chapels for eight years. Their bones were then dug up and arranged in the chapels. This strange proceeding has been abandoned for some years.

After luncheon we drove in a quaint little carriage to the Vatican City, making a rapid tour of the Vatican Museum, art galleries and the Sistine chapel. Again, we can say that we have been here, but little more than that. We were impressed with the glowing immensity of St. Peter's, but we had only time to appreciate its immensity. Sitting outside a cafe at the west end of St. Peter's Square eating spaghetti (nourishing and cheap!) and an omelet, I remarked to a Cambridge don whom we met by chance here, that I was a little disappointed in the famous square. "Oh," he said impressively, "it's very fine—very fine!" Therefore I am certain it must be; but I continued to think that the great mass of tenement-like buildings obtruding above the colonnade at the south side spoils a gracious effect. These tenement-like buildings, obeying no architectural form, are part of the Vatican.

We spent but a day and a half in Rome, leaving for Naples shortly before noon and reaching there after midnight. From Naples we rushed out to Pompeii. After another, and a longer, visit to Pompeii I may be able to speak intelligently about it. At the moment I cannot. It was wonderful to see Vesuvius quietly smoking in the distance.

Until now, Emily II had not been asked to do anything extraordinary. She was overladen, of course; but the Italian roads, while not quite so good as English and French roads, permit careful driving, and she had come to no harm. But the journey south-east to Bari, across the Italian peninsula, over a succession of steep hills, on

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fairly well-metalled roads, demanded all that she was able to give. She never failed us; but we had some anxious moments climbing a particularly terrible hill after dark one night when Dick feared serious clutch trouble. After a few moments' pause, he was able to make temporary adjustments which allowed us to carry on.

This road across Italy might quite easily follow valleys, but it seems compelled to climb nearly every hill, because on many of the hills are perched quaint little walled cities in which the rural population evidently live, going forth each morning to cultivate the surrounding land. Isolated farm-houses are rare, and small villages do not seem to exist. Every square inch of land seems to be cultivated, and the terracing on the hills and mountains is almost dazzling. Wild anemones, most often purple with an occasional white blossom, appear in the fields and along the highway, differing but slightly from the cultivated species chiefly in that their flower stems seem shorter. Occasionally a small orchard of blossoming peach or almond trees brightened the immediate landscape, but the charm of the journey for me lay in the quaint little cities perched on the hill-tops.

We spent our first night in Potenza, which seemed to have outgrown its walled age and could offer a comfortable inn. The fact that our unusual little expedition had dropped in at Potenza after most of its good citizens had retired for the night, might have disturbed the local police much more if they had not read our famous interview in the *Giornale d'Italia*. They seemed more anxious to hand us pictures of ourselves than to accept our passports. How they longed to make us understand them; and how we longed to be able to say more than thank you, a room with two beds, and, "We like Italy very much!" That was the extent of our conversation in Potenza.

At Irsina I had better luck, although I had not learnt any more Italian, and there seemed no one within reach who knew enough French to understand my reckless French. Dick, who was anxious about Emily's clutch, was too eager to get on to Bari and a workshop to take

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much interest in Irsina; but I enjoyed a delightful hour there.

I should imagine that Irsina has remained unchanged for centuries. The city walls still stand, and are probably kept repaired to prevent children from toppling out of streets into the surrounding gulches. The dwellings were built for individual defence; presumably Irsina enjoyed family feuds; therefore they have withstood the ravages of time and are in moderately good repair. Centuries have passed since the city walls refused to contain comfortably, or uncomfortably, even one more building. The streets, or passages, are now above the lowest floors, whose occupants run down little lanes to their homes accompanied by the family chickens and pigeons.

The road had struggled up a very steep pinch to Irsina and was about to pass a narrow bridge leading to the city gates across a steep gulch when we remembered that we needed stores. We therefore entered Irsina and found ourselves back a few hundred years in the most interesting, and I fear the dirtiest, little town I have ever seen. We struggled along a narrow tunnel, watched with the greatest excitement by the inhabitants, until we reached a moderately open space, backed by an immense Gothic church whose east end rose with the city walls. We drew up at a nearby grocer's shop which I entered with some hope of isolating a dozen eggs. Upon former occasions this had been difficult; obviously a phrase book would have been most useful, but we had more fun struggling along without one. A quite good imitation of a chicken hysterically announcing a recent success had merely produced a nude hen ready for the pot. A pencil sketch or an egg had produced fat little sausages. Eggs had only been isolated and bought with triumph on both sides after an exhausting process of elimination allied to some dumb show.

Boys are boys the whole world over, always ready to pounce on heroes and to worship without looking too closely at the heroes' feet. A boy of fourteen serving macaroni to a black-robed woman of Irsina in that grocer's shop watched my entrance with curiosity; he then glanced

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through the door, doubtless expecting to see the ordinary car used by tourists. He saw Emily II. He saw the gay little flags painted on her door. He had been reading the interview in the *Giornale d'Italia* and had seen a picture of us and the hotel proprietor before the woman came in for her macaroni!

It was really too much for him. He crashed a final scoop full of macaroni on to the scales, practically flung it at the astonished woman, and stood before me with glistening eyes and heaving chest asking for my commands. I began the egg ceremonial and explored the shop. He produced eggs at once, and from that moment we hardly required language to convey our thoughts, although his attempts to say all that he wanted to say would have produced apoplexy in an older person. The woman with the macaroni had been trying to attract his attention for some minutes, dumbly holding forth a few coins when the boy's father walked in, himself moderately excited but obviously convinced that his son should control himself better. He said so, quite gently, but firmly. The boy listened courteously and then, with a pitying smile, placed the *Giornale d'Italia* under his father's nose. The boy's father smiled at me and made a remark, which I'm certain was the Italian version of "Boys will be boys!" What interested me most was the fact that the boy might have been a nice English boy, or a New Zealand boy, overcome with deep interest; the mild hysteria, or what we regard as such in the Latin races, was missing. We became great friends.

Meanwhile the father was reading the interview, helped by the boy. "These, my father," I'm certain he was saying, "are great people, and see—they love Italy. There's the little car in the picture, in Rome; and oh—there's the same little car outside the shop, our shop in Irsina. Oh!" exclaimed the boy when his father had read the last word. "Oh—viva Engleesch—viva—VIVA!" After which he turned to me with a glowing smile, throwing reserve, parental advice (much weakened now) and control to the winds.



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I found no difficulty in letting him know that I wanted to see the great church. He seemed grateful to me for the chance to do something to help. The church was locked, but he would run to the sacristan's for the key and be back within a few seconds. He kept his word and came dashing back with four or five friends, all equally interested and all equally courteous. We marched across the square to the great church.

The door was opened with a flourish and my first exclamation, " Beautiful—beautiful! " was repeated by all the boys. They knew precisely what I meant. The church, Gothic, was indeed very fine; but although the fabric was in good order, the absence of love and attention was rather obvious. The pictures and statues sadly needed attention; the carving was laden with dust, and the altar hangings were shabby and ill-kempt.

We marched around the church while my guides struggled to explain what they could, finding satisfaction only when they ended each sentence with a quaint pronunciation of " Beautiful—a! Beautiful—a, *si, si!* "

We had examined the nave pretty thoroughly and were at a loss what to do next, when one of my friends suddenly thought of the crypt. We were instantly in excited action again; the movements of the party were always jerky, and down to the crypt we marched. Here was a large chapel of what seemed exquisite proportions to me, with a vaulted roof which had once been gleaming with mosaic. Now it was hardly more than a lumber-room, packed with all kinds of faded ceremonial finery, odd bits of lovely old oak carving, a coffin or two, an immense catafalque, dead old artificial flowers, and much that was possibly valuable. But my guides had really brought me here to see the view. With great difficulty they opened an ancient oak door.

The view across the terraced hills and valleys was entrancing, but more interesting perhaps was the position of that door. It was actually a little below the great city walls above, on the face of a cliff with a sheer drop of hundreds of feet below. That great **door** seemed full of awful possibilities.

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Back once more in the nave of the great church it seemed obvious to my friends that, alas, the entertainment must end. They had given me their all; and they were dragging comfort from a repetition of, said very charmingly, "Beautiful—a! Beautiful—a, *si, si!*" now with a slightly questioning note, as if seeking reassurance.

Suddenly one of them dropped what had the effect of a bomb on the party. They looked at each other with the utmost contempt; they laughed at themselves as I am quite certain they said, "St. Victor! What on earth made us forget him? St. Victor, why of course!" And then the disturbing thought, "Would this Englishman like to see St. Victor?"

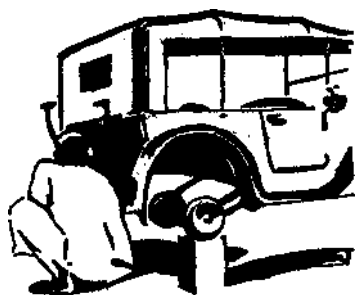
The Englishman expressed himself as delighted to see "San Veector"; and across the nave we swept to the north transept where, behind a faded red curtain there was a length of broken glass, and behind the broken glass a coffin, with no side, and in the coffin a skeleton reclining on some dusty old cloth dressed in faded silk. And they had rather over-padded that part of the skeleton where the chest and stomach once were, so that St. Victor looked very portly indeed. And the coronet of red paper roses around St. Victor's head made him look gay and not a very nice old man!

"How do you like San Victor? Is he not a delightful saint? He was martyred in Syria, and was brought to this church with much trouble. You like him? Good! Viva Eengleesh—viva, VIVA!"

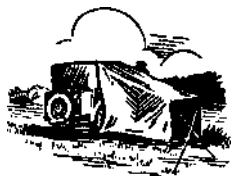
I enjoyed St. Victor very much indeed because my friends wanted me to enjoy him; and after once more thanking them, I bade them good-bye and hurried back to Dick who was becoming impatient. The incident is presumably unimportant; but those nice boys of Irsina, yes, and jolly old "San Veector" in the beautiful old shabby church, shine very brightly in my Italian experience, the excuse for their inclusion here.

We reached Bari towards the late afternoon, and prepared to cross the Adriatic to Albania.

## BOOK SIX EUROPE TO CONSTANTINOPLE







## CHAPTER TWELVE

### ADRIATIC TO ALBANIA

**D**A ME ITALY had welcomed us nicely; as a hostess she was charming; but the hand she held out to bid us good-bye at Bari seemed a mailed fist—covered with bird-lime. Signor Mussolini should disguise himself as a traveller and make an attempt to leave that Adriatic port for foreign ports, and then have his blood-pressure tested! If he survived, there might be a row in Bari.

Having changed most of our Italian money into Albanian coinage, keeping only enough for the inevitable tipping on the dock, we ran alongside the small vessel which plies between Bari and Durazzo and which sailed that evening at seven. Dick and I were perfectly calm as we unpacked Emily, a fact I unaccountably insist on because within a few minutes we had become the centre of a typhoon-like argument which began circling from the deck of the ship above us down and through the shaggy heads of three or four dock labourers and back to the ship again, where a fierce mariner, apparently the bos'n, led a savage chorus of seamen. An officer watched from a higher deck with his chin resting on his hand. He said nothing. He would not have dared. On the other hand, the bos'n said much; and said it so fiercely that his men should have crumpled up instantly. They did not crumple up. They merely struck attitudes and went for him—hard! However, they always offered enthusiastic help when an attack was launched against the dock labourers below.

I could foresee three possible results: (a) that the tops of the heads of these men would simply blow off, and they

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would die, when Dick and I would have to **mount** Emily to the ship ourselves; (b) that their fury would be relieved by making poor little Emily a victim—simply pushing her into the Adriatic and ending the argument once and for all; or that (c) she would hang fairly in the slings they were arranging around her wheels and be stowed on the ship without coming to any harm. Because the last-named result seemed highly improbable, Dick watched from the dock while I kept my eyes open on the ship's deck.

Emily was stowed quite safely; but the last rope which lashed her to the deck was merely the last line in an argument which left us more exhausted than were the actual combatants.

Our baggage remained on the dock a few yards from the gangway. We were willing to engage one man to carry it on board and to pay him adequately, even generously; but we had hardly begun negotiations with a portedly looking individual standing near when the four dock labourers who had arranged the slings on Emily advanced with fury in their eyes, emitting so terrifying a chorus of abuse that the portedly individual slunk away and was seen no more. A *safari* was formed to carry our baggage, and this marched very valiantly to the gangway where it halted and launched a fierce attack on sundry-stewards standing on the ship. They counter-attacked, making a successful sally down the gangway to the dock where they captured the loot in triumph and retreated with a blood-curdling war-cry back to their position on the vessel, where we hastily joined them and directed them to our cabin. Here, utterly exhausted, we shut the door and collapsed amongst our baggage.

A few moments later came the police, not **of the carabinieri**, but sinister-looking men in plain clothes who gazed at us searchingly and demanded our passports. We gave them our passports, but when they proposed taking them away we objected firmly. We now **knew** enough Italian to object; we understood them **perfectly when they** assured us that **the passports would be returned to us in**

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Durazzo, but we refused to agree to this proceeding, and so they sent for the stewardess who spoke French. The milk of human kindness was dried up in that woman. She was very terse, and simply ordered us to give up our passports and, as far as I could understand, to shut up! Therefore we gave up our passports only to find ourselves waging a war for our cameras, which the police thought they should annex. We won this last engagement.

Again there was peace in the cabin; but not for long. The door was flung open suddenly, and in the alleyway stood the four dock labourers prepared, it seemed, to tear us limb from limb. They demanded money, and Dick proceeded to give each of them what he thought an adequate tip.

The effect was terrible. Their lips trembled; their eyes flashed; their eyebrows beetled for a space and then arched as high as possible on their foreheads, remaining like that during the course of each period; their hair stood on end; their shoulders shrugged, and their arms swung around like semaphore arms, but less stiffly; and this was merely the action they set to surely the most dramatic speech ever delivered from the alleyway of a simple little ferry vessel.

Dick gave them a few more coins, and they laughed a blood-curdling, bitter laugh. Then they became ominously calm, and spoke very softly; but it was merely the calm before a storm of terrific fury. They were soon advancing upon us declaiming so magnificently that I whispered to Dick, " Give them your all! "

" I have—all our Italian money! " he replied.

" Then we must fight I " I said.

Up to this point we had stood with our backs to our berths; we could retreat no farther. Now we began talking in rapid English, shaking our lips, flashing our eyes, beetling our eyebrows, stiffening up our hair and shrugging our shoulders as we advanced. The effect was miraculous. Muttering hoarsely, our enemies turned **their** backs and retreated along the alleyway. **Before** they reached the deck they had started so fierce an argument

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amongst themselves that doubtless we were forgotten within a few moments.

The poor little ferry steamer was literally crowded with men in uniform—Kings of Italy, Crown Princes, Mussolinis and Gabriele d'Annunzios—all on duty of some kind, all in graceful capes which reached to their ankles and which just permitted exquisitely gloved hands to emerge sedately in front, one gloved hand occasionally grasping a gleaming sword hilt, and all with military caps a shade too big for them. It seemed utterly absurd of that little ship to think that she could leave at seven.

And yet there were hardly more than twenty passengers in both classes, simple, harmless folks who hardly deserved all this attention. Many of the officers were perfectly calm; but occasionally a fierce argument would break out in which, it seemed, all joined, from the cabin-boy (including the terse stewardess) to the captain. I began to wonder what would really happen if something important developed, if a spy were discovered, for instance. A few minutes before seven a pair of *carabinieri* strolled gracefully down the wharf; but they remained bland and beautiful, not interfering with a soul. They may have encouraged the little ship in some kindly way, for precisely at seven, in the midst of what seemed the most dreadful argument between some beautiful officers and an Arabian-looking gentleman in a turban and black cassock, the gangway was pulled aboard and the vessel moved slowly out into the Adriatic to be welcomed by a steep little head sea which made her stern lift and shake itself at intervals, to the great discomfort of the second-class passengers whose cabins were aft.

We were not second-class passengers; at least, not quite! We were second-class *distinta* passengers, which meant that we were allowed to use the less sumptuous saloon state-rooms, the best deck, but not the saloon dining-room. Since the journey only occupies a night, this seemed a sensible way of saving a few lire. The dinner in the second-class dining-room was quite good, but we should have enjoyed it much better had the amiable



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young Italians who dined with us, young commercial gentlemen, I suspect, been better sailors, or had they appreciated the propriety of withdrawing from the table between courses when their *mal de mer* showed active symptoms. It was the first time I had ever seen the philosophy—what one loses on the swings one gains on the merry-go-rounds—applied in the stern cabin of a small ship in a steep head sea!

Dick and I knew nothing about Albania. To us it was simply a country we must pass through on our journey eastward. Personally I had a vague vision of a mountainous land occupied by irresponsible brigands with a Turkish bias, where Prince William of Weid had had rather an unpleasant time of it. We hoped the brigands might ignore us and that the weather would be good. We left Albania less than a week later with quite a pretty knowledge of the land, and a very sincere affection for its people, who seemed to us the most lovable in the Balkans.

But when we saw Albania from the steamer the next morning we felt slightly nervous. Civilization lay behind us, we felt; anything might happen in those sombre-looking mountains beyond the low-lying coast.

There were, of course, customs formalities before Emily could be released at Durazzo, but these occupied hardly an hour, and we were free to pursue our way to Constantinople.

We had no precise idea how to proceed. A man on the steamer had spoken of an American school near Tirana; Tirana was due east of us, and so we decided to motor there for information. We had no difficulty in buying petrol; four gallons had been brought to us before the close of the customs negotiations.

We passed through the outskirts of Durazzo, a collection of weary, old, tiled hovels divided by execrable roads and narrow streets, and soon we were on a wide highway which had once been an excellent road built, incidentally, during the Austrian occupation, but which was now an annoying series of pot-holes. The road passed **through**

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swampy country to begin with, gradually rising to higher land given over almost entirely to sheep. We saw little cultivation and few houses; but the highway carried all sorts and conditions of men and women mounted on very small donkeys. The women were often veiled, but many of them were not. Sheep seemed to be following their owners like dogs; occasionally sheep were tethered \* to bullock-wagons and walked behind without offering any serious objection. We felt very sorry for the poor donkeys whose loads were merely limited by the amount that could be attached. All that could often be seen of a donkey were four thin little legs, stepping along quite briskly below cruel loads of firewood, and I am certain that the combined weight of an Albanian and his great saddle was often greater than the wretched beast forced to carry it.

The distance to Tirana was slightly less than twenty-five miles; but we found some difficulty in convincing ourselves that we had reached the capital of Albania when we ran into what seemed a sprawling village merely distinguished by a whitewashed mosque and one or two other buildings. We drew up at the Hotel Bristol and sought luncheon, entering an immense dining-room heated by a big central stove and reeking with the combined odour of garlic and vile cigarette smoke. We were struggling with a waiter who spoke Italian when a comely young fellow approached and asked in pleasant English whether he might help us or not. We urged him to lunch with us, but he said, "No thanks; I've lunched, but I'll have a coffee!" You have "a coffee" with a friend in Albania in the same way that you have a glass of ale with a man in England.

He told us how to find the American school, adding, "But wouldn't it be better to see your own officers here?"

We had no knowledge of any British officers in Albania, and said so. Incidentally, I might remark here that British officers are always popping up on the overland journey from England to Singapore, although "popping up" hardly describes the quiet, manly existence of the

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men we met who seemed largely concerned teaching the people around them how to play cricket and football.

Our friend explained that the Albanian *gendarmerie* was being trained by a number of British officers commanded by Major-General J. Percy, who lived in Tirana. He suggested our getting into touch with the adjutant, Major Hill.

The young fellow told us that he was an Albanian educated at one of the excellent American schools in the neighbourhood. He was employed as General Percy's interpreter, which possibly explained his pleasant accent. I said to him, " You speak very good English." He replied with a modest gesture, and added quaintly, " We lose the American accent after we leave school! " Which seemed a trifle disloyal in view of the fact that the Balkan peoples owe so much to the devoted work of hundreds of American men and women scattered throughout the land from Albania to Turkey.

We telephoned to Major Hill at the tennis-courts. He dropped his racket and tennis-balls and came to us at once, forbidding us to leave that day and placing himself and his house at our disposal. His wife was in England; we therefore spread ourselves over his bungalow and enjoyed a delightful week-end, meeting General Percy and his son Alister, and learning a great deal about the interesting little country.

Hill's *menage* in a small Albanian bungalow consisted of a gendarme and his young wife, the former acting as valet or batman, the latter as cook. The cook, Marie, came from the mountains and was more like an Irish colleen in appearance and temperament than what one might have expected to find in the Near East. Her hair was a light brown; her skin was light and her cheeks were rosy. She was not a bit shy, showing great interest in us, and sisterly concern regarding our clothes, which she was certain needed washing and mending. Hill seemed to enjoy teasing her, evidently telling her wild stories about the land we came from, stories which I suspect she was not meant to believe. At the end of each yarn her mis-

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chievous eyes would glance from one to the other of us, finally resting on Hill with an expression of mock contempt as she snapped, "*Te rafte sumari!*" Again and again we heard this, "*Te rafte sumari!*" It means, "May your pack-saddle hurt you!"—a gentle little curse very apropos in Albania, where a big proportion of a man's life is spent perched on a hardwood pack-saddle. A better English translation might be, "May your car cushions turn into fish-hooks!"

General Percy and his adjutant are devoted to the Albanians, and completely loyal to Albania's temporary king, of whom they speak with great respect. As gossips they were quite inadequate; but we met other people more willing to bring out the comic side of life as it is lived in Tirana.

At the moment Albania has a native king, King Zogu. Zogu crept, or leapt, on to the throne at a moment when the great European nations were seriously concerned with their own business. Prince William of Weid, the rather unfortunate child of the Powers, whose failure may be traced more to financial malnutrition than to any serious faults in his character, had, of course, departed. The Albanian chieftains knew that whenever the Powers could get round to it they would be given a king. Zogu, the powerful chief of a powerful mountain clan and the young head of a very old Albanian family, gradually assumed complete, or nearly complete, control. No king sent by the Powers could hope to survive without his help; sensibly enough he decided that he would probably make a better King of Albania than any European princeling; at a given moment all the chiefs of Albania sent him telegrams urging him to assume the crown, so what could the poor fellow do but comply, notably when, it is alleged, he ordered the dispatch of the wires himself? Many local difficulties had to be overcome; more than one Albanian found it safer to live over the border; but without doubt the idea was a happy one and is enjoying success. According to General Percy, King Zogu is now perfectly safe in Albania; he might go about as he pleased; but he evidently

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thinks differently, and seldom, if ever, emerges from his palace, smoking hundreds of cigarettes daily, taking no exercise and ruining his health. General Percy thinks very highly of him; but his affectionate admiration inspired by King Zogu's undoubted military prowess and charming personality would be more complete if the king took more exercise and smoked fewer cigarettes. It was rumoured that Italy was eager to arrange a match between King Zogu and the King of Bulgaria's sister, but the lady very wisely objected; she would have a much more exciting time as Queen of Upper Tooting. Life in Albania may be what the Albanians like; but I should imagine that the palace plumbing leaves much to be desired, and because the Albanians have not changed a great deal since Herodotus (was it?) said of them, "The Ignatians never wash their feet!" Court life in Albania might be lived in an atmosphere of feet. I apologize for this indelicacy; perhaps it gives too literal an impression of Albania, but I fear it is not exaggerated. However, General Percy and Major Hill seem not to worry much about the smelly feet atmosphere. They live in Albanian houses when they travel throughout the country, eating native food and apparently enjoying it, chiefly concerned with making "a good show" of their *gendarmerie*. They seemed completely devoted to the people. They wear the Albanian uniform, and look very fetching in it, particularly General Percy, who is very tall and slim. Young Alister Percy, who is comely and equally tall and who is also an officer in the *gendarmerie*, would make a magnificent leading man in a musical comedy with an Albanian setting.

King Zogu is in an extremely awkward position. His people are intensely patriotic, and centuries of bondage could not destroy their fierce love of independence. They are now independent and consequently contented. They have little or no desire to progress. They want to be able to feed their sheep, to drink their sour milk (Bulgarian Bug), to eat their mutton and goat well seasoned with garlic, to sleep in their ramshackle hovels, never to take off their coats, and never to wash their feet. The town-

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dwelling Albanians use the service cars which ply between the different little towns; but the people who form the backbone of the nation are a pastoral people who live far from the main roads and travel on donkeys when they make a journey. The land feeds and clothes them; they have little need for actual money, and have little. King Zogu has seen the advantages in developing an export trade. Albania could export much wool, but the sheep in Albania produce too hairy and coarse a wool for the European market; and it is necessary to establish a more suitable breed, which would not be difficult if the people could appreciate the importance of progress. The country could produce an enormous surplus of butter and cheese if it were farmed even with a suggestion of modern methods; but a fence is abhorrent to an Albanian, and it is obviously quite useless to develop good pastures for cows if two or three shepherds have hereditary rights to lead their badly bred sheep over the same land. The general result is a scarcity of money; and capital is needed to lay what foundations Zogu dare lay for future prosperity. He also needs money to support his royalty, not a great deal for a king; his salary is about £4,000 a year, but even that amount may not always be raised with ease in Albania.

Italy, the most interested Power, came to his aid. Italy, it will be recalled, tried to maintain a footing in Albania after the war; but the Albanians and malaria made this difficult, and the Italians, seriously threatened with Bolshevism at the time, withdrew. It would be absurd to blame Italy. Yugo-Slavia hates her, and would fly at her throat with the slightest provocation. Yugo-Slavia wants Trieste and Fiume. Old Austria-Hungary feels very much the same towards the Italians. Yugo-Slavia would be very seriously embarrassed if Italy occupied Albania during a possible war, and Italy would be hardly less so with her enemies in Albania. Italy therefore lent King Zogu a large amount of money upon condition that the Albanian Army should be trained by Italian officers. Theoretically the country is occupied by an Italian Army,

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but only theoretically: the Albanian soldiers march quite briskly; young Albanian officers manage their voluminous capes well, fairly well; but nothing on earth can disturb the independent spirit of the simplest Albanian soldier, and a word from his tribal chief means more to him than a whole drill-book full of commands from the most picturesque Italian officer. It is rumoured that Italy does not entirely approve of King Zogu's importation of British officers; it is also believed that the *gendarmarie* could clean up the Army without any trouble<sup>1</sup> If the king gets behind in his interest payments, he may find it difficult to retain his Britons. Altogether the situation is very difficult. However, I sympathized thoroughly with Italy after a few days in Yugo-Slavia; she is wise to take every possible precaution—but I must instantly stifle this impulse to talk politics!

Alister Percy motored us to Kruja, the ancient mountain fortress held by Skanderbeg five hundred years ago—a mere yesterday to the Albanians who think of him every day and still follow his fashion in coats. This coat is strongly woven in thick black wool, and is decorated with many woollen tassels and stiff frills. It must be quite uncomfortable, but even an Albanian navvy working with a pick and shovel on the highway would never dream of taking it off even in the warmest weather. It is degrading for an Albanian ever to remove his coat while he works; he may remove it while he rests, but never when he labours. Incidentally, the country is full of opposites. Cats purr when they are furious, and when a dog wags his tail it is well to beware. A man expresses a negative by nodding his head and an affirmative by shaking it. Roosters are quiet during the day and begin crowing soon after dusk, and no roosters in the world can crow as well as the Albanian cocks. They can make one crow extend into minutes. A rooster with a particularly good crowing capacity is greatly prized, and given to a young couple as a valuable wedding present.

Near the ancient watch-tower at Kruja we met a party of Americans from one of the schools near Tirana. With

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them was a vivacious young woman with a quaint accent which I thought must be French.

"And how do you like Albania?" she asked.

"Very much indeed" I replied.

"And the Albanians?"

"Very interesting," I admitted, noting an inexplicable expression of anxiety in Alister Percy's eyes which might have warned me. "You arrive here," I went on brightly, "and you seem surrounded by ragamuffins"—Alister Percy shuddered—"sinister-looking people and so dirty"—Alister Percy, who had drawn near, gave me a vicious pinch—"you forget that dock labourers are the same the whole world over; you do not realize that it is the picturesque costume the labourers wear which gives this effect—you understand what I mean, Mademoiselle? Quite! Then when you really meet the Albanian people you find them most attractive and you want to know them better"—Alister drew a breath of partial relief which I heard—"and we're so sorry we cannot stay more than a day or two—because we like and admire the Albanian people so much. You're French, of course, Mademoiselle?"

"But no!" she smiled; "I am an Albanian."

"You surprise me!" I exclaimed; but I must admit that Alister's pinch had prepared me for this surprise.

The bazaar at Kruja is more like a sewer-bed than a creek-bed. It accepts all the drainage from the hovel-like stalls which line it, and the freshest little fish offered in big tubs had been very dead for days, and admitted their deadness too eloquently. Possibly in dry weather the bazaar is more attractive; I found it revolting.

"Isn't it fascinating, this bazaar?" raptly exclaimed one of our female American friends—"so picturesque! Oh, I love it!"

She was quite sincere. Neither Americans nor British people living in Albania will willingly say a word against the people or their customs.

General Percy was no exception. He loves the people because they make brave soldiers; perhaps he loves them more because of their fine sensibilities. At dinner that



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evening he told of an old Albanian chieftain who had been hopelessly opposing the Turks for years, but who at last stood watching his sons and tribesmen being tortured as an example to other disaffected tribes and families. Just before his turn came to be flung on sharp hooks driven into a tree, the Turkish officer said, " We'll teach you Albanians to plot and rebel; we'll show you what torture is."

" You can't torture me more than I have been tortured," said the Albanian. " Why, I've been so poor that I have been unable to kill a sheep or a goat to refresh a guest; I have had neither sheep nor goats."

It would be nice to imagine Albania pursuing her peaceful way without disturbance. She merely asks to be left alone; but within the next ten years her plains and valleys are certain to resound with the roar of cannon; all her roads will be rebuilt and destroyed, rebuilt and destroyed again; her bridges will be blown up; her flocks will be gobbled up by hungry soldiers; and the dispute will have nothing to do with her whatever. There are grave disadvantages in living in a cockpit.

Armed with a document written in Albanian ordering all gendarmes to treat us well and to help us on our way, and an excellent map drawn by Alister Percy, we prepared to leave Tirana on the Monday morning. Hill helped us to shop. We bought bread, eggs and meat. The change from the bakery was dusted with flour and carried odd bits of dough; the egg change was all right, but the butchery change was gory and carried enough suet on it to make a small plum pudding.

The butchers do not seem to have much idea of cutting a carcase neatly into joints; they hack off what comes first. Meat should be bought at the crack of dawn when the market opens, and before the flies wake up. We were a trifle late.

I was particularly fascinated with the festoons of entrails which adorned the butchery where we bought our meat. There were maroon entrails, scarlet entrails, pink entrails, **deep** brown entrails, grey entrails, **and** black

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entrails. I had paused near a rich festoon of pink viscera. The courteous old butcher asked me, I guessed, if I wanted to buy it. I shook my head violently—the Albanian affirmative!—and he instantly handed me the festoon, being seriously puzzled, until Hill explained, because I had drawn back.

After Hill had explained that a head-shake in English denotes a negative, the elderly butcher bowed low, his long grey beard mingling with the pink entrails, which he still held in his hand. Quite a charming contrast in colour—pink and grey!

I bowed low and murmured, "*Tungat yeta!*" (Long life to you!) The butcher murmured, "*Tungat yeta!*" and bowed again, the incident ending in an overwhelming odour of courtesy.

Major Hill had taught us a few words of Albanian, including that most necessary word in the Near East and East, "Go!"—*eke* in Albanian. For Albania is no exception; the place is alive with beggars, although most of the beggars in Albania belong to the considerable gipsy tribes who perform the menial work in the country.

About thirty miles out of Tirana we paused to lunch near a small bridge leading to a large house on the side of the hill above the road. We were consuming our brown bread and honey when two picturesque villains trotted up on donkeys. Their saddles were old but beautifully embossed and decorated with brass and silver; they carried knives and sinister-looking pistols thrust in their leather belts; their clothing was in rags, but the rags were quite colourful, and altogether they looked charming. We tried to ignore them, but the moment we looked up they began whining in chorus, pressing their stomachs and showing by a look of great agony that they needed food very badly. When they had given several encores, their sad story spoken in perfect unison, we gave them a supply of food. They bowed low and blessed us in the name of Allah, the pitiful.

Having consumed some of the food and stowed **the balance in their** saddle-bags, they **regarded us with a**

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calculating eye and began again, doubtless now telling of their starving relations.

"*Eke—eke!*" pronounced "*eek,*" we said firmly; but this seemed rather to stimulate them to a greater effort. "*Eke—eke!*" we repeated, adding, "*Spate—spate!*" (hurry!) This produced a perfect frenzy of whining, and the most shocking facial contortions. Thereupon we rose up and said, "*Oh—te rafte sumari!*" (May your pack-saddle hurt you!) and they trotted off, doubtless cursing us in the name of Allah, the just. They were gipsies.

The big house near us was an American girls' school. Although we were eager to reach Elbasan that day, and the road was very bad indeed with a dangerous ford across a river this side of Elbasan, we decided to pay our respects to the American ladies. Miss Camp was in charge, one of those really delightful American women whom British people never fail to like, simple and unassuming, yet buoyant and cheerful and full of quaint little remarks. She offered even to produce tea (with a smile which said, "An Englishman, I know, must have his tea!") if we would pause, but we dared not. We had to be content with a rapid inspection of the school, rather in a state of flux at that moment because the building had only been occupied a day or two.

"Girls!" said the teacher in one class-room filled with lovely little Albanian maidens, being given a chance—bless the American Near East Relief! "Girls—these gentlemen come from New Zealand. Who knows where New Zealand is?"

Hands went up a little uncertainly, although the arm muscles on one girl threatened to break, so great was her eagerness to show her knowledge. She was ignored until it was shown that the majority of opinion placed us in the region of Greenland. At each failure she threatened to shoot her arm off her shoulder.

"All right, Marie!" said the teacher, "you shall tell us."

"In Africa, Miss Stevens!" said Marie.

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"Alas, no! " said the teacher, who was the English mistress. " I'm afraid you must ask the gentlemen to tell you."

We feigned shyness, and urged the teacher to place us on the map.

She did not rightly know I

Poor New Zealand!

I wonder why America performs this magnificent service in the Balkans. She has no axe to grind. The individual teachers win the hearts of their pupils, but we never became aware of any serious love or even liking for America as a nation in the Balkans. Yet fine American men and women continue to give their all to these people, sensibly and cleverly; in a word, giving them a chance to murmur hopefully, "*De profundis!*" I presume one might as well ask why one should try to love one's neighbour. The answer is the same.

It began to rain soon after we left the American school, and the result was that we found the ford at the Paper River a rushing torrent and quite impossible for us. Near the ford was a magnificent bridge, but parts of it had been blown up by the Austrians, or the Italians, or the Serbians, or the Bulgarians, or the Turks in the last war. We spent the night encamped near the gendarme post, making a more successful attempt to reach Elbasan the next morning, and actually struggling across a few hours before the river multiplied its depth by about ten, fed by heavy rain which continued all that day and only ceased when it turned to snow late in the afternoon when we reached the frontier post of Prenys, nearly three thousand feet above sea-level.

We had had a trying day. The road, through mountainous country, was quite bad. For many miles of the journey we had followed a river. This became a fiercely rushing torrent at a point where it was necessary to cross it on a bridge of small pontoons, all tearing at their moorings, all with considerable bow waves, as the yellow water rushed at them. The bridge was behaving like an excited eel when we began to cross it, a distance

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of between fifty and a hundred yards; and because **the** decking looked far from secure, it was quite easy to imagine a short notice in *The Times*: "Two Australians"—I was certain they would deny us our country, New Zealand—"crossing a river in the mountains of Albania were lost with their small car when the bridge collapsed owing to the flooding of the river. Their bodies have not yet been found.—*Reuter*." However, we crossed safely. But how it rained, and how foul the road became as we entered the apparently uninhabited mountain country, almost treeless, and nearly always black and uninviting!

It was dark, or nearly dark, when we pulled up at the frontier post at Prenys. We showed our letter to the officer in charge, who was a nice chubby little man with kindly brown eyes. He liked the letter very much; so did his men, who all leant over his shoulders when he read it out with great expression. Then he turned to us and regretted, as far as we could judge, his inability to let us pass through to Struga (in Yugo-Slavia) that night. He urged us to motor to Pogradec, where there was, he said, a *bono hotel*, and where they would be able to arrange the customs formalities with greater ease. But we had had enough of Albanian roads for one day; we were determined to camp near Prenys.

I should explain that our conversation depended entirely upon signs and dumb show, together with the one word "*bono*" He often used a word, "*mea*" pronounced like mere; this, we thought at first, must be a negative because it was accompanied by a head-shake. It is tremendously difficult always to remember that a nod is a negative and a head-shake an affirmative; therefore we found ourselves explaining again and again that we simply wanted permission to camp near the post, always feeling ourselves rebuffed by that gentle "*Mea!*" and the head-shake. However, we gathered eventually that he had no objections, and we returned to the car and began spreading our tent.

Two or three of the soldiers—stoutly built lads with **good-humoured** faces who might have been British Army

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recruits fresh from the country—followed us, and tried to persuade us to choose a less exposed position, but it was only when something approaching a blizzard blew up through the gorge to the north-east of us during the night that we began to understand their concern.

After settling ourselves, we returned to the officer's room in the old stone cottage which formed the barracks, to take dinner with him. The room was perhaps stuffy, for it was well heated by a central stove, but it seemed glowingly comfortable to us after the now freezing air without.

A kindly old cat entered the room. "Pussy, pussy, pussy!" I called, but pussy ignored me. "*Mi, mi, mi!*" I tried, but with no better success. "Midge!" whispered the officer with a delightful smile. "Midge, midge, midge!" I called, and the cat turned instantly and rubbed her coat against my legs.

Our very charming host apologized for the simplicity of the dinner he offered us, macaroni and an omelet cooked by one of his men over a charcoal fire. I am afraid I must seem ungracious when I admit that the process of eating a courteous proportion of that garlic-soaked macaroni was distinctly trying. But the intention was so very kindly that we actually felt nothing but gratitude, notably when the soldier had removed all traces of the meal.

Sentries were posted at our tent, and whenever the guard was changed throughout the night, the man detailed to guard, or watch, us, opened the tent and inspected us very thoroughly. Sleep eventually became out of the question; we were literally frozen and found it best to rise at dawn to start the petrol stove going to make hot tea and to thaw out the tent. We were stiff with cold, and felt like carcases of "best Canterbury mutton" fresh from the freezing room.

However, we made a dash for the officer's room, and here we soon became warm again. Our friend had been busy on our behalf, and had gained permission for us to cross the frontier from his post. Before bidding him good-bye we urged him to be photographed with the car,

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and to this he agreed with boyish excitement, decorating himself with all his equipment—sword, rifle, revolver, map-case, field-glasses, knapsack, water-bottle, and, a delightful touch, a leather-bound thermos flask. The result was not very successful, but we sent him prints back from Constantinople. We hope that he recalls us with the same pleasure that we remember him.

We had to drive more than a mile from the Albanian outpost to the Yugo-Slavian outpost, through a no-man's-land entirely uninhabited. Incidentally, these Balkan states are invariably separated by a wide strip of country, evidently to prevent frontier clashes. The frontier guards never fraternize; it is unlikely that they ever meet.

The Yugo-Slavian soldiers were no less courteous than the Albanians, but the difference in their appearance was almost startling. The Yugo-Slavs were big blonde men, excellently turned out and obviously much cleaner—yet not nearly so lovable as their slovenly, cheerful brothers at Prenys.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN



### YUGO-SLAVIA

**A**LTHOUGH an occasional Turkish looking man, and sometimes a heavily veiled woman (middle-aged, judging from her figure) may be seen on the streets of Struga, the town has very definitely a western European atmosphere. The prevailing fashion in male attire is mid-departmental store relieved a little by broad-peaked Russian caps. The buildings in the little town are quaint and old-world—plaster walls, reinforced with dark wooden beams and struts, and with heavy tiled roofs. These houses, built on the banks of a fine clean river rushing down from snow-clad mountains to the northward, offer a very charming picture from the main bridge in the centre of the town.

We saw our first veiled women in Albania, where they are common; and we continued to meet them at odd moments until we reached Turkey where veiling would seem to be forbidden. It is perhaps a little ungallant to note that middle-aged and older women seemed more eager to hide their charms than their younger sisters. In Albania some of the veiled ladies arranged their veils in such a way that a very large fishy eye stared forth at one. This practice is sternly forbidden in Albania, old-fashioned Albanians regarding it as most indelicate. All the veiled ladies in the Balkans were then following the prevailing fashion in short skirts. After admiring the sturdiness and strength of many of the legs we saw, all sensibly covered with black cotton or woollen stockings, it was nice to imagine the soft, sensuous beauty of the faces hidden by the peculiarly ugly veils. On behalf of romance, we refused to believe that perhaps the faces were in keeping with those honest legs.

We were delayed in Struga while the customs people



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sealed odd portions of Emily II's anatomy; after which we might have pursued our way, and escaped the slightly annoying attention of an immense crowd, had we not been forced to wait for Dick's fish.

During his early morning visit Dick had met the owner of a local cafe who spoke good English. This man had told Dick about the delicious fish to be caught in Lake Ochrida, a vast area of blue water near the town. Dick had probably said to him, " There's nothing I would like better than a jolly good feed of fish! " and the man had promptly promised to cook a few for us to carry in the car. The fact that the man spoke English had evidently turned these fish into British fish, or British-cooked fish. Dick was already enjoying a "jolly good feed " of New Zealand fish, reliving a New Zealand day, seeing himself standing in the surf, armed with a line, on the Ninety Mile Beach near his home, drawing in schnapper after schnapper, anticipating the moment when a few of these pink and silver beauties would be paling in a clean petrol-tin of boiling sea-water, soon to become that " jolly good feed," more jolly, more delicious because of the time and place.

While waiting near the cafe, poor Emily II was surrounded by Yugo-Slavs of all ages and sexes. These people were merely inspired by curiosity, but their attitude lacked the delicacy we had appreciated in Albania. Older people made no attempt to protect us from the pertness of small boys who kicked the tyres, shook the car from the back (a most annoying sensation for those within) and generally treated us like monkeys at a zoo. The tables had actually been turned. In Albania we had been permitted to regard the people as an exhibit; in Yugo-slavia the people found us an amusing and interesting exhibit, which they regarded with a slightly blase air and a touch of insolence which made the open country beyond the town most attractive. The cafe proprietor duly presented the fish, well wrapped up in thick paper, and we hurried from Struga along an excellent road which followed the shores of the lake.

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I had stowed the fish in our beautiful tucker-box, obviously offering them a purely temporary lodging, but I am willing to bet almost any sum that the awful spirit of those fish still haunts that tucker-box. After opening the parcel, we instantly moved our camp, leaving the fish to the birds of the air and the rats of the sand, but until we reached Mechid, in northern Persia, where we abandoned the tucker-box to relieve poor Emily's springs, no food ever came from that tucker-box without a faint flavouring of Dick's "jolly good feed of fish." A Yugo-Slav's idea of fishly freshness may possibly be the same as our own, although I doubt this; these Ochrida fish which we learnt to know so well may have been perfectly fresh when dropped into the boiling oil which cooked them; but the oil was seething with old, old memories, largely of garlic, which all the cleansing of the tucker-box with hot water, soap and disinfectants could not rub out. I can smell those fish at this moment!

Although the road from Struga to Monastir (Bitolj) climbs a snow-clad mountain range, it is well graded and offers a moderately good surface; we therefore made excellent time, reaching the latter town shortly after dusk. The exchange being in our favour, we felt able to bear the cost of the Grand Hotel, a modern building which British noses might find more agreeable in summer weather when the garlic, emitted by all the guests, would have more chance to escape than it had on the cold wintery night we spent there when most of the windows were closed.

We were, naturally, seeking impressions of Yugo-Slavia; perhaps our impressions are false, based as they are on a total ignorance of the Serbian language and with but the faintest knowledge of Serbian history; nevertheless I am convinced that Yugo-Slavia is preparing to fight, and judging from the stamp of officer and man we saw, I should imagine Yugo-Slavia will give a good account of herself. The streets of all Italian towns are decorated with fascinating uniforms adorning the bodies of not very belligerent-looking men; but in Yugo-Slavia the simple uniforms, equally common, seem incidental; one is chiefly impressed

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with the manliness and strength, a trifle forbidding, of the soldiers who wear them.

The great dining-room in the hotel might have been an officers' mess. At a long table near ours a company of big handsome officers in beautifully fitting khaki uniforms were entertaining an elderly gentleman who was apparently their general. He seemed a genial old boy, eager to respond to the hospitality of his hosts, but his demeanour carried a note of seriousness which assured them that the war was not over yet. True, the division had made a successful advance that day, reaching its objective without too many casualties, but until the armistice was signed it was unwise to rejoice *too* boldly.

I could not abandon this impression, even when the obsequious head waiter came at the end of the meal to ask the general how he had enjoyed his meal. The general had enjoyed his meal very much indeed and he stroked the head waiter's hands; the head waiter smiled his appreciation and bowed gracefully, gratefully — and seriously; the general was only too obviously fighting for the head waiter and all other civilians of Yugo-Slavia.

All the officers rose when the general finally left, but while his exit removed some restraint, allowing one or two of them to approach the tipsy stage, they still remained very serious.

Yugo-Slavia has some scheme on foot in the Balkans. She will probably cut the wretched Bulgarians into mince-meat, and then turn her attention to Italy, whom she will fight—in poor struggling Albania! I cannot imagine what the final result will be.

A few days later in Stip I said to the local schoolmaster who spoke excellent English, "Why do you people worry about war? Would it not be better to expend your energy in developing your land? Why not give the poor peasant a chance?"

"You are right," said the schoolmaster earnestly, "we have too much war in the Balkans, always fighting and always poor——"

"And," I added severely, "disturbing the rest of

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Europe! Why not take a different line? Why don't you try to be friendly with your neighbours? "

The schoolmaster was staring at me with deep interest. "An intelligent fellow!" I thought.

"You *have* a moustache!" he said suddenly; "I could not see, at first!"

Dick laughed rudely.

"If you could only realize how absurd it is always to be fighting," I persisted, not knowing what my moustache, a war relic, had to do with the discussion, and determined not to be an exhibit.

"You are right," repeated the schoolmaster, "we *must* have peace"; adding with startling irrelevance, "We must have Trieste and Fiume—or perhaps Salonika. We must say, 'Give us Trieste and Fiume—or perhaps give us Salonika/ If they say, 'No!' then we must—take!"

"But——!" I began.

"Yes—we must have peace; we *must* have peace—for, well, ten years," said the schoolmaster with an angelic light in his kind eyes; "and then," he added hopefully, "we shall be strong and able to say—'Give us Trieste and Fiume or——!' You see," he explained, "we have hundreds of miles of beaches, but no good ports."

This schoolmaster was a pacifist Serbian. We liked him; he was of inestimable help to us; but we instinctively knew that had we shown any interest in the military preparations beginning at Stip and doubtless continuing to the Bulgarian frontier, our remaining days in Yugoslavia might have been uncomfortable.

Monastir is an attractive town with some excellent shops in fairly wide, pleasant streets. There still remain many traces of the Great War, some streets in the outer parts of the town passing through sad-looking ruins with\* out any evidence of an attempt to rebuild them. We saw a fairly large war cemetery on a low hill near the town; evidently the Balkan people care less for their soldier dead than we do; no attempt had been made to keep the place even in decent order.

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The Monastir market, not quite a bazaar in the Oriental sense, but colourful and lively, follows the course of a river which passes through the town. This river was hardly more than a trickle the day we crossed it on a stout bridge; but the Monastir citizens had offered it successful sacrifice in the form of a well-made bed of cement and stone, both wide and deep, through which it could tear as fiercely and gaily (and harmlessly) as it liked when the sun of spring and summer released the snow and ice on the truly lovely surrounding mountains.

We were able to buy butter in Monastir, a notable event for us because butter can seldom be bought in any but the largest Balkan towns. We also bought a large tin of some vegetable oil which was happily tasteless and which proved invaluable for cooking buttered eggs.

We left Monastir at about eleven o'clock the next morning with the intention of cutting across Yugo-Slavia to Stip, whence we hoped to enter Bulgaria, the map showing a main road connecting up with a main Bulgarian road leading to Sofia.

There was little to see from the highway. The country was still in the grip of winter and the land was sleeping. There were no fences dividing property, and not a tree within sight. Odd little flocks of sheep, hopelessly in-bred, Dick thought, judging from their colour, quaintly concerned only with their own shepherds, enlivened the landscape.

The shepherds walked slowly; occasionally two or three sheep concerned with a patch of succulent grass lingered behind the main mob, but they soon cantered up again when the distance between themselves and the shepherd became dangerously great.

The road, invariably good here, finally left the plain country near Monastir and crossed a snow-clad mountain range. We passed through two small towns, Prelep and Veles. In both we were regarded with deep suspicion by the police, and forced to show our passports. This, we thought, showed a woeful lack of imagination; had we been spies I doubt if we would have chosen a Baby Austin

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to spy **from**; **when** I want to spy in Yugo-Slavia I **shall** disguise myself as a Mohammedan lady.

As a matter of fact, these annoying police had no doubts regarding the innocence of our intentions. We were unusual; we had evidently been noted by Superior Authority, therefore it was as much as their job was worth to ignore us.

If one always remembers that the police who are so annoying in the Balkans have no desire to be offensive, **that** they are actually striving to hold down their jobs, the process is much more bearable.

And we found police attention obnoxious merely because the inevitable pause allowed the Yugo-Slavs to gather round us in hundreds, pushing and scrambling and breathing their garlic-laden breath over us until we were often tempted to debouch from the car and to slay the lot of them with the jawbone of an ass, or a spanner.

It was dusk when, followed by a score of excited, yelling small boys, we drew up at the best inn in Stip. An immense crowd immediately surrounded us, and something of a riot developed when the landlord and a gendarme began the almost hopeless task of dispersing it. We had no peace until Emily was safely unladen and locked up in a neighbouring garage.

The inn had no bathroom, and Dick and I followed our usual custom of sponge-bathing from the ordinary bedroom basin. It is amazing what you can do even with a small amount of water in the way of freshening up.

"I loathe being an exhibit for these people," I said peevishly; "anybody would think, judging from their attitude, that we and Emily were sent here merely to amuse them."

I was safely dressed in a towel, but unfortunately Dick was quite nude, when he said, "No, I don't like being an exhibit, either I"

At that second the door swept open and before us stood a buxom chambermaid with wide, curious eyes. Murmuring an apology, the stupid girl, doubtless meaning to close the door, flung it more open by mistake. Dick had

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sheltered behind me while she made a further rather drawn-out apology before slowly withdrawing. Possibly the poor girl was interested in sculpture!

The people at the inn were very courteous, producing the only man in the town who could speak English, the pacifist schoolmaster. We told him of our desire to cross into Bulgaria, and he promised to help us if he could, but he felt certain that permission would not be given.

Nor was it. Eager to avoid the additional two hundred miles failure meant, we tried hard to persuade the authorities to let us pass; but the mere suggestion made them hysterical, and we were forced to motor north to Nish, a long journey over a road then being repaired where good progress was impossible. We recall our schoolmaster friend of Stip with pleasure, but I am compelled to mention one of his last remarks.

He had regretted his inability to find others who spoke English.

"But are there not American schools here?" I asked.

"No," said the schoolmaster awkwardly; "there had been rather a serious outbreak of Protestantism, and we decided that for the present we had better not have the American schools. Perhaps later——" he added encouragingly.

Humility is not an outstanding trait in the Serbian nature evidently. Nor do the people seem particularly cheerful. Throughout the Balkans, including Turkey, the peasants always smile or shout a happy greeting if given the slightest encouragement, but Yugo-Slavia is the exception until one approaches the Bulgarian frontier east of Nish, where they seem much happier.

The journey north to Nish was very interesting. It was market day in many of the small towns, and the country roads were gay with peasants returning home. Most of the women wore their national costume of gaily coloured tartan homespun. The tartan skirt of one middle-aged lady was interwoven with golden thread, and the effect in the sunlight was very brilliant indeed. One young woman left an impression which still survives. I

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caught hardly more than a passing glimpse, but I can never forget the perfect oval of her face, her exquisite, rather pale skin, her large blue eyes and soft brown hair. She was carrying a baby, a little too heavy for her. Possibly this brought pain to her beautiful eyes, but I preferred to think that she had been forced to marry a rough peasant whom she had learnt to loathe, and that she hated the smell of garlic. I have never seen a more beautiful young woman.

Darkness came when we had still a hundred miles to travel. We might have paused in one of the larger towns we passed through, but the Serbian police are so very suspicious and make matters so difficult for foreign travellers, that we decided to push on to Nish. The road had entered a narrow gorge through which a fierce river rushed, and it was not a very good road, but we rather enjoyed those hours in the darkness which shielded us from police attention.

A curious incident occurred on the outskirts of Nish, which we entered towards midnight. We were negotiating a poorly lighted cobblestone road lined with dim houses. I saw a small party of men emerge in rather a suspicious manner from an alley as we approached. "Put your foot on it, Dick!" I whispered quickly. Fortunately Dick had not been blind. Emily darted forward and missed by inches an immense boulder flung across our track by these men who were possibly bandits.

The unfortunate Nish police were evidently all dug out of their beds before the hotel-keeper dared let us escape to our room; but they seemed satisfied with our passports, and we retired, glancing a little regretfully at the main dining-room, where immense numbers of gay Serbian officers were dancing with plump, gayer Balkan ladies, all in a thick atmosphere of smoke. The effect was pure Hollywood.

Emily seemed to be the only motor going about Nish the next morning. I had left her to explore the market, having promised Dick not to delay the expedition too much. He had come to find me at the moment when I



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was admiring the traffic cop at the main cross-roads of the town. This officer was having a most trying time directing immense bullock-wagons which were coming at him from all directions. The bullock-drivers were much more eager to obey him than the bullocks, and the result was frayed tempers. In the middle of one unfortunate jam, Emily suddenly appeared, and Dick duly drew up to await instructions.

The traffic cop sprung to attention, and ordered all the bullocks to stop. By a piece of good luck he was successful, and Emily swept magnificently across the square, the traffic cop saluting Dick, and Dick returning the salute in quite a romantic way. I thought our Emily looked very charming.

Dick very kindly crossed the square two or three times, and always with effect. The traffic cop had a delightful morning.

I believe that Nish is quite an interesting little town to explore. I have heard since of a royal prince who is imprisoned in the Nish fortress and who lives largely on the eggs offered by his own pet hens, the poor fellow being much too nervous to eat any other food. He expects to be poisoned.

On the whole, one found it easier to respect the Serbians than to like them. It is a little difficult to laugh at them, although I think a picture which one sees quite often in the hotels of Yugo-Slavia has the elements of humour and a touch of pathos. This shows King Alexander wearing his pince-nez, sitting bolt upright in a chair in full uniform clutching a sword with his infant baby precariously perched on his hard knee, while in a large bedstead reclines his lovely wife, doing her best to look really human and kindly. I could imagine a Yugo-slav being a firm, honest friend when once his friendship is won; but I am certain he could cut up an enemy into mincemeat without even murmuring towards the end of the operation, "Poor devil!" or sighing one sigh of regret.

The atmosphere of Yugo-Slavia changes a few miles

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east of Nish. Instead of the dour glances we had been offered formerly, we now found ourselves responding to cheery greetings.

At one part of the road two shepherds stopped us and tried to warn us that the road ahead was impassable. Not knowing what they meant, we pushed on to find out for ourselves. Actually, nearly half a mile of the road was quite impassable for a car; as a matter of fact, had we been able to read Serbian we should have followed a detour marked some miles farther back. However, the very courteous foreman in charge of the road reconstruction found us interesting, and he gave us a dozen of his men who almost lifted Emily through the thick, sticky clay.

We passed through Bela Paranka and Perol, finally reaching the frontier town of Carisbrod. Here Emily had her Serbian seals removed, and our passports were vetted for the last time in Yugo-Slavia.

A short journey brought us to the outer Yugo-Slavian outpost, which, like Carisbrod, is on the great international railway which ends at Constantinople. The efficiently clad Serbian soldiers opened a gate for us and we entered an unusually short stretch of no-man's-land, not more than a quarter of a mile of road quaintly producing an excellent crop of grass. Evidently it is no man's job to keep this road in order. Some Bulgarian soldiers awaited us at a point where a long sapling barred the road.

The contrast between the Serbs and the Bulgars was startling, and a little pathetic. The uniforms of the Bulgars were held together largely by string; boots were in a very sad state of repair, and even caps were collapsing with age.

It would be wrong to suggest that the last Serbian soldiers we saw were discourteous or unattractive; they were fine, clean, manly fellows; but the pathetically clad Bulgarian men showed a kindness and warmth which won our hearts at once.

It was necessary for one of them to go with us to his officer who lived at least a mile farther on, at the **near side**

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**of the Dragoman** Pass. Emily simply **could not** carry him, but when I suggested by signs and wonders that he should sit in the car while I walked behind, he dismissed the suggestion as absurd. He walked. And he walked gladly, and with some difficulty over a fairly rough road, for his boots must have hurt him a little, without letting us think for a moment that it was a nuisance Emily being so small and so overladen. He hurried, too, so that we should not be seriously delayed.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### BULGARIA



THE officer at the Dragoman Pass asked us to report at the customs station at Slivnitsa, and having taken a note of our passports, he bowed courteously and requested us to proceed.

The Dragoman Pass had an unpleasant sound, but it offered no difficulties; indeed we were through it before we were aware of any serious grades. The country here seemed largely uninhabited; the peasants probably know what is being prepared for them on the other side of the border.

Of course we knew not one word of Bulgarian, but our smattering of French was occasionally handy and most educated Bulgarians speak English, thanks to the American schools. In a Bulgarian conversation one often hears the word "yes," but I am not certain whether it is an affirmative or not. We were beginning to think that "gladstone" was also a Bulgarian word, for almost always when we said "Eengleesh" as a personal explanation the Bulgarians who did not speak English said with a nod of appreciation what we finally imagined to be, "Of course, Gladstone was English!" I have since learnt that Gladstone's successful effort to win independence for Bulgaria is very far from being forgotten; they continue almost literally to adore him.

When I have spoken warmly of the Bulgarians since our journey through their country—and we liked them immensely—friends with perhaps a better knowledge of the Near East have admitted their charm and kindness, but have left me with a vague suggestion of hypocrisy. Being a Celt, I find more difficulty in detecting hypocrisy than many of my English friends.

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We had no trouble at Slivnitza. The small British flag painted on our car seemed to assure the customs men that we were Gladstonians, and they made no attempt to examine our baggage.

I might remark here that in a weak moment years ago I gave Dick a very powerful Mauser automatic pistol. Despite all my efforts to dissuade him, he insisted upon carrying it in the car tool-box disguised as a monkey wrench. Experience has taught me the uselessness of one gun in an expedition. Brigands never attack without the advantage of overwhelming odds, and as far as we were concerned even victory would have to be bought at too high a price. Attacked by brigands, we had the choice of two alternatives, to run and to run hard, or to submit and at least to save our lives and car from a possible contre-temps. Never annoy a brigand! Nothing annoys a brigand more than to see two or three of his mates lying dead.

Because of the endless bother it would cause, we never declared the Mauser; had it been discovered, in Persia for instance, we should have been heavily fined or perhaps even imprisoned.

The journey from Slivnitza to Sofia was delightful. The roads were alive with brightly clad peasants, walking, riding on donkeys, or perched on bullock-wagons. They invariably met us with cheerful smiles and shouts of greeting. It was a little like looking through the pages of the *National Geographic Magazine*, but of course even more charming.

We passed through several small towns, pausing to shop occasionally, and now delighted with the crowds around Emily who were much cleaner than our Albanian friends, much gayer and equally courteous.

How I longed to linger for at least a month in Bulgaria; but there was nothing for it but to push on, seriously distressed at the thought of all we were missing, although grateful for even this slight glimpse of an interesting country and people.

We reached Sofia at about eight in the evening, and the

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exchange still being happily in our favour, we felt able to afford the Hotel Splendide. We were given an immense comfortable room for something less than five shillings, although five shillings in Bulgarian currency seemed quite a respectable sum of money. We had an excellent little dinner in a small French cafe which, with the tip for the waitress, worked out at about ninepence each.

We could afford but a morning in Sofia, enough to let us see what a beautiful city it is. It was Sunday, and we spent some very happy minutes in a small Orthodox church near the royal palace. This church, possibly the cathedral although it is so small, is a veritable gem of exquisite beauty. At the funeral of Anna Pavlova in London—a great artist whom I knew slightly and adored from my small corner—I had learnt to love the ritual music of the Orthodox Russian Church; but in Sofia that Sunday morning the singing seemed even more wonderful. I knew nothing of the ritual; it seemed to me a series of fascinating coronations in which very small kings were crowned, only to prepare the throne for greater kings, who in turn adored the supreme king, who finally came forth from behind the golden screen to receive the homage of all. The song of the angels can hardly be sweeter than the music of the Orthodox Russian Church.

The royal palace is in the centre of the town. It is difficult to imagine the king enjoying very much privacy, but we were told that he has several country places to which he retires when he wants to be human. A few years ago he felt able to go about in Sofia without serious risk, but to-day he is more cautious, and does not often appear. Bulgarian friends—we made quite a number when Emily was forced to pause outside a photographer's store—assured us of his popularity; but they were all agreed in sincerely disliking his father. A university professor, a very charming man who spoke delightful English and who came up to us to make friends, assured us that while Bulgaria, like the rest of the world, was having a difficult time financially, he saw hope on the horizon. The fact

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that the allies refused to permit serious military development was really a blessing; much money was saved.

"But what about Yugo-Slavia, and your alliance with Italy?" I asked.

"D'you know," said he, "I believe England will help us. Gladstone was an Englishman, wasn't he?"

"True!" I said, "very true!" but at that moment I had not the foggiest idea why Mr. Gladstone should be dragged up.

We found it most interesting outside that photographer's shop. At least a score of students from the American school surrounded us, all able to speak excellent English and boyishly proud of the fact. While we were waiting for some film to be developed, we were joined by an elderly man who sells the essential oil of roses. Roses are cultivated in the neighbourhood for their essential oil, whatever that means, and a small pot of this will make gallons of perfume if placed in pure alcohol. The gentleman, while never attempting to urge us unduly, suggested that we might very easily carry with us a jar of this valuable oil and, having avoided the customs in Australia, sell it at an immense profit. We could not well agree to this proposition or admit that we could, and he saw our point of view. Without the slightest hesitation he cashed a cheque for the large sum of one pound on the London branch of my New Zealand bank. I knew the cheque to be good, but he could not know. Murmuring something about Gladstone, he handed over the money which I found a great help. Without a drop of Scots blood in his veins, Dick, as expeditionary treasurer, was behaving (very rightly) like the traditional Aberdonian.

The most friendly atmosphere developed around the car; so much so indeed that when at last we were on the highway making for the Turkish frontier we felt strangely lonely.

The country we passed through was not remarkable after Sofia had been left behind. Near the capital rise snow-clad mountains where the new Queen of Bulgaria has developed a fashion for winter-sporting. These mountains

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lend grandeur to the view, but after a time the highway merely passes through valleys, over low hills and across small plains. A few miles to the west of a small town called Kostence, the road follows a stream which is made almost to boil by some excellent hot springs.

We reached Plovdiv, ancient Philippolis, near midnight. We found a good room at the Hotel Molle, but poor little Emily had to spend the night parked near the kerb guarded all night by an ancient Bulgarian who swore he would not sleep. We had tried to awaken the owners of three garages, whistling and shrieking through keyholes and cracks, but with no success.

There are interesting Roman remains in Plovdiv; but we had no means of isolating them. However, we had an amusing hour or two wandering about the streets of the pleasant little city staring in the shop windows. They make rather a feature of coffins in Plovdiv. In one undertaker's shop the main window showed half a dozen brightly decorated coffins which we thought rather dear; however, had we needed one we could have chosen from the cheaper variety, of which there were four leaning invitingly against the shop front.

Incidentally, this rapid rush across the Balkans showed us odd facets of life. Just before leaving Sofia, we saw a bridal couple sitting proudly in an open victoria. The bride was handsome and conventionally clad, but not a very young woman. The bridegroom was a stout little round-faced man of early middle age with pink pimples on his chubby face. This was not a love match.

Once or twice we passed churches wherein funeral services were being held; we could smell the incense, or we imagined we could when we saw the dim space within the church with the catafalque near the centre surrounded by glimmering candles. Once, as we passed a small house whose door was draped in black, we saw a corpse stretched starkly out on a white bed with women bending near and apparently wailing.

Food is very cheap in the Balkans; eggs, our mainstay, were seldom more than threepence a dozen. We usually



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had coffee at the inn or hotel where we had slept, but eggs, with bread and plenty of fruit, nearly always formed our luncheon and dinner. We carried a goodly supply of ovaltine and ovaltine chocolate. We fared quite adequately if very simply.

We reached Svilengrad, the Bulgarian frontier town on the Maritza River, shortly before dusk; but they would not permit us to cross into Turkey that night which, as it turned out, was just as well.

We were very eager to get safely across the Turkish frontier, because we more than half suspected they were waiting for us to enjoy driving us back. We imagined a short note reposing in a file at the Turkish outpost to this effect, "If two Australians named"—followed our names in Turkish—"driving an Austin car try to enter the country, they must be requested to return at once into Bulgaria; if they refuse, they should be shot instantly!"

Our fears were not without foundation. In London we had asked Sir Granville Ryrie, the Australian High Commissioner, to introduce us to the Turkish Ambassador with the object of getting some kind of letter to help us through the military zone. We saw the English secretary at the Embassy, a charming fellow, who promised to do what he could for us. Apparently, the Ambassador was willing enough, but the Embassy Councillor, a stern old Turk (so we imagined him to be) said, "Ha! Why should we give a pleasant letter to these Australians? Why even should the Australian High Commissioner ask us to give a pleasant letter to these Australians? How does Australia regard Turkish nationals? She regards them as *niggers*—natives! "

It will be seen at once that we had become a question; and therefore the only thing to do was to fade away from the consciousness of the Ambassador and his Councillor as quickly as possible. Fortunately the A. A. had already had our passports visaed by the Turkish Consul, and still more fortunately we had forgotten to take them with us to the Embassy that day. The English secretary had been ordered to ask us for them! Heaven only knows what

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that subtle old Councillor would have written in them had he got hold of them.

We hypocritically regretted, and agreed to let him have the passports the next time we called, making a mental note never to call again. We could, of course, have switched to New Zealand; but until we could learn how our country regarded Turkish nationals, it seemed best to let the matter rest.

Therefore we felt slightly insecure at Svilengrad and were eager to discover whether our fading away had allowed the question to die, or whether the Turks were still struggling with it. We both love Australia; but to be sacrificed on the Turkish frontier because Australia dislikes admitting Turks seemed far from alluring.

Immense crowds gathered around Emily in Svilengrad as we made our way to the hotel. We were shown a room, the best in the place, but it had been so obviously occupied up to a few moments before our arrival, and was so unclean, and smelt so vilely of garlic, that we rather rudely withdrew, much to the astonishment of the innkeeper, and tried to make our way back across the beautiful Maritza Bridge to open country where we thought we might camp.

But I think the Bulgars suspected us of having a secret intention to slip through their outposts that night, and not wanting to have our blood on their heads, they thought they might keep us within view. A gendarme was evidently ordered to look after us. He marched in front, clearing a way for us, and followed by hundreds of very curious, but quite cheerful, men and boys we were led to the main *gendarmerie* near the great river.

In a way we were prisoners, but I could not imagine more delightful gaolers than these Bulgarian gendarmes. We could not understand a word of their language, or at least very little, but they made it quite clear that we must sleep in their barracks and dine with them.

I imagined a dormitory, and knowing that at least three of them would snore loudly throughout the night, I thought it best not to understand; and we **spread** our tent and diverted their attention by exhibiting **our** air

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mattresses. Then we showed them our petrol stove; and they were delighted with my method of cooking buttered eggs. It was great fun.

After dinner a Bulgarian student appeared. He spoke French; and we all sat on the banks of the river exchanging war yarns. One of the gendarmes, a nice fat man, told us that he had fought with the Turks as a boy, against the Turks as a man, with the Turks again in the Great War, and it only remained for him to fight with the English to complete his experience.

I said understandingly, "Gladstone——! "

All the gendarmes said in chorus, "Glad-stone—Eengleesch! " and left little more to be said upon the subject of Britain's excellence.

I made rather an error when I said, "Of course, the Bulgarians have never fought the British! "

"Oh, yes, we have! " said the nice fat man; and he began telling how the Tommies fought north of Salonika. I gathered from him that to fight a Tommy was quite delightful—plenty of fun and cheeriness; and he gave in pantomime an excellent picture of Tommies coming over the top. He was less enthusiastic about our French allies; they, I gathered, were very grim in battle.

Later in the evening we strolled through the town and paused for coffee—delightful Turkish coffee—at a small cabaret. Although little obvious notice was taken of us, all the people in the cabaret were soon aware of our presence, and without obtruding themselves, many of them sent waiters to us to demand our orders. We were at first unaware of this attention. It was only when we asked for our bill that we knew we had been guests.

Back at our camp a gendarme watched us undress with great interest; in fact throughout the night the slit in the tent always had a kindly face staring through it. I found some difficulty in sleeping. My mind continued wandering back to the Turkish Embassy in London. I could hear that subtle old Councillor chanting, "' Won't you come into my parlour? ' said the spider to the flies."

Our method of getting out of our sleeping-bags, the cut

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and material of our pyjamas (these of honest wool, good English wool, the gendarmes could see; and they brought Gladstone in!), our safety razors, the soap we used, our teeth cleaning and, the *piece de resistance*, our dip in the frigid waters of the Maritza, all proved delightfully interesting to our gendarme friends.

With every possible sign, they had urged us not to bath in the river. We had to. The chance could not be missed; and it was delightful to be so brave and so clean, to let these men know that we Gladstonians were not frightened of a little frigid water. It was only after we had entered the river up to our knees, and had soaped and ducked that we saw the main sewer of the town, rather a primitive affair, entering the river immediately above us. I suspect we let Mr. Gladstone down here!

Bidding our friends good-bye with sincere regret, we left Svilengrad soon after breakfast. The outpost is some miles distant, and we were delayed here while an elderly man attended to the customs papers. Finally the barrier was removed from the road, and we were soon motoring across the uninhabited no-man's-land, quite a wide area here, to the Turkish outpost which appeared near the top of a hill ahead of us.



## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### TURKEY

OUR fears were without foundation. The Turkish officers at the outpost were nervous, but quite courteous and not very sticky, and we were not held up very long at the customs post a hundred yards farther on.

Finished with the customs, we fondly imagined that less than two hundred miles lay between us and Constantinople; and when we saw how excellent the road was on the stretch between the outpost and Adrianople, we decided to go on motoring until we reached the capital. Dick had about twenty-five shillings in Turkish money, changed at Svilengrad, and there seemed no reason why this should not carry us safely through.

Near the outskirts of Adrianople, which seemed a dreary old ruin of a place, a kind of forest of broken minarets and moss-stained domes, a kindly-faced soldier stopped us and demanded our passports. He wanted to keep them, but we let him see quite plainly that we had no intention of agreeing to this. Apparently admitting the justice of our objections, he signalled us to follow him to the main Government office in the town. Here we found a Turk, some important man's chauffeur, who could speak English. He explained that the passports would be returned to us in Constantinople, but he agreed with us that we should have a very difficult time getting there without them. Eventually we were told that if we were willing to wait two hours the passports would be returned to us. They allowed us to park Emily II under a cherry tree in an orchard, and here we basked in the warm sunshine in perfect contentment.

Of course we had not seen very much of Turkey, but

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what we had already seen bore little resemblance to what I had imagined. I had expected to see all the men wearing the fez; all the men either wore nondescript-looking soft caps, or unlovely felt hats. It had seemed inevitable that we should get a few glimpses of dark-eyed maidens discreetly veiled wearing harem trousers strapped with jewelled bands around their ankles; all the women we saw wore shabby black, and were not a bit pretty. The Aladdin's palace of our dreams was in reality as interesting as a rather sordid second-hand clothing shop, and apparently not much cleaner. As far as the actual country was concerned, it, like the rest of the Balkans as seen from the road, was treeless, not remarkable, and in the case of this part of Turkey, almost uninhabited.

Our letter of credit showed a bank in Adrianople, and had we been wise we would have changed a cheque; but we were enjoying peace in that orchard, and the streets of Adrianople looked far from inviting. We decided to take a chance with the twenty-five shillings. Incidentally, the journey from Monastir to this point had cost slightly less than £5.

Eventually the passports were returned to us, the officer who brought them to us signalling to me to write down in my notebook what he had to say. What I heard sounded like this, and I duly copied it: "Adrianopolis see-livery chek-majeur Istanboul."

Because we longed to have at the tip of our tongues some disarming kind of phrase in Turkish, some gentle little sentence like that engraved on a tail-wagger's disc, I conceived the notion that the officer was teaching us such a phrase, and I repeated it after him several times, finally committing it to memory. As a matter of fact, he was merely giving us the names of the towns on the route we must follow.

Certain now that we had successfully removed ourselves from the storm centre of that awful question raised by the Embassy Councillor in London, and buoyed up with every hope of reaching Constantinople late that night, we bade the Turkish officers good-bye and began

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motoring rapidly through the narrow, sombre streets of Adrianople, making for the highway.

"Well," I said to Dick, "we haven't had any serious trouble—not really; it's all passed off very well."

"Yes," said Dick with a happy smile.

"I think we've been so wise," I pursued, "to be patient and er—charming. Not to—well, to regard these people as savages. It always pays to be nice. You see, we'll simply romp through to Constantinople——"

At that second a savage-looking man in uniform stepped in front of the car and stopped us.

"*Adrianopolis see-livery chek-majeur Istanboul!*" I said, with a flashing smile.

The soldier looked at me with a glance which combined malevolence and the utmost surprise.

"Pass-poreI Pass-poreI" he growled, clutching his revolver, and we thought it best not to argue with him.

He took our passports, and after noting their contents in his register, he returned them and permitted us to proceed. The policeman was probably performing his usual duty, which was evidently to stop all cars, foreign or otherwise, leaving the town; but we thought his personality far from disarming.

Once away from the town, we found ourselves on a splendid road along which we could speed quite happily. At the end of about twenty miles I said to Dick, "It's amazing how little you can believe. We've been told, and we've read again and again, about the shocking Turkish roads, and here we find ourselves on the best road in the Balkans." I laughed happily, and we broke into a chorus, "Ole Man River," I think.

"I dare say we shall be a bit late for dinner in Constantinople," I said a few moments later, "but we're averaging a good thirty; thirty into two hundred goes, say about seven times; it's now noon; Constantinople about nine or ten o'clock, allowing for delays! "

At the end of the wide plain we had been flying so swiftly across, we saw that the road turned to mount a fairly steep hill. At the base of the hill, we saw a small

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shed. Had we been wise, we should have paused here, for we both suspected a military control-post; but thinking that perhaps the soldier within was asleep, we ignored the shed and began tearing up the hill on second. We both heard a whistle, and ignored it.

Unfortunately for us—perhaps fortunately—the soldier was able to tear directly up the hill, and puffing and panting, with his rifle ominously ready, he stood waiting for us at a turn in the road. Beyond *chi* (tea) we understood not one word of Turkish, but it was easy to understand every word this unfortunate lad said when he reproached us for ignoring him, "What the hell d'you mean by dashing past my control-post without stopping? Didn't you hear me whistle?" Without doubt his vicious flow of language meant that.

We expressed the utmost regret; and noting his heaving chest, we were sincerely sorry. He looked through our passports and gradually calmed down, finally smiling quite happily when he signalled us to proceed.

We descended the hill, and the road was still excellent. Again we congratulated ourselves. Again we said, "They told us the Turkish roads were execrable, and here we're on the best in the Balkans 1 "

At one point near the base of a hill, the road swept to the right. A side road left the highway and went forward, but it looked much too unimportant to be the main road to Constantinople, and we tried to ignore it. However, a mile farther on we thought it best to question a peasant who was ploughing with water buffaloes. He, with only one word which we could understand at his disposal, "Istanboul" (the Turkish name for Constantinople), soon assured us that the unattractive road we had tried to ignore was the road to the capital.

It began quite badly; but it was the decayed remains of a road until it reached a weary old village inhabited, it seemed, by sad old men who quite courteously directed us through what was more like a cow-yard than a highway—a surface of caked mud, uneven like a relief map of the Swiss Alps. After the village there was no formed road



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whatever. We followed tracks evidently left by bullock-wagons sometimes across ploughed fields, guided by the tracks and merely encouraged to proceed by telegraph lines which followed the way. Poor little Emily was having a shocking time. She was still well overladen, and only the most careful driving saved her springs from total dissolution. We were not averaging more than eight miles an hour. We were encouraged by the thought that the road would improve after Chorlu, one of the towns ahead of us.

Shortly before dusk we entered a small village where we bought a tin of petrol, pouring most of this into the main tank, which was almost empty. The men who sold us the petrol were genial, friendly fellows, and we had no reason to suspect them. We could not dream that they had sold us a mixture consisting of seven-eighths kerosene and one-eighth petrol. Emily offered no serious objection because her engine was warm, and quite gamely she recommenced the struggle with the road.

The bridges were most exciting. Some of the bridges were only half-decked, but we overcame this difficulty by arranging what decking there was on the first half of the bridge and, having reached the centre, often by good luck, we then rearranged the decking on the last half. Sometimes the piles on the far side of a bridge had collapsed, and this meant running down a hill formed by the collapsed bridge and then running up the far bank of the creek. More than once the bridge was out of the question and we were then forced to ford the creek, following the tracks of other vehicles, but never without a careful reconnaissance. Darkness found us wearily climbing a long, low hill through what had evidently been an ancient Roman city, judging by the amount of marble chips on the road and the odd marble columns still standing here and there on the landscape. Once we crossed a beautiful old stone bridge which was probably old in 55 B.C., yet still sound and serviceable. At the top of the hill we paused for a meal.

For the first time in her history Emily II refused to respond to the self-starter and crank-handle when we were

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ready to start again. With a cold engine, and the day of pleasant spring warmth had changed to a very cold night, she refused to start on kerosene. We had begun to suspect kerosene shortly before we stopped; our suspicions were confirmed when we poured some of the oil from her tank on to the ground and placed a match near it; instead of the quick, eager explosive kind of flame petrol shows, we saw a dirty, sluggish, half-hearted blaze. We were forced eventually to drain the tank and to take good petrol from one of the reserve tanks, when Emily offered no objections to starting quite happily. The loss was serious merely because our store of money was shrinking.

On we struggled, the road becoming worse, it seemed, and now dangerous in darkness. Towards midnight we saw the lights of Chorlu and fondly imagined we should be there within a few minutes; but apparently all the cattle of Turkey had decided to enter Chorlu during the last heavy shower: the road had become a vicious honeycomb of baked clay, over which we were forced to struggle at a snail's pace. At precisely midnight we pulled up at a garage in Chorlu and asked for two gallons of petrol.

The man refused to sell less than a four-gallon tin. We should have been delighted to buy this had we had enough money to pay for it. Because we could only pay for two gallons, we naturally refused the tin. A serious argument was developing when a Turk who could speak French joined us. To him we explained only what we thought he should know of the situation. Our tank would only take two gallons, we said—not perfect truth, but we were becoming desperate.

He stood our friend very valiantly, and the garage man finally agreed to split a tin for us. Unfortunately; I fear there was bad staff work here; the fellow had poured in nearly three gallons before he could be stopped, and he naturally demanded payment for three.

The French Turk rather boldly stood by us in saying that since we had only asked for two gallons we should not be asked to pay for more, and the argument became a little terrifying.

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A large crowd was gathering around the car, and in the distance, along the badly lighted street, I could see two soldiers approaching. Unless we escaped within a few seconds we might be forced to spend a night in the town gaol.

The scene can be imagined. The absurd little Baby Austin in a small inland Turkish town surrounded by Turks, really very nice people as I now know, but to us then, sinister-looking ruffians capable of slaughtering us without more ado. How we regretted not changing a cheque in Adrianople!

I whispered to Dick, "We must run for it!" He thereupon handed the garage man most of the cash he had, and while the man was counting it, Emily began moving slowly, finally making a quick dash, and within a few seconds we had disappeared down the street. At the outskirts of the town we saw a soldier on duty, but before he could read our numbers, we had gone beyond his ken. Fortunately the road was not too terrible; we could make a little speed.

Free of Chorlu, and now in open country, we continued following that awful road, crossing bridges which were quite unsafe, and fording creeks where it seemed we must sink from sight. But we carried on gamely, and we might possibly have reached Constantinople after midnight if we had not missed the road and lost the telegraph poles.

At about three in the morning we found ourselves marooned on an open plain. It was useless to proceed. We therefore turned out all lights; we suspected brigands and wolves; and in the darkness we spread the tent and turned in. I confess that I slept very little.

We were awake shortly before dawn; at dawn, after a breakfast of ovaltine only—again, bad staff work, but we had been so certain of reaching Constantinople the night before—we were ready to move off.

We soon found the telegraph posts and the road, such as it was, and after a run on an improving road we reached the Sea of Marmora—radiantly lovely that morning—and a small town called Silivri.

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We had about sixpence, and this we began spending in the near side of Silivri. We asked for four eggs, and received so much change that we ventured on a loaf of bread. Even after paying for the bread we had many coins left and bought half a dozen oranges. Indeed we felt quite rich when we bade our friends in the bazaar good-bye and began climbing a hill in the town which, they told us, led to Istanboul. Constantinople was now about forty miles distant.

We reached the outskirts of Silivri. Here we received an assurance from a pedestrian that we were on the right road, and we were beginning to imagine the late breakfast we would enjoy when, to our amazement, we heard that whip-like sound which a rifle bullet makes when it passes dangerously close to one's head.

I looked back. A Turkish soldier was chasing us, and now getting ready to fire another round.

We stopped in some surprise.

The soldier, pleased with his shooting, came up with us and ordered us to turn and follow him. Quite gaily he leapt on to one of our light auxiliary petrol tanks attached to the running-board. Without any hesitation, Dick pushed him off. He thereupon leapt on to the load at the rear of the car. Dick stopped the car and ordered him off that. I think he lost a little face, but made up for this by striding boldly in front of us, leading the way back to a long narrow street at the end of which a large crowd was gathering, waiting to see the fun.

We were not in the mood to be executed; indeed we were both extremely angry at this amazing treatment and were ready to vent our rage upon whomsoever had ordered our return.

This was an officer sitting at a table in what seemed a *gendarmarie*. His hands were shaking with sheer nervousness, and they shook more when I had finished with him. He could not understand a word I said, but I have noticed that great fury will give the power of tongues to the furious.

We could make no progress. I gathered that an inter-

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preter had been sent for. The interpreter turned out to be a Turk dressed in fashionable Eastside New York "reach-me-downs," one who had but lately left the United States owing to the depression.

"Kindly tell this officer that we are very angry," I began; "we have no objection to being stopped with a gesture or even a whistle; but we dislike being shot at. Ask him to put us into telephone communication with the British Ambassador, or the *Gazil* "

The officer listened to the interpretation of my tirade with deep attention, and then became sulky. I think I had gone a little too far. I should have stopped at the Ambassador; the *Gazi*, the conqueror, is Kemal Pasha, the greatest man in the world to a Turk. It would have been better to call upon Allah!

It was now explained to us that we had reached the edge of the military zone surrounding Constantinople, across which no motors may pass without a military escort. We might proceed if we took with us a soldier and agreed not to take photographs or to make sketches.

I instantly explained that we had been given permission at Adrianople to proceed to the capital and that our car, already overladen, could not carry a soldier. I again asked to be put into telephone communication with the British Ambassador so that the shooting at British subjects might be satisfactorily explained.

The officer then said that he had decided to send us to the nearest railway station, where our car and ourselves could be shipped to Istanbul.

"Tell him," I said sharply, "that we shall agree to nothing of the kind. We either proceed from here in our car or remain in Silivri for the rest of our lives."

The possession of precisely a penny three farthings had lent us a dignified desperation. I bowed to the officer and withdrew to the car where I whispered to Dick, after explaining the situation, "They've got the wind up because the soldier fired at us. What a good thing he did, because otherwise they would simply force us to the railway station—and how can we pay our fares? "

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We each took out a book, and lolling comfortably in our seats, began reading.

The *gendarmerie* made the first move. This was an invitation to discuss the situation with the Commandant. Ignoring the nervous officer as I passed through his office, following the American Turk, I mounted a staircase and found myself in the presence of a stout elderly gentleman in uniform. I liked him at once, and accepted his invitation to drink coffee with him. While waiting for the coffee we had quite a delightful chat, both of us ignoring the contretemps, the Commandant obviously eager to put me in a good humour to the point of forgetting the shooting, while I was equally eager to placate him to the point of letting us pass.

I soon saw that with the best will in the world he dared not let us pass without risking his commission; and it now seemed best to join with him in finding a way out. He pointed out the advantages we might enjoy in carrying a soldier with us; we should have no trouble at the controls on the way. I agreed with him, and explained Emily II's springs.

He then spoke of a launch leaving Silivri that day. Perhaps one of us might travel in the launch to make room for the soldier. I thought that might be arranged if the launch owner would agree to being paid in Istanbul. The American Turk instantly agreed to advance me any sum I needed within reason. I showed him our letter of credit, and explained our neglect to cash a cheque in Adrianople.

And then we had coffee, over which we discussed the shocking wickedness of the Armenians.

We all became great friends. The Commandant came down to look at Emily II. He chuckled with great pleasure while examining her. He achieved one remark which made the people around the car collapse with mirth. "The Commandant says," interpreted the American Turk, "that your automobile is a baby car! "

I said to Dick, "The Commandant says our car's a baby car! " and we both shook with laughter.

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A few moments later the American Turk suggested that it might be best if we sent our heavy baggage in the launch and in this way made room for the soldier. Dick and I discussed this idea; but since every item we carried was necessary to the success of our journey, we naturally hesitated. Our hesitation was noted, and after a further talk with the Commandant, the American Turk urged us to have no fear of any loss; a soldier would accompany our baggage, and our own escort would not leave us in Istanbul until he joined up with the man guarding the baggage.

We finally agreed to this. We unpacked Emily, and made the baggage we could most easily spare into two big packages each bound with a sleeping-bag. We placed the nice old Commandant in front of Emily with a package on each side of him, and after gaining his permission, photographed him from every angle. He was delighted with this attention, and we had gained some evidence!

All was soon arranged. A soldier, armed to the teeth, replaced the baggage in the back seat. We shook hands with everybody within sight, including the nervous officer who had now become quite genial, and off we went in the happiest spirits.

Two or three miles out of the town we saw a beautiful little fountain in the shade of two or three shady trees, and here we stopped. The soldier felt that he should object when we both got out of the car; but before he could take any steps, Dick had gone to the fountain for water while I began unpacking the tucker-box. "*Chi* (tea)," I said to the soldier; and he seemed satisfied.

We were literally starving. Our last simple meal had been eaten before sunrise that morning, and it was now past midday.

The soldier, whose name we soon learnt was Abdulla, became deeply interested in our preparations. He still found it impossible to unglue himself from his rifle, but he ate most heartily, and becoming very friendly, soon began teaching us odd words of Turkish. We even reached the stage of making little jokes. Frankly, I am convinced

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that you might have to go a long way around the world before meeting a nicer lad than Abdulla, and I know that he soon became completely attached to us.

He sat immediately behind me in the car, and at odd moments I felt the muzzle of his loaded gun bumping into my ribs. A quaint sensation!

We were following the Sea of Marmora whose waters, along this coast, caress the most lovely beaches and charming headlands. But the country is now almost entirely depopulated, and the small towns we passed through were falling into ruins. The people we saw appeared depressed and poverty-stricken.

The road was always bad, but for one stretch of about two miles it was execrable. Actually the old road followed a beach about five hundred yards above the shore on a steep slope; but the bridges across the inevitable little gulches and creeks had simply been washed away. We struggled along the actual beach on fairly soft sand. We could manage the sand with Abdulla helping me to push over the softest parts; but the creek mouths often held us up seriously, and it was all we could do to struggle through them.

At first Abdulla never left the car to push without taking his rifle with him, but after a time he learnt to forget his gun; eventually he regarded himself as an important member of our expedition. Before we had reached Constantinople, he began treating the police at the town controls with a very high hand, magnificently agreeing to a short pause for passport inspection, but never permitting a serious delay.

With all this bother about the military zone around Constantinople, we had imagined ourselves creeping through fortifications and entrenchments; but we saw nothing, for the simple reason that there is nothing to see. I understand that the Turks are not allowed seriously to fortify Constantinople, although from what we learnt of Kemal Pasha he would make the country bristle with guns if he wanted to. The poor man's treasury will not permit. He is doing something in the way of establishing



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anti-aircraft guns at suitable points. The first gun had arrived from England while we were in Constantinople, and the makers had sent out engineers to instruct the Turkish officers in the best method of constructing emplacements. We met some of these instructors. They found the Turkish officers intelligent enough, but quite unwilling either to remove their coats, gloves, or their military equipment. Incidentally, we told these engineers of Abdulla and what a fine fellow he was. They said, " Oh, the Turkish soldier is always a fine fellow! "

In spite of the bad road, which, however, improved as we approached Constantinople, we found this short journey delightful. The presence of Abdulla having given us complete confidence, we could enjoy the radiant picture the Sea of Marmora makes along this coast. With a settled and more agreeable government, this part of the Mediterranean must rival both the French and the Italian Riviera as a glorious playground. Nothing that we had seen could compare with it in soft beauty.

We had reached the summit of a low hill above the small town called Chekmajor when Abdulla, suddenly leaning forward and crushing the muzzle of his gun into my back, shouted, " Istamboul! Istamboul! "

In the distance we saw a forest of minarets and domes, a great sprawling city, it seemed from here, resting near a tongue of radiantly blue water. I estimated the distance at five miles, but it proved to be nearer twelve; three-quarters of an hour passed before we had entered one of the gates in the ancient Byzantian city walls and found ourselves competing for a small share in the narrow, rather dirty streets, with rumbling tramcars, taxis, bullock-wagons, donkeys and hurrying pedestrians.

I have no idea what would have happened to us without Abdulla. With him, obeying his orders, we pursued our way, apparently breaking all traffic rules, often ignoring the signs made by the Turkish traffic cops, dressed, incidentally, rather like fire brigaders. He did not seem to give a rap for them, and they accepted the situation without objection.

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Eventually we reached the centre of the native city and paused. At once we were surrounded by a staring mob. People spoke English to us, begging to be of service. A comely young man led us to the Ottoman Bank where, leaving Dick and Abdulla to face a great crowd, I went to change a cheque on our letter of credit.

The people in the bank were most courteous and helpful. After supplying me with cash, they put me into telephone communication with our agents. I found it delightful to hear a pleasant English voice speaking to me and giving me directions; and I recall at this moment the excitement I enjoyed when I heard, " You are on the other side of the Golden Horn; you must cross it by the Galata Bridge and——"

Imagine having the Golden Horn within a few yards of one!

When I had succeeded in struggling through the crowd around Emily II, I found Dick alone; Abdulla had disappeared.

" Where's Abdulla? " I asked anxiously; he had become very much a part of our party.

" Oh," said Dick, " he's hiding in that tobacconist's shop; the crowd began chipping him, and not being able to slaughter them, and becoming very embarrassed, he thought he had better hide. I'll signal to him."

Dick gave three toots on Emily's horn, and the crowd near the footpath divided as Abdulla forced his way through, smiled kindly at me, scowled at his countrymen, and ordered Dick to proceed.

We duly crossed the Golden Horn by the famous Galata Bridge, and after ignoring two or three traffic cops we eventually paused near the office of our agents. They directed us to a good hotel in Pera, and here we bade Abdulla a temporary good-bye. The hotel clerk could speak Turkish, and we asked him to tell Abdulla how much we had enjoyed having him with us. Jokingly we asked if he would like to go on to Australia with us. Abdulla's reply was simply, " When do we start? "



## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### CONSTANTINOPLE

I COULD, of course, write much about Constantinople, but perhaps it might be best merely to tell of our personal adventures in the curious old city.

Although our friends urged us to abandon all hope of ever seeing our baggage again, we never lost confidence in our friend the Commandant at Silivri. Abdulla reported the next morning, telling us that a storm had delayed the launch. Our friends wagged their heads and said, "We told you so!" but the confident attitude of Abdulla reassured us. The next morning he reappeared with his soldier mate in an ancient victoria—the cheapest conveyance he could hire—carrying our baggage, which had obviously not been interfered with in any way.

Presumably it must sound unimportant, yet both Dick and I sincerely regretted parting, now finally, with Abdulla. He was not eager to accept a present from us, and we were both touched when we saw tears in his eyes. Through an excellent interpreter, we expressed our friendship for him. He was an ordinary, common Turkish soldier, but we number him amongst the truly fine people we met on our journey. At this moment I can see him placing a brown hand on his heart as he bowed to both of us. The interpreter assured us that the present we made Abdulla would permit him to marry and to live happy ever after. The total cost to us, including the launch charges, was less than fifteen shillings. I suspect the interpreter exaggerated.

The hotel at Pera was excellent. The majority of the guests were British, and these included the commanders of three British ships which had run aground at the Black

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Sea entrance to the Bosphorus. Two of these vessels were heavily laden with petrol, and the Turkish authorities had refused to permit the commanders to leave until steps had been taken either to refloat the vessels whose hulls were still undamaged, or to have the petrol pumped into lighters. The justice of the Turkish attitude was freely admitted; a moderately strong current always flows from the Black Sea through the Bosphorus, and there was enough petrol in the two vessels to turn the Bosphorus into a river of fire.

We spent our evenings with the ship commanders and the men sent out from England with the anti-aircraft guns. After dinner we all used to withdraw to a cafe called "The Ra-ra." Here we were invariably joined by three or four young women from Greece. I do not think one's maiden aunt would regard them as very nice young ladies, but they were harmless enough as Ra-ra friends, if, I should imagine, quite dangerous otherwise.

Pera, the foreign quarter of Constantinople, is more startling and picturesque than morally clean. Near our hotel a narrow alley ran down to the main shopping street. To be completely safe from molestation after dark it was necessary to begin running at top speed from the entrance to the exit. Otherwise a man was literally besieged and manhandled by shocking young women who debouched from almost every door. During daylight it was less dangerous; but it was always necessary to keep a hand gripping one's hat, otherwise the hat would be grabbed by a shocking young woman, and a man undesirous of being either compromised or fleeced, regarded the hat as lost. The initial attitude of these shocking young women was, of course, quite friendly if a trifle hurried; but any ignoring of their invitations produced a torrent of abuse in quaint broken English, which often included a spluttered, "Damn you, Jack! "

Constantinople is but a husk of its former glory. Much romance left with the sultans; the heart of the Turkish nation has been moved to Angora, and the *Gazi*, **Kemal** Pasha, doubtless with the best **interests** of **his**

## CONSTANTINOPLE

people at heart in striving to control the national religion by purging it of superstition and hysteria, has destroyed much that, we gathered, must have been picturesque and interesting. The red fez, common throughout the Near East, is never seen in Turkey. Kemal Pasha has said, "Thou shalt not I" and the Turks know it is best to obey. And so they wear any old head-gear, most often an ordinary peaked cap of shabby tweed amongst the poorer class. At prayer in the mosque, the peak is drawn to the back, because nothing must intervene between a man and God when he prays; and devout Turks at (literally) knee drill look like ardent motor-cyclists.

Kemal Pasha's control of Turkey seems complete. The idea of a *gazi* (a conqueror) is not foreign to the national consciousness. His strength is admitted, and accepted; it is always applied without any hesitation. Persons suspected of intrigue or rebellion against his regime run the risk of being hanged at once and their conduct investigated later.

After a few days' rest, we began making plans for the next lap of our journey across Anatolia. We saw the French Consul-General, who gave us a card to the French officials in Alexandretta who would be concerned with Emily II's entrance into French Syria. We learnt that the roads were quite bad, yet possible for a car, but when we were ready to start, the hitherto good weather we had enjoyed in Constantinople suddenly changed. Light rain became heavy rain, and word came through that the roads were impassable. It was necessary, therefore, to pause.

At the end of two or three days there was a slight improvement and we again made ready, but all hope of crossing Turkey in Asia to northern Syria had to be abandoned for at least a month, we were assured, when word came through of heavy snowfalls in the high country. I think we might have ignored this if Constantinople had not suddenly become unpleasantly cold. Although snow never accumulated in the streets to any extent, the air was often cream and grey with sleet.

We finally decided to avoid Anatolia by taking a small

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**Bulgarian** vessel through the AEgean Sea and around the coast to Syria. The necessity of following a more or less fixed schedule to meet the seasons in northern India **and** northern Australia made that month's delay out of the question for us. The expense of life in Constantinople was an important factor.

The s.s. *Bulgas* was advertised to sail for Beirut via Alexandria, Port Said and Jaffa, quite an attractive itinerary, but more attractive was the fare demanded, a mere £10 for ourselves and Emily in the first class.

We completed our arrangements, packed our bags, paid our hotel bill, and motored down to the dock on the day of sailing, ready to put Emily on a lighter which we had hired to carry her out to the *Bulgas*, anchored some distance from the shore. We called at the agent's for our tickets. He was about to issue them when he suddenly said, " You must land at Alexandria, or Port Said; the captain of the *Bulgas* has decided not to call at Beirut."

" Why should we land at Alexandria or Port Said? " we asked in some excitement.

The agent shrugged his shoulders.

" Neither Alexandria nor Port Said are of any use to us! "

The agent shrugged his shoulders.

" Why did the captain change his mind—at the last minute? "

The agent shrugged his shoulders.

" It's perfectly disgraceful, allowing people to get ready like this and then——What does he mean by it? "

The agent shrugged his shoulders.

It was useless to pursue the discussion. We withdrew to the dock to think out what we should do next. Here we met Colonel Binns, the Dunlop Tyre agent in Constantinople, who had come to bid us good-bye. He listened to our story with great sympathy, and I think he understood the situation at once. " The only thing for **you** to do now," he said, " is to come and stay with me. This foul weather cannot last for ever; we shall be **ddighted to have you until** it clears."

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The invitation was very tempting, yet we hesitated. With care, we were capable of paying our way throughout the journey. This forced halt in Constantinople had not been foreseen, and had therefore not been budgeted for. It seemed indelicate to accept hospitality which might save us a world of financial anxiety.

We compromised by accepting an invitation to luncheon at Colonel Binns's home on the Bosphorus. By making this slight advance, we thought we might reconnoitre his wife's reactions to the idea of our staying in her house. She, already warned by her husband evidently, took it for granted that we should stay, and before we knew it, we were each occupying a jolly old room in a quaint old Turkish house two or three yards from the Bosphorus at the northerly end of the city.

We now prayed for a change in the weather, but instead of improving, it seemed to become steadily worse. There were odd hours of radiant sunshine, when the Bosphorus without our windows became entrancing. Its waters, incidentally, reach to within a foot of the breastwork, which follows its course through the city. Ships of all sizes, many of them oil-tankers, passed up and down all day. It was intensely interesting to stand on the breastwork and to watch large vessels steaming at a moderate speed within a few yards of one. The palaces lining the banks always interested me. Our journey home to the Binns's house from the city each day was along a narrow street lined with old palaces, some of them now in ruins, the result often of fires during the war period when scarcity of coal made the pumping of water almost impossible.

A bored sultan evidently found relief in building a palace. The financing of the building was of the simplest. The sultan merely issued a million or so pounds worth of notes with which to pay for the material and work. Wise workmen spent their money instantly, for the sultan was apt to cancel the note issue immediately upon the completion of the palace. A number of palaces within a small area was found extremely useful by a sultan in his

## EUROPE TO CONSTANTINOPLE

capacity of husband. Women will grow old and annoying. By gathering together the most annoying ladies in one palace and then withdrawing to another gave a weary husband some peace.

Few Turks to-day have more than one wife. They can only afford one, and the interests of Turkish women are well guarded by the charming wife of Kemal Pasha. No veiled women are seen on the streets of Constantinople to-day; the veil merely survives in a black silk scarf, which may hang loosely around the shoulders, or be wrapped pleasantly around the head.

There is a magnificent American school towards the northerly outskirts of the city. Apart from the advantages it offers to Turkish young people, it also makes a good English education possible for the children of the British colony. Some British families have lived in Constantinople for several generations. At the outbreak of war, the British people withdrew without serious difficulty. In view of the reputation the Turks have in eastern Europe, not always deserved, it was surprising to discover that their interests were not completely disregarded when Turkey was fighting us.

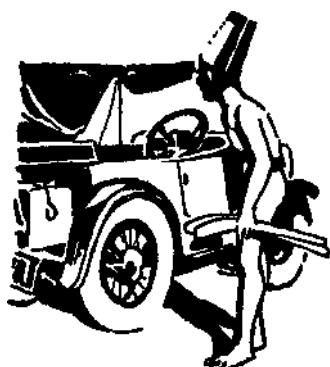
We spent about ten days in Constantinople, not nearly long enough to express even what I have written. With about ten months at my disposal, and a working knowledge of Turkish, I think I might succeed in writing a useful chapter on Istanboul.

Although both our host and hostess could not have been more hospitable, Dick and I became rather embarrassed when the weather still refused to improve. We heard of an Italian ship, the *Utnbria*, leaving for Beirut via different ports and islands in the *JEgean*. Both the first and second class on the *Umbria* were quite beyond our pocket, but the agent told us that the third-class *distinta* would be quite comfortable. When he agreed to carry us and Emily to Beirut for £10, we decided to accept his offer.



## BOOK SEVEN

## TURKEY TO PERSIA







## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### PALESTINE TO DAMASCUS

I HAVE travelled on many ships and fallen in love with some, but seldom have I met such a sisterly old darling as the Italian *Umbria*. I have met many skippers and liner commanders, but none with the boyish enthusiasm and simple charm of Captain Grassi. And I have made many journeys, but not one so delightful as that run down from Constantinople to Beirut.

The *Umbria* is old. With deep regret in his voice, Captain Grassi told me that she must soon be replaced by a modern vessel.

"There is no ship on the sea to-day," he said in French, simple enough for me to understand, "who behaves more charmingly in all kinds of weather/"

I could believe him quite easily. She was betrothed to the sea, and the sea loved her and caressed her.

Her tonnage is about four thousand, but while her lines are graceful—a very nice bow and a pretty stern—her mast and funnel arrangements are old-fashioned.

She carried all sorts and conditions of men. On the after-deck were the deck passengers who slept where they could, and bought food from a canteen. These were Italian peasants, Greeks, Syrians, Turks and Jews. Emily, securely lashed to the deck and covered with a useful tarpaulin, lived with the deck passengers. On the for'ard-deck was the third-class *distinta* which housed our expedition and a decent young German. The after-end of the deck above carried the second class and the second-class *economica*. A young Italian couple with two children had this all to themselves. The first class and the first-class *distinta* occupied the two top decks.

In the same way that the *Umbria* is betrothed to the

## TURKEY TO PERSIA

ocean, so Captain Grassi is betrothed to Signora Grassi, who lives in Genoa. We have never seen her, but we know she's an awfully nice woman. It is only necessary to hear Captain Grassi say "*Ma femme* " to believe this. Captain Grassi must be at least fifty; probably Signora Grassi is forty-five. They met first—well, I really don't know where they first met, but given time, I could write the most charming love story, all true, about the Grassis. At the moment, in the early afternoon of their days, they are great pals.

I dare not pause to tell what we felt as the *Umbria* steamed through the Dardanelles, where many of our countrymen rest. We paused for a day at Rhodes, and Dick and I wandered through the narrow streets of the well-preserved medieval city, with its beautiful walls enclosing a veritable ants' nest with the (Greek) ants all buying and selling and playing backgammon between bargains. A small wooden minaret like a temporary lighthouse rises from one of the narrow bazaars, and here we listened to a *muezzin* calling the faithful to prayer, and spitting on the heads of the Greeks below him at the close of his tuneful chant. I am not convinced that this was an act of contempt; the *muezzin* may have wanted to spit at that moment and had no handkerchief.

And in the streets of the medieval city we met some fellow-passengers from the *Umbria*, very superior English folks from the first-class *distinta*, leaving the ship to meet their yacht at Rhodes. From the lowly third-class deck we had merely enjoyed seeing their heads high above us on the *Umbria's* promenade deck; but now the menfolk seemed interested in us and our journey, and we thought we were charming them most effectively when one of their womenfolk broke in on my best remark and said wearily, " *When* do we go to our hotel? " Please God she was deaf; but oh, how lowly and third-class *distinta* we felt at that moment, although she (May her pack-saddle hurt her!) could not have suspected this from our careless, " *Cheerio* I " as we wandered off in our Emily-soiled kit.

But our wounded (very slightly) pride was soon healed

## PALESTINE TO DAMASCUS

when we returned to the *Umbria*. Captain Grassi, hitherto unaware of our existence, had received letters from Signora Grassi enclosing a newspaper clipping reporting our interview in Rome. Our remarks had reached her heart, and this had instantly set Captain Grassi's ablaze when he discovered us on board his beloved *Umbria*. He was waiting for us on the deck in a great state of boyish excitement. "*Multo interessante! Multo interessante!*" he shouted, metaphorically gathering us to his heart with what seemed a threat of something more real, and embarrassing. He showed us his wife's letter and the clipping. "*Ma femme a Genova——*" he laughed. He translated what his wife had to say, "Was it not delightful to find these two men from so far away loving Italy——?"

We had been perfectly happy in our third-class *distinta*. The food was very simple, but well cooked and always interesting. We had a good *cameraria*, and it was a sheer delight to sit on deck at night listening to the sailors singing odd bits from the Italian operas in the sweetest tenor voices, achieving quaint little trills and always in perfect tune. But Captain Grassi would not permit us to remain there. Orders were instantly given, and we were translated to a better part of the ship and made much of by every Italian on board from Captain Grassi to the cabin-boy. I suspect the captain sent for Sautina, a kind of female steward rather than a stewardess on our deck, and, having read her portions of his wife's letter and shown her the newspaper clipping, he had said, "Do you duty as a Genoese woman!"

Sautina thereupon pounced on our baggage and organized our clothing in a series of piles around the cabin. What little was clean and whole, she stowed away in drawers; clean socks, stockings and linen needing mending and darning were placed in a basket; soiled goods were flung outside the door and carried to a bathroom where Sautina washed them. She made no attempt to ask our permission. She took it for granted that we should regard her as a mother, and we did.

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She never knocked before entering our cabin, and if she found us half-dressed, she stayed to lend a hand, and an efficient hand too. She prepared our baths for us, and I believe she would have liked to scrub our backs; she owned a loofah, and waved it about significantly, but with great tact we kept her out of the bathroom in more difficult moments. I should add here, perhaps, that Sautina was possibly in her late fifties, but although a trifle portly, she was a handsome figure of a woman. She watched over our interests even in the dining-saloon. We could always see her handsome dark eyes peering from the vestibule while we ate. This, we suspected, made her unpopular with the head waiter. I think he must have spoken rather rudely to her, because, after dinner one evening, we found her in tears near our cabin. We tried to comfort her, but could understand not one word of her story. However, when the head waiter rather unwisely ventured on to our deck, she dried her tears and went for him, pouring forth a stream of furious Italian which should have annihilated him at once. He turned the solo into a duet, which sounded like a scrap from *Pagliacci*, and it looked as if it would merely be a matter of the survival of the fittest vocally until we stood behind Sautina and glared so furiously at the wretched head waiter that he was forced to make his exit, singing a most delicate *pianissimo*.

Sautina began trading in eggs at Alexandretta, and continued the good work down the Syrian coast where eggs sell at twopence a dozen. During those moments when she was not engaged ironing our shirts and mending our socks, she was busily engaged washing each egg from the large basketfuls she had bought, and wrapping it in soft tissue-paper ready for the market at Genoa. Her profits must have been immense.

Our A.A. triptique had now run out, but the gentleman called "Mister Cook" (Thomas Cook & Sons) by dragomen, taxi-drivers and carriage-coachmen in the East, acts as a customs agent for travellers in Syria. Mister Cook struggled successfully with Emily's formalities at

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Beirut, while we were yet engaged getting her ashore from the *Umbria*, anchored thirty or forty yards from the breastwork in the Beirut Harbour. The *Umbria* had charged us £1 freight for some hundreds of miles; the lighter-owner at Beirut wanted to charge us £3 for a journey of forty yards. He eventually got much less than that.

Ashore at Beirut, we began to realize how much the *Umbria* had meant to us. We had not enjoyed saying good-bye to Captain Grassi, and it was even harder to say good-bye to Sautina, whom we kissed. However, we had a friend ready to welcome us in Beirut, and it was delightful to have Emily on land again.

The friend in Beirut was the second in command at the Shell Petrol agency. He won our hearts at once with his simple charm and the capable way in which he lifted from our shoulders the inevitable petty troubles which always arise when one enters a fresh country.

Incidentally, it is amazing to discover how many stunt artists there are nipping about the world on push-bikes, on motor-cycles, on foot, and, of course, in cars. Many of these people, God bless them, pay their way, or beg their way, by selling picture post cards of themselves. While we were in Constantinople a young German, making an ambitious tour, turned up on a motor-cycle. He could not pay his customs deposit, and his journey would have ended if Colonel Binns had not stood his friend, in the same way that he proved a fine friend to us.

But I am certain that Colonel Binns has not boasted of his kindness to us, or to the young German. We, fortunately, required no financial assistance from anybody; but I must confess to considerable irritation when agents occasionally placed us in the category of stunt artists, being too obviously on the defensive against being borrowed from. The Shell man in Beirut said, "My name's Heald, Ronald of that ilk; what can I do for you?" We made much use of Ronald in many ways, not too burdensome for him, I hope, but which saved us a world of petty trouble. We liked him.

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Beirut is quite a modern little town with charming esplanades and excellent hotels. It is unbearably hot in summer, but the more fortunate citizens have villas on the slopes of the Lebanon Mountains, easily reached either by a fine motor road or by the railway. We found the citizens enjoying a strike against the local electric light and power company. Tramcars were passing through the streets in the rush hour each with a solitary gendarme as the sole passenger, while even the larger shops were using lamps and candles after sunset.

Our route now lay across the Lebanon to Damascus, from whence we expected to join the convoy across the Syrian Desert to Baghdad; but when we learnt that Mister Cook could arrange a four days' stay in Palestine without serious customs formalities, the temptation to see the Holy Land proved irresistible.

We left Beirut at about six o'clock that evening with the idea of getting as near as possible to the Palestine frontier that night. The road being excellent, and Emily, as usual, in good trim, we found no difficulty in reaching a camping ground a few miles south of Sidon.

A reference to Sidon in the New Testament is, "Woe unto thee, Bethsaida, for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." People who know their Bibles will be surprised to hear that Dick and I, entranced with that glorious Syrian night, found some difficulty in blaming *Lot's wife* for looking back.

The lights of Sidon were a few miles to the north of us; the moon was shining on the still Mediterranean; we could hear the little waves beating on the shingle nearby; the screen of darkness shielded us from curious eyes; Emily was with us, and altogether we were very happy indeed, and a little excited in anticipating the journey into Palestine and back. Later, when we managed to arrange our Bible geography more correctly, and when we were actually near the traditional site of Sodom (we had obviously mixed Tyre and Sidon with Sodom and



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Gomorrhah), I returned to my original impression that Lot's wife may possibly have been a mature hussy.

The night passed peacefully away. Towards midnight we heard the pattering of a donkey's feet on the deserted road. The elderly traveller—we imagined him to be old—evidently saw our camp in the moonlight. The donkey began galloping and its rider praying in a loud, nervous voice, and the prayer and the gallop continued until the traveller had reached safety some distance along the road.

We bathed in the Mediterranean soon after dawn, and washed in a small creek. Before seven we were on the road making for Ras el Nakoura, "The Headland of the Trumpet," the north-westerly gateway of the Holy Land.

We could not have chosen a better time of the year, early April, for this journey. The Mediterranean will always make the coast beautiful, but now the flowers of spring had made the otherwise parched country a veritable kaleidoscope of vivid colour. We could see the remains of ancient terraces on many of the low hills, but nothing seemed to be growing on them; much of this country is evidently not very fertile. The road merely passes through the outskirts of Tyre, through wild orchards, largely, it seemed, of loquat trees, which were now fruiting and nearly all covered with large nets of very fine mesh as a precaution against birds. We bought large quantities of loquats and delicious Jaffa oranges.

Eventually we reached the Franco-Syrian control, and a short drive up a road carved out of the edge of a cliff, facing the sea, brought us to the Headland of the Trumpet, where we found British soldiers in a well-built covered way conducting their business with a good deal of shrewdness, judging by the attention they paid the contents of the cars driven or occupied by dignified-looking Oriental gentlemen.

The road leaves the coast after Ras el Nakoura and passes through fertile farming country, pleasant enough, but not notably beautiful. On the right side of the road, for a long distance, a rich purple-coloured lavender was being cultivated, and the perfume was delightful. We

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reached the immediate coast again a little south of Acre, which, alas, we had not time to enter. Perhaps this may not have mattered very much in view of the short time at our disposal. Acre, almost built into the Mediterranean, with its massive walls and flat-topped Eastern houses, seems a fascinating child's story-book city. Judging by what we saw of other Palestine towns, a closer inspection might have destroyed a charming impression.

We crossed the mouth of the River Kishon where Elijah slew four hundred and fifty false prophets, and leaving the conventional road, we followed a concrete way bridging the very soft sand of the beach until we reached to within a few yards of the actual sea, where we began following the tracks left by other cars. This might, have been less difficult if all the other cars had been Baby Austins. As it was, we were often held up for a few seconds on soft sand ridges, where we could not follow the firmer tracks left by bigger motors. This short section of the journey can be both difficult and dangerous; but after a heavy westerly gale, when the sea has been driven well up, the sand remains very firm and perfect for motor-ing until westerly winds form the sand ridges, which we found awkward. During strong westerly weather, the beach should not be attempted, advice which I offer with some feeling: Emily made the attempt upon our return north, but only Dick's masterly driving saved her from a watery grave. There is practically no tide.

We spent but a few minutes in Haifa. I could imagine Haifa being a useful base for exploration of Mount Carmel immediately above the town. In regard to Haifa, I can merely say that it is inadvisable ever to accept change in its bazaar without vehement protest. If you raise your eyebrows and tear your hair, you have some chance of finding your change doubled, and even then you are moderately certain to be cheated. Haifa bored us; I think because it was so very hot and because we found so much difficulty in ridding ourselves of annoying touts.

From Haifa we passed inland to Nazareth over an excellent road which became more mountainous as we

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progressed. I shall never forget the wild flowers. I have been told that there are in all two thousand varieties of flowering plants indigenous to Palestine. Sometimes the world around would be golden with marigolds and tall mustard plants picked out with odd little clumps of pink hollyhocks. A field might occasionally appear like an exquisitely designed garden of the rockery variety, blue and purple with lupins, anemones and arunculus, slightly splashed with gold. It almost took one's breath away.

Long strings of camels bearing immense burdens occasionally passed us. They often became very annoyed with Emily, turning and hissing at her, much to the amusement of their Arab owners. Occasionally we passed Bedouin women, who stared boldly at us. They were hard-looking women, perhaps, but invariably very handsome with beautiful dark eyes and a smooth, olive skin, often quaintly tattooed. There were Bedouin camps, nothing more than wide shelters of some dark material which seemed to house large families of men, donkeys and chickens. I asked later what happened to the Bedouin families when it rained, for these woollen covers cannot be waterproof. "The Bedouins get wet!" was the reply.

But, alas, I must hurry on; or is it fortunate? I confess to an abysmal ignorance of this most interesting country, and find the process of digging what I do know from a mass of impressions very heavy going indeed. Before seeing Palestine I had imagined a series of coloured Bible pictures. That is precisely what it is.

The way begins dropping from the high country shortly before reaching Nazareth. Nazareth is built on the side of a hill and makes a charming picture from the road. The native town is completely dwarfed by the immense and beautiful ecclesiastical buildings which blend perfectly with the surrounding country. They are evidently built with the local stone, outcroppings of which may be seen amongst the gorgeous hues of the wild flowers as far as the eye can reach. One gets an impression of cleanliness, but I should not call Nazareth a very clean town.

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Nor would I call the Church of the Annunciation a clean church. I wanted to like Nazareth. I recalled a mission hymn, "Jesus of Nazareth has passed by," and I knew that He had lived here as a carpenter, possibly making the simplest native furniture with the simplest tools. Yet I was conscious of not the slightest emotion.

I entered the Church of the Annunciation. Few, if any, of the traditional sites of incidents in the life of Jesus are above suspicion; but water is not plentiful in Nazareth, and there can be little doubt but what the Virgin Mary drew water from the well now covered by a shockingly dirty little altar whose lace frontal is grimy from the hands of those who lift it to gaze down into the well. The boy who was guiding me offered a glass of water which he had drawn from the well, and I drank it with fewer misgivings because I had been effectively inoculated (I hoped) against typhoid, para-typhoid, cholera and dysentery. The church has a beautifully carved screen, but it is withal so greasy with candle grease, and smells so shockingly both of candles and B.O., that revulsion is the only emotion I was conscious of. It was the Greek Easter Saturday, and there were a good many people in the church; possibly Greek Christians express themselves differently from us, but these folks seemed restless and fanatical; I soon felt restless and vaguely unhappy. Finally, something seemed to be urging me to fly from the place as unclean and unlovely. The Carpenter was not in Nazareth that day; although "They seeing see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand."

Who can tell? And who shall say—anything?

However, these are personal impressions, and if they sound sententious and critical, I must be forgiven.

My guide led me behind the screen where a priest was arranging and marking the pages in an immense book resting on a lectern. This man wore a copious beard, and his long black hair was tied up very neatly in a mid-Victorian "bun." His black cassock was rusty with age. He was not an attractive figure until he smiled **and bowed**

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pleasantly. I thought there was then a world of simplicity and goodness in his dark brown eyes.

The road rises beyond Nazareth for a short distance, but after a time the steep but well-graded descent to the Sea of Galilee begins. The Sea of Galilee is 682 feet below the Mediterranean.

It was getting late in the afternoon when we first saw the Sea of Galilee from the road. The sinking sun was shining gently on the purple and blue mountains of Moab on the farther side. The Carpenter was here.

Tiberias, at the foot of the descent with its remnants of ancient medieval walls, appears very attractive in the distance; but a short walk through its filthy bazaars bored us. With an efficient guide and more time at our disposal, I am certain we should have found much that is intensely interesting; we, alas, had just sufficient time to see ill-kempt looking Jews buying and selling in the foul-smelling streets; and we were glad to hurry from Tiberias along a charming road which follows the Sea of Galilee to the mouth of the Jordan. We were eager to visit the hot springs a short distance beyond the town, but the light was failing fast and it seemed best to see the Jordan River.

We spent the lovely moments of sunset where the Jordan leaves Galilee. Without difficulty, now, one's imagination could have full play. Returning along the road we paused for a few moments and gathered a few small pebbles from the shore to carry home to our loved ones. They were very ordinary kind of pebbles and not a bit pretty, but I said to Dick, "They'll love to have these!" Dick thereupon gathered a few more for his great-aunt.

I don't know what luck he had; I know that my pebbles were accepted without any excitement whatever. "Ah," said one, standing near when I unwrapped the stained handkerchief containing the pebbles, "you should have brought home a few diamonds from the sands of Kimberley!" That one was a trifle cynical, but there was awful truth in him just then. However, I should add that one dear friend was delighted to receive a few of the

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little stones. She placed them in a bottle, and having carefully sealed it, she wrote a neat label explaining the contents, and the bottle has an honoured place on her parlour chimney-piece.

It was worth coming to the Holy Land merely to see the Sea of Galilee.

It was quite dark when we began the ascent from Tiberias. We had not much idea where we should spend the night; we thought we might motor on until we became tired and then camp near the roadside. I think we had reached to a point about five miles short of Nazareth when our headlights showed us three or four British soldiers, armed to the teeth, forming a cordon across the road. They signalled to us to stop, and discovering that we were British, they asked in hasty whispers if we had met another car travelling without lights.

We instantly imagined a complete A.A. of cars travelling without lights, but we could be certain of not one. They then told us to carry on, but to be prepared to meet "the corporal" who was in a lightless car ahead of us. "If Arabs attempt to hold you up, dash right through them at top speed, but not through the corporal!" one of them advised; and we said that we should.

They could give us very little information; but we now felt far from secure. When Dick dug out the Mauser from under his seat, I feared the worst.

We duly met the corporal in his lightless car a few miles farther along the road. A little more communicative, he explained that some Arab raiders had crossed from Transjordan and might be up to mischief. He assured us that we should be perfectly safe after Nazareth, and for Nazareth we therefore made at the best speed Emily could give on that hilly road. It was all most exciting; but nothing more came of it.

We heard later that two or three Arabs had held up thirteen cars near here a few weeks earlier. Nobody had been hurt; indeed, one of the robbed motorists said that the few shillings he had lost, all he carried with him at the time, had been a very low price to pay for the fun he had

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enjoyed. These robbers were captured by a patrol of Tommies. A man we met in Jerusalem saw them with their guard in Nazareth; he said that it was difficult to decide which were the prisoners, the Arabs or the Tommies.

It was eight o'clock and very dark when we reached the Plain of Esdraelon; and being hungry we drove the car to the side of the road to dine. A convenient ditch, three or four feet deep, whose banks (we could see with our powerful spotlight) were ablaze with wild flowers, made an excellent kitchen; and I was soon busily engaged turning out an excellent meal of stewed tomatoes and buttered eggs. Not for a moment did I imagine how suspicious-looking we must have appeared to the Jewish colonists living in the houses near. I merely noticed that the lights in the houses went out one by one.

The scene, of course, can be imagined, and it must be realized how very insecure these people feel, exposed as they are to Arab hostility. That very day five Jews had been murdered a few miles out of Haifa on the road we had passed over. In fact we had narrowly missed discovering the bodies. The murderers, Arabs, had escaped in a car.

"Are these men in this mysterious car Arabs making an ambush in the ditch? Will they attack us, and murder us?" might quite easily have been asked by the nervous folks in the houses near.

We heard whispering, and after a time a man began creeping slowly along the road towards us.

Dick challenged him, and asked who he was. We heard a relieved laugh. He approached and explained the situation. We then explained ourselves, and the man was completely reassured.

He remained to chat, and we found him very interesting. He was obviously a man of education, one who evidently thought, and I said to him eventually, "What seems more a miracle than the incarnation is the undoubted fact that in this barren, if beautiful, country a stupendous movement began. I find it impossible to

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imagine Jesus as merely the Son of Joseph and Mary; we have seen so many Josephs and Marys to-day! I am bound to fall back on my faith as a nominal Christian——"

"I understand what you mean," he said quietly; "but if you lived with us, you might think differently. To discover a boy of perhaps twelve with an exquisite knowledge of the Scriptures is not unusual here. I have often listened to such a boy actually expounding the Scriptures to old and learned men."

This man seemed happy enough about the neighbouring Zionist-Jewish settlements. Many of his friends had been quite unused to agricultural or manual labour; they had now to work very hard; they missed the comfort and interest of town life; but most of them had found peace and would not willingly abandon their little settlements.

I should like to have asked him why his brother-settlers built such ugly timber bungalows and cottages when they had so charming an example to follow in the old villages and towns; but I dare say he would have told me that the wooden bungalows were sweet and clean, and could be kept so—not a good enough reason, I think, for deforming the landscape. The northerly end of the radiantly lovely Plain of Esdraelon might have been lifted from an equally beautiful section of New Zealand, where the farm dwellings and small villages are only slightly less hideous than what one finds in the rural districts of the American Middle West.

Time had passed, and we were tired. Our friend seemed to think we could not be comfortable in any hotel or caravanserai nearer than Jerusalem. Learning that we could conveniently camp, he urged us to make use of the field within a nearby gate, assuring us that he had the right to give us permission. Without more ado, we drove Emily through the gate, spread our tent, and immediately turned in.

But evidently there could be no peace even for us on the Plain of Esdraelon, one of the world's great battlefields incidentally where, presumably, hundreds of thousands of men have died violently throughout the centuries. We



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were both awakened an hour or two later by a curious sensation.

" Did you call me? " I whispered to Dick.

" No," said he, " I haven't said a word. I thought you had called me; didn't you? "

Not a sound could be heard, and yet we both knew that we were practically surrounded by men, evidently lurking in a hedge near the tent or lying amongst the tall mustard plants on the other side.

Drawing aside the tent flap, we both called out in chorus, and with tolerable confidence, " Who's there? What do you want, anyway? "

There was a quick movement in the hedge; the men were withdrawing evidently. " Who's there? " we repeated.

A very nervous voice replied, " Are you the C.I.D.? "

" We are not the C.I.D., but we'd advise you to hop it! " Dick replied.

Dick's advice was taken. Had we been less tired, I doubt if either of us could have slept much after that.

We left soon after dawn the next morning and were therefore unable to get a satisfactory explanation of this incident. Our first friend had evidently reassured the people in the houses. The men who were spying on us were possibly young fellows returning late from one of the other settlements. In view of the murders that morning on the Haifa road and their effect in the new Jewish settlements, we were perhaps lucky (or unlucky) to escape a regrettable incident.

Incidentally, Dick and I in our adventurings always seem to escape really exciting incidents. Our Emilys, one and two, never broke their axles or refused to function in any way whatever. We always carry on without any bother. I believe that if we decided to drive Emily to the top of Mount Everest, there would be a shattering earthquake or something a few days before we reached northern India which would remove all the steep ascents and make the exploit of no interest whatever.

On the whole, I do not think the Plain of Esdraelon **the**

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nicest or the safest place to camp unless arrangements are made with the local people before sunset.

The journey from Esdraelon to Jerusalem is, of course, packed with interest; but I have no time to give it more than passing attention. We met long strings of camels, who invariably gazed at us malevolently when they were not grinning sardonically. I suppose most people know the Arab's explanation of the camel's alleged smile. There are three names for God, Allah, God, and another name only known to the camel who finds vicious amusement in refusing to tell it. I offer that for what it is worth.

The road across the Plain of Esdraelon, splendidly fertile and still being cultivated as it was cultivated thousands of years ago, is magnificent; but south of Esdraelon the country becomes mountainous, and although the road is well made with a good enough surface, speed is inadvisable.

Every square yard of soil, sometimes in little sections amongst the rocks which can be measured in square feet, is forced to produce. The country here was very lovely. I recall beautiful shady valleys between the rocky little mounts and charming olive plantations, and we passed through towns of great Bible interest; but Emily was averaging a good twenty-five miles an hour on this journey to the Holy City, and I think perhaps we had better follow her example and hurry.

In all my wanderings I have never enjoyed a more entrancing view than the picture made by Jerusalem when it first appears from the northern road. I think because the walls are so beautiful. All the hills around show that out-cropping of putty-coloured stone appearing amidst dim green olive trees and small patches of cultivation, relieved by those flat-topped houses seemingly so exquisitely clean, blending so perfectly with the natural world around that they might have grown there. Within the walls can be seen the tops of an amazing jumble of buildings and the famous Dome of the Rock, said to be one of the most beautiful buildings in the world.

There is now almost as much of Jerusalem outside **the city walls as there is inside.** **Therefore we were passing**

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through wide modern kind of streets for some time before we reached the Jaffa Gate. For a second or two we thought we were about to run into the midst of a riot when we saw two or three score of young men dancing down a road singing and shouting whilst one of their number threw swords into the air. Many of them wore the red fez, but they were otherwise clad in European dress. These, we learnt later, were Christian Egyptian pilgrims at the Holy City for the Easter celebrations.

Having parked Emily with the Jerusalem Austin agents, we hurried to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, struggling down through a particularly foul-smelling, narrow street, which was actually a covered bazaar, to the entrance of the church courtyard. It was the Greek Easter Sunday, and we were eager to see the miracle of the Holy Fire. It was now noon, but we soon discovered that had we arrived in Jerusalem at the crack of dawn that morning, we might possibly have had some chance of getting our noses just within the great doors.

We were eager to see the famous Dome of the Rock, but the local Mohammedans had wisely gained permission to prevent Christians from entering during the Greek Easter, and we were forced to be content with a mere glimpse from the end of one of the peculiarly foul Jerusalem streets. This showed us the exquisite little mosque with its radiantly lovely blue mosaic and tile work resting in an atmosphere of peace and calm, in contrast to the ghastly scramble and welter of base human feeling surrounding what should be the centre of a Faith designed to bring peace on earth and goodwill towards men.

A nasty place, Jerusalem; we were glad to leave it towards the middle of that afternoon. Our idea was now to make a quick dash to the Dead Sea and back, for, according to Mister Cook's customs arrangements, it was necessary for us to leave Palestine at the end of the next day.

Yet one little picture remains clearly outlined in my memory which I might add before leaving the old city. I had found myself exploring the many unclean little

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chapels behind the main altar in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. I saw a stone stairway and decided to climb it. As I climbed, the sound of Greek priests intoning prayers reached my ears. Intoning is a flattering term to apply to the unmusical, throat-gargling sounds these men make. At the head of the stairway I reached a platform from where I could see the grand altar behind the main screen. Four or five grubby priests were engaged in some kind of ceremonial. Their vestments were grubby; the altar was grubby and dusty; and the general effect was revolting and a little silly to me. I was about to descend when I heard a faint sigh. Looking to my right, I saw three middle-aged women in what seemed, in that dim light, beautiful robes, kneeling with their eyes fixed on the altar below. They might have been posed for a picture. They might have been those women "beholding from afar off." One of these women—she was very beautiful—smiled very sweetly at me.

A few years ago it was necessary to engage an escort for the journey from Jerusalem to Jericho; nowadays, thanks to a British Government and motor-cars, the journey may be made over a magnificent road in perfect safety, although frankly, I should not feel too secure on the return journey after dark when the steep grade of the ascent—Jericho is 3,326 feet below Jerusalem and 820 below sea-level—forces anything but the most powerful car to crawl at a snail's pace. The country on each side of the road is so wild, inhospitable and lonely. The distance as the crow flies is merely fourteen miles, but this becomes about twenty-four with the turns and twists the road must make.

It was nearly five o'clock when we left the main road and took a side track leading across country to the Dead Sea. I had expected salty water, but when I rather foolishly allowed a few drops of the Dead Sea to descend my throat, I was certain I was poisoned. Dick had shown more care, and laughed when he saw me galloping to a nearby palm-roofed pavilion in the hope of finding a little fresh water. I found a kind of canteen where I was able

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to buy lemonade; but only two bottles poured hastily after the Dead Sea water gave relief.

I was waiting at the canteen for Dick who was approaching, when another Baby Austin of the sports variety dashed up. This contained a young Scotsman, who accepted us as brothers with so much enthusiasm that we did not become aware of our intention of leaving until the next morning. One of the more cheery nights of our journey was spent at the Dead Sea.

We met some of the men engaged in exploiting the amazing wealth of this curious salt lake. As far as I could gather, its water contains almost everything of value, including gold in solution, phosphates, and a very pretty poisonous chemical suitable for the manufacture of heinous poisonous gas guaranteed to kill a soldier without any trouble whatever. I think they are concentrating on the phosphates without, however, neglecting the possibilities in the poison.

We bathed in the Dead Sea and enjoyed ourselves thoroughly. We walked in quite happily until the water reached to within an inch or two of our shoulders, when we bobbed up and floated a little uneasily. One is apt to keel over if one's legs are not crossed. The water seemed slightly warm. There are fresh water showers at the pavilion to remove the Dead Sea water, which becomes very sticky if left on one's body.

After breakfast we made a quick dash across the desert to Jericho, now a sprawling Arab village fast becoming a holiday resort for Jerusalem people who can leave fierce winter behind and enjoy a tropical climate for a week-end. We saw Elisha's well, a fountain which has made Jericho of importance for countless centuries; Jericho is simply an oasis. We saw something of the excavations, and very possibly gazed upon the walls which fell at the sound of the rams' horns when Joshua captured the city. They certainly looked very dusty and very, very old.

But there, again I must hurry from a spot which I know to be intensely interesting, but of which I know very little. In Jericho, we were bound to think of the customs

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control at Ras el Nakoura, which had to be reached before the close of that day. We dashed back up the hill to Jerusalem, and paused there for but a few minutes before continuing the journey back to Beirut.

That journey was made first in snow and sleet and finally in darkness. More than once we nearly lost Emily on the beach road north of Haifa, which we traversed in the teeth of a westerly gale. But we crossed the frontier before midnight, and after another peaceful night encamped near the Mediterranean south of Tyre and Sidon, we motored rapidly to Beirut.



## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

### BEIRUT TO BAGHDAD

PEOPLE with a car-sense may now say, " Yes, this is all very interesting about Jerusalem, but what about Emily? Were her tyres ever changed? Did Dick have to decarbonize her? How often was her oil changed? Did he use the grease-gun each morning? "

I shall do my best to answer these questions, remarking, to begin with, that although we lived very economically ourselves, we never applied economy to our little car. Her oil was watched closely; she is an economical little beggar; but her oil was always kept reinforced, and at intervals it was drained and a fresh supply poured in. We used triple Shell. The grease-gun was used every morning, and with particular care if the previous day's run had been long. She was decarbonized at Damascus.

But frankly, the car was so very much Dick's show that I became completely detached from routine work on her, only lending an eager hand during those arduous moments after punctures. I was always willing to share the driving, but he would not let me! Not that Dick ever objected, not obviously; it was a kind of passive resistance which I found quite overwhelming. While I drove, he sat there looking perfectly bland, but I knew he loathed it! When on these increasingly rare occasions I gave him back the wheel, I used to say acidly, "Now, you're relieved! " "Oh, rot! " he would reply. "Then look here," I would add, "at intervals when the road's not too dangerous you must say, 'How about taking a turn at the wheel? '"

But he never said it!

Secretly, I sympathized. He was determined to drive

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Emily round the world. He was justly aware of his own efficiency; mine was an uncertain quantity, more uncertain because when I drive him I feel as if I were enduring a *viva voce* examination. This feeling of inferiority returned only the other day in Sydney, when I was giving Dick a lift in one of Sir Philip Game's cars. I very nearly ironed out a traffic cop who fortunately leapt aside in time and saluted very nicely, because of the crown on the car. Without that crown I suspect he would not have saluted I

My job was expeditionary cook, work I carried out with the utmost efficiency, and chief packer-up, which I liked less because there was not so much scope for artistic treatment. Dick, however, usually superintended the final arranging of our baggage in the car. He never said, "Damn this typewriter!" because I was ready with a retort if he had; but he felt like saying that.

The journey from Beirut to Damascus presents no difficulty. The Lebanons and the anti-Lebanons must be crossed; but if brakes are in good condition, for the grades are often steep and there are many hair-pin bends around which native drivers tear without much thought, a good average speed can be maintained on the excellent tar-sealed road. With more time at our disposal, we would have paused rather more than half-way and taken the road which branches and leads to Baalbec, but apart from the fact that we believed the convoy left Damascus the next day for Baghdad, Dick felt that every spare moment must be spent on Emily before she should be asked to make the desert crossing. She had hesitated once or twice climbing the Lebanons. If really well, Emily never hesitates; therefore she needed attention, and I fear that Dick thought much more of her health than of all the beautiful ruins in the world.

We reached Damascus at four o'clock that Tuesday, and drove immediately to the Nairn Transport office. We had imagined that Mr. Nairn, a fellow-countryman, incidentally, would say, when he saw us, "**Well, well, how**



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very interesting—all the way round the world in that funny little car " to be followed by an admiring smile.

Mr. Nairn was perfectly gracious, but the next few moments saw some of our illusions shattered.

" You've been told, of course," said he a little bitterly, " that the road to Baghdad is like a billiard-table? "

We admitted this. " But isn't it? " I asked; " a man in Constantinople told us that our speed need only be limited by our car's capacity."

" One hundred of the five hundred miles is good going; the rest is bad, damn bad! " he said. " And," he went on, glancing sourly at poor little Emily, " I don't see how that perambulator is going to do it. With plenty of time, you could manage all right, but you've got to maintain a high speed; you've got to do five hundred and fifty miles, flat out, in two days, or rather less."

We did not understand then, as we understood later, that when the Nairn Transport Company assumes responsibility for a private car in the convoy, it is compelled to see that the car, or its passengers, at least, reach Baghdad; neither the Franco-Syrian nor the Iraqi Government enjoys the expense of a search. A time-table must be kept; a badly driven or mechanically inefficient car can therefore be a serious nuisance.

" How many spare tyres have you got? " asked Mr. Nairn.

" Oh," said Dick, " just the ordinary spare," and Mr. Nairn smiled grimly.

" And how many spare tubes? "

" One extra," lied Dick, although he may have been referring to an ancient tube, cut into several lengths, and tied up like German sausages to keep certain spare parts free from damp.

With a rather stern expression on his face, Mr. Nairn now led us to one of his touring-cars, a big American car which looked like a pimple on a pumpkin because of its immense truck tyres.

" We have got to use truck tyres," he explained, " because of the fierce effect of the desert gravel on rubber;

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even these tyres only last three or four trips; the heat generated on tyres during the desert crossing at midday is hardly less than that used in vulcanizing them.

" You see," he said severely, as he led us back to the wretched Emily, " what you're up against! " He then began shaking Emily and kicking her wheels in a most irreverent way. " You shouldn't do it I " he added.

" But other small cars have——" I began.

" Not without causing us endless trouble and delay," he returned, giving poor little Emily's off rear wheel a final shake.

He now explained that he was not sending any cars across the desert the next day, Wednesday, but that if we wished he would make arrangements for us with a native driver who would not charge us more than £5, he thought. " If you care to wait till Friday," he said, " you can join our convoy; I'll charge you nothing I "

We decided to wait, and with a final and quite good-natured laugh, he said, " All right, we'll look after you; but be ready at dawn on Friday morning! "

The story of the Nairn Transport is full of romance. The Nairn brothers were New Zealand soldiers who fought in this neighbourhood during the war. With their gratuities, and presumably with some outside help, but not much, they conceived the notion of establishing a motor service between Damascus and Baghdad, over a route hitherto used by native caravans who usually occupied more than a month on the journey, a month of fatigue and great danger, for water is scarce and the native tribes can be very unpleasant. The Nairns conceived the revolutionary notion of making the journey in two days. It is said, I do not know with what foundation, that before the idea had any chance of success the desert sheikhs had to be given adequate baksheesh. There were grave difficulties, of course; cars were captured, and pioneer drivers were even killed; but the idea was pursued with great courage, and eventually the Franco-Syrian and the Iraqi Governments accepted the trail as a possible highway, and now protect it during at least two days in each week. This protection

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was naturally to be desired, but it has had the effect of permitting natives to establish services. For a first-class fare, the Nairn Transport Company charges something in the neighbourhood of /15, this amount being reduced for the less convenient and less comfortable seats. A native, however, will carry a passenger for as low an amount as £5, and he may also be persuaded to reduce this for parties.

I discussed this opposition with Mr. Nairn. "It's all right," he said; "it's just as well to have a third-class form of travel."

As a matter of fact, the native cars are almost entirely patronized by natives who leave behind them in the car cushions emigrant little bugs and fleas, which are, admittedly, less dangerous than armed Arabs and Bedouins. Arabs and Bedouins may, of course, take a keen interest in cars less efficiently run and driven than the Nairn cars, and which may be compelled to halt for too long a period during the crossing. At the moment, the Nairn Transport has still what amounts to a monopoly; but it seems a pity, even if it is inevitable, that, in view of the history of the project, it should be exposed to opposition.

Our conversation with Mr. Nairn had not helped us to regard the Syrian Desert with much joy. We decided that every spare moment in Damascus should be spent on preparing Emily for the ordeal. How we hoped that she would "show them! "

She did, of course; but I personally cannot claim any credit, for the uncomfortable reason that I ate something at dinner that first night in the hotel at Damascus which poisoned me, making my digestive machinery of more importance to me than Emily's engine. While Dick was busy grinding valves slightly, decarbonizing, replacing worn portions of Emily's distributor, and thorough-cleansing the carburettor, my inside was apparently doing the same with itself while I remained in the hotel enduring the most shocking spasms which, I felt, could only end with my end. However, I applied to myself a rule I

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followed with sick natives in the Solomon Islands. I drew an imaginary line across where I thought my diaphragm must be. The pain was below the line. All right, then: "salt medcin," or castor-oil. I drank much castor-oil and eventually found relief. Had the pain been above the imaginary line, I should have taken quinine. This is rather a good rule.

We saw a little of Damascus, but not nearly so much as we wanted to. Our hotel was in the more modern city area where there are excellent shops and wide streets following the canal walls which enclose the magnificent stream of water flowing from springs in the neighbouring hills, a stream which gave life to Damascus thousands of years ago, and without which even to-day it could not exist for more than a few months.

With some misgivings and more humility than we can usually boast, we were duly on parade soon after dawn on that Friday morning. The Nairn convoy was drawn up near the hotel. It consisted of a big Pullman motor-bus, an aerial car (a kind of two-wheeled, motor-caravan vehicle fitted with seats like a char-a-banc attached to a big touring-car), and the touring-car we had seen.

We were introduced to the driver of the touring-car. He had been given the honour of shepherding us, an honour which he obviously regarded as very doubtful. Our efforts to be engaging and charming to him were accepted with a gravity which we found disheartening. He was naturally a cheerful, decent kind of young fellow; but the jeers of the other drivers who had escaped having us thrust upon them had possibly depressed him.

"These things," he said, glancing carelessly at our treasure, "are all right in towns—on concrete or tarred roads; *but they're not meant for the desert!*"

"Nohow! " I was forced to add: the driver was so very serious.

"However, wait! " he went on, glancing at me a little contemptuously; "you don't know what you're up against."

There was now so determined an expression in Dick's eyes **and** so firm a set about his jaw, that I became seriously

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depressed. He was going to "show them!" When Dick is "showing them," he enjoys himself, I presume, more than his passenger. I knew, too, that the utmost was going to be asked of little Emily, and looking at her—she was beautifully polished with her badges shining in the morning sunlight—it seemed most unfair. Beside the other cars, so effectively prepared for their dangerous work, and so big and strong, she seemed a dainty little flea. I could see at once that we were going to be in the position of Alice that first day in the garden with the Red Queen. The big tourer was going to tear across the desert, dragging us behind, towing us with a rope more effective than hemp, that which appeared in Dick's firmly set jaw and the determined light in his eyes. And the analogy of Alice and the Red Queen is the most effective way I can offer a picture of our crossing of the Syrian Desert. I called the tourer the Red Queen, although as a matter of fact she was painted grey.

While we were waiting for the signal to start, resisting the last-minute efforts of the Damascus merchants to sell us knives, daggers and other curios, the Red Queen's driver seized this chance to tell us of his troubles with other private cars he had shepherded. "They can't, or they won't, maintain speed; they're always stopping to change their tyres"—he paused and gave each of Emily's tyres a savage kick—"to cool their radiators and"—very contemptuously—"even to light cigarettes I"

We made a mental note not to stop to light cigarettes; we never do, anyway; so we were all right on that point. We could only pray about the radiator and the tyres.

"One car, doing a stunt like yours, bent an axle after crashing into a dry *wadi*; I had to tow it a hundred and fifty miles. I was four hours late. An old colonel from India with his wife and family refused to do more than twenty; said he wanted to use his car in England; he was silly—silly!"

"You can't crash into *wadis*!" shouted the Red Queen's driver; "you can't have broken axles! You must keep your foot on it—in the desert!"

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In tremulous tones I said, " And what about brigands? "

" Oh, brigands—Bedouins I " he said lightly, as who should say, " You soon get used to them and their little murdering ways! " " If you can get away—get away—push your toe through the foot-board! But if you can't get away, stop! They may leave you your car, but little else; they won't hurt you if you stop. Of course," he went on, now quite pleasantly, " they hold you up rather neatly these days—with fast cars with machine-guns fitted through their windscreens/ "

He then told of the day when his car and a big motor-bus were attacked. " I got away, because I had plenty of speed, but there were bullets crashing through my wind-screen," he said. " The other chap would have escaped too, but an unlucky bullet killed him. That was in old days before the desert patrol began. Nowadays, it depends upon whether a sheikh needs a new car. A sheikh liked a new tourer we had imported. He took it, and it has never been seen since. But your car ought to be safe," he added kindly; " useless in the desert! "

It occurred to me at this moment to wonder whether Emily's size and lightness really protected her. A sheikh might like to carry her home for his children to play with. I said nothing, however.

There was no object in our waiting at the hotel, and we finally decided to start, to wait at the end of the road for the Red Queen. We passed through the great irrigated area beyond Damascus, where the vegetation appears very luxuriant. The road, tar-sealed, was excellent, and Dick had a chance to try out poor little Emily. She seemed perfectly willing to do anything, and we were greatly comforted.

Quite suddenly, the rich pastures and gardens with their vividly green trees and shrubs ceased; the glorious tarred surface of the road was exchanged for sandy dust as it turned to the south for about half a mile; soon there were no more fences, and the road broke into a fan-like arrangement of many tracks; we were at the gateway of the desert.

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To describe all our sensations during this desert crossing is, of course, out of the question, nor may I dwell with serious detail on our adventures. I choose merely incidents which struck me as interesting or amusing.

We passed over no sand, or very little; the surface was largely fine gravel on hard, rather dusty earth. There was one long, glorious stretch of what appeared to be a white kind of clay left perfectly smooth by rain water, I should imagine, which had nowhere in particular to flow, remaining here until evaporation. There were times when the surface was precisely like a new country road with scoria scattered over it; and strange as it may seem, on a road hundreds of miles wide, there were parts where speeding cars had left maddening corrugations particularly trying for a Baby Austin, and really dangerous when it was necessary to apply all brakes if a *wadi* appeared on the track. Looked at from a height, the desert must appear perfectly flat; but actually it is often undulating, and because everything is magnified in some queer way, the impression is gained that the car is travelling across low hilly country.

There are odd patches of hard, wiry grass, not always burnt brown, and low shrubs resembling the American sage-brush appear. Gazelles are sometimes seen; we saw none. We occasionally saw two or three vultures hanging, it seemed, from the cloudless sky.

During most of the day the world around was one glorious mirage. For many hours we always seemed to be approaching the shores of an immense inland sea of turquoise-blue water, gleaming like quicksilver. Quaint finger-like peninsulas broke its shores, and dotted about were little isles, each with shady trees and palms. The lovely shores of this magic sea were nearly always sheltered by beautiful trees sometimes with overhanging branches which invited one to rest for a space. We could always overhaul the trees; in reality they were shrubs, perhaps a foot high. The charming isles were odd lumps of earth mixed with an assortment of stone and gravel.

**The other cars of the convoy, nearly always ahead, but**

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apparently to one or the other side of us, were also subject to weird distortion. A column of smoke-like dust seemed to rise fifty or sixty feet from them; but you could merely see their bonnets as they tore across that sea of quicksilver, sweeping round the enchanted islets, or avoiding the peninsulas. To watch the bonnet of a car, apparently quite detached from the main body, tear along at a great pace was a very weird sight.

About forty-five miles out from Damascus, we caught up with all the other cars of the convoy at the Franco-Syrian outpost control. Passports were examined here; and the delay of fifteen minutes allowed us to meet some of the passengers. I do not think the stern ladies in the Red Queen left their car; but many of the passengers from the aerial car and the motor-bus came over to admire Emily and to photograph her. I was astonished to discover that most of the passengers making this very difficult and arduous journey were either middle-aged or frail, elderly women. One very nice plump middle-aged lady with a gleaming sunburnt face came over to us and said with a jolly smile, as she looked with great joy on Emily (enough to win our hearts instantly), "That those little wheels can go round so fast! May I take a photograph?"

The outpost was a baked mud building surrounded by a high loop-holed wall, and further defended by very useful barbed-wire entanglements. I should think that life here would be far from jolly, and that a Bedouin attack must be regarded as a delightful change from broiling and sometimes freezing monotony.

Shortly after leaving the outpost, we ran on to that smooth stretch of white earth. The motor-bus could do forty-four miles an hour, but not an inch more; generally it had a great advantage over us in that its six immense wheels with their mighty tyres allowed it to maintain this speed or something near it on even bad country. But on that lovely surface, we could approach nearly sixty; and since the Red Queen carried much of our heavy baggage, Emily was in good trim to do her best.



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Gradually we overhauled the big bus, and sweeping to one side, we ran easily alongside it, to let the plump middle-aged lady admire Emily again, and then bidding the driver an impudent good-bye, we shot ahead and left him. The Red Queen's driver, who had watched this, loved us for it. Rubbing his hands at the midday halt for luncheon he said, "He was pushing his toe through the foot-board! "

"But why——? " I began.

"He can only do forty-four," he explained.

"We can do much more than that, so it wasn't very difficult! "

"Yes, I know," he said with momentary irritation; "it's all right to be passed with a load of passengers by a *car*, but when a little rat dashes past you, it's—well, you could put your foot on a thing like that—but to let it pass you——! " The Red Queen's driver was tremendously pleased.

I managed to put in a remark at this moment to the effect that we were not really delaying him; that we had only been ten minutes behind the convoy at the end of nearly a hundred and fifty miles.

"No! " he admitted grudgingly; "but you've got to stick to it; the desert's not crossed yet."

I knew that, only too well. For hours I foresaw a *wadi*, a hidden *wadi*, into which poor Emily must rush at nearly full speed. She had escaped so many too narrowly; the law of averages left at least one, and disaster! The *wadi* was there, all right—beyond some bad corrugations where Dick dared not pull up suddenly. Emily seemed to rise suddenly from her springs, but she sank back again with a groan and was apparently all right on the far side, and carried on; but she never really recovered. Fortunately this *wadi* was waiting not far from Baghdad; we met it towards the end of the second day.

The convoy paused for luncheon on the side of a low hill. The middle-aged and elderly ladies seemed very tired, although the rosy-cheeked one was still cheery, and **made more** nice remarks about Emily. The two stern

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ladies from the Red Queen sat apart with a carton of sandwiches and a bottle of wine.

When we had finished our luncheon, we asked the Red Queen's driver if we might go on. It seemed a chance to treat Emily decently. He urged us to follow the main track, and off we went. We were expecting to enjoy this run over a track of fine scoria, but we had not travelled more than half a mile when, to our amazement, the little stones on the way seemed to rise before us in a dense cloud.

Locusts! They must have been in countless millions; for three miles, during which we had to slacken speed, often wondering whether we dared go on, the air around was literally thick with them. Thousands died on our windscreen, which became a kettle-drum, and the windscreen wiper proved inadequate to clear away the greeny fluid they left.

The windscreen protected us; but many were drawn on to the tonneau cover, where in desperation they tried to hide in its folds. Many fell behind our seats; but fortunately none, or few, actually landed on us. I noticed that those not hurt used their brains; they always crawled up carefully to the side of the car from whence they took off quite safely. When we unpacked the car, we found very few corpses. I can now believe any tales about plagues of locusts. Those we saw were more than an inch long, and a dark green and black in colour.

We met two French armoured cars on the first half of the journey. They looked very martial indeed, but I should imagine that clever Bedouins could easily evade them, and we were ready always to follow our shepherd's advice. We had been warned not to stop if Bedouins signalled for water—a desert trick; but fortunately during the first day we saw none.

We were considerably startled when an old-fashioned American car swept up alongside us with an ominous-looking machine-gun sticking through its windscreen. This appeared an hour before we reached Rukba Wells. I was certain we were about to be held up; but **the men**

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in **the car** were in khaki uniform, and we guessed **that** they belonged to the Iraqi patrol. Emily interested **them** tremendously, and the car made circles around us. The Red Queen very kindly guessed that we felt slightly insecure, and running alongside of us, her driver reassured us. The country becomes mountainous near Rukba, and the trail enters a valley which seemed to me designed for a hold-up. Tracks were not plain, and for a time we feared we were lost; but once through the valley we saw a romantic-looking fortress with castellated walls, and we were soon entering carefully guarded gates, making for the fortress rest-house. Half of Emily's trial had passed; again she had upheld our honour.

The excellent well at Rukba is carefully guarded. The fortress—it is nothing else—could withstand a siege of many weeks. Except that there is no central tower, or keep, it reminds one of the Tower of London. The great walls form a square about two hundred feet by two hundred feet; the gates are massive, and the walls are further guarded by barbed-wire entanglements.

Clustering around the walls are many Bedouin or Arab dwellings built almost completely of petrol-tins, each filled with heavy stones or earth to keep it steady. The roofs are of canvas or native wool. The Rukba guards are nearly all Arabs, dressed in native robes made of uniform khaki, and they look very smart indeed. Many wore beards, and some of the younger men had golden-coloured beards, which they evidently braid before turning in; they were beautifully frizzy. The flag of Iraq floats above the fortress.

We had a good wash and brush-up in the rest-house, and joined the Nairn passengers at tea. The two stern middle-aged ladies from the Red Queen sat at a table by themselves with a bottle of wine. They must have needed it, poor dears. The plump middle-aged lady, now with a cheery middle-aged man with whom she had made friends on the journey, chatted with us, and made a few more nice remarks about Emily.

We were soon busy pitching **our** tent between the

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walls and the barbed-wire entanglements. Dick began working on Emily, while I thought out the dinner menu. "I think we'll have buttered eggs to-night—for a change I " I said to Dick. "Ha, ha I " laughed he.

We made that joke every night.

The sun had just set, but there was still some light when I entered the fortress gates to get water. I saw the Red Queen's driver jumping into his seat. "A man and a woman lost I " he explained, and dashed off across the quadrangle to the gates.

I made inquiries. The plump middle-aged lady and the cheery middle-aged man had gone to watch the sunset from a nearby hill. They had not returned, and a good deal of anxiety was felt for them. Other cars began rushing out through the gates.

Back at our camp I told Dick the bad news. He was, of course, very sorry; but he was able to carry on with his job. But for me, the thought of scrambling eggs and preparing dinner while those good people were in great danger, and yet so near, was almost impossible. A bright light was now shining hopefully from the fortress flag-staff, and we could see the headlights of the search cars sweeping the desert in every direction.

I said to Dick, "Unless the headlights actually pick them up the cars may pass within a few yards of them, and not see them, or hear their cries."

I had no interest now in food, but Dick, busily overhauling Emily for her next day's trial, had to be thought of, and I continued breaking the eggs into the saucepan. I instantly deserted the kitchen when I saw the three cars returning.

No, the lost man and woman had not been found, and nothing more could be done until daylight.

I cannot recall ever feeling more distressed. I think because I had sensed a threat in the desert all day. I could see that unhappy middle-aged lady and her steady man-friend wandering about hopelessly, she now without a cheerful glow in her happy eyes, and he trying to comfort her. I imagined them wandering farther and farther away

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from help. I prayed for them, even while I pumped the petrol stove. " Oh, God, give them common sense; let them stand still, and wait. It's getting cold; if they want to keep warm, let them run in small circles! "

Writing calmly at this moment, with no desire to be sentimental or sensational, I am amused at my emotion. I believe that the desert had subconsciously frightened me, and this was an outlet. Nevertheless, our friends were in very real danger.

The scrambled eggs were finished; the meal was more or less ready. I gave Dick a little warm water to remove the worst of the oil from his hands, and we began eating, trying not to think too much about the man and woman; but the desert in the dim starlight looked very menacing. I thought of the mirages of the day, of the gleaming panorama of superb beauty which had charmed us. Now the desert was a terrifying reality.

I was aimlessly washing the dishes—Dick had returned to Emily—when the headlights of a car swept round towards the gates. I rushed over. It was only a native service car from Damascus laden with turbaned men. I waited. Another car appeared. It paused at the gates. Sitting with the driver was the ruddy-faced middle-aged lady.

" You're found! " I shouted; "but where's your boyfriend? "

" Oh, I'm here," said the middle-aged man from amongst an assortment of turbans.

They had been seriously lost, but had happily stumbled upon the main trail west of Rukba, and here the native car had picked them up. We gathered the next day that the Red Queen's driver's feelings about this incident were very definite. " Old fools! " he growled, but " old " was not the only adjective he used. " At their age, too I " he added; and from this I gathered that the desert journey had inspired a nice little romance.

At midnight the motor-bus and the aerial car continued their journey to Baghdad; we left at dawn with the Red Queen. The trail was much the same, although perhaps

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it was slightly more like a vast ash-heap east of Rukba. We followed the railway survey for part of the journey, and the going here was slightly better. Towards midday, it became excessively hot, and we had a puncture; but the spare wheel was on before the Red Queen could return to us.

At the luncheon pause I imagined that the two stern ladies would chat with us; but they withdrew to a safe position twenty yards off where they drew forth another bottle of wine. "I am certain," I said to myself, "that these good women would like to offer us a nip from the bottle; they have probably only enough for themselves; we must be ready to refuse firmly and politely if they do!"

Dick had just emptied a fresh tin of petrol into Emily's tank—we had bought this at Rukba—when I saw one of the stern ladies approaching with a bottle.

Dick's empty tin seemed strangely valuable in that mighty waste; it seemed a pity to throw it away. Dick must have felt this, for he still held the empty tin in his hands when the stern lady reached us.

"Is this any use to you?" she asked, holding out the bottle. "I thought er—it seemed a pity to throw it away."

We might have replied, "Thanks! Would you like our petrol-tin?" Both were empty. We thanked the good woman with tolerable composure, but were quite unable to accept the empty bottle. In which we failed very badly, for the offer was meant kindly.

I think these good women felt far from secure. After all, they were alone in a mighty desert with three strange men, who could have murdered and robbed them and left them to the vultures without much danger of being found out. I am certain they were taking no chances.

Towards four o'clock we saw palms, real palms, on the horizon. Soon we were in Ramadi, the Iraqi outpost, where they examined our passports. Another sixty miles, partly across a mild desert, but often on a tar-sealed road, brought us to West Baghdad, which we entered an hour after the Euphrates broke over her mud banks and made the road we had passed over quite impassable.

We had run along the banks of the Euphrates; we had

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crossed it on a punt manned by very unpleasant Arabs who hated us when they found we could only pay them in Syrian money; but in spite, the Euphrates seemed not particularly interesting, although we were geographically delighted to see it.

The Iraqi customs officials were decidedly sticky, and wanted to hold Emily at the Baghdad customs office over the week-end until they could finish the formalities; but the Red Queen's driver composed the difficulty for us, and upon our agreeing not to use the car after she had reached the Nairn Transport office in Baghdad, we were allowed to continue the journey across the Tigris on the Maude Bridge, a wonderful bridge of pontoons, into old Baghdad.

## CHAPTER NINETEEN



### BAGHDAD AND BEYOND

**S**INCE our visit to Baghdad, I have read Gertrude Bell's two volumes of letters. Incidentally, I mentioned Gertrude Bell to a friend in London, a man of moderate education and some business prominence. "Gertrude Bell!" he replied; "I knew Gertrude Millar; who is Gertrude Bell? I don't know her!"

And I have to confess, with honest shame, that until I walked through the museum at Baghdad, I knew nothing whatever about Gertrude Bell. I know now that she must be numbered amongst the great British women of all time. Her work in Arabia was perhaps less picturesque than that of Lawrence; as a woman amongst Moham-medans she had to overcome serious limitations and prejudice; but the kings and chiefs joined with the poorest peasants in loving and respecting her. She is called the king-maker of Iraq, but she is much more than that; she is the mother of a nation.

In 1914 Gertrude Bell was a middle-aged woman with rather a specialized reputation as an archaeologist and a traveller in Arabia. When the importance of Arabia was appreciated, she was withdrawn from Red Cross nursing in France and sent to Cairo on intelligence work. Later, she moved to Basra, and after the fall of Baghdad, she was given some kind of an appointment there, and her most significant work commenced. Her personal knowledge of and actual friendship with the great chiefs and sheikhs of Arabia were of incalculable value to our army in Mesopotamia. She, presumably, promised her Arabian and Iraqi friends independence when once the Turk had been driven out; therefore, when the war had ended, she



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felt it her duty to see that all promises were kept. She never doubted the word of her country; the difficulty was to make the fulfilling of these promises possible and useful. To abandon Iraq to its own devices immediately after the war was out of the question. The people of Mesopotamia are an amazing mixture of race and creed. There are Sunni Mohammedans who are tractable and Shia Mohammedans who are not, and who hate the Sunnis as Roman Catholics sometimes hate Protestants; there are Jews who have lived here since Abraham's day, and others since the days of the captivity; there are Christian sects and semi-Christian sects, and there are even devil-worshippers. With the magic of her great love and understanding, Gertrude Bell welded this mass into a nation; and to-day Iraq is an independent kingdom. The Foreign Office is convinced, as our High Commissioner was, that Iraq can now stand alone. An Arabian nation, ruled by an Arab king, was Gertrude Bell's dream. She died in Baghdad a few years ago, fortunately knowing that her dream would shortly be realized. To read her letters is to make a friend, a friend who is simple and charming, with a great understanding and of a good courage.

My first impression was that we were being very weak there, allowing ourselves to be over-ridden by the natives we had saved, in saving ourselves, of course, from the Turk.

That uncomfortable newly-born national spirit broods all over Mesopotamia, and with emphasis in Baghdad. Young Englishmen employed there say a little bitterly, and contemptuously, "We shall simply have to clear out! They don't want us here! "

And I think the latter remark is true; we are not wanted as masters. I am convinced, however, that we are wanted as friends. Some of the most brilliant British brains have been used in Iraq teaching the people to rule themselves. The police force, trained by a British colonel, is the best turned out and most efficient force of its kind I have ever come across; and no traffic cops in the world that I have seen look smarter, or attend to their work

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better, **than** the Iraqi men. We have **been teaching Iraq** to walk in the world as a nation; she is adolescent at **the** moment, and therefore difficult and annoying to those who do not really understand. And we cannot really complain if she wants to walk alone.

It will be interesting to see how she manages. My own impression is that the time is not yet ripe, that she still needs, and will continue to need, British advice and help. Presumably she will get it. It is hard for a Briton to look at a subject like this fairly and honestly. We are nearly all Imperialistic; few of us like to see our hold over a country completely released.

I had lost my passport soon after I had shown it to the Baghdad officials; therefore most of Monday morning had to be spent negotiating a new one, first with the British Consul and then with the Persian Consul, whose *visa* I needed. It was an exhausting business, notably with the Persian official, who had to be persuaded to occupy only two hours in writing a few remarks in the passport and adding a stamp or two, instead of the two days he was usually given.

While waiting for the passport, I saw the Baghdad Museum, Gertrude Bell's memorial. It is a very wonderful museum, of course; but I think one has to be interested in archaeology really to appreciate it. I thought the body of an ancient Babylonian queen the most exciting exhibit. Her face, which had not smiled for thousands of years, was dark brown and leathery and seriously mixed up with earth; but her golden crown still gleamed in parts, and its graceful pattern showed that it must have looked very nice indeed when it was placed there. Large numbers of local people of all races were visiting the museum, **and** they seemed deeply interested.

I wandered through the bazaars, which in **Baghdad** appear rather derelict. I found the narrow street **occupied** by the Subbis most interesting.

**The** Subbis are **a** curious race. They place **John the Baptist before Christ** and **spend much of their spare time**

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being baptized, as far as I could gather. To remain pure, a Subbi must be baptized many times during the year. These people manufacture silverware of all kinds, but Subbi work is distinguished by charming little pictures inlaid with antimony on the coffee-pots, teapots, jugs, trays and cigarette-cases they make—dainty little palms whose leaves seem to be rustling in a breeze, little rivers whose waters are running gently, or camels, perhaps, just about to kneel at an oasis—all exquisitely limned in very dark grey.

The Subbis lead a very serious life; low speaking is a virtue with them, yet all good Subbis must wear an expression of permanent gaiety on their handsome faces. I was told that they live near the banks of the Tigris, which they find useful for baptizing.

The Subbis look like ordinary Arabs to a stranger. Dick, who was strolling down their narrow street of little workshops, photographed a group of them. One could speak English, and thanked him very charmingly in his gentle voice, while the others smiled upon Dick with much joy in their eyes. Not knowing the Subbi tenets, Dick thought he had made a great hit, and I think hoped for a small present in the way of an inlaid cigarette-case when he returned with prints of the photograph. He was given many cheerful smiles and soft-spoken thanks, but no cigarette-case.

I had not time to visit any of the Baghdad mosques. Their blue-tiled domes and minarets give Baghdad that Arabian Night atmosphere which one expects, but this atmosphere is not very overwhelming.

It takes more than two or three days to find the old city more than a rather shabby old Eastern town. The Tigris was in spate, rushing furiously against the pontoons of the Maude Bridge; but except that it rushed, as a great river it seemed no more interesting to me than the Thames in its journey through London—the Thames without much shipping and without London, but still seriously discoloured.

British influence in Iraq, while very real and strong, was not very apparent. The then High Commissioner,

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now the Minister, lives in a large house in West Baghdad, with a picturesque guard of Kurds who wear putties, shorts and ordinary tunics and the Australian military felt hat, turned up at the side and decorated with a big scarlet rosette. The British Consul's office is at the end of the High Commissioner's compound. Heads of departments are evidently British officials, or Iraqis advised by such. The Union Jack is seldom seen. Men of the Air Force are occasionally seen in Baghdad. The business language is English, and the Indian rupee is at the moment the national coinage. Since the Indian rupee is backed by the British Treasury, it remains stable and is regarded with great respect in the bazaar, while Syrian and Persian money, although of commercial interest, is slightly despised.

We were fortunate enough to meet a British Public Works official, and he very thoughtfully gave us an open letter to present to officers on the way through to the Persian frontier.

Emily was released by the customs at noon on the Tuesday, and we were soon driving to the eastward across a plain literally as flat as a pancake, but perhaps more like a Highland oatcake than a pancake.

The country became more fertile in the neighbourhood of Bakobah near the Dijala River, which we reached after dark, spreading our tent in the railway station enclosure there. The station-master, a polite Jew, offered us accommodation in his own quaint little house, which had been a British officer's dug-out during the war, but fearing to disturb him by rising early the next morning, we decided to use our own tent. The railway station was effectively guarded with sentries on duty all night; indeed, all this part of Iraq seems prepared for anything.

We found the country more interesting the next morning. The land is evidently fertile and the water supply good. We reached Khanakin before noon, and paused here to meet a British official whose office, a series of vaulted rooms, seemed to have been carved out of an immense chunk of baked **mud**. **The bazaar** at Khanakin

## BAGHDAD AND BEYOND

was cheerful, offering a goodly supply of dates, which at first were attractive until we saw how very much countless flies appreciated them. For a very small sum we bought two dozen immense oranges, which we placed on the floor of the car ready for a good feed on the open road.

The baked-mud houses of Khanakin are quaint and interesting in themselves with their flat roofs rising and falling in terraces; but they were particularly interesting to us because of the storks who lived on them. Nearly every house had at least one immense nest on its flat roof, and on each nest sat a deeply thoughtful stork. Evidently they are not disturbed by the inhabitants; their prideful, if contemplative, attitude would seem to suggest that they regard the houses as built entirely for their convenience.

Following instructions from our Khanakin friend, we motored on to Kachal-Kachal, the frontier post and railway terminus of Iraq. Formalities here occupied but a few minutes, and when we were ready to cross into Persia, whose mountains could be seen rising before us, an Iraqi official decided to accompany us in his own car, to see us safely through, as he explained.

A short drive across what was left of the Mesopotamian plain brought us to a defile in the first rocky hills to the east of us. Nestling on a small plateau was the Persian customs post of Khosrovi. With the Iraqi official to guide us—evidently they help each other out occasionally—all went well.

We left Khosrovi and began negotiating a fair metal road up through the bare rocky hills to the Irani Plateau.

## CHAPTER TWENTY



### PERSIA

WE travelled seventeen hundred miles in Persia in ten travel days. We paused for two days in Teheran and two days in Mechid. I had known something of Persian cats, but nothing about Persia or the Persians. At the moment I can only hope to interest those who are as ignorant as I was. I will try very hard not to wound the sensibilities of people who know, or are seriously interested in Persia.

To begin with: Persia is *not* a British Protectorate. Since the Anglo-Persian oil contretemps most people realize that, but Dick and I had thought it was! It very nearly became one after the war, as far as I could gather, when the weak wandering Shah spent so much of his time in Europe, and Paris in particular. But Persia was saved for the Persians when Raza Khan, once a Cossack, strode boldly across the military and political field, and having changed his name to Raza Shah Pahlavi, and taken steps to inform the old Shah that he need not return, said, "I m in charge here! "

The addition of "Pahlavi" to his name is the only claim Raza Khan can make to royal descent, for *pahlavi* means "royal," and was a name borne by an ancient Persian dynasty. A claim to royal descent in Persia, however, is easier to maintain than in England; even a temperate shah had many, many more wives than Henry VIII and hundreds more children! The assumption of royalty by a man strong enough to assume it does not startle Persia, and Raza Shah Pahlavi is a very strong man, and something of a character. He reminds one of Queen Elizabeth, although his remarks are more picturesque and lurid than the traditional sayings of the Virgin Queen.

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When an officer of high military or political rank annoys the Shah, his Majesty is not content merely to frown and then to write a bitter dispatch. He sends for the offender and hisses, "*Pidar sukhta!*" and spits in his face.

*Pidar sukhta* means "burnt father," a shocking remark which suggests that one's father is burning in hell.

He said, and did this, on the parade ground near Teheran when his chief of staff was thrown from his horse at a critical moment during a review of his new army. Before the wretched general could get up from the ground the Shah was bending over him, a very angry Shah indeed, because the *corps diplomatique* had been invited to admire his pet army, and he was well aware of their amusement.

Some time before we entered Persia two motor-lorries were held up and robbed between Kermanshah and Hamadan. Since the Shah is justly proud of the fact that for the first time in Persian history Persian highways have been safe, this was a serious blow. His Majesty jumped into his car and drove at terrific speed to the office of the Chief of Police at Kermanshah. "*Pidar sukhta!*" hissed the Shah, dragging the policeman's epaulettes from his shoulders; "you're here to keep your roads safe; you're dismissed—*pidar sukhta!*" Thereupon he kicked him on the most convenient place, and spat on him, into his mouth, I regret to say!

Nevertheless, we gained an impression of a perfectly just, strong man, and in many ways an attractive man. I heard only yesterday of a German doctor who had fallen on evil days writing to Raza Shah Pahlavi and reminding him that he had given him medical attention in Russia in his Cossack days. The German doctor—I cannot vouch for the truth of this story, but I have no reason to doubt it—is now Lord High Doctor of the Persian Empire.

I might whisper here that the only person in the world who can make the Shah tremble is his wife, his only wife, now a middle-aged woman, to whom he is completely devoted.

Without any doubt her influence would long before

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this have freed the Persian women from their many social disadvantages if the experiment in Afghanistan had been more successful, although many Persian ladies thought Amanullah's queen rather brazen when she passed through Teheran.

A merchant in the bazaar at Mechid offered us a mid-Victorian coloured print of a brunette lady in a ballet dress which he called *antika*. Our guide explained that when the first Shah of Persia visited England (the fellow about whom all the funny stories were told years ago), he thought the ladies of the ballet at Covent Garden looked very nice, and he gave orders that the women of his seraglio should be dressed in this fashion. Imagine the dear old Shah with a ballet all to himself, women, of course, of all ages, and many, possibly, with legs more suited to flowing Oriental dress! His orders were naturally obeyed and the fashion followed by his courtiers; and to-day (or until recently) very old-fashioned and conservative Persian ladies wear ballet skirts. I had no means of proving this.

Emily carried us from the frontier to Teheran, a distance of nearly five hundred miles, in slightly less than four days. In that journey we climbed up on to the Iranian Plateau, from four to six thousand feet above sea-level, on a road which was fortunately fairly good. This road was made by the British and Russians during the war, and the work put into it then was so good that by playing about with it a little the Persians can still keep it fair.

We climbed the first step from Khosrovi to Kasr-i-Shirin, not a very obvious climb through a series of great valleys surrounded by mighty mountains utterly bare of vegetation, their forbidding and sombre aspect sometimes relieved when the higher peaks were covered with snow. A little wheat and barley were growing in the valleys; in some parts of the country the Persians can steal a light harvest from the almost dry years; but the world around was really semi-arid, relieved occasionally by odd areas of rich cultivation evidently surrounding wells or *kanats*. We paused for a few moments in Kasr-i-Shirin to buy bread.

We began the main climb to the great plateau in the



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late afternoon, beginning, surely, the sternest climb a heavily laden Baby Austin has ever been asked to attempt. Emily ground her way up on low gear, but the contest was made much more unequal by the strings of donkeys, camels, mules, horses, and pedestrian tribesmen then migrating from the western deserts to the cooler Persian country. They, the donkeys notably, sprawled across the road, and we were frequently forced to reduce speed on steep pinches, fatal for a car of low horse-power.

Although the donkeys were very naughty indeed, we were sorry for them when it was necessary practically to force them off the road on to the crumbling embankment from which they had to struggle back with their cruel loads. The donkeys seemed unconcerned, but the chickens, ducks and geese quite at home in the wicker baskets on the donkey's backs, protested volubly, the geese in particular sticking forth their long necks and hissing at us.

The Nomads—bare-footed men and women, the former most often in the *pahlavi* cap and wearing long tunics bound with a belt, and the latter usually unveiled with a shawl over their heads and clad in full cotton skirts—seemed not unfriendly; although had I been a weary Nomad, forced to shove and bustle my caravan on a steep pinch to permit a car to hurry on, I should have flung "*Pidar sukhta!*" at that car with vicious enthusiasm.

The caravans had rested, fortunately, when we began the really serious climb at the Paitak Pass in darkness. We were quite frightened of brigands—I was, anyway—when the great dark mountains enfolded us, but we wanted to reach Kermanshah that night.

As we ascended, the road became wet and occasionally skiddy; often I had to leap from my seat, partially to relieve poor Emily's struggle; sometimes I lent her a hand around bends; but she reached the top safely and here we paused to allow her radiator to cool.

It was too dark to see much; we merely caught vague glimpses of the snow-covered peaks around us. This pass is only possible during the late spring, summer, and early autumn. We reached Kermanshah towards midnight.

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We were held up most of the morning in Kermanshah by the police, but this gave us some opportunity to see a little of a Persian town and much, too much, of the local beggars.

A Persian town is built largely of sun-baked mud as far as I could see. Where sun-baked mud is protected from rain, it can be shaped and moulded into architectural forms which are beautiful in their simplicity; therefore, while exteriors in Persia give an impression of dripping candles, and dusty untidiness, interiors appear firm, graceful, clean and convenient. The more important buildings like the mosques and palaces are protected with beautiful tile-work.

The beggars ruined Persia for me. We could never pause, anywhere, without being instantly surrounded by human monstrosities, poor wretches in the last stages of human decay, holding out filthy, diseased, and bony fingers, while they moaned for aid. The air around them became foul and noisome; but relief could never be gained by giving them money. Charity to three or four beggars only produced a dozen more, even more vile-looking and evil-smelling. Places of interest where tourists pause are infested with these poor creatures; they drove us from the famous rock inscriptions at Taq-i-Bastan, between Kermanshah and Hamadan, and we were most eager to examine these.

While Dick was struggling with the police in Kermanshah, I was left to guard Emily in the square. A kindly gendarme gave me some protection from beggars, and made it possible to walk about. Here the shops are conventional enough if rather shabby and not worthy of note. The men were often bare-footed and clad in European dress, and always with the *pahlavi* hat—a hat, a pill-box with a peak, designed by the shah as a national head-gear which all males must wear and which makes Persia appear a nation of retired station-masters. Most of them were seriously due for a shave. There was one very old man who appeared like a very long-retired station-master on the smallest pension who strolled about with a rooster under

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his arm. Occasionally he allowed the rooster to hop down on to the road when there was any food about, but having fed, the rooster invariably hopped back with a happy cluck to the arm of his friend. I gave the old man a few coins and was introduced to the rooster who responded amiably. We all became great friends when I bought the rooster a small packet of rice.

Hamadan was a hundred and seventeen miles ahead of us, rather a long journey for an afternoon's run, but we decided to make the attempt. At the luncheon halt Dick examined Emily's rear springs. "I thought so," he said; "come and have a look!" One of the spring leaves had snapped. It was the first instalment we had to pay that *wadi* in the Syrian Desert; perhaps we were paying for our cruelty to the little car in overloading her on the journey through Europe; possibly the startling changes in temperature the steel was forced to suffer helped; at any rate, from this sad moment until the end of our journey we never ceased to be spring-conscious.

We bound the spring with string and carried on, reaching Hamadan towards midnight and now very eager to reach Teheran and a good workshop.

Alas we saw practically nothing of Hamadan. We spent the night in one of the two or three decent hotels in Persia—a beautiful, cloister-like building forming a quadrangle around a plantation of beautiful trees and odd little gardens of roses near pleasant pools. We should like to have visited Queen Esther and her Uncle Mordecai's tombs near here, but it was necessary to push on. We left Hamadan before seven the next morning, determined to reach Teheran that night.

About twenty miles north-east of Hamadan, near the centre of a great plain surrounded by tall dark mountains, nearly all of Emily's rear springs snapped, and she sat heavily down on her rear axle.

We should, of course, have struggled back to Hamadan where there is a garage; but Dick and I do not like turning back. We actually reached Teheran at three o'clock the next morning, after poor, crippled little Emily had

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struggled over two hundred and forty miles of not always good road, and some of it mountainous, with her rear springs bound with hundreds of yards of string. It takes a Baby Austin to do—just that!

The story of that section of our journey is much more interesting to Dick and me than it can possibly be to anyone else. We shall not easily forget it.

It was late in the afternoon before we were ready to start, after the string-binding bee, and from then until we reached the capital our minds were concentrated on those wrecked springs, always expecting another collapse.

I met a tabby cat once who had unfortunately been run over by a tricycle. The fore half of this cat was quite gay and active; the rear half, including the tail, trailed uselessly behind. Emily's condition was similar. The cat recovered; and so did Emily, of course!

Our speed had to be seriously limited, and how very slowly the speedometer piled up the miles, two hundred and forty of them; it was awful!

Still, there were interesting moments. We bought a score of delicious oranges in Kazvin for three krans, slightly more than sixpence, and they helped a good many miles to pass more happily, and we rested for an hour near the highway in the darkness to prepare a meal, an island of peace in a sea of anxiety. And about ten miles from Teheran we paused at a *chia khanah* and drank delicious tea served in small glasses. *Chia*, pronounced apparently "chi," is tea, and the Persians know precisely how to make it.

I have no idea why Persian tea should be stimulating. It is very weak tea, heavily sweetened and served hot in little glasses without milk. *Chia khanahs* occur at intervals on Persian roads; they are sometimes rustic-looking arbours with rough stools and tables; more often they are baked-mud houses with sheltering verandas.

A Persian gendarme on the road to Mechid a little later watched me put three teaspoonfuls of tea into our billy-can. " *Chia! chia!* " he exclaimed in mingled disgust and

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interest, trying not to laugh, and when he made an attempt to drink some with milk, he failed, and spat it out on the ground. On the other hand, we learnt to like Persian tea, and often invested a farthing or two at a *chia khanah*.

And the road within a few miles of Teheran became mysteriously interesting in the darkness. On each side of us, for miles of the way, were long strings of camels carrying produce to the morning market.

The streets of the capital were utterly deserted when we entered; not knowing a word of Persian we had something of a job to explain to the police what we wanted. By repeating "hotel" a good many times, one bright policeman understood us. "Gran-otel?" he asked, and we expressed an affirmative by repeating the word, because we did not yet know whether a nod in Persia means yes or no. Had we nodded, and had a nod expressed a negative, the policemen would have been confused and we should have-spent the night on the street!

The Grand Hotel at Teheran appeared entrancing in the moonlight, with its cloisters and gay carpets, and the room we were given was tolerably clean; but our friends, whom we met the next day, urged us to move at once because, as they said, "The Grand has had its day!" A little experience at breakfast, and an inspection of the sanitary arrangements, showed us that they were right. Hotels in Persia are apparently possible during the first few years of their life; after that they fall badly away and become unattractive to European noses and palates. This, we were told, does not apply to the hotel in Hamadan, which always remains decent.

Emily's springs were welded in Teheran, thanks to the officials of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company who placed a workshop and a good mechanic at Dick's disposal; and we had a little time to look about us.

The position of Teheran near the foothills of the Elburz Mountains is beautiful. The higher peaks are capped with snow, notably that of Mount Demavend upon whose nearer slopes, about six miles from **the capital and**

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seven hundred feet higher, is Gulahek, the summer home of the foreign ministers.

Seen from its wide streets, Teheran is a strange hotch-potch of the slightly old, the mid-Victorian and the ugly modern. The roads in the actual town are unpaved, with a much less comfortable surface than that of the highway from the frontier. There are open spaces and large buildings of nondescript architecture, and ordinary provincial town shops. The embassies and legations are hidden behind high walls enclosing, as in the case of the British Legation, magnificent plantations of beautiful trees usually occupying much more than an ordinary town square. Within this compound, the consular and legation officials live in charming houses, their size and importance depending on the rank of their occupants. Seen in England, these compounds might be thought charming enough, but when entered from the shabby streets of Teheran, they have the effect of paradise on a weary traveller. The Russian Legation is said to rival the British in beauty and magnificence, but it is now occupied by what our English friends in Teheran called "Bolos," and is apparently "not done! "

One of our Anglo-Persian Oil Company friends gave us luncheon in his Persian house. We ate chicken in different forms, and curiously cooked vegetables. Rice seemed to be the main foundation of the meal, served unsweetened with the chicken, and sweetened, and dyed with saffron, for the sweet course. The scrapings from the pie-dish, in brown and gold shavings, were served on little dishes. We drank Persian wine, and were assured by our host that if we had enjoyed our meal we must make what the small boy called "excuse me noises" as a compliment to him. Dick's gratitude was evidently of the deepest. To make "excuse me noises" is a delicate mark of appreciation in a Persian guest.

After luncheon we motored to the Shah's Teheran Palace, which he merely uses for ceremonial occasions, preferring to live in a large modern house in the suburbs. We passed through a series of beautiful rooms of good

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proportions, whose walls and ceilings were lined in graceful patterns with exquisite looking-glass work, each section of mirror being but a few inches long, and the whole delicately traced over with a design in plaster of Paris. The gleaming effect can be imagined when it is known that not one single inch of the walls and ceilings of the great rooms were free of this work. A massive candelabra of shining crystal hung from each ceiling; the chimney-pieces were white marble decorated with two or three Sevres vases. The rugs on the parquet floor were, of course, magnificent.

We eventually entered the great throne-room and saw the Peacock Throne, surely the most exquisite piece of human workmanship in the world, of beaten gold, of course, set with immense emeralds and other gleaming jewels. It has been described so often that I do not propose to describe it here. In glass cases around the room were many jewels and much valuable old china; but most of the best treasure was then in London at the Persian Exhibition.

There were magnificent rugs in all the rooms. Before this journey a carpet was merely a carpet to me, something which made a room cosy; but I had not been long in Persia before I began taking quite a serious interest in rugs. All English people in Persia are interested in rugs, and it is not considered a bit rude to bend down to admire, and to feel critically, a rug on the floor of one's host. The carpet merchants in the bazaars are always delighted to have their rugs examined, and they don't mind a bit if you walk over them with muddy feet. I was told that they sometimes spread them on the ground outside their stalls for the donkeys to trample on; Persian rugs improve with age. They are very expensive in Persia; I have been told that much better and much cheaper pre-aniline dye rugs may be bought in London.

We motored one afternoon to Gulahek, the legation summer station, and spent a few minutes in the British Legation gardens. They are very, very beautiful. I saw the pool where Gertrude Bell used to bathe in icy water

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when she stayed here a good many years ago. I imagine that in this garden she conceived the notion of translating some of the poetry of Hafiz, whose reputation in Persia far, far, transcends that of Omar Khayyam. The charm of these Persian gardens is very real, but some of it is the effect of contrast. The short journey from the capital to Gulahek is through desert; Teheran is surrounded by miles and miles of desert. The effect is obvious when one leaves a hot, dusty road to enter a vast plantation of radiantly green trees with charming houses here and there, with beautiful pools of clear water in tanks lined with blue tiles, and gardens of gay flowers which seem not to be distressed by the shade. I always think of that glorious garden in Gulahek and of Gertrude Bell when those lines of Hafiz, written after the death of his son centuries ago, come back to my mind. The translation is Gertrude Bell's.

*Light of mine eyes and harvest of my heart,  
And mine, at least, in changeless memory!  
Ah! when he found it easy to depart,  
He left the harder pilgrimage to me!  
Oh, camel driver, though the cordage start,  
For God's sake help me lift my fallen load,  
And pity be the comrade of the road.*

But there, I dare not go wandering on about Persia. Even my impressions would fill a small volume, and Baluchistan, India, Malaya and the vast continent of Australia have yet to be crossed before I may say good-bye.

We left Teheran late on the Monday afternoon, and motored due east to Mehid, where we spent the week-end with the British Consul-General. We then turned due south and followed the Afghanistan frontier to Duzdab, the terminus of the railway from India. From Duzdab we passed into Baluchistan. The total distance from Teheran was 1,209 miles.

I think it best not to dwell on the adventures of each day, contenting myself, and my patient readers, I hope,



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merely by relating odd incidents and telling what little else I know of Persia.

We drew up at a *chia khanah* near the mouth of a *kanat* shortly after dusk that first night out from Teheran, and politely refusing the use of one of the cubicles reserved for travellers, we pitched our tent. I was preparing dinner when a gracefully built, dark young fellow came over to us and said, "Oh, good-bye!" He then shook our hands and said proudly, "I er—British!"

He wore a dark beret which suited his fine features admirably, and although his European clothing was travel-soiled, it could be seen that he took some pride in his appearance. His English was charming, coming in fits and starts. I think he saw that shyness was seriously reducing his vocabulary, and he tried to combat this by dashing at sentences with, unfortunately, not always good results. When the end of a quite well-begun sentence eluded him, he frowned and said, "Oh, damn I."

He told us that his name was Yacoob (Jacob), that he was an Arab from Jerusalem, that he had driven a motor-lorry through from Bombay, and that he was now on his way back to Jerusalem. If it is true that he drove that motor-lorry through from Bombay, he very cleverly eluded the customs people at Duzdab, for they knew nothing about him there when we inquired; but I wanted to believe Jacob's story because I liked him so much.

He was very interested in my cooking (scrambled eggs, for a change!), and tried to be of use by dashing back to his lorry and returning with fourteen eggs which he placed near the stove. A very sombre light crept into his handsome eyes when I made a slight gesture towards paying for these, and I then tried to explain that I thought he had bought them for us at the *chia khanah*. In need of common soap for washing clothes, I asked him if soap could be bought at the *khanah*. He disappeared instantly and returned with his own cake of highly scented soap and a face towel, which he made Dick use. All efforts to make him some return failed; but he drank tea with us and ate a little bread.

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He remained with us after dinner until we turned in, giving his political opinions, which seemed based almost entirely upon a fierce hatred of what he called the "Yudis," the Jews in Palestine. His dislike of the Irani (Persians), notably the police in the towns, was only slightly less deep-seated. He admitted, quite casually, and here I hope Jacob lied, that he had slit the throats of seven Jews, and he hoped to slit more. His boyish *naivete* when he made this blood-curdling confession almost made me regard it in the light of—"Well, boys will be boys!" For the British his love was complete! He said it was, anyway.

In the morning we bathed in the icy cold water at the mouth of the *kanat*.

These Persian *kanats* are very interesting. The rainfall in Persia is negligible. From eight to ten months in the year the sky is cloudless, or nearly so; rivers and streams soon dry up in the fierce heat of the sun.

Choosing a spot on high ground near the foothills of the mountains where water is likely to accumulate underground, the *kanat* diggers—they are a guild or clan in Persia—dig a well sometimes four hundred feet deep to a good flow of water. They then dig another well twenty or thirty yards farther down the slope in the direction they desire the stream to follow. The two wells are connected by a small tunnel. They continue digging these wells, sometimes for many miles, always connecting them with a tunnel; but, of course, the depth of the wells becomes less as they progress to the plain. Finally, the water flows forth on the surface, and here you have a village surrounded by cultivations of barley, wheat and poppies, and sheltered by shady trees.

AH the work is done by hand with the simplest of tools, and the earth is brought to the surface in small baskets. All over Persia great mounds of earth can be seen following the course of the *kanats*. They are like gigantic mole-hills.

We passed beautiful old caravanserais, fast falling into utter ruin, for the pilgrimage to Mechid, along the main

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roads, anyway, is made these days in motor-lorries. The caravanserais have outlived their use.

We always arranged to camp near gendarme posts which occur at intervals of about fifteen miles, invariably finding the soldiers courteous and helpful.

We passed through towns and villages, some of great archaeological interest, but a closed book to us; the road, which most often passed over and through hard, bare, mountainous country, occasionally swept through small valleys where shady trees, with their roots not too far from a *kanat*, offered a slight change.

Eighty miles from Mechid, we spent the night at a large modern motor caravanserai, differing very little from an American auto-camp. For a few krans we were given the use of a small plastered room furnished with a chair or two, a table and two bed frames with woven hemp mattresses. The caravanserai had a large kitchen, a cursory inspection of which showed it to be perfectly clean. We decided to try a meat dish, and I ordered *goosht*, which was duly brought by the cook from the kitchen in a large bowl. Dick thought he smelt garlic and refused to have any. " *Goosht, goosht—goosht!* " urged the cook, holding the bowl under Dick's nose. Dick, I regret to say, told him to go to hell! I found the stew delicious.

We were awakened after midnight by the arrival of two motor-lorries full of pilgrims from Mechid. Each lorry held about forty men and women, who began fighting and screaming the moment their bedding was unloaded. Never was such a din; for more than an hour eighty men and women yelled and screamed at the top of their voices. The battle recommenced at seven the next morning when the lorries were being loaded; I have no idea what the dispute was over, but a mad-house full of violent lunatics could not make more noise. Once settled in the lorry, the pilgrims became perfectly calm, and they went off singing responses to a chant led by one of their number perched on the back of the car with his feet dangling over the tail-board!

We were near Nishapur and the tomb of Omar Khay-

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yam, but we dared not spare a day to see it. Persians who love Sadi and Hafiz wonder at Omar's great reputation in Europe; they give great credit to FitzGerald's translation and suggest that had FitzGerald translated Sadi and Hafiz people in Europe would feel as they feel.

Mechid looked charming from the hill. We were facing a mighty valley with great mountains on its far side, and near the centre of the plain a gleaming golden dome shone in the sunlight surrounded by turquoise blue domes and graceful minarets.

At the base of the mountain we had to cross a fiercely running creek, nearly of the proportions of a river. The crossing was a little risky for a small car, and I doubt if we would have made it had we known that a big car had overturned in it a few days earlier, drowning two of its occupants.

Mechid was less charming when we had entered its crumbling walls. In a street of apparently tottering, baked-mud houses we were stopped by the police and our passports demanded. We could cope with the police much better than with the dozens of beggars who instantly surrounded the car. The policeman refused to return us our passports, and since we had some idea of going on that afternoon, we objected to their confiscation.

A serious row was developing; more beggars were gathering around us, thrusting leprous hands under our noses and showing their foul diseases and deformities; it was very dusty, and it was also very hot; soon we were seriously distressed, and furious with the police. The situation was aggravated by the fact that our communications with the police were reduced to signs. Into this mix-up strode a fat Indian with a snowy white turban, and he tried to reassure us by saying, "It is the lar—the lar! " (the law). He urged us to go at once to the British Consul-General.

We were guided along a wide, dusty street, to a gate in a high wall whereon was emblazoned the British coat of arms. The great door was opened for us, and shut behind us. We were on a wide drive in the shade of immense

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trees; we finally reached a charming old white house upon the veranda of which in a wicker chair sat a tall, handsome, middle-aged man gazing at us with some astonishment.

" Good Lord I " he exclaimed; " where have you come from? "

" From London," I said quickly, adding with a touch of irritation, " They've taken our passports from us, and won't give them back, and so we've come to you I "

" Then they shall give them back to you! " said he quaintly; he might have been comforting a small son with a grievance.

I should like to spend much time telling about Colonel and Mrs. Barret and their beautiful Persian garden. We were their guests for the week-end. We had come from the highways and by-ways of Persia without wedding garments, in fact with very little to recommend us; but I have seldom had a host and hostess more kindly.

The invitation was issued like this:

" Where are you going now? "

" To the Hotel Moderne——"

" No, you're not; you're staying here! "

The garden was immense, with English flowers and vegetables growing luxuriantly; and there was an orchard of apples and plums and other fruits which reminded us of New Zealand. There were long shady walks through great bushes of guelder roses; and the flower-beds were brilliant with pansies and violas of every imaginable colour.

We had intended leaving Mechid the next day, but our hostess urged us to stay at least another day, and we gladly accepted her invitation. It never rains but it pours in places like Mechid. Word came through that Mrs. Edward Montague would reach Mechid the next evening at four in her Moth.

We were very interested the next afternoon, but when the sun went down and the Moth did not appear, we became anxious. At six, we heard that the aeroplane had crashed, but that both Mrs. Montague and her pilot were unhurt. They reached the Consulate after midnight, and

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we met them the following morning, finding them not seriously concerned about the accident which might have been fatal, Mrs. Montague being dragged from her seat a few moments before the Moth burst into flames. It had struck a *wadi* just before rising from a small landing ground and had turned over. They were taking immediate steps to get another Moth from Baghdad.

The journey south to Duzdab was very long and trying. The last section from Birjand is largely across a very hot desert, but Emily behaved magnificently and we maintained a fair average speed, even when more than twenty miles of the road had been washed away by a recent flood, forcing us to crawl warily. We were still spring-conscious.

At Birjand, we were treated courteously by the British Consul, an Indian doctor, who told us much about the Persians he attends. He assured us that seventy-five per cent, of all Persians, high and low, rich and poor, suffer from unpleasant disease. I was amazed when I heard his story, amazed, in view of the mental effects of opium and the physical effects of uncleanness and sexual intemperance, that there are any Persians at all.









## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

### ON INTO BALUCHISTAN

" D UZDAB " means the place of the thieves. Raza D Shah Pahlavi regarded the name as a reflection on his regime, and changed it to Zahidan; but the more picturesque Duzdab is still used.

I was discussing this change of name, and Raza Shah Pahlavi generally, with a Punjabi gentleman in Baluchistan. " Ah, yes! " he said. " There are no brigands robbing in Persia just now. When a king who is a brigand ascends the throne there never are I "

Duzdab is the terminus of the Indian railway passing through Baluchistan. The railway extends through nearly fifty miles of Persian territory and consequently slightly annoys the Shah who proposes to annex the Persian end. Between the Duzdab area and the main part of Persia is a precipitous range of mountains pierced by a gorge-like pass which a battalion might defend against an army corps.

We reached Duzdab after dark and drove to the Grand Hotel, a startling name for a baked-mud inn managed by a large Indian, with a great paunch, a magnificent beard and an immense turban of snowy white muslin. His charges seemed to us extortionate, fourteen rupees a day *en pension*; but when we demurred, he became most distressed so that his turban, his fat jowls and his paunch all trembled together like a disturbed jelly. He had been urged by the British Consul, he explained, to run an hotel suitable for Europeans, but when British travellers arrived the British Consul invited them to stay with *him*. Indeed he would certainly have invited us to stay with him had we arrived before dark; the stout Indian was sure of this and he sighed heavily; therefore in order

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to live—because so few Europeans came to his inn—he must make a high charge when they did come. Which seemed a weak argument to us.

Our bedroom was large and fairly clean. Following the usual Indian custom, the beds were merely frameworks holding a network of stout hemp. Upon these our sleeping-bags were spread.

Duzdab is a modern Persian town with a large Indian population. It boasts a British Consul and a Belgian customs officer. Since the Shah has forbidden all imports except under licence, the Belgian, a neutral employed to collect customs dues on behalf of Persia's creditors, has not a great deal to do. However, he was of great service to us in expediting Emily's inevitable formalities. We had to pay a small sum as a tax for the use of the Persian roads.

When we called on the Consul the next morning he was amused to hear that we had put up at the Grand Hotel. "You should have come to me at once," he said; "there's a good rest-house here."

We lunched with him and met his wife. During luncheon the charming dining-room suddenly became dark with sand and dust. "This is what happens nearly every day, here," said our hostess, "certainly during the spring and summer." The doors and windows were shut, and only opened when the short storm ended. The Consul's wife has two other European women friends, the Anglo-Persian Oil manager's wife and the Belgian's wife.

The Indian train left that day and we saw it depart. The Belgian customs agent stood on the platform while his sleuths searched the Indian passengers. Three or four handsome young fellows with beautiful beards and turbans were captured and forced to open parcels: they were lectured severely by the Belgian but remained so charming and agreeable throughout the whole business that it was contracted with a most refreshing degree of cordiality. There is a tax on all Persian exports, and the smuggling of untaxed opium must be guarded against.

The smartly dressed Indians seemed to be travelling second class; a British colonel with his wife and children

## ON INTO BALUCHISTAN

had a compartment which, although dusty and hot, seemed large and spacious.

People at home have little idea what the wives of our political agents have to suffer in these wild places. This colonel had left a small Persian town in the desert; it was apparently a revolting place, but the pay and allowances were good, and the bringing up and educating of the children had to be thought of. They were now going to England to school, and years would elapse before he would see either his wife or children again. In the meantime, he was applying for an even more unpleasant place, ten days' journey from a railway and over mountains, which are impassable in winter. But the pay and allowances were most attractive, and would permit his wife to live comfortably in England. Instead of talking of taxing rich bachelors who live luxuriously at home, it might be a good idea to make them adopt (vicariously) the wives and children of some of these officers to whom the Empire owes infinitely more than is generally realized.

Incidentally, if any pessimistic Briton believes that our Empire is effete and not fully alive to every danger, real and imaginary, near its borders, he should make the journey made by Dick and me. He would be amazed at the attention to detail, the keen efficiency and intelligence shown. On this point it might be unfair to be more explicit. Suffice it to say that very, very little escapes over the Russian border without our being fully aware of it.

The train puffed out at noon. The *mem-sahib* was busy with her children, settling them for a journey of five hundred miles across the Baluchistan Desert to Quetta; but she had time to bid us good-bye, and so happily, that I rather envied her the journey; it promised to be most romantic. Since I have crossed that desert I now regard that train as a black-hot poker being thrust into a white-hot furnace—a hellish journey, and that's calling it cool!

Emily followed the train late that afternoon. Our host and hostess had arranged a picnic some days earlier with the Anglo-Persian Oil couple and their respective children. They had motored some twenty miles along

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the road we were following to the Baluchistan frontier, and we overhauled them having a most cheery picnic on the top of what seemed a black ash-heap. There was not a tree within sight, but I dare say they imagined a green verge and shady trees, and for a few hours were thoroughly enjoying freedom from Persians and Indians, establishing a little bit of England in that sombre valley on top of their ash-heap. We joined them, and shared their nice picnic tea and home-made cakes and buns.

We spent the night in a *dak* bungalow at Mirjawa, just over the border, where the road ended. Since we spent many nights in *dak* bungalows during our Indian journey, it might be a good idea to explain them now.

*Dak* bungalows, or rest-houses, were established on all Indian roads in pre-railway days, and occurred at the end of each stage, roughly at intervals of twenty to thirty miles. They were essential in those days; now they are convenient and useful, because officials are constantly travelling, and only the larger Indian towns can offer hotels suitable for Europeans and the better class of Indian. Different branches of the Civil Service have rest-houses; for instance, there are Public Works *dak* bungalows and Canal *dak* bungalows. These are newer and more commodious than the common kind which may be occupied by soldiers and civil servants, and, as the notice says in all of them, "By travelling gentlemen." I think it is necessary to have a chit from an official if travellers want to occupy a P.W.D. or Canal *dak* bungalow. However, by marching up to one with a brazen air, any objections which the *chaukidar* may feel he should have are broken down. The charge is usually one rupee per person a night, and for this is supplied a spacious room, often charmingly furnished with Indian woven rugs, frequently of plain dark blue, comfortable chairs, tables and bedsteads. Travellers in India always carry their own bedding. Off the bed-sitting-room is the bathroom, containing hip-baths and other conveniences. There is often a glass cupboard whose shelves are lined with tinned food and liquor, and there is a price-list attached.

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The *dak* bungalow *chaukidar* is generally **in charge**, and he must be tipped. He will **open** the glass cupboard and supply what is needed. The *bihishti* (**apparently** pronounced "beastie") brings water in what seems **the** carcass of a dead pig, letting the water shoot forth from one of the late pig's legs into the bath, and he must be tipped. The *mihter*, of the sweeper caste (an untouchable), acts as plumbing and drainage, ably assisted **by** the "shawks," a breed of scavenger hawk, and he holds forth his hand (carefully avoiding casting a shadow on you) so that you may drop money into it. If you have ordered dinner, there is the cook; but usually, we were content with *chota haziri*, early morning tea with hot buttered toast, served by the *chaukidar*.

We left Mirjawa soon after dawn with the intention of reaching Dalbadin at the end of the day's run, **a** distance of two hundred and fifty miles, not much when said quickly, but a very uncertain quantity where there are no formed roads. Our course lay immediately south of the Afghanistan frontier and followed the railway. The railway gave a sense of security, for although **trains** only pass twice a week, there are *gang-wallas'* dwellings **at** close intervals and half a dozen stations—Mirjawa, Jussak, Warechah, Nokkundi, Dalbadin, and finally Nushki, at the base of the mountains below Quetta. There **are** stations between Dalbadin and Nushki, but after Dalbadin the road is partially formed and leaves the railway-line. The *gang-walla* houses are called *ghantis*.

We were given directions at Mirjawa, and immediately found ourselves seriously mixed up in the bed **of** what had been a fierce mountain torrent; but after struggling in this for a time we were rescued by some *gang-wallas* and guided from the *nullah* to the track, which we found well marked with small cairns. The *wadis* of Arabia **are** called *nullahs* in Baluchistan.

The surface of the Baluchistan Desert is **darker than** the Syrian, **and** on the whole the going is much **better**; but there are **bad** little bits of honest yellow sand occasionally, **and for** eighty miles west **of Dalbadin**, *nullahs* **with**

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bad sandy beds are plentiful. But until eleven o'clock we had no complaints. Once or twice Emily hesitated in patches of bad sand, but by leaping forth and lending her a hand I was able to give her enough help to grind through.

The view immediately after leaving Mirjawa was magnificent, a great range of mountains stretching to the south of us with a very fierce-looking volcano, like a bad tooth, rising from amongst them. This was Kuh-i-taftan. But after an hour or two we were on plain, endless desert, and again surrounded by amazing mirages.

At one part of the way, we ran in amongst curious sand mountains, possibly from a hundred to two hundred feet high. These mountains, rising from ash-pit kind of country, apparently move about the desert. We saw the railway-line with its accompanying telegraph-poles enter one and emerge at the other side. A great loop had been made in the line to avoid it. We heard that nothing can be done about these mountains. If they decide to rise on the railway-line, the railway people are simply out of luck and must build a loop. We saw one beginning to bury a *ghanti*. Fortunately, they rise very slowly, and the line can be kept clear until the loop is ready. After a time they move away.

Occasionally there were mountains to the north of us of radiant colour, recalling the Mohave Desert. These appeared in the moving sand mountain country. The distant mountains were purple and dim red; nearer sand mounts were shining like gold in the sunlight. The effect was literally gorgeous, and when the immediate foreground became a gleaming mirage, the beauty seemed almost too much for one's eyes.

The country was often undulating, but the surface was excellent, and by eleven o'clock we had covered more than a hundred miles.

The air had been quite cold when we left; it was delightful at nine; at ten it was balmy and pleasantly warm, but at eleven o'clock Dick said, "It's getting a bit warm!"

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At eleven-thirty a hot wind began blowing into the car, and we arranged a piece of red calico above our heads immediately below the hood. It became hotter. Finally it was impossible to touch the side of the car without getting burnt. The hot breeze became scorching, and we found ourselves winking our eyes constantly, because it seemed as if the moisture in them must dry up. We could see the distorted shape of a *ghanti* ahead of us, for we were now running near the railway; and we both knew that it was absolutely necessary for us to reach that *ghanti* as quickly as possible. The humidity in the air was negligible; although we were both so hot, there was not a sign of perspiration.

Emily was tearing along; the *ghanti* was becoming more real, and we were breathing more freely because, had we been forced to halt, I presume we should have been simply dried up and literally roasted. The *ghanti* was half a mile away, and it looked as if only a minute would pass before we should gain shelter from the intolerable heat, when "Thud, thud, thud, thud!" went one of the rear wheels; we'd had a puncture.

Never, I'll swear, has a wheel been changed more quickly; we leapt from the car and darted at it, and soon we were away again, reaching the *ghanti* safely. The *gang-wallas* were most courteous, and gave us shelter in an inner cool room. Emily was carefully wrapped up in the tent.

We were urged by these men not to go on until four; but we had become very bored with inaction by half-past two, and believing that the temperature must now be falling, we decided to push on.

It was not hotter; I am certain it was a trifle cooler, but that scorching wind was still blowing, and even at four o'clock when we entered the *nullah* area about which we had been warned it was still very warm. The *nullahs* occurred at intervals of about three or four miles. Between *nullahs* the surface was excellent; and I suspect we should have managed very well had it not been for the fact that many of the wider watercourses, dry, of course, were sub-

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**divided into** smaller channels with hard chunks **of earth or rock** dividing them. To slacken speed in the sandy beds was to ask for trouble; therefore a *nullah* for Emily was **a** series of awful bumps. She would have to rush at a sandy patch and leap to the hard section, then down she must sink into sand again, and so on. Occasionally the far bank presented a slight step, and Emily must rush at this. Her springs were then black hot. The almost inevitable happened. At four-thirty all her rear springs had snapped, and she was again sitting heavily on her rear axle.

Imagine us, eighty miles from Dalbadin near the centre of a great desert in a car which now should not have been asked to travel another yard without careful attention.

We determined to ignore our trying situation, and made tea. It was getting cooler, and we were happy to realize that the accident had occurred when we had many cool hours before us. How we enjoyed that tea!

And then we unloaded Emily. Jacking her up on to piles of stones, we forced the springs back into their normal position, and began the old business of lashing them with string. We must have used some miles of string, but fortunately we had some excellent rope which unravelled easily, and there was no scarcity. We worked from about five o'clock until about ten, and then after more delicious tea, we recommenced the journey.

I shall never forget that night. The *nullahs* continued, and Emily had still to rush them, for had she stopped I doubt if we could have got her through the sand. Dick was driving and had a very anxious time; but I had the worst end of the stick, for it was my duty the moment we entered a *nullah* to leap from the car and to run with her, being ready instantly to push the moment she hesitated in the soft sand. But in some of the wider *nullahs* Dick could speed up, and then I seemed to fly through space, my legs going like propeller blades and my heart beating like a piston-rod. Emily towed me, of course; **but even with her** help, sprinting on soft sand at fifteen miles **an hour was not particularly agreeable.** I began giving these



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little exhibitions in the darkness of the Baluchistan Desert at about ten o'clock, and at intervals of not more than fifteen minutes, sometimes less, I continued giving them until about four the next morning, when the sandy *nullahs* became rocky and pebbly *nullahs*, where the cairns marking the track could not always be seen.

The sun rose at five-forty-five, and since the sky was cloudless, and we were travelling due east, it was impossible to proceed until the sun should rise a few degrees. We stopped; and within two seconds, I am certain, we were both sound asleep. I know we actually lost an hour and a half without being aware of it. A short run took us into Dalbadin, the chief railway station in Baluchistan.

We motored instantly to the *dak* bungalow, and having been given beds, turned in and slept until four that afternoon. Just before we went to sleep an Indian arrived and rather peremptorily demanded our passports, I stared at him, and asked, "Are you an Irani—a Persian?"

"No, Sahib!" said he.

"When the Persians want passports, they are rude and unmannerly/" I said severely; "that's why I thought you must be one."

I don't think he understood all this, but he saw that he had annoyed me.

"How should an *Indian* ask a traveller for a passport?" I went on, feeling rather a prig.

"He should say," said the man, "\* Your passport, if you please, Sahib," and then he should bow and say, 'Thanks, Sahib!'"

"Good!" I agreed; "now do that to us!" And he did it.

The fellow had annoyed me because we had been so happily impressed with the contrast between the cheerful courtesy of the Indians, even the *gang-wallas*, and the surly rudeness of the Persian police; but this boy's eagerness to behave nicely removed his initial bad effect.

We awoke at four and looked about us. We seemed to be marooned actually on a sandy desert, although there were pleasant-looking bungalows around us and odd

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clumps of beautiful trees. A big fortress appeared across what seemed to be a parade ground. There was a garden around the *dak* bungalow, and two white-robed gardeners were loitering about in it. We were rather hungry, but the *chaukidar* could speak no English and seemed to have no ideas about procuring us food. There were no British officers in Dalbadin. While we stood a little helplessly on the veranda, two tall, handsome Indians approached, and the bigger of these bowed and asked in perfect English if he could be of any use to us.

The bigger man was Said Amir, the Public Works engineer; the other told us his name, which was too unwieldy for common use; he preferred to be called Gi-gi. They said they were brothers, but this really meant great friends. Said Amir is a Punjabi; Gi-gi is the son of Afghan parents. Had there been a British officer in Dalbadin, we should probably not have met either Said Amir or Gi-gi. We should have been poorer in consequence. Dear good fellows, both of them! They had little to offer us—nobody in Dalbadin has very much—but what they had was ours. The grace in Said Amir's gesture when he said, "My servants shall bring you dinner!" turned the simple offering of milk, a few eggs and some Indian bread into a banquet; and his servant, a strangely quiet, white-robed Afghan, multiplied himself into a hundred slaves.

We were forced to spend three days in Dalbadin; we discovered that the railway engineer, an Anglo-Indian (the official name now for Eurasians, although pure Indians rather comically persist in calling them Europeans), could arrange to have Emily's springs welded; and it seemed madness to proceed without having this done.

I don't know what we should have done without Said Amir and Gi-gi. Other Indian Civil Servants were kindly, and the railway engineer gave us a wonderful breakfast; but Said Amir and Gi-gi were delightful friends who kept us thoroughly amused.

Said Amir, who is thirty-two and looks slightly more, has rather a patriarchal way of talking; he has a great sense of humour, but even his more commonplace remarks

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seem like quotations from Holy Writ. However, he might have been quoting from a school history book when he said one evening, " The Great War destroyed the flower of the Empire's nobility. The King Emperor can no longer send to us his nobles to speak his words——" going on, as far as I could gather, to suggest in his picturesque Punjabi way that you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, nohow!

I liked Said Amir immensely; but I fear he was just a *little* bit of a snob. His grand manner was more effective and interesting when he spoke of King Amanullah of Afghanistan.

" That king was a King of Tears. When that king had ascended his throne and walked about amongst his people, they wept with joy when he spoke with them; always they wept for the joy of seeing their king. And," went on Said Amir in softened tones, " when bad men drove that king from his throne, his friend said unto him—his friend whom he loved and who loved the king—' I will go and fight even unto death to restore my king, so that my king shall again ascend his throne! ' And the friend went forth and fought, and drove the bad men from the king's city; and then the friend of the king ascended the throne himself! Surely, he is the King of Tears! "

I was about to shed a tear or two in sympathy when Gi-gi, who is less romantic, said what amounted to, " I hear Amanullah's at Mecca. There'll be something doing shortly! "

I understand that when Mohammedan princes go to Mecca something *is* doing a little later on.

Neither Said Amir nor Gi-gi have the slightest sympathy with the Indian Nationalists. They detest and despise all Hindus. Said Amir said that the whole movement was backed by the wealthy Hindu merchants. I could not understand this, remarking that peace and security under the British *raj* had made these men rich, that revolution and rebellion would kill business.

" But only for a time! " said Said Amir; " these men are like the sower of seed. They throw on the earth

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what they have; they lose it; but do they not expect a harvest? "

We discussed the treatment of women by Moham-medans, and had our legs effectively pulled.

"I was married at the age of twelve," explained Said Amir; "and my wife was twelve. I was a very strong, healthy boy. I am now thirty-two, and my wife is that age. Now I am looking about for a beautiful young woman for a second wife."

"But what about your first wife whom you've had for twenty years?" I objected.

"She," said Said Amir in the tones of one offering a perfect explanation, "is the mother of ten children! "

"All the more reason why you should stick to her," I said.

Both men stared at me. "A woman," said Said Amir, "who has had ten children gives eight good reasons why you should get another if you can afford him."

"Unserviceable 1 " offered Gi-gi.

"I did get another wife two years ago," said Said Amir; "she was beautiful, and I loved him; she died ten months ago, but not a day passes but what I don't feel sad about him." (Said Amir mixes the gender of his pronouns.)

"I'll bet your first was glad when she died," I suggested.

"But, of course!" said both men in chorus.

Gi-gi told us about the actual wedding and the seclusion which follows.

"If she is seen talking to another man, she must have some reason," he said; "it is a reason which will dishonour her husband and she should be killed at once! "

We expressed wonder at this life-long seclusion. "Oh," said Gi-gi, "when she gets a bit old she likes it"—Gi-gi screwed up his face with a tolerable imitation of a withered hag and made his hands tremble—"she can go about as she likes then; but no—she is very, very careful, then! "

"No longer serviceable!" said Said Amir gently.

Over a bottle of bright green lemonade bought from the train the next night, Gi-gi was more truthful and more sincere. He admitted that one good wife, **even if a mother**

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of ten, made for peace and contentment in a man's life; and he told us of his aunt and uncle who are sixty, are great pals, and have been happy and jolly all their lives.

But when Said Amir appeared Gi-gi became frivolous again, notably when I asked him what happened in the harem when a man announced his intention of adding a new wife.

"OhI " groaned Gi-gi in a thin soprano voice, imitating a woman in distress, " she cries and says, ' Am I no longer beautiful? Do I not keep your house well, and cook well? ' and you say, ' Ye-es, but——' "

"No longer serviceable! " put in Said Amir in courteous tones.

" Much better," I said finally, " to let your women be free, like ours; and get rid of this stupid seclusionI "

" God forbid! " said both men.

" That," added Gi-gi, " would be the beginning of trouble for us."

There is a native village in Dalbadin with plenty of little shops selling clothing and simple native food. Said Amir had told us about an animal which lives in the desert sand called a sand-fish, because it is shaped like a fish and moves like one through the sand. As we walked through the village with him, he glanced at the people contemptuously and said, " Sand-fish! "

" What do these people live on? " I asked.

" Sand! " he said with a curl of his lips.

Emily's springs were happily welded, but we dared not leave Dalbadin for the simple reason that the air became so full of sand during many hours that it would have been unsafe to drive. It was very trying, for no matter how we shut doors and sealed windows, even the pleasant rooms of the *dak* bungalow became coated with sand and dust. It was impossible to see more than twenty feet in front of one. This is the usual Dalbadin weather during the summer months; out of every twenty-four hours, there is probably an average of six hours clear weather. It had seemed just possible to put up with the heat; the sand made us feel desperate.

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But one morning the air cleared, and off we started. The road was excellent, all the *nullah* crossings being reinforced with brush, and after gradually leaving the desert and finding ourselves actually passing trees not dependent on irrigation, we approached high mountains at Nushki where we met the railway-line again. From the neighbourhood of Nushki we began climbing, and towards the afternoon we were on high, gloriously cool land making for Quetta. At a cross-roads we saw a finger-post. One arm pointed to Quetta; another arm pointed the way we had come and written on it was, "To London—5,877 miles." Written in pencil under this was, "But to Glasgow—6,277 miles."

We reached Quetta at about six o'clock and put up at the *dak* bungalow, which was really an hotel managed by a Eurasian woman of great ability.

Quetta is an important hill station and the headquarters of the army guarding the North-West frontier. It lies near the centre of a vast semi-arid valley, but the European residential quarter and the military cantonments are one radiant garden divided by wide avenues sheltered by glorious trees. A little hot in midsummer, but never seriously so, Quetta can be very cold indeed in winter, cold enough for winter sports in the way of ski-ing and tobogganing. Tacked on to it is the inevitable native quarter, perhaps not so dirty and unsavoury as in older Indian towns, but not exactly a garden of scented flowers.

We had dinner one evening with an officer of one of the Indian regiments. He was alone in the mess, and the fact that we had no evening kit did not therefore matter. The dinner was delightful, but after dinner a slight argument began which I thought rather interesting.

He said, "I always like New Zealanders; they're so loyal—and they're like ourselves. Now the Australians——" and he went on to speak a little critically of our neighbours and brothers in the Pacific.

I do not want to pose as virtuous in this respect, but while one is naturally glad to hear one's own countrymen praised, it never gives me the slightest pleasure when it is

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offered with an odious comparison at the expense of Australia. New Zealanders are loyal; Australians are equally so. The English accent in New Zealand is more musical than that in Australia, but I have learnt that it is not how a man says a thing that matters nearly so much as what he says; and for the very selfish reason that the words spoken to me in Australia have always been words of encouragement and help, I find no difficulty in liking an Australian even when he calls a cake a " kike " and massacres a few other words even more cruelly. Frankly, and to put it bluntly, I don't know how he gets that way.

However, I like an argument in a quiet way after dinner, and took up the cudgels for Australia, beginning an offensive. I said, " In England a few months ago, I asked some well-loved boys home from a great English public school the name of their dog. ' Laon ! ' ' I thought they said until they spelt the word. The dog's name was Lion! "

" What English public school? " asked our host; and I told him.

" My school! " said he a little dangerously; " don't you like the way I speak? "

" Tremendously! " I said; " but you've got to admit that while ' kike ' for ' cake ' may be awful enough, ' laon ' for ' lion,' a perfectly nice word, is sheer affectation, and worse! "

" I don't think it is," said he boldly; " there's music in ' laon,' but I'm damned if there's even jazz in ' kike.' "

The argument progressed until we reached the point when he said something to the effect that, after all, we came from " down under." Then he became so distressed, fearing he had been offensive, that even if he had wounded our colonial pride, we should have forgiven him instantly.

The days have passed, however, when even a colonial snob is conscious of inferiority in the company of a home-bred Englishman. Why should he feel inferior? Perhaps he knows that to feel inferior is a grave reflection on the manners of the Englishman.

To be more serious, while I know the provocation may be great, I might remark here that when home-bred

## DUZDAB—HOME

English people think that the essential heart of Australia is anything but loyal to its King and Empire, they are hopelessly mistaken. Australians may not feel loyal to Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, or even to Mr. Winston Churchill. Some Englishmen with an "Oxford" accent, notably those who know Oxford best in their geography books, bore them very seriously; but they love their King, and if some of them sing "God sive the King" instead of "God save the King," their prayer, I think, comes from a fine manly heart, and in the long run that is about all that matters.

English gentlefolks have no trouble in Australia. At the moment in Sydney, the woman who is worshipped above all others is a simple English gentlewoman, Lady Game. The reddest of the reds adore her. I've watched them at it.

We bought sheets and bedding in Quetta, and then began making plans for the descent to the great highway across northern India. Although this proved to be perfectly simple, we had some difficulty in getting information; the journey, apparently, is not often made by car.





## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

### THE GREAT PLAIN OF INDIA

IT will be seen from the map that Quetta is perched high up in the wild country of the North-West, not very far from the Afghanistan frontier; and that some hundreds of miles of mountainous country separate it from the great plain of India.

Emily ran about the roads of this land quite fearlessly for the simple reason that her owners were unaware of any danger. I mentioned this to a friend later, a senior English officer, and he said, "Oh, you were all right. Some tribesmen might have potted you, but they wouldn't have *meant* any harm and might have been extremely sorry had they killed you, or wounded Emily."

When we met this officer we were within a hundred and eighteen miles of the Punjab; but he would not permit us to proceed without an armed escort in the shape of a motor-lorry which, incidentally, created such a dust that, rather ungratefully, we proceeded to leave it a good many miles behind us.

We left Quetta late one afternoon, and crossing its great arid valley, we began following an excellent road through a series of gorges between high rugged mountains. These mountains were utterly bare yet beautiful, because of their warm colour, a shade which combined lightest pink with brown. We occasionally followed creeks of running water, and wherever there appeared a few square yards of flat land near a creek, here was a small cultivation, producing barley and wheat. A bulb with conventional spear-shaped leaves grew wild on the small damp flats; its golden blossom was a trifle like a hyacinth, but was not very interesting. On the other hand, a particularly charming **wild shrub**

## DUZDAB—HOME

adorned the lower slopes near the road. It was much lighter in colour than purple heather, but there was purple in its brilliant pink; and the effect where it grew plentifully was as lovely as heather. We had every intention of examining this plant, but unfortunately delayed until it ceased to occur.

We spent the night in a *dak* bungalow at Kach, and pursuing our way across the mountains the next day, we finally entered a forest of trees with gnarled trunks and limbs of the pine or *macra carpa* variety. We thoroughly enjoyed these trees; it was so delightful to find them growing freely and happily without human attention. One settlement in this belt of forest had small shacks and cottages hidden amongst the trees. These, we heard later, were occupied by British women during the very hot weather of the higher country.

At a point where the trees were becoming scarce again—in fact, they had really stopped, but there were odd shady trees near the road—we decided to enjoy a tree for a few minutes and to drink tea from our thermos. Although it was now midday, the climate was still glorious, simply warm enough to make the tree attractive.

We were sitting with our backs to the tree, each armed with a bright blue unbreakable tumbler, while the thermos-flask stood between us. Emily was shining and clean; I had spent much time on her in Quetta; and our khaki shorts and shirts were unusually fresh and clean because they had been recently washed and ironed. I recall few more peaceful moments on the journey.

We heard an approaching car. The car swept past us, and then with a shriek of brakes drew up, and began backing to us. It contained three white-robed patriarchal-looking Indians; but from amongst these there emerged a neatly built Englishman of late middle age, dressed as we were dressed, but with shorts of better cut.

" Good Lord! " he shouted, glancing with great amusement at Emily; " where on earth have you come from? "

" London! " we said casually.

" In this? " placing a kindly hand on Emily.

## THE GREAT PLAIN OF INDIA

"In that! Will you have some tea? "

"Just lunched, thanks! But—good Lord! How delightful! I'm so glad I met you. Where are you making for now? "

He spoke with an eager, boyish voice. He was plainly delighted to see us, and showed not the slightest reserve in expressing his delight. The patriarchal Indians were interested in Emily too; but one could see that they found the Englishman a never-failing source of admiring amusement. We said that we were making for Loralai, where we proposed spending the night at the *dak* bungalow.

"Nonsense! " he exclaimed; "we'll put you up. I'll write a chit to my missus—can't go back with you now—must look at a road—but will be back later."

While he spoke he was busy writing a note, which he addressed to a lady, giving the number of a bungalow. We had no idea of his rank; but no drummer-boy in good spirits could have been jollier. Having given us the note, he showed no signs of moving, and proceeded to tell us all about Loralai.

"We're having a week there—a week! Don't know how it started. The General gave a dinner and dance; we gave a dance; the Eighteenth had a few people round and that turned into a dance, and so it went on. To-night the Club is giving a ball. You must come. They'll be delighted. No evening kit! Doesn't matter! They'll turn it into a fancy-dress ball, and you can go as Boy Scouts. A fellow turned up at one of the dances who was very good at juggling; they'll like you better."

With urgent orders not to forget to present the chit to his missus, he finally hopped into his car and disappeared.

We reached Loralai shortly after two and drove to our friend's bungalow. We saw that he was the C.R.E., and that he had a large, beautiful bungalow in an immense garden. A mighty grape vine sheltered a wide veranda upon which were wicker chairs and sofas. They looked most attractive, but when I suggested driving quietly in at once, Dick was plainly shocked. "D'you mean to say you'd go in there now and wake a poor woman from her

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siesta? " he asked. " Do what you like," he went on, " but I'm going to get petrol, and wait until four."

Feeling more like an unmannerly swine than an explorer, I stole quietly along the verge following the drive, and stepping softly on to the veranda, I sank happily into a long, low chair.

Almost at once the door opened softly; an exquisitely clad Indian stood bowing before me, and remaining as silent as the grave, he began enticing me indoors. I followed him to a large, cool room where a bed was arranged. He produced two newspapers, some magazines, a book or two, cigarettes and matches, and having bowed again, withdrew. I thought of Dick at the petrol station in the hot sun, and immediately went to sleep. The ways of the unrighteous, or unmannerly, are not always uncomfortable.

As a matter of fact, Dick went to the *dak* bungalow, where he found a puzzled chaplain who had been given a note by the *chaukidar*. The chit was signed by the C.R.E., and commanded the *chaukidar* to send to his bungalow any sahibs who should arrive. When Dick had explained himself, the chaplain sank back once more into the *dak* bungalow.

Said our hostess when we all met at tea, Dick having been collected by the Colonel, " I'm so glad to discover that you're human beings."

" Startled her a bit! " explained the Colonel. " Dashed in and said, ' Darling, I found a couple of New Zealanders on the road, and brought them home! ' She, only half awake—dancing all last night, of course—thought you were lizards or something."

" He brought home a pair of tortoises yesterday, and woke me up to tell me about them! " our hostess explained.

We had a delightful evening. The Club dance was a fancy-dress ball, and had only one disadvantage, for the men; there were not more than a dozen women. They had at least forty men to choose from. The ball, therefore, became a delightful romp, with but little dancing on

## THE GREAT PLAIN OF INDIA

the hard tennis-courts, which had been spread with tightly drawn canvas, making, incidentally, an excellent floor.

The fancy dresses were good, although there seemed rather a preponderance of Arab sheikhs. I was about to congratulate one gentleman on the excellence of his make-up—a bearded Indian with a snowy turban. Fortunately, I expressed my admiration to my partner. "It is a good make-up," she admitted; "but then, you see, it comes natural, because he's the R.A.M.C. Indian officer!"

He was the only Indian present; he went about chortling, but did not dance.

The British people seemed quite used to having Indians in high official positions. The political agent in Loralai, whom I understand ranks only second to the senior military officer in a station, had been an Indian until shortly before we arrived. I guessed he had not been very popular, but this had had nothing to do with his race.

The glorious avenues of Loralai are lined with mulberry trees, some of the red variety which are edible; but most of them bore white fruit, which is woody and uninteresting. The Colonel's orchard offered all varieties of English fruit in great profusion—apples, plums, pears, apricots and peaches—but although a glorious harvest was then preparing, there was nothing ripe. Grape vines appeared everywhere, and all English flowers grew well.

We were impressed here, and we continued to be impressed as we crossed India, with the youthfulness of the British women in India. I guessed the age of our hostess to be somewhere in the middle thirties; she looked twenty-five. She loved housework, she said, but dared not take even a duster in her hand. To do so, she said, would seriously wound the feelings of the bearer. However, during one leave in England, she had taken lessons in sweet-making; and now with a small kitchen of her own, she made the most wonderful chocolates I have ever seen or tasted. Each piece—one had to regard them as pieces—was a work of art, always with a professional touch—smoothly covered with chocolate and decorated with candied violets, rose petals, and the like. They were nearly

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always large, and one never knew what delicious filling to expect inside them. Immense boxes of these sweets were always placed on the small tables near our chairs.

We remained in Loralai the next day, to rest up after the ball. We enjoyed many a yarn with the Colonel. Talking of the North-Western tribesmen, he said in his characteristic way, "It's the young fellows with nothing to do, spoiling for a fight! Trouble largely economical—not enough suitable land for the young fellows. These young bloods say, 'We must fight and get more land! Old men who did the same thing when they were young say, 'Don't! ' Young bloods say they must. 'You'll get it in the neck if you do—later! ' the old fellows warn. But that doesn't stop 'em—and the fun begins! But nice men, really," added the Colonel; "courteous and hospitable, when you know them."

I found our host with three elderly Afghans, handsome old fellows, with flowing beards dyed red. They bowed to us, and smiled charmingly. They continued to smile, rather boyishly, looking from us to the Colonel and back to us, while he explained them.

"Been working for us, carrying metal on camels. Haven't got any more work for them, but I suppose I'd better find some. Border men! Should go back to their families, now, for a spell; but they're in a fix. Their new king sent 'em word that if they didn't behave themselves he'd be down on them to clean 'em up! They think they'd better stay."

The spectacle of the traditional Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, each with a bad conscience, and each nervous of punishment, could not have been quainter. However, they had a friend in the Colonel, and they knew it.

"Roads," he said, "solve many a problem. The tribesmen object, and pot the labourers. Then the motor-lorries come, and someone starts a tea-house. Then we give 'em a bit of work maintaining the road, and they give up pottin'; and soon they like the road, and more motor-lorries turn up. More tea-houses open, and so it goes."

Loralai seemed to us a happy hill station, but they

## THE GREAT PLAIN OF INDIA

have a little excitement there occasionally. An Indian trooper in one of the Lancer regiments was punished for kicking a horse. The punishment was C.B., or something equally mild; but the man's honour was seriously hurt. The squadron was in camp at the time. Loading his rifle, the man rushed quickly down the officers' lines firing into each tent, and killing himself with the last bullet. He fortunately missed the officer in the first tent, and by the time he reached the second, its occupant and all the other officers in the other tents, guessing what was happening, were lying flat on their faces, and so escaped. The incident was regarded as hard luck as far as the man was concerned, but "frightfully funny" otherwise.

Leaving Loralai was like leaving a charming home; but then the same might be said of many an Indian military station as far as we were concerned. I have adventured in wildest Australia where the bush people are hospitable; and our countrymen in New Zealand can be equally kind. I have travelled in Canada, and I know the United States well. And I have read of the almost traditional big-hearted hospitality of all Colonials. But never in my life have I enjoyed more kindness than I enjoyed in India during this journey. Perhaps it was the delicacy with which it was offered that charmed us most.

It was the Colonel who sent the armed motor-lorry to escort us to the borders of the Punjab. "A good deal of desert—something might happen to your car; it's just as well!" he explained.

After Fort Munroe, we climbed the last great mountain, a sombre mass of dark red broken rock, and at the summit we paused. Calcutta, our objective, lay fifteen hundred miles beyond the horizon, and we proposed to cross India in the middle of the hot weather. People who know northern India will appreciate what we were up against.

We began descending to the plain, at least four thousand feet below us, on a beautiful road of many hair-pin bends—following gulches and precipices of terrifying depths. Occasionally the road crossed the dry bed of a

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mountain torrent, and here were notices warning motorists that boulders came down when the torrent was running. It was fortunately not running that day.

As we descended, we could see the great plain of India stretching below us—as flat as a pancake, putty-coloured country relieved by patches of vivid green, and sheltered here and there with clumps of tall trees.

Down we went; it was a matter of hours; and gradually the air became warmer. And then we descended the last steep grade, the last steep grade Emily was asked to descend for nearly fifteen hundred miles.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon when we left the hills; but the temperature was still between no and 115 degrees, and a fiercely hot wind began blowing into the car.

Feeling homesick for the bungalow at Loralai, we ran into Dera Ghazi Khan and inquired the way to the rest-house at a bungalow where a very handsome young Englishwoman, armed with a tennis-racket, stood waiting near the veranda.

It was still very hot when we reached the rest-house, upon the veranda of which sat a "European" lady drinking lemon squash. Deciding that she was the manageress, we asked if we might have some lemon squash too. "Most certainly!" said she, and a servant instantly brought two tall glasses, the contents of which we literally poured down our throats, and asked for more.

We were quite kind to this lady, giving our orders courteously; but some of these she regretted she could not obey because, as she explained, to our consternation, she was an Indian Civil Service Educational official who, like ourselves, proposed making use of the *dak* bungalow.

In the midst of our embarrassment, a motor dashed up containing the handsome young Englishwoman and her young husband. "Look here," they said, "you can't stop here; you must come and stay with us!"

And so Dera Ghazi Khan, although shockingly hot, was like Loralai. The District Commissioner, who lived in a beautiful bungalow, invited us to spend part of the



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evening with him; and this we did, being given excellent road directions.

Pointing to one section of the road before us, west of Lahore, he said, "You'll find that very bad—very bad! I know you're used to rough roads, but I'll swear you've never been on anything worse! " When we eventually reached this short strip we found it dusty, and deep pot-holes and ruts had to be watched; but we could not call it really bad. I fear they don't know what a bad road is like in India.

We crossed the Indus the next morning on an immense stern-wheeler. We sat in Emily in the waist of the vessel surrounded by a vast assortment of Indians, bullocks, cows, donkeys and camels. The river, then in spate, was like an immense swamp, or a flood which had covered a great area of country; and the stern-wheeler made her way around islands and past odd clumps of trees, occasionally running aground, but always managing to slide off safely when great poles were got out to assist her. The journey occupied nearly two hours, and should have been intensely interesting; but the heat became unbearable and the beasts smelt so horribly that we could think of nothing else. Europeans and better class Indians usually occupy special compartments high up on the vessel, but we dared not leave Emily unguarded.

Although we paused at Multan chiefly to call at the bank, we were eager to look about us; but the heat drove us into a *dak* bungalow, where we each lay almost naked below an electric fan. Being inexperienced, we opened all the doors and windows; therefore after a time the fans drew the hot air from without and we should have been baked. Later we learnt to keep the doors and windows closed fast.

We left Multan at four in the afternoon, and continued motoring until almost midnight, when we reached Montgomery.

I fear I shall bore if I continue this journal of our life each day in India. In the cool weather, it could have been delightful and interesting; but you cannot, you simply cannot, take an intelligent interest in your surroundings

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when the temperature ranges between 110 and 125 degrees. We were conscious merely of a long, wide, metalled road, nearly always sheltered by tall, shady trees, which we shared with annoying native drays and wagons. There were no other private cars abroad. The wagons sprawled across the road; and we soon learnt not to wake up their drivers, because the control they exerted over their bullocks and water-buffaloes seemed to be confined to making them stop, to making them start again, and to making them go round corners. This was done largely by bashing them over the head. These native wagons have long hardwood planks sticking out from their rear ends. Again and again we narrowly missed being swept off the road when the bullocks too suddenly turned at our approach.

There were camels and elephants on the great highway. The camels were generally content to growl hissingly at us; but we seemed always to annoy the dear old elephants to the point of revenge. One great beast turned round and charged us, but, of course, he had no chance of getting near us. Elephants loathe Baby Austins. While we were in Singapore, an otherwise docile elephant returning from water saw a Baby Austin parked at the kerb with its owner looking inside the bonnet. Breathing hoarsely, and ignoring all its keeper's efforts to calm it, the elephant marched up to the little car and broke it up. The Austin owner had withdrawn.

We eventually developed the wise plan of motoring throughout most of the night, and remaining sealed up inside *dak* bungalows during the hottest hours of the day.

We passed through small towns and villages wide awake and lively even at midnight; and the highway was peopled with small companies of natives, notably after we had left the Punjab, armed with *lathis* and apparently up to mischief, but most probably merely making friendly calls. Sometimes our brilliant headlights would pick up brightly coloured little paper temples or tabernacles carried on the shoulders of thin-legged Hindus.

And so the days passed. I am certain that a well-baked

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loaf of bread could not tell much of its adventures during the hour it spends in the oven. India was an oven to us.

We were very impressed with the great canals in the Punjab where British brains, courage and enterprise have turned a desert into a rich productive area. Here we bought luscious rock-melons, and had we not been inoculated against cholera, most probably both of us would have died.

We were very kindly treated in the Lahore cantonments, but the few hours we spent there were spent lunching and resting in the Brigadier's bungalow. While we were in his office word came through of a possible riot. "It seems a pity to interfere in this heat!" I said.

"True!" laughed the staff officer; "live and let live is what I say to-day."

One of the guests at luncheon was leaving for Simla that evening in the train. "I don't envy you," I said. We had seen many Indian trains dashing across the plain, and the very sight of them had made us feel hotter.

"Oh," said the guest cheerfully, "I have a maund of ice placed in a tub in the centre of the compartment. A fan plays on this, and it's quite cool."

"But very wet and dirty, after a time," said our host. "I prefer the heat."

From Lahore we motored to Amritsa where we spent a night, or part of a night, for we reached there late in the evening and made a moderately successful effort to get away before dawn. We found that the air cooled at midnight, and remained pleasant until nine the next morning; after ten-thirty it seemed impossible to live in the open. There was no humidity; until we reached to within a hundred miles of Calcutta we never perspired. Prickly heat, that curse of a humid, hot climate, seemed unknown.

We were always treated courteously by the natives. A man in Quetta had urged us to cover up the Union Jack painted on Emily's door, warning us that if we did not, we might be the target for brick-bats; but I can honestly say that we were never conscious of the slightest

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hostility. We left India with the impression that the situation there is exceedingly complex and packed with difficulty, but that it is not nearly so bad as the newspapers would lead us to think.

Delhi, of course, is most interesting. We spent our first night in the rest-house a few yards from the base of the Kutb Minar, which I climbed in the cool of the morning and saw the ruins of all the old Delhis, odd chunks of decaying masonry, scattered about on the plain.

The fabric in Emily's tyres had been bruised so seriously on the rough surface of the deserts that a complete renewal was now necessary. We had had punctures, and it is impossible to make a really effective patch in the hot weather. They soon give.

Having procured a complete set of tyres and fresh inner tubes, we left the car with the agents in Delhi and asked them to make the change. The temptation, unfortunately, was evidently too great for the native mechanics. They naturally changed the outer covers; it would have been ridiculous to replace our old wounded covers; but it was not ridiculous to annex our fresh inner tubes, and to put back our old ones. This they did, and the result was most uncomfortable for us. When we discovered this mean trick, we thought of boiling oil, or something lingering!

At Delhi, we began to feel the strain of this crossing of India in the hot weather. Dick developed a temperature and looked so seedy that I suggested motoring back to Umballa, and thence to Simla for a spell. He would not hear of the idea.

We had reached Delhi in the cool of the morning, and the agents had sent us out to the Kutb Minar before noon in one of their own cars. Our idea had been to return to Delhi after tea, but Dick was much too seedy to move. He was slightly better the next morning, and his temperature was normal; but after luncheon it began climbing again, and I became anxious. A doctor was indicated.

Fortunately, in the midst of this difficulty, the tele-

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phone rang. Lieutenant Ean MacDonald, the acting C.R.E. to whom we had been introduced, was soon urging us to come immediately to his bungalow at the New Cantonments. We ordered a car from Delhi, and went there at once.

Here we found a kindly young Scotsman and his wife. It was Mrs. MacDonald's first hot weather, and she had decided to stay in Delhi and not to follow her sisters to Simla. Fortunately for her, Ean is a clever mechanic; and one large room at least in the bungalow remained beautifully cool. I thought the scheme very interesting. The idea of covering open windows and doors with screens of *khus-khus tatties*, and keeping them damp, is an old one in India. *Khus-khus tatties* are the fibrous roots of a native grass, pr shrub. The evaporation of the water on the sponge-like *tatties* produces cool air; but usually a boy must be kept busily spraying. Our host had arranged a large electric fan, set up like a windmill, in the room in front of the open French windows duly screened with *khus-khus tatties*. The large fan not only drew in the air from without, but also worked a small pump which kept water gently circulating over the screen.

We had dinner on the lawn and remained there until bedtime. Friends dropped in, and there was some interesting talk about India. New Delhi was discussed, and we heard for the first time the remark made by a French admirer of Sir Edward Lutyens' work—"What magnificent ruins they'll make!" I think it was our host who characterized as "Rot!" the superstitious suggestion that the building of a new capital at Delhi marks the beginning of the end of British rule in India. I am a little insecure with my facts here, but I know that my host insisted that the abandoning of capitals by the Mogul emperors was based on a restless desire to find a cool situation. Their Persian blood found the heat unbearable; but in pre-telegraph days, when communications depended on men and beasts, they had to be on the spot; they dared not move to the hills in the hot weather. I suspect, too, that they liked making new capitals. And anyway, because the

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fish course in a meal may be bad or tainted, it does not follow that the meat is poisonous.

One of the officers evidently lived with the MacDonalds. Beside his chair sat a very serious little fox-terrier called Chota. All our beds were arranged on the lawn; and when this officer turned in, Chota slept on the grass near him. When we left in the morning soon after dawn, Chota was still there. He wagged his tail faintly as I approached, but glanced so seriously at the mosquito-net-covered bed above him that I was forced to tread softly, and not to awaken his god.

New Delhi was quite empty, the Government then being at Simla. It is impossible not to be impressed with the beauty of the new viceregal lodge and indeed with the other buildings, but I should imagine that a viceroy without a princely income might be hard put to it to make both ends meet. I was A.D.C. to a colonial governor shortly after his Government house had been burnt down, forcing him to live in a moderately sized bungalow. After I had been looking after his household and personal accounts for a few months, I guessed that he was not very eager to see a new palace built. In the large bungalow he could almost live within his official income.

New Delhi is close to the present old city. While we were there the former seemed very bare, new and deserted compared with the latter which appeared lively, gay and dirty. New Delhi is merely the administrative capital of the Indian Empire; there are shops and office buildings, but it is apparently not designed to be a commercial centre. I do not understand why it is called New Delhi; it seemed merely a new and supremely important group of buildings built at Delhi on the most convenient area. There was not an inch of room left in the old city.

We saw very little; it was much too hot. We met some rich native merchants alleged to be "hot Nationalists." The long tunic worn by one of these gentlemen was buttoned with turquoises and diamonds, and he appeared very prosperous indeed. He was perfectly courteous, but his attitude towards the British Government was most

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patronizing. While I talked with him, I recalled Said Amir of Dalbadin—big, manly, generous Said Amir breathing sand in the desert, guarding one of India's gateways—and I began to wonder precisely what would happen to the gentleman with the turquoise and diamond buttons if a few thousand Said Amirs decided to make their presence felt in an India freed from British control. That, of course, is a very old argument.

Armed with many letters of introduction to officers in the cities ahead of us, we left Delhi and motored to Agra which we reached shortly before noon. We had a letter of introduction to the officer commanding the Irish Fusiliers, and this we gave to an orderly who asked us to wait while he saw the Colonel. The orderly having described us as "two commercial gentlemen," the Colonel began wondering what we proposed to sell him; but after we entered his room, and before we could open our mouths, he had read us.

"Isn't it hot?" he said. "Look here, I'm very busy for a few minutes on a new scheme for the vocational training of soldiers. You want to be put up for a day or two, don't you? We're delighted! It makes such a difference to us to meet people in the hot weather. Now you'd better go over to the mess and make yourselves at home. I'll be there in a little while."

Rather shyly, we entered the mess ante-room where two or three officers were sitting. One of them was ordering drinks, and without more ado he turned to us and asked casually, "What will you drink?"

We were accepted without having to give any explanations whatever, and felt at home immediately. I dare say the telephone was used.

When the Colonel arrived for luncheon arrangements for our comfort and amusement were discussed. Maurice French, one of the subalterns, thought we might be happy in rooms near his, and gave orders to have one of the fans fixed. The Colonel decided that we should see the fort and, of course, the Taj. "Pat," he remarked to a subaltern, "I think they'd better have dinner with you in

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the fort and see the Taj in what moonlight there is. I'll deliver them after tea if you'll bring them back after dinner."

Everything was worked out happily with a total absence of gush; it made us feel that our appearance in that officers' mess in our now soiled khaki shorts and shirts was the most natural thing in the world.

When French was settling us in our rooms for the after-luncheon siesta, we discussed clothing with him. Our kit, made in New Zealand, lacked the smartness and "cut" of that worn by our friends. A tailor was instantly produced. He measured us, and attended carefully to the instructions of our friend; and the next morning we were beautifully fitted out, and the cost was very little.

After tea the Colonel motored us to the great Fort of Agra, and ordered Pat to guide us through the palace where Shah Jehan spent his last days. Fortunately, there were little notices explaining each of the lovely apartments, because Pat, who lived in the fort within a stone's throw of them, knew remarkably little.

The Colonel, having read these notices and given us a wink, would assume the expression of an eager tourist and approach Pat and say, "Are we to understand, Pat, that in this chamber Shah Jehan breathed his last, his dying eyes fixed on the lovely monument he had erected to shelter for ever the remains of the woman he loved?"

"Yes, sir! "

"Thank you, Pat! "

When the Colonel had left us, we drove to the Taj. "In all the world there is no more beautiful sight than the Taj by moonlight!" an old friend of mine used to remark, generally after his second glass of port. Therefore the Taj had always been associated in my mind with a quaint old London house, an excellent dinner, even better port, and a slightly dithery host. But I had always imagined it near the centre of a vast plain, away from everything, in the stillness of solitude. The Taj is actually near the edge of a teeming native city.

I will not presume to talk about it here. I found it very



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wonderful, very beautiful. I had expected much, and I was not disappointed. The moon was only half full when we returned after dinner, enough to let me believe easily my old friend's remark, "In all the world there is no more beautiful sight than the Taj by moonlight."

Before dinner we all bathed in the fort swimming-pool. Pat and his brother subaltern on duty in the fort told us that many Tommies had been bathing in the pool for a week, that it was therefore "a bit soupy." We should have enjoyed that pool had a division been swimming in it for a month.

We had a delightful dinner with Scott (Pat) and his brother subaltern Barham, and returned to the main cantonments at bedtime. Here we found French still caring for our comfort. He had had our beds placed on the lawn (burnt to a crisp just then) and in an effort to make us cool for the remaining hot hours, he had had water sprinkled on the ground around us. It was very amusing to hear him giving a lecture to his servant who had charged him so much per week for firewood to heat his bath water. The fellow had been simply leaving it in the sun.

We motored the next morning to Fatehpur-Sikri, hoping to get there and back before nine-thirty, but by mistaking the road we reached Akbar's old new capital when the sun was becoming unbearable. I merely mention that we went there. I can merely fling superlative epithets of admiration at it, and therefore will not.

Great is India; wonderful is India; and more fascinating and interesting than I ever imagined it to be; nevertheless it will always remain for me a brilliantly jewelled setting for what I felt was a pearl beyond all conceivable price—the simple kindness of the British gentlemen of the British Army in India. Nor can I forget some of the Indians we met. I recall stopping at a bungalow in the outskirts of Cawnpore to ask a direction. A young Indian doctor appeared and gave us directions. "But it's very warm, now," he said gently; "won't you come inside and rest?" Just a passing remark which meant little to him, probably, but a great deal to us.

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Colonel Grieg, our host in Agra, is very wise. He is a man, very much a man—a D.S.O., and more; I shouldn't think anything could frighten him; but with it all there is in him a gentleness and tenderness which I found very satisfying. There were rumours of a possible riot in Agra at that time. If one walks through the native town, one is astonished that there is not a daily riot. The people are so crowded together; there seems so little room; merely to breathe would seem to demand an effort. "If the streets were swept with a machine-gun, it might teach them to behave themselves," I said.

The Colonel smiled. "Yes," he said, "that might be one way; if you kill people, they certainly can't riot. But," he went on, "if you had seen, as I have, the result after a machine-gun has swept a street, you would decide that it is not the *best* way."

In chatting with him I spoke of Wogs. Wog in Anglo-Indian parlance means Westernized Oriental Gentleman \_W.O.G.—the young Indians home from British universities, notably those of inferior caste. The young English officers are on excellent terms with the Indian soldiers; they get along splendidly with the peasants and apparently with all Indians, except the superior young men of the intelligentsia who have gained much in England, including a so-called Oxford accent.

"Young officers use that term," said the Colonel; "a pity, rather; it doesn't help to solve the problem created by the return of these young Indians from England."

Nor does it! But I should imagine nothing can be done about it; a young officer wise enough not to use the word might be something of a prig in other ways. Westernized Oriental gentlemen probably know that!

An officer whom we had not met returned to the mess on the day we left—Captain McCarthy. He was imbued with the same kindly spirit we had found so delightful in the other officers of the Royal Irish Fusiliers. He owned the biggest dog I have ever seen—a new breed which had some English mastiff in it and perhaps a touch of St. Bernard. He was a fine beast! His name was Shan, and

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he had big serious eyes. I called him to me, but beyond glancing up at his master, he made no movement. McCarthy nodded, and Shan walked over to me and allowed me to stroke him. He was a bit drippy about the jowls, poor old man, for it was very hot. I was told how much meat he ate daily. "Rather expensive to keep, I should think," I said.

McCarthy glanced a little reproachfully at me. "But don't you think he's worth it?" he asked.

We left Agra after tea one evening. The Colonel had ordered the mess sergeant to make us up some packets of sandwiches, and Captain McCarthy piloted us through the city to the main highway. When he finally left us, we felt very lonely and seriously depressed.

We were both now under the weather; but Dick looked positively ill. His complaint had been diagnosed in Delhi as "Heat," generally—a mistake, as it turned out *Anopheles* mosquitoes had bitten him, most probably in Dalbadin; he had malaria of the *benign tertian* variety, which is not quite bad enough to lay a man by the heels, but it keeps him in a very low condition.

From Agra to Calcutta was something of a race against increasing seediness. I should never advise any one to motor across northern India in the hot weather unless, perhaps, in easy stages. We rushed.

We slept that night, or the next early morning, at Dewar, in the neighbourhood of which the Hindus were celebrating some festival. The highway was alive with processions, even at midnight; and what with processions and bullock-wagons in long streams, we had something of a job to maintain a good speed.

We lunched with the Tank Corps at Cawnpore the next day, and spent one gloriously cool hour in the swimming-bath of some *hurra sahib* then in Simla. The water for the bath was brought to the surface by an immense water-buffalo, who, with his eyes masked, travelled many miles round and round attached to a turnstile arrangement.

The next morning we passed through Allahabad with-

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out stopping, reaching Benares towards noon. A serious sand or dust storm had made the night and very early morning most unpleasant, but in some strange way it had cooled the air. It was not a bit unpleasant even at noon in Benares. We had letters of introduction to every cantonment on the way except at Benares. Which was most unfortunate, because we soon found ourselves in a fix through which we eventually struggled, but which caused us worry and anxiety.

We never carried very much cash with us; neither Dick's nor my pockets are made of asbestos, and our letter of credit always produced money when we needed it. But to get money on a letter of credit a bank is necessary. There were several banks in Benares, but a Mohammedan festival, Mahorrum, I think, but I am not sure, had closed them, and they would not open for three days. We were now faced with the awful prospect of remaining in Benares for three days in the heat, which would certainly return, or taking a chance with the fourteen rupees we still had in cash, and motoring the three hundred and fifty odd miles to Calcutta without stopping.

Lunch at the hotel in Benares was out of the question; we bought a rupee's worth of provisions from a grocer's shop, and motored along the highway to a shady tree, where we lunched and thought out the situation. To be able to sit in the open air in the hot weather, even in the shade of a mighty tree, seemed something of a miracle.

While we were lunching, we watched two well-dressed Indians leave a car on the highway and join a company of peasants in a field. At once there was a tremendous din, all the peasants screaming and shouting together. The well-dressed men, we guessed, were usurers, arranging to advance money to the peasants for future crops. The shocking din continued for more than fifteen minutes, and then stopped suddenly. Immediately after the silence, the money-lenders returned to their car and drove back to Benares. One of the peasants had dropped dead in the middle of the argument. We saw them carrying him off on a rude litter shortly afterwards. The dead

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man was a step nearer the earth than his friends, but only a step; the latter looked very earthy in their mud-stained *dhotis*.

We were both too anxious and unwell to visit the famous temples and other sights in Benares.

We decided to push on. Emily was in excellent condition, and there seemed no reason why we should not reach Calcutta the next morning. After filling up the petrol-tanks we had still six rupees left, and that seemed enough.

We reached a town called Dehri at about eight o'clock, and began following a road which seemed to be dropping down to a valley. We had not gone far before we were stopped by small boys, who urged us to turn back. Inquiries showed us that we had reached the banks of the Son River, and we were told that the only way to cross it was to truck the car.

This was a blow, but worse followed. We were told at the station that the fare for ourselves and Emily was ten rupees!

Learning that by motoring an additional hundred and fifty miles we could cross on a bridge or a pontoon, we decided to attempt this, and tried to raise our drooping spirits by drinking some iced lemonade in one of the small cafes.

It meant going back on our tracks more than twenty miles to Sasaram. We did this in the depth of depression.

Sasaram, in Behar and Orissa, seemed a large town, and I inquired at the station if there were any British officials about. "There's the District Magistrate," admitted the station-master; "he's a European."

I now shied at the additional hundred and fifty miles. I determined to subtract twenty rupees from the pocket of that magistrate; in a word, to borrow from him. Unquestionably, he would have the money telegraphed back to him by the end of the next day at the latest; and buoyed up with this knowledge, which I feared my victim might not share, I determined to be quite bold, and not to give him a chance to refuse.

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We entered a driveway and pulled up before a large white bungalow, in front of which the magistrate and his English wife were dining. They were most interested in us, and when I felt their interest had reached its highest peak I told them our story and asked flat out for a loan of twenty rupees.

The magistrate said, " Why, yes! " before he was aware of it.

But after a few moments, he began urging us to stay at the *dak* bungalow in Sasaram, and my spirits sank. The lady, perhaps, saw this, for she smiled at me and said, "It's all right; we'll see you through! " By a lucky chance she knew friends of ours in England. But had I been these good people I should have said good-bye to the twenty rupees.

The magistrate explained that he was not happy about our travelling across Bengal in the night. Tigers might not disturb us, but leopards have been known to leap from trees on to cars forced to stop on the highway at night-time. However, we were given the twenty rupees which, incidentally, was returned to these kind people the next afternoon.

We were seriously delayed at Dehri, where Emily was trucked. We tried to sleep in our sleeping-bags on the truck, but some very obnoxious native excise *wallas* demanded the right to search our baggage. Because they were not in uniform and appeared like ordinary coolies, we refused, very naturally, to permit this. I do not know why cars should be searched here; they look for spirits and opium, we were told. The men remained obstinately with us until we reached the other side, where soldiers in uniform were produced and we had to submit then to the search. The incident was most unpleasant.

There was another delay in getting Emily off the truck, which had been shot into a siding; but at two o'clock we were on the road again, threading our weary way between long streams of bullock-wagons, whose drivers were fast asleep.

Our headlights picked up all kinds of **beasts, but**

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chiefly slinking jackals; we rather hoped to see a tiger, but not one appeared.

At two in the morning, we stopped at a *dak* bungalow in Burdwan, the only unclean, unsavoury *dak* bungalow we came across. Burdwan is a native state, which may explain the filthy *dak* bungalow.

We had now left the great dry plain of India. We entered rich tropical country, passing through country similar to what one sees in the Solomon Islands—a forest of tall trees thickly draped with parasite ferns and creepers, of beautiful palms and a thick, impenetrable undergrowth. We saw hills; we climbed hills; and towards noon we entered the outskirts of Calcutta and followed the Hughli River to a great bridge, which we crossed, finally reaching the heart of the city, where we met a Scotsman who directed us across the Maidan to the fort. At the fort they received us gladly, made us members of the staff mess, gave us pleasant rooms, and here we rested.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

### CALCUTTA AND MALAYA



THE hottest day in Calcutta is much cooler than the hottest day in Delhi; but in Delhi a respite comes at midnight, and the mornings are cool. There is no respite in Calcutta, or very little. But what makes the climate of Calcutta so trying in the hot weather is the drenching humidity of the air. Underclothing is damp a few minutes after it is put on. Prickly heat is almost general; all our friends in the fort were gleaming with it, and we were very soon in a similar condition.

Two officers in particular looked after us, a young subaltern from the Tank Corps and a delightful young Irish R.A.M.C. lieutenant.

Every evening at sunset we entered that holy of holies, the Bengal Club, and drank a *chota peg*, never failing to be impressed with a due sense of the honour we were enjoying in being permitted to sit in the same magnificent apartments with the *hurra sahibs*. The *hurra sahibs* are, of course, the merchant princes; the name sounds descriptive, and a little irreverent.

After dinner we either went to the movies where the air is dried by some mechanical process, or to Firpos, a gay restaurant, where we drank iced beer and made our prickly heat worse.

In rather a hurried way, we saw many of the sights of Calcutta, largely from a sense of duty, I'm afraid; we had seen so much, so very much! We spent an hour in the quaint little Jain Temple with its brilliant mosaics composed of broken china, much of it; and we saw an ugly old idol in a dim alcove with a brilliant jewel in its forehead. We spent a few hot, but delightful, hours, in the Calcutta Zoo, feeding great elephants with bananas and peanuts; and we walked one evening in the Botanical Gardens. But



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it is the Maidan at Calcutta which gives the city its charm. The fort, completely walled and ready for defence at any time, is on the banks of the Hughli. Surrounding it on the city side is an immense cleared space, left clear for an obvious reason—a field of defensive fire. The fort can, or could, accommodate the European citizens in the event of trouble. The clear space is the Maidan. To see that green immensity dotted about with many thousands of moving white figures is to enjoy a weirdly beautiful picture.

Every day, or every evening, games are played on the Maidan—tennis, cricket, football (rugger and soccer) and I believe golf. While Calcutta is a handsome enough city as such, it might be very dull without the Maidan.

We could not cross Burma. Apart from the fact that there is no road across its river and swamp-pierced jungle, Burma was enjoying a slight rebellion at the time, and we should not have been able to gain admission. We therefore shipped ourselves and Emily on board the s.s. *Tairea*, and she carried us down the ugly, mud-stained Hughli to the Bay of Bengal and finally to Penang in northern Malaya.

We had a shocking time getting ourselves and Emily ashore at Penang. Vessels anchor a mile or two from the shore. They dangled Emily over the side of the big liner and dropped her gently enough on to an immense rice junk. It had been our intention to go ashore with her, but before we could get down the side of the *Tairea*, the junk had moved off and was making for the shore. A junk may take fifteen minutes to reach the shore, or two hours, everything depending on the tide and wind; we had therefore a reasonable chance of overhauling Emily's vessel in the ship's passenger launch. Unfortunately the launch had left a few minutes earlier; and there we were, stuck on the *Tairea*, watching our little car disappearing amongst fleets of vessels of all shapes and sizes near the docks.

When we eventually got ashore, we saw Emily's junk in the centre of forty or fifty similar vessels all crammed ten deep against the breastwork. It was Sunday; and although we tried very hard to rescue our little car, we

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failed. We took a rickshaw and were driven to the Runnymede Hotel.

Penang is a beautiful little city of spacious avenues and beautiful homes, all in radiant tropical gardens of palms, crotons and other coloured shrubs. Our hotel, a large, sprawling white and cream building, was on the water-front surrounded by lawns and sheltered by lovely tropical trees of the flamboyant variety then in blossom. Beneath each tree the vividly green lawn was stained, or adorned, with fallen scarlet blossoms.

At sunset the effect was radiantly lovely.

Imagine it! The western sky glowing with colour reflected on the still ocean; a low stone wall lined with a few very dark green pine trees with pine needles hanging in long bunches; the velvet lawn with its tables and chairs; the flamboyant trees with their burden of scarlet blossoms; and finally the great hotel with the main door open, now brilliant with lights, from which came soft music. Sitting there with a long, cool drink, we felt very rich indeed.

The hotel was expensive; and it occurred to me to wonder how planters and planters' assistants could possibly afford to stay here. Apparently they sign chits when money is scarce, and join with the hotel management in hoping. We learnt later that it is possible to sign a chit for almost anything in Malaya. Therefore many people live well above their incomes. I have no idea what the final answer is. Most probably those who pay cash pay for those who do not.

We rescued Emily the next morning, and having crossed to the mainland, we began the journey south to Singapore, a distance of about five hundred and fifty miles.

Malaya presented no difficulties. All the main roads are asphalt. The best picture I can offer of this section of the journey is to suggest a trip through one of the tropical hot-houses at Kew Gardens, if a hot-house more than half a thousand miles long can be imagined. At intervals are beautiful towns with wide streets and handsome white buildings; and the dense tropical vegetation on each side of the road is occasionally broken by Chinese villages, gay

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rows of shops decorated with brilliant Chinese signs and decorations, while the Chinese, not badly built, but anaemic-looking men and women, nearly always clad in black cotton, sit lazily about. The actual Malayan villages are less apparent; the Malays are not good shopkeepers, and their homes, built on high piles, are hidden in the jungle.

The climate is perhaps warm, but not too unpleasantly warm. It is chiefly difficult because it is so changeless. There is no summer, no winter, no spring and no autumn. The difference in temperature throughout the year is under ten degrees; and except that in the actual sunshine it is very hot, the night temperature differs very slightly from the day. It is like living on chocolates, only.

Comparisons are odious, but Malaya is not India. There are no British Army officers in Malaya, and that made all the difference in the world to us.

Perhaps we were hyper-sensitive; it is true that we were both utterly worn out and tired of travelling; from Penang to near Muar, more than two-thirds of the journey, our temperatures ranged around a hundred. You cannot look on the sunny side of life when your temperature ranges around a hundred. "We shall be all right when we get to Australia," we said again and again, and hurried.

The geographical position of the Malay Peninsula makes it something of a world roadway. All sorts and conditions of travelling beggars turn up—travellers on foot, travellers on push-bikes, travellers on motor-cycles, travellers in cars and travellers in aeroplanes. By the time they reach Malaya many of them, judging from what we heard, are not merely physically exhausted.

One evening we had been asked to dine with a really very charming man whose position brings him into contact with these travellers. I think he liked us. But after he'd had a few drinks and felt expansive and friendly he said, "Look here, why do you do it?"

"Do what?" we asked.

"Oh—going round the world in a small car kind of thing! You can't get anything out of it!"

"We wanted to see the world, to travel!" said Dick.

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"And why shouldn't we?" I asked, in tones cold enough to warn him.

"I suppose there's no reason why you shouldn't," said he, offering us another *satingah* (pronounced "stinger"—a whisky and soda). "I'll admit to you," he went on in rather serious tones, "that when I heard you were coming, I wrote to all my agencies saying, 'Everything possible must be done to help these gentlemen, but not one penny of the firm's money must be spent!'"

I saw red. Perhaps I thought of Agra and the Royal Irish Fusiliers, of Calcutta, and the officers in the fort.

"I'm glad you gave these instructions," I said; "it makes everything so clear, doesn't it? Now, if you would give me a rough estimate of what you're spending on food and drink for us to-night, I'll be delighted to write you a cheque!"

He laughed heartily, and refilled our glasses. Fortunately!

One night at supper in Singapore we met a merchant whose duty brought him into touch with airmen making the flight from England to Australia. He went through the whole list, and had hardly a good word to say about any of them. "I wonder what you'll have to say about us when we've gone?" I asked; but even that did not freeze him.

We spent each night at a rest-house, really an hotel in the smaller towns of the country, where planters come to drink and sometimes to dine. After nibbling at a little dinner, we used to retire into a state of semi-coma on our beds. Our rest, such as it was, was always more or less disturbed by people coming to the rest-house for meals or drink. We could hear orders shouted to the Chinese servants. "Boy" (sometimes pronounced "bye"), "two beers, boy! Boy—boy! three *satingahs*—boy! Boy—damn you, boy, what y' doin'—four beers—boy!"

One evening we heard a man and a woman enter the dining-room near our bedroom. "What'll you drink?" he asked.

"Beer!" said she.

"Beer!" shouted **the** man, "bring me two boys—I mean two beers, boy!"

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I waited for a chuckle after this little mistake, but none came. I therefore decided that they were in a bad humour, and rightly, for they soon began exchanging mild abuse which developed into an unpleasant quarrel when the dinner they had ordered appeared on the table. I was not interested in the dispute, and have no idea what it was about. Obviously, the man's liver was in a shocking state. All the way through the quarrel, I could hear their knives and forks scraping across, or tapping their plates. They put quite a lot of venom into that. By the time the meal had ended, the man was in a furious temper. I heard chairs savagely scraping the floor as they got up; finally, their voices died away into the distance.

Followed perfect silence for at least ten minutes, a calm before a fierce storm as it happened, for the man's voice was heard again.

"You blank devil I " he shouted, evidently from the veranda, and I could hear the woman's voice protesting. " I'm finished with you. Now get out of it quick. Quick, I say! I'll kick your blank——1 "

Followed a crash, the sound of a canvas shoe meeting soft flesh, and a faint scream. Footsteps were heard rushing swiftly along the veranda.

Deciding that perhaps the man was behaving rather drastically, even to a woman whose voice was harsh and unmusical, I investigated. Happily, the lady was not the victim. The man's native chauffeur had been caught in the act of driving out his dark lady-love in his master's car.

In rather a dazed fashion we passed through Ipoh where the Austin agent gave us a charming luncheon. I managed to drink a little frozen soup; Dick struggled more heroically. They were most hospitable and kindly, urging us to stay with them for a few days. They motored with us some miles along the lovely road to some limestone caves where the Chinese have weird temples, each lovely cave having its altar and what not. We bought joss-sticks and burnt them to bring us luck, according to the priest, and passed on our way.

At Kuala Lumpur, a very beautiful city with an

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immense mosque which looks more like a town hall than a place of worship, another Austin agent gave us tea at his bungalow, and urged us to stay with him, but we were eager to reach Muar, near which one of my old Cambridge friends managed a large estate, deciding that if we once stopped travelling we might have to stop for some days or even weeks.

I had not seen my friend since 1914, when he was nineteen. I assured Dick that he would like him. Dick accepted this assurance; but we both agreed in trying to imagine his wife. We decided to hope for the best, but reached the general foreboding that she would turn out to be a "bite."

"C——was one of the cheeriest, happiest and most feckless lads at nineteen," I said.

"That does it!" said Dick; "those sort are always caught by 'bites' "

We turned off the road near Muar and finally reached a large bungalow, on the veranda of which sat my friend. Seventeen years added to nineteen invariably makes some difference, but the only serious difference I noticed was a slight access of seriousness; he was no longer feckless. His wife was then resting, for it was not yet three o'clock, so it looked as if we would have to wait, to know the worst.

"The Mem's sleeping!" explained my friend, after he had made us welcome.

"She's not now," said a pleasant feminine voice, and down a stairway came the Mem. Mem-sahib of India becomes simply Mem in Malaya.

She was definitely not a "bite." She was a good-looking and very sensible young woman who saw the situation as far as Dick and I were concerned at once. A doctor was sent for, and Dick was put to bed.

The doctor took drops of blood from both of us, and having dyed these a charming shade of mauve, he put them between glass and looked for malaria germs. He found some in Dick's blood, but none in mine; which was **rather** annoying of him, because all sympathy and sisterly nursing was thereupon concentrated on Dick.

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We had to wait nearly a fortnight for a vessel from Singapore to Darwin, and we spent most of this time with my friend and his wife.

We learnt a great deal about rubber planting, and heard many sad stories about its sad condition then; we played much backgammon, and occasionally went to little parties; we went crocodile-hunting one Sunday on the local river, and saw none. Had we been more enthusiastic we might have gone tiger-shooting, but tiger-shooting from a rubber plantation did not strike me as being very amusing.

As far as I could gather, this is what happens: A platform is built in a tree, and the hunters sit on this all night, being bitten by mosquitoes, while a wretched live goat, tethered near the tree, groans at intervals. At dawn comes the tiger, or he doesn't come. If he comes to eat the goat, the shooters shoot him.

It is necessary to keep the tigers down, of course; but this way of killing did not sound exciting to me.

We heard of two fellows who spent a weary night waiting for a tiger. At dawn the goat was still *m-maa'ing*, but no sign of a tiger. One of the fellows became so annoyed with the tiger for not coming that he shot the goat. The kick of the gun disturbed his balance and he fell from the tree—on to the back of the dilatory, and very surprised tiger!

Tigers often bag a coolie or two, but the tiger does not always get a feed. One of my friend's Tamil labourers fought a tiger with his knife and killed it. The coolie was badly wounded, and lived for months on his reputation, until he bored my friend so seriously that he finally sent him away.

I found it difficult to distinguish Malays from the Indians, who are plentiful in Malaya. Both wear brilliantly coloured sarongs, and both are very dark; but after a time the Malays emerge, chiefly through a touch of Mongol in their features.

It is a curious life that is lived by Europeans in Malaya. The climate affects the men much less than the women, who usually appear faded and washed out. Breakfast and luncheon occur at the usual hours; but

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dinner may happen at any hour between eight-thirty and eleven, a good deal depending upon the number of people who have dropped in at six for *satingahs*. *En famille*, one, or at the most two, whiskies and sodas are drunk; but when people turn up, a party develops, and *satmgahs* go on for quite a time. *Satingah* in Malay means half; a *satingah* is the *chota peg* of India, a little drink; but the term is deceptive.

When people really feel that they've had enough, *pihats* are suggested, with the general idea that since we're all so er—jolly, and such good friends together, and don't want to part too soon, yet feel that while we don't really need any more, it would be nice merely to sip——!

But the *pihats* (I'm certain I've spelt the word wrongly) are actually port glasses practically filled with hard liquor, touched up with something else.

You don't become drunk. I do not know precisely how to explain the effect. I merely felt dull, contented vaguely, and very, very damp.

We spent three days in Singapore before embarking. I felt much better; Dick, who was taking from thirty to sixty grains of quinine a day to clear his blood of the *benign tertians*, felt accordingly.

Singapore is a most cheerful city. It costs half a crown to say good morning in the decent hotels; local people pay with chits, and probably endure some awful moments back on their estates when the bills come in. We stayed at the club, which was very comfortable, and worked out at about £2 a day each.

To shop in Singapore in the Indian quarter is delightful. Everything is ridiculously cheap, notably silk shirts and pyjamas, but the fun is the bargaining. Dick spent one afternoon and an entire evening buying some silk pyjamas which I don't think he wanted. This made his position strong, and he got them for about one-third of their marked price.

But what we found most delightful in Singapore was a kind of amusement park called the New World. Scattered about the New World were at least a dozen



## CALCUTTA AND MALAYA

Chinese theatres with open-air stages, all going hard. Some of the stages were small, and on these the actors and actresses extemporized, much to the delight of the stage-hands and the orchestra; but some stages were immense, and on these there were productions—*productions!* There were battle scenes, and court scenes; there were murders and shocking intrigues in palaces; there were kings and princes, queens, empresses, dancing-girls and what not—all dressing up and playing their parts with great joy. The stage-hands went about amongst the actors, and enjoyed odd bits of the play; but no one seemed to enjoy the performance more than the performers themselves, who were not a bit interested in applause, carrying on through it all with great enthusiasm. The Chinese love acting.

The Malays have theatres too. My friend's wife told me that she saw a performance of *Hamlet* in the Malayan language. A much-used expression in the bungalow is *pergi*, which is pronounced simply "piggy," and means "Go! " When Hamlet ordered Ophelia to get herself to a nunnery, he said abruptly, "*Pergi la!* "

The liner which usually runs between Singapore and Darwin, having sunk off Sydney Heads at this time, we were forced to travel on a cargo vessel called the *Mangola*. The attitude of the agents of this vessel was simply this: " The *Mangola* has no passenger accommodation; but there are some odd rooms. If you want to travel on her, you may do so, but you will not expect to be comfortable, will you? "

We expected very little from the *Mangola* in the way of comfort, and we enjoyed little. The actual food supplied to the ship was probably good, but when the Goanese cook had finished with it, the result was revolting. The ship's officers were all suffering from indigestion and indignation!

I could write quite a long chapter about this short voyage. The Highland captain had a moustache which fell over his good-humoured mouth like *khus-khus tatties*. He was a very quiet man. I stood near him one day when a young and rather chatty clerk from one of the

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vessel's local agencies in Java was talking to him. The captain had remained perfectly quiet until the boy said, " Well, I suppose I'd better be getting ashore! "

The captain then turned round and stared fixedly at him for a second and then snapped, " I don't give a b—— if you do! " Exit boy!

Sparks, who was a perfectly good Australian, was literally Signor Mussolini's double. That supplied a little comedy. He had about six inches of\* black bushy hair shooting out from his chest, and he was a little proud of this mark of manly strength. His head was practically bald. The purser, or super-cargo, a dear good fellow, had been on the wrecked liner, and found life on the *Mangola* rather dull after the smart passenger ship.

He told us that after he had got ashore from the wrecked liner, he was called to give certain particulars to some official whom he described, with a bitter glance at me, as " One of these bloomin' Englishmen! "

This was the dialogue which had apparently infuriated the purser:

OFFICIAL: Your name, please?

PURSER: Smith (I invent).

OFFICIAL: Christian name?

PURSER: Harold.

OFFICIAL: Harold Smith! (*looking up at him seriously*). H'm! I *thought* so!

"Sarcastic b——! " said the purser, when he finished this yarn.

The second mate had a low opinion of the purser. I was chatting with him on the bridge late one night during his watch. Looking out on the dark waters around the sturdy old ship I said, " D'you ever feel the awful responsibility of your job? "

' Yes, I do! " he said, " but you've got to put up with a lot. When an ignorant b——d, like the blank purser on this ship says that you've no more to do than a tram-car motorman, it makes you feel—well, what a lot of ignorant blanks there are about! "

The *Mangola* finally ran alongside the dock at Darwin.



## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

### LAST LAP

**T**HE situation of Darwin is very beautiful, on a bluff or point of land above radiantly blue tropical sea. The town, such as it is, has great wide, dusty streets, but except for the old brown-stone inn, there is not one building of any note. There is a considerable Chinese population, and a Chinatown; but import duties are so high that it is hardly worth the while of the Chinese merchants to import interesting goods. These people are the relics of pre-White Australia days, when the Northern Territory showed great promise. They probably know that a rich and mighty area of the world cannot remain largely unproductive while millions are starving for a little land not so many miles away. And so the Chinese wait.

Returning for the last time to politics, I must admit that to open wide the northern gates of Australia to Asiatic immigration might be more unwise than to pursue the present policy of keeping the gates fast closed. It merely seems to me that in view of the failure of whites to succeed, some scheme of controlled immigration should be attempted before the issue is forced, which it is bound to be, sooner or later, when control might not be possible.

Before Emily could proceed south, a bond for nearly £50 had to be deposited with the customs. It seemed a lot of money for a little car.

We drove at once to the hotel and booked a room. When we had carried our baggage into the hall, I said to a man whom I thought might be a porter, "Is there a porter? "

He gazed at me with some astonishment, and then smiled. "Well," he said in the kindest tone, "I don't

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mind lending you a hand! " And he lent it; we had a large number of small packages; but I felt as if a king had said, " You may kiss my royal hand! "

There were many people at dinner, but only one waitress. Yet no one was kept waiting, and the dinner was excellent. Half-way through it, a nicely dressed motherly soul in lace came to us and asked if we were being looked after well, and we assured her that we were. She lent a charming, kindly atmosphere to her hotel. Ma Gordon is one of the Northern Territory's characters, and a delightful one. During the last labour upheaval in Darwin they made her hotel " black," but she survives.

Morning tea is a very necessary meal in the tropics where people always rise early; but there was no tea served at the Darwin inn. I went to the kitchen and spoke nicely to the waitress, who gave me all the tea and thin bread and butter I needed. She said, almost in a hushed whisper, " You know, Yd like to take round morning tea, but I dare not; they'd call me a ' scab! '"

A very nice girl, and the swiftest and best waitress I have ever come across. Her wages were probably twice that of a waitress in England; but she actually did the work of at least four.

Customs formalities held us up in Darwin for a day or two, but at last we were ready to leave. While we were packing Emily, who was garaged under a tree, a large dusty char-a-banc, followed by a motor-lorry, dashed into the inn yard. Written across both in flaring capitals was, " Pioneer Tours! "

A couple of months earlier, a retired bushman living near Melbourne saw advertised in his local paper a motor-tour which attracted him at once. The promoters proposed to take their patrons from Melbourne to Darwin and back, to show them " wildest Australia," to let them shoot crocodiles, water-buffaloes and more edible game, to show them aborigines in their native lairs, and generally to allow civilized Australians to live the pioneering life of their forbears. Ten thousand miles would be travelled through the bush.

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The retired bushman wrote at once and booked a place, and began preparing for the adventure, cleaning his guns, looking over his old bush knives and getting suitable kit ready. He was comfortably off, but he'd been rather lonely in his suburban bungalow. On this tour he would be certain, he felt, to find other stout fellows.

When he took his seat in the char-a-banc, he found himself surrounded by women, and one tall, thin man. The tall, thin man, who was middle-aged, had his wife with him. One lady, a frail spinster, was seventy; another lady was a buxom widow of sixty. None of the other women was under thirty.

The driver of the char-a-banc, hearing that we were going south, came over and asked if we would keep our eyes open for a suit-case which had dropped from the baggage lorry. The bag had dropped somewhere between Darwin and their last camping place, two hundred miles south. Its owner, a very shy, diffident person, should have been more distressed than she appeared to be; the bag contained all the items she needed for her short stay in Darwin; but the fact that we were going to look for her bag gave her complete reassurance, and she decided to forget it.

It was glorious to be in the bush once more, and we said so to each other again and again. Many people find the Australian forest monotonous. I don't. It never ceases to charm me. The forest in New Zealand is more varied and is perhaps much more lovely to look at; but try to walk through it, and you are instantly held up by all kinds of undergrowth, if you are not entangled with lawyer-canes and other parasite creepers. And you get very damp.

But the Australian bush is like a vast park through which you may walk for thousands of miles without being held up; and while gums predominate, the bush seldom lacks colour; there is always something blossoming, and sometimes it literally blazes with golden wattle. But I think you have got to live in the Australian bush really to know and love it. I have travelled nearly ten thousand

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**miles in it and** slept in it, night after night; and I can recall no waking more wonderful than the first glimpse after dawn of **a** brilliant sky through the beautiful branches of a gum tree.

It was mid-July when we left Darwin, mid-winter, of course, in the Southern Hemisphere; but this is the season when the northern half of Australia enjoys a perfect climate for camping out. The days are pleasantly warm; the nights, notably inland, are cool and indeed almost chilly. Rain is not considered.

The road south from Darwin is merely a blazed trail through the bush. No money is spent on it, and what becomes formed with traffic is usually washed away during the wet season when motor travel in the territory is impossible.

To do justice to this last lap of our long journey, I should have to write a complete book. I think it best, therefore, merely to offer the more interesting incidents, and to hurry on.

At about six o'clock that first evening, we stopped near a running creek and made camp, now the simplest business, for there is not the slightest need for a tent. A mosquito-net, however, has to be arranged with sticks; for apart from the annoyance of the ordinary mosquito, one has to guard against the dear old malaria *anopheles* in the territory. And a mosquito-net is an effective guard against snakes, which sounds rather funny unless you know the way of snakes.

People always camp near water. Snakes come to drink during the night. Slithering gravely back from the *billa-bong* they are interrupted by a blanket covering a man. Perhaps they are a little frightened; perhaps the warmth attracts them; but they are apt to slide under the blanket where, if they are disturbed, they bite; and **a man** might be dead before he wakes up! Bushmen have been known to wrap up snakes in their swags and to carry them about for the **day**.

I have read again **and** again that the Australian bush teems with snakes. **I have yet to see a wild snake in**

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Australia, although I have often enough seen their trails. I have occasionally seen dead snakes on the road where they have been run over by cars; but it is considered unwise to run over a snake, because the wheels are apt to fling him into the car in the worst of humours,

I still clung to my sleeping-bag with its pneumatic tubes, but Dick, having shipped his to Sydney by the *Mangola*, hoping I would follow so good an example, made himself a "hippo" each evening. A "hippo" is simply a fairly large rounded hole scooped from the ground where you propose to sleep, its size and shape depending upon the figure of the man using it. With a "hippo" you can sleep in perfect comfort. When we got farther south, Dick used to fill a tin with sand and earth, leaving this on our camp-fire until he was ready to turn in. He would then line his "hippo" with the hot earth or sand and enjoy warmth and comfort throughout the night.

By a lucky chance we found the pioneer lady's suitcase on the side of the trail the next morning, and by a still more lucky chance we met a small motor-lorry making for Darwin. The pioneer lady got her suit-case a few minutes before the pioneers left Darwin on the return journey, but her mind was doubtless relieved.

We camped at Adelaide River near the railway station that night. There is a small inn here where beer sells at three shillings the bottle. Feeling reckless, we bought one bottle; but let it go at that. We left betimes in the morning and followed a wrong trail, which took us into the blue, ending near a beautiful lagoon ablaze with water-lilies of every colour. There were many thousands of white cockatoos in the trees near the lagoon, but it is no good saying "Pretty Polly!" to them, because they don't know what you mean.

We were back at Adelaide River late in the afternoon, and decided to camp here again when we heard that the pioneers were expected. They duly turned up, and we all made mild whoopee in the inn parlour that night.

The district turned up in force. The district consisted of the policeman and his wife, who had travelled slightly

less than seventy miles, and a young Russian peanut farmer.

The policeman's wife had a great old time with the pioneer women; she had not seen a strange woman for three years. The policeman drank a little beer, but not much! You can't, you simply can't get gay on beer at three shillings a bottle.

The young Russian peanut farmer had been a cadet in the Czar's army before the Revolution; heaven knows how he had managed to land at Adelaide River; and not having any partners of his own age to dance with, he had taught the inn landlady some Russian folk dances. She was over sixty, but still a graceful figure of a woman, and while she could not leap or cavort as gaily as he could, she danced her part efficiently. The music was supplied by an ancient cylinder gramophone. The young Russian danced beautifully, and being quite without self-consciousness, the pioneers and the few inhabitants of Adelaide River who formed the audience felt no temptation to laugh at him, or to snigger at the strange spectacle of a man giving a solo dance in the bush.

When I awoke next morning and glanced towards the pioneer's camp, I saw a lady's nude back rise up from a heap of blankets. It fascinated me; but I was still more fascinated when the lady put on a neat little hat, evidently to prevent crushing it while she continued dressing. She was the elderly buxom widow. You can have no idea how quaint a buxom widow of sixty looks clad from the waist up in merely a neat little hat with trailing wisps of tulle. She fiddled about with the things around her for some time and then drew something pink up over her back. This was kept up by two narrow bands which passed over her shoulders; but whenever she bent forward, the straps would fall down her plump arms, and down would go the pink garment. She restored them again and again, for they were always dropping. The other pioneers began shouting to her to hurry; but I saw that until those straps were made to hold firmly, she would never get her packing done. Finally, one of the younger pioneer women came



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to her rescue, and evidently made her stand up; and this solved the problem, making the straps quite taut.

I said to her that evening, for we camped together again, "I saw your back this morning, and a'very handsome back it was too! "

" How dared you look! " she snapped; " dear me, I've been told that before! "

We continued with the pioneers all the way to the Queensland border. They helped us, and we tried to be of use to them. If we shot two turkeys, we gave them one; if we were late in reaching camp and their dinner was ready, we dined with them. The retired bushman pretended to despise the women and ruled them with a rod of iron. They adored him, for he never failed them when they needed help.

We lived magnificently. If we shot squatter pigeons, or ground pigeons, a pretty bird with a touch of red on his head who lives on grass seed, we stewed these in boiling dripping; we treated duck, equally plentiful on the lagoons, similarly; but scrub turkey demanded more careful attention.

Scrub turkey are like small ostriches and do not resemble the ordinary turkey very closely. They have no fear of a car, and may be shot with the greatest of ease, poor things. Dick usually attended to the actual cooking, or baking. He dug a hole about three feet deep and built our camp-fire in it. When I had plucked and cleaned the bird, usually after our evening meal, Dick scooped out the fire from the hole. I then wrapped the corpse in a wet cloth and placed it in the hole. Dick filled in the hole with hot earth and left the remains of the camp-fire on top. In the morning the turkey was perfectly cooked, and deliriously tender. When we had onions and tomatoes, I chopped up the heart, liver and other little turkey organs and mixed these with the onions and tomatoes and bread-crumbs, making an excellent stuffing.

We had turkey for breakfast, turkey for luncheon and turkey for dinner for days at a time. Buttered eggs became a welcome change.

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The bush was alive with kangaroos, wallabies and other marsupials; we saw many emus; and countless thousands, I might almost say millions, of parrots and parakeets.

With the pioneers, we camped on the site of the Elsey homestead, where Mrs. Gunn found her material for "We of the Never Never." With great difficulty we found the grave of her husband, the Maluka of her story. The station is now abandoned, and the white ants have left absolutely nothing.

Those who have read "We of the Never Never"—well worth reading, by the way, and now a classic in Australia—will recall a *billabong* (a pool or lagoon), near the homestead. We were encamped near this *billabong*.

The lights from the pioneers' camp in the clearing surrounded by very tall trees lent a mysterious air to the place, haunted for all of us by the ghosts of the strong men and the little woman of the story. Mrs. Gunn still lives, but she was a neat little ghost for us that night. The pioneers, who had arrived some hours before us, were arguing about the sites of the various buildings of the narrative; and they were most eager to find the Maluka's grave. We all felt a little sad.

And then the bushman returned from the *billabong* with a fish which was still alive. It was not a very big fish, and we all agreed with him that it would be best to throw it back. I don't think anybody felt inclined to clean it. People were tired after the day's run; the dishes had all been washed up, and bed was on the near horizon. The widow, the lady of the shoulder-straps, thought differently.

"What a pity to waste a good fish I " said she.

"Well, you clean it! " said one of the female pioneers a little acidly.

"Certainly I will I " said she; and the bushman groaned audibly.

She was given the fish, and taking it in her very pretty little hands, she marched to the table.

"I need a basin," she said; and a basin was given to her. "And some water! " and some water was produced. "This knife's too blunt I " she exclaimed; and the bush-

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man gave her his sheath knife. " Ooh! " she screamed, "a fin's stuck in me! " and they wrapped up her hand. " That's better/' said she, and plunged the knife into the unfortunate fish, at quite the wrong place, but also into her pretty hand. "Ooh! I'm cut, badly! " she screamed.

They had to unpack the baggage wagon to find the Red Cross box; and after an hour, there was peace in the pioneers' camp. As we passed their camp in the morning, I saw the fish, mutilated, looking dimly up from the grass near the table. Sad, very sad! It would have looked so much nicer in the lagoon.

We left the funny little Territory railway at Birdon, plunging now into dry, almost desert plain country. We passed through Daly Waters and Newcastle Waters, pausing for the night at Anthony's Lagoon.

At Anthony's Lagoon, we slept in the bungalow of the police officer, a tall young fellow of magnificent physique, who was yet curiously sympathetic and charming. A Queensland girl we met later said of him, without much originality, that he was the answer to the maiden's prayer. I should think he might be too.

With practically no neighbours, with the worst material at hand, he had succeeded in filling his life. He had an immense vegetable garden near the actual lagoon, producing tomatoes, lettuce, cabbage, egg-plant and much else—infinately\*more than he could possibly use; but he kept passing drovers well supplied, and every vehicle passing north and south, not frequently at Anthony's Lagoon, carried supplies to people who hardly ever see an honest cabbage. He had a magnificent herd of goats, and kept himself in fresh milk and butter. While we were there, he was finishing a fine tennis-court which he had decorated with rustic chairs and tables suitable for a large tennis-party. I have no idea with whom he proposed to play tennis; but I dare say he will get one or two sets during each year. Some charming young women, his neighbours, live about a hundred miles down the street!

On we went, day after day, each day more delightful than the day before. We entered the State of **Queensland**

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its feet and dashed for the street to catch trams and ferries. I flew across the world after that.

We crossed to Auckland in the s.s. *Maunganui*; but until Emily had been driven from the dock to a garage less than a mile distant, she could not say that she had encircled the globe.

Imagine, therefore, our emotion when Dick and I sat in our little car to drive that last mile; but imagine what we felt when a few yards from the dock gates the Auckland traffic cop stopped us, refusing to let us proceed—for not having New Zealand number-plates!

"And," said he, "if you say much more, 111 have you up for not having New Zealand driving licences! "

Oh, well—East's west—home's best! But should we criticize the Turks?

THE END











