

comfort, I like warmth. *Hetty I* took me many miles through Europe, and I am grateful to her, but still I think that the woman is not yet born who can travel 300 miles in a day across shell-shocked roads, and perhaps survive a hailstorm or a day of Mediterranean heat, and come out of it looking like a Hollywood starlet. Hence, that important thing—feminine vanity—is wrecked right at the start.

Many's the time I've crept into an hotel, dragging a filthy bit of baggage which has twice fallen off the machine, and surveyed a disastrous hair-do mostly over my eyes, a shiny nose, smuts on my cheeks, and wished that the mirror would crack. But I still sit on the pillion, and the model and I have come to understand each other better.

*Hetty I* was a loyal companion, and took us thousands of miles without breathing a word of complaint. She held the road with ease and a feeling of solid confidence. There were times in France, in 1946, when I was certain that if I had possessed false teeth they would have been found embedded in my skull; but one could blame only the pavé for that, or holes where shells had fallen and the French had forgotten to put the road back.

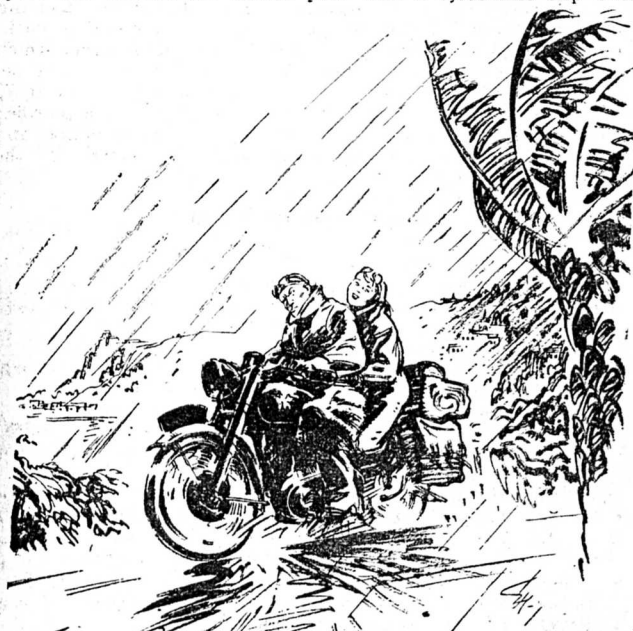
### Midnight Spiv-Work

At the end of a day I would walk bow-legged into a hotel and sit astride my chair like a jockey, grinning sourly at the couples who actually danced in the evening, as if their legs belonged to them. But gradually I was being broken into it—the hard way.

When the Matchless was sold to a rider who did not know her gallant history, I felt as if we had betrayed a friend. I even resented *Hetty II*, her successor, who was the newest model, and whose black and silver showed no scratch, and who even had a sprung pillion. In Paris, *Hetty I* and I had once managed a little bit of midnight spiv-work which had resulted in a piece of Sorbo-rubber, bearing strong resemblance to a jeep seat, being lashed on to the pillion so that *Hetty* and I did not smack each other with such violence on secondary roads. The second Matchless was provided with a special cushion which, though more comfortable, had no romantic history at all.

*Hetty II* took the hills of Corsica very boldly, and apart from tossing Kenneth down a hillside once or twice, her record was unblemished. I was busy raising another Craven to carry on the family motor cycling tradition at the time, so I was not there to jeer, or to offer friendly advice beginning, "Of course, I told you so..."

However, this machine had only begun her travelling. This year she entered her second year with a 5,000-mile trip over



"There was one occasion when we travelled down the Italian Riviera in a steady downpour..."

the worst roads of Europe, and the pillionist really won her wings. There was one occasion when I left the pillion completely for a minute, and landed on something which felt like a petrol tank, but as Ken was still forrard somewhere, it was probably only his saddle.

My best achievement as a pillionist was a performance in the Yugoslav hills. After a fortnight of solid rain, the roads had been washed away, and on one slippery clay track our clutch nipple pulled out, and a solderless spare tore its threads. The only solution, I was informed, was that I should push my spouse, a heavy motor cycle, and some quarter-ton of baggage along the road until he slipped her into gear. I was then to rush alongside like Sidney Wooderson and do a flying vault into the saddle.

It all sounded far too easy, considering that I was wearing oilskins, and that my feet were tastefully done up in pieces of old inner-tube to keep the rain off. The space in which I had to land was a very narrow one between Ken's back and the vast mound of luggage on the back carrier. . . . But, at the cost of a strained wrist and a wrenched ankle, I did it, and the rousing cheer from some peasants by the roadside showed that they appreciated the Daring Dexter act as a free side-show. How I wish they had filmed it for Movietone News, for a circus contract would have been offered to us at once!

There was one occasion when we travelled down the Italian Riviera in a steady downpour. Rain had fallen for days without a break, and all our baggage was sodden. Our emergency rain-kit was nearly worn out, the blue Med. was a dirty cocoa-colour, and the famous midsummer charms of the Riviera were well drowned in mist and water.

### Ignorance is Bliss

After days of this, we were too miserable for speech, but I began to consider our plight. The more I thought about it the funnier it seemed. I shrugged my shoulders to keep the rain from running down my spine (it feels less cold if it trickles over the shoulder blades!)—and I began to laugh. Ken swerved violently and asked me if I was all right, but I laughed still more. When I could explain the joke it was—"Do you realize that we are actually each paying about five shillings an hour to do this?"

So why do pillionists still do it? To be honest, I don't quite know. I don't understand motor cycles and try very hard not to do so; it saves a lot of argument. Occasionally I say, "Turn on the petrol, dear, then she may start," or "Mooky Ploog," but I find that when I am proved to be right my dear husband is often more than a little annoyed at my correct diagnosis, so I find that Ignorance is Bliss.

I can't claim that my trips on a pillion are caused by a passion for motor cycles. So why have I not insisted upon travelling by car? There is one very good reason, I think. A motor cycle is not merely a form of transport, it is the only universal, international passport to the hearts of fellow-enthusiasts wherever one goes. In every foreign city *Hetty I* or *Hetty II* has made her friends, and it is a case of "Love me, love my bike."

The motor cycle in this day and age is the most democratic way of travelling; it is a sure way of meeting other people who love travel for its own sake. The comfort-loving Sybarite who travels de luxe does not stop to look at a foreign bike, but the crowds who gather around our machine are always friendly, interested, helpful. There are moments when a pillionist's life is chilly and dreary, but there are other blessed occasions when the warm winds whistle in one's hair and the sun gleams on a blue sea, and then the hum of a healthy engine and the smooth feel of a good road can make up for everything!

