



Mr. W. H. JOHNSON.

ACROSS THE WORLD ON A WILLYS KNIGHT



**8,000 MILES
IN 80 DAYS**

48½ actual running days

*The story of an Odyssey of
Endurance Reliability
and Speed . . . on a*

**WILLYS KNIGHT
SLEEVE VALVE SIX**



ACROSS THE WORLD IN "EIGHTY" DAYS ($48\frac{1}{2}$ ACTUAL RUNNING DAYS)

*The story of an Odyssey of Endurance, Reliability, and Speed, on a
WILLYS KNIGHT SLEEVE VALVE SIX*

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A FOREWORD

Seven thousand seven hundred and sixteen miles, from Manchester to Calcutta, in 48½ running days!

FOR more than 4000 miles of that journey there were no real roads, frequently not even a marked track! Mountain passes of almost indescribable difficulty had to be negotiated, hundreds of miles of desert, either waterless or, in the alternative, a horrid quagmire due to rains, in which the car threatened to become entirely engulfed. Boulder-strewn paths through deep defiles, wherein the danger of being shot at by warlike Arabs or wandering tribes of hillmen was very real indeed.

In spite of these physical obstacles, in spite of every conceivable difficulty in connection with Frontiers, Customs, and Military zones, of which you shall read anon, Mr. Drader has set up a record that is likely to stand for many a long day.

Most amazing of all, he drove the car himself throughout the whole journey. What a man! What a car!

Interesting as you will find this narrative, we would have you know it represents but a small portion of Mr. Drader's story. Our difficulty has been to decide what could be omitted without detracting from the value. We have not just chosen the exciting, the hazardous, the unusual incidents, but rather attempted to give you a general impression of the journey, concealing not a single episode which refers to mechanical trouble, for this you must know, since it is a story of a man, and a car.

And when you have read it, you will readily agree it would be difficult to find a car and a man with the dogged endurance displayed by Mr. Drader and his Willys-Knight car.

To the narrative then, commensurably in Mr. Drader's own words, and illustrated by original and untouched photographs taken *en route*.*

* Since little interest would be evinced in pictures of the more civilised country traversed, the pictures selected illustrate only the wilder portions of the route. Interesting as these are, Mr. Drader regretfully tells us that a whole series of films, together with an expensive camera, were stolen in Turkey.



Receiving the Letter from Manchester's Lord Mayor

ACROSS THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS

This is to be a plain man's tale. Had I the facile pen I would have burst into print years ago, for many are the good yarns I could tell of my ten years' sojourn in India. I am better with a steering wheel in my hands, a good car beneath me, and a hard road ahead.

I knew I had these in my Willys Knight, hence my quick decision to drive back to India after a "Refresher Course" at Heaton Chapel, Stockport.

Of course I wanted to start right away, but Sir William Letts and the good people at Heaton Chapel insisted on thoroughly going over the car, equipping it properly for carrying the necessary spares and kit, and generally making me feel that far too much fuss was being made of a job I knew the car would do easily, if I could manage to hang on to the steering wheel.
I little knew what I was in for!



Most of the Continent—as holidaymakers know it—was not unknown to me, and since I would feel quite at home once Quetta was reached, I imagined the trip would be a sort of holiday, with a pretty gruelling drive for the middle 2000 miles or so—and what was that for a thoroughbred car with the engine the whole world admits is unapproachable for endurance and reliability?

Again, if I ever had qualms, they were quickly dispelled by the desire to pioneer, which is born in every man of us, and here was my opportunity—and the means!

So I left Manchester in the midst of the Civic Week celebrations, the proud bearer of a letter to the Mayor of Calcutta from the Lord Mayor of Manchester, who, with Sir William Letts and Mr. H. Fildes, Managing Director and Director respectively of Willys Overland Crossley Limited, afforded me a very hearty send-off, as also did the crowd of enthusiastic Mancunians gathered before the City Hall on October 6th, 1926.

"Manchester delivers the goods" cried one as I drove away, and that phrase rang in my ears under many a southern and eastern sky, when, after a gruelling day, everything seemed black and success farther away than ever.

Manchester delivered my car—and I vowed to deliver that letter safely in Calcutta or—I would see!

PARIS ENTERTAINS US

To Folkestone then and from Boulogne to Paris without incident.

Paris! and the week of the Salon d'Automobiles! Had I stayed much longer (and how they pressed me to stay) the hospitable Parisians would have made me believe I had already accomplished my task.

Another enthusiastic send-off, and I am at last away on the first long leg of my journey to Calcutta, accompanied by Mr. Jubault, a most capable mechanic and a splendid companion.

Chalons the first night out, and on to Strasbourg by 6 p.m. the following day, and so across the bridge to get the Customs details settled, where we found the Germans more than obliging and interested in our tour.



The Willys Knight leaves England

We pushed on in the dark over a mountain (some 5000 feet) and down to Freudenstadt for the night.

We made Munich at 11 p.m. the following night, where we also stayed the next day, having a very serviceable box fitted to the running board to carry our oil supplies effectively and securely. Then on to Vienna without trouble, apart from the difficulty of finding the right road into the town—I missed the correct turning during a duel with a big German car which I overtook at 45 m.p.h. on a big hill. A "diverting" episode, thoroughly enjoyed by both parties, although we overshot Vienna by eleven miles and found some nice hairpin bends for our trouble, or pleasure.

OUR FIRST CUSTOMS "CUSS"

On Saturday, October 16th, we left for Budapest, which should have been reached by 4 p.m. had we not been delayed by an officious Hungarian



Customs official on the Frontier beyond Kitsee. He insisted on driving my car. He could not speak English any more than he could drive a car, but I decided to humour him—with one hand on the switch and the other very near the brake. I did this because I was not anxious for him to go through all my baggage—a fearful nuisance. He examined my small hand bag only. Cheers!

I made it a practice with all difficult Customs Officials and Police, to try and interest them in the car and the map of the route round the sides. This manoeuvre frequently succeeded, and in their interest in our journey they forgot all about my baggage and let me go. Note, Turks are *not* susceptible.

We reached Mohacs (15 kilometres from Jugo-Slavian Frontier) on the evening of October the 18th, after much delay on that day. Unfortunately we listened to the advice of a local know-all and lost our way near a place called Tolna. We had great difficulty in getting back to the road advised by the A.A. Let me say here, stick to the A.A. road, it's right.

Over the Frontier at 10 a.m. next day, and what a really first-class crowd of people Jugo-Slavians are! Had their country been bigger, my tale would have been shorter—as the nursery rhyme tells us. More power to their independence, and little wonder they never built a bridge from Belgrade across to Selmin. They prefer, and always have preferred, to be separated from such nasty neighbours by at least some good, clean, wholesome water.

We spent more time in Belgrade than intended, partly because we had our first difficulty of any description—the very heavy “special” headlamps fitted in Paris proved too much for one of the lamp stays—it's own stay, by the way. This was quickly remedied, but still we tarried because of the extraordinary reception accorded us by Mr. Trifunovitch and his partner, the local agent for Willys Knight cars. It would have been sheer joy, in a way, had we needed real mechanical assistance, so keen were they to be helpful. These gentlemen finished their education at Cambridge, and it was a special treat to be able to converse with them in King's English, which they spoke fluently and without a trace of accent.

We left Belgrade for Nis(h) on October 23rd, the roads being execrable. Hitherto I have said nothing about roads, not because we did not find them pretty awful, but that they were so incomparably bad later on, even where they could be located at all, I feel I must accept any surface with a few broken stones on it, and having two discernible sides, as a good road for the future.



Mr. Fildes, Sir Wm. Letts, and Mr. Drader at the Paris Salon

'WARE BRIGANDS!

On October 24th we left the Serbian Custom House at Tsaribad for the Bulgarian Frontier, which is reached by a military outpost on a river bed leading out to the Dragoman Pass. All semblance of road disappeared three miles after Tsaribad. Back in Budapest, and even in Vienna, we were told much about the brigands in these parts, and we were given fairly conclusive evidence of their very real existence. Fortunately we managed to get through without interference—in fact, without a sight of them. At Slivnitza we ran into a sort of military sports meeting. The King's Aide-de-Camp came along and spoke to us in French, wishing us the very best of luck. A charming fellow! We knew then, on our trip through Bulgaria we would be entirely free from “official officiousness.” At Sofia, which we reached that afternoon, the attitude of the Director of Customs was “You are tourist folk and don't want to be bothered with Customs Deposits, so I will loan you a Policeman, who will see you right down to the Turkish Frontier.” Needless to say we were very grateful for this wonderful assistance.



So the following morning we got away early (7 a.m.) for Haskioki, over the most awful roads and mountain defiles. For instance, at times the gradients were appalling, the roads but rock-strewn paths, and great boulders frequently went scrunching under our front axle as we dodged them by means of judicious steering.

My great fear was that an extra large one might bash in my crankcase base-chamber—the one dread I had throughout the whole journey. But we bumped and bounced along from rock to rock, over a range of hills, and never once did I use first gear, although the gradients were one in three in many places. No hill has yet brought me down to first since leaving Manchester, and the admittedly good Manchester water is still in the radiator, which has so far refused to boil. My tyres are doing splendidly.

I made no mention of Philipopolis, which holds so prominent a place on the side of the car, because I have seen Philipopolis. It is a place one does not care to think about. No wonder the people of Sofia were insulted when they found their Capital had no place on my "map," as painted on the car—and Philipopolis was!

Next day we left for Jisr Mustafa Pasha, and reached the Turkish Frontier ten miles further on, 100 kilometres from Haskioki, at noon. I would like to draw the curtain over most of the remainder of that inglorious day. I do not want to bore you with our troubles with the execrable Turkish authorities. A full catalogue of them would fill a book, but I feel you would like to know sufficient about them to realise that, apart from the geographical difficulties of a journey of this nature, there are others of an equally insufferable and infinitively annoying nature. After untold trouble and argument at the Frontier we reached Adrianople at 2-30 p.m., feeling we could easily make Constantinople (70 miles) that night. As a matter of fact, we only got away at 12-30 the following day, after arguing until 7 p.m. the previous night with Policemen, Customs, and goodness only knows what other people, all of whom appeared to have some jurisdiction over our movements. We were promised our passports (which were confiscated) at 8 a.m. the next morning, but as we left at 12-30 we were given strict instructions to report immediately to the Army authorities at the commencement of the military zone, twenty miles from Constantinople.



High up in the Balkan Mountains, where roads were "not"

TURKEY "IS OFF"

This we did, and after very patiently waiting several hours to see the General, we were told that under no circumstances would we be allowed to go into the Town. I managed to interview several important individuals, but all to no avail. I learned, on the best authority, that two British Colonels were recently held under close arrest for four days, and were only liberated after considerable pressure from the British Embassy. Their crime? trying to reach Constantinople across that twenty miles military zone by road.

Finally we were allowed to put the car on rail in an open truck and it took sixteen hours to reach Constantinople, during which time I sat in the car, rain simply pouring down the whole time—and I had absolutely nothing to eat—I could have eaten Constantinople, or blown it up!

Next day, by much bribery and cajolery, I managed to get our passports for the trip across Turkey, but not for passage over the military zone on



the other side of the Bosphorus from Scutari Island. No foreigner is allowed to travel by road, either on foot or otherwise. I therefore made for Mudania, a little lower down the Straits and just outside the military zone. We unloaded the car from the ferry boat at 3 p.m. on November 3rd and reached Broussa (20 miles) over a fairly good road. Not until 10 a.m. next day did we receive our passports (which had again been confiscated in the usual Turkish manner) and this time mainly through the good offices of a Turkish interpreter I had hired in Constantinople. We reached Eski Sheher in the evening after a passable run of 125 miles.

Here we decided to make a "bee line" across the bits of desert to Konia and straight on to Eregli. We stuck in soft ground after only eleven miles, but thereafter made a good crossing of several barren, stony hilltops without a semblance of a road, and struck the main track again into Ak-Shehir. Next day we were determined to make Eregli, keeping to the desert and avoiding the old Roman route through Affium-Karahissar, and incidentally those detestable passport wallahs in each township.

45 M.P.H. IN THE DESERT

Saturday, November 6th, saw us away at 6 a.m., and right down to Ismil the desert going was splendid. In one place we actually held 40/45 m.p.h. for ten miles, until rather frequent waterways across our path slowed us to a more reasonable speed. This interlude of high speed travel was quite exhilarating, and the car showed its capabilities on a good surface after the terrific pounding it had received over those terrible mountain passes I have previously referred to. Half-an-hour's stop at Karabinnar at the foot of the Taurus mountains, reached just before sundown. I hated the idea of spending even one more night in a filthy Turkish den, preferring a night on the road, notwithstanding my Turkish interpreter's horror of Kurdish robbers, who are supposed to infest this area. I cannot imagine them any worse than the Turks, who are, in my opinion, little better than a nation of organized brigands, so we pushed on in the gathering darkness.

Four miles out we met a camel man, who said we might expect "handfuls" of sand ahead, or so my interpreter translated. I think he hardly dared to listen to the camel man's advice, so scared was he of robbers round every corner of this lonely and barren spot. Four miles further on my engine stopped as dead as if someone had switched off and put a brake on the flywheel. I started up again, accelerated the engine, and let in the clutch.



This road in the Taurus is actually a river bed

VOLCANIC SANDS

As before, my engine stopped dead. Differential gone, thought I, and Jubault agreed. Out we jumped to jack up the back wheel, and noticed each was just about as black as a nigger. We had noted the little patches of black sand as we nipped along at 15/20 m.p.h. and now realised we had been passing through the volcanic hills of which we had been warned by the camel man. But our appearance in the beam of the spot light was ludicrous to say the least of it. We were simply caked in black dust. It did not take us long to appreciate the fact that the volcanic sand was holding us in a vice-like grip, yet we had hardly sunk up to the rims in it. We managed to bump the car forward about six inches each time before stopping the engine, and after digging out the sand from in front of the wheels, but the more we tried this method of procedure, the deeper we sunk into this filthy volcanic mixture. Then we remembered our wire netting, two coils of which we had carried all the way from Manchester for some such emergency. In the pitch darkness in a truly black country, we laid our



strips of netting under all four wheels, after an enormous amount of jacking and pushing and shovelling. Thus we proceeded, laboriously coaxing the car over the netting, laying one strip on ahead before we ran off the other—until, at about 10-30 p.m., or maybe much later, we ran on to firm ground again.

Ten miles further on the track completely disappeared into a land of dry marsh, with tall stout reeds that smashed into the front of the car as we hopelessly searched for a sign of the track for about thirty minutes. We were on the point of giving in for the night and snatching a little well-earned sleep before daylight, when, without any warning, we struck the very end of a metal road.

The Turks do these things with roads, starting or stopping them in the most unaccountable way anywhere. We reached Eregli only a few miles further on, and turned in for the night at a so-called Turkish hotel, which impressed me more than anything else as a rendezvous for all the thieves and robbers who frequent these mountains.

The interpreter was dead beat, and Jubault and I just curled up for the night without worrying very much about anything to eat. But sleep was not for me after a gruelling day against heavy odds, odds I felt no other motorist had ever encountered, realising that our day's progress was all too small. I was more than ready for sleep, yet it forsook me. As I lay me down, three words came drumming hazily through my mind, the words of an Advertisement. *Time to re-tire—time—to—re-tire.* There was nothing else for it, I just had to get up and examine all my tyres, although I had done so several times that day. Of course they were all right, and having "touched wood" to lay the bogey, it was indeed time to retire—to sleep.

TROUBLE IN THE TAURUS

Up and away with dawn on November 7th, I reached a tiny village from which we could see the commencement of the track over the mountains—where the roadway started or ended we fail to discover without assistance. Picked up a villager to guide us, but he promptly led us across sheep tracks to the edge of a ravine 20 ft. deep and little more wide, across which we were expected to drive the car. With the advice of more sensible yokels we eventually reached the main track across the Taurus and made Oulou-kishla by noon. Then to Bozanti, half-way across the mountains, is about 26 miles, which occupied four hours of the fiercest work car or driver could be expected to perform. The crossing of the Balkans was a mere bagatelle compared with this.



A good surface in the Taurus Mountains

I had to repeatedly pick my Turkish interpreter from under the kit and impedimenta in the rear compartment, and at times packages were flung forward on to the back of my neck—a far from pleasant experience, I can assure you. Old "Turp's" head was sore for many a day, and how he escaped bruising his ribs among the baggage is more than I can understand.

Hereabouts we met several caravans from Khourestan. The humans were about the wildest lot of ruffians I have ever seen: all were armed to the teeth and took a far from pleasant interest in us as we drove past.

You know the sort of feeling that runs down your spine when you can see each of them holding his rifle at the ready as you approach, and you know he stops and turns as you pass. Unpleasant, very! I had it, badly! You wait for the crack of a rifle, the sing of a bullet—you are certain that the fellow you are just passing is the blighter who will do the trick—Ugh!—but you keep right on, foot on the accelerator, staring straight ahead—and hope! After this, the sight of real policemen was a pleasure for once, and we



found Bizantine or Bozanti. Our ten minutes stop for passport examination was a welcome and reassuring interlude.

After leaving Bozanti we had to climb what I considered was our very steepest hill, more than eleven miles long, most of which required second gear. My water boiled for the first time since leaving Manchester—in fact it boiled at four places on this mountain climb; but the engine pulled magnificently throughout, and the car is not made that will climb this mountain without boiling.

THROUGH THE CILICIAN GATES

Once from the top it was good going till we reached the Cilician Gates, famous in history as the road down which Richard Cœur de Leon marched his army when fighting the Saracen. The possession of this pass has been disputed by many armies down the ages.

Flanked on either side by precipitous cliffs, the pass itself has been blasted out at one face 50 or 60 feet above the bottom and is just a narrow ledge wide enough for a car and a donkey—no more.

To our horror we came across a place where the road had dropped away, leaving a half-round gap which took us twenty minutes of perspiring nerve-racking effort to negotiate. For a distance of 2 ft., although I scraped my fenders on the inside cliff wall, the outside tyre actually overhung the 50-ft. drop. It was like a cinema stunt—you waited for *it* to happen, and *it* didn't. After this no further trouble except pot-holes as far as Taurus City, at the far side of the mountains, which we reached at 9 p.m., and pushed on to Adana, 29 miles away.

Further passport trouble and the uncertainty of the route kept us at Adana for three days, but the car only received a couple of hours general attention. It needed no more, and the rest was welcome. Next morning we awoke to find the mountains all snow-clad—a lucky escape.

ANOTHER TURKISH HOLD-UP

I was anxious to get straight down from Adana to Mardin in Southern Turkey, and in a straight line on to Mosul and Teheran. The Head of the Police—not a bad chap as Turks go—wired to Angora asking for permission as this route would save me many days. This was not forthcoming as the Khurds were giving trouble and the whole area from Mardin to Mosul was under martial law.



Roman Bridge at Mysis, southern side of Taurus Mountains

I am still convinced that had I been allowed to take this route I would have made Calcutta in fifty days, whereas, as you shall read, my troubles were endless and almost heartbreaking, and all on account of the persistent hold-ups while in Turkish territory.

At least I can look back on Adana with some pleasure, for there I met McDowell, as fine a fellow as ever I met—speaks Turkish like a native, worked with the British Intelligence Department up in Khurdistan during the war, though he is American born.

However, to my story. I had to accept the road via Piyas and Alexandretta, and thence to Aleppo.

Left Adana, November 11th, at daybreak, with hearty good wishes from McDowell, and hopes we would not be shot up in Syria. Rather less than 100 miles on we had to take to a river, the so-called bridge not being strong enough to hold a decent sized donkey. We struck a boulder in the river bed, and three miles further on I felt my engine labouring, and the oil gauge was not working properly.



We found we had sprung an oil pipe joint on the inside of the oil sump, and the oil was not being fed to the big ends.

This was tragedy indeed. After three thousand miles of faultless running, here was my one big dread realised—damage to the base chamber.

We found No. 2 big end a little slack, and twenty minutes later had it out. An hour later I had fitted my spare connecting rod, and Jubault was ready to fit the spare base I had carried in case of just such an emergency. That spare connecting rod fitted faultlessly, and the engine ran without a semblance of a knock or tightness, although I never attempted to bed it or scrape it, but just fitted it.

We were away again on the road for Piyas—the Turkish Frontier—in two hours from crashing in the river bed, but had to stay that night at Dort Yaul, as I had to get my papers all signed to release that £57 I deposited at Adrianople.

MONTMARTRE IN SYRIA

Down to Piyas then at 6 a.m., and across into French Syria at 9 a.m.

We went into their little shack to have our passport stamped, and I could almost imagine myself back in Montmartre, for the walls were full of pictures cut from papers like *La Parisienne*, *Sourire*, and so on.

The informality of the French, their cleanliness, enthusiasm, and real white man's welcome, was truly delightful after our experiences in Turkey. Hereabouts we had to cross the most rickety bridge I ever trusted with a valuable load. Half the timbers had been stolen from it, but we passed over safely, though gingerly, and ran on to a decent French military road built up on the sides of the cliff.

Almost before I realised it we were in Alexandretta, in time for our first decently-cooked meal for a longer time than I dare imagine or recollect. Customs proved a little difficult, despite the presence of a French-Syrian who had been sent down by the British Consul to try to bluff me through Syria without paying deposit.

I had to deposit £50, and I was away for Aleppo (100 miles) at 3 p.m. Over a terrific mountain range here, which the Knight negotiated easily in second gear, with a cool radiator.



Adana to Alexandretta "road." Fortress of Toprak Kale

On the way to Aleppo we got a grip on the public's opinion of the Arab proposition. Every one was armed—big, healthy-looking guns—and I felt uncomfortably out of fashion among folk who did not appear able to afford decent clothing—but they all carried a gun.

We were allowed to enter Aleppo at 9 a.m., after careful scrutiny by half-a-dozen French-Syrian soldiers.

JUBAULT LEAVES ME

On Saturday, November 13th, at Aleppo, I said "good-bye" to my French mechanic. I very much disliked parting with him, despite the fact that there had been so little for him to do. He is most capable, and has a complete disregard for his own personal comfort and safety. Of course, the arrangement was that he should only come as far as Aleppo.



The rains had commenced in Syria ten days previously, and here all talk was in regard to the possibilities of our reaching Baghdad. Certain optimistic Arab Ford-drivers said a little preliminary rain was good from the motoring point of view. My previous visit to Baghdad had taught me that the particular brew of Baghdad mud was to be classed among the world's wonders. Certainly it was greater to me than the Pyramids or the Colossus of Rhodes. Somewhere a few hundred miles away due south lay the Nairn Transport Co.'s desert route, but this is just about as useless as any other, once the rain has set in. Incidentally, I learned later from the English papers of the hardships encountered on that route about the time I was in Aleppo. Had I known this it would have but confirmed my decision (made in the light of bad weather reports from the whole area) to make a dash straight across the desert from Aleppo to Baghdad.

Oh! for the chance to reclaim those valuable days the Turks compelled me to waste, first in enforced idleness, then by considerably extending my route southward.

REAL "EVIDENCE" OF BRIGANDS

Here I actually came in contact with the first real living evidence of the highwaymen I had heard so much about but never seen. An Arab driver who had made several crossings from Aleppo to Baghdad told me of his last experience, which was one of several. On the particular trip in question, he had as passenger aboard his Ford, a wealthy Arab merchant carrying a small bag of gold. The news must have leaked out, for sixty miles from Aleppo half-a-dozen mounted men opened fire on the car. It was pretty accurate shooting, too! The steering wheel was smashed, also two of my Arab friend's fingers, and he stopped three more in the calves of his legs, all of which wounds were just nicely healed up at the time I spoke with him. I understand the door nearest the driver was a sight for any Bisley marksman. Eventually he won clear, and whatever other faults these Arabs have, we must admit fear is not one of them. They are a thoroughly manly crowd.

With this man's help, and the suggestions of a few others, I managed to get most of the villages marked out on my map, and all was ready for the great dash into the "Unknown" the following morning, Sunday, November 14th.



Bridge with half timbers stolen, Piyas—Alexandretta

The going was good over a decent track and we made 30 m.p.h. for long stretches, but eventually found ourselves on a track too far south, but finally reached Membek after being re-directed. Eleven miles further on the track disappeared, but I steered in the rough direction of my route, and then I simply flew along over the good hard, flat surface. Presently we sighted an Arab village where a boy was loaned to us, and he put us on the right route again, inside the hour. Curiously enough he would accept no backsheesh, and I doubt if he had ever seen money before. We reached Meskeen and, after some terrible surfaces, Hamman that night.

Hamman proved to consist of one small mud house, surrounded by a mud wall. All buildings in this part of the desert are, of course, baked mud. The place was in charge of an outpost consisting of four or five Franco-Syrian soldiers. The desert, they told us, is absolutely unsafe after dark, but I think I would almost prefer it and its possible dangers to taking shelter in such filthy places as I find these shacks invariably are.



CHAMPAGNE IS CHEAP AT DEIR

We reached Deir Ez Or at 7 p.m. next day. The French have an aerodrome in this very old Arab city, and, incidentally, there are limited supplies of Champagne at 2 6 per bottle, which no-one seems to drink. Local Arab risings are frequent and possible at any time. They are not keen on French rule hereabouts.

Next morning we were away for Abou Kemal at 9 a.m., after straightening my front axle, which I had noticed was slightly bent on arrival the previous night.

No difficulty in finding the right route here, for the Euphrates lay over on our left, and the going was fine so long as we kept well away from its muddy banks.

We picked up an Arab who had been a camel-man in this desert for years, and he picked out our course with amazing facility by spotting tiny heaps of stones left there by camel drivers. He enabled us to make splendid time. Twenty miles from our objective for the night we picked up a wondrously adorned Arab Sheik. He had a splendid dagger I would have given much to possess, but there was positively "nothing doing." When he learned I was British he was truly delighted, for he also was under British rule and most anxious to get back into British territory. Rather nice to hear this, being a Britisher. He insisted on our sitting three-abreast in the front seat, he swinging an old Lee Metford rifle over the side of the car as though hoping for the chance of a pot shot at something or other.

That night, a glorious moon, and I wanted to dash off to the British Frontier at Anah, but the French Police at Abou Kemal absolutely forbade this.

No difficulty here with Customs, and 10 a.m., November 17th, saw us in the desert again making for Anah. Here was a small British fortress filled with well-armed Levees, who were kindness itself. I drank about a dozen cups of Arab coffee along with the Sergeant in charge, having learned from past experience it is an insult to the host to refuse.

AN INTRIGUING SIGN

A little further on we came to a most intriguing sight, just a sign-board, but it read "Speed limit 10 miles per hour." The first English I had seen for weeks, and I felt as safe and civilized there as if I were in Piccadilly.



In the Syrian Desert. A stop to find a route up the hill

Beyond Anah the desert, though rocky in places, was soft elsewhere and we frequently sank axle deep, but fortunately there were plenty of loose stones at hand which enabled us to get out on the hard ground again without much difficulty, compared with our past experience.

These delays, however, made it necessary to stay that night in Khadisa, where I learned enormous quantities of rain had fallen in Baghdad. I was also informed of a nasty river twelve miles ahead where such few cars as attempted to travel at this time of the year often had to wait several days before being able to cross.

We were at the river by 8 a.m. next morning, taking along an Arab who wanted a lift to Hit, forty miles off. The river was about 100 feet wide, and my Arab waded cautiously over to show me the depth. It did not seem to go within six inches of his knees, so I put the Knight at it, knowing my best chance of crossing was to go at a smart pace.



About half-way over, with the fan lashing the water but still going fine, we suddenly sank into a soft part of the bed. My engine stopped dead, with the carburettor drinking the river dry. We pushed and pulled but never moved the car an inch, so I sent the Arab ahead for help. Thirty minutes later he returned alone, not having seen a single soul. With the rain in the hills I knew that the river was due to rise and here was I, stuck in the middle. A glance at the bank showed that the water frequently rose a dozen feet above its present level. Finally, in desperation, I thought of the self-starter! I engaged first gear, pressed the starter button, and the car moved forward about a foot. We quickly unloaded everything and deposited it on the further bank, and ten minutes later I had the car across by much pushing and the use of the self-starter. An incredibly fine performance for that battery and self-starter, both of which were submerged.

It may not seem believable, but I drained a gallon-and-a-half of water from the sump. As I had only one spare gallon of oil left, and required this in case of further emergency, the oil which followed the water out of the sump had to be used again. We ran into Ramadi, 65 miles west of Baghdad, at 5 p.m. that evening, the engine pulling splendidly.

WE ARE WANTED ON THE RADIO

At the Ramadi Wireless Station of the Royal Air Force I learnt they had been enquiring for me from Baghdad, doubts and fears having been expressed even in England as to the possibility of my getting through to Baghdad by the route chosen because of the tremendous rains over a wide area. I had been lucky! Messages regarding my safety were sent back

Then came a tremendous downpour, and all I could see from the local Arab Hotel was just a vast sea of mud and water. At least twenty cars were already hung up and waiting permission to take the Ramadi-Baghdad road, but this latest deluge would delay the attempt for several days more. Most of the waiting cars had come up over the Nairn transport route from Beyrout, which had been fairly good up to Baghdad when they arrived. So you see, all reports notwithstanding, I would have been better on the Nairn route. The choice was mine, made in the face of very bad reports, and one could only go by the information available.



300 miles W. of Baghdad. We towed this car out, backwards

Shall I ever forget that Monday when we left Ramadi for Baghdad? Captain Mead eventually allowed about eleven cars to attempt the crossing. The first bad patch was reached five miles out, but all got through after much shoving and towing, the Knight leading. We accomplished the magnificent distance of six miles in six hours, and one of the pictures will give you some small idea of what conditions were like. I stripped several teeth from the first and reverse gear—this was a minor detail since I had never used first gear up to this point. Nairn's cars on the following day smashed two sets of rear springs, pulled out two front dumb irons, and two others completed the tale of woe by breaking their back axles. We reached Baghdad the following day, November 23rd, where I was able to procure a replacement for my gearbox from the local Willys-Knight Agent, who actually had a Model 70 in stock.

From the 24th to the end of the month I was again down with Malaria, but copious doses of quinine and the attention of Dr. Sinderson, of Baghdad, put me on my feet again.



POLICE CLOSE ALL ROADS

During this period more rain fell, and the Police definitely closed all roads into and out of Baghdad. This cut out all hope of getting past Bakouba, on the way to Qaniqin, just this side of the Persian Frontier, for weeks. Between Baghdad and Bakouba the desert is always twice as bad as between Ramadi and Baghdad, and the route being positively closed by the Police, I had no alternative but to put the car on a truck to a point 80 miles away just above Bakouba, on a line that had been twice washed away since my arrival in Baghdad. I ought to mention that I sent back Nudki Bey, my Turkish interpreter, and took on an Armenian at Baghdad, who agreed to come with me as far as Teheran.

On the road once more, past Qaniqin and on to Kaar Cherin, a Persian Frontier post, where I spent a cold night in the rest house. Between Kaar Cherin and Kermanshah, the country is very mountainous and (as usual) brigand-infested—these fellows pay their special attention to any slow-moving motor traffic. There is also the added danger of snow blocking up the passes at this time of the year, and at night wolves are frequently met with. The largest pass is Pytak, which has one or two stretches of one in four. My Knight romped up in second gear, although a much bigger engined touring car only just reached the summit in first. This may have been the driver's fault, of course, but it emphasized the speed at which I negotiated the pass, and made me feel quite bucked at the wonderful way the Knight was standing up to such gruelling work, with positively no attention whatever other than greasing.

Kermanshah was reached in the afternoon, where I had to wait for my papers being fixed up to facilitate our passage across Persia into the Dusbab. This delay enabled me to meet Mr. Bourne, of the Anglo-Persian Oil Co., who greatly assisted my departure the following morning when a fractious Persian soldier refused to let me leave without Persian number plates. When we eventually received these, I tied them on upside down, in my ignorance, but it satisfied the officials, including the Chief of Police, who had been brought along by Mr. Bourne.

Soon we were shooting along the Hamadan Road at 40 m.p.h., but our late start prevented reaching the famous Assadabad pass outside Hamadan until sundown. Two other cars decided to spend the night in the village at the foot of the pass, but after having some tea we pushed on, in the cool of the evening.



Twenty miles of this "stuff" on the Ramadi-Baghdad road

WE RACE THE SNOWS

What a road, what a pass, and what "hairpins"! But my "70" never faltered, and we averaged 10 15 m.p.h. even over the final 1-in-3 section. Near the summit here we found snow and all the pools frozen. In consequence we had to empty our radiator at Hamadan a little way down the other side, where we stayed the night in a so-called hotel with a garage underneath.

On and away at sunrise next morning in an attempt to reach Teheran, 250 miles away. This road between Hanahan and Kazvin was expected to be snowed up any day, when it becomes impassable to all forms of traffic. Just in time again!

At Kazvin, reached at 5 p.m., we received filthy Russian petrol sealed up in perfectly good Anglo-Persian Oil Company's tins. This clogged our strainer up, which had to be cleaned every hundred miles. Delayed by a



Persian soldier for twenty minutes, but got away on giving backsheesh. He informed us the road ahead was good, but five miles later we took a series of leaps into the air, the front wheels of the car finally coming to rest in a hole quite two feet deep. No springs broken, but the front axle still more bent, and now sufficiently so to effect the steering, making it heavy. I should not have been in the least surprised if the axle or something else had broken, so fearful were those leaps and crashes. We reached Teheran at 10 p.m. after driving cautiously in view of the possibility of further ditches across the road. The road itself was dead straight, but a series of what are known as "Russian bridges"—a sort of built-up "gutter" with a sharp top—had to be negotiated carefully as they frequently touched the axles and crankcase. Teheran is very Russian and indicates the tremendous influence exercised by Russia in this part of Persia.

Here I spent the major part of the following day with Englishmen who are in the employ of the Eastern Telegraph Company and know Southern and Northern Persia very well.

KAVIR, NOT CAVIARE

My original intention was to go to Dusdab via Meshed. This road I found was closed, even to horse traffic, owing to a muddy morass at Sharud. The Persians call this particular morass by the name Kavir. Anything sticking in it must wait until the following Spring when the road dries up. I was therefore compelled to attempt the Southern sandy road, and I received full particulars of the general direction of the telegraph poles from Ispahan right down through Yezd, Kerman, and on to the Baluchistan Frontier. I was also warned of certain shifting sands near Yezd.

More tales of shooting brigands ahead, from Armenian commercial travellers, who said I would need to travel behind an armed guard or Government post waggon. Teheran to Ispahan is 273 miles, and I decided to make an early start on Wednesday, December 8th. Twenty miles of good road beyond Teheran, then it trails off into tracks similar to those in Turkey. We drove all day, and at midnight reached a small Persian rest-house. A Federal lorry was standing outside with the engine running. The driver told me he was making for Shiraz and will reach Ispahan at 5 a.m., so I decide to carry on behind the lorry, feeling justified in doing so since the road is getting more difficult to locate and I am very tired. I do not object to his 15 m.p.h. in the circumstances.



Typical Persian Scenery! 200 miles of it, Yezd to Kerman

We duly reached Ispahan at 5 a.m. I had driven continuously for 23 hours since leaving Teheran. The lorry driver showed me his back spring, in which five leaves were broken. I examined mine and also found broken leaves, which I replaced in two hours and proceeded, but without my interpreter, who had disappeared that morning, although he agreed to come with me as far as Dusdab.

I therefore engaged a local Persian Ford driver who had been as far as Karachi and Bombay, and who spoke a limited amount of Hindustani. The following morning it took about two hours to get through narrow little bazaar streets. Around many of the corners six reversals were necessary. When we got out to the "road," it was only a donkey track, and 5 to 10 m.p.h. was the maximum speed. We carried on without actually being held up until 10 p.m. I knew we must be approaching Yezd, because it took more and more power to propel the car every mile we made. At about 10 p.m. we ran into soft sand, which stopped my engine, and we spent half-an-hour digging the car out before we ran into firmer ground for a space. Eventually I spied a mud hut and fixed my spot light on it,



sending the guide ahead to investigate. After much shouting the inmates were aroused, and told us every car that ever attempted to come this way stuck in the sand as we had done.

They promised to put us on the safe route into Yezd next morning, but I refused to sleep in the hut. Not because I wished to be rude, but I had had about enough of such hovels.

Next morning, with our additional guides, we had a hectic time on the soft sand, which did not succeed in holding us again; but what sand!

And so to Yezd. After two hours in this old city, on we went for Kerman about noon. We reached Rafsinjar at 8 p.m., spent the night in the Eastern Telegraph Co.'s rest house, and started again for Kerman at 7 next morning, much reversing being needed in the narrow bazaars. I felt like knocking half the town down to get out more easily.

A most interesting salt desert of atrocious surface between here and Kerman, which I took at speed, otherwise the car would have sunk. Such obstacles are now taken without comment—we are hardened to anything. Kerman at 12 noon, where I stayed as the guest of Mr. Nelson, Manager of the Imperial Bank of Persia.

I wish I had time and space to tell you about an alleged Russian mechanic, who attempted to repair Mr. Nelson's old Model 20 Willys Knight—which he bought second-hand in Karachi, and which arrived with all the bearings run out, as the fool of a driver had put no oil in it. Anyhow, the Bank was without a manager Monday and Tuesday, because Nelson and I spent both days in his garage. We had the whole engine down and I fixed it up for him. I have the satisfaction of knowing there is one more good motor-car in Kerman, helping to make life just a little bit more liveable.

We are now but 343 miles from Duzdap, the railhead of the Indian system. But the greater portion of this is a vast sand desert, more than 200 miles of which is absolutely waterless.

UP 1 IN 3 THROUGH A 6ft. GORGE

I had a great send-off from the few Europeans, on December 15th, and reached Bam that evening at 6 p.m. Off for Shurgaz next morning, which we reach, across the plains without much difficulty, at 1 p.m. Here two Ghoolams of the Eastern Telegraph Company helped by pointing out the shifting sands for three miles, and assisted us to push across the bad places.



Fifty miles of Salt Desert between Kerman and Duzdap

The track then passed over foothills leading to a mountain pass, then up a river bed for eight miles, with the greatest difficulty, as it is rock and boulder-strewn the whole way. For about one-eighth of a mile the path lay through a very narrow gorge, only just wide enough to admit the car, and the grade was certainly 1 in 3, with two right-angle bends. We had to jack the car round the bends, because any attempt to steer round jammed the wheels on the sides and the car tended to turn over on the semi-rounded bottom of the gully. A most difficult piece of work. It took us three hours in all to negotiate the pass, the top being reached about midnight without sustaining serious damage.

Slept in a small, uninhabited hut, 14 miles down the other side, and left at 8 a.m. on the last leg of the trip across Persia—for Duzdap, which we reached at noon, December 17th. Saturday, 18th, in Duzdap, and on Sunday started for Dalbandin, 243 miles away. No real difficulties, but absolutely no road, and 10/15 m.p.h. was highest possible speed. Arrived Dalbandin December 20th, where I decided front axle needed attention as steering was very difficult.



Mr. Forest, the Foreman of the Government Locomotive Workshop, rendered very willing assistance, and his Indian blacksmiths soon had my axle heated and straightened with about three blows of a sledge hammer. At the same time I knew the heating process would soften the axle, so we braced it inside and out with two strips of steel. Not like the real job, but probably good enough to carry me on. I attribute the bending of the front axle to the high speeds maintained over atrocious surfaces for thousands of miles. I am hoping to complete the 8000 miles in half the time ever accomplished across country of this nature.

Nushki, after very hard going, by noon the next day, and then up the famous gorge on the Sheik Wasil pass. There is a splendid road from Mustung to Quetta, and I was determined to reach it that day by 5 p.m. Unfortunately, some fool put me on the wrong road, and after many difficulties I reached Karnak, a few miles from Mustung, at 7 p.m.

THE FIRST REAL ROAD FOR 4000 MILES !

The Stationmaster found me a man who took me across a rough route across salt marshes, and once into the middle of an irrigation canal, on the bank of which the car was balanced on its gearbox and running boards—an actual see-saw. It took half-an-hour to get the car off that “fulcrum.” At 11 p.m. my guide said: “There is the road, Sahib.” All I could see was a deep ravine with steep banks, so I went ahead, on foot, to make sure there was a road over the other side of that ravine. There was, and with a glass-like surface! I did not walk back to the car, I *flew*, and within fifteen minutes the car was across the ravine and once more upon a real road—the *first real road for approximately four thousand miles!*

Exactly forty-five minutes after we had dug the car out of trouble for the twelfth time since six o'clock that night, I was outside the main doors of the Quetta Club, just as the head waiter was going off to bed. I was, therefore, just too late to get that drink I had promised myself since early morning. However, I made myself very comfortable in the Quetta Dak bungalow, the rooms of which resembled a palace after the filthy places I was compelled to sleep in whilst crossing Turkey, Syria, and Persia. The next two days were the most restful I ever spent in my life—or so it seemed.



7000 ft. up. The road is only a narrow ledge

The great question now was which route I should take to reach Calcutta in the quickest possible time. Everyone agreed the *safest* was to strike the grand trunk road which runs down from Peshawar to Calcutta. Some suggested Loralai, Fort Munro, and thence down through Dera Ghazi Khan and on to Multan, whence there is a good road. But the trouble here is the danger of attack by hillmen. These tribesmen shoot to kill—no waiting for hands up and deliver. They just keep on shooting until there is no sign of life, then loot everything.

After what I had already gone through I was not greatly concerned about the risk of being shot at, but I did feel it was more than tempting providence to leave the railway route here, since I should then have been further away from assistance in case of mechanical trouble than I had been even in Yezd! It would require six weeks to two months to obtain spares.

Finally I decided to follow the rail route to Jacobabad, thence through Behawalpur State into the Punjab. Having taken this decision, all lingering



doubts as to the wisdom were set at rest by news that the Loralai-Dera Ghazi Khan route was already closed to all traffic.

On Thursday, December 23rd, I left for Sibi, 90 miles away, over a beautiful road built during the war. Spent the night at Sibi, as there would be trouble in getting out to the Sind desert over a bullock track alongside the railway.

50 M.P.H. ACROSS THE SIND DESERT

Once reached, that desert proved a wonderful motor track, and I flew along at 45/50 m.p.h. for miles and miles. When I reached Jacobabad three hours later, I found I had beaten the train time. Jacobabad is the hottest place in India, and at no other place in the world is such a high temperature held for such long periods. Summer temperature rises to 129 degrees in the shade and 120 degrees is maintained in the daytime for five and six months on end. The temperature does not drop below 95/100 at night.

They said there was a passable road to Sukkur, where I had to cross the Indus over the Sukkur Bridge. It was passable, but only just. I found it difficult to keep my engine running at all during parts of this run. The dust came up in enormous quantities through the footboards, covering everything (literally) inches deep. It filled up the deep recesses in the engine where the sparking plugs are, thus cutting off the ignition as effectively as a switch. I reached Sukkur at 8 p.m., and next day being Christmas I had much trouble in obtaining petrol, because all the shops were closed.

At noon I left for Khanpur, reached late that night over a passable track kept open for the Ruler of that State, who naturally owns cars.

From Khanpur, through Bahawalpur State, thence to Bahawalnagar, and on to Fazilka, the road is quite decent. At Fazilka I found there was an old road, unmetalled, which ran straight on to Ferozepore.

TRAGEDY WITHIN 5 MILES OF SAFETY!

Apart from excessive dust, all went well until within *five miles* of the junction with the main Trunk road. I was going along steadily when I came to one of those bridges which are made in the form of an inverted "V" to allow the water to pass from one field to another across the road. This one was built of bricks and I approached it with every care because the angle of the "V" was such that it meant driving across "sideways." I had got first one front wheel across the ridge, then the other, gingerly,



A sample of "road" between Nuski and Quetta

when, to my horror, one front wheel slipped off a loose brick and down we slipped, the whole weight of the car banging on the gearbox with great force.

Examination showed nothing beyond the fact that the gearbox casting had received the blow, for it was badly scraped, but not broken.

I started the engine, but the noise of the starter told me more damage had been done than appeared on sight. Then I found the clutch pedal seemed to be half out—would not come back into position. I could not engage gears quietly, which showed the clutch would not free, but I found I could run all right, and half-an-hour later reached Ferozepore, where I spent the night.

Next morning, off for Delhi on the Great Trunk Road with an amazing surface. The car simply romped along at 40, with tons of power in reserve. Delhi about midnight, where I met Mr. Rich, and notwithstanding my excellent speeds I was unhappy, for I knew there was trouble in my clutch and transmission.



Messrs. McKenzie & Co.'s men had the gearbox down next day and the trouble was located in the clutch splined shaft, which had been wrung out of truth on the spigot end, due to the enormous strain on that camel-backed bridge.

This lack of alignment fairly quickly destroyed the single clutch plate, so my spare was fitted, not as a cure, but in order to get on, for I was keen to reach Calcutta with the least possible delay.

This gave out 50 miles from Cawnpore. I took the gearbox down myself, and in one hour (with the local blacksmith) had fixed up the clutchplate again. Back went the gearbox, and half-an-hour later I was on my way to Cawnpore, which I reached at midnight.

There I obtained a spare plate from McKenzie's depot and pushed on. Allahabad at 10 p.m., and next morning left for Benares, where I had lunch. After 40 miles the plate went again, but away again in two hours, the only worry being the certainty of a recurrence, for no clutch plate can live with a shaft out of truth.

NEARING THE END OF AN EPIC JOURNEY

Stayed in a rest house that night 50 miles from Asanol, and away again in good time next morning. Filled up with petrol at Asanol for the last leg of my trip (140 miles) to Calcutta. I wired McKenzie & Co. at Calcutta to send out a car to meet me with another spare plate, for I knew I should need it. I did, just 30 miles from Calcutta.

I now 'phoned McKenzie's, but found they had no spare in stock at Calcutta but were actually unloading that day. So, with assistance from a passing cyclist mechanic, we patched up one of my existing plates and were just ready to start off when up rolled a Whippet with a crowd of welcoming people. However, we pushed on at once, in fine style, and arrived in Calcutta at 1 a.m. on January 3rd, 1927, where I received a magnificent reception, and duly delivered the letter to the Mayor.

Manchester had delivered the goods.



Jacobabad, the hottest place in the world

Thus ended my trip from Manchester to Calcutta. I will not bore you with long eulogies about my car. If you have read to the end—and this is the end—you will heartily agree with me when I say the car is a marvel. One more word and I am done. I said this was to be a plain man's tale. It is. I have mixed my tenses, split my infinitives, done all manner of things with King's English, but I've given you the journey as I lived it, and given you the diary as I wrote it, without embellishments.

Alfred Brade

For details of speeds, petrol and oil consumption, etc., see page 36.



NOTE BY WILLYS
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We would like to assure you that Mr. Drader's car was an absolutely standard tourer, taken from stock. It was, in fact, one of the earliest models of its type, and not nearly so good as the models now being delivered.

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Dear Mr. Johnson,

I regret the delay in forwarding the enclosed specially bound copy of Mr. Drader's diary, promised in mine of the 10th., ult., I feel sure you must receive many such publications, but I doubt if you have received one more worthy of the half-hour of your valuable time required to read it carefully from cover to cover. Only by this means, together with a careful study of the map, can one fully appreciate the enormity of the task which Mr. Drader set himself.

As a journalistic and typographical effort it may be of interest to you to know, that the book was actually published within seven days of the receipt of Mr. Drader's rough diary, and since its publication more than 15,000 copies have been distributed.

Yours faithfully,
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