Jubbulpore in the Central Provinces of India is a pleasant station. I had been posted there from Belgaum in the south in September of the year 1930, and did not take long to settle in my new environment. I had already made acquaintance with the small game shooting, which was excellent, though not a shade better than I had previously enjoyed in Belgaum, and I was looking forward eagerly to getting on terms with big game in the famous jungles which need no description. I was also searching for a mount, "up to any weight," which might carry an indifferent horseman over the Nerbudda Vale country. I was in a mood of contented and pleasurable anticipation when my plans were suddenly modified by the exigencies of the Service. To put it less elaborately, I had been in Jubbulpore for about one month when I was ordered to Peshawar, to proceed there, as the pundits say, "forthwith."

I was not unduly troubled by this upheaval. The frontier was new to me, and I longed to see it. My old bearer, a rapid and seasoned packer, was utterly phlegmatic about moves. Last, but not least, I had just bought a new car, a six-cylinder Chevrolet tourer in rather loud taste, with a blue body and wheels of a sickly yellow. As far as this vehicle was concerned, my transfer to Peshawar was a good thing, as I wished not only to see what the car could do on a long run, but also to remove it from the station before the remarks of my friends about this very car caused me to commit homicide. I forwarded my heavy baggage by rail, and, early one morning, carrying as little kit as possible, and accompanied by my bearer and a cocker spaniel, I started on the fourteen-hundred-mile drive to the North-West Frontier.

Motoring in India is a pleasant and eventful pastime, very unlike the orderly and comfortable progress one experiences at home. To digress a moment, I remember on one occasion motoring along a jungle road in South Kanara with a friend. It was twilight, and the darkness increased as we entered a defile caused by high banks of red earth flanking the road. Something ahead caused my friend, who was driving, to stop, and he called my attention to an object about fifty yards ahead, which I took to be a bundle of leaves.

"It's a panther," he said.

I replied in suitable terms, stressing my unbelief, so we decided to put the matter to the test by leaving the car and approaching the object under discussion on foot. We had not gone twenty yards before I discovered that my friend was right. It was a panther, and, disliking our propinquity,
it made off, clearing the twenty-foot bank with a nonchalant spring and scramble. On another occasion I have come face to face, or rather face to radiator, with a large bull bison, and I have listened to a harrowing story, related by a Gunner colonel, of a sambhar stag which leapt into the back of his car, attracted, so he said, by a case of beer. As he was telling this story in the bar, at his expense, I listened to the bitter end, or shall we say the gin-and-bitter end. Two friends of mine, driving from Peshawar to Risalpur after a dance, were stopped on the road by a barricade of bullock carts, and, on alighting to go further into the matter, were held up by bandits and politely but firmly dispossessed of all their worldly goods. As this digression, starting as an inlet, threatens to become a veritable arm of the sea, we will drop it.

I started, then, from Jubbulpore in the early morning. My first stop was Damoh, where a tendency on the part of the radiator cap to emit steam indicated a shortage of water. I needed no petrol, so I drove to the nearest water visible, a pump in the middle of a cobbled maidan, got out to stretch my legs, and left the whole proceedings in charge of my bearer. When I returned, after a brief sight-seeing tour, I expected to find the car ready, but such was not the case. The car was not to be seen, but I presumed that it was somewhere in the centre of a large and variegated crowd which had collected round the pump.

As unobtrusively as I could, I worked my way through the crowd to my car and found a strange scene being enacted. My bearer, on being ordered to fill up the radiator with water, had delegated the duty to a third person, in the time-honoured manner of the old soldier, to which "genre" he certainly belonged. The man who had volunteered for this job was without doubt a simpleton. He poured the water carefully, in the manner of one decanting liqueurs, and was mystified and chagrined to find that there was no end to his work, because the rate of his pouring was negatived by the escape of water down the overflow pipe. Some onlooker of malicious disposition had told him that the overflow pipe led, not to the outer world but to the vitals of the car, and that gallons of water would be required before the flow down the pipe ceased. He also added that if the work were not finished before the sahib came back, the sahib would be very, very angry.

Consequently I arrived to find this wretched water pourer in a state of abject fear and intense perspiration, the butt of a large crowd, not excluding my bearer, who had purchased a bottle of lemonade, and was enjoying the situation over a quiet drink.

The whole plot was exposed to me by a superior young man in a pagri and plus fours, and I put an end to the entertainment, presenting the village idiot, who was very put about, and obviously expected a buffet, with a rupee. I roundly upbraided my bearer for tolerating such nonsense, explaining to him that I expected more from a man of his age, experience and military service. The old man was rather ashamed of himself,
Indian Journey—Interrupted

and could not account for this lapse from his usual Jeeves-like impeccability.

I think a word about him here would be in place. He accompanied Younghusband to Tibet in 1902, and wears the rare medal of that expedition. He served in the Mohmand rebellion in 1908, and was awarded the Indian General Service Medal. He accompanied the 41st Dogras to France, which entitled him to the 1915 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. He gained a clasp to his Indian General Service Medal when he served with me on the Kajuri Plain in 1930, and he accompanied me on the Chitral Relief in 1932, again active service. Through all these wars and tribulations, he carried out the duties of an officer's bearer. During his sojourn in France he was shot through the knee. This old wound, though honourable, was inclined to arise in conversation on the approach of hard work. He is one of the old types of Indian bearer, and I can say without hesitation that I have never met a more perfect gentleman. It is a long time since I have been to India, but if I never go there again I shall never forget him. He has retired from work now, and lives in his village. I wish him a happy old age.

Leaving Damoh behind, my next stop was the dak-bungalow at Malthone. I had pleasant memories of this spot, having spent a short shooting leave there the previous year, and decided to stay for a protracted tea meal, my lunch having consisted of a few perfunctory mouthfuls at the steering wheel. While my bearer was collecting the necessary materials for the repast, I picked up a shotgun and crossed the road into the adjacent scrub jungle, having memories, from my previous visit, of game not a stone's throw from the bungalow verandah. I was not disappointed, and returned in less than an hour with a brace and a half of black partridge. After consuming, in a leisurely fashion, a noble meal of strong tea, eggs and bread, I drove onwards to Saugor. One year before I had been stationed at the Indian Cavalry School, and I could not believe that all my friends had left it, quickly as stations change and acquaintances fade in India. There was no course in progress, but the staff remained, unaltered since I had known them before, and I was very hospitably entertained, even to the point of wondering whether or not I should get any sleep to fortify me for a long drive next day.

I departed early in the morning. At breakfast I had been obliged to choose between champagne and coffee, but succeeded in avoiding the former. The road between Saugor and Jhansi passes through delightful country. Everywhere is the jungle, not close and forbidding as in the south, but open and variegated, alternating with rolling plain and broad cultivation, at one point overwhelming the traveller, shutting out the view, and then yielding to a vista of wide, undulating country only limited by the dim blue of a distant horizon. The drive to Jhansi was uneventful except for one incident, temporarily distressing and typically oriental, which occurred at the crossing of the Betwa, a river intersecting the Saugor-
Jhansi road. Communication between the two banks of the river is maintained, during normal times, by a wooden ferry boat, antiquated, but sufficiently large to transport motor vehicles of any size. When the river is low, the ferry is out of commission, owing to the appearance of large stretches of soft sand on either bank, impassable to motor transport. At such times, drivers of automobiles are obliged to have their cars and themselves bodily hauled across by coolie, rope and bullock train. When I arrived on the southern bank of the Betwa, the river was low.

It was early afternoon, and the immediate neighbourhood was singularly deserted. On the ferry boat, which appeared to be grounded on the near bank, slouched a nondescript individual who might have been dead, but who turned out to be merely asleep, and eventually awoke on being gently prodded with a walking stick, this method of persuasion having over-ruled my bearer's suggestion of pelting him with stones. Awake, he was either deaf or feigned that affliction, remaining quite unmoved by our questions, exhortations and threats. He was not blind, however, and he produced, from some recess in his unbelievable garments, a vernacular newspaper which he proceeded calmly to read.

A deadlock had arrived. Reluctance to commit homicide debarred me from any solution, but the impasse was surmounted by my bearer. Lowering his voice several octaves, he began to speak, quietly and intermittently, to this man. What he said I do not know, but the effect was immediate. Charon, Youth at the Prow, or Pleasure at the Helm, call him what you will, he leapt in the air like an animated scarecrow and disappeared eastwards in a cloud of dust and a rapidly diminishing smell. I was blankly astonished.

"What did you say to him?" I asked my bearer.

"Sahib," he replied, indulgently, "I asked him to fetch men and byles, and he has gone to fetch them."

One should never ask unnecessary questions of old soldiers.

Whatever the nature of the boatman's quest may have been, he certainly dragged it out. I lit a pipe, and, disliking inactivity in that slumbrous atmosphere, set off on a voyage of exploration along the river bank, in the opposite direction to which the boatman had fled, bidding my bearer recall me with view halloa when reinforcements arrived. The sand near the river was firm. The day was hot and still. The sun saturated the afternoon air and all the landscape. I had that vague and rather uncomfortable impression of limitless and purposeless distance that sometimes assails one in the Plains, when I was jerked back to reality by an awful hubbub arising from the place I had just left. I turned about and saw my bearer and car surrounded by an assortment of human beings and bullocks. The human beings were agitated. The byles were stolid. My bearer was minatory. Even at that distance I could recognize an attitude of aggression in his old but sturdy frame. The air was rent with imprecations. The price war was on.
I returned, rather more quickly than I had set out, to find the old man on the verge of tears.

"Sahib," he said, "these —— want thirty rupees." Then sotto voce: "Offer them thirty and then give them nothing once we get across."

My bearer, had he not missed both vocations, might have gone far in politics or big business. Like all great ideas, his was the essence of simplicity, but I could hardly accept it, and settled down to bargain. The spokesman of the relief party—which looked as if it had been indiscriminately selected from the nearest jail—was a Brahmin, wearing the triple thread of his caste, and a very superior person. He waved aside my Roman Urdu and overwhelmed me in the most appalling deluge of babu English I have ever heard. I believe my bearer would have cheerfully murdered him. The argument was long and fruitless, but a lucky idea enabled me to produce a trump card.

"Very well, then," I said, "I now go back to Sangor and put all this in the hands of the police."

This suggestion visibly rattled the twice (or is it thrice?) born.

"My good sir," he expostulated, "we are all good men out to help, naturally" (or words to that effect), "we will do you for twenty."

"Ten."

"Fifteen."

"Twelve."

"Right-ho, sir, the bargain is then consummated."

And, while my bearer gnashed his teeth in impotent rage, lengths of stout rope were produced, bullocks were efficiently yoked, and my car was triumphantly towed to the far bank. Here the Brahmin, who seemed to be the treasurer as well as the spokesman of this Third International, accepted twelve rupees with hauteur. I pressed the starter and set on my way with a feeling of freedom and relief. I had gone several miles when a wail, like the ultimate shriek of agony from a lost soul, nearly caused me to wreck the car, and certainly made me stop it. This awful ululation proceeded from my bearer, who, in an unusual and certainly undignified posture, was leaning over the back of the car. I dismounted, hurried round to investigate, and then I saw it all. My own scant luggage was disposed inside the car. His, even scantier, was roped on the luggage carrier. All that now remained of his total worldly possessions was represented by a few ends of rope, obviously cut with a sharp knife. The Third International, after towing us across the river, had, while their Brahmin chief was accepting fees and indulging in conversation, extracted extra forfeit by removing my bearer's bundle of possessions from the luggage grid.

It was too much for me. The whole comedy, starting with the human scarecrow on the ferry boat, leading up to the motley crowd of men and animals haranguing on the bank, the flatulently discursive Brahmin, the procession, like a Roman triumph gone wrong, across the fallen waters of
the Betwa, culminating in the petty theft of a few blankets, trinkets and kettles, struck me like a club. I started to laugh and could not stop. The laughter fed on itself and soon I could no longer stand. I sat shamelessly on the road, my back against an ample mile stone, and roared and howled, while my old bearer regarded me reproachfully. I don't think he has ever forgiven me. He was still reproachful when, weak and hiccupping, I crawled limply into the car and set it in motion for Jhansi. Long live the East!

I arrived in Jhansi after dark, found the dak bungalow, bathed, consumed a belated sundowner, ate a satisfying meal and turned in.

I awoke before dawn considerably refreshed. My bearer brought me tea and his whole countenance was lit as with a lamp. I asked the reason of his inordinate joy and he told me that his missing baggage had been brought to the dak bungalow half an hour ago in a car, by a sahib who had seen the bundle on the road with his headlights, and had retrieved it. Who was the sahib? He did not know, but he was an Indian, not an Englishman. Did he stay? No, he passed straight on. What was the number of the car? Not taken. I have given up trying to solve the problem of my bearer's luggage. The ropes were obviously cut and the abrupt reappearance of the stolen booty in the small hours was puzzling, to say the least of it. Anyhow, what does it matter?

We bowled along the ever-improving road in the direction of Gwalior. At one point during the journey I was puzzled by the presence of large coveys of partridge flanking the road. On the approach of the car they did not fly, and indeed appeared unwilling to move at all, one or two coveys running along in a middle-aged manner. I slowed up. This did not worry the game. A few yards further on the presence of several peafowl determined my action. I stopped altogether and started manoeuvring for my shotgun. If even then these amazing birds refused to fly, I could always salve my conscience by "shooting for the pot." I had even loaded, but my hand was stayed in the last instance by the thought that I must be in some game preserve, so very reluctantly, to the wrath and almost the mutiny of my bearer, I unloaded and started off. Some hundreds of yards further on the problem was solved by a signboard on the right of the road —"Datia State. All shooting prohibited." The rulers of Datia are Jains and do not take life, so all game is safe and tame in the sanctuary of their State. I have heard of travellers on this road who have unwittingly, and even wittingly, violated the Jain law in a Jain State, but I am glad to say I refrained, although I came very near the mark. In this region the monotony of the landscape which had deteriorated and recently touched low water-mark in a series of arid and distorted gorges crowned by grisly underfeatures resembling the tortured shapes of the foothills near Jericho and the Dead Sea, was relieved by a fine ridge crowned with a remote and magnificent castle.

"The glamour of the East" is a hackneyed term, hackneyed because
that same glamour is hidden to the great majority of Westerners who cross the Suez Canal, more hidden because it does not exercise its fascination until the traveller has stepped ashore on the Indian peninsula. Not in Egypt, with its cosmopolitan cities and vast stored archaeological wealth, not in Sinai, even with its Crusaders road, not in Palestine, of biblical memory and eternal racial hatred, beats the vital and romantic pulse of the East, but in India, the land of great jungles and deserted temples, of sorrow and despair and short-lived joy, of living martyrdom and ascetism; the land of bushed beaches and unknown gods, of teeming death-infested cities, and the magnificent, far-flung, eternal snows of the Himalaya. Here is the East.

To know it is to suffer. Its knowledge is bought, if not by blood, by hard experience. Kipling, in “The Naulhaka,” threw aside the veil. Yeats-Brown, in “Bengal Lancer,” probed a secret. His descriptions of Benares and the Taj Mahal are vivid and alive. Aitchison, newly come to India, grasped a truth in his book “Hindu Holiday.” He showed us the very ugliness of India’s beauty.

Here, as I drove along in the late afternoon, in the shadow of that grim castle, I felt the glamour that is always hidden, but shines forth at times in the lines of great writers and the mind of travellers who are willing occasionally to leave cantonments and railway trains. Who lived in that immense pile? What scenes had been enacted within its walls since it had been built in the dark ages? Its grim bastions, frowning from insurmountable glacis and ridge, breathed the very spirit of India, the India of Clive and the Mahrattas, of Tantia Topi and the Mutiny, of all the dark sorrow and intrigue and mystery which have shaken the inscrutable peninsula since the dawn of time.

My romantic and somewhat sombre mood was shaken back to normal by a comic interlude. A long drive, lined by trees, led from the outworks of the fortress to the road, and at the junction of road and drive stood a solitary, uniformed, bearded and venerable sentry. Despite his extreme age and rather rusty movements, his authority was not to be gainsaid, for he advanced into the exact centre of the highway. There was no way round him so I stopped the car and got out. Every single accoutrement of that ancient “mariner” was upside down. His shouldered rifle was held by the muzzle. His pagri badge, his shoulder numerals and his belt buckle were all standing on their heads. He had no buttons on his tunic, nor had he requisitioned the services of the dhobi for some considerable time. He looked like a demented boy scout out of Alice in Wonderland.

In reply to his challenge, voiced in an unknown tongue, I explained, in my best company office Urdu, the deficiencies of his uniform. He was unperturbed but answered me in Urdu of a remarkably pure strain. If his uniform were wrong, would I put it right? I delegated these duties to my bearer, who performed them quickly and efficiently, roundly upbraiding the soldier, as one respectable old man to another, for his untidiness. The
sentry, renovated, salaamed, gave thanks, stepped back to his post near and almost in a cactus bush, and we continued on our way.

When we reached the environs of Gwalior it was dark. I was making for an hotel I knew, and the journey here was relieved by two singular incidents, one pleasant and exciting, the other exciting if definitely the reverse of pleasant.

The first incident occurred on a lonely, jungle-flanked road some considerable distance from the city. I was driving in the dark, with my headlights fully on, when suddenly a panther flashed across the road, a dark, lithe streak in the glare of the lamps. The panther, instead of vanishing like a wraith into the welcoming jungle, turned squarely and sat on its haunches in full view at the edge of the metalled road. Simultaneously I braked and stopped the car. The panther sat there unconcernedly like a tabby cat on the hearth, in the hard glare of the lights, looking, not at the halted car, but straight across the road. I followed the animal's gaze and suddenly on the other side of the track, catapulted from the dark jungle like stones from a sling, shot two diminutive but very speedy cubs. They joined mother and the trio made off, this time with no perceptible delay. If the maternally-minded panther had decided to attack us in the car she would have made mincemeat of both my bearer and myself as I had no loaded firearm handy. I was foolish to stop the car but I saw something of interest. Anyhow, I got away with it.

The second incident occurred very much nearer Gwalior. I was driving along, wondering whether if I had a rifle or shotgun (at that range) handy, I should have resisted the temptation to put that panther in the bag. (I say resisted the temptation, for although at that time it was permissible to shoot panther, looked on as vermin, from cars, I always held strong views on the subject, considering such procedure unfair. A panther, enticed from the jungle by the purr of an automobile engine, blinded by headlights, is hardly a sportsman's mark. I notice with satisfaction that the Forest Officers of India have recently taken up a similar attitude, and game laws have been revised to prohibit slaying big game of any description from the comfortable upholstery of a motor car.) As I was mooning along, another car hove in sight, coming in the opposite direction, with blindingly strong headlights. I dimmed my lights, but the other driver kept his full on, so I tilted mine back again. Enraged by such unreasonable procedure, my opposite number then turned on a spotlight in the neighbourhood of his windscreen and flashed it full in my face. This completely blinded me, and I was compelled to draw into the side and stop dead, hoping fervently not to meet a tree on the way. My car came to a standstill. The approaching headlights loomed closer, I heard one terrific report, and a charge of birdshot, No. 6, I should guess, came whistling around my ears. Providentially none of it hit me. Fired from the side and slightly in front, most of the charge had been taken on the off side of the Triplex windscreen. I was concerned for my bearer, but needlessly. He was unscathed, and
the dog also had escaped scot free. I was a bit shaken by this exhibition of perfect road manners on the part of some unknown, but I managed to reach the hotel and restored tissues in the usual manner. My bearer picked some pellets from his pagri, and confirmed my diagnosis. It was No. 6 shot all right.

Next day we set out for Agra: one more river to cross! The broad waters of the Chambal, however, were sufficiently high to allow the ferry to function unhindered. I checkmated an attempt on the part of my bearer, who had commandeered a receipt in advance in true Oriental style, to decamp without paying toll, and drove on smoothly, without mishap, to Agra. Here I received my first real set-back. I drew up at a garage to replenish the vital needs of the car, and was accosted by a rather seedy looking Indian gentleman in a smart store suiting. He asked me who I was, and I told him unconcernedly enough.

"Ah," he replied, "the Provost Sergeant is looking for you."

I cast my mind back over my recent misdeeds, but was unable to recollect any encroachment on the Army Act.

"What does he want?" I inquired.

"You have to go back to Jubbulpore."

Here was a pretty kettle of fish. I set out to confirm this scandalous news, but the day being Sunday, and my topographical knowledge of Agra confined to the whereabouts of the Taj Mahal, I had some difficulty in unearthing the authorities. Eventually I discovered the Staff Captain, *non sine pulvere*, consuming a cool drink on a handsome verandah.

"Oh, yes," said that potentate calmly, in answer to my frantic inquiries, "back you go to Jubbulpore. Your move is cancelled. Have a drink."

There was nothing for it but to retrace my steps, or rather wheel tracks. I was disconsolately threading my way through the Agra traffic, already starting the return journey, when a large figure, dressed to the minute in some sort of a silk suit, leapt in front of the car, endangering his worthless life, and emitted a roar of welcome. It turned out to be a friend of mine, a subaltern in the Royal Irish Fusiliers. I poured my tale of woe into his ears, and he shrieked with laughter. He asked me where I was going, and I told him, back to Jubbulpore. He said, No, I wasn't, I was coming to stay in their Mess for an indefinite period of time, to be determined by him. I demurred, with some language, but by this time he had been joined by some of his friends, who, after perfunctory introductions and explanations, agreed unanimously and forcibly that I should stay. When I still demurred, they merely dispossessed me of the wheel and drove to the club, my bearer perched precariously somewhere in the region of the luggage carrier.

I spent a pleasant day or two in Agra, revisiting, in the mornings, the world-renowned beauties of the place, seeing the Taj Mahal from where it should be seen, from the far bank of the Jumna, and when it should be seen, at sunrise, at the time and from the place that Shah Jehan, helpless
and dying, was raised to see for the last time, with his last breath, the majestic splendour he had created out of his own mind. In the afternoons I played squash racquets, and spent the evenings in the club. When at last I was afraid my military career would be blasted by any further delay, I tore myself away. I stayed not upon the order of my going, but went, with my flat foot on the floor and my eyes glued to the road. Errant partridges, magnificent views to reward my camera, flashed by unnoticed. I locked up my gun and camera and saw nothing but the road, the road, the road. I flew.

Approaching the Chambal Ferry, I hit something which looked like, and was, an itinerant water tank on wheels. This dented the car somewhat and reduced my bearer to tears, but the vehicle still went, so what odds. The Betwa River was still low, but I collected the haulage gang in record time (I think they sensed I was ripe for murder) and brooked little delay there. At Malthone I was ejected from the dak bungalow by a pack (or is it covey?) of hysterical female missionaries, who could not abide a man under the same roof, but I turned out my camp bed and slept on that, rising long before dawn to start in complete darkness and scorch up the miles under the glare of headlights.

I cannot remember, but I am firmly convinced I did not draw breath until I arrived in Jubbulpore. I will not set forth here the time I took to traverse the distance between Agra and Jubbulpore, because nobody would believe it if I did. Suffice to say that, still in a state of considerable tension, I off-loaded in the gardens of the Nerbudda Club and went in search of my Commanding Officer. It was the time of the afternoon siesta, but I should worry, as they say in America. I found him lying in bed, having an early afternoon tea. My cocker leapt through the window and was rewarded with toast.

"I suppose you heard, sir," I ventured, "my move has been cancelled?"

"Yes," he replied, salving with difficulty the last of the toast for his personal use, "I heard that, and more. Your move's on again. You're going back to Peshawar."

I turned and ran. I heard some agitated shouting, which, I suspected emanated from my Commanding Officer, but, I regret to say, I took no notice. This time, I determined, I would damned well go to Peshawar. Doubtful civilians inquiring sheepishly after my identity would be shot at sight. Provost serjeants, staff officers, and others approaching with official documents would be struck down with the starting handle. If I were cornered I would say I was Jack Dillinger, General Booth, or the prophet Isaiah. I would do all these things and more, but I was determined that nothing would on this occasion divert me from the capital of the northwest, so remote and apparently so difficult of access.

I spent the night once more at the dak bungalow of Malthone, undisturbed by missionaries, male or female. A curious peace had descended upon me. If I were fated to spend the rest of my life caravanning the
long roads of the Indian peninsula I would at least enjoy myself. I wandered into the country with a shotgun, but was soon jerked out of my somnolence by an outstanding number of black partridge. I enjoyed stupendous luck and bagged four brace in under an hour. I was hard put to carry them as I had come unprepared for such a spate of birds, but I solved the problem by improvising a game carrier from a handkerchief torn into strips.

The Fates, having touched me up a bit, were inclined to be lenient. The journey proceeded smoothly without major catastrophe. The Betwa chain gang were actually waiting for me; perhaps their Brahmin chief had telepathic powers and sensed my coming. The Chambal was crossed without further damage to the car, but I was electrified by the sight of a very crazy raft, shockingly overloaded with coolies and tilted at an impossible slant, being propelled across the river in primitive fashion by oarsmen who had every appearance of being inebriated. The raft was closely followed by a shoal of at least twenty gharial. The gharial is a gentleman and eats only fish, but those gharial in the Chambal looked capable of anything.

My bearer was wildly excited as we approached Delhi. He had not seen it, he said, since he was a small boy, which must have been a very long time ago. Also, he added, "Delhi ke samne, Agra mamooli jagar hai," which being translated means, "Compared with Delhi, Agra is a one-horse show," or something like that. Magnificent towns, with historic associations long buried in the past, have ceased to mean so much to me. They could keep Agra and Delhi. I wanted to see Peshawar.

We left Delhi at four o'clock in the morning. I was feverishly restless again and obsessed with the idea of speed. The Grand Trunk Road lay in front of me, straight as an arrow, smooth as a windless lake in the sun. There was no doubt about it, I was going too fast. I was certainly doing sixty-five when the near front tyre burst. The car swerved, lurched sickeningly, and turned upside down in the fraction of a second. The transition from upright to upside down must have happened in an infinitesimal moment of time, because I have no recollection of it.

Of every other incident of what must have been one of the most extraordinary motoring accidents on record, I have the clearest remembrance. The first thought that passed through my mind was that I was neither brained nor stunned, but perfectly conscious. Why, I wondered? Let's find a reason. Let's be logical if nothing else. I was wearing a thick pig-sticking Cawnpore topi which had hit the tarmac with a resounding thump, and undoubtedly saved my life. The rim of the topi was pressing uncomfortably on the bridge of my nose, but I decided not to grumble about that under the circumstances. I tried to shout for my bearer, but could not. Temporary aphonia was the only injury I suffered in that appalling smash. Then my brain, working independently, struck off to solve another problem. The car, being a tourer, should have had the hood driven in by the impact, and be flush with the ground. What had kept the hood up? Then I
remembered that my bearer had been in a hurry that morning and had jammed the luggage into the back seat haphazardly and anyhow, roof high. The luggage, so untidily bundled into the car, had saved my life. I wondered about my bearer, but I couldn't speak: still that blasted aphonia. I moved my arms and my hands, which were on the steering wheel, and my feet, still on the controls. My limbs were intact. My brain took over control again. I must get out. I willed to move, but something had gone wrong with the connexions. Suddenly the wrecked car gave an ominous creak and subsided a little. My head was driven into the road and the pressure of the topi on my face became intolerable and suffocating. I suddenly got the full power of my limbs and struggled as only a trapped and suffocating man can struggle. I still had sufficient strength left not to make my efforts entirely aimless, and concentrated on escaping through the framework at the side of the hood. It seemed that failure would be my only reward. I became breathless, light-headed, and for one agonizing moment was racked with cramp. God was good to me, however, that day, and one last despairing effort (if that had failed I think I had played my last card) thrust my head between the struts of the hood. I rested a little and got one arm out. Then I managed to free myself from the blinding caress of the battered topi. I got out my other arm—not so easy this time. Another short rest, a heave, a wriggle, a pull, and I was free. I stood up weak and sweating, and regarded the wreck of the car with mixed feelings.

I shouted my bearer's name and got a feeble reply. He was alive. I shut out the thought that I might find him horribly crippled and attempted to disentangle him from the wreckage. I might as well have tried to uproot the Great Pyramid of Cheops. I could not reach him, nor could I budge the wrecked car an inch. Worse still, the car was sinking gradually. It subsided until, with a nerve-racking blare, the horn button on the top of the steering column hit the road, and the quiet morning air was filled with a hideous and continual hoot. This was another benison of God. The appalling noise attracted a band of Sikh ryots, who were two fields away from the road, hidden from view by a hedge, and proceeding, until they heard that awful din, in the opposite direction to the car.

I blessed those merry, chattering Punjaub Sikhs. They swarmed round the car like ants round a jampot, and in less time than it takes to describe the act with pen and ink, had the car on its side. Then I drew breath again. All my troubles were dissolved. My bearer, still wearing his pagri, stepped forth unharmed from the wreckage, followed by my cocker, who regarded the whole incident as a huge joke, and obviously, from the gleeful way he wagged his tail, desired a repeat performance. My bearer, had, unfortunately, sustained a few minor abrasions and a fractured metacarpal, but he made light of these injuries and started to exhort the Sikhs who told him to shut up. One of them politely suggested that if he would not help, he might at least find his master a drink!

I never saw anybody get their teeth into a job of work like those Sikhs.
Their next effort was to put the car on an even keel and review the damage, which was considerable. The whole superstructure of the car was matchwood. One door had been torn off bodily, and the bonnet looked as if it been battered by an infuriated blacksmith wielding a sledge. The Sikhs changed the wheel—the tyre and tube had been ripped and slashed to ribbons—threw the errant door into the back seat, produced lengths of rope from apparently nowhere and made fast the shattered hood.

“Now, sahib,” said one of them, grinning all over his broad face, “get in and drive off.”

I wedged myself into the salvage and pressed the starter with no hope. The engine started up. I threw in the gear and let out the clutch. The car moved forward as if nothing had happened. I stopped the car, left the engine running, and offered generous largesse, which was promptly refused with some show of anger. I thanked my deliverers as best I could, shook hands all round, saw from an adjacent milestone I was nine miles from Jullundur, and set off. When I arrived in Jullundur I made the British Military Hospital my first port of call and had my bearer’s injuries dressed and splinted. I then drove the awful wreckage to a garage, told them to do what they could, deliver the car in Peshawar at a subsequent date, find me a taxi and deposit me at the railway station. Arrived there, I purchased tickets for Peshawar and spent the rest of the day enjoying the very welcome hospitality of a combined medical and sapper mess in Jullundur.

I slept that night on the Frontier Mail and awoke in the wild country round Attock. Soon I was in Peshawar, reporting to a harassed Commanding Officer. Who was I? What did I want? Why had I come? He had heard nothing of it. There was no job for me to do. He had too many officers. I ventured a mild suggestion.

“What the hell did I mean? Was I trying to pull his leg? Happy thought. He would send me to the Kajuri Plain. I asked nothing better, and there I went.

Current Literature


The following diluent was found to be satisfactory for stabilizing Schick solutions. Boric acid 8.4 grammes, NaCl 15.9 grammes, borax 5.7 grammes, purified gelatin 5.0 grammes, distilled water 2 litres. This is a modification of Kusama and Hata’s diluent [Bulletin of Hygiene, 1934, v. 9, 766]. This mixture generally has a pH of 8.0. Sterilization is effected by autoclaving at 115°C. Sodium ethylmercurithiosalicylate is added as a preservative to a concentration of 0.01 per cent. The gelatin must be purified and detailed instructions for its purification are given. Schick toxin diluted with the