

THE OPEN ROAD

There are many ways of traversing the open road. One can stroll along gladed lanes, tinged with a glistening frost, or one can be led these unconscionable distances by a piece of willing machinery. Just to expose the depths to which the modern youth can sink, I prefer the latter method. It is strange that when a horse is seen on the road it is regarded as an intruder. I, myself, am particularly wary of this somewhat nervous animal. Yet we regard the motor-car as a rightful traveller on our out-of-date roads. What a travesty of justice, since the advent of the car was greeted with the same curiosity nowadays excited by the horse.

In the previous paragraph I expressed a preference for engine-powered travel, yet it is only fair to add that more sweat and weight have been lost since the arrival of this, at times accursed machine, than ever before. Yes, thanks to my motor-bike, I am familiar with every inch of the road between Feltham and Hounslow, listed on a map as four miles as a shrewd crow flies. So against a major sparking plug company may I lodge my complaint. I was cruising along at a steady speed, five miles an hour since I did not want to inconvenience my cousin preceding me with a red flag, when my sparking plug refused to collaborate. I was stymied. The handbook was less than helpful, and quotes, "If the spark-plug will not spark, replace it." An invaluable piece of advice if you are carrying a spare, but, on a piece of land bearing a distinct similarity to the Russian Steppes, hardly helpful. So, with a merry chuckle and a light heart I proceeded to deliver the machine a savage and not a wholly verbal attack, trying to cajole it into spluttering to life. After a smart, hopeful salute to a passing R.A.C. patrol I decided to push the idle machinery to Hounslow—another defeat for homo sapiens.

Since my greatest humiliation came on being overtaken by a mini-motor, I must state that the joys of riding are being ruined by inconsiderate and dangerous driving. Take my case, for example. The machine was going downhill and who knows but the engine might have sprung to life? Often drivers hurtle along narrow roads with a high-pitched hooter screeching its sorry song to the world. They seem to fly past my more pedestrian machine emitting stranged sounds, so strange in fact, that there is a temptation to call for Professor Quatermass. Quite often there is hardly time to whisper "HUX600" before the car is away. Even when my modest machine passes a car, my mind is besieged by such thoughts that I am tempted to retire and spend the rest of a misspent life contemplating the inevitable. The thought process is similar to this. "That fool is as mad as can be at me for passing him. He is going to tell the police; that would be awkward. He is no mad, so crazy that he will crash me and leave me to die. Listen! that was his hooter. Look! he has just driven straight by. Wait 'til I get him!"

I hope this work has shown, in a light vein, how the open road is being closed.