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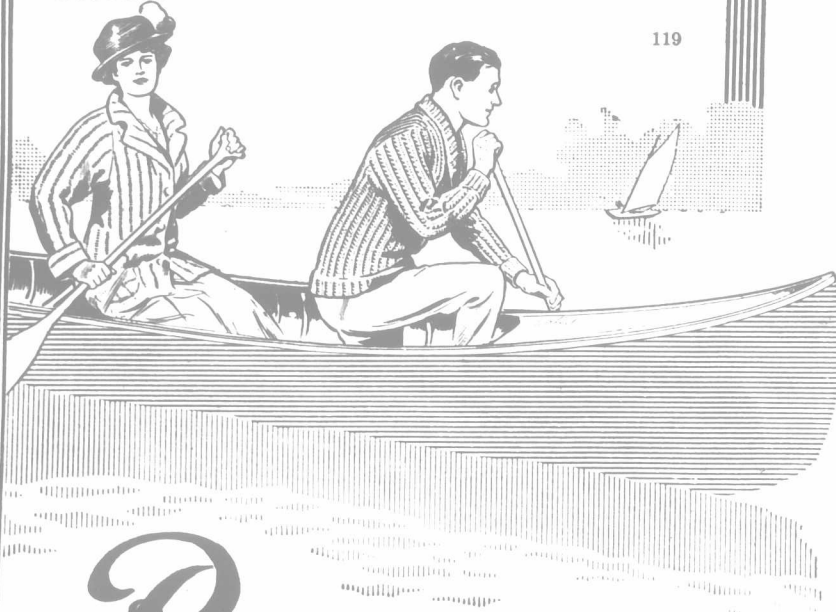
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usually an affair of twenty minutes, but has to be caressed for an extra five by his mistress, who never fails to abandon hope of seeing him again the moment he is out of sight.

To test the quality of Miss Van Buren's resolutions, I asked her to take the seat beside the driver, expecting some excuse; but she came like a lamb; and the taste of conquest was sweet in my mouth.

In Haarlem all had proved such good motorists that, despite the ferocity of Amsterdam trams, I was scarcely prepared for the emotions which began to seethe in the tonneau the moment the car was started and the chauffeur had sprung to his place at my feet. According to my idea, there's no courage in reckless driving, but selfishness and other less agreeable qualities; still, we did not exactly dawdle as we left the Amstel to swing out into the tide of city life.

"Heavens, he's going to kill us!" I heard the Chaperon groan. "Ronald, tell him to stop."

Miss Rivers was also giving vent to despairing murmurs. Tibe was "wuffling" full-noted threats at each tram which loomed toward us, and Starr was attempting to advise me over my shoulder that the ladies would wish to be driven less furiously.

To my joy, Nell looked back and laughed. "Why, we're not going more than seven miles an hour," said she.

"Then, for goodness' sake, let's go one," implored her chaperon. "I never dreamed of anything so awful."

I slackened pace. "Are you an old motorist?" I inquired of my companion, as if I were used to asking her friendly, commonplace questions.

"I never was in a car until the other day with my cousin," said she, in the same carefully unconscious tone. "And I'm afraid in my feet and hands now; but the rest of me is enjoying it awfully. Yes, that's the word, I think, for it is rather awful. I shouldn't have dreamed that trams could look so big, or bridges so narrow, except in nightmares. And—and you can't make your horn heard much, can you, over the noise on the stones? Oh, there was a close shave with that wagon, wasn't it? I felt bristling like a fretful porcupine—oh, but a stark, staring mad, blithering, driving porcupine!"

It was delicious to have her talk to me, and to feel that because she trusted my skill, she was not really afraid, but only excited enough to forget her stiffness.

"Perhaps Amsterdam wouldn't be a pleasant place to learn 'chauffeurage' in," I said; "but it's all right when you have learned."

"It's a good thing," she went on, "that motoring wasn't invented by some grand seigneur in the Middle Ages, when the rich thought no more of the poor than we do of flies, or they'd have run over every one who didn't get out of their way on the instant. They'd have had a sort of cow-catcher fitted on to their cars, to keep themselves from coming to harm, and they'd have dashed people aside, anyhow. In these days, no matter how hard your heart may be, you have to sacrifice your inclinations more or less to decency. I dare say the Car of Juggernaut was a motor. Oh, what a huge town! Shall we ever get out of Pandemonium into the country?"

We did get out at last, and suddenly, for in Hollow Land the line between town and country is abrupt, with no fading of city into suburb and meadow. One moment we were in the bustle of Amsterdam; the next, we were running along a klinker road, straight as a ruler, beside a quiet canal. Such horses as we met, being accustomed to the traffic of Amsterdam, had no fear of the motor, which was well; for on so narrow a road, with the canal on one side, and a deep drop into meadows on the other, an adventure would be disagreeable. But it was not all straight sailing ahead. Outside the traffic, I put on speed to make up for lost time, and the car quickly ate up the distance between Amsterdam and Muiden.

My passengers broke into admiration of the medieval fortress with its paraphernalia of moats, bastions, and drawbridges, which give an air of historic

romance to the country round; but their emotion would have been of a different kind had they guessed the risk we must take in running through the winding fortifications. It was not so great a risk that it was foolish to take it, and thirty or forty cars must do the same thing every day; but the fact was, that we had to run through these tunnels on tram-lines, with no room to turn out in case of meeting a steam monster from Hilversum. I had chosen my time, knowing the hours for trams; still, had there been a delay, there was a chance of a crash, for our horn could not be heard by the tram driver, nor could he see us in time to put on his brakes and prevent a collision.

With the girl I love beside me, and three other passengers, not to mention the chauffeur, it was with a tenseness of the nerves that I drove through the labyrinth, and I was glad to clear Muiden. Next came Naarden—that tragic Naarden whose capture and sack by the Spaniards encouraged Alva to attack Haarlem; and then, without one of the party having dreamed of danger, we swung out on the road to Laren, a road set in pineland and heather, which would have reminded the real Lady MacNairne of her Scottish home. There was actually something like a hill here and there, which the strangers were astonished to find in Holland, and would hardly believe when I said that, on reaching Gelderland, I would be able to show them a Dutch mountain two hundred feet high, among a colony of smaller eminences to which half the Netherlands rush in summer.

Meanwhile they were satisfied with what they saw; and it is a pretty enough road, this way between Amsterdam and Laren. At first we had had the canal, with its sleepy barges, peopled with large families, and towed by children harnessed in tandem at the end of long ropes; its little shady, red-and-green wayside houses, with "Melk Salons" printed attractively over their doors. We had had avenues of trees, knotted here and there into groves; we had passed pretty farmhouses with bright milk-cans and pans hanging on the red walls, like plaques in a drawing-room; we had seen gardens flooded with roses, and long stretches of water carpeted with lilies white and yellow; then we had come to pine forests and heather, and always we had had the good klinker which, though not as velvety for motoring as asphalt, is free from dust even in dry weather. We had run almost continuously on our fourth speed; and even in Laren I came down to the second only long enough to let them all see the beauty of the Mauve country.

Starr knows Anton Mauve's pictures, and his history; but the ladies had seen only a few delicious landscapes in the Ryks Museum. Still, they liked to hear that at Laren Corot's great disciple had found inspiration. Nowhere in the Netherlands are there such beautiful barns, each one of which is a background for a Nativity picture; and it was Laren peasants, Laren cows, and the sunlit and cloud-shadowed meadows of Laren which kept Mauve's brush busy for years.

After the charm of Haarlem's suburbs, Hilversum, where merchants of Amsterdam play at being in the country, was disappointing; but having lunched in open air, and spun on toward Amersfoort, we ran into a district which holds some delightful houses, set among plane trees, varied with flowering acacias and plantations of oak. Everywhere our eyes followed long avenues cut in the forest, avenues stretching out like the rays of a star, and full of a tremendous green light, shot with gold.

In the midst of this forest we came upon Soestdyk, where the Queen-Mother lives, that pleasant palace with its romance of a mysterious, secret room; then by-and-by we ran into Amersfoort, ringed by its park, and Nell was so entranced with the Gothic church tower, that she rejoiced to hear it was the finest in the northern Netherlands.

I had chosen market-day in Amersfoort for our drive, and as we sailed into the spacious square of the town, my passengers saw in one moment more Dutch costumes than in all their previous days in Hollow Land.

It was too late for the best of the