



On fast roads like these the saloon could put up high averages. This stretch cost \$2,000,000.

A giant cactus between Tucson and Phoenix dwarfs the M.G. in Arizona.



An M.G. in the U.S.

In spite of gloomy, predictions, Philip Allen was confident that his M.G. 1¼ litre saloon could tackle American mileages as well as the largest Transatlantic car. He was right!

find an open space immediately in front of our building. It was only some hours later (when we moved the car away) that we noticed the yellow strip on the pavement, which meant "No Parking."

After our stay in Boston, we were due to go to Washington, D.C., and we had to fit in a couple of days at Harrisburg (Pennsylvania) on the way. The route included some broad highways, but for part of the time was slightly complicated and cross-country, and we rather enjoyed driving on comparatively narrow and twisty roads after the busy parkways near New York and Boston. My wife had one agreeable exchange on the way with a garage-hand somewhere in Maryland when we stopped to fill up.

"That's a nice little car," he said, "but how have you found it coming up these hills with such a small motor?" ("Motor" is American for engine.)

"Hills?" asked my wife — "What hills?"

We found Washington itself a trifle complicated; it is a planned city, and in consequence is full of surprising angles. It also has confusing devices such as streets which are one-way only for the morning rush hour, and one-way only, but in the opposite direction for the evening rush hour.

Journey South

We took our journey to the South in comparatively leisurely stages. Our route lay through the tobacco and cotton country of Virginia and the Carolinas we stopped at Atlanta, Georgia (where the extremely lengthy negro who brought our car from the garage to the hotel looked very startled that he had been able to fit himself into the driving seat) and then at our first "Motel" (a good one) at Montgomery, Alabama.

At our various stopping places the car attracted a good deal of attention the sliding roof, in particular, was regarded as a fascinating gadget. When we left our hotels in the morning we usually had all the negro porters to see us off, and on one fine morning when we waved goodbye to them, actually through the open roof, they were overcome with delight.

And then we came out at the Gulf of Mexico, at Mobile, and relaxed in the

I WAS due to go for eight or nine months to the U.S.A. — my first visit — on a mission which would necessarily involve travelling over a good deal of the country. I had a modest daily allowance of dollars and a travelling allowance, and decided that the best way of covering the considerable distances would be in my M.G. 1¼ litre saloon.

Experienced travellers said that it was foolish to think of travelling across a continent in a tiny motorcar, and that if I was so misguided as to go by car, I should do better to buy a second-hand one when I arrived in New York. But I had not enough dollar capital to do this and, anyway, I was rather proud of the M.G. There was also the consideration that with an economical car I could take my wife, who was not entitled to any dollar allowance, and show that two could travel as cheaply as one. And so one day we drove the M.G. down to the London Docks, smeared vaseline over the chrome, and left her to be swung aboard a freighter which was due in New York ten days later.

We had originally contemplated staying a week in New York and then starting on our travels, but we soon found that this was too optimistic. The car arrived in the New York Docks the day before we did, but it took us ten days before we eventually got her through the Customs and licensed and insured her.

Americans do not recognise international

driving licences, so we had to acquire New York number-plates (or "licence tags," as we soon learnt to call them), and we had to take a driving test, practical and written, before we could get driving licences.

The Start

On a clear and cold Monday morning, fifteen days after we had landed, we fitted our very considerable collection of luggage into the car, drove down 57th-street, climbed up a ramp on to the express highway running alongside the Hudson River, and started on our journey.

We found the roads quite fast, although, rather to our surprise, subject to speed limits (which were not always strictly observed) in the open country. Our immediate destination that day was Boston, and we covered the 230 miles in about six hours (and on not much more than six imperial gallons of petrol) but we had been late in leaving New York, and our last hour was in darkness. I would not advise anyone out of choice to drive into a large American city at night on his first day's motoring in that country, particularly Boston, which has, perhaps, the most confusing traffic arrangements of any of the large American cities we visited. Somehow we found our way to the block of flats where we were to stay. The streets were lined with parked cars, as in all American cities, but we were relieved to

warmth, and admired the luxurious foliage and some of the lovely old homes. We had a pleasant drive along the Gulf and then made our way to New Orleans, where we, for the first time, saw the Mississippi. It was quite hot—well up in the eighties—and from time to time it rained very hard indeed. We stayed a week in New Orleans (not merely to sample the French creole cooking), and noted with regret that the street car which ran to Desire had been replaced by a trolley bus. We then made our way to Houston, in Texas, where the temperature dropped from 83 to 42 on the afternoon of Christmas day. After this, San Antonio and Del Rio, and our first sight of the Rio Grande — a somewhat unimpressive stream here — and of Mexico.

Soon after we entered Texas we were charmed by an enormous notice by the roadside: "This is God's country — don't drive thru it like hell." Texas is enormous, and we liked it and the Texans. We were particularly entranced when we reached the desert and discovered how attractive its colourings are and how fascinating its assortment of cacti.

Sand and Rain

We spent some time at El Paso, in the extreme west of Texas, and on New Year's Day crossed over from there into Mexico for a few hours. We then continued on our journey, through New Mexico, where we ran first into a sandstorm, which made us have one or two anxious thoughts about the carburetter, and then into heavy rain, which we thought rather odd.

We were two months in California — mainly Los Angeles, San Francisco, Berkeley and Sacramento. The weather practically throughout was bad — we had snow, ice, fog, "smog" and rain — and we wondered if all the stories about the Californian climate could be true. When we went up to Yosemite there was five feet of snow, and even when we went down to San Diego and into Mexico again it was bitterly cold. We were a week in San Francisco and found that it was either covered in fog or was raining hard. Nevertheless, we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves.

There was one particularly lovely road on the Pacific coast, between San Luis Obispo and Monterey, which stands out in the memory; and we were interested to see the "mother lode" country of the '49 gold rush, and the giant redwoods, and the film studios, and the eucalyptus and pepper trees, and the gaily coloured M.G. roadsters which nipped in and out amongst the bigger cars. The volume of traffic was not inconsiderable. There are over four million cars in California, and no petrol rationing.

There was a good deal of road construction going on, and some of the roads

which had been finished were very good. We grew quite adept at speeding round the clover-leaf junctions at the ends of the bridges and we also became impoverished by frequently paying the substantial tolls required for crossing them.

Life Without a Car

Soon after our arrival in California, we left the car to be greased and tuned-up by a friendly garage in Beverley Hills (where the next car to ours was Paulette Goddard's) and were dependent for a day or two on the extremely exiguous public transport. We realised how difficult life in Los Angeles would be without a car. We had, by this time, become reasonably familiar with some of the problems of driving in the U.S.A. We had mastered the intricacies of the parking meter; had learnt to look out for the wide variety of traffic lights, which were of every conceivable design; had grown accustomed to leaving the car parked in the street overnight.

We were never long enough in one State to learn all the niceties of the traffic regulations of that State — for instance, in some areas it is permitted to turn on a red signal, and in others it isn't, and there is usually nothing to indicate to the stranger what the rule is — and we never really grew used to the almost complete absence of driving signals. We were also puzzled by some of the roadside traffic signs, such as "Soft Shoulder," and "No Trucking" and "Frost Heaves," but we usually worked out their meaning in the end.

Signs of Spring

We were also used by now to dealing with the little crowd of interested spectators who gathered round our car when we left it anywhere, and having to explain that this was a "sedan" model and what the initials M.G. meant, and telling them how many miles it would go on a gallon of "gas."

We had to leave California just when there were at last some signs of spring. With some considerable difficulty, we equipped ourselves with skid chains (our route back went up to 8,000 ft. and there was still much snow about), but in the end we did not need them. On our way back

we stopped at Las Vegas, Nevada, a town grown prosperous from gambling, divorce and marriage, surrounded by miles of desert, and with a showroom full of brightly polished M.G. roadsters.

Not far from Las Vegas we saw the Hoover dam and then drove on into Arizona and to the Grand Canyon. We were prepared to be disappointed at such a tourists' Mecca, but we were not. We also stopped to have a look at the Painted Desert, but after this we had no real stops until Indianapolis, in the Middle West, 1,500 miles away. We found it easy to cover large distances on these fast open roads one day, in spite of a plentiful supply of large potholes in the road, without ever exceeding 65, we covered 440 miles in 8¾ hours, including stops. We cut through the top part of Texas and then into Oklahoma, where we were unfortunate to catch up the winter again. In Missouri we had a cold and slippery journey with great icicles on the car and with the screen freezing up, but during our few weeks' stay in Indianapolis the spring began to overtake us, and for our journey from there back to the East we had four perfect days.

We called at Niagara, which we found disappointing, and at Albany, the capital of New York State, and then our wanderings were nearly over. We, ourselves, had still some time to spend sweltering in the heat, which by now had reached Manhattan, but towards the end of May we drove the car down to the docks and handed her over to be put aboard a freighter to come back home.

She had 10,313 American miles on the clock. As we climbed into a taxi and drove back to our hotel, we felt a little sad, and wondered what she would think of having so long a sea journey without our company.



Beverley Hills, California



In the Texas desert