



WITH pockets bulging with coils of copper wire and insulating tape, various tools lying about the floor and on the already uncomfortable passenger's seat, spares of various and curious descriptions, assorted tins of oil, unlimited faith and hope—so did I take the road on a vehicle for which my unpleasantly moneyed cousin paid the sum of £100. That was ten years ago, and the cycle-car (happy name!) was, of course, second-hand.

Yesterday I pressed a starter-button, left the engine to warm while I hurriedly packed a bag, and set off for the north with about as much trepidation and bother as when I walk up the road to the tobacconist. This car cost £100, too, but it had the advantage of being new: a Morris Minor, in fact.

It would hardly be pleasant to be asked whether those exciting and oily days with comparatively empty roads were preferable. Perhaps it would be best to content oneself with the solemn platitude, happiness is relative.

But it was at about that time, or a trifle earlier, that people were making such a fuss about "£100 cars," and all kinds of contraptions appeared temporarily on the market. At least one never got off the drawing board, even if it got so far as that, and enthusiastic individuals cheerfully paid deposits! And now, when the "£100 car" appears, nobody seems to take the least notice or get at all excited—people simply write out their cheques and drive their cars away. After all, the car comes from the House of Morris, and there is no question about its ability to do a job and to do it properly.

My own example has now covered some 8,000 miles. This is not a fabulous distance, but far enough for me

## A Modern Marvel: Thousands of Trouble- Free Miles on But a Very Small Capital Outlay

By H. A. TAYLOR

to have discovered any faults and to have become properly acquainted with it. The car was taken from an agent's window in the ordinary course of purchase, and so is likely to be a pretty fair sample of the machine as it reaches Mr. Smith and Mr. Jones.

The Minor has been definitely good and better than my most optimistic expectations. After the first 1,000 miles, during which I endeavoured to treat it as gently as circumstances permitted, I settled down to subject it to a necessary reign of terror. It has been given long periods of 45 m.p.h., still longer periods of 40 m.p.h.—in fact, any speed is its standard cruising speed—and has been used just as I had previously used a slightly faster sports car. We have screamed up one or two of the milder freak hills together in pursuit of trials competitors, and I have no doubt at all that with a pair of competition tyres it would, without special tuning, acquit itself creditably in any strenuous event. One thing has been rigorously dealt with: the Minor's sump has been emptied and refilled after each five hundred miles. Its capacity is only half a gallon, and I think that the slight cost of oil will be amply repaid in longer life. Instead of topping-up the sump I simply change the oil.

In these days, when a car is so often

treated as a piece of furniture, it seems a little unnecessary to stress mechanical reliability, certainly after a comparatively small mileage; but even so, at a price such as that of the two-seater Minor, the fact that nothing but routine adjustments and decarbonisation have been carried out is worth recording. At the end of 1,000 miles the pistons were taken out for safety's sake, when a partial seizure was suspected, but were found to be in perfectly normal condition. Every time the tank is filled up a certain amount of upper-cylinder lubricant is added, and the result is that the inlet valve guides remain moist. I know nothing about its effect on cylinder bore wear, and, in any case, the car is always warmed by a fast tick-over for five minutes. The oil consumption has therefore remained low and is still better than 1,500 m.p.g. under fast touring conditions.

A timed maximum has never been taken, but the speedometer reads 55 m.p.h. when travelling all out under normal conditions, and has actually shown a mile-a-minute under very favourable circumstances. The instrument has been checked at 40 m.p.h. and showed a 2 m.p.h. error. In second gear, valve bounce sets in at less than 35 m.p.h., and 30 m.p.h. is the fair limit for work on this ratio. But the most extraordinary feature of the machine is its ability to pull and keep on pulling in top gear up long slopes. In fact, it is usually a disadvantage to change down at any speed higher than 20 m.p.h. unless it is perfectly obvious that a change will have to be made in due course. The minimum top gear speed is in the region of 6 m.p.h., and the fuel consumption is 45 m.p.g.

There has never been any question about the road-holding, either. One wanders along at 45 m.p.h. without considering the road surface, one hand on the wheel, and the car holds its course accurately without roll on bends. The brakes, too, are among the smoothest and most powerful that I have ever tried. One is liable to forget the purchase price, and, just because it feels so like a big car, really long journeys are made non-stop without boredom or discomfort.

What is too hard to realise at first is that all the equipment is standard. The side curtains keep out the rain, and the hood is easy to fold, as well as absolutely weatherproof. My car has spent a good many nights and days out of doors at one time or another.

What it all comes to is that in this year of disgrace, for better or for worse, two people with luggage can motor with absolute confidence between John o' Groats and any other place where there happens to be something resembling a road—on a capital outlay of £100.