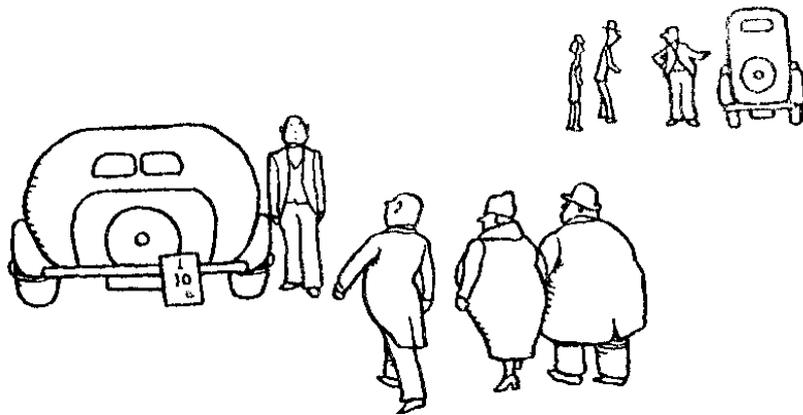


HOW TO BE A MOTORIST



Cars To Suit All Figures



VINTAGE WORDS OF WISDOM

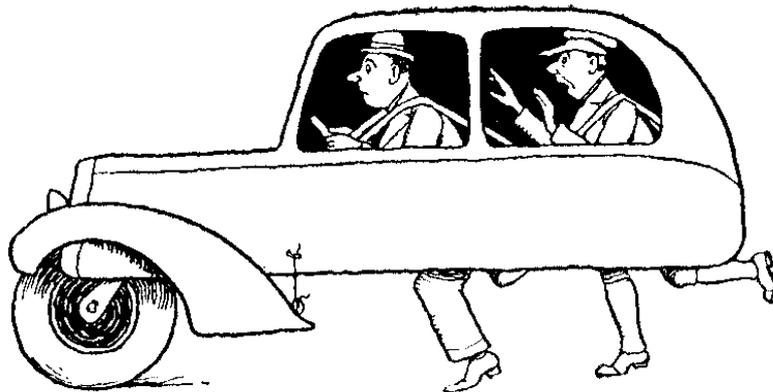
HOW TO BE A MOTORIST

By

HEATH ROBINSON

and

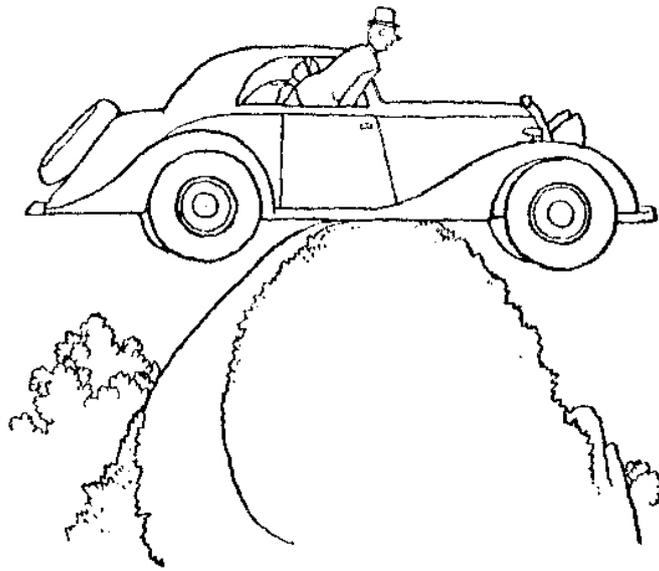
K. R. G. BROWNE



Learning to steer



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Alpine Difficulties



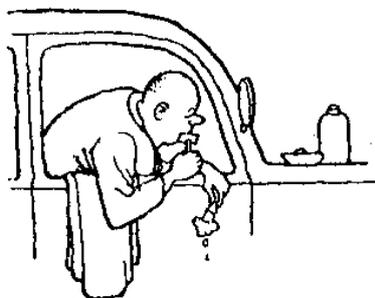
DEDICATION

THIS handy, decorative, valuable, and uncostly volume, on which so much loving care and ink has been expended by the compilers, is dedicated in admiring sympathy (on the artist's part) and sympathetic admiration (on the author's) to that badgered but unconquerable little creature, the British Motorist, or Fate's football.

In England nowadays it is practically impossible to be both law-abiding and a car-owner; try as the latter may to keep abreast of the regulations, new ones pop up at the rate of six a week to confound and abash him. His not to reason why; his not even to make reply when browbeaten by a beak for committing one of the 11,437 major crimes or one of the 27,812 minor offences in the motoring calendar; his but to bow the head and cough up the sum demanded.

In view of the fact that he is nearly always the goat, and regarded by the Treasury as an unfailing fount of gold, it says much for the British Motorist's skill, nerve, and sense of direction that he so seldom gets quodded for more than three years at a stretch or fined more than £50 at one go. And if this little book proves in any way helpful to him in his efforts to stay out of gaol and hang on to his savings, nobody will be gladder than us (or more glad than we, if you prefer it).

That will be all – and quite enough, too, in our opinion.



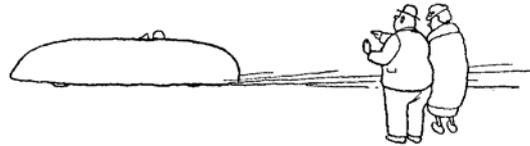
Wayside Shave



Cop-Comfort

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The Latest

FOREWORD BY GEOFFREY BEARE (TRUSTEE OF THE WILLIAM HEATH ROBINSON TRUST)

In the 1930s Heath Robinson was known as ‘The Gadget King’ and he is still most widely remembered for his wonderful humorous drawings. But humorous art was only his third choice of career, and one that he turned to almost by accident. On leaving the Royal Academy Schools in 1895 his ambition was to become a landscape painter. He soon realised that such painting would not pay the bills and so he followed his two older brothers into book illustration. He rapidly established himself as a talented and original practitioner in his chosen field, and in 1903 felt sufficiently secure to marry. However, the following year a publisher who had commissioned a large quantity of drawings was declared bankrupt. The young Heath Robinson, who had just become the father of a baby girl, had quickly to find a new source of income. He turned to the high class weekly magazines such as *The Sketch* and *The Tatler* who paid well for large, highly finished humorous drawings, and within a short time was being acclaimed as a unique talent in the field of humorous art.

For a number of years, he combined his careers as illustrator and humorist with equal and growing success. One day he might be illustrating Kipling’s *A Song of the English* or a Shakespeare play and the next would find him at work explaining the gentle art of catching things. He said of this time ‘It was always a mental effort to adapt myself to these changes, but with the elasticity of my early days, it was not too difficult’. During the First World War the market for luxurious illustrated books diminished, but demand for his humorous work increased, his gentle satires of the enemy proving popular both with the public at home and especially with the forces in the various theatres of war. This situation persisted after the war with very few commissions for illustration, but regular demands for his humorous drawings from popular magazines and for advertising.

In 1935 the *Strand Magazine* published an article titled ‘At Home with Heath Robinson’. This had a text by Kenneth R. G. Browne and ten pen and wash illustrations by Heath Robinson. The illustrations, which showed novel uses for unwanted items, were drawn under the working title ‘Rejuvenated Junk’. K. R. G. Browne, a fellow member of the Savage Club, was an ideal collaborator for Heath Robinson. He was the son of Gordon Browne who is still well known as an illustrator of books and magazines, and was the grandson of Hablot Knight Browne, who under his pen name of ‘Phiz’ gained lasting fame as the illustrator of many Victorian novelists, including Charles Dickens, Charles Lever and Harrison Ainsworth. The article in *The Strand Magazine* marked the start of a partnership that was only brought to an untimely end by the death of Browne in 1940. During 1932 and 1933 Heath Robinson had drawn a series of cartoons for *The Sketch* entitled

'Flat Life', which depicted various gadgets designed to make the most of the limited space available in the contemporary flat. It was this series of drawings that provided K. R. G. Browne and W. Heath Robinson with the inspiration for their first full-length book together. It was called *How to Live in a Flat*, and as well as greatly extending the original ideas showing many ingenious ways of overcoming the problems caused by lack of space in flats and bungalows, also provided much fun at the expense of the more extreme designs in thirties furniture and architecture. The book was published by Hutchinson for Christmas 1936 and was well received.

Over the next three years K. R. G. Browne and Heath Robinson successfully repeated the formula in a further three titles. Heath Robinson received much teasing from his family about the choice of subject for the second book, *How to be a Perfect Husband*, but looking back over his cartoons one finds that romance and courtship had been among his most frequently chosen subjects, from early 'Cupid' cartoons to such pictures as 'The Coquette' and 'Stolen Kisses' which were reproduced in *Absurdities* in 1934. The next book in the series received a valuable preview when *The Strand Magazine* published an article called 'A Highly Complicated Science'. The science referred to was that of gardening and the article by K. R. G. Browne was accompanied by nine of Heath Robinson's drawings all of which were subsequently used in *How to Make a Garden Grow*. Again, much of the subject matter for this book and the next, *How to be a Motorist*, was drawn from Heath Robinson's earlier cartoons. Among his earliest work for *The Sketch* was a series of drawings on the practicalities of gardening. This included a picture of 'root pruning' showing the gardener tunnelling down to the roots of a plant to prune them. Although the earlier drawing is much more elaborate, the idea is the same as is presented on page 27 of *How to Make a Garden Grow*. Similarly the theme of motoring recurs frequently in his earlier cartoons.

But there is an important difference between the full-page cartoon for a newspaper or magazine, and the humorous book. The cartoon must be capable of making the reader laugh whatever his mood as he turns the page and so must achieve an instant impact with a strong idea and sound execution. The reader of a humorous book, on the other hand, will have picked it up in the expectation of being amused, and so here the author or artist's problem is one of how to sustain the humour in an extended form, rather than to create a sudden effect with a single idea. In the *How to...* books Heath Robinson found the opportunity to present the reader with a set of variations on a theme, allowing him to look at his subject from every angle and to explore each idea that presented itself. Thus the books allow us to see a different aspect of his humorous art; to see its depth, rather than just selected high points.

Heath Robinson died at home on 13 Sep 1944. His immediate appeal and general popularity during his lifetime resulted mainly from his humorous work and in this field he was both brilliant and unique. He was an unusually prolific and versatile artist with a seemingly inexhaustible stock of good ideas. But like artists such as Hogarth and Rowlandson before him, the secret of his appeal lay in his great abilities as a serious artist.

Geoffrey Beare



Geoffrey worked as an operations research scientist in the Ministry of Defence until 2009, when he took early retirement. He is the leading expert on Heath Robinson and has researched and written about all aspects of the artist's work. He curated the exhibition of Heath Robinson's work at the Dulwich Picture Gallery in 2003, which has been touring the UK ever since, and wrote the book that accompanied the exhibition. He is a Trustee of the William Heath Robinson Trust which is working to build a Heath Robinson museum in North London. He pursues his more general interest in the history of illustration through the Imaginative Book Illustration Society, of which he is chairman.

VINTAGE WORDS OF WISDOM

The **Vintage Words of Wisdom** titles are not simply facsimiles of old books. They have been carefully selected and professionally produced as high quality ebooks. Our aim is to make the best vintage books on popular topics of interest more widely available again. The books range from practical titles that include wisdom from times past to unashamedly nostalgic works that will appeal to those who may remember these or similar titles from their childhood. Often amusing and quaint, these vintage volumes also contain wise words and advice that may have been forgotten in the intervening years. So often it is worth revisiting the past to remind ourselves that the best ideas stand the test of time. Above all, the **Vintage Words of Wisdom** titles are highly entertaining and provide a fascinating snapshot of life in days gone by. We have chosen books with wonderful illustrations, exciting stories of daring and adventure, practical advice and charming nostalgic descriptions of a simpler life.

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The Cottage Farm Month by Month

Mrs Beeton's Jam-making and Preserves

Titles by William Heath Robinson:

How to Live in a Flat

How to be a Perfect Husband

How to be a Motorist

How to Make a Garden Grow

Humours of Golf

For further details and the most up-to-date information on our titles please visit our website www.wordstothewise.co.uk

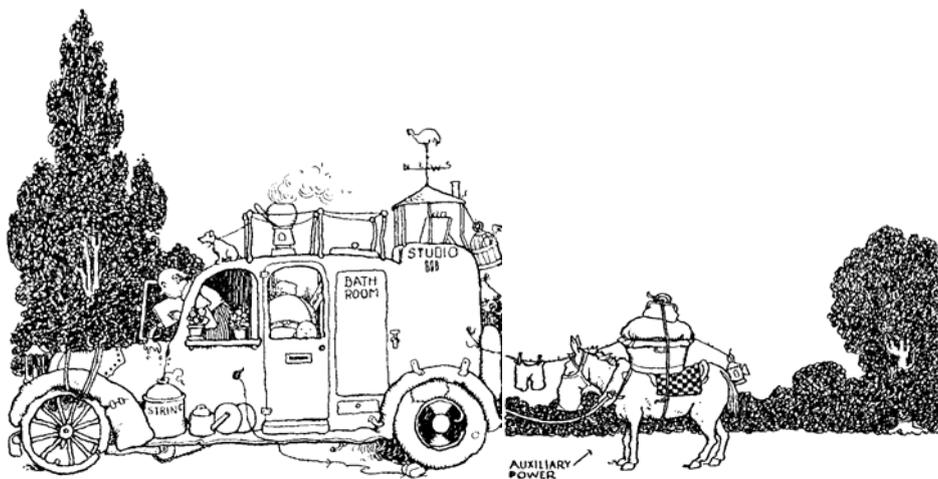


The Introduction

INTRODUCTION

As one trudges along Life's highway, humming an old Andalusian air and in momentarily peril of annihilation by mechanically propelled vehicles bearing coals to Newcastle, stockbrokers to Brighton, or football addicts to Cup Finals, one is apt to forget that motoring, as a pastime for the masses, has yet to celebrate its half-century.

Yet so, as a glance at the archives will bear witness, it is. The automobile (a'to-mo-bil, *n.* Gr. *auto*, self) if not exactly in its infancy, is still some way from its second childhood. As late as the closing days of the Victorian era, when the bustle was a common object of the countryside and wireless Talks on Economics were mercifully hidden in the future, the transport problem was a constant worry to the citizen who was scared of horses, allergic to trains, and ill at ease on penny-farthing bicycles. He could walk, or he could stay at home, but there was no middle course. And then somebody, killing time between meals or trying to take his mind off the Repeal of the Corn Laws, up and invented the motor-car; and – bing! – life took on a new aspect for high and low alike.



Mr. Heath Robinson's Home-made "Carmactor"

In its young days, of course, motoring was no hobby for the aged and infirm, or for those who shrank from publicity. Like the mind of a Cabinet Minister – or a hen under the influence of vodka – the early motor-car moved in such mysterious ways that it was often hard to say if it

were coming, going, or just oscillating slightly. Viewed with grave suspicion by the Law and with amused contempt by the general public, the pioneer motorist needed the hide of a rhinoceros, the optimism of a spaniel pup, and the physical endurance of a female hockey player; also a joke-proof constitution, a cap with ear-flaps, some stout walking-boots, and a good deal of spare cash.

In those days, in fact, one had to be pretty tough to own and/or drive a car. Though the late-Victorian automobile could always be trusted to stop, it could not always – or even often – be relied on to start; while its tendency, when flustered, to dissolve into its component parts was a perpetual annoyance to its occupants. Moreover, on the rare occasions when, with the help of St. Christopher and a following wind, it travelled more than a mile without blowing up or falling apart, a summons for driving to the danger of the public was generally the result.