

A WOMAN AT THE WHEEL

I MET her at a bridge party and she told me she'd just started a new job — driving for a dry-cleaning firm. "What's it like?" I asked. "Better come on the round with me tomorrow and find out at first hand," she suggested. We arranged that she should pick me up on the corner at nine.

It was, however, half-past ten next morning before we met. "Some hitch in the laundry," she explained, "but everything's set now. I've got all my parcels stacked ready in the order I deliver them, so we ought to be through in time." The speedometer stepped from twenty to forty-five.

"How did you get the job?" I asked.

"Saw an ad. in the paper for a driver. It didn't say it had to be a man so I rang up and asked if there was any objection to a woman applying. The man at the other end said he hadn't thought of employing a woman, but would I ring back at twelve? I thought if I rang up again he might have changed his mind, so I turned up myself instead."

"Did he give you a driving test?"

"No, not till the next day. But he asked me what sort of car I could drive, and I said any sort except the kind with the gear-lever on the steering wheel. I knew they weren't likely to have those. And the man grinned and said I'd do."

Skirt or Slacks?

We turned a sharp corner at thirty and drew up in front of the first depot. "Give me a hand out with this stuff, will you?" she asked. Laden with boxes and packets we staggered into the depot, then out at the double with more packets of laundry and dry-cleaning to be heaved into the back of the van.

"They keep you on the go, don't they?" I panted, as we climbed back.

"No, you've just got to keep moving and not waste time." We dodged neatly behind a tramcar and shot into a side street. "The next one's a private delivery. Any idea where Pinnacle Street is?"

I hadn't, so rummaged for the map. While the driver kept a stern eye on the road I looked it up and gave directions.

"You know the boss thought it might be a good idea if I wore slacks," she said, "and I rather liked the idea myself. But then I thought perhaps it wouldn't be such a good idea. You see if ever you

want any help on the road you're much more likely to get it if you're wearing a skirt. And the same thing applies to getting the truck loaded in the mornings. There isn't usually anything heavy (I'm doing only light deliveries) but if there is I can always say to one of the drivers, 'How about it, buddy?' and I'm sure they wouldn't be so prepared to help if I wore slacks."

Open Sesame

The truck zoomed round corners, turned abruptly and raced up the straight. "64, 62, 60, 58," we counted, and then stopped. The driver leapt from her seat to the back of the van, collected her box and darted up the path. I leant back and lit a cigarette. For the first time in my life I was realising that it's possible to be car sick.

My respite was short. We zigzagged down the hill and on to the coast road. "Got to deliver some laundry to the camp," she explained. A wave of her hand and a smile of recognition took us past a sentry and a barbed-wire entanglement. Everywhere our arrival was hailed with delight, except by a corporal whose clean shirt hadn't turned up for the third day in succession, but even he was mollified when my companion assured him that she'd make a special trip next morning.

We were back in town by 12.30. "Not bad," said my chauffeuse, looking at the

mileage on her speedometer. I looked at it, too, and shuddered, refusing to work it out in terms of miles per hour. I got out of the van, and was not surprised to find that the ground swayed beneath my feet. I climbed thankfully on to the nearest tram.

I saw her again the following week. "Still keeping up the pace?" I wanted to know. "No, I've learnt something since that first week," she laughed. "I've discovered now that if you don't deliver everything one morning you deliver it the next. And that you needn't run all the time you're not driving."

MORSE TESTS

WEDNESDAY, JULY 1.

1—L, G, R, M, I; 2—J, P, S, Y, T; 3—M, O, X, Z, E; 4—F, P, Q, N, R; 5—Y, C, N, F, I; 6—U, W, V, A, C; 7—P, T, R, E, O; 8—X, T, R, I, F; 9—B, K, L, T, N; 10—R, M, X, J, E; 11—D, C, O, Z, U; 12—E, N, I, J, W; 13—H, W, Y, R, S; 14—X, M, F, P, N; 15—G, N, O, G, T; 16—H, K, K, T, R; 17—L, S, M, A, B; 18—X, T, U, K, F; 19—D, Z, V, E, Q; 20—P, R, X, N, S; 21—Q, T, O, T, K; 22—B, H, N, W, U; 23—R, G, A, D, F; 24—S, J, L, S, Z.

THURSDAY, JULY 2.

1—Q, J, U, M, K; 2—E, D, M, G, V; 3—R, N, C, U, O; 4—F, O, M, E, A; 5—R, E, W, O, W; 6—H, U, J, F, X; 7—K, G, S, M, J; 8—D, M, H, Q, R; 9—G, X, C, D, A; 10—D, E, T, R, S; 11—F, P, I, K, T; 12—A, F, Y, A, X; 13—C, S, T, L, V; 14—R, T, B, Z, W; 15—P, W, O, D, E; 16—L, D, C, F, N; 17—B, E, M, X, Y; 18—I, N, G, N, K; 19—A, P, L, W, U; 20—V, Q, M, E, M; 21—C, R, D, J, W; 22—Y, T, Q, S, H; 23—B, G, I, U, G; 24—P, X, T, K, X.

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(Continued from previous page)
on the train going out, though there's still the flow of questions: "Mum, what does the train do when it wants to turn round?" "Mum, why did that man make us pull all the blinds down?" But most of them are over-tired and inclined to grizzle, and mothers don't seem to have as much patience with them as they did on the way out. Then they realise for the first time that their feet are sore, and think without enthusiasm of returning to that empty house and immersing themselves once more in a life which till the end of the war must remain for them incomplete.