



IN THE
REAR-VIEW MIRROR

SIR HENRY ROYCE
THE ROLLS-ROYCE MOTTO

“QUIDVIS RECTE FACTUM QVAMVIS HUMILE PRÆCLARUM”
“Whatever is rightly done, however humble, is noble.”

*Quidvis recte factum quamvis humile praeclarum**

IT IS OFTEN ASKED wherein lies the secret of “Rolls-Royce” supremacy? What has caused the name “Rolls-Royce” to be used throughout the World as a synonym for unsurpassable excellence? Why are Rolls-Royce cars the best in the world? The answer to these questions is that every action of the Rolls-Royce company, since its foundation, has been governed by the principle set forth in the Latin motto printed above. Every piece of a Rolls-Royce product, no matter how humble may be the duty the part is to perform, is created with the ideal of the true artist continually in view, namely, that it may be *rightly done* and thus attain distinction.

In 1906 the Rolls-Royce Company produced a 40-50 h.p. chassis which was to become renowned throughout the World as the highest example of refinement in motor car construction. So perfect was its design at its inception that the “Silver Ghost,” except for improvements in detail, continued to maintain its illustrious position for nearly twenty years. It was then succeeded by the no less famous “Phantom I.” The “Phantom II” chassis described hereafter is the direct descendant of this honourable family. While its performance on the road has been increased beyond that of its predecessors, this new 40-50 h.p. embodies all the qualities which gained for its ancestor the title of “*The Best Car in the World.*”

* “*Whatever is rightly done, however humble, is noble.*”

During a luncheon which he was giving to Mr. Eric Gill, the famous sculptor, Sir Henry Royce stated that these words contained the principle upon which all his work was founded. Mr. Gill, as an artist, was so impressed with their significance that he forthwith translated the words into Latin, and the same afternoon carved them on the stone arch forming the overmantel in the Dining Room of Sir Henry Royce's residence.

This announcement from Rolls-Royce was made in a catalogue for the Phantom II. Note the statement that Gill carved the inscription in an afternoon, though as Tom Clarke has noted Gill completed it over several days. [Rolls-Royce Limited]

Tom Clarke, wrote in the magazine of the Rolls-Royce Owners' Club of Australia, which takes its name, 'PRÆCLARVM' from this motto, in September 1972, "Royce and Eric Gill (d.1940), the sculptor and typographer, met at West Wittering in Sussex where Gill's father was Vicar and Royce had his home, Elmstead, and design office, Camacha. They became friendly and met often. At one of their meetings, a luncheon at Elmstead, Gill asked Royce what he thought was the basic reason for his success. Royce replied "I have always believed that whatever I do, however humble the job is, if I do it as well as I can, it is noble." Gill was well pleased with this thought and had the words freely translated into Latin. Royce agreed to Gill's suggestion of an inscription and between May 28th - 31st 1924 Gill inscribed the motto in two lines on the over-mantle in the dining room at Elmstead.... Gill (sent an) invoice from his studio at Ditchling Common, Sussex, to Royce for £5.0.0. dated 3rd June, 1924.... A brief description of the origins of the motto was used by Rolls-Royce Ltd. in the 1930s for Sales Brochures, first appearing in the 40/50 H.P. Phantom II brochures May, 1933 and September, 1934. This description states Gill carved the inscription the same afternoon, though in fact Gill returned for several days to complete it."

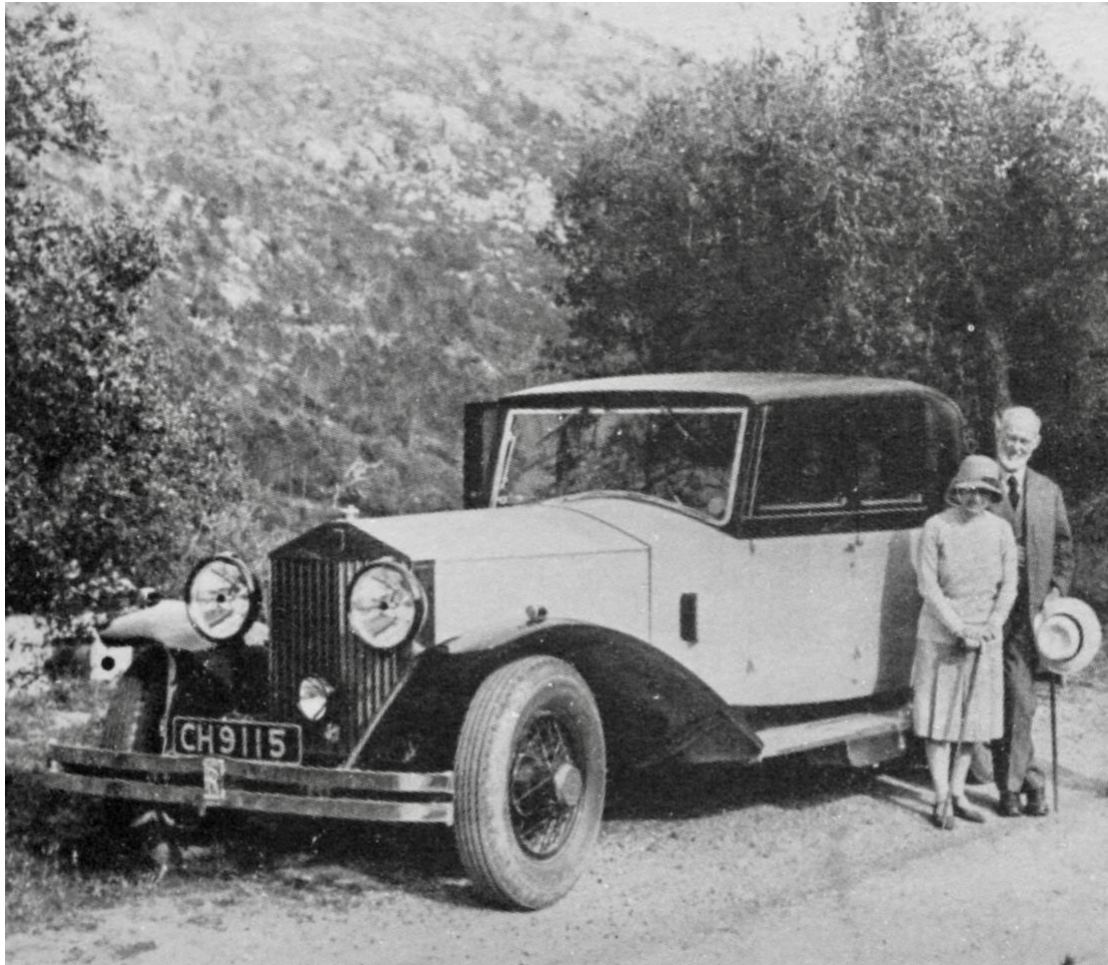
Some accounts suggest that Royce, once made a remark to a neighbour, Vicar Gill, after repairing his lawnmower. The remark was to the effect that no task, however small, was meaningless. Gill Sr. repeated this remark to his son Eric who paraphrased it and carved a Latin inscription into Royce's mantel piece.



Eric Gill was one of the most respected artists of the 20th century when he died in 1940. However, his diaries published in 1989 revealed a reprehensible private life.

[Eric Gill, 1927. Photo by Howard Coster]

Tom Clarke returned to the motto in his 'Ernest Claremont' booklet published in 1995. Royce's long time companion and nurse, Ethel T. 'Auby' Aubin (1885-1967) married George H. R. Tildesley in 1935. Tildesley was one of only two mourners at Royce's funeral. They separated in 1937 though remained friends administering Royce's bequest into research on colds. Ethel Aubin had the carving removed when she left Royce's former house in 1935. It is thought it was either taken to her new Welsh home (where in spite of considerable efforts it has not been traced) or put into storage after 1937. Ethel Aubin lived for a period back in West Wittering with friends, then Surrey and Norfolk. She died in 1967 and left a substantial sum of money to relatives.



Nurse Aubin with Sir Henry with 21EX, the first left-hand drive Phantom II, pictured in France. [Alec Harvey-Bailey, Hives, The Quiet Tiger, Sir Henry Royce Memorial Foundation, Historical Series No. 7, 1985.

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