

# A wet day in Edinburgh

by Manohar Singh Gill

THE Edinburgh Festival held in September every year is famous the world over. Tourists come from all over Europe, and the town is given over to art exhibitions, film shows, musical evenings and sports contests. The highlight is the military tattoo which is staged outside the portals of the local castle. Tickets for the event are sold out months in advance.

We were two couples on a Scottish holiday — Kuldip and his wife being the other pair. We had motored all over the north and come into Edinburgh on a rainy afternoon. It took us some time to find lodgings. After a cup of tea it was agreed that we must go and see the tattoo.

The town was full of visitors. I drove around for almost an hour before I could squeeze our car into a parking space some distance away from the castle. There was a steady, maliciously cold drizzle all the time. We trudged

up the slope and soon came in sight of a serpentine queue which seemed to wind up in the general direction of the castle gate.

## DRENCHED

Kuldip enquired and was told that these were the hopefuls expecting to get an entry into the show. We joined them. The queue shuffled up the hill at a snail's pace. Meanwhile, we continued to soak in the good Edinburgh street. We had carried a blanket to use while watching the tattoo. In desperation I spread it over our heads, but soon the rain was seeping through it and dripping down our collars.

I was for going home. After all, one had seen enough military tattoos in India. But the others would not agree. Tempers were running short in our party. Kuldip, always the one to find solutions, ran across to a pub and came back with four

glasses of brandy. To our frozen souls it was a Godsend. Drinking is not allowed on the roads, but Kuldip was never very conventional. The Scots around us smiled, and winked in admiration of our spirit.

After a long wait we finally got to the ticket window only to be told that there were none left. By now it was pouring, and I was doubly furious. I proposed that we curse the Scots and go home. Kuldip was not to be defeated. He walked up to the tall, burly military policeman at the gate, had a few words with him and came back smiling.

## MAGIC FORMULA

I asked him what he had done. He replied: "You wait and see." The military policeman walked away into the castle. Ten minutes later he was back and smilingly handed Kuldip four V.I.P. passes.

We were ushered in with

ceremony and seated in the General's box. I asked Kuldip about the magic formula that got us in. "Simple," he replied. "I told him that we were visitors from India, with military pedigrees going back to the Anglo-Sikh wars, and had come to Edinburgh for the sole purpose of seeing their army perform. Were they going to deny us the pleasure?"

Kuldip's plea had worked beautifully and the Scottish soldier had been so understanding. The show was simply out of this world and included a fabulous dance by a group of a Maoris from New Zealand. But, of course, we sat in the open stands, with a cutting north wind and a continuous downpour. However, the surprising thing was that nobody seemed to mind the wet and the cold, and the show went on in pucca British style.

No wonder, it is said that the British take even their pleasures with a grim sense of duty.