



CHAPTER I.

The Man Who Dared.

The official starter let his raised arm fall and leaned forward, peering across the blended glare and darkness.

"What?" he shouted, above the pulsating roar of the eleven racing machines lined up before the judges' stand.

There was a flurry around the central car, whose driver leaned from his seat to stare down at the man who had slipped from beside him to the ground.

"The mechanic of the Mercury is of his car!"

"Fainted!"

"The automobiles hadn't started; he must be sick."

The referee was already pushing his way back, bringing the report from the hastily summoned surgeon.

"Heart disease," he announced right and left. "Stanton's mechanism just dropped off his seat, dead."

But Stanton himself had already swung out of his car, with the energetic decision that marked his every movement.

"My man is out," he tersely stated to the starter. "I've got to run over to my camp and get another. Will you hold the start for me?"

The question was rather a demand than a request. There was scarcely one among the vast audience who would not have felt the spasm gone from this strong black wine of sport they had come to sip.

"Five minutes," the official conceded, and drew out his watch.

Already a stream of men were running toward the Mercury camp with the news. Stanton sprang into his machine, deftly set it forward out of the line, and shot around into the entrance to the huge oval field edged by the beach track; a mile of white ribbon bordering a green meadow.

The row of electric-lighted tents, each numbered and named for its own racing car, was in a turmoil of excitement. But most agitated was the group before the tent marked "3, Mercury."

"Durn'd down and out—give me another man," called Stanton, halting his noisy, fuming car. "Quick, you—"

"I'm married, sir," refused Jones succinctly.

"Well, you then, Walters. Good heavens, man! what do you mean?"

"I'll dig potatoes, first, sir."

"No, you used to race?"

"Not with Stanton, sir."

"There was a low murmur of approval among the spectators, and a drawing together for support. Stanton stepped down from his car, snatching off his mask to show a dark, strong face grim with anger and contempt.

CHAPTER II.

The Risk and the Lady.

Two hours later, Stanton emerged from his camp and strolled toward the paddock exit. It was after two o'clock in the morning; the dark arch of starry sky overhead, the black emptiness of the central field except for the line of tents, contrasted oddly with the glistening white track where the meteor-bright cars circled tirelessly to the accompanying monotone of many voices, varied by the occasional wail of the official klaxon.

"What for?" demanded Stanton. "If I kill my mechanic, I'll kill my car and myself—I don't need two men, and I've got one."

"But I thought you said—" began the assistant manager.

"I'll keep Floyd. Now, I'd like to get some rest."

The assistant manager stepped aside from the entrance, confounded.

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"Car on each side as one trying to pass," the older voice pierced the hearing. "No room next the fence."

Stanton grunted. The boy knew how to rise in a speeding machine, then, and how to take care of his driver, he noted. Nevertheless, he meant to take that fence side.

And he did. As the other drivers shut off power to take the dangerous bend more slowly, Stanton shot forward at unchanged speed; cut in ahead and swept first around the turn, taking the inside curve.

The people cheered frantically, the band crashed into raucous music. Stanton's mechanic got up to lean over the back of the flying car and feel the rear casing.

"You're tryin' to tire," he imparted, his accents close to the driver's ear.

That was the first time that Stanton noticed that Floyd lisped and blurred his final "g" in moments of excitement. It might have sounded effeminate, if the voice had not been without a tremor. As it was—

At the end of the first hour, the bulletin boards showed the Mercury five laps ahead of its nearest rival. And then Floyd spoke again to his driver.

"What?" Stanton questioned, above the noise of the motor.

"We've got to run in; I'm afraid of the rear inside shoe. It won't stand another skid like the last."

Stanton's mouth shut in a hard line.

"I will not," he stated. "Get back in your place. You can't tell."

"I can."

Stanton declined no reply, sliding past one of the slower cars on the back stretch. To go in meant to lose the whole time gained. As they took the back turn, Floyd again leaned over.

"Goin' to throw away the race an' wreck your machine, for foolishness?" he inquired. "That's just like you, Ralph Stanton. You'll risk a blow-out an' a smash to save five minutes in a twenty-four hour race. You can drive, but you won't use common sense."

Something snapped under Stanton's mask. Raging with silent fury, he slowed down his car and swung into the paddock gate as they came opposite it, thundering through to his own camp.

"Fix that tire," he commanded, as the swarm of mechanics surrounded them, and descended from his seat to confront the assistant manager. "Have you got me another mechanic, yet? This one won't do."

"Why, no," Mr. Green deprecated. "The driver who alternates with you wants to keep his mechanic; besides, the man isn't exactly ready to go with you, and he couldn't do both shifts, anyhow. I've telephoned to the company to find a man and rush him here. What," he looked toward the group around the car, where Floyd's bronze head shone in the electric light as he directed proceedings, "what's the matter with this one? Scared?"

"No," conceded Stanton, grudgingly just. "Insolent and interfering."

"Well, if that is all—"

Stanton turned his back upon the speaker, recklessly and blindly angry, past all reasoning.

When the brief operation completed, Floyd sprang up beside his driver for the start, Stanton surveyed him through his goggles.

"If you are nervous about my driving and my sense, you had better get off now," was the grim warning. "For I drive as I see fit, and I'm going to make up these laps."

"Why are you wasting time here, then?" countered the mechanic, practically.



Halted an Instant to Have His Lamps Relighted.

With some conservatism, perhaps he acknowledged mentally that no car built would stand such vicious grinding work for twenty-four consecutive hours. But he kept the lead gained, for all that, and a pace like the long swoop of a swallow.

"Car coming out of the paddock. Hundred and eightieth lap. Car stopped around the bend," Floyd reported, at intervals. Otherwise there was mute attention to business on the part of both men.

"Signal," Stanton abruptly ordered, at last, as they rushed across the stretch of track between the grandstand and the training-camps.

Floyd obediently rose in his place, raising his arms above his head in the accepted signal to their men to stand ready for the car's entrance. On the next circuit Stanton turned into the paddock and came to a stop before the Mercury's tent.

"Get out," he directed, and himself left his seat.

The two men who alternated were waiting to relieve the two who descended from the machine. The workmen swarmed around to fill tanks and give swift inspection, and the fretting car sped back to the track.

Left opposite each other in the flickering glare of the swinging electric lamps, driver and mechanic stood for a moment, weary, car-stiff, and still tense. Stanton unclasped his mask with a jerk, took a step toward the tent, then turned toward his assistant.

"The three hours are up," he observed roughly. "I suppose you leave me."

"Why do you suppose that? Are you through with me?" Floyd asked, with studied quietness.

"I made the offer to any man who would go for the first three hours. The time is up; you're free to get your money from Mr. Green, and leave."

Floyd took off his own mask and bared his white, steadfast face and tired eyes to the other's gaze.

"I entered for the race, or for as much of it as you want me," he corrected. "Until you quit, or find a substitute you like better, I'm with you."

"Go rest, then. There is coffee inside," bade Stanton, and swung on his heel.

At the entrance to his tent he was met by the exultant assistant manager.

"I've got you a mechanic, Stanton!" he exclaimed jubilantly. "I telephoned our fix to headquarters, and Jack Rupert is coming down—the chief tester at the factory, you know, who used to race with the chief himself. He phoned that he wouldn't see the Mercury thrown out but to tell you he was going to cancel his life insurance policy first so he would not be accused of suicide for the benefit of his heirs. Funny chap! He'll be here before you go on the track again."

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CELEBRATE JULY 4th JENNER'S PARK

WATCH FOR SMALL BILLS FOR PROGRAM

DO NOT FORGET IT A GOOD TIME GUARANTEED TO ALL

A Mother Praises the Boy Scout Idea.

In the May Woman's Home Companion, a mother gives her personal experiences with her troublesome boy of twelve or fourteen years of age and tells his connection with the Boy Scouts of America made a better boy of him.

- 1. A Scout is trustworthy
2. A Scout is loyal
3. A Scout is helpful
4. A Scout is friendly
5. A Scout is courteous
6. A Scout is kind
7. A Scout is obedient
8. A Scout is cheerful
9. A Scout is thrifty
10. A Scout is brave
11. A Scout is clean
12. A Scout is reverent.

Grand Colony Excursion

For Ladies and Gentlemen Will be given Through the Auspices of the American Townsite Co. of San Antonio from Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma and Nebraska to Texas.

A town lot and five acre tracts will be sold for fruit and truck farms, summer and winter homes, for three hundred dollars; ten dollars down and ten dollars per month, no interest or taxes until paid for.

Special cars will be in service, a banquet will be given at Hotel LaSalle, free oyster and clam bake will be served in grove near Beach.

Fishing and sailing will be at your pleasure at Seadrift and Port O'Connor.

This trip will be the event of your life. Everybody come and bring your friends. Trains will leave Omaha and other points in Nebraska June 18th, Kansas City June 18, at 9 a. m., Oklahoma City and Muskogee June 18, and intermediate points. Route and tickets on the Frisco to Port O'Connor. Under all circumstances connect with the Frisco.

Summer Tourist Round Trip Fares to the Pacific Coast

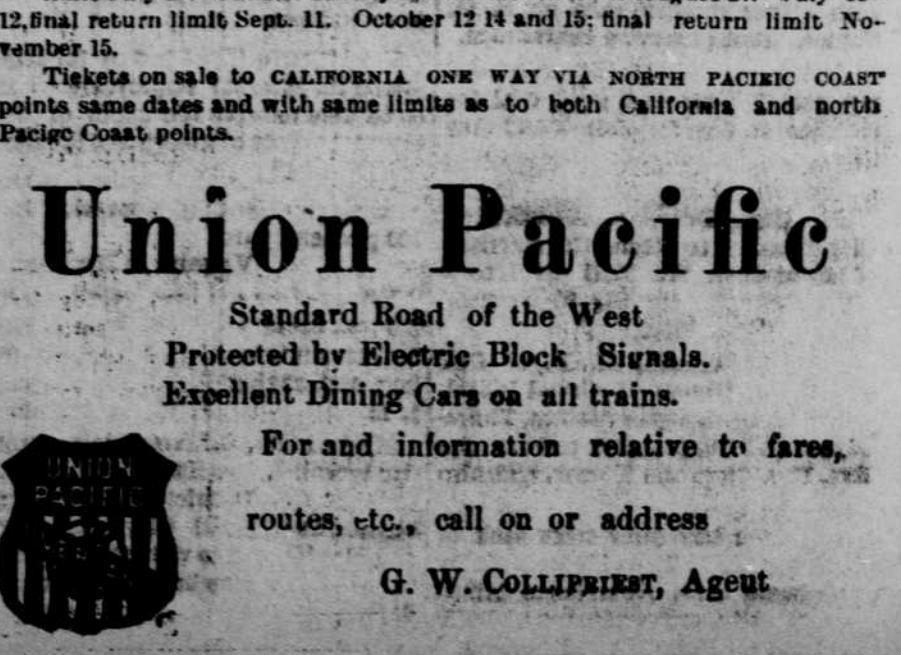
From Loup City to California 62.10, to north Pacific Coast points 62.10, to California one way via north Pacific Coast points 77.10. Tickets on sale June 1 to Sept. 30 inclusive. Final return limit October 31, 1912.

In addition to the above the following low fares will be in effect from Loup City to California 67.08, to north Pacific Coast points 57.08, to California one way via North Pacific Coast points 72.08. Tickets on sale to California June 12 to 20; final return limit August 31. August 29 to Sept 4; final return limit October 31.

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Will Scuman informs us that his auto business has been very satisfactory up to the present, and while the sale of horseless carriages has been somewhat slow, owing to the dry spell causing conservatism on the part of would-be purchasers, yet the repair and livery business has been very good. He is well pleased with the outlook so far. He is nicely enclosed in his new home adjoining his garage and takes a rosy view of all things.



TO BE CONTINUED