

STANTON WINS

By
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Illustration by
Frederic Thorburgh

SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I—At the beginning of a race the mechanic of the Mercury, Stanton's machine, drops dead. Strange youth, Jess, Floyd, volunteers, and is accepted.

CHAPTER II—In the rest during the twenty-four hour race Stanton meets a stranger, Miss Carlisle. She introduces herself. The mechanic saves machine from wreck.

CHAPTER III—The Mercury wins race. Stanton receives flowers from Miss Carlisle, which he ignores.

CHAPTER IV—Stanton meets Miss Carlisle on a train. They alight to take walk and train leaves. Stanton and Miss Carlisle follow in auto.

CHAPTER V—Accident by which Stanton is hurt is mysterious. Floyd, at Stanton's request, tells of his boyhood. Stanton again meets Miss Carlisle and they dine together.

CHAPTER VI—Stanton comes to track sick, but makes race. They have accident. Floyd hurries to Stanton's side. Stanton again meets Miss Carlisle and they dine together.

CHAPTER VII—Stanton, at his hotel, receives invitation to visit the Jesses. They go to theater together, and meet Miss Carlisle.

CHAPTER VIII—Stanton and Floyd meet again and agree to operate automobile factory as partners.

CHAPTER IX—Floyd becomes suspicious of Miss Carlisle, and warns Stanton.

CHAPTER X—Stanton again visits Jesses, and they become fast friends. Stanton, Miss Carlisle, and Miss Carline.

CHAPTER XI—Just before important race time needed for Stanton's car are delayed. Floyd travels them and brings them to camp. During race Stanton deliberately wrecks his car to save machine from wreck. Stanton becomes very ill and loses consciousness.

ing to them across the road of their own motor, and on between the walls of people into the quieter back stretch in pursuit of their rivals.

There was a bridge, back there, across a shallow running brook shut in by a strip of autumn-tinted woodland.

"Car ahead!" Floyd cried suddenly, as they rushed around a curve and bore down on the crossing. "Look out—Stanton—"

In the center of the bridge was a reeling, staggering car, coming to a halt and striving to maintain its equilibrium meanwhile. The chain had broken loose. Its driver afterward explained, and was lashing the under-mechanism to scrap metal. Seeing too late to stop his own machine, Stanton took the only chance of saving any of the four lives and tried to twist past the other car on the narrow bridge.

Only a master-driver would have attempted the feat: Stanton carried it to the verge of success. They were along side, passing, when the edge of the wooden bridge gave way under the double strain. There was the rip of splintering planks, as the Mercury's outside wheels crushed through the flooring, a shuddering lurch.

"Jump!" Stanton shouted his vain command to Floyd, as they went down. The cool water lapped around his



A Linen-Clad Nurse Stood Beside Him.

fingers, trickled revivingly across his intolerably painful arm, gurgling like a joyous voice as it passed by him. Slowly, with infinite effort, Stanton dragged himself up upon the other arm, the unshrined right. He must see; that was the imperious cry of brain and heart, to see. It seemed to him years ago that the Mercury had gone off the bridge, yet he knew the time could be but moments, since the ambulance had not come and he was still here.

His vision was clearing. Yes; there, half in the dainty brook, half on the green bank, lay the heap of bent and broken metal that had been the Mercury racing car. And beside it—

When he drove back the faintness that blackened the bright noon, Stanton began to drag his pain-racked body toward what lay beside the Mercury. Movement hurt, but unbearably, yet was a less anguish than thought. For he knew, knew the mechanic seldom escapes.

Floyd lay near the machine, un-moved to outward view except for a cut over his temple and a stain of blood on his lips. His mask and cap were gone, one hand was flung out, palm upward, and the torn sleeve left bare the slim arm crossed by the zigzag scar gained at Lowell. He looked very young and strangely grave, as the sunlight and tree-shadows flickered back and forth across his colorless face and shining bronze waves of hair.

"Floyd," Stanton articulated hoarsely. "Floyd!"

The brook gurgled cheerfully, a belated oriole flashed past a streak of flame. Stanton's head sank back down against his mechanic's inert hand, and the world fell out of knowledge.

CHAPTER XII.

Jess.

It was two weeks later when Ralph Stanton first reopened conscious eyes. His time upon the immaculate cleanliness of a hospital room. A linen-clad nurse stood beside him, and at the foot of the bed was a gentleman unmistakably medical.

"Better, Mr. Stanton?" queried the latter, breezily professional.

"Floyd?" Stanton whispered, with difficulty. "Where is Jess Floyd?"

The doctor surveyed him oddly, hesitating. But the nurse stooped over him, her expression altering to impulsive compassion.

"Well, very well," she assured hastily. "Jess Floyd has gone home. Try to rest; try not to think of things."

He had known the truth before he asked the question. Stanton quickly turned his face to the wall and faintly, being very weak.

In his next conscious interval, he put another demand.

"Miss Floyd? She is alive?"

"Yes, oh yes," the nurse heartily affirmed. "Yes, indeed."

Once more Stanton turned to the wall. Jessica had not died when Jess did, then, according to her prediction; the tie of kinship had not held so far. She was in the little apartment, alone. Later in the night his steady, silent gaze drew the attendant to his side.

"What is it? You are suffering more?"

"Ask her to stop singing," he begged. "It wasn't my fault. Ask her to stop."

The nurse took a glass from the table.

"There is no one singing, Mr. Stanton, no one at all. Drink this."

"No one? Not out there in the dark?"

"No."

He averted his gaze, and remained mute, unprotesting. After that he never lost memory again; not even in sleep, for he dreamed. Day and night, hour after hour, Jessica's monotonous song beat through his sick brain.

"Oft, in the stillly night—"

His nights were not still, always when he closed his eyes he heard some one sobbing, Jessica Floyd weeping for her brother.

But gradually the last traces of delirium faded out. Slowly his superb health reasserted its dominion, and brought Stanton back to normal life. The fractured bones knit, the other injuries healed.

He never spoke Floyd's name a second time. Nor did any one mention it to him. The head of the Mercury Company came out from New York to see him and express cordial sympathy. George, who had driven the Duplex to victory after the Mercury's wreck, came to visit him more than once, a blonde, cheery presence; as did the driver of the machine on the bridge who owned his own life to Stanton's cool fearlessness and skill. Mr. Green brought his fussy condolence. But none of them, alluded to Jess Floyd. There was a curious constraint that marked them all, an air of watchfully keeping silent upon some subject constantly present in their minds. Stanton looked them through and through with his hollow blue-black eyes, and asked nothing.

It was two months before he could leave the hospital. Winter had shut in, raw and bleak. The day fixed for his departure, the doctor lingered in bidding him good-bye.

"I have not wanted you to be worried, Mr. Stanton," he said brusquely. "Not on any account. But from the fact that your first question was 'Jess Floyd?' I imagine you feel some responsibility in that matter. May I ask where you are going?"

Before the spoken name Stanton winced, but steadily met the other's inquisitive eyes.

"To Miss Floyd," he responded.

The doctor held out a hearty hand. "Good, I was sure of it! A patient shows a lot of his character by his physician. Good luck to you—all kinds."

How did he know of unprotected Jessica Floyd? Stanton wearily pondered the question as he descended to the carriage. Or rather, how did he know of Stanton's feeling of responsibility toward her? The mechanic was supposed to take his chance with the driver. Perhaps delirium had revealed the close bond of friendship between Floyd and himself.

At the railroad station, a tall young man approached him, as the train whistled in the distance.

"My name is Richards," he announced diffidently. "You're hardly on your feet yet, Mr. Stanton; if there is anything I can do for you on the trip into the city, I'd be glad."

Stanton surveyed him with blank non-recognition.

"You don't remember me?" the young man tried again. "Have you forgotten the cub reporter who followed you on the afternoon you were arrested for speeding your machine in Pelham Parkway? You let your companion give me the story."

Stanton put out his hand, the poignant memory unendurable.

"Yes, yes. What of it?"

"It gave me my start, it meant a big life for me; and I didn't forget it. I made the accounts of the accident at the Cup race as easy for Miss Floyd as I could, when they came out. There was bound to be some sensationalism."

"Thank you," Stanton made brief acknowledgment. "There is nothing that you can do for me."

The train was hissing at the platform, but the reporter pursued him a step farther.

"You, you'll look after Miss Floyd, Mr. Stanton? That's square?"

The driver turned an amazed resentful glance upon his questioner, his hand on the rail. But, hardly aware why, he answered, however glacially.

"Yes, sir."

The reporter beamed at him, radiant. "I knew it," he called, above the roar and clang of the starting train. "I knew it was all right."

A dull gray sky arched above a snow-patched landscape, flurries of snow were in the harsh air. Stanton sat with unseeing eyes directed out the window, chin in hand, much as he had found Floyd sitting in the west-bound train the night they started for Indianapolis. September sunlight, October crimson and gold, all gone.

A delicate fragrance drifted around

him, there was the frou-frou of soft garments as some one took the seat facing him. Stanton looked up, and saw Valerie Carlisle opposite, her blond fairness framed in dark velvets and furs, her amber eyes regarding him from beneath the shadow of her wide plumed hat.

"There is nothing at all singular in my being here, Mr. Stanton," she stated, in her cool, indolent voice. "Because I ascended by telephone when you intended to leave the hospital, and so arranged to meet you on the train."

"Tomorrow I start for Europe, to remain for a long time, and it was necessary for me to speak with you first. I am sorry to see that you have been frightfully ill."

"You are too good," he answered, the old antagonism stirring him strongly.

"As you observe, I was not fortunate enough to finish myself completely in the late week."

"One sometimes feels like that," she conceded, passing one small gloved hand across the soft fur of her muff.

"I have wished for the finish, here lately, for my part. You probably did not know that I was engaged to marry Archer Ross, of the Atlanta Automobile Company?"

Stanton sat erect. All Floyd's suspicions of this girl rushed back to his mind.

"Yes," she confirmed the thought in his expression. "What you are imagining is quite correct. I tried very hard to induce you to drive for the Mercury Company instead of for the Mercury. The Atlanta absolutely required a good racing record. But I failed. You were more than firm in your decision."

So that had been what she wanted of him. That had lain behind her polished surface of gracious admiration and had been the core of her insincerity.

"And when I would not drive for your company, you tried to prevent me from driving for my own?" He wondered incredulously.

She looked at him, and looked away again.

"I fancy you would scarcely credit me, Mr. Stanton, if I denied the fact, now. I have been very clumsy; a society woman is not trained to practical melodrama. You are unbelievably difficult to lead."

Her flawless self-possession gave an effect of unreality to the whole affair. Stanton felt a vertigo of the mind.

"You had that purpose in view when you first spoke to me at the beach twenty-four hours ago?" he questioned. "You hoped to induce me to wreck my car by fast driving, in order to leave the Atlanta a better chance of winning?"

"Oh, no!" she deprecated. "I never tried to cause your wreck—what can you think me? No, that was merely an impulsive experiment; I wanted to see if you would do as I wished. Some men have done so."

"Are you going to tell me that you drugged me at Lowell, on the eve of the road race?"

"Drugged you? That is a harsher description than I ever gave the incident in my own mind. But I poured into your coffee what Archer Ross had given me for that purpose. He said it would not harm you, only prevent you from driving next morning; he had been betting heavily on his car. But you raced, after all, ill as you must have been. I never imagined you would take such a risk, or I should have refused the responsibility. I disliked the task, anyhow. To be frank, I was horribly frightened when I saw you on the course, and when the report of your accident came in, I felt guilty of assassination."

He looked at her, at her ivory-and-gold beauty, her composed ease, his own face coldly emotionless. It did not matter, nothing mattered, now. But yet he read that behind that apparent ease of hers heaved a sea of stormy thoughts; as always, her speech was no guide to her mind.

"I suppose, then, that you would not have been distressed if I had broken my arm when I cranked your car after driving you home from New York," he commented.

Her color changed for the first time, her eyes flashed to his.

"You angered me," she retorted. "You brutally told me that you had not raced at the beach, please me, nor would you do so. You were supercilious, no man had ever treated me that way before. For one instant I did hate and long to hurt you; I pushed under the spark as you cranked. The next moment I would have undone it if I could."

"There was a pause, as the train halted at a station, and the usual flurry of ingress and egress ensued. When the start was made:

"Why are you telling me this?" Stanton asked. "I am not considered especially amiable and forgiving, as a rule; why chance unnecessary confession?"

"No," her lip bent in a faint smile that was not bitter. "But you are too masculine to retaliate upon a woman. I am not much afraid, although I find myself forced to depend upon your indulgence. A net was spread for the feet of the wicked by some one more acute, or less indifferent, than the Mercury's driver. Your mechanic set a private detective at the task of following and guarding you until after the Cup race; fearing treachery, I suppose, would be used to prevent your driving. You are surprised?"

He saw the crowded railway station, on the morning of the return from Indianapolis.

Stanton Surveyed Him With Blank Non-Recognition.

face turned to him, in the artificial light. He heard the fresh young voice: "If you won't take care of yourself, Stanton—"

"There was no need, Mr. Stanton. I had no idea of interfering with you personally. But the thing was done, and overdone. The man hired to play detective was not honest; he exceeded his mission of protection and went on to investigation for his own profit. If I am telling you this, it is because you would soon hear the story from him, anyhow, and because I want you to silence him. He has offered me his silence for a price, but I do not choose to yield to a blackmail which, once commenced, would never end. I prefer to ask shelter of your civility."

"I will silence him," he gave cold assurance.

"You are very good. It is not the least of my humiliations to know that you could deal me nothing more contemptuous than your forbearance."

She hesitated. "There is one thing more; I would like to ask whether your recent accident was in any way caused by the late arrival of the tires for your machine."

"You did that?"

"Yes, I did that. I had the express car misdirected before it left my father's factory in Chicago. I knew your car could not race on bare rims."

Stanton turned to the window. So she was responsible for the last harshness he had shown Floyd; since their misunderstanding could never have arisen if the mechanic had not been absent on the trip to Coney Island. His sudden nausea of loathing for her made calm reply difficult.

"The lost tires had nothing to do with the accident," he explained carefully. "If you have quite finished, Miss Carlisle, I will change to another seat."

"It is I who am going. I am glad that the wreck and alteration in my sincerity."

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German Doctors Making Good

Patients From Many Cities Taking Treatment

Now that harvest is over many victims of chronic ailments have enrolled for a course of treatment at the offices of the German Doctors, 108 E. 3rd St., Grand Island, Nebr.

Their extensive practice have made them so proficient that diseases are diagnosed in a few minutes, and rapid results follow cases accepted for treatment. The resident offices are maintained for the benefit of patients in this vicinity who appreciate the saving of travel, time and expenses, yet receive the same skilled services given at the home offices in Council Bluffs, Ia.

They treat all curable cases of eye, ear, nose, throat and lung diseases, catarrh, rheumatism, gravel, paralysis, stomach, heart, kidney, blood and nervous diseases. They are especially equipped for bloodless treatment of goiter, piles, rupture, cataract, enlarged veins, etc. Their system is nearly all home treatment so that frequent visits to their offices are not necessary.

Monday Sept. 2nd has been set as the free consultation date at Grand Island offices. If impossible to call on this date, write for consultation date later.

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