



Author of 'The Game and the Candle' and 'The Flying Mercury' etc.

Illustration by FREDERIC THORNBURG

CHAPTER I—At the beginning of great automobile race the mechanician of the Mercury Stanton's machine, drops dead. Strange youth, Jesse Floyd, volunteers, and is accepted.

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

She deliberately stepped down beside him, accompanied by the crisp sound of shaken silk and a drift of faint, rich fragrance. She wore a dark motor-veil, and in the mingling of dense shadows and glaring lights it was not possible to distinguish more than her general effect of youth and well-poised grace.

"I fancied by your costume that you were one of the racers," she explained. "And as I only arrived an hour ago, I wished to beg some information."

"I am one of the men driving," he corroborated.

She turned to glance at the cars rushing by, struggling for the lead.

"Thank you. Can you tell me whether Ralph Stanton is now driving the Mercury?"

"No," he answered, interested for the first time. "But he will take the wheel again in half an hour."

"Ah! I have heard so much of his spectacular feats, I," she gave a careless, rippling laugh. "I confess I should like to see some of them."

"Yes? Well, half the people here come to see whether some of the men won't take a chance once too often. They say there is a pleasant thrill in watching some one else get killed."

"Hardly that," she demurred. "Still, if one comes to an automobile race, one wants to see something more exciting than a drive in the park; something more exciting than—that." She waved a fragile hand toward the track, shrugging her shoulders with an airy amusement and scorn.

Stanton surveyed the scene, the darkness hiding his expression.

"The Mercury is marking time with a substitute driver, the Duplex is off with a choked feed-pipe, and the Stern went through the fence," he summed up. "The others are driving to win by endurance, playing for accidents to the faster cars. It is a dull period, just now. Yet every car there is going fast enough to face destruction if anything goes wrong."

She turned to him again, and he knew her gaze swept him interrogatively, searchingly. But his close-fitting linen costume offered no means of identification, since he purposely kept from the light the silver letters running across his jersey.

"My father is president of a tire company," she idly remarked. "His tires are being used on some of the cars, the Mercury for one, I believe, and he wanted to watch their testing under use. So, after a dinner engagement we could not escape, we motored down here from the city. You see I have not viewed much of the race. I admit this does not look very perilous and I am a bit disappointed. I," again her short crystal laugh. "I shall hope better things of the famous Stanton; I want to admire him very much. But I am detaining you, and you were leaving! Every thanks for your patience."

"Hardly leaving, since the twenty-four hour race is not six hours old," he corrected briefly. "I am glad to have been of any use to you."

She returned his salute; then, upon the cool impulse of one accustomed to doing as she chose, put her question directly:

"Ah—I am Miss Carlisle; I would like to know who has been good enough to aid me in my ignorance."

"My name is Stanton," he complied, and went on.

From the shelter of the obscurity he looked back. She had taken a step forward into the light and her veil had slipped aside as she gazed after him with an expression of acute and eager interest. She could not have been older than twenty-four or five, with a finely cut, beautiful face framed in waves of fair hair.

Floyd was sitting on a camp-stool outside the tent, chatting with a group of men, when Stanton returned. The rest had brought back the mechanician's color and animation; in fact, he looked ridiculously young and irresponsible. But he sprang up readily at the driver's nod.

"Time!" he asked, his gray eyes like burnished steel.

"Yes," Stanton confirmed. And to the nearest man: "Bring in the car."

There was an obedient commotion. Several men ran to flag the other driver; Floyd caught up goggles and cap, and knelt to tighten a legging strap. As Stanton made his own preparations, Mr. Green bustled up to him.

"We're leading," he reminded superfluously. "There isn't, really, any need for extra fast work, Stanton."

Stanton snapped a buckle, saying nothing.

"I telephoned to the office and told Rupert he needn't come. I told him that you had a new man."

"Well!"

"He said, 'Poor nut!'"

The driver straightened to his full height, his firm dark face locking to bronze inflexibility.

"You had better report his sympathy to Floyd, whom it's meant for," he advised harshly. "I'm not interested if the company doesn't like the way I drive, let them get some one in my place; but while I do drive the car, I drive, and not Rupert or Floyd, or any one else. I'll neither take risks nor shirk them to order."

The assistant manager choked, speechless. He had no way of knowing why Stanton flashed a sudden glance toward the row of automobiles



For Mr. Stanton, the Boy Insisted.

The witnesses in stands and paddock went frantic. Floyd pumped oil. Stanton snatched a glance at the miniature watch strapped on his wrist, over his glove, and slightly reduced speed. The maneuver had been successful, but the driver knew that it might have called down upon him the judges' just censure and have sent him from the track, disqualified.

The number of laps steadily grew on the bulletin register. A faint, dull light overspread the sky, the forerunner of the early summer dawn. At four o'clock the Mercury unexpectedly blew out a tire, reeling across to the fence line from the shock and the jar of sharply applied brakes. Stanton said something, and sent his car limping cautiously around to the camp where its repairers stood ready.

Floyd slid out of his hard, narrow seat rather stiffly. The cold grayness was bright enough now to show the streaks of grimy dust and oil wherever the masks had failed to protect the men's faces, and the effects of fatigue and strain of watching. Stanton looked for the inevitable pitcher of water, but found himself confronted instead with a grinning, admiringly awed messenger boy who held out a cluster of heavy purple flowers.

"What?" marveled the disgusted driver. "What idiotic trick—"

"For Mr. Stanton, sir," deferentially insisted the boy; who would have addressed the president as "bo," and gazed at the car.

Stanton caught the blossoms roughly, anticipating a practical joke from some fun-loving fellow-competitor, and saw a white card dangling by a bit of ribbon.

"Thank you," he read in careless perusal. "I have no laurel wreaths here, so send the victor of the hour my corsage bouquet."

She had had the imprudence, or the cool disregard of comment, to use one of her own cards. Valerie Atherton Carlisle, the name was engraved across the heavy pasteboard.

She had thought that wild duel with the Duplex was an exhibition given for her, that at her wanton whim he had jeopardized four lives, one his, own. With a strong exclamation of contempt Stanton moved to fling the flowers aside to the path before the Mercury's wheels, then checked himself, remembering appearances. The orchids curled limply around his warm fingers; suddenly the magnificent arrogance of this girl struck him with angry humor, and he laughed shortly.

"Throw them in the tent, Blake," he requested, tossing the bouquet to one of the men. "They'll wither fast enough."

The new tire was on. As Stanton turned to his machine, after tearing the card to unreadable fragments, he saw Floyd watching him with curious intendment.

A raw, wet mist had commenced to roll in from the nearby ocean. The promise of dawn was recalled, a dull obscurity closed over the motordrome, leaving even the search-lighted path dim. The cars rushed on steadily.

The night had been singularly free from accidents. Only one machine had been actually wrecked, although three had been withdrawn from the contest. The officials in the judges' stand were congratulating one another, at the moment when the second disaster occurred.

The mist had grown thicker, in the lights a dazzling silver curtain before men's eyes, and the track had been worn to deep grooves at the turns. The Mercury was sweeping past the grand-stand, when one of the two slower cars, being overtaken, slipped its driver's control, caught in a foot-deep rut, and swerved crashing into the machine next it. Twice over it rolled, splintering sickeningly, but flinging both of its men clear of the wreck. The car struck, plunged on around the curve into the mist, apparently unhurt.

Out across the damp dusk pierced the shriek of the klaxon, mingled with the cry of the people and the tinkle of the hospital telephone. Stanton, swinging wide to avoid the pitiful wreckage, kept on his course.

"Stop!" Floyd shouted imperatively beside him. "Stop, Stanton, stop!"

Stanton sped on, disregarding what he supposed was a novice's nervous sympathy. He could not aid the stunned men lying on the track, and one glance had told him that they could be safely passed; as indeed they had been.

"Stop!" the command rang again; and as Stanton merely shook his head with impatient annoyance, the mechanician swiftly stooped forward.

The motor slackened oddly. Before the astounded driver had time to grasp the situation, the power died to put me off the car—I threw your switch. I've got nothing to say. But the mist lifted and I saw what lay ahead."

What lay ahead? The klaxon was shrieking madly, from all around the track came the sound of halting cars. The rising wind pushed along the fog walls again, and they opened to reveal the second machine of the late accident, not twenty-five feet ahead, a tilted, motionless heap. After the collision it had staggered this far, to go down with a broken rear axle and two lost rear wheels. Its men were still in their seats unhurt.

There was an instant of silence. The avoided disaster was no excuse for the mechanician's interference, nor did Floyd offer it as such, well aware that his driver was perfectly justified in any course he chose to take. There can be but one pilot at any wheel.

"Since I suppose you are not equal to cranking a ninety Mercury, you had better fix the spark and gas while I start it," dryly suggested Stanton. "And—never do that again."

He stepped out and went to the front of his car, seizing the crank and starting the big motor with an exertion of superb strength which would indeed have been impossible to the slender Floyd. When he retook his seat, the mechanician made his equally laconic apology and acknowledgment of error.

"I never will," Floyd gave his word. The wind shook the mist more strongly, streamers of pink and gold trembled across the sky. The day had commenced.

CHAPTER III.

The Finish, and After.

Morning arched its golden hours across the still speeding cars, and melted slowly into noon. The weary drivers had settled to steady endurance gaits, saving their energy and their machines for the more spectacular work of afternoon and evening.

At nine o'clock that night the race would end.

The Mercury car had registered ninety miles more than the Duplex, both of them being many tens of miles in advance of the other competitors. At six in the morning Stanton had gone in for a brief rest. At eight he was back, and kept the wheel until one in the afternoon. Victory was in his hands if nothing happened to his car; an hour and a half lost in repairs would transfer all his advantage to the Duplex. He was jealously afraid to intrust his machine to his assistant driver, and consequently merciless to his mechanician and himself. But Floyd made no complaint.

At half-past one, all the cars were sent to their camps while an hour was spent in having the track hurriedly mended by gangs of workmen. The road-bed in places was furrowed like a plowed field by the flying wheels. Meanwhile the afternoon crowds flowed in, filling the stands to suffocation, massing on the promenade, banking in a solid row of private automobiles behind the screen.

When at half-past two the racers were recalled to start anew, Stanton sharply scrutinized his mechanician before leaving the camp.

"I'm going to keep this car until the end of the race," he announced, not unkindly. "If you don't think you can stand seven hours of it, say so; and I'll have them find some one to relieve you. They can rush Rupert here from up the Hudson by four or five o'clock. If you get in for it, you'll finish, if I have to tie you in your seat. I'm driving to win."

The scarlet of resentment flashed through Floyd's grime-streaked pallor. "You won't have to tie me," he promised, white teeth catching his lip. "I'll not flinch. Go on."

Stanton actually laughed, bending to his levers.

"I didn't mean to tie you to keep you from running away, but to keep you from fainting and falling out," he explained. "But—"

The car bounded forward.

The track had been filled in with wet mud from the infield—on the first circuit the heavy Loselle car skidded and went through the fence at the big end.

TO BE CONTINUED

No Filth, No Flies

"Swat-the-fly" campaigns for 1912 are well on. The elimination of this filthy and dangerous insect is a desirable end. The house-fly, in addition to being a demonstrated agent in the spreading of typhoid, is strongly suspected, on more or less conclusive evidence, with relation to a large number of infections, including cholera, dysentery, the infantile diarrheas, diptheria and contagious ophthalmia. About a billion flies were killed in various campaigns in 1911—a statement which seems impressive until one considers the number of flies which escape the slaughter. In Washington, D. C., alone some 7,000,000 flies were killed by the "swat," the trap, drowning, sulphur fumes and even by electrocution. Dr. Howard, of the Bureau of Entomology, points out that in the congenial climate of that city seven generations of flies may be produced in a single summer. One female fly will lay on an average a batch of 120 eggs; and if all these eggs from a batch laid in the middle of April should hatch and reproduce their kind in like manner, there would be by autumn, from a single female fly, a progeny of nearly six thousand billion. And as each female may lay four batches of eggs, the figures for their unchecked development through a summer staggers the imagination. To "swat the fly" by the billion, therefore, means but little, says The Journal of the Medical Association, so long as those that survive have unchecked opportunity for breeding. There is even more weight, therefore, in Stockholm's statement that during 1911 filthy breeding places were cleaned up, which, if left alone, would have given opportunity for the propagation of incalculable billions. Better than "swatting" the fly is the prevention of its breeding by cleaning up the places where it thrives—the unsanitary privy, the dead dog and horse allowed to lie unburied until putrid, the dung-heap, the uncovered garbage can and the spittoon. How this can be done, can be learned from the health departments of many states and municipalities, and from civic leagues and like organizations.—Ord Quiz.

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More Railroad Talk

A big Hudson car plowed through the mud and pulled up in front of Hotel Ord Monday night. While the party of four were eating supper the word leaked out that the tourists were on their way from Kearney to Canada and that they were spying out a route from the Canada-to-the Gulf railroad.

A number of booster citizens of Ord gathered and were in earnest conference with the strangers. Arthur Jenkins of London, England, is the big man of the party and is rated as several times a millionaire. Traveling with him is a Mr. Weaver, also an English capitalist. The other men, relatively local citizens, are S. A. D. Henline of Kearney and Carson Hildreth of Franklin, Neb. They are all clever men to meet and particularly genial is Mr. Jenkins, who enjoys talking business when it is a general theme but is equally versatile, when politics, crops, weather of baseball is the subject of conversation.

For some years the talk of a railroad from Beloit Kansas, to Kearney has been common but it is only within the last few months that it has been a certainty. Advantageous connections south, will give direct outlet at Galveston to the Gulf of Mexico.

In reaching the vast wheat fields of Canada the promoters are planning an air line. They contemplate striking straight north from Kearney, going through Loup City, Ord, Atkinson and Wheeler, South Dakota, Carrington, North Dakota and on to the Moose Jaw country of Western Canada.

The party left Kearney Monday morning, stopped at Loup City and went to Burwell after supper. Mr. Jenkins said that they were not going to Burwell to talk railroad but because it was the best auto route on their northward trip. They expected to reach Canada in five days so that Mr. Jenkins could get to Montreal by June 17.

A prominent official of the Union Pacific company has stated that his company is in no way interested in the new road but that he is satisfied that the English capitalists who are behind the movement are financially able to construct the road and equip it with the necessary rolling stock.

Mr. Jenkins left with the request that he be furnished by the commercial club with some data relative to Valley county and that those familiar with the topography of the county offer some suggestions as to the most feasible right of way.—Ord Journal.

Ashton 8, Elba 1.

Ashton defeated Elba by a score of 8 to one. Elba played a loose game, making errors and allowing 4 walks, which was responsible for most of Ashton's scores.

Scores by innings: R H E Ashton 4 0 0 0 0 1 0 3 8 5 4 Elba 0 0 0 1 0 0 0 0 1 3 11

2 base hits, Kwiatkowski. 3 base hits, L. Polski; Struck out by Polski 3, by Sumovich 3. Base on balls; off Polski 1; off Sumovich 4. Bases stolen G. Polski, Topolski, W. Wilson, and Sumovich. Time of game, 1:40 Umpire, B. Lorenz.

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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.

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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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