

# The FLYING MERCURY

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## SYNOPSIS.

The story opens on Long Island near New York city, where Miss Emily French, a relative of Ethan French, manufacturer of the celebrated "Mercury" automobile, loses her way. The car has stopped and her cousin, Dick French, is too muddled with drink to direct it aright. They meet another car which is run by a professional racer named Lestrangle. The latter fixes up the French car and directs Miss French how to proceed homeward.

## CHAPTER III.

It was a business consultation that was being held in Mr. French's firelit library, in spite of the presence of a tea table and the young girl behind it. A consultation between the two partners who composed the Mercury Automobile company, of whom the lesser was speaking with a certain anecdotal weight.

"And he said he was losing too much time on the turns; so the next round he took the bend at 72 miles an hour. He went over, of course. The third car we've lost this year; I'm glad the season's closed."

Emily French gave an exclamation, her velvet eyes widening behind their black lashes.

"But the driver! Was the poor driver hurt, Mr. Bailey?"

"He wasn't killed, Miss Emily," answered Bailey, with a tinge of pensive regret. He was a large, ruddy, white-haired man, with the slow and careful habit of speech sometimes found in those who live much with massive machinery. "No, he wasn't killed; he's in the hospital. But he wrecked as good a car as ever was built, through sheer foolishness. It costs money."

Mr. French responded to the indirect appeal with more than usual irritation, his level gray eyebrows contracting.

"We ought to have better drivers. Why do you not get better men, Bailey? You wanted to go into this racing business; you said the cars needed advertising. My brother always attended to that side of the factory affairs while he lived, with you as his manager. Now it is altogether in your hands. Why do you not find a proper driver?"

"Perhaps my hands are not used to holding so much," mused Bailey unresentfully. "A man might be a good manager, maybe, and weak as a partner. It isn't the same job. But a first-class driver isn't easy to get, Mr. French. There's Delmar killed, and George tied up with another company, and Dorian retired, all this last season; and we don't want a foreigner. There's only one man I like—"

"Well, get him. Pay him enough." Bailey hunched himself together and crossed his legs.

"Yes, sir. He's beaten our cars—and others—every race lately, with poorer machines, just by sheer pretty driving. He drives fast, yet he don't knock out his car. But there's a lot after him—there's just one way we could get him, and get him for keeps."

"And that?"

"He's ambitious. He wants to get into something more solid than racing. If we offered to make him manager, he'd come and put some new ideas, maybe, into the factory, and race our cars wherever we chose to enter them. I know him pretty well."

The proposition was advanced tentatively, with the hesitation of one venturing in unknown places. But Ethan French said nothing, his gray eyes fixed on the hearth.

"He understands motor construction and designing, and he's been with big foreign firms," Bailey resumed, after waiting. "He'd be useful around; I can't be everywhere. What he'd do for us in racing would help a whole lot. It's very well to make a fine standard car, but it needs advertising to keep people remembering. And men like to say 'my machine is the same as Lestrangle won the cup race with.' They like it."

"I don't know," said Mr. French slowly, "that it is dignified for the manager of the Mercury factory to be a racing driver."

"The Christine cars are driven by the son of the man who makes them," was the response. "Some drive their own."

"The son of the man who makes them," repeated the other. He turned his face still more to the quivering fire, his always severe expression hardening strangely and bitterly. "The son—"

The girl rose to draw the crimson curtains before the windows and to push an electric switch, filling the room with a subdued glow in place of the late afternoon grayness. Her delicate face, as she regarded her uncle, revealed most strongly its characteristic

overearnestness and a sensitive reflection of the moods of those around her. Emily French's childhood had been passed in a Canadian convent, and something of its mysticism clung about her. As the cheerful change she had wrought flashed over the room, Mr. French held out his hand in a gesture of summons, so that she came across to sit on the broad arm of his chair during the rest of the conference, her soft gaze resting on the third member.

"My adopted son and nephew having no such talents, we must do the best we can," Mr. French stated, with his most precise coldness. "Being well born and well bred, he has no taste for a mechanic's labor or for circus performances with automobiles in public. Who is your man, Bailey?"

"Lestrangle, sir. You must have heard of him often."

"I never read racing news."

"I read ours," said Bailey darkly. "We've been licked often enough by him. And he's straight—he's one of the few men who'll stop at the grandstand and lose time reporting a smash-up and sending help around. Every man on the track likes Darling Lestrangle."

"Likes whom?"

Bailey flushed brick-red.

"I didn't mean to call him that. He signs himself D. Lestrangle, and some of them started reading it Darling, joking because he was such a favorite

should have asked his, and I fancy yours is fully as valuable. Come, shall we have this racing manager?"

Astonished, she looked from her uncle to the other man. And perhaps it was the real anxiety and suspense of Bailey's expression that drew her quick reply.

"Let us, uncle. Since we need him, let us have him."

"Very well," said Mr. French. "You hear, Bailey."

There was a long silence after the junior partner's withdrawal.

"Come where I can see you, Emily," her uncle finally demanded. "I liked your decided answer a few moments ago; you can reason. How long have you been a daughter in my house?"

"Six years," she responded, obediently moving to a low chair opposite. "I was fifteen when you took me from the convent—to make me very, very happy, dear."

"I sent for you when I sent for Dick, and for the same reason. I have tried three times to rear one of my name to fitness to bear it, and each one has failed except you. I wish you were a man, Emily; there is work for a French to do."

"When you say that, I wish I were. But—I'm not, I'm not." She flung out her slender, round arms in a gesture of helpless resignation. "I'm not even a strong-minded woman who might do instead. Uncle Ethan, may I ask—it was Mr. Bailey who made me think—my cousin whom I never saw, will he never come home?"

He voice faltered on the last words, frightened at her own daring. But her uncle answered evenly, if coldly:

"Never."

"He offended you so?"

"His whole life was an offense. School, college, at home, in each he went wrong. At twenty-one he left me and married a woman from the vaudeville stage. It is not of him you are to think, Emily, but of a substitute for him. For that I designed Dick; once I hoped you would marry him and sober his idleness."

"Please, no," she refused gently. "I

It was characteristic that he offered neither praise nor caress.

"You have relieved my mind," said Ethan French, and turned his face once more to the fire.

## CHAPTER III.

It was October when the consultation was held in the library of the old French house on the Hudson; December was very near on the sunny morning that Emily drove out to the factory and sought Bailey in his office.

"I wanted to talk with you," she explained, as that gentleman rose to receive her. "We have known each other for a long time, Mr. Bailey; ever since I came from the Sacred Heart to live with Uncle Ethan. That is a very long time."

"It's a matter of five or six years," agreed the charmed Bailey, contemplating her with affectionate pride in her prettiness and grace. "You used to drive out here with your pony and spend many an hour looking on and asking questions. You'll excuse me, Miss Emily, but there was many a man passed the whisper that you'd have made a fine master of the works."

She shook her head, folding her small gloved hands upon the edge of the desk at the opposite sides of which they were seated.

"At least I would have tried. I am quite sure I would have tried. But I am only a girl. I came to ask you something regarding that," she lifted her candid eyes to his, her soft color rising. "Do you know—have you ever met any men who cared and understood about such factories as this? Men who could take charge of a business, the manufacturing and racing and selling, like my uncles? I have a reason for asking."

"Sure thing," said Bailey, unexpectedly prompt. "I've met one man who knows how to handle this factory better than I do, and I've been at it twelve years. And there he is—" he turned in his revolving chair and rolled up the shade covering the glassed door into the next room, "my manager, Lestrangle."

The scene thus suddenly opened to the startled Emily was sufficiently matter-of-fact, yet not lacking in a certain sober animation of its own. Around a drafting table central in the bare, systematic disorder of the apartment beyond, three or four blue-shirted men were grouped, bending over a set of drawings, which Lestrangle was explaining. Explaining with a vivid interest in his task that sparkled over his clear face in a changing play of expression almost mesmeric in its command of attention. The men watched and listened intently; they themselves no common laborers, but the intelligent workmen who were to carry out the ideas here set forth. Wherever Lestrangle had been, he was coatless and the sleeves of his outing shirt were rolled back, leaving bare the arms whose smooth symmetry revealed little of the racing driver's strength; his thick brown hair was rumpled into boyish waves and across his forehead a fine black streak wrote of recent personal encounter with things practical.

"Oh!" exclaimed Emily faintly. And after a moment, "Close the curtain, please."

## (TO BE CONTINUED.)

### Gift for Business.

Willie's father conducts a boat-renting business on the Jersey side of the Hudson.

"I'll give you a dollar if you'll bail out the boats, Willie," said the father one morning after a rain.

There were 25 boats and Willie wasn't keen. So he was non-committal. A little later his friend Albert came over.

"I'll give you a quarter if you'll bail out the boats," said Willie to Albert.

"Gee! What'd ye take me for?" returned Albert as he surveyed the fleet of rowboats. "It's worth 35 cents, anyway."

"Well, all right, 35 then," said Willie.

Albert got busy and did the bailing, while Willie looked on and, Tom Sawyer-like, bossed the job.

The work done, Willie collected, paid Albert and pocketed 65 cents.

"That boy'll be a business man," remarked the father to Willie's mother later, but not in the boy's hearing.—New York Herald.

### First of French Monarchs.

History concedes that Clovis I. was the real founder of the French monarchy, although his father, Childeric, held some sort of tribal rule over part of the country which was destined to become France. Clovis was a progressive king and vastly extended his domains during the period of his rule, from 481 to 511. He made endless war on surrounding tribes and took territory right and left by conquest. In 493 Clovis took Paris by storm and thereupon that city became the permanent seat of the French government.

### Just Before the Interest Quickens.

"I hope your novel ends happily?" "Indeed it does. It ends in the marriage of the heroine and hero; does not go into their married life at all."

## ADVENTUROUS ANN



With hat and muff, so  
very gay,  
Ann bravely started  
forth one day,  
And what she saw  
along the way,  
Or where she went  
I cannot say!

## FEW OLD ENGLISH PASTIMES

Truckling the Trencher Is Played by Children Sitting or Kneeling on Floor in Ring.

Truckling the trencher—this is an old English game. The children sit on the floor or kneel in a ring. A person in the center holds the trencher (a pie tin will serve) and when all are ready he truckles, or spins it, at the same time calling the name of some one in the ring. The one named must spring quickly and try to catch the plate between both hands before it stops spinning. If he succeeds, he takes the place in the center, and the first truckler goes in the ring. If he does not catch the plate between both hands before it stops spinning he pays a forfeit and is counted out.

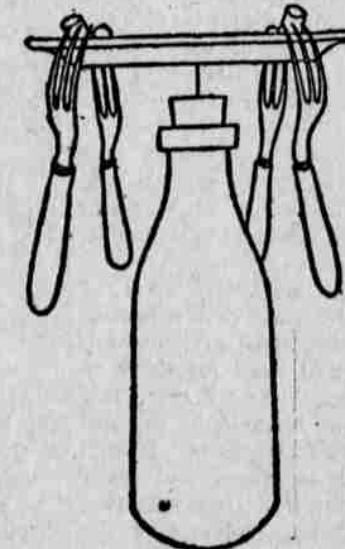
Then there is the play of "Twos and threes." The company is grouped in twos and threes, usually only one odd one, and the fun consists in not being caught as the third. This keeps each child looking over her shoulder, for when two are behind the foremost must slip away and find another place to be tapped.

After a stand-up game, a rather funny game, where all the company may sit, is to have one person chosen to call and the rest to repeat: One good fat hen; two ducks; three plump partridges; four squawking wild geese; five felicitous oysters; six pairs of Roman-striped hose; seven thousand Spanish soldiers; eight cages of Hellogabulus paroquets; nine sympathetic, apathetic, didactic, propositions; eleven superstitious astronomers viewing Venus in Venice; twelve European dancing masters teaching Egyptian mummies to dance at Hercules' wedding. If any one laughs in the course of this he must pay a forfeit. The one who repeats most smoothly and solemnly must be the caller out and begin gibberish over again.

## BALANCING A PLATE AND PIN

Trick Is Comparatively Easy of Execution if Instructions Given Are Followed.

Can you balance a dinner plate on a pin? Easy enough, if you do it this way: Drive a pin into a cork in a bottle. Take four forks and four other corks



The Plate and the Pin.

and stick each fork into a cork, near its end. Then, by hanging the forks about the edge of the plate as shown in the picture you can balance the plate on the pin.

### No Relation.

"Mamma," queried three-year-old Ethel as she watched the servant washing the windows, "is Jane my stepmother?" "Of course not, dear," replied her mother. "What made you think she was?" "Cause," replied Ethel, "she's always climbing around on a stepladder."

Little Eva—I wonder what the twinkling stars really are?

Little Olga—Oh, I guess they are good little night lamps that have died and gone to heaven.



"He Understands Motor Construction and Designing."

and because they liked him anyhow. It's just a nickname."

Emily laughed out involuntarily, surprised.

"I beg pardon," she at once apologized, "but it sounded so frivolous."

"If you try this man, you had better keep that nickname out of the factory," Mr. French advised stiffly. "What respect could the workmen feel for a manager with such a title? If possible, you would do well to prevent them from recognizing him as the racing driver."

Bailey, who had risen at the chime of a clock, halted amazed.

"Respect for him!" he echoed. "Not recognize him! Why, there isn't a man on the place who wouldn't give his ears to be seen on the same side of the street with Lestrangle, let alone to work under him. They do read the racing news. That part of it will be all right. I can have him."

"If it is necessary—"

"I think it is, sir."

Emily moved slightly, pushing back her yellow-brown curls under the ribbon that banded them. On a sudden impulse her uncle looked up at her.

"What is your opinion?" he questioned. "If Dick had been listening I

am fond of Dick, but—please, no."

"I am not asking it of you. He is well enough, a good boy, not overwise, but not what is needed here. Failed, again; I am not fortunate. There is left only you."

"Me?"

Her startled dark eyes and his determined gray ones met, and so remained.

"You, and your husband. Are you going to marry a man who can take my place in this business, in the factory and the model village my brother and I built around it; a man whose name will be fit to join with ours and so in a fashion preserve it here? Will you wait until such a one is found and will you aid me to find him? Or will you too follow selfish, idle fancies of your own?"

"No!" she answered, quite pale. "I would not do that! I will try to help."

"You will take up the work the men of your name refuse, you will provide a substitute for them?"

Her earnestness sprang to meet his strength of will, she leaned nearer in her enthusiasm of self-abnegation, scarcely understood.

"I will find a substitute or accept yours. I, indeed I will try not to fail."