

The FLYING MERCURY

by ELEANOR M. INGRAM
AUTHOR OF THE GAME AND THE CANDLE
ILLUSTRATIONS BY RAY WAUTERS
COPYRIGHT 1910 BY DOBBS-MERRILL CO.

SYNOPSIS.

The story opens on Long Island, near New York city, where Miss Emily Ffrench, a relative of Ethan Ffrench, manufacturer of the celebrated "Mercury" automobile, loses her way. The car has stopped and her cousin, Dick Ffrench, is too muddled with drink to direct it aright. They meet another car which is run by a professional racer named Lestrage. The latter fixes up the Ffrench car and directs Miss Ffrench how to proceed homeward. Ethan Ffrench has disinherited his son, who has disappeared. He informs Emily plainly that he would like to have her marry Dick, who is a good-natured but irresponsible fellow. It appears that a partner of Ethan Ffrench wanting an expert to race with the "Mercury" at auto events, has engaged Lestrage, and at the Ffrench factory Emily encounters the young man. They refer pleasantly to their meeting when Dick comes along and recognizes the young racer. Dick likes the way Lestrage ignores their first meeting when he appeared to a disadvantage. Lestrage tells Emily that he will try to educate her indifferent cousin as an automobile expert. Dick undertakes his business schooling under the tutelage of Lestrage. Dick is sheer grit, and in making a test race meets with an accident. Lestrage meets Emily in the moonlit garden of the Ffrench home. Under an impulse he cannot control he kisses her and she leaves him, confessing in her own heart that she returns his love. The uncle of Emily, learning of her attachment to Lestrage, informs her that the man is his disabled son, whom she has never seen before being adopted by him. He claims that his son ran away with a dissolute actress, refuses to acknowledge him, and orders Emily to think of Dick as her future husband. A big race is on in the south and Ethan Ffrench takes Emily to see it. The fame of the "Mercury" is involved in the success of Lestrage and Dick running the race.

CHAPTER IX.—(Continued).

The hours passed. One more car went out of the race under the grinding test; there were the usual incidents of blown-out tires and temporary withdrawals for repairs. Twice Mr. Ffrench sent his partner and Emily to the restaurant below, tolerating his seat. Perfectly composed, his expression perfectly self-contained, he watched his son.

The day grew unbearably hot toward afternoon, a heat rather of July than June. After a visit to his camp Lestrage reappeared without the suffocating mask and cap, driving bareheaded, with only the narrow goggles crossing his face. The change left visible the drawn pallor of exhaustion under stains of dust and oil, his rolled-back sleeves disclosed the crimson badge on his right arm and the fact that his left wrist was tightly wound with linen where swollen and strained muscles rebelled at the long trial.

"He's been driving for nineteen hours," said Dick, climbing up to his party through the excited crowd. "Two hours more to six o'clock. Listen to the mob when he passes!"

The injunction was unnecessary. As the sun slanted low the enthusiasm grew to fever. This was a crowd of connoisseurs—motorists, chauffeurs, automobile lovers and drivers—they knew what was being done before them. The word passed that Lestrage was in his twentieth hour; people climbed on seats to cheer him as he passed by. When one of his tires blew out, in the opening of the first hour of his driving and the twenty-fourth of the race, the great shout of sympathy and encouragement that went up shook the grand-stand to its cement foundations.

Neither Lestrage nor Rupert left his seat while that tire was changed.

"If we did I ain't sure we'd get back," Rupert explained to Dick, who hovered around them agitatedly. "If I'd thought Darling's mechanic would get in for this, I'd have taken in sewing for a living. How much longer?"

"Half an hour."

"Well, watch us finish."

A renewed burst of applause greeted the Mercury car's return to the track. Men were standing watch in hand to count the last moments, their eyes on the bulletin board where the reeled-off miles were being registered. Two of the other machines were fighting desperately for second place, hopeless of rivaling Lestrage, and after them sped the rest.

"The finish!" some one suddenly called. "The last lap!"

Dick was hanging over the paddock fence when the car shot by amidst braying, klaxons, motor horns, cheers, and the clashing music of the band. Frantic, the people hailed Lestrage as the black and white checked flag dropped before him in proclamation of his victory and the ended race.

Rupert raised his arms above his head in the signal of acknowledgment, as they flew across the line and swept on to complete the circle to their camp. Lestrage slackened speed to take the dangerous, deeply furrowed turn for the last time, his car poised for the curving flight un-

der his guidance—then the watching hundreds saw the driver's hands slip from the steering-wheel as he reached for the brake. Straight across the track the machine dashed, instead of following the bend, crashed through the barrier, and rolled over on its side in the green meadow grass.

"The steering-knuckle!" Bailey groaned, as the place burst into uproar around them. "The wheel—I saw it turn uselessly in his hands!"

"They're up!" cried a dozen voices. "No, one's up and one's under." "Who's caught in the wreck—Lestrage or his man?"

But before the people who surged over the track, breaking all restraint, before the electric ambulance, Dick Ffrench reached the marred thing that had been the Mercury car. It was Lestrage who had painfully struggled to one knee beside the machine, fighting hard for breath to speak.

"Take the car off Rupert," he panted, at Dick's cry of relief on seeing him. "I'm all right—take the car off Rupert."

The next instant they were surrounded, overwhelmed with eager aid. The ambulance came up and a surgeon precipitated himself toward Lestrage.

"Stand back," the surgeon commanded generally. "Are you trying to smother him? Stand back."

But it was he who halted before a gesture from Lestrage, who leaned on Dick and a comrade from the camp.

"Go over there, to Rupert."

"You first—"

"No."

There was nothing to do except yield. Shrugging his shoulders, the surgeon paused the necessary moment. A moment only; there was a no protest, but he himself never left scattering of the husked workers, a metallic crash.

From the space the car had cov-

Dick exceeded his commission by transmitting the speech entire; repeating the first part to Emily with all affectionate solicitude, and flinging the second cuttingly at his uncle and Bailey.

"The doctors say he ought to be in bed, but he won't go," he concluded. "No, you can't see him until they get through patching him up at the hospital tent; they put every one out except Rupert. He hasn't a scratch, after having a ninety Mercury on top of him. You're to come over to our camp, Emily, and wait for Lestrage. I suppose everybody had better come."

It was a curious and an elevating thing to see Dick assume command of his family, but no one demurred. An official, recognizing in him Lestrage's manager, cleared a way for the party through the noisy press of departing people and automobiles.

The sunset had long faded, night had settled over the motordrome and the electric lamps had been lit in the tents, before there came a stir and murmur in the Mercury camp.

"Don't skid, the ground's wet," cautioned a voice outside the door. "Steady!"

Emily started up, Dick sprang to open the canvas, and Lestrage crossed the threshold. Lestrage, colorless, his right arm in a sling, his left wound with linen from wrist to elbow, and bearing a heavy purple bruise above his temple, but with the brightness of victory flashing above all weariness like a dancing flame.

"Sweetheart!" he laughed, as Emily ran to meet him, heedless of all things except that he stood within touch once more. "My dear, I told them not to frighten you. Why, Emily—"

For as he put his one available arm about her, she hid her wet eyes on his shoulder.

"I am so happy," she explained breathlessly. "It is only that."

"You should not have been here at all, my dear. But it is good to see you. Who brought you? Bailey?" catching sight of the man beside Dick. "Good. I wanted some one to help me; Rupert and I have got to find a hotel and we're not very active."

Emily would have slipped away from the clasp, scarlet with returning recollection, but Lestrage detained her to meet his shining eyes.

"The race is over," he reminded, for her ears alone. "I'm going to keep you, if you'll stay."

He turned to take a limping step, offering his hand cordially to the speechless Bailey, and faced for the first time the other man present.

ness between them most apparent, in the similar determination of mood which wiped laughter and warmth from the younger man's face. However coldly phrased and dictatorially spoken, it was an apology which Mr. Ffrench had offered and which had been declined. But—he had watched Lestrage all day; he did not lift the gauntlet.

"You are perfectly free," he conceded, "which gives you the opportunity of being generous."

His son moved, flushing through his pallor.

"I wish you would not put it that way, sir," he objected.

"There is no other way. I have been wrong and I have no control over you; will you come home?"

There was no other argument but that that could have succeeded, and the three who knew Lestrage knew that could not fail.

"You want me because I am a Ffrench," David rebelled in the final protest. "You have a substitute."

"Perhaps I want you otherwise. And we will not speak in passion; there can be no substitute for you."

"Ffrench and Ffrench," murmured Dick coaxingly. "We can run that factory, Lestrage!"

"There's more than steering-knuckles needing your eye on them. And you love the place. Mr. David," said Bailey from his corner.

From one to the other David's glance went, to rest on Emily's delicate, earnest face in its setting of yellow-bronze curls. Full and straight her dark eyes answered his, the convent-bred Emily's answer to his pride and old resentment and new reluctance to yield his liberty.

"After all, you were born a Ffrench," she reminded, her soft accents just audible. "If that is your work?"

Very slowly David turned to his father.

"I never learned to do things by halves," he said. "If you want me, sir—"

And Ethan Ffrench understood, and first offered his hand.

Rupert was discovered asleep in a camp-chair outside the tent, a few minutes later, when Dick went in search of him.

"The limousine's waiting," his awakener informed him. "You don't feel bad, do you?"

The mechanic rose cautiously, wincing.

"Well, if every joint in my chassis wasn't sore, I'd feel better," he admitted grimly. "But I'm still running. What did you kiss me awake for, when I need my sleeps?"

"Did you suppose we could get Lestrage home without you, Jack Rupert?"

"I ain't supposing you could. I'm ready."

The rest of the party were already in the big car, with one exception.

"Take a last look, Rupert," bade David, as he stood in the dark paddock. "We're retired; come help me get used to it."

Rupert passed a glance over the deserted track.

"I guess my sentiment-tank has given out," he sweetly acknowledged. "The Mercury factory sounds pretty good to me, Darling. And I guess we can make a joy ride out of living, on any track, if we enter for it."

"I guess we can," laughed David Ffrench. "Get in opposite Emily. We're going home to try."

THE END.

WHY THE PRICE WAS HIGH

Sir Joshua Reynolds' Notice of Sketch Made It Worth Vastly More, Said Dealer.

"What do you ask for this sketch?" said Sir Joshua Reynolds to a picture dealer whose portfolio he was examining. "Twenty guineas, Sir Joshua." "Twenty pence, I suppose you mean." "No, sir; I would have taken twenty pence for it this morning, but if you think the drawing worth looking at all the world will think it worth buying."

A London dealer who had made a few trifling purchases at a second-hand furniture shop in the country was leaving it, when he caught his foot in the string of a picture and fell. Having picked himself up, he examined the picture to see if it had been damaged. It had escaped injury, and he found, to his surprise, that in thus tripping he had—literally—stumbled upon a print of the duchess of Rutland, after Reynolds, by Valentine Green, in its first state. The dealer bought the print for £4 and afterward disposed of it for £1,000.—From Jerningham's "Bargain Book."

What to Do With Babies.

If the custom of checking babies at the department stores and leaving them there continues to grow, it may be necessary for those establishments to hold auction sales of unclaimed babies, as the express companies do of parcels left on their hands.—New York Tribune.

Fitted.

"Miss Pinkie Pry has such an elastic step." "Yes, and a disposition to match." "What do you mean?" "She rubbers."

FINALLY LISTENED TO REASON

Old Gentleman, Explosive at First, Gave In to Young Man Who Asked for What He Wanted.

"What do you mean, sir, by presuming to sue for my daughter's hand in marriage? Do you forget that you are a mere underling in this establishment?"

"No, sir, I don't forget it for a moment."

"Then why have you the presumption to suppose that I would permit my daughter to wreck her life by becoming your wife?"

"You remember that you sent me about a week ago to ask the president of the C. F. & W. railroad company to extend a spur up to our warehouse, do you not?"

"What has that to do with what we have been discussing?"

"Your partners objected, as you will remember, because they were sure the railroad company would refuse."

"That has nothing to do with my daughter's happiness."

"You told them they were fools, and said it would not cost us anything to ask. I think you said, also, that people who never asked for what they wanted never got it. I learned a great lesson right there. When I asked the president of the railroad company for the spur he flared up and said it was preposterous; but I found out after a little while that he was capable of listening to reason. A hundred men are working on the spur now."

"Do you insinuate that I'm not capable of listening to reason?"

"No, sir. I think you are. If I hadn't thought so we'd have got married first and asked your blessing afterward."

"Huh! You would, eh? Do you know what I ought to do with you?"

"You ought to give me some encouragement for the ability I showed in getting that railroad president to do what you wanted done."

"Confound your impudence! Did my daughter ask you to see me about this affair? Did she spur you on?"

"She didn't seem to think it would be worth while, but her mother said she wished I would ask you, because she thought it would please you to be consulted. She did the spurring."

"That's just like my wife. There's one of the kindest and most thoughtful women alive. Say, my boy, promise me just one thing. Let them think I gave my enthusiastic consent without waiting for you to explain the situation."

Latest From Paris.

It may be true that the American invasion of Paris is Americanizing things there to an alarming extent, but there are places where the Frenchman still doggedly holds his own. One of these is a certain Paris hotel where an American recently ordered a cocktail.

There was a delay. The American grew impatient. He beckoned to the head waiter.

"Are they getting that cocktail for me?" asked the American.

"Certainly, Monsieur," answered the head waiter. "It will be ready in a minute."

There was more delay. The American began to fume. Again he summoned the autocrat of the dining room.

"How about that cocktail?" he asked.

"Coming, sir. Just a moment, sir." Still more delay. The American grew profane. For the third time he called the head waiter.

"Tell me," he said witheringly, "do you know what a cocktail is?" The head waiter looked deeply offended.

"Of course I do," he answered. "It's a kind of bouillon."

Same Old Story.

Aviator (to young assistant, who has begun to be frightened)—Well, what do you want now?

Assistant (whimpering)—I want the earth.

Acts Accordingly.

"Are you the boy who was here a week ago looking for a position?"

"Yes, sir."

"I thought so. And didn't I tell you then that I wanted an older boy?"

"Yes, sir; that's way I'm here now."

—Tit-Bits.

This is a Fact.

"What do you do when you forget your lines?"

"I must repeat the multiplication table in a muffled voice," said the emotional actress. "I had the house in tears the other night over nine times nine is eighty-one."

Quite a Number.

"I understand when Smith went out for the first time in his new machine he struck quite a gait." "I believe he struck a dozen gates before he finished the machine."—Exchange.

Irresistible Attraction.

Briggs—"I understand that Bulger fell in love with the girl he married at first sight." Griggs—"Yes; when he first saw her she was making a fat deposit in the savings bank."



"I Am So Happy."

ered a small figure uncolled, lizard-like, and staggered unsteadily erect.

"Where's Darling Lestrage?" was hurried viciously across the silence. "Gee, you're a slow bunch of workers! Where's Lestrage?"

The tumult that broke loose swept all to confusion. And after all it was Lestrage who was put in the surgeon's care, while Rupert rode back to the camp on the driver's seat of the ambulance.

"Tell Emily I'll come over to her as soon as I'm fit to look at," was the message Lestrage gave Dick. "And when you go back to the factory, have your steering-knuckles strengthened."

"I think," said Ethan Ffrench, "that there need be no question of hotels. We have not understood each other, but you have the right to Ffrench-wood's hospitality. If you can travel, we will go there."

"No," answered David Ffrench, as quietly. "Never. You owe me nothing, sir. If I have worked in your factory, I took the workman's wages for it; if I have won honors for your car, I also won the prize-money given to the driver. I never meant so to establish any claim upon Ffrench-wood or you. I believe we stand even. Dick has taken my place, happily; Emily and I will go on our own road." They looked at each other, the like-