



SYNOPSIS.

At the beginning of great automobile race the mechanician of the Mercury. Stanten's machine, drops dead. Strange youth, Jesse Floyd, volunteers, and is accepted. In the rest during the twenty-four hour race Stanton meets a stranger, Miss Carlisle, who introduces herself. The Mercury wins race. Stanton receives nowers from Miss Carlisle, which he ignores.

CHAPTER III.

The Finish, and After.

Morning arched its golden hours 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 fealously afraid to intrust his machine to his assistant driver, and consequently merciless to his mechanician and himecif. But Floyd made no complaint.

At l-alf-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 Meanwhile the afternoon wheels. crowds flowed in, filling the stands to suffication, massing on the prome nade, 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 flushed 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 Lozelle car skidded and went through the fence at the porth turn. After that, nothing could have induced Stanton to allow his machine in other hands.

Hour after hour passed. The noisy music of the band crashed out monotonously: the crowd swayed, murmuring, applauding, exclaiming, arguseyed and kaleidoscopic in color and motion.

At sunset, when the Mercury made a trip into camp for supplies, neither of its men left their seats. The beaming Mr. Green came to shower congratulations upon Stanton, and with him the head of the Mercury Company, himself a former driver whose quiet appreciation had an expert's value. Stanton was leaning across the wheel, chatting with them, when his employer broke the thread of speech.

"What is the matter with your mechanician, Stanton?" he queried. Stanton turned, suddenly conscious

of a light weight against his shoulder.

With his movement, Floyd also started erect, their glances crossing. "Nothing," the driver briefly answered to the other's question. "Tired, perhaps; he has been working. As

you were saying-" But the glimpsed picture stayed with Stanton; the fatigued young face against his arm, the drowsy, heavylidded eyes flashing keenly awake, the involuntary expression of angry shame at the moment's weakness.

And he would sooner have tied Floyd In his seat, after that, than have added the fine insult of offering to relieve

"Ready," some one called; the workmen scattered in every direction, and the Mercury was off once more.

"Car comin'," warned the mechanician, as they shot from the paddock entrance on to the track. "Duplex

Floyd was himself again, watchfully usinesslike, nonchalantly fearless.

around the track and transformed it

announcing Stanton's coming victory. Driving evenly, steadily, refusing Green was warning Floyd, by way of all challenges to speed duels and at- farewell. tempting none of his deadly tactics of the night before, Stanton piloted his car to the inevitable result. At nine o'clock the flag dropped, and amid a hubbub of enthusiasm the Mercury crossed the line, winner.

column of unused tires.

strike you?"

ness and humor.

began.

"I have asked you." "It struck me rather hard. But-

do you.' "I need a mechanician to race with me for the rest of the season," Stan- ing-room benches, reading a magazine;

want the position?" Floyd straightened: even in the uncertain light the color could be seen to rise over his face.

"You'd take me; you?" "Yes.

motor. I understand my work, but for road racing-you know I can't crank your car or change a tire without help.

Stanton smiled grimly. "I guess I am big enough to crank my own car," he quoted at him. "You have your nerve. I can't have a whining quitter to drive with me. I make der his fine, clear skin. you the offer; take or leave it. But remember, I am likely to break your

"I'll chance that," answered Floyd, drawing a quick breath, and held out his slender hand. "I'll come."

The pact was made. In after time, Stanton came to wonder at its bald simplicity.

mechanician, at least superficially cleaner and wrapped in a long dust coat, was leaving the training camp "See here, Floyd; you are going to ships as most men did. race with Stanton right along, he says."

"You won't get along with him," he don't bother about that-I suppose you

Color and glow faded from the sky; of small conventionalities, and arroonce more the search-lights flared out gantly took such diversion as the mo ment offered. And should be play the to a silver ribbon, running between game to which she invited him, or walls of ebony darkness except where | decline it? Was it worth while? He the lamp-gemmed stands arose. Al- was weary to exhaustion, but still he ready newspapers were being cried remained gazing at the box of laurel. "You can't stand Stanton," Mr.

And the mechanician was laughing.

CHAPTER IV.

The Road to Massachusetts. Stanton and Floyd did not meet Later, when the triumphant tumult again for a fortnight. Their ways of in the Mercury camp had somewhat life did not run parallel except when subsided, Stanton walked over to a race was due or taking place. The where Floyd was leaning against a Mercury car had gone back to the factory for a thorough overhauling, "You've had twenty-four hours of after the twenty-four-hour grind, and me," he said abruptly. "How did it it would have as soon occurred to Stanton to seek out his machine as Floyd raised his candid gray eyes his mechanician. Some drivers grow to the other's face, and in spite of ex- sentimentally attached to their cars, haustion smiled with a glinting frank- watching them fondly and jealously; he did not, consistently and tempera "If you want me to tell you-" he mentally practical in outlook on the minor facts of life.

It was in the railroad depot, the morning he started for Massachusetts, I'd like you to like me as well as I that Stanton saw his mechanician for the first time since the Beach victory. Floyd was seated on one of the waitton gave brief information. "Do you in his gray suit and long overcoat, his head with its clustering bronze curls bent over his book, he looked like a particularly delicate and pretty boy of eighteen, perhaps even a trifle ef-Remembering that cry feminate. from the midst of the perilous strug-"You know-oh, I can tune up a | gle with the Duplex: "Cut him closer; he's weakening! Cut him close! Stanton's lip curved in amused appreciation as he crossed to the absorbed reader.

"Good morning," he remarked.

Floyd glanced up, then rose with an exclamation and held out his band, his ready color rising like a girl's un-

"Good morning; I didn't see you coming," he responded. "No, you were reading. You are go-

"To Lowell. The car is aboard, you

"I did not know," corrected Stanton with indifference. He was studying the other curiously, striving to The assistant manager overtook analyze his singular attractiveness Floyd, a little later, when that young and to find the reason why he, Stanton, should feel pleasure at the prospect of having this companion at his side; he, who had never formed friend-

Floyd laughed, his grey eyes mis-

"Well, I know. We've been working Mr. Green agitated his foreboding all the week at the machine, and we've got her ticking like a watch. You



Stanton Was Leaning Across the Wheel Chatting With Them.

asserted darkly. "No one does. He, | don't have to, it's up to us. But if he is-you'll see. But you won't you will take her out on the track toleave us on the edge of a race, will morrow, I'll tune her up to the last We are entered at Massachu- notch." setts, for week after next; you'll turn up on time, no matter what he does in between?"

"Surely, sir. I would not leave any one without notice, of course." "Plenty of notice, Floyd. For you

can't stand Stanton." Stanton at that moment was in his tent, contemplating with cynical speculation a florist's box of fragrant green leaves lying on a chair. There was no card with these, but they were sprays of laurel. In fancy he saw the message that had accompanied the orchids, the delicately engraved letters: Valerie Atherton Carlisle, Did she take him for a matinee idol, he scoffed; or, what did she want? Something, she wanted something of him. What? Only amusement, probably. He had not grown to manhood in New

Suddenly Stanton put his finger on the thing he sought, one thing that made this mechanician different; and voiced his thought before considering

"You're a different class, Floyd," he stated abruptly. "You're no workman, nor descendant of workmen." Floyd stared, startled at the brusk irrelevance, then melted into a

straight, direct smile as he met the keen gaze.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Leaning Tower's Secret.

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