



**SYNOPSIS.**

At the beginning of great automobile race the mechanic of the Mercury, Stanton's machine, drops dead. Strange youth, Jessa 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 flowers from Miss Carlisle, which he ignores. Stanton meets Miss Carlisle on a train. They agree to take walk, and train leaves. Stanton and Miss Carlisle follow in auto. Accident by which Stanton is hurt is mysterious. Floyd, at lunch with Stanton, tells of his boyhood. Stanton again meets Miss Carlisle and they dine together. Stanton comes to track sick, but makes race.

**CHAPTER VI. (Continued.)**

There was a bad turn. His eyes on the machine in front, Stanton rounded the banked curve at a pace which sent the shrieking crowd of spectators recoiling from the danger-line and sprayed yellow soil high into the air. As the Mercury lurched into the straight stretch beyond, as Floyd was in the act of turning to examine the rear tires, there came a sharp explosion and a reeling stagger of the car as a rear casing blew out, wrenched itself bodily from the wheel and rolled like a hoop into a field a hundred yards away.

The machine tottered to the edge of the road, stopping under the powerful brakes. Floyd sprang out, dragging loose one of the extra tires carried, while Stanton reached for the tool-box. They had no need or time for conversation, as they worked, people from all directions flocking around in a pushing, eager circle to watch the proceedings.

The two worked well together, Floyd's deft swiftness balanced by Stanton's strength. When the task was finished, the driver first regained his place.

"Get in," he ordered crisply. "Are you going to take all day, or am I going to catch that Atlanta?"

Floyd obeyed first and retorted second, an invaluable habit.

"If you're going to catch anything but a snail, I'd suggest a slow-down for that turn," he countered, in the blurred accent so softly deceptive. "No tire built is going to stick on a wheel under such roughing."

Stanton shot a glance askant out of the corner of a stormy blue-black eye. He was irritated by the lost time, he felt more ill than he could have been brought to admit, and interference pricked him like a spur.

"I'll give you a lesson in driving," he cast across his shoulder, and bent over the wheel.

It was Stanton at his worst and best who made the next two circuits of the long course. Other racers, warned by their mechanics of the thunderbolt bearing down upon them, drew prudently to one side, preferring the chance of later regaining the advantage. From every angle and curve the people fled, at sight of the gray car followed by its whirlwind of dust and carrying the huge "S" on its hood.

Twice the Mercury rushed past the grand-stand, to a tumult of cheers drowned by the car's own roar. The second time, the two men glimpsed an official rising, megaphone in hand, and rightly guessed that they had made the fastest circuit of the day.

And Floyd had received the promised lesson, for Stanton had safely negotiated the turn that before cost them a fire, at a pace equally fast.

Safely, once; but, not content, he came around the second time driving as furiously, with unslackened speed. Down upon the turn they swept again, Stanton unerringly repeating his exquisite feat of skill and twisting the Mercury around on the two inside wheels; then the predicted happened. The crack of an exploding tire came while they were on the bend, instantly echoed by the bursting of its mate from the opposite wheel; the car tore itself from control under the double shock and shot off the course into the field beyond, plowing deep furrows in the soft earth until it returned with a final crash.

Partly held by his steering-wheel, Stanton was flung out on the meadow grass as the car upset, its speed then so much checked that he escaped scarcely bruised. Floyd, unprotected, had been hurled from his seat by the first shock and lay half-stunned near the edge of the course.

From far and near came the people's cries of horror and shrills for aid. But before the first man reached them, Stanton was up and at the side of his mechanic.

"Floyd!" he panted. "Floyd!" Floyd was already rising to one

knee; gasping for breath, soiled with dust and grass-stains, and with the blood welling from a jagged rent in his left arm, but with his attention only fixed on Stanton.

"You're—all right?" he articulated. "If Yes. A fool always is. You—"

But he could see for himself that the mechanic was not seriously injured, without Floyd's reassuring nod.

"Call me what you like," Stanton permitted, between clenched teeth, as he dragged out his handkerchief to bandage the slender arm.

The appalled crowd was upon them. With a sputtering roar the Duplex machine rounded the turn and sped down the straight stretch, its mechanic starting back over his shoulder at the wreck. But Floyd brushed the girlish curts off his forehead and staggered erect, helpless laughter shaking him.

"Call you? I think you've got the best disposition an' the worst temper I ever saw! Tie this up an' we'll fight the car. We've got to be movin' on."

There were plenty of sympathetic helpers. Incredible to the witnesses, but as Floyd had foreseen, the Mercury had not materially suffered. The big car was righted by fifty hands; Stanton and Floyd—unsaid, according to racing rules—put on the new tires, and took their seats amid hearty admiration and good wishes.

Twenty minutes after she left the course, the Mercury shot down it once more. By the time the grand-stand was fully aware that "Stanton had got his again," and the ambulance had been hurried clanging to the scene of the possible tragedy, the Mercury whirled past the judges, running more comet-like than ever.

But Stanton took the turns conservatively; for him.

The race was lost. Even Stanton could not regain the half-hour lead given his competitors. Late in the fourth hour he signaled Floyd to lean closer, and when he was obeyed:

"Where's the Duplex?" he questioned eagerly.

"At its repair pit for the last hour," Floyd made hopeful answer. "An' there's only the Atlanta ahead of us."

Stanton shook his head, but let out his car a little faster.

The Mercury came across the line, at the finish, just five minutes behind the Atlanta; to receive fully as great an ovation as the winning car. The spectacular driving, the record of the fastest lap and highest speed ever made on that course, the second place won in spite of the accident, almost eclipsed the Atlanta's victory.

In the midst of the joyous tumult, Floyd descended, stiff and weary enough after the continuous run of five hours and fifty-eight minutes. But Stanton did not follow; leaning upon his steering-wheel, the focus of snapping cameras, curious crowds, and blended congratulations and sympathy. Only when one of the judges came over to shake hands, was the explanation made evident.

"If I am to get out, some one will have to help me," announced Stanton impassively, and unclasped his mask, baring a face gray with exhaustion under its coating of caked dust.

And, in fact, it was necessary to aid the cramped, over-taxed driver to dismount from his car; to the wonder of all those familiar with his usual superb endurance.

A little later Floyd, some of the grime removed, somewhat rested, and issuing from the ambulance surgeon's care with his arm bandaged in civilized fashion, felt a touch on his shoulder.

"I'm going to get out of this up-rnar," Stanton briefly imparted. "Come with me; and for your things and stay at my hotel tonight."

Floyd drew back, hesitating oddly. "I'm sorry," he began.

Stanton's straight dark brows contracted.

"You mean that you don't want anything personal to do with your brute of a driver? Oh, say so."

"No, no! Only—"

The steel-keen eyes sent one direct glance into the troubled gray ones.

"Good-by," pronounced Stanton definitely, and turned on his heel.

"Stanton!" cried Floyd, in distress. The other kept on, unheeding. "Stanton!" Floyd appealed, overtaking him. "Please—I give you my word I never meant that. I've got to be back at my own hotel, tonight, that was all. I'll do anything you say."

Stanton slowly halted. "Will you come with me now, to dinner? Suit yourself."

"I'd like to," was the humble surrender. Like a woman, Floyd yielded to a superior will; like a man, there were no small reservations in his yielding.

There was a taxicab waiting; to it Stanton led the way.

The destination was one of the large hotels of the city, and neither of the companions were dressed for the public dining-room. In the guest-crowded lobby Stanton paused to order dinner sent to his own apartment, perfectly indifferent to the sensation caused by their entrance.

"You are unwell, sir?" the clerk ventured, regarding him wide-eyed.

"No," he denied laconically. But he looked far more fatigued than his comparatively frail mechanic, nevertheless. Fatigued, and ill.

"You didn't hurt yourself in our upset, I hope," Floyd said with anxiety, when they were alone in the stiff, impersonal hotel room.

"No. I had a bad night of it," Stanton explained. He sat down in an arm-chair, resting his head against the cushioned back. "Make yourself comfortable as you can, Floyd. There is nothing the matter with me—there can't be, I never was sick a day since I can remember. Probably I need feeding; I've eaten nothing since that confounded dinner last evening, and it is nearly six o'clock now."

But, after all, when the food was brought, Stanton could eat none of it; although maintaining a pretense of doing so, which forbade his companion to comment upon the fact.

"Were you feeling ill yesterday?" Floyd inquired, when the last course was removed and they were left to themselves. His own bearing was less assured than usual, his gait subdued to quietness almost save of timidity.

"Not until evening, after dinner." The mechanic looked at him, started to speak, checked himself, and at last impulsively put the indiscreet question:

"Do you mind telling me where you dined?"

"Of course not," Stanton returned, without a trace of hesitation. "With Mr. Carlisle of the tire company, and his daughter. They are here for the race; He wanted to talk tires to me. Heaven knows why. We didn't get very far; after Miss Carlisle left us I began to feel so sick that I excused myself and got away to the nearest doctor."

Floyd turned his head, and caught his breath in a brief, quick sigh. When he looked back at his host, his canny eyes were clearer and more gentle than they had been since the assistant manager had given the account of Stanton's amazing disappearance.

"Acute indigestion, your doctor called your attack?"

"Something like it."

"Miss Carlisle doesn't seem to be a lucky companion," Floyd observed dryly. "She made you miss your train here, you came near breaking your wrist with her car, and her dinner seems to have poisoned you. What did she give you, lobster and ice-cream?"

"No—I hardly know. I never care what I eat." He passed his hand impatiently across his forehead, suddenly giddy.

Floyd leaned nearer.

"Stanton, how did you feel? What? Tell me; I'm not just curious."

"Nausea, violent successive attacks

of seasickness that left me too weak to stand. I've got the headache yet."

His voice died out; he had a vague impression of Floyd starting up and coming toward him.

"I had to make the doctor steady me with some drug so I could race," he resumed abruptly. "I'm brute enough without that in me, Floyd."

"Hush, try to rest," urged his mechanic's earnest young voice across the mist.

"I'm tired," he conceded.

It seemed to him a long time afterward that a sensation of exquisite coolness extinguished the flame-like pain binding his temples, although the rich sunset glow was still in the room when he opened his eyes. Floyd was bending over him, bathing his forehead with light, firm touches. Stanton's savage irritability of a strong man

"What a position for you and me! What will you do for me—the engine is shaking loose from the chassis, by the feeling? Get your tools."

"Don't try to talk. I have sent for a doctor," soothed Floyd. "You are all right. Here," a hand was slipped behind his head, a glass of water held to his lips. "Drink this."

"You might have been a nurse," Stanton wandered dreamily. "Your sister couldn't do better. And you're so nonsensically good-looking! Floyd," the feverishly brilliant eyes flashed wide, "what is your sister's name?"

"Jessica."

"Jesse—Jessica?"

"We are twins; I told you that. They named us so purposely."

The heavy white bandage encircling his mechanic's left arm caught the patient's falling attention.

"You've had a bad day; go home and rest," gasped Stanton the brute, before things slipped from his ken.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

**SHREWD IDEA OF DIPLOMAT**

Where Russian Officer of Embassy Proved More Than a Match for Abdul Hamid.

Diplomatists abroad tell how a distinguished member of the Russian corps diplomatique cleverly outwitted Abdul Hamid, the late Sultan of Turkey. The Russian displayed a curious ingenuity in introducing the business of his country in the guise of personal pleasure.

It appears that the Sultan had absolutely refused to grant an audience to any member of the diplomatic body at Constantinople and that during the period in question Abdul Hamid spent the greater part of his time in cock-fighting, an amusement whereof he was passionately fond.

The Russian heard that his imperial majesty stood in need of fresh birds to supply the place of those killed in fight, whereupon the wily Muscovite procured a fine-looking white fowl of the barnyard species, caused it to be trimmed and spurred to resemble a gamecock, and sent it in a richly decorated cage to the Sultan.

The ruse was successful, but the Sultan, at first delighted with the gift, soon sent for the diplomatist to explain, if he could, why his bird had shown no inclination to fight. The Russian went, examined the bird in the presence of Abdul Hamid, and with great astonishment and regret acknowledged that it was quite unable to cope with the royal gamecocks, which were undoubtedly of a superior breed.

A conference followed on the subject of gamecocks in general; and when this was finished the Muscovite succeeded in drawing the Sultan in a mood of conversation of a different character, and in time adroitly introduced the political matter he had so long awaited an opportunity to discuss. After a long interview he returned to his embassy triumphant over his colleagues.—Harper's Weekly.

Escaped, but Without Booty. A wealthy Swiss merchant at Lausanne has just outwitted thieves who sent to him a letter demanding that a large sum of money should be brought to a certain place, and threatening to murder him if he refused to send it. He informed the police, and a trap was set. A servant, carrying a packet of worthless paper, went to the appointed place—a railway station where an express train stops for a short while. When the train, arrived a woman dashed out of a first-class compartment, snatched the packet from the servant's hands, and re-entered the train. The train, which usually starts from the station within a few minutes of the arrival, was delayed by arrangement, and the detective entered. They found the compartment empty, with the door on the side furthest from the platform wide open. They saw the woman enter a motor-car containing three men, which raced away.

About the House. In case of a sudden leak, when it is difficult to get a plumber quickly, turn off the water and mix some common yellow soap and whiting with just enough water to make a thick paste. It will be found to do temporarily as well as solder, provided you turn the water on again rather slowly, as a sudden rush might force it out.

The Deadly Dust. Out of every thousand of those whose occupations call for constant work in dusty quarters, five die of consumption, according to German official figures; whereas among those who are not exposed to the action of dust only two out of a thousand die of the disease named.

The Worst of It. "My wife always tears her hair when I come home late." "Which makes you feel mean, eh?" "Yes; and which also makes it necessary for me to buy more hair."—Boston Record.

How to Be Prominent. "Why aren't you a suffragist?" "I think I can get more publicity by opposing the movement," replied the prominent lady courteously.



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