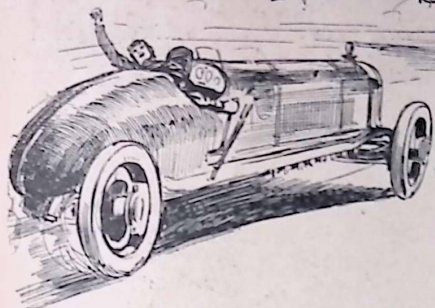


KINGS OF SPEED!

BY Alfred Edgar.



Thrills and dare-devil driving are features of this story of the world's greatest motor road-race

THE FIRST CHAPTER

Sons of Speed!

"NINETY—easy!"

Bob Hamar reached up and belated the words in his brother's ear, and even as he spoke they were snatched from his lips by the terrific gale of wind that whirled past his head.

Roger Hamar responded with a short nod, while his bronzed, tool-scarred hands rested firmly on the big, rubber-bound steering-wheel, holding the long, grey racing car to the wide road.

Bob snuggled back to the mechanician's seat, getting a fresh hold on the leather grip which was bolted to the near side of the scuttle; he slipped his right arm through the little hole behind his brother's squab and steadied himself anew against the vibration of the hurtling machine.

The magnificent car shot on in a welter of dust and raging sound. Its exhaust was roaring madly, and from the blackened end of the flat, copper exhaust pipe there darted a tongue of flame, visible despite the brilliance of the noon-time sunshine.

From the front of its rounded radiator to the tip of the pointed tail, the low machine was perfectly streamlined. Above the high

edge of the scuttle, the bared heads of Bob and Roger just showed as they crouched behind their tiny, wire-meshed wind-screens.

As the silvery-grey car shot onwards down the straight, little whorls of dust flung out from beneath the threshing tyres, mingling in a low cloud behind. The machine seemed to leap on the broad road as it thundered on, the even roar of the engine lost in the staccato note of the exhaust.

The long, grey Warwick car had lapped the six-mile course at Twynham's Park at ninety miles an hour; its speed on the straight stretches had been actually over a hundred and five. The machine was tuned almost to perfection; and it needed to be, because one of the most sporting contests in the whole history of motor-racing was due to be run off in less than forty-eight hours time on the specially prepared track at Twynham's.

Sir Thomas Dent owned Twynham's Park; he was uncle to the two fellows in the silvery car. He had been interested in motor-racing since its inception, and it was he who had financed the Warwick Cars, Ltd. Roger Hamar was the star speedman of the firm, and Bob's one ambition was to make as great a name as his brother had done.

Roger's features were strong and lean, tanned almost to a coppery hue; his clear

grey eyes gleamed out from his bronzed skin with a strange, steady keenness in just such a way as did those of his younger brother.

Roger knew cars inside out; he had no nerves at all. Neither had Bob, for that matter, and he was already becoming known in the motor-racing world. Already he had raced at Brooklands and in some of the minor Continental events; he had acted as mechanic to his brother in the last Italian Grand Prix at the Monza Speedway.

Now he was to play the same part in a battle of giants—in a race that was absolutely unique. There had never been a contest like it, and it had been made possible by the splendid generosity and sportsmanship of Sir Thomas Dent.

Road racing was barred in England, but the old baronet had overcome that difficulty. He had turned his great estate at Twynhams into a speedway. Part of the roads that traversed the grounds formed a six-mile triangular circuit; the roads on this circuit he had had specially widened, while corners and bends had been cut and straightened.

There were not many people who knew the reason behind all this; few did outside the two young Hamars and Sir Thomas. In the old days when the baronet himself had raced, the one speedman whom he had been constantly against was an Italian named the Comte d'Alessan.

The Comte was just as good a sportsman as the baronet, but he almost always seemed to win. Whenever Sir Thomas had come up against him—and that was frequently—the Italian got home first. Through all the years that had followed the baronet had tried to get a machine which would give its exhaust

gas to the Ballago, the make of car which the Comte d'Alessan financed.

Never had Sir Thomas been able to beat the Italian machine—until Roger and Bob joined the Warwicks and showed the motor-racing world some dare-devil driving and real speed.

Because of the publicity which Sir Thomas' scheme received, the race attracted enormous attention. The motoring world saw that it was likely to overshadow even the great events held at Indianapolis and on the classical French courses.

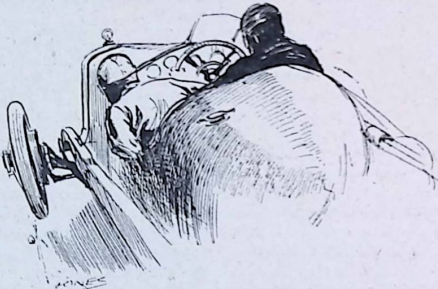
Entries for the cup which he offered came from America, from Italy, Spain, France, Belgium, and even Holland offered a team of cars.

When the selections had been made of only those machines which had earned real fame on the world's great tracks, there were left eight teams of three cars each. The cars were to be handled by the pick of the world's drivers, veritable kings of speed. Out of them all, Sir

Thomas looked to Roger Hamar on the Warwick to win—to win and to beat the Ballagos, thus avenging the many defeats he himself had suffered in the years before at the hands of the Comte d'Alessan.

There was one other event. That was a race between himself and the Italian count—on the cars which they had driven twenty years or more before. They were old, out-of-date machines, fit only for the museum; but the sporting, stout-hearted veterans would race them as they had raced so many times before.

But the great interest was not centred on these two old cars; the eyes of the world were on the wonderful machines which would fight it out in dust and tumult later in the day.



Bob, hunched up in the mechanic's seat, peered grimly ahead, as the car roared on (See page 155)

Between these, rivalry was already keener than had ever been observed in other events. The drivers risked their machines in impromptu races during the practice spins, and in just such a little contest did Roger Hamar indulge as the silvery Warwick neared the end of the straight.

Ahead, he saw a black machine—an American car, driven by a speedman who had won the Iron Crown of Monza and the 500 miles race at Indianapolis earlier in the year—Danny Farrell.

The sable car showed in a haze of dust racing down to Brace Corner—the first on the course after the replenishment pits.

Roger had never raced against Farrell before, nor had he come up against him during practice spins, so that he had never found an opportunity of discovering whether the black machine was all that it was alleged to be. He would, in any case, be able to test the pace of Farrell—if the American took the challenge.

That the speedman on the black machine was only too ready became evident as she reached Brace Corner. His mechanician saw them as they took the wide bend and, even before they were round, he was squirming in his seat to wave them on.

Roger slowed for the corner, clicking beautifully through his gears. Above the roar of the car Bob heard the whine of over-running gears and the gripping of the four brake drums; then they hurtled round without the slightest suggestion of a skid and took the straight again in the haze of dust that the black car had left behind.

Bob, hunched up in his seat, peered through the wire mesh in front of him; he saw the American mechanician turning round and grinning, waving them on again; then the fellow settled down in his seat and gave his attention to his work.

Roger swung the silvery-grey car a little to the right, clear of the dust and his foot went down little by little on the accelerator, opening up. The machine gathered speed and more speed with every fraction that his foot went down, hurtling onwards like a living thing.

The road showed red with gravel and with the dust from the bricks that had been used

to pave the parts where it had been widened. It shot beneath the threshing tyres like a crimson carpet. The Warwick held to it with a firmness that told of wonderful design, but, for all that, Bob was bucketed in his seat. He held on with all the strength that was in his muscular arms, forcing himself down in his seat, and bracing his back against the squab.

He saw Roger's knees thudding on the cotton-waste pads that had been strapped to the steering-pillar; saw the muscles standing out on his wrists and hands as he gripped the big wheel, and he saw the tensed, square jaw and the half-closed eyes.

His bronzed features carried the same expression as they had borne during the big race on the Monza Speedway, and Bob knew that if they didn't pass the black machine it would be because Farrell was driving a better car.

Fifty yards separated the two speeding machines when they were clear of Brace Corner; they accelerated in unison and for a little more than a quarter of a mile the distance between remained the same. Farrell's mechanician did not look round again—which was in accordance with good manners on the racing track; he would take no further notice of the silvery car until it was on them—if that happened, then he'd pass the information to his driver, and Farrell would edge over the few feet which would mean all the difference between an easy passing and a tight one.

The distance between Brace Corner and the next—Ferry Bend—was a little under two miles. The centre part of this road had been newly built for the race, cutting out a nasty curve and a narrow bridge over the Trent Brook. This new section of road included a wooden trestle bridge which ran over another part of the stream.

The road dipped slightly to this bridge, and Bob Hamar glimpsed the new wooden posts at the sides as they topped the slope.

He saw, half a mile in front of them, and still some little way from the bridge, a group of four cars. They were, seemingly, all out, and engaged in just such an impromptu race as that between the Warwick and the American.

This racing during practice was one of the features of the preparations for the Dent Gold Cup event; there were always crowds on the course—for the estate had been opened to the public—and the spectators were certain of seeing some real speed work.

There was a crowd of these people on the grassy banks at the beginning of the wide bridge, and many of them scuttled back as the four hurtling cars roared down on them.

It seemed to Bob that there was no distance at all between the quartette of multi-coloured machines; they appeared to be running wheel to wheel. He could see them only hazily because of the dust that Farell was raising, but he knew that there was some close work going on ahead.

He turned his attention to the black car in front. Against the dark hue of the short, rounded tail he could see the stabbing flare of the exhaust, and he could hear its vicious, tearing note as the machine sped on.

The whole fabric of his own car was vibrating with the terrific speed. From beyond the bent-edged, steel footplate against which his canvas shoes rested, came the thunderous roar of the engine, and from out the cavity there rushed a volume of heated air, almost hissing as it passed his body and legs and escaped through a cavity at the end of the tail.

Down the slope the grey and the black cars rushed, bellowing and roaring like two monster metal demons. The dust swirled and eddied behind, rising high in a thin film after their passing.

Bob peered through the meshed screen just in time to see the four cars top, the slight rise of the bridge and literally leap at the slope beyond. The people who were standing by were watching them, and he saw them turn to wave to Farell, as though to urge him in pursuit.

He noticed, then, that they were gaining on the black machine. His keen eyes, attuned to judgment of distance, told him that the Warwick had notched yards out of the American's lead—ten yards at the least. And they were still gaining.

He pushed his body forward in the seat and reached upwards to Roger's ear.

"Show 'em how!" he yelled. "Put your foot down!"

Roger's grim-set lips stretched in a grin showing his white teeth. On the instant those teeth were covered with a layer of grit from the dust on the road—but he did not notice that.

They were ninety feet behind Farell when the American car touched the flat hundred yards to the wooden bridge—a distance which it would cover in a matter of barely two seconds, for both cars were touching the hundred mile an hour mark.

Bob had a glimpse of people standing well back on the banks. They looked to be waving and shouting, but he had no chance to see what they were actually doing.

He fixed his gaze on the black car and saw it streaking for the bridge. In what seemed the fraction of a second later the wheels of the American machine were thundering on the wooden structure.

Bob saw it reach the low crown of the bridge, and the threshing wheels actually left the road as the car leaped over the slight, abrupt rise. Then——

Bob was never too sure of what happened then.

There were whitened posts and rails at the side of the bridge. Suddenly, and for no apparent reason, these seemed to fly into the air, hurtling high. The bridge, where those posts had been, rucked up as though it was made of cloth, while half a dozen broken, dust-filmed planks jutted out of the breach.

That quartette of cars which had sped before had tested the strength of that bridge, and had found it weak. The structure had given under the strain, and the passing of the black car had been all that was wanted for its collapse—it was collapsing now.

Bob knew that Roger must realise it. He saw the big fellow's hands move on the wheel, saw those tensed muscles flex and strain, glimpsed his squared jaw and gleaming eyes as he sent the car on.

There was no time to stop, no chance to brake and pull up. But there was a chance that the car might speed over that collapsing bridge—and Roger took that chance.

He asked the Warwick for every atom of

speed that was in the roaring engine. His foot went down on the accelerator with all the great strength of his tensed leg-muscles, clamping the throttle wide.

The fraction of a second later and they were hurtling amidst the falling woodwork that had formed the bridge-rails. Bob ducked, yet he still managed to look ahead.

The front wheels of the great machine hit the bridge with a thud. Beneath the impact, the timbers at onesidehook and broke, thundering down with a mighty roar.

The road-way sagged at the crown—sagged and dropped even as the silvery machine hurtled to the spot.

Just as the black car had done, the wheels leaped clear and the Warwick surged on, driving above cracking timbers and jagged rents, and hitting the dust of the good hard, red road on the other side.

It was while the machine was actually in the air that a whitened post came plugging down. Others bounced off the rounded tail and joined the ruck of broken woodwork which had once been the trestle-bridge; but this thick post drove into the scuttle of the car from the off side.

It caught Roger's tensed arms just as the car struck the firm ground and hurtled

onwards. Bob, bending from the threatening post, saw his brother's hand swept clear of the wheel, and the car lurched across the road. On the instant, Roger's left hand was shooting back to the rubber-bound frame again, but not before Bob had found a hold there and had steadied the great car.

A moment later and the machine was straight again, saved by Bob's swift thought and action. Already Roger was braking, the

whine of the drums sounding as the wheels threshed to a halt in the middle of the road.

"Hurt?" asked Bob, wriggling stiffly forward in his seat.

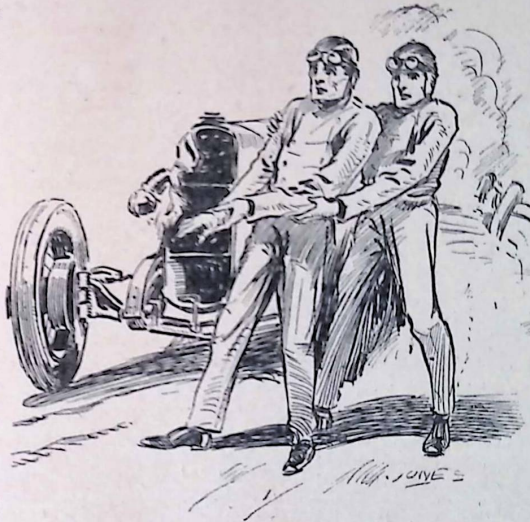
"It caught my wrist!" Roger answered. He was gripping his right wrist with his left hand, and he was frowning at the pain. He turned in his seat to look back, despite his hurt.

Where the bridge had been there

was now a towering cloud of dust—the collapse of the structure had been absolute and complete, only a wide gap showed now.

"Narrow shave that!" Roger commented as he saw it. "Wonder if they can repair it in time for the race?"

The effect of the smashed bridge on the race was his only thought; he did not consider the almost miraculous fact that they had come



"What's the matter?" Bob asked his brother anxiously. "That post has broken my wrist!" Roger answered slowly, in a voice that was vibrant with anger. "I shan't be able to drive in the big race!" (See page 155)

through two incidents which might have meant instant and horrible death.

"I hope they jolly well——" Bob's voice died away as he noticed his brother's face. It was twisted with pain now, and he was trying to get out of his seat. Bob climbed to the road, then he helped his brother out of the scuttle. For a few seconds the big fellow stood feeling his wrist and, as his fingers moved over it, Bob saw the colour drain slowly from under the tan of his face.

"What's the matter?" he asked.
"What—— Do you feel——"

"That post has broken my wrist!" Roger answered slowly, in a voice that was vibrant with anger. "I shan't be able to drive in the race!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER

Veterans of the Track!

THE fact that a broken wrist doesn't necessarily keep a man in bed was but poor consolation to Roger Hamar. There have been stout-hearted, plucky speedmen who have gone into a race with a damaged limb, but their pluck has never been rewarded with victory. Roger Hamar knew that he could not drive with but one hand, and he knew that, if he attempted it, he would stand no chance of winning.

For this reason, he vacated his seat to his brother. Bob was glad of the chance he was being given, but he wished with all his heart that it had come about some other way.

For some little time, the collapse of the bridge looked as though it might mean the postponement of the race. When it was reported that it would be impossible to reconstruct it in time for the race on lines strong enough to stand the shocks of the speeding cars, there was many a black brow in Twynhams Park.

It was Sir Thomas Dent who solved the difficulty. He called a meeting of all drivers and mechanics engaged in the race, and he took them to the branch road which had been cut off when the new section and bridge had been built.

"Gentlemen," he said. "I will have every available man set to widening this half-mile of road and to broadening the entrance,

but I cannot enlarge the bridge over the brook. It is impossible for two cars at speed to pass over the bridge together—one can get across with comfort. The trestle bridge cannot be built in time for the race; but if you will agree to the inclusion of this stretch of road and the narrow bridge—the race can be run."

When this little speech had been translated to the Belgian drivers and the Italians, to the Spaniards, the Frenchmen, and to the team from Holland there was, for a short space, pandemonium.

After that, every driver and mechanic went down to the Trent Bridge to look at it. The peculiar thing about their inspection was that they did not examine the bridge or the width of it. What they looked at was what lay on either side of it, and just how far their machines would have to fall if they happened to—well, to miss the bridge.

"Waal, Sir Thomas," drawled Farell, "if you'll hook up them spiked fenceings on th' near-side bank, I'll race over that bit of course until the li'l bridge is red-hot!"

And everybody else said the same. It was the Comte d'Alessan who put the finishing touch to the discussion. The baronet's great rival was a short, spare, wiry man, and his hair was as snow-white as that of Sir Thomas. Where the baronet's features were the rich red of an English country gentleman, the Comte's were bronzed and wrinkled. But there was the same gleam bright in his brown eyes as showed in the Britisher's, and the sly dig that he gave was accompanied by a flashing smile.

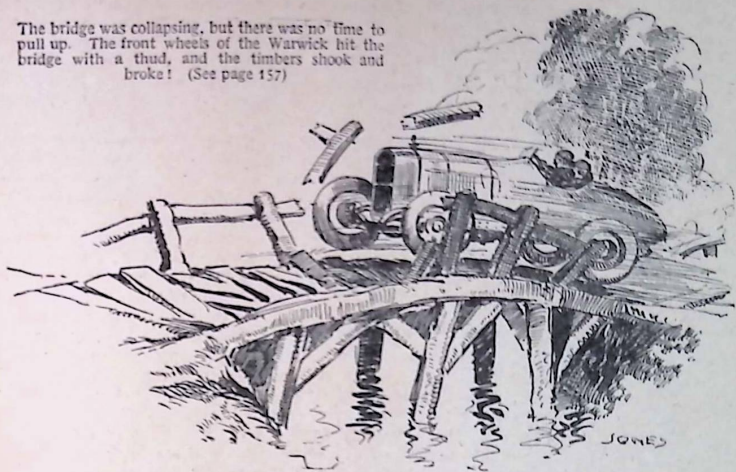
"You and I, Sir Thomas, when we race, should we weesh to pass togeezzer—it will be my ver' great pleasure to make way for your ver' rotten automobile!"

"Look here, my boy," roared the baronet, "if your antiquated pile of rattling junk can beat my old machine to this bridge, I'll—I'll give you the race!"

And the Comte d'Alessan smiled and bowed; then he laughed into the rubicund features of the nobleman and extended a slim, strong hand.

"We fight old battles over again, eh?" he asked, as his slim fingers were wrapped in Sir Thomas's broad palm. "Perhaps,

The bridge was collapsing, but there was no time to pull up. The front wheels of the Warwick hit the bridge with a thud, and the timbers shook and broke! (See page 157)



thees time, fortune will favour you, and you——”

“Anyway, we’ll show some of these youngsters what the old ’uns can do, eh?” and the baronet laughed jovially and clapped a hand on Bob Hamar’s shoulder. “This youngster’s coming as my mechanician. My nephew. Haven’t met him, have you?”

“His brother I know well,” answered the Comte.

“You’ll know this lad a jolly sight better after he’s beaten your rotten Ballagos in the big race,” Sir Thomas answered.

The Comte’s eyes widened.

“You drive?” he queried. “You drive the Warwick?”

“Yes,” answered Bob.

For what seemed long seconds the grey-haired Italian gazed at him, surveying his resolute features and looking deep into his grey eyes. Bob met squarely the gaze of this veteran of the motor-track, and he was proud to take the old sportsman’s hand as he extended it to him.

“You will have a ver’ hard task to conquer

Deo—my ver’ great driver,” he said slowly. “But I weesh you ver’ good fortune.”

Bob knew that an Italian named Pietro Deo was the crack driver of the Ballago team; he was a speedman who had swept the board on the Italian tracks, and who had been victorious in France as well. There would be credit in beating such a man as he.

Bob knew that he would have his great chance in the big race; that, if he won the Dent Gold Cup he would not only please his brother and gain his uncle’s everlasting blessing, but he would make a name for himself that would live for ever in the annals of motor-racing.

And he meant to win.

It had been originally arranged that he should go as mechanician to Sir Thomas in the “Veterans’ Race” the morning before the big event. That arrangement was still to hold, for two reasons.

The first was that Bob had prepared the old car for his uncle, and the old baronet wanted him in the seat at his side; the second reason was that the two or three hours spent in making the car finally ready, as well

as the time of the actual race, would occupy the young fellow's mind and leave him no opportunity to think on the important event of the afternoon.

So he was to play a part in both the races that were near to Sir Thomas's heart—mechanician in the sporting event of the morning, and driver in the Gold Cup race. A pretty full day, a lot of people thought—but Bob knew that he could manage it all.

All that night, all the next day, and all the night following, gangs of road men worked like demons on the branch road. Trees came down, ditches were filled, and the track was broadened to its full width of sixty feet.

But the bridge could not be altered. A few projections were removed; nothing more than that could be done. It still remained a death-trap to the driver who would not give a rival room. There were certain to be many duels for precedence on that bridge—and the risk was very great.

Every competing driver knew this, but none quailed. There was a chance that the bridge would not interfere with the race, that it would play no actual part in holding up a car. They did not consider what would happen if a driver, in the heat of the fight, forgot the bridge—or refused to let his rival go ahead.

With the morning of the great day Twynhams park was invaded by crowds who came from all over England and from the Continent. They came by special trains and by fleets of cars; by charabanes and—a party of enthusiastic Americans—by aeroplane.

The course itself was simple, a six-mile triangle, with two dead-straight legs, and a third which included the branch road and Trent Bridge—an ugly and treacherous stretch. The three corners were Brace Corner, Ferry Bend and Home Corner. This last marked the straightest and fastest stretch, and just around it were the grandstands and the replenishment pits, together with the starting and finishing line.

The long grandstands were gay with flags and bunting, streamers and pennants. The pits were full of colour, for each carried the distinguishing sign-board of the cars that it was to supply. These pits were just wire cages, recessed from the tracks; at the back stood

mechanics and helpers; on a broad plank in front of them was every type of tool and spare allowable in the race—from a split pin to a carburettor, from spare wheels to chewing gum. This last is often as much value to a speedman as another ounce of "pep" to his engine.

The track was cleared at nine-thirty. At eleven o'clock the race between Sir Thomas Dent, on an ancient Panhard, and the Comte d'Alessan, on a strange-looking machine which was known as the "Beetle," was due to start.

The Panhard was a strange affair, with the radiator coiled over the front of the engine-cover; the top of the cover could be lifted and held in position by little forks. The driver sat perched high up in his seat, with the steering column running down almost perpendicularly before him. His mechanic was accommodated in a much lower position; both seats were nothing more than boxes, with cushions at the bottom.

The Beetle was an altogether queer affair. The engine cover was nothing but vents, and stuck out in a point at the front. The engine was air-cooled, and the cylinder heads seemed to be about on a level with the axles, so low was the engine slung. The whole effect was extremely rakish, and the Beetle certainly looked to promise speed—and noise.

There was a huge crowd to witness the start of the veteran cars' one-lap race, and most of them agreed that six miles was about as much as the machines would run without falling to pieces.

Bob had been working on the Panhard every moment that he could spare from the Warwick machine during the past month, and he had the engine in pretty good trim. Of course, many parts were hopelessly worn and, according to the agreement of the race, these could not be replaced. But Bob thought that the car would last the course, and he had certainly tuned it to concert pitch—although the "concert" part was nothing but a clattering and a snorting.

When the two machines lined up there was a crowd of celebrities round them. As Bob glanced about him he saw the features of men whose names had been famous in the infancy of motor-racing. They had come to see the



CUTTING OUT THE PAGE!

Two Monster Racing-cars Fighting out a Thrilling Speed Duel in a Great Road Race

two old warriors fight again—and the odds were, as ever, on the Comte d'Alessan.

Sir Thomas climbed to his seat after the machine had been started up, and Bob took his place beside him. The engine was clattering and roaring, the cover was rattling on its shaky hinges and the exhaust was chugging with the purposeful regularity of a gas-engine.

The baronet glanced across to his rival. The Comte was in his seat, settled comfortably behind his steering-wheel, much lower than the baronet. Sir Thomas grinned:

"We'll show these young 'uns, eh, D'Alessan?" he bellowed above the clatter of the Panhard. The count didn't catch his

down on the Beetle. After that it was first one in the lead and then the other all the way to Brace Corner.

There was no speedometer on the car, so Bob could not tell what speed they were making. But there was plenty of noise and dash about the old Panhard. Sir Thomas was bending over the wheel, his eyes shining, grinning to himself when they passed the Beetle; muttering angrily when the low car forged ahead and left them behind.

Both cars raised the dust enormously. When the Beetle was ahead Bob could feel the tiny grains clattering his eyes and nostrils. It seemed to lie thick at Brace Corner, and the cars reached it neck and neck.



Sir Thomas bent over the wheel of the old Panhard, his eyes shining, and grinning to himself when they passed the Beetle. (See this page)

words, but he guessed what he meant, and he smiled. A moment later and they were both watching the red flag of the starter.

Ahead, the road stretched straight as a die to Brace Corner. Bob saw it shimmering in the heat of the morning sun, then he looked at the starter again.

He saw the flag flutter—it dropped.

The Panhard got away with a jump that drove the back of his seat against his spine, then the Panhard was thundering away, to the tremendous cheering of the crowd on either side.

The Beetle leaped into its stride immediately and forged ten yards ahead. Sir Thomas opened up in pursuit, did desperate things with the gear lever, and began to close

The baronet did not think it needful to slow, and he took the corner at top speed. The result was a terrific skid which sent Bob's heart into his mouth. The top-heavy machine slithered the whole width of the corner, appeared to poise on two wheels, gained the horizontal again, and dashed after the Beetle, now nearly fifteen yards in the lead.

"We'll get 'em on the slope!" Sir Thomas shouted; and Bob thought he could foresee some exciting work on the way to Trent Bridge.

They gained nothing on the Beetle until they reached the entrance to the branch road; there the slope to the bridge commenced, and the Panhard began to pick up. Foot by foot they overhauled the Beetle, the

heavier Panhard gaining momentum with every yard that it travelled.

The bridge was hardly half a mile distant, and Bob could see that Sir Thomas was determined to regain the lead and get across first. Possibly he was remembering what D'Alessan had said only a little time before.

On the two cars thundered, rattling and banging, their engine covers clattering and adding to the din, their heavy wheels spurning the red dust, their pilots bent over the steering gear, grim and determined.

Two hundred yards from the bridge and the snaked radiator on the Panhard was level with the Comte d'Alessan. Sir Thomas was shouting words that Bob could not catch, and laughing like a boy.

They forged ahead; by some chance, the Italian managed to urge a little more speed out of his engine, and he drew level again.

Side by side they raced for the bridge. Bob saw Sir Thomas's foot go down on the accelerator, the Panhard spurted, gained two yards of lead—and they were through.

Across the bridge, the baronet turned in his seat to shake his fist at D'Alessan, almost running the car off the track as he did it, then he settled down to make sure of the race.

He lost way up the rise beyond, and the two cars were again running neck and neck at Ferry Bend. It was a ding-dong battle down the straight to Home Corner, and the Panhard had the lead when they reached it. It did not avail Sir Thomas much, for he slipped again.

When he got the car straight once more, D'Alessan had snatched the lead—and two of the Panhard's cylinders were misfiring.

The Beetle thundered on, while the lamed Panhard rumbled up in the rear. The coloured replenishment pits came into view, Bob saw the decorated grand stands, then he glimpsed the Beetle as the car was flagged home as winner.

"Beaten me again! Did you ever see such cursed luck?" gasped Sir Thomas. "The old car went back on me again. I'd have beaten him an'—"

His words seemed to choke in his throat and, half a minute later he pulled the car to a halt five yards from the victorious Beetle.

D'Alessan rushed up to help him down from his seat and to shake his hand.

"Thunderin' stiff that's made me," Sir Thomas growled. "Not so young as I was. Well, congratulations, D'Alessan. You've won a dashed good race—confound you!" and he shook the Italian's hand heartily, then he swung round to Bob: "Lad, win the big race, and I'll give you the finest sports model Warwick that ever touched the road!"

"I'll win it, uncle, without the—"

"You've got to win it, Bob! If you don't, D'Alessan will be strutting round Twynhams like a fighting cock. I've got to get my revenge somehow—and you're my last hope!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER

Silver and Yellow!

THREE HOURS later Bob was once more anxiously watching the starter's flag. Its red fabric was silhouetted against the green of the trees beyond. Vaguely, he noticed that a hush had fallen in the stands on either side of the broad road.

Ahead of him, cars that had started at twenty-second intervals before him were already raising the dust on the road to Brace Corner. Beside him, other machines waited their turn to leap into the great race.

Already the last car was but a clot of dust on the sunny surface of the road. It looked as though he would never catch him—would never catch Deo, the daring driver of the yellow Ballago who had gone off a minute before. Would that flag never drop? Was the starter going to hold it there all— Ah!

The red cloth slashed down. In went the Warwick's clutch, and the car, racing in second gear, sent a vicious fount of dust up behind as it leaped in pursuit of number six; Bob's number was seven.

In the mechanician's seat beside him was a Cockney who had helped to make the silvery car ready—a man who had his whole heart in the Warwicks' gaining the victory.

Away they went, the roar of the engine rising to crescendo, the bark of the exhaust stammering to a nerve-shattering roar that brought echoes back from the grand-stands. It was a magnificent start.

Shaking and trembling in every inch of its glistening body with the force of the unleashed power, the Warwick started its two hundred-mile journey—thirty-three laps of the triangular circuit.

Brace Corner seemed to rush at them. The four-wheel brakes slowed the terrific momentum of the car as Bob changed down; he held the machine close in to the wooden fencing that marked the inside edge of the track, accelerated in a haze of wildly-flung dust and, with a bellowing roar, was away again.

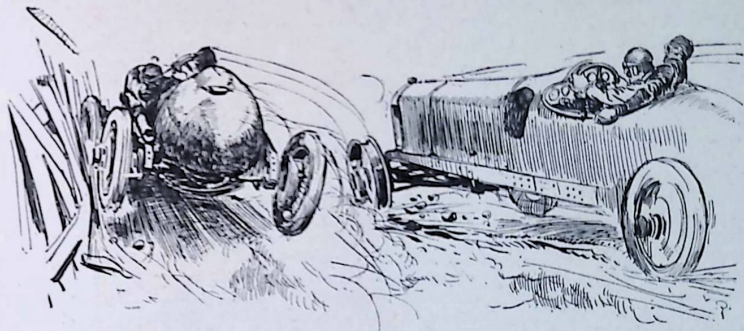
A quarter of a mile past the corner and he made out number six ahead. The other machine was holding the centre of the road,

number four—held them until they were around Home Corner, then Bob passed him by the stands.

Roger Hamar and Sir Thomas Dent were standing together with the Comte d'Alessan, and the two Britishers cheered when they saw that Bob had passed three rival machines on the first lap.

"He's chasing Deo!" roared Sir Thomas. "He'll get him the next lap."

Ahead of the young speedsman lay only the Ballago team. Of course, the twenty-second start which the cars had received from each other would be taken into account when the race was run, but it was not likely that it



Bob twisted the rubber-bound steering-wheel a trifle and took the silvery car closer to the fencing. There was a ripping of wood, a fountain of palings, and he was clear of the corner! (See page 164.)

but the Warwick swung up to it as though the car had been crawling, flashed past it with a triumphant roar, then bore in for the bend to Trent Bridge.

"Them Spaniards ain't no good!"

Bob's mechanic reached up to shout in the young fellow's ear, and there was a chuckle in his voice as he bellowed the words. The car they had passed might not be good enough for the Warwick, but it had been good enough to gain victories in the Coppa Florio and other big speed events.

The second of the Spanish team was just making the Trent Bridge as Bob saw it. They overhauled and passed the car ere it reached Ferry Bend. The leader of the Spaniards—

would make much difference on the actual running. Bob knew that if he could get and hold the yellow machine that Deo was driving—number three—he would be all right.

The road to Brace corner lay wide and straight, with a haze of dust on it and no sign of a Ballago. He did not see anything of the yellow cars until he was on the fifth lap, then he sighted one on the straight to Home Corner. He closed down on it, gaining all the way. He tried to beat it to Trent Bridge, but he failed, and he did not close in again until they neared Ferry Bend.

Then he was but a scant ten yards behind, and he could glimpse the Italian mechanic shouting frantically to the driver. But Bob

had the legs of that yellow car, although the other machine made desperate efforts to get away from him.

The driver knew that he was hard pressed and he took risks on Ferry Bend. Bob was watching the machine to try and get a glimpse of the number, and he saw the tail slither outwards as the machine took the corner.

It was a skid—and a bad one. The whole machine slithered sideways, driving for the whitened fencing which kept the spectators off the track. Suddenly, something black seemed to fly out from the near-side front wheel—it was a tyre, ripped from the rim by the strain of the skid.

The driver seemed to rise half out of his seat as he fought for control, hauling on the wheel to take the machine away from the spectators and the fence.

The machine shot back across the track, and Bob saw it coming. He twisted his own rubber-bound steering-wheel the fraction of an inch, and took the silvery car closer in to the inside fencing.

He saw the yellow machine bearing down on him—thought it would hit him! He heard the Cockney mechanic yelling and, a moment later, there came a ripping of wood, a fountain of palings—and he was clear of the corner, hurtling to the next bend.

Behind him, the yellow Ballago pulled into the side of the track—fortunately right way up. Just behind where the car stopped there was a great break in the inside fencing, where the hubs of the Warwick's near-side wheels had caught as Bob twisted to avoid the skidding car.

Both machines had had a narrow escape—but that was all part of the great game.

"Number two that was!" shouted Bob's mechanic, and the young fellow grinned as he heard it. He had passed four cars and must now be hot on Deo's machine.

Lap after lap swung under the threshing wheels of the Warwick. The machine ran faultlessly, but never a sign could Bob see of the two yellow Ballagos which were in front of him. The Cockney watched the Warwick's replenishment pit anxiously for signals, but all he got was a series of "O.K.'s."

The leaders were setting a terrific pace, lapping the difficult course at little short of ninety miles an hour. The speed soon told on the weaker machines, and before the course was half run eleven cars had retired.

All the Warwick's were in the running still; numbers eight and nine were fighting it out with Farrell and his two team-mates. Bob was all on his own, straining every nerve to get up with the Italian machines which he knew were somewhere ahead.

On the seventeenth lap he thought that he saw the sunlight glinting on something yellow on the red road ahead. He set his teeth, put his foot hard down and settled to keep that dusty yellow speck in sight. Two laps passed before he made any appreciable impression upon the distance that separated the cars, and two more went by before the mechanic, sighting the other machine at Brace Corner, said that it was number one!

"Pass 'im—an' we get Deo!" the Cockney yelled.

Bob overhauled number one on the next lap, passing him steadily and leaving him behind. Then he watched for Deo.

Continually, now, Bob was passing cars; he watched every dust-cloud anxiously, but he was reeling off the twenty-sixth lap before he picked up a blotch of dust which seemed persistently to keep ahead of him. He knew that that must be Deo.

The yellow car was lying half a mile ahead almost, and the miles sped beneath the threshing tyres, bringing them to within four laps of the finish—then Bob knew that he was closing in on his rival.

It seemed almost inches at a time that the swaying, leaping car took him nearer to the yellow Ballago. Bob knew that, on time, his own silvery machine was leading—but he wanted the glory of passing Deo, of passing and giving him his dust. The race would be truly won then!

Brace Corner—Ferry Bend—Home Corner—the two cars shot round them almost together, the Warwick a little in the rear. Bob thought that his engine must be tiring, for he could make no impression on the short lead which Deo had. It wasn't that—the Italian driver was using every device that his

experience could bring to get his car along, to forge away from the Warwick and win.

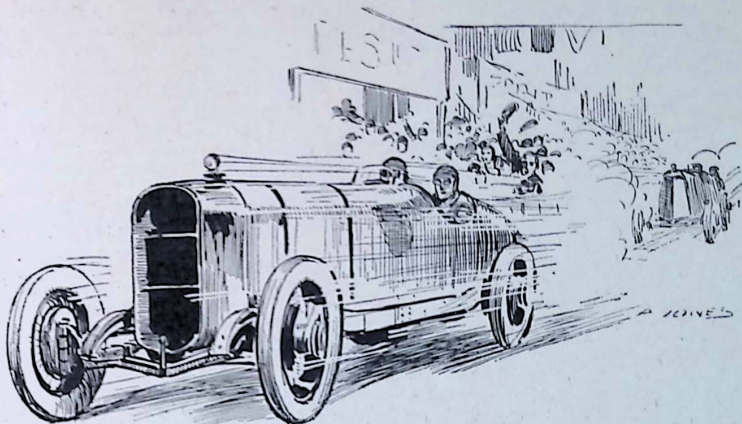
Behind him, Bob was doing all he knew to crowd an extra ounce of power out of the engine—to pass the yellow Ballago and leave it behind.

Thirty laps—thirty-one—thirty-two—they entered on the last hurricane circuit. The silvery car seemed to stretch itself as it shot past the stands and past the replenishment pit that it had never visited.

"Last one, boss!" bawled Bob's mecha-

nician, worked with all his brain in his hands and feet—but here, Deo was his equal, and he held him. For all that, the Ballago was not so delicately responsive as the silvery car, and once more Bob snatched feet from the other's lead—which brought his radiator level with the other's tail.

He knew, then, that if Deo held the lead over Trent Bridge there would be no hope of catching him on the home run. Passing over the bridge meant that he would be put at least a car's length behind—and even inches



Bob took the last bend in a flurry of dust, and flashed past the grand-stands and across the finishing-line—the winner! (See page 166).

nician. "Git past 'im—else Sir Tom'll go mad!"

Bob did not answer. Every nerve in his body was thrilling now. He could feel the pull of his engine, could sense the tremendous power, knew the great fight that the Warwick was putting up—and despite all he could do the yellow machine held him all the way down to Brace Corner.

Bob took risks now. He cornered so close to the inside fence that the hearts of track stewards leaped, spectators raced away—and he gained three feet on the yellow machine.

He accelerated with all the skill that he

counted with a rival like Deo racing to hold the lead.

Bob knew that he had got to cross Trent Bridge first if he wanted to please old Sir Thomas and give the baronet his "revenge" on the Comte d'Alessan—and he meant to do it.

It seemed to him that he crept further along the side of the yellow machine as they tore onwards to the bend that marked the entrance to the branch road. He was gaining in inches, but he was still behind when they sighted the bridge at the bottom of the long slope.

"Now for it!" bellowed his mechanic, and, from the corners of his eyes, Bob could see the man bend eagerly forward.

Bob flicked the throbbing lever wide, and he put all his weight on the accelerator pedal—just to make sure that the engine was getting all it could. He bore over on the track to make a dead straight course for the bridge, then he urged the bellowing car along.

The mechanic sprawled in his seat, jerking his right foot forward and pressing his toe up and under the brake pedal—making certain that the brakes were not on in the slightest degree.

The helmeted heads of the drivers were bent over the big steering wheels, both exhausts were belching flame, each car was bellowing a war song of defiance—and the Trent Bridge flashed up towards them.

Neither driver would give way to the other. To spectators who were standing near the bridge, it looked as though the cars must smash on the low parapets at the sides.

Bob felt that the Warwick was gaining—but he dared not look to see. He heard his mechanic shouting something, glimpsed the brickwork of a bridge parapet, saw the gleaming yellow radiator of the Ballago, caught sight of a threshing wheel—then he was on the bridge!

The hubs of his wheels all but scored the brickwork, a masterly twist of the wheel—the merest fraction of an inch, and he was through and in the lead, his exhaust roaring defiance on to the very radiator of the yellow car!

Ferry Bend went past in a maze of cheering spectators and gleaming fences. The heart seemed to be taken out of the Ballago, for it dropped behind yards at a time on the straight run to Home Corner.

Bob took the last bend in a flurry of dust, then the grand-stands loomed up, with their waving flags; he saw the pits and their coloured signboards, the grouped officials—cameras—pressmen—and Sir Thomas with the great gold cup under one arm, his hat waved high above his head, his ecstatic cheering drowned by the furious roar of the silvery car as it flashed past the chequered flag on the finishing line—the winner!

THE END

The Greyfriars MASTERS' GALLERY



Mr. LARRY LASCELLES

A FIGHTING man we here behold,
A most athletic person;
I love to have a hero bold
To vent my flowing verse on!
From very early days in life
He learned to thrust and parry;
He is a giant in the strife—
We simply worship Larry!
We always have a cheery time
When Larry takes mathematics;
Some masters, who are past their prime,
And smitten with rheumatics,
Are apt to fly into a rage
And cane a chap with vigour;
But Larry hasn't reached that stage—
He is a kindly figure.
He helps us in our work and play,
Grand games he organises;
And at such times, he gives away
A host of handsome prizes.
For he's a sportsman of the best,
Who loves a thrilling tussle;
And he arranges many a test
For youthful mind and muscle,
Then give three cheers, and three times three,
For this delightful master!
A fine and fearless Briton he
In triumph or disaster.
Possessor of a hero's heart,
He has no proud superior;
If Larry Lascelles did depart
Then Greyfriars would be drearier!