

By JOHN BREARLEY

*A real-life story of the football field, telling how a young newcomer—Dick Forrester—brings about an astonishing revival in the fortunes of Oldtrent Rovers.*

## THE FIRST CHAPTER

### A Determined Rebel I

"**T**HEN this is your last word, pater?" Colonel Forrester rose slowly from his padded seat in the old library at Trent Manor, bushy grey eyebrows drawn down in a frown as he stared at his stalwart son opposite.

"It is, Dick," he said briefly.

"And although we're not—not as well off as we were, you're going to make me waste four years at Oxford—at Uncle John's expense, too—rather than let me try to earn my own living!"

The colonel's temper, always a trifle hasty, flared up when Dick had finished, and down came his fist on the table between them with a crash.

"Confound it, sir," he snapped, "are we going to have this infernal argument all over again? The Forresters have been at Oxford for generations—and you know it! And since I cannot send you, your Uncle John is doing his duty as a matter of course! And, in any case, I do not like your way of 'earning your living,' as

you call it! You go up to Oxford as soon as you're eighteen!"

"I won't!"

Dick Forrester's own temper, just as fiery as the colonel's but usually under better control, snapped at last.

There was a striking resemblance between father and son as they glared at each other in tight-lipped silence.

Colonel Forrester was slight and dapper, and his grizzled hair and thin, lined face looked oddly white against the rich panelling of the library; whereas Dick stood three inches taller than he already, and was broad in proportion. But both had the same sparkling grey-blue eyes and the hard chins of fighting men.

The battle of wills raged for some seconds before Colonel Forrester raised a hand that trembled slightly and pointed to the door.

"Get out, sir!" he rasped. "Get out—and don't come back until you can apologise! This is the last time I'll be brow-beaten by you!"

Not trusting himself to reply, Dick turned on his heel, fists clenched, head held

high. Next instant the heavy oak door slammed behind him, and the colonel, already regretting his outburst, half moved as though to recall the lad, but finally compressed his lips obstinately and sat down again.

As Dick stamped down the stairs and through the hall of the Manor, a girl came in from the garden, her fresh, pretty face glowing in the autumn sun, and who, when she saw the expression on Dick's face, gave a little cry and hastened towards him. He shook his head heavily when she came up, in answer to the anxious inquiry in her eyes.

"No luck, old girl! He's just as set as ever on me going to Oxford, and, in fact—well, he's just turfed me out! That's all!"

It was characteristic of Moira Forrester that she did not waste words in idle sympathy. Instead, she tucked her arm beneath her twin brother's, and together they wandered moodily out into the wide-flung garden.

Trent Manor stood on the top of a huge hill that towered over the countryside for miles around, and through a gap in the ancient oaks they could look down in the valley to where the town of Oldtrent sprawled untidily.

Once a tiny agricultural place, Oldtrent had boomed during the century into a big industrial centre, and a pall of smoke from countless chimneys hung over its thousands of roofs. There was work down there, energy and the whirling bustle of modern life, men and women earning their living; and Dick Forrester loved the place, all the fierce ambition in his nature making him detest the thought of dawdling away four years in sleepy, grey old Oxford. But Colonel Forrester, on the other hand, remembering the past, hated Oldtrent now and all its works!

A severe set-back in the family fortunes three months before had been the cause of Dick leaving school before his time, so that when his uncle had offered to pay his way through the Varsity, the colonel had jumped at the offer—at least, until his own income should pick up again.

At first, Dick's scheme of earning his

own living had been received with an indulgent smile, but, to the colonel's surprise, his son stuck to the idea tenaciously, and the quarrel that had just taken place was the last of many on the subject.

"It's absolutely putrid!" burst out Dick furiously at last, glowering at the smooth lawn before them. "Why should I piddle round at New College? For a tenth of what it will cost to send me to Oxford I can start up with Sergeant Willis, and not be an expense to anyone."

"What did father say about the sergeant, Dicky?" asked Moira, in her soft voice.

"Oh, in off the deep end, as usual! Didn't like my way of earning a living! What the dickens there is wrong in helping a decent, clean-living chap like Willis to run a gymnasium on business lines, blown if I can see! One of the best P. T. instructors ever turned out by the Army, Moira! And he's got a topping gym., all fitted up with the latest apparatus, smack in the middle of High Street, where all the fat, unfit business jossers are—and for fifty pounds I can go in with him! You see, he's starting classes for the youngsters in the town, and that'll be my job—making the little chaps fit. And, by gum, wouldn't I just enjoy it!"

Moira pressed his arm, knowing just how he felt, although she had heard it all several times before.

Physical fitness was a religion with Dick Forrester. Still five months from his eighteenth birthday, he was a young giant in the making, and hard as nails in wind and sturdy limbs.

Moira knew and liked Sergeant Willis, too; an iron veteran who had retired from the Army and opened a gymnasium and training school in Oldtrent. Apart from other reasons, the gym. was a good commercial proposition, and Moira knew that for fifty pounds a share in the business was cheap. But she was also level-headed enough to appreciate the force and weight of Colonel Forrester's veto.

"Well, what can you do, Dicky?" she asked anxiously.

"Do?" snorted Dick. "Find a way to

earn that fifty quid and some to live on while I'm doing it, of course!"

"Dick!"

Her brother's jaw jutted out like the ram of a battleship as he frowned down on her.

"Why, you don't think I'm going to be licked, do you?" he cried fiercely. "I've said I won't go to Oxford, and I won't! It's absolute obstinacy on the governor's part. He's stiff-necked, old-fashioned, and prejudiced to the hilt against everything in Oldtrent!"

"Oh, Dick!"

Moira's voice was shaky as she protested against the tirade. "Don't talk like that about dad! You know he's one of the best in the world!"

Dick flushed.

"Well, yes, I suppose so," he muttered remorsefully. "Sorry! But, honestly, why should I waste four years at someone else's expense when we know dad's absolutely hipped for cash?"

"I know, Dick. But what can you do?"

"Play football!"

The words came short and sharp. Moira released her brother's arm, to look up at him with startled eyes.

"Play football! You mean as a professional?"

"Why not?" asked Dick coolly. If his father could be determined, so could he! "It's the best thing I can do. And, Moira, I rather think there's a chance for me in the town team!"

His sister gazed at him in stricken silence—not because of the football, for she loved watching him play; but—but the son of Colonel Forrester a professional!

Apart from the sensation it would cause



Moira watched her brother, bag in hand, stride off towards the gates, on his way to join Oldtrent Rovers.

in the neighbourhood, she hardly dared think of her father's wrath. The colonel hated professional sport—he knew nothing about it, incidentally—and the twins fairly had to sneak into the town on Saturdays to watch Oldtrent Rovers! Now, if Dick threw in his lot with them—

Moira said as much, in a horrified voice.

"I don't care!" cried Dick recklessly. "I'll earn a living somehow! Listen, Moira, I've thought it all out. If I can get taken on—"

"If, Dick?" Moira fired up at that, for she honestly thought her brother one of the finest forwards in the world. "Why, you're sure to!"

"Not sure to!" he corrected honestly. "You've got to be jolly good to be a pro., Moira! I think I'm fit enough, but—well, anyway, I'm going down to see about it. If I can even get into the reserves, I'll jolly soon save hard and raise that fifty! The sergeant'll keep the place open for me, and I'll be all right for the summer!"

Moira plucked at her under-lip doubtfully.

"Ye-es! But, Dick, what will dad say

when he learns you're among professional players?"

"He can say what he jolly well likes!" snorted Dick, hardily. "What's wrong with the pro's, anyway? I know a lot of 'em, and they're as decent chaps as you'll find anywhere! Dash it, they're only doing the job they can do best, the same as millions of other people; and it's a job you have to keep fit for, too, which is more than you can say for others!"

Moirs was silent. She knew her brother too well to know he would alter his mind once he looked and spoke like that; and a few minutes later she watched him stride off towards the gates, bag in hand, trying, like the gallant sportsman she was, to keep back her tears. Suddenly, on an impulse, she went flying after him, catching him as he marched into the road.

"I'll come with you," was all she said, and Dick pressed her arm as she fell into step beside him.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER

### New Chums—and an Enemy!

IN silence they walked down the hill to the town and took a tram to the other side, where the Rovers' ground was—a fine new enclosure. It had not been opened long, and was equipped with the latest accommodation and a fine playing pitch. The pity was that just at the moment the team itself was decidedly not living up to its headquarters!

Last season the club had slumped badly after Christmas, descending with heart-breaking suddenness to the bottom of the First League and feeble relegation.

Now this season, even in the Second League, they were doing no better; in fact, although the football season was six weeks old, Oldtrent Rovers had exactly one point to show for seven matches!

Opinions in the town, of course, were furiously divided on the subject, some blaming the defence, some the management, others the trainer. But only a few of the experts had diagnosed the right trouble—the forward line! The defence was sound enough, as the goals scored against them proved, but the forwards as a line were

ragged robins, without an ounce of punch or finish about them.

Individually they were clever, which is why the town as a whole blamed the defence. But against methodical opponents the Rovers' attack folded up completely, and the best defence in the world can't win matches behind a feeble front line!

It was a well-known fact that the Rovers were looking for forwards, and equally well known, too, that, having spent a huge sum of money on the new ground, the club could not afford heavy transfer-fees. Therefore, Dick Forrester speculated, as he walked up to the gates, he had an outside chance.

For there was no doubt he could play football. He was the best centre or inside-right turned out by Clavering School for years, and, in addition to playing for the Corinthians twice on tour, had gained schoolboy international caps against Scotland and Wales.

However, as he received admittance by asking for Mr. Capper, the trainer-manager, and he and Moira walked into the spacious ground, he could not suppress a thrill of nervousness.

Leaving his sister in a stand seat, watching a few grey-sweated players at heading practice, he learned that the manager was in the dressing-room, the sweeper who gave him the information indicating the passage with a horny thumb.

At his knock a tremendous, irate voice bellowed "Come in!" and, pushing open the door, he found himself in a big room full of players in various stages of changing. There were first and second team men there, some of whom he recognised, and who in turn recognised him as he stood in the door, for the Forresters were well known to nearly everyone in Oldtrent.

A few were silently engrossed donning elaborate shinguards and special boots, but most of them were changed already, chaffing and laughing at each other with a healthiness that showed, no matter what brand of football the Rovers played, they were a happy club, anyway.

One man in the room, however, looked far from happy. He must have been a

sturdy man once, a little pocket Hercules, but was now past his best, and his bulky muscles had run to fat.

Clad in tweed trousers, white sweater, and a battered soft hat, he glowered round the room from man to man with a ferocious frown on his red, chubby, but efficient face, as though begging someone to start trouble. Any trouble would do!

It was his voice that had bidden Dick enter, and as his eyes fell on the lad, he roared:

"And what the pernicketty do you want?"

Dick grinned disarmingly. Although he did not know Mr. Capper he had seen him often, and knew enough about him not to be alarmed by his blustering ways.

"A job, please, Mr. Capper!"

Some of the players who knew Dick looked up in surprise and ceased talking, but Mr. Capper snapped his fingers towards the door.

"Got all our programme-sellers, thanks! Scat!"

"As a player, please!" continued Dick, standing his ground amid a chuckle from the Rovers.

"Huh! What's your fool name?"

"Er—Forrest!" blurted Dick, reddening, at which some queer glances went round the room.

"Means nothing to me!" snapped Mr. Capper testily. Evidently something had riled him badly that morning! "Who have you played for before? How old are you—eighteen?"

"Y—yes!" Dick stammered. "I've played for Clavering School and the Corinthians twice, and——"

"And for English schools against Wales and Scotland!" boomed a great voice behind him.

A mighty hand descended on his back, nearly knocking all the breath out of him, and, turning, he beheld an enormous giant towering over him, with a wide smile on his broad, leathery countenance.

He knew who it was at a glance—Tim Abbot, the Rovers' great old international full-back, now past his best days, but still

a star in League games. Tim gave him a friendly nod and grinned at Mr. Capper.

"You're an ignorant old man, Cappy," he said severely. "You ought to study the game more—like me! This lad's one of the best youngsters we've got in the town. Fit, too—aren't you, my son? Feel there, Cappy—and here!" He pinched Dick's calves and flicked a backhander into his taut stomach muscles, grinning again as the lad scarcely moved. "Like iron!"

Mr. Capper found his tongue at last.

"You—you darned interferin' lobster, you——"

"Now, now!" said Tim reprovingly.

"You—you——"

"Cappy! Come, come!"

These two were old friends—and foes! They had been club-mates for years, but whereas Tim Abbot was still a player, Capper's tendency to corpulence had forced him off the playing-field into the training-room. Apparently these little scenes between them were common occurrences, for the rest of the players gathered round to watch the fun.

"Who's the manager of this club?" howled the little man.

"Why, you are, Cappy, of course!" answered Tim, with elaborate surprise.

"Well, then, go and jump off the grandstand, you—— You, youngster—Forrest, or whatever your name is—where have you played?"

"Centre or inside-right," answered Dick promptly. "The latter for preference."

"My players don't have preferences!" snapped the fiery little trainer. "They——"

But before he could go on, there came another interruption. The group of players moved, and a tall man with very light hair and eyelashes stepped to the fore.

Dick knew him immediately as Thurston, the Rovers' inside-right, a wonderfully clever but terribly selfish player, who, in the opinion of more than one good judge, was just the man who was holding up the line every time, although his trickiness made him popular with the crowd.

Pushing past Capper, he stared leisurely

at Dick from head to foot, with narrowed eyes and a sarcastic grin.

"Think you're going to do me out of my job, then, Mr. Schoolboy?" he sneered.

The unexpected bitterness in the words took Dick's breath away for a moment, but Mr. Capper had something to say.

"Mind your own business, Thurston!" he snorted, laying a hand on the other's arm.

Thurston shook it off easily.

"Close your face!" he ordered insolently. He had cost the Rovers a lot of money last season, and well he knew the directors would not listen very hard to complaints against such an expensive man. Turning to Dick once more, he said mockingly:

"Forrester's your right name, isn't it? Colonel Forrester's son! Father know you've come among us low fellers?"

A curious expression came stealing over Dick's face, and as wise old Tim Abbot studied him in silence, he grinned suddenly and stepped gently out of the firing-line, fixing a comical look of pity on Thurston's scoffing features.

"Well, no, he doesn't as a matter of fact," replied Dick quietly.

"Not officially, eh?" jeered the other.

"How do you mean?" asked Dick, puzzled by the cryptic words.

"Why, the colonel's hard up, I've heard. Suppose he doesn't mind his son earning his living, but not under his right name! Poor but proud, eh? Snobbish, I call it!"

Dick's face went scarlet.

"Why, you fearful blighter!" he roared, in sudden fury. "Take that!"

Smack!

His hand, swishing out, clumped hard across Thurston's face, making the man reel back into the arms of the interested players.

Leaping up, little eyes a gleam, the footballer pushed Capper savagely out of the way and jumped at Dick, guarding his face in the usual style of rough-and-ready fighters.

But he made a sad error. Dick had not the slightest intention of breaking his knuckles against anyone's hard jaw, and

as Thurston's arms left his body wide open, he bobbed under a swinging left and whipped a right hook to the solar plexus, with all the weight of his body behind it.

The shot was an absolute winner. Thurston gave a curious yelp, half-howl, half-gasp, folded in the middle like a penknife, and slumped heavily to the floor. Tim Abbot, with a beatific smile, lifted Dick's arm and held it aloft.

"Gentlemen, Forrester is the winner!" he guffawed jubilantly.

Little Mr. Capper stared down at the gasping footballer, then at the indignant lad who had knocked him out.

"Who gave you leave to hammer my men?" he yelled. "Gosh, laddie, that was a beauty! What d'ye weigh—11.6? All of it landed on Thurston then, I reckon! Well, pick the moaning elephant up, you chaps, and get along out. We've wasted enough time as it is!"

"Hey, but what about the young 'un, Cappy?" cried Tim Abbot.

Capper whirled round, and, seizing a spare boot, missed the grinning giant by a mile with his aim.

"Will you mind your own business?" he roared. "I know what I'm doing! Son, I'll give you a show just for flooring Thurston! You've finished him for this practice, anyway. Are you fit for a full trial match?"

"I think so, Mr. Capper. I'm always pretty fit," replied Dick respectfully.

"Well, then, you can turn out for the Colours!" ordered Mr. Capper, secretly pleased. "Mitchell!" A youngster in the reserves looked up inquiringly. "Change into a white shirt and play for the First! Go on now, all of you! Out of it!"

When Dick came on to the field, most of the players gave him an encouraging smile. It was not that they were glad Thurston had been knocked out, although he was not very popular with his mates, but, like good sportsmen they enjoyed seeing anyone stand up for himself.

Dropping a hand on his shoulder, big Tim Abbot whispered:

"This is a chance for you, laddie!

Cappy's just aching to boot Thurston into the reserves, so play up!"

The game, like most practices, was First eleven forwards against the defence, for Capper was making every effort to remodel his forward line. He had some good players, too, but was handicapped by the directors' instructions to build up the attack round Thurston, the highly-paid star, a state of affairs that only made the vitriolic little man more wild than usual.

Dick lined up nervously in the Colours'

Trapping it prettily in his stride, however, he had a quick vision of a tackler at his shoulder, and flicked the ball to the centre-forward. The pivot's shot went wide, but as they streamed back for the goal-kick, Dick felt better.

He had been terribly shaky at first. Indeed, his knees felt as though they had melted into water. But now his head was clear, and he remembered the stake he was playing for.

The ball came dropping out of the sky



"You fearful blighter!" Dick roared. "Take that!" His hand swished round and clumped hard across Thurston's face.

forwards, catching a glimpse of Moira, sitting eager and alone in the stand, and next moment the game was on.

The First forwards went away speedily in an attack, but Tim, sliding in, cleverly robbed Mitchell, and swung the ball fast and flat to Dick's partner on the wing. Unconsciously Dick sprinted hard into the right position, and the ball bobbed up in front of him before he was quite aware of it.

towards him, and, racing up, he beat a half-back's head by a fraction. As the ball dropped to the ground, Dick whipped round the centre-half and went for goal at a speed that made little Mr. Capper, watching anxiously on the touchline, raise his eyebrows under the battered hat.

Challenged, Dick swung the ball with beautiful precision to his partner, who centred. Again the shot went wide, and again Dick was first away from the goal-

kick, Hall, the Rovers' centre-half, securing the ball and lining out a glorious pass to his toes.

This time, Dick swung the ball into the field first time, right to the feet of the inside-left, and, running like a hare, was just on the spot to push the return pass obliquely to the centre-forward. The lightning criss-cross movement opened the defence wide, and the centre-forward went through the gap with a clear run, and shot. Fast and rising, the ball sped towards the right-hand post, but the keeper, leaping across, punched it out. Unfortunately, it lobbed over the head of a following half-back and dropped at Dick's foot, so that, without losing a second, he drove hard for the other post.

"Good shot, son!"

The unexpected rasper left the reserve keeper standing still. Neatly and sweetly the ball flashed under the bar and hissed cosily into the rigging.

Little Mr. Capper ran out on to the field like an excited terrier.

"Hey, Forrest! Mitchell! Come here, you two! Change shirts!"

Stocky little Mitchell, who so far had had no chance, looked disappointed, but grinned cheerfully at Dick.

"Good luck, old man!" he said as he turned away, and Dick patted his arm gratefully.

Mr. Capper had some brief instructions to give.

"Keep up that constructive work, laddie. It's what this club wants!"

Scarcely daring to look up at the tense little figure in the stand, Dick trotted into the First team forward line, his heart beating quickly. Hayward, the centre, touched the ball to him, and he passed it back; then away they went, until Dick found himself face to face with Tim Abbot's vast bulk, with the ball running between them. At close quarters Tim was still the best tackler in England, but there was a curious grin on his face as somehow Dick just got there first. *just* beat him, and sent the outside-right, Osborne, racing for the corner-flag with the leather.

A whirling half-hour passed like a

glorious if somewhat confused dream, and then, to everyone's surprise, Mr. Capper walked out at half-time and stopped the practice.

He had seen enough. And so had everybody else on that field, the sullen Thurston included, scowling bitterly from the stand as he saw the other players patting Dick on the shoulder, much to the lad's astonishment; for, although his side had won comfortably, he had put it down to Osborne's terrific pace at outside-right and his accurate centres.

Tim Abbot, too, looked thoughtful as he sauntered up to Mr. Capper.

"Cappy—" he began, but the little trainer waved him to silence.

"Don't wake me up, Tim!" he pleaded. "Don't wake me up and tell me it's all a dream! Don't tell me that at last I've got the makin's of the finest inside-forward we've ever had, and at last I can chuck Thurston into the dustbin!"

The giant laid a hand on his little friend's shoulder.

"I'm glad, old socks!" he chortled. "He's a nice kid, too. We may save the season yet!"

For he alone knew that little Capper was facing the end of his contract with the Rovers if some improvement in the team didn't show up, and if occasionally during the practice he had slacked artistically to let Dick get past—well, why not, if it gave a natural footballer just the right confidence, and helped old Cappy? But all this, of course, he kept to himself!

"Never seen young Osborne move so fast before," he said meditatively, pulling off his boots, "or sling his centres over so well!"

"You've never seen young Osborne get such passes before, either!" snapped Mr. Capper. "Any fast winger can play like that after his inside-man's drawn all the defence and stuck the ball right on the very identical blade o' grass I'd ha' picked out myself to put it on!"

Both veterans glanced over the dressing-room to where Dick and Osborne were changing together, chatting and laughing

over their new partnership like old friends already.

Half an hour later Dick had signed professional forms for Oldtrent Rovers. Afterwards, striding gaily towards the gates with Tim and Osborne, he introduced them to Moira, at the same time telling her the glad news.

Manfully she congratulated him, and won the hearts of the footballers by her firm handshake and bright smile; and Dick, having seen her home, turned back to find Sergeant Willis and tell him about the venture.

For little Mr. Capper, sticking firmly to his guns, had clapped Dick in the side against Mapleton United on Saturday, and as this was only two days off, had already wired Dick's application to the F.A., in London.

Thurston, the ex-star, was forgotten!

### THE THIRD CHAPTER

#### A Happy Ending!

"AND so, you see, Colonel, he's turned professional. And—well, o' course, that's all right in its way, but, being a sport, sir, I don't like to see a wild kid, if I may say so, lowering his folks like that!"

Thurston, the Rovers' inside-right, lounged carelessly back in his chair in Colonel Forrester's study at Trent Manor, and, though his manner was obsequious, there was a sardonic light in his small eyes as he watched the effect of his words on the stern face opposite.

For this was Thurston's idea of getting even. It was Saturday morning. In a few hours Dick Forrester would be playing his first game in the green shirt of the Rovers, a fact which, together with the dropping of Thurston himself from the team, had already caused a sensation in the town.

The footballer had left the Rovers' ground after the trial two days ago nearly mad with fury. Several schemes had occurred to him. He had even toyed for a long time with the plan to have Dick "scragged" by certain of his tough friends in town. But, deciding that there was too much risk

in that, he had seized on the subtler inspiration of coming to Colonel Forrester, and, of course, putting Dick's rebellion in its worst light.

Cunningly, then, he picked his time until within a few hours of the match, for, if the colonel acted as he fully anticipated he would, and marched down to the ground and stopped Dick from playing, then that little rat Capper would have no option but to reinstate the fallen star.

So thought Thurston, the inside-right, but he made the mistake of allowing his face to betray his thoughts, for Colonel Forrester was wise in the ways of men, and his voice was bleak as he spoke for the first time.

"You are, I believe, a professional footballer also, Mr.—er—Thurston?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" replied Thurston eagerly. "But, o' course, it's different for me!"

"Doubtless! But I dislike hearing any man run down his own profession. Well, I am obliged to you, sir. Is there anything more you wish to say?"

The abrupt dismissal took the footballer's breath away. This was not what he had expected.

"B-but aren't you going to do anythin'. Colonel?"

Colonel Forrester rose to his feet, and, with great calmness, touched a bell on his desk.

"That, I am afraid, I cannot discuss," he said quietly. And as a servant appeared in the door: "I wish you good-morning, sir!"

Five minutes later Thurston was outside Trent Manor, red with wrath and bitterly inveighing against "old snobs" and the like, while back in the study Moira Forrester, who had seen—and heard—his departure and guessed his errand, was sitting on the arm of the colonel's chair, patiently waiting for her father's anger to subside before she put in her own spoke.

"Well, I think you're an old silly, dad," she said, when at last the storm abated somewhat.

"Moira!"

"Well, daddy, I do! Try to put yourself in Dick's place! Would you have taken any favours from people, or consented to live even on a dear old thing like Uncle John for four years? No, of course you wouldn't!" she said swiftly, as the colonel's face twitched.

His fist thumped down on the desk.

"He's a disgrace! My son a professional footballer!"

"And a jolly nice lot they are, too!" cooed Moira serenely. "I've met some of them!"

"What, miss? How dare you!"

"And if you'll listen to me, dad, instead of trying to be the harsh old silly you're not, you'll come and meet them, too, yourself, this afternoon!" Moira's voice would have melted a heart of granite.

"Me?" spluttered the colonel. "Me go and watch my son perform in public—for money? And with such men as the specimen who has just called here?"

"If you want to know, Thurston's the most unpopular man in the club, because he's no sportsman," replied Moira calmly. "And the reason he hates Dicky is because Dick thrashed him after he'd insulted you on Thursday. So there! Now, listen!"

And Moira Forrester began to talk for Dick's sake—and the colonel's.

It was a long fight, but she stuck to it gallantly, and at five minutes to three that afternoon the colonel's two-seater deposited them both at the Rovers' ground, where her father, still bristling and fuming, slammed down a note for two seats in the stand.

Blissfully unaware of the eyes that were watching him, Dick trotted out on to the green field amid the welcoming roar of the home crowd. Tim Abbot won the toss and chose the wind, and Mapleton United came bursting away in their first attack.

They were beaten back by Hall, the centre-half, who slipped the ball to Dick. Not yet certain of himself, he hesitated just for a second, but it was long enough for Carson, Mapleton's veteran skipper, who was marking him, to rob him deftly and send the forwards away.

A groan burst from the crowd, and the

man next the colonel in the stand voiced his disapproval strongly.

"That's what comes of playin' blinkin' schoolboys!" he snorted. "They ought to be playing Thurston—not getting kids out of nurseries!"

A slight frown came to the colonel's brow as he glanced sideways at his neighbour, and the frown grew into a positive thundercloud next moment, when Dick was again beaten for possession, and the supporter broke into more expressions of disgust.

"Is Dick playing badly, Moira?" The colonel asked the question with studied carelessness, but Moira detected a slight quiver in his voice.

"He's up against a really great player, daddy," she said, and the colonel frowned at his neighbour again.

Meanwhile, the game was going briskly. Dick was disappointed but not downhearted, and a genial wave from Tim Abbot comforted him; but, seeing he had not settled down, the Rovers' captain wisely began to direct the attack to the left-wing, and Dick and Osborne were starved.

Then suddenly came another chance! Rapid-fire play in mid-field left the Old-trent centre with the ball, and all paths to the left-wing blocked. Quickly he flipped the ball to Dick.

The latter had a glimpse of Carson's red jersey at his elbow, and touched the leather straight back, nipped round the international, picked up the return pass in a clear field, and next moment Old-trent's new right-wingers were flying down the field in their first raid—a raid that finished only when Hayward finally headed Osborne's centre just over the bar.

To the sound of an encouraging roar, Dick ran back to his place, receiving a grim wink from Carson as he did so; and the colonel looked pointedly at his neighbour.

Hayward got the ball from the goal-kick and sprinted left. Tackled, he passed to Dick, who again just beat Carson and sent Osborne away. This time, however, the centre curled behind the posts.

Expressive glances were exchanged

among the defenders of Mapleton, and Carson smiled as Tim's great voice boomed:

"Hey, Billy, how d'ye like your eggs done?"

Half-time arrived with no score. But Dick had found himself, and the Rovers had done most of the attacking. The crowd gave them a great cheer as they filed off.

The second half started with a bang. Bucked by success, the Rovers had every intention of swamping the United right away; but football is a queer game, and within five minutes two lightning raids, two holes in defence, two unstoppable shots, and Mapleton were two goals up! There was a despairing note in the cheers as the Rovers lined up after the second goal.

After that they played like demons, much to the surprise of Colonel Forrester, who had always thought professionals turned it in when they were losing heavily; and attack after attack ripped through Mapleton's defence. The criss-cross move between Dick and the inside-left saw Hayward's shot brilliantly saved, then Hall sent the left-wing away. Over came the centre, and Dick got his head to it, and a groan went up as the ball slammed against the cross-bar from ten yards out!

Nothing daunted, the green shirts came again, and Dick began to prove he was a born schemer. Hayward had the ball, Dick running beside him, Carson waiting to pounce. Dick swerved suddenly to the right, waiting for the leader's pass; Carson followed him, and then the new inside-right swerved back through the gap, picked up



Dick got all the swing of his sturdy leg behind the ball, and into the side of the net like a brown, hissing thunderbolt it went. The Rovers had won!

Hayward's pass, feinted to Osborne, which drew the back, and then stabbed a lightning screw pass to the unmarked inside-left ten yards from goal! The Mapleton 'keeper picked the ball out of the net amid a roar that shook the stands!

"My great little inside-right!" crowed Mr. Capper, standing by the stand rails.

2—1! A solo run by Osborne was beaten by a desperate defender; a great shot from the centre-half was tipped over the bar by inches! Then an attack started by the left-half blazed up in a manner that brought hysterical yells from the crowd and tears of pure joy to little Mr. Capper's eyes; for, like a smooth, polished machine, the Rovers' whole line swept goalward, passes ripping "first time" from man to man until Mapleton were all over the place! The avalanche finished with Hayward in possession five yards out and the backs nowhere! And no goalkeeper on earth could have stopped the lightning shot that nearly tore the rigging!

Level! The colonel by this time had for-

gotten his grievance. He was tense with excitement over the clean, sporting game, and every time Dick got the ball, clutched Moira's arm until she could have cried out—if she had noticed it! Down by the railings, little Mr. Capper was crooning to himself:

"My wonderful little new forward! Go on, Dicky, lad—on your own for a change!"

Having played a perfect passing game all through, Dick was trying a regular Corinthian dribble, beating man after man by pace and swerve. But, like all novices in League football, he just overdid it, and the wily Carson, shadowing him carefully, hooked the ball away amid a wail from the crowd, who had taken young "Forrest" to their hearts. And the colonel's eyes glowed as he saw Dick and Carson grin at each other afterwards.

Mapleton became desperate, trying everything to prevent the ball reaching the Rovers' lightning right-wing. Time went on, and the crowd began to glance up at the clock anxiously between cheers. There was no doubt which was the better team, but Mapleton meant having one point out of the game, anyway!

Wave after wave rolled over them, and somehow they scrambled the ball away; and when their defence was torn into rags by scorching passes from wing to wing, their 'keeper played like a hero. Dick uncorked a beauty from short range, but without any luck, Osborne was just too late for a dropping centre, and a few seconds afterwards a long, floating header from Hayward skimmed the bar. Mapleton's goal bore a charmed life, for nothing could stop the green-shirted forwards as they stabbed and weaved their way along amid one continuous thunder from the crowd.

Three minutes before time a Mapleton back booted hard and high into the stand, and while the ball was coming out Dick grinned at Osborne.

"Got any wind left, Harry?" he asked.

"A little, Dick."

"Well, then, get off your knees and let's see you run!" came the bantering reply. "Something's got to be done!"

The throw-in was collared by Hall, who drilled the ball through to Dick's feet. Whipping past Carson, who was tiring badly from the pace set up by the two youngsters, he sent Osborne off.

For the first time the outside-right centred with bad judgment, and the 'keeper, coming out, gathered and cleared. Trapping the ball with his chest, Hayward slipped it sideways to Dick, and Dick, jaw set and eyes gleaming, took it on the run and slammed through Mapleton like a runaway train.

An irresistible swerve carried him past two desperate half-backs, and, looking up as though to find Osborne, he side-stepped Carson neatly. The Mapleton centre-half pounded across, but Dick got him on the wrong leg and went for goal at top pace, the Rovers spreading out, Mapleton after him with their hearts in their mouths.

The full-back expected Dick to pass, and Dick knew that he did. So that, having looked round for someone to pass to, he altered his mind, by which time the full-back had moved a foot too much to the left, and Dick's pace carried him straight past.

In the stand, little Mr. Capper was nervous with excitement.

"My discovery!" he howled. "Go on, Dicky, lad—on your own! By thunder, now for goal, boy! Shoo-oo-ooh! Goal!"

Beating the left-back's sliding tackle by a split second, Dick had got all the swing of his sturdy leg behind the ball, and into the side of the net like a brown, hissing thunderbolt it had gone, the goalie hitting the ground a moment after with a despairing look.

The whistle went soon after, and Oldtrent in their thousands came pouring on to the ground.

In the stand, Colonel Forrester, hatless, stickless, wild with excitement and bristling like a cat, wagged a long, bony finger beneath the astonished eyes of his neighbour, while Moira looked on and laughed helplessly.

"Let me tell you, sir," blared the colonel, "that that's my son, sir! My son! And let me tell you that you know nothing about football, sir! Nothing!"

His fingers snapped loudly in the sup-  
porter's bewildered face, and then, grasp-  
ing Moira firmly by the arm, he set out  
for the entrance to the dressing-rooms,  
through which the laughing, gasping  
Rovers, Dick in their midst, with Tim  
Abbot's arm round him and Carson of  
Mapleton by his side, were fighting their  
way.

He was never one to do things by halves,  
was Colonel Forrester. The speed of the  
game, the cleanness and the genial sports-  
manship of Carson and his men towards a  
newcomer, were revelations to the colonel.  
Leaving Moira talking to the excited little  
Mr. Capper, he strode straight into the  
dressing-room amid the changing foot-  
ballers.

Fine men they were, and he felt an added  
thrill of pride to think that his son had  
held his own with such muscular fellows!  
In a far corner of the big room he saw Dick,  
grinning breathlessly at Tim Abbot and  
young Osborne while they chafed him; and  
marched up to him with hand outstretched.

"I'm sorry, Dick," he snorted fiercely.  
"Beg your pardon sincerely! Want me  
to say any more, you obstinate young  
hound?"

"Not a single word, dad!" cried Dick,  
nearly beside himself as he wrung his  
father's hand. Then, waving his hands at  
giant Tim Abbot and his speedy partner, he  
said quietly:

"My friends, dad!"

Colonel Forrester held out his hand  
again.

After the match with Mapleton United  
Oldtrent Rovers never looked back, and the  
end of the season found them fighting for  
promotion to the First League, which they  
eventually won, thanks to the young  
recruit, Dick Forrester.

In the close season Dick, with the fifty  
pounds which he had been able to save, went  
into partnership with Sergeant Willis, and  
helped him to run the gymnasium. He  
never regrets the day he turned pro., any  
more than does his father now!

THE END

## High Days & Holidays



### OLD BOYS' DAY.

ON this great festival so bright  
The fags all wear clean collars;  
And Greyfriars welcomes with delight  
Her old and honoured scholars.  
Gaily we greet the heroes bold,  
Of bygone generations;  
Eagerly bidding them unfold  
Stories of past sensations.

See them swarm in! A motley band  
Of gallant, grim old-stagers;  
Lawyers, and leaders of the land,  
Airmen, and gallant Majors,  
Professors, scientists, M.P.'s,  
And leisured landed gentry;  
Some youthful, some inclined to wheeze  
All make their welcome entry.

They wander through the old domain  
Recalling days of youthfulness;  
"If only we were boys again!"  
They sigh, with touching truthfulness.  
"What fights and feuds, what jolly japes,  
What feats of boyish bravery!  
When we were gay young jackanapes,  
And life was sweet and savoury!"

They live again, for this brief day,  
The lives of happy pupils;  
They feast, in quite the old-time way,  
Without digestive scruples!  
And then, beneath the early stars,  
We part from their society;  
And they are borne, in trains and cars,  
Back to the world's anxiety.



## Our Incurable Interviewer Calls On WUN LUNG

*(The Chinese junior of the Greyfriars Remove.)*

**A** SAVOURY odour of what smelled like Irish stew was the first thing that struck me on opening the door of Study No. 13. The next thing that struck me was a cushion, hurled at my head with unerring aim by the young Chinese who was kneeling in front of the fire.

"Whooop!" I yelled indignantly.

Wun Lung looked round and registered slight surprise in his almond eyes.

"Me sorry!" he said.

"Sorry? I should jolly well think you are sorry!" I growled. "Nice way to greet the HOLIDAY ANNUAL's Incurable Interviewer, I must say!"

"No savvy! Wun Lung think you Billy Buntel," smiled Wun Lung. "Billy Buntel, he come along plenty quick, pinchee Chinese boy's nice stew. Me thlowee cushion, hit fat Buntel plenty hard!"

"Oh, I see! You thought I was Bunter on the prowl," I said, a little mollified. "As it happens, I'm not; but I must say I shouldn't blame him for sniffing round at that stew of yours. It certainly smells good."

"Chinese boy makee nice stew!" grinned Wun Lung. "Handsome stlanger, he tastee plenty soon!"

"Thanks, I will," I replied promptly.

I took a seat at the study table, and started interviewing the young heathen of the Remove while he got out crockery-ware and laid the table.

"How do you like Greyfriars, Mr. Wun Lung?" I asked.

"Me likee plenty much," answered the Chinese. "Handsome Bob Chelly, he velly nice; Mark Linley, plenty good fellow;

Billy Buntel, he plenty bad. Me killee one day; cuttee throat—like this!"

"Here, ease up!" I yelled in alarm as Wun Lung made a dive at me, brandishing a carving-knife.

"No killee stlanger!" grinned Wun Lung, replacing the knife on the table.

I mopped my perspiring brow, and felt very thankful that Wun Lung's programme was "no killee" so far as I was concerned. Having recovered my breath, I proceeded with the interview.

"What are your hobbies, Mr. Wun Lung?"

"No savvy!"

"What is your greatest ambition?"

"No savvy!"

The interview didn't seem to be exactly illuminating. I tried another line.

"Do you prefer English manners and customs to those of your own country?"

"No savvy!" grinned Wun Lung. "Me dishee up stew now!"

After two generous helpings I ventured to inquire the nature of the meat which seemed to form the basis of the stew.

Wun Lung's answer made me jump out of my chair.

"Lats and mice!" he said.

"You—you made that stew with rats and mice?" I murmured faintly.

Wun Lung nodded.

"Ooooooooooh!" I moaned.

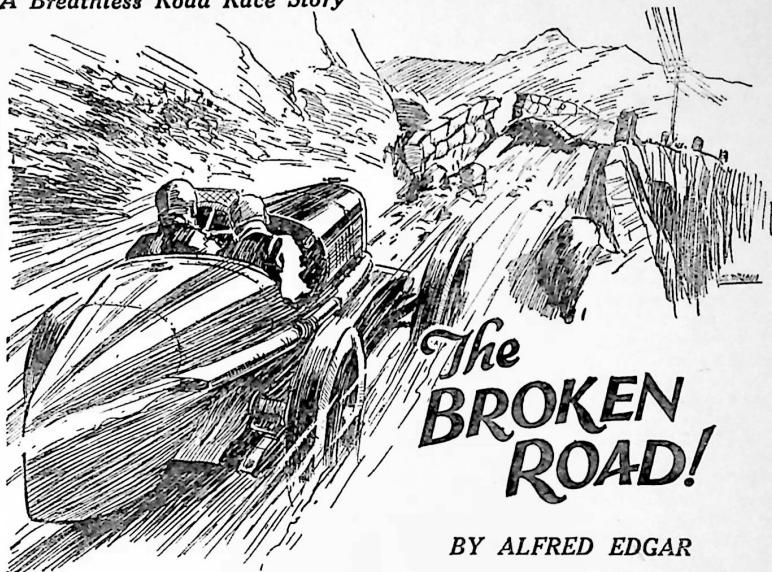
"Stlanger tlyee more stew?"

"Ow! No! Ooooooooooh!"

Giddily I swayed to my feet and staggered out of Study No. 13, leaving Wun Lung to finish off that awful meal on his own.

THE END

## A Breathless Road Race Story



BY ALFRED EDGAR

*Less than a lap to race, through blinding sand-storm and intense heat; and a broken road lay between Bob Royd and Danny Moore, in the Connaught racer, and the winning of the gold trophy!*

### THE FIRST CHAPTER The Spanish Grand Prix I

**B**OB ROYD gasped and ducked a little as a racing-car went past the replenishment pit. Its kicking tyres sent a great cloud of choking white dust streaking high from the road, smothering the enclosure opposite and hazing the faces of spectators in the grand-stand.

The roaring machine was painted blue, and the blazing Spanish sun lent Bob a momentary glimpse of the strained face of the driver. Then only the wreathing dust was left behind, rushing past in great clouds as the burning wind of the sirocco took hold.

Bob stood in the Connaught pit, and three Connaught racers were competing in this Spanish Grand Prix. Rather, there

had been three. One was now a wreck on the side of the road, and another was in the "dead car" park.

The motor-race was being run off over what was almost a mountain circuit, where precipices edged the course and corners were fringed by gulfs. Almost with the drop of the flag had come the sirocco—an oven-like blast of dust-laden wind which screeched down from the burning hills around.

At the back of the pit a little group of men bent over a figure on a stretcher. The man wore racing overalls which had once been white, and he was unconscious. He was the mechanic out of the last Connaught car in the race—the machine which was even now trying to snatch the lead from a red Italian car.

The mechanic's shoes were almost burnt

from his feet by the heat slung back from the engine. His neck was all blistered and raw from the heat of the sun, and the wind had driven dust deep into the pores of his skin.

Famous Danny Moore, driver of the last of the Connaughts, had dropped the mechanic at the pit three laps back, and had taken on another man. The mechanic had been senseless when Danny had stopped, and Bob marvelled that the driver himself was able to carry on.

Another car went through—Spanish this time, with a yellow body and red wheels. The crowd in the stand cheered its driver, although they knew that he stood no chance of victory unless either Moore or Ricardo, in the flaming red Brescia, cracked up. One of those two seemed certain to win the race, because they had only a couple more laps of the twenty-mile circuit to complete.

Bob was on holiday from Abbotsleigh School. His father was racing team manager for the Connaughts, and he had brought his son over to watch the Grand Prix. Bob wore overalls, and he helped in the replenishment pit, although there was nothing to do now that the race was almost run, and but one car of the team left running.

"Ricardo should be coming through in two minutes!" a mechanic called hoarsely from the other end of the pit, where he and two others bent over a battery of stop-watches and timing-charts.

"Danny's due in eight minutes, sir," another mechanic called.

"Keep the 'all out' signal flying for him!" Bob's father growled the words from where he was bending over the unconscious mechanic.

Mr. Royd was a thick-shouldered man, and he could not bend his left arm. He had crippled it in a crash in a big race at Brooklands. In his day Bob's father had been as famous as Danny Moore was now, and it was Bob's own ambition to learn to handle a speed machine.

He realised, of course, that he was a lot too young. This event, run off through a storm of dust and wind and searing heat, was showing him that a speedman needed

more than mere driving skill; he had to be tough and resolute.

At school Bob did his best to make himself hard and fit. Although he had only just got his remove into the Fifth Form, he had already played one season as wicket-keeper for the first eleven, and nobody could beat him for hard work on the footer field.

He was full of quick-moving muscle, which rippled over chest and shoulders, and his face, though now smudged with oil, and on which wind-borne dust had caked, held a determined look.

Bob knew that Danny Moore had once been at Abbotsleigh, and the dour, dark-eyed speedman seemed to like him. Danny's picture, taken in racing kit, hung in the Small Hall. He had performed daring feats at school which had never been equalled, though it was more than twelve years since he had left.

Bob crouched as yet another machine surged past the grand-stand and the pits. It was a second French car, travelling like a mad thing down the road, with the driver bent over his steering-wheel, a silk handkerchief flapping where it was tucked around the neck of his overalls to keep out the dust.

As its roaring died, there came a similar sound from overhead. Bob craned above the pit-plank to look up through the whirling dust, and sighted a red biplane. It was flying low, almost skimming the fluttering flags on top of the stand.

Bob could make out the head of the pilot, and even the shape of the camera strapped to the side of the fuselage. The pilot raised his hand as he went past, and Bob grabbed a swab to shake in reply.

The chap in that 'plane was "Blam" Cooper. He had flown over from England specially for the race, and he was another Abbotsleigh old boy. Bob had fagged for Blam, and even in those days his senior had enjoyed a reputation for recklessness. He was now the star camera man for a big newspaper combine, and he was trying to get unique pictures of the race. He was staying at the same hotel as Bob and the Connaught team, and he shared Bob's admiration of Danny Moore.

As the 'plane vanished, the mechanic with the stop-watches yelled:

"Ricardo's Brescia is now due, sir! He's late!"

At the words Bob's father jerked from the stretcher and came to the tool-cluttered pit-plank.

"His engine's beginning to crack up," he said. "It's a miracle that everybody hasn't been finished by this heat! How late is he now?"

"Thirty seconds, sir!"

Bob leaned farther out and peered along the line of pits, which were like little sheds, open at the front and back, and joined up to one another. He could see the Brescia pit, with half a score of anxious Italians leaning out to stare down the road and watch for the first sign of their car.

"One minute late, sir!"

"The later he is, the more chance Danny stands of catching him up!" Mr. Royd growled.

Then, almost with his words, they heard the distant crackle of an approaching car.

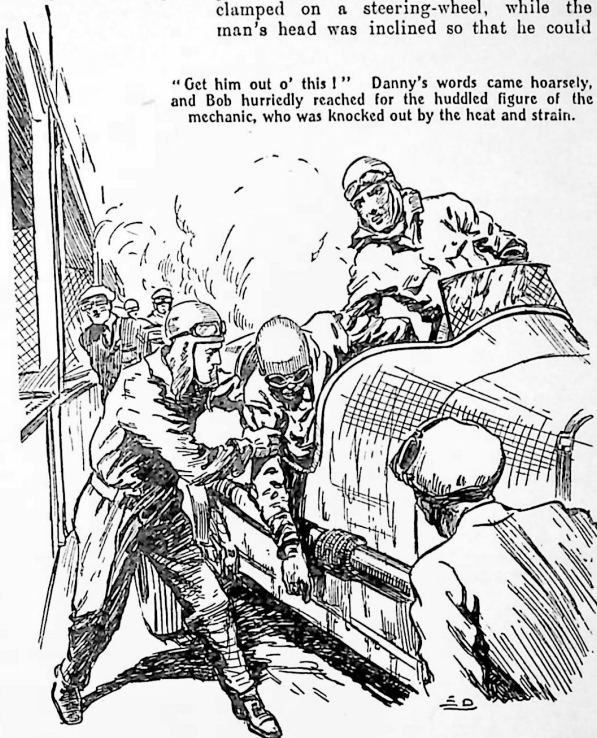
The road stretched away white, wide and straight, with the wind driving down it, sending the dust skating in streaky clouds that masked everything more than a hundred yards away.

The bellow of the car drew nearer, then it appeared as a hazy red smudge which

swiftly became more definite, and suddenly showed as the Brescia handled by Ricardo. It was coming down the straight at two miles a minute, and at the back of it dust spread like a comet's tail.

Full into the burning heart of the sirocco the Italian was hurtling, visible only as a pair of goggles, a crash helmet, and hands clamped on a steering-wheel, while the man's head was inclined so that he could

"Get him out o' this!" Danny's words came hoarsely, and Bob hurriedly reached for the huddled figure of the mechanic, who was knocked out by the heat and strain.



look past his little wind-shield, which was caked heavily with dust.

"He's just ninety seconds late, sir!" the mechanic yelled to Mr. Royd.

Bob saw that the men in the machine's pit were frantically signalling the Italian to go all out. He heard them yelling, and then

came a fierce blast of the hot wind which banked the dust on the road, flapped the banners and the flags in the enclosure opposite, and tore away the roof of the end pit, so that it crashed to the course.

Instantly officials darted out, bending against the dust-storm to clear away the debris of the roof, just as two cars came hurtling into sight and went howling in pursuit of the leading machine, both of them actually a full lap behind it.

"Danny's due in five minutes, sir!" Bob heard a mechanic call.

"All right. One of you stand by with the all-out signal!" Mr. Royd called.

"I'll do it, dad!"

Bob reached for a white-handled pole, the head of which carried a white disc, with a red circle in the centre. It was a signal for Danny to kick the throttle wide open and drive as hard as he possibly could for the last two laps of the race.

Bob slid with the pole over the front of the pit and stood waiting there. Dust slashed at his face, and he patted the pair of goggles closer over his eyes. Every man in the pit was wearing goggles. The wind whipped and tore at him, dust blasted into his ears and nostrils, and the wind drove it like mist up the road.

Minutes ticked away, and he heard the mechanic counting them off.

"Due in four minutes, sir! Danny's due in three minutes, sir!"

It was as the man said this that there came a shattering bellow down the road, a raucous boom which made every man in the pit leap to the plank, because they recognised the sonorous sound as the exhaust note of Danny Moore's Connaught.

"That's Danny. He's gained two and a half minutes, sir! He's only a hundred an' fifty seconds behind the Brescia!"

"Here he is!" Bob shouted as he braced himself and raised his signal, holding it steady to face the approaching machine.

He saw the low-hung green car rip out of the dust-storm, and even as he saw it he heard the screeching drone of its brakes. The car weaved on the road, then, slowing, came streaking to the pit, half skidding as it stopped.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER

### Two Laps to Go!

Bob dropped the signal when he saw the car stopping. He glimpsed Danny's mouth open, and knew that the driver was shouting something, which was lost in the squealing of tyres and brakes.

Men and car were all grey-white from dust. The windscreen was solid with it. The stuff was all caked in the folds of Danny's overalls, and on the huddled form in the seat beside him.

That was his mechanic. The man was doubled up, knocked out by the heat and strain of riding in a wildly driven car over three twenty-mile circuits of mountain roads.

"Get him out o' this!" Danny's words came hoarsely, and Bob jumped to the other side of the machine, reaching to lift the inert man.

He got him half up, and track officials came to aid him. They dragged the man clear, and it was then that the driver shot out a dusty gauntlet and gripped Bob's forearm.

"Get in!" Danny yelled. "Ride it out with me, boy—quick!"

Bob stared. He heard his father shouting as he came across the pit-plank.

"Get in—unless you're scared!" the driver gasped. "Abbottsleigh's going to win this race! Come on!"

Bob almost fell over the side of the cockpit. The instant that his feet left the ground Danny Moore sent the machine surging forward, screaming in gear. For half a minute Bob struggled against the dust that smashed into his face, then got down to the hard little seat and hugged the smooth side of the cockpit, giving Danny plenty of room.

It was like the inside of a furnace. From the engine fumes and burning heat swept through the foot-grid; dust came with it, and more dust plastered in stinging grains against Bob's face.

"How do I stand?" Danny yelled to him through the roar of the engine as he changed into top gear and held the machine to the middle of the road.

"You were two and a half minutes

behind when you stopped," Bob answered. "I say, this is jolly decent of you to take me!"

"You won't think so by the time you've been round here once or twice. But you won't conk out, I know. How many laps have I got to go?"

"Two."

"Good! About three minutes behind, and only two laps to do. Come on, Connaught! Bring that Brescia back!"

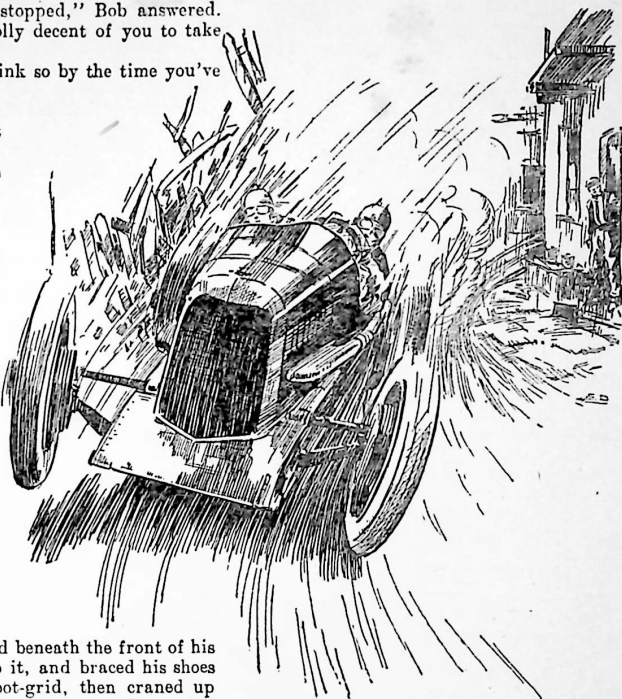
After that Danny said no more.

Bob had been round the circuit during practice, but never with Danny Moore at speed. As the car began to bounce on the road, he caught and held a leather hand-hold beneath the front of his seat. He clung to it, and braced his shoes against the hot foot-grid, then craned up to peer over the edge of the scuttle.

He saw the sirocco sweeping huge streamers of dust across the road, and through it he sighted where the course bent to the left and the white-walled buildings of San Viente village showed. They were among them a moment later, plunging into the shadow thrown by the buildings.

Bob saw blurred faces at the black openings of windows and doors. He saw yellow palisades, with empty, open ground behind them, from which spectators had been driven by the heat. Then the village slid away, while, on the left of the road, there rose the bold side of a mountain.

Here the course was like a shelf cut daringly, with only a foot-high parapet of



As the Connaught rocked round the corner, there was a sound of rending woodwork, and broken palings flew high in the car's wake!

boulders to mark where the road ended, and where began a two-hundred-foot gulf, which fell sheer to a river sparkling below.

Bob had glimpses of the river—a closer glimpse than he wanted when Danny swerved suddenly to avoid a machine which had stopped for something, and was just pulling out on to the road again. It was one of the French cars, and they went by it with a roar, wheel-hubs all but nudging the little parapet, so that the precipice appeared to drop straight from their side.

Across the valley Bob made out where the

wind was wiping the very earth from the bare hillsides, sending it out like rain on to the air. He had heard something about siroccos, but this was the first time he had ever been in one, and he didn't want to experience another!

For a mile and a half they hurtled along the rocky ledge, almost dead straight all the time; then came the furious screech of brakes, the car's tail wagged a little, and they went ripping round an abrupt bend where the mountain bulged.

There came a second, a third bend, and with the last the road turned so that the wind was now behind them, while the course dipped steeply to a valley which was almost a ravine.

On the right reared the tremendously high and steep shape of what Bob had named Black Mountain. It was a colossal height, ugly and dark, and faced with boulders which seemed likely at any moment to plunge into the dip.

To one side was the little village of Arcayos, and from this the Rio Escudo wound in a silvery streak, passing under the road at the bottom of the dip. Bob, as they hurtled to the clearer air, could see the river, and the bridge like a camel's hump.

Down towards it the Connaught flung itself, seeming barely to touch the road, travelling faster than it could move at any other part of the course. Bob could see a car in front, already beyond the bridge, and dwarfed to a speck by the distance of two miles or more.

The rush of hot air past Bob's face caught his breath. Heat came burning from the engine, wrapping about his ankles and legs, and making his insteps tingle. He braced himself in the cockpit, and tried to keep his head high to avoid the fumes which were sweeping up through the foot-grid.

It was then that he glimpsed Blam Cooper's plane. The machine was above them, diving steeply and a little ahead. Bob would have waved, but he was too occupied holding on, and, in any case, the racing car was travelling faster than the red plane.

Bob watched the craft wheel and dive still lower, until it was coming towards them. He made out the black eye of the camera, then they had dived beneath, and the humpy structure of the Escudo Bridge was fairly lifting itself from the valley to meet them.

There was a little crowd of spectators sheltering in the shade of rocks near it, and the men seemed to grow larger as the car rushed on. When it appeared to Bob as though they could never stop in time to take the bridge safely, Danny reached for the brakes.

The car slowed, magically it seemed, then they were at the bridge, flying up it, leaving the ground for a moment at the summit of the hump, and landing with a crash on the far side, giving Bob a kind of switch-back sensation before the car caught him and carried him streaking on.

Beyond the bridge the road was in shadow. It was stiflingly hot, and there was not much wind down here. When the course began to wind and climb, he sighted the car he had previously seen. It was not the Brescia they were chasing; it was the yellow and red Spanish car, and the driver pulled close to the edge of the road to give them room to pass when they finally overhauled him.

Another village at the end of the valley, and after that the course was all wild corners and turns, with glimpses of steep drops waiting for the car should it leave the road. The sirocco caught them in its grip again, and Bob huddled down to keep out of the stinging dust.

"Keep your—head up! Mind—fumes!" Danny's wind-snatched warning came to him.

The engine fumes were pungent and sickly; they had knocked the other two mechanics out. Bob sat up, loosing one hand to hold it before his nose and mouth, so that he could breathe easily.

The machine was rocking and bucking under its speed. Again and again his back was thudded sickeningly against the swab, while on one corner he cut his cheek against the leather side of the cockpit, from the

violence with which Danny was forced to skid a curve.

Presently Bob picked out Pino, the village marking the last corner before the grand-stand straight and the end of the lap. Dust half blotted it out, and as they stormed towards the buildings, he sighted a wrecked car in the heart of a torn-down palisade.

They went between the buildings, raising the dust behind, swung round the corner in the heart of the place, and then fairly leaped to the straightaway beyond.

"Look out—for signals!" Danny thundered the words at him, which were half lost in the engine's mad roaring and the screech of the supercharger.

Bob craned in his seat to peer ahead. They were driving full into the teeth of the sirocco now. Dust-grains hit him like rain, stinging the cut on his cheek, silting up in his ears and clogging his nostrils.

He sighted the grand-stand and the line of pits. He picked out his own, and saw the white disc with the red centre flying. Below it was a board bearing "2 m." Every man in the pit was waving and cheering them on.

"We're two minutes behind the Brescia now!"

He put his lips close to Danny's ear and shouted the words, and the speedman nodded.

His face was like a clown's, with its grey mask of dust all streaked by little channels of sweat. Bob could see the muscles sticking out at the side of Danny's jaw as he rammed his foot hard on the throttle pedal, his gaze steady on the sweeping dust before them.

"Last lap!" Bob called, and the driver nodded.

"I'll get him somehow!"

San Viente village whirled at them. There was a corner here for which Danny had previously braked. He did not use his brakes now.

They went into the village, rocking from their speed. Bob saw the walls which hemmed the corner and a palisade, then they were rushing at it, skimming the fence! He heard the crash of woodwork,

saw palings fly high, splinters showered across their tail, and men ducked back into a near-by doorway. Then they were through the corner, with the fence broken behind them and their tail dented, while the shelf-like road opened ahead.

On to it they went, travelling at mad speed. The wind seemed to have died a little, and the road was now clear. Bob marked bunches of cactus at the edge, growing among the boulders. He saw two abandoned cars here, with Spanish soldiers looking after them—and then he saw Blam Cooper's 'plane!

It was coming round the bluff in front, where three corners lay before the steep, fast drop down to dangerous Escudo Bridge. The 'plane was flying low, and it swung out over the gulf, then turned, still ahead of them.

Bob thought that he saw Blam waving, but he was not sure. The machine dropped until it was almost level with the road, and now Bob could see the pilot raised in his seat, leaning from the cockpit, waving one arm.

"Telling us to go a bit faster!" Bob thought. "I bet he's seen that Italian not so far ahead!" And he waved back.

'Plane and racing-car were near now, and Blam was still waving. Then suddenly he drew his arm in, and an instant after the craft came sweeping towards the road just ahead of them and dipping close to the cliff.

Bob watched him. He clearly saw Blam look round. Still closer came the 'plane.

"He's going to land in front of us!" Bob gasped, panting the words into the gale which screeched past his head.

As he spoke, one wing-tip of the machine dipped to the little parapet at the roadside. Instantly wood and fabric broke against the boulders, dragging the craft round, so that it seemed to be diving straight for the car.

Danny's foot crashed on the brake pedal, and the machine slid sideways, then slewed the other way as the brakes locked the wheels.

The 'plane lurched on to the road, drove full across it, then smashed its propeller



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TAKING A CHANCE!

H.A.

on the rocky face opposite, canted sideways, broke its other wing, and came to a juddering stop, barring the course.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER

To the Victor . . .

Bob thought they must crash full into the wrecked craft, but they stopped a yard short of it. As the droning brakes held the wheels, Blam Cooper came tumbling from his cockpit, blood streaming where he had cut his face. His shoes hit the ground, then he lurched towards them, hanging on to the damaged wing of the machine.

"Had to—stop you!" He came closer, bending to yell the words through the roar of the car's engine. "The bridge is down!"

"What?" Danny jerked up in his seat.

"The sirocco—loosened earth on the mountain—avalanche!" the pilot gasped. "Road's clear, but boulders smashed a great hole in the middle of the bridge!"

"Where's Ricardo?"

"He raced the avalanche—got across!"

"Then unless we can get over he'll win!"

Danny shouted through the engine's beat.

"Is the bridge down altogether?"

"No, there's only a hole in the crown of it," Blam answered. "I had to stop you. You'd have been killed!"

"A hole in the middle of the bridge? Then we might—jump it!" Danny spoke through gritted teeth. "Bob, swing the tail of that machine out of the way!"

Bob scrambled from the car. Blam, though he staggered, aided him to haul the 'plane's tail over so that half the road was clear. The moment there was room for the car to go through Danny sent it forward, yelling:

"Good man, Blam! See you later!"

Bob made a dive for the cockpit as the machine went by him, and was jerked off his feet as he scrambled in. Danny slowed.

"You get out! This is too risky for you!"

"I'll see it through!" Bob gasped, and struggled into his seat.

There was no time for argument. Ricardo was getting farther away with

every second. The Connaught screamed through its gears, then plunged into the corners, and left them behind as the dip opened down to the valley.

Bob saw the bridge. At one side was a mighty mass of fallen, crumbled rock and earth. It was piled up about the river. The road was scattered with dirt and stones, and right on the crest of the bridge showed a yawning cavity.

"We can do it!" Danny leaned towards him and roared the words. "If I take the bridge as fast as we can go, the speed will make us jump that hole! There'll be a devil of a smash the other side, so hang on! Duck if we go off the road and crash!"

Bob tightened his grip as they flung down the slope. Nearer came the bridge. He saw Spaniards rushing to the roadside to warn them. Flags waved madly, but they did not slow.

Faster and still faster they went. The bridge seemed to rise to meet them. Bob saw more clearly the debris which was strewn across the road, and the bridge with the black hole gaping in its crown.

"Hang on!"

Danny shouted. Bob wedged his feet against the grid, gripped his leather holds, braced his every muscle, and then saw the bridge swoop at them.

He felt the car kick from stones as its tyres bit on them. The machine tilted upwards, front springs bottoming as the nose of the car took the rise of the hump-backed bridge. The hole showed below them, then they were clear of the ground, and flying through the air!

One fleeting glimpse Bob had of the broken road beneath and the shadowy river through it. For what seemed an age they streaked on, dropping now; then came a colossal crash, and the car skidded almost broadside.

He saw Danny fighting the wheel, forcing the car straight, mastering it, and sending it streaking safely on through the valley.

"Done it!" Bob gasped, and he saw Danny grin. "Good old Abbotsleigh!"

Up the rising ground now, through the shadows and the village at the head of the

valley, and into the wild corners and bends beyond.

How Danny took them Bob did not know. They approached turns at such speed that it seemed beyond possibility that they could get round, yet they always did. When a cliff wall seemed to block their path, the wheel-hubs would all but scar its face, tyres and brakes would scream, then the road would open before them.

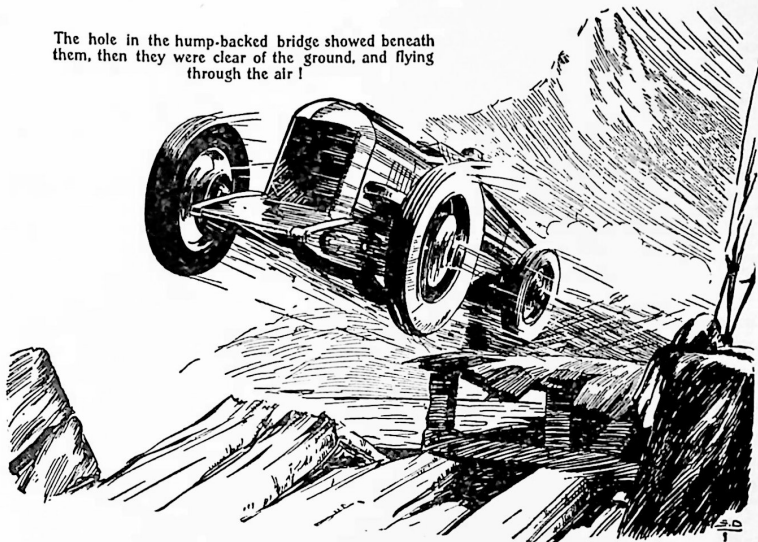
And it was as they entered Pino that they saw the red Brescia!

gritted teeth filmed by the stuff. The man's head was bent, he was shouting through the uproar, and his dark eyes were blazing as he asked his machine for one last wild spurt.

For half a mile the two machines ran dead level, then the Connaught gained slightly.

Tantalisingly slowly, it seemed to Bob, the Connaught nosed ahead. So far as he could tell, he thought that Danny now had the car all out. He knew, too, that it was

The hole in the hump-backed bridge showed beneath them, then they were clear of the ground, and flying through the air!



It was then two hundred yards in front of them, already slowing for the last dangerous turn on the mountain course.

After it went the Connaught, and they were at the Italian's tail as they came to the corner. On went the brakes, and the Connaught leaped and juddered like a wild thing, skidding. Danny fought it round, held it close to the fencing, then cut inside the red machine, and came from the corner dead level.

Bob saw Ricardo, face grey from dust,

only Danny's skilful driving that had given them this slight lead. Unless they could gain on or keep the half-length difference between the two cars, victory might yet be snatched from their grasp—that is, if the Brescia had some reserve power. Had it? Bob wondered.

The thought made him glance over his shoulder at the Italian. His face now held a grim smile, for the red Brescia was no longer receding; it was holding the Connaught's tail! No, it was creeping up!

The Brescia had more power—unless the Connaught was failing at the critical moment! That awful thought made Bob hastily swish his glance round to Danny.

"He's holding us!" he shouted through the roar of both madly-driven engines. "Got any reserve in her?"

Danny greeted Bob's words with a smile. That was all, but it was a reassuring smile, and Bob felt relieved.

The Italian car had by now practically crept level again with the Connaught. Then suddenly Bob heard the pulsating roar of the Connaught engine grow louder, and when he looked round at the Italian it was to see him dropping behind. He smiled to himself. Danny had kept a card up his sleeve, so to speak!

"We win!" Bob yelled.

He saw the stand in front, and the dust of the sirocco hazing the group of officials who stood at the side of the road with the winner's flag.

Bob looked behind again. The red

machine was about five yards in the rear of them now, dropping farther and farther away—beaten!

Twenty seconds later, the winner's flag slashed in the air, signalling the Connaught across the line.

In the Small Hall at Abbotsleigh School, by the photograph of Danny Moore, there is a small gold cup, a replica of the trophy which Bob helped to win in the Spanish Grand Prix. Flanking it is a picture of a wrecked aeroplane and a photograph of a dusty, battered racing-car, with Danny and Blam and Bob standing by it.

New boys at Abbotsleigh are taken into Small Hall and shown these things, and are told the story connected with them. They are then asked to say who did most towards winning the race: Danny or Bob or Blam?

Nobody has yet satisfactorily solved the problem.

THE END

