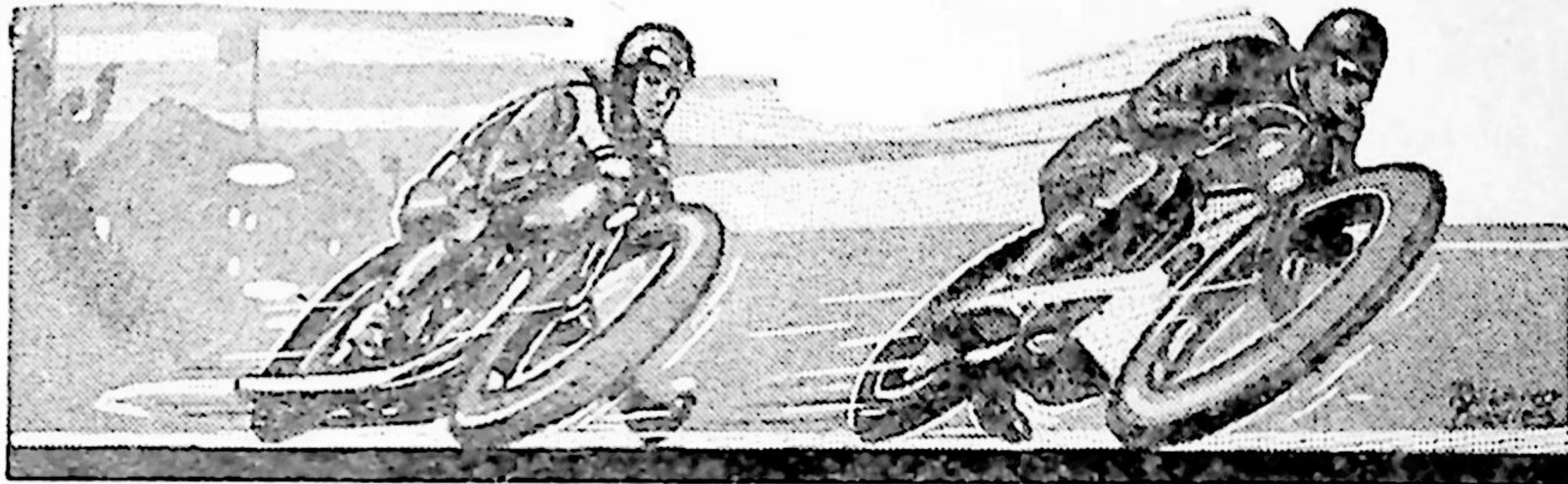


A Magnificent Story of Dirt-Track Racing. By A. CARNEY ALLAN

SPEEDWAY FURY



THE FIRST CHAPTER Flat Out !

EXCITEMENT ran high at the Burford Speedway, and thirty-thousand pairs of eyes were fixed on the four riders who had answered the call of the bell and wheeled their D.T. bikes across the ramp to the starting-point.

A hush had descended over the crowd, a hush of expectation, for the event billed on the programme was the final heat of the Track Challenge Match between the boys of the home team and their keenest rivals in the Southern League, Fernlea. With the points evenly shared up till now, a desperate race for the honours seemed certain.

The visiting "fans" looked to Ray Hampson, the Fernlea Stadium's "star," the home supporters to Jim Conway, ace and captain of the Burford team.

Jim, idol of the local enthusiasts, was six feet from the rim of his crash-helmet to the steel toe-cap of his field-boot—thirteen stone of genial dare-devil; a youngster with a ready smile, but with a glint in his eye and a set of the jaw that marked the will to win.

He and Ray Hampson were the men to watch, for the others—Bill Ritchie of Burford, and Wal Davids, of Fernlea—were second-place men, though capable of giving a good performance when at the peak of their form.

The track attendants pushed the quartet forward, and the four bikes ripped out their deep-toned notes. The lights swinging above the quarter-mile circuit glanced on the chromium plating of the speed-irons as the riders covered the preliminary lap, one forging ahead of the others every now and then as he tested the acceleration of his machine.

They pushed along the back straight, swung round the second bend to come into the front stretch, and then, forming up, "turned on the taps" for the flying start. They passed the judge in a straight line, and the green light signalled the "all clear." The final heat of the Track Challenge Match had begun.

To the cheers of the Fernlea supporters, Ray Hampson snatched the lead, twisting his throttle-grip hard round and driving for the first bend with his head sunk low over the

Five hundred pounds is offered to Jim Conway to lose a race . . . And five hundred pounds is the sum he needs to save his brother's life !

handle-bars. But close on the tail of Hampson's bike came Jim Conway, and there was scarcely daylight between them as they hit the curve.

They hurtled into the corner and raked round, cinder-shifting. Jim fought determinedly to hold his rival, but Hampson had the advantage of the inside position and, hugging the white line, he swerved on to the back straight a couple of lengths ahead of the Burford ace.

Jim opened up after him, and as he turned up the "wick," it was as if his gleaming speed-iron slipped some unseen leash. Storming in pursuit with deafening engine-roar, it clipped off the lead that the Fernlea man had gained. As the back bend loomed near, Jim and Hampson were riding wheel to wheel.

Ritchie and Davids were battling in the rear, fighting for third place and the single point it would secure at the end of the race.

Meanwhile, dead-level with each other, Jim and Hampson dived into the corner, and the grit streamed from their back wheels in a murky cascade as they skidded round. Once again the advantage of the inner position gave the Fernlea "star" the lead, and he had not lost it when he crossed the line for the second lap.

He tore into the bend amid the delirious shouts of his admirers, while the home "fans" yelled themselves hoarse as Jim drove his screaming speed-iron flat out at the corner in a neck-or-nothing bid for first place. Then suddenly there was an involuntary gasp.

Using the "cut-out," Jim lashed his back wheel into a terrific broadside, and for an instant it seemed as if he had wrecked himself, for the machine swept up towards the safety fence in a vicious skid. Jim fought that skid, gauntleted fists grappling on the handle-bars, toe-plate scrabbling in the track surface and striking up the sparks as it bit deep. With the strength of his powerful wrists concentrated on the twist-grips,

and the muscles of his left leg flexed into bands of steel, he mastered the side-slip and swung the rocking bike on to the back-straight.

The crowd breathed again, and gave vent to a spontaneous roar of admiration.

Jim had lost ground, but, undaunted by the deficit, he let rip with the throttle and chased Hampson along the stretch. On his right the faces of the crowd appeared as one blurred mass, and the din of their shouting merged into the ear-splitting note of his shuddering speed-iron.

Hampson drove into the corner ten lengths in front of the Burford ace. Jim, entering it high up by the safety fence, cut down towards the white line and fought his way round it in a fearsome slide that brought the spectators to their feet. He finished up on the straight with the back wheel wrenching towards the right and the front wheel forced hard round to baffle the skid.

Toe-plate and grappling hands again mastered the speed-iron; and, with only five yards between him and the tail of his rival's machine, Jim twisted the throttle grip and opened up in pursuit.

The line was crossed for lap three, and, riding full out to keep his advantage, Ray

Hampson launched his "iron" into the bend at the end of the straight. Jim dived after him, cut out his engine, and then came in with it again, so that the exhaust-spouts blurted flame and sound and the back wheel whipped round in a slashing broadside.

A stream of cinders raked across the track. Through that haze of dirt Jim suddenly saw a figure forging its way. It was Wal Davids of Fernlea, making an unexpected challenge for second place.

The spectators, like Jim, immediately realised that Davids had left Ritchie standing, and they cheered this effort of his to pit himself against the two stars. But, though he rode like one inspired, Davids had attempted



Jim Conway, captain of the Burford Speedway.

more than he could achieve. A long slide actually took him ahead of Jim, but he could not control the skid and down he came in a smother of grit.

Bike and rider parted, and the machine, grinding on its side, thudded into the safety fence.

Jim swept on round the corner and flashed along the back straight after Hampson; but the Fernlea crack was driving his speed-iron at full throttle, and at full throttle he hurled it into the second bend. He had to win now to save his team from defeat and make the match a draw.

Jim tore into the curve hard behind him, and was taking the cinders from Hampson's back wheel when they gained the front straight. The grit peppered his tank and gauze shield, and some of it must have found its way into the mechanism, for all at once his speed-iron faltered. The check was momentary, but, quickly as the engine cleared itself, Hampson had increased his lead to two lengths when he was flagged for the last lap.

Jim rallied, and the note of his speed-iron had risen to a shriek when he launched her into the first curve. An ugly skid almost brought him down, but he dug his field-boot into the track surface and

Jim lashed his back wheel into a terrific broadside, and there was a gasp from the spectators as the machine skidded right up to the safety fence.



swerved on to the back straight in masterly style.

He was only a length behind Ray Hampson now, and the gap between them remained the same in the spurt for the last bend. Both men swung into the corner, and their spouts blazed simultaneously as each juggled with the "cut-out." The Fernlea star was sticking close to the white line, but Jim was forcing abreast of him. They were wheel by wheel as they hit the home stretch, and their bikes roared in unison as they switched the throttles full round. The "fans" stood up to a man and yelled.

"Keep her at it, Ray!"

"Come on, Jim. You've got it, Jim!"

Jim's speed-iron pulled ahead almost imperceptibly. He was taking first place, fighting for it inch by inch. The finishing-line was just ahead—

The checked flag fell and the gun banged. In the same instant there arose a mighty cheer, deliriously triumphant.

"Jim Conway wins! Burford wins!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER

The Bribe!

IT was late when Jim Conway reached his flat, fifteen minutes' journey from the Speedway; but in spite of the hour he had hardly slipped his key into the front-door latch when he heard footsteps.

Jim shared the flat with his younger brother, and it was Tom Conway who met him as he crossed the threshold. There was only a couple of years between them, but they bore little resemblance to each other. Jim, ruddy, fair-haired and stalwart, was a magnificent specimen of Anglo-Saxon manhood and carried himself with the lithe, easy gait of an athlete. Tom was dark, pallid and spare, with a complexion almost transparent and the manner of a student. But one thing they held in common—an affection which was "as steadfast as the stars."

"How did you get on?" was Tom's first question, and for the next five minutes Jim was obliged to describe, in detail, the night's racing.

"I wish I'd been there to see you," was Tom's rueful comment, when Jim had finished his account of Burford's victory over their rivals.

Jim shook his head.

"It struck me as being mighty chilly on the way home to-night," he observed, "and you know the night air isn't good for you."

Tom nodded. He had to take care of his delicate constitution. Chill night air, fog, wet weather, all the rigours of the English climate that only seemed to make others, like Jim, more hardy—these were disastrous to Tom. And if he sometimes felt that Jim was inclined to play the nurse-maid with him, he realised that, ever since the death of their

parents, Jim had been something like a guardian to him.

Jim was the bread-winner. Regular employment for one in Tom's state of health was out of the question. Yet he was no idler, for, interested in everything relating to science and mechanics, he had made a hobby of inventing various devices of his own. They scarcely ever found a market, or brought any money into the house, but the modelling of them amused him immensely.

Jim inadvertently turned the conversation to the subject of Tom's hobby by asking him what he had been doing with himself.

"I've been working on my latest wheeze," Tom rejoined, and indicated an adjoining room which he had fixed up as a workshop. "Would you like to hear about it?"

Jim was dog-tired. He would rather have gone to bed, but he was not the one to hurt his brother's feelings by any sign of disinterest, so he listened patiently to a long description of Tom's most recent invention.

"And pretty soon," Tom added, when he had explained the principle of his device, "I hope to give you a practical demonstration of it. Of course, I know the idea has been worked out before, but not so simply as in my process."

"Of course," agreed Jim vaguely, and then: "Look here, old son, we'd better get to bed."

As he spoke he idly picked up the evening newspaper, and his eye caught a headline on the front page.

"'Carnation' Clancy Believed To Be Lying Low In England," the black type ran. "International Swindler And Cracksman Wanted For £40,000 Robbery."

There was a head-and-shoulders picture of 'Carnation' Clancy under the print, the picture of a rakish-looking individual in a soft hat. Jim regarded the photograph cynically.

"Forty thousand pounds," he mused, a twisted smile appearing on his face. "I believe I'll turn burglar."

"Burglar!" exclaimed Tom, staring at him. "What the dickens are you talking about? What makes you say that?"

Jim laughed.

"Oh, I'm just talking rot," he answered. "Shove along to bed. Good-night!"

Alone in his bedroom, Jim's eye wandered to that newspaper again, and once more he stared at the picture of "Carnation" Clancy.

Forty thousand pounds, he reflected. One-eightieth part of that amount was all that he needed. Five hundred pounds—

He bit his lip. That same morning he had had a talk with a specialist whom he had called in to examine Tom. His verdict, delivered to Jim in privacy, had been terse and to the point.

He had told Jim quite frankly that his brother could not last out the winter if he remained in England; but three months in one of the finest nursing homes in the South of France would make a new man of him. The South of France was his only chance, and if he could afford the expense, which five hundred pounds would cover—

Jim clenched his hands. Naturally, he did not intend to imitate the career of "Carnation" Clancy in order to raise the necessary amount, but he vowed there and then to risk his neck on the dirt-tracks, and win all the prize-money he could. He reckoned that, by so doing, he could earn five hundred by the end of the season. He *had* to earn it, or Tom's health was forfeit. It was a life-and-death affair.

"Hey, Jim!" Tom's thin voice reached him from the other bedroom. "Hey, Jim, that's the telephone, and I've got my things off. Are you still dressed?"

Jim roused himself, and heard the bell ringing insistently in the hall.

"Sure, I'm dressed, Tom," he called, and hurried out of his room, wondering who could be on the 'phone at that late hour.

Picking up the receiver, he held it against his ear and spoke into the mouth-piece.

"Hallo, yes!" he said. "This is Burford 4460. Yes, it's Jim Conway here. Who is it talking?"

A quiet voice answered him at the other end of the wire.

"The name doesn't matter," it rejoined; "but I have a proposition to make to you. I understand you're riding at Burford Speedway in the Silver Helmet event next Thursday,

and"—the voice became measured and deliberate—"it would be to my interest—if you did not win!"

Jim's hand tightened on the receiver spasmodically, but for the moment he was so taken aback that he could make no reply.

"If you happened to lose," the voice continued, "I would see to it that you received a handsome amount of money—tenfold the amount you would collect if you won the event—"

"Listen to me!" Jim cut in on the speaker, and his voice shook. "Listen to me! If I could see you as well as hear you, I'd answer your dirty offer of a bribe with the back of my hand."

"I see," was the grim rejoinder. "In that case, I may as well tell you that you'll have cause to regret your words."

And next instant Jim heard the man at the other end of the wire hang up the receiver.

The young dirt-track rider immediately put himself in touch with the operator at the exchange, and demanded the telephone number of the unknown person who had called him up; but he was speedily disappointed.

"The call just put through to you was made from a public telephone-booth," he was informed.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

Foul Play!

IT was the evening of the Thursday following Burford's win over Fernlea, and under the eyes of a record crowd the heats of the Silver Helmet had already been run off.

The bell was now calling the respective winners to the starting-point, and there were two among them whose appearance in the final had been more or less a foregone conclusion. One was Jim Conway, who had come through in flying style, riding even more daringly than he had ever ridden before. The other was a speedman known as "Spark" Bronson, captain of a rival team from the other side of the Metropolis; a big, bluff, dark-haired fellow whose fame on the tracks was as great as Jim's.

It was likewise a foregone conclusion that

the coveted Helmet would go to one or other of these two "cracks." Such, at least, was the opinion of the crowd, for the remaining contestants, Con Steele and Terry Morgan by name, were hardly in the same rank.

In a tense silence the competitors were pushed off, and, making the preliminary circuit, they swung at length into the front straight and throttled up for the dash across the line. Three of them kept abreast, but the fourth, Con Steele, hung back until the last second, and then spurted forward to pull level.

The riders were actually in line when they passed the starter, but Steele's ruse had given his bike an advantage of five-miles-an-hour in speed, so that in another instant he would have forged ahead. The judge, however, was quick of eye, and, a fault being signalled, the riders were flagged down by the attendants.

They circled the track again, and for the second time Steele made that flying spurt at the starting-line. But on this occasion he was cunning enough to deceive the official, and, with the race begun, he dashed into the lead.

"Spark" Bronson stormed into second place. Jim, riding third, was closely followed by Morgan.

They swept into the bend, and Bronson passed Steele in a long, raking slide. Jim, broadsiding recklessly, was making up on Steele as well when the fellow swung out in front of him.

Steele had side-slipped, whether by accident or design Jim could not tell, though he had never had much of an opinion of the man. At any rate, the young Burford ace was forced to pull out, and lost ground with the swerve.

Bronson increased his lead in the dash along the back straight, and Steele seemed content to remain in second place. After Steele came Jim, intent on recovering the two or three lengths that his swerve on the corner had cost him.

He clipped off a yard in the race along the stretch and fairly hurtled into the second bend, to gain the front straight close on the tail of Steele's machine. But Steele rode

desperately to hold his narrow advantage over Jim. It seemed as if he were determined to keep the Burford ace behind him rather than to overhaul Bronson.

The second lap saw little or no change in the positions of the riders, and during the third lap Jim was baulked by wild cornering on the part of Steele. With the yellow flag fluttering to signal the last circuit, the Burford crack drove full out in an effort to beat Steele and then challenge Bronson.

His screaming speed-iron slashed into the first bend, and half-way round the curve he was almost abreast of Steele. Then from over thirty-thousand throats a sharp cry of horror went up, for without warning Steele came down in a smother of grit, machine and rider parting company.

It was not on Steele's account that the sharp cry of anxiety arose, for the falling speedman pitched himself sideways on to the turf. But his "iron" lashed round into Jim Conway's path, and the front wheel of the Burford captain's bike crashed into the other machine's tank and stopped dead.

Jim plunged head foremost over the handle-bars, and as he slid through the cinders his speed-iron somersaulted violently and crushed his legs beneath its weight.

"Spark" Bronson drove on round the track to win, but several seconds before the checked flag sliced down a crowd of attendants had run to the scene of Jim's disaster and carried him on to the grass, together with the wreckage of the two bikes.

Jim made no movement. His face looked white and drawn. Someone raised the shout of "stretcher."

Steele, limping near, uninjured but for a bruise or two, was loud in his expressions of concern, though the eyes behind his goggles held a curious glint.

Jim was carried through the well under the main stand, and soon the track medical officer was stripping off his padded suit to examine him. He was not long in delivering his verdict.

"This boy won't ride again for weeks," he said grimly. "He's taken a bad spill—"

Jim had opened his eyes and roused himself a little, and he had heard. He thought of

Tom and that other doctor's verdict, and he groaned.

Days of pain had been followed by the slow process of mending, and now Jim Conway was home again, impatient at the enforced idleness of convalescence, but awaiting with little heart the resumption of his career on the dirt-tracks. For ever since he had known that he was temporarily out of the game, he had realised that he could never make good the resolve which had been his greatest match-winning incentive—the resolve to earn enough to send Tom abroad.

A week before he was due to make his bow before the "fans" at Burford Stadium again, some of the boys called to see him. Not only did the party contain members of the Burford team, but it included one or two riders from other clubs, and among the latter was "Spark" Bronson.

Tom was out at the time, and his name being mentioned, Jim took his visitors into his confidence. He had brooded over the business so long that he felt he must give utterance to his thoughts, somehow, and while his visitors listened in silence he told them of the desperate condition of his brother's health.

"That crash had to come when I was desperate to win every race," he finished



Davids over-did a broadside and came down in a smother of grit. Bike and rider parted, and the machine, grinding on its side, thudded into the safety fence.

bitterly, "and the weeks I've had in hospital have killed my chance of raising the money I needed. I go back to the Speedway on Saturday, but if I won every event from now on until the end of the season I couldn't make that five hundred. It's too late now; too late now—"

It was in an awkward silence, which was eloquent of sympathy, that the other riders eventually took their leave, each one gripping him mutely by the hand till "Spark" Bronson moved forward to say good-bye.

"Keep your pecker up, kid," he stated, in

his loud, bluff voice. "You never know what might happen between now an' the end of the season. See you on Saturday, anyway. I'm ridin' in the inter-track Captains' Race at Burford Stadium, an' I mean to win through to the Final. If you pull off your heat you can have another shot at tryin' to beat me."

Bronson departed on the heels of the others, and Jim watched him go, a little rattled for the moment by the man's impudent self-confidence and his crude attempt to commiserate with him over Tom. Then he fell to thinking of his brother's plight, and his mind was in that groove when Tom arrived home.

Jim heard him go to the room he had fitted out as a workshop, and he remained there for quite a spell. When at length he emerged he seemed unnaturally flushed, and Jim noticed that he was carrying a small case in his hand, something like a radio set.

"Well," announced Tom, "here it is." Then, as Jim looked blank: "My latest invention. You know, the television device."

Jim had vague recollections of the night Tom had tried to explain the principle of the invention to him, and he watched his younger brother fix the apparatus below the telephone in the hall and then substitute an ear-piece of his own design.

"There you are," he declared; "all ready for the final test. Now all that remains for me to do is to fix my own special-type transmitter to another 'phone and get someone to call up this number. Wait a bit, I've got an idea. There's a public call-box in the next street. I'll slip into it, attach the television transmitter and ring up the flat. You be here, ready to answer, and when you hear my voice look into the screen of the television box."

Jim nodded, and, as excited as a youngster with a new toy, Tom left the flat and hurried to the public 'phone booth in the near-by street. He found it empty, and covertly substituted his transmitter for the regulation instrument. Then he lifted the receiver and gave the number of the flat.

A few seconds later he heard Jim's voice.

"Hallo, Jim!" he called. "What's the verdict? Can you see me?"

At the other end of the wire Jim was staring into the television set, and before his eyes a miniature impression of his brother's head and shoulders took shape, hazy at first, but gradually dawning clearer.

"Great Scott!" he said. "It's marvellous! I can see you as plain as a photograph."

"That's all I wanted to know," Tom returned, and replaced the receiver. He was on the point of removing the special transmitter when to his consternation he saw a man waiting outside the booth.

Tom had no wish to be accused of tampering with Government property; so, deciding that he would hang around until a more favourable opportunity occurred of changing the transmitters, he emerged from the call-box.

The man who had been waiting took his place in it. He was a dapper individual in a slouch hat. He shut the door and picked up the receiver, while Tom moved off along the street.

Tom Conway's transmitter differed very little in outward appearance from the regulation instrument, and, unsuspectingly, the man called up the exchange and gave the number, Burford 4460—the 'phone number of the Conway flat.

In the hall-way of that flat Jim was examining Tom's invention interestedly when the call came through. As he picked up the ear-piece he heard a quiet, measured voice, a voice that was oddly familiar.

"Is that Jim Conway? Good. Listen, Conway! I'm making you another offer, and I think you'll accept—for your brother's sake. How about five hundred pounds—if you lose on Saturday?"

Jim started. The man at the other end of the wire was the mysterious stranger who had tried to bribe him just before the race for the Silver Helmet, and the truth had scarcely flashed on him when, half by chance, his glance wandered to the television set.

He saw a face, the face of a rakish-looking individual in a soft hat, and suddenly he remembered where he had encountered it before—below the headlines of an evening newspaper.

The man was "Carnation" Clancy, international cracksman and swindler!

"I've had five hundred pounds placed in the hands of a solicitor," the voice of Clancy went on. "I'll give you his name and address, but you needn't ask him for mine. He doesn't know it. Now, that five hundred will be handed to you if you do as I've asked. You can go to this lawyer between now and Saturday and verify what I've said——"

He spelled out a name and address.

"You've got that?" he went on. "And get this, too, Conway. I'm taking no risks; that's why I'm making this offer. But I warn you, if you win through your first heat, I'll see that something is done to prevent your winning the Final. I've got men in my pay, like a certain party who brought you down in the race for the Silver Helmet."

Steele! The name leaped to Jim's mind. So Steele had been hired by Clancy!

"What's your game?" the youngster asked unsteadily.

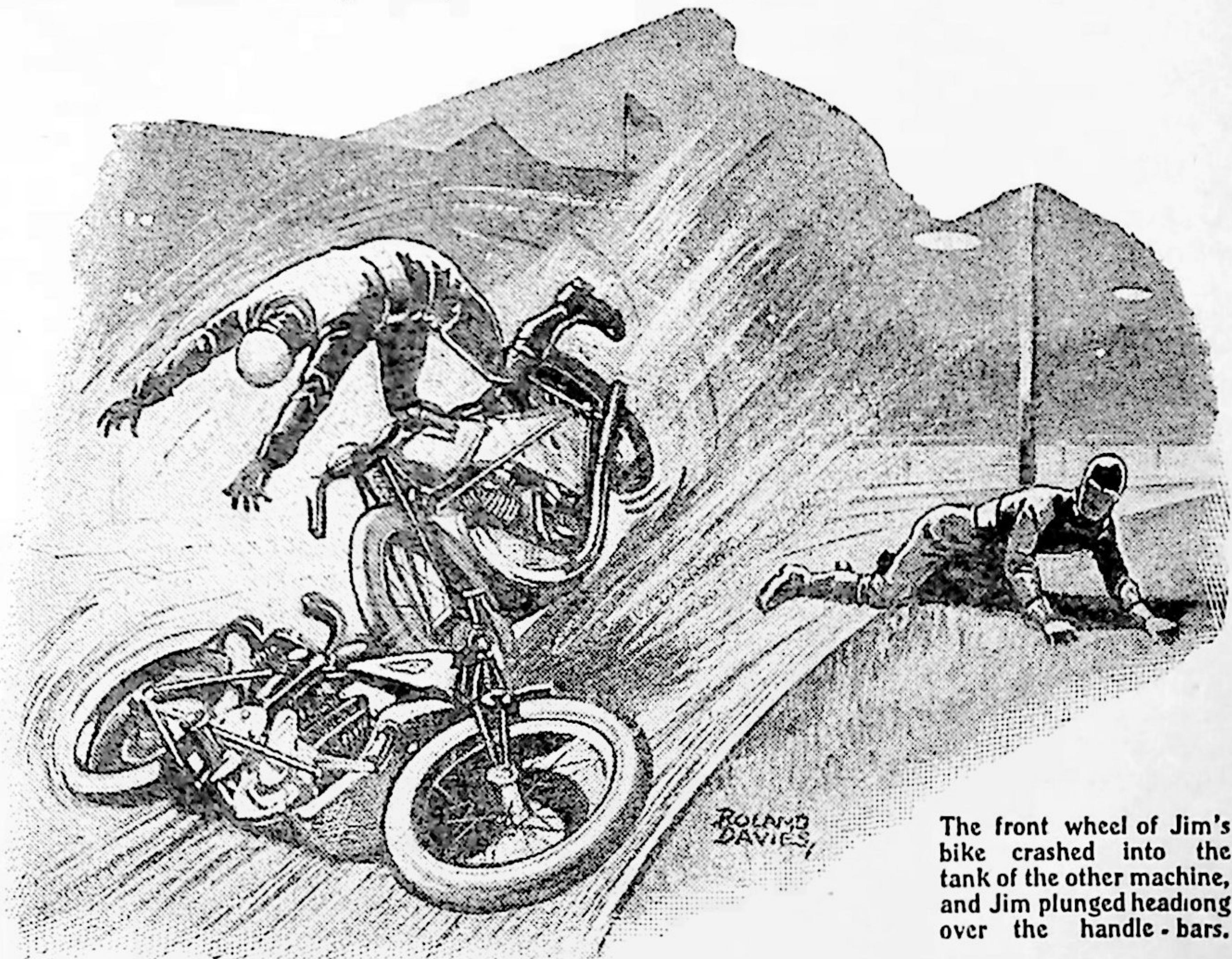
"I'll tell you this much," was the answer. "I'm gambling against you. If you lose, I collect ten thousand in private bets—and you get a cut-out of five hundred to send your brother abroad. What's your answer?"

Jim's face was haggard. He thought of Tom, and what this offer meant to *him*. He knew that he should turn down the bribe and notify the police, but his brother's life was at stake. This was his one chance to raise enough to save him, and kinship grappled with conscience.

"Give me time," he said in a strangled voice.

At the other end of the wire, standing with lips close to the mouth-piece, "Carnation" Clancy drew in his breath.

"All right, Conway," he murmured. "But remember what I told you—about the men in my pay."



The front wheel of Jim's bike crashed into the tank of the other machine, and Jim plunged headlong over the handle-bars.

Clancy hung up and slipped out of the booth hurriedly. His back was hardly turned before Tom Conway entered the call-box, changed the transmitters, and hastened along the street. At a corner fifty yards away he saw the man in the slouch hat in company with another individual, but paid no particular heed to either of them until, as they were on the point of entering a taxi, he recognised one of them as "Spark" Bronson.

About that same time, Jim Conway was gazing miserably into the television set, from which the face of "Carnation" Clancy had faded like something seen in a dream.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER The Captains' Race !

THE stands at the Burford Stadium were packed, and there was a fluttering of programmes as Event No. 10 was registered on the indicator. It was the second heat of the Captains' Race, and Jim Conway was one of the entrants.

The crowd knew nothing of the story behind the contest. They knew nothing of Jim's thoughts. But down in the pits the Burford ace was stammering out a few broken words to his brother Tom, who had insisted on coming along to watch the afternoon's sport.

"Tom," Jim panted, "I can't ride crooked—not even for your sake. I've got to go in there and—win. Try to understand, old son. It goes against the grain to take a bribe—"

"What the dickens are you talking about?" Tom demanded.

Jim told him all; broke the dread news to him concerning the state of his health, and gave an account of his televised conversation with "Carnation" Clancy over the 'phone. When he had finished there was a stark silence, during which Tom stood like one in a trance, for it was as if he had heard a death-sentence passed upon him. Then he straightened up, and the expression on his face was magnificently courageous.

"There goes the bell, Jim," he said quietly. "Go in—and win!"

Jim turned blindly, and with a lump in his throat, wheeled his bike across the ramp. Tom watched him thoughtfully from his privileged vantage-point, and was only aroused

from his gloomy reflections when someone brushed against him in passing.

The someone was "Spark" Bronson, just off the track after winning the first heat of the Captains' Race and qualifying for the Final. As he caught sight of him, Tom instantly recalled his acquaintance with the man who had turned out to be "Carnation" Clancy.

Steele had been in Clancy's pay. Was Bronson one of the swindler's hirelings as well?

Jim was out on the track, beyond recall, but when he returned to the pits, having won his heat fairly comfortably, Tom put him wise to Bronson's connection with the international crook.

Jim's eyes hardened.

"Bronson's in the Final, eh?" he said grimly. "Then I'm going all out to beat him. I owe it to every Burford 'fan' who's paid money to come through the turnstiles. But in the meantime, Tom, you get in touch with Scotland Yard and tell them you think you can put them on to 'Carnation' Clancy."

Tom slipped away. Before Event 12 had been run off he was back.

"They're sending a couple of plain clothes men down right away," he announced. "They'll be here before the end of the meeting."

The detectives had not arrived, however, when the bell called the competitors to the starting-line for Event 21, the Final of the Captains' Race. There were four riders in the contest—Jim, Bronson and two others, Melville and Shipton by name.

Taking up their positions, they were pushed off by the attendants. The luck of the draw had given Jim the inside position, and from the flying start he dashed into the lead and stormed over the straight for the first corner. But Bronson was hard behind him, and he was still close on the tail of the Burford captain's speed-iron when they rocked out of the bend on to the back straight.

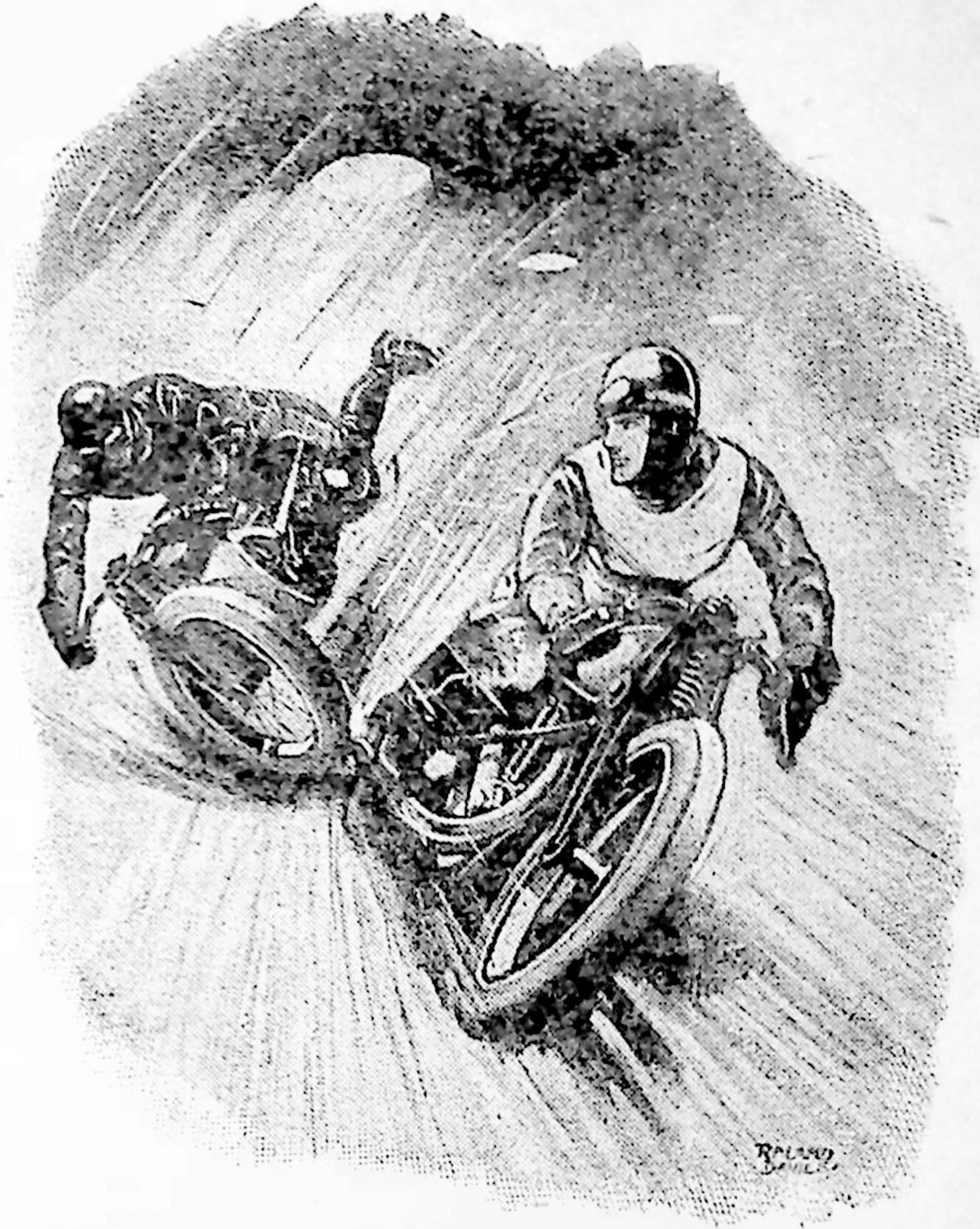
Fierce cornering on the second curve brought no change in the positions of the riders, and Jim was still a shade in advance of Bronson when he crossed the line for lap two and stormed on to the first bend again.

He swerved into it recklessly and shifted the cinders in a wicked slide. Then Bronson slashed abreast of him in break-neck style, holding him till the sweep of the corner was passed, when Jim looked like pulling ahead once more.

The toe of Bronson's heavy field-boot was poised over the track surface. The bikes were very close, and about them rose a cloud of grit. Under cover of the dirt-haze Bronson jabbed with his foot, and his steel plate caught the rim of Jim's front wheel and kicked it out of his control.

The wheel wrenched violently sideways, and in the same instant Bronson pulled out to avoid collision. Jim, scrabbling desperately, felt the pad on his left knee scrape the ground, while his toe ripped through the cinders. On his right-hand he saw Bronson forge past him to take the lead, and a moment later Melville and Shipton had swayed round the Burford ace's skidding bike as well.

It was by main strength that Jim regained control, and when he opened up along the back straight his jaw was set in determination. It was clear that no one but himself had seen Bronson's foul, and he did not intend to whine an appeal to the judges. But he was more determined now to beat the man in spite of dirty riding.



The handle-bars were jerked out of Bronson's hands as his front wheel grazed Jim's back wheel, and he came down with a crash.

He felt certain now that Bronson was hand-in-glove with Clancy, and he suddenly realised that it must have been from Bronson that the swindler had heard of Tom's health.

Jim's speed-iron fairly roared as he whipped the throttle hard round. He was five yards behind Melville and Shipton when he entered the second bend, but he was scarcely a couple of lengths in arrears during the spurt along the front straight. Up at the first curve again he saw his chance and bored between them to gain second place.

Bronson was several lengths ahead of him,

but Jim reduced the lead on the next corner, and the crowd was yelling for the Burford youngster when the line was crossed for the final lap.

On the bend at the end of the front straight his tank was peppered by the cinders from Bronson's back wheel, so close was he to the leader. In the race over the back straight there were only inches between them. With the last bend opening out before him Jim hurled his speed-iron for the curve at full throttle.

The tail of his bike ripped through the grit, and he was forging almost level when Bronson swung wide in an attempt to check him. But Jim had a trick to meet Bronson's. He swung wider still and raked his way round the other bike to take the lead. As he was passing he felt Bronson's front wheel graze the back wheel of his own speed-iron.

The handle-bars jerked out of his grasp, Bronson came down with a smashing crash. As he lay there, groaning, he heard Jim's bike storm on along the home stretch to carry him triumphant across the line.

A doctor might have pronounced Bronson's injuries trivial, and diagnosed him to be suffering mainly from shock, when he limped into the pits. At any rate, there was no

question about the shock he received when he found himself arrested by two Scotland Yard men!

It was in a moody silence that Jim and Tom Conway made their way back to their flat after tea, and though Tom once or twice tried to affect a light-hearted air, he made a miserable show. Neither he nor Jim could forget that, by the time the winter was over, he would in all probability be done with life.

So lost were they in their tragic thoughts that they reached the door of their flat without noticing a man who stood beside it. Not until the man spoke were they aware of his presence. They looked up, then, and recognised one of the Scotland Yard men.

"Bronson owned up," the detective told them, "and gave away Clancy's hiding-place, so your information has led to the 'wanted' man's capture and the discovery of the Thorndike jewels, which were missed some weeks back. I may say there was a reward offered at the time, and it still holds."

"Reward?" Jim echoed.

"Mr. Thorndike," the detective went on— "Mr. Julian Thorndike, the millionaire, has asked me to tell you that his cheque for a thousand pounds is already in the post."

