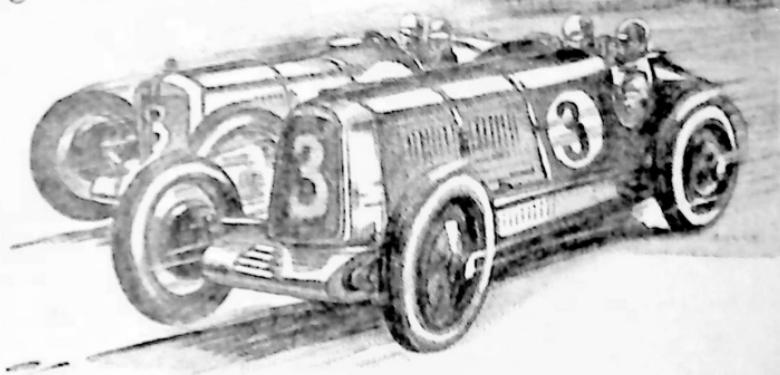


Storming Speed!

By ALFRED EDGAR.



THE FIRST CHAPTER

The Lame Racer.

JEFF GRAHAM lay flat against the oil-stained concrete, with an empty oil-can jabbing his ribs and with a pair of field-glasses clamped to his eyes.

Through the lenses he was watching a racing car come off the Brooklands banking, travelling at over two miles a minute.

As the hurtling machine left the slope, daylight showed under its spinning wheels; dust and concrete fragments slashed from the thrashing tyres when they bit home on the flat stretch which followed the banking.

"Here he comes!"

A voice bawled the words in Jeff's ear, and he felt his chum, Tom Moore, nudge him.

Both were sprawled beneath a replenishment pit at the side of the track, watching the world's fastest motor-race in progress—the annual 500-miles Brooklands event.

The chums' heads just stuck out from under the tool-laden plank of the pit—one of a row of little wood-built, open-fronted depots at which cars could call for repairs or replenishments during the long event.

Tom also had field-glasses, and the chums' job was to watch the tyres of the approaching car.

It came up with a shattering roar; a low-built, red shape that travelled like a fiery meteor. They heard the harsh whistle of its scuttering tyres, caught the power-filled drone of the super-tuned engine, and heard the

baleful, howling whine of the supercharger rising above all else.

Into Jeff's glasses came a swift-passing picture of the front tyres; grey, dust-hazed shapes spinning so fast that they seemed hardly to move. All his attention was concentrated on them as he watched for the tell-tale white strip which would show that the rubber had worn through and that the tyre

At storming speed the Red Ace thunders over mile after mile of the Brooklands track—with two worn-out tyres on the rear wheels lying between its victory and disaster!

was down to the canvas—which meant danger for his brother, Phil, who was at the wheel.

That thundering red machine was running on dud tyres!

The race was not yet half run, but the Red Ace had been in for tyre changes every fifty miles, and every fresh stop was pushing the wonderful car farther and farther behind.

It was a wonderful car. Phil had built it, and beneath its engine-cover it carried a power-unit which was almost a miracle. Phil had been working on the car for a year, that he might run in this race and prove himself and what he had made.

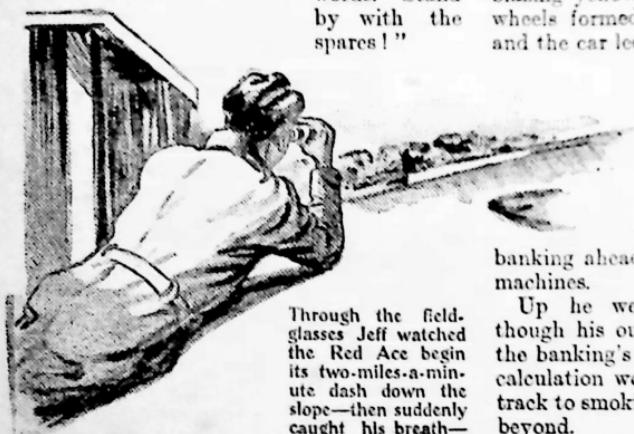
Everything that a man could conceive to make a car go fast he had done, and even the wheels were specially constructed of aluminium—and those wheels were the trouble. They were not standard size, and Phil had been obliged to get special tyres made for them.

Those tyres had faulty rubber. Instead of one set lasting for the whole race, as good tyres should have done, they were wearing out every twenty laps or so.

"O.K.!" Jeff yelled, as he squirmed back over the pit and stood up behind the plank, Tom following him.

Three mechanics were there; men who had been employed by Phil in the construction of the machine at his experimental workshop.

"You'll see canvas on them the next time round!" Bates, the foreman, bawled the words. "Stand by with the spares!"



Through the field-glasses Jeff watched the Red Ace begin its two-miles-a-minute dash down the slope—then suddenly caught his breath—

He called the order to his companions, and stubbed his thumb to where four spare wheels lay on the pit-plank.

"Is that all we've got left?" Jeff gasped.

The foreman nodded, and waved a hand towards the back of the pit. On the ground here lay other tyres which had been taken off the car; worn, stained circles of rubber. One had burst, so that canvas and rubber hung in tatters.

"He'll never finish on only four more tyres!" Tom exclaimed.

"It's all we've got!" the foreman said.

"And it's a wonder he's done so well. If he—"

"Here's Sanchis!"

One of the mechanics shouted through the rising howl of a car which was following a bunch now passing the pits. The chums looked out.

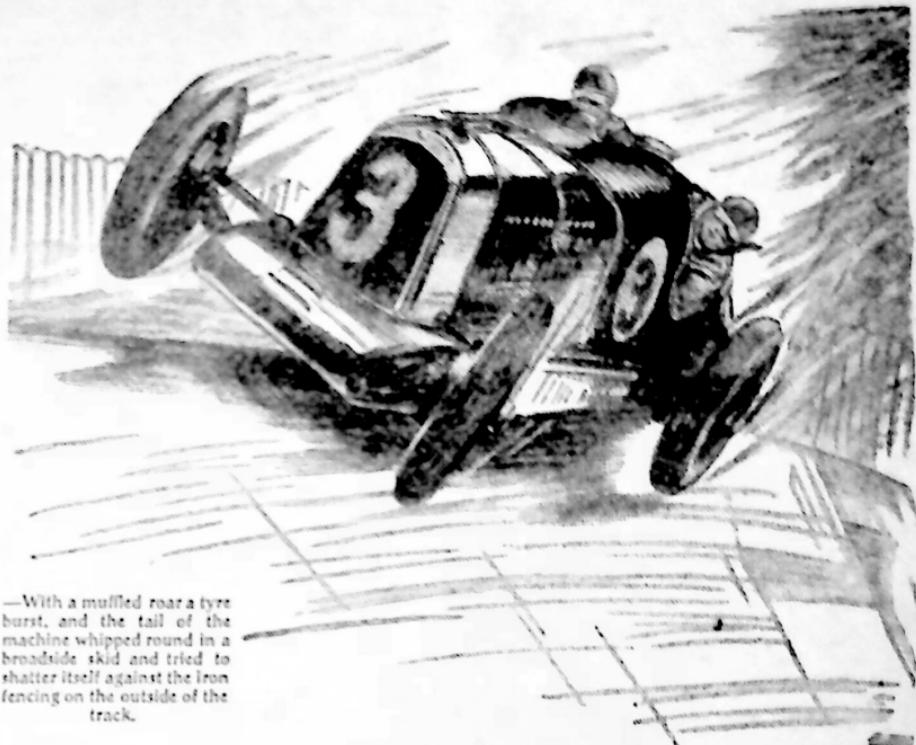
They saw a group of colourful machines streaking by. There was a white Mercedes, bellowing furiously as it hurled itself past. An efficient, stubby-tailed blue Bugatti, which had come over from France, was hanging on the German's tail, and duelling as France and Germany had always duelled.

Behind these was a great, green-painted British Bentley, running as if it was on rails; as stately as a battleship and as fast as a wheeled shell.

In rear of these three machines came a blazing yellow car. Its yellow body and red wheels formed the racing colours of Spain, and the car led the race!

At the wheel was Don Sanchis, handling his Fuerta car with all the verve and dash that had gained him victory in other big races. He was a black-eyed dare-devil, and the boys watched him climb to the brink of the banking ahead as he passed the other three machines.

Up he went—up!—until it seemed as though his outside wheels were flirting with the banking's lip, when one split inch of miscalculation would send him over and off the track to smoking disaster amongst the fir-trees beyond.



—With a muffled roar a tyre burst, and the tail of the machine whipped round in a broadside skid and tried to shatter itself against the iron fencing on the outside of the track.

"What a driver!" Tom breathed, as he watched.

"But Phil could lick him, if he had the tyres!" Jeff panted. "He's less than a couple of laps behind, as it is!"

"You're right—we're being beaten by tyres!" Bates growled. "A year's work going west!"

Jeff thought of the way his brother had worked. There had been days and nights of ceaseless experiment, and more days spent down here on the track, tuning up. The car had grown from drawings to a magnificent thing of tense steel and streamlined bodywork. If Phil could prove the machine by winning this race, there were men waiting to finance him and put other cars like the Red Ace on the market—which meant a fortune for Phil.

Jeff and Tom were interested because they knew that if Phil became head of a great

motor-works specialising in sports and high-speed cars, then they'd get a job there, too. Both could drive, as it was; in fact, Jeff had been allowed to handle this racer during the days when the engine had been "run in."

"Here's Phil again!" Tom shouted, and Jeff made ready to dive under the pit again, but saw that he would be too late to get into position; he remained where he was, lifting his glasses to survey the tyres once more.

He saw the machine taking the banked curve which led to the Fork. The sun caught it, changing the car, for just a moment, into a crimson meteor. Then the light left it as the machine swung around, again making its furious leap from the slope to the flat.

That slope had never been designed for more than two miles a minute, which some of

the cars were touching, and again Jeff saw the car charge through the air with all four wheels off the ground.

The wheels touched and, through his glasses, he saw one of them apparently swell out. A tread had been stripped clear away. Chunks of hot rubber streaked out on the air—and then the tyre burst!

Jeff lowered his glasses, catching his breath as he watched. He saw the tail of the machine whip outwards until the car was travelling almost broadside on the track, moving at terrific speed.

A shout went up from the horrified crowd in the near-by grandstand; then the car slithered straight, with Phil fighting over the wheel, holding the machine as it skimmed across the concrete and tried to shatter itself against the corrugated iron fencing on the outside.

He regained control, but not until he was almost up to the pits, and a second tyre had been wrenched clean off the rim of one rear wheel.

The boys heard the scream of brakes and, with wagging tail, the lamed car surged to the front of the pit and stopped, the mechanic fairly flinging himself out.

"Change all round!"

The shout came hoarsely from Phil's dust-smirched face. His mouth was like a black cavity against the grey on his skin, through which showed smudges of wind-blown oil.

"Only four spares left, sir!" Bates leaned forward, shouting the words so that Phil would hear them through the deafness engendered by the sustained roar of his engine.

"What?" Phil dived at the pit-plank, staring at the spares. "Then I'm beat!" he panted.

One hand gripped the edge of the plank, and about it was an oily old glove with the finger-tips cut away. The sleeves of his overalls were rolled high, revealing taut muscle and sinew.

He turned his head, gazing at Jeff, then suddenly leaned forward and grabbed at the boy's arm.

"Jeff, there's a set of old racing tyres back at the workshop!" he said hoarsely. "Get 'em—they may see me through! Get a plane and fly there!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER

A Race Against Time!

FROM the aerodrome which stands in the centre of the mighty concrete oval at Brooklands, a plane took the air bare minutes later. It was a big, cabined craft with room for the pilot and three passengers.

This machine had as pilot a man who had been an airman in the Great War, and who was a friend of Phil's: as passengers it carried Jeff and Tom.

It went off the ground in one long zoom, throttle wide open, skimming hangar roofs and keeping fairly low as it rushed to hundred-miles-an-hour speed over the green countryside.

"It's twenty miles, dead straight, to Phil's place!"

The lined, set face of the pilot turned as he shouted the words to Jeff.

"We can do it in twelve minutes—if we can land close to the workshop!" he added.

"There's a field at the back!" Jeff yelled to him.

While he shouted, he calculated swiftly. The tyres Phil had just taken would last him twenty laps and that, at the speed he was making, would mean twenty-seven minutes of time.

Twelve minutes to the workshop, and twelve back with the old racing tyres! That was twenty-four minutes, so, if all went well, the old tyres would be ready by the time the dud ones were worn out.

Jeff knew the tyres Phil meant. He had used them while he was trying out the machine. They weren't worn badly, and they had been constructed by a famous firm specially for him; but he could not afford to buy from them all those he required in the race, because the final work on the car had left him almost broke.

With luck, he might be able to run through the rest of the race on the sound old tyres—and he might yet challenge the fleet Spaniard.

Flying low, the big monoplane shot across country like a homing bee, but the minutes seemed endless. Jeff watched fields and roads, houses and hedges, streams and wide highways flash beneath them.

It appeared an age before Tommy suddenly



ROLAND
DAVIES

FIGHTING FOR THE LEAD!

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shouted and pointed through one of the shatterless windows. Jeff sighted familiar ground, and he felt the machine zoom upwards while the pilot craned his head to one side and looked out.

"That's the workshop, isn't it?" he yelled, then banked the craft round, and cut off the engine as he dipped the nose for a long, narrow field at the back of the tin-roofed building which stood behind the red-brick house that formed Jeff's home.

The boys heard the engine "blip" on as the landing wheels touched. They swayed and jolted forward, and the instant that the craft stopped Jeff loosened the latch on the cabin door and jumped blindly out, Tom at his heels.

They charged the hedge which cut off the field from the ground about the shed, and darted for the building, kicking the door open and plunging in. The shed was large and well lit, with lathes and delicate balancing instruments and benches on which lay discarded motor parts.

In a corner stood the old racing tyres on the original experimental wheels which Phil had first built; wheels which were very light in weight and with a resilience in their construction which helped to take the shocks that normally went to the springs.

Without a word, they grabbed two each, lifting them by the hubs. Outside they heard the pilot taxi-ing the machine round. They dashed out, forced the wheels through the hedge, helping one another, then ran for the plane as it came about.

The pilot helped them up with the wheels.

"Quick work!" he exclaimed, as the chums followed them in. The craft took off again before people on a near-by road hardly realised that it had landed.

They had staked the wheels in the spare seat, and the boys steadied them as the machine banked around and streaked back for Brooklands, with Jeff wondering all the while what was happening there.

He craned up in his seat, watching anxiously ahead until, at last, he made out the flat area of the track and sighted coloured streaks against the grey of its banking, and knew them for cars.

They climbed a little as the pilot made

ready to judge his landing, the boys scanning the concrete for a glimpse of Phil's machine.

"There it is—going on to the Byfleet banking!" Tom called.

Jeff saw it. The plane was then crossing above the railway-line, and they saw the River Wey like a ribbon of silver as it traversed the grassland in the centre of the track.

The car had left the railway straight, skating at storming speed along the banking, drawing away from the plane as it went.

Watching, the boys saw it rise up the bank to pass another machine, pulling high. It climbed to the very edge—and from one rear wheel there suddenly spurted a black streak that was like ebony spray!

"He's over!" Tom gasped the words involuntarily.

They saw the car slow and the other machine race ahead. Jeff expected to see the Red Ace disappear over the edge of the banking, but it did not.

The tail dropped, and the car turned a complete circle on the track, sliding broadside, then gradually slipping to the inside of the track and coming to a stop as the plane turned for its landing.

"A tyre gone again!" Tom yelled.

Jeff did not answer. He reached out for the latch on the door, releasing it ready to jump from the machine.

"They're all right, don't go to the car!" he heard Tom shout. "Take the wheels to the pit!"

His voice was loud as the aeroplane's engine died. They touched earth, with the pilot taxi-ing the machine as closely as he could to where a tarred road ran near the railings on the inside of the course.

Jeff pitched the door open and dropped out, dragging a wheel with him. He saw one of the pit mechanics running up, and this man took a wheel. Tom came out of the machine, and the pilot dropped two others to him, then followed himself with the fourth wheel.

"He's just burst a tyre on the banking!" the mechanic called, as all four raced towards the pits. "He skidded, then stopped!"

Jeff leading, they ran on. Officials opened gates for them and they tore into the enclosure

behind the pits, darted through another gate and reached the Red Ace depot just as a figure came staggering along the concrete from the turn and the halted Ace beyond.

"That's Phil—he's hurt!" Jeff panted.

He tried to clamber over the plank, but the foreman held him back. They saw officials catch at Phil's arms to support him, but he shook them off, staggering and reeling towards the pit, and finally stumbling there, holding on to the plank.

He was white under the mask of oil and dust on his face, and there was blood running from a cut at one side of his forehead.

"Two rear tyres went!" he said, and his voice was hardly more than a croak. "Mechanic—laid out. I'm—finished!" He swayed where he stood, then stared straight at his brother and at the old racing wheel that he held. "You—carry on—Jeff!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER Behind the Wheel!

THE crowds on the near-by stand and jammed along the rails of the enclosures suddenly saw Jeff's overalled figure appear, carrying a spare wheel under either arm—which, to those who knew nothing about the special lightness of those wheels, seemed a marvellous feat.

Behind him came Tom, similarly burdened. Both wore overalls, and Tom had snatched a couple of linen caps off the pit-plank as he crossed it, jamming them into his pocket.

In rear of the boys appeared the foreman and a mechanic, each carrying a big, quick-lift jack, a hammer and other tools. In this race, the driver and his companion as well as two mechanics were allowed to work on a car, and the four were now running back along the track to the stranded Red Ace.

The boys saw the machine a quarter of a mile around the bend by the banking, with a crowd on the grass beside it, and some people bending over the unconscious mechanic.

The chums raced up, Jeff making for the back of the machine and dropping his wheels there, while Tom remained at the front.

Jeff saw that both rear tyres were mere tatters of disintegrated rubber, and the wheel-rims were flattened and scoured bright

where they had rasped against the concrete.

Bates, the foreman, joined him and they started the wheel-change. Working together, he and Jeff wrenched off the lamed wheels, clearing the tangled rubber jammed about brake rod and axle, then ramming the fresh wheels home just as Tom and his companion finished those at the front of the car.

"Get going!" the foreman called to Jeff. "He only wants you to take the car through to the finish now!"

Jeff guessed that was what Phil wanted. As he leaped to the cockpit, the yellow Fuerta came up and went flashing past, its exhaust bellowing triumphantly back at the Red Ace.

Jeff slid over the side of the cockpit, grabbing a pair of goggles from the little net below the instrument board and slipping them about his neck as Tom came in beside him.

The two had handled the machine together during the test runs, and both knew exactly what to do now. The foreman and the mechanic hunched at the tail, rolling the car forward for a push-start.

The engine fired healthily and the Red Ace surged away, gathering speed as Jeff eased the throttle open, changing up, sweeping around the turn and then charging down towards the pits with the machine booming in third gear.

He saw Phil there, leaning against the front of the plank, first-aid men grouped around him. He raised his arm as they went by.

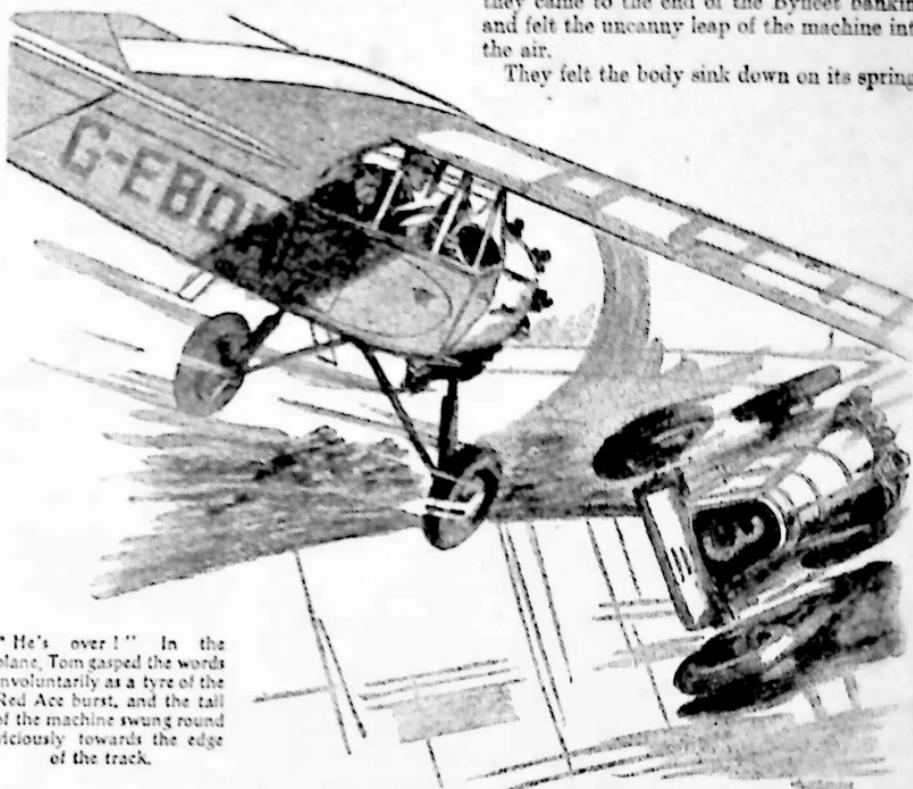
"Take it through to the finish be blowed!" Tom growled the words as he leaned close and adjusted Jeff's goggles. "Go after that Spaniard, Jeff—show 'em what you can do!"

That idea was in Jeff's mind. He knew that there was still two hundred miles to run, and that the car need not stop again—if the old tyres held out—because Phil had replenished when he pulled in at the pits the last time.

He saw the crowds on the inside rail of the steep banking beyond the Fork. Faces showed in a grey blurr as the machine zoomed on. They took the bend under the Members' Bridge, and he saw the drop to the railway straight ahead.

On the downward rush the Red Ace grew faster, and the chums settled down to it as Jeff slid into top gear.

He heard a snarl behind him, and the great white Mercedes drew level, then streaked ahead. Jeff put his foot down and sat on the big German car's tail, letting the white machine set the pace for three laps, until his own nerves and eyes had become attuned to the high speed.



"He's over!" In the plane, Tom gasped the words involuntarily as a tyre of the Red Ace burst, and the tail of the machine swung round viciously towards the edge of the track.

There were no corners in this race. There were only the sweeping bends on the track to negotiate, all of them permitting a car to get around at the limit of its speed—providing its driver knew how to place it on the bankings.

Jeff did know. He was recalling all the things that Phil had ever told him now. He remembered the hours he and Tom had spent watching crack drivers in action—and on his

third lap Jeff pulled out to pass the Mercedes.

The Red Ace went by, finding a sudden surge of fresh power as Jeff stamped the throttle pedal down to the steel footgrid.

The patched concrete of the track swept towards him in a sunlit grey blur, and they were well ahead of the German by the time they came to the end of the Byfleet banking and felt the uncanny leap of the machine into the air.

They felt the body sink down on its springs

as they landed. Jeff braced behind the wheel and kept the car straight. He saw the dark line of the pits, and glimpsed a signal flying there.

"They're flagging us to ease up!"

Tom leaned over and bellowed the words, and his voice reached Jeff's ears, torn by the wind.

"What a hope they've got!" Jeff grinned as he shouted back, his gaze on the track in

front--on a yellow shape just disappearing on the banking!

It was the Spanish Fuerta--and they were gaining on it!

Two laps later it was only a little way ahead of them when they came off the long banking, and Jeff took his Ace high, so that the slope of the concrete would lend him more speed.

They passed the yellow Spaniard as they went by the stands, the crowd applauding the sight--even though they knew that the British-built, unlucky Red Ace was yet three laps behind, and must pass Sanchez three times more before the car could gain the lead.

Jeff's numbed hands were clamped on the kicking wheel. His shoulders were fiery from bruises where bumps in the track had thudded his back against the hard leather of the squash.

He wore ordinary shoes, and his feet were burning on the pedals; they were numbed, and felt as though they had swollen enough to burst the leather which encased them.

His mouth was dry, and his lips were caked with dust slung back as he had passed other machines. Blood had dried on his cheek where concrete chippings, picked up from the track, had gashed his skin.

The roar of the engine and the screech of the supercharger had drummed his brain until it seemed impossible that he would ever hear any other sound. He felt sick, because he wore no abdominal belt to hold him together against the hammering of the machine.

But he had passed the Spaniard twice!

Now the yellow car was in sight, again--and there were but two laps to go before the race was ended. If Jeff could pass him again, the Red Ace would win!

Tom was huddled beside him, peering over the side of the cockpit with one goggled eye as they went by the stand. Up there, men were waving them on; and along the rails more arms were uplifted--but Jeff saw nothing of this.

He let the car ride on the steep banking--a banking so sheer that, at its centre, a man cannot climb up it.

The Red Ace flashed around it, the broken edge of the concrete all but under the outside wheels. The bushes and the slender trunks of young fir trees formed a black wall which seemed to echo the car's shattering blare of sound. Then the trees fell away and in front Jeff saw the width of the straight, with the Spaniard scuttling down its centre.

The British machine appeared to gather itself and went down the long slope to the straight in one colossal rush, with the revolution counter surging past the danger line, and the speed-born gale hissing a menacing song past Jeff's stunned ears.

They gained ground. On the long Byfleet banking Jeff could see the faint, spouting oil-smoke that came from the Fuerta's Brooklands muffler, and less than fifty yards separated the two when the Ace made its leap from the banking's end.

The crimson car was closer yet when they went past the stands and the crowds that cheered there. The Ace seemed to sway on the track under its storming speed.

Its wheels were stamping the concrete, flinging the car on, and they were at the Spaniard's tail as they rocked beneath the steel girders of the Members' Bridge--on the last lap.

Jeff saw that he had the speed to pass, but the yellow car was high on the banking, and Jeff forced the Ace beneath it.

With its mighty engine giving all its power, exhaust crashing a war-song of speed, the Red Ace shot level with the yellow Spaniard, and in that moment Tom craned up to shout in Jeff's ear:

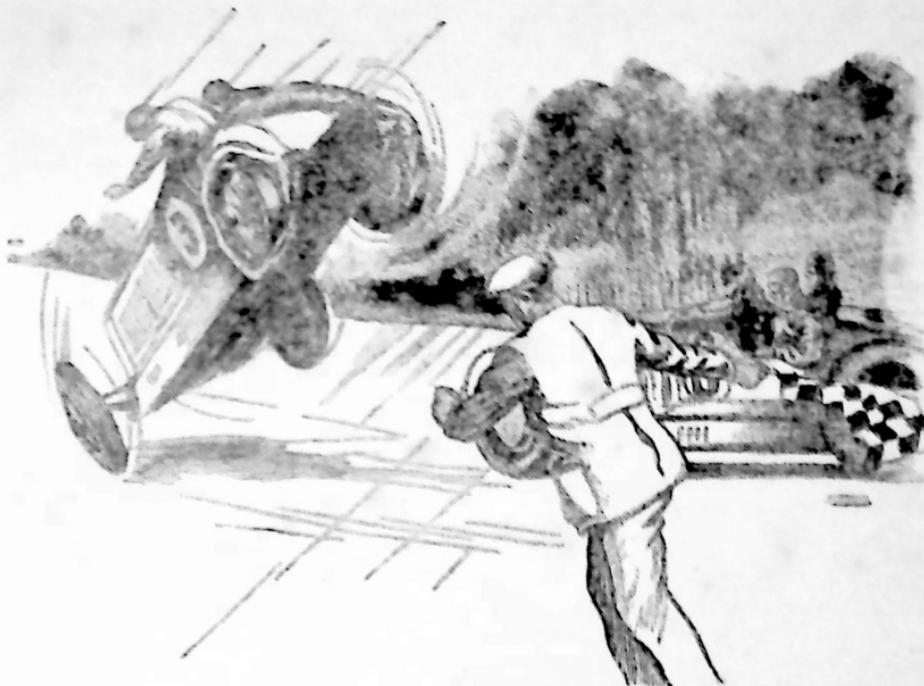
"Canvas showing on both rear tyres!"

Jeff heard him, and his heart leaped. The old tyres were worn through, and at any moment either of them might burst.

If that happened at this colossal speed, nothing could save them, because neither he nor anyone else would be able to hold a suddenly fanned car straight at that pace.

And the Fuerta was now matching their speed.

Its daredevil driver had his throttle jammed down to its limit. Every ounce of power that his engine could give was crowded to the wheels now, and he was keeping level with the Red Ace.



No sooner had the Red Ace crossed the finishing line than both rear tyres burst together. The crowd gasped as the tail of the car jumped high in the air.

Jeff could not slow. If he slowed they might run safely to the finish—but then they would not win.

If he held his speed the Red Ace might gain victory despite the handicaps it had surmounted. All the while the white streak in the spinning rear tyres was broadening; every moment the danger grew greater.

Down the straight they hurtled, the machines still level. A thousand field-glasses were watching from the stand and the enclosures, and on the roof of the Ace pit Phil was balanced, gazing at the two cars.

They neared the turn on to the Byfleet banking, and Jeff suddenly remembered how crack drivers cut the corner. They forced their cars close in, shortening the distance they had to travel—but they strained their tyres.

Jeff's tyres were weak, but he bored on the

wheel. The distance between the red machine and the Spaniard widened as Jeff cut the corner, fighting the juddering car and forcing it to his will.

If a tyre burst now—

He knew that they would stand no chance, and he heard the strained tyres shrieking against the concrete, while rubber sheared away and the thin wall of canvas that stood between the boys and oblivion grew yet thinner.

Yet the tyres held—and they gained from the Fuerta.

They hit the banking ten yards in the lead, hurtling around, and Jeff gritted his teeth as the turn off it came, with the winner's flag waiting for him bare yards ahead—if he could keep in front and if a tyre did not go.

Again he bored on the steering. Again he battled the machine down the bank, until its

near-side wheels were stirring the sandy dust where grass grew close at the inside of the turn.

He felt the car fighting against him, with the tail trying to slide outwards in a skid that meant utter disaster. He held it for the long seconds necessary to take him around the turn, listening for the flurried roar which would be the sound of the tyre bursting—and might be the last clear sound he would ever hear.

But it never came.

The Red Ace completed the turn, and Jeff dared a glance behind him.

The yellow machine was rocketing twenty yards in rear of them now, the driver's eyes flashing behind his goggles as he made one last furious effort to come level and shoot ahead.

In front, Jeff saw officials grouped. He saw the black-and-white of the winner's flag. He saw the top of the stand as a forest of waving arms, then the flag was dipping down as the Red Ace shot over the line.

They had won, but as the flag dropped, both rear tyres burst together.

The crowd saw the tail of the car jump in the air and come down again on tyreless back wheels. Through the roar they heard the screech of bared wheel-rims as they scoured the track; but Jeff held the car steady and straight, slowing.

He kept the machine under control, while the yellow car went past him, with its Spanish driver lifting one hand from the wheel and raising his arm high in salute to the victor.

Lamed, dust-smothered, oil-splashed, the Red Ace limped on, while from her rear wheels fell away bits of the old racing tyres.

There is a motor works now in the long, narrow field where the aeroplane landed, and Phil Graham's office is at the far end.

Jeff and Tom have the job of testing and passing out all Brooklands model Aces made by the thriving firm, which is the sort of job both had always wanted.

They alone are allowed ever to drive the first Red Ace, which is always kept spotless and in racing trim in a corner of the works.

Flanking the windows in Phil's office are two big glass cases, each of which contains a wheel with the remnants of an old racing tyre still clinging about its scored rim.

POTTED HUMOUR

By MONTY LOWTHER
(of St. Jim's).

*THERE is a young fellow named Gore,
Whom you'll find in the study
next door;
But if Skimpole sees you,
With rapture he'll seize you,
And send you to sleep with his "jaw."*

According to Mr. Linton, in lessons on geology, "we are all beggars—living on the crust of the earth."

*G-o look for a youth with monocle neat,
U-rbane and knuttish and so debonair!
S-ports beautiful toppers, wears spats
on his feet.
S-uprising, however, when this fellow
you meet,
Y-ou'll find that he's not all there!*

Herbert Skimpole went around St. Jim's last half-holiday making frantic efforts to borrow a watch, but none of the fellows had any "time" to spare!

*A caddish Sixth-Former (that's Knox),
Has a pair of remarkable socks;
They're yellow and green,
With light blue in between,
And crimson embroidery clocks.*

We learn from the Rylcombe Gazette that a misguided yokel of the village was charged last week with stealing a mirror from outside a second-hand shop in the High Street, and got three months' "hard." He might have been let off more leniently if he had pleaded in his defence that he had "taken a glass too much!"

*There is a young rotter named Trimble,
Whose brains would go into a thimble;
He spends his time spying,
And sneaking and prying,
And for rotten behaviour's the symbol.*