



*Mile after mile of the tortuous road circuit sped under young Peter Stuart's whizzing wheels. Then came the last lap of the race, with Peter lying fifth . . . . and he'd GOT to win to save his firm from going broke!*

By

WISHART PHILP

### THE FIRST CHAPTER DISASTER!

THE sun, climbing above the eastward hills, behind which, for the past quarter of an hour, it had been tinting the dawn sky with gold and cyclamen, shone on a scene of unwonted activity.

It shone on the sleepy, grey-roofed town of Arneagh, in which the racing camps housing the motor-cycle teams for the next day's race were already astir ; it shone on the twisting Irish roads that made up the course, glinting on the massive chromiumed exhausts of the two machines that were streaking over the tarmac at eighty miles an hour ; and three miles ahead, where a low hill made a natural vantage point, it shone on

two men who were watching the machines approach from a hiding-place in the hedge.

It was a glorious morning ; and as Peter Stuart swung his machine in the wake of his team-mate, he thrilled. Tomorrow he would be riding as a member of the famous Nomad team in the Free State Grand Prix, and fulfilling the ambition he had nourished for as long as he could remember. Even now, with a super-tuned racer beneath him, he found it hard to believe in his good fortune. It isn't many people who realise their ambitions at eighteen !

With eyes fixed on the humped form of Dan Wilson, Nomad's first string, who rode ahead, Peter hung on desperately. He guessed that the

famous veteran was testing him by trying to shake him off, and he determined to keep up.

Their speed rose rapidly, until they were touching the ninety mark on the straights and cutting the corners within bare inches. The hedges, streaking towards them, became green smudges as they flashed past, and the rising wind threatened to tear the boy from the saddle.

Nothing could hold the Nomad team at this speed, Peter realised; neither the Nortons, nor the Rudes, nor the dangerously fast French Viberts. Nomads were going to win! And Peter Stuart would be a member of the winning team!

With perfectly tuned engines roaring in unison, the two speedmen flashed down the long straight—and the men who were hidden in the hedge watched them come.

The taller of the two lowered the binoculars through which he had been following the machines, and turned to his partner.

"Coming over the rise," he said.  
"Get ready!"

He turned back to the road without waiting to see his companion raise his hand above his head.

Still the speeding motor-cycles came on—up the hill that ended the long straight, past the white cottage and up to the solitary tree that stood, like a lone sentinel, in the hedge—and as they reached the tree the tall man's hand clenched convulsively.

"Now!" he snapped out.

His comrade's raised arm flashed down, and in response a heavily laden hay-cart lumbered out of an obscure side-turning, wherein it had stood motionless for half an hour, on to the road.

Streaking into view bare feet behind Wilson, Peter took in the whole scene at a glance: the hay-cart entirely blocking the road, the driver

apparently dozing on his high perch, and the big chestnut horse which he was leaving to choose its road. There was no way past!

In the same moment he realised that Wilson was no longer in front of him, and that he was still rushing at the obstruction at nearly seventy miles an hour.

There was only one chance of stopping in time, and Peter took it. He threw his lithe body sideways half out of the saddle, and jerked the machine into a broadside skid. Tyres, protesting, howled on the road, stones flew like bullets from the threshing wheels, and the speediron went careering wildly down the road, with the boy leaning it over until his knee almost grazed the ground.

But even as he wrestled with the kicking bars, he knew it was useless. The cart was much too near. To crash was inevitable!

Peter braced himself for the impact.

The front wheel of the bike slid full into the back wheel of the cart, the grips were jerked from his hands, and the cart's tailboard swept him from his mount and hurled him on to the grass verge. He felt the ground disappear from beneath him, clutched wildly at empty air, then the lush grasses of the ditch closed over him.

Dazed and shaken, he lay at the bottom of the ditch and took hold of himself. He was amazed to find that he was not badly hurt. In the moment before he hit the cart he would have counted himself lucky to have escaped with a broken limb.

For a time Peter remained still, waiting for his head to ease its throbbing and for the dizziness that was making him feel rather sick to pass off. Presently, when he felt better, he clambered to his feet and struggled back to the road.

The scene had changed considerably,

he saw. The frightened horse had dragged the hay-cart some distance along the road, leaving a liberal trail of loose hay ; and, at his feet, lay all that remained of a motor-cycle—a battered, almost shapeless mass of metal from which a grotesquely twisted wheel reared drunkenly on broken forks.

With a start Peter realised that he was looking at his own mount. He knew then how miraculous his escape had been.

On the other side of the road was another, less-battered, motor-cycle, and sitting beside it, nursing his arm, was Dan Wilson.

As Peter stumbled across the road towards him, the old speedman looked up at the boy, and a quick smile of relief lit up his face.

"Thank heavens you're all right," he said. "Gosh ! When I sat up and saw your bike there, I thought —" His face clouded and he left the sentence unfinished.

"Yes, I'm intact," Peter told him. Then, with a quick smile : "I never felt better in my life. What about you ? "

Wilson grinned reassuringly.

"An arm," he said. "Nothing much. Probably only a strain, only I can't move it."

The sound of the hay-cart approaching cut them short, and they turned to meet it. They found themselves looking into the wizened, pinched face of the carter, gazing down at them malevolently from his lofty perch.

Dan glared back at him.

"Look here," he burst out suddenly, "don't you know that these roads are closed to ordinary traffic during practice hours ? Couldn't you avoid blocking the whole road ? Man alive, it's a wonder you didn't kill us both ! "

The carter said nothing for a moment ; then, without warning, a

torrent of words in the native Erse poured from his lips.

Dan shook his head to show that he didn't understand.

"Speak English," he demanded.

But the more he tried to make the peasant understand, the more obvious it became that it was useless ; and when the carter made to drive his wagon back into the side-turning from which it had come, they stood back and let it go. There was nothing to be got from continuing the talk.

Together, the two speedmen stood and watched the cart out of sight, then they turned back to examine their wrecked machines.

Suddenly the place was full of people—another rider out for early morning practice, a farm labourer, hoe on shoulder, on his way to work, and a doctor returning homeward from a night case in a dilapidated touring car—all eager to help the Nomad riders who had met with misfortune.

With the help of the friendly speedman and the labourer, they lifted the remains of their bikes into the back of the car. Then, excusing themselves from the doctor's pressing invitation to accompany the wrecked machines back to the Nomad camp, they set out across country to walk.

For a long time Peter walked in silence, trying to hide the bitter disappointment that he felt. Three weeks ago he had been an apprentice working in the machine shops of the Nomad works, and the chance of ever gaining a coveted place in the racing team had seemed infinitely remote.

Then, suddenly, Orton, head of the Nomad works, had called him into his office and, because he liked the look of the square-shouldered, fair-haired youngster who looked one straight in the face when he spoke, had offered him a place in the team.

"We're a man short, and I like the

look of you," was all the reason Tod Orton had given ; and Peter had wondered, not knowing that, months before, Orton had stood under a tree in the pouring rain and watched the boy practising cornering on a second-hand motor-cycle of doubtful origin, and on a road that was slippery enough to have slowed up even Dan Wilson.

Now he had to tell Orton that he had lost his chance of making good and smashed up his machine. It wasn't exactly going to be a tea-party.

" I'd give anything in the world to undo that spill," Wilson said suddenly, as if he had read the boy's thoughts. " It wouldn't have mattered so much in an ordinary race, but this one——"

He left the sentence unsaid, so that Peter looked at him quizzically.

" Why this one, especially ? " he said.

Wilson paused for a moment as if collecting his thoughts before replying ; then he looked away from the boy and said quietly :

" I suppose you know that Orton's nearly bankrupt ? "

Peter stopped short in his tracks.

" What do you mean ? " he said.

" I mean that if we don't win this race Nomad's will go bust and the works will have to close, and hundreds of workpeople will lose their jobs."

Peter said nothing. His own little world, which he had always thought so secure—the Nomad works with their red chimney and low-lying sheds, the Nomad team, Orton, Wilson, everything—was crumbling about his ears.

" Tod's staking practically everything he's got on this race," Wilson went on passionately. " He's just got to win. If he can, it will prove to the world that Nomad bikes are just as good as ever they were when we were winning races hands down all over England and the Continent ;

and people will start buying them again. If he fails, well, I suppose this'll be the last race a Nomad team is ever entered in."

He went on to tell Peter how Viberts, the huge mass-production French firm, were straining every nerve to drive Nomads from the market ; how, with almost unlimited capital behind them, they were selling their machines for less than it cost to build them in order to induce people to buy Viberts instead of Nomads ; and how they had stopped Nomads winning races by bribing Max Souter and Kid Connolly to stop riding Nomads and ride for Viberts.

They had tried to bribe Wilson, too, and their emissary still cherished painful memory of the black eye which had been Wilson's only answer.

Now, with Dan Wilson and Peter out, and only Michael Gill left to carry Nomad colours in the race, it looked as if Viberts were going to win their dour struggle with Tod Orton and smash the tiny British firm that had stood out against them for so long. And once Nomads were out of the way, they would have almost a monopoly of the market for the particular type of machine which the two firms produced.

It was a galling reflection, and as the two speedmen made their way through the cobbled streets of the waking town, their faces were stern.

The Nomad camp was situated in a converted barn on the edge of the town, and if it lacked much of the splendour that characterized the white-walled garage which held the Norton team, and the extensiveness of the Vibert headquarters, it made up for all that in enthusiasm.

Wilson and Peter strode round the corner into view of the camp. Then they stopped dead !

Around the door of the barn was a

large crowd of onlookers, and at the gate was an ambulance.

Wilson grabbed Peter's arm and broke into a run. With overwhelming apprehension, they raced across the road and forced their way through the crowd to the door.

After the brilliant, crystal-clear light of the morning sun, the darkness of the barn seemed unusually intense. The benches which lined the walls, and the shiny tools which lay upon

get accustomed to the deep gloom; then, as if he had been hypnotized and had suddenly regained his senses, Wilson swung round on a mechanic.

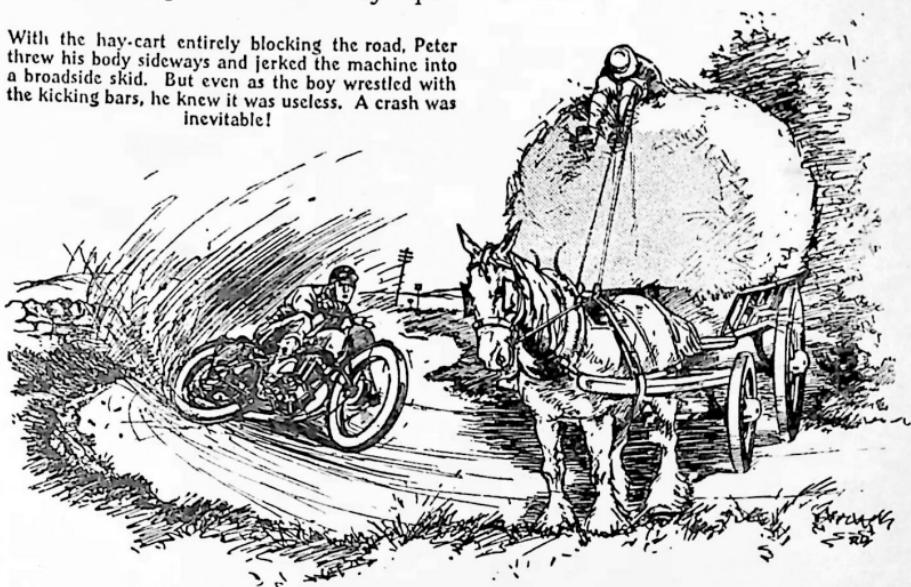
"What's the matter?" he gasped. "What's happened?"

"It's Gill," the man whispered. "He's crashed."

Wilson's face paled beneath its tan. His lips were set in a hard line.

"Crashed?" he breathed. "How? Where?"

With the hay-cart entirely blocking the road, Peter threw his body sideways and jerked the machine into a broadside skid. But even as the boy wrestled with the kicking bars, he knew it was useless. A crash was inevitable!



them, seemed to be playing hide and seek with the shadows, half seen and half obscured by the gloom. Only at the farther end of the place could the sun-blinded speedmen see; where brilliant rays of yellow sunlight streaming through the window in the roof shone on a little group of doctors and motor-cyclists who stood, silent and expectant, round something that lay on the floor.

For a few moments, Wilson and the boy stood inside the door, taking it all in, waiting for their eyes to

"About twenty minutes back," the mechanic told him. "He followed you out to practice—up by the disused railway line, there. Someone had closed the level-crossing gates—broken the padlock, apparently. Gill couldn't stop."

Dan's eyes rested on the silent group, but he didn't see them. In his imagination he was looking through them, seeing Michael Gill lying white and very still on the ground, a thin trickle of blood escaping from the corner of his mouth.

"Hurt?" he breathed. "Is he badly hurt?"

"Don't know yet. Pretty badly, I'm afraid. His machine's over there."

The mechanic indicated a pile of wreckage in the corner which gave mute testimony to the speed at which Gill had hit the gate.

Wilson bit his lip and beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead. Suddenly he squared his shoulders and turned once more to the mechanic.

"Where's Orton?" he asked.

The man jerked his head in the direction of the hotel in which the team were installed; and, looking to neither right nor left, Wilson strode once more through the crowd about the door and disappeared into the building.

Seeing that he could do nothing to help, Peter, too, forced his way back into the sunshine. He wanted to get back into the air. Somehow, near that silent, purposeful group at the other end of the barn he felt that he couldn't breathe.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER PETER'S CHANCE.

"DAN!"

Seated on an upturned box in the now deserted barn, Dan Wilson looked up at the sound of the voice. What he saw made him jump to his feet in astonishment.

Standing in the doorway, with his leathers open at the collar and his face hot and dusty, was Peter Stuart, and squirming in his strong grip was the man who had glared so malevolently at them from the hay-cart.

Over four hours had passed since the ambulance bearing Michael Gill—for whom the doctors prophesied at least a month in hospital—had driven away, and during that time Peter had not returned to the camp.

Now he had appeared suddenly out

of the blue, with his hand twisted into the collar of an almost complete stranger.

"Great Scott! What in heaven's name—" Wilson began.

Peter yanked his captive across the shed and dumped him, protesting sullenly, at the foot of the bench.

"I found him talking English," he said shortly.

Wilson stared in amazement at the cowering figure of the little Irishman and back at the boy, whose wind-blown hair and strained-looking eyes gave him a strangely wild appearance.

"But this morning he couldn't! You must be making a mistake!" he blurted out; then, as he realised the full significance of the boy's words: "Good heavens, you don't think the hay-cart blocking the road was anything but an accident. My dear chap, you can't mean—"

But Peter was no longer listening. He had looped a length of rope round his prisoner's wrists and was now absorbed in securing the man's ankles.

When he was satisfied that his knots were firm he swung himself on to the bench opposite Wilson.

"That's exactly what I do mean," he said, as if no time had elapsed since Wilson's last question. "I'm nearly sure that someone paid this merchant to block the road with his cart, and I'm going to make quite sure."

"What the dickens are you driving at?"

"I'm going to ask you to give me a hand in a minute, so I suppose I'd better tell you," Peter went on more quietly. "You see, during that crash this morning I hadn't much time to think; but afterwards I was kind of picturing that hay-cart in my mind, and suddenly it struck me that there was something wrong about it. I couldn't quite place what it was, but I was quite sure I was right. It was like having a word on the tip of your

tongue and not being able to remember it."

Wilson nodded, his whole attention fixed on the boy.

"Well, when we got back here and found that Gill had crashed at the same time, it seemed—how shall I put it?—rather too much of a coincidence. So I went for a walk to think it out. Then I remembered about the cart.

Peter leant forward, his eyes flashing.

"Dan, the reins were taut! The driver was reining back his horse! He wasn't trying to get out of the way!"

Wilson thumped his knee enthusiastically with his sound fist.

"By George, youngster!" he cried. "I believe you're on to something! What do we do now?"

"Find out who paid him, first; then tell Tod."

"All right; it's your show. Carry on."

Peter slipped off his seat and wheeled an old practice bike out from the corner of the shed, kicking it on to its stand so that its rear wheel hung almost over the helpless driver's head.

"Come and sit on the little rat's chest," he invited. "I'll show you." He kicked the engine into life, thumbing the throttle open until the back wheel whirled fiercely in the air; then, while the burly speedman straddled the unfortunate driver, Peter bent down and spoke to him.

"Listen!" he shouted above the roar of the engine. "I've asked before who bribed you to play that dirty rotten trick this morning. This is your last chance. Who was it?"

The man's face was pale with dread, but he said nothing.

Peter gripped the saddle of the machine. Gradually he edged it nearer and nearer until the spinning wheel was only a bare inch from the terrified driver's face.

"Who was it?" Peter demanded

again. "Or would you like to find out how it feels to have your face rubbed on a motor-cycle tyre?"

The threat was enough. Peter could see by the man's horrified expression that he was willing to do anything to escape. The boy cut out the engine and turned once more to the Irishman.

"Who was it?" he said very quietly.

The man opened his lips a quarter of an inch. The words came in a sibilant whisper.

"Mr. Souter."

Max Souter, Vibert's crack rider!

Wilson straightened up. A low whistle of surprise escaped from his clenched teeth.

Peter closed the door of Orton's room behind him and faced the manufacturer.

People in the Nomad works were wont to refer to Tod Orton as a character. It was easy to see why. In spite of his sixty-five years, he was still as straight as a plumb-line. His fine head, with its shaggy mop of grey hair, still sat proudly erect on his square shoulders; his unwavering, light blue eyes, set in a rugged, tanned face, still retained their brightness. Dressed in Harris tweed—as he always was—he seemed to Peter to be wholly British, like a John Bull who has lost his side whiskers and grown taller and less set in his limbs.

"Well, Stuart?"

"We've discovered that those crashes this morning were engineered. We think you ought to know," the boy said. He went on to tell Orton all that had happened since his disappearance; and by the time he had finished, the old man's eyes blazed fire and the hand which lay before him on the blotter was clenched until the knuckles showed white through the brown skin.

"Where is Wilson?" he said, at last.

"Outside in the passage. We locked the man in the shed."

"Ask him to bring the ruffian here, please."

Peter delivered the message and returned to Orton's room, taking the chair that the old man indicated. The silence that fell between them was tense and expectant, so that the grandfather clock striking midday made both man and boy jump. Peter felt oddly excited—the kind of feeling one gets in a theatre, waiting for the curtain to go up.

Suddenly the door was flung open, and Wilson was framed in the doorway.

"He's gone!" he snapped out. "Someone's unlocked the door and cut through the ropes. He's got clean away!"

Orton and Peter sprang to their feet as one man; then, slowly, the manufacturer sat down again.

"All right; come in and shut the door, Dan. It's no good crying over spilt milk."

"But we might catch him again," Peter gasped.

"Not a chance of it. The people who set him free had a car waiting, there's no doubt."

Tod Orton sucked his pipe meditatively; then he said to Peter:

"Your frog-marching the man through the town caused a good deal of excitement. Am I right?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you brought him past the Vibert camp on the way, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"H'm, that's fairly plain, then. They saw you, guessed you'd get something out of their man, and waited for a chance to get him away."

There was silence, then, until at last Orton looked up at Wilson.

"What part prevents you from

repairing your machine?" he asked.

"The frame's cracked and we can't get another from London in time. The one on the practice machine won't do because it's the old model."

Orton examined the bowl of his pipe for a moment without speaking; then, without looking up, he said:

"But we could get a new one here by air."

Wilson thought for a moment, then nodded slowly.

Suddenly, the manufacturer gripped the arms of his chair and rose to his full height.

"Listen," he said slowly. "Viberts have played me a few dirty tricks in my time, but I've never paid 'em back in their own coin. I've always fought fair all my life. You know that. Now they've smashed three of my machines and, what is far worse, incapacitated two of my riders by a trick that is as villainous as any that I've ever known. If I had any proof I'd go straight to the race stewards; but they've taken away all the evidence I had." The old man's anger was mounting up. "They've left me only one course—and I'm going to take it!"

He turned to Peter, thumping his desk to drive each word home.

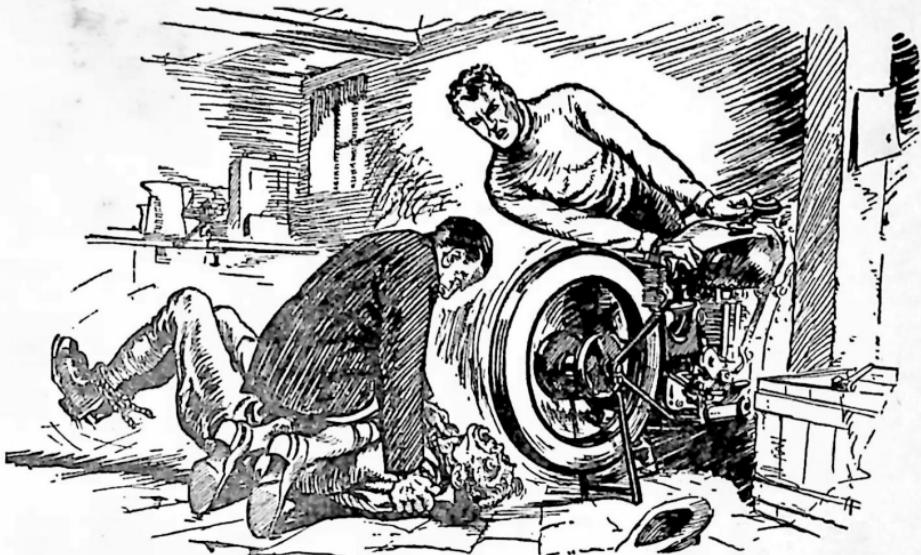
"I've got about two hundred pounds left in the world, Stuart. I'm using it to put you in the race. I'm going to smash Viberts, fighting fair if I can; and if I can't, I'd like to think I went down fighting."

He stretched out a powerful hand.

"Good luck!" he said.

The hands of the old manufacturer and the young speedman met across the table.

The shadows about the barn were growing long before the plane bearing the needed frame came dropping down on Arneagh out of the sky; and it was grey dawn before the



With Dan Wilson kneeling on the hay-cart driver's chest, Peter gradually edged the machine nearer and nearer, until the spinning wheel was only a bare inch from the man's face. "Now," demanded Peter, "who bribed you to block the road with your cart?"

dog-tired mechanics, who had worked all through the night under Wilson's guidance, stood back from the finished speed-iron. Then, while the men raised a tired cheer, the veteran speedman, with his arm still in a sling, rode the machine away into the dawn to test it.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER THE RACE!

**C**ROUCHING low over the bars, Peter streaked down towards the pits.

Eighteen times before—once every lap—he had seen the packed stands and the long row of replenishment depots slide up to meet him thus; and now, the next time, it would be the finish.

That meant that there was only one lap more to go—and, as yet, he had failed woefully to fulfil the confidence Orton had placed in him.

For hours, it seemed to him, he had

been roaring round the circuit; and at each straight section he had strained his eyes to catch a glimpse of either the crimson crash helmet of the Norton rider or the green ones of the three Vibert men. But he had not seen them.

Somewhere ahead of him streaked all four of his rivals—whom he had got to catch.

Settling himself lower in the saddle to cut down wind resistance, he twisted the throttle to the limit, asking his engine for that last ounce of power that he had been keeping in reserve.

And standing in the Nomad pit, his face expressionless, Tod Orton watched him come.

For close on two hundred miles the old man had stood thus, watching the blue-helmeted Nomad rider risking everything to catch the flying Viberts, and the crack riders of the Vibert team holding off the boy's

challenge. Now it was the last lap and still the three Viberts and the Norton maintained their lead.

The manufacturer turned to Dan Wilson who stood beside him.

"Give him the all-out signal," he said. "Show him he's close to them."

Wilson leaped to the back of the pit and seized a huge crimson disc mounted on a pole. Quickly he thrust it from the pit counter, waving it slowly to catch the boy's attention.

Peter saw it and his gauntleted hand left its grip for a moment, rising in a half salute to tell the men in the pit that he understood.

He had ridden fiercely before, but now he threw his machine round the corners in a way which made the crowds catch at their breath and step back involuntarily from the road.

He had forgotten danger; forgotten the pain that had been racking his chest ever since his crash in practice. He remembered only that he must go faster; that somewhere ahead were the men who were trying to wreck Nomads, and he had got to catch them.

Again and again his foot-rest struck sparks from the road as he leaned his speed-iron right over on its side to surge round a tricky bend; and again and again he brushed the roadside grass as he straightened out. A hundred times it looked as if he must crash and a hundred times he pulled his machine out of danger by a split inch and sent it rocketing onwards. It seemed almost that, whatever he did, no catastrophe had power to touch him.

He caught the Norton at the end of the long straightaway and, on his heels, zoomed up the hill to the white cottage beyond which they had crashed into the hay-cart. And as he swung round the bend in the Norton's wake he saw a Vibert rider at the side of the road.

Orange flames were streaking from the Vibert's engine, and its rider was bending over it, struggling desperately to put them out.

Eagerly Peter's gaze flashed to the machine's number, and, with a grim smile, he saw that it was No. 7. That was Kid Connelly's machine. Now it was out of the race there was only Max Souter and Vibert's third rider ahead.

Past the tree that stood like a sentinel in the hedge they streaked; and then Connelly and his burning machine were forgotten and Peter was riding all he knew to pass the Norton.

For a mile the two machines hung together, with Peter determined to pass and the Norton rider as determined to keep ahead; then suddenly the engine note of the leading machine started to die away and its rider was drawing in to the side of the road. Some small defect in his highly tuned engine had put him out of the race in the last lap.

As he streaked past, Peter risked a glance over his shoulder at the unlucky rider. He saw the man throw up his arm in the old Roman salute, sportingly wishing good luck to the rider who was more fortunate than himself.

Peter gripped his knees into the tank and strove for yet more speed. He was on the back leg of the course now, where vantage points were scarce and spectators consequently fewer; and there was little more than two miles left to go. He had got to go faster. It was now or never!

Corners slid to meet him, were negotiated and forgotten; straight stretches were covered at over the hundred mark; and the lone Nomad never faltered in its stride. It seemed to realise how great were the issues that depended on its speed.

Once more the boy flung his mount into a bend, and as he straightened

# THE LAST LAP!



ROLAND  
DAVIES

Facing page 224

As the winning-post draws nearer, the pace of the roaring racers gets hotter and hotter! Skidding round the bends with wide-open throttle the leading riders make their final desperate bid for victory, with disaster as the penalty for the over-reckless!

*Specially drawn for the "Holiday Annual" by Roland Davies.*

out an exultant whoop escaped from his clenched teeth. For before him, one behind the other, were the two Viberts.

Glancing back from in front, Max Souter saw the boy at the same time, and humped himself down over his tank, urging his machine to the utmost. What he had imagined to be a runaway victory had suddenly turned into a speed duel as desperate as any he had ever experienced.

With scrabbling tyres screeching on the turns and engine shrieking defiance, Peter rode into the thundering exhausts of the two Viberts. And all the time the Nomad was catching up.

Yard by yard, foot by foot, the distance between the machines diminished until at last Peter drew out to pass the second Vibert. And as he did so, the man edged his machine over, cutting him out.

Again the boy tried to pass, and again the rival rider blocked his path.

Peter understood then. The man was holding him out purposely, taking advantage of the lonely part of the course to keep him back while Souter went on to win.

In a compact bunch the three snarling speed-irons stormed up to the hairpin bend, the last corner before the long, straight run to the finish. Into Peter's excited brain flashed the thought that unless he could get past here his last chance would have gone.

Deliberately he drew his machine wide, giving the impression that he meant to pass on the outside of the curve; and, with a grim smile, he watched the Vibert rider edge out to stop him.

For a moment the boy hung behind the Vibert machine; then, without warning, he flung his speed-iron over and, changing down, streaked for the inside of the curve.

The Vibert rider realised the boy's

intention too late. He jerked his front wheel inwards viciously and spun the throttle wide in a wild endeavour to cut the Nomad off. For a split second the two machines almost touched; then the Vibert was whipping outwards in an uncontrollable skid, with its rider striving in vain to hold it. In a series of frenzied swerves the snarling speed-iron skated across the road to hit the bank.

As he swung his machine after Souter, Peter saw the whole racer fling itself into the air and go crashing through the hedge.

But Souter was still twenty yards ahead, and before them were the stands again, and out in the road, small in the distance, the figure of an official holding his chequered flag aloft to acclaim the winner.

Peter's muscles stood out like whipcord under the skin, and his jaw, clamped hard, was thrust forward menacingly. He twisted his throttle hard against the stop and hung on. He could do no more. It rested between the two machines, now, to fight it out.

For seconds that seemed long as minutes the distance between the two machines remained the same, then slowly the British bike started drawing in.

The people who thronged the stands were on their feet, now, cheering wildly for the lone rider who had come, so it seemed to them, from nowhere to challenge the invincible Souter. His youth and the odds which he faced had made the crowd Peter's staunchest partisans from the start, and now their Irish enthusiasm was unrestrained.

In front of the stands, the time-keeper was gesticulating wildly to the marshal who held the flag.

"The lap record!" he managed to bellow above the uproar, and his expression suggested that it had already gone "sky-high."

The marshal nodded, and his gaze flashed back to the machines that streaked towards him, the roar of their engines already audible above the roar of the crowd.

Hastily Peter's eyes flashed from Vibert to the finish, measuring the distance, and then crazy joy was surging up inside him, for he knew that he would win !

" Got you ! " he croaked triumphantly at Souter's humped back.

" Got you ! "

The noise of the straining speed-irons roared in the boy's ears like a thousand machine-guns. It seemed to shake the very air. The ground rushing beneath their flying wheels vibrated as from the passing of an express train.

He was almost level now. His front wheel was up to Souter's foot, up to the Vibert's tank, up to its front wheel—ahead ! He was ahead !

Half a length in front of the Vibert he saw the flag slash down—then everything went black.

It was Tod Orton who picked the boy up from under his machine where he had fallen. He raised the youngster in his great arms and carried him to the special pit which had been fitted out as a first-aid station.

Quickly the doctor ran his practised hands over the boy's body, and when he looked up his face was grave.

" Good heavens," he ejaculated, " this boy's been riding with a couple of broken ribs ! "

The thing that pleased Peter most, later, was the postscript to a letter which he received from Tod Orton a few days before he left hospital and followed the Nomad team back to England. It consisted of a single line, and it ran :

" When are you coming back to practise for the Isle of Man T.T. ? "

THE END



## GREYFRIARS RHYMES BOB CHERRY

(the fighting man of the Remove and a member of the Famous Five)

A LONG-LIMBED, healthy lad is Bob,  
A splendid type of youngster;  
The nation's heart with pride should throb  
To have such boys amongst her.  
His eyes are all aglow with mirth,  
His ways are frank and sunny;  
And surely happiness is worth  
Far more than mints of money ?

Bob makes the lofty manners drop  
Of high-and-mighty Coker,  
And more than once has put a stop  
To Loder's games of " poker."  
He's not an interfering fool,  
A sneak both mean and brainless,  
But one who really loves his school,  
And keeps its honour stainless.

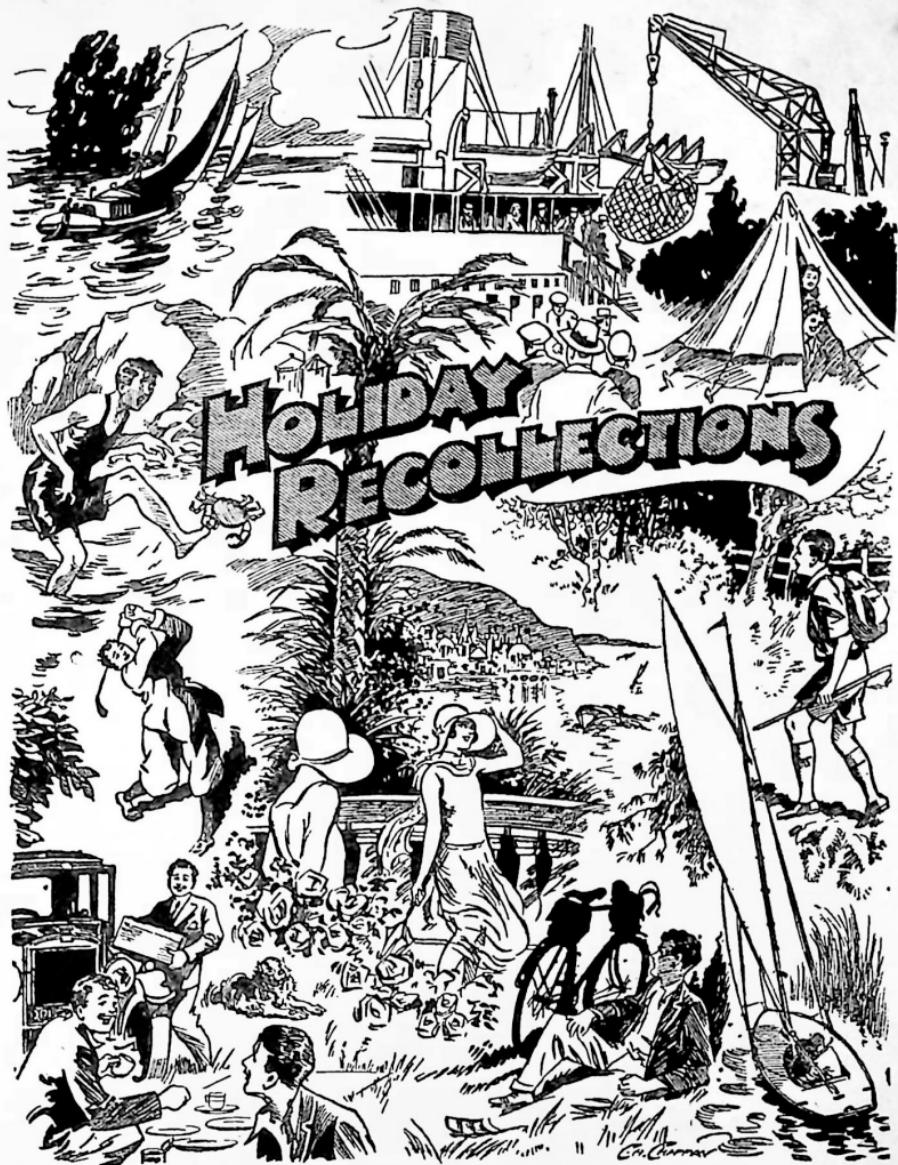
Bob Cherry is, without a doubt,  
A mass of wiry muscle;  
And bullies have been counted out  
In many a thrilling tussle.  
The Highcliff cads have felt his fist,  
And Vavasour and Monson  
Have begged our hero to desist—  
To them he seemed Len Johnson !

Though Bull can fight like one possessed,  
And Wharton has some science,  
They have to give the bully best—  
He sets them at defiance.  
The only fellow in the Form  
He cannot triumph over  
Is Cherry, who has made it warm  
For him—the great Bolsover !

Yet Cherry is, to tell the truth,  
When girls are present, modest;  
With them he thinks himself uncouth—  
His manners are the oddest.  
Although one day he'll maybe wed  
His Susan or his Sarah,  
His honest cheeks get very red  
With Marjorie and Clara.

Once Cherry was expelled for theft,  
His protests went unheeded;  
But when the school found they were " left,"  
Apologies were needed.  
To think that Bob could be a thief  
Was really very funny.  
One might suppose an Indian chief  
Had manners sweet as honey !

Good, honest Bob ! long may you be—  
The boy Frank Richards makes you—  
A hero brave on land or sea,  
Whatever fate o'ertakes you !  
To " H.A.-ites " who on life's course  
Are nobly persevering,  
Your sunny smile's a latent force,  
For ever bright and cheering !



Holidays come and go, but pleasant memories of them linger on—of joyful days spent hiking or cycling, camping or picnicking, boating or swimming.

# TUBBY'S TIP

*by*

**Arthur Edward Lovell**

**SAID** Tubby, beaming like the moon :  
“ I say, you chaps, how prime !  
My Uncle Joe this afternoon  
Is coming for a time !

I've got a wire to say that he  
Is coming for the trip  
On purpose to hand out to me  
A very useful tip ! ”

“ Congratters, Tubby ! ” Silver said.  
“ You're certainly in luck.  
Mind you don't paint the village red  
And die of too much tuck ! ”

Our podgy friend could hardly wait  
For Uncle to arrive ;  
He loitered at the college gate  
From three o'clock till five.

When Uncle in the station hack  
Rolled up, he grinned with glee,  
For he had got a bad attack  
Of “ hoping ” cough, you see.

At last, when Uncle took his leave,  
He gave his hand a grip,  
And said : “ Now, nephew, I believe  
I promised you a tip.

It's this : When next you write to me,  
Remember what I say—  
The word extremely ' has no ' g ',  
And Uncle ' has no ' k '.”

With that, and with a brief good-bye,  
He bade the driver start :  
But tear-drops filled poor Tubby's eye,  
And fury filled his heart.

When Jimmy said, “ Well, are you rich ? ”  
He groaned, as if in pain ;  
So we said, “ Have some doughnuts ! ”—which  
Soon cheered him up again !

