

# THE SPEED DUEL!



## THE FIRST CHAPTER ALL OUT!

**D**OWN the centre of the broad French highway roared the car, held unerringly to the crown of the road despite its leaping speed. Little wisps of morning mist dancing in the sunlight were slashed to shreds by the racer's spinning wheels, losing themselves in the blurred slipstream of disturbed air, dust, and grit streaking out behind.

Settling himself more comfortably in the cockpit, Roy Grant tilted his head a trifle sideways and peered past the insect-starred windshield at the road ahead, the mask of caked dust and oil-spume on his face splitting in an exultant grin as he watched the tall poplar trees lining the highway streaking towards him at terrific speed.

The dust that had mingled with the engine-blown oil on Roy's face could

no more hide the youthfulness of his features than it could conceal the rakish speed-born lines of the car he was driving. That dust had been picked up in four-and-twenty laps of the eight miles circuit of the Grand Prix de l'Ouest, the great French road-race, and Roy had one more lap to go before his day's practice over the course should be completed.

By **CLIFFORD CAMERON**

*A great yarn of motor-racing, in which an affair of honour is fought out to a finish in a death-defying duel of speed!*

He shrugged down in his seat as the sudden determination came to him to make this last lap the fastest he had ever done, and his right foot pressed just a little harder on the throttle pedal. His revolution counter told him that he was now travelling at 125 m.p.h.

With a quick movement he pulled his soiled goggles off his eyes, squinting through half-closed lids as a gale of air swept suddenly into his unprotected pupils. Then he reached for a clean pair of goggles dangling loose

around his neck, snapped them into place on his head, and tensed ready for a bend in the road ahead.

From windows set high in the white-washed walls of a little cluster of cottages flanking that bend, swarthy French peasants watched Roy's car hurtling towards them. He stormed up to the turn faster than anything they had ever seen before, then his foot shifted crisply from the accelerator pedal and stamped the brake.

Tortured fabric screamed in the car's brake-shoes, and the madly spinning tyres danced in torment on the road. As if grabbed by a giant's hand, the racer slowed, and Roy's left hand dropped like lightning from the steering-wheel to the gear-lever, changing into second with faultless precision. Next instant he was in the heart of the bend, and putting all his strength into his arms as he forced the car round.

The peasants at the high cottage windows shrank back instinctively as they watched the car skid for a split second. They had just a fleeting vision of the racer's tail wagging, then the machine was through the bend, and the raucous bellow of its exhaust was slamming back from the cottage walls. "How he drives, ce fou Anglais!" those peasants muttered, looking into one another's startled faces.

Where the houses flanking the bend fell away, Roy changed up into top gear, flogging his machine to its limit as the road opened up dead straight in front. And so he drove on, putting everything he knew into handling the car, taking straights and bends at limit speed until a line of small, open-fronted replenishment pits alongside the road showed before him.

Little clusters of men, busy around

rakish racing cars standing in front of these pits, turned to watch Roy's car as it stormed up to them, and there were some who snapped the triggers of stop-watches as he went by. Roy passed them all, still at top speed, but a hundred yards down the road he slowed the car and drove sedately back to a pit flaunting a banner marked "Titan Motor Co."

As he stopped the racer and switched off the engine, a stocky man in tweeds jumped over the pit-counter to meet him. It was old Dave Blair, racing manager for Titan cars, which was the make Roy was driving.

Dave had the reputation of being the most taciturn man in the motor-racing game, but just now his gnarled face was beaming, and he was babbling congratulations as he helped Roy from his driving seat.

"Five minutes fifty-four seconds for that last lap! Over eighty miles an hour, and the record's only seventy-eight! Great, son, great!" He patted a beefy fist into Roy's back, then went on: "How's she goin'? Everything O.K.?"

Before Roy could answer, the excited Dave had left his side and was running an experienced eye over the dials on the instrument board of the car, feeling the heat of the tyres, and giving instructions to the mechanics under his charge.

Helping himself to a cooling draught of lemonade from a jug on the pit-counter, Roy watched the enthusiastic old man with good-natured amusement.

"She's going great guns, Dave," he said. "And if I can make her last out during the race on Saturday I shall fancy my chance of winning."

"Fancy your chance!" Dave Blair wheeled at the words. "Listen, son, if you can go on Saturday like you've

been goin' this mornin', you've got the race in your pocket."

"I'm inclined to agree with you, Mr. Blair."

The remark, quietly spoken by someone standing just behind Roy's back, made the youngster's attempt to gulp a mouthful of lemonade end in a splutter. It was the first intimation Roy had had that someone was behind him, and he almost jumped with surprise. Turning, he found himself face to face with a tall, swarthy figure dressed in spotless white racing overalls, and his startled gaze met two cold eyes staring amusedly into his own. He recognised the man as Count Séliman, chief driver of the French team of Voileau cars, and probably his most serious rival in the forthcoming Grand Prix de l'Ouest.

"Congratulations, Grant," the count said in perfect English. "A very fine run of yours this morning. Five minutes fifty-four seconds for that last lap, wasn't it?"

For a moment Roy was too surprised to speak. Then:

"Tha—thanks," he stammered. "Er—very good of you, count, though I'm sure you could do better with the car."

Séliman's smile grew.

"Kind of you to say so. Of course, in a race, perhaps—extra experience, and that sort of thing. You're only a beginner, aren't you? That makes a difference in an actual race. All the same, yours was a very creditable performance for the practice. It'll be interesting to see how near you get to me on Saturday, won't it?"

For a moment the man's cool assurance took Roy's breath away, and he was wondering if he had heard aright. Then the full meaning of the count's last remark sunk home. The

man was so cocksure that he was going to win that he imagined Roy's only interest in the race would be seeing how near he would be behind Séliman's Voileau at the finish of the event!

Old Dave Blair was the first to break the awkward silence.

"Maybe it'll be just as interesting to see how near you get to Grant's Titan!" he grunted. Then: "Come on, Roy, let's get the car away"—and he deliberately turned his back on the French crack.

The smile vanished from Count Séliman's face and a hard glint came into his eyes. For a moment it looked as if he would reply, then he turned on his heel and strode off in the direction of his own racing camp.

"What did you turn on him like that for?" Roy asked Dave when the count was out of earshot.

"Because he's the most poisonous snake that ever got behind a steering wheel," Dave replied shortly. "I don't know much about him, but what I do ain't pleasant. Besides, look at that ugly mug of his, and the nasty way he has of creeping up so quiet nobody can hear him coming. Didn't you notice he did it just now? Him and his 'interesting to see how near you get to me'! Huh!" Old Dave's face was a picture of disgust.

"If half the tales I've heard about Séliman are true," Blair went on, "he ought to have been warned off every race-track in Europe. They say he killed Varazzio, the Italian, at Monza through deliberately skidding a car in front of him so that Varazzio had to charge off the track to miss him. And I've heard he was behind that car-nobbling at Monaco, when the Gordon team had to withdraw at the last minute because someone filled their oil-sumps with emery powder



the night before the race. Then there was——”

A sudden uproar from the Voileau camp made him break off what he was saying, and both he and Roy turned to see what the disturbance was about. What they saw made them clench their fists with rage.

A tall man in white overalls, easily recognisable as Count Séliman, was gripping an elderly mechanic by the collar of his overalls and punching the man unmercifully in the face. High above the mechanic's yells of terror and pain came bursts of execration from the count, speaking rapidly in French, abusing the mechanic for some mistake in his work on the count's car.

Before the watching Englishmen's eyes, the count drove home a final blow that left the mechanic unconscious and limp in his grasp, and the enraged driver flung the man from him like a sack. The mechanic lay still where he had fallen, while his comrades stood round helplessly.

Just for a minute, Roy was too astounded to act. Then, galvanised to action by the count lunging a kick at the prostrate figure on the ground, he began to run forward, shaking off a restraining arm Dave laid on his shoulder.

In a few strides he was beside the count, had grabbed his arm and whirled him round so that they both stood face to face.

“Leave him alone, you cad!” Roy said, in an ominously quiet voice, “or I'll——”

He broke off to escape a wild blow the count aimed at him—and what happened then was so swift that it left the onlookers dazed! One minute the count was on his feet and aiming a punch at Roy's face, the next he was lying on the ground with a bewildered

expression on his face, where a white weal was blushing a sudden red.

There was dead silence, while nobody moved. Then the count spoke, and his words came from between clenched teeth.

“You'll pay for this, Grant! If you think you can strike the Count Séliman without paying for it, you must be taught your mistake. My seconds will call on you to-morrow.” He started to rise to his feet, and some of his mechanics rushed to assist him. He brushed them aside. “Out of my way, idiots!” he snarled. “Get on with your work—and take this pig on the floor out of my sight. As for you, Grant, you will hear more of this from my seconds.” And he clicked his heels together in a stiff little bow.

Roy felt a touch on his shoulder, and turned to find Blair at his side.

“Come away, son,” the old man said. “We don't want any trouble from the gendarmes, and Séliman seems to have had enough for one day.”

Roy allowed himself to be led away, glaring back at the count with undisguised disgust.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER CHALLENGED!

**B**ACK at the Titan pit, where they were watched by many curious eyes, Roy found his voice.

“Sorry, Dave, but you'd have done the same if I hadn't got there first. Someone had to, didn't they?”

“Of course,” Dave grunted, patting the boy's shoulder reassuringly, “but what was Séliman saying about 'hearing from his seconds' when I arrived?”

Roy told him, word for word, all that Séliman had said. When he had finished, the old man's face was grave, and he gave a low whistle.



"You know what that means, don't you, son? He's going to challenge you to a duel! The dirty, murdering crook! It's said he has killed two men in duels already, and I suppose he wants to add you to the list for the sake of 'his honour'—such as it is!"

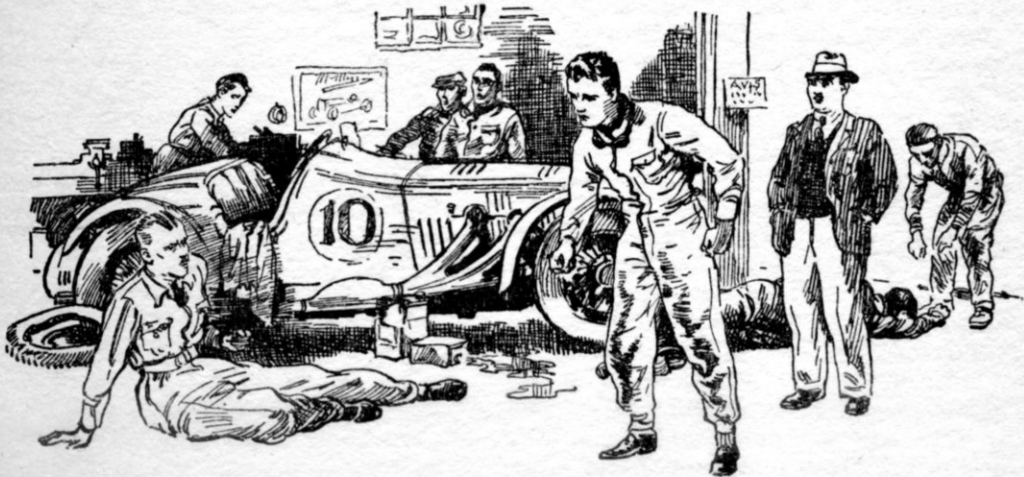
"A duel!" Roy echoed. "My hat! Does he mean it? Why, I've never handled a sword or revolver in my life!"

"Don't worry, boy," Dave reassured him. "He'll probably think

And so the matter was dropped—until later.

By the time Dave and Roy were having dinner that night in the private room of the hotel where they had made their quarters, the subject of the duel had been practically forgotten in the interest of preparing the Titan which Roy was to drive in the big race.

But just as Dave was pouring out coffee to round off the meal, two strangers were announced by a white-faced, excited waiter, who explained



What happened to Count Seliman was so swift that it left the onlookers dazed. One minute the count was on his feet and aiming a blow at Roy's face, the next he was lying on the ground, bewildered. "You'll pay for that blow, Grant!" said the count between clenched teeth.

better of challenging you when he cools down a bit. It wouldn't do any good to what little reputation he's got left if it got round that he's been issuing challenges to duelling novices. Besides, duelling is illegal, even in France, and though the police can't always interfere early enough to stop the fights, they'd mighty soon give us protection from a man like Seliman."

"Anyhow, let's forget it. We've got plenty of work to do on the car, and I'm feeling hungry, too."

that the callers would neither give their names nor state their business. After a hurried consultation, Dave advised Roy to invite the strangers in.

The men whom the waiter ushered in were Frenchmen in immaculate evening dress, and one of them, who appeared to be spokesman, made the necessary introductions.

"Monsieur Grant," he said, addressing Roy, "allow me to introduce Monsieur le Marquis de St. Alaire, while I am Le Duc de Gavine. We are friends of Monsieur le Comte

Séliman ; you will understand, of course, why we have called ? ”

“ I can't say I do,” Roy replied. “ Please sit down and tell me your business.” And he proffered chairs. His face was a picture of surprise when the Frenchman haughtily waved the seats aside.

“ Monsieur,” the spokesman of the callers said, “ we are the count's seconds. He has asked us to explain to you that he requires satisfaction for the insult you gave him on the race-course this morning. By the laws of duelling, you, as the challenged person, have the right to choose the site and the weapons. The latter I will leave entirely to you, but as you are a stranger here, may I suggest the Panchères Wood, which is quite near here, as the best meeting-place ? And, say, dawn to-morrow as the best time ? ”

The explanation of the strangers' call was so unexpected that Roy could not reply for a moment. Then he heard Dave Blair speak.

“ Gentlemen,” the old man said, “ I am afraid you are wasting your time. If Count Séliman has a quarrel with young Mr. Grant here, I am sure Mr. Grant will be pleased to fight him in a decent way any time the count wishes. But it'll be with fists, and not with swords or pistols ! ”

The Frenchman gave no sign that they had heard Dave. Both continued to favour Roy with a haughty stare, until, finally, the Duke of Gavine remarked :

“ We are still waiting for your answer, monsieur ! ”

“ You've had it ! ” Roy replied hotly. “ If Séliman wants to fight, I'll take him on any time, with or without gloves. I know nothing about duelling, and the count knows it.”

“ The count has thought of that,”

the Duke answered, and a thin smile played at the corners of his lips. “ He therefore has requested us to suggest—although, of course, it is an irregularity—that the duel should be fought with racing cars.”

“ Racing cars ? ” Roy could not keep the amazement he felt out of his tones.

“ Exactly ! Shall we say three laps of the Grand Prix de l'Ouest course, yourself and the count to start together, and the object of the race to see which of the two of you can crash the other off the road ! ”

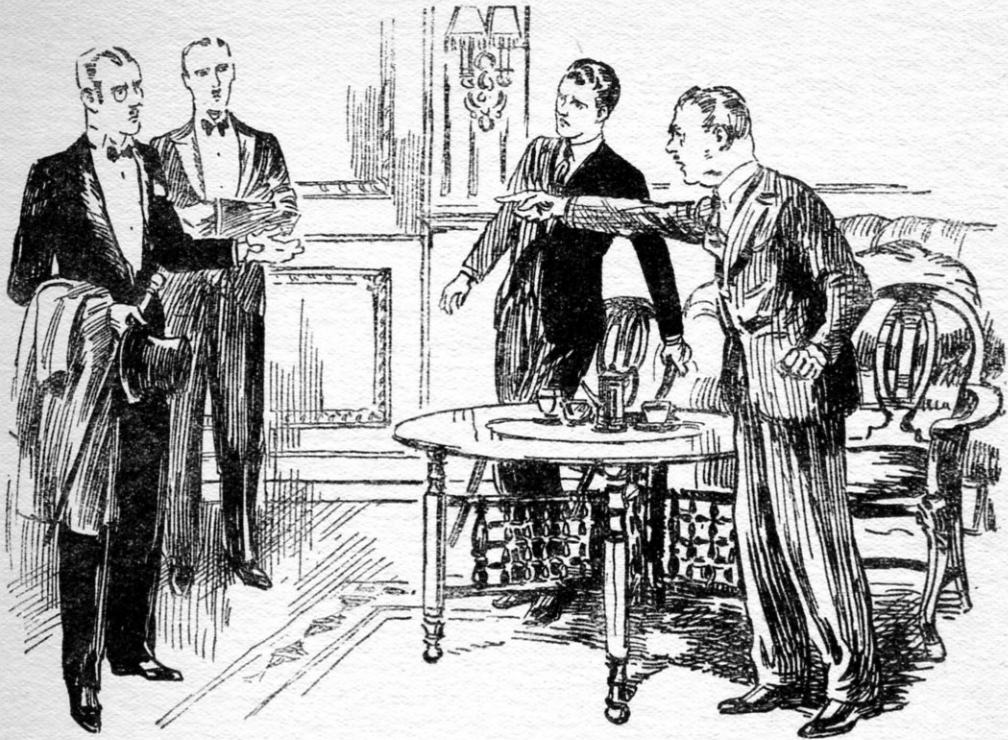
“ Come, now, what do you say ? I must warn you, of course, that a refusal on your part must be accepted as a sign of cowardice, and that the count will not allow it to go unknown that you have refused to give him satisfaction after insulting him. He will publish——”

“ Who cares what he publishes ? ” Dave Blair had risen to his feet, and was standing up to the Frenchman in a towering rage. “ Get out of here, you idiots ; we haven't time for your silly challenges and sillier talk. Get out ! ”

“ One moment, Dave ! ” Roy, too, had risen, and now he was very grave and quiet. He addressed the Frenchmen : “ Gentlemen, you may take back word to the count that I accept his challenge, and that we will fight our duel in racing cars. We will meet at five-thirty to-morrow morning at the pits on the course. Good-night.”

Not another word was spoken as, to Dave's utter astonishment, Roy held open the door for the Frenchmen, acknowledged their stiff little bows, and then closed the door again after them.

“ You crazy kid ! ” was all Dave could say when at last he found his voice.



"Get out of here!" exclaimed Dave Blair to the count's seconds. "We haven't time for your silly challenges and sillier talk. Get out!" "One moment, Dave!" said Roy. "Gentlemen, you may tell the count that I accept his challenge—the duel to be fought out in racing cars!"

Dawn was just breaking when the shrill clamour of a bedside alarm-clock woke Roy next morning. With a sleepy grunt he turned on his side and switched off the bell, and then was suddenly and instantly wide-awake as he realised the full significance of the early call. Within an hour or two he was to pit his skill and daring against Count Séliman in a duel to the death with racing cars!

It seemed that last night's happenings must have been only a nightmare—until he realised the grim reality of it all. He remembered the long argument he had had with Dave after the count's seconds had gone; how the old man had tried by every

possible argument to dissuade him from the speed duel, only to be won over at last by Roy explaining that a refusal to meet the count would be accepted by Séliman as a sign of cowardice.

"After all," Roy had said, "the firm can't have any objection. I'll use my own Titan—it's only just been tuned up, and it's nearly as fast as the car I'm driving on Saturday. Of course, the firm would kick up the very dickens of a row if they knew I was driving at all in anything as dangerous as this is going to be, but nobody need ever know the duel was anything but ordinary race practice."

By such arguments Roy had finally won Dave over, though the old man's



assent had been very grudgingly given.

As he bathed and dressed, Roy could not prevent a queer sinking feeling coming over him. It wasn't that he was afraid, but this business of fighting a man for his life was something he could not stomach.

Roy was just buckling on a stout body-strap to help brace his muscles against the jarring of the fierce drive in front of him when Dave, fully dressed, burst into the room. The racing manager looked anxious, and his worried expression grew as he saw Roy's body-strap.

"So you're going through with it, boy?" the old man said. "Why don't you drop the idea? I could fix it with the local police to stop the duel, if you don't want to call it off yourself."

"Thanks, Dave, but it's no use." Roy gave the old man's shoulder a reassuring pat. "I've got to go through with this now, but everything's going to be all right, so don't worry. Let's go down to the car."

Not another word was exchanged as they walked out of the hotel and through the deserted streets to the old barn which had been converted into a garage for the Titan cars. There they found two mechanics waiting for them, and through the open door of the barn could be seen Roy's racer, its streamlined bulk hidden under a grey dust-sheet.

Working in silence, the mechanics pulled off the dust-sheet and wheeled the car out into the early morning light. Oil and petrol tanks were filled, tyre pressures tested, and then Roy climbed into the driving seat. He switched on the engine, nodded to the mechanics to show that he was ready, and the two men bunched at the tail of the car, putting their beef behind a lusty shove.

As the car rolled forward Roy let in the clutch. The engine sucked thirstily, coughed once or twice as it half-fired, and then suddenly burst into full-throated song. Roy throttled down and let the machine tick over until the engine should warm up.

"Five o'clock, Dave," said Roy, with a glance at the shock-proof watch on his wrist. "We've only got half an hour."

Blair nodded gloomily.

"I'll go and get the tourer," he replied, and turned into the garage. Presently he emerged at the wheel of a Titan touring car, into which the mechanics climbed after locking the barn doors.

With a sudden roar from his car's exhaust, Roy accelerated forward, Dave following in his tourer, and they drove slowly round the outskirts of the town to the line of pits in front of the grandstands on the Grand Prix de l'Ouest racecourse.

Séliman had already arrived, and was busy with a knot of mechanics on his Voileau. The French car, painted blue in its national racing colour, looked viciously fast. A supercharger bulked at its streamlined nose, half covered by a metal cowling, and the narrow, low-built bodywork raked back to a pointed tail. From its exhaust gouted puffs of blue smoke as the count, seated in the cockpit, revved up the engine in short bursts.

Roy pulled up in front of the Titan pit, and presently two men detached themselves from the little cluster around the Voileau. Roy recognised them as his visitors of the night before—the count's seconds.

"You're on time, m'sieur," the Duke of Gavine said, as he reached the Titan pit. "And are these your seconds?" He indicated Blair and

Anderson and Hewett, the mechanics, with a wave of his hand.

"They are," Roy explained.

"Then let us discuss details, gentlemen. Are you agreed to starting at five-thirty, and that your principal and mine shall race for three laps?"

Blair and the mechanics nodded dully.

"Good!" The duke turned to his companion, "That is quite in order, eh, Marquis? Then let us get back."

He extended a hand to Dave, which the old man took, while St. Alaire did the same with Anderson and Hewett. Roy they both ignored. Then they turned and strode swiftly back to the Voileau pit.

"Well, that's that," muttered Dave. He turned to Roy. "How are you feeling, boy?"

"Pretty good," Roy lied. Actually he had a queer tightening around his heart, and the sinking sensation in his stomach was growing more pronounced. He pulled himself together with an effort. "I wish it was time to start," he burst out.

He glanced at his watch again. The hands pointed to twenty-five minutes past five. He looked at Dave, and the old man, seeing the youngster's nervous tension, laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Drive slowly up to the starting-line, Roy—it'll help you get a grip on yourself," Blair advised. "Just think of it as the start of the Grand Prix, and you'll be O.K."

Letting in the clutch and engaging bottom gear, Roy felt instantly more self-assured, and the gentle acceleration of his car as he moved off helped drive his unpleasant emotions still farther away.

As he passed the Voileau pit, the

count was just moving off, too, but Roy noticed that the Frenchman took care to keep behind him as they ran gently to the starting line marked in white across the course.

The two drivers stopped their cars, with engines running, so that their front wheels just touched the line, and one of the count's mechanics took up his place nearby with a stopwatch in one hand and a little white flag in the other.

Dave and Roy's mechanics, who had followed in the tourer, ranged themselves around the Titan.

"Good luck, Roy," Dave muttered, "and don't take any more risks than you need. Just remember that you're every bit as good a driver as Séliman—and watch out for his dirty tricks."

Roy shook hands with his manager and the two mechanics in turn. Then, at a signal from the man with the starting flag, he settled down in his cockpit, and drew his goggles more comfortably about his eyes.

He could feel a cold, damp clamminess all over his body, and his tongue seemed parched and dry. He was just wondering whether the count was feeling the same sort of uneasy foreboding, when, with a suddenness that he had not expected, the starter's voice cut across his thoughts.

"Ready?" he heard the man call. Then, in a silence broken only by the muffled drone of the two cars' exhausts, came the counting of the passing seconds: "Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one—GO!"

Down flashed the white flag.

On the instant, two highly tuned engines burst into their full-throated war-song, tyres howled and scabbled a little on the road, hands snicked levers through the gears—and the duel was on!

## THE THIRD CHAPTER

### THE SPEED DUEL!

THE sudden excitement of the start drove all thoughts from Roy's mind save that of getting his car under way without loss of a split second.

From the corner of his eye he could see the Voileau's bonnet come nosing up alongside, all glittering chromium plate and burnished blue enamel. Instinctively, he trod the throttle pedal harder, as if this was the start of a race and he duelling for the lead with a friendly rival.

Whoom-raaaah! came a bellow from the count's car as its driver snicked into second gear, and zooooomp! came the Titan's answer as Roy, too, changed gear.

Steadily, the Voileau crept up to the Titan. The count was putting all he knew into his driving, determined to get level with Roy's car before they reached a corner showing down the road ahead. Inch by inch, the Voileau gained. Now it was spinning its speed-blurred wheels at Roy's elbow, now they reached the Titan's louvred bonnet—and then the cars were level, and hurtling down the road wheel to wheel!

Slowly the gap between the racing speedirons narrowed, forcing Roy to pull his car away from the other and to the side of the road. But the more he drew away, the farther the count edged over, until finally the Titan was a bare twelve inches from the grass-fringed edge of the road.

In a flash, Roy realised the purpose of the count's move. The duel was on in earnest, and Séliman was trying to crash the Titan off the road!

Frantically he sought for greater speed, striving to get ahead of the Voileau crowding him off the road. But the count's car was his match for

speed, and clung on grimly beside him. For a fleeting second Roy took his eyes off the road to glance at the Voileau's driver. Count Séliman, shrugged down in his seat and with his hands tensed on the steering-wheel, was eyeing him through his goggles, and Roy thought he could see the ghost of a sardonic smile playing around the other's lips.

He turned away. Two hundred yards ahead, the road bent round a knoll of trees in a dangerous corner, and Roy tensed in his seat as he prepared to take the curve. His left foot jabbed the brake sharply, and as if by magic the Voileau shot ahead.

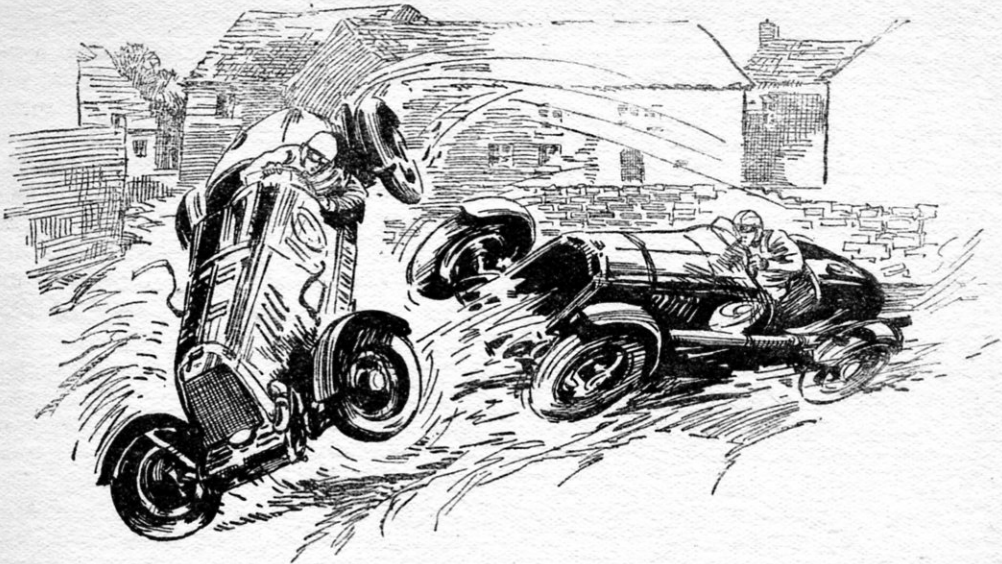
"He'll never get round!" Roy gasped, amazed at the way the count was storming into the turn. "He's braked too late——!"

Next instant he was reaching frantically for his hand-brake, and his left foot was jamming the foot-brake into the floor-boards. In front of him, the Voileau was sliding across the road, the count half risen in his seat as he fought the steering-wheel—and Roy was storming up to his rival at 100 miles an hour!

As he stood hard on his brakes, it flashed across Roy's mind that the count's skid had been deliberately planned. Only a driver of the count's ability could have done it so cleverly; but Roy also knew that Séliman was far too good a driver to have attempted to take the bend so fast.

The awful screaming of the Titan's tyres sounded high above the warring of the engine as Roy locked the brake-shoes solid with their drums. The steering-wheel shuddered under his hands like a living thing, and he gripped it the tighter as he realised that he could not stop in time to prevent smashing into the back of the sliding Voileau.





With a terrific crash the two cars met, the Titan's nose striking the Voileau's side with a force that lifted the French car clean off the ground, and as Roy fought to keep his own car under control, he saw the Voileau completely overturn.

On either side of the road tall trees were sliding past—there was no escape there. But in the short seconds that had passed since the Voileau's first sign of a skid Roy's brain had been working frantically, and at the very moment when the Titan should have slammed into the Voileau's tail Roy piled all his strength into a great effort to turn the steering-wheel.

Bucking under the strain, the Titan swung broadside-on across the road. It was only by hanging on to the steering-wheel that Roy prevented himself being shot out. The car gave a sickening lurch, then shot forward into the trees at the roadside.

That was Roy's chance—and he took it. Somehow—but exactly how he never knew—he managed to keep enough control over the Titan to head the car between two gaunt trees. He crashed down a young sapling, then shot through the edge of the knoll of trees on to a patch of grass

bordering the road beyond the bend. He was just in time to see Count Séliman's Voileau rocket out of the corner and streak away. Séliman was leaning back in his cockpit, a mocking leer on his face as he looked behind to see how his trick had succeeded.

At sight of him something snapped inside Roy's brain. The terrible strain of the past few seconds had taken toll on his keyed-up senses, leaving him momentarily weak and dazed, but now a great wave of rage swept over him, giving him the energy of a madman.

With a single lunging movement he swept the gear-lever of his car into second gear. The engine was still running, for the car had not yet stopped moving, and now, as Roy stamped the throttle wide, the Titan leaped forward across the grass, plunged over the low bank at the roadside, then shot in pursuit of the Voileau.

Roy had gone fey—he was seized by that strange absorption in a single purpose which comes every now and then to a racing driver whose nerves have been overstrained. There was room for only one thought in his mind, and that was to catch Séliman.

Like a howling fury of vengeance the Titan swept in pursuit. A glance at the speedometer told Roy that he was travelling at ninety miles an hour, and still accelerating like a bullet. He caught a glimpse of the Voileau disappearing at half-speed round a bend ahead, then he was storming into the same bend—and without slackening speed!

In a cooler, saner moment he would have thought it impossible to take that corner at such speed. The tyres of his car screamed in protest, and the machine swung giddily sideways. Next moment Roy was through the bend and thundering down on the Voileau.

Above the uproar of his own machine Séliman caught the racket of the oncoming Titan, and shot back a startled glance. Then he was fighting grimly to get his Voileau under full speed, ready for what instinct told him was to be the fight of his life.

But he was too late. Before the Voileau could pick up speed the Titan was alongside, and Séliman had a glimpse of Roy's grim, set face.

Without a glance at his rival, Roy reined in the Titan to keep pace with the Voileau. Then he began to edge closer to the count's car, copying the trick Séliman had taught him. Nearer and nearer he steered his thundering racer, until bare inches separated the spinning hub-caps of the two cars.

They were on a straight stretch of road now, and as the two cars hurtled along it Roy moved over closer and

closer to the Voileau. Inch by inch he forced the count to the side of the road, until the Voileau's wheels were brushing the grass banks—at 120 miles an hour!

All the colour had drained from the count's face, leaving it set and white. For the first time in this speed duel he was scared—scared because he knew that here was a new Grant, and that he was going to have to fight this duel out to its bitter end.

Side by side the two cars roared around a gentle curve in the road, the count's brain working furiously to think out a plan of campaign that would leave his rival no chance of an escape. Hurling beside him, Roy watched and waited, determined to forestall any treacherous move the count should make.

They were now approaching the bend where Roy had so thrilled the peasants at their cottage windows during his practise run the day before, and along the straight road leading to it the count had a chance to make use of his Voileau's greater all-out speed. Slowly the French car drew ahead, and Roy, knowing that his car was already at its limit, had perforce to watch it go.

That Séliman had a very good reason for outstripping the Titan Roy could guess, and he braced himself more firmly in his seat, ready to see what the next move would be. Something warned him that the climax of the duel was at hand, and as the two cars slammed up to the cottage-fringed turn together that climax came.

Prepared as he was, the suddenness of the count's manœuvre all but caught Roy off his guard. Roy glimpsed Séliman shooting a glance back over his shoulder to see how far the Titan was behind, then the Voileau seemed



THE END OF A GRUELLING RACE!



HA

**FLAGGING IN THE WINNER!**  
Specially painted for "Holiday Annual" by H. Radcliffe Wilson.

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suddenly to come back at him as the count stamped on his brakes.

With a gasp, Roy trod his own brakes, changing gear in the same moment. Immediately the Titan slowed, with a jar that sent Roy lurching forward across his steering-wheel, the blow on his chest knocking nearly all the breath from his body.

From the Titan's tyres came the scream of rubber gripping the road. Brakes whined in their drums, and the engine boomed out like a hound in leash. Still slowing, the Titan stormed up to the back of the Voileau, but the suddenness of the count's manœuvre had prevented Roy braking in time to avoid hitting his rival's car.

Frantically Roy flung his steering wheel to the left, and the Titan's nose came round in response. He felt the tail wag, heard the crunching of metal as the Titan's offside front mudguard struck the tail of the count's car, then he was alongside the Voileau, and skidding half sideways across the road, and missing the cottage walls by inches only.

With a bump that sent the car bounding into the air, one of the Titan's front wheels just touched a wall at the roadside. For a split second Roy thought his machine was turning over, then the Titan fell back with a crash, sending him sprawling sideways in his cockpit.

Above the din of his own car Roy heard the sudden snarl of the Voileau as the count changed gear and accelerated violently to escape from the bounding, lurching Titan beside him. And at the very same moment the Titan, released from the drag of its brakes as Roy's foot slipped from the brake-pedal, shot across the road.

With a crash the two cars met, the Titan's nose striking the Voileau's

side with a force that lifted the French car clean off the ground. Roy had the merest glimpse of Séliman rising in his seat, and of the Voileau overturning with a tremendous crash, then bouncing twice before it lay still, a heap of smoking ruin.

All this Roy saw while he still fought to keep his own car under control. The Titan was lurching wildly under him, and as he pulled himself back into his seat with an effort he reached for the hand-brake, tugging on it with all his strength. With a jolt, the Titan came to rest.

Almost before the car was at a standstill Roy had leaped over the side and was running to the wrecked Voileau. The count was lying half out of his cockpit, one side of his overalls spattered with dust from the road, and a raw wound showing on the side of his head. Bending down, Roy placed an ear against Séliman's chest.

At first he could hear nothing but the thumping of his own heart, and the roaring that filled his speed-deafened ears. Then he made out the faint palpitations of the count's bloodstream, and knew that the man was alive.

Working swiftly, Roy stripped off his shirt, tearing it into bandages, which he wound around the ugly gash in the count's head. Then, placing his hands under Séliman's armpits, he dragged the unconscious man to the Titan, setting him beside the driver's seat in the cockpit.

Slipping down beside the count, Roy started up the engine. Then, with one arm around Séliman to hold him upright, he started the long drive back to the pits, in his heart the great hope that he would be able to get the count to medical aid in time to save his life.

The Grand Prix de l'Ouest was at its height, and the great crowds of spectators watching the cars hurtle around the eight-miles circuit were delirious with excitement. Only five laps to go, and two cars, a British Titan and a French Bugatti, were fighting out the result on their own, with the rest of the field left miles behind.

At the Titan pit, old Dave Blair was dancing with excitement like a cat on hot bricks. His car, with Roy at the wheel, was one of the two leaders, and he knew that the Titan still had speed in hand!

Every time the Titan and the Bugatti swung past him he watched anxiously for the "All right" signalled by a wave of Roy's mechanic's hand. And when they passed him on the last lap, he signalled back with a yellow board mounted on a wooden pole—the prearranged signal for "all out!"

From the grandstands opposite, another figure signalled, too—a figure swathed in bandages, with legs stretched out on a surgical chair. Dave grinned happily as he saw the bandaged arm raised in salute. It was Count Séliman, willing Roy on to win.

Back into Dave's memory came a scene in a hospital ward—himself, Roy, doctors, nurses, and some of the count's friends grouped around a bed in which lay Séliman. And Séliman had opened his eyes, painfully raised a hand, and said, "Thanks, Grant—I'm sorry." That was all, though Séliman's eyes had said all the rest there was to say.

But now the crowd was roaring anew, and Dave craned forward from his pit counter. Hurling towards the grandstands and the finishing line

was a racing car, and the sun flashing on its paintwork shone on green—the green of Britain's national motor-racing colour!

It was the Titan, winning, and as it thundered by Roy waved a gauntleted hand first to Dave, then to Séliman.

A minute later, Dave was helping Roy and his mechanic from the Titan's narrow cockpit, while Press photographers and officials pressed forward to congratulate the young driver on his success. Someone hung garlands of flowers around the shoulders of the winning car's crew, and a news-reel cameraman thrust a microphone into Roy's hand with a request for him to speak a few words.

With a single gesture Roy waved them all aside, while he turned to Dave.

"Everything all right?" he asked anxiously.

"All right!" echoed Dave joyfully. "Why, you young mug, you've just won the biggest road-race in France in a Titan car and you ask me if it's all right!"

Glowing with enthusiasm, the old racing manager pumped Roy's hand in his own beefy fist. Then he leant forward to whisper something in the boy's ear.

"It's all O.K. about Séliman, if that's what you mean," he said. "The whole affair's hushed up, and nobody knows that it was anything but an ordinary accident that cracked Séliman up. You can forget everything except that we've won the Grand Prix de l'Ouest, and now we're going to have a clean-up in every other big race this year."

Dave was right. They did!

THE END