

V. The Early Races

HOW TO RECAPTURE Speedway—its fury and tension and heart-break! All the rest of our year was spent preparing for the five-hundred-mile classic held every Memorial Day on the racetrack outside of Indianapolis. Millions were spent, thousands of men worked the year around, and prizes were offered amounting to a hundred thousand dollars, to contribute to the success of this single day.

I was always up at four o'clock on Speedway Day. There would be thirty or forty house guests to be breakfasted and taken to the track. There were always last-minute guests who had not been able to find lodgings in the overcrowded city and were brought home by Carl, for every hotel and spare room in Indianapolis was filled. At Blossom Heath one room, called the "Speedway Room," was stacked to its ceiling with extra bedding and cots. Other people slept in their cars, in the streets and empty lots, and in the surrounding fields outside the city. On Speedway mornings, dozens of extra guests stopped by on their way to the race to share our breakfast on the big porch under the apple tree.

Hampers of sandwiches and fried chicken and gallons of hot coffee and cold lemonade had to be packed by Galloway to serve at noon in the grandstand. All the spectators brought lunch to Speedway Day. It was the biggest picnic in the world.

For within a few years we were to see that first thin cavalcade of horse-drawn vehicles, with here and there a car, that set out for the races on Memorial Day, 1911, widen and lengthen until twenty-five thousand automobiles carrying a hundred and fifty thousand people came to see the leading sporting event of