

IX. War Comes to Speedway

IN EUROPE the automobile manufacturers and racers were preparing to compete against America at Speedway for final mastery. France and England would not accept defeat. Carl knew *that more powerful racing cars were continually being built and tested on the test track at LeMans in France.* Sometimes he grew thoughtful. "I wish I knew what those fellows are cooking up over there," he would say. I, longing to try out my newly learned French, always countered with the helpful suggestion that we go to France and find out. But whenever I proposed a European trip, Carl became angry. He had not forgotten his tour with the American racing team and their humiliating defeat. "Besides, you can't get a decent steak in Europe," he always wound up stubbornly. "Everything I want to see is right here in the United States. Don't let me hear any more about any European trip."

I had learned to bide my time with Carl. That year it was a hot summer in Indianapolis. Carl sat on the porch at Blossom Heath one day in front of the fire that he insisted should blaze winter and summer in the fireplace, and complained of the heat. In a thoughtless moment, fanning himself with a newspaper, he remarked testily, "For two cents I'd go to Europe!"

Without saying a word, I got up, and left the house. I drove into Indianapolis, secured passage to Europe, and was back beside him on the porch within an hour.

"Darling," I said, "this is Thursday, and we'll have to leave here early tomorrow to be aboard the *Imperator* when it sails from New York on Saturday."