

## THE SAGA OF THE ROARING ROAD

going cars. Down in the barroom there was a bedlam of argument and betting.

Over at Krug's corner, where the mechanics were busy giving the final touches to their racing machines, there was a jam of excited camp followers and partisans.

All this time the least concerned of all were the foreign race drivers themselves. Some of them slept peacefully in their camps. Hemery, Wagner, Duray and several other dare-devils, however, spent their last night on earth, as they jovially termed it—and it was no joke, either in those days of accidents and the courting of death in a race—playing baccarat at the Garden City Hotel.

Around the course and on the roads approaching it there seemed to be a million glaring headlights. Then with the coming of the dawn Phoebus harnessed up his horses to the sun and drove his chariot of the day across the heavens.

And then just before real daylight had come, I counted my long rehearsed un, deux, trois, quatre, cinque, seize, sept, huit, neuf and with "dix" slapped the first of the minute-apart starters on the back and the race was on.

My association with the Vanderbilt Cup and my official identity with the ten races that were run for it naturally brought me in contact not only with the illustrious donor, William K. Vanderbilt, Jr., but also with several other men of comparable wealth and prominence, such as Foxhall Keene and Col. E. H. R. Green (the latter the son of the famous and eccentric Hetty), who found in the then new sport of automobile racing a fresh and marvelous thrill.

Foxhall Keene, in the days of the early Vanderbilts,

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drove one of the three Mercedes cars he imported from Germany in a futile attempt to lift the trophy, and the story is pernicious, but personally unverified, that in the first or second race, his luxuriant mustache ignited when his mount burst into flame. If there is any basis of fact for this oft-repeated report, the fire in his facial foliage is the only hirsute conflagration on record in the annals of automobile racing.

Col. Green, on the other hand, was satisfied to engage professional drivers to handle his cars and to watch their varying fortunes from a secure chair in a grandstand box. As a racing car owner, however, he did things on a grand scale and shipped his mounts from one meet to another in a private baggage car specially designed and built for that purpose.

Without exception, I found all these distinguished gentlemen true sportsmen without qualification, liberal of purse yet modest of deportment. Flattering headlines and newspaper glorification they did not seek, for lines and newspaper prominence they already enjoyed. They played the game solely for the game's sake. Their patronage, in turn, was indispensable to the establishment of a sport, then new and costly, on a firm and enduring foundation.

As far as Mr. Vanderbilt is concerned, I will hazard the opinion that none of his big deals in Wall Street and railroad circles ever gave him so much concern as did the famous Cup and the races that made it historic. Human life he held priceless, and the lives that were lost on the Vanderbilt Cup course touched his great heart and bowed his head in sorrow. It was these tragedies and our inability to secure the necessary police protection to safeguard fool-hardy spectators that prompted him to twice withdraw the Cup from