

## XIX.

My candle of memory seems to be an inexhaustible taper. Probably it would burn on and on were I to permit it and if you had the patience to bear with me to the very end. But generally I fear that I have given the impression of being a garrulous old man, one who lives in the lavender-scented past, all too unmindful of the golden present.

Nevertheless, before I close this humble epistle, I deem it necessary to transpose the song of unsung heroes.

For instance, the night before a great race classic, there are scattered streaks of light in the various garages where the racing cars are quartered and tired men toil, making final adjustments upon the shiny machines whose fame and glory they seldom share. All night, all day, for weeks and even months these men have slaved.

On race day, surprisingly fresh in white, glistening cover-alls, resplendent with the color insignia of their racing emblem, they will give a final twist of a screw, a final, skillful glance at a clean, proud motor and final tap to the hood as they lock it, even while their charges are rolling into position behind the pace car.

And then they are left alone. Alone in a crowd of thousands. Alone with their pit crew as their "baby," the delicate mechanical thing which they have mothered for months, watched grow by day and by night, roars forth in a few hours search for undying fame.

They are the "Cotton" Hennings, the Olie Olsens, the Jean Marscenacs, and Riley Bretts.

They are the unsung racing garage mechanics who show the patience of Job and are the world's greatest optimists.

The race is on, and the quick cars have made the first turn and are roaring back in the straightaway on their first lap. The cars separate according to their speed and the skill of their drivers and the contest becomes a merry-go-around, a maze of scurrying machines.

But all is very clear to the pit mechanic. His eyes never leave his charge except when it ducks out of sight in the back stretch. One. Two. Three. Four laps. They spin around the oval with ever increasing speed. These tired men are watching through eyelids heavy from lack of sleep, weary from nights of work but watching every turn of the wheel of their favorite car with an enthusiasm born of and sustained by the greatest of competition. Their ears are attune to every whine of the spinning tires and roar of their mighty engines.

Above the monotonous din of racing cars and the rumble and the shouts of thousands of spectators a foreign sound reaches their ears. For a moment their shoulders drop in weariness.

Smoking, groaning and thumping, the pride of their weeks of work limps into the pits behind a shouting, maddened driver. Up goes the hood and members of the technical committee brush through the pit attendants. Even before the officials can decide what it is all about the tired man in the white cover-alls knows that it is all over. Before him is a gasping, internally twisted, wrecked motor, its broken innards sending up a ghastly metallic cry as they beat a gnashing, me-