



The beloved and resplendent Eddie Rickenbacker.

## XVII.

When writing of the more illustrious among the scores of knights of the accelerating feet I have known intimately, one must place the name of Captain Edward Vernon Rickenbacker—"Eddie" and "Rick" to millions of Americans—out in the forefront.

Rickenbacker was the sanest, and at the same time, the most daring driver ever to circle the ovals.

Gabbing with him one morning at the Kansas City track, where he was set to race in the afternoon, I said to this son of a German father and a French mother:

"Why, Eddie, do you flaunt your life so recklessly when you could still win by driving more carefully?" He laughed.

"I'm not reckless!" he answered. "I always demand an even break, and try to eliminate every possible element of danger before making a venture. I am not reckless, because a reckless man does not stop to consider the odds!"

One hates to disagree with Rick, for there always had been in him that quality of sincerity that can never be doubted. His statement must therefore stand as he made it, yet it is possible to interpretate it.

He may not have been reckless as a driver or as a flyer, but it will be hard to make any of the fellows who raced against him on the speedways or who were in the same squadron with him in the World War, where his exploits made him the American "ace of aces," believe that his dare-deviltry could be quite neatly split out from sheer recklessness.