

### XVIII.

If, perchance, that ubiquitous inquisitor of the metropolitan press "The Inquiring Reporter" should step up and ask me what is the outstanding characteristic of the race driver, I would have a short and ready answer for him.

"Fearlessness" would be my reply and then, laying myself open to the charge of redundancy, I probably would add: "Absolute fearlessness!"

And I'm thoroughly satisfied that my answer would have a virtue other than brevity. It would stand up, as well, under the most searching of investigations.

I hold to the further opinion that none would challenge me as an incompetent witness, for it has been my opportunity to study the race driver, on and off the track, for twenty-five years, and of the thousands and more that have come under my observation, I have yet to know one that was not the personification of daring.

Even more recently, as little ago as July 4, 1924, which isn't so far back to an oldster like myself, I witnessed, from an uncomfortable ringside seat, a striking exhibition of the fearlessness of the race driver.

The Kansas City Speedway provided the stage for this drama of daring that gave promise of being a tragedy. The race was scheduled for two hundred and fifty miles, but after one hundred and twenty-five miles was behind the barking exhausts, the track of wood was a veritable bowl of death.

The two-by-fours and the spikes that anchored them were not equal to the punishment to which they were

submitted, and the tremendous suction and the constant pounding of fifteen race cars, rolling at an average of one hundred and twenty-five miles an hour and better, had torn the boards loose. On the turn leading into the home stretch great holes had been made and through them I could see a crowd of boys sticking their heads to better see the race, playing hide-and-seek with death, and, as the cars swept around the turn, the drivers laid a snaky course to avoid the yawning pits of certain doom.

In such a crisis, I conferred with Shannon Douglas, a former prosecuting attorney of Kansas City and the representative of the A.A.A. Contest Board, and Dr. Joseph Riley, a prominent football official and the referee of the meet, and we decided to call the race. So, at the completion of one hundred and fifty miles, I gave the field the checkered flag and cleared the track, awarding Jimmy Murphy, who was leading at the time, first money.

While this was the only course I could honorably pursue under circumstances so freighted with menace, I was fearful, nevertheless, of the attitude of the crowd as the result of my automatic action. For in the stands were 40,000 spectators who had paid to see a race of two-hundred and fifty miles and here I was dropping the curtain on their show one hundred miles too soon—a speedmad throng that did not realize as I did the dangerous condition of the course and the utter folly of continuing the race. And while I was ready to take the abuse of an entire city, if need be, to save one human life, I had no relish of the brickbats of public condemnation.

My fears on this score, however, proved groundless, and I shall always regard the orderly conduct of that