Translated by CHARLES MOSS

Juan Manuel Fangio

WORLD CHAMPION

By GUNTHER MOLTER

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Fangio

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Dedicated to

ONOFRE MARIMON

Foreword to Second Edition

I am honoured indeed that my book about Fangio should have evoked such interest in the United Kingdom to make a second edition necessary. I have always considered Britain to be a country where motor sport has a broad and exemplary basis and where the young people really have a chance to pursue the sport with all kinds of vehicles, even inexpensive ones. Your public and press have a more open mind where motor sport is concerned than on the Continent for here there is still a certain animosity to overcome. The " British way of motor racing " has produced a number of drivers who are potential world champions and at their top is Stirling Moss.

In my book I have tried to convey the wonderful atmosphere surrounding a motor race; men like Fangio and Moss are ever able to fascinate us with their skill. As this book is a complete whole I did not want to change it but have only added four chapters which describe Fangio's way to the absolute top.

I want to close these remarks with my deep-felt thanks to those men who enabled me to bring out my book in Great Britain: my friends Harold Marshall, who published it, and Charles Meisl, who knew how to translate Fangio in the required sense and style.

GÜNTHER MOLTER

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Fate

It is June 11, 1955. The clock on the Dunlop bridge that describes such a graceful arc over the Sarthe circuit at Le Mans shows exactly 6.27 p.m., 2 hours and 27 minutes ago the battle of the 24-hour race began. In the Mercedes-Benz pits Alfred Neubauer leans forward on his chair and looks along the finishing straight for the leaders must soon appear round the Arnage bend. The big black second hand on the Dunlop clock moves on inexorably. For an hour now Juan Manuel Fangio on a Mercedes-Benz and Mike Hawthorn, Jaguar mounted, have struggled for the lead but now the Britisher gets a pit signal to stop, perhaps he must refuel and in about 17 minutes Fangio is due to replenish the tanks and hand over to his co-driver Stirling Moss. The race has developed more and more into a duel between British and German cars; the pace of rivals Fangio and Hawthorn, is tremendous. At first the red Ferraris kept up, but later started dropping back and only young Eugenio Castellotti managed to hang on to the leaders for a while.

As Neubauer looks at the two stopwatches in his hands, they show that his men Levegh, Fangio and Kling must come by within the next few seconds, but Levegh is already a lap behind, so is Kling. Only Hawthorn and Fangio reign supreme. They will pursue each other until one of them drops out—or until the machines lets one of them down. Overhead, thick white clouds sail past sometimes obscuring the sun. The very air vibrates with the noise of the engines. The spectators opposite the pits lean in serried ranks against the wooden fence and stare towards the cars that roar along. When Fangio raises his airbrake at the Dunlop curve it seems as if a robot were extending its sword into the air. Yet there is a human being in the car, exerting his will over the machine.

" Here they come! " Neubauer bellows at lap-chart keeper Geier. Now they thunder along—a gaggle of big cars, green, white, white again and then. . . .

An ear-splitting, explosion-like crack. Darting flames, smoke, the shrieks of a thousand voices lingering for seconds, as if accusingly in the air, spreading appalling horror as one of that thundering mass of cars has crashed through the barriers spreading death amongst the tightly packed spectators. Against all expectations, a car threads its way through this hell that has descended like a cataclysm of nature leaving many dead in its wake. The man at the wheel stops a few minutes later, deeply moved by so much human tragedy, and reverently makes the sign of the cross—Fangio!

Was it ability that saved him from the catastrophe? No, it was more than that—it was fate, intuition—it was just Juan Manuel Fangio. . . .

CHAPTER I

"Bandy Legs"

" Hola, Señor, can you tell me where I'll find Casa Fangio? "

The old man whose help I ask stands on a scaffolding and with practised hand applies a last stroke to the plasterwork of a new building. With a deliberate movement he lays his trowel on a plank, walks to the edge of the scaffolding and looks down towards me.

" Claro, Señor, no need to look further. I am Fangio and if you have a few minutes, I'll take you to my casa myself."

I look at him with disbelief: " With all respect for your age Señor, I can't believe you're Fangio. Juan Manuel Fangio the capitano of the Mercedes-Benz Equipo. Juan is a man in his best years. There must be a mistake. Mil Perdon Señor, but I haven't come in this infernal heat from Mar del Plata with an old Chevrolet to disturb your work. I am looking for the world champion Fangio, the great driver. Adios, Señor, and thanks for your help." The white-haired old man shakes his head: " Caramba muchacho, you're surely not from Balcarce, otherwise you'd know Loretto Fangio, Juan's father. Wait a bit please, I'll be down with you in a minute. It isn't every day a foreigner visits Balcarce! "

I just cannot understand it. Fangio's father, estimated to be worth more than a million pesos, working as a simple plasterer?

In the meantime the old man has run down the narrow ladder with surprising agility and hurries towards me. His walk strongly resembles the gait of a cavalry man. Good heavens, I say to myself, he walks just like Juan whom the Argentinos call " El Chueco," the bandy legged one—just for that reason. Wiping his hand on his trousers he smilingly proffers it in greeting.

" I've just remembered, Juan phoned from Buenos Aires yesterday to say you were coming. Forgive me Señor, but at 71 one tends to be forgetful. Of course you must be the German journalist who wants to write a book about Juan. Be welcome in Balcarce, muchacho! "

The older people like to call the young ones muchacho, if they want to impart a more confidential note to their conversation. If a local calls a foreigner muchacho it means he has discarded all shyness, and that's just what I need. I look at my watch, I have just five hours in which to talk with Fangio's parents.

For two days I had waited for Juan in Mar del Plata, he was to have called for me, but then he rang to say business talks were keeping him in Buenos Aires and he could only come later. Why didn't I drive myself to Balcarce on my own? It was only a matter of 40 miles, a mere nothing in a car; but there I was car-less and nothing for it but to find a taxi. Eventually I found an Italian prepared to drive me there for 350 pesos. He seemed to know more about the family than father Loretto himself, but it soon became apparent that his knowledge was greatly at fault. So I left Mar del Plata, the Monte Carlo of Argentina. Two nights hence I was due to fly back to Germany but obviously I could not do so without visiting Balcarce. So despite 35 degrees centigrade in the shade and 50 in the sun, I arrived in a Chevrolet which the Italian would-be racing driver described as the best vehicle in Mar del Plata and its environs. He surely had never driven anything better in his life, but in South America one doesn't take these things very seriously.

Father Fangio's workmates have left off work in the meantime to join us; they accompany his tales with lively nods and clearly show that they do not only respect the great racing driver Juan Manuel, but really love him. The picturesque little township of some 40,000 souls that is Balcarce, lies between the Table Mountains; potatoes are its only produce. Before Fangio became a racing driver the people of Buenos Aires only knew that good potatoes came from Balcarce. To-day the place is known to all racing enthusiasts. Yet to Loretto, Juan is still the nice lad he was some 30 years ago.

Fangio père is not particularly impressed that the Argentinian radio corporation Belgrano spends yearly thousands of dollars in cables to transmit original reports of every European race, lap by lap, in which Fangio competes. Fangio has reached a degree of popularity in Argentina which is beyond European imagination, he is the national hero. None of this stops his whitehaired, fresh faced father from cycling to work every day and wielding his trowel until the foreman decides it is knocking-off time. " Señor," I say, " why don't you stop working; at your age it is too dangerous to climb around scaffolding! "

The old man takes me by the arm and conducts me to a recently fitted door put up by his mates. " Look, if these hinges are not moved they start to rust. And that's what would happen to me, I too would rust. I was seven when my parents left their old hut in the Abruzzi to emigrate to Argentina. For 51 years the Fangios have lived in the same house which I built at the age of nineteen together with my father. Sometimes, even to-day, I think of the little village Castiglione in the Italian province of Chieti where I was born and lived as a child. But this is my home, my childhood remained in Italy.

" Juan is a good boy. His most beautiful cups are in my house and every time he comes here for a rest he leaves a lot of money behind. Always I say to him: ' Juan why all this money, we don't need it. I am working and mother is just as active as ever. We're proud of you but the money belongs to you, you earn it the hard way! ' But Juan won't be told, he's a good boy. You know, muchacho, he wasn't strong as a child, you wouldn't believe it seeing him to-day. He was sickly . . . but why should I tell you all this—come along to Erminia, she's much better at it than I am!"

The old man's eyes are wet as he pushes me into the old Chevrolet and he himself mounts his sports cycle, just like a young man.

" No, no, this keeps me young!," he says turning down my offer of a lift. Whilst he leads, the Chevrolet grinds after him in bottom gear. His compañeros wave and remain behind. As I turn back to look at them, I see them climb up to the scaffolding again to work on a big three-pointed star fixed to the building. This self-same star is carried by the silver racing car in Germany, with which Fangio has achieved such brilliant results. But in Balcarce potatoes are still the main produce.

Fangio's house is a single storey building in Calle 13, number 321. The youngest son, who works in his famous brother's garage, has advised his mother by telephone of our coming and Erminia Fangio receives us simply dressed. Her serious madonna-like ways inspire respect in everyone she meets. She is one of those typical Italian mothers who find fulfilment in their family, her conception of life being strengthened by a deeply religious outlook. Even though she be mother of a world famous son, her naturalness is complete; when she speaks she chooses her words with care and the way she talks of Juan is appealing.

Although his father spent his childhood in Italy, Señora Fangio

was born in Tres Arroyos, in Argentina, of Italian parents. She asks me to sit in their pleasantly furnished living room where the shades are lowered against the sun and the room is half dark and mysterious. Large cups and trophies are everywhere and photographs of Juan decorate the walls. I look at the Señora questioningly and she begins her story.

" Juan was the fourth of six children, three boys and three girls. His birthday is San Juan's day—the 24th June—and that's why we christened him Juan; he was born in 1911. As he grew he showed no particular aptitudes. He was a weakly, frail child and learnt eagerly and easily. The six obligatory school years he managed in four. Since he was particularly gifted in technical matters, especially cars, his teacher managed to get him a scholarship to a technical school in Buenos Aires, but Juan refused to go. Even whilst going to school he spent every free minute in the garage of Capetini, the foreman mechanic. Juan was then twelve and a half years old. When Capetini moved away from Balcarce, he wanted to take Juan along because he considered him an excellent mechanic. I did not agree to this, however, because I was too worried about his health. That's why Juan went to Señor Viggiano; there he could continue in his work. Soon he became a qualified mechanic but it wasn't enough for him to know the ordinary mechanic's work, he wanted to learn more about machinery. We have a covered workshop in our garden; ever since our marriage my husband has worked there in his free time. Whenever there is something to repair in the house he sets to and does it. There Juan put up his own bench.

" That he soon became interested in driving under Viggiano's tuition and early on began to drive himself around surprised us, but seemed commonplace to Juan. Yet he always cleverly avoided doing anything that might come to my ears to worry me; even then he was a kind-hearted boy. I once watched him on a Sunday when his father gave him a few centavos to go to the cinema. Do you know what he did with the money? Well, on the next corner he saw a Criollo boy in rags. He talked to him and soon they wandered off together. When he came home again I asked him where he had gone with the other boy; his reply was short: 'You know, mother, this poor Criollo also likes to see a film once in a while! '

" When Juan was 18 he had severe pneumonia. He was in bed for two months and after I had nursed him back to health with great difficulty, the doctor gave me strict advice not to let

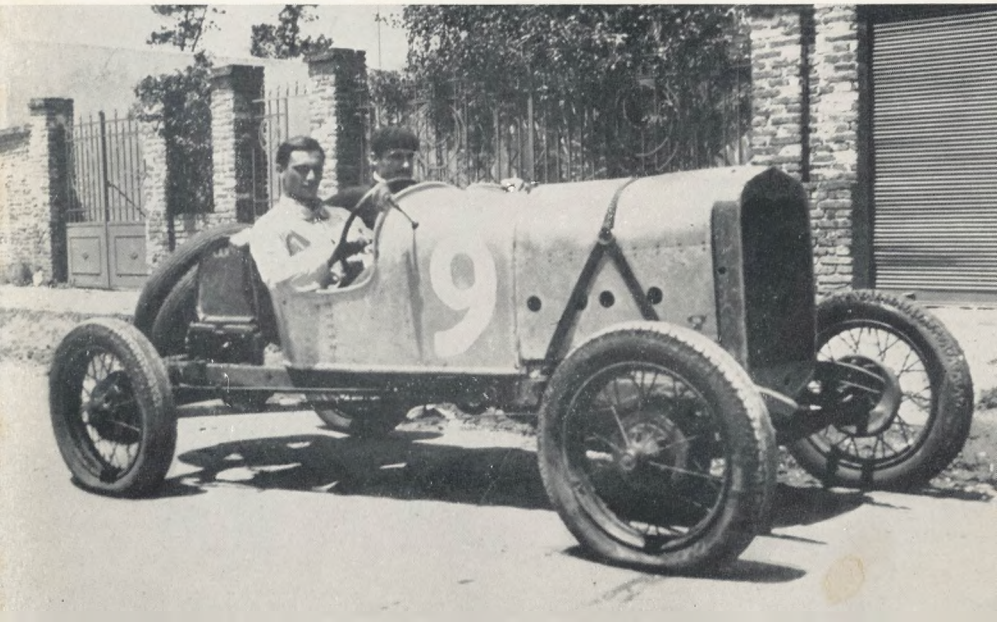
TOP RIGHT :
Juan after his confirmation.

BOTTOM LEFT :
Senora Erminia Fangio, Juan's mother.

BOTTOM RIGHT :
Loretto Fangio, Juan's father (under the Mercedes star), works on the building which will become the Mercedes-Benz Agency belonging to Juan in Balcarce.

TOP :
A happy winner—Juan after the Gran Premio Internacional Del Norte, 1940.

BOTTOM :
The "bathtub," his first home-built Special.



him work for at least a year, so I sent him to the country to stay with my brother.

" At 21 he was called up for military service at the cadet school, Campo de Mayo, near Buenos Aires. His technical capabilities did not stay hidden long and he became the commanding officer's driver. He stayed away from home for a whole year and I worried about him but he returned healthy and full of enterprise. He'd played a lot of games whilst in the service, including football; his friends told me that he was a good player."

When I asked what position he played in the team, his younger brother interjected: " The same as Rahn! " When I ruefully admitted that Rahn and football were Chinese to me, Fangio junior was visibly disappointed. " Rahn," he said reproachfully, " is a player in the German football team which became world champions in Switzerland in 1954! "

Disconcerted, I kept silent partly because of my ignorance and partly with amazement, that the German football achievements penetrated as far as Balcarce. Then the Señora asked me to accompany her to their back yard to look at Juan's first workshop. To-day there is only some rubbish there and a few bags of plaster, but looking around I came up against an old Ford engine.

" That's the engine from Juan's first racing car," father and son Fangio say together: " He built it himself."

" And you helped him, my son," interjects Señora Fangio, turning to me she continues:

" Never would I have permitted that Juan should occupy himself with such things had I known; building racing cars indeed, and he so frail! Well, they knew I'd no objection against the workshop, so during the day the two youngest ones repaired customers' cars and at night while I slept they worked on the racing car. Juan's brother has helped with all the races. He understands cars even better than Juan himself! If I'd only looked after the boys more carefully then things wouldn't have gone so far!" Whilst saying this a touch of worry flits across the Señora's face.

" But Señora," I reply, " everything has turned out so well and to-day Juan is the world's best racing driver! "

" Yes, Señor, but put yourself into a mother's place. I am always anxious about him, in every race. I listen to the broadcast reports about the European races but I quake every time until it's over and I can hear my son's voice once more; only then am I assured and even so only for a short time! "

A deep quiet lies over the garden of Casa Fangio. The scorching heat is filtered by the leaves and boughs. Only the cheerful laughter of the Fangio grandchildren disturbs the peaceful stillness as they draw cars in the sand with a broken piece of wood. How far removed all this seems from the turmoil and noise of the multitudes on the great race circuits who cheer Juan Manuel Fangio the great *corredor*.

But time presses. Another two hours and Balcarce will again recede into its idyllic solitude.

I want to know still more about Juan's career as a racing driver but the Señora replies: " Señor Cavallotti will soon come to fetch you for dinner. He'll tell you about this much better than an old woman like me. But look after my Juan when he is in far away Europe! "

This I promise her, but what can I do?

" Adios, Señora, and many thanks. I shall send you greetings from time to time from Europe and the great races," I say, by way of goodbye.

Father Loretto Fangio cycles back to work. Smilingly he nods to his wife who tells him to take care. To me she says: " Is this work for a man of 71? " But Loretto interjects: " I've built more than 100 houses in my lifetime and, of all places, am I to leave someone else to plaster my son's building—never! "

Señor Francisco Cavallotti, a friend of Fangio's since boyhood is to-day his partner and in charge of the works in Balcarce, for Juan cannot bother with this. He is obsessed with the battle of cars and who knows when the time will come to retire. During dinner Señor Cavallotti tells me of Fangio's rise as a racing driver. Before we part he drives me to a hill overlooking the town, so that I can see the whole of Balcarce. " Here " he tells me and points to the valley in which Balcarce lies, " is where Juan got the strength to withstand the strain of the most difficult races! "

I have now only 70 minutes left for the return journey to Mar del Plata, for I simply must catch the express back to Buenos Aires. But my Italian taxi driver has found the Fangio atmosphere in Balcarce contagious and gets the old Chevrolet back on the deserted country road at hair raising speeds. . . .

CHAPTER II

In the Pampa

With yowling engines the cars disappear in a fountain of dust and dirt. The *Caballeros* roar their approval, temperamental *Gauchos* spur their horses and gallop after the cars—just for fun. The Pampa absorbs the high-wheeled steel chariots and even the fastest thoroughbred cannot keep within sight of them. Three kilometres (just under two miles) per lap, the track is no super smooth asphalt, only hard baked earth. The vehicles groan and creak and threaten to fly into a thousand pieces any minute. But the men at the wheels don't care, they have fastened themselves in their seats with wide straps, this being the only way to keep their hands at the steering wheel and their foot on the throttle. Those boys are all " lead footed; " they're rough and tough those who live here, for this is no sport for namby-pambies and you've got to be quite a guy to drive here. This is no Alfa or Bugatti playground, 60-80 per cent of each vehicle was born in Henry Ford's factory in Detroit and all of them have a long and arduous life behind them. These cars have already given long and reliable service on the Haciendas (farms) or covered thousands of miles on the hard earth tracks of the Argentine plains or even the concrete highways of North America. The racing drivers have resurrected and refurbished them, all superfluous parts have been taken off and stronger springs and shock-absorbers fitted. The body is generally from a two-seater roadster, the engine compression raised and more horse power extracted, as if by magic. Now they are so noisy that the spectators' horses tremble with fear. These machines are capable of 80-90 m.p.h. flat out and the races are 125 to 155 miles long, all of it on the sun-baked earth of the Pampa.

This is the sport, the Sunday diversion of modern youth of Argentina in the early 'thirties. Each little town, each large village has its earth track, even Balcarce.

The year is 1933. Young Juan Manuel Fangio has completed his military service and is working on his own account. He has his own business which consists of nothing more than a work

bench and the necessary tools to fix the modest Fords or Chevrolets. His brother helps him and the workshop does quite well for the people remember young Fangio when a car needs mending and Balcarce does not only have cars but also many tractors. Juan has no difficulty in keeping them running and it is necessary that he should make money. Father Fangio's earnings are needed for the big family, children cost money for clothes, shoes and hungry stomachs. Everyone always wonders how well Erminia Fangio manages to fill the many empty bellies and to dress the children decently.

But Juan does not only need money to live, the crazy racing with the battered cars has got hold of him, incurably, beyond hope. He, like all young men of the 20th century has sporting ambitions. He plays outside right in the A team of the local football club; he is talented and a good career has been forecast for him. But football is to him only a game, a pastime, his heart is in motor racing. Like all the great drivers of our time his enthusiasm began in earliest childhood and cars were his passion.

His first encounter with the sport did not extend beyond the position of co-driver. In the races around Balcarce he competed as co-driver urging on his "*corredor*," but in between races he looked after small repairs arising from the hard going on the dirt.

At last there came the day when he sat behind the wheel himself, but he lacked the right machine, having only an old vehicle at his disposal, and among the older and younger 4 or 8-cylinder Fords he was not even one of the fastest. In the four, five or six races in which he competed to the enthusiasm of the local potato growers, he failed to obtain a worth-while place.

"You are poor just as I am, Juan," thus his friend Cavallotti tried to calm him. "To have a chance of success you need a fast car, but that costs money!"

Poor solace for Juan, in the throes of his passion.

By heaven, he thought, there is other racing apart from the dirt track kind. In the bigger towns they have races with proper cars; single seaters, with famous drivers like Arzani driving Alfa Romeos and the like. Why shouldn't I have a go at this and build a special car for it? It might possibly be done.

He was 25 when he drove an old Ford in his first race. A year later he started building his first racing special. . . .

The night sky is like an enormous coupola over the Pampa.

Unending, wide plains like the Russian steppes merge with the horizon. It is a country that evokes sentimental songs, melodious tales of love, passion and death. The Gauchos sing them when they sit around the camp fire after a hard day's work.

In Balcarce the monotonous endlessness of the plains is broken up a little by a few hills, yet, somehow they do not blend into the countryside. It is as if the Creator had dropped them here and there in threes, fours, and fives.

Impressively the stars glow overhead; everything flickers and quivers until one's gaze is arrested by the Southern Cross, shining majestically over all.

The night is alive with a thousand sounds, crickets chirp and nature breathes. Only man sleeps.

But in Fangio's house the light is still on for Juan and his brother make use of the hours of night to bring their plans into being. With much trouble, exigency and self-denial they have got together the parts for the construction of the racing car. The engine block is Ford, but the front and rear axle are unrecognizable, although everything has been fitted together sensibly and forms an entity with but one purpose—speed. Juan, who is not burdened with theoretical knowledge, does not worry whether the whole is technically harmonious; for him it suffices if the thing goes and hangs together for two or three hours.

Carefully the two carry on working. All unnecessary noise is avoided because mother must not know what is being done here. She fondly imagines Juan to be repairing just normal highly civilized cars, never dreaming that he might be building a racing car. Why should mama be put into a state of excitement, she who has enough worries already keeping the family going. Father on the other hand knows the score but keeps quiet. He's a practical man and is delighted that his sons follow a sound artisan occupation. Even the construction of a racing car is such an occupation in his eyes, as long as one does not drive this weird looking vehicle in one of those crazy races.

It takes almost two years before the new two-seater Fangio Special completes its trial runs. First one thing breaks, then another part is found to be too weak but finally all is ready for a start. On the macadam road to Mar del Plata the Special with the enormous bonnet reaches a thundering 100 m.p.h. Juan has never driven so fast in his life, but knowing no fear he hangs on to the bucking, undamped wheel to which every road shock is transmitted. The wind whistles round his head and he must

feel like Stephenson with his first " Rocket " locomotive. Juan's first real racer is entirely devoid of comfort and he who drives this contraption at 100 m.p.h. on the road, must be as unconcerned as a child. An experienced engineer would throw up his arms in horror were he asked to drive the thing.

But Juan's lack of concern goes further than that and he studies the events list with interest. Then he finds what he is looking for—a race in Necochea for which first rank drivers have entered. Although his brother suggests that it might be risky to start for the first time in the company of such talent, Juan dismisses the objection with a wave of the hand.

He did in fact start in the main event at Necochea. The spectators direct their attention at Carlos Arzani, a famous driver at the wheel of a newly imported 3.8 litre Alfa. The starter's flag falls and before the public has time to realize it, the simple Ford Special of Fangio has jumped into the lead 20 or 30 yards in front of the bright red Alfa. The latter is supposed to have a maximum of some 175 m.p.h. whereas Fangio's Ford can hardly get up to 125. Arzani curses and drives like one possessed, winning in the end and Fangio comes in third. But how was this possible? They had watered the dirt track to bind the dust as protection for the spectators, and Arzani's Alfa unfortunately stood with its rear wheels in a large puddle. Thus on starting the wheels spun on the moist surface and it took a moment before the tyres had enough grip to move the car from the line. Fangio on the other hand took off like a flash and even to-day he says about this incident: " It gave me enormous pleasure to leave the Alfa behind in my poor old Ford! "

This modest success gave him the much needed impetus to carry on.

In the meantime the make-shift workshop in the parent's house was exchanged for a new one, much larger, and which offered more scope. How difficult it was for the young man is shown by the fact that he even had to do the foundation work himself. He dug the inspection pit with his own hands, the muscles of this slim 27 year old began to get firm. Working in fresh air and playing football strengthened his body which had been weakened by the bad attack of pneumonia, but it took a few more years before it became apparent how much strength there was in the slender figure.

He deliberates carefully about his next start, but from now on he knows no peace and must become familiar with the famous

Argentinian long distance races. For 6,300 miles these crazy races wind over the earth roads of the Pampas and through the mighty mountains of the Cordilleras. In one of these events—the Gran Premio de la Republica—he takes part as co-driver with the Argentinian Finochetto. That was in September, and on November 13th he starts in the 300 miles race of Tres Arroyos, birthplace of his Mother. On this 6 mile long earth track many famous drivers are due to give battle, among them the famous South American Carlos Zatuscek on a SSKL Mercedes. The sun has dried up the earth. On race day not a cloud is in the sky with the track like a witches cauldron; the many spectators look expectantly towards the starting area.

The cars are off in a thick cloud of dust but Fangio makes a bad start and lies at the end of the field. The machines are barely visible as they come round after the first lap with an Alfa in the lead followed by a Mercedes, another Mercedes, then a Ford Special and another Ford. An old one this time—Fangio's! Unflurried and with iron nerve he plunges into the greyish-brown dust cloud. The men at the wheel can hardly see their opponents; the dust becomes an inferno. Experienced drivers reduce speed, it is impossible to race here and the one who drives with unabated speed must be out of his mind. Is it Fangio? He knows no caution. There are dangerous accidents, but he presses on. The dust gets into the lungs and fine grains enter between the goggles and his face; they rub the skin raw and find their way into his eyes. No matter, Fangio's foot is well down on the throttle. This is too much for the spectators, this is a catastrophe; the officials stop the event after the fifth lap. Fangio halts the Ford near his friend who pulls him out of his seat and embraces him.

" A thousand pities they stopped racing so soon. I was just in my element!," Fangio says to him.

But the friend shakes his head, horrified: " Juan, Juan, don't talk about the race; what's happened here was dreadful. Don't you know about it? "

" Why, what's it all about," says Juan, " dust and nothing but dust, one could hardly see the man in front, but otherwise it was a terrific dice! "

" Five deaths! Five drivers in fatal accidents. Collided in the opaque dust. Five broke their necks, including the great Zatuscek. Good God and you talk about a terrific dice. Let's go! "

In Balcarce they are beginning to notice Juan's talent. To support the talented local driver, the Balcarce popula-

tion is even prepared to go to the length of dipping into their pockets. A Fangio fund is created. But the Ford coupe intended for a long distance race is not available in time, so that he takes an old Chevrolet to the start in Buenos Aires for the Gran Premio. The 28-year-old driver sets off with high hopes but soon out of luck; in Pergamino he has to effect repairs to the crankshaft, having only managed a paltry 140 miles. Grimly he sets to and gets to the Cordoba control last. The next morning, nothing daunted, sees him again at the start. This section leads from Cordoba to Concordia and as the 108 competitors press on over the earth roads, dark skies suddenly appear, followed by a cloudburst. Equally suddenly the roads become flooded and it becomes difficult to keep on the right track, so that only 70 reach Concordia, amongst them Fangio, now in 17th position. The Press takes particular note of his outstanding drive and suddenly the unknown *corredor* becomes front page news. However, the Gran Premio is cut short because of the appalling road conditions.

Then a Gran Premio Extraordinario is promoted with a start in Cordoba. The route takes in Mendoza and Balcarce. For Fangio it is a matter of honour to get to his home town in good position. In Mendoza he has already pulled out a 25-minute lead, but on leaving this lovely town at the foot of the Cordilleras his differential gives up the ghost and he must effect repairs once more. He re-starts within two hours and still manages to be sixth in the general classification; Balcarce is proud of their *chueco*—everyone calls him by this nickname which is to stick to him in all his racing days. A vivacious welcome awaits him on his return home and the money collected for him gives him the chance in 1940 to buy a new Chevrolet. His preparations are concentrated towards the great *Carrera* which will demand the last ounce from driver and machine alike—the Gran Premio Internacional Del Norte. In the past his vehicular equipment consisted of items discarded by others, although he managed to make it usable again. Hard work, iron determination, renouncing sleep, amusements and rest was the cost. These formed the basis of the tough training which provided Fangio with the physical and mental condition enabling him to withstand the stresses and strains of thousands of miles of racing. Now for the first time he could start in a race with equipment equal to the other competitors.

CHAPTER III

Gran Premio Internacional Del Norte

The man who thought up this race must have had a wild conception of a car's lasting ability.

The task set is to cross the South American continent, 2,966 miles in length, in seven days. But that is not all. When the courageous drivers have covered this distance they must about turn immediately and again cover the same route in six days in the reverse direction. The start is in Buenos Aires at midnight and after a non-stop run of 867 miles the drivers arrive in Tucuman. The next morning they are off on the next sector of 400 miles to the frontier town of La Quiaca. Then over the Bolivian mountain ranges to Potosi—311 miles. The fourth day's sector ends in La Paz, that is 326 miles. Then the wild chase leads past lake Titicaca and another 369 miles to Arequipa; thence to the Peruvian coast and after 399 miles they arrive at Nazca.

The last 312 miles are like child's-play and finish in Peru's capital Lima. And after all that—back to Buenos Aires.

The cars taking part are series production touring cars, specially equipped for the job and are mainly American models.

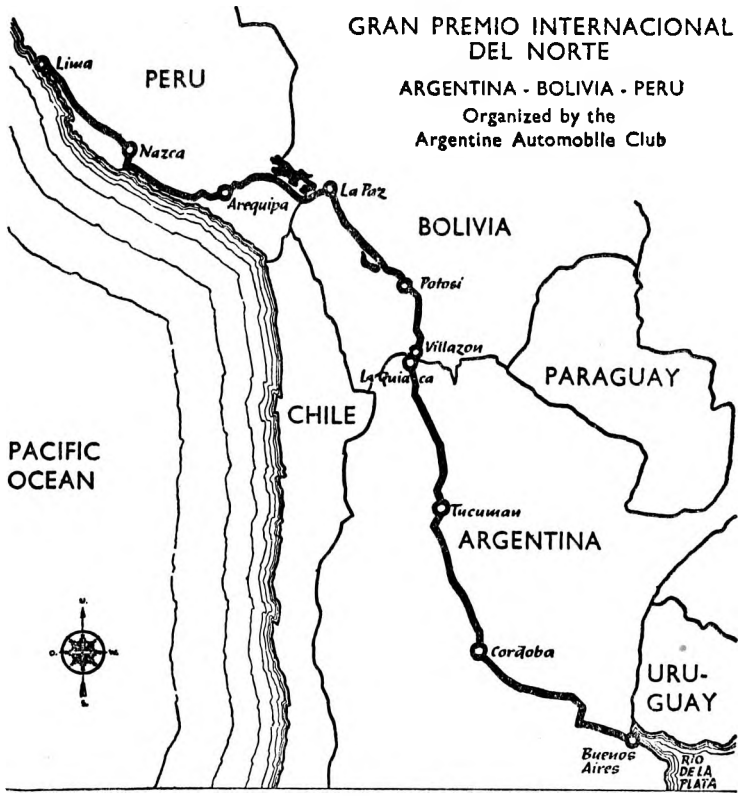
The permitted alterations consist of engine modifications for higher performance, and considerable strengthening of chassis to withstand the hammering meted out by 6,000 miles of earth tracks. In other words all forms of soft suspension are eliminated and the vehicles are as hard on springs as a farmer's cart. The small difference being, that the farmer's cart is driven at walking pace over the lanes whereas the same surfaces are taken at 100 m.p.h. by the competing cars. The interior is stripped bare and thus lightened and a very large fuel tank substituted for the rear seats. The front seats are changed for light racing type bucket seats which conform better to the anatomy of the driver, who thus has closer contact with his machine. Seat belts are an absolute must, without which skull fractures would be the order of the day. The only European comparison is the great long distance race on open roads, the Mille Miglia in Italy. Here, highly developed sports cars, designed to withstand the stresses

of racing, cover one thousand miles without major stops. The Mille Miglia does however take place on concrete or macadam highways but admittedly with plenty of curves, bends and corners. Italy's climate is normal. The South American monster race in 1940 took place between September 27th and October 12th and contained varied climatic conditions, tropical, sub-tropical and mountain. The maximum altitude in the Andes over the Alto de Toroya pass being of the order of about 13,500 feet.

No one thought it possible that one man would be capable of mastering this enormous distance, hellish strain and countless dangers without relief and all vehicles were manned by two drivers at the Buenos Aires start. Juan Manuel Fangio reaches Tucuman first, at the end of the first sector, after covering the distance in 10 hours 49 mins. 07 secs. an average of 125.995 k.p.h. (about 79 m.p.h.). He has driven this distance without being relieved at the wheel.

After the third stage he is already in second position overall, close behind Oscar Galvez, the latter having won the second and third stage. No one believes that a car can cope with such strain. But Juan's 1940 Chevrolet is standing up to it. The Argentinos, Bolivians, Peruvians, in fact all of South America is beside itself. Where else in the world is there such a motor race! Here, nature and simplicity reign supreme. In Europe, on the other hand, motoring competition is governed by carefully thought-out rules, and the tradition of decades, together with technical suitability, has formulated the regulations. South American temperament cuts through this orthodoxy as a knife through butter; this is motor sport *in extremis*. La Paz, 12,000 feet above sea level, is the end of the stage.

Where in Europe is there a race run at even remotely comparable altitudes? It is true enough that in the Rome-Liège-Rome Rally half the distance of the Gran Premio Internacional Del Norte is covered without rest and narrow Alpine passes and mountain roads have to be negotiated. Yes, but that's in Europe—without tropical climate or primeval forests, and mostly on first-class roads. The European, specially constructed competition vehicle cannot be compared with the South American " tin coffins," which although considerably modified do nevertheless bear their North American maker's nameplates and origins. The advertising value provided by those South Americans, who have hopelessly succumbed to the bug of motor racing, cannot



Stages	*Km.*
1. Buenos Aires—Tucuman	1363·1
2. Tucuman—La Quiaca	644·5
3. Villazon—Potosi ...	501·0
4. Potosi—La Paz ...	524·3
5. La Paz—Arequipa	592·6
6. Arequipa—Nazca ...	641·9
7. Nazca—Lima ...	501·2
	4768·6

Stages	*Km.*
1/7. Buenos Aires—Lima	4768·6
8. Lima—Arequipa	1143·1
9. Arequipa—La Paz	592·6
10. La Paz—Potosi ...	524·3
11. Potosi—Villazon	501·0
12. La Quiaca—Tucuman	644·5
13. Tucuman—Buenos Aires	1363·1
Total Distance	9537·2

be measured in monetary value by Detroit. The contestants in races through South America are almost exclusively Ford, Chevrolet and Plymouth cars, and papers from the most obscure corners of South America print column-long reports of the events. For days people read who is in the lead, who is the race favourite. Daily the makes of the faster cars are dinned into the minds of the public and last but by no means least the cars are driven by local people. Considering the sporting attitude of Latin people it is obvious that such high-powered propaganda has tremendous influence upon the car-buying public. Even to-day the high-wheeled Fords and Chevrolets of the thirties command surprisingly high prices among the farmers.

Fangio's brilliant drive in this hellish race made him popular overnight. Whereas before a small paragraph on the sports page seemed enough, to day it is nothing less than the head lines!

Yet this man at the wheel of his Chevrolet is lonely; no one can help him. He needs must drive the 800 mile stages alone and conquer the wild Cordilleras mountains and the broiling heat of the plains by himself.

He roars through the tropical part of Argentina, then past the Titicaca lake and twirls down the countless curves to the coast, finally to arrive exhausted, but first, at Lima, the fascinating capital of Peru. Even then he has no time to occupy himself with the romanticism of old Indian cultures or the Spanish colonial style. He is not attracted by the adventurous atmosphere of the Inca ruins of Machu Picchu and Cuzco. Only one thing obsesses him: to get the Chevrolet fit again and 100 per cent. prepared to battle anew over another 3,000 miles. Fate has thrown a tremendous chance into his lap and he is determined to make the most of it.

On the return journey the stage stop at Nasca is eliminated and it is 711 miles back to Arequipa; on no account must the *corredores* have an easy time! After the first drawing of breath in Lima with the thought—oh well, I've done it so far—the men immediately get a true perspective on this fantastic race.

It is here that it becomes apparent for the first time how tough is the hide of this " Chueco." This is no longer the puny boy whose health his mother worried about, for the man now at the wheel is as tough as nails and his will is inflexible.

After 13 hours 20 mins. and 41.2 secs. he crosses the line at Arequipa, winner of this stage. In the general classification he leads before Daniel Husso by 1 hour, 39 min. 48 secs.

Again and again individual drivers forge forward. As if in a trance they surpass even themselves. But all fail, either due to the treachery of the course, or through trying to follow Juan Manuel Fangio. The great favourites, Oscar and Juan Galvez, real top men in such long distance events, retire on the Lima-Arequipa stage. Ceaselessly Domingo Marimon battles with the former unknown from Balcarce; but in vain, he is too far back.

Marimon's son, young Onofre, enthusiastically follows his father's duel with the 29 year old Fangio. No one was to know then that the self-same Fangio would one day become young Marimon's tutor, Onofre having inherited his father's driving talent. On goes the wild chase. The 10th stage from La Paz to Potosi again falls to Fangio. He covers the 325 miles in 7 hours 49 mins. and 10 secs. Domingo Marimon is second and the entire race lies between Ford and Chevrolet. The business rivals in the cheaper range of mass produced cars also compete in this sphere of sport.

The 310 mile, 11th stage from Potosi to Villazon finds Marimon in the lead and Fangio ninth. These incredibly tough drivers have by now covered some 4,650 miles and whoever is still in the running has a very good chance of reaching the finish. Now they are back on Argentinian soil and this seems to give them fresh impetus, particularly Marimon. He's getting good and mad—what's all this business about the newcomer Fangio? He would have to show him, and he does, by winning the La Quiaca—Tucuman stage of 400 miles. Fangio finishes in seventh position. Does that mean he is slowing up? Of course not—now he shows his good sense which is to win him many Grands Prix later. After having gained a sufficient lead he sensibly sets a pace just sufficient to give him victory. He knows how to control his temperament and is master over himself. It is that quality which makes a great racing driver. The wild ones never have got far. Man and machine have their limits, and to know them already constitutes half the battle.

Buenos Aires makes ready to receive the drivers. The whole town is in a fever of excitement. The German air attacks on London and the war in Europe are only of cursory interest.

Only another 815 miles from Tucuman to Lujan remain to be covered.

Now the Fords put on a spurt for their final attack; they want to demonstrate the efficiency of their machines, apart from which there is a valuable trophy, donated by the Ford representative,

beckoning to the winner of this stage. Victor Garcia on his Ford-special thunders past the finishing line first, having covered the last stage at an average of 118.64 k.p.h. (about 74 m.p.h.). Fangio arrives in fifth position at 114.805 k.p.h. (about 71.5 m.p.h.). Nothing but Fords have crossed the finishing line before him, but no one can take the overall victory away from Fangio and his Chevrolet. The simple mechanic from the potato town Balcarce has won this astonishing race in 109 hours 36 mins. and 16.8 secs. at an overall average of 87.176 k.p.h. (about 53.6 m.p.h.).

Whilst the experts scribble a new name in their notebooks, the bearer of it drives home. In the meantime the mayor of Balcarce prepares a beautifully inscribed document nominating Juan Manuel Fangio freeman of Balcarce; father Loretto's eyes become damp on hearing this news. . . . When his son is medically examined after this marathon drive, the doctors find him to have lost 15 lbs. in weight.

Countless road events of this type take place in Argentina, and Fangio participates in most of them. Now that he has come into the limelight the organizers also want his name on the programme alongside those of Juan and Oscar Galvez. Those two racing stars know the secret of success like Fangio—that the thorough going, meticulous technical preparation of the vehicles must be 100 per cent. understood. The condition of the machine is of paramount importance in these long distance events.

Fangio uses a Chevrolet for touring class events and a Ford V8 Special designed and built by himself for racing. In 1941 he wins the Premio of the Brazilian president Getulio Vargas and on December 13th the thousand mile race of Argentina. March 2nd, 1942, nets him the Gran Premio of Rosario and on April 2nd he adds the Premio Mary Sierra to his list. He is first in the Premio Primavera in Mar del Plata on September 21st, and the Doble Vuelta (Sierra de la Ventana) on October 26th. Then the shadows of world war extend towards Argentina. Although peace still reigns in the land of the Pampas, the consequences of war have a material influence on its internal economy.

Cars and spares are needed much more urgently on the steppes of Russia, in Africa and on the Islands of the Pacific. Oil from which petrol is refined becomes more valuable than gold; it would be unthinkable to waste it on motor racing in these times. Rubber is essential to the production of first-class tyres. Those who

produce war machinery have put this item at the very top of their priority list. The economy of all countries is geared to the war. Even if a country is not involved, its industry nonetheless runs at peak production speed. Valuable raw materials and goods are being exported for much needed dollars, for in a war-minded world there is no more room for Olympian thoughts of sport. Thus the South American clubs decide to stop all racing at once. People like Fangio, Galvez or Marimón no longer matter.

The popular driver retires to Balcarce. He works in his garage, gathers strength and prepares himself for the great future which has not yet dawned for him. Whilst he battled for his first laurels under difficult enough circumstances, his thoughts were often directed towards Europe—the continent of classic motoring sport, where the foundations of the contest between horseless carriages was laid on July 22nd, 1894, in the Paris-Rouen race.

The great names of Daimler, Benz, Bugatti, Alfa-Romeo, Maserati, Fiat, Peugeot, Delage, Delahaye, Talbot and others, fascinate Juan Manuel Fangio.

CHAPTER IV

The Turning Point

Fangio has clearly decided in his mind that one day, after the war years, he will race again.

He tells his relatives and friends who are pleased to have him in their midst for a long spell: " I must not vegetate here. I must remain in training at all events! "

They, however, ask him how he proposes to go about this—after all motor-racing on one's own does not make sense. It is the hard, self-imposed task of long distance racing and fighting it out with the tough opposition that provides the training—so they say.

Juan gets into his Chevrolet and drives across Argentina. Wherever he appears he is received with pleasure; his name is not overshadowed even by the vicissitudes of war.

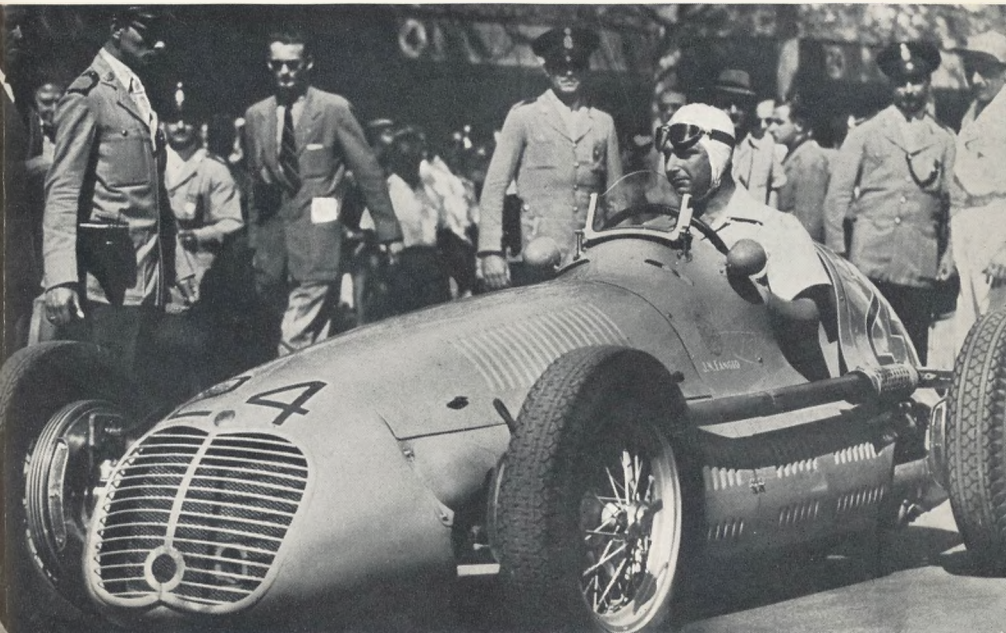
On returning to Balcarce he adds physical training to the exercise of driving. In time, the slim youth who triumphed over himself in the Gran Premio Internacional del Norte, becomes a muscular man. Wide strong shoulders, a massive chest and powerful arms are the outward signs of a changed physique. Where before will-power had wrung strength from a frame that seemed hardly capable of it, body and spirit are now healthily tuned to each other.

The war ends in the terror of the atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki but Argentina is beginning to experience political upheavals. In 1946 General Peron takes over the reins of Government. This momentous period in Argentina's history is destined to be decisive for Fangio's future career. The General's government programme allows plenty of scope for sport and magnificent arenas are due to be built where the young people can spend their leisure. Since the General himself is a terrific motor sporting enthusiast, racing is not being overlooked.

Mother Fangio in Balcarce believes that Juan's dangerous hobby has ended with the war. The sylvan, sleepy little country town is far from all sporting sensations; here life flows on according to the rhythm of centuries. Perhaps this strong middle

Top : *Cornering acrobatics on the home-built Ford Special.*

Bottom : *At the wheel of the newly imported 4 CTL. Maserati.*



Top : *The military football team for which Fangio played forward.*

Bottom : *His Special raises a dust cloud in one of the Argentinian long distance races*

class milieu will influence Juan and tie him to family comfort. His friends are enchanted with his racing successes, admiring and cheering him, yet if one were to ask them to exchange their profession for the racing wheel they would shake their heads in horror, as if an incredible suggestion was being made.

Juan had again conceived clear-cut plans. A new and better racing car must be created.

His tremendous victory in 1940 does not render him immune from the possibility of defeat to-day, and having always remained modest, he does not underestimate anyone. With his brother's help he builds a monoposto machine and this time it would withstand the scrutiny of the experts. It is technically sound; correctly designed independent suspension provides the new Fangio Special with excellent road holding, the motive urge is by Chevrolet, much modified to give greater power. Fangio the mechanic attains output factors which are noteworthy for a racing engine.

The Argentinian races take place again and nothing has changed. But Peron wants more than that. He dreams of a sort of international Argentinian season for which the famous continental teams and drivers should enter. But Europe bleeds from many wounds. Are there not more important things to do than play with racing? Yet European drivers are just as obsessed as the Argentinian ones and the war has hardly finished when the old traditional automobile clubs take up work once more. Racing and sports cars, well cared for and stored in remote barns, have survived the war. Their owners get them out and check them over ready for the start. Soon afterwards France and Italy organize motor races once more.

The European season soon gets into its swing, beginning in spring and ending in autumn. It follows that the Argentinian season would have to be tuned to the European one. That would be easy, for Argentina lies on the other side of the equator and its summer falls at the time of the European winter. Thus the great international Argentinian races are planned for January and February. Fangio takes good note of this. He has heard a lot about racing in Europe and knows the racing car designs that were created there, but he does not realize at this time that his greatest successes will happen over there.

The first Europeans to appear in Argentina at the invitation of the Government are Luigi Villoresi and Achille Varzi from Italy. Fangio meets them and takes the start with them. He is impressed

by their polished style, his, at that time, being a lot rougher. They, who have gained their laurels in many difficult races, master their light cars with almost playful elegance. Thus Fangio has a new goal: he wishes to be on a par with them.

The Argentinian Automobile Club has established its own racing stable with government help. To equip it with machines of worth-while competition level they buy several European racing cars, among them a four cylinder Maserati whose 1½ litre supercharged engine produces some 200 b.h.p. They also have an ultra light Simca, modified by the brilliant French tuner Amedée Gordini.

These cars are naturally at Fangio's disposal and he need no longer worry about his home built Chevrolet Special. Now he will be able to show his mettle. At long last the great day dawns at Rosario in 1948. The Argentine season is in full swing. Famous European aces, like Jean Pierre Wimille from France and the Italians' Farina, Varzi and Villoresi are at the start—so is Fangio. Like Wimille, at that time the world's best driver, he handles the light, easily manageable Simca-Gordini. There are no racing formulæ in Argentina, anything that looks like a decent racing machine can start. It is quite immaterial how powerful the engine is or what its cubic capacity might be.

The whole town is on its feet and even the banks of the lazy Rio Parana river are deserted to-day. Thousands of spectators have come from the environs of Rosario, and Juan's friends from Balcarce are there too. In serried ranks men and women press round the circuit, the police have their time cut out to keep them off the course.

The experts among them do not rate the Simca-Gordini chances very high compared with the more powerful Alfas and Maseratis, even though a driver like Wimille is at the wheel. They are due to be proved quite wrong. The flag is down and the howling pack is off. After a few laps two cars have pulled out into the lead—the two Simca-Gordinis; and they are duelling bitterly. Jean Pierre Wimille—the cold-blooded Frenchman—is in front, but as if glued to his rear wheel there is " Chueco." Two great drivers indeed. No one expected that Juan Manuel Fangio would manage to defy the great Wimille, and sensation is in the air when the time-keepers declare the fastest lap to the credit of Fangio. But he has bad luck. As he is about to put on a final spurt his car lets him down and he must retire. Wimille is the winner, followed by the Brazilian Landi on an Alfa-Romeo.

Juan is not disappointed at all. He has learnt a great deal in this race and he knows that he must work hard before he can conquer the top European drivers. He has shown in Rosario that he has the ability, and the press confirms this, seeing in Juan Manuel Fangio one who is able to represent the Argentinian colours in Europe with great honour.

He is successful in subsequent races. On February 28th, he wins the Vuelta de Pringles and on March 20th, the Gran Premio Otono. The Hundred Miles of Necochea and the Vuelta de Entre Rios also fall to him. Within a few months the name Fangio is again as familiar to Argentine sports fans as it was before the war.

In the summer of 1948 he has an urge to go across to Europe and decides to take part in a race. He starts on a Simca-Gordini in the unsupercharged up to 2-litre class which precedes the French Grand Prix at Rheims. The Ferraris are favourites but Fangio manages a good position in the middle of the field although the Gordini has a lower power output. Engine trouble forces him out before the end.

He returns to Argentina for further activity, but before the end of the year fate deals him a hard blow.

He participates with his well-proven Chevrolet in the long distance event from Buenos Aires to Caracas, capital of Venezuela. A look at the map will show the tremendous effort required from men and machines alike.

Juan is in first-class form. Concentrating on the road (if it can be called that), he extracts the last ounce from his car. He drives hard but not senselessly. His acute feeling for machinery enables him to keep a fine balance without overstressing.

Next to him, patiently, sits his trusty co-driver. Fangio knows he can rely on him. Hours and days pass monotonously; the endless ribbon of road is swallowed by the racing Chevrolet. Each second requires maximum concentration, for a mistake means death. But Juan Manuel Fangio is only human.

A curve approaches—the car is going too fast. Like lightning it begins to slide and turns end over end. It hits the stony ground with a grinding crash. They get Juan out alive from the damaged car, but his old friend is dead. Deep emotion and sorrow overcome Juan who is a decent sportsman to the very bones. Like all drivers after their first accident he must conquer his inner self—and he manages it. At the beginning of 1949 he is again at the wheel of his racing car. Only now will it show

if he has mastered the emotional after effects of the accident, or they him.

The Palermo park extends like an island in Buenos Aires. It reaches from the town to the banks of the enormous estuary of the River Plate. Ancient trees provide shadow in the hot, humid summer climate, magnificent sports grounds provide welcome diversion to the hard working city dwellers and wide avenues traverse the grounds of the park. This is the venue of the races sponsored by the Automobile Club. The Gran Premio of Buenos Aires of President Peron starts the Argentinian season. The European stars Wimille, Villoresi and Farina are again at the start and with them appears a new man from Italy. Younger than Fangio, yet he is counted among the future great drivers of old Europe. His is a famous name in motor sport—Alberto Ascari. Like Fangio, Argentina's hope, he drives a Maserati, but his is the new, more potent type, 4CLT.

Tragedy is about to mar this race. On the morning of the penultimate practice day the Simca-Gordini of Jean Pierre Wimille gets out of control on a bend, touches the straw bales, and after several somersaults crashes into a tree. Wimille is dead. Escorted by Farina, Villoresi and Galvez he is provisionally buried in Buenos Aires. Later the remains of this great French sportsman are taken to Paris by Air France where Madame Christine Wimille and Amedée Gordini pay their last respects.

France stands, deeply moved by the bier of its great son and the President of the Republic awards him the cross of the Legion d'Honneur as a mark of esteem. . . .

More than 100,000 spectators press alarmingly round the Palermo circuit; to see the top drivers of Europe master the many cornered circuit is a unique experience for them. The battle begins and the Europeans take the lead. The exciting attacks of young Ascari fire the imagination of the spectators particularly. They press past the barriers and are dangerously near the track. The drivers must concentrate acutely so as not to endanger anyone. Alberto Ascari finally wins before his team mate Villoresi at 113.01 k.p.h. (about 70 m.p.h.). Fangio is fourth.

President Peron proclaims the Gran Premio Eva Duarte Peron to be in memory of Jean Pierre Wimille. After a dramatic contest during which Villoresi, Farina and Ascari retire due to mechanical trouble, Oscar Galvez wins at the wheel of a 3.8-litre

Alfa, in front of Fangio's 1½-litre Maserati. The latter just escapes an accident when his car, skidding, touches a tree.

Twenty-one days later on February 27th, Fangio manages to beat the Italian aces at the Gran Premio Internacional Ciudad de Mar del Plata, again driving the Maserati. Fangio is followed home by Bira—Farina, Villoresi and Ascari having to give up owing to mechanical troubles.

Now no one can gainsay his worth and the Automobile Club of Argentina decides to send him to Europe in the spring accompanied by his countryman Benedicto Campos. This time the new 4CLT Maserati will be his mount.

Just before his departure, on March 20th, he wins the Premio Fraile Muerto.

Balcarce is proud of its son. The wishes of an enraptured population accompany him on his significant European trip.

With a sorrowing heart, his mother gives him her blessing.

CHAPTER V

Veni, Vidi, Vici

Fangio still does not realize how good he is but he will discover it this time in Europe. This simple mechanic from the Pampas moves with surprising ease and naturalness among the smart set on the Riviera. The fashionable ladies of Italian society do not deem the name Fangio worth a second look when they peruse the list of competitors for the Gran Premo di San Remo. Drivers like Prince Birabongse, Felice Bonetto or Raymond Sommer mean far more to them. In any case, this race is only for the " second eleven " because the fast bolides from Milan, the Alfettas, are missing, having decided not to race this year. Thus Fangio's début in the polished ring of the European G.P. circus is well chosen in its timing. The ladies also miss Farina, the gentleman from Turin, and Antonio Ascari's brilliant son Alberto, whose fame increases year by year. This Gran Premio is in two heats of 45 laps—152 kms. (95 miles) per heat. Fangio in his Maserati roars off and, after a few laps of the winding Ospedaletti circuit, clearly sets the pace. Soon everyone begins to realize that this chap Fangio has a commanding lead, notwithstanding the fact that his opponents are experienced drivers.

The European motoring journalists underline the name Fangio in their notes and their reports say: " One will have to remember this man. Although not yet a stylist like our great drivers, one has nonetheless the impression that he drives surprisingly safely and calmly." To all those who understand these things this means that he is far from the ultimate in skill and there is yet room for development.

So, in 1949, Juan Manuel Fangio wins his first G.P. race on European soil. His overall average of 100.57 k.p.h. (about 63 m.p.h.) is enough to give him first place in front of the Siamese Birabongse—Baron de Graffenried being third and countryman Campos fourth.

But one swallow does not a summer make. He's a bright lad though, and has wisely not chosen the most important races, intending rather to gain experience in the provincial events.

After his first appearance at San Remo he goes to Pau, that lovely spa in the Basses Pyrénées, for the G.P. which comprises a curvaceous 2.76 k.m. circuit through the town itself. Like San Remo, this is a race demanding special driving ability and Fangio's cornering displays sheer artistry. Fifteen cars take the start, watched by 50,000 spectators. Fangio takes the lead in his Maserati; the Swiss de Graffenried on a car of the same make pursues him, but cannot endanger Fangio's position.

Charles Faroux, doyen of the French motoring journalists, lowers the chequered flag that proclaims Juan Manuel Fangio the winner after a time of 3 hours 35 mins. and 11.9 secs. Smilingly the victor receives his cheque for 30,000 francs. De Graffenried is second, followed over the finishing line by Campos. Although Juan is delighted with his second victory, he states openly to the journalists that he would only be really happy if he could win one of the " grandes épreuves " against the élite of European drivers. Grandes épreuves are those Grand Prix races which are traditionally contested every year in France, Italy, Germany, etc., on the most famous circuits; Rheims, Monza and the Nürburgring being cases in point.

It therefore follows from his comments that he considers those two races as mere skirmishes before the real battles. At the next event—the G.P. of Rousillon near Perpignan—he completes the hat trick. Fangio wins the first heat from Prince Birabongse who drives under the pseudonym Bira, and finishes second to him in the next heat; the total times suffice to give him overall victory. It is significant in this race that Luigi Villoresi—at that time considered among the " number one " drivers—is also competing. Fangio becomes confident but not frivolous; he does not underestimate any of his opponents and continues his task of improving himself.

The Grand Prix of Marseilles is run a fortnight later and as only non-supercharged cars are admitted, Fangio changes over to a 1.4-litre Simca-Gordini. His opponents handle far more potent machinery, such as the 4½-litre Talbot of 230 b.h.p., the new 2-litre Ferrari and, for the first time after the war, Italy's " Campionissimo " Tazio Nuvolari on a 2-litre Maserati. The " flying Mantuan," star of many pre-war races, has aged but is still a virtuoso of the steering wheel. The G.P. is run in the form of two heats and a final on the 2.6 kilometre Marseilles circuit.

Start! Fangio is off like a bullet, Etancelin's Talbot in hot pursuit, a French win is expected—the 230 b.h.p. of the Talbot

play with the 90 of the Gordini like cat and mouse. But the spectators soon see that the Gaucho fairly whistles round the corners with the little car from Paris. Soon Fangio has another win in his pocket, the fourth of the season; in Buenos Aires they sit up and take notice—such success was not expected. That chap Fangio from faraway Balcarce goes to Europe and wins all the races! The local papers concentrate their sports news even more on him. The readers want to hear all about the Argentinian team that is so successful over there. Nothing easier than that, for the team is accompanied by several journalists and radio reporters.

With great hopes the expedition travels to Spa, the Belgian resort in the Ardennes. The G.P. of Belgium of 1949 should give Fangio the opportunity for the first time to cross swords with the European élite in a grande épreuve. The circuit measures 14.5 kms. (about 9 miles) and lies in beautiful country. In the front row of the starting grid next to the well-known Ascari and Villoresi there is also the Italian ace Giuseppe Farina, who like Fangio, drives a blown 1½-litre Maserati. The Argentinian knows that this is going to be a tough day, that he must make a lightning start and drive like the wind to hold out against the gentleman from Turin.

The battle is on, but Fangio does not even complete a lap. A broken piston puts him out of this race almost before it has properly begun. But Chueco accepts this breakdown with unshakeable serenity, his spirit is not easily beaten.

If one leaves Milan in the direction of Lecco, a 15-kilometre drive gets one to Monza, where there is a wonderful park in this industrial town of Northern Italy. It was laid out in 1806 near the royal lodge at the behest of Eugenie de Beauharnais and in the middle of these romantic grounds lies the Autodromo, Italy's most famous race track. This is where Fangio is next due to compete, in the Grand Prix of Monza for formula 2 cars, i.e. those up to 2-litres, without superchargers. For this race, the Argentinian Automobile Club has arranged for a 12-cylinder Ferrari to be made available to Juan. His old rivals, Ascari, Villoresi and Bonetto drive exactly the same machines; only

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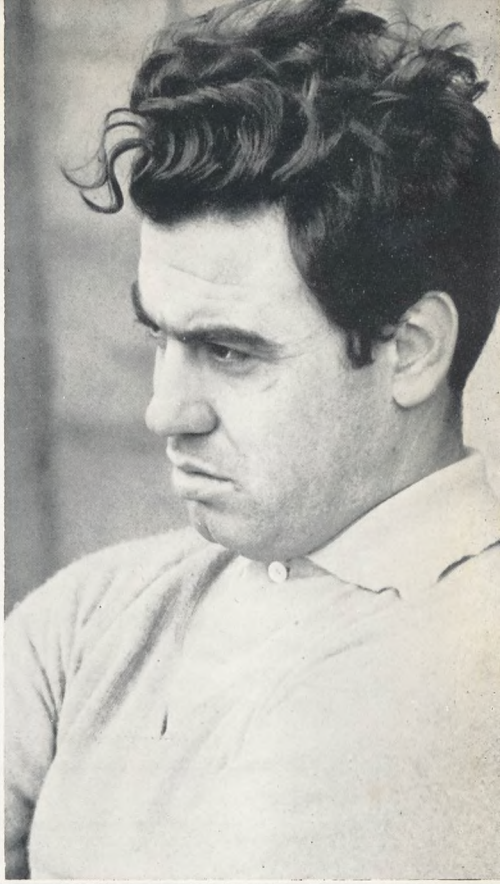
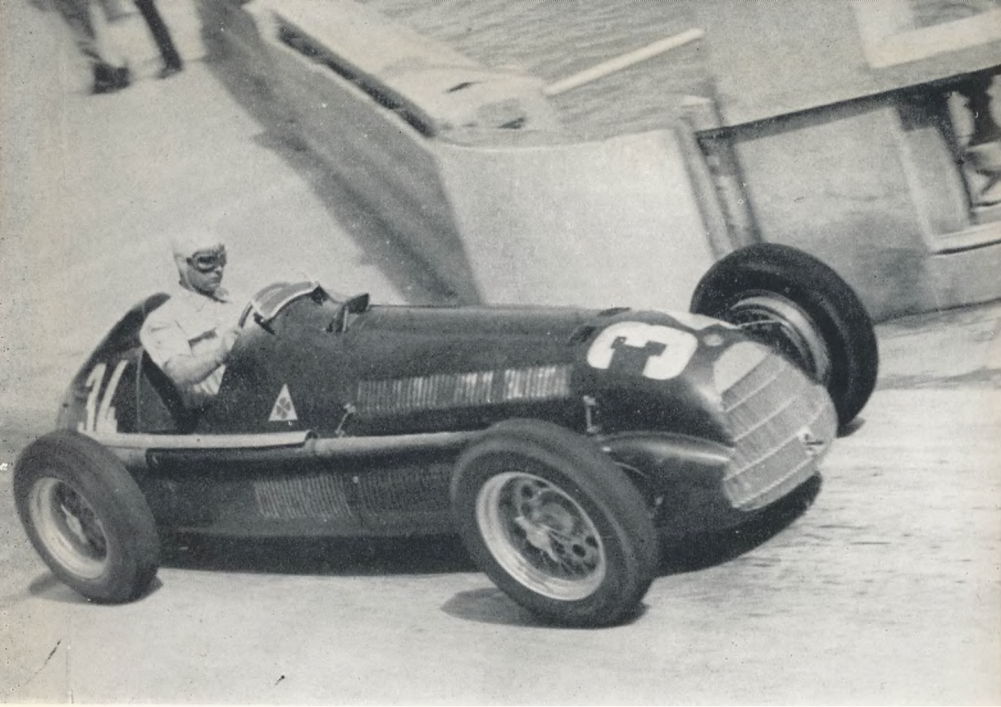
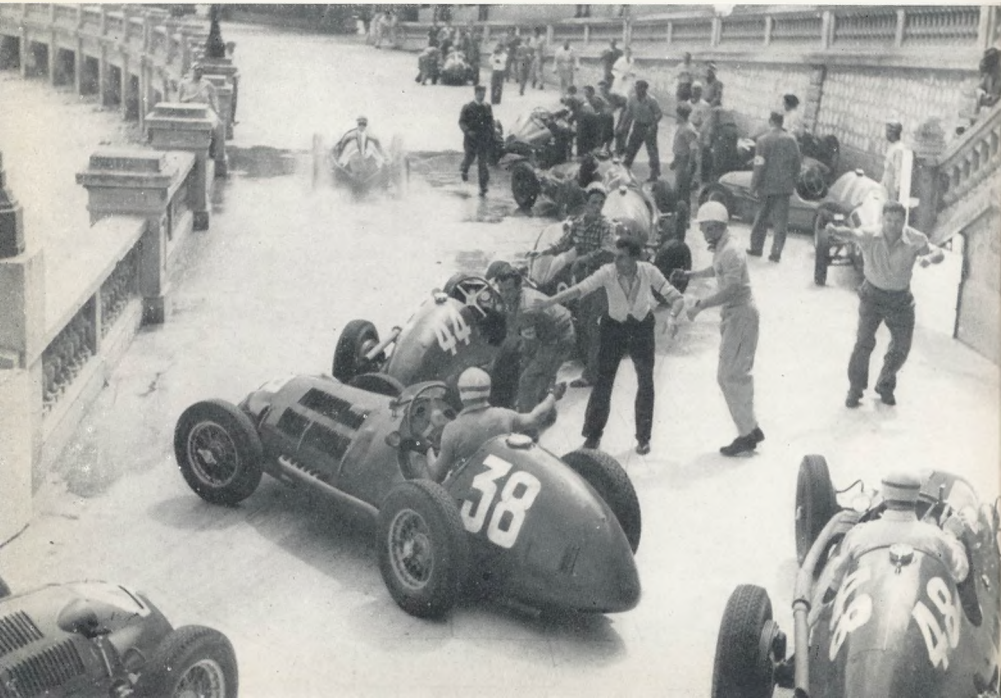
TOP LEFT : *Juan with his favourite Alfa mechanic, Zanardi.*
TOP RIGHT : *The late Onofre Marimon.*
BOTTOM : *Father Loretto between Juan and his youngest brother Ruben.*





TOP : *With the Alfetta on the way to win the Monaco G.P. of* 1950.

BOTTOM : *The melee in that G.P. after the multiple collision. Juan's car is seen streaking away, top left of the photograph.*



Farina is missing. This fast course of 6.3 kilometres should provide a lot of interest, because technically the star drivers compete on level terms. Three Ferraris are in the first row, surprisingly on the right hand side of the grid a silver car is lined up, somehow it does not seem to match up with the brilliant red of the Italian machines. At the wheel is none other than the former Auto Union driver Hans Stuck; driving the AFM built by Alex von Falkenhausen with an improved 328 BMW engine, he achieved fourth fastest practice time. At the drop of the flag, Stuck roars off and holds the lead for two laps, then the more powerful Ferraris of Fangio, Ascari and Villoresi pass him and although those three put in very fast speeds, Stuck hangs on close behind. But after 20 laps, engine trouble forces him to call repeatedly at the pits and the time lost puts him behind. Among the leaders, which Bonetto has joined in the meantime, there is a wheel to wheel tussle in progress, Fangio has to fight hard this day, for this race cannot be compared with the four he has won. The Italians try him well and truly, but nothing can shake Chueco's equanimity. Villoresi retires on the 22nd lap. The race length is 504 kilometres (about 312 miles), all of it in the heat of the Italian summer; the sharp tempo costs tyres, which suffer under high-speed cornering. Bonetto, Fangio and Ascari change wheels; Ascari's mechanics work quickest and the lattter rejoins the race in first position, Fangio taking over the lead on the 69th lap while Ascari refuels. Now is the decisive moment for the Argentinian. Impetuously he sets the pace and wins with a race average of 160.2 k.p.h. (about 100 m.p.h.) and also sets a new course record; 22 seconds later Bonetto gets the chequered flag and Ascari is third. Juan Manuel Fangio has every reason to be proud, but modestly he congratulates his opponents.

Once more France sees him successful when he wins the G.P. of Albi at 158.38 k.p.h. (about 98 m.p.h.) in front of Prince Bira. But somehow success in the grandes épreuves eludes him this year, for at the G.P. of France at Rheims he is eliminated through engine trouble and in the formula 2 race on the same circuit he has to abandon the fray whilst in the lead, through transmission failure.

He returns to Argentina as the winner of six races and is received enthusiastically. At home he continues his success by coming first in the Gran Premio de la Republica Argentina on November 5th.

CHAPTER VI

Fangio's Great Chance

The Italian papers are full of the news: In 1950 the world championship is again due to be contested. At that time the Italians are masters of Grand Prix racing. Almost everywhere they appear they are victorious and thus they have the biggest chance to gain the most coveted title in motor sport.

The first world championship was organized a quarter of a century ago when Italy won the title and the firm of Alfa-Romeo came into prominence, for in 1925 it was the marque that was honoured, but to-day it is the driver who wins the laurels.

This decision was made when the International Sports Commission of the F.I.A. sat in the autumn.

The Italian Motor journalists endeavour to clarify for their readers in extensive articles what this world championship is about.

Paris is the seat of the F.I.A. (Federation Internationale Automobile) and a section of this organization is the International Sports Commission. It is made up of the representative clubs who organize motor sport in Italy, France, Great Britain, Germany, etc.

Then the journalists go on explaining further for the man in the street:

This Commission meets every year at joint conferences. The National Automobile Clubs send their delegates, who are highly knowledgeable about motoring sport. Among the delegates are engineers and emissaries of those firms who build racing cars. Not only does the Commission formulate the basic regulations of motor sporting events in joint consultation, but it also settles the technical formulæ, within the framework of which the construction, of racing cars must be kept. These formulæ are valid for a pre-determined period, after which a further joint decision can either change or prolong them.

The world championship is established for racing cars of formula 1, that is cars of a swept volume of 1.5 litres supercharged, or up to 4.5 litres unsupercharged. These machines

compete in 1950 in the Grands Prix of Europe at Silverstone, of Monaco in Monte Carlo, of Switzerland on the Bremgarten circuit in Berne, of France at Rheims, of Italy at Monza and the 500 mile race at Indianapolis in the United States. Each year one of these races is nominated the Grand Prix of Europe; in 1950 it was Great Britain's turn, and the Silverstone circuit, which used to be an R.A.F. aerodrome, was the venue.

How is the world champion determined? Points are awarded for each race thus: The winner receives 8, the second man 6, the third 4, the fourth 3 and the fifth 2 points. The driver establishing fastest lap receives one additional point. At the end of the season the International Sports Commission adds up all the points, and the winner receives a cup and a diploma from the F.I.A. The cinderella of this championship is the 500 miles race at Indianapolis. This American monster-race on the square brick and asphalt track is run according to an old European formula which was valid until 1940, and admits cars of a swept volume of up to 4.5 litres unsupercharged or up to 3 litres supercharged. The relation of the normally aspirated engine to the supercharged one is therefore quite differently rated. In consequence the American drivers generally only compete amongst themselves and their Grand Prix is really only included in an honorary manner. It follows that the European G.P.s constitute the real bones of the automobile world championship.

This is very comprehensible to the Italians and they follow with tremendous interest the preparations of the various firms. To them it is self-understood that Alfa-Romeo, the title holders in 1925, will participate this time. Unfortunately this assumption is by no means certain at this moment.

In the elegant board room of Alfa-Romeo S.A. in Milan an interesting discussion is taking place. The Managing Director, Gallo, is in the chair and they are about to decide whether the famous Milan company is once more to take its place among the Grand Prix contestants. Alfa appeared from 1946 until 1948 at all the international circuits and was successful everywhere. But racing is expensive, very expensive in fact when prepared for and executed with the care commensurate with the reputation of a well-known firm in the motor industry. Yet ready capital is also very short in post war Italy and that is why Alfa-Romeo decided to stop racing in 1949. But now in 1950 a chance occurs which should not be by-passed. In fact, a chance of winning the championship is definitely seen as within the bounds of

possibility from the technical point of view. The Alfettas are available; 1½ litre supercharged cars created in the winter of 1937. Engineer Colombo designed them then and in the post-war period this straight eight with its two-stage supercharger has been improved to the extent that it now produces some 334 b.h.p. This is a useful vehicle to enter, with a real chance of success in the six European Grands Prix.

" Yes but," Managing Director Gallo interjects, " whom have we by way of drivers? Jean Pierre Wimille and Achille Varzi had fatal accidents last year. Both were in our team. Count Trossi whom we also retained, has died from a serious illness! Whom can we get to drive the Alfettas? "

Racing Manager Guidotti, former mechanic and test driver of Alfa replies: " The driver question is no insoluble problem. I have gone into it with care and have arrived at the following solution: Alfa-Romeo should engage the Argentinian Fangio, our countrymen Dr. Giuseppe Farina and the old expert Luigi Fagioli. In case of need we still have our chief tester Consalvo Sanesi and Felice Bonetto from Turin! "

" All right then," says Gallo, " I agree. The necessary telegrams can be despatched to those gentlemen to-day! "

The sensation is out! The Italian papers carry black banner headlines:

" Alfa-Romeo races again. The famous Milanese company fields Fangio, Farina and Fagioli in six Gran Premios. The ' three F ' team has been formed! "

When Fangio receives his telegram his heart beats higher. At last the great opportunity has come his way. With this machine he has the weapon to compete on level terms in the world's most important events. He is grateful to the Italians; for them he is like a son anyway—did not his origins stem from there? Has he not set up headquarters whilst in Europe in the little place Galliate in the province of Novara? And was not Galliate the home town of the famous Achille Varzi who was the first to show Fangio the way to Europe? By return he telegraphs to Milan his agreement.

Alfa-Romeo has only engaged him for the six grandes épreuves. This means that he has freedom of action for other races. Should, however, the Milan works decide to participate also in other races the Argentinian will naturally drive only the Alfetta.

The European season begins at Pau. Fangio drives a 4CLT Maserati and beats Villoresi's Ferrari into first place. He starts on the Alfetta for the first time in San Remo. No one expects

Chueco to be outstanding at his first try, for he must first get to know the quick Milan machine, but Juan underneath his apparent calm, realizes that he must give no quarter, for he drives the only Alfetta in the race.

As the cars line up on the Ospedaletti circuit the roads glisten with rain which only stops in the early hours of the afternoon, thus it will be even more difficult for him on this wet circuit. His strongest opponents are Ascari, who made fastest practice lap, and Villoresi who was only two tenths of a second slower than Fangio in practice. Both drive the new 1½-litre two-stage blown Ferrari.

Fangio is by now a well-known personality in Europe, his series of successes last year have not gone unnoticed. But the spectators are not treated to a shot gun start from Fangio this time. After the first lap he passes the starting line in fourth place. Ascari leads, in front of Villoresi and the picture does not change for the next two laps. Then Fangio attacks. He moves up one place and systematically whittles down the distance between himself and the leaders. He knows full well that he must control himself in this decisive hour—slowly but surely he speeds up. The Alfetta is the most temperamental prima ballerina of all the cars he has yet driven. To control it completely requires acute sensitiveness; the 334 horses could take charge only too easily.

A few laps later the spectators cheer as he passes Villoresi. Then, after three more laps the Alfetta overtakes Ascari and remains in the lead. With more than a minute advance Fangio flashes past the finishing line, victorious in his first drive for Alfa-Romeo, his race average being 95.99 k.p.h. (about 62 m.p.h.). The Italians carry him shoulder high towards the victory celebrations.

Eight days later. In the early morning hours of April 23rd, there is tremendous agitation in Brescia. Thousands mill in its narrow streets. Everyone is excited, except Signor Castagneto who calmly settles his inevitable bowler on his head. He looks at his watch and at exact intervals of one minute, despatches car after car to start in the Mille Miglia, Europe's most magnificent road race. Among the 375 competitors there is also Fangio. Confidently he drives the 2.5-litre Alfa Sports car over the tricky roads—a thousand dangerous miles lie before him. From Brescia's Viale Rebuffone the route winds via Verona, Vicenza, Padua and Ferrara toward Ravenna on the Adriatic coast, then

quickly past Rimini, Pesaro, Ancona to Pescara. Through the Abruzzi mountains to Popoli L'Aquila, Rieti and Terni to Rome. The race goes on non-stop past the countless spectators who line the streets from Brescia to Malagrotta, along the Ligurian coast via Civita Vecchia, Tarquinia, Grosetto, Leghorn, Pisa, Florence, then over the Futa pass to Bologna, Modena, Reggio, Parma, Piacenza, Cremona and at last back to Brescia.

This event is enormously popular with the Italians, being considered an automobile festival. Sports racing cars take part and so do touring cars such as can be bought by anyone. The smallest machines start first, the biggest last; the drivers must concentrate every second on the road for each kilometre is different. Here they have no chance to learn the course by heart, as is possible on a closed circuit; no one can remember a thousand miles of ever changing road.

Narrow village streets, careless spectators, closed railway crossings and bad road surfaces require instantaneous reaction. The drivers try to help themselves by mapping out the road during practice. The passenger then bellows the most dangerous points into his driver's ear endeavouring to make himself heard over the engine noise, trying to convey to the driver that this bend can be taken at 80, the next at only 50 and so on. Only there are not twenty corners in the Mille Miglia, but thousands. Very close to exhaustion the driver presses on towards the finish, since each car is started individually he does not even know his race position, it is a fight against time without the impetus of the visible opponent. After rain, fog and slippery roads Fangio reaches the finish having covered the course in 14 hours 2 mins. and 5 secs. The timekeepers having worked out results tell him that he is third in the general classification. The winner, second and fourth are Italians, who are naturally able to cover large parts of the course many times per year, thus familiarizing themselves with the many cornered sections and consequently being able to go quicker there.

Silverstone, the next event counting for the world championship is flat as a pancake, and this is where the European Grand Prix is being disputed. During the war the Rolls-Royce Merlin-engined Spitfires flew from here against the German bombers and to-day the narrow curved track is the battlefield for the drivers. In fact, here it is a question of juggling with bends and short straights, for no sooner does a car accelerate out of a bend than it must brake again for the next one; Giuseppe Farina wins and Fangio retires.

Farina thus notches up his first nine points towards the championship, for he has also made fastest lap. Chueco, however, leaves with empty hands.

In the miniature fairy-tale realm of Prince Rainier, busy little men attach colourful posters to the stone balustrades of the quay, then they put them up between the palms and nail them on the thin wooden walls of the temporary grandstands which are being erected everywhere. An army of Monegasque workmen cover the corners and bends of the streets of Monte Carlo with thick straw bales, and kindly police calmly direct surprised visitors to the nearest diversion roads.

Soon the racing machines thunder through the elegant streets, the noise of their engines and the screaming of the tyres resounding even in the luxurious foyer of the Hotel de Paris. The old ladies who spend the evening of their lives there withdraw, shocked, to their apartments. Sometimes when the row becomes too strong, they raise their lorgnettes to stare disapprovingly past the heavy curtains, only to recoil horrified when a red, blue or green racing car suddenly roars past the Casino at frightening speed. So Monte Carlo lives through the most enchanting motor race in the world, the G.P. of Monaco, a hundred laps around and through this pearl of the Côte d'Azur, a hundred laps of bends, corners and curves. A breathtaking spectacle with a background of roaring engine noise, reinforced by its echo thrown back from the houses. An exciting spectacle, as the pack howls up that hill surmounted by the Casino, then down to the railway station, through a network of bends to the wide road on the sea front.

From the semi-darkness of the tunnel the cars issue like so many vari-coloured rockets to take the left-hand bend, with only inches to spare from the granite edge, all this a hundred times. There is no room to make mistakes here—stone and concrete on all sides only partly covered in straw bales. Half-inch accuracy on these bends is a must here, just the thing for the old stylists with their polished techniques, nerves must be conspicuous by their absence. How will Fangio fare here?

Fangio is as cool as ice when he races, here his opponents will be all around him like angry wasps. This is not the kind of circuit where racing develops gradually, everything is concentrated on the smallest possible space, a lap measures barely 2 miles. The slow cars are soon caught up with and must, if possible, be overtaken on the short sea front straights; there is hardly any other opportunity in view of the continuous bends and corners.

Farina, Fangio and Fagioli are driving for Alfa, Ascari, Villoresi and Sommer for Ferrari. Fangio is fastest in practice, then Farina, and the timekeepers declare José Froilán González as third fastest. He is an Argentinian like Fangio and makes his racing début in Europe in 1950—can he endanger Fangio?

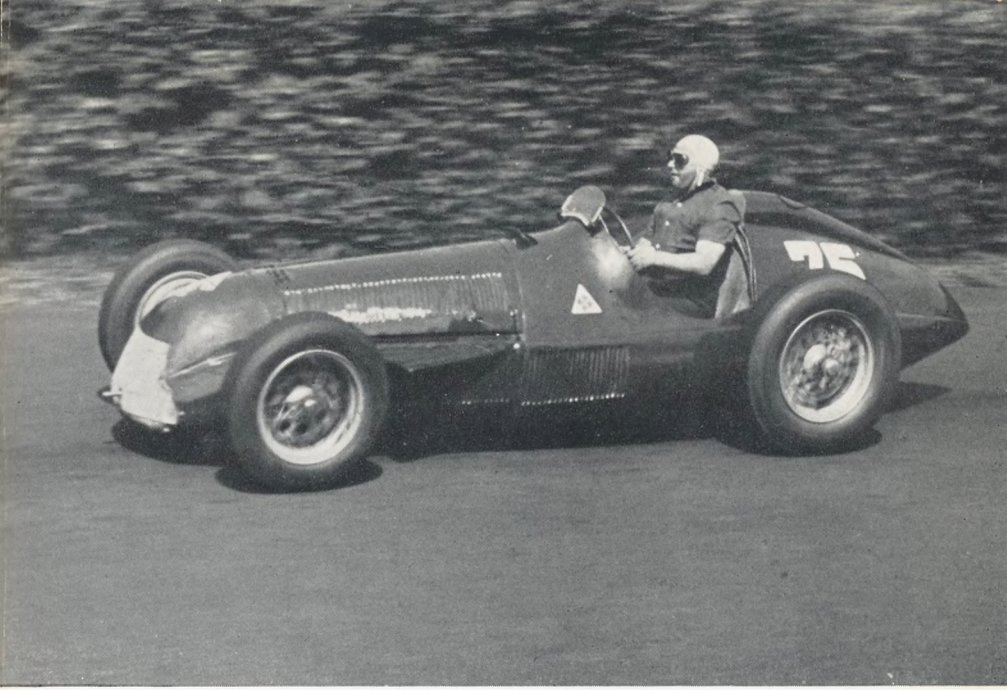
The cars are lined up on the grid, their noise stayed for the moment, and swanlike the white yachts move gently at anchor on the deep blue waters of the harbour. Over the fairy-tale beauty of this peerless town the great castle of the prince seems to stand watch like a guardsman. The smart set watches the start preparations with interest and reserve, beautiful, elegant women glance admiringly at the actors in this nerve-tingling spectacle striding quickly towards their cars.

The howl of the started engines rends the air like an explosion. The distinguished spectators in the grandstands begin to be agitated as the noise increases in intensity. Old Charles Faroux takes up the flag; as in a trance the spectators stare at the nineteen cars.

All hell is let loose and like a tornado they roar towards the Casino, to disappear behind the houses whilst the thunder of many hundred horse power vibrates in the air. Seconds later the tunnel ejects them again: Fangio—Villoresi—Farina—González—Fagioli. At high speed they enter the sharp left-hander where the circuit joins the Boulevard Albert 1er.

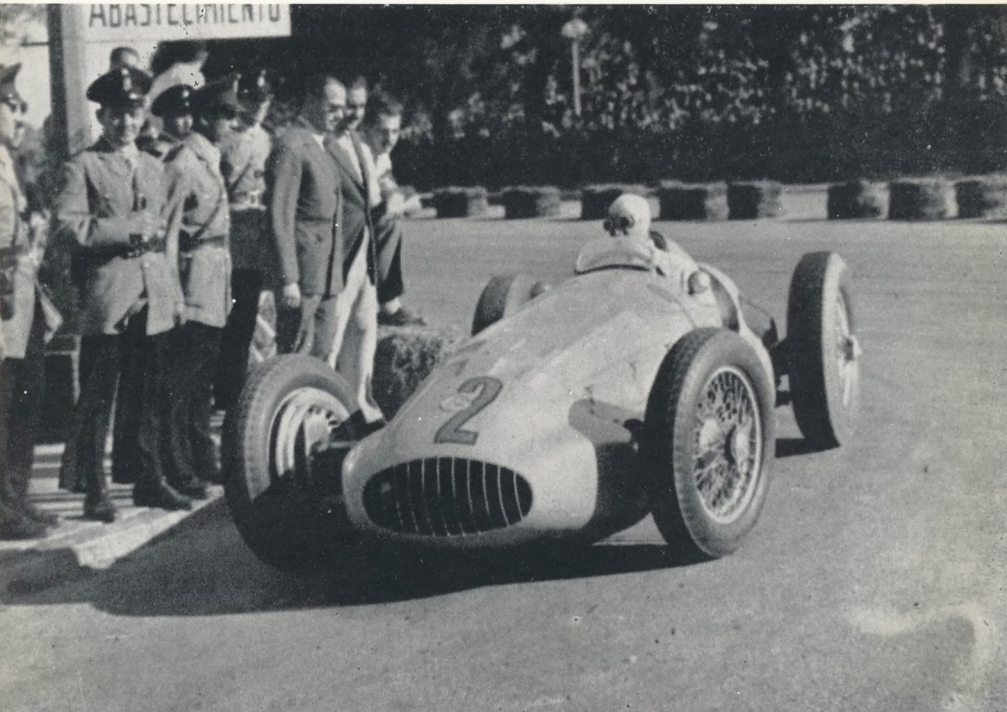
Then—what's happening? Excitedly the spectators jump up from their seats. Farina's Alfetta has spun, González, close behind, touches the spinning car. Fagioli has stopped right across the road when Rosier's Talbot slams broadside into him. The marshals at the tunnel agitate their yellow flags—danger ahead. But so embattled are the drivers that they react too late. They see the obstacle and brake hard—but now they are too close. An instantaneous confusion of cars arises and excited drivers try to free their machines from the blockage. Six, seven, nine cars are impacted in a confused bunch. On the hairpin at the end of the straight, Gonzáles, his face a picture of fear, jumps out of his burning Maserati. The very devil is loose! Ascari, Sommer and Chiron finally manage to free their cars and take up the pursuit again, as Fangio comes roaring up on the next lap and just manages to get past the chaos.

Farina and Fagioli retire, now Fangio alone must defend Alfa-Romeo's colours. Only nine cars survive the multiple crash on the quay and Fangio has a secure lead. Villoresi who has also



TOP : *The Alfetta on the Nurburgring.*

BOTTOM : 1951 *G.P. of Buenos Aires, the pre-war* 3*-litre Mercedes.*



TOP :
Alessio, Managing director of Alfa-Romeo, hands to the world champion of 1951 *the winner's cup after the Spanish G.P.*

BOTTOM :
On test with the B.R.M.

spun in the heat of the excitement and in eighth spot, is catching up fast; driving daringly he overtakes three cars and finally gets into third position.

The three Ferrari's of Ascari, Villoresi and Sommer pursue Fangio but calmly and unaffected by the events he reels off lap after lap; behind him Villoresi overwhelms his pupil Ascari and presses on with verve. Once more the nerves of the public are tensed when Chueco stops at his pit to refuel, the Alfa mechanics working like beavers. A leather apron is put over his head and neck, so that the pungent fuel should not come into contact with his skin should it suddenly spill over.

Tensely the public looks towards the tunnel mouth; will Villoresi appear before Fangio has rejoined the racing? Seconds seem to become minutes. One would almost like to help him—but he acts as if he had all the time in the world and takes a refreshing drink. Thirty-two seconds and all is done, Fangio is off before Villoresi has appeared and a little later that courageous man must give up because of a faulty differential.

The positions now remain static, monotonously and without change the race is played out. Juan Manuel Fangio, the simple mechanic from a village in the Pampas, walks with a cavalry man's gait towards the canopied box where he will receive the silver cup from the Prince's own hands. As if there were nothing to it, he strides down again . . . without emotion and quite calm. Only the high treble of the Argentinian radio commentator hangs in the air for a few seconds. . . .

Nine championship points for Fangio, who has won the G.P. of Monaco at an average of 98.7 k.p.h. So he and Farina are now equal!

CHAPTER VII

The Storm Rages On

Eight laps before the finish of the Grand Prix of Switzerland—the timekeepers have just drawn a thick line through the remaining lap columns against the name Fangio. He has retired, to arrive a little later at the pits on foot, whilst Farina drives on to victory. Nothing in Fangio's expression shows his inner feelings, he seems to be completely unaffected by this misfortune which has befallen him. Yet the engine trouble of his Alfetta on the 34th lap of the Bremgarten circuit in Berne has cost him 9 championship points, whereas Farina's score sheet now shows 18. But who is this " dottore "? The name Farina had already a good reputation among motor engineering experts, before the Turin driver ever sat behind a racing wheel. His father had founded one of the first coachworks in Turin, Stabilimenti Farina. His Uncle Pinin Farina, to-day enjoys the same reputation among the exponents of the coachbuilding art as Christian Dior among the haute couture houses. The great American motor corporations ask the artist Pinin Farina to design for them exclusive car bodies for which they pay fantastic sums. Giuseppe Farina himself takes a hand in design when he is not racing, for the modelling of sheets of metal into elegant shapes clearly expresses Giuseppe Farina's artistic feelings even though his modesty in public borders on shyness. Although he is a dare devil, the experts name him as the most complete stylist of our time for his driving is always tidy even during the most exciting moments. He never " dices " nor is he brutal with his machine, conducting and guiding his mount in a superior manner with quiet and sparing movements. His way in a race is rather more reminiscent of the cold calculating ways of an Englishman, not of the temperamental southerner. He is self-control personified and typifies the complete gentleman but his private life is hardly ever known. One might describe him as very reserved, yet he is always willing to talk to journalists about everything concerning motor racing but not about himself. One of the few people who

have accompanied him on several trips is that self-willed Milanese journalist Corrado Millanta.

" Stories about Farina?" said Millanta, when I wanted to ask him about Farina. " I hardly know any. Except perhaps the one about his similarity to ex-King Umberto II. In 1930, generals used to salute the young lieutenant Farina from 20 yards distance, thinking he was Principe Umberto! "

Millanta describes Farina as the last representative of the old guard of those who drove the beam axle cars which to-day can only be seen in museums.* Farina, 48 years old in 1945 was hardly 20 when he thought of becoming a racing driver, but the right car had to be found, and that cost money. Since he studied political economy and later achieved a doctorate in this faculty, he decided to go about acquiring money in a manner akin to his profession: he took to speculation. The only results however, were debt. Openly he spoke about his worries to his father who first of all paid his debts and then did something few fathers would do: he bought two Alfa sports cars and entered them for the Hill climb of Aosta-San Gran Bernardo, drivers nominated being father and son Farina.

Whereas the son had an accident, albeit after an impressive start, father managed a place. On the course he saw his son's damaged car by the roadside which so frightened him that shortly afterwards he sold the cars again. Thus Giuseppe's dream was at an end . . . but was it really? Like all those young men who are truly filled with enthusiasm for an idea and who are possessed of the necessary energy to carry it out, he turned up again shortly afterwards at a racing circuit. Again he at first drove an Alfa, then in 1934 and 1935 he had a Maserati.

This was the time of the great German racing success; Mercedes-Benz and Auto-Union were technically superior to the Italian machines. One man nevertheless again and again took up the challenge against this superior force: he was of middle height, wiry, tough and belligerent of heart. Wherever he started he fascinated the spectators. His name was Tazio Nuvolari and he came from Mantua. This Italian with his square, truculently pushed forward chin did not accept defeat; always he fell upon the field of German cars and attacked fearlessly, if he sensed a chance he took it and sometimes managed to triumph over the Germans.

* Except in England!

This man then, was the object of Giuseppe's admiration. He venerated him and made him his ideal. One day Signor Enzo Ferrari made him a splendid offer—to join his world famous Scuderia, which raced Alfa-Romeos. The team chief was none other than Tazio Nuvolari. The *Campionissimo* soon noted the exceptional talent which Nino—that is what his friends called him—possessed. Tazio looked out for Nino and later this regard for his ability ripened into friendship, a friendship whereby Farina profited a great deal. Nuvolari taught him those ultimate touches of finesse which enabled him to progress towards bigger tasks.

Farina had tremendous courage. Often enough this took the place of insufficient engine power, for his fighting nature was not satisfied with just being placed. He strove always forward, but even vehicles specifically developed for motor racing have certain physical limits. He who chooses to disregard those limits will rue his decision bitterly. Such was the case of Farina. He lived through dreadful crashes and often escaped unscathed from situations which would have meant the end for others, fortunately for him nothing remained but a few scars.

The first bad crash is often decisive for the further career of a racing motorist. The psychological moment of the accident can have grave consequences, it can be so weighty that, although the driver continues to race, he will never again approach those peak speeds and limits which constitute the top class. Not so Farina, who again and again overcame the after effects of accidents.

In 1937, 38 and 39 he became Italian racing car champion. In the Swiss G.P. of 1939 he took on the considerably more powerful 3-lire Auto-Unions and Mercedes-Benz, each of which had fielded five cars, at the wheel of the new 1½-litre Alfetta. For many laps of the wet circuit he was in second place following the eventual winner Hermann Lang.

After the war, during which he served as an Army officer, he soon drove Maseratis and Alfas again, but as a private owner. Once more he was successful and the first races showed that the long enforced rest had not lost him his skill. He belongs to those rabid enthusiasts for speed who spend their happiest hours behind the wheel of a fast car on the world's racing circuits.

In characterizing him Millanta says: " Farina drives fast also in private life, with arms outstretched, head slightly on the side and seeing the road with the eyes of a connoisseur of the arts, as if viewing paintings in the art galleries. Sometimes he sings while

driving, about a mysterious beautiful woman he met one evening somewhere; he has never seen her again and even though her name remained unknown he has never forgotten her. I think her name was—youth. Romanticism at 100 m.p.h. while exasperated citizens shout curses after him. . . ! ''

Farina married rather late. His wife owns a well-known Turin fashion house and hardly ever turns up at a race, in contrast to the other drivers' wives. She is just as refined and quietly distinguished as Nino himself. They are two gentle people, whose like are found again and again among the cultured races of the old world.

Dottore Giuseppe Farina in 1950 is Juan Manuel Fangio's keenest rival on the path towards the world championship. During the year it becomes ever clearer that the title will fall to one of them. Fangio, after quickly winning on a Maserati the Circuit des Ramparts near the town of Angoulême, is due to oppose Farina at the next championship event, the G.P. of Belgium at Spa-Francorchamps.

The organizers have done a lot of work on this circuit; more than 1,400 trees have been removed, the road has been widened by 2 yards and very much improved. The circuit now allows much higher speeds, and already in practice averages are put up which should make this 1950 Belgian G.P. the fastest road race in the world.

Again the Alfettas of Farina, Fangio and Fagioli are opposed by their strongest rivals, the Ferraris of Villoresi and Ascari. Whilst Villoresi drives the 1½-litre blown machine, Ascari has a new design with a 3.3-litre normally aspirated engine. '' Ferrari is cooking up something new,'' say the experts and consider Ascari's monoposto as an in-between stage of new developments. At Alfa's they have not rested on their laurels either; their eight cylinder with the two-stage supercharging has now several more horsepower and the Alfetta's practice times are better than those of Villoresi and Ascari.

Fangio jumps into the lead right from the start, followed by his team mates Farina and Fagioli, although the latter has been overtaken by Villoresi. On the seventh lap Farina gets ahead but three laps later is overtaken again by Fagioli, whilst Fangio is in third place. During the race the three Alfettas take the lead in turn. After their pit stop, Raymond Sommer leads for four laps with his 4½-litre Talbot, only to succumb to the three Alfettas

again. Farina is leading when Fangio attacks once more, six laps before the finish.

This Alfa-Romeo duel is a unique experience for the many spectators dispersed round the 14.12 kilometre (about 9 mile) circuit. Excitement never stops for the Argentinian radio reporter, whose sharp eyes follow Fangio and whose voice breaks in his endeavour to comment on some advantage Fangio has gained.

Farina has to relinquish first position to his rival and makes a pit stop three laps before the end. After a short interval he resumes the race but his speed is visibly reduced, something has happened to his car necessitating caution. Thus he is forced to let Rosier by on the Talbot and finishes fourth, Fangio being the winner, with Fagioli second. Fangio completes the 494.2 Km. (about 307 miles) long race at an average of 177.09 k.p.h. (about 110.5 m.p.h.) but the fastest lap is Farina's at 180.82 k.p.h. (about 112.5 m.p.h.). The points table therefore looks like this: Farina 22, Fagioli 18 and Fangio 17. The Argentinian will have to make a big effort now to catch up the five-point advantage the man from Turin has over him.

His effort is crowned with success at the next event, the French G.P. Since Ferrari's are preoccupied with important development work and do not consider the present models sufficiently success prone, they have not appeared and the G.P. on this fast triangular course of Rheims-Gueux is mainly contested between the three Alfas of Fangio, Farina and Fagioli.

After the 17th lap Farina has to visit the pits on several occasions because of fuel feed troubles, thereby falling back into seventh place and he no longer plays a decisive role in the finishing order.

Fangio wins again at an average of 168.72 k.p.h. (about 105 m.p.h.) for the G.P. distance and having also made fastest lap at 180.82 k.p.h. (about 113 m.p.h.) he notches up an extra point. Fagioli is second. Now Fangio leads in the championship with 26 points, against Fagioli's 24, and Farina's 22.

All Argentina follows the development of the world championship and the chances of Juan Manuel Fangio. The motor-racing championship of the world for a native of a country that boasts no motor industry to speak of? What a wonderful thought!

At this time the Alfetta stands head and shoulders above the other competitors, its supercharged engine, developed from race to race, is now producing over 334 b.h.p.

But whilst the international public, not knowing what goes on behind the scenes, already consider motor racing as purely an Alfa affair, systematic development work is going on in the small works of Commendatore Enzo Ferrari, to create a new racing car.

Enzo Ferrari is a big, strong man, with a Roman head and a high intelligent forehead. This grey-haired Italian raced himself in the early 'twenties. In 1929 he founded a racing stable, Scuderia Ferrari, which ran Alfa-Romeos and until the end of 1937 Scuderia Ferrari started 343 times and won 114 times, covering altogether 352,817 racing kilometres. When Alfa themselves re-entered racing in 1938, Enzo contracted to manage their team. But this self-willed, energetic man was too much of an individualist to knuckle under to the instructions of the works management. He left Alfa and founded his own firm for the design and construction of sports vehicles, his first car being driven by Alberto, son of his close friend Antonio Ascari who lost his life all too soon in a racing accident. During the war Ferrari had to stop making competition cars, and in a very short space of time he reorganized his works for the production of first-class machine tools, but soon after the war ended his sports car manufacture started again. To-day this excellently equipped factory employs some 250 people, its head office being in Modena, capital of the province of the same name, where the story of Don Camillo and Peppone originated. Some ten miles away is the village of Maranello on the outskirts of which, hidden by thick shrubbery, the Ferrari works can be found. The stranger who wishes to see the inside of the factory must have the Commendatore's permission, for he is informed about everything that goes on within its walls. Only if Ferrari says " Si " will the doorkeeper open the gate that is graced with the insignia of the Ferrari works —a prancing black horse on a yellow shield.

The direction of the works is firmly in Ferrari's hands. This must be so for racing participation and the construction of competition cars requires considerable finance, and there is no financial group backing this enterprising Italian, to relieve him of worry.* His factory produces some hundred cars per year, all of which are of a sporting type. They rate high in sales value and are disposed of to a few buyers at startling prices. Ferrari is

* This is now changed, for he receives some assistance from Fiat and others.

a master of his métier and no one can tell him tall tales, because his outstanding knowledge stems from having been through all the stages of this specialized trade.

When Ferrari started to build a new formula car after the war, Alfa-Romeo already possessed a fully proven design. Of all people, Commendatore Ferrari engaged as designer Colombo, who was the very man responsible for developing the Alfetta. He designed a V.12 1½-litre supercharged car for Ferrari, which, although a most interesting machine, was not powerful enough to beat the Alfettas. Engineer Colombo then went back to Alfa.

In his stead Aurelio Lampredi was taken on, an excellent man full of ideas. Lampredi comes from the aircraft industry and ploughs his own furrow. The realization of his technical ideas in the design of the 1950 Ferrari racing car began a new chapter in Italian motor racing. . . .

Quiet has descended over the lowlands of the Apennine mountains. The inhabitants of Maranello have finished their daily work and are spending the evening with their families or chatting with friends over a drink. Suddenly a howling noise disturbs the peace. The men stop talking for a while and look across to the Ferrari shops:

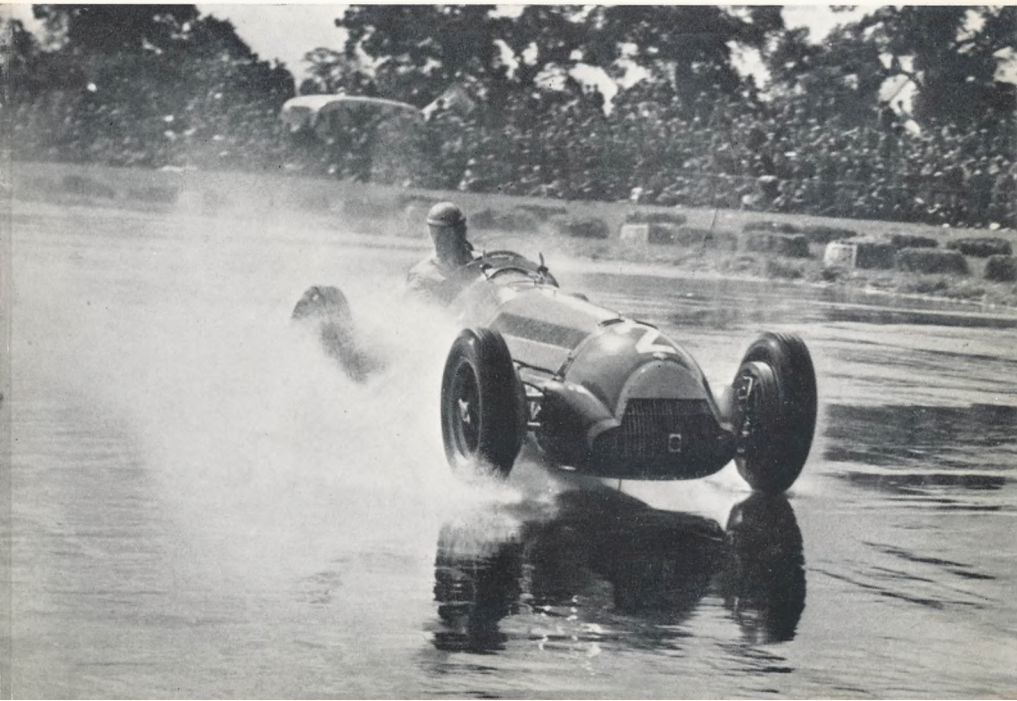
" There's a lot of activity on at the Commendatore's place. Something new is being cooked up, beyond doubt. The noise is quite different, much lower than before and deeper, heavier! "

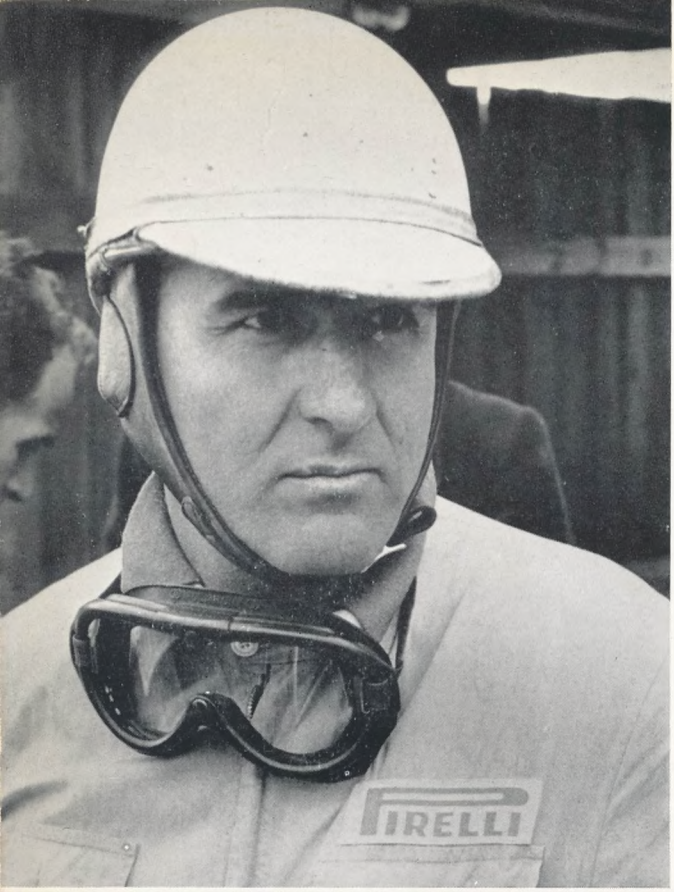
They think about it a little but shortly resume their chatting and playing. For them the noise behind the thick shrubbery is no longer exciting, for they have got used to it over the years. They hardly look up now when one of the red Ferraris is driven in the streets, but on the other hand they are filled with pride when the car's successes are announced in the local press. Many of Maranello's citizens work for the Commendatore and they have good jobs. To work on the machines or in the assembly shops requires specialized knowledge and the men working for " Automobili Ferrari " can justifiably be called highly skilled experts.

The noise issues from a small brick building, where two men are working on a 12-cylinder engine coupled to a dynamometer. Whilst the burly chief mechanic Meazza runs up the powerful engine to full throttle again and again, chief designer Aurelio Lampredi watches the instruments on the test panel with keen eyes. Unflurried Lampredi, of tall stature with a high forehead and a pleasant face, enters the figures on his test sheets and

Top : 1952 : *After his accident at Monza they put him in plaster.*

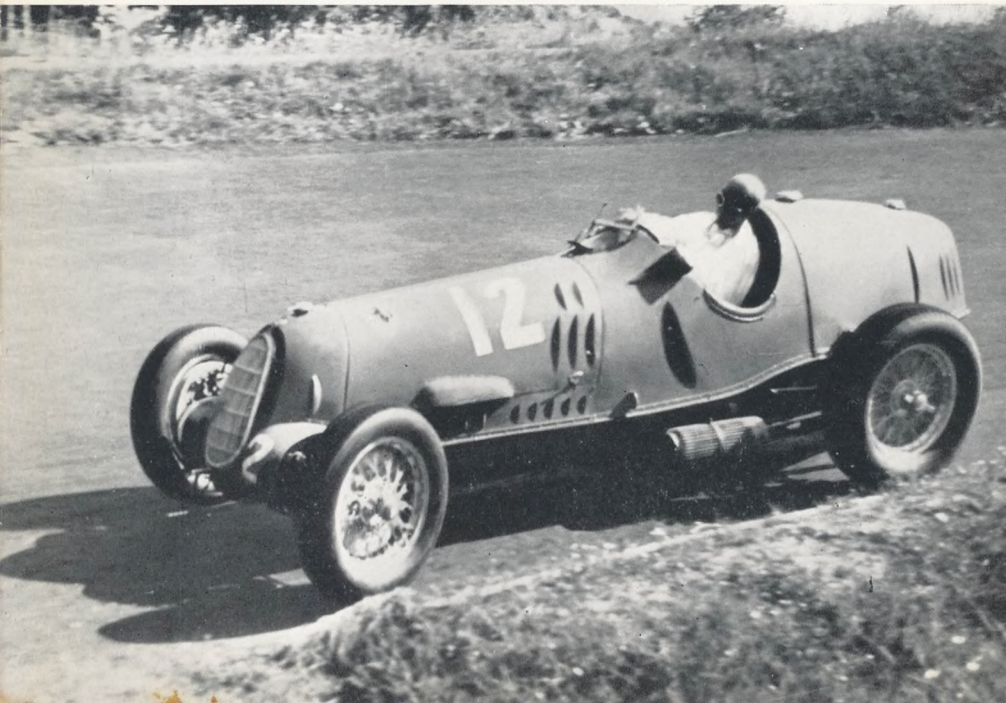
Bottom : *A masterly drive in the wet at Silverstone (Alfetta).*





TOP :
Giuseppe Farina, the gentleman from Turin.

BOTTOM :
Farina with the 1937 *Alfa on the Nurburg-ring.*



nothing in his mien shows the temperamental Italian. This man is a scientist, building the machine which, in the hands of outstanding drivers like Ascari and Villoresi, will interrupt the victorious advance of Alfa-Romeo.

The rev. counter needle trembles on 6,500—7,000—7,500 r.p.m. and still higher. The engine running on full load sets up vibrations in the very building itself, they become transmitted to the test panel and the writing pulpit; pencils and tables perform a little rhythmic dance. The two men do not move. As if mesmerized they stare at the black hand of the rev. counter which now swings towards the red line, hovering there motionless. Lampredi dare not breathe. Through his brain flash thoughts like lightning: will the engine take it; are the design calculations right—or—will the steel and light alloy block fly apart? . . . Soon they will know, there is not much time left. Now comes the proof of whether Aurelio Lampredi's way of design is right. The new Ferrari is due to start in the G.P. of the Nations in Geneva, the Commendatore wishes it, and he is even now waiting in Modena to hear the news that will relieve him of the anxiety which only Lampredi can allay.

The designer looks at his watch. The minutes pass desperately slowly but minutes are not enough: the engine must run for hours under full load.

Meazza wipes his forehead with an oily hand, the sweat disappears but a black streak remains. Questioningly he looks at Lampredi, who smiles and nods. The tense face of Meazza relaxes in a smile. Nothing untoward is happening, the 4.5 litre, normally aspirated engine for the new Ferrari racing car can stand the load, it runs evenly and smoothly. The design is right, but hours must elapse before the tired chief mechanic can switch off the roaring engine. Eventually the last noise reverberates off the walls, then all is quiet. Exhausted, the men look at each other. Suddenly, they both let themselves go and clap each others shoulders. " At last, we've done it! " they bellow at each other. Then out into the cool of the breaking dawn. Lampredi breathes deeply, and with quick steps he walks to his car to drive immediately to Modena.

In the simply furnished private office, Enzo Ferrari's men are assembled. Here sits the elegant journalist Fillipini who now has the function of manager for Scuderia Ferrari; over there Aurelio Lampredi casts a quick glance once more over his test figures and team chief Ghiberti jots down a few notes.

The employees at the Modena head office of Automobili Ferrari raise their fingers to their lips enjoining quiet, should one of the visitors state his views too loudly: " Quiet please, the Commendatore is in conference, a most important one. He must not be disturbed at any price."

Alberto Ascari thoughtfully contemplates a photograph of his father, at the wheel of an Alfa-Romeo for this picture has a place of honour in Ferrari's office. Villoresi's lively eyes watch those taking part in the conference.

" Lampredi's résumé of the situation makes me certain that we can risk running the new car at Geneva. I do not expect a victory in this difficult race but let us see how far we have progressed. You, Alberto, can attack and get an idea how powerful the engine is. Villoresi, on the other hand, will drive a waiting race and have some reserve in hand. We are only at the beginning of our developments which we hope will create a racing car to beat the Alfettas. We must be reserved in our releases to the public. It need not know that we are putting in the new 4.5-litre engine. Let our rivals think that we have not advanced much and that we are running an intermediate design. And now gentlemen, I wish you all success! "

The men bid Ferrari goodbye. Their way now is to the banks of Lac Leman, to Geneva.

Although the strictest secrecy has been maintained at the Ferrari works, nevertheless the Grand Prix des Nations has awakened exceptional interest in press circles. Journalists have a fine nose for sensations and it looks as if Geneva might provide one. Fillipini is continuously surrounded by foreign and Italian journalists. They try to trip him up with casual remarks, but this wily ex-journalist manages to extricate himself with diplomatic answers and none manage to nail him down. The Press men have their stopwatches at the ready as soon as practice starts on the 4 kilometre circuit and soon matters are clear: it must be the new 4.5 litre for it is far too fast to be the 3.8 one. Things will be exciting on Sunday!

They are all agog at Alfa-Romeo. Time and again Guidotti, Alfa's racing manager, tries to peep under the bonnet of the rival marque. But Meazza is watchful.

" Let them look," he enjoins his men, " but not too long. They'll have a job to tell the difference from the old engine."

The circuit leads past the palace of Nations and descends towards the road to Lausanne, continues on this for a spell, then

doubles back on another straight, past the International labour office and again to the palace of Nations.

On the last practice day Fangio wants to make sure and tags on to Ascari. Zanardi, Fangio's favourite mechanic watches his driver.

" Watch out," he calls to his colleagues, " now we'll see something! "

But Ascari realizes immediately that the Argentinian wants to test his speed, and before the personal duel begins, he throttles down, and with a grin waves Fangio on. Soon afterwards the red Alfa stops at the pits. Fangio pushes up his goggles and climbs out of his seat.

Zanardi runs towards him.

" How about it, Juan? Could you catch him? Is there something to this 4½ litre or is it not so fast? "

Fangio shrugs his shoulders, his mischievous eyes twinkle as he replies: " Alberto smelt a rat, but the new Ferrari is a damn fast machine. We'll have to watch it. One thing's clear though, it's the new 4½ litre all right. Anyway we'll see! "

The sky is blue and clear over Geneva as the starter's flag falls. Soon the journalists know how the headlines over their race report will read:

The new Ferrari the main attraction of Geneva!

Ascari hangs on to Fangio and can hold him. After a few laps the race order looks like this: Fangio—Ascari—Farina—Baron de Graffenried (who to-day drives an Alfetta)—Villoresi, on the second new Ferrari—Piero Taruffi also on an Alfetta.

There are 68 laps in this G.P. which however, does not count towards the world championship. Ascari maintains his second place, until trouble strikes on the 62nd lap. Ascari is missing from the race order and a little later he arrives slowly at his pit. Back axle trouble has put him out of the race, but now the spectators also wait in vain for Farina and Villoresi. In the pits they seem to have an inkling that something has happened on the circuit. Ascari, gesticulating wildly, is talking to his team chief. Marshals are running along the Avenue de France and loud-speakers call for the ambulance. Fillipini and Ghiberti disappear from their pit. Where is Villoresi, what's the matter with Farina? At last the news filters through: Villoresi has got into a skid at 140 m.p.h. on the return straight to Lausanne. The Ferrari collided with a curbstone, Villoresi was thrown out and injured,

then the driverless car smashed through the barrier into the spectators—several dead and wounded is the dreadful consequence. . . .

Juan Manuel Fangio wins the G.P. des Nations from the Swiss de Graffenried. The new Ferraris dropped out but have stood their first proving test extremely well. Zanardi rides on the tail of Fangio's Alfa for the lap of honour.

Fangio's next win with the Alfetta is in the Grand Prix of Pescara. This race on the very difficult circuit in the Abruzzi on the Adriatic coast, does not count for the championship either. The decisive event is to be the Grand Prix of Italy on the Monza track and whilst the Argentinian gets ready for this event, Alberto Ascari wins the first German post-war Grand Prix at the Nürburgring. As this race is for Formula II machines only and Fangio has not a car available for it, the German public is deprived of the chance of seeing him.

A week before the Italian G.P. the Alfa team puts in an appearance for the International Trophy race at Silverstone. Farina manages to win from his rival Fangio. A bad omen for the last round?

On September 3rd, the Italian Minister of Labour, Marazza, lowers the flag at the Monza autodrome. Twenty-five cars are at the start for the G.P. of Italy. More than 100,000 spectators form the back-drop for this, the most important motor-racing event of 1950. Both Farina and Fangio put in a spirited start. When the red cars come howling past for the first time along the wide finishing straight, Ascari's Ferrari has already managed to slip past Fangio. Is Chueco using waiting tactics until the two Italians have quietened down, to attack them later? No one knows what thoughts pass through the Argentinian's mind. Three hundred miles must be covered before the chequered flag descends, for eighty laps the machinery must last, each and every yard imposing terrific strain.

Among the four leading bolides Ascari reels off the laps. Will the famous Milanese machines wear down the provincial newcomer? It does not look like it, for on the 14th lap Alberto passes his countryman Farina to take the lead; two laps later however Farina has re-passed him once again.

And Fangio? He remains in third spot, driving most regularly; his hour has not yet come.

The pitched battle has left its marks on the machines. The spectators are disappointed to witness Ascari's retirement on

the 22nd lap. Now Fangio has taken up second position behind Farina. At the end of that lap he stops at his pit. What's happened? Fangio's Alfetta in trouble? No! Quick as a flash the mechanics push the jack under the car's rear. In one sweep it is raised, Zanardi hammers off the hubnuts. Fangio is changing rear wheels! In the meantime a can of fuel goes into the tank and in a short while all is done and he is off again. But a few laps later it is all over, engine trouble has ended his decisive attack on the world championship. A wonderful dream is finished. The mechanics, headed by a saddened Zanardi, push the Alfetta into the " dead " car park behind the pit. Yet once more Fangio enters the fray, taking over Taruffi's machine lying in second position at this time. But Chueco is unlucky; that car also gives up the ghost. Fangio is definitely out of the race.

In the Argentine, thousands share this bitter disappointment, for like all races in which he takes part, this one is transmitted by radio to South America.

Dr. Giuseppe Farina is the victor of the Grand Prix of Italy and so becomes world champion of 1950. To show the toughness of this race—18 cars from the 25 that faced the starter had to retire.

CHAPTER VIII

In Fangio's Shadow

In the Luna Park in Buenos Aires, a place for sporting events, there stands a large exhibition hall with several windows. The centre one bears the insignia of Mercedes-Benz. Above the windows large neon letters state clearly: " José Froilàn González & Cia Automoviles-Camiones." Several Mercedes models are exhibited there and on the rear wall a more than life sized picture shows an overalled driver at the wheel of a racing car, wearing a laurel wreath. This is José Froilàn González who, although officially nothing to do with Mercedes, is a top driver for Scuderia Ferrari and thus in the rival camp to Fangio.

After Fangio, he is Argentina's most competent driver at this time. Physically, he is an entirely different type from Juan, he is corpulent with soft facial features and inwardly is probably without the toughness distinguishing his great compatriot. When he appeared in Europe for the first time in 1950, his fans soon called him the " Puma." His forceful, rough and tough driving methods and unceasing attacks allied to tremendous bombshell starts bring about this comparison with the South American mountain lion. His countrymen, however, simply call him " big head." This nickname, exactly as in the case of Fangio, is no characterization of his personality, but refers directly to the appearance of his big head on its short neck.

Although González is indeed an excellent driver achieving noteworthy results over the years, he is nevertheless always overshadowed by Fangio who, as a person, gets on better in public than the somewhat reserved and gloomy González. Several versions are current in Europe about his origin. He was born on October 5, 1922 in Arrecifes, a place known for its motor sport enthusiasts. The favourite version, because it is the most romantic one, shows the " Puma " as a poor bus driver working in Marimón's firm and by chance discovered by him.

In actual fact, however, contrary to Fangio, there is considerable motor sport heritage in his family. Uncle Julio Peréz was

one of the most popular racing drivers in the 'thirties, making a name for himself in long distance events. Obviously therefore his nephew tried his luck at the wheel early on, first in small events, then in a race on the dirt track of Arrecifes in 1946. There he drove a monoposto built by his compatriot Viglione in 1934 with a 1928 Chevrolet engine. With this old banger González won the preliminary heat, but retired in the final with engine trouble. He contiued driving this machine until 1947 but was never placed " in the money." The explanation is very simple: " Puma " had too " heavy " a foot, in other words, his temperament used to run away with him, resulting in the Viglione special blowing up regularly. At last he got fed up with the unreliable machine and bought another single seater with a 4-cylinder Ford engine. This also would have deserved a place in the museum; its chassis shook up the driver's inner organs just like a cocktail mixer. The radiator was surrounded by a heart shaped grille and nasty wagging tongues said that González meant it to show the size of his battling heart. That he really had courage was to be proved later. González was very fast in this machine, but not very successful; no car withstood his wild driving, yet it was just this run of ill luck and his extremely attractive, dare-devil driving style that aroused the enthusiasm of the spectators. His tear-away starts again and again pulled his fellow competitors along and soon " big head " was called the " whip " of the dirt tracks. The experts knew that this modest boy had great driving talent in him, but he would have to curb his temperament and drive with his head, like Fangio. At last they put him in a Maserati in 1949, but even this car, developed by capable engineers, could not stand up to his " lead foot." In the first race he blew it up, in the second he damaged the car's tail and dragged it along until forced to retire. In Mar del Plata he managed to finish sixth, and came in seventh at Rosario. Before flying to Europe in 1950, he won the preliminary heat in Mar del Plata and was first in Le Cumbre.

The European season began well for him. He was second at Albi on a Ferrari, third at Angoulême and seventh at Zandvoort in Holland. In Marseille, Pau, San Remo, Roubaix, Rheims and Geneva he retired; contracted burns at Monte Carlo when his Maserati was involved in the multiple pile-up on the quay through no fault of his.

But José Froilán González' great hour is imminent. In 1951 Fangio arranges for the Argentine Grands Prix to be run on a narrow twisty circuit in the Palermo park of Buenos Aires.

Argentine's great " Campeon " considers the light, manœuvrable Ferrari the right machine for the twisty Palermo park circuit; fate, however, decrees otherwise. The reason for this is to be found in the office of team chief Alfred Neubauer of Daimler Benz A.G.

When war broke out Daimler Benz owned an appreciable fleet of racing cars and as Allied air attacks pushed further and further into German territory, the cars were removed further eastward and, during the evacuation, some got to Austria, some to various places in Germany, only a few remained behind in Stuttgart. The Red Army confiscated most of them and transported them to Russia, where, it is said, some of them are nowadays exhibited in Moscow's technical universities as models of engineering practice.

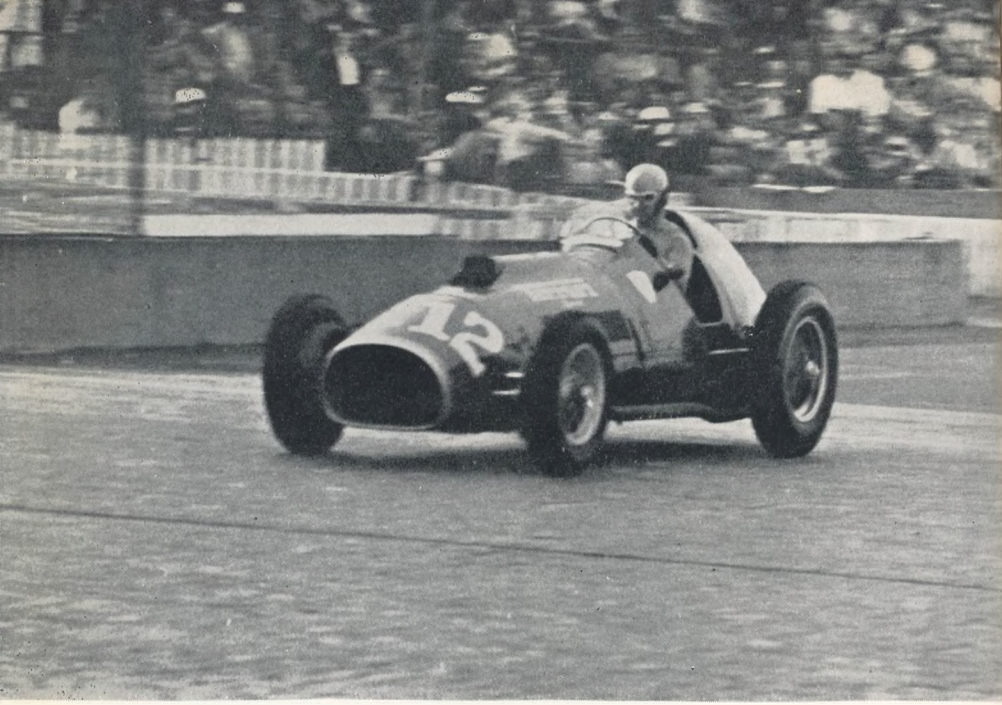
The American millionaire Tommy Lee paid 25,000 dollars to get a Mercedes racing car over to the States; it was found in an Austrian barn. The car was tried out in the Indianapolis 500-mile race but did not cover many laps, the American mechanics being unable to get the complicated machine to perform as it used to.

Racing manager Neubauer organized a search for the missing machines in the first post war years and contrived to hunt down a few of them for return to the works. These were then reconditioned with parts that were still available.

The re-opening of the South American markets decided Dr. Haspel, the managing director of Daimler-Benz to accept the invitation of the Argentinian Government to send the silver racing machines across the ocean during the winter months of 1951. Daimler Benz A.G., aided by the powerful support of Jorge Antonio, is about to try for a foothold in Argentina. A racing success by the famous German marque would help Don Jorge's efforts enormously. Thus, Untertürkheim prepares three of the 1939 Formula cars for the Argentinian excursion. Their 3-litre V.12 supercharged engines give around 460 b.h.p. In Argentina the people are convinced from the first that these monsters must win, therefore they are most anxious to have Juan Manuel Fangio at the wheel, which means that Giuseppe Farina, whom Daimler Benz have put under contract, must be released again. The re-formed racing team now consists of erstwhile European champion Hermann Lang, Fangio and the new man Karl Kling, in place of Rudolf Caracciola, who has refused. Chief of the whole team is of course the world renowned organizer, Alfred Neubauer.

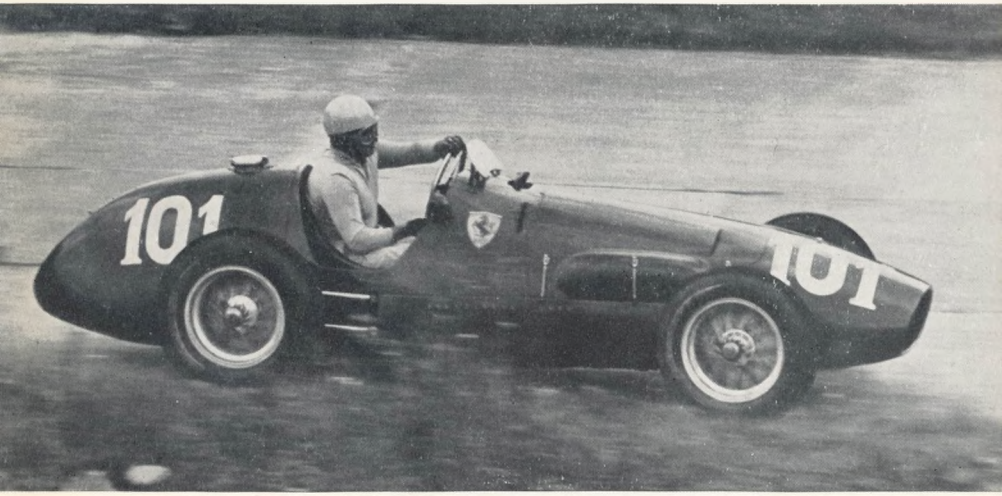
First, Fangio on a Maserati ; Second, Hawthorn on a Ferrari during the German Grand Prix 1953 *on the Nurburgring.*

Farina driving the Formula II Ferrari to victory in the German Grand Prix, 1953.



TOP : *Ascari with the* 4.5 *litre Ferrari at Indianapolis.*

BOTTOM : *Alberto Ascari on a Formula* 2 *Ferrari with which he achieved some of his greatest successes.*



Neubauer knew just how to run his drivers in the days of the great Mercedes victories, between 1934 and 1940. With intuitive certainty he sensed the weak points of the opposition, signalling his men to attack when the right moment came. He would build up a jig-saw picture of his opponents, which consisted of small pieces of information and accurate observation, which in most cases would fit together to form a picture. Whether his capabilities had survived the war would be shown in Buenos Aires.

The 270 pound heavy-weight behaves in the same self-willed manner wherever he goes, his quips always find their mark and even sound funny when they are trite. Born in Neutitschein in Moravia in 1891 he was already organizing and directing races when ten years old! On the basis of newspaper reports he prognosticated results of the international races although unfortunately his forecasts were usually wrong.

" They always performed differently from the way I wanted them to!" the lively old boy says to-day when asked about it.

Neubauer's father, a foreman artisan, died early, and the son therefore had to think about earning a living. He decided to become an officer in the army of the old Austro-Hungarian empire.

A smart young man with exceptional technical gifts, he was accepted as a cadet in the artillery training establishment at Traiskirchen near Vienna. There, however, the theory of ballistics and military discipline were not compatible with the lively imagination of this young cadet whose mind was filled with cars and motoring, and who spent his Sundays reading the " Osterreichische Automobilzeitung " from cover to cover.

In spite of his preoccupation and being an intelligent youth he managed to pass his exams and at last one day reported as an artillery lieutenant to his regiment.

He tells amusing stories about his experiences whilst on manœuvres. Lieutenant Neubauer was of course more interested in motor engineering than in the complexities of the manœuvres.

" One day the captain called me:

" Neubauer!"

" Sir?"

" You will take horse to general headquarters and collect the

manœuvre orders. This is a very pressing and confidential order for you!"

" Yes, sir!"

" I ride off, but en route meet a gun tractor on which several men are working. I rein in my horse.

" Well, what's the matter with it? "

" The thing won't go forward or backward sir!"

" I dismount, tie the horse to the field gun, take off my uniform jacket and examine the tractor."

" Ah, clutch trouble. Soon I'm immersed in work. Midday passes, then afternoon and at last the clutch works again. The gun tractor can drive on. I re-mount my horse and return to my battery. There I am met by a very infuriated captain."

" Neubauer where have you been? Have you the orders?"

" What? You haven't? Have you taken leave of your senses, man? I shall report you to Major Kloiber!"

But the major, understanding Neubauer the motor enthusiast, only meted out a reprimand. When later H.Q. Command required officers for the newly formed Austrian motor-batteries, the major remembered Neubauer and posted him.

Neubauer's task took him to Austro-Daimler, where a no less self-willed engineer built the new tractors for heavy mortars: his name—Ferdinand Porsche. Neubauer got to know him well and this was to be fateful for him later, for at the end of the first world war he stayed with Austro-Daimler and thus remained in close contact with Ferdinand Porsche.

It became Neubauer's job to popularize an idea given to Porsche by Count Kolowrat. The Austrian count induced Porsche, then a director of Austro-Daimler, to build a small car to be called " Sascha," this being the Russian version of Alexander, the Count's christian name.

To publicize the new baby car, a racing model of the same dimensions was built. This was driven by Neubauer in the famous Targa Florio of 1922 that extraordinarily difficult event in Sicily; he finished in 19th position. Considering the 1100 c.c. engine, his times were remarkably good when compared with those of Count Masetti on the Mercedes which had a much bigger capacity. Motoring experts are of the opinion, rightly or wrongly, that Porsche on account of the success of the small Sascha was later inspired to design the Volkswagen.

In 1923 Ferdinand Porsche went to Daimler in Stuttgart as chief designer and took Neubauer with him. The ex-artillery officer made rapid progress there and soon became head of the testing department, in which capacity he raced once more in the Targa, when the new, blown, Mercedes won with ease. He realized soon afterwards that he was no longer suitable as a racing driver and therefore concerned himself with the organization and management of the racing department. When there was no racing his duties were to represent the Company.

At the end of the twenties, Neubauer with young Rudolf Caracciola, a small technical staff and the heavy SS cars swept through half Europe with considerable success.

When the F.I.A. proclaimed the 750 kilogramme Formula for 1934 to 1937, Daimler-Benz started to build a new racing car. This Formula imposed upon designers the task of producing a machine, which, without fuel, coolant and tyres, must not exceed 750 kilogrammes; as an example, the Volkswagen to-day weighs 710 kilos. At Mercedes Benz, Dr. Ing. Nibel designed a 5.6 litre eight cylinder which at the end of the Formula's validity produced 600 b.h.p. This veritable projectile on wheels inaugurated an era of tremendous Mercedes successes, carried on by the 12 cylinder cars of the 3 litre formula of 1938—1940. These successes were inextricably coupled with the names of Neubauer and the drivers Caracciola, Lang, Fagioli, von Brauchitsch and Richard Seaman. Neubauer was then at the peak of world wide popularity, which to a degree exists even to-day.

* * *

The circuit which Fangio selected in the Palermo Park measures 3.5 km. (just over 2 miles). It runs along the wide Avenida Costanera Rafæl Obligado next to the Rio de la Plata. After a hairpin bend it doubles back along the same road and then the drivers must negotiate a semi-circular curve by the Club de Pescadores. After several lesser bends it turns off into the park and back to the river again. A diagram would show the circuit to be in the shape of a battle axe of the olden days.

The three Mercedes are opposed by a majority of 1½ litre blown Maseratis, a few 1½ litre Simca-Gordinis and 2 litre supercharged Ferraris plus several pre-war Alfas. From the point of view of pure brute force Mercedes have the advantage, this fact being well noted by the Argentinian press which is overjoyed that Fangio, the local hero, is being entrusted with a German machine.

His first attempt at handling the car is surprisingly successful and after a few laps he has become familiar with it and puts up excellent lap times. Practice, however, takes place under unfavourable weather conditions; rain is falling and the thermometer shows 59 degrees, an extremely low temperature for the Argentinian summer. When Neubauer and the Mercedes team is presented to President Peron, the head of the Government, Neubauer puts forward a request: " Señor Presidente, please arrange for the rain to stop on race day."

Peron seems to have influence, for a strong sun burns down on race day and it is eighty degrees in the shade, nothing unusual for January in Argentinia, but the German team, coming from wintry Europe are not used to it. It is also too hot for the cars, taken out of " moth balls " after their long enforced rest during the war.

An unbelievable mass of spectators jostle along the circuit as the President in person dispatches the field. The post-war debut of Mercedes is followed in their homeland with enormous interest and hopes. The three silver cars take the lead at once with Fangio in first position, but a short while later he relinquishes the lead to Hermann Lang. This blunt Swabian, increases the distance lap by lap from Fangio, now also overtaken by González. Worry is apparent at the Mercedes pit when Lang's engine loses its crisp note. Neubauer, checking his team's times, is horrified to find that Lang is getting slower, and three laps later amid tremendous enthusiasm from the crowd José Froilán González takes the lead. Fangio has lost so much time through changing the right front wheel, that he has dropped back into fifth place, but yard by yard he fights slowly forward again.

They hold their breath at the Mercedes pit when González stops to refuel on his 37th lap. Lang is in the lead again, but his engine runs irregularly as before. The heat has affected the complicated twelve cylinder engine and soon Lang has to watch the tail of González Ferrari once more.

González achieves a great personal triumph for the first time by beating the famous German cars and winning the Grand Premio le la Nacion Juan D. Peron. Lang is second and Fangio, through superhuman effort manages to be third. Kling, whose Mercedes is also very sick achieves sixth position.

Although Juan Manuel Fangio is so very successful in Europe, ill luck dogs him when driving European cars in his homeland. This is proved when he races in Argentina's second G.P., the one

named after Señora Evita Peron, who personally lowers the starter's flag. Again González wins on his Ferrari from Kling and Lang, whereas Fangio retires. All three Mercedes somehow do not get into their stride, running unevenly after a few laps and not developing full power. Kling wins his team chiefs plaudits by achieving second position even though half asphyxiated by escaping exhaust fumes.

The noteworthy wins of González in the Palermo Park events seem to indicate the possibility of impending serious rivalry between Fangio and " Puma," which during the coming years in Europe becomes more pronounced.

The German cars are shipped back and retire definitely from active participation.

To-day they are exhibited at the Daimler Benz museum in Stuttgart in venerable company with other fine old machines, objects of admiration for the public. Here are assembled famous cars representing a great epoch of international motoring competition.

Modern technique advances too quickly and the struggle for supremacy requires new design ideas and progressive thinking.

This is Fangio's comment about Palermo Park races:

" I have punished myself, for it was I who chose the venue in Palermo Park with the intention of preventing the powerful Mercedes cars from developing their power. For the short, nippy Ferrari it was certainly the ideal circuit!"

CHAPTER IX

The Great Son

The summer heat lay oppressively over Paris that late afternoon of the 26th July, 1925. In the newspaper offices the editors sorted the incoming news items; nothing much was happening that day except in the sports department, where there was high activity. At Linas-Montlhéry the Grand Prix of France was in progress and the latest news was about due.

In the sports editor's office of " Le Monde " the sub-editor nervously kept looking at his watch for if his chief did not come in soon he would have to put the edition to bed. Shrugging his shoulders he lit a cigarette with the thought: " Oh well nothing happening to-day. So much the better, I'll be able to pack it in an hour earlier. What can I do tonight and in this heat?"

The insistent peal of the telephone bell brought him back to reality. Lifting off the receiver he waved a printer who had just come in to a chair.

" The chief. . . ."

" Hallo, yes?"

" Yes, I am ready to take down, is it likely to be much?"

" Who is dead. . . .?"

" Who . . . Ascari? The Italian. . . .?

When . . . what just now? Collided with a wooden fence, the Alfa turned over! Yes I see . . . a terrible tragedy!"

Thoughtfully the sub-editor replaced the receiver and ran his hand through his hair. The printer tried to draw attention to his presence by a gentle cough. The journalist whispered, as if to himself: " The great Antonio Ascari, a fantastic driver. . . . A shadow descends upon the Grand Prix of France at Montlhéry. . . ."

In Milan, the eight year old Alberto Ascari trying to understand that he would never see his father again, remembered all those unforgettable incidents, in which his father had figured—truly a boy's ideal. Not quite two years before he was allowed to accompany his father on a lap round Monza; pride filled him still at the thought.

One of the most brilliant drivers of his time, Antonio Ascari left his family comfortably off, being the owner of a sound motor business in Milan. When his son grew up he took charge of the business in Corso Sempione 60.

The motor trade, however, was not enough for him as he had inherited his father's love for the sport of racing. He determined to become a successful driver like his father.

In 1936 he raced for the first time on a motor cycle; five years of this sport taught him a great deal. Two wheeled racing requires great courage and a fine feeling for balance. On four wheels one can usually correct mistakes to a certain degree without having an accident, whereas on two wheels the slightest infraction of the possible limits means a crash. Many famous drivers began their careers on motor cycles: Nuvolari, Rosemeyer, Lang and many more.

Enzo Ferrari, old friend of the dead Ascari, followed the development of young Alberto as a driver with considerable attention. When Ferrari began to build sports-racing cars in 1940 he arranged for one to be driven by Ascari junior in the Mille Miglia.

Whilst the war had stopped motor racing almost everywhere, events still took place in Italy, untouched as yet by the great conflict. The German team Von Hanstein/Bäumer won the Mille Miglia in 1940 on a 2 litre B.M.W. with fully aero-dynamic enclosed body, a shortened course near Brescia being used which had to be covered several times.

Ascari's debut on the Ferrari was not noteworthy in any degree nor was his drive on a Maserati at Tripoli in North Africa, or in the Targa Florio.

The great career began in the post war period and after a few races the public soon took notice of his ability, commenting that he had great talent like his father. Alberto drove a Maserati and became friendly with Luigi Villoresi who belonged to the older generation of drivers. The friendship soon became close and the two became inseparable. This was particularly useful for Alberto, because Villoresi, who is called Gigi by his friends, imparted to him a great deal of racing knowledge culled from many years of experience.

When Commendatore Ferrari put Alberto under contract, Villoresi was also in the team. From now on, the white haired pleasant Villoresi appeared always jointly with the dark, massively built Ascari on the famous circuits of the world.

Although Villoresi never quite seemed to regain his old form after his terrible crash in Geneva, Ascari's star rose higher and higher in the racing world as time went by.

To-day a bronze bust of Antonio Ascari on a simple wooden plinth graces the entrance hall of Corso Sempione 60, erected by a thoughtful son to the memory of an unforgettable father. Daylight is almost excluded from this hall and the bust stands there in semi-darkness as if in the solitude of a chapel. The street noises hardly penetrate here, nor does the heat of the Italian summer. On the first floor a simple wooden door bears a brass plate—Alberto Ascari. Here with his charming wife Mietta, his daughter Patricia and a son who perpetuates his grandfather's name Antonio, lived the man who unfortunately lost his life in an accident last year. Beyond doubt he was the greatest driver of post-war Italy.

Alberto Ascari, the designer and record breaker Piero Taruffi, Villoresi and González were due to race the newly developed 4½ litre Ferrari in 1951 and to pit their strength against the might of Alfa Romeo.

The 1951 Alfetta was better than ever, its output close on 400 b.h.p. Whereas the Scuderia Ferrari drivers raced very frequently, the Alfetta's only did a few training laps at Monza. The Alfa engineers sensed already that Ferrari would not rest until they vanquished their fiercest opponent. Thus the people from Milan were preparing their stake in the world championship with the greatest care.

After the usual provincial Grands Prix which seemingly form the overture for the world championship, the first grande épreuve of 1951 is the G.P. of Switzerland at Berne. Signor Alessio, new managing director of Alfa, decides however to run the cars first in the Daily Express Trophy race at Silverstone, the drivers being Fangio, Farina, new team member Felice Bonetto and chief tester Consalvo Sanesi. Ascari and his team mates do not appear, but Reginald Parnell starts as an independent with the new 4.5 Ferrari. The first of the preliminary heats shows that the Ferrari is almost the Alfetta's equal; Fangio only wins by very little from Parnell, and Farina is first in the second heat. In the final, Parnell takes the lead at once, but a tremenduous rain storm breaks and the organizers are forced to stop the race for

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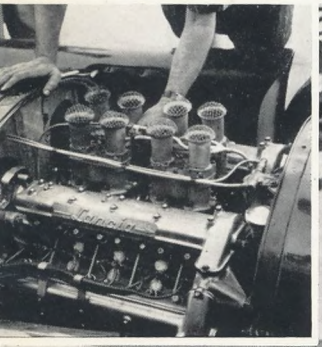
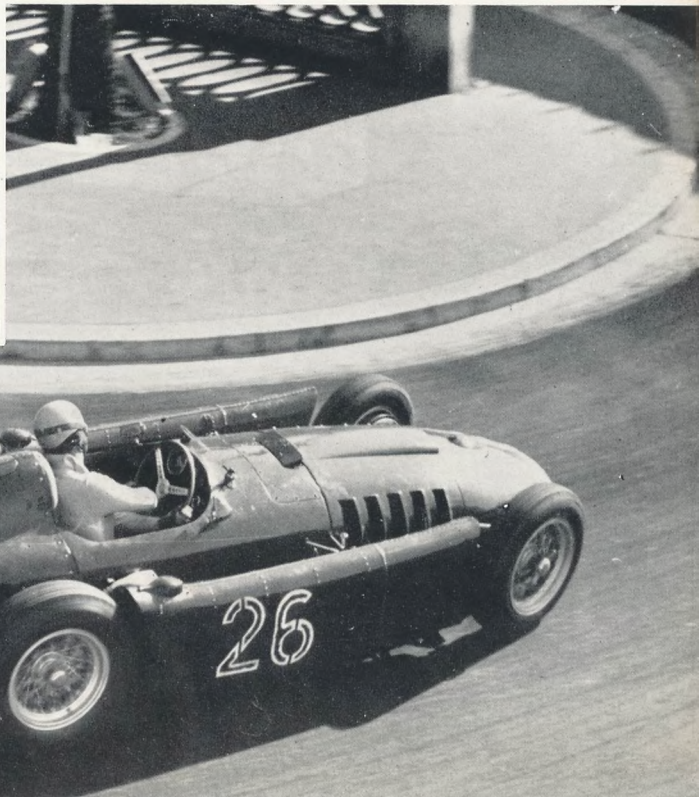
Ascari, a driver never to be forgotten.

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safety reasons after the sixth lap. Fangio is in third position at that moment and in the final classification Parnell is declared the winner and Fangio runner up.

At the Bremgarten circuit on the outskirts of the Swiss capital, the rain drips down monotonously and the spectators huddle under umbrellas. It is noticeably cool and the May sun hides behind thick banks of cloud. Even when the cars are wheeled to the starting area there is no lessening of rain, on the contrary it looks as if the wetness has come to stay.

The three new Ferraris driven by Ascari, Villoresi and Taruffi are opposed by four Alfettas in the hands of Fangio, Farina and Sanesi, plus de Graffenried, the Swiss driver; he has been lent a car as a gesture by the Italians towards their hosts. González is not yet officially a member of the Scuderia Ferrari and drives a French Talbot.

After the flag has dropped, the roaring pack enveloped in spray, makes a fantastic picture. Fangio takes the lead and guides his car competently over the slippery surface. After a few laps it looks as if neither Villoresi nor Ascari can seriously endanger the Alfetta. Villoresi's pursuit of the leaders, Fangio and Farina, ends in a spin on the 13th lap and he subsequently retires. Ascari does not appear to be on form and everything points to a clear Alfetta victory. Fangio, who had to abandon the lead whilst quickly refuelling manages to wrest first place again after a brilliant sprint. Then Taruffi attacks and gets his 4.5 Ferrari closer and closer to Farina, until he is right on the latter's tail in spite of bad visibility caused by fountains of water thrown up from the Alfetta's rear wheels. Fangio receiving a pit signal informing him of the impending danger responds by making fastest lap and increasing the distance between himself and those lying second and third.

After an exciting tussle Taruffi squeezes past Farina on the penultimate lap thus getting his Ferrari into second place. Juan

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TOP : *Maranello threesome at Indianapolis : Meazza, chief mechanic ; Ascari,* 1952 *and* 1953 *world champion ; and right, Lampredi, Ferrari chief designer.*

MIDDLE : *The V.8 Lancia engine with the twin-choke Weber carburetters.*

BOTTOM : *Ascari with the* 2.5*-litre Lancia in the Station bend at Monte Carlo.*

is the winner and therefore acquires points in this, the first heat of the championship.

Alongside the circuit Alfred Neubauer from Mercedes Benz watches the potentialities of the Italians; Karl Kling and Hermann Lang are with him. The racing experts welcome the interest displayed by the legendary racing strategist, and consider this a good sign. The people in Stuttgart-Untertürkheim do in fact intend to enter Grand Prix racing again provided that the FIA extends the current formula which is due to finish at the end of 1953. The FIA however decides on a new formula for 1954. This will be 2.5 litre unsupercharged or 750 c.c. supercharged. To develop a new car for the remaining formula period appears to be a pointless pursuit as far as Daimler Benz is concerned, an understandable view point because of the enormous sums to be expended and the time involved. In technical circles and elsewhere the hope is expressed that the three pointed star will again be seen on the starting lines. Neubauer is determined to have that man Fangio in his new équipe, if a new team does come into being.

In Spa-Francorchamps the three Alfa drivers Fangio, Farina and Sanesi again oppose the Ferrari phalanx of Ascari, Taruffi and Villoresi. A lively struggle begins immediately following the start and after the first lap five red cars roar past the pits wheel to wheel; Villoresi in the lead followed by Farina, Ascari, Fangio and Taruffi. Soon, however, the picture changes and Farina takes charge followed a little later by Fangio. The Alfettas put up terrific speeds which cannot be matched by the Ferraris, who are beginning to lose ground. When Farina is flagged into the pits on the 15th lap for refuelling Fangio takes the lead, to stop in his turn on the next lap. Zanardi and the Alfa mechanics work with the speed of light. The fuel is in and now only the rear wheels need changing. Fangio gets ready to re-start but cannot get away.

" The wheel, the wheel! " yells Zanardi.

" What's the matter with the damn wheel?" replies Fangio, climbing out of his seat to look at the trouble. Two broken spokes have wrapped themselves round the hub in such a way that Zanardi has to work for 14 minutes to free it. . . .

14 minutes lost. . . . Three times Farina sweeps by before Fangio rejoins the race. But the cool-headed Argentinian hardly seems to worry about this unexpected slice of ill luck; with remarkable equanimity he finishes in ninth position. Again it

seems as if the contest for the championship title will be a very dramatic one.

The circuit of Rheims lies in the middle of green fields and there the Grand Prix of Europe will be contested over a distance of 601 kilometres (about 373 miles). González is due to drive a works Ferrari for the first time.

Ascari leads for nine laps, then Fangio overtakes. But Zanardi soon shakes his head in annoyance: his trained ear has detected that Fangio's engine is no longer running crisply; sure enough Chueco halts at the pits and makes a gesture—finish! Team manager Guidotti grabs his flag and signals old Fagioli to come in. Fagioli climbs out and makes way for Fangio, who roars off after the disappearing leaders. Farina is still number one, followed by none other than González, who shows clearly to-day that he is more of a " puma " than a " big head." Fangio lurking already in fourth place has just made fastest lap at 193.112 k.p.h. (about 120 m.p.h.); the French applaud enthusiastically when this time is given over the loudspeakers.

In the meantime González has had to hand over his car to Ascari, albeit regretfully. There is discipline in the works équipes and it is quite understandable that the ace driver of Scuderia Ferrari has certain privileges. Ascari holds second place for Ferrari but Fangio approaches threateningly. Zanardi looks pleased, he knows the ways of his master and senses that a surprise is imminent; sure enough he is right.

The leader Farina must stop for tyres; in the heat of the moment he leaves his braking too late, and overshoots the pit. His mechanics push him back a good way and two minutes elapse before the man from Turin rejoins the fray.

Alberto Ascari is now number one on the scoreboard, Fangio still hovering behind him. On the 50th lap Ascari stops for wheels; Fangio takes over the lead never to lose it again until the chequered flag falls. Now the points table for the championship reads thus: Fangio 15, Farina 14, Ascari 9.

After the wonderful impression made by the Ferraris at Rheims, engineer Satta, an important man in the design department of Alfa Romeo went over to Aurelio Lampredi and congratulated him on the successful design of the 12 cylinder. If a reticent person like Satta, who looks more like a thoughtful professor than an engineer, takes the trouble to do that, it is a sure sign that the Ferrari is to be taken seriously, but just how seriously is shown later at Silverstone.

José Froilan González is due to make his second appearance as a Ferrari works driver on this airfield circuit. We know him to be a short distance " sprinter," full of competitive spirit and very temperamental; he is at his best on a short twisty circuit. Practice proves that Silverstone is just his cup of tea, and he throws his car into corners with such spirit that it is a pleasure to watch him. Fastest practice lap falls to him, followed by Fangio, Farina and Ascari. Thus two Ferraris and two Alfettas are side by side on the front row of the starting grid.

These results in practice are registered sceptically by the Alfa pit. Guidotti wrinkles his forehead and is obviously doubtful. This chap González is clearly tremendously keen—the type of man who, fired by burning ambition, achieves outstanding results. Until now, he always has been overshadowed by Fangio. At Palermo Park he was highly appreciated by his countrymen and now at the wheel of an equivalent car, he wishes to prove to all Europe that he is as good as Fangio, at least as far as driving ability is concerned. Dark clouds hang menacingly overhead as the Union Jack drops for the start of the British G.P. and the aces roar off in a frighteningly close melée. González leads already on the second lap and Fangio is wedged tight in fifth position. Soon he improves on this, and prepares to attack González whom he manages to overtake on the tenth lap; but he simply cannot shake off the " Puma." Lap after lap those two duel: the corpulent González dicing after Fangio, who in his turn just cannot out-distance his pursuer. Although Guidotti gives Fangio the danger signal, the latter cannot do more than drive on the limit, for if the opponent has the more powerful machine even better driving does not help much.

Fangio is too clever to stake the chance of the championship and when González' attack continues unabated he lets him pass, and " Puma " roars by impetuously. Fangio tries determinedly to hold on to him and the speed of those two is so high that third man Farina only follows a minute later. But now Fangio must stop for fuel and González uses this to increase the gap inexorably. His lead is one minute 15 secs. when he himself must refuel. The Ferrari mechanics know what is at stake and despatch him again after 22 seconds. Once more Fangio shows his great artistry at the wheel and gobbles up two seconds a lap of his rival's advantage. But the Ferrari pit is quick to realize this and signal González to speed up, Fangio cannot change the issue any more and follows the winner González 51 seconds later past the chequered flag. Although he

figures only as runner-up in the British Grand Prix, he has been able to increase his world championship lead by 6 valuable points because Farina had to retire; so now the score is: Fangio 21 points—Farina 15.

If you turn west at Koblenz, a forty mile drive will bring you to the Nürburgring, the circuit in the Eifel mountains. The soil of the basalt mountains that predominate is very poor and yields little. The people who live there have a hard time of it and in the critical years of the early twenties this was even worse. Then, one day, the local head of administration, one Dr. Otto Creutz, conceived a courageous plan to ease the lot of the local population. With governmental relief aid, Creutz hoped to bring to life a project, which not only would provide the local menfolk with work but would also encourage tourist traffic for all time in a spectacular manner. So one day Creutz knocked at the door of his regional chief:

"What can I do for you Dr. Creutz?" said the eminent personage.

Creutz quietly opened his portfolio, extracted some drawings and calculations and expounded his ideas: "You know, sir, that the Eifel is a distressed area; the soil yields little and the farmers must work very hard for a poor harvest. There is no industry, and although the country is attractive there are no visitors, for we are poorly off in regard to communications. This causes me considerable anxiety because relief works alone cannot remedy matters for long, there should be a complete change!"

The chief listened with interest, then he interrupted:

"Yes, Dr. Creutz I know your problems, know them only too well. But how can you remedy matters? Bring in industry? I doubt you'd be successful, for factories need good rail and road connections to carry their goods abroad and to bring in raw materials. Tell me, what have you in mind?"

Creutz was silent a moment, then straightening himself, he said:

"Let us build a car testing track, sir, a race track on which the automobile industry can test their vehicles and where we could hold every year big, international motor races. The circuit must be unique, grandiose, something which Germany and Europe will take note of. I want to build a Nürburgring round the Nürburg and I have brought the plans to show you, they were worked out by Eichler. The project would cost some 15 million marks; I believe we could find this sum in the relief

works planning and the government would have to be won over. Year after year many thousands of people would then travel to the Eifel, they would have to eat and sleep and thus spend money which would help to relieve local want. Once they have got to know the Eifel country, they will come again and even spend their holidays there!"

Dr. Creutz' discourse was so eloquent that its appeal began to persuade the chief. This Dr. Creutz is very bright—one would have to consider his idea, he thought. Thus, the interest shown by the top of the hierarchy was in itself already a measure of success.

So Dr. Creutz and the architect Eichler built the Nürburgring. The foundation stone was laid on the 27th September 1925 and not quite 2 years later a circuit came into being, unparalleled in its beauty. In June 1927 it was inaugurated by the first Eifel race. The circuit is 28.264 kilometres long (about 18 miles) and with its 172 bends, extends right around the ruins of castle Nürburg, it is sub-divided into the south loop, 7.747 kms (about 5 miles) and the north loop of 22.81 kms (about 13 miles). There is a generously proportioned start and finish area with pits, a drivers " camp " with lockable garages, model time keeping arrangements and naturally also grandstands, incorporating a hotel and restaurant. When the German and foreign pressmen saw the Nürburgring for the first time, they were tremendously impressed and before long it was named the most beautiful circuit in Europe. The drivers themselves said it was the most difficult Grand Prix circuit ever, which mercilessly revealed who was worthwhile as a driver of racing cars and who was not. The experts all agreed that here was a track where cars could be tested pitilessly and in a manner that would show up every weakness.

Here Alberto Ascari won the German Grand Prix on a Ferrari in 1950. Fangio raced here for the first time in 1951 in the same event and showed conclusively what an outstanding and consummate driver he is. He did not require much time to master this difficult course and never seemed to worry, even when precipices yawned threateningly alongside the road. His body accepted patiently the bumps and knocks meted out by the bucking car. It is quite incredible how the vehicles are stressed, and how devilish are the centrifugal forces and vibration ever seeking to wear down and break up the machine.

Fangio is unimpressed by his colleagues' statements that this

circuit contains every hazard likely to be encountered by a racing driver. For him these difficulties merely constitute a challenge to his skill, devised by a bright engineering brain as the universal solution for an ideal racing circuit. It was just that it was artificially engineered and not created by nature like the tracks of the Pampa or the Cordilleras, or even the Bolivian forests. It was on those tracks that Fangio acquired the tremendous stamina that enables him to withstand every European race.

Castle Nürburg proudly stands above the multi-coloured woods of the Eifel. It already stood there when the knights of old hunted the stag and bear in the thick forests, or started off south on the crusades. To-day the noise of high powered engines echoes from the mountains, to become lost in a thousand resonances among the dark firs.

In this German Grand Prix of 1951 Farina is off first but on the south loop Fangio comes up alongside, and leads as they roar past on the opposing straight. As if tortured the engines howl as gears are changed down before the grandstand curve. Once more the cars flash past the eyes of the spectators as they cross the bridge and then disappear behind the trees.

When the cars reappear after the first lap, Fangio leads, followed by Ascari, who knows the ring intimately; after the fourth lap the positions are reversed and Ascari is in first place. After six laps Fangio refuels and changes wheels in 38 seconds. This is enough to give González the chance to slip into second place and when Ascari stops for fuel and tyres on the ninth lap, the Puma takes over the lead. A lap later Ascari is first again because of González' fuel stop, Bonetto (Alfetta) retires and so does Farina owing to engine trouble. The German driver Paul Pietsch who has been lent a works Alfa, crashes. Fangio's Alfa is now the marque's sole representative to oppose the Ferrari phalanx. Once more on the eleventh lap he puts on speed to overtake González and, a little later, Ascari. But this triumph is short lived for he loses his lead on the fourteenth lap when he must refuel and change wheels again. Three laps later the new Ferrari racing manager Ugolini flags in Ascari for a wheel change and fuel. Meazza and his helpers do their job in 36.8 secs. and Ascari is off again before Fangio has appeared. Once more the Argentinian makes a bid to reverse the positions but his transmission is giving trouble which on the Nürburgring of all places spells a hopeless situation. Thus Ascari's Ferrari passes the finishing line before Juan, who in his turn is followed by González.

Farina can no longer endanger Fangio's world championship, but a new adversary has appeared, Alberto Ascari. Now it is no longer a question of team mates but two drivers of rival concerns. When the Italian flag unfurls on the victory flagstaff, Aurelio Lampredi telephones Ferrari who is waiting in Modena:

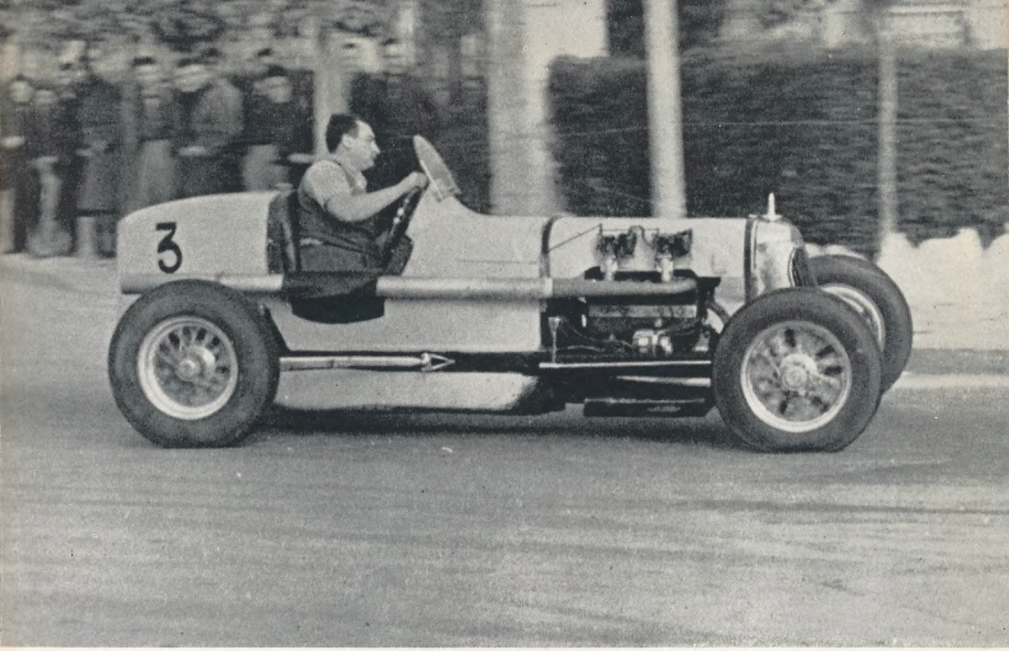
" Our new car has withstood brilliantly the hardest test of the year at the Nürburgring. We are well on our way to breaking the Alfa run of success. The highest title of motor sport is within our grasp!"

The Italian enthusiasts are in tremendous suspense about the outcome of the Italian Gran Premio in Monza. At Alfa's in Turin the racing department works under high pressure.

That bad luck never strikes just once is clearly shown at Monza. Colombo certainly has done great things for his Alfettas, for they are putting up wonderful times here including Fangio's almost unbelievable lap time of 200.35 k.p.h. (about 125 m.p.h.), the eight cylinder engine now giving off nearly 420 b.h.p. But Maranello has also benefited from the lessons of the Nürburgring, so that the contest promises to be very exciting. Thousands of Milanese and all of the Alfa people are up and about, for nobody believes that Ferrari will beat Alfa on their own doorstep—but that is exactly what happens.

The Milan works suffer a crushing defeat in this Grand Prix of Italy, the race having begun with a fascinating duel between Ascari and Fangio, the latter falling back already on the 14th of the 80 laps due to tyre trouble. Although he manages to get into third place again, he has to retire finally because of engine failure after half the race is run. That day at Monza continues with more Alfa " mortality " so that at the end only one lone car opposes the overwhelming might of the Ferraris who run like clockwork and are driven by Ascari, González, Villoresi and Taruffi. The sole survivor is Bonetto's car, taken over by Farina. Ascari wins the Grand Prix in front of González, then Farina, Bonetto, Villoresi and Taruffi. The championship score is 28 points to Fangio, 25 to Ascari and 21 to González. And now Alfa prepare for the last decisive round, the Spanish Grand Prix at Barcelona.

Scuderia Alfa-Romeo has its race headquarters in the shops of the Daimler-Benz agency in Barcelona. The Alfa mechanics seem tired as they perform their tasks, since Colombo could not let them rest between Monza and Barcelona. Again and again he laid on test runs at Monza, for the Alfettas must get their



TOP :
Jose Froilan Gonzalez with his 4-cylinder Ford Special at Tigre.

BOTTOM
Close-up of the "Puma."

TOP :
The burning Ferrari-Squalo of Gonzalez on the Thillois bend at Rheims.

BOTTOM :
The all-conquering Mercedes-Benz Racing Team after the British Grand Prix on 16*th July,* 1955. *Reading from the left : Dr. Uhlenhaut, J. M. Fangio, P. Taruffi, S. Moss, K. Kling, Racing Manager, R. Neubauer.*

own back. More is at stake than just a race victory; a famous car manufacturer battles for prestige.

Only in Spain and Argentina are there numbers of spectators at motor car races to compare with those of Germany. The eyes of 300,000 people follow excitedly as the cars, enveloped in a thick cloud of dust, disappear down the Avenida Generalissimo Franco, this superb avenue which runs right across Barcelona and called " Diagonale " by the locals. At the end of the " diagonal " where the road carries on to Madrid, the racing cars turn sharp right into a grove of plane trees.

The two opponents, Colombo and Lampredi, follow their creations like hawks until they vanish from view, and when they can no longer see the vehicles themselves, they listen to the high squeal of the Alfetta and the deeper howl of the Ferrari. Deep lines on Lampredi's face show the strain he is feeling, yet Colombo appears serene. Hiss boss, managing director Alessio, is among the spectators, proof of the importance the Milan firm attaches to this race. Yet Colombo is confident, he feels that everything will go well to-day. Not for nothing have his cars been tested for thousands of kilometres in the last two weeks and the superchargers modified to provide more power. Things are different, however, for Lampredi who has had to arrive at a compromise for Ferrari. The rear axle layout is the weak point of the new car and the undulating top dressing of the Pedralbes circuit imposes high strain on this very part. To make it easier for the car's rear end Lampredi has decided to use one size smaller tyres than those employed at Monza. . . .

Ascari rockets into the lead at the start but Fangio seems to be glued to his rear wheels. The championship is so much in the balance that one of them must win outright to gain the coveted title and consequently a very high speed is soon reached. Trouble starts on the sixth lap with Taruffi having tyre bothers although he is known to be very easy on his tyres. Next, Villoresi arrives slowly at his pit with a flapping tread and on the ninth lap Ascari finds that his hopes of the world title are definitely scotched as he too falls a victim to tyre trouble. Fangio's path is now clear and, well in the lead, he finishes the race. González saves the Ferrari honour by coming in second. Alfa have hit back successfully, but the people in command at the works are quite aware that the results of the next world championship are by no means a foregone conclusion. The Alfetta, now developed up to the limit of its possibilities, is unlikely to be able to hold the new Ferrari, for Lampredi can go a lot further with it yet.

That evening there is a festive occasion at the Ritz Hotel in Barcelona.

After a veritable second Grand Prix of speeches, the new world champion, in expressing his thanks, modestly pays tribute to Alfa and no less sincerely to his fellow drivers for the fine contests they have provided for him. Ascari smiles a little ruefully perhaps, as he thinks of the past and of the future.

When Fangio lands a few days later on the Pistarini airfield in Buenos Aires, an overwhelming welcome is accorded him by an enormous mass of people.

He is received by the President, and the press devotes whole columns to him. From a simple lad he has become a national hero, yet in spite of all these honours he remains a modest man. Now he belongs to the élite of racing drivers and having become Campeon del Mundo he has also acquired extensive responsibilities, for in the future his people will always expect outstanding results from him.

CHAPTER X

Setback

Jorge Sabaté stands thoughtfully before the drawing board in his studio in Buenos Aires. After long deliberation his pencil flies boldly over the white paper. The job to be done has been commissioned by the highest authority. The president wishes a motor car stadium to be created outside the gates of Argentina's capital, a stadium incorporating all modern knowledge in this field which will fulfil every requirement and Sabaté is the man chosen to design it. He has made a study of the famous continental circuits and thinks he has conceived an idea, the realization of which will put all other existing track layouts in the shade. His clever hands trace the fine, cobweb-like lines to form a sensible, homogeneous whole and in a very short time he draws the design for the Autodromo of Buenos Aires. On a relatively small, flat piece of ground a circuit will be built, allowing for 8 different road combinations, the whole to be surfaced with a non-skid dressing which cannot soften even under the hottest sun. Total width will be 30 feet and the start and finish area as much as 63 feet. Tens of thousands of spectators will be accommodated on large scale grandstands and Sabaté has naturally allowed for pits, garages, time-keeping, meteorological services and all those other items which make up a complete racing circuit.

The main point of the design however, is this: the entire circuit can be seen from the stands so that the spectators will not only see the cars hurtle past, but they can keep them in sight in all positions and from all perspectives. Thus a type of racing will ensue which is fully compatible with the temperament and mentality of the South Americans.

Sabaté's plans find universal approval, the necessary finance is forthcoming and building commences at once. After only 10 months the " Autodromo de 17 Octobre " is complete. It is inaugurated in the presence of Peron, and Fangio wins by a small margin from González, both driving 2 litre Ferraris.

Eight days later there is another race, for Argentina wishes to see the new world champion in action. Again the winner is Fangio, González retiring on this occasion.

Fortune smiles on Fangio in Buenos Aires, now that the races are run on the Autodromo instead of Palermo Park. Further, the Argentine Automobile Club applies to the FIA for permission to open the 1953 racing season with the G.P. of Argentina which will count as the first round in the world championship. The rapid strides made by Fangio and González have no little influence on this development, for although racing cars are not built in Argentina at least the country produces outstanding drivers and a tremendous interest in the sport. A little later Fangio also wins the Gran Premio of Piriapolis in Montevideo.

Then, an item of news comes with bomb-like impact: Alfa Romeo has decided not to compete in the 1952 championship but to concentrate only on sports car racing. Now what about Fangio? Although he will naturally drive for the Milan works in sports car events, all these are still far away.

The European race organizers draw their own conclusions from Alfa's decision. Since the excitement and tension in 1951 depended upon the struggle between Alfa and Ferrari and became intensified from race to race, the Formula 1 Grands Prix of 1952 would be one sided affairs contested only by Ferrari, in view of the fact that their cars would have no real equal. But the organizers said to themselves " no one will pay to see this," and mentally reckoned the enormous costs of running motor races. There is but one alternative: to organize all Grands Prix for formula 2 cars, for here Ferrari will not be alone and serious competition can be expected. There is Gordini in France, Count Orsi's factory in Modena, where the finishing touches are being put to a 2 litre Maserati, together with Alfa, Connaught, Cooper, E.R.A. and H.W.M. in England; a few Veritas-Meteor's and an A.F.M. in Germany.

So Ferrari in Maranello might just as well put his 4.5 litre into mothballs, except for a few Formula 1 races in France and England. But does he do so? Of course not! Instead, the Commendatore sets his cap at Indianapolis where Ascari is due to start in the famous 500 mile race, after the car has undergone some modification.

The Americans, mindful of this, do not underrate the appearance of the Ferrari; once before a 3 litre supercharged Maserati has run away from the specially built American machines. The great question now is, where will Fangio go?

Early on he arrives in Europe with the intention of driving a six cylinder Maserati. This 160 b.h.p. machine might well endanger the four cylinder Ferrari Lampredi has designed for Formula 2, which caters for unsupercharged machines of up to 2 litres or 500 c.c. blown; all firms interested in racing have however decided on the normally aspirated 2 litre engine.

Then Fangio receives a most interesting offer from England, to drive the new B.R.M. The Argentinians who have heard very little about it ask themselves what manner of machine it is.

Although the British Motor Industry has since the war produced some outstanding sports cars, it has not brought out anything by way of pure racing machinery able to compete with the Italians. This fact worries the pre-war driver Raymond Mays and he decides to do something about it. He calls together well known firms in the motor industry, to found a trust, with a view to producing a racing car. Eventually the British Racing Motors Trust comes into being which builds a formula 1 sixteen cylinder 1½ litre racing car at Bourne. " A substantial design," says the press, " a vehicle superior in power to all others designed since the war!" This is quite true, but nevertheless the B.R.M. seems overpowered and such a highly bred vehicle requires a lengthy period of development to eradicate initial snags; this however, requires a great deal of money to be donated by the firms in the Trust. All of them, occupying important positions within the industry, have their own opinions—typical of British individuality. Mays has the difficult task of correlating the varying interests so that the B.R.M. should finally see the light of day. The car, however, generally breaks down for varying reasons and cannot at present challenge the Italian position.

Raymond Mays invites Fangio, González and young Stirling Moss to try the B.R.M. Fangio is delighted and convinced of its quality. He achieves respectable lap times, but the B.R.M. never finishes. The experts are of the opinion that Peter Berthon, the car's designer, could well get the car " au point " if he were working for a development department of a big motor manufacturer.

Fangio's new responsibilities force him to travel back and forth between Britain and Italy. For instance, The Ulster Trophy is run near Belfast on the 7th June, but the B.R.M. retires. Immediately after the race Juan flies to Paris because the Monza G.P. takes place on the 8th and he wants to drive a Maserati there. On account of bad weather he cannot fly from Paris, so

friends lend him a car and he drives through the night towards Milan. At 2 p.m., an hour before the start, he arrives at Monza, tired out. Since he has not practised, for this race, it is necessary for all his opponents to agree to his starting, which of course they do. People try to persuade the Argentinian not to drive, but he does not heed his advisers.

Start! The cars are off and Fangio manages the new Maserati well. At the end of the first lap Ascari is in the lead.

The Carabinieri standing on the inside of the Lesmo curve under the old trees step back a little as the pack comes hurtling along on the first lap. Too much has already happened on this spot. Hardly anyone to-day remembers the dreadful G.P. of Italy when an oil pool sealed the fate of 3 famous drivers. An old " Capitano " who is in charge, begins the story as the cars issue from the dusk of the park into the bright sunlight.

" That was a race, that day in 1933, Alfa, Bugatti and Maserati fighting it out. No one could have prevented it, they were just as obsessed with speed as these chaps to-day. I remember well how they roared up—their heads pulled in a bit and eyes unswervingly fixed on this dangerous bend. Then it happened, like a bolt from the blue: Campari left the road, Borzacchini shot into the bushes and, to complete the dance of death, Czaykowsky also slid off the road, his car catching alight; all killed in one day!"

The captain has scarcely finished when the leaders appear again, about to enter the bend. Someone pulls the captain back, a red car flies through the air like a leaf carried by the wind. Two, three, four somersaults and it crashes into the escarpment. The driver is thrown out in an arc and falls, to lie still after a convulsive jerk. The first-aid men overcome their shock, run to pick him up and carry him to the ambulance under the trees.

" He's alive, thank God he's alive!" One of the first aid men calls out to the Carabinieri just before they push the stretcher into the ambulance.

The Argentine radio reporter yells excitedly into his microphone: " Fangio is missing. Fangio has not returned after this lap. The cars have just passed the start and finish area again—without him!" Looking over to the green expanse behind the pits he just catches a glimpse of an ambulance driving towards the Autodromo's exit. Just then an assistant hands him a note reading " Fangio has had a severe accident at Lesmo, his Maserati has somersaulted several times."

A little later a phone call to the hospital elicits the fact that he has a broken vertebrae in the neck and sustained head injuries, but there is no danger to his life.

So ends the 1952 season for the Argentinian driver. His convalescence makes rapid progress however and he is already among the spectators when Monza witnesses the G.P. of Italy in September. Although his iron constitution has overcome the serious accident there is, as yet, no question of racing again. The champion, his neck in a plaster cast, seeks rest and convalescence in Viareggio.

In the meantime young Ascari paves the way to the championship with victory after victory. Taruffi in the Ferrari wins the Grand Prix of Switzerland, Ascari being in Indianapolis at that time, where however he is eliminated through an accident which leaves him unharmed. Then he wins the G.P's of Europe, France, England, Holland, Italy and the G.P. of Germany for the third time. This victory gives him also the title of Nürburgring champion, a title only once before awarded and then to Rudolf Caracciola, who had won there on three occasions before the war. As is expected, Ascari wins the world championship.

In 1952 the cars with the three pointed star appeared again on the world's circuits. Since the FIA did not extend the current racing formula, Daimler-Benz stopped work on the planned racing car project, but the development chief Rudolf Uhlenhaut designed and built a sports car in complete secrecy.

The six cylinder engine of the 300 S was improved and developed to produce almost 170 b.h.p. This power plant was then fitted, canted at a 40 degrees angle, into a light aircraft-type space-tube frame, clad with light alloy ærodynamic body-work. Thus the 300 SL came into being and this new machine, developed from the series production model 300 S was down to run for the first time in the Mille Miglia, there to meet the Ferrari, in its turn changed from a racing into a sports car. Kling with co-driver Hans Klenk finished second after the Ferrari of Giovanni Bracco. Kling then won the sports car race at Berne, whereas the team Lang/Riess were victorious in the 24 hours of Le Mans, Lang also winning the Jubilee event on the Nürburgring. This successful design had its greatest hour however in the Carrera Panamericana in Mexico, the experienced pair Kling/Klenk being first in this gruelling 5 day race.

This latter most important international victory, decided the German sports journalists to elect Kling sportsman of the year and he thus achieved in his 42nd year what he had dreamed of

for a long time. The grey haired Mercedes Benz team driver was born in Giessen on the 16th September 1910, a teacher's son. He began his business career as an apprentice in the shops of the Mercedes distributors Neils & Kraft in Giessen, there he subsequently passed all trade tests. Even as an apprentice he was determined to become a racing driver and, from savings and earnings accumulated through working after hours, he managed to buy motor cycles; later came small sports cars, such as B.M.W's and others. Through tuning and modifications he increased their output and took part in minor rallies and trials, his goal always being Stuttgart, where he hoped one day to be engaged by the racing department. This was the time of the great Mercedes victories in the era of the 750 kg. formula.

At last he was transferred to the service department of the famous works at Untertürkheim and some time later managed to get himself included in the rally team. Despite all his efforts however, he just could not manage to be selected for the racing équipe.

Then came the war and the end of racing, but no sooner had it ended than Kling restarted competition motoring in earnest with a 328 B.M.W. Later he built up a 2 litre Veritas sports racing car and entered this machine in most German events. He was successful and soon joined the front rank of German drivers of the post-war period, to become German 2 litre champion in 1950. In the autumn of 1950 Daimler Benz gave him a racing contract.

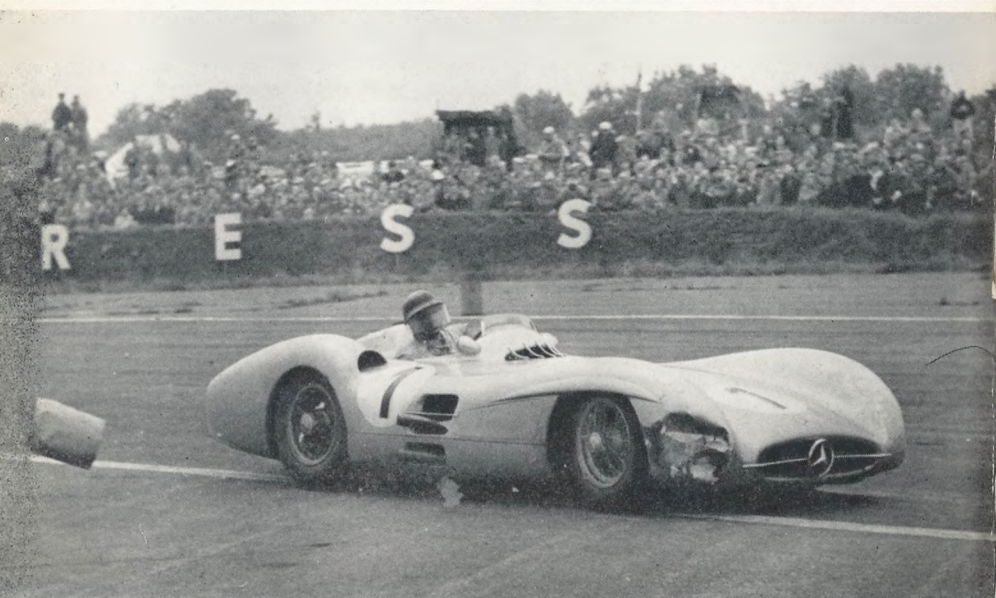
He was in his fortieth year when he achieved the goal for which he had striven with tremendous will-power, without once having deviated from his chosen path.

As a person Kling is reserved and taciturn and although appearing cool, he develops a terrific fighting spirit in decisive moments. He will stake all, regardless of his personal safety. Over the years he has acquired extensive technical knowledge. His job within the racing department of Daimler Benz is not confined to mere driving, for he conducts test runs of many thousands of kilometres and is concerned with the development of the cars until they are fit to race. He is strong physically, and probably as tough as Fangio; the same might well be said about his fighting spirit.

Although 45 to-day he will probably be driving quite a while yet, for his way of life is entirely governed by the needs of the sport, ensuring the physical reserves so necessary in motor racing.

Top :
1954 *G.P. of Germany, first lap : Gonzalez (Ferrari) leads, then Fangio (Mercedes), Moss (Maserati), Lang (Mercedes) and Herrmann (Mercedes).*

Bottom :
Left to right : Eger, Herrmann, Fangio, Moss, Kling and Jenkinson.


R E S S

Kling, who has already belonged to the same écurie as Fangio in 1951, meets him again as fellow team member at Alfa's in 1953.

At that time Fangio is still under treatment by the doctors. One day in Buenos Aires his physician tells him: " Well Juan, everything is all right, you can now get back to racing!"

Fangio is delighted about this, but his Maserati is still somewhere on the Atlantic, on its way to him. Nevertheless he cannot keep away from the Autodromo, where he meets Juan Galvez, his old rival of the pre-war days of long distance racing. Galvez is practising on a pre-war Alfa Romeo.

" Hello Juan," says Fangio, " what about letting me try your Alfa to see how I am getting on?"

Galvez gets out of the cockpit and with a gesture invites Juan to take his place.

Those who have known Fangio for a long time notice that his accident has not left him without visible results. He holds his neck rather stiffly and does not seem so agile as before. Fangio puts on crash helmet and goggles and is soon away. A few laps and he knows that nothing has changed, the accident is overcome and the enforced rest has given him new strength.

In the Argentine G.P. he immediately tacks on to the leading Ascari, but a few laps show that even the driving talent of Fangio cannot make up for the lesser power of the Maserati. Ascari makes up ground visibly and wins, followed by his team mate Villoresi, whereas Fangio retires. He is no luckier in the second event of the season on the Autodromo. April sees him back in Europe and he wants to contest the championship on the Maserati, further he will compete in sports car events at the wheel of the new 3.5 litre " Disco Volante " Alfa Romeo, the makers of which have also engaged Karl Kling.

TOP : *Two sick boys in the Buenos Aires children's hospital are happy at Juan's visit.*

BOTTOM : *Juan sends the marker drums flying at Silverstone.*

CHAPTER XI

An Important Decision

Within the premises of Daimler-Benz AG in Stuttgart there are buildings to which only certain groups of employees are admitted. Whereas outsiders can visit the other shops without difficulty, a special pass is necessary to enter this particular sector, which is the experimental department. It comprises the passenger car development and also houses the racing department, in other words the holy of holies of this, the oldest car manufacturer in the world.

At the entrance to this part of the works there is a multi-storied administrative building which also comprises the offices of the technical director of Daimler-Benz, Professor Fritz Nallinger. Here, surrounded by a carefully selected staff, Dr. Nallinger develops the range of Mercedes production vehicles and he is also responsible for cars destined for competition motoring. Round about the New Year 1952/53 the board of the Company, of which Dr. Nallinger is a member, under the chairmanship of Managing Director Dr. Fritz Könecke, takes an important decision: Daimler-Benz will race again in the 1954 Grands Prix. A new Formula I car will be built so that an attack on the world championship can be envisaged. The signal thus given, planning begins.

On a grey winter's day Dr. Nallinger calls his closest collaborators to an important conference. The tastefully furnished board room in the technical office block is lit by fluorescent light, for the sky outside is obscured by thick fog and dusk has descended soon after the day has dawned.

The engineers who, with their staffs, will build the new racing cars are taking their seats round the big table. There is Rudolf Uhlenhaut, chief of the experimental department and decisively concerned in the development of competition machines, a London-born German whose heart and soul is in his job; the only designer in the world able to drive racing cars as fast as the best drivers.

This ability enables him to study closely the practical behaviour of the machines created in detail on many drawing boards. His findings enable the final details to be put right for no matter how complicated and thorough mathematical calculations may be, testing at racing speeds shows up weaknesses which are unforeseeable. Only when all components are in absolute tune with each other will optimum results ensue.

Dr. Scherenberg takes the neighbouring chair to Uhlenhaut and spreads before him a few sheets covered with figures. They are joined by Kraus who, with others, belongs to the design team deciding on the conception of the new Mercedes racing car. Alfred Neubauer appears last; he will direct the new racing team and organize their future racing engagements.

Grey haired and of middle height, Dr. Nallinger starts the discussion and those present are very much aware of the importance of this moment. The subject of the conversation here must not penetrate beyond these walls. In Italy, France and England new formula cars are being built and people there are most interested in the Mercedes plans.

Presently Dr. Nallinger begins to speak:

" Gentlemen, after an interval of almost 14 years Daimler-Benz A.G. will once more participate in G.P. racing, and it has been decided to develop a new Formula I car which should be ready to start in the Formula's first year, beginning on January 1, 1954. We reckon on participating in the French Grand Prix on July 4, 1954. I need not stress that there is little time at our disposal, particularly in view of the present circumstances. Our future rivals started racing soon after the war and developed existing machines or designed new ones in time. Thus, for some years now they have been able to test the cars in races and to improve them systematically. For us that was impossible, our last formula car having been built before the war and between then and now there is a big gap. It is now up to us to decide whether we should build upon the basis of the achievements of our rivals or whether we should create something entirely new. I think you know already which direction we shall take.

" Apart from cars, we produce buses, lorries, locomotives and marine engines and, until the war ended, we also built aircraft engines which were the first in the world to be series produced with fuel injection.

" It is therefore clear that a specialized product like a racing car should incorporate all the experience we have gained, and achieve therefrom the very best solution to our problem.

" The new car will have a normally aspirated 2.5-litre engine equipped with fuel injection. Then the question arises as to whether a 4, 6, 8 or 12 cylinder design should be used. You know that elaborate calculations have been made and the results of these show that our choice should be an eight-cylinder-in-line engine. Before I continue, may I ask you, Dr. Scherenberg, to explain the advantages of fuel injection, because its planning falls within your sphere."

Dr. Scherenberg with his slim figure, resembles more a games master than a scientist, and he explains, *inter alia*: " We are developing in collaboration with Robert Bosch G.m.b.H. in Stuttgart a pump to inject fuel directly into the cylinders. This gives considerable advantages over the traditional carburetter, for the injection type engine is independent of the weather.

" It does not react so decisively to varied climatic conditions, such as humidity, height above sea level and other factors. Furthermore all eight cylinders are equally filled with fuel mixture and the same conditions obtain in every one of them, consequently enabling us to approach the top limit of loading. Apart from this, the injection engine makes for better cylinder filling at all engine speeds.

" Since every pound weight saved is of paramount importance in relation to power output, it suits our book particularly that fuel consumption is lower in an injection engine than in a carburetter engine of equal size. To-day's racing tyres have reached such a pitch of perfection that a 300-mile G.P. can be run without a tyre change, it follows therefore that we must aim to cut out refuelling stops, for a pit stop can materially affect the outcome of a race."

Thus far speaks Dr. Scherenberg and Dr. Nallinger continues:

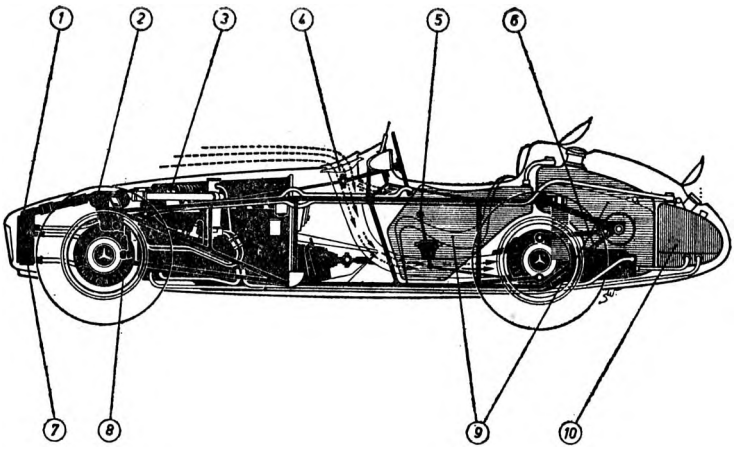
" To obtain good cylinder filling without supercharging it is necessary to open and close the valves as quickly as possible. Quick opening is a question of cam contours and the shape of the rocking fingers. Rapid valve closing is normally brought about by valve-springs which do, however, cause extra loading on the valve actuating mechanism when opening the valve. To-day's high rev. ranges and the necessity to consider every fraction of an ounce of reciprocating weight, necessitates the abandoning of valve springs.

" In this respect considerable efforts have been made everywhere to bring about a forced opening and closing of the valves without making use of valve springs at all. We have succeeded

in developing a desmodromic valve actuation whereby the valves can be quickly opened and closed without using springs.

" Robert Bosch, G.m.b.H., is developing a new twin magneto for our racing engine which will take care of firing the two plugs per cylinder. It is much lighter than the old one and produces 68,000 sparks per minute at 8,500 r.p.m. The twin plugs are also designed by Bosch.

" The engine will be fitted, almost lying on its side at an angle of 60 degrees, into a space tube chassis, the front suspension of which will have upper and lower wishbones controlled by torsion



(1) *Radiator.* (2) *Radiator pressure tank.* (3) *Fuel injection pump.* (4) *Driver's and rear brakes fresh air intake.* (5) *Gear lever.* (6) *Gearbox.* (7) *Oil radiator.* (8) *Turbo brakes.* (9) *Fuel tank.* (10) *Oil tank.*

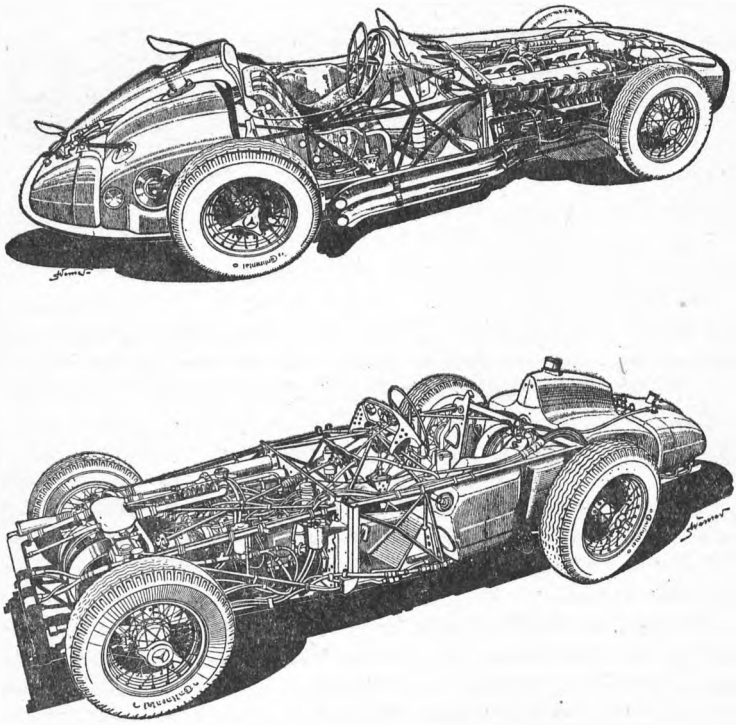
bars. The rear is of swing axle layout but with a low single pivot mounting similar in arrangement to the one used on the 220A passenger car. The heavily finned brakes will not be part of the wheels but fitted inboard and joined to the wheel hubs by thin shafts."

Whilst Dr. Nallinger continues to explain the design features of the new formula car, his collaborators make copious notes and the subsequent discussion clears some important points. The conference breaks up very late and now work will start in the design department.

To speed up completion of the different components, all the various Daimler-Benz factories will contribute. In Stuttgart-Untertürkheim, Sindelfingen, Mannheim, Gaggenau and Berlin specialists will be working to the highest degree of precision.

Aided by models, aerodynamicists will carry out extensive wind tunnel experiments, for air resistance is considerable at high speeds and the optimum body form must be found to give the lowest resistance factor, a most important point in racing car body design.

Two different body shapes will be created. For fast circuits like Rheims, Monza and Avus a fully streamlined light alloy body is being built which encloses the whole car including the four wheels. But this shape is less suitable for many-cornered



Mercedes 2.5 litre Formula I Racing Car

circuits like the Nürburgring, Silverstone or Monte Carlo. There the driver aims his front wheels into the bends to enable him to round them at maximum speeds. This he cannot do with the fully aerodynamic car, because he cannot see his front wheels. Therefore a further, monoposto type body is developed where all wheels are exposed and where the aerodynamicists confine their attention to the shell only. Although this shape, known as the " type Nürburgring," creates more wind resistance, this disadvantage is offset by greater manœuvrability.

As time goes on the intensity of work increases and to speed completion of the cars separate test rigs are built, upon which single components can be endurance tested.

Sensitive instruments register exactly how the material stands up to these tests thus making certain that no single part breaks down under the tremendous stresses of racing.

Whilst the new formula car begins to take shape at Daimler-Benz, Fangio goes from race to race again. In the Mille Miglia he handles the new 3.5-litre Alfa-Romeo sports-racing car which produces some 270 b.h.p. It has a very streamlined coupé body developed from the well known " Disco Volante." Alfa have called their sports car " flying saucer " because its flat body resembles somewhat those mysterious shapes which are said to appear in the sky occasionally.

Kling, like Fangio at the wheel of an Alfa, sets a high speed from the start, again he is accompanied by his well tried co-driver Hans Klenk who directs him well on this difficult course. In Rome, the turning point, Kling is in the lead, but the pundits say that he who leads in Rome can never win the Mille Miglia. This is certainly true in the case of Kling, who retires with rear axle trouble.

Kling's retirement has let Fangio into the lead, closely pursued by Giannino Marzotto the textile millionaire, who drives a 4.1-litre Ferrari. Marzotto drives only as a hobby and not professionally; for him it is a wealthy man's pastime. At the start in Brescia he climbs into his Ferrari, dressed in lounge suit, white shirt and tie; slowly he works himself forward from the middle of the field to break all records, and in Bologna he leads Fangio by several minutes. Is the Argentinian slowing up? No, but since the Futa pass Chueco is taking considerable chances, for the track-rod mounting has come adrift and he can only steer with his right front wheel. When the experts get to hear about

this they shake their heads—the risks he is taking show courage and tremendous nerve. He averages 100 m.p.h. on the last section between Bologna and Brescia—this is foolhardy to a degree because at any moment he might lose the steering of his remaining wheel and the consequences of that can easily be imagined.

Although Marzotto wins, Fangio is runner-up, last remaining representative of the Alfa team, a remarkable effort barely a year after his crash at Monza. Now every one knows that the accident has left him psychologically untouched and when checking his race average one cannot fail to be impressed by his performance.

Although the broken vertebrae have healed, the accident has left its mark upon him inasmuch as his neck has remained stiff, as if still encased in plaster. Fangio must turn his entire body if he wishes to look round. This would be relatively harmless for someone in an ordinary job but for a racing driver it is extremely difficult and in a race of several hours it necessitates even more than usual energy. In spite of this he races wherever possible and occasionally drives a Gordini. At the wheel of the very much improved Maserati he comes in second at the Naples G.P., somehow being unable to achieve an outright win, for the Ferraris are superior to the Maseratis. During the year, Ascari, Farina, González and young Hawthorn constitute an overpowering opposition to Fangio, who alone carries the responsibility for the Maserati team.

Again he drives an Alfa in the 24 hours of Le Mans and once more Kling is a serious rival on the same type of car. However, all Alfas retire with mechanical trouble before the end of the race. In the G.P. of Belgium Ascari's Ferrari wins, and Fangio, although lapping very fast in his Maserati, drops out. In the French Grand Prix there is a magnificent battle between Hawthorn and Fangio, which the former wins by a second. At Silverstone it is again Ascari's turn and Fangio is runner up, the same position being his in the German G.P. where Farina triumphs.

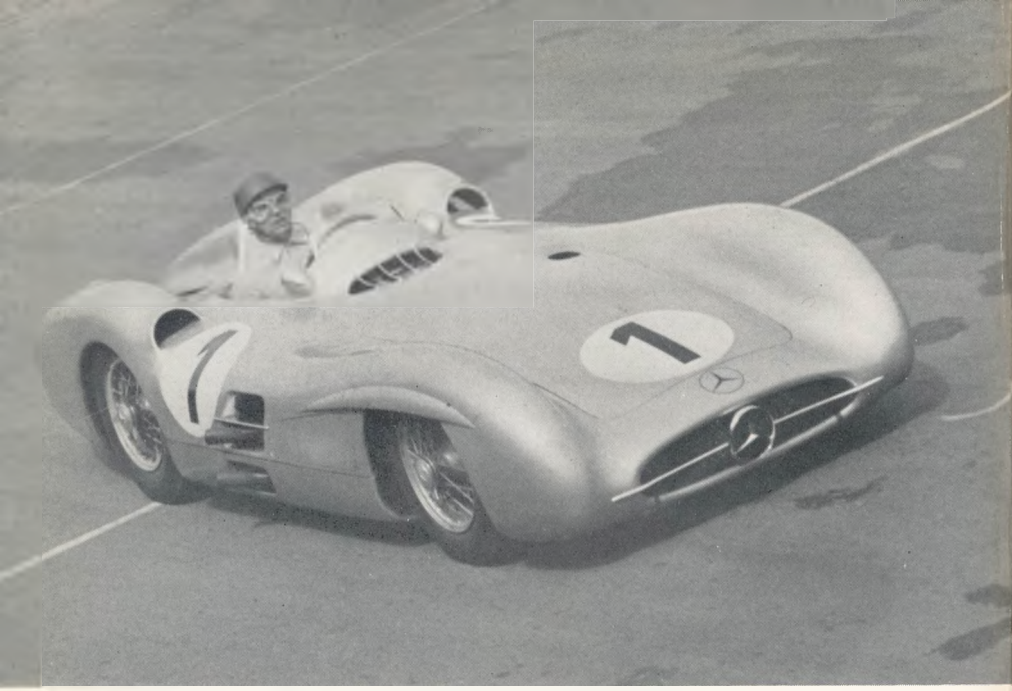
The last few races were notable for the steady advance of a young Argentinian, bearing a well known name in Argentine motoring sport. Young Onofre, Domingo Marimón's son, also belongs to the Maserati racing stable and Juan looks after him, conveying at the same time some of his superlative skill and bringing Onofre into the élite class of drivers.

The tussle for the world championship continues unabated;

TOP :
Neubauer signals : Fangio in the lead, in front of Gonzalez, Trintignant and Herrmann.

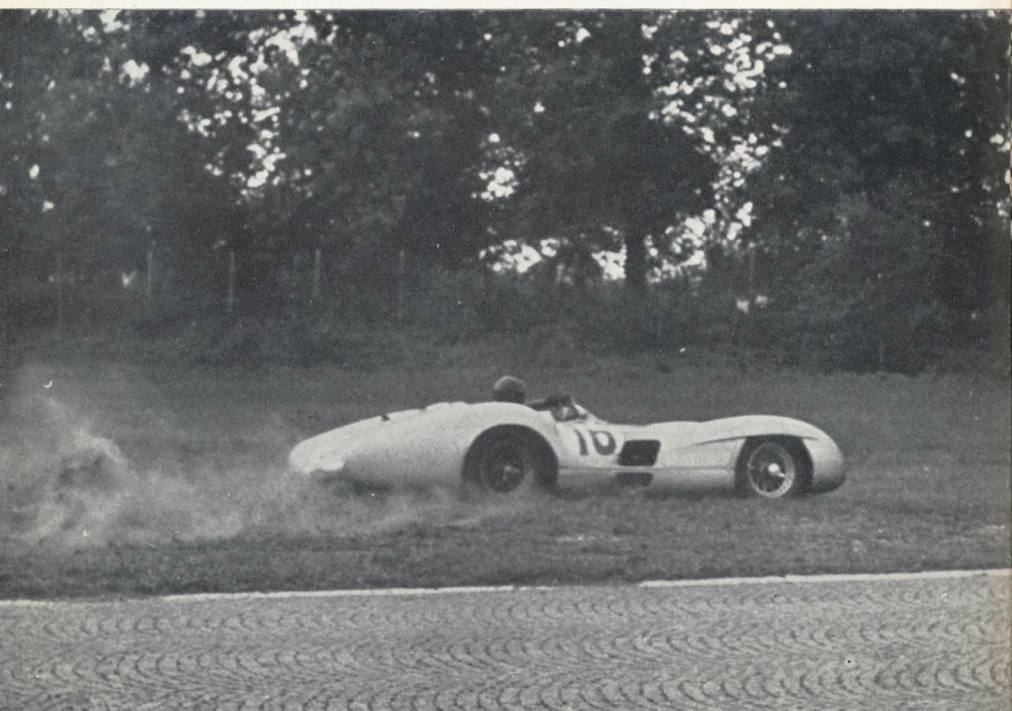
CENTRE :
" Regulare "—drive at constant speed. Fangio leads by 26 *seconds from Gonzalez.*

BOTTOM :
" Veloce " — faster. Gonzalez is only 18 *seconds behind.*



TOP : *Calm and unruffled as always—Fangio and the Mercedes streamliner.*

BOTTOM : *A little excursion into the green countryside. In the* 1954 *G.P. of Italy there were several such "extra" trips but every time he got his car back on to the circuit and won in the end.*



Ascari wins the Swiss G.P., Fangio retiring with a broken valve. Chueco keeps attacking the Ferraris, but until Monza he is unable to beat them.

The Italian Grand Prix is contested over 80 laps and after the start Ascari, Farina (both on Ferraris), Fangio and Marimón are closely bunched together. The racing is so fantastic that the spectators acclaim it enthusiastically time and again as they see the four cars lapping together as if joined by ropes. Marimón has one pit stop to repair a leaking oil pipe, which throws him back hopelessly, nevertheless he rejoins the leading group which travels far out in front of the field.

They are about to start the last lap. Ascari enters the fateful Lesmo curve first followed by Farina, Fangio and Marimón. The spectators jump up from their seats and stare as if mesmerized across to the return straight where the cars must shoot out from the park. Then they appear, Ascari still in the lead—another two right handers and then the finishing straight. Another 40 seconds—30—the last corner—and suddenly a dust cloud rises where the red cars should appear. One car has shot off the road and a second is also involved, yet another gets through on the inside and approaches the finishing line—it's Fangio! Fractionally in front of Farina he wins the Gran Premio. But what's happened? As Ascari entered the bend he suddenly found himself in a pack of cars that had been lapped and the road was treacherously slippery because of deposited rubber. In view of the determined drivers behind him Ascari possibly risked entering the bend a fraction too fast, the Ferrari got out of control and left the road. Marimón closely behind him could not brake in time and collided with the Ferrari. Fangio immediately weighing up the situation, found a gap and calmly passed on the inside of the bend. The crashed drivers were fortunately unhurt, and Fangio won his first race in 1953.

But Ascari's lead in the championship was too great and the popular man from Milan became world champion for the second year running.

Eight days later Fangio also won the Modena G.P.

In the meantime good progress has been made on the Formula I Mercedes. Fangio knows he is to drive the car as soon as it can be entered, but before that he wants to race a lot more.

In Turin the famous Lancia factory is setting up a team for the well known Mexican long distance race, due to be run in

November. Fangio accepts their offer to drive a 3-litre Lancia alongside team mates Felice Bonetto, Piero Taruffi and Eugenio Castellotti.

The Convair 340 of the Mexican airline Avianca Mexicana which plies from Acapulco to Mexico City to-day describes a wide arc before the pilot goes into his landing approach. The aircraft has left the luxury resort on the Pacific ocean seaboard according to its timetable and carries a number of American passengers who, after some days' holiday, wish to spend a little time in Mexico's capital. The snow-covered tip of the cone-shaped Popocatepetl contrasts sharply with the deep blue sky but the flight captain takes no notice of the majestic beauty of the volcano and steers his aircraft across to the Llano Grande mountain range. There, the road coming from Puebla De Los Angeles winds through countless hairpins across the mountains, then into the high valley of Mexico City and straight as a die towards the great mass of dwellings of Ciudad de Mexico.

As the aircraft flies at 3,000 ft. above the mountain range, the pilot takes up his microphone to attract his passengers' attention to the road below, lined with many thousand spectators.

" Down there," his voice comes over the aircraft's loud-speaker system, "in that red car is the leading driver of the Carrera Panamericana Mexico and he is on his way to the finish of to-day's stage at Mexico City. Since the early hours of to-day the commentators on the Mexican radio have reported the progress of this adventurous motor race, which started yesterday November 19th in Tuxtla Gutierrez, some 180 miles from the border of Guatemala.

" After a dangerous 300 mile drive they finished up yesterday in Oaxaca, end of the first stage, the winner being Felice Bonetto's Lancia at an average of 152.71 k.p.h. (about 95.5 m.p.h.) leading his countryman Taruffi and the Argentinian Juan Manuel Fangio, both on Lancias.

" The next 407 kilometres (254 miles) to Puebla is said to be the most difficult stage of the Carrera as it winds through many narrow bends over the Sierra Madre. The radio announced that Taruffi won this sector before Bonetto and Fangio, the average speed achieved being 141.52 k.p.h. (about 88 m.p.h.). After 30 minutes' compulsory stop the ' Corredores ' re-start the third stage of 128 kilometres (about 89 miles) to Mexico City and the car we have just seen is being driven by the leader, Taruffi.

" After crossing the 10,000 feet of the Llano Grande range he now nears his destination. However, unfortunately we cannot

watch the racing further as we've just received permission to land!"

As the plane approaches the airport the passengers see that the road running alongside it is black with thousands of spectators and through this thick mass of humanity the cars roar past in short intervals toward to-day's goal. A little later the twin engined aircraft lands safely on the runway—the airport seems deserted, anyone who can be spared at all wants to witness the arrival of the cars in Mexico City. The people seem to be in the grip of a fever—more than nine million Mexicans push and shove each other at the interesting vantage points of the 3,077 kilometres (about 1,912 miles) long Carrera. In five days, famous European and American drivers cross all of Mexico, over the Sierra Madre, along the Pacific coast, through the jungles of the south and the desert-like steppes of the north. Whereas the south is full of bends and curves, the north contains endless straights, sometimes for 60 miles a stretch, where averages of over 125 m.p.h. are achieved.

Taruffi also wins the third stage at 165.45 k.p.h. (about 94 m.p.h.) a fraction before Bonetto and Fangio comes in fifth. The race develops more and more into a duel between the 3.3-litre Lancias of Taruffi and Bonetto.

Taruffi won the Carrera in 1951 on a Ferrari, whereas Bonetto, who has competed here year after year since 1950, has not yet been able to achieve victory; this time however he is determined to be first, come what may.

When they start on the fourth stage, 273 miles to Leon, Felice Bonetto leads by 41 seconds in the general classification from Taruffi. All those who know and watch Bonetto at the start in Mexico City note the grim determination which replaces the usual cheerful smile of the man from Turin. No one has ever seen him like that before; until now racing has been just an adventurous game for him and he loves to play with danger. But the game has become desperately serious.

The cars are started at one minute intervals, but soon the rivals are close together for Taruffi's determination to win is just as strong as Bonetto's. A determined wheel to wheel battle develops as if the devil himself were chasing them. Then Taruffi goes too fast into a bend and the Lancia tries to leave the road, but he is lucky and manages to correct the slide.

However, the steering is damaged and he only just manages to limp to the finish of the stage. From this moment he can no longer endanger Bonetto. But why does Bonetto not realize

this via his rear-view mirror? No one will ever know—Bonetto continues at unabated speed; for him the race must be decided now or never. He is now so fast that he risks everything—and that everything is just too much, for the Carrera is treacherous. At any time a sudden, unforeseeable obstacle can appear, gulleys lurk invisibly and gutters run across village streets; the very high speeds make braking in time impossible.

This very thing happens to Bonetto. In the village Sialo Gto. his Lancia hits a gutter, skids and crashes at high speed into a lamp-post. When they lift Bonetto out of the badly damaged car he is already dead. Dr. Gianni Lancia is severely shaken by the death of one of his drivers and orders the others to reduce speed from now on.

Although Taruffi has lost a lot of time he obeys team orders. He wins the Leon-Durango stage of 530 kilometres (330 miles) and is second in the Durango-Parral sector of 404 kilometres (251 miles). The seventh stage (200 miles) to Chihuahua he finishes in fourth position and on the final stage to Ciudad Juarez of 223 miles he is third. The winner of the final stage is Umberto Maglioli who manages the fantastic average of 222.59 k.p.h. (about 147 m.p.h.).

The overall winner however is Juan Manuel Fangio: he knows these long distance events across countries only too well; knows too that here caution is needed when the moment of decision arrives and temperament must be kept in check. He observed the deadly duel between the rivals Taruffi and Bonetto with the superiority of the knowledgeable, who judges accurately what he can risk and when.

His overall average in this dramatic race worked out at 169.22 k.p.h. (about 105.5 m.p.h.). Taruffi was second at 168.01 k.p.h. and third comes Eugenio Castellotti at 167.09 k.p.h. all three on 3.3 Lancias.

The mortal remains of Bonetto are flown to Milan, his home-town, where thousands attend the funeral of this popular sportsman.

CHAPTER XII

Let Battle Commence

On a cool March day in 1954 a blue Mercedes lorry turns off the autobahn at the Walldorf exit. Its driver, racing mechanic Erwin Grupp, quickly covers the ground to the little country town of Hockenheim, on the outskirts of which a 7.7 kilometre asphalt road describes an oval through pine trees and asparagus plantations. This is the Hockenheimring one of the best known test and race tracks of south-west Germany. Grupp parks the blue transporter in front of the wooden pits which are used when racing is in progress. There he is met by Neubauer, Uhlenhaut, Karl Kling and the young reserve driver Hans Herrmann.

A few wisps of fog still remain among the pines, but circuit visibility is good and Neubauer orders the unloading of the transporter. A ramp is extracted from the back and the rear doors are opened. A silver racing car appears, seemingly crouching on the wooden floor of the transporter like a monster from another world. The wooden chocks are removed, Grupp climbs into the cockpit and slowly, guided by strong arms, the streamlined machine is rolled gently down on to the road; the new Mercedes racing car is ready for its tests. Now the officials of the Hockenheimring company go into action and via the circuit telephones find out whether the track is clear and safe everywhere.

Below, at the town curve, where the car must pass at reduced speed, a few press photographers get their cameras ready although the new car is no longer a secret; a few days ago it was shown to the press at Untertürkheim, thus the world has already seen many interesting photographs. But the photographers to-day want to take pictures of the new " bolide " in its own element.

The men responsible for the racing department have other worries, to-day they want to run endurance tests in actual road conditions. Only then will it be proved if the design considerations are right and now the decisive moment is upon them, following on months of hard day and night work. Even now

much remains to be done before the new car can measure up to its rivals.

Grupp starts the engine and the eight-cylinders roar with a deep full-throated voice, music to the ears of the experts, whose eyes light up when they hear it. To the layman this is just noise, but they know from the sound of an engine, if it is running evenly and giving full power.

After the engine has warmed up the " hot " racing plugs are fitted, designed to withstand extreme working temperatures. Then a few cans of racing fuel are poured into the tank, mixed personally by engineer Schad of Esso A.G. This is a special mixture compounded from alcohol, benzole, nitro-benzole, and high octane petrol, the combination of which requires expert knowledge, for its correctness is extremely important to the faultless running and maximum power output of a racing engine.

In the background Uhlenhaut puts on his grey racing overalls, for he will drive the car first, prior to its endurance testing by the racing drivers.

At last everything is ready, Uhlenhaut puts on his crash helmet and goggles and climbs into the cockpit. He fits the removable steering wheel (which makes entry into the driving compartment easier) on to its boss, ensuring that the locking mechanism is fully engaged. He waves his hand and several mechanics push the car; the engine starts up with a roar and he disappears, accelerating quickly, among the trees.

He puts in a few laps without a stop, then halts at the pits and getting out, exchanges a few words with Kling who takes over testing.

Hans Klenk has made use of the brief stop to check the tyres once again. When he drove a 300 SL in practice on the Nürburgring, he crashed so badly that he will never race again and the Continental works of Hannover have engaged him as test engineer for racing tyres. In this new capacity he works in co-operation with the Mercedes racing department and is due to accompany them on their future trips. The behaviour of tyres under actual racing conditions provides valuable data which will be applied by the makers on further racing tyre development.

" Mr. Klenk," one of the reporters asks, " do you think that Continental tyres have caught up the advance of the Italian Pirellis?" " I am fairly certain of it!" replies Klenk, who, however, cannot enter into any detailed explanation, in view

of works secrecy. Cleverly he directs the interests of the journalists into general channels, only remotely concerned with racing tyres.

Aided by a staff of chemists and engineers, the Continental tyre works seek ever more resistant rubber mixtures by means of long and complicated experiments. They try to design the tyre casing in such a way that it should withstand the exacting demands of racing. Hour after hour sample tyres run on the special test rigs at 200, 250 and 300 m.p.h. Those who watch the tests are protected by thick plexi-glass screens lest rubber parts should fly off. The rubber becomes terribly hot and the tread must withstand these temperatures without parting company from the canvas structure. For if such a parting occurred in a race at perhaps 160 or more m.p.h. a fatal accident would ensue in most cases.

The Continental Company make 3 different tyres for the Mercedes Benz racing car—the Monza, Nürburgring and Avus types. The Nürburgring tyre has a 9 mm. thick rubber tread and is used on many cornered circuits, such as Nürburgring where, over a Grand Prix distance, the 3,000 curves and bends literally rub the tread off the tyres. For fast circuits like Monza and Rheims a tread thickness of 6.5 mm. only is used because maintaining high speeds over considerable distances means that centrifugal force and heat created by friction are extremely high. For ultra high speed circuits like the Berlin Avus, the tyres bearing that name only have 3.5 mm. tread thickness. If the rubber tread were too thick, localized heat would build up to such a degree that it could not be dissipated quickly enough, with the result that the tread would fly off.

After the various test runs, Klenk measures rubber loss and tyre temperatures. Each figure thus obtained is entered on to a chart and at the end of the test the charts provide an accurate picture.

Soon Kling stops to hand over to Hans Herrmann. Neubauer checks the lap times with several stop watches; Herrmann is lapping very regularly. In the meantime Kling imparts his impressions of the test run to Uhlenhaut; not only is the behaviour of the chassis, and transmission whilst cornering of interest, but also the reaction of the engine and particularly the fuel injection system at peak engine speeds is carefully observed. For, although the Daimler-Benz engineers have considerable experience with injection in the field of aircraft engines, a high

revving racing engine demands far more from its component parts. Fuel consumption also plays a most important part, because here conditions are quite different from those obtaining on the test bench and the racing manager must know the consumption of each car exactly in order to plan race strategy—too much fuel would mean excess weight and this must not happen on any account.

For reasons of weight saving and to reduce stressing of the components to the minimum there is a further interesting point in which this racing engine differs from other similar units. Here, the power take-off is not at the end of the crankshaft, but in the middle, thus virtually making it into two four-cylinder engines. It follows that the crankshaft at the take-off point is only stressed in the manner of a four cylinder one.

Neubauer does not only observe his stop-watches but he can hear immediately if the regular running of the engine is interrupted.

On the Hockenheimring one can hear the sound of the engine until it fades away at the end of the straight in the woods and again when the car approaches on the opposing straight the noise is once more carried towards the pits; its intensity then increases when the driver changes down to slow for the town corner. Four, six, eight times Herrmann roars past Neubauer at some 125 m.p.h. and each time he touches his crash helmet with his right hand to signify that all is well.

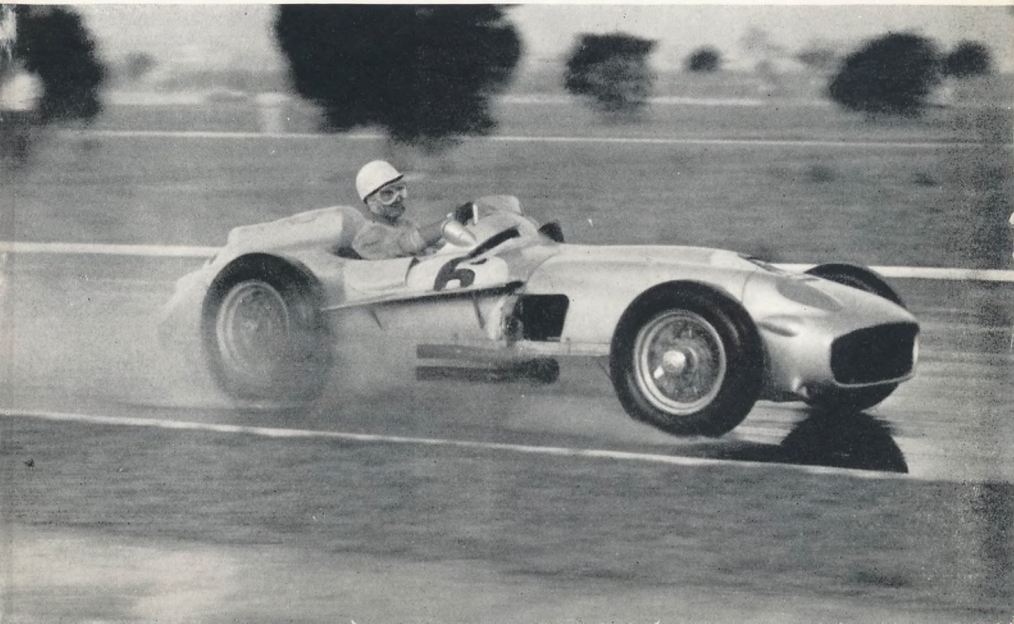
Suddenly the engine roar from the direction of the town corner becomes higher pitched than usual and stops suddenly as if cut off with a knife. Neubauer jumps up: " Quick, my car, something's wrong!" he calls out to the mechanics. But Kling is already at the wheel of his 220, Neubauer gets in and they are off towards town corner. When they arrive there is no sign of anything. " Go on! " urges Neubauer, but Kling has already seen a crowd, turns off the circuit and into Heidelberger Strasse, where, after a few yards he can see what has happened. The racing car lies badly damaged against the wall of a house and a few people look after Herrmann; fortunately the boy does not look badly hurt.

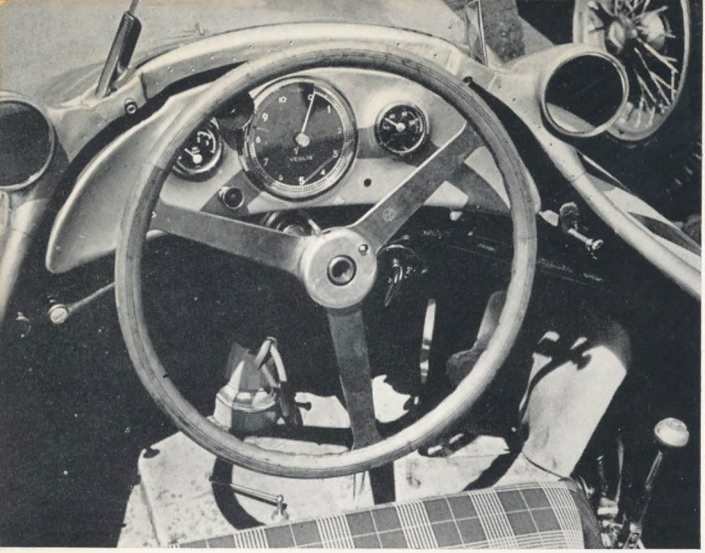
" Thank God for that!" Kling mumbles to himself and stops at the spot.

" What's happened?" Neubauer wants to know. Herrmann makes a despondent gesture: " I was unlucky!" he says. His trousers are covered in oil and with a pain wracked face he points at his right leg:

TOP :
Stirling Moss.

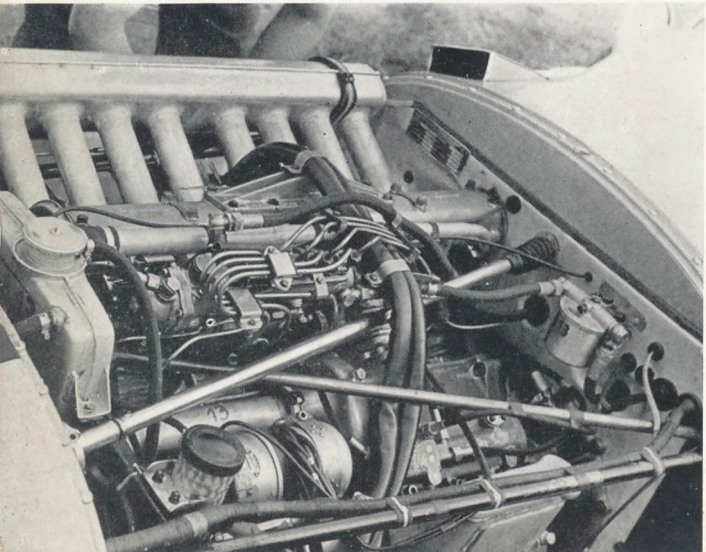
BOTTOM :
In Buenos Aires the Moss Mercedes puts up a screen of water during a rainy drive.





TOP :
Mercedes racing car cockpit. Revolution counter in the middle, oil pressure left, water temperature right. Below is a thermos bottle with a tube ; the gear lever for the five-speed box is on the right.

CENTRE :
The Mercedes technicians : left to right — Rudolf Uhlenhaut, Dr. Nallinger technical director and Dr. Scherenberg.



BOTTOM :
The " power pack." The in-line eight cylinder racing engine with Bosch fuel injection.

" An oil pipe . . . oil pipe burst when I approached the town corner at high speed. I braked, but my foot slid off the pedal and I was far too fast for the corner. As I had no other escape I steered into the road that joins the corner hoping to slow the car down there. Suddenly a couple of cyclists dashed out of a side turning, I wrenched the car round and pranged into a wall. There was a terrific bang and I got chucked out!"

Neubauer quietens the young driver, for, after all, one cannot reproach him. Neubauer knows well enough that this newcomer to the Mercedes équipe has not yet had a great deal of experience with very fast vehicles—a few years ago he was only an unknown confectioner. However, the trial runs are well and truly over and Kling drives Herrmann to the local hospital; he has sustained burns to his right leg which require immediate medical attention. Otherwise he seems relatively unworried over the accident, being one of those fortunate young people with an enviably balanced temperament and not easily upset.

On February 23rd, 1954 Herrmann was 26 years old, only two years after his participation in a motoring competition with his 1500 Porsche for the first time, the event being the Hessian winter run in February 1952. His Porsche was the 1500 Standard model, a tame vehicle indeed, often and easily used by lady drivers.

To-day Herrmann's lap times on a 260 b.h.p. racing car are only very little slower than those achieved by well known drivers, yet this pleasant young man had never been a serious motor enthusiast. He just likes to drive fast and he only has a rough idea what happens under the bonnet. As we have said already he is a confectioner and pastry cook by trade and after the war he opened a café-cum-restaurant in Stuttgart's Eberhard Strasse and later in the same house a bar, called Madeleine. Business prospered, so he could afford a Porsche.

After the winter rally which the Porsche withstood quite well, except for a few dents and scratches, he thought in his quiet way that he was not all that much less competent than the other drivers. That was the reason why he entered the Porsche in the same year for the German rally. This reliability event takes place in several stages, on good and bad roads and sometimes over trials sections right across the Western German Republic. A few speed tests and hill climbs are thrown in for good measure. When Herrmann appeared at the start with the Porsche and the number 313, the experienced competitors started pulling his leg: " What! You want to do the rally with a Porsche?" they said,

" as soon as you have to ford a creek, you'll get stuck. The Porsche is for road work not trials!"

Herrmann took no notice of all this, anyway he only drove because it was fun. If he should win, that would be very nice, but if not the world would not come to an end; at that time he did not even dream of becoming a racing driver.

But after the speed tests and hill climbs the experienced people stopped pulling his leg. By all that's holy, they thought, this boy can really drive. He was fastest in the special tests and, after the results had been computed, the officials declared him class winner, yet he drove the only Porsche in the rally. That success spurred him on and he entered for the Travemünde rally, with Erwin Bauer from Stuttgart as co-driver. Bauer had met Herrmann at the Motor Sports Club of Stuttgart and noted straightaway that something could be made of the lad. Neubauer had arranged for Bauer to drive for Mercedes in 1939, but in view of the war this did not come to pass. After the war he drove in reliability trials and a few races, being one of those racing drivers who have a lot of talent but, in view of the times, no chance to perfect their ability.

Herrmann finished the Travemünde rally in sixth position and the following will show how little he knew about mechanical matters. Suddenly during the run he said to Bauer: " The brakes have gone!" In consequence they reduced speed and when at the finish Bauer took a closer look at the brakes he found that they were perfectly all right but only needed to have brake lining wear taken up. That such a thing was possible did not even occur to this enthusiastic confectioner.

Bauer advised him to enter for the production car race at the Nürburgring, run off prior to the German G.P. for racing cars. Herrmann duly entered his Porsche and although he had never seen the ring before, he established fastest practice lap, Bauer having naturally pointed out the most difficult parts. Bauer was now convinced beyond all doubt that this young man possessed quite exceptional driving talent. In the race however, he dropped out on the first lap with differential trouble. The same year he won his class in the Rhine rally.

Bauer's plans with him were even more ambitious in the spring of 1953 and he decided to attempt the Mille Miglia, where it would really show whether Herrmann had the stuff in him. There was not much time to study the course and they covered it only once, Bauer noting the most difficult patches in his book. The rest he left to Herrmann's intuition, which, in fact, was far

from disappointing, as they won the 1500 c.c. class at an average of about 74 m.p.h. Porsche's racing manager, the experienced Huschke von Hanstein put Herrmann very high on his list of drivers for the coming season. When Brendel, chosen as works driver for the Le Mans 24 hours had an accident, Porsches took Herrmann into their team and he contested the 1500 c.c. class with co-driver Helm Glöckler. Von Frankenberg and Frère won their class followed very closely by Glöckler and Herrmann. In the next major event he took first in the 1500 c.c. sports-racing class at the Nürburgring in record time, again at the wheel of a works Porsche; a little later he made fastest time of the day and set a new record at the Schauinsland hill climb. These successes netted him the sports car championship for cars up to 1500 c.c. It must be admitted that this was quite a remarkable feat for someone who had only passed his driving test in 1947!

In the summer of 1953 an undreamed of chance offered itself. One afternoon his telephone rang: " Herrmann speaking!" a well-known voice came powerfully over the line " This is Neubauer, Daimler-Benz, listen, would you like to try our car?"

Young Herrmann could not speak for excitement and mumbled something unintelligible.

" Well what about it?" bellowed the voice on the other end.

At last Herrmann got hold of himself to reply in a small voice " ye . . . yes please!"

" All right then, be at the Nürburgring to-morrow! " Click! That was that, Neubauer had put the receiver down. Hans Herrmann stood there looking at the phone, not being sure whether he was dreaming or what was happening.

For two days Neubauer tested several drivers, and experienced ones among them on the 300 SL. Herrmann was second fastest on the first day and made fastest lap on the second day. That was enough for Neubauer and he invited him for further testing at Monza.

Although he had not yet received a racing contract for 1954, nevertheless he as good as belonged to the team.

CHAPTER XIII

The French Grand Prix—1914 and 1954

The completion of the new racing Mercedes was being pressed on with most energetically for on July 4, 1954 it was due to make its public debut.

And Fangio? He wins the first championship round, the Argentine G.P. at the new Autodromo at Buenos Aires on his Maserati.

He knows he is " on call " and his drives on the Maserati are on borrowed time. Juan Manuel Fangio has not yet signed a contract with Daimler-Benz, although he will be team captain. Until the moment the new design faces the starter for the first time he is his own master and until then he must drive as much as possible, not only to keep in form, but to have accurate knowledge of the potentialities of tomorrow's opposition. In the third round of the championship and the first on European soil, the G.P. of Belgium, Fangio again drives a Maserati. He wins in front of Frenchman Trintignant on a Ferrari. Fangio now leads with 17 points and thus brings a valuable " present " with him to Daimler-Benz.

During the days of June he handles the new Mercedes on the Rheims circuit and is extremely fast. Neubauer is already convinced during these test runs that he will be able to count on this magnificent driver in all situations.

In Stuttgart the last preparations are made for the great event of July 4th, which will take place on historical ground as far as the sport of Grand Prix racing is concerned. There is no rest, for the engineers and mechanics who work at all odd hours even on Sunday. There is something great and inspiring in the atmosphere of a racing team when preparing the cars for a decisive race, it is the spirit of sportsmanship that extracts yet more work from the already overworked crew. The same spirit animated Daimler's men to prepare cars for the Grand Prix of France in 1914, when the political atmosphere was already tense.

The military shook their heads with incomprehension when they heard that the Automobile Club de France intended running their Grand Prix in spite of everything on July 4 at Lyon. On June 28th the Austrian crown Prince and his wife had been murdered at Sarajevo, this fact being synonymous with war. But that morning of July 4th was still a peaceful one. Lyon was awake all night with revellers making merry and then proceeding, hours before the start, to take up their places around the circuit, which was 37.63 kilometres (23½) miles long. With great excitement they awaited the start of the race, due to be contested by competitors from France, England, Italy, America and Germany over a distance of 752.6 kilometres (about 467 miles).

It was very hot on this summer's day and the many nationalities present were in high spirits. For the French a win by their darling Boillot on the Peugeot was a question of prestige, yet they viewed their German rivals with a certain amount of anxiety. Around the five Mercedes a swarm of mechanics were busy putting the last touches and the French were impressed with the precision of it all. Everything is thoroughly organized: spare parts and many tyres are put out, tools set up and signals prepared and it seems as if the German pits are the brain centre of a precision machine to help and succour its drivers Sailer, Lautenschlager, Salzer, Wagner and Pilette.

" Mon Dieu," exclaim the French, " the Germans march as if to battle!"

This Grand Prix was in fact rather more than a sporting contest: for the first time it was organized according to a formula, limited to cubic capacity and weight. The cars that ran there were not allowed to be heavier than 1,100 kgs. and the swept volume of their engines was not to exceed 4.5 litres. The leading motor manufacturing countries had made great efforts to extract the utmost power from the cars built within the technical framework of this formula.

The machines of that day already produced 100 b.h.p. and had a maximum of some 110 m.p.h. Peugeot's engineers, also those of Delage and Fiat, had fitted a novelty to their racing cars, to wit, four-wheel brakes which were to be of material help on this twisting circuit, whereas, the other cars were only rear-wheel braked. The white Mercedes looked elegant with its pointed bonnet.

In those days racing exerted a very considerable influence upon motor car development and drove it forward with considerable impetus, the kind of impetus that a modern war creates. Then, the motor car was an expensive thing to be bought by the *haute vollée* and a Grand Prix win decided what sort of machine the gentry would drive next—rather as Dior, to-day, dictates fashion.

On that July 4th the crowds were excited as never before, seemingly sensing that this would be the last race to be seen for many a year.

Thousands of hopes accompany Boillot as his blue Peugeot roars off, but it is a white Mercedes that appears first after the standing lap, followed by Boillot's Peugeot, a Mercedes again figuring in sixth place.

Formidable that man Boillot! The crowd guesses that his plan will be to let the Germans exhaust themselves. No machine can withstand the crazy efforts Max Sailer expects from it, but Boillot must also extend his car to prevent that German devil from getting away too far. And so he chases after him in hot pursuit—that being just what the Mercedes pits intended. It was Sailer's job to induce the rivals to join the wild chase: the cars might last three, four or even ten laps, but not much more. The technicians know what the components will stand and they know the limits which, if once exceeded, spell finis to the car. There is not only that madman Sailer in the running for Mercedes, as tactical reserve they have also the courageous Christian Lautenschlager, the Belgian Pilette, Louis Wagner from Paris and Otto Salzer—they all wait for the signal to attack. This is not only sport but systematic strategy, the responsibility of the men in charge of the works and all those who work for Daimler is too great to consider this race as only a game.

Sailer continues in the lead and increases it by several seconds every lap, but those in the grandstands do not worry, they imagine they know when that " Jerry " will run out of breath. The timekeepers then work out a record lap for Sailer of 111 k.p.h. (about 69 m.p.h.) which stands for the rest of the race. Sailer is still out in front and from the pits they signal to him what he is to do next. The journalists follow with quickening interest the mysterious signalling of the Germans and then, on the sixth lap, Sailer's Mercedes gives up the ghost, Pilette's car having retired already with engine trouble. The white chargers from the other bank of the Rhine are being decimated. Perhaps

then Boillot's valiant struggle has been worth while after all and when Sailer retires he leads the field. Behind him however there is trouble brewing; now Lautenschlager begins to attack, followed by Wagner. It is unbelievable what these drivers must withstand, the Grand Prix is endless. Not for them the smooth concrete or asphalt roads, all they have to drive on is hard rolled ballast and the tyres tear to ribbons. The men themselves must change them and this is very strenuous, but not a fraction of the effort of those 20 long laps. When one drives at a 100 or more miles per hour over ballast roads the hands must grip the wheel like a vice and after a very few laps the palms become torn open. To harden them Lautenschlager used to carry bottle corks around with him which he kneaded all the time to harden his palms and make them resistant.

At long last the ultimate lap begins—for seven hours this destructive Grand Prix has raged and the spectators' excitement is at fever pitch. Will Boillot make it? Can he hold out against this superior force?

Unfortunately he cannot. The great Georges Boillot is forced to retire on the last lap and the white Mercedes win the G.P. of France of 1914—the last before the great tragedy.

Christian Lautenschlager is first in 7 hours, 8 minutes and 18.4 seconds equal to an average of 105.6 k.p.h. (about 65.3 m.p.h.) followed by Louis Wagner and Otto Salzer.

Forty years later. . . .

There is a hearty handshake from Juan Manuel Fangio for the old gentleman who is about to climb into a pale blue 300 S. coupé for the lap of honour before this, the 41st G.P. of France. The old gentleman is none other than the famous Louis Wagner, one of the heroes of the 1914 G.P. When they announce his name over the loudspeaker the thousands of spectators at the Rheims circuit cheer him with great gusto.

White clouds gently float over the champagne country towards the west and the sun fails to penetrate them. Then, suddenly, as the cars are made ready for the start, the clouds tear asunder and a deep blue sky forms a soft contrast to the luminous white of the clouds.

Monsieur Wagner frowns as he thinks of that far off day in 1914 when those seven long hours seemed like eternity. To-day they will not even need three hours to cover 500 kilometres and their cars are light and easy to manage—not like the heavy, ponderous weapons of 1914.

Now the majestic 300 S sweeps along the Thillois straight where the racing cars will reach some 200 m.p.h. before they must brake for the " Virage de Thillois," reducing speed to 45-50 m.p.h.

Not much has changed, Wagner muses, the same highly charged atmosphere, the same discussions, only now it is the Italians who will be the rivals of the silver cars. To-day, unfortunately, there is no French racing car that is a serious challenge to the Italians and Germans. Only Amedée Gordini, the Frenchman of Italian origin, tries again and again, albeit with insufficient means to keep his small and very light cars on a par with the other competitors. These midgets look charming among the big machines but they cannot play a decisive part.

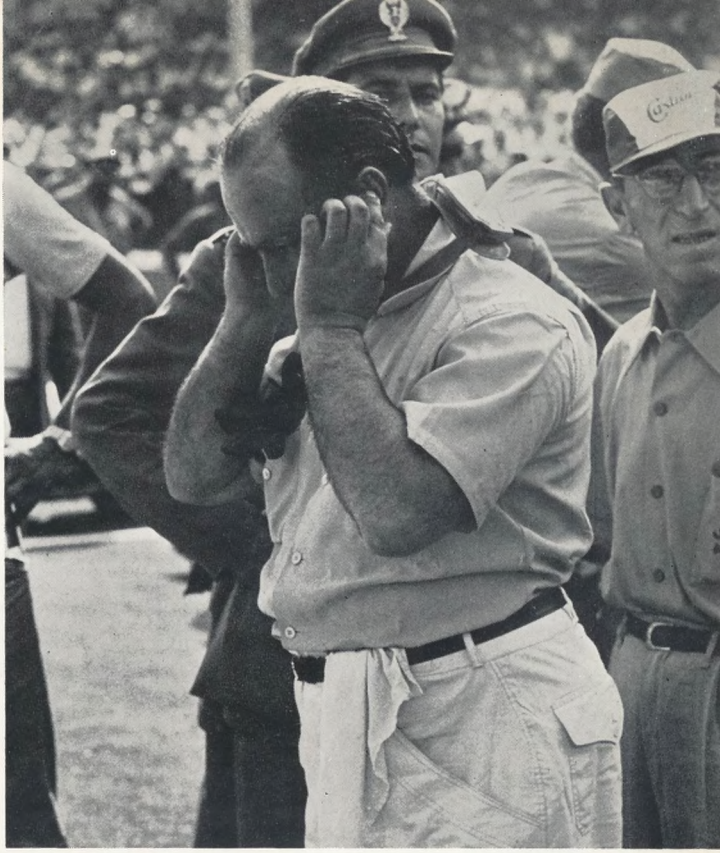
But, he thinks, what a change has been wrought in the cars, so much methodical engineering in these aerodynamic super-racing cars, into which the driver seems to fit as if designed as a whole with the machine. We struggled with the wind, dust and were tormented by tyre troubles, gear boxes and inefficient brakes. To-day . . . fully synchronized five speed gear boxes, turbo cooled four wheel brakes, how very much simpler it all seems.

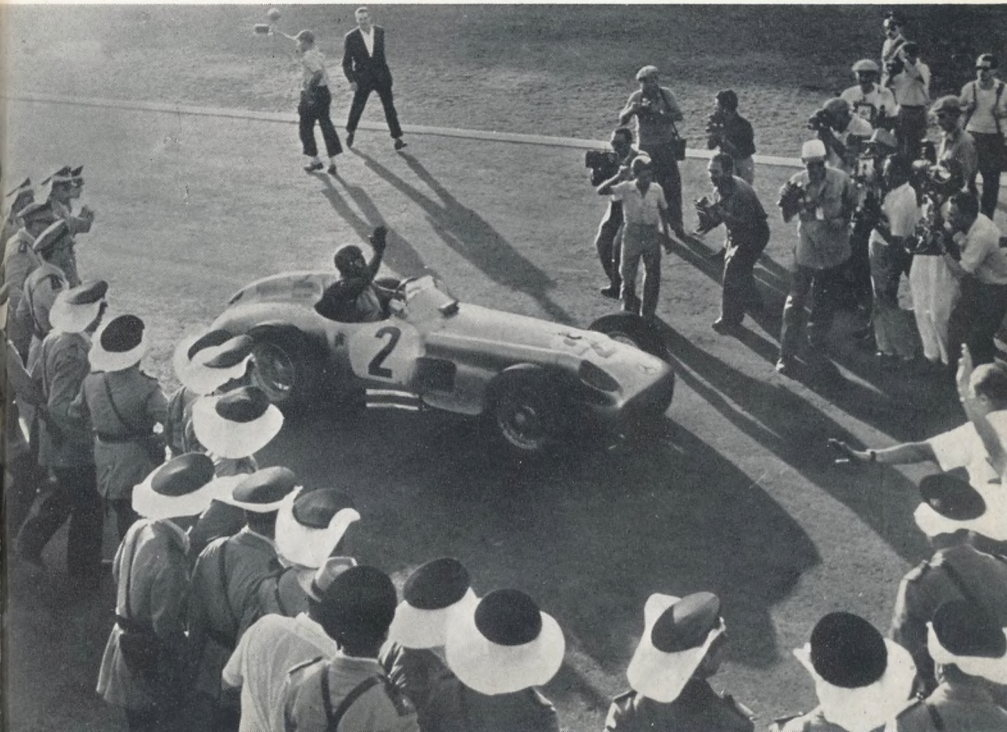
The man with the tired face outside the pits could tell a different story about this apparent simplicity! He knows of the many problems that had to be solved in the last few days and now instead of resting for a few hours, Uhlenhaut puts on the grey racing overalls to get ready for his job as reserve driver.

The three silver cars of Fangio, Kling and Herrmann stand before the pits as if on parade, but under the shining light alloy bodywork things are not all as they should be and mechanics are still working on them. Uhlenhaut runs his hand over his face as if wishing to erase the strain of the last few days, then walks over to the car bearing number 20 and touches the shoulder of the mechanic working in the cockpit: " Well, Geier, how's it coming? We haven't much time left, you know!" Eugen Geier, straightens up to look at Uhlenhaut. His face is tired, almost grey with fatigue, his eyes inflamed from too much night work. " Don't worry Mr. Uhlenhaut, we'll get done all right;" he says in his broad Swabian dialect, which somehow seems reassuring in the circumstances. As the cars are wheeled to the start, the mechanics still lying in the cockpits, tighten the last nuts. But why this last minute rush?

TOP :
"Those racing engines are jolly noisy!"

BOTTOM :
Excitement after victory.



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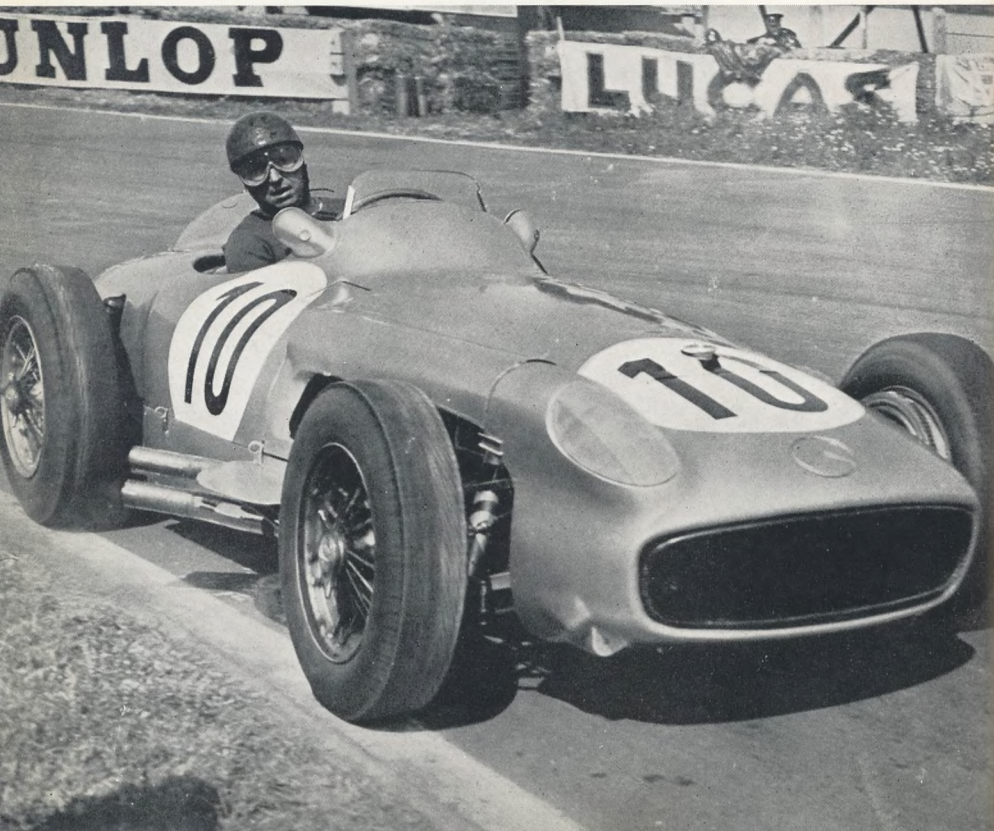
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At the protracted Hockenheim tests, a fuel consumption of 35 litres per 100 racing kilometres had been established. Since the tank held 195 litres, this was enough for a G.P. distance of 500 kilometres, but during practice at Rheims a considerably greater rate of fuel consumption was observed. Did the drivers suddenly drive faster?

The Rheims organizers offered some interesting inducement for the practice session. The house of Pommery, one of the leading champagne producers, had promised a special prize of 50 bottles to the driver first to exceed a 125 m.p.h. average for the Rheims/Gueux circuit; for 125½ a hundred bottles, for 126, 200 bottles, 126½ qualified for 300 bottles and for the man to average 156 m.p.h. they promised *all* the bottles which their 11 miles long cellars contained, in other words something like 12 million bottles! Fangio exceeded 125 m.p.h. (200.24 k.p.h.) and thus earned himself 50 bottles of the finest wine, and no one was faster than he. Was it perhaps the Pommery champagne that caused the higher fuel consumption of the Mercedes or was it the astringent air of the champagne country? I do not attribute it to either of these causes—simply a case of entirely different driving in racing and practice, as compared with testing.

Ascari's, González' and Marimón's practice times were not very much under those of Fangio and Kling. As a refuelling pit stop would therefore mean a risk for Mercedes, the technicians had to try to find room for extra fuel tanks in the little space remaining in the car. These tanks could only be made at the works, and Uhlenhaut drove back as quickly as possible in a 300 SL on Friday night, had them made and chased back to Rheims on Saturday afternoon. On the Sunday night the tanks were being installed and now, just before the start, the last adjustments were being made. As a matter of course, the mechanics and Uhlenhaut had to give up a night's rest to do this.

Once more, as the French said, everything was beautifully organized.

For the French and the Italians the first appearance of the new German cars meant quite a sensation. Although it is very seldom that a new design is victorious first time, nevertheless Mercedes were expected to make an impressive debut.

Juan's accuracy when cornering is uncanny and accurate to less than an inch. (TOP: *Monte Carlo;* BOTTOM: *Aintree*).

To make their old rival's come-back as difficult as possible, the Italians have mustered a strong " battle force." Ascari and Villoresi are not driving for Ferrari in 1954 having signed up with Lancia, who have a new formula car in preparation. As it is not ready, Lancia " loaned " them to Maserati. Farina is not available having crashed a Ferrari sports car at Monza and sustained serious burns, so that the Commendatore fields Hawthorn, González and Trintignant, whereas Fangio's pupil Marimón drives for Maserati.

In practice, Ascari tried all he knew to approach Fangio's lap times and although he ruined two engines in the process he was still 1.1 second slower.

Fangio, Kling and Ascari are in the front row of the starting grid. The Argentinian knows his opponents and their machines; until now they have never been forced to extract the last ounce of their reserves, but if, he, Fangio really goes all out to-day they will have to pull out all the stops and then it will show whether their engines can stand the strain.

Charles Faroux lowers the blue, white and red flag and Kling and Fangio roar off; Ascari's Maserati does not survive the first lap. González and Hawthorn tail the Mercedes, Herrmann working up into fifth place, soon challenging González. Whilst Fangio and Kling pull out a good lead, Herrmann, the young confectioner who is driving in his first Grand Prix establishes fastest lap and overtakes González. Thus the three Mercedes lead the field but a lap later González replaces young Herrmann in third place. Then on the 17th lap Herrmann begins to trail a white smoke cloud as he races along the Thillois straight, the Mercedes appears to be rocket powered. He begins to slow down and subsequently retires with engine trouble. González also is missing; flames were seen coming from his car on the 13th lap as, due to a broken oil pipe, oil spewed out over the engine and caught alight; a little later Hawthorn has to give up too. One after the other cars fall by the way-side, victims of the murderous speed set by Mercedes, who continue to out distance the rest of the field. From the 22 starters only 6 pass the finishing banner and Fangio wins by two tenths of a second from Kling. A lap later the first Ferrari, driven by Frenchman Robert Manzon passes the flag.

In the small works of Ferrari and Maserati the danger signals are up and they prepare for their revenge in the British G.P. at Silverstone.

At the Five Arrows hotel in a little place called Waddesdon close to Silverstone, serious discussions take place between racing manager Neubauer, Uhlenhaut and drivers Fangio and Kling. The first practice period on this ex-aerodrome circuit has already shown that the Mercedes will be severely handicapped. On this short, many cornered circuit, the aerodynamic cars are not nimble enough and cannot develop their potentialities to the full, in fact the all enclosed bodies are an embarrassment. The circuit has no straights longer than about half a mile and eight corners of varying sharpness. In spite of tremendous efforts the Nürburgring type of body could not be completed.

" I can't go any faster," Fangio states briefly, " how can I speed round the corners if I cannot even get at them properly. It is like target shooting, I've got to be able to aim properly first, before I can hit it!" and he shakes his head resignedly. That he will do everything in his power is obvious to Neubauer who realizes that his men will have a tough day of it.

When the Ferraris appear it is clear straightaway that they are not the latest models which were handled at Rheims by Hawthorn and González. As they both retired too soon, Ferrari decided to field the older but well-tried machines and chief designer Aurelio Lampredi considers they are powerful enough to beat the Mercedes. In spite of this Fangio makes fastest practice lap, then González, Hawthorn, and young Stirling Moss on the Maserati. Ascari's and Villoresi's cars are ranged at the rear of the grid; their machines arrived too late for official practice and practice times decide starting positions.

The British G.P. is contested over 90 laps of the Silverstone course. González takes the lead from the start, followed by Hawthorn and Moss. Fangio in fourth position; a little later Juan improves this to second place. After 30 laps it begins to rain and the Mercedes situation becomes even more critical, though Fangio keeps his place. On the 54th lap Moss attacks, passes Fangio and begins to threaten González. Later even Fangio's fighting spirit avails him nothing when Hawthorn and then Marimón pass him. This surprising fact is due to gearbox trouble which beset him after the 50th lap and forced him to drive with one hand, having to hold the gear lever with the other as second and third gear tended to jump out of engagement. He battles on however, finishing the race in fourth position. González is declared winner. Hawthorn's Ferrari second, Marimón's Maserati third, whereas Kling is seventh.

Thus the Ferrari/Mercedes battle is at par and everyone makes ready for the third round, the G.P. of Europe on the Nürburgring. The Mercedes-Benz technicians have not had much time to improve the cars for this difficult event and although some changes have been made there is not time to prove whether they have brought about increased power and better road holding. The first cars with the new body only arrive on the Friday before the race. The men work through Saturday night and Sunday morning to get the cars ready for practice. Those responsible at Mercedes-Benz are playing for high and risky stakes because should there be trouble with the modified machines there will be no time to put matters right before the race starts. Fangio drives the car with the new body-work for the first time and here, on this the most difficult G.P. circuit in the world, he shows again his uncanny ability to get on with an unaccustomed mount. After very little time he laps at 9 minutes, 50 seconds in practice, a time not improved on by anyone else. On returning to the pits after this astonishing effort he suffers the greatest shock of his career: his young friend Onofre is dead. Marimón wanted to improve his practice time and got into his Maserati once more. His father, Domingo Marimón had come to Germany especially to see his son start in this difficult race. With tremendous concentration Onofre hurled his car through the Eifel woods, driving his red Maserati with great precision, plus the élan of youth. Then he turned into the downhill run at Wehrseifen, where close shrubbery prevents one from seeing the valley. He braked from high speed to negotiate the right hand bend, and a front wheel locked! The car slewed to the left, flew like a projectile through the bushes, uprooted a tree and crashed into the clayey earth, to come to rest in a cornfield. When the course marshals arrived, Onofre's young life was about to end, a life which had seemed destined to join the élite of great Argentinian drivers.

A little later González leans heartbroken against the shoulders of rival Fangio, sorrow over Onofre's death bringing them together in friendship. Deeply moved by the death of this young driver, Count Orsi would have prefered not to run his team of cars.

Less than an hour later Kling's Mercedes loses its right front wheel on the long Döttinger Höhe straight at some 125 m.p.h. Through masterly driving Kling manages to hold the car and prevent an accident, but it means that he cannot practise any more and must resign himself to the rear of the starting grid.

During the night a monotonous rumbling can be heard in the old forests of the Eifel. Thousands are coming by road, in numbers never before seen at the Nürburgring.

H. U. Wieselmann, the editor of the motor paper " Das Auto, Motor und Sport " had this to say: " The night before the Grand Prix was unforgettable. Slowly I drove round the Ring, past numerous tents and caravans set out at Hatzenbach, Wippermann, Brünnchen, Pflanzgarten and all the other famous bends and curves of the Nürburgring, and camp fires were alight everywhere. It was cool as usual in that odd summer and the woods formed a back cloth to it all, as for a Wagnerian opera."

But over this singularly beautiful picture, joining technical science and nature in strange harmony, lies a veil of sadness due to Onofre Marimón's tragic death. Juan Manuel Fangio is in a turmoil within himself; for the first time the merciless harshness of the sport seems to overwhelm him. He does not want to drive or struggle on this day for everything seems so senseless. Then Neubauer talks to him and begs him to go on with it and the unsophisticated, modest man rises above himself and with his face marked with the lines of sorrow he gets behind the wheel.

As they push the 20 cars to the start, the West German president, Theodor Heuss arrives. Many other personalities are present, Rudolf Caracciola and the managing director of Daimler-Benz A.G., Dr Könecke, who wishes to follow the race from the Mercedes pit.

Apart from Fangio, Kling and Herrmann there is also another driver, one of the pre-war aces, at the wheel of a Mercedes. No less a person than Hermann Lang the pleasant Swabian, who before the war worked his way up from racing mechanic to European G.P. champion.

The engines are started and sound as if all hell is let loose, the same exciting atmosphere that grips people at the race courses all over the world. There is no spectacle more dramatic or powerful than the start of a motor race. Sixty seconds tick by between the starting of the engines and the beginning of the wild chase, but each second is more exciting than the preceding one until at last tension is unleashed and more than 2,000 horse power roars off.

González takes the lead followed by Fangio but it is the latter

who returns in first position from the standing lap. Then follow Moss (Maserati) after the " Puma " and Lang, who is shaping well and who, after a few laps replaces González in second place Kling in the meantime has worked through the field and is third. Young Herrmann, driving an aerodynamic car because the fourth Nürburgring type could not be made ready in time, is fifth but is soon passed by Trintignant's Ferrari and Herrmann gives up on the eighth lap with engine trouble. On the tenth lap Kling is already in second position and a little later Lang runs out of road when his engine seizes up; everyone feels sorry for him when he retires, especially after the good impression he made during the first few laps. Imperturbably and in masterly fashion as always, Fangio leads the field.

González who seems still influenced by the death of his friend Marimón stops and hands over to Hawthorn, who had to give up in his own car a little while before.

Then Kling makes fastest lap at 138.8 k.p.h. (about 86.5 m.p.h.) and closes up on Fangio, overtaking him on the 15th lap amidst acclaim from the spectators. Is Fangio weary of the struggle to-day?* Within 15 laps Kling has virtually achieved the impossible, working up from last place to the lead but this success is short-lived for a rear axle stay breaks and Fangio overtakes him again. His pit stop where they try and patch up the damage is so extensive that he falls back into fourth position. Only now does it become apparent that his car's tank started to leak on the second lap. The acrid alcohol fuel dripped on to the turbo brake drums and was thrown forward into the cockpit. To enable him to continue driving in these overpowering fumes, Kling held in his teeth the damp sponge which he normally carried to clean his goggles in case of need.

Fangio wins the Grand Prix of Europe over 300 miles of Nürburgring. Seriously and unsmilingly he goes through the paraphernalia of victory celebrations, it being quite obvious that he is at the end of his tether. His devoted wife Andrea cries from relief now that the four awful hours are over.

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* According to other sources and from personal observation, Kling drove unnecessarily fast, endangering the Mercedes lead; in fact Fangio signalled considerable annoyance and both Neubauer and Dr. Nallinger tried on several occasions to slow Kling down, becoming quite threatening in the process.

Juan Fangio now has such a points lead over his countryman, González the runner-up, that it is unlikely that anyone can challenge him for the world championship.

Nonetheless he presses on relentlessly and wins the G.P. of Switzerland at Berne from González on a Ferrari. Then he is due to drive in the Italian event at Monza where the car manufacturers are making strenuous efforts and are prepared to stake everything to prevent a Mercedes win.

CHAPTER XIV

Triumph and Tragedy at Monza

The voices of the newspaper boys sound raucous and penetrating across the Piazza Duomo in Milan disturbing the peaceful evening. The countless pigeons which populate the square during the day have long been asleep in the 135 towers of the white marble cathedral which 200 architects designed 400 years ago. There is room for 40,000 people in this greatest Gothic church in Italy, for which at the end of the 14th century Bonaventura created the biggest church window in the world. But from the other side of the Piazza the classic atmosphere is broken by barbaric and garish neon-lit advertisements extolling the achievements of the 20th century. Life pulsates in the covered ways and passages which blend so harmoniously with the architecture of the cathedral. Here the call of the newsboys reverberates from the thick walls and cannot be mistaken. They shout of the " terribili Mercedes " and the rest of the headline is lost in the treble of their voices. Those who buy the paper see the thickly printed front page news: Ferrari and Maserati have united against the terrible Mercedes!

The " terrible ones " from the cold north threaten with their calculated singlemindedness of purpose to disturb the easy going Italian game which, suddenly, has become a very serious business.

The appearance of the silver " bolides " from the other side of the Alps has abruptly stopped the rivalry between Maserati and Ferrari and jointly they intend to oppose the enemy.

To strengthen this common front, Gianni Lancia even lends " campionissimo " Alberto Ascari to Ferrari and puts Gigi Villoresi at the disposal of Count Orsi of Maserati. Thus the curious situation arises whereby the " inseparables " suddenly appear in two different équipe. The race at Monza has become a national issue overnight.

In the squares and passages there is a buzzing as in many beehives, the Gran Premio is uppermost in all discussions. The few German journalists on the terrace of the elegant Hotel

TOP :
Juan's office in Buenos Aires. In the centre is his friend Ibanez, himself a racing driver and motor salesman ; next to him Arthur Keser, Press Chief of Daimler-Benz.

CENTRE :
Enormous placards invite spectators to the Argentine G.P. of 1955.

BOTTOM :
The men of the Mercedes-Benz agency in Buenos Aires are delighted to have the "boss" with them. Jose, Fangio's elder brother, is next to him in a white shirt.

Principe e Savoia on the hill and isolated from the restless vitality of this town that is the Italian New York, talk about the German chances in the race; soon they witness a veritable exodus of the people of Lombardy. Until the early hours of the morning there is a constant and uninterrupted flow of Fiats, Alfas and Lancias towards the park where Monza lies.

The practice period is already noteworthy for the extreme tension that is in the air; the Italians consider this Gran Premio a point of prestige and therefore muster a considerable force. No less than five Ferraris and six Maseratis are fielded in the attempt to prevent Mercedes from carrying off these most important racing honours. The Germans on the other hand are doing everything they can to win here—in the lions' den so to speak—thus proving their re-establishment in the sport of Grand Prix racing beyond all doubt.

Monza has always been the place where nationalistic struggles between Germans and Italians occur. In the altar of the local church is kept the iron crown with which Frederic Barbarossa was once crowned. But the romanticism of those far off days lies buried in the altar of the Duomo, and to-day in the royal park, the irreverent noise of the engines echoes back from the walls of the Villa Regina. Modern technique has a different romanticism of its very own and the men who so capably control the car's power and use it so expertly for their own needs, are truly the parfit knights of our time. No longer do they battle in armour and on horse back, but with hundreds of horse-power and fractions of seconds; and it is these fractions which set their stamp on this practice session. Two minutes—this is the magic figure, to lower which these matadors of the circuit struggle with incredible determination.

Fangio and Kling were the first to achieve it, then Stirling Moss, in brilliant form to-day—the prophets already visualize him at the wheel of the Mercedes.

TOP LEFT: *Fangio talks with Collins (centre) and Musso in Monte Carlo.*

BOTTOM: *He appears to reflect that it was hard work getting all these cups!*

Shortly before the end of practice Ascari achieves a time to give him a starting position next to his old rival Fangio, who owes him revenge for his win in the memorable 1953 G.P.

In the eyes of the experts the tie between that great hearted past champion Hermann Lang and the newcomer Hans Herrmann for the wheel of the third Mercedes was almost sad to see, and the decision was for the newcomer. Lang said frankly: " I just couldn't find the right way through the Lesmo curve and that cost me the tenth of a second which I needed later on!" How much sportsmanship is necessary to admit such a thing!

Aurelio Lampredi also had not wasted the last few months and systematically developed the Ferrari further. He gave the most potent car to Ascari, former star of his écurie who however did not get on with the latest side tank machine. So they fitted its 265 b.h.p. engine into the older chassis with the tail mounted tank. González plumped for the side tank one, whereas Hawthorn, Trintignant and newcomer Maglioli had the older, heavier machines.

Maserati had their 255 b.h.p. cars which had already been seen before and they were handled by Moss, Villoresi, the Argentinian Roberto Mieres and the Italians' Musso and Mantovani.

Daimler-Benz A.G. have put the aerodynamic cars at the disposal of Fangio and Kling and the Nürburgring model is driven by Herrmann. The eight-cylinder gives 270 b.h.p. but with a weight of 700 kilogrammes (about 1,550 lbs.) is the heaviest car in the race. There were also three Gordinis, a few privately entered Maseratis, a Ferrari entered by Frenchman Robert Manzon and the new ultra light 2.3-litre Vanwall to be driven by Peter Collins. Fangio's unyielding spirit forces the Italians again and again beyond their reserves, although there is one factor he has not allowed for and which becomes apparent during the course of the race. The two right angle brick paved corners of the circuit are becoming more and more covered in rubber and oil as racing progresses. This is more disadvantageous for the Mercedes than for the Italian cars and Fangio slides out beyond the road edge on several occasions. He masters these unpleasant incidents with an amazing lack of fireworks and is finally alone among the pack of Italian cars.

How much Daimler-Benz A.G. owe to the Argentinian is particularly obvious at Monza. He stands alone against the Italian phalanx because Kling has gradually slowed up, finally to retire after a crash, fortunately without injury to himself.

The circuit resembles a witches' cauldron from the start. The impetuous attack of Alberto Ascari warms the heart of his 100,000 compatriots who have come to watch. After leading for a long while he is forced to retire with engine trouble, to their deepest disappointment. When Moss passes Fangio to ursurp the lead there is tremendous acclaim—and later the Englishman has as much as 22 seconds' advantage over the Argentinian. But nine laps before the finish this wonderful effort ends in disappointment when Moss has to give up. Now the way is free for Fangio, who chalks up his fourth win for Mercedes in this season. A lap later, Hawthorn's Ferrari is given the chequered flag.

The three mile asphalt and brick rectangle of Indianapolis has witnessed the fastest post-war races in the world. In September 1954 the G.P. of Berlin was due to be run on the famous AVUS track for Formula I cars. Daimler-Benz alone send their team of Fangio, Kling and Herrmann; Ferrari and Maserati do not appear and unfortunately nor does Hermann Lang the old record holder of this track, but the public is not told the reason why. He won the last AVUS race before the war on a Mercedes at the legendary average of 261 k.p.h. (about 162 m.p.h.). Until to-day there has not been a race anywhere in which this fantastic average has even been remotely approached. Indianapolis is contested over 500 miles, whereas the Berlin G.P. comprises only 300. Since the Mercedes aerodynamic cars have no serious competitors the race becomes purely a demonstration run in which the attempt is made to break the Indianapolis post-war record of 210.58 k.p.h. (about 130.5 m.p.h.) average, achieved by Bill Vukovich over 500 miles. Kling who wins in front of Fangio and Herrmann, manages this and covers the 300 miles at 213.5 k.p.h. (about 132.3 m.p.h.) although Fangio nets fastest lap at 224 k.p.h. (about 139 m.p.h.). Thus the 1954 Avus G.P. becomes the fastest post-war motor race in the world. For Fangio the north curve of the Avus is a physically painful affair because the centrifugal forces not only impinge heavily upon his car but also on the constitution of the driver, and his damaged vertebrae do not re-act exactly pleasantly to the strain.

The last championship round of the season, the Spanish G.P. on the Pedralbes circuit in Barcelona, brings forth a new opponent to Mercedes-Benz in the shape of the new Formula I Lancia. This exceptionally light design has a V8 engine and the drivers are Ascari, Villoresi and Castellotti. There is one especially

interesting design feature: the fuel tanks are mounted on both sides of the body, forming sponsons between the front and rear wheels which have considerable influence on the aerodynamics since no air eddies occur, as they do, for instance, on the Nürburgring type of body. Practice shows that the Lancias are considerably faster than their opponents, nonetheless the Mercedes pit is confident. The new Turin cars still have to show that they can last through the full Grand Prix distance. Although Ascari achieves fastest lap in the race, all the Lancias drop out—nor are Mercedes lucky for soon after the start engine trouble rears its ugly head; Fangio finishes third and Kling in fifth position, Herrmann having retired. That evening several German radio stations report that plug trouble had handicapped the Mercedes, but the experienced plug technician of Bosch, the incomparable old specialist Bamminger, disagrees with this statement. He knows very well that his plugs were all right and his experience is so extensive that he always chooses the right ones to withstand all contingencies. What then had happened? The later version as given by Daimler-Benz seemed more than trite, but was in fact true. Wind sprang up during the race and blew up bits of paper and leaves. This rubbish settled in the cooling intakes of the Mercedes which overheated as a result and the plugs no longer functioned properly. At the same time the paper also blocked the air intakes and this was the reason that the eight-cylinder engines did not develop full power and ran irregularly. A few photographs showed that the winning Ferrari driven by Hawthorn also had an accumulation of paper in its intake. Why then did the Squalo Ferrari's four cylinder continue to function properly? That well known British motor journalist Laurence Pomeroy remarked after the Mercedes win at Rheims that the Ferrari was a very uncomplicated machine compared with the Mercedes. It would therefore seem reasonable to assume that the uncomplicated Ferrari is less sensitive to external influence than the very complex Mercedes, equipped as it is with many technical refinements and futuristic innovations. It is always thus when pioneering: each new invention takes a while before the engineers are *au fait* with it. No matter how scientific the theories may be, they cannot entirely replace practical experience.

CHAPTER XV

The New Man from England

The greyness of a December afternoon hangs over New York and I lean comfortably against the soft cushions of the airport bus that takes me in 45 minutes from the Air terminal to the international airport of Idlewild. From there I shall fly in a PAA Strato-Cruiser to Frankfurt. Twenty-four hours ago I came back from Mexico having watched the Carrera Panamericana, now I long to be home again. To-day is December 4, 1954, and a crazy pre-Christmas rush reigns in this gigantic city. It took the taxi more than an hour to get from Manhattan West to the Terminal at Manhattan East and the cab driver swore like a trooper in the process.

Idlewild appears and the fresh breeze from the sea rouses me after the sleepy bus journey. I stroll into the overheated hall and to the PAA counter to have my air ticket checked. There I see a young man with a typically English duffle coat slung over his shoulders.

" Well now," I say to myself, " I've met this chap before."

Walking over to him, I remember: it is Stirling Moss, the well-known driver. " Hello Stirling, what a surprise to meet you here. Where d'you come from and where are you off to?"

Stirling Moss—it really is he—turns round surprised and recognizes me.

" I say, it's nice to meet someone you know. I'm on my own and I'm off to Frankfurt at 4 p.m. on Clipper Flight 100! "

" To Frankfurt and on the 100? Excellent, then we'll fly together. But hang on, what are you going to Frankfurt for in the middle of winter?"

Stirling smiles, winks and puts a finger to his lips.

Although I have been away from Germany for five weeks I get the implication at once: Stirling will drive the Mercedes racing car, there can be no other reason for flying to Frankfurt at this time of year.

Bluntly I say: "And where are you going to drive the Mercedes?"

He laughs: "In Hockenheim! What sort of a circuit is that by the way? I've never driven there. As a matter of fact I wanted to go to the Bahamas, shark fishing, having just come from a business trip to California. But I had to cancel it all when the cable came from Stuttgart!"

"For the silver fish you'll get over there, you might well leave the sharks alone, no matter how big they are. And you needn't worry about Hockenheim, it's an oval with two long flat-out straights, a slow and a fast bend. In five laps you'll know it!"

Our flight is announced and we walk to the plane. A PAA hostess with a pin-up figure and lovely eyes wishes us *bon voyage* and a short while later the Stratocruiser is flying towards the east at 21,000 feet. We are in the bar drinking orange juice; I would have preferred a scotch and soda but Stirling does not drink alcohol, so out of politeness I do not have it either. The sky is clear and star studded, the enormous radial engines of the Stratocruiser roar monotonously. Far below the ocean looks like molten lead and there is just the slightest swell.

"You know," Stirling suddenly interrupts the silence, "I'm very interested to know how they'll accept me in Germany if Mercedes-Benz give me a contract."

"Very favourably beyond any doubt. Remember how popular Seaman was in Germany? But it'll be necessary to make you known there. They only know a little about you and your racing on the Nürburgring, Schauinsland, and on the Avus. That's about all. I must admit myself, that although I've met you at many circuits I don't really know much about your career. How would it be if you told me a little about it and when I get back home I'll write a story about you—all right?"

Whilst Stirling thinks over how to begin I have a chance to study him more thoroughly. If one were to see him for the first time one might almost take him for a jockey. He is not very tall and of slim build, yet his physique is athletic, well proportioned and muscular.

"Look Stirling, you don't have to tell me you were born on September 17, 1929 and that your father is a dentist, that I know too,—come on, talk about motor racing!"

Stirling who is not very talkative begins: " When I started racing I was in the lucky position of having a £1,000. I had a 328 BMW which I sold and the rest I took from my account. I used to ride as a boy and took part in more than a 100 contests where, apart from some attractive cups, I also earned a few pounds. By the way, I owe a lot to this riding: body control and balance. Those £1,000 went on a Formula III Cooper and in my first season in 1948 I won eleven races. In 1950 I was part of the H.W.M. team and drove their Formula II car in several Grands Prix. But it wasn't until 1951 that I got a works contract from Jaguars. To be a good driver one has to work jolly hard you know. There are several factories in Europe which have works' teams and many drivers try them for contracts. Well, without my parents' help, I don't mind admitting I wouldn't have got very far. Neither father nor mother were over enthusiastic about my plans at first, both of them know too much about this racing game. My father, Alfred Moss, studied in the early 'twenties at the Dental College in Indianapolis and had a chance to drive a Fronty-Ford in the 500 mile race at Indianapolis. He ran twice there and in 1924 even finished fifteenth. You've seen the 500 mile race and you know how difficult it is for a European to be successful there. My mother Aileen Moss used to drive a Morgan in club events and I therefore grew up in an atmosphere of motor sport. When both of them realized that I was seriously determined to become a racing driver they supported me in every way. We had a farm in Maidenhead—we have moved since to another one at Tring—and there I had my first " racing stable." A former German prisoner of war who worked for us helped me a lot, we called him Don Müller. He came to me one day and said he had heard I wanted to race and as he had been a motor mechanic by profession, could he be my racing mechanic? He did not want any extra payment, just to do it for fun. I accepted gratefully.

" We built our first racing car transporter from an old horse box and father gave me an old Rolls Royce to pull it along. I started in small events, the first two were speed hill climbs, then the first circuit: Brough airfield. I came first among eight competitors and from that moment the sport got me; it was the beginning of a long and difficult road.

" What makes a good driver? Well, you know, I used to love horses and when you think about it, you find there are a

lot of similarities between a rider and a racing driver. You need a pair of good hands for both the horse and the racing car.

" I've never heard anyone say that such and such a driver has a good seat, but in fact one does drive through one's extended back, through the trousers and seat, just like riding a horse. If one has feeling there then one is in contact with the horse or the car—agreed?

" A horse expects its rider to think ahead and it is no different with a racing car. One must not struggle with horse or machine. You must convey your will and force either of them to do your bidding. A racing car at high speed on a bend is exactly the same thing as riding a horse on slippery ground on a corner, you must foresee the course your car or horse will take and react immediately. If the car wants to slide out or the horse stumbles, you must think and act before it happens.

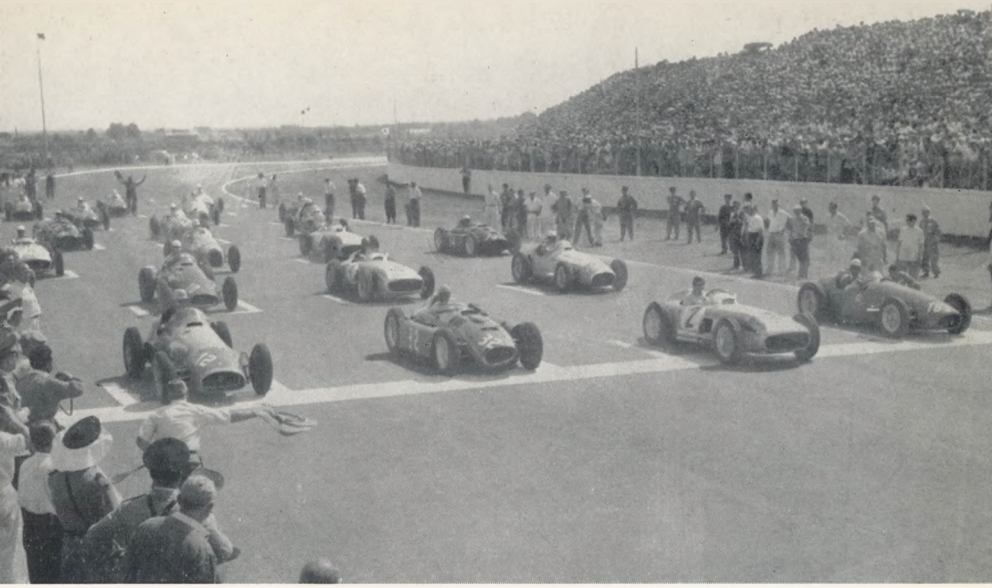
" Furthermore you must value your own physical condition, just like a footballer. Tiredness can kill; Fangio's serious accident in Monza was due to over-tiredness and consequent increased reaction time.

" However, I don't want to divulge all my ' secrets ' but tell you how I got on with my racing. One of my ideals apart from Fangio is Giuseppe Farina. The clean, polished driving style of this pleasant man has always impressed me!"

With a passion that to me seems hardly English, Stirling chats on about motor sport. Our interesting conversation, is however, interrupted because there is a noisy drinking party starting in the bar and so we decide to go to bed. " My manager, Ken Gregory, will join this flight in London tomorrow and he'll give you any missing information. Good night!"

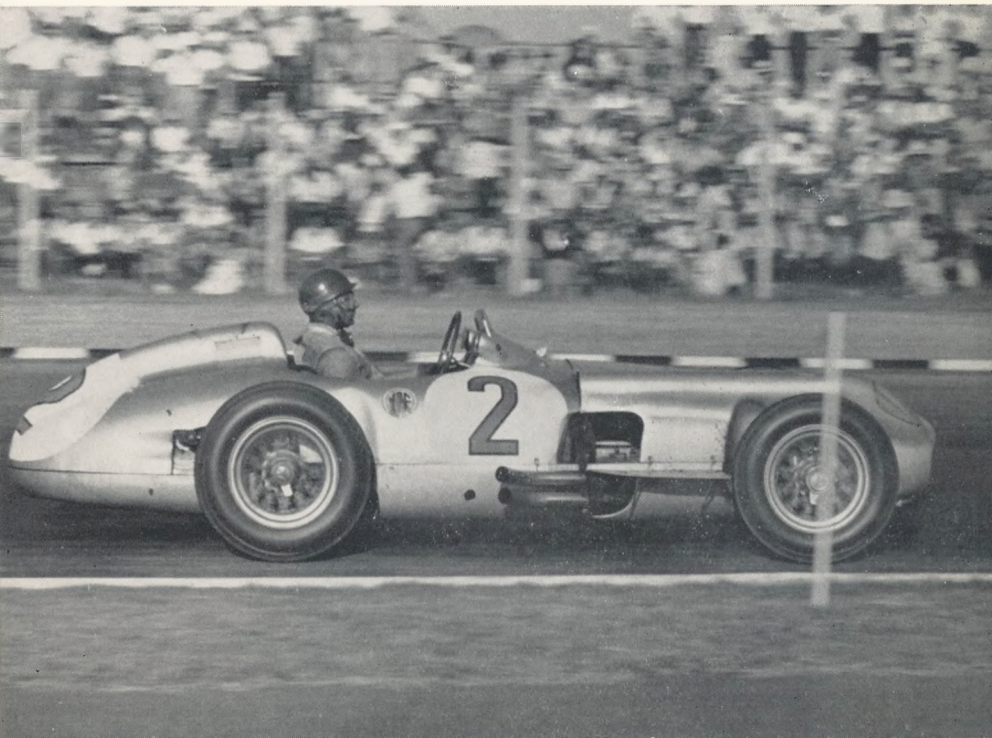
" Good night Stirling, don't dream too much about Hockenheim, two long straights, a fast and a slow bend, that's all!"

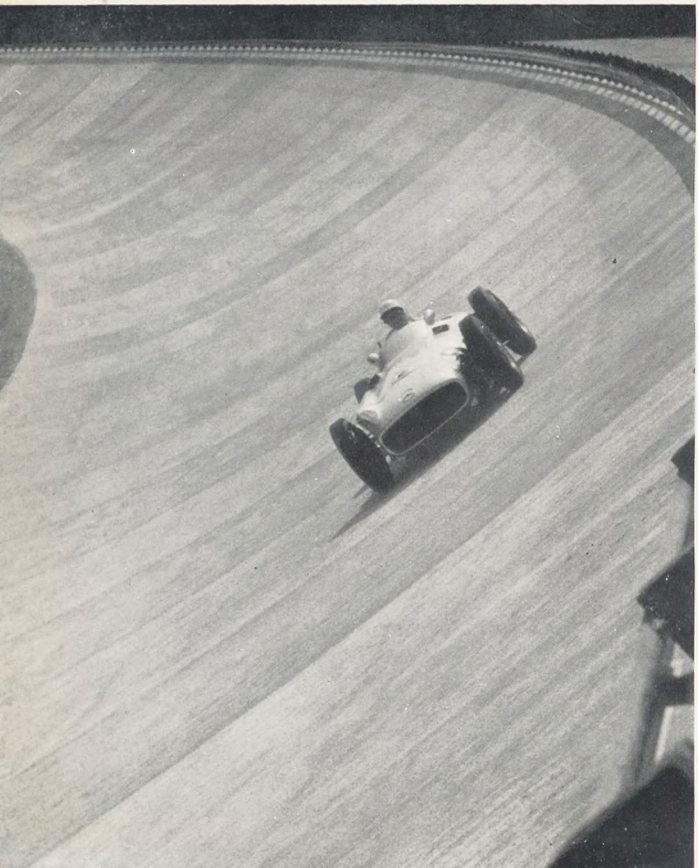
After an uneventful flight of 10 hours and 30 minutes the Stratocruiser lands at London Airport and Moss senior and Ken Gregory join the flight. Father Moss flies to Germany to be present at this decisive moment of his son's career. From Ken Gregory I also hear the following: " Stirling became even more active with John Heath's HWM and took part in several big events, he also drove the Cooper. In the 1950 Gran Premio in Naples he crashed, broke his knee and knocked out his front teeth; the doctors dealt with his knee and his father repaired the teeth. A fortnight later Stirling vamoosed from hospital because he wanted to drive at Brands Hatch. His doctor forecast that should anything happen



TOP : *Start of the Argentine G.P.*, 1955. 1*st Row (left to right) : Gonzalez (Ferrari), Ascari (Lancia), Fangio (Mercedes), Behra (Maserati).* 2*nd Row : Farina (Ferrari), Kling (Mercedes), Schell (Maserati).*

BOTTOM : *Juan during the "Sun Battle" on the Rio de la Plata.*





TOP :
Fangio on the 300 *SLR at the start of the* 1955 *Mille Miglia.*

BOTTOM :
Stirling Moss on the Formula I Mercedes on one of the two steeply banked curves of the new Monza track.

again he would have to have a metal plate in his knee—but nothing happened.

In the autumn of 1950 the English journalist Wisdom lent Stirling his XK 120 Jaguar to drive in the Dunrod Tourist Trophy, thus he handled a big sports car for the first time. It rained, the circuit was slippery and dangerous, but the newcomer from Maidenhead was undeterred, beat his opponents and won. After that the managing director of Jaguar's offered him a place in the 1951 works team and Stirling signed a contract. At the end of 1950 he and Leslie Johnson went to Paris and established a new 24 hours record with a Jaguar at Montlhéry.

For his achievements in 1950 the British Racing Drivers Club awarded him his first gold star, the highest British distinction for racing drivers.

In 1951 he had an even more intensive season. He took part in the Monte Carlo Rally, made record lap at the 24 hours of Le Mans, drove the HWM in several Grands Prix and was finally asked by Raymond Mays to drive the BRM. In three short years he had achieved front rank among British drivers. His personality and the way he drives enable one to judge the outstanding qualities which will one day make him one of the best in the world. His father, who often accompanies him and sometimes assumes the role of racing manager, is largely responsible for the systematic improvement in his driving style.

Stirling Moss does not specialize in one type of car only: he drives racing, sports and touring cars and masters them all. He races an Osca in the Florida 12 hours race together with the American Bill Lloyd and wins. Jaguar mounted, he is again victorious in the Rheims 12 hours. He is successful in racing cars, sports cars and rallies—but his dream is a Grand Prix car.

During the winter of 1953/54 he got into touch with Alfred Neubauer and this wily old strategist advised him to buy a worth while Formula I car and to race it in Grand Prix events. Moss acquires a 2.5-litre Maserati and soon is so fast with it, that Maserati chief, Count Orsi, offers him works support. In the autumn of 1954 he then has an epic struggle with the great Fangio at the Italian Grand Prix. When I talked with him about this magnificent achievement he said modestly: " I thought it would be a good thing to keep behind Fangio and I did so."

In the winter of 1954/55 Moss is at the beginning of a new career, his youth naturally being of material advantage on his way to the top. Then he drives the Mercedes at Hockenheim

and after a short while achieves impressive lap times. A few weeks later he signs a racing contract with Daimler-Benz, thus having the chance to compete in the world championship on level terms.

In Britain the public asks if it is right that a British top line driver should, by his efforts, further the cause of German industry, thus increasing the danger of German competition in the export markets. To his critics Stirling replies to the effect that he will always be prepared to drive a British G.P. car as soon as one is available. As, however, this is not the case at present he will accept the great opportunity offered him.

The German public welcomes Stirling Moss without prejudice as a member of the famous Mercedes team, in the same way as it accepted Richard Seaman who was killed tragically in the Belgian G.P. at Spa before the war.

CHAPTER XVI

Sun Battle at Rio de la Plata

The hot moaning wind raises a fountain of dust, forms it playfully into a pillar and chases it at terrific speed across the Pampa until it subsides amidst the old trees on the Estancia of Don Jorge Antonio.

The men of the Mercedes team seeking a little shade from the merciless sun sigh in disgust. This wind around the Estancia is like the breath of hell and comes from the North, born in the tropical heat of the Brazilian primeval forests. Then it blows over the endless Pampa towards Buenos Aires. It is known as " Pampero."

A Gaucho, with a black sombrero on the back of his head, is preparing with the richly decorated Gaucho knife an Asado, juicy roast beef especially cooked over an open fire for the German guests. The tempting smell of the meat cooking in its own juice wafts through the trees. But the men have no appetite in this heat and sink exhausted to the ground, swatting resignedly at the myriads of flies that attack them as soon as they move a few steps from the open fire. Or they try to cool off in the clear waters of the big swimming pool of the Estancia, owned by the Mercedes-Benz sole agent of Argentina. They have been here only a few days, after a 36 hours' plane trip, and when they left Germany the thermometer stood at 23 degrees, yet on their first Sunday in Argentina the mercury column reached the giddy height of 104 degrees in the shade!

" 81 degrees' change of temperature in a few days and normal people are supposed to stick this!" Neubauer swears and curses —they call him Don Alfredo here.

" And," he continues exhausted, " Señor Rubens, Don Jorge's brother, tells me that it hasn't been as hot as this in Buenos Aires these ten years in the early January days. If it doesn't cool down for the Grand Prix on January 16th then God help our drivers!"

Furiously he pulls off his shirt, wet through with perspiration,

and climbs down into the refreshingly cool waters of the pool. He has forgotten his bathing trunks, and calmly walks into the water clad in his long white underpants to be greeted enthusiastically by his men.

Only one man is absent from the Estancia—Juan Manuel Fangio. He knows the climate of his homeland and realizes what awaits him next Sunday at the Autodromo. For weeks he has been preparing for this difficult event which is the first in the 1955 season. He gets into training, as they say in racing circles, does not drink alcohol, goes to bed early and keeps away from all pleasures that could decrease his physical capabilities.

He knows well enough that it is not easy for the European team to get used to the humid heat of the Argentinian coastal region on the Rio de la Plata. However, the weather could change any day and a thunderstorm would cool the temperature down to 65-70 degrees.

The older drivers like Fangio and Kling know full well what to do to withstand the tough conditions of this race, but it is not easy for Neubauer to persuade the two young ones, Moss and Herrmann of the dangers of this climate. Ever since his embryos, as he jokingly calls them, discovered the charms of South America, he is after them like a nursery governess. But these two juniors of the Mercedes stable, who mostly go out together, repeatedly find a way, by hook or by crook, to escape his surveillance. Until at last he grumblingly threatens to lock them in their rooms. " I don't think that'll be much good," Hans Klenk laughingly interjects, " they'll find their way out even through the keyhole!"

The mechanics however, have the toughest task of all, they have no time to consider the climate or to get used to it gradually. Since the day they arrived they have toiled ceaselessly in the oven-like heat of a garage to get the racing cars ready for the G.P. of Argentina, led by the head engine man, Lamm, experimental manager Kostelecky and their jovial foreman Hägele.

The cars were shipped over and the long sea voyage now makes a thorough check-over necessary. They are dismantled, tested and rebuilt. When the drivers return that evening to Buenos Aires from the Estancia, the Pampero increases in intensity. It blows thick dust clouds over the land and darkens the sky, but the threatening thunderstorm does not break and the next day is just as hot as before.

Since Fangio has won the world championship twice, motor racing in Argentina has become almost a national affair. The G.P. of Argentina, being an event counting towards the championship now leaves a visible imprint upon the face of the town for days.

The Avenida Corrientes leads into the Avenida of July 9th of which it is said that it is the widest street in the world. There, where the two Avenidas meet, is a large obelisk in the middle of the road, pointing like a finger to the sky. Around this stand enormous photographic enlargements of all the drivers and cars taking part in the race.

Over these poster-like pictures fly the flags of all nations taking part in international motor sport. Along the wide Avenida pours a stream of cars, circumnavigating the obelisk in the manner of a roundabout; from the afternoon until late evening the Corrientes forms a suitable place for the Senoritas and Caballeros to stroll about or to sit chatting in the many cafés. These days talk is all about the " Corredores," their sleek cars and particularly about the local heroes Juan Manuel Fangio and José Froilán González. Chueco hardly dares show himself in this crush and if he occasionally appears then he is surrounded by his enthusiastic countrymen in no time at all. There are loudspeakers everywhere reminding the people time and again that on January 16th the world's best drivers will battle for the premier honours.

In this atmosphere of elation an exceptional performance is expected of Juan Manuel Fangio and his " Coche Aleman " (German car); a performance which will provide the Gauchos on even the furthest Estancia with a subject for conversation for months to come when they sit by their camp fire of an evening.

Can Fangio provide this performance? He certainly will try hard enough, of that there is no doubt, but first it must be established how the Mercedes will get on on the narrow Autodromo circuit. After its defeat at Barcelona it has been further developed with great care and it now weighs some 160 lbs. less and the engine gives 280 b.h.p. The newest engines, finished at the works in the nick of time, arrive in aircraft of Aerolineas Argentinas and ASA during the week preceding the race.

The cars of Fangio and Kling have a 14 centimetres shorter wheel-base, the better to cope with the maze of corners and bends of the Autodromo. It becomes obvious after a few hours of practice that the G.P. circuit of 3.91 kilometres (about 2.3 miles)

although ideal from the spectators' point of view, is sheer hell for the drivers, for there is only one straight on which the cars can develop high speed for a short space of time. Then they have to mess about in narrow bends and corners which do not give the cars, developed as they are for European road racing, the chance to unfold any real speed. They are driven mostly in the lower gears and the high power built into them by fine engineering and ingenuity is left virtually unused.

The lighter Ferraris and Maseratis are not so affected and are as easy to drive here as they were at Silverstone.

Uhlenhaut has flown specially to Argentina to make sure through his extensive technical knowledge that there shall be no repetition of the 1951 happenings. He climbs into the Mercedes, chases round the circuit for quite a few laps and seeks and finds the best technical solution to this problem. When asked by journalists about the difficulties of the circuit, he openly voices his opinion: " A problem is set and the technician must solve it. And the successful driver will probably be the one who is best able to cope with the contingencies as they arise on this circuit."

Will it be Fangio or Ascari? Who knows? Apparently unaffected by any such problems Chueco reels off his practice laps. Later he chats quickly with " Don Alfredo " in a mixture of Spanish and Italian. A discussion with his mechanic Erwin Grupp is carried out in sign language only, for neither of them understand each other's language; it is an amusing spectacle when the son of the Pampas and the typical native Swabian exchange experiences by means of energetic gestures, although this method of communication seems to work wonderfully well. What remains to be done, Fangio achieves by his amazing delicacy of feeling for the machine; not once has he dropped out through engine trouble since driving for Mercedes-Benz.

When times are compared at the end of practice one finds that there is relatively little difference between the fastest and slowest, the experts explaining this as being due to the circuit which makes it impossible for the aces to show either their outstanding capabilities or the superior technical qualities of their vehicles.

González on the Ferrari makes fastest practice lap; Fangio and Ascari as next fastest also are sure of a place in the front row of the starting grid.

Dr. Gianni Lancia hopes to have overcome the troubles from which his cars suffered at Barcelona and flies his three machines

to Buenos Aires shortly before the race in a four-engined Douglas, DC.6, to have as much time as possible at Turin for modifications. Some idea of the cost of this may be gauged from the fact that a charter aircraft of this type from Stuttgart to Buenos Aires would cost the astonishing figure of some £8,500. That alone shows how much money the big companies spend on motor sport, thereby to prove the quality of their product. It is said that Daimler-Benz A.G. in 1954 spent £500,000 on the development of their racing cars and the maintenance of their team. Although these figures appear exceedingly high for European conditions they are nonetheless only a fraction of those spent by big American manufacturers on advertising. The experience gained in building and racing the cars will sooner or later benefit touring car construction. On top of this, the racing of sports and racing cars in South and Central America has considerable economic significance because motor racing is not only a sporting and technical adventure but materially helps the motor industry in the country of the winning car.

The Formula I Grand Prix of Argentina has to-day already usurped the importance of the great South American long distance events, always a prerogative of American vehicles.

The great spectacle at the Autodromo of Buenos Aires starts in the early morning hours of January 16th, in the presence of President Juan Peron. Cycle races, motor cycle races and events for Argentinian home built " specials " form the overture to the Grand Prix scene. As the hour of the big event approaches the more impressive becomes the spectacle combining engineering and sport presented to the 300,000 spectators. Pilots exhibit breathtaking aerobatics, parachutists float gently towards the earth and death-defying acrobats perform remarkable feats whilst suspended from helicopters. It seems as if the whole thing is cleverly stage-managed by a brilliant producer, yet it is only a game compared with the serious sporting event about to be provided by the Grand Prix.

The start is arranged for 4 p.m. and the fears of the Daimler-Benz people have become reality. The thermometer indicates 95 degrees in the shade and 131 degrees is measured on the ground. The massive concrete structures of the grandstands reflect the heat even more intensely upon the circuit which lies directly under the broiling sun—there is not a spot of shade anywhere. The Pampero blows from the Pampa and adds to the heat of the track, the air also has a humidity content of 23 per

cent. Enough to make this race into an almost inhuman torment for the driver.

Fangio starts like a flash, followed by González, Ascari and Moss. Then Kling is involved in a collision on a 110 m.p.h. bend, his car skids, out of control, leaves the track, demolishes a fence and comes to rest a yard in front of the last wire safety fence guarding the spectators. The first Mercedes is out!

In the meantime the lead has passed to Ascari who pulls out all the stops as if to make good at once all the opportunities lost in the past. Fangio wisely holds back, being well aware of the climatic conditions. He knows that in this infernal heat one must husband one's strength. He is content to let González and Ascari exhaust their fury. Then Ascari loses control of his Lancia when leaving a fast right hand bend, the car shoots across the grass, crashes into a fence and comes to a stop badly damaged.

Shaking his head Ascari climbs out, fortunately unhurt. The second Lancia, driven by Villoresi has also run out of road soon after the start. What is the trouble with the Lancias? The technicians at the works tried to improve their road holding even further, but succeeded only in worsening it. Now the side tanks cause trouble beyond certain speeds and centrifugal force, acting on the car's centre when the tanks are full, is so powerful that the Lancia is beyond holding once it has started to slide.

" Niente molto stabile" (it is not very stable) says the Italian technical journalist, Giovanni Canestrini.

Now only González is in front of Fangio and soon the " Puma " also leaves the road. Although he is able to continue he is so exhausted from the heat that he hands over his Ferrari to Farina at the pits, who in his turn shortly before handed over to Maglioli. This is Farina's first race since his serious accident at Monza and he straight away stakes everything. His efforts gain him considerable appreciation for he drives with his left leg thickly encased in asbestos to save it from the heat after his bad burns sustained at Monza and, with two morphia injections to make the pain bearable, the 48 year old man from Turin gives battle again and again.

Fangio now leads from his team mate Moss and the enthusiasm of the Argentinians knows no bounds. But the heat causes yet another victim, Stirling Moss giving up due to exhaustion. He had already said in practice: " It's impossible to drive three hours in this heat!" Now there are only two Mercedes left and

all three Lancias have been eliminated. Neubauer gets into action and signals to Fangio what is happening behind him. But an hour after the start Fangio suddenly stops at the pits. Is this great driver also about to lay down his arms? No, for a short while later he is off again. Some small trouble had suddenly occurred to his car and Juan, wishing to make certain wanted his mechanic to check it; the trouble was harmless and after quick refreshment he takes up the struggle again, now in fourth position. Forcing the pace, he regains the lead displacing Harry Schell on his Maserati.

After one and a half hours Hans Herrmann in fourth place hands over his car to Kling and collapses exhausted in the pits.

Fangio continues to lead the ever diminishing field, but he also is affected by the heat. The temperature in the cockpit, especially near the pedals, is unbearable and in fact he sustains second degree burns on the right leg. He overcomes a strong desire to give up and presses on.

The news of Fangio's heroic struggle spreads like wildfire even as far as the town itself—further thousands stream out towards the Autodromo and finally 400,000 spectators follow Fangio's lone drive.

The drivers are not only troubled by physical discomfort but the heat plays tricks with their vision and produces imaginary pictures in the air or distorts the natural. When entering bends at 110 m.p.h., contours suddenly grow hazy and it requires iron nerve to keep the cars under control.

Behind Fangio the drivers change regularly, three men being necessary to keep each of the following three cars on the road. González is in the running again and he also has been given morphia injections; his back injury, sustained in his crash at Dundrod last September, is very painful. Fangio manages fastest lap and is able to stick it out. Apart from him, only his countryman Roberto Mieres has driven right through but he is five laps behind.

At last the three hellish hours are over and Juan Manuel Fangio wins the Argentine Grand Prix: crossing the finishing line he jubilantly throws both arms in the air.

Blackened from oil fumes and rubber dust without a dry stitch on his body and close to collapse he walks slowly to the presidential box to receive his cup from the hand of Peron. A Ferrari driven by González, Farina and Trintignant is second,

third another Ferrari piloted alternately by Farina, Maglioli and Trintignant. The Herrmann/Kling/Moss Mercedes-Benz receives the chequered flag in fourth position.

When Fangio is examined by a doctor on the following day he is found to have an over strained heart and second degree burns on the right leg.

A few days after this gruelling race he says himself: " To be frank, I was at the end of my tether, battling with every adversity there is. I tried to gain energy from wherever I could and thank God the Mercedes provided everything I asked of it. I planned the race beforehand, being of the opinion that it would be wrong to accept the challenge of Ascari and González at the start of the race. Naturally I was able at all times to get closer to them had I wished, but I did not do so because the race was too long and the risk too great. I was certain that the driver roaring off wildly at the start was bound to retire, that is why I preferred to drive a regulated race, saving my strength, for if one overdoes it, the consequences turn against oneself. The facts have proved me right, but I also had to cope with some extraordinary problems. My driving cockpit was like a furnace. Everything seemed to burn, even the steering wheel, at certain moments the temperature went up to 248 degrees. I managed to get my breath back after half the race had been run, but then González came after me. I was naturally all the time informed as to his efforts and I thought that his attack would bode ill for the courageous Ferrari driver, which did in fact happen. Fortunately it was not necessary for me to call on my power reserves, thank the Lord everything went well. But never will I forget this race! "

Eight days later Fangio also wins the formule libre G.P. of Buenos Aires, after a pitched battle with Stirling Moss, who comes second.

When the German expedition gets together for the last time in the administrative offices of Mercedes-Benz Argentina S.A., Fangio is the centre of the festivities. Now this erstwhile penniless mechanic from Balcarce is the leading racing driver in the world. By his own efforts and overcoming many difficulties he has created an excellent living for himself.

Fangio owns in Bernardo de Irigoyen 13/5, Buenos Aires, a car agency with petrol station and large workshops, run by his brother José; a 2,000 seat cinema at Mar del Plata also belongs to him. Together with his boyhood friend Cavallotti he runs a

car agency with petrol station and workshops in Balcarce, as well as being a Mercedes distributor. Although he is a wealthy man to-day he has remained what he has always been, a modest sportsman possessed only of the wish to engage in the battle of fast cars. When one asks him about his future plans, he replies briefly—motor racing!

His countrymen venerate, in fact love him. His popularity has exceeded normal limits and he has hardly any time for his private life. To have a few hours to himself when in Buenos Aires he has acquired a so-called " secret " flat which figures neither in the telephone nor address book. When I visited him, there, together with Mercedes publicity chief Artur Keser and wanted to note his address, Fangio asked me to refrain and not to publish it.

His flat is full of pictures showing the milestones of his career and alongside souvenirs of many countries stand a host of beautiful cups—silent witnesses of the tremendous successes he has achieved.

* * *

Like a giant red disc the sun rises from the ocean as the DC 6 of Aerolineas Argentinas leaves Argentine soil bound for Frankfurt. The town on the Rio de la Plata is still covered by the darkness of night but countless points of light span the country like a golden chain, abruptly swallowed up at the coast by the greyness of the ocean. A new season is again upon us and the men at the wheel once more will strive ceaselessly for the most coveted title in motor sport. Irresistibly new development advances with seven league boots, possibilities become realities, progress marches ever onward. Engineering genius discovers better, faster machines, other men drill deep into the earth's crust for the oil to give life to the engines. Atomic research brings to light unheard of sources of energy to serve man who is its master.

Four hours later the sugar loaf mountain appears out of the mist seeming close enough to touch and the pilot inclines the four engined plane on its wing to give his passengers an uninterrupted view of the famous resort Copacabana, close to Rio de Janeiro.

CHAPTER XVII

Pane, Amore e Mille Miglia

If there is a race which Fangio considers as exceptionally difficult and dangerous, it is the Mille Miglia, the adventurous 1,000 miles which must be covered without rest on an ever-changing treacherous road. From the driving point of view it is the complete criterion of motoring sport. The sports racing cars of the big class competing in this year's event have become progressively more potent and have to-day such acceleration and speed that they differ but little from pure racing cars. Technically they are racing chassis with sports body work. The 300 SLR to be driven by Fangio, Kling, Moss and Herrmann are direct derivatives from the Mercedes Grand Prix cars. The chassis and fuel injection engine are the same, only the swept volume is increased to 3 litres, the engine block is of light alloy and peak power is slightly reduced for reliability. The power output is now over 300 b.h.p. and the maximum speed of the Mille Miglia 300 SLR in the region of 175 m.p.h. In this race there are many straights when the full speed potential can be used; often speed must be reduced very considerably to negotiate the narrow twisty streets of old-fashioned Italian villages. Demands are made on the drivers' stamina unlike any other form of sport, and they who manage this unique circuit in 12 or 13 hours expend a physical and mental energy output unequalled in other sporting contests.

For the Italians, capable as they are of extreme enthusiasm, the 1955 Mille Miglia is *the* sporting event of the year. One of the journalists of an Italian sports paper entitles his pre-race report " Pane, Amore e Mille Miglia "—Bread, Love and the Mille Miglia—and mentions specifically the strong German contingent.

Ferrari are this time the most powerful opponents of Mercedes and the Commendatore is fielding a large battle force. There is Paolo Marzotto, fastest of the enthusiastic Marzotto

brothers, the grey haired 48-year-old Piero Taruffi, and the winner of the 1954 Carrera Mexico, Umberto Maglioli, all down to drive the 3.7 six-cylinder Ferrari, of which it is said that it produces a good 340 b.h.p. The rising drivers Carini and Sighinolfi will handle the 3-litre four-cylinder and the young venturesome Eugenio Castellotti lent by Lancia to Ferrari for this race has the new 4.5-litre six, developing 420 b.h.p., the most powerful car of the whole field.

The Mercedes team has taken the greatest care over this event. For weeks they have driven round the course to familiarize themselves with it as far as possible. Stirling Moss and Hans Herrmann will both have co-drivers, the former chosing a red-bearded journalist, Denis Jenkinson—" Jenks "—and Herrmann takes along Eger, an experienced Mercedes mechanic. By means of an accurate predetermined signal system the co-driver will warn his " pilot " of the most difficult road sections. Fangio and Kling think they know the thousand miles well enough to dispense with the services of a co-driver, thus saving about 130 lb. of weight.

The rays of the rising sun soon break through the dawn of the 1st May, 1955, and the sky is cloudless. The weather is made to order for record breaking and along the arduous circuit hundreds of thousands eagerly look for the heavy sports cars which are the last to leave in the field of 530 competing vehicles, after being started by Commendatore Castagneto.

The spectators, already up half the night, forget their tiredness, discussions wax hot and animated. The systematic preparation and strong force of the " Tedeschi " (Germans) has created a profound impression. Red and German cars alike are received with contagious enthusiasm.

The Press office in the Piazza Vittoria in Brescia resembles a beehive as journalists from every country in the world tensely await the first news from Verona. Television enables them to follow the cars' course.

Paolo Marzotto leads, having covered the section Brescia-Verona at the fabulous average of 198 k.p,h, (about 123 m.p.h.) but a few miles out of the town he throws a rear wheel tread at 160 m.p.h. Although there is a dangerous skid, Marzotto coolly controls it but subsequently retires. Now Castellotti is in the lead and at Ravenna he has 2 minutes in hand over Moss, Taruffi, Herrmann, Kling, Perdisa on the new 3-litre Maserati,

and Fangio, who is 8 minutes 30 seconds behind the leader. As always in long distance events, the Argentinian starts his racing in a controlled manner.

Castellotti's lead is of short duration. Twice he has tyre trouble and finally he has to give up owing to engine trouble. But why all this tyre trouble on the Ferraris? Is it the fault of the tyres? No, the facts are these: this year the Commendatore decided to run on Belgian Englebert's, but the night before the race he changed over to Italian Pirellis. To improve the car's roadholding he decided on less tyre pressure than is normal. And that—state the experts—is the reason for the troubles that beset Marzotto and Castellotti. Mercedes use Continental tyres run at 36-lb. pressure for the rear wheels, as opposed to 23-lb. on the Ferraris.

After 630 kilometres (about 395 miles) a Ferrari is still ahead, driven by the engineer-driver Piero Taruffi who is very familiar with the Mille Miglia route. Then Mercedes-Benz attack: on the Abruzzi sector of the Adriatic coast to Rome, Moss averages 173 k.p.h. (about 108 m.p.h.) and is fastest, followed by Taruffi, Herrmann, Kling, Fangio and Maglioli. Moss first in Rome! Is there about to be a repetition of the rule, that he who leads in Rome can never win the Mille Miglia?

When the Mercedes leave Rome they carry 60 gallons of fuel, but Kling loses 7 valuable minutes through a plug change. To make up for it he speeds up and after only 2½ miles is eliminated by crashing on a corner, himself being injured. Not long afterwards Herrmann has to give up when the tank filler cap comes adrift and he is drenched in fuel. Eger stuffs a pullover into the opening but it does not seal, and with a heavy heart Herrmann retires, whilst lying well up.

Taruffi having had to abandon the race in Viterbo owing to engine trouble, the way is now free for Mercedes. Stirling Moss running first is followed by Fangio, who is about to give chase. For a large part of the course his engine has not produced full power because one of the fuel injection pipes had broken and could only be put right in Florence. Twenty minutes separate Fangio from Moss as they roar towards Brescia, and whilst Juan knows that he cannot now beat the Englishman he brings his car to the finish just as in 1953 when he had steering trouble on the Alfa Romeo.

Stirling Moss, however, disproves the old Mille Miglia saying, having won the race at the record speed of 10 hours 7 minutes and 48 seconds. Fangio in second place finishes without a scratch or bump on his car and no externally visible sign that it has just withstood a thousand dangerous miles. Maglioli is third in spite of his injured arm which gave him trouble, thus saving the honour of Ferrari.

CHAPTER XVIII

You Cannot Always Win!

Resignedly Uhlenhaut shrugs his shoulders when the journalists ask him why all three Mercedes retired in the G.P. of Europe at Monaco:

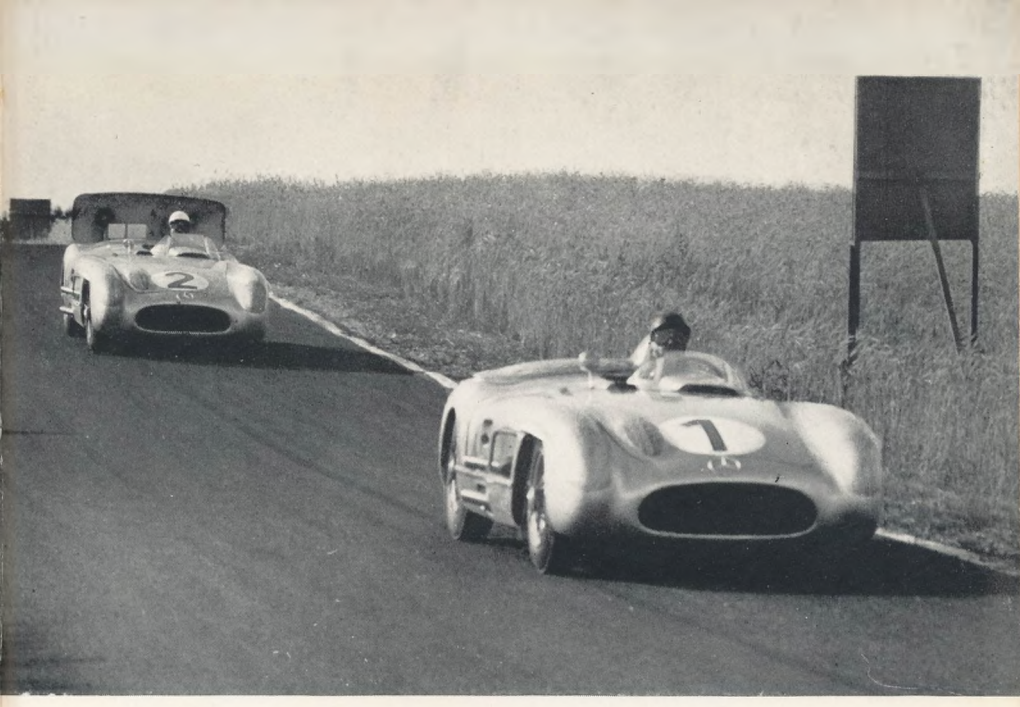
" Gentlemen, unfortunately I cannot tell you anything about that. Only when we take down the engines at the works will we find the answer! "

Uhlenhaut, who is an objective person and easy with the Press people, was himself amazed when one after another of his three cars stopped at the pits with smoking engines, unable to continue. Yet in the first laps Mercedes had proved themselves to be more than a match for the other cars.

The circuit is many cornered and a short, nippy car is essential, so Untertürkheim had modified the Mercedes G.P. chassis especially for Monaco. The wheel base was made even shorter than for the Buenos Aires cars, and as this necessitated the front axle being closer to the engine, the inboard brakes had to be given up in favour of conventional hub mounted ones. The engine output was increased to 290 b.h.p. and the whole car was somewhat lightened.

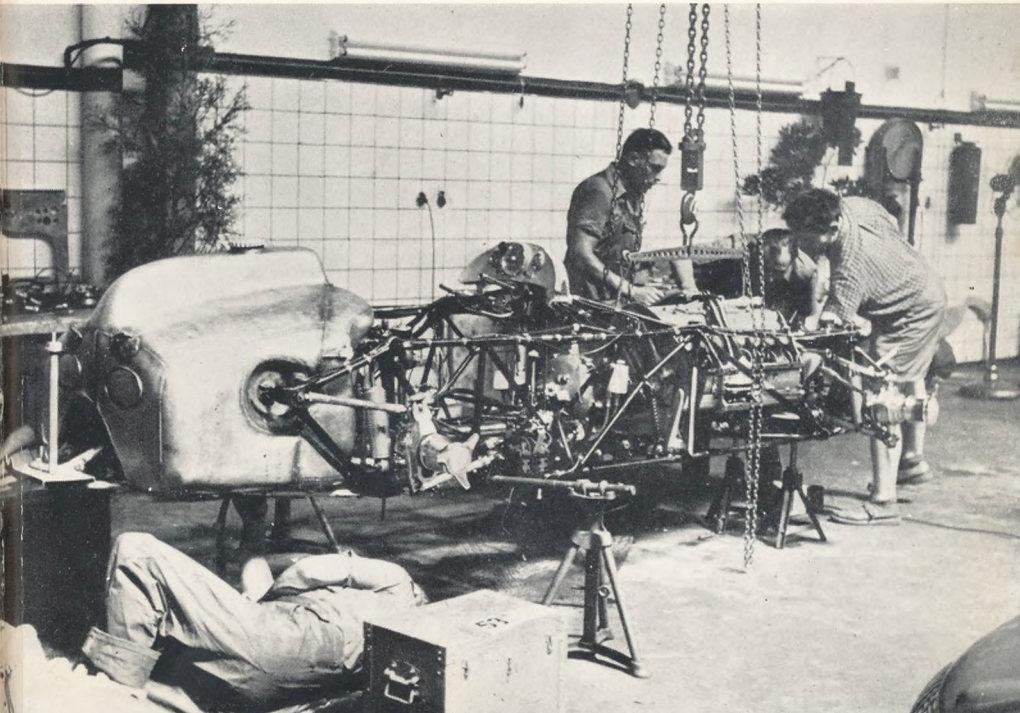
Fangio and Moss knew the Monte Carlo circuit; Kling was not available because of his Mille Miglia accident. Herrmann drove here for the first time and had to get used to the circuit before attempting fast laps.

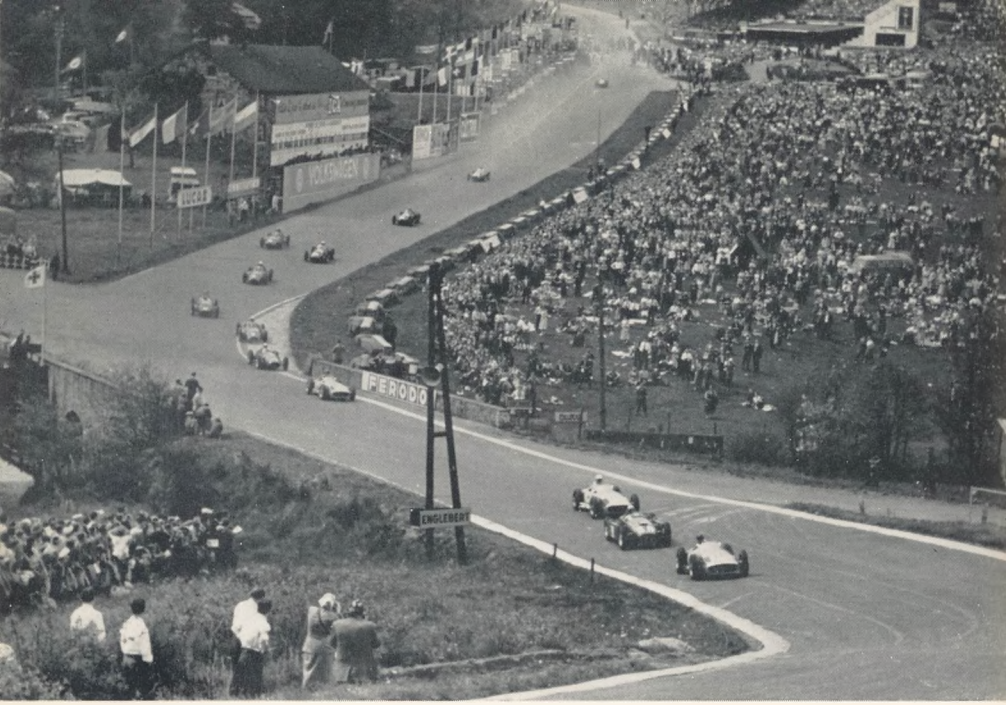
The first practice period was set for Thursday and a lot of spectators were present because the day was a holiday. To offer them value, the organizers decided to fix the starting position for the race on that day's practice times. That was madness, for taking risks on such a tricky circuit in first practice meant unnecessarily increased danger. Juan, who talks rather too little than too much, did not hesitate to make his views known, being certain in his mind that the driver who ran out of road on this circuit had hardly a chance to get away with less than serious injuries, in view of the circuit running among



TOP : *Fangio on the* 300 *SLR leading Moss in the Swedish sports car Grand Prix. Moss is just operating the air brake.*

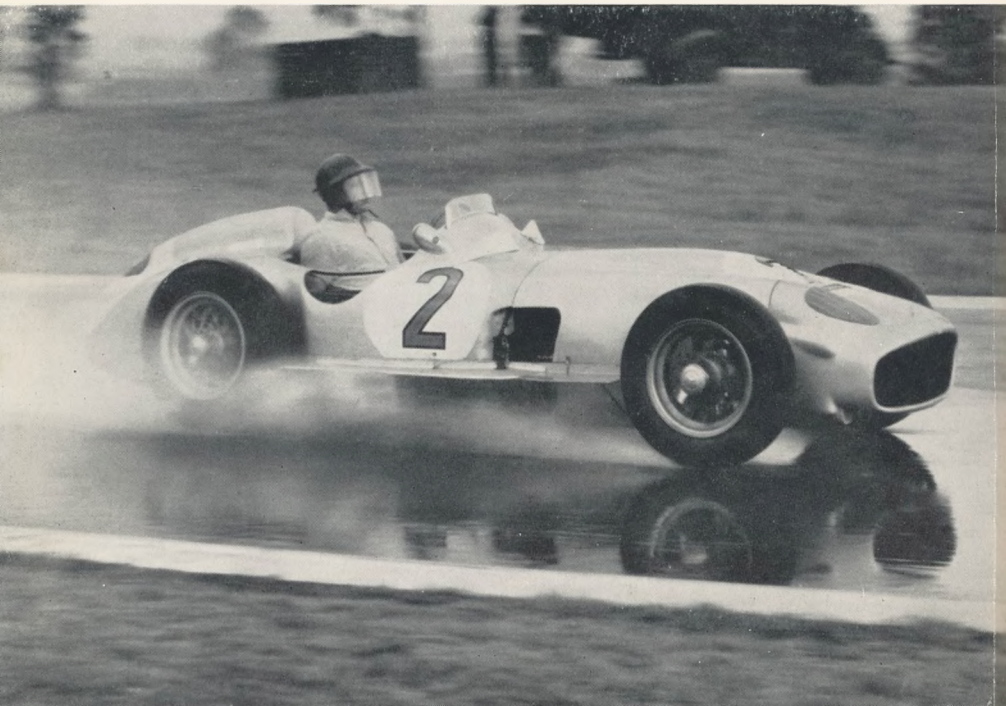
BOTTOM : *Preparation of a Mercedes Grand Prix chassis.*





TOP : *Start of the Belgian G.P.* 1955. *Fangio leads Castellotti* (*Lancia*), *then Moss, Kling, Behra* (*Maserati*), *Farina* (*Ferrari-Supersqualo*), *Hawthorn* (*Vanwall*), *and Trintignant* (*Ferrari-Supersqualo*).

BOTTOM : *Come rain or shine, nothing can disturb Juan's composure at the wheel.*



houses or stone balustrades. This is a most attractive circuit from the spectators' point of view, but by comparison, the Buenos Aires Autodrome is entirely devoid of danger, for Jorge Sabate had also considered the people and not only the machines.

Nevertheless Fangio with a time of 1 min. 41.1 secs. soon broke the pre-war lap record established by Rudi Caracciola in 1937 on a 5.6-litre Mercedes at 1 min. 46.5 secs. Only the virtuoso Alberto Ascari managed to equal this with his Lancia, Moss being third fastest at 1:42.6. Then Herrmann tried. Accelerating hard, he shot along the Boulevard Albert 1er and then up the steep hill towards the Casino; but shortly before the theatre entrance, where drivers are suddenly confronted with the bend after the hill, his car got into a skid, collided with the stone balustrade which it pierced and just as his head was nearing a heavy stone slab the car stopped. Herrmann sustained injuries to vertebræ and hip and had to be taken to hospital; even so, he was incredibly lucky.

To have its team complete, Daimler-Benz engaged the Frenchman André Simon to drive the practice car, which, however, had the normal wheelbase and was not too well suited to the Monte Carlo circuit.

At the end of the first day's practice, the experts noted an astonishing improvement in the Lancias' form; they seemed to have overcome the road holding difficulties which were so obvious in Argentina. No less surprising was young Castellotti's driving, he seemed to get on exceedingly well with the Lancia.

After Alberto Ascari's practice times, a Mercedes-Lancia duel was expected, but in the race it was seen after a few laps that the cars from Turin were no match for the German machines. Fangio led from his team mate Moss and lap after lap the two Mercedes increased their advantage over the others. Moss was tailing Fangio who, as always, drove quickly and in a relaxed manner, showing, too, his mastery over this difficult course; his driving was a joy to behold.

The European Grand Prix extended over 100 laps. The first half of the race was almost over when Simon had to retire; engine trouble was the verdict of the Daimler-Benz mechanics after looking under the bonnet of his Mercedes which stopped with a smoking engine at the pits. This was not particularly worrying since it happened to the practice car, which had already had a hard life before the race. But when the leading cars came

round on the fiftieth lap Fangio was missing and his mechanics Eger and Grupp hurried immediately along the circuit to find out what had happened. They did not have to search long; they found the Mercedes at the Railway bend by the side of the road and Fangio already half-way back to the pits on foot. Arriving there, he told Uhlenhaut that the engine had suddenly started to play crazy tricks.

For the first time since driving for Mercedes, Fangio had to retire because of engine trouble and that worried Uhlenhaut. Racing cars are being continually improved and their power increased; it is therefore on the cards that some engine component may give way under the increasing strain. Stirling Moss was still in the race, now leading by 90 secs. from Ascari after Fangio's retirement. But fate decided against his winning his first Grand Prix and 20 laps before the end he, too, stopped at the pits with a smoking engine. Was Lancia about to win the G.P. of Europe? It looked like it, but a little later Ascari slid into the chicane where the circuit switches over to the quay, demolished a wall of sandbags, and hurtled into the harbour. Luckily he extricated himself immediately from the rapidly sinking machine and was fished out, only slightly injured, by a small boat. Maurice Trintignant with his Ferrari became the ultimate winner.

When they took down the Mercedes engines at Untertürkheim it appeared that a fault in the valve mechanism had caused enough damage to bring about the retirement of all three cars.

Exactly three days after his lucky escape at Monte Carlo, Ascari drove out to Monza having an appointment with his friends Villoresi and Castellotti who were about to drive in the Super Cortemaggiore race there. The latter is down to pilot a 3-litre Ferrari which he is just trying. When he stops at the pits Alberto asks him if he could try the car and Castellotti sees no reason to refuse this request coming from the captain of the Lancia team. Before Ascari takes his seat in the car he quickly phones his wife Mietta to tell her that he would be late. Then he drives off . . . never to return. The Ferrari somersaults for reasons unknown to this day and the great Alberto Ascari, who has driven in so many races, surviving so many crashes, has such injuries that he succumbs to them shortly afterwards. Albert Ascari, the greatest living driver alongside Fangio, known simply as Ciccio (the violet) by his friends, is no more.

Many theories are put forward to explain the accident. One

of the most creditable seems to be that Ascari's tie flew up before his eyes for a fraction of a second hindering his sight; yet another explains that consequent upon his crash at Monte Carlo he suddenly became unwell, thus losing control over his machine. No one will ever know how it really happened: that it did is tragic enough in itself.

Juan Manuel Fangio is deeply moved by the sudden and premature death of his great rival; yet he feels he must go on racing, almost as a token of remembrance.

The chief of the Turin works, Gianni Lancia, decides to disband his Scuderia in view of the death of his team captain and not to race any more. Only Castellotti is lent a Lancia for the fast Spa-Francorchamp circuit where the Belgian G.P. is held, but he drives there as a private entry.

Now that Lancia have withdrawn, a strong opponent of Mercedes has stepped down, and through the death of Ascari, the only driver of equal standing to Fangio, Grand Prix sport has lost a determined protagonist of considerable importance.

Thick rainclouds hang over the Ardennes and in the forest patches of mist still linger as the cars roar along on the last practice day over the Spa road circuit during this, the fourth heat of the world championship. In spite of the wet surface Fangio establishes fastest lap with 4 mins. 52.8 secs. Only Castellotti manages to get anywhere near at 4: 53.2; the Italian has already put up a surprising performance in previous practice, lowering Fangio's fastest lap by six-tenths of a second and making fastest practice lap overall.

But again Fangio's and Moss's Mercedes leave the rest of the field behind after the start, lap by lap they increase their advantage over the other competitors.

The Belgian spectators, however, rejoice in the excellent driving of their countryman Paul Frère, to whom Ferrari has lent a " Tipo Squalo "; they also greet their ex-King Leopold with " Vive le Roi." Eugenio Castellotti hangs on grimly in third place until forced to abandon because of engine trouble on the seventeenth lap. Whereas the Lancias ran beautifully at Monte Carlo, here there is no explanation of their mechanical trouble and they say that the reason will be found when the car is checked over in Turin.

Kling, driving the third Mercedes, has to retire because of a broken oil pipe. Fangio, regular as ever, races on, followed

like a shadow by Stirling Moss. Although the young Englishman does not yet possess Fangio's experience, he improves race by race. Fangio wins this G.P. with a lead of 8 secs. over Moss and 1 min. 40 secs. over Farina, who is third with his Ferrari. The Argentinian radio reporter is still speaking, although he has kept up a three-hour machine gun-like talk over the air. Once more Neubauer throws his hat in front of Fangio's wheels as he crosses the finishing line and the spectators shout even more excitedly " Vive le Roi." Does it apply to Fangio this time?

The King of the Grands Prix continues his victorious sweep amid the sand dunes of the Dutch coast. Fourteen long, hard days lie between these successes. To carry on after the deaths of Bonetto, Marimón and Ascari requires almost superhuman willpower from Fangio. Only eight days before the Dutch G.P. he has close experience of the greatest tragedy that has ever befallen the sport of motor racing. As he races at more than 125 m.p.h. down the finishing straight of the Sarthe 24-hour circuit, the hand of his team mate Pierre Levegh is briefly raised to indicate an overtaking manœuvre. Suddenly, as if a volcano erupts—car parts fly through the air, a green car spins across the road, smoke billows. Instantaneously, in the Fangio manner, and even before fully grasping the happenings, he guides his car unerringly through this seemingly impenetrable chaos.

A shadow lies over motoring sport and over Zandvoort, where Holland's Grand Prix is run. Mercedes-Benz, Ferrari, Maserati and Gordini face the starter's flag in spite of the many criticisms, partly exaggerated, partly inaccurate, made by those who are opposed to this great sport and who seek to stop it.

In a brilliantly organized event, run without the least mishap, Fangio again wins from Moss. None of these men driving here the products of modern and mature engineering will ever wantonly endanger human lives. They realize only too well their responsibilities, and that the dreadful accident at Le Mans was caused by a sequence of fateful incidents, which, following one another with terrible rapidity, culminated in a holocaust.

Their regard for human lives is as deep as before and Juan Manuel Fangio is too human not to be deeply affected by this tragedy.

* * *

In 1839, Lord Sefton and Lord Derby founded a horse race at Aintree which was run every year and called the " Grand

National Liverpool Steeplechase." In time it grew into an exceptionally difficult steeplechase, the international importance of which is so extensive to-day that the Grand National might well be the Blue Riband of all the world's steeplechases. The racecourse on which it is run at Aintree is controlled by Mrs. Topham, who decided to build a motor race circuit alongside the horse racing track to be called Aintree Race course and a very considerable financial outlay was necessary for this.

Compared to Silverstone, Aintree is relatively simple. Five sharp corners, two long and fast swerves, and one " S " bend are joined by several longer and shorter straights. The circuit measures just over 3 miles, lies in flat country, and can be overlooked from all the grandstands.

Where normally are seen grey top hats and elegantly dressed ladies, to-day, the 16th July, 1955, oily fingered mechanics toil in the sun. On this occasion the masses do not enthuse over the smooth flanks of a thoroughbred but over the throaty roar of racing cars, the Mercedes engines in particular sounding like hungry beasts of prey.

More than 150,000 spectators have come in spite of increased safety precautions, due to the Le Mans tragedy, moving them further away from the course. In fact more people have turned up than normally attend the Grand National; they even stay when the racing has become a monotonous procession led by the four Mercedes of Moss, Fangio, Kling and Taruffi over the rest of the remaining field of five cars. Stirling Moss seems well on his way to win his first Grand Prix and it looks as if he has not too much to fear from Fangio.

Twenty-five cars took the field in the British G.P. when the starter's flag fell, Fangio, as so often before, showing his lightning start technique and leading, with Moss close behind. The two Mercedes are so fast that only Behra's Maserati keeps up for a short while until his car goes on strike. Fangio and Moss swop places for the lead until the Argentinian definitely leaves it to his young team mate who does not relinquish it. Apart from third place man Kling, the two leaders lap the entire field. The race order at the finish is Moss, Fangio, Kling, Taruffi, and in fifth place comes Luigi Musso on the Maserati.

* * *

Fangio is the last of the " old guard " still active in racing. Those who saw him win on the famous international circuits

consider him the best driver of our time, yet he remains intrinsically modest even during his most spectacular successes; his driving is fair and unusual, like his personality.

No less a person than Stirling Moss said of him after winning the British G.P., " I consider him the best driver in the world and he made my victory easy. It is part of his greatness to be able to lose and yet smile."

Many of the men who did battle with him when Fangio was on his way up, and who often were his ideals, are no longer with us to-day. But he often thinks of his good friends—Jean Pierre, Wimille, Achille Varzi, Raymond Sommer, Christian Kautz, Onofre Marimón, Luigi Fagioli, Clemente Biondetti, Felice Bonetto, and, of course, the incomparable " Campionissimo " Tazio Nuvolari and his worthy successor, Alberto Ascari.

* * *

The big assembly hall of Mercedes-Benz Argentina, not far from Buenos Aires, is full of the noise of machinery as hundreds of diligent men assemble parts into complete motor vehicles. Those who work here in the summer heat of Argentina do not think only about the Mercedes car when they tighten nuts or fit a part, they also think of the man who has driven the silver cars with the three-pointed star to many victories, that simple mechanic from the little town of Balcarce—Juan Manuel Fangio.

And when one clear January day in 1955 a black Mercedes-Benz coupé rolls to a stop in the works forecourt, the machines stop and the noise suddenly abates. The men wipe their oily hands on their blue overalls and hurry outside into the glittering sun to welcome one who was and still is, one of them—to welcome Fangio.

With an enthusiasm the like of which I have never experienced, they take him into their midst, grasp his hand again and again, and almost with one voice the name goes round Chueco, Chueco, Chueco. . .

Is it only the victorious racing driver that brings about such enthusiasm, or is it the fascinating personality of the man that stirs up such emotion? No, it is simply Juan Manuel Fangio.

CHAPTER XIX

Good-bye to Mercedes-Benz

The 1955 season finishes rather surprisingly for Fangio. Six days after the Targa Florio, the technical director of Daimler Benz, Dr. Nallinger announced, during the course of a final party in honour of the racing drivers, that the firm would retire from racing for a time. In 1955 Daimler Benz had won, with Fangio, the world championship, the competition for the Coupe des Constructeurs in sports cars and the European touring car championship—without doubt a resounding success. No other competing company had expended as much in regard to technical development and personnel; indeed the people directly and indirectly working for the racing department at Mercedes exceeded the *total* number of people employed by Ferrari. On the financial side, Daimler Benz spent some 16 to 17 million Deutschmarks (£1 equals about DM. 12) in 1955, but a part of this sum was borne by the Continental tyreworks and other firms who collaborated in the development of the cars. Nevertheless, this sum appears extremely high, yet is fully justifiable in comparison with the technical, and above all, the publicity value obtained and the resultant commercial success. Daimler Benz's reputation, which had somewhat " tarnished " due to the war, reached its old high peak entirely due to the firm's sporting successes. Thus, the development which started with racing the 300 SL. in 1952 reached the pinnacle and its end in 1955. Although the tragedy of Le Mans overshadowed the sporting triumph, the unpleasantness was soon almost forgotten by the majority of the public (as always in this life) and only success remained as the more tangible factor in the foreground. More than ever had the sport served as industrial propaganda and publicity medium, the importance of which should not be overlooked in the economic recovery of Germany's post-war industries. The victories of Mercedes-Benz racing and sports cars achieved by the best drivers in the world smoothed the path of the entire German industry in recovering the markets which were long believed lost.

Daimler Benz gave as reason for their retirement from the sport the need to re-employ the technical personnel working in the racing department in the series production shops and further, that the experience gained in racing should be made available for further development of standard cars. There was, however, another, unofficial version for their retirement. According to this, two new shareholders, disagreeing with the great sums spent on racing, demanded that further participation by the official works teams should cease. Obviously it would be difficult to get confirmation of this version, as the board meeting at which the decision was taken was not public.

The retirement was disappointing not only for the drivers but also for the technicians, because the latter had prepared in their department new racing and sports cars which were even more potent than those raced before.

Without wishing to belittle the exceptional technical achievement of the Mercedes people, one must nevertheless highly respect that of their adversaries. After all the latter had considerably smaller resources available. Yet in spite of this they were ever willing to take up the cudgels and their drivers gave of their best.

The last four events of the 1955 season were of particular importance for they were run on circuits where Mercedes had not fielded their new cars. Fangio won two of them whereas Britain's great driver Stirling Moss won the other two. The sports car Grand Prix of Sweden and the Gran Premio of Italy at Monza fell to Fangio, whereas the Tourist Trophy at Dundrod and the famous Targa Florio on the Madonie circuit near Palermo were bagged by Moss with Fitch and Collins as co-drivers.

Fangio and Kling drove their 300 SLR into second place.

The 6.53 kilometre circuit at Kristianstad in Sweden is a " braking " one, therefore the 300 SLR with its airbrake had the advantage there, apart from rather feeble competition. Thus Fangio and Moss on their 300 SLRs had a private duel on their own, which Fangio decided for himself in 1 hour 18 mins. 13.7 secs. for a distance of 209.18 kilometres. Moss finished next, only three-tenths of a second behind, although handicapped by an eye injury due to a stone thrown up by Fangio's car. Castellotti's daredevilry secured a third place for Ferrari, although his 4.4 litre car could never seriously endanger the 300 SLRs.

The Italians had rebuilt the Monza Autodromo for the 1955

Grand Prix. The Curva Sud of the old road circuit had been shortened and on the inside an oval circuit of 4.25 kilometres with strongly banked curves had arisen. This very fast track was included in the road circuit, thus making a total length of 10 kilometres per lap. The steeply banked curves made exceedingly high demands on chassis and tyres; Mercedes therefore prepared their cars with almost scientific thoroughness. The longer wheelbase streamliner (2.35 metres) proved itself superior to the shorter model with 2.15 metres wheelbase, but only two streamliners were available, one for Fangio, the other for Moss. One of the cars was provided with a more aerodynamic nose for practice, lower in front which was supposed to increase pressure on the front wheels especially in the curves. As it tended to hit the ground, it was removed again. Lancia running for the first time under the Ferrari prancing horse insignia were the fastest opponents of the Germans during practice.

Dr. Gianni Lancia had handed the cars over within the framework of a supporting action for Ferrari; Fiat had also helped financially. The Lancia-Ferrari suffered from tyre troubles; Farina lost a rear tread at some 180 m.p.h. on the banked curve and the same happened to him next day and also to Castellotti.

The Commendatore then decided not to use them and put in the Supersqualo-Ferrari instead. Maserati fielded their six-cylinder cars, one of which had fully aerodynamic bodywork and was driven by Jean Behra. The Mercedes of Fangio and Moss, with Kling and Taruffi driving the Nürburgring models, were opposed by four works Ferraris with Hawthorn, Castellotti, Trintignant and Maglioli, five works Maseratis with Musso, Collins, Mieres, Behra and Menditeguy, two privately entered Maseratis of Gould and Fitch, two Vanwalls. of Wharton and Schell, and three Gordinis with Pollet, da Silva and Lucas (the latter with the new eight cylinder). Regardless of such opposition Mercedes went strongly into the lead, the order being Fangio-Moss-Kling-Taruffi. After the 27th lap only the Italian and German cars remained running.

When Moss stopped at the pits to change a screen shattered by a stone, the race suddenly livened up, for he tore off in pursuit in the course of which he set up a lap record of 215.7 k.p.h. Fangio won the 500 kilometres at 206.79 k.p.h. without fully extending his car, in front of Taruffi. Kling retired in second position due to propeller shaft trouble, whereas Moss

stopped with engine trouble on the 29th lap. Castellotti finished in third place as best placed Italian, Behra being fourth with the not over-convincing Maserati streamliner. Thus Fangio became world champion for the third time; he and Moss had again ensured predominance for Mercedes. Fangio was certainly tops in the formula car being a shade in front of Stirling who, supreme in the sports-racing car, fascinated all spectators by his style and ability. With Fitch, Moss won the Tourist Trophy and achieved an average of 142.13 k.p.h. Here, as at Le Mans, Mike Hawthorn put up wonderful opposition with his D. type Jaguar against the 300 SLR, the latter however showed its splendid road-holding to particular advantage when it started to rain and no one looked like catching it.

Fangio and Kling drove their 300 SLR into second place.

In the Targa Florio, that classic organized by the Sicilian, Cavaliere Vincenzo Florio, Moss once again showed his talent. He and his co-driver Collins made a wonderful combination complementing one another to the best advantage.

Fangio, who had been paired up with the German Kling was evidently not sufficiently helped by him and thus bore the brunt of the battle. Moss/Collins won at an average of 96.20 k.p.h. for the race distance of 936 kilometres which contains more than 10,000 corners; Fangio/Kling followed 4 min. 41.2/5 secs. later in second place.

With this race an interesting chapter of post-war racing closed. It was popularly thought that Mercedes retirement would rob motor racing of much of its importance, interest and atmosphere, and that 1956 would be but a shadow of the great happenings in the past. In fact things turned out to be quite different. If the 1955 races were, in a way, demonstration runs of one marque, so 1956 developed into a real sporting battle between youth and the great old master Juan Manuel Fangio.

CHAPTER XX

Youth to the Fore

Fangio decided to drive for Ferrari in 1956. The energetic support by Lancia and Fiat gave new impetus to the Maranello works and spurred technical development. As Maserati in Modena also wanted to enhance the trident's chance due to the retirement of Mercedes, an interesting season seemed imminent; the more so as Maserati had signed Moss for 1956. Thus the world championship was due for a re-birth and provided a tremendous sporting spectacle, because Argentine's iron " Campeon " found his erstwhile Mercedes stable mate a formidable opponent at the beginning of the season.

Fangio won the first heat of the championship, the Argentine Grand Prix, on the V8 Lancia-Ferrari at 127.75 k.p.h., having taken over Musso's car, his own letting him down. But Moss averaging 104.51 k.p.h. won the G.P. of Monaco, this curvaceous town circuit not being very much to Fangio's liking and thus points were even. Yet from then on it seemed as if these two main " players " who, after all, acted the title roles in this grandiose spectacle, were pursued by bad luck. Both retired on the fast Spa circuit due to engine and transmission trouble respectively. But at least the Britisher managed to continue in the car of his stable mate, young Perdisa, to establish fastest lap and save a valuable point. Victory fell to Collins at 190.61 k.p.h. The latter, another youngster, was under contract to Ferrari for the first time and his clever, sensitive driving brought him quickly to the fore. Young Peter won again at the French Grand Prix at Rheims at a speed of 196.80 k.p.h. Again, mechanical bothers slowed up Fangio and Moss, both having to continue the race in their stable-mate's cars. Fangio seemed to overcome his run of ill luck at last at the British Grand Prix at Silverstone, winning at 158.76 k.p.h. His winning streak continued at the Nürburgring Grosser Preis to the rate of 137.80 k.p.h. There in particular it was clearly shown that the " old man " of motor racing was still the absolute master. Moss was second but

Collins, although retiring, was runner-up in the championship table.

The Argentinian's points lead was considerable but not so large as to make him safe from the possibility of sudden surprises as when he had to give up in good position during the European Grand Prix at Monza whilst Collins was busy pressing on. The Ferrari pit tried to get Musso to give up his car to Fangio but the Italian denied the real " master " this courtesy. Then Collins decided on a wonderful sporting gesture which filled the world of sport with admiration: he stopped and handed Juan his car to enable him to achieve the coveted world championship for a fourth time. But the winner was Moss at 208.78 k.p.h., so gaining second position in the championship behind Fangio.

From the technical view-point Ferrari had started the attempt on the championship with various car types, but the developed Lancia had proved best and thus was used during the whole season. Maserati improved the carburettor engined six cylinder but also experimented with direct injection on a similar car which, however, did not prove very satisfactory. Vanwall showed remarkable progress in output but not in staying power. B.R.M. disappointed, as did Connaught and Gordini; these only played supporting roles

Fangio's great love is for pure racing cars, this became more apparent in recent years although he also raced sports cars extensively. It is not the sports car itself that he is a little hesitant about, but the racing of them. To allow cars of vastly different potential to compete in one race seems to him an unnecessary increase of danger, an argument which is in fact difficult to decry. He is also very averse to sports car racing on only partially protected roads, the prime example being the Mille Miglia, which, due to modern 4.5 and 5 litre cars developing 300 b.h.p. and capable of some 200 m.p.h., has become a dangerous experiment. The demands of such events exceed those with which a conscientious driver can reasonably be expected to cope and Fangio's conscientiousness is very considerable. He never lightly exposes himself to danger and he prepares for a race with great care. Courage, sporting ambition and conscientiousness towards himself and his opponents are present in him in healthy proportions. In spite of all this he competed in several sports car races thus fulfilling his contractual obligations. After the end of the Mercedes programme in 1955

he won on a 3 litre Maserati in The Venezuela Grand Prix and in 1956 he took part in the qualifying runs for the Coupe des Constructeurs in Ferrari sports cars.

The first heat of the new championship season, the 1000 kilometres of Buenos Aires, was won by Moss/Menditeguy on a Maserati, whereas Fangio who drove a 4.95 litre Ferrari with Castellotti had to give up with back axle trouble.

In the 12 hour race at Sebring in Florida he turned the tables however, winning on a 3.5 litre Ferrari. But there the main burden fell on young Castellotti as Fangio did not feel well. After that event he was never again first in any race counting towards the sports car championship. He was fourth on the Ferrari in the Mille Miglia in which he always drove with care and restraint and second with Castellotti in the 1000 kilometres Nürburgring race. In Sweden and at Le Mans he did not take part.

In 1957 he concentrated his efforts even more on Grand Prix events.

CHAPTER XXI

Fangio the Wonder

The 1957 season started with the Gran Premio Republica Argentina on the many cornered Autodromo of Buenos Aires. Fangio, who combines a sensitive technical feel with an unerring instinct for the most potent and success-prone machine, started on a Maserati. Moss on the other hand had contracted with Vanwall, who, like B.R.M., were busy preparing for the European Grands Prix. Thus only Ferrari and Maserati were on the Buenos Aires starting grid and Tony Vandervell released Stirling to drive a Maserati.

According to his well proven tactics, Fangio first let the young ones have their fling, then took the lead which he never relinquished. Maserati occupied the first four places and clearly and surprisingly beat Ferrari. Moss had throttle control trouble —a split pin had come out—and he fell far back, but in his subsequent pursuit put up fastest lap.

The first heat of the championship in Europe was again run at Monte Carlo. Here for the first time appeared all European teams, excepting only Gordini who had ceased participating due to financial reasons and other pressing commitments. Maserati was represented by Fangio, Behra, Schell, Menditeguy and Scarlatti, Ferrari fielded Collins, Hawthorn, Trintignant and von Trips. Musso did not drive due to illness. Moss and Brooks handled Vanwalls; Connaught, due to cease racing later in the season for financial reasons, had Bueb and Lewis-Evans. The latter changed over to Vanwall where he showed remarkable accomplishment.

There were a few private entrants amongst whom the Australian Brabham in the 2 litre Cooper put up a fine performance.

A sharp tussle started on the first lap between Vanwall Maserati and Ferrari but Moss was, however, too enterprising and collided with the chicane resulting in a chain reaction involving Hawthorn and Collins, who thus became *hors de combat*. Once again Fangio proved himself the coolheaded

and experienced " master," knowing intuitively how to escape the accumulated hazards. He took the lead never to relinquish it to the end.

Due to the scratching of the grandes épreuves of Belgium and Holland, the championship round was continued in France, the Grand Prix being held this time on the more difficult circuit of Rouen-les-Essarts instead of at Rheims. Moss could not drive his Vanwall due to sinusitis and Fangio showed his mastery this time also to such a degree, that none of his opponents could seriously challenge him. Musso did try and in so doing achieved fastest lap but lost time when he spun on a bend. Ferrari demonstrated good lasting qualities by taking the next three positions to Fangio.

In the European Grand Prix, a real sensation occurred on the winding Aintree circuit, for the Moss/Brooks Vanwall achieved its first victory in a grande épreuve. Fangio did not really get going due to engine trouble and gave up in disgust.

Der Grosse Preis von Deutschland at the Nürburgring figured as the high light of this season. Fangio's incomparable driving resulted in his victory after a very dramatic race. His performance on this, the most difficult circuit of the championship series, forces us to admit that the question of his absolute limit of driving ability is impossible to answer. He is simply a phenomenon, a fabulous driver who probably surpasses even the greatest in motor racing history. As at Rouen, the Ferraris impressed with their ability to last.

The Gran Premio of Pescara was made into a heat of the championship in place of Zandvoort and Spa. Ferrari only had Musso at Pescara, whereas Maserati and Vanwall fielded a full team. Moss won convincingly and proved thereby, that Vanwall had solved all their technical problems based on the experience gained at Nürburgring.

The last round of the championship took place on the old road circuit at Monza, where Vanwall was already as superior as Mercedes in 1955, and the predominance of the Italians became seriously endangered. For the first time since the war a non-German firm was able to dislodge the Italians from their leading position. Moss came first and only Fangio in second place managed to finish on the same lap.

The world championship was Fangio's for the fifth time. Not only had he resisted the attack from the young ones for the second time, but he showed clearly on the difficult Nürburgring

that he still represented the absolute top class. Although beaten at the season's end by the Vanwall, this did not reflect on his ability as a driver, indeed it was admirable that he continued battling to the very end even though it was obvious that the performance of his Ferrari was inferior. His appreciation of Stirling Moss's tremendous ability is best shown by the inscription on his wedding gift to Stirling: " to the future world champion."

CHAPTER XXII

Juan Manuel Fangio, the Man

His ability has made him what he is to-day, and has given him the reputation of the best racing driver in the world, indeed the best of all time. His personality is not brilliant like Ascari's or Nuvolari's when he is among his fellow men, for he is unpretentious, modest and natural, yet he fascinates behind the wheel of a racing car where he demonstrates the pinnacle of artistry. His command over the machine is so absolute that one gets the impression of complete homogeneity between technique and human endeavour. Different physical laws seem to apply to Fangio than to his fellow competitors. It was not talent alone that lifted him to this standard, for he knew how to polish and perfect his ability to a degree unlike anyone before or contemporary with him. To achieve this was not easy, it meant years of struggle, disappointment and hard work.

Man is almost always the product of his own environment which clearly circumscribes the limits and points the way to the right sphere. Not many succeed in breaking away from this circle. To try to explain Fangio one must return to his birthplace, the insignificant little town of Balcarce and to his parents though poor were deeply religious and brought him up in a strictly God-fearing way which has remained with him to this day. His high degree of conscientiousness is undoubtedly a direct result of his upbringing and since the tragedy of Le Mans it is greater still. That is why he always acts deliberately, conscientiously and in a balanced way. His inner calm and balance stem from this religiousness and respect of life instilled by his parents and form an important basis of his exceptional abilities. The famous driver Fangio, in the centre of things on the world's circuits, gives an impression of reserve and taciturnity almost to the point of shyness. One seems to remain outside an impenetrable mystery. Watch him when he gives autographs—nothing can shake his calm, no matter how he is beleaguered. Yet how different he is in Balcarce, for only there in the surroundings of his home town does he open up in the circle of

his family and old friends. There he is no longer the celebrated racing driver but only the son for whom his mother counts the beads of her rosary whenever he is likely to be in danger. In the car he appears cool, calculating, judging the situation and reacting instantly but at home he reveals himself as sentimental with a touch of romanticism. The Fangio who practically does not talk before a race will suddenly chat about himself and days of long ago. One can sense from his words that nothing came easily to him, indeed one guesses the difficulties and the battle for survival that his forebears had to face when they were forced to leave the hopelessness of the poor and remote Abruzzi village for the wide world beyond. Fangio has at times the ways of a ponderous, slow, but painstaking peasant or artisan, never rushing but planning with care. Only in exceptional circumstances will the Latin temperament flash to the fore, that greatness almost amounting to genius which elevates him above the average. He has not the artist's nature, as had Ascari, sometimes his calm is icy and his self-control as complete over himself as over his machine. This is particularly impressive when he drives in normal traffic. One does not particularly notice the great racing driver when traffic is normal; he drives with complete assurance taking in all those factors which the average person does not always notice. Both his hands are on the wheel, he is considerate, alert and never takes risks. Only in moments of danger does the racing driver " come out." That day for instance when travelling at 95 m.p.h. a lorry crossed his path near Fidenza. He prevented a fearful accident by braking his Lancia with a fantastic drift and remained master of a situation which would have spelt catastrophy for others. In his private life he appears as a normal pleasant citizen. His modesty is impressive and luxury foreign to him. He still lives to-day, not as the rich man that he is, but in the hotel Columbia in Milan, where he used to stay as an unknown driver from South America. He never travels with a big retinue and his constant companion is Donna Andrea from the Argentine, as simple and uncomplicated as he. His successes have left him a man of simple heart, without arrogance and self-importance. He neither denies nor forgets his poor origin yet conducts himself as a gentleman. His human traits fill us with emotion. For instance, that day when, after driving in the murderously hot race at Buenos Aires in 1955, he visited 500 orphans, before having the second degree burns on his leg treated.

During the race he is always a fair opponent and remains

what we call "a nice chap." His greatness as a man was perhaps best revealed to us when he kneeled devoutly in a little chapel in Paris and prayed for the soul of his departed friend, Alfonso de Portago, scion of a high born Spanish family who came from such a different world; the "Muchacho" from the Pampa, born not in a castle, but in a house built by his father's own hands.

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