

# Reporting the Vanderbilt Race in a Rambler

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JUST how the Vanderbilt cup race was won and lost last fall has long been a matter of history, but how the details of the international struggle for speed mastery were reported and given to a waiting world within a few minutes from the time that Hemery crossed the line a winner with Heath and Tracy close behind is something that only the scribes who started off at one A. M. on the assignment are cognizant of. And how a Rambler car played a rather important part in this to the general public, unknown accompaniment of every event of general importance, is yet another story.

Four of us were ordered to rendezvous at 34th street and Broadway, a landmark in the center of what is euphoniously termed New York's "Tenderloin," at the wee' sma' hour of two in the morning, there to meet a chauffeur with a Rambler car. Ye scribe who aids in the compounding of that mixture of news, scandal and sage meditations on the editorial page that greets the average citizen at the breakfast table every morning, knows no hours. He works from now till then, from the time he begins till the time he gets through, so we were all at the appointed place promptly and after shaking the sleepy guardian of the steering wheel into a semblance of wakefulness, we piled the tonneau full of cameras, ourselves and spare sweaters and overcoats. It was not cold then, but going a good twenty-five an hour at four in the morning lowers the temperature considerably.

In less than five minutes we were off at a good clip for the Long Island Railroad Ferry, for we were scheduled to make the two-fifteen boat and losing it meant either a wait of an hour or a detour of several miles by way of the Williamsburg bridge. The scene of animation at the ferry entrance would have done credit to a Saturday half-holiday race crowd instead of a time when all good

people are supposed to be indulging in that aid to beauty—peaceful sleep. Automobiles were everywhere and before our Rambler party got within three blocks of the gates it was a mad rush for place in the waiting line, for the capacity of the ferryboat for touring cars is strictly limited, so it is a case of first come, first served. For a few moments our hearts went down; it looked as if we were in for the hour's wait or the long way round despite our promptness, for automobiles seemed literally to spring out of the very ground at every few feet—the street was full of them. On we raced and fortune

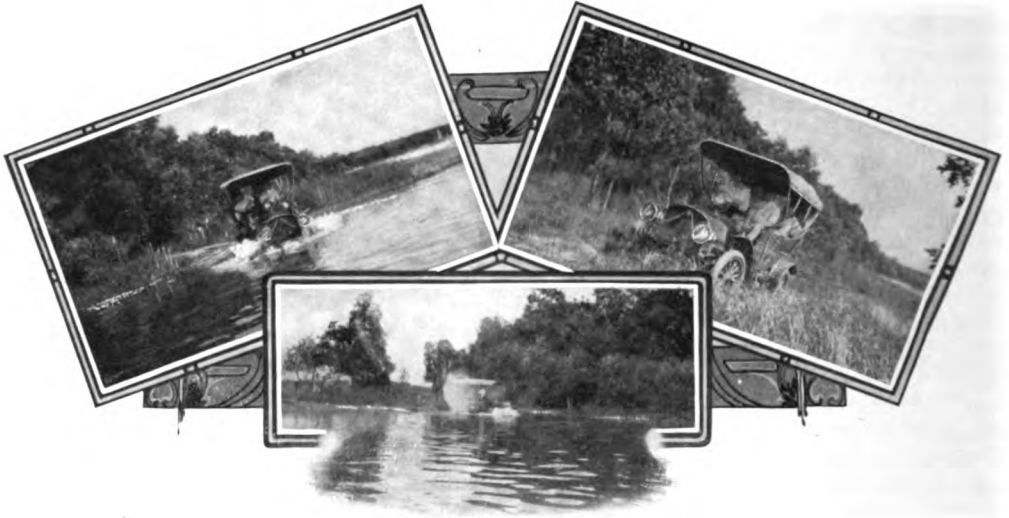


AMONG THE WILD MUSTARD IN CALIFORNIA

avored us, for hugging the right hand curb crosstown brought us smack up against the tail end of the coveted line, while many of our oponents ran by and had to manoeuver to get back to it, losing valuable time in the process, for that broad streak of thumping, chugging machinery surmounted by gleaming shafts of white light grew like magic.

By the time our fears were finally relieved by being handed a ticket and told to move ahead in line, it had extended to and beyond Second avenue, a long block away. We were just one to the good; the next man behind us who had slipped into position while previous arrivals were fumbling about to get in line followed us onto the boat and then the gates swung to in the faces of the waiting line, condemning them to a long and exasperating wait.

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SCENES AT FOX LAKE, ILLINOIS

Despite the usual strict rule against restarting the motor before touching the slip on the opposite side, every engine was throbbing out a lively tune long before the boat bumped into the slip on the Long Island shore. One by one the cars led off in a decorous line, but once free from the restraining walls and fences of the ferry enclosure it was a free-for-all, go-as-you-please. The Island is noted for its fine roads and with a trusty car beneath you there is more than enough exhilaration in speeding along at a clip of better than thirty miles an hour—give it the added touch of the weird, distorted shadows that only a moonless night and the beams of numerous acetylene headlights can produce and it is positively fascinating.

Your newspaper man can sleep when and where he may, and more than one of us had determined to utilize the trip out to indulge in a cat nap, but even had a tonneau with three and their assorted paraphernalia been conducive to repose, the excitement of the scene and its surroundings would have been more than sufficient to keep the most somnolent on the alert. Cars to the right of us, cars to the left of us, cars in front of us and cars behind—every one with its driver keenly on the qui vive to spy an opening and let her out to gain a length and move up one in the swiftly speeding line. Here a spurt and a clever twist of the steering

wheel would bring us on even terms with some monster of twice the Rambler's size, and then a battle of skill and power would often end by landing us a notch ahead in the procession, there, our driver would catch the chauffeur of a ponderous covered car napping and shoot by him at an open space; these impromptu encounters were constant until ten or fifteen miles out on the way the contestants had all settled into the respective places allotted them by their speed and endurance, for not a few of them were laid out by the roadside making good, minor troubles that do not seem so small at three A. M.

The battle was to the swift, and after passing Jamaica, the road was clear before and behind—under the impulse of an open throttle and advanced spark the Rambler was eating up the road in a manner that would bring us to the end of our journey long before daylight. We were spinning along at a great rate everything working smoothly and utterly carefree, when seemingly from the nether regions there sprung up directly in front of us two baleful red eyes, dancing and cutting circles against the background of inky blackness.

A trap! The Long Island constable has decided to take time by the forelock and rake in a few shekels, was our first thought, but those red lights presaged no good and we instinctively feared

something far more dangerous than the predatory minion of the law. In a twinkling the gears were out of mesh, the engine throttled down and the brake brought us to an easy stop within a few feet of the waving red lanterns.

Constables, sure enough, but why did they quietly get out of the way instead of ordering us to step down and deliver. It was a weird sort of performance that savored more of the Arabian nights, but in a few moments we realized the danger. There, entirely blocking the road was a large frame house in the course of being moved along the highway, and a pretty mess indeed, would a car have made, charging it a la Don Quixote, in full tilt. There might have been sad tales to tell of that morning's run had not those same anti-automobile authorities had the foresight to post, not one man merely, but two—to keep one another awake probably, for the house on its greased timbers was squarely in the center of the main road leading to the course. Once safely by it, we let her out again with a feeling of relief, but we went on just as fast. Such is human nature, but then houses usually do not flock in the middle of the road, and one in a night is surely enough.

Another quarter hour saw us at Mineola, just beyond the grandstand, and here we lolled about until approaching daylight warned us the time for business was close at hand. Lightened of its load by one passenger less, the faithful Rambler sped along the Jericho Turnpike in the misty gray dawn of the October morning and six miles further, at a turn that promised to be "interesting" when the speed monsters attempted to negotiate it, we dropped another. Ten miles further, at Albertson's "S", the load was reduced to one and the driver, and now time was pressing; we had but a few minutes in which to cover the remaining miles to the Lakeville turn before at least two or three of the racing machines would be well along on their mad dash around the tortuous oval. Around the curves lickety split, up and down hill we pushed the Rambler for every ounce of speed she could produce, with the warning cry of the telephone signal man "they're off, get off the course" ringing in our ears. Faces lighted up and late arrivals came on the run at the sound of our mad rush, only to give way to a disappointed expression at sight of us, "It's only a touring car."

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With two or three minutes to spare we pulled off the course, had cameras out and ready for business before the intermittent booming of the exhaust of the first car was heard on the turn a half mile above. All that forenoon the Rambler rushed back and forth, up one side road and down another, striking the course at as many points as possible during the running of the race and did yeoman service. Then, when the telephone and key had done their duty in telling the story of the race's running right in the newspaper offices and on the streets a quarter hour later, came the mad rush back to reveal the work of the cameras in the darkroom and show those not fortunate enough to be able to attend the race itself what it looked like, and here again the Rambler scored. Twelve hours after leaving, the car was

back in its home garage from the run of sixty odd miles and ye scribes were dreaming of other "beats" to come.



UP AMONG THE CLOUDS AT ESCONDIDO, CAL.