

THE MILLE MIGLIA

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in time; of the lessons learned and minor modifications made during practice I can say nothing here: lack of space forbids. The full story of the great adventure would fill a book.

So let us skip the sea passage from Fowey to Genoa and the hectic days of practice, and get to the start of the race, from the beflagged, Fascisti-guarded enclosure in the wide boulevard out-

back. The loud speakers suddenly blared forth "Soldiers of the King," and, amid rousing cheers, the British cars accelerated away down the road to Parma, Bologna and . . . Rome.

From the very beginning it was an epic struggle. The principal rivals of the Magnettes were two redoubtable Maseratis, one of them being driven by the famous Tuffanelli, and "Tim" Birkin, in the rôle of "destroyer," which he loves to play, went flying southwards with the avowed inten-

Alfa Romeos—Boszacchini and Nuvolari—were only 11 minutes faster over this stretch.

As at Bologna, so at Florence: Birkin was the first car through. Hard on his heels came Lord Howe and Eyston. Despite the need for changing one or two plugs, oiled up on mountain descents, all three Magnettes were well ahead of record time thus far. Over the tortuous Raticosa and Futa Passes, where the wind blew cold despite the April sunshine, the M.G.'s really came into their own: their perfect road-holding, powerful engines and the marvellous Wilson gearbox enabled them literally to toy with their rivals.

After Siena, to everyone's regret, Sir Henry Birkin and Rubin were forced to retire owing to a broken valve. But the great driver had done his work: he had left Tuffanelli's Maserati with a wrecked gearbox on the Futa pass, while the second Maserati was already 50 minutes to the bad. Although now there



Earl Howe and H. C. Hamilton arriving at the Finish in Rome, one-and-a-half minutes behind G. E. T. Eyston and Count Lurani

side Brescia, in Northern Italy.

Long before dawn feverish activity reigned in the quaint old town, where even in the short years that I have known it, lofty, majestic modern palaces of white marble have replaced the picturesque old buildings with their tiled roofs. The narrow street leading to the start was choked with pedestrians. It was difficult for the cars, with headlights blazing and horns blowing, to get through at all.

The sun rose in a clear sky; a Fascist band played a gay air; the police pushed the crowd back so as to give the first cars off a clear run.

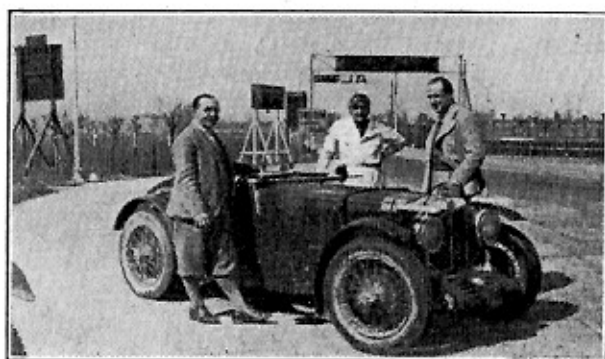
At seven o'clock the "utilitarian class"—low-priced vehicles with engines of under 1,100 c.c.—were sent off one by one. All were Fiats: neat, workmanlike little two-seaters. Then the larger "utility" cars were started and, some forty minutes later, the three M.G.'s stood lined up, ready for the start.

The Fascisti started to cheer. The crowd took it up and, growing in volume, the applause rolled up to the stately buildings of the city and came thundering

tion of breaking up the opposition.

This he succeeded in doing, and in the process added still further to the renown of the M.G.'s by averaging 87 m.p.h. for the first 130 miles to Bologna. And this, be it noted, over ordinary roads along which lorries rumbled occasionally, and where the crowd left barely room for the car to get through. Often it was like driving through a tunnel lined with human bodies. A swaying, bumpy bridge of boats was among the many hazards of this first section, on which Birkin overtook 35 cars.

Some idea of Birkin's feat may be gathered from the fact that the Italian "aces" on 2,300 c.c.



Mr. Hugh C. McConnell, Team Manager to the victorious M.G. Magnettes, with Sir Henry Birkin and Mr. B. Rubin

came into the picture a new rival: a little Fiat—a special job with a decidedly non-standard cylinder head, beautifully driven by Ambrosini and Menchatti.

And so on to Rome, the dreaded Radicofani Pass being tackled on the way, with Eyston and Lurani leading their class. They had taken only 6 hours 16 minutes to cover 380 miles. Lord Howe and Hamilton were through just 20 minutes later.

With the Eternal City behind them, Eyston and Lurani, still leading the entire field, embarked upon a second crossing of the Apennines, where the roads went from bad to worse. At Terni

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