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THE LAST MILLE MIGLIA: ?

Small cars are away first in the Mille Miglia - the great 1,000 mile classic whose circuit spans Northern Italy, from Brescia to Rome, from the East Coast to the West. Stirling Moss is one of the British drivers for whom this event has been a "must" for many years - though since last year's fatal accidents, there has been increasing public pressure to have the race banned. The Marquis de Portago, of Spain, and Eddie Nelson, America, share a Ferrari. Also in the Ferrari team is Britain's Peter Collins.

Stirling Moss - who won the 1955 event in record time - leaves the starting ramp in his Maserati.

Neither the watching millions at the roadside, nor De Portago himself, dream of the tragedy that lies ahead for him - that before the end of the race, the Mille Miglia will be darkened by the worst disaster in its history. Most of the way, the race is true to pattern; mechanical trouble puts some of the drivers out of the running. Including Stirling Moss, and Peter Collins after he had led the field. De Portago makes a good time - but victory goes to Italian veteran Peiro Taruffi, beating Von Trips by a few yards.

Taruffi gets a hero's welcome from the crowd. But suddenly, clouding the moment of triumph, comes news of disaster! Thirty miles back De Portago and Nelson have crashed, killing themselves and ten others. A burst tyre, at 120 miles an hour, sent their Ferrari hurtling into the crowd. And five of the dead were children. Twenty-four times this brilliant race has been held - but modern speeds, where a simple fault can mean wholesale death, have made it impossible. A tragic end - but the Mille Miglia can be run no more.