

**THE STORY
OF THE
MARATHON**

The Marathon, the greatest long-distance running race in the world, is over. The prize in the event goes to Hayes, the sturdy, deep-chested American athlete; the honors of the day go to Dorando Pietri, a confectioner's assistant from Capri, Italy, a pale-faced little man, ridiculously small, merely a bundle of nerves, but a greater man than the winner himself. Dorando arrived at the Stadium for the finish far and away ahead of any other of the fifty-five athletes who started out in this greatest of all races of modern times, on that gorgeous July day, for the twenty-six-mile run from the gates of Windsor Castle to the Stadium, and then, with only a few yards to go to win the honors for which he had so nobly fought, he collapsed. His countrymen in the arena, wild with enthusiasm, crowded him over the finishing line. He was the first to cross, but, being aided, in fact, actually pushed along for the last few yards, the executive of the sports were forced to give the decision to Hayes, the American runner who crossed the tape just one minute later entirely unaided.

The *Standard of Empire* in its report, thus describes the race, the second greatest Marathon, second only to the first, and the best perhaps that will ever be run:

One hundred thousand people had waited hours, squeezed tight in the suffocating Stadium, to welcome the winner. Here was a huge amphitheatre, crowded until its sides threatened to burst. Men and women from all over the world were here, intensely excited, overwrought by the strain of it all, ready to cheer to the echo the first man to reach the greatest prize of the history-making Olympic games. Strong men revelled after the fashion of the rollicking schoolboy. There was a conspiracy to run riot when the end came.

A tall liveried man, after many hours' waiting, yelled down a megaphone, "The men are now approaching. Dorando, of Italy, is the leader." Such a cheer, deep and long; such a cheer that made one go cold because of its great depth of feeling, and then, as if by magic 100,000 folk were hushed into silence.

The name of Dorando was only whispered; there was now no full-throated shout of joy. A tragedy was feared; and a tragedy there was indeed. While the great throng within the arena waited with breathless expectation, poor Dorando, broken and crushed, lay in the door of the Stadium, through which he was to pass. Few, if any, of the expectant crowd within knew what was happening; and strong, hearty men, who coaxed and cajoled the semi-conscious Dorando to make one more Herculean effort, wept. Here within the precincts of the Stadium lay and writhed the man who was only a few short yards of success. Everybody wanted to help him, but

help was given. One feared that the little man would die. His wan face, caked with the white dust of the road, was pitiable to behold. It had no intelligence. The eyes were dull and glazed; the handkerchief, which in his strong moments he had improvised into a sunshade, was wet and grimy.

"Vive l'Italie" was shouted by his frenzied compatriots. "Dorando!" And the half-dead Italian, as if by instinct, scrambled up by the wall and stood upon his dithering, knocking, drunken legs. And, swaying to and fro in an utterly helpless fashion, scared, almost wild, he tottered into the arena. The one hundred thousand people who were waiting to greet him were made dumb by the sight of the tragic figure they beheld. One tried to cheer but failed. One was fascinated by the crushed man he saw. One's speech had gone. One could only stare at the crumpled man who was fighting to sustain himself to creep halfway round the track and thus win. But Nature won. Dorando fell on the scratching, cruel track. Men rushed to his side and lifted him to his feet. Dorando struggled heroically to move his legs, but they were twisted and completely worn. They would move, and that was all. He could not make progress. Four times did he fall all of a heap, after being held up by the officials, who broke all rules governing the race, and so brought about his disqualification. By this time Hayes, who in comparison to Dorando, was running tolerably fresh, but obviously drawing upon his last ounce of vitality, appeared. The Italian lay almost dead; too tired, too exhausted, even to groan. Hayes came slowly but surely on. He was being carried to the finish on a wave of enthusiasm, and as he drew nearer Dorando was lifted again and practically carried to the winning post a few yards in front of Hayes. It was impossible to give the race to the Italian, though everybody knew that morally he was the winner, and his quick disqualification was expected. Dorando was removed on a stretcher more dead than alive. We felt that the original stirring story of the Marathon race was being told all over again. One sickened. There has never been anything like the finish of this race before. It was terrible; a pitiable end to a battle that had captured the imagination of us all.

There are many tragedies, many cruel scenes, long before the end. The heat was almost tropical. Though the greater part of the course had been carefully prepared, the roads threw off clouds of choking dust. The sun was almost blinding. As it beat on the roads, it became a terrible white flame; motors reeked with petrol; cyclists were often a serious nuisance; and we had not proceeded very far on our journey when we saw stout-hearted men lying prone on the roadside.

With a lamentable lack of generalship, the English representatives, who were confidently expected to do exceptionally well, if, indeed, they did not capture the prize, began to race one another. They set out as if they were running a five-mile race. At times they were positively sprinting, and half the distance had not been covered when it was obvious they could never stay. A. Duncan, a market gardener, from Kendal, who, like Lord, a Yorkshire stoker, had accomplished remarkable performances in the trials; Appleby, who had twice beaten the great Alfred Shrubbs, and held the record for fifteen miles; Price, of Birmingham, a prime favorite—all soon held out signs of distress. Lord had a sunstroke in the back; the others I have mentioned were more or less seriously troubled. They were beaten at the end of ten miles. Having sacrificed themselves on the altar of their own folly, they paved the way for Heffron, the South African. Dorando, who, from the moment he left Windsor, ran steadily and with delightful unconcern about those who were making the pace, and Tom Longboat were at this stage the

most likely men. Heffron was the most fancied. He did not mind the sweltering heat in the least, and took such a big lead that he seemed certain to win. After he had gone seventeen miles I asked him how he felt. He smiled, as if he was enjoying it all. He waved his hand gleefully. And then I rushed back on my motor car to pick up Dorando. He, too, was moving sweetly. He was strong and well, and, without any great exertion, was shortening the distance between him and the South African. And further down the long, straggling line of runners I found that Longboat had given out.

The news came as a great surprise. When I had last seen the Indian he was running as if he were enjoying a holiday. Then he was challenging Dorando for second place. His attendants declared that he was as sound as a bell, and they, like Longboat, were confident of success. And though Heffron had at that time such a commanding lead, and one saw and felt that Dorando was destined to play a big part in the race, Longboat was striding out so well, his red face wreathed in the broadest smiles, that he appeared to have as great a chance of winning as any of his rivals. But Longboat, when apparently at his strongest, stopped running, and took to walking. His face wore a pained expression. He held his hand ominously to his side. He was surely failing. He looked pathetically to his trainers, and told them that he feared he would be obliged to retire. He was induced to make another attempt, but he had not got very far when he cried, "I must quit." The poor fellow was completely undone. He had then reached Harrow. He was assisted into a motor car at a time when his prospects were especially bright.

Tom Longboat, though he failed to finish, is all that he is represented to be. His style is well nigh perfect, and if he were running the race again tomorrow I should think most highly of his chance. It was not the distance that beat him. He succumbed to the heart-breaking conditions. The wonder was that any man ran those long 26 miles. Longboat was bitterly grieved. "It is your climate that did it," he said.

When the Stadium appeared in view Heffron began to walk. He threatened to collapse at any moment. By this time Dorando had taken the lead, and everybody cheered him frantically. Only 200 yards remained, and then Dorando, for the first time, began to reel from one side to the other of the narrow path on which he was running. One instinctively looked round for Heffron, but neither he or any other runner was in sight. With a mighty effort, clenching his teeth despairingly, his face distorted with pain, Dorando conquered his fit of dizziness for a moment, and on he went a few yards further. One could hear the people in the Stadium roaring. Everybody was on tiptoe; everybody was razor-edged. One's nerves tingled. A few minutes before one had heard the band in the Stadium playing "See, the Conquering Hero Comes." And here was Dorando, again tottering, on the verge of a complete collapse. A great shout suddenly went up from some hundreds of foreign attendants, mostly Italians engaged in the exhibition, who, hearing that the runners were in sight, climbed the hoarding and beheld Dorando. "Vive l'Italie!" they screamed. And a moment later Dorando, as if he had suffered a great shock, was on the point of falling again.

With unbelievable pluck he kept jogging on. At last he reached the door of the Stadium. He seemed to despair of going any further. He stretched out his arm to feel for the doorpost. He missed it, and fell like a log. No one, except a few officials in the arena, knew what had happened. And it seemed hours before Dorando regained his feet. Then, like a drugged man, he fell into the arena, and the sight of him silenced a multitude of shouting, bawling folk.

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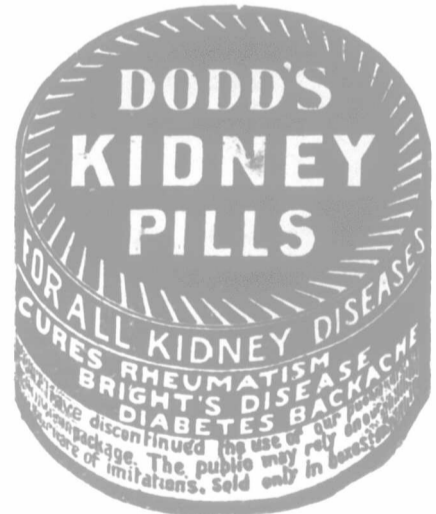
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Here it was that the tragedy was completed; here it was that Dorando had won and lost the race of his life. This Marathon race has burned itself in the memory of all the hundreds of thousands of people who saw it. It has contributed an unexpected page to the history of sport.

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