

# BASEBALL STORIES

20¢  
SUMMER

## BIG BRAIN IN BROOKLYN

THE STORY OF  
BRANCH RICKEY



## PLUMBER AT THE PLATE

HE WAS A MILLION-DOLLAR ROOKIE  
WITH A TWO-BIT BAT!

A big league novel  
by CURTIS BISHOP

# Now YOU Can Lick Any AUTO REPAIR JOB!

IN LESS TIME—WITH LESS WORK



**FREE  
7-DAY OFFER**

**MoToR's New AUTO REPAIR MANUAL**  
shows you how to service and  
repair ANY part of ANY car!

No auto repair job is too tough when you've got MoToR's AUTO REPAIR MANUAL! YOU can repair anything from carburetor to rear end—quickly, easily, right! Just look up make, model, and the job in the quick index—and go to work! Clear, illustrated instructions lead you step by step.

To make such an amazing book possible, the engineer-editors of MoToK Magazine collected and "broke down" 150 official factory shop manuals for you, spotted all the vital repair information you need, dove-tailed it all together into ONE handy, easy-to-understand book.

## No Other Manual Like It!

This BIG book—764 pages, 8½ x 11 inches, bound in sturdy fabric—brings you nearly 200,000 service, repair, adjustment, replacement, tune-up facts on every car built from 1935 to 1945. More than 1000 cut-away photos, diagrams, draw-

ings show you exactly WHAT to do and HOW to do it! Used by the U. S. Army, trade and technical schools everywhere, thousands of auto servicemen.

Now YOU—without cost—can see for yourself what a wonderbook MoToR's Auto Repair Manual really is. TRY it—FREE for 7 days! Learn first-hand how it can pay for itself the first few times you use it.

## SEND NO MONEY 7-Day Free Examination

Just mail coupon below—without money! When the postman brings your book, pay him nothing. First make it show you what it's got! Unless you agree this is the greatest time-saver and work-saver you've ever seen—return book in 7 days and pay nothing. Mail coupon today! Address: MoToR Book Department, Desk 128C, 572 Madison Ave., New York 22, New York.

USED BY  
U. S.  
ARMY



## Clear, Pictured Facts on Every Job on Every Car Built Since 1935!

Nearly 200,000 service and repair facts on all these makes:

American	Bantam	Ford	Oldsmobile
Auburn	Graham	Overland	
Austin	Hudson	Packard	
Buick	Hupmobile	Pierce	
Cadillac	Lafayette	Arrow	
Chevrolet	La Salle	Plymouth	
Chrysler	Lincoln	Pontiac	
Cord	Lincoln	Ros	
Crosley	Zephyr	Studebaker	
De Soto	Mercury	Terraplane	
Dodge	Nash	Willys	

764 big pages; including 59 pages of carburetor test charts, illustrations, covering all models. Over 500 charts, tables; Tune-up chart; Valve Measurement; Compression Pressure; Torque Wrench Reading; Starting Motor; Engine Clearance; Generator; Clutch & Brakes Specifications; Front End Measurements, etc.; Engines; Electric, Fuel, Cooling, Lubricating Systems; Transmissions; Universal; Front Ends; Wheels; Rear Ends, etc.

## Some FREE 7-Day Offer Applies on MoToR's TRUCK REPAIR MANUAL

For mechanics, truck specialists, service stations, fleet owners. Covers EVERY job on EVERY truck made since 1936! 1400 pictures, 914 pages, 300,000 facts. Used by Armed Forces. Warranted to contain every essential fact you need to know. Sturdy fabric binding, size 8½ x 11. Covers all types Gasoline

Engines; Diesels and Hessel-nuts, Fuel Systems, Governors, Lubrication Systems, Ignition Systems, Starters, Generators, Clutches, Transmissions, Axles, Targa Dividers, Transfer Cases, Brakes, Steering, etc., etc. ALSO SERVICES buses, farm and industrial tractors, contractor and road building equipment, stationary power machinery, etc. (on all parts described in Manual). Check coupon at right.



**MoToR** Published by MoToR, The Leading Automotive Business Magazine. MoToR's manuals assure high standards of repair work.

## MAIL COUPON NOW FOR 7-DAY FREE TRIAL

MoToR Book Dept., Desk 128C, 572 Madison Ave., New York 22, N. Y. Rush to me at once: (check box opposite book you want.)

☐ MoToR's AUTO REPAIR MANUAL. If O.K. I will remit \$1 in 7 days, and \$1 monthly for 4 months, plus 35¢ delivery charge with final payment (\$5.35 in all). Otherwise I will return book postpaid in 7 days. (Foreign price, remit \$7 cash with order).

☐ MoToR's TRUCK REPAIR MANUAL. (Described at left.) If O.K. I will remit \$2 in 7 days, and \$2 monthly for 3 months, plus 35¢ delivery charge with final payment (\$8.35 in all). Otherwise I will return book postpaid in 7 days. (Foreign Price, remit \$11 cash with order).

Print Name ..... Age.....

Print Address .....

City ..... Zone No. ....

State ..... (if any).....

Occupation .....

☐ SAVE 35¢! We pay postage if you ENCLOSE full payment. (check, m.o., postal note.) Same 7-day return privilege.



# Fact and Fiction

# BASEBALL

## STORIES

T. T. SCOTT, President

MALCOLM REISS, Editor & Gen. Mgr.

### Baseball Stories' Feature Novel

#### PLUMBER AT THE PLATE . . . . . Curtis Bishop 86

Fence-busting was apple pie for the clouting Malones, Paddy and Sandy—the best brother act since the Waners. But for young, aspiring Terry Malone it was just three swings and a drink of water . . . until a dyed-in-the-diamond gal started to call the pitch.

### Two Big Novelets of the Diamond

#### "GOODBYE PENNANT" . . . . . Bill Heuman 2

The dog days of August were fouling the feud-ridden Trojans, and the kid infield was cracking at the seams. There was but one guy who might jack 'em up—Al Brady, bullpen clown, manager O'Dowd's pet hate.

#### THE LAST PITCH . . . . . Harold Rogers 50

'Twas the manager speaking: "All right, Menzel, here's your chance to live up to your aged rep. You've been squawking for it. Win this game . . . beat this pup of yours . . . and you'll get a contract next year. Lose, and by the living saints——"

### Three Swift Short Stories

#### SLUGGER'S GOLD . . . . . J. B. Thornton 32

When the eye is gone and the headlines fade, take one last swing for those grandstand gallants.

#### MOUND ANGEL . . . . . Tom Sayres 43

Gamblers' money rode the whip-arm of "Lazy" Lew Calhoun . . . rode it once too often.

#### OL' KNUCKLEHEAD . . . . . Paul R. McCully 73

Ironpants McCord wised for a nice quiet berth in the Mexican League after a rollicking season with screwball Jeff Carson.

### Facts and Features

#### BIG BRAIN IN BROOKLYN . . . . . John Drebing 22

The Dodgers are on the upswing. Shall we blame it on Branch Rickey?

#### TWO PICTURE PAGES . . . . . Walter Galli 85, 107

Depicting the incomparable Cobb—and World Series hi-lites

Summer Issue (July-Dec.) 1946

Volume II, No. 6



20c per copy



BASEBALL STORIES: Published by Flying Stories, Inc., 670 Fifth Ave., New York 19, N. Y. Printed in U. S. A. The entire contents of this magazine are copyrighted, 1946, by Flying Stories, Inc. All rights reserved. The characters named and incidents described in our fiction stories do not refer to any actual person. While due care is always exercised, the publishers will not be responsible for the return of unsolicited manuscripts. For advertising rates address: Advertising Director, Fiction House, Inc., 670 Fifth Avenue, New York 19, N. Y.



# "GOODBYE PENNANT"

*By Bill Heuman*

The dog days of August were stalking the feud-ridden Trojans. The kid infield was cracking at the seams. There was just one guy who could jack 'em up—Al Brady, bullpen clown, Manager O'Dowd's pet hate.

**H**E HAD a tiny bonfire going out in the bullpen with the temperature hitting ninety-three in the shade, and the diamond baked hard as stone. He'd found a newspaper out on the bench here and he'd torn it up into strips, igniting the mass with a match. The sweat sliding down his round cheeks, he huddled over the little fire, rubbing his hands and hunching his shoulders.

Bullpen catcher, Dud Graham, sat on the edge of the bench, a broad grin on his homely face.

"Want me to chop up the bench, Al?" he chuckled.

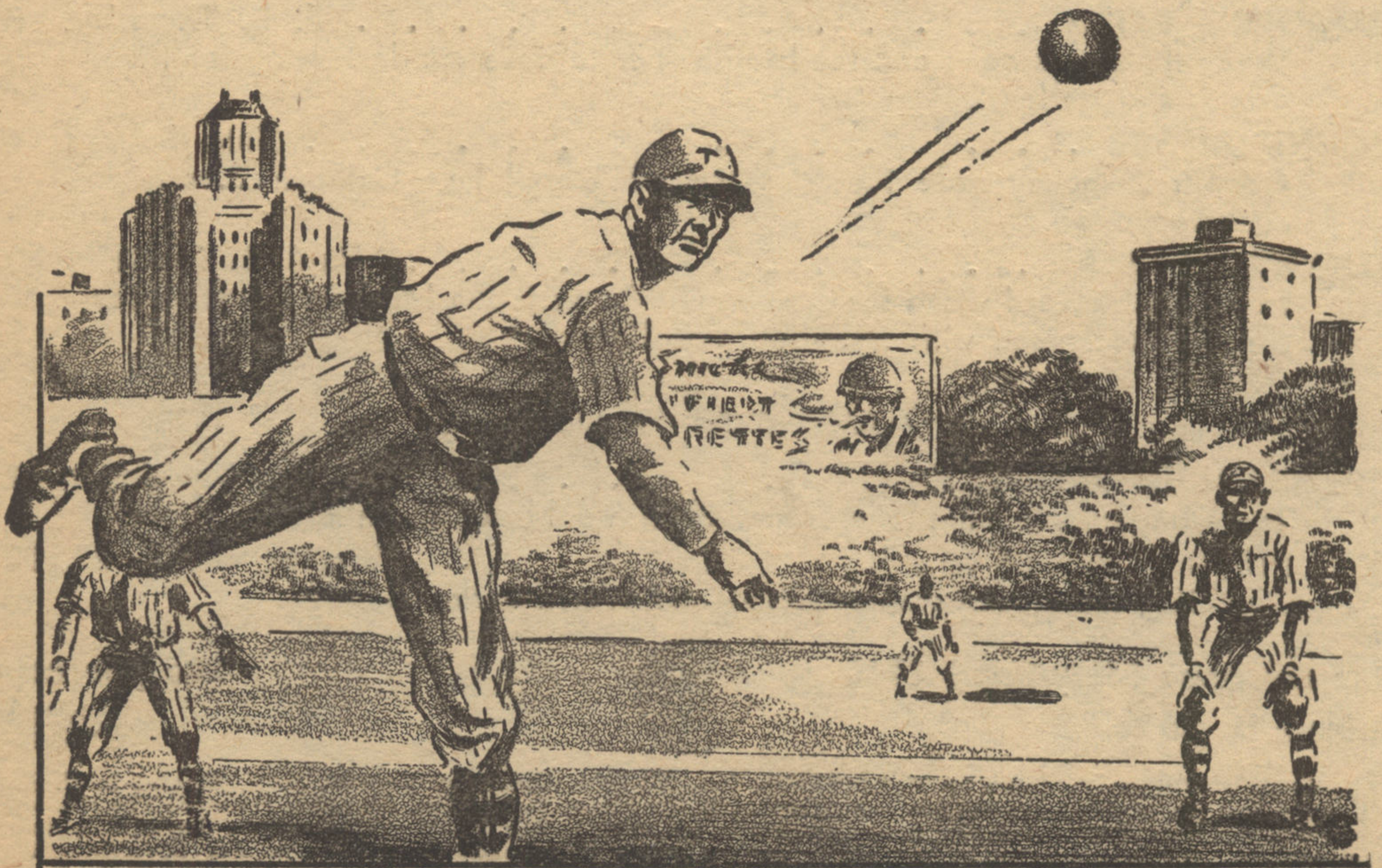
Al Brady, Trojan relief hurler, spat across the fire, small blue eyes peering out from beneath the rim of his cap. They'd spotted the fire in the stands now, and he could see them pointing. A wave of laughter started to sweep through the big Trojan Stadium. Men were standing up to see better.

Carefully, Al lifted one of his spike shoes and held it over the little blaze to warm his feet. Another gale of laughter greeted this stunt. The bullpen was out in right field, outside the foul line, and a lot of people couldn't see clearly along the first base line, but they heard the noise and they were curious.

Behind the plate, Umpire Callahan, had stepped to the side now, slipping off his mask. He began to wave it emphatically toward the bullpen, and then the Trojan infield turned around to look.

"Callahan wants it out," Dud Graham grinned. "Must be in the rule book, Al."

"Sure," Al said. He stood up and took a few steps toward the field, and then cupped his hand over his ears as if trying to make out what the umpire was shouting, but he wasn't watching Callahan. He had his eyes on young Ted Marshall, Trojan shortstop, and on Eddie Blair, the kid second baseman. These two had turned





## "GOODBYE PENNANT"

to look toward the bullpen, and he saw them grinning, some of tension leaving their brown faces.

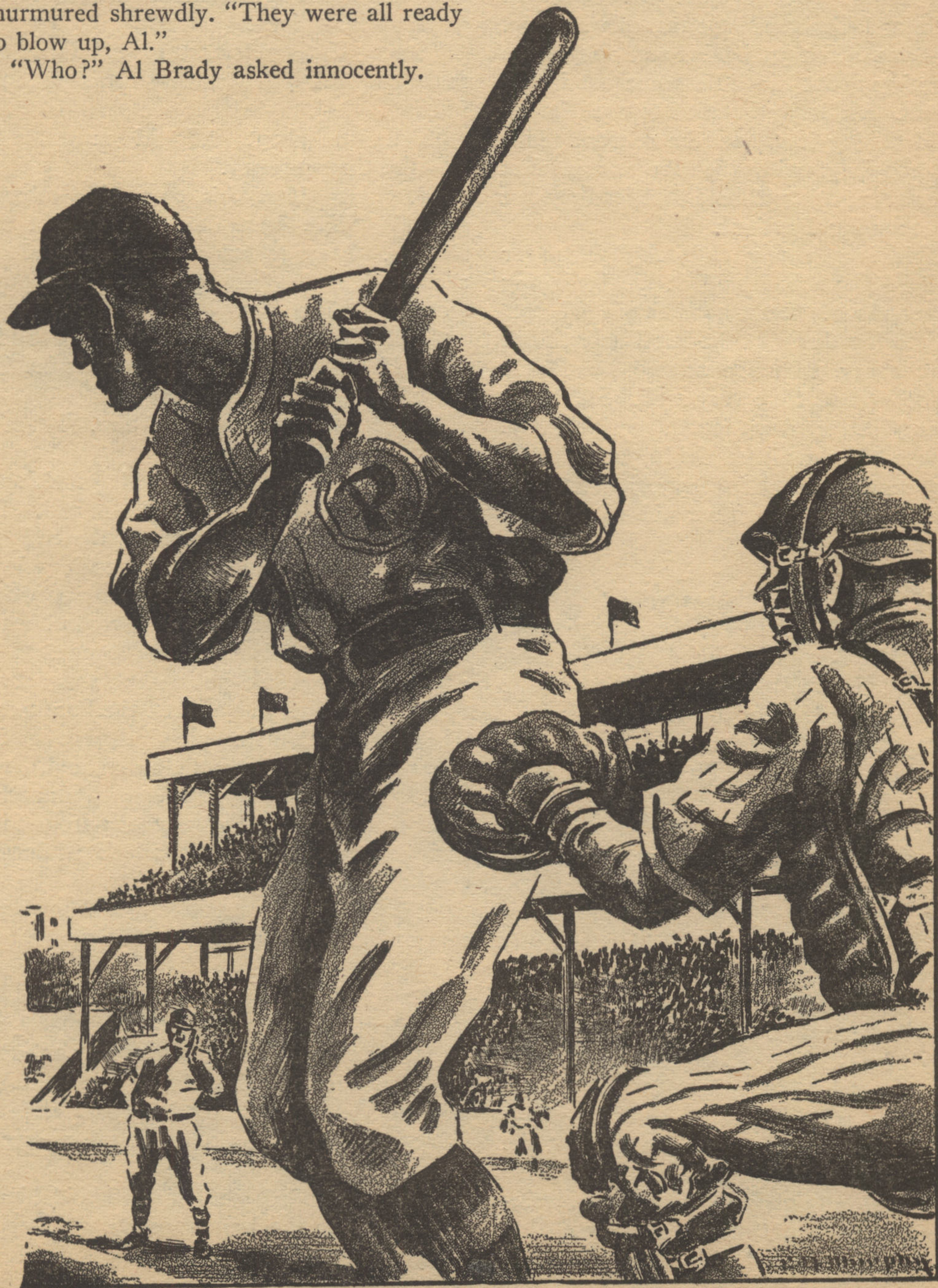
Al took a deep breath and waddled back to the bench. Then he stared at Callahan again, regretfully, and stamped out the fire. The laughter started to subside, but the Trojan infield was still glancing toward him, all of them grinning. Al saw Blair and Marshall talking together.

"Kind of settled 'em down," Graham murmured shrewdly. "They were all ready to blow up, Al."

"Who?" Al Brady asked innocently.

"Cut it out," Graham said. He was a short man, near forty, with gray in his hair, and a broken nose. His eyes were light blue and sharp, staring out of the mahogany-colored face.

Al sighed. "A feller can't have a little fun," he murmured. He was watching the infield again, noticing the way the rangy Marshall danced back and forth toward the bag to keep the Panther runner close to



*The boys were solid behind Al now. He wound up and fed Rhodes the knuckler.*



the sack. The Panthers had men on first and second with only one away, and one run needed to tie the game in the sixth.

"We'll get two now," Graham said, "if they hit it on the ground, Al."

"Let's hope," Al told him. "Maybe you boys better loosen up again, Dud." They had the kid, Johnny Castle, out in the pen also, and Castle was slated to go in first if the fireworks started.

Al leaned back against the bench as Castle and Graham went out to warm-up. Play was about to begin, and they were forgetting about the little scene out in the bullpen. Al Brady listened to the Trojan infield talking it up, and he relaxed. This was mid-July, with the Trojans in first place and fighting to hold that lead against the oncoming Panthers.

"This is a young club, Al," Manager Huck McCann had said at the beginning of the season. "Let's hope they hold up."

Watching them, as the left hander, Dick Montgomery, took the mound, Al Brady knew they had done very well. Slated for nothing better than fourth position, the Trojans had astonished the league by grabbing an early lead in May, and staying there all the way, with a kid infield, and kid pitchers.

**M**ONTGOMERY was wild today, but he managed to get the next pitch in low to big Tom Blackford, Panther first baseman. Blackford slapped it hard on the ground toward Marshall, the ball going a little to Marshall's right.

The kid came up with it cleanly, pegging it to second. Eddie Blair, chunky, red-headed, pivoted off the sack and shot it across his chest to first for the double play. It was very fast and very smooth, and it retired the side.

Al rubbed his jaw, closed his eyes halfway, and let his head sag on his chest. He was thirty-eight, and he was getting fat around the waist. At thirty-eight, and father of a ten-year-old boy, he had a right to start putting on weight.

"When are you gonna kick me out, Huck?" Al had asked the manager at the beginning of the season.

McCann only grinned. "You got a wrinkle or two left, Al," he'd said. "Keep that soup bone in shape."

"That's about all it's good for," Al had

said. "Soup." He'd been throwing for the Trojans for fourteen years, and he'd never been a great pitcher. Once he'd hung up twenty wins, the third season in the big time, but after that he was just a work horse, winning his dozen or more every year, helping out from the bullpen.

Dud Graham came back to the bench, damp spots showing on his gray Trojan shirt. Graham had handled Al's stuff up until six years ago when he'd been relegated to the bullpen.

"Some of these smart guys," Graham said, "they think that clown stuff is just for fun."

"Tell me about it," Al murmured. "You're the professor."

"A dozen times this season," Graham growled, "I've seen those kids about to fold up. They get an edge and they need a laugh to loosen 'em up. You're the guy who can do it, Al."

"Tell Huck I want a bonus," Al said. "Tell him I'll go on a sit-down strike in the pitcher's box."

"Cut it out," Graham told him. "I don't need any jokes, kid."

Al lapsed into silence, watching the Panthers toss the ball around the infield. It was 3 to 2 for the Trojans at the end of the sixth, but Montgomery wasn't going to last today. The big lefthander was wild from the start, and when his control was bad, he seldom finished the ball game.

Castle, who would go in next, was nervous as he always was against the Panthers. The tough middlewest club had a half-dozen good jockeys on the bench, and they usually went to work on the enemy hurler. They'd been after Montgomery from the first inning, and the lefthander's wildness could be attributed partly to that.

"They'll hit Johnny," Dud Graham had said earlier in the afternoon. "Keep warm, Al."

"I'm hot," Al said without emotion. "I'll stand 'em on their heads." He threw a half-speeder now, a slow one, and a little hook, but his control was very good. He'd been monkeying around with a knuckleball this season and was finding it quite effective.

"After a while," Graham had told him, "everybody in the league knows what you old guys are goin' to throw. If you don't come up with somethin' new every once in



## "GOODBYE PENNANT"

a while they'll drive you into the bushes."

"The knuckler stops 'em dead now," Al said. He remembered that last season it had been an old-fashioned cross-fire ball which you didn't see very often in the big time. It had worked out well till the end of the season when they'd begun to plaster it. Wisely, Al discarded the pitch, holding it for emergencies.

The Trojans went down in order and the Panthers again took the field. When Montgomery picked up the ball and started to warm-up, the Panther jockeys got busy again. Even in the bullpen Al could hear them howling at Dick Montgomery.

At the other end of the bench Johnny Castle shifted uneasily. Dud Graham tapped his big mitt with his free hand and grimaced.

Montgomery passed the first two Panther batsman, and then Huck McCann came out of the dugout. He walked to the edge of the infield, spoke a few words to Montgomery, and then went back. Johnny Castle was already warming up again.

Carson, Panther shortstop, rifled a single to left field, sending in a runner and tying up the ball game. Montgomery looked toward the bench, and then Huck McCann waved to the bullpen.

Al saw Castle's tense face as he came over for his jacket. Castle had won a dozen games this season, some of them in relief roles. He had a fast ball and plenty of stuff, but he was only twenty-two, and it was hot today.

"Keep 'em close, kid," Al said. "Rhodes and Bickford never could hit balls in on the handle."

"Thanks," Castle mumbled.

"An' don't worry about those monkeys on the bench," Al added. "They're slap-happy because they don't have to stand up against your stuff."

Castle grinned. He was a good-looking, kid, over six feet, dark-haired, brown-eyed. Al Brady watched him walk toward the infield, and then he got up and took a ball from Graham's glove.

"You'll be in," Dud said gloomily. "These damn Panthers are gettin' mighty tough, Al."

"I'll twist them around my finger," Al said. He began to throw, very easily, all soft stuff. He heard Rhodes' bat crack, and

turning his head, saw the ball bounce off the right-field wall. Two Panther runners came in, making it 6 to 4 for the second place club.

"There goes that World Series melon," Dud Graham growled. "I was figuring on makin' the last payment on the house with that."

Al didn't say anything. A couple of thousand dollars extra would come in handy this season for himself also. This was probably his last season with the Trojans and he hadn't been drawing down too big a salary the past five years.

HE had a decent bank account but that money was set aside for young Jack Brady's schooling. The kid would have to go to a prep school, and then college, and during those years the money wouldn't be coming in any too fast.

"I promised the wife I'd give him the best," Al had told Graham in a moment of confidence. "We thought maybe he'd be an M. D. or a lawyer—anything but a dumb cluck of a ball player like myself." Alice had been dead eight years now, and Al had raised the kid with the aid of a housekeeper. The road trips weren't much fun any more because the kid didn't usually go along.

Johnny Castle walked Lou Bickford, filling the sacks, and then Shelbourne, stocky left-fielder singled sharply to center, letting in two more runs.

"The lucky seventh," Dud Graham muttered, "but not for us." He was about to throw the ball to Al, but then he held it. "Here you go, kid," he said.

Al turned around, a little surprised. Evidently, Huck McCann wasn't going to take too many chances with Castle. The tall boy was off and he wasn't going out.

McCann stood on the dugout steps, staring toward the bullpen while young Castle walked from the mound, head down.

"It's 8 to 4 now," Graham said. "You don't have much to lose, Al, and all to win."

"We'll take them," Al said confidently. "I'll put out this fire, Dud." He talked big because it always gave them a laugh, and sometimes he was right! When they pinned his ears back he blamed it on a chilled arm, or the weather, or the ball, and they took it for what it was. He was the club jester.



## BASEBALL STORIES

He got his jacket from the bench and walked toward the infield like a man who had plenty of time and no place to go. He spotted a tiny dandelion on the grass—one which had escaped the shrewd eyes of the groundkeeper, and stopping, he plucked it, sniffing, and then placing the little flower in the buttonhole of his shirt.

It got a big laugh from the crowd, and he was glad young Jack wasn't out today. With school closed the kid wanted to come to almost all the games, but Al sent him off to the beach occasionally. The kid was getting to the point where he noticed things, and once Al had caught him staring queerly at his father when the club jester got down on his knees and pounded the ground with his fist when Callahan called a bad one on him. The crowd got a big kick out of it, and the Trojan infield settled down, but young Jack hadn't laughed with them.

"You're the biggest guy in the world to him," Dud had said. "I guess he just doesn't like the old man to play the clown."

After that Al had gone easy when the kid was in the box. He could fool around in the dugout, and make his remarks, but when he took the mound he was more careful, paying more attention to his hurling.

Eddie Blair was waiting for him out on the grass, slapping his glove, trying to smile. The Panthers had runners on second and third with none away, and a four run lead. This game they had practically clinched, and they'd also won yesterday. Blair was thinking about that, and it showed in his gray eyes.

"What the hell's the matter, kid?" Al asked with an injured air. "You need an old man in here?"

"You show them, Al," Blair grinned.

"Watch the knuckler, kid," Al said. "You'll be able to see it from where you are. I had old Duddy tyin' himself in knots trying to hold it."

Again Blair smiled, and some of the tension left his face. He picked up a pebble and threw it away. Whitey Crawford, the first baseman, and George Carrigan, Trojan catcher, were waiting for him on the mound. Carrigan had been with the Trojans several years, and he was holding up. Crawford, however, was another first year man, a big fellow with a crop of whitish-blond hair. He'd been hitting well

most of the season, but he was feeling it now, the same as Marshall, Blair, Castle and Montgomery.

"Get back there, George," Al said. "You know what I throw—fast, faster, and then the fireball."

"All right," Carrigan chuckled. "Let 'em have it, Al."

The Panther jockeys started to go to work on him. Benny Shane, a relief pitcher, howled.

"Who's the fat tub, McCann?"

The crowd laughed, and then Al Brady pulled up his stomach and took in two notches in his belt. Gravely, he thumbed his nose at Shane.

Joe Barlowe, Trojan third baseman came over with the ball. Barlowe, like Carrigan, had been with the club a while, and he was steady. Al threw a few balls to Carrigan, and said out of the side of his mouth to Barlowe.

"They're using the flesh-to-flesh signal for the bunt, Joe."

Barlowe nodded. "I was trying to catch it, Al," he said. "It'll help." He added. "You ever miss anything, Al?"

"I got eyes," Al Brady grinned. "I use 'em, kid." He'd watched closely from the bullpen just as he watched from the dugout when he wasn't on duty, and he'd caught the Panther signals. They were using the tricky flesh-to-flesh for the sacrifice bunt—scratching the nose, rubbing the hands together, mopping sweat from the brow. It was a tricky one, and the Panthers, like every other big league club, changed the signals every few days. Sometimes it was a little difficult catching them, but it always helped. The infielders got the jump on the ball.

The Panthers had Brand, the pitcher, batting, and Al was thankful. He stepped from the mound and glanced around the infield before going back. Ted Marshall was on edge and would probably bobble the first ball hit to him.

"Hey, kid?" Al called sharply.

Young Marshall ran in to the mound. Al was standing, feet wide apart, rubbing the ball with his hands.

"You got the time, kid?" Al asked casually.

Marshall mechanically glanced at his right wrist where the watch usually was strapped. Then he saw the little grin on



Brady's face, and a smile spread across his own.

"What the hell, Al," he mumbled, abashed because he didn't have a watch on.

"You fall for the old ones," Al chuckled. "The bushers used to be pretty smart in my day." Marshall trotted away, and then Al threw a slow hook to Brand.

The Panther pitcher cut at it, lifting a twisting fly ball behind first base. Crawford went back and took it for the out.

"Lucky Brady," Shane yelled.

Al turned to him deliberately. "When you're good enough to be out here, Benny," he called, "then talk." Shane had no comeback, and the Trojan infield grinned.

McMillan, Panther second baseman was in the slot, a bad man in the pinch, Al glanced toward the dugout and saw Huck McCann hold up four fingers, indicating a free pass. He purposely walked McMillan, filling the sacks.

"Afraid, Al?" McMillan howled at him as he trotted down the line.

"Come around after the game," Al said. "I'll strike you out on three pitched balls, you bum." He watched Edgar Pratt throwing away a stick. Pratt hit from the left side of the plate, and he sometimes hit a long ball.

Al threw one in close and low for a ball. Then he walked halfway down the path and glared at umpire Callahan. The big man took off the mask, his jaw jutting out.

"You forget your tin cup and cane, Cally?" Al asked softly.

"Get the hell back there," Callahan growled. Even Pratt was grinning as he stepped out of the rectangle and scooped up dirt.

## II

AL BRADY fed the Panther the knuckler, getting it low and outside, but good. Pratt cut at the pitch, knocking it on the ground toward the box. Al snapped it to home, and George Carrigan threw to first for the double play.

"Nice work," Huck McCann said in the dugout. He was a short man, on the thin side, with gray hair and serious blue eyes.

"I'll have 'em eatin' out of my hand," Al said. "Get me some runs, you bums." He went to the water fountain and instead of drinking from the spout, used one of

the paper cups. He drank a bit of the water, and then stared at the cup. "This is for luck, gang," he said, and tossed the water over his shoulder.

Young Marshall yelled as the cold water splashed over his head. The Trojan benched rocked with laughter, and Marshall wiped his face with a towel.

"You're lucky it wasn't a horse shoe, kid," Al told him. "Get me a hit out there."

Marshall, still laughing, relaxed, went out and doubled to right field. Prescott singled, and then Eddie Blair singled also.

"Nice work, Al," Huck McCann said softly.

"I could always beat those bums over there," Al told him.

"I don't mean that," McCann murmured. The Trojan crowd was beginning to open up now, sensing a big rally, and they weren't disappointed. Crawford picked out a good ball and hammered it against the center-field wall, driving in two more runs and making it 8 to 7.

After that, Brand, Panther hurler, tightened up, permitting no more hits, and the Trojans took the field one run behind.

Al fed Tom Blackford the half-speeder, and the giant first baseman slammed it on a line through the box. Al stepped away to let it go by, knowing that a ball like that was liable to end his career.

Young Blair cut across behind the bag, knocked the ball down, and threw the slow-footed Blackford out at first. Al grinned. It had always been like that when he was out on the mound. The Trojans gave him sensational support, and there was a reason for it. They were all relaxed, very loose, and the muscles responded.

Al gave Duke Carson, Panther short-stop, the knuckler, and the Duke hit it out into center-field where it was taken for the second out.

The Trojans were talking it up again, and Al Brady grinned contentedly.

"I just toss 'em in," he'd told Dud Graham, "and let the kids worry about the rest."

Rhodes banded the curve ball hard on the ground, but Blair came up with it cleanly for the third out.

"Let's get that run in," Al said in the dugout. "We take these donkeys."

With two away the end of the eighth, George Carrigan rapped a clean double to



right-center. Al bounced out of the dugout and rummaged among the bats in the bat rack. McCann came out and said.

"We need this run, Al. Want me to put Riley in to pinch hit?"

Al turned around slowly, three bats in his hands. "What the hell, Huck," he mumbled. "You want to win this game?" He wasn't a great batter, but he made his hits, and usually he got them when they were needed. McCann knew this.

"Okay, Al," the little manager grinned. "Hit away."

"Maybe," Al said, "I should be insulted, Huck." The Trojans were grinning at him from the bench.

"Knock down the walls, Al," Whitey Crawford called.

Al swished the three bats through the air and walked toward the plate. The crowd gave him a hand as he hitched in his belt another notch.

"Here's the Rubber Boy," Campbell, Panther catcher, chuckled. "Put it around his belly, Rube, an' he won't see it."

Al bent down and peered through the bars of Campbell's mask.

"It talks," he said to Callahan, and the umpire smiled.

"Take your three swings and roll away," Campbell scowled.

Al let the first one go by. It was in close on the handle, and Callahan called it a strike. Al came out of the box and glared at the umpire.

"You missed that one, Cally," he growled.

Callahan came back with the classic. "I wouldn't have missed it, Al," he grinned, "if I'd had a bat on my shoulder."

"With a bat on your shoulder," Al came back quickly, "you'd look more like a human being, Cally."

"Shut up," Callahan snapped.

Rube Brand threw one on the outside corner, and Al stepped across the plate, poking the ball over first base. It was a dinky hit, but it sent Carrigan in with the tying run.

Standing on the first-base sack, Al needled the jockeys in the Panther dugout.

"How'd you like it, Benny?" he yelled at Shane. "What's your battin' average, kid?"

Young Marshall, coming up again,

slashed a ball through left-center field, and it rolled to the distant fence. Puffing, Al Brady went all the way home on the hit, nearly collapsing when he touched the rubber. He staggered toward the dugout, weaving back and forth, taking his bows from the cheering crowd.

He took a long time going out to the mound for the last of the ninth because he wanted to get his breath back. Callahan had to come over to the dugout finally. He found Al stretched out on the bench near the water cooler with a wet towel draped over his forehead.

"Okay, Sleeping Beauty," the umpire snapped, "the Prince is here."

Al sat up and yawned. He peered through his fingers at Callahan and chuckled.

"Is that your face, Cally, or a new kind of mask?"

Callahan pulled the watch on him, and Al hustled out to the mound. He had Bickford, Shelbourne and Campbell in order, and all three of them could be tough.

**B**LACKFORD hammered a terrific clout to center-field, and Hank Norman made the catch out by the flagpole; Shelbourne hit one on a line down the first base path, and Whitey Crawford took it without moving out of his tracks. Campbell rattled a fast ground ball through the box, but Ted Marshall came up with it to make the putout at first. It was 9 to 8 for the Trojans.

"You have to live right," Al Brady boasted in the dressing room. "How many wins I got now, Huck?"

"You're right up with the leaders," McCann grinned. "You got three, kid." McCann was sitting down on a bench nearby, and for the second time within a week Al Brady noticed that peculiar expression on the little manager's face. Huck McCann's mouth was drawn up as if in pain. He was smiling, but there was no smile in his eyes.

There was a lot of talk in the Trojan dressing room, and a few of the boys were singing to themselves. Listening, Al Brady felt good. Once again these kids had been near the breaking point, but the unexpected win over the Panthers had restored much of their confidence. They would roll along for a few more weeks now.



Young Jack listened breathlessly to the account of the game when Al got back to the apartment that night. He wanted a play by play resume; the kid knew most of the players on both clubs, and he knew the game.

"You knocked in the tying run, Dad," he grinned, "and you scored the winning run!"

"I could always hammer that—," Al began, relapsing into character. He stopped, smiled wryly, and said. "It was a lucky bingle kid, just cleared Tom Blackford's head."

They went to the movies that night, and had a a soda when they came out. Jack Brady was still talking about the game, and he insisted that his father buy a late paper so he could read what the sports writers had said about him.

"I hope," Jack said before he went to bed, "that you play baseball all your life, Dad." He added proudly. "It's not every boy has a father in the big leagues."

Al slapped him on the back. He didn't say that his baseball life was very close to the finish. He was getting by with a prayer now, and he knew it. McCann hadn't started him in a single game this season knowing that his arm wouldn't hold out for nine innings. At the end of the season he expected his release.

The Trojans played heads-up ball the remainder of the week, taking four out of five from the Bees, and retaining a two game lead on the Panthers. On a Saturday afternoon Huck McCann failed to show up at the club house. Coach Art Myers came in, stating that McCann wasn't feeling too good. and that he'd asked him to take over for the afternoon.

"What's wrong with him?" Al asked when he got Myers in a corner.

The coach, a lanky man with a semi-bald head, shrugged. "You got me, Al," he said. "Huck ain't been lookin' too good the last month or so."

McCann missed the next day's game also, and on Monday the news came through that he was resigning as Trojan manager. It was as if a bolt of lightning had struck the Trojan dressing room. Stunned, the players listened as the club owner, Martin Stone explained the situation.

"Huck's heart is very bad," Stone said, "and he's been ailing a long time with it.

The Doctor gave him orders to quit immediately and go home. Huck wants to be remembered to all the boys."

Al leaned against the wall, hands in his back pockets. He looked at Dud Graham, and then at the other players staring silently at the floor. Huck McCann had been immensely popular with this club. He'd made no set of rules; he was easy going, but yet he was able to get the best out of his men.

"I have a man in mind for the position," Stone said, "but I haven't signed him up as yet." Stone was a business man and he'd left everything up to McCann for the past fifteen years. He was an elderly man with thin gray hair and spectacles.

"Who's the lucky guy," Dud asked quietly.

"Pat O'Dowd," Stone said.

Al saw Graham's face tighten. O'Dowd, former Blue manager, was out of the big-time this season, having quit his job at the end of the previous baseball year. O'Dowd had a reputation for toughness; he was a driver, who made his players toe the line. Earlier in his career he'd won pennants, and he'd commanded a high salary for it.

"I think if I can get O'Dowd," Stone went on, "we'll keep on top and win the pennant this year."

Graham nodded, but didn't say anything. Al saw him look at the Trojan kids with whom McCann had been so careful. McCann had treated these boys as if they'd been his own sons, and he'd gotten a good brand of baseball out of them.

"Goodbye pennant," Graham muttered as he walked out on the field with Al Brady. "O'Dowd will be like a bull in a china shop. He never knew when to hold his tongue."

"He knows the game," Al said. "He's turned out great clubs."

"For me," Graham said slowly, "I'd rather have a guy who knows men. The kids know the game themselves."

Al didn't say anything. The Trojans won again that afternoon with Castle on the mound, and the following afternoon Pat O'Dowd joined the club.

THE big man came into the dressing room carrying a brown valise. He'd flown from Chicago, and he was full of pep. For ten or fifteen minutes he con-



versed with Art Myers in the office, and then he came out in uniform. Forty-five years of age, he was in prime physical condition, weighing nearly two hundred pounds, black hair, streaked with gray, a wide, tough face, and flinty blue eyes.

The Trojans watched him as he stopped in front of Al Brady's locker. The relief pitcher looked up and grinned.

"How's it, Pat?" he asked.

O'Dowd's face cracked into a smile. "You still around, Brady?" he chuckled. "What do they do, give you a shot in the arm every day?"

"I get by," Al said carefully. He knew O'Dowd from years back, and he'd been acquainted with dozens of players who'd worked under O'Dowd. The big man liked to crack a joke, but he didn't like to take one.

O'Dowd made a little speech before the club took the field. He asked that every man go all-out; he liked guys that dug in. He'd been the kind of player himself who'd never hesitated to ram his head into a stone wall to make a catch, and he expected the same of his men.

"If a guy ain't givin' everything he's got," O'Dowd finished grimly, "I want to know about it. That guy won't be with me long."

Dud Graham said to Al Brady in the dugout. "How in hell does he think this club got in first place?"

"Take it easy," Al warned.

"I'm not worrying about myself," Graham said.

They went out to the bullpen that afternoon with Montgomery on the mound against the Jays. It was hot again—very hot for the first of August.

"The Dog Days," Dud Graham said soberly. "This is the time that a club cracks wide open. The heat gets under their skin."

Al Brady grimaced. He'd seen experienced ball players fold up in August because the pressure then was almost physical. July was bad enough. The club leading the league had to keep winning to stay there, while the other clubs had nothing to lose and all to gain.

Montgomery passed the first Jay batsman, and O'Dowd waved to the bullpen.

"He's off," Dud Graham said. "He won't go today."

Al shook his head. Sam Blunt, Trojan

hurler, got up and began to throw to Graham. Montgomery was batted from the box in the second inning. He walked two more men, and then another long hit followed. O'Dowd yanked him with the score 3 to 0 for the Jays.

Blunt, a stocky little right hander with a fast ball, went in and held the fifth place Jays for five innings. The Trojans weren't hitting today and O'Dowd didn't like it. Al Brady watched the big man out on the third base coaching line. O'Dowd shouted something at Ted Marshall, but the kid went down swinging.

"He's got 'em on edge," Graham said. "These boys aren't used to bein' pushed."

In the eighth Blunt went out for a pinch hitter, and Al Brady walked into the dugout when it was two away. He'd been warmed up sufficiently to go into the box.

"Get out there," Pat O'Dowd scowled at his club. "Put up a fight, gang."

Al saw the grim faces of the Trojans. Undoubtedly, they'd been taking a lot of abuse from O'Dowd all afternoon, and O'Dowd was scarcely aware of what he was doing. He'd always spoken roughly to his players, thinking that by getting them riled up they'd do something. It hadn't worked out.

Al went out to the mound and picked up the ball. He had three men to face, and the Jays had a three run lead. His duty was to see that they didn't make it any bigger.

Young Jack was in the box this afternoon, an empty soda pop bottle in his hands, sucking on the straw. He grinned as Al started to throw a few to Carrigan.

O'Dowd sat in the dugout, a scowl on his face. Al Brady walked back on the grass and grinned at his infield. They'd been playing good ball today, but Albright, Jay hurler, was having an on day. He was a curve ball pitcher and his slants were breaking beautifully. Al had been able to see that even from the outfield.

"When that guy's right," Dud Graham had stated, "there's no club in the league can take him. He's right today."

Al called to Marshall. "Back me up, kid. I don't feel so hot today."

Marshall smiled, but didn't say anything. They had a slim crowd in the stands today, a week-day game. Al Brady took his cap from his head, mopped his face with his handkerchief and shoved the ball





*Fair or foul? It was hard to figure. The first baseman made a pretty stab.*

in his back pocket while he did it. Then he forgot where he'd put the ball and began to look around for it. The boys grinned a little, and even young Jack giggled at that one. O'Dowd didn't crack a smile.

Al threw the knuckler and it was knocked off the left field wall for a double, he managed to get the next Jay batsman on the hook which was lifted up into the infield. Blair took it for the first out.

A single followed, and the runner scored from second. The fourth man slapped the ball hard to Barlowe, and it resulted in a double play, third to second to first. Al walked to the dugout.

O'Dowd glared at him distastefully. "Cut out the clowning when you're on the mound, Brady," he snapped. "Let's have a little baseball."

Al stared at the big man for a moment in silence. He rubbed the letters on his shirt and said,

"Okay, Pat."

The Trojans had taken this in, but no one said a word. Al Brady took a seat in a corner of the dugout and slipped into his jacket. He watched the three Trojan batsman go down in order, with O'Dowd standing in the third base coaching box, clapping his hands, snarling for base hits.

"No pep," O'Dowd snapped in the dressing room. "Let's get some fight in there." He walked back and forth among the players as they sat on their stools in front of lockers. He paused in front of Whitey Crawford and bit off the end of a cigar

savagely. Crawford had made none for four this afternoon, with two strikeouts chalked up to him. "What in hell were you swingin' at, kid?" he growled. "You had two free passes there if you'd waited that guy out."

"All right," Crawford said tersely. He was hitting .321 for the season, and was reputed the best rookie prospect of the year.

When O'Dowd finally walked into the office and closed the door, there was a gloomy silence in the room. Dud Graham began to say softly,

"Goodbye, pen——,"

"Shut up," Al told him. He saw Crawford throw his spikes into the locker, slam the door, and then walk grimly out of the building.

"What did I say about O'Dowd?" Graham asked quietly. "Talk about your bull in a china shop. That guy knows less about handling ball players than any man I ever knew, yet he's supposed to be a good manager."

### III

AL BRADY stood in front of the mirror, adjusting his tie. O'Dowd he knew could be good with a club like the Panthers—a tough crew that needed rough handling to keep them in line. They had a few men in the Panther lineup who liked their beer, and O'Dowd could put a stop to that kind of stuff. However, the Trojans



were more of a college club; they were younger men and they kept in shape.

Young Jack Brady came through the door and walked toward his father. He'd come into the dressing room many times and Huck McCann had never seemed to mind it. The boy was a big favorite with the players.

George Carrigan grabbed him as he went past his locker, and clamped a headlock around the boy's neck, yanking him playfully into a corner. It was then that Pat O'Dowd strode out of his office, cigar in his mouth. Stopping in front of Al Brady, he snapped,

"Get some of that fat off, Al, and keep in shape or you're through with this club. We're not carryin' any deadwood."

He said it loudly, and Al Brady's face went a brick red, thinking of the kid. Young Jack couldn't possibly have missed hearing the remark.

"Look, Pat," Al started to say, anger creeping into his voice. He remembered other things then and he shut up. "Okay," he murmured. O'Dowd left the building.

When Jack came over he was a little pale. He sat down on the locker stool, his hands in his pockets.

"How's it, kid?" Al grinned. "We can't win 'em all, boy."

"No," Jack said. "What's he mean, Pop?"

"Who?" Al asked in surprise. "O'Dowd?" Then, "He's a great kidder, Jack. Don't worry about him."

The boy didn't say anything and he was very quiet on the way home.

"You're not fat, Pop," he said finally.

"Look," Al grinned, "when you get up in the bigtime you take a lot of laughs and you give a lot of them."

"You're not fat, Pop," Jack Brady said. There were tears in his eyes now.

"Hey?" Al yelled. "How about it? You pull any of this stuff, Jack, and I can't take you hunting up in the north woods this winter. They only want men up there."

"Okay," Jack half-sobbed. "I don't like that O'Dowd, Pop."

"Forget about him," Al smiled. "You and I stick together." He wasn't smiling though when the boy went in to get dressed.

The Trojans won the next afternoon with Thorne on the hill. Thorne was a veteran, and O'Dowd's talk didn't upset

him. He pitched a three hit shutout against the Jays, but there was little batting by the Trojans. Barlowe hit a home run in the fourth which gave the Trojans their only two runs of the ball game.

O'Dowd was pleased at the win, but displeased with some of the Trojan players, and he wasn't the man to keep it to himself. Al watched him needle young Marshall when the boy came out of the shower room. Marshall had gone none for four today, not even hitting a hard foul.

"Everybody tells me you kids can hit," O'Dowd said. "How about showin' me?"

"They'll come around," Art Myers put in hastily. "A little slump now and then—"

"Hell," O'Dowd said. "This is no time to go into battin' slumps. We can grab a big lead on them Panthers. It looks like they're foldin' up." The Panthers had been playing mediocre ball the past week or two, and the other clubs were too far behind to become major threats.

The Trojans won and then they lost, playing five hundred ball the next two weeks where they had been playing seven hundred ball all season.

"We're lucky," Dud Graham told Al once. "If them Panthers ever hit their stride again they'll go past us so fast we won't know what happened."

Al Brady could see the trouble coming with each passing game. O'Dowd kept on top of his men every instant; nerves were getting frayed, and once Eddie Blair disappeared for three days after O'Dowd slapped a fine on him for loafing on a ground ball. When the kid came back O'Dowd had filled his position with one of the relief infielders, and Blair had another fine added to the first one.

THE Trojan pitching staff, with the exception of the reliable Thorne, was taking it on the chin daily. Montgomery no longer started ball games, and Johnny Castle won one game in four starts, being batted out on three occasions in the early innings.

Al sat on the bullpen bench, going in on rare occasions. O'Dowd didn't think much of him, but was willing to let him ride the season out. Next winter there would be no contract issued to him.

"What holds this club in first place," Graham scowled once, "I don't know."



They were winning lucky games, a timely home run by Carrigan or Barlowe, a circus catch by Norman in center field. They had three games on the Panthers going into September when the second place club grabbed four straight from the third place Steers.

"That's it," Dud muttered, after the fourth Panther win in three days. "They'll be comin' here next week to take our scalps, an' after that it'll be a nice gentle walk to the pennant for the Panthers."

"We're not through yet," Al Brady said. "Don't count us out."

The Panthers continued to win as they headed east. They took a three game series from the Royals, and then another double-header from the Jays, making it nine straight wins, and cutting the Trojan lead down to nothing.

The day before the Panthers appeared at Trojan Field they won another contest which put them in first place by a matter of percentage points. The Trojans had lost that afternoon to the past place Bengals, and O'Dowd was fit to be tied.

Al watched the big man slam the office door shut as he went inside.

"The big babboon," Carrigan grated. "What in hell does he expect? He threw all these kids off stride." The Trojan catcher threw down his pads and chest protector. "I'd like to go in there and bust him one."

Al slapped the man's back. Carrigan had been one of the few who'd held up during that bad month of August; his hitting, and handling of the jittery Trojan pitchers had prevented the debacle from being twice as bad as it was.

The other Trojans were trooping in now, down in the mouth, some of them cursing a little as they dropped down on their stools. Whitey Crawford threw one spike against the rear wall, and then another one.

"All right," Al said. "We lost a ball game. We'll win it back tomorrow. Forget about it." He got up and he put his cap on backwards. He stuck a cigar in his mouth and gave a silent imitation of Pat O'Dowd coaching on third base, clapping his hands, stamping, beefing with the umpires.

In the middle of it, O'Dowd walked out, face red as a beet. The Trojans had started

to grin a little, but they became stone-faced now.

"It'll be funnier, kid," the big manager said to Al Brady, "when you're pitchin' semi-pro ball next summer. Think about it, Al."

"Okay," Al said. "I'll think about it, Pat."

"An' maybe," O'Dowd added, coming closer, "you'd like to get a fist stuck in that fat belly, kid. How about it?"

Whitey Crawford stood up in his bare feet. He said coolly. "Don't try it, O'Dowd."

The Trojan manager spun around on him quickly. "You lookin' for trouble, White?"

"That's right," Crawford murmured. He was a college boy, and he'd done some boxing in school. Al was aware of that, and he was sure O'Dowd was also.

O'Dowd started to smile, eyes half-closed. He lit a cigar while the Trojan players watched him grimly, the dislike plain in their eyes.

"There'll be new faces in this dressing room next summer," he said quietly. "Faces I like to look at."

"Your own is no prize," Johnny Castle called out coolly.

O'Dowd didn't say anything, but went back to the office. Watching him, Al Brady realized the club had gotten out of his hands. He'd have to break it up and bring in new men before he could gain respect again, and this Trojan team had been Huck McCann's pride and joy.

"I'm thinkin' about them Panthers tomorrow," Dud Graham stated, "an' the double-header the following day."

Al went home tired. The bright dreams of mid-season faded away. He had the feeling that he'd precipitated that near-riot in the club house with his clowning act.

"It would have happened anyway," Graham maintained. "Maybe tomorrow or the day after that. Those boys just don't have any use for O'Dowd. They don't play his game."

With the lead practically tied Trojan Field was jammed the following afternoon for the opener of the series. Al Brady, tossing a ball back and forth with Ted Marshall, watched the Trojan fans hurrying to their seats. O'Dowd had Thorne scheduled for today, and Montgomery or



Castle for the morrow.

"Keep warmed up," Dud had said in the dressing room. "Even you will be in that double-header tomorrow, kid."

Al thought about that now. O'Dowd's pitching staff was shot to pieces. Blunt had developed a bad arm; they had another left hander by the name of Hickey, but he was in and out. Montgomery and Castle had become thoroughly undependable.

When the Trojans started to take batting practice, Al trotted out toward right field to shag flies. Whitey Crawford was up swinging, and Al heard the crack of the bat as he passed behind second base. Instinctively, he raised his glove, and saw the ball as it was a few yards from him. Crawford hit a line ball and this one was traveling.

Al tried to shrink away from it, but the ball struck him on the right arm just above the elbow. He let out a sharp cry of pain and clutched the arm with his left hand. He was grinning though when several Trojan players rushed over to him. Crawford had started from the plate, the worry in his eyes.

"Back up," Al yelled. "You can't hurt an old war horse." He galloped out toward the field, nausea sweeping through him, the arm feeling like a piece of iron, hanging limp.

HE stood around in the outfield for a while, rubbing the arm once or twice when he thought no one was watching him. Dud Graham stopped him as he came into the dugout after the batting session.

"That didn't feel too good, Al," he said quietly.

"That ball?" Al grinned. "Cut it out, Dud."

They had thirty-five thousand in the stands for the Saturday game, with at least fifty thousand scheduled for the morrow's double-header. Al went out to the bullpen when Thorne took the mound.

"You won't be in today," Graham said, "and you can thank your lucky stars, kid. I'll bet you can't throw a ball."

"Watch me," Al said, "when the chips are down."

Thorne pitched a masterful game and lost it by a 2 to 1 count, the Trojans making exactly two hits against Mickey Burke. Pat O'Dowd was quieter than usual

this afternoon, and Al knew the big man had already given up hope of winning this pennant. O'Dowd was thinking about next year, and the new club he would build, the men he would trade or release outright.

The Trojans went through the motions on the field, playing mechanical ball. Whitey Crawford summed up the thing in a few words,

"A louse like that shouldn't win a pennant," Whitey said.

"The way it looks," Dud Graham growled, "after tomorrow's double-header we won't have to worry about a pennant any more."

Al sat in front of his locker and kicked off his spikes. It was an effort getting out of the sweatshirt because he could scarcely lift the arm over his head. He was grinning though when Dud Graham came over.

"How's it feel now?" Dud wanted to know.

"I got a little headache," Al said. "Think I'll take an aspirin."

"Hell," Dud muttered. He went away, and Al stalled around a while before going into the shower room. He came out with a towel around his waist, dried himself off very slowly until everybody else was out of the locker room. Then he went back to the shower room and turned the water on very hot, standing under it with that right arm and shoulder. It felt good.

He massaged the arm, telling himself he was a fool not to have the club trainer work on him, but he knew what that would mean. It would get around that the arm was in bad shape and O'Dowd wouldn't use him. He had the feeling that he'd be needed in the double-header on the morrow.

He was still rubbing the arm when he became conscious of the fact that someone was standing in the doorway, watching him. Turning around quickly, he stared into O'Dowd's hard face.

"Hurt?" O'Dowd grinned coldly.

"What?" Al asked him.

"Never mind," the Trojan manager said. "I owe you something, Al, for breakin' up my club." He went on bitterly. "You're one of those wise guys goes around with a joke, an' then you dig under a manager."

"You got me wrong, Pat."



"I'll see you crawlin' after me for a job to clean this locker room," O'Dowd rasped.

"You won't live that long, Pat," Al assured him, the tightness coming into his face. O'Dowd only nodded and walked away.

Al went back to the apartment thoughtfully. Young Jack was almost in tears that night.

"What happened, Pop?" he wanted to know. "We were winning all summer and now the Panthers are ahead of us."

"It's a funny game," Al explained. "You're up and then you're down."

"That O'Dowd should pitch you more often," Jack said stoutly. "I wish Mr. McCann was back."

Al rubbed his arm thoughtfully. Jack hadn't been out this afternoon, but wild horses couldn't drag him away from tomorrow's double-header. The Panthers had the tough Brand ready for the opener, and Richards on deck for the nightcap. Both men were good, experienced throwers.

"If we win tomorrow," Jack said, "we go back in first place, Pop. But we got to win both games."

"That's right," Al grinned. "Root the boys home, kid."

The arm seemed to get worse during the night. There was nothing broken. Al was sure of that, but the muscles were very sore, and the arm swollen. Dud Graham watched him throw a few balls in front of the dugout, and he shook his head.

"You should be up in the stands, watchin' this one, kid," he said. Young Blair heard the remark and he glanced at Al curiously. They remembered that smash he'd received yesterday, and they knew what such a thing could do to a man's throwing arm.

Al threw a fast one to Graham and grinned despite the pain. "You're talkin' through your hat, Dud," he called cheerfully. But he didn't throw any more fast ones after that, and he played around the infield during batting practice, instead of going to the outfield as was his custom. A man didn't have to throw balls very far from the infield to the box.

Johnny Castle was slated for the opener, and there were fifty thousand in the stands when the rival hurlers started to warm

up in front of the grandstand. There had been rumors of dissension in the Trojan club, but O'Dowd had wisely kept his mouth shut, knowing that the first alibi he presented it would be pointed out that the club was in first place when he took over.

O'Dowd stood up in the dugout now and said flatly, "Hickey."

The lanky left-hander slapped his glove, and started toward the bullpen with Dud Graham.

"All right, Brady," O'Dowd said.

Al tried not to show his surprise. He stood up, and then he saw Dud Graham looking at him, and Eddie Blair, and Carrigan. They were looking at him, and then looking at O'Dowd.

"Let's go," Al said to Graham. George Carrigan stared at Graham, and Al saw something flash between them. Graham didn't speak until they were passing third base, out of hearing of the dugout.

"Damn it," Dud grated, "that louse knows your arm is shot, Al."

"Which one?" Al asked. "Left or right?"

Dud didn't say anything until they were out to the bullpen bench, and then he smashed one fist into his catcher's mitt.

"That's it," Graham snarled. "He knows you're still pretty popular with Martin Stone and the fans, and he doesn't want to fire you until you prove definitely that you're washed up on the mound. You did some pretty good relief pitching this year, Al."

"So what?" Al asked.

"O'Dowd knows you got a bad wing," Graham snapped, "an' he figures on puttin' you in today an' showin' you up. He's given up any idea of winning the pennant this year anyway."

"You got imagination," Al said, but he thought of O'Dowd's remarks in the dressing room the previous afternoon when they'd been alone. The Trojan manager hated him because he was popular with the players, and O'Dowd was the kind courted popularity himself. He liked to bask in the sunlight.

"I've a good mind to go in and bust him one," Dud Graham said tersely. "That's the cheapest stunt I've ever seen pulled in organized baseball."

When McMillan took his position in the batting box, a roar went up from the Tro-



jan faithful. Listening to it, Al Brady felt a small thrill go through him. This big crowd was still behind the Trojan kids, backing them to the limit.

"Makes a guy feel small," Al murmured. They could see Castle taking his signal from George Carrigan. Al could see the box where young Jack was sitting. The kid was hoping against hope that his old man would get in the ball game!

McMillan singled to left on the first pitched ball. It was a clean base hit, the bat ringing true. Al sat down on the bench and shook his head.

#### IV

**I**N THE Panther dugout, the jockeys were going to work on Castle. Al could hear their shouts, and he remembered how it affected the right-hander.

"He won't finish," Dud Graham said. "Get up there, Hickey." The catcher went out with the left-hander and started to warm him up. A boy ran out from the Trojan dugout with a message from O'Dowd.

"He wants Brady warming up," the kid panted.

Dud stared toward the dugout, hands on hips, his lips forming curses. Al got up from the bench, grinning, and took the ball from Hickey. Out of the corner of his eyes he saw Eddie Blair turn to look toward the pen.

"I was right," Dud snarled.

Al began to lob the ball into the catcher's mitt. He threw very easily, but even the soft throws hurt. He hoped after awhile when he was properly warmed up, the pain would go away.

Tom Blackford whipped a double to deep center a little later in the inning, sending McMillan home with the first run.

Castle managed to put out the fire before it got any worse, and the Trojans, surprisingly enough, came back with a run in their half of the first.

"That Brand don't have his stuff today," Dud said when they sat down on the bench. "He's groovin' too many balls."

Al felt a small hope come into his heart. With Brand off, there was a possibility they would take the Panthers in this opener, and then by grabbing the second game also, they would be back on top. The Trojans might come out of the coma. But

there was always O'Dowd. Al Brady felt a little sick inside.

Watching Brand during the second inning, Al was convinced Graham was right. The big hurler was having trouble with his control. When he tried to cut the corners, he put the ball over the middle, and the Trojans were hitting. They scored two more runs the last of the second, giving them a 3 to 1 lead.

"I don't believe it," Dud said.

In the Panther dugout, Benny Shane and his pals were giving Castle a workout. The Trojan pitcher allowed a run in the third, and other in the fourth, tying the ball game.

Al started to warm-up again, knowing that it was bad to stop throwing. Every time he sat down, the arm seemed to get stiffer if anything, and it was a greater effort loosening it up. The pain was still very bad.

"Johnny won't get by," Graham said. "They got his number, Al." He added bitterly. "A guy like you should be sitting home takin' this one in on the radio. That louse is throwin' you to the lions, Al."

"Hell," Al said, "I got twenty wins in this arm, Dud."

Campbell, smashed a home run in the fifth, but Barlowe came back with a four-bagger on his own account the same inning, tying it up gain.

The Panthers chased Castle out of the box in the seventh. McMillan, head of the batting order hammered a double to right. Pratt singled, but McMillan was held on third base. Castle passed Tom Blackford, and then Carson singled between third and short. Two runs came in.

"That's it," Graham said tersely.

O'Dowd was signalling from the dugout, and Al Brady saw the Trojan infield turn around to stare at him. There were runners on first and third with none down, and two runs in.

Al picked up his jacket and slipped it over his shoulders. He grinned at Dud Graham, and chuckled.

"Don't worry about it, kid."

"You want to hear what I got to say to O'Dowd after this game," Graham mumbled. "He's losin' a good bullpen catcher."

Al walked toward the infield, the same jaunty little step. He slapped his glove with his bare hand as if anxious to go.



The Trojan infield waited for him on the mound, and then George Carrigan came out also.

Al looked into the grim faces as he came up. "Looks like a Republican Convention," he chuckled. "Let's go."

"How's that arm?" Carrigan asked quietly.

"Fit as a fiddle," Al lied.

Carrigan looked at the silent group. "You guys know why O'Dowd has him out here," he said slowly. "That rat ain't worrying about the pennant."

Whitey Crawford tugged at his cap and looked at Pat O'Dowd standing on the dugout steps, arms crossed, face expressionless.

"Anybody lets Al down," the big first baseman said quietly, "is meeting me under the grandstand when this game is over."

Marshall slapped his glove a few times. "Just throw 'em in, Al," he said, "and get out of the way."

"Look," Al said, "I can make these donkeys eat out of my hand. Take a walk, you guys."

"They're hittin'," George Carrigan put in. "Don't groove it if you can help it, Al."

"They did their hittin'," Al assured him. "You hang onto that fast one, George. It's been goin' up like a kite."

"Sure," Carrigan said. He looked around the circle once, and then plodded back toward the plate.

Young Jack Brady was standing up in the box, lips quivering a little, just watching. They had Rhodes on deck with Lou Bickford following, two bad men.

Al glanced toward the boxes and saw Martin Stone, Trojan owner, sitting with his wife. Stone was watching O'Dowd for some reason.

"Strike 'em out, Al," a man yelled from the upper tier. Al Brady grinned at him. He took his throw, oozing confidence, a confidence he did not feel. Then he picked up the resin bag and rubbed it briskly.

"We'll make you eat that before you're through!" Benny howled from the Panther dugout.

Al's grin broadened. He went back on the grass, rubbing the ball, glancing around at the infielders who'd gone back to their positions. He had an inkling of the thing

which was coming, but he wasn't prepared for that first play.

He glanced at Ted Marshall and then yelled.

"Hey, Sourpuss. How about a smile?"

Marshall smiled grimly, but it wasn't Marshall who came through on that first ball pitched. It was George Carrigan.

"Guess we can go now, Joe," Al said to Joe Barlowe who was standing a few yards away. "Back me up, kid."

"You know me, Al," Barlowe grinned. He went away, and Al fed Rhodes the knuckler. It didn't break very much, but it was on the corner, and Rhodes fouled it up into the air, the ball twisting toward the Trojan dugout. It was too far in for Barlowe, but Carrigan was going after it, mask off, face very tight, eyes glued on the ball.

"No!" Al yelled. "No, George!"

Carrigan kept going, plunging off the top step of the dugout, hitting the roof of the shed with his stomach as he caught the ball in his mitt. Al had raced in to cover home plate in case the runner on third tried any funny work.

Carrigan held onto the ball as he crumpled up on the floor of the dugout. His head showed above the top step a fraction of a second later. The face was pale, and he was doubled up as he scrambled up the steps the ball in his free hand, ready to throw to the plate. The Panther runner held the sack.

Then Carrigan stopped, looked full at Pat O'Dowd on the bench, and rasped:

"Stinker."

He was rubbing his stomach as he walked over to home plate, and Al Brady muttered,

"No call to kill yourself, George."

"Hell," Carrigan panted. "Wish I'd pushed a spike in that guy's face when I jumped in there. Wasn't sure where he was sittin'."

Al went back to the mound with the ball, and he listened to the noise. He was vaguely astonished.

GEORGE CARRIGAN wanted that slow hook against Bickford, and Al got it in, the arm feeling as though it were being twisted off in the process. Bickford cut very hard, slashing it on the ground between first and second.



Blair went after it like a scared rabbit, sliding on his face, glove outstretched. He knocked the ball down, rolled over and threw it to second for the forceout, and Marshall whipped it across to Crawford for the doubleplay.

Al walked in toward the bench, rubbing his chin, grinning.

"One club I could always stop," he told Carrigan.

The Panthers had a 6 to 4 lead at the end of the seventh and they held it as Brand suddenly tightened up, and facing the tail-end of the Trojan line-up, got them without any trouble. Al went down swinging at a fast ball, eyeing the left field fence.

"Don't worry," Carrigan said, "we'll get 'em, Al. We got time."

"I should worry," Al said, "when this club can't hit a ball outside the infield."

He had Shelbourne, the right fielder, to face the start of the eighth, and he got a strike and a ball on Shelbourne before the Panther smashed the third pitch. Al saw it coming back, waist high, looking very small, and directly at him.

He couldn't get away in time, but he managed to do the next best thing, and deflected it a little with the glove. The ball smacked into his stomach, taking the wind out of him, rolling away a few feet.

On shaky legs, he went after it and made the put-out at first base. He was rubbing his stomach ruefully as the infield ran toward him. He was very weak with the sweat breaking out on his face.

"How's it, Al?" Barlowe asked anxiously.

Al swallowed a few times. "That belly's good for something besides a beer vat," he mumbled.

Barlowe had to smile at that one because Al never had been a drinking man.

Ted Marshall raced in saying, "You should have let that one go, Al. You got us back here."

Al grinned. "There were three balls comin' out," he said. "I ducked two of 'em, kid. That should have been enough."

Callahan, the umpire, came halfway down the line, mask in hand.

"You guys want time you got to ask for it," he scowled.

"Okay, Flat-Foot," Al grinned. It was the one nickname Callahan hated. The umpire's feet were well down on the ground,

and he wore a twelve shoe.

"All right, Brady," Callahan snapped. "You look for a break on them close ones."

Al chuckled. They didn't come any squarer than Callahan. The man couldn't call them wrong if he tried.

Campbell, Panther catcher, belted the knuckler full on the nose, knocking it far over Norman's head in center field. Al grimaced, knowing that ball was labeled for three bases.

The fleet-footed Norman took one look at it, and turned his back. He was sprinting at top speed when he put his gloved hand out and took the ball over his right shoulder nearly four hundred feet from home plate.

"Wow!" Al muttered.

It was young Marshall who made the third out, going far to his right to knock down Brand's smash, and then throwing the pitcher out at the initial sack.

"Horseshoes!" Benny Shane screamed.

Al picked up the resin box and threw it at the jockey. He paused before going into the dugout and winked gravely at young Jack Brady.

"We got 'em, boy," he said softly. Martin Stone heard that remark. In the dugout Al scowled, "Give me a few runs, you guys." O'Dowd was out on the third base line. He said nothing to the players when they came in between innings.

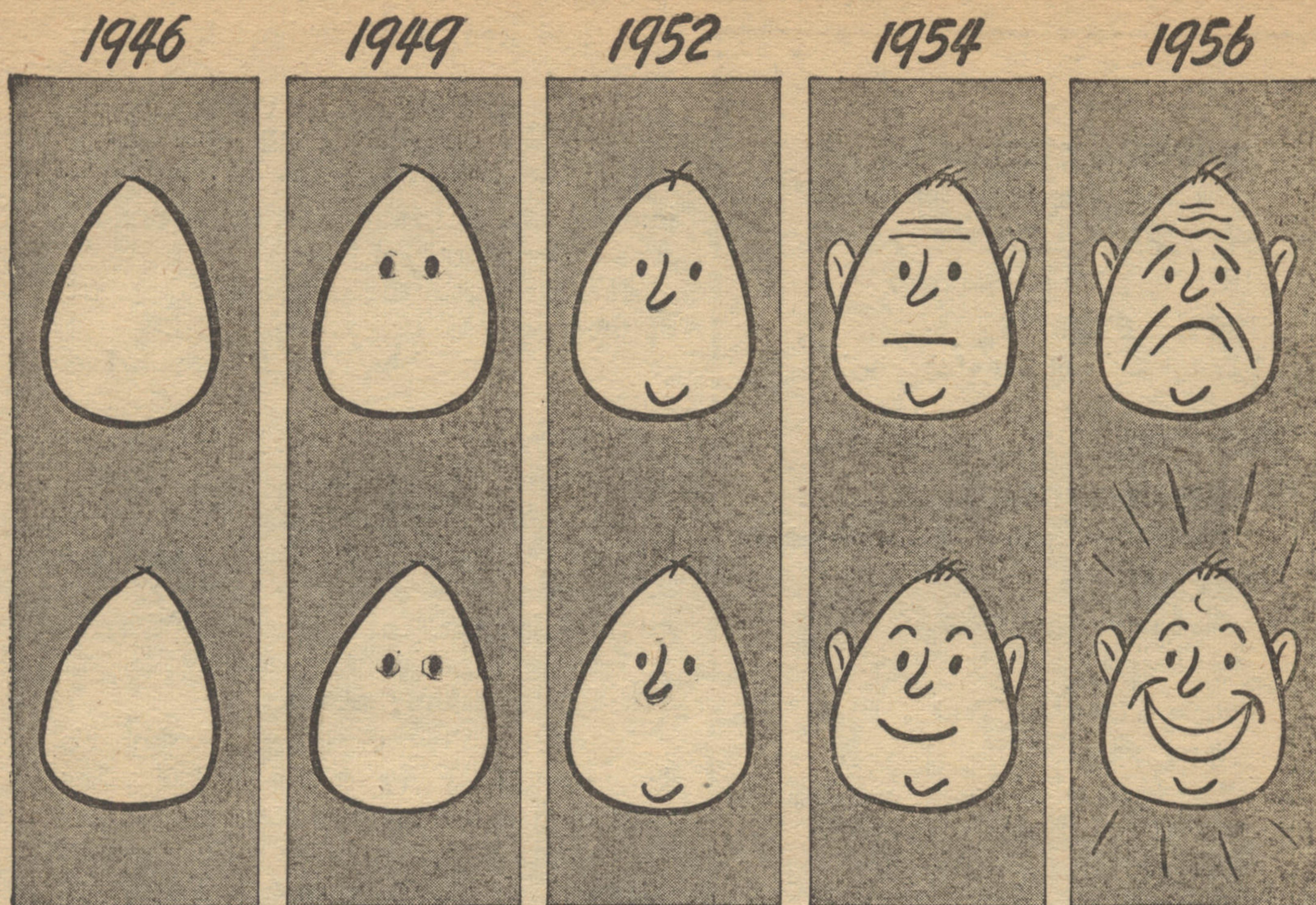
Whitey Crawford, leading off, hit the first ball off the right field fence for a double. Richards, the right fielder, and a good sticker, singled over short. Crawford came home, running like a wild horse, and hit Campbell just as the Panther catcher took the throw-in. Runner and catcher went down, the ball rolling away in another direction.

Al Brady sat in a corner of the dugout, smiling. Barlowe walked, and then Norman dropped a surprise bunt down the first base line, advancing the runner, and beating out the throw himself.

With the bases loaded Carrigan threw away a stick, and stepped into the rectangle. He let the first one go by, and then stepped out of the batter's box. When he glanced toward the dugout, Al Brady pointed to the left field wall.

Carrigan hit it on the next pitch, a smashing drive which traveled very low. Two runners came in, giving the Trojans





## Two ways your face can grow in the next few years

**U**SUALLY, our faces show what's happening to us.

For instance, suppose financial matters are constantly on your mind.

Suppose you know that there's practically no cash reserve between you and trouble.

It would be surprising if your face didn't show it.

But suppose that, on the contrary, you've managed to get yourself on a pretty sound financial basis.

Suppose that you're putting aside part of

everything you earn . . . that those dollars you save are busy earning *extra* dollars for you . . . that you have a nest egg and an emergency fund.

Naturally, your face will show *that*, too.

There's a simple and pretty accurate way to tell which way your face is going to go in the next few years:

If you are buying, regularly, and holding as many U. S. Savings Bonds as you can, you needn't worry.

Your face will be among the ones that wear a smile.

## Buy all the Bonds you can... keep all the Bonds you buy!

FICTION HOUSE, INC.

*This is an official U. S. Treasury advertisement—prepared under auspices of Treasury Department and War Advertising Council*



**Sports . . .****BASEBALL STORIES**

(The national sport—within covers)

**FOOTBALL STORIES**

(Rousing gridiron action)

**FIGHT STORIES**

(Fast fiction and fact of the ring)

**Western, Adventure . . .****ACTION STORIES**

(The best adventure magazine published)

**LARIAT**

(The best western)

**FRONTIER**

(Stories of the Old West)

**NORTHWEST**

(Exciting adventure in the trackless North)

**WINGS**

(Featuring ace-high novels of war in the air)

**JUNGLE STORIES**

(Exciting adventure in darkest Africa)

**Detective . . .****TWO COMPLETE****DETECTIVE BOOKS MAGAZINE**

(Featuring two current, booklength detective novels for the price of one magazine)

**DETECTIVE BOOK MAGAZINE**

(One current, booklength detective novel plus novelets and short stories)

**Fantastic . . .****PLANET STORIES**

(Tops in its field)

All edited for your exclusive enjoyment. All bearing the imprint of fiction excellence—



**FICTION HOUSE, INC.**  
Publishers

670 Fifth Avenue

New York

a 7 to 6 lead, and Carrigan landed on second.

In the stands the Trojan crowd was going wild. Brand left the ball game, and a lefthander by the name of Alberts, came in. Alberts got away without any more runs being scored on him.

Al went out to the mound for the start of the ninth with a one run lead.

"Can you hold 'em, Al?" Barlowe asked anxiously.

"These guys?" Al chuckled. "They're all duckin' from the fast one."

The Panthers put a pinch-hitter in by the name of Truck Rudolph. Rudolph was a big man, slow on his feet, but with a good batting eye. Al fed him a slow hook, and Rudolph's big bat swished, the ball shooting down the first base line.

It was Whitey Crawford flinging his body toward the line, taking the ball a few inches from the ground, for the out. Al moistened his lips and took a deep breath. There was a mist in his eyes.

McMillan was in the rectangle, anxious to hit, always a dangerous man. He fouled the first pitch behind first base, and Blair was after it, heading for the field seats. The second baseman took it and tumbled over the iron railing into the box. He was limping badly when he came back on the field, but he stayed in.

"What a club!" Al whispered aloud.

PRATT, Panther outfielder, came up with none aboard, the last out of the game. The Trojan fans were standing as Pratt whistled the third pitch down the left field line. Very fast, he sprinted to third base before the ball was returned.

"Tough luck," Joe Barlowe growled.

Al took a deep breath. He had Tom Blackford in front of him now.

"Watch him," Barlowe said.

"This rummy," Al grinned. "I give him three balls and he sits down." He gave Blackford two, one of them the big Panther laced over the right field wall, foul by inches. The second one he belted on a line down toward third base.

The ball was traveling with terrific speed when it tipped the earth, but Barlowe had braced himself directly in its path, going down on his knees, blocking it squarely.

The fast-moving pill went through his glove, bounced off his chest, and rolled



away. Pratt was in toward home plate with the tying run, as Barlowe got up and retrieved the ball.

His throw to first was hurried, and it went high, but Whitey Crawford went up with it, keeping the toe of one spike on the sack, and snatching the ball out of the air with the tip of his glove. Blackford was out by a half step.

In the dressing room O'Dowd walked straight toward his office, and was opening the door, when Crawford caught up with him. The first baseman didn't say anything, but he swung his right fist. It landed squarely on O'Dowd's jaw and he went down.

"Hey!" Al yelled. He raced toward them, and he heard the other men coming after him.

O'Dowd got to his feet, shaking his head, but he made no move to continue the fight.

"I'll see some of you guys back in the bushes," the manager snarled. "I'll break up this whole damn club."

"I'm afraid not, O'Dowd," Martin Stone said quietly. "You can draw your pay at the office. You're through."

Al spun around to see the quiet owner standing by the door.

O'Dowd glared at the men for a moment in silence, and then walked grimly into his room, slamming the door.

"I've been considering a change in management for some time," Stone said then, "and I wrote Huck McCann about it last week. He sent me this telegram." He handed it to Al Brady while the Trojans gathered around, eyes gleaming.

Al read aloud,

"CONSIDER AL BRADY BEST MANAGERIAL PROSPECT STOP SIGN HIM LONG TERM."

"If you want it," Stone said, "you can take over the next game, Al."

"Me?" Al burst out. "Manager?"

"We couldn't get a better one," Carrigan chuckled.

Al Brady took a deep breath. "All right," he growled. "Cut the comedy, you punks. Let's get out there. Let's knock 'em dead." He saw the grins on their faces, and then he grinned himself.

# FREE OFFER for FALSE TEETH

With This Offer.



## TIGHTENS FALSE TEETH or NO COST!

### JUST 3 STEPS

Here's new amazing mouth comfort without risking a single cent . . . enjoy feeling of having your own teeth. Satisfy your desire for food . . . eat what you want. CROWN RELINER TIGHTENS FALSE TEETH OR NO COST. PERFECT FOR PARTIALS, LOWERS AND UPPIERS. Don't suffer embarrassment and discomfort caused by loose dental plates. Apply CROWN RELINER. In a jiffy your plate fits like new and stays that way up to 4 months. No old-fashioned heating to burn your mouth. Just squeeze CROWN from tube and put your teeth back in. They'll fit as snugly as ever. Inventor is a recognized authority in dental field. A patent has been applied for CROWN RELINER to protect you from imitators. After you reline your plate with CROWN, take your false teeth out for cleaning without affecting the CROWN RELINER. CROWN RELINER is guaranteed . . . it's harmless. It's tasteless. Has that natural pink color. NOT A POWDER OR PASTE! If not satisfied even after 4 months, return partly used tube for refund.

No.1  
CLEAN  
WELL



No.2  
DRY  
UNDER  
LAMP



No.3  
SQUEEZE  
CROWN  
FROM  
TUBE,  
PUT PLATE  
IN MOUTH



### EATS STEAK!

J. Clements of Algonac writes: "My plates were so bad they rattled when I talked. Now I eat steaks, corn on cob." E.W.W. of Va. writes: "I found Crown Reliner to be all you claim." Many more attest excellent results. Reline your plates with CROWN RELINER today . . . enough to last a year.

At your druggist or order direct

### SEND NO MONEY

### FOR CROWN PLATE RELINER

MONEY BACK GUARANTEE



CROWN PLASTIC CO., Dept. 3706  
4358 W. Philadelphia Ave., Detroit 4, Mich.

Send Crown Dental Plate Reliner and include free Crown Cleaner. I will pay postman one dollar plus approximately 24c postage. If I am not satisfied after four months, I may return partly used tube for refund. ( ☐ I am enclosing one dollar in full payment—same guarantee.)

Name .....

Address .....

City & Zone..... State.....



# BIG BRAIN IN BROOKLYN

*By John Drebing*

**A man of astonishing paradoxes; a man who has risen to baseball heights upon one adversity after another must of necessity be intensely fascinating and interesting. Branch Rickey is all of that.**

**A**CCORDING to the generally accepted formula, success begets success. But somehow in the extraordinary baseball career of Branch Rickey this set procedure seems to have gotten for itself a most extraordinary tossing around.

By most any standard of measurement the Baseball Brain of Brooklyn, as he is euphoniously called, has made himself a success and a very tremendous one in our national pastime. He is the head of one of the most influential franchises in the major leagues. He has amassed a vast personal fortune and over a span of a quarter of a century he has left an indelible imprint on America's great game.

And yet, it was decidedly not by a series of triumphant steps that he eventually placed himself upon his present high pedestal. On the contrary, and quite incredible as it may sound, it actually was done by one little failure after another.

He began his athletic career as a football player and ended that calling with a broken leg. He turned to baseball playing as a means toward paying his way through college so that he could become a lawyer. As a ball player he quickly gave evidence he would never be a Ty Cobb, Babe Ruth or even a Danny Gardella. As a lawyer he was no Blackstone or Gladstone. In fact, after a brief trial at both vocations he found himself happily married and—flat broke.

Whereupon he tackled baseball again only to run himself into what seemed another dead end. Moving into a "front office" job he worked himself back to the ball field, this time to become the manager, and, upon his own frank admission, another dud. He had ideas and brilliant ones galore. But he couldn't convey them to his players and while they tried to figure out what in the world he was talking

about, one ball game after another went into the lost column. So, presently, he resigned and the next year the same club under a new manager won a pennant and a world championship!

But did this major personal disaster deter him? Not in the slightest. In fact, he actually hopped up a half a dozen ladder rungs. For with the same club, the St. Louis Cardinals, he stepped into a new job, one virtually of his own creation which in time was to become even more powerful than the manager—the general manager—the man who not only hires, fires and trades players, but manages as well.

And then, when finally even this lucrative job slid out from under him because his employer, one Sam Breadon, considered he was making too much money—'tis said that during that period of twenty-five years Rickey earned more than a million dollars in salaries and bonuses—he fell, not down, but upstairs once more. Indeed, this time he went up a couple of flights. For within a couple of months he was with another club, not as manager, or general manager, but as the president and major poobah himself.

Nor is he likely to stop there. For in addition to being the chief executive and guiding genius of the colorful Brooklyn Dodgers, he also is head of a syndicate which already has accumulated considerable portions of the club's highly valuable stock. On the face of the evidence, therefore, it is not too venturesome to guess that ere long he will own that club, lock, stock and barrel.

A man, therefore, who has risen to such astounding heights upon one adversity after another must of necessity be intensely fascinating and interesting. And Branch Rickey is all of that.



HE is, in fact, a man of astonishing paradoxes and contrasts. He is scholarly and pedagogical, which well he might be, for he was also once a teacher in a college. But there is nothing of the dryness of a musty classroom about him. He abounds in wit and humor and seems to enjoy telling stories of his own personal reverses.

He does not swear, drink nor attend ball games on Sunday, but considers none of this a display of saintly virtue. He does it solely because it is his choice.

"If drinking is a vice," he once remarked, "then so is smoking and I consume an innumerable quantity of cigars a day. I

like cigars. I never cared for liquor, but it is nothing to me how much the other fellow drinks."

He doesn't swear because he considers profanity a poor and utterly unimaginative way for a man to express himself.

One day we came upon him talking to a group of fellow baseball scribes. As we came within earshot we heard him exploding a string of oaths that would have done credit to a McGraw bawling out a clubhouse meeting. Noting our astonishment he interrupted his conversation to explain hastily, "This isn't me swearing, John. I'm just quoting a fellow in a story I'm telling the boys." Then he con-





tinued with his cussing, but all in quotes.

He is an entertaining and convincing conversationalist and though he insists he talks largely to convince himself he seems to have a most amazing faculty for convincing others. In fact, ball players have long since come to hold his persuasive tongue in high regard if not in awesome fear.

A few years ago a player was stubbornly holding out for more money and refused to report to the training camp. Then, one day, a friend dropped around, only to see the player packing his bag with great haste.

"What now," asked the friend, "have you decided to report?"

"No I haven't. But I'm getting the hell out of here as fast as I can."

"Why?"

"Because I just read in the paper that Rickey is on his way to visit me here and once he starts talking I know I'm hooked."

Eventually Rickey did catch up with the recalcitrant player and what the player had to say of that interview proved equally revealing.

"I barged into Rickey with a flock of figures to prove I was the most underpaid player on anybody's payroll. I showed him batting averages, my runs-batted-in and extra base records and my fielding percentage. He blinked at me with those owl-like eyes behind his glasses and for a time said nothing.

"Then he reached in a drawer and brought out a set of his own figures. They showed how the club lost money last year, the year before and the year before that. In about twenty minutes he almost had me in tears and I signed for what he had offered me. Had he talked another five minutes I think I would have taken a cut."

As with most successful men in a highly competitive business he has his enemies who dislike him heartily and curse him roundly, especially when he outslickers them in a player deal. But their wrathful outpourings only leave him with a feeling of astonishment. For, unlike McGraw who knew how to strike back at his critics, Rickey somehow never loses his temper and seems unable to hold rancor toward anyone, even though he occasionally comes out on the short end of a deal. Whenever that happens he usually, like a

chess player, looks moves ahead to get even.

Once he traded Burgess Whitehead to the Giants, firm in the belief that Whitey, though a fine second base prospect, was too frail physically ever to play a complete season of 154 games. But Whitehead played two successive campaigns without losing a day and by his brilliant work at second helped the Giants win two pennants in a row.

Rickey, in the meantime, indulged himself in no fruitless rantings. But when, some years later, he palmed off a washed up Bill McGee on the Polo Grounders and followed up with a worn out Dolph Camilli and sundry others he more than squared accounts.

In all his deals he operates with meticulous care so that there can be no misunderstandings later. When P. K. Wrigley's Cubs were hot on the trail of Dizzy Dean, Rickey warned them that Dean might be suffering from a serious arm injury. But when the Cubs still insisted he said O.K., put a \$185,000 price tag on the pitcher and made it clear in the contract that once completed the Cubs could claim no redress.

The Cubs, confident medical treatment would correct Dean's ailment, gobbled up the offer, only to learn later to their sorrow that the once great arm was gone forever and the deal a total loss.

"A most unfortunate break for Mr. Wrigley," said Rickey solicitously, but otherwise gave no indication the matter rested heavily on his conscience.

In fact, folks, who are apt to regard him as something out of heaven because of his abstemious habits—except in the matter of smoking cigars, would be surprised to know that even in a tough and hard boiled game he can be as tough and hard boiled as the next.

ASKED one day whether he didn't think it would be a good thing for major league baseball if the stronger clubs would occasionally lend a helping hand to the weaker ones (there had been talk at the time that the all powerful Yankees of that day ought to spread some of their star players among other clubs) Rickey replied:

"That is the sheerest of nonsense. Never have I known of a single good coming



from an act of charity and you can't name me a single instance in baseball when it ever has worked. There is only one way for a ball club to attain success. That is by initiative and intelligent operation.

"Across the river (he was then talking in Brooklyn and referring to the Yankees) is one of the most superb organizations ever devised in baseball. And it got that way solely through the hard, diligent and resourceful work put into it by Edward G. Barrow."

As a matter of fact it is largely because he built his own success step by step on one reverse after another that he can see no other road to follow. Indeed, it was at a moment when he was struggling with the last painful adversities he was to know that he conceived his most brilliant contribution to baseball—the famed "chain store system."

The "system," now exploited by practically all successful major league clubs, consists of the big leaguers purchasing minor league franchises and using them as the proving and developing grounds for young players. Previously all major league clubs obtained their players in more or less hit-or-miss fashion in the "open market." They bought players wherever they found them on the loose. The good ones, if any, they retained. A few were held on option according to the baseball law of the time and the rest were cast adrift, sometimes to come back as stars with rival clubs.

It was obviously a method whereby only the wealthier clubs, wealthier because they were situated in more favorable locales, such as New York, Chicago and Boston, could fare with any reasonable uniformity of success. If some of the players they bought proved duds, they could toss them off and afford to buy more. The less fortunate, with no big bankrolls at their disposal, had to guess right the first time or just wind up out of luck.

It was in the early twenties that Rickey, then with the Cardinals, began pondering over this hopeless inequality in the baseball structure which was making pennants the almost exclusive property of the favored few.

Rickey was serving as manager of the club and while already half convinced he never would set the world afire as a field

leader of a ball club he also realized that even were he the combined genius of John McGraw, Connie Mack and Miller Huggins, it wouldn't help much either. The Cardinals simply didn't have the players and no amount of masterminding on the bench could win with inept players.

To make matters worse, the Cards were in desperate financial straits. There had been seasons when the club was barely able to scrape up enough money to finance a spring training camp.

"At the time," said Rickey later as he recalled this most eventful period of his career, "we had just one real ball player, Rogers Hornsby, and we almost lost him. In New York, Charlie Stoneham had just bought the Giants and was ready to spend any amount of money for a winner. He offered us \$150,000 for Hornsby, then a fabulous price for a ball player, and we doubtless could have run it up to \$200,000.

"The temptation was terrific. The money would have fixed us up nicely for a couple of seasons. At the same time, however, I could not escape the painful realization that, having already disposed of all the other assets we had, we were actually doing nothing more than stalling off the inevitable. In time the money would be gone, Hornsby would be gone and then what would we have?

"Suddenly, it occurred to me that if the Giants were willing to spend that kind of money for Hornsby, whom we had got for practically nothing and developed into a star, why not concentrate on developing other players who could either win for us or be sold to other clubs for fancy prices.

"To do that under existing conditions, however, demanded a method for developing them and the idea then came to me that our end might be obtained if we invaded the field of the minor leagues. If we could gain control or part control of just one or two minor league clubs it immediately would provide avenues for development."

The matter was talked over with Sam Breadon, who by then already had purchased controlling interest in the Cardinals, and Sam, an automobile salesman as well as an aggressive, hard hitting business man, quickly agreed. A twenty-five per cent interest was bought in the Houston club. Explained Rickey:



"It was an extremely modest 'in,' as you might call it. But it nevertheless was an 'in' and it quickly proved we were on the right track. Being on the inside we naturally worked it so we would have first call on the best players that came up with the Houston club. Naturally we helped scout players for them and we also gave them first call on players we had who needed more seasoning in the minors."

**S**IMILAR acquisitions were made at Syracuse, Rochester, Danville, Ill., and other promising spots in the vast minor league setup of organized baseball. The holdings in each club were increased until soon nearly all were owned outright.

At first rival clubs ridiculed the idea. They called it fantastic, too unwieldy for practical operation, and predicted that the whole thing would collapse and leave the St. Louis club with the worst financial disaster in baseball history on its hands.

But as the Cardinals began to rise in the world the feeling of mirth gave way to one of worry followed quickly by open alarm. A pennant, the first in National League history, came to St. Louis in 1926. Another came in '28. Still another in '34. And in the years the club didn't win it was always a factor. No longer was it one of the league's accepted doormats. Star players, such as Chick Hafey, Jim Bottomley and Burleigh Grimes were sold, left and right, for the fancy prices Rickey had dreamed of when Stoneham offered him \$150,000 for Hornsby. Even Hornsby himself was allowed to go after the winning of the '26 pennant. Fresh talent was always available to take the place of the fading veterans.

The "chain store system" expanded like an octopus until just before World War II it had attained its peak with the Cardinals owning and operating more than twenty clubs in the minor leagues. The other major leaguers, long since through scoffing, were all desperately trying to follow in the wake of the pace setter.

And even after the war began to riddle the ranks of all the ball clubs and with Rickey no longer in St. Louis, the momentum gained by that intensive campaign of player development was still so tremendous it sent the Cardinals winging

on to three more pennants, from 1942 to 1944, with a fourth one just missed by a whisker.

Personal success, however, did not come quite so rapidly to Rickey as did his "chain store" idea. He was, at the time he first conceived the idea, still the manager of the Cardinals and though he now began to come up with the players he still was having a tough time trying to handle them.

For the players of that era were a pretty rough and tumble lot and the professional tactics of their mentor simply wouldn't wash down. There were days when the Cardinal clubhouse was a veritable bedlam as Rickey strove to get his players to take seriously his ingenious ideas on strategy.

He held clubhouse sessions daily and expounded at length upon the game's finer points while his players fidgeted on chairs, waiting for the bell to ring to let school out. According to Bill Doak, a master spitball pitcher of that day and an ace hurler for the Cards, Rickey was by far and away the smartest man he had ever seen in baseball.

"And if we could only have played the way he used to map it out on his blackboard," said Bill, "I don't think we ever would have lost a game. But unfortunately Rickey never seemed able to take into account the mental and physical shortcomings of his players. A lot of them never even knew what he was talking about."

One day just before the opening of a championship season Rickey called his class to order and gave the boys a "pep talk" with a decided novel approach.

"Every club," he explained, "has a normal strength of so many victories. With some, its forty, others its fifty or sixty. I would say our normal strength could be placed at about seventy-five. In addition to this there are games which can be won with just a little extra effort and hustle. They are games I would call lying out in the horizon.

"Now, it normally takes around ninety-five victories to win a pennant, and, as we have a normal strength of seventy-five, this means that if we hustle to pluck those extra twenty in the horizon the pennant could come to us."

After class it was also Rickey's custom to ask questions just to see how closely the boys had been following him and on this



occasion he turned on Heinie Mueller, decidedly not one of his brighter pupils, and asked:

"Heinie, do you think it is possible for us to win the pennant this year?"

Heinie, whose head and hitting were both very hard, thought carefully for a moment. Then his face lighted up.

"Vell, I'll tell you," he replied with his quaint Germanic accent, "if you hustle and get us this feller Ho Rizen you said could vin us twenty games I think we make it easy."

Mueller was ever a source of surprise and wonder to Rickey in those boisterous days of his painful managerial career. One day Doak was pitching against the hard-hitting Pirates in spacious Forbes Field and while Spittin' Bill had a most effective spitball, Rickey this day decided that at all crucial moments Doak would resort exclusively to his slow ball.

THE idea, of course, was that with the park offering plenty of room in the outfield, Doak could take chances letting the Pirates hit the ball and if he tossed soft enough, nothing but harmless pop flies would result. Also, with each signal for a slow ball, Mueller, playing center-field, had been instructed to come rushing in to make certain he would make the catch.

And so enthusiastic and realistic was Mueller in carrying out his part of the instructions that even the fans wised up and every time they saw Heinie charging in from deep center with Doak winding up they set up a cry, "Here comes the slow ball."

At that everything went along quite well until the seventh when, with two out, the Pirates filled the bases on a pass and two infield errors. Undismayed, Doak settled down to face Clyde Barnhart. When he rang up two strikes with two spitballs the situation still looked well in hand.

"Rickey," narrated Bill, "then decided to do the unexpected. He signaled that I should throw a fast ball.

"I cut loose with everything I had and I could see a look of surprise on Barnhart's face although he did come around with his bat and meet the ball squarely enough. However, as it was going straight out to deep center I figured Mueller would

be under it easily and the inning would be over.

"But as I looked around my heart almost jumped out of my mouth. For there was Heinie tearing in and before he had a chance to backtrack the ball went sailing over his head and out to the fence for a base clearing three-bagger."

With the inning over and the players back in the St. Louis dugout, Rickey turned on Mueller and asked:

"Heinie, didn't you get that signal for a fast ball?"

"Yes, Mr. Rickey, I got it."

"Then why in the name of Judas Priest did you come racing in like that?"

"Vell, I'll tell you Mr. Rickey. I joost thought I'd fool the people in the stands."

Nor was Rickey himself immune to blunders in those hectic days. One afternoon our friend Doak was getting along nicely for about four innings, his spitter breaking in all directions, when an overcast sky suddenly started sprinkling rain. Bill immediately called time, walked to the bench and advised Rickey to warm up another pitcher.

"Why Bill," said Rickey in great surprise, "you're doing fine. Just keep right on going?"

"Well, if this drizzle keeps up I won't be going long," said Doak, but as Rickey showed no signs of changing his attitude Bill went back to the mound determined to let the professor himself learn the hard way. He never did finish the inning as the opposing batters hammered him all over the lot.

"Up to that moment," commented Bill later, "it had never occurred to Rickey that a spitball pitcher becomes utterly useless when it starts to rain and the grass gets the ball all wet. You see, in throwing a spitball you wet only the top of the ball so that two fingers can slip off easily. But the rest of the ball must be absolutely dry so that it can be gripped tightly by the thumb and remaining fingers.

"Needless to say, Rickey never failed to keep an eye open for rain clouds whenever I pitched after that."

It was Doak, too, who in a fashion was responsible for Hornsby becoming a second baseman. The peerless Rajah, who in the years to follow was to become the greatest right-handed hitting batsman of



all time, already had won his spurs as a clouter, but as late as 1921, six years after he had come to the club, they still were trying to find a suitable spot to exploit his talents in the field. He was tried at shortstop, third, first and even the outfield where, according to the authorities of that period, the best he ever could do was gum it up for the other fellow.

Finally, one day late in the 1921 season, Branch Rickey approached Doak and said:

"Bill, we don't seem to be doing very well."

"I guess not," replied Bill, "seeing as how we're wallowing well down the second division."

"What would you suggest to improve matters?" asked Rickey.

"Well, for one thing, I would move Hornsby from third to second and shift Milton Stock from second to third."

"And why would you do that," asked Rickey, with whom there must always be a reason, and a sound and logical one, before he would do anything.

"Because I have seen Stock play third and know he can play it very well. And as for Hornsby, he couldn't possibly be any worse at second than he is at third."

That seemed to be reason enough for the professor and a few days later one of the greatest second basemen of all time was born.

THAT, of course, still didn't solve his managerial problems with the Cardinals, but he refused to be daunted. All his life he had done things the hard way, yet withal he had performed prodigious feats. He even jumped from grade school to college without the benefits of an intermediate high school preparation.

Born on a farm near Lucasville, Ohio, Dec. 20, 1881, he attended the local school and when he finished that the elder Rickey, with many mouths to feed, considered his son had received all the "book larnin'" any farm youngster would ever require.

But young Branch had other ideas. He wanted to learn and he loved books and though the family did not have sufficient money to send him to high school he solved the problem. There was an old educator in Lucasville who took a kindly interest in the lad, loaned him books, taught him

mathematics and physics and a spattering of Cicero and Caesar.

It wasn't long before Rickey sufficiently equipped himself to land a job as a teacher in a town 18 miles away. He made it each day on a bicycle. It paid him \$35 a month and while he was teaching he was still taking instructions himself. In two years he had amassed a personal fortune of \$76. He also had a burning desire to go to Ohio Wesleyan and though he had no high school credits necessary for entrance it was finally arranged for him to matriculate.

Now began some real back-bending years. He did all sorts of manual work to earn his keep. He also played football and baseball, and outside of college played them professionally, too, when opportunity offered. He had no compunction about that for he needed the money and he never had any illusions about college amateurism.

Despite these various hardships, Rickey in due course received his diploma, became a teacher at Allegheny College and later Delaware College, and played semi-pro baseball and football wherever opportunity offered. Football for a time appeared the more lucrative—he played in the backfield and some times drew as high as \$150 a game—but then he suffered a broken leg and that finished him on the gridiron.

The leg mended and the following spring saw him venture on a ball playing career. This was in 1903 and he had just turned twenty-one. He was a catcher, a position one can easily imagine appealed more to him than any other, and he got a trial with the Lamar, Wyo., club. The following spring he opened with Dallas in the Texas League and a month later was bought by the Cincinnati Reds. But here he clashed with the Reds' manager, Joe Kelly, over his aversion to playing ball on Sundays and he moved on again. To the Browns, back to Dallas, then to the White Sox and the Highlanders who later were to become known as the Yankees.

Five years of this slipped by without Rickey setting the world afire. His health began failing him a bit in 1908 so he decided to quit. He determined to become a lawyer, entered the University of Michigan and with customary zeal applied himself so vigorously to his studies that he



completed the three-year course in two.

Baseball, however, still held a strong interest for him and he was now also coaching the Michigan nine. But by 1911 he decided to embark upon a law career without reservations, moved to Boise, Ida., and hung out his shingle. For the next two years, however, Rickey was to see his fortunes all but touch rock bottom. Clients weren't knocking down his door to avail themselves of his gifted legal talents and to add to his cares he had now assumed the responsibilities of a married man.

By 1912 matters were at their lowest when late that fall he received a wire from Robert Hedges, then owner of the St. Louis Browns, to meet him in Salt Lake City relative to taking a "front office" job. It was, for Rickey, perhaps the most embarrassing moment of his life. For here he was being offered a chance to step into an executive job when actually he didn't possess the railroad fare to take him from Boise to Salt Lake City.

But Hedges arranged that, gave Rickey the job and the following year saw Branch firmly entrenched in St. Louis where for thirty years he was to carve a memorable record for himself. He remained with the American League club in the Mound City for only two years but in that time he already had revealed amazing talents for organizing things and judging young ball players. Perhaps his outstanding contribution to the Browns was his acquisition of George Sisler with whose extraordinary ability Rickey already had become familiar while at the University of Michigan.

George was a pitcher then, but of such amazing all-around skill that he could play most anywhere on the diamond. Because of his remarkable hitting, Rickey decided that Sisler would best serve the club in a position where he would be playing every day and so finally converted him into a first baseman. Sisler attained stardom overnight and for the next decade was to establish himself as one of the greatest first sackers of all times.

Rickey, now, also was definitely on the rise. When Phil Ball, mid-western millionaire, bought the Browns in 1916 he urged Rickey to stay on as general manager. But the idea of working at a straight

salary for a millionaire did not exactly appeal to him.

THE rival National League club in St. Louis appeared more inviting so he went to work for the Cardinals. It was really starting from scratch, for in the spring of 1917 the Cards were too poor to afford a southern training trip. The players trained right in their own back yard—St. Louis.

But difficulties never discouraged Rickey. He had interested Breadon, a hustling automobile man who had migrated from New York, and Sam bought a few shares. Presently he bought more. The baseball fever caught him and by 1920 Breadon owned the controlling interest in the club and became its president. He retained Rickey as manager.

They made a strange combination, these two. Breadon, rough, blunt, Irish and aggressive, who never shed his New York dialect. Rickey, erstwhile farm boy, now a gentleman and a scholar in every sense of the word.

To confuse the picture some more here was Rickey, the erudite man of letters, striving to make good as boss on the bench of as rough and tumble a crew of ball players as ever assembled in one dugout.

For five years he stuck by his guns but in 1925 he decided to call it quits. He turned the job over to Rogers Hornsby and retired to the front office as general manager.

Blunt, outspoken Hornsby called just one clubhouse meeting. It was really a meeting to end meetings.

"Listen, you humpty dumpties," he told them with characteristic forthrightness, "all this stuff you've been hearing is a lot of hooey. You're all pretty good ball players, because Rickey, if he knows nothing else, seems to know a good ball player when he sees one. But we'll have no more blah-blah about horizons and the like of that. Just get out there and hustle and do your stuff. I don't give a damn what you fellers do between sunset and sunup, but when you get here at the ball park I expect you to report with clear heads and your eyes open. Do that and the pennant will take care of itself."

Here was language the ball players understood. Without a word of dissent they



accepted the hard boiled Texan as their leader.

There wasn't enough left of the 1925 season to do much better than finish fourth, but in 1926 the Cards broke in front and remained there to the end to bring to St. Louis its first National League pennant. What is more, the Cards then went on to defeat the Yankees in a memorable seven-game world series, the seventh game being saved by a heroic piece of relief pitching by Grover Alexander.

Here, too, was another curious picture in which Rickey always seemed to be involved. Oldtime fans still are familiar with the circumstances of Alexander's rare feat. He had won his own game the day before and had gone on a terrific celebration immediately thereafter. Yet, here he was on the next afternoon, with bloodshot eyes, unexpectedly called to the mound to strike out Tony Lazzerri with the bases full, and thus win baseball's highest prize for two teetotalers—Rickey and Hornsby. Hornsby, in fact, not only never drank but eschewed all forms of tobacco as well.

As general manager and direct head of the fast growing "farm system," Rickey now finally was in his element. He worked on a salary as well as a commission on profits and the money came rolling in. The far flung Cardinal empire in the minor leagues became an industry that could be appraised conservatively at a million and a half dollars.

However, that Breadon and Rickey should eventually fall out was inevitable. For years the two had operated on a system of selling their topflight players when they had others, as yet unknown, coming up to take their places. In this they moved without fear and no player's name was ever too big or his popularity too great to make him indispensable.

Hornsby was the first to go. After winning that first Cardinal pennant in 1926 the Rajah was the toast of St. Louis. But when his salary demands that winter were deemed too excessive Breadon coldly traded him off to the Giants for Frankie Frisch. St. Louis fans vowed they would boycott the team. But when the Cards came back with another flag in 1928 the fans also came back.

Other great name players, and managers, too, followed Hornsby. And so it went until finally came the day when Breadon decided he no longer needed Rickey. They parted company at the close of the 1942 season at the very moment the Cards, now managed by Billy Southworth had won another pennant.

After thirty years Rickey again was out of a job, but under vastly different circumstances. He had by now amassed a considerable fortune and by reason of his amazing record was in high demand. Don Barnes, owner of the Browns, tried hard to induce Rickey to return to that club. But Rickey by now doubtless had had enough of St. Louis. Also, something more interesting was beckoning.

There was an opening in Brooklyn where Larry MacPhail had brought his spectacular period of leadership to a close to enlist in the army as a lieutenant colonel. Here was something really enticing and when the directors of the Brooklyn club, representing the Ebbets and McKeever estates, offered him the job as president and general factotum, he accepted.

Now the professor really was in strange surroundings. Brooklyn, a hotbed of baseball fanaticism, had for nearly five years been kept in a turmoil by the flamboyant MacPhail and the equally loud and boisterous Leo Durocher, manager.

Following in the wake of the colorful MacPhail and handling the swashbuckling Durocher appeared to be a pair of assignments which even Rickey's most ardent admirers regarded with skepticism.

But the professor tackled both jobs with a relish. Oddly, the former was the tougher. The folks in Brooklyn had come to like the way MacPhail did things, tossing money about with a lavish hand. And when Rickey started discarding some of the older hands an immediate hue and cry went up that the same pinch-penny methods that had been practiced in St. Louis had now come to Ebbets Field.

But Rickey, in public, said nothing. In private he chuckled. He knew Brooklyn and he knew that basically all it wanted was a winner and he meant to work to that end "irregardless" as they say in Flatbush.

As a matter of fact, disposing of old





ball players no longer was a problem or necessity. He was doing it only when convinced they no longer were of any service. Indeed, the prime reason he had come to Brooklyn at all was to be able to exercise his developing talents without the additional burden of selling star players merely to make ends meet.

"From now on," he declared, "I can work secure in the knowledge that every top-grade ball player we develop I can keep. The protests of the fans doesn't disturb me a bit. They have a right to squawk and when they squawk it is a healthy sign. Only when fans stay away is there cause for worry."

Handling Durocher proved even less a problem. Rickey, of course, knew Leo, for Durocher had been shortstop of the famous Gas House Gang Cardinals that had won a pennant and world series in 1934.

Few, however, thought that Leo, explosive, impetuous and a gamester who

would bet his last shirt on the turn of a card, would prove Rickey's type. But here the professor again confounded everybody. He gave Durocher his unconditional release as he came into Brooklyn late in 1942 and then presently re-engaged him at his own, that is Rickey's terms. These terms were that henceforth Leo would have to mend many of his ways or move on.

"I frankly admit that Leo frequently says and does things of which I don't approve," said Rickey, "But I know him as well as I think anybody can know him and I fully believe he can be curbed and handled. And to me the effort is well worth it, for inherently he has all the qualifications of a superb manager."

And the evidence at the close of three harrowing, war torn years seem to indicate Rickey had scored on all counts. The spring of 1945 had found the Dodgers assembling a motley, nondescript crew of youngsters and oldsters at their Bear Mountain training retreat. The experts unanimously consigned the club to a last or at best seventh place finish.

But the Dodgers, faltering only slightly during the early stages of the race, plunged fearlessly into the first division and wound up in third place behind the reputedly much stronger Cubs and Cardinals. And behind them trailed the Pirates and Giants who also had been regarded as much stronger. What is more, the home attendance at Ebbets Field soared over the million mark and topped the figures of the Yankees and Giants.

And now, with the war over and Rickey able to exercise his talents for player development to the full Brooklyn has every reason to expect that henceforth the Dodgers will long remain a potent factor in the National League. And the man who "failed" so many times seems about ready to direct the crowning achievement of a remarkable career.



*A Fiction House Magazine*





# SLUGGER'S GOLD

*By J. B. Thornton*

**Vic Kennedy was the guy with the photographic orbs; the guy with the power-laden wrists who never swung at a bad ball . . . until the gold bug got in his eyes.**

**H**E WAS in a bad mood because Joe Carter, the sports writer, had made him promise he'd say a few words at a boy's club that afternoon and he'd been unable to crawl out of it. There was no cash in a thing like that.

"Look," Ed Brady, Trojan owner, was saying, "we're making it five grand above last year's salary, and another five if you lead the league in batting again this year."

Vic Kennedy, Trojan second baseman, and the league's leading batsman, shook his head. He sat in a corner of the room, a rangy man with a thin face, sleek black hair, and a pair of cold blue eyes. He was smiling, but there was no humor in the smile.

"I don't have to play ball, Ed," he murmured. "Get wise to yourself. I have my cattle ranch and I can move out there whenever I'm ready."

Ed Brady, fat, bald-headed, held up a pair of soft, white hands and stared at Manager Fred Corrigan, sitting across the room.

"You're the highest paid man on the club now," Corrigan told Vic quietly, "and we're giving you five thousand more than you got last summer."

"I asked for ten," Vic reminded him coldly. He'd hit .381 last season to lead the league by eighteen points, and he'd been up with the league-leading hitters for four straight seasons since coming with the Trojans. Each spring he had the usual wrangle with Brady and Fred Corrigan before signing his contract.

"There's a lot of boys overseas," Brady said grimly, "who won't be making thirty grand this summer, Kennedy."

"Not many of them," Vic observed, "would hit .381, in or out of uniform." He was a 4-F because of a perforated ear drum. The sports writers called that per-

foration the most valuable hole in the world because it had won two pennants for the Trojans.

"Twenty-seven," Brady said suddenly.

Vic shook his head, puffing on the cigarette, smiling a little. "I'll take thirty, Ed, "and the five thousand bonus if I lead the league again."

Brady threw his pencil down on the desk.

"I'm not worried so much about the money, but there are a lot of other men on this club who have been playing good ball—"

"How many hit .381?" Vic asked softly.

"You'll never get it from me," Brady scowled.

Vic rubbed out the cigarette in an ash tray and stood up. "You boys know where I'm staying," he said as he went out. He knew he would get a phone call before nightfall. Brady would fret and fume, and then come across because batsmen of Vic's calibre were few and far between these war times, and Brady wanted another pennant.

Back in the hotel room he was slipping off his tie when he remembered the boys' club meeting. It was two-thirty now, and the meeting was scheduled for four o'clock.

Vic threw the tie against the closet door and swore softly. He knew now that he'd been a fool to let Carter talk him into it, but Joe had been persistent down in the lobby, and there were other reporters around.

"It'll take ten or fifteen minutes," Carter had grinned. "These kids are from the west side—about five hundred of 'em. Our paper sponsors the club—a 'Keep the Kids off the City Streets' idea."

"Hell," Vic had smiled. "What'll I tell 'em, Joe?"

"The last World Series," Carter said. "Tell 'em how you felt when you hit that







triple with the sacks loaded in the last game. The kids eat up that stuff."

Vic Kennedy grimaced now. He wasn't thinking of what he would say to five hundred kids, but he'd never had any particular use for kids any way, and this was a waste of time and effort. Time was valuable only if there was a dollar in it. He had a forty thousand dollar ranch to show for that, and he was fixed for a long time with his annuity policies.

It hadn't always been like that. He remembered the lean days, living with a father and brother who were no good who made him go out and pick coal to keep their run-down little shack warm. He remembered cold days when there hadn't been anything to eat; he shuddered when he thought of the dampness of the coal mines. His father had lied about his age when he was fourteen because he'd been a tall kid. His father had been drunk practically all the time, and the older brother was a tough pool hall shark.

"You got some wrong ideas about things, Vic," Fred Corrigan tried to tell him once. "Keep up like this and you'll end up behind the eightball. You won't have a friend in the world."

Vic wanted to laugh in the man's face. He had a bank account, and a man with a bank account didn't need friends. Corrigan didn't know what it meant to be poor, to play a double-header on a Sunday afternoon for two bucks, and have that taken away from you for more drink.

VIC KENNEDY glanced at his watch, made two turns around the room before stopping in front of the phone. About to pick it up, the thing rang of itself. It was a representative of the Washington Tobacco Company. They wanted to know if he could get over to the office today and sign the contracts and pose for a few pictures. He was endorsing the new Washington cigarettes—for a thousand dollars, and it was easy money.

"We have a camera man coming in about four o'clock," the Washington man explained. "Can you make it about then, Mr. Kennedy?"

"Four o'clock," Vic murmured. He grinned. "Okay, I'll be down." He set down the receiver, and then picked it up again, getting Joe Carter on the other end

a few moments later. "Afraid I'll have to get out of that talk, Joe," he said.

Carter came back quickly, "Why, Kennedy?"

Vic hesitated a moment, and then said, "There's another engagement I forgot about." He added. "You can pick up one of the other boys, Joe. They're all in town."

Carter didn't say anything for a while, and Vic thought he'd hung up. Then his voice came over smoothly, without emotion.

"Okay, Kennedy."

That was all, but Vic's eyes flickered. He put down the phone with a bang. The Trojans were in town today, playing a few exhibition games with the Redbirds before opening the season on Thursday. Carter could have his pick of any of those guys. Why should those brats be fussy. He remembered when he was a kid there had been no boy's clubs, and celebrities going down to speak to them. These kids had a racket today.

Ed Brady called up that night at six o'clock. The Trojan manager said flatly.

"Stop in, Kennedy, and sign your contract."

"Which one?" Vic laughed.

"I said 'yours'," Brady growled. "You in shape to play ball on Thursday?"

"I can go in tomorrow," Vic told him, "if I'm paid for it."

"Don't worry," Brady said tersely, "you're getting paid for it."

He went down to the ball park the next afternoon and checked in at the locker room. The morning papers had given the incident the usual play on the sports pages. Vic Kennedy had won his annual bout with the Trojan management, and it was assumed that Brady had paid the second baseman exactly what Kennedy asked for.

There were about a dozen of the Trojans in the room when he came through the door. He hadn't seen any of these boys since the season closed last fall. The Trojans had been working out at Indian Springs in the north this spring, while Vic had stayed on the ranch, exchanging correspondence with the Trojan management, stating the terms at which he would sign a Trojan contract.

Chuck McRae, Trojan third baseman, stood in front of his locker as Vic went



past, but he didn't turn his head. Jack Pierce, the left fielder, sat on a bench, tying his shoelaces. There was a thin smile on the short, stocky man's face, but that was all.

Vic slipped out of his coat and hung it on a hook in the locker. The Trojan players had no use for him, and he had no use for them. He knew that they were sore because he was making the big dough.

Other men started to drift in, and Vic listened to the talk. None of the Trojans attempted to open up a conversation with him. Several of them nodded casually, but that was as far as they went.

To hell with 'em, Vic thought.

Vic took his infielder's glove from the bag and slapped it a few times, moving the fingers inside. He didn't miss anything here because he'd never had anything. Even in the minors for three seasons, before the Trojans bought him up, he'd made very few friends. This baseball was a game in which a man could make money. There were enough worries in it without having to be concerned about a friend.

Two more men came in through the door, and the room was quite filled now. Vic, sitting with his back to the door, heard a booming laugh which he recognized immediately as belonging to the red-headed Lou Beckett, Trojan catcher. Beckett was a pretty tough character, and several times in the past Vic had been tempted to swing on him.

Beckett stopped to talk with McRae, and Vic heard him say loudly,

"Money-Bags here yet, Chuck?"

Vic stood up and turned around, the glove still on his hand. He was smiling a little as he moved toward Beckett and McRae. The catcher was a big man, fully as tall as Vic and a little heavier in the shoulders. Vic scaled in at an even one hundred and ninety, sufficient weight to hit a long ball. He seldom swung for the fences, but even punching his hits he'd managed to hammer eighteen balls over the park fences the previous season.

"Looking for anybody, Lou?" Vic asked evenly. He heard the silence come into the dressing room. This private feud between the second baseman and the catcher had been brewing for a long time, and it was overdue.

Beckett grinned. He had a long nose and

a heavy jaw, with a pair of pale blue eyes and colorless eyebrows.

"You get your pound of flesh from Ed Brady?" Beckett asked grimly.

"Lou," Vic observed, "when you hit .381 you can go around for a pound of flesh also." He knew that one had hit home because Beckett, although a big man, was a notoriously poor sticker.

"You got a big mouth," Beckett said quietly, "along with that fat bankroll. I'm thinkin' maybe if Brady didn't have to dig down so much for you he could fatten up our contracts a little."

"Make a hit now and then, Lou," Vic smiled, "and you could make your own contract."

"All right," Beckett snapped. "Some of us don't have money on the brain, Kennedy."

"I could take that up the wrong way, Lou," Vic said. He braced himself, at the same time shifting the glove over to his right hand.

"You can take it up any damn way you wish," Beckett growled. He was ready for the next move, but Vic was too fast for him. The second baseman's gloved hand shot up for the catcher's jaw, landing squarely.

Beckett staggered back against the locker with Vic Kennedy after him, swinging punches with both hands. Chuck McRae let out a short yell. Pierce and Harry Borden, the right fielder, broke in between them, McRae grabbing the enraged Beckett, and Borden clinging to Vic's arms.

"A hell of a way to start the season," McRae grated. "We ought to finish a bad last."

"Okay, Harry," Vic Kennedy said quietly. "Let go."

Borden, a little abashed, stepped back, and Vic walked over to his locker.

"Any time you want to finish this little thing," Beckett called after him, "you look me up." He wasn't hurt, but he'd been slightly stunned by that first smash with the gloved hand.

Vic looked down at his fingers, flexing them several times. He didn't want to break any fingers on Beckett's hard jaw because a broken finger could mean money. There was a five thousand dollar bonus clause in his contract if he led the league in batting for the second successive time, and



sitting on the bench with a busted finger wouldn't permit him to do that.

FRED CORRIGAN came into the room a few minutes later, noticing immediately the strained atmosphere. He glanced at Vic suspiciously, and then looked at Beckett who was just climbing out of his pants.

"Everything all right?" the Trojan manager asked.

Chuck McRae said, "Let's play ball."

Vic didn't start the exhibition game against the Redbirds. He took his batting practice with the others and worked out with the infielders. He noticed that during the batting session he wasn't meeting the ball squarely and he couldn't understand that.

"Next year," Corrigan said quietly, "you get your training with the other boys."

Vic ignored the remark. He'd been showing up late every season with the Trojans, usually getting in a few exhibition games immediately before the season opener, and he'd never had any trouble hitting the ball. He kept in good physical shape during the winter, and the hitting had always come natural to him. He never knew a time when he couldn't hit a ball.

The afternoon was chill, and Vic sat in a corner of the dugout, windbreaker buttoned up at the neck. It didn't matter who won these ball games and both managers experimented with rookie pitchers. They had a tall right-handed kid in for the Redbirds when Fred Corrigan gave Vic the sign to hit.

The Trojans had runners on second and third and two away in the seventh. Vic Kennedy slid his stick out of the rack and walked to the plate, swinging it vigorously to get the chill out of his body.

The fans gave him a rather cold reception, but he'd never listened to them anyway and it didn't matter. He knew they were disgusted with him because of these yearly hold-outs, but they came out to the games, and they paid cold cash which eventually went into his pockets to some extent.

Bud Allen, Redbird catcher, took off his mask when Vic came up, and grinned.

"Here's the big Butter-and-Egg man," he chuckled. "I hear you're startin' your own bank, Kennedy."

"Put the muzzle on," Vic told him coolly. "You look more natural."

"Nuts," Allen growled. He squatted down behind the plate and gave his signal to the kid hurler.

Vic edged up to the plate, hitting from the left side, swinging the long bat very easily. They'd given a lot of space to his batting form in the sports columns. He was supposed to have a photographic eye; he never took a bad ball, and he had tremendous power in his wrists and forearms.

The kid on the mound fidgeted a little and then took his stretch. The ball came in fast and straight. Vic was grinning as he hitched the bat and swung it around viciously. The ball was down the middle—"a cripple."

He was very much surprised when it slid past his bat and spanked into Allen's glove. He heard the Redbird catcher's yell of glee.

"You got him, Georgie!" Allen howled. "This guy's got a gold-bug in the eye!"

Vic stepped out of the rectangle and snatched up a little dirt. He was puzzled and annoyed. He missed balls before—fast ones, or sharp-breaking hooks, tricky screw balls or knucklers, but very seldom a straight pitch like that, and not too fast.

Corrigan was standing on the third base line, arms crossed, cap pulled down low over his eyes, watching quietly. Once he capped his hands but he didn't say anything.

Vic went up to the plate again, tightening his grip on the bat, digging in with his spikes. A hit didn't mean anything today. The score was 8 to 5 for the Trojans, and nobody cared who won, but hitting with him had always been a matter of pride. He loved to feel the thrill as ball met bat squarely; he liked to watch the white pill line out over the infield, or batten itself against the right-center field wall—his favorite spot.

"Get him again, Georgie," Bud Allen screamed.

Georgie threw a hook which was wide, and Vic let it go by. He cut at another straight one a moment later, fouling it into the net behind the plate. That ball had been down the middle also, and he'd only tipped it.

He watched the Redbird pitcher more closely, thinking perhaps he may have underestimated him. It was possible this kid,



George Kenlon, was throwing a much faster ball than it seemed. Vic remembered being fooled that way before by guys who took a very easy wind-up and threw without effort, but they managed to get a hop on the straight one.

"You got him, Georgie," Allen howled through the mask. "Make him like it this time."

With a two and one count, Vic wasn't looking for another straight one from the middle, but he got it. Even then he got his bat around with plenty of time to spare, and the swing was very smooth. The ball spat into Allen's glove for a neat third strike.

Vic tossed his bat toward the Trojan dugout and trotted out toward second base. He tried to tell himself that he'd struck out before, and that it didn't mean anything. Probably Corrigan was right in saying that he should have been out a few weeks earlier taking his batting practice with the others. He was rusty, but that would pass away after he'd had a few games under his belt.

Dominick Peluso, Trojan shortstop, came over to take a throw from Beckett, and Vic saw the little grin on the bow-legged man's face. Peluso relished that strike-out.

Vic slapped his glove a few times and smiled grimly. He saw McRae down at third grinning also, and then glancing toward the dugout, he looked straight at Corrigan, one of the smartest managers in the game, and Corrigan was leaning forward, elbows on knees, staring at him. It made Vic feel uncomfortable.

Going into the dugout at the end of the inning, he was hoping he wouldn't have to go up to the plate again, and that was peculiar because he'd always loved to hit. He tried to analyze this emotion and laugh it away, but he knew that this afternoon he was a little afraid.

In the eighth the Trojans scored a few more runs, batting through the line-up. Borden, hitting directly before Vic, slapped a single to center.

The Redbirds still had the tall kid throwing out on the mound. It was two away, with runners on first and second. Vic threw away his extra stick and went up to the plate.

"Hambone!" Allen whooped.

VIC SWUNG at the first down the middle, and missed. He felt a tightening sensation in his throat, and his legs were weak. A small panic swept through him which he tried to laugh off inwardly. There were guys who fanned three times during a ball game and came back the next afternoon to knock out four hits. It didn't mean anything.

George Kenlon threw two wide ones, and then grooved another pitch. There was absolutely nothing on the ball. It came down the heart of the plate, waist high. Vic cut and missed.

Corrigan, on third, was saying something, but Vic couldn't hear him. The crowd was behind the kid pitcher now because he was the underdog, facing the most dangerous batsman in the circuit.

"He's blind in one eye," Allen yelled, "an' he can't see out the other, kid!"

Vic glanced toward the fence, feeling the sweat break out on his forehead. Something was going all wrong today. The other Trojans were killing the stuff this kid threw in, and the Redbird manager was keeping the kid on the mound because he didn't want to work any more of his regulars this cold afternoon.

"Hit away," Corrigan called.

Vic stepped back into the rectangle. The bat felt awkward in his hands. The ball had been coming in as small as a pea, and usually it was as big as a balloon. He had the futile feeling of a man swatting at a fly in the air and using a thin stick.

The kid was up on the mound, taking his stretch, keeping an eye on first base. Vic Kennedy could feel the confidence flowing out of him, and it was almost a physical sensation. He knew he wasn't going to hit this next ball.

Then Kenlon suddenly whirled and shot the pill to first base, catching Borden off the sack for the third out.

"Were you lucky," Allen yelled in Vic's ear.

"Hell," Vic growled. He went out to second base again and picked up his glove. He saw Corrigan talking with coach, Dutch Wagner, and he knew they were talking about him.

Peluso was grinning again on short, and McRae had a satisfied smile on his face. They wanted him to hit during the season and drive in those runs so they



could be assured of another pennant and a nice World Series melon, but they liked to see him shown up also.

He was glad when the game was over and he got back into the dressing room. He wanted to get out of there as quickly as possible also and try to figure this thing out.

Corrigan stopped in front of his locker and said quietly.

"Next year, if you got to hold out, Kennedy, we'd appreciate it if you worked out with us anyway. I'll make special arrangements with Ed Brady."

"Don't worry about it," Vic said. "I'll be all right by Thursday."

"I hope so," Corrigan muttered.

Joe Carter, the sports columnist came in then, smoking a cigarette, a tall, angular man with one shoulder higher than the other. Joe had a long jaw and a pair of quiet brown eyes.

"How's it?" Vic said when Carter moved toward him. "You get another guy for that little talk, Joe?"

"I got Lefty Reed," Carter said without emotion. "The kids were a little disappointed."

Vic nodded. Reed was the Trojan ace hurler, twenty game winner the previous season.

"Sorry I had to call that one off," Vic apologized. "You know how it is, Joe."

"Sure," Carter murmured. "Too bad I couldn't have taken up a collection from the kids."

Vic felt the red come into his face. "What do you mean, Joe?" he asked tersely.

"Figure it out," Carter said, and he passed on.

The Trojans opened up with the Beavers the following Thursday, a capacity crowd of fifty-five thousand jamming the Trojan Field for the opener. There had been two days of rain prior to the Beaver contest, and exhibition games with the Redbirds had been washed out.

Vic stood out on second base as Lefty Reed took the mound for the Trojans. Since the bad start in the Redbird game he had done no batting, with the exception of this pre-game session. He'd hit a few balls fairly solid, but he'd missed many more, and he saw Corrigan's face getting very long.

The other men were becoming aware of

the fact that Vic Kennedy was off form and that Corrigan was worrying about it. When the tall second baseman took his position in the batter's box, they watched him carefully, knowing that a pennant probably depended upon that long yellow stick.

In the second inning Vic came up with Borden on second base and one away. Corrigan signalled to hit away, and Vic swung at the third pitch, rolling it out to the pitcher's box. He got a few boos for that when he went out on the field again.

"What's the matter?" Peluso asked from short. "Lose your eye, Vic?"

Vic shook his head in disgust. He didn't mind the boos of the fans any more than he minded their cheers when he was hitting, but this thing was getting on his nerves. It didn't make matters any better when you started to think about it. A man had to be relaxed at the plate, very easy, and very loose.

**I**N THE fourth he came up again with the bases empty, and none away. There was no pressure now, and he thought he would get hold of Jim McAfee's fast ball. The tall Beaver right hander shot two balls in, waist high, and close, but good. Vic swung and missed both.

The Beaver infield was giving it to him good when he stepped out of the box and tapped the bat against the dirt two or three times. He let one go by, and then cut at the next one, a shoulder high pitch. He missed it cleanly.

In the dugout he sat with his hands folded, telling himself he'd get straightened out. Everybody went into a batting slump sooner or later, and this was the first one he'd ever had. If a man kept cutting at those pitches, he'd come out of it.

"You get kicked by one of those damned steers out on your place?" Corrigan asked once.

"No," Vic told him. "Why?"

"You're edging away from the plate when the pill comes in," Corrigan snapped. "You can't hit a ball that way."

Vic thought that over. He hadn't even been aware of the fault. Usually, he stepped straight into a ball, meeting it with full power.

The Beavers had a 3 to 1 lead going into the seventh, with Jim McAfee pitching beautiful ball. In the seventh the Tro-



jans got runners around to second and third base with Borden coming up, and Vic Kennedy on deck.

With two away McAfee had no intention of passing Borden, but with a three and two count on the man, fed him a wide ball and Umpire Ringe waved Borden down to first base, filling the sacks.

Vic edged up closer to the rubber, remembering Corrigan's remarks. He was thinking of the fault when McAfee shot the first one in, on the outside corner. Ringe called it a strike.

Vic stepped out of the box and looked back at Ringe angrily.

"Watch that damn thing," he growled.

Ringe, fat, red-faced, slipped off the mask. "All right, kid," he warned. "Easy with the language."

Vic tightened his lips as he went up again. It had been a long time since he'd beefed with an umpire. If they called one bad one on him, he knew he always had another, and he only needed one to hit.

McAfee fed him a hook and he cut at that viciously, feeling sure he would connect. He followed the break easily, and tried to lay his bat on the ball rather than swing for the wall. He missed cleanly.

He heard the boos from the stands now, and the boos had started when he attempted to argue with Ringe. These fans were sore at him also because he was one of the few hold-outs. A man shouldn't hold out for more dough when there were twelve million guys in the services making pin money in comparison, and risking their necks doing it.

"Get these boys in," Corrigan called from the third base line.

Vic swung at a fast ball and missed for the third strike. He threw his bat viciously toward the dugout and trotted out on the field. It was a display of temper which surprised even the Trojans, for Vic Kennedy was known as a cold duck.

"That won't get you anywhere, Kennedy," Corrigan said when the game was over and the Beavers had won by a 3 to 2 score. "You get the fans down on you and they'll ride you right out of the league."

"Don't worry," Vic retorted, "They won't push me."

In five games he made two scratch singles. He averaged one strikeout per game,

and the previous season he'd only fanned eighteen times.

He tried working out in the mornings, and he hit by the hour, but something was missing. He didn't line the ball the way he usually did. Once in a while he caught hold of one, but those times were rare. He was topping the ball or hitting under it when he didn't miss altogether.

"Maybe you need a rest," Corrigan suggested. "I'll work Atwood a few days at second."

Vic sat on the bench watching the relief infielder handle the second base assignment. Vic came back four days later to make none for five in a game which the Trojans took by a 12 to 3 score. Even the weak-hitting Beckett hammered out three bingles in that one.

In four games against the Royals, Vic made one hit. Corrigan benched him again, even suggesting that he go back to the ranch for a few weeks to recuperate.

"I'm all right," Vic growled. He felt good physically, but this was something else.

"A guy either gets out of this," Corrigan said quietly, "or he winds up in the bushes."

Vic didn't say anything. He'd seen other men hit these disastrous slumps, and the harder they tried to come out of them, the worse they got. It wasn't anything that you could fight. After awhile the bat started to ring true, or it never rang again.

In mid-June, with the Trojans in fifth place, Corrigan tried him out a third time, letting him in the game for two full weeks, hoping that he would hit his way out of the hole. Vic managed to bring his batting average up to .130 before he was taken out again.

The thing was getting him inside, and he couldn't sleep nights. He lost weight thinking about it. He heard rumors that Corrigan had him on the block, and that there were no takers, every manager in the circuit considering him washed up. None of them wanted to take over that fat contract he'd signed for this year.

HE STRUCK out three times in a game with the Royals, and then Fred Corrigan called him into the office when it was over.

"I put you up for sale, Kennedy," the



Trojan said quietly. "You can see you're not helping this club any."

Vic bit his lips. "What happened?" he asked.

"No go," Corrigan said. "We're sending you to Leland the latter part of the week."

"Leland," Vic murmured. Five years ago he'd come up from Leland in the Mountain League. This was the road back. He knew that he wouldn't hit the pitching in the Mountain League any more than he was hitting big time throwing. It wasn't the pitchers who stopped him; he'd stopped himself.

"You can try those last games with the Wings over the weekend," Corrigan said. "If you show me anything—," His voice trailed off.

Vic stumbled out of the office and went back to the hotel room. Every club in the league had passed him by and he was heading down the trail. Those big salaries, and bonuses, were things of the past. He didn't need the money, but it had been a blow at his pride.

The Trojans took on the Wings the next afternoon, A Friday game. The Wings were last place and never did draw a crowd. Coming out on the field at one thirty, Vic glanced up into the empty stands. There would be more fans in later, at game time, but at most they wouldn't draw more than eight or ten thousand today.

He heard the noise out in right field, and turning, saw that portion of the bleachers jammed with kids, yelling, excited kids.

"What the hell is that?" Vic asked Chuck McRae curiously.

"Joe Carter's Boys' Club," McRae told him. "A lot of west side kids Ed Brady's letting in free today. School is closed now."

"Kids," Vic muttered. He remembered that he'd gone into the batting slump shortly after he'd turned down Carter's invitation to speak at that same club.

When the Trojans took the field at three o'clock, Vic sat on the bench again. Corrigan had promised to give him a try Saturday's game, and possibly Sunday, before shipping him to Leland.

"I want to be fair," Corrigan had said, "but Ed Brady's after me, too. You're not helping us, Kennedy. You can see that."

"I'm ready to go," Vic had said flatly. "I'm not whining." He hadn't slept last

night, and it had been weeks since he'd had a good night's sleep. Many times he'd walked the streets, turning it over in his mind. A slump was a slump, but a man came out of them.

The Wings jumped to a three run lead in the first inning, and held for five more. Twice, young Atwood, filling in for Vic, fanned with runners on the sacks, and the kids out in right field went crazy. It was 3 to 1 going into the eighth.

Pierce, Trojan left fielder, singled, starting the eighth. Shelbourne whipped another base hit through the box, putting runners on first and second. Dominick Peluso dropped down a neat sacrifice, sending the runners to second and third.

It was Borden in the rectangle, with Atwood on deck. Out in right field, the kids started to howl again, and Vic Kennedy watched Atwood picking his bat from the rack. Atwood was a lean, red-haired chap, a fair fielder, but a light hitter. Today, he was very nervous, knowing that he'd failed twice already.

Borden lifted a pop fly to the infield for the second out, and Atwood was moving toward the plate when Corrigan came down the third base line to talk to him.

Vic watched curiously. He saw Atwood turn toward the dugout, and then Fred Corrigan was motioning to Vic to come out.

Vic took a deep breath and stepped out into the sunshine.

"See what you can do," Corrigan said. "We'd like these two runs."

Vic moistened his lips and his hands shook a little as he found his stick. Walking up to the plate he heard the scattered boos from this small adult crowd in the stands, and then the p. a. system blared his name.

"Kennedy batting for Atwood."

Vic threw away one stick and took a deep breath. He heard the rising crescendo of sound from right field, and he saw those kids getting up, some of them climbing on the netting posts, and they were howling, yelling his name!

Vic gulped and hesitated before going into the box. There was no doubt about it. These kids were putting on a wild demonstration, and he was the cause of it.

Wing catcher, Mack O'Doul, took off his mask and scratched his sweating chin.



"I'll be damned!" O'Doul murmured.

The regular Trojan fans were silent now as these kids gave Vic an ovation. There were no more boos.

"Maybe they don't know you got to be a bum," O'Doul grinned. "You got some rooters out there, kid."

Vic Kennedy felt the mist in his eyes, and he had to swallow several times before going into the rectangle. He felt for the first time the cheapness of the thing he'd pulled on this Boys' Club. These were poor kinds, and guys like Carter were trying to make it easier for them—bring a little sunshine into their lives. Having a big-leaguer talk with them was a highlight in their drab lives.

"Kids do some dopey things," O'Doul was saying. "I got three of my own. I should know." He paused, "And then, sometimes, they're a lot smarter than we think they are. I don't always foller 'em."

Vic Kennedy tightened his grip on the bat and shook his head a few times. The Wings had Jeff Carr throwing today, and pitching very nice ball. Carr fed him a hook on the inside corner and Vic swung.

It was a fluke hit because he caught it on the handle, but it went over first base for a clean single, and the two Trojan runners came in, tying the score.

VIC KENNEDY stood on first base, listening to the noise. He'd hit home runs with the bases filled, and he'd broken up a World Series with his long bat, but none of those hits gave him the same amount of satisfaction this fluke bingle did.

"Lucky guy!" Sam Walters, Wing first baseman murmured. "You couldn't do that in a million years, Kennedy."

Vic nodded. The ball had just cleared the top of Walters' big glove and rolled down the foul line.

It didn't matter to these kids, though. Vic Kennedy had hit, and he'd tied up the ball game. To them he was still the most deadly batsman in the circuit, a figure they had set on a pedestal.

The Trojans won the ball game in the tenth when McRae lifted a ball over the right field wall.

Vic Kennedy sat in the dressing room, taking his time, trying to think it out. He took a long time showering, and when he came out the dressing room was empty.

He saw Joe Carter coming out of Corri-gan's office, and Carter nodded to him, no friendliness in his eyes.

"Joe," Vic called.

Carter pulled up and lit a cigarette.

"Nice crowd of kids you had out there," Vic said lamely.

"They're good boys," Carter agreed. "A lot of them don't get much encouragement at home."

"I—I guess I should have gone down there when they had that meeting," Vic muttered. "Any time you want me to talk to 'em, Joe—"

"Tomorrow's Saturday," Carter said. "We have a get-together tomorrow morning. You want to say something then, it's all right."

"Sure," Vic told him. "I'll be down."

He didn't know quite what to tell these kids now. A man with a .130 batting average can't tell boys how to hit. He sat before them the next morning at ten thirty. The paper hired a hall for the occasion, and there were more than five hundred present.

Vic sat on the platform as Joe Carter spoke to them. They were young, grammar school age, some colored kids in the bunch, a lot of Italian boys.

"We probably get over a dozen nationalities," Carter had said. He was introducing Vic now, telling of some of his exploits in the previous World Series. "Vic has had a little trouble hitting the ball this year" the sports writer grinned.

"He won the game yesterday!" one kid yelled.

There was a lot of noise after that, and Joe Carter turned, nodding to Vic. The Trojan second baseman stood up, swallowing. He had a speech outlined vaguely, but he forgot the whole thing when he started to speak, and he got off on an entirely new slant.

They quieted down abruptly, and he looked into their eyes, feeling his own smallness.

"One thing a fellow has to remember," Vic Kennedy said slowly, "if he wants to play baseball. Don't let money get the best of you; don't let it go to your head." He heard Joe Carter shuffle his feet behind him, but the kids were listening, taking it in.

"It's a great game," Vic said, "when you



play it for fun, and when you play it cleanly. You kids playing in the back lots are getting the real thing. Keep that spirit when you get up higher." He paused and then went on. "I've been a pretty rotten guy." Then he told them how Carter had asked him to come down a few months ago, and he'd slipped out of the invitation because there was nothing in it for him. "I don't know why you kids cheered me yesterday," he mumbled. "I don't think you would if you'd known what kind of guy I was."

He'd been thinking along these lines those nights when he walked the streets, unable to sleep. It was on his mind when he sat in the Trojan dugout after going down on strikes, that hopeless feeling inside of him.

"Don't make a dollar your god," Vic finished rather abruptly. "I hope you all turn out to be better men than I am." He sat down, and for a moment there was a period of silence which almost hurt. Then these kids started to cheer again, and they wouldn't stop.

When the meeting was over, Vic spent an hour and a half signing his autograph. They crowded around him, telling him he was all right, slapping his back.

Joe Carter skipped out for a few minutes and then came back smiling. He had an announcement to make.

"The Trojan management is inviting the Club down to the park again this afternoon," he stated. "Bring your friends."

Vic Kennedy listened to the noise. He got away an hour later, had his lunch, and went to the ball park.

"You'll have a lot of rooters out there this afternoon," Joe Carter had said.

Vic shook the man's hand before leaving the club. "Keep up the good work, Joe," he murmured.

Fred Corrigan started him at second base, and there was a bigger crowd today. The kids were out in right field, sitting in the hot sun, enjoying it.

The Wings scored no runs in the first inning, and Vic Kennedy came into the dugout. He saw Corrigan glance at him strangely, and then walk down to the third base coaching box.

McRae, leading off, singled to right, and Pierce walked on four straight balls. They were facing the left-hander, Johnny Wallace today.

Dominick Peluso lifted a high one to center field, and then Borden fanned for the second out. Vic Kennedy walked to the plate, cap pulled low over his eyes.

The kids started to howl out in right field, and today it was even worse than it had been yesterday.

"They're nuts," O'Doul said.

"Shut up," Vic told him. He leveled out his bat and waited for Wallace to get ready. He felt a sudden smoothness come into his swing, and a new strength in his body. He started to grin as Wallace shot one in on the outside for a ball.

The awkwardness he'd experienced for months seemed to have left him now. He dug in a little, hitching his shoulders, sweeping the bat back and forth. That first ball had looked very big.

Wallace took his stretch and let it ride in. The pitch was good, shoulder high, a fast ball.

Vic Kennedy let the bat come around in a smooth arc. He felt that solid ring, and a thrill went through his body all the way to the toes. He watched the ball rise up, very high, moving out toward right field, and he started to run.

The ball kept going, over the right-fielder's head; over the fence, beyond that mob of shrieking kids.

Vic Kennedy trotted around the sacks, head down. He nearly stumbled over second base because he couldn't see it. At third, Fred Corrigan said softly,

"I think you'll be staying around, Kennedy."

Vic stepped on home plate and walked into the dugout. Joe Carter was there, sitting in the corner, and Vic dropped down beside him.

"I have a check for five grand for that Club, Joe," he said quietly.

"Five grand!" Carter blinked. "That's a lot of dough, kid."

Vic Kennedy laughly coldly. "It's paper, Joe," he stated quietly, "and a lot of guys have hocked their souls for it." He added, "I got mine back, Joe. It wasn't worth it."



# MOUND ANGEL

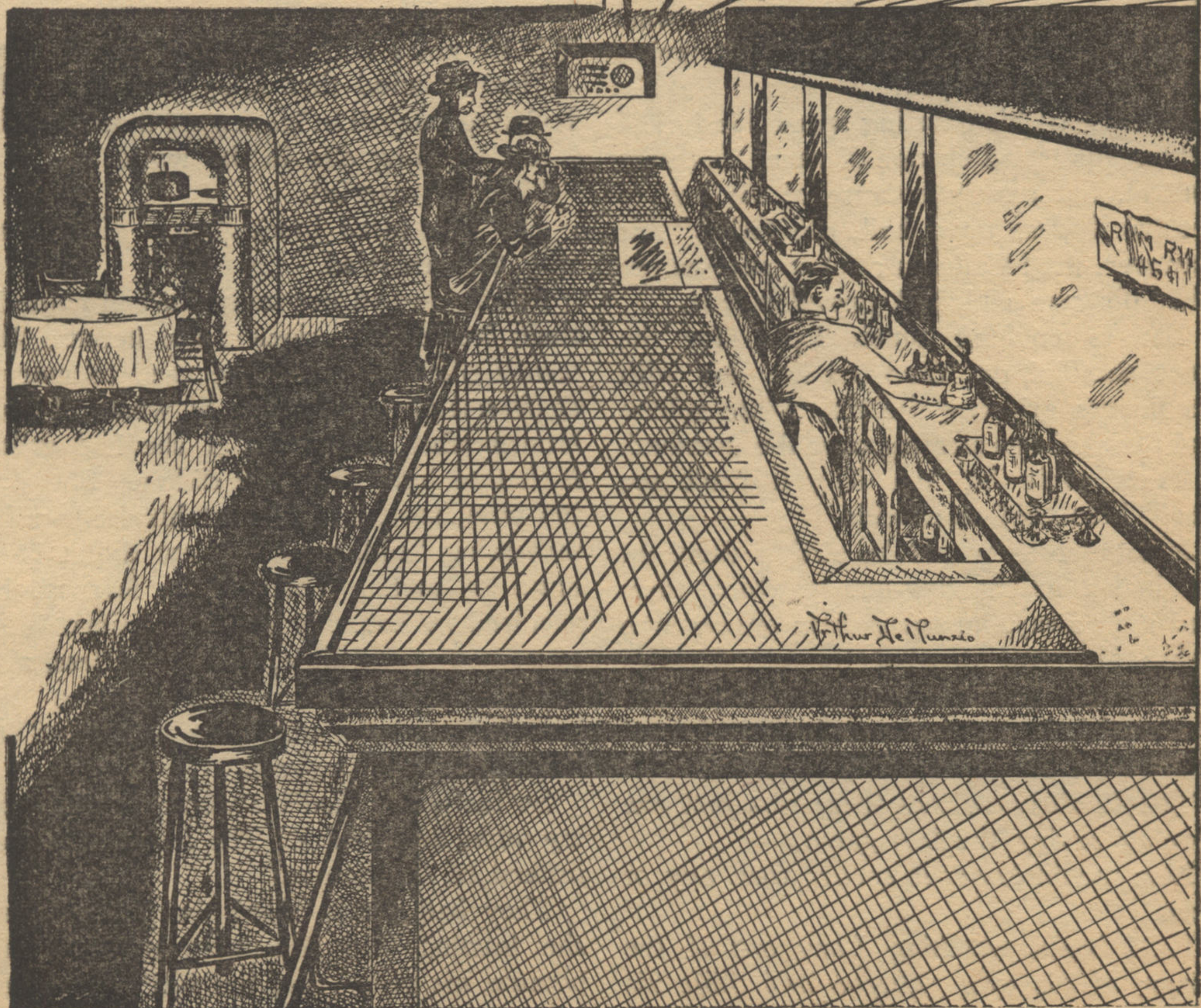
*By Tom Sayres*

The gamblers figured it this way: Anything can be done if you lay enough green stuff on the line and pass it to the right guy. Was "Lazy" Lew Calhoun, who slept with a baseball and dreamed of scoreboard zeros, *the right guy?*

**H**E couldn't read. He couldn't write. But he could pitch. He was one of those men born with the feel of a baseball in their hands.

His name was Lew Calhoun. Everybody called him "Lazy Lew."

They called him that because—well, that was the way he was, it was the way he moved around, or didn't move around when he wasn't pitching. Six feet-three in his





bare feet—which was how he liked to putter around the Hills where he was born, long arms dangling loosely from broad shoulders, people used to wonder what was holding him up as he shuffled languidly out to the pitching mound or lurched lazily back to his dug-out. He looked as limp as a rag doll and as relaxed as a Jumping Jack with broken hinges. That was how Lazy Lew took life: slow and easy and relaxed.

The only quick thing about him was the final snap of his wiry wrist as he let the ball go at the end of his "whip lash" pitch. It was then that his pliant muscles became as steel springs, with the ball shooting from his powerful fingers too fast for the eye to follow its flight.

His fingers were the longest in the Major Leagues, and the strongest. He could wrap his right hand—the one he pitched with—completely around a baseball.

Maybe it was because he was born with such fingers that he grew up with that fierce love in them for the feel of the ball.

Ball players used to say: "If you'd toss Lazy a ball, and keep the other pitchers of his club on the bench, he'd pitch every game his team played."

Because of his dazzling speed, his forked curves, his weird change of pace, his canny control, but mostly because of his itch to get his fingers on a ball, old "Mac," his manager, used Calhoun a lot to save games after his own club had gained a lead.

Batters couldn't touch Lew after he went shufflin' out there to the slab with his fingers gripping the tiny white sphere and the shadows stealing over the diamond.

"You can't hit 'em if you can't see 'em!" Mac used to chuckle.

His reserves would be sitting there on the bench in the dug-out watching their lead melt away, knowing their pitcher was losing his stuff or that the other club's hitters were getting their eyes on the ball, and realizing that it was only a matter of time before the game would be gone.

They'd all know that there was just one hope of saving the ball game.

Mac would know it sooner than any of them.

He'd begin watching Lazy out of the corner of his eye. Maybe he'd shift his seat so as to be next to Lew. Maybe he'd

slide off the bench onto the step of the dug-out, facing the players as they leaned eagerly forward, tanned faces strained.

Mysteriously Mac would have a ball in his hands, fondling it. Mac always had a ball in his hip pocket after Lew Calhoun joined the club.

As the hits would continue to rattle off the rival club's bats, Mac would begin to revolve the ball, watching Lazy's hands.

Then, suddenly, Lazy Lew would have a ball in his fingers—and Mac wouldn't.

The game was as good as won right there.

Give Lazy Lew the feel of the ball in his hand, and the ball game was over.

\* \* \* \* \*

*The gamblers had been watching Calhoun a long time. Some day, they plotted, to play him. He was one of their marked cards: a hidden ace. They would keep him up their sleeve for the right moment; they would save him for the big kill. They knew the proper time would come; they could wait. They waited, watching him covetously.*

\* \* \* \* \*

FOR years there was no doubt in anybody's mind that Lazy Lew loved the feel of a baseball in his fingers more than he loved anything else in the world.

Then he married.

His wife loved baseball, too. That was why they married.

His bride had not missed a ball game in their home city since Lew became the team's pitching ace. She used to marvel at his technique, although he wouldn't have known what she meant if she had called it that to him. But she didn't. She was too wise, too kind, to hurt his feelings by professing "edification." Lew didn't have much of that. Whatever he learned, he acquired by listening and by instinct. Because he listened little, and talked less, acting more and more upon impulse, his knowledge of the world, its ways, and its language was not great.

So his wife called his wizardry of pitching what he called it: The feel of the ball instead of "technique."

They had a talk about that once. And she learned—did this wise woman who became his wife—that the feel of a baseball meant to Lew what music means to a



musician. In a sense Lew's pitching, at least to him, was music; certainly a form of music. It had rhythm; and there was the perfection of mathematics in it.

Yet there was more to his pitching than perfection of form. There was the human side of it.

That feel of the ball—the symbol of the great common game of over a hundred million people, of a whole nation—flushed him with a feeling for humanity, a camaraderie with people, a kinship to mankind—which is part of great art.

When he took a ball in his hand, and his caressing fingers closed around it, and he felt the seam—they said Lazy could tell the manufacturer's name stamped on the cover by the feel of his fingers along the surface—all these things flooded through him.

As he would step from the dug-out fingering a new smooth baseball, and sight the catcher's mitt awaiting the smack of the sphere, and would hear the roar of the crowd in his ears, and see the blurred panorama of the stands, with its flash of color and movement, and would feel the hot sun beating down upon him, and sense the vast blue depths of the summer sky overhead, he would tingle with exhilaration.

Then, as his great muscular arms would slowly swing into action, with blood swarming through every artery of his gangling body, and perspiration oozing out upon his sun-baked face, his whole being would mellow with warmth, and the fragrance of the earth would intoxicate him, he would become part of the very vibration of the universe: brother not only to man but to Nature.

He wouldn't have put it that way, of course. He didn't when he had that talk about it with the woman who understood him so well. But that was what he meant by the "feel of the ball." And the only woman to whom he had ever confided his secret knew then that he was, at heart, a poet: a helpless poet of the diamond.

It was a strange sort of thing: that marriage. It was a strange sort of relationship between Lew and the gentle woman who understood him so well and loved him so deeply. She was as much a mother as a wife to him.

He lavished gifts upon her, looked up

to her almost as a child would have done. He loved her as a school boy loves. Maybe it was because he had never had a girl before. Baseball had been his sole sweetheart.

Lew was so much in love with his wife that he spent most of his salary buying her foolish gifts. That is, everybody else said they were foolish gifts. But Lew didn't think so; and his wife never said so.

She let the money go from them; saw Lazy spending it, squandering it, to bring her things . . . many of them surprising, to say the least, and hardly any of them useful or necessary. But she didn't say a word.

It was all a symbol to her of Lew's love. And she was that kind of woman—if, indeed, there be any other kind—who treasured the prodigal security of their married love more than she would have the tombed security of their married bank account.

After all, he was only a boy; and always would be.

And he always would be as improvident, as impetuous, and as lovable as a boy. So she let him spend their money on her not because she wanted the useless things he bought her, but because he wanted to spend the money on her. It made him happy.

Then Lazy Lew's club won the pennant and entered the World Series heavy favorites.

Lazy was heralded as Mac's ace. In a short series, with a long jump between cities which gave an extra day's rest to the pitching staff and made an "ace" pitcher particularly valuable, it looked to the public as if Lazy Lew Calhoun was to be the world's champion ball team all by himself. His games were considered already "in." The betting odds showed it.

**T**HEN the gamblers got busy.

There are men who love baseball so intensely that they will swear on Spalding's Guide that a baseball game cannot be fixed—that a series cannot be thrown.

They will show you that too many men would have to be bribed or silenced to make the idea of fixing a ball game even considered.

That's what the gamblers, too, had said aloud years ago. Then they had fixed



one. They fixed it with some seven men.

The gamblers who said publicly that it couldn't be done figured privately that anything could be done if you laid enough money on the line and handled it the right way: if you said the right thing to the right men.

Well, the gamblers who got together just before the world series at the end of the season which saw Lazy Lew Calhoun hailed as the greatest pitcher in baseball had the "jack," laid it on the line, and said the right thing to the right man.

Lazy Lew didn't believe there was that much money in the world until the gamblers showed it to him—let him touch it, fondle it, run his huge fingers through it, hold as much of it as he could grasp in his two enormous hands.

They piled it up on the table and watched him stare at it. Then they stacked it and put it back into a suitcase, arranging in neat packages the new five dollar bills, ten dollar bills, twenty dollar bills, hundred dollar bills, thousand dollar bills. It was all crisp and crackly.

At first he thought they were foolin'.

It puzzled him. Figures—"money matters"—except spending all the money you had in your pockets and all you could get from the Club in advance and could borrow from any of the boys you were with at the time—always did puzzle him. It wasn't his game: this "figurin' out sums." He had never done it back in the Hills.

So that was how the gamblers got near him. They puzzled him. It was like giving him an anaesthetic.

Then, his brain numb, his wits befuddled by the figures, they played his main weakness, as they called it to themselves: which was his love for his wife—his desire to make her happy by giving her things: anything, everything.

The gamblers told Lazy he could buy his wife everything if he had the money.

They painted the picture to him: shining motor cars, flashing jewels, a home in Florida—"Northern winters were dangerous for her," a penthouse in New York City in the summer, gowns from Paris, furs, soft lingerie, a maid—"Why, his wife would be a great lady!"

"Gosh!" exclaimed Lew, his eyes opening as wide as his mouth.

When the gamblers saw that he was

picturing his wife as a queen, they switched the talk to morals, to justification—indeed, to duty.

They dwelt on the duty of a man to give his wife not merely the comforts but the luxuries of life.

They stirred him, then—they saw it in his tanned face—by showing him how much money his ball club owner was making. Yet it was the players who were making the money for the magnate. Particularly it was a few of the players—the great players—who brought the cash through the gate. The great players were the drawing cards. It was a handful of stars who had made Organized Baseball's millions: who had built the huge steel stadia.

Take his own club for example. It was his pitching that had made the team the past season, that had won the pennant—that had, in short, made a fortune for its owner. Without Lazy Lew the club would have lost money. And what had he to show for it?

Had he any money saved? Had his wife the things he wanted her to have?

Worse still—and here the gamblers played their marked ace—suppose his wife became ill, met with an accident, was even now lying somewhere desperately injured, had he any money with which to save her life? How much money did he have in the bank at this minute?

Lew turned paler under his tan. They had hit him under the belt. He didn't have a cent saved up. He had spent his whole salary every month to make his wife happy and comfortable—as he had thought—in an expensive hotel suite. If she were taken sick or hurt he was helpless to save her!

These shrewd men were correct. It wasn't right. His mind was in a panic.

The gamblers let his thoughts burn into him, then they pressed the attack.

So, they argued, if he made a little extra money out of the World Series starting tomorrow it would be only receiving back—after his being practically cheated out of it—what he had earned.

It wouldn't be dishonest—"Hell, no!" cried the gamblers, aghast. It would be only justice. How can a man be blamed for getting what really belongs to him?

Then they showed him how safe it was.



As a matter of fact, they said lightly, "There was nuthin' to it!"

IT would not be against the Law. Suppose a man—himself, for instance—turned his pillow over some night—tonight, say—or found a suitcase in his room, a package. Suppose he unwrapped the package and found some money in it,—suppose he found ten thousand dollars in it.

He wouldn't know who had put it there, would he?

"Nope!" said Lew.

And if he didn't know who had put it there, he couldn't give it back, could he?

"Nope!" said Lew.

So he'd have to keep the money, wouldn't he? There wouldn't be anything else to do with it, would there?

"Nope!" said Lew.

No one could say that was wrong, could they?

"Nope!" said Lew.

All right, then. That was all there would be to it. No one the wiser. No crime. No arrest.

Then the gamblers ventured a little further. As a matter of fact, they related, once upon a time a few men—they happened to be ball players, too—actually had found some money that way—in a suitcase or was it under their pillows?—and nuthin' was ever done about it. The Law was on their side.

But in his case, the gamblers concluded, nobody besides themselves—he and they—would ever know anything about it. *They* wouldn't tell! and surely *he* wouldn't tell even his wife because that would spoil the surprise of his presents to her, bought with the money he found. So no one could possibly find out, could they?

"Nope!" said Lew.

Then they explained what he had to do, or rather, not to do. He was not to "bear down" when hits meant runs, and when runs meant a game. That was all: just save his arm a bit.

Even if he did want to pitch hard—or seem to pitch hard—he could throw the right batter the wrong ball at a critical time, and the game would be over. Because he rarely took orders from Mac this would be simple.

He wouldn't have to throw more than half a dozen balls, perhaps, different from

the way he always would have. But those half dozen balls would mean the Series. Most ball games were decided on one pitched ball. There would be no cause for suspicion even among the experts of the Press—and they were the smartest men in Baseball.

Almost was Lazy Lew persuaded right then.

The way the gamblers had put it to him—simple-minded product of the Hills as he was—practically had drugged him. The crafty men almost completely had chloroformed his conscience.

But, because he was a clean-minded man and always had played fair when he was clear in his heart what the fair thing to do was, he still struggled in the gambler's net.

Nettled, they resumed their attack, pinning him down to a final conclusion:

It was simply a question, they repeated, as to whether he loved his wife and wanted to protect her future. With the money he would find in his room that night, no matter what happened to him in the years to come—such as a broken leg or an arm gone dead or any of the other accidents which often happen to ball players and cut off their careers in baseball—the only career in which he could earn real money—his wife's happiness would be assured for life.

If he didn't have that money, and something happened to him, his wife would be a pauper.

"Lazy Lew" winced. He had seen paupers in the Hills.

It was then that he languidly arose, stretched his giant limbs, and prepared to leave.

"Ah reckons," he drawled, "ah bettah look undah mah pillah—or in mah satchel—tonight."

All that night he squirmed uneasily in his bed and dreamed about his wife, who, at the request of Mac, had remained home. The manager apparently had not wanted to risk the effect of such a strong diversion upon his Series' star.

IT is mid-afternoon of the first day of the World Series.

The gamblers, barred from every park of organized baseball because of past betting activities, sit in "The Spider Web"—



their favorite drink-easy rendezvous—near the hotel where Lazy Lew's team is registered.

At their elbows is a radio, broadcasting the game being played not many blocks away.

They only sip the fiery fluid in their glasses; but they fairly tip the radio to their thirsty ears and gulp down in great gurgling drafts the sizzling running reports and comments from the ball park.

It is the last half of the ninth inning, and Mac's famed ball club, although leading all through the game and still ahead, is now facing almost inevitable defeat.

A sudden, sharp rally by the home team in the final frame, as savage as it was unexpected, has filled the bases, and there is nobody out. Only a miracle, apparently, can avert the disaster which has closed amazingly and swiftly in upon the grizzled leader of the invaders.

Although the score is 2 to 1 in his favor there is not a fan in the ball park nor anywhere else on the North American continent nor in any of the American possessions on other continents—standing by on the radio—who believes Mac can save the ball game.

With the bases filled and no one out, and a lusty pinch hitter, Red Carty, striding to the plate to hit for the home twirler, the game is all but "in."

Mac, to the amazement of the press, the public, and both teams, and to the dismay, as first, of the gamblers, had not started his ace, Lazy Lew Calhoun.

And to the further surprise of unseen millions of people watching the game with their ears, he had not yet ordered the best hurler in baseball off the bench to get warm.

Instead, he had kept a left-hander in the bull pen all afternoon; and had kept Lazy Lew at his side in the dug-out.

The radio announcer could not get over it; the gamblers could not believe it. The one commented frequently upon it; the others swore continuously over it—until the ninth inning.

Then they hardly could restrain their elation.

But why had Mac kept Calhoun on the bench? And played right into their hands, as it was turning out?

Mac couldn't possibly have got hep to

their reaching Lew, with \$10,000, the night before. And Lazy couldn't possibly have failed to find the money under his pillow and so have sealed their deal?

They had seen to it that there would be no chance of his keeping the currency and crossing them. Of that they were sure. They had told him his wife was covered by the toughest "gun" in her city. A word from them of a double cross on his part—and she would have a bullet in her heart in half an hour, or in half a year. Her death would be certain no matter how long it took if he kept their money and did not deliver.

Besides, they knew Lew wouldn't cheat anybody if he really understood what it was he was doing. And they had made him understand.

No, they were certain Lazy had the money and would have gone through with his part if Mac had put him in. But Mac hadn't, and apparently wasn't going to. Mac was famous for his strange strategy in World Series games. According to the radio announcer, the left hander was still alone in the bull pen.

"Hello!" suddenly cried the broadcaster, "Hello! What's this? What's happening now?"

He hesitated, and the gamblers could hear the thunder of the stands.

Then there was a sudden hush over the ball park, carried to all parts of the globe by the wireless waves of the air.

"Here's drama, folks!" he cried, "here's strategy: baseball generalship! As Red Carty, the pinch hitter I told you about, approached the plate, Mac stopped the game and apparently is going to send in his southaw to pitch to him. Fitzgerald, who hurled a beautiful game up to this ninth inning, is a right-hander, you know. Mac wants a southpaw in there against Red, I reckon. The ball game is in the balance! But wait!" The announcer suddenly forgot himself again and shouted into his mike. Then—

"No—yes—no—I'm sorry, folks, but you'll have to blame the managers for what is mixing us all up out here! The managers are jockeying their players like chess masters!"

Then he calmed down somewhat and explained.

"Red was waved back to the bench as



his manager saw that Mac planned to send in his southpaw and here comes a right-handed pinch hitter. But—WOW!—look what's going to happen NOW! Oh—Oh—OH! Mac is doing it at last: He has sent his southpaw back to the bull pen and is—is—YES! He's sending in Lazy Lew Calhoun to pitch!"

The gamblers sprang to their feet, upsetting the table.

"It's a million!" they shouted. "It's a set-up for us! One ball—one hit—can do it! Anything at all can win, now! The game is in!"

"Lazy is warming up!" resumed the broadcaster, "he seems to have everything! Whew, what speed! I never saw anything like it! He's sure getting steamed up in a hurry! And he seems to be the coolest and calmest man in the park! He seems to be actually enjoying it! But what a spot to drop a pitcher into: bases full and nobody out, and after this pinch hitter the head of the batting order coming up! What a spot, folks, what a spot!"

THE announcer paused a moment; then blurted on, mixing comment with facts:

"Lazy Lew is always at his best in a tight place, we know, but this is too much to expect of any man! I'm afraid Mac has got him in there too late, this time! The game is practically gone now! But—Oh my—OH MY! Look at that smoke! Look at that speed! It didn't take him long to get warmed up! And there he goes. He's shuffling out to the pitching mound ready to go!"

As a new roar burst from the stands, the announcer stopped a few seconds, then cried out excitedly, expectantly:

"What's going to happen NOW?"

*Well, this is what happened:*

*Lazy Lew struck out the next three batters on twelve pitched balls.*

Two hours later he shuffled into the gamblers' den—they were still there, drinking and waiting for him—and he threw down a bundle which broke open and scattered crisp banknotes all over the wet table.

"Thar's your stuff, boys," he said.

They stared at him, flabbergasted. They

gazed at the money, stupefied, and saw that it was all there. Then they glared back at him, savagely. Only his huge shoulders and loose muscular arms dangling dangerously almost to his knees kept the gangsters from jumping on him.

Finally they found expression.

"What the hell?" they demanded.

They didn't dare call him a double-crosser to his face. In fact, he wasn't a double-crosser: he had brought their money back.

"Why didn't you go through with it?" they demanded again. "Didn't you get the money last night? Wasn't the set-up perfect for you out there at the ball park today? Wasn't—" they could not speak any more. They could only stare at him, blankly, waiting for him to explain.

He explained.

Everything was all right, he admitted; everything was set. He had found the money in his room and had aimed to do just as they had planned. Then something had happened.

In that ninth inning, when the crowd was roaring and stamping and hurling hats and score cards and everything else they could get their hands on in their craze at that batting rally, and the savages on the home team were hitting everything Fitz was shoving up at them, handcuffing the infielders and running the outfielders bow-legged, and his team on the bench were twisting and turning and squirming in helpless agony, watching the game slipping away from them, and the sun was beating down out there on the diamond, from the high, hot blue sky, and the smell of the earth was in his face, and the blood was warm in his arms, and the perspiration was oozing out upon his forehead, and the bases were full and nobody was out—

Lazy Lew paused.

"Go on!" cried the gamblers.

"Waal," drawled Lew, "somethin' happened that made me forget all about this heah deal with you-alls."

"Something happened?" exclaimed the gamblers, astonished, "that made you forget your deal with us? What was it? What happened?"

Lazy Lew paused again. Then he concluded.

"Mac tossed me a ball," he said.



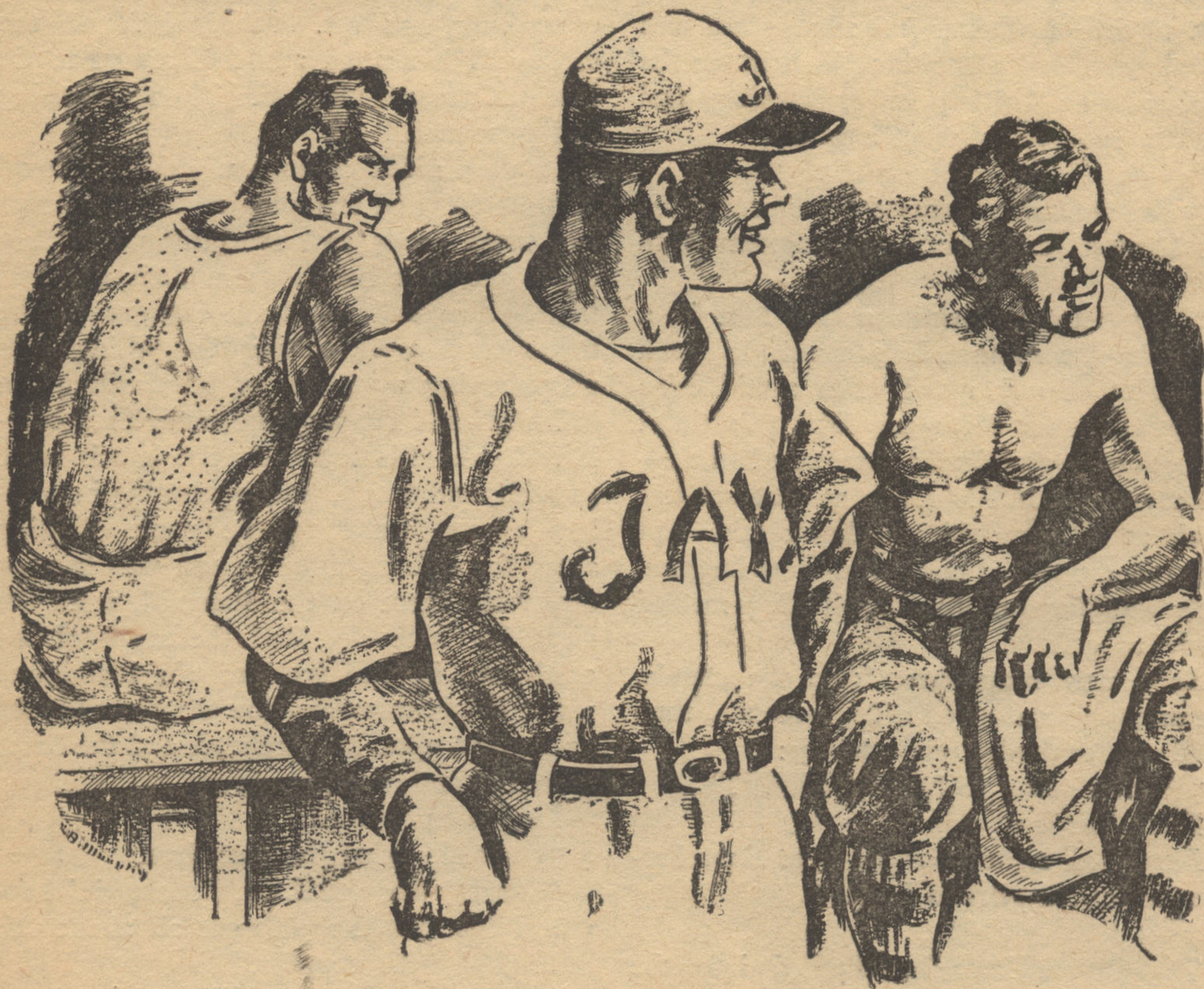
# THE LAST PITCH

*By Harold Rogers*

The ultimatum practically hissed from Hennesey's lips: "All right, Menzel. Here's your chance to live up to your aged rep. You've been squawking for it. Win this game . . . beat this pup of yours . . . and you'll get a new contract. Lose it and by the living saints—"

**I**N HIS ragged clothes, he looked smaller than his sixteen years. His face was thin and darkly tanned, with the tired dirty marks of a long journey still shadowing the edges, where he hadn't washed too clean. Freights are always bad and the one he had ridden from Philly to Minneola was no exception.

You couldn't help but notice his eyes, deep blue with the hidden laughter beneath the slight squint, and you decided that one of his parents had been Irish and the other was probably French or maybe Spanish. You could tell the last by the olive tint to his skin and the way his hair grew thick and black from his temples



He stood there, just inside the door of the dressing room, watching the players pull off their uniforms and head for the showers. At first he didn't speak and you could tell from his eyes that he was searching for something or someone.

and tumbled around over the top of his head.

You saw his shoulders next, sloping and bony beneath the faded blue of his sweater. If you were a ball player you naturally looked at his hands. You can tell con-



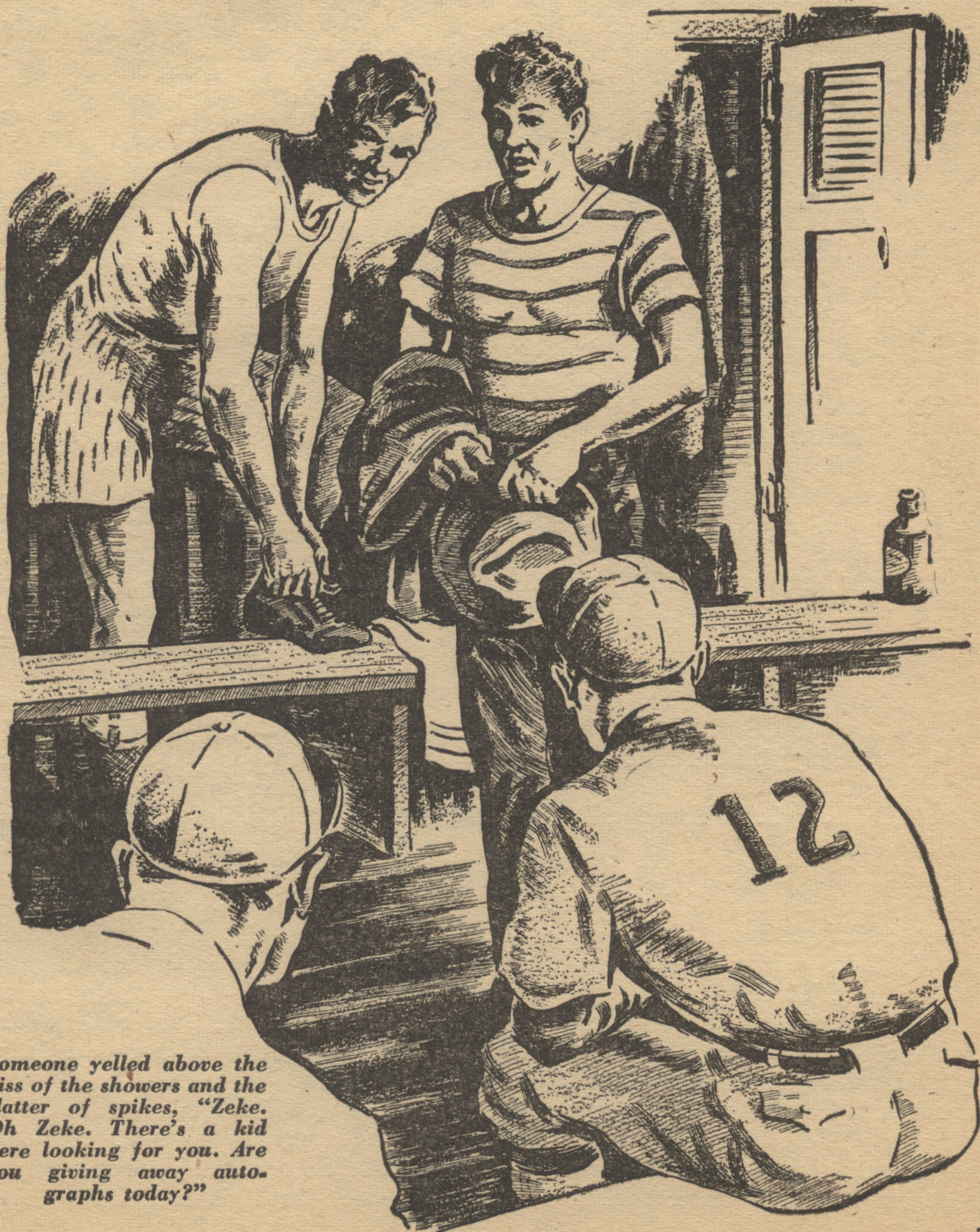
siderable by a person's hands and the kid's were no exception. They were big and broad and the second finger of his right hand was crooked at the first joint. It wasn't hard to imagine him stopping a liner on the end of it during a sandlot game, and it had never been properly set, if it had been set at all.

Finally he spoke and his voice was just in that changing stage where it is never quite certain. "I'm looking for Zeke Menzel," he said.

Someone yelled above the hiss of the

showers and the clatter of spikes, "Zeke! Oh Zeke, there's a kid here looking for you. Are you giving away autographs today?"

A barrel-chested man, with a towel around his middle and not too much red hair on his head, came over. "You'll find old Zeke around the corner, probably stretched out on a rubbing table. You just go around there." He pointed with a crooked finger. He had a nice grin and his voice made it sound perfectly okay. "I caught him today. Now they're trying to



*Someone yelled above the hiss of the showers and the clatter of spikes, "Zeke. Oh Zeke. There's a kid here looking for you. Are you giving away autographs today?"*



put some life back in his wing. I'm Pinky Paige." He stuck out a gnarled paw.

The kid took it. "I'm Tommy Condon," he said. "Pleased to meecha. Now I'd better find Mr. Menzel. I came quite a ways for that." He crossed the room carefully, avoiding benches and baseball gear.

He could feel the eyes of the players watching him and he wished the color wouldn't climb up into his face, but he kept on going across the room and around the corner into a little alcove, where a man lay stretched on the table, with a trainer working on the muscles of his right arm.

"An arm is like a piece of machinery," the trainer was saying, "after about so long it begins to wear out. It happens to the best."

The man on the table shifted uneasily and frowned when he spoke. "There's plenty of games left in it yet. There'd better be," he added. "It's all I know."

**T**OMMY CONDON stood there for just a moment to make certain that he was right. The man on the rubbing table looked older than he did out on the mound. There were traces of gray silvering the dark hair around his temples, and there were grim lines furrowing out from the corners of his mouth and eyes.

He noticed Tommy and raised himself on one arm. "You looking for me, son? I'm Zeke Menzel."

"Yeah," Tommy said. "I came from Philly to see you."

"You did?" Some of the tired lines went out of the big pitcher's face. "I used to pitch there."

"Don't I know it." Tommy Condon stepped closer.

"Just visiting?" the player asked.

"Well sorta," Tommy shifted uneasily. "That is until I get located."

"Oh." Zeke winked at the trainer. "Looking for a job are you?"

"Yeah," Tommy said and his glance slid around the place, then came back to Zeke. "I guess I could use one if it had the right connections." He tried to forget the gnawing in the pit of his stomach and make himself sound casual as he imagined the big pitcher would do under similar circumstances.

"You're keeping an eye on the future, then?" Zeke asked.

"That's right, Mr. Menzel. A man has to look out for himself."

Zeke nodded his big head solemnly, as if he understood perfectly. "Any particular business that interests you?"

Tommy Condon took a deep breath. It was now or never. "Baseball," he said. "I've had considerable sandlot experience. I thought you might know of something where I could start and work up."

"Then I won't have to worry about my job right away?" Zeke questioned.

"No sir," Tommy affirmed guilelessly and with no particular thought of the question. "I'm a pitcher, though."

Again Zeke Menzel nodded, then he turned to face the dressing room. "Pinky!" he shouted. "Hey, Pinky come here."

Pinky Paige rolled in with the towel still wrapped around his middle and Tommy wondered if that were all the clothes he owned, then he was too busy trying to catch their low voiced conversation to think much about such trifles. From what he could gather, it seemed that the bat boy had quit the day before and the opening still existed. It also seemed that the boy had slept in the clubhouse and that he got ten dollars a month besides. To make it even better, there was a hamburger place, just across the street from the park, that needed a boy. It was night work, after the games until one in the morning and he would get his eats for that.

He was fairly leaning forward with his mouth open when the burly catcher whirled around and caught him at it. "So you've got rabbit ears, have you?" Pinky's greenish eyes carried a wicked gleam. "That's bad. It's ruined more than one good player."

Just then a battered door marked "Office" swung open and a short, ruddy faced man came out. He wore his cap well back on his gray hair. The word Jays was lettered across the front of his shirt, but instead of having a number on the back it said, Manager.

Zeke motioned for him to come over. "Mac, this is Tommy Condon. Tommy meet Don MacShane. He's our manager."

MacShane offered his hand and kept on smiling with his lips, but a veil seemed to



come down over his gray eyes and he gave the impression of a man very much in a hurry.

"Pinky and I just hired you a new bat boy," Zeke said.

"So—" the little manager exclaimed. He turned to Tommy. "What about your folks, did you run away? I don't want a truant officer coming around."

Tommy brightened visibly. "You don't have to worry, Mr. MacShane. I'm an orphan. I've been looking out for myself quite a spell now."

"He's from Philly," Zeke interposed.

"How did you get out here?" MacShane asked.

"Freights," Tommy answered. "They save wear and tear on your thumb."

MacShane took a deep breath. "He's your headache." He nodded to the two players. "If you can get him so we can use him—"

He started away and came back. "When did you eat last, son?"

"I had a big breakfast," Tommy lied.

"When, day before yesterday?" MacShane asked gruffly. "Here." He reached in his pocket and pulled out a five. "This is an advance. After you've had a few checks you can pay me back."

Pinky Paige finally went to put on some clothes and Zeke slid off the rubbing table and headed for his locker. Tommy went with him. When Zeke swung the steel door open to get at his things Tommy saw that there were two pictures pasted on the inside. One was of a friendly, smiling woman with soft, wavy hair. The other was of a leggy girl in shorts. She had her hair twisted into pig tails and she looked as if she would swing on you at a minutes notice.

"Who are they?" Tommy asked.

"My family," Zeke told him. "The woman is Ellen, my wife. The girl is Peggy, my daughter. That picture was taken while she was in camp last summer. She's fifteen now."

"Gosh!" Tommy exclaimed. "You got a family? I always thought you were alone like me."

Zeke grinned at him. "Maybe someday you'll meet them. They're up at the lake now while it's hot. In the winter we live in Texas. Pinky's alone, though, like you are. Sometimes he stays with us. We

hunt together and he helps me get in shape before we report at the training camp in the spring."

LIVING with a ball club was a continual round of pleasure to Tommy. At the same time it was home and family to him. Before he had been with them a week he knew everyone from the grounds keeper to MacShane, the manager. He called them all by their first name or nickname which was more often the case. He had his picture in the paper along side of Zeke Menzel and there was the story about how he had come out from Philly on a freight, just on purpose to find Zeke.

Along with the players' names, he knew their batting averages, their favorite stick and what teams they had played with before coming to the Jays. He knew which men were pull hitters and which ones were bunters. He knew where they hit in the batting order and why. He sat in on the pregame talks and once he heard a thing he seldom forgot it.

In the hamburger place he was as good as he was around the dugout and clubhouse. He could fry hamburgers and pour coffee with a speed that was amazing and making change was no trick for a guy who could figure batting averages and team standings.

Keegan, the night manager, a pimply faced youth of twenty, with a patent leather hair comb, watched him for a couple of nights and decided if Tommy wanted to do all the work that was all right with him. Thereafter Keegan spent more time than usual leaning on the counter, shooting the breeze with the customers.

Because the shop was directly across from the park most of those who ate there had more than just a passing interest in the Jays. Their conversation was very pleasant to Tommy's ears and he was content to listen, storing little things away for future reference.

There was one night, though, when he did more than just listen. The Jays had lost that day with Zeke on the mound. It had been a close affair with the Ducks taking them 4—3. Zeke had gone the entire distance and it was only his third loss against nine wins, but it cut Tommy as deep as if he had been knocked off the mound in the first inning. It was the



first time he had seen Zeke lose and he wasn't quite used to the idea, but there was something deeper than that, something he didn't understand yet.

Muggsy Hennesey was the Ducks' manager and losing to him seemed to trouble Zeke more than the loss itself. Zeke's face had been very dark when he came back into the clubhouse. He had slammed his glove into his locker. "That damned Hennesey," he said.

It was one of the few times that Tommy heard him swear, but there was something in Zeke's face that kept him from asking questions. Up until then he hadn't thought too much about the Ducks' manager. If anything, he was larger than Zeke. He had close set obsidian eyes in a florid face, and he did considerable yelling and pacing around. As far as Tommy could see he might have been anyone of a dozen people, but there was something about him that made him a very special hate to Zeke, and that was good enough for Tommy.

The thing happened about eleven o'clock. The place was empty and Keegan had some hot jive coming in on the radio, when the door opened and a couple walked in. Keegan took their orders and called to Tommy, "Two without and a pair of malts."

It was while he was frying the hamburgers that he happened to glance up in the mirror that was trained on the counter and really noticed them. Before a girl had been just part of the crowd, but this one was different. She was like a bright star on a cold night. Even when he watched her in the mirror she dazzled him. Her hair lay soft on her shoulders like a gold-brown flame. Her eyes were deep and blue like a mountain lake and she had a way of arching her eyebrows, when she talked, that fascinated him. She wore little rouge, but her mouth was a scarlet gash and when she parted her lips to laugh, which was most of the time, the even whiteness of her teeth was a jeweled ornament in her cameo face.

## II

**T**OMMY stood there watching her, paying her silent tribute, until the smell of burning meat brought him up

with a jerk, but as soon as he repaired the damage he went back to watching her. He didn't notice her escort until he had served them and then it was only a passing glance. He was a boy of eighteen or so, in a plaid sports jacket, the kind who were a nickel a dozen with their father's car and an enlarged allowance.

Tommy would never have given him a second thought if he hadn't been talking baseball with Keegan. "We'd have won today if we'd had anyone on the mound but that doddering old Zeke—"

That was as far as the conversation ever went. Tommy grabbed the first thing that was handy. It happened to be a piece of banana cream pie. He leaned across the counter with the pie in his right hand and with his left he caught the front of the speaker's sport jacket and lifted him half off the stool. He crammed the pie, plate and all, into the face that had dared speak disrespectfully of Zeke and worked it around with a circular motion.

He was doing a masterful job of it until Keegan grabbed him and pulled him away. "Are you crazy?" he hissed. "That costs you your job." He hustled Tommy out into the back room and went back to offer his most profuse apologies. He even went so far as to refuse to accept payment for the check.

Keegan waited until they were outside, then came back to where Tommy was pulling off his white jacket. "Forget what I said about being fired. That was only for effect. The only time they come in here is when they're slumming. You pay for the pie you ruined and their bill and we'll forget it. Only don't ever let it happen again. If the top management ever heard of it they'd fire us both."

The night shift manager wasn't being generous because of his nature. He remembered that Tommy could do more work than any two boys he had ever had and for him that was very nice.

"You know who they were don't you?" Keegan asked suddenly.

Tommy shook his head. He was still remembering the girl and the remembrance dimmed everything else.

"The hell you don't?" Keegan groaned. "You mean to tell me you don't know them? The broad was Marlyce Pifer. Her dad owns the Jays and the punk with



her was Vance MacShane, the manager's son. What a combination and you pull a stunt like that." Keegan grinned wickedly. "I wouldn't give a nickel for your job as bat boy. Maybe after tomorrow you can work full time here."

However, if Don MacShane ever heard of the pie episode, he never mentioned it to Tommy.

The next day after he had finished laying out the bats for batting practice, Tommy started down along the first baseline to the bull pen. He crammed a full package of gum in his mouth to make an impressive lump in his cheek and he walked with a definite swagger.

He saw Marlyce Pifer sitting there alone in a box, about the same time she spied him. She motioned for him to come over, but at first he pretended not to notice her. When she persisted, he spat through the crack in his teeth, as Pinky Paige did after a close one, and walked over to stand with his fingers hooked through the wire netting.

"Aren't you the new bat boy?" she asked.

"Not so new," Tommy replied. "Don't you ever come to ball games?"

She smiled and tossed her head. "After school was out I went up into Maine for a visit. I only came back yesterday."

"Then I expect you'll be coming regular," Tommy said.

"Oh, now and then." She arched her eyebrows at him. "Say don't you work in the hamburger place across the street?"

"Yeah." Tommy took a defensive chew on his gum.

"Why did you get so angry at Vance MacShane last night?"

Tommy scowled. He had been hoping she wouldn't recognize him as the boy in the hamburger place. "Hell," he said, "anyone can have an off day." He swaggered away then, leaving her to wonder if it were Zeke Menzel or himself to whom he referred.

EVERYDAY after that he took to watching secretly for her to come to her box. A few times he went over and stood with his fingers laced through the screen while he talked to her and she smiled at him, arching her eyebrows when she did.

In the quietness of his room he spent hours rehearsing the various things he was going to say to her the next time they met, but when he stood there before her a thickness seemed to come into his voice and the best he could do was: "So you're here again today. Well, watch us win this one."

She didn't say it in so many words either, "Tommy, you're the one I come to see. I know you won't always be a bat boy. Someday you'll be out there on the mound pitching a no-hitter and I'll be so proud of you." She never actually said that or anything close to it, but he could read the real meaning that lay behind her, oh so casual words.

The afternoons when she didn't come were very empty for him and the few that she came with Vance MacShane were worse than the ones when she didn't come at all. Vance was no baseball fan. He had said so himself. Polo was his game. He hadn't told Tommy that, he never spoke to him, but he had told others and they kicked it around in their clubhouse gossip.

Young MacShane went to a military academy and Marlyce went to a girls' school. It was common knowledge that he was carrying the torch for her. It troubled Tommy to have others think she was Van MacShane's girl when actually she wasn't, but he consoled himself by thinking, "Someday they'll know. Then all you'll have is your polo, you heel."

It was the week before Labor Day that Marlyce invited him to her party. "It's just a little going away affair before I leave for school. You'll come won't you?" And when he hesitated, she added, "For me?"

That clinched it. He bought a new blue sport shirt for the occasion and wore it with the collar outside of his sweater. His pants were freshly pressed and he shined his shoes on a towel. There was a carefully guarded nick on his left cheek, where he had cut himself when he was shaving, and he wore it as a badge of maturity.

The Pifer home was out on Lakeside Road and it covered as much ground as the average apartment building. When Tommy walked up the drive it was already lined with chrome trimmed roadsters and a scattering of family sedans that had been



driven by the unfortunate few who didn't own their own car. Laughter and the quick throb of music mingled together and floated out through the open windows.

He walked up slowly on to the big porch and rang the bell. He had meant to come early, but he hadn't realized how far it was from the end of the carline. He was standing there, wiping his forehead with his handkerchief, when Marlyce saw him and she swept him out on to the floor where they were dancing without giving him a chance to tell her that he didn't know a waltz from a rhumba. He saw Vance MacShane standing in the stag line in a two tone outfit and when they stumbled past he heard him say, "This party stinks. Even the bat boy comes in his best sweater."

Tommy would have gone back then and finished the job he had started in the hamburger place, but Marlyce hung on to him and said, "Don't mind the precious pet. He's pouting tonight because I'm going back to school a day early."

However, after that she only danced with Tommy once and the other girls avoided him as if he belonged to the Saints instead of the Jays. It brought a fierce, hard anger to him and he slipped out before the refreshments were served. "Someday," he said, "someday—" but his thoughts were choked like his words.

**T**HEN it was the middle of September and the season was coming to a close. The Jays had third place cinched, which wasn't too bad considering everything, and Zeke was almost sure of a contract for the coming year. He had won eighteen games and he still had a few left in his arm.

After the last game there was considerable back slapping and handshaking mixed in with the talk about the hunting season. Everyone was jubilant and just a little gay, but as Tommy put the bats away for the last time he took no part in it. Most of the players slipped him a five or a ten and it made a sizable roll, but the winter months stretching ahead were going to be a hollow shell with Zeke and Pinky down in Texas and Marlyce away to school.

He worked slow, wiping the bats as he put them away and the room was almost

empty when Zeke came over to him. "You about packed to leave?"

Tommy looked at him, then away. Where did Zeke think he was going?

"Hey, wait a minute." Zeke grabbed him by the shoulder. "You didn't think Pinky and I were going to leave you here, did you? You're going to Texas with us and to school." Then as an after thought he added, "It will be nice to have someone to go with Peg."

So they went to Texas. Ellen, Zeke's wife was as pretty as her picture and twice as nice. Just before supper Peggy came in. She was a leggy colt with freckles across the bridge of her nose. She wore bobby socks and a sloppy Joe sweater. Her hair could have stood combing and she had a way of standing with her hands on her hips and appraising things frankly with her big brown eyes. It made Tommy want to shut his own eyes and remember Marlyce Pifer. The comparison was horrible.

Zeke said, "Peg I want you to meet Tommy Condon. He's the boy I've been writing about."

"Hi," she said, and just stood there watching him, but after Zeke had gone and they were alone she let him know what she was thinking. "So you're another ball-player. Why couldn't you have been a flyer, or—or an actor? All we ever have around here is baseball. I get so sick of it I could scream."

Tommy felt his face redden. "You're screwy," he told her. "If you could see some of the girls who come to our games—"

"I have," she retorted.

That night at the table Pinky said, "All right, Peg, catch this one. We're trailing the Comets by one run. We have a man on first with one down. What do we do?"

"Send for the Marines," she said darkly. Then her face brightened. "Van Johnson is showing at the Paramount." She looked straight at Tommy.

He shifted uneasily. He remembered that Zeke had said something about having someone to go with Peg. "I'll be going down town," Tommy said stiffly. "I'll see that you get home."

Zeke and Pinky went on a hunting trip and Tommy started to school. Other years he had gone because it was warm and there had been a free lunch at noon for



those who needed it and he had always been one who did. Then too he liked to read and the school had plenty of books and magazines. Mostly he liked history and geography. Math wasn't too bad because you used it to figure batting averages and team standings, but English stunk. Without any conscious effort on his part Tommy had finished his junior year and now that he was seventeen, his birthday was the tenth of September, he was a senior. It didn't mean a think to him.

Eventually readjustments took place and things settled down into a regular routine. The days in south Texas were still warm and sunny when Zeke and Pinky returned from their hunting trip and while the rest of the world played football and later basketball they went to work on Tommy. There was a wire cage with a plate and a mound where Zeke worked and each evening after school they took him out there.

Pinky, in a faded sweatshirt and with a big mitt on his left hand, crouched behind the plate. Out on the mound Zeke and Tommy, in similar faded sweatshirts, took turns pitching to him. About all Zeke did was toss them in to keep his arm limber and he spent long hours showing Tommy how to hold the ball and little things about form and control.

They worked with him patiently, carefully, drawing on their vast store of knowledge, teaching him things that other youngsters wasted years learning. And because he was young and healthy and quick and because he lived baseball, he soaked up the things they told him and asked for more.

Yet all of the while he worked and while he was in school there was a great longing that was always with him. It was for Marlyce Pifer. Peggy would come out at times and stand with her hands on her hips watching them, but he would close his eyes and imagine she were Marlyce.

A dozen times he penned voluminous letters to Marlyce and always he tore them up. They said exactly what he felt, but when he read it on paper the color would climb to his face and he knew it was no good. Finally though he could stand it no longer. He wrote her a brief note in his big handed scrawl. He didn't say

much and it was stilted and formal, but it was a letter and it carried his address. Thereafter for nearly a month he watched the box in the post office. Finally one day it came.

It was a square envelope of pale blue. When he opened it there was a delicate insidious scent that clung to his nostrils and reminded him of her hair, when they had been dancing together. The letter was brief, as his had been, but she enclosed a picture of herself and it was quite the happiest day he had ever lived. He carried the letter with him wherever he went. When he was alone he would read it, then hold it up to his face and breathe deep of its perfume.

He put the picture on the dresser, but after the first day whenever he returned to his room it was always lying face downward. He tried propping it up in various positions and leaving the windows of his room closed, but the picture refused to stand and finally it disappeared completely. Then the thing that had been happening dawned on him.

He didn't accuse Peggy before the family and Pinky. He was too cagy for that. He walked to the library with her and when they were alone he demanded the picture. At first she denied any knowledge of its existence, but when he was insistent, she slapped his face. He grabbed her wrists then and held them. She burst into tears and kicked at his shins in a very undignified fashion, but the next night when he returned from school the picture was in its usual place. He picked it up and saw that it had been torn in two and then had been neatly mended with glue and tape.

### III

IN February Tommy came into the living room where Zeke sat reading the evening paper, when suddenly Zeke flung it from him. "Damn!" Zeke said. "Oh damn it all!" He went out of the room and his face was very dark.

When he was sure that Zeke was gone Tommy went over and picked up the paper and saw the thing that had happened. Don MacShane was going to Lewiston to manage the Comets, the southernmost club in the league and Muggsy Hennesey had re-



signed his managership of the Ducks and was going to handle the reins for the Jays. He had almost forgotten Zeke's hate for Hennesey, but once more it became a thing that was very real though he didn't know what had brought it about.

Tommy cornered Pinky that night and at first Pinky was evasive. "The game is full of personal grudges," he said. "This is going to be hard on Zeke." He would have let it go at that, but Tommy was persistent.

"... so," Pinky said finally, "It goes clear back to the time when they were rookies, trying to break into the big show. There were many things, but the most was a girl by the name of Ellen Terry. She's Ellen Menzel now. Zeke was the lucky man and married her. Hennesey has never forgiven him. He swore then that he would get even if it were the last thing he did and this is probably his chance. He'll ride Zeke and there'll be a fight, because they have fought before. Then Zeke's pitching will slump and that is what Hennesey wants."

Everyday after that Zeke worked hard in front of the practice cage and he did some road work to get in condition for training camp, but to Tommy he didn't mention the change in managers, although he must have realized that the youngster knew.

When Zeke and Pinky left for training camp in Florida Tommy would have gone with them, but Zeke was firm in his refusal and Pinky backed him up. "You stay in school, graduate," Zeke told him. "After that you can play ball if you want to, maybe go to college during the winter, but now it's school for you. Good baseball players are educated these days. When the years start creeping up on them they don't have to worry. They can start their own business."

Tommy watched them go and for a few evenings he stayed down town and moped around the pool hall, then Peggy caught him up. "If you're ever going to amount to anything you've got to practice and keep on practicing. You act like a jerk because you couldn't go with them. Do you want to be a dumb bat boy all your life?" She stood with her hands on her hips and glared at him.

"All right Miss Know-it-all, but tell

me one thing, how am I going to pitch if I don't have anyone to catch me?"

Her head came up and for the first time Tommy noticed that her hair was combed. It lay in a heavy dark mass down around her shoulders framing her independent face. "I'll help you."

"You?" he questioned. "A girl!"

She didn't answer him, but turned on her heel and went into the garage. When she came out she was carrying an old archery target. It was almost as big as she was, but she lugged it out together with a standard and set it in front of the practice cage, then went back after some balls.

Tommy snorted. "You must think I'm a sap."

"I do," she agreed vehemently. "Daddy used to spend hours practicing this way. I'd sit out here and score him. He got five points if he hit the bull's-eye, four if he hit the ring next to it and so on, but maybe you think you're too good for that."

"No," he said slowly, then shut his eyes and shuddered. If Marlyce should see him—

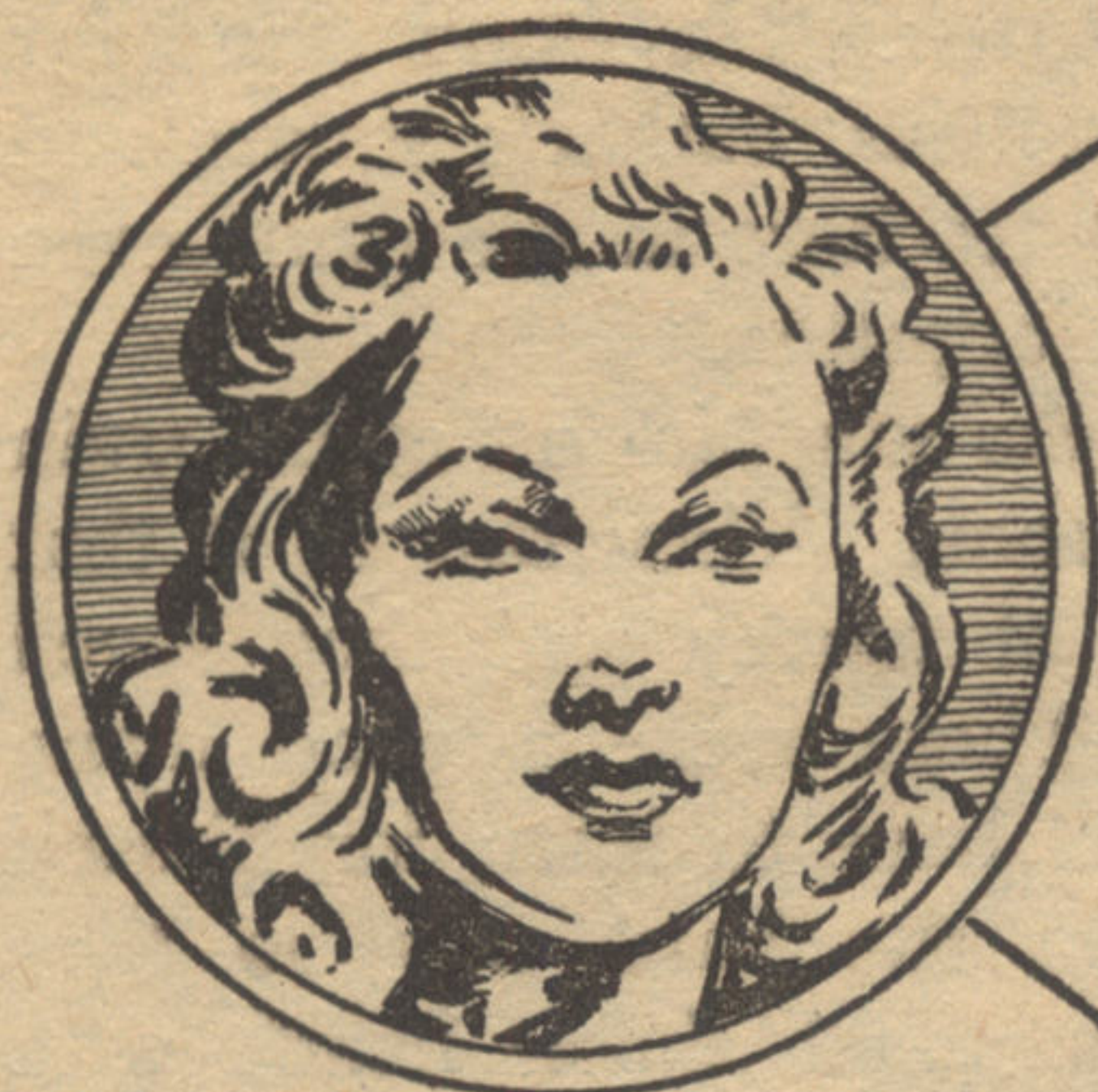
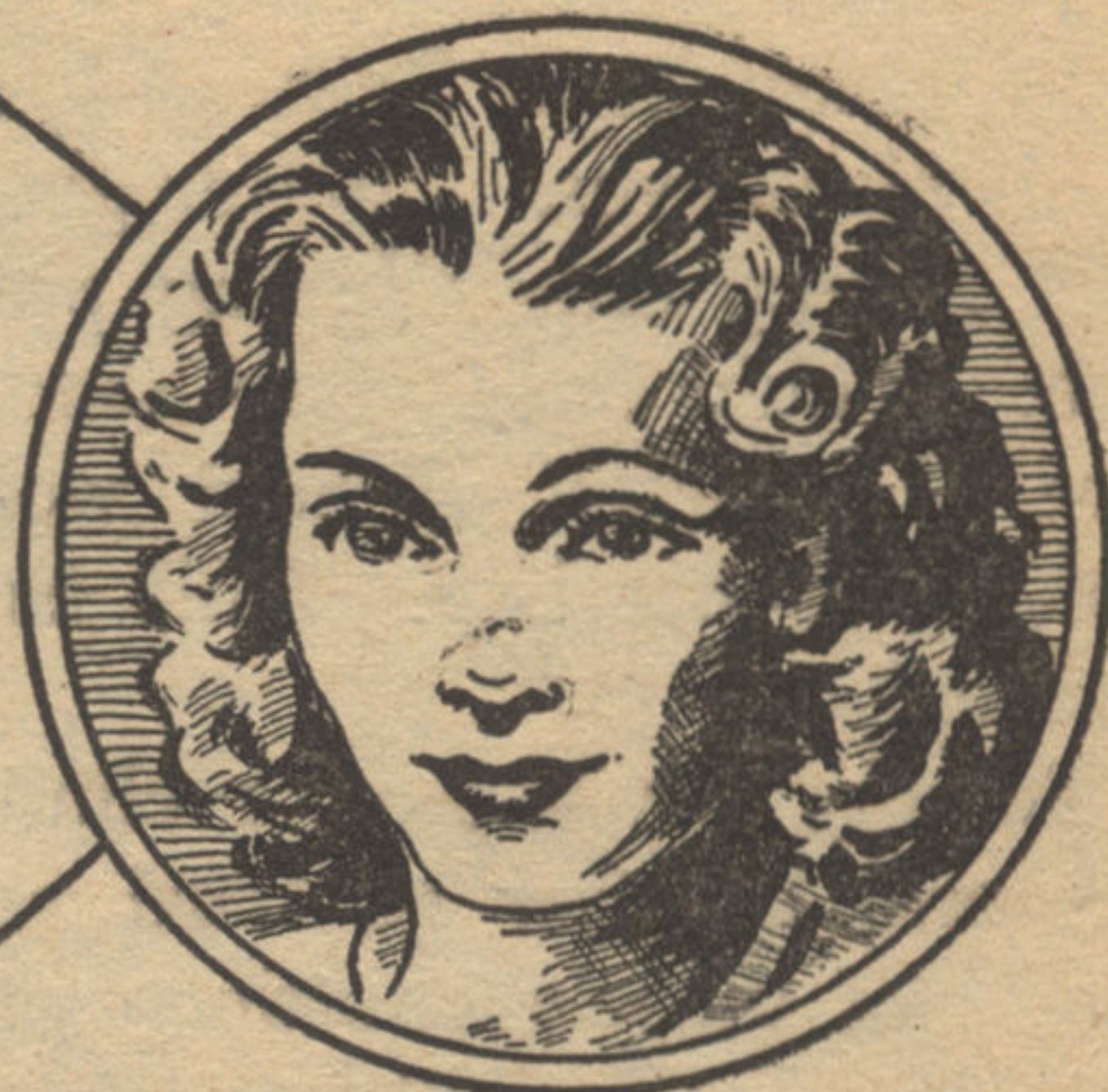
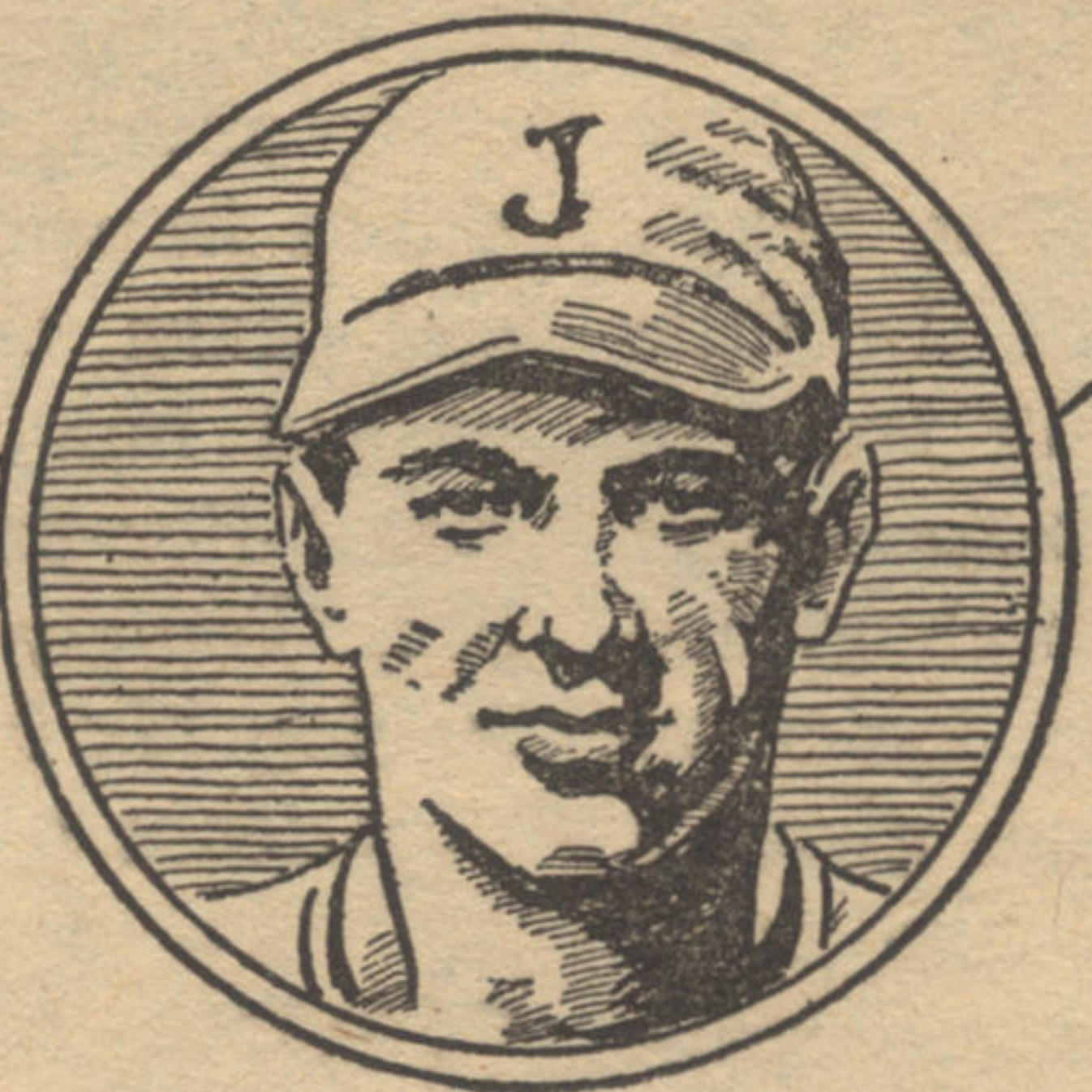
He went to work while Peggy brought out a stool and parked herself to one side of the target where she could see without any danger of getting hit. She had an old score pad and a pencil and her tongue was sharper than the pencil. Once she even tried to show him how to wrap his fingers around the ball, but he balked furiously.

"You can be the score keeper, but by gosh you stay off the mound or I'll never throw another ball as long as I live," he shouted.

Peggy went back to her score keeping, but she chiseled him down on the balls that hit the line giving him the count for the lower ring and he very nearly threw his arm out trying to hit the bull's-eye and knock the target over at the same time.

**I**N May there was the Junior-Senior Prom. Peggy was a junior and because Tommy still remembered that Zeke had said it would be nice to have someone look out for her, he took her. He danced with her just once, then spent the rest of the evening standing with the stags. He didn't want anyone to get the wrong impression.



*Tommy idolized Zeke**Marlyce was like a bright star on a cold night,**Peg was a tomboy—but she grew on you.**and Zeke was on the way out*

On the way home she was very thoughtful. Finally she said, "Look, Tommy, don't you ever think of anything but baseball and—and that girl?"

"What girl?" he asked, and knew perfectly well which one she meant.

"You know," she said. "The one whose picture—" She caught herself quickly with a half choke.

"Sure," he answered. "I think of lots of things, but you wouldn't understand. You're just a kid and she's a woman." It was his chance to get even with her for tearing the picture.

Tommy was graduated from high school the first week in June. Peggy and her mother were going north to join Zeke in a week or two, but he didn't wait for them. He had enough money left from what the players had given him at the close of the last season to buy a ticket, but he kept it in his pocket and two hours after he had his diploma he was aboard a freight, heading for Minneola and the Jays' park.

There were plenty of changes in the lineup. Over half the team was new and it wasn't the old happy-go-lucky place as Tommy remembered it.

Tommy saw the worried look in Zeke's eyes and he already knew from the papers that he wasn't doing too well. Zeke was

a slow starter. All he needed was time and hot weather. If they would give him that he would win his share of the games for them. But would Hennesey?

Tommy saw a new boy wearing his old uniform and carrying out the bats so he didn't ask about his job. He went along with them out on to the diamond and when Zeke and Pinky went into the bull pen, he went with them as if he had a perfect right. He picked up a ball and started firing it across, slow and easy at first, then when the sweat started to flow he began bearing down. He saw a pleased expression creep into Pinky's face and pretty soon Zeke quit pitching to watch him.

"Three months," Zeke said and counted them off on his fingers. "March—April—May. It's unbelievable."

Pinky came up then and said, "All you need is a little game experience. If I couldn't see you I'd imagine it was Zeke heaving them in."

It was the greatest compliment Tommy had ever had. The world rocked and swayed and he had to blink a couple of times to get the mist out of his eyes.

After the game, Zeke took him in to the manager's office, but Hennesey would have none of it. Maybe it was because the Jays had lost that day. Maybe it was



because of the things that had transpired in the past.

"We're already carrying too many players," the new manager snapped. "Way too many. We're going to cut down right soon. Most of the youngsters will have to go and some of you old timers." He looked straight at Zeke with a cold glitter in his black eyes. "Better get going, Menzel. I keep only winning pitchers on my club. You'll have your hands full taking care of yourself without worrying about last year's bat boy. This isn't a kindergarten."

Tommy saw the color climb into Zeke's face and his jaw go hard with the little bulges of muscle knotting out in front of his ears. He waited for Zeke to speak and when he didn't Tommy felt both chagrined and angry. He knew by the looks on Zeke's face that he would have given a month's salary to have kept him from knowing the truth, and the sudden realization that it could be the truth hurt even more.

Then something rose up in Tommy. It was the same thing he had felt when he was a kid fighting for scraps in the alley and when he had jammed the pie into Vance MacShane's face.

He said, "Some day, Hennesey, you'll eat those words and you might as well begin now."

Before Hennesey could move Tommy grabbed his cap and jerked it down over his eyes. He drew back his hand to slap him along side the jaw, but Zeke clamped a hammerlock on him and wrestled him out through the door.

Pinky saw them coming and recognized the signs of trouble. Wisely he kept silent then, but that night he cornered Tommy and wormed the story from him. "I've been afraid of that. A man's only got about so many games in his arm and Zeke has just about hurled his string. Every night in our room I work on his arm. If Hennesey will only give him time, wait until it gets hot, Zeke will win his share of the games yet this season, but when it comes to next year—" Pinky shook his head.

When Tommy met Zeke the next morning in the hotel lobby, the old pitcher's face was a closed book. If he had any feelings they were not mirrored in the set

of his mouth or in the depths of his eyes.

"I talked to Rufus Ryan long distance last night. He's the manager of the Harvesters up at Targo. He's willing to give you a trial. If I can't keep my eyes on you, there's nobody I'd rather have doing the job than Rufus. He won't stand for any monkey business, but he's square and one of the best teachers in the game even if he has been forgotten."

Pinky and Zeke saw him off at the train a little before noon. They saw to it that he had plenty of money and they saved their advice. There were a good many things he would have to learn for himself and learn them the hard way so they wished him luck and shook hands with him. For the first time he could remember, Tommy had the distinct feeling of leaving his family behind. It was a new experience to him.

**T**OMMY CONDON reported to Rufus Ryan at the Harvesters' park the next afternoon, but if Ryan were a forgotten man as Zeke had indicated, there was nothing in his manner to show it. He had a way of rocking forward on the balls of his feet like a football lineman and he squinted down at Tommy with his blue eyes, sizing him up before he spoke. He was a big man, broad of shoulder and thick of chest, and age had failed to take the snap out of his voice and body.

"So you're Tommy Condon, are you, and Zeke Menzel says you're ready to go," he said, sliding his long fingers over a face that was the color of old bronze. "That's a high compliment coming from Zeke. I'd go far on it."

"You know Zeke?"

"Know him!" Ryan slapped his rough hands together. "Lord love you boy, originally we're from the same town back in Michigan, though I didn't really know him until he came to Philly. He was only a youngster then and I was on my way down, but he was the most promising rookie I ever saw. We worked together for two seasons. Those were the days."

Then Ryan was all business. "We'll get you a suit and I'll introduce you around. For a while you can work out in the bull pen with the rest of the pitchers. When I need you I'll holler."

Tommy met the rest of the team and



they were a far cry from the Jays. There were a few whose names he remembered from the days when they had been diamond greats, getting their reams of publicity and their cut of the World Series' checks. Now they were men on the way down, trying to eke out another season or two of playing and there was a certain wistfulness in their manner.

The rest were youngsters. Some of them had a year or two of experience in organized baseball, others were from high schools and college teams. A couple were ex-sandlotters like himself. All had one thing in common. They were eager, ambitious, waiting for the call that would send them soaring to unknown heights. Many would fall by the way, but individually they felt it wouldn't be them and they went out and made their bid for that elusive thing called fame.

#### IV

FOR a week Tommy worked in the bullpen with the other moundsmen and when it came his turn he stepped up to the plate and took his raps. His hits were well placed and long, but he never thought much about that. Pitching was the thing that counted, the only thing.

They were playing the Ravens the day Rufus Ryan finally gave him the nod. Immediately his lips burned dry and his hands became wet and slimy. He kept wiping them on the leg of his pants, but it didn't seem to do any good.

He took his warmup practice and went out on the mound. Slidell, the Harvester catcher, finished buckling on his pads and the Raven leadoff man crowded up to the plate. Tommy saw Slidell's signal. He was calling for one high and inside. Tommy wound up fast and whipped the ball toward Slidell's mitt.

It never got there. It floated along the groove as straight as a string and as big as a balloon. The Raven hitter came around with the full weight of his body behind the stick and the ball sizzled out into right field for a clean single.

Tommy decided he wouldn't make the same mistake a second time so he took his time winding up and forgot to watch the runner on first until he heard the second baseman's wild yell. Then it was too late.

The Raven runner hit the dirt and went into the bag with a hook slide while the umpire spread his hands wide. Safe!

Slidell took his mask off and waddled out toward the mound. "Nice going," he said reproachfully. "The guy tags you for a single on the first pitch and you hand him an extra base to make him feel welcome."

Tommy kicked at the dirt with his spikes and rubbed up a new ball.

"They know you're new and now they expect you'll blow higher than a kite," the catcher continued. "We'll fool them. We're going to cut the corners and mix 'em up. Remember you've got four chances to the hitter's three."

Slidell scuffed back toward the plate and Tommy wondered if his hands would ever stop sweating. He glanced back over his shoulder at the runner on second, then shot one into the mitt for a called strike. He sent the second man to face him down swinging, but the next Raven singled and the runner scored from second.

A sort of wild desperation gripped Tommy. He wound up and pitched as he had that day when he was sore at Peggy and had tried to knock the target off the standard. He worked too fast and wasted effort holding the runner close to first, but he finished the inning with only one run chalked up against him.

He went over and took a long drink of water and tried to think himself into steadiness, but it was useless. His hands continued to sweat, while his stomach froze. There weren't more than about five hundred people in the stands, but they looked more like five thousand. He knew Rufus Ryan was watching him and that Zeke and Pinky would read about it in the paper. He was very scared.

He wobbled through the second and the top half of the third with the score still 1—0 in favor of the Ravens. Four Harvester hitters had gone to bat in the first and three in the second so that brought Slidell up to start off the last half of the third.

The Harvester catcher worked the count to three and two, then chipped out a shaky single. Tommy picked up a bat and walked out to the plate. All the while he was thinking that in a few minutes he would be back out there on the mound.



He swung on the first pitch and rattled it off the right field boards for a clean double. Slidell was a streak on the paths and scored standing up on an overthrow to the plate.

Blaney, the Harvester leadoff man, came up for his second trip and singled to score Tommy from second. From there they went on to win the ball game 6—3.

OUTWARDLY Tommy was very quiet and self-contained when Rufus Ryan called him into his office, after he had showered and dressed. "You looked nice out there," Ryan said. "You got away with murder. Where did you learn to hit?" He went on then to point out a few things. "If you're going to be a pitcher you've got to have a swivel neck and gimlet eyes. You've got to carry a complete picture of the place in your mind at all times. You have to know where everyone of your own men are, just as you know where the runners are. Never forget that. And when you go up to hit, don't forget to look to me for the signal. That time you doubled on your first trip up was very nice, only I called for a sacrifice. It could have been bad, you crossing things up that way. If you want to stay and work I'll give you a chance." Ryan grinned at him. To Tommy it was as good as a bonus.

Before he went to bed he had a telegram from Zeke and Pinky. The next day he received a note from Peggy.

She said: "Hi Jerk: How does it feel to be a big shot? Just make believe you're pitching at the old target out in our back yard. You'll win plenty of ball games."

He put Peggy's note with the telegram in a top dresser drawer and spent the morning trying to compose a letter to Marlyce. He wanted to tell her that he had won the game for her, but that sounded presumptuous. It was queer, but whenever he tried to write or talk to her he was always tongue tied. Maybe it was because of the way she arched her eyebrows at him. Finally he gave it up and sent her a copy of the Targo Times. There was a big picture of him with the heading: "Wins first game for Harvesters."

After that Tommy took his turn at mound duty. He took his wins and his losses, but Ryan never left him in long enough to take a real shellacking. They

found he could hit, and in the games he played he went up to the plate and took his cut at the ball the same as an outfielder. The Harvesters weren't a pennant club that year, but they played good consistent ball. Twice a week Ryan held morning practice, teaching the youngsters the fine points of the game, calling on the veterans to help him out.

Again it was nice. Ever since he had come to Zeke, the path to the top had been rosy and he should have been happy, but there were a couple of flies in his ointment and they bit very deep.

Every day he watched the papers. Zeke wasn't going too hot. He had won eight and lost seven. He had worked a few times as a relief pitcher and early in July Muggsy Hennesey brought a couple of young hurlers up from the Mississippi Valley League. For Zeke, the hand was beginning to write on the wall.

Each day, just as he read the papers about Zeke, he watched for a letter from Marlyce. It was almost the first of August before it came. She wrote: ". . . frightfully negligent of me Tommy, not to have written sooner. Of course, I'm proud of you. This has been a terribly busy summer for me. I've seen only two ball games. This fall I expect to go to the U if I don't get married. . . ."

The last, "if I don't get married—" fastened itself in his mind. It clung there like a dark cloud crowding out everything else. His stomach felt empty, worse than it had the day he pitched his first game for the Harvesters. He was tempted to fly to Minneola, but he was slated for mound duty that day. The latter didn't last long, however. They were playing Duluth and the boys from the lake city went to work on him with a vengeance in the first inning and finished it up in the second. With one run across, the bases loaded and nobody out Rufus Ryan waved him to the showers.

That should have hurt, but he thought only of the added minutes it gave him. He had dressed and left the clubhouse before the rest of the team came clattering in on the short end of a 6—2 score. He sat in a telephone booth until nearly midnight trying to call Marlyce long distance, but was unable to locate her and finally gave it up. Back in his room he



spent the remainder of the night composing an impassioned letter. He finished it by saying: ". . . if you will only give me time. If you will only wait. If I have a good season with the Harvesters again next summer it should be my last. Then I can step out and make some real dough for us, darling."

The week he waited for her reply was interminable. He lost another game and even his hitting, which wasn't expected from a pitcher, and yet had always been solid, went into a slump.

When her letter finally came, he walked to his room and locked the door. He nearly tore it in two opening it. She wrote: ". . . never dreamed you felt that way. You are so naive, Tommy dear. If you were here I would kiss you."

He should have read between the lines, but he didn't. He stood on his head in the center of the bed. He would be eighteen that September and the next year, with one season already under his belt, oh happy days!"

The Harvesters finished the season early in September, in third place. Just before Tommy left, Rufus Ryan came to him. "You'll be coming back next year, boy, never fear, and at more money, too. This winter I want you to get plenty of rest and if you're with Zeke get him to work with you. He'll know when you've had enough." But Tommy only half heard him. His mind was already in Minneola.

THERE was a storm and a section of the track was washed out so the train was five hours late. Tommy paced the aisle and fretted like an expectant father. The first thing he did, when they arrived at the station, was to call the Pifer residence. Marlyce, he was informed, had left early that morning for Chicago. He cursed the trains and the rains and the city felt very empty.

After he had cleaned up a bit, he called Zeke and Pinky. The Jays still had seven games left to play. He went out to the park and saw Zeke win his twelfth victory for the season, but he also saw that there were more gray hairs around his temples, and that the lines in his face had been etched a little deeper during the summer.

That night he would have gone on to Chicago, but Zeke and Pinky had already

made plans for him, while he was there, and later to take him to the World Series. They went to St. Louis and then to New York. It was one of the best series that had ever been played, but Tommy's heart wasn't in it. He caught the worried expression in Zeke's eyes and he had worries of his own. He should have learned plenty from watching the two great teams play, but it was wasted time for him.

With the series finished they went back to Texas. They hunted for a week, then Pinky pulled out the wire cage and grinned at Tommy. "Reckon it's time we went to work on you, young fellow." He glanced around to make sure that Zeke wasn't near, and added, "It will be good for him. I think he'll get a contract, but he'll take a big cut. Unless he really breaks loose, Hennesey will shove him back to relief hurler and maybe clear out. I hope it's hot next summer, hotter than hades."

So they worked through what was left of October and all of November up into December. The past winter, Tommy soon learned, had just been kindergarten stuff. They worked on the fine points and they worked on control. Nothing was too small for Zeke to overlook. In his day he had been a master of his profession and now he was passing it all on to the boy who had followed him out from Philly, the town that had toasted him in the heyday of his glory.

A few times Peggy came out to watch them, but mostly she was busy with her own affairs. She was a high school senior and had become quite dignified, though she still had a habit of standing with her hands on her hips and looking at people, with a frank open stare.

Once when Tommy walked down town with her to a movie, she said, "I think I'll take up nursing and then be an airline hostess. One meets such fascinating people and it would be very thrilling. I might even get killed and have my picture in the paper. Would you care?"

"Sure," Tommy said, without listening and he thought, "Have your dreams, kid. You'll change your mind a dozen times before then."

It was the first of January and the beginning of a new year. Up at Minneola the U would be reopening after the holidays, for the beginning of the Winter



Quarter and Marlyce would be there. She hadn't been married, yet she gave no explanation in the few letters she had written.

Tommy made up his mind one evening and the next morning he was packed. He told Zeke and Pinky when he came down to breakfast.

"What's the matter with the schools down here?" Zeke asked. "That way you could come here on weekends and we could work with you."

Tommy shook his head. "I get lonesome for snow."

"What are you going to take?" Pinky asked.

"Well—" Tommy said. "Well, I haven't exactly made up my mind. Probably Phys Ed, or I might even take business."

"Both good," Pinky replied. "Need any money?"

He saw Peggy for just a minute and there was a certain mistiness in her eyes when she said, "It's going to be awfully quiet around here, with you away."

He answered, "You folks have been mighty good. You're the only family I have. I'll be seeing you, kid."

**D**URING the day Tommy took Phys Ed and at night he took Marlyce. He bought himself a roadster and spent all the money he had saved. He wrote to Pinky for a loan. He forgot Rufus Ryan's admonishment about rest. He danced until all hours of the night and drank a bit more than was good for him, but he kept Marlyce so busy that no one else had a chance and that was the thing that counted.

He didn't give her a ring, but as far as he was concerned things were pretty well understood and the three months quarter slid along in a blistful haze. The fact that scholastically it wasn't too successful, didn't disturb Tommy in the least.

Once he ventured to ask Marlyce about Vance MacShane.

"But really, Tommy dear," she said arching her eyebrows at him through a haze of cigarette smoke, "I prefer my men more mature. After all he's so insipid." She dismissed it with a wave of her hand.

When Tommy reported to the Harvesters' training camp, Rufus Ryan took one look at him, noted the tell-tale signs on his face, and asked, "When did you see Zeke last?"

"The first of the year."

The Harvester manager nodded. "I thought so. Well, you're young yet and can take it. We'll sweat it out of you."

They practiced in the morning and again in the afternoon. Along with the diamond drill, Rufus handed them a stiff jolt of calisthenics and topped that off with some road work. Again in the evenings he called them together for some blackboard drill. There were plenty of newcomers on the team and Ryan meant that they should be given a chance to display their wares.

No matter, though, how tired he was at night, Tommy always found time to write to Marlyce. On weekends he called her long distance. He re-read every letter he got from her a dozen times and after he had talked to her he would sit quietly, trying to remember her voice and how it had sounded smooth and sophisticated.

He had a couple of letters from Zeke and one from Pinky. Zeke was quite non-committal, but Pinky was more frank. "Zeke looks good," he wrote, "better than I've seen him for a long time. I only hope it's hot when we go north. There's a possibility that Hennesey may still use him as a starter."

By the time they opened against the Lumbermen, Tommy was one big bundle of nerves. This was his season. To him it was all or nothing. It would take real dough to support a girl of Marlyce's tastes, more than the Northern League paid its pitchers.

He drew the opening assignment and right from the start he let his opponents know that he meant business. During the first three innings, a Lumberman never saw first and the Harvesters racked up two runs.

In the fourth and the fifth they got to him and jammed a run across in each stanza. Then he settled down and when the final ball was pitched the Harvesters had the game 7—3.

They played four teams at home before they went on the road and they won all four of the series. They were a hustling ball club. On the road they took their wins and a few losses. A team can't go through a season without losing a few, but here again Ryan proved himself a master strategist. He knew when to put on the



pressure and when to ease off. He didn't demand perfection, but he didn't expect a man to make the same mistake twice.

The middle of May, the season turned rainy and cold. It was that way all over the north central states and it extended as far south as Kentucky. There were three weeks when entire leagues were rained out more times than they played. The idleness was hard on players and it meant that later on they would have to bunch up on their games and play too many double-headers.

It bothered some worse than others, but Tommy was one of the fortunate few who could work every day or lay off for a week and then come back as good as ever. That was the advantage of youth. With the Jays, Zeke was having his trouble. He failed to go the distance three times in a row and Hennesey shoved him back into a relief role. For a few innings he was effective. He could pitch with his head and what there was left of his arm. After that he was just a tired old man. Pinky said as much in one of his letters. "Heat," he wrote. "If we'd only get some blistering weather. . . ."

During one of the streaks of clear weather, the Harvesters swung south and played the Granite City team in their home park. It was a three game series and they split the first two games. The Granite City team was new in the league, but they were fast making a bid for recognition. They were a mixed aggregation like the Harvesters, some veterans on their way down, some youngsters on their way up. They played fast ball, and they played for keeps. They were already well ensconced in second place and they had their eyes on the Harvesters' upperberth.

They went out for the third and final game of the series with Tommy Condon on the mound for the Harvesters and Smoky Howell performing a similar task for the Granite City Rockmen. Howell was a veteran from way back. He had been up and down baseball's ladder like a paperhanger. He was one of baseball's burly oldsters with a heavy, crooked nose overhanging a protruding upper lip. It was hard experience pitted against a meteoric rising youth.

In the first two innings neither team put

a man on first, but in the last half of the third the first man to face Tommy singled and the Rockmen managed to work him around the paths and across the plate for a score.

The game went into the fifth inning with the score unchanged, and the one run lead the Rockmen had, began to loom very large. Then in the first half of the sixth, Jergins, the Harvester second sacker got hold of one for a single. Lasiter, the shortstop flied out and Slidell, the catcher, went down on strikes. That brought Tommy to bat, with Jergins still standing on the initial sack.

Either Smoky Howell got a little careless or he didn't know that Tommy could hit. He grooved one waist high that dead-centered the plate. Tommy rode it over the fence for his first homer of the season, giving him a 2—1 lead to work on.

Howell settled down and nipped the Harvester leadoff man with three straight pitches and Tommy started for the mound. He passed Howell coming in and because he was still jubilant after his homer. He spoke without thinking. "Thanks cousin," he said.

Howell's face flushed beneath its tan. His lower jaw jutted. "You'll regret those words, punk," he snarled.

The 2—1 lead gave the Harvesters a new lease on life. They tightened up like a stone wall. The Rockmen couldn't find an opening when they did make a connection. When the Targo Harvesters moved into the top half of the ninth the score hadn't changed and Tommy was the first man to face the dark visaged Howell.

He picked up his bat, rubbed dirt on his hands, then stepped up to the plate. He saw Howell begin his windup and saw the ball leave his fingers. It came toward him high and inside, but he waited, thinking it might break out and catch the corner. When he saw that it wouldn't he started to fall away but his spikes had dug deep into the dirt and he didn't fall quite soon enough. He remembered the remark he had made to Howell earlier in the game and thought, this is his way of paying me back. There was a thunder clap just above his left ear and his head seemed to explode.

Then there was darkness.



## V

TOMMY opened his eyes and forms began to take shape. He was in bed. when he looked at the windows he saw that it was dark outside. He put his hand up to his head and felt something wet and cold bandaged there. Then one of the figures moved and spoke. It was Rufus Ryan. He said, "That was a hell of a bump you took on the head. It would have killed most men and all you've got is a slight concussion. Your skull must be solid ivory."

"I asked for it," Tommy told him. "I popped off like a dumb rookie."

They left him in the hospital for a week. He received a telegram from Zeke and Pinky and a tremendous lily. He knew the last was their way of kidding him just a little, to keep him from thinking of the thing that had happened and maybe losing his nerve. From Peggy he received two letters and a box of candy.

Everyday he waited for a letter from Marlyce and when none came it hurt him worse than his head, because he knew she must have heard what had happened. The local papers had printed a picture of him being carried from the field and the AP had picked it up and scattered it all over the country.

When he rejoined the Harvesters the first thing Rufus Ryan did was to shove him into batting practice. He kept him there until he saw that his eye was still as good as ever and that he hadn't developed any complexes. The next two days he worked in the bull pen and found that his arm was still strong and sure.

"A rest never hurt any man," he told Ryan with a grin and the manager took him at his word.

"You're working tomorrow in the opener," he said.

They were scheduled for a double header and just to prove that he was as good as ever, Tommy went out and pitched himself a shutout. They slapped him on the back and shook his hand and again it was very nice.

He went back to the hotel about half expecting a telegram from Zeke and Pinky. About midnight it came. It was from Zeke only, and it wasn't the kind of a telegram he had been expecting.

It said: "Pinky struck by truck Stop Instantly killed Stop Will wire details later Stop"

The tears spurted to his eyes and he put his head down on his arms and cried unashamedly. When his thinking became clearer he remembered Zeke. He knew what a catcher could mean to a pitcher and suddenly he realized just how much Pinky must have meant to Zeke.

The season slid along with the Harvesters clinging to first place, though sometimes it was only by an eyelash and that eyelash was a youngster by the name of Tommy Condon. He pitched like a veteran. Those who saw him and knew, said that he was a carbon copy of Zeke Menzel in his younger days. They were predicting great things for him, because he was still plenty young and the years stretching ahead should be many.

With the Jays, Zeke was having his troubles. They were in second place, trailing the Comets by only a few games and Muggsy Hennessey was driving them hard. He had his eye on the pennant and he meant that nothing should stand in his way. A shortage of pitchers was troubling him as it was most of the first division clubs, but he kept Zeke hurling relief and even there he was sagging. At first the writers and fans were kind and they attributed Zeke's slump to Pinky's death, but the public is quick to forget and the demand for winners is great.

Occasionally Zeke wrote and it wasn't hard to read between the lines, though he never intended it that way. He was the last man in the world to dim another's ascension by the shadow of his own falling; yet Tommy was quick to catch it and he was glad that he wasn't there to see the thing with his own eyes. Now when he looked at the oldsters around him, struggling to hang on, he felt a twinge and any rancor that he might have felt for Smoky Howell, for bean balling him that day in Granite City, faded.

With the number of games remaining to be played dwindling away, Tommy found himself wondering more and more about Zeke and what would happen to him. When he wasn't thinking about that he was thinking about himself and Marlyce. He had won himself twenty-one games and if the right offer came along—. He



forgot that her letters had tapered to one a week and sometimes not even that. He thought, once I see her it will be like last winter. I won't take no for an answer.

The day the Harvesters finished the season with the pennant all wrapped up, Rufus Ryan came to him. He said, "Well, son, this is tough. The rest of us can rest, but you still have a few chores left to do. You're going right into the final stretches of another pennant fight. Mac-Shane down with the Comets has bought you and he wants you now. They still have ten games left to play and his pitching staff is getting pretty wobbly. They're in there scrapping hard for that first place money, so trot along and give them a lift."

TOMMY listened and gulped, then went white beneath his tan. He would be playing in the same league with Zeke Menzel. Supposing—supposing— He remembered something Zeke had said a long time ago, that day when he had first met him there in the dressing room. "Then I won't have to worry about my job right away."

The Comets had finished their home-stand for the season and were playing the Distillers when Tommy reported to them. It didn't take him long to discover that Rufus Ryan had been right about their pitching staff. A cold, rainy season and a string of double headers following on the heels of one another had taken their toll. Only the superb handling of Don Mac-Shane had kept them up at the top, but now it began to look as if that wasn't going to be enough. From the bull pen, Tommy watched them drop a heart breaker 9—8 and he saw their chances slipping away.

They used him the next day. Between nerves and scraggly hitting, he was very lucky to win it 3—2, but it gave them a few percentage points and percentage points were money in the bank. With so few games left to play and the Jays breathing on their necks, they were almost figuring their percentages to four places.

The Comets moved on to Minneola and the Jay's park for the final series of the season. The Jays' park! Home! Tommy felt a lump in his throat. There were only three hours before game time, when they arrived at the depot. Time only for a

quick lunch and a dash out to the park for the most of them, but for Tommy time to squeeze in a hurried telephone call. Time for a few words with Marlyce, time to hear her voice, if he were lucky. He wasn't. She was out to the hair dressers and then she had a luncheon engagement.

They went out to the park and the place was very poignant with memories. He saw Zeke when they went out for their pre-game practice. He saw the worried look in his eyes, the tired droop to his shoulders. There was so little to say and when the game finally got under way it seemed very strange to see a new catcher waddle out and take Pinky's place behind the bat.

Zeke sat on the Jays' bench and Tommy stayed with the Comets. They were so close and yet so far apart. Zeke had worked three innings as a relief hurler the day before, while Tommy had been pitching for the Comets. No danger today; yet the thing that could be was there like a high tension wire dividing their paths.

They split a twin bill so their standings remained unchanged, but Tommy was more cognizant of the fact that during the entire afternoon Marlyce never came to the park.

When he finally located her about seven that evening, she sounded almost gay. "Really Tommy, I had a date, but I'll break it for you."

She wore black, stunning black, that brought out all the creamy softness of her skin. When her shoulders pressed softly against his he felt his heart pickup and the old sureness come back.

"This is my chance," he told her. "I've got to make good."

"Always thinking about baseball, aren't you?" Her red mouth formed into a soft pout.

"Only where it concerns us," he said. "If I make good with the Comets now and again next year, there's no reason—" He let his sentence hang unfinished when she arched her eye-brows at him. "You're a devil," he added and reached for her fingers.

The next day there was another double header and again they split it with the Jays taking the first game 6—5 and the Comets coming back to win 4—2.



In the Jays' dressing room Muggsy Hennesey chewed his finger nails down to the quick, while over in the Comets' section Don MacShane slumped along, running his fingers through the new gray hairs that were sprouting.

One game to go and both teams were shot, worn to a frazzle. Only that pennant fluttering there so close kept them going, that and nerve. A bobble, a slip, and error in judgment on the part of a player or manager and a season's hopes would be blasted.

Don MacShane paced the dressing room and thought, "It's too much to ask of a youngster, just up from the bushes." He remembered that only three short years ago Tommy had been a ragged urchin, asking for a bat boy's job, and now— But during those three years he had worked with Zeke Menzel and Rufus Ryan. Both were men whom MacShane knew well and respected. And a few days ago he had seen the youngster work against the Distillers. A pitcher, who could stand in there and on pitch after pitch nick the corners for a called strike, had something. Along with that, MacShane had seen other things. He had seen smoothness and power and he had seen control, the control of a Zeke Menzel.

He made his decision then, knowing the chance he was taking. If he used Tommy and blew the pennant they would say he was a fool. From that standpoint it might be safer to start a veteran, change later, if necessary, but right or wrong, Don MacShane had always made his own decisions and he made one now.

"Condon," he snapped, "when you've showered and dressed report to me in the office."

They had dinner together that night, Don MacShane, Tiswell, the Comet catcher, and Tommy Condon. When they were through eating they went up to the manager's room. There they took the Jays' batting order and one by one they scrutinized the players, going over their weaknesses, planning their campaign. Tomorrow Tommy Condon would be on the mound.

It was midnight when they finished. It was too late to call Marlyce, but tomorrow night, with the season finished Tommy knew what he'd do.

THEY went out on the diamond and the stands were jam-packed. Outside long lines of fans still stood in front of the ticket offices, clamoring for admission. It might have been the World Series for all the enthusiasm displayed and while they were away from home the Comets were not without their rooters. They came from a red hot baseball town, a town that backed its team to the limit, both in body and money.

Tommy looked over in the Jays' bull pen and saw Zeke working steadily and he had his moments of misgiving until the public address system blared: "Battery for the Jays, Huggins and Caldwell. For the Comets, Condon and Tiswell."

They finished their practice and the umpire called: "Play ball!"

From the Jays' part of the stands there was a continual roar of sound as only three Comet batters made their trips to the plate, then walked back to the bench, shaking their heads. Huggins was hot. He was a fireballer and just wild enough to be effective.

Then Tommy Condon went out on to the mound and he worked carefully, because Zeke was watching him. It was the first time Zeke had ever seen him in a game. He didn't try to impress him, as he might have if Pinky had been there, but somehow he had the feeling that if he won this one, it was for Zeke and Pinky, and that somehow it might help soften the blow that was almost certain to come to the old hurler.

He glanced up into the rows of box seats and saw Marlyce there. He started bearing down with new vigor and determination.

The first two innings were scoreless, but at the beginning of the third, Huggins lost his control. Sitting there on the bench, Tommy saw the first hitch come in Huggins' windup and he knew that it wouldn't be long. He glanced out toward the bull pen where Zeke was still working and rubbed his hand across his eyes.

When two Comet runners crossed the plate, Hennesey waved Huggins to the showers and again Tommy had a bad few minutes until Charlie Garnett, a gangling southpaw, took the mound for the Jays.

Garnett nipped the Comet rally, but when Tommy went back to the mound he



had a two run lead. He managed to get by the last half of the third and all of the fourth, but in the fifth the Jay hitters suddenly found him. It was brief, but it was deadly. Tompkins, the Jay first sacker, nicked him for a single and Purdy, the left garden man, blasted one over the center field fence, knotting the score at two all.

Tiswell, the Comet catcher, and MacShane came out toward the mound. They saw the perspiration on the youngster's forehead. "And hour from now we'll have it back for you and more too," Tiswell affirmed. "Those birds were just lucky."

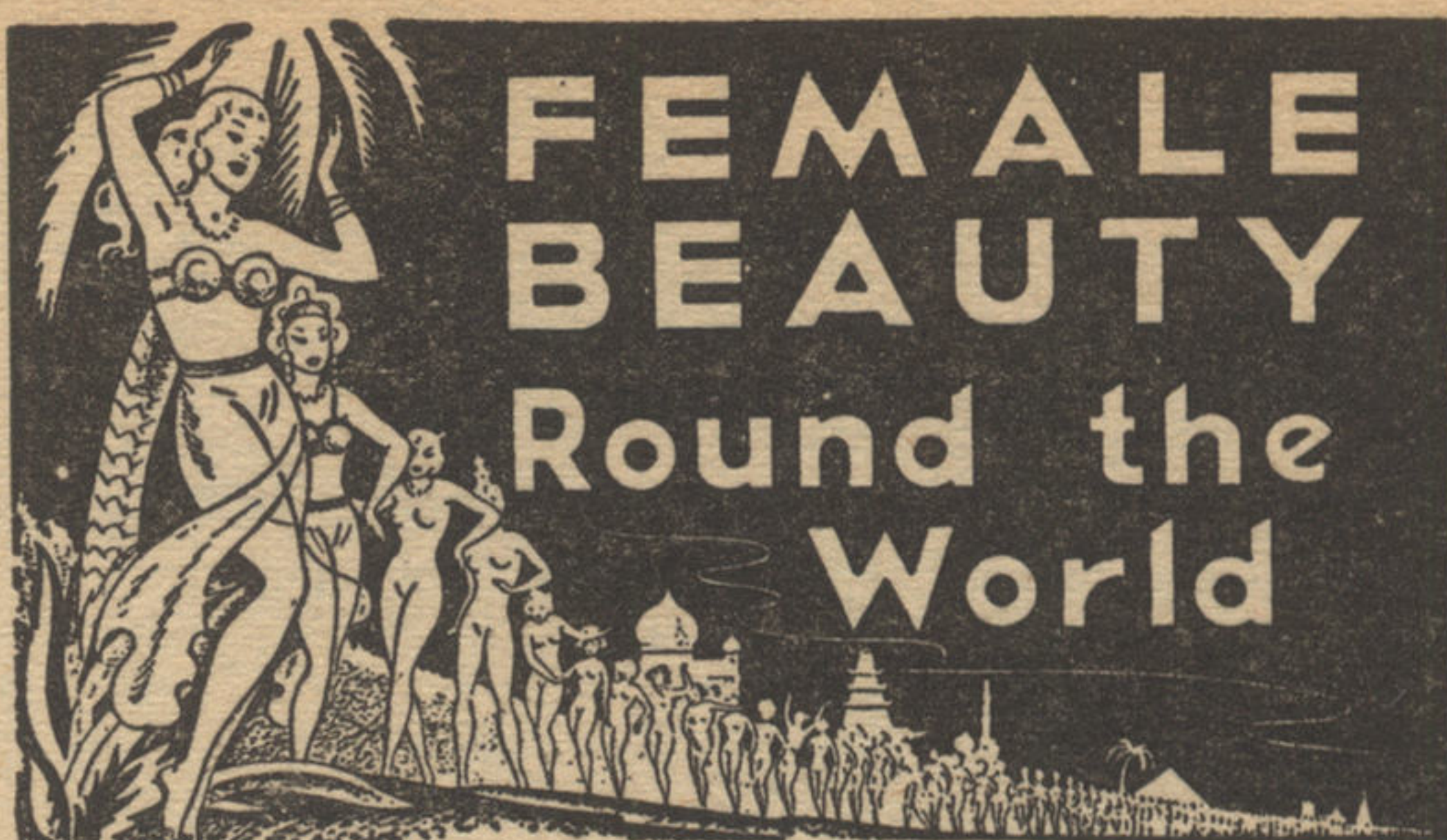
"There's no hurry," Don MacShane said. "The hunting season doesn't start for a couple of weeks yet."

Tommy worked his spikes into the dirt. "I'm all right," he said and wasn't at all sure that he spoke the truth.

However, the Jay bats began to lose their effectiveness, while the Comet outfield tightened up, giving him air tight support and the infield suddenly became an iron ring around him. Still Tommy wasn't fooled. This was money ball. It was only a matter of time until one team or the other cracked enough to let in a run and with the type of a game it was, one run could be awfully good.

They went on into the seventh with the score still standing at two all. In the top half of the eighth, the Comets got themselves a run. They got it the hard way. Mills dumped a single down along the third baseline and beat the throw by a gnat's wink. Tomlin sacrificed to advance him to second. Lanning flied out to right field and Mills took third after the catch. He took a long lead then, and he kept Garnett pegging to third until he lost control and walked Crowder and Brunstein to fill the bases. Then on a wild pitch Mills scampered home.

"There she is!" Tiswell shouted. "There she is, Tommy boy! All you need is one run and you've got it." The Comet catcher was jubilant, but even while he listened to Tiswell's shouts, Tommy felt his own stomach fall away beneath his belt. Hennesey was motioning for Zeke Menzel to come in and take the mound. The thing that he had been dreading was happening. He would be pitching against Zeke.



## World's Greatest Collection of Strange and Secret Photographs

**N**OW you can travel round the world with the most daring adventurers. You can see with your own eyes the weirdest peoples on earth. You witness the strangest customs of the red, white, brown, black and yellow races. You attend their startling rites, their mysterious practices. They are all assembled for you in these five great volumes of **THE SECRET MUSEUM OF MANKIND**.

### 600 LARGE PAGES

Here is the world's Greatest Collection of Strange and Secret Photographs. Here are Exotic Photos from Europe, Primitive Photos from Africa, Torture Photos from Asia, Strange Photos from Oceania and America, and hundreds of others. There are almost **600 LARGE PAGES** of Strange and Secret Photographs, each page 57 square inches in size.

### 1,000 PHOTOS

You see actual courtship practiced in every quarter of the world. You see magic and mystery in queer lands where the foot of a white man has rarely trod. You see Oriental modes of marriage and slavery in China, Japan, India, etc. Through the intimacy of the cameras you witness the exotic habits of every continent and the strangest customs, in America, Europe, etc. You are bewildered by these large pages of **ONE THOUSAND PHOTOGRAPHS**, including 130 full-page photos and thrilled by the hundreds of short stories that describe them.

**Contents of 5-Volume Set**  
**VOLUME 1**  
 The Secret Album of Africa  
**VOLUME 2**  
 The Secret Album of Europe  
**VOLUME 3**  
 The Secret Album of Asia  
**VOLUME 4**  
 The Secret Album of America  
**VOLUME 5**  
 The Secret Album of Oceania

### 5 PICTURE PACKED VOLUMES

The **SECRET MUSEUM OF MANKIND** consists of five picture-packed volumes (solidly bound together for convenient reading). Dip into any one of these volumes, and as you turn its pages, you find it difficult to tear yourself away. Here, in story and unusual photo, is the **WORLD'S GREATEST COLLECTION OF STRANGE AND SECRET PHOTOGRAPHS**, containing everything from Female Beauty Round the World to the most Mysterious Cults and Customs. These hundreds and hundreds of large pages will give you days and nights of thrilling instruction.

#### Specimen Photos

Dress and Undress Round the World  
 Various Secret Societies  
 Strange Crimes, Criminals  
 Omens, Totems & Taboos  
 Mysterious Customs  
**1,000 Strange and Secret Photos**

### SEND NO MONEY

Simply sign and mail the coupon. Remember, each of the 5 Volumes is 9 1/4 inches high, and, opened, over a foot wide! Remember also that this 5-Volume Set formerly sold for \$10. And it is bound in expensive "life-time" cloth. Don't put this off. Fill out the coupon, drop it in the next mail, and receive this huge work at once.

**FORMERLY \$10  
 NOW ONLY**

**\$1.98**

**FOR THE COMPLETE  
 5 VOLUME SET**

**ALL FIVE  
 VOLUMES  
 BOUND  
 TOGETHER**

Metro Publications, 363 Broadway, Dept. 1806, N. Y. 13, N. Y.  
 Send me "The Secret Museum of Mankind" (5 great volumes bound together). I will pay postman \$1.98, plus postage on arrival. If not delighted, I will return books in 5 days for full refund of \$1.98.

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... Zone.... State.....



CHECK HERE if you are enclosing \$1.98, thus saving mailing costs. Same Money-Back Guarantee.  
 Canadian and Foreign Orders—\$2.50 in Advance.



## VI

THEY met in front of the Comet bench, Muggsy Hennesey and Zeke Menzel, and Tommy couldn't help but hear. Hennesey's voice was quiet, deadly, and his black eyes fixed their lance-like gaze on Zeke Menzel's set face.

"All right, Menzel," he said. "Here's your chance to live up to your old reputation. You've been squawking for it. Well, here it is. Win this game, beat this pup of yours and you'll get a contract for next year. Lose it and by the living saints—"

Tommy slid off the bench. He wanted to smash his fists into Hennesey's livid face. He hated the Jay manager for Zeke and he hated him for himself. He took a couple of steps forward when Don MacShane grabbed him and shoved him back on the bench.

"Take it easy," the Comet manager purred in Tommy's ear. "What do you suppose Hennesey did that for, if it weren't to upset you? He could have met Zeke any place but here. Should have, but he's a low down devil. He'll do anything to win a ball game. Now cool down." All the while Zeke was walking out toward the mound and while he was taking his three warmup pitches, MacShane talked to Tommy, but he didn't hear.

Through a red haze, he saw Zeke Menzel out there on the mound, the corners of his mouth grim and tight. His big shoulders were slumped. His long arms dangled at his side. He twitched his cap a trifle lower over his eyes, shook off the first signal from the Jay catcher, then wound up and fired the ball. And for three pitches he looked like the Zeke Menzel of old.

Holtz, batting for the Comets, never had a chance. He struck out and the dam burst then, with the sound coming from the stands and farther out in the bleachers. It rolled down on to the diamond like surf beating against the rocks. When Zeke had taken his place on the mound the public address system, blaring his name, had been so loud in the silence that it sounded unnatural. The Jay fans had sat as if they were painted there. They still remembered him from the years when he had been a baseball great and the remem-

brance had humbled them into silence, but more than that it was the fear of what he might do because his season's record was still very clear in their minds. Now that he had struck out Holtz with three straight pitches, they were wild in their acclaim. Standing, they cheered him as he walked slowly in toward the Jays' bench.

With the noise still showering down around them, they met half way between home plate and the mound. There was just the faint trace of a smile tugging at the corners of Zeke's strained mouth. "This is a ball game, Tommy," he said. "All you have to fear is that you won't do your best." He went on then, in toward the bench, with his spikes scuffing the dirt. He took his windbreaker from Hennesey and buttoned it around him, while Tommy threw his warmup tosses.

The Jays saw their ball game dangling there in front of their eyes and they realized the youngster on the mound was upset. They listened to Muggsy Hennesey's whiplash voice and they knew it was money in their pockets to go out and get that one run back and at least another one to go with it.

Mechanically Tommy took the signals from Tiswell and chucked the ball up to the plate. It had happened at last and there was no way out. He walked the first man to face him and the second batter singled. With nobody down and two on, Tiswell came out to the mound. Tommy saw MacShane glance out toward the bull pen where other Comet hurlers were working, just as he saw Zeke sitting there on the Jay bench, lacing and unlacing his big fingers.

Tiswell took one quick look at his pitcher's moist face. "You feeling all right?" he asked sharply.

"I'm okay," Tommy said. "I— guess I wasn't doing my best, but I will from here on."

Tiswell looked at him queerly, then walked back to his place behind the plate.

SOME of the numbness went out of Tommy's brain and momentarily he got hold of himself. He caught the corners and he mixed them up. The hitter flied out to short and the next one went down swinging on four pitches. To retire the side Tommy caught a high fly and the



eighth inning was over.

Zeke Menzel went out there for the first half of the ninth and he did all that Muggsy Hennesey or any other man could ask. Only four men faced him. The first man flied out to center. He struck out the second. The third Comet hitter was lucky. The Jay shortstop bobbled his grounder and he got to first on an error but that was as far as he got, because Zeke picked off the next Comet batter with three straight pitches.

The Comets were still leading 3—2 when Tommy Condon went out to take the mound for the last half of the ninth, the last of the ball game, the last of the season, if he could get by, maybe the last of Zeke Menzel. He remembered what Muggsy Hennesey had said to Zeke, standing there in front of the Comet bench, when he had sent him into the game. "Win this game, beat this pup of yours, and you'll get a contract for next year. Lose it and by the living saints—"

Zeke hadn't lost, though. He had done all that any man could. The game had been lost when he went in, unless Jay bats could salvage it during the next few minutes. Blinding rage at the unfairness of the thing gripped Tommy. He wondered how a man of Hennesey's stripe had managed to stay in organized baseball, why someone hadn't killed him? Suddenly there was no one in the world he would rather beat than Hennesey, and yet if he beat him—

He got the first two men to face him and then he went up in the clouds. Trask singled on his first pitch. Caldwell, the catcher, banded another single into deep right field and Trask went on around to third. Two out, two down and the tying and winning runs on the paths.

There was a stir over on the Jay bench. Tommy settled back on the mound, waiting for Hennesey to send in a pinch hitter, then he heard a gasp go up from the crowd. Hennesey was letting Zeke Menzel take his regular turn. Zeke, who in all the years he had played had never come anywhere close to being a good hitter. Was Hennesey crazy?

Then it came to Tommy with the chilling suddenness of a fire bell ringing in the night. Zeke had taught him. Zeke knew every pitch he had, even before he

threw it. He could tell by the hunch of his shoulders, the way he wound up. Damn Hennesey! He was playing it smart. Tommy might get by a pinch hitter, but by Zeke Menzel, never. And a hit would tie the ball game.

He saw Zeke walking slowly toward the plate, glancing neither to the right nor the left, swinging two bats as he came. Just short of the plate Zeke stopped, tossed one away, dusted his hands in the dirt, wiped them on his pants, grasped his bat and stepped up to the plate.

An electrifying hush settled over the crowd. What would it be? Only the two men who stood there, grim and silent, facing each other, held the answer. So quiet was their stance that they might have been two statues. Their bodies were tense, faces white, drawn, the one with a bat, the other with a glove and ball.

Out on first and third the runners shifted nervously. In front of the Jay bench, Muggsy Hennesey stood with his hands on his hips, grinning a queer, twisted, satisfied grin. No one could say that he hadn't given Zeke Menzel his chance. All he had to do was hit.

Almost desperately Tommy Condon glanced up into the stands as if he were seeking the answer there. He saw Marlyce Pifer, but her back was to the diamond. She had turned around, was talking to Vance MacShane, apparently unmindful of the drama that was being lived out there, almost within her very reach. For a moment Tommy's gaze remained riveted there, and when she failed to turn, a bewildered look crept into his own eyes.

He glanced on, then, quickly and a few boxes further out he saw Ellen and Peggy Menzel. He had known they were there and that was all he had thought about it. Now he saw Ellen staring down at Zeke and he knew what must be in her heart. Then he saw Peggy and that she was watching them both, first him and then her father. He saw that she was twisting something, probably a program, between her fingers. Other than that she neither moved nor spoke, and in a twinkling the little things, her sitting there beside the target scoring him, the picture episode, the mistiness in her eyes when he had left, her short, cryptic letters, all came back to him.



ONCE more he looked back at the girl, whose hair lay like a gold-brown flame around her shoulders, and when she still didn't turn, he knew that the fire he had felt since that first night he had seen her had somehow burned itself out. There was no pain, nothing. He hunched his shoulders and faced the plate.

If he pitched to Zeke— He saw Tiswell's signal and shook it off and two things that Zeke had said to him were very clear in his mind. The first, "Then I won't have to worry about my job right away," and the last, "This is a ball game, Tommy. All you have to fear is that you won't do your best."

That was his answer. Suddenly he stepped up on the mound and without any windup, he threw. He saw the look of surprise cross Zeke's face when the ball went wide of the plate and he realized what was happening. He saw Tiswell start toward him and Don MacShane start out on to the diamond. He saw Muggsy Hennesey hurl his cap to the ground and step on it. Tiswell and MacShane saw it too, and they turned back.

It took only a minute for Tommy to toss the four wide ones across and after that first sweeping glance at the end of his first pitch Tommy didn't look around. He knew that Zeke went to first and that the bases were loaded. He thought that if Pinky were watching from somewhere, he must be smiling. He spat through the crack in his front teeth, then as if he were still trying to impress the old catcher, shot three across so fast that the last Jay hitter to face him was throwing his bat away in disgust.

He headed for the Comets' dressing room under the stands but Zeke caught him just short of the door. In the noise he couldn't hear what Zeke was saying, but whatever it was he knew it was all right between them.

When Zeke had left and all of the players had gone in, he saw Peggy making her

way toward him. He saw the reddish lights in her dark hair and he knew by her eyes that she had been crying. He also saw that she now wore her clothes as if they really belonged to her and that she was almost a stranger, a different, wonderful stranger, even when she stood there in front of him with her hands on her hips. She made no attempt to conceal the fact that she had been crying and she was as blunt and honest as usual.

"Well, Jerk," she said, "you really won yourself a ball game."

"I'm sorry," Tommy replied haltingly, "sorry it had to be that way."

She reached out then and caught his hand. "Look at me, Tommy Condon! Do you think he would have wanted you to—" She stopped and their fingers were very tight. "If he had to lose, Tommy, he'd rather it was to you than to anyone. You couldn't have fooled him."

He went into the dressing room finally and showered and dressed. Later he went in to see MacShane. When he came out he was smiling.

He was still smiling the next day when they headed south on the highway, with Zeke and Ellen going ahead in their sedan, while he and Peggy followed along in his roadster.

They came to a tree shaded side road and he braked the car and turned from the cement into a pair of twisting ruts. It didn't look as if the road had been used for a long time and the trees were very tall and concealing.

"Last night," he said, "I talked to MacShane. He's going to be needing a new coach next year. I think Zeke will be hearing from him right soon. And now young lady I have something to say to you." He reached over and turned off the ignition.

"I think you're a—"

Whatever it was that she thought he didn't let her finish. Anyway her hands were not on her hips.



*A Fiction House Magazine*







# OL' KNUCKLEHEAD

*By Paul R. McCully*

It's bad enough to have a "hot shot" on your club. But when he turns out to be a "knucklehead," it's enough to make an old baseball brain like Iron-pants McCord wish he'd taken up with some nice quiet high school team.

**Y**ES, Knucklehead, that's what they called him after a while. Not that he didn't deserve it, you understand. As a matter of fact, sometimes I get to

thinking that "Knucklehead" was a masterpiece of understatement.

You see, the Barons had a doggone good ball club for the first time in six or seven



years. Started out the season, bang, right in first place. And held it for a long time, too. Five of the boys were clobbering the ball at better than .300, and when I say better than .300 I don't mean .301 or .302. Joe Coltella and Vance Renville were up around .335 and Bernie Cleveland was hitting them a lick at .342. That was our outfield. Pepper Gionski at short was clipping off a regular .317, and Pete Hyde was holding up a nice cozy .321 besides turning in a sweet job behind the plate. With a team clicking like that, it's a pretty sure bet to be riding at the top of the column.

Then around the first part of June, Coltella and Cleveland pick themselves up a slump at the platter and it isn't long before they look like a couple of kids on sleds, trying to see who can slide down to the bottom quickest. Naturally it hurts the team. We soon drop down into second place when the Cubs hit a hot streak.

We figured that Bernie or Joe—maybe even both—would pull out of it within a week or so, and the Barons could get back to the serious business of winning themselves a pennant.

But they didn't. They didn't even stop sliding.

Then, as if we didn't already have troubles, Pete Hyde tries to stretch a double into a triple against the Phillies and pulls a tendon in his leg. Pete's no kid anymore, and he should have paid attention to Eddie Cummins when Eddie tried to flag him the hold-it-up sign.

That meant that Pete would be doing all his base-running on crutches for a month or so, and young Jerry Rowan, the only other receiver on the club, would be doing a solo job with the backstopping chores.

With Pete on the bench and another big bat wrapped in cotton, the Barons couldn't pull off the big push to dislodge the Cubs from first place. As a matter of sad fact, a few days later the Cardinals jolted us down into *third* place with a not-too-silent thud.

Old Ironpants was really worried for the first time in the season. It didn't take him long after that to start the wires buzzing to our timber scouts out in the sticks.

A week later, Joe Conway sent Ironpants a telegram from the Coast saying

that he had a boy on the way East. Joe's wire said the kid was pretty hot stuff—ready for the big time.

The following Thursday afternoon we were in Pittsburgh, and, in accordance with local custom, a sizable handful of rain was messing up everything in general, and Forbes Field in particular. But since most of the boys were a little jumpy and on edge—not the kind of "on edge" that means good baseball—it didn't hurt anybody very much to take it easy for a day.

A few of us were sitting around the lobby of the Schenley, batting out the breeze.

"Y'know," Newt Benson was saying, "they got a mess o' lovely tomatoes residin' in this here now town. Best I should amble outside and look the sitchiation over."

"Aw, take it easy, Junior," Stan Abel complained. "You said we were gonna take in the fights tonight at the Gardens."

"OK, so do we have to go alone?" Benson asked.

"Take dames to the fights?" Stan laughed. "Count me out, Junior. But have a good time and come home early."

Newt chuckled. "Well, let's make up our mind—do I have a good time or do I come home early?"

"What's wrong with taking a woman to see a fight?" Pete Hyde wanted to know. "Why, before the Missus and me was married we used to see a lot of fights together. Helen got as much kick out of them as I did, I think."

"What a memory!" kidded Ace Flick, the big right-hander. "Must have been sixty years ago!"

"Yeah?" Pete half rose from his leather chair and in mock anger swung his cane in Flick's general direction.

"What's the matter, grandpa? Your grand-children gettin' smart again?" The remark came from outside the little circle.

Pete turned to see who it was.

The speaker stood three feet away from our little gathering, a suitcase in his hand, hat pushed back from his forehead, a smirk playing on his lips.

PETE HYDE pulled himself up out of his seat and hobbled around to the intruder. Pete's eyes ran over the young fellow from the dark hair sticking out



under his hat down to a pair of new brown and white shoes. The fellow stood about six-two and was packing roughly an even two hundred pounds not including the suitcase. Pete just about came up to his chin—and from the look in his eye it looked like he was fixing to measure the distance with his fist.

"Smart kids aren't welcome around here, Sonny. If you want an autograph, you come up polite-like and ask for it, see?"

The kid's smirk widened into a sneer. "Suppose you take it easy on the old blood-pressure, Dad. Seems like the rest of these guys aren't much impressed by your youth either."

"Yeah. Well, they're them and you're you—try to remember that."

"Why don't you sit down and take it easy, and tell me where I can find John McCord."

Pete Hyde's eyes narrowed. "And suppose you go blow it, Sonny."

The kid shrugged and turned to walk over to the desk. I could see him talking to the room clerk, asking him, I suppose, for McCord's room.

Ace Flick put his hand on Hyde's shoulder. "C'mon, Pete, I'll beat you a game of Casino."

Pete turned back to the rest of us. "Smart kid!" he snapped.

"Must be the one Joe Conway was sending us from the Coast League," Stan Abel commented. "—to help Rowan with the catching." As soon as the last part was out he wished he hadn't said it, for Pete Hyde winced.

Butt Pete looked at Stan, and in a moment a grin spread over his face. "Maybe I *am* getting a little creaky at that—but as soon as the old gam gets back in shape I'll be as spry as a college lad!"

The tension eased among the rest of us as Hyde came back to normal. It wasn't often that he got himself irritated. But, as I said, Pete *was* getting old and I guess this was the first time it had really been brought to his attention—this, and the bum leg.

An hour or so later, McCord came out of the elevator with the kid behind him. Ironpants sauntered over to where we were watching Pete and Ace in a hot game of Casino.

"Fellows," Ironpants broke in, "Want you to meet Jeff Carson. New catcher that Conway picked up out west. Carson—" McCord pointed around the circle, "—Ace Flick, Stan Abel, Monty Hackett, Lou Barrett, and Pete Hyde. Hyde is the reason you're here. Hurt his leg last week."

"We've sort of met," Carson said. "'Scuse me, wanna get some cigarettes." If he was irritated by the lack of a glad-hand he had received an hour before, he apparently had said nothing to McCord.

As the boy took off, Ironpants plunked himself down and challenged the winner of the Casino game.

FRIDAY, on a damp field, the Pirates trounced us to the music of 10-2, adding another to our growing number in the right-hand column. Tony Forchetta lasted four innings when the Bucs opened up the heavy guns and brought five runs across in their half of the fourth.

On Saturday, Ironpants sent the new catcher in behind the plate, hoping that Carson would be able to start the team hitting again. Of course it wasn't smart baseball to let the kid do big time backstopping with so little dope on the hitters, but the Barons were getting to the place where almost anything would be an improvement. And old Charley Donahue, one of our mound veterans, took Carson aside to give him a few tips on the Pittsburghers.

Charley came away shaking his head. "The kid's got the ken as far as handling the apple goes, but he's too smart to listen when I try to give him the dope. Says he can tell how to pitch to a man by the way he stands. Maybe he can, I don't know."

The boy came to the front of the dugout to pick out a club for his lick at batting practice. Ace Flick got up from the bench and walked over to him.

"Carson," he said, "Donahue says you're going to catch your own game today. Might be smart if you'd pick up some of this stuff on the Pirates. This ain't no bush league, you know. The people in this loop are in it for the heavy dirt."

"You pitch your games and I'll catch 'em the way they should be caught," the kid flashed back. "I played ball before."

"O.K., hotshot," Ace shrugged. "Hope you have a nice visit with us."



The Barons went down one-two-three in the first while the Pirates were picking up two runs in their half. There was no score in the second, and likewise in the third. In the third, though, Jeff Carson started his big league batting career with a flashy single off Rip Sewell.

The score stayed at 2-0 all the way down to the eighth, with the Ripper holding us to three hits including Carson's single. It'll have to be said for Carson that he was turning in a sweet game back of the plate. There was none of the nervousness you usually find in a boy that's just breaking in. Maybe he *could* guess a batter by his stance. Anyway, Flick had only shaken off three signs all afternoon.

In the eighth, Pepper Gionski, our fiery little shortstop, looped a long one to center for an easy out. But Herb Lyons and Andy Cohen came through with a pair of singles, putting men on first and third.

Jeff Carson unbuckled his shin pads and unlimbered his big shoulders as he walked out to the plate. As he stepped into the box he turned toward the mound.

"Don't throw anything good if you want to take tht ball home with you!"

Sewell grinned and whipped in a clean called strike.

The kid glared at the umpire and Lopez laughed.

The next two were wide to make it one and two. A foul into the net evened the count. Then with the count in his favor, Sewell accidentally let one ride down the middle.

Carson wound up—and unwound.

A screamer went back over the box and on a whistling line into right-center. Lyons scored. Carson sped past first and rounded second. Cohen passed third and went on in for the second run. The ball came off the wall and was whipped back into the infield. Carson hit the dirt and hooked the hassock a full second before Elliott could put the ball on him.

Ed Cummins, coaching at third, pulled Carson to his feet and clapped him on the back. The Barons' bench was on its feet, full of ginger again.

Ace Flick batted for himself and with the ball game again within reach proceeded to bloop a Texas leaguer into right field, scoring Carson easily from third.

The Flicker held the Buccos in their half

of the eighth and again in the ninth and walked off with the ball game in his hip pocket.

Now you'd think that anybody would be glad to take the orchids for a three-base swat like that and shuck the credit over to Flick who also had a hand in the proceedings.

But not our boy Carson.

"McCord!" he shouted, slamming into the clubhouse, "Cut yourself in on a slice of pennant-pie. When you got Ole Jeffrey Carson to hit for you in the clutch you start to win ball games!"

"Sure, Mr. Babe Ruth," sneered Joe Coltella, "Only don't count on the Ripper to groove one for you more than once a season."

"Talk to me when you get your hittin' shoes back, slugger," the kid cracked.

"That's enough of that!" McCord's face was unsmiling. "You got yourself a nice triple, Carson, but please remember that you won't find them in the slot all the time like Joe says—and don't forget that Mr. Flick here just happened to knock in the winning run."

"Yeah, sure," the kid leered, "All by himself wiff no help fwom nobody."

"Mr. Carson," McCord did not find the remark particularly humorous. "It might interest you to learn that that's going to cost you fifty." Ironpants turned and walked out of the locker room.

The resentment to Carson's attitude was already growing. Most of the men did not care for his cracks, especially when they were directed at somebody like Joe Coltella who, besides being a great ballhawk, was popular with the rest of the team.

Carson dressed and left the room without further comments.

**I**N Sunday's double bill, Monty Hackett took the mound in the first feature with Carson doing the receiving. Monty held the Pirates to six hits while the Barons batted their way to a 7-3 win. Jeff Carson came through with a double and two singles out of five. Coltella, possibly spurred by the previous afternoon's remarks, dug around in his locker till he found his hitting shoes, and let loose two clean doubles.

Some of the smiles left Old Ironpants' face after the second game, though, when the Pirates laid into Stretch Markey for



eight runs. Jerry Rowan was behind the platter, and the Barons could gather only two markers.

We picked up four out of five from the Phillies and two out of three with the Giants, while the Cardinals were only able to garner three out of seven. The men with the paper and pencils reported that the Barons had pulled up a half a game ahead of the boys from St. Louis, and were now just three games behind the Cubs for first honors.

We were in good spirits as we boarded the train for Boston. Pete Hyde, his cane in storage and able to move around easily without it already, suggested a little game with the red, white, and blue checks.

"Why shore," Herb Lyons, our first sacker, said. "Who else wants to contribute to the Society for the Perpetuation of the Hyde Bankroll?"

"I've got a few odd pennies," Gionski announced.

"Pennies, yet, he says," laughed Benson. "Dig down deep and make with the quiet offering for your old Uncle Newton!"

"Who else?" Hyde shouted. Jeff Carson sauntered up.

"Join us, Carson?" Benson asked. Gionski looked at Hyde, but Pete only shrugged.

"Sure," Carson answered, "If the pot's right—say about a dollar limit?"

"That's a little steeper than we usually go," Lyons said, "—but if it's O.K. with the others it's O.K. with me."

Gionski looked up at Carson. "You got any mazoo to back up that kind of talk? Buy some chips."

Pete pushed the buzzer for the porter who brought in a wall-table.

If Carson was lucky with the pasteboards, it wasn't too apparent during the next two hours.

"Lemme have fifty worth," he said for the third time. Hyde counted out the correct number and shoved them across the table.

"Well heeled, I hope," Gionski commented. "Usually play six or seven hours."

"Do your talking with your cards," Carson remarked with a calmness that didn't quite sound as calm as intended.

"My cards are talkin' all right," Gionski said with a little smile, fingering a stack of blue chips.

"Shall we say one," Benson interjected, closing his hand and flipping a chip onto the pot.

"Right and up one," Hyde answered.

"Ho!" Herb Lyons laughed, "Everybody's got power—and me too. Two and up one more!"

"Call," Carson slowly shoved out three chips.

Gionski did the same. Benson and Hyde made it right.

"Cards, gentlemen." Pepper Gionski announced.

Benson tossed two onto the chips. "I, my fair maiden, wouldst crave two aces to replace those worthless ducats."

Hyde hesitated a moment and called for one.

"Me, I'm an honest man," Lyons intoned, "I shall need three."

"Carson?"

"I'm pat."

"Well!" said Gionski. "And I'll take three," pulling them off the deck.

"Vell, I'll tell ya," said Benson, "Having strong suspicions that our good short-stop is dealing from the bottom of the deck, I shall be forced to call the local gendarmes. But in the meantime I shall be forced to fold."

"I'm good for one," Pete Hyde said.

"You can't get by old Herbert Couer de Lion with a crumby bluff like that. I'll see that one."

Carson waited till Lyons was in and announced, "Make it five."

Gionski frowned.

Pete Hyde folded his cards and laid them beside his chips.

"When we set a limit, we stick to that limit, see, Sonny?"

"If you can't afford to lose, maybe you'd better get out," Gionski said, a scowl clouding his face.

"What's the matter?" asked Carson, sneering, but his voice a little trembling. "No guts?"

"Well, now, if it's guts you want, fella, I'll see that five—and raise you—fifteen." Gionski's voice was calm but his lips were drawn tight as he spoke.

Pete Hyde and Herb Lyons quietly dropped their cards in the pot.

Carson looked up from his cards. Gionski's comeback had apparently surprised him. He rocked forward on the



suitcase he was sitting on in the aisle, and pushed fifteen into the pot.

"—And five more," he added deliberately.

"You're called," Pepper said, matching Carson's five.

The catcher straightened up on the suitcase, bent forward, and spread his hand—a spade flush. With a smirk he reached to gather in the chips.

"Spades are good," said Gionski, "—but they still don't beat a filly—eights over jacks."

Carson's face went blank. He placed his hands on the edge of the table and slowly stood up, leaning forward. His face was close to Gionski's.

"You dealt those cards," he said slowly, "and I thought for a minute Benson was kidding. Y'don't just draw three cards to a full house. You palmed those cards! Lousy crooked so-and-so's deal off the bottom to a guy on your own team!" Carson exploded. His right foot came forward, crunched the single table leg, and sent chips and cards flying. Carson turned and hurried down the aisle.

Pepper Gionski started after him, but Benson put his hand out and clutched him by the arm. Gionski's face, white with anger, slowly relaxed. He shook his head slowly. "I'll never understand that fellow."

"I can't quite figure him either," Pete Hyde said. "—But let's straighten out this mess and hit the sack."

**T**HE story of Carson's flare-up and the insinuations he had flung at the popular little shortstop didn't add much to Carson's rating among the rest of the men—a rating which was already down around the zero level anyway.

The first tilt with the Braves was an easy win for the Barons with Charley Donahue doing the honors, holding them to five hits. Jeff Carson went to the platter five times and failed to connect an equal number of times.

Then in the second game with the Braves, it happened.

Stretch Markey's fast one was hopping just right, and Jim Tobin had our boys biting at bad ones for the simple reason that he refused to throw any good ones. So it was a nip-and-tuck tussle right down

the line-up with each side able to pick up only one run along the way.

We latched onto our one tally in the fifth when Bernie Cleveland walked, Pep Gionski singled him around to third, and Herb Lyons caught the boys from the Hub flat-footed and squeezed Cleveland across for the marker.

The Braves' run came on a bad break when, with runners on second and third, Benson down at second booted Masi's grass cutter, allowing Sentzel to scamper home. But the unearned ones count too, so we went into the ninth all even up at 1-1.

Stretch Markey got the signal from McCord to take his licks, but after working the count up to three-and-two, missed a sharp drop by a foot. Benson watched two go by and clamped the third one for a wicked drive—straight into the mitts of Sentzel in center. Two away.

Renville looped a high one into right center where Workman picked it off on the run. Any additional scoring the Barons would do would have to be done in extra innings.

The Hub fans started whooping it up for some runs. A bunch of kids started kicking the seats in rhythm back of first. Weitemann obliged by dropping a single on the chalk mark back of first. The stands got really noisy now. Holmes skidded one down to Andy Cohen at third. Cohen whipped it to Benson at second cutting down Weitemann, but Benson's flip to first was too late to nab Holmes. Workman followed with a drive over second that moved Holmes to third. First and third, one out. Carson ran out to the mound, pounding the ball in his big mitt. Markey shook his head. They jabbered for a minute and Carson went back to the plate.

Markey's first offering to Sentzel was wide for a ball. The next was letter-high and—clunk—Sentzel lofted a blooper to short right. Cleveland came tearing in for it. Holmes tagged up on third, waiting. Cleveland took the drive on the run down by his knees, two more steps and, off-balance, whipped the pellet plateward. The thunder from the stands was terrific as Holmes charged in from the look-in corner. Carson crouched in front of the plate, waiting for the ball. The throw was miraculously straight and true. Carson



took it on the hop as Holmes hit the dirt in a long slide, hooking for the plate. Carson lunged, half backward, half sideward, the ball clutched in an out-reaching claw—and missed the runner completely!

The explosion in the stands was deafening. The Braves war-danced around Holmes, whooping it up, pounding him on the back. Jeff Carson picked himself up off the ground, the spheroid still clutched in one hand. His face was red, dust covered him from ears to ankles, and a stream of explosive verbiage flowed from his tongue. He spluttered to anyone within hearing, and in a sudden violent display of anger turned toward the stand, drew back his arm, and heaved the ball into the upper tier.

The Man in Blue laughed, but as the ball disappeared into the crowd, Holmes, who had been dusting himself off near the plate, broke loose from the teammates who were congratulating him, trotted over to the platter and plunked down on it with both feet.

The umpire spread his hands flat.

Carson's jaw dropped. Fans who were filing out onto the field stopped and gaped.

Ironpants McCord raced up from the dugout, demanding:

"What the sam hill kind of a delayed decision is *that*?"

"Carson missed the runner, McCord," the big arbiter said calmly, "—but the runner also missed the plate. All Carson had to do was walk over and tag him—instead of throwing the ball away."

"Oh, you sweet Knucklehead!" one of the fans crowded around shouted at Carson. Another nearby laughed. Several Boston players clapped each other on the back and guffawed. John McCord shook his head and shuffled away.

Carson looked dumbfounded, and—surprisingly—a little hurt. Then he moved slowly away toward the dugout.

One of the sports writers must have been near the plate when the fan made that remark about "knucklehead," because the morning sports page carried Carson's picture with the single caption: "Knucklehead."

Jeff Carson's fame spread quickly throughout the circuit. Not Jeff Carson—Knucklehead Carson. The jockeys picked it up and Carson took a terrible ribbing

from dugout and grandstand alike.

By that time the kid had had about enough. The big swagger was now missing from his walk, and he not only didn't pop off much any more but he grew very sullen.

Newt Benson occasionally tried to keep things lively, but Carson's only reply was a cursory, "Can it, funny man!"

PERHAPS it would have blown over with a few weeks. A couple of the fellows, like Max Moton and Andy Cohen, had never actively campaigned against Carson, and even now—or maybe I should say *especially* now—they threw in a few good words for him. But there was little denying that the rest of the men had no confidence with Carson back of the plate. More than occasionally now Flick or Forchetta or Donahue were shaking off his signs.

"I'll have to admit I felt a little sorry for the kid, myself. The riding he got from outside wasn't so bad. You get used to it. But the silent treatment from our own boys must have hurt plenty.

I never talked much with Carson; mainly because he never seemed to want to be talked to. But one day in Brooklyn I was glancing through the Eagle in the hotel lobby when he mosied up and sat down beside me. None of the rest of the men were around.

"H'lo Mr. Barrett," he said.

Mr. Barrett! It surprised me a little, even if I *was* thirty years older than he was.

"Howdy Carson. No excitement around town tonight?"

"Naw. Nothing ever happens in Brooklyn. Mr. Barrett—" he says, dropping the subject, "what in the blazes have I done to this ball club so I should be a leper or something? Sure, I loused up one ball game, but if I remember, a couple of other guys have done the same thing."

I looked at him closely. This Carson was a little new to me.

"Look, Mr. Barrett; I want to crack this league like any other young fellow does, and I think I've done a pretty decent job so far, haven't I? But it seems like to me the league—'specially the Barons—are out to crack *me*."

"And you want my advice, eh, Carson?"



I asked. "Well, I know you're a good ball hawk. Ironpants McCord knows it, too, or you wouldn't still be around here. And I'm pretty sure you know it, or at least you've told people as much. So why don't you just stick in there and play ball till the jockeys get a little tired of riding you. And that, young fellow, is about all you can do."

The boy shrugged. "I thought maybe you could help me. You been around here a while. But I didn't want you to read me out of the Bible." He got up and walked away.

Jeff Carson put his heart into his game, all right. He worked like a horse at playing ball. Maybe he worked *too* hard; maybe he was getting groggy with all the punishment he was taking. Maybe that's what happened Sunday. He must have been in a daze, but whatever it was it didn't help his reputation any.

In the fourth inning we were three runs ahead, and Monty Hackett was looking mighty sweet on the mound.

Going into the first of the fifth we cooked up a couple more potentials. Gionski walked, Lyons popped to short, and Cohen scratched an infield bingle. Carson walked, filling them up.

Monty Hackett unwound on a fast ball and lifted it out near the fence. Gionski and Cohen held up to see what would happen. But Carson, as the ball left the bat, lowered his head and took off like a huge pigeon along the path for second. Cohen moved off second toward third and tried frantically to wave him back. But Carson passed him without seeing him and charged on for third. Gionski and Cummins tried to flag him down—but to no avail. Carson wasn't stopping. A glance over his shoulder toward left showed the ball hitting low on the wall and he raced past third on what he thought should be an easy score. It *would* have been an easy score—if the side hadn't been automatically retired when he passed both runners ahead of him.

Needless to explain, Carson, Knucklehead Carson, became a national institution in the sport world.

Ironpants fumed, his gray hair showing white beside his scarlet face.

"Carson! Mr. *Knucklehead* Carson!" he stormed. "That will cost you an even

hundred—and you can find yourself a spot on the bench, because you'll be using it for a long time. Rowan! Get in there and catch! Of all the—" he pounded his palm, sputtering for words.

JEFF CARSON rode the bench for three weeks with Jerry Rowan doing the chores back of the plate. Pete Hyde's leg was a lot better and he was taking over in the second tilt every bargain day. But Pete was about washed up as a workhorse, and Jerry Rowan just didn't have the stuff. The Barons needed Carson, but it wasn't altogether healthy to suggest that to Ironpants McCord.

So the Barons played see-saw ball going into the last two weeks of September. We were holding off the Cardinals with one hand and reaching for the first place Cubs with the other. The papers showed us a game-and-a-half behind the Chicago boys and a half-game ahead of St. Louis.

Four games with Pittsburgh, three with St. Louis, and a final two-game clincher with the Cubs would wind us up.

Our chucking staff was in decent shape, but McCord was worried about his receivers. He told me that Carson had asked to be sent in, but he was undecided. He knew Carson could do the job, he said, but he was afraid if he put him in it might bust the team wide open.

With Rowan working we split the four-game series with the Bucs. The Cubs won three and lost one against the Giants, dropping us to two-and-a-half games.

The Barons moved to St. Louis a not-too-happy group of men.

"This is the kind of stuff that puts ulcers on the old sidewalls," complained Ace Flick.

"You all complainin' yet," grinned Newt Benson. "Look at me little pinkies—shakin' like a leaf." He extended his hand for all to see.

So Flick proceeded to shut out the Cards by virtue of a home run by Benson with two aboard in the seventh. The score board showed that the Reds had taken the Cubs over, 5—3.

Herb Lyons, Newt Benson, and Andy Cohen ganged up on the Ace a second after the Flicker flicked across the last strike. Benson pushed Flick's cap down over his eyes while Lyons and Cohen clobbered



him on the back. Pepper Gionski charged in from short to pull them off.

"Save it, you muggs!" he yelled. "This guy's got a couple more games to chuck yet!"

That put us within a game and a half of our quarry, but still a sizable chasm with only four games left. And that game-and-a-half grew to fantastic size during the next two days. We won two more from the Cards behind Markey and Donahue, but Chicago was also busily whipping the Redlegs.

As we moved northward to Chicago we were still behind by the width of that unholy game-and-a-half. The flag was there to be had, but the Cubs had a full-size army doing guard duty.

Ironpants McCord's fingernails had been chawwed off up to the elbows, and Benson had begun calling him Venus de Milo, which humor I'm sure was pretty much lost on McCord in his present condition.

If McCord was in bad shape, though, Jeff Carson was even worse. The Knucklehead had been spending half of his time on the bench, and the other half slightly suspended *above* the bench as he tried to catch the boss's eye for the wave of the hand that would send him in—even as a pinch hitter. But the sign hadn't come. Carson had long since grown truculent, with a sharp answer for each and any question or comment. Carson knew that the team was clicking with Jerry Rowan behind the plate—even though Jerry himself couldn't connect once in ten trips.

If the rest of the men were as nervous as Ironpants and Carson, they succeeded fairly well in hiding it because the old spirit and zip were there. The pupils of their eyes had that greenish reflection of World Series cash. All they had to do was lick the Cubs two for two.

When we hit Chicago, a sizable demonstration was under way as the Chicagoans were making with the hoopla for their "boys." Chicago's rabid fans were already celebrating the bringing home of the pennant, and series tickets were on sale for the opener of the main event. And with the Barons running a rather poor second, I'm not so sure that they weren't more than justified.

Thirty-five thousand of these fans

poured into Wrigley Field for the first of the two-game series on Saturday. Although it was the end of September, Chicago was still warm, and the Cubs were still hot. Wyse took the mound for the opener and we picked out Tony Forchetta to oppose him.

Both Wyse and Forchetta were on, and neither team could scraape up much more than a couple of infield taps through the first five innings. To open the sixth, Van Renville clouted the first pitch along the stripe past third for a double. Joe Coltella followed with a long single to bring him around. Then what looked like a hitting spree turned into something of a fizzle as Cleveland, Gionski, and Lyons failed to dent the horsehide and Coltella was left stranded. But it gave Tony one marker to work on.

**I**N their half, the Cubs took the cue from us and opened up. With one away, Hughes singled over second. Lowrey lined past Andy Cohen, moving Hughes to third. Cavaretta fouled out back of first with Herb Lyons taking the pop near the stands. Pafko let two good ones go by and then loosened up on a high fast one. The ball whistled out into left-center and before it could be relayed back to the plate two runs were across and Pafko was standing on second. Tony put the clamps on after that and the next two batters went down one-two.

The Barons couldn't score in the sixth, and the Cubs couldn't do any better than the Barons. In the seventh Benson singled and Renville walked to put the Cubs up on their toes, but again we failed to push over a tally.

As the Cubs went to bat in the seventh, Forchetta got two in a row and then walked Hack. Hughes watched two go by to make the count one-and-one. As Tony heaved the third pitch, it rolled off his fingers and came in low, very low. It hit the dirt an inch behind the plate and Jerry Rowan went down after it. Hack was on the way to second. Rowan came up with the pellet and whipped it out to Gionski who came over to cover. But Hack slid in, safe by a yard.

As he started to throw the ball back to the mound, Pepper Gionski hesitated, looked at the ball, and then looked toward



the plate. He called time over his shoulder to the umpire at second and ran in to the plate demanding to see Rowan's hand. The ball had been smudged with red, and Jerry's hand showed the reason. His right thumb was badly squashed and bleeding. Gionski led Rowan toward the bench and Doc Barnhart.

The Doc told McCord Rowan would have to come out, and Jerry didn't protest—the hand hurt pretty bad.

McCord glanced along the bench to Pete Hyde, hesitated for a second and then to Jeff Carson. He wagged to Carson. The boy nodded and hurriedly donned his equipment.

As Carson moved toward the plate he passed Jerry Rowan and put his hand on the injured man's shoulder, "Sorry, Jerry."

"Hit 'em a lick, Carson," Rowan replied.

McCord shook his head to Ace Flick. "What a devil of a time for something like this to happen!"

Carson took his place back of the bat, and the Chicago fans greeted him with the familiar taunt: "Oh, you Knucklehead! Just give him a few minutes, boys, and he'll donate us the game!"

Two gone and Hack on second. Forchetta worked hard on Hughes but lost him. Lowrey followed and worked up to two-and-two. Carson called for a fast one high and inside. Tony shook it off, and Carson repeated the sign. Again Tony shook it off. Carson walked out to the mound.

Tony greeted him with, "Listen, you knucklehead, you want to see that thing pasted against the fence?"

"Look, pitcher," Carson replied, "Suppose you throw me what I tell you to throw."

Tony shrugged and waved the catcher back to the plate. Crouching behind the batter, Carson repeated the sign and Tony offered it up, high and hard on the inside. Lowrey swung and missed.

Herb Lyons opened the eighth with a line drive down third which Stan Hack went up for and came down with. Andy Cohen singled over second and Carson lifted a high foul back of the plate for the second out.

Stan Abel picked out a club as McCord signaled him to hit for Tony Forchetta. It was a rough spot to send in a fellow

who hadn't been to the plate in two weeks, but Stan took it in stride and laced the second pitch into right. The ball hit inside the line and Andy Cohen galloped around to third. Newt Benson marched up to the platter with three big bats, picked out one bat and one ball and put them together for a hot drive through the box and past second into center. Cohen scored and Abel moved around to take his place on third, Benson stopping at first. Vance Renville, ever potent at the platter, won himself a permanent seat on the Olympus of the Barons' mountain of the gods. The third pitch came in waist-high. A gleam lit Renville's eyes and he unwound. The ball was still going up-hill as it left the park.

Renville's timely poke gave us a 4—2 lead, and when the Cubs failed to do anything more about it, we found we had latched onto a very important ball game.

That lifted us one full game closer to the top and left us only a half-game behind.

To ask the boys to duplicate the victory on the following day was almost expecting too much. The Cubs would be pitching Hank Borowy and we'd be working behind Ace Flick. It was up to the Ace whether we'd have a look-see at the World Series.

**I**RONPANTS McCORD never goes in much for this pep talk business before a game, but on Sunday afternoon he walked into the locker room where the men were pulling on their uniforms.

"Look, men," he shouted and the jabber stopped. "This is no time for me to make a speech and so I'm not gonna make one. The Chicagos aren't gonna let you walk off with this game. They're hot and Borowy's hot. Maybe you can beat them, maybe you can't. I think you can—if Flick is on—" he looked at Carson, "—and some of you other guys keep your head out and play a game of ball the folks at home won't be ashamed of." He turned and walked through the tunnel to the dugout.

Wrigley Park was packed to capacity, if you call the rafters part of the capacity. It looked like everybody in Chicago was out for the kill.

Newt Benson opened the first inning with a grasshopper to Merullo who



lopped him off at first. Renville lifted a high one to Hughes at second. Joe Coltella watched two good ones and four bad ones go by and scampered down the baseline. But Bernie Cleveland could do little to help the cause when, with two and two, he ticked the fifth pitch and Livingston held it.

The Cubs also failed to score in their half of the first. And again in the second chucker the man in the scoreboard added zeros in both columns.

Cohen singled between short and third to start the third inning and Jeff Carson punched a Texas leaguer over first. But Ace Flick, Newt Benson, and Vance Renville couldn't bring them around.

The Cubs combined two singles and a double in their half to push across two runs before Flick could retire the side. Those two runs loomed awfully big as Borowy continued to set one of our boys down after another. The Cubs played air-tight ball through the fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh, and held that 2-0 lead.

Pepper Gionski stormed into the bench as we came in from the field for our half of the eighth.

"All right, you jerks. Whattya playin', jacks or something? Let's get some hits! Who's up? Carson? Well, get *out* there, Knucklehead, and *do* something!"

Carson did something—he struck out. Ace Flick followed him and tapped a lazy roller into the infield which was good for a free ticket when it was booted across the diamond. Newt Benson picked out a curve and sent it on a line past third for one base moving Flick up to second.

Renville drove a low pitch down to first. Cavaretta picked it up and heaved to third, cutting off Flick, but the return was too slow to catch Renville. Two gone. Joe Coltella watched Borowy playing with the corners until he missed once too often, filling the sacks. Borowy bore down on Cleveland and whipped in two quick strikes. But Bernie could see paydirt in the third pitch, and he connected. The pellet buzzed over second and out into center. Benson left third like a caliber-fifty and crossed the plate in three strides. Renville rounded third and charged for the platter. The throw came in but Renville crossed standing up.

**UGLY  
BLACKHEADS  
OUT  
in  
SECONDS  
with**

**VACUTEX  
BLACKHEAD  
EXTRACTOR  
\$1.00**

**EVEN  
THESE  
..EASILY**

Blackheads are ugly, offensive, embarrassing. They clog pores, mar your appearance, invite criticism. Now your blackheads can be removed in seconds, scientifically, and easily, without injuring or squeezing the skin. VACUTEX creates a gentle vacuum around the blackhead, cleans out hard-to-reach places in a jiffy.

Germ laden hands never touch the skin. Simply place the direction finder over your blackhead, draw back extractor . . . and it's out. Release extractor and blackhead is ejected. VACUTEX does it all! Don't risk infection, order today!

#### JUST 3 EASY STEPS

Yes, in a jiffy, VACUTEX removes blackheads, painlessly and harmlessly. You have blackheads—then apply VACUTEX, and then presto, chango, they're out.

#### 10 DAY TRIAL OFFER

Don't wait until embarrassing criticism makes you act. Don't risk losing out on popularity and success because of ugly, dirt-clogged pores. ACT NOW! Enjoy the thrill of having a clean skin, free of pore-clogging, embarrassing blackheads. Try VACUTEX for 10 days. We guarantee it to do all we claim. If you are not completely satisfied your \$1.00 will be immediately refunded.

**SAFE • SURE**

**SANITARY**

**DAINTY**

**FAST**

**PLEASANT**

**BALLCO PRODUCTS COMPANY, Dept. 65-F  
19 W. 44th St., New York 18, New York**

☐ Ship C. O. D., I will pay postman, \$1.00 plus postage. My \$1.00 will be refunded if I am not delighted.

☐ I prefer to enclose \$1.00 now and save postage. (Same guarantee as above.)

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

City & Zone .....

Sorry No C. O. D.'s Outside U. S. A.



The stands groaned while the Barons' bench went wild. We shouted to Gionski to bring one more across. But the Pep topped one back to the pitcher's mound and was out by ten yards at first.

The Cubs came in for their half of the eighth with the score all tied up at 2—2, and ready, willing, and determined to get both runs back again. Ace Flick had different ideas. The support behind him put the zip back in his fast one, and the Cubs went down one-two-three.

The ninth opened with Borowy facing the tail-end of our hitting order. Herb Lyons did his best to start the procession moving again, but succeeded only in breaking his back three times. Borowy fed Andy Cohen a high soft one, and the little third-sacker lifted it up over the infield. Cavaretta moved a little to the left and camped under it. Two gone. Jeff Carson came up to the plate. The first pitch was low for a ball, followed by a hard strike around the knees.

Borowy hooked in a sharp curve which Carson lunged at and missed, falling with the swing. He picked himself up, dusted himself off, and moved back into the box to the accompaniment of taunts from the grandstands.

With the count at two strikes and one ball, Carson was far behind in the statistics. Borowy wasn't throwing anything that he could drive out of the park. There wouldn't be anything coming across the middle. Maybe he was playing too much for the corners, because somehow the next pitch slipped. It was coming in high—mighty high. It didn't look to Carson that the catcher would be able to get up to it. Carson saw it was going to be wild.

He drew back and took a vicious swing at it—but at waist level, swinging six feet under the ball! In one motion he dropped the bat and streaked for first. The ball passed the leaping catcher and traveled back toward the stands. Carson hit first and sent the bag spinning as he rounded. The fans who had guffawed at first were now stunned. And now they were screaming. Carson raced for second. The catcher had retrieved the ball and had sent it winging toward second. Carson hit the dirt in a long slide and hooked for the outside of the sack. Behind the dust cloud, an

umpire spread his hands—safe!

The Barons were out of the dugout.

"Oh, you sweet kid!" yelled Newt Benson.

Ace Flick persuaded McCord to let him hit for himself. With a big grin on his face he pickled the first pitch over first base on a line drive that caromed off the wall. Jeff Carson came across the plate standing up. Pepper Gionski grabbed him by the hand and led him to the dugout. Joe Coltella moved over to make room for him on the bench.

Ironpants McCord walked along the bench and stood in front of Carson. McCord put his hands on his hips and grinned.

"You're the guy I called 'Knucklehead,' huh?"

Carson grinned back at him. "Aw shucks, Boss; twarn't nawthin' any red blooded American boy couldn't have done."

Newt Benson dribbled a grounder to second for the final out.

As Ace Flick came in from second to pick up his glove, he called toward the plate.

"OK, Jeffrey m'lad, you're calling them—let's give 'em the works, huh?"

Neither Hubbell nor Grove nor Alexander could ever have been hotter than Ace Flick in that last half of a ninth inning. Jeff Carson was calling the pitch and Flick was plugging a dime with every one he whipped in. Three Cub batters couldn't so much as get themselves a foul tip.

Jeff Carson and Ace Flick raced for the dugout arm in arm. As they emerged into the locker room, Carson shouted:

"Want you guys to meet the greatest hittin' pitcher—no, the greatest pitchin' hitter—this side of Paducah!"

"Yeah," Flick returned, "and I want you all to know the smartest Knucklehead in organized baseball, li'l ole Jeffrey Carson."

Carson walked over to where Joe Coltella was pulling off his shoes. "Y'know, Joe, Flick is a pretty good hitter at that—for a pitcher."

Coltella smiled, "Why you silly knucklehead!"

Yep, we still call him Knucklehead. But Jeff doesn't mind any more. In fact, I think he gets something of a kick out of it.

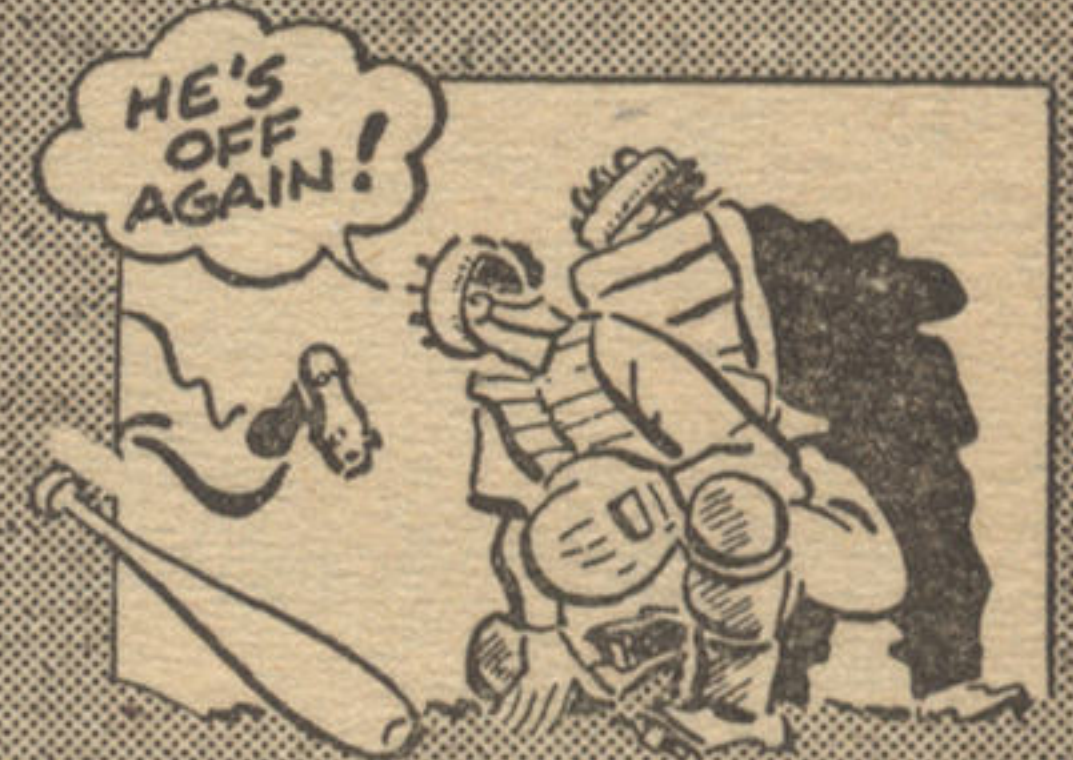


# the INCOMPARABLE TY

WALTER GALLI

**COBB** --- A MAGNIFICENT BALL PLAYER--FEARLESS AND AGGRESSIVE--HE CAME OUT OF AUGUSTA IN 1905--AND FOR THE NEXT 24 YEARS PROCEEDED TO TEAR BASEBALL APART !!

...WHEN HE RETIRED HE HELD OR HAD TIED 90 MAJOR LEAGUE RECORDS --OF WHICH MORE THAN 30 STILL EXIST...



TWO OF THESE RECORDS WILL CERTAINLY NEVER BE BROKEN--HIS LIFETIME BATTING AVERAGE OF .367 FOR 24 YEARS--AND HIS 892 STOLEN BASES. HE LED THE AMERICAN LEAGUE HITTERS 12 TIMES !! NINE YEARS IN A ROW !!

IT WAS COBB WHO DEVELOPED THE ART OF BASE STEALING--NO ONE HAS EVER APPROACHED HIM IN TECHNIQUE...IT WAS HE WHO INVENTED THE "HOOK SLIDE" AND HIS 96 STOLEN BAGS IN 1915 IS STILL THE RECORD FOR ONE SEASON...YEP, EVERY TIME TY GOT ON BASE, THE OPPOSING TEAM ALWAYS GOT THE JITTERS!





# PLUMBER AT THE PLATE

*By Curtis Bishop*

Fence-busting was apple pie for the clouting Malones, Paddy and Sandy—the best brother act since the Waners. But for young, aspiring Terry Malone it was just three swings and a drink of water . . . until a dyed-in-the-diamond gal started calling the pitch.

“**H**ERE she comes,” whispered Huck Appleton to Grace Seton. “Miss Coleman herself.”

Cynthia Coleman seemed to realize she was the subject of Huck’s hoarse whispering, for she gave the veteran manager of the Blue Sox a dazzling smile as she pulled off her gloves. “How are you today, Huck?” she asked sweetly. Then her dark eyes turned inquiringly upon Grace Seton.

“Miss Coleman,” Huck explained awkwardly, “I want you to meet Grace Seton. Her Dad usta play for us. One of the best catchers we ever did have except for his hitting. I heard you mention yesterday you needed a combination secretary and receptionist. Well, Miss Grace now, she knows shorthand and typing and . . .”

“I’m a fanatical baseball fan,” Grace put in for herself, her blue eyes appealing. “The Blue Sox mean almost as much to me as to Huck. Or to you. I’d be happy here in the office.”

Miss Coleman nodded. It was difficult to tell by her attitude whether she liked this auburn-haired applicant or not. Cynthia Coleman had inherited the Blue Sox from her father during the winter, and had shocked professional baseball by announcing she intended to run the club herself. The business offices were being renovated and enlarged to suit her.

“I do need someone,” she murmured. “But you must know shorthand, my dear.”

“I’ve been a secretary for five years,” Grace answered quickly.

Huck Appleton caught this quick subtle animosity between them and blamed himself for bringing Sad Sam’s daughter to see the new owner of the Blue Sox. Mebbe the trouble, mused Huck, was that Miss Cynthia Coleman wanted to be the only pretty gal around the office. Some gals knew their baseball. Grace Seton, now,

could rattle off batting averages and even batting weaknesses. But Cynthia had shown in just a few weeks that she was stepping into her father’s shoes as president of the Blue Sox because of the notoriety and excitement the job provided.

“If you can take shorthand,” Cynthia said, “the job is yours.”

Grace took a small notebook and pencil out of her purse. “I’m ready,” she announced quietly. “Try me out.”

Cynthia rattled off a letter. Grace Seton’s fingers moved swiftly, expertly. Then the applicant read back the letter and Cynthia nodded.

“All right, Miss Seton,” she said crisply. “The job is yours. Start right now. Hours eight to four. One hundred and forty per month.”

“Yes, Miss Coleman,” Grace answered. She had prayed all night that she would get this job, but now, for some unexplainable reason, she wasn’t elated. Perhaps it was a premonition.

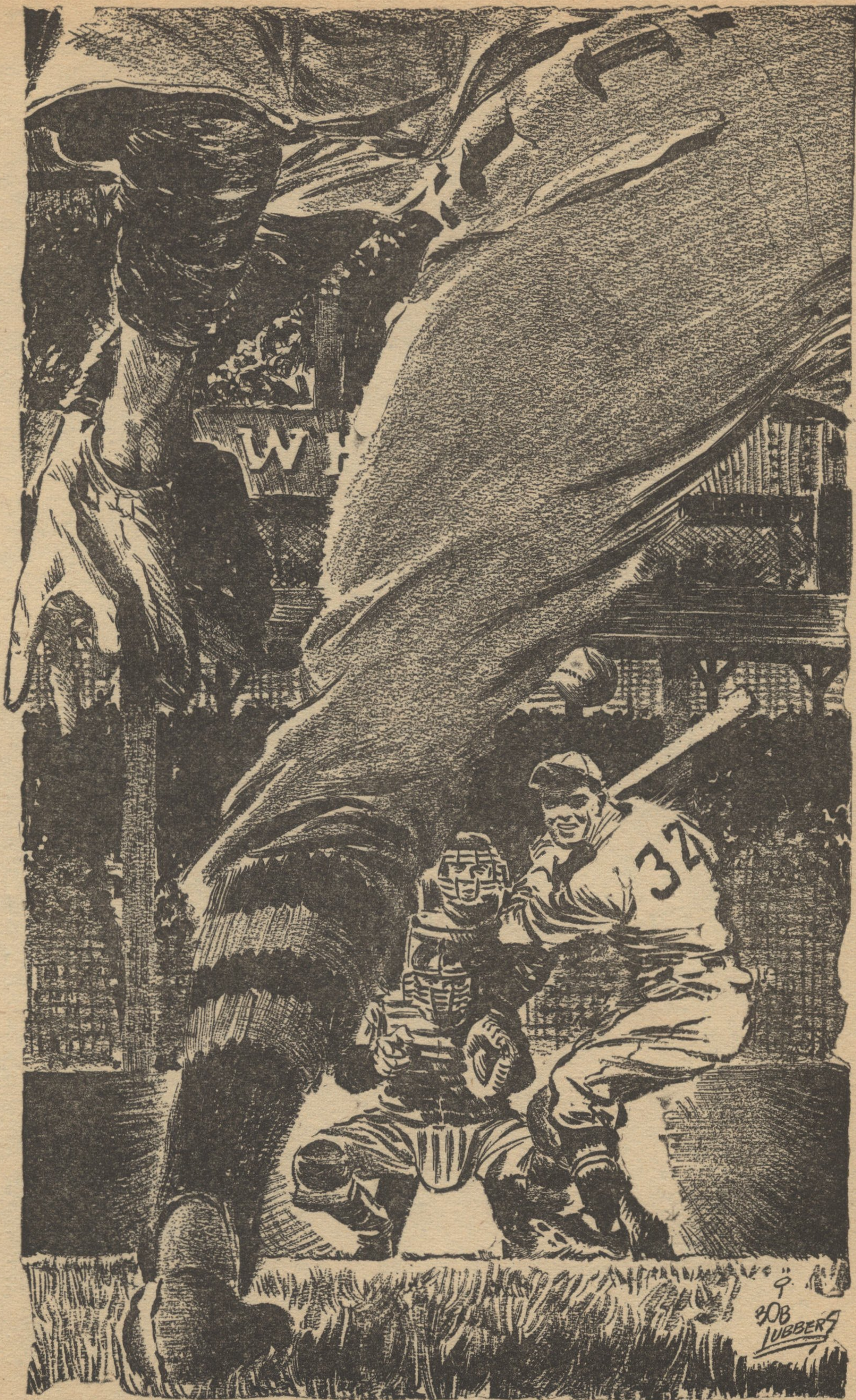
Miss Coleman waved her hands around at the filing cabinets and plain oak desks. The inner office, which had been Luke Coleman’s “sanctified sanctorium,” had been enlarged, re-decorated and re-furnished. Nothing so practical as a plain oak desk for Miss Cynthia Coleman, the society girl dabbling in professional baseball. “Get rid of these, Miss Seton,” she said helplessly. “I guess some of the papers we’ll have to keep on file. Use your own judgment.”

Grace nodded. Then, to Huck Appleton, with the same sweetness: “Did you wish a conference with me?”

“Yes’m,” Huck said quickly. “We got trouble. The Malone boys . . .”

“Come into my office,” Cynthia invited. Grace moved a desk out of the way, rolled a filing cabinet into a corner and shortly







had the front office presentable. She took out her notebook and doodled absent-mindedly. Had she made a mistake changing jobs? Of course not. Here she was in the business office of the Blue Sox! She would have her finger on the pulse of the ball club that had been her father's religion, philosophy and profession. She would know the inside workings of trades and . . .

"Is old Huck Appleton in here?" demanded a voice from the doorway, startling her.

"Yes," she answered crisply before taking a look at the big man pushing through the door. Following him was another young giant who was almost his replica. Grace gasped. How often had she watched these two tall broad-shouldered young men play baseball! The Malone brothers, Paddy and Sandy!

"You're the Malone boys," she smiled at them. "You're Paddy and you're Sandy."

Each accepted his identification in turn.

"You don't look so much alike," she said, disappointed. "The sports writers had me thinking I couldn't tell one from the other."

"Look, Miss," apologized Sandy Malone, "we'd like to chew the fat with you but we're kinda rushed. Where's that ingrate, Huck Appleton?"

**"INGRATE!"** Grace Seton frowned in disapproval. Ball players shouldn't refer to their manager in such fashion.

"And we'll tell him so to his face" growled Paddy. Paddy was heavier than Sandy, she noticed. And banged with his right fist even if he did bat and throw from his southpaw side.

"We ain't leaving for training camp until we get one thing settled," thundered Sandy. "If he's in there, run him out."

And he waved toward Miss Coleman's private office.

"He's in there," Grace frowned. "I'll see if he can come out."

"We'll go right in," growled Paddy. "Might as well tell this dame who owns the ball club that . . ."

He was pushing the door open as he was muttering. Cynthia Coleman heard his speech, his threat against the "dame who owns the ball club." She came swiftly

to her feet, her eyes flashing. No doubt of it, she had a temper.

"Miss Seton, I didn't tell you to let these two men in," she flashed at Grace, who was standing in the doorway with an apologetic expression on her face.

"I didn't let them in, Miss Coleman," she answered with some pique in her voice. If the job called for bouncing out huskies like the Malone boys, she couldn't hope to keep it. Nobody but the toughest of umpires had ever been able to bounce the Malones.

"These are the Malone boys," Miss Coleman," Huck interrupted. "We were just talking about 'em."

"Oh, Paddy and Sandy," murmured Cynthia, sitting down again. She had just observed what strapping men they were. Tall and straight stood the Malones, each over six feet and weighing nearly 200 pounds. And each was a good-looking man in his own virile way. Grace noticed how quickly Cynthia calmed down. She returned to her desk with lips tight in disapproval.

Certainly the girl owner was turning the full glory of her dark eyes upon Sandy and Paddy Malone, the best brother act since Paul and Lloyd Waner held forth at Pittsburgh.

"And what bothers the mighty Malones?" she asked sweetly.

"Huck there will tell you," stammered Paddy. "He gave us his word . . ."

"It's the same story, Miss Coleman," sighed the manager. "There is a third Malone, Terry. He also plays the outfield. When we signed up these two . . . these Malones . . . they made us promise to give their younger brother a contract when he was 20. We did. He lasted a week or two in spring training. We sent him to Beaumont. He finished the season in Louisiana. We brought him back the next spring. He stuck around a little longer. He can field. And he can hit some, but not with ducks on the pond. We sent him to Louisville. Then back to Beaumont. Then to the Three-Eye League. He hit about .290 there. Now they want us to bring him up again."

"If he doesn't come up," growled Sandy, "there won't be a Malone playing for the Blue Sox."

"It's all of us or none," added Paddy.



"Our old man dreamed of the day when there would be an all-Malone outfield. The kid can't hit like we can, Miss Coleman. But he's got a great arm and . . ."

"He's got a great arm," agreed Huck. "He can throw one strike after another from the right-field fence. But he can't hit his weight."

"He can cover ground like a jackrabbit," argued Sandy, ignoring Huck.

"But we got a right fielder who can knock the cover off the ball," protested the manager. "Chink Wilson will hit .330 against any pitching, and for plenty of extra bases."

"But he limps around," snarled Paddy. "Could you play him if it weren't for me and Sandy? I handle center, Miss Coleman. Except I play half-way over in right field. I cover half of Wilson's territory while my brother, Sandy here, covers up for me."

"Some of that's true," Huck agreed.

THROUGHOUT this argument Cynthia had been studying the Malone brothers through half-closed eyes. "I think, Huck," she murmured, "we must give this third Malone another chance. Will that satisfy you, gentlemen? We'll call up the younger brother for a third trial?"

"He'll make good, too, Miss Coleman," promised Sandy. "He's picked up some on his hitting. We've been working on him."

"Sometimes I think," growled Huck, "that if you two and your old man would let the kid alone, he might make a ball player."

"See to it, Huck," Cynthia smiled. Then, looking from one Malone to the other: "Come and see us again when you have troubles."

"Yes, ma'm," gulped Sandy.

"You betcha," Paddy answered promptly.

"Come outside," sighed Huck, "and we'll send the telegram to Beaumont."

"Terry is with us," said Sandy. "Here in New York. He can leave for camp with us."

"I guess you guys are in top shape," said Huck, eyes twinkling. No problem children, the Malones. Baseball was their whole life. They showed up each spring hungry for action, and physically ready. If a Malone ever loafed, mused Huck, old

Pops Malone would whale the offender with a baseball bat. Pops and Huck had played in the same league twenty years before.

"So is Terry," Paddy said quickly. "We've been working out. He watches that curve ball better, Huck. He pulls it down the foul line and . . ."

"Yeah, yeah," sighed Huck. "We're giving him a trial. Let him sell himself."

The Malones departed, satisfied with this promise. Huck looked after 'em with a frown.

"Why in the hell do they have to have a kid brother?" he demanded of Grace Seton. "The only weakness they got is that no-good Terry."

"I remember Terry Malone," she said. "Nice-looking but light with the stick."

"Light ain't the word for it," growled Huck. "He might as well not carry a stick up to the plate with him."

"But he's a nice kid," Huck concluded. "I dunno, mebbe he busts out of the big leagues just for the hell of it. His old man and his big brothers ride him all the time."

"I hope he clicks," Grace said. "It would be something to have an outfield of Malone, Malone and Malone."

"If the kid was like Paddy and Sandy," shrugged Huck, "it would be something!"

## II

GRACE SETON sat in the owner's box back of third base and watched the tall slim batter work over the pitcher. Huck Appleton was always a week behind other managers in letting his moundsmen show their curves and Terry Malone was batting at nothing but medium-speed balls.

But this couldn't alter the fact that Terry Malone was looking good. He was stepping into the pitch with his weight behind his bat and hitting 'em straight away—inside balls to right, outside pitches to left. Grace saw that Huck had an idle moment and motioned to the manager.

"If that's your bust hitter, include me in," she smiled.

"Oh, it's two o'clock," Huck said carelessly. "He looked that good before. Wait 'til it's three o'clock, and game time."

"Meaning when the clutch comes and ducks are on?"



"Yep. It's three swings and a drink of water then."

"You're prejudiced," Grace accused him. Huck had always been like an uncle to her, she could take that attitude.

"Sorry for him," Huck shrugged. "Get some of this Malone family pressure off him and he might make it."

He turned back to the diamond. Cynthia Coleman was entering the owner's box with a party, and Huck did not want to be trapped into being introduced to any more of the Florida society. Luke Coleman had never come south with the team, at least hadn't moved the business office along with the squad, but Miss Coleman had no intentions of stepping out of the limelight even for a brief period. Here, as in New York, she was the beautiful society girl who was owner and president of the Blue Sox. More pictures of Cynthia had been snapped in spring camp than of all the ball players combined.

She was dressed in a dazzling pearl-gray creation, and she surveyed the scene before her with regal calm. These husky sweating men were *her* ball players. They were performing for the entertainment of herself and her friends.

A half-dozen couples were in her party. As they tried to find seats, it was obvious that there weren't enough chairs.

"I believe we need your seat, Miss Seton," Cynthia murmured to her secretary.

"Of course," Grace answered. "Pardon me."

"Any letters for me to sign?" asked Cynthia.

"Yes. They're on your desk, Miss Coleman."

"Thank you," Cynthia murmured, sighing as if it were a terrible price to be bothered with these business details.

Actually she never came to the office except to dash her signature across letters and contracts. This suited both Grace and Huck to a "T". Let her pose for the photographers if she wanted to, growled Huck, just so long as she didn't stick her nose into his managerial affairs. They could win a pennant this year if one or two rookies came through. And Lefty Power could keep his pitching arm limber.

Grace took a seat in the next box. She heard one of the women with her employer

giggle and point to Terry Malone, who was still batting.

"There's the handsome young man who was dancing at the Tivoli last night. Introduce us, Cynthia."

"Of course, Edith," Miss Coleman agreed. She hesitated, then turned to Grace.

"What's his name, Miss Seton?"

"Malone—Terry Malone."

Cynthia's brow knit into a frown. The name Malone struck a familiar chord in her memory.

"Oh, yes," she smiled. "His brothers wouldn't report to camp unless we gave him a trial. They actually staged a hold-out, Edith."

"How fascinating!"

Now Terry was through with his hitting and was walking back to the dugout. Cynthia motioned to Grace.

"Call him over, Miss Seton."

Grace hesitated. She wasn't sure this was in her contract. But she obeyed.

"Terry Malone?" she called out.

Terry lifted his head, trying to locate the voice.

Grace flushed slightly as her gaze met Terry's, and she had to motion again. He approached the boxes with slow steps.

"Terry, this is Miss Cynthia Coleman, your boss," Grace said crisply. "Miss Coleman wants to introduce you to her friends."

"Edith here wanted to meet you," Cynthia explained. "Edith Van Sickle, Terry Malone. And this is Patricia Kemp. And Mr. and Mrs. Robert Forsythe."

"Pleased to meet you," murmured Terry.

His grey eyes studied his owner's face. He was, Grace realized, a good-looking youngster. He had a quietness about him, a subdued quality, that one didn't expect to find in a Malone. Sandy and Paddy could be classified as "characters"—hot-tempered, loud-voiced, rough from the word go. Terry was cut from a different pattern.

"You must play some fine baseball for us," Cynthia smiled. "I think your brothers will die a thousand deaths if we have to release you."

Terry nodded. Grace did not miss the shadow which flashed across his tanned face. She remembered what Huck had said, that perhaps Terry might be a better



ball player if he could escape the bullying and coaching of his brothers and father.

"If you can play baseball," said Edith Van Sickle, "as well as you can dance, you'll help Cynthia's cause. Where did you learn that rhumba you were doing at the Tivoli last night?"

"I studied dancing in college," admitted Terry. His face colored. Grace smiled to herself. It wouldn't do for that to become known to the squad. A Malone had studied dancing in college!

"You must dance with me the next time you see me at a night club," Miss Van Sickle said coquettishly. The rich girl turned upon Cynthia. "Why don't you bring some of your nice-looking young men with you, Cynthia? We're always short of men, you know."

"I hadn't thought of it," shrugged Cynthia.

Grace saw the changing expression of Cynthia Coleman's face. She didn't like this pass at Terry Malone, mused Grace. If any of her ball players were going to be yanked into Florida society, it would be on her own leash.

"It's a good idea," Miss Coleman added after a moment. "I'll send my car to the hotel for you tonight, Terry."

The rookie hesitated. Grace quickly gave him credit for that—he obviously didn't like what he was being pushed into. But this dark-haired girl wasn't just another woman, she was owner of the Blue Sox.

"I'll be waiting in the lobby," he smiled. "Thank you."

And, with a murmur to show he appreciated the introduction to Cynthia's party, he turned back to the field.

Huck Appleton was waiting for the rookie, a scowl on his weatherbeaten face.

"You might shag some flies, Mister Malone. That is, if you got the time."

"Yes, sir."

He ran out to right field, his lips moving in silent resentment. What had Huck expected him to do—refuse a summons from the owner's box!

A CRASHING line drive came his way; he was off with the sound of the bat, running with head down, playing the ball without following it with his eyes. Grace Seton, watching closely, knew then he had at least the instincts of a ball

player. Few rookies can do that. And, suddenly turning his head, Terry snared the ball with a short leap. The catch looked fairly easy. He made it seem so, another point in his favor. But he had traveled almost to the right center wall and that was 387 feet in this oversized ball park.

He turned to throw to home plate. Every outfielder did that after every shagged fly in Huck Appleton's training camp. A good throw home, swore Huck, was one of the stoutest defenses a ball club could have. Catcher Tom Poland was out in front of the plate ready to receive the peg.

Like a bullet the ball sailed, barely head high as it came over the second baseman. It landed in the grass just beyond pitcher's box and bounced once . . . right into Poland's mitt.

Grace nodded in approval. She had watched plenty of ball players in her 22 years. She had heard her father talk about as many more. But this rookie outfielder, this kid brother of the great Malones, could throw with any of them.

She heard Edith Van Sickle's gasp from the box next to her.

"He's *wonderful*, Cynthia! You're so *lucky* to have him on your team."

Another fly ball carried young Terry to the wall. Again that long throw.

Then, after another round of hitting, Huck divided the squad for a five-inning game. Miss Coleman's party left shortly, the society girl posing for photographers as she went out. Grace looked after her unhappily. Why couldn't somebody have inherited the Blue Sox who loved the club? Like Luke Coleman had done. Or Grace's own father. Or like Huck still did.

The three Malones were on the Blues. Pitching for the Whites were youngsters hoping against hope to crack into a mound staff already pretty well set for starters. The kid pitchers couldn't cut loose with their fork balls and the regulars, especially the Malones, had a field day. Sandy and Paddy each parked one, prodigious clouts both. Terry had two sharp singles to show for his four trips up.

That night, at the hotel, Grace gave Terry a lift for his good hitting. The youngest of the Malone clan had her sympathies. Huck swore Terry might stick as a big leaguer if the youngster could ever



shake the weight of the Malone reputation, the stigma of being the one Malone who couldn't rattle the fences.

"You looked sharp out there today," she told him in that easy informal way of hers.

"Wait 'til they start curving me," Terry shrugged.

He wasn't modest, she decided, just resigned. "You're licked before you start," she told him crisply.

Another shrug. "You can't steal first base," he said ruefully.

Then a bell hop paged him and, with a friendly grin, he went off to join Cynthia Coleman's party. She looked after him regretfully. He was making two big mistakes. He was letting the reputation of his older brothers worry him and he was going out with Cynthia's society crowd. No ball player belonged in the night club league.

**A**FTER three more intra-squad games, Huck told his pitchers to cut loose. Grace Seton was on hand a half-hour before the practice game was to start, and she didn't deceive herself as to the big reason for her keen interest. What would Terry Malone do against curve balls?

Terry was batting second in the regular lineup, Paddy third and Sandy fourth. The elder Malones wanted it that way. One Malone coming up after another one. A Malone murderer's row!

Pitching for the Whites was a slim southpaw named Bob White who was making a determined fight to stay on the squad. White struck out Jim Marshall, the third baseman and lead-off man, and then caught the corner of the plate for a called strike on Terry.

Huck came over to the box and gave Grace a grin.

"He looks okay," conceded the skipper. "As loose as a goose up there."

Which was true. Terry was relaxed and self-confident. White tried for the outside corner again. Wide. Both of the elder Malones were swinging bats and calling encouragement to their brother. Terry waited out another curve.

Crack!

His bat met White's sailer squarely for a clean single to left center.

"How's that?" Grace asked joyfully.

"I've seen it before," Huck shrugged.

"Wait until we hit the tough exhibition games. White is just a kid. Needs smartening up."

"But he's got a good curve," Grace argued. "I thought that was Terry's nemesis, a curve. He cracked that one."

"Terry's trouble is trying to outguess the pitcher," Huck declared. "He outfigured White. Knew the floater was coming."

Paddy came up to the plate, throwing away two bats. He picked out one to his liking and smashed a long triple into right center.

Sandy, beaming from ear to ear, waited out three pitches, then clouted one of White's curves over the right field fence.

Paddy ran across the plate and kept coming . . . to where Huck was talking to Grace.

"How's that?" yelled Paddy. "One Malone gets on, another drives him in."

"Yeah, nobody like the Malones," Huck said sourly.

But, behind Paddy's back, he shook his head sadly. "It's a shame the kid can't make it," he observed. "I believe Paddy and Sandy would play for nothing if they could just have Terry in the outfield with them."

"I haven't given up on him yet," Grace pointed out.

Huck eyed her with a questioning grin. "The kid has you swinging at the wide ones, doesn't he?"

Grace hesitated, then flushed and smiled in the same instant. "It's his change of pace," she agreed.

Huck turned away to the practice game. Joe Reuther, a 19-year-old fireballer, was pitching for the Yannigans. Huck replaced Terry with Chink Wilson, the veteran who clouted as hard and often as the two Malones. Wilson's relations with his two outfield mates were none too cordial; he thought they carried their eagerness to make their kid brother look good too far. Paddy Malone loafed on flies into right center, trying to convince Huck they needed more speed in the sun garden.

Wilson's forte wasn't speed, but hitting. He gripped his bat grimly and waited for Reuther to bring one in letter high. That pitch he promptly desposited among the palm trees bordering the left field fence.

Huck grinned. Chink could stand some



firing up. The stocky chap, whom the boys called "Five-by-Five," could become one of the great hitters of the game if he had spark.

### III

IN their first official practice game, the Blue Sox whaled Chicago pitching for 11 runs. Terry received the starting nod in right field, and got a respectable single out of three trips up. Wilson's mark was two for two, both for extra bases. The other Malones hit home runs.

Then the Blue Sox took the road for three games in five days. Grace Seton watched the box scores in the papers. Terry hit for a mediocre .300—with pitchers still nursing arms, an outfield prospect should be going better than that. Chink Wilson's slugging was the real feature of the series. The Blue Sox copped all three games and young Joe Reuther pitched six consecutive scoreless innings.

Huck was grinning as he came into the business office for a conference with Miss Coleman. Cynthia was late as usual. Huck usually cooled his heels a half-hour or so before the languid owner of the Blue Sox appeared.

"It's too early and I know better than count my chickens before they hatch," the veteran manager told Grace, "but we're looking good. That Reuther boy has speed to burn."

"And Wilson is hitting like a house afire," Grace added promptly. "Your problem is third base. Who stays—Lamotte or Snow?"

"Both," Huck winced. "I'll trade Gattura, the relief second baseman. I figger on nursing both Lamotte and Snow along."

"How long does Terry stay on the payroll?"

Huck gave her a sharp glance. "That's up to Miss Coleman," he said brusquely.

"To Miss Coleman?"

"I tried to make a trade for Terry last week," Huck confessed. "She turned thumbs down."

"Naturally," Grace said bitterly. It was catty of her, but there is some of the feline in every woman.

"Yeah," he groaned. "Naturally."

Cynthia came in wearing a pale green dress that showed off her slim beauty to

best advantage. She gave Grace a cool nod, then motioned for Huck to follow her into her office. The door was left half-open behind the manager and Grace overheard their conversation.

"Terry Malone plays right field," Cynthia was saying firmly.

"Look, Miss Coleman," protested Huck. "I've seen the boy flop before. Ordinarily we can carry five full-time outfielders. But with third base so shaky, and Cotton Back slowing up at first. . . ."

"Mr. Appleton," interrupted the owner, "what's the use of owning a ball club if you can't keep the players you choose? We keep Terry Malone. That's final."

A moment later Huck came out, face red, lips moving soundlessly. To Grace he said in a weak voice: "Could you drink a beer with a guy?"

Grace nodded. It was almost lunch time. Over his beer Huck swore gently.

"The best damn club we've had in ten years," he moaned, "and she's trying to break it up. I'd quit only . . ."

"Only you can't leave the Sox, Cynthia Coleman or no Cynthia Coleman," Grace finished for him. She knew how he felt about this team.

"That's right," Huck nodded. "It ain't the money, though I'm not rolling in it."

"So we keep Terry Malone!" mused Grace. "He isn't so dumb and naive, is he?"

There was a tell-tale bitterness in her voice. She couldn't admire a man who held on to his major league berth by such methods.

"We keep him," Huck sighed. "Furthermore, she says to play him. If I had any backbone, I'd quit flat."

"No," Grace snapped. She had a sudden inspiration. "Let me see what I can do."

"You! What notions you got?"

The girl's face colored. "There is no fury like a woman scorned," she said. "I'm going to see if I can attract young Mister Malone's interest."

"And Miss Coleman will take it out on him!"

"Exactly."

"I hope it works," muttered Huck. "I hope something does."

"Of course," considered Grace, "Terry might surprise everybody and play some



ball."

"I'm not willing to count on that."

THE Sox swung north. Cynthia Coleman did not accompany the club on these exhibition tours; the owner returned to New York and Grace was left with much of the executive details. Frequently Miss Coleman called by telephone. Once it was to deliver another ultimatum to Huck Appleton concerning Terry. "Terry Malone in right field or else!"

Malone in left, Malone in center, Malone in right! It made good copy. It made for good fielding and good throwing. But Terry's batting average dropped to .270 as they faced improved pitching. Chink Wilson, on the other hand, was hitting like a man possessed. Chink's pinch hitting mark was over .400 and his regular average just a few points less.

"To make it all the worse," groaned Huck, "the boys are grumbling. They know Chink oughta be in there. They like Chink. They know why Terry stays in the lineup. Damn that woman, anyhow."

Grace echoed the same sentiment. And, almost nightly, she made an effort to attract Terry's eye.

He was friendly. Too friendly. He bought her coffee and they went for strolls. But not a flicker of emotional interest was aroused. As soon as he left her he returned to his seat in the lobby, staring off into space, as if brooding or lonely. Grace wondered if she and Huck were doing the rookie an injustice and Terry was actually in love with Cynthia.

Huck took her advice and suggested to the sports writers that they pass along a gossip tip to the New York columnists. Terry Malone, the youngest of the Malone baseball dynasty, was ga-ga over Grace Seton, daughter of the old veteran, club secretary of the Blue Sox.

Finally this tid-bit appeared in print.

"That'll bring action," Grace smiled.

"Just wait 'til Miss Coleman sees *this*."

"Yeah," Huck said gloomily. "But what kind of action? What if she fires you?"

"I've thought of that," Grace said. "I don't think she will."

They were at Nashville, playing a three-game series with the Detroit Tigers, when Miss Coleman re-joined the team. By

plane!

The society girl entered the hotel room, set up as a temporary office, with eyes hard and face set in marble lines. Huck was going over the expense accounts with Grace.

"If you'll pardon us, Mr. Appleton," Cynthia said frostily, "I'd like a word in private with Miss Seton."

Huck obediently withdrew, shooting Grace a worried look over his shoulder.

The secretary smoothed her dress and waited.

"I understand," Cynthia said coldly, "that you are going places with Terry Malone?"

"Some," Grace admitted. "Why?"

"Miss Seton, I didn't let my prejudice against having an attractive single girl as a secretary interfere with my giving you a job," Cynthia snapped. "I foresaw some confusion. But I judged you to be a level-headed girl. I didn't think you'd abuse my confidence by throwing yourself at the eligible young men on the team. I can't have scandal on the Blue Sox."

"Is my going out with Terry necessarily scandal?" Grace asked softly.

"It's in the papers," Cynthia shot back. "Is that good publicity for the club?"

"It was in the papers also," Grace countered, "that Terry was escorting *you* to all the Florida night clubs. There has been more than a hint in the sports columns that Terry was being carried on the roster because the Blue Sox owner couldn't stand to send such a charming young man back to the minors. Isn't that scandal, too?"

"That is my business," Cynthia snapped. Her cheeks were flushed with fury.

"Aren't my relations with Terry *my* business?"

Cynthia's bosom tossed.

"I have no alternative but to discharge you, Miss Seton."

"I wouldn't do that," Grace countered. She had anticipated this, and was ready for it.

"And why not?"

"What will Terry think about it?" Grace asked slyly. "Perhaps I should be grateful to you for firing me, Miss Coleman. Men are such sympathetic creatures. They can't resist a woman who cries on their shoulder. Mr. Malone will be very con-



science-stricken because of his responsibility for losing me my job. Maybe he'll be so sympathetic he'll offer to marry me to keep me from starving to death."

Cynthia eyed her grimly. "You're a brazen little wench. You know the angles, don't you?"

"Some of them," Grace smiled.

She met Cynthia's glare a moment, then turned to her desk. "I have these expense checks to be signed, Miss Coleman," she murmured. "Do you have your fountain pen with you or do you want to use mine?"

"I have my own, *thanks*," Cynthia snapped.

"OUR scheme," Huck said dolefully, "backfired. Cynthia gave me notice to play Terry every day and to revise his contract. He gets a two thousand pay boost."

"I misjudged her," Grace admitted. "I didn't think she would let her temper get the best of her. I suppose I've messed things up, Huck."

"They were messed up anyhow," Huck said philosophically.

Now the Blue Sox were swinging back to New York. Two games with the Philadelphia A's, then to the Polo Grounds for the season's opener.

Huck announced to the press his start-

ing lineup, which listed Terry Malone in right field. Paddy and Sandy Malone expressed their appreciation to the skipper.

"He'll come through, Huck," promised Paddy. "We'll make him."

"Leave him alone," ordered Huck.

To Grace he sighed: "Mebbe he'll snap out of it. The pressure has been on him to make good. Mebbe self-confidence is all he needs."

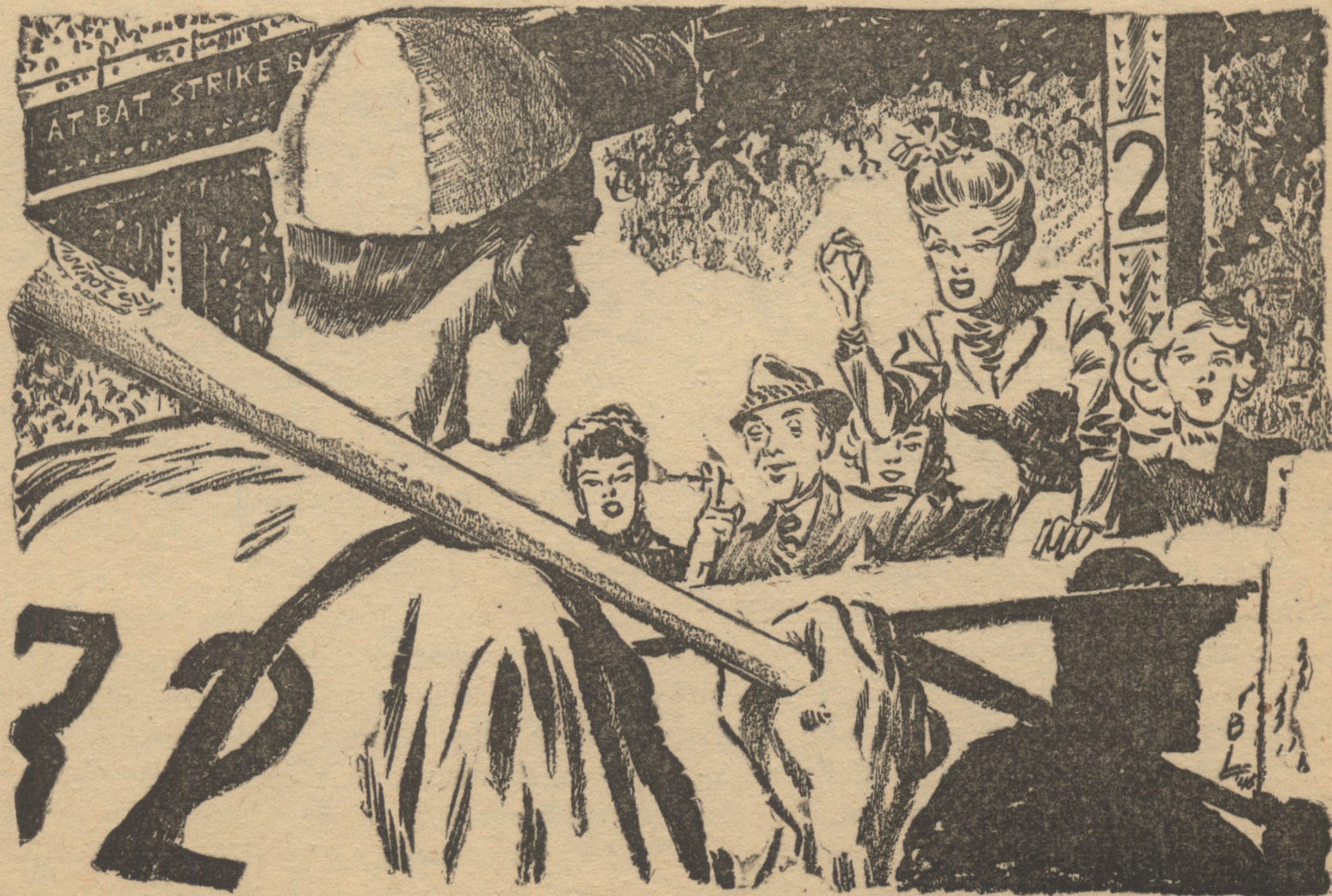
"But you don't believe it," Grace observed.

"No," admitted Huck. "When a batter tries to outguess a pitcher, he's licked to start with. He's got to guess wrong some of the time. Then he loses his confidence."

"My Dad," recalled Grace, "always said that was why pitchers can't hit. They're thinking about the pitch from the pitcher's standpoint and keep trying to guess what's coming."

"Could be," nodded Huck.

The stands were packed for the opening game. There were some "if's" about this Blue Sox team—Jed Lamotte had to come through at third base, Joe Reuther had to make good as a starting pitcher and Cotton Beck's bad knee had to stand the gaff at first base. These three developments would make the Sox into a first-class team. Even if Terry folded as an outfielder, reasoned



Terry flushed when he spotted the glamour crowd.



the scribes, Chink Wilson could step into the right field spot and make up with his slugging what he lacked in fielding, throwing and base running.

Lamotte led off for the home club after the Orioles had been retired in order by Lefty Ponder's cunning. In Ponder and Snake Storm the Blue Sox had cinch twenty-game winners. Fred Stackhouse was counted on for fifteen. If young Reuther came through, the mound staff was adequate. A half-dozen veterans who had Sunday arms gave Huck Appleton a chance to juggle his starters on double-header days and keep his regulars on an every-fourth-day schedule.

Lamotte struck out. He wouldn't hit much, but only Cotton Beck of the Blue infield was heavy with a stick. Paddy and Sandy Malone and Chink Wilson had done most of the hitting the year before.

Now Terry Malone. The crowd gave him a big hand. He tipped his cap politely. Grace watched with tight lips. Since her flare-up with Cynthia she had seen very little of Terry. Perhaps the autocratic owner had given Terry his orders, and he was obeying like a good little lap dog.

Dutch Devore was working for the Orioles. He was mainly a fireballer, although he did throw in a side-arm change of pace that stood opposing batters on their ears. That side-arm came in now, Terry let it go for a called strike.

Grace saw Terry step in closer before Dutch delivered. And then chop at the ball. He had known he would swing at it before Dutch ever threw it. The side-arm pitch was slapped into short right field for a clean hit and Terry Malone had started his major league career in fine style.

But Grace recalled what Huck Appleton had predicted. The rookie had clearly outguessed Devore. That wouldn't happen too often.

The fans roared their approval as Paddy Malone ambled up. Now there were three Malones! The fans had idolized Paddy and Sandy for these five years, and justly so. It was easy to see why their sentiments were with the youngest of the Malone fly-chasing clan.

Paddy gripped his bat tightly, barely wagging it, and Grace knew he would hit.

Paddy and Sandy would see to it that Terry was knocked home every time the youngest Malone got on base.

A strike, a ball. Then a crash, and a white streak sailing toward shortstop.

The hit-and-run! Terry had been off with the pitch and the Oriole shortstop had come over to cover second against a left-handed batter. The shortstop couldn't get back in time and Terry rounded second at full speed. He could run. The center fielder made a quick play for him at third but he slid in under the baseman's glove and was safe.

Paddy hadn't stopped at first. Seeing the play was at third, Paddy tore around first and went into second with the speed of a frightened deer. Both men were safe and Sandy ambled to the batter's box while the Blue Sox supporters banged pop bottles against their seats and yelled in ecstasy. Oh, you Malones!

**S**ANDY was the exact opposite of Paddy at the plate, standing there loose, wagging his bat, foot almost in the bucket. He was right-handed but in spite of this, and that near-bucket stance, the outfield played him straight away. Dutch Devore wasted one, trying for the outside corner. Then Dutch, fearing his fast ball, tried to sneak his side-arm inside. Sandy waited out the pitch, cracked one over the shortstop's head. Terry and Paddy scored standing up while Sandy stopped at first.

Two runs! Those mighty Malones!

Now Cotton Beck doubled. Huck Appleton could afford light-hitting boys at second, short and third; he had so much power at the other positions. Three runs in the first inning and Lefty Ponder had his usual control. The Orioles went hitless until the fifth, then got but a single run off two solid smacks.

Meanwhile Sandy and Paddy hit again, and the count was 4—1 going into the seventh. Terry produced only a weak infield fly and a line drive to center in his next two appearances. Grace made mental note of this even as the fans were still praising the Malone tribe to the skies. Dutch Devore didn't let himself be outguessed again.

Lefty appeared to be tiring at the start of the eighth, pitching slower and slower and using his slow ball more and more.



Out in the bull pen Joe Reuther, Lew Foreman and gray-haired Tip Jordan were warming up. Grace wondered which one Huck would throw in before the game was over. For certainly Lefty wouldn't last it out.

Dippy Evans singled to start the Orioles off, after working Lefty to a three-two count. Pepper Blount slashed out a long foul, then caught Cotton Beck napping with a cagy bunt down the first base line. Cotton was still favoring that troublesome knee and wasn't showing too much speed. Ponder was over to receive the throw but Blount got the decision and there were runners on first and second with none away.

On the short end of a 4—1 count, the Orioles couldn't employ the sacrifice. Bud Stone came up with unmistakeable intentions to hit away. He was a pull hitter to right field and Grace Seton understood why Huck Appleton left Lefty Ponder in to pitch to this batter. Lefty could keep that nothing pitch dancing on the outside corner. Stone would have trouble pulling it around for extra bases.

But . . . crack!

Every fan came to his feet. There was a head-high smash going down the right field foul line, deep, deep. . . !

And Terry was charging forward at an angle, playing the ball coming in!

Grace held her breath. If it was over him, it would be a triple and two runs would pour in. What a reckless chance this kid was taking!

He got it, speared it one-handed on the dead run. Evans tagged up and started for third. Terry seemed off-balance and Evans was sure of advancing the base.

Terry dug his spikes into the grass, stopping dead. He fired his peg and . . .

Grace trembled from the thrill of it. So did fifty thousand other spectators. A home run is a sight to behold but so is a blazing throw from the outfield. From short right, from across the foul line, Terry shot the ball into third-sacker Lamotte's glove. On the bee-line, never over eye-brow height, a perfect strike!

Evans was out by only a half-step. The Oriole runner seemed unwilling to accept the umpire's decision. He wasn't exactly protesting, just dazed. He looked back at

Terry and shook his fist while Lamotte took off his glove and blew on the palm of his left hand!

The stands shook from the tumult. That was baseball. A sure-fire base hit turned into a double play. A menacing rally nipped in the bud by a sure, stout arm.

Lefty seemed to take heart. He swept his southpaw curve across the outside corner three times in succession, and the dispirited Oriole batter went down on strikes to retire the side.

Cotton Beck homered in the Blue Sox half of the ninth and the Orioles did not threaten again. Ponder got them out on half-speed balls and the Blue Sox had a 5—1 victory.

That night Huck told Grace with an appreciative twinkle in his eyes.

"That kid has a baseball heart. I wish he could hit."

#### IV

**S**PEED to burn and a great throwing arm! That was Terry Malone in right field. Faster than either of his brothers. Surer on his pegs. Huck considered shifting him to center at the end of the Oriole series and even suggested the move to Terry. The youngster himself nixed the suggestion. The Malones had been trained like that—Sandy in left, Paddy in center, Terry in right.

Terry was still guessing the pitchers but his batting average was an even .300 when the Sox wound up their home stay with a 5—2 decision over the A's. The Sox won eight of these 10 games and Huck beamed from ear to ear at every press conference. Yes, he would give young Malone credit for sparking the club. But Reuther's shut-out and Lamotte's good fielding at third was important. As was Cotton Beck's all-around play.

Grace was grateful for the first road trip. In New York Cynthia Coleman was in the office at least half of every day. But Cynthia wouldn't desert her night life to follow her ball team around the circuit. Grace was given authority to sign checks for everyday expenses and instructed not to contact the society girl owner except on important matters. She readily agreed to that. It would have to be plenty important, she told herself, before she would



telephone Miss Coleman.

Philadelphia first. Grace Seton noticed that the pitchers were working carefully on Terry. Experimenting with all kinds of pitches. He got one for four. Then one for three. Then none for three. That kind of batting wouldn't hold him his job.

Then Cleveland. Joe Reuther pitched another shut-out. Lefty Ponder idled his way to a 6—2 decision. The Sox had won 13 out of 16 games. How long could they hold this pace?

Not for a long time had Terry invited Grace to a movie or to a walk. They exchanged greetings, but neither sought out the other's company. His face was buried in a newspaper when Grace sat down on the same couch with him, else she would have chosen another seat.

He looked up after a moment and said pleasantly:

"How are you, Miss Seton?"

"Fine, Terry," she said casually, laying down her magazine. The first spark of interest he had aroused in her had died out. She couldn't think too much of one of Cynthia's society crowd. Perhaps Terry wasn't to be blamed for insuring his berth on the Sox by escorting the attractive owner to night clubs and parties, but Grace couldn't admire him for this trait.

"You seem to be dodging me lately," he smiled at her.

"To the contrary," she answered calmly. "You seem to be ducking me."

He flushed. "I heard about Miss Coleman jumping on you. I didn't want to get you into any more trouble."

"Don't worry about it. Miss Coleman and I understand each other. I select my friends as I choose."

"She's wonderful," Terry murmured. There was that tell-tale look in his eyes which no girl could fail to understand. Grace gasped.

"You're in love with her!" she exclaimed.

"Of course," Terry said. He grinned. "I thought that was the talk of the whole club."

"No," Grace said slowly. "I didn't think so."

"Then why did you think I was going out with her?"

Grace shook her head. She couldn't answer that question. But she hadn't real-

ized the rookie was actually in love with his society-girl owner.

"Today's my birthday," Terry went on in that same boyish manner. "I have a call in for her and . . ."

A bell hop came through the lobby calling: "Mr. Terry Malone, Mr. Terry Malone!"

"There it is now," he exclaimed, leaping up.

She looked after him with sober eyes. The poor kid. In love with Cynthia Coleman! Grace sighed and returned her attention to her magazine. Well, he rose some in her opinion. At least that was better than turning himself into a gigilo just to hold his place on the ball club.

She read a few pages, then closed her book. Was Cynthia in love with Terry also? Wouldn't that be a shock to all concerned if it turned out to be the real thing, and Terry would marry the rich girl. That, she smiled, would certainly establish the Malone tribe in the driver's seats.

Terry came back across the lobby, discouragement written all over his face. He sat down on the couch and buried his face in his hands.

"She said no?" Grace asked softly.

"Yes," he whispered.

Then he jumped to his feet. "Would you drink a beer with a guy?" he demanded.

"Sure," she said in quick sympathy.

"We'll go somewhere else," he said jerkily. "Where Huck won't find out about it."

"Huck won't worry too much about it," Grace promised him.

THEY found a small cafe and a dark booth. Terry gulped half of his glass before speaking.

"She wouldn't even discuss it with me," he said unhappily. "She was drinking. Maybe she's even drunk. She just laughed at me."

Grace nodded. No doubt it had seemed amusing—to Cynthia.

"She said she just picked me up when there were no other eligible men around," he continued tonelessly. "I danced well. And she didn't have to worry about me getting serious."

"I was afraid of that," Grace said sym-



pathetically.

"And that isn't all," the rookie added miserably. "She told me—she ordered Huck to play me—because . . ."

"Most everybody knew that, too," Grace agreed.

"Then why didn't somebody tell me!" demanded Terry. "Why didn't my brothers? I'm sick of this whole baseball business. The Malones, the Malones! Every Malone is born a great outfielder! When I showed interest in engineering in college, they shooed me away from it. Labs took too much time. And why should a big league ball player study engineering?"

"You shouldn't have let them take charge of your life," Grace told him. "You should have kept on with your engineering."

Terry's face brightened for a moment. "I did," he whispered. "I carried it on by correspondence. I'm just a year away from my degree."

He ordered another beer. "So I made a sap out of myself!" he said bitterly. Grace just let him talk. The sooner he got it out of his system, the better. "I guess Cynthia and her crowd thought I was a funny cluck. I'm just a two o'clock hitter in that league, too."

"She is a pretty girl," sympathized Grace. "Any other young man in your place would have fallen for her. You'll get over it."

"Yes," he nodded. "I'll get over it."

He took a deep breath. "I'll tell you something else, too. This winter I'm going back to school and get my degree. I'll finish the season with the Blue Sox or wherever they send me. I don't care. Cynthia can tear up my contract if she wants to."

"No," Grace Seton said. She suddenly remembered the two thousand raise Cynthia had granted Terry. "You can thank Cynthia for the money to finish college on," she smiled. "Now that you're not spending your paycheck and more taking her around, you can save money. Besides, you haven't washed out yet. Huck is still playing you."

"On *her* orders," Terry said bitterly.

"If you could hit. . . !"

"I've never been able to hit!" the youngest Malone interrupted. "I've heard that all my life. That's okay, kid, you'll learn to sock 'em. I've had Sandy show me.

And Paddy show me. And Pop show me. Eye on the ball. Wrist action. Follow through. I'm sick of it. I'm not a hitter. I don't like the outfield. Mebbe shortstop. Or pitching. But a Malone has to play the outfield. Any Malone is a born outfielder."

"You poor kid," Grace said sympathetically. She looked at her watch. It was already ten o'clock and she shouldn't encourage one of the regulars to break training. But Terry had a lot to get out of his system.

"Have another beer," she suggested. "I'll buy."

She waited in the dining room the next morning for Huck to come down to breakfast. The manager was a late riser. What was the use of getting up early—there weren't any baseball games played in the morning!

"Wanted to talk to you," she explained. "Who are you going to use in right field today?"

Huck reached into his pocket and held out a telegram in reply. She read it at a glance.

It was from Cynthia.

USE YOUR OWN JUDGMENT ON TERRY MALONE.

Grace nodded. Cynthia wasted no time.

"I was going to suggest Cink," she said slowly. "Terry isn't in a good frame of mind."

"He has been slumping," Huck admitted. He tapped the telegram. "I got a chance to pick up Ed Price on waivers."

"Price!"

The name was familiar to her but she couldn't be sure.

"Plays first and outfield both," explained Huck. "A good steady veteran. Cotton's knee is swelling already. Price would fortify us at both positions."

"How long before you have to cut the squad?" Grace asked.

"Two weeks. I'll carry Terry until then. There's a chance he might come through."

"No," disagreed Grace, "there isn't much of a chance. But carry him. Why not? Miss Coleman is paying for it."

BACK home and the Blue Sox were still riding high. Cotton Beck's tricky knee was holding up and Wilson was hitting like a Greenberg. Joe Reuther was



winning every fourth day and the Sox had a four-game lead over the second-place Tigers.

Now it was an established custom that Grace wait for Terry after the game. Huck used the youngest Malone in double-headers, Chink's legs weren't too sturdy for the twin bills. Now Terry had a batting average of only .230 and it was common talk that he wouldn't finish the season.

But Terry wasn't too unhappy. He was saving his money and he had recovered surprisingly easy from the heartache caused by Cynthia. Perhaps Grace was the inspiration for the latter as well as the first. She was more his type of girl.

Finally he asked her to meet his family. "They'll talk your arm off," he warned her, "and nothing but baseball is ever mentioned there. But you'll love them."

"I'm sure I will," Grace agreed.

She found Pops Malone to be a big burly man who told her in the first moment of their acquaintance that he had played better baseball than any of his sons, and could show 'em outfield tricks today. "I got a bad heart and they told me I should quit," he sighed. "But I could still hit in the clutch if they'd let me."

And Mrs. Malone was a sharp-tongued motherly Irish woman.

"Faith, and he can out-talk 'em yet," she put in good-humoredly. "There never was anyone for talking like the Malones."

Sandy and Paddy came over with their wives and Grace sensed that Terry must have warned them their guest was a prospective in-law. They were friendly and cordial, yet inquisitive.

After dinner, which stretched into a feast, Mrs. Malone brought out a pile of scrapbooks.

"I've kept every clipping about my boys," she said proudly. "Look, I've divided them into sections. Here are the high school clippings. All of them were stars then."

Grace thumbed through the pages. Sandy Malone's triple won the prep-school title for St. David's! Sandy Malone to captain St. David's nine! Paddy Malone named all-city prep standout. Paddy Malone leads prep hitters. Terry Malone to pitch for St. David's in championship game.

"Remember that, Terry?" smiled Mrs.

Malone. "That Etheridge boy had flu, poor kid. And you pitched the whole game."

"A good game, it was," nodded Pops Malone. "Three hits, Miss Seton."

Grace nodded. Now the box score of Sandy Malone's first game with the Blue Sox.

"Did you know, Miss Seton," Pops asked proudly, "that every Malone got a base hit in his first time up in the big show? Sandy got a double. Paddy hit one over the right field wall. And this season, in the opening game, Terry got a single."

The Malone boys sat and watched her thumb through the clippings, Sandy and Paddy with obvious pride, Terry with mild amusement. The two daughters-in-law retired to a corner of the living room to discuss their various household problems.

Grace pretended to be absorbed in the scrapbooks. But every now and then she looked up with a quickening heartbeat. What a proud old-fashioned family this was! Simple, yet closely-knit, and very happy.

"I trained these lads meself, Miss Seton," Pops explained. "When they were little shavers, I took 'em out to the park and hit 'em fungoes. I taught 'em to play close in and go back after the long flies. They cut off those bloopers that way. Old Tris Speaker could do it, I thought to meself, and my boys can do anything any other man could. I worked 'em by the hour, Miss Seton. I brought 'em home with their tongues hanging out, until their own mother tried to get me to stop. But I got the three best-fielding sons in the majors, Miss Seton. It takes a sharp wallop to fall for a base hit when the three Malones are out there."

Grace nodded. That was certainly true.

The elder Malone chuckled. "Sometimes I blindfolded 'em so they'd have to judge the ball by its sound against the bat."

"Once," recalled Paddy, "I got hit in the cheek that way."

"But you were right on the ball," Pops pointed out.

Paddy went out and returned with a huge pitcher of beer. All of them sipped the cold ale moderately. Grace enjoyed herself immensely. This was the type of



family life she had known. This was the type of life she wanted again.

On the way home Terry smilingly asked her if she thought she could stand being around his family often.

"I love them," she answered sincerely.

"If I was a hitter," sighed the rookie, "I guess we'd be the happiest family in the world."

"Don't worry too much about that," Grace murmured. She was mulling over an idea which had popped into her mind.

"I guess they'll live over it," Terry said, "but it'll be a blow to them when I give up baseball."

"Who said you're giving it up?" Grace demanded.

"I'll finish out this year," Terry said. "I need the money to pay for my last year of college. But I'm not sticking to minor league ball, Grace."

He studied her face. "You don't want me to, do you?"

"Not the minor leagues," she said firmly.

"What other leagues can I play in?" he shrugged. "You know as well as I do that I'll draw my release next week. They'll send me to Beaumont first. Then Beaumont will send me back to the Three-Eye Loop. I'll stick there. Maybe. Last year I did pretty well."

Grace nodded. Yes, that looked like the picture. Unless . . .

## V

PADDY and Sandy cornered Huck in his office.

"Look, Skipper," begged Paddy, "can't we give the kid one more chance? Sandy and I have been coaching him a little lately. Maybe . . ."

"You and Sandy have been coaching him all of his life," Huck said firmly. "The kid can't hit, boys. I'm sorry. God knows I'd like to have three Malones playing outfield for me. But I can double Price at first if Cotton's knee buckles."

"We know, Skipper," Sandy pleaded. "You didn't want to bring him up this season. But one more chance? Then if he doesn't hit . . ."

"All right," sighed Huck. "I'll give you Malones one more break. The kid plays right field today. We'll forget his horse-collar batting average and start him from

scratch. But when he drops below .300, back to Beaumont he goes. And I never want to hear another yap out of you two."

"It's a deal," Paddy agreed.

The two brothers went in search of Terry. They found him playing catch with Smoke Storm.

"You start today," Paddy said grimly. "The last chance, Terry."

"Forget about trying to out-guess the pitcher," begged Sandy. "Settle back in that box and hit straight away. You can't let Pops and us down, Terry."

The rookie sighed. Why did Huck have to listen to them and make another concession?

"I'll do what I can," he sighed. His eyes flashed. "I don't poof out on purpose, you know," he reminded them angrily. "Maybe if you'd leave me alone, I'd hit better in the first place."

He went over to the third base box where Grace was already in her seat.

"Paddy and Sandy have talked Huck into giving me more one chance," he said unhappily. "But just this game. Unless I smack one or two on the nose, I'll be headed for Beaumont tomorrow."

"I hope you don't," Grace surprised him by saying.

"You hope I don't hit!"

"That's right. It'd be an accident if you did. I'm perfectly reconciled to the fact that you can't hit a breadwagon on biscuit wheels."

"I wish," sighed Terry, "my family felt that way."

Smoke Storm was going to work for the Blue Sox. The fire-baller had been slumping in his last few starts and Lefty Cox was warming up, too. The Sox were dropping from their terrific early-season pace. Lefty Ponder's arm was worrying Huck and only Joe Reuther was holding up to his April promises.

Terry noted that wily Pete Haycock was going to work for the Tigers, and shook his head. He'd rather face stuff than cunning. He couldn't work up any degree of confidence over this last chance. Not even when Huck squeezed his shoulder.

"Show me I'm wrong, kid," said the manager. "Your brothers claim you got the stuff in you. Show me they're right."

Terry trotted out to right field without answering. His brothers *weren't* right.



Never had been. It was a shame that it took still another ball game to show them.

Smoke gave up a run. The big speedballer was getting a home-run complex. Three of his last four games had been dropped by circuit clouts with men on bases. Four-three, 3—2, 5—3. Smoke had the games in his hip pocket until somebody clouted one with ducks on. That happens to pitchers. A home run does more than just count on the scoreboard; it jars a pitcher's confidence to smithereens.

LAMOTTE worked Haycox for a base on balls to start their half of the inning. Terry looked hopefully to Huck. Not always did the manager order a sacrifice in a spot like this. Huck's strategy, sometimes, was to play for a big inning. Terry was tickled that Huck ordered him to lay it down. That took the pressure off.

He took one pitch inside, then crouched and rolled a passable bunt down the third base line. Lamotte reached second unchallenged and, running with all he had, Terry was only a half-step behind the throw getting to first.

"Nice hustling," Huck told him as he returned to the bench.

Terry pursed his lips. Sure, nice hustling. He could run. But a man couldn't steal first base.

Paddy flied out to center field but Sandy singled Lamotte home and the score was tied.

Smoke bore down with his high hard ones. One-two-three . . . out the Tigers went in that order for two innings. Wily Haycox was as unhittable. Then, in the fourth, Smoke gave up a single and a walk after two were out.

This still wasn't a grievous situation, not if Smoke weren't bothered. But he saw a home run in the offing, and couldn't get his fast one in. Bob Tucker doubled for the Tigers and there were two runs across the plate. Huck called in Lefty Cox and the side was retired.

Terry was leading off. "Let's start something," called out Huck.

This was their inning to score. The lower end of the Blue Sox batting order was woefully weak at the plate. Terry gripped his bat tight and faced Haycox grimly.

As Huck had observed, Terry had the

heart. He wanted to win ball games. If he could open up with a hit, any kind of a safety, maybe they would be off to a big inning. Both of his brothers were dependable batters with runners on. So was Cotton Beck.

Haycox fed him a curve. Quick-breaking. Terry had expected a fast one and almost bit, just barely pulling back his swing. Haycox studied him calmly, then whipped in a fast ball. A little slow, Terry swung late and fouled down the left field foul line.

Now Haycox, noted as a slow worker, would waste one. Terry relaxed in the box. It would be outside. . . .

It wasn't. The pitch was another sharp-breaking curve. It started wide but cut across the outside corner and Terry was waved out by the umpire.

He went to the water can, his shoulders dejected. The look Sandy gave him didn't help. The brothers Malone meant what they had promised Manager Huck Appleton. One more chance for the youngest Malone.

Grace Seton, however, smiled. She had been afraid Terry would prolong this grief by swinging with his eyes shut and slapping out a long ball. He couldn't hit. So what? That wasn't the end of the world.

Paddy and Sandy connected safely and Beck scored them both with a long triple. That put the Blue Sox back in the ball game. And Lefty Cox worked smoothly through the fifth and sixth innings.

In the Blue Sox half of the sixth, Terry came up again. Lamotte had opened the inning with a single and the home fans begged for runs. Terry wanted to sacrifice but Huck gave no such sign. Haycox was tiring and Huck anticipated a big inning.

Grace sighed in pity as she noticed Terry's tightness. It was nothing short of criminal to drive him this way. He didn't believe in this last chance—hadn't wanted it.

Haycox fed him a curve. Then a hard one. Terry let them both go. Huck was ordering him to hit the first pitch but he had taken these two balls.

The third pitch came in. Terry had to swing. He started his cut, figuring it was a fast ball. When the pitch broke sharp



he had to hit anyhow. He poked out a ground ball to shortstop and the smooth-working Tiger infield turned it into a double play.

Two out! Paddy Malone snarled as he pounded his bat on the platter. What hurt was that the kid was giving up.

Huck left his coaching box and came up to where Sandy was standing hopefully.

"Go ahead," growled Sandy before Huck could say a word. "Put Chink out there. We need some tallies to win this ball game."

Huck motioned to Wilson. "Take over right, Chink," he said.

Terry did not look up. Huck sat down by the rookie and squeezed his shoulder.

"Sorry, kid," he said gruffly.

They were all sorry. It would have been wonderful to have had another edition of Sandy and Paddy Malone.

MISS CYNTHIA COLEMAN, surprisingly enough, was not late for her appointment with Huck Appleton. She gave Grace a scornful look as she swept into the office. Their relations were that strained formality which usually exists between two women who have shared the attentions of the same man. However, Grace did not wince before her employer's animosity. There was no longer any cause for a feud.

"Come on in, Mr. Appleton," Cynthia said.

Huck bent over Grace's desk for a moment. "You and young Malone seem to be serious. Which do you like the best—Texas or California?"

"California," Grace whispered back.

Huck left the door half-open, perhaps on purpose.

"We have to meet our player limit today, Miss Coleman," Huck explained.

"I was aware of that, Mr. Appleton. That means we release Terry Malone."

"Yes, and Skeet Newman," added Huck. Newman was a veteran catcher whom they had picked up in the spring to help handle the younger pitchers. "Skeet knows this is coming," Huck went on. "I told him straight-off that we couldn't carry him all year, but if he would sign with us until June and help us with our rookie pitchers, we'd do what we could for him. How about a bonus for Skeet? Say a thousand

dollars."

"You're very generous," Cynthia said reprovingly. "Is that much necessary?"

"We're known as a generous ball club, Miss Coleman. Skeet worked hard on Joe Reuther. You can see how that paid off. Joe is the best pitcher we got right now."

"All right," Cynthia conceded.

"Since Skeet is a ten-year man," added Huck, "we got to give him his outright release. Now about Malone?"

"Yes," Cynthia said, raising her voice slightly. "I'm very interested in Terry Malone."

Grace no longer made any pretense of being busy at her desk.

"We've released him under option twice," explained the manager, "so we can't hold on to him. I've tried to get some trades working. Nobody in the majors is interested."

"Then we can simply wipe Mr. Malone off our books as a failure?"

"We got some dough tied up in him," Huck shrugged. "I'd like to buy a kid third baseman from Oakland. Named Bob Stanley. Good hitter, stout arm. Just needs experience."

Cynthia Coleman, despite her inconsistencies as an owner, had acquired some knowledge of the Blue Sox roster. She nodded approvingly.

"Lamotte is fielding well enough but we could stand a replacement. What's the price on Stanley?"

"One hundred thousand dollars," Huck said gently, "in cash or players."

"It must be in players," Cynthia said quickly. "I haven't that much cash."

"We could send 'em Terry Malone," Huck put in. "They're not sold on Terry, however. They'll take him, but only for five thousand of the deal. And we'll have to pay part of his salary for the rest of the year."

"Why should we?" Cynthia demanded.

"You raised Terry's pay yourself, Miss Coleman," Huck shrugged. "He's drawing five grand this season under an iron-clad contract. Oakland nor any other minor league club will pay him that. That's why we'll have the dickens placing him anywhere."

"Do you mean we have to pay Terry the full five thousand?" Cynthia asked unhappily.



"Yes," Huck said firmly, "we see that it's paid. Oakland will pay him two grand for the rest of the year. That means we'll have to pay Oakland three thousand."

"And get credit for only five against this third baseman," frowned Cynthia. "Mr. Malone isn't of much value to us, is he?"

"We can ship him to Beaumont," added Huck, "but on just about the same terms. I recommend the Oakland deal myself."

"Pardon me," a voice said from the doorway.

Cynthia whirled around. Grace Seton was standing there.

"Mr. Appleton and I are in conference, Miss Seton," Cynthia snapped.

"I overheard part of your conversation," Grace said. "It pertained to Terry Malone. I'd like to make a suggestion."

"What?"

"Terry Malone's value to you in the Oakland deal is only two thousand dollars," Grace said. "Would you give him his unconditional release for two thousand cash?"

Cynthia's eyes narrowed and she turned to her manager.

"What kind of deal is that?"

"It's a good deal for *us*," Huck shrugged. "Oakland doesn't want him, they'd just take him to make the trade. If we could get two thousand, and save the three thousand we'll have to pay him under his contract, we'd have five thousand cash ready to pay on Stanley."

CYNTHIA studied Grace's face with lofty disdain. "What advantage is it to you to have Terry released unconditionally?"

"That is my business," Grace shot back. "Take it or leave it. You have a contract with him you don't want to pay off. I'll give you a check for two thousand dollars right now."

"Grace, honey," protested Huck, "you haven't that kind of money."

"Is it a deal?" Grace asked Miss Coleman, ignoring Huck's protest.

"It seems to me," Cynthia said to her manager, "that this is the best way out for us."

"Yes," Huck agreed quickly. "But I hate to see Miss Seton throwing her money away like that. Terry has us signed up,

honey. He can draw his pay and then next spring get . . ."

"Whom are you working for, Mr. Appleton?" demanded Cynthia. "We'll accept your offer, Miss Seton."

Grace took her checkbook out of her pocket and started writing.

"I didn't realize," murmured Cynthia with acid sweetness, "that my secretary had such resources."

"Dad left some insurance," Grace explained as she finished writing the check. She studied Cynthia with half-veiled amusement. "You may call the bank and see if it's good," she conceded with dignity.

"I'm sure it is," Cynthia refused. She eyed Grace patronizingly.

"Don't you think you're carrying your affection for Terry too far?" she asked, holding the check between her fingers. "There is no reason why I should worry about you, but I'll tear up this check and forget the interruption if you wish."

"No," Grace declined. "It's a good investment, Miss Coleman."

"Investment?"

"Yes. Because if you're not too hard-headed a year from now, you'll be buying Terry Malone's contract back for much more money."

"I can't picture myself doing that," Cynthia smiled. "Can you, Mr. Appleton?"

"No," the manager said honestly.

"I'll prepare the release," Grace said turning back to her desk.

In a few moments Cynthia affixed her signature. Now it was necessary for Terry to sign a salary waiver.

Grace started putting on her hat and coat. "Couldn't you telephone Mr. Malone?" demanded Cynthia.

"No," Grace replied. "He doesn't know about this—yet."

"He doesn't know about it!" exclaimed Cynthia. "Miss Seton, have you wasted our entire morning on such foolishness? Mr. Malone will . . ."

"Gladly accept his release as soon as I have explained something to him," Grace finished gently. "I'll be back with his signature before noon."

She was. Cynthia Coleman nodded in satisfaction.

"That closes out the Terry Malone incident," she murmured. "Is that all, Mr.



Appleton? I have a luncheon engagement."

Huck lingered outside after Miss Coleman had hurried off to her engagement.

"Let ol' Huck in on this, honey," he begged Grace. "What kind of a bee do you have in your bonnet?"

"It may not work," Grace shrugged. "Forget it."

It was her lunch hour, too. She rode down the elevator with the gray-haired manager. Terry was waiting in the lobby. He came over with a grin.

"What are you two kids up to?" demanded Huck.

"I got a new manager," grinned Terry.

"Where are you heading?" Huck demanded. "Say, kid, I can give you a letter to a pal of mine in New England. He needs an outfielder bad and your fielding and throwing. . . ."

"No, thanks," Grace interrupted.

"You're quitting baseball!" Huck gasped. He couldn't imagine a Malone retiring from the game.

"Ask us no questions," Grace retorted, "and we'll tell you no lies."

Huck shrugged his shoulders and started off. Grace caught his shoulder.

"By the way," smiled the girl, "you might tell Miss Coleman I won't be back to work. I neglected to resign while she was there this morning."

Huck chuckled. "That ain't in my contract. Let her find out for herself."

And the manager went his way whistling.

Terry studied his fiance with twinkling eyes. "Now what, Skipper?"

"I have to call your mother," Grace said.

Mrs. Malone was cooking dinner for the Malone brood but agreed to come to the 'phone when Grace insisted it was important.

"Why, you darling!" said Mrs. Malone. "Why don't you come right out for dinner? . . . You're what. . . . Now, isn't that the sweetest thing! . . . Faith, and I won't breathe a word of it to these gossip men . . . 'tis tickled I am, darling. . . . You have! . . . But, dearie . . . I can't . . . well, sure you have my permission. Terry was never in better hands. . . . Right you are, darling . . . he's a Malone and you can make some-

thing out of him. . . . I won't breathe a word, darling. . . . And I'll answer every letter you write. . . . Give Terry a kiss for me and tell him his mother knows he'll make good!"

Grace rejoined Terry. "Your mother thinks it's a good idea," she said gently.

"I guess," grinned Terry, "you didn't confer with Pops and my two slugging brothers?"

"I did *not*."

Terry sighed. "I like baseball better already," he grinned. "Promise me one thing, Skipper. You'll never try to show me how to hit a curve ball, will you?"

"Never," Grace promised.

Terry sighed again. "Now for business. Which do we do first—eat lunch or get married?"

"Would I seem too practical if I voted for lunch?" the girl smiled.

"Not at all," he conceded. "I couldn't stand a wedding, even our kind of one, on an empty stomach."

## VI

THE BLUE SOX hung grimly onto the lead, even after Cotton Beck went to the hospital for a week and Jed Lamotte started pegging balls into the stands back of first base. A team which has three hard hitters and two good pitchers is tough to kick off the top. Reuther's right arm held out, as did Lefty Ponder's south-paw wing. Huck juggled the rest of his staff to fight off opposition, and sometimes his experiments paid off. Often enough at least.

There was one consolation through a hot July. Cynthia Coleman finally decided she had had enough of business affairs and employed a capable baseball man to boss the front office. So all Huck had to worry about was ball games—winning ball games.

Beck returned to the lineup just as the Blue Sox opened a crucial series with the Tigers. The first baseman celebrated his return by slapping out two triples. Chink Wilson hit a home run. The Malone brothers threw in two timely hits each. Thus the Sox won the opening game 7—6 despite the ineffectiveness of four Sox hurlers.

That added to the Blue Sox margin. Two full games. But Huck wasn't happy.



Joe Reuther and Lefty Ponder couldn't do all the pitching. In fact, the left-hander was tiring. He couldn't stand the every-fourth-day grind throughout the season.

There was a night letter waiting for Huck at his hotel. He frowned as he read its contents.

NOTICE PITCHING STAFF IS SLUMPING. HAVE YOU LOOKED INTO RECORD OF T. EDWARDS, ABILENE, TEXAS ROOKIE? HAS WON FIVE STRAIGHT GAMES FOR MISSIONS. BLAZING FAST BALL. SUGGEST YOU SEND SCOUT TO LOOK HIM OVER.

It was signed: "G. HOLLOWAY."

Huck knew no "G. Holloway." He shrugged off the night letter as a message from some crank and concentrated his worrying on his mound selection for the next day. He should rest Ponder until Sunday. But Joe Reuther couldn't go for at least another 24 hours and it had to be the left-hander.

"I'm sorry, kid," Huck apologized to the veteran. "You need more rest. But we gotta take this series. At least three out of four."

Lefty nodded and rubbed his salary wing. "I'll try 'em, Skipper," he said calmly. "But get somebody hot. Get me out quick when my curve quits breaking."

Huck was grateful for this kind of team spirit. "Come out whenever you feel like it," he said. "You know your arm better than I do."

Ponder started with a strikeout. Then a base on balls. The curve wasn't breaking wide, he explained to Huck when the manager went out to the mound for a conference.

"But I'll try 'em a while longer," sighed Lefty.

He threw three straight balls, then had to come in there. The Tiger hitter, Moose Martin, didn't take the pitch. Moose swung mightily and Huck died a hundred deaths until Paddy Malone took the smash off the left center wall. Another long fly and the Tigers were retired.

Huck prayed for an outburst of base hits. But Lamotte fanned, Chink Wilson rolled out and Paddy Malone's single was wasted when Sandy lofted an infield fly.

Lefty Ponder went back to the mound with his face longer than ever.

The innings dragged on. Lefty's curve still lacked its old snap. Huck didn't understand why the Tigers didn't blast him right out of there. The southpaw was getting by with a nothing ball.

In the seventh the Tigers teed off. This Moose Martin put one where no human being, not even a Malone, could pick it off. Then George Pipken tripled and Blue Elliott singled. Huck rushed in Lefty Cox. But the damage had been done—two runs.

The Sox couldn't get them back. Sandy Malone parked one of Tom Browning's fast ones but the final count was 2—1. The Sox had dropped a crucial game.

That night there was another telegram. ST. LOUIS SCOUT LOOKED OVER T. EDWARDS TODAY. ARE YOU TRYING TO THROW THE PENNANT.

Huck grinned. This G. Holloway was certainly a crank.

JUST for the hell of it, he bought a copy of the "Sporting News" and studied the West Texas League box scores for the past week. Sure enough, there was a T. Edwards pitching for Abilene. Well, the West Texas was a Class D circuit. No pitcher could jump that far in a single season.

Joe Reuther pitched a shut-out for the Blue Sox over the Tigers. But then Smoke Storm dropped his sixth straight and their margin was a single game again.

And G. Holloway advised Huck by night letter that T. Edwards had won another game!

ARE YOU AFRAID OF ROOKIES? WHERE WOULD YOU BE WITHOUT JOE REUTHER?

With a grin Huck referred the night letter to their scout, Walt Henry.

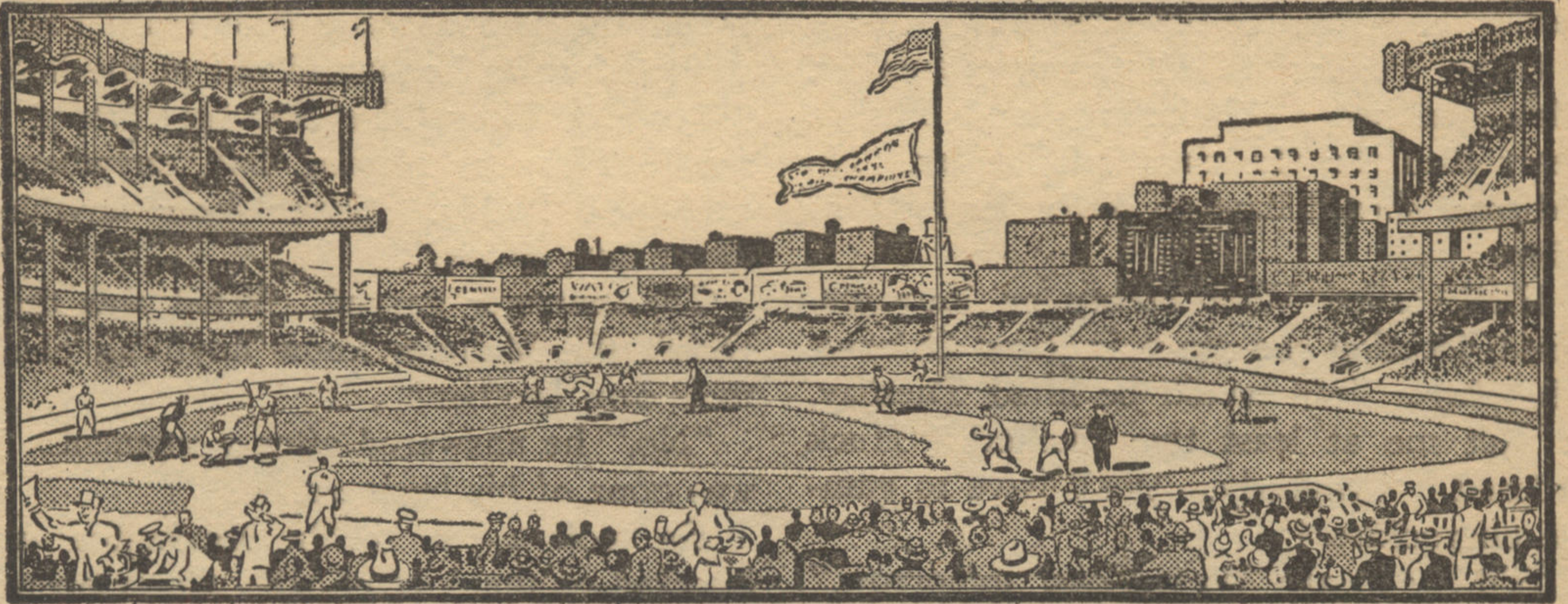
"I've heard some reports about this Edwards," Walt confirmed. "I'll drop in on Abilene next month."

"Look up this guy Holloway," Huck said, "and buy him a beer. He's spent quite a few bucks wiring us."

Lefty Ponder won over the Indians. But Bill Deware lasted only two innings and the hard-fighting Tigers pulled up even. Huck had taken a wild shot on Deware and wasn't too surprised by the slim right-hander's failure to click. Joe

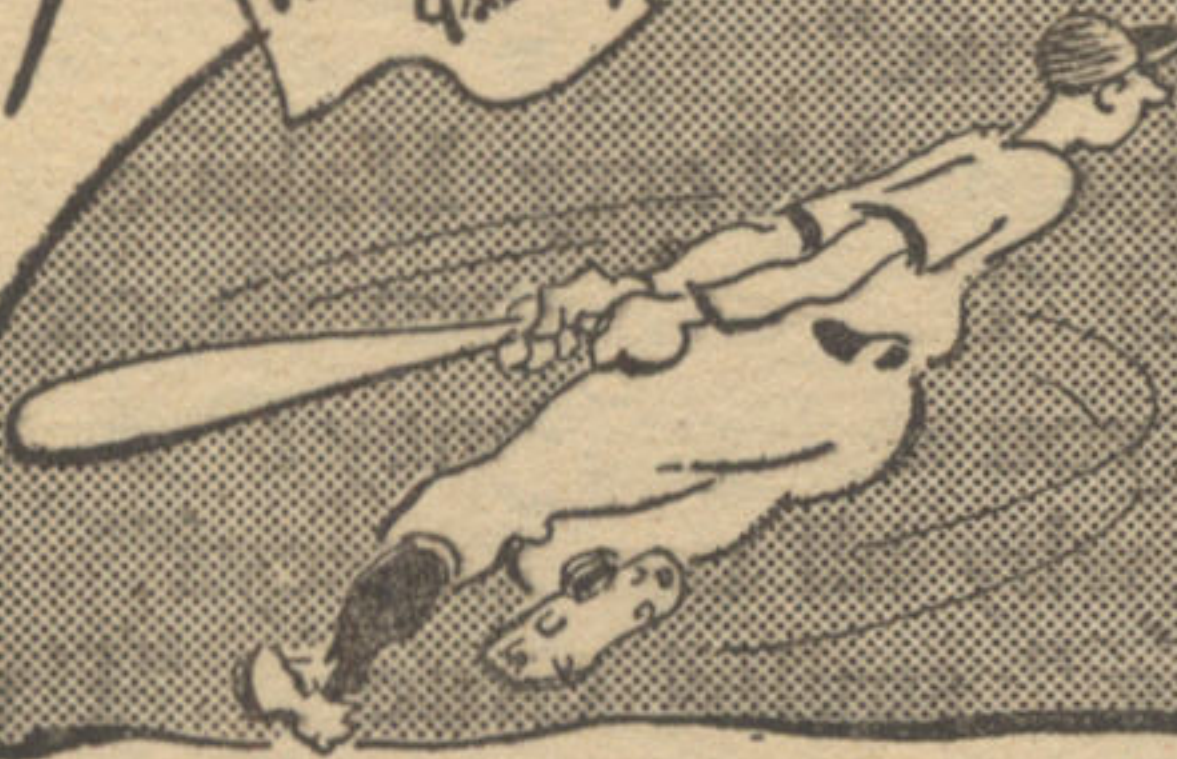


# WORLD SERIES!



64

WALTER  
GALLI



**FRANKIE FRISCH** PLAYED  
IN THE MOST SERIES GAMES--  
**50**--AND HE MADE THE  
MOST HITS--**58**!!



ONE MUSTN'T  
OVERLOOK THE  
BABE'S PITCHING  
ACHIEVEMENTS--  
HE WON **THREE**  
WORLD SERIES  
GAMES--ONE  
OF WHICH WAS  
A **14-INNING**  
DUEL AGAINST  
BROOKLYN IN 1916.

## BABE RUTH

-- OF COURSE,  
HOLDS JUST  
ABOUT EVERY  
SLUGGING  
RECORD  
FOR THE  
SERIES...

## BASEBALL'S BLUE PLATE SPECIAL--

WHICH, EVERY FALL SINCE 1903--HAS  
BROUGHT TOGETHER THE RESPECTIVE  
CHAMPIONS OF THE NATIONAL AND  
AMERICAN LEAGUES.....



THE AMAZING BOSTON BRAVES OF 1914  
WERE IN **LAST PLACE** ON JULY 4<sup>th</sup>--  
YET PUT ON ONE OF THE GREATEST  
SPURTS IN BASEBALL ANNALS TO WIN  
THE NATIONAL LEAGUE FLAG--AND  
WHAT'S MORE, THEY SWEEP THE SERIES  
AGAINST THE POWERFUL ATHLETICS--  
WINNING **4** STRAIGHT GAMES!!



**BILL WAMBSGANNSS**  
OF CLEVELAND, UNCORKED  
AN UNASSISTED TRIPLE-PLAY  
AGAINST BROOKLYN IN 1920...  
**ROGER PECKINPAUGH**  
MADE **EIGHT** ERRORS  
IN THE 1925 CLASSIC...  
THE IMMORTAL **CHRISTY**  
**MATHEWSON** PITCHED  
**THREE SHUT-OUTS** (  
AGAINST THE PHILADELPHIA  
ATHLETICS IN 1905...



Reuther won. Smoke Storm broke his slump. But the Tigers kept winning ball games, too. And the Sox had to take to the road for 17 straight games. These 17 games would decide the pennant.

Lefty Ponder toiled through another. This one went 12 innings and Huck's heart bled for the tired left-hander. No old man should have to pitch this hard so often.

Huck called Walt Henry on long distance, locating the scout in New Orleans. The player limit would be lifted Tuesday.

"Get me at least two pitchers," Huck ordered. "Anybody. We'll have to gamble on rookies."

"I'll fly to the West Coast tomorrow," agreed Walt. "And on the way back I'll take a look at this Edwards."

Huck returned to his newspaper. Sandy and Paddy Malone came up for a chat. The ball club was on edge, the Malones bought a paper each and pulled up their chairs and buried their noses in the box scores.

"Mr. Appleton . . . Mr. Huck Appleton!"

A bell hop came searching for the Blue Sox manager. "Here, son," called out Huck.

"Telephone, Mr. Appleton."

Huck supposed it was long distance. Probably Henry already had a deal working. But no! It was a woman! For a moment he couldn't recognize the voice.

"Sure, come right over and see me," he barked. "I'm in the lobby."

"No, you'll have to come to our hotel."

"Why?" Huck demanded.

"Just as a favor to me," the girl's voice said sweetly.

"Who is this?" Huck barked. Then, before she could answer, he recognized her voice. "What are you doing in town? Where have you been? Why haven't you let anyone hear from you?"

"Come on over to the Lexington and I'll explain," Grace Seton Malone laughed. "And I want you to meet a good pitcher."

"I'd walk to California and back to meet a good pitcher," growled Huck. "I'll be right over."

"Come to Room 518," advised Grace. "Don't ask for us at the desk. We're registering under another name."

"I thought you got married," Huck pro-

tested.

"Don't judge everybody by yourself," Grace snapped. "We *are* married."

Huck had left his hat in his chair between the two Malone brothers. Paddy stopped him as he started out of the hotel.

"Just combing 'The Sporting News' to see if Terry is playing ball anywhere," explained Paddy. "Ever hear anything about him, Huck?"

The manager gasped. What was this? Didn't the Malones know anything about their own brother?

"No," he answered after a moment. It was none of his business.

He took a cab to the Lexington and knocked on the door of 518. Grace opened it, threw her arms around Huck and kissed him.

"Here, here," he said gruffly. "Somebody might see us."

Behind her stood Terry Malone wearing a broad grin. The two men shook hands.

"How are you doing, honey?" demanded Huck, "And why all the secrecy?"

"Just a gag," smiled Grace. "I wanted you to be the first to meet Terry Edwards."

Huck started. The name was familiar.

"Edward is his middle name so we just made it Edwards in the box scores," the girl went on. "My middle name is Holloway."

"You're G. Holloway!" Huck creaked.

"Exactly," Grace smiled. Then, frowning: "And since when are you too busy to notice minor league pitchers who have won nine straight games?"

"The West Texas," Huck said weakly, "is a Class D league. Henry was gonna look over your boy next week."

"We could wait," Grace snapped, "but the Blue Sox can't. We flew up when we read you were having to pitch Deware. Terry can take his regular turn."

"Now, look, honey . . ."

He gasped. Sometimes Huck Appleton was slow to catch on.

"Terry," he exclaimed, "*is a pitcher!*"

"Always was," Grace said proudly. "His stupid, hard-headed brothers and his dad tried to make an outfielder out of him. Of course, he can't hit. How many pitchers can? But he's got a high hard one, Huck. With smoke on it."

Suddenly Huck Appleton wasn't too



hard to convince. It added up. For no rookie outfielder had ever showed up with a better throwing arm than Terry Malone. He wondered why he hadn't thought of it himself.

"What do we do now?" he blinked, sitting down on the edge of the bed and looking from one to the other.

"Ask her?" shrugged Terry. "She's the skipper."

"One thing we *don't* do," Grace said briskly. "We don't agree on a salary or a bonus until you see Terry work."

"Bonus!" exclaimed Huck.

"You don't think that Cynthia Coleman will get him back for nothing, do you?" countered Grace. "I'm thinking about twenty-five thousand. Make it cheap just for old times sake."

Huck chuckled. "We'll see," he promised.

"My boy," Grace said proudly, "will finish the season with the Blue Sox for one thousand and a bonus of three hundred dollars for every game he wins. Then, before the World Series, we'll talk final terms."

"Before the series!" sighed Huck. "Honey, we're shot. I wouldn't bet a plugged nickel. . . ."

"Terry and Joe Reuther can do it," Grace said confidently.

"We'll see," Huck repeated.

## VII

SANDY and Paddy Malone always had lockers side-by-side. They were as close off the field as on. The two brothers were pulling on their cleated shoes when Terry entered the dressing room.

Their gasps came simultaneously. "Kid, what are you doing here? Why didn't you let us hear from you? Pops has been worried sick? Are you . . . !"

Terry held up his hand. "Mother heard from me all summer," he said. "She didn't tell Pops because Grace and I wanted our whereabouts kept a secret. I'm back with the Blue Sox. Can I borrow part of your locker?"

"Sure, kid," gasped Sandy. "But how come you back with us? Where have you been?"

"In the West Texas League," Terry said truthfully.

"Yeah? Good stuff, kid. What did you hit out there?"

"I think," Terry grinned, "it was about .250."

He waited a moment, then added with twinkling eyes: "The pitching wasn't too hot. Sometimes I guessed right. I even hit a home run."

But neither older brother shared his pride. Two-fifty in a Class D league!

"I wish," sighed Paddy, "I could figure out what is wrong with your hitting."

"It'll come out in the wash," Terry said lightly. "By the way, the folks will be here for this series. Getting here on the noon plane."

"They are! Why didn't they let us know?"

"It was Grace's idea," shrugged Terry. "We'll have a family reunion tonight."

"Then we gotta win these ball games," Paddy said fiercely. "It would break Pop's heart if he saw us drop out of first place."

Terry pulled on his old uniform. His brothers ran out for fly shagging and their practice turns. The youngest Malone grinned as he replied to cordial welcomes from the other Blue Sox players. Even Chink Wilson was glad to see him.

"I wish," sighed Chink, "that you could field 'em for me and I could hit for you."

Terry nodded.

He went out onto the playing field with Chink.

A good crowd had turned out to watch this second game of the series. The Cleveland club was out of the running but the Blue Sox held the spotlight. Over at Boston the Tigers had already started their game with the Red Sox. And were a run behind.

Huck motioned to Terry. "I'm going to start Lefty," he explained. "I don't think he can go the route. Keep hot in the bull pen. We'll feed 'em Lefty's slow curves and then your speed."

Terry went out to the bull pen.

Just before the game started Paddy Malone noticed that Terry wasn't on the bench.

"Where's the kid?" he asked Sandy.

Sandy could offer no explanation. They turned to Huck with their inquiry. Huck shifted his cud of tobacco from one cheek to the other.



"He was around here a while ago," he said mildly.

The bull pen was in deep left field, invisible from the bench.

Lefty Ponder started with a strikeout. Then he gave up a single. Huck squirmed. He wanted Lefty to stay out there a while longer. He had looked over Terry's stuff that morning. The youngest Malone wasn't quite the pitcher his proud wife claimed him to be. But had control and speed. With some seasoning and coaching, Huck mused, Terry would make it. But Huck didn't want to depend on just speed for a full-length game. Until next season, when Terry could be taught a curve ball and a change of pace, he wanted to use the young pitcher for relief duty only.

Ponder rallied. Pitching on guts alone. Got the side out without a run.

Lamotte singled and Paddy Malone scored the third-sacker. A tally to the good.

Huck and every other Rex Sox player kept one eye on the scoreboard in center field. The Red Sox now had a 2—0 lead over Detroit in the fourth inning.

**H**UCK took over the third base coaching box in the fourth when Chink Wilson doubled and Cotton Beck singled home another run. None were away and Huck was hoping for a big inning. But Gatoura and Pipken went out via the strikeout route and Huck turned back to the bench with a sigh.

He heard his name being called and looked up to see Grace and the entire Malone tribe in a box. He went over for a word with Pops and Mrs. Malone, and to be introduced to the wives of Paddy and Sandy. Then he went on to the dugout with a chuckle in his throat.

Lefty kept toiling. Twice the Indians got runners in scoring position but both times the southpaw worked out of trouble. The Blue Sox couldn't add to their margin.

Over at Boston the Red Sox pushed over another run and led the Tigers 3—0 in the seventh. The eighth.

Right in the midst of the fifth inning in Cleveland, the entire Blue Sox club suddenly took time out to do a dance around their dugout. For the final zero was posted for the Tigers. Detroit had fallen 3—0. If they held their 2—0 mar-

gin here in Cleveland, the Blue Sox were in undisputed possession of first place again.

But, in that fifth, the Indians got two solid base hits off Ponder and chased a run over. It was 2—1.

"Better get me out, Skipper," Lefty said sadly to Huck. "I'm washed up."

"Go as long as you can," Huck urged.

That wasn't long. In the sixth Ponder walked the first man. Then he gave up a single. He shot an appealing look to the bench and Huck nodded. The Blue Sox manager gestured toward the bull pen in deep left field.

And toward the mound came a tall youngster who flapped his glove against his thigh as he walked. And over the loud speaker came the announcement:

"Malone now pitching for the Blue Sox. Terry Malone!"

Huck tried to sit down again but he was besieged with protests and questions from all sides. He chuckled. The older Malone boys had cut off their younger brother and were demanding the score. Huck wondered what was happening in the box seat occupied by the Malone tribe. He wished he could be there to hear it.

Then, of a sudden, he realized he was counting his chickens before they had hatched. Terry Malone had the speed, yes! And the control. But what if the youngster flopped this chance! What did Huck know about Terry Malone's pitching ability in the clutch! A warmup session with the bull pen catcher meant nothing. Plenty of kid moundsmen had stuff but couldn't win ball games.

The palms of Huck's hands were dry. He would hate himself the rest of his life if it turned out that he had thrown the kid in too quick.

The Malones returned to their outfield position. Huck saw that they were shaking their heads. And that the infield was nervous. They didn't like this little surprise act. They wanted a pitcher out there they could depend upon. Huck swore at himself for letting his sentiment get the better of his judgment. This wasn't the way to treat a ball club battling out its collective heart for a pennant.

If Terry flopped, they would turn on him. Their confidence in him as a manager would be shaken. That might mean



their collapse. Anything can break a ball club when tension is this high.

Now Terry had concluded his warmup. Huck saw how nervous the youngster was. Why not? Huck swore. The whole darned idea was silly. He should never have fallen for it.

"Ball one!"

Outside.

"Ball two!"

Inside.

"Ball three!"

Too low.

Terry took off his glove and wiped his hands on the sleeve of his uniform. Then, taking more time, he threw and . . .

"Strike one!"

Huck sighed in relief. Perhaps the kid was . . .

No! The pitch was wide! Ball four!

He left the bench and started for the mound. Terry came a few steps to meet him. The youth's face was white.

"Steady, kid," Huck said gently. "You can't let us down now."

"I'm all right," Terry grunted.

But he wasn't. Huck didn't want to go back to the bench.

"Just relax, kid," he urged. "It's just another ball game. It's just . . ."

The Blue Sox manager felt somebody push by him. It was Sandy Malone. The left fielder gripped Terry's shoulder.

"You're the baby, kid," Sandy said fiercely. "Just throw 'em in. We'll catch everything they hit."

Somebody else brushed Huck's shoulder. It was Paddy.

"We're behind you, kid," promised Paddy.

Huck turned back to the bench. Something told him that a Malone family conference would settle everything.

Bob Greenleaf was up for the Indians. A good hitter. Not a slugger but sharp. Huck waved in the infield a few steps. They would play for the runner at home, which put more pressure on the pitcher.

Wham!

"Strike one!" yelled the umpire.

Huck grinned. That one had smoke on it.

Wham!

"Strike two!"

Wham!

"Strike three!"

Huck could hear the commotion in the stands. It was a Cleveland crowd all right, but there was a boxful of Malones. And the Malone family could dish out the pepper at a ball game.

Now Jitter Webb. He was set for this speed; he had watched Bob Greenleaf wave helplessly at it. He chocked up his bat and swung and . . .

Low swooped the ball into right center. Huck held his breath. Then he grinned as he saw Paddy Malone take the line drive waist-high and fire a throw into home plate that sent the base runner scurrying back to third.

Two gone.

Terry took his time. This batter, Bull Johnson, didn't like 'em outside. Huck grinned appreciatively at Terry's skill in working that corner. The count reached two-two. Then Bull swung at a wild one and sent up a high curving foul which Jed Lamotte gathered in for the third out.

Before Terry could reach the bench he was gathered into a bear hug by his two brothers. Huck Appleton chuckled. Then his chuckle became a happy laugh. He could sense the new spirit of this ball club. The strain seemed off. They were cracking jokes and indulging in horse play. That was good.

Catcher Rip Chandler struck out and then Terry came to the plate. He received a faint round of applause from the Cleveland fans for pitching out of this hole. Huck Appleton saw the pitcher lift his cap with a grin. The gesture was aimed at that box seat near third base where a small panic was taking place.

Terry watched one pitch curve in for a strike, then swung too quick at a curve. His roller was scooped up by the Cleveland first-sacker and he was out to first base unassisted.

"Poor kid," sighed Paddy. "I wish I knew what was wrong with his hitting."

"Can you believe it!" murmured Sandy. "A Malone pitching."

"As soon as we get used to the idea," answered Paddy, "I think we'll like it."

Which they did. So did all of the Blue Sox, for that matter. Two other relief stints by Terry Malone won them the pennant!



**HOT OFF  
THE PRESS!**

# TALES THAT MALES LOVE TO READ IN BED!

## COLLECTED FROM MAN'S BEST PRIVATE LIBRARIES!

You may have to answer to your wife for devoting all your attention to this book . . . but it's well worth it! We will wager you won't know where to start reading this big, brand new, collection of seemingly inexhaustible, spicy entertainment. Ed Fitzgerald, well-known book critic to radio audiences, gathered this collection of hard-to-find tales from the far corners of man's best private libraries.

## WHY MEN DON'T LEAVE HOME!

We are warning you! Don't be too shocked when you receive this irresistible incentive to stay home nights. Packed closer than sardines with unusual, rare viewpoints on the one subject that always steals the show—WOMEN! As you enjoy this luxury of reading in bed, living through these gay inviting bedside stories, you will just hate to turn out the lights. These escapes from boredom are vividly portrayed! You can't help feeling that you're a witness to these experiences that expose women in their true light!

## SEND NO MONEY!

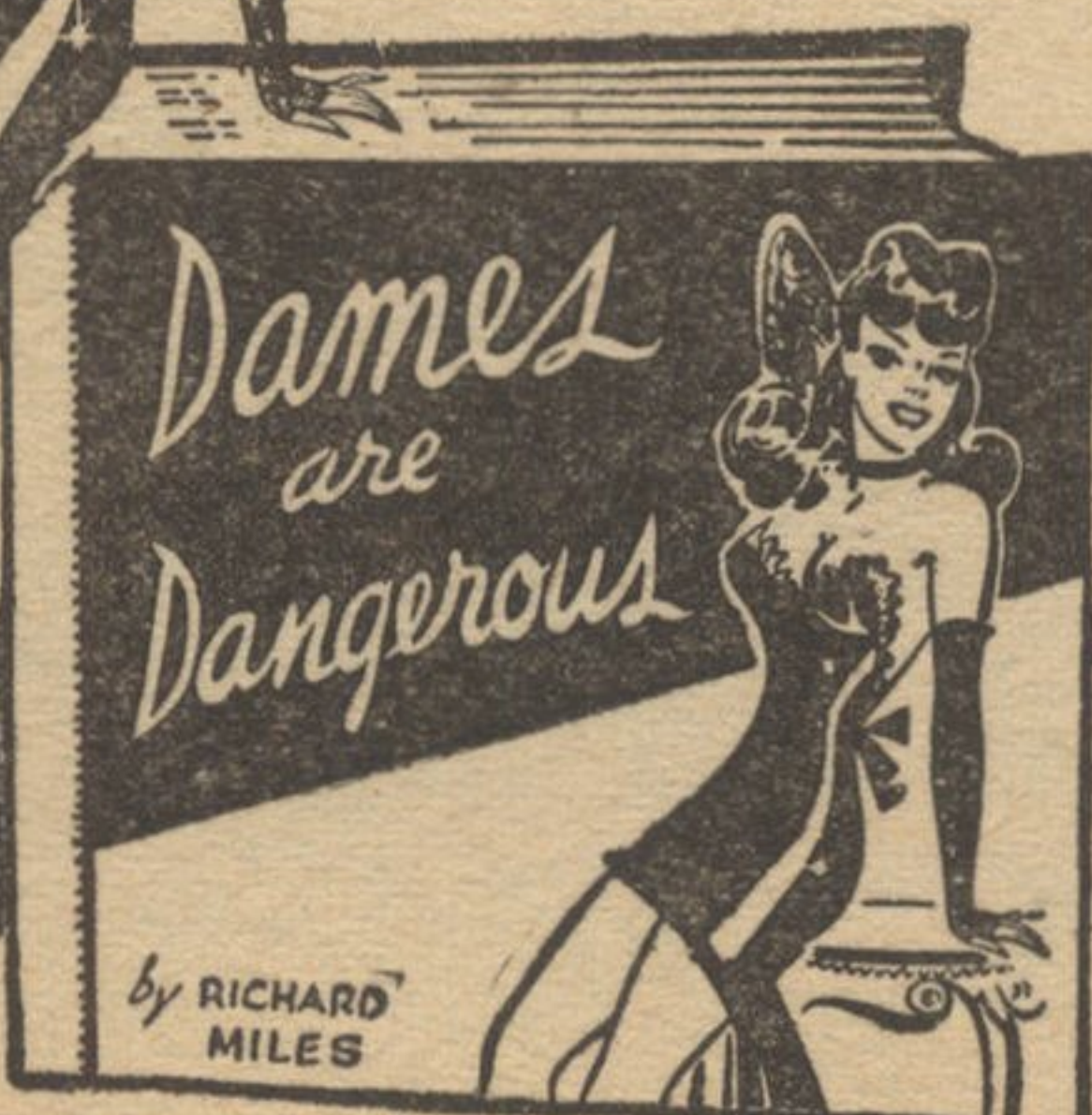
Don't send a cent! We invite you to read this book for 10 nights, . . . and days, too, at our expense. Just fill in and mail the coupon, the "open sesame" to one of the few joys bequeathed to the male sex. Just deposit with postman on delivery \$1.98 plus postage. After 10 days of impartial appraisal, you must decide this book is worth not \$1.98 but \$198.00 in fun and thrills or your **MONEY BACK GUARANTEED!** Mail coupon now!

**FREE!** of extra charge  
"DAMES are  
DANGEROUS"

## What Men Should Really Know About Women!

For a short time only, this divulging book "DAMES ARE DANGEROUS" will be given absolutely free of extra charge with your order of "TALES FOR MALES." Just off the Press! This book of hilarious intimate revelations is now released to the public for the first time! These most enlighten-

ing views on the dangerous, enchanting side of women will open your eyes! It rips the mask off their fair faces! Yes, you'll wonder why they were ever known as the modest, weaker sex. Remember, men—forewarned is forearmed! While our limited supply holds out, we advise you to grab this added treat immediately! Mail coupon NOW!



## YOU WON'T KNOW WHERE TO BEGIN WITH THESE CONTENTS OF "TALES FOR MALES"

- THE LOVE KICK *William Saroyan*
- MY VIEWS ON MARRIAGE *W. C. Fields*
- HE WAS SO GOOD TO HER *Frank Sullivan*
- WHAT EVERY YOUNG WIFE SHOULD KNOW *James Thurber*
- BUNDLING: AN OLD YAN-KEE CUSTOM *G. S. Chappell*
- LOVE, OR HOW TO WOO AND WIN A WOMAN *J. Goodman and A. Green*
- WHAT GOES ON IN LADIES REST ROOMS *C. A. Hamilton*
- I LEARN SOMETHING ABOUT SEX *Corey Ford*
- LOVE LETTERS OF SMITH *H. C. Bunner*
- STRIP TEASE *George Weller*
- FASHIONS IN LOVE *Clarence Day, Jr.*

. . . and these are only the beginning, gentlemen . . . for there's plenty more inside!

CADILLAC PUBLISHING CO., Inc., Dept. F-208, 220 Fifth Ave., New York 1, N. Y.

## FREE GIFT and 10 DAY TRIAL COUPON!

CADILLAC PUBLISHING CO., Inc., Dept. F-208  
220 Fifth Ave., New York 1, N. Y.

Rush to me "TALES FOR MALES" plus the free book "Dames Are Dangerous" in plain wrapper. I will deposit with postman on delivery \$1.98 plus postage. If after 10 days, I am not completely delighted my money will be refunded.

NAME .....

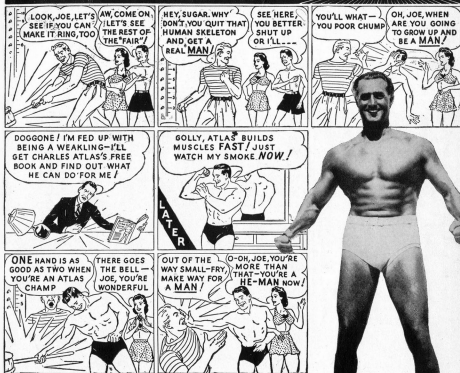
ADDRESS .....

CITY & ZONE.....STATE.....

☐ If you wish to save postage, enclose with coupon only \$1.98. Same money back guarantee.  
Canada Orders—No C.O.D.—Send \$2.50.



# The Insult "CHUMP" Into a CHAMP



## I Can Make YOU A New Man, Too, in Only 15 Minutes a Day!

HAVE YOU ever felt like Joe—absolutely fed up with having bigger, brawlier fellows "push you around"? If you have, then give me just 15 minutes a day! I'LL PROVE you can have a body you'll be proud of, packed with red-blooded vitality!

"Dynamic Tension." That's the secret! That's how I changed myself from a wiry, 97-pound weakling to winner of the title, "World's Most Perfectly Developed Man."

### "Dynamic Tension" Does It!

Using "Dynamic Tension" only 15 minutes a day, in the privacy of your own room, you quickly begin to put on muscle, increase your chest measurements, broaden your back, fill out your arms and legs. This easy, NATURAL method will make you a finer specimen of REAL MANHOOD than you ever dreamed you could be!

### You Get Results FAST

Almost before you realize it, you will notice a general "toning up" of your entire system! You will have more pep,

bright eyes, clear head, real spring and zip in your step! You get sledge-hammer fists, a battering ram punch—chest and back muscles so big they almost split your coat seams—ridges of solid stomach muscle—mighty legs that never get tired. You're a New Man!

### FREE BOOK

Thousands of fellows have used my marvelous system. Read what they say—see how they look before and after—on my book, "Everlasting Health and Strength."

Send NOW for this book—FREE! It tells all about "Dynamic Tension." Shows you actual photos of men I've turned from puny weaklings into Atlas Champions. It tells how I can do the same for YOU! Don't put it off! Address me personally, Charles Atlas, Department 212E, 115 East 23rd Street, New York 10, New York.



*Charles Atlas*

—actual photo of the man who holds the title, "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man."

CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 312E  
115 East 23rd St., New York 10, N. Y.

I want the proof that your system of "Dynamic Tension" will help make a New Man of me—give me a healthy, husky body and big muscular development. Send me your free book, "Everlasting Health and Strength."

Name .....  
(Please print or write plainly)

Address .....

City ..... State.....

☐ Check here if under 16 for Booklet A





# I Will Show You How to Learn RADIO by Practicing in Spare Time

**I Send You  
6 Big Kits  
of Radio Parts**



**KIT 1**  
I send you Soldering Equipment and Radio Parts; show you how to do Radio soldering; how to mount and connect Radio parts; give you practical experience.



**KIT 2**  
Early in my course I show you how to build this N.R.I. Tester with parts I send. It soon helps you fix neighborhood Radios and earn EXTRA money in spare time.



**KIT 3**  
You get parts to build Radio Circuits; then test them; see how they work; learn how to design special circuits; how to locate and repair circuit defects.



**KIT 4**  
You get parts to build this Vacuum Tube Power Pack; make changes which give you experience with packs of many kinds; learn to correct power pack troubles.



**KIT 5**  
Building this A. M. Signal Generator gives you more valuable experience. It provides amplitude-modulated signals for many tests and experiments.



**KIT 6**  
You build this Superheterodyne Receiver which brings in local and distant stations—and gives you more experience to help you win success in Radio.

## KNOW RADIO—Win Success I Will Train You at Home

Send the coupon for my FREE 64-page book, "Win Rich Rewards in Radio." See how knowing Radio can give you security, a prosperous future. Read how N.R.I. trains you at home. Read how you practice building, testing, repairing Radios with SIX BIG KITS of Radio Parts I send you.

### Future for Trained Men Is Bright in Radio, Television, Electronics

The Radio Repair business is booming NOW. Fixing Radios pays good money as a spare time or full time business. Trained Radio Technicians also find wide-open opportunities in Police, Aviation, Marine Radio, in Broadcasting, Radio Manufacturing, Public Address work, etc. Think of the boom coming now that new Radios can

be made! Think of even greater opportunities when Television and Electronics are available to the public!

**Many Beginners Soon Make \$5,  
\$10 a Week EXTRA in Spare Time**

The day you enroll I start sending EXTRA MONEY FOR SHEETS to help you make EXTRA money fixing

Radios in spare time while learning. MAIL COUPON for FREE 64-page book. It's packed with facts about opportunities for you. Read about my Course. Read letters from men I trained, telling what they are doing, earning. MAIL COUPON in envelope or paste on penny postal. J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 86G, National Institute, Pioneer Home Study Radio School, Washington 9, D. C.

Our 31st Year of  
Training Men for  
Success in Radio

**Mail this--64 page book FREE**

MR. J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 86G  
National Radio Institute, Washington 9, D. C.

Mail me FREE, without obligation, your 64-page book about how to win success in Radio and Television—Electronics. (No salesmen will call. Please write plainly.)

Name..... Age.....  
Address.....  
City.....Zone.....State.....

My Course Includes Training in  
**TELEVISION • ELECTRONICS**

