

town. The war correspondents seized upon the incident of the goat and the tin can, and made it good for anywhere from two sticks to a whole column. Hardy was angry. He reproved one of the reporters.

"But I didn't say all that stuff!" he persisted. "It makes me—well, ridiculous. It isn't fair!"

Then that reporter told his fellow workers that the new outfielder was a rube who objected to press notices and had threatened to punch the head of any correspondent who took his name lightly between the bars of his typewriter.

Hardy was already "in bad" with several members of the team; he was now "in bad" with the press.

"If he drops dead on the field, we'll print ten lines about him," said the press gentlemen. "Otherwise, nix!"

So it happened that all the home fans knew about Hardy was the incident of the goat and the tin can. It was not an auspicious introduction.

The season opened on the home grounds, and Hardy, playing a sun field to which he was unaccustomed, dropped a fly ball which he should have "caught in his teeth," as Callahan reminded him, and the error lost the game. This was unfortunate, for a certain clique of leather-lunged rooters on the right-field bleachers decided that the new man would not do.

If a dozen baseball fans select a fixed idea and their voices hold out, they can do almost anything. By the end of the first game two hundred "regulars" were after the new right fielder, and it pleased them to see that Hardy resented their efforts.

Any ball player knows what it means to have enemies in the home town. He expects to get the worst of it on the road, but when he performs at home he expects loyal support and encouragement. One hundred hostile rooters in the home town can hound a player out of the club, and it has happened in almost every city in the league, and will happen again so long as performers are susceptible to outside influence.

The constant chorus of "Tin can! Tin can!" got on Hardy's nerves and worried him. Every time the ball was hit

in his direction there went up a sarcastic chorus. The boy was unused to this sort of treatment. In the town where he had previously played he had been somewhat of a local deity. A bad cigar had been named after him, and small boys followed him about the streets. He had never been a grandstander, but it is one thing to play ball before a friendly crowd and quite another to do one's best when that best brings only jeers and abuse.

Hardy began to make inexcusable errors. He mislaid his batting eye, and

swung wildly at "bad ones." Opposing pitchers quickly diagnosed his case.

"The busher is swinging at 'em," they said.

Overanxious, and fretted until his nerves were raw, Hardy played like a schoolboy, lost his stride entirely, and brought down upon himself the wrath of those stern censors of the press who edit the most interesting page of the paper. The sporting writers began to howl for his release. Hardy wouldn't do, they said, and they said it in headlines.

Wise old Ben Daly, manager of the club and team captain as well, a great infielder in spite of a dash of gray over his temples, tried to put some heart into the recruit.

"You've let the knockers get you going," he said. "Didn't they chase Dillon out of Louisville years ago, and didn't he play three times as well as soon as he struck a new town? There wasn't anything the matter with Dillon, only they got his goat, and they kept it. There isn't anything the matter with you, either. You'll hit your stride one of these days, and show these flannel mouths what a regular outfielder looks like. Buck up, kid!"

Hardy shook his head. "I don't know what's the matter with me. I go up there to hit, and I can't see a ball any more."

"You only think so," soothed Daly. "Don't you think I know a sweet hitter when I see one? Why, I never saw a man show up better in spring training! You're just worried, that's all that ails you. Forget it! You'll get started one of these days."



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