

Is Baseball Our National Game?

By W. A. HEWITT

THE smoking compartment of the International Limited was filled to its capacity one day last week on the run from Montreal to Toronto, and the light being somewhat hazy for continuous reading, a conversation took place among the passengers, passing with great rapidity from theoretical solutions of the latest murder mystery to the realm of sport.

Said the bright young man in the brown suit, with due deliberation, denoting the value of his own opinion:

"I tell you fellows, Joe Kelley's got a great pitcher in this man Lundgren, he just bought from Chicago. He'll be a winner in Eastern League company.

"I guess so," said a little wizened-up old chap in the corner. "I follow the Toronto team closely and Kelley knows a ball player when he sees one."

"Sure, Kelley's a good judge," interpolated a Montrealese, "but he hasn't anything on Jimmy Casey."

"Perhaps not," said the Torontonians. Then he added with just a touch of pride in his voice, "Of course Casey got his baseball education in Toronto."

That opened the discussion to large proportions, and the knowledge of the game and of the players displayed by those who took part was a revelation to the writer, whose business it is to know these particular things. They talked of the old stars and the new stars, according to their respective ages. The older men spoke with veneration of Ned Crane, Mike Slattery, Pete Wood, Charlie Maddocks, Shorty Fuller, Doc. Shepherd, Jay Faatz, Fatty Smith, George Stemeyer (the ambidextrous twirler), Chub Collins, Doc. Andrus, and other great lights that have dimmed with age or have gone out altogether. Then the men of the next generation had an innings and extolled the merits of the immortal Buck Freeman, Cooney Snyder, Wally Taylor, Rabbit McHale, Billy Lush, Bill Dineen, George Staley, Pop Williams, Charley Dooley, Jimmy Hannivan and dozens of others, only to give way to the modern critic, who referred to Jack Thoney as "the Bullet," Bill Carrigan as "Buster Bill," Mike Joyce as "Your Uncle Dudley," Jimmy Jones as "the Kentucky Colonel," Dick Rudolph as "the Kid Wonder," Ben Houser as "Smiling Ben," Wm. Mahling as "oh, you Kid," Joe Kelley as "King Kel," and Dr. James Casey (as it appears on the hotel registers) as "Montreal's Pet."

What they did in the days gone by, the mighty formidable deeds of the past, were ranged before the vision of the younger element by wonderful word descriptions, how Fatty Smith caused Jarvis Street residents to petition the city to remove the ball grounds because of his habit of knocking the ball "miles" over the fence and breaking all the windows in the neighbourhood; how Ned Crane hit the ball from King Street to Front Street (approximately) on a line, and shut his opponents out without a hit or a run with his tremendous speed (faster than Rusie ever was, said the narrator); how Mike Slattery used to slide from base to base and finally to the home plate, as if on rollers; how Shorty Fuller used to fool all the umpires with the bluff swing of the arm to touch base-runners, though he missed them by yards; how Pete Wood always had the Indian sign on Toronto, meaning thereby that every time the aforesaid Mr. Wood pitched the Toronto team sniffed defeat before he ever entered the box.

Reminiscences followed each other as naturally as water flows down the Niagara river and allowance was made by all for any exaggeration of speech for it was a communion of souls with a common interest, an involuntary gathering of baseball enthusiasts, as dyed-in-the-wool "fans" as ever took a St. Catherine's car or boarded a ferry for Hanlan's Point.

The experience quoted is not an isolated one by any manner of means. Baseball has undoubtedly taken a strong and fascinating hold on Canada, and threatens to become supreme in the affections of the sport-loving public. Interest in the game is not confined solely to Toronto or Montreal, or London, or Hamilton, or any other particular part of the provinces of Ontario or Quebec, but extends from ocean to ocean, taking in all the great country between. The Maritime provinces have for years been a stronghold of the game, many splendid players having been developed in New Brunswick especially, two present-day notables for example being Fred Mitchell, one of the catchers of the Toronto club and Larry McLean, one of the catchers of the

Cincinnati club, who are graduates of a club at St. John.

Every hamlet and village in Ontario has its baseball team and its league, and in the cities with their hundreds of teams, the interest in the game is even greater than in the country which calls baseball its national game. Quebec is more conservative, but the game is flourishing there in a most surprising manner.

The boundless West has hitched its waggon to a baseball star. From Manitoba to the coast it is all baseball. In isolated spots attention is attracted just at present to lacrosse, by cup-hunting expeditions, but these only happen once in a lifetime and so secure extra space in the newspapers, entirely out of proportion to the merits of the case. Baseball is the game. Even in Regina, which is getting some good advertising by gathering a lacrosse team together from all quarters to play two matches away from home, baseball has the call. They have a pro-

The Base-Ball Fever

By J. K. MUNRO

BASEBALL is largely an acquired or contracted habit in this Canada of homes. The man you meet at the club does not tell you of what a great game he pitched against Spodunk when he was a boy. He confines his remarks to the game of to-day, perhaps wandering back far enough to raise an argument as to whether Jimmie Casey ever played down over the Don. Or if his hair is getting a little thin and his figure a trifle portly, he may tell you of that great day down Queen Street East when Ned Crane pitched two winning games all in the same afternoon, nosed out Newark and gave Toronto her first international baseball championship.

Then again, you occasionally bump into a veteran who will dilate on the older days when all Hamilton used to come down to Toronto with the Clippers on the *Macassa* and of the stirring times there were then. If the man you meet happens to get behind that, turn ye and flee while there yet is time. He comes from Hamilton or London. If he starts to "reminisce" of the Maple Leafs or Londons it will take all evening to teach you that what you see nowadays is not real baseball at all; that there has not been any since the masks and pads and gloves came into the game to make it as safe as carpet ball and as easy to gather in "flies" as if each player was provided with a net.

What is there about this game, then, that men, seemingly sane, catch late in life and that causes them to act as if they were boys again? Have you not seen them—you who in a cool spot in the stand with a bag of peanuts, a cigar and a newspaper to help along the game, were trying to make a tolerably decent afternoon of it? Have you not seen them, staid business and professional men, educators of the youth and advisers of the grown-ups? Haven't you seen them, I say, yelling and shouting and waving their hands and pounding each other on the back, alternately cheering and groaning and acting generally in such a way as to leave a reasonable doubt as to their sanity? Have you not heard them—soft-hearted philanthropists and hard-headed lawyers—shouting, "Kill the umpire"? Have you not heard these same old chaps whose opinion is worth its weight in gold on most matters, noisily declare that a called "ball" was "right over and a beauty" when said old chaps are not in a position to tell whether the ball went within yards of the plate? Have you not seen them do dozens of other things just as foolish—at a ball game?

That's what you call "getting the fever." And just a word of advice. If you don't want to catch said fever and become a confirmed crank, never, when at a ball game, allow anything above a whisper to escape from your anatomy. If you ever do it's all over with you. That whisper will grow louder and louder till it ends in one of those fierce yells intended to put the nerve of an opposing pitcher to the test. Almost ere you know it every player in your "own" team will be known to you by name. It'll be "Joe" and "Billy" and "Kid" all down the line. And at the same time and place every man on the other team will have become

fessional league in that district called the Western Canada League, and only the other day an entire team left Toronto to represent one of the places on that circuit. Winnipeg is the central point for what is known as the Northern League, and smaller organisations abound in the city and the surrounding country, some of the villages that support baseball teams being considered so unimportant as to fail to secure recognition on the map.

British Columbia is turning more than a listening ear to the baseball enthusiast. The whole province is very attentive in fact, Vancouver in particular having gone clean crazy over the game. Vancouver once supported two lacrosse teams, but one of them gave up the ghost recently and the other is trying to secure enough players from the East to make up a team. In New Westminster they breed lacrosse players and keep them at home, by moral suasion, perhaps; but nevertheless they keep them. Still with all the glory of a world's lacrosse championship in the town they can't stop the spread of the baseball microbe. The small boys and the big boys too, have been inoculated and nobody apparently wants to effect a cure.

Looking over the broad Dominion as games flourish one may find a ready answer to the question: "Is baseball Canada's national game?"

your deadly enemy. You will glory in his discomfiture, take a deep and lasting joy in his errors and know what ecstasy really means when he smites the air savagely three distinct and different times and carries his bat and a look of disgust back to the visitors' bench.

And as for the umpire! He will in that awful moment have become the most conglomerate mass of bad judgment and malicious intentions ever left unhung. You will feel it in your heart to do the little job that the hangman has neglected and are only prevented therefrom by the wire screen that comes between you and your intended victim. But at least your lungs are your own and you can tell him all the things you would like to do to him. That's being a fan. Of course you are not one. You can never find out after the game; and during the game—well, what did you pay your money for, to watch the play or listen to what other fellows are saying?

But as I said before, if you would escape all this never emit the first yell. The moment you do the virus enters your being, you have the habit. You are no longer a responsible party from the moment the gong sounds till the last man is out in the ninth.

No antidote nor anti-toxine nor anything else has yet been discovered for this terrible epidemic that has been with us every summer, and hence it has worked considerable havoc. Scarce a town in Canada but has suffered from it. From the Bay of Fundy to Burrard Inlet every city of every size has had its attack of professional ball. Almost everywhere it has left financial wreck behind. But it comes and goes and comes again. If there's one man in Canada who has made a cent out of promoting professional baseball he should be given a place in the new Toronto museum. But still the game goes merrily on and will go merrily on just because to the fools who are said to be born every minute it adds about one every second that a game lasts. And would you stop it? Not for worlds! Did you ever stop to notice that the happiest men you knew were the fools?

The Man Behind

By WILLIAM SULLIVAN

Catcher, Chicago Americans

EVERY player, I suppose, thinks his own particular position is the hardest on a ball team. Some do not have as much work as others, but they figure that when the work does come, it is hard and requires especial skill for its rightful carrying out. I am like the rest. I believe that the catcher is the hardest-worked man on a ball team, that his position is the most important and that he of all others must never be found sleeping at the switch. For he is the main-spring of the nine. On him depends the work of the pitcher. He it is who can watch the whole field and keep control of tight situations. He is as the pilot of a ship. If his hand slips, or if he