

DEATHS



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About the time this article is printed, I will begin reading time tables and Bullinger's Guide to find out the best trains from Los Angeles to Marin, Texas. I intend to get into the training camp with the first flight of recruits this spring and work out gradually, because, when age and winter begin to get into the old "souphone," they come out slowly. However, I have had one of the best rests this winter that I have ever had during the off season since I entered the big league, and I expect to come back strong this spring.

My ambition is to equal "Cy" Young's record for longevity of service in the big leagues. During his career, he hung up more than 500 victories. I still have some distance to go. In my younger days, I was ambitious to do something in the winter, and so I took a whirl at two or three off season propositions. Several weeks of vaudeville filled out one winter, but it did me no good as a pitcher, because I had one of my worst seasons after the hard work. Some folks imagine that going around the vaudeville circuit is a lead pipe cinch, just a few minutes' work each day. It is hard work, and was harder work for me than for those who make their profession. Although the engagements require only a few minutes when you are actually on the stage, it is necessary to be on hand at the theatre at least an hour before the time the act starts, so that the whole afternoon is always gone. Just about time enough to get some dinner is allowed between the afternoon and evening performances when it is necessary to go back to the theatre. The vaudeville performer seldom gets away much before midnight. The life is wearing on health, as the hours are irregular, and I did not like the work. Therefore, no more vaudeville.

Another year I tried insurance, and the business appeals to me because it has just enough mathematics in it to make it interesting, but nearly everybody to whom I attempted to sell policy wanted to talk baseball to me. I would go in to offer some insurance, and the following dialogue is a fine sample of what generally took place:

"Can I write you an accident policy?" "Matty, how did Brown happen to beat you in that last game in Chicago?" "Did you ever stop to consider the risks you run every time you go out in the streets in New York?" "You can't tell me that 'Johnny' Everett was right on that second base argument of his. Did you see the play? Now, what do you think about it, yourself?"

"I recall devoting an hour one day to a man who was marked on the company's books as a good prospect. After getting all the inside baseball gossip he could think to ask about, he concluded with the remark:—

"I was reading Mark Twain last night, and I agree with him about accident insurance. Somebody asked him once, before he started on a trip, whether he would not like to take out an accident policy."

"No, I hardly think so," replied Mark. "I have been studying statistics and find that more people die in bed than in railroad trains. Therefore, I'll take one out some time when I am going to spend a few days in bed."

"I feel the same way about it, but I am glad to have met you, and if I hear of any one who wants to do business, I'll let you know."

That's what became of one of my fine prospects.

After the season last fall, I made up my mind that hereafter, as long as I was in baseball, I would devote all my time, winter and summer, to the game. As I have said, I am getting along in years when the time is measured by my period of service in the big league, and it becomes more difficult for me to round into shape each spring. My pro-

THE BIG LEAGUE GOSSIP BY CHRISTY MATHEWSON THE GIANTS' STAR PITCHER

gramme for future off seasons is to hunt in the fall and then spend the rest of the time in California, playing golf. That game has kept me in excellent shape all winter, keeping my muscles just limber without wearing on them. I believe the adoption of golf is one of the greatest things a pitcher can do to help his condition if he will play it in the off season.

When a player is young, spring training looks like a wonderful institution, and he regards the trip south as something of a picnic. I recall that the first time I went south with the Giants, I could hardly wait for the starting time to arrive, and I enjoyed the experience.

For an old fellow, I had a pretty good year last season, and I attribute it to the outdoor life I led in the winter, combined with the early break I made for the training camp. I left early in February with McGraw and his recruits. It was a month after I had arrived last spring before I tried to curve a ball. Here is "Mac's" letter:—

"Dear Matty:—

"I wish you were along, because I know you would like to have given the Japanese the once over. We have been very busy since leaving you in Seattle. All the way across the Pacific the captain of the steamer said he thought we were the best crew he ever had. You were right about that sea sick thing. It certainly kept us busy. Since arriving, we have been eating and speech making and listening to a lot of remarks about ourselves in Japanese that the interpreters say are complimentary."

"I want to ask you if you would go to Marlin early to work into shape slowly and also to keep an eye on the

recruits under 'Dick' Kinsella. Look over the young pitchers and see if any show promise. Trusting you are well, etc.

Yours, "MAC"

I am glad of the opportunity to have a hand in the sorting of the young material this spring. It gives me experience I need, because I have made baseball my business, and I want to learn every angle of it. Some day, I may be looking over some recruits of my own. But I do hate the idea of that training grind to interest one. I never mind playing through the regular schedule, because every game of baseball is different and presents a new problem, but each day of training is just like the one preceding and exactly the same as the day which will follow. However, I will be on the job early, having some confidence in that saying about the luck of the early bird.

OPERA HOUSE NEWS

Good Judge of Horse Flesh

As a horse trader, David Harum, was "some pumpkin" and as a judge of human nature he was supreme. His humorous method of handling all classes of individuals makes the play a sermon and a delight.

A former says he rid his farm of rats as follows:—"On a very large number of pieces of old shingles I put about a teaspoonful of molasses, and on that with my pocket knife I scraped a small amount of concentrated lye, then placed the shingles around under the floors and under the cribs. The next morning I found forty dead rats, and the rest vanished. I have cleared many forms of the pests in the same way, and have never known it to fail."

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