



Mr. Ernest Paterson thinks these gladiators have no real place in modern civilization. "Bleacher" says the professional baseballist is a public benefactor.

TWO VIEWS OF BASEBALL

1. *The Professional Game is Not Legitimate Sport*
2. *Baseball is an Institution Worthy of Public Patronage*

BASEBALL, excitement, which began in May and will culminate in the latter part of this month, has come to the high-water mark in 1911. Every year Canadian "fans" are on the increase. The biggest crowd in the annals of the Eastern League assembled at Hanlan's Point, Toronto Island, last May, when 22,000 people witnessed the opening struggle between Toronto and Providence. In Montreal, a leading centre of lacrosse, the great American game has become almost as popular as in Toronto. In all our western cities local leagues have made baseball as prominent a summer pastime as hockey is in winter. The struggle for the pennant of the Eastern League this year has been eclipsed in Canada only by a great general election, whose leading issue is reciprocity, of which baseball is a startling manifestation. In the two views of baseball published on these pages, Mr. E. R. Paterson openly condemns the vogue of professional baseball, which, in his estimation, amounts to a form of hysteria. "Bleacher" as strongly contends that the professional game is a great out-of-door institution well worthy of public patronage.

THE CRITIC'S VIEW

BY ERNEST PATERSON.

ANY historian of this age and continent, failing to give due weight to professional baseball as a powerful influence in the life of the people, would be guilty of a serious omission. The game has, in truth, come to form a salient feature of the social conditions of our times. The extraordinary prominence given to baseball by the daily press throughout every season of the year—a prominence rivalled only by the subject of politics—is a sufficient indication of how conspicuous and continuous an interest it is in the minds of our citizens, and no student of the various forces at work in our North American civilization, taking note of the thronging crowds of spectators at the matches, the vast amount of discussion on all sides regarding the veriest minutiae of the game, the waves of jubilation or depression that seem almost to sweep across the community according to the varying fortunes of the "home team," the eclat that marks the opening of the season, when the city's Mayor or even the Lieutenant-Governor of the Province is present and assists almost as if at some important public ceremony—no one taking note of these things could fail to perceive that baseball is playing a large part, a part of singular significance, in the life of the people. It is, therefore, important that we should consider with great care the nature of the influence that is exerted by this remarkable interest.

Let us acknowledge, before proceeding further, that baseball is in itself an admirable game. It calls for and develops all the characteristic qualities of the athlete—speed, strength, endurance, agility, trueness and quickness of eye, mental alertness, strategic skill. Especially is it an excellent game to watch. Every movement of the players can be seen, and those movements are exceedingly accurate and rapid. Moreover, every play "counts"; every mistake is significant; every well-thrown or well-caught ball has a definite bearing on the final result. Of course, as with other games of its kind, such as Rugby and Lacrosse, baseball has the defects of its excellences. It is too vigorous and violent for most men who have passed beyond the years

of youth. "Slow" games, like cricket and golf, have an immense advantage in this respect. But our continent is singularly impatient of delays in its pastimes; it demands quick movements and a constant excitement. Baseball, indeed, seems to suit the genius of Canada as well as it suits that of the States, and in itself it is by no means unworthy of the devotion of our best athletes and sportsmen.

It is, therefore, a matter of double regret that the game has fallen on evil days. Professionalism has been gnawing like a vulture at its very heart, until the baseball we see played by our city teams can no longer in any legitimate sense be regarded as sport. It may well be that no form of professional athletics is deserving of the name; sport is suggestive of a pure and spontaneous delight which those that make a game their business cannot be expected to feel themselves or to inspire in others. But baseball is marked by some features that distinguish it from most varieties of professionalism (for example, professional cricket in England) as being peculiarly incompatible with our conception of sportsmanship.

It is a matter of common knowledge that the whole baseball organization is a business enterprise, conducted solely for the profit of its shareholders, and tainted through and through by a venal commercialism. The players are paid experts, and it is rare that a single man of them is a citizen of Canada. They are bought and sold and transferred from one team to another without any consideration of their place of birth or residence, and without any regard to their own wishes. This traffic in athletic skill forms the great topic of public interest during



This is the kind of popular spectacle that Mr. Paterson condemns and which "Bleacher" argues is as necessary to the twentieth century as the Olympic games were to the Greeks.

the winter season, and it continues even during the actual months of competition. The result, therefore, is that every year sees what is substantially a new team professing to represent Toronto, composed largely of players who in past seasons or even in the same season have been members of rival clubs, and who will almost certainly be so again in the future, assisting and opposing in turn just according to the amount of salary that their ability com-

mands. Pecuniary profit is, in brief, the basis of the whole structure. The clubs are simply business companies, and their sole object in purchasing the services of good players is to attract large gate receipts.

The enterprise, however, has been so adroitly conducted and so cleverly advertised by its owners, that they have succeeded in duping and blinding the public into a strange and almost laughable delusion. One would naturally suppose that the spectators would watch the game very much in the temper and attitude of people attending a simple exhibition of athletic or acrobatic skill. So regarded, a baseball match is a remarkable performance. The precision of the game is almost unique; it is as if some admirably constructed and carefully oiled machine were in motion. But such a conception of baseball is absolutely foreign to the minds of a typical audience. Amazingly credulous, pitifully hoaxed, victims of an absurd hallucination, the spectators behave as if the "home team" in some way was actually chosen from the best brain and brawn of the youth of their city, and as if the city's prestige was materially enhanced by its victories and impaired by its defeats.

The outburst of local patriotism that results from this delusion, factitious and fallacious as it is, is a thing incredible to those who have not witnessed it. Almost every other feeling is sunk in a keen and almost overwhelming desire to see the "home team" win. So far is this carried that the spectators are perfectly willing that the match should be a poor exhibition of baseball, provided that their craving for victory is satisfied; and they are usually eager to see the opposing side play badly, in order that the players they are supporting may be correspondingly advantaged. Favour and prejudice, partiality and malice, rule the day.

The colossal imposture of the whole thing, the extraordinary obliquity and blindness of vision displayed by the public, whereby a body of paid men, collected for a few months from various parts of a foreign country, playing baseball in much the same spirit as that in which a troupe of tumblers perform their feats of agility, owned and managed by a private company for its private gain, is invested with all the attributes of a team of amateur sportsmen, lovers of the game for the game's sake, imbued with the traditions and ideals that are the proud heritage of sportsmen, representing their native city at considerable expense to themselves of time and money in a chivalrous contest against other true amateurs—such a state of affairs would be utterly beyond belief if it had not become the commonest of commonplace. Men otherwise intelligent and even astute, keen in their discernment of the practical issues of life, undeceived and uninfluenced in their business dealings by considerations of sentiment, cool, cautious, hard-headed men, are absolutely hounded and flimflammed by this transparent swindle, absolutely fooled by this silliest and shallowest of fictions.

Such having been the origin and development of professional baseball, conceived as it was in a sordid desire for gain, and born and bred in delusion and credulity, we dare not expect that the actual playing of the game should be in accord with the spirit and traditions of true sport. Very little need be said on this subject. Every one who has attended a match, or has read newspaper reports, knows that the ideals of sportsmanship, those gracious principles of courtesy and honour and restraint that form one of our race's chief sources of pride, have no part in professional baseball. The most prejudiced devotees of the game can scarcely make this claim. It is always tacitly assumed that baseball stands almost by itself among games, with its own peculiar code, and its own unique notions of what is fair and praiseworthy.

This assumption has become so general that it is but rarely criticized. People merely smile when the conduct of a baseball match is described, amused rather than amazed and indignant at the disgraceful features of the game—the incessant interchange of minor abuse and petty squabbling among the players, the occasional riots and shedding of blood over a questionable decision, the brutal attacks on the umpire that marked former years, only now partly checked, not by any improvement in the tone of the game, but by the stringent imposition of fines, the perpetual yelling of the spectators, absolutely partisan, absolutely devoid of any regard for the claims of justice and generosity, the indiscriminate and virulent vituperation hurled at the members of the visiting team, the snarl shrieks of encouragement and stupid advice directed at the "home" players.

In truth, the whole temper of the game is in absolute antithesis to all that is usually accounted sportsmanlike and honourable. Any attempts at deceiving the umpire, any underhand but successful ruses are