

# On Just Being a Fan

By Mabel Hite

Who is now Mrs. Mike Donlin

Illustration from Photograph

I SCARCELY know what this article should be entitled—whether "The Confessions of a Baseball Player's Wife," or "The Chatterings of a Female Fan." But anyway I shall ramble on just as I please, whether this has an appropriate title or not.

I used to think that the baseball men had the queerest jargon in the world. I still think so.

Once I remember, after I had met Mr. Donlin, and after I had come to take some interest in the sporting extras, I was skipping through an inning play when I came across a sentence that almost made my heart stand still. The sentence read: "Donlin got tired of life and suicided at the plate." It flashed through my mind that he had failed to hit the ball, and then in a fit of disgust had killed himself. After I had

convinced myself that it was not so bad as that, I looked further down in the column, and found where he had come smilingly up again. Really, a person who has a particular friend playing the game ought not read the sporting page, as he will find where the friend died at second, or had his head chopped off by the pitcher, or had any number of heartless things done to him.

There is nothing I delight in more than sitting in the grand stand, and playing the game with my husband. It is almost as exciting as being out on the diamond; for the most part I believe I get more stirred up in the grand stand than Mr. Donlin does on

the diamond. Sometimes I get happy enough to dance while at a game, and sometimes at the remarks the men around me make, I want to rise right up



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and say something mean. Just the other day in one inning I heard Mr. Donlin called a "pill" and an "angel." It is truly wonderful how a player can run the gamut of creation, from a chimpanzee to a seraphim, all in one game; if he hits a three-bagger he has a seat among the heavenly elect while if he misses he is on easy terms with Milton's hosts. I am getting so now that I only listen to the good remarks about my husband, and when a man behind me begins to criticize Mr. Donlin I immediately lose myself in the game.

I used to think that an actress' life very nearly tested human endurance, but now I believe that a baseball player has more tiffs by far with unkind fate. A ball player has to pay for all the honor and glory he gets; it all goes to the old proverb, "There is no excellence without great labor." If we got roasted on the stage the way the ball men do, I am sure we would jump our contracts. I sometimes wonder which is the bigger man, the expert baseball player, or the famous actor.

Human nature is a queer piece of goods. I have talked with lots of baseball men who wanted to be actors, and then many big actors have told me that the one bright dream of their lives was to be a diamond hero. So it goes.

Every day a man plays baseball it takes just so many hours off his final days of old age. The work is very exacting. It uses up the best of a man's life, and then leaves him high and dry. But with all that, I'd rather be a baseball player than a worker in any other profession under the sun.

Some people think that all there is to the game, is for one man to throw the ball, another to hit, and a third to catch it. But the more I come to know about the game, the less I find I know. It is the greatest of the sciences. I might almost say that a baseball player is born, not made. But after one is born, he has to go through an endless amount of tiring humdrum. Behind every good player is about eighteen years of hard practice. A player must go to the field every day of the season, rain or storm, heat or cold. There is no getting around it.

I have just made my first tour with the Giants. The first season after we had been married, Mr. Donlin broke his leg, the fifth week he was in the game; the second season he did not play, and so this year is my first time around the circuit. I think it great fun; it is the most exciting experience that I ever encountered. It is awful strenuous; I will have to confess that I am forced to take medicine for my nerves.

In Pittsburg one day this season, I became very much disturbed. The pitcher had disposed of Manager McGraw, and of Cacther Bresnahan, and then Mr. Donlin came up. He and I have signs, you know. But I could not wait for the signal, and so cried out to him from my box, to land on it. He sent back a sign, and I felt absolutely sure that he would meet the ball. I was not disappointed. But I felt proud. That is the good thing about baseball—a man has a big opportunity before him, and he is given a fair opportunity to rise to the occasion.

But of all the misunderstood, unfortunate people in the world, the umpire has the biggest place in my pity. I would not be an umpire at any salary. I dislike any scene over the decision of the umpire. I believe that there ought to be a rule against a player making any stand against the umpire, under penalty of removal from the game. If the captain can kick, why not the manager, or the president of the club! I often wonder why Kipling doesn't write a poem vindicating the lowly umpire.

There is a spirit growing up that I like to see very much. And that is when a man makes a good play of cheering him, without stopping to think on which team he is playing. A meritorious play is always worthy of applause, whether the man is a home-team player, or from out of town. The game is getting too big for the little spites and slurs against the visitors, that used to characterize it. A good play is a good play the world around.

This present season has been the greatest one that baseball has ever known. But a year from now this cannot be said. For each year the game will continue to grow, to become fairer and more interesting.