

How Winn Won

By William M. Stokes

Illustration from Photograph

A YOUNG man, small of frame, timid-looking, with hair of uncertain color, was poking around over a decayed lumberyard, struggling through the weeds and kicking plentiful tin cans out of his path. He was acting as if he expected to find the entrance to some gold mine in the matted weeds or under a pile of garden lath. He paid no attention to the cockle-burrs that spitefully clung to his trousers' bottoms, or to the scriggly little bug-insects that went scurrying out from under his feet.

After two hours of exploring among the weeds, tin cans and insectivera, the young man took his way to the office of the owner of this deserted lumberyard. "I'd like to lease that old lumberyard," said the boy with the faded hair. The owner brightened up. The owner didn't want very much for it; it took up quite a bit of his time looking after it, and it was such a bother, anyway. The taxes were seven hundred dollars a year; the rental only one hundred and twenty dollars. It had cost the owner six hundred dollars a year for more than twenty years. He smiled to himself as he replied that he would consider leasing it. Yes, he would lease it if pressed to it; kind of as a matter of friendship.

"How long do you want it?" asked the owner.

"For five years, with an option of purchase," was the quiet answer.

The owner gasped. He looked at the bashful appearing young man to see if he really meant it. Option of purchase? Was he actually going to get rid of that white elephant. And so the contract was soon closed.

After the papers were made out and signed, the owner spoke to the young

man: "Say, now, what in the world are you going to do with that old lumberyard, anyway?"

"Put up a baseball park."

Again the owner gasped. But the boy with the pale hair did not smile.

To this day the owner gasps every time he passes his old lumber camp, for it is now a beautiful, thriving park, a source of pride to Lowell, Mass.

The boy who kicked the tin-cans out of the way is Alexander Winn, the youngest baseball magnate in the world. Winn is a winner. One day he decided that he wanted to become a magnate—and that settled it. He didn't have any money, and he didn't know very much about baseball, but he never allows trifles to bother him. That was two years ago; today he has been offered enough money for the frapped lumber dump to cause a major league club owner to be jealous.

Nine or ten years ago Alexander Winn of Boston decided that he was going to college. He had \$50 when he landed in Andover, and \$40 of this went to tuition and laboratory deposits. He had an eagle to take him through nine months school. It did. He rented a room, and furnished it himself. No padded van backed up to the door; Winn bought a wooden box of Shredded Wheat Biscuit, and then used the box for a table while he lived on the biscuits. It did not take him long to set his table; while he was studying he merely reached under the lid and pulled out a few biscuits, poured on some water and lo! the repast was prepared. Why should he buy milk for his biscuits, when only two hundred yards away there was clear, cool water, nature's own drink, in the uni-

versity well? But Winn did not live on the Shredded all the time. Once a week he went down town and blew himself to a spread. He would make up then for the biscuits and clear water; he would spend a quarter.

And then Alexander of Boston went to Princeton, where he tutored and played baseball. He tried for the outfield.

After he finished at Princeton, Winn got the idea that he wanted to be a professional baseball player. He is always getting ideas that way. He didn't know just why, but still he had a kind of hankering. So he went to Fred Lake, then manager of the Lynn club, now manager of the Boston Red Sox, and asked for a job. Lake said that he could use a man at third, and asked Winn if he knew anything about the third corner. Winn brightened up, and said that that was his particular forte, that nature had ordained him to hold down that very bag. In Princeton he had always played in the outfield. He was given a try-out by Lake, and in some miraculous way, at his first game in Fall River, he was able to swing onto every ball that came his way. When he came up to bat, he actually hit the ball. Winn could hardly believe it himself, but he acted as if he was disappointed that he hadn't sent the grounder a few rods farther, and as if he surely would do better next time up. Lake got to following him around with his eyes, and rubbing his hands in glee. And so the boy became a ball player before he hardly knew it.

But after a season he decided that he wanted to go to the Harvard Law School. He went, but law was so dry that it could not hold his attention altogether. And then he got a fool idea that he wanted to be a club owner. He had never owned anything more than a suit-case and two overcoats, but he had made up his mind. He cast his eye around over New England for a team to own. The Lowell club was then something to be spoken about with a sympa-

thetic shake of the head. It stood without competition—at the bottom. He found that by assuming a few hundred dollars of liabilities he could get that organization, and that the owners would feel a debt of gratitude toward him. He was perfectly willing to furnish them the feeling. Then he had a ball club all of his own—and nothing else. The team was one in name only, and it took a little stretch of the imagination to call it that.

He was outfitted then with a team and a debt. This is usually a bad combination, but Winn was optimistic. The ball park in Lowell was so far from town that one had to start in the morning to get to a three o'clock game. He immediately set about remedying this defect. That is why he explored the old lumberyard. It was right in the heart of Lowell, but none of the wildest imaginations in Lowell had ever thought of this dump-heap as having the potentialities of a ball park.

Today it is one of the neatest and best kept parks in all the country. It has shade trees, and makes some pretense at landscape gardening. He built bleachers, and a fine grand stand. The people of Lowell woke up and began to invite visitors to come around and see their fine ball park.

But Winn did a queer thing. He built, in back center field, a big block of bleachers for boys, and now admits boys under fourteen years of age free of charge. Who ever heard of the like? Any boy, not more than fourteen years old, may see the games in Lowell free of charge. Winn has a queer theory. He thinks that boys should witness games of prowess, and that a poor boy should be lent a helping hand; hence the free bleachers. There is a special entrance to the boys' stand, and on the gate is painted these words:

"Well intentioned boys, under fourteen, who hope to become good men and great, may enter here as guests of the management, except on Saturdays and holidays."



ALEXANDER WINN
Manager Lowell Team

From the very first time the gates of Washington Park were thrown open the crowds began to pour in. A man would be sitting on his stoop smoking when about one minute before three o'clock he would see Neighbor Smith going to the game, and then he would hallow at Smith, "Wait a minute. I guess I'll go too." They all did. Though the team was only fair, he made more money than the champions made.

In cold cash Winn put \$20,000 into his park, and refused a lot of offers from other magnates, who hadn't thought of using the lumberyard.

Two more queer things Winn did. He would not allow any whiskey ads. to be put on the fences and bill boards in his park. And then he made all the men on his team give up their cigarettes. The men did not know what to think of it at first, but they all did, and are now right thankful for it.

Then Winn began selecting his players. The personnel of the club when he took hold of it was not very high. Most of them were proteges of the side-street saloon. Winn set up a motto which had two requirements: First, a man had to be a good ball player; second, he had to be a gentleman. The idea caught on with the Lowell people, and they began to call the players, "Our boys."

Winn uses his park the year around. Last winter he turned it into a skating rink. He dammed it up, and flooded it with water. It cost quite a bit of money. But there was no cold weather; he could not get any ice. Every night he would stick his head out the window and whiff the air, to see if it might not freeze that night. January came, and still no ice, and what was more, no admissions.

When the ice did come, there was free ice everywhere. People would not pay for skating, when they could get it free. It was an open winter. There was little if any, snow to spoil the free skating; and so like Napoleon at Moscow, Winn was forced to own himself beaten by nature. Nevertheless, he is planning to have skating again this winter, and hopes for a less open winter.

All this time Winn was going to the Harvard Law School. Nearly every day he went to Lowell to see about his park and team. It usually takes a couple of tutors and assistants to get a man through the Cambridge Law School, but with all that this young man passed creditable examinations. How he did it no one knows.

At Harvard, he is known under another name, as he decided, when he took hold of the Lowell club, that he would be known as "Winn" in baseball, and under his own name in law. He has made such a success of baseball, that he has finally adopted the euphonious cognomen of Winn. The students at Harvard, who know him under the name brought from his fatherland, do not suspect that this quiet, awkward, unostentatious fellow at their sides is the magnate that they read about in all the New England papers.

How old is Winn? Last summer he would not let it out, as most of his players were older than he himself, and he feared they would think him inconsequential. As a matter of fact, he is twenty-seven years old, and looks nineteen. He was born in Switzerland, and, his parents having died when he was a mere babe, he has made his way ever since, and put himself through three colleges.

