

The Fanatic is Melancholy

He has His Troubles with the Fans

By F. C. Lane

THE Fanatic looked hot and flurried as he strolled into Gorham's Grocery store the other morning and his step lacked something of its usual elasticity. His tie was under one ear, his hat had a dent in it and he was otherwise upset.

"What's the matter," grunted the produce salesman, whittling down a match to the size of a toothpick, "you look disgruntled!"

"I feel disgruntled," sighed the Fanatic as he took a reef in his starboard suspender, combed back a stray lock of hair from his off eye and seated himself nonchalantly on the pickle barrel.

There was a twinkle in the eye of the butter and eggs man as he chewed a straw reflectively, but no one spoke.

The Fanatic, finding as usual that he must do all the talking, took careful aim at a luckless pickle as it bobbed to the surface, bit off a juicy fragment and began.

"Yes, as you say, I look disgruntled and I regret to say such is the case in feelings as well as looks, but what can a peaceful denizen of this fertile land of ours expect at the hands of his excited brethren when the home team overcomes a four run handicap and wins out in a ninth inning rally? Is it not enough to rouse the blood and make even our genial proprietor so well disposed toward humanity in general that he would place the crackers more within reach of his steadiest customers. What, no reply? Well, well, these red, white and saffron colored combinations here in the little case will do as well."

"Hey there," grunted the alarmed proprietor, "them there fancy crackers is 18 cents a pound. I don't give samples noways, at least not without purchases."

"My soul," grieved the Fanatic, "what a commentary on the high cost of living and the grinding extortions of the trusts, but as I was saying, it was really a most interesting game.

"There is a question which has puzzled me for some time. You have all, no doubt, studied deeply on the time-honored problem, 'Why is a hen,' but that puzzler, subtle as it is, must pale into insignificance before the question I now propound to this indulgent and intelligent audience, 'Why is a fan?'"

"There are thousands of good American citizens outwardly sober, industrious and peaceful. Alas, what a fallacy. Let those same citizens be seated on the luxurious boards which the generous magnates so thoughtfully provide for their patrons and they at once become changed into howling dervishes. Why, to-day one of the players on the home team slid into first base just about the same time, as near as I could judge, that the ball reached the first baseman. The umpire called the man out and instantly the air was filled with flying missiles. I pried one of them from behind my ear where it had been intercepted in its flight,—a lemon of a very billious aspect. Yes, if it had been more recently plucked from the parent stem it would not have been so bad for in that case I should have mixed its juice with the acetic acid with which, I regret to say, our genial proprietor soaks his pickles in place of pure cider vinegar, but as it was I had my dignity incensed and no fair recompense. But the demonstration against that umpire was thrilling. If every one of those people on the bleachers had severally and collectively owed the gentleman two dollars there could have been no more enthus-

iasm in the outbreak.

"All this was very interesting to be sure and threw a baleful light on the complex character of my fellow men, but that was as nothing compared to what came in the ninth inning. Yes, if our genial host only knew how parched my throat was from the lusty cheers with which I led the home team to victory he would set up a flagon of that genuine Three X cider, guaranteed under the pure food and drug acts, which he seems so anxious to preserve for future generations who would be far less appreciative than I. No? Very well. 'Twas ever thus. Yes, the game went merrily on to the ninth inning. I was far more interested in a fly that was doing a Barnum and Bailey stunt on the bald head of a prosperous looking citizen before me, that I was in the monotonous regularity with which the home players were missing the pellet. But in the ninth I must admit I sat up and took notice.

"The big brawny individual who had been doing a barn dance in the neighborhood of first base led off with a measly little hit that got tangled up in the fingers of the pitcher and refused to be unsnarled in time to catch the player. There was a murmur throughout the vast assemblage, but the more patient of the brethren assembled managed to control their emotions by reefing their suspenders and waited breathlessly for what was to follow. The second man up, a little squat individual with a bullet head, struck at the ball. He missed it twice, but the third time he managed to send it wriggling and crawling down toward third base. There was plenty of time to get it but the big man on first was tearing down for second, waving his arms and emitting blood curdling yells, so the fielder in his excitement dropped the ball. The third man tried to sacrifice but the visitors showed their magnanimous spirit by refusing to permit this and kindly allowed the man his base on an error. There they were, the bases were full and no one out. At this point I decided to cheer, but the fat man in front of me beat me to it. Getting a firm brace on my sore toe, he managed to jack himself up to his full height, and after gurgling a minute by way of ex-

periment until I thought of slapping him on the back to prevent strangulation, he finally found his voice and emitted a magnificent deep toned bellow. That must have been a preconcerted signal for instantly from all around came a series of wild war whoops mingled with the pounding of boards until a person brought up on the frontier might have imagined that a tribe of blood thirsty savages were in full charge. While I was trying to extricate my toe from under the foot of the man in front and at the same time dodging with practiced eye the wild lunges of the man behind who was emitting whoop after whoop until he threatened to go into convulsions, somebody knocked a home run. I didn't see it myself. I was too busy defending myself from the assaults of my thoroughly locoed companions, but it must have been a brilliant play. The first intimation I had that anything unusual had transpired was when a hat came sailing past and caromed off the bald head of the apoplectic fat man before me. I made a swipe for it as it looked to be an improvement on my own but my aim was bewildered by a perfect volley of hats of all descriptions, sizes and states of preservation which filled the air all around. Before I could take any action at all the maniac behind me brought down his calloused paw on my own hat with enough force to dislodge me from my seat so that it was with difficulty I managed to pry my ears from under its bent rim.

"I made a swing for him with my fist but only succeeded in knocking off a pair of spectacles from a reverend looking gentleman who was meekly enquiring what had happened. Of course, after that I was obliged to turn around and look as innocent as possible, but for all that my heart burned with rancour toward the fat man in front who had come near crippling me for life and the spavined individual behind who had damaged my personal feelings.

"Yes, the great American game is a grand institution, but henceforth I either wear an assortment of murderous hat-pins concealed in my hat and cast iron frame work in my shoes or else I shall be obliged to take out an accident insurance policy."

“Here,” interrupted the proprietor bustling up, “you’ll have to move, there’s a customer wants some of them fish.”

“That so,” grunted the Fanatic, “this greed for mere money which is undermining all classes of the community is a terrible thing, but I suppose business is business. Still, if you took some of those sun-dried herring in your pocket

to the next ball game nobody would come near you. No, not if there was a home run every inning.”

Here the Fanatic glanced slyly at the proprietor, but that individual was busy inserting a nail under the pound weight on the scales preparatory to weighing out the purchase for his customer, so the remark fell on unheeding ears.

