

EDITORIALS



THE winter is almost over. As we write the clubs are already enroute for the South. In many training camps from Georgia to California pitchers are limbering their throwing arms and catchers pegging lazily to second. Yet a few short weeks and the baseball world will welcome opening day. The traditions of 1914, still a part of the living present, will then be ancient history. The Braves will no longer rest on the laurels of a World's Championship. They must begin the long struggle to the top anew. The Athletics, a reconstructed team, will no longer be the redoubtable club of old. There is a general feeling of uncertainty in the winners, which is the surest augury of a successful season.

There is something peculiarly satisfying in the situation. While the three continents of the Old World are convulsed with the most gigantic and the most destructive war of history, our battles are the bloodless ones of the athletic field. While the press of France and Germany is aflame with bayonet charge and cannon fire, our milder mannered dailies concern themselves with stolen bases and home-run drives. There the field of view resolves itself into one huge carnage plain. Here the dominant spectacle is the diamond. There daring men strive for the Iron Cross or the bright emblem of the Legion of Honor. Here trained athletes strive for fielding skill or a three-hundred average. On one side of the Atlantic the gloomy grandeur of war is the universal theme, on the other the loftier, more enduring glory of peace.

We do well to live in America in these days of stress and strife and we do well to devote our interests to the worthy rivalry of sport, as most fittingly typified by our great American game, baseball.



AN other page of this issue appears an article by Walter Johnson in which he gives the baseball public the reasons which induced him to sign with the Federal League. This action by the great Washington star has been much criticised and has no doubt cost him a certain amount of popularity among the more thoughtless and fickle of fandom.

Johnson's attitude is clearly set forth in his statement, "Other things being anywhere nearly equal, I would always give Washington the preference." This statement, we believe, covers the case and is all that could logically be expected of any player. The player's first duty is toward his old employers. To them he owes the best of his service so long as he is in their employ. To them, for reasons of sentiment, he owes the preference where other clubs or other leagues are concerned. But this commendable preference does not demand of him unreasonable financial sacrifices when his service is terminated and he is free to sign elsewhere. The celebrated Minor letter was a friendly, an even generous note under most circumstances. But coming to Johnson as it did after he had refused an unprecedented offer of twenty thousand dollars a year, it completely changed the situation. Other things were no longer anywhere nearly equal, and he signed with the Federal League.

To those who claim he was guided by mercenary motives, we believe the facts have not properly presented themselves. Johnson's defense is good. "I showed I was not mercenary," he says, "by refusing a better Federal League offer than I even expected to get from Washington." To us it seems that he acted in perfect good faith and that his conduct was entirely justified.

Johnson must stand arraigned not as a contract jumper from Washington, but a contract jumper from the Federal League. His contract with Charles Weeghman was signed in good faith by both parties. Nothing was done by the Federal League to justify his act. But the conference with Clark Griffith could hardly fail to sway a man of Johnson's easy-going, straightforward temperament, actuated as he always has been by a desire to do the "square thing." Griffith was the injured manager. He had always treated Johnson generously. There was a friendly feeling between the two men. Furthermore, Griffith was the largest single stockholder in the Washington club. In that venture he had invested the savings of a lifetime. He had accomplished wonders with a perennial loser. He had lifted the club into a position where it was almost a sure first division team, where, in the confusion arising from the disruption of the redoubtable Athletics, it might well stand a chance at the pennant. With Johnson gone, vanished all hope of a pennant, all hope of even first division rating, all hope of profit, the progress of years, the very backbone of the club. It is no wonder that Griffith's plea had a compelling influence on Johnson. It is no wonder that he was able to mould the impressionable star, to get him to reconsider his act, to resign with the Washington club.

"It seemed to me," says Johnson, "that I had unwittingly got into a position where whatever I did was wrong. I had to choose between two evils, and I made the decision for myself according to the best of my ability."

That he was actuated in doing so by mercenary reasons no one who knows Johnson or the facts in the case believes. We can state authoritatively that he resigned with Washington for a sum considerably less than he would have received from the Federal League.

The facts of the case exonerate Johnson from the graver suspicions of mercenary conduct and dishonorable dealing which usually blacken the character of the man who breaks his word. "It was the hardest thing I ever did in my life," says Johnson, "and I did it only because I believed that otherwise I would be doing a still greater wrong." With this frank statement we may fairly dismiss the case with that final word from the great star: "I may have done wrong, but I meant to do the square thing." Intentions, in the last analysis, are the only things that should count, and Johnson's intentions are above suspicion.



HERE are two sides to every question. The side of organized baseball has apparently won out in the famous Johnson case. His momentary defection was the greatest triumph in the record of the Federal League. It was a proud day for Joe Tinker when he signed the prince of pitchers to a Chifed contract. It was a bitter disappointment when that pitcher deserted.

In an effort to get at the facts of the case we interviewed the Federal League authorities in Chicago.

"I am not surprised that Walter Johnson resigned with Washington," said Charles Weeghman. "I understand that several lawyers were closeted with him, and from my experience with lawyers, I believe they would have convinced me that black was white if I had been in his shoes. I am not surprised that he signed with Washington and I am

not sore. You may tell him, if you will, that I am not sore. The only thing I blame him for is, when he was approached by representatives of organized baseball, he didn't give us an opportunity to defend ourselves. He listened to their arguments without letting us know. We never had a chance. I signed Johnson in good faith and I am going the limit. I must do so in the interests of my business. I employ good legal talent, and they tell me I have a legitimate claim to Johnson's services. I shall put the matter to a legal test."

Law and baseball, like oil and water, do not mix. The great American game is governed by its own peculiar statutes, which in a measure are essential to its existence. It is unfortunate that the law is invoked in so many instances, but no one can blame Charles Weeghman for attempting to enforce what he considers a binding and lawful contract. The Johnson episode has been the most sensational event of a baseball decade. It is not yet closed.



THE attention of our readers is called to the section in the present issue devoted to the Baseball Players' Fraternity. In that section, it will be noted, the Fraternity has taken upon itself the task of maintaining an old-time player, Cal McVey. This veteran of the game was one of the original players on the first Boston National Team, a conspicuous character in the early days of the great sport. Unlike some of his companions, he led a deserving life, and accumulated a small business in San Francisco. This business was annihilated by the tremendous earthquake which laid that beautiful city in ruins. Forced to seek a fresh start, McVey went to Nevada and was totally incapacitated from further work by a serious mine accident.

McVey had passed the meridian of his career long before the Fraternity was even a theory. He had been player and manager, star and has-been, had run the whole gamut of a player's active career before many members of the Fraternity were even born. It did not devolve upon them to relieve the distress of an oldtimer who belonged to a previous era and who was separated from their headquarters by the breadth of a continent. But fortunately they did not quibble over the idea of responsibility. They rose to the occasion and have made reasonable provision from their treasury for the maintenance of this old-time star.

Generosity cannot fail to be commended. But, on the other hand, does it seem hardly fair that the Fraternity should be asked to assume, unaided, a burden which is so entirely outside its proper scope and province?



FOR the past thirty days the baseball world has been marking time. Both organized ball and the Federal League, having left their complicated problems for Judge Landis to solve, must perforce undergo a period of depression and anxiety until that decision is rendered.

The situation is not unlike that in big business circles when a new national administration is inaugurated. There is a season of general uneasiness until the tariff policies and government oversight of trade and manufacture have shaped themselves and the public as a whole becomes accustomed to new conditions. Such a period is always unpleasant, in a measure unfortunate. Its only justification is necessity.

Perhaps it was inevitable that the differences which have rent the baseball world should be carried to the courts for adjustment. If so, it was well that Judge Landis should have been chosen as the referee. He is known as a man of large breadth of view and sympathetic interest in baseball. He is also known for his sensational decisions, particularly that one which imposed a fine of \$29,000,000 on the Standard Oil Company.

No doubt by the time this reaches our readers the long-expected decision will have been reached. In the interests of all concerned it is to be hoped that Judge Landis is not too strongly influenced by strict legal interpretation. Baseball is an industry which has evolved from necessity a code peculiar to itself. It has been governed by statutes of its own origin, more efficient than equitable. But it would be wanton destruction to shatter the present system unless a better were installed upon its foundations. With so much power for good or ill within his single hand, it is to be hoped that Judge Landis will be guided by that wisely constructive policy which allows no care of detail to eclipse the broader view of the general welfare.

The logo for the LA84 Foundation features a stylized, multi-colored flame or ribbon shape. It is composed of several overlapping, curved bands in shades of blue, green, yellow, and red, all pointing towards the right. A thin horizontal line is positioned above the top of the flame shape.

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