



WALTER JOHNSON

HAS Johnson's fast "one got a hop?" I asked the weary batter. He said, "You're kidding me, old top, and it's no joshing matter. Although I've often heard his fast one whistle past my bean, it can't be proved by me at all, because I've never seen it." The batters shudder, one and all, when Walter Johnson's twirling. They vainly try to see the ball that travels by a-whirling, they hear it sizzle o'er the pan; it comes in hot and smoking. With sickly grin they weakly fan; it leaves them dazed and choking. With helpless look you see them stand a-chopping and a-swinging; they swat the air to beat the band, but never do much binging. They hate to face the wondrous Swede, they dread it like the dickens. The hits they gather from his speed, are scarce as teeth in chickens. No slugger ever crowds the plate or steps into his fast one, for if it should caress his pate, he knows 'twould be his last one. The sporting writers never rave about Sir Walter's spitter; they know a slow one never gave this pitching star his glitter. They know he sometimes curves the ball and doesn't always speed it, but though he has some other stuff, the Speed King doesn't need it. He pitches speed, he peddles speed, it lets him live in clover; it's Johnson's punch, his only need, because he gets them over.

SPRING

When the rookie lands in the sliding pit,
 When the pitcher lobs 'em across the plate;
 When the ball plops home in the catcher's mit,
 And the shortstop trains to reduce his weight;
 When the last of the holdouts is on the job.
 And the scribes "discover" an outfield "king,"
 The busher who's better than Burns or Cobb,
 Why, then it begins to feel like Spring.
 When the veteran answers the southland call,
 And the young recruit makes his hopeful bid;

When the bleachers echo the coacher's bawl,
 And the fielder bellows, "I got it, kid";
 When they're batting fungoes and placing bunts,
 And the distance drives make the old park ring;
 When the southland hums with these training stunts
 Why, then I know that it must be Spring.

L'Envoi

What tho the calendar says I'm wrong?
 Why should I hark to that tune, by jing?
 When the ball clubs flock to their training grounds
 Believe me, Mawruss, *I know* it's Spring.