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A BASEBALL ROMANCE

**T**HE real baseball romance of 1916, with, no doubt, a brilliant chapter added for next season? The real baseball "thriller" of the year, with a lesson in every line, an example to American youth, and a message of hope to the weak and wavering? The come-back of Edward Spencer, catcher, now the pet backstop of Detroit, and the backbone of the Tiger team for 1917!

There have been few baseball ro-  
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mances like that of "Tub" Spencer—and the best chapters of Spencer's melodrama are yet to come. Way back in 1907, the scouts of the St. Louis Browns unearthed no less than three star catchers, all at one time, in the Texas League: Jim Stephens, Branch Rickey, and Ed. Spencer. Rickey was destined to play both in St. Louis and New York, to become a manager of a big league team, and to make a pleasing record as a corking good athlete and a high-class college gentleman. Stephens caught in the big show for quite a while, but finally went back, and drifted into baseball obscurity. Both Rickey and Stephens had interesting histories, but neither of them had a life-romance to match that of Eddie Spencer.

When Spencer came up to the big league, he was a college graduate, already famed for his joyous and convivial ways at school. Ere long Spencer's merry-making became the talk of the American League, but his baseball value was so great that he was seldom disciplined. He was a second Ewing, so they all declared—a mighty catcher whose rifle-throws to second turned them back halfway down the trail; whose intelligence and skill behind the bat were almost uncanny, and who hit that ball with tremendous power. "Tub" Spencer—they soon began to call him that, for the boy fast put on bulgy and unwieldy flesh—was a rich young man, son of a millionaire; he had always done what he wished at college and in the minor league; baseball, to Eddie Spencer, was not a livelihood, but a joy ride and a pastime—and why should he take baseball seriously?

And so Spencer kept on in the big league, the rolls of fat encroaching fast upon his figure, his keen eye growing dimmer, his matchless arm beginning to grow slow. It was all great sport for Spencer—but it couldn't last forever. One day came his notice of release—and then the boy woke up. Woke up, it seemed, too late, for his folks at home, exasperated by the stories that they heard, had turned him down—had told him to go along upon the trail he had selected. Almost in a day, the Million-

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aire Kid was jobless and moneyless—the champagne dream was over.

For awhile, there were occasional paragraphs concerning Spencer and his wanderings. Fat and wheezy, penniless and useless, he went here and there, picking up his living as he could. Then—Spencer disappeared. Vanished from view; removed himself from the world that had used him so hospitably and so hard. Vanished for a year and more.

Tub Spencer, the fallen idol of the college crowds and the big league fans, had gone up into the mountains of the far Northwest. Alone in the solitudes he wrestled with his troubles—and he won. He scrambled up and down the crags, he hunted in the valleys. Day by day his eye grew clearer and the pouched fat came off his mighty frame. Never did a man have a harder fight to make, but Edward Spencer, out there in the hills, made his fight and won it.

One day a powerful athlete, still young, clear-eyed and active, turned up behind the bat in a club of the Pacific League. It was Tub Spencer, a tub no longer, but even stronger, even faster, than the great young catcher who had come up from the Texas League so many years before. His work in the Pacific League was superfine, and the big league managers soon began to eye him wonderingly, almost bewildered at the possibility of such a come-back. Over at Detroit, the catching staff was weakening—its mainstay, Oscar Stanage, was growing old, its younger maskers were inadequate to the work thrust upon them. And so Detroit sent for Edward Spencer, and Spencer, late in the 1916 season, came again into his own.

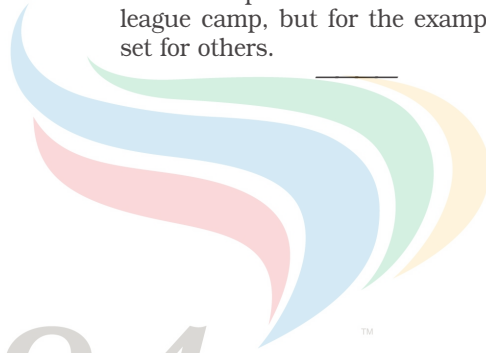
Over at Detroit they count on great things from Ed. Spencer next summer. Owner Navin says that he will be the mainstay of the team, and that he shall have a salary to match. Spencer says he isn't worrying about the salary. He has been taken back into the home circle just as he has been taken back into the big league; he is a rich man again, and the baseball pay is little to him now. But there's this great difference: Nine years

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ago Ed. Spencer didn't need the salary, because he had money, and baseball was a joyride, anyhow. Today, Ed. Spencer doesn't need the salary, but he wants to show the baseball world what a man he has become, and he'll stick to the great game till the cows come home.

Few baseball heroes, once the thick fat has gathered on their bones, and their speed has gone, have ever made the good fight and won clear through. Spencer made the fight and made it win. He deserves full credit, not alone for all he did to help himself back into the big league camp, but for the example he has set for others.



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