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THE DROP-BALL

WHAT has become of the drop-ball that our daddies used to throw? It seems to have passed out entirely—at least, you never see the strange, down-shooting curve that was a specialty of great pitchers 25 years gone by. The spitball, so they say, takes a downward shoot like the old drop-ball, but, viewed from the pressbox, it doesn't seem to have quite the same arch to its fall. Buffinton and Ramsay were two of the best drop-ball men that ever lived; Terry had a good drop curve, and at least half the pitchers of 25 years back could put in an occasional drop-shoot when they felt like trying it. The drop-ball was extremely effective, and some of the greatest strikeout records were made by using it. Just how, when, or why it passed out is hard to state, but the pitchers seem to have given it up almost as if by general consent. There used to be a prevalent idea that the drop injured the arm—but that idea was kept in circulation about the spitball, having been started by Stricklett and Walsh, who wanted to have a monopoly on the wet delivery.

Toad Ramsay's drop-curve was the biggest and most terrible ever seen, but Ramsay had peculiar, freakish, physical advantages, such as few men now in the game possess. He had been a brick-layer, and the grip required in his trade proved exactly what he needed to give

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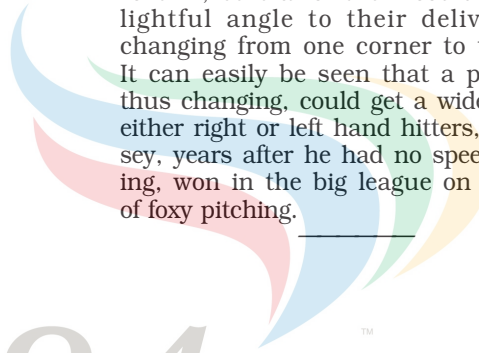
force, speed, and a somersaulting hop to his delivery. When Ramsay was "right," he was almost unhittable, and his equal, in that style of pitching, may never be seen unless some other brick-layer takes up the pitching game.

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Another delivery that has gone, but mainly through the change of rules, was the cross-fire, Kid Carsey's best stock in trade. When a man's foot is glued to a small slab, he can't do much cross-firing.

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But when the pitchers had a box to rove in, several of them could get a delightful angle to their deliveries, by changing from one corner to the other. It can easily be seen that a pitcher, by thus changing, could get a wide slant for either right or left hand hitters, and Carsey, years after he had no speed remaining, won in the big league on that style of foxy pitching.



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