

# EDITORIAL COMMENT

THE turning point in a baseball season is Independence Day and even that date is too early to serve as a basis for predictions of profit or loss. Much less is the first of June a suitable time for taking count of stock. So far as meagre data serves to show baseball has been affected by war conditions to a very minor degree. The attendance in certain Cities has emphasized the fact that people are unusually busy during week days, but enthusiastic patrons at the ball parks on Saturdays and Sundays. In certain other cities the attendance has been uncommonly large. Baseball will play second fiddle to the war in every respect. Men cannot put rivets in ships while they are at the ball park. Neither can they work to advantage in putting rivets in ships and do nothing else. The few idle hours which come to the laborer are utilized more than ever at the ball park which is as it should be. Baseball does not wish to interfere in any way with the maximum prosecution of war preparation. But baseball has proved itself to be a most useful adjunct of that war preparation and will doubtless so continue. Baseball has an important work to do in this mightiest of struggles.

AS we go to press comes the celebrated order by Gen. Crowder commanding all drafted men to engage in some useful occupation or join the ranks. An imperative publishing date makes it impossible for us to await the final outcome of this order or to predict its probable consequences. Doubtless by the time this magazine reaches our readers, the order will have become ancient history and fail to stir more than a passing memory in these days of rapid changes on a gigantic scale.

To our mind, judging merely from the meagre facts at hand, the authorities at Washington wisely aimed the order at the useless young men, who are either vagrants, wealthy idlers, or engaged in some questionable or at best doubtful occupation. No one would waste breath for a moment in defending such young men from the effects of such an order whose wisdom in their case at least would be above question.

But the order as given was so sweeping, and apparently if we may say so, so vaguely worded, that it might at first blush seem to include almost all professional baseball players. The status of baseball in the world war has been defined often enough to render repetition unnecessary here. Baseball is surely at least, upon a par with theatrical enterprises which are exempt, we understand on the ground that the American people must have some recreation. To our mind baseball is superior to most theatrical entertainment for it is the most healthful of all amusements, taking its patrons out in the open air and giving them the stimulus of a red blooded athletic contest. What the soldiers and sailors think of baseball may be gleaned from their remarks at the big league stands, where they flock in thousands and from the spirit with which they participate in amateur contests of their own, on the improvised diamonds at the big cantonments. Baseball has been wisely recognized by

the administration a necessity for the soldier and no pains has been spared, to supply the men in khaki with baseball equipment both here and abroad. Nor are the needs of the home population to be entirely ignored. Baseball is the most democratic of pastimes, the poor man's game if you will. Golf and even tennis, will never be for the mass, the cost is too much for the laboring man's pocket. But the price of a bleacher seat is within the means of all.

Nor is baseball a sport only. It is a gigantic industry, involving the investment of millions of dollars and contributing its due share in taxation for the successful prosecution of the war. Baseball is the great American pastime. Washington itself recently recognized this fact by legalizing Sunday baseball in the national capitol so that the government employees, busy other afternoons, might attend their favorite sport. We cannot believe that the administration would wreck the national game, the peculiar institution beloved by the masses in order to supply a few hundred ill equipped young men, for industries of which they know little where their work would be on a par with the most unskilled laborer in the land.

WITHIN twenty-four hours of the Crowder order, Pres. Wilson and Mrs. Wilson visited the ball park at Washington and were interested spectators throughout the game. At this contest a baseball autographed by the President brought \$3,000 for the Red Cross. Here is a striking example of the utility of baseball at this time. Pres. Wilson is, the busiest man in the world. But he wasn't too busy to go to the ball game and the afternoon's relaxation doubtless did him good. Is baseball on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon not equally advantageous to the millions of workers rushed with business during the week? Pres. Wilson also witnessed an example of the great work Baseball has done for the Red Cross and other war charities. Shall a sport which has grown to mean so much to millions of people, which contributes entertainment to thousands of soldiers and sailors, which pays in a huge annual war revenue to the government, which contributes so substantially to war charities in a variety of ways, be suspended to the incalculable loss of the nation at large in order to supply a few hundred ill equipped laborers for part of the season? Ball players should be usefully employed in the off season. During the summer however the most genuinely useful way in which they can be employed is in practising their profession. We cannot believe that it was the intention of our administration at Washington to destroy the national game.

A NOVEL baseball game occurred recently close up behind the firing line in France. The contesting teams wore gas masks. Among the players the most brilliant performer was Hank Gowdylate of the Boston Braves. It takes more than a sprinkling of shrapnel and the booming of big guns to deaden the love of baseball in the American Soldier.