

Reminiscences of the Old-Timers

By

FRED PFEFFER, etc.



A Motorcycle Race "Somewhere in France"

THE TRUSTFUL MR. HOTALING

REMEMBER Pete Hotaling?" queried Fred Pfeffer, in a reminiscent mood. "He was one of the old birds—good batsman, sturdy all-round player—fine type of the bygone generation—and yet a type that was wholly different from the tricky, fast-thinking stars like Mike Kelly, Buck Ewing and Arlie Latham. Old Pete thought of things at a leisurely pace, reflected over them before he decided to do them, and then solemnly executed them when he got around to it. Incidentally, Pete was a trustful and confiding individual. He had implicit faith in the honesty and good intentions of his fellow-men, and hated to think that anybody would deceive him. That is, Pete used to think that way—but, after he had been bumped around the big circuit several seasons, I am inclined to believe that some of his ideas must have changed. Those were days of sinfulness and deceit; days when they'd do anything short of murder if the one umpire was looking the other way, and it must have been hard for any one as innocent and trustful as Pete Hotaling to get by.

"If I live a century, I'll never forget the richest example Hotaling ever gave of his confiding disposition. Playing against us one afternoon, Pete slammed a snorting single, and broke for second a moment later. Mike Kelly, who could throw them high and far when he did happen to toss one astray, shot way over my head, and the ball went out in center field. Here, it got past George Gore, and rolled towards the end of the park, with Gore in desperate pursuit. Hotaling, who had slid headfirst to second, never saw the ball go by, and I made a despairing effort to keep him on second by slamming my empty hand on his back as he reposed across the bag.

"That's right, Fred!" chirped Ed

Williamson. 'Keep that ball, and tag Pete if he edges off that base!'

"'Leave it to me,' I answered. 'Nice slide, Pete, but that's as far as you'll get today!'

"Gore was still chasing the ball, and every member of Hotaling's crowd was screeching for him to get up and come home. Pete rose, keeping one foot carefully on the base, and shook his head in answer to the wild demands that he score. At last the ball came back, and I saw a look of absolute bewilderment and sorrow on Hotaling's face as Clarkson regained the leather. The next man popped out, Hotaling walked off the base to resume his field position, and at least seven of his crowd surrounded him to ask him why in blazes he hadn't scored.

"'I thought the ball was on second,'" he moaned in misery. 'Anyway, Pfeffer and Williamson told me it was, and I didn't think they'd lie to a fellow!'

TWO NOBLE SLEEPERS

BALL CLUBS," says good old Frank Bancroft, "have been very fortunate in escaping railroad accidents. Only a few instances are recalled where serious injury has been inflicted on any number of ballplayers while traveling, and when you consider the number of the boys who are making the circuits from April to October their good luck seems almost to justify the belief that they have charmed lives. Charlie Bennett, of course, lost his legs in a railroad wreck, and Jimmy Ryan was so badly battered, on one occasion, that he was out of the game most of the season. Taken on the whole, however, the boys have been the luckiest of all the people who make numerous journeys on the rails.

"I was in one smashup, 25 years ago, that was a corker, and yet had its funny side. The Reds—with Comiskey in com-

mand and old Pete Browning as the star slugger—were coming across from St. Louis, and, in the middle of the night, a freight crashed into us. A scene of horror and confusion followed, doubly augmented when the two sleepers stood on end and then pitched down a deep incline.

"Somehow, some way, we scrambled out, in pajamas or without them, and took a census of our numbers. Bid McPhee had a smashed nose, Frank Dwyer had a skinned elbow, and there were a few minor injuries, but nobody was killed or even crippled. And then, to our utter horror, we found that Charles Comiskey and Pete Browning were missing!

"We remembered that they were in the forward end of the second sleeper, which was now on fire. If they had not been killed by the fall, they would soon be burned, and there was no time to lose. With the train crew, we grabbed axes and handspikes. We toiled madly, and in a jiffy we had cut a road into the side of that blazing car.

"We struggled along the aisle of the car, almost tilted on end, and consequently a tough place to travel. The green curtains had fallen out, bedding and splinters were heaped in the aisle, and the flames were gaining ground. Onward we struggled, and at last we pulled aside the last obstructions, dreading what might be revealed.

"It was some reveal, too, for there lay Charles Comiskey and Pete Browning, standing on their heads in the berths, with their feet pointing heavenward in the upturned car, and both of them snoring like slumbering bulls! The crash, the shock, the tilting of the car, had never even roused them from their happy sleep, and they were mad as hornets when we woke them up. Sleepers? There never were their equals since the world began!"

THREE HUMAN TARGETS

THERE have been three men in the history of the big leagues," says good old Bid McPhee, the famous second baseman, "who stood out pre-eminent above all others when it came to being hit by pitched balls. Those three men were Curtis Welch, Hughey Jennings and Frank Chance. They have never had any rivals, and I don't suppose any play-

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ers are really anxious to equal the records that they made.

"The strangest thing of all, so far as two of these men were concerned, was the fact that they didn't mean it. They were game, all right, but not game enough to voluntarily run the risks they seemed to take, and the countless bruises they received were not endured to help their teams, but because they couldn't dodge.

It's a fact—Hugh Jennings could not dodge a ball, and Frank Chance couldn't duck one either. As for Curtis Welch, he



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was a different proposition. He got hit intentionally time after time.

“The box scores of the old Baltimore games seldom went into print without the words, ‘Hit by pitched ball, Jennings.’ Time after time Hughey was cannonaded, and, as a rule, was bumped hard. His nerve and gameness were widely praised, while some of the critics said he was simply foolhardy. The latter opinion was almost universal when, after Baltimore had safely won the flag, Hughey continued to get thumped, and to get hit in games where the Orioles were miles ahead.

“Not until late in his career was it discovered that Jennings never meant to get soaked at all. All these years, he had been unable to dodge. He seemed unable to convey the sense of danger from his brain to his limbs quick enough to spring aside.

“Frank Chance was hit in the head no less than 38 times, and stunned on twenty occasions, while he received innumerable smashes on shoulders, ribs or legs. Chance wanted to get out of the way, but couldn’t. He stood flat-footed, resting heavily on his pins when batting, almost imbedding them in the ground, and he couldn’t sidestep or make his feet move in time to save him. I doubt if he could even dodge a slow ball, his feet moved so rebelliously.

“Curtis Welch stood lightly set upon his feet, and could spring away from the fastest pitching, if he desired. But he didn’t desire, and so agile, so snake-like was he, that he could seem to be grazed by purest accident every time. He even developed a way of glancing the ball off his forearm, apparently dodging, yet leaving the arm exposed and letting the ball tick against it. Finally, the National League introduced a rule by which a batter got no base if hit on arm or hand, and this rule, created especially to check Curtis Welch, was rescinded when that great and tricky player died.”