

# A Glance Backward

*Baseball Thrillers of Former Days from the Reminiscences  
of an Old Time Fan*

By E. K. GOLDSBOROUGH

A GOOD many things can happen in a quarter of a century, and our national pastime is no exception to this rule. The present generation of fans may not be aware that the game a couple of decades back, was a long drawnout affair, in comparison to the swiftly played contests of today. This was primarily due to the lack of a foul strike rule, and the fact that the catcher did not stand directly behind the plate, unless a pitcher had two strikes or two balls on the batter. Batting, however, was far more in evidence, and argue as one may, the average fan likes to see the horsehide slugged. Averages soared, owing to the fact that a base on balls was scored a hit, and bunting was practiced with a far greater degree of success, as with the catcher playing in the rear, a ball dumped in front of the plate almost invariably meant a single.

The game of today may on the whole, be more scientific and the teams better balanced; but the individual stars of yesterday were every whit as good as they are now. Compare the Boston club of 1897 with its galaxy of stars, including Nichols, Bergen, Tucker, Lowe, Long, Collins, Duffy, Hamilton, Stivetts and one or two others, to the American League world beaters of 1916, and our modern aggregation pales a bit in comparison. But let us stop a brief moment to weigh the merits of this splendid old club of twenty-one years ago. By many impartial critics, Collins and Long were pronounced the greatest third baseman and shortstop that the national pastime has ever produced. Bobby Lowe at second was a superb player, as was Tom Tucker at the initial bag. Hamilton in the outfield was, perhaps, the most scientific base stealer it has ever been my good fortune to behold; and Duffy set a record with the stick that has yet to be touched, viz, .432. Nichols, their star boxman, compares with the greatest boxman in the history of the game, possessing speed, cunning, control; in short, everything that goes to make greatness. Incidentally, the Kid, as he was dubbed, was the most graceful moundsman I've ever seen toe the rubber. Stivetts, was another star, and besides being a prize pitcher could slug like a Delehanty. And who can ever forget Bergen? If any better backstops have ever been born I've yet to see them. As surprising as it may appear, this powerful

aggregation in the opinion of many unbiased critics were a shade outclassed by the n'er to be forgotten Baltimore Orioles who after copping a pennant in three consecutive years, lost the fourth to Boston by one game before the greatest throng that ever packed the Monumental City park. If you should ever happen to meet an old Baltimore fan, ask him gently if, in his opinion, there has ever been a team that could possibly compare with the Orioles of that period. Doubtless he will smile superciliously, as if it were a foregone conclusion that this club was universally conceded to be the greatest of all time. But being desirous of exposing your ignorance

upon this particular subject, he will proceed to back up his assertions with certain stubborn facts, merely, that Brouthers, Reitz, Brodie, Robinson, Doyle, Hoffer and Corbett had never been excelled; while Keeler, Jenning, McGraw and Kelly (the big four) will forever stand out as the greatest stars in baseball's broad constellation. You will, moreover, be informed that this aggregation played the best "inside" baseball ever known, which they probably did, and with "Sadie" McMahon doing mound duty, they were once and for all invincible. Keeler was an outfield gem, "of purest ray serene." The little fellow was pretty nearly in a class all by



Convalescent Canadian Soldiers on John Jacob Astor's estate in England. It would seem as though the batter might experience some difficulty in beating out a bunt while the catcher is obviously handicapped in pegging to second base. But the game is the main thing and where all participants are crippled chances are equally fair

himself. Once in a game against the Washington "Senators" when the Capital crowd were crowding the "Orioles" the midget raced after a long fly that was falling in the bleachers. It seemed a physical impossibility to make the catch, as at that time several strands of barbed wire had been placed on the bleacher fence, with the idea of keeping the crowd from surging to the field. Like a diminutive express train, Keeler raced over to the enclosure, and as the ball was falling beyond reach, he jammed his arm through the wire; cutting himself badly, but making the most spectacular catch perhaps ever witnessed. Blood was trickling down his arm, but Willy didn't care, as the batter was out. If in the archives of our beloved pastime there have ever been nerver plays than this I'd like to be told about them. On the day in question Keeler received the greatest ovation ever accorded a player. This act of super-gameness will give one a pretty fair idea of the calibre of this wonderful club.

Another stellar club of that time was Patsy Tebeau's Cleveland Spiders. Although never winning a pennant they were right on the heels of the pennant winning Baltimoreans, and in the famous "Temple Cup Series" gave the "Orioles" the worst thrashing they had ever received, largely due to the amazing prowess of those pitching demons, "Cy" Young and "Nig" Cuppy. The brightest stars of this club were chubby "Cupid" Childs, Ed. McGarr, and McAleer. Bobby Wallace pitched for Tebeau, but barely lacked major league caliber and later found his niche at shortfield where he made a name for himself that is not apt to be forgotten in a hurry.

On one occasion when the "Spiders" were crowding the "Orioles" for the lead, they struck an unexpected snag when they hooked up with the lowly "Senators" and incidentally had their pennant aspirations jolted. After winning the series in Baltimore they reached the Capitol City, aflush with victory, confidentially expecting to make an easy clean up. The dope was upset in the opening contest when 'Smiling' Al. Maul, who possessed more "personality" perhaps than any other pitcher, teased and tormented the vicious Spiders with his devious tricks and dilatory tactics, that made him so famous, thereby gaining

a decisive victory over Cuppy, much to the chagrin of Patsy Tebeau, and his cohorts. The next afternoon, Tebeau played his trump card when he ordered Cy Young to the mound. In a forlorn, desperate hope, Win Mercer assumed the grim burden for Washington. Young, straight and strong, with the whip of a gatling gun, bowled the Senators over like so many tenpins for eight innings, and although Mercer performed nobly the score stood two to nothing in favor of the visitors when the ninth inning commenced. The home crowd had conceded the game to the Spiders, and the fans were already moving towards the gates. On the Senators' payroll at that time there was a player who, although never starring as a fielder or baserunner, did not know the meaning of the word 'Quit' and in a pinch his bat spelled terror to the best boxmen. His name was 'Scrappy' Bill Joyce; any old fan will recall him. In the ninth, Washington managed to get two men on the bases. Two were out when Joyce took his place at the plate, but his eyes saw red. 'Zip' Cy Young shot a cannon ball across the pan. 'Bing!' Bill Joyce bounced a vicious two bagger against the right field bleachers, tying the score. The next batter went out; but the damage had been done; poor Patsy Tebeau almost had a fit. The game went into extra innings, and when darkness prevented further play, the score was still a tie, 3-3. It is needless to say that the Spiders returned to their hotel a disgruntled lot.

A generation later I had the honor of witnessing the same redoubtable Young win his five hundredth big league game; the Washington Americans being his victims. He was the same grand boxman, except that his waist line had felt the pressure of advancing years, and the blinding speed of former times, was not so much in evidence. This, too, was an extra inning game, and when in the eleventh the Cleveland club put the game on ice with several runs; Washington going out in one, two, three order in the final half, a smile of solid satisfaction crept over the rugged countenance of baseball's grandest pitcher, as the realization dawned that he had accomplished his purpose. Five hundred games had gone on the winning side of his record; a record which will stand for other pitchers to shoot at and miss unless

another miracle happens. Cy Young's comrades crowded around him, patting the old Roman on the back, and although I am a staunch Washington fan I was, for the first and last time, glad that my home club lost.

Other stars of that period, whose lights have long since descended, are Rusie, the Walter Johnson of the nineties; Jouett Meekin, a pitching gem of the purest water, Breitenstein, a southpaw wizard; Esper, Ehret, Killen, Cunningham, Hawley, Weyhing, Dwyer, Griffith, all splendid boxmen; outfielders Sam Thompson, Delehanty, Tiernan, Van Haltren, Bill Lange, the Ty Cobb, of olden time; a galaxy of infield stars including De Montreville, Crooks, Quinn, Pfeffer, Ely, Lave and Monte Cross, Tenney, Corcoran, Davis; catchers, Farrell, McGuire, Clarke, Sugden, Ewing, Ganzel, and a host of other notables, too numerous to mention. Across the horizons of baseball's yesterdays flashes the finest star of the vast firmament, the "Noblest Roman of them all"—old Pop Anson.

An interesting incident of the nineties was Silver King's comeback. King was Von der Ahe's pitching pet when the old St. Louis Browns were setting the sport world afire. He was conceded to be one of the greatest slabmen that ever toed the rubber. After a well earned retirement King settled down with the apparent intention of resting on his laurels. Like many others he had seen his day, and his star had apparently set. But the germ was still alive in his red blood. Some six years later Silver King announced that he was due for a come back, and the ball world looked on aghast. Washington needed pitchers, the old warrior was given a trial and in his initial contest he electrified the crowd by holding the Pittsburgh Pirates to six scattered hits, winning the game with amazing ease. King more than held his own for the balance of the season, and pitched some splendid games. When about a year later Father time again called a halt, this game boxman accepted the inevitable and made his final bow to the public, after having conclusively demonstrated that age had not affected his cunning, or his former ability to worry the wielders of the willow.

They were great old days all right, those days when baseball was young

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## A WORD TO OUR READERS

*The war has hit the publishing business hard. Operating expenses are continually mounting. But while all the items of manufacturing costs, such as paper, engraving, printing, and labor increase almost over night; while other magazines are raising their prices both for single copy and yearly subscriptions, the BASEBALL MAGAZINE is still doing business at the same old stand at the same old price. We are trying to give you, Mr. Reader, a square deal. And we are quite sure you appreciate getting at least one necessity that doesn't cost more than it used to. How about it?*

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