

"Hey, mister! Want ah play?" he inquired, raising his hand in an upward wave to supplement the direction of his query.

Although my knowledge of the game was very rudimentary, the spirit of sport had been running riot in my veins from the moment I had seen the boys at play—I longed to rear and tear around as I saw them doing—so I nodded an assent.

The nod of Jove never created greater consternation. "Aw, git out—you're a man." "What d'yu take us fer—he's got whiskeys!" and like protests were hurled at me and the reckless one who had taken the initiative.

How my "whiskers"—in the shape of a moustache only, by the way, gave any indication as to my ability baseballically, was beyond my comprehension. However, "Sorrel-top" and "Tow-head" had been the first chosen, so I sagely held silence. Hair probably had more to do with the matter than a layman might suspect. Billy, however, rose easily to the occasion—he would drop me as soon as some "other kid" came. This compromise being acceptable to the other side, friendly relations were again established.

The next preliminary was the tossing of a coin for position.

A careful inventory failing to locate the requisite coin among my seventeen fellow-players, Billy graciously condescended to use the quarter which I proffered. This event we won, and immediately chose "outs."

In the elation of this victory, Billy absent-mindedly confiscated my quarter; but, as the tenure of my position was very doubtful, and its continuance rested entirely with him, I discreetly overlooked the little incident.

In the placing of his men I, being an unknown quantity, was naturally a source of great perplexity to my captain; but a hasty consultation with a couple of self-constituted aides soon decided my position as second base, the information being volunteered that I was put there on account of my superior height, this minimising the possibility of the catcher's "gitting 'em over" the second baseman's head in "throwin' 'em down." As Billy designated my position

by a wave of the hand, I was, fortunately, not forced to inquire as to its location, a procedure that would, I am certain, in the light of subsequently-acquired knowledge, have meant my instant release from service. I took my place where I had seen the boys stand while I was watching the former play, and the game started.

For five minutes everything ran smoothly, and I was enjoying to the fullest extent the exhilaration of my first game of baseball. With two out and a man only on first base, there was no question as to the advantage of our position, if the opinion of our leader, who was playing "first," could be relied upon.

"There's nothin' tu it!" he assured loudly.

"Git 'em down to second now. Yu can't git 'em too high!" he admonished

and coached the catcher, and then winked knowingly at me—an act which I, not comprehending its full import, returned in kind. The next instant I was in a whirlwind of excitement.

As the ball shot from pitcher to catcher, there was a loud cry of, "Watch 'im there, mister!" from Billy, and then a confused mass of arms and legs flashed by me on the way to second base. The catcher, with arm drawn back, ball clutched tightly for a throw, stood nonplussed. For a moment there was a painful silence—the calm that precedes a storm—then mutterings of disapproval came from every quarter. Not loud, but ominous.

"What's the matter—yu nailed there?" inquired my superior, in disgust.

I stammered pitifully, and tried to excuse my misplay, or rather non-play,

by explaining that I had forgotten there was a "man" on first base, but the attempt, under the gaze of those scowling eyes, was a poor one; and I saw clearly that I had sowed the first seed of distrust in the heart of my doughty captain.

A "foul out" relieved the situation somewhat, my mistake being partly condoned by the fact that the runner had not been able to score.

It was now our "ins," and what we were going to do was "a plenty," as Billy succinctly put it.

In the interim, while our catcher and pitcher batted, Billy patronisingly vouchsafed to me, for my future welfare, information as to the wonderful "in" and "out" curves of the terrible "Twister," as well as of the "up shoots" and "down drops" that he "worked" now and then for variety. All of which was evidently intended to allay any misgivings I might have entertained as to facing the terrible Tommy. But so fraught with fearful eyes and awful nods was the description, that it had quite the opposite effect; and by the time it came my turn to bat, the former frowsy-headed little lad had assumed proportions monstrous.

Fearfully I advanced to the plate as the cry of, "It's the man's bat," smote upon my ears. Our catcher and shortstop had made outs—the pitcher and Billy were on base, the former on third, and the latter on first.

"Line 'er out, old man!" was Billy's enthusiastic injunction; but his ardour quickly cooled as I struck wildly at the first two balls pitched.

"Git a board!" he now advised sarcastically, while the man on third suggested a "shovel" as probably more effective; but the advice came too late, as I had already used the bat in a futile attempt to hit the third pitch.

The jeers this unfortunate event elicited from my companions discouraged me so visibly that even the unresponsive heart of my captain was touched by pity, for he tried hard to smile—the attempt could scarcely have been considered a success—as we took our positions, and offered as consolation a cheery—"That's all right, old man—yu ain't got yer eye yit."

The next few innings, however, left



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