

BASE-BALL—FOR THE SPECTATOR.



THE next generation of Americans will be as thoroughly educated in the technicalities of base-ball as our English cousins are in the intricacies of cricket. Many a man to-day has felt a little defrauded by the increasing space his morning paper gives to the game, and has been inclined to look with disapproval upon the devotion of his boy at school to something apart from his studies. As the present generation of boys become men, however, there will be a softer spot in their hearts for a pastime whose ways they know and whose fascinations they remember. Putting aside for a moment its professional questions, base-ball is for every boy a good, wholesome sport. It brings him out of the close confinement of the school-room. It takes the stoop from his shoulders and puts hard, honest muscle all over his frame. It rests his eyes, strengthens his lungs, and teaches him self-reliance and courage. Every mother ought to rejoice when her boy says he is on his school or college nine. And she would if she knew what he means when he says he is "in training." It means that he is following, with the closest observation, the laws of health. He is free from the taint of dissipation, and is making of himself a clean, strong young man. This training has been made a study, and the results have been handed down through college and school, until every boy now enjoys the advantages. The enforcement, too, of these laws of training is more strict than that of any rules of teacher or faculty, for, instead of surveillance, the boy is bound by his honor to his captain and his fellows.

The history of the game is an interesting record of progress and development. Away back in the fifties we find it assuming its first stage as a well-defined sport. Previous to that time there were certain games played with bat and ball, but there were not enough points of

similarity to warrant one in attempting to prove or disprove conclusively where the game of base-ball originated. In this early stage the game was chiefly confined to local nines, with here and there a sporadic outbreak of it at the colleges. There were occasional attempts at organization; but while these had existed here and there, an association or league of men making base-ball a profession was unthought of. Men who played ball for a financial consideration had other means of livelihood, and there were no players whose efforts could accumulate a fund sufficient to last through the winter. As the game grew in popular favor it became possible for men to turn it into a money-making venture, and this they did not hesitate to do. The sport had not at that time acquired sufficient strength to withstand the evils dragged into it by those whose sympathies were only with the gambling and pool-selling classes, so that in the sixties the evil of betting had crept into the sport so much as seriously to compromise its prospects and give it a bad odor among respectable communities. Sold games were a common thing, and many of the journals of that day predicted its speedy downfall. As a notable effort to reinstate the game in popular favor and scotch the betting and selling evil, stands out most prominently the convention held in Philadelphia in December, 1867. An idea of the thoroughness of the effort can be gained from the fact that five hundred clubs were represented.

The leading ball clubs during the next year or two were, in the East, the Atlantics of Brooklyn, Athletics of Philadelphia, Unions of Morrisania, and the Mutuels, while the Red Stockings of Cincinnati bore the palm in the West. This latter club made a most successful trip east in 1869, winning all of the twenty-one games played. Such was the enthusiasm produced by these victories that on the return of the

club it was met with a perfect ovation, tendered a banquet, and presented with a champion bat. This rather remarkable testimonial was twenty-seven feet long and nine inches in diameter. The same nine made another Eastern trip the following season, and met with almost equal success, suffering but one defeat, and that by the Atlantics on the Capitoline grounds. A crowd of ten thousand people assembled to witness this match, and so lost their heads in the excitement as to give the Western men a very unfair reception. The game was not decided at the end of the ninth inning, each club having five runs. The tenth inning was played in a pause of breathless excitement, neither club scoring; but in the eleventh inning, in a perfect bedlam of noise, the Atlantics succeeded in making three runs, while the Red Stockings scored but two.

In 1874 American base-ball men made their first foreign trip. The ex-champion Athletics and the champion Bostons crossed the water and played several exhibition games. Their first game was played at Lord's, on Bank Holiday, August 3.

This was fifteen years ago, and this year two nines of representative American ball players, after carrying the sport through almost every civilized quarter of the globe, completed their tour by a game at Lord's.

The comments of the English papers upon the sport at that time are very amusing. Speaking of the practice before the game, they say: "The larking indulged in by the Americans for ten minutes before the match shows great precision, but after the game commenced returns were not so accurate." Comparing the game with cricket, they admit that the fielding is far better, but ascribe it to the difference in the ball used. By this time the American game had also made a fair stand in Canada, the Maple Leaf Club of Guelph, Ontario, being the most prominent in that region.

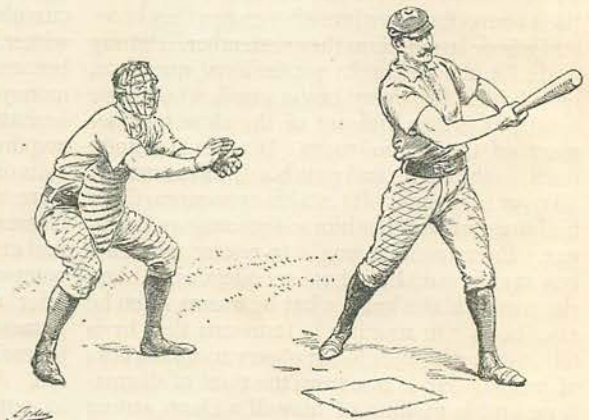
In 1876 the National League was formed of eight clubs, containing the very pick and flower of the ball-playing fraternity. This selection was so small when compared with the large number of people anxious to be spectators of ball games that in 1881 the American Association was organized. Until time had demonstrated that there was plenty of room for both, there was bitter rivalry between the two. This was not long lived, and what is known as the National Agreement now unites the two in respectful and harmonious tolerance. Their united power is quite sufficient to govern, with their blacklists, reservations, and contracts, the entire professional ball-playing community. Their rule is tyrannical and pro-

vokes much hard feeling and occasionally open rebellion, but not as yet a sufficient revolt to overthrow their authority.

During the last twenty years the Boston Ball Club has won more than a third of the annual championships, bearing off the honors in seven years. The Chicago Club stands next, with five championships to their credit. The only other club to win more than once has been the Providence nine, which has been successful twice. A study of the records of the League and the Association shows that the contest is closer in the latter—that there is not so great a difference between the records of the first and last clubs.

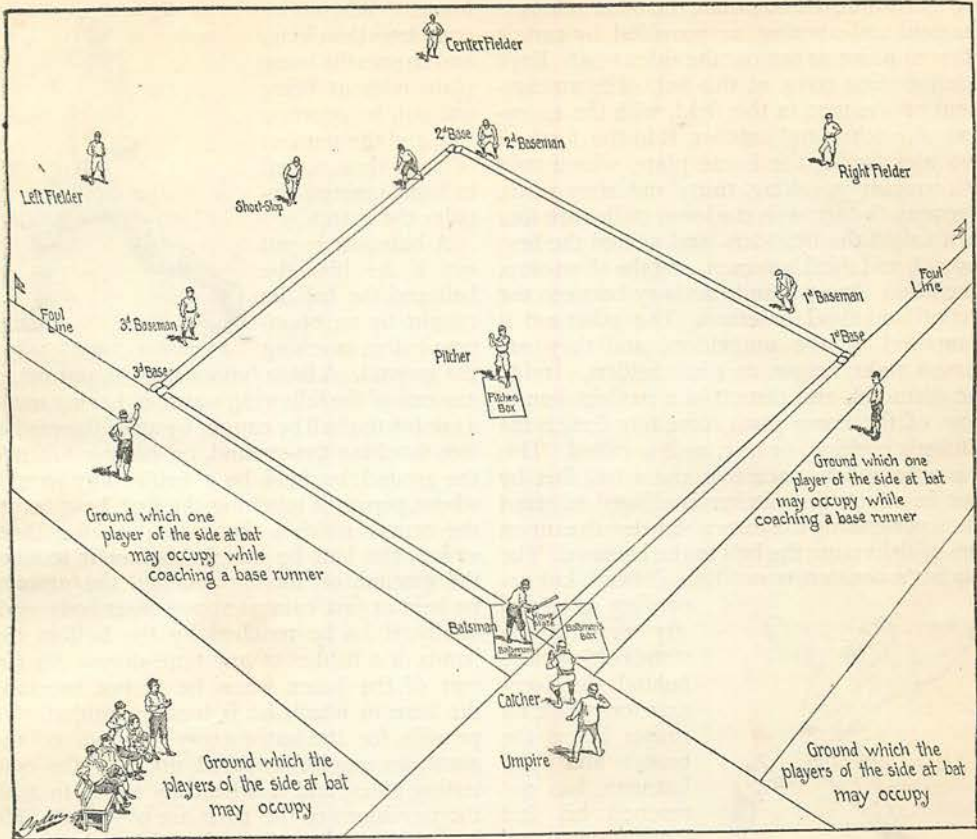
Another feature of the records is of interest as showing the tendency of men to drift in and out of this rather nomadic profession. There are but seven men in the books of 1888 who have played through the twelve years upon one or the other of the League nines. These seven men stand, however, with but one exception, high in the profession, and exhibit the same superiority that tenacity of purpose and experience produce in any calling.

The history of college base-ball follows the line of the professional game very closely. At times the college men have been rather more conservative, and have clung to certain rules for a season or two after their abandonment



THE CATCHER.

by the professionals. In the end, however, in nearly every instance, they have realized the advantage of the change, and followed the lead set them. In the early days of the sport the collegians coped successfully with the majority of the semi-professionals, but even then, when they were pitted against the strongest, the college nines met with defeat. The first game of note between a college nine and professionals was in the spring of 1868, between Yale and the Unions of Morrisania. The Unions were at that time the champions



THE FIELD.

of the country. The game was intensely exciting. At the end of the fifth inning Yale led, 8 to 4, but by the end of the ninth inning the Unions had tied the score and eventually won the game, 16 to 14. Frequently the score sheets of college nines show excellent fielding, but when these same men are brought to face the sharp, hard hitting of the professional batsmen their errors begin to multiply, and, in an inverse ratio, their hits diminish. The increase of errors is due to the difficulty they find in handling the fast drives of the trained batsmen, and also to the nervousness produced by the knowledge that they must play a quicker game. A professional gets away to first base far more rapidly than a college player, and the first sensation of a college infield on meeting a professional nine is one of hurry. A short-stop or third baseman finds that he has no time to "juggle" the ball and then throw the man out, as he often can do with college runners. The ordinary college pitcher is no match for League or Association batters, and they find an easy prey in him. On the other hand, the skill of the professional pitcher readily balks the attempts of the college batsmen to find the ball, and only the best men handle

the stick with any effect. The rest of the nine become nervous over their failure to judge the delivery, and before the end of the game apparently dread to come to the plate for their turn.

Perhaps the host of people who understand the game of base-ball thoroughly will forgive a few words of explanation for the sake of those who have never witnessed a match. It may not be uninteresting to try to realize how the game appears for the first time to an outsider. Any comparatively level piece of ground over a hundred yards square will serve for a base-ball field. Upon this field is laid out a diamond whose sides measure thirty yards, and whose nearest corner is distant about ninety feet from one end of the field. This corner is marked by a white marble plate a foot square, sunk level with the ground, and called the home base. At the other three corners are canvas bags fifteen inches square, and called, beginning at the right as one looks into the field from the home plate, the first, second, and third bases respectively. The lines from home to first and home to third, indefinitely prolonged, are called the foul lines. The game is played by two sides of nine men each, one of these sides tak-

ing its turn at the bat while the other side is in the field endeavoring, as provided by certain rules, to retire or put out the side at bat. Each side has nine turns at the bat. The arrangement of the men in the field, with the exception of pitcher and catcher, is in the form of two arcs facing the home plate, whose radii are, roughly speaking, thirty and sixty yards. Forming the arc with the lesser radius are four men called the infielders, and named the first, second, and third basemen, and the short-stop. The latter player stands midway between the second and third basemen. The other arc is composed of the outfielders, and they are named right, center, and left fielders. Inside the diamond, and distant in a straight line in front of the home plate some fifty feet, is the pitcher's position, or box, as it is called. This is a rectangular space five and a half feet by four in which the pitcher is obliged to stand when performing the duty which devolves upon him of delivering the ball to the batsman. The catcher's position is not thus defined, but according as necessity requires he stands either close behind the batsman or, when no runner is on the bases and the batsman has not reached his last strike, some seventy feet back of the plate. When standing thus he simply performs the duty of returning



AN "OUT CURVE"—THE BEGINNING.

the ball to the pitcher, as it is unnecessary for him to catch it under these circumstances. The players of the side at the bat take their turn in regular rotation and continue until three of them have been put out by the opponents. This retires the side to the field, and the others come in to the bat. The batsman has a box similar to the pitcher's, in which he must stand when striking at the ball. The batsman becomes a base runner immediately when he has made a "fair hit" (that is, knocked the ball so that it will fall in front of the foul lines); or when he has had "three strikes" (that is, three fair opportunities of hitting the ball); or, finally, when the pitcher has delivered "four balls," none of which have been struck at by the batsman or have passed over the plate at the proper height. In this latter case he is entitled to occupy first base without being put out; in the other cases he is the legitimate prey of the opponents, and his only havens of refuge are the bases, which he must take in regular order, first, second, third, and

home. When he completes this circuit and crosses the home plate without being put out, he scores a run, and the number of runs thus scored in nine innings decides the match.

A batsman is put out if he hits the ball and the ball be caught by an opponent before touching the ground. A base runner may be put out in any one of the following ways: if, having made a fair hit, the ball be caught by an opponent before touching the ground, or, having touched the ground, be held by a fielder any part of whose person is touching the first base before the runner reaches that base; if, after three strikes, the ball be caught before it touches the ground, or, having touched the ground, be held at first base as above described; and, finally, if he be touched by the ball in the hands of a fielder at any time during his circuit of the bases when he is not touching the base to which he is legally entitled. To provide for the satisfactory conduct of the game, an umpire is agreed upon by the contesting nines, and it is his duty to see that all the provisions of the rules are observed. He is also the judge of good and bad balls, put outs, and runs. Any other question liable to become a point of dispute comes under his jurisdiction.

Such are, in general, the laws by which the modern game of base-ball is governed. These laws or rules are the growth of many years, and it is to them and to their annual revision and improvement that the game owes in a large measure its success. There are many technical terms, and a knowledge of these is necessary to a perfect understanding of the game. Every ball that the pitcher delivers to the batsman, and which he does not hit with his bat, is called by the umpire either "a strike" or "a ball." If the batsman attempts to hit it and misses it, it is a strike, whether it passed over the plate at the proper height or not. If the batsman makes no attempt to hit it and it passes over the plate at a height



PITCHING A "DROP" BALL.



AN "OUT CURVE"—THE END.



RUNNING TO FIRST BASE.

not greater than his shoulder or below his knee, the umpire calls it a strike. If it fails to meet these requirements and the batsman makes no attempt to hit it, the umpire calls it a ball.

As above described,

four of these called balls make the batsman a base runner and entitle him to his base; and at the third strike, whether called or attempted, he becomes a base runner and must reach first or be put out. A base runner cannot run out of the direct line in order to avoid a player with the ball, nor can he interfere with any of his opponents legitimately attempting to handle the ball. It often happens in a game that a base runner is obliged to vacate his base by the occupancy of that base by a following runner. This is called being "forced," and when it happens that runner may be put out by being touched with the ball, or by its being held by a fielder on the base to which this succeeding runner forces him, before he can reach it. There is only one base which a runner may overrun without liability of being touched out, and that is first base. "A balk" is any motion made by the pitcher towards delivering the ball to the batsman without so delivering it, and every base runner is entitled to the next base on such offense. Within the province of the umpire comes the duty of deciding regarding the weather and darkness. In the case of the former the rule is laid down for him that the rain is sufficiently severe to stop the game when the spectators seek shelter. If the rain then continues for a half-hour he "calls" the game, and if five complete innings or over have been played it stands as a game, otherwise not. The same result holds in the case of darkness.

In the scoring of the game there are also technical terms, and a slight knowledge of these enables one to glean from the tabulated forms in the newspapers a fairly good idea of what each man has accomplished. The columns are headed by the initials of these technical terms. The first column shows the number of times the man has been "at the bat," and is usually headed A. B. The next is headed R., and indicates the number of runs he has made. The column headed B. H. indicates the character of his batting, and the letters

stand for the term "base hits." A batsman makes a base hit when he strikes a fair ball in such a direction that it is impossible for his opponents either to catch it on the fly or to field it to first base before he crosses that base. Following this column is one headed S. B., which means "stolen bases." These are bases gained by good running or by strategy, without the assistance of a hit. In addition to these columns, which indicate what each man of the side has accomplished while at the bat, are three columns devoted to the record of the fielding. These are headed P. O., A., and E. The first stands for "put outs," and indicates how many of the opponents he has individually retired. It will be noticed that the first baseman and the catcher usually succeed in taking the lion's share of this column. The next letter stands for "assists," and any player who handles a ball during a play which might or does eventually result in the putting out of an opponent receives for every such assistance a credit of one in this column. The last column indicates the number of missed opportunities or "errors." A player is accredited with an error for every chance he has failed to accept in a manner to result directly or indirectly in the putting out of an opponent. It will be seen, then, that the sum of these three columns shows just how many opportunities each fielder has had, and the relative ratio of the sum of the put outs and assists to the errors indicates his fielding record.

Other special phrases and terms are almost self-explanatory. An "earned run" is one that is made without the assistance of fielding errors; that is, in spite of the most perfect playing of the opponents. From the nature of things, a ball so knocked that it cannot be caught or fielded to the plate before the man can make the entire circuit of the bases yields an earned, or, as



FIRST BASEMAN CATCHING A HIGH BALL.

more generally called, a "home run." A "passed ball" is a pitched ball which by an error of the catcher is allowed to go behind him so that a runner is advanced a base. A "wild pitch" is a ball delivered by the pitcher so wide of the mark that the catcher cannot recover it before the runner has advanced a base. A "sacrifice hit" is a

ball so batted as to advance a base runner while it gives an opportunity of putting out the man batting it.

There are certain strategic plays which go to make up the finer points of the game. One of the most common of these is missing a catch in order to put out more than one man. For instance, when there is a runner on first base and a fly is batted near second. If the second baseman caught the fly he would put out the man who hit it, but the man on first would simply hold his base. Whereas if the second baseman misses the catch, the man on first is thereby forced to run to second, and by quick work the second baseman can, after dropping the ball, pick it up, touch second, and throw the ball to first before the runner who struck the ball can reach that point. In this way he makes what is called a double play, putting out both men. Triple plays are also possible, although seldom made. Another point which shows the brains of the game is in attempting to put out the man who is nearest home in his circuit of the bases. Thus, whenever there is an opportunity of putting out a runner who is coming from third and one who is

going to first, the preference is given to the former, unless the chances of putting him out are unusually slender. Still another fine point is the race of man against the ball, as shown in the case of a man on third base when a long fly is batted into the outfield. According to the rule, the runner must touch the base after the fly is caught before he can run, but the distance from the fielder making the catch to the home plate is so great that there is a very fair chance of his getting home before the ball. He therefore stands with his foot touching the bag and leaning forward for a start. Just as the ball settles into the fielder's hands, off he goes. The fielder, too, is prepared for this, and recovering himself almost instantly, he drives the ball in on its long journey towards the plate, often reaching it just as the runner crosses it, but too late for the catcher to touch him.

Of all the positions on the field, the two that command the most attention are those of pitcher and catcher, or battery, as they are called. Upon them are pinned the hopes of every other man. If the pitcher succeeds in deceiving the opposing batsmen and the catcher gives him good support, all will be well; but if the curves and strategies of the pitcher are readily solved, or if the catcher fails to hold him well, the field will have some sorry work to do before the nine innings are finished. Successful batteries are in great demand, and receive the highest salaries among

professional ball players. In valuing a battery the first points of consideration are their effectiveness and endurance, and then their ability to get on well with the rest of the nine.

A pitcher to-day is not a strong pitcher unless he has good command of the curves, a fair amount of speed, and ordinary accuracy. These are only the average recommendations. The crack men have these, combined with excellent judgment and unusual endurance. A pitcher who can pitch more than two games a week successfully through a season can boast of his record. Nor is a catcher much better off. His hands are liable to slight injuries which may keep him off a day or two, or, if he persists in playing, result so badly as to incapacitate him for weeks. The constant strain when under the



SLIDING TO BASE.

bat is too great for him to endure more than two or three games a week. The rest of the men can, if necessary, play their four or five games a week without serious inconvenience, but the battery requires constant care and frequent relief.

Probably no point in the game has been more developed in the last twenty years than the pitching. The old method was to deliver the ball by a perfectly straight swing, the arm passing close to the side of the body, and the ball being sent from a point below the pitcher's hip. This style of delivery would meet with such a reception from the trained batsmen of to-day that an inning would last longer than the ordinary game. The first step from this old-time true pitching was to the use of the wrist in the delivery, making what was known as an underhand throw. At just about the same time the discovery was made that a ball could be so pitched or thrown as to cause it to curve slightly from the straight line. Many were the skeptics regarding the possibility of such a thing. For a long time men versed in physical science and phenomena pooh-poohed at this, saying that it was impossible and that it was simply an optical illusion. But the ball did curve, and the first pitchers to acquire the art proved problems to the best of batsmen. The "out curve" was the one first discovered, as it is the easiest to effect. This is a delivery by a right-handed pitcher which causes the ball to curve away from a right-handed batsman. Slowly after this came the "in curve," or

verse of this. The "rise" and "drop," which had probably existed for some time previous, then took on definite names and became combined with the other curves. The most logical explanation of the curvature of a ball depends upon the supposition of the compression of the air just in front of the ball and a corresponding rarefaction immediately behind it, so that the ball by its friction is deflected from its true course. When the curves were mastered, the tendency of the pitchers was to bring the hand up above the hip in order to get more of a twist to the ball and thereby assist the curve. The difficulty experienced by umpires in controlling this tendency led to the adoption of a rule allowing the pitcher to deliver the ball from any point below the shoulder. This rule prevailed for a time, but no sooner were the pitchers allowed this leeway than they began to make the umpire's task equally difficult again by getting their delivery just a trifle higher than the law allowed. In order to put an end to the eternal field discussions upon this point a rule was passed permitting the pitcher to throw the ball in any way he saw fit, and this rule has met with comparatively good success. The pitcher, who had formerly been placed forty-five feet from the batsman, was relegated to a fifty-foot distance. Even then, by taking advantage of a step or two behind his line, he acquired so much speed that it became necessary to fix his position more definitely, and to-day he is even bound to the extent of the exact position of his feet when delivering the ball. In spite of all these restrictions, such is the growing skill of pitchers that the problem is constantly under discussion how to legislate in favor of the batsman.

The rest of the fielding has kept some measure of progress with the pitching, the catcher's position exhibiting the highest development. This development is fortunately accompanied by numerous safeguards against the shocks of the increased speed of the ball. The first catchers who came up under the bat were wont to wear a small piece of rubber in the mouth as a protection to the teeth from foul tips. It was not long before an inventive genius designed a wire mask which buckled about the head, and, while allowing perfect freedom and sight, rendered the catcher safe from any chance ball

striking his face. The next step was the use of a large breastplate extending quite to the legs. This is made of rubber, and inflated so as to make a yielding cushion. The gloves which the catchers have worn ever since the days of the rubber mouth-piece have also undergone radical changes, and are to-day so heavily made as thoroughly to protect both hands, leaving free only the fingers of the right hand.

Outside the battery, in these days of almost perfect fielding, the strongest factor is team play. Plenty of men can be found who can perform the ordinary duties of basemen and fielders, but the problem is to secure men for these positions who are strong batsmen and who harmonize well with one another. The usual merits for the individual positions are: in a first baseman, ability to catch bad throwing; in a second baseman, an especial capacity for covering a large amount of ground; in a third baseman, rapidity in fielding ground balls over to first. A third baseman must recover himself quickly and have a strong throw. A short-stop should be an accurate thrower, and a man of brains sufficient to take advantage of opportunities for double plays and fielding out advanced runners. The outfielders must be fast, not only in covering ground, but also in returning balls to the diamond.

Base-ball is a game for the people. The materials are inexpensive, and all that is wanted is a field. If one may judge from what one sees by the way, it is more difficult to say what will not answer for a ball-field than what will; for in spite of carts, cabs, and police, no street is too small or too crowded for Young America to make a ball-field of it. With its eager young followers everywhere and with many men now growing into the prime of life who have enjoyed it most heartily in their younger days, it is safe to say that as a sport, and as, par excellence, the American sport, it is sure of a long life.



FIELDER CATCHING A FLY.



STOPPING A GROUNDER.

Walter Camp.