BASEBALL JOE IN THE WORLD SERIES

LESTER CHADWICK

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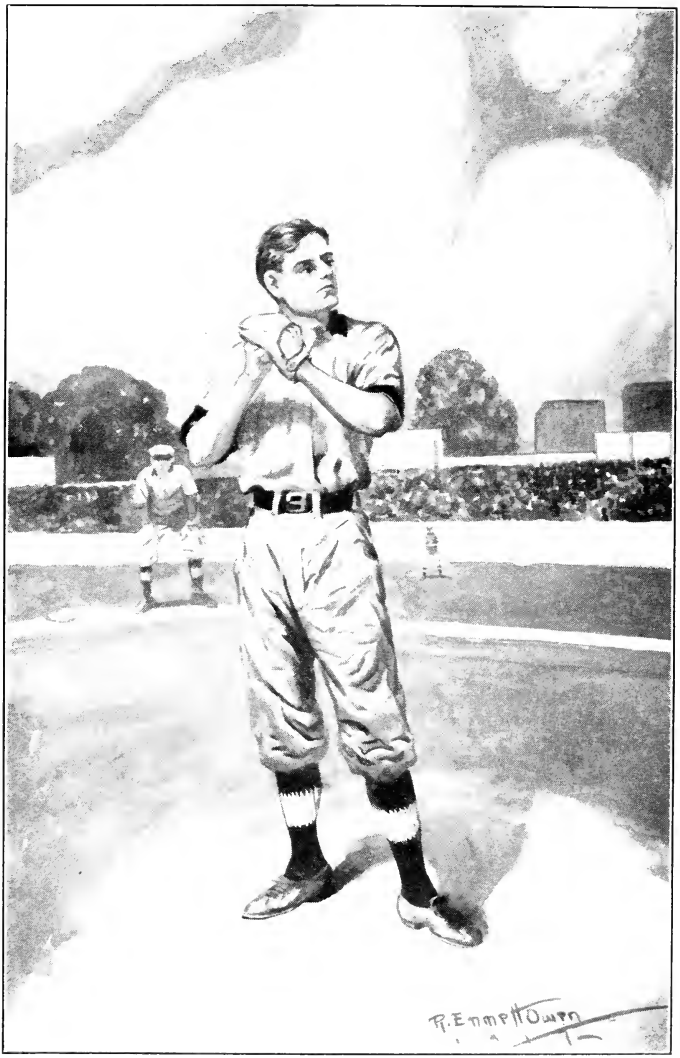

HE WAS A GLORIOUS FIGURE OF YOUNG MANHOOD.

Baseball Joe in the World Series.

Baseball Joe in the World Series

OR

Pitching for the Championship

By LESTER CHADWICK

AUTHOR OF

"BASEBALL JOE OF THE SILVER STARS," "BASEBALL JOE IN THE BIG LEAGUE," "THE RIVAL PITCHERS," "THE EIGHT-OARED VICTORS," ETC.

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NEW YORK
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Baseball Joe in the World Series

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BASEBALL JOE IN THE WORLD SERIES

CHAPTER I

AN INSOLENT INTRUDER

"HERE he comes!"

"Hurrah for Matson!"

"Great game, old man."

"You stood the Chicagos on their heads that time, Joe."

"That home run of yours was a dandy."

"What's the matter with Matson?"

"He's all right!"

A wild uproar greeted the appearance of Joe Matson, the famous pitcher of the New York Giants, as he emerged from the clubhouse at the Polo Grounds after the great game in which he had pitched the Giants to the head of the National League and put them in line for the World Series with the champions of the American League.

It was no wonder that the crowd had gone crazy with excitement. All New York shared the

same madness. The race for the pennant had been one of the closest ever known. In the last few weeks it had narrowed down to a fight between the Giants and the Chicagos, and the two teams had come down the stretch, nose to nose, fighting for every inch, each straining every nerve to win. It had been a slap-dash, ding-dong finish, and the Giants had won "by a hair."

Joe Matson—affectionately known as "Baseball Joe"—had pitched the deciding game, and to him above all others had gone the honors of the victory. Not only had he twirled a superb game, but it had been his home run in the ninth inning after two men were out that had brought the pennant to New York.

And just at this moment his name was on more tongues than that of any other man in the United States. Telegraph wires had flashed the news of his triumph to every city and village in the country, and the cables and wireless had borne it to every American colony in the world.

Joe's hand had been shaken and his back pounded by exulting enthusiasts until he was lame and sore all over. It was with a feeling of relief that he had gained the shelter of the clubhouse with its refreshing shower and rubdown. Even here his mates had pawed and mauled him in their delight at the glorious victory, until he had laughingly threatened to thrash a few of them. And

now, as, after getting into his street clothes, he came out into the side street and viewed the crowd that waited for him, he saw that he was in for a new ordeal.

"Gee whiz!" he exclaimed to his friend and fellow player, Jim Barclay, who accompanied him. "Will they never let up on me?"

"It's one of the penalties of fame, old man," laughed Jim. "Don't make out that you don't like it, you old hypocrite."

"Of course I like it," admitted Joe with a grin. "All the same I don't want to have this old wing of mine torn from its socket. I need it in my business."

"You bet you do," agreed Jim. "It's going to come in mighty handy for the World Series. But we'll be out of this in a minute."

He held up his hand to signal a passing taxicab, and the cab edged its way to the curb.

The crowd swept in upon the players and they had all they could do to elbow their way through. They succeeded finally and slammed the door shut, while the chauffeur threw in the clutch and the taxicab darted off, pursued by the shouts and plaudits of the crowd.

Joe sank back on the cushions with a sigh of relief.

"The first free breath I've drawn since the game ended," he remarked.

"It's been a wonderful day for you, Joe," said Jim, looking at his chum with ungrudging admiration. "That game will stand out in baseball history for years to come."

"I'm mighty glad I won for my own sake," answered Joe; "but I'm gladder still on account of the team. The boys backed me up in great shape —except in that fifth inning—and I'd have felt fearfully sore if I hadn't been able to deliver the goods. But those Chicagos certainly made us fight to win."

"They're a great team," admitted Jim; "and they put up a corking good game. But it was our day to win.

"Did you see McRae and Robson after the game?" he went on, referring to the manager and the coach of the Giant team. "Whatever dignity they had, they lost it then. They fairly hugged each other and did the tango in front of the clubhouse."

Joe grinned as the burly figures came before his mental vision.

"They've been under a fearful strain for the last few weeks," he commented; "and I guess they had to let themselves go in some fashion or they'd have burst."

"Do you realize what that home run of yours meant in money, to say nothing of the glory?" jubilated Jim.

"I haven't had time to do much figuring yet," smiled Joe.

"It meant at least fifty thousand dollars for the team," pursued Jim. "We'll get that much even if we lose the World Series, and a good deal more if we win. And if the Series goes to six or seven games the management will scoop in a big pot of money, too—anywhere from fifty to a hundred thousand dollars."

"That's good," replied Joe, a little absent-mindedly.

"Good?" echoed Jim, sharply. "It's more than good—it's great, it's glorious! Wake up, man, and stop your dreaming."

Joe came to himself with a little start.

"You're—you're right, Jim," he stammered somewhat confusedly. "To tell the truth, I wasn't thinking just then of money."

Jim gave him a quick glance, and a sudden look of amused comprehension came into his eyes. Joe caught his glance and flushed.

"What are you blushing about?" demanded Jim with a grin.

"I wasn't blushing," defended Joe, stoutly. "It's mighty warm in this cab."

Jim laughed outright.

"Tell that to the King of Denmark," he chuckled. "I'm on, old man. You told me in the clubhouse that you were going to the Marlborough

Hotel, and I know just who it is that's stopping there."

"My friend, Reggie Varley, is putting up there," countered Joe, feebly.

"My friend Reggie Varley," mimicked Jim, "to say nothing of his charming sister. Oh, I'm not blind, old fellow. I've seen for a long time how the wind was blowing. Well," he continued, dropping his light tone for a more earnest one, "go in and win, Joe. I hope you have all the luck in the world."

He reached over and slapped his friend cordially on the shoulder. Then he signaled for the chauffeur to stop.

"What are you getting out here for?" asked Joe. "We haven't got to your street yet."

"I know it," answered Jim, preparing to jump out. "I want to give you a chance to think up what you're going to say to the lady fair," he added, mischievously.

He ducked the friendly thrust that Joe made toward him and went away laughing, while the cab started on.

Joe knew perfectly well what he intended to say when he should meet Mabel Varley. He had wanted to say it for a long time, and had determined that if his team won the pennant he would wait no longer.

He had met her for the first time two years be-

fore under unusual circumstances. At that time he was playing in the Central League, and his team was training at Montville, North Carolina. He had saved Mabel from being carried over a cliff by a runaway horse, and the acquaintance thus formed had soon deepened into friendship. With Joe it had now become a much stronger feeling, and he had dared to hope that this was shared by Mabel.

Reggie Varley, Mabel's brother, was a rather affected young man, who ran chiefly to clothes and automobiles and had an accent that he fondly supposed was English. Joe had met him at an earlier date than that at which he had formed Mabel's acquaintance and under unpleasant conditions. Reggie had lost sight of his valise in a railway station, and had rashly accused Joe of taking it. He apologized later, however, and the young men had become the best of friends, for Reggie, despite some foolish little affectations, was at heart a thoroughly good fellow.

The brother and sister had come to New York to see the deciding games and were quartered at the Marlborough Hotel. Mabel had waved to Joe from a box at the Polo Grounds that afternoon, and her presence had nerved him to almost superhuman exertions. And he had won and won gloriously.

Would his good luck continue? He was asking

himself this question when the taxicab drew up at the curb, and he saw that he was at the door of the Marlborough.

He jumped out and thrust his hand in his pocket to get the money for his fare, but the chauffeur waved him back with a grin.

"Nuthin' doin'," he said. "This ride is on me."

"What do you mean?" inquired Joe in surprise.

"Jest what I said," returned the chauffeur. "The fellow that won the championship for the New Yorks can't pay me any money. It's enough for me to have Baseball Joe ride in my cab. I can crow over the other fellows that wasn't so lucky."

"Nonsense," laughed Joe, as he took out a bankbill and tried to thrust it on him.

"No use, boss," the man persisted. "Your money's counterfeit with me."

He started his car with a rush and a backward wave of his hand, and Joe, warned by a cheer or two that came from people near by who had recognized him, was forced to retreat into the hotel.

He did not send up a card, as he was a frequent caller and felt sure of his welcome. Besides, he was too impatient for any formalities. He wanted to be in the presence of Mabel, and even the elevator seemed slow, though it shot him with amazing speed to the fifth floor on which the Varley suite was located.

His heart was beating fast as he knocked at the parlor door, and it beat still faster when a familiar voice bade him enter.

He burst in with a rush that suddenly stopped short when he saw that he was not the only visitor. A young man had stepped back quickly from Mabel's side and it was evident that he had just withdrawn his hand from hers.

For a moment Joe's blood drummed in his ears and the demon of jealousy took possession of him. He glared at the visitor, who stared back at him with an air of insolence that to Joe at that moment was maddening.

The stranger was dressed in a degree of fashion that bordered on foppishness. He wore more jewelry than was dictated by good taste, even going so far as to carry a tiny wrist watch. His eyes were pale, his chin slightly retreating, and his face showed unmistakable marks of dissipation. His air was arrogant and supercilious as he took Joe slowly in from head to foot.

Mabel rushed forward eagerly as Joe entered.

"Oh, Joe!" she cried, "I'm so glad you've come! I never was so glad in all my life."

Before the joyous warmth of that greeting, Joe's jealousy receded. He could not question her sincerity. All her soul was in her eyes.

He took her hand tenderly in his and felt that it was trembling. Had she been frightened? He

turned her about so that he stood between her and the visitor.

"Tell me," he commanded in a low voice. "Has this man offended you?"

"Yes, no, yes!" she whispered. "Oh, Joe, please don't say anything now! Please, for my sake, Joe! It's all right now. I'll tell you about it afterward. He's Reggie's friend. Don't make a scene, please, Joe!"

Joe's muscles stiffened, and had it not been for Mabel's earnest pleading, he would have thrown the other fellow out of the room. But Mabel's name must not be mixed up in any brawl, and by a mighty effort he restrained himself.

The visitor during this brief colloquy had been moving about uneasily. He evidently wished himself anywhere else than where he was. Then, as the two turned toward him, he put on a mask of carelessness and drawled lazily:

"Won't you introduce me to—ah—your friend, Miss Varley?"

Mabel, recalled to her duty as hostess, had no option but to comply.

"This is Mr. Beckworth Fleming, Joe," she said. "Mr. Fleming, this is Mr. Matson."

The two men bowed coldly but neither extended a hand.

"Mr. Fleming is a friend of Reggie's," Mabel explained to Joe.

"And of yours also, I hope, Miss Varley," said Fleming with an ingratiating smile.

"I said a friend of Reggie's," returned Mabel, coldly.

It was a direct cut, and Fleming felt it as he would have felt the lash of a whip. He turned a dull red and was about to reply, when he caught the menacing look in Joe's eyes and stopped. He muttered something about a pressing engagement, took up his hat and cane, and with a pretence of haughtiness that failed dismally of its effect, swaggered from the room.

CHAPTER II

GLOWING HOPES

"AND now!" exclaimed Joe, as soon as the door had closed on the unwelcome visitor, "tell me, Mabel, what that fellow said or did, and I'll hunt him up and thrash him within an inch of his life. I'll make him wish he'd never been born."

"Don't do anything like that, Joe," urged the girl. "He's probably had his lesson, and it isn't likely I'll ever be troubled by him again. He's just an acquaintance that Reggie picked up somewhere, and I've only seen him once before to-day. He called at the hotel to see Reggie, and when he found he wasn't in, he stayed to talk with me. He started in by paying me a lot of compliments and then became familiar and impudent. He seized my hand, and when I sought to pull it away from him he wouldn't let me. I was getting thoroughly frightened and was going to call out when your knock came at the door. Oh, Joe, I was so glad when I saw who it was!"

She was perilously near to tears, and her beautiful eyes were dewy as they looked into his. Joe's

heart beat madly. The words he had been longing to say leaped to his lips, but he choked them back. He did not want to catch her off her guard, to take advantage of her emotions and of her shaken condition. Her acceptance of him at that moment might be due in part to gratitude and relief. He wanted more than that—the unconditional, unreserved surrender of her heart and life into his keeping, based only on affection.

So he held himself under control and recompensed himself for his selfdenial by an inward promise to make things interesting for Mr. Beckworth Fleming, if ever that cad's path and his should cross.

"But come," said Mabel more brightly, as she sank into a chair and motioned Joe to another, "let's talk about something pleasant."

"About you then," smiled Joe, his eyes dwelling on her eloquently.

"Not poor little me," she pouted in mock humility. "Who am I compared with the great Joseph Matson about whom all the world is talking—the man who won the championship for the Giants, the hero whose picture to-morrow will hold the place of honor in every newspaper in the country?"

"You're chaffing me now," laughed Joe.

"Not a bit," she said demurely, her dimples coming and going in a way that drove him nearly

distracted. "I really feel as though I ought to salaam or kow-tow or whatever it is the Orientals do when they come before the Emperor. But, oh, Joe," and here she dropped her bantering manner and leaned forward earnestly, "you were simply magnificent this afternoon. The way you kept your nerve and won that game was just wonderful. I was so excited at times that I thought my heart would leap out of my body. I was proud, oh, so proud that you were a friend of mine!"

Joe had heard many words of praise that day but none half so sweet as these.

"Will you let me tell you a secret?" he exclaimed, half rising from his chair. "Do you want to know who really won that game?"

"Why, you did," she returned in some surprise. "Of course the rest of the team did, too, but if it hadn't been for your pitching and batting——"

"No," he interrupted, "it was *you* who won the game."

He had risen now and had come swiftly to her side.

"Listen, Mabel," he said, and before the note in his voice she felt her pulses leap. "You were in my mind from the start to the finish of that game. I looked up at you every time I went into the box. This little glove of yours"—he took it from his pocket with a hand that trembled—"lay close to my heart all through the game. Mabel——"

"Why, hello, Joe, old top!" came a voice from the door that had opened without their hearing it. "What good wind blew you here? I'm no end glad to see you, don't you know. Congratulations, old man, on winning that game. You were simply rippin', don't you know."

And Reggie Varley ambled in and shook Joe's hand warmly, blandly unconscious of the lack of welcome from the two inmates of the room.

"How are you, Reggie?" Joe managed to blurt out, wishing viciously that at that moment his friend were at the very farthest corner of the world.

It is possible that Mabel's feelings were most unsisterly, but she concealed them and rallied more readily than Joe from the shock caused by her brother's inopportune coming.

"I was just telling Joe how proud we were of him," she smiled. "But he's so modest that he refuses to take any credit for what he has done. Insists that somebody else won the game."

"Of course that's all bally nonsense, don't you know," declared Reggie, looking puzzled. "The other fellows helped, of course, but Joe was the king pin. Those Chicagos were out for blood and Joe was the only one who could tame them."

Joe listened moodily, and while he is recovering his composure it may be well, for the sake of those who have not followed the career of the fam-

ous young pitcher, to mention the previous books of this series in which his exploits are recorded.

His diamond history opened in the first volume of the series, entitled: "Baseball Joe of the Silver Stars; Or, The Rivals of Riverside." Here he had his first experience in pitching. In that restricted circle he soon became widely known as one of the best of the amateur boxmen, but he had to earn that position by overcoming many difficulties.

In "Baseball Joe on the School Nine," we find the same qualities of grit and determination shown in a different field. The situation here was complicated by the efforts of the bully of the school, who did everything in his power to frustrate Joe and bring him to disaster.

A little later on, Joe went to Yale, and his triumphs in the great university are told in the third volume of the series, entitled: "Baseball Joe at Yale; Or, Pitching for the College Championship."

As may be imagined, with such redoubtable rivals as Harvard and Princeton, a very different class of baseball is required from that which will "get by" in academies and preparatory schools.

Joe got his chance to pitch against Princeton in an exciting game where the Yale "Bulldog" "put one over" on the Princeton "Tiger."

But in spite of his athletic prowess and general popularity, Joe was not entirely happy at Yale.

His mother had set her heart on Joe's studying for the ministry. But Joe himself did not feel any special call in that direction. While always a faithful student he was not a natural scholar, and outdoor life had a strong appeal for him. His success in athletics confirmed this natural bent, until at last he came to the conclusion that he ought to adopt professional baseball as his vocation.

His mother was, naturally, much disappointed, as she had had great hopes of seeing her only son in the pulpit. Moreover, she had the vague feeling that there was something almost disreputable in making baseball a profession. But Joe at last convinced her that whatever might have been true in the early days of the game did not apply now, when so many high-class men were turning toward it, and she yielded, though reluctantly.

Joe's chance to break into the professional ranks was not long in coming. That last great game with Princeton had been noted by Jimmie Mack, manager of the Pittston team in the Central League. He made Joe an offer which the latter accepted, and the story of his first experience on the professional diamond is told in the fourth volume of the series entitled: "Baseball Joe in the Central League; Or, Making Good as a Professional Pitcher."

But this was only the first step in his career. He

was too ambitious to be content with the Central League except as a stepping stone to something higher. His delight can be imagined, therefore, when he learned that he had been drafted into the St. Louis Club of the National League. He was no longer a "busher" but the "real thing." He had to work hard and had many stirring adventures. How he succeeded in helping his team into the first division is told in the fifth volume of the series, entitled: "Baseball Joe in the Big League; Or, A Young Pitcher's Hardest Struggles."

But these hard struggles were at the same time victorious ones and attracted the attention of the baseball public, who are always on the lookout for a new star. Among others, McRae, the famous manager of the New York Giants, thought he saw in Joe a great chance to bolster up his pitching staff. Joe could hardly believe his eyes when he learned that he had been bought by New York. It brought a bigger reputation, a larger salary and a capital chance to get into the World Series. He worked like a Trojan all through the season, and, as we have already seen, came through with flying colors, winning from the Chicagos the final game that made the Giants the champions of the National League and put them in line for the championship of the world. The details of the stirring fight are told in the sixth volume of the

series, entitled: "Baseball Joe on the Giants; Or, Making Good as a Ball Twirler in the Metropolis."

"I say, old top," remarked Reggie, breaking in on Joe's rather resentful musings, "you're going to stay and have dinner with us to-night, you know."

Joe looked at Mabel for confirmation.

"You certainly must, Joe," she said enthusiastically. "We won't take no for an answer."

As there was nothing else on earth that Joe wanted so much as to be with Mabel, he did not require much urging.

"And I'll tell you what we'll do," suggested Mabel. "In fact, it's the only thing we can do. We'll have the dinner served right in here for the three of us. If you should go down in the public dining-room of the hotel to-night, Joe, you'd have a crowd around the table ten lines deep."

"By Jove, you're right," chimed in Reggie. "They'd have to send out a call for reserves. I'll go down and have a little talk with the head waiter, and I'll have him send up a dinner fit for a king."

"Fit for a queen," corrected Joe, as he glanced at Mabel.

CHAPTER III

A POPULAR HERO

REGGIE hurried away to order the meal that was to put the chef on his mettle, leaving Mabel and Joe once more in possession of the room.

Good-natured, blundering Reggie! Why had he not waited five minutes longer before breaking in on that momentous conversation?

To be sure they could have resumed it now, but Joe felt instinctively that it was not the time. Cupid is sensitive as to time and place, and the little blind god is only at his best when assured of leisure and privacy. His motto is that "two is company" while three or more are undeniably "a crowd."

Reggie might be back at any moment, and then, too, the waiters would be coming in to spread the table. So Joe, though sorely against his will, was forced to wait till fate should be more kind.

But he was in the presence of his divinity anyway and could feast his eyes upon her as she chatted gaily, her color heightened by the scene through which they had just passed.

And Mabel was a very delightful object for the eyes to rest upon. Joe himself, of course, was not a competent witness. If any one had asked him to describe her, he would have answered that she was a combination of Cleopatra and Madame Recamier and all the other famous beauties of history. What the unbiased observer would have seen was a very charming girl, sweet and womanly, with lustrous brown eyes, wavy hair whose tendrils persisted in playing hide and seek about her ears, dimples that came and went in a maddening fashion and a flower-like mouth, revealing two rows of pearly teeth when she smiled, which was often.

Even Reggie was moved to compliment her when he came in again after his interview with the head waiter.

"My word, Sis, but you're blooming to-night, don't you know," he remarked, as he went across the room and put his hand caressingly on her shoulder. "This little trip must be doing you good. You've got such a splendid color, don't you know."

"Just think of it! A compliment from a brother! Wonder of wonders!" she laughed merrily.

Perhaps if she had cared to, she might have enlightened the obtuse Reggie as to the cause of the heightened color that enhanced her loveliness. Joe, too, could have made a shrewd guess at it.

But now the waiters came bustling in and they talked of indifferent things until the table was spread. A sumptuous meal was brought in, and the three sat down to as merry a little dinner party as there was that night in the city of New York.

"How honored we are, Reggie," exclaimed Mabel, "to have the great Mr. Matson as our guest! There are hundreds of people who would give their eyes for such a chance."

She flashed a mocking glance at Joe who grew red, as she knew he would. The little witch delighted in making him blush. It made his bronzed face still more handsome, she thought.

"You'd better make the most of it," Joe grinned in reply. "I may fall down in the World Series and be batted out of the box. Then you'll be pretending that you don't know me."

"I'm not afraid of that," returned Mabel. "After the way you pitched this afternoon, I'm sure there's nothing in the American League you need to be afraid of."

"That's loyal, anyway," laughed Joe. "Still you never can tell. It's happened to me before and it may happen again. Then, too, you must remember that it's a different proposition I'll be up against.

"Take, for instance, the Chicagos to-day. I've pitched against them before and I knew their weak points. I knew the fellows who can't hit a high

ball but are death on the low ones. I knew the ones who would try to wait me out and those who would lash out at any ball that came within reach. I knew the ones who would crowd the plate and those who would inch in to meet the ball. The whole problem was to feed them what they didn't want.

"But it will be different when I come up against the American Leaguers. It will be some time before I catch on to their weak points. And while I'm learning, one of them may line out a three bagger or a home run that will win the game."

"You speak of their weak points as though they all had them," put in Reggie.

"They do," replied Joe, promptly. "All of them have some weakness, and sooner or later you find it out. If there's any exception to that rule at all, it's Ty Cobb of Detroit. If he has any weakness, no one knows what it is. For the last seven years he's led the American League in batting, base stealing and everything else worth while. All pitchers look alike to him. He's a perfect terror to the twirlers."

"Well, you won't have to worry about him, anyway," smiled Mabel. "It's lucky that he's on the Detroits instead of the Bostons. For I suppose it's the Bostons you'll have to face in the World Series."

"I guess it will be," answered Joe. "Their sea-

son doesn't end until Friday. They've had almost as tight a race in their league as we've had in ours, for the Athletics have been close on their heels. But the Bostons have to take only one game to clinch the flag while the Athletics will have to win every game. So it's pretty nearly a sure thing for the Red Sox."

"Which team would you rather have to fight against?" asked Reggie.

"Well, it's pretty near a toss-up," answered Joe, thoughtfully. "Either one will be a hard nut to crack. That one hundred thousand dollar infield of the Athletics is a stone wall, but I think the Boston outfield is stronger. That manager of the Athletics is in a class by himself, and what he doesn't know about the game isn't worth knowing. He's liable to spring something on you at any time. Still the Boston manager is mighty foxy, too, and you have to keep your eyes open to circumvent him. Take it all in all, I'd just about as lief face one team as the other."

"It will be a little shorter trip for you between the two cities, if you happen to have the Athletics for your opponents," suggested Mabel.

"Yes," assented Joe. "In that case we'd have a good long sleep in regular beds every night, while on the Boston trip we'd have to put up with sleeping cars. Still the jumps wouldn't be big in either case, and it's a mighty sight better than if

we had to go out West for the Chicagos or Detroits.

"From a money point of view the boys are rooting for Boston to win," he went on.

"Why, what difference would that make?" asked Mabel in surprise.

"Because the Boston grounds hold more people than the Athletics' park," was the answer.

"That's something new to me," put in Reggie. "I've attended games at both grounds, and it didn't seem to me there was much difference between them."

"The answer is," replied Joe, "that we're not going to play at Fenway Park, the regular American League grounds in Boston, in case Boston is our opponent."

"How is that?"

"Because Braves Field, the National League grounds there, will hold over forty-three thousand people, and the owners have put it at the disposal of the American League Club," Joe answered.

"That's a sportsmanlike thing to do," commented Mabel, warmly.

"It certainly is," echoed her brother.

"Oh, the days of the old cutthroat policy have gone by," said Joe. "The National and American Leagues used to fight each other like a pair of Kilkenny cats, but they've found that there is

nothing in such a game. This act of the Boston people shows the new spirit. We saw it, too, when the grandstand was burned at the Polo Grounds. The ruins hadn't got through smoking before the Yankee management offered the use of its grounds to McRae as long as he needed them. And then a little later when the Yankees lost their grounds because streets were going to be cut through them, McRae returned the favor by giving them the use of the Polo Grounds. It's the right spirit. Fight like tigers to win games, but outside of that, let live and wish the other luck."

"Tell me honestly, Joe, what you think the New York's chances are, in case they have to stack up against Boston," said Reggie.

"Well," answered Joe, thoughtfully, toying with his spoon, "if you'd asked me that question a week ago, I'd have said that New York would win in a walk. But just now I wouldn't be anywhere near so sure of that."

"You mean the accident to Hughson?" put in Mabel.

"Exactly that. He was going like a house afire just before that. You saw what he did to Chicago in the first game. He had those fellows eating out of his hand. He was simply unhittable. That fadeaway of his was zipping along six inches under their bats. They didn't have a Chinaman's chance.

"Then, too, in addition to that splendid pitching his reputation helps a lot. The minute it is announced that Hughson is going to pitch, the other fellows begin to curl up. They're half whipped before they start, because they feel that he has the Indian sign on them, and it's of no use to try."

"That's so," assented Reggie. "Besides, when he's in the box his own team feel they're in for a victory and they play like demons behind him."

"It's going to take away a lot of confidence from our boys," said Joe, "and in a critical series like that, confidence is half the battle. We could have lost two or three other men and yet have a better chance than we will have with Hughson out of the game."

"Isn't there any chance of his recovering in time to take part in some of the games?" asked Mabel.

"A bare chance only," Joe replied. "I saw the old boy yesterday, and he's getting along surprisingly fast. You see, he always keeps himself in such splendid physical condition that he recovers more quickly than an ordinary man would. We've got over a week yet before the Series starts, and he may possibly be able to go in before the games are over. If he does, that will be an immense help. But McRae had figured on having him

pitch the first game, so as to get the jump on the other fellows at the very start. Then he could have gone in at least twice more, perhaps three times, and it would have been all over but the shouting."

"It's lucky that McRae has you at hand to step into Hughson's shoes," declared Reggie.

"Step into them!" exclaimed Joe. "Yes, and rattle around in them. Nobody can fill them."

"I don't believe a word of it," cried Mabel warmly—so warmly in fact that her brother looked at her in some surprise.

"Yes," she repeated, holding her ground valiantly, "I mean just what I say. It's awfully generous of you, Joe, to praise Hughson to the skies, but there's no use in underrating yourself. I don't thing Hughson can pitch one bit better than you can. Look at that game this afternoon. I heard lots of people around me say that they never saw such pitching in all their lives. And what you did to-day you can do again. So there!"—she caught herself up, smiling a little confusedly, as though she had betrayed herself, but finished defiantly—"if that be treason, make the most of it."

Joe's heart gave a great leap, not only at the tribute but at the tone and look that had gone with it. So this was what Mabel thought of him! This was how she believed in him!

His head was whirling, but in his happy con-

fusion one thought kept pounding away at his consciousness, a thought that never left him through all the tremendous test that lay before him:

"I've *got* to make good! I've *got* to make good!"

CHAPTER IV

THE SPOILS OF WAR

THE rest of the evening flew by as though on wings, and Joe was startled when he looked at his watch and found that it was nearly eleven o'clock.

"I'll have to go," he said reluctantly. "I had no idea it was so late."

"Why should you hurry?" asked Reggie. "The season's over now in the National League, and the World Series won't begin for a week or more. I should think you might have a little leeway in the matter of sitting up late."

"I'll have plenty of leeway before long," laughed Joe. "But just now I want to keep in the very pink of condition. I'll need every ounce of strength and vitality I've got before I get through the Series."

He would have dearly loved a chance for a few words with Mabel in private before he went away, but Reggie failed to appreciate that fact, and he accompanied the pair even when they went out to the elevator. But Joe avenged himself by holding Mabel's hand much longer and more

closely than he had ever dared do before, and the girl did not dream of calling for help.

But although Joe had been balked in saying what he had wanted to that night, he felt much surer of Mabel's feelings toward him, and his heart was a tumult of joyous emotions as he made his way home to the rooms he shared with Jim.

He found Barclay sound asleep, at which he rejoiced. He was in no mood for chaff and banter. He wanted to go over in his mind every incident of that memorable evening—to recall the tones of Mabel's voice, the look in Mabel's eyes. It was a delightful occupation and took a good while, so that it was late when he dropped off to sleep.

He was awakened at a much later hour than usual the next morning by a vigorous tugging at the shoulder of his pajamas; and, opening one sleepy eye, saw Jim fully dressed standing at the side of his bed.

"Go away and let me sleep," grumbled Joe, turning over on his pillow for another forty winks.

"For the love of Pete, man! how much sleep do you want?" snorted Jim. "What are you trying to do, forget your sorrows? Here it is after nine o'clock, and I've already had my breakfast and a shave. Get a wiggle on and see what it is to be a popular hero."

"Stop your joshing," muttered Joe, sleepily.

"Josh nothing," Jim came back at him. "If

you'll just open those liquid orbs of yours and give this room the once over, you'll see whether I'm joshing or not."

This stirred Joe's curiosity and he sat up in bed with a jerk.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed, as he saw the room littered with a mass of boxes and packages that covered every available spot on chairs and tables and overflowed to the floor. "Where did you get all this junk? Going to open a department store?"

"I guess you'll be able to if they keep on coming," returned Jim. "I've been signing receipts for express packages until I've got the writer's cramp. And there's a pile of letters and telegrams, and there's a bunch of reporters down in the lobby waiting for an interview with your Royal Highness, and—but what's the use? Get up, you lazy hulk, and get busy."

"It surely looks as though it were going to be my busy day," grinned Joe, as he jumped out of bed and rushed to the shower.

He shaved and dressed in a hurry and then ate a hasty breakfast, after which he saw the reporters.

Those clever and wideawake young men greeted him with enthusiasm and overwhelmed him with questions that ranged from the date of his birth to his opinion on the outcome of the World Series.

They knew that their papers would give them a free hand in the matter of space, and they were in search not of paragraphs but of columns from the idol of the hour.

"You look limp and wilted, Joe," laughed Jim, as they went back to their rooms.

"It's no wonder," growled Joe. "Those fellows got the whole sad story of my life. They hunted out every fact and shook it as a terrier shakes a rat. They turned me inside out. The only thing they forgot to ask was when I got my first tooth and whether I'd ever had the measles. And, oh, yes, they didn't find out what was my favorite breakfast food. But now let's get busy on these parcels and see what's in them."

"What's in them is plenty," prophesied Jim, "and these are only the few drops before the shower."

It was a varied collection of objects that they took from the packages. There were boxes of cigars galore, enough to keep the chums in "smokes" for a year to come. There were canes and silk shirts and neckties accompanied by requests from dealers to be permitted to call their product the "Matson." There were bottles of wine and whiskey, which met with short welcome from these clean young athletes, who took them over to the bathroom, cracked their necks and poured the contents down the drain of the wash-

basin, until, as Jim declared, the place smelled for all the world like a "booze parlor."

"No merry mucilage for ours," declared Joe, grimly. "We've seen what it did for Hartley, as clever a pitcher as ever twirled a ball."

"Right you are," affirmed Jim. "There's none of us strong enough to down old John Barleycorn, and the only way to be safe is never to touch it."

After they had gone through the lot and rung for a porter to carry away the litter of paper and boxes, they attacked the formidable pile of letters and telegrams.

Among the former were two offers from vaudeville managers, urging Joe to go on the stage the coming winter. They offered him a guarantee of five hundred dollars a week. They would prepare a monologue for him, or, if he preferred to pair up with a partner, they would have a sketch arranged for him.

"That sounds awfully tempting, Joe," said Jim, as they looked up from the letters they had been reading together.

"It's a heap of money," agreed Joe, "and I do hate to pass it up. But I won't accept. I'm not an actor and I know it and they know it. I'd simply be capitalizing my popularity. I'd feel like a freak in a dime museum."

"How do you know you're not an actor?" asked

Jim. "You might have it in you. You never know till you try."

But Joe shook his head.

"No," he said, "there's no use kidding myself. And even if I could make good, I wouldn't do it. You know what it did for Markwith the season after he made his record of nineteen straight. He never was the same pitcher after that. The late hours, the feverish atmosphere, the irregular life don't do a ball player any good. They take all the vim and sand out of him. No vaudeville for yours truly."

"Well," said Jim, "you're the doctor. And I guess you're right. But it certainly seems hard to let that good money get away when it's fairly begging you to take it."

The telegrams came from all over the country. A lot were from Joe's old team-mates on the St. Louis club, including Rad Chase and Campbell. Others were from newspaper publishers offering fancy prices if Joe would write some articles for them, describing the games in the forthcoming World Series. Joe knew perfectly well that this would entail no time or labor on his part. Some bright reporter would actually write the articles, and all Joe needed to do was to let his name be signed to them as the author. But the practice was beginning to be frowned upon by the base-ball magnates, and it was in a certain sense a fraud

upon the public, so that Joe mentally decided in the negative.

One telegram was far more precious to Joe than all the others put together. It came from Clara, his only sister, to whom he was devotedly attached, and was sent in the name of all the little family at Riverside. Joe's eyes were a little moist as he read:

"Dearest love from all of us, Joe. We are proud of you."

For a long time Joe sat staring at the telegram, while Jim considerately buried himself in the newspaper descriptions of yesterday's great game.

How dear the home folks were! How their hearts were wrapped up in him and his success! What a splendid, wholesome influence that cozy little village home had been in his life. He thought of his patient, hard-working father, his loving mother, his winsome sister. He thought of their quiet, circumscribed life, shut out from the great currents of the world with which he had become so familiar.

They were proud of him! Yet all they could do was to read of his triumphs. They had never seen him pitch.

He took a sudden resolution.

The home folks were in for one great, big, glorious fling!

CHAPTER V

GETTING READY FOR THE FRAY

"COME along, Jim!" cried Joe, jumping to his feet. "Put down that old paper and let's go up to the Polo Grounds. You know we've got to meet McRae and the rest of the gang there at two o'clock, and it's almost one now. We'll just have time to get a bite of lunch before we go."

"I'm with you," responded Jim.

They hurried through their lunch and took the train at the nearest elevated station.

"Some difference to-day from the way we felt when we were going up yesterday, eh, Joe," grinned Jim, as he stretched out his legs luxuriously and settled back in his seat.

"About a million miles," assented Joe. "Then my heart was beating like a triphammer. Then the work was all to do. Now it's done."

"And well done, too, thanks to you," returned Jim. "Say, Joe, suppose for a minute—just *suppose* that the Chicagos had copped that game yesterday."

"Don't," protested Joe. "It gives me the cold shivers just to think of it."

When they entered the clubhouse, a roar of welcome greeted them from the members of the team who were already there. They crowded round Baseball Joe in jubilation, and the air was filled with a hubbub of exclamations.

"Here's the man to whom the team owes fifty thousand dollars!" shouted the irrepressible Larry Barrett, the second baseman, who had led the league that year in batting.

"All right," laughed Joe. "If you owe it to me, hand it over and I'll put it in the bank."

In the laugh that ensued, McRae and Robson, the inseparable manager and trainer of the Giants, came hurrying up to Joe. Their faces were beaming and they looked years younger, now that the tremendous strain of the last few weeks of the league race had been taken from their shoulders.

They shook hands warmly.

"You're the real thing, Joe," cried Robson.

"You won the flag for us," declared McRae. "That home run of yours was a life saver. It brought home the bacon."

Joe flushed with pleasure. Praise from these veterans meant something.

"It took the whole nine to win for us," he said modestly.

"Sure it did," agreed McRae. "The boys put

up a corking good game. But your pitching held Brennan's men down, and it was that scorching hit that put on the finishing touch."

"It was the trump that took the trick," supplemented Robson.

Denton, the third baseman and wag of the team, stepped up and gravely put his hands around Joe's head as though measuring it.

"Not swelled a bit, boys," he announced to his grinning mates. "He can wear the same size hat that he did yesterday."

They were all so full of hilarity that it was hard to get down to serious business, and McRae, who was as happy as a boy, made no attempt at his usual rigid discipline.

But when they had at last quieted down a little, he gathered them about him for a talk about the forthcoming World Series.

"You've done well, boys," he told them, "and I'm proud of you. You've played the game to the limit and made a splendid fight. I don't believe there's another team in the league that wouldn't have gone to pieces if the same thing had happened to their crack pitcher that happened to Hughson. It was a knockout blow, and I don't mind admitting to you now that for a time my own heart was in my boots. But you stood the gaff, and I want to thank you, both for the owners of the club and for myself."

There was a gratified murmur among the players, and then Larry shouted:

"Three cheers for McRae, the best manager in the league!"

The cheers were given with a will and the veteran's face grew red with pleasure.

"And three more for Robson, the king of trainers!" cried Jim.

They were given with equal heartiness, and Robson waved his hand to them with a grin.

"I'm glad we all feel that way," resumed McRae, when the tumult had subsided. "If at times I've been a bit hasty with you lads and given you the rough side of my tongue, it's been simply because I was wild with excitement and crazy to win. And now for the big fight that lies before us. It's a great thing to be champions of the National League. But it's a greater thing to be champions of the world."

A rousing shout rose from the eager group.

"Sure, we've got it copped already," cried Larry.

McRae smiled.

"That's the right spirit to tackle the job with," he replied, "but don't let the idea run away with you that it's going to be an easy thing to do. It isn't. Those American Leaguers are tough birds, and any one who beats them will know he's been in a fight.

"There used to be a time," he went on, "when the bulk of the talent was in the National League. But it isn't so any longer. They have just as good batting, just as good pitching and just as good fielding as we have.

"Of course, we don't know yet just which team we'll have to face, but we may know before night. If the Bostons win to-day that will settle it. Even if they lose, provided the Athletics lose, too, the Red Sox will be the champions. Of course, there's nothing sure in baseball, but all the chances are in favor of the Bostons.

"In any case, it will be an Eastern club, and that cuts out the matter of the long jumps. But whichever one it happens to be, it'll prove a hard nut to crack."

"Nut-crackers is our middle name," murmured Denton.

"You proved that yesterday," laughed McRae, "and you're going to have a good chance to prove it again.

"Just as soon as the American race is decided," he continued, "and it's known in what city we are to play, the National Commission will have a meeting to fix all the details of the World Series. If they follow precedent, as they probably will, the first game will be appointed for a week from this Friday. They'll toss a coin to see whether it shall be here or in the other city. I'm rooting for it to

be here. It'll give us a better chance to win the first game if we play it on the home grounds, and you know what it means to get the jump on the other fellows."

"You bet we do!" went up in a chorus.

"Just as soon as it is decided who our opponents are to be," the manager resumed, "I'm going to send some of you fellows out as scouts to see some of the practice games of the other fellows and get a line on their style of play. You can pick up a lot of useful information that way, and we've got so much at stake that we can't afford to overlook a single point of the game."

"How about our own practice?" asked Larry.

"I was coming to that," replied McRae. "I'm going to get together just as husky a bunch of sluggers and fielders as can be found in the National League."

He took a sheaf of telegrams from his pocket.

"I've got a lot of wires here from every club in the league, offering the services of any of their players I want," he said. "We've had our own fight, and now that it's over they're all eager to help the National League to down the American. It means a good deal to each of them to have us come out winner. Even Brennan has offered to let me have some of the Chicagos to practise against. I saw him at the hotel last night, and, although of course he was sore that he didn't win

yesterday, he told me I could call upon him for any men I wanted."

"He's a good sport," ejaculated Jim.

"Sure he is," confirmed McRae, heartily. "He's a hard fighter but he's as white as they make 'em."

He consulted a list on which he had jotted down a few names in pencil.

"How will this do for an All National team to practise against," he asked.

"Konetchky, First base.
Niehoff, Second base.
Wagner, Shortstop.
Zimmermann, Third base.
Wheat, Left field.
Carey, Center field.
Schulte, Right field.
Pfeffer, Alexander, Pitchers.
Archer, Gibson, Catchers."

A murmur went up from the players.

"Some sweet hitters!" exclaimed Markwith.

"A bunch of fence breakers," echoed Jim.

"They'll give you mighty good practice," grinned McRae. "If they can't straighten out the curves of you twirlers, nobody can. I'll have them all on here in a day or two, and then we'll start in training."

The conference lasted till late in the afternoon,

and just as it was breaking up, a telegraphic report was handed to McRae. He scanned it hastily.

"That settles it!" he exclaimed. "Boston won to-day, three to two. We're up against the Red Sox in the World Series!"

CHAPTER VI

JOE GIVES FAIR WARNING

ALTHOUGH the news only confirmed what had been all along expected, it was worth a great deal to the Giants to know certainly just whom they would have to fight. Their enemy now was detached from the crowd and out in the open. They could study him carefully and arrange a clear plan of campaign.

Joe and Jim were discussing the matter earnestly, as they passed out of the Polo Grounds to go downtown.

"Don't let's take the elevated," suggested Joe. "We haven't had much exercise, and I want to stretch my legs a little."

"I'm agreeable," replied Jim. "There's a cool breeze and it's a nice night for walking. We can go part of the way on foot, anyway, and if we feel like it we'll hoof it for the whole distance."

They soon got below the Harlem River and before long found themselves in the vicinity of Columbus Circle. They were passing one of the fashionable cafés that abound in that quarter when

the door opened and a man came out. Joe caught a good look at his face, and a grim look came into his eyes as he recognized Beckworth Fleming.

Fleming saw him at the same time, and the eyes of the two men met in a look of undisguised hostility. Then with an ugly sneer, Fleming remarked:

"Ah, Mr. Matson, I believe. Or was it Mr. Buttinski? I'm not very good at remembering names."

"You'll remember mine if I have to write it on you with my knuckles," returned Joe, brought to a white heat by the insult and the remembrance of the occurrence of the day before.

"Now, my good fellow——" began Fleming, a look of alarm replacing his insolent expression.

"Don't 'good fellow' me," replied Joe. "I owe you a thrashing and I'm perfectly able to pay my debts. You'd have gotten it yesterday if we'd been alone."

"I—I don't understand you," stammered Fleming, looking about him for some way of escape from the sinewy figure that confronted him.

"Well, I'm going to make myself so clear that even your limited intelligence can understand me," said Joe, grimly. "You keep away from the Marlborough Hotel. Is that perfectly plain?"

Before the glow in Joe's eyes, Fleming retreated a pace or two, but as he caught sight of a police-

man sauntering up toward them, his courage revived.

"I'll do nothing of the kind," he snarled.

"You will if you value that precious skin of yours. I've given you fair warning, and you'll find that I keep my word."

By this time the officer had come up close to them, and Fleming, immensely relieved, turned to him as an ally.

"Officer, this man has been threatening me with personal violence," he complained.

The policeman sized him up quizzically. Then he looked at Joe and his face lighted up.

"Good evening, Mr. Matson. That was a great game you pitched yesterday," he ejaculated in warm admiration.

"I tell you he threatened me," repeated Fleming, loudly.

The officer smiled inquiringly at Joe.

"Just a trifling personal matter," Joe explained quietly. "He insulted me and I called him down."

The policeman turned to Fleming.

"Beat it," he commanded briefly. "You're blocking up the sidewalk."

Fleming bristled up like a turkey cock.

"I'll have your number," he said importantly. "I'll——"

"G'wan," broke in the officer, "or I'll fan you. Don't make me tell you twice."

He emphasized the command by a poke in the back with his club that took away the last shred of Fleming's dignity, and he retreated, with one last malignant look at Joe.

"I know his kind," said the officer, complacently. "One of them rich papa's boys with more money than brains. Sorry he bothered you, Mr. Matson. Are youse boys goin' to lick them Bostons?"

"We're going to make a try at it," laughed Joe.

"You will if you can pitch all the games," rejoined the policeman, admiringly. "It cert'nly was a sin an' a shame the way you trimmed them Chicagos. You own New York to-day, Mr. Matson."

The chums bade him a laughing good-night and resumed their interrupted stroll.

"Who was that fellow, anyway?" asked Jim in curiosity.

"His name is Fleming," answered Joe. "That's about all I know of him."

"How long have you known him?"

"Since yesterday."

"What was the row all about, anyway?"

"Oh, nothing much," evaded Joe. "I guess we just don't like the color of each other's eyes."

Jim laughed and did not press the question. But he had heard the warning to keep away from the Marlborough Hotel, and could hazard a vague guess as to the cause of the quarrel.

At their hotel both Joe and Jim found a letter from the owners of the New York Club waiting for them. In addition to the informal thanks conveyed to the team in general by McRae, they had taken this means of thanking each player personally. It was a gracious and earnest letter, and wound up by inviting them to a big banquet and theatre party that was to be given by the management to the players in celebration of their great feat in winning the National League championship for New York.

But Joe's letter also contained a little slip from the Treasurer, to which a crisp, blue, oblong paper was attached. Joe unfolded it in some wonderment and ran his eyes over it hastily.

It was a check for a thousand dollars, and on the accompanying slip was written:

"In payment of bonus as per contract for winning twenty games during the season."

Joe grabbed Jim and waltzed him about the room, much to Barclay's bewilderment.

"What are you trying to do?" he gasped. "Is it a new tango step or what?"

"Glory, hallelujah!" ejaculated Joe. "Yesterday and to-day are sure my lucky days."

He thrust the check before his friend's eyes.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Jim. "It never rains

but it pours. If you fell overboard, you'd come up with a fish in your mouth."

"It sure is like finding money," chortled Joe. "Everything seems to be coming my way."

"You'll be lending money to Rockefeller if this sort of thing keeps on," Jim grinned. "But after all it can't be such a surprise. You must have known that you had won twenty games."

"That's just it," explained Joe. "I wasn't sure of it at all. I figured that with yesterday's game I had nineteen. But there was that game in August, you remember, when I relieved Markwith in the sixth inning. We won the game, but there were some fine points in it which made it doubtful whether it should be credited to Markwith or me. I had a tip that the official scorers were inclined to give it to Markwith, and so I had kissed the game good-bye. But it must be that they've decided in my favor after all and notified the New York Club to that effect."

"That's bully, old man," cried Jim, enthusiastically. "And you can't say that they've lost any time in getting it to you."

"No," replied Joe. "Ordinarily, they'd settle with me on the regular salary day. But I suppose they feel so good over getting the pennant that they take this means of showing it."

"They can well afford to do it," said Jim. "Your pitching has brought it into the box office

twenty times over. Still it's nice and white of them just the same to be so prompt. That's one thing that you have to hand to the Giant management. There isn't a club in the league that treats its players better."

"You're just right," assented Joe, warmly, "and it makes me feel as though I'd pitch my head off to win, not only for my own sake but for theirs."

"You certainly have had a dandy year," mused Jim. "With your regular salary of forty-five hundred and this check in addition you've grabbed fifty-five hundred so far. And you'll get anywhere from two to four thousand more in the World Series."

"I haven't any kick coming," agreed Joe. "It was a lucky day for me when I joined the Giants."

"I suppose you'll soak that away in the bank tomorrow, you bloated plutocrat," laughed Jim.

"Not a bit of it," Joe answered promptly. "Tomorrow night that money will be on its way to Riverside as fast as the train can carry it."

CHAPTER VII

THE THOUSAND DOLLAR BANKBILL

THE little town of Riverside had been buzzing with excitement ever since the news had flashed over the wires that the Giants had won the championship of the National League. On a miniature scale, it was as much stirred up as New York itself had been at the glorious victory.

For was not Joe Matson, who had twirled that last thrilling game, a son of Riverside? Had he not grown up among the friends and neighbors who took such pride and interest in his career? Had he not, as Sol Cramer, the village oracle and the owner of the hotel, declared, "put Riverside on the map?"

There had been a big crowd at the telegraph office in the little town on the day that the final game had been played, and cheer after cheer had gone up as each inning showed that Joe was holding the Chicagos down. And when in that fateful ninth his home run had "sewed up" the victory, the enthusiasm had broken all bounds.

An impromptu procession had been formed, the

village band had been pressed into service, the stores had been cleared out of all the fireworks left over after the Fourth of July, and practically the whole population of the town had gathered on the street in front of the Matson house where they held a hilarious celebration.

The quiet little family found itself suddenly in the limelight, and were almost as much embarrassed as they were delighted by the glory that Joe's achievement had brought to them.

The crowd dispersed at a late hour, promising that this was not a circumstance to what would happen when Joe himself should come home after the end of the World Series.

Had any one suggested that possibly the Giants would lose out in that Series, he would have stood a good chance of being mobbed. To that crowd of shouting enthusiasts, the games were already stowed in the New York bat bag. How could they lose when Joe Matson was on their team?

In the Matson household joy reigned supreme. Joe had always been their pride and idol. He had been a good son and brother, and his weekly letters home had kept them in touch with every step of his career. They had followed with breathless interest his upward march in his profession during this year with the Giants, but had hardly dared to hope that his season would wind up in such a blaze of glory.

Now they were happy beyond all words. They fairly devoured the papers that for the next day or two were full of Joe's exploits. They could not stir out of the house without being overwhelmed with congratualtions and questions. Clara, Joe's sister, a pretty, winsome girl, declared laughingly that there could hardly have been more fuss made if Joe had been elected President of the United States.

"I'm sure he'd make a very good one if he had," said Mrs. Matson, complacently, as she bit off a thread of her sewing.

"You dear, conceited Momsey," said Clara, kissing her.

Mr. Matson smiled over his pipe. He was a quiet, undemonstrative man, but in his heart he was intensely proud of this stalwart son of his.

"How I wish we could have seen that game!" remarked Clara, wistfully. "Just think, Momsey, of sitting in a box at the Polo Grounds and seeing that enormous crowd go crazy over Joe, *our* Joe."

"I'm afraid my heart would almost break with pride and happiness," replied her mother, taking off her glasses and wiping her eyes.

"Of course it's great, reading all about it in the papers and seeing the pictures," continued Clara, "but that isn't like actually being there and hearing the shouts and all that. But I'm a very wicked

girl to want anything more than I've got," she went on brightly. "Now I'm going to run down to the post-office. The mail must be in by this time and I shouldn't wonder if I'd find a letter from Joe."

She put on her hat and left the house. Mrs. Matson looked inquiringly at her husband.

"You heard what Clara said, dear," she observed. "I don't suppose there's any way in the world we could manage it, is there?"

"I'm afraid not," returned Mr. Matson. "I've had to spend more money than I expected in perfecting that invention of mine. But there's nothing in the world that I would like more than to see Joe pitch, if it were only a single game."

Clara soon reached the little post-office and asked for the Matson mail. There were several letters in their box, but none from Joe.

She was much disappointed, as in Joe's last telegram he had told her that a letter was on the way and to look out for it.

She had turned away and was going out of the office, when the postmaster called her back.

"Just wait a minute," he said. "I see I've got something for you here in the registered mail."

He handed her a letter which Clara joyfully saw was addressed in Joe's handwriting.

"It's directed to your mother," the postmaster

went on, "but of course it will be all right if you sign for it."

Clara eagerly signed the official receipt and hurried home with her precious letter.

"Did you get one from Joe?" asked her mother, eagerly.

"There wasn't anything from him in the box," said Clara, trying to look glum. Then as she saw her mother's face fall, she added gaily: "But here's one that the postmaster handed me. It came in the registered mail."

She handed it over to her mother, who took it eagerly.

"Hurry up and open it, Momsey!" cried Clara, fairly dancing with eagerness. "I'm just dying to know what Joe has to say."

Mr. Matson laid aside his pipe and came over to his wife. She tore open the letter with fingers that trembled.

Something crisp and yellow fluttered out and fell on the table. Clara's nimble fingers swooped down upon it.

"Why, it's a bankbill!" she exclaimed as she unfolded it. "A ten dollar bill it looks like. No," as her eyes grew larger, "it's more than that. It's a hundred—Why, why," she stammered, "it's *a thousand dollar bill!*"

"Goodness sakes!" exclaimed her mother. "It can't be. There aren't any bills as big as that."

"WHY, WHY," SHE STAMMERED, "IT'S A THOUSAND DOLLAR BILL!"

Mr. Matson took it and scrutinized it closely.

"That's what it is," he pronounced in a voice that trembled a little. "It's a thousand dollar bill."

The members of the little family stared at each other. None of them had ever seen a bill like that before. They could hardly believe their eyes. They thought that they were dreaming.

Mrs. Matson began to cry.

"That blessed, blessed boy!" she sobbed. "That blessed, darling boy!"

Clara's eyes, too, were full of tears, and Mr. Matson blew his nose with astonishing vigor.

But they were happy tears that did not scald or sting, and in a few minutes they had recovered their equanimity to some degree.

"What on earth can it all mean?" asked Mrs. Matson, as she put on her glasses again.

"Let's read the letter and find out," urged Clara.

"You read it, Clara," said her mother. "I'm such a big baby to-day that I couldn't get through with it."

Clara obeyed.

The letter was not very long, for Joe had had to dash it off hurriedly, but they read a good deal more between the lines than was written.

"Dearest Momsey," the communication ran, "I

am writing this letter in a rush, as I'm fearfully busy just now, getting ready for the World Series. Of course, you've read by this time all about the last game that won us the pennant. I had good luck and the boys supported me well so that I pulled through all right.

"Now don't think, Momsey, when you see the enclosed bill that I've been cracking a bank or making counterfeit money. I send the money in a single bill so that it won't make the registered letter too bulky. Dad can get it changed into small bills at the bank.

"You remember the clause in my contract by which I was to get a thousand dollars extra if I won twenty games during the season? Well, that last game just made the twentieth, and the club handed the money over in a hurry. And in just as much of a hurry I'm handing it over to the dearest mother any fellow ever had.

"Now, Momsey, I want you and Dad and Clara to shut up the house, jump into some good clothes and hustle on here to New York just as fast as steam will bring you. You're going to see the World Series, take in the sights of New York and Boston, and have the time of your life. You're going to have one big *ga-lorious spree!*

"Now notice what I've said, Momsey—*spree.* Don't begin to figure on how little money you can do it with. You've been trying to save money all

your life. This one time I want you to *spend* it. Doll yourself up without thinking of expense, and see that that pretty sister of mine has the best clothes that money can buy. Don't put up lunches to eat on the way. Live on the fat of the land in the dining cars. Don't come in day coaches, but get lower berths in the Pullmans. Make the Queen of Sheba look like thirty cents. I want you, Momsey dear, to have an experience that you can look back upon for all your life.

"I've engaged a suite of rooms for you in the Marlborough Hotel—a living room, two bedrooms and a private bath. Reggie Varley and Mabel are stopping there now, and they'll be delighted to see you. They often speak of the good times they had with you when they were at Riverside. And you know how fond Clara and Mabel are of each other.

"Tell Sis that Jim Barclay, my chum, has seen her picture and is crazy to meet her. He's a Princeton man, a splendid fellow, and I wouldn't mind a bit having him for a brother-in-law."

"The idea!" exclaimed Clara, tossing her pretty head and blushing like a rose, but looking not a bit displeased, nevertheless.

"Now don't lose a minute, Momsey, for the time is short and the Series begins next week.

You'll have to do some tall hustling. Wire me what train you'll take, and I'll be there with bells on to meet you and take you to the hotel.

"Am feeling fine. Best love to Dad and Sis and lots for yourself from

"Your loving son,

"JOE."

There was silence in the room for a moment after Clara finished reading. They looked at each other with hearts beating fast and eyes shining.

"New York, Boston, the World Series!" Clara gasped in delight. "Pinch me, Dad, to see if I'm dreaming! Oh, Momsey!" she exclaimed as she danced around the room, "Joe put it just right. It's going to be a *'ga-lorious spree!'* "

CHAPTER VIII

RECKLESS DRIVING

In New York, the preparation for the World Series was rapidly taking form. Little else was thought or spoken of. Pictures of the teams and players usurped the front pages of the newspapers, crowding all other news into the background. For the time being the ballplayer was king.

It was generally agreed by the experts that the contest would be close. Neither side could look for a walkover. The fight would be for blood from the very start.

On paper the teams seemed pretty evenly matched. If the Red Sox were a little quicker in fielding, the Giants seemed to have "the edge" on their opponents in batting. It was felt that the final decision would be made in the pitcher's box.

And here the "dope" favored the Red Sox. This was due chiefly to the accident that had befallen Hughson. Had that splendid veteran been in his usual shape, it was conceded that New York

ought to win and win handsomely. For Boston could not show a pair to equal Hughson and Matson, although the general excellence of their staff was very high.

But with Hughson out of the Series, it looked as though Joe's shoulders would have to bear the major part of the pitching burden; and though those shoulders were sturdy, no one man could carry so heavy a load as that would be.

Thus the problem of New York's success seemed to resolve itself into this: Would Hughson have so far recovered as to take part in the games? And behind this was still another question: Even if he should take part, would he be up to his usual form after the severe ordeal through which he had passed?

So great was the anxiety on this score that almost every new edition of the afternoon papers made a point of publishing the very latest news of the great pitcher's condition. Most of these were reassuring, for Hughson really was making remarkable progress, and it goes without saying that, regardles of cost, he was receiving the very best attention from the most skilful specialists that could be secured.

In the meantime the National Commission—the supreme court in baseball—had met in conclave at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York. They really had little to do, except to reaffirm

the rules which had governed previous Series and had been found to work well in practice.

The Series was to consist of seven games, to be played alternately on succeeding days in the two cities. The place where the games were to start would be decided by the toss of a coin. If rain interfered with any of the games, the game was to be played in the same city on the first fair day.

The Series was to finish when either of the teams had won four games. Only in the first four games played were the players to share in the money paid to see them. This provision was made so that there should be no temptation for the players to "spin out" the Series in order to share additional receipts. It was up to each team to win four straight games if it could.

Of the money taken in at these first four games, ten per cent. was to go to the National Commission and ten per cent. into the clubs' treasuries. The balance was to be divided between the two teams in the proportion of sixty per cent. to the winner and forty per cent. to the loser.

The players had no financial interest whatever in any money taken in at other games, which went to the clubs themselves, less the percentage of the National Commission.

"Hurrah!" cried Jim Barclay in delight, as he broke into the rooms occupied by Joe and himself.

"What's the matter?" asked Joe, looking up. "Dropped into a fortune? Got money from home?"

"We've won the toss of the coin!" ejaculated Jim. "New York gets the first game."

"Bully!" cried Joe. "That's all to the good. That's the first break in the game and it's come our way. Let's hope that luck will stay with us all through."

"And just as we supposed, the first game will start on Friday," continued Jim. "So that we'll have about a week for practice before we have to buckle to the real work."

"McRae told me this morning that he had almost all the practice team together now, and that we'd start to playing against them on Monday," said Joe.

"It's up to us to make the most of this little breathing spell, then," returned Jim. "I think I'll take a little run down to the beach to-morrow. Care to come along?"

"I've got an engagement myself to-morrow," Joe replied. "I'm going for an automobile ride with Reggie Varley and Miss Varley. By the way, Jim, why don't you come along with us? Reggie told me to bring along a friend if I cared to. There's plenty of room, and he has a dandy auto. Flies like a bird. Come along."

"Where are you going?"

"Out on Long Island somewhere. Probably stop at Long Beach for dinner."

"Sure, I'll come," said Jim readily. "But don't think I'm not on to your curves, you old rascal. You want me to engage Reggie in conversation so that you can have Miss Varley all to yourself."

"Nonsense!" disclaimed Joe, flushing a trifle.

"Well, then," said the astute Jim, "I'll let you have the front seat with Reggie, while I sit back in the tonneau."

"Not on your life you won't!" said Joe, driven out into the open.

"All right," grinned Jim resignedly. "I'll be the goat. When do we start?"

"Reggie will have the car up in front of the Marlborough at about ten, he said. We'll have a good early start and make a day of it."

"All right," said Jim. "Let's root for good weather."

They could not have hoped for a finer day than that which greeted them on the following morning. The sun shone brightly, but there was just enough fall crispness to make the air fresh and delicious.

Reggie was on time, nor did Mabel avail herself of the privilege of her sex and keep them waiting. The girl looked bewitching in her new fall costume and the latest thing in auto toggery, and her rosy cheeks and sparkling eyes drew Joe

more deeply than ever into the toils. Jim's mischievous glance at them as they settled back in the tonneau while he took his seat beside Reggie, left no doubt in his own mind how matters stood between them.

Whatever else Reggie lacked, he was a master hand at the wheel, and he wound his way in and out of the thronging traffic with the eye and hand of an expert. They soon reached and crossed the Queensboro Bridge, and then Reggie put on increased speed and the swift machine darted like a swallow along one of the magnificent roads in which the island abounds. Beautiful Long Island lay before them, dotted with charming homes and rich estates, fertile beyond description, swept by ocean breezes, redolent of the balsam of the pines, "fair as a garden of the Lord."

Jim, like the good fellow and true friend that he was, absorbed Reggie's attention—that is, as much of it as could be taken from the road that unrolled like a ribbon beneath the flying car—and Joe and Mabel were almost as much alone as though they had had the car to themselves. And it was very evident that neither was bored with the other's society. Joe's hand may have brushed against Mabel's occasionally, but that was doubtless due to the swaying of the car. At any rate, Mabel did not seem to mind.

At the rate at which they were going, it was

only a little while before they heard the sound of the breakers, and the great hotel at Long Beach loomed up before them.

Reggie put up his car and they spent a glorious hour on the beach, watching the white-capped waves as they rushed in like race horses with crested manes and thundered on the sands. Then they had a choice and carefully selected dinner served in full view of the sea.

"Some hotel, this," remarked Reggie as he gazed about him. "Make a dent in a man's pocketbook to live here right along."

"Yes," agreed Jim. "They give you the best there is, but you have to pay the price. Reminds me of a story that used to be told of a famous hotel in Washington. The proprietor was known among statesmen all over the country for the way he served beefsteak smothered in onions. One man who had tried the dish advised his friend to do the same the next time he went to Washington."

"But onions!" exclaimed his friend with a shudder. "Think of one's breath."

"Oh, that's all right," replied the other. "When you get the bill it will take your breath away."

Reggie laughed, and, as the afternoon was getting on, ordered the car to be brought around. They had thought to go out along the south shore as far as Patchogue, before turning about for home.

They were bowling along on the Merrick Road in the vicinity of Bay Shore, when an automobile behind them came rushing past at a reckless rate of speed. It almost grazed Reggie's car, and the quick turn he was obliged to make came within an ace of sending the car into a ditch.

"My word!" cried the indignant Reggie. "Those bally beggars ought to be pinched. A little more and they'd have smashed us."

"Half drunk, most likely," commented Jim. "They'll kill somebody yet if they keep that up. By Jove, I believe they've done it now!"

From up the road came a chorus of yells and shouts. They saw the flying automobile hesitate for a moment and then plunge on, leaving a limp and motionless form sprawled out in the road behind it.

CHAPTER IX

A BRUTAL ACT

THERE was a shout from the men and a scream of terror from Mabel.

"Oh, hurry, hurry!" she urged. "Perhaps they've killed him!"

Reggie needed no urging, and in a moment more they had come within a few feet of the figure that still lay without motion or any sign of life.

Joe and Jim were out of the car like a flash and ran to the side of the victim.

Reggie turned the car into a piece of open woodland at the side of the road, and then he and Mabel descended and joined the others.

The man who had been hit seemed to be nearly seventy years old. His hair was silvery white, except where it was dabbled with blood that flowed from a wound in his head near the left temple. His clothing was shabby and covered with dust. A G. A. R. button was on the lapel of his coat.

As Joe knelt down and lifted the man's head to his knee, the latter opened his eyes and gave utterance to a groan.

Jim, who had a rough knowledge of surgery from his experience with the accidents that are constantly happening on the ball field, ran his hands deftly over the prostrate form.

"Don't seem to be any bones broken," he announced after a moment. "And that cut on the head seems to have come when he struck the road. But let's carry him over to this patch of grass and bind up his head to stop that bleeding."

The handkerchiefs of the party were called into requisition and torn into strips from which a bandage was improvised. There was a small brook near by, and Mabel hurried to this for water, with which she bathed the man's head and face.

"We'd better get him into the car and carry him on to Bay Shore," said Joe, when they had done all they could. "I don't imagine he's fatally hurt, although at his age the shock may make it serious."

Just then the man stirred feebly and his eyes opened. There was a puzzled expression as he gazed into the faces surrounding him, and then a look of comprehension as he recalled the fact of the accident.

"Was it your car that hit me?" he asked. "But no, I know it wasn't," he added, as he caught sight of Mabel. "There wasn't any woman in that machine."

"Don't try to talk," admonished Joe gently. "You've had a bad shake-up, but there are no bones broken and you'll be as good as ever in a little while."

"They didn't give me a dog's chance," the old man murmured wearily. "They must have seen me coming, but they didn't honk their horn or give me any warning. They were fooling and laughing, and the car was zigzagging as though the driver was half drunk. An old man like me doesn't count, I guess, with a bunch of joy riders. Did they stop afterwards?"

"Not a second," declared Jim angrily. "They rushed on without even looking behind. They're not much better than a bunch of murderers."

"I wish we'd got their number," Joe gritted savagely between his teeth. "I tried to, but they were raising such a cloud of dust that I only caught the numbers seven and four as part of their license number. And that isn't enough to go by."

"They ought to be made to pay handsomely for the outrage," declared Mabel indignantly.

"We'll telephone to the towns ahead when we get to Bay Shore, describing them as well as we can, and try to have them arrested," said Joe. "But now we must get to a doctor or a hospital. This man ought to be attended to at once."

Joe and Jim lifted the old man carefully and placed him, half sitting, half lying, in the tonneau

of the car. The others crowded in as they were able, and Reggie threw in his clutch and started on the way to Bay Shore.

Here on making inquiries they found that there was a large hospital at Islip, not far away, and in a few minutes they were at the doors of the big institution.

A preliminary examination showed that the wound on the head was a superficial one and that the old man was suffering chiefly from shock. He was put to bed in a cool private room that Joe made himself responsible for, and the doctor predicted that in a few days he would be on his feet again and able to return to his home.

This, they had learned from him, was Boston. His name was Louis Anderson. He was in poor circumstances and his visit to Long Island had been for the purpose of disposing of a tiny bit of property which represented his last earthly possession.

"I can't thank you boys enough," he said, as they at last prepared to leave. "I only wish there was something I could do for you in return. I don't suppose you often get to Boston."

"We expect to get there several times within the next week or two," remarked Joe, as he looked at Jim with an amused twinkle in his eye.

"Then you must be traveling men," suggested Anderson. "What line are you in?"

"The baseball line," grinned Jim.

"And you're going to Boston?" repeated Anderson. "Why, then you must be members of the Giants and going to play in the World Series."

"Guessed it right," Jim responded.

"If I didn't hate to root against Boston, I'd almost wish you'd win, after all you've done for me," Louis Anderson smiled feebly.

"We're going to try mighty hard," Joe assured him.

"They say that fellow Matson of yours is the king of them all," the old man went on.

"Oh, I don't know," responded Joe gravely. "I've known him to pitch some rotten ball."

They shook hands and went away, promising to keep in touch with him and do all they could to find the reckless automobilists who had caused his injuries.

But although they gave the facts to the village authorities and had a notice sent out to other towns in the car's path, they had little hope that anything would come of it.

"I guess they've made a clean getaway of it," judged Jim, as they once more headed toward the city.

"It's a burning shame," commented Mabel. "He seems to be such a nice old man, too. The idea of those men not even stopping to see what they could do for him."

"He might have died in the road for all they cared," declared Reggie indignantly. "A good long jail sentence would teach those bounders a little decency, by Jove!"

"I'd like to have them soaked heavily for damages," observed Joe. "I don't think the old man would have much trouble in getting a heavy verdict in his favor from a jury. And I guess the poor old fellow needs all he can get."

The knowledge, however, that the accident would not prove fatal and the consciousness that they had done all they could to help, served to dissipate the shock caused by the affair, and before long they were chatting as merrily as ever. So that when at last they parted at the doors of the Marlborough their only feeling of regret was that the day was ended. As for Joe and Mabel, snugly ensconced in the tonneau, they would have been willing to ride on forever. Joe said as much, and Mabel had acquiesced with her eyes if not in words.

It was a discordant note, therefore, when as the chums were going toward their rooms they almost ran into "Bugs" Hartley, the former pitcher of the Giants, who had been released earlier in the season for dissipation.

That erratic individual, whose venom against Joe had once led him to drug his coffee so that our hero might be unable to pitch, had rapidly

gone from bad to worse. He had exceptional ability when he kept sober, and even after his release by McRae he could have found some other manager willing to give him a chance if he had kept away from drink. But he had gone steadily downhill until he was now a saloon lounger and hanger-on.

He had been drinking heavily now, as was evident by a glance at his bleared face, and had reached the ugly stage of intoxication. His former team mates stepped back as he lurched against them.

"Hello, Hartley," said Joe not unkindly, for despite his just cause for resentment, he was shocked and sorry to see how low "Bugs" had fallen.

"Don't you talk to me!" snarled Hartley viciously. "You got me off the team and knocked me out of my chance of World Series money."

"You're wrong there, Bugs," returned Joe, keeping his temper. "I did everything I could to help you. When you were drunk in St. Louis, Jim and I smuggled you off to bed so that McRae wouldn't find it out. You're your own worst enemy, Bugs."

"Why don't you brace up, Bugs, and cut out the booze?" broke in Jim. "You've got lots of good pitching left in you yet."

"Quit your preaching, you guys," growled Hart-

ley thickly. "It doesn't work with me. You've done me dirt and I'm going to get even with you yet and don't you forget it."

He moved away unsteadily, and the chums watched him with a sentiment of pity.

"Poor old Bugs," remarked Jim. "He can't bat successfully against the Demon Rum."

"No," assented Joe. "I'm afraid he'll be struck out."

CHAPTER X

THE OPENING GUN

THE practice games of the next few days were by no means tame affairs, even though there was nothing especially at stake.

The All-National team was, as has been seen, chosen from among the stars of the profession, and though they lacked, of course, the team work of the Giants, they gave the latter all they could do to hold their own. They had been ordered to "tear things wide open" and play the game for all it was worth.

This they proceeded to do with such effect that when the time for the great Series arrived the Giants had been put on their mettle and were at the very top of their form.

It had been an especially busy week for Joe. He had spent one day in Boston, to which city he had run over on the midnight train at the direction of McRae, in order that he might observe the practice of the Red Sox and get a line on their batters. He had been impressed but not dismayed by their show of strength, and had

come back knowing that his work was cut out for him.

He had taken advantage, too, of his presence in Boston to arrange for rooms for his family, as well as for Reggie and Mabel, as they expected to go back and forth during the fateful week the Series lasted on the same trains taken by the two teams.

Thursday was made memorable to the New Yorks by the appearance of Hughson. There was an affectionate roar and rush for the veteran as he came into the clubhouse among his adoring mates.

To the torrent of questions poured out on him as to his condition, he responded that he was feeling fine physically, but was not yet sure of his arm. His shoulder was still somewhat lame and tender, but he hoped to get into some of the games later on. He tossed the ball about for a little while, but made no attempt to cut loose with any curves or fast ones. But the very sight of their crack pitcher once more in uniform was a tonic and inspiration to his mates, and they put an amount of "ginger" into their practice game that afternoon that was full of promise to McRae and Robson, as they watched their men from the side lines.

"I think we're going to cop the Series, Robbie," declared the former when the practice was over. "The men are as full of pep as so many colts."

"They certainly look good to-day, John," was the response. "But I'd give a thousand dollars out of my pocket at this minute if Hughson was in shape."

That evening Joe's parents and sister reached New York. Joe had received a wire telling him on what train they were coming and was at the station to meet them, full of affection and impatience.

He scanned eagerly the long train as it rolled into the station. Then he detected the familiar figures descending the steps of a Pullman coach, and in a moment more there was a joyful family reunion.

"Momsey—Dad!" he cried, grasping his father's hand and kissing his mother, who had all she could do to keep from throwing her arms around his neck then and there. "And Sis, you darling! Sweet and pretty as a picture!" he exclaimed, holding her out at arms' length so that he could look at her sparkling face. "Poor, poor Jim!" he teased. "I see his finish!"

Clara's color deepened, but before she could retort, Joe was hurrying the little party through the crowd to the street, where he hailed a taxicab and had them whirled away to their rooms at the Marlborough.

He had arranged to have a nice supper served in their suite that night, as he knew that they

would be tired and excited after their long journey. So they dined cosily and happily, and the hour or two of dear familiar talk that followed marked one of the happiest experiences the united little family had ever known.

But Joe could not stay nearly as long as he wanted to, for to-morrow was the day of the first game and he had to retire early so as to be in perfect condition.

McRae had told Joe that afternoon that he was slated to pitch the opening game.

"I'm banking on you, Joe," the manager told him. "You've never failed me yet, and I don't think you'll do it now. If you fall down, we're dead ones."

"I'll do my very best," declared Joe earnestly.

"Your best is good enough for any one," replied McRae. "Just show them the same stuff you did the Chicagos in that last game and I won't ask for anything more."

The next morning dawned bright and clear, and the city was agog with expectation. New York, usually so indifferent to most things, had gone wild over the Series. The morning papers bore the flaring headlines: *"Matson Pitches the First Game."* Crowds gathered early about the bulletin boards. Long before the time set for the game, cars and trains disgorged their living loads at the gates of the Polo Grounds, and before the teams

came out for practice the grandstands and bleachers were black with swarming, jostling humanity. The metropolis was simply baseball mad.

Within the gates, hundreds of special officers lined the field to keep order and prevent the overflow back of centerfield from encroaching on the playing space. The Seventh Regiment Band played popular airs. Movie men were here, there and everywhere, getting snapshots of the scene. The diamond lay like so much green velvet under the bright sun, and the freshly marked white base lines stood out in dazzling contrast. It was a scene to stir to the depths any lover of the great national game.

There was a thunderous roar as the teams marched down from the clubhouse, and there were bursts of applause for the sparkling plays that marked the preliminary practice. Then the field was cleared, the gong rang and the umpire, taking off his hat and facing the stands, bellowed in stentorian tones:

"Ladies and gentlemen: The batteries for today's game are Fraser and Thompson for Boston, Matson and Mylert for New York."

Loud applause followed, and this grew into a cyclone when Joe took the ball tossed to him and walked toward the pitcher's box.

"Matson! Matson! Matson!" yelled the crowd.

Joe cast a swift look at the box where his family were seated with Mabel and Reggie. Then he touched a little glove that rested in a pocket of his uniform.

The head of the Red Sox batting order had taken up his position at the plate.

"Play ball!" called the umpire.

Joe straightened up to his full height, wound up deliberately, and the ball shot over the corner of the plate like a bullet. The batter lunged at it savagely, but only hit the air.

The crowd yelled its delight at the auspicious beginning.

"That's the way, Joe!"

"He can't touch you!"

"Missed it by a mile!"

A ball followed, then a foul, then another ball, and a final strike that sent the batter discomfited to the bench.

The next man up raised a towering skyscraper, which Larry gathered in without moving from his tracks, and the third man died, as had the first, on strikes.

The half inning had been short and sharp, and Joe met a tempest of encouraging cheers as he walked in to the bench.

"You've got their number, old man!"

"They'll break their backs trying to hit you!"

"Some bad pitching, I don't think!"

But Joe had had too much experience to be betrayed into any undue elation. There were eight innings more to come and in that time many things might happen.

CHAPTER XI

SNATCHED FROM THE FIRE

NOT a bit dismayed by their unpromising beginning, the Red Sox took the field, and speedily showed that they too could uncork a brand of pitching that was not to be despised.

The best that Burkett could do was to raise a "Texas Leaguer" that Berry gobbled in without any trouble. Larry chopped an easy one to Girdner, who got him at first with plenty to spare. Denton dribbled a slow roller that Fraser gathered in on the first base line, tagging the runner as he passed.

And now it was the turn of the Boston enthusiasts, of whom thousands had made the trip to see their favorites play, to yell frantically for the Red Sox.

Joe realized at once that he had a foeman in Fraser who was worthy of his steel, and knew that all his skill and cunning would he required to win.

For the next two innings the sides were mowed down with unfailing regularity, and not a man on either side reached first base. It looked as though

the game were going to resolve itself into a pitchers' duel, and the crowds were breathless with excitement as batter after batter was sent to the bench.

The Giants broke the ice in the fourth. Burkett scorched a single to right, and by daring baserunning stretched it to a double, as Cooper was slow in making the return. Barrett sacrificed him to third. Fraser put on steam and fanned Denton on strikes. Then Willis came to the rescue with a sizzling hit just inside the third base line, and Burkett came galloping over the plate with the first run of the game.

The crowd rose and cheered wildly, and the Giants from their dugout threw their caps in the air and gathered around Burkett in jubilation. It was only one run, but the way the game was going that run looked as big as a mountain.

Willis was caught napping off first by a snap throw from Thompson to Hobbs, and the inning ended.

The fifth was devoid of scoring, but in the sixth the Bostons not only tied the Giants but passed them.

Loomis, the crack left fielder of the visitors, started the trouble with a sharp hit to Larry, who "booted" the ball, letting Loomis get to first. Hobbs lay down a bunt on which Joe had no time to get Loomis at second, though he tossed out

Hobbs at first. Walters lined out the first clean hit that the Red Sox had made so far in the game. If it had been properly played and taken on the bound, it could have been held to a single. But Becker made a mistake in thinking that he could make a fly catch. The ball struck the ground in front of him, bounded over his head and rolled to the further corner of the field. Before it could be recovered, Walters had made the circuit of the bases, following Loomis over the plate, and the Red Sox were in the lead by two runs to one.

The Boston rooters started their marching song of "Tessie," while the New Yorkers sat glum and silent.

Joe tightened up and struck out the two following batters in jig time, but it looked as though the mischief had been done.

"Don't let that worry you, Joe," counseled McRae, as he came in to the bench. "You're pitching like a Gatling gun. That's the first hit they've got off you in six innings and it ought to have been a single only. We'll beat 'em yet."

"Sure we will," answered Joe, cheerfully. "We've only begun to fight."

At the beginning of the "lucky seventh," the crowd rose and stretched in the fond hope that it would bring the necessary luck for their favorites.

The omen might have worked, had it not been

for a dazzling bit of play on the part of the Bostons.

Their own half had been fruitless. Joe was pitching now like a man inspired, and his bewildering curves and slants had made the Boston sluggers look like "bushers."

In the Giants' half, Joe was the first man up and he laced out a hot liner between second and short that carried him easily to first. Mylert hit to short and Joe was forced at second, though Berry relayed the ball to Hobbs too late for a double play. A wild pitch, the only one of the game, advanced Mylert a base. Burkett received a pass. Now there was a man on first, another on second, and rousing cheers came from the stands. There was only one man out, Fraser was evidently getting wild, and it looked as though New York might score.

The Boston infield moved in for a double play. And it looked for a moment as though they would make it. Larry hit to short, and a groan went up. But the hit was so sharp that Stock could not handle it cleanly, and, though he succeeded in getting Burkett at second Larry reached first safely while Mylert raced to third.

It was a time for desperate measures, and McRae gave the signal for a double steal. The moment Fraser wound up, Larry started for second, not with a design of reaching it, but hoping

to draw a throw from the catcher, under cover of which Mylert might scamper home from third. If he could touch the plate before Larry was put out, the run would count and the score be tied.

Thompson threw like a shot to Berry at second. But instead of chasing Larry, who had stopped midway between first and second, he kept threatening to throw to third and catch Mylert, who was taking as big a lead toward home as he dared. After playing hide and seek for a moment, Berry thought he saw a chance to nip Mylert and threw to Girdner at third. But the ball touched the tips of his fingers and got past him, and Mylert started for home.

A howl of exultation went up from the throng. Then it died away as suddenly as it had risen.

Girdner, chasing the ball, slipped as he went to pick it up. Lying on the grass, he made a desperate throw in the direction of the plate. It went high, but Thompson made a tremendous jump, pulled it down and clapped it on Mylert just as he slid into the rubber.

"Out," yelled the umpire.

It was as classy a play as any of the spectators had ever seen, and even the New Yorkers, sore as they were at losing the run, joined generously in the applause that greeted it.

"That fellow Girdner must have a rabbit's foot about him somewhere," remarked Robson to

McRae with a twisted smile. "He couldn't do that thing again in a thousand years."

"A few more things like that and the crowd will die of heart disease or nervous prostration," answered McRae. "But they can't have all the breaks. Just watch. Our turn will be coming next."

But nothing happened in the eighth to change the score, and the ninth opened with the Red Sox still in the lead.

That the Red Sox would not score again was as nearly certain as anything can be in baseball. Joe, as cool as an icicle, was going at top speed. They simply could not touch his offerings.

But as the visitors went back in one, two, three order, they consoled themselves with the thought that they did not have to do any more scoring. They were already ahead, and if Fraser could hold their opponents down for one more inning, the game was theirs.

But Fraser had about reached his limit. He could not stand the gaff as sturdily as Joe. With the exception of that one wild spell, he had pitched superbly, but the terrific strain was beginning to tell.

His first two pitches went as balls, and McRae, whose eagle eyes saw signs of wavering, signaled Becker, who was at the bat, to "wait him out."

The advice proved good, and Becker trotted

down to first where he immediately began to dance about and yell, hoping to draw a throw which in the pitcher's nervous condition might go wild.

The Red Sox players shouted encouragement to their pitcher, and the catcher walked down to the box on the pretense of advice but really to give him time to recover himself.

No doubt this helped, for Fraser braced up and made Iredell put up a towering foul, which Thompson caught after a long run.

Joe came next and cracked out a pretty single between short and second. Becker tried to make third on it, but a magnificent throw by Walters nipped him at the bag. But in the mix-up, Joe, by daring running, got to second.

With two out, a long hit would tie the game, anyway, and carry it into extra innings.

Fraser seemed to waver again and gave Mylert his base on balls. Then big Burkett, the head of the batting order, strode to the plate.

Amid frantic adjurations from the crowd to "kill the ball," he caught the second one pitched and sent a screaming liner far out toward the right field wall.

Cooper, the fleet Red Sox right fielder, had started for it at the crack of the bat. On, on he went, running like a deer.

Thirty-five thousand people were on their feet,

yelling like maniacs, while Joe, Mylert and Burkett raced round the bases.

Ball and man reached the wall at the same instant. The gallant player leaped high in the air. But the ball just touched the tips of his fingers and rolled away, while Joe and Mylert dented the rubber, Burkett halting when he reached second.

Then the crowd went crazy.

The game was over. It had been a battle royal, but the Giants had vanquished the Red Sox, and had taken their first stride toward the championship of the world.

CHAPTER XII

THE TABLES TURNED

BASEBALL JOE waited just long enough to wave his cap at the box in which his party sat, and then raced with his companions to the clubhouse before the crowd that was rushing down over the field should overwhelm them.

Mabel turned towards Mrs. Matson, who had been watching the game with the most intense interest and yet with a sense of complete bewilderment. The intricacies of the game were new to her, but she knew that her boy had won, and at the applause showered upon him her fond heart swelled with motherly pride.

"What do you think of that son of yours now?" Mabel asked gaily. "Didn't I tell you he was going to win?"

"It was j-just wonderful," replied Mrs. Matson, reaching for her handkerchief to stay the happy tears that had not been far from her eyes all through the game.

Mr. Matson had renewed his youth, and his

eyes were shining like a boy's. Clara clapped her hands and laughed almost hysterically.

"Oh, oh, oh!" she cried. "And he's my brother!"

Mabel laughed and gave her a little affectionate pat.

"I don't wonder that you're proud of him," she said. Joe would have been glad to hear the slight tremble in her voice.

In the clubhouse there was, of course, a mighty celebration. A lead of one game in such a series as that promised to be was, as "Robbie" exultantly said, "not to be sneezed at." Now they would have to win only three more to be sure of the flag, while the Red Sox needed to take four.

And yet, despite the victory, there was no undue boasting or elation. They had not won by any such margin as to justify too rosy a view of the future. The Red Sox had fought for the game tooth and nail, and at various stages a hair would have turned the balance one way or the other. The Bostons were an enemy to be dreaded, and a profound respect for their opponents had been implanted in the Giants' breasts.

Besides, McRae knew that he had "played his ace" in putting Joe into the box. He had no pitcher of equal rank to bring out on the morrow, while at least two of the Red Sox boxmen were quite as high as Fraser in quality.

"You did splendidly to-day, Matson," said McRae to Joe, clapping him jovially on the shoulder.

"I'm glad we won," responded Joe. "But that Fraser is no slouch when it comes to putting them over."

"He's a crackerjack," the manager admitted. "But you topped him all the way through. We raked him for seven hits, though he kept them pretty well scattered. But they only got to you for three, and one of them was a scratch. And he was wobbly twice, while you only gave one pass."

"That crack of Burkett's was a dandy," observed Joe. "And it came just in the nick of time."

"It was a lulu," chuckled McRae. "My heart was in my mouth when I saw Cooper making for it. Mighty few hits get away from that bird, but it was just a bit too high for him."

Both teams were to leave for Boston that night. A special train made up entirely of Pullman cars had been prepared to carry them, together with hundreds of enthusiasts who had planned to go with them back and forth and see each game of the Series. They would reach the city a little after midnight, and in order that the athletes might not be disturbed, they would be shunted into a remote part of the railroad yards where they could slumber peacefully until morning.

But several hours were to elapse before the train started. Joe hurried into his street clothes, and, accompanied by Jim Barclay, was whirled away in a taxicab to the Marlborough, where they had arranged to have a jolly dinner with his family and the Varleys.

The baseball players found everything ready for them, and the welcome that greeted them warmed their hearts.

"What a pity that we haven't a band here ready to strike up: 'Hail the conquering heroes come,' " said Mabel, mischievously.

" 'Hero,' you mean," corrected Jim. "I'm shining with only reflected glory. Here's the real hero of the piece," indicating Joe. "I'm only one of the Roman populace."

"And who's the villain?" smiled Mr. Matson.

"Oh, Fraser was the villain," responded Jim. "But Joe foiled him just as he was about to carry away the che-ild."

Barclay had not yet met Joe's family, but now Joe introduced him to his parents and Clara. They greeted him cordially, and Clara's eyes fell before the admiration that leaped into Jim's merry blue ones.

It is barely possible that that young lady had thought more than once of what Joe had said of Barclay in the letter that had enclosed the thousand dollar bill. And now as she studied him

shyly from time to time while he chatted away gaily, she had no difficulty in understanding why Joe had spoken so enthusiastically of his friend. And she was not sorry that Mabel had arranged that she and Jim should sit next each other at the table.

They were soon talking with freedom and animation.

"You ought to be awfully proud of that brother of yours," Jim declared.

"I should say so!" Clara exclaimed. "He's the dearest brother that ever lived."

"He's a prince," assented Jim. "A finer fellow never trod in shoe leather. I owe an awful lot to him, Miss Matson. I was feeling as forlorn as only a 'rookie' can feel when I broke into the big league, but he took me up at once and we've been like brothers ever since."

"He's often spoken of you in his letters home," replied Clara. "I'd tell you what he said of you, only it would make you too conceited."

"And he's raved to me about that sister of his," said Jim. "He's done more than that. He's shown me your picture. I've been tempted more than once to steal it from him."

"What a desperate criminal," laughed Clara, her cheeks growing pink.

"I think any jury would justify me if they once saw the picture," replied Jim, gallantly, "and

they certainly would if they caught sight of the original."

From this it can be seen that these young folks were fast becoming very friendly.

"It has been the dream of my life to see New York and Boston," observed Clara.

"Is that so?" said Jim, eagerly. "I know both of them like a book. You must let me show you around."

"That's very nice of you," said Clara, demurely. "But I suppose Joe will want——"

"Oh, of course," said Jim. "But Joe will be so busy you know with the games. He'll be under a big strain, while I'll probably have plenty of time. I'm only a sort of fifth wheel to the coach, while Joe's the whole thing. And then, too, Joe's already got Mabel, and it isn't fair that he should have two lovely girls while I'm left out in the cold. You really must take pity on me."

Few girls would have been so hard-hearted as to let such a handsome young fellow as Jim die of grief, and Clara had no intention of hastening his demise by excessive cruelty on her part. So she assented, though with the proper degree of maidenly hesitation, and they began merrily to map out plans for the coming week.

Joe, seated with Mabel on one side and his mother on the other, had also been enjoying himself hugely through the dinner, while Reggie and

Mr. Matson found plenty to talk about in discussing the events of the day. The time passed all too swiftly and before they knew it they had to begin preparations for the journey.

"Let's look at the weather probabilities for tomorrow," said Joe, buying an evening paper at the newsstand as they passed through the Grand Central Terminal.

"Um—cloudy and unsettled," he read.

"That means that we'll have to get busy and win in the first five innings before the rain comes," laughed Jim.

"It ought to be a good day to pitch Markwith," returned Joe. "With a cloudy day and that blinding speed of his they won't be able to see the ball."

The two young athletes saw their party to their car, and after a few moments of pleasant chat bade them good-night and repaired to the Pullmans that had been reserved for the Giant team.

All were in a most jovial mood and filled with highest hopes for the morrow. Joke and banter flew back and forth, until the watchful McRae asserted the claims of discipline and sent them all to their berths.

The next morning when they drew the curtains, they found that the weather man's prognostications had been correct. Dull, leaden-colored clouds chased each other across the sky and a bleak wind came from the east.

"Looks like soggy weather, sure enough," commented Jim, as he met Joe in the lavatory.

"It certainly does," assented Joe. "Hope it holds off till after the game. It may cut down the attendance."

"No danger of that unless it rains cats and dogs," rejoined Jim. "Boston is the best baseball city in the country, and it'll take more than a few clouds or even a drizzle to keep the crowds away."

They breakfasted in the dining car, and then Joe's party adjourned to the hotel where rooms had been reserved. There was not much time for sight seeing, but they all had a pleasant little stroll on the Common and in the wonderful Botanical Gardens, before their duties called the young men away to the baseball grounds.

The weather still continued threatening, but as Jim had prophesied, this did not affect the attendance. Boston was as wild over the Series as New York, and long before noon Commonwealth Avenue and Gaffney Street were packed with the oncoming throngs. By the time the game started the enormous Braves Field was packed to its utmost capacity.

Personally, McRae welcomed the overcast sky. It was a pitcher's day, a day that called for speed, and speed as everybody knew was Markwith's "long suit."

"Smoke 'em over, Red," was McRae's admonition, when he told Markwith he was slated to pitch. "If we can only put this game on the right side of the ledger, the world's flag is as good as won. Give us a lead of two games and it will take the spine out of those birds. They'll never catch up."

"I get you, Mac," grinned the pitcher. "I'll zip 'em over so fast they'll have to use glasses to see 'em."

For four innings it looked as though his prophecy would be fulfilled. His companions played like fiends behind him, and although the Bostons got to him for three bingles, they were scattered ones, and not a man got as far as third base.

"Looks as though Red had their goat, John," Robson remarked to McRae.

"He's doing fine," McRae returned, "and our boys seem to be getting to Banks pretty freely."

The Giants had, in fact, got a pretty good line on Banks, the port flinger of the Red Sox, and had accumulated three runs, which, with Markwith going as he was, seemed a very comfortable lead.

But the glorious uncertainty of the national game was demonstrated in the next inning. The Giants had been disposed of in their half with a goose egg, and the Red Sox came in to bat.

The first man up was given a base on balls. The next hit a sharp bounder to Denton, who ought to

have made an easy out either at first or second, but he juggled the ball and both men were safe.

The error seemed to unnerve Markwith, and he gave another pass, filling the bases.

"Get to him, boys!" screamed the Boston coacher on the side lines near first base. "He's got nothing on the ball but his glove and a prayer."

Walters, the slugging center fielder, caught the second ball pitched right on the seam and sent it on a line between left and center for the cleanest of home runs, clearing the bases and denting the rubber himself for the fourth run. In jig time, the Red Sox had wiped out the Giants' advantage and taken the lead.

The crowd went wild and the "Tessie" song swelled up from the stands.

McRae, with his brow like a thunder cloud, beckoned Red from the box and called in Jim, who, as a matter of precaution but with little idea of being called upon, had been warming up in a corner of the grounds.

"It's up to you, Barclay," he said as he handed him the ball. "Let's see now what stuff you're made of."

Joe gave Jim an encouraging pat on the shoulder.

"Steady does it, old man," he said. "They're only one run ahead and the bases are empty. Hold

them down and our boys will hand you enough runs to win out."

It was a trying position for a young and comparatively new pitcher, but Jim was a "comer" and had already proved in other games that he had both skill and nerve.

"Knock this one out of the box, too," came from the stands.

"Sew up the game right now!"

"Eat him up!"

"He'll be easy!"

"Oh, you Red Sox!"

Jim wound up and shot one over for a strike.

"Easy, is he?" came back from the Giant supporters. "Just watch that boy's smoke."

Another strike followed, and the stands sobered down a little.

"You're out," called the umpire, as a third strike split the plate.

Shouts of delight and encouragement came from the Giants' bench, and McRae's face lightened somewhat.

The next man went out on a high foul, and the inning ended when Stock popped an easy fly to the box.

"Bully for you, old man!" came from his mates, as Jim walked in from the mound.

"Knock out some runs now, you fellows," admonished McRae. "Barclay can't do it all. And

do it in a hurry, too. I don't like the way those clouds are coming up."

The sky was blackening rapidly, and the wind, coming from the east in strong gusts, told that a storm was on the way.

The Giants knew the need of haste, and they went at their work fiercely. Larry started proceedings with a rattling two bagger. Denton sacrificed him to third. Willis lined out a single, bringing in Larry and reaching second himself a moment later on a passed ball. Becker sent one to right that scored Willis and netted two bags for himself. Iredell went out on an infield catch, but Mylert came to the rescue with a sizzling hit that brought Becker to the plate amid frantic shouts from the New York rooters.

Three runs had been scored and New York was again in the lead by six to four. Two men were out. But now rain began to fall, although at first it was only a drizzle, and McRae, frenzied with anxiety, ordered Burkett to strike out.

Now, of course, it was the Bostons' cue to delay the game. If they could prevent the sixth inning from being fully played out before the rain stopped proceedings, the score would revert to what it was at the end of the fifth inning and Boston would be declared the winner.

They came in slowly from the field, stopping frequently to talk to each other. Then when at

last they were at their bench, the first batter took unusual pains in selecting his bat. And all the time the rain was falling more heavily.

McRae rushed at the umpire.

"Can't you see what they're doing?" he demanded. "Make them play ball."

The umpire turned sternly to the batter.

"Hurry up there," he commanded. "None of your monkey tricks or I'll forfeit the game to the New Yorks."

Thus adjured, the batter sauntered as slowly as he dared to the plate.

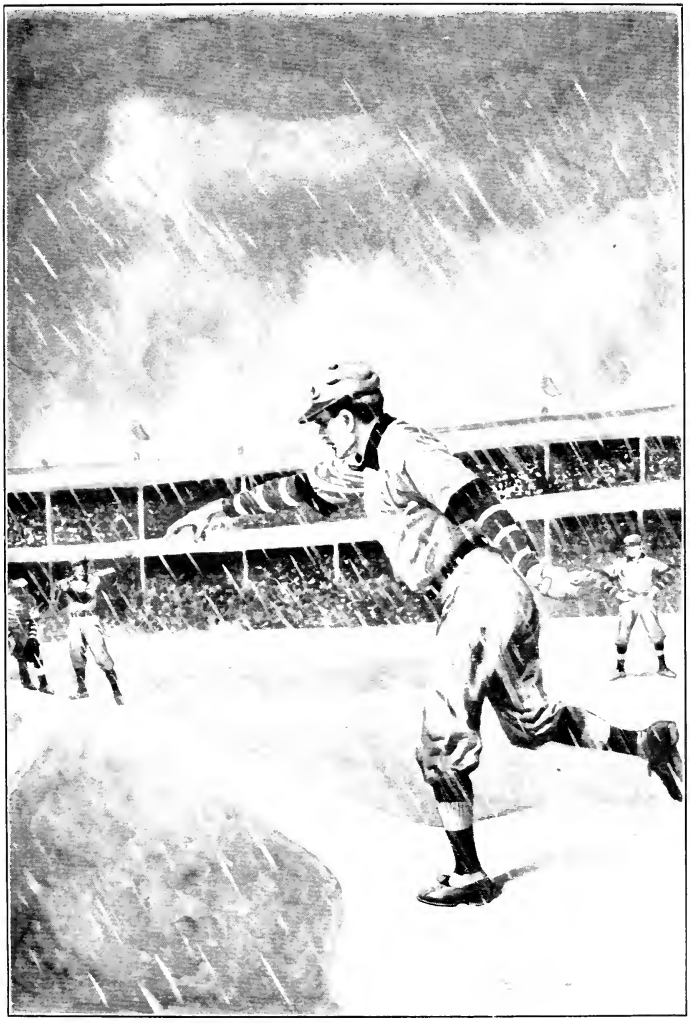
Jim put over a strike.

"That wasn't a strike," argued the Boston captain. "It didn't come within six inches of the plate."

"No argument," snapped the umpire, who saw through the tactics. "Go ahead there," he called to Jim.

Jim put over two more. The batter did not even offer at them. He had figured that with an occasional ball switched in it would take more time to put him out on strikes than if he gave a fielder's chance. But there were no balls and he was declared out.

The second man crawled like a snail to the plate. It was pouring now and the bleachers were black with umbrellas. The Giants were fairly dancing up and down with impatience and apprehension.



THE HEAVENS OPENED AND THE RAIN CAME DOWN IN TORRENTS.

Baseball Joe in the World Series. *Page* 105

Jim pitched like lightning, not waiting to wind up. But before he could dispose of the batsmen, the heavens opened and the rain came down in torrents.

Play was impossible. The umpire called the game and everybody scurried for shelter.

Old Jupiter Pluvius had taken a hand in the game.

CHAPTER XIII

A GALLANT EFFORT

IT is needless to paint the exasperation on the faces of McRae and Robson and the rest of the Giant team, as they saw victory taken from them just as they were tightening their grip upon it.

"Talk about luck," growled McRae. "Those fellows have got hogsheads of it."

"Why couldn't that rain have held off for ten minutes more?" groaned the rotund Robson.

"It may let up even yet enough to let the game go on," remarked Larry, though without much conviction.

"Such a chance," grunted Willis. "Why, you could take a swim at second base already."

There was, indeed, little hope of resuming the game, although in accordance with the rules, if the rain ceased in half an hour and the grounds were in condition for play, the umpires could call the teams back to the field. But the rain was blinding, and to wait around any longer was only a matter of form.

Joe and Jim had worked their way through the

crowds to the box in which their party sat. In the neat, gray, traveling uniforms that set their athletic figures off to perfection, the girls thought they looked handsomer than ever.

All gave them a hearty welcome and gladly made room for them. It was, of course, only by a coincidence that Joe found himself next to Mabel while Jim sat close to Clara.

"I'm so glad your side won, Joe," said motherly Mrs. Matson, beaming lovingly on her son and heir.

"But we didn't, Momsey," Joe laughed a little ruefully.

"Why, I kept count of the runs," said his mother in surprise, "and your side made six while the others had only four."

"That's right, but our last three don't count," explained Joe. "If we could only have finished out this last inning, we'd have won. But it wasn't finished, and so the score went back to the end of the fifth inning when the Bostons were ahead four to three."

"I think that's a shame!" exclaimed his mother, with as near an approach to indignation as her kindly nature was capable of feeling.

"Those old Bostons were just horrid to try to delay the game that way," declared Clara.

"It wasn't a bit sportsmanlike," declared Mabel, warmly.

Joe favored Jim with a solemn wink. Both knew that the Giants would have done precisely the same thing if positions had been reversed. It was a legitimate enough part of the game if one could "get away with it."

"Yes," assented Joe, keeping his face straight. "It didn't seem exactly the thing."

"I don't wonder Mr. McRae was angry," said Mabel. "I'm sure he wouldn't have done a thing like that."

Joe had a sudden choking fit.

"Well," he said, "there's no use crying over spilt milk. We ought to have made those runs earlier in the game, that's all."

"I felt so sorry for poor Mr. Markwith," said Mrs. Matson. "It must have been very mortifying to have to give up before so many people."

"Poor Red," said Joe. "It was too bad, especially when he got away to such a splendid start. But every pitcher has to take his medicine some time. Pitchers are very much like race horses. One day no one can beat them and another day any one can beat them."

"I think you did splendidly, Mr. Barclay," said Clara, shyly.

"Oh, I didn't have much to do," said Jim. "Just the same," he added, dropping his voice a trifle, "I'd rather hear you say that than any one else I know."

The flush that made Clara look like a wild rose deepened in her cheeks not only from the words but the quick look that accompanied them.

"Don't you think it might clear up yet?" she asked, changing the subject.

Jim followed her gaze reluctantly. He had something better to look at than the weather.

"The clouds do seem to be breaking awa a little," he assented. "But the base paths are a sea of mud, and the outfield is a perfect quagmire. There go the umpires now to look at it."

Those dignitaries (there were four of them that officiated at each game, one behind the plate, one at the bases and the two others at the foul lines in right and left field, respectively) were, as a matter of fact, solemnly stalking out on the field.

From the stands went up a thunderous roar:

"Call the game! Call the game!"

The Boston rooters were taking no chances and were perfectly willing to go without further baseball that afternoon, now that their favorites had the game won.

But their exhortations were unnecessary. Even McRae, clinging desperately to the last chance, could not in justice to his common sense urge that play should be continued. It was clearly impossible, and would have degenerated into a farce that would have risked the limbs of his athletes,

to say nothing of the harm it would work to the game.

So there was no protest when the game was formally and finally declared off, and the disgruntled New Yorks gathered up their bats and strode from the field.

"Never mind, boys," comforted McRae. "We can beat the Red Sox but we can't beat them and the rain together. Better luck next time."

"That listens good," grumbled "Robbie," who refused to be consoled. "But now we've lost the jump on them and it's all to be done over again."

"Well, we're no worse off than they are, anyway," returned the Giant manager.

"If we could only pitch Matson every day, the Series would be a cinch," mused Robson.

"A copper-riveted cinch," agreed McRae. "But I was mightily encouraged at the way young Barclay mowed them down. The ball didn't look any bigger than a pea as it came over the plate."

"He certainly had lots of stuff on the ball," admitted Robson. "I wonder if he can stand the gaff for a full game."

"I don't know whether he's seasoned enough for that yet," said McRae, thoughtfully. "But it'll stand a lot of thinking about. We'll see first though how Hughson's feeling when we get back to New York."

The return journey to New York was not by

any means so joyful as the trip out had been. Still, there was no discouragement in the Giants' camp. They had played good ball and with the lead they had and the way Jim was pitching would probably have won if it had not been for the rain. And on the theory that the good and bad luck of the game usually struck an average, they felt that they were due to have the break in their favor the next time.

As for Joe and Jim, although, of course, they shared the chagrin of their mates, their cloud had plenty of silver lining. They had played their own parts well so far in the Series, and had no painful recollections to grow moody about. And then, too, were they not in the company of the two girls whom they devoutly believed to be the most charming in the world?

They made the most of that company in the quiet Sunday that followed. Mr. and Mrs. Matson smilingly declined Reggie's cordial invitation, on the ground that they were feeling the need of rest after the excitement. The young people bundled into the car and they had a delightful ride through the woods of Westchester, whose trees were putting on their autumn tints of scarlet and russet and gold. A supper at the Claremont put the finish to a day in which the blind god with his bow and arrows had been extremely busy, and the drive home through the twilight was something none of them ever forgot.

The next morning, Joe, scanning the paper, gave a delighted exclamation.

"What's the matter?" asked Jim, disturbed in a pleasing reverie that had nothing to do with baseball.

"Matter enough," returned Joe, handing him the paper. "Hughson's going to pitch. McRae must have fixed it up with him yesterday."

"Gallant old scout!" cried Jim, his eyes kindling. "I was sure he'd get into the scrap somewhere. The only way you could keep that old war horse out of the World Series would be to hit him with an axe!"

CHAPTER XIV

MORE HARD LUCK

"WON'T this make Boston feel sore!" Baseball Joe exulted.

"You bet it will," chuckled Jim. "That's the one thing they were banking on more than anything else. With Hughson out, they thought we didn't have a chance."

"Let's get through breakfast in a hurry and run up and see the old boy," cried Joe.

Jim needed no urging and they were soon in a taxicab and on their way to Hughson's home.

They were met at the door by Mrs. Hughson, who greeted them with a pleasant smile and ushered them into the living room, where they found the great pitcher stretched out at his ease and running over the columns of the morning paper.

He jumped to his feet when he saw who his visitors were, and there was a hearty interchange of handshakes.

"So Richard is himself again," beamed Joe.

"Best news we've had in a dog's age," added Jim.

"Yes, I guess the old salary wing is on the job again," laughed Hughson.

"How's it feeling?" asked Joe, eagerly.

"Fine as silk," Hughson responded. "I've been trying it out gradually, and I don't see but what I can put them over as well as ever I did. It hurts me a little on the high, fast ones, but everything else I've got in stock seems to go as well as I could ask."

"What does the doctor say about your pitching?" asked Jim.

"Oh, he's dead set against it," was the answer. "Tells me it isn't well yet by any means, and that it may go back on me any minute. But you know how those doctors are. They always want to make a sure thing of it. But McRae and I have been talking it over, and we've concluded that in the present condition of things it might be well to take a chance."

"That head of yours is all right, anyway, you old fox," laughed Joe. "You've always pitched with that as much as with your arm. You'll outguess those fellows, even if you have to favor your arm a little."

"We'll hope so, anyway," was the reply. "That was hard luck the boys had in Boston on Saturday, wasn't it? Pity we couldn't have had it played here that day. It didn't rain a drop in New York."

"We were surely up against it," replied Joe. "But to-day's another day and we'll hope it tells a different story."

"By the way," grinned Hughson, "an old friend of yours was up here yesterday."

"Is that so?" asked Joe. "Who was it?"

" 'Bugs' Hartley."

The two young men gave vent to an exclamation of surprise.

"He's a great friend of mine," said Joe, dryly. "He met me on the street the other night and showed me that I was as popular with him as a rattlesnake at a picnic party."

"He certainly is sore at you," Hughson laughed. "He started in to pan you but I shut him up in a hurry. I told him that you'd always done everything you could to help him, and I hinted to him that we knew pretty well who drugged your coffee that day you pitched against the Phillies. He swore, of course, that he didn't do it."

"I know that he did," Joe replied. "But still I've never felt so sore against poor old Bugs as I would have felt against any one else who did such a thing, because I knew that he was a little queer in the head. Even now I'd gladly do him a favor if I could. What did he come here for?"

"He wanted to get on to Boston but didn't have the price," answered Hughson. "He thought that if he could see Rawlings he might get a chance

with the Braves for next season. And he might, at that. You know what Rawlings has done with a lot of cast-offs from other teams, and if he could keep Bugs from kicking over the traces he might get something out of him next year. You know as well as I do what Bugs can do in the pitching line if he'll only brace up and cut out drink. So I coughed up enough to send him on and I hope he'll get another chance."

"I hope so," rejoined Joe, heartily. "There are mighty few teams that can beat him when he's right."

"But keep your eyes open, Joe, just the same," counseled Hughson. "He's holding a grudge against you in that old twisted brain of his, and you'd be as safe with him as if you were on a battlefield."

"I guess he's done his worst already," Joe laughed carelessly.

They talked a few minutes longer, and then, as the rubber came in to give Hughson's arm its daily massage, they took their way downtown.

The whole city was alive with excitement at the news that the famous standby of the Giants was to be in the box that afternoon. Yet mingled with this was an under current of anxiety. Was he in shape to pitch? Would that mighty arm of his hold out, so soon after his injury?

If wild and long-continued cheering could have

won the game, it would have been won right at the start when Hughson came out on the field a little while before the gong sounded.

It was a tribute of which any man might have been proud. For more than a dozen years he had been the mainstay of the team. His record had never been approached in baseball history.

Year in and year out he had pitched his team to victory. Several times they had won the pennant of the National League, and even when they failed they had always been up among the contenders. And more than to any single man, this had been due to Hughson's stout heart and mighty arm.

And the affection showered upon him was due not only to his prowess as a twirler, but to his character as a man. He was a credit to the game. The fines and discipline, so necessary in the case of many brilliant players, had never been visited upon him. He had steered clear of dissipation in any form. He was sportsmanlike and generous. Players on opposing teams liked him, the umpires respected him, his mates idolized him, and the great baseball public hailed him with acclamations whenever he appeared on the field.

And to-day the applause was heartier than ever because of the importance of the game and also in recognition of his gameness in coming to the help of his team so soon after a serious accident.

"They're all with you, Hughson," smiled McRae, as the bronzed pitcher lifted his cap in response to the cheers that rose from every quarter of the field.

"They seem to be, John," replied Hughson. "Let's hope they won't be disappointed."

As the game went on, it seemed as though the hopes of the spectators were to be gratified.

The veteran pitched superbly for seven innings. His twirling was up to the standard of his best games. He mowed the opposing batsman down one after the other, and as inning after inning passed with only two scratch hits as the Bostons' total, it began to look as though it would be a shutout for the visitors.

"They've got holes in their bats," cried McRae, gleefully, as he brought his hand down on Robson's knee with a thump.

"It sure looks like it!" ejaculated Robbie. "But for the love of Mike, John, go easy. That ham of yours weighs a hundred pounds."

But the Boston pitcher, stirred up by the fact that he was pitted against the great Hughson, was also "going great guns." Larry and Burkett had been the only Giants so far to solve his delivery. Each had hammered out a brace of hits, but their comrades had been unable to bring them in from the bags on which they were roosting.

"Get after him, boys," raged McRae. "You're

hitting like a bunch from the old ladies' home. Split the game wide open."

They promised vehemently to knock the cover off the ball, but the Red Sox pitcher, Landers, was not a party to the bargain and he obstinately refused to "crack."

In the first half of the eighth, Cooper, of the Bostons, knocked up an infield fly that either Larry or Denton could have got easily. But they collided in running for it and the ball fell to the ground and rolled out toward center. Iredell, who was backing up the play, retrieved it, but in the mix-up, Cooper, by fast running, reached second.

Though both men had been shaken up by the collision they were not seriously injured, and after a few minutes play was resumed.

But in the strained condition of the players' nerves, the accident had to some degree unstrung them. So that when Berry chopped an easy roller to Denton that the latter ordinarily would have "eaten up," he juggled it for a moment. Then, in his haste to make the put-out at first, he threw wild and the ball went over Burkett's head. Before he could get it back, Cooper had scored and Berry was on third.

The Boston rooters howled like wild men, and their hats went sailing into the air.

Hughson, cool as an iceberg, brought his fadeaway into play and whiffed the next man up. Then

Hobbs rolled one to the left of the box. Hughson made a great reach for it and got it, though he slipped and fell as he did so. He snapped the ball, however, to Mylert, nipping Berry at the plate.

Mylert returned the ball to Hughson who took his position in the box and began to wind up. But almost instantly his hand dropped to his side.

He tried again but fruitlessly.

McRae ran out to him in consternation.

CHAPTER XV

FLEMING TURNS UP AGAIN

"WHAT's the matter, Hughson?" McRae cried.

"The old arm won't work," replied the pitcher. "Guess I hurt it in the same old place when I fell."

His fellow players crowded around him, and the umpire, who had called time, came up to ascertain the damage.

The club doctor also ran out from his seat in the stands near the press box and made a hurried examination.

"You've strained those ligaments again," he remarked, "and as far as I can tell now one of them is broken. I told you that they weren't healed enough for you to pitch."

McRae groaned in sympathy with Hughson and in dismay for himself and his team. He had been congratulating himself that with Hughson in the fine form he had showed that afternoon the world's pennant was as good as won.

"It's too bad, old man," he said to Hughson. "You never pitched better. You were just burning them over."

"I'm fearfully sorry," Hughson answered. "I did want to be in the thick of the fight with the rest of the boys. But I guess all I can do from now on is to root for them."

He took off his glove and walked over to the bench, amid a chorus of commiserating shouts from the stands.

McRae beckoned to Joe.

"Jump in, Joe," he directed briefly, "and hold them down. They've only got one run. I'm depending on you to see that they don't get any more."

Joe went into the box and tossed two or three to Mylert to get the range of the plate. He had a greeting from the fans that warmed the cockles of his heart.

There were two men out and Hobbs was dancing around first. Joe saw out of the corner of his eye that he was taking too big a lead, and snapped the ball like a bullet to Burkett. Hobbs tried desperately to get back but was nipped by a foot.

Joe had finished putting out the side without pitching a ball.

"Some speed that," came from the stands.

"I guess Matson's slow."

"We don't have to pitch to beat you fellows," piped a fan and the crowd roared.

But nothing could hide the fact that the Red Sox were ahead. McRae brought all his resources

into play and sent two pinch hitters to the plate. But though one of them, Browning, knocked out a corking three-bagger, the inning ended without results.

In the ninth, Joe had no trouble in disposing of the men who faced him. His slants and cross fire had them "buffaloed." One went out on a foul, another was an easy victim at first, and he put on the finishing touch by striking the third man out.

McRae tore round among his men like an elephant on a rampage as they came in for their half of the ninth. They, however, needed no urging. They were as wild to win as he was himself, and they were almost frantic as they saw victory slipping from them.

They did do something, but not enough. By the time two men were out, there was a Giant on first and another on second. Larry, the slugger of the team, was at the bat. He picked out a fast one and sent it hurtling on a line to left. It looked like a sure hit, but Stock, the shortstop, leaped high into the air and speared it with his gloved hand, and the shout that had gone up from the stands ended in a groan.

Three games of the Series had been played and the Red Sox had won two of them!

It was a disgruntled band of athletes who went under the shower in the Giant clubhouse that afternoon, and when Joe and Jim joined their party at

the Marlborough in the early evening, the air of jubilation they had worn on the day of the first game was conspicuous by its absence.

"If you had that band here you were talking about Friday, what do you suppose they would play?" Joe asked of Mabel, after the first greetings were over.

"They ought to play the 'Dead March in Saul,' " Jim volunteered.

"Not a bit of it," denied Mabel, cheerily.

"There's a better day coming and dinna' ye doubt it,
So just be canty wi' thinking about it,"

she quoted, flashing a sunny smile at Joe that made him feel more cheerful at once.

"It was too bad," comforted Mrs. Matson. "But, anyway, Joe, it wasn't your fault," she added, beaming fondly on her son.

"Call it misfortune then, Momsey," Joe smiled back at her. "But it surely was that. We lost the game, we lost it on our own grounds, we were whitewashed, and worst of all Hughson is out for the rest of the Series."

"That's enough for one day," acquiesced Jim.

"Stop your grouching, you fellows," admonished Reggie. "You'll have plenty of chances to even things up."

"Oh, we'll fight all the harder," agreed Joe. "There isn't a streak of yellow in the whole Giant team. The boys will fight like wildcats and never give up until the last man is out in the deciding game. We're looking for revenge to-morrow."

"And maybe revenge won't be sweet!" chimed in Jim.

"Who is going to pitch for your side to-morrow?" asked Mr. Matson.

"McRae gave me a tip that I was to go in," Joe answered.

"Then we might as well count the game as good as won," declared Mabel.

"That certainly sounds good," laughed Joe. "But suppose I should be batted out of the box? I wouldn't dare show my diminished head among you folks then."

"We're not worrying a bit about that," put in Clara, looking proudly at her idolized brother.

But the question was not to be settled on the morrow, for when the day dawned in Boston the rain was falling steadily, and the weather predictions were that the rain would continue for the greater part of the day.

For once, at least, the much maligned weather prophet was right, for at noon the rain had not abated, and, much to the disgust of the expectant public, the game was declared off.

By the rules that had been made to cover such

an event, the teams were to stay in Boston until the first fair day should permit the game to be played.

The different members of Joe's party were rather widely scattered, when the sun finally peeped out in the course of the afternoon. Reggie had taken his sister out to a country club where he had a number of acquaintances. Mrs. Matson and Clara were doing some shopping in the Boston stores and Mr. Matson had gone out for a stroll.

Joe and Jim had been down town with the rest of the team having a heart-to-heart talk with McRae and Robson about the strategy to be adopted in the forthcoming games.

By four o'clock the sun was shining gloriously and the roads were beginning to dry out. Just the day, Joe thought, to hire a runabout just big enough for two and take Mabel out for a spin.

He conjectured that by the time he got the car and reached the hotel Mabel would have returned from her trip with Reggie and be ready for him.

"Come along, Jim, and help me to pick out the car," he said.

They went to a neighboring garage and selected one which both agreed was a good one.

"Jump in, Jim," said Joe, "and I'll give you a ride as far as the hotel."

They were bowling rapidly along, when an auto-

mobile passed them, moving at a rate of speed that was almost reckless. Joe saw that a man and a woman were the only occupants.

He glanced carelessly at the man and was startled when he saw that it was Beckworth Fleming.

But he was still more startled when his eyes passed to the face of Fleming's companion.

It was Mabel!

Jim, too, was staring as though he could not believe his eyes.

For a moment Joe saw red and his blood boiled with rage. He stopped the car and looked back.

Then his rage turned to alarm, for Mabel was looking back and waving to him frantically, while her companion seemed to be trying to draw her back.

She was in peril!

Instantly, Joe turned his car and tore away in pursuit.

CHAPTER XVI

A CAD'S PUNISHMENT

THE hotel at which Mabel had been stopping with the rest of the party was in a quiet residential section not far from the suburbs, and Joe had almost reached it at the time of the encounter. There was little traffic here to interfere with the chase, and in a few minutes pursuer and pursued had cleared the outskirts and were in the open country.

Joe caught a glimpse of Fleming looking back and saw that the latter knew he was being followed, a knowledge which was followed by a sudden quickening in the pace of Fleming's car.

It was, evidently, a powerful machine, and despite Joe's utmost efforts the gap between the two cars kept constantly widening.

Joe had had a good deal of experience in handling automobiles during his big league career, and was a cool and skilful driver. But the utmost exertion of his skill could avail little when he had an inferior car pitted against one which greatly exceeded it in horse power.

His heart was in his mouth as he saw how recklessly Fleming was speeding. His car seemed to be on two wheels only as he took the curves in the road.

How Mabel came to be in that car was a question that could wait for an answer till later. The only thing that mattered now was that she was there with a man she dreaded and despised, and her frenzied waving told Joe that she was in mortal fear and looked for him to help her.

Jim sat perfectly still without saying a word. Nothing must distract Joe for a second from that car and the view of the road ahead. He knew what nerves of steel were back of the sinewy hand that clutched the wheel. He had grasped the meaning of the chase, and he shared with his friend the determination that the cad in the car ahead should pay dearly for this escapade.

Suddenly Joe gave an exultant cry.

As they turned a curve, he saw that a railroad crossing lay ahead and that the gates were down, while a long freight train was lumbering leisurely by.

Fleming could not get past till the gates were raised, and by that time Joe would be upon him.

There was no cross road between him and the track into which Fleming's car could escape. His enemy was trapped.

"You've got him, Joe!" exclaimed Jim, with a thrill of exultation in his voice.

"Yes," Joe gritted between his teeth. "I've got him."

And his tone would not have reassured Beckworth Fleming.

Fleming's car had halted and Fleming himself had jumped out and run wildly to the gate, looking up the track to see if the train was nearly by. He saw at a glance that it would not have passed before Joe would be upon him.

From the other side of the car, Mabel had leaped as soon as it had stopped. She came running back up the road, and Joe, who had stopped, rushed forward and took her in his arms. She was sobbing with fright and excitement, and Joe held her close as he tried to soothe her.

Fleming saw that the game was up and promptly darted off into the wood at the side of the road.

"After him, Jim!" cried Joe. "Don't let him get away!"

Jim darted after the fugitive. Fleming put on all possible speed, but he was no match for the seasoned athlete, and a moment later Jim's muscular hand had him by the collar.

"Let me go," snarled the wretch, struggling desperately.

"Come along," growled Jim, dragging him to the spot in the road where Joe was comforting

Mabel, who was gradually getting back some of her self-control.

The tender look in Joe's eyes was replaced by one of a different character as he looked at the flushed, dissipated face of the man who stood before him, still held by Jim.

"Now, Mr. Beckworth Fleming, I have an account to settle with you."

Fleming shrank back as far as Jim's grip would let him before the steely look in Joe's eyes.

"Don't be afraid," said Joe, contemptuously. "I'm not going to thrash you in the presence of a lady."

Relief came into Fleming's face.

"It was only a lark," he began, but Joe cut him short.

"I don't care for any explanations," he said. "I want you to go down on your knees in the road and beg Miss Varley's pardon."

Fleming looked around for some means of escape but found none. His furtive glance at Mabel fell before the scorn in her eyes.

"I apologize," he jerked out sullenly.

"Down on your knees, I said," remarked Joe with dangerous calmness.

Fleming hesitated before this last humiliation, but Jim's knuckles in his neck decided him.

"I beg your pardon," he muttered, getting down

on his knees and scrambling again to his feet as hastily as possible.

"And now, Jim," Joe continued, "if you'll just take Mabel up the road a little way around that curve, I'll finish this little account with Mr. Fleming."

Fear sprang into Fleming's eyes.

"You said you wouldn't," he began.

"I said I wouldn't thrash you in the presence of a lady, and I'm going to keep my word," said Joe, imperturbably. "Please, Jim."

He relinquished Mabel to his friend, and Jim assumed the responsibility with a cheerful grin.

"Don't hurt him, Joe," Mabel urged, hesitatingly.

"I won't kill him, Mabel," Joe answered. "I only want to impress a few things on his memory so firmly that he'll never forget them."

Jim gently urged Mabel out of sight beyond a curve two hundred feet away.

When they had vanished, Joe turned to Fleming.

"Take off your coat," he ordered curtly.

"What are you going to do?" asked Fleming, fearfully. "I warn you that if you hit me——"

"Take off your coat," repeated Joe, setting him the example.

As Fleming still hesitated, Joe reached over and slapped his face lightly.

"You seem to need a stimulant to get you going," he taunted.

Even a rat will fight when cornered, and Fleming, with an exclamation of rage, threw off his coat and rushed furiously at Joe.

The latter met him with an uppercut that shook him from head to foot. Then he sailed into Fleming and gave him a most thorough thrashing. Nor did he let up until Fleming with a highly decorated face lay helpless in the road, sobbing with shame and rage and whining for mercy.

"I guess that's enough for the present," said Joe, who had not a mark on him, as he resumed his coat. "You'd better get into that car of yours and drive home before your eyes are entirely closed. And remember that this isn't a circumstance to what you'll get if you ever dare to speak to Miss Varley again."

He turned his back upon the discomfited cad, and, jumping into the runabout, drove around the curve where he rejoined Mabel and Jim.

"Did you impress those things on his memory?" asked Jim with a grin.

"I don't think he'll forget them in a hurry," Joe laughed, though rather grimly. "And this time, luckily, there was no policeman handy."

CHAPTER XVII

PLANNING FOR REVENGE

"I HOPE you didn't injure him too much, Joe," said Mabel, snuggling close to him in the crowded little runabout.

"Do I look like a murderer?" chaffed Joe.

"But really, Joe, what did you do to him?" asked Mabel.

"Less than the rascal deserved," Joe answered. "He got a good thrashing; and it was surely coming to him. I don't think he'll ever trouble you again."

"I was so relieved when I caught sight of you in this car," sighed Mabel.

"How did it happen that you were riding with him?" asked Joe, as he threw on a little extra speed.

"He was out at the Country Club when Reggie and I reached there," Mabel replied. "I hadn't told Reggie how he had acted the last time he called at the Marlborough, because I didn't want to make trouble, and I thought after the way I cut him then he'd never bother me again. But he was

dining at the Country Club with a party of friends that we both knew, and I couldn't make a scene without being conspicuous. I avoided him, however, as much as I could.

"You know, of course, Reggie's car is in New York and we were using a hired machine. When we were getting ready to come away, I had just stepped into the car when Reggie was called to the telephone. This man, Fleming, was standing by, and before I knew it he jumped in, took the wheel, and started the auto going.

"I ordered him to stop, but he only kept going faster. He had been drinking, and he was loud and boisterous. I begged and threatened, but he only laughed and went on at a greater speed. Said he was going to get even with me for the cut I had given him the other night, and was going to take me on a long ride whether I wanted to go or not.

"I never was so frightened in all my life. I told him that my friends and my brother would punish him for what he was doing, but he only laughed and said they would have to catch him first. I hoped a policeman would stop us, for he was going at a furious rate. Then I thought of jumping, though I knew I would probably be killed if I did. I screamed, but we were going at such a rate and making so much noise that no one heard me. Then I caught sight of you, and when I looked back and waved and saw that you were

coming after us, I knew that everything would be all right. Oh, Joe, it seems as though you are always on hand when I need you most."

Her nerves had been so badly shaken that she was on the verge of tears again, and she fumbled for her absurdly little handkerchief in the cuff of her sleeve.

Joe's heart thrilled, and if Jim had not been there and he could have taken his hands from the wheel, he would have comforted her again as he had on the road.

"I'd have followed you to the end of the world," he said rather huskily.

"How lucky it was that that freight train just happened to be passing at the time," chuckled Jim. "Can't you imagine how desperate Fleming must have been when he saw the way barred?"

"It was a friend in need for us, all right," grinned Joe. "Fleming wasn't quite tipsy enough to try to butt the train off the tracks."

"He ought to sue the railroad for damages," Jim suggested.

"He might get them, too," laughed Joe. "If a jury saw his face as it is just now, they'd know that he'd been in a mix-up of some kind."

They found Reggie in a state of great bewilderment and agitation at the hotel. They had told him at the club that Fleming had driven off with Mabel, and though he had not known of the lat-

ter's offensive behavior toward his sister previously, he knew that Fleming had been drinking that afternoon and was in no condition to handle a car.

He was enormously relieved, therefore, when he saw Mabel return safely, though he wondered to see her escorted by Joe and Jim.

They told him all the circumstances and he was furious. He was for starting out at once to hunt up Fleming, but Joe dissuaded him.

"He's had a good trimming already," Joe assured him. "We don't want anything that may bring notoriety to Mabel's name. I don't imagine we'll ever be bothered by him again."

In the meantime, Fleming, left battered and disheveled on the country road, was wild with pain and rage. His heart was a tumult of seething emotions. He had undergone that afternon more humiliation than comes to most men in a lifetime. He had been thwarted in his impudent venture. He had been taken by the collar and shaken as a rat by a terrier. He had had to get down on his knees in the dirt of the road and humbly apologize. And then he had been bruised and beaten until he had begged for mercy.

He ground his teeth in unavailing fury. He had been accustomed all his life to have his way. Money had made his path easy. He was not used to the sensation of being the "under dog."

He took out his handkerchief and wiped the blood and dust from his face, brushed and adjusted his disarranged clothing as well as he could, then climbed into the car and by a roundabout route made his way back to town.

His first visit was to a Turkish bath where he attempted to have some of the soreness rubbed from his battered frame. Then he visited one of the facial artists who make a specialty of painting black eyes into some semblance of flesh color.

In this way he managed to efface the worst traces of the afternoon's encounter, though his face still remained somewhat swelled and puffy. Then he set out to make a night of it and drown his troubles in the way with which he was the most familiar.

He was seated at a table in a crowded café patronized chiefly by gamblers, when he was accosted by a friend whose dissipated face showed that he was of the same type as Fleming.

"Hello, old man," said the former. "Drinking here all by your lonesome?"

"How are you, Bixby," responded Fleming. "Sit down here and have something with me."

His friend did so and Fleming motioned to the waiter and ordered a couple of drinks.

"Why, what's the matter with your face, Fleming?" asked Bixby, as he looked at his friend curiously. "Been in a scrap?"

"Nothing like that," lied Fleming in a surly tone. "Ran a car into a ditch and had an upset."

"Doesn't improve your beauty any," laughed his friend lightly. "Still, you can't kick if you've come out of a smash with nothing worse than that. What are you doing here in Boston, anyway? Come over to see the game?"

Fleming growled a moody assent.

"They say Matson is going to pitch to-morrow," Bixby continued.

Fleming greeted the mention of the name with a lurid outburst that left no doubt as to his feelings.

His friend looked at him with surprise.

"You seem to be horribly sore," he ventured. "I thought that like most New Yorkers you'd be rooting for him to win."

"I hope they knock him out of the box," Fleming hissed, with the venom of a snake.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE PLOT

"THERE are lots of people in Boston hoping the same thing," replied Bixby. "But I think they're due to be disappointed. It isn't often they send that boy back to the shower."

"He can be beaten like any one else," snarled Fleming, his gorge rising as he heard Joe praised.

"Sure," conceded Bixby. "The best of them have an off day at times. But they say he's in splendid shape just now. That arm of his is certainly a dandy."

Fleming could have told him better than any one else just how good that stalwart arm was. Not four hours had passed since he had tested its strength. And he knew that it was good for something besides baseball.

But not for the world would he have had that beating come to light. It would make him the laughing stock of the clubs. He was sure that Joe himself would not tell of it nor would Reggie, because of their desire to prevent Mabel's name being dragged into the affair. So that his

secret was safe, unless he himself should reveal it while he was in his cups.

"He's a false alarm," he growled. "Lots of these fellows start out as though they were going to set the league afire, but after a year or two you find them back again in the minors. They go up like a rocket and come down like the stick."

"Well, if he's a false alarm, he's deceived a good many people," answered Bixby with a diminished respect for his friend's judgment. "All the dope is that he's going to be another Hughson."

They drained their glasses and ordered more liquor. While they were waiting for it to come, Bixby glanced around the café. His eye rested on a table in the further corner of the room where three men were sitting.

"Do you see that big fellow over there with the other two?" he asked Fleming.

"I see him," replied Fleming, shortly.

"Well, that's Big Connelly the notorious Chicago sporting man," returned Bixby.

"Well, what if it is?" said Fleming, indifferently.

"Oh, nothing special, except that he seems to feel a good deal the same way about Matson that you do. I was sitting near him just before I came over here to join you and he was grouching to beat the band."

"Is that so!" ejaculated Fleming with a quick-

ening of interest. "What does he seem to have against him?"

"Oh, that's more than I know," was the reply. "But he seems to have a bitter grudge from the way he talks."

"Do you know Connelly personally?" demanded Fleming.

"In a way I do," replied Bixby. "I met him at a prize fight once in Chicago and was introduced to him. I don't know whether he'd remember me or not. But why do you ask?"

"I'd like to meet him if you don't mind," answered Fleming.

Bixby was somewhat surprised but did not object, and the two wended their way among the tables till they came to the one in question.

"How are you, Mr. Connelly?" said Bixby. "I don't know whether you recall me, but I met you at that Welsh-Leonard bout in Chicago last year. Bixby is my name."

It was Connelly's business to recollect faces, or to pretend to even if he did not.

"Sure, I remember you," he replied with the real or assumed heartiness of his class. "Glad to see you again, Mr. Bixby."

"This is my friend, Mr. Fleming," introduced Bixby.

Connelly's shrewd eyes appraised Fleming as one of the "idle rich," the plucking of whom had

often feathered his nest, and his greeting was cordial.

"Won't you sit down and have something with us?" he inquired, introducing the two men who were with him and making room at the table.

"We'd be glad to if we're not intruding," replied Bixby.

"Not at all," said Connelly, and to seal the acquaintance he ordered a bottle of champagne.

It was not long before they were talking freely, and it goes without saying that in the one engrossing thought that prevailed everywhere they fell to discussing the World Series.

Connelly—"Big" Connelly, to give him the name by which he was usually referred to—was, as his name implied, a ponderous man with a hard, smooth-shaven face and cold, calculating eyes. He was a hardened "sport" and a shrewd politician, with strings out everywhere in the underworld that he could pull when he felt so inclined. He was wholly unscrupulous and stopped at nothing to achieve his ends.

"I hear you're expecting Boston to win the Series, Mr. Connelly," remarked Bixby.

"I've picked 'em to win," agreed Connelly, "and I think they would to a dead certainty if it weren't for one thing, or perhaps I ought to say one man."

"And that one man is Matson, I suppose?" put in Fleming.

"Exactly," frowned Connelly. "With him out of the way it would be a walk-over for the Sox."

"You'd go into mourning if he broke a leg or anything like that," grinned Bixby.

"No such luck," grunted Connelly. "Nothing ever happens to that bird. He must carry a horseshoe around with him. I came all the way from Chicago to see Brennan's team win, only to see Matson smear a defeat on them. But it isn't that I'm sore about especially."

"Some little personal feeling, eh?" ventured Fleming, tentatively.

"He turned me down on a little deal once," Connelly spat out viciously, "and I've vowed to get even with him some time."

He refrained from explaining that the "deal" referred to had been a crooked bit of work that he had dared to suggest to Joe at the time the latter was with St. Louis and the club was struggling to get to the head of the second division. Not only had Joe rejected the proposition hard and instantly, but Connelly had only saved his face from disfigurement by beating a hasty and undignified retreat. From that moment he had cherished a bitter grudge against the man who had humiliated him, and this was intensified at the present by the young pitcher's popularity.

"Yes, sir-ee," he grunted vindictively, "I'd give

ten thousand dollars to have Matson put on the shelf."

"You could have him put out of the way for a good deal less than that," suggested one of his companions, an evil-faced man named Moriarity. "There are fellows in New York or Boston who would do it for a thousand."

"Nix on that stuff," growled Connelly. "You could get away with a good many things, but you couldn't get away with that. You might as well try to do away with the President. Any one who puts the extinguisher on Matson would go to the electric chair sure, and nothing could save him. Even if he got off, the public would tear him to pieces. Forget it."

Moriarity was squelched and shrank back before the big man's disapproval.

"Just the same," ruminated Connelly, "I wish I could think of something that didn't have any come-back."

A thought suddenly came into Fleming's mind, but he hesitated to express it in the presence of Bixby, who was an ardent partisan of the New Yorks. He sat toying with his glass and turning the idea over in his mind.

It was a relief to him when Bixby rose a few minutes later and left them on the ground of an engagement. Fleming hitched his chair a little closer to Connelly's.

"I've just thought of something that may help you out a little, Mr. Connelly," he began.

Connelly looked at him in curiosity.

"Let's hear it," he said eagerly.

CHAPTER XIX

WEAVING THE WEB

THE four at the table put their heads together, and Fleming lowered his voice so that he might not be overheard by those in the adjacent chairs.

"Of course, I don't know whether we can make the thing work," commenced Fleming a little diffidently, "but it won't do any harm to figure it out and see what there is in it."

"Sure thing," said Connelly, encouragingly.

"As you say, it won't do to injure Matson physically," Fleming went on. "Though nothing would suit me better," he added with sudden savageness, as the stinging recollection of that afternoon's events came back to him.

"I see that he isn't exactly popular with you," grinned Connelly. He reflected that this man might be a valuable aid to him, if he nourished a personal grudge.

But it was not in Fleming's mind to betray himself, and he pulled up short.

"As I was saying," he continued, without re-

plying to Connelly's suggestion, "the public wouldn't stand for a minute for any rough work with Matson. But we can injure him in other ways."

"Just how?" asked Connelly.

"Well," asked Fleming in turn, "what do you think is the most important thing in the world to him just now?"

"The World Series," replied Connelly, promptly.

"Exactly," assented Fleming. "It means more to him just now than anything else on earth. It means money and reputation and a big future if he wins. Now if we could knock him out of winning, we could hit him in his pride, his prestige and his pocketbook all at the same time, and hit him hard."

"No doubt of that," admitted Connelly, "but I don't see just yet what you're driving at."

"What I'm driving at is this," explained Fleming. "We've got, in some way, to keep Matson from playing. You know as well as I do that he is the mainstay of the Giant team. That's especially the case since Hughson was hurt. Matson's the only reliable pitcher they have left. Markwith is as wild as a hawk and may go up in the air at any time. Barclay has the stuff, but he's green and inexperienced.

"The Red Sox now have won two games to the

Giants' one. The New Yorks must take three more to win the Series. They're counting on Matson to pull out two of them at least, perhaps all three. I tell you he's the king pin in the Giant machine just now, and without him the whole team would go to pieces."

"I see your point all right," said Connelly, "but with the rough stuff barred I don't exactly see how we are going to keep Matson from playing." He pondered the problem for a moment with knitted brows. Then suddenly an idea came to him, and be brought his fist down on the table with a resounding thump. "Great Scott!" he cried. "I believe I've got the very thing!"

"Let's have it," demanded Fleming, eagerly.

"There's a pal of mine in this burg," explained Connelly, "that's having all sorts of trouble with a nephew of his that's going to the dogs as fast as he can. The boy has put over one or two phony checks already that my friend has had to settle for to keep the kid out of jail.

"My pal has the idea that if the boy could be shipped out of the country for a long voyage it would get him away from the gang he's running with and might put him in the way of keeping straight. He was talking to me about it only yesterday and I promised to help him carry it through.

"You see, I happen to know an old sea captain

who's loading up now at a Boston wharf for a trip to South America. He's a tough old nut, and he'll do almost anything for me, especially if a little money is slipped to him to sweeten the job. I was going to propose to him to have this kid I'm telling you about bundled on board and carried away with him. But that matter can wait. Now suppose we're able to get Matson on board in place of the other fellow."

"Great!" cried Fleming excitedly.

"It's too hot and crowded in here," declared Connelly, rising. "Let's get out somewhere and fix up the details."

He dismissed his henchmen, and he and Fleming strolled down the street till they came to the Common. They chose a seat in a remote part, and began to figure out how they could carry their plan to success.

"It's too bad that it's too late to put the thing through to-night," regretted Connelly. "I'd like to put him on the blink for to-morrow's game."

"We can't do that of course," replied Fleming. "But even if he wins to-morrow's game, that will only even up the Series. There'll have to be at least two more games played and maybe three. We'll get him then."

"I'll go down and see the captain the first thing in the morning," said Connelly. "I'm sure he'll fall in with it all right. Then the only thing that

remains to be done is to get Matson within his reach without rousing suspicion."

"But that's a mighty big thing," returned Fleming doubtfully.

"What time does their train for New York leave to-morrow night?" asked Connelly.

"Somewhere between eleven and twelve, I believe," answered Fleming.

"That'll give us all the time we want," declared Connelly confidently. "Now listen to me."

"Not quite so loud," admonished Fleming, looking around him nervously.

The conspirators lowered their voices and talked earnestly. It was nearly midnight when they parted.

The next morning dawned brightly and there was every promise of a glorious day.

"How are you feeling, Joe?" asked Jim, as the chums were getting ready to go down to breakfast.

"Fine and dandy and full of pitching," replied Joe blithely.

"That sounds good," rejoiced Jim. "Didn't sprain your arm on Fleming yesterday?" he inquired with a grin.

"Not so that you could notice it," laughed Joe. "In fact it was just the exercise I needed. It made up for having no other practice, kept me from going stale, as it were."

"It took real friendship to stay around that curve when I was fairly aching to see you do that fellow up," declared Jim.

"I'll do as much for you some time," Joe consoled him.

They had barely finished their meal when word was brought to Joe that there was somebody waiting in the lobby to see him.

He went out promptly and was surprised and pleased to find Mr. Anderson, the old G. A. R. man who had been knocked down by the automobile on the Long Island road.

They shook hands heartily.

"I'm mighty glad to see you!" exclaimed Joe. "I didn't expect you'd be able to get back to Boston so soon. Those Islip doctors must have been right on the job."

"They fixed me up fine," agreed Louis Anderson. "Everybody's been mighty good and kind to me since I was hurt. You especially, Mr. Matson. I want to thank you for the money you left for me with the doctors, and which they handed to me when I was coming away."

"Oh, that's all right," said Joe, "and half of that was from Mr. Barclay, the young man who was with me. Here he comes now," he added, as Jim sauntered out of the dining room and joined them.

He greeted the old man heartily, who thanked

him also for his kindness. Jim waved it away as a trifle.

"Found out anything yet as to who those fellows were that ran you down?" he inquired.

"Not a thing," said the old man sadly. "I only wish I could. I'd make them pay for what they did to me."

"And we'd be witnesses for you," declared Joe warmly. "It was one of the most brutal things I ever saw."

"They ought to be made to pay up handsomely," added Jim, "and they'd be mighty lucky to get off with that."

"I'm afraid there isn't much chance of ever finding them," the old man said. "But it wasn't that I came to see you especially about this morning, Mr. Matson. I heard something last night that I think you ought to know."

"Is that so?" asked Joe pleasantly. "What is it?"

"I was on the Common last night," Anderson replied. "It was so close and hot that I couldn't sleep, and I thought it might do me good to get the air. I sat down at the foot of a big tree and I guess I must have gone to sleep. I was waked up by hearing voices and found that two men were sitting on a bench the other side of the tree.

"I didn't pay much attention till I heard one of them mention your name. Even then I thought

they were talking about baseball. But then I heard one of them say mean things about you. I perked up then and I heard enough to know that they were planning to harm you in some way."

Both ball players were listening now with the utmost attention.

"Did you hear them call each other by name?" asked Joe.

"One of them spoke to the other as Mr. Fleming——"

"Fleming!" interrupted Jim, as he shot a quick glance at Joe.

CHAPTER XX

A STIRRING BATTLE

"FLEMING's got busy in a hurry!" exclaimed Joe. "But just what was it they were planning to do?"

"That's just the trouble," answered Anderson. "I don't rightly know just what mischief they were cooking up. They kept their voices pretty low most of the time, and then, too, my hearing isn't any too good, especially since I had that accident. Once I heard one of them say: 'It'll put him on the toboggan all right.'

"I didn't dare to stir for fear they'd see me, or I'd have tried to edge around the tree so as to get closer to them. But from the number of times they spoke your name and the ugly way they did it, I was sure they had it in for you.

"I stayed there until they went away and the last thing one of them said was: 'I'll set the thing going the first thing in the morning.' And the other one said: 'It can't start too quick for me.' "

"Did you see what kind of looking men they were?" asked Joe.

"I peeked out at them as they were leaving, but all I could see was that one of them was a big, heavy man and the other was slimmer and seemed to have something the matter with his face. It was puffed up as though he had the toothache."

"Fleming, sure enough!" ejaculated Jim, grimly.

"I guess I know how he got that toothache," Joe remarked grimly.

"Why, is he any one you know?" inquired Anderson.

"I'm pretty sure I do," replied Joe. "There aren't likely to be two men named Fleming who want to do me up."

"Do be careful now, Mr. Matson," the old man urged. "I can't bear to think of anything happening to you after all that you have done for me."

"I'll keep my eyes open," answered Joe. "And I can't thank you enough, Mr. Anderson, for the trouble you've taken to come and tell me about this."

"It's little enough," answered Anderson. "I only wish I could do more. But I know you must be pretty busy just now, with the big game coming on, so I'll just jog along. Hope you have luck today, Mr. Matson."

He said good-bye and went away. After he had

gone the two friends looked at each other very long and thoughtfully.

"What do you make of it, Joe?" asked Jim at length.

"Why, I hardly know," replied Baseball Joe, slowly. "I wish the old man had been able to get something a little more definite. The only thing that seems clear is that that snake is trying to make trouble for me. But, pshaw! 'Threatened men live long,' you know, and I'm not going to worry about it."

But Jim was not inclined to dismiss the matter so lightly.

"Do you think they might try anything like the drugged coffee game?" he inquired. "Hartley got away with that once on you, and it might be done again."

"Not likely," answered Joe. "But what's the use of worrying? I'm going to put it right out of my mind for the present. I've got to pitch this afternoon and I'm not going to think of anything else."

True to his nefarious promise, Connelly, at just about the same time that morning, was having a private conversation with the captain of a tramp ship that was lying at a wharf far down on the Boston harbor front.

The tramp was a battered, rusty-looking old hooker that seemed to be about as tough and dis-

reputable looking as the skipper, who was shouting orders to his crew when Connelly came on board.

There was a mutual recognition.

"How are you, Mr. Connelly?" the captain said, as he came forward to greet the newcomer. "And what is it that's bringing you so far from Chicago?"

"How are you, Captain Hennessy?" returned Connelly, cordially grasping the gnarled hand that was extended to him. "I happened to be in town on business and I heard you were loading up here. How's the carrying trade just now?"

"None too good," replied the skipper. "What with freights 'way down and the competition of the big liners, it's all we can do to make a living these days. But come down to the cabin and wet your whistle. Talking's dry business."

Connelly needed no urging, and they were soon seated at a table in the cramped cabin, with a bottle and glasses between them.

They talked of indifferent matters for a time, and then Connelly broached the object of his visit.

"Where are you going this trip?" he asked.

"Down the South American coast as far as Rio Janeiro," was the answer. "Porto Rico will be my first stop."

"And when do you expect to start?"

"I may finish up loading to-day if I have luck," replied the skipper. If so, I'll get my clearance papers and slip out early to-morrow morning."

"I suppose you've done a bit of shanghaiing in your day, eh, Hennessy?" remarked Connelly, jocularly.

"Many's the time, especially in the old sailing days," grinned Hennessy, a light of evil reminiscence in his little eyes. "But there's little call for it nowadays."

"I was just wondering," went on Connelly, "if you'd do me a favor and take a fellow along with you on this trip that doesn't want to go."

"It might be managed," returned the skipper a little doubtfully.

"There'd be a nice little slice of money in it for you," Connelly explained. "You see it's a young fellow that's got in with a wild gang ashore, and his folks think a sea voyage wouldn't do him any harm."

Hennessy's hesitation vanished at the mention of money and his eyes had an avaricious gleam.

"Sure I'll do it!" he exclaimed. And then, with voices slightly lowered, the pair perfected their scheme.

A little later Connelly left the ship and walked rapidly away with a triumphant glint in his vulture-like eyes.

He found his confederate waiting for him in the same café where they had met the night before. Fleming jumped up from the table at which he had been sitting and came rapidly forward to meet him.

"Well?" he said eagerly.

"It's all right," responded Connelly. "It didn't take much urging to turn the trick. I told you he'd be only too glad to oblige me."

He went over the events of the morning rapidly, and Fleming exulted.

"So far, so good," he gloated.

"But the hardest part is yet to come," Connelly reminded him. "We've got the stage set for the play, and the next thing is to have the chief actor on hand when the curtain rings up." And then the two talked the matter over in detail.

The enthusiasm at Braves Field that afternoon was at fever heat. The Boston rooters turned out in the biggest crowd of the Series so far. The last game their favorites had won filled them with confidence, and they were out to cheer their pets on to another victory.

Even the knowledge that Matson was to pitch for the Giants, which had been featured in the morning papers, was not sufficient to daunt them. They felt that luck was with the Red Sox, as had already been shown in the accident to Hughson and the rain that had snatched the second game

from the New Yorks. And that luck, they felt sure, would persist. The wish may have been father to the thought, but there was no doubt as to the optimism that existed in the home town of the Red Sox.

The Giants faced the test with quiet confidence. The odd game was against them, but they looked forward serenely to evening up the score that afternoon with Baseball Joe in the box.

McRae had a little talk with his team in the clubhouse before they went out for practice.

"Go right in, boys, and eat them up," he exhorted them. "Those fellows never saw the day they could beat you if you were doing your best.

"They'll probably put in Roth against you. He's a good southpaw, but southpaws are just your meat. Look out for that 'bean' ball of his. He's sure to use it in trying to drive you away from the plate. But don't let it rattle you for a minute. Be quick to dodge, though, for I don't want to have any of you hurt at this stage of the Series.

"And don't let Matson do it all. He can't carry the whole team on his shoulders. No matter how well he pitches, he can't win unless you bat in some runs. Hand him a few right from the start."

"Little old New York is rooting for you to win, boys. Don't fall down on the job. You'll own

the city if you come back with a row of Boston scalps at your belt. And I know you can do it if you try. Go in and wallop the life out of 'em."

There was a cheer which told McRae that his words had gotten "under the skin," and the Giants dashed briskly out on the field.

CHAPTER XXI

EVENING UP THE SCORE

WHEN the gong rang, the Giants started out as though they were going to sew up the game then and there.

Burkett set the ball rolling with a wicked drive through the box that got past Roth before he could gauge it. Larry followed suit with a smoking hit to left. A prettily placed sacrifice bunt by Denton advanced both men a base. Roth struck out Willis on three pitched balls, but Becker came to the rescue with a line drive over second that scored Burkett easily, though Larry was put out as he made a great slide for the rubber.

The net result was only one run, but the most encouraging feature of the inning was the exhibition of free hitting.

"Three clean hits in one time at bat is going some," Robson exulted.

"The boys seem to have their batting clothes on for fair," responded McRae, vastly pleased.

"I doubt if that bird will come again for more,"

judged "Robbie." "They'll probably take him out and put Fraser in."

Joe was in fine fettle, and he showed his appreciation of the lead his mates had given him by retiring the Red Sox without a man seeing first base.

Contrary to Robson's prediction, the Boston manager elected still to pin his faith to Roth, who tightened up after his bad start and for the next three innings held the Giants scoreless.

He was helped in this by the superb support given him. Both the outfield and infield were on their toes all the time, and drives that ordinarily would have gone for hits were turned into outs in dazzling fashion.

One magnificent catch by Thompson, the Red Sox catcher, was the feature of the fourth inning. Iredell, who was at bat, sent up a sky-piercing foul. Thompson, Hobbs and Roth started for it.

"I've got it, I've got it!" yelled Thompson.

The others stopped and Thompson kept on.

The ball swerved toward the Boston dugout, where the substitutes and extra pitchers of the team were sitting.

A shout of warning went up, but Thompson did not falter. With his eye on the ball and his hands outstretched, he plunged ahead.

He grabbed the ball in a terrific forward lunge and went head over heels into the dugout, where

his comrades caught him and saved him from injury. But he still clutched the ball as he was put on his feet, and a tempest of applause went up in which even the Giants and their partisans could not help joining.

"Suffering cats!" exclaimed McRae. "That was a miracle catch."

"Never saw a better one in all my years on the ball field," Robson conceded generously.

Thompson was forced to remove his cap again and again before the crowds would stop their cheering, and the play put still greater stiffness into the Boston's defence.

But they needed something more than a stone wall defence. They had a lead of one run to overcome, and at the rate Joe was mowing them down, this seemed a tremendous obstacle.

Joe had never felt in better form. He had superb control and had not yet issued a pass. His mastery of the ball seemed almost uncanny. It seemed to understand him and obeyed his slightest wish.

His speed was dazzling, and the ball zipped over the plate as though propelled by a gun.

"Why don't you line it out?" growled the Boston manager, as one of his players came back discomfited to the bench.

"How can I hit 'em if I can't see 'em," the player grunted in excuse.

But Joe did not rely wholly upon speed. Every once in a while he mixed in a slow one that looked as big as a balloon as it sailed lazily toward the plate. But when the batter almost broke his back in reaching for it, the ball would drop suddenly beneath the bat and go plunk into the catcher's mitt.

"If I only dared to pitch that boy in all the remaining games of the Series!" thought McRae to himself. "He's just making monkeys of those fellows."

For six full innings the score remained unchanged.

Then the storm broke, and a perfect deluge of hits rained from the Giants' bats.

Becker began it by whaling out a terrific drive to center that netted three bases. Iredell followed with a one cushion jolt between second and short that scored Becker. Joe pumped one to center that was good for a base; and on the futile throw made to third to catch Iredell, Joe by fast running got as far as second. Mylert went out on an infield fly, but the burly Burkett clouted a screaming triple to right, scoring both of his mates while he rested, grinning, at third.

Pandemonium broke loose among the Giant rooters. Roth, at a signal from his manager, drew off his glove, and Landers took his place.

But the Giants were on a batting spree and

would not be denied. Larry and Denton cracked out singles. Willis went out on a long fly to right, but Curry pounded out a two-bagger that cleared the bases. A moment later he was caught stealing third and the inning ended.

It had netted the Giants six runs, and they were now in the lead by seven to nothing.

"Talk about a Waterloo!" shouted Jim, as he fairly hugged Joe in his delight.

"What do you think they're doing around the bulletin boards in New York just now?" Joe laughed happily.

He was about to pull on his glove to go into the box when McRae stopped him.

"I guess you've done enough for to-day, Joe," he said. "I want to save that arm of yours all I can, and with the lead we've got now the game seems to be cinched. I'm going to put Markwith in for the rest of it."

Markwith had few superiors when it came to working for a few innings. His arm was fresh, and his terrific speed carried him through, although he was scored on once in the ninth.

The Giants, "just for luck," added two more runs in the remaining innings, and when they gathered up their bats at the end of the game the score was nine to one in the Giants' favor.

"This is the end of a perfect day," chanted Jim as the hilarious team hurried from the field.

"Not quite perfect," objected Larry with a grin.

"Why, what more do you want, you old glutton?" put in Willis.

"I'd like to have made it a goose egg for the Sox," responded Larry.

"Some folks never know when they have enough," remarked Joe. "I'm not kicking a single bit. That was mighty sweet hitting the boys did to-day," he added.

"And mighty sweet pitching, too," returned Larry. "Don't forget that."

The train did not leave until 11:30 P. M.; so that they had ample time for leisurely preparation. Joe and Jim dined with their party, who were quite as joyous over the result of the game as themselves. After dinner the young men took a quiet little stroll with Mabel and Clara and returned about nine.

The girls had left them to make ready for their trip, when Joe was summoned to the telephone.

"Hello, Joe," came over the wire. "This is McRae talking."

"Why, hello, Mac," Joe answered. "I didn't recognize your voice at first."

"The connection isn't very good, I guess," was the answer. "But listen, Joe. I want you to do me a favor."

"Sure thing," replied Joe promptly. "What is it?"

CHAPTER XXII

A HOLE IN THE WEB

"It's like this," came the response. "I'm making a call on an old yachting friend of mine whom I always drop in to see when I'm in Boston. He's a thirty-third degree fan, but he's laid up with rheumatism and can't get to the games. I've been bragging to him what a pitcher you are, and he wants to meet you. Would you mind running down just for a few minutes? It won't take you long."

"Of course I will," answered Joe. "Where are you and just how can I get to you?"

"His yacht is lying off Spring Street wharf. He'll have a motor boat there to meet you and bring you over. A taxi will bring you to the wharf in ten minutes."

"I'll be there," said Joe.

"That's bully. Good-bye."

"Good-bye."

Joe hung up the receiver and looked around for Jim to leave a message with him explaining his short absence. But Barclay was not in sight at

the moment, and Joe hastily put on his hat, dashed out, hailed a taxicab, and a moment later was being whizzed uptown.

Not more than ten minutes had passed before the cab drew up at the end of the pier, which at that time was almost deserted.

"Here you are, sir," announced the driver.

Joe stepped out and paid him.

A large motor boat lay at the pier. As Joe looked around, a man stepped forward.

"This Mr. Matson, sir?" he questioned respectfully.

"Yes," answered Joe.

"Mr. McRae told us to wait for you here, sir. The yacht's lying a little way out. Will you step on board, sir?"

Joe stepped into the boat, the moorings were cast off, and to the "chug chug" of the engine the boat darted out on the dark waters of the bay.

Joe took his seat on a padded cushion at the stern, noticing as he did so that there were several husky figures sprawling up near the bow.

The cool night air was very grateful after the heat of the day, and Joe took off his straw hat, so as to get the full benefit of the breeze.

Several minutes passed, and Joe began to wonder that they had not reached the yacht where McRae was waiting for him.

"How far out did you say the yacht was?" he asked casually of the man who was steering.

The man grunted, but made no intelligible reply.

"I asked you how far out the yacht was," Joe repeated, a vague uneasiness beginning to take possession of him.

At this, a huge figure detached itself from the group forward and came toward him. It was Hennessy, a sour and evil smile upon his weather-beaten face.

"I never heard the old hooker called a yacht before," he grinned, "but if you must know, it's quite a tidy way down the bay before we come to it."

"Why, Mr. McRae said it was lying just off the wharf!" exclaimed Joe.

"Perhaps Mr. McRae says more than his prayers," was Hennessy's surly reply.

The words, with all they implied, struck Joe with the force of a blow. Like a flash, the warning of Louis Anderson that morning came to his mind.

"Look here!" he cried, starting to his feet. "What does this mean? What game are you up to?"

"You'll find out soon enough, my bucko," answered Hennessy. "In the meantime you'd better take my tip and keep a civil tongue in your head.

My temper's rather short, as those who have sailed with me can tell you."

"Don't threaten me!" warned Joe, all his fighting blood coming to the surface.

At his menacing attitude, the men in front rose to their feet and moved forward. There were three of them, which made the combined force five in number, counting Hennessy and the man at the wheel.

Joe cast a swift glance around. There were no boats near at hand which could be reached by a shout. Nor did he have a ghost of a chance against the husky figures standing about him. For the moment the advantage was with the enemy.

An agony of self-reproach overwhelmed him. Why had he so lightly taken it for granted that it was McRae at the telephone? Why had he let the warning of Anderson slip from his mind?

He had fallen into a trap! Where were they taking him? What was their object? He thought of Mabel and his family. Into what dread and consternation they would be plunged by his disappearance! And his comrades on the team! What would they think of him?

Hennessy had been watching him keenly.

"Easy does it," he remarked. "If you want a rough house you can have it, but take a fool's advice and don't go to starting it. We're too many for you."

There was sound sense in the advice, unpalatable as it was, and Joe recognized it. He must temporize. He wanted to dash his fist into the ugly face before him, and he promised himself that luxury later on. But just now he must depend on that nimble wit of his that had so often helped him to outguess an opponent.

He sank back in his seat with an affected resignation that was calculated to put his enemy off guard. It did so in the present case, as Hennessy chose to consider the action as a surrender.

"Now you're acting sensible," he grunted. "There ain't no use butting your head against a stone wall."

"Where are you taking me?" asked Joe in a lifeless tone.

"I don't know as there's any harm in telling you, now that we've got so far," Hennessy answered. "I'm taking you on board my ship, the *Walrus*."

"What for?"

"Just to give you a little sea air," grinned Hennessy. "Your folks thought it would do you good to take a short v'yage down the coast."

"Down the coast?"

"South American coast," replied the captain shortly. "You're on your way to Rio Janeiro."

Rio Janeiro! Joe's heart thumped violently.

"You say my folks are in on this," he said, try-

ing to keep his voice calm. "Just what do you mean by that?"

"Oh, I've heard all about that gang you're running with and those phony checks, and the like of that," answered Hennessy.

"Phony checks?" gasped Joe.

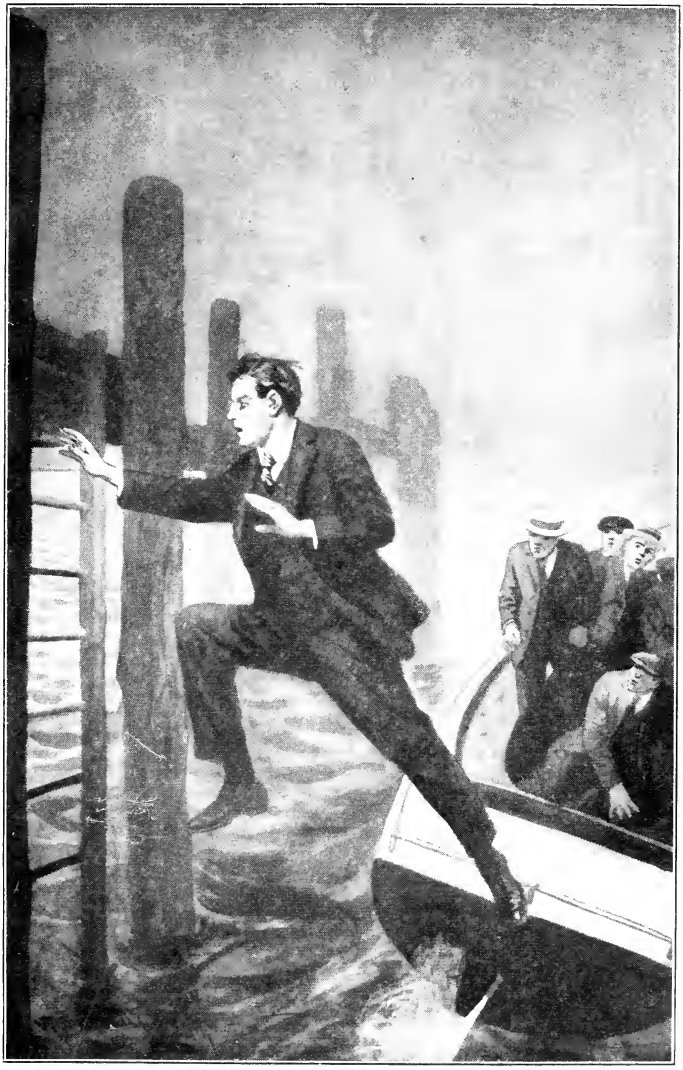
"Don't be playing innocent," growled Hennessy roughly. "You know well enough what I mean."

"But you've got the wrong man," persisted Joe. "I don't know what you're talking about. I never ran with a gang or handled bad checks. You've picked me up, thinking I was somebody else. I'm a baseball player, a member of the New York Giants."

"They told me you'd probably say something like that," retorted Hennessy placidly. "But you can't pull any wool over my eyes. I'm too old a hand for that."

The man was obdurate, and Joe ceased his useless efforts to convince him. But he knew now that his case was desperate, and he summoned all his coolness to cope with the situation. One project after another raced through his brain, to be dismissed as useless.

While they had been talking, the motor boat had made rapid progress. But now a heavy haze was settling over the water and the engine slowed down a little.



JOE JUMPED ON THE RAIL AND LEAPED FOR THE PIER, SIX FEET DISTANT.

"Look out, you swab!" shouted Hennessy angrily to the steersman as the end of a pier loomed up before them. "Do you want to smash the boat?"

The man veered off. But in that instant Joe had acted.

His fist shot out, knocking Hennessy off his seat. Like lightning, Joe jumped on the rail and leaped for the pier, six feet distant.

It was a long jump from an unstable footing, but Joe made it and clutched one of the spiles. It was slimy and slippery, but he held on with all the strength of his trained muscles. His feet, swinging wildly about, touched the rung of a ladled. In another moment he swarmed up it, and stood panting and breathless on the wharf.

"Back her! Back her!" screamed Hennessy from the fog. "Don't let him get away!"

Joe chuckled, as he heard the wild splashing of the water and the pounding of the screw.

"Good-bye, Captain!" he sang out. "Hope I didn't spoil your beauty. Give my regards to Rio Janeiro."

CHAPTER XXIII

TAKING THE LEAD

BASEBALL JOE wasted little time in reaching the end of the pier. He hailed a cab at the first thoroughfare he came to and was soon once more at the hotel.

He found his party ready to start and wondering where he had gone.

"Where on earth have you been, Joe?" asked Mabel. "We were beginning to get worried about you."

"Oh, I was just called away by a telephone message," Joe parried.

He had no desire to let the women of the little group know that he was being made the victim of any hostile machinations. They would have magnified the danger and worried without ceasing.

"Well, it's all right as long as you are here now," Mabel said brightly, flashing Joe one of the dazzling smiles that always made his heart beat more quickly.

There had been a tenderer note in her voice ever since he had rescued her from the reckless

ride on which Fleming had taken her. She blushed when she remembered how she had taken refuge in his arms in her first paroxysms of relief. It had been instinctive, and she had fled to them as naturally as she would have gone to those of her brother in similar circumstances. How strongly those arms had held her and how absolutely safe they had made her feel!

Barclay had been looking curiously at Joe ever since the latter had returned. He had been more alarmed than he would have cared to confess by his unexplained absence. Knowing his chum so well, he could see that even now he was laboring under repressed excitement. But his chance for an explanation did not come until some time later. It was only after they had bestowed their charges in their Pullman car and had said good-night and had gone forward to the car in which the Giants were quartered, that Jim was able to relieve his impatience.

"Come on now, old man, and tell me all about it," he demanded.

"All about what?"

"You know well enough. Quit your stalling and come across with the story. Where did you go? Who called you up? Get it off your chest."

Joe readily complied. There was very little he ever kept from Jim, and just now he felt especially the need of a confidant.

Jim listened with growing excitement and indignation.

"The hounds!" he exclaimed hotly.

"That doesn't begin to express it," said Joe. "It was about as dirty a piece of business as I ever heard of. It's worthy of a reptile like Fleming."

"I'd like to have him here this minute," cried Jim. "I'd repeat the dose you gave him yesterday."

"What puzzles me is as to who was in cahoots with him," mused Joe. "He couldn't have put a thing like that through alone. Think of the wires that had to be pulled to carry out the plan."

"I suppose the big fellow that Anderson heard talking with Fleming was at the bottom of that," conjectured Jim. "It surely was smooth work."

"Oh, it was all prearranged carefully enough," agreed Joe. "There wasn't anything left to chance."

"It was pretty slick, using McRae's name to get you there, too," commented Jim. "They knew you'd do anything he asked that was reasonable. What beats me is how they could counterfeit his voice so that you were taken in by it."

"Well, you know how it is," Joe replied. "When any one at the telephone gives you his name you take it for granted. It sounded a little strange, but it was a pretty good imitation at that.

Probably they've rung in some actor who's accustomed to mimic voices. He could easily have hung around the hotel and listened to Mac talking, till he got a pretty good line on his voice. Where I blame myself is that I hadn't kept Anderson's warning in mind. But I was thinking of other things——"

"Yes," interrupted Jim dryly. "You'd just been walking with a charming young lady. I understand."

He grinned quizzically, and Joe made a friendly thrust toward him which he adroitly ducked.

"Well, 'all's well that ends well,'" Joe quoted.

"If it *is* ended," said Jim seriously. "They may cook up something else, now that this has failed."

"I guess they've shot their bolt," replied Joe lightly. "This will probably discourage them, and they'll give it up. But it gives me the cold shivers to think how nearly they put this scheme of theirs across."

"It was just touch and go," agreed Jim. "You did some mighty quick thinking, old man," he added admiringly.

"It was a case of must," answered Joe. "I just had to think quickly, or it would have been all up."

"By the way, are you going to say anything to McRae about this?"

"What's the use?" returned Joe. "There's

nothing he could do. It would only worry him and make him hopping mad, and he's got enough on his mind as it is. Besides, I couldn't tell him the whole story without bringing Mabel's name into it, and I'd rather cut off my hand than do that."

Just at that moment McRae came through the car. He was in high spirits, and greeted them cordially as he sat down by them.

"Wouldn't you boys better have your berths made up?" he inquired. "It's getting pretty late and I want you to be in good shape for to-morrow. We'll want that game badly, too. It isn't enough to have evened up. We want to jump right out into the lead."

"I suppose you're going to pitch Markwith to-morrow," said Joe, after having signaled the porter and told him to prepare the berths.

"I'm not sure yet," answered McRae thoughtfully. "He certainly pitched pretty good ball in those last three innings to-day, and I'll see how he warms up to-morrow before the game. But just at this present moment I'm inclined to pitch Barclay."

Jim's heart began to thump. He had not expected to figure in the Series, except perhaps as a relief pitcher. It was his first year in the big league and though he had shown some "crackerjack stuff," he was not supposed to be seasoned

enough to work a full game at such a critical time.

To tell the truth, he would not have had a chance of taking part if it had not been for the accident to Hughson. McRae was famous for the way he stuck to his veterans, and though he believed in "young blood," he always took a long time in developing his new pitchers before he would trust them in a game on which a great deal depended. Sometimes he kept them on the bench for a year or two, absorbing "inside stuff" and watching the older players before he considered them ripe for "a killing."

But he was hard put to it now to handle his crippled staff to the best advantage. He did not dare to use Joe too often for fear of hurting his effectiveness by overwork. Markwith was brilliant but unreliable. Sometimes he would pitch superbly for the better part of a game. Then all too often there would be a fatal inning when he would lose his "stuff" entirely, and before he could be replaced the game would have gone to pieces.

"I may pitch Jim to-morrow," McRae went on reflectively. "If he wins, we will have the edge on the Sox, and I can take a chance on Red for Friday's game. Then I'll have you, Joe, to put the kibosh on them in the final game on Saturday.

"But if Jim loses to-morrow the Sox will have three games tucked away and only need one more.

In that case, Joe, I'm going to pitch you Friday to even up and Saturday to win. Think you can stand two games in succession and win out?"

"I'd work my head off to do it," replied Joe earnestly.

"It'll put a big strain on your head and arm too," said the manager, "but you'll have all winter to rest up in afterwards, and we may have to chance it."

He chatted with them a minute or two longer, and then, as the berth had been made up, he left them.

"Gee whiz, Joe!" ejaculated Jim, as he crept into the upper berth, his teeth chattering in his excitement. "To think of me pitching a game in the World Series before that whale of a crowd at the Polo Grounds!"

"It's the chance of your life, Jim," responded Joe. "You're made as a pitcher if you win. And you will win, too. I'm sure of it. You had those fellows right on your staff in that inning or two you pitched at Boston."

"Well, here's hoping," murmured Jim, getting in between the sheets. "If I don't, it won't be for lack of trying."

It was, indeed, a "whale of a crowd" that greeted the Giants on their victorious return. All New York was jubilant, and comments were rife everywhere on the gameness of their pets in the

fight they were making against accident and hard luck.

The team was cheered singly and collectively as they came on the field and scattered for preliminary practice. McRae and Robson paid especial attention to the warming up of the pitchers, for up to the last minute the manager was undecided as to whom he should play.

Both Jim and Markwith seemed to have plenty of "smoke" as they sent their slants and benders over. But the older pitcher was inclined to be wild, while Jim's control was all that could be asked. So with many inner quakings McRae finally decided that Jim should do the twirling.

The crowd was somewhat startled when they saw the young "second string" pitcher going on the mound. They were well aware of McRae's predilection for his old players, and they wondered at his willingness to-day to take a chance.

But whatever may have been their misgivings, there was nothing but the heartiest applause for the youngster. If generous rooting and backing would help him to win, he should have them.

There was a host of Princeton men there, too, and they gave the old college yell that Jim had heard so often when as an undergraduate he had twirled for the Orange and Black.

But, perhaps, if the truth were told, Jim's greatest incentive came from the fact that Clara

was watching him from a box in the upper stand, her pretty face flushed and her bright eyes sparkling. It was astonishing how much that young woman's approbation had come to mean to Jim in the short time he had known her.

He was a little nervous at the start, and Cooper, the first man up, drew a base on balls. He was nipped a moment later, however, in an attempt to steal, and with the bases again empty Jim fanned Berry and made Loomis chop a grounder to Larry that resulted in an easy out at first.

"Bully for you, old man!" cried Joe, encouragingly. "You got through that inning finely. The first is usually the hardest because you're finding your bearings. Besides, you've got rid of the head of their batting order."

Fraser was in the box for the Red Sox, and it looked at the start as though he were going to prove fully as good as in the first game. For four innings he turned back the New Yorks, who seemed to have lost all the hitting ability they had shown the day before.

"What's the matter with the boys?" growled McRae, uneasily. "It would help Barclay a lot if they handed him something to go on."

The New Yorks gave him that lead in the fifth. Denton and Willis singled, and Denton scored when Cooper, the right fielder, lost Becker's fly

in the sun and it went for a double. Becker was forced at third on Iredell's bouncer to Girdner, and both Willis and Iredell scored when Berry made a wild throw of a sharp hit by Curry.

This ended the scoring for the inning, but those three runs, in the words of Robson, looked very "juicy."

The lead, of course, was very gratifying to Jim. It seemed to put him on "easy street." But at the same time it was dangerous, because it was calculated to give him, perhaps, too much confidence. And over-confidence was a perilous thing to indulge in when the Bostons happened to be one's opponents.

Jim waked up to this fact in the very next inning, when Walters straightened out one of his incurves with a mighty wallop to the fence on which he easily circled the bases. Two more hits sandwiched in with a pass yielded one more run, and McRae began to look uneasy. A rattling double play got Jim out of what had begun to look like a bad hole, and the rally was choked off then and there.

It had been a bad inning for him, but Jim was a thoroughbred, and he braced.

In the next three innings they only garnered four more hits, and of these only two were "Simon pure." Loomis got a hit past Denton when the latter was running to cover the base. Then Stock

chopped one to the box that took a puzzling bound and went for a single. Girdner lined out a scorcher to center in the eighth and Walters sent one to the same place in the final frame. But this was the sum total of their endeavors and the Giants had no need of playing out their half of the ninth.

It was a very creditable victory for the "kid" pitcher of the Giants. Once more the New Yorks had the upper hand in the desperate fight for the Series. Jim had won his spurs and could count hereafter on taking his regular turn in the box.

The roars of the crowd were like music in Jim's ears. Still more grateful were the praise and congratulations from his comrades on the team. But, perhaps, he treasured more than all the shy tribute that came that evening from the lips of a remarkably pretty girl.

"You were just splendid to-day, Mr. Barclay," said Clara, her eyes shining brightly. "Just splendid!"

CHAPTER XXIV

PLOTTING MISCHIEF

THE feeling in Boston was in marked contrast to that in the metropolis, when the news was flashed over the wires that for the second day in succession the Red Sox had lost.

To be sure they were by no means out of it, and a victory the next day would leave the clubs even up. But the odds now were on the New York side, especially as it was certain that Baseball Joe would pitch in one of the games.

The Red Sox stood in no particular fear of Markwith, although his ability was freely recognized. Still he could be handled. But they had the profoundest respect for Joe, not to say dread, and they had begun to share the feeling that he had the game won when he appeared upon the mound.

Perhaps by none was this conviction felt more keenly than by two men who sat at a table in a café. A groan had just arisen from a throng surrounding the ticker and in that groan the two men read defeat.

"That makes three games the Giants have won," growled Connelly. "One more and the Series is theirs."

"But they haven't won that other one yet," suggested Fleming, whose face by this time had renewed more nearly its usual appearance, "and it's up to us to see that they don't."

"That sounds good," growled Connelly. "But so did our other plan sound good. But you see what came of it."

"It not only sounded good but it was good," replied Fleming. "You know as well as I do that we only missed putting it over by an eyelash."

"I haven't got over wondering yet how Matson slipped out of that net," Connelly ruminated. "It seemed a dead open and shut certainty that we had him."

"He's a slippery customer," said Fleming, "but because we didn't get him once doesn't say that we won't the next time. But whatever we do, we'll have to do in a hurry. He's to be in Boston only one more day."

"What was it you were telling me about that Hartley?" asked Connelly.

"I don't know how much there may be in that," answered Fleming, thoughtfully. "The fellow's fearfully sore on Matson for some reason or other that I can't just make out. He'd like well enough to do him a personal injury, too, if he could.

"I got him away from the gang he was ranting to and had a little talk with him. But I wouldn't dare trust him to do any rough work. He's half full all the time; and then, too, I think he's a little crazy. He'd be apt to spill the beans in anything he might undertake.

"There's only one thing, though, in which he may be of some help to us. He's on to the signals used by the Giant pitchers and he offered to give them away. That might help some in a close game."

"It might," reflected Connelly. "But it isn't sure enough. The pitchers might tumble to the game and change their signals. Still, we'll use him, on the off chance that it may help if we don't think of anything better."

"The only sure way of beating Matson," observed Fleming, "is to see that he doesn't go on the field at all."

Connelly looked up quickly.

"Nothing like that," he grunted. I've told you already that I wouldn't stand for any rough stuff. America wouldn't be big enough to hold a man who'd do that."

"Hold your horses," retorted Fleming. "Who's talking about injuring or killing him? I'm no more anxious to go to the electric chair than you are."

"Well, what's the game then?" asked Connelly.

"Here's the dope," answered Fleming. "You see by the score that Barclay pitched for the New Yorks to-day?"

"Yes," agreed Connelly.

"That gives McRae a little margin to go on," continued Fleming. "He could afford to lose to-morrow's game and still be even on the Series. Then he'd still have Matson as his ace for Saturday's game in New York.

"Now suppose it works out that way. Mark-with pitches, we'll say, and loses."

"I'm listening," said Connelly.

"Then the deciding game will be played on Saturday at the Polo Grounds. The Giants will be before their home crowd. Matson goes in to pitch. What's the answer?"

"A victory for New York," replied Connelly, grinding his teeth.

"Probably," agreed Fleming. "Now there's just one thing to be done. When the Giant team leaves Boston to-morrow night for New York, *Matson mustn't go with them.*"

He almost hissed the last words, all the venom he felt toward Joe showing in his eyes.

Connelly thumped the table with his ponderous fist.

"You mean that he must be kidnapped?" he exclaimed. "You think we may put it over better on land than we did on the water?"

"That's rather an ugly word," warned Fleming, looking around to see that they were not overheard, "and perhaps it would be better not to use it. What I mean is that in some way he must be kept from taking the train late Friday night or the early train Saturday morning. After that it doesn't matter what he does.

"You see," he went on, "there wouldn't be any come-back in a thing like that. There'd be no need to hurt him. The whole thing would only cover about twelve hours. After nine o'clock on Saturday morning he could be set at liberty and be free as air. But he'd be in Boston and he couldn't possibly get a train then that would land him in New York in time for the game."

"It might work," reflected Connelly. "It's worth trying, anyhow, unless we think of something better. But it's going to take a good deal of neat work to carry it through."

"It will," admitted Fleming. "And it's going to be all the harder because he'll probably be on his guard after what nearly happened to him the other night. But I think it can be done. The first thing is to get the services of half a dozen men that can be trusted to do just as they are told. Do you know of such a bunch that you can lay your hands on?"

"Moriarity does," replied Connelly, referring to the henchman whom Fleming had been intro-

duced to on the occasion of his first meeting with Connelly. "He knows the tough side of Boston like a book. He could get us just the gang we need in less than no time."

"That's good," commented Fleming. "I'd get him busy at once."

"Sure thing," confirmed Connelly. "And now let's get down to the fine points. We don't want to have any slip up this time."

What followed was almost in whispers.

CHAPTER XXV

A RANDOM CLUE

MR. BECKWORTH FLEMING would, no doubt, have been interested in knowing that while he was speaking of Joe in Boston the latter was discussing him in New York.

It was Reggie who had first brought in his name, as he stood with Joe and Jim in the lobby of the Marlborough, waiting for the others of the party to come down on the way to the train.

"Funny thing happened to-day, don't you know," he remarked. "Fellow sitting in the box next to me at the grounds got to talking about an auto accident that happened on Long Island a little while ago."

Joe and Jim pricked up their ears.

"What did he say about it?" Joe asked eagerly.

"Why, I heard him say that it was the wildest ride he had ever had, and that he'd been wondering ever since how they got through it without getting pinched. Said that half the time the car was going on two wheels. Once they knocked down a man on the Merrick road, and they had come near

to smashing up a car they passed just before that."

"That describes the accident to Anderson," broke in Jim.

"Yes, and don't you remember how near they came to running into us just before that?" added Joe. "But did you get any clue as to who the fellows were?"

"I didn't hear any full names," replied Reggie, "but several times the man who was telling the story referred to the reckless driving of 'old Beck,' whoever that might have been."

"Beck, Beck," mused Jim. "That isn't much of a hint. The directory is full of Becks."

A thought suddenly came to Joe.

"Fleming's first name is Beckworth, isn't it?" he asked Reggie.

"Yes," replied Reggie.

"And wouldn't it be natural for his cronies to speak of him as Beck?" Joe went on.

"Sure," said Reggie. "As a matter of fact, I've often heard them refer to him in that way."

"And he's known as a reckless driver, isn't he?" asked Joe, going back in memory to the way in which Fleming had handled the car on that memorable afternoon when he had rescued Mabel from his clutches.

"Yes," Reggie responded. "In fact, he seems

to take a sort of pride in it. I've often heard him tell how often he had been arrested for speeding."

"It begins to look as though he might have been mixed up in that Anderson affair," mused Jim.

"Yes, but that's a mighty slender basis to go on," answered Joe. "Of course he'd deny it, and we couldn't prove it if we had nothing to back it up with."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Reggie. "Now that you come to speak of it, I remember catching sight of Fleming at the Long Beach Hotel when we were dining there. He was sitting at a table in the further corner of the room. I thought of going over to speak to him, but I noticed that he was with a pretty noisy party, and as the girls were with us I passed it up."

"Well, now, that's something more like proof!" exclaimed Joe, with animation. "That brings him near the scene of the accident on the day it happened. He's a reckless driver and his pals often spoke of him as 'old Beck.' I believe he was the fellow that knocked the old man down."

"It looks like it," agreed Jim, "and from what we've learned of the fellow since, I think he's just the kind that would go on without trying to help or stopping to see what he had done. But even now we haven't anything that would convince a jury."

"No," agreed Reggie. "Moral proof isn't legal proof by a long shot. The one thing we need to clinch the matter is the number of the car that held the party."

"What a pity we didn't get it," fumed Joe.

"We weren't to blame for that," replied Reggie. "They were going so fast and raising such a cloud of dust that we couldn't see it. That is, we didn't get it in full. Seems to me, though, that I heard you say something, Joe, about some numbers that you caught sight of."

"That's so," confirmed Jim. "What were they, Joe? Do you remember?"

"There was a seven and a four," answered Joe. "But I couldn't be sure that they were next to each other. There may have been another figure in between. And anyway, as there were probably five or six figures in the whole number, that isn't very much to go on."

"I tell you what," cried Jim, eagerly. "Every car is registered in the State Registry Bureau, isn't it?"

"Yes," answered Reggie. "Mine is, I know. They put down the name of the man when they give him his number."

"Exactly!" returned Jim. "What's the matter then with our making inquiries at the proper department and finding the number of the car that is registered as owned by Beckworth Fleming?"

"The very thing," assented Reggie. "But when we find it, what then?"

"Nothing, perhaps," Jim admitted. "And then, on the other hand, it may mean a great deal. Suppose, for instance, the number has a seven and a four in it?"

"That would certainly bring it much closer to Fleming," observed Joe, thoughtfully, "and it would make us that much surer in our own minds that he's the man in question. But it would still fall far short of legal proof."

"Bother legal proof!" snapped Jim. "The one point is that all these things taken together would make us feel so sure that we were on the right track that we'd feel justified in accusing Fleming to his face of having done it."

"I see!" exclaimed Joe, his eyes kindling. "You mean to put up a great big bluff and try to catch him off his guard."

"That's what," agreed Jim. "Trust to his guilty conscience. He knows whether he did it or not, and he won't be sure how much we know. If we act as if we were sure we have him dead to rights, he may give himself away. Try to explain or excuse it and in that way admit it. At any rate, it seems to me it might be worth trying. We can't lose and we may win."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Reggie. I believe it might work."

"It's a dandy idea," approved Joe, warmly.

"It would do me a whole lot of good to make him come across handsomely to Anderson," said Jim. "The old man needs money badly, and Fleming has a good deal more than is good for him. And he can consider himself mighty lucky if he gets off with only a money payment."

"Well, whatever we do in that line, we'll have to do right away," remarked Joe. "To-morrow's the last day we'll be in Boston, and I'd like to fix up the matter at once. Anderson we know is there and Fleming probably will be, too."

"I wish we'd known of this earlier," remarked Jim. "Of course all the official departments are closed by this time."

"Yes," said Joe, "but I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll ask Belden here at the desk to look up the matter for us the first thing to-morrow morning. He can find out the number and call me up on the long distance 'phone to Boston. We ought to know all about it as early as ten o'clock."

"The very thing," said Jim.

Joe went over to the hotel desk, where Belden, the night clerk, had just come on duty. He was a warm admirer of Baseball Joe, and, like everybody in New York just then, was happy to do anything he could for the famous pitcher of the Giants.

"Mr. Belden," Joe began, "I want to ask a favor of you."

"Only too glad, Mr. Matson," replied the clerk, his face wreathed in smiles. "What is it?"

"I'd like you to call up the city office of the State Registry Bureau, Broadway and Seventy-fourth Street, early in the morning," said Joe, "and find out the number of the car owned by a Mr. Beckworth Fleming. Then I'd like to have you call me up on the long distance 'phone, of course at my expense, and let me know what it is. If you'll do this for me I'll be greatly obliged."

The clerk made a note of the name and also of the hotel where Joe would stay in Boston.

"I'll do it without fail, Mr. Matson. You can depend upon me."

Joe thanked him and returned to his party, which had now been joined by Mr. and Mrs. Matson and the girls. A couple of taxicabs were pressed into service, and they were carried to the Grand Central Terminal where they embarked on the last trip that was to be made to Boston during the Series.

"What with the game to-morrow and perhaps this Fleming matter on our program, I imagine we're going to have our hands full," Jim remarked in an aside to his friend.

"Yes," laughed Joe, "it looks like a busy day."

But just how busy a day it was destined to be it would have startled him to learn.

CHAPTER XXVI

A BLUFF THAT WORKED

EVERY member of Baseball Joe's little party had by this time become thoroughly acquainted with every other, and they formed a very congenial group.

Mr. and Mrs. Matson, as Joe had predicted when he had sent on for them to come, were having the time of their lives. The great world had opened up its treasures for them after the long years they had spent in their quiet village, and they were enjoying it to the full. And their delight in the new vista opened up was, of course, immeasurably increased by their pride in Joe and his achievements so far in the World Series.

Mabel, too, had taken them right into her heart and had won their affection from the start. They could easily see how things stood with her and Joe and were eagerly ready to welcome her into a closer relation.

Reggie was full of life and good-nature, and his knowledge of city life made him invaluable as a guide and companion. As for Clara, she was in

a perpetual flutter of happiness. Was she not with her idolized brother? Was she not tasting the delights of a broader life that she had often read of and longed for but scarcely dreamed of seeing? And had not that handsome Mr. Barclay shown himself a devoted and perfect cavalier? Could any girl barely out of her teens possibly ask for more?

So it was a happy party that laughed and chatted as the train sped through the night toward Boston.

"Our last trip to Boston, for a while at least," smiled Mabel.

"I wonder whether the Series will be settled there or at the Polo Grounds," remarked Clara. "It would be glorious if when we come back to-morrow night the Giants should have won the Series."

"Well, we have two chances to the Bostons' one, anyway," observed Jim. "They *must* win to-morrow or they're goners. We can lose to-morrow and still have a chance."

"A chance!" objected Clara. "You ought to say a certainty."

"I've learned already that there's nothing certain in baseball," laughed Jim.

"But Joe will be pitching that last game," returned Clara, as though that settled the question.

Joe laughed.

"I wish I could make the Red Sox feel as sure of that as you do, Sis. If they did, they'd quit right at the start."

"Well, they might as well, anyway," declared Clara, with assured conviction.

"What is this I see in the paper about a tour of the world after the Series is over?" asked Mr. Matson.

"Why, there's nothing very definite as yet," answered Joe. "McRae has been giving some thought to the matter, I believe. If we win the Series, we could go with the prestige of being the champions of the world, which would be a big advertisement. Mac could easily get up another team composed of crack players which could be called the All National or the All America Nine. Then the two teams could travel together and give exhibition games in most of the big cities of the world."

"Would there be much money in it?" asked Reggie.

"Oh, probably not so much, after all the expenses were taken out," Joe answered. "Possibly there might be a thousand dollars for each player. Some of the trips have panned out as much as that."

"Then this isn't entirely a new idea," remarked Joe's father.

"Oh, no," replied his son. "It's been done be-

fore. The boys have always drawn big crowds and aroused a good deal of interest."

"And they'd do that to-day more than ever," put in Jim. "Baseball is no longer simply an American game but a world game. You'll find crack teams even in Japan and China."

"It would be a wonderful experience," remarked Reggie.

"You bet it would!" exclaimed Joe, enthusiastically. "Think of playing ball in sight of the Pyramids! We'd take in all the great cities of Asia and Europe and some in Africa. It would be a liberal education. And instead of spending money in making a tour of the world, we'd be paid for taking it."

"Rather soft, I call it," laughed Jim.

"How long would the party be gone?" asked gentle Mrs. Matson, who was somewhat alarmed by the prospect of her boy being separated from her by the width of the globe.

"Oh, not more than five months or so," Joe replied. "The boys couldn't very well get started much before the first of November, and they'd have to be back for spring training."

"They won't need much training, I imagine," remarked Jim. "They'll have been playing while the other fellows have been loafing. They ought to be in first class shape to begin the season."

"Of course," observed Joe; "it isn't a dead sure

thing that we'll go, even if we win the Series. And if we lose, it's dollars to doughnuts that Mac will call the whole thing off."

It was getting rather late, and Joe and Jim said good-night to the others and sought their berths.

They were up and abroad earlier than usual the next morning, for the matter of the automobile accident promised to engross all the time they could spare from the game.

Reggie was able to find out for them the place at which Fleming was putting up in Boston. Having ascertained from the clerk that he was still staying there, the next thing was to get hold of Louis Anderson.

Jim hurried up to the address the old man had given them. It was in a humble neighborhood, but the three rooms in which Anderson and his wife were living were neat and clean.

Jim did not want to raise false hopes, in the light of the imperfect information he had. So he told Anderson that he thought he had a clue, though he was not at all sure, as to the men who had run him down.

"Do you think you would be able to recognize the man who was driving, if you should see him?" Jim inquired.

"I'm sure I could," answered Anderson. "He was on the side nearest me and I got a good look at his face just as the car bore down on me."

"That's good," replied Jim. "Now if you'll get ready and jump in with me, we'll go down to where Mr. Matson is."

The old man complied eagerly, and they were soon on their way down town.

Joe, in the meantime, had hovered in the vicinity of the telephone, waiting impatiently for the long distance call.

Shortly after nine o'clock it came.

"Is this Mr. Matson?" the voice inquired. "Good morning, Mr. Matson. This is Belden talking. I called up just now at the registry office and found that the number of Mr. Beckworth Fleming's car is 36754. Did you get that? 3-6-7-5-4. Yes, that's it. Not at all, Mr. Matson. Don't mention it. Glad to be of service. Hope you win to-day. Good-bye."

Joe stared at the number that he had jotted down as Belden had called it off. 36754. There were the two figures, 7 and 4, the 7 coming first as he remembered.

It was not proof. But it was corroboration, enough, anyway, to justify the audacious bluff that he had in mind.

Jim returned shortly afterward with Louis Anderson, who greeted Joe, gratefully.

"It's an awful lot of trouble you two young men are putting yourselves to for me," he declared in a grateful voice.

"That's all right," returned Joe. "It was a dastardly thing that was done to you, and the man who did it has got to pay for it if we can make him. But you mustn't build your hopes too high. We've only probabilities to go on instead of certainties."

They stepped into the taxicab which Jim had retained, and were soon at the Albemarle where Fleming was stopping.

"Suppose he refuses to receive us when the clerk sends up your card," asked Jim. "You can't very well force your way into his rooms."

"There isn't going to be any card," replied Joe. "Reggie gave me the number of his suite and we'll just go up in the elevator without being announced."

"But he may slam the door in your face when he sees who it is," Jim remarked.

"I've got a pretty capable foot," grinned Joe, "and I guess I can keep the door from being shut."

They got off at the fourth floor and walked along the corridor till they reached the number for which they were looking.

Fleming was already engaged with a visitor. He and Big Connelly were in earnest conversation when Joe rapped on the door. Fleming looked up with some irritation at being interrupted.

"What does that clerk mean by not announcing a caller?" he growled.

"I'll just step into the bedroom while you see who it is," said Connelly, tiptoeing into the adjoining room.

Fleming went to the door and opened it. He started back in surprise and alarm when he saw Joe's face. Then with a snarl he started to slam the door, but Joe thrust his foot between the door and the jamb. Then he gave a push with his brawny shoulder and the next moment he and his companions were in the room. Jim coolly shut the door and stood with his back to it.

"What does this mean?" shouted Fleming, almost stuttering with rage. "Get out of here this minute or I'll have you thrown out."

"No, you won't," replied Joe, coolly. "I've got a little business with you, Fleming, and I don't go out till it's finished."

Before the cold gleam in his eye, Fleming shrank back.

"If you attempt any violence——" he began in a voice that trembled.

"There isn't going to be any violence unless you make it necessary," Joe interrupted. "Though I ought to give you another thrashing for that trap you laid for me the other night."

"I don't know what you mean," growled Fleming, sullenly.

Oh, yes you do. But we'll let that go. I came here this morning to tell you that we've identified

you as the driver of the car that ran this man down on the Merrick Road and then went on without stopping to see how badly he was hurt."

The accusation was so sudden, so positive, so direct, that, as Joe had hoped, it took Fleming fairly off his feet. He stood staring wildly at the group, his face an image of guilt. Then he tried to rally.

"It's false!" he shouted. "I didn't do anything of the kind."

"No use of lying, Fleming," said Joe, coldly. "We've got the goods on you."

"He's the man!" cried Louis Anderson, excitedly. "He had a cap on then, and his face was red, as though he was drunk, but he's the same man. I could swear to him."

"You're crazy," snarled Fleming. "I wasn't on Long Island that day."

"Didn't you have dinner at the Long Beach Hotel that day, eh?" asked Joe.

"N-no," Fleming denied, avoiding Joe's eyes.

"Yes, you did," declared Joe, sternly. "And afterward you nearly crashed into the machine I was in. I saw you hit this man. I looked for the number on your car. The number of that car is 36754. Ever heard those figures before, Fleming?"

His eyes were like cold steel now and seemed to be boring Fleming through and through. He seemed so sure of his facts, so unwavering and re-

lentless, that Fleming crumpled up. The arrow shot at a venture had reached its mark.

"It was the old fool's own fault," he growled, casting aside all further pretence of denial. "If he hadn't run in front of the machine he wouldn't have got hurt."

"It wasn't so," cried Anderson. "You were swerving all over the road. Your crowd was shouting and singing. You didn't blow your horn. You were half drunk. And after you hit me you didn't stop."

"We're his witnesses," said Joe. "And I don't think he'd have any trouble in getting heavy damages from a jury."

"Let him try it," snarled Fleming. "I've got more money than he has and I'll fight the case through every court. He'll die of old age before he ever gets a cent from me."

"Oh, I don't think so," remarked Joe, carelessly. "I don't suppose you'd care to go to jail now, would you, Fleming?"

"It isn't a question of jail," replied Fleming.

"Oh, yes it is," rejoined Joe. "You may not know that a law has been passed making it a prison offense in New York State to run away after knocking a man down with an auto and not stop to see what you can do for him."

"I don't believe it," said Fleming, going white.

"I know what I'm talking about," answered Joe,

in a voice that carried conviction. "You'd better come to your senses, Fleming. We've got you dead to rights. You ran this man down. You've admitted it. You ran away without stopping. Half a dozen of us saw you do it. Nothing can save you from going behind the bars if the matter is pressed. You'll do the right thing by this man, or I'll see that you're arrested the minute you set foot in New York."

"What do you mean by the square thing?" asked Fleming, who now was thoroughly wilted.

"We're not unreasonable," said Joe. "You came within an ace of killing this man. He had to go to a hospital. At his age he'll feel the effect of the shock as long as he lives. It will probably shorten his life. A jury under those circumstances would certainly give him several thousand dollars. I think you ought to give him at least two thousand. Will that be satisfactory, Mr. Anderson?"

The old man nodded.

Fleming reflected a moment. Then he nodded surlily.

"I'll do it," he muttered.

"And do it to-day, if you please," Joe went on smoothly. "I want to know that this thing is settled before I go back to New York. Write down your address, Mr. Anderson, and Mr. Fleming or his lawyer will be up to see you before night.

And I'll run up myself before I leave, to see whether it has been done."

There was a threat in the last words that warned Fleming against any attempt at evasion or delay. The latter agreed with a nod of his head.

There was no pretence of a farewell that would have been mere hypocrisy under the circumstances, and without a word Baseball Joe's party left the room, while Fleming stared after them with baffled rage and hate in his eyes.

Once more in the taxicab, Anderson broke out with a flood of thanks that Joe waved aside lightly.

They drove around by way of his humble home and left him there, and then went hurriedly down to their hotel.

Left to themselves in the car, Jim and Joe looked for a long time steadily at each other. Then Jim burst out into a roar.

Joe grinned happily.

"Joe," cried Jim when his paroxysms had subsided, "as a bluffer you're a wonder, a real wonder!"

CHAPTER XXVII

STEALING SIGNALS

FLEMING sat in his chair, limp and sprawling, after the departure of the trio who had burst in on him so unexpectedly. So swept and exhausted was he by the tide of emotions aroused by their visit that he had forgotten all about the presence of Connelly in the adjoining room, and only became conscious of it when the fellow plumped himself down in the chair beside him.

"Some stormy session," he remarked, as he lighted a fat, black cigar.

Fleming only growled in reply.

"Don't wonder that you feel sore," Connelly commented. "They certainly put the skids under you in great shape. That Matson is a bird and no mistake."

"I'll get even with him yet," Fleming broke out stormily. "I won't let him crow over me. I won't pay that money."

"Oh, yes, you will," returned Connelly, calmly. "He's got you where the hair is short in that matter of the jail. It mightn't have been so bad if

you'd kept your nerve and denied everything. But he got you so rattled that you admitted knocking that fellow down and then the gravy was spilled."

"What was the use of keeping it up?" queried Fleming. "He had the facts."

"Maybe he did," admitted Connelly, doubtfully, "and then again he may have had only some half facts and made a bluff at the rest. He's got nerve enough to do it. I have to hand it to him. But now you have admitted it, you'll have to pony up. What's a couple of thousand to you, anyway?"

"It isn't so much the money," Fleming muttered gloomily. "It's knowing that he got it out of me and is probably laughing at me this minute."

"Let him laugh," said Connelly, with the philosophy that it is so easy to use where others are concerned. "We'll have our laugh later on. But you want to get that money paid right away, because if we put over on Matson what we're planning, he'll be so furious that he'll send you to jail sure. But if the thing is settled, he'll be helpless.

"Another thing, unless I'm very much mistaken, Matson himself has given us a mighty valuable tip. He's put a spoke in his own wheel."

"What do you mean?" asked Fleming.

"Didn't you hear him say that he was going to run up to-night to that old man's house to see whether you'd come across or not?"

"Yes."

"Well, where could we have a better chance for pulling off our little game? It's probably a poor neighborhood with the lights none too good and where a scrap wouldn't attract much attention because it's a common thing. Moriarity and his bunch could be on hand and the rest would be as easy as taking a dead mouse from a blind kitten."

"By Jove, the very thing!" ejaculated Fleming, a look of malevolent delight coming into his face.

"Sure it is," chuckled Connelly. "I'll get word to Moriarity at once. In the meantime, you'd better settle. Take in all you can of the neighborhood while you're doing it."

"Even if Markwith wins this afternoon and so ends the Series, I'd like to put this through on Matson just the same," snarled Fleming, viciously.

"No we won't," declared Connelly, decidedly. "I'm out to keep him from winning the Series and nothing else. If Markwith wins, the game's up, anyway, and the thing ends for me right there. But if he loses I've got a chance, and I'll see that Matson doesn't pitch the last game."

All Boston seemed to have turned out that afternoon at Braves Field. The enormous seating accommodations were taxed to capacity. It was the last chance the loyal Bostonians would have to see their favorites in action. And the fact that if they lost to-day their chance for the

world's pennant was gone brought the excitement to a delirious pitch.

Landers was in the box for the Bostons while Markwith twirled for the Giants. Before the game had gone three innings it was seen that both these gladiators were out to do or die. There was an unusual number of strike outs and the bases were occupied only at infrequent intervals. Up to the fifth it was little more than a pitcher's duel. But after that, though Landers kept his effectiveness, the Red Sox began to get to Markwith more frequently. It was not that the latter seemed to have let down a particle. His speed and his curves were working beautifully, but in a way almost uncanny the Bostons seemed to know what kind of ball was coming next and set themselves for it accordingly.

In the sixth they gathered two runs. Burkett had clouted out a home run for the Giants in their half, but that left them still one short of a tie.

Boston started the seventh with a rattling two-bagger to center.

"I don't understand it," muttered McRae, uneasily. "Markwith never seemed to be in better shape. He's got a world of smoke."

"They seem to know just what he's going to feed them," commented Robson. "It almost looks——"

He was interrupted by a sharp exclamation from Joe.

"Look over there by the Boston dugout!" he exclaimed excitedly. "There's Hartley just behind the screen whispering to Banks. I'll bet that skunk is giving away Markwith's signals!"

They looked in the direction indicated. Banks, the Boston second string pitcher, was lolling carelessly against the railing of the grandstand, idly chewing on a wisp of straw. Hartley's face behind the screen was not two feet away from Banks' ear.

As Markwith prepared to wind up for the next pitch, Hartley leaned forward a trifle and his lips moved. A glance and an almost imperceptible sign passed between Banks and the man at the plate. Then as a low incurve came sweeping up, the batsman caught it square on the seam for a line single to left.

"Great Scott!" cried McRae, leaping up from the bench. "They're stealing our signals!"

CHAPTER XXVIII

A BLOW IN THE DARK

McRAE rushed over to the umpire.

"There's a fellow over there in the grandstand giving away our signs," he stormed.

Cries of derision came from the stands.

"Hire a hall!"

"Write him a letter!"

"Play ball!"

The umpire called time and walked over with McRae to where Banks was standing.

"Get away from there," he ordered.

"Why?" asked Banks, impudently.

"Never mind why. Get away I tell you."

There was nothing left but to obey and Banks sauntered off.

"And as for you," said the umpire, addressing Hartley, "if I see you talking to any of the players I'll have you put out of the park."

"You're a disgrace to the National League," cried McRae, glaring at Hartley, "and I'll see that you get all that's coming to you for this bit of work."

"Aw, what's eating you?" retorted "Bugs" sullenly. "I wasn't doing anything." But he seemed to shrivel up before the rage in his former manager's eyes, and for the rest of the game obeyed the umpire's injunction.

Markwith and Mylert, who was catching him, instantly changed their signs and the Bostons scored no more. But the damage was already done, for Landers was doing some demon pitching, and the game ended with the score two to one in favor of the Red Sox.

It was a hard game to lose, and Markwith received nothing but condolence and sympathy from his mates. He had pitched superbly and though beaten was not disgraced.

"I wonder how much that traitor got for giving away his own league," said Joe, bitterly.

"Probably just enough to fill up his wretched skin with booze," returned Jim. "Fellows like him come cheap."

"He won't get another chance," put in McRae, angrily. "I'll have the stands searched to-morrow, and if he's there he'll be bundled out neck and heels."

Once more the hard-won lead of the Giants had vanished into thin air. But they took heart of hope and braced up for the struggle on the morrow. They were to play on their own grounds and Joe would be in the box.

All the members of Joe's party were boiling over with indignation. If anything they took the defeat harder than the players themselves, who had learned in a hard school to take what was coming to them and brace up for revenge.

"Well, to-morrow's a new day and what we'll do to those fellows then will be a caution," Jim declared philosophically.

Perhaps his cheerful view of things was increased by the fact that Clara had promised to let him take her for a cozy little spin to see Bunker Hill Monument by moonlight. The moon just then was in high favor with these two young people.

It was arranged that the pair need not come back to the hotel, but that Jim could bring Clara directly to the train. Mr. Matson and Reggie would escort the others.

Joe grudged every minute spent away from Mabel and stayed with her as long as he could that evening. But he had promised to drop in on Louis Anderson to see that the arrangement with Fleming had been carried out, and at last he left her reluctantly, promising to see her again on the train if only long enough to say good-night.

But though he was deprived of her physical presence, his thoughts were full of her as he was whisked away in the car he had summoned, and the time passed so quickly that he was surprised

when the driver drew up in front of Anderson's house.

"Wait for me here," he directed as he stepped out. "I'll only be a few minutes."

"Very well, sir," was the response.

Hardly had Joe gone inside when a man stepped up to the curb.

"I want you to take me to the North Station," he said, preparing to step inside.

"Sorry, sir," was the answer, "but I'm waiting for the fare I brought here."

"But I must get that train, I tell you," persisted the other. "I'll pay you anything you want. Ten dollars, fifteen even."

The driver was tempted.

"Make it twenty and I'll go," he said. I suppose the gentleman can pick up another car."

"Sure he can," replied the other. "Twenty it is. Get a move on, now."

He got inside and the car whizzed away.

Joe found Anderson and his wife radiant.

"He did it, Mr. Matson!" the old man cried. "He grumbled a lot about having had to telegraph on to New York to have his bank wire the cash to him, but he did it. And I signed a paper giving him a release of all claims against him. Oh, Mr. Matson, we can never thank you enough for what you have done for us."

His wife joined in his expressions of gratitude.

"Don't mention it," smiled Joe. "I only did what any decent man would do to right a great wrong. And you squared the account when you gave me that warning the other day. I was just on the point of stepping into a trap when I thought of the warning and it saved me."

"Is that so?" cried Anderson, delightedly. "I'm mighty glad if it helped you."

They chatted happily for a few minutes and then, as his time was getting short, Joe took his leave with their repeated thanks ringing in his ears.

He was dumbfounded when he saw that the taxicab was not there.

"Where in thunder is that fellow?" he asked himself. "I suppose he's getting a nip in the nearest saloon."

But when, after a minute or two spent in waiting, no car appeared, Joe started for the nearest thoroughfare, three short blocks away.

He was just passing the second corner when a man stepped out of the shadows with something in his hand.

"Hi, there, stop!"

"What do you want?" demanded Joe, trying to make out the face in the darkness.

"I want you!" hissed the man.

He took a step closer and raised the object he carried in his hand.

Joe tried to dodge, but it was too late.

There was a quick blow. Joe felt no sense of pain. Rather it was a gradual sinking, sinking, ten thousand fathoms deep!

Then the famous young baseball player became unconscious.

CHAPTER XXIX

QUICK WORK

JOE'S father and mother, together with Mabel and Reggie, had reached the station a few minutes before train time, and Clara and Jim, who might be excused for tarrying, had joined them a little later. They were somewhat puzzled at not finding Joe on the platform.

"You folks get on anyway," suggested Jim. "Probably Joe is up in the car with the team. McRae may have nabbed him to have a talk with him."

After they were safely in their coach, Jim hurried forward to the Giants' cars. He went through both of them, but before he had finished his search the gong rang and the train started.

"Seen anything of Joe?" he asked McRae.

"No," was the answer. "I suppose he's in the car behind with his folks."

"But he isn't," replied Jim. "I thought I'd find him here."

"What?" fairly yelled McRae, springing to his feet. "You don't mean to say he's missed the train?"

In an instant all was agitation.

The smoker was first searched, then every car in the train from end to end, but, of course, Joe was not to be found.

McRae and Robson were wild and the rest of the team were glum.

"Of course, he can get that eight o'clock train in the morning," was the only comfort McRae would allow himself. "That will get him to the grounds in time, but he won't be in good shape to pitch right after the trip."

But Jim had reasons of his own for fear, and a cold sweat broke out on him as he thought of Fleming. But he put on as good a face as possible in order to reassure the girls and the rest of Joe's party, who were torn with anxiety and apprehension.

It was broad daylight when Joe woke to a sense of his surroundings. His head swam and it was some time before he could recall the events of the preceding night.

He was in a shabby room, sitting on the floor against the wall with his hands tied behind him. As his brain cleared he was conscious of a face looking at him curiously. There was a sweet sickly odor in the room.

"Waking up, eh?" asked Moriarty with a grin.

"You'll pay for this," said Joe, thickly.

Moriarty laughed.

"Now don't get sore," he counseled. "Nobody's going to hurt you. You'll be out of this in a little while now. We're going to let you go just as soon as the New York train has gone."

Joe tried to digest this. Why should they keep him from getting the train for New York. Then in a blinding flash his brain woke from its daze.

It was the day of the last game! And he was in Boston! And if he missed the morning train he could not get to New York before the game was over!

His heart turned sick. What would McRae and the rest of the boys say? What would Mabel and the folks think?

He pictured the consternation when he should fail to turn up in time. The team would be demoralized. Whom would they pitch? Only Jim was available and he had pitched two days before. And he would be so full of worry over his friend that he could not be at his best.

Was the World Series then to be lost? Was the splendid fight the boys had put up to go for nothing?

"You only got a little tap on the head," Moriarty was saying. "It was just enough to make you quiet, and chloroform did the rest. We didn't figure to be any rougher than we had to be."

Joe made no reply but he was thinking hard and fast.

He tested the bonds that held his hands behind him. They seemed tight but not excessively so. Probably his captors had put most of their faith in the chloroform.

With as little apparent exertion as possible, he began to stretch and strain at them. His powerful wrists and hands seemed endowed with double their ordinary strength and to his delight he could feel the cords give.

Moriarty was alone with him, but Joe could hear low voices in an adjoining room. One of them he thought he recognized as Fleming's, and his teeth gritted with rage.

At last he wriggled one hand free, although he had rasped his wrist till he felt it was bleeding. A moment more and he had freed his other hand, though he still kept both behind him.

Moriarty was yawning after his night's vigil.

"What time is it now?" Joe muttered sleepily.

"Just a little after eight," Moriarty answered. "The train's just about started now, but we'll let you cool your heels here for another hour or so. Then you can walk the ties if you want to."

"You've got me pretty well trussed up here," said Joe. "The fellow who tied these knots knew his business."

"Yes," said Moriarty, complacently, strolling over to look at them. "He's a dandy when it comes to doing——"

But he got no further.

As he bent down, Joe's muscular hands darted out and clutched him by the throat. The yell he started to give was stifled at its birth. In a moment Joe was on top of him with his knee on his chest.

Moriarty struggled as hard as he could, but his liquor-soaked frame speedily collapsed before Joe's onslaught, and in a moment he lay limp and senseless. Then Joe flung him aside and rose to his feet.

He rubbed his legs vigorously to restore the circulation until he felt the strength coming back into them.

There was but one door leading from the room. Joe went to it on tiptoe. He could still hear the murmur of voices. He flung the door open suddenly and burst into the adjoining room.

Fleming and Connelly sprang to their feet in consternation. With a powerful uppercut, Joe sent Felming crashing to the floor. Connelly retreated and Joe had no time to bother with him.

He flung himself down the stairs and out into the street. Half a block away he saw a taxicab coming toward him. He rushed toward it.

"To the South Station!" he gasped. "Quick! Quick! Quick!"

In an amazingly short time, the taxicab, running at high speed, landed him at the depot. Joe

saw by the station clock that it was a quarter to nine.

Frantically, he sought out the traffic manager and ordered a special.

"I must be in New York by one o'clock," he cried. "I must, I tell you. Never mind the price. Get me a special."

The official hummed and hawed. It would take a little time to make it up, to get a car. It would——"

"Don't wait for a car," interrupted Joe, in frenzy. "I'll ride on the locomotive."

In ten minutes the train despatcher had arranged for the right of way, and one of the road's fastest locomotives puffed up. Joe sprang into the cab, the engineer flung the throttle open and they were off.

"Can you make it?" questioned our hero, anxiously.

"We'll make it or bust," was the grim response of the engineer.

He was one of the oldest and most reliable men on the road and as Joe looked at him he felt his confidence rising.

Yet a good many miles lay between our hero and New York City.

And a hundred things might happen to delay the special.

On and on they went, humming over the steel

rails at such a rate of speed that Joe could scarcely see the telegraph poles.

Suddenly the engineer pulled on a lever and the big locomotive slackened speed so quickly that our hero was all but thrown to the floor of the cab.

"Wh—what's the matter?" he gasped, when he could catch his breath.

"Signal against us," was the short reply. "It's O. K. now;" and once more the locomotive sped on its way.

"Phew! you have to have your eyes open, don't you?"

"That's it—just like you do, when you are pitching," answered the old engineer.

"Some work, running a locomotive," mused the young baseball player. "I guess an engineer earns all the money he gets."

Half an hour later came another scare. Again the locomotive pulled up, this time to allow an automobile full of people to pass over the tracks. An instant sooner and the big engine would have ground the "joy riders" to death.

"Meet such fools almost every trip," said the engineer. "Seems as if they wanted to be killed."

"Why don't you have gates at such crossings?"

"It would cost too much money to have a gate at every crossing," was the explanation. "We do have 'em on the main roads. That was only a

little dirt road—I don't know why the auto was on it. I wasn't looking for anything faster than a farm wagon or a buggy."

"You must have some accidents?"

"Oh, yes, but not many, considering the risks we run. But we wouldn't have hardly any accidents if the folks were a bit more careful. But some of 'em don't heed the warnings. They will read a 'Safety First' sign and then run right into danger, just as if they were blind," went on the old engineer, with a grimace.

They were now on an upgrade, but presently they gained the top of the rise and down they streaked on the other side, at a rate of speed that fairly took Joe's breath away.

"Some running, and no mistake!" he gasped. "You must be making a mile a minute, or better!"

"Running at the rate of seventy-five miles an hour. But we can't keep it up. Here is where we slow down," and they did so, as a long curve appeared in the tracks.

"I don't know as I want to be a locomotive engineer. You run too fast."

"And I don't want to be a baseball player—you pitch too fast," chuckled the old engineer.

"Well, everyone to his own calling, I suppose."

On they plunged in the wildest ride Baseball Joe had ever known. Under arches and over bridges, thundering through towns with scarcely

a lessening of speed, past waiting trains drawn up on side tracks to give the special the right of way, on, on, lurching, swaying, tearing along, until at ten minutes before one the panting engine drew up in the yards at New York City.

The game was to begin at two.

Baseball Joe leaped into a taxicab with orders to scorch up the pavements in a mad dash to the Polo Grounds. Then the clubhouse, into which Joe tumbled, covered with grime and cinders, amid the frantic exclamations of the rubbers and attendants. Then the cooling shower and a quick shift into his uniform, after which Joe, cool, collected, thoroughly master of himself, strolled out on the field where the whole Giant team forgot their practice and made a wild rush for him.

He had fought a good fight. He had kept the faith.

CHAPTER XXX

A GLORIOUS VICTORY

THERE was a mad scramble and Joe was almost pulled to pieces by his relieved and exulting mates. Then came a torrent of questions which Joe good-naturedly parried.

"After the game, boys, I'll tell you all about it," he said, "but just now I want to get a little practice in tossing them over."

"Didn't I tell you that nothing could stop that boy from getting here?" crowed Robson, gleefully.

"I thought so myself," answered McRae, "but when they 'phoned up to me that he hadn't come in on that regular morning train, I thought our goose was cooked."

In some mysterious way, though McRae had tried to keep it a profound secret, the news had got abroad that something had occurred that would keep Matson out of the game, and the crowds that had put their chief reliance on that mighty arm of his had been restless and fearful. So when they recognized him the stands rocked and thundered with applause, and the general re-

lief was not much less than that felt by the Giants themselves at the return of their crack pitcher.

But it was toward an upper box that Joe's eyes first turned. There was a wild flutter of handkerchiefs and clapping of hands. Mabel and Clara were leaning far out and waving to him. But Mrs. Matson's face was hidden by her handkerchief, and Joe saw his father quietly slip his arm around her. Joe did not dare to look any longer for he suddenly felt a dimness come over his own eyes, and he hastily turned to the tremendous task that confronted him.

For that afternoon he was fighting against odds. His head was still aching from the effects of the blow and the chloroform. The rocking of the engine had made his legs unsteady. And the only food he had had since the night before was a sandwich he had sent for while he was slipping into his uniform.

But it is just such circumstances that bring out the thoroughbred strain in a man, and as Baseball Joe took his place in the box and looked around at the enormous crowd and realized the immense responsibility that rested on him, he rose magnificently to the occasion. Gone was weariness and pain and weakness. His nerves stiffened to the strain, and the game he pitched that afternoon was destined to become a classic in baseball history.

The first ball he whipped over the plate went

for a strike. A second and a third followed. And from that time on Joe knew that he held the Bostons in the hollow of his hand.

There are times when to feel invincible is to be invincible. Joe was in that mood. He was a glorious figure of athletic young manhood as he stood there with forty thousand pairs of eyes riveted upon him. He had discarded his cap because the band hurt his head where he had been struck, and his brown hair gleamed in the bright sun as he hurled the ball with deadly precision toward the batter. Like a piston rod his arm shot out untiringly and the ball whistled as it cut the plate.

"Gee whiz, see that ball come over!" muttered McRae.

"He'll wear himself out," said Robson, anxiously. "It isn't in flesh and blood to keep up that gait for nine innings."

Fraser was in the box for the Bostons, and he, too, was pitching first-class ball. But the Giants by the end of the fourth inning were beginning to solve his delivery. The hits were getting a sharper ring to them and going out more on a line. But superb fielding helped the Bostonian out of several tight places and he "got by" until the fifth.

Then the Giants broke the ice. Larry sent a corking single out to center. Denton whaled out a tremendous hit that had all the earmarks of a home run. But Walters, by a wonderful sprint,

got under it and Larry, who had rounded second, had all he could do to get back to first before the throw in.

"Highway robbery," growled Denton, as he went disconsolately back to the bench.

Willis went out on strikes, but Becker poled out a crashing three-bagger that brought Larry over the rubber for the first run of the game and sent the stands into hysterics.

Becker was caught napping a moment later and the inning ended. The New Yorkers were hilarious while the Boston rooters were correspondingly depressed.

"You're getting to him, boys!" yelled McRae. "We'll drive him to the tall timber before long."

But Fraser had views of his own on that subject and refused to be driven. He had no ambition to be slaughtered to make a New York holiday.

Still, though he uncorked a dazzling assortment of shoots and slants, the Giants scored another run in the sixth though it took two singles, two passes and a wild pitch before it was finally recorded.

Iredell beat out a slow roller to Hobbs and took second on a single by Curry to right field. Both of them were advanced a base on a wild pitch that just touched the tips of Thompson's fingers as he leaped for it, and rolled all the way to the Bostons' dug-out before it was regained. Joe was

purposely passed, Fraser thinking that with the bases full a double play might pull him out of danger.

Mylert hit to Hobbs, forcing Iredell at the plate, although he made a great slide. Another pass given to Burkett forced Curry home for the second run of the game, leaving the bases still full. Larry was at the bat and there was a great chance to "clean up," as he was frantically urged to do by the excited spectators. But the best he could do was to tap weakly to Fraser who fired it back to the plate making a force out. Thompson, in turn, shot it to Hobbs in plenty of time to get the runner, making a sharp and snappy double play.

"We ought to have made more out of that than we did," growled McRae. "That's what I call bush league work. To have the bases full twice and as the result of it all one little measly run!"

"Never mind, John," chuckled Robson. "It's one more to the good, anyway, and even if it is measly I'll bet that Boston would be mighty glad to have one like it."

In the seventh inning, Walters, the first man up, sent up a high foul that Burkett and Mylert started for at once. Larry, who was field captain, shouted to Burkett to take the ball. But Mylert either did not hear or trusted to his own judgment and collided forcibly with the first baseman, both

going to the ground with a crash, while the ball dropped between them.

The other players rushed to the spot and lifted the players to their feet. Luckily, they were not unconscious although badly shaken, but it was fully five minutes before the game was resumed.

Walters' second effort was a sharp grounder straight at Denton, which the latter shot to first in plenty of time. But the ball went high and rolled almost to the right field wall. By the time it was retrieved, Walters had got around to third amid the frantic acclamations of the Boston rooters who thought they saw at last a chance to score.

With a man on third, no man out and some of the heaviest sluggers coming up, it looked as though the Red Sox would break their string of zeros.

A long fly to the outfield, even though caught, would in all probability bring in Walters from third.

But Joe tightened up and struck out the next man up in three pitched balls. He made Hobbs chop a bounder to the box on which Walters did not dare to try for the plate. Then with two out he beguiled Girdner into sending up a towering foul which Mylert caught almost without stirring from his position. Poor Walters, left at third, hurled his cap to the ground in a movement of

despair, and the gloom about the Boston section of the stands could be fairly felt.

The Bostons now were growing desperate. They bunted. They tried to wait Joe out. They sought to rattle him by finding fault with his position in the box. They put in pinch hitters. They pulled all the "inside stuff" they knew.

"But Joe obstinately refused to "crack." He "had everything" on the ball. His change of pace was perfect. His curves worked beautifully. His drop ball broke sharply, inches below their bats.

"All over but the shouting," chuckled McRae, as the Red Sox came in for their last inning.

But two minutes later he was pale as chalk while the Boston partisans were in delirium.

Girdner sent an easy grasser to Larry, who booted it, and the batter reached first. Stock followed with a bunt that Denton slipped down on as he ran in for it. These mishaps must have got on Burkett's nerves, for he squarely muffed Thompson's pop fly that any "busher" could have caught.

There were three men on bases, though none had made a hit. No man was out, and Cooper, the slugger of the Boston team, was coming to the plate.

A hit of any kind would bring in two men and tie the game. A two-bagger would clear the bases

and put Boston in the lead. The Red Sox rooters were on their feet and screaming like mad.

Joe shot over a ball at which Cooper refused to "bite." The next one, however, suited him better, and he sent it hurtling toward the box like a bullet.

Joe saw it coming two feet over his head. Like a flash he leaped up and caught it in his ungloved hand. He turned and shot it over to Denton at third. Denton touched the bag putting out Girdner who had turned to go back and then got the ball down to Larry before Stock could get back to second.

It was a triple play! The game was over, the Series was won and the Giants had become the champions of the world!

For a moment the crowd was fairly stunned. Then wild howls and yells arose and an uproar ensued that was deafening. Staid citizens forgot their dignity and danced up and down like madmen, utter strangers hugged each other, straw hats were tossed into the air or smashed on their owners' heads. Then the crowd hurdled over the stands and swooped down on the players who were making tracks as fast as they could for the clubhouse to escape the deluge.

"A no-hit game! A triple play!" gasped McRae, as he almost wrenched Joe's arm from its socket. "Joe, you're a wonder. And now for that

tour around the world. You've got to go with me, Joe. I won't take No for an answer. You'll be our greatest drawing card."

How Joe accepted the invitation and the startling events that followed will be told in the next volume of the series, to be entitled: "Baseball Joe Around the World; Or, Pitching on a Grand Tour."

It was a long time before Joe could tear himself away from his hilarious team-mates and reach his party at the Marlborough. How his mother cried over him in her joy and pride, how Mr. Matson wrung his hand and patted his shoulder hardly trusting himself to speak, how Clara hugged and kissed him, how Mabel would have liked to do the same but did not dare to, how Jim and Reggie mauled and pounded him—all this can be easily guessed. They were happy beyond all words.

But there was an impalpable something in the air that gradually thinned out the party. Mrs. Matson motioned her husband to come with her. Jim and Clara, only too glad of the excuse, slipped away, casting a roguish glance behind them, and even the obtuse Reggie remembered a letter he had to write and vanished.

Joe and Mabel, left alone, looked at each other, but Mabel's eyes fell instantly before what they read in Joe's. Her cheeks flushed, her breath came faster and she began to tremble.

"Mabel," Joe began, a trifle huskily.

"Yes, Joe," she faltered.

He took her little glove from his pocket and bent toward her tenderly.

"This little glove of yours has done wonders for me," he said. "It has helped me to win two championships. But these victories are nothing to me unless I win you, too. Will you be my wife, Mabel—will you? You know I love you."

He read his answer in the beautiful eyes full of love and trust that she turned up to his. The next instant she was in his arms.

Decidedly, it was Joe's winning day.

And that good right arm of his had made it a winning day also for hosts of others. The whole National League was aflame with exultation. The city of New York was wild with joy. And every member of the Giant team was tasting the delights of victory to the full.

They had all played their parts well and ably. But they knew perfectly well that more credit belonged to Joe than to any one else and they were loud in their praises of his skill and courage.

"I've seen some dandy pitching in my life," Robson declared to the group of Giant players who had gathered round for an impromptu jollification, "but that performance of Matson's this afternoon was far and away the best of all. He was as cool as a cucumber and it was impossible to rattle

him. He couldn't have done better. He's the greatest pitcher in the League to-day, barring none!"

"Right you are!" exclaimed McRae, clapping him on the shoulder. "I tell you, Robbie, it was a great day for New York when I signed Baseball Joe for the Giant team!"

THE END

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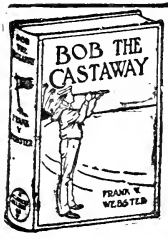

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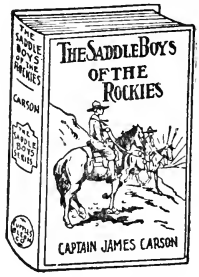

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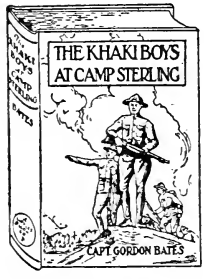

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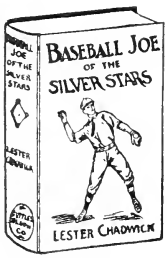

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