

MATTERS OF MOMENT IN THE SPORTING AND DRAMATIC WORLD

What Is the Hardest Position to Play on a Ball Team?

By TOMMY CLARK.

DURING a recent fanfest among several big league ball tossers the question came up as to which was the most difficult position to play on a team. Opinions differed, but the majority of them selected the position of backstop as the hardest on the team.

Not so many years ago there would have been but one answer as to which was the easiest position on the team to play, and this would have been first base. Leaving out the battery positions, shortstop would have been picked as the hardest on the team. Now first base is not considered the easiest position by most of the players, while a good percentage of them do not consider shortstop the hardest. Neither do the players agree as to the relative amount of skill required in the different positions.

Among outfielders the left station is rated as the most difficult to play—that is, when the sun field is not taken into consideration. The reason for this is that left hand batters, when they hit to left at all, drive out balls that are harder to handle than any other variety sent to the outer gardens. A left fielder must have a good pair of hands to negotiate such catches, as the ball has a tendency to break and twist out of the glove and must be grasped firmly.

Center field is the easiest of the three positions, for a ball hit in that direction has been met fair and square by the bat and sails out on a pretty straight course, with no disconcerting changes in that direction. The middle fielder has more ground to cover than either of his companions, but his catches are comparatively easy. Of course where there are sun fields that alters the argument altogether.

First base is generally considered second to center field as an easy position, but there is a growing sentiment among the players that a higher rating should be placed on the position when the right kind of man is covering the bag. Such men as Chase of the New York Americans, Davis of the Philadelphia Athletics, Hoblitzel of the Cincinnati Nationals, Tenney of the New York Nationals and Konechy of the St. Louis Nationals are virtually infielders in the ordinary acceptance of the word, outside of their duties of taking thrown balls. They not only cover a lot of ground around the bag, but are required to use a lot of judgment in handling bunts. For the first baseman who gets all there is out of the position it is anything but an easy one. On the other hand, a good percentage of the first basemen in major league company manage to do their positions through their ability to handle lead throws. To play this way first base is easily the second easiest position on the diamond.

When it comes to the most difficult position the players are divided between third base and shortstop. A good percentage of them consider third base a harder position to play



Leading National and American League Pitchers

Although the season is still young, a good line has been given on the leading pitchers of the two big leagues. In the National, Mathewson of New York, "Three Fingers" Brown, of Chicago, Camnitz and "Babe" Adams of Pittsburgh and Rucker of Brooklyn are the stars. In the American, Walsh of Chicago, Addie Joss of Cleveland, who recently twirled a no hit game against Chicago, and Mullin of Detroit lead the junior association.

than short. They contend that what counts most at shortstop is the natural ability to cover short ground and

make throws and that a mechanically perfect shortstop has no trouble in taking care of his position.

In playing third, they say, more headwork is required as well as speed and a good arm. Without a good head

a third sacker is of little value, as the batter will fool him continually by bunting when he is not looking for the

play or by placing the ball where he cannot handle it. Throws by the third baseman must be fast and hard, and he must be quick on his feet in order to get the ball.

Taking the entire team into consideration, the players are pretty well agreed that the hardest place to play and get out of the position all that is in it is behind the bat. Good headwork is necessary in order to do this, and along with it good feet, a strong arm and a good eye are required. The catcher can make or unmake the average pitcher, and his services are practically invaluable if he plays the position as it should be played.

While third base, along with short and the catcher's position, is considered rather difficult, according to some of the stars, Hobe Ferris, the former crack third baseman of the St. Louis Americans, does not agree with them. In talking recently about the job of holding down the third station Ferris said: "Honestly speaking, from a workman's standpoint and considering the amount of labor involved, I would rather play third sack than coach. When I went into the business of playing professional baseball eight years ago I naturally tried to pick out the softest job and finally decided that third base was about the easiest place in sight. The hardest place? Why, nowhere but second base. There's a position that tries a man's soul—yes, his patience and his nerve as well. A second sacker has a thousand things to think of where a third baseman has one. Third base? Why, even if I were a Bill Bradley or a Devil I would be almost ashamed to take my salary for playing that position."

Ump's Life No Happy One.
The umpire's task is a thankless one at best. Billy Evans calls attention to the fact that the meanest of baseball players can now and then earn applause from the stands, but none ever heard a crowd give an umpire the glad hand for good work.

Surely it is in the worst of taste to jeer an official who is doing an unpleasant duty, to laugh when he is hit by a pitched ball or to abuse him because the game is not going right. Fortunately umpires are well paid to endure as well as to judge or there would be few to take the thankless posts.

Should Managers Listen to Fans?
The statement made by Fred Clarke recently that he let Bill Abstein go to St. Louis because he realized that the latter had ended his usefulness to the Pittsburgh team owing to the fact that the home fans were against him brings up one of the most interesting problems of baseball. His case is identical with that of Fred Merkle of the New York Giants, and the two offer almost a parallel. Merkle made his famous break two years ago when he failed to touch a base, and as a result the New York Giants lost the National League pennant to Chicago, the Cubs afterward

capturing the world's championship. As a result Merkle got in bad with the New York fans and it cannot be said that he has even really got back into their good graces again. Incidentally his record as a ball player has not been what was expected before the break, and it is a question right now whether McGraw would not give much to have a better man on first. McGraw stuck to Merkle through his trouble, but it is still a question whether he would not have allowed the youngster more had he allowed him to go to some other club where he would not have had to face the opposition he has in New York. Clarke, on the other hand, has sent Abstein to another club and league and given him a chance to make a fresh start. These cases and others almost as prominent lead to the question of whether it is not better to secure a young player than keep an experienced one who is in bad with the fans and has not their encouragement to help him win.

Policing the Big Fight.
On the coast it is becoming the custom to insure the referee. The man who is to rule in favor of Johnson in his battle with Jeffries, should it be necessary, will probably be classed as an "extra hazardous risk."

Which reminds one to inquire if there is any possibility of a rumble arising when the championship is fought July 4. No announcement has yet been made, but it is likely that the pavilion will have to be heavily policed. Forty or fifty thousand persons of all descriptions will be assembled, and the least dissatisfaction with the ruling of the official may furnish a spark for trouble.

It is not the least of the problems the promoters of this fight face—the controlling of the passions of battle crazed enthusiasts.

The Murray Case.
The black eye which failure of the Philadelphia club to come to a settlement with former Manager Murray placed on the National League seems to have been wiped out.

Murray has never been given credit for what he accomplished at Philadelphia. It was his resourcefulness which built up the present team. What is more, this same team would have been a much greater factor in the race last year had it not been for the interference with Murray by some of the owners of the club. It does not help a manager's work to have individuals who "know little or nothing about the game" to make trades such as the Magee-for-Donlin affair, which created the split between Murray and the club. No sane man would have made such a trade, and it was while he was protecting the club by refusing to sanction this deal that Murray paved the way to lose his position. Those who know Murray have not lost confidence in his ability, and it would not be surprising to see him back at the head of one of the major league teams before the present season is over.

LADIES' DAY AT THE PLAYERS—WHEN "HUMPTY DUMPTY" FOX PLAYED "HAMLET"

Lawsuit in the First Production Here of Robertson's "Caste"—Gig Lamps on the Steers of a Western Actor. Breezy Bits of Gossip About Well Known People of the Stage.

By FRANK H. BROOKS.

ONCE a year the home where Edwin Booth lived and died, now the Players' clubhouse, just a step from the city home of Samuel J. Tilden, facing Gramercy square, New York city, is thrown open to ladies who are fortunate enough to be on the Players list. And it is easier for a socially ambitious woman to get on the waiting list of the Four Hundred—if there is such a list—than it is for her to get an invitation for ladies' day at the Players. Any woman who attends the annual reception puts it down as an investment. The reception committee that meets the house was attended by many of a select set. As is always the case, as many prominent actors as were in the city were there. Any one who is not up in the art of hospitality and who has a longing for that accomplishment ought to arrange to attend a ladies' day at the Players. There, if anywhere, is seen the delightful art which many believe is a lost art. The reception committee that meets the invited guests at the entrance of the house is composed of actors who are at the very zenith of the profession. When the committee ushers the guests into the great room at the head of the stairway the guests are taken by another committee and conducted to the ample dining room, where a collation is served that is the acme of perfection. Then follows the ramble through the corridors and rooms where the "man of all his time" and profession passed the days of his retirement. All that he loved, at least all that was inanimate, is there just as he left it. Another committee conducts the guests through and over this collection, concisely explaining each article. At the top of the house is the room where the great tragedian breathed his last. Here are the places where he rested, the desk just as it was the last day he sat there and wrote, the last chair in which he sat when he looked out on the city and the quaint bedstead in which he lay in the last hours of the closing scene. On the walls of this room is the picture of his wife as well as the pictures of others who so often were his guests. The reception on ladies' day lasts until the shadows begin to creep in at the windows. Then the lights are turned on, and the guests depart as music floods the old house.

"Caste" in Other Days.
The revival of "Caste" at the Empire theater in New York recalls a lawsuit.

Lester Wallack had secured the right to bring it out in New York. Billy Florence had seen the play in London and rewrote it from memory. He claimed no rights. He produced it from his notes in 1867. Wallack sued out an injunction. After a hearing of the case the judge refused the injunction. Florence went on with the play, and it was a brilliant audience that greeted him. It is also recalled in connection with that production that Mrs. Frank Chanfrau was in the company. Wallack presented the piece in 1893. In 1874 it was played at the old Union Square for a benefit to Jennie Lee. J. H. Stoddard was in the cast. The last notable revival in New York was at the Knickerbocker theater, when John Hare and his London company presented it. When "Caste" was brought out at Wallack's second time, in 1887, one of the members of the company was F. W. Robertson, son of the author of the play.

Gig Lamps on the Steers.
Percy Heath is the most voluminous story teller connected with the publicity department of the theatrical business. Witness a sample reeled off by him while watching the interests of his "boss," Frederic Thompson. Frank Bacon, who takes the character of the old druggist in "The Fortune Hunter," is when at home on his ranch of many acres between San Francisco and San Jose a cattle breeder and fruit grower. In one tract of his land a herd of high jumping cattle roamed. Not satisfied with the ground allotted them by Bacon, the cattle—to be exact, three of the herd—used to leap the fence at will and wander promiscuously on the acres of Bacon's neighbors. Lawsuits for damages became numerous. Bacon got to thinking, "He had heard of a Paris firm that made goggles for animals. A measurement of the three fence jumpers was forwarded, and in due time the "gig lamps" arrived. It was a great day on the Bacon ranch when the lamps were adjusted on "them steers." Then the jumpers were turned loose. They headed for the neighboring fence. Of course the "speck" made the fence seem very near. When within seventy-five feet of the wire the steers raised themselves in the air. When they came down they saw that they were not over by many feet. For a moment they looked as if they realized that the joke was on them. Then they turned tail and went full tilt, bellowing like mad, in the direction whence they had started. They never attempted to climb the fence afterward. But they are still wearing the "gig lamps." The "wind-downs" come high, but they are not as expensive as lawsuits.

"Pop" Wood, Who Saw "Humpty Dumpty" Fox Play "Hamlet."
Over at the Hudson theater, New York, Henry B. Harris' pet enterprise, is a stage door man whose name is L. C. Wood. He started in the theatrical business with George L. Fox in "Humpty Dumpty." Although seventy-two years of age, his mind is clear and his mental faculties are acute. In

teresting character is Wood. He served in the navy in the old frigate Independence and was for four years in the army during the civil war as a member of the One Hundred and Thir-

ty-ninth New York volunteers. In 1858 he was stage door keeper of the old Olympic theater, in New York. The house was formerly known as Laura Keane's Varieties. John A. Duff took the lease and started out with George L. Fox in "Humpty Dumpty" as his first attraction. "Pop" Wood tells the following story of how the late Augustin Daly became identified with the theatrical business in the United States: "John A. Daly was the name we first knew him by. He first came around the theater after he had married Mr. Duff's daughter. Daly was then a

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newspaper man, and Duff took him in and made him his business manager. It wasn't long before he became the big figure in the theatrical business in New York, with two theaters, the Grand Opera House and the old Madison Square, which he named Daly's theater. I knew Booth and Barrett, E. L. Davenport and John McCullough. Barrett was very friendly with us around the stage, but Booth seemed to be always laboring under a spirit of depression. I think Edwin Forrest was the greatest actor I have ever known and one of the finest men too. Everybody had a good word for him, and he had a good word for everybody. The people in his company idolized him, and he had more friends among theater goers than all the other actors of his time put together. And maybe you think George Fox wasn't a good actor! I remember once at the old Olympic theater he gave a travesty on "Hamlet," and a brilliant audience witnessed his performance. In one box sat E. L. Davenport, in another box John McCullough. Edwin Booth occupied a third and Lawrence Barrett a fourth. After the performance I was standing alongside of Mr. Duff, our manager, and they came back to congratulate Fox on his performance. All declared that it was one of the best things they had ever seen. The grave-digging scene was very effective for a burlesque. The two gravediggers were played by the famous team called the Queen sisters, who, while digging the grave, sang "Five O'clock in the Morning," and that song was picked up by everybody in New York and was as big a hit as its day as "After the Ball" or any other big song success since that time."

WORTH KNOWING THAT—
They usually call him Edward Everlasting Evergreen Eternal Rice, acting manager for Henry B. Harris. He is the man who brought out "Evangeline" at Niblo's Garden in 1874. At that time he was advertising agent for a steamship company. His success with "Evangeline" induced him to quit his steamship connection. In his stage career of thirty-one years he has produced forty-one plays. He made the combination of W. H. Crane and Stuart Robson and put Richard Mansfield in "The Mikado" when it opened in Boston. To name the people who appeared under Rice's management is to call the roll of many notables of the stage.

Frederic Thompson, Mabel Taliaferro's husband, will play a summer roof garden in "New York against Luna Park at Coney Island," title of the piece, "The Comic Supplement," principal female role by Maude Raymond; lyrics and music by Harry Williams and Edgar Van Alstyne. There will be a posthumous play of Charles H. Hoyt ("Rosemary") for a summer tour. Seems that Hoyt wrote the prologue and one act just before he died. Act 2 has been added from Hoyt memoranda. The name of the play is "A Bunch of Blue Ribbons." Harry Gill will be the young man in the prologue and an old man in the acts.

Some Play Women Who Please the Public



PLAYGOERS in Rochester and Buffalo, N. Y., and out in Detroit, Mich., know better than playgoers of New York who Jessie Bonstelle is. She has a circuit that takes in the first three cities named and manages the people who play in that circuit. She engages her own company, contracts for the theaters where they appear and arranges with playwrights and managers for such productions as she wants. She also personally directs the business that includes the manufacture of properties and the building of scenery. She goes on the road in the summer time and superintends her business. At a moment's notice she can lay aside her managerial duties and take a part in any play that is under her direction, for she is a clever actress. Any playgoer who saw her in "The Faith Healer," played by Henry Miller and his company, will remember that Jessie Bonstelle shared honors with the star. Miss Bonstelle will next season bring out under her own management Caroline Duer's new play, "Birds of Passage." Miss Duer is a cousin of Mrs. Clarence H. Mackay and a member of a very old and wealthy New York family.

Miss Chrystal Herne received her first stage instructions from her father, James A. Herne, the actor and playwright, than whom there was

none greater in his line in his day. Miss Herne will be starred early in the fall season in a new play under the direction of Messrs. Liebler & Co. Miss Bessie Abbott will be seen the coming season in the new light grand opera "Ysobel," by Pietro Mascagni. The production will be under the di-

rection of Messrs. Liebler & Co. It is based on the story of "Lady Godiva." Miss Marie Tempest, who is playing the part of Polly in Frohman's revival of Robertson's "Caste," written and now running at the Empire theater, New York, played the same part on three occasions in London. She says she is particularly fond of the character. Miss Elsie Ferguson plays the role of Esther according to the method as she conceives it today. Miss Maude Milton plays the marquis. She wishes she might be permitted to cut some of the speeches she has to speak and confesses that they are tiresome.