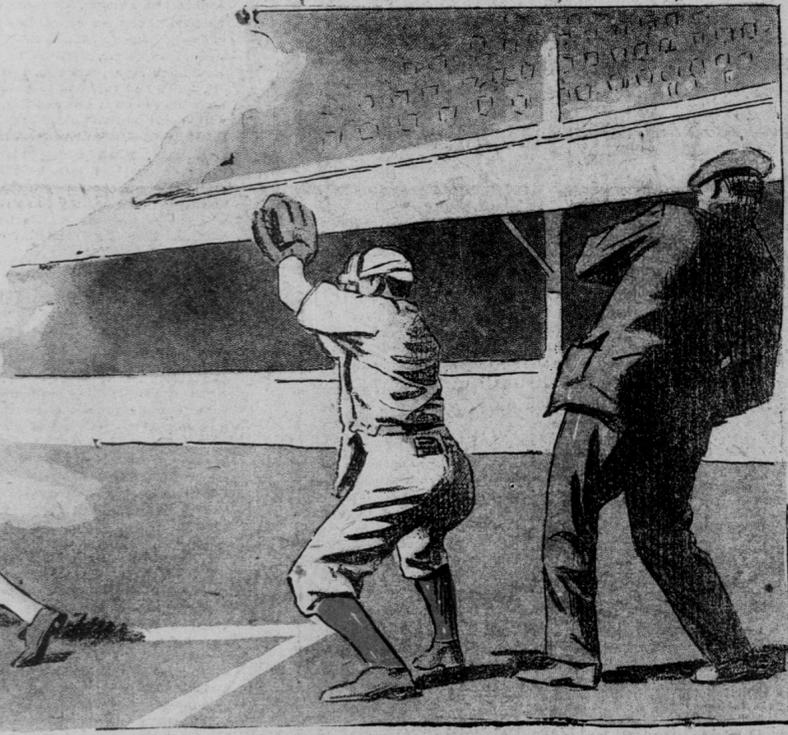


WITH THE BUGS ON THE BASEBALL BLEACHERS

By Paul Parker

THE baseball bug is a strange animal. He inhabits the right and left field bleachers of Recreation park. He shuns the unsplintered seats of the grand stand as he does straw hats and artichokes. He has hell in his lungs and heaven in his face. Although he prefers thirst weather to any other, yet he is easily enticed out of the thickest jungles in a storm to watch a game, as steam heat costs but 5 cents a glass on the bleachers. And once a bug, always a bug. People get over the various fevers and messes, but when the bacillus baseball once enters their veins they have it for life. Nothing but the big procession and the slow music can tear them away from the game.

When the bug has "How many?" snapped at him from the bowels of a two by six box he planks down his two dimes and a nickel with as much ease and grace as the millionaire who has to break a twenty to witness the contest. The bug is troubled with a good digestion. He lives in anticipation of the Seals capturing "the rag," but preys on ball players, umpires, peanuts and beer. His special dish is scrambled umpires trimmed with pitchers. When very hungry he drinks the life blood of 18 or more players. There is no law of gods or man with him. When once he starts to mangle a team nothing but a flu fitsu hold on one's reputation will save it from being blasted to the tenth decimal point. The bug is as fickle as a summer girl and fluctuates like a woman's waist line. He puts a player on a pedestal one day so that he can topple him over the next. When once he has the harpoon out for a player he lets the sun sink each day on his wrath, and this hatred lengthens as the days grow longer. Yet, with all, the bug is a noble animal. We could not do without him. He often makes an otherwise dull game interesting, and is as necessary a part of the baseball landscape as any of the immortal nine whose pictures adorn the



reporting pages as having hermetically sealed the championship.

When the bugs say thumbs down to a player he might as well beat it while his return ticket is working, as they will—to drift into the vernacular—get his goat. Many near-diamond luminaries have been sent back to the bushes by the echoes from the bleachers. Often the splinters do not rest just right, or the hammer bath or gin fizzes did not revive according to schedule, so the bugs take it out on some poor, unfortunate who is merely trying to prove the rule that to err is human.

Three Kinds of Bugs

Bugs can be divided into three species, somewhat after the manner in which Caesar divided Gaul. There are the bugs courteous, the bugs discourteous and the knickers. The two latter species predominate. They see no good in any player and evil in all. They think their 25 cents admission money poorly invested unless they can eat up about \$1,000 worth of reputations. They seldom get away with any clever bits of wit, but churn out the same line of noise the whole day through.

The worst crowd to bullyrag the players, however, is the Sunday afternoon bunch. They have the two edged sword looking like a telegraph pole when it comes to making cutting remarks. "That's the crowd," as a ball player once expressed it, "who have the rum and gum voices; they come out to the ball grounds with a healthy Saturday night afterglow, after a battle with their 'for better or for worse,' and when the decision went against them they headed for the ball game to take it out on us."

While entering the ballgrounds the other day I fell in with Jimmie the Irresistible. James is a bug and then some more. Several years selling papers has given him a voice that makes Empire Finney's loudest notes sound

like a whispser. Any time he misses a game it is due to a severe attack of falling of the bank account. He hinted that he had been suffering from this disease quite frequently of late, as the 7 and 11 had forsaken him in the greatest of all indoor sports, shooting craps. On this day, however, fortune had smiled bountifully at him. He could have played scatter the coin with Rockefeller for a few fast rounds. He was even so flush that he hesitated as he passed the peanut stand. Upon being asked if he was going to decorate one of the benches in the grandstand, he replied: "Nothin' stirrin'; my transfer don't lead up them stairs. Come on, leave us gumshoe the controversy from the right field cushions. The boss is some fan and he is liable to see his slave up there under the shingles. If he would see me there with 50 cent brows he would think that I had put my bread trap in the till, and I guess he wouldn't be avargin' 1,000 per cent in the thinkin' column; besides, Seymour, it's no place for one who climbs under the eiderdown at the Workingman's Palace for 15 cents per night."

As we clambered along the bleachers I spotted Charles Horatius, the apostle of slang and the noblest Roman of them all. On this sunshiny day in June he beamed out among the rabble like a beamed plant in a thousand acre sage-brush bouquet. For, be it understood that C. H. is a smart dresser on and off. He is good to look upon whether behind the drainboard putting the New York scald to a Bronx cocktail or merely scattering chunks of his O. P. S. conversation. It would take the gem expert of Tiffany's and the head of the Harvard English department to decide which is more dazzling, his line of talk or the piece of alum in his cravat.

C. Horatius' apparel has a decidedly eastern twang, for he is no domestic bird. He was originally from Waterbury, Conn., once of New York, but now of Van Ness avenue. Besides being a good judge of tailors, he is there

10,000 strong when it comes to throwing the calcium on the ball players. He is a grizzly bear in this regard. When he misses any tricks among the gladiators out in the arena, "there is a reason" as a breakfast food advertisement says. It can usually be laid to the trade winds which deposit a few pounds of the diamond in the orbits of the party of the first part and thereby prevent him from witnessing the awful massacre of the fundamental rules of the national game.

Charles Horatius Opens Up

On this day the cellar champions were working over time trying to reach water before the nine innings were over. The only person who enjoyed the game was the bat boy of the Sacramento team, as he seldom had to pick up a bat along the first base line. This team played like the supposed dark horse who turned around and ran the other way to escape being run over. Charles Horatius thought that the Sacramento mascot was in fine form, but he was being poorly supported by the rest of the team. As the game progressed baseball crimes were being committed in rapid succession, until one of the players forgot to use his gray matter as rapidly as he was paid to do. Then up spake Charles Horatius: "What's the matter, been out in the alcoholic circles last night? You want to take advantage of Friday and eat some brainfood. What's your head for, old glucose foot? Is it used to keep your collar on, or just as a hat-rack? Believe me, dicky one, you'll never get arrested for exceeding the speed limit for fast thinking. I'll bet a stack of blonde money and put myself liable to look for breakfast at the Cheap and Ready, each clanging of the coffee an' bell. If you haven't a wood insertion in your dome. Some of these babbles think that they are Joe Jefferson in 'Rip Van Winkle.' They ought to have their backs on the feathers and the curtains down. They seem to forget that the comet is playing night engagements now."

The pitcher was being hit, so hard that a new man was substituted. Two linings went by without a run being scored on him, so one of the bugs adjourning our hero twitted him about the new pitcher holding them down. "What that heaver hold'em down? Yes, when they commence picking feathers from a cuckoo clock? He'll come up for air after a few more spasms." C. H. was

right, the new pitcher looked like a clubbing that one of the bugs was thinking seriously of sending for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to help the fellow out.

This day being one of the rare ones for which June is famous, caused the fan of many to turn to baseball. Every one on the bleachers was thaved out completely. The Irresistible James said he never saw so much pep and vinegar as was displayed. Even the tiny vener of three and one-half chaps was melted. Arrayed in tones of gray they contrasted sharply with some of their elbow neighbors, who were gowned in some of the most careless efforts. Mortimer, one of the trio, became real kittenish and rudely laid his old rose gloves on the headgear of Piffles when Bodie knocked a home run. Even Piffles with his hat band bottomed up in back got away from Miss Van Stamp Beans' ooling party long enough to mutter, "Say, fellows, wasn't that a right smart hit?"

This wild burst of enthusiasm on the part of the minor Ned Greenway was too much for the Irresistible James, so when the nurse to the "collars" came by with an armful of the thirst dispellers, James yelled at him, "Leave us battle with a couple of your collars, boy. I'm so dry that my mouth would look like the Sahara desert look like the blue Danube. If I had to mail a letter in this moment the only way I would ever be able to get the stamp on the envelope would be with a pin." It took but one short gasp for him to smother the collar. These collars are a great institution. They are composed of an inch of beer and six inches of foam. Oscar-at-the-Spigot evidently believes that a pound of foam is worth an ounce of prevention.

As the Irresistible One could now look the world in the face it was no trouble for him to answer the question, "Who ever saw Sacramento win a game?" hurled at him by a sailor sitting one seat back. "There is only one survivor left who ever witnessed Sacramento winning a game, Jacky, and he is blind. Every time he thinks about it, however, he throws a convulsion. The doctor says he has only a few thoughts left. They say that Danny Long sold the player who lost this game for the Seals to a billiard ball manufacturer. He was the real lively headed thing."

Next to us was one of the first families of Grass Valley. He did not look very highly of the class of ball which

no earthquakes, mosquitoes nor frogs, were rooting for their home team. After they had made several patients for the aurist, Beef turned around to a friend sitting near the recruits from the knowledge factory and said, "Say, Dick, give Clarence and Harold some sarsaparilla to prevent their breaking out again." Dick, however, did not like to see the boys joshed, so he replied, "Cut it; don't you know enough never to kid cripple or fight a fool?"

Not far from me was one of those pesky bugs who have several intimate friends among the ball players, and in order to impress this fact upon the other fans either deliver a solo which would make an anarchist convention look like a Quaker prayer meeting or they yell some pet name to the player in question every time he comes within a hundred yards of them. This fellow was no exception. Nick Williams was the motif of the party. The moment Nick appeared on the horizon, he waved his hat and yelled, "Beat 'em, Richard, I'm behind you. I taught him all he knows about the game. I remember the first long pants he wore; it was April 13, 1839. I saw him pitch his first curve. That was in 1895; it was one Wednesday morning about 9:30."

Daley, who led off for Los Angeles, drove out a hit so that chapter three was not started. Mr. Wiseman soon became very excited and yelled, "Look out, Nick, he is going to steal, but enough he attempted to steal, but Williams whipped the ball down and Daley was tagged. "See there," said the Pest, as his vest strained at the buttonholes. "He heard my voice. Wasn't that a fine peg? Danny Long ought to have me down there on the bench so that I could tip off the other team's signals."

The remainder of Williams' life history was lost as two bugs started up a few rapid fire comments of the game as it progressed.

Bug One—"Who's the cherry picker on the mound for Los? Has he got any smoke?"

Bug Two—"That's Nagle. Couldn't break a pane of glass at 10 feet. See, he's doin' the Maud Allan Spring Song with his mitts."

Bug One—"Who's the reportin' for duty with the cudgel?"

Bug Two—"Oh, that's Bodie, champion two style hitter of the league. He either splits shingles on the houses or strikes out. How's that for a sap? I guess he can't sting 'em. But pipe the run. Look the way he puts his dial to the ground. He thinks he's an ostrich, so that when he gets his head to the ground the other players won't see him. Come on you, Bodie; lift up your head, all good things don't grow in the ground. What! Did the ump call him out at second? Hey, you umpire, can't you see? What's the matter? Got a draft blowin' through your loft, you big nutmeg? Trim your wicks and get the close ones, you big bum."

Bug One—"Hear Mohler grab, the ump is certainly gettin' his. Jeffries ought to get a job umpirin'; it would put him in condition much faster than boxing antiques and punching bags. They say Mohler wants to be a gentleman on the field, but he keeps puttin' it off."

Bug Two—"How many redskins have bit the dust this mornin'?"

Bug One—"Two or three bright spirits have ascended heavenward to date."

Another common bug is the one who is eulogizing players one minute and damning them the next. In this game McArde made a wonderful stop and a bug spilled this, "Mac, you're the greatest ball player in the world. A natural ball player you'll soon be in the big league. Watch old Wagner take on a deep sea green envy, when he shows the Dutchman up." The next inning McArde struck out and the same bug said, "Hit the air, you zook; 90 days in the bastle for you. Don't you know you can't get hits out of quart bottles. You'll do more good for the team runnin' the lawn mower on the grass. You ought to flee to Honduras for taking a salary. You're slow enough to be a policeman."

One of the frequenters of the lower row of the right field bleachers is Casey. During a game he has no smile on his face like his more illustrious namesake. There is no joy in Casey's manner unless some Seal has shattered the flagpole with a line drive. And the pent up noise is turned loose so that every one has to tie on

his hat in the immediate vicinity of Casey. Casey's one best wish is a warm day, a smooth diamond and Portland on the short end of the score. For he loathes and despises the web footers with all the fire and vehemence which an Irishman can put into hatred. Some one has said he loved a good hater; he should have known Casey, as he is the champion heavy weight hater of the world, barring neither race nor color. Next to his Seals, Casey loves the national game. For five and a half days of every week he toils and labors in a plumbing shop in joyful anticipation of the games on the following Saturday. He is always on the job at the ball grounds whether his first and second loves, the Seals and the Oaks, are playing or not. Even when Portland or Los Angeles are playing together he makes a temporary favorite out of one or the other; he usually opposes the team which has beaten the Seals in any recent series. Some bugs only root when their favorite is playing, but not so with Casey. He is none of your half hearted, just out for the sunshine bugs. He is alive and kicking at every stage of the game.

Casey even takes a 9 o'clock boat over to Oakland on Sunday morning. The only time I ever heard him object to this trip was during a recent series between Los Angeles and Sacramento.

He said, "I hate to see those chickens play; it's always the same old sixes and sevens when they meet. The team that has the patience to stick out the nine acts is sure to win. They ought to act both those teams through baseball bankruptcy or shake the bushes for more players. Some of that Sacramento crowd are only called ball players by courtesy. One thing is in my favor today, however, Finney is going to umpire. I can forget the game and listen to him. To see that guy in refreshments for two, but to hear him give decisions is a feast. You don't know whether he is real or not, but I declare of independence or merely asking for some one to turn the sun around as it's shinin' in his face. His voice starts just below his instep and it does nicely until it gets shivered in his stomach, so that all you hear is the echo of the splash. He ought to get a hydraulic jack or a stepladder and have his voice raised. The only brother voice to his is the one handled by Go Get 'Em Dooey, who roots for Oakland. Occasionally when he belches forth in accents wild he'll tear up the grass by the roots and shake down a few shimmies at the edge of the grandstand."

Let Shamrock Alone

There is always a crowd of "entertainers" from the Mason street resorters who sit in the grandstand. Arrayed in their zebra uniforms, skull caps and sweaters, they come to the games every day. As the warm seats are better than a Hammam bath for preparing these smooth floor artists for the 10 round go with the music and the demon rum, they become real devils at times and get a boil over with humor. One of them all but sang his swan song not long ago. An Irish lad who escorts the "collars" around was picking his way through legs and shoes, monotonously crying out: "Anybody here want drinks?" One of the bediamonded, besweated comedians replied: "No, but we are looking for Kelley with the green necktie." The young shamrock turned suddenly on the canary fresh from the white way and said: "Looks here, you hairy done fried potato, they'll be looking for a carpet sweeper with a black handle to pick up your remains if you ever throw a spillable at me again."

The conversation one hears as he leaves the grounds usually starts with "How'd you like it?" The answers to this are never the same. One says "Rot-ten" the next "pretty good," and another "How'd you like it?" I recently overheard a bug reply to this question thus: "How did I like it? How does a tannery smell? The next time I come out here where these hear-ballplayers are exercising you can sign me up for a six by six set of pads at Agnews. They ought to get Dr. Hook, with pruning knife to thin out some of the lemons. Say, by the way, don't tell Mike you saw me out here, because yesterday I bet him I would not come out here until they imported some good players. You see, today I kinda thought would be one of those exceptions, and the boys would put up a good article of ball. I tell you, we don't get the stuff that Overall, Chase, Helmsmiller and the rest of those ballplayers used to give us in the olden days."

A Buggy Conversation

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When "Beef" Beefs

At this game "Beef" was holding forth in his own little way. This bug warms up the left field bleachers at every game. He has a lovely ingrowing fang and nice mossy teeth and is otherwise happy. He was rightly named for he spares neither players nor audience when he starts his tea taster in Los Angeles in the red flag in his face and the dart in his side. Any time he misses a chance to say something caustic to the players from the south he swears off smoking, but so far he never has had cause to put the ban on Mrs. Nicotine and the little Nicotines.

At this game Dillon was objecting strenuously to third strike being called on him. Some one remarked that he would like to see Dillon hit the umpire. Beef spoke up, "So would I. Any time a boob can't hit the leather any better than Ole Dillon has today he stands a fine chance of connecting with a Hairy like McCreary." As Dillon walked back to the bench after having the "comrade" ball administered to him, Beef yelled to him, "Look out, Doctor Osler will getcha if you don't watch out. He's after a lot of you old silver tops with a can of chloroform."

Beef received a solar plexus blow from an old man who was yelling for Los Angeles later on in the game. The old fellow was telling the umpire how many feet there were between the ball and the player whom he had called out. Beef took his nose out of a glass of beer and said to the old man: "You're in wrong, Father Time; put on your glasses." The old man came back with this: "I'd rather take a chance with the naked eye than the kind of glasses you've been peering through." Beef never looked another beer in the face during the rest of the game.

A little later Los Angeles almost got away with the "squeeze play" and a near fan remarked: "That's inside ball even if it wasn't successful." Beef replied: "It's so much inside that I can't see it."

A couple of Zip-Boom-Ah boys from

PARKER
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