"HAL CHASE, FATHER of "THE CHASER"

An Interview with the "Yanks'" Young Manager, Who Is Also a Peerless First Baseman, a Huntsman, a Billiard Player

"HAL" CHASE

TO be the idol of untold thousands of baseball fans, the greatest first baseman of all those engaged in the national sport, and the youngest manager of a big league team (which, incidentally is in the largest city in the country), one must possess, seemingly, some remarkable qualifications. Such a man is "Hal" Chase, manager of the New York team of the American league, otherwise the "Yanks." Among the many interesting incidents of his career, perhaps the cardinal one, inasmuch at it is indispensable, is the star's entrance upon a real league diamond, and consequently this tale will begin at the beginning.

It was the opening day of the Coast league baseball season in Los Angeles, Cal., in 1904. A big crowd was out—20,000 fans, for California is a great baseball state. The first game was with the Oakland team, then as potent a drawing card in Los Angeles as the Cubs are in New York. Frank Dillon was the first baseman of the Los Angeles team and he was considered the best workman about the initial sack on the coast. He was the star of the team, the idol of the fans—in short, the hope of Los Angeles.

The Pacific Coast league had been an outlawed organization, but in 1904 it returned to the ranks of organized baseball. The Brooklyn club of the National league promptly drafted Dillon, as was its right. Still the fans hoped that by some hitch or technicality Dillon might be able to play in this most important opening game. The management hoped that he might be able to play. Dillon hoped that he might be able to play, for he had no desire to leave his native state and the idol worship for the precarious road which a big league recruit has to travel. He was old in the game. He had no higher ambitions than to be a star in the Pacific Coast league.

"Better be first in the Pacific Coast league than second in Brooklyn," was Dillon's sentiment.

So the stage was set for the opening game. The customary parade of players passed without the official scorer crediting any one with an error. The band played a medley of American airs. The management was "standing them in the aisles." Dillon played with the Los Angeles team in practice. The bell sounded three times as a signal that the season was on. The umpire dusted off the plate, the Los Angeles pitcher curved a few over the plate to his catcher, and the first Oakland batter knocked imaginary clay out of his spikes with his willow stick.

Suddenly a messenger boy brushed through the crowd out upon the field. He walked to the Los Angeles bench and handed a telegram to the manager. The manager walked out to the plate and held a conference with the umpires. The first batsman, curious, ceased knocking clay out of his cleats and walked up to the plate. The other manager joined them. Players gathered around. There was keen suspense in the large crowd, and each man asked his neighbor, "What's the matter?"

The answer was prompt. The Los Angeles manager signaled for Dillon to come in from first base. The telegram was from the national commission. Another club in a league of a higher class had claimed Dillon. He could not play with Los Angeles. The supreme court of baseball had decreed it and the decree must be obeyed. Dillon could not play in the opening game.

The populace groaned.

Ont in left field was a stripling sitting on the edge of the bleachers, kicking his heels. Passively he watched the discussion at the home plate, thinking that it concerned him not a scintilla. Suddenly his manager raised a finger at him. He slipped off his seat, took the chewing gum from his cap and ran to the bench. In a minute he was out on first base. His two piece suit, bearing the words "Santa Clara" did not match any better than a man's principles and his habits. The crowd groaned when they saw this misfit going out to the position. Some of the gamblers—for they bet on baseball on the Pacific coast—began to hedge.

The game started. The infielders were nervous with the big crowd of the first day. Their enthusiasm exceeded their accuracy when it came to throwing. The stripling at first base seemed to be the coolest one of them all. With one hand he pulled down balls way over his head. He dug them up out of the dirt. The infielders certainly gave the new man some bad throws to handle that day, and he got them all without a flaw or an error in his work.

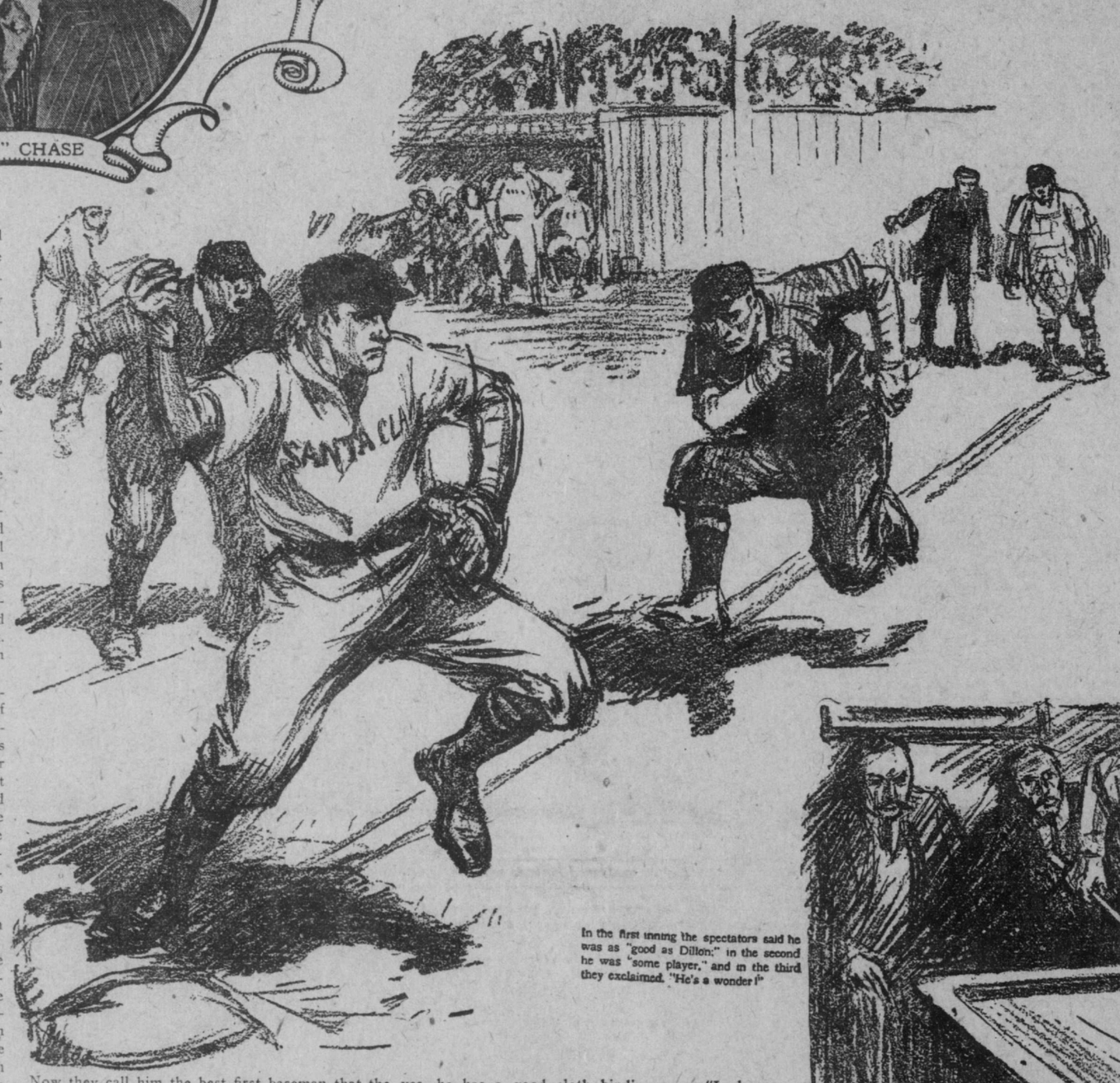
In the first inning the spectators said he was as "good as Dillon"; in the second he was "some player," and in the third they exclaimed, "He's a wonder!"

BROKE UP THE GAME

In the fifth inning the youngster broke up the game with a triple with two men on the bags. The crowd went crazy. The great California public is no exception to the rest of the great American populace. It is fickle. Dillon was forgotten. The new hero, misfit suit and all, had dethroned him. It was a case of "The king is dead! Long live the king!"

The new man was "Hal" Chase.

In a week Dillon was forgotten. Now he is only remembered as the man whom "Hal" Chase displaced. The next day Chase had a regular's suit. But he had made good in the misfit, which only goes to prove that you can't judge a book by its binding.



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Now they call him the best first baseman that the game has ever known. Fans who have seen this wonder in action on the field know him as the ball player. But what sort of a citizen is he? What are his ambitions, his hobbies, his hopes?

Chase had just finished a game of billiards when I called on him. He plays three cushion carom shots with almost as much facility as he covers first base. He put his cue in the rack. He smiled when he was told that he had to deliver one autobiography, sealed, wrapped and in good condition.

"I read the 'Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin' once," he said, "and the first thing he did in his life was to be born. I'm no better than he, so I will begin there, too. I was born in Los Angeles, Cal., 27 years ago. Some folks say I was born a ball player, but if I was it was kept secret until I was 14 years old. Of course I played one ol' cat and a little around the lots when I was a kid, but the first regular ball team that I ever played on was the town team. I covered second base for the village aggregation when I was 14. The rest of the talent was composed of men. I was very proud, and for a time I threatened to outgrow my hatband. I also played on the high school team at the same time."

"Versatile gentleman?"

"No, I seldom went to school. In 1903 I went to Santa Clara college. As a student I was a pretty good ball player. The college didn't do me any good. I wouldn't let it. In the summer of 1903 I played an engagement with the Victoria team of semiprofessionals in British Columbia. On the Victoria team I caught. In college I pitched and played second base. I appeared again with the college team in the season of 1904. The college nines play ball in the winter on the coast. James Morley, the owner of the Los Angeles team in the Pacific Coast league, signed me in the winter of 1904 to play with his club. On the opening day of the season I took the place of a man named Dillon, who had been draughted by Brooklyn and could not play on account of the laws of organized baseball."

Such was Chase's modest way of describing the manner in which he broke into the Coast league. That reflects the man. He hides his light under a bushel, but still it shines through.

"The remaining portion of my autobiography, which has to do with my baseball career, is simple, and I guess most people know of it. I played the season of 1904 with the Los Angeles team, and in 1905 I came to New York."

"Who was your discoverer?"

"'Danny' Long, a scout Clarke Griffith had working for him, signed me up to play with the Yankees. I've been with New York ever since except one break in 1908, when I had some trouble with the management. That about concludes the story of my baseball career, and I guess that is the most important part of my autobiography."

"When did you start digging bad throws up out of the dirt, aviating after high ones and covering the greater part of right field as well as first base?"

"I guess it's the glove," said "Hal" with a smile. "You see, I've always been lucky in picking gloves. They are sort of trick mitts and I train them to work for me."

"It's a good workman who blames his success on his tools. Then I suppose that the most difficult thing that you do is to pick out the right glove. Do you get a new one each season."

"Yes, I have designed a glove that I use. It works pretty well."

"It seems so."

"They liked my work all right when I was in Santa Clara college—that is, the undergraduates did, but the faculty couldn't see me with a microscope. That is why I only stayed a year."

"And if you hadn't been able to buy a trick glove each season, what means would you have employed to fight the sheriff off each week?"

WOULD BE A CIVIL ENGINEER

"You know," said Chase, kicking an imaginary speck off the floor with the toe of a trim russet boot—yes, he has a good cloth binding now—"I always wanted to be a civil engineer. I still would like to be one. I'm fond of the mountains of my native state, and it seems to me a wonderful thing to think that a man can go out with a few simple instruments and make a picture of a vast country. The profession always attracted me and it might have been better for me in the end if I hadn't been able to buy those trick gloves. But still I have no kick coming."

"And for recreation you like to"——

"Hunt. I would rather hunt than eat, and I'm some gastronomic slugger and epicurean. My wife says that if I could hit as well in the big league as I do in the stable steaks I would make Tyrus Cobb wish that he had never been born. I certainly do like to hunt out through the hills of California."

That, then, is the secret of the long, easy, swinging stride of "Hal" Chase on the ball field—the stride of a man in the hills, used to long days of tramping and vast spaces. One can almost see this king of first sackers striding over the mountains after game day on day with never a thought of fatigue. It has been said of him that his every move on the diamond is a picture. He finds the shortest distance between two points instinctively, and he accomplishes the most difficult plays with the least possible expenditure of energy.

"What do you consider to be the greatest indoor sport?"

"There is no such thing. Indoor and sport are contradictory terms. But to be obliging I'll say reading and playing billiards. I do like to read. I enjoy Captain Charles King's books. Many times have I sat up all night reading one of James Fenimore Cooper's stories. They are a scream—all of them. When I pick up one of his books I emulate the well known habit of the postage stamp—I stick to the thing until I get through with it. They are like live wires. I just can't let go of one of his books until the current is turned off. I remember, too, the first time I read 'Paradise Lost.' I started in at 10 o'clock at night in a condescending sort of way. I hadn't anything else to read. I didn't think there was much in poetry. I was going to look at it for half an hour at the most, and I finished it at 3 o'clock in the morning. Since then I have read it through three times, and I liked it better each time I read it. Wasn't Milton a wonderful man!"

"Have you any desire to become a litterateur yourself?"

"No. When I read the stuff that these other fellows write it discourages me anyway. I don't ever expect to write or to break into vaudeville. I believe the footlights hurt a ball player.

"I was sorry to see Matty go into the game, for I think that he is one of the greatest pitchers who ever lived and one of the nicest fellows. If it hadn't been for him we would have beaten the Giants in the post season series last fall. He's a wonder. And, do you know, the night he opened in his act at Hammerstein's I was more nervous than he was, and that was going considerable, for he was rattled. But I was so afraid he wouldn't make good that when the curtain went up I found myself in a dripping perspiration. I was never so nervous on the ball field, even in my first days. No, I will never crowd in on the ranks of either the authors or the actors."

"What are your vices?"

"Smoking, automobiling and riding horseback. I don't drink. That's the 'groove' that has spoiled many good ball players, and as long as I have started I might as well try to last in the profession.

"I'm getting the automobile bug bad. Next spring I'm going to get a runabout, something simple. But I suppose that I will soon get a bigger one, because I do like to travel fast. Then I go home to San Jose each winter, and it will be fine for traveling out into the mountains, where I can hunt. Horseback riding makes a hit with me.

"In the east here I never get a chance to ride, but when I am in San Jose each morning before breakfast I limber up a little by taking an eight or ten mile gallop through that California air, which, by the way, is more or less atmosphere. And it doesn't tend to reduce one's appetite for breakfast, either."

THE "CHASER"

"You must be quite an equestrian. And there is a Mrs. Chase?"

"Yes, and a little Chase. The 'Chaser,' we call him, because he crawls all around the floor and follows everything. I think that he already shows the instincts of a ball player, the way he picks up rollers, and he is not yet a year old. I'm going to try to stop him, but if it is born in him I might as well attempt to stop an express train with a blade of grass."

"What do you hate to do more than anything else in the world?"

"Make a speech at a banquet," replied Chase, without a moment's hesitation. "That always spoils a dinner for me, to have to try to make a talk. I worry about it all through the banquet. I usually try to lay down a bunt, for I always make a short one."

"And no doubt you make a hit."

He smiled.

"When I get through baseball I don't know what I am going to do. Perhaps they will bury me then. After all, I love the game, and I'm going to stick by it as long as it will stick by me. I expect to remain in it for some time yet. Then I'm going to try to get into some business on the side in the winter. I have bought a home out in Leonia, N. J."

"Is New Jersey a disease with you, or do you really like it?"

"You never saw Leonia?"

"No."

"Well, I like Leonia, and it seems to be good for the youngster."

"What do you consider to have been the crucial moment in your baseball career?"

"When I put Ford in to pitch against Mathewson in that first game with the Giants. That meant the championship of the biggest city in the country to me, and it was one of my first acts as a big league manager. If we had won that first game we probably would have won the series. Much depended on the choice of pitchers. I thought Ford could beat 'Matty.' I didn't think Mathewson was as good as he was. If I had worked my pitchers differently we might have pulled the series out. As it worked out, that first game meant the series. But even so, Russell Ford is a great pitcher. There is only one, I think, who can beat him, and that is the one who did it. Watch Ford next season. Remember, this was his first year in the big leagues."

That is Chase. Lavish in the praise of others, he is modest when it comes to discussing himself.

"Well, I guess I'll take another crack at billiards," he concluded.

I watched him play. He shoots with the same facility, almost carelessness, with which he plays baseball. His movements are quick, graceful, sure. No time is lost in figuring shots, as he loses no time in deciding on plays when in a game of ball.

"Goodby," he said with a smile; "try to make it sound as if it was a talk with a big league manager, anyway."

He Plays Three Cushion Carom Shots with Almost as Much Facility as He Covers First Base

TRADITIONS OF WEDDING RINGS

According to the ancient ritual in marriage, the husband began the ring business by placing it upon the bride's thumb and putting it successively on the next two fingers, pronouncing for each one a personal of the trinity; with a final amen the fourth finger was reached, and there the ring remained.

The Greek church ritual directs that the ring be placed upon the right hand. Puritan influence sought to abolish the ring as a vain and heathen emblem, but the sweet old fashion of giving and taking emblem, "for our love's sake," yet remains to us.

Betrothal or engagement rings vary in fashion nowadays and always depend, or should, on the purse of the donor. Where there are no limitations of this sort his taste, if it be perfect, will lead him to choose a diamond solitaire, and of the best he can afford, a small and pure blue white stone being altogether preferable to a large stone. Some prefer a ring set with three stones, generally a sapphire set between two diamonds. Others select a ruby or an emerald, which signifies promise of happiness.

Few persons choose pearls for an engagement ring, as pearls are supposed to typify tears. They are also too perishable to become emblems of love, which, in its first glow at least, is always understood to be indestructible. Their beauty is very precarious, being dimmed or "aged," as the lapidary expresses it, by contact with impure air, while acid annihilates them completely.

THE WORLD'S SEVEN BIBLES

The world has seven bibles. They are the Koran of the Mohammedans, the Eddas of the Scandinavians, Tripitaka of the Buddhists, the Five Kings of the Chinese, the Three Vedas of the Hindus, the Zendavesta and the Scriptures of the Christians.

The Koran is not older than the seventh century of our era. It is a compound of quotations from the Old and New Testaments, the Talmud and the gospel of St. Barnabas. The Eddas of the Scandinavians were published in the eleventh century and are the most recent of these seven bibles. The Buddhists' Tripitaka contain sublime morals and pure inspirations. Their author lived and died in the seventh century before Christ.

The sacred writings of the Chinese are called the Five Kings, "king" meaning web of cloth or the warp that keeps the threads in their places. They contain the choicest sayings of the best ages on the ethico-political duties of life. These sayings can not be traced to a period higher than the eleventh century before Christ. The Three Vedas are the most ancient books of the Hindus, and it is the opinion of great scholars that they are older than the eleventh century before Christ.

The Zendavesta of the Persians is the grandest of all the sacred books next to the bible. Zoroaster, whose sayings it contains, was born in the twelfth century before Christ.

THE CYCLOPEAN EYE

The Greeks were, unwittingly, very near an anatomical truth when they ascribed to certain monsters called cyclops only one eye apiece, which was placed in the center of their foreheads.

The cyclopean eye exists today in the brains of men in a rudimentary form, for in the pineal gland we find the last vestiges of that which was once a third eye and which looked out into the world, if not from the center of the forehead, at least from very near that point. There is alive today a little creature which would put to shame the one eyed arrogance and pride of Polyphemus and Arges and Brontes and Steropes and all the rest of the single eyed gentry who, in the days of myths and myth makers, inhabited the "fair Sicilian isle."

The animal in question is a small lizard called calotis. Its well developed third eye is situated in the top of its head and can be easily seen through the modified and transparent scale which serves it as a cornea. Many other lacertilians have this third eye, though it is not so highly organized as it is in the species just mentioned.

A tree lizard which is to be found in the mountains of east Tennessee and Kentucky has its third eye well developed. This little animal is called the "singing scorpion" by the mountaineers. On dissection the third eye will be found lying immediately beneath the skin. It has a lens, retina and optic nerve.