



A Typically Exuberant Crowd at a Baseball Game.

The Game Elevates and Fits the American Character--It Brings Into Play the Emotional and Moral as Well as the Physical Side of Man's Nature.

By EDWARD MARSHALL.

His face is that of a Greek hero, like manner that of a Church of England Bishop, when I talked with him he was a candidate for United States Senator from California, and he is the father of the greatest sport the world has ever known. You don't know him? You are unfortunate. There are in the United States at least a million men who do and who will yell at sight of him. I am writing now of A. G. Spalding, and he talked to me, the other evening, of the game's psychology.

The Mind and the Game.

"I take it that you are trying to find out what effect the game has on the mind, and what effect the mind has on the game. The general impression among those who do not know, and, although there are several million people in this country who do know, still, there remain a few who don't, is that baseball is simply a form of physical exercise which is interesting to watch and to take part in. Those who have played the game know well that it is more—much more. They know that it is quite as much a mental as it is a physical exercise.

"As a matter of plain fact, it is much more a mental exercise than a mere physical sport. There is really no other form of outdoor sport which constantly demands such accurate co-ordination between the mind and body as this National game of ours. And that is rather fine, when you come to think about it. "Baseball elevates, and it fits the American character. The emotional and moral as well as the physical side of a man's nature are brought into play by baseball. I know of no other medium which, as completely as baseball, joins the physical, mental, emotional, and moral sides of a man's composite being into a complete and homogeneous whole. And there is nothing better calculated than baseball to give a growing boy self-poise, and self-reliance, confidence, inoffensive and entirely proper aggressiveness, general manliness. Baseball is a man maker.

"Of course the professional baseball player is the one known to the non-playing public; he attracts attention through his superior talent, just as a great actor or a great singer does; but a great actor or great singer may start late, while a baseball player cannot. I do not believe there is a single player in the major leagues who had not demonstrated a peculiar fitness for the game, and made a reputation as a skillful player among boy associates, before he was fourteen.

"Yes; certainly the game has its psychology—a part of the fine, healthy, unregenerate psychology of the whole Nation. The professional baseball player is no thug, trained to brutally like the prizefighter, no half-developed little creature like the jockey, no cruel coward like the bullfighter. He is the natural development of the American boy's inborn love of manly, skillful, outdoor sport—sport busying brain and body and not harming any one or anything. The average boy who loves baseball is not the sort of boy who loves to go off with a gun intent on killing some poor bird. Baseball has done a lot to keep the Yankee lad from being brutal. "And he revels in baseball, does this American boy—good luck to him! No one ever has to urge the normal Yankee lad to participate in this clean game. He takes to it as a duck to water. He knows its judgments before he learns

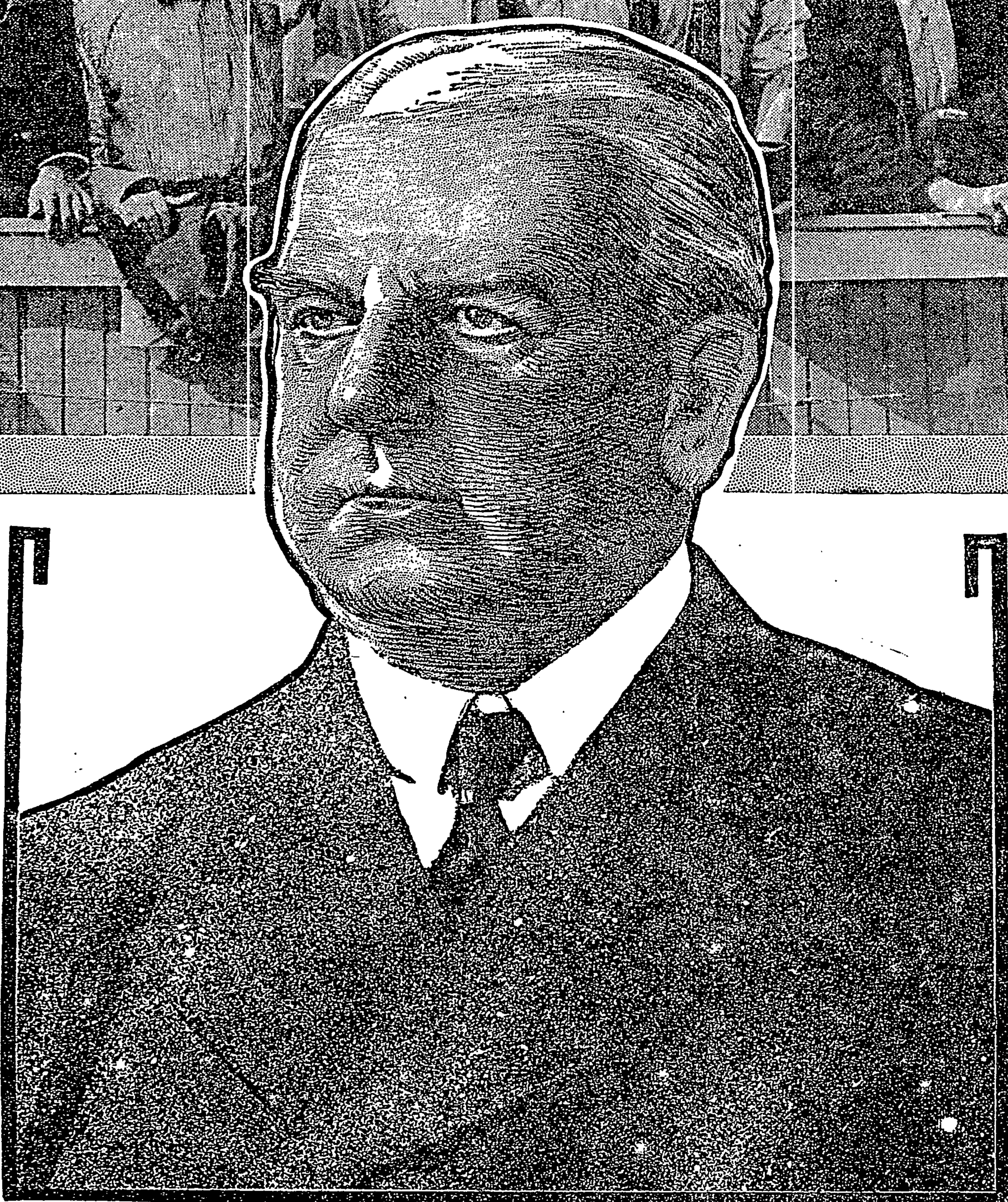
to read and write. His father played baseball before him, and, of this generation, most of his forefathers. And it is a sport which parents may encourage, for it is neither dangerous nor demoralizing.

"The professional baseball player is doing more for his native country than any one engaged in any form of sport has ever done for any country in the past. They say horse racing has resulted in improvement in horse breeding; well, baseball, has done something better, it has resulted in improvement in man breeding. Aside from giving outdoor recreation to the public, the professional baseball player is, by his example, encouraging the boy to healthy sport with which not one unpleasant feature is connected. Little gambling is associated with baseball. When the game first started as a professional sport there was an effort made to saddle it with all the gambling features which beset the race tracks—pool selling and all—and from 1870 to, say, 1875, the gamblers practically had control of our professional baseball. Every baseball park had its betting ring. This made decent people stay away, and interest in the game fell to a low ebb. Every error made was charged to crookedness upon the player's part, and not always, probably, unjustly. William Hulbert of Chicago had become interested in the game, and I explained this all to him. I was actually afraid the game would have to go. He wanted me to take my winning club on from Boston to Chicago, and I told him that I would if he'd clean out the gamblers, and not otherwise. He said he'd try, and he did try, to mighty good effect. That saved the game, undoubtedly, and in the winter of the following year the National League was organized, and has been getting more and more important to the life of all America with the passage of each day since then.

Gambling Driven Out.

"The elimination of the betting evil was the cornerstone of the success of baseball as an exhibition game. The fight against it was a fierce one, lasting four or five years. Then we triumphed, and the cleanest game on earth had been established. No betting, no Sunday playing, no liquor sold upon the grounds! It was a revolution in the world of professional sport. Baseball is the only game which suits the mighty populace and yet is wholly free from ties to bind it to the gambling and the liquor selling element, whose aim it is to victimize that populace.

"That's part of its psychology—it is clean-souled. Another and important part of it is that it is a leveler. That makes it, in the truest sense, American. It is almost, if not exactly, the same game in all parts of the United States, and nowhere is it cursed by caste. Caste may not wreck a sport in countries where caste dominates the social life, but it would surely wreck baseball in this country. That's the finest thing about baseball. Its spectators, once they settle in their seats and glue their eyes upon the diamond, are absolutely equalized by their delight in what they see. The hod-carrier, if his seat so placed him, and the President would almost surely turn and grin at him. I don't know that that has ever actually happened, but I have known a workman in jumpers to so lose his memory of social and financial and political rank as to bluff thus a grand Senator. It was



A. G. SPALDING.

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a fine and a significant spectacle, because—note this—the Senator was not offended. He couldn't clear his mind of frantic joy in time to be offended, and, better yet, he would not have been offended if he could have cleared it."

Right here I ought to explain something. This interview was quite a family affair. Across the room from me sat Mr. Spalding's nephew—a young scientist—and at my right, upon a couch, was Mrs. Spalding. She is a fit mate for her classically featured husband. She is really very handsome, has a notably delightful voice—soft, cultured, vibrant—and she does what the "advice to wives" departments in the women's magazines always urge young wives to do; she takes an interest in her husband's soul-enthusiasms. Interest? Well, some.

Two Cranks in a Family.

"Men at baseball games, all men at baseball games, are brethren, equal sharers in whatever joy or woe or protest the great game may bring," said she. "And utterly irreverent. Ban Johnson, the old President of the league, was sitting near us in the stand, and a man wanted to make a photograph of him. Did the crowd sit awed and reverent? Not notably. That crowd admired Ban Johnson and, in a way, revered him, but the camera man was an obstruction. What a cry went up! 'Too much Johnson! Too much Johnson!' roared instantly unto the vaulted heavens."

Mr. Spalding smiled at her. "Two cranks in a family means domestic bliss, if they are both baseball cranks," he commented, thereby adding to his exposition of the game's psychology.

"Any one who blocked a crank's view of the game would meet with instant criticism," he said proudly. "And if Teddy himself were playing and made an error he'd be roasted by the best friends he possessed upon the bleachers. "But, in spite of this, baseball is the most good-natured pastime in the world. Partisans will rave and tear their hair, but how often do you hear that one of them has torn another's hair on baseball grounds? In the history of the world no such great crowds have gathered to watch anything the world has ever known—sport or anything else—with so few fights. Baseball, you see, arouses no brutal instincts. It is a turmoil rather than a battle. It is more a war of skill than a war of strength. Football often breeds fierce fights. That game calls for heavy muscles, don't you see, as well as skill, and I shall dare some critics when I say that football science is less delicate than baseball science. Brute strength, in one football player, can, and often does, overmaster the pure science of

another. In baseball this could not possibly occur.

The One Game in the Open.

"The game is in the open, too. Twenty thousand people can cluster round a diamond and see every move the baseball players on it make. There is no chance for secret cheating, therefore there is no tendency in that direction. It is not alone the umpire who can see what happens on the field, but every newsboy, every millionaire, among the spectators. In football there is often chance for hidden fouls.

"Professionalism has not wrecked baseball—it has merely brought about a higher degree of skill in players by offering them an income which permits them to keep up, after they have become men, the sport in which they have excelled as boys. The professional is merely a grown boy, and, in the minds of a large number of his fellows, a very lucky boy at that. His profession is his sport a little glorified. He is the natural outcome of the boy's love for the game—ah, how that same boy loves it!

"And it is the only professional sport I know of which it does not hurt a boy to reveal in. He worships the professional who wins, and, doing this, he never worships a plug-ugly or a thug. Drunkards and all other moral undesirable are barred from real success upon the baseball field by the very nature of the sport. The men whom the boy 'roots' for are a very decent lot of fellows—such a decent lot of fellows as no other professional sport the world has ever known could show. The professional baseball player, by his example, does not encourage his young devotees to anything unworthy. That's a fine detail of our National sport. Parents need not be alarmed if their young sons announce at breakfast some fine morning that they plan to be professional ball players when they reach maturity. In the first place, out of 500 boys who may express that firm determination, only one, upon an average, will ever make good in a major league, or minor league, for that matter, and, in the second place, that one of the 500 will not, by making good, prove himself to be anything at all unworthy. Success as a baseball player does not plunge a youth into a vicious or a dissipated life, but, on the other hand, insures him from that sort of a career.

Professionals Lucky Chaps.

"Indeed, lucky is the boy who can develop sufficient skill to get a place on a league team. That means a mighty good salary and a pleasant, clean, and healthful life. The professional baseball player is no mollycoddle—there are no mollycoddles in the game, but

neither is there any room for thugs in it. No training could be more severe than that of the league player. Under the present system of organized baseball, he must conform to the strictest mental, moral, and physical discipline, and must develop wonderfully in patience, self-reliance, and fair-mindedness. He must keep at the top notch in all these details of fine character if he would keep position in the game. Ability to take criticism cheerfully is one of the great requisites of real success in any line. I know of no profession which requires of those who win in it the disposition and ability to do this which baseball requires.

Baseball and the Mind.

"Now as to the effect of baseball on the mind of the boy player. If a boy is naturally selfish, peevish, or crabbed-minded, the members of the team he plays with will soon knock that out of him, or drive him from the team. He won't want to leave the team, for baseball, you must remember, is ingrained in his blood. If he is inclined to be hot-tempered, the loss of a few games and the respect of his associates as the result, will help mightily toward correcting it. If he is prone to be a cad, to put on airs, to assume a superiority over his fellow-players as a result of the social or financial standing of his family, a little joshing from his fellows on the errors he made upon the field will soon bring him down to earth again. If he is unduly timid and shows cowardice in a pinch, his mates will quickly cure him or eject him. If he is apprehensive, pessimistic—and no trait is more entirely un-American—he will soon lose his place upon the team. The lad who is continually predicting a defeat will not last long in baseball. And the beauty of the thing is that rarely will he let his faults go far enough to bar him from the game—his love of it is too instinctive and too real. Rather will he let the game correct the faults. And there you are. It's a man as well as a soul builder.

"The psychology of baseball? It is the psychology of success. "I know of nothing which more fitly trains the body, mind, and soul. The game plays havoc with a boy's or man's emotions. In a day the player may well sink to the fine heights of victory and rise to the dark depths of black despair in a defeat. And it must be the one or the other. There is no midway station. The score is 5 to 3. You win or lose, and quickly learn that nothing is accomplished by trying to lay the blame, if defeat comes, upon the umpire or upon your fellow-players. Pleading a sore finger or strained muscle or tendon wins nothing for the vanquished player in his own mind or the minds of his associates. That is a good

thing. After many victories, and the defeats which are quite certain to go with them, a player must, of sheer necessity, achieve self-poise, learn to take winning calmly, and lose philosophically. He may well reach that super-point where he looks grave in victory and smiles with hope when he is vanquished.

Important in Education.

"Baseball has for a long time been important in the education of our youth—far more important than most people think—and it is destined to become still more important. The day will come, I think, when all American school authorities will supply the necessary grounds to play the game on as an essential adjunct to every public school. The game means countless benefits, and not a single danger to the boy who plays it. You may have gathered from what I have already said that I consider it the greatest game on earth. I do, and, doing so, am proud of my good judgment. There should be baseball grounds adjacent to or very near each public school building in the United States.

"Baseball is the only sport which is severe enough to benefit and not severe enough to overstrain. Baseball players live to good old ages, almost always. I wish I had the list at hand. The longevity of ex-professionals would surprise you. I myself began to play on the advice of my physician, and I made a business of it in the end.

"Prizefighters, jockeys, football players, oarsmen, even college athletes, are not long-lived."

I had not asked so very many questions. They had not been needed. Mr. Spalding puts his words across the plate as accurately and as logically as, in the old days, he pitched his balls. But now I asked one.

"Even if the game had not resulted in great wealth and fame for you, would you still be glad you took it up?"

He laughed. The Greek countenance, framed with white hair, broke into a particularly winning set of wrinkles; the Bishop's face became that of the jolly monk in the world famous picture. "I'm a candidate for Senator," he said, "and ought not to use slang, but—I—sure—would. Glad? Why, I tell you it meant health to me—the biggest thing of all. It has taken me around the world again, and yet again; it has thrown me into contact with the finest set of men this country ever has produced. It has taught me that humanity is, at the bottom, clean of mind and soul. It has made me a rank optimist—and it has kept me one. It is the only sport on earth. The prizefighter is brutalized and his heart bothers him; the rowing man is almost certain to be most unhealthily developed physically, and his heart, also, generally goes wrong; football maims and brutalizes; horse racing sends its devotees to pieces morally and gives them little of the compensation coming from good exercise and honest rivalry. It is and always has been founded upon gambling.

Old Players Now Important.

"Find fifty men from all these sports who have outgrown them and reached real importance in the world! You can't. I could name a hundred baseball players—yes, two hundred and then more—who have become important, worthy, and respected men in later years. There's John M. Ward, for instance. Senator Gorman was a baseball player once. John K. Tener, who, as we talk, is a candidate for Governor of Pennsylvania, was a professional and went around the world with us in 1888. Senator Bulkeley of Connecticut was a player first and then first President of the National League. Baseball for a few years is one of the best character builders I can think of. An able boy's blood always runs high and the first thing he must learn, if he is to win success, is to control it. Baseball teaches that, first, last and all the time.

"The game was fortunate from the beginning. It was spread throughout the country by the soldiers returning to their homes after the Civil War.

Now it is in its third generation. I hesitate to guess what it will be when it has reached its fourth. The crowds to-day are big; the crowds of future days will be much bigger. Every boy, you see, plays baseball, and the players of to-day are the spectators of tomorrow. The human being who has ever got the germ of basball in his blood, whether the infection comes when he is young or after he has reached maturity, never gets it out."

"What effect has your baseball record and enthusiasm had upon your candidacy for the United States Senate?" I inquired, really wondering.

"How do I know, yet? he asked. But then he added: "Give me the baseball votes of California and my opponents may have the rest."

Across the room from me sat Homer Davenport, most famous of the world's cartoonists, and himself a baseball crank of advanced mania.

"Any man," said Davenport, not looking up from his sketch pad, (which Mrs. Spalding, also, was intent upon,) "who can pitch every game, every season, for the Boston team, for five long years, and win the pennant every time, and then go to Chicago and take the pennant with him in his trunk, as Mr. Spalding did, can capture a seat in the United States Senate on wet grounds, with a glass arm in the box and the rooters all against him. The political game is easy when you stack it up against baseball. You're talking to a Senator to be, all right."

Baseball and Business.

"Has your baseball training helped you in your business?" I inquired.

"I never struck anything in business that did not seem a simple matter when compared to complications I have faced on the baseball field," said Mr. Spalding. "A young man playing baseball gets into the habit of quick thinking in most adverse circumstances and under the most merciless criticism in the world—the criticism from the bleachers. It doesn't train him, nothing can. Baseball in youth has the effect, in later years, of making him think and act a little quicker than the other fellows."

"They have, now, in colleges, a course in which they call experimental psychology. The relation between thought and action is recorded by delicate instruments. These instruments, in the psychological laboratories of the colleges, show that the mental reactions of the athletes are quicker than those of any other students. And that of the baseball player is quicker than that of any other of the athletes. The sprinter, don't you see, has but to go from place to place. His thought is intent on the one thing—on getting there. The thought of the baseball player must take many other things—a thousand things—into consideration. He must think while he is going.

"Folks marvel at the great throngs which attend important baseball matches. They really need not be wondered at. The public likes the game, and, more than that, it knows that this one game, of all sports, is certain to be absolutely on the square. The spectators have been players, most of them, and understand not only the first principles but the fine points of the sport.

"Here, again, is the effect of the evolution of the game up through the boy into the man. The boys of the past generation are the spectators of this; the boys of this one will be the spectators of the next. So, like an endless chain, baseball will last and grow as long as these United States shall last and grow. Each generation will produce a little higher type of citizenship than that which went before it, and baseball and the principles which underlie it will help to bring this about."

The old baseball player, the successful business man, the candidate for Senator, stopped talking. I looked at him inquiringly.