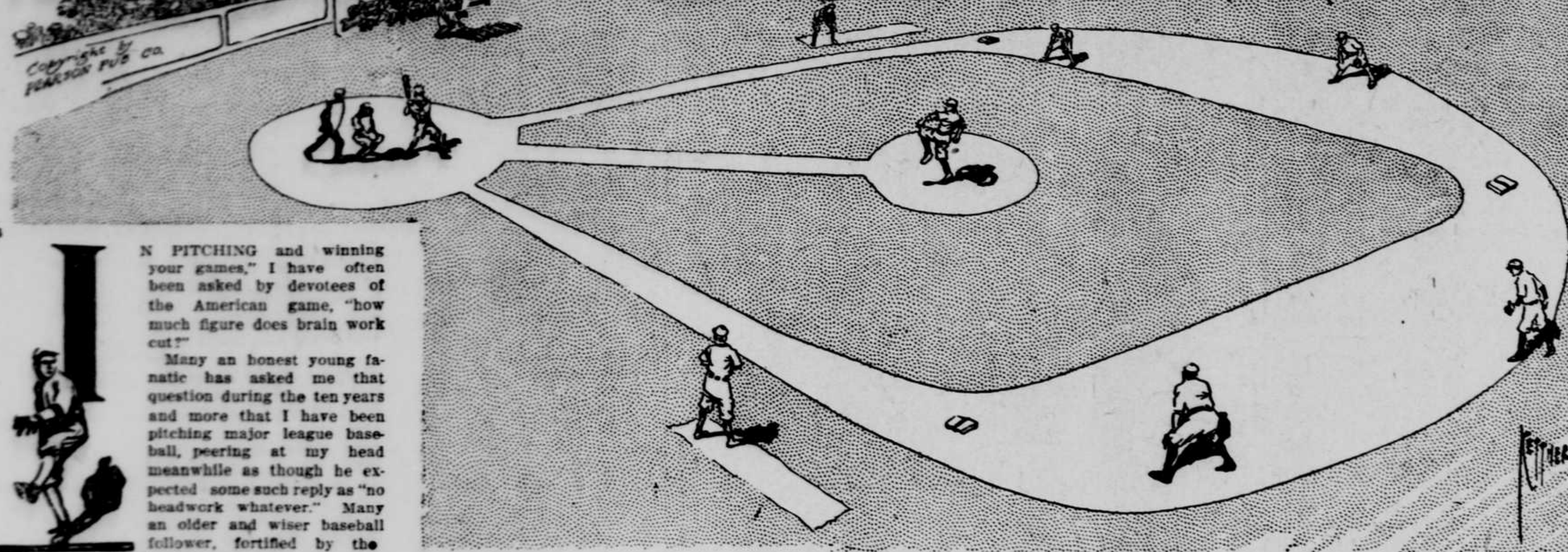
"Outguessing" The BATTER

by CHRISTY MATHEWSON



IN PITCHING and winning your games," I have often been asked by devotees of the American game, "how much figure does brain work cut?"

Many an honest young fanatic has asked me that question during the ten years and more that I have been pitching major league baseball, peering at my head meanwhile as though he expected some such reply as "no headwork whatever." Many an older and wiser baseball follower, fortified by the wondrous knowledge that comes to men after years of squatting in the grand-stand, has asked me the same thing in a modified form.

How much figure does brainwork cut? I don't quite know myself. I do know that no pitcher, however powerful or agile, can hope to become a great performer without being thoroughly equipped "from the shoulders up." The steel arm is desirable, the good eye is even more desirable, but, without the little filling of gray matter that is popularly supposed to inhabit the skull, a pitcher might just as well pack his suit-case and go back to the quaint little village where he was first discovered. It isn't the iron in the arm, because lots of longshoremen could snap a pitcher's arm in two with a single twist; it's the combination of brain and body, the perfect co-operation of mind and muscle, that makes a man a successful major league twirler.

Most pitchers who break into fast company and stay there by consistently demonstrating their ability, are men that went through a long course of sprouts before they got anywhere. They, like hundreds of successful men in other walks of life, were forced to look, listen, and learn before they had anything like an even chance to win their spurs.

Many things have been said and written about pitchers outguessing batters, and batters outguessing pitchers, and to tell the truth there has always been a question in my mind about the outguessing proposition. I have seen so many instances where guesses went wrong—so many hundreds of instances—that I am about the last human being in the world to pose as an oracle on the subject of pitching psychology. Nevertheless, there certainly is a lot of psychology about pitching a baseball. Granting that a pitcher needs something more than a clear head, it must be admitted that the successful pitcher is always a student. There are a hundred and one little things that every good twirler has in his repertoire, a hundred and one little things that the average baseball lover doesn't know anything about. I have always made it a practice, before going into a crucial series, to get some kind of authentic information about the strength or weakness of every batter slated to face me, and once I know positively that a batter doesn't like speed, I feed him oceans of it. If I find that his weakness is a low curve, he gets that for a steady diet.

ARTHUR DEVLIN.

When we met the Athletics in the season of 1905, after having won the National league championship, I realized that a good part of the pitching burden would be on my shoulders, and I began making inquiries about the weak and strong points of the American league champions.

Monte Cross, who played on Connie Mack's infield in 1905, was known by me to be a dangerous hitter, though his average was not high. He was the kind of a hitter who was always bobbing up with a hit at a time when a hit meant trouble, and just before the series started, I did a little quiet detective work through friends of mine who knew the game and knew Monte. I had been told that Monte's weakness was a high, fast ball, but when I talked to "Kid" Gleason of the Philadelphia Nationals, Gleason told me that Cross had fought against and overcome his weakness and had developed into a murderer of the high, fast delivery. Keeping Gleason's advice in mind, I gave Cross nothing but low curves during the series, and had him helpless from the start. Had it not been for Gleason's tip, Monte's always dangerous bat might have caused trouble in that series, for there were some very close games before it was all over.

The greatest strength of a pitcher, aside from his control, is what the players call his "mixture." That means no more nor less than what the word implies—his variety of fast and slow balls, his serving of this or that curve. What we call the "change of pace," the delivering of a fast and then a slow ball with the same preliminary motions, and the mixing of a high fast ball and a low curve are the successful pitcher's best assets.

Lovers of baseball have often asked me how I deal with a batsman whom I have never faced and about whose batting ability I know nothing. Every seasoned pitcher has been called on often enough to meet batters he never saw before, and in such pitches he must rely largely on luck. When I am facing a new batsman for the first time, I pay particular attention to two things—the position he assumes at the plate and the way he holds his bat. If, for instance, he holds his bat well up toward the middle there isn't much use of sending him speed. Batters of this type are always ready for speed and they can meet the fastest ball a man ever threw. A low curve on the inside will do for a starter, and if such a batter goes after it and fails to connect, you have his "number." The batter who stands back from the plate with a long bat and a grip near the end is the one who can send a low curve into the southeastern quarter of the adjoining section.

FRED CLARK, of Pittsburg.

While a batter may work hard and overcome a certain weakness, that does not necesarily mean that he becomes a great hitter. In centering his energies on overcoming his weakness for a high ball he may lose his strength on low balls because he has been continually fed high ones by opposing pitchers. In that case I would try him on a low ball and if it was found that he could still hit that the only thing left would be a curve ball or change of pace. It is often the case that a pitcher cannot deceive a batter's eyesight but he can deceive him mentally. For instance, most any batter can hit a slow ball if he knows it is coming. The same is true in regard to a fast ball, but if he is expecting a fast ball and gets a slow one, a strike out or a weak grounder to the infield will be his best effort.

Some batters, a few of the chosen, have no weakness that the most studious pitcher can detect. Men like Hans Wagner and Lajoie don't care much what the opposing pitcher has to offer.

MATHEWSON.

I have often been told by my friends that a pitcher is about 90 per cent. of the game, and have never failed to assure them that nothing could be further from the truth. A winning pitcher helps a baseball team a whole lot, of course, but there are eight other boys on that team, and nobody knows it better than the winning pitcher. The recent series between the Giants and Yankees will prove my point.

In that series I got away with every game in which I participated, but I won because I received magnificent support, both in the field and at the bat. Had George Wiltse been right, or had McGraw sent in Ames or Crandall, the story would have been the same if the support had been of the same splendid caliber. The wonderful work of Devlin, Devore and Doyle—the wonderful work of the whole team, for the matter of that—made defeat practically impossible. With that great machine working behind me and with the greatest manager of them all backing me up, I simply couldn't lose. That's how much a pitcher is 90 per cent. of the game.

As a matter of fact, it would be impossible to establish the mathematical relation of the pitcher to a ball club. Figures in baseball are often misleading. One pitcher may work brilliantly for 13 innings and have a 1 to 0 defeat marked up against his record, while on the following day another pitcher may luckily win a 10 to 8 game. It is a matter of record that in the season of 1909, Leon Ames of the Giants, in finishing a 17 inning game and participating in two extra inning ties, pitched 30 consecutive innings without allowing a run and yet did not win one of the games.

From this it can be seen that the winning power of a team must depend largely upon its run-getting ability. To reach an estimate of value we will say that offensive play is half the game. I think that conservative. That would leave but 50 per cent., and the pitcher could not be all of that. I would say that about 30 per cent. of the strength of a ball club lies in the pitcher's box. No matter how effective a pitcher may be in the box he cannot win unless the team bats in runs behind him. It is true, however, that the work of a pitcher can have a very strong influence upon the work of the rest of the team. Disgruntled fans frequently make the assertion that infielders and outfielders will not support certain pitchers. That idea is erroneous. Ball players always want to win, no matter who is in the box. It is usually lack of control on the part of the pitcher that disconcerts or demoralizes the infield. Players lose confidence because they are uncertain as to what will happen next. The catcher may call for a "pitch-out"—that is, a ball thrown wide of the batter, so that the catcher can have a clear throw to second to catch a runner who is about to steal. The infielders all see this signal and both the shortstop and second baseman leave their positions to assist in making the play. If the pitcher does not pitch-out, as expected, the batter may hit the ball through the spot left vacant and upset the whole team. Once they lose confidence in a pitcher in a game, it is very difficult to regain it. It is not that they will not support the pitcher. On the contrary, it is the fault of the pitcher who will not give them a chance. If the pitcher has control everything works smoothly.

FRANK CHANCE.

If it were true that pitching is 90 per cent. of the strength of a ball club, it would be logical to assume that the team having the best staff of pitchers would always win the pennant. That is not true. The baseball reader who pays attention to records will notice that the teams which win the pennants always have several players who lead in their respective departments. And this does not necessarily include the pitchers. For instance, the Baltimore club, back in the early nineties, won three successive pennants with pitchers whose names can scarcely be remembered.

JOE TINKER.

The hackneyed cry of "What we need is pitchears" could well be changed to "What we need is hitters, base runners and fielders." Without them there can be no pennants.

Some of the best pitchers ever connected with professional baseball have received bumps from sources so humble that any false esteem they may have held for themselves has vanished like the snows of last season. Cy Young, the noblest old Roman of them all, has been beaten by village teams. The best pitchers of the world's champions, not long after they had trimmed the Cubs, were beaten by the unknown Cuban teams they faced during their late barn-storming trip. They pitched good ball, the kind of ball that would defeat any team if it came to a matter of whole season's record, but luck, the one thing above all others that makes baseball the thrilling and perfect game it is, decreed otherwise. There are times, you see, when all the science and all the outguessing in the world will not avail.

I shall never forget a trimming I got from a village team in Michigan. Just after we had defeated the Athletics for the world's championship in 1905, Frank Bowerman and I went on a hunting trip. As soon as the natives of Frank's home town, Romeo, Mich., knew that I was his guest, they came and begged us to do the battery work for the Romeo club in a game they were to play with the club representing the adjoining town. We agreed, and I am afraid that our willingness cost a lot of honest Romeo villagers everything except their family plate. The thought of defeat never entered their minds, any more than it entered ours, but the little rival towns club came over to Romeo and gave Messrs Bowerman and Mathewson, fresh from their big league triumphs, a touch of high life that they never forgot. They beat us 5 to 0, and I guess they are celebrating it to this day. I don't know just how they managed it, because I was in perfect trim at that time. I had everything, as we say in professional circles, and they hit everything I had. I didn't mind it much myself, but I felt sorry for poor Bowerman. He had to keep on living there, and I didn't.

"HONUS" WAGNER

The real test of a pitcher's ability arrives when the opposing team gets men on bases. His responsibility is increased while his freedom of pitching motion is restricted. He must watch the base runner constantly and at the same time must deliver the ball to the batter with the least possible swing of the arm. In other words, he can't "wind up." Some pitchers find it difficult to get as much speed, curve or accuracy with the short arm motion as they do with their usual swing. This affects some pitchers mentally, as the curtailment of physical effort prevents them from concentrating their mind on the man at the bat. At the same time the base runners, and frequently the coachers, are constantly trying to annoy them. To protect himself the pitcher must try and detect some action on the part of the base runner which will indicate when he is going to attempt to steal the next base. In this he is materially assisted by the catcher. Once the pitcher or the catcher discovers when the runner is going to start the remedy is simple. Frequent throws to the base will prevent the runner from getting too much of a lead, and when he does start, the ball is pitched out of reach of the batter so that the catcher can have a clear throw to second.

SHERWOOD MAGEE, of Philadelphia.

While the pitcher is watching the base runner he knows that the base runner is also watching him, in an effort to ascertain whether the ball is to be delivered to the plate or to the base. Therefore, no preliminary movement on the part of the pitcher must betray his intentions.

George Van Haltren, the famous base runner of his day, once told me that he could tell to a certainty when certain pitchers were going to deliver the ball to the batter. This enabled him to get a running start and many times the poor catcher was blamed for allowing a stolen base, when in fact the pitcher was unconsciously at fault. John McGraw, manager of the Giants, spends several weeks each season in teaching his young pitchers to overcome that kind of a weakness.

The tremendous popularity of the national game—its popularity is growing every year—means that in the years to come there will be hundreds of baseball stars where there are dozens now. Every healthy boy has it in him to become a good ball player, though he may never care to follow the pastime professionally. Being a professional player myself, I may be over-fond of the game to which I owe so much, but I can think of many other callings and many other pastimes that a boy might better shun. Baseball is always played out in the sunshine, where the air is pure and the grass is green, and there is something about the game, or at least I have always found it so, which teaches one how to win or lose as a gentleman should, and that is a very fine thing to learn.

SAM CRAWFORD, of Detroit.

For Self and Wife

BY IZOLA FORRESTER

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"I'm positive it's Ralph," Vera leaned forward in her steamer chair to get a good look at the man who had just passed. "He has marched around about 40 times so far this morning, Phil, and I do wish you'd find out for me."

"I didn't know you were so keen on digging up Ralph." Phil's tone was a mere grunt of disgust, from the depths of his rug. "Didn't that die out at Pinehurst last fall?"

"Didn't what die out?" Vera looked meditatively and innocently out to sea.

"Weren't you engaged?"

"Not exactly."

"Not exactly? Upon my word, Vera, you girls get on my nerves. You think love's a polo game. When a chap come's a cropper, you lift your eyebrows, and say it's too bad he can't play right. You know Ralph was awfully cut up after you left, and—when did you see him last?"

Vera rose, smiling mysteriously.

"Phil, it wouldn't be right for me to tell you. It's bad enough to encourage those—er—polo players, but it's worse to give a description of how they took the tumble. Go and find out from the ship's list if it is Ralph; there's a dear. And if it is, look him up, and be nice."

Most unwillingly Phil obeyed instructions. There was over six years between Vera and himself, and an elder sister has rights which even a fellow of eighteen has to recognize. Carefully he went over the list of first cabin passengers, but found no such name as Ralph Maynard.

"He's in stateroom D, promenade deck, because I asked a steward," Phil protested. "Who's got that room—can you tell?"

"Somerset Lane, for self and wife," the purser told him. "I think they're just married, and on their honeymoon."

"I don't believe it," Vera said, calmly, when Phil brought back the news. "It is Ralph. I know, now, because I bowed to him as he went by the forty-first time, while you were gone, and he knew me. Why should he ship under an assumed name?"

Vera's Face Was a Study.

"Maybe it's a secret marriage," suggested Philip archly. "He's a wise old dog, anyway."

"He is not, Phil. If ever there was an open-and-above-board, straightforward boy, it's Ralph Maynard. Did it give the wife's name?"

Phil shook his head.

"Just said for self and wife."

"But where's the wife? If he were on his honeymoon, would he be tramping the deck madly hour after hour?"

"Maybe she's seasick," Phil suggested brightly. "I saw him talking to that old chap from Virginia in the smoker this morning, so on the way back up the companionway I ran into him and asked if he knew Somerset Lane. He said he did, that he was a bully young chap, and it was a shame his wife was so delicate that she had to keep to her stateroom all through the passage over."

Vera's face was a study. She frowned and pursed her pretty lips tensely. Some way, she could not picture Ralph's wife at all. She could only remember the last night at Pinehurst. It had been in September, and the Carolina beach looked wonderfully fair in the rich, golden moonlight. Hatless, they had mounted horses and gone for a canter at low tide along the wet sands, far, far out, to what they called Lovers' Leap. It was a jutting headland of rock that cut off the beach. And it was here that Ralph had taken his chance with Fate. She could see him still, bending toward her from his saddle, his face a bit hard and tense in the cool moonlight, his eyes full of yearning. She had said no, of course—every girl does the first time she is asked by a man—and if he had been older he would have understood the challenge in her eyes and words, and fought the game out with her to its winning. She had wished him to win, but the next morning when she had risen she got the news of his departure for New York on the first train out.

And now he was on board, under an assumed name, in a stateroom "for self and wife."

"I say, Vera, here he comes," Phil said suddenly. "I'm going. Good luck, sis. You might offer my congratulations with your own. They say lemons are good for seasickness."

The next moment Ralph Maynard stood in front of her, cap off, very erect, and on the defensive, but with the same splendid brown eyes that could plead a cause better than all the lips in the world, she had once thought.

"I would have spoken before, but you didn't seem to remember me, Miss Chalmers."

"We've only been out one day?" She looked up with a smile, but it was not an encouraging smile. A girl does not feel sunny and sweet-tempered toward a man who takes unto himself a wife six months after he has made love to her. "I had not noticed you before."

"May I take Phil's chair for a while?"

"Surely, if you wish." She waited a moment, then said gently, very gently: "How is your wife, Mr. Maynard?"

"Good Lord, I'm not married," gasped the boy. "How can you ask that, when you know I never loved any woman in the world but you, Vera? Why, I heard at the last minute you and Phil were sailing on this boat for the Tuttle wedding in London and I caught it at the last minute, just for the chance of even looking at you."

"Haven't you a wife in stateroom D, who is seasick and unable to appear during the voyage?"

He met her clear blue eyes unflinchingly and tried to speak, but she went on. "Didn't you tell the old gentleman from Virginia, in the smoker, that your wife was delicate? Aren't you registered on the list as Somerset Lane? Oh, Ralph, I never thought you could do such a thing! And then to make love to me—"

She tried to rise, but he caught both her hands and held her firmly.

"Listen, sweetheart," he said. "I was fool enough to let you get away from me last fall at Pinehurst, but you won't this time. I am registered as Somerset Lane. Don't struggle, please, till I get through, and the passage was booked for 'self and wife.'"

"Then where's your wife?" she flashed back.

"She's a myth," he laughed. "It was too late to engage a regular passage on this boat. Everything was taken. So I hustled to the brokers' offices and landed a ticket and booking for Somerset Lane and wife—"

"But who are they?"

"Who cares? I took the double booking, of course, for the chance of crossing with you. And I had to carry it out, didn't I? I am Somerset Lane, pro tem. If my wife isn't seasick, where is she? I have to tell something about her, or they'll accuse me of having thrown her overboard. Don't you see?"

Her eyes were full of mirth. "It's very suspicious."

"Not half so suspicious as it will be when I come back on another boat under my own name, with another wife. Can you risk it, Vera?"

She hesitated and sighed, then laughed again.

"I suppose that is really as near as you'll ever get to a proposal, Ralph, so I'll have to say yes. You may book passage for self and wife on the return trip, but don't you dare take it on this boat."

High-Class Samoan Dialect.

Robert Louis Stevenson described amusingly how the Samoan noble had a private dialect of his own, quite distinct from the common people's. The ordinary words for an ox, blood, bamboo, a bamboo knife, a pig and an oven were taboo in a noble's presence And the noble had special words of his own for his leg, face, hair, belly, eyelids, son, daughter and wife, his dwelling, spear, comb, sleep, dreams and anger, his food, his pleasure in eating, his ulcers, cough, sickness, recovery and death, his being carried out on a bier, the exhumation of his bones and his skull after death.

Both Qualities Are Needed

The Beautiful and the Useful Must Be Developed to Make Mankind Perfect.

Mankind can only be made by all men, the world by all its powers together. Often enough they war among themselves, but even as they try to destroy each other, nature holds them together and brings them forth again. From the first animal impulse towards construction up to the highest exercise of intellectual art, from the laughter and shouts of childhood up to the glorious utterance of the orator and the singer, from the first scuffles of boyhood up to the huge armaments by which nations are lost and won, from the faintest kindliness and the most transitory affection up to the most burning passion and the deepest bond; from the merest sensation of the tangible present up to the most mysterious presentiments and hopes for the furthest spiritual future, all this, and far more, lies in man, and must be brought out and unfolded; only not in one man, but in many. Every capacity is important, and all must be developed. One individual can only work for the beautiful, another only for the useful; but both are needed to make a man.—Goethe.

Used Fists Instead of Pens.

A unique method of settling a political dispute was recently adopted by two Queensland journalists, Mr. Murphy, editor of the Charleville Times, a Liberal organ, and Mr. Kilner, editor of the local Guardian, Labor. They decided to settle the matter by a public fight with boxing gloves. The hall was crowded and both men fought fiercely. The first round was decidedly in favor of Mr. Murphy. In the second round Mr. Kilner fared even worse. The third finished him completely and in less than a minute he was hanging on the ropes in a dazed condition.

The Offense Defined

General Craft, an attorney of Terre Haute, Ind., was once called into a jewelry store in that town to settle a dispute.

"See here, General," explained the proprietor, "if I take a watch from Mr. Smith here, and make repairs that cost me ten cents and then keep it hanging up for a week and charge him six dollars when he comes to get it, what percentage do I make? We have been figuring for half an hour and only get up to 900 per cent., and that is but a dollar, so we decided to leave it to you."

"Well," said the General gravely, "you must know that it is a fact, and it has been demonstrated by calculating machines, that at certain points in progressive numbers the law governing them changes. In your case the law would change long before it reached the six dollars, and woud run out of percentage and into what is known and designated as larceny.

Canine Prudence.

"Do you want to be taught human speech?" asked the St. Bernard.

"No," replied the collie. "We dogs are now regarded as remarkably intelligent. But a reputation for sagacity is peculiar. The more you talk the more you are liable to lose it."

Patriotism---and Patriotism

There are two kinds of patriotism. First is the variety which seeks to separate one's country from other countries and set her over against them, as their rival or enemy—and then glories in her power to outshine or overcome them, to put them to shame by her superiority, or to bring them to her feet in subjection.

The other is the patriotism which seeks to identify one's country with the interests of our common humanity; which considers her as the helper and friend of all the needy, as the champion of the oppressed, as a leader among those who are working to extend the boundaries of freedom and peace and eager to co-operate with all other peoples of good will in breaking down the barriers that keep nations apart.—Washington Gladden.