

The Lady-Killer

by C. S. Montanye

SHOW me the bird what believes every gal in the world is crazy and mad about him, and I'll show you a guy worth his weight in ivory. Or better still I will introduce you to no less than Oscar Morton. Oscar, or Ox as the bunch calls him, is a Columbus of beauty. Which is to say he discovers more good-looking dames in one day than Columbus ever did in the way of real estate, in all of his life. With Oscar it is just one gal after another, and it's about as hopeless to keep his mind off of the sex feminine as it is to eat vegetable soup with a fork. Oscar was a born lady-killer and will continue so as long as he is able to totter around.

Here is the way I got acquainted with the male vampire:

I and Larry Higgins has took his baseball team down to White Springs, Texas, for a period of training. The reason I is going along is due to the fact I'm the manager of the team and Larry hisself says that when it comes to whipping a nine into shape and bringin' them back North, fit and ready to cop out the pennant, I is second to nobody at all.

We get down to Texas on the second day of March. Down there the climate can't be told from July in Coney Island. White Springs has everythin' that goes with hot weather. They is dust, perspiration to be had by all, to say nothin' of ice-water and hot sunshine and silk shirts. The boys, however, after leavin' the big town in a howlin' blizzard, is gladder to see the sun and feel the heat than they is to grab their salary checks.

We all repair, as the guy says what wrote it, to the Hotel Springs—called so no doubt on account of the leaks in the roof and what we

sleep on. We're given a welcome better'n what the President got off of the Frenchmen. The whole town is out to meet us, the hotel clerks out to do us, and altogether they is more excitement over our comin' than they is in Russia at any hour. We're led up to the hotel by a cheerin' mob. Larry, bein' the owner of the team, smilin' like a conquerin' hero.

"Some welcome!" Larry keeps sayin'.

"Yeah," I answers. "Some welcome is right! I guess they hasn't been a nickel spent in this here town since we was here last winter!"

We reach the hotel what is to be our headquarters durin' our trainin' period, and they is as much yellin' and noise in the lobby as they was at Shadow-Thierry when the Marines gave the Huns the worst of it. Everybody is shakin' hands and' stumblin' over somebody's else's suit-case, and they is a big banner hangin' all the way across the lobby which reads, "Welcome Brown Sox."

AFTER the boys finally beats it away upstairs to their rooms, and Larry starts gettin' familiar with the ice-water tank I grabs a cigar and goes outside on the porch, which is two degrees warmer than it is in the lobby. Outside they is nothin' but bum scenery, heat waves, sky and dust.

I is just about the duck inside again and horn in on Larry's acquaintance with the chilly drink, when up the road what leads to the hotel I perceives the figure of a young man approachin', staggerin' under the weight of a suit-case what is really a young trunk with handles on it. I watches him, smilin' at the way he is creepin' along, until he reaches the hotel, chucks down his grip and falls on top of it

sheddin' both moisture and gloom.

"Oh, boy!" he says. "I learned in Sunday-school that Hades is away down under the ground, but whosoever made that one up has a guess more. It is right *here!*"

I grins at him sympathetically, noticin' he is not a bad-lookin' guy. He is one of these here individuals known as "neat dressers" and has got curly hair full of waves and dust. For the rest they is gray eyes what match his suit, a good jaw and a nice smile. They is only one thing against him. On his upper lip they is somethin' what masquerades as a mustache but what looks to me like a sick caterpillar has crept Up there for a sleep. Outside of this he seems to be a normal human bein'."

"Yeah," I says, "the weather is slightly warm here. But, however, if you wants to enjoy *hot* weather, wait until the end of next month when all the thermometers in town busts outa the top of their glass cages! This is cold compared to what will be!"

At this he moans and shakes his head from one side to the other.

"Well, thank goodness," he answers, "I wont be here then."

"Is that so?" I says to be polite.

"Yeah," he replies, moppin' off his face. "By that time I hope to be up to the North, pitchin' the Brown Sox to victory!"

I looks him over carefully to see if I is bein' kidded, but his face is as straight as a yard of string.

"You don't tell me!" I says. "Has you signed with them?"

He shakes his head some more.

"Not Yet, but I expect to, once the manager of the Sox, a bird called Joe Miller, sees me work."

I has to laugh.

"What did you say your name was?"

He looks surprised.

"I didn't say. But—but do *you* know Joe Miller?"

"Yeah," I says. "I have known him since the day I was born. Joe Miller is my name, and I happens to be the manager of the fastest baseball club in the world and White Springs—the Brown Sox what is the property of Larry Higgins!"

NO sooner do I get the words from out my mouth than he jumps off of his suit-case and begins grabbin' my hand and shakin' it. This over, he takes a breath and busts out in autobiography. In a coupla minutes I knows the history of his young life by heart. He tells me his name is Oscar Morton, that he is twenty-seven years old, that he comes from Houston but that I shouldn't hold that against him, that he is a Baptist and has pitched semi-professional ball for the Houston Giants. Also, so he says, he is the inventor of the famous down-hop ball and has newspaper clippin's in his grip to prove the same. Accordin' to him, what he don't know about speed, control and strikin' 'em out is less than nothin'.

He goes on to confide that he is sick and tired of both small-time baseball and waitin' for scouts, what never showed up to discover him. Realizin' that what Shakespeare says. "Everythin' comes to him who waits-if he waits on hisself," true, he has quit Houston cold, packed his grip, and has come to White Springs to let me know they is such a person as hisself alive, and that I will make the mistake of my life by not immediately takin' him on.

When he gets all through with his spiel, he wipes his face off again and mutters somethin' to the effect that while Houston is hot, he will have to wear a fur overcoat when he gets back there again.

"Well," I says, thinkin' over his story, "seein' you has come all the way here, the least I can do is to give a workout. Good pitchers is as scarce as money, and if you is one half as good as you say you is, they will be a berth for you with the team." I stops and then adds: "I

give you fair warnin', however if you has not the stuff, you is wastin' your time and mine. I can pick up the twirlers what is 'almost there but not quite' without goin' five minutes away from our bometown diamond."

This don't take the smile off of his face and together we goes into the hotel where Oscar gives over his suit-case to a coon bell-hop, the dinge weighs it with both hands and then whistles for six or seven of his playmates to help him.

Then Oscar wipes over his face some more and suddenly begins starin' across the lobby like he has seen either a old friend or a bill-collector. I turns around to see what has caught his eye, but they is nothin' at all in sight outside a little blonde telephone girl, chewin' on a bit of gum and toyin' with both a novel and a powder-puff.

"Pardon me," Oscar murmurs in a funny voice, leavin' my side and steerin' for the switchboard.

WHEN I leaves the lobby ten minutes later, and goes in search of Larry, Oscar has pushed a chair almost up on the top of the switchboard and has curled up on the blonde gal's ear, chewin' the rag somethin' awful.

Even then I didn't get wise to the fact he was one of these here musicians what finds grand opera in the music of a skirt. I should have taken a tumble but didn't. After the dinner I has to use the telephone in the lobby, to call up the caretaker of the grounds on which we conducts our practice, and whilst Goldilocks is gettin' the number for me. I gets curious about her and Oscar.

"Old friend of yours, hey?" I chirps, mentionin' the name of the newcomer in our midst "I suppose him and you was childhood friends in that Houston place. Ill bet you was glad to see him again, hey?"

She looks at me with one of these here dreamy gazes and sighs.

"You is a bum fortune-teller," she says.

"you is referrin' to Oscar the pitcher, I cant tell a lie. I only seen him first this afternoon. But" -she sighs again- he is awfully nice.' And he is gonna give me a photo of hisself when he gets the oneyfonn of the Brown Sox on him."

I has to laugh.

"Is that so? Well, blondie, maybe you will never have the pleasure of gettin' that photograph. Who knows?"

She gives me both my number and a cold look at the one and the same time.

I tells Larry about Oscar's comin' to the Springs, and the boss gets excited. He says maybe the boy is another Marquard, and who knows? Anyway, so Larry says, I should give him a stiff tryout and also plenty of chances to see what he has got.

THE next day it is rainin' with drops as big as fifty-cent half-dollars, so the boys stick around the hotel, performin' with dice and cards. Oscar, who has got introduced to them all, excuses hisself from the family circle and hangs around the switchboard like he was expectin' a long-distance call from Mary Pickford. The followin' day the rain stops as quick as it begun, and ten minutes of White Springs sun makes the ground drier than prohibition has made the country at large.

In festive array, as the guy says what composed it, we start for the ball-grounds escorted by the male population of the town. The grounds is nothin' to go crazy about, they consistin' only of a diamond that is flat as the top of a billiard-table; a grandstand what looks like Noah give the contractors that built it the lumber from outa his ark; bleachers what is bleached to splinters and a coupla benches that still can be sat on by them what carry accident insurance.

"Slip Oscar into the box." Larry says to me, "and let us get a look at what he can do besides talk about hisself."

I picks Oscar from outa the bunch and sends him out to the box, gettin' in back of him so I can see if he knows where the plate is and what it's meant for. Larry gets up and moves behind Eddie Bush, same bein' our star catcher, whilst I signals to Terry Flynn to grab ahold of a bat. Terry is the heaviest hitter in the Tri-City League. He has a .292 percentage, and I knows a ball has to have somethin' on it to get past him without his cloutin' the cover off of it.

"All right, kid," I says carelessly to Oscar, who is toyin' with a brand-new ball. "Let's go!"

He nods, leans down to get some dirt on his fingers, makes a short wind-up and burns the plate with a ball what sounds like the shot outa a gun.

"Strike!" hollers Larry. "What is the matter?" he says to Terry. "Do you want 'em brought to you on a silver dish?"

Flynn grins.

"No, but I'd like to have them keep goin' and not do no tricks when they gets to me, like that there ball did!"

FOR twenty minutes straight runnin' Oscar shows us everythin' he has got and the further he goes, the better he gets. His work stands out like a chorus girl in a room full of washwomen and he has the team gaspin' for breath and hollerin' for help. He uses a fancy ball what he calls the down-hop and which same leaves his hand with the speed of an Erie train and travels up to the plate like it was sick and tired. Just when the batter gets ready to knock it so far that nobody but Peary can ever find it, the down-hop suddenly gets full of pep. It spins around, and as the bird at bat makes a swing, it turns a somersault, hops over the willow and flops into the mitt of the catcher. Some ball!

Oscar has also got another one what has more curves to it than a scenic railway, a fast inshoot what leaves the air hotter than it really is, and a slow drop what is a bear. Altogether, they is more tricks to him than they is to a

Chink magician, and when a half-hour is over, he has my heaviest hitters runnin' about in circle's and Larry doin' everythin' but kissin' him.

"Great stuff!" the boss keeps on sayin'. "Great stuff! C'mon up to the hotel, kid, and we shall frame up a nice contract!"

I draws Larry to one side and proceeds to furnish him with some information and advice.

"Listen." I says. "This bird might be the child wonder of the western hemisphere, and he might know about the art of pitchin' than Charley Schwab does about makin' steel, but thirty minutes of his work don't prove to me he is is another Plank or Mathewson. The boys is not anyways near their form yet, and no doubt this Oscar guy has been pitchin' all winter in that Houston place. Don't go nutty Larry, just because he shows a flash. Let him string along with us and if at four weeks from today he still deliver the same stuff he pulled just now, and get away with it, all well and good. Then I'll say go ahead and sign him. If he is as good then as he is now he can have anythin' I has got, includin' the shirt off of my back!"

Larry cools down at this and thinks it over. After a while he decides it's better to look before leapin' and tells Oscar that while he was a little hasty about the contract thing, still he is gonna make some kind of a arrangement whereby he will get paid while with us, whether he works or whether he don't. This suits the pitcher, and they is nothin' more said on the subject.

TWO weeks pass us by, durin' the time of which Oscar is still holdin' to his form and makin' suckers outa the boys. In addition to his pitchin' he is as fast as lightnin' on the bags, no rummy at the bat and isn't too proud to run in for bums or to grab a fly when the same is anyway within six or eight feet of him. Takin' all in all, he still looks as good to me and Larry as a new million-dollar bill.

But I keeps my fingers crossed.

They is one thing about the boy what has got my goat. This is the fact h don't seem to want to mingle with his team mates but sticks around the blonde telephone operator like he was a reporter tryin' to make her speak up. Not only does he hang around her, but he is on flirtin' terms with the dame in the White Springs post office, the gal who handles the soda-water counter in the village drug-store and the lady cashier in the quick lunch room what is next door to the station. Oscar don't play no favorites, but I sees the cutie at the hotel is aces high with him. The others is just merely there to fill up his spare time and keep him from gettin' bored.

Kiddin' and jokin' about three gals don't have no effect on him whatsoever. The gang, once they tumble to the fact Oscar is a lady-killer, starts in to ride him somethin' terrible, but for all the fun they gets outa it, they might just as well have laid off the stuff. Wise cracks and joshin' don't get under Oscar's skin which, no doubt, is tough enough as that of an elephant. He takes all they has and begs for more. On accounta his indifference and the way he takes punishment, Terry Flynn christens him with a new name. Terry call, him Ox and in practically no time at all everyone is callin' him the same.

"Listen." I says to Oscar one night, trippin' over at the bar in the drug-store, where he is watchin' his lady friend shake up sodas behind the fountain. "Listen," I says, "the poets has told us they is nothin' worse than a woman's scorn. If such be true, take a free tip off of me. Keep this under the covers or the little peroxide telephone gal up at the hotel will be after you with her hatpin ready to put more holes in you than they is in any golf links!"

Oscar laughs and tears away his gaze from the gal he is watchin' like he is a detective or somethin'.

"The sex attracts me," he confesses without a blush. I can no sooner resist a pretty face than

I can strikin' them out."

WALKIN' back to the hotel with him, accompanied by a lot of friendly mosquitoes, he tells me that he must be a relation of a guy known as *Romeo*, because every feminine person what sees him immediately falls in love with him. He tells me handin' out pictures of hisself to all what are crazy about him keeps him always broke. Then he goes on to say that gals is an inspiration to him, and without a couple around to cheer him up he feels as blue as a June mornin' sky. Females, accordin' to him, is divided into two classes—they with brains and them with beauty. To show he has a kind heart. Oscar says he don't pass up the first-mentioned because they are minus what the second has, or the second because they is not a bunch of Lillian Russels. No, he loves them all, it seems, tall, short, beautiful and ugly, stupid or smart.

By the time we gets back to the hotel, I has a pretty fair angle on Oscar. I has decided that as a pitcher he is there, but that in other things he isn't. I has also made my mind up that if he weighs a hundred and sixty pounds, one hundred and fifty-nine of the same is weight above the ears!

When four weeks is up, Oscar gets his contract, a new uneyform and the glad hand from Larry and the bunch. The boss is tickled to death with the boy and as happy as a child with a new toy He talks Oscar, and dreams Oscar, believin' he is gonna set the world on fire and that they is a lotta credit comin' to him for holdin the kerosene can. Also' in addition to this, Larry has got an idea in his bean that once he uncovers his marvel, all the big leagues doin' business will be breakin' their necks tryin' to buy him up.

By this time I has hammered the Brown Sox into some kind of shape, and like we has done in former years, we begins fixin' up games with local teams. After givin' the worst of it to the

best White Springs can offer, we proceeds to a little town called Spartan where they is spent a very pleasant Saturday afternoon givin' the Spartan fielders a lotta exercise, and teachin' the native people of the burg how baseball is played.

LARRY is happy as a show-girl with a string of pearls at our showin', and because Oscar has pitched great ball, and has kept the Spartans away from first base, like they was a band of burglars and the sack a bank. Ox is still there with his down-hop ball and all his other tricks, and he has our opponents gnashin' their teeth and sayin' things under their breath, whilst we lose more balls on them than a guy just learnin' this golf thing.

"Some pitcher!" Larry says to me after the game. "I just wish John McGraw or Connie Mack or Frazee could stick an eye on this lad of mine! I guess maybe they wouldn't hock their whole team to get him, hey?"

I has to admit Oscar has kept to top form, but still I can't help but figure out a couple of games with some Texas Bolsheviki bears no relation to goin' into the box and pitchin' Tri-City stuff.

"Yeah, he looks good," I says to Larry. "But one swallow don't make a summer!"

The boss grins.

"No, but one off of Oscar makes a sucker outa anyone! Joe, you was always a knocker. Wait until the series is over and the big money split up. Then you will be singin' another song."

"Maybe." I retorts, "the name of the song will be 'Break the News to Mother!'"

Directly after the Spartan game Larry looks over the ground, and the first thing I know, we're to journey to Dallas and mix up with the Dallas Giants. This is the last game we're to play before goin' to the North to open the season, and once the gang is let in on the secret, they bust into cheers. One game and then home!

Oh, lady!

The only one what doesn't show great joy is little Oscar. He draws me to one side and informs me his heart is broke on accounta leavin' White Springs, the post office, the drugstore, the lunch-room and the switchboard at the hotel. It is only when I tell him what swell-lookin' babies they is up North that he cheers up again, and says he hopes Myrtle, she bein' the blondie who handles the calls, can bear the separation from him.

The night before we leaves the Springs for good, he takes three hours off, and goes around biddin' his friends farewell and tellin' each one she is the only gal be cares for and so forth. Then, when we finally piles onto the train what is to take us to Dallas, I has to hold him by the arms to keep him from jumpin' off, and rushin' back to the little phone operator who is standin' on the station wavin' a handkerchief to him and usin' the same frequently.

"Love is a awful thing," he moans, dashin' tears from his eyes. "I hope Myrtle doesn't do anythin' desperate. I would never forgive myself if she did."

AS White Springs fades outa sight, I drags him into the train and throws him into a seat.

"Tear your mind away from the ladies," I begs, "and tell me how that wing of yours is feelin'."

He sighs.

"My arm is O. K.," he replies. "It's my heart that troubles me!"

He looks so sad I busts out laughin', winkin' at the same time at Terry Flynn who is busy oilin' up his glove.

"Oscar," I says, "that little guy what shoots arrows from out a bow and arrow, what don't wear no clothes worth speakin' about, and what has got wings on his back, must be kept terrible busy where you is concerned. I is speakin' now of none other than the well-known kewpie—"

His answer is nothin' but a groan.

Three quarters of the trip is made by him in silence. The hunch is skylarkin' around, playin'

pranks on each other and occasionally stoppin' to kid Oscar. Then they start playin' polka, and Oscar, to relieve his mind, goes off into another car. Lookin' to see what he is doin' a half-hour later. I see he has recovered. He is settin' in a seat next to a pretty gal, chewing the rag and laughin' more than if he was at a vaudeville show.

We gets into Dallas as the shades of night is fallin' fast, and Larry, wantin' to do the thin' in style, hires a fleet of Texas cabs to roll us all up from the station to the hotel. We is all climbin' into the cabs when I suddenly get wise to the fact that Oscar is not one of us. I remembers the dame on the train, and knowin' the habits of my pitcher better'n I knows my own name, I ducks back into the station. The train is still standin' there, takin' on mail and freight and givin' Ox a chance to gaze up at the gal he has got acquainted with, she bein' in the open window of the train, smilin' sadly down at him.

"Listen," I says, gettin' sore at the sight. "Lay off of this stuff and string along with the gang, or you'll be alone in a foreign city with no helpin' hand to guide you. Can the chatter—you is holdin' up the railroad!"

He don't pay no attention to me but keeps on talkin' to the gal in the window.

"Good-by!" he says. "Good-by Gladys! Don't forget to write every day and take good care of that photo I has gave you. It is the last I owns except one more!"

I pries him away from the train, throwin' kisses off of his hand to the gal who is beginnin' to cry, and manages to get him into a cab.

"What you need," I says, "is a nurse to take care of you!"

He nods his head.

"I think so, too," he agrees. "Do you know of any blonde ones?"

THE hotel to which we arrive at is nothin' but class and tone. It is as different from the one at the Springs as a loan shark is from a human

bein'. In the first place they is electric lights, hot water which is really hot, a telephone in each and every room, to say nothin' of paper on the walls, carpets on the floor, and beds what look like they was made to be slept in.

After I and Larry has grabbed somethin' to eat, we start out to look up the manager of the Dallas Giants, leavin' the boys to their own devices, which same consists of pool, billiards and bull. We hire a guide and in no time at all meet the man we're out to see. They is not so much to it, and after a hours has passed, we has doped out a percentage arrangement as to the nine inning's to be played and so forth. Then, when we gets this all fixed up without comin' to blows, Larry, for good measure, and with his mind still full of Oscar, lays a thousand bucks at even money we will win with five runs to spare.

"it is just like pickin' up money outa the gutter!" the boss chirps, as we wend our way back to the hotel. "The manager of these here Dallas Giants is a good sport, and I hates to see him lose a thousand berries in one settin', but still I aint runnin' a ball team for my health. Easy dough, hey, Joe?"

I shrugged my shoulders.

"They must think they is pretty good," I answers. "No man is plunkin' down that much money unless he thinks he has somethin' behind him."

Larry chuckles.

"Sure—but I has Oscar behind *me!*"

"I hope he stays behind you," I retorts.

WE get back to the hotel, and Larry breezes away to see what the bunch is up to, while I runs into Oscar, who is gettin' in the shadows in one corner of the lounge room, holdin' hands with a pretty black-haired gal I has never before laid an eye on.

"Excuse me for buttin' in," I says, "but it is now eleven o'clock, more or less, and you is a ball-player, Oscar, and not no night watchman. For this reason it is up to me to ask you to seek

the feathers!"

His little friend giggles whilst he gets up to his feet and makes a bow.

"Ruth," he says to the gal. "let me introduce you to Joe Miller, who is manager of the Brown Sox. Joe," he says to me, "shake hands with Ruth Cooper, a dear friend of mine!"

After the introduction is over and finished with, Oscar coughs a coupla times.

"Joe," he says, "how are the chances of gettin' a box seat at the game to-morrow for this here little lady?"

"If you gets to bed now," I barks, "the chances are pretty good. If you don't, the chances are nothin'!"

The gal giggles again.

You'd better retire, Sir Pitcher," she murmurs to him. "And don't forget that picture of yourself to-morrow!"

Oscar, lookin' as happy as a bird when the doctor tells him he must lay off smokin', bids us good night and crawls into a elevator, leavin' me and the dame alone.

"Old friend of yours, no doubt?" I says in order to say somethin'.

She colors up and finds a view of the ceiling is interesting'.

"Well—well," she stammers, "not exactly. You see Mr. Morton mistook me for a girl he knew in Buffalo."

I has all I can do to keep from bustin' out laughin'. A gal he knew in Buffalo! Oh, boy!

She smiles.

"But do I get that ticket?" she wants to know.

I slips her my card with some handwriting on the top of it. She thanks me like it was a check made out to bearer, and smilin' all over her face, says good night and beats it.

THE next day is as bright as a Tiffany diamond and hot as a red stove. We finds the Dallas ball park to be some peach of a place, with a fast diamond, large stands made outa

cement, a clubhouse what can't be told from a swell private house, lawns, flowers and plenty of cold water handy.

Half of the mornin' is spent tunin' up, and by the time the game is called, the Sox is as smooth as velvet and works like machinery or a orchestra ready to tear off one of these symphony things.

The city is evidently baseball-hungry, for it declares a half-holiday, and they is an angry mob at the gates almost tearin' them down, tryin' to get in. Soon they is more people in the grandstand than they is in a Bronx subway train any evenin', and the bleachers is so full, it is almost bendin' in half. As we is to drag down a piece of the gate, Larry, after givin' the stands the double-O can hardly be kept from shoutin' out loud with joy.

"Oh, lady!" he yells. "The money I is gonna take from out this burg is a crime!"

He keeps on ravin' whilst I suddenly lamps Oscar leanin' against the grandstand and smilin' into the eyes of Ruth Cooper, who is reposin' in a front-room box seat. Just as I sees him, so does Terry Flynn, and the catcher sends a howl over to him.

"Hey, Ox," he bawls, "leave go of that lady's hand and come over here and run over the signals with me!"

The stands lets out a roar and Ruth Cooper ducks down behind a newspaper to hide herself, whilst Oscar, no more disturbed than if he is a deaf and dumb mute, grins and hurries away.

Oscar goes in, and for three innin's the Giants don't get a smell of the ball. Meanwhile Terry Flynn knocks out a three-bagger and is sent home by little Jerry Deacon, our shortstop. By this time the whole city of Dallas is wise to the fact they is seein' a great pitcher in action, and they leaves off kiddin' Oscar and begins cheerin' him when he is in the box.

"Can you beat *that!*" says Larry "A strange guy in a strange town, and look at how they yell their heads off for him!"

“Yeah!” I snaps. “But this single, solitary run we got don’t suit me at all! Outside of Terry and Deacon, none of the boys seems to be able to get to this Giant pitcher. He is not good, but he is not bad, and he is holdin’ us. If they ever solve Oscar, it will be roses for us and make no mistake!”

The boss takes a puff on his cigar.

“Don’t worry none about that,” he says. “Them five runs I need to win on is comin’ along soon, and when they get on the down-hop, silk shirts’ll be sellin’ at twenty cents apiece!”

UP to the endin’ of the seventh Oscar keeps sendin’ them over, and each Giant takes three chances at ‘em and retires in a hurry. For our part the team has got wise to the Dallas twirler and has fallen on him for exactly four more runs, which, with the one Terry presents us with, makes five in all. The game is drawin’ rapidly to the end of it and I begins once more to breathe natural.

But, as the guy says what tells us, every rose has its thorn and every fur coat its moth.

Just as things is lookin’ like Larry will soon have his little thousand back, with another to play around with it, Oscar comes over to me, whilst we is at bat, white as a quart of milk.

“Joe,” he yelps, lickin’ his lips, “I—I don’t think I can finish out this here game!”

I almost falls but manages to keen my balance, lookin’ him over from head to feet.

“Where do you get that stuff?” I snarls. “This here game is sewed up, and all you has got to do is to serve them with a few more of the same brand you has been sendin’ over!”

This don’t get me nothin’, and Ox lets out a groan, his manly brow wet with perspiration what wasn’t due to the heat.

“I—I can’t pitch another ball!” he croaks.

Just as I is about to snap at him, Larry comes bustin’ over to see what is the matter. Oscar turns to the boss and begs he shouldn’t be sent in no more but should be lot go to the

showers immediately if not sooner.

Instead of doin’ the same, Larry gets red in the face.

“You big tramp!” he hisses. “What has got into you that you is tryin’ to quit cold at a time like this?”

Ox licks his lips some more.

“I’m sick,” he moans. “I think I has got a fever!”

“Sure!” Larry sneers. “A yellow fever! You big stiff, my thousand berries depends on *you!* Stay in and I’m plus! Quit and I’m minus! I don’t wanna hear no more excuses out a you! Take your cold feet to the box and warm them up!”

Oscar pulls on his glove whilst the rest of the team, seein’ they is somethin’ wrong is starin’ over.

“All—all right,” Ox says in a voice what can be hardly heard. “I’ll—I’ll go in, but if I toss this game away, don’t blame me—”

“I wont blame you,” Larry hollers. “I’ll bust you in the eye!”

I sees it is a time for some of this diplomacy stuff, and I follows Oscar, who is creepin’ away, shakin’ in every limb, and lays a hand on his arm.

“Grab hold of yourself!” I pleads. “You is scared about somethin’,—I know the signs.—and that is all the matter with you. But remember. Ruth Cooper is settin’ up there with her eyes on you. If you cracks now, *she* is sure to think you is a false alarm!”

He shakes his head, groanin’ whilst the stands begins howlin’ for a little action.

THE two innin’s what follows is cruel. Oscar is as wild as a coupla uncaught lions, and for all he knew, the home plate might be located in Egypt. He keeps the whole team on the jump and wears out the bases lettin’ the Dallas Giants around them. In the eighth they piles up fifteen runs and only quit then they needs a rest.

By this time Larry has tore out the most of

his hair, and it takes the combined efforts of the team to keep him from rushin' out and committin' murder.

The first half of the last innin' ends with him hollerin' his head off at Oscar and shriekin' like he was crazy with the heat. I has sent Terry Flynn in to bat for Ox and they is already two outs. Terry pops up a little fly and the game ends with the city of Dallas screamin' so loud the noise must have been heard in Scotland.

As the game ends, with the Dallas Giants doin' a war-dance, Oscar, who is tryin' to make a dash for the clubhouse, is prevented from doing the same by Larry, who tells him all over again just what he thinks of him.

Oscar puts an end to it by suddenly duckin' behind me. As he does so, they horns into the family circle a blonde gal who carries a green umbrella.

Zing!!

I dodges, and poor Ox catches the shot on top of his nut, the umbrella bustin' into sticks.

Then, the next thing I knows, the blonde has got ahold of Oscar by the collar and is shakin' him so hard his teeth rattles.

"Good for you, Lady!" Larry hollers. "Give him one for me!"

For the next three minutes they is nothin' but confusion made more so by the sudden appearance of Ruth Cooper, who jumps into the fray and tries to pull Oscar away. They is scraps enough to feed all Russia, believe me!

Finally the one what has started all the trouble leaves off beatin' Oscar and turns to Larry.

"Who runs this here ball-team?" she wants to know. When the boss, backin' away, admits he is guilty, she almost lets Ox go, to get at him. "Don't you know no better than to give a job to this good-for-nothin'!" she screams. "And why do you pay him good money what he throws away on havin' his picture took so he can give them to poor unsuspectin' gals!"

At each and every word she speaks, Oscar

shivers from head to foot and throws up his hands like she was still tryin' to knock him.

"Aw, Mae!" he pleads. "Have a heart—"

BY this time they is quite a crowd around us, which is to say the whole city of Dallas has got an ear open and reporters is workin' overtime, gettin' the stuff down whilst it is still hot.

"Hey, lady!" chirps Eddie Bush, gettin' fresh. "What has Ox ever done to you that you should beat him up?"

"That's what I'd like to know," says Ruth Cooper, glarin'.

The blonde gal laughs in a way that makes cold chills run up and down my spine and turns to Oscar.

"It's a good thing," she says in a voice full of icicles, "that you told my brother, before you sneaked outa Houston, you was gonna join the Brown Sox! And it is a good thing I found out the team was playin' here in Dallas to-day! Oh, you has been cute and foxy, all right, but not enough! You'd have to be better'n *Shylock Holmes* and smarter than Marshal Foch to put anythin' across when I is on the job!"

"Just a minute," I butts in. "This aint gettin' us nowhere, and all it is doin' is givin' this here crowd enough gossip for the next fifty years! Come through. Is you Oscar's sister or what?"

"His *sister!*" she screams. "Is *that* what he told you! The liar! I'm his *wife*—the first one he ever gave a picture of hisself to!"

No sooner she gets the words said than it is Ruth Cooper's turn to be heard.

"Oh, you big hound!" she hollers, kickin' at Oscar's shins. "You told me no longer ago than last night I was the only one you ever loved!"

She busts into tears and is led off.

Then Oscar's wife gives him a yank by the collar, and the last any of us ever sees of the pair of them, is her leadin' him away, whilst the entire population of Dallas is hootin' and jeerin' at poor Ox.

“There goes the best pitcher what I ever seen,” says Larry in a sad voice.

“And the *worst* husband!” chimes in Terry Flynn.

THEY is a silence. Then I hears some one callin’ my name, and turnin’ around, I almost collapses. Comin’ through what is left of the crowd I sees no less than Myrtle, the little blondie telephone gal of White Springs.

She too has got the habit and is weepin’.

“Oh, Mr. Miller!” she sobs. “My train was late and now it is too late. My heart is broke—” Whilst we all stares at her like we is seein’ things, she mops her eyes. Some vampire has stole Oscar away from me! I seen her with him just now and—and—she had her arm around his neck— and—and he made believe he didn’t see *me—*”