

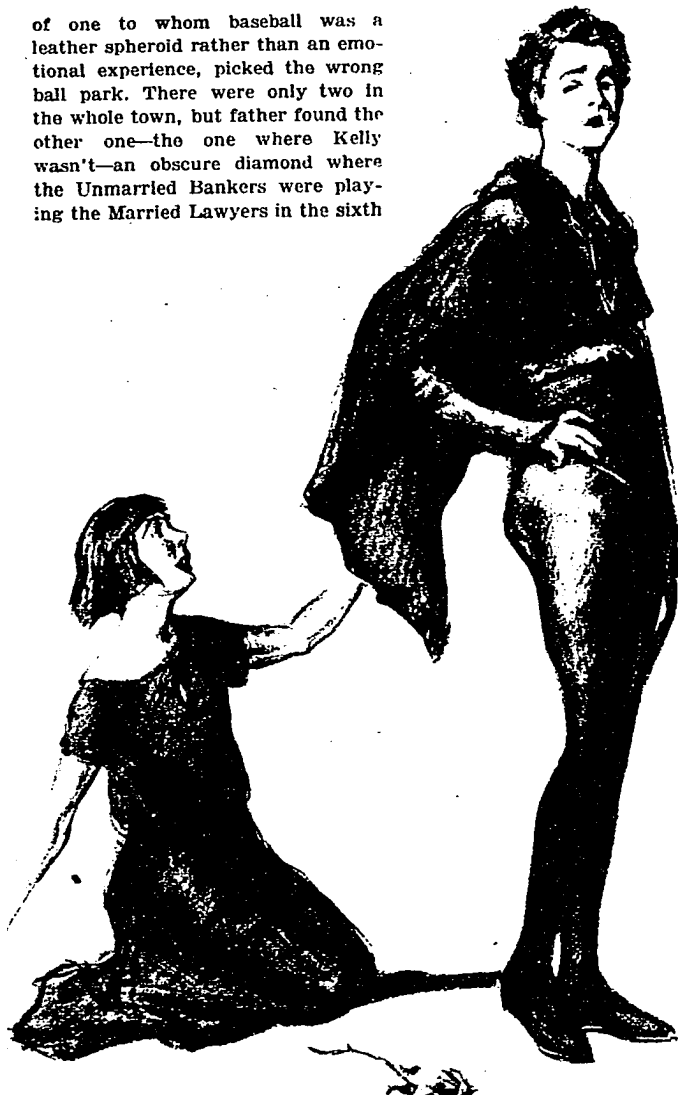
"Heroes by Any Other Name"

of one to whom baseball was a leather spheroid rather than an emotional experience, picked the wrong ball park. There were only two in the whole town, but father found the other one—the one where Kelly wasn't—an obscure diamond where the Unmarried Bankers were playing the Married Lawyers in the sixth



By FREDERICK COLLINS

"The 'Babe' has founded a legend."



"She says John Barrymore is the greatest American."

live in New Rochelle, my favorite actors were Chick Sales and Willie Howard. The theatre was a place to take customers to, and the show—it didn't matter much what show it was, so long as it was one of Ziegfeld's. But I decided to look into this stage hero stuff, for I love Minnie and the kids and have become accustomed to Michael (which is more than Minnie has ever done!) and I was frankly worried by this affair with Barrymore. I even paid \$5 to see him in a merry little thing, "The Jest," and never got a giggle out of the entire evening. Of course it is funny to see any man in green tights, but it is a lot funnier to see Sam Bernard that way than John—anyway, the man was only an actor, and no proper person to have his picture on my married sister Minnie's dressing table.

But I soon discovered that Minnie is the type of hero worshipper that has breadth as well as depth. She is not one of those narrow-minded enthusiasts who can worship but one hero at one time. She worships the whole Barrymore family. She even liked Lionel as Macbeth; and I know she gets an annual thrill out of bathing in the same ocean with sister Ethel's three small children. I wouldn't have you think that Minnie is narrow-minded even in this larger affection for all the Barrymores. Since I began looking into this subject, I have met many people, quite outside the Barrymore family, who can see greatness only in a Barrymore—many young men who write pieces alongside the theatrical advertisements in the newspapers are members of this club—but Minnie is far more catholic in her tastes. She loves Nora Bayes, and I honor her for it.

Minnie once saw Nora on the street. It was the high point in her career—Minnie's, of course—and I never saw such a transformation in a woman. Minnie, in spite of Michael and five children and three years in New Rochelle, is naturally a woman of distinction and poise—but suddenly, her beautiful neck lengthened and bent, her eyes hung like tassels, her ears cocked and uncocked, her knees stiffened, she stopped. She had seen Nora—Nora, the deep-voiced singer of "Kelly," and "Mandy," and "Shine On Harvest Moon."

You can't help loving Minnie for her enthusiasms, and I soon found myself imbibing them; but Michael's interest in the drama is much harder to understand. He is one of those people who always "regret to observe" and likewise "view with alarm." He longs for the good old days of Aeschylus and Percy MacKaye. He cares nothing for anything that other people like. He couldn't tell you the difference between Singer's Midgets and Boganny's Bakers; he doesn't know Olga Petrova from Anna Pavlova; and he wouldn't know, if you asked him, why Bert Williams always plays those black face parts! He is, in short, a very ignorant man.

I used to have patience with Michael—you couldn't have anything else, like a good time, for instance—but I gave him up the night of the big snow, when he and I were marooned in New York, and I took him to see "Sally." It was a waste of money, and a good deal of money, too—he didn't know Leon Errol from Marilyn Miller! I cannot understand such stupidity. He might go wrong on Sothorn and Marlowe, or Henry Miller and Blanche Bates, but Leon Errol, with his legs, and Marilyn—but Michael's interest in the drama is certainly different from mine. He is not a hero worshipper. He says "the play's the thing"—but, then, Michael would say anything that was totally surrounded by quotation marks, even if he didn't sincerely believe that words speak louder than actors, for our Michael is the world's champion human echo.

You can't expect a man of Michael's limitations to remember the name of every trained seal in the Hippodrome tank, as Minnie has learned to do, but I call it downright ingrowing to live in New Rochelle—the town immortalized by

(Continued on Page 25)

I THINK most people are hero worshippers, don't you? Only nowadays they do not pick their heroes from the ranks of soldiers and Senators. Five years of war gave us no outstanding figure, but one year of peace gave us Babe Ruth! Foch merely saved the world. The Babe has founded a legend. His is the fame of Ulysses and Charlemagne and Chaplin. His deeds will be told from father to son. His place in history is secure. He's a hero.

Michael—that's my married sister Minnie's husband—says this hero stuff is all rot. "Being arty for art's sake" is his motto; and, as Minnie says, "You can't do a thing with Michael when he has fully mottled up his mind." I am for art, too, but I can't help it if Douglas Fairbanks's smile doesn't grow on John Doe's face, and when I see that smile again I forget all about art, and say, "Why, there's dear old Doug," and I sit back to have a grand time.

It's the same way with baseball. If I happen to be going up to the park—which happens as often as is consistent with the avoidance of starvation—it's a vital thing to me to know who is going to pitch. I have seen President Elliot at commencement and Harry Vardon at the tee. I have seen Carpentier with the gloves on and Charlotte on the ice. I have seen the great Nijinski and Chauncey Depew in his prime. But I have never seen a human being so graceful, so poised, so heroic as Christopher Mathewson at the Polo Grounds. To me he will always be the great American!

My sister Minnie, with whom I live in New Rochelle, doesn't agree with me. She says John Barrymore is the greatest American. Minnie is one of those people—there seems to be thousands of them—who are quite without shame in their attitude toward the people on the bright side of the footlights. I blush as I write to think of the abasement of that woman—and I feel it my duty as an uncle and a fan to impress on Minnie's five small children that the most influential factors in my young life have been not the make-believe heroes of their mother's adoration but those husky heroes of the diamond from Kelly and Clarkson to Landis and Ruth.

And yet, I cannot find it in my heart to condemn Minnie, for it is this ability to pick out heroes from the ranks of those who entertain us—from the stage and the diamond and

the screen—that makes life worth while in an otherwise unheroic age. I am not so much on the stage, myself, but I'm crazy about baseball and the movies; and it adds interest to both games that one man named Griffith cannot win a pennant, with the whole Washington team to help him, and another man of the same name can take a lot of bush leaguers like those people in "Way Down East" and win a world's championship. There is, I think, no human relationship, be it father and son or husband and wife, more indissoluble than the relation between the genus Fan and the genus Hero.

For instance, I'll never forget the day I first saw Mike Kelly—King Kelly, Slide-Kelly-Slide Kelly, the hero of my boyhood dreams. Minnie was a funny little girl of seven—too young to worship anything but her dolls—but I was nine, and for a year past I had gone to sleep each night repeating softly and reverently the names of all the big league players and the positions that they played. (This habit stayed with me for many years, and when most boys were beginning to dream of curls and hair ribbons I dropped off each night to the tune of "Nichols, Klobedanz, Stivvets.") I was, as I have said, nine; and my father, who was a good man and should have known better, had got himself elected Mayor of our town. The best thing in the community, except Father, was Bulkley and Malone's semi-professional baseball team. On week days Bulkley and Malone were bartenders, and you remember what I mean, and on Saturday afternoons they were also public benefactors, especially the time they brought the "Bostons" to our town. And with the "Bostons"—Kelly. To have come without Kelly would have been a Chaplin picture with Hamlet left out. But King Kelly did come, and all the world, including Father, Minnie and myself, turned out to worship him. Father, with the unerring instinct

contest of the professional man's exercise league. This, as I pointed out to father, was small-time stuff. To leave, however, and thus offend the banking and legal vote, would be, as father pointed out to me, equally small-time stuff. So there we sat—with Kelly twenty blocks away. Personally, I think father was wrong. There was no one there anyhow except the wives of the married lawyers and the would-be wives of the unmarried bankers, and in father's day these people couldn't vote and didn't want to; whereas every male citizen strong enough to exercise a franchise had battled his way into Bulkley Park at the other end of town, and was even now shouting the great war cry of those times: "Slide, Kelly, slide!" I may add that father was defeated at the next election.

That is how I learned that heroes are much better friends than bankers and lawyers—all of which has very little to do with Douglas Fairbanks, except that King Kelly, as I finally saw him, riding majestically to the station on the tall end of the local dump cart, adoringly followed by those of us boys who managed to elude their fathers and sisters, his patent leather shoes dangling demagogically in the dust, his brown derby hat and big black cigar at angles that must speedily have met—King Kelly of that Summer afternoon was for me the first of a royal line of heroes of which Douglas and Babe Ruth are the lineal descendants and reigning princes.

I told this story to Michael, my married sister Minnie's husband, and Michael was against Kelly as a national influence, chiefly, I think, because he wore a brown derby hat. I try to be cheerful about Michael, but what can you do with a man to whom the word Ruth suggests nothing but Naomi? I admit that King Kelly was rather a cheap sort of hero—I don't like brown derbies with patent leather shoes any bet-

ter than Michael does—but Kelly had that precious gift of personality that makes a dump cart a chariot and a derby hat a crown.

Michael's oldest boy is just like me. Sometimes I think the best friend he has in all the world is George Herman Ruth, the Home Run King. On his side are admiration, devotion, utter abasement; on the Babe's side the desire and ability to satisfy utterly the deepest longings of his soul. David and Jonathan, Weber and Fields, Johnson and Borah—none of the famous pairs of history have anything on Michael Junior and the Sultan of Swat.

But there is one other relationship of this kind in the young man's life—for even professional heroes have their rivals!—that is likely to change the whole course of said life. He knows a second cousin of Stanley Keck. You have no idea what this means to a boy who has reached that pivotal period when he must decide which college he is to adorn. And though Michael Senior has led him solemnly to New Haven and shown him the Harkness Memorial and introduced him to William Lyon Phelps, the boy is going to Princeton if he dies for it. Of course Junior has never spoken to the Princeton football captain, and the football captain has never heard of Junior, but their friendship is eternal. A first cousin of Malcolm Aldrich might make him waver—Angels could do no more! All of which is a great blow to Michael, who, as you know, believes that the personal equation should be entirely eliminated from the mathematics of life; but it means very little to Minnie and me, who come from Boston and are very broad-minded, and quite willing to admit that either Yale or Princeton is the finest college south of the Massachusetts line.

The only thing that Minnie and I did not agree on was this fellow Barrymore. In fact, until I went to

"Heroes by Any Name"

(Continued from Page 8)

Eddie Foy's living in it and Georgie Cohan's singing about it—without being able to inform a visitor which it is that has eight children. I shall never forget that first week in New Rochelle when Eddie's eight challenged Michael's five to a potato race. Michael just thought it was another of those Sunday school picnics, but Minnie was so excited she wanted to plant potatoes in the front yard, as if it were war time, and she was going to get a badge from Herbert Hoover. From that day Minnie divided her allegiance between what are commonly supposed to be the two greatest theatrical families, the Barrymores and the Foy's, although she knows in the bottom of her heart that the greatest theatrical family of all time is George M. Cohan!

Imitation is the sincerest form of hero worship, and if you don't believe that Macmonnies or Jo Davidson would find their ideal models for a marbleized version of "The Three Heroes" in Eddie and Ethel and George—ask Elsie Janis and Mollie King and Gertie Hoffman. Thanks to them—and their imitators—millions who have never seen the originals instantly recognize Foy's damp enunciation, Barrymore's throaty "There isn't any more," and Cohan's immortal "My father thanks you, my mother thanks you, my sister thanks you, I thank you." Thus is hero worship spread from Broadway to Main Street.

But it wasn't until they found a way of putting up heroes in cans and shipping them all over the world that the truly universal character of this emotion was thoroughly demonstrated. I remember one day long before Minnie was married—and Minnie says it seems as if she had been married forever!—coming home late and telling father I had been to the movies. He looked at me with the vacuity of Raymond Hitchcock's Englishman who said, "Yonkers? What are Yonkers?" For father, being no more up on theatres than he was on baseball diamonds, had never heard of movies; he did not know that the most extraordinary phenomenon in the long history of hero worship was about to be phenomenalized. Father, as I have said, didn't know what was happening, and Michael doesn't know yet.

But Minnie was thrilled, not by the scientific possibilities of the new medium, but by what I told her of a big-eyed little girl with curly hair and pouty lips that ran away with the picture and was easily worth the

entire nickel I had paid to see the show. Several fat men with bald spots may think they had something to do with the popular success of the motion picture, but it was little Mary—the first of the celluloid heroines—projecting her personality from the silver screen to the public heart that first institutionalized the movies by giving the world a new thing to worship. She and her contemporaries have made a permanent place for the screen by bringing hero worship within the reach of all. They may not have cornered heroism, but they certainly have trademarked it. The movie has revived the Heroic Age—and made it pay!

So every night Minnie and I take our shot of hero worship in a public manner comfortably seated in the largest and most perfumed theatre in New Rochelle, with four large exits on Main Street, and ushers in uniform on Saturdays and Sundays; and we don't care much what the picture is so long as we have seen the girl before and know whom she's married to in Hollywood, and there's blue moonlight at the end to let us know it's over. But Michael, who is just as cold to the canned heroes as he is to the fresh ones, sits at home and reads Shakespeare—who still appeals to Michael as a greater dramatist than Anita Loos. These things, of course, are matters of opinion, and when any one has so many opinions as Michael, one of them must be right. And, anyhow, I have more respect for Michael since the other night. He didn't come home on his usual train, and didn't telephone, but Minnie wasn't worried, for Michael is one of the littlest things in the little theatre movement, and has to attend committee meetings and dodge down smelly side streets to discover unknown actors giving unknown plays in unknown tongues. Michael was like that. So Minnie and I took in a return engagement of Charlie Chaplin in "The Kid"—you have to hand it to him, the kid is clever!—and went to bed. Just as I was dropping off to dreams of angels and policemen I heard Michael's step on the stairs—that creaky upper step had fallen him—and it occurred to me that even Michael might have a late paper and could, by a little careful study, tell me what had happened to the Giants and the Yanks. It was a forlorn hope, knowing Michael, but I took a chance.

"Who won?" says I.

"Soldier Bartfield," says he, "in the tenth round—he knocked him cold!"

I think most people are hero worshippers, don't you?