

Miss Arnold as she sat in her box near the players' bench. From their glances he could tell they were talking about him.

Martin had broached the subject of releasing Gilligan to the minors.

"You see," he explained to Miss Arnold, "we've got to keep the club within twenty-one men under the new rule, and I have a chance to get Bill Kaufman, a star that will set this league afire. It's a question of keeping Gilligan or losing Kaufman."

"I'm sorry to interfere with your plans, Mr. Martin," said Miss Arnold, "but this club cannot let Gilligan go. For reasons that I cannot explain, it is impossible."

"Is it as serious as all that?" inquired the manager, casting a knowing glance at Miss Arnold.

"Mr. Martin," said the magnate severely, "you have no right to ask such a question. Please remember your position."

"Well, if that's the way you feel about it, I don't mind telling you it may come to a question of your keeping me or keeping Gilligan."

"For other reasons that I cannot explain," she replied, "it is also impossible for me to let you go."

"Whether you can let me go or not, I am going to quit unless you let Gilligan go—unless, of course," and he smiled, "you want to get rid of the club. In that case I am ready to buy."

"Well, I am not going to sell, and neither am I going to consent to the release of Mr. Gilligan," Miss Arnold answered with emphasis. "Moreover, Mr. Martin, you are under contract and you will have to play out the season with us or not play baseball at all."

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The note left by old Silver King restrained her from saying more.

"I guess I might find some other business if it came to a showdown," said Martin peevishly.

As he started for the bench Martin caught the eye of one of the promoters in a near-by box and winked significantly.

"I think she'll give in soon," he said to the prospective magnate a little later on, between innings; "we've got a chance to cop it."

"Hit while the iron is hot," chuckled Martin's backer. "It's your big chance."

"Tomorrow, maybe," said the manager, returning to the dugout.

Manager Martin was unusually sullen at game time the next day, and did not once look in the direction of Miss Arnold.

"I've a hunch that something is coming off here," "Butch" Evans remarked to Gilligan.

"Let 'er come," said "Red."

It was in the third inning that a shrill voice from the stand, just back of the Graylegs' bench, began to hurl epithets at Jack Martin.

"Tryin' to win ball games with marked cards, eh?" shouted the voice. "Dressin' punk batters up in phony whiskers! Why don't you wear the skirts yourself?"

As the game proceeded the abuse of the fan became more personal. When a good opportunity offered "Red" Gilligan edged down the field to take a look at the offending person. He was dumfounded.

"What do you know about that?" he said to "Butch" Evans, returning to the bench. "The guy that's raising all the trouble is Kid Sax, the fighter! You got it right, 'Butch,' there's something doing here."

Gilligan told Evans of his having seen "Kid" Sax in the company of Martin a few nights before.

"That abuse stuff ain't on the level," he added.

The two puzzled players in a few minutes began to see through the scheme. Twice Jack Martin had appealed to the umpire to have the fan stopped. Even this looked to Gilligan like a piece of acting. It smacked of insincerity.

In the sixth inning the abuse had grown so personally insulting that Martin, in apparent rage, left the coaching lines, vaulted over the railing, ran toward "Kid" Sax and deliberately struck him in the face. Sax made no effort to defend himself and for a minute, it seemed, the manager rained blow after blow upon the fighter's



"Take those curtains off!" demanded the umpire of Gilligan. "What you think this is, a burlesque show?"

misshapen nose and mouth. The stands were in an uproar.

Two park policemen came to the rescue and dragged Martin away.

"Take him out of the grounds!" ordered the umpire.

Two or three of the players, Martin's particular friends, ran to the umpire, demanding that he retract his order.

"Jack was right in not standing for that stuff," they insisted, "and if he goes out we go with him!"

The official was firm in his order, and, sure enough, seven of the Graylegs walked out of the park, leaving an insufficient number of players to continue the game.

Amid the excitement that followed, the hissing and groaning of the spectators, the umpire declared the game forfeit against the Graylegs by a score of 9 to 0.

Hundreds of fans stormed the box office, demanding their money back. Those who were there after Miss Arnold got in communication with the ticket sellers were paid. Others, refusing to wait, went away, swearing they would never come to another ball game in that park.

By 9 o'clock that night Jack Martin had received notice that he had been indefinitely suspended for striking a spectator. Miss Arnold got a copy of the notice, but

found it impossible to get in communication with the manager. Finally she located "Red" Gilligan and sent for him.

"Don't you worry about that forfeit and suspension," he assured her earnestly. "There's something worse coming off—unless I can stop it."

"Something worse?" she repeated, startled.

"A bunch of the players say that if Martin ain't reinstated tomorrow they'll refuse to play," he told her. "They're going on a strike! I might as well come right out in the open and tell you this thing ain't on the level, Miss Arnold. That fellow that Martin struck was his friend. He is a tough little prize fighter and framed up to do that so that Jack could hit him and get suspended."

"Why did he want to get suspended?" she asked in astonishment.

"He and that bunch of players he's had around him so long wanted to bring about a strike."

Seeing that the woman magnate could not grasp such intrigue, "Red" explained to her that if the club went on strike and refused to show up on the field that the game would be forfeited, as well as the franchise.

"The directors are all against you to

start with," he added, "and, you see, we already forfeited one game today."

"And you mean that we will lose everything?" she asked.

"We would have if 'Butch' Evans and myself had got on in time."

"And that's why Martin wanted to have you released? I see it all now. What will we do? I've got to depend on you."

"Never you mind; old Silver King was my friend. You sit right still in the boat and leave it to me. I've got 'Butch' Evans on the job now. He's gone to Schuetzen's Park to talk to some of the fellows he used to play with out there—a lot of amateurs. Just you keep quiet. I've tipped off a few of our newspaper friends. We'll beat that bunch yet."

He rose and started for the door.

"Do you have to leave, Mr. Gilligan?" asked Miss Arnold coyly. "I know now what my uncle meant when he requested that I should never release you from this club."

"He said that?" asked Gilligan, surprised. "And is that why you objected to my release? Is that—"

"Not the only reason," she answered, a touch of color rising to her cheeks. "You see, I couldn't—wouldn't—release you—"

"Nor me you," said "Red" boldly.

And it was several minutes before he did.

Gilligan, crafty, nimble-witted Gilligan, was all business again.

"I want the key to your office—that's where you keep the blank contracts, ain't it?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Miss Arnold. "I can't understand it—and I don't care to now, for I leave it all to you."

And she handed him the key.

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It was a strange gathering in the office of the Graylegs that night. Athletes, big and little, had rallied to the call of "Butch" Evans; and one after another they signed contracts set before them by "Red" Gilligan. They were amateur ball players, but whether they could play made no difference to the red-headed outfielder, who had set about to save the little woman from financial ruin.

The next day came—and with it the discovery that the striking ball players had taken their uniforms from the clubhouse. It was a queer looking team that sallied onto the field under the name of Graylegs. No two uniforms were alike; one, a brilliant red, earned for its wearer the sobriquet of "the Zouave."

The game had only been under way a few minutes when it was evident that the fans were to witness a burlesque. Gilligan's makeshift club could offer no serious opposition to the Seagulls.

The president of the league and several members of the board sat in the stand and scowled.

As Gilligan stepped to the plate he swung onto the ball viciously and smashed out his longest hit of the year. It was an easy three bagger, but he decided to stretch it into a home run. The ball was relayed in by the shortstop, and it looked as if "Red" would be thrown out.

The throw was a little wild, however, the catcher getting the ball fifteen feet back of the plate. Gilligan was about the same distance from the rubber when he decided to make a slide for it. The catcher saw that his only chance was to slide with the ball. He and "Red" slid at the same time. Gilligan swerved to one side, missing the plate by a foot, and the catcher missed touching him by the same distance.

The umpire made no decision, and taking it for granted that he was safe, Gilligan got up and started for the bench. The catcher, holding his ground, looked at the umpire inquiringly.

"Well, how about it?" asked the backstop. "He didn't touch the plate."

"No, and you didn't touch him," said the official.

That being sufficient hint, the catcher turned and started for the Graylegs' bench to touch the runner, just as had been done in the case of Landis and Evans the season before—the case mentioned by Miss

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