

THE WHISPERING BALL

By Hugh S. Fullerton

Illustrated by R. Tandler



PAULIN, refusing to abandon the final hope that Gordon would reappear, remained downtown until close to 1 o'clock. It was nearly 2 when he reached the park. The gate had been closed for half an hour. Already nearly 60,000 persons were inside the inclosure, and outside a mob of even larger proportions struggled to get close to the entrances.

Paulin, small and wiry, fought his way toward the entrance reserved for the players, and with clothing torn and hat and glasses lost, he finally succeeded in securing admission. He crossed the playing field rapidly and reached the bench where the Greens were emerging from their subterranean recesses in preparation for the combat. He whispered to McCollis and Haley, the acting captain, the news that no trace of Gordon had been found, then walked quickly across to the runway under the stands in which Professor Terpening was busy setting up his instruments.

"I have brought a new detector," said the professor smilingly. "I hope to ascertain through it the exact spot from which these disturbances come should they materialize today."

"I have an idea you won't be disturbed today, professor," said Paulin gloomily. "Gordon has disappeared, and I think he is so hot on the trail that whoever it is will not be likely to attend the game."

"Disappeared?" There was no doubt of the anxiety in Professor Terpening's voice. "I hope nothing untoward has happened to our young friend. When did this happen?"

"During the night," said Paulin. "He received a summons."

"Summons, from whom? How?" Professor Terpening was visibly agitated.

"I don't know," said Paulin, surprised at the unexpected show of emotion. "Telephone message, I imagine. He said it was a life and death matter."

"Ah," said Terpening, visibly relieved. "I hope he has not encountered any dangers or has been injured. This man Kendall perhaps had a hand in it."

"Nothing doing," said Paulin, turning away. "I've been with Kendall half the night and most of the morning. He's over there in a box now."

As he turned he saw Professor Terpening's face change. The expression startled him and he turned again quickly. The professor was bending over one of his instruments and the expression had disappeared.

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THE Greens were engaged in their preliminary practice as Paulin made his way under the stands and reached the press box. The pulsing roar of the great crowd, swelling and breaking, was echoed by the sullen roar of the massed thousands outside. Mounted police dashed around the edges of the field, while outside squads of perspiring guardians of the peace held back the swarms that threatened to smash down the barred gates to secure entrance. Never before had such a situation existed in baseball.

On the field the teams were practicing with the cold, deadly precision and quiet that marks the work of great teams when under high nervous strain.

"They are starting ten minutes early," announced Wittich, the veteran Boston reporter.

"No chance for Gordon now," said Paulin desperately, as he glanced at his watch.

The game started with a furious assault upon "Slats" Slattery, the Blues attempting to pound out a victory be-

fore the past master of the pitchers could steady to his task. He was driven to resort to his famous dropping fader to stop the attack, and the inning ended with Blues on second and third. That danger escaped, the Greens made a counter attack, slashing away viciously at the first good ball pitched by Krentzman, hoping to find that great curve pitcher for long hits before he warmed up to his work. Two of the Greens reached the bases, but Krentzman stopped the attack and after that first inning the teams settled to the task, the two great pitchers working like machines, studying each ball and pitching with crafty coolness that balked the efforts of the best batters. The second and third innings reeled away with neither team being able to force a runner to first base. The great crowd, spurred by the spectacle of two master pitchers pitting their brains and cunning against the resourceful attacks of the two greatest generals in the game, volleyed applause after each out. The fourth inning brought the first opportunity to the Greens. Catching the Blues napping for an instant, the Greens opened a sudden bunting attack and by outwitting Ortsefsen, the Blue third baseman, twice, they managed to get runners on the bases, but again, when they seemed to be on the verge of counting, Krentzman stopped them.



"I was waiting for him, heard him coming, and arose to go down-stairs, and at the door met the professor."

The fifth inning started with the score blank, and with three hits for the Greens against one for the Blues. Then came one of those sudden upsets of form that go to make baseball the greatest of all games. Lordney, first to bat, outguessed, struck late at a ball and rolled an easy bouncer down toward second base. Mattison, the substitute infielder, set himself to make the stop and throw, but the ball bounded crooked, struck him on the wrist and before he could recover it Lordney had raced across first base. On the next pitched ball Pentman, crowding the plate, strove to dodge, but the ball struck his shoulder and two runners were on the paths. Haynes sacrificed, and for the second time Slattery was thrown back upon the defensive. The infield was drawn close to cut off the runner at the plate and Slattery, pitching as coolly as if in practice, commenced his desperate task of retiring Haynes and holding the other runners on the bases. A scream of relief from the anxious crowd shattered the air as Haynes hit a low, weak line fly straight at Mattison.

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A WILD yell of warning followed the scream as the watchers saw Pentman, forgetting all save the plate, racing toward third base at top speed, his head down, his feet flying, his ears deaf to the warning shouts of Lordney, who was holding third, and of the coacher. In the climax of the game Pentman had made

the worst blunder of the year. All that was necessary to end the inning was for Mattison to catch the easy fly, walk to second and complete the double play.

Over the screams and hysterical laughter of the overwrought crowd there suddenly arose a shriek of surprise, turning to anger. With the ball almost upon him Mattison suddenly reeled, threw one arm before his face, groped wildly at the air. The ball struck him on the shoulder, rolled on to right field and Lordney, sprinting on ahead of the blundering Pentman, crossed the plate just a step before his erring teammate.

The blunder had been turned into an additional score.

The dullest in the vast crowd knew that Mattison had been blinded just as he was about to make the catch. A sullen, angry roar swept the vast assemblage. The pent-up anger of weeks broke. The crowd stormed and raged, crying for vengeance and not knowing whither to turn to exact it or upon whom to wreak their fury. With those two runs across the plate Slattery, pitching as if nothing had happened, retired the side.

The Blues, fortified with a lead of two runs, scenting victory, played desperately. The Greens, rallying, strove to break down the defense, but in vain, and the fifth inning was closing when, of a sudden, a fresh disturbance started at the back of the crowded stands. A commotion, commencing at the head of one aisle, spread rapidly as waves spread