

when a stone falls into water. Almost in an instant men and women were on their feet, questioning each other excitedly, screaming the news, to their neighbors.

As the word spread, rank after rank of the massed spectators stood up, and suddenly from the center of the disturbed area appeared a group, advancing as rapidly as the crowded condition of the aisle would permit toward the front of the stands. The cheers that arose from those nearest them when they were recognized spread like ripples that grew into waves of noise, until the great crowd was surging with sound and applause pounded upon the banked masses in the stands like surf upon a rocky shore.

Down the aisle in the center of the stands came three persons. In the center was Helen Holiday, supported on one side by her father and on the other by Arthur Metzler. Both men were wan and sick looking. The girl, although pale, carried her head erect and walked firmly.

The players, who were changing positions, halted at the outburst of noise and stood looking toward the stands to discover the reason for the sudden explosion of sound. They saw the trio and the Greens, rushing forward as one man, gathered near the president's box and stood with caps off while the party made its way forward. In vain old Bob, the umpire, shouted to the teams to play ball. The tumult drowned his voice.

The excitement was beginning to subside and the spectators, weary with cheering and asking each other excited questions, were beginning to resume their seats, when from directly back of the Greens' bench there arose a wild yell that dimmed in volume the preceding outburst. In an instant the vast crowd was on its feet again, going from paroxysm into paroxysm of noise as, from the tunnel behind the Greens' bench, Freddie Gordon emerged upon the field.

He was arranging his uniform as he ran. His face was cut and bloody, and his hair disheveled. Without stopping at the bench he sprinted across to the box where Bart Kendall was sitting and, leaning over and making a trumpet of his hands, he said something to the gambler. The crowd, raving with excitement and screaming queries which no one could answer, watched the tableau. They saw the tall gambler's face turn livid as he leaped to his feet. They saw him brush aside the persons who impeded his progress and make his way along the front of the stand toward one of the exits. Freddie Gordon watched the gambler for, an instant, then running to the bench, he said:

"McCollis, there'll be no more interference with the game."

Then he turned and raced for his position.

CHAPTER XXX.

The Sixth Inning.

FREDDIE GORDON'S dramatic return revived the waning spirits of the Greens and seemed to smash the confidence of the Blues.

The vast crowd, still seething with excitement over the sudden reappearance of Holiday, his daughter and his stepson, and Gordon's return, was swept with rumors. For an instant it seemed as if Gordon's consultation with Kendall would bring the mob to a point of violence against the gambler. Reporters were fighting their ways through the excited crowds, striving to discover what it was all about, and, for the moment, the game itself was forgotten in the excitement over the dramatic events going forward among the spectators.

Paulin, grasping the situation in part, threw his score book to one of his fellows, and dodging down under the stands ran through the maze of passage ways, seeking Kendall. He caught a glimpse of the tall gambler fighting his way out through one of the passages, and saw him force his way into the crowd outside the gates as a door swung open a trifle to permit him to es-

cape. He turned and ran back along the runway, seeking Professor Terpening. In the runway he found part of Terpening's instruments, thrown aside as if hastily, but there was no sign of the scientist himself.

Puzzled, Paulin made his way slowly toward the entrance to the Greens' bench. He found the heavy door closed and no response came from his repeated knocks and cries. Baffled, he returned to the press box. The reporters were busily engaged telegraphing wild reports and rumors to their papers, together with accounts of the scene of magnificent excitement. His own paper was clamoring for an explanation of the reappearance of the missing ones and there was none to give.

The game had been resumed and the Blues were baffled in their attack in the first half of the sixth inning. Two batters were out for the Greens and no one on the bases when Gordon came to bat for the first time. The great stands and bleachers rocked with applause and excitement. To Paulin's keen eyes it was evident that Gordon was spent almost to a point of exhaustion and was being upheld by his nerve force. His face was masklike from weariness and the strain of the situation as he faced Krentzman. The big pitcher sent a curve shooting just outside the corner of the plate and Gordon, tempted, restrained himself and drew a ball. He faced Krentzman again, striving to guess what the master pitcher of the Blues would do. He knew that the ordinary pitcher would use either a fast ball pitched on the inside corner of the plate or a slow one over the plate. Knowing Krentzman, he concluded that instead of pitching either the Blue pitcher would pitch another curve and in exactly the same place as the first.

IT WAS a game of head and tails—guess against guess. Gordon stepped back slightly in the box as if expecting a fast ball, and watched closely. The pitcher wound up, whirled his long arm overhead and sent the ball whizzing toward the plate. Even as he pitched Gordon stepped forward a long step, caught the ball with his bat before it curved and drove it with terrific force to left center. He raced to first with every nerve and muscle in his body strained in the effort. He turned the base in his stride, risking a collision with Lordney, who held the bag as long as possible, then leaped aside. Gordon had an idea. He knew that Jarnigan, the veteran left fielder of the Blues, a great player and a smart one, had one bad habit, and that was carelessness. Time and again he had seen Jarnigan toss the ball back into the infield after fielding such a hit as he had just driven out and this time he gave a fleeting glance as he turned the base. Jarnigan had picked up the ball and tossed it high and slowly toward the shortstop. Like a flash Gordon leaped into full stride again. The sudden scream of the crowd attested his movement, and he raced down upon second base, putting every ounce of his force into each leap. He saw Haynes, alarmed, rushing out to meet the slowly thrown ball. He saw Haynes grab the ball and whirling, throw to second and as the ball came Gordon lunged his body into the air, struck out one leg desperately and came to a stop, one toe on the bag, his body beyond it, while Pentman hurled the unoffending ball against the ground and cursed Jarnigan.

The brilliantly executed move to gain an extra base irritated Krentzman. He spoke sarcastically to Jarnigan and sneered as he turned to face Hyde. The lumbering first baseman of the Greens, slow moving to the eye but covering a lot of ground with his long strides, faced Krentzman, waving his bat threateningly, and on the first pitched ball he hooked his bat around and dropped the ball down the third base foul line. Conniff, the catcher, leaped after it. Ortsefsen, caught half asleep, rushed forward. The two came near colliding and Conniff grabbed the ball, whirled and made a

vicious throw toward first. It was evident that Hyde would beat the ball to first base even before the throw was made, but the next development was startling. Gordon, racing for third on the bunt, saw the two Blues each striving to field the ball and, whirling around the base, he came on behind Ortsefsen. As Conniff threw to first base Gordon leaped past Ortsefsen and sprinted for the plate. The wild warning shouts awakened Krentzman and Conniff to the peril at the same instant. The pitcher and catcher raced to cover the plate and reached it a step ahead of the flying Green who, with a desperate slide, smashed his way between them to the plate and scored a run.

THE daring brilliancy of Gordon in scoring the run against great odds stirred the crowd to new paroxysms of cheering, which were succeeded by a murmur as it was seen that the Green captain staggered as he walked back toward the bench. The strain had worn upon him and he was deadly weary. The shock of the collision at the plate had racked his exhausted body.

The muttered sympathy of the crowd was lost upon him. His body was sagging and his brain reeled. A moment's rest while the succeeding batter was retired and he walked to his position half supported by Haley, whose questions received only half understood head shakes.

The seventh and eighth innings passed without a change in the score. The two runs that had been forced upon the Blues by the scientific trickery of the outsider seemed to spell the doom of the Greens' pennant hopes. Gordon was so weary he scarcely could drag one leg after the other. All the noise, the seething tumult of the stands, came to him as if deadened. He scarcely cared whether the team won or lost. His brain was numb and his body ached in a thousand places. He found himself longing for the game to end that he might roll into the luxury of a steaming bath and ease the torture of tired and outraged muscles. His eyes persisted in drooping and even the frantic efforts of his teammates to smash the defense of the Blues and get a start in the attack upon the icy nerved Krentzman failed to arouse him.

The last half of the ninth started. The crowd, which had been frantic, arose to new heights of noise, pleading, imploring, screaming, seething with wild enthusiasm which swelled to a shriek of hope as Kobow drove a long line fly to left field. The shriek broke at its highest note and turned to a half-groan as Oiger, sprinting outward, overhauled the ball and dragged it down. The scattered applause which greeted his brilliant feat of fielding was given grudgingly and the enthusiasm that greeted Robinson as he strode to the bat was diminished. The crowd was beginning to shift uneasily, ready to start toward the exits. Hope was dying, but dying hard. Robinson still was fighting. Facing the master pitcher, he began a duel of wits, and after five minutes of jockeying, fouling and waiting he drew a base on balls. A scream of revived hope greeted this opening. For the first time in innings the Greens had a runner on first base, and Hyde, usually the most placid of players, ran to the plate, gritting his teeth, crying wild words to the pitcher, in a frenzy of overwrought nerves. Krentzman, cool, cunning, resourceful, paused and smiled. He had faced nervous batters many times and he was figuring coolly that it would be a useless risk to pitch a good ball to Hyde, who was beside himself with anxiety to hit.

The tall pitcher pawed the slab with his foot, smiled and sent a fast ball shooting high above Hyde's head. For once the cunning of the pitcher was wasted. As the ball was pitched Hyde, his face transfixed, leaped and struck at it. The ball, driven with terrific force, shot over the second baseman's head, and before it could be retrieved the run-

ners were on first and second—and a base hit would turn the tide.

Gordon was coming to bat. He arose from the bench as a man in a dream. The roar of the crowd he scarcely heard. Manager McCollis saw his condition and, springing from the bench, he grabbed the captain by the arm.

"Don't go up," he ordered. "You're all in. I'll send O'Hale to hit for you." Gordon turned upon him in sudden fury. He shook loose from the grasp of the manager, glared at him and walked unsteadily to the batters' box. The crowd, watching the pantomime, read it in different ways. It was evident that Gordon was not himself. He staggered as he walked and his face was set, his teeth clenched. He looked out toward Krentzman as if puzzled. Krentzman sent his curve flashing down and out just outside the corner of the plate. Gordon stood, not moving a muscle, eying the ball curiously. "One ball," screamed the umpire. The roar of the crowd was redoubled. The noise was like the roar of surf upon a hard beach. Krentzman stood as if puzzled. Gordon's tactics worried him. It was like pitching to a stone image. He sent his fast ball straight through the heart of the plate and Gordon, without moving, let it go past with no effort to hit at it.

"Something is the matter with Freddie," said Krentzman as Haynes dashed forward to consult with him. "I don't think he saw that one."

"Pitch carefully, Ben," Haynes urged. "He's dangerous."

Krentzman tried his curve again and it swept outside the plate for the second ball, and the hopeful jubilation of the multitude was renewed.

Suddenly Freddie Gordon awakened from his trance. His eyes had been roving aimlessly along the stands, a puzzled expression on his face. His weary brain seemed to be groping for an explanation of all the wild excitement. Suddenly his eyes rested upon a face, the face of a girl who was leaning forward, her face pleading, anxious, beseeching. His brain cleared in an instant. He tightened his grip upon his long, lean bat and crouched, watching Krentzman. His mind was working again. He remembered that Krentzman had tried two curves, and that a fast ball has whizzed through the heart of the plate unmolested. Krentzman would pitch a fast ball again. Instinctively he gripped the ground with his feet. The ball came like a rifle shot, straight at the plate, waist high. Gordon summoned every ounce of his remaining strength and threw it behind the swing of the bat. He felt the bat meet the ball with a ringing crash. He saw Haynes leap high into the air and the ball flash over his finger tips. He reeled toward first base. The wild applause of the great crowd poured down upon him. He saw Jarnigan, far out in left field, make a despairing effort to stop the ball with one hand, then turn and sprint after it as it rolled toward the fence. He knew that Robinson and Hyde were racing for the plate, that his drive had won the game, that the Greens were champions. He saw men pouring over the barrier walls of stands and bleachers as water over a precipice. He felt his feet touch first base and with a long stagger he reeled into the arms of Hatpin Hankins, who had been coaching—and knew no more.

CHAPTER XXX.

Into Thin Air.

TWO hours after the sensational finish of the final game of the season that gave the Boston Greens the championship a little group, tense with expectant excitement and anxiety that toned their triumph, sat at dinner in the rooms of Charles Holiday.

Mr. Holiday, his face drawn with suffering, presided, and at the table were Freddie Gordon, Paulin, Arthur Metzler, his cousin, the actor, and Miss Holiday. "We are waiting for one more guest," said Mr. Holiday. "When he arrives I