SPEED GALLAGHER won 34 games for the Gray Sox during the regular season. Then he pitched three straight shut-outs in the world series. After that he was more popular than a neighbor with plenty of pre-war stuff, and as widely known as the president. So the K. and L. people signed him up for 20 weeks in vaudeville.

"What kind of stuff do I get to do?"

Speed inquired after affixing his signature to the contract that called for more money a week than many college professors make in a year.

The theatrical manager looked at him and sighed. "Let us worry about that, Speed," he suggested. "We'll frame up something for you."

The theatrical manager then called in Danny Fleisher, a clever young product of Broadway, who wrote plays in much the same way that a tailor makes suits. You showed Danny an actor or someone who wanted to be an actor, and said: "Something to fit this, Danny; we want to start rehearsals tomorrow night."

"I've signed up Speed Gallagher, Danny," the theatrical manager said.

Danny nodded approval. "Good business; he ought to draw."

"He ought to," the theatrical manager agreed. "God knows, he won't be able to do nothing else. Fix us up something for him, Danny. About 20 minutes; to close in one act."

The act opened at Atlantic City. In it were Speed, his catcher Red Martin, and Marshall Kendrick.

"Just do your stuff, kid," Martin advised Speed, reassuringly, as they stood shivering in the wings, just before the curtain went up. "Never mind this hoofin' and singin' they've rung in on you. You just stall through that any old how, and then, when you come to burnin' 'em across to me, just do your stuff! That's all. Just do your stuff! and we'll get by."

The act went with a whoop. Fortunately, Speed's hoofing and singing were so bad that the audience of admiring fans rocked in their chairs and laughed until the tears came at sight of their gangly, raw-boned favorite trying to make his feet and throat behave.

When, near the close of the act, they struck the set and Speed on the bare stage took a baseball in his big fist and began burning over curves and shoots to Red Martin, the roars of applause that answered his efforts had nothing of ridicule in them. While the audience clapped and shouted approval of his illustrations of how to pitch three straight shut-outs in the world series, stumpy little bowlegged Martin, crouching low, thumped his big mitt and shouted his customary chant of encouragement:

"Do your stuff, kid! Atta boy! Do your stuff!"

HE critics in New York were too subtle for the suddenly stage-struck Gallagher. They damned him with superlative burlesque praise, and he did not realize that they were kidding him. He knew only that his name was up in electric lights on Broadway and conspicuous on the billboards of the city; that at every performance he was cheered and cheered again; that he was getting more money for appearing on the stage for a few minutes twice a day than he had ever made pitching his heart out on the diamond. He felt like the man who went to a horse race for the first time. cashed his initial bet at ten to one, and inquired: "How long has this been going on?"

They played on the bill with Louise Clare for the first time in Chicago. Louise was as completely a part of the theatre as a back drop or a bunch light. Her father and mother had been old-fashioned circus and song-and-dance people. She had been on the stage in a baby carriage when she was six months old and had made her entrance on her own feet within a year of the time she was able to stand on them unaided.

At 22 she could take an audience in the hollow of her pink little palm and mold its mood to her will as a sculptor fashions clay. She could and did do most of the things that are done on a vaudeville stage. The main feature of her act was her work on the tight rope. but she was also a comedienne of sorts and could even have stayed at the top of the theatrical heap on the strength of either her singing or her dancing. Ifitimate acquaintance with life had made her thrifty to the point of miserliness with her money, her health and her friendship. She was a wise, wholesome, heart-hungry little soldier, who knew all the ways of the warfare that a girl on her own in the profession must fight, and who nursed a pathetically intense longing for the peace of happy marriage, with love to stand guard.

She fell for Speed Gallagher; fell quick and hard. She was tired of smooth, flat little dancing men; pompous, strutting actors and posing acrobats. Speed attracted her because he was rough and awkward, bashful, deferential. To her he was a man from a far country; a champion in a strange and thrilling game.

JACK REILLY, the house manager in Chicago, introduced them after the show on the second night.

"I saw you in all of the games you pitched during the series last fall, Mr. Gallagher." she said. "You certainly did have them eating out of your hand."

"Aw, that was nothin' much," Gallagher mumbled. "Have you watched me act yet."

She nodded. "I always come down in the wings when they strike the set and you start to pitch," she said. "Oh, that!" Speed exclaimed. "That's nothin'. Have you seen the rest of it?"

She admitted that she had not.
"I'd like to have you watch it some night," Speed said. "I'd like to have you tell me what you think of it. Seems to be going pretty well."

"I'll watch it at the matines tomor-

SPEED GALLAGHER, COULD PITCH --- HE THOUGHT HE COULD AGT --- HE IDECIDED HE LOVED HIS ART MORE THAN HIS GIRL OR BASEBALL AND TWEN THINGS BEGAN TO HAPPEN.



WITHIN three weeks after starting with on living to the control of the control of

fore Gallagher said:
"I'll cut out this baseball stuff for good
now and we'll do an act together, eh?

scarcely had time to begin, in fact, be-

You and me?"
"Oh, but Speed, you mustn't give up baseball," she protested.

baseball," she protested.
"Why not? Any roughneck can play
baseball."

"But, Speed! That's your game!"
"Well, actin's my game, too, ain't it?"
he said, resentfully. "I'm getting more
money for actin' than I ever got for playin' baseball. With you and me together—"

"But, Speed, you get paid so much for acting simply because you're such a won-derful baseball player."

"Well, of course, I did at first," he admitted, reluctantly. "Since I've learned the business like I have, it's different. I'm going pretty good, ain't I?"

"Why, yes," she agreed, hesitatingly. "You're going all right, Speed, but—"
"But what?" he demanded truculent-

ly.

"Well, Speed, you're a baseball player; you're not an actor. Baseball is your stuff, just the same as acting is mine. You've got to do your stuff."

"Maybe you think I ain't good enough to do an act with you," he suggested, sullenly.

"Well, Speed, you wouldn't think I was good enough to play baseball on your team, would you?"

The quarrel that followed was bitter and final. Speed sought relief from his mood in hard liquor, and Red Martin had his work cut out for him the next day to get the big pitcher sobered into shape for the matinee performance. After the show Red berated him in the dressing room.

"What the devil ails you?" he demanded. "This actin' thing gone to your head? In all the time I've been roomin' with you I never saw you drunk before." "Well, you seen me drunk last night,

didn't you?"
"I sure did! And I'll tell the world
you were one sloppy sight to see."

"Well, I can get drunk if I want to,

"You proved that all right! You keep on like this and you're goin' to be in fine thape when you show up for spring

trainin'."

"Who said I was goin' to show up for

spring trainin'?"

Red stared. "You ain't had a rew with the club, have you?"

"No, I ain't had no row with the club, but I'm off of baseball. I'm through!" Red showed real concern. "What's wrong?"

"Aw, what's the use of tellin' you?" Speed flamed. "You're like all the rest of 'em! You think all I can do is just play baseball. I'm goin' to show you guys, the whole bunch of you! I'm goin' to keep on actin'; that's what I'm goin' to do; an' make more money at it than any of you birds, too. I'm goin' to show all of you guys, an' Louise Clare, too, that—"

"Louise Clare," Martin exclaimed.
"What's she got to do with it?"
"Well, we had a fight," Speed admit-

ted, grudgingly.

Martin nodded. "I thought there was something. Come on, old kid; come clean. What's it all about?"

SPEED told him what had happened the previous night.

"Well, holy, high-jumping Jehoshaphat!" Martin exclaimed. "You been
holdin' something out on me all these
years, kid. I always knew you were a
little bit fat from the wishbone up, but
you never let me know before that you
were the world's champion mucker! One
of the nicest little girls in the world falls
for you—you big farmer, and before
you'd kissed her twice you started fig-

urin' on living easy off her big reputation. You were goin' to quit work and go kitin' around the country doin' nothing and dragging down half of the big dough that she makes."

"Where do you get that stuff?" Speed muttered. "I guess my reputation's as big as hers, ain't it?"

Red confronted him, his feet spread apart, his hands on his hips. "Say, you big blob of home-grown cheese, you listen to me. I want to tell you something. If it hadn't been for baseball you wouldn't have had no more reputation than a second-hand car. Your dad was a blacksmith down in a little hick burg in Tennessee, that never had enough boobs in it at one time to even get its name on the map. You were a bum, that's all. Just a bum! If you hadn't been such a nut about baseball, you might of worked hard, and some day got to be werth \$40 a month as a farm hand, but you were a nut about baseball and so you weren't worth even \$40 a month to nobody in that little neck o' the woods. Oh, your dad told me all about you when he was visitin' you in Cincinnati last summer.

"All right! You go ahead and jump. But I'm telling you this: You'll land right back where you started from, only when you get there you won't be a kid any more and there won't be any game to pick you out of the ash heap and make a king of you again. Instead of being a dirty-faced little kid, you'll be a good for nothin' no account, hulkin' old tramp, moochin' quarters around poelrooms and trying to get nice clerks to listen to you while you tell 'em how good you was once. You an actor! Why, say, if you had one bad year in the big league -if your arm went back on you for one season-you couldn't get a contract at a dime an hour in a nickelodeon! That's the truth and you can take it or leave

"You're a darned liar." said Speed.
"If I am," said Martin, his face suddenly white, "you ain't the man to tell me so and get away with it!"

It took five stagehands and a house manager to pry the two apart.

"I'm through!" Red panted as they dragged him away. "I'll work the week out, but after that you get somebody else to-"

"You won't work no week out!" Gallagher roared. "You show up tonight and I'll knock your block off. And they ain't goin' to be nobody else, either. I'll show you guys. That baseball part's out of this act. You hear me! Me and Kendrick is goin' to do straight singin' and dancin' from now on and you watch how we go. You just watch!"

AT 10 O'CLOCK that night Speed Gallagher left his dressing room on his way to his hotel. He was half way down the first flight of stairs that led to the stage when he thought of the promise he had made to the manager of the hotel to autograph and give him three baseballs for his three hero-worshiping young sons.

He returned to his dressing room, took three baseballs from his trunk, dropped them into the side pocket of his overcoat and went his way.

As he stepped out the stage door he could hear Louise Clare singing a sprightly song. He passed Red Martin standing in the alley. The two old friends did not speak.

Speed was heartsore but stubborn.

"I'll show 'em," he muttered to himself, as he trudged along to his hotel. "Think I can do nothin' but play baseball, eh? I'll show 'em!"

theatre's onjfire, Mr. Gallagher," he said, excitedly. "I thought you'd want to know. They say she's just blazing away."

Speed threw on his overcoat and rushed out. He was thinking of his

TT WAS 10:30 when the clerk phoned

up to Speed Gallagher's room. "The

trunk and clothes hanging in the dress-

The street was loud with the rumble and clang of fire apparatus; choked with a noisy and curious crowd. Speed reached the fire lines and was nabbed by a burly cop.

"I'm Speed Gallagher," Speed panted.
"You know; playin' at the Elite this week. Let me through, will you?"

The name was magic. "Sure! That's all right, Speed," the cop said. "Go ahead. I don't reckon you can do much, though. They think they got everybody out. She's burning like the very devil." Speed rushed around to the back of the theatre and stopped. Flames were curling out of the door; coiling high about the brick wall. Speed backed across the street and stood before the lighted show window of a hardware store, cowering away from the heat. There Red Martin found him. Red was screaming with excitement and pointing upward. Speed looked up. An icy agony of horror flooded through him.

High up on the otherwise blank brick wall, just under the peak of the stage roof, there was a window, about a foot and a half square. Framed in the window was Louise Clare. Her face and head were clearly seen in the glare from the flames below.

"Do something!" Red Martin shouted frantically, beating his fists together. "Good God, Speed, what can we do? Nobody can get in there! That whole lower part's just a roaring hell. Man, we got to do something!"

Speed acted with a celerity that legitimatized his name. With a side sweep of his arm he smashed the plate glass windown of the hardware store, jumping quickly back to escape the falling fragments of glass. He kicked the jagged pieces left in the frame out of his way and stepped into the show window. From the hooks on which they were displayed he yanked down a ball of stout brown twine and a coil of quarter-inch manila rope. With these he jumped back to the sidewalk. He raised his head and cupped his palms about his mouth.

"Louise! Don't jump!" he bellowed.

"Don't jump!"

A GLASS transom over a wooden door next to the hardware store bore the

Speed spied the door. It was locked. He backed off several paces, hunched his right shoulder high against his head, and plunged into it. The door splintered and crashed inward. Followed by Red Martin, Speed dashed into the hallway and up the stairs. On the third floor he ran into a bewildered man throwing clothes into a trunk.

inscription: "Rooms for Rent."

"The roof!" Speed shouted. "Which way to the roof?"

"It ain't on fire yet, is it?" The man chattered affrightedly. "This house ain't on fire yet? I got most of my things packed now, and if it ain't on fire yet I can—"

Speed grabbed him by the throat and

slapped his face with his open palm.
"The roof!" he shouted again. "Which way to the roof? You gabbling idiot, tell me the way to the roof, or I'll tear your head off you." The man gurgled, point-

ed to a narrow doorway in the hall.

Speed tore through the opening, leaped up a narrow ladder-like flight of stairs, threw open the trap and scrambled out on the flat roof. He rushed to the edge of the roof and looked across. The little square window in the back wall of the theatre was almost on a level with him. Louise Clare was still standing there.

"Don't jump!" Speeds bellowed at the top of his lungs. "Louise! Do you hear me? Here! Across the street on the roof! Don't jump!"

The girl in the tiny window high up

waved her answer to him.

Speed threw off his overcoat and took one of the baseballs from his pocket.

He flipped out his jackhnife, opened it

above the growing flames heard and

and made two slashes in the tough, horsehide cover of the ball about an inch and a half long and a half inch apart. With a point of the knife blade he threaded an end of the stout twine, looted from the hardware store window below, under the half-inch strip of cover between the two slits and knotted it. Rapidly he uncoiled a considerable length of the twine so it would run free. With the ball in his hand, he rose and shouted to the

"Get back!" he roared, motioning to her. "Get back! One side! Look! The ball! See? Through the window; get

THE girl understood and withdrew. The small square aperture was empty. Speed stood erect on the roof, hitched up his breeches in a manner familiar to him when he was in a tough spot on the diamond, twitched his cap, and wound up. He uncoiled with the snap of a released steel spring and, the ball with the brown twine tied to it flashed across and struck the brick wall an inch to the right of the opening, struck and fell to the street below! Speed Gallagher had missed. He had missed, and for the first time in his career panic seized him. He fell to trembling.

"Oh, my God! What's the matter with me?" he prayed. "Good God! Red, I can't make it." He was frantically hauling in on the string. "You try it. Red!" he begged. "My arm's gone, something's the matter with my eye! I can't do it; you try it."

It was no job for Red Martin, and Red Martin knew it. He could peg to second with the next one, but to hit that tiny window across the street was a job for Speed Gallagher, who had wasted his boyhood pitching baseballs at a knothole in a fence. And there on that roof the habit of the diamond stood Red Martin in stead; the habit of the veteran catcher mothering a rattled pitcher through a critical situation. He crouched down, thumping his right fist into his left palm, as though the latter were a padded

"Come on, old-timer!" he barked, encouragingly. "This one's easy, kid. You know; the old eye. Steady, boy! You got all the stuff in the world today. Attaboy! Come on now, kid; do your stuff! Do your stuff!"

And under the effect of the familiar flow of encouraging chatter from his diamond mate, Speed Gallagher steadied as he had steadied many a time before in a bad spot; steadied and tightened; grew calm and deliberate and menacing as he drew the ball up over the edge of the roof.

Once more he stood erect, hitched up

his trousers and twitched his cap. Beside him Red Martin stood, squatting in the catcher's position, spanking his left palm with his right fist, chanting his slangy line of encouragement.

"Atta boy, old kid! You could shave

a guy with that fast one today and never leave a bruise. Right in the old spot, Speed! Come on! Do your stuff!"

And Speed Gallagher, himself once

And Speed Gallagher, himself once again, nerve-rackingly deliberate; as sure as a bit of perfect machinery, wound up and threw. The ball sped straight, true as a bullet from a marksman's gun, through the tiny window.

The girl's head appeared in the aperture once more.

"Pull!" Speed bellowed across to her.
"Pull on that string; there's a rope tied
to it. Tie the rope to one of them girders
in there. Pull!"

The girl began to draw on the string. Speed knelt and quickly knotted it to an

end of the manila rope.

The girl rapidly pulled the rope across

the intervening space, drew it through the window and secured it about a girder. Red Martin and Speed Gallagher braced themselves and drew it taut. Louise crawled out through the window and surrendered herself to the line, making swift work of crossing hand-over-hand. As she neared the roof on the opposite side and safety, the flames leaped suddenly high along the brick wall of the theatre. Speed groaned in an agony of apprehension, for leaping tongues of fire along the wall were licking dangerously near the rope.

"You hold it, Red," he said, and, releasing the line, lay flat on the roof, leaning over as far as he dared, reaching his arms toward the girl and shouting to her to hurry. He had one of her wrists in both of his hands when the rope burned through and parted.

As the girl's weight sagged full on him he felt himself being drawn over the roof, slipping helplessly toward the pavement below; felt himself being dragged to destruction, but he clung tight to the girl's wrist. Then, as he was pitching over the edge his ankles were encircled by hands that bit and held like Iron bands. As he hung face downward, clinging desperately to the dangling girl, he heard above him the grunted shout: "I got you, kid! Atta boy! Steady with it! Hang on. Help's comin'. Do your stuff, old kid!"

A moment later Speed felt other firm hands on his legs; heard other voices on the roof. Slowly, carefully, he was drawn back to safety. The blood was pumping hard in his head. As they drew him up over the edge of the roof consciousness deserted him, but the will to save the endangered girl remained operative. It took the efforts of two men to pry, his locked fingers loose from her wrist.

WHEN Speed came to he was lying on a bed in one of the rooms below. Louise Clare was sponging his forehead. He sat up grinning weakly.

"I must of passed out," he muttered, apologetically. "What a crazy thing to

Louise Clare was on her knees before him, holding his big right hand in hers. She was weeping happily. "Oh, Speed!" she cried. "I'm sorry I was mean to you. I didn't mean it. Speed. Honest! You just go right ahead and quit baseball and we'll do an act together, you and I."

Speed patted her shoulder and shook his head. "Not for mine!" he said, firmly. "Baseball's my stuff, 'nd that's what I got to do. "You come with me in the summer while I do my stuff, an' I'll go with you in the winter while you do your stuff, huh?"

"Oh, Speed!"

"Baseball's my stuff," Speed repeated, solmenly. He felt carefully of his right arm, flexing and straightening it experimentally. "Gosh! I thought for a minute up there on the roof the old wing had gone back on me. But I guess it's all right. Feels better today. Baseball's my stuff. Pretty good stuff at that."

He took Louise Clare's upturned face

in his big hands and leaned reverently forward to kiss her. Red Martin backed tiptoe into the hall.
"Do your stuff!" Red Martin whis-

pered to himself, grinning. "Atta boy, kid! Do your stuff!"

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