

# The Collision

by George Ade

Once in the dim dead Days beyond Recall, there lived a blue-eyed Gazook named Steve.

We refer to the Period preceding the Uplift, when the Candidate wearing the largest collar was the People's Choice for Alderman.

A Good Citizen wishing to open a Murder Parlor needed a couple of Black Bottles, a Barrel of Sawdust and a Pull at the City Hall.

When he opened up, he threw the Key in the River and arranged to have the Bodies taken out through the Alley so as not to impede Traffic in the Main Thoroughfares.

Twelve months every Year marked the Open Season for every Game from Pitch-and-Toss to Manslaughter.

Any one in search of Diversion could roll Kelly Pool at 10 Cents a Cue in the Morning, go to the Track in the Afternoon, take in a 20-round Scrap in the Evening and then Shoot at the Wheel a few times before backing into the Flax.

The Police were instructed to make sure that all Push-Cart Peddlers were properly Licensed.

Steve roamed the Wide-Open Town and spread his Bets both ways from the Jack.

When he cut the String and began to back his Judgment he knew no Limit except the Milky Way. Any time he rolled them, you could hear considerable Rumble.

All the Bookies, Barkeepers, Bruisers, and the Boys sitting on the Moonlight Rattlers knew him by his First Name and had him tagged as a Producer and a Helva Nice Fellow.

Steve heard vague Rumors that certain Stiffs who hurried home before Midnight and wore White Mufflers, were trying to put the Town on the Fritz and Can all the Live Ones, but he did not dream that a Mug who went around in Goloshes and drank Root Beer could put anything across with the Main Swivel over at the Hall.

O, the Rude Awakening!

One day he was in a Pool Room working on the Form Sheet with about 150 other Students and getting ready to back Sazerack off the Boards in the Third at Guttenberg, when some Blue Wagons backed up and Steve told the Desk Sergeant, a few Minutes later, that his Name was Andrew Jackson.

Next Day he had a Wire from a Trainer but when he went to the old familiar Joint, the Plain Clothes Men gave him the Sign to Beat it and he turned away, throbbing with Indignation.

The down-town Books were being raided but the Angoras kept on galloping at the Track, so he rode out on the Train every day in order to preserve his Rights as a free-born American.

One Day just as he was Peeling from his Roll in front of the Kentucky Club, in order to grab Gertie Glue at 8 to 5, Lightning struck the Paddock and laid out the entire Works.

When the Touts and the Sheet-Writers and the Sure-Thingers came to and began to ask Questions, it was discovered that the Yap Legislature had killed the Racing Game and ordered all the Regulars to go to Work.

Steve went back to Town in a dazed Condition to hunt up the Gang and find out what could be done to put out the Fire.

When he arrived at the Hang-Out there was a Flag at Half-Mast. The Roost had been nailed up for keeping open after Eleven o'Clock!

A few Evenings after that he sauntered up to a large Frame Building to look at a couple of Boys who had promised to make 135 Ringside.

A Cannon was planted at the Main Chute and the Street was filled with Department Store Employees disguised as Soldiers.

Nothing doing.

The Governor had called out the Militia in order to prevent a Blot being put upon the Fair Name of the Commonwealth.

With the Selling-Platers turned out to Pasture, the Brace-Box and the Pinch Wheel lying in the Basement at Central Station, the Pugs going back to the Foundry and all the Street Lamps being taken in at Midnight, no wonder Steve was hard pushed to find Innocent Amusement.

He started to hang around a Broker's Office but it was no Fun to bet on a Turn-Up when you couldn't watch the Shuffle. Besides, the Game was Cold and was being fiercely denounced by the Press.

For a Time he kept warm in a Bowling Alley. Drive a Man into a Corner and goad him to Desperation and he will go so far as to Bowl, provided that he lives in a German Neighborhood.

One Evening he went down to see the Walhallas go against the Schwabens, but the Place was Dark.

The Authorities had interfered.

It seemed that the Manufacture of Bowling Balls involved the Destruction of the Hardwood Forests, while the Game itself overtaxed certain Important Muscles ending with "alis," at the same time encouraging Profanity and the use of 5-cent Cigars.

Steve had one Stand-By left to him. He could prop himself up on the Bleachers with a bag of lubricated Pop-Corn between his Knees and hurl insulting Remarks at Honus Wagner, Joe Tinker and Ty Cobb.

When he crawled up in the 50-cent Seats he found the same old Bunch that used to answer Roll Call at the Pool Room, the Sharkey Club, and the Betting Ring.

The Law had made them Decent Citizens, but it hadn't made them any easier to look at.

Steve longed for the Ponies and the good old Prelims between the Trial Horses, with Blood dripping from the Ropes, but when he picked up the Pink Sporting Page in the Morning, all he could find was that the Sacred Heart Academy has wrested the Basket-Ball Trophy away from the West Division High School.

Base Ball is only Near-Sport to one who has whanged the Wise Ikes that mark up the Odds. Steve went to it because there was nothing else on the Cards.

One Day he found every entrance to the Park guarded by a Blue Burly and the Crowds being turned away.

The Health Department had put in a Knock on the Game, on the Ground that the Ball, after being handled by various Players and passed from one to the other, carried with it dangerous Microbes.

The Officials insisted that, after every Play, the Ball should be treated with an Antiseptic or else that each Player should have an Individual Ball and allow no one else to touch it.

The Society for the Protection of the Young had put up a Howl because the Game diverted the Attention of Urchins from their Work in the Public Schools and tended to encourage Mendacity among Office Boys.

The Concatenated Order of High-Brows had represented to the proper Authorities that, as a result of widespread Interest in the demoralizing Pastime, ordinary Conversation on the tail-end of a Trolley Car was becoming unintelligible to University Graduates, and the Reports in the Daily Press had passed beyond the Ken of a mere Student of the English Language.

The Medical Society certified that eight out of ten Men had shattered their Nervous Systems, split their Vocal Cords and developed Moral Astigmatism, all because of the Paroxysms resulting from Partisan Fervor. Either build an Asylum in every Block or else liberate the present Inmates of all the Nut-Colleges. It was not fair to keep the Quiet Ones locked up while the raving Bugs were admitted to the Grand Stand every Afternoon.

Under the Circumstances, a purely Paternal Administration could do only One Thing. It put Base Ball out of Business.

On the very next Afternoon the unquenchable demand for Sport asserted itself.

Steve went into the Back Yard with his eldest Son and looked about cautiously.

"Is the Look-Out stationed on the Fence?" he asked.

"He is."

"Is the Garden Gate securely locked?"

"It is."

"Are the Mallets properly muffled?"

"They are."

"Then t'hell with the Law! We'll have a Game of Croquet."

MORAL: If it is in the Blood, the only Remedy is the substitution of Iced Tea.