

WASHINGTON GOSSIP

Taking a Census of the Water Wells



WASHINGTON.—Prof. W. J. McGee of the department of agriculture has been at work upon a curious sort of census for some months. This census is not the counting of souls, but of the wells of water upon which souls are nourished. He has secured data concerning the wells of the country, and they are bearing on the national water supply and incidentally upon the ultimate food resources of the nation. This well enumeration has already reached 35,000, and covers the states and practically every country of the United States. Records are compiled, so far as possible, showing the depth of the well and the depth of the water and the variation of water level from year to year. The significant part of the showing is that the water level in the wells of the country is decreasing at the rate of a foot and a half for each decade. Some of the records go back for 20 years and some to the first settlement of the country.

The average reduction in level of the "ground water" is shown to have been 14 feet since its first settlement. This is regarded as a serious condi-

tion, because the food-producing possibility of the country depends eventually on the water supply.

One group of 10 states was taken in the rectangle inclosed by Minnesota, Ohio, Tennessee and Iowa. It was found that this was representative of the general condition. It was shown that the water level was gradually but steadily falling all over the country, so that the ultimate outlook, not next year, but in a few centuries, will be for a vanishing drinking supply not only on the farms, but in urban communities where the water supply is drawn from lakes and rivers.

Prof. McGee says that the supply could be increased by digging the wells deeper, but that this would be merely a palliative measure. The real remedy is in changing the system of farm cultivation so as to conserve the water supply.

He explains that when the country is in a state of nature all the rainfall and the melting snowfall sinks into the ground and the rivers run clear. With settlement and cultivation the ground is broken up so that it is washed into the streams and the rivers run muddy in the spring, and there are intervals of disastrous floods and bad drouths.

He says further that as land becomes more valuable the farmer is unconsciously applying the remedy by more intensive cultivation and managing his land so that it is not allowed to erode and wash away.

First Giant Wireless Towers Erected

THE first of three giant steel towers to be used by the bureau of yards and docks of the United States navy as wireless telegraph stations has been erected on a high hill overlooking the Potomac river at Arlington, Va. Two of the towers are 450 feet high, while the third is 600 feet high, the latter being the highest in the world built for use as a wireless telegraph station.



When the other two towers are erected the three will be capable of sending a wireless message a distance of 3,000 miles over the sea and almost that distance over land. Had they been completed and in working order a week ago direct communication could have been established between Arlington, Va., and any of the vessels within hundreds of miles of the ill-fated Titanic.

The 600-foot tower, when erected, will contain an elevator, and the steel work on the two smaller towers has been so arranged that elevators can be placed in them at any time. However, for a while at least, persons will ascend from the bottom to the top of the smaller towers by means of a stairway. The 600-foot tower rests on a base 150 feet square, while the two 450-foot towers rest on a base 120 feet square.

A power and engine house, transmitter and receiving buildings are be-

ing erected at Arlington. These, with the three huge towers, which, when erected, will be visible from any point within many miles of the nation's capital, will constitute the most powerful wireless station in the world.

When completed the station will be able to communicate over the seas with the Azores in the Atlantic, all West Indian ports and South American coast towns as far south as the mouth of the Amazon river. Aerial disturbances, which are greater over land than over sea, will, it is expected, make transmission over land more difficult, but it is said that after allowances for impediments in transmission over land wireless communication from this station will extend over half of North America.

The steel work on the towers has been completed for some time. The towers were shipped to Arlington from the shops here in sections and erected as fast as the different sections were completed.

Historic Ship Is Abandoned by Navy



THE historic old ship Santee, which recently sank at her dock at the Annapolis Naval Academy, has been abandoned by the naval authorities and will be sold to the highest bidder with the understanding that he remove her at his own expense. An inspection of the vessel shows that she is waterlogged and beyond repair for naval purposes. She rests on the muddy bottom of the Severn with the water about twelve feet above her water line and probably never will float again.

Naval officers have an affection for the old Santee, based on recollections of their student days at the academy. For many years she was used as a practice ship by the midshipmen, and when no longer able to navigate, was transformed into a prison ship for the

embryo admirals who transgressed the rules. In more recent years she was used as a garrison for marines and sailors on that station. A few days ago a large section of her bottom gave way and she sank slowly to the bed of the river.

The Santee is a wooden ship of the square-rigged type. She was built just before the civil war, but because of a mistake in her design she never was used for any important service. Tradition has it that the error was pointed out to the designer by his young son soon after the vessel was launched, and that the designer committed suicide by shooting himself on her deck. The mistake was that the port-holes were built directly opposite each other, thus affording an open line of fire to an opposing warship. The Santee was taken to Annapolis in 1865, when the Naval Academy was transferred there from Newport. Soon after that she was dismantled and roofed over. Huge anchors were cast fore and aft to steady her in position and, in fact, for years she practically rested on the soft mud at the Naval Academy dock.

Aeroplane Gun Fires from Both Ends

TESTS of another invention designed to make "war in the clouds" possible are being prepared by the United States. It consists of an aeroplane gun that discharges a projectile from each end. One of the projectiles is designed for destructive work and the other as a dummy, to neutralize the recoil. Commander Cleland Davis, U. S. N., is the inventor.

The practicability of the weapon has been partially demonstrated in tests at Fort Wright. Two light canvas wings, corresponding to those of an aeroplane, were rigged up close to the gun. Delicate springs and recoil discs were placed under the wings to record the vibration and concussion and recoil. The results indicated that its use on an aeroplane instead of at sea is practicable.

The two projectiles weigh about

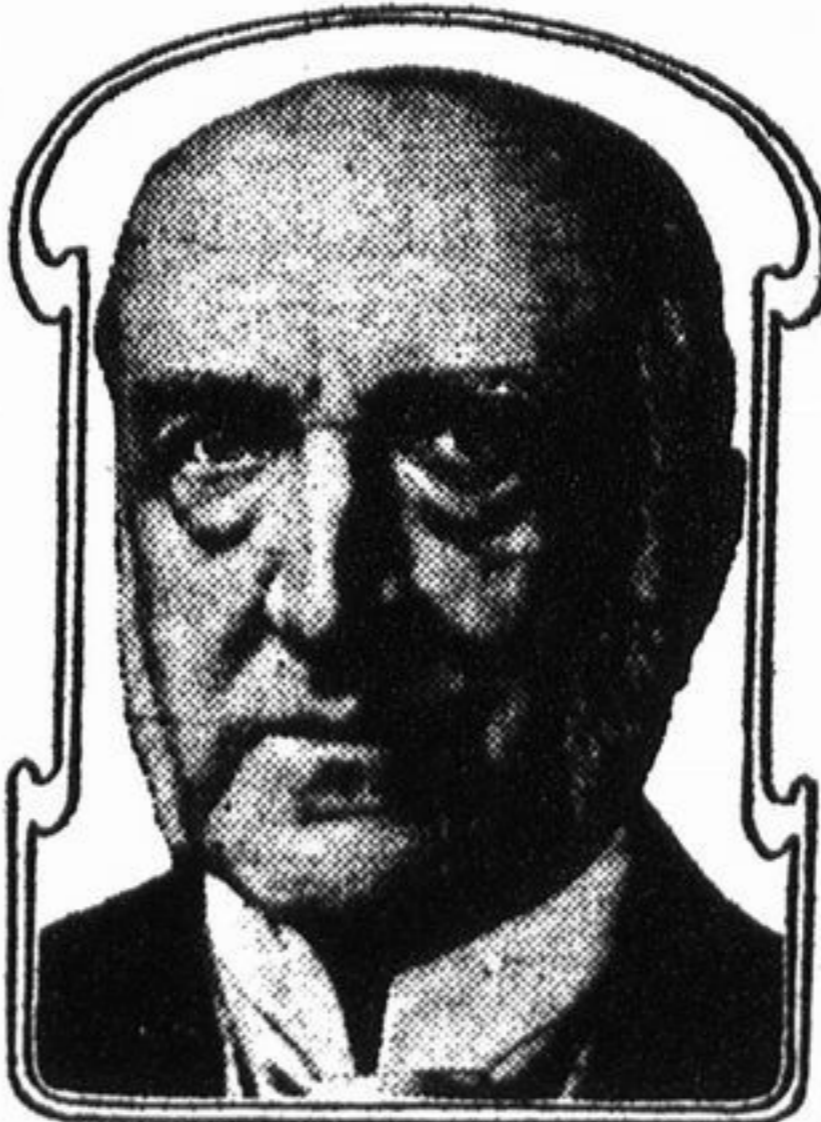
fifty pounds it is acknowledged that the sudden loss of weight might affect an aeroplane greatly. Now the inventor and Captain Washington I. Chambers, U. S. N., in charge of aviation in the navy, are studying this phase of the problem.

Final tests of the gun will be held soon at Indian Head under the supervision of the bureau of ordnance. It will be fired from a frail structure to represent an aeroplane and a dynamometer will register the effect of

IN THE LIMELIGHT

DEPEW, 78, STILL SPRIGHTLY

Chauncey M. Depew, seventy-eight years old, stepped into the reception room of his wide, high-ceilinged house at No. 27 West Fifty-fourth street, with the same spry, erect carriage which has distinguished him always. With his same old genial smile and hand clasp he demanded to know of a reporter if he were not as young looking as ever. He appeared to be.



"Well," said Mr. Depew, "I suppose you want to know the secret of youth? What? Most wealthy Americans don't know it? So, so. Well, they use their acquisitive faculties so much that they forget how to play. I always mixed work with play in physician-like quantities. It's the secret of health, wealth and pleasure. But I fear it has won me the reputation of being a frivolous person." Mr. Depew shook his head.

"A frivolous person," he repeated meditatively. Then his eyes twinkled.

"Yes," in answer to a question. He had read Joseph H. Choate's declaration that this is an age of defamation and crimination. But he (Mr. Depew) did not agree with it.

"This age isn't a circumstance to former ages," he said. "Why, back in the days when the republic first started if you were to have read the opposition papers you must have concluded that George Washington was everything from a hypocritical liar to an unmentionable bigot, not to mention the other unmentionable mentions made of him. Hamilton was secretary of the treasury, and saying he was a defaulter was a mild form of praise. If he had lived then Mr. Choate would probably have been speechless."

"However, I was reading over some letters written by a Federalist ancestor of mine to his son just after Jefferson's election. He wrote that Jefferson was 'an infidel and a Jacobin.' Further, he said that he was glad he was leaving a republic that was going to the dogs under Jefferson's administration. Whenever I'm blue I read those letters and grow optimistic."

WEYLER MAKES NO APOLOGIES



"I glory in the insults leveled at me by the Americans and the Cubans," declared Gen. Valeriano Weyler, he who was the grim Spanish commander of the Spaniards in Cuba—he who built the "trocha," drove within his lines the hordes of starving Cuban "reconcentrados," and was largely responsible, in the minds of many, for the Spanish-American war.

He makes the statement in the fifth volume of his book, "My Command in Cuba," which has just been published in Madrid. It is the last of the series of volumes, the four previous ones having followed each other at intervals during the past two years.

Weyler makes no apology for the acts that caused his name to be execrated here and in Cuba, except in so far as to state that he believes in justice tempered with severity and never treated his opponents with unmerited cruelty.

In the "epilogue," which sums up his work he confidently maintains that, if he had been in command of the Spanish forces in Cuba when the Americans under Gen. Shafter invaded that island, he would have driven the invaders into the sea and caused the war to go down in history as a Spanish, and not an American, triumph.

SHE'S MRS. JOHN ASTOR NOW

Although Ava, Willink Astor has proclaimed herself a resident of England, and has announced her intention of rearing her daughter Muriel abroad, no intimation has come as to when she will start back to London.

Society is waiting impatiently for this announcement, as from it a fairly definite answer may be gleaned to the one big question which is agitating the four hundred now:

Will Mrs. Ava Willink Astor try to resume her place in society here and become the recognized feminine head of the Astor family?

Public discussion of this phase of the complicated Astor family situation is considered out of the question during the present period of mourning, but private speculation upon it is rife in all circles of society.

The fact that Mrs. Astor, immediately upon her arrival here, took pains to identify herself to interviewers as Mrs. John Astor is taken by many to indicate that she aspires for reception here as THE Mrs. Astor. That her experience in society would give her a considerable advantage over the youthful Mrs. Madeline Force Astor is conceded. Doubts, however, exist at present as to whether either of the Mrs. Astors will ever be able to grasp the scepter held by Mrs. William Astor, the colonel's mother.

Had Colonel Astor lived, it is probable that his bride eventually would have been accepted in his set as a leader. But as the colonel died before she could be established in that position, and as before her marriage she starred on tennis courts, rather than in ball rooms, it is considered doubtful whether she can ever become the social celebrity that she surely would have become had her husband lived.



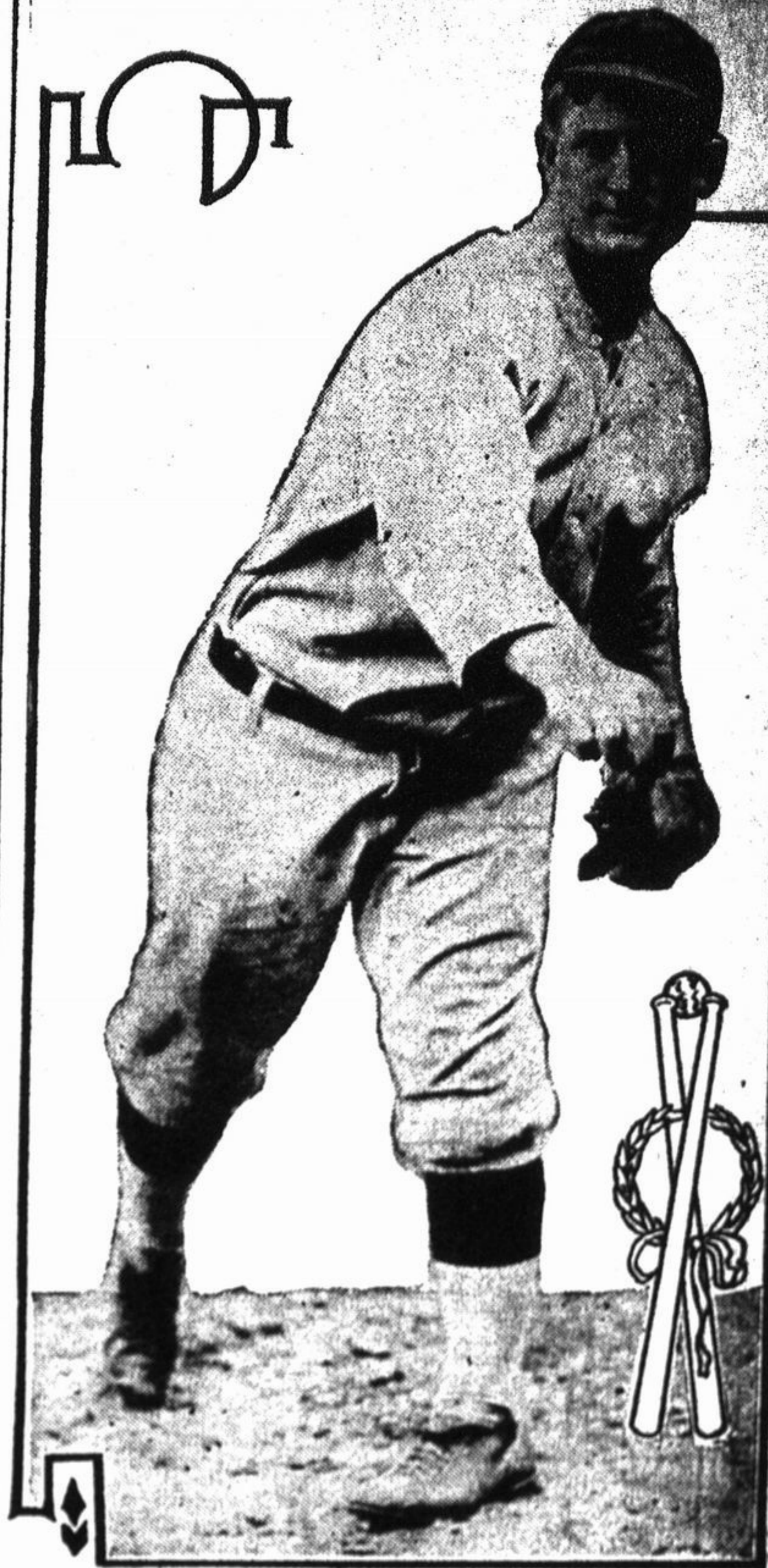
MAJ. RHOADES SUCCEEDS BUTT



Maj. Thomas L. Rhoads, who has succeeded the late Maj. Archibald W. Butt at the president's chief military aid, was chosen from the medical branch of the army service. He is 42 years old and unmarried, like all his predecessors. Serving as the president's aid is one of the most exacting occupations known, and for that reason a bachelor is invariably given the post.

Until recently Major Rhoads served on the medical staff of the Walter Reed General hospital, near Brightwood, a suburb of Washington city. His duties there naturally kept him from mingling much in the social life of the capital and restricted the range of his acquaintances. But that restriction has now been removed, and Major Rhoads is making friends rapidly. He has always been well liked in army circles. He is somewhat older in appearance than Major Butt, and has more gravity of manner. Major Rhoads has been discharging "Archie" Butt's duties since the latter left for Europe several months ago. Major Rhoads had been assigned as the president's physician, and when Major Butt left the president selected him to fill the aid's post temporarily. Major Rhoads' appointment was decided as soon as it became certain that Major Butt had perished in the wreck of the Titanic.

LONG, HARD HITS DROVE IN MANY RUNS



PAUL THOMPSON PHOTO

Jack Murray, Slugging Outfielder of Giants.

The hundreds of New York fans who saw Jack Murray go through the world's series without getting a hit and then wondered if McGraw would drop him from the team in 1912 may be surprised to know that this red-headed young Irishman is the White Hope of the Giants.

After looking over the bright galaxy of fence busters for the spring we find that the name of Jack Murray leads them all. He is the tonat of the team and the pride of McGraw. Never in his life has Red played such havoc with spring pitchers.

Several of the players were dis-

cussing Murray's failure to hit in the big series, and for the first time McGraw discussed that much mooted subject.

"While he didn't get a hit," said McGraw, "I was quite well satisfied with his work, for he hit them all hard and on the nose. He was unlucky in having his drives shoot straight at some fielder. I never had any idea of letting him go. In criticizing Murray for his lack of hitting, the fans probably overlooked the fact that during the season he drove in many a winning run with his long smashes."

OVER 61 FEET OF PITCHERS

Smallest of St. Louis Twirlers is 5 Feet 11 inches, While Tallest is 6 Feet 4 in Height.

What do you think of a fellow standing 5 feet 11 inches being the baby of the pitching staff? That's the distinction that belongs to Geyer, of the St. Louis Nationals. He is one of ten twirlers and he is the smallest. That is in the matter of height. When it

got the impression that he's standing on a house-top.

Willis is next in line. His hair is six feet and three inches above the earth when he is in his stocking feet. Dale, another youngster, and Golden, the lad with all the speed, along with Steels, the lad who lacks control, are tied for third honors. They are entitled to membership in the six-foot-two club. Harmon, the iron man, and Slim Sallee, are just an inch shorter—not their combined height, for if the slim fellow was not afraid of bending and would allow Harmon to stand on his head, they would tower 12 feet and two inches above the earth. Woodburn is the six-footer of the aggregation. His companion in that class is Louis Loudermilk.

This staff of ten men has a total height of 61 feet and 8 inches. The average height of the twirlers is 6 feet and 2 inches.



Robert Harmon.

comes to slimmness he isn't in a class with Slim Sallee. The southpaw has them all beat when it comes to circumference.

It's doubtful whether there is a pitching staff in the country that compares with the Cardinals—in height. Of the ten men, nine stand six feet or better. Dale, a youngster, is the giant of the giants. He is 6 ft. 4 in. tall. When he goes on the high mound and begins to show his southpaw feet one at the bottom they

DIAMOND GOSSIP

Louisville has released Third Baseman Hooper unconditionally.

It is said that Hobe Ferris' days with the Millers are numbered.

Topeka critics say the weakness of this year's team is in the pitching.

Pitcher Tommy Griffith, released by St. Joseph, was signed by Sioux City.

The Dodgers think they will go well now that Wheat is back in the game. St. Paul has set aside Mondays and Fridays as Ladies' Day for their patrons.

Forrest Thomas shows signs of being something of a come back with St. Paul.

No, Boston will not send Otto Rose back to New Orleans unless John Mosty Ward is crazy.

Denver begins to entertain hope that it will get Buck O'Brien from the Boston Red Sox.

George Stinson is not the only pitcher who can throw a curve ball. The Chicago White Sox have a pitcher who can throw a curve ball.