

Opening day at the Newark Federal League Base Ball Park.

FAMOUS MAGNATES OF

A Series Devoted to the

Harry Sinclair, Oil Wizard,

Most Picturesque of the Wealthy Magnates Who are
Made Man, a Daring Speculator, but Thirty-Eight and
Most Aggressive Opponent

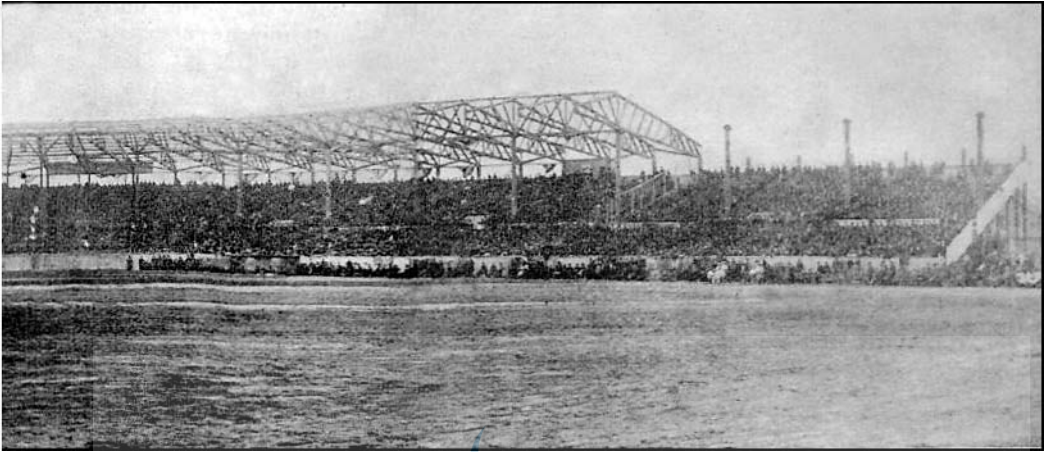
By F. C.

IN early March there joined the Federal League a man whose courage, daring and ability would well nigh assure the success of any enterprise. A born fighter, a cool but adventurous plunger, a gambler who has won and lost fortunes and never turned a hair, a man still young in the face of all his dizzying feats, whose blood yet warms to the spice of danger, a man in a million for a cause offering heavy risks and long profits, that is Harry Sinclair, owner of the Newark franchise.

"I don't know whether he will make money or whether he will lose," said an associate, "but before Harry Sinclair is through he will write baseball history." We are on the eve of big events. What these events may be or how the ultimate balance will turn has not yet been de-

cid. But one thing is sure; that when the Federal League, already strong in men of brains and wealth, added Sinclair to their ranks, they rounded out a staff of owners to command respect in any business circle and to cause more than a passing qualm in the slenderly financed ranks of organized baseball.

Amid a group of men whose individual wealth runs into the millions, Sinclair is unique. His is the most dazzling success, his the most picturesque character. There are in that company men of large fortune like Gwinner of Pittsburgh, courtly, polished gentlemen like Weeghman, solid business men like Robert Ward. Sinclair alone is the all-around sport, the typical plunger, the man who gambles with fortunes as the average man chips nickels in a poker game. Sen-



Note the unfinished roof and the enormous crowd—27,000 people.

THE FEDERAL LEAGUE

Leaders of the New Circuit

the Live Wire of the Feds

Backing the Federal League is Harry Sinclair—A Self-Many Times a Millionaire, the Newark Owner is the of Organized Baseball

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sational in all his dealings, fearless to the point of recklessness, devoted to his friends, generous, lavish, but in all his daring speculations shrewd to a degree, is this youngest member of that group of men who are carving out the fortunes of the Federal League.

The career of Harry Sinclair reads like a romance. It recalls visions of the old marauding days when the Spanish main was dotted with hostile barks and bold adventurers staked their lives for gain. He is as out of place in a prosaic matter of fact world as a cavalier of the sixteenth century would be in a New England village. The mighty shadows of Carnegie and Rockefeller have been cited as transient prodigies of an era in the development of the nation, recent but already passed. Their colossal for-

tunes, so it is said, were the product of two huge industries of enormous resources. But Sinclair's career is a revelation of a new era. Whether he will ever scale the heights they reached is a question. But on the other hand when they were his age it is doubtful if either could count his wealth in more units of seven figures than can Sinclair.

The bulk of a wealthy man's fortune usually comes late in life. He like the rest of us, plodded along a lean road for weary years until he finally achieved the realization of his labors. But Sinclair is only thirty-eight. His entire fortune he made himself, almost all of it within the past eight years.

"My father was a druggist in Independence, Kansas," says Sinclair. "He had a good business and when he died I in-



Pat Powers, the man who interested Sinclair in the Federal League

herited a little property that I thought would last me as long as I lived. But I found that it didn't take me long to blow it in," and he laughed with carefree.

"Yes," he continued, "I found myself pretty well cleaned out when I was twenty-four, and I decided to go to work. After looking over all the vocations carefully, I concluded that traveling on the road offered the most change and variety. But after I had traveled for a year, I found I had rather less money than I had to start with. So I abandoned the job.

"I went into the oil business on a shoe string, buying leases and selling them. Later I was able with a little money to develop the leases and produce oil on my own account. The oil business is the same as any other business. They compare it to gold mining, but there is no comparison. In mining you get a claim; if it's a flivver you lose, if it's rich you

make a fortune. In oil there is some margin, but nowhere nearly so great. You know pretty well by the location of a lease in reference to other producing property what it is worth. Of course, some wells run better than you expected and some run worse. But there are uncertainties in any business, no more in oil than others."

In a matter of fact tone of voice, as if he were talking about the weather, Sinclair thus compressed into a few short sentences the main incidents of his career. But that career is entirely too interesting to be thus compressed.

If we will go back thirty-eight years we will find Harry the infant son of a prosperous druggist of Wheeling, West Virginia. Business was good in Wheeling, but, like

many others, the elder Sinclair was impressed with the prospects which lay on the other side of the Mississippi, and in 1883 moved to Independence, Kan. Here young Sinclair resided until he had inherited and lost the modest fortune which his father left him. Some recollections of his early life, interesting in that they throw light on his character, are given by a boyhood acquaintance.

"I was born in Germany," said this acquaintance, whose name we will not mention, "and when my parents moved to Kansas I was the typical German boy, I suppose rather green and awkward to my associates. I did not at first attend the same school as Harry, but the first time I ever saw him we were going with a crowd of boys down to the pastures on a sort of excursion. While jogging along I put my foot in a hole, stumbled suddenly and fell against Harry. He turned quickly, thinking I had hit him inten-

tionally, and struck me full on the point of the jaw. I went down flat on my back and my head swam, but I saw his face and thought that I should know him again.

"That was my first introduction to Harry Sinclair. I was about eight years old at the time, and he was a year and a half younger. I did not see him again for a year, when as my parents moved I began attending the same school he did. I was a new boy at school; my parents were poor, and of course the rest had to come around and make life miserable for me. There were half a dozen boys standing about me at recess, making remarks and generally picking on the stranger when Harry strolled around the corner. He didn't know me, but he saw there were quite a number against one, so he rushed into the group, knocked down two or three of the smaller boys, and eventually wound up in a furious tussel with the biggest boy in the crowd. The fight must have lasted for ten minutes and he nearly met his Waterloo, but finally by sticking to it he managed to give the other boy a thorough thrashing. Thereafter Harry seemed to take a liking to me and we were always friends."

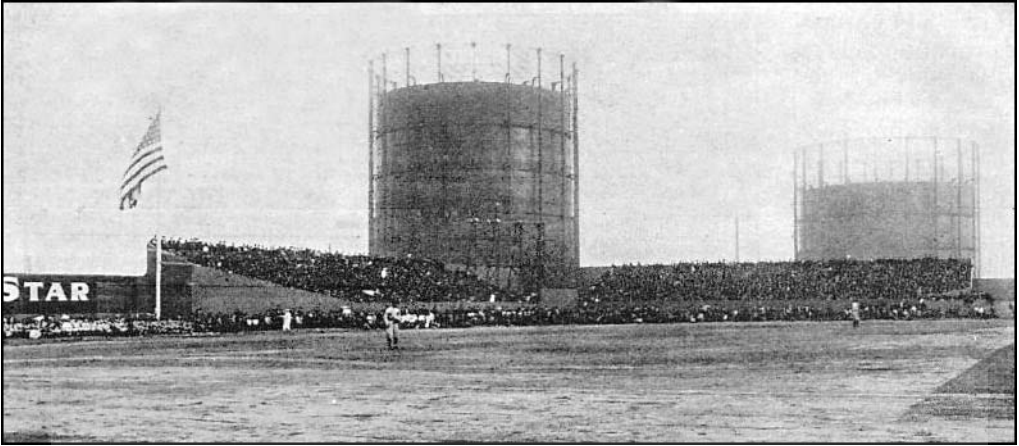
At that early age Sinclair displayed three traits which have always been char-



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acteristic. First, his impetuous, quick-tempered love of action. Second, his courage and instinctive love of a fight. And third, his sympathetic feeling for the under dog and unwavering loyalty to his friends.

Still another trait crept to the surface later. He was about nineteen when he inherited money from his father. In Sinclair's opinion, life without strenuous action was not worth the candle. So at that early age he might be found in the company of the leading business men of the town, playing poker for high



The bleacher section at Newark Federal League Park

stakes, losing or winning perhaps two or three hundred dollars in an evening with equal indifference to good or bad fortune.

Two or three years of his life he spent at the University of Kansas, where he sought a degree in pharmacy as an aid to continuing his father's business. At school he was chiefly noted for his interest in athletics, though he himself was not conspicuously good at the game, in music, and in feminine society, as Kansas is a co-ed institute. Which of the three proved most prominent he does not say, but he does admit that his regular course of study suffered considerably in consequence of all of them.

Having completed his education and inherited his father's money, young Sinclair proceeded to swell the patrimonial estate. The golden lure of margin buying was irresistible, and he had a peculiar passion for gambling in wheat. When Leiter made his famous corner of the wheat market, Sinclair, following the lead of the more famous plunger, cleaned up a neat little stake and then characteristically spent most of his earnings in treating his friends to a sightseeing trip.

For a time it seemed as though he might make a large fortune in stocks, as he succeeded in more than doubling the money left him by his father. But he listened to the seductive voice of the ticker once too often, the wheat market rebelliously turned on her former favorite, and both his inheritance and his subsequent winnings vanished together in an unsuccessful attempt to satisfy the

voracious demands for more margin.

After the storm clouds had cleared away, Sinclair found himself broke, undismayed, and twenty-four. Since fortune could go so easily, fortune must also come. So he set resolutely to work. A year on the road traveling for a drug company proved neither so congenial nor so profitable as he had imagined, and he forsook the hard routine for a more adventurous mode of making a livelihood. In those days the rural population yearned for the thrills of high finance, and chafed under the irksome restrictions which prevented them from plunging into the supposedly lucrative speculations of Wall Street. They could not support a Wall Street nor even a brokerage establishment, but they could support its vulgar diminutive, a "Bucket Shop." Sinclair, noting this sad predilection of his Kansas and Oklahoma brethren for quick action on their money, and himself responding to a similar love for the excitement of chance, started a bucket shop on his own account, then another and another. For a year and a half he pursued the lot of a pure adventurer on the ragged edge of finance, adding a few stray dollars to his slender hoard. But he awaited the magic name of oil to unlock the gates of a larger fortune.

It was Sinclair's opportunity that he lived in the vicinity of one of the most productive oil belts in the world. But it was his peculiar fitness to improve the opportunity which he shared in com-

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mon with many thousand others which distinguished him above the rest. His first venture into the oil business was some twelve years ago, and it is characteristically told by a leading representative of the Standard Oil Company. At that time the oil business in Oklahoma had taken a slump and this particular representative, who shall remain nameless, was sent to investigate the state of affairs. One evening a young man burst into the office where sat the Standard Oil representative, and driving abruptly to the heart of his proposition, said:

"I have two thousand dollars that I am willing to invest at big interest. I know where I can get a lease on some oil property for that amount. If you will take down your charts I will show you where the lease is and you can tell me what you think of it."

The Standard Oil man impressed as much by the abruptness as by the enthusiasm of the stranger, did as he suggested and found on examining his charts that the particular property spoken of joined some very productive territory.

"What do you think of it?" asked the stranger.

"If you don't take it, I will," replied the oil man.

"That's good enough for me," said Sinclair, for it was no other, and he bolted from the room.

To this modest beginning dates the rise of a new member in the oil world, a member whose wealth has gone on increasing as resistlessly as the geysers of oil which once released spout upward from their confining bonds of rock and sand. The firm of White and Sinclair, of which he is an equal partner, today control property worth more than twelve million dollars in the state of Oklahoma alone. In addition the largest bank in the state of Oklahoma is the property of Sinclair, while his holdings of oil property in Mexico, California and elsewhere are varied and immense. He recently sold in one deal seventy-two oil tanks full of petroleum, each tank with a capacity of fifty-five thousand barrels. He owns the largest oil farm in the world, a group of storage tanks with a

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capacity of more than twenty-five million barrels.

Business with Sinclair is always rushing. Last year, long after the beginning of the war, Sinclair, braving the dangers of ocean travel in these perilous times, crossed the Atlantic on the ill starred Lusitania to interview the largest competitor of the Standard Oil Company in the world, the so-called Dutch Shell Company of London, with oil territory in five continents. It had been the dream of Sinclair's life to own or control an independent pipe line to the coast. To this gigantic foreign corporation he went for aid in mapping out his plans. His success depended upon certain legislation then pending at Washington. Unfortunately this legislation went against him and the prospect fell through.

Undiscouraged Sinclair talked when I last saw him of organizing an independent refinery of his own. "I have sold most of my product to Standard Oil," he said, "but I have also sold to independent refineries. No one is going to get the best of Standard Oil. There are some of the smartest people in the world in that concern. But the price of petroleum has fallen to forty cents a barrel and we must refine ourselves in self-defense.

"The most productive territory in the world is in Mexico. We own extensive tracts there. The government, or rather lack of government, is a problem. But after all things aren't so difficult as they seem. Whoever is fighting in Mexico, whether Villa or Carranza, has an equal thirst for money. We get around the difficulty by paying a certain percent of our earnings to whoever happens to be the main squeeze in our territory at the time."

A number of years ago, Sinclair became interested in baseball in a minor way. There was a ball club at Independence and he was always a prince of boosters for his home town. As the club was hard up financially, as is the nature of minor league clubs, Sinclair was appealed to financially. "I was the club backer and sucker, principally the latter,"

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he said with a chuckle. "There was no money in it, no glory, and not much fun."

One characteristic act of the embryo magnate is well remembered in that territory. The club had suffered a number of successive reverses when Sinclair called the manager into conference. "Now," said he, "you lay off for a few days and let me run things." Sinclair himself accompanied the club to the town of one of their strongest competitors, interviewed the hostile owners before the game, bought outright several of their strongest players, and made a clean sweep of the series.

How Sinclair became interested in the Federal League is thus recounted by himself: "Pat Powers was an old friend of mine. When he was in organized baseball he tried to get me interested in investments. I didn't follow his suggestion at the time. But when Powers left organized ball it struck me that he had suffered a dirty deal, and when he tried to get me interested in the Federal League, I was ripe for action. I offered to back him up provided my name didn't appear in the transaction, but it leaked out."

To the man who has played successfully with the Mexican situation and bucked the Standard Oil Company, the opposition of organized baseball has no terrors. "I am satisfied with the outlook in the Federal League and so are my associates. All the complaints I have heard have come from organized baseball. Ban Johnson has been giving the Federal League some advice lately. He advised us to go out of business. It was kind of him. Perhaps he thinks we didn't appreciate his advice. Perhaps we didn't. At any rate we didn't take it. If I remember Mr. Johnson also gave some of his friends the same advice. Some of the faithful Minors, who had always supported him, came to him for help and then got it. He advised them to go out of business.

"They say we haven't faith in our own proposition, but we have faith enough to establish a park right here in New York on Manhattan Island. It will take a barrel of money, but we are going to see this thing through."

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Sinclair's earnestness recalls the statement recently made by R. B. Ward, over the Kauff incident. Said Ward: "We have respected contracts and played fair. We expect organized baseball to do the same. If they do not, but start raiding our players, we will retaliate and there is one of us, Mr. Sinclair, who, if he ever got started, would go the limit."

The passing of Phillips, Newark manager, who had won two pennants in the Federal League, was a surprise. Sinclair himself wished to make no comments on the case, but it is known that his chief objection to Phillips was his easy going way with the players. Sinclair is a man who demands fire and dash and enthusiasm in a ball club. While in the west he hired two Pullman coaches and took a party of friends to Kansas City to see his team play. Unfortunately the club lost both games of a double header to the great discomfiture of the owner. The recent losing streak of the Newark club was the final blow. And Sinclair decided he would give things a thorough shaking up. "I want a winner or nothing," he said.

President Gilmore of the Federal League thus recounts his first meeting with Sinclair. I was told by Pat Powers that he had interested a friend in our enterprise, and that he wished to see me. I arranged an interview, we talked things over, and Sinclair agreed to take a franchise. Later we met in Mr. Ward's office, and Sinclair made over a check for \$25,000 for the Kansas City franchise. Kansas City fought hard to keep the club, so we transferred Indianapolis instead.

Sinclair resides in the winter at Tulsa, Oklahoma, in the summer at Greenwich, Connecticut. A man of some five feet nine inches in height, he weighs not far from two hundred pounds. Eight years ago, after a courtship extending through more than ten years, he married Miss Siddie Farrell of Kansas. The two are devoted pals and take most of their business trips together.

To meet Mr. Sinclair one would not be impressed by the wealth or power of the

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man. Smooth shaven, well groomed, with a rather pleasing cast of countenance, there is nothing remarkable about him, if we except his piercing blue eyes. But though he talks with a soft voice and in an even tone, there is a hidden force under that smooth exterior, which flares up suddenly now and then in the flash of the eye and the decisiveness of the voice. For Sinclair is a man of quick temper and impetuous character. Oddly enough he shrinks from publicity. Those who claim the Federal League magnates are in baseball as an advertisement of their other businesses, had best interview Mr. Sinclair. As you talk, he is always likely to interrupt with, "I don't like this publicity stuff." "Can't you keep me out of this?" "What do the public care about me?" and the like.

But the public do care about him. They are interested in men who have made a success, especially men who have succeeded so marvelously and so young. And they will hear much more of the most picturesque character and livest wire in the Federal League, the man who, before he is done, is destined "to make baseball history."

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