

The team sat dressing the next morning in the lockers, each player thinking the same thing. He's a good kid; sure he's a good kid. But what will he be like as manager? Will he dish his brother; will he change roomies, or won't he? And what about me? Will I get traded or will he keep me on the team? That's what they were all thinking, all except the second baseman.

Bob was thinking: He's the manager of the Dodgers now; he's Spike Russell, the manager of the Dodgers, the kid that came up from the Nashville Volunteers. He's the manager, Spike is, the best guy who ever lived. Gosh, how I wish the Old Lady could have seen this! Wouldn't she be proud!

Then the door opened and MacManus entered with the new manager, the older man's arm in that of the shortstop. Bob looked at his brother, suddenly realizing that his shoulders had filled out. He's broader and stronger; that's why his ball is steaming in there, why he's getting those extra bases on his hits. There were new lines in his face, lines Bob had never seen there before, and a new seriousness there, too. Now MacManus was talking, talking slowly and calmly, not in the least in his usual vein.

"Of course all you men know there's been an unsatisfactory situation here for some time, and I . . . that is, we . . . that is, the management . . . think the club can go further under a new manager. We're making this change therefore, and we hope you'll back it up with everything you've got." He hesitated, looking at Spike in his monkey suit, standing by his side. "Guess that's about all." He stuck out a big paw. "Spike, good luck! Everyone upstairs is behind you." He turned and walked from the room.

Spike was alone with them. He stood for a minute glancing at the players grouped on the benches or squatting on the floor or leaning against the lockers in the rear; at Roy Tucker with his friendly, honest expression; at Fat Stuff

and McCaffrey; at Karl Case, a scowl on his dark, handsome face; at Klein, the black-haired rookie, a catcher's mask under one arm; at Razzle, standing negligently to one side; at Draper and Cassidy, the coaches; at Harry Street and Swanny; and last of all at his kid brother, the best guy who ever lived, the best pivot man in the leagues. Somehow the look on Bob's face gave him courage to go on, to begin, to speak. He raised his head and stuck out his chin.

"I've just been made manager, as you know, and I'll do the best I can; but any success will come—must come, from you guys. It's your show from now on. We all know what the situation here was, what it's been like on this club, and many of us were unhappy. You can't play good ball when you feel that way. We know what the trouble was, no need to go into that. From now on we've got to pull together. This crowd must turn into a real team. From now on no one is working for himself. We're all working for all of us. When you do that, a team has something solid.

"We'll play a little different type of baseball; maybe I've been brought up in a different kind, and of course I expect to play the system I know

best. We're not going to fight the umps or the other teams any more. Let's us win ballgames, not arguments. We aren't going to get into rhubarbs with every team in the league. In every one we've been in our club has become disorganized; we've all got mad and lost the game, like that blow-up at Boston the other day where Elmer forgot to cover first. I b'lieve players do better when they keep cool, when they don't lose their heads."

He paused, trying to think of his next point.

Why, he's older, he's grown older, thought Bob. Here I've been living with him, rooming with him all summer, and never noticed it until just now. He's ten years older than he was this time last year. He was growing older right under my eyes and I never realized it. How's that for being dumb?

"I'm manager now, and you won't maybe know how to act. To hell with all that! I'm a ballplayer just the same. I'm out there going through the motions, same as the rest of you. If any of you have anything to say, say it; if you have anything you want to get off your chest, let's thrash it out right here in the clubhouse."

Once again he paused, thinking hard and

trying to phrase his sentences so they wouldn't hurt.

"Now we all know some of us haven't been keeping in shape the way you should. Want you to realize one thing: when you do this, you're hurting all the other men on the club. It isn't just MacManus or the stockholders you hurt when you go out at night. It's us, all of us. That's what I mean when I say in the future we must be a team that pulls together, not an individual record team. I'm sick myself of this whispering stuff in corners.

"I don't hardly think we've been giving enough, either. Oh, sure, I know, you come out and give all you got on the field; I know that. But the point is, if you stay out all night or if you're in your room in the hotel playing gin-rummy 'til three-four in the morning, you just can't . . . you just haven't got it once you get onto the field. That's all going to stop. Anyone who feels he must get loose once in a while, come see me. O.K. I'll give you late permission."

Hang it, thought Bob, the guy's got it. He's really got it! He could see the effect of his brother's words on the team. They were easier now, less tense. Gosh, thought Bob, what a fellow he is, that Spike!

"Now I'm not going to make any radical changes or shake-up in this ballclub. It only needs to hustle. Baseball, as you all know, is played in fractions; fractions of a second, fractions of an inch. I realize I'm not telling you anything; you all know this, especially those of you who've been in the game lots longer'n I have. But seems to me we haven't been hustling; we've been thinking about this or that, about the cut in the meal allowance or how much we lost in that poker game last night or who's running today at Belmont. I want us all to be thinking about who's hitting for them in the seventh instead of who's running in the seventh at Jamaica. Keep on missing signals the way some of us have lately, and we'll all be back seeing the folks at home sooner than we expected.

"From now on I want hustle and more hustle. I want everyone on this club to run out every-thing to first, whether they think they can beat the throw or not. Yes, and that means all of you pitchers, too. Rats and Elmer and all the rest of you. You gotta presume the fielder's gonna boot that ball. Other day over in Cinci we dropped an important game that shoved us down into sixth place. Why? 'Cause a pitcher started toward first on a hard hit ground ball with his bat in his



hand. The shortstop muffed it and threw wild, and he'd been safe if he'd hustled. He didn't hustle and he was out, and we lost the winning run right there when Klein tripled. He was out, and that's out, too, on this club from now on. When you get a single, I expect you to take that turn at first and go on until you see you can't make it. If you can't, O.K., dig in those spikes and hustle back to the bag. But if the fielder so much as bobbles the ball, keep going and you'll be in there. And you won't get a bawling-out if a perfect throw nails you, either. I want you to take chances. You never reach second if you run to first and stop.

"Now there's certain things on this club that's annoyed us all, you and me and everybody. I'm gonna put a stop to 'em. One is morning practice. We been practicing mornings lately, and I think maybe it hurt more than it helped. Maybe we've all got a little stale. Nother thing, about the meal allowance. It was cut from six bucks to four bucks this summer, and for some of you big eaters I realize that's not enough. If the other teams in our league get six, we oughta get six, too. We won't have any more of this getting up to eat breakfast together at nine o'clock, either. You come down when you like,

jes' so long as it's a reasonable hour. I'm glad to say Mr. MacManus sees things this way, and has agreed to put the meal allowance back where it was."

Man, is he smart! Is that guy smart! They've all been beefing about that meal allowance for the last two months. That coming down to breakfast on the button hurts, too. It's those grudges against the management that burn up ballplayers, that are worse than a two-thousand-dollar cut in salary, thought Bob. Yessir, he's really smart, starting off like that. Looking over the room, he could watch them relax and settle back, see the relief on every face.

So, I'm not fired or traded; he's not shaking everyone up; he's not trying to show his authority right off; he's not sending me back to Montreal. O.K., let's us all go out for this kid, they seemed to be saying to themselves.

"I guess that's about all. For now. This isn't a second division club, and I know if you'll hustle for me we can go places . . . Oh, yes, one more thing. I realize how it upsets a man not to know when he's due to pitch. From now on we'll have a regular schedule. A man'll rest one day after pitching. He'll run and run hard the next day chasing flies. Then he'll throw a little the next

day and be ready to pitch if I want him either the fourth or the fifth day. Is that understood? Everyone will take their turn pitching batting practice, too. Raz . . . you'll go in today."

Razzle, leaning against a locker in the back of the room, straightened up and replied hastily. "Yeah, but you know I don't never aim to pitch batting practice, Spike."

It was the first time one of them had addressed the new manager, and the initial contact was a refusal, almost insubordination. As the star of the team's hurling staff, Razzle had never been forced to pitch batting practice by Ginger Crane. The others took their regular turn save the prima donna of the pitchers.

A bench creaked in the stillness. No one spoke, for everyone was watching to see what would happen. Raz stood motionless. He looked at the new manager. The new manager looked back with a steady hardness that Bob had never seen before on the face of his brother.

What'll he say? What'll he do now?

His voice was calm. "Razzle, from now on you'll take your turn out there with the rest. And you'll . . . pitch . . . batting practice . . . today."

Somewhere in the rear another bench creaked

as someone leaned forward to see what the big pitcher would do. He hesitated, astonished, dazed for a moment, his mouth open. Then he slapped his glove.

"O.K., Spike," he said.

A kind of murmur went round the crowded room. Say! Maybe this kid, this rookie manager, isn't going to be so soft after all.