

SPORTY-CUSS TO THE GLADIATORS



YE call me Captain, and ye do well to call him Captain who for long years has bucked every old line the county of Cook over, and who has never yet got it between the collar-buttons. If there be one among you who can say that ever on an end-run or a center play my actions did belie my words, let him stand forth and say it. If there be three in the eleven dare face me on the bloody field, let them buckle on their shin-guards and come at me. And yet I was not always thus a savage chief of still more savage men. My ancestors came from out near Aurora and settled among the corn-fields of the Calumet. My early life ran as quiet as the Chicago River, and when at noon I gathered the cows into the barn and tried to work the Dean, there was a friend who joined me in the past time. We roomed together and ate at the same beanery.

One evening after the chores were "did" and we were all seated beneath the mortgage which hung over the cottage, my brother, a cheerful skate, was telling of Beloit and Hyde Park, and how on a defiled ball ground our little band had withstood a whole host of professionals. I did not know the game then, but I said funny things, I know not why, and I grabbed the knees of my aforesaid brother and would have made a touch-down then and there had not my father, gently patting me with an elm club, bade me go to bed and think no more of savage warfare. The very next day the hirelings landed on our coast. I saw the face of our full-back trampled under foot, the bleeding body of our center born from the field in pieces. To-day I killed a man on the grid-iron, and when I lifted his nose-guard, behold! he was my friend. He knew me, said something, rolled over and expired. I told the umpire that he was my friend, and begged that I might carry his body away and burn it, as coal was scarce, but the umpire drew sternly back and said: "Let the carrion rot! There are no noble men but Armour's," and so, fellow students, must you and so must I die like dogs. Oh, Armour! Armour! Thou hast been a tender nurse to me. Ay! Thou hast given the poor gentle country boy who never knew a harsher note than the dinner horn, muscles of iron and a face of brass; taught him to gaze into the eyeballs of the Registrar even as a boy upon a laughing girl. Hark! Hear ye yon rooter roar? 'Tis three days since he has feasted his eyes on the slaughter. If ye are men, follow me! Strike down yon guard and center and do bloody work or all is lost — is lost.

W. M. L.