

The "X" Letters were penned by an anonymous author, in the *Porter's Spirit of the Times*, penned in hopes it would cause someone to write a book on the subject of the game. The letters covered the origins of the game and provided a guide for playing the game and operating a club. This was in lieu of a base ball guide, which soon after, would be provided by the *Beadles Game Guide*.

#1      Oct. 24, 1857

DEAR SPIRIT:- As the season for playing Ball, and other out-door sports has nearly passed away, and as you have fairly become the chronicle for Cricket and Base Ball, I take the liberty of writing to you, and to the Ball players through you, a few letters, which I hope will prove of some interest to your readers, as well as induce some prominent player to write or publish a book on the game.

Among the many books on the sports and pastimes of the people, Cricket is well represented, and the various Clubs have manuals and books giving sufficient knowledge to the person desirous of learning the game, and enabling him to acquire it without a teacher; although in England a tutor is considered necessary to impart a thorough knowledge of positions, &c. But no such work has made its appearance to meet the wants of the young Base Ball players; not that such a book would be considered useless, for we well know that every true lover of the game desires to be well acquainted with everything that relates to it; and there are but few persons to whom the book would not convey some ideas, or impress more strongly their past experience.

I intend, therefore, to write a few letters to you, DEAR SPIRIT, which may cause, as I have before said, some book to make its appearance.

It would occupy much time, and perhaps uselessly, to go into any research on the origin of the game.

My letters will, undoubtedly, call forth some criticism from the many good players that reside among us, and there may be many faults; but I shall state that which has come under my own observation, as also some of my friends, during the last four years of the Ball-playing mania. Indeed, I hope that such effect will be produced, as many original and novel ideas may be started, which will at some future time help to control the game, and improve the laws as well as the players.

We find that Cricket was played as early as, and perhaps before the sixteenth century-- although many improvements and alterations have since been made in the game. Base Ball cannot date back so far as that; but the game has, no doubt, been played in this country for at least one century. Could we only invoke the spirit of some departed veteran in the game, how many items of interest might we be able to place before the reader.

New England, we believe, has always been the play-ground for our favorite game; and the boys of the various villages still play by the same rules as their fathers did before them. We also find that many games are played, different but little from the well-known game of Base.

I shall touch slightly on one or two of them in some of my letters. Though I am a resident of the State of New York, I hope that I do her no wrong by thinking that the New England States were, and are, the ball grounds of this country, and that many of our present players were originally from those States.

The game of Base, as played there, was as follows: The two best players generally were the leaders. They would take the bat, "hand over hand," as the present time, "whole hand or none." After the sides were chosen, the bases would be placed so as to form a square, each base about twenty yards from the other. The striker would stand between the first and fourth base, equi-distant from each. The catcher was always expected to take the ball without a bound, and it was always thrown by the player who would stand between the second and third bases. A good catcher would frequently take the ball before the bat could strike it. A hand was out if a man running the bases should be struck with the ball which was thrown at him while running. He was allowed either a pace or jump to the base which he was striving to reach; or if a ball was caught either flying or on first bound. There was no rule to govern the striker as to the direction he should knock the ball, and of course no such thing as foul balls. The whole side had to be put out, and if the last man could strike a ball sufficient distance to make all the bases, he could take in one of the men who had been put out. The ball was not quite the same as the one in present use, and varied very much in size and weight, it was also softer and more springy.

The bats were square, flat, or round-- some preferring a flat bat, and striking with it so that the edge, or small side, would come in contact with the ball. Another arrangement of bases is, to have the first about two yards from the striker (on his right), the second about fifty down the field, and the third, or home, about five.

Having briefly touched on the game, as played in days gone by, I will turn my attention in my next more to the present, and especially to New York city and vicinity.

Yours respectfully, X.

#2 Oct. 31, 1857

#### THE BASE BALL CLUBS.

DEAR SPIRIT:-- In my last letter to you, I promised that my remarks in other letters would have particular reference to the most prominent clubs, and ball-playing as at present practiced.

I will commence by reviewing the history of several of the A 1 clubs, beginning with the Knickerbocker, as the first formed of the existing organizations. The Knickerbocker was organized in 1842. They numbered about thirty-five members, their limit was and now is, forty. But few of the first members now belong to the club; for notwithstanding a ball-player's love for the game, changed will and must take place, that separate companions in pleasure, as well as in the more serious duties of life.

For some years there was no other club for them to contend with; for sports of this nature were not cherished as they are at the present time; and other games, such as cricket, were almost abandoned by every one, excepting a few, whose attachment to such sports seemed innate with them. The Knickerbockers were therefore obliged to play among themselves, getting up games between the married and single; and it was not until the Gotham was formed that they could compare their playing with another club. They have played the game for fifteen years, and are in reality the parent club, for whom the others should feel a certain regard, on account of the difficulties they have encountered and overcome, such as a new association has to contend with, unless assisted by other players. The Knickerbocker now has about as many members as they are allowed.

They turn out a very strong nine, of which some mention may well be made. Their catcher, Mr. De Bost, has fulfilled that position with as much ability as any player ever did, and has never been excelled as a powerful batsman, but is frequently caught out, as the ball is raised sufficiently high for the fielders to catch. He plays a strong game, and in a match is the life of the club. Notwithstanding the number of good players in and around New York city, he still maintains his reputation. Mr. Stevens, who is their regular pitcher, has not played as well this season as last. Their first base man is fully equal to the average, but the club lost the man for that position when Mr. Wadsworth left them. Their second and third bases are well covered, and the fielders are lively enough, but do not practice as much as they should. Dr. Adams as short stop is excellent.

The great trouble with the nine is, that each one does not confine himself to that place that he occupies during a match; perhaps for this reason many are inclined to think that, with two or three exceptions, the second nine would be almost as strong as the first. When the club was first organized, they played by the rules that, until this season, all the clubs played by. The recent Convention which was held last February (and of which I will write hereafter) was called by this club, who thought that there was room for improvement in the rules, and earnestly desired to see the game partake of as much of science as possible. Whether their efforts were successful or not, the ball-playing community will decide. Again I will say, that a certain amount of honor belongs to the Knicks, and I believe it is accorded to them by most of the clubs. They have rendered themselves too exclusive by passing a resolution not to

play any other club than those that practice on their grounds. Such seems to be the opinion of most players; and the Public hope that another year will see them prepared to play with any club that desires such honor. They have always been noted for gentlemanly conduct, and their reputation as gentlemen fully equals that obtained as players. During practice, all balls from the bat must be caught on the fly, or it does not put the striker out; this rule is a good one, and should be followed by all—it will give more confidence to the fielder, and on poor ground the ball will bound in any direction than the right one. In writing of other clubs, I do not intended (sic) to write of them in the order that they stand as players, or to give one a position that I would not another; but believing that they all desire to be the first club, as players, shall of course leave it to the community to decide which is the best.

Yours, respectfully,

X.

#3 Nov. 7, 1857

### BASE BALL SKETCHES

DEAR SPIRIT:-- As there are several clubs that rank as first-class in this city, it is fair to presume that some notice of each will be interesting to the reader.

The Gotham was formed in 1853. They were most of them new hands at the game, but continual practice has improved them very much. They, last year, stood at the highest point as players; but, this season, their good fortune has partly forsaken them. They have played several matches lately with varied success. Their first defeat was from the Atlantic, of Brooklyn.

Many ball players who were present at this match were confident that the Gothams had a pretty sure thing of it, with a well-balanced nine, all fine, energetic men, and with their experience, it seemed impossible that they should be beaten.

Even at the sixth innings, some of their friends were satisfied that they had not commenced to play, and that the next three innings would show a marked improvement, and turn the game in their favor. The return match, which was played last Friday, and which was won by the Gothams, will convince the other clubs that they still are able to cope with the best of them. Much credit belongs to the short stop for his excellent playing. The batting was not heavy, with the exception of several ground balls, which were struck during the latter portion of the game. It will be sometime before they can again establish that prestige which once was with them. Their best men are: Messrs. Vail, Van Cott, Cudlipp, Johnson, McCorker, Wadsworth, Sheriden, Turner, and Commerford. Mr. Vail, one of the oldest players in this city, and one of the original members, has had great experience; he has filled the position of catcher since Mr. Burns left (the club miss this player very much). He is a strong bat, and plays with good judgment.

Mr. Van Cott stands very high as pitcher, combining speed with an even ball. Mr. Wadsworth formerly belonged to the Knickerbocker, and until the last year or so played in all their matches, but left them through some misunderstanding. It is claimed by his friends that he is the best first base man in any club, perfectly fearless—he will stop any ball that may come within reach—is a good player in any position, as his fielding last Friday will show. McCosker and Johnson are both fine catchers, and remarkably strong batsmen; and of the others it may be said, that if not powerful batters, they are what is termed sure ones, and good catchers. This club was the first to lead the Knickerbocker, but was beaten by them the first one or two games that they played. The Red House, Harlem, witnessed their first victory. Among the original members were, Messrs. Vail, Winslow, and Davis, old players; although Vail is the only one remaining, the efforts of the others to raise the club to its present high position will be remembered. The Gotham formerly played on the grounds of the Red House, and would probably have played there to this day, had there not some difficulty sprung up with the proprietor or lessee. They play at Hoboken, on grounds but slightly inferior to their old locality. Another year will see them at work again, when they intend regaining all their former laurels.

Among the many clubs that have been organized in the last few years, none stand higher than the *Eagle*, and, we hope, will always continue to do so. Shortly after their formation, they did not hesitate to play the first clubs; and if they were defeated, they exhibited such an earnestness to improve, together with physical ability, that their friends were sanguine of their ultimate success. The year 1854 was their first as a ball club. Their rapid improvement since then must certainly have justified the highest expectations of those interested in the welfare of the club. Their first nine comprises several of the finest players in the State. Mr. Gelston, the catcher, is certainly as effective as any man that ever played the game, and as a batsman, is quite sure. His catching, throwing to the bases, and his play throughout, will excite the admiration of all; any ball within his reach is always held. (Mr. Gelston has recently taken up cricket, and is acknowledged by cricketers to be a splendid fielder, while he is improving in the use of the bat, and in the minutiae of the game.) The bases are covered, especially the third, by Mr. Place; and it is no easy matter to run from the second to third, with a good man as catcher, and Mr. P. on the third. The rest of the nine are fine players. Mr. Bixby is a steady pitcher, although no great speed is obtained on the ball. Still, many think that a ball that will curve as it approaches the striker is much more difficult to bat than one that takes a straight course. Several excellent players have lately joined the *Eagle*, and they are able to turn out a strong second nine. Why do not the second nines of the various clubs play together? It would prove the strength of each club more fully than one nine of the best players do now—as we would have a sample of all the best players. In my next I will write of two more of the principal clubs, and endeavor to do justice to all.

Yours,

X.

#4: Nov. 14, 1857

#### BASE BALL SKETCHES.

DEAR SPIRIT:-- I promised, in my last letter to you, that I would write of two more of the clubs in New York; but if I confine my remarks to only two of the clubs in each letter, I may be lengthening my sketches beyond the patience of your readers, as well as occupy more space than you may be willing to give for such a purpose, and that may be more profitable to the ball-players. Fearing that this may be the case, I will endeavor to be brief, and, at the same time, cover as much ground as possible.

Another club of equal importance, as players of our noble game, is the Empire. This club also organized in 1854. They have kept almost "side and side" with the Eagle; and another year may find them the first in New York; for they possess every requisite that can make players, and with the practice that they have, can hardly fail of producing as strong a nine as any. Among them are some excellent players. Mr. Goff, who has filled the position of catcher, lately, is one; he throws a good distance ball. Mr. Thorn, as pitcher, has improved in the last year or so, very much; and is thought by some to be the swiftest pitcher in any club. The great trouble with a swift pitcher is, to deliver the ball true, so that the catcher can tell what direction the ball will probably take. Mr. Thorn has more control of the ball than formerly; he keeps a strict look-out on the game, particularly on players running the bases. Mr. Leavy, the first-base man, is a fine, safe player, covering his base well, and is a good bat; he has been rather unfortunate this year, injuring a finger, and other minor accidents, that might frighten some timid persons from playing. The ball public are glad to see him able to play as usual. The other positions in the field are well filled. The Empire Club have played several matches this season, and, I believe, are about even. They also have a fair second nine, that would trouble many of the new clubs to beat.

Other clubs in this city give every token of future success; among them are the Harlem, St. Nicholas, Baltic, and Union, of Morrisania.

The St. Nicholas is made up principally of gentlemen from one of the gymnasiums; and with one season's practice, they already give much promise of a bright future: they have muscle and endurance enough, and that combined with agility, and a quick eye to judge distance, &c., are the great elements of a player. They play at Hoboken, on one of the numerous grounds of that locality. No regular matches have been played by them; but several games that they have played with some members of the Gotham (not the best), also between the light and heavy weights, is argument enough to show what they intend doing the next season.

I have called the Union, of Morrisania, a New York club, because they are regarded as such by the Long Island clubs. They also play a good game. Mr. Pinckney, of this club, is one of the best players. It will be remembered that he played in the match of the Gotham and Knickerbocker, at the Red House, before the Convention made the rule prohibiting all persons playing in a match game who belonged to two clubs. (This rule I will touch on hereafter, in noting the effects of the Convention in another letter.) Mr. Booth is also a fine player, and a safe one; generally a strong bat. The ball players think that this club are a little indifferent to the game, compared to the rest of the clubs. They play better than the average of players; and there is no reason why they should not try the best of them. The Baltic Club follow the

game with as much spirit as any. They have played quite a number of match games since their formation; and if they were unfortunate at first, they have not lost heart, but are prepared to play with as much vigor as ever. They have taken their defeats with a proper spirit, and while regretting the result, they are cheerful, and treat the winning club with as much kind feeling as they would have done had they been the winners.

While writing of New York clubs, I must not omit some mention of the junior organizations. They are as numerous as the old ones, and there is as much ambition to excel among them. One of the best, if not the best, is the Young America, of Harlem. Their game would be no discredit to several of the senior clubs. Their recent games with the Enterprise, of Brooklyn, show such to be the case; and although they were beaten, I am inclined to think that they rank the highest in this city. The nine are all excellent players. They have a fine pitcher, and should they be short of any of the selected players, have a large number to make up their list. The Excelsior, Ashland, and several other of the juniors, are all anticipating a glorious time next season. Some of the players would become eminent in most any grown club, and a few years will see them occupying positions in many.

I purpose to review the Base Ball Clubs on the other side of the East River in my next.

Yours, respectfully,

X.

#5: Nov. 21, 1857

#### BASE BALL SKETCHES.

DEAR SPIRIT:-- Having written of most all of the clubs in this city, I will go at once to another ball-club region, Brooklyn, and make some mention of the numerous ones of that city.

Brooklyn boasts of many good players and lovers of the game; but the Atlantics stand unrivalled at the present time by any of them—and it is very probable that they will remain so for another season, although something may transpire before then, to either strengthen the other clubs, or weaken them.

The old Harmony Club, that was represented at the Convention last Winter, became defunct, or effected a consolidation with the Atlantic, under the latter name. This made them very strong, as the best players from both the former clubs were selected for their nine. They have played several match games this year, and have won all but one—the return match with the Gotham. Persons who were present, were satisfied that, with some exceptions, they did not play the game that they can, and that some difficulty existed in the Club. Mr. Tassie, in last Sunday's *Mercury*, states, that the trouble did not originate through any match that they have had, and that they are stronger than ever. Of their playing, but one opinion is held: they are as strong batters as any club in existence, and all seem perfectly fearless of a ball. Their former catcher, Mr. Bergen (who is no longer a member), is a fine player, and generally throws a true ball to the bases, which are admirably covered; the first, by Price—the second, by Holden (Mr. H. has also left), and the third by Boerum. I cannot speak too highly in praise of their playing, each one in his position; their throwing from base to base, and short stop to base, is as near perfection as any club has arrived at. Mr. Boerum will probably be their catcher, in future matches. The short stop, Pearce, is at home in his position. The pitcher is a good one; and of the field, all that is necessary to say is, that O'Brien, a brother of the pitcher, is everywhere, never trusting for a ball to bound, if at all possible to reach it on a fly, covering more ground than most fielders are capable of doing. Several of the Atlantics belong to cricket clubs; and some cricketers assert that the reason they play so strong a game, is entirely owing to the practice they have had on the cricket field.

This will not be believed by nine-tenths of the ball players, and need not be contradicted by any one person. The Club have arrived at its high condition in only one season, as they were not thought to be very formidable opponents last year. One reason of their great improvement is, the care and interest that the members take while playing; their games on practice days are played as particularly as their match games. They never wait for any bound balls, but if they cannot take them on a fly, would almost as soon lose them. They have striven to make the grounds at Bedford the rendezvous of the best players, both senior and junior clubs, and so far have succeeded pretty well, as the Enterprise (a junior) ranks about as high as the Atlantic among the junior associations.

While writing of the Brooklyn clubs, I would not omit the Putnam. This club was the first to organize on Long Island, and if they do not rank as high as one or two others, they have been very successful this year. In their nine are, or were (for Mr. Gessner, their second base man has left), four first-class players; and could the club have had the services of similar men, would rank second to none in the State.

They have a fine pitcher, Mr. Dakin, one who loses no time in the delivery of the ball; and it is comparatively easy to fulfill the duty of catcher while he is pitching, which Mr. Burr does to the satisfaction of the rest of the club. Messrs. Hoyt and Smith are good fielders. Mr. Smith has played the second base for them lately. McKinstry (who has recently joined the Atlantic) was their short stop, and is a careful as well as active player, and good bat. The gentlemanly conduct of this club has won for them many friends.

Another of the Brooklyn clubs is the Continental. Their games with the Atlantic show them to be good players. They have been strengthened by one or two fine players. Their nine is well made up. They have several fair pitchers in the club, and have other players on whom they can depend, should the nine be short on a match. Their catcher holds a ball very prettily, and reminds many of Burns, who formerly was catcher for the Gotham. Mr. Kelly, who pitches in some matches, delivers a ball very true, and loses but little time in doing so. There is a cricketer in the club, who bats fine balls; but they are often caught, as they are what is called skys. If another year notices as much improvement in the Brooklyn clubs, the New Yorkers must look well to their laurels, or the Brooklynites will be ahead.

Yours respectfully, X.

#6: Nov. 28, 1857

#### BASE BALL SKETCHES.

DEAR SPIRIT:-- As this letter will conclude the sketches of the clubs, it will be somewhat longer than the others. Still, I hope it may prove interesting to your readers.

The Eckford was organized late in the Fall of 1855, so could hardly have been much of a club before 1856. The members are principally New Yorkers, but few of them residing on Long Island; but in a match between Long Island and New York State, or Brooklyn and Hoboken, they will be recognized as a part of the Brooklyn forces. They have played several match games, and have won most of them. They are fine players, and as a club rank at least next to the best in Brooklyn. What they can do with New York ones has been pretty well shown. Among the best are: Messrs. Pigeon, Tostovan, Grum, Logan, and Brown. Pigeon is a thorough player in any position, but usually occupies that of pitcher; he pitches a true as well as swift ball, and is also a very good batsman. Tostovan, the catcher, is equally fine, and plays any of the bases well. Grum is on a par with any of the famous ones at short stop, and fills the catcher's position well, throwing a good ball. Logan, as third base, is excellent, and probably the best baseman in the club. In the field, Brown has especially distinguished himself. There are several promising players who have, or will, become members; and they are stronger than ever. Their grounds are at Greenpoint, on the Newtown turnpike. They play twice a week, but it is such a distance for New Yorkers to go, that they do not get a visit from them as often as they wish. They have about 36 members, and are in as good condition as any of the clubs; are known as good batsmen and fielders.

South Brooklyn is represented by but one club of any importance, and that one is the Excelsior; and if they are not well known as players, they have as good, if not better, reputation as gentlemen than any other similar organization. Their deportment during the late contests they have been engaged in, shows that they can bear defeat and victory with good feeling toward their opponents. They are very strong in numbers, being about fifty. Mr. Leggett, the catcher, is equal to almost any man in that position, and is a powerful bat. The nine are generally fine batsmen, but deficient in fielding and in throwing. Wells, as second base, is above the average of players in that important place; but should improve in batting. Cole, as first base, is a fine catch, and gives promise of future success as a player. Ethridge, their former pitcher, is a fine bat, and fleet runner, but very uncertain as catcher. They are all too careless on days of practice. Several fine players intend joining them next season. They owe the number of players they have to a consolidation of the Wayne and Excelsior, which was brought about by the game on practice days being made up as much of one club as the other (the Wayne played on the Excelsior grounds). This movement was effected last October—both clubs voted to adopt the Excelsior name, also the Wayne dress, with some slight modifications. The officers were equally divided. They have played two matches since then, and have given ample evidence that they possess the elements that will make players.

The Nassau Club are also determined to take a stand as a club. There are some clubs in Brooklyn that are rather hard to classify either as old or junior clubs; perhaps in a year or two they will be better known. As I have written of one or two of the New York Juniors, I must not omit the Brooklyn ones, who

deserve all that can be said of them for their attention to the game. At present the Enterprise is called the first. Their nine have beaten the only club that could compete with them once (I refer to the Star), and although the Star has played several matches, first and second nines, with success, the last victory will place the Enterprise a trifle higher. The best players are: Dayton, who is a pretty catcher, and throws the bases well; C. Smith, who covers the first, and also fills the post of catcher with credit; Weddle pitches a swift ball, but a little too high for a striker, so it causes delay to the game; Webber, second base, is a better catcher than bat; and of all the short-stop players of the Juniors, Cornwell and Sid. Smith probably are the best. Last Friday there was to have been a return match between the Enterprise and the Star, but owing to some disagreement of the players, the game was drawn.

I cannot disparage too much the disposition to quarrel that the junior clubs appear to have, and the ill-feeling that sometimes follows their matches. They should learn that there is nothing gained by such conduct. I do not desire to impute such to any particular club, but merely state, while writing of junior clubs, that this fault does exist with some of them, and ought to be corrected. Another fine club is the Star. The members play on the grounds of the Excelsior, South Brooklyn. They have won all but one of their match games since their organization, and in that one they were not able to bring the nine selected in the field, or the result of the game might have been materially altered. They have lost one fine player, who is in Philadelphia at present. Fairbanks, the pitcher, is very good, but loses time in delivering the ball; he bats well, and is a fine catcher. Tomes, and C. Whiting, are also good. Nash, a new catcher that has recently joined them, adds much to their forces. Some of the best players are not able to practice, as they have to attend rather strictly to business. Binner plays the second base well. One or two of their members have improved very much, this year; among them is Tracy, who formerly belonged to the second nine, but has played, as a substitute, in the first nine matches.

The effect of junior clubs will be shown at some future time. When I commenced my sketches, I did not intend to write of all the clubs that are, or have been organized, but merely a glance, to enable the reader to make a better acquaintance with the prominent clubs and players.

Yours, respectfully

X.

#7: Dec. 5, 1857

#### BASE BALL CORRESPONDENCE.

DEAR SPIRIT:-- The season that has at last closed, has been very propitious for all out-door sports and amusements, especially base ball. That this game is as firmly seated in this country as cricket is, I hope no one will deny; and the anticipations for future seasons that we all have, will insure its success. At the beginning of Spring, the ball clubs commenced playing rather listlessly, while cricket appeared to take the lead; this, however, did not last long, for, after several match games had been played, the old spirit again infused itself among the followers of our game, and they were alive to its pleasures and allurements. The number of clubs has nearly doubled, and the condition they are in enables us to judge how firmly all are attached to the game who have played it. While the clubs have increased, the players have improved and the game has reached the highest point that it is capable of under the present rules.

There remain some alterations and a few additional rules that will render the game almost perfect in the eyes of its admirers; and we hope that, should an effort be made for this purpose, the movers will not be overruled by timid players. But we are wandering from the intended object of this letter, which is, to give a few hints that may be of some benefit to those who intend forming a club, and perhaps be of slight service to those already formed.

In starting a club, it well becomes the originators to find out if there is sufficient material for such purpose, and if the persons who will be members are sufficiently interested to keep together and turn out to play on the days appointed for such exercise; if this is the case, you should call a meeting at some convenient house, and having enrolled a few names who will share expense, you can, first, adopt a name, any that may be deemed suitable; try and get one that will have something besides popularity to recommend it. We have in this State several Excelsiors, Metropolitans, Eagles, and Unions, although the first formed of each are the best entitled to the name. In framing your constitution and by-laws, do not have any regulation or rules on your books that your officers will not see enforced; it will be useless, and only lead to a laxity in the enforcement of the other rules, which are absolutely necessary to the existence of the club. Do not be too severe in your fines; no matter how much a man enjoys the game, if you have a fine for every little act that some few in the club may deem improper, you will find that they seriously object to paying them. Also, let the fines for absence on practice days be light; they are more easily collected and their being large will not have the effect of making members turn out to play. If a person loves the game, he will be on hand pretty often. Whatever rules are enacted, let them be such as will be obeyed willingly.

It would be well to select a committee to draw up the constitution and everything relating to the club, and they should consult with members of other clubs if practicable; also take the regulations of as many clubs as possible, and from them all, many useful rules would be kept sight of, that would otherwise be forgotten or overlooked. Your officers should be men of influence with the club, and good men, particularly the President, who should be present on all days of exercise and meetings, both regular and special. The same with the Vice-President, so that if first officer be absent through sickness, there would be the next in command on hand. In selecting new members, be sure that they are persons of good habit and character. A quarrelsome person is always in trouble, frequently with gentlemen who do not belong to the club, but who would join if they were not brought in contact with those with whom they would object to associate. Admitting such persons will do more to destroy the harmony of the club than any one thing that can be mentioned. Upon new men joining, you might omit the first quarterly dues, as they have the initiation fee, their uniform, and other expenses, which might deter persons from becoming members who would make good players and companions. The expense is generally light, the uniform being the principal item. The articles that compose it, such as shirt, belt, pantaloons, cap, and shoes can easily be purchased. The shirt, pantaloons, and cap should be of flannel (the pants and cap are sometimes made of cloth), not made to fit too snugly, as it will impede action, particularly running; they should be trimmed to suit the club (all alike). The best belt is such as worn by cricketers, although but seldom used by ball players, they preferring one of patent leather, with the name or initials of the club thereon. The shoes are about the same as cricket shoes, the spikes suited to the ground—if your ground is well covered with turf they will be more useful if they are of sufficient length to take hold. Buckskin is easier to the feet than canvas, as it stretches readily, and the bands of calfskin will keep it in place. Provide yourself with bats, balls, and bases—and get some member of the present well-known clubs to

aid you in instructing the members. If your club can afford it, you could obtain a man who can assist you in every particular; and although there are no professional players, there are some who would be glad to receive pay for service so agreeable.

Yours respectively,

X.

#8: Dec. 12, 1857

#### BASE BALL CORRESPONDENCE.

DEAR SPIRIT:-- I will continue my remarks on what course can be adopted by the new clubs. After the election of officers (and the club has fairly organized), the men should obey them in every thing that relates to the game and the welfare of the club—let the members endeavor to cultivate the feeling of fellowship with each other, avoid angry disputes, both on the field and at the meetings of the club. The officers should be attentive to the wants of the club—they should be out to play—encouragement is what is wanted to keep any society going. Let them, in appointing captains, be careful to exhibit no partiality; but let everyone be given a chance, in order that he may place himself in whatever position he pleases. Most all players desire to improve; but if the best places are occupied continually by the same parties, they find that their advancement in the game is very slow. I would advise both officers and man to let friendly feeling be as much an object as play.

#### GROUNDS.

In selecting a ground, you will have to be guided by many controlling circumstances. The great trouble with all sports in the open air is to obtain suitable ground. It should be level, the surface free from all irregularities, and covered with fine turf. It should be rolled after rain, particularly from pitchers' point to the catcher, and the line from base to base. In fact, it seems impossible to devote too much attention to it, adding largely to the pleasure of playing. The proper size is about seventy yards wide by one hundred and fifty long, although a smaller plot will answer. Let the home-base be about twenty-five yards from the head of the field, and let there be a very level piece of ground for the ball to strike on before reaching the catcher. You had better have logs of wood inserted in the ground, at the base points, leaving about half an inch in height exposed—they should be about five inches in diameter. In these you can drive iron staples, to which the bases should be strapped. There are several ways by which the grounds may be correctly measured, but I believe the best is this: Find home—measure down the field one hundred and twenty-seven feet, for the second base; fifteen yards from home in the same direction for pitcher's point—then take a small rope or string, one hundred and eighty feet long, fasten one end home, the other at the second base—take the line midway and extend each side for the first and third bases; this will give the exact measurement, as the string will form the sides of a square.

I can give no better advice relating to strangers being permitted on the grounds than is given in the "Manual of Cricket," and it is equally applicable to base-ball. "It is always a proper courtesy, and tends to the popularity of this noble exercise, to allow any respectable and quiet strangers to come on the ground to witness either play or practice; but it is always good policy, likewise, to have it understood by the visitors that it is a privilege, not a right."

The inviolable rule of keeping strangers in good order, so that they shall keep well out of the way of play, avoid positions in the field which may obstruct or divert the sight of the players, or interfere with the marker's full view of the game, will lead to the prevention of much trouble at times, and more particularly when a match is going on. The officers of the club, and others having authority, will, for these reasons, do well to keep this order courteously, but firmly enforced. To this we add, that should a member of another club be present at any time during practice days, it would be no more than polite that he should be invited to play, unless the sides are already very full. There are two or three clubs to

whom these words may prove a little unpalatable; but I believe that the majority of ball-players agree, that the success of the game depends much on the harmony which at present exists. I alluded, in my letter of Nov. 24, to the quarreling of the junior clubs. That such is the case, reference need only be made to the last number of your paper, which gives place to an account of a match which was played in Brooklyn, where one of the clubs withdrew from the field unwilling to play. Some member of the "Enterprise" calls "X" to account, because he gives some credit to another club. "[ ]" also uses not very kind and conciliatory language toward the "Star", such as no old club would use in speaking of another. Another very important item in his letter is, the "very large bets" that were made. Was it necessary to drag this in the newspapers, in order to let the public know that ball-playing begins to assume some of the worst features of sport? I think not. It is very hard, all acknowledge, to be beaten in a match; and especially so, if the referee does not give just decisions. It should only make us more careful in selecting a man for such office; and learn us that we are not invincible, and to make greater efforts to improve. Enough for the present.

Yours, respectfully,

X.

#9: Dec. 19, 1857

#### BASE BALL CORRESPONDENCE.

DEAR SPIRIT:-- I am aware that some of my letters will be of little interest to clubs already formed in this city; but as they are intended to supply the place of a book on Base ball, until some more competent person will write one, it is necessary, for the advancement of the game in country towns and villages, that everything relating to the game should be given. The other important items in the game are: Bases, Bats, and Balls. The bases should be made of the best canvas (heavy) as there will be much jumping on them with spiked shoes; it would be an advantage to have them made of double thickness. They should be filled with sawdust; it is lighter to carry to and from the field than sand. The straps should be securely fastened to the bags, so that they will not tear away; let them be of harness leather, about one and one quarter inches wide. The bases vary much in size—all the clubs having them made to suit themselves; as long as they cover one square foot of ground, when in the right place, they will come within the requirements of the rule. I think that the bags ought to be about fourteen by seventeen inches, the straps passing entirely around. The pitchers' point and home bases should be of iron in the form of a quoit, about eight or nine inches in diameter; have them cast with a spike running from the under side, which will keep the plate stationary. It is hardly worth the trouble for any member of the club to make the balls, as they can be purchased in this city in any quantity, and they will then be correct, both in weight and size. Some players (I believe most of them), are inclined to think the ball in present use is a trifle large, and that nine and three quarters to ten inches in circumference would be better. In matches, the ball that is most used is the smallest one allowed, ten inches; it is a better ball to catch, and has weight enough at present for a ball of that proportion. The rule governing the bats is, we think, explicit enough; while all are limited to a bat of suitable size in diameter, no objection is made to the weight. New players prefer short ones—those that present as much surface as allowed. They vary in length, from thirty-four to forty-four inches. Older players frequently adopt some favorite; they also make use of longer ones than the new hands; and there is every reason to suppose that if the ball is fairly struck with them, that it will be driven to a greater distance than by a shorter one. Many woods are used in the making: such as maple, white and pitch pine, hickory, ash, and mahogany; weight for the size required governs the selection of all of them; for a bat of medium weight, ash is preferable to all others. Many very handsome bats are made of mahogany, but they are liable to break.

In the choice of a bat, select one rather light than heavy, as you will frequently (in matches) to contend with very swift pitching, and a light one can always be wielded better; at the same time, it should be heavy enough to overcome the resistance of the ball. Practice with one bat makes the player surer than he will be if he changes continually. The position and method that players select in batting, is different with many players; some take the bat with the left hand on the handle, and slide the other from the large end down, as they strike; others grasp it nearly one-third of the distance from the small end, so that both hands appear near the middle of the bat; others, again, will take hold with both hands well down on the handle, and swing the bat with a natural and easy stroke, while great force is given to the hit. All have some reason for their style, either to make sure of the ball, or to drive it as far as possible. Some of the most powerful batsmen find it very hard to bat a ground ball, but raise it. This is very pretty to look at, and may do where the fielders are poor, and on practice days; but in a match where there are

three experienced fielders, it is a losing game. Ground balls are generally successful, unless they are weak, and run but a short distance. Batting will sometimes win a game, when the players are deficient in fielding.

The uniform shirt most in use is white flannel, trimmed with blue. The collar and cuff, in one or two instances, will be entirely of that color—a large collar is in the way, and a neat small one will not trouble you so much. Instead of having a regular cuff, make the trimming represent it. The sleeve should fit rather snugly—not so tight as to inconvenience the player, but so that it will allow any free movement of the arm. The cap is made somewhat on the jockey pattern; as light as can be made, with a white front—as a black one absorbs the rays of the sun, adding to the heat about the head, which, in summer, is the great drawback to the successful pursuit of the game. Blue, or gray flannel makes up well for pantaloons; but I would recommend that they be made of some cloth or woolen substance, so that men can wear them to their business, and not be compelled to change their entire dress when they arrive on the field for exercise.

Yours, respectfully,

X.

#10: Dec. 26, 1857

#### BASE BALL CORRESPONDENCE.

DEAR SPIRIT:-- I will now endeavor to describe the duties of each player when in the field. In match-games, nine men constitute a full side; they occupy the following positions: catcher, pitcher, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2d, and 3d base; shortstop, right, left, and middle-field. I will presume that the young club have selected their ground; that they have all the arrangements made for playing the game. On entering the field, if there be only three or four players present, let them cover the bases, and practice throwing from base to base, shortstop to base, and let them continue at it, until there is a sufficient number to make up a game. Throwing a true ball, as well as on distance, are both necessary to make a very fine player; the ball is much more easily held when thrown true, and there is not half so much danger in a novice hurting his hand in catching. If this practice becomes tedious, you may, if you have eight or ten men, play one, two, three, and so on, until they are all numbered; number one, two, and three form the inside. Number four pitches, number five catches—the rest can occupy whatever position by chance falls to them; the batsman must run on everything, tips and foul balls; the pitcher is allowed to baulk as much as he pleases; the players are out the same as in base; and as soon as any of the three lose a hand, four comes in; the next out, five takes his place. This game is very lively and interesting, but not so improving as throwing the bases; this cannot be too highly recommended. Again, if you are obliged to wait until more players arrive, you can improve your batting by each taking a number, as, one, two, three, and let one be the batsman, two the catcher, and three the pitcher; let one be entitled to a certain number of well-pitched balls, say twenty, any ball in striking distance to be a fair ball. Should he be caught out on the fly during such time, two takes his place: each one following in the order that his number indicates. When your numbers have arrived so as to make up a game of base, let the President (if your rule directs) appoint two captains, who should be evenly matched as players, and after a fair division of men, let them decide who has the choice of innings by the bat, hand over hand, full hand; or by a penny, as there can then be no dispute on what would be a full hand. After the sides are chosen, the captains should locate the players; and so soon as the outside are placed, play may commence. Time can be called whenever it is necessary to change a player, or if the umpire desires to ask any questions.

The duties of the various players it is rather difficult to define, so that a person who has never seen the game played will understand all points of it. The catcher is expected to catch or stop all balls pitched or thrown home; he will, when a player is running from the first to second base, stand as near the batsman as possible, and take the ball before it bounds; as the man at the bat seldom strikes until when another player is on the first, the catcher is better enabled to do so; the object of this is to shorten the distance to the second base, as he should throw there, in order that the baseman may put the player running to the second out. He should be prepared for foul balls, and tips, also keep a wide look-out over the game, and be able to throw a swift and true ball to the bases. The pitcher is to deliver the ball as near as he can over the home base, at same time, combine speed with an even ball. He should be cautious, watching the bases—lose no time by any "fancy" motions in pitching, and make no run in delivering the ball, as such actions may be considered as a baulk, and the base claimed. The pitcher must be ready to occupy

the bases, if left any time by their guardians while after the ball. He must particularly watch from the third to home, as the first object of the outside is to prevent a run being scored by the opposing party. The basemen are not confined strictly to their bases, but must be prepared to occupy them if a player is running toward them. The rules explain their duties. Should any player be caught between the bases, in running from one to another, it is the safest plan to run in and put him out at once, and not to throw the ball to the other basemen more than can be helped, or the opportunity will be lost, unless they are very fine players. The short stop duties are to stop all balls from the bat that come within his reach, and throw them to whatever base the batsman may be striving to make (probably the first), to assist the pitcher, and, should occasion require, to cover in behind the third base when the catcher throws to it; also the second and third, when the ball comes in from the field. The fielders are expected to catch all the balls that can be caught, allowing no ball to bound that can be taken on the fly, and pass it at once to that part of the field where it will be of most benefit. To all players, I think good advice is to let no ball from the bat bound—it is too much like child's play. When you have stopped the ball, do not hold the ball in your hand, but throw it in at once. Short balls that are knocked in the air have a twist on them that will change their direction very much if allowed to bound, especially foul ones. A left-handed catcher, if a good one, make the best third base, as the ball will continue the direction imparted to it, by the catcher who throws the ball, until it touches the player who is running to the third. Young players will learn more in watching a few matches than they will with three months' practice with parties not well acquainted with all the points of the game. It is learned as much by intuition as practice, and new hands should take advantage of all the chances they have to witness fine play.

Yours, respectfully,

X.

#11: Jan. 2, 1858

#### BASE BALL CORRESPONDENCE.

DEAR SPIRIT:-- On practice days, the person who attempts the duties of umpire should give his decisions are fairly as his judgment is capable, and not allow it to be warped by ill-feeling towards any of the players. In a match, he should pay every attention to the game. Let him be watchful, giving his decision for his own club where there is a doubt, and abide cheerfully by that of the referee; in everything he should remember that he is chosen to represent the interests of his club as judge of the play, and that they have a right to look for the proper maintenance of such interest. The referee is a position requiring a player thoroughly acquainted with the various points of the game—a position of honor and difficulty; many a friend has been hurt at the decision of a referee, when, so far as he could see, he was giving it rightfully. He should have some reason for every decision, and where the point is doubtful, to give it in favor of the ball: if he makes an error in judgment, and it is too late to rectify it, he cannot cancel or balance it by another, favoring the side that the former decision was against. Neither umpires nor referee should enter in conversation with any party during a match, as it may lead to some unpleasant remarks among others interested. The spectators should be kept out of the way of umpires and referee.

When a match has been agreed upon, the club having the choice of innings had better take the last; as most players are much excited and nervous, if it is their first attempt in a match, and it becomes

impossible to bat well, until it has partially subsided. Be sure that you commence the game in time to finish it before darkness sets in; for, if your opponents have the last inning, they may remain at the bat when it is not light enough to see the ball plainly, and having made a large number of runs for their side, will bat out—(lose the inning.)

Considerable speculation is abroad regarding the propriety of calling another Convention for next February. It seems desirable that there should be one, if not to make any new laws, to amend or render a few points less obscure than they are at present; and a Convention of committees from all the Clubs, including all who have played under the rules now used, will tend to advance the game as much next season, as those adopted last Spring did for the season that has left us. There are about twenty-five clubs in New York city and neighborhood, and there are several Clubs in other parts of the State, who intend sending delegates. One point that will admit of much discussion is, the propriety of junior Clubs being represented. At the last Convention, it was thought right that any club could send their delegates, provided they paid their proportion of expenses (such as printing, room, &c.). Now, there are about twenty junior clubs in the vicinity of New York, who, if they should be allowed the full vote of the older clubs, might probably over-rule those improvements that did not chime with their ideas of the game. There are several clubs ranking as juniors, but who play almost as fine a game as some of the older clubs, and are equally interested in its success. The Convention have a right to discriminate between those parties who are judges of what would be best, and others who, unable to offer anything towards improving, may, by their vote, amend or render useless the best directed efforts of the senior players.

The Convention will, perhaps, have to name what clubs shall send their delegates, so that most of them will not interfere with the rules of the game. There are many rules that need some amendment or alteration, and, if the Convention is called, it is very probable that the happiest effect would result from it. Long Island seems to abound in ball clubs; and on a pleasant afternoon all the vacant grounds are occupied by the various clubs. What both New Yorkers and Brooklynites desire to witness is, a match between the best players from Long Island and the rest of the State. The only difficulty seems to be in selecting them; and this could be overcome by calling a meeting of the New York Clubs, and have each one properly represented, and have the Chairman appoint a nominating Committee, who shall select a certain number of players; from whom, if the persons present are suited, a selection could be made, to be known as the New York United Nine (or ten, as that number will, perhaps, be more desirable for such a match). A similar move could be made in Brooklyn; and no man should feel hurt because he is overlooked, or because he imagines some favoritism is shown—both parties know enough of each other to feel that it will not do to have one weak man on either side. There would be but little trouble in selecting seven men from each party, who are recognized as the best for their positions, and who stand pre-eminent as ball-players; the others would be harder to choose. There is time enough for the move to be made several months hence, and it will be better to find out who will be our best players next season. But do not let all the players be disappointed another year; but let us have a match with players worthy of representing the game.

Yours,

X.

#12: Jan. 9, 1858

#### BASE BALL CORRESPONDENCE.

DEAR SPIRIT:-- Having given some attention to the clubs that are in active organization, I would also write a few words to those who desire to enjoy the game. Do not attempt to start a club, so long as there is any good one that you can join; if you do, it will probably be a weak one for one season, and it will do more harm than good towards establishing the game; you will not only take away from the other club those recruits that they otherwise would have; but are likely to drag along, as I have said, one season, before you get members on whom you can depend, and be compelled to take entire strangers in the game, in order that the sides will be full enough to play. Members of well established clubs should regard it as a duty to do everything that is honorable for their own club; and if that is full, and there are others who, interested in the game, desire to form a club, to assist them in every particular. The existence of a club depends somewhat on the interest that is felt in it by friends; but almost any association can be sustained, if the members only work for that object. I stated, in one of my letters, that the difficulty of obtaining grounds was a drawback to the formation of more clubs, and it is so. In a few years, unless some steps are taken by the ball-players to secure ground, the players will have to go several miles out of town to find a place large enough for the purpose; all the players know that Hoboken is being rapidly built up, and ere many seasons have elapsed, we may be without a ball ground. Give the players this, and there need be no fear that the game will ever be in disrepute, unless made so by some characters, who swarm wherever there is sport of any kind to be found. Many will remember the words of a certain first-base man, who remarked, while making a speech at a meeting of players, that "when he died, he desired to be buried beneath the first-base." Will any doubt, then, that the game has such powers of fascination, and that its admirers always crowd around every match, where they can watch the progress of the game?

One important item in the history of the game is, the foundation of the junior clubs; they will be our players, when we may be but spectators. To use the language of a well-known player who, speaking in reference to the juniors, said: "They will be the men who sustain the credit of the game, and that the present will have to take a back seat." I hardly agree with the gentleman, as I see no reason why they may not support the game as well, by becoming members of old clubs as soon as their abilities entitle them to, as by any other method. If so the old clubs will be advancing, rather than occupying "back seats."

The happy effect produced by exercise in the open air is beginning to be recognized by parents, and they no longer object to their boys joining a ball-club, because it has slight expenses attached to it, or they may get hurt. The old adage, "All work and no play," is revived, and comes home with as much force as ever. So much has been written on the benefits derived by those who take any good, regular exercise, and plenty of it, that it seems almost useless for me to attempt to enlarge on the subject. Let all parents induce their children to take out-door exercise—to join some ball-club, and not mind the slight bruises they receive in playing. While I do not oppose gymnasiums, for persons of mature growth, I think that such games as ball and cricket are decidedly the best to improve or maintain health; if, as all

acknowledge, exercise in the open air is much better than that taken in rooms or confined places, what can be better than participating in these games where that exercise so essential is obtained. That change of occupation for the mind is as necessary as well for the body, all admit. No one can play ball or cricket with spirit, and his mind be occupied by other thoughts; for, while playing his attention is riveted to the game, which demands all he can give.

The ground allotted to ball-play in Central Park will, report says, be a fine one; it will be suitable for "home and home" matches, of which there are many to be played this summer, and can be reached in about thirty-five minutes' ride from the City Hall. Will not the committee appointed by the last Convention take a glance in that direction, and inform the players (through the SPIRIT) if they will be in a fit condition to use next season? Sufficient space could be given in a few of the smaller Parks throughout the city, where the game could be played without detracting from their beauty.

Yours,

X.

#13: Jan. 16, 1858

BASE BALL CORRESPONDENCE.

DEAR SPIRIT:-- When the rules and regulations, as adopted by the Convention of Ball-Clubs (on Feb. 25) were published by PORTER'S SPIRIT, there was a review made on them at the time; since then, there are several points that the rules do not fairly reach. I will, therefore, state what opinion is held in regard to some of them.

SEC. 1 regulates the size of the ball, and weight. While many are satisfied with the latter, they would prefer to have the ball from nine and three-quarters to ten inches in circumference, instead of the present size; it is a prettier ball to throw, pitch, or catch. SEC. 5 defines the position of pitcher; some few players desire to have it three or four yards further from the home base, say eighteen, or place the pitcher exactly in the middle of the square. SEC. 6 needs much alteration, and has always been unsatisfactory. The baulk should be more clearly defined; for, as it stands now, on the referee's good judgment, depends the correct rendering of the section. SEC. 8, on foul balls, says, that the umpires shall declare all foul balls unasked. Experience has shown that the referee should call them, instead of umpires; and at all matches, the clubs have been in the habit of making this regulation. SEC. 13 should be erased, and another introduced, compelling all fair balls to be caught on the fly. It would improve the game very much. It is also the wish of most players, that the section should be altered. SEC. 16 forces the player running the bases to return to his base, if a fair ball is held on the fly, or on a foul ball. In one case he has a right to the base he returns to; in the other, he is obliged to hurry back, and run the risk of being put out. Should not the rules in both instances be the same, protecting the player back to the base he starts from?

SEC. 27 state, that "in playing matches, each player shall have been a regular member for thirty days." While the observance of this rule will be correct, there should be some courtesy exhibited, when a club desires to play a member who has not been such for thirty days, but who is, and will be, for the season a regular member, and where there is no trick or fraud intended. Several instances occurred last Summer, which the writer recollects, when the only question asked by the opposing club, was "Is he a regular member of your club?" The answer was in each case, "Yes!" The reply made (which will show what feeling ought to exist), was "All right! We want to play your best men, so they better represent the strength of your club. All clubs play to win, if possible; but they should not force any to play second nine men in a first nine match, any more than they would like them to introduce first-nine men in second-nine matches.

SEC. 28 reads: "Any player holding membership in more than one club at a time, shall not be permitted to play in the matches of either club." This is one of the best sections of the regulation, and should be strictly kept, not only by one club desiring that another shall play none but bona-fide members, but by each and every club; and it should be regarded as a dishonorable act for any club or player to do so. Let this be remembered, that any one demeans himself who is guilty of such disreputable conduct, and that it will not be forgotten. A player joining one club from another should see that his resignation is accepted; and if laid over for no reason of debt, has every right to demand its acceptance. One or two instances occurred last season, bordering on a breach of this section, which may be brought up at the Convention.

The rest of the sections will perhaps undergo some corrections which may improve them. The game needs some few points to make it equal, if not superior, to all Summer out-door sports. Another idea will be carried into effect next year, which will add to the interest in the game; one club sending an invitation to another to send ten of their best players (they selecting their ten), then to divide them, placing five from each club on one side, who shall play against the others, each player filling that position which is assigned to him in a match game. This will be a new phase of the game, and will lead to an interchange of feeling, which will enhance its prosperity. Second nines will also play together more next year than ever; and it will be of additional benefit to the players, giving them a chance to exhibit whatever abilities they may have as players in matches. In calling the Convention, nearly all the clubs look to the Knickerbocker to take the initiatory for that purpose, because they were the first to play and sustain the game; and they, therefore, think that the call should emanate from them. It is hoped that the ball-playing public will hear from them shortly. It is right that the clubs, who were represented at the last Convention, should constitute the body this year; and that the clubs since formed be admitted by ballot: this will not be any slur on the newly-organized clubs, but will give the Convention control over those who, not belonging to any of the well-founded clubs, may seek to enter, merely to make trouble.

Yours, respectfully,

X.

#14: Jan. 23, 1858

#### BASE BALL CORRESPONDENCE.

DEAR SPIRIT:-- As this is my last letter to you for the present, I will make a short review of matters relating to the game. In comparing cricket and base ball—games, though alike in some few respects, are constantly setting the exponents of each to unpleasant discussion-- I may overlook many good points of both. There are several reasons that cause this feeling; among them is this: we have made base ball our national game, and regard it with somewhat the same feeling that Englishmen do cricket; and while both cricketers and ball-players desire to see their favorite games succeed, it leaves but little cause for surprise, that animated, and occasionally disagreeable debates ensue. There is a saying that seems to be regarded by many English cricketers as a truism (but which another season will probably see entirely dispelled), that "Americans cannot play cricket." That few Americans do, is owing more to their love of ball, and other amusements, that seemingly partake of more exciting character; and cricket to a novice or looker-on, does not seem so lively as base ball; and, therefore, they are not tempted to try it. A few, however, do play—and I need only point to one or two well-known ball-players who have, within a few months, exhibited much improvement, and equal, if they do not excel, most cricketers in fielding.

In base-ball, the player has some other object in view than batting; and, for a match, is generally selected for his abilities as a catcher, unless he be a very sure and powerful bat. But in cricket, most players strive to excel in batting, because they have their wickets to defend; and the number of runs depends on their skill as batsmen; consequently, they need all the practice for that portion of the game, and frequently neglect catching. Another feature in ball that cricket does not have, is this: the batsman having made one hit, his place is supplied by another; and so on until his turn comes again; but in cricket, the indifferent player is soon bowled out, and then has to fag during the remainder of the game, while the good batsman remains in, on some occasion, several hours.

Cricketers will say that this is perfectly fair, that it offers a premium for good playing, and that it is a player's reward for his assiduous attention to the game, which he should not be deprived of. But has the beginner or poor player no claims on the game? The answer is, "he, of course, has some, but they increase in proportion to his merits." It is in this point of the game that ball players think that they have an advantage, and that their game gives the new hand more chance to learn. The bowling overhand of cricket, and pitching of base-ball, cannot be compared to each other relatively, only as taxing the player who fills either position, to the utmost; and very fine pitchers are as scarce as fine bowlers. Their rule for catching a ball is superior to ours, compelling all balls to be caught on the fly; but every ball-player well knows that no one will permit a ball to bound that can be reached otherwise, although our rule gives us the liberty of so doing. The play of the flat-bat is superior to the round, and the efforts of a portion of the last Convention to introduce a square one in base-ball, shows that there is a longing on the part of some to increase the scientific batting of the game.

The silly argument, that it is making ball too much like cricket, will not have force enough to over-rule the introduction, provided the convention are convinced that the present method of playing the game will allow of it. There will be considerable opposition made to it, for players say that the whole aspect of the game will be changed, and that we will be playing cricket with this difference, that we run the bases instead of from wicket to wicket; also, that it will not be any benefit, but rather detract from whatever

merit it now has. There are many points in cricket which base-ball has not, and for real science is preferable; but for a good, lively, and interesting game, that does not require too much time, base-ball has the advantage. The best points in cricket require a person to play the game to properly appreciate it. There is much in it to learn, and ball-players should practice it; there is no reason why they should not prove adepts. If the best members of the various clubs would start a cricket-club, with one season's play they might prove very formidable opponents. A good ground could be obtained at Hoboken, and the club would start with the best wishes of all ball-players. This project was talked of in the Fall of 1856, and in the Spring of '57 it was hoped that it would be carried into effect; but it was suffered to fall through, for lack of interest felt in it by the originators.

The season will probably commence very early next Spring; and if the present spirit is only evinced at that time, it will be more successful than any we have yet had. The players generally regret that the game is so confined to New York and neighborhood, and that the inhabitants of other cities and towns do not play it. Let those parties who desire to learn the game, understand that they will be furnished with rules, and whatever advice they may need, by applying to any of the secretaries of the clubs represented at the convention, and that the city clubs desire to see the game played in all parts of the country, and will render all the aid they can to encourage it.

Before closing my letter, I desire to ask the ball-players, if the game does not need some book as well as cricket, to explain all its points, containing such hints as may be deemed necessary? Also, if they will not call on several eminent players, who will be at the next convention, to be a committee for that object? Give us a suitable book, and parties in other cities will not have to write to the sporting journals for information relative to the game. There are many men of acknowledged ability, whose interest in the game should lead them to write some manual; and to them we all will look for a fulfillment of our wishes.

I trust sincerely, that my letters have been of some slight value, not from any literary merit they possess, but because the subject has never been handled by any one. Their being rough-hewn is the very reason why I am so anxious to have it properly treated by others more competent. I would ask them all to cherish the game, and keep it from disrepute, and they need never fear of its obliteration as a national sport.

Yours, respectfully,

X.