



## Another



### The Greater Johnson

Surrogate George H. "Greater" Johnson, of old town baseball fame, died July 24, 1933, in Doctor's Hospital, New York. He was born in Scotch Plains, Nov. 26, 1871, and lived there all his days. A big, good natured and energetic kid, he led his Scotch Plains Giants against the Young Invincibles of Westfield in many a baseball and football jamboree, which usually ended in a wild scramble for permanent possession of the ball. He was the best pitcher in these regions and usually won his games. To settle a probable dispute over ownership, Captain Johnson would stuff the ball in his pocket after striking the last batter out, and say "Come on, fellers, let's go home." His reputation as a local strike-out king attracted the attention of semi-professional baseball magnates. He pitched for two seasons in the New York State League, and was nick-named "Greater" because of his ample girth—not to mention his wide, looping outcurves that just made the outside corner.

When the late Charlie Coddling organized the Central New Jersey Baseball League, "Greater" alternated on the slab with Jack Sharratt of the New York Giants. When not pitching he played centerfield. It was his now historic muff of a high fly ball, with two men out and two men on, that

gave Plainfield the winning run in a crucial game at Drake Park, on an historic Fourth of July afternoon.

After that conspicuous performance, the undaunted "Greater" entered politics and his fielding average steadily improved. He was Town Assessor, Town Boss, Clerk of the House of Assembly, Under Sheriff, Sheriff, and finally Surrogate. As Republican leader of Union County, he wielded as much power as any individual in the councils of his party in the State. When Walter Edge was U. S. Senator, he sought to have "Greater" appointed Collector of Internal Revenue, but was obliged to withdraw his name because of the effective opposition of Mrs. Lillian E. Feickert of Plainfield. This feminine rebuff did not weaken "Greater's" control of party affairs, however. He resigned as County Chairman to be elected Surrogate by a substantial majority. "Greater" suffered from the common affliction of the big-hearted political leader — too many friends who were with him if and when he could do something for them. In trying to accommodate all of them, he occasionally struck out the wrong man. Considering the nature of the game he played, and the contradictions in human nature, he did pretty well for himself and for his party.