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CRICKET

[Illustration:
From a Painting by _R. James._
TOSSING FOR INNINGS.]

CRICKET

EDITED BY

HORACE G. HUTCHINSON

[Illustration]

“_DESIPERE IN LOCO_”

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[Illustration]

PREFACE

Surely it is sheer neglect of opportunity offered by an official position if, being an editor, one has no prefatory word to say of the work that one is editing. It is said that that which is good requires no praise, but it is a saying that is contradicted at every turn—or else all that is advertised must be very bad. While it is our firm belief that the merits of the present book—_The Country Life Cricket Book_—are many and various (it would be an insult to the able heads of the different departments into which the great subject is herein divided to think otherwise), we believe also that the book has one very special and even unique merit. We believe, and are very sure, that there has never before been given to the public any such collection of interesting old prints illustrative of England’s national game as appear in the present volume. It is due to the kind generosity of the Marylebone Cricket Club, as well as of divers private persons, that we are able to illustrate the book in this exceptional way; and we (that is to say, all who are concerned in the production) beg to take the opportunity of giving most cordial thanks to those who have given this invaluable help, and so greatly assisted in making the book not only attractive, but also original in its attraction. In the first place, the prints form in some measure a picture-history of the national game, from the early days when men played with the wide low wicket and the two stumps, down through all the years that the bat was developing out of a curved hockey-stick into its present shape, and that the use of the bat at the same time was altering from the manner of the man with the scythe, meeting the balls called “daisy-cutters,” to the straightforward upright batting of the classical examples. The classical examples perhaps are exhibited most ably in the pictures of Mr. G. F. Watts, which show us that the human form divine can be studied in its athletic poses equally well (save for the disadvantage of the draping flannels) on the English field of cricket as in the Greek gymnasium. The prints, too, give us a picture-history of the costumes of the game. There are the “anointed clod-stumpers” of Broadhalfpenny going in to bat with the smock, most inconvenient, we may think, of dresses. There are the old-fashioned fellows who were so hardly parted from their top-hats. These heroes of a bygone age are also conspicuous in braces. We get a powerful hint, too, from the pictures, of the varying estimation in which the game has been held at different times. There is a suggestion of reverence in some of the illustrations—a sense that the artist knew himself to be handling a great theme. In others we see with pain that the treatment is almost comic, certainly frivolous. We hardly can suppose that the picture of the ladies’ cricket match would encourage others of the sex to engage in the noble game, although “Miss Wicket” of the famous painting has a rather attractive although pensive air—she has all the aspect of having got out for a duck’s egg.

More decidedly to the same effect—of its differing hold on popular favour—do we get a hint from the spectators assembled (but assembled is too big a word for their little number) to view the game. “Lord’s” on an Australian match day, or a Gents _v._ Players, or Oxford and Cambridge, hardly would be recognised by one of the old-time heroes, if we could call him up again across the Styx to take a second innings. He would wonder what all the people had come to look at. He hardly would believe that they were come to see the game he used to play to a very

meagre gallery in his life. But he would be pleased to observe the progress of the world—how appreciative it grew of what was best in it as it grew older.

Another thing that the collection illustrates is the various changes of site of the headquarters of the game, if it had a headquarters before it settled down to its present place of honour in St. John's Wood. There is a picture (_vide_ p. v) of "Thomas Lord's first Cricket Ground, Dorset Square, Marylebone. Match played June 20, 1793, between the Earls of Winchilsea and Darnley for 1000 guineas." With regard to this interesting picture, Sir Spencer Ponsonby-Fane, in his catalogue of the pictures, drawings, etc., in possession of the Marylebone Cricket Club, has a note as follows:—"This match was Kent (Lord Darnley's side) _v._ Marylebone, with Walker, Beldham, and Wills (Lord Winchilsea's side). M.C.C. won by ten wickets. It will be noticed that only two stumps are represented as being used, whereas, according to _Scores and Biographies_, it is known that as far back as 1775 a third stump had been introduced; many representations, however, of the game at a later date show only two stumps." No doubt at this early period there was no very fully acknowledged central authority, and such little details as these were much a matter of local option. The wicket shown in this picture does not seem to differ at all from the wicket in the picture of "Cricket" by F. Hayman, R.A. (_vide_ p. 1), in the possession of the Marylebone Club, though the date of the latter is as early as 1743. Neither does the bat appear to have made much evolution in the interval. It is on the authority of Sir Spencer Ponsonby-Fane, in the catalogue above quoted, that we can give "about 1750" for the date of the picture named "A Match in Battersea Fields" (_vide_ p. 3), in which St. Paul's dome appears in the background. Here they seem to be playing with the three stumps, early as the date is. Again, in the fine picture, "painted for David Garrick" by Richard Wilson, of "Cricket at Hampton Wick" (_vide_ p. 375), three stumps are in use, and the bat has become much squared and straightened. Of course the pictures obviously fall into two chief classes—one in which "the play's the thing"; the cricket is the object of the artist's representation; the other in which the cricket is only used as an incidental feature in the foreground, to enliven a scene of which the serious interest is in the background or surroundings. But the pictures in which the cricket is the main, if not the only, interest are very much more numerous. A quaintly suggestive picture enough is that described in Sir S. Ponsonby-Fane's catalogue as, "Situation of H.M.'s Ships _Fury_ and _Hecla_ at Igloolie. Sailors playing Cricket on the Ice." In this, of course, there is no historical interest about the cricket (_vide_ p. 392). The one-legged and one-armed cricketers make a picture that is curious, though not very pleasant to contemplate; and the same is to be said of the rather vulgar representation of the ladies' cricket match noticed above. The "Ticket to see a Cricket Match" (_vide_ p. 40) shows a bat of the most inordinate, and probably quite impossible, length; but we may easily suppose that the artist, consciously or unwittingly, has exaggerated the weapon of his day. Here too are two stumps only. We may notice the price of the ticket as somewhat remarkably high, 2s. 6d.; but it was in the days when matches were played for large sums of money, so perhaps all was in proportion (length of bat excepted, be it understood). There is a picture of the "celebrated Cricket Field near White Conduit House, 1787" (_vide_ p. 17), which is named a "Representation of the Noble Game of Cricket." It is a picture of some merit, and evidently careful execution, and here too the players are seen with bats of a prodigious length; so it may be that these huge weapons came into fashion for a while, only to be abandoned again when their uselessness was proved, or perhaps when the legislature began to make exact provision with regard to the

implements used. In this same picture of the “Noble Game of Cricket” a man may be seen standing at deep square leg, who is apparently scoring the “notches,” or “notching” the runs, on a piece of stick. This at least appears to be his occupation, and it is interesting to observe it at this comparatively late date, and at headquarters. In the match between the sides led by Lord Winchilsea and Lord Darnley respectively, it is seen that there are two tail-coated gentlemen sitting on a bench, and probably scoring on paper, for it is hardly likely that they can have been reporting for the press at that time. England did not then demand the news of the fall of each wicket, as it does now. Nevertheless, that there must have been a good deal of enthusiasm for the game, even at a pretty early date, is shown conclusively enough by the engraving (_vide_ p. 190) of the “North-East View of the Cricket Grounds at Darnall, near Sheffield, Yorkshire.” What the precise date of this picture may be I do not know, but it is evident that it must be old, from the costumes of the players, who are in knee-breeches and the hideous kind of caps that have been reintroduced with the coming of the motor-car. Also the umpires, with their top-hatted heads and tightly-breeched lower limbs, show that this picture is not modern. And yet the concourse of spectators is immense. Even allowing for some pardonable exaggeration on the part of the artist, it is certain that many people must have been in the habit of looking on at matches, otherwise this picture would be absurd; and this, be it observed, was not in the southern counties, which we have been led to look on as the nurseries of cricket, but away from all southern influence, far from headquarters, in Yorkshire, near Sheffield. To be sure, it may have been within the wide sphere of influence of the great Squire Osbaldeston, but even so the picture is suggestive. The scorers are here seated at a regular table. A very curious representation of the game is that given in the picture by James Pollard, named “A Match on the Heath” (_vide_ p. 29). It is a good picture. What is curious is that, though the period at which Pollard was producing his work was from 1821 to 1846, the bats used in the game are shown as slightly curved, and, more notably, the wicket is still of the two stumps only. There are only two alternative ways of accounting for this: either they still played in certain places with the two-stump wicket, or else, which is not likely, Pollard was very careless, and no cricketer, and took his cricket apparatus from some older picture. I observe, by the way, that I have, on the whole, done less than justice to the ladies, as they are portrayed playing the game, for though it is true that the one picture is, as noticed, vulgar enough, there is another, “An Eleven of Miss Wickets” (_vide_ p. 248), that is pretty and graceful. While some of the pictures in this collection are interesting mainly for their curiosity, or as being something like an illustrated history or diary of events and changes in the game, there are others that are real works of art and beauty, sometimes depending mainly on their expression of the game itself, and sometimes only using it as an adjunct to the scenery. Of the former kind, we must notice most especially the remarkable series of drawings by Mr. G. F. Watts, R.A., which show the batsman in the various positions of defence or attack. To very many it will be a revelation that the great artist could lend his pencil to a matter of such trivial importance (as some base souls may deem it) as the game of cricket; but without a doubt that great knowledge of anatomy, which has been one of the strong points in all his paintings, has been learned in some measure from these studies, which also give it a very high degree of expression. There is a force, a vigour, a meaning about these sketches which are interesting enough, if for no other reason than because they show so vividly the inadequacy of the mechanical efforts of photography, when brought into competition, as a means of expression, with the pencil of a really great artist. You feel almost as if you must jump aside out of the way of the fellow

stepping forward to drive the leg volley, or of the fearful man drawn back to cut, so forcefully is the force expressed with which the batsman is inevitably going to hit the ball (_vide_ p. 67). One of the most charming pictures of those who have taken cricket for their theme is that which is lent by His Majesty the King to the M.C.C., and is styled “A Village Match.” It is by Louis Belanger, of date 1768 (_vide_ p. 361). Charming, too, is the picture attributed to Gainsborough, “Portrait of a Youth with a Cricket-bat”; it is said to be a portrait of George IV. as a boy, but it seems doubtful. The bat here is curved, but hardly perceptibly; it shows the last stage in evolution before the straight bat was reached (_vide_ p. 208). Our frontispiece is a jolly scene—the ragged boys tossing the bat for innings—“Flat or Round?” and the fellow in the background heaping up the coats for a wicket. We all of us have played and loved that kind of cricket. A wonderfully good and detailed picture is that of “Kent _v._ Sussex” (_vide_ p. 137). It is a picture of a match in progress on the Brighton ground, and Brighton is seen in the background; in the foreground is a group of celebrated cricketers in the spectators’ ring, yet posed, in a way that gives a look of artificiality to the whole scene, so as to show their faces to the artist. Even old Lillywhite, bowling, is turning his head quaintly, to show his features. One of the most conspicuous figures is the great Alfred Mynn, who was to a former generation what W. G. Grace has been to ours. All the figures are portraits, and every accessory to the scene is worked out most carefully. The drawing is by W. H. Mason. Sir Spencer Ponsonby-Fane has a note on this picture: “As a matter of fact, this match, as here represented, did not take place, the men shown in the engraving never having played together in such a match, but they all played for their respective counties about 1839-1841.” Very delightful, too, is the picture that is the last in our book (p. 433), “At the End of the Innings”—an old veteran with eye still keen, and firm mouth, telling of a determination to keep his wicket up and the ball down “as well as he knows how,” and with an interest in the game of his youth unabated by years. A jolly painting is that of “Old Charlton Church and Manor House” (_vide_ p. 415), with the coach and four darting past, and the boys at cricket on the village green. And last, but to many of us greatest of all, there is the portrait of Dr. W. G. Grace, from Mr. A. Stuart Wortley’s picture, which sums up a modern ideal of cricket that we have not yet found ourselves able to get past (_vide_ p. 228).

There are other pictures, not a few, that we might select for notice, but already this ramble goes beyond due prefatory limits. There are the sketches in which the cricket is made to point or illustrate political satires. To do full justice to these, one would need to be well versed in the history (other than the cricketing history) of the period. But enough has been said. One could not let such a gallery of old masters go without an attempt to do the showman for them in some feeble way. They need neither help nor apology. They are good enough to win off their own bat.

In our modern instances we have been no less lucky: with Mr. Warner to bat, Mr. Jephson to bowl, Mr. Jessop to field, and the rest of the good company, we do not know that any other choice could have made our eleven better than it is; but after all, that is for the public to say; it is from the pavilion, not the players, that the applause should come.

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[Illustration]

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[Illustration:
From a Painting by _Francis Hayman, R.A._
CRICKET, AS PLAYED IN THE ARTILLERY GROUND, LONDON, IN 1743.]

[Illustration]

CHAPTER I

SOME POINTS IN CRICKET HISTORY

By THE EDITOR

Cricket began when first a man-monkey, instead of catching a cocoanut thrown him playfully by a fellow-anthropoid, hit it away from him with a stick which he chanced to be holding in his hand. But the date of this occurrence is not easy to ascertain, and therefore it is impossible to fix the date of the invention of cricket. For cricket has passed through so many stages of evolution before arriving at the phase in which we find it to-day that it is difficult to say when the name, as we understand its meaning, first became rightly applicable to it. The first use of the name "cricket" for any game is indeed a matter entirely of conjecture. It is not known precisely by Skeat, nor Strutt, nor Mr. Andrew Lang. But whether the name was applied by reason of the cricket or crooked stick, which was the early form of the bat, or whether from the cross stick used as a primitive bail, or from the cricket or stool, at which the bowler aimed the ball, really does not very much matter, for all these etymological vanities belong rather to the mythological age of cricket than the historical. Neither is it of great importance whether cricket was originally played under another name, such as club-ball, as Mr. Pycroft infers, on rather

meagre authority, as it seems to me, from Nyren. Nyren did not hazard the inference. The fact is that the form in which we first find cricket played, and called cricket, is quite unlike our cricket of to-day, so that we do not need to go seeking anything by a different name. They played with two upright stumps, 1 foot high, 2 feet apart, with a cross stump over them and a hole dug beneath this cross stump. The cross stump is evidently the origin of our bails. Nyren does not believe in this kind of cricket, but he gives no reason for his disbelief, for the excellent reason that he can have had no reason for his scepticism; and the fact is proved by the evidence of old pictures. He was a simple, good man; he never saw anything like cricket played in that way, so he did not believe any one else ever had. He did not perhaps understand much about the law of evidence, but he wrote delightfully about cricket. The fourth edition of his guide, which a friend’s kindness has privileged me to see, is dated 1847, some time after the author’s death.

[Illustration:
Engraved from a Painting by _Francis Hayman, R.A._
THE ROYAL ACADEMY CLUB IN MARYLEBONE FIELDS.]

[Illustration: _A MATCH IN BATTERSEA FIELDS._]

Yes, in spite of Nyren, they bowled at this cross-stick and wicket which the ball could pass through again and again without removing the cross piece, and the recognised way of getting a man out was not so much to bowl him as to catch or run him out. You ran him out by getting the ball into the hole between the stumps before he got his bat there—making the game something like rounders. Fingers got such nasty knocks encountering the bat in a race for this hole that bails and a popping crease were substituted—at least the humane consideration is stated to have been a factor in the change.

It is not to be supposed that even we, for all our legislation, have witnessed the final evolution of cricket. Legislate we never so often, something will always remain to be bettered—the width of the wicket or the law of the follow on. About the earliest records that have come down to us there is a notable incompleteness that we must certainly regret. The bowler gets no credit for wickets caught or stumped off his bowling. What would become of the analysis of the underhand bowler of to-day if wickets caught and stumped were not credited to him? But at the date of these early records all the bowling was of necessity underhand. Judge then of the degree in which those poor bowlers have been defrauded of their just rights. Whether or no the name of our great national game was derived from the “cricket” in the sense of the crooked stick used for defence of the wicket, it is certain, from the evidence of old pictures, if from nothing else, that crooked sticks, like the modern hockey sticks, filled, as best they might, the function of the bat. They are figured as long and narrow, with a curving lower end. There was no question in those days of the bat passing the four-inch gauge. They must have been very inferior, as weapons of defence for the wicket, to our modern bats—broomsticks rather than bats—more than excusing, when taken in connection with the rough ground, the smallness of the scores, even though the bowling was all underhand and, practically, there was no defence. The solution of these problems, however, is, I fear, buried in the mists of antiquity, and one scarcely dares even to hope for a solution of them, or the fixing of the date of the changes. There are other problems that do not seem as if they ought to be so hopelessly beyond our ken. In Nyren’s cricketer’s guide, one of the laws of cricket, therein quoted, provides that the wickets shall be pitched by the umpires, yet in part of his