

The Messrs. Ray, of the same place, it is understood, are shortly going to follow suit.

Mr. D. W. Saunders has returned to his native Guelph, after spending two years at law in Toronto.

Mr. P. Æ. Irving, who so ably captained for Newmarket last year, is practising law in Victoria, B.C.

CRICKET, AND HOW TO EXCEL IN IT.

BY DR. W. G. GRACE.

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I. INTRODUCTORY. THE GAME ITSELF.

The game of cricket in some form or another was played as far back as the thirteenth century. Edward II., who lost Bannockburn and was murdered at Berkeley, is claimed by some enthusiasts as the first royal cricketer, or rather "creag" eter, from the occurrence of an obscure entry, in which his tutor, John Leek, appears as drawing a hundred shillings from the treasury for expenses "ad creag et alios ludos per vices," in 1305, when cricket, if creag was cricket, must have been a fairly well-known game. Some people say that in old days the game was usually called Club Ball, and was played much as rounders is now; others have an idea that tip-cat, which is in much favour in some districts, is the game to which cricket owes its origin; while a third party go so far as to assert that we have got single wicket from club ball, and double-wicket from tip-cat, under its old name of cat-dog.

Be this as it may, it was not until the early part of last century that cricket was played anything like it is at present, and previous to this we need not linger on antiquarian researches. Hampshire was, I believe, the first county to form a regular club and play the game in proper style; at least the old Hambledon is the earliest club we hear about as being of any account, though cricket was played at some of the public schools long previous to 1750, about which date the Hambledon was started. An old painting gives us the Hambledon eleven in their club costume of knee-breeches, stockings, buckled shoes, and velvet caps, by no means such an elaborate uniform as that of Lord Winchelsea's team, who used to play in silver laced hats. They played at first on Broadhalfpenny Down, afterwards on Windmill Down, both close to the village, and for many years held the same position with regard to other clubs that the M.C.C. does now. Between the years 1786 and 1794 they played All England several times, and, what is more to their honour, generally beat them. The game was also played in Kent, and very early in Surrey, particularly round about Farnham. The "Three Parishes" (Farnham, Godalming and Hartley Row) are famous in cricket annals, and proved a thorn in the side of their neighbours, the Hambledon men, whom they frequently defeated. Middlesex and Notts followed, after a short interval, the good example set by the south of the Thames, and clubs were gradually formed over the whole country.

One of the earliest of the London clubs was that called the White Conduit, which came into existence about 1780, and whose matches were played not only on their own ground in White Conduit Field, but also on the Artillery Parade Ground at Finsbury. In 1787, a Scotchman named Thomas Lord, who was connected in some way with the White Conduit Club, many think as a bowler, rented a field where Dorset Square now stands, and started it as a cricket-ground. The best players of the White Conduit Club formed at the new ground a new club, and called it the "Marylebone Cricket Club," and on the old Dorset Square field, on Thomas Lord's first ground, they played their first match. The ground was eventually required for building purposes, and Lord, and with him the club, cleared off to another ground, where South Bank, Regent's Park, now is. Here he stayed three years, until the Regent's Canal was cut, when he moved off once more, in 1827, to St. John's Wood Road, where the M.C.C. now play.

It was at South Bank, in 1825, between the first and second days of the Winchester and Harrow match—curiously enough, the very year that the old Hambledon Club broke up—that the Pavilion was burnt, and nearly all the old scores and records of the game perished. It is, perhaps, worth noting, that some of the original turf which was on Lord's ground in Dorset Square was taken by Lord to South Bank, to be afterwards again taken up and removed by him to St. John's Wood Road, and laid on the present ground. Lord had not been long at St. John's Wood before he wished to retire, and there was great danger of our famous ground being built over. Mr. Ward, however, very generously bought the lease at a very high price, and staved off the evil day. Some years after, the remainder of the lease was bought by Mr. Dark, and when the ground, in 1864, came again into the market, the M.C.C. made a great effort,

stepped in, and, at a cost of a little over £31,100, bought it right out for themselves, so that Lord's should be a cricket ground for ever.

And now with regard to the materials. First of all, the ball. The ball was much smaller than the one used at the present time, being something of the size of the ordinary rounder ball. Our antiquarian friends consider that the ball was adopted because the cat would not go far enough. The cat was made stumpier and stumpier, until it was at last cut down to a badly shaped ball, and the first cricket-ball was consequently a wooden one. The bat in the last century was very like a club, and there were at first no rules as to its size or width. Although its crooked shape has an odd look, it was not badly adapted for the style of play, which, being purely offensive, required something with which a good deal of hard hitting could be got through.

David Harris, one of the old Hambledon men (who, by the way, is once credited with having bowled to Tom Walker, "Old Everlasting," one hundred and seventy balls for one run), was the cause of the alteration in the shape of the bat. Harris, if not the inventor, was the introducer of length balls, and against his bowling the old hockey-stick arrangement was of no use. This introduction of length bowling had a great deal to do with the progress of the game, for not only had the bat to be altered, but the stumps had to be raised far above their old twelve inches, and the old-fashioned backward slashing play was superseded. Old Small, one of the best hands at the draw that ever lived, is said to have first made a straight bat. Once the inventive spirit was let loose, things grew apace, though some of the novelties were not received with the cordiality that their originators anticipated. One man at Reigate (his name was White; he deserves to be immortalised) appeared at a match with a bat larger than the wickets. This was too much of a good thing, and so the first rule was made as to the width of the bat, and the Hambledon Club had an iron frame made, through which all bats were passed before being allowed to be used. One of the first men to have a practical exemplification of its utility was Surrey Robinson, who designed a bat specially for cutting, at which he was a great proficient; but the bat would not pass through the frame, and the Hambledon men "cut" from it in a sense unexpected by Robinson. However, Robinson, with his bat all hacked about by pocket-knives, made top score, and won the match against the damagers of his bat. Robinson was the inventor of the spikes in the shoes, and of the leg-guards, which, as he left them, consisted of two pieces of wood placed anglewise to protect the shin—a very noisy contrivance, which had the disadvantage of throwing off the leg-byes at a prodigious pace.

The wickets seem always to have been twenty-two yards apart as now, the length of a surveyor's "chain," but the stumps have varied greatly in position. We first find them two in number, two feet from each other and one foot high, with a long stick across the tops, which, like the present bails, had to be knocked off to bowl out a man. Between the stumps—and here the resemblance to rounders and tip-cat was not quite broken off—there was a large hole in which, to put a man out when off his ground, the ball had to be popped (hence afterwards "popping" crease). The wicket-keeper had a lively time of it in those days, not so much from the swift ground balls coming right through the wickets (and they could come through as often as they liked, for unless the stumps were struck or the bail knocked off the batsman continued in and no advantage was gained by the bowler) as from this same popping arrangement; for in running a man out the ball had to be put in the hole, and as the bat had also to be grounded in the hole in making a run, the bat not unfrequently was popped on the knuckles of the wicket-keeper. The very natural remonstrances of the wicket-keepers at last led to the hole being abolished, and the man was put out by knocking off the bail. About the same time the stumps were brought nearer together, and in 1775 the middle stump was added, and the height increased from twelve to twenty-two inches, the new width of six inches being retained. About a dozen years after the wickets consisted each of three stumps twenty-four inches high and seven inches wide, and two bails were used. In 1814 the wickets had grown to twenty-six inches by eight, and about 1817 they were once more altered to twenty-seven inches by eight, which is their present size. At the same time, to compensate for the extra inch on the stumps, an extra two inches was given to the distance between the creases.

Round-arm bowling came into force about 1825, about which time gloves were first used. It had frequently been tried previously, but had been adjudged unfair, and it was not until the under-hand style was found easily playable that the round-arm came in. Tom Walker, the man who got the run off Harris's one hundred and seventy balls, was the most celebrated of the early round-arm bowlers, but the Hambledon people objected and legislated, and