

The *American Cricketer* of the 8th inst. has:

"One of the smallest bits of very sharp practice that ever came to our knowledge, with regard to cricket, has recently been brought off by the Australians in their match with Surrey, at the Oval, on 26th of May.

It appeared that the County Committee had taken no end of pains to have the wicket in first-class condition, and as there was a heavy rainfall for some hours prior to the time of the game, they had covered the crease with a tarpaulin. But when, after the rain had stopped, and the toss had been taken—which the Australians lost—the visiting colonials objected to playing on the covered ground, and another wicket had actually to be chosen, upon which the rain had operated unobstructedly.

Comment on this action is useless. Contemptible is a very mild word for it, and it indicates to us that the gate money is what the Australians are after fully as much as were their predecessors:

If this is to be the example set at a high class match, on what is probably the finest cricket ground in England, the fewer the visits of Australian players to the mother country the better for the game."

Although the action of the Australians in this instance may be blamed by some, yet in our opinion they only did what nine elevens out of ten would do if similarly situated. What association the words "gate money" have with it we fail to see. The reason for their objection is very obvious; their bowling is not effective on a lively wicket. When we consider this, we cannot wonder at the Australians wishing to take advantage of a wicket suited to them by nature, the first which they have had since arriving in England, and rejecting one which had been prepared by artificial means.

## CRICKET, AND HOW TO EXCEL IN IT.

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### CHAPTER III.—BOWLING.

Bowling may be round-arm or under-hand, and each of these styles can be straight or crooked, and fast, medium, or slow. Bowling may also be divided in another way into good or bad, but it does not then necessarily follow that the good sort is that which invariably takes wickets, and the bad sort that which does not; for good bowling is not always successful, though bad bowling occasionally is, particularly against batsmen who are aware of its quality, despise it accordingly, and pay the penalty for their consequently careless play.

The only style of bowling at first was under-hand, and that generally fast, but the daisy-cutters eventually gave place to David Harris's lengths, and when the celebrated Lillywhite brought round-arm bowling to such perfection, the under-hand style went out of fashion, and now we find nearly everybody bowling round-arm. The hand, however, has gradually got higher and higher, and the delivery is so altering that it would seem, unless something is done, and that soon, the round-arm bowling of a few years back will become as rare as the earlier under-hand, and give place to mere shying at the wicket. The old rule on the subject said, "If the ball be thrown or jerked, or if the hand be above the shoulder in the delivery, the umpire must call no ball." The present rule, in which the second clause is omitted, leaves too much to the umpire, and has not worked satisfactorily. A man is now not only allowed to bowl as high as he likes, but a great many of our so-called bowlers deliberately throw, and the umpires decline the responsibility of no-balling them. This throwing practice does no good to the game, and there is a very strong feeling about that the time has arrived when some strict rule forbidding it should be laid down. On throwing bowling, therefore, I shall not touch. The young beginner—and here as throughout I make no distinction between right and left handed bowlers—should above all things guard against bowling too fast, as if he does he is sure to sacrifice pitch and straightness. Let him begin by bowling at eighteen yards instead of two-and-twenty, and as he grows older and stronger he can easily work back to the proper distance. The style he adopts must be that which comes naturally to him; he will soon find out what suits him best, and then if he bowls fast let him stick to fast bowling, if slow let him stick to slow, and never let him make the common mistake

of bowling fast one day and slow the next; for unless he invariably bowls one style he cannot hope to become a first-class hand at it.

Let the young bowler never get out of practice; let him bowl a few balls every day, and never bowl them mechanically, but let him think what he is about with every ball that he bowls. The reason we have at the present time so few good bowlers in the South of England is that bowling is not practised as it should be; people are always batting; bowling is looked upon as a thing of easy acquirement, and fielding as of no importance at all, and coming to man without effort very much as sleep does.

Let the bowler always take a short or medium run, measuring out for the purpose so many paces behind the wicket, which he can mark off in some way, and thus he will always start from the same place and never overstep the crease and get no-balled. Let the number of steps taken be always the same, the momentum always be the same, and, in short, the whole action of run and delivery should never vary.

In running up to the crease, let him run straight, not crossing his footsteps or wagging about as he comes, and let him make his last step or two shorter than those he started with. Let him present always a full face to the opposite wicket, and keep his shoulders in the line of the crease.

Let him put a piece of paper on the pitch from four to seven yards from the wicket he is bowling at, and endeavour to drop the ball on to the paper every time he bowls. By this means he will very soon learn to bowl straight and to get a good length, and in time will be able to alter his pitch at will.

After having learnt to bowl straight, but not before, let him try and twist the balls. Twist depends entirely on the way the ball is held and delivered. If you turn your hand over, you will find as a rule that the ball will twist in from leg; if you turn your hand under, the ball will twist in from the off. The spin of a ball also depends on the way the fingers are placed and unclasped from it. They should be curved well round the ball, grasping its centre and resting a little over the seams, and as the ball passes from the hand should leave go of it joint by joint as it were, so that when, guided by the little finger, it flies off from their tips, it goes away with a regular whirl. A good ball, like the globe on which we live, has two motions, a rotatory one and a progressive one.

A man may be able to bowl straight and to twist, and yet not be a good bowler. There is something else to be done, and that is to be able to vary pitch and pace and to alter the curve of the ball's path. If a succession of balls is sent in with a low curve on to the pitch, and then a ball follows with a high curve tossed somewhat higher in the air, but all the time a good length, and going to drop on the same spot that the others have done, the latter will seem to the batsman to be coming right up to his wicket, and he will probably play it wrongly, just as he would a full pitch coming straight on to his balls after he has foiled all attempts to get past his bat with good lengths.

Never bowl at your utmost strength; accuracy, not speed, is the essential part of bowling, and you can never have much command of the ball when you are firing away at top power. Always have a little in hand, to increase the pace for a ball or two if necessary; variation of pace without perceptible alteration in the manner of delivery is one of the most valued acquirements of the good bowler. If you find you are getting tired, leave off; never force yourself. If you are bowling short, hold yourself more upright, so as to part from the ball at a higher level, and do not lean forward and overstrain; the ball will pitch shorter if you do. The higher the point at which the ball leaves the hand, the greater, in all but very fast bowling (when it is inappreciable), is the curve the ball makes to the pitch, and the more deceptive is its approach to the batsman.

Remember that everything depends on the men you are bowling against. If you are bowling to first-class batsmen, you are more likely to get them out by trying a dodge or two than you are by bowling straight, over after over. It is seldom of any use to keep pegging away at the stumps like a catapult, as a good bat will play maiden after maiden; but if you take stock of your enemy and endeavour to outwit him, bowl a bit with your head, giving him, say, a well-pitched ball on either side of the wicket; he is very likely to get out by making a bad hit, when he would have played straight bowling for over. If you are playing against inferior performers, you need only bowl straight, ball after ball, and you will be sure to get wickets, as no bad players can play straight bowling for any length of time; they are bound to let the ball go by eventually.

The question as to which is the best bowling, fast or slow, depends, to my mind, on the state of the ground. To a great extent, a fast bowler on a good true wicket is just the man for a good player to score off, for the balls want no hitting; a snick is