

Photo by Thomas]

LORD'S PAVILION ON AN ETON AND HARROW DAY.

[Cheapside.

THE HEADQUARTERS OF CRICKET.

AN INSIDE VIEW OF THE PAVILION AT LORD'S.

BY

M. RANDAL ROBERTS.

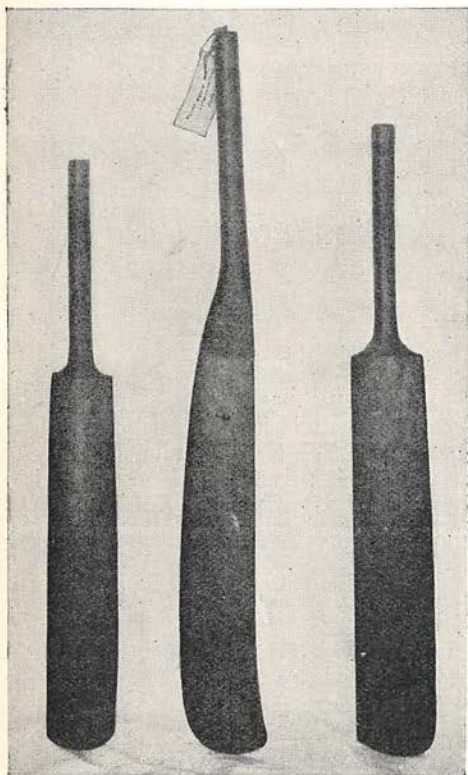
THE Marylebone Club is the cricketers' Mecca. Every schoolboy worth his salt, from the time he first handles a bat, looks forward to the day when he can don the famous colours and enjoy all the delights and privileges of membership of the M.C.C. Old members, when their days for active play are over, gravitate to Lord's on fine summer afternoons as surely as steel filings are attracted to the magnet. No self-respecting old Blue would absent himself from Lord's pavilion on the occasion of the 'Varsity match any more than the Chancellor of the Exchequer would keep away from the House of Commons on Budget night. Among the members there are certain old cricketing Nestors whose proud boast it is that for forty years they have never missed a match of importance at Lord's, and who hope to continue the same programme, if they live, another forty. What a chance for the cricket chronicler if he could only secure a seat among those veterans. They are most of them full of reminiscences and could supply him with enough gossip about bygone heroes to fill half a dozen ponderous tomes. While discussing the ever fresh story of famous cricket matches, an enthusiastic member told the writer last season that he could walk blindfold from the pavilion to the exact spot on the ground where the wicket was pitched in the historic match

twenty-one years ago, when the Australians suddenly leaped into fame by beating a powerful M.C.C. team in a single day.

The M.C.C. is the hub of the cricket universe. I am aware that I have previously called it the Mecca, but a variety of metaphors seem to come naturally when dealing with what the Hon. R. H. Lyttelton terms the great, glorious, and unsurpassable subject of cricket. The Australians would rather win the match played at Lord's than any of the other test matches. No matter what the performances of the team elsewhere, no visit of the Colonials would be considered a failure if it were illumined by a victory over England at Lord's. But, by a curious perversity of fate, Lord's has never proved a happy hunting ground to any of the Australian elevens. Of the seven matches against England played on the ground of St. John's Wood Road, only one, that in 1888, has been won by the Australians. Moreover, except in 1878, they have never succeeded in beating a team of the M.C.C. at headquarters. The two most terrible disasters that have ever befallen Australian and English cricket are associated with Lord's. In 1878 the first Australian team dismissed an eleven of the M.C.C. for a paltry nineteen, and it is still fresh in everyone's memory how, after waiting

eighteen years for revenge, the M.C.C. got rid of the last Australian eleven for eighteen runs, the smallest score ever made by an Australian eleven in this country.

By the courtesy of Mr. F. E. Lacey, the secretary of the M.C.C., the writer a few weeks ago was allowed to explore with a camera the inmost recesses of the pavilion at Lord's. Though it is known as the pavilion, it is in reality a most capacious clubhouse. Every cricket lover, among Londoners at any rate, is familiar with the external appearance of the famous building,



BATS, FORMERLY THE PROPERTY OF LORD BESSBOROUGH, THE HARROW COACH, AND MERCER.
Now in the Pavilion at Lord's.

but an acquaintance with its interior is rigidly reserved for members and their friends. To the inexperienced eye the large room shown in our last photograph looks like what the young lady novelist would describe as the banqueting room in a baronial hall. As a matter of fact this room is not devoted to banqueting at all, baronial or otherwise. It is simply a gigantic lounge room, where the members do mostly congregate on the occasion of a big match when the icy zephyrs of our English summer

make sitting on the benches outside too risky an amusement. From the windows in this room a perfect view is to be had of the playing portion of the ground and all that thereon is.

Every room in the pavilion is lavishly decorated with interesting cricket pictures, some of which are reproduced here. The print of the match between teams composed of one-armed and one-legged cricketers—such a match was actually played about ninety years ago—is absolutely unique. Then, in the bar, there is a photograph of a mixed team of Englishmen and Fiji Islanders. The Fijians, whose cricket costume looks something like a cross between bathing raiment and a footballer's garb, rejoice in such mouth-filling names as Nailovolovo, Tuisawan, Epeli, and Kadavulevu. Beside these oddments there are cricketing sketches by Mr. G. F. Watts, and portraits of all the presidents of the Club from its foundation till the reign of Mr. Alfred Lyttelton, in the present year of grace.

In Mr. Lacey's room stand three bats, two of which will always be regarded with interest by every old Harrovian. They used to belong to Lord Bessborough, who coached the Harrow boys for so many years and who was one of the founders of the Zingari, and from their appearance probably saw a great deal of active service in his hands; one of these bats, it will be observed, is much smaller than the other. The third is a left-handed bat which was at one time the property of Mercer, a batsman who some time in the Dark Ages used to make a lot of runs for Kent. In this room there is also an interesting cricket card containing the details of the record score of 1,094 made by Melbourne University against Essendon in Australia, in March last year.

The antiquarian, however, who visits Lord's pavilion will probably pause longest before two cases of bats which stand in the room of one of Mr. Lacey's assistants. One of these cases, containing bats belonging to the Scott family, was presented to the M.C.C. by the Duke of Buccleuch. Some of these bats date back nearly a hundred and fifty years, and most of them have been eaten by worms into a state of unsubstantial hollowness. The case in which they are preserved is, as far as possible, air-tight, and my request that the bats should be taken out, so that they could be photographed individually, was peremptorily refused on the very reasonable ground that they would very possibly dissolve into dust on being exposed to the air. One

very remarkable bat belonging to a member of the Buccleuch family is absent from the collection—the bat with which Lord George Scott made his historic score of 100 in the Oxford and Cambridge match of 1887.

The bats in the other case are also worm-eaten and jet black with age. Many of them were once wielded by the heroes of the cricket field a hundred years ago, but undoubtedly the most interesting in this collection is Fuller Pilch's bat. For the benefit of those readers of the WINDSOR who may not be versed in cricket lore it may perhaps be explained that Fuller Pilch was probably the finest all-round cricketer in the world seventy years ago. He was the originator of what is known as "forward play," and it was largely owing to him that Kent obtained her pre-eminence among the cricket counties half a century ago. He was

born in 1803, and died in 1870, so that it is quite possible that some of the older of the present generation of players may have actually seen him bat. Pilch's only real rival was

Alfred Mynn. Those were the days of single wicket matches, and in this form of the game each of them could overcome with ease and affluence any antagonist rash enough to challenge either of them. A match between the two champions would have been regarded with as much interest as a match between England and Australia at the present day, but either because they both belonged to the same county, or because each was afraid of the other, such a match never came off.

Pilch and Mynn must have been to Kent in those days what the Graces were afterwards to Gloucestershire.

And with five such mighty cricketers 'twas but natural to win,
As Felix, Wenman, Hillyer, Fuller Pilch, and Alfred Mynn.

The M.C.C. celebrated its centenary in 1887, as all cricket enthusiasts remember,

and consequently is 112 years old. In the beginning it was an offshoot of White Conduit Club, which in the latter half of the last century was the most important cricket club in London. One Thomas Lord was engaged at that club in the dual capacity of half attendant and half bowler. Dissensions however, arose among the members, and Lord was requested to prospect the neighbourhood for a new ground. The ground he finally selected was the space which is now known as Dorset Square. Thither the schismatics followed him, and Lord's ground came into being. At the outset of its career the M.C.C. was thus simply a proprietary club "bossed" by Lord. The Club kept its habitation for two years at Dorset Square, when, in consequence of a demand for an increased rent from the landlord, it changed its site to North Bank, a position some few

hundred yards distant from where Lord's at present stands. At North Bank the Club remained for a very brief period before it removed to its present abode.

Just eleven years after this last migration of the Club it was threatened with sudden dissolution owing to Lord's resolve to sell the remainder of his lease to a firm of jerry builders, or whatever was the equivalent in 1825 of the modern exploiter in cheap bricks and mortar. However, this disaster was averted temporarily by the patriotism of a Mr. Ward, one of the members, who purchased the remainder of his lease from Lord at an exorbitant figure. Lord, it may be remarked parenthetically, was of Scotch descent. Five years later, for reasons which need not be entered upon here, Mr. Ward sold the unexpired portion of his lease to Dark, who in his turn disposed of it to the committee in 1863 for £11,000. Even then the Club was not altogether out of the wood, for on the expiration of the term for which the committee rented the ground, the ground landlord would have ousted the Club and all its belongings, had not one of



MR. THOMAS LORD, THE ORIGINAL PROPRIETOR OF LORD'S CRICKET GROUND, AND HIS WIFE.

From a print, presented to M.C.C. by Mr. Walter Townsend, 1897, and now hanging in the Pavilion at Lord's.

the members again come to the rescue, and by advancing the committee the necessary purchase money enabled them to secure final possession of the much-bid-for cricket ground.

Trouble with the landlord was by no means the only difficulty the M.C.C. had to struggle with in the days of its infancy. In 1825, immediately after a Winchester and Harrow match, the pavilion was burned. The burning of the Alexandrian Library was nothing compared with the wholesale destruction of cricket records on this melancholy occasion. Many of Lord's account books

nothing autocratic about the committee; no change in the laws is ever made until it has been fully ascertained that such a change is unanimously demanded by all the county clubs in the country.

The wickets at Lord's are now almost uniformly good—*i.e.*, favourable to the batsmen; but this wasn't always the case, and some years ago a "regular Lord's wicket" was a synonym among cricketers for a bowler's harvest. The founders of the Club seem to have been enamoured of the turf of the old ground at Dorset Square. Anyhow, they



A MIXED TEAM OF ENGLISH AND FIJI ISLAND CRICKETERS.

From a print now hanging in the Pavilion at Lord's.

and ledgers were also swallowed up in the flames, and it was probably this sudden loss which prompted him to recoup himself by selling his lease of the ground to the highest bidder.

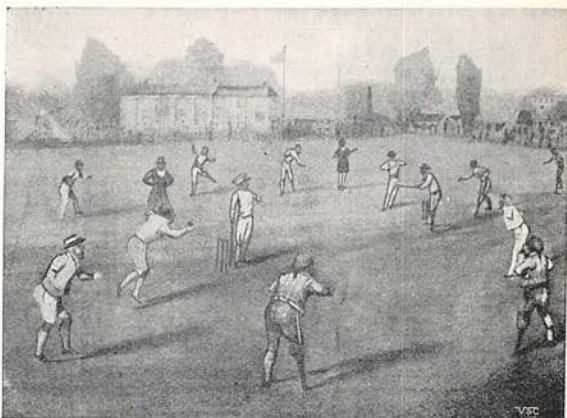
No body exercises more unlimited sway than the M.C.C. It is the parliament of cricket, but requires no policemen to enforce its laws. The constitution of the Club is absolutely informal; there is nothing to prevent any club from arranging to play *not* according to M.C.C. rules. But just because its rule is so light rebellion against its decrees is never dreamed of. There is

brought it with them when they removed to North Bank, and transferred it again from there to the present ground. Batting at Lord's cannot have been half so pleasant an occupation thirty years ago as it is to-day. W. G. Grace often tells of an experience he had while playing for the M.C.C. against Yorkshire in 1870. The bowling was bumping and kicking in the most unexpected directions. Most of the players were literally black and blue before the game ended, and one ball hit W. G. so hard on the elbow that it flew up into the air and gave him time to score a run before it descended. It is on

record that in one Gentlemen *v.* Players match the Gentlemen owed their victory entirely to the fast bowling of Mr. Harvey Fellows, who, finding an old-fashioned Lord's wicket, first hurt his opponents and then got them out.

Whatever may have been the early troubles of the Club, the M.C.C. has bidden a long good-bye to all financial fears. Its income is over £30,000 a year, and the committee could easily double this sum if they wished by extending the list of membership. At the time the new pavilion was built it was thought desirable to raise £10,000 by admitting a hundred members on payment of £100 each. The difficulty was not to find a hundred persons willing to avail themselves of this opportunity for membership, but to select the hundred from the numbers who applied. At the present day, under ordinary circumstances, no one can hope to be elected for at least thirty years after his name has been put down for membership, so largely does the demand exceed the supply. Of course special provision is made for the election of promising young cricketers, and youthful Blues, or any young amateurs who have proved their worth, are always sure of immediate election.

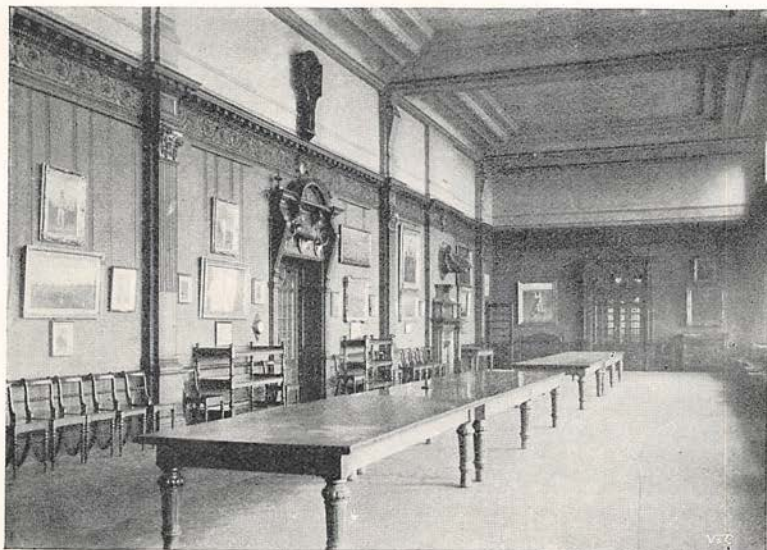
Over forty professionals are engaged at



A CRICKET MATCH BETWEEN ONE-ARMED AND ONE-LEGGED CRICKETERS NINETY YEARS AGO.

From a print by Halcken, Senior, now hanging in the Pavilion at Lord's.

Lord's, many of whom earn as much as £10 a week. The ground bowlers are paid from thirty shillings to £2 10s. a week, and these wages are, of course, largely supplemented by tips. For country matches the professionals receive £6 a match, and £3 for each match played at Lord's. The M.C.C. defray the expenses of all the county teams which play against the Club at Lord's, but when an M.C.C. team travels to play a match against a county, all its necessary expenses are paid out of the Club's exchequer.



THE LOUNGE IN THE PAVILION.