

With Bat and Ball in Olde New Zealand

New Zealand batsmanship (we are told on the eve of the Dunedin Test) has slumped gravely. To counter any undue alarm and despondency we offer here some evidence that it once was worse

THE English team has just arrived at Dunedin after a triumphal tour of Australia and now has put Otago in to bat first. Jackson, England's fast bowler, begins with a maiden over against the Fleming-Morris combination. With rather excessive optimism, the *Otago Daily Times* reporter writes dynamically, "This favourable commencement, though of a negative character, inspired the hope that Otago might make a stand." But alas! Poor Yorker! Fleming is bowled by a "shooter" while Morris tragically "interposed his leg between the ball and the wicket."

In that first innings of Otago, six wickets fall for 18, then eight for 23. But the home team rallies and fights back, and by the time the fourteenth wicket of the first Otago innings falls, 65 runs are on the board. (At least they would be there if there was a board.) Then it is nineteen wickets down for 67. Finally all are out for 71. It is the Englishmen's turn to bat but the pitch is rough. Possibly it would be a good idea to shift it over a bit. It seems flatter. So the pitch is shifted and the game goes on. (There's no question of Otagoans watering their pitches like some people we have heard rumour of—they just shift it instead.)

Perhaps we should point out that the date of this rather slaphappy match was February 2, 1864; the All England XI was that of George Parr; and in order to shorten the odds Otago was allowed to field a team of 22 men. Nevertheless, England won the match with nine wickets in hand, then drew with a combined Otago-Canterbury XXII, beat a Canterbury XXII at Hagley Park, and finally went back to Dunedin for still another win.

Officials in charge of the reception for the 1955 visiting M.C.C. team could well ponder the reports in the *Otago Daily Times* during January-February, 1864. The tactics employed were most cunning.

The assault began the moment the visitors arrived. Mr. Mumford (of the Port Chalmers club), Mr. Kissling (Dunedin club), Mr. Lakeman (North Dunedin), Mr. E. T. Gillon (Tokomairiro), Mr. Toms (Port Chalmers again), Mr. Rees (Wakatipu)—all of them presented addresses of welcome to which Mr. Parr replied. He asked that the deficiencies of his speech be excused as they were due to nervousness which, in turn, was due to an attack of erysipelas. But, reading between the lines, it is easy to see that the Englishmen were already cracking under the strain of a Scottish welcome.

Nor was the pace allowed to slacken. A lunch was now put on, followed by toasts to the Englishmen, to the Otagoans and so on. One especially of the Otago men must have been worth his weight in gold—a fine filibusterer, always throwing speeches at the cowering Sassenachs. Then came another staggering assault on the visiting Eleven. They had to be part of a procession from Port Chalmers, where they landed, up to Dunedin. The order of march was: Two mounted troopers, a party of horsemen from Port Chalmers, the Port Chalmers club, the All England team, in a coach drawn by six white horses and driven by "Cabbage Tree Ned," Mr. Shadrach Jones in his private carriage (for Mr. Jones is an important man, being both promoter of the tour and publican of the Provincial Hotel); then the match committee, the Dunedin club, the North Dunedin club, the Tokomairiro club, two coaches of cricketers, citizens in private vehicles all well decorated, and



horsemen three abreast—a wild gathering of Scots sufficient to strike terror in any English breast. And not content with that intimidation, the city fathers arranged for a strong gale of wind with attendant duststorms to throw them off balance.

Incidentally, those winds had destroyed a cottage past which the procession travelled and the *Daily Times* observed with cold-blooded humour calculated further to horrify the visitors, "a woman stood beside the ruins but seemed neither to participate in nor understand the enthusiasm of the merry throng."

Once the Englishmen had been battered by heavy speeches and softened up by heavier dinners, the artists of the city took over, and set about giving the visitors an exaggerated idea of their own importance. One poet in the *Daily Times* subtly turned their head with these magnificent lines:

We welcome those
As friendly foes;
While manly arts prevail
Their claim must be
"Supremacy"—
Eleven of England, Hail!

And in addition to that masterpiece Wm. Hayden Flood further turned their head with a specially composed piece of dance music, "The New Zealand Cricket Polka," the first piece of music, incidentally, ever to be printed in Dunedin.

During the matches the Otagoans made no let up either on or off the field. There were speeches at the midday meal which the *Daily Times*, for once, did not have the space to reprint in full; there were speeches and presentations of bats to all and sundry between matches; there was even a farewell bombardment of speeches before the visitors left for Canterbury, which only goes to show that Otago has always been willing to help her northern sisters (though seldom was her helping hand appreciated).

Incidentally, two quotations from the *Daily Times* may be of interest to those present Otagoans who have been brought up to believe that they aren't half the men their forefathers were, morally, mentally or physically. "Owing to a very heavy sweep (worth ten guineas) having been drawn (the previous day in the hotel Provincial) on the highest scorer, great interest was felt as to the man"; and secondly, "The ground was kept by the police but not the smallest disturbance occurred"—there's something sinister there!

The most interesting of the visiting cricketers was no doubt Dr. E. M. Grace. His biographer, F. S. Ashley-Cooper, remarks that "when he left England he was the greatest player in the world; but soon after he returned he found him-

self surpassed by his brother, W.G." His scores in these matches (against 22 men, remember, on a crude pitch which "owing to the spongy swamp beneath it, literally trembles at every step") were 24, 26 not out, 42, 0 (bowled by Wills of Canterbury), and 10. It was of the second score that the *Otago Daily Times* could write: "It may be presumption to set down any score that Dr. Grace made as a fluke, but . . ."

With that "but" ringing in his ears, the reader can now set about a discussion, "Of course, you can't take it away from Tyson, he's good, but . . ."

Left: The English XI plays a Canterbury XXII at Hagley Park in 1864. Note the mounted constabulary.

