



## **Cricket Island Style**      Arthur

THIS IS THE STORY OF ARTHUR GRIMBLE AND HIS TIME IN THE GILBERT AND ELLICE [ISLANDS. IN](#) 1913, HE WAS GRANTED A CADETSHIP TO WORK FOR THE COLONIAL OFFICE IN THE ISLANDS WHICH ARE SPREAD OVER FIVE HUNDRED MILES OF THE PACIFIC BETWEEN NEW ZEALAND AND HAWAII. GRIMBLE DESCRIBES HIMSELF AS A TALLISH, PINKISH, LONGNOSED YOUNG MAN, FANTASTICALLY THIN-LEGGED AND MILD OF MANNER, BUT WITH A PASSION FOR SEA TRAVEL. AFTER THE INTERVIEW FOR THE POST, HE FOUND OUT THAT HE WAS THE ONLY ONE TO APPLY FOR THE JOB, BUT HE REFUSED TO BE DETERRED AND ON MARCH 6", 1914 HE SET SAIL WITH HIS NEWLY MARRIED WIFE OLIVIA.

To begin with Ocean island was to be my base and a man called Edward Eliot was to be my boss. He was the Resident Commissioner for all the islands and the first thing he asked me was whether I played cricket. When I said I liked it, he replied, "Well that's one good thing anyhow!"

One Saturday, he told me to give my first cricket lesson to twentytwo of the local workers. At the end of the practice, which had not proved very enthusiastic, I asked them if they would like to try again some time. "Sir," replied their spokesman with courtesy, "we shall be happy to come, if that is your wish."

I explained to him that there was no enforcement, but put it to him that the game was a good game. I asked him if he thought so too?

"Sir," he said "we do not wish to deceive you. It seems to us a very exhausting game. It makes our hearts die inside us."

After such a reply I naturally asked why, if that was the case, they were willing to have another go. He answered at last "On account of the overtime pay which the Government will give us for playing on its ground."

Those early teaching days provided some problems of umpiring, and there was one case where I remember no decision was ever reached. The problem arose from a mismatching of partners. Ari, a little quick man, and Bobo, a vast and sluggish giant, were in together when Ari hit what he judged to be an easy two. He proceeded to run two, paying as usual, not the slightest heed to his partner's movements. But the gigantic Bobo ran only one, with the result that both players were at Ari's original end when the ball was thrown in.

However that was not the end of matters. The ball was overthrown upon which, Ari hurled himself onto Bobo and pushed his great mass to start a second run before Ari himself careered away on his third. Bobo finished his second, but by that time Ari was back at his original place (having finished his fourth run) he started on his fifth one. However he collided with Bobo, who was making heavy work of his third in midpitch. Bobo collapsed there, Ari on top of Bobo, and Ari's original wicket was thrown down.

The question was which one of the two was out? In point of fact, it was Bobo whom

we sent back to the pavilion, but that was not an umpire's decision. Bobo was sent back because Ari's head had butted into his diaphragm and left him gasping for medical aid.

There was another case which was much discussed. A man called Abakuka was batting and he played a rising ball so that it span up his arm and by some fluke, lodged inside the yellow and purple shirt with which he was honouring our game. Swiftly, the wicket-keeper darted forward and grappled with him, intending to seize the ball and so catch him out.

After a severe struggle, Abakuka escaped and fled. The whole field gave chase and the fugitive, hampered by pads, was overtaken on the boundary. At that point they tried to retrieve the ball from his shirt-front by standing him on his head, but he still wouldn't let the ball go. Even though he was held by his feet, he resisted with such fury that it took all eleven members of the team to persuade the ball from his chest. After so gallant a fight, it would have been sad to judge him out. Fortunately we were saved the pain, as he was carried from the field on a stretcher.