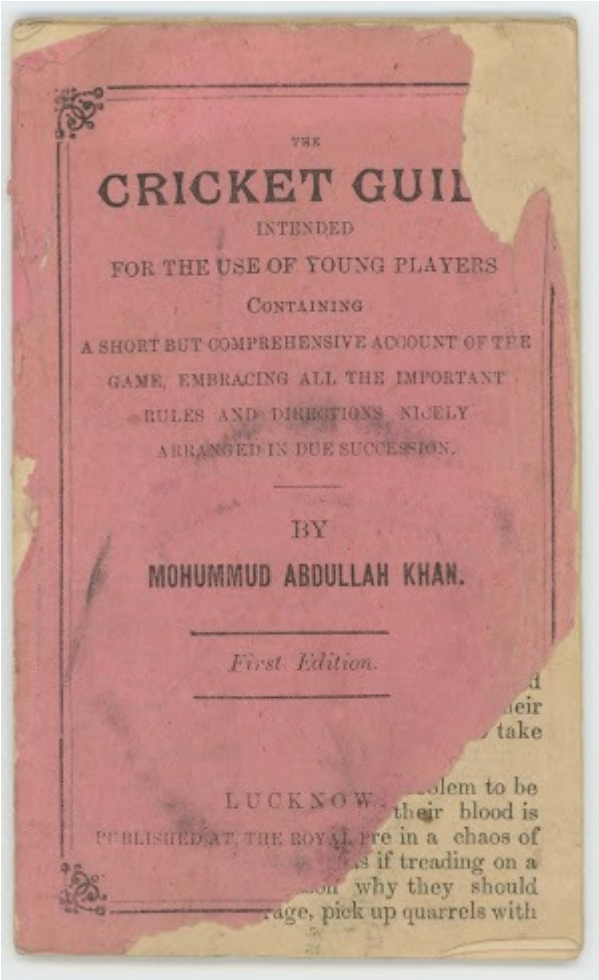
Twitter Thread by Abhishek Mukherjee

Abhishek Mukherjee
@ovshake42

I suppose a lot of us are still upset, so let me share something amusing.

This concerns this book, one that I had been unaware of until I came across a report by Andrew Lang in The Times.

In a piece in 1922, EV Lucas hailed the author as the Indian Nyren.
+



.@sumitganguly14 got a scan of the cover for me from an acquaintance in Lucknow.

I shall share some snippets here.

I shall share more if and when I ever get the entire book.

But first, a word or two on cricket books in India.
+

Calcutta Cricket Club Scores 1844-54, the first known book of scores outside the British Isles, was published in 1854.

In 1867 a Hindi coaching book was published in Agra. It was translated in Urdu in 1868.

In 1889, a Marathi coaching book was published in Baroda.
+

JM Framjee Patel's famous Stray Thoughts on Indian Cricket was published in 1905.

In between all this, this book came out in 1891. As you can see, it has a long name.

I shall refer to this as Cricket Guide.

Here are the promised excerpts, mostly taken from Lang's piece.
+

I am trying to add some comments. I also have some questions. See whether you can answer them.

Excerpt 1:
"Even those who are very good and noble turn so rash and inconsiderate at certain moments that their brains lose the balance and begin to take fallacious fancies."
+

I do not know what to make of this in cricketing context. This seems more out of a self-help book.

Excerpt 2:
"Devout lovers of the duty [of umpiring] call last but one at the fourth ball, a very common practice, although by mistake prevailing."
+

Five-ball overs, I must remind here. The umpire was supposed to announce the end of the fourth ball.

Maybe this used to be standard practice. It certainly seems helpful.
+

Excerpt 3:
"Each and every one of the umpires must avoid using insulting terms, or playing on bets, with any one of the fielders, in his capacity of being an umpire."

Was insulting cricketers commonplace for umpires? It would have been a refreshing revenge in reverse timeline.
+

Even if one ignores that part, was the bit on betting needed?

Was it really necessary to *legally* prevent the umpires from betting with fielders? Why? Did it usually happen?

Additionally, was it okay to bet with batsmen? Or the other umpire? How did this syndicate operate?
+

Excerpt 4:
"The fielders must take special care not to exchange jokes with one another or try funny tricks that do secretly divide their attention and produce a horrible defect in their fielding."

I do not like Mr Mohammad at all. :(
+

Excerpt 5:
"During one and the same over the bowler is allowed to change his ends as often as he may desire, but cannot possibly bowl two overs in succession."

First, some context. Until 1889, a bowler was allowed to bowl consecutive overs *twice* in an innings.
+

So some part of this makes sense.

But Mr Mohammad seems to have taken things a bit further.

But my favourite bit is "as often as he may desire".

Does this mean that he could bowl the five balls from alternate ends?
+

That would mean switching ends four times in an over, at different batsmen, with the field and umpires changing every time...

Excerpt 6:
"The bowler is allowed to make the batsman stand in any direction he may choose from the wicket he is bowling from."
+

How did this work? Could the batsman be made to face the wicketkeeper on demand?

Excerpt 7:
"Two trial balls are only allowed in every match to each party."

This is nice. Trial balls still exist in gully cricket, and back then, used to be in vogue in serious cricket as well.

+

In an attempt to inflict mental disintegration, Warwick Armstrong once bowled them for 19 minutes to keep a debutant Frank Woolley waiting.

Mr Mohammad puts an upper limit of two. He would have prevented Armstrong from doing what he did.
+

Excerpt 8:
"I would like this man [wicketkeeper] to be of a grave demeanour and humble mind, say the Captain of the Club, whose duties are to guide the fielders, order the change of their places if necessary guard himself well against the furious attacks of the sweeping balls.
+

Also
"He should also stand with the stumps under his arms."

I get the duties, the extra responsibilities, but what is with the demeanour and humility? Why should the others get away without being humble?

"Stumps under his arms" was probably poor phrasing.
+

Excerpt 9:
"He [the point fielder] must be a very smart and very clever man, of a quick sight and slender form. His place is in front of the popping-crease, about seven yards from the striker.
+

"He must take special care to protect his own person in case when fast bowling is raging through the field. Pay great attention to the game, my dear pointer, or suppose yourself already hurt."

At seven yards this is more of a silly point, but that is not the point (intended).
+

Why should he take special care when a fast bowler was bowling? Weren't silly points more at risk when spinners bowled?

Or was there a chance of the fast man bowling wide enough to decapitate the fielder?

Also, why should he be smart and clever?

And
WHY IS THIS A LAW?
+

Excerpt 10:
"The fielders must never sting the player with taunts, if they turn him out, for this often results in something disagreeable to

the human mind."

Spirit of Cricket, basically. I do not have a problem with this, because it is a law, and therefore not vague.
+

Excerpt 11:
"If one of the strikers is run out , then the remaining one must not leave his wicket, unless next player comes in, and even then both the parties must agree to the proposal of the striker leaving his position to complete his innings."
+

This one, I could not fathom. Can someone help me understand this?

Excerpt 12:
"Behave like gentlemen after the game is over; avoid clapping and laughing in faces of the persons you have defeated.
+

"If you are the Captain of your team and the fielders of the opposite party clap your welcome, you are required simply to turn or raise your night cap a little, and this is sufficient to prove your easy turn of disposition as well as to furnish the return of their compliments."
+

All that is fine, but did Indian cricketers of the era take field in nightcaps?

Excerpt 13:
"If you have any book to be signed by the captain of the opposite side, confessing his defeat by so many runs, please do it like men."

??????????????????????????