

Richard Cashman, *The "Demon" Spofforth*, (Kensington: New South Wales University Press, 1990). Bibliog., illus., index, notes, statistics, pp. xi + 275. \$34.95

This is a magisterial book. One is staggered at the sheer geography of Richard Cashman's research as he moves from 'home' territory such as the New South Wales Cricket Association Library to the Hampstead Club in London and the obscurities of the relatively newly-founded Humberside County Council, with many a stopping-point on the way. No bit of minutiae is taken on trust: its veracity is tested by the evidence of the documents. We have, therefore, a book for the cricket historian by a leading exponent of that academic genre. The footnoting is impeccable - a revelation of the vast treasury of nineteenth-century cricket archival material which awaits the avid and curious researcher. If a mere 'Pom' may say so, the Australians lead the field in their use of it: one does not easily match such names as Cashman, Sissons and Vamplew with their English equivalents. Nor, at the moment, do 'we' with Border, Taylor and Alderman.

I say a book for the cricket historian. Yes! But all cricket enthusiasts whose reading takes them beyond the trivia of the newest idol will find much to delight them. No more than I did, will they easily put it down. Perhaps there are times when Dr Cashman, in his mood of relentless quarrying away at his subject, allows himself to be drawn into by-ways which he over-burdens with people and activities. The text is tight so that the reader is allowed no more licence for leisure than the author allows himself.

A biography must stand on its own feet as a technical piece of writing. We must know how the general led his men, the politician proposed his policies and the cricketer destroyed his adversary. Dr Cashman is particularly good on Spofforth as a bowler, assessing the

judgement of contemporaries and recognising the difficulties of 'measurement' in cricket. Once the glamour is gone, the tinsel disregarded, the man no longer a public figure, the rest of a sportsman's life poses its own problems to the biographer. Len Hutton worked with flame-proof pulleys, Spofforth with tea. Neither excites the imagination but I found myself wanting to know more about the years with the London Star Tea Company especially when the author finds common ground with Spofforth's success in cricket and in business.

This book is well-presented with a good type-face. I found some of the art-work a little 'fussy' but maybe even that fits the Victorian (in chronological terms) which Spofforth was. The photographs must have taken some finding and a nice balance emerges of cricketer and family man. I never argue with statisticians and no doubt Rick Finlay has done his sums but I would have liked to have seen more of a 'break-down' by teams and Spofforth's career figures for Hampstead. The index works.

Like Grace, Spofforth has a claim to be one of the great Victorians carrying the ethic of talent-fulfillment and work-achievement in Edwardian years and beyond. It is nice to think that the man who vanquished the MCC at Lord's in 1878 (10 for 20) gave a gold medal to 'Stork' Hendry in 1921, and 'Stork' was there in the wings for Richard Cashman to interview. I read the book in Australia and wrote the review in England. Spofforth would have liked that - his two worlds. He would have liked much more of this definitive, judicial even awesome biography.

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