

THE NEW RULES

“ You mustn’t think,” warned Smithy, “ that soldiers are soft or silly, or easily got over, just because Nobby Clark’s got a way of takin’ ’em in.

“ Nobby’s got what I call an artful way, an’ there’s no doubt at all,” added Private Smith impressively, “ that what Nobby don’t know ain’t worth knowin’.

“ We was havin’ a talk the other night about cricket. Well, everybody knows that ‘ B ’ Company is the worst cricket company in the regiment, an’ the other chaps was chaffin’ me an’ Nobby about it.

“ ‘ Look ’ere, Spud,’ sez Nobby solemnly, ‘ when you talk about us not knowin’ how to play cricket you’re only showin’ up your ignorance. It’s you

that don't know how to play cricket—real cricket.'

" 'How so, Nobby?' sez Spud.

" 'Why,' sez Nobby, 'you chaps don't play accordin' to the new military rules.'

" 'What new rules?' sez Spud.

" So Nobby explained a few of the new rules for military players, an' everybody was very surprised to hear 'em.

" 'Where did you pick 'em up?' sez Spud suspiciously.

" 'When I was a referee,' 'e sez.

" 'You mean umpire,' sez Spud.

" 'It's called referee under the new rules,' sez Nobby calmly.

" 'It's my belief,' sez Spud Murphy, 'you don't know anything about the new rules.'

" 'Still,' explained Smithy, with an admiring wag of his head, 'it was easy to see that a lot of chaps believed old Nobby—especially chaps of our company

—when Nobby told 'em that if the game 'd been played under proper rules they wouldn't 'ave lost a match last year, an' the end of it was our company agreed to play 'G'—the best cricket company in the regiment—an' Nobby offered to be referee.

"Spud Murphy wanted two referees, but Nobby said that wasn't allowed under the new rules. So Spud 'ad to be content—although 'e grouched like anything an' refused to play for us.

" 'Let 'im play for 'G,' sez Nobby, and Spud was allowed to play for the other side.

"There was lots of bets on the game, an' Spud made a bit of row because he 'eard that Nobby was backin' 'B' Company very heavy.

" 'Umpires ain't allowed to bet,' sez Spud, an' Nobby referred 'im to the new rules. Spud went all over the town tryin'

to buy a book of the new rules, but couldn't.

"Everybody went over to the cricket ground to see the match, an' Nobby was there with a book under his arm.

"The other side won the toss, an' Crawley an' Spud Murphy was the first men in, an' I could see Spud didn't 'arf like it.

"None of your larks, Nobby,' sez Spud.

"Go on, my man,' sez Nobby very haughtily, 'attend to your business, an' don't talk to the referee.'

"If you give me out,' sez Spud, wettin' 'is hand, an' ketchin' hold of the bat, 'you just look out for yourself.'

"Out!' sez Nobby.

"What for?' roars Spud, an' all the chaps come runnin' up.

"I warn you off the field,' sez Nobby firmly, 'for threatenin' the referee.'

"There was an 'orrible row, an' one of the chaps went over an' brought Corporal Mason, who's a football referee, to decide it. 'E come over an' said 'e didn't know anything about cricket, but if Spud insulted the referee, 'e'd have to leave the field, which Spud did, amid loud cheers from 'B' Company.

"In one way an' another," said Smithy, "Nobby got all the 'G' chaps out for eleven.

"Spiky Brown was put out for hittin' a ball outside the boundary, old 'Ampshire Giles got run out naturally, Billy Pain was out for makin' remarks to the referee, two other chaps was out for hittin' the ball with the wrong side of the bat, an' the rest was out under one of Nobby's new rules.

"Me an' 'Appy Johnson was the first to bat for our side, an' Billy Pain was the bowler.

“ The first ball I got I just managed to touch, an’ it sort of glanced off my bat into Spud Murphy’s hands.

“ ‘ How’s that ? ’ yells Spud.

“ ‘ Not out ! ’ sez Nobby.

“ ‘ It is out ! ’ roars Spud, indignant.

“ ‘ What did you want to ask me for ? ’ sez Nobby, ‘ if you knew all about it ? Go on with the game.’

“ But they wouldn’t go on until Nobby explained the rule. It appears, by Nobby’s rule, a chap that’s been warned off the field by the referee ain’t allowed to get a man out, either by catchin’ or bowlin’.

“ ‘ It’s part of the punishment, Spud,’ sez Nobby sadly. ‘ I can’t help you, my poor feller ; I didn’t make the rules.’

“ ‘ I don’t know so much about that,’ sez Spud fiercely.

“ We went on with the game, an’

bimeby a ball came along an' sent my middle stump flyin'.

" 'How's that?' sez the bowler.

" Nobby hesitated for a bit an' looks at the stump, an' then looks at me. .

" 'How's that!' shouts 'G' Company, very wild.

" 'Out,' sez Nobby, 'quite out, by the rules of the game.'

" After this 'G' Company began to brighten up a bit; they could see there was something in Nobby's rules after all.

" There was a bit of a sensation in court, in a manner of speakin', a few minutes after, when 'Appy Johnson gave 'is bat a swing backward an' knocked the bails off.

" 'How's that?' shouts the wicket-keeper.

" 'Not out,' sez Nobby, very prompt.

" 'Why not?' shouts Spud Murphy. gettin' red in the face.

“ Nobby turns on him sternly.

“ ‘ I’ve ’ad to speak to you once before, young feller, an’ if I ’ave any more cheek from you, I’ll deal severely with you.’

“ ‘ But why ain’t ’Appy out?’ sez Spud, very persistent.

“ Nobby thought an’ thought, while everybody stood waitin’, an’ then, when ’e couldn’t think of anything to say, ’e sez :—

“ ‘ I refuse to discuss the matter ; go on with the game.’

“ ’Appy got out after a bit by bein’ clean bowled, an’ although Nobby said it was a ‘ no ball,’ ’e allowed ’Appy to go out, becous the other side was doin’ so badly.

“ The game stood eleven all when our last man, Dusty Miller, went in, an’ the excitement was intense.

“ Before the play started, Nobby

goes up to Dusty an' starts givin' him tips.

" 'What you want to do, Dusty,' sez Nobby, 'is to keep well in front of the wicket, an' if you see the ball comin' straight for the stumps, put your bat down so as it can't get past. Get a bye if possible, because that's easiest, an——'

" ' 'Ere!' interrupts Spud Murphy, who was gettin' quite vexed, ' 'ere, Nobby, you're the bloomin' umpire; you ain't allowed to give tips.'

" 'Ho! ain't I?' sez Nobby, indignant. 'Ain't allowed to give tips, when I've got four shillin's on the game?'

" 'No,' roars Spud.

" 'Proceed with the game,' sez Nobby politely, 'an' keep your face closed, Mr. Murphy, if you please.'

" 'Dusty did very well,' commended Smithy. "All the balls that come

straight for the wicket 'e stopped, either with his bat or with his leg, an' Nobby patted him on the back once and said 'Bravo.'

“ Then a nice slow ball come along, an' Dusty, bein' encouraged by what Nobby said, went 'arf way down the pitch to meet it.

“ 'E gave it such a sort of swingin' round-about cut an' drove it be'ind 'im.

“ It would 'ave got a boundary, only Nobby appeared to be standin' in the way.

“ The ball caught 'im in the middle of the chest, an' down dropped Nobby, blue in the face an' gaspin'.

“ We all gathered round, an' Gus Ward, who was lookin' on, gave Nobby some artificial what-do-you-call-it?—sort of dumb-bell exercise for drowned people.

“ Bimeby Nobby came round, an' 'e glares at Dusty.

" ' Are you 'urt, Nobby ? ' sez Dusty, anxious.

" "'Urt ! ' gasps Nobby faintly ; ' yes, I am, ' ' e sez, ' but you !—you're " out " an' warned orf the field by the new rules, ' ' e sez."

