

*William Golding's In Certamen Pilae (1706)*  
*Latin text: with an English translation and commentary*

by Duncan McLeish

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*Editor's note: this is the first part of a very interesting article which re-examines one of the early texts and offers some ideas*

### Introduction

William Golding's poem was first published 300 years ago in 1706. It would seem to be the earliest substantial extant description of a cricket match. It was written in Latin, in dactylic hexameters, perhaps because a Classical education was a *sine qua non* for an educated gentleman of that time. Such hexameters had most notably been used in Homer's epic Greek poems *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* on the Trojan War and its aftermath, and Virgil's Latin poem *The Aeneid*, on the same theme.

There have of course been various translations of the poem published, the two best known appearing in the early 1920s, by Harold Perry and P.F. Thomas, to which I make due acknowledgment. These are verse translations, and very good ones, though I feel that at times attention was paid to the dictates of poetical convention rather than to giving a strictly literal translation; of which more anon.

The poem's author, William Golding, was educated at Eton College and then, from 1700, at Cambridge University. Most of his life, until his death in 1747, was spent in Gloucestershire. It is not known why he produced the poem, but I am prepared to hazard a guess. He wished to show that it was possible to write a poem in heroic style and language, namely Latin hexameters, on a contemporary early eighteenth century theme, one unconnected in time or nature with the great legends of Greece and Rome. Apart from his study of Classics at Cambridge, he may have become familiar with cricket there, though the first mention of the game there dates from 1710.

It is noticeable that throughout the poem Goldwin avoids 'dog' Latin terms such as *cricketus*, *baila*, *stumpi*; and sticks entirely to such Latin words as can be found in the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, apart from two minor exceptions, as noted in the commentary. 'Classical' Latin terms are found to denote bail, stumps, batsman etc, while making clear what exactly the poet means. With regard to such things as dimensions of stumps, field placings etc the poet gives no precise details. Perhaps there were none; and the poet's silence on certain matters speaks volumes to modern readers as to how the game may have been played c 1700.

Also Goldwin describes these relatively humdrum, unimportant events in mock heroic terms; again as noted in the commentary. Having achieved all that, he brings his poem, quite abruptly, to a triumphant conclusion, signifying perhaps that he was satisfied that he had proved his point and could thus sign off.

To whom was he making the point? Was it to some schoolboys to show how it was possible to apply a 'dead' language to a modern sport without undue distortion? Or perhaps to some friends, perhaps even to win a bet as to whether such a poem was possible? Or to satisfy his own intellect? Or even to glorify the comparatively young

game of cricket? I leave it to readers to decide whether he has been successful in his poetic efforts and I have been successful in explaining these efforts.

I have chosen to translate the Latin verse into English prose; firstly because I felt that, on this occasion, expressing the meaning clearly was more important than paying attention to such matters as metre and rhyme. This latter consideration has perhaps led translators into straying slightly from the literal sense of the Latin; though of course no criticism of them is implied, for in general they are clear enough as to what is meant. Secondly, while I may or may not be a competent translator, exegete or historian, I am most certainly a bad poet; not that the latter consideration has stopped some from writing poetry on cricket.

It is the aim of the perfect translation to present the original author's meaning clearly in the language into which it is translated, while reflecting the idiom of the latter. If I have strayed, I have done so towards a literal translation, for the above reasons. While I have tried to make the line numbering of the English translation correspond with that of the Latin, in some cases such a correspondence can only be approximate.

In matters of cricketing history I have drawn largely on the work of Peter Wynne-Thomas, particularly his *The History of Cricket* (1997). Of course the responsibility for the historical remarks in the commentary lies entirely with me, as does that for the translation and exegesis as a whole. The commentary is not meant to be exhaustive, and matters have been raised on which further clarification, comment and information would be most welcome. Any omissions too should be made good.

Since the poet's use of capital letters in his text seems somewhat arbitrary, I have settled the problem by following the modern convention of printing Latin texts and used capital letters in proper names only. However, I have retained the 'English' convention of showing consonantal *i* and *u* as *j* and *v* respectively. In the translation a few words appear in brackets. These do not strictly appear the Latin text, but have been inserted in order to make the poet's meaning clear in the English translation. Finally I have broken the poem down into sections for ease of treatment, but of course the reader may read it through in one block should he or she so desire; and similarly with the translation and commentary.

### Lines 1-6

in certamen pilae  
vere novo, cum temperies liquidissima coeli  
arridet, suadetque virentis gratia terrae  
veloces agitare pedes super aequora campi;  
lecta cohors juvenum, baculis armata repandis  
quos habiles ludo manus ingeniosa polivit,  
in campum descendit ovans; sua gloria cuique.

### *On the Ball Game*

*At the beginning of spring, when the clear and mild weather  
smiles forth, and the pleasantness of the green countryside urges*

*our feet to make speed on the level plain,  
a select band of young men, equipped with curved sticks  
which a talented hand has made smooth and fit for sport,  
goes down rejoicing into the field; each one has his own style.*

Note that Goldwin does not entitle his poem **in certamen cricketi** or some such 'dog' Latin expression. He sticks almost wholly to terms which can be found in any dictionary of 'Classical' Latin; which tends to reaffirm that this is a serious attempt to portray a current sporting event, with its technical terms etc, in the Latin of Cicero and Virgil of the first century BC.

01 **vere novo**: *early spring or the beginning of spring* would perhaps suggest to us early March, but that seems unlikely in this case; particularly so as c 1700 it would appear that winters were longer and harder than they are now. While there is a reference to a cricket match on Clapham Common in March 1700, I would be inclined to suggest April at the earliest; and *green countryside* would tend to support that.

03 **campi**: **campus** means field or level stretch of ground; **aequora** is added to emphasise its flatness.

04 **juvenum**: **juvenis** is usually translated as a young man, usually between the ages of 15 and 30, as far as the Romans were concerned; though perhaps the youths here were towards the lower than the upper age.

They were a *select* group: selected by whom? Perhaps the selection was done by grown ups trying to arrange some formal game, or it could have been less formal, with two leading players as 'captains' bringing along their friends. Though schoolboys are known to have played the game 150 years earlier, and some public schools were playing the game formally by 1706, it is unlikely that it would be an inter-school match. Could it then be between villages or districts? Lines 39-40 suggest that the sides were not picked beforehand, but only after the rules had been settled and other arrangements made. So perhaps *select* is used in a very general way.

**baculis**: **baculus/um** can mean a stick in general, but obviously here would imply a thicker and heavier piece of wood that could be shaped into a curve as required. Dr Littleton's Latin dictionary of 1678 uses **baculi** and **pilae** for **bats and balls** respectively. Bats nowadays are made of willow, but there is no mention in the poem of the wood concerned, though Latin had the word **salix** to denote the willow.

05 **polivit**: **polire** can mean to smooth or to polish. The bats might be smoothed to make them *fit for sport*, but were they polished as well? Would some agent, like the later linseed oil, be used to polish and preserve the wood?

06 **ovans**: suggests noise and exultation; perhaps it is the first outing of the year. **gloria**: could cover a number of meanings. It could be the youths' physical attributes, or their style of play, or their particular talents, or their sporting prowess in general. *Style* perhaps covers most of these.

#### Lines 7-13

hic magis aptus humum celeri transmittere planta,  
et vigilante oculo variis discursibus omnes,

ire redire vias; longe torquere per auras

10 doctior ille pilam, atque adversos rumpere ventos;  
tertius arte valet quo non praestantior alter  
per sola plana orbem dextrae libramine iusto  
fundere, qui rapido cursu praeverteret ictum.

*One is more skilled at covering the ground swift-footedly,  
and with watchful eye and with varied steps, going  
to and fro in all directions; another is more skilled at hurling the ball a long way  
10 through the air to split the contrary winds;  
a third, whom no rival surpasses, is strong in the art  
of sending the ball over the level ground with perfect balance from his right hand  
to frustrate the shot with its rapid pace.*

07ff: the poet then goes on to describe the skills of the fielding side; first the one talented at rushing around the field, then the one with the powerful arm, then the right-arm pace bowler. The first has to have a keen eye, as well as being agile, nimble and swift on his feet. The second has a powerful arm that can throw the ball a long way; in fact it literally bursts, **rumpere**, through the wind against it.

11ff: the bowler has to have perfect balance. The word used for balance, **libramen**, is not found in the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, but it would seem to be a late Latin or poetical equivalent of **libramentum**.

The ball is to go over *the level ground*. The bowling of course would be underarm at this time. So **per** could mean that the ball ran along the ground as in bowls, or over it some inches above it before pitching. At any rate the speed of the ball is such that it prevents the bat making any contact with it.

#### Lines 14-22

adventum excipiunt manus adversaria laetis  
15 alloquiis nectuntque moras; mox iurgia miscent  
civilesque iras, quod vult imponere ludo  
quisque suas leges. Nestor cui cana senectus  
conciliat cultum turbae veniamque loquendi,  
se densae immiscens plebi vice fungitur aequi  
20 iudicis, et quamquam positis campestribus armis  
iamdudum indulsit senio, non immemor artis  
proponit iustas leges, et temperat iras.

*A group from the other side welcomes their arrival with  
15 joyful cheers; and causes delays. Soon they are mingling quarrels  
and mutual rage, as each (group) wants to impose  
its own rules on the game. A Nestor, whose grey-haired age  
wins the mob's respect and the leave to speak,  
mingles with the dense mass and performs the office of a fair*

20 judge; and, although he has long laid aside his sporting gear  
and has given himself up to old age, he is not unmindful of his experience;  
and puts forward fair rules and moderates their wrath.

14: **manus**: is a singular subject but it is followed by plural verbs. Of course *side* implies a number of persons; which would partly explain the plural verbs, though metrical convenience is perhaps a more important factor.

While the groups are pleased to see each other, their mutual encouragement soon dissolves into a dispute about the rules of the game, even though the sides have not yet been picked. It would seem that just about every locality at this time could have had its own version of the rules. There probably would have been 'core' ones that applied to all versions, but there would also be 'local' rules. The first published set of Laws did not appear until 1744, and possibly even then it did not have universal application. That may not have applied fully until the Star and Garter Club's revision in 1774, and then the advent of Marylebone Cricket Club as guardian of the Laws.

One suspects that such quarrels were not uncommon in early cricket, for the poet seems unsurprised and untroubled by them.

17: Nestor was one of the Greek heroes at the Trojan War, as described in Homer's *The Iliad*. He was long past the age for active combat, but was much valued as an adviser; hence the application of his name to the retired, but still respected cricketer. However, like Nestor, he may have been a bit of a bore with his stories of the old days.

19: The old man has no hesitation in going into the crowd and making his opinions known. Nowadays the plebs would be regarded as a mob of the lower classes, or the common herd. Here it is probably just the crowd in general, for there is really no indication of social status.

20: The old man's equipment was **campestris**: of the field. Again there is the use of a term that implies cricket, but does not mention it directly. He uses his past experience to settle the present dispute about the laws, in a sufficiently fair manner to satisfy both parties.

#### Lines 23-32

deinde locum signant, qua se diffundit in aequor  
plana superficies; hinc illinc partibus aequae  
25 oppositis bifido surgentes vertice furcae  
erectas modicum quas distinet intervallum  
infiguntur humo; tum virgula ponitur alba,  
virgula, qua dubii certaminis alea pendet,  
et bene defendi poscit: coriaceus orbis  
30 vi ruit infesta, quam si fortuna maligna  
dirigit in rectum, subversaue machina fulcris  
abripitur, cedas positus inglorius armis.

Then they mark out a pitch, where the level surface stretches  
flat all round; at this spot and that, directly  
25 opposite each other, two sticks, forked at the top,  
which a short distance separates, are set upright in the ground.  
Then a white twig is placed (upon them),  
a twig on which the outcome of a close contest depends  
and (which) requires to be carefully defended: the leather covered ball  
30 rushes on with hostile power; if evil fortune  
directs it in a straight line, and the device is toppled and snatched  
from its supports, you may lay aside your gear and depart ingloriously.

23: They are fortunate enough to find a level pitch with a surrounding flat area for an outfield. No mention is made of the distance between the two sets of wickets, or of the distance between the stumps, though there were roughly equivalent Latin terms for yards, feet and inches; perhaps there were no standardised distances at that time.

25: Nor does the poet invent special terms for stumps and bails, but uses standard Latin words, which, however, are clear as to their meaning with regard to cricket. The stumps may have been of ash as in later years; again the Latin word for ash, **fraxinus**, is not used. However, it may well be that they were any suitably forked sticks of the appropriate length.

There is no mention of a hole in the ground between the stumps, as there is in Nyren, where the fielder has to put the ball in order to run out the batsmen.

26: This line, unusually, has a spondee in the fifth foot. Such a device was normally used for some effect, but that does not seem to be the case here.

27: The bail, **virgula**, again may have been of the later ash or box, but again no particular wood is specified. It is noted as being *white*, but it is unlikely that it would have been painted that colour; perhaps the bark had been stripped from it, or it was of some lighter kind of wood.

28: The bail is equated with **alea**, a game of hazard. The outcome of the match will depend on whether the ball makes sufficient contact with stumps or bail to make the latter fall. Perhaps to emphasise its importance, **virgula** is repeated. The ball could of course pass between the stumps and under the bail without dislodging anything, hence the idea of chance; which was to be largely precluded later by the addition of a third stump.

At any rate, as the bail's fall meant that the batsman was out, it was the most important part of the structure and had to be properly defended. Dr Littleton had used **vibia** as depicting a crossbar, like 'the cricket-bar at bat-play'.

29: **coriaceus**: **corum** means leather, **coriarius** and **coriaceus** being the adjectives from it. Again **coriaceus** is not found in Classical Latin, but this later form is easily enough understood.

31: **machina**: would appear to refer to refer to the bail as it is hit by the ball and dislodged from the stumps, **fulcris**.

32: **armis**: The plural would suggest various items of equipment, but at that time it is unlikely that the *gear* would amount to anything more than a bat; pads etc being at least a century away.

### Lines 33-38

stant moderatores bini stationibus aptis  
fustibus innixi, quos certo attingere pulsu  
35 lex iubet, aut operam cursus perdemus inanem.  
parte alia, visus qua libera copia detur,  
parvo in colle sedent duo pectora fida, parata  
cultellis numerum crescentem incidere ligno.

*Two umpires stand in suitable spots,  
leaning on their staffs, which the law orders that we touch  
35 with definite force, or else we make the reward for our run empty and in vain.  
At another spot, where a clear line of sight may be given,  
on a low mound sit two trusty-hearted (fellows), ready  
to cut the increasing score on their sticks with their penknives.*

33: The poet now turns to the officials. **moderatores** can reasonably be translated as umpires. They stand at appropriate spots. These spots would appear to be near each set of stumps, for the batsmen, as demanded by the laws of the game, have properly to touch the umpires' staffs at the end of each run for it to count. Presumably then one umpire is not standing at square leg.

34: The umpires' staffs are described as **fustes**, often translated as cudgels or clubs. Here the meaning is probably less warlike, perhaps just rough-hewn sticks. At any rate they would have to stand up to rough blows from the bat as the batsman turned.

It is possible that **quos**, being grammatically masculine and plural, could refer to the umpires themselves, but that is unlikely because of the risk of injury.

It is also possible that **atingere** means simply to reach the umpires, perhaps grounding the bat on some rudimentary crease. However, that seems unlikely. Indeed the poet makes no mention of creases of any kind; though that need not necessarily preclude their existence then.

36: The scorers are also in a suitable spot to get a good view of the game. There being no boundaries to the field of play other than natural ones, their choice of spot would be one of preference, and possibly closer to the play than some of the fielders. The fact that in this case it was a small mound would not be seen as an impediment to play.

37: The scorers, perhaps conventionally, had to be *trusty* fellows, and presumably also nimble-fingered if there was a burst of scoring; carelessness could result in more than getting the scores wrong.

*The second part of this article will appear in the December edition of the Journal.*

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*This is the second part of Duncan McLeish's article offering a new translation, continued from the Autumn edition*

Lines 39-50

tum certatores digitis capita aequa recensent  
40 ordine dispositi: medias it nummus in auras  
arbitet et primas partes decernit agendas  
aut his, aut aliis. nondum discrimine coepto  
stant in procinctu juvenes; dum cautior ille  
mittere cui data cura pilam, rursusque remissam  
45 effugio prohibere, manu alterutraque tenaci  
excipere attactam, praescripta ad munia jussit.  
en! quali studio sese disponit! ut acres  
excubias agitat circum diffusa juvenus  
exspectans ludi monitum, trepidantia haurit  
50 corda pavor pulsans, famaеque arrecta cupido.

*Then, when the players have been arranged in line, they point out and choose  
40 two equal sides. A coin goes high in the air  
as an arbiter and decides who is to play the first innings,  
this side or that. Though the game has not yet started,  
the young fellows stand ready for the fray. The more serious is the one  
who has been given the task of bowling the ball and stopping its flight  
45 when it is hit back again to him, and with either hand grabbing and holding  
it tight; he has (also) ordered (the others) to their prescribed duties.  
See, how eagerly he makes his own arrangement, as around him  
the young men spread out and keep eager watch  
in expectation of the command to play, and a throbbing nervousness fills  
50 their fearful hearts, and their desire for fame is aroused.*

39: The players are really **certatores**: competitors; though they are only just about to select the sides. The poet does not say who does the picking, by pointing out with the fingers; perhaps it was the two pre-arranged 'captains'. Notably, the numbers in each side are not given; maybe anyone who turned up got a game.

40f: Choice of innings, then as now, was decided by the toss. It would seem that the winners of the toss had first innings, with no choice for the winning captain of going in second. Perhaps, however, the poet is merely simplifying the process.

43ff: Why the opening bowler should be more cautious or serious is not quite clear, though his duties are clear enough. He is to bowl the ball and make a sharp stop, should it be hit straight back to him. He also has the duty of setting his field.

There is no mention of the captain helping with that, though again the poet may be simplifying. Nor are we given any details of field placings, though perhaps a few at least were standardised by that date.

47ff: Certainly the writer appears to be employing poetic licence or exaggeration in describing the nervousness of all those concerned in what to our eyes would be a 'bounce' match. Their hearts are beating feverishly and their hopes of glory to the fore, as in a real battle, though they are only awaiting the call of 'Play!'. That at any rate would seem to have been part of the game even then.

Lines 51-60

et jam dulce paratur opus: par nobile primum  
heroum certamen init, duo fulmina ludi;  
inde, dato signo, pila lubrica viribus acta  
carcere prona fugit, volitansque per aequora summa  
55 radit iter rapidum: sese hostis poplite flexo  
inclinat, cita currentis vestigia lustrans  
si modo subsultet, tum certum assurgit in ictum  
brachia vi torquens celeri, longeque propellit  
clangentem sphaeram. superas volat illa per auras  
60 continuo stridore ruens, atque aethera findit.

*Now the pleasant issue is joined. A notable pair of heroes,  
two stars of the game, join in the opening fray.*

*Then, when the word is given, the ball, sent swiftly with some force,  
flees straight from the (bowler's) grasp and, flying over the plain's surface,  
55 it sweeps a smooth, swift course. The opposing (batsman) leans forward  
on bended knee, watching the flying (ball's) swift course (to see)  
if he should jump out first; then he rises to (make) a decisive shot and,  
twisting his arms with swift power, he drives the ball far  
with echoing sound. It flies through the upper air,  
60 rushing with continuous whizzing sound, and splits the heavens.*

52: Two **fulmina** stand out. **fulmen** really means a lightning bolt, but here I have taken it to mean any powerful light, literally and metaphorically; hence the use of the modern expression star. Heroes too should probably have its modern connotation. Whether they are the two opening batsman or the opening batsman and bowler is not quite clear.

53: The ball is described as **lubrica**, which really means slippery or greasy. There is no indication that it has been treated with what would nowadays be deemed an illegal substance, so **lubrica** probably has its secondary meaning of shiny; and hence moving swiftly through the air after the manner of a modern new ball.

54: **carcere** really means prison, but here presumably refers to the bowler's grasp from which the ball has sped. It scrapes (**radit**) its way after the manner of a razor, though in this case it really sweeps its way cleanly through the air.

55ff: The **hostis**/enemy or opponent is clearly the opposing batsman, and I have added the latter term, as I have added bowler in line 54, to make matters clear. The batsman seems to be leaning forward with his (presumably) left knee bent, ready to jump out into the stroke, as line 57 shows. He keeps a close eye on the ball so as to decide what action to take. In the end he decides on some kind of forward attacking stroke, winds up his arms, and skies the ball.

The text has **brachia**, though the spelling **bracchia** is much more common.

59: The ball, as struck, is described as **clangentem**; which usually refers to an echoing metallic clang, but would here seem to indicate an echoing solid whack. Such is the force with which the ball flies that it can be heard going through the air; it is evidently a skyer.

#### Lines 61-68

at coelo observans catus explorator in alto  
insidias parat, erectis palmisque cadentem  
excipit exsultans, dextraque retorquet ovanti.  
hinc laetus sequitur clamor, dolor obruit illos  
65 moerentes tacite casum infelicis amici;  
grande malum! ast uno avulso non deficit alter.  
aemulus hic laudum furiisque ultricibus actus  
ingreditur scaenam, et damnum reparare minatur.

*But a sharp fieldsman looking into the height of heaven,  
prepares his trap, and with palms outspread exultantly catches  
the falling (ball); and joyously throws it up again with his right hand.  
Then follows a joyful shout on one side, (while) gloom enfolds those  
65 silently grieving the fall of their unlucky friend.*

*What a great disaster! But when one has been got out, there is always another to  
take [his place].*

*Vying for honour and driven on by avenging furies,  
he enters the scene, and threatens to make good the loss.*

61: The fieldsman is really an **explorator**: a scout or lookout, sharp in eye, mind and action.

62f: He makes a two-handed catch, then throws the ball back into the air, presumably to claim the catch as in the modern manner; followed by joy or gloom as appropriate.

**ovanti** is a transferred epithet, to be applied to the man rather than his right hand; which latter the grammar would imply.

66ff: The loss of the opening batsman, apparently first ball, is described in mock-epic fashion as a great disaster. Like a hero of old, the number three batsman enters the scene eager for glory and revenge.

#### Lines 69-86

successum dea dira negat: vix ter quaterque  
70 cursum orbis peragit, vix dum tria sensit ab hoste  
verbera, praecipiti cum protenus impete missa  
virgam sede levem rapit, eluditque minantem.  
ille indignanti vultu sua tela reponit  
atque deos atque astra vocans crudelia, donec  
75 succurrens partes implevit proximus haeres,  
qui jam languentem causae socialis honorem  
instaurare velit; sed et hicquoque numine laevo  
orditur lusum; nam dum cursus recursusque  
alternos iterat, vestigia lubrica ponens  
80 labitur infelix, pronusque metam sub ipsam  
procumbit; tremefacta gemit sub pondere tellus  
ingenti, risuque exultat rustica turba.  
quemque manent sua fata, trahit suos exitus omnes.  
ah! nimium properans; seu fors, sive artis egestas  
85 nisibus invidet; retro sublapsa refertur  
spes omnis juvenum, vultuque et corde relanguent.

*The grim goddess denies him success: three and four times  
70 the ball runs its course, and scarcely feels three blows from the opposing (bat),  
when bowled with headlong force it forthwith  
eludes the threatening (batsman) and removes the light bail from its place.  
He with indignant expression lays aside his kit  
and calls gods and stars alike cruel, until  
75 the next in succession runs in to fulfil his role;  
he now would wish to restore the flagging fortunes of his friends' cause;  
but he too starts his innings under an unfavourable omen:  
for while he is running successively to and fro,  
the unfortunate fellow puts his feet on a slippy (patch),  
80 and slips and falls his length just before reaching his goal.  
Under his heavy weight the earth trembles and groans,  
and the rustic crowd laughs and jeers.  
His fate awaits each man and his end comes - ah too quickly! - upon each,  
whether fate or lack of skill begrudges (success) to his efforts.  
85 All the young men's hope slips and falls backwards,  
and they become downcast in both face and heart.*

69: The grim goddess is perhaps Nemesis. At any rate fortune is with the bowler as he beats the swinging bat three or four times before removing the bail. Conceivably

the Latin could imply that each of these balls hit the bail, but surely the poet would made much more of such a bowling feat.

70: The bat/batsman is called threatening, so perhaps he tries to repeat the opening batsman's attacking stroke. Proper defensive play may not have been developed, or would have been of little avail on the contemporary rough pitches anyway  
**impete**: is an old form of the much more common **impetu**, the former being used for metrical reasons. The bail is described as light, as any touch on it or the stumps would remove it.

73: The batsman is described as indignant; though perhaps **indignant** also implies that he feels he had been unworthily treated. That is confirmed in line 74 when he bemoans the cruelty of the stars and gods, but not of God, note.

75: Of course he still had a **haeres**/heir, and the latter tries to embark on some sort of stand to recover from a start of at least two wickets down for few if any runs.

77: However, he too is under a **numine laevo**: a sign from the left, which ancient diviners took as being unfavourable.

78: He does start to make some runs, but just as he has almost completed a run he steps on a slippery patch, and so, presumably, is run out. Hence what were possibly the three main (perhaps even the only) types of dismissal at that time have been described: caught, bowled, run out.

81f: Again there is mock heroic description of the effect of the fall of an apparently hefty batsman on the earth, and the effect of it all on the crowd. The latter is described as rustic, but whether that applies to their locality or their manners is not quite clear.

84: The poet becomes philosophical about the inevitability of fate, which comes upon the batsman whether he has skill or not.

86: By this time all hope has gone for the batting side, and it shows both without and within. However, no mention is made of the total number of batsmen nor of the score.

#### Lines 87-95

adversum auspiciis melioribus agmen arenam  
intrans, perpetuisque fatigant ictibus orbem;  
fervet opus; manat toto de corpore sudor;  
90 mox ubi ludendi processerit ordo tenore  
felici, litemque unus discriminat ictus,  
impete pulsa pila in coeli sublimia templa  
provehitur rapiente Noto, lusumque coronat;  
concertata diu Victoria concrepat alis,  
95 et complet clamore polum fremituque secundo.

*Under more auspicious omens the opposing side take the field,  
and with repeated blows belabour the ball;  
the contest warms up; sweat flows over all their bodies.*

90 *Soon, when the run of play has progressed on a lucky course,  
and one blow can settle the contest,  
by (that) blow the ball is driven into the high halls of heaven,  
snatched up by the South Wind; and that crowns the game.  
Victory, having been long fought for, claps with her wings,  
95 and fills the heaven with shouts and cheers of support.*

87: At any rate one side appear to have been all out fairly quickly, their place being taken on the field by their opponents in what seems to have been a one innings a side match.

**agmen**: The same factors apply here as to **manus** in line 14.

88: The new batsmen waste no time in pursuit of what is probably a small total. In contrast to their opponents' efforts they hit the ball hard and often and the score mounts quickly; there is no mention of the fall of wickets. Perhaps the author has exhausted his descriptions of means of dismissal in his narrative of the first innings.

89f: The pace is so hot that all, like the heroes of old in battle, are soon completely covered in sweat. Soon too the batting side are within one hit of victory.

91f: That hit is made with such power that the ball soars into heaven's highest temples or halls: again a mock heroic touch on the part of the poet.

**lusumque coronat**: is perhaps an echo of the Latin maxim **finis opus coronat**: The end crowns the work.

94: The goddess Victory, again in mock heroic terms, uses her wings rather than hands to express her approbation of the victors.

95: The poem seems to end very abruptly with the brief narrative of the second innings and the mock heroic description of the scenes of victory. Indeed the description of the actual play has occupied only 45 lines, in contrast to the 50 devoted to the preliminaries.

Perhaps the poet felt that he had made his point: that it was possible to write an epic-style poem in Latin hexameters on a contemporary and relatively unimportant event instead of on the the heroic men and deeds of the past; and to do so whilst still incorporating at least some of the features of Homer's and Virgil's poems. Having done so, he may have felt that he could sign off without stretching his poem to the thousands of lines which comprised their poems.