

The Australian Cricketers at Home.

BY M. RANDAL ROBERTS.



If one looks at the fixture list of the Australians, which extends without a break from the beginning of May to the middle of September, it seems almost a misnomer to speak of them as ever being at home. It is difficult to have a fixed abode when you are compelled to be at the Oval one day, at Eastbourne the next, and two days afterwards at Sheffield. However, if the exigencies of their cricketing programme deprive the Australian Eleven of the delights of hearth and home during their campaign in England, the team, like other invading armies, occasionally enjoys the luxury of head-quarters. And the head-quarters of the Eleven, as everyone knows, are situated at the Inns of Court Hotel in Holborn. The hotel is, in fact, the base of operations

On the contrary, Major Wardill and his merry men gave me as warm a welcome as if I had been an old friend whom they had long been pressing to visit them. Probably I bored them, but at any rate they didn't show it, though for one whole day I lived and moved and had my being among them, just as if I had been a member of the eleven.

The clocks in Holborn only pointed to a few minutes past nine when I reached the Inns of Court Hotel, but, early as it was, two or three of the Australians had already finished breakfast. Major Wardill was sitting at a table in the corner of the room, with a huge pile of letters in front of him, which told plainly enough that the manager of a touring team must have the pen of a ready writer if he attends personally to all his correspondence. Hugh Trumble was reclining in a capacious saddle-bag, deep in thought, and looking as



From a]

MAJOR WARDILL IN HIS COSY CORNER.

[Photograph.

from which Major Wardill, the manager, directs the movements of his troops, and to which the army of invaders periodically returns after a victorious onslaught on one of the counties.

Truth compels me to admit that on the occasion of my spending a day with the Australians at their London home I was not an invited guest. It was I who proposed the visit. However, I didn't meet with the fate that usually awaits the self-invited guest.

if he were devising new methods (it wanted only three weeks to the first of the test matches) for getting England's batsmen out. But Hugh Trumble has always a preoccupied air, so perhaps his thoughts may have been engaged on a far less interesting problem.

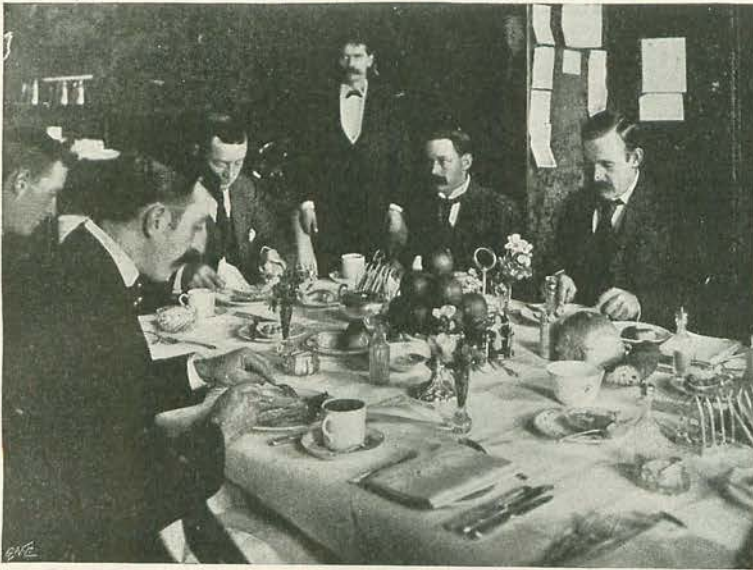
Presently the rest of the team began to drop in one by one. I hope I am not giving away any secrets when I state that the last to put in an appearance was Clem Hill.

V. Trumper.

J. Worrall.

S. E. Gregory.

W. P. Howell.



F. A. Iredale.

SOME OF THE ELEVEN AT BREAKFAST.

[From a Photograph.

the flag of English cricket in the dust. As Mr. Trumble moved across the room to Major Wardill and came within range of the photographer's weapon, one of his companions at the breakfast table threw an elongated bâton of bread over to him, with the remark, "Here, Hughie, you mustn't be photographed without a bat in your hand." Trumble caught the impromptu bat and made a fine forward stroke with it, but he declined

I can conscientiously recommend a breakfast with the Australians as a first-rate recipe to anyone afflicted with an attack of the blues. There was a joke ready for each new-comer, and there was a general air of hilarity which one associates more with a party of light-hearted schoolboys than with a party of light-hearted schoolboys than with a team which has travelled all the way from Australia on the serious business of trailing

altogether to let the tableau be preserved in a photograph.

Long before breakfast was over I descried a familiar figure in the doorway. It was the burly form of Jem Phillips, the Anglo-Australian cricketer, who can boast that for the last seven years he has never seen a winter. This pleasant feat he has achieved by the simple expedient of playing cricket in

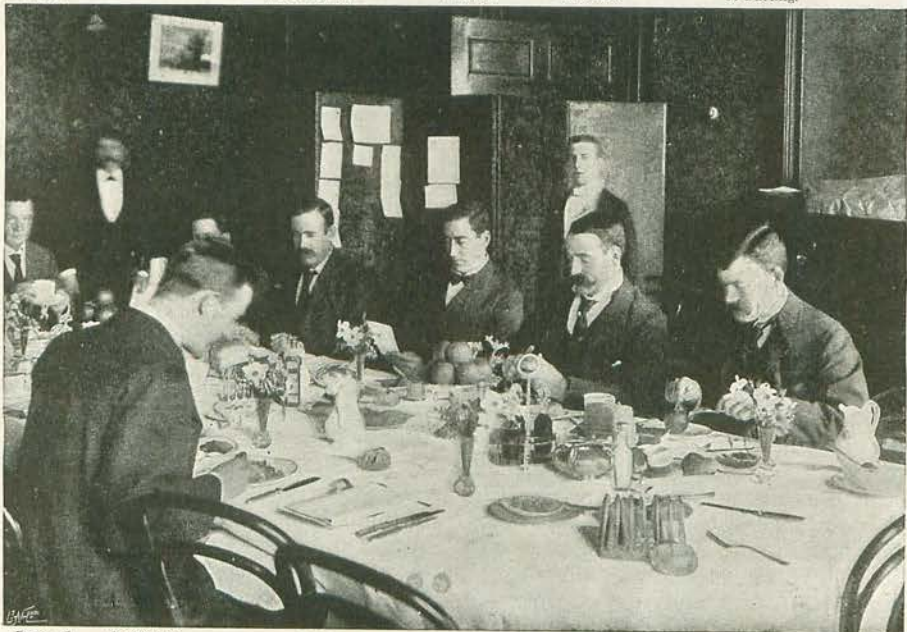
J. Worrall.

W. P. Howell.

F. Laver.

E. Jones.

J. Darling.



From a

C. McLeod.

MORE OF THE ELEVEN AT BREAKFAST.

[Photograph.



JEM PHILLIPS CONSULTING WITH THE MAJOR. MR. IREDALE READING THE PAPER.
From a Photograph.

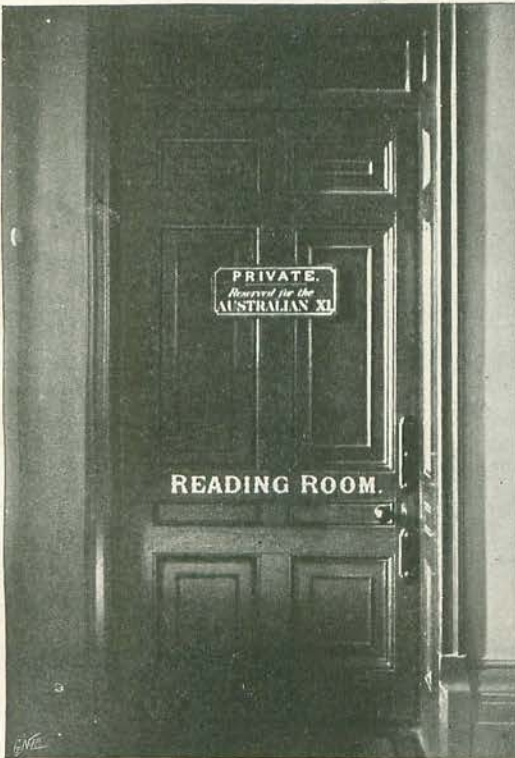
England during the summer and in Australia during our winter—a see-saw piece of work that most of us envy him. Phillips is engaged with the Australian team as official scorer, and on that particular morning had looked in to see Major Wardill on a matter of business, as he had doubtless done on many mornings before. But it at once occurred to my mind that there was quite a dramatic touch about Phillips's presence there. Here was the man whose action in no-balling Mr. Jones during Mr. Stoddart's last tour in Australia had caused more commotion than any event of the last twenty years in the cricket world, standing side by side and chatting pleasantly with the very cricketer whose bowling he had condemned. As a matter of fact, there was really nothing remarkable about the incident, as the Australians, like the good sportsmen

they are, feel nothing but respect for an umpire who has the courage of his convictions; but not having seen the two men in the same room before, the scene struck me in much the same light as if I had found Lord Salisbury and Sir William Harcourt hobnobbing together.

The post that morning had brought to each of the team a small pamphlet, the work of some one of the multitudinous army of cricket writers whom every visit of Australians to this country brings into being, giving a highly imaginative life-story of every member of the team, which proved far more interesting than the historian could possibly have anticipated. It added a relish to Mr. Darling's breakfast to find himself described as the finest batsman in Australia. This was satisfactory so far as it went, and his natural pride was not abated on discovering that exactly the same terms of praise were applied to Mr. Hill. Any batsman living could feel well disposed towards the writer who bracketed him with Clem Hill, but the glow of satisfaction began to cool

when it appeared that the pamphleteer, in his desire to extol the merits of the team, had described each and every member of it as "undoubtedly the best batsman in Australia."

The quarters specially reserved for the Australians in the hotel consist of a cluster of bedrooms, all on the same floor, and a large room overlooking the comparatively peaceful wastes of Lincoln's Inn Fields which is used as a common room and dining-room by the team. On the outside of the door of this room is affixed a conspicuous placard bearing the legend, "PRIVATE. RESERVED FOR THE AUSTRALIAN XI." This placard is mainly intended to warn off interviewers and other irresponsible callers, and for the sake of further security a waiter is told off specially to guard the threshold.



From a]

THE AUSTRALIANS' ROOM.

[Photograph.

Speaking as a mere native of the British Isles I should have called the weather warm, but the Australians evidently thought differently, for a bright fire was burning in the breakfast-room. The sight of that fire was very suggestive of the contrast between the climates here and "down under." There is nothing, Clem Hill remarked to me, which strikes the Australian cricketer on his first visit to this country more than the premature stiffness which is so prevalent among English players.

The everyday sight on an English ground of a man who is unable to "shy," and can do nothing but "jerk," is unknown in Australia. Even Colonials who have passed their cricket prime, and have reached the age of forty, can still throw with much the same dash as of old. Among the best English teams there is often a woful deficiency in this essential to good fielding; the cold and damp of our Northern climate penetrates into the bones

and creates a chronic and incurable stiffness often before a man is thirty.

"Major," said Mr. Noble, from the end of the room, where he was attentively examining a barometer, "what time did you say that train of ours starts?" The Major replied that there was no need to worry about trains, as he had ordered a four-horse shay to convey the team to Leyton that morning. This was the signal for a general move. Within a couple of minutes the Major was left alone trying to solve the problem of how the team was to be at Bradford till 6.31 Wednesday evening, and at Lord's the next morning, without travelling in the night; while the said team were in their bedrooms, tumbling bats, boots, and shirts into eleven cricket bags, preparatory for their battle against Essex, which was to begin at Leyton a couple of hours later.

Mr. Jones I found in his room with one hand on his cricket bag and the other on the button of the electric bell, in a state of consternation, because one of his cricket boots was missing. Finally, however, the absent boot was recovered, and the eleven came clattering down the stairs to the front hall. The Major's



From a]

MR. JONES PREPARES TO START.

[Photograph.



MR. KELLY AND MR. GREGORY ATTEND TO THEIR CORRESPONDENCE.

From a Photograph.

are confirmed water drinkers.

Judging from the bushels of invitation cards which lay piled on Major Wardill's table, it seemed as if there were a conspiracy among the managers of every entertainment in London to deprive the Australians of their well-earned repose after a match. However, as luck had it, on this particular day they had an off evening. So after dinner, when cigars were produced, we still sat about the room

four-horse shay, which took the form of a remarkably smart drag, was standing in readiness at the Holborn entrance. Oddly enough, though the street was crowded at the time, it apparently did not occur to any of the passers-by that the coach contained the Australian Eleven. A couple of small boys and their smaller sister tumbled to the fact and raised a weak cheer, but, otherwise, the team passed unnoticed from the hall door to the roof of the four-in-hand.

As the story of how the Australians fared at Leyton will be stale history by the time this appears in print, the reader must now imagine, after the manner of Acts I. and II. in a melodrama, a period of eight hours to have elapsed.

The official dinner-hour of the team, when they are in London at any rate, is seven o'clock, but this fixture is an elastic one. However, on this particular evening, as the men returned in good time from Leyton, it was punctually observed. Inasmuch as the Australians dine on exactly the same lines as other less distinguished mortals, I am not going to describe the dinner. But it may possibly interest those who hold the creed that stimulants are necessary to sustained exertion to learn that two of the team

*From a*

MR. CLEM HILL PACKS HIS CRICKET BAG.

[Photograph.]



MR. HUGH TRUMBLE.
From a Photograph.

chatting of everything in general and cricket in particular.

The conversation drifted to the comparative merits of devoting only three days to a match, as is done in county cricket, and of playing every important game to a finish, as the custom is in Australia. Gregory, Trumble, and Hill were very emphatic in declaring that they enjoy cricket far more in England than in Australia. That our three-day fixtures

produce much more lively batting than the indefinitely extended matches in Australia is a fact with which every cricket spectator will agree, but it was interesting to hear the opinion of three players who have had practical experience of the pros and cons of the methods which prevail in both countries.

The visit of an Australian team to this country, I learned, is a far more formal affair than any of the tours in Australia undertaken by English cricketers. Before the present Australian team started each of the members signed an official agreement under which he bound himself to observe certain conditions. One of the most notable of these conditions was that during the tour none of the team should contribute to the Press either in this country or in Australia. I only mention this as a good instance of the serious spirit in which the tour was undertaken. The Australians have come over with the object of beating England if they can, and anything likely to interfere with their attaining that result is to be rigidly eschewed.

There is no recipe for making time fly like talking cricket gossip. Before I had heard half of what the new-comers had to tell me of their impressions of cricket in the old country the clock had struck eleven, and as there was evidently a disposition to move bedwards, I considerably took my departure.



From a

THE ELEVEN OFF TO A MATCH.

[Photograph.]