



THE PAVILION AT KENNINGTON OVAL.

## SOME CRICKET YARNS.

BY ALFRED GIBSON



**I**F we Englishmen were not quite so cold-blooded and so calculating we should have gone into hysterics by this time over the prospect of Stoddart's second team for Australia.

Remember the unparalleled wave of enthusiasm that floated over England directly it became known on the last occasion that Stoddart's men had pulled the first international match out of the fire and gained a thrilling win by ten runs. That performance was enough of itself to sustain excitement over the rest of the tour. For those few weeks there was a cricket fever in England. Politics went by the board. Nothing was saleable but Australian cricket, and the epidemic lasted until we had won the rubber, and had welcomed home the team as saviours of the honour of the old country.

But as I started out by saying, we are a cold-blooded people. We do not fatten on anticipation. Expectation is too fatiguing for your average Englishman; he knows that Stoddart's side will not be completed until the late autumn, and therefore his enthusiasm at present lies dormant.

I am, however, able to announce the names of a few players who have been invited to go to Australia; and for the rest—well, I think the average follower of the game will be able to make deductions. The fact of the matter is that the present season's form

should have very little to do with Mr. Stoddart's decisions, except in the way of confirming impressions. It was on late form that Lockwood and George Bean and O. G. Radcliffe were taken to Australia, and in each of these cases a mistake was made.

The player who has just failed at home is not at all unlikely to make his reputation in Australia. McKibbin was nothing in the Colonies, but he was useful enough over here; and in even greater degree the same can be said of Jones.

By the way, talking of Jones reminds me of a very funny experience at Eastbourne. I was talking to the fast bowler on the parade, and I was joined by a friend. The



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MR. A. E. STODDART.  
(Middlesex.)

conversation turned to cricket, and my friend suddenly electrified both of us by asking: "And do you think Jones, the Australian, throws?" I hurriedly said that it was a matter of opinion for the umpire, but Jones gravely ventured the theory that Jones *throws* every alternate ball. "But," he added, "I have never seen him bowl. When I happen to play against him I will soon call the umpire's attention." Subsequently I told my friend that he had been speaking to Jones, and he suddenly departed for another seaside.

The negotiations between Sussex and Jones fell through, but we are to have another Australian bowler in an English county team. I speak of Roche, the Victorian, who is qualifying for Middlesex. Roche has a physical peculiarity. He is not, like Sharpe, the old Surreyite, minus an eye, but on his right hand he has only two fingers. And after that you will be surprised to learn that Roche is a right-hander. He both bowls and bats with that hand, and more curious still, he is a really fine player; indeed, a well-known Kent professional expressed the opinion to me that on anything like a broken wicket Roche would be the most dangerous bowler in the country.

The worst of talking cricket is that you are apt to wander. Now, I started out with the intention of discussing Stoddart's team, and I haven't said anything about it yet. Well, let me first of all put down Ranjit Sinhji's name. The famous Indian is not only going, but a special Act of Parliament has been passed in Australia to enable him to arrive without the usual alien duties.

What Ranji will do on Australian wickets can only be conjectured. Having regard to the extent of his hitting on our own, it will be well to sympathise with the Australian bowlers forthwith and to expect some serious attacks on the world's batting records. By the way, I do hope that somebody will practise the old trick with Ranji. Do you remember that visit of his to Yorkshire while he was touring with the Cambridge

Cassandra? The opposition side were secretly informed that Ranji knew not a word of English except "How's that?" and "Yes," and "No." The "black chap" made a big score, and he was rather surprised at the open and rather embarrassing criticism of his play by the fieldsmen. One of them humorously suggested lynching, and when Ranji was struck by a rising ball the bowler audibly expressed the hope that that would knock some of the steam out of "the ducky." At the subsequent luncheon Ranji made quite a long speech in giving a toast, and during this the faces of the opposition side were studies!

In the way of cricket yarns, however, I think that told me by George Lohmann to be the funniest. It was in an up-country match in Australia, of course—all the funny things happen there!—and Pilling finely stumped a batsman off a ball from George. To general amazement the umpire stentoriously gave "Not out!" When asked whether he knew the game, he smiled sardonically. He said, "Bowling I holds with, catching I holds with, but when it comes to bowling a man from behind—no, you don't catch Joe Robinson napping, even if you do come from England!"

Another member of Mr. Stoddart's party is F. S. Jackson, who, by the way, has seriously been advised to wear a wig. "Jigger" Jackson is of course the hero of a famous expression.

When he came down to play at Lord's for Harrow against Eton, his father, the then Secretary for Ireland, promised him a sovereign for every wicket he took and a sovereign for every run he made. Jackson *fills* met with astonishing success, and was congratulated on his haul. But I must not repeat such a "chestnut" as the retort, modest and effective, which was Jackson's reply.

Jackson has never been to Australia, and his visit will be keenly welcomed. The only thing that may stop him going will be a desire for political honours. It is a well known fact that Jackson wants to get into Parliament. Ranjit Sinhji is another cricketer with like intentions. His con-



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stituency will be Brighton, and he will endeavour to wean the town out of its Conservative tendency. It is curious that this season at Lord's Capt. B. V. Wentworth, the present member for Brighton, and

certainly not now a wicket-keeper—unless it be Lilley, of Warwickshire—who can claim to be so good a bat as Storer. The Derbyshire man is the only professional who has managed to hit up two distinct hundreds in one match.

Mention of records reminds me of a match I saw at Hamilton, when England were playing Canada in 1872. It had been agreed to finish the match on the evening in any circumstances. It got so dark that the ball could scarcely be seen, and I distinctly remember one of the Englishmen—A. N. Hornby I think it was (it would be just like him)—lighting a candle in the slips.

I don't suppose Gunn will be included in Mr. Stoddart's team. He would not go on the last occasion, and I doubt whether he will be asked again. I often think of Gunn as the ideal batsman. What a perfect style he has! Indeed, he is the ideal on whom aspiring batsmen should model their play.

By the way, we were speaking of anecdotes. One that deserves a good place was told me by a Lancashire professional—you will surely guess his name? A match was played in a country district, and in an emergency a local farmer's boy was put in to keep the score, the duties being carefully explained to him. When the last man on the side had been caught, the fielders darted in to see the score, and they found—the book blank! That was the condition, too, of the

“scorer's” face. “The truth is,” he said deliberately, “I was sae centeristed in the wee sport that I quite forgot ta mak' the crosses. But it disna matter — that

wee laddie wi' the red face is the smartest runner amang ye!”

It is said that Jack Hearne, of Middlesex, may go to Australia with Stoddart's team. But a truce to these reflections. Let us to the field, gentlemen!



From a photo by]

J. T. HEARNE.  
(Middlesex.)

[Thiele.

Ranjit Sinhji should have been on opposite sides.

Archie McLaren, the hero of the highest score, has been asked to repeat his visit, and is almost certain to go. McLaren is one of the few men who scored a century on their first appearance for a county. Was it not he, by the way, who once having skied a ball declared the innings closed before the ball had fallen?

It is a pity that McLaren cannot play regularly for Lancashire, for then the County Palatine would have a far better chance for the championship. He is, I think, one of the finest batsmen the world has produced.

Peel will go, as a matter of course. However fluctuating may be his success as a bowler, he is worth his place as a batsman and a fieldsman alone. I think it was Peel who told me that in an up-country match in Australia a batsman, whose off-stump he had knocked down, refused to go out because he “always went by the majority.” Peel has a dry humour, and I strongly suspect that he invented that little joke.

Storer, of Derbyshire, has never been to Australia. He is a great cricketer, and he is not among those who overlook the fact; still, he should go to Australia. There is



From a photo by]

W. GUNN.  
(Notts.)

[Thiele.