

DON BRADMAN LIVES NEXT DOOR

A tale about life and some flannelled fools in heaven

PLAY UP! PAY UP! AND PLAY THE GAME!

Playwright/Composer

Cenarth Fox

THIS IS A PREVIEW SCRIPT. THE COMPLETE PACKAGE INCLUDING THE MUSIC IS AVAILABLE FROM FOX PLAYS

D.G. Bradman, [The Don] 1908-2001 is considered by many to have been the world's greatest batsman. His Test batting average was 99.94

W.G. Grace, 1848-1915, is considered by many to be the greatest cricketer ever, not just because of his outstanding achievements and his cricketing longevity, but because of his overall contribution to the game.

F.S. Ashley-Cooper, 1877-1932, is considered by many to be the greatest cricket writer ever, not just because of his prolific writing output but also because of the lengths he went to in compiling cricket records.

The Script

Many of the events described in this play took place.
The dialogue and plot are invented.

W.G. is a bullying snob who unabashedly claims single-handedly to have taken cricket from a social pastime to an international obsession and credits himself with the birth of the Ashes – that little gem alone is reason enough to see the play. **Melbourne Observer**

The script is a nice combination of C.J. Dennis, Steel Rudd and even Barry McKenzie. **The Footy Almanac**

A fantastic play, well performed and directed! A must see! **Lynne Stevens-Chappel**

A very clever play and the actors were superb. **Strathmore Theatre**

Brilliant play, brilliant production, brilliant playwright. I would happily go again. **Marie Ryan 96.5FM**

What a great play and what an enjoyable afternoon. **Cameron Close**

A madcap round of 'warts and all' interviews, quizzes and dance routines, a thoroughly enjoyable show all round. **Victorian Drama League**

DON BRADMAN LIVES NEXT DOOR

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Introduction

William Gilbert Grace was a medical doctor and an amateur cricketer. He played first-class cricket for Gloucestershire in the English county competition and 22 Test matches for England. He was an all-rounder, i.e. a batsman and a bowler not to mention a fine fielder. He played mainly in Victorian times when the game changed from being primarily a social pastime in towns and villages to a professional sport involving national and international competition. Money was a major part of the game when Grace was a player. He was unusual in that he played as an amateur but made a great deal of money from cricket. His family called him Gilbert.

Frederick Samuel Ashley-Cooper was an avid collector of and commentator on all things cricket. He is regarded by many as the father of cricket statisticians. He wrote or edited more than 100 cricket books and had a collection of some 40,000 cricket memorabilia. Towards the end of his playing career, Dr Grace sent his season's statistics to Mr Ashley-Cooper. The writer produced a book called *W.G. Grace, Cricketer: A Record of his Performances in First-Class Matches*. Today, many of Ashley-Cooper's books fetch high prices when available for sale. There were only 30 copies produced of his *Indian Cricket Chronology and Memorabilia* and today a copy of the book fetches about £2500. Another of his many texts was a biography of E.M. [Edward Mills] Grace, known as the "Coroner" and an older brother of W.G. Grace. Mr Ashley-Cooper knew a great deal about the cricketing Grace family.

Script Notes

For the fanatical followers, there is still debate as to whether some of the games in which W.G. Grace played should be granted first-class status. Different statisticians have slightly different totals for Grace's first-class results.

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Characters

William Gilbert Grace was an eye-catching cricketer and human being. He was a tall, slim young man who ate and drank well and became a tall rotund old man. From his youth he didn't shave and was easily recognized by his full, flowing beard. Its black shade became somewhat grey as the years and innings rolled by. There are many photographs and illustrations of the 'Old Man' as he was affectionately known. To some he was gruff and argumentative but almost always he finished any dispute with a smile and a handshake.

He had amazing energy as a boy and young man and this seemingly inexhaustible supply of enthusiasm continued well into his senior years. He was still playing competitive cricket in his 60s. Grace married the daughter of one of his cousins and fathered four children.

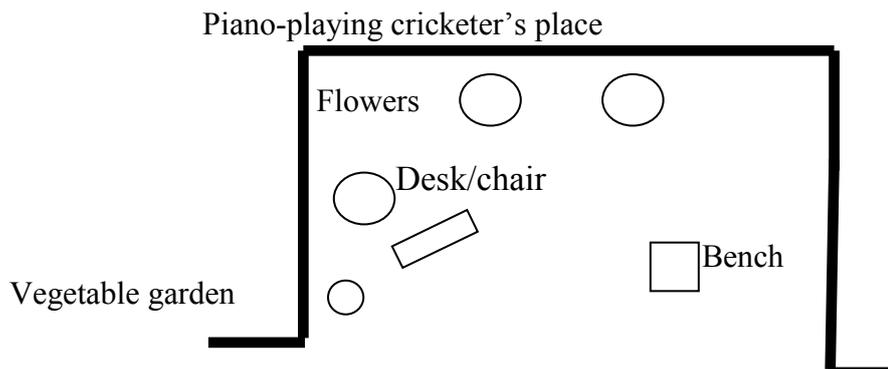
Frederick Samuel Ashley-Cooper [Fred] is a fine foil for WG in that he was far less intimidating in shape, size or demeanor. Retiring would be a good description. Fred was poorly as a child and seemed to have had no profession as such. He was born in London and from a young age took a keen interest in cricket records. He spent ages in the British Museum Reading Room trawling through old newspapers looking for details of matches played in previous eras. He was once accused of never having seen a game of cricket. He was working on a book about E. M. Grace [older brother of WG] and corresponded with WG towards the end of the great man's life. Mrs Grace took over the correspondence when WG became ill. In middle age, Ashley-Cooper married a woman almost 10 years his senior.

Accent, Appearance and Costumes

There are many photographs of WG. He maintained a West Country burr. There is at least one photo of Ashley-Cooper, a Londoner. In this play, Grace is in gardening gear and Fred, as always, is in collar and tie.

Set Design

The play takes place in cricket heaven. The time is the present but the men are dressed as when they last lived on Earth. Grace died in 1915 and Fred in 1932. We see either the back verandah of Grace's house or else inside WG's conservatory in his garden. Various plants are in pots. A writing table and chair are to one side and a garden seat or bench on the other side. A vegetable patch is offstage. A cricketing pianist lives over the fence in the house upstage. A small picket fence with a poster or two of Grace could line the stage.



FIRST INNINGS

[Before the play begins music of the period is played. Songs from the Victorian and/or Edwardian eras would be appropriate. Just before play begins, music fades and FRED is heard offstage calling. He knows that WG is in his vege patch offstage. This routine has happened before]

FRED *[Offstage calling]* Dr Grace. Good morning. *[FRED enters carrying books, notepads, pencils, etc and places and sorts them on the table. He continues talking to his unseen host]* Another beautiful day. Oh and I've had an idea about the title. *Stumps are Never Drawn.*

GRACE *[Offstage]* Manure.

FRED *[Ignores the reply]* Or perhaps *The Greatest Appeal.*

WG *[Enters wearing gardening gloves. He's pleased]* Manure.

FRED *[Sees him and is dismayed]* Oh, sir. You agreed to remain civil about all my suggestions.

WG Asparagus love manure. *[Holding out gloved hand]* Here, smell it.

FRED *[Realizes his mistake]* Ah, I won't, thank you.

WG *[Removing gloves and fetching watering-can]* You should take up gardening, Fred; 'tis a grand challenge.

FRED I'm afraid, sir, that cricket is my life.

WG *[Inspecting plants]* I've given these chaps too much water. Always water your plants like you would a pitch.

FRED *[Decides on another tack]* So are you a flowers or a vegetable man?

WG *[Is not listening to FRED]* I enjoy flowers but my passion is growing vegetables. *[Sotto voce. Finally speaks to FRED]* There's a game on to see who's got the biggest pumpkin.

FRED And you'd like to win.

WG *Like to?* I *have* to. The Graces are programmed to win.

FRED Which means you might consider cheating?

WG *[Aghast]* I would *never* consider cheating. I do it automatically.

FRED You mean you 'bend the rules'?

WG *[Picks up cricket bat]* Oh Fred, you're a writer, you haven't a clue. *[FRED nervous]* You spent your earthly life in a library with old newspapers. You never ran with the hounds, tickled a trout or faced some lunatic quick on a lethal pitch.

FRED Each to his own, sir.

WG But not young Gilbert. He *did* things. *[He raises bat in an intimidatory fashion. FRED is a little apprehensive]* He ran, jumped, shot, bowled, threw, struck, he competed. And the sole purpose of competing, sir, *[Emphatic]* is to win!

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[Speech ends with WG holding bat ready to smash a cricket ball which may be FRED'S head. He cowers seeking to defuse the enthusiastic giant towering above]

FRED What a splendid title for your book. *Winning is Everything.*

WG *Everything?* *[Steps back allowing FRED to rise]* Winning is the *only* thing. Boxing, bowls, curling, cards, football, fishing, gambling, golf, marbles, barbells and especially cricket.

FRED *[Holding out hand for the bat]* And was young Gilbert ever on song with such a blade?

[WG hands bat to FRED and retires to garden seat DR. He is in a mood to think back to his youth]

WG Indeed he was. On August the 22nd, 1856, I made 103 in our apple orchard with that very willow. My mother declared me brilliant.

FRED *[Impressed]* You made a hundred in the back yard at your Mum's?

WG It was four days after my 8th birthday. I got a leading edge and was caught in the covers by Springer.

FRED *[Goes to notepad to make notes]* I've not heard of Springer. Was he a cousin or one of the village lads?

WG *[Snaps out his reminiscing]* Hmm, what? *[Sees FRED at the table, waves him in]* Come on over to first slip, old chap.

FRED *[Moves to sit beside WG]* Your memory is in ripping form.

WG Can't remember what I had for breakfast but ask me about any innings and I'll give you my total, best shots, method of dismissal and how that damn stupid umpire got it wrong.

FRED So what was Springer's first name?

WG Who?

FRED The fielder who caught you in the orchard.

WG *First name?* Why would you give two names to a dog?

FRED *[Surprised]* Springer was a dog?

WG *[Hops up and moves C behind the imaginary bowler]* He'd crouch 10 yards behind the bowler and if the ball drifted outside off *[Indicates the covers then becomes the dog]* he'd scamper before the shot was made, snaffle the ball in the covers and have it straight back to the bowler.

[WG could proffer his mouth with imaginary ball therein. Gingerly FRED removes ball from grinning pooch. FRED will make sacrifices to humour the great man]

FRED That's fantastic.

WG We actually had three canine fielders. *[Examines flowers]*

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- FRED** Doctor Grace, this sort of detail is priceless. Please, you must tell the real story of your life.
- WG** *[Annoyed, doesn't want to do that]* Oh Fred, it's been done, many times. Even you had a go.
- FRED** But those books were not controversial. They ducked the truth.
- WG** *[Not interested]* Ha.
- FRED** They were glorified scorecards with you as a champion player avoiding claims you were a bully, cheat and carpet-bagger.
- WG** *[Genuinely doesn't know what this means]* Carpet-bagger?
- FRED** They fail to explain why you played as an amateur yet made a fortune charging exorbitant fees for so-called expenses.
- WG** Are you trying to insult me?
- FRED** You could tell the world of your amazing life and brilliant career.
- WG** It's a bit late for the world.
- FRED** *[Realizes]* Perhaps but there are millions of cricket fans here in heaven who would adore reading about the real Leviathan.
- WG** *[Smiles]* Long time since I was called that.
- FRED** Heaven has many players, fans, umpires and administrators who
- WG** *[Shocked]* Umpires and administrators?
- FRED** Yes.
- WG** There are cricket umpires and administrators in heaven?
- FRED** Well, yes.
- WG** *[Annoyed]* How the hell did they get in?
- FRED** *[Seizes on WG's complaint]* See, you *do* have strong opinions but what are they, what caused them? And what do you think of your critics?
- WG** Crackpots.
- FRED** They called you a money-grubbing opportunist, a class-conscious snob and a tyrant.
- WG** And they were the nice things.
- FRED** My book *Your* book is a glorious opportunity to hit back. You can punish their bowling to all parts of the ground.
- WG** *[Impressed]* I like your way with words, Fred.
- FRED** Forget scorecards and averages, wins and losses. Tell the real story, the truth, warts 'n all. *[In close]* Let me help you give both barrels to all those cricket administrators.
- WG** And umpires?
- FRED** Of course.
- WG** And journalists?
- FRED** Everyone. Make this your perfect innings, the truth, the record never to be broken.

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WG *[Pause. He likes the idea but holds back]* I must have final say on every word.

FRED Of course.

WG And a proper share of all proceeds.

FRED Without question. But money is not the issue here.

WG *[Almost replies too quickly]* It is to me. *[Pause]* You think I'm greedy.

FRED Not necessarily

WG *[Go on, admit it]* You think I'm the best ever shamateur.

FRED No, I think you're the best ever cricketer. As a player and a personality, you were miles ahead of the rest. Your appearance was unforgettable and your ideas changed the game for good forever which means you *must* tell your life story without pulling any punches.

WG Actually I *was* a good boxer. *[Spas a little. FRED backpedaling]* I was sparring with a team mate once and *[Swings/Jabs]* almost killed him.

FRED *[Moving avoiding punches]* There's *another* story. *[Weaves]* Who was that team mate? *[Ducks]* Why were you boxing? *[Weaves]* Put it in your book. *[Ducks]* The whole truth and nothing but the truth. *[WG swings and totters a little. FRED grabs WG to stop the punching]*

WG *[Struggling, he hates to be beaten]* But it has to be *my* truth.

FRED Of course. *What Really Happened* by W. G. Grace. *[WG nods and FRED releases him]*

WG *[Thinking]* It might upset a few people. What will Rachmaninoff say?

FRED *[Thinks]* I'm sure he'll be extremely interested. And you'll be going in first.

WG *[Excited]* Really? I'll bat before him?

FRED Top of the scoreboard.

WG *[Decides, enthusiastic]* Then sir, let us publish and be damned!

FRED *[Delighted, shaking his hand]* Oh Doctor, this is wonderful, wonderful! *[FRED moves to desk, sits and sorts papers. WG wanders beside/behind him]* I can't begin to tell you how excited I am. This book will be superb.

WG Bit of a change for you, too, hey?

FRED *[Stops to look at him]* Pardon?

WG First time you'll write anything controversial. Maybe death has brought out the best in you.

FRED Very droll, Doctor. Now ... *[WG roars]*

FX *Wind*

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[Suddenly WG is in a trance. He is holding an imaginary piece of string attached to an imaginary kite which is leaping about over the heads of the audience. WG tugs at the string]

WG Whoa, there she goes. *[Pointing skywards]* Can you see that, Fred?

FRED *[Has no idea what is happening, stands, despairs]* Doctor Grace, please.

WG *[Struggling]* Is that not the best flying machine you ever did see?

FRED *[Looking up at the imaginary kite. Goes along with the game]* Well yes, I suppose so.

WG My grandfather designed and built that box kite then flew it right across the mighty Avon Gorge.

FRED Very impressive.

WG Impressive? It was bloody marvellous. *[Handing imaginary string to FRED]* Here, hold this.

[As if by magic FRED struggles as the kite is tugging to escape]

FRED *[Struggling to hold it]* I can't hold it.

WG *[Moves forward and calls to the heavens]* Hang on, mother.

FRED *[Panics]* Mother!

WG *[Back at FRED but pointing to the kite]* That's my mother up there! In her father's flimsy box kite she soared above those ancient limestone ridges, the river Avon and the forests, *[Emphatic]* on her own. How's that for bravery?

FRED *[Struggling with the kite and the concept]* Mindboggling.

WG Courage from my dear Mama made facing the demon Spofforth child's play. *[Taking kite]* Here, give it me. *[Looking up he waves to vanishing kite]* Bye Mother. Bye.

FX *Fade wind sounds*

FRED She sounds remarkable.

WG *[Reminiscing]* The news of my dear mother's death caused the abandonment of a first class game of cricket. *[Back to the present with arm around FRED]* Now Fred, you grew up in Victorian England. Describe the status of a domestic servant.

FRED Oh they were working class.

WG My father's father was a lowly working class servant but what did *his* son become?

FRED If you mean *your* father then he became a doctor, Doctor.

WG Doctor Henry Grace, son of a servant, crossed the class divide just like his wife crossed the Avon Gorge. Together my parents attacked life with a passion to succeed.

FRED And you inherited their genes.

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- WG** Plus those of my three older brothers who dared me to beat them at everything. And with one brother the best batsman in England, I had incentive. *[Grabbing FRED]* So come on me lad, we've a cricket ground to build.
- FRED** *[Excited]* You mean the orchard in the Grace family home?
- WG** *[Pointing]* Stumps, man, the stumps.
[FRED fetches set of stumps which are on a small stand and places them to one side. WG starts miming swinging an axe]
- FX** *Sound of axe cutting wood*
- FRED** Shall I remove these apple trees?
- WG** Clear the orchard, Gilbert, come on. *[FRED mimes dragging off trees]*
Then fix the screen for the backstop
- FRED** *[Rushes in with imaginary screen and mimes putting it in place]* This'll be the best wicketkeeper in Gloucestershire.
- FX** *Wood chopping stops*
- WG** I'll roll the wicket. *[WG mimes pushing/dragging roller]* I taught the Aussies how to prepare a pitch.
- FRED** *[Rushes to other end and places single stump on stand for bowlers' end]* And this for the bowlers' end. *[FRED looks down pitch, is alarmed]* Oh no.
- WG** *[Stops rolling, distressed]* What is it? *[Thinks it's the pitch]* A crack in the pitch? What?
- FRED** *[Stepping it out]* It's only twenty yards.
- WG** *[Dismissive]* Ha! That kept us batsmen on our toes. Right, I'll set m' field.
- FRED** May I have a bat, Doctor?
- WG** Boys five minutes, *[FRED takes bat and faces up]* Adults fifteen.
- FRED** What if it lands in the lake?
- WG** *[Pointing]* Sisters and maids, over there please. Thank you Mother, you're fine where you are.
- FX** *Dog barking*
- FRED** *[Taking strike]* I'm ready, Doctor.
- WG** *[To dog]* Good boy, Springer. *[Prepares to bowl with almost no run up]*
Right then, Fred?
- FRED** Play.
[WG bowls imaginary ball to which FRED plays an imaginary defensive shot]
- WG** *[Stirring appeal]* s'at! *[Rushes behind the stump]*
- FRED** No, I definitely missed it.
- WG** *[Becomes umpire and raises his finger]* Sorry son, the umpire's decision is final.
- FRED** *[Upset. Crossing to desk to make notes]* I'll just make a note of that.

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- WG** *[Puffing, retires to his bench. Reflects]* Whoa, I had to be a cricketer.
- FRED** *[Writing]* Doctor Grace said, “The umpire’s decision is final.” *[Sotto voce]* Liar.
[Hops up and moves centre pitch]
So your parents bought a house with an apple orchard in Downend near Bristol.
- WG** Where my father and uncle chopped down the trees and made the Grace cricket ground. We practically lived there.
- FRED** *[Takes bat to face up]* Here’s an idea. Let’s pretend I’m you as a young boy. Who were the bowlers?
- WG** *[Gets up to bowl]* Oh my father, uncle, brothers, village lads, the stable boys – almost anyone except the girls. They could only field.
[Pointing at FRED] Come on then, young Gilbert; play. *[WG becomes his Uncle Pocock and bowls an imaginary ball which FRED swipes across the line. WG furious]*
[Angry] No, no, no. Play straight, Gilbert, straight. Master your defence.
- FRED** *[As young WG]* But Edward whacks them to leg and he’ll soon be the best batsman in England.
- WG** Until someone who plays straight will take his place. Once again.
[WG bowls imaginary ball and FRED plays an immaculate forward defensive shot]
- FRED** Was that better?
- WG** Much better. Now you must choose to play either forward or back.
- FRED** Why?
- WG** Because *every* batsman plays either forward or back.
- FRED** I’d like to do both.
- WG** *[Frustrated]* You can’t do both, that wouldn’t be cricket.
- FRED** But look; *[Plays forward]* forward. *[Plays back]* And back. I can do both.
- WG** *[Frustrated]* Stop it, Gilbert, you’re breaking the rules of batting. Enough.
[The game is over. WG retires to his seat and FRED joins him. They are back to being themselves]
- FRED** You revolutionized cricket. Before you, batsmen had a limited range of strokes; they played forward or back but not both.
- WG** That’s why scores were often so low.
- FRED** You were the first batsman to play forward or back depending on the length of the delivery.
- WG** If you say so.
- FRED** I think it’s important the book should list all your great attributes.

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WG *[Half listening]* Jolly good.

FRED As well as your appalling faults.

WG *[He has been listening]* Hey?

FRED Fear not, sir, my questions will be as gentle underarm lobs.

WG *[Doesn't believe him]* Yes, with the odd shooter and bouncer.

FRED Question one; when did you first realize you were a snob?

WG *[Annoyed]* Oh Fred, please, that's a bit like asking me when I stopped beating my wife.

FRED *[Shocked]* Dr. Grace, violent towards a woman? Unthinkable.

WG Thank you.

FRED Towards a child I could believe but ...

WG All right, all right. No need to go there.

FRED Warts and all, Doctor, the *whole* truth, remember?

WG *[Defending his actions]* Children today have no respect for their elders.

FRED Which you believe can be taught using brute force.

WG Look, I set up the 'No practice' sign. *[Emphatic]* 'No practice'. A group of lads ignored it.

FRED Whereupon you asked them to leave then lost your rag.

WG How dare they disobey a reasonable order.

FRED And when one lad was cheeky, *[Might pick up stump]* you grabbed a stump and gave him six of the best.

WG *[Correcting FRED]* Once! I only hit him once. *[Contrite]* Not my finest hour. Thank goodness they didn't press charges.
[Pause. Silence]

FRED You did have a short fuse. *[WG nods]* Administrators got under your skin.

WG A little.

FRED And umpires.

WG A lot.

FRED *[Hops up and fetches notepad]* I say, here's an idea. I'll say something and you tell me the first thought that comes into your head.

WG Manure.

FRED We haven't started yet. *[Is ready]* Okay, umpires.

WG Manure.
[Pace routine with increase in tempo and volume - a mini showstopper. FRED has the questions on his notepad. Mimes scribbling answers]

FRED Coach.

WG Uncle.

FRED Cricket knowledge.

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WG Mother.

FRED Cricket fanatic.

WG Father.

FRED First innings.

WG 3.

FRED Worst pitch.

WG Lord's.

FRED Best pitch.

WG The Oval.

FRED Best batsman.

WG Brother Edward.

FRED Best fielder.

WG Brother Fred.

FRED Best bowler.

WG The Demon Spofforth.

FRED Best chum.

WG Billy Murdoch.

FRED Best entertainer.

WG Don Bradman.

FRED Best declaration.

WG 93.

FRED Best County.

WG Gloucestershire.

FRED Best Country.

WG England.

FRED Best challenge.

WG The Ashes

FRED Best cricket.

WG My life!
[Phew. They take a breather]

FRED That was interesting.

WG *[He enjoyed it too]* Yes, I liked that.
[FRED refers to his notes during this follow up of the quiz]

FRED Tell me more about your first match.

WG I played for West Gloustershire and batting at number 11, made 3 – all singles.

FRED And were you the captain?

WG Captain? I was only 9 years old.

FRED So which boy was the captain?

- WG** Boy? All the other players were men. Look, I played a first-class match at Lord's three days after I turned 16.
- FRED** *[Checking his notes]* And your mother, she had a great cricket brain?
- WG** After an innings she'd call me over. *[Imitates the mater]* "Willie, Willie, haven't I told you over and over how to play that ball?" She was so perceptive.
- FRED** In what way?
- WG** Mother would say, "Left-handers should be drowned at birth".
- FRED** *[Raises his eyebrows]* And your father?
- WG** He rose at 5am, practised cricket till 8am, then practised medicine till 8pm.
- FRED** *[Referring to notes]* And you reckoned Lord's had a bad pitch.
- WG** Bad, it was diabolical. You'd get three shooters and the next would take off for six byes. I played in a match which finished in a single day; helped by my bowling of 11 for 66.
- FRED** You really were keen on statistics.
- WG** *[Of course, look at my record]* No, I was keen on *my* statistics.
- FRED** You said your best declaration was in 1893.
- WG** No, I once declared when I *reached* 93.
- FRED** Because?
- WG** Because that was the only score under a hundred I had never made in first-class cricket.
- FX** *Piano music is heard softly at first*
- FRED** *[Shaking head]* Unbelievable. And when I said 'Best entertainer' you said 'Don Bradman'.
- WG** Because it's true.
- FRED** But you never saw each other play.
- WG** No but as he's now my neighbour, I can say that of all the chaps who've played Test cricket, he is by far the best all-rounder.
- FRED** Bradman, an all-rounder?
- WG** Yes, batsman and pianist.
- FRED** *[Surprised]* Pianist?
- WG** *[Wanders upstage]* That's him now. He tickles the ivories like he tickled the bowlers. *[Calls]* Morning Rachmaninoff.
- FRED** You don't really call him that.
- WG** *[Comes back to bench]* When we first met I called him 'Sir Donald' but the man has no pomposity and calmly said, *[Australian accent]* "Fair go, Doctor. Just call me Sir Don".
- FRED** How lovely. And what does he call you?
- WG** *[Pleased]* He calls me, 'Your Grace'.

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FRED That's a nice touch.
WG Yes but I'm not up to snuff with the Australian sense of humour.
FRED Oh?
WG Well the first time he called me, 'Your Grace' I said, "Thank you Sir Don, but there's no need to kiss my ring".
FRED *[Amused]* Very witty.
WG *[Still confused]* Yes but I can't repeat his reply.
FRED I suppose you know people have written songs about Sir Don.
WG *[Groans]* Of course I know; he never stops playing the damn things.
FRED *[Hops up, excited]* I think that was *The Umpires' Salute*. *[Goes to fetch two white hats/caps]* I really like that one. Do you know the words?
WG *[Not happy]* What? No! Look, this is a book about *me*.
FX *Music for the song Sir Donald.*
FRED *[Handing WG a hat. They put them on]* Come on, Your Grace, let's humour the all-rounder next door.
WG Must we?
FRED The great and the almighty.
WG *[Being pushed/led into position]* Well *I'm* the almighty.
[The duet is sung with WG being sarcastic and FRED genuine and happy. WG and FRED become cricket umpires. Lighting could concentrate on the two men. They could place the set of three stumps DC and stand behind them. You could even have two sets, one for each umpire]

Song 'Sir Donald' *[The Umpires' Salute]*

Umpires *We've come to hate Sir Donald Bradman
He makes us wave our arm all day.
[Umpires signal 4]
We know our fate with Donald Bradman
"You're out" is what we seldom say.
It's true you're great Sir Donald Bradman
An honour just to watch you play
You've got us in a state Sir Donald Bradman
You make us wave our arm all day.
[During song, WH and FRED are umpires who speak and signal]*

DIALOGUE DURING SONG

WG Now we umpires have many signals.
FRED No-ball *[WG signals]*, wide *[Signal]*, bye *[Signal]* and leg-bye *[signal]*.
WG We signal a four *[FRED signals]*, a six *[signal]* and "You're out" *[signal]*.

Don Bradman Lives Next Door – 15

- FRED** We have the greatest view of the greatest players including the magnificent Donald George Bradman.
- WG** In his first first-class match he made a century.
- FRED** 117 centuries.
- WG** 37 double centuries.
- FRED** In one season his batting average was 201.
- WG** Overall his Test average was 99.94.
- DUET** *[Saluting]* Sir Donald Bradman.
[The chorus is repeated then song ends. Hats are put away by FRED. Lighting returns to normal with WG on his bench and FRED at his desk taking notes]
- WG** *[Muttering]* Fancy making a duck in your last match. 99.94. No need to kiss my ring. *[To working FRED]* Oh and that's another thing. You should explain why Rachmaninoff's a knight and I'm not?
- FRED** *[Packing, writing]* Pardon?
- WG** I missed out on a gong because in my day knighthoods for sportsmen were unheard of.
- FRED** Let's not compare players from different eras.
- WG** Though I was once up for a peerage. Tory of course.
- FRED** Of course.
- WG** *[Smiles]* I could've been ... the Lord of Lord's.
- FRED** Now even though this book will be the story *behind* the story, it should mention some of your records.
- WG** In between the warts 'n all.
- FRED** *[Referring to notes]* I'll certainly list your outstanding first-class figures. *[As he speaks WG nods in appreciation]* In round figures you made 55,000 runs, took 3000 wickets and held 900 catches.
- WG** So remind me, how many wickets did Rachmaninoff take?
- FRED** In Tests he took 2.
- WG** *[Sarcastic]* That many?
- FRED** Come now, Doctor. Let's put Sir Donald aside and concentrate on you.
- WG** And did he play when underarm and roundarm bowling were still legal?
- FRED** No, he didn't.
- WG** Or when overs had 4 and then 5 balls each?
- FRED** No, he didn't.
- WG** Did he play when there were no boundaries and all runs were all run?
- FRED** I'm sure you know he didn't, Dr Grace.

Don Bradman Lives Next Door – 16

- WG** *[Takes guard at Lord's]* And did he play on the lethal Lord's pitch where once a batsman was killed?
- FRED** No but let's not ...
- WG** Where the next batsman was so scared he came out wearing a helmet.
- FRED** *[Surprised]* A helmet? In the 19th century?
- WG** He wrapped his head in towels tied with a scarf.
- FRED** Surely not at Lord's?
- WG** It was an MCC scarf.
- FRED** Oh that's all right then.
- WG** Or what about abdominal protectors?
- FRED** *[Correcting him]* Ah, now they *were* available in your era, Doctor.
- WG** But did every batsman wear one?
- FRED** *[Stunned]* Are you saying, sir, you batted *without* a protector?
- WG** What better incentive to put bat on ball than to face those fiery quicks sans box?
- FRED** Is that why sometimes you have a funny sounding voice?
- WG** I was batting with a fellow once who wore some bulky wire contraption and kept getting hit in the groin producing strange twangy sounds. I said, "I told you to wear a box, old chap, not a musical box."
- FRED** I've compiled a list of your first-class firsts, sir, which will definitely be in the book.
- WG** Firsts?
- FRED** *[Reads from his notes]* First to make a century of centuries. First to reach 50,000 runs. First to take 2000 wickets. First to do the double of 2000 runs and 100 wickets in a season.
- WG** 1873 and 1876.
- FRED** First to make a triple century. First to make 10 centuries in a season. First to make more than 1000 runs in a season 28 times. First to make 1000 runs in May.
- WG** 47.
- FRED** First ... *[Stopped in his stride]* 47?
- WG** When I made a thousand runs in May I was almost 47 years of age.
- FRED** Remarkable. *[Carries on]* In your first first-class match you took 13 for 84 and bowled unchanged through both innings.
- WG** *[Moves bowling arm]* I'm still a bit stiff.
- FRED** First Englishman to play Test cricket when aged in his 50s.
- WG** First captain of England.
- FRED** First ... *[Shocked]* Pardon?

Don Bradman Lives Next Door – 17

- WG** Please include that I was the first captain of England.
- FRED** *[This is difficult for FRED]* I'm sorry, Dr Grace but you *weren't* the first captain of England.
- WG** *[Insists]* I think you'll find I was.
- FRED** *[FRED knows WG is wrong and hates having to correct his hero]* You did become captain of England in a Test series but not until you were 40 and there were several Test captains of England before you.
- WG** *[Annoyed]* Damn it, man. I know my own records. In 1906 I was appointed the first captain of England.
- FRED** *[Hasn't got a clue]* 1906?
- WG** England versus Scotland.
- FRED** Scotland?
- WG** Yes; *[Mimes bowling]* in lawn bowls.
- FRED** *[Huge sigh of relief]* Oh, you had me going there for a minute.
- WG** How many times did Rachmaninoff captain Australia in lawn bowls?
- FRED** Ah, none that I'm aware of.
- WG** And my first first-class hundred was a double; 224 *not out*.
- FRED** Yes and with no boundaries in those days you had to run every run meaning you covered some 9000 yards.
- WG** After which I caught a cab to the Crystal Palace where I came first in the *[Imitates hurdling position]* quarter mile hurdles.
- FRED** *[Scribbles]* Cricket and athletics ... on the same day.
- WG** In the cricket ball throwing competition at Eastbourne I came first with a throw of 122 yards.
- FRED** *[Writing]* I'm glad to include these firsts, Doctor. Anything else?
- WG** Such as?
- FRED** Well your musical neighbour was a dab hand at golf. Did you have any firsts with the little round ball?
- WG** Not really. *[Thinking]* I was very good at not counting all my strokes. And I once fell over in a bunker.
- FRED** Apparently Sir Donald could beat his age.
- WG** *[Angry that Bradman does anything better than him]* What?
- FRED** When he was in his eighties he could shoot a score lower than his years.
- WG** *[Indignant]* Well that's hardly fair. I died in m'sixties.
- FRED** So what else?

Don Bradman Lives Next Door – 18

- WG** I won 73 cups and ribbons in athletics, I played curling, rugby and football, rode to hounds until I was too fat for *any* horse, shot grouse, rabbits and kangaroos and once caught 130 trout in my first fly rod session.
- FRED** This is all excellent but I think the ‘warts ‘n all’ material should dominate.
- WG** [*Scoffs*] But of course, scandal sells.
- FRED** I’d really like your views on money, umpires, cheating and snobbery.
- WG** Snobbery?
- FRED** Yes, when do you think you first became a snob?
- WG** [*Upset*] Oh “When did I stop beating my wife?” - again.
- FRED** You did have a reputation for treating professionals as second-class citizens.
- WG** They *were* second class citizens.
- FRED** You travelled first-class and stayed in the best hotels.
- WG** I was a gentleman.
- FRED** The professionals travelled third-class, had damp beds in cheap hotels and changed in tents while you swanned around in style. That was apartheid in the 19th century.
- WG** That was *society* in the 19th century. [*Yorkshire accent*] Workers went down pit and [*Aristocratic accent*] gentlemen became doctors, lawyers and amateur cricketers.
- FRED** With enormous expense accounts.
- WG** You can’t expect me to pay for my own bed and breakfast.
- FRED** You were offered membership of the MCC simply because of your talent.
- WG** [*Incensed*] How dare you.
- FRED** In fact some have said you wouldn’t have got anywhere near the Long Room if you weren’t such a brilliant cricketer.
- WG** [*Wants a fight*] Give me their names. Come on - names.
- FRED** You never attended a public school or University opting instead for home tuition and the dreary Bristol Medical School.
- WG** Dreary? Now who’s being a snob?
- FRED** MCC members were fellows from titled families, old Etonians and Oxbridge chaps. You had none of that breeding.
- WG** You *are* a snob.
- FRED** They say the worst snobs are those who’ve risen from a lowly background and that sounds exactly like you, Dr Grace.

Don Bradman Lives Next Door – 19

- WG** Now see here, chummy. If you want the real story, put this in your book. I saved the MCC.
- FRED** Pardon?
- WG** The headquarters of English cricket was under threat and I saved it.
- FRED** *[Keen to learn]* You did? How?
- WG** The counties were growing, Test matches were beginning and the rules of the game and its future were all with the MCC. But they were struggling until along came the boy wonder, cricket's first superstar and I saved their bacon.
- FRED** So you *were* invited to join purely because of your towering talent?
- WG** *[Has to concede]* Well, yes. *[Can't you see?]* But look what I did.
- FRED** And because you entered the establishment from your modest middle-class life, your snobbery took root.
- WG** *[Aghast]* Modest middle class?
- FRED** I contend, sir, you were a social climber and a snob.
- WG** How the hell would you know?
- FRED** Well I did write a bit about the game.
- WG** But that's all you did.
- FRED** I observed and analysed cricket for almost fifty years. I wrote or edited more than 100 cricket books and countless articles.
- WG** You lived in a bloody museum. You had no experience of real life.
- FRED** I was once secretary of the Notts County Cricket Club.
- WG** Oh and what a raging success you were. You only got the job because you knew the chairman. Then you made a dog's breakfast of it and retired hurt with your reputation in shreds.
- FRED** We all have our failures and *[His turn to be angry]* at least I treated all cricketers as equals.
- WG** Are you saying I didn't?
- FRED** You picked players for Gloucestershire because they were public school boys or university chaps.
- WG** They were good players.
- FRED** But local lads without a privileged background were passed over.
- WG** Poppycock.
- FRED** You pocketed piles of money while your hard-working professionals were paid a pittance.
- WG** That's slander.
- FRED** You went gallivanting off with the aristocracy; downing their salmon, pheasants and single malt as the poor old pros walked home in the rain.
- WG** *[Is stung by this criticism]* You don't really believe all that?

- FRED** What, that you made a mint out of cricket or looked down on the pros?
- WG** Is that what you want to write?
- FRED** If it's true.
- WG** Okay. So, do you think people should be rewarded for effort?
- FRED** Of course.
- WG** And did I somehow, in some small way, assist the game of cricket?
- FRED** You almost single-handedly helped turn the game from a social pastime in villages to a national and international obsession.
- WG** There used to be signs outside cricket grounds, *Admission sixpence*.
- FRED** [*FRED completes the sign*] *One shilling if W.G. Grace is playing.*
- WG** They had to invent turnstiles because of me.
- FRED** But you made so much money?
- WG** Whenever there was a testimonial for an ageing professional, who was *always* there to boost the takings?
- FRED** You were.
- WG** Who alone guaranteed bumper crowds and huge receipts for the counties and promoters?
- FRED** You did.
- WG** I used to put half a crown on the top of the stumps and any local bowler who could knock it off would keep it.
- FRED** I didn't know that.
- WG** There's a lot you don't know. There were many times when I actually did something for others - for nothing.
- FRED** [*Pause. Quieter, contrite*] I can believe that.
- WG** How many of my poorer patients never received a bill?
- FRED** [*Contrite*] Many.
- WG** Plenty but decency and kindness don't sell newspapers or books.
- FRED** [*Quieter*] I apologise if I implied you were unkind.
- WG** [*Pause. Quieter, contrite*] And I apologise for saying you failed at Trent Bridge.
- FRED** Don't, it's the truth. I was an appalling administrator.
- WG** Look I don't mind you pointing out my failings so long as you list my hidden good points.
- FRED** Of course. Balance is essential. [*Unsure*] Your *hidden* good points?
- WG** The greatest being that I created the Ashes.
- FRED** [*Stunned*] You created The Ashes?
- WG** See, it *is* hidden. Even you don't know.

- FRED** But they were created when a group of women in Australia put some ashes in a small urn and gave it to the visiting English captain.
- WG** Yes but why?
- FRED** Because an English newspaper published a mock obituary about the death of English cricket.
- WG** *[A bit louder]* Yes but why?
- FRED** *[Getting agitated]* Because for the first time England was defeated in England.
- WG** *[Louder still]* Yes but why?
- FRED** *[Frustration rising]* Because Australia outplayed England.
- WG** *[Loud]* Yes but why?
- FRED** *[Just as loud]* I don't know why.
- WG** See, it *is* hidden. Without my specific and direct action, The Ashes would never exist. Now, will you put that in your book?
- FRED** If it's true I will ...
- WG** *[Back to being angry]* If it's true? So I'm a snob *and* a liar.
- FRED** No sir, it's just that ...
- WG** Were you at the game?
- FRED** Hardly. I was only 5.
- WG** Well I was there, top scoring for my country.
- FRED** *[Going to his notes]* But I did collect the newspaper reports of the match and I've made a summary.
- WG** *[Sarcastic]* Written no doubt by minor poets for their sycophantic readers.
[WG takes set of stumps and sets them centre stage. This area could be lit]
[This scene is divided into five sections]

SECTION A

- FRED** It's here somewhere. *[Finds it]* Ah. *[Reading a la broadcaster at the game]* "On August the 28th, 1882, the sky was overcast, the ground damp and the crowd enormous when England and Australia met at The Oval for the only Test match of the summer."
- FX** *Crowd noises*
- WG** *[Pointing to imaginary crowd]* Look at that crowd. Obviously I'm playing.
[The lights change as WG and FRED re-enact the famous Test match in 1882]
- FRED** Outside the ground, people climbed onto rooftops or watched from crowded windows.
- WG** *[Waving to crowd]* Good morning to you.

- FRED** England had the cream of its professional and amateur players on show including young Studd from Eton and Cambridge. *[WG bows and acknowledges the crowd]* Australia won the toss.
- WG** Good toss to lose.
- FRED** England went out to field but soon the cream of colonial cricket was vanquished as the Australians made a paltry 63
- WG** I took two catches. *[Collects bat]*
- FRED** The weather continued to threaten, people kept pouring in and England had its greatest asset to open the batting.
- WG** *[Taking guard]* In a lead up game I was bowled by Fred ‘The Demon’ Spofforth for 4.
- FX** *Crowd cheering*
- FRED** A huge cheer went up as Grace and Barlow began the chase.
- WG** *[Ducking and weaving, defensive shots]* It was hard work. The pitch was lively from recent rain.
- FRED** Spofforth was the trump card for Australia.
- WG** I played him carefully and waited for the bad ball when suddenly *[Plays shot]*
- FRED** *[As excited spectator]* ‘E’s out!
- WG** Yorked again by the Demon for only 4. *[Retires from The Oval pitch]*
- FRED** England battled hard to 101, a lead of 38.
- FX** *Thunder, rain and crowd noises*
- WG** It’s raining
- FRED** That night The Oval’s uncovered pitch was soaked and there was sawdust aplenty when Australia began its second innings.
- WG** They were brave, those colonials. Their motto was ‘Hit out or get out’.
- FRED** The deficit was wiped with all ten wickets intact.
- WG** *[Clapping, urging his fellow fielders]* ‘Come on lads, we need wickets.’”

SECTION B

- FRED** The huge crowd and the English bowlers sensed the tension.
- WG** Crouching at point I took two catches.
- FRED** But still the runs flowed. Sammy Jones joined his captain and the Australians pushed past 100. Their overall lead was building.
- WG** We needed a break through.
- FRED** The match was clearly heading the way of Australia. Someone from England needed to do something special. The Australians took a single with Sammy Jones now at the striker’s end.
[FRED leaves his desk and collects a bat]

- WG** *[Mimes catching the ball]* The ball was thrown to me. I was close to the stumps.
- FRED** *[Beside the stumps with a bat]* Sammy Jones looked at Grace.
- WG** I looked at Jones.
- FRED** The ball was dead. The pitch needed some gardening.
[FRED as Jones walks out of his crease and pats down the pitch]
- WG** Jones stepped out of his crease.
- FRED** *[As Jones]* I turned round and saw Grace *[WG mimes breaking the wickets]* whip off the bails. “Hey!”
- WG** *[Turns]* I faced the square leg umpire. *[Appeals]* “’s’at!”
- FRED** *[Still as Jones]* “You can’t do that, the ball was dead.” *[Faces umpire]* “Umpire?”
- WG** The umpire looked at me. I demanded an answer. He raised his finger.
- FRED** *[As Jones. Angry]* “Out?” *[At WG]* “You dirty rotten dingo!” *[Exits as Jones]*
- WG** The Australians were not happy. When we were batting, the Demon warned our skipper for backing up too far.
- FRED** But the English captain was an old Harrovian and they always play by the rules.
- WG** *[As Hornby with Lancashire accent]* “Eee, that’s just not cricket, lad.”
- FRED** Spofforth saw Grace run out Sammy Jones and steamed out to bat.
[FRED collects his chair placing it centre]
- WG** Never take strike with your emotions inflamed.
[WG removes stumps then sits on centre chair]
- FRED** The Demon was bowled for a duck making him even more furious.
[WG sits on the chair and mimes putting on his pads].

SECTION C

- WG** We took the last three Australian wickets and needed only 85 for a grand victory. Apparently Spofforth was a tad upset about my run out. *[Sitting to put on pads]* I was padding up when the Demon burst into the English dressing-room.
- FX** *Lighting changes to single spot above WG*
[WG is like a prisoner in a cell being interrogated. The examiner/torturer is Spofforth played by FRED]
- FRED** *[As Spofforth, fuming]* “Where is he? Where’s that bearded illywhacker?”
- WG** Are you addressing me, sir?
- FRED** “Listen to me you dog. You’re a bloody cheat, mister.”
- WG** I think you mean, ‘You’re a bloody cheat, *Doctor*’.

- FRED** “Is that how you bastards play cricket? ”
- WG** Better obviously than your manners.
- FRED** “Blind Freddie could see our bloke was doing some pitch repairs.”
- WG** Your *bloke* was out of his crease.
- FRED** “Even the flamin’ ump had to ask if you was fair dinkum.”
- WG** Sorry, I don’t speak Orstraylian.
- FRED** “I’ve heard about you. You don’t cheat, you’re too clever for that. You just bend the bloody rules.”
- WG** Will that be all?
- FRED** “You couldn’t lie straight in bed, you crook, you crawler. You haven’t heard the last of this.
- WG** One can but hope.
- FRED** “You’re lower than a snake’s belly. [*Gesticulates – put ‘em up*] You wanna stir the possum? Have a stoush? Well come on, stack y’drapery.”
- WG** [*Looking around in vain, calling*] Is there a translator in the pavilion?
- FRED** “You’re so low I wouldn’t use you for shark bait. I’m ropeable. I’m as mad as a gum tree full of galahs and you’ll need more than pads to survive out there. Ever heard of a Woolloomooloo uppercut? Trust me, Doc, you’re cactus.”
- WG** I blame the convicts.
- FRED** “I’ll be bowling like the clappers, mate. You’re a drongo. What are ya? You mongrel.” [*Exits a little*]
- WG** [*Calling*] I say you wouldn’t have an Australian curse would you?
- FRED** [*Back at WG*] “I hope all your chooks turn into emus and kick down y’dunny!”
- WG** [*Polite applause*] Oh bravo! Bravo!
- FRED** [*Right in WG’s face*] “This will lose you the match.”

SECTION D

[New scene. FRED is no longer Spofforth. LIGHTING back to that of The Oval commentary. WG stands and continues tale of the game. Chair replaced. The two men now stand side by side with the stumps between them]

- WG** That was the best dressing-room pep talk I’d ever heard.
- FRED** Spofforth continued his tirade as the Australians took the field. He urged on his team mates. “This thing can be done. This thing can be done.”
- WG** The captain and I strode out to knock off the 85 runs for victory.
- FRED** A number of the Australians walked up to Grace and wished him well.
- WG** They suggested I go forth and multiply.

Don Bradman Lives Next Door – 25

FRED *[Scraping the ground]* At the Vauxhall End, Spofforth marked out his run.

FX *Crowd noises*

WG *[Playing shots]* We got off to a cracking start. 85 was an easy target and the skipper and I went for our shots.

FRED But Spofforth was like a man possessed. He steamed in and smashed the skipper's stumps.

WG Only 70 to get with 9 wickets in hand. Barlow joined me with instructions to blunt the Demon.

FRED Spofforth bowled him first ball.

WG Steady, steady.

FRED Ulyett joined Grace and they both attacked.

WG I drove Spofforth with ease.

FRED At 50 for 2 England needed 35 to win with the master at the crease.

WG The light was failing.

FX *Dim lighting*

FRED Spofforth was wailing.

WG Ulyett was flailing.

FRED *[Appealing as Spofforth]* Howzat!

WG 34 to win, 7 wickets left. I had the measure of the Demon from Down Under.

FRED But Boyle, not as fast as Spofforth, had an excellent slower ball.

WG I went for the drive but lofted it straight to mid-off.

FX *Roar from crowd*

FRED The champion trudged wearily back to the pavilion.

WG I hated losing.

FRED 32 to win, 6 wickets left.

FX *Dramatic music*

WG It was nail biting stuff.

FRED No runs, no wickets.

WG 12 consecutive maidens.

FRED Spofforth still seethed.

WG He ripped through Lyttleton.

FRED 19 to win, 5 wickets left.

WG But a boundary to England. 15 to win.

[Both men applaud]

FRED Then around The Oval, the Demon's voice was heard. "This thing can be done. This thing can be done."

[FRED keeps chanting until recording takes over]

FX *Pre-recorded chant, "This thing can be done". It continues.*

Don Bradman Lives Next Door – 26

WG Spofforth strikes again. 15 to win. 4 wickets left.
FRED At last we'll see Studd stride to the wicket and carry England home.
WG But no, he huddles in the dressing-room, wrapped in a blanket, shivering.
FRED *[Anxious]* Spofforth destroys another English castle.
WG *[Jumpy]* I tugged my beard in dismay. 15 to win, 3 wickets left.
[Both men excited as the score mounts]
FRED Then a shot for 2.
WG *[Excited]* Yes.
FRED And then 3 byes.
WG 10 to win.
FRED *[Pointing]* But Spofforth soars and smashes stumps.
[Both men in agony]

SECTION E

FX *Increase volume of chant*
[The following spoken as a poem with each man following on from the previous line. They could stand back to back with faces front]
WG 8 wickets down and Studd we like
FRED But over's called, he's not on strike
WG So Boyle to Barnes, then ball to glove
FRED The catch is made, we plead above
WG It's last man in, Ted Peate the pro
FRED Short-sighted Ted, he'll have a go
WG A shot, two runs; it's hard to bear
FRED Just 8 to get will take us there
WG The crowd's distraught, enthralled, subdued
FRED Umbrella handles being chewed
WG Last ball from Boyle before young Studd
FRED Will face the Demon, draw his blood
WG Ted swings his bat, a mighty sweep
FRED And all three stumps lie in a heap.
FX *Kill all sounds. Silence.*
WG *[Pause. Mimics Spofforth]* "This will lose you the match."
FX *LIGHTING returns to before the game re-enactment*
[End of scene of the five sections]

Don Bradman Lives Next Door – 27

- FRED** *[Going to his table and takes notes. He is back to being himself]* Wonderful tale, Doctor. England's first home defeat caused by your rule-bending.
- WG** *[Retires to his garden seat]* There should be a copyright on The Ashes. If I'm responsible for their creation, I must be paid royalties.
- FRED** More expenses?
- FX** *Piano music begins – Bradman Solo #2*
- WG** You know it's a pity we can't sell my *[It's now 'his' book]* book back on Earth. We could quadruple our profits. *[No reply]* Fred?
- FRED** Is that Sir Don playing his piano?
- WG** *[Hops up and heads next door]* Oh really, this is too much. *[Calling as he exits]* Now see here, Rachmaninoff. Enough's enough, Sir Don.
- FRED** Chapter headings. *[He reads his notes]* *Champion confesses. Champion inspires enemy. Run-out ruins relations. Grace under fire. The Ashes are born. Amazing Grace. Fiery Fred. Spectacular Spofforth. It's just not cricket.*
- FX** *Piano music stops*
- FRED** *[Thinking about what he's written]* The whole truth, Doctor, warts 'n all.
[WG bursts in]
- WG** *[Excited]* Fred, I've got the answer!
- FRED** *[Confused]* To what?
- WG** How to sell my book back on Earth.
- FRED** *[Stunned]* Back on Earth? But how?
- WG** *[Beaming]* Sherlock Holmes!
[BLACKOUT. Actors exit. Interval music begins and house lights come up]

TEA

SECOND INNINGS

[Once interval ends and the audience has returned, fade music and fade all lights. FRED enters in darkness in position he held just prior to interval. Once ready, lights come up]

FRED *[Thinking about what he's written]* The whole truth, Doctor, warts 'n all.

[WG bursts in]

WG *[Excited]* Fred, Fred, I've got the answer!

FRED *[Confused]* To what?

WG How to sell my book back on Earth.

FRED *[Stunned]* Back on Earth? But how?

WG *[Beaming]* Sherlock Holmes!

FRED *[No idea what WG means]* Sherlock Holmes? What do you mean?

WG *[He's fired up]* At which London hospital did I study?

FRED St Bart's.

WG And which famous detective worked there?

FRED Sherlock Holmes.

WG And who is intimately acquainted with Sherlock Holmes?

FRED Dr. Watson.

WG *[Mildly annoyed]* No.

FRED Mrs Hudson.

WG *[More annoyed]* No, that chap who played for the MCC.

FRED Sir Arthur Conan Doyle?

WG Yes and he's one of those ... thing-a-me-bobs.

FRED A novelist?

WG *[Mildly annoyed]* No. Yes. I mean

FRED A doctor?

WG *[More annoyed]* No. Yes. Oh you know.

FRED Not a spiritualist?

WG Yes. He can contact the other side.

FRED But we're *on* the other side.

WG So when some medium pacer from Earth contacts Doyle, he can tell them about my book. *[Emphatic]* It can be sold on Earth.

FRED *[Not convinced]* I'm not so sure about that.

WG And to prevent any copyright infringement, Doyle can have Sherlock Holmes represent us.

FRED *[Almost speechless]* Sherlock Holmes?

WG Yes, he wins every case and best of all, he doesn't charge.

- FRED** *[Pause then suddenly twigs or thinks he twigs. Amused, laughing]* Oh very good, Doctor, very good. *[Wags finger]* You almost had me going there.
- WG** This could mean loads of money. My fame will live on. *[Pause. His turn to be confused]* What?
- FRED** For a minute there I really thought you were serious.
- WG** *[Still trying to work it out]* You really thought I was serious?
- FRED** Mind you, there are plenty of people who still believe Sherlock Holmes was real.
[Crunch time. Pause. You see up until that precise moment WG did believe Holmes was a real person. WG is now in a tricky situation]
- WG** *[Laughing to cover his confusion]* What? A real person?
- FRED** Yes.
- WG** *[He laugheth too much]* People actually believe Sherlock Holmes was real?
- FRED** Yes.
- WG** *[You're kidding. Drawn out 'No?']* No? What blithering nincompoop would believe that?
- FRED** *[Changes tack and attacks him]* Aha! You see, *there's* the mystery, the unknown Grace, the hidden Grace, the man the world doesn't know.
- WG** *[Has no idea]* What are you blathering about?
- FRED** Were you joking then or are you just thick?
- WG** *[Angry]* Thick?
- FRED** What Spofforth might call a 'sandwich short of a picnic'.
- WG** *[Angry]* I've had enough of your grubbers. *[Looking around]* Where's that stump?
- FRED** I mean let's tell the *whole* truth, Doctor; have you ever read a book?
- WG** *[Indignant]* Of course; I've read at *least* one.
- FRED** You said reading was bad for the eyes.
- WG** It is.
- FRED** And you must have been a slow reader because you took 11 years to qualify as a doctor.
- WG** That's because I was travelling the world being a champion cricketer.
- FRED** And by the time you sat for your finals, no examiner was ever going to fail you.
- WG** Oh so now I cheated at cricket *and* medicine?

- FRED** Apart from Queen Victoria, you were the most popular person in Britain. Imagine the pressure on your examiner in far flung Scotland. *[Scottish accent as WG took his finals in Edinburgh. Bowing]* “Oh Mr Grace, it’s an honour to be able to help you pass your final examination.”
- WG** *[Amazed]* But that’s *exactly* what he said.
- FRED** And if that massive presence and reputation were not enough, you could always resort to your famous bully-boy tactics.
- WG** *[I’ll fix you, Fred]* What a splendid idea. Let’s start on you.
- FRED** You bullied players, umpires, administrators, taxi-drivers, railway staff, spectators - everyone.
- WG** *And publishers and writers so why not you? [Spits the dummy]* Or else, let’s just cut the bullying and cancel this *[Angry]* damn, bloody book.
- FRED** *[Devastated]* Oh sir, no, please; don’t pull the pin.
- WG** You’re starting to get my goat Fred. Why are you *really* writing this book?
- FRED** Because history is important.
- WG** *[Scoffs]* Yes but whose history? The ‘truth’ is written by the winning side and you’ve never won anything.
- FRED** *[Worried]* Oh please Doctor Grace. *[Sneezes]* Ah choo! Don’t withdraw now. You will have the final say on every word in the book; every word.
- WG** Assuming there *is* a book.
- FRED** *[More concern]* Oh sir. *[Sneezes more loudly]* Ah choo.
- WG** What’s the matter with you, man?
- FRED** It’s my hay fever. Your lovely flowers are upsetting my sinuses.
- WG** Then you must retire hurt.
- FRED** *[Pleading]* No!
- WG** *[Wants him out]* Grab your papers, your smug questions and sling y’hook!
- FX** *Glass breaking*
- FRED** What was that?
- WG** *[Worried]* Oh no.
- FRED** Broken glass; a window perhaps?
- WG** *[Furious]* That was my glasshouse. *[Exiting]* If they’ve touched my tomatoes there’ll be blood on the pitch. *[Exits]*
- FRED** *[Concerned]* Oh my Lord. He can’t quit now. *[Thinking]* I’ll offer him money. But how much? Too little, he’ll be insulted; too much and ...

WG *[Offstage]* What the devil?

FRED He's found it. He's gone mad. He'll hit me with that stump. *[Starts to pack papers]* I really do have to go.

WG *[Enters angry]* Who knows about my book?

FRED *[Flustered]* What? Ah, nobody, just the two of us.

WG Well somebody does and they want to stop me telling the truth. There was a cricket ball next to my glasshouse and wrapped around the ball was *[Brandishing note]* this note. *[He reads]* "Publish and be damned".

FRED *[Flustered]* But that's what the Duke of Wellington said when a lady threatened to write her memoirs.

WG And?

FRED He didn't care. He wasn't afraid of his letters being published.

WG And nor am I.

FRED *[Hopeful]* Really? You'll allow the book to go ahead?

WG You're damn right I will. Nobody intimidates me. You can't bully a bully.

FRED That's wonderful news, Doctor. *[Back to his notes]* So, what would you like to talk about next?

WG *[Back at FRED]* You.

FRED Me?

WG Yes. Let's talk about Frederick Samuel Ashley hyphen Cooper.

FRED But this is a book about you.

WG I can tell when a chap is hiding something, so come on, scribe; what's the *real* story?

FRED *[Worried]* I don't understand.

WG You've never written anything controversial in your life. You're Mr Politeness, the gentleman who'd do anything for anyone. Suddenly you're like some penny dreadful hack foraging through my rubbish bin.

FRED But I want to include your many good points.

WG What's going on, Fred? *[Intimidating]* Tell me.

FRED *[Breaks down and confesses]* Oh very well. *[Pause]* I do want to write a warts 'n all book but I'm also trying to win something.

WG Win something?

FRED I've never won anything in my life, but next week I hope to change all that. And I can if you'll coach me.

WG Explain yourself.

FRED I'm in a competition to discover the *Best Cricket Writer*. You see cricket writers are mad and we all ...

- WG** I know that.
- FRED** I mean mad about obscure facts and figures and we desperately want to know something that no other cricket writer knows.
- WG** And?
- FRED** Well the competition is next week and my specialist subject is Doctor W.G. Grace.
- WG** *[Now he understands]* Oh, finally the truth.
- FRED** So apart from writing a controversial but truthful book about your life and career, I want to glean some priceless Graceian details to win the title.
- WG** *[Likes the term]* ‘Graceian’ details. I like that.
- FRED** *[Goes to his notes]* I’ve got some possible quiz questions and it would be an honour, sir, if you would kindly test me.
- WG** What about my book?
- FRED** Well if we tackle the quiz, we may find new material for our book, *your* book.
- WG** *[Takes sheet of questions, reluctant]* We’d better.
- FRED** Excellent. *[Moves chair centre and sits]* I’ll be myself and you are the quizmaster. *[Looks at WG]* When you’re ready, sir.
[WG is not happy about this ‘silly’ business but as the quiz builds, he becomes enthusiastic. He’s reminiscing and reveling in his past and his triumphs. His enthusiasm builds and the scene becomes a play within the play]
- WG** *[Reading as the quizmaster]* Your specialist subject is the life-long innings of Dr. W.G. Grace and your time starts ... now.
- FX** *Lighting could change to highlight the quiz contestant
Clock ticking sound is heard*
- WG** *[Reading]* Within his family, W.G. Grace was known by what names?
- FRED** ‘Gilbert’ although his mother called him ‘Willie’.
- WG** Correct. How many brothers did W.G. Grace have and what was their cricketing prowess?
- FRED** 4. All played first-class cricket except Alfred, who nevertheless made several centuries playing club cricket in Gloucestershire.
- WG** Correct. What was Grace’s mother’s unique contribution to cricket?
- FRED** Three of her five sons played Test cricket for England.
- WG** More information.
- FRED** She was the first woman ever listed in Wisden.
- WG** Correct. For which football team did W.G. Grace play and what is its claim to fame?

- FRED** The Wanderers in London and they won the first ever FA Cup final.
- WG** *[Breaks from quizmaster persona]* Which they won another three times.
- FRED** Four.
- WG** Really? *[Back as quizmaster]* When did Grace begin his first-class career, how old was he and what was his first score?
- FRED** 1865, he was 16 and failed to trouble the scorers.
- WG** In 1878 why was Billy Midwinter prevented from playing for Australia at Lord's?
- FRED** Dr Grace kidnapped him.
- WG** More information.
- FRED** Dr Grace manhandled him into a hansom cab and took him across London to play for Gloucestershire at The Oval.
- WG** Correct. During a match in Warrnambool Victoria, why did Grace refuse to attend a dance held in honour of the touring English cricketers.
- FRED** Because the professionals were invited.
[They revert back to themselves, step out of the play within the play scene and have a barney]
- FX** *Clock ticking stops, previous lighting returns*
- WG** *[As WG]* Now if this is going in my book, let's get it right. What I said was, "If the professionals were allowed to be present, then as a gentleman, I would decline the invitation."
- FRED** *[Not as contestant, out of seat]* But they were your team mates, your fellow Englishmen.
- WG** They were players, I was a gentleman and off the field, ne'r the twain shall meet.
- FRED** Even on tour?
- WG** *Especially* on tour. What sort of example would that set for the colonials to see Englishmen of different classes mixing at the same knees-up?
- FRED** You made ten times more money than the professionals.
- WG** I drew ten times more spectators than the professionals.
- FRED** *[Knows he's beaten]* Look, Doctor, this won't help me win the title.
- WG** Well you started it.
- FRED** *[Returning to seat and to being a contestant]* Yes, I'm sorry. Please continue.
- FX** *Clock ticking and quiz lighting returns*
- WG** *[Back to being quizmaster]* What happened to the Grace family home with its orchard cum cricket ground?

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- FRED** The house became a supermarket and the orchard a car park.
- WG** What connects Grace with Monty Python?
- FRED** In the film *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, W.G.'s face appears as the face of God.
- WG** What was remarkable about the time Grace made 37 in a match at Cheltenham?
- FRED** He batted with a broom handle.
- WG** Complete the following Graceian sayings. "I don't like defensive strokes ..."
- FRED** "Because you only get three for them."
- WG** "There is no such thing as a crisis ..."
- FRED** "Only the next ball."
- WG** "I can still bat ..."
- FRED** *[Not sure]* Oh. Blimey ... *[Thinking]* "I can still bat".
- WG** *[Gives a hint]* It happened when my chest slipped; when the ground was too far away.
- FRED** *[Now he knows]* Ah! "I can still bat but I can't bend."
- WG** Name five nicknames for W.G. Grace.
- FRED** The Leviathan, the Mammoth, the Old Man, The Doctor, WG and Gilbert the Great.
- WG** *[As himself]* That's six.
- FRED** You were very popular.
- WG** *[As quizmaster]* Name five teams captained by W.G. Grace.
- FRED** Gloucestershire, MCC, England, London and the Gentlemen.
- WG** Which knight of the realm dismissed W.G. Grace to take his one and only first-class wicket?
- FRED** Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.
- WG** What unique event caused a match between Lancashire and Gloucestershire to be abandoned?
- FRED** A telegram arrived with news that *[Goes quiet and sombre]* the mother of W.G. Grace had died.
- [Pause as even WG is affected]*
- WG** *[As quizmaster]* Three funds were created to raise money for Grace's testimonial. How much was raised?
- FRED** £9000 which today is about one million dollars.
- WG** How old was Grace when he first captained the English Test team?
- FRED** 40.
- WG** What percentage of Tests did England win under Grace?
- FRED** 62.
- WG** What was Grace's weight in his 50th year?

- FRED** 22 stone.
- WG** How old was Grace when he played his final first-class match?
- FRED** 59.
- WG** How old was Grace when he played his last game of cricket?
- FRED** 66.
- WG** Which notable cleric was a great admirer of Dr Grace?
- FRED** The Bishop of Hereford.
- FX** *Stop ticking clock and light one area of stage*
[FRED stands and moves to lit area]
- WG** *[In the darkness as commentator]* W.G Grace was honoured in books and newspapers, in magazines and advertisements, in Parliament, on the Music Hall stage and from pulpits in churches small and grand. Today's sermon will be delivered by His Grace, the Bishop of Hereford.
- FX** *Church organ music*
- FRED** *[As the Bishop of Hereford, preaching]* From St John's Gospel, "There was a man sent from God whose name was John". And at the home of cricket, Lord's in St John's Wood, we divine, "There was a man sent from Gloucestershire whose name was Grace". From St John's gospel – "When he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple". From St John's Wood – "When he had made a scourge of small strokes, he drove them all out of the ground".
- St John's gospel – "He was a burning and a shining light". St John's Wood – "He was a burning and a shining light".
- St John's gospel – "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." At St John's Wood, beneath the Grace Gates upon which is written 'The Great Cricketer', we hear the good Doctor – "In the game ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the game".
- If Dr Grace had been born in ancient Greece, the Iliad would be a different book.
- WG** *[As worshipper in church]* Amen.
- FRED** If the good Doctor had been born in the Middle Ages, King Richard's greatest warrior would have been W.G.
[The technician and SM could join WG in speaking]
- WG** Amen.

- FRED** And if so, our hero Grace would today be lying with his padded legs crossed in a niche in Bristol Cathedral.
- WG** Amen.
- FRED** So how fortunate we are that the great man, the champion, the conqueror lives and breathes and walks among us today.
- WG** Hallelujah.
- FRED** He is the colossal centurian, the glorious gladiator and the third of our triumvirate. *[Hand raised making sign of the Cross]* God, cricket and WG.
- WG** *[Ttio's final speech]* God, cricket and WG.
- FX** *Church lighting changes and now to Music Hall situation. A scooping whistle is blown signifying the end of church and the beginning of the Theatre. Is there any difference?*
- [Both men suddenly become music hall entertainers. WG hands a boater to FRED having collected one for himself]*
- FRED** I say, I say, I heard this funny joke today.
- WG** Do tell, do tell.
- FRED** A patient went to Dr Grace's surgery and knocked on the door.
- WG** Knock, knock.
- FRED** 'Excuse me,' said the patient, 'is the Doctor in?'
- WG** *[All agog telling the tag]* 'Yes, he's been in since Tuesday.'
- FX** *MUSIC BEGINS. Lights change*
[Much laughter from the men]

Song 'The Doctor Went In'

- FRED** *[Recit]* Against a crew of 22 he picked the gaps at will
- WG** *[Spoken]* I did
[Recit] On pitches stark in weather dark I showed tremendous skill
- FRED** *[Spoken]* He did
[Recit] At home, abroad, he freely scored and gave vast crowds a thrill
- WG** *[Spoken]* I did
- Duet** *And so we go to heaven, where Grace is batting still.*

*The Doctor went in on Tuesday
And on Thursday he's still not out
The bowlers look hagged, the fielders run ragged
The umpires stand staggered, the game is a rout.*

*His run rate is rapid and rising
There is no need for the benefit of the doubt
Because the Doctor went in on Tuesday
And on Thursday he's still not out.*

[Then patter follows before a soft-shoe dance finishing with the chorus and coda]

PATTER

WG I say, have we started yet?
FRED Not yet, Doctor. We haven't said Grace.
WG Did you know a bowling side once called the fire brigade?
FRED The fire brigade?
WG It was the only way they could put me out.
FRED I once saw Fred Spoffoth give a batsman a pounding.
WG Was he all right?
FRED Fine. He was having his teeth out anyway.
WG I was once bowled first ball?
FRED What did you say?
WG "Nice practice ball; now let's begin".
FRED One of your players threw down his bat and said, "I've never played so badly before".
WG And as his captain I replied ...
DUET "Oh you've played before?"

DANCE

[They laugh and dance then sing. Song ends and they retire to their respective seats. They are tired and have enjoyed their last bit of fun. WG is about to reminisce. The tempo of their dialogue is slower]

FX *Lighting returns to later in the day; the afternoon sun slowly fades.
Bird sounds*

WG *[Reflective]* I've had a cracking day, Fred.
FRED Same here, sir.
WG It's good to look back.
FRED Memories?
WG We mellow with age.
FRED Cricket enemies become best pals.
WG They do. You know Fred Spoffoth married an English girl and settled in Blighty.
FRED So the Demon from Down Under who cursed you is now a chum.
WG I write to him as 'My Dear Spoff'.
FRED So tell me your thoughts on the game itself.
WG The game?

- FRED** Yes. How important are the rules?
- WG** Oh tremendously. And they should be followed to the letter.
- FRED** So which rule did you follow when you were batting and the ball lodged in your shirt?
- WG** *[Smiles]* Oh that.
- FRED** You started running and only stopped when several fielders grabbed hold of you.
- WG** I think I ran 5 before they stopped me.
- FRED** By why didn't you just toss it back?
- WG** *[Indignant]* And be given out for handling the ball?
[They laugh. Pause. Twilight is calling or falling. Is there night in heaven?]
- FRED** Were you ever frightened when batting?
- WG** Never. Only when those German Zeppelins dropped bombs on London.
- FRED** Surely facing Fred Spofforth was scary.
- WG** I could see Fred but not those damned bombs.
- FRED** But you must have some happy memories.
- WG** Oh many.
- FRED** Things which made you laugh.
- WG** Indeed. *[Thinking. Smiles]* I was batting with Conan Doyle once at Lord's and the poor chap caught fire. He had a box of matches in his pocket when a ball struck and set them alight.
- FRED** A fire at Lord's.
- WG** Two actually. One freezing day I saw an Australian fieldsman warming himself by a fire he'd lit on the ground.
- FRED** The Australians said the English winter ended in June and began in July.
- WG** *[Laughs]* Bloody Australians.
- FRED** So what was cricket like in your day?
- WG** Hectic. We played County games, Gentlemen v Players, North and South, Under 30s and Over 30s, Test matches, one dayers, testimonials; we never stopped.
- FRED** There was even a game between Smokers and Non-Smokers.
- WG** Oh yes. The Non-Smokers won and their captain celebrated with a cigar.
[They laugh. It's winding down time]
- FRED** Was money important - for everyone I mean?
- WG** Oh money was God. Gambling was rife. The crowds bet on anything and players bet on themselves.
- FRED** And sledging?

WG It never stopped.

FRED Somehow I can't imagine you as some foul-mouthed sledger.

WG Good heavens no. I used to chat to batsmen as a kindly old gent. They thought it wonderful; a great player giving them the time of day.

FRED When all the while you were interrupting their concentration.

WG *[Tapping nose]* How else could a trundler take 3000 wickets?

FRED But bowling changed in your day.

WG It did.

FRED From underarm to roundarm to overarm.

WG And chucking was all the rage.

FRED With the rules constantly changing.

WG Constantly. Yes, with cricket in my day we had too many games, coloured clothing, betting, sledging, loud music and constant rule changes.

[Pause. They look at one another and speak as one]

DUET No change there then. *[They laugh]*

FRED You know you were a hero to millions of schoolboys ... including me.

WG *[Touched]* Fred.

FRED I devoured *The Boy's Own Paper* and you were on the front cover. My mother bought Coleman's Mustard because you advertised it. And I was so honoured when you sent me your statistics after each season.

WG Well you were the best cricket writer by far. You wrote or edited a hundred cricket books.

FRED A hundred and three.

WG But you made mistakes with your biography of my brother Edward.

FRED Your dear wife wrote to me. *[Finds letter and reads]* "The doctor is ill but read the proofs and told me of a lot of mistakes. He would be very sorry for it to be published with such a number of errors."

WG It didn't much matter in the end. I died.

FRED *[Goes to him]* Dr Grace, I'm worried about this latest book. I'm afraid you'll find some excuse not to proceed.

WG *[Starting to become lively again]* Hey?

FRED You have a long record, sir, of spitting the dummy hence my use of reverse psychology.

WG Spitting the dummy! *[Suspicious]* Reverse what?

FRED That cricket ball with the note by your glasshouse – I put it there.

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WG *[Shocked]* You what!

FRED It's reverse psychology. I thought if *you* thought someone was trying to stop you publishing, you'd do exactly the opposite.

WG *[Temper rising]* How dare you.

FRED And I'm only confessing now so I can test another theory about you; that you have a fiery temper and fly off the handle but in the end, you enjoy a good laugh and shake hands.

WG *[Not well pleased]* I'm damn angry all right and ... hang on, I heard the sound of breaking glass.

FRED Yes, that was a bottle being smashed in the house next door. The cue was *[Reprises his sneeze]* "Ah choo".

WG *[Starts to lose his anger]* Next door? You mean Rachmaninoff had a hand in this?

FRED Actually it was another of your Aussie mates, Billy Murdoch.

WG *[Relaxed and pleased]* Billy Murdoch, that old scallywag.

FRED He said your game of golf is on tomorrow and he'll give you five strokes start.

WG *[Mock anger]* Five! I'll need at least ten.

FRED He said he had the perfect plan to beat you.

WG Of course. He cheats more than I do. *[Looking for clubs]* Now where are my clubs? I must get in some practise.

FRED *[Concerned]* But what about your book?

WG Where did I put them? *[Stops searching]* What's that?

FRED When can we continue with your book?

WG *[Has forgiven FRED and goes to him and they shake hands]* Any time dear chap, any time. Oh and I loved that trick with the note. *[Starts to exit]* Cheerio.

FRED *[Speaks to his back]* So you really *are* an overgrown schoolboy?

WG *[Stops and turns, mock anger]* Overgrown? How dare you. *[Comes back to FRED. Will he belt the writer?]* Bit of advice, m'lad. *[As in a pep talk]*

FX *Curtain call music begins softly*

WG "Let's be getting at them before they get at us."
[Pause them huge laugh from WG. FRED joins in and they exit together]

FRED So tomorrow when we win the toss ...

WG We bat, bat, bat. *[They exit arm in arm and laughing]*

FX *Fade lights*
[Actors reappear for their curtain call]

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If you wish to stage *Don Bradman Lives Next Door*, you must obtain permission in writing before you commence rehearsals. A show application form can be obtained from Fox Plays

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Damien Jones (Fred) and David McLean (WG) in Tangled Web Theatre's production of *Don Bradman Lives Next Door*