

IF.....

**If you can't run singles when all about you
Are screaming loud and shouting "Two!"
If you can trust yourself when all others doubt you
And hold your ground, stay put and stick like glue;
If you cannot throw and not be good at fielding,
Or being slow at turning don't stop the byes,
Or being old, don't give way to ageing,
And yet don't know the laws, nor talk too wise:**

**If you can bat - and not make runs your master;
If you can throw - and make not the stumps your aim;
If you can meet with Victory and Defeat
And treat those imposters just the same;
If you can push a sightscreen with joints and hinges broken
Twisted and bent by those practising mid-week fools
Or watch your teammates struggle with the tent and stay unspoken
Remaining silent as the worn-out tools:**

**If you can make one heap of all your innings,
And risk it on one turning pitch or toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never tell a soul about your loss;
If you can bowl with flight and guile and sinew
And only watch as balls are plundered far, and gone,
And keep a smile when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says "Hold on!"**

**If you can talk with the opposition and keep your virtue,
Or walk at once when getting the faintest touch,
If neither criticism nor sledging can hurt you,
And you are quick to praise (but not too much);
If you can fill the unforgiving scorebook
With boundaries, not distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And - what is more - you'll be a Gargoyle, my son!**

Scroll down for more.....

Xanadu

In Alstonefield did Old McKay
A stately cricket ground decree
Where men in flannels white, ran
Through lush meadows measureless to man
Far from a sunless sea.
So twice five acres of fertile ground
With dry stone walls were girdled round
And there were gardens bright with glorious frills
Where lived the players, the weekend wannabees
Who longed for Sundays in the shadow of the hills
Enfolding sunny spots of grey and greenery
But O, that rope-protected square which slowly slanted
Down the green hill athwart a clovern cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a howling wind was haunted
By bowlers wailing for another over!
And from this square, with giant wormcasts seething
As if this earth in fast quick pants were breathing
A mighty crack of willow momentarily was forced
Amid the bowler's long relentless burst
Red balls of fire vaulted like rebounding hail
Or chaffy grain beneath the batter's flail
And 'mid all these dancing stones at once and ever.

Up rose momentarily the flannelled men as one
Appealing loudly and moving in a mazy motion
In chaotic scenes unrehearsed they ran
Through lush green meadows measureless to man
And sank in tumult to rejoice in unison
And 'mid this tumult they saw with eager eye
The umpire's fateful finger, pointing to the sky.

DD

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(With apologies to R Kipling and ST Coleridge)