That's a wide!" said Tom, as the ball went rolling by about a yard from the stump. "Throw it up, Maggie. Now, Hugh, try again!"

It was a very young and inexperienced team that Tom Gardner was instructing. Tom was staying with his Aunt Gertrude, and had been complaining to her that he had no one whom he could play cricket with.

"Why don't you play with the children?" asked his aunt at last.

"Play with the kids?" gasped Tom. "Why, auntie, they are all girls except Hugh, and he not even in knickerbockers! And they don't know how!"

"Well, can't you teach them?" his aunt asked. Tom looked at her with some surprise. He was very fond of her and would do much to please her, but this seemed rather unreasonable.

"I—I have only a bat," he murmured? "there aren't any stumps!"

"O, I'll soon make you some stumps," said the lady briskly. "Come out into the garden and I'll soon get them."

She was as good as her word. In a few minutes she had found three sticks, pointed the ends with her pocket-knife, and driven them in with the gardener's mallet on the lower lawn. A flower-pot was placed on the centre stick. Then she produced a ball from her pocket.

"Now," she said, "you have everything you will want, and I leave you to teach your scratch team."

Tom laughed. The phrase "your scratch team" pleased him. His aunt's energy had infected him, and he began to marshal his forces.

"Now, look here, girls," he said; "Maggie, you're wicket-keeper, and Fan and Kitty must field, and Hugh shall bowl."

But Hugh proved such an indifferent bowler that even the girls began to clamour.

"Let me twy, Cousin Tom," cried Maggie; "I can frow better than Hugh!"

"You frow!" laughed Tom; "why, you can't speak properly yet!"

"Let me twy," said Maggie; "I don't bowl with my tongue!"

So Maggie tried, and the game began to get exciting.

Maggie couldn't say her "r's," but she could certainly throw a ball very straight, and Tom had to play his best.

He began to hit the ball about the lawn, so that the little fielders grew hot and out of breath. At last one vigorous toss absolutely hit the wicket and sent the stumps and the flower-pot sprawling.

"I have knocked him out," cried Maggie, jumping about in her glee. "I am going to bat the ball now!"

But at that moment a voice was heard calling: "Come in to tea, children!"

"It can't be tea-time yet, surely!" said Tom, quite astonished at the quick flight of time.

So the scratch team had not played so badly after all, and during Tom's stay with his aunt they had many a game together and always thoroughly enjoyed it.