

Football Notes and News.

By "Grasshopper."

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

MILLWALL v. LUTON.

SUCCESS OF THE "BLUES."

What memories of the past, what recollections of Trojan tussles are brought to mind at the mention of Millwall v. Luton! As two of the oldest partners in the Southern League tourney they have fought many a stiff fight, and they were engaged in their big battles long before the existence of many of the present teams in the League. No match in the South at one time was fought more tenaciously than when Luton met Millwall. Nowadays they have come to respect each other's prowess, with a slight inclination to rest on past laurels, yet now and then when both teams meet some of the old-time spirit is infused into the game. In the past honours have been fairly evenly divided, and while the Lutonians can point with pride to some brilliant victories, the "Dockers" have had also placed to their credit some of the finest achievements in the field.

By defeating Millwall by 2-1 on their own ground on Saturday, the "Blues" were distinctly lucky. That will be admitted by the majority of the Luton spectators. At each meeting of the teams last season, the Londoners were the victors—at Millwall by 2 clear goals, and at Luton by 2-1; but last November on the Ivy-road enclosure, Luton fairly routed their old rivals, piling up the huge score of 6-1. On that occasion the Millwall supporters declared that it was their goal-keeper who was responsible for such a crushing defeat; though to an impartial spectator it looked uncommonly as if the backs had given the game away.

Millwall has lost very much of its energy this season in the Cup-ties, and since the team has been knocked out of the competition it has not done quite so well. On Saturday they found themselves opposed to the team occupying fourth place in the League, and three points in front of them. The "Dockers," however, generally play best when the odds are against them, and it was expected they would give one of their best displays on Saturday.

Their play was certainly all that could be desired—they have not played a better game this season—but the result must have been a great disappointment. Millwall indeed experienced cruel luck. From the kick-off the home side went away with a rush, and for practically half-an-hour they fiercely bombarded Luton's citadel. The pressure was only momentarily relieved, though the visitors had the advantage of a slight breeze. Platt had to tip over; a shot from Jones scraped the top of the bar; Watkins, who had the goal at his mercy, shot high over; Platt just managed to stop a fast drive from Hunter, who later with a "header" only missed by inches; and then Bradbury had the misfortune to send behind. Such were a few of the chief points in the first 20 minutes. Though Luton's defence worked hard, and Platt was in tip-top form, it was not altogether good play that kept the homesters out.

Moreover, practically the first time Luton got away—or rather the first time they became really dangerous—they scored. From a goal-kick, the Blues' forwards went down the field in a line, and McDonald put the finishing touch to a splendid move by sending the ball with a hot drive into the corner of the net, giving Joyce no earthly chance.

Going away with a rush, Millwall soon forced a corner off Blackett, and from the flag kick a melee took place in front of the Luton goal, and Platt was distinctly fortunate in punching the ball away. The pace began to tell on the Dockers, and Luton now had the experience of attacking, but they were not in Millwall's quarters for long, for Comrie, the right half, soon put Heaton in possession; however, the home centre was pluckily stopped by R. Hawkes. Campbell returned the leather, and for the next five minutes Millwall were again all over their opponents.

Another fierce bombardment of Platt's goal ensued, and it must be confessed that how the citadel escaped falling at times was a miracle. Platt effected three magnificent saves in quick succession, and his performances received the well-merited appreciation of every spectator. Some very fast play followed, the shots directed at Platt being legion, but the Luton custodian nobly rose to the occasion, and kept the homesters out until cheers of the crowd of 8,000.

Luton were in the proud position of leading by the only goal scored so far. Directly on the re-start, Millwall assumed the aggressive, and kept popping at Platt, who had to get on his knees to save a hot drive from Heaton. Later the visiting goal-keeper, from a corner, saved what seemed to be a certain goal.

At the other end Millwall were in difficulties. Brown and McDonald breaking away, the centre-forward tested Joyce with a terrific low drive, which he fell on to save. A scrimmage over the prostrate goalkeeper looked dangerous, but Campbell came to the rescue and cleared. Platt was again subjected to further pressure, but he seemed invincible, and returning to the charge, Joyce appeared lucky in clearing all the shots directed at him.

But Millwall were not to be denied, and they attacked desperately. Hunter, following up one of his own passes, was in the act of heading the ball, when he was accidentally kicked in the face by Blackett, and had to leave the field in consequence. The homesters continued the game to the end with ten men. Then Barnes received a nice pass from McCurdy, and made a fine sprint along the wing, before centreing to Pickering, who was fouled by Stevenson within the fatal area. "Bob" took the penalty kick, and Luton were quickly two goals to the good.

Almost immediately from the re-start, the homesters were awarded a penalty for hands against Gallacher. Heaton took the kick, but Platt brought off another marvellous save. Was ill-fortune destined to dog the footsteps of the "Dockers" right through the game? Suffering from rheumatism in the knee, Blackett finally left the field, and the teams were even in numbers once more.

For a good while play slackened down, and the drizzling rain did not improve the state of the ground. Pulling themselves together Millwall, as it were, made one last effort, and Comrie sent in a shot which cannoned off Fred Hawkes, and reduced Luton's lead.

There was no further scoring, and the Blues left the field victors by 2—1. Though Luton had a bit of luck, as one of the directors observed, it only made up for the ill-luck they have had on some occasions this season. Millwall's forwards were undoubtedly the better of the two, but the defence on both sides was pretty equal.