

FOOTBALL NOTES AND NEWS.

By "Grasshopper."

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON'S LAST MATCH.—A FARCE.

A REGRETTABLE FINISH.

The last match of the season—Luton v. Reading—which was played on the Ivy-road enclosure on Saturday afternoon, was really little better than a farce; but if the game itself was extremely dull and uninteresting, an incident, regrettable in itself, came at the end, which created no little excitement, and without doubt more will be heard of it.

The game was of such a tame description that a few lines should suffice by way of detail. The homesters had their usual in the field, and Reading were well represented, as follows:—Whittaker; Gettins, Lindsay; Allman, Comrie, Weir; Bartholomew, Minter, Edgley, Davies and Carrick.

McCurdy won the toss, and what breeze there was the Biscuit men had to face. Luton opened the attack, but after Latheron had sent behind, the visitors replied, and from a centre by Carrick an apparently open goal was missed by Edgley. Neither side had any especial advantage for some time, although each goal received its due share of attention. Eventually Reading came out on top, and Davies nearly scored from a header. Platt effected a smart save. On the other hand, Brown almost scored for Luton by means of a free kick. After a corner to Reading, which was headed away by Jones, Carrick put in a very fine run. Barnes did likewise a minute later, and then Pickering missed an easy chance. Whittaker saved well from Gittins, especially as the ball was very greasy, and most difficult to hold. Just before the interval Luton applied some pressure, but few shots found their way goalwards, and there was no score at half-time.

Resuming, both ends were early visited without result, and then play degenerated. Eventually Gittins broke away, and was going well for goal, when Weir tried to take the ball from in front of the forward's toes. To the surprise of some the referee (Mr. Smith, of Boston), awarded a penalty. Jones took the kick, and easily beat Whittaker. It was not long, however, before Davies equalised with a decent shot.

After this the game was not worth witnessing. Probably never in a match has there been so much handling, the visitors being special offenders in this respect, and the whistle went continuously. This fact in a large measure tended to destroy anything like a decent exhibition. The referee, too, did not appear to be sufficiently strict with the players. Whenever the game was temporarily suspended, the players would swarm round him like a lot of bees; some would do the "Highland fling" and others give a demonstration of juggling — on a small scale, of course—but all the same these were elements that should never have been allowed to enter the game. Combined with this was the apparent listlessness of the players themselves, so that on the whole little complaint could be found with those who became disgusted with this, the last match of the season.

Five minutes or so from the close "hostilities" ceased for some minutes while the referee consulted with the linesman over some point, and then argued with the players. No one could exactly tell what was happening, as the men completely surrounded the principal official, and from the Press-box nothing could be seen of that gentleman excepting his hands, which waved above the heads of the players. After some minutes the game was resumed, but then it was noticed that Fred Hawkes and Carrick, the Reading outside-left, had been ordered off the field. Of course this must have been for a serious infringement of the rules, and no one could believe that Fred Hawkes—who had never done a mean action before on the football field—had been guilty of an offence that justified his being sent back to the dressing room.

The crowd, no doubt disappointed with the "performance," now showed their resentment towards the referee, and "booed" that official to the echo, while on leaving the field Hawkes was received with much cheering. There are one or two "versions" of the affair. The first is that Carrick was dashing along the wing when he was charged by the Luton right half, coming in contact with the railings, and under the impression that he had been fouled intentionally, he picked up the ball and threw it in Hawkes' face; that he next kicked Hawkes, and that then the latter struck him with his fist. Another story is that Carrick deliberately threw the greasy ball in Hawkes's face, and that the latter retaliated with his fist, but that there was no kicking. Still another report is that Carrick, in throwing in, merely intended to bounce the ball off Hawkes' chest, but that it struck him in the face.

It was the linesman who interfered, and the referee had no alternative but to stop play and inquire into the matter. After a deal of haggling, in which both goalkeepers joined, Hawkes and Carrick were seen to shake hands, and it was thought the incident had closed; but the linesman was again seen to approach the referee, after which the two men were ordered off the field. The truth will, doubtless, come out when the matter comes before the Association.

The game ended in a draw of one goal each, and as the players and the officials were leaving the ground the crowd on the grand stand became very hostile, and an ugly rush was made for the exit from the ground to the dressing rooms. The police, however, had taken precautions and, though they were pushed about, succeeded in protecting the referee and linesmen. All the same it was an anxious moment, and the crowd were only kept away with the greatest difficulty. Then the spectators on the other side came across the field; thousands gathered on the ground in front of the Press box, but the greater part seemed to have come out of a spirit of curiosity. At length, after some persuasion, those few who had declared their unmistakable intention of "getting at him"—(exactly who was meant, was not quite clear) — were cleared off the stand.

Now, what will happen? Referee Smith, of course, is bound to report having turned off the field two of the players, and there is little doubt that the Association will back up the chief official and mete out punishment to the two offenders. That seems to be certain, and Luton may not be able to play Fred Hawkes for the first month of next season. Then comes the question, Will the ground be suspended? On the face of it, there is little ground for anxiety in that respect. The directors did their utmost, and were successful in seeing that the referee and his two colleagues were fully protected. Still one never knows what may happen.