

FOOTBALL NOTES

(By CRUSADER).

Three hundred years ago flourished Jeremy Taylor, and he tells us that when an even more ancient gentleman, yeleft Zeno Citiensis, lost all his goods in a storm, he retired to the studies of philosophy, to his short cloak, and a severe life, and gave thanks to fortune for his prosperous mischance. The cost of living having risen considerably, I cannot follow old Zeno's example, and so when the storm of criticism breaks upon me, I just sit tight and emulate Leno rather than Zeno. In my very early days, long before my shins were dodging the big feet of colliers and quarrymen, I was taught of the joy which comes by bearing other people's burdens, and the Town directors owe me a benefit match, or a vote of thanks for taking the hailstorms while they receive the gentle showers.

For weeks I tried to get a deputy who could invent excuses for the Town F.C.'s defeats, but nary a volunteer could I get. Colleagues who have had correspondence courses in cynism, hypnotism, and jazz drumming, smiled pitifully and made convenient entries in their diaries, and so in desperation I smuggled into my notes last week a S.O.S. advertisement, inviting a volunteer who would endeavour to take my place for ninety minutes at the Millwall match on Saturday, and tell the "Saturday Telegraph" readers what he thought of the game, at the same time convincing the players that they had played worse than they thought, the spectators that the match had been worth watching, and those who had not attended that they had missed the best game ever seen on the Town ground. The worst part of the business from my point of view is that so many of the letters are anonymous. All the same, I like to read them. They lighten the darkness a good deal, and prevent conceit and the kindred evils which lead some men to stand for Parliament, and others to play golf or strive after allotment prizes. To that extent they are like Mrs. Squeers' tonic at Dotheboys Hall—corrective, if not satisfying.

Among the contributions this week are two which I will quote. Mr. H. E. Muller I am sorry for. While disagreeing, he paid me a compliment—a thing so rare that the shock was too severe for tears. He looks like receiving some thousands of invitations to an early morning discussion, pistols for two, and coffee for one. Another gentleman, however, shows that hardness of heart which is lamentable. He has come to the conclusion that my knowledge of football is vague, and he begs me to try to interest him and others at gardening. Now if I obeyed his request, his hair would curl better than his broccoli. Once I dug—but I dare not tell it here. I merely add that I once acquired a spine which would have made an excellent figure for trigonometrical illustration, and my interest in horticulture was killed, so I took up football instead. That is about a quarter of a century ago, and if my knowledge of football is vague now, I am afraid I have missed my vocation. But what is it all about? On looking through my notes I find that I have consistently criticised the forward play of the Town, even when they have won, and yet my correspondents generally infer that I have overlooked it. Any one who has my notes for any two games, will find that in one of the two, if not both, I have said that the forward line lacks balance and cohesion—which is a more readable way of saying they have been at "sixes and sevens." As there are only five of them, one can hardly apply that term, but I will say now that such was the case on Saturday against Millwall, although not to such an extent as in many previous games; further, that with steadiness and shooting precision in front of goal, the Town should have won by a fair margin.

Frequently I think I have said that I do not believe in "luck." Good and bad play respectively win or lose matches, and poor forward play was the reason the Town did not win on Saturday. Individual merit was spasmodic. Neither of the Town's goals was a really good goal, although Williams deserved his because of the enthusiasm he had put into his play, while it is a matter of opinion whether Dunn deliberately or accidentally handled in the penalty area. We have not before seen a goal such as Broad's equaliser, not this season at any rate, and so good was it that I am not going to quibble about the possibility of offside, although Dunn appealed loudly. I am inclined to the opinion that Dunn ran forward to put Broad offside just a little too late—namely, after Fort had kicked the ball to Broad.

Millwall deserved to draw because of the fine play of Wood and Broad, and the fact that they kept at it without flinching.

And that is as much as I need say about the match. Now about Saturday.

Simms was probably more enthusiastic than wise on Saturday, for he ought never to have played. The play of Bradshaw at Portsmouth with the Reserves was sufficient to justify his inclusion in the first team at Brighton on Saturday. He is the son of the secretary of the Southern League, and brother of the manager of Swansea, and has been playing for Fulham, to whom he went from Watford. He played with Fulham Reserves at Luton on January 24th, then figuring on the extreme left, but he is more at home in the inside berth. He is on trial with the Town for a couple of matches, and it is to be hoped that in him Bookman will find a partner capable of getting the best out of the Irish International's speed.

At Brighton he will take inside left vice Williams, who moves to his natural position at centre forward, Simms being given a rest. The team to visit Brighton will therefore be: Whitehead; Elvey and Dunn; Urwin, Rutherford and Parker; Hoar, Hill, Williams, Bradshaw and Bookman.

The Town Reserves lost at Portsmouth by the only goal of the match. The reason was probably due to the fact that Hensman was injured just before the interval, and was absent for the rest of the game. Duller, the captain of Hitchin Blue Cross, was given a trial at centre-forward, but when Hensman was hurt he went to right half, and so the team was disorganised.