

TOWN GO NAP AGAINST GILLINGHAM.

When the crowd roared over the goals or the bright footwork of the Town players on Tuesday I was feeling sorry for a gentleman in the Press-box. Very sick he looked, and he must have been mightily pleased to hear the referee's whistle sound the closure. He was John MacMillan, the manager of the Gillingham team, formerly inside left for Derby County and Leicester Fosse, and he once had the honour of saving Derby County from relegation. Those were the days of test matches between the bottom clubs in Division I. and top clubs in Division II., and MacMillan, if memory serves me correctly, was a member of the Derby team to meet Notts County in one of these test matches. Near the end Notts were leading by a goal to nil, but MacMillan came along and scored a couple off his own bat, and so helped Derby to retain their place in Division I. He must have groaned in despair as he watched the crude attempts of the Gillingham forwards, and I wondered what he would have given for a wing as good as himself and George Ekins, when they played with Derby. They had a chat together, and perhaps that relieved the

monotony of defeat, to which the Gillingham management are now pretty well accustomed. The poorest opposition yet furnished on the Town ground this season, and they never looked like being the first team to take down the colours of the Town at home. To have the management of a complement such as Gillingham is a heartbreaking task, and how they have managed to win three games is something of a mystery. For John MacMillan's sake I was glad the Town did not get more than five, but looking at it from the business end one could not but come to the conclusion that the Town forwards were too merciful. To score five goals and Simms' name not among the scorers is extraordinary, but if the home forwards had gone all out to score in the ordinary way they would probably have got a much bigger bag and Simms been among them. Their anxiety on his account enabled the Gillingham backs to keep constant watch on him, and what with the mud and their attention he found the job very difficult. Not that he did not have shots. He missed several chances by over anxiety, and he had other efforts saved splendidly by Branfield or cannon off the defence. Several times it appeared as though the ball could not be prevented entering the net, but all the same it was, and Simms went away comfortless. But he had played quite as good a game as usual. He opened out the game like an artist, and the result was that Hoar and Bookman were alternately galloping through and dropping the ball into the middle. Had it been a dry day—well Gillingham's goal-keeper would shudder at the thought of it.

The Town pressed for quite nine tenths of the game, and yet were always playing well within themselves. They were on top from the beginning, but the Gillingham defenders were plucky and stuck it manfully, although several of them could barely raise a trot at the finish. The first goal came after fifteen minutes. Bookman got possession on the halfway line and galloped off. Not far from the corner flag he centred, and Mathieson met the ball on the run and, shooting without hesitation, saw Branfield well beaten.

Higginbotham received another wire from the Reserves, who were at Northampton. It read:

Dear Chief, upon my soul.
When will you get that goal?

As at Rotherham, he took the message to heart. Not having opened a goal-scoring account this season, he set about it, and he only just missed doing the hat-trick within a period of ten minutes. His first goal was lucky. After forceful play on the wing, he dropped the ball well in front. It skidded off the greasy ground and bounced under the bar. Branfield sprang for it, and got it, but it was well over the line, and neither referee nor the visiting players had any doubt about it. Branfield made several thrilling saves before Higginbotham again got through from close quarters, and immediately afterwards he and Simms got close in and Higginbotham crashed the ball into the net, but a minor infringement by Simms nullified the point. Branfield did excellent work before the cross-over, and he got a little ovation at the interval.

In the second half he did great work, and saved a multitude of shots. On several occasions the Luton forwards could not miss him, for he got in the way of shot after shot from close range, and fully deserved the hearty applause the crowd gave him. Mathieson got the fourth goal after another of Bookman's sprints, and from a corner well placed by Bookman Hear nearly sent the ball through the net. The rest of the time was spent chiefly in the effort to get a goal tagged on to Simms, but he could not do it, and the game ended with the Town victors by five goals—their biggest victory of the season—but not by any means their best.

Branfield's work was nothing short of brilliant, and his backs played hard, gritty football. The halves were weak. Waugh was suffering again and had to leave the field for a quarter-of-an-hour before the interval. He is a new man from Scotland, and he did well at the beginning of the game. The forwards were very poor, with Needham about the best.

Of the home side it is not necessary to say much, but all were in splendid fettle despite their matches on Saturday and Monday. It was Semple's first game at home with the first team, and he showed plainly enough that he is the class man he was reported to be. He fell in with Tirrell's style quite serenely and nothing came amiss to him. Johnny is all right, and his trait of volleying low and accurately was much admired. It means much to the forwards. Molyneux is developing into a top notch player, and his work was again the subject of much comment. The forwards were clever and again showed us football of a quality that has not been seen on the Town ground for a decade. Simms' feeding of Bookman was a feature of the forward play, and the little man could not complain on Saturday if he were built that way, but he isn't.

Luton.—Bailey; Semple, Tirrell; Molyneux, Parker, Lamb; Hear, Higginbotham, Simms, Mathieson, Bookman.

Gillingham.—Branfield; Robertson, Sissons; Baxter, Waugh, Thompson; Wood, Howard, Needham, Hall, Wright.

Referee.—Mr. L. E. Vickery, Birmingham.