

LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY C.C.

THE PROSPECTS OF 1910.

By "REYNARD."

The plentiful rains of the past week or two, and the miserable weather, coupled with the appearance of sundry floundered figures in our midst, whose cold, pinched features decide the tribute they are paying to their exhaustion—all these are the unfailing signs that the English summer approaches apoplexy. With the summer, of course, comes its inseparable companion, cricket, which, in spite of the efforts of the dying men, is still the national sport of the Anglo-Saxon race during the rainy season. County cricket may or may not be losing its hold on the public (which is the fault of the county cricketer, if the charge be true), but cricket as a game will never drop while an Englishman remains in England. The glamour of the trim, green pitch, the musical meeting of bat and ball, the hurling flight from the bowler's hand, the graceful sweep of the wicket-keeper, the many potent charms to draw each eager to plumb in the fray—the oddsmen were leisurely talking of wickets won, world-wide hundreds of young age, and the woe of degeneration of this latter age. But when the field is set and never-ending struggle between the small, round ball and the big, oblong bat begins in earnest, they will forget to growl. The spell of cricket will steal over them again. With sympathetic sportsmanship they will realize the spirit of the game, and spectators will be at one with players, under the mysterious, magical charm of cricket.

ON COUNTY CRICKET

GENERALLY.

I trust all will have a happier time this season than last, otherwise one or two counties will be nearer rain than they are now, if possible. May azure skies and genial sunshine smile on the games of 1910, and may the summer be worthy of the reputation our grandfathers have given it. With less interruption from the elements, county cricket may regain its old place in the affections of the crowd, for I think the various management are beginning to realize the folly of some of their ways. They appeal to the public for support, but they have not considered the public requirements of those who have done a truly meritorious and necessary adjournments, the too-frequently-painful latenesses, seen in the most recent during some of the games of last year. Australian team, have done much to alienate sympathy. Stolid batmen and an eternal eye on the averages have done as much more. Let county cricket be, as it used, played with the sole idea of winning every possible match, let it be for ever keen, and it will flourish. The alterations not approved by the M.C.C. committee last week, notably the permission to cover certain portions of the pitch during rain, will prevent much waste of time, and the new system of scoring by wins only should lessen the evil of playing for a draw so prevalent of late years with almost every shire but Kent.

AND LEICESTERSHIRE

IN PARTICULAR

So much generally; now for the special prospects of little Leicestershire—I hope I may be able to say gallant little Leicestershire when the time arrives to review their doings during 1910. There is not a great deal to say. They hope to do better than last year, in results and finances both, which is a modest aspiration. Personally, I am wanting and expecting considerably more than that. Yet again I must say, as we have said so many times before, Leicestershire are a good old, most thoroughly unconscious of their strength. What a brilliant season for a small county. Northants enjoyed last year, yet man for man were they really as strong as Leicestershire? They won some matches, because imbued with confidence, and won some more. Leicestershire need confidence. If this summer they find the one attribute they lack, or have lacked ever since 1908, they will have a fine time in the field, and as a natural corollary, the finances will improve tremendously. No new star has risen in the narrow confines of our little shire. We have to depend on the old friends; and as a well-wisher of Leicestershire cricket, I pay them the compliment of saying I wish nothing better provided only they stiffen their backs, never cease struggling till the end has come, be not so easily swayed by misfortune, and preserve that unity of purpose which is more to a team than even the presence of a Grace or a Ranjitsinhji.

THE PLAYERS.

The team for the first match has been already announced, rather the twelve from whom it will be finally selected. They are, Sir Arthur Hazlewood (to whom we all wish a happy fortune in his fourth year of captaincy), V. F. S. Crawford, G. J. Wood, A. T. Sharp, J. Shipton, and six from Knight, King, Coe, Javes, Astill, Whitehead, and Shipman. On the ground staff in addition are Turpin, Sturman, Toon, Mountney, Lord, and Brown, while H. Thompson, W. W. Odell, and J. Burgess may be able to lend their valuable services on occasions. Thus while the team will differ very little in its personnel from last season's, there is a fair equipment in reserve. Turner we all hope to see among the leading batsmen this season. He shone so well during the latter part of 1909 that a future is confidently prophesied for him. As yet he has had no practice owing to his football duties, so probably he would have been amongst the players from whom the eleven to open the season at the Oval would have been chosen. Curtis has this year been engaged by the Sefton Peveril C.C., probably he will then devote himself to the cricket, his natural gift enough to make of him. That very fine young fellow, Bott, was reengaged on the ground staff, but I regret to say that an injury sustained during the winter has obliged him to resign.

IF THEY ARE IN FORM.

A. T. Sharp should this season prove that his great reputation he gained at a schoolboy at Repton was well founded. He has, I hear, recovered from the injury to his back which has bothered him for more than a year, and is almost certain to become a brilliant bat. Should he do so this summer, and should C. J. Wood, V. F. S. Crawford, Knight, King (who must be handsomely benefited when Notts. come to Aylestone-road on June 23 and the following days),

Coe, Whitehead, and Turner be in form, Leicestershire will have on powerful a batting side as most shires, especially as Jays, Astill, Shipman, the mighty hitter, and Sir Arthur Hazlewood, with his steady nerve, will be on the side, and an unchanged record for next season. It is often forgotten in batting Leicestershire failed just season. If Jay bows so brilliantly again, and Shipman has improved in the measure expected, if Astill has regained his old skill, of which there were many indications last season, the attack will be strong, as it was in 1909. We can always rely on King—there is no "if" in his case—and Wood, Coe, and Turner are all most changeable, while Whitehead is a sound man to have on the side. He was not at his best last season, but Mountney, too, is an all-round player who may spring a surprise, while of the others Lord should sooner or later develop into a capital bat, and Brown, who hails from Woodhouse Eaves, is reported a smart left-hand bowler. Leicestershire wants a young left-hander who will train on into a county man. The wicket-keeping is rather the weak side of the Shires and, though the fielding needs to be more constant than it was last season. At times brilliant in the extreme, it sometimes sinks below the moderate mark. Fielding wins matches, as Tedly Richardson, who now combines the posts of trainer and ground superintendent, will impress on his charges.

Leicestershire, however, by appearance to have enough men in form to keep them playing for their places. The Committee should see that you do without letting one or two failures be the cause of the dropping of a player, a man who consistently deserves should give way to one who has just claims to inclusion.

OTHER TOPICS--CHIEFLY FINANCIAL.

There is not much to add. Leicestershire are playing four less matches than usual, Essex and Hunts not being met, which is a pity. If not a mistaken policy. The reason is the financial losses of last summer. Let us hope that, with better result's of the season, the Committee will evaluate the present sum will vanish. The measures taken during the winter to improve the financial position of the club seem to be working pretty well. Efforts are being made to induce those members who have remained to re-enter the fold, while over 100 new one's have been recruited, indicating a steady basis of support. The Committee should see that you do without letting one or two failures be the cause of the dropping of a player, a man who consistently deserves should give way to one who has just claims to inclusion.

THE FIXTURE LIST.

May 2, 3, 10-v. Surrey, Oval.
May 4, 5, 11-v. Lancashire, Old Trafford.
May 10, 11, 18-v. Yorkshire, Leicester.
May 12, 13, 25-v. M.C.C., Lord's.
May 14, 15, 16-v. Warwickshire, Coventry.
May 17, 18-v. Kent, London.
May 19, 20-v. Nottinghamshire, Nottingham.
June 3, 10, 11-v. Notts, Trent Bridge.
June 13, 14, 15-v. Beds, Trentham.
June 20, 21-v. Lancashire, Old Trafford.
June 27, 28-v. (Saturday) King's (King's Benefit).
July 4, 5-v. Derby, Derby.
July 11, 12-v. Derby, Derby.
July 18, 19-v. Derby, Derby.
July 25 (Saturday) 26, 27-v. Lancashire, Old Trafford.
Aug. 1, 2, 10-v. Lancashire, Old Trafford.
Aug. 15, 16, 17-v. Lancashire, Old Trafford.
Aug. 22, 23, 24-v. Surrey, Leicester.

OLD LEICESTERSHIRE CRICKETER DIES.

W. TOMLIN'S CAREER.

THE FEATS OF A STYLISH BAT.

(Specially Written for the "Leicester Daily Post.")

William Tomlin, who passed away on Tuesday, is a name to the present generation, for rather more than a decade has passed over our heads since he donned flannels and flourished a graceful bat for Leicestershire. Those who have played cricket and watched cricket any time these last twenty years, will remember one of the most stylish bats the county ever possessed, and such as over memory's screen still pictures the hue and mien with grace that bespeak gifts far beyond the common run, and a career that closed prematurely. Billy, as the crowd hailed him in the old days of Leicestershire cricket, never fully realised the high hopes founded on his exceptional gifts. He had many better friends than himself—I can and like know this in the last sad days, when the dread fear of cancer was ending a career early about the life of only 43 years—and the brilliant batman which might have been climbed remained uncrowned. But while there were missed chances, it is better to bury them in oblivion and remember Billy Tomlin as one of the best bats who ever played for Leicestershire.

CAREER WITH LEICESTERSHIRE.

Tomlin's story, like his old captain's, G. E. de Trafford, Poughley, and Woodcock, goes back to the days before Leicestershire was a first-class county. Perhaps those few may be called the days on which rested Leicestershire's pretensions to enter the highest ranks. Tomlin only saw five seasons, indeed, practically four, of championship encounters, but in them he did enough to ensure his inclusion in the gallery of notable cricketers of the hunting shire. For one thing, and there were others, he deserves to be remembered as one of our struggling little shires, for was he not the prime agent in the solitary victory we have gained at the expense of proud Surrey? In 1883 it was, and the season Surrey proved champion of England. The led off with 250, Leicestershire, backed up by 162, but Woodcock's lightning bowling, backed up by Poughley's cunning stroke, and the Kensington men—Abel, Hayward, Brockwell, W. F. Read, and the other great men—for 113, leaving Leicestershire 177 wanted to win. Could they do it? Highly it seemed, when five men were gone for a month, 70, but Tomlin had one of his moments. Tom Richardson might have been a club bowler, so easily was he played. The result, a victory by four wickets, was a personal triumph for Tomlin, and he carried out his bat undefeated with a superb century and set to his name in the score book. There were other occasions when Tomlin was in evidence, this was the brightest day in his career, the crest of his manhood. It was the only hundred for Leicestershire in that season, and Tomlin was the only man to average over 30 runs per innings, heading the batting list as he had done during 1884, the first summer in which Leicestershire met the other first-class counties as equals in strength, to the sceptical. The other distinction belongs to Tomlin, in 1886 against the M.C.C. in 1886 was the first victory for the county on its elevation to first-class rank. Tomlin entered the XI, about the season of 1888, and in proving steadily, was second only to Holland in the bat. In 1892, in 1893, Leicestershire's last year as a second-class county, Tomlin maintained a regular place but in 1893 he began to decline, and thereafter the old Arisians knew him no more as an active player. In local cricket for some years after he was a prominent figure, assisting the Soho End Club, and he was also engaged at Lord's at different periods.

A PET STROKE.

Not a big man, though sturdily framed, Tomlin owed his batting successes largely to a pair of supple wrists and a quick eye. Style, that elusive quality, gift of nature, which no training, no perseverance can bestow on the one who hath it not, as it were, of instinct, was his also. He had many strokes, and one which, I think, was his alone. At least I have never seen another use it so constantly or so effectively. To fast rising balls, pitched not far outside the off stump, he would apply a peculiar cut, not the hard down-the-leg stroke which Albert Knight loves, and sends the ball rattling along the ground, but an upward stroke, and despatched the ball high in air to fall somewhere near the boundary. It was unorthodox, like that quaint high drive over cover point's head which Tom Hayes used to exploit. To many men it would have been fatal, for such deliveries are very well hit shots, but Tomlin employed it very effectively. This man in those days used to decorate the boundary line, so Billy had many a useful four from his own particular shot. A fire free off-drive was, perhaps, his most prolific scoring stroke, and occasionally his steel wrists would sweep the ball to the leg corner, the bat swinging horizontally, in the manner of Ormond's play was not parcellled out to such a nicety in those days, and like the other batsmen Tomlin notched the majority of his fours to the off. His batting was based on a good defence, too. I well remember Albert Knight once in his salutary days consoling himself for a duck with the philosophical reflection that "There's no disgrace in a wicket like Billy Tomlin can't get runs." Even in his days A. W. was a keen analyser of cause, effect, and detail. Tomlin's sturdy, staccato, deserved to be remembered by all who have Leicestershire cricket at heart. If these few lines will wake recollections and preserve his career from oblivion, my task has not been in vain.

STATISTICS.

Below are a few statistics which illustrate Tomlin's feats. His career batting averages for Leicestershire from the time they became first-class were:—

	Inns.	Runs.	Inns. not out.	Avg.
1884	23	534	146	24.6
1885	32	626	1064	20.22
1886	27	531	62	21.6
1887	29	228	70	16.19
1888	11	359	100	22.71
1889	3	20	14	6.16

a. Signifies not out.

His chief scores were:—	
1883-v. Surrey (oval)	105
1883-v. Notts (Leicester)	140
1883-v. Middlesex (Lord's)	57
1884-v. Derbyshire (Derby)	31
1885-v. Hampshire (Leicester)	162
1886-v. Yorkshire (Leicester)	62
1886-v. Essex (Leicester)	55
1886-v. Warwickshire (Birmingham)	52
1887-v. Surrey (oval)	70
1888-v. Lancashire (Manchester)	106

a. Signifies not out.

REYNARD.

