

## SOME FAMOUS FOOTBALLERS.

By C. B. FRY.

*Illustrated by Special Photographs.*



is nothing subtle about the game of football.

It is a good game—none better, except cricket. But it precludes sentiment; its philosophy is altogether material-

istic; it gives no scope for æsthetic appreciation. It is the barbarian in us that loves football. The game is exceedingly civilised and scientific nowadays; but clothe it as you will in law and order, it none the less fascinates and appeals to us by reason of that in us, which desires the stress and excitement of fighting. In olden times the game was nothing more or less than a free fight; now it is, as it were, a very refined form of the same. Indeed, the game has become almost too refined. It was at its best when just entering upon its civilised stage, before there were quite so many rules and regulations, and before leagues were invented. However, it is a grand game still, especially as played at the schools and universities and by amateurs in general. In professional districts it has lost as a pastime what it has gained as an exact science. Even the most enjoyable of all football, on Casual and Corinthian tours, seems to have been better fun a few years ago. These tours are decidedly worth while still; but, somehow, the impression one gathers is that football was a finer game when the Corinthian side used to include the Walters, Amos, Spilsbury, Aubrey Smith, and the rest of that famous crew.

There were giants in those days. Fancy George Brann the smallest and lightest man on a side! But he used to be when the Corinthians played their welter team. Yet Georgie is not so heavy as you might suppose from a casual glance at him in his ordinary

clothes. He strips clean and strong, and even nowadays scales but a few pounds over twelve stone. The weighing machines at railway stations have a great attraction for him. Someone told him, once upon a time, exactly how much a man of his height ought to weigh. Georgie discovered then that his pounds and inches were in ideal correspondence. Should he chance to find himself a trifle too heavy, he immediately takes steps to see if he has not grown taller. No? Then, as he is not in the habit of paltering with facts, matters must be adjusted by assiduous running with the beagles. Once the case was serious. He went to the Cape to play cricket, and came back rather altered. His own story is that he could not get enough exercise out there. No, Georgie, that won't do. We read our Wisdens. Besides, what was your average? Anyway, they tell us he was charged overweight on his return ticket. He soon became normal, and



*From a photo by*

*[E. Hawkins, Brighton.]*

GEORGE BRANN.

has remained so ever since. Buffon says that a proper man should be square. Georgie is square—*quadratus homo* in more senses than one. No one was ever so uniformly fit and well. The sight of him on a dull November day is enough to revive whole months of summer weather. His cheeks never lose the brown and bloom of July suns. His presence is like a glass of rare old port—warm and welcome, soothing and silky. Socially he has many points. He is

them. He sings rather a good song when he begins in the right key; and, in justice to him, there is only one recorded instance of his having chosen a wrong one, and then he stuck to it all through, so it was not so bad. There never was a kinder heart or a more fidgety temperament. He has been known to watch the last over of an exciting cricket match from all the windows in the pavilion at Lord's.

And what about his football? Well, in



From a photo by

AN ASSOCIATION GAME.

[R. W. Thomas.]

the most candid friend imaginable. If you have faults, prepare to hear them now. But then how nicely he mixes your medicine. The taste is always pleasant. No doubt his soft touch has smoothed away many jags and dents of character. So he is somewhat of a benefactor. He has a nice sense of humour, and rarely takes his pipe out of his mouth without being very amusing at no great length. His comments on passing events remind one of Shillito's notes on the classics—short, to the point, and you don't forget

his prime he had no superior as an inside forward, or an outside for the matter of that. He was wonderfully quick, neat, and clever with his feet, a beautiful dribbler, and one of the very best exponents of the best form of combined forward play. Nowadays, he might be considered a trifle selfish, but it is a question whether the theory of passing has not been carried a step too far. Certainly no set of forwards ever played a more telling game than the Corinthians when George Brann was at his best. The ball was taken

straight down the ground without any piffling or hesitation. The passing was of the "forward and through" type; the dribbling determined and effective. As for the shooting—well, if goal-nets had been used in those days, they would have had to be pretty strong. George is somewhat of a veteran now, more because he has an unsafe knee than for any other reason. He plays

in the familiar blue knickers and white shirt. There he comes, good luck to it, twirling his moustache somewhat fiercely and apparently much interested in the grass at his feet. And it's ten to one that after the match he will do the quickest change on record; for George has a knack of finding towels and not mislaying his clothes; he never has any difficulty with his packing; his pipe seems to fill and light of itself; and for him a glass of shandy-gaff turns up automatically. He will catch the best train home, contented with having taken a lot of exercise and having added another good game to his many pleasant memories. Of these, some of the brightest and most vivid are no doubt connected with the great matches played, in what George Brann calls the old days, between the Corinthians and Preston North End. The Corinthians are to-day very much what they were then—the pick of amateur players. With Preston it is otherwise. Then, the Preston team was without a serious rival among the Northern and Midland professional clubs: now, it is simply one of many. The old Preston team was the prototype of the powerful professional teams engaged in the modern league competitions. It was the first to demonstrate the high development of which combination is capable, and it invented the short passing game which has since been adopted almost universally by professional players. Possibly such teams as have since represented Sunderland, Everton and Aston Villa may have been

[Winter, Derby.]



From a photo by]

JOHN GOODALL.  
(Derby County.)

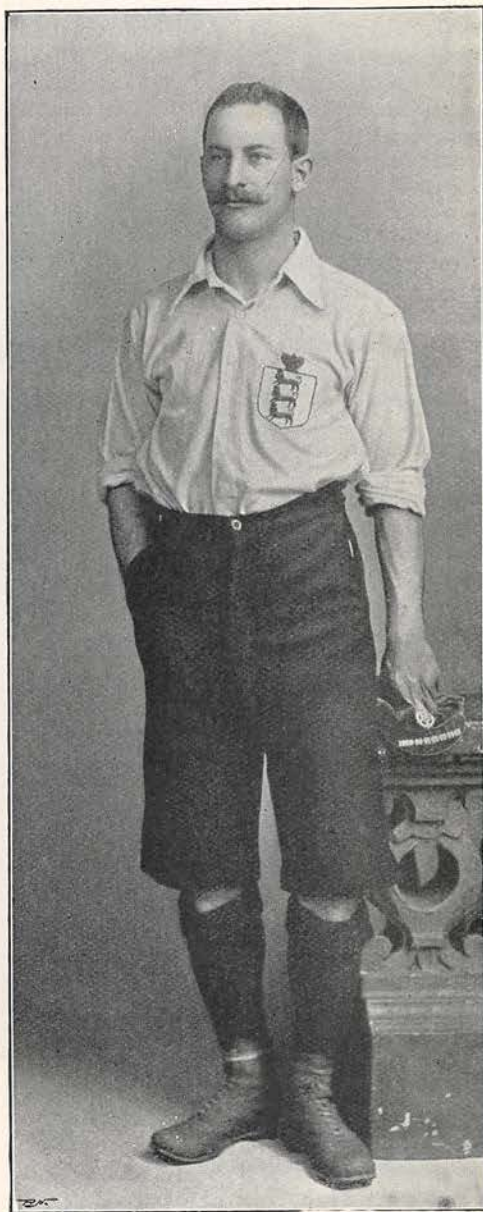
occasionally, and always well enough to remind one of his brilliant prime. There is something stylish and strenuous about the way he goes to work. Formerly, the Swifts, the old Sussex clubs and the Corinthians had most of his services. Now he occasionally abandons golf to appear for the Eastbourne Club. There will be many regrets when the season comes that does not see George, at least once, emerging from the changing-room

equal to the old Preston North End. They have not surpassed it. The combined play of that team was at the time a revelation. Dewhurst, the younger Ross and John Goodall were the best of the forwards; and of these John Goodall is perhaps the most famous.

He is to this day one of the finest centre-forwards playing, though naturally not quite the man he was a few years back. At

present he is captain of Derby County, and what with his brother Archie, Stephen Bloomer, and one or two more, John leads a very strong combination. Archie Goodall has played in every position with almost equal success: John will always be remembered as a great centre-forward. In that capacity he has frequently represented England against Scotland. His career in the football world would be remarkable if only for its length. Considering the enormous strain of league football, not to mention Cup competitions and those curious games called "friendlies," a professional cannot reasonably expect to last more than four or five years. But tough old John is still well in the running, after goodness knows how many seasons. Other great players have come and gone. John was before them and has outstayed them all. There is nothing ephemeral about this capable veteran, so wise, so steady and so sturdy. Perhaps the secret of his perennial vigour is the way he plays the game. He treats it evenly and seriously, relying upon skill rather than force. Nothing flurries him; he is always cool and collected in the middle of the most exciting scrimmage round goal. He is dogged rather than dashing. He seems to get possession of the ball on every possible occasion, and that without apparent effort; for he never rushes about at all. He watches the game so persistently that he always turns up at the right spot at the right moment. His energy is always well applied; so much so that he rarely seems to be exerting himself. His great virtues as a centre-forward are his faculty for always being where wanted, his wonderful instinct as to where the ball should be passed, his knack of keeping the whole forward line well together, and his complete unselfishness. He is a very dodgy, but very occasional dribbler. Once in a while he steers the ball through the entire opposing side, and then, with the goal at his mercy, gives a pass to someone else to show he has not been selfish. His tactics are always fair enough to satisfy the prejudices of the most squeamish Southern amateur. Yet his less scrupulous brethren would have to get up very early to take a point off him. He has an elusive way of not being charged, but, if you do get a shoulder up against him, there is a most unpleasant jar; and nothing much to show for it—from your point of view. You never saw John knocked over, and probably never will, especially as hard charging, both fair and foul, has been legislated out of the game. Sound, solid John Goodall;

may your long boots, skilfully guided by your long head, splash about in the mud or clatter over frost-bound grounds, to your



From a photo by]

[Whitlock, Birmingham.

W. BASSETT.

(West Bromwich Albion.)

own and your side's advantage, for many years to come!

Rather a contrast to John Goodall is Bassett, of West Bromwich Albion, but, none

the less, a very effective forward. Brilliant, dashing, and mercurial, he is always a great favourite with the crowd. And can he not boast a record number of International caps? And did he not get the largest number of votes when *Answers* asked its readers to name the best player of the day? His admirers call him a "flyer," meaning that he can run very fast with, or without, the ball, and can get goals with considerable frequency, in spite of being an outside right.

In that position he is certainly the most famous player of the last few years, and he cannot complain that his skill has missed appreciation. Passing along the streets of Birmingham he causes nearly as much excitement as Mr. Chamberlain, or Peter Jackson, or the King of Siam. And what a thrill runs through the serried lines of spectators at West Bromwich, when Bassett gets the ball, and those who can see, shout, "Bassett's off!" If Bassett is "off," com-

plications may arise near the centre-line, or the corner-flag, or in the enemy's goal-net—something is sure to happen. It is only natural that his comrades play to him rather too much; but the better the match, the better he plays. In Cup ties he always rises to the occasion, and lifts his side along with him. In International matches he is almost invariably selected by the critics as having performed better than anyone else. His great merit as a player is his combination of

pace with command of the ball. Athersmith and Spikesley are perhaps faster, but Bassett has a rare turn of speed; he can go full tilt with the ball at his toes, stop dead within a yard, double like a rabbit, this way or that, and, in fact, do anything that occurs to him as desirable. Probably, if he chose, he could stand on his head with the ball between his feet, elude the backs, and finish off with a goal; but at his best, in important matches, his game, though clever, is direct and go-

ahead. Off the field he is a festive individual, and on the field, too, when there is a soft thing on. Whether you wish for a tricky variety performance, or really good football, Bassett is your man, according to circumstances; all you have to do is to choose your match. For choice, go and see West Bromwich meet the Corinthians—Bassett will be at his best, and there will be several very interesting players on the other side.

To begin with, Wre-

ford-Brown will be playing centre half-back, and captaining the Corinthians—that is, if you are lucky. But, if you do not know him, avoid being misled by not seeing his name in the *Sportsman*, or on the correct card, for he is extremely likely to be playing *incognito*, as A. Black, or O. L. Dun, or something equally impenetrable. How may you know him? Easily enough. He will come on to the ground last of all the players, with a bootlace in his hand, to be used as a



From a photo by

C. WRETFORD-BROWN.

[R. W. Thomas.]

garter later on. His knickers will be obviously a borrowed pair. Very possibly, too, he will be wearing buckskin cricket boots, or brown bicycle shoes, or patent leathers—that depends on what could be raised on the spur of the moment. Lately, however, Wreford has reformed, and generally comes with a bag of gear, except to important Cup ties. Then, again, he will strike you as the slackest individual you ever saw—till the game begins. After the kick-off, he will be ubiquitous energy itself: so much so, that you will be in doubt whether he regards himself as half-back, forward, or goal-keeper. Wreford is the only man who has succeeded in being in two or three places at once. The side on which he plays may safely congratulate itself on consisting of thirteen men; yet Wreford does not “get out of his place” in the ordinary sense; he simply does all his own work, and then goes off to find some more. There is a story that he once played in three different matches at the same time: at Leyton for the Old Carthusians, at Queen’s Club for the Corinthians, and at Oxford for Mr. C. Wreford-Brown’s team. Perhaps it is true: he was younger in those days. Possibly he sent his astral self to Oxford, his body to Queen’s Club, and his soul to Leyton; at any rate, there is no knowing what Wreford can do; he has certainly proved himself capable of being in London one evening, playing against Queen’s Park in Glasgow the next afternoon, and being at his rooms again by breakfast-time the day after that. You see, he is a very busy lawyer, with designs on the Woolsack, whatever that may be; nevertheless, he sometimes attends football matches as a spectator, or touch judge, or player. Wreford is quite a character; he does most things differently from other people. At football he tackles, kicks, and heads in a manner all his own. How he manages to get at the ball, as he does sometimes, with his head or vitals muddled up with a dozen whirring hostile legs, and yet avoids getting killed, is a mystery. He is by no means an acrobatic player—far too good for that—but he is in the habit of heading the ball when it is only two feet off the ground and an opponent is about to

kick, and it’s long odds, now, against his meeting with a violent death. In smoking-rooms and railway carriages he belongs to the class that listens much and talks little—rather a pity, for he has a big fund of amusing experiences. His very occasional expressions of opinion are always valuable and original. He understands the game, and loves it. The Old Carthusians owe a good deal of their consistent success to his efforts; whenever he puts on their rainbow-coloured shirt, Wreford has excellent intentions, which he does not fail to translate into deeds.

But the Old Carthusians can boast of another and perhaps even more famous player, none other than G. O. Smith, the best centre-forward of the day. He is called Joe, but it’s written G. O. Now G. O. is a marvel. “He isna much to look at, but he can play football,” said a spectator at Kirkcaldy. As a matter of fact, he is very nice to look at; otherwise, the man from the “Lang Town” was about right. Of course, he is lightly built; but he is very wiry, and can take care of himself well enough. To gauge his true merits you should see him play supported by a fairly heavy forward, such as John Veitch or R. C. Gosling, in each of the two inside-forward positions. He feeds them, they feed him; they do the hustling, he does the shooting. Among light forwards, G. O. is liable to be knocked about



From a photo by]

[Hawkins.

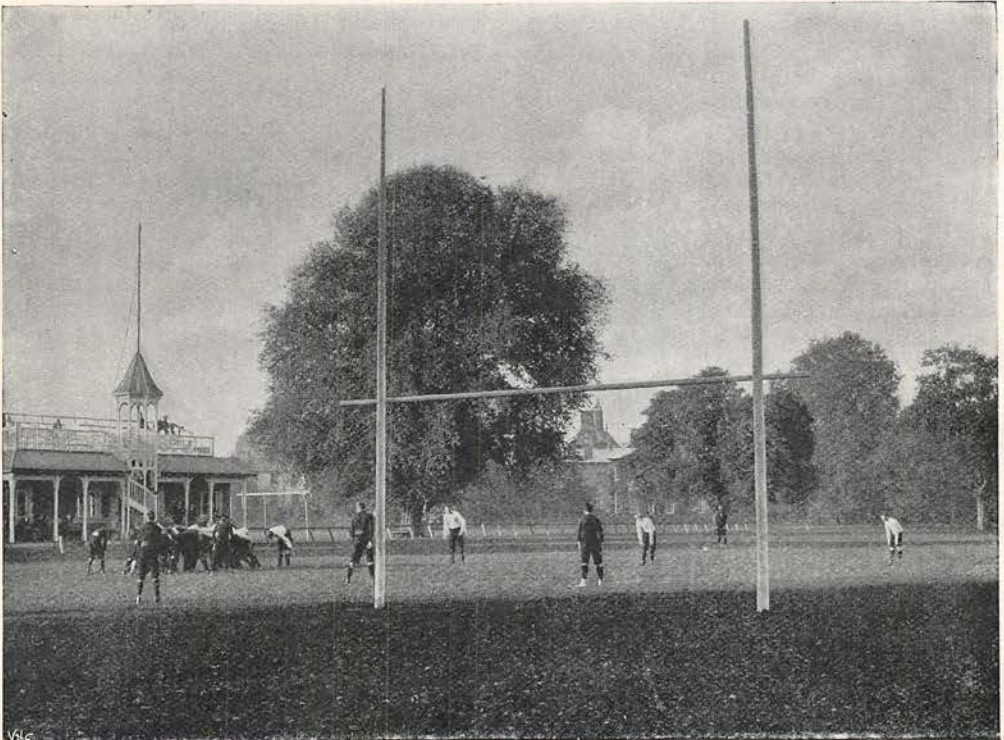
G. O. SMITH.

more than the others. The opposing defence know who is dangerous, and act accordingly. People say that the new unwritten law that “every charge is a foul charge” was introduced by referees in G. O.’s interest. One can quite understand his being popular with referees: he gives them so little trouble; besides, he is always polite to them. But the suggestion is not convincing. You would never guess from his shy, demure manner, and big, innocent eyes what a demon he becomes with a football at his feet. He is not a sprinter in the cinder-track sense, but he takes more catching on a football field than most of your Sheffield handicap winners. And he is a very quick starter. There is a poise, a balance in all he does that is very attractive. His efforts are never

jerky or abortive. He hardly ever gets into an awkward position. His feet always have complete control over themselves and the ball. He is a very fluent player; his progress is straight forward rather than from side to side. He has a cunning way of making would-be tacklers think that he is going to dodge this way or that; so they seem to a casual onlooker to be getting out of his way instead of trying to stop him. Now, G. O. is not very old, but you can teach him nothing about the game. Like John Goodall, he has a wonderful power of

do so often. So, unless the Martians send a football team across to us, he has no further honour to gain. He is the best forward in our planet at the present time.

Oxford was lucky a few years ago. Its Soccer team contained not only G. O., but two other Internationals, G. B. Raikes and W. J. Oakley. No side scored many points against the Varsity with the former in goal, the latter at back. Indeed, "Oakers," as he is called, would be difficult to improve upon. He is all a back should be—heavy, strong, safe, active, and fast. His education has been



From a photo by]

[R. W. Thomas.

A RUGBY GAME.

keeping the line of forwards together. He is most unselfish, and times his passes to a nicety. Perhaps, one of the most noticeable points in his play, is his habit of driving the ball clean through to the outside forward from the most complicated positions in mid-field. He can play the short or the long passing game equally well. He is wonderfully versatile and adaptable. Few other amateurs have been a success when wedged in between two professionals in an International match. G. O. has already captained England against Scotland, and will probably

varied and elaborate. He was a good oar, and got his "Trials" cap. He was a hurdler, a long-jumper, a sprinter, a weight-putter, and a hammer-thrower. He played Rugby football with but moderate, and cricket with even less, success; but he never really applied himself seriously to those games. He will not own that his cricket is weak, maintaining, that even if he does not hit the ball often, he hits it very high. "If I stay five minutes, I cause more excitement than you would in an hour," is his retort to scoffers. But he does not set

much store by cricket. He says it is a game of chance—which it is, for him! However, his football is a certainty. He is the finest back in the United Kingdom. Lodge runs him close, and is at times most brilliant, but, on the whole, Oakley has the verdict. The two together make a splendid pair, probably the best the Corinthians have ever had, except the two Walters. There is nothing wanting in "Oakers'" back play. It has a kind of measured strength, admirably adapted for tackling and kicking purposes. You cannot upset his



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[Hills &amp; Saunders.

MR. W. J. OAKLEY.

equilibrium, physical or mental, and he is hydra-headed in front of his own goal. When a game is getting very hot, or an opponent rather too attentive, a sardonic little smile appears at the corners of "Oakers'" mouth and a steely glint in his eyes. It's serious then. Nothing excited, you know, but grim earnest. He is just the man needed at a pinch, for he is sterling and never flinches, and you cannot exasperate him. Give me "Oakers" in a rough-and-tumble, and you may have any other man in England, except Sam Woods.

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