

OLD CRICKETERS' TALES.

The Mirfield Club.

(SPECIAL TO THE "NEWS").

When seeking information about the Mirfield Club and its old players, I was extremely fortunate in being able to get an interview with James Ledgard and Henry Schofield, than whom the club has had no better supporters since its inception about 45 years ago. To-day, both may be seen regularly upon the field, though they have to content themselves with acting the part of mere spectators, or indulging in a game of bowls on the adjacent green. If the weather is fine and not too hot, they can be relied upon to be about the field, and it was to the splendid ground now occupied by the club that I immediately proceeded when I wanted my chat with them. The result was a pleasant hour in the pavilion, the benefit of which I now give to my readers.

THE CLUB'S HOMES.

The Mirfield Club, unlike some, has never been fond of sitting about, and has only made one change of ground since its inauguration, that being from no desire to change, but from sheer compulsion. The first field which the club occupied was behind Blake Hall, and there they remained until 1856, when the London and North-Western Railway Company turned them out by bringing their new line from Heston Lodge to Wortley, straight through the ground. Their then landlord, Mr. E. T. Ingham, J.P., found them another field at the corner of the Park, as it were, and rendered them every assistance to make the ground and its adjuncts attractive and worthy of the game. The first field I may state was laid out through the generosity of several local gentlemen, who became guarantors for the expenses incurred. Amongst these were Armitage Rhodes, John Topham, John Holmes, and James Crowther.

FIRST SECRETARY.

John Eyles was the first secretary of the club, and he was also the stationmaster at Mirfield. The office was afterwards held by Thomas Haworth and George Whittaker before coming to the more recent days.

PROFESSIONALS.

Mirfield can claim to have had two noted Yorkshire County players commencing their careers as professionals with them. Just recently G. H. Eust filed that position, and in

mistake. The Clerks had the three Stapletons playing with them that day, and amongst the spectators were their father and mother. On returning to the pavilion, Mr. and Mrs. Stapleton remarked, "Now, then, if you cannot beat Mirfield to-day, you never can beat them." But such a thing as a defeat never entered the minds of a single player on the home side; in fact every individual batsman was going to score more than that number. Mirfield could not be said to be very elated at the prospect, but James Ledgard was by no means undaunted. "Ledgard, I may say, was a very fast bowler, and always took a very good share in the attack. He was in fine form at that time, and said to his colleagues, "They will never get them. Stick like blocks, for I am going to bowl to-day." He led off from one end, and Billy Brooke was in charge of the attack at the other. The Clerks scored a run, and then lost a wicket, and so the game went on, until, amid great excitement, 9 wickets had fallen for as many runs. The last two men were at the wickets, when one of them popped up a ball, towards which John Wheatley and Joseph Ledgard rushed. They had practically got to it, when both drew back and stood staring at each other until it fell to the ground, and the opportunity was missed. Only another run, however, was added, when Ledgard sent the wickets flying, and the Clerks had managed to score 11, or just a run per man, on the average. To say they were surprised conveys but a faint idea of either their thoughts or feelings, for they had been absolutely certain of the victory. In that match Ledgard bowled with terrible effect, for it was just one of those occasions in which he put forth every power he possessed.

ANOTHER FINE FEAT.

The week after Elland paid a visit to Mirfield, E. T. Ingham fielded point for the home side, and Thos. Hodge, the schoolmaster at Hopton, kept the wicket. At that time there was a man named Wild working in Mirfield, and as he was known to be a bowler he was asked to take part in the match and share the bowling with Ledgard. These two proved to be in a very destructive humour that day, for Elland only managed to score 4 runs off the bat, while 5 byes swelled their total to 9. Ledgard got 4 wickets for no runs, and Wild captured the remainder.

TWO BATSMEN.

Henry Ledgard and H. Walker have been described as two of the finest batsmen who ever did duty for Mirfield, their style being exceptionally fine and attractive, though they were not particularly big hitters. Two very good men in the fact were W. Dennis and