

THE CITIZEN SATURDAY JANUARY 6 1900

ROUND THE ROPES

COLLAPSE OF A STAND

MAN INJURED; AMBULANCE AT WORK

By 1.30 the ground was filling up all round, the cheaper stands, as might be expected, being covered first. The strains of the band were almost lost in the busy hum, and all was pleasurable anticipation, when suddenly a loud crash was heard, and those who turned quickly were just in time to see part of a raised stand, in the shilling enclosure, collapse bodily and precipitate some two hundred people to the ground. Immediately shrieks and cries for help were heard, mingled with roars of laughter from those who did not appreciate the seriousness of the occurrence. On proceeding to the spot it was found that the police and ambulance attendants were already attending to the hurt, who were fortunately few. The majority of people escaped with a shaking, or at most slight cuts and bruises, but Mr W Brindley, of Theresa-street, Bristol-road, sustained a severe cut on the head and his left leg was badly injured. He was placed on an ambulance and removed in a half-fainting condition. On an examination of the smashed stand, it was seen that the heavy baulks and struts supporting the structure had collapsed, some of timbers being completely broken through and the large spikes fastening them together bent and broken like pins. The spectators quickly recovered from their fright, and some of the bolder spirits seized the opportunity to scale such portions of the framework that remained and obtain posts of vantage whence to view the game.

Later enquiries elicited the fact that the injured man, Brindley, was hurt by a plank falling across his leg just below the knee. He was conveyed to a house close by, where he was temporarily attended to.

THE REASON OF THE ACCIDENT

Mr T Gurney, the contractor for the erection of the stands, informed the press that the cause of the collapse was the fact that it was only temporarily fixed with nails. The man who had been told off to fix the bolts which would have rendered it secure, having been taken ill, had omitted to do so, with the results already detailed.

By 2 pm there were already some eight or ten thousand spectators on the field, whiling away the time with rousing choruses – calmly ignoring the band which was blaring and grunting in futile fashion on the half-way line. Once the musicians started “The Men of Harlech” and immediately thousands of feet began stamping in unison, and one looked round in apprehension of a further collapse of the stands. Luckily the tune was quickly changed. But the first-aiders having tasted blood were on the alert with their gruesome apparatus.

About 2.10 the appearance of some of the players evoked loud cheering, in which the scent of the rose mingled in about equal proportions with that of the leek. The Welsh contingent kept up their spirits by singing and chaff, to which the Englishmen replied with interest.

At about 2.15 a couple of “Tommies” assisted by a brace of the “Handy Men in Blue” marched proudly into the centre of the ground, bearing a flagstaff, which was afterwards raised amidst the singing of the National Anthem, and a great outburst of patriotic enthusiasm, and the Royal Standard

floated out on the breeze. England and Wales here had met in a friendly fight, and the thoughts of all went out to the far land where, side by side, they fought the nation's foes. At the time for kicking off drew nigh occasional light scuds of rain swept across, and coat-collars were turned up and hands dug deep into pockets in anticipation of a wetting. However Jupiter Pluvius did not manifest his presence to an un-comfortable degree. The band played with untiring energy, national airs being quickly picked up and hummed, whistled, and sung in bewildering discord. The Welshmen practically monopolised the stands behind the Worcester-street goal, and from that quarter came samples of the yells which later on greeted players from the gallant little Principality.

By 2.25 the stream of fresh arrivals had dwindled down to a dribble, and there was still room for another ten thousand.

Cheltenham contributed about 1,000 spectators to the crowd at Kingsholm, of whom 800 proceeded by train.