

CHAPTER XII.

INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL: SCOTLAND.

By R. W. Irvine.

WHILE the Scotch maintain, and no doubt with truth, that football is a national game, and has existed in Scotland in some form or other since the time when the Caledonian savages first took to wearing boots, nevertheless Rugby football as at present played is, it cannot be denied, a game adopted from across the border. Its very name implies this, and when he considers how important a part the great English school, Rugby, played in developing and fostering the game, in establishing the present laws of the game, and in popularising it throughout the country, no Scotsman, however patriotic, will grudge that the name Rugby should be for ever associated with the game, even though he may be the last to admit that either Rugby or the country in which it lies has any present pre-eminence over his own country in that sport. Football seems to be a game peculiarly congenial to the "*perfervidum ingenium Scotorum.*" Not only is it played well and enthusiastically in the schools, but it is also astonishing how kindly grown men who never saw a Rugby ball till nearly twenty, and to whom, when they begin, the meaning of "off-side" is one of the mysteries, take to the sport, and how soon they become, at least in the scrummage, first-rate players.

Scotch Rugby football may be said to have sprung up from boyhood into robust manhood with the first International match in 1871. In saying this there is no disparagement to the earlier players. Far from it. "*Vixerunt fortes ante Agamemnona multi.*" Many of us can recall to mind Rugby players, heroes of our boyhood, who flourished before International matches were

dreamed of, and the idea of a football Union had not yet taken shape, players who would have made many of our cracks of the present day look small. The Rugby game was played, and played well, by school and club thirty years ago and more; but in those days inter-scholastic matches were very local and comparatively few, while inter-club matches were even fewer. Except in Edinburgh and Glasgow there were very few properly organised Rugby clubs in Scotland. There was one, and a good one—St. Andrews—a club whose prowess was known far and wide, and which made up for the paucity of its matches by the fervour with which it entered into those it did play. Provincial Rugbyfootball hardly existed. There is no evidence of any provincial Rugby club out of Edinburgh (and district), Glasgow (and district), St. Andrews, and Aberdeen University, playing regularly as a club, before 1870. For some years prior to that, however, signs of greater activity and enterprise were becoming visible in the Scotch Rugby world. Edinburgh and Glasgow clubs were playing more matches among themselves, and journeying more frequently to each other. But what gave the great impetus to the game had to do with our neighbours across the border. For some years previous to 1871 an annual match had been played in London—an International match it was called—it was played according to the laws of the dribbling game. England usually won, but the Scotch made a good fight always. This match at first attracted only a sort of curiosity in Scotland, and a languid sort of interest. But in course of time, as the Scotch were beaten time after time, and it was quite an accepted truth that Scotland was in football, as in cricket, wonderfully good for its opportunities, but far behind England, the souls of certain Scotch past and present players stirred within them. The idea dawned



R. W. IRVINE.

upon them, "If there is to be an International match, let it be a real one, and don't let the relative merits of England and Scotland in football matters be decided purely by Association football, let us ask them to send a Rugby team north and play us on our native heath." The Scotch leaders felt that they could not be so very far behind their opponents, and at all events, better to know the truth than to be set down as inferior, as it were, by proxy. At last, after much consultation, and in some trepidation, but not at all in despair, the missive was despatched. Scotland did not undertake to play only Scotsmen residing in Scotland. She reserved to herself the right to get them from wherever she found them, and it was to be a really representative team; and she would admit that if it was beaten. There was no Scottish Rugby Union then, except the rough-and-ready Union, in connection with which Scottish Rugby players should always hold in venerable remembrance F. Moncrieff the first Scotch captain, H. H. Almond, J. W. Arthur, Dr. Chiene, B. Hall Blythe, and Angus Buchanan. A team was selected without wrangle and without jealousy, and invitations were sent to the team to play in a great match, and responded to with alacrity.

The first Scotch team was selected from Edinburgh Academicals, Edinburgh University, Royal High School F.P. (which was supposed to mean former pupils), St. Andrews, Merchistonians, Glasgow Academicals, and West of Scotland. The men were requested to get into training, and did it. It was twenty a-side, and the Scotch forwards were heavy and fast. We were ignorant what team England would bring, of what sort of players they had, and of how they would play; and though assured by Colville, a London Merchistonian—and a rare good forward, too—that we would find their size, strength, and weight not very materially different from our own, many of us entered that match with a sort of vague fear that some entirely new kind of play would be shown by our opponents, and that they would out-manœuvre us entirely. The day of the match soon settled that uncertainty. The English twenty were big and heavy—probably bigger and heavier than ours, but not overpoweringly so. Before we had played ten minutes we were on good terms with each other. Each side had made a discovery—we that our opponents were flesh



SCOTTISH TEAM V. ENGLAND, EDINBURGH,
MARCH 27, 1871.
(SCOTLAND—1 GOAL, 1 TRY. ENGLAND—1 TRY.)

J. MONRO. J. THOMPSON. T. CHALMERS.
A. BUCHANAN. J. COLVILLE. W. FORSYTH. J. MEIN. R. W. IRVINE. J. W. ARTHUR. W. D. BROWN. D. DREW. W. CROSS. J. FINLAY. HON. F. J. MONCRIEFF (CAPT.). G. RITCHIE.
A. C. ROSS. W. LYALL. T. R. MARSHALL. J. W. MACFARLANE. J. ROBERTSON.

and blood like ourselves, and could be mauled back and tackled and knocked about just like other men; they that in this far north land Rugby players existed who could maul, tackle, and play-up with the best of them. There was one critical time during the match. Feeling was pretty highly strung. It was among the first no-hacking matches for many of the players on both sides. Now, hacking becomes an instinctive action to one trained to it; you hack at a man running past out of reach as surely as you blink when a man puts his finger in your eye. There were a good many hacks-over going on, and, as blood got up, it began to be muttered, "Hang it! why not have hacking allowed?" "It can't be prevented—far better have it." The question hung in the balance. The teams seemed nothing loth. The captains (Moncrieff and F. Stokes) both looked as if they ought to say "no" and would rather like to say "yes," and were irresolute, when Almond, who was umpire, vowed he would throw up his job if it were agreed on, so it was forbidden, and hackers were ordered to be more cautious. The match was won by Scotland by a goal and a try to a try—the Scotch goal placed by Cross (not Malcolm, but his big brother) from a very difficult kick—and though many matches have been played since then between the countries, there has not been one better fought or more exciting than this, the first one. The Scotsmen were exultant, and the winning ball hung for many a day in the shop of Johnnie Bowton, at the Stock Bridge, adorned with ribbons like the tail of a Clydesdale stallion at a horse show. With this match and victory the life of Rugby football as a national institution fairly commenced. It was the end of the season, and the last match played; but by the beginning of another year enthusiasm was fairly taking possession of the Scotch Rugbeians. The winter of 1871-72 saw an activity in Rugby football that it had never known before. Not merely was this so in Scotland, England, too, was waking up and girding up her loins. Her defeat had nettled her. The Rugby Union was formed—the "Rugball Footby Union," as it was once styled by a hilarious and bibulous Scotch forward. The leading Scotch clubs joined it, and in 1873 the Scotch Football Union was formed, the original clubs forming it being the same that had originated the International match—

viz., the Universities of Edinburgh, St. Andrews, and Glasgow, the Academicals of Edinburgh and Glasgow, the Royal High School, the West of Scotland, and the Merchistonians, with power to add to their number. The original object of the Union was stated in three propositions, which still hold good:—(1) To encourage football in Scotland; (2) to co-operate with the Rugby Union; (3) to select the International teams.

The spring of that year saw the second International match played at Kennington Oval. Much deliberation was bestowed on the selection of the Scottish team. Trial matches were played; London was appealed to to supply some good Scots, and on February 5th, 1872, the Scottish twenty turned out full of hope on Kennington Oval. The match was peculiar. Almost immediately after kick-off the Scotch forwards carried a scrummage, followed up well, and in a trice Cathcart had dropped a goal. England looked dubious. One of them remarked, "We have no chance against your pace." The result showed how far off his reckoning he was. The rest of the match was one continual penning of the Scotsmen, the only flash of luck they had being when Chalmers once made his mark near the centre of the field, and L. M. Balfour, an Academy boy of sixteen, very nearly placed a goal from it. Scotland was beaten by two goals and two tries to a goal. The English team was a grand one; forward it was the heaviest football twenty that ever played together. Back, very little was required, but Freeman and Finney could have done all that was required behind by themselves. The licking did Scotland good. Their previous victory had made them very cocky. They thought that because they had beaten England in 1871, that, therefore, they had nothing to learn from them. They now saw that in the proper arrangement of their men, and in the proper selection of



L. M. BALFOUR.

(From a Photograph by Marshall Wane,
Edinburgh.)

men for the back places, they were a century behind England. They also found out that touch is something more than merely the boundary of the field of play, and that half the game of backs is played across the touch-line. They also found that light fast forwards were no good against heavy fast forwards in a twenty a-side match. Like wise men they took the lesson to heart. They formed their own Union in the next year, and they instituted the inter-city matches between Edinburgh and Glasgow.

The inauguration of the inter-city match was a great hit. It has become between Edinburgh and Glasgow what the International is between England and Scotland, and has given the same impetus to the game in the respective cities. Edinburgh won both matches, a team was chosen, and the third International match was played in Glasgow at Partick. The ground was a quagmire, and the match ended in a draw, after a game which while stubbornly fought out by the players, must have been monotonous to a degree to the onlookers, and must have had a great deal to do with depopularising the Rugby game in Glasgow. It was one succession of weary mauls, broken by an occasional rush, but at this interval of time the impression left was that of a muddy, wet, struggling 100 minutes of steamy mauls, and standing out in bold relief, Freeman, the English three-quarter back, making his mark, and having such an appalling drop at goal as one seldom sees in a football lifetime.

The next season saw the International played in London, and won by England by a goal (dropped by the demon Freeman) to a try and a disputed try. In this match Scotland had, admittedly on all hands, the pull all through. She was superior for the first time behind the scrummage. Kidston, St. Clair-Grant, and A. K. Stewart, shone brilliantly, and the forwards had rather the pull of their opponents. Still the luck was against Scotia, and she had to pocket another defeat. How lucky the Southerners thought themselves was well seen in the fervour with which their skipper, in a speech at the dinner of the match, thanked God that Jupiter Pluvius had come to the rescue, and made the ground so slimy as to take the heels from the fleet Scotch backs.

1875-76 saw much the same state of matters. The

inter-city matches continued to be toughly and grimly fought, but the metropolis always kept the whip-hand. The International of 1875 was played in Edinburgh, and was a draw—as usual, Scotland fully holding its own forward, but being lamentably weak behind. The number of shaves the Scotch goal had from the dropping of Pearson and Mitchell that day no Scotsman playing will ever forget. Another draw in favour of England.

1876 saw the fight again removed to London; and on the Oval, for the third time in succession, the Thistle was nowhere. Scotland had the pull forward, but behind were far inferior. She had one half-back who weighed somewhere about nine stone, and the other dislocated his thumb early in the game, and R. Birkett and Collins ran over them as they pleased, while Hutchinson had a run for England, which will live in football history, nearly the whole length of the ground, and the try was consummated by Lee. England had a goal and a try to the good, and two matches to the good on the whole.

1877 saw a change. An agreement had at last been come to regarding the fifteen a-side, and it was to be tried this time. Scotland had previously routed Ireland in a match remarkable for the number of goals gained—six goals to *nil*—played at Belfast. In this match Ireland showed much good material, but it was raw. Much good Hibernian breath was expended in shouting which would have done more good to the distressed country if spent in shoving. “Oireland, Oireland, get behind yourselves,” a despairing son of Erin was heard to cry, as the Scotch forwards were wedging through the Irish with the ball before them, and the Irish did not seem to know where it was, and were not coming round. But if Scotland had the best of it on the field, the vanquished were the victors at the social board, and if Ireland was raw at the game that day, Scotland was certainly boiled next morning. Flushed with this victory, Scotland met England full of confidence a fortnight after in Edinburgh. The teams were well matched. Scotland was in good form behind and fully held its own; the match was fast and furious to a degree never before seen in an International, and when within five minutes of “No side,” Grahame got the ball and chucked to Malcolm Cross, and Cross, quick as lightning, dropped at goal, the excitement beggared

description. The match was won by Scotland by this dropped goal—and we felt that our long struggle for fifteen a-side had not been in vain. The verdict of players and public was hearty and unanimous, and the twenty a-side International was from that date a thing of the past. In that year, too, the first attempt was



J. H. S. GRAHAME.

(From a Photograph by Moffat, Edinburgh.)

made to have a more true trial match for the selection of the team than had hitherto been accomplished—and the East *v.* West match was the remedy proposed and adopted. Whether it has been a success or not is a question, but it has ever since been the substitute of the second Inter-city, and now there is an Inter-city before New-Year in one city, and the East *v.* West after New-Year in the other.

1878 saw Scotland's fifteen again on the Oval; again saw a splendid fast match,

and at last saw the spell of Scotch ill-luck on the Oval broken, for not only was she not beaten, she very nearly won—in fact, many of the team thought she had won—but it was only a draw; no score either side. The Scotch had there probably the best forward, and indeed, all-round team, they ever put on a field. Their backs, too, were good—had much improved on their three years' before form—but had not yet acquired anything like the finish and easy certainty in catching and dropping the ball that we saw in Stokes and Pearson and used to see in Freeman. They could drop as far, and Finlay, probably, was the longest drop in Britain, Stokes not excepted. They could tackle—I would rather fall into the hands of any back in the three kingdoms than into those of W. E. Maclagan when roused. They could utilise touch—none neater at taking a little punt or drop at a nice angle into touch at a critical moment than Malcolm Cross. But with all that they wanted the freedom, dash, and style altogether which characterised the play of the English. Their play, compared with

that of the Englishmen, was like the play of clever ponies, or big active Clydesdales, to that of thoroughbred racehorses. Ireland didn't raise a team to come across to play us.

1879 came round. Things still went on well. The Union flourished. New clubs were joining. A team was sent across to Ireland and again defeated its opponents, but this time by half the former score, and the Irish forward play had improved in a way that promised to give Scotland and England some trouble to hold their own at no distant date. The English International of 1879 was played at Edinburgh. A tough and splendid match resulted in a goal placed by Stokes from a run by Burton being equalised by a most cleverly dropped goal by Ninian Finlay, and the result was a draw in favour of nobody.

In 1880 the Scotch Union prospered, the funds prospered, new clubs joined. There were now 24 clubs composing it, whereas in 1879 there were 21, and in the first year, 1873, there were 8. Ireland came over to Glasgow, and, while showing good mettle, was well beaten in all points of the game, but the Irish had left their souls in the Irish Channel the night before. England had previously been over in Dublin and just escaped being beaten by Ireland. Scotland was thus the favourite—she had never such a good team. The English team was too old and the men stale. Never was a greater mistake made. The Scotch as usual were fully as good as the others forward, but the backs might, half of them anyhow, have just as well been left in Scotland. Once an English back was past the Scotch forwards the backs seemed suddenly seized with paralysis, pawed him like old women, as if to encourage his onward career, and England won by 2 goals and 3 tries to 1 goal placed by Cross from a try by Sorley Brown.



W. E. MACLAGAN.

(From a Photograph by Negretti & Zambra, Crystal Palace, Sydenham.)

This was the biggest beating Scotland had yet had on paper, and certainly the sorest disappointment. It was also the least easily explained. England certainly had a magnificent team, admittedly on all hands, but Scotland had also a first-rate team. The men had been doing wonders all the season. Certainly the ground was simply not fit for football, hardly fit for mudpies, and a gale of wind blowing, but that was the same for both sides. It was just what happens sometimes in a man and in a team—they were not in form and not in luck. They seemed to play with the funk on them, and never played to win, and didn't win. This match is noticeable as the first English International played out of London. It was played at Whalley Range, Manchester, and the crowds that witnessed it surpassed anything hitherto seen at any football match in the three kingdoms.



W. A. PETERKIN.

(From a Photograph by W. Crook, Edinburgh.)

The match with England in 1881 was splendidly contested. Scotland were the first to score, by R. Ainslie making a good run from the

25-yard line, but Begbie's kick failed, the ball grazing the post. This was all the score in the first half, the play being so equal that it was impossible to award the preference to either side. The Scotch backs now played a defensive game, but Stokes getting the ball chucked to him lowered the Scotch goal by perhaps the most magnificent drop-kick ever seen in the International matches. Immediately afterwards Campbell Rowley romped over the line. The place-kick was a failure. With England a goal in advance, the Scotsmen had little hope of saving the match. Three minutes from time the match seemed a certain victory for England, when J. Brown securing the ball eluded Hornby and grounded the ball between the posts, and Begbie kicked a goal. Thus ended the most sensational International match, the result being a draw, a goal and a try for each side.

The match with Ireland ended in a great surprise. There was a schism in the Scotch Union, and some clubs considering themselves hardly dealt with because so few of their men were selected in the team, resorted to the unpatriotic course of withdrawing those who had been chosen. Thus Scotland appeared at Belfast without her best team, and Ireland won by a goal to a try.
