

MIS-ADVENTURES.

LUTON TOWN'S JOURNEY TO MERTHYR.

Prelude and Aftermath of Defeat.

By Crusader.

MERTHYR TOWN 4
LUTON TOWN 1
MERTHYR—Linton, Page, Pedler, Drew, Bishop, Woodward, Mitchell, Murphy, Phillips, Sutherland, Davies.
LUTON—Harper, Graham, Tili, Gordon, Richards, Millar, Pounton, Yardley, Thompson, Reid, Clark.
Referee—Capt. A. Prince Cox, Barnes.
When we went to bed at the Queen's Hotel, Cardiff, on Friday night one of the Town players commented on the fact that the carpets were being taken up, and added, "They are expecting a lot of Scots here to-morrow." These were not the only preparations for the Rugby International match that was to take place next day, for there were official programmes for sale to English and Welsh people, along with the national colours and emblems of Wales and Scotland. Affluent visitors had already arrived, and several members of the Welsh International team were staying in the hotel. There was a big influx of Scots before dawn, and when they had, roused everybody, and were inquiring after various essentials to comfort from all and sundry, the noise developed until the evening, when it reached a crescendo. Many of them wore plaid coats and tam-o'-shanters in addition to their favours, and let all Cardiff know that Scotland had come to win. So events proved.

THE LESSER FRY.

Cardiff City and Lotton Wanderers were lesser fry for the day, and so I hardly knew in what category to place Luton Town. However, others did. Of the comforts provided at the hotel one cannot speak too highly, but when we were due to start on the journey of 23 miles that would take us to Merthyr, we found trouble. The Scottish invaders probably felt more at home for the simple reason that there was a wretched drizzle that somehow reached the marrow. We had to wait for motor-cars, this mode of conveyance having been arranged as more likely to land us back in Cardiff in time to catch the 6.15 p.m. express train so that we might get home before Sunday's milk. Duly ensconced in the cars before 12.30 p.m., at crawl pace we managed to clear the streets. The internals of the car in which Mr. Ernest Pryer, David Richards, and myself travelled were causes for alarm, and when we reached the outskirts of the town the car came to a standstill. The reason, however, was that the second car, on which the players' bags were loaded, was suffering even worse, and refused to go farther.

A POST-MORTEM.

The three chauffeurs held a hurried post-mortem, and then one ran into Cardiff for a substitute car. Meanwhile we all descended to watch a more ancient, but more reliable mode of travel—a barge on a canal. We watched a couple of barges arrive at the lock, and proceed on their way, towed by horses that belonged to the past generation. But they did make some progress. When the substitute car arrived we resumed the journey, and the police assured us that we were safe from road rage, undulating and there was always a possibility that something might happen when we were descending a gradient, for it needed no highly-tuned mechanical car to detect rheumatism or spavin, or whatever illness, motor-cars acquire through faulty brakes.

TO QUAKER'S YARD.

Still, we were getting on, and had left Cardiff four or five miles behind when one of the cars in the rear began to cough badly. A soothing dose of something was administered, and to such good effect that ours, which had been the leading car, was overtaken. We had wondered long before this if there were a highways department under the Glamorgan County Council, and two or three times we had courageously admired the mountain scenery and the deep gorges that fell away from the turlinle, and from which our wheels were now and then reprieved by a few strands of wire, and occasionally by broken walls less than a couple of feet high. Sometimes there was nothing to prevent a more or less accurate calculation as to how many times we would bump before we fell upon the house-tops in the valley, or before we struck out for dear life in the black and swollen waters that flowed swiftly through the ravine. A brief respite from these gentle musings came at Quaker's Yard for the third car jibbed at a steep hill, and the combined wit of the chauffeurs, and the application of mysterious tools were necessary before it could be persuaded to renew its activities. Not all the wit was used in this

way, for a juvenile band were on the way to a service of some kind, and it was suggested as this was Quaker's Yard the band were going to a Quakers' Meeting.

FLOODERS.

When the music of the cars met the satisfaction of the mechanics we resumed the road, and the work had been done so effectively that the other two cars left us. Ours plodded along, however, and we were comforted by the thought that the game could not begin without us, for the players' bags had been transferred to our roof. Eventually we landed in the Black (Diamond) City, or town of Merthyr. There was no band to greet us, but Sid Reid, who had travelled by train in the early morning to his paternal home at Treodryhiw, nodded as we passed him in the main street. (It is no reflection upon his innocence that he preferred to use Shanks' pony to reach the football ground, or that he had travelled by rail from Cardiff.) At 2.10 p.m., however, we were outside Penydarren Park, grateful, and to some extent, comforted. We began to calculate the odds of travelling from Merthyr to Cardiff in the dark in the space of 75 minutes, seeing that it had occupied something over 100 minutes in daylight. One chauffeur informed us that he had done it in 90 minutes, and he would do his best to get us there in time. We did not hope that he would, because we kept shutting our eyes the better to blot out possible descents if he happened to get on the wrong side of the road, or if darkness or fog fell—and there was a very misty and far-away look in several pairs of eyes.

THE CROWD.

Inside the gates there appeared to be the whole of the police force of Merthyr, and they were very genial fellows. They comprised the welcoming crowd, but the gates were open, and at 2.30 the officers had taken up their respective posts, and there were two policemen on each of three sides of the ground, and not another soul. However, a quarter of an hour before the start, a few adults and many small children had turned up, and by the time the teams had made ready, some 500 or 600 spectators were present. More came later, but I am pretty certain that there were not a thousand people present. If there were, then they tucked themselves into odd corners. Rain fell, and I heard Linton, the Merthyr manager-go-keeper, opine that they would not get much more than a £10 note from the whole of the gate. Of the appointments at the ground there is no need to dwell. The Press-box is still called the pigeon-cote by those of our players that could spy it, but I am bound to say that the drawbacks were recompensed by the warmth of the welcome that was given to everybody. That was the best part of the afternoon.

THE RETURN.

The game itself I will leave until I have dealt with the return journey. The players, bespattered with mud from head to foot, many of them looking as though they had been dragged through a black bog, were eventually ready to travel, but the clock had struck five several minutes earlier, and we pinned our faith to a slender hope that we might catch the 6.37 p.m. train from Cardiff. Away we went, our car bringing up the rear, and darkness falling fast. We had turned one corner, and David Richards and I were telling Sid Reid that our car had been the best on the run out, and were hoping it would be the first home. Then it stopped. The chauffeur alighted, peered under the bonnet, trimmed the back hair, and then wound savagely at the hand. A few shivers and spasms, and then the rattle ceased. Again he did his best, and then unhinged his liver or some other portion of the entrails, and vigorously blew through them, tried to see heaven through them, and failed. As the four passengers were total abstainers, we could not complain when the chauffeur said that water had got into something or other. Various implements were brought into action, and then one of the preceding chauffeurs returned to wonder what had happened. The rain fell fast, and we gave up wondering if our train would be late, and the telephone was requisitioned to acquaint the Queen's Hotel of our plight. Of course, Mr. Pryer had not been out of sight many seconds when the car was all ready again. At least, it was making a rare noise, and David beseeched the chauffeur not to subdue it.

THE RETURN (CONTINUED).

Sympathetic messengers arrived to tell us that Mr. Pryer had reached the Post Office, and so we travelled at quite a spanking pace (downhill) to the Post Office. They are busy on Saturdays at Merthyr Post Office. One of the cars, we felt sure, might have reached Cardiff all right, but the other had joined us in the waiting stakes. Rain fell heavily, and Sid Reid returned to Treodryhiw, thankful, I daresay, that he could again travel by train on Sunday morning. Sweets, apples, and other light staves of the pangs of hunger were consumed, and then, happy that the Queen's staff had taken pity on us and would take us in, we began the darkness journey. We had reached some place with a name like a tender steak on a red-hot grill, when we came up with the car, that we had imagined was in Cardiff station rank, or in the Spanner and Wrench Infirmary. The chauffeur had considered the situation, and as he was not sure of the road he had

decided not to leave us. Those vehicles might have been labelled "Fragile," "With Care," so tenderly did we procession back to Cardiff. It little mattered that the place was so thronged with Scots that there was little but the water over our heads, and we gladly waited for a glimpse of a glimpse of a super that put everybody in good temper. Indeed, none had lost his temper, and the remainder of the evening, if not without incident, was happily spent. We travelled back to Luton on Sunday, and reached home shortly after 6 p.m. In five weeks' time we are due at Aberdare, which is "just over the mountain" from Merthyr. That is a cherished thought.

THE OTHER GAME.

On two previous Saturdays, Penydarren Park had been in such a state that matches had been postponed, but it was in better condition than the Luton ground had been on the previous Wednesday, when Cardiff City Reserves were visitors. Still, there was a strong wind driving the rain up the almost imperceptible slopes, and it was the good fortune of Tili to win the toss, and to take advantage of this. The game opened with such determination that they might have run up a goal or two before the Town had got used to the ground. As it was, the Town had the better of the play, and the fact that Merthyr scored first was simply typical of the run of the game as a whole. Luton had more of the game than Merthyr in the first half, and, taking the game as a whole, quite as many chances, but they could not profit by them to the same degree as Merthyr. The forwards were made to look so, and, by comparison, the Town were slow. It is a long time since I saw so many shots hit the woodwork, and both goals escaped in this fashion before a score was made. The movements of the Town were more combative, but those of Merthyr more effective. So it was that the whole of the Town forwards were required to take part in an attack, whereas Merthyr's raids were carried out in a sort of hop-skip-and-jump fashion—a swiftness of pass to the wing or fast up-and-down quick centre for someone to shoot on the run.

AND THEY SHOT.

They did shoot, too, and the first goal was a gem. WOODWARD took a loose ball as it came out of the rack, and from several yards outside the area he let drive with all his might. Harper made a frantic sort of effort, but he was still glued in the mud as the ball rattled the rigging. The Town asserted pressure, but the home backs and halves were very quick in recovery, and Linton, save for one troublesome rush by Reid, was not seriously troubled. Graham made several sprint-dribbles, and put his forwards in possession, but it was hazardous enterprise, and but for the vigilance of Gordon and Tili a severe penalty might have been exacted. The home team got away in another venture, and after many attempts a fantastic shot came out of PHILLIPS, who hit it hard and true, and although Harper made a headlong dive, the ball got past him just inside the upright. Reid was playing quite well at inside left, and the bull-like rushes of Thompson carried him through several times, but he was usually overpowered before he could get in a shot, though he once hit the bar. The Town had much the better of the general play, but there was a real craftsman in Murphy in the front line, and he was again he initiated speedy raids. Linton was in fine form, too, and made a lot of splendid saves, and the interval came with the score—

MERTHYR 2
LUTON 0

The exchanges were even in the opening of the second half, and there seemed little likelihood of the home team repeating their first half successes so soon, especially as Page had been carried off, and could not turn out again. The ball travelled quickly from end to end, and now and then a couple of minutes elapsed, and the home right wing made a similar movement, and Mitchell dropped the ball in front for SUTHERLAND to head a pretty goal.

The Town were not done with, and both the wingers got the ball across, and Jim Thompson once bored through, but Linton dashed out and knocked the Town centre-forward off his feet in summary fashion, and avowed what looked like a certain goal. There was another occasion when Thompson got right through and was swept off his feet by his own men, but he had been here already, and the referee thought otherwise, and the goal escaped. The Town pressed intermittently, but the accurate shot could not be found for a long time.

REID'S GOAL.

Following a quick work by the Town right wing, in which Gordon was conspicuous, Thompson forced through again, and although tackled by Pedler and Linton, and brought down, he managed to make the former kick in the direction of the empty goal. He was up again, but REID had completed the work by tapping the ball into the empty net.

The home attack then brought pressure to bear, and Harper made a great save, and two or three corners were won before the Town took up the attack, and Linton's one free hit gave him the net, but he was alert and clever. The end came with the home side pressing and deceiving success because of their superior speed in attack, and opportunism.

MERTHYR'S MEN.

Merthyr will not have to seek relegation if they can maintain this game. They were very fast, and although not a big

FOOTBALL.

ON THE TOWN GROUND

WEDNESDAY NEXT,

Feb. 9th.

SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

LUTON RESERVES

v.

POOLE

Kick-off 3.15 p.m.

(Continued from previous column.)

liant team there are individuals above the average. Lindon was a grand goalkeeper, and Pedler played the right game at back. The halves were strong and lusty, with Woodward the pick. In the attack the shining light was Murphy, who is only 18, and his skill it was that so frequently initiated attack.

THE TOWN

Harper was not to blame for any goal. Had the foothold been secure, he might possibly have saved either the first or second, but he could not get out of the mire quickly enough. Graham was a great back, and once more the understanding with Gordon was a source of profit, but the back, in his endeavours to infuse some life into the attack and to fill the breach in the middle, often travelled too far. He played grandly, however, all through. Till was good in parts, and it is clear that he does not appreciate the mud, but he had a lot of extra work thrown upon him by the indifference of the middle line. Richards worked hard, but was puzzled by the

quick-footedness of the home inside forwards, and it is obvious to me that he is not a pivot. His best games this season have been played at back. Gordon gave him a lot of help, but Millar was not at his best until the second half, and had a very hot handful to face.

Of the forwards, the usual tale must be repeated. Chances, chances, chances, but poor shooting. Thompson took the palm for thrustfulness, and pressed the defenders hard, and Reid was quite successful at inside left, though rather slow in getting off the mark. He scored, but the donkey work was Thompson's. Yalvey made some neat touches, but was attempting to make openings for Thompson rather than taking a chance himself. Pointon and Clark did good things times, and helped in many attractive movements, but the trouble all the time was that the forwards wanted a close view of the net before shooting. Their constructive work was quite stylish at times, but they WOULD NOT SHOOT.