

## No. 205—P. D. AMBROSE of Newcastle West

(By SEAMUS O'CEALLAIGH)

**N**EXT April we celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the victory of Limerick in the first All-Ireland Senior Football Final.

The successful appearance of the defeated finalists of that occasion—Louth, in last Sunday's great All-Ireland Final epic—recalls that first great championship bid by Limerick and its victorious outcome.

The following year Kilfinane won for Limerick its first hurling crown, and from that time onwards the accent has been on the caman code in Sarsfield's County.

Football gradually declined in skill and popularity—and that decline has not been stemmed, as evidenced by the recent decision to withdraw from the National Football League—mainly because some of our leading players had intimated their desire to be left out of the reckoning when teams were being selected.

**A BAD SPIRIT.**

That's a bad spirit, particularly in view of how narrowly we missed a Muntser football crown this season. The present set up of the Leagues, however, may be a contributory factor, as it is just plain silly asking a team like Limerick play in a league which also includes such sides as Cork, Galway, Louth and Tyrone—to name only the provincial stars.

I heard one good judge declare, following last Sunday's football feast at Croke Park, that the Meath minors would beat the best team Limerick could put on the field every bit as much as they beat Armagh.

To go back to the Limerick Commercials and the glory they brought Limerick in the long ago, we find in their ranks the subject of our article this week.

Patrick Downey Ambrose, to give him his full baptismal name, came into Limerick City from the West at an early age, and was apprenticed to the drapery business at the well-known establishment of John McBirney and Co., Ltd.

**STRONG NATIONAL VIEWS.**

Young Ambrose arrived in the city armed with strong national views. His upbringing ensured that. His family were ardent Land Leaguers, who rarely missed any of the big rallies within measureful distance of their home.

The impressionable youth could

not but be impressed as he travelled to such gatherings in company with many neighbours, their donkeys all dressed up in green trappings. They were the leisurely, yet hectic, days of the early 'eighties, before motor cars were known.

For years afterwards, when the old days were recalled, P. D. Ambrose displayed the pride he felt in the fact that his father was Chairman of the second last meeting the "uncrowned King of Ireland," Charles Stewart Parnell, addressed. It was in Newcastle West. A few weeks later the great leader was dead.

**JOINED THE COMMERCIALS.**

A lad with national leanings naturally looked for a G.A.A. club to join in the city, and his connection with the drapery trade immediately suggested Limerick Commercials.

Both as a player and organiser young Ambrose threw his full weight into the Gaelic movement, and he was soon prominent in the ranks of the club, then one of the most active units in the sporting life of Limerick.

Commercials did not confine themselves to football. The members were keen athletic fans and the club organised some great sports meetings at the old Markets Field—gatherings which on a few occasions extended to a period of three days, so extensive was the programme. They also enjoyed a considerable social life, and their periodical balls were the highlights of the season.

The spread of football was the chief aim of the club, and with this object in view they organised tournaments both with the leading clubs of other counties and between the different commercial houses in the city, something on the lines of the present Inter-House Leagues.

**INTER-HOUSE CONTEST.**

Commercials won their second All-Ireland final on February 6th, 1898, and football fever was still at its height when Cannock's and Todd's met in a famous match for a set of medals, presented by the Commercials Club, at Corkanree, on March 30th. Cannock's won by two points to one and the teams were:—

Cannocks—W. Ryan (capt.), P. Wall, J. Frewen, P. Frewen, E. Frewen, E. Clifford, M. O'Dwyer, P. O'Connell, P. Maloney, J. O'Meara,

M. McNamara, G. Butler, J. Hayes, P. Ryan, W. Reynolds, J. O'Brien, M. Mahony, J. Curry.

Todd's—E. Mullane (capt.), P. O'Donnell, H. Cremin, T. Frieze, P. Liston, E. Keane, R. Howard, M. Noonan, J. Dynan, P. Ryan, S. Kelliher, F. Nash, M. Doolin, R. Fitzgerald, B. Hennessy, J. Butler, E. Kenny.

P. D. Ambrose was also closely connected with the old Mechanics' Institute and was a prominent member of the gymnasium attached to the premises, where he had, amongst his associates, two well-known Limerick figures in Ned O'Toole and Mickey Hartigan.

Also mixed up with many other local associations and activities, he was a loyal member of the Arch-Confraternity of the Holy Family attached to the Redemptorist Church—a membership he referred to often and lovingly in after years in exile and coupled with it the pride he felt in his connection with the famed Commercials.

One of the most abiding memories he carried across the Atlantic was the reception accorded John Daly on his homecoming to the city. It was a great night in Limerick and the streets were brilliantly illuminated with bonfires and torches.

**MADE HIS MARK IN CANADA.**

He emigrated in October, 1899, and very soon made his mark in the land of his adoption. He built up a successful business connection in Montreal, Canada, and established a prosperous provision store.

Always keenly interested in the progress of his native land, Mr. Ambrose often expressed disappointment that Irish business interests were not more alive to the possibilities of extending their activities to embrace the big Canadian potentiality.

More than once he cited the failure of Irish biscuits to strive for the Canadian market, which was well served by English manufacturers of these goods.

He regularly stressed the openings there was in Canada for a big trade in Irish tweed, and urged manufacturers of the same to interest themselves in building an export trade as the climate was most suitable for its development.

**SON A NOTED SOCIAL WORKER.**

One of Mr. Ambrose's five sons—Rev. Patrick J. Ambrose, M.A., is a noted social worker in Canada, and has served the nation well as Director of the Catholic Welfare Bureau of the Federation of Catholic Charities. His work in this connection was so successful that he was appointed to the Officer Board of the International Conference of Catholic Charities—a federation of all the social and welfare services of the Catholic Church on the American Continent.

Despite the great success he enjoyed in the land of his adoption, Mr. Ambrose never lost his love and affection for Ireland. He summed this up once when he said: "When all is said and done, the heart of the exile ever goes back to that little gem that is set in the ring of the sea, and that old home where I was born is ever home to me."