

GREAT LIMERICK SPORTSMEN

No. 200—JAMES D. HARTNETT of Abbeyfeale PART 1

By SEAMUS O'CEALLAIGH

EACH succeeding St. Patrick's Day recalls for many an old timer in West Limerick the halcyon days of the great gatherings in Abbeyfeale in honour of the National Apostle—the grand procession, the fine turn out of the local band, the big St. Patrick medals sported by the leading citizens, and the magnificent leadership of the great Father Casey.

One name which crops up frequently in connection with these celebrations is that of the late James D. Hartnett, who played a big part in some of the later gatherings and bridged the gap between the very early processions and those of after years.

The possessor of a facile pen, he has left us many interesting stories of the years of richness and glory when Fealeside went into carnival mood to honour the National Festival.

In an effort to recapture some of a past that has passed unfortunately for ever, and much of its spirit as well—the happy, homely spirit of an unspoiled Irish countryside, I give some of the happenings by Fealeside at the turn of the century, as related some years ago by our subject this week—J. D. Hartnett:

"It may be that memory wreathes a solacing charm of its own about those old St. Patrick's Days of our youth, but it appears the more likely that the peace effacing progress of modern times lays a foundation that may fail to bring to others, in later years, the same joy of retrospect which so naturally clings to our mental films of the past

"SHAMROCK SPOT."

"There used to be a 'shamrock spot' on the banks of the Feale—where Pouleen Buidhe runs between its long scimitar-shaped strand and the yellow banks along the fringe of that bank. Days before St. Patrick's Day, we competed in our school day afternoons, when the thought of the national holiday took root in our minds, in a race along the Fealeside to the spot where we knew the genuine triple leaf grew in abundance.

"The peaceful scenes reflected in the works which have now become the dreams of Charles Kickham were only a sample of what were enjoyed elsewhere throughout the Emerald Isle. There was joy and peace and happiness in the townlands of the Gael, even when the clouds of oppression were still lingering in the sky over the hills and vales of Tipperary, for a just cause was backed by stout, clean hearts.

THE GREAT FATHER CASEY.

"St. Patrick's Day in Mullinahone had been reflected in the hamlets and villages on the banks of the Feale, and when our Abbeyfeale of to-day was little more than a hamlet there came there from the foot of the Galtees a kindly young sagart, later to become a national figure universally known as Father Casey, who brought with him the spirit of Tipperary and the simple customs of its gallant people.

"West Limerick then had little of its present pretensions. Its simple people round about, like those of Mullinahone, had a hard run for life; dragging hard rents from the soil for their masters, but in them was a faith and spirit that came down from the Walls of Limerick. There, on St. Patrick's Day, a spirit of gladness took the place of resentment, when Father Casey's Brass Band roused the residents from their beds, and the windows rattled from the strokes of its big drum, at day-break, and with a lifting power that would have left Matt The Thresher envious. Out of our beds we tumbled with the opening volleys of that big drum; swopping the remnant of our sleep for a peep at Jack Scully, who could still give directions to his boys without missing a note from his cornet.

A REMINDER AND A LAPSE!

"And what a time of it that guileless young curate had then, for a time, with some of those band boys of his. One soft-hearted young member of the band was one day reminded by Father Casey that it behoved him on one particular day, when he

mounted one of the long outside cars, as it was set for Ballybunion with the band, to be on his guard against any attempt that might be made to interfere with the Pledge he had taken. 'Make your mind easy, Father,' the hopeful replied, 'it isn't in the power of the Old Boy to make me break my pledge!' Vain boast. He happened to be the only one that required a little physical assistance to mount the long car on the return.

"On St. Patrick's Day, when last Mass was over, hundreds of men and youths of the parish would assemble under the chestnuts and copper beach, chatting and smoking until the senior members of the Temperance Society appeared with their big St. Patrick's Day medals on their breasts and passed the word to the waiting crowd to get into marching order.

ONE OF THE GREAT DAYS.

"It was one of our great days then watching the banners, on which we saw the serpents wriggling into the sea at the feet of St. Patrick, and the wolf hound beside the round tower, close to some thousand year old abbey or church. Occasionally there would be some inclination in the village to endow the questionable tradition of the 'Patrick's Pot' with some sort of national association with the Festival, but that lively young curate of the broad shoulders and athletic step had no place for it in his organisations. A bandboy, or some member of his Temperance Society, might slip now and then off the rigid line of sobriety, but on the whole they were well conducted and he had not much difficulty in maintaining a model society under his fatherly supervision.

"Those old marshals of the village processions, whose ages bordered on the seventy mark, also formed a sort of committee of the Temperance Society to which they were attached, and numbered about half a dozen. It would have been a village scandal of top dimensions had any of them broken his pledge before the coming of Christmas set its annual limit to it. Life pledges were exceptional.

ROUNDING UP THE WANDERING SHEEP.

"The Reverend President, whose monument now adorns the square of the village, which has now become a town of some importance, might shut his eye to aberrations of a few days into the New Year, but after that the wandering sheep would be rounded up within a week.

Sometimes it would happen that one who had been winding up his own freedom would walk into the Temperance Hall with a corrective gait, linked with a softer member of the Association in tow, and when he himself might have been revelling during the week. This kindly act, with quasi merit, would, of course, be relied on to avert any suspicion of his own lapse. The President would meet such manoeuvres in silence, but with a smile, which usually covered a kindly roll of the tongue in his cheek.

"Many important events in the world's history have occurred within the past half a century, but none with all this era's inventiveness has replaced the peaceful atmosphere that blessed the simple faith and customs of our youth. That older generation embraced more real happiness, with all its poverty of modern luxuries, than any period that succeeded it since.

ALL GONE TO REST.

"All that cabinet of elders in the Temperance and other organisations of our youth, as well as the last of the band boys of the processions and Land League demonstrations, have gone to rest. They sleep where the monks of old raised their orisons of praise to the Creator, leaving the Faith still regnant in their sons. There where their forbears knelt is a church whose modest walls spoke to them of its Penal associations.

"Traditions die hard in Ireland, and are still cherished where the steps of Ita and Brendan blessed the hills and vales of Limerick and Kerry. The faith of Patrick is still sustained with much of

that vitality which brought it through more than three hundred years of persecution.

"As of old the Holy Sacrifice is still offered on the rock by which the Feale still flows, as it does by Slieve Luchra's range, where for the most of fifteen centuries, ministers of the Faith, from the days of Patrick, have been laid to rest awaiting the trumpet's call for the gathering of the harvest."

More stories of Father Casey, the Temperance Society and early football days in Abbeyfeale will appear next week

No. 200—JAMES D. HARNETT
of Abbeyfeale. (Continued)

By SEAMUS O'CEALLAIGH PART 2

THE part the late Father Casey played in the life of Abbeyfeale during many vital years form the main theme this week from the reminiscences of that great Gael and chronicler, the late James D. Harnett:—

"There was not from Malin Head to Cape Clear a more enthusiastic patron of Gaelic athletics than Father William Casey, the well known pastor of Abbeyfeale. A good judge of a horse, he liked riding but never hunted anything but unreasonable landlords and undesirables in his time.

"For years after his death many an old rambler of the roads clumsily shifted his bag from his shoulders, or changed the stick in his hand, to lift his battered hat to the bronze statue on the square at Abbeyfeale, which was all that was left to remind them of the old friend whose admonitions were always lined with help for them. For one so endowed with the hot blood that seemed to warm with the breath of the Galtees, under which he first saw the light, at Castlequartern, Kilbehenny, in 1844, there was always a special place reserved in his big heart for those old wanderers to whom the world usually gave the cold shoulder.

LONG REIGN IN ABBEYFEALE

"Ordained priest on July 2nd, 1868, he spent some time at Bannogue, where the famous horse races used to be held long ago; and Manister, before moving permanently to Abbeyfeale, on November 18th, 1871, to his great delight and there he remained until his much lamented death on December 29th, 1907.

"Shortly after settling down in Abbeyfeale, his activities opened with the establishment of a Temperance Society, a brass band, which afterwards became famous in the Land League days, and an athletic club. The latter was in a flourishing position years before that meeting in Thurles established the Gaelic Athletic Association.

"The Temperance Society remained for many years the leading social sanctum of the village, which it was then, and for a long time after its establishment its prestige was jealously guarded by a committee of veterans, of whom the leaders were Mickey Walsh, John Donovan, Tom Fethin, Maurice O'Grady, Patsy Meade and others—a thoroughly honest and faithful combination.

VERY WELL CONDUCTED.

"It was a very well conducted Society. I know it was too well conducted for us youngsters when we grew old enough to be mischievous. Either this cabinet were the greatest martinets of the age or we were the most incorrigible urchins known to the history of the place.

"It was as easy to get into that Temperance Hall at night then as it was to get into the lost city of Petra in the Land of Edom in days of old. If by any chance of relaxed vigilance one of us did get in surreptitiously who was not a member of this invincible institute, his name was solemnly recorded in a red covered pass book by Mickey Walsh, who made the entry more painfully impressive by moistening a short stump of pencil he always carried in one of his big waistcoat pockets, and he pocketed our night's rest with the performance when he stowed it away. There was always the uncertainty of a visit from Father Casey at the next day's school, if there did not happen to be an eviction or something of national importance to divert his attention from trivialities.

A STRICT DISCIPLINARIAN.

"Mickey was charged with the conduct of the Society, and was a strict disciplinarian. The annual temperance pledge of the Society expired on the 31st of December, and a few days after its expiry, which some of the members naturally sought to prolong, there was a

general round up, and Mickey would then become busy with reports to his President of the straying sheep. This was a part of his office that made him anything but popular amongst the senior members, who disliked any shortening of their annual freedom. They were usually roped in before a fortnight and harmony once more restored.

"Mickey was rather tall and stoutly built, and even when well over eighty would still walk upright without a stick. We used to hear that he fought before Sebastapol in the Crimean War of 1854, and we were not a bit surprised. He was comfortably off, and kept a tobacco and grocery shop. Here unscrupulous young crooks of our acquaintance often tried it as an exchange when his wife was in charge, to convert some outlandish foreign coin into sweets of some kind.

"Nearing his end his upright, soldierly walk drifted into a slight shuffling movement, and every Saturday when he visited the Parish Church he would walk straight up to Father Casey's confessional, outside which this great patriotic pastor now sleeps, and no matter how thronged the seats might be the middle door of the confessional would open, and Father Casey would shrive old Mickey at his feet. No one but Mickey enjoyed this privilege, and we used to think he would never tell his sins so openly if it were he who passed those bad pennies for good sweets.

"This Temperance Society, over which Mickey was such a faithful guardian, functioned in the old low ceilinged school room, with its infants' gallery at one end, where the brass band used to practise and at the other end, over the intervening desks, there was a long table. This, somewhat like Goldsmith's 'chest of drawers,' served the double purpose of an expansive master's desk by day, and a card table at night.

SCENE WORTH RECALLING.

"It was a scene worth recalling to see half a dozen of those happy veterans of the Committee, all verging on seventy, if not beyond it, each with a different temperament and disposition, holding their cards at the table keenly intent on a forty-one match. Suddenly, Jack Scully, the bandmaster, would set the whole lot of the instruments going in the gallery, and when the music reached its blaring burst in altissimo from the big belled brasses, one of the card players might drop a wrong card. Then would arise an argument in pantomime, for all words were lost in the thunder of the band. When it ceased some startling expressions, keyed to the high note of the gallery, might be heard afar off, telling all whom it might concern that that band would soon blow out the windows of the place and the cards along with them.

"This Society was a kind of happy family then, when motor cars and even bicycles were unknown. Those of the members who were not playing cards or draughts were nightly grouped about a big turf fire, and here on winter nights might be heard the true story of how the Kerry farmer's horse, car and driver fell off the Kerry bridge and were none the worse for the adventure. Here, too, was often re-told the tale of the three lads from the town who were engaged ferreting rabbits in the Castle Inch when a great Feale flood surrounded them. No one could or would venture to save them until Father Casey, the daring young curate, who was not long in the place at the time, galloped to the spot and forced his horse into the flood at the risk of his life, and brought them out one by one in the nick of time.

LESSON OF REVERENCE.

"Most of the members smoked, and enjoyed their smoke after a hard day's work, but should Father Casey make his appearance amongst them, as he mostly did each night, the pipes instantly disappeared leaving a lesson of reverence to a rising generation from men who knew what hard work meant. With a gentle smile as some dislodged pipe cover would roll to his feet, their kindly patron would tell them: 'Smoke away, boys!' He was partial for some years to a pinch of snuff, but he never smoked, and faced a painful operation some weeks before his death, refusing an anaesthetic, and putting aside the little brandy that was proffered him rather than slight the pledge of his Confirmation."

The visit of the Abbeyfeale Band and football team to Croom for a big championship engagement will be described next week.

Did you

No. 200—JAMES D. HARNETT
of Abbeyfeale (Continued)

By SEAMUS O'CEALLAIGH PART 3

A MEMORABLE visit of the Abbeyfeale Brass Band and football team to Croom for one of the earliest senior football championship engagements form the main part of the reminiscences of the late James D. Harnett, as related this week.

"Jack Scully succeeded Tom Dennison as bandmaster, when the latter accepted an important position in London. Jack was a genius in the minor ranks of the profession, even composing music of his own, but like some geniuses his eccentricity, too, often took the form of a weakness for the bar, invariably at the wrong time. This little failing kept Father Casey busy from time to time, giving him a pledge for life once a month or so, but for the life of him he couldn't see or feel his way to keep it for a long time, but eventually he succeeded.

"Jack's services were indispensable. He was known to every Land League Committee in the three counties, and more than once shared the honour of his patriot friend, when the premier place was given his band at some city or county demonstration.

IN HIS ELEMENT WITH THE FOOTBALL TEAM.

"He was in his element when playing the local football team to some county match. There his music might help the boys to victory, or if fortune were inclined to shun them it might at least have some paralysing effect on their opponents.

"Jack Scully sleeps beside the Feale with many of his comrades, and not far from Croyle Hill, across the river, from which his music so often awakened the echoes down the valley in the peaceful summer twilights of the past. The kindness extended to him by his old friend only betrayed that sympathetic line which ran through all the good natured actions of his old patron.

"Father Casey's uncompromising attitude towards landlordism came from his first hand knowledge of the cruel conditions under which many tenants at will struggled to meet high rents, which were spared only from penury. It was so he cleared the ground for some of the excellent work also accomplished by his distinguished successors in the days that followed.

FOOTBALL CONTEST AT CROOM.

"One fine day in the late summer of 1891, the brass band, the football club and the usual muster of sideline warriors and youthful aspirants to the colours of green and gold were detrained from a special at Patrickswell Railway Station and marshalled by Father Casey outside the platform beside a bridge, with the pleasant instructions to face a march of five or six miles to Croom. There it was that a contest for the Limerick County football championship of the year was fixed for decision between Abbeyfeale and Doon.

"The latter team came from the borders of Tipperary, under the shadow of Galteemore, and turned up on some waggonettes, a fine set of strong limbed, hard-faced, fearless looking men. They looked as if they might have found it hard to return to a place so near Tipperary if they failed to snatch victory from the men from the mountains. An approbrious term this, now almost dead, but then applicable to those who had the temerity of being born west of Barnagh Hill.

AN IMMENSE CROWD.

"There was an immense crowd present when the boys lined up with their opponents. Already Father Casey was busy along the sideline, whip in hand, his tongue searching about his cheeks, a gesture to stimulate a sort of vexed impatience, familiar to everyone who knew him, which helped more than the whip to keep a clear field. He was assisted in the work by the Gaels of Croom, although,

I believe they were under a different affiliation, for there were rival boards—the regular one under the Chairmanship of Paddy O'Brien ("Twenty") and a break-away body under the rule of Father Sheehy—operating in the county at the time.

"The brass band sent out one or two old Irish airs over the field to remind the boys of what was expected of them (incidentally, if not unfairly, perhaps) and Brian Boru's march might have been heard at Ballyneety in the distance, where Sarsfield put one up on William long before that.

THE DOON TEAM.

"The Doon stalwarts did not appear to care much for music just then, and one of them jumped and shouted a defiant note of his own in resentment against this dressing up, so much on the one side altogether. My friends in East Limerick may be interested in learning the names from which the Doon team was selected for the occasion: Thomas Hayes (captain), P. Hogan, P. Ryan, J. Carey, W. Kennedy, J. Kennedy, M. Maher, J. Sweeney, M. Hayes, B. Hayes, D. Connors, P. Martin, C. Hayes, E. Russell, T. Fitzgerald, M. Darcy, P. Bourke, T. Collins, B. Kennedy, Jeremiah Hayes, P. Lonergan, P. Coffey, P. Lande, J. O'Dea and M. Ryan.

THE GAME.

"The whistle sounded and play began with some fine punts from the Doon centres, which a forward just failed to turn to account. A second rush was saved by some hefty arm strokes of the backs, then permitted, and for some minutes there was even play until the Feale men took the offensive. After ten minutes' tense work, two Feale centre forwards introduced a dual pass movement, which just placed their top man in dangerous ground, when he was deliberately tripped by an opponent. This was the beginning of the end, for an appeal only invited further aggression, and immediately pandemonium reigned in a scene which I have never seen repeated on a football field since. Better forget what happened, but the Doon men retreated to their waggonettes, and the game was awarded Abbeyfeale and subsequently confirmed.

DEPRIVING THE PUBLICANS OF CUSTOM.

"In all great battles the vanquished are usually depicted as scattered and disorganised in retreat. Our return to Patrickswell that evening might well have given a stranger an impression of defeat. There was no marshalling now, and very little music, for Father Casey was robbing the publicans of some of their customers behind us, and sending them in groups before him to the far-off train, and with so many large crab apples on the wayside trees between, with no time left for their acquaintance for the smaller members of humanity. They were more concerned avoiding any contact with Father Casey, for they knew his hands were full with old members, who were bent on celebrations he did not like.

"Our place, as youngsters, was naturally, behind the band, but this afternoon there was no band to go behind. In our eagerness to catch our train at any cost, the pace we made for Patrickswell enabled us to pass at various parts of the journey several bearing band instruments who were not band boys, for there was no harmony in the weird notes they blew on them from time to time, from the little wind the hiking could afford. One grown-up schoolboy, Dick Walsh, later of Kilmurry, Castleisland, was struggling along with the big drum, but his appeals for assistance fell on deaf ears as we passed. He was, however, relieved before we faded from his

view.

THE LAST MAN!

"At Patrickswell we found ourselves an hour and a half too soon, and this we employed watching the victors and their satellites arriving. They were shepherded to the last man by Father Casey. And this last man, after all, seemed the only one that caused him any anxiety. The men did not seem to know he was playing the role of a lost sheep, for he stopped at the end of every half a dozen steps to emphasise some point or other of the advice he seemed more inclined to impart than to follow, if he were to catch his train."

Some great games with Templeglantine, and the County Final of 1898, form the main theme of the recollections for the next article in this series.

No. 200—JAMES D. HARNETT of Abbeyfeale (Continued)

By SEAMUS O'CEALLAIGH *Part 4*

CONTINUING the reminiscences of the great Abbeyfeale sportsman, and Gael, the late James D. Harnett, we find reference to some great matches of the olden arena, notably the exciting contests between Abbeyfeale and Templeglantine, which were such a feature of early G.A.A. days in the west.

The life of the G.A.A. in West Limerick in those far off days of the nineties throbbled in the county matches between Abbeyfeale and Templeglantine. Both teams presented a set of young men of such very fine physique that any country might well feel proud of. Athletic, virile, fearless, and invariably almost impossible to hurt in a match, there was seldom any need for subs, and it very rarely happened that play was suspended for the recovery of a player. There was something to quicken the spirits of a young Gael then, when Abbeyfeale and Templeglantine teams met outside the town at Mountmahon, and with the visitors in the place of honour behind the band, all stepped to some old favourite march of Jack Scully's through the main street (there weren't too many other streets then), and to Denny Dick's Inch, behind the Court-house — where all arrangements would be set for a county match between those old rivals.

THE CONTEST WAS USUALLY STRENUOUS.

The contest was usually a strenuous one, and the balancing of accounts at the end of the season seldom showed any great disparity in the scoring between them. In those days when the venue was either at Abbeyfeale or Templeglantine one side of the field was kept well defined under Father Casey's methods for a clear field. On the opposite side usually the respected pastor of Templeglantine, the Rev. Father Clifford—the same who bred Kirkland, a Grand National winner, while afterwards Parish Priest of Monagea—plied his riding crop to good effect. The Abbeyfeale lads at this period lined out under the captaincy of Conny Collins of Kingsland.

The bulk of this whip and crop business was mainly pretence on the part of the respective parish priests, but some such demonstrations were necessary where the pitches were unenclosed. Of course, whenever the Glantine supporters were carried over the line by their enthusiasm, in the event of a score, that side line would then be raked rigorously by Father Casey. This, of course, meant extra work for Father Clifford, when appeals were lodged by aggrieved enthusiasts for reprisals, in the shape of a dose of the same drug for the Abbeyfeale demonstrators. On the whole the proceedings were mostly good humoured, and Father Casey would insist after a home venue on seeing that the visitors were played outside the town by the band, so as to lead the team away from the temptations that might find them playing the whole game over again in some local bar.

AN OLD PHOTOGRAPH

Some time ago, I came across an old photograph of the band and football team, taken on the occasion of one of those famous games, and the names, as written on the back, make interesting reading now: Dan McAuliffe, Paddy Flynn, J. D. Harnett, B. Cotter, John Tobin, Jack Enright, Dan Galvin, Dick Cotter, Billy Mick, Father John Moloney, Jim Dick, C. C. O'Rourke, Mick Finnerty, Dan Daly, Yose Rourke, Mick McEnery, Willie Dan Batt, Jack Connell, Jack Mick, Patsy Leary, Peter Leary, Daniel Meegan, Hero Flynn, Mick Shan, T. D. O'Connell, Thomas Keane, Jack Scully, Sean Connor, Jimmie Rourke, James Dennison, Jack Foran, Connie Daly and Lindey Regan.

In later days another generation of players grew up in the ranks of Father Casey's club and

gave an excellent account of themselves in many county matches as in North Kerry. There were reliable combinations who played a much more scientific game under reformed rules and who were found repeatedly in the county finals. The Limerick Commercials, under the captaincy of Con Fitzgerald or Ailbie Quillinan, invariably stood between them and a county victory until 1914, when Abbeyfeale beat the famous city club by the odd point in three, after a grand final—a success the West boys repeated the following season.

MET COMMERCIALS IN SENIOR COUNTY FINAL

Limerick Commercials won their second All-Ireland senior football crown on February 6th, 1898, when they defeated Dublin Young Irelands for the 1896 final, 1-5 to 0-7. Abbeyfeale met the Commercials in the Limerick County senior football final at Rathkeale on May 28th, 1899, and although the famed city combination won, 4-4 to 0-5, it was a closely contested match most of the way with many exciting bouts of good quality football. The teams were:—

Commercials — D. Byrane, Jim Riordan, E. Mullane, M. Culhane, J. Buttimer, John Riordan, L. Sheehan, Con Fitzgerald, P. Roche, W. Murphy, P. Connell, M. Madigan, M. Ryan, Ailbie Quillinan, E. O'Callaghan, John Murphy, H. Cremin.

Abbeyfeale — M. Collins, M. Maloney, T. Danaher, J. Harnett, D. McCarthy, J. McCarthy, J. O'Donnell, T. Browne, P. Hishon, J. Calvell, P. Cahill, P. Lyons, W. Flynn, P. Maloney, W. Collins, J. Healy, P. Buckley.

REVIVAL OF AN OLDEN RIVALRY

The olden rivalry between Abbeyfeale and Templeglantine was revived in the autumn of 1899, and evoked all the thrills and throbs of the early days. On October 15th the Templeglantine Owen Roes drew with the Newcastle West Wolfe Tones, 1-5 each, in the West Limerick senior football championship. A fortnight later, at Abbeyfeale, the Templeglantine lads won the replay, 2-7 to 0-3. Abbeyfeale beat Ardagh in the same competition, 11 to nil, on October 22nd, to clear the road for the great tussle between the age old rivals—Abbeyfeale qualifying for the Western final against Glin in rather lucky fashion and by the narrowest of margins.

That tussle with Glin was the talk of West Limerick for many a day. The pair first met at Athea on January 28th, 1900, when the game resulted in a draw of 1-0 each. P. J. Hayes, of Limerick, again officiated at the re-play, which took place at Newtownsandes on April 22nd. Nearing the end the scores were level at one point each when Glin scored a minor which their opponents disputed and left the field. Abbeyfeale objected and the County Board ordered another re-play.

THE TEAMS IN THE SECOND RE-PLAY

The second re-play took place at Ardagh on June 17th and resulted in a win for Glin by the odd point of five. The teams in this exciting series of games are worth recalling:

Glin—P. McCoy (captain), M. J. O'Shaughnessy, J. O'Shaughnessy, R. Fitzgerald, M. Fitzgerald, P. Moore, M. Fuery, E. Dore, M. Dore, P. Lynch, M. O'Donnell, J. Wrenn, S. McGee, P. McNamara, E. Moriarty, J. Dore, M. Lynch.

Abbeyfeale — J. Cahill (captain), J. Connors, M. Prendeville, J. Healy, P. Lyons, T. Browne, J. Collins, M. Buckley, M. Collins, J. McCarthy, P. McCarthy, P. Histon, J. Harnett, J. O'Donnell, P. Moloney, T. Danaher, W. Flynn.

Several Abbeyfeale lads caught the eye of the county selectors, and when Limerick lined out against Kerry in the Munster Championship the team included six lads from the banks of the Feale—M. Moloney, J. Moloney,

D. McCarthy, J. McCarthy, W. Flynn and P. Lyons.

WHEN THE KERRY BOYS LAUGHED!

In 1905, when Abbeyfeale challenged the champions of Kerry—Kilmoyley — there was great amusement in Kerry at the considered audacity of the Limerickmen. Luckily, Abbeyfeale won the toss and played with the wind, scoring five points, without reply, in the first period of play. Still the Kerry boys were laughing, but the wind went down and a lovely calm was enjoyed during the last half, with the result that the champions of the "Kingdom" never made a score. Two old Kerry women in Listowel that day, were heard to express themselves thus:—"Why should not the Abbeyfeale lads win when their own Father Casey kicked the ball into the field?" The other added—"Yes, and got the wind to stop laughing the last half-time."

The reminiscences will conclude next week with some stories of Father Casey, and his great work for Gaeldom.

No. 200—JAMES D. HARNETT of Abbeyfeale (Concluded)

By SEAMUS O'CEALLAIGH

WE conclude the reminiscences of the late James D. Harnett with a fine pen picture of the renowned Father Casey, written at the time of his death, in December, 1907:

"The people's friend, the brave, pure-souled champion of Ireland's rights, the zealous priest, the big-hearted idol of the poor, the patriot pastor of Abbeyfeale, has left us for ever. Stung with grief, his parishioners mourn as for a loving father departed, one who entered into their every joy and sorrow, whose interests were his own, without class or distinction, who claimed no greater right to stand between the people and their troubles; the nation and its enemies, than the promptings of a great generous, broad-hearted disposition, allied with a high toned, Celtic nature, which always chafed with subdued indignation at Ireland's hopelessness in the hands of her enemies."

A MANIFOLD CHARACTER.

"His was a manifold character, not always thoroughly understood in detail by some who failed to trace occasionally his actions to the simple formulas of his life, which led his strength to the side of weakness, and with the oppressed. But it is as a patriot, as the combatant of Ireland's wrongs, and the fearless defender of her liberties that his reputation lies far beyond the humble parish of his ministry, in the remotest State of the great Western Republic or the plains of the Southern Cross, and wherever an Irishman has found a home in his noble work and sacrifices in the ranks of the national movement are tenderly treasured by the exiles who took his kindly words of courage and advice to guide them when his exhortations failed to keep them where his heart would have them stay."

DURING THE FEVER PLAGUE OF 1871.

"Father Casey came to Abbeyfeale in 1871. During the terrible fever plague which ravaged the district in 1883, in his devotion to the stricken poor he displayed an utter disregard of personal risk in his great desire to fulfil one of the heroic obligations of his sacred calling. At this time there were sixty patients in the fever hospital at Newcastle from the district. On one occasion Father Casey in four adjoining houses anointed nineteen persons and then became a victim himself to the disease."

"That same year Father Casey was appointed Parish Priest. At this time the great Land League movement was swelling to its height, and there certainly were few districts in Ireland more in need of some agrarian reformative measures than Abbeyfeale then was. On more than one occasion Father Casey told me that many of his parishioners at this period were in a sad state of privation, many of them merely subsisting in their extreme efforts to meet a rent which was subsequently proved to be an impossible one, and it was undoubtedly attributable to his personal experience of some cases of singular hardship in this aspect that his warm nature espoused so ardently the cause of the tenant-farmers of his parish and fought the long, difficult, but victorious battle against landlordism which ended in its complete overthrow in the district; the vindication of his demand that tenants should be at least more than rent slaves and which made them fee-simple independent holders of their farms."

HIS WORK FOR LAND PURCHASE.

"His zeal for the emancipation of tenants similarly circumstanced found him actively engaged to the end in an effort to conclude terms of purchase for tenants, not only in different and many parts of Limerick County, but even in Kerry, Cork, and elsewhere. In politics he was always a consistent advocate of majority rule and for many years enjoyed the friendship of the leaders of public opinion in Ireland. Always anxious for peace, his last efforts were privately exercised in an attempt to close the up ranks in the political vanguard. For many years he was the life and soul of the national movement in Limerick County, being Chairman of the City and County Executives of the United Irish League and President of the West Limerick Executive, before each of which bodies he kept constantly moving the claims of the evicted tenants."

"As Chairman of the Limerick County Technical Committee he entered fully into every scheme promulgated for the improvement of the general community, but through all his secular associations with County affairs, in which no one was more interested or self-sacrificing, his ardent patriotic convictions were always apparent, but never distastefully obtrusive towards those of different political leanings."

HIS HEART WAS WITH THE GAELS.

"For several years he also presided amongst the Gaels of the county, and it may be truly remarked that, though his mind was ever labouring for the spiritual, material and social elevation of the people as a whole, his heart, next to the faithful fulfilment of the sacred duties of his office, was with the "Young Blood," as he used to call them, the Gaels of the country. With them his word and presence were more powerful in critical moments on the hurling and football field than all other influences combined. To be amongst them made him young again, their victories swelled his heart with boyish enthusiasm, but none of his selection ever felt more despondent than he did, when fortune smiled the other way."

"A fluent Gaelic speaker, he took a keen interest in the language movement, was President of the West Limerick Coisde Ceannair, and the most prominent figure at all our Aeridh-cacta. His local brass band, of which he felt so proud, was always accorded an honoured place at all the great provincial demonstrations of the early Land League, but as a temperance reformer his good work was incalculable."

STORY OF A TEAPOT

"PLEDGE"

"The local Temperance Hall was his creation, and amongst its members most of his hours of relaxation, and they were few, were always spent. Many humorous tales are recorded of his efforts to capture the effing ones. On one occasion he happened on a party of three who, having forgotten the pledge, retired to a private house and were revelling in a high time when the door opened and his reverence appeared. There was no es-

caping the pledge and the defensive arguments drifted towards compromise. No, he would not allow them two drinks nor even one for the morrow. The party had been imbibing 'mulled stout' through the medium of an old tea pot commandeered for the occasion, and as a last resort one of them, pointing towards the apparently harmless old pot near the fire, asked indifferently, 'would you let us drink what's in the teapot itself?' 'Oh,' replied his reverence, mistaking its contents, 'you may drink all you like out of the teapot,' and after the pledge they did and were found two days later by his reverence carrying out the letter of the pledge through the teapot. His reverence became suspicious of 'teapot' pledges after that."

"Having run down a pledge breaker at another time, the latter astonished Father Casey by asking, 'Were you ever drunk father?' 'No,' smilingly, replied his captor, 'why do you ask?' 'Because,' he continued, 'I knew you weren't, for if you ever lived until the next morning, you'd never think it necessary to preach another sermon on the curse of drink!'"

PATRIOTISM AND CHARITY.

"No more prominent leader voiced the feelings of the people at national conventions, and few met with a warmer reception at the great provincial demonstrations he attended. Seeing the homesteads of some of his parishioners burned to the ground, it made him a relentless opponent thence forward of tyrannic landlordism, but twenty years later he saw their claims vindicated and half their original rents accepted."

"As a prominent Nationalist leader and advocate of the people's right the general public knew and appreciated his work, but the zealous, self-denying manner in which he performed his missionary labours was known only to his Divine Master, his parishioners, and those immediately associated with him in ministering to the spiritual needs of his flock. He never permitted a public obligation, and they were many and pressing, to detract him from his sacred duties. Ever ready for sacrifice, he did God's work as he would have his devoted people to do it, 'extraordinarily well, and for the rest his philanthropy became proverbial. It is questionable whether Father Casey's patriotism exceeded his charity's, both have become inseparably connected with his name."

HE GAVE ALL HE HAD.

It may be said his left hand did not know what his right hand conferred, but this was only for a short time, because his generosity became a kind of public institution, and then with him concealment became impossible. He gave all he had, and he gave always and everywhere unobtrusively; he listened to those who blamed him for encouraging vagrancy and vagabondism, but like the Great Master he sent none away; he rather somehow left disappointed if no poor vagrants hung about the Presbytery when the day's labours were done. The world's strays were ever God's creatures to him, he drew no fine distinctions between the hobo, the gaeger, the unemployed and the destitute. The peer and the peasant were the same to him as the rich and the poor. As one who knew Father Casey intimately remarked, Cardinal Manning's definition of a perfect priest was never more aptly applicable than to him, 'the flag of whose hall door was worn by the feet of the poor.'

LEFT A BRIGHT EXAMPLE.

"At last the blow has fallen, the darkening cloud has settled down in gloomy shadow o'er the land, for Abbeyfeale its star is set, the patriot pastor, the only Father Casey his people knew, the stalwart breastwork and their friend is gone. In many an Irish home whose roof-tree he upheld the silent tear will fall, and the fervent prayer ascend for the noble heart who drove the rent thief, like the wolf, to lowlier lands, who truly fed the poor and soothed those in pain, who dared the prison for his people's rights and left his country better than he found it. He did his best, and left for other hands and better times a bright example and a clearer way to win his country's liberty and to slay her wrongs."

THE LATE JAMES D. HARNETT.

In concluding these memories of olden days by the Feale, it is only right that we pay a well deserved tribute to the man who left us such a fine record of the period, the late James D. Harnett, a Gael of fine culture and high intelligence, who played a prominent part in the national and social life of the country."

Intensely patriotic, he played an active and unselfish part in the Irish Ireland and G.A.A. movements, while in the days of the land war and struggle for national independence he was a tower of strength in furthering the cause of the tenant farmers, and that of severing the connection with England. During the Land League struggle he came into contact with the leading figures of that time, and had many exciting and dangerous experiences during the coercion regime, repeated in later years when he was several times warned by the Black and Tans against sending press reports unfavourable to the British occupation and even threatened with death on a few occasions. He unflinchingly continued to expose the atrocities of the British, however, and displayed the most forthright courage as a newspaper correspondent."

In his passing, West Limerick lost one who was the very soul of honour and sincerity and in every respect a true and sterling Irishman."