

# No. 119—PADDY McINERNEY of Young Irelands

By SEAMUS O'CEALLAIGH

IN recalling the career of one of Limerick's greatest hurling defenders, Paddy McInerney, it is only natural that nostalgic memories should come crowding of the famed Club with which he was so closely associated.

Young Ireland was one of the grand clubs of the mid-years of the G.A.A.—the fifty golden seasons from 1898 to 1948, covering the spell during which the popular colours of blue and gold shed lustre on Limerick hurling and gathered honours galore not only on Shannonside but in almost all of the hurling counties.

Paddy McInerney was a great Young Ireland man, one of the grand band of hurlers who brought honour to the blue and gold, and was always proud of the old colours. In fact, few clubs can be named who had more loyal and enthusiastic members and for that reason it is particularly pathetic that the old Club of such happy associations has ceased to exist in Limerick Gaeldom, except in the hearts of the old timers—members and supporters alike—who will ever hold such tender memories of the grand band who made the hurling welkin ring in days that will not come again.

Nothing emphasises the passing of the years more than the memory of old associations, and the disappearance of so many who helped to build up the pleasant background of the happy days when we were boys is the indication that youth is no longer ours—a realisation that makes us cherish the more the friends we used to know in the carefree hours of long ago.

## ALMOST ALL ARE GONE

Almost all of those who helped to establish the great Young Ireland Club fifty-seven years ago have gone to their eternal reward, and only a few remain of the men who won first Limerick senior hurling honours in the blue and gold colours more than half a century ago.

Young Ireland opened a chapter of Limerick hurling history then that spread over the decades and left the proud wearers of the old familiar jerseys at the end leaders in the hurling roll of honour of Limerick County. It matters not now that another famous combination came in after years to surpass that record, because for the majority of the hurling fans of their day the memory of Young Ireland and the gallant men who wore the Club jersey must ever remain fragrant and refreshing.

We toast one of the latter this week—Paddy McInerney—in exile for many a day, but still a popular favourite with the hurling lovers of the days when he flourished as one of Limerick's finest defenders.

## A NATIVE OF CLARE

A native of O'Callaghan's Mills, Paddy was almost born with a hurley in his hands, and hurled as soon as he was able with the local youngsters under the guidance of Tom McGrath, a great All-Ireland man of his day. Also in the parish lived such famous hurlers as Ned Grace, Paddy Meany, Paddy O'Callaghan, Denis O'Callaghan, Paddy O'Brien, Paddy O'Dea, Tom McInerney, John Kelly, Tommy Lynch, Jim Flanagan, Tom Higgins, Jim Pepper, Hugh Moloney, and J. J. Hurley—the "makings" of an All-Ireland team almost in the one parish.

They often walked as kids the three miles each way to play another team, and it was nothing to see fifty or sixty boys practising every evening in a field belonging to Paddy's father.

At an early age, old hurlers predicted that Paddy would one day "play in the Markets Field," and sure he did! Still very young when he went to reside in Limerick, Paddy went to Leamy's School there and in good time found his way to the Markets Field as a member of the Young Ireland team, which he joined in 1912.

## OUTSTANDING MEMORY

Paddy's outstanding memory still is of the great struggle with the other famous city team of the glory days—Claughaun, and it is his ardent hope that the enthusiasm their meetings evoked will be the means yet of reviving the famed Young Ireland's to recapture the hurling heritage that is so fully theirs.

Paddy played with Young Ireland's from 1912 to 1925 and won

honours in plenty with them, including the County championship titles of 1921 and 1923, captaining the team the latter year. A win that he appreciated a lot was against Ballingarry for the historic John Daly Cup.

Picked for Limerick in 1918, he helped the green and white to All-Ireland success that year, a triumph they repeated in 1921. Paddy captained the Shannonside fifteen that won Munster honours again in 1923, but they lost the All-Ireland to Galway. He feels the team were overtrained for that match, and to this fact he attributes the defeat. Another trophy he treasures is the Thomond Feis medal won with Limerick.

Paddy intended continuing his hurling in America and he actually played one game in the old Celtic Park Grounds, New York, but owing to job conditions was unable to carry on. He was, however happy to meet a lot of the old Gaels who had left Ireland before him and, one in particular, the famous Egan Clancy, with whom he had the honour of hurling against Cork (Redmonds) Selection in Killarney, the Sunday before the Fedamore man left for the U.S.A. Egan was a great Gael and a true Irishman, with love of country to the last.

## KIND FOR HIM TO BE A HURLER

I said early on that Paddy was literally born with a hurley in his hands. Anyway, it was kind for him to be a hurler for all his family at his father's side, and cousins played with the old Clare teams, and his brother, the late Johnny McInerney, played with the Commercials and later Claughaun, who were a great team in the city in those days. Paddy still holds a great admiration for the Claughaun lads and expresses his pleasure at seeing them back in the limelight again after some lean years. His hope is that they produce some great players as in the past, such as Rochford, the Kelly brothers, Tom McGrath, Dan Troy, Mickey Cross, etc., and, of course, Johnny was later a Young Ireland stalwart, and in after years rendered great service to the Blue and Gold as a club officer and committee member.

## HOW HE TRAINED

Paddy McInerney's training schedule will be read with interest and maybe amaze some of our present generation of players. Every morning at seven he had a fast walk and run out to Barrington's Pier. Every evening he indulged in running and hurling at the Market's Field and at night had a fast walk as far as Mungret and Patrickswell, then home and to bed. When the hurling close season came along he took to long distance walking, often doing fifteen to twenty miles in the company of his old friend, Mickey Hartigan, to whom Paddy sends sincere good wishes. Mickey was an old Young Ireland player.

A keen follower of athletics and deeply interested in the development of camogie, Paddy can recall most of the great athletic feats of his youthful days and was present at the Markets Field to see the great Paddy Leahy clear 6 ft. 6 ins. in the High Jump, and later had the pleasure of seeing famous figures like J. J. Ryan, Condon, O'Briens, Jack O'Grady, Jim Keays, O'Leary of Cork, McNamara of Clare, and many more of the greats whose names will long live where the athletic days of Ireland are discussed.

Paddy hurled against most of the great players of his time, including Hughie Shelly, Micky Leahy and Paddy Dwyer of Tipperary; Tom McGrath, Clare; Frank Burke and Brendan Considine, of Dublin; Larry McGrath, Galway; Eugene Coughlan and "Ga" Aherne, Cork, and not forgetting his old friend and rival—Tom McGrath, of Claughaun.

## AMUSING INCIDENT

Paddy tells an amusing incident of his hurling days: "I tried to bring home to Limerick one of the old Tubberadora caps which were worn by the Boherlahan selection. You might as well take Thurles out of Tipperary as one of those caps, as I found out when big Mickey Maher rushed me to the rails after the game. I thanked my stars I got home to Limerick myself in one piece as when I looked and

saw the size of the man I offered no opposition. I had no wrong purpose in my mind, but I just thought an old Tubberadora cap would be such a wonderful souvenir from the great hurling county. I still say my old friend Denny Lanigan had a lot to do with selling me the idea a few nights before the game."

In answer to the query: "What is your opinion of present day players?" Paddy replied: "I am not in a position to offer a fair opinion being away so long; however, the two teams I saw playing in New York, Cork and Tipperary, I feel are not up to the standard of the Cork and Tipperary teams I saw since my young days. I have seen them all from the era of the famous Thurles Blues and peerless Toomevara, likewise the famed Dungourney and Blackrock selections. But I will say some of the individual players are as good if not better. One man I will mention and that is Christy Ring, of Cork. I think of all the famous centre-forwards I have seen playing, in my judgment, Christy Ring and Mick Mackey are the two best Ireland ever produced. I notice the long distance pucks have disappeared and on the whole the players seem smaller. I have talked with other well known past players in New York and they all seem to think the same."

## HIS GREATEST GAME

When asked to name the greatest game he played in, Paddy said: "I think the greatest game I played was in the Cork Athletic Grounds against Tipperary for the Munster final. We led by two points and a few minutes to go, and typical of Tipperary they swept down the field clearing everything before them. It was like a bayonet charge, but the Limerick defence in glorious fashion held them back again and again and all the Shannonside players and supporters were happy to hear the final whistle."

Concluding his flash back from over the seas, Paddy said that he kept closely in touch with home affairs through the medium of the "Limerick Leader." "Even though late," he went on, "I'd like to offer my congratulations to the Limerick junior team on their great victory for all-Ireland honours. I hope it is a stepping stone to greater success in the future and that we shall all see the name of Limerick back in the proud position of other days. I am sure the material is to be found in Limerick to-day as it was then, and if the younger generation would get together, organise each parish in the county, get all the youths to the practice field every evening under the control of some past players, train hard, with plenty of games thrown in, I have no doubt in a short time Limerick would be back again in that proud position once held. I had a very happy meeting with my old friend, Sean Og Murphy, during his visit to New York and it made me very happy to see him looking so fit and well."

## THE GAELS OF NEW YORK

"The Gaels of New York are doing a great job at the moment. Football is at a very high standard and the hurlers are going to be very fit by the time they visit Ireland, with high hopes of winning. As a final word, I hope to see a team soon again on the field wearing the loved blue and gold colours of Young Ireland. I am glad to notice the progress of the new Inter-House Leagues in the city and have hopes that some move might be made to attract the unattached players in same as a start towards the re-building of my old club. It's a thought I had anyway."

Apart from his prowess on the hurling field, Paddy was one of the most genial and sociable of Gaels, and though he be divided from us by the broad Atlantic, there are many who look back with pleasant memories of Paddy McInerney's championship. He is now proprietor of a very flourishing bar and restaurant business in Katonah, about fifty miles from New York, where Gaels from every county in Ireland are often to be met. And many a night there a great discussion takes place about the old Gaelic days in Ireland, and the great men who played the games there are often toasted. But our toast to-night is "Paddy McInerney, the white-jerseyed hero of many a game." Long may he flourish!