

No. 159—EGAN CLANCY of Grange

(By Seamus O'Ceallaigh)

MENTION of the name, Egan Clancy, immediately brings to mind the famous family of which he was a member, and recalls the part played by the Clancys on the Gaelic field and in the wider arena of national endeavour.

Seoirse Clancy, the murdered Mayor of Limerick, has a place all his own in the memory of those who were associated with him in Ireland's gallant fight for freedom, and we cannot forget that Seoirse was also an enthusiastic Gael, and an earnest worker for native games.

The Clancys came of good Gaelic and Fenian stock and Seoirse carried on the best traditions of early G.A.A. days as a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood—an organisation that originally inspired the foundation of the Gaelic Athletic Association.

Around the turn of the century, Seoirse went to Dublin to attend the then Royal University, from which he graduated a few years later. During his stay in the Metropolis he was an enthusiastic hurler—a very fine exponent of the code, and did splendid work for the games as captain of the Confederate Club.

After graduation he obtained an appointment as language teacher in Clongowes, but had to relinquish this position four years later when illness forced his return to Grange. On restoration to health he obtained a teaching position in Limerick, which he still held at the date of his murder by forces of the British Crown.

A REALLY GREAT FIGURE

One of nature's gentlemen, Seoirse Clancy was one of the really great figures of his time. A loveable character in every sense of the word, he was the ideal leader, tolerant and helpful in all his actions; a devoted son of Ireland, ever willing to expend himself in the cause of Irish nationhood, ready to pay the supreme sacrifice of his life—a penalty that was exacted in the darkness of an early March night in the fateful year of 1921.

The bullets of English assassins found their mark in the body of Limerick's Mayor that dreadful night, but the spirit of that great Gael lives on, to inspire generations as yet unborn. We recall the stirring words of another great Limerick man—Most Rev. Dr. O'Dwyer—in the maytime of 1916: "Ireland is not dead yet. While her young men are not afraid to die for her in open fight or, when defeated, stand proudly with their backs to the wall as targets for English bullets, we need never despair of the old cause."

Seoirse's pre-occupation with the fight for Independence left him little opportunity to develop his hurling talents, and it fell to the lot of his brother, Egan, to uphold the family name on the Gaelic field.

This he did in no uncertain manner, for Egan Clancy crashed into the Gaelic limelight in the early years of the present century, and maintained an active association with the games of the Gael right up to his untimely passing, in exile, on March 28th, 1933.

FIRST APPEARANCE WITH FEDAMORE

The century was young, and so was Egan when he first turned out in the Green and White of Fedamore. The district around the famous hill boasted some splendid hurlers at the time but although they were in the thick of the championship fight for several years, and winners of many tournament trophies, it is a strange fact that they had to wait until 1912 before they put their name on the championship Roll of Honour. That same season they also won the Band Cups. And it reflects the sturdiness of the opposition in the great hurling days by the Shannon that a great combination as they undoubtedly were had to be content with the single entry in the records book as witness of their prowess in hurling ranks.

Egan Clancy first donned a Limerick senior County jersey for a match against the famous Erin's Own, of Kilkenny, then in their heyday, and which was played at Waterford on August 14th, 1910. Other Fedamore men on the team that occasion were Con Scanlan, Ned Tracy and Mick Harrington. Limerick won in easy fashion, 5-3 to 1-1.

Egan was again on the Shannon-side team that beat Kerry, 6-2 to 2-0, in the Munster semi-final at the Markets Field.

MEMORABLE GAME AT TRALEE

Limerick and Cork met in the Munster Final at Tralee, on Oct. 16th, the crowd of two thousand, with gate receipts £58, being considered very good then. Nothing reflects the progress of the G.A.A. better, perhaps, than to contrast the public interest of those far-off days with the huge crowds and great "gates" of to-day. But if the crowds were lacking, those who turned up in Tralee that memorable evening surely got their "tanner's" worth.

It was a terrific match, in which Limerick created the sensation of the year by beating a strongly fancied Cork side by 5-1 to 4-2. The winners fought with great determination, their hurling was magnificent, their combination excellent, their swiftness in getting possession of the ball and their long and well delivered shots causing a first rate surprise.

THE ALL-IRELAND FINAL

Limerick encountered Wexford in the All-Ireland final at Jones's Road (now Croke Park), Dublin, and in an exciting game were narrowly beaten. This proved one of the most controversial finals ever fought, and old Limerick followers maintain to the present day that the county got a raw deal on that occasion. Wexford won, 7-9 to 6-2, but two of the Leinster goals were hotly disputed on the field and in the newspapers for many weeks afterwards.

Fedamore had a great victory over the County champions, Castleconnell, 4-1 to 3-1, in the Lyons Memorial final at the Markets Field on February 12th, 1911, the winning team on that occasion including two members of the Clancy family—Egan and Jack.

Limerick's first big success in 1911 was gained at the Market's Field, where they defeated a team of Irish-American hurlers drawn from Chicago and New York before a crowd of ten thousand spectators—the referee being Mr. Harry Boland of Dublin. Fedamore players on that team were E. Treacy, M. Harrington, M. Bourke, C. Scanlan, E. Clancy and S. Gleeson, whilst Fr. John O'Donnell of Grange (now P.P. in Hollywood, California) also wore the Limerick colours that day.

THE 1911 MUNSTER FINAL

The 1911 Munster Final between Limerick and Tipperary was played at Cork Athletic Grounds. The Premier County lads, with seven points of a lead, looked all out winners ten minutes from time. Then Mick Feely shot a marvellous goal from mid-field—a Limerick revival followed and scores in rapid succession left them winners, 5-3 to 4-3, in a welter of excitement.

That ambition of all Gaels—an All-Ireland medal, was denied Egan when the final against the Noresiders, fixed for Cork, could not be played on the date originally arranged owing to the water-logged condition of the pitch. The re-fixture was made for Thurles but Limerick refused to play there. The Central Council refused to alter the venue and Kilkenny had a bloodless victory.

Limerick's inter-county greatness faded for a while following this unfortunate experience, but in 1912 the county had a notable triumph when the Cardinal Agliardi Medals were secured, after a great final with Kilkenny. In this achievement Egan played an outstanding part.

The following year Fedamore became County champions, when they defeated the lads from

Ballingarry in a memorable final, Egan captaining the County team in the subsequent season.

Their first Munster championship engagement was against Tipperary at Dungarvan and proved a notable triumph, but in the semi-final Clare inflicted an unexpected defeat and went on to win their only hurling Blue Riband.

LAST IMPORTANT GAME IN IRELAND

This was Egan's last important game in Ireland, and in June, 1915, that great Gael left his native county for the greater Ireland beyond the seas, his colleagues presenting him with a gold watch and chain as a token of their esteem at a great send-off party.

In America he quickly made his mark on Gaelic fields, and one of the newspapers there dubbed him "the wizard wielder of the crooked ash." On his retirement from the active arena he continued his good work for Gaelic games as a writer of brilliant articles on them, for a leading American journal.

His loss was a big one to his native land, but his grand work for Gaelic ideals on alien soil cannot be overestimated. His untimely death in the prime of life came as a great shock to his legion admirers and even though he passed away in a far-off land his memory is as fondly cherished there as it is still at home by his old club mates and all true Gaels of his generation, and his deeds recounted by many a fireside where hurling lovers foregather.

Paddy, a former member of An Dail for County Limerick, and Jack Clancy, were also prominent on the Gaelic field besides playing no mean part in the fight for National Independence. Joe, who was Chairman of the Fedamore Club when the County crown was won, was also prominent in the struggle for independence, and lost his health following the rigours of the great fight. They were a great family surely!

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