

# No. 169—DR. J. M. RYAN of Ballyadam

DR. JOHN RYAN did remarkable work for Gaelic games and athletics, and won many honours on the hurling field, gaining Dublin, Leinster and All-Ireland medals with the famed Collegians, for whose organisation and advancement he was in the main responsible.

But despite his wonderful record of labour in the cause of the Gael, he had one regret throughout life, and it was that he was denied the honour of winning a Gaelic title in his native county, and never had the pleasure of wearing a Limerick jersey, or participating in the glamour of a Munster championship encounter.

Born at Ballyadam, Pallasgreen, Co. Limerick, John Ryan early evinced an interest in things Gaelic, and it was no surprise that when he entered University College, Dublin, as a student of medicine, he immediately set about getting the hurling game on a firm foundation there.

## HAD TO FIGHT PRIDE AND PREJUDICE.

Many present day Gaels may find it difficult to appreciate the vastness of his task. He had to break through pride and prejudice of the most despicable kind, and met opposition at every turn—not alone from those in authority, but from many of his fellow students.

That he fought it all, at times almost single-handed, and carried the struggle to an eventual victory that had a profound effect on the whole standing of the games, not alone in the Universities but in the entire metropolis, is only part of the work accomplished by this true pioneer, whose interest and enthusiasm never flagged and who richly deserved the tribute of having his memory enshrined in the pair of cups, now the prized trophies for the annual hurling and football games between the University selections and the Rest of Ire-

## (By Seamus O'Ceallaigh)

land. The unselfish sacrifices of Dr. John Ryan, and men of his calibre, made these games possible, and this fact should not be lost sight of in these days when our games have won a popularity and a patronage undreamt of two score years ago.

## NOBLE PART IN WIDER FIELD.

In the wider field of national endeavour, Dr. John, like many of his G.A.A. colleagues, played a noble part. A student at Richmond Hospital during the Easter Week Insurrection of 1916, he rendered invaluable help and assistance to the insurgents. Later, he spent three years as House Surgeon at Jervis Street Hospital, again helping by every means at his disposal any member of the Republican forces needing his succour.

When he set up in private practice, his house was a friendly haven, for he attended many wounded men, and sheltered them under his hospitable roof. He risked his own life by doing so, but visits and threats by armed members of the British forces only strengthened his resolve and he remained to the end steadfast to the cause of Irish independence.

## WHEN NEW STATE WAS SET UP.

He was a close personal friend of Michael Collins and Harry Boland—both of whom shared in full his G.A.A. ideals and outlook. When the British were eventually driven out, and the new State established, Dr. Ryan was entrusted with many important medical tasks. On the establishment of the Garda, he was appointed first Medical Officer of the Dublin Metropolitan Division, and was also largely responsible for the organisation of the Army Medical Services.

Dr. John Ryan was a man of fine stature—6 ft. 2 ins. and built accordingly. Mighty also in his work, although his caman craft and fame are imperishably linked with his adopted Dublin, he always took pride in telling that he learned his hurling in the Golden Vein country, under the influence of the stalwart teams of his day—Pallas, Cappamore, Murroe, Caherline and Castleconnell.

## A GRAND TEAM.

Helping the Collegians win Fitzgibbon Cup victories in 1915, 1916 and 1917, he soon had the U.C.D. lads a force in the Dublin championship, and they were, indeed a grand team when they won that coveted title for the first time ever in 1917, repeating the success in the two following years.

But Collegians had higher ambitions than the Liffeside crown. They introduced new methods to the training of the Dublin fifteen they selected. By this they revolutionised hurling in the Metropolis. Deciding that speed was the big essential for youthful students, Dr. Ryan trained them on sprinting methods. His 1917 team that won the Dublin and Leinster Senior Championships were fleet as deer. In helping to shape that side, Dr. John had the assistance of another masterful Gael—the late Harry Boland, of happy memory, and the reward came in a Leinster success over a veteran Kilkenny team that counted more than a few of their record-breaking 1913 side in their numbers.

## BIGGER SURPRISES TO COME.

Bigger surprises, however, were to come. Dr. John Ryan was at Cork Athletic Grounds to see Tipperary triumph over his beloved Limerick lads, on a replay of the Munster Final. The genial doctor had just got his medical degree, and many good judges thought he was drawing the long bow when he said: "I have a team of young lads in Dublin that could beat the pick of the two teams to-day."

It looked a bold boast, for the Slievenamon and Galtee boys were

holders of the Blue Riband, and could count such stalwarts as Johnny Leahy, with his brothers, Paddy and Mick; "Skinny" O'Mara, between the sticks; Steve Hackett, Hughie Shelly and Phil Dwyer.

But, Dr. John was right. He captained a grand side from Collegians and Faughs mainly. They challenged Tipperary in rare style and won well, 5-4 to 2-3. Some of the Dublin newcomers on that occasion made history later. Dr. John Ryan, a powerful commanding back, with more resolution than polish; his colleague, Dr. Tommy Daly, one of the grandest little men that ever guarded a hurling net; Paddy Kennefick, Martin Hayes, Bob Mockler, then in his glorious prime; Frank Burke, one of the few dual champions; our own Mick Neville of Kilfinny. Jim Phelan of Laois, and a man very much to the fore in the support and encouragement of hurling to this day—Tommy Moore of Faughs.

## MEMORABLE SUCCESS.

The Collegians' success was a memorable one and Dr. John was a proud captain, indeed. The College lads retained their hurling championship for two further years, but Wexford took the Leinster title in 1918, and it was "next best thing" for the Collegians captain when his native Limerick, with Willie Hough as captain, took home the All-Ireland Cup.

Dr. Ryan, however, had hurling on the College map and remained its pillar to the end.

When he retired from the active arena, Dr. Ryan continued to give practical support and maintained an unbroken connection with Gaelic athletic affairs in U.C.D. where he was always a popular and honoured figure. Also President of the college athletic club, he turned out grand teams of athletes.

Very successful in his professional career, he enjoyed a big medical practice in Dublin City and invariably gave his best service without any recompense whatsoever to struggling Gaels.

His untimely passing in the prime of life was deeply and deservedly deplored and hurling lost a great captain, friend and leader in Dr. John, as he was affectionately called.

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