

SOME years ago the people of Kilduff, Pallasgreen, erected a monument to the memory of a devoted teacher who accomplished much for the district and whose many fine qualities of head and heart are still reverently recalled by the old timers.

A son of this well-loved man is the subject of our sketch this week. Michael L. Kennedy was a teacher, whose early years were spent in Brackyle National Schools. Never a great player himself, he was, however, filled with an intense love for hurling, and one of his first acts on returning to his native district from training for his profession was to revive the local hurling club.

At a period when clubs were not as well organised as at present, and when funds were hard to come by, Mick Kennedy spent everything he had in keeping that team going. Out of his meagre resources (a young teacher's pay was not very large half a century ago), he paid the affiliation fees, bought jerseys and even hurleys (against the general custom of the time) and generally saw to it that the players had everything they needed to play the game he loved so dearly.

AN IDEALIST FOR NATIVE GAMES.

Mick Kennedy was an idealist for our native games if ever there was one. He consecrated his life to the G.A.A., and did more than a man's part to build the secure foundations on which the great edifice stands so safely now.

Exiled from his native county for many long years—professional duties kept him away from Limerick—yet few kept in such close contact as he with Sarsfield's County, and he always took a very keen and sincere interest in the doings of the caman wielders of the county.

Mick Kennedy was a great Limerick Gael in the broadest sense of the term, and his deep attachment to his native county had to be experienced to be fully appreciated. He loved Limerick with an intense love and his dearest wish was to see the old county to the fore on the hurling field.

WENT TO THE BIG MATCHES.

As already mentioned, he had a deep and abiding love for the great caman game and never missed an opportunity of seeing the big matches of the year even when the call of his profession took him well away from the traditional hurling strongholds. Out of Limerick for many a

(By Seamus O'Ceallaigh)

day, it is not surprising, I suppose, that he should be forgotten by many. This has been the case with many grand workers in the cause of the Gael, and I often thought that a greater effort should be made by the G.A.A. to provide some machinery to keep the old workers from becoming forgotten men as far as the Association is concerned.

Brilliant with the pen, he wrote many fine articles dealing with various aspects of G.A.A. administration, revealing a very deep knowledge of the aims and traditions of the Association.

Interested in every aspect of the Gaelic athletic revival, he made a great effort when domiciled in Carlow to popularise the ancient game of "Rounders." At the time he had great hopes of success and felt that the game would develop something on the lines of its great American counterpart—baseball—and that international competition would eventually be possible. The second great world war then came along and finished the project.

MEMORIES OF HIS NATIVE DISTRICT.

Mick Kennedy had many memories of his native district, and he recalled them for me more than once. Here is what he said: "The region embraced by Pallas and its environs gave birth to a galaxy of athletic stars, men of might who were ahead of their time. Had they lived generations later and in another place their deeds would be so publicised that their names would ring round the globe as those of infinitely lesser men have done. Those men knew nothing of training or preparation for athletic contests—they simply left it to nature to show what fine specimens she had produced.

"There was the great Phil Madden of Pallasbeg, whose feats outtrilled those of 'John Ridd' as told by Blackmore in 'Lorna Doone.' People still relate how, when a horse refused to pull a load of turf out of the bog Phil took out the animal, went himself between the shafts and hauled it on to the road. Another instance was that of a massive boulder on the roadside which could not be moved by the united efforts of several men. It is told that Phil lifted it in his arms, threw it over the fence, then went inside and threw it back again. He was far before his time. One cannot but wonder vaguely

what figures he would have put on the record book had weight-throwing been in his time.

SIX WORLD RECORDS IN ONE DAY.

"Following him came the great Willie Real, the Ryans and the Grady's, all world beaters. Of those, Paddy Ryan was the only one who got any chance of training at all. That was when he went to America and was taken up by the Irish-American Athletic Club, and the effects of that bit of training told when he broke six world records in one day. Had he 'crossed the pond' years before and undergone serious preparation there is little doubt that he would have put up unbeatable figures. Furthermore, all experts agreed that he could have had the world's boxing crown had he taken to the fistic art.

"It was as a hurler I knew Paddy best. Had there been a hurling team in Pallas in Paddy's young days he would have been Limerick's full back. He won the long puck championship of Ireland when he had not handled a hurley for years, but when he did play as a youth he was as impregnable as the 'Rock of Cashel.' At that time there was no team in the parish, but strange to relate, there was never so much hurling. Sundays saw the hurling field full and matches played between different sides of the parish. The schoolboys were not forgotten either as they got their opportunities for matches and plenty of encouragement from the elders. Everyone who possessed a hurley or what passed for one could play and so long as there was an equal number on each side it did not matter how many took part in the game.

CONTRAST WITH THE PAST.

"On looking back over the years and noting the contrast between then and now I wonder if the modern young Gael knows how well off he is as far as our national pastimes are concerned. In almost every parish he has a playing field, he is provided with a hurley or football at little or no cost to himself and he is transported free to a playing venue. In my mind's eye I can see the scornful curl of his lip if he had to handle the so-called hurleys of our time. If they had anything at all in the shape of a "boss" it did not matter what constituted them. So long as they were 'tough' they fulfilled every requirement. Then the balls—they were made of cork and thread and sewn with a packing needle—leather covers were not to be had. Many a poor mother missed her grand worsted stockings purloined by her young hopeful to make a ball for Sunday.

"Those Sundays of our youth come back to me in a wave of nostalgia. From breakfast time after first Mass until the shades of evening fell we kept at it hopping from one field to another as an irate farmer chased us off his land and oftentimes we had to be content with the road for a playing pitch.

"Those days are gone but the tradition of the games lives on in the heart of the true Gael as part of his nature, racy of the Irish earth from which he sprung. The growing youth demands exercise to fit him for the battle of life and he turns instinctively to his native pastimes to supply the need. None but Irish hands feel the itch for a hurley and no other game can approach hurling in bringing forth the best qualities of athletic manhood."

Mick Kennedy deserves well of Limerick Gaeldom, and I am pleased to pay this tribute to the memory of one who should be remembered for his great work for our national games.