

No. 110—NED TREACY of Fedamore

By SEAMUS O'CEALLAIGH

ONE of the oldest clubs in the Gaelic Athletic Association, Fedamore, has played a noble part in hurling history ever since the Association was, in swaddling clothes. Theirs is a grand record—one that any club might feel proud of, with the name of many sterling Gaels linking the golden years together.

Fedamore is not now as prominent in hurling ranks as its past record and tradition warrant, and many old timers will assert that Limerick hurling has lost something very vital in the continued absence of a team that shed such lustre on the Shannonside arena in the past.

A quarter of a century ago the names of Fedamore and Young Ireland were spoken of with bated breath wherever hurling was discussed and their meetings attracted almost nationwide interest. I have vivid memories of some of the matchless games they played and the vigour and enthusiasm of their hurling has not been equalled in all the years since that have brought such changes in Gaeldom and elsewhere.

THE HARDEST GAME.

I have witnessed many breath-taking games in over thirty years close association with the hurling code, but the hardest game I ever saw—without question—was a match between Fedamore and Young Ireland on the old pitch at Hospital, with nothing at stake much—just a tournament decider for an old cup that had long since seen its best days.

Rivalry between the pair had reached a high pitch following a hectic clash for the 1928 Championship, which the city lads won. Fedamore were all out for revenge—hurling fans knew there was little between the teams, so a great concourse found their way to Hospital anticipating fireworks. Feeling certainly ran high—no referee in Limerick could be found to handle the game, and the late Joe Murphy of Mitchelstown, was called to officiate. He said afterwards that full-blooded hurling took on a new meaning for him that evening and it was a game he would never forget.

From start to stop no quarter was given or sought in one of the fiercest encounters that must take rank with the toughest struggles of the Gaelic arena. There was little room for spectacular hurling as men stood shoulder to shoulder and "drew" on everything. Personal courage was never less in question and Young Ireland certainly earned their laurels that evening. The intrinsic value of the trophy was little, indeed, but it was fought for with an abandon that could not be bettered were the highest laurels in Gaeldom at stake.

HURLING'S GREATEST RIVALS.

Fedamore and Young Irelands were hurling's greatest rivals in those hectic days beyond compare, and it is a real tribute to their sporting spirit that despite the thrills and spills of the active arena friendships were never sundered and, to this day, they remain firm friends—those lads that made the welkin ring in hurling days gone by.

There is a lesson to be learned from the great men of that era in devotion to club and willingness to take hard knocks that the

players of to-day could assimilate with profit. We had no first aid men then, no Accident Fund, and a player was really hurt and badly at that before he would leave the field.

I set out to write something about the late Ned Treacy, and I can do no better now than quote a few lines from the pen of a colleague—the late Egan Clancy, written in exile:

When all alone I often think
And dream on days of yore,
And my thoughts go quickly
o'er the seas,
To dear old Fedamore;
For it's many the pleasant stroll
I took
"With ashen stick" in hand,
To spend a day in manly play
With the lads in "Con's"
command.

And when the practice match
was o'er
To "Jamesy's" we'd repair
To discuss the coming conflict
And "Shaun" would take the
chair;
And "Mick" would read the
minutes
Of the meeting that passed o'er;
Oh! God be with those happy
times,
And bless you, Fedamore.

HAD CLUB IN 1885.

Fedamore had its hurling club in 1885, a few months after the Gaelic Athletic Association first saw the light. The club colours in those far off days were purple and gold, being changed in 1894 to green and white, the present colours. In the thick of the championship fight all down the years and although winners of numerous other trophies, it is a strange fact that Fedamore had to wait until 1912 before they put their name on the championship roll of honour. The same season they also won the "Band" Cup—still preserved in the village along with the Infirmary and Ozanam Cups.

The captain of the side was the famous Con Scanlan, the unassuming star seventy yards man, and this renowned Fedamore team embraced seven other inter-county men, "Egan" Clancy, Mick Harrington, Tom and Martin Hayes, Stephen Gleeson, Mick Bourke and the subject of our sketch—Ned Treacy.

Far back in the first decade of this century Ned wielded the caman with Fedamore, gradually coming to prominence as one of Ireland's best. To the fore with his club's premier team he quickly gained recognition by the county selectors and figured in many hard fought struggles both for his club and for Limerick.

COULD HOLD HIS OWN WITH THE BEST.

A fine, hefty athletic youth, he was able to hold his own with the most vigorous on the playing pitches and became known far and wide as the "unbeatable Ned Treacy o' the pluck"—a tribute indeed to his fine qualities on the hurling field.

Associated with the great Limerick County teams of 1910 and 1911, he played in the unforgettable Munster Championship game against Cork at Tralee in the former year and in the subsequent All-Ireland final against Wexford which must have been one of the unluckiest days ever for Shannonside hurling.

An All-Ireland medal again by-passed him in 1911, when the All-Ireland final fixed for Cork Athletic Grounds had to be postponed owing to weather conditions and Limerick refused to play at Thurles, for which venue the game was re-fixed. Kilkenny, as a result, got the only bloodless verdict ever recorded in a hurling final, but Ned had the pleasure later of playing a big part in the defeat of the Noresiders at Croke Park in a great game for the Cardinal's Medals, regarded by many as the virtual "All-Ireland."

With Fedamore and Limerick Ned hurled with boundless energy and enthusiasm, at the same time throwing all his weight and influence behind every movement associated with things Gaelic and national.

DROPPED THE CAMAN FOR THE RIFLE.

In consequence, it was only natural that when, in the second decade, the call came for Irishmen to once more battle against the ancient foe in the cause of national independence, Ned dropped his caman and pluckily handled the rifle to fight for Irish freedom. A man of rare pluck and courage, he soon became a Battalion Staff Officer in the East Limerick Brigade, I.R.A., and distinguished himself against the British, amassing a wealth of wondrous and daring exploits to his name.

He displayed particular gallantry on the occasion of the attack on Kilmallock R.I.C. Barracks in May, 1920, which fight was regarded as one of the fiercest of the whole War of Independence, and which eventually ended in the capture of the strongly fortified citadel and its complete destruction.

Captured by British Crown Forces in November, 1920, he was interned in Ballykinlar Camp until the Truce.

SINGLE-HANDED ATTACK ON BRITISH TROOPS.

One of the many whose services for a free Ireland shortened their span in this life, Ned is reputed to have attacked, single-handed, a lorry of troops, put them to flight and burned the lorry. The troops rallied later and discovered there was only one attacker but Ned escaped by leaping from a bridge to the river bed, twenty feet beneath. This incident was believed to be the origin of the spinal trouble which afterwards caused his untimely death.

So passed away in the prime of life one of Ireland's best. Champion hurler, national top-notch, too, at hurling long-puck, and gallant soldier of his native land, Ned sleeps his last long sleep in the little churchyard at historic Lough Gur, mourned by all as a good comrade, fond friend, decent neighbour, true Gael and patriot.