

No. 153—DAN TROY of Claughaun

(By Seamus O'Ceallaigh)

I HAVE always felt that Limerick club hurling hit its peak in the city during the early 'twenties, and that the famous pair, Claughaun and Young Ireland's, contributed more than their share to setting the hurling heather ablaze and winning many adherents to this greatest of field games.

And when I think of Claughaun, one name stands out above the others, the name of a grand caman wielder and an ornament to any club, the late Dan Troy.

Born at Ballymakeogh, Newport, Dan did a lot of his early hurling in his native Tipperary, where he learned the most of what there was to know about the game. That district produced some fine hurlers around his time, and he played many a match with good hurlers and Gaels like the Rainsfords, Mick and Martin Aherne, Mick Ryan ("Tailor") and Paddy Ryan ("Grug"), to mention only those that come readily to mind.

A READY-MADE HURLER.

Anyway, Dan was a ready-made hurler when he came to Limerick City, where he was immediately attracted to Claughaun, then at the height of their glory and the leading senior hurling team in City or County.

Claughaun had won three County titles in a row, but their old rivals, Young Ireland, replaced them, as City representatives, in the County final of 1917, only to suffer a surprise defeat at the hands of Newcastle West.

One of Dan's first games in the horizontal bars of green and white was against Young Ireland in the opening round of the 1918 championship—a match Claughaun won readily.

It was a few weeks before the Munster championship was due to commence and Dan's play so attracted the selectors that he was immediately called to the County colours. His first game for Limerick was against his native Tipperary, and a right hard tussle it proved, in the confined spaces of the old Markets Field. After a thrilling, closely contested game, the result was undecided—a draw of 5-3 each.

A CHAMPION SIDE IN THE MAKING.

Limerick, without an All-Ireland win since 1897, realised they had a champion side in the making, and it was decided that a special course of training be undertaken—the players repairing to Foynes, under the guidance of the late Jim Dalton.

The British military authorities, however, threw a spanner in the works. They issued a proclamation banning all G.A.A. games, except under permit from the R.I.C., and a special meeting of the Central Council was summoned to deal with the situation.

The Council instructed that all clubs defy the proclamation, and ordered that to make the decision effective the first Sunday of August, (1918) be declared a Gaelic Sunday, games to be organised without permits for every venue in the country.

Fifteen hundred such contests were announced—fourteen being held in Limerick County, and all attracted large crowds. At the Markets Field, Claughaun and Young Ireland were the big attraction, and right good fare they served, the Blue and Gold lads reversing the championship verdict.

BRITISH FORGOT THE WHOLE THING!

The British, sensing the magnitude of the task of enforcing the ban at fifteen hundred different venues, wisely forgot the whole thing, and Limerick and Tipperary travelled to Cork Athletic Grounds a fortnight later to re-play their Munster Championship tie. Limerick won by the narrowest of margins, 3-0 to 2-2.

Dan's next outing was with Claughaun, and they beat Cappamore 7-2 to 4-1 in the senior hurling championship.

In the Munster final, played at

Thurles, on September 15th, victory came easily, the final score reading: Limerick, 11-3; Clare, 1-2.

Two weeks later, Galway were visitors to the Markets Field, and they, too, succumbed to the charm of the lads in Green and white, Limerick thus qualifying for another All-Ireland final.

Dan Troy was a firm believer in training and it was said of him that he never went out of training during the entire course of his hurling career. Only a short time before his all too early passing, he asked me to impress on all the players, club and County, the necessity of keeping fit if they were to do justice to their prowess.

INSTRUCTIONS TO TEAM FROM TRAINER.

On that occasion he gave me a copy of the instructions he received from trainer Jim Dalton, a few weeks before the 1918 All-Ireland final, which was played on Sunday, 26th January. As he laid particular stress and importance on these, their reproduction here may help present day players.

Here is the letter each member of the 1918 team received from the trainer:

"Apart from the individual honour of being one of the hurling champions of Ireland, an amount of public interest is taken in the match, and it is up to every man to do his part to show that the public confidence reposed in him was not misplaced.

"If the necessary preparation days at the beginning and the rest days at the end are taken into account, there is only about a fortnight to get ready, and the men of the Limerick team have to depend on their own earnestness, persistence and determination to be fit for the fray.

"It is desirable to prepare for training with a light dose of epsom salts before breakfast.

"As the ground is likely to be heavy, constant practice of the muscles is necessary, so that men will retain their hitting power to the end of the match. For this purpose exercise with the hurley, and hurling practice daily is essential. Do not stop too long at exercise at any time or you would become mechanical and slow, thereby losing "whip" and spirited swift movement. Do not mind the weather conditions, because a cold can always be avoided by dressing in togs for exercise and rubbing over with towel and changing clothes immediately, putting your togs, if necessary, to dry for next day. There is no healthier time to exercise than a wild blustering day.

"Begin your work by hard walks every night and an odd short jog. Do not start sprinting until you feel that your system and sinews are toned up to the work. When sprinting start with a few loose runs at natural speed so as to get the blood running freely through the nervous system, and also to speed up the heart by degrees. By this means you strengthen the valvular system of the heart, and do permanent good for yourself.

"Do not overdo exercise, it weakens the heart, and such exercise does harm instead of good. Watch your weight, and if you are carrying too much do not allow yourself to reduce quickly.

OBJECTIVE IN TRAINING.

"The Wexford men are a strong team. Your objective in training is to be strong, swift and enduring. To attain this you must go early to bed and take full sleep—nine hours. As you must be up about 7.30 a.m., it is necessary to be asleep at 10.30 the night before. Sleep rests the heart and distributes the juices of the body. Over-sleep is bad. The night is for sleep, the day is for work.

"Smoking is most injurious for many reasons to a man in training. The system is affected by some things in a greater degree than is the case in normal conditions of life. Alcohol or fermented drinks of any kind are poison. Fluid should be limited. While good water is healthful in normal conditions it must be remembered that in common with other fluids it keeps the liver extended, and the

flesh full of moisture, and, therefore, affects what is known as the 'wind.' The sue of fluid compels a man to work harder in order to get fit and firm. As men will not be undergoing a special dietary on this occasion the most of the food used will contain a large amount of moisture, not alone enough for the purposes of nature, but an excess that has to be got rid of by hard work. It is well during the course of training to take once or twice before breakfast as much glauber salts as would pile on a shilling.

"Be sparing in the use of sugar, it induces thirst. You may use salt as it is valuable, as a lubricant. Keep the skin clean in order to enable the pores to carry out their functions.

"In the coming trial of our skill and grit, certain success is assured, provided every man has the firmly fixed will to win, and lays aside all other considerations for the next few weeks, but the steady determination to do his best."

LIMERICK WON.

Limerick won that game, 9-5 to 1-3, and at the age of twenty-one, and weighing almost twelve stone, Dan Troy gained the great ambition of a hurler's lifetime—an All Ireland Final.

At the scene of the great triumph—Croke Park—he, however, suffered a serious head injury that put him out of the game for a long time, and although I saw him play a good game as late as 1930, at Croom, in a replay against Ahane, the lengthy enforced absence deprived him of the opportunity of figuring with Limerick, in the All Ireland Finals of 1921 and 1923.

In his heyday one of the most finished hurlers in any team, he was a swift and strong striker who always played the game in the best traditions of the code. Shy and unassuming, besides being a great hurler he was one of nature's gentlemen.

It is many a year since I first met him, and I can honestly say he was one of the sincerest of friends. In company he spoke little, but what he did say was always marked with the weight of honest conviction.

In late years he was only rarely to be seen at a match, but he never lost his interest in hurling and was constantly discussing old matches and times. A general favourite with the hurling fans of his day, they remember him as one of the greatest players on that grand combination who left an impress on Limerick hurling that will not be effaced.