

No. 176-MICK MACKEY of Ahane (Continued)

MANY are the tributes that were paid to Mick Mackey's ability as a hurler. I could not possibly, in the space at my disposal, reproduce anything like them all, but I feel that in justice to his record, and the opinion of many that he was Ireland's greatest hurler, some should be mentioned.

One of Clare's greatest Gaels wrote me some time ago: "Mick Mackey not alone was Limerick's best hurler, but he was the best hurler of all times and Paddy Clohessy was the best centre half back of all times. I have seen every important championship match for thirty years and that is my honest opinion."

Several poems were written singing the praises of the great Limerick skipper, and a well-known South Limerick hurling enthusiast penned this one following nine great All Ireland successes, in which Mick captained the Shannonside fifteen:—

Oh! Limerick is beautiful, as everybody knows,

'Tis there the early flowerets spring and summers' grandeur grows,

In days of old its men were bold and fought like heroes then,

And their renown is handed down to Mick Mackey and his men.

We followed you through Munster and we shouted for your fame,

On Dublin's far famed pitch we stood that bears a glorious name,

And cheered with joy each man and boy, each maid and matron when

We saw the sheen of white and green, Mick Mackey and his men.

From Corrin's heathclad slopes we came along by Galtee-more,

From sweet Tipperary's border towns, away by Shannon's shore,

From the Banner County's hills we came around by Foynes and Glin,

To cheer that day the grand array of Mick Mackey and his men.

'Twas well we knew the game would be both fierce and strong that day,

When the Noreside boys came on the pitch all eager for the fray,

Resolved were they to win their way and gain the Crown again,

But we said "No? 'twill surely go to Mick Mackey and his men."

It was a glorious sight to see, sweet music filled the air, The happy throng were gathered round and had no room to spare.

In proud parade and undismayed, each side came out to win,

We said "no doubt, 'tis coming south to Mick Mackey and his men."

To each and all of our gallant band, a tribute I would pay, The great Mick Mackey first of all was the hero of the day,

And Paddy Scanlan, tried and true, has proved his worth again,

Repelled attack with lightning crack for Mick Mackey and his men.

By SEAMUS O'CEALLAIGH

There's a boy who hails from Fedamore, Paddy Clohessy is his name,

A star with lustre bright, undimmed and nation-wide his fame,

And from Knockainey's storied mound this year a man came in,

'Tis Tommy Cooke, with slash and hook, for Mick Mackey and his men.

Then Timmy Ryan at centre field, you heard his name before,

His prowess at the ancient game is known from shore to shore,

Mick Hickey, fierce and strong, would face a lion in his den,

But he'd rather stay to win the day with Mick Mackey and his men.

Of Jim McCarthy, Feenagh's pride, Mick Kennedy and Ned Chawke,

Of Peter Cregan, Jackie Power, I'd like to sing and talk,

John Mackey and Dick Stokes, my boys, all fought like trojans then,

And Jim Roche, so true from "Croom Abu," with Mick Mackey and his men.

Now Paddy McMahon from Ahane, I never can forget, A tiger in the onset bold, he's the man to smash the net,

Then cheers for all that gallant band again and yet again, That great fifteen, the white and green, Mick Mackey and his men.

I'll go down to Castleconnell and I'll stay for an hour or two,

And I'll call out "Tyler" Mackey to some cosy rendezvous,

We won't talk of County Councils, Boards of Health or things akin,

And make no boast but drink a toast to Mick Mackey and his men.

"TERRIFIC GAME."

A Limerick City reader recalls a terrific game played in Castleconnell during the Emergency for a silver cup, offered by Col. Tom Feely, O.C., 7th Brigade.

The contestants were the 7th Brigade (All Army Champions) and Ahane (Limerick County champions). Mick Mackey, Philby Burns, Paddy O'Shea, Mick O'Grady and Jim McGrath played with the army lads, but Ahane won by two points.

He comments: "I'll never forget that game. I think it was the only time the two brothers played on opposite sides, and I can tell you that you saw nursing at its best that day."

Another reader, a West Limerick man, has this to say:

"Mick Mackey was the human dynamo which motivated Ireland's greatest hurling machine; his the brain which conceived most masterly scoring moves; his the courage which urged his comrades to greater deeds of daring; his the cheerful spirit which added spice to the sweets of victory, and diluted the bitter pill of defeat; for Mackey was, despite his clowning, the two ends and middle of a gentleman. A hundred scribes might place the crown of victory on a hundred different heads, but my history would record the name of Mick Mackey, as the High King of Ireland's hurling men."

OTHER TRIBUTES.
From the South we have this

tribute:

"Mick Mackey was the best hurler that Limerick ever produced, because it can be gleaned from his achievements that he possessed the outstanding essentials that will never be equalled, not alone in Limerick, but throughout Ireland, and they were: Hurling ability, team spirit, physical fitness, dynamic personality, and last but not least, a mental capacity that enabled him to be in the right place at the right time and do the right thing in the proper way."

And from East Limerick:—
"His uncanny ball control, the fear with which every defence held his powerful thrust and attack, the general like manner in which he directed a whole team, the high esteem and loyalty of his team mates to him at all times, and last, but by no means least, his personality in general, which drew crowds wherever he went, these are some of the reasons that make Mick Mackey Ireland's greatest hurler."

In one of the newspapers of his day this appeared:—

"Mick Mackey is one of our greatest ball players, number one indeed in the hurling world. His success lies, apart from a powerful physique, expert control, quick eye, and keenness of anticipation in what may be called 'scoring mentality.' Other forwards try to score, Mick means to and does."

VIEWS OF A GREAT SPORTING JOURNALIST.

Dublin's great sporting journalist, W. P. Murphy, writing in the Divine Word Missionaries Annual, said:—

"There is no accounting for individual tastes, but if asked to name the greatest hurler and Gaelic footballer I have ever seen, I feel that I would have more supporters than opponents when placing Limerick's Mick Mackey top of the list in hurling and John Joe Sheehy, leader of the Gaelic football stars.

"Though aware of the array that might be paraded by those in disagreement with my selections I stand by them. When venturing forth to pick the second best in each game, however, the assignment almost intimidates me. Men like Christy Ring, Lory Meagher, Eadie Coughlan, Mick King, Martin Kennedy, Bob Mockler, John Keane, Phil Cahill, Mick D'Arcy, Sean Og Murphy, Peter Blanchfield, Mick Gill and Paddy Clohessy—all carrying their hurleys as if they were part of them—command consideration. But having 'replayed' many epic games in making a decision, the honour goes to Glen Rover's Cork wizard, Christy Ring.

"THE TERROR OF HIS TIME."

"I stand pat on my nomination of Mackey and Sheehy as the greatest players ever. During the Limerick man's prime, there were fine centre half backs on the hurling field, but having seen him make a monkey of them all, I could not conceive there ever having been a greater hurler. The name of Tipperary's John Maher will always be recalled with pride in his native county. Yet one day in Thurles I saw the Ahane idol score 4-6 off his own hurley in an hour of magnificent achievement by many players. Strong as an ox, and a genius to his finger tips, Mackey was in truth, the terror of his time. The manner in which he could career through a defence, oblivious of swinging hurleys was almost frightening in its daring."