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**Saturday 25 January 1896**

THE LATE REV. FATHER DAN CLANCY.

Reminiscences of historic Clare.

Picturesque Miltown-Malbay.

(For The Sydney Freeman.)

By a paragraph which appeared in the Sydney Freeman some couple of months ago, I learned, with very deep regret, that the late Rev. Father Clancy, S.J. was in a precarious state of health, but I was hardly prepared for the sad news that he was to pass away. I, unfortunately, missed the number of the Freeman which contained the account of his decease, together with the Rev. Father Watson's fine poem on his death, which, I am sure, will be keenly appreciated by Father Clancy's numerous relations in old historic Clare. It is seldom that I touch on matters concerning the Catholic clergy, leaving such for more competent hands to deal with than those of an Australian backblock selector. However, I think I need make no apology to you, Mr. Editor, or to your numerous readers, for penning a few remarks regarding Father Dan and the county from which he came. I knew Father Clancy both in the old country and in Australia, and I little thought that when I last saw him, in apparently robust health, about eight years ago, when he was Rector of St. Aloysius' College, Bourke street, Sydney, that his life was to come to an end until he reached a green old age. At that time I was not long out from the old country; and the sparkle that came into his eyes and the colour to his cheeks when I related some stirring incidents which happened in his native land — and more particularly news regarding his own people — would have done anyone's heart good to see. We parted, it is hardly necessary to say, the best of friends, and I have every reason to cherish his memory for the tokens of his goodwill and his remembrance of me. The late Father Dan having been at college most of the time when your correspondent lived in the neighbourhood of the hospitable home of the Clancys, I only remember having seen him on a few occasions in Ireland, before he joined the Australian mission. But I met the other members of the family frequently, and, with the exception of one brother, who holds a high public position in the town of Ennistymon, some 7 miles distant from Miltown-Malbay, I was well acquainted with them. Before I fairly commence these few notes, which I feel sure will be perused with interest by hundreds of your readers — for the Sydney Freeman has no stauncher supporters than Claremen — I may say that the late Father Clancy came of a fine old Cathoilc family, and, although both East and West Clare can boast of a splendid Catholic population, there have been few families so consistent champions of Ireland's rights, and few more ardent and enthusiastic supporters of the old faith, than the Clancys. Few families have been held in higher respect and esteem by all classes. Mr. James Clancy, the father of Father Dan, died, if I remember rightly, only a few years ago, and I think I read in an Irish newspaper that he had one of the largest funerals that ever passed through Milltown-Malbay, it being attended by the priests and people for many miles around.

The Clancy family, I think, numbered six, viz., five sons and one daughter, the latter being known far and wide as the charming and accomplished Miss Katie Clancy. This lady married a well-known and enterprising townsman, namely, Mr, James, or, as he was generally known, ' Jamsie,' O'Neill, a merchant doing a large business in Miltown-Malbay. The names of Father Dan's other brothers are John, Andrew, and Patrick. These are well-to-do and devout sons of the Church. Mr. John Clancy is married to a daughter of Mr. John O' Sullivan, who was for many years master of the local Public School— the real ' pedagogue, by the way, of O'Dwyer— Aglauna, who deeply regrets that he did not stay longer under, and pay more attention to, his tuition: Mr. John Clancy built a large hotel in Milltown- Malbay, and was some years back, and no doubt, is doing a lucrative business

Mr. Andrew Clancy is married to an aunt of O'Dwyer — Aglauna. Her maiden name was Ellen Honan, and she was a charming and talented young lady, and was possessed of a large fortune. When the yeomen of the locality discovered that Miss Ellen was a well-dowered maiden, it is needless to say that she had no lack of admirers. The “genial Stranger from afar,” however, came upon the scene, and carried off the fair Ellen to the home of his fathers, to the deep chagrin of the local and unsuccessful swains. Mr. Andrew Clancy opened an hotel also in Miltown-Malbay, and, under the management of himself and his spouse, it speedily became the leading hostelry in the place. He is still carrying on the business. Mr. Andrew Clancy, I may mention, is a highly educated gentleman, and has written many a letter from Clare to their children who had gone to seek their fortunes beneath the kindly Southern Cross. Mr. Andrew Clancy's marriage was regarded as a master-stroke both in love and diplomacy; for not only did he obtain a charming helpmate, but he became connected with families throughout the length and breadth of Clare. The 'clans' which this marriage brought Mr. Andrew Clancy into relationship with are as numerous, perhaps, as those the old Scotch chieftains were mixed up with. The 'clans' were the O'Kellys, of the National Bank, Kilrush; O'Gormans, of Carhunagry, famous for their hospitalities and joviality; Cahills, Hayeses, and O'Darcys, of Mullagh and Kilmurray, Miltown-Malbay is, or used to be, an exceedingly lively town. There were six or seven fairs held annually there, and these generally attracted the rural folks for miles around. Amusements were provided in galore. The most popular entertainers were, perhaps the gipsy street ballad-singers. A pair of these itinerant minstrels— husband and wife, generally— travelled together. When they started some patriotic ditty— especially if it was unpopular with the authorities— large crowds gathered round, and eagerly listened to the song, and as eagerly purchased the words, which were offered for sale on printed slips immediately after they had been sung, The old songs it may be said, were mostly always the best liked. The old ballads included ' The Green Linnet,' ' Colleen dhas Crutha Namowv, ' Rory of the Hills,' ' Shan Ó' Dheir, Aglauna,' ' Brennan on the Moor,' 'Peeler and the Goat,'' &c. It was here I first heard the Australian bushranging song which was popular in this country in the. olden days. I only remember the following four lines ; —

' I'll roam these brooks and valleys,   
Like a wolf or a kangaroo,   
Before I'll work for Government,   
Said bold Jack Donohue.'

In subsequent years the songs of the Grand Old Man of the Irish Party, Mr. T. D. Sullivan, became very popular. One of them, in particular, was sure to be received with wild outbursts of enthusiastic and ringing cheers. This song was none other than the famous 'Murty Hynes.' The eyes of the farmers' daughters sparkled, and their cheeks glowed, when the singers came to these verses: —

‘And then he wrote a letter, and he sent it to the Lague,   
Saying, from the cause of Ireland I never will renague;   
Never more, I promise, while heaven above me shines,   
Will I for land go 'grabbing,' said honest Murty Hynes.

When the boys heard this, they gathered in a crowd,   
The boys brought out their banners, and they bate their drums aloud.  
And there were songs and ' spaches,' and dancing light and gay,   
Around the flaming bonfires, that night in Ould Lough rea.'

An hotel in a town like Miltown-Malbay was, as you may be sure, pretty nearly as good as a goldmine, and it is no wonder that Mr. Andrew Clancy became opulent. At the fairs, Guinness's porter for the young, and old Irish punch for those of mature years, were the favourite beverages. These occasions were made opportunities for social reunions, as the people met and interchanged kindly greetings, courtesies, and news while disposing of their pigs, horses, cattle, butter, &c. During these fairs the parish priest and his curate generally had a trying time of it. On the previous Sunday they never failed to urgently exhort the people to keep straight, and avoid strong liquors during the fair. The Irish priest, it is well known, can get an Irish man to do almost any mortal thing except to refrain from drinking Irish whisky. Father Mathew was, perhaps, the only priest who ever succeeded in this line. The priest, of course, is fully aware of this, but he endeavours to minimize the imbibition and the consequences thereof. On the evening of the fair, the priest, accompanied by his curate, patrols the streets, and good-humouredly endeavours to prevent too great indulgence. The presence of the priests in such scenes does more to preserve ' law and order' than a whole regiment of soldiers. It must in fairness be said that the Irishman in the old country rarely drinks largely — except at these gatherings. In most cases he does not drink at all except at the fairs. The consequence is that, being unused to potent liquors and being of a mercurial temperament, a few friendly glasses soon send him ' half seas over,' and then fun develops. But to return to the minstrels. The celebrated song, 'The Green Linnet,' was sung in plaintive cadences, which lingered long with those who listened thereto. One verse runs —

‘For I'm a daughter of Daniel O'Connell,  
From England I've lately come oer,   
To wake up those slumbering peasants,   
Who lie sleeping on Erin's green shore.'

This would be sung by the woman, and the husband would then probably strike up 'Rory of the Hills,' a verse of which, referring to the ' indisposition' of some old-time landlord, would be listened to with jovial good humour. The verse is as follows: —

'In Slievenamon I met a man who asked, ' Was Scully dead ?  
‘I cannot give you that account; but I hear he's sick in bed.  
'He turned my mother outside the door, but I might meet him still;   
For I'm the bold Tipperary boy,' said Rory of the Hill.'

The other and youngest of the brothers Clancy married into a popular Catholic family in Miltown Malbay — that of Mr. Patrick McMahon. Miltown-Malbay is a thriving township, situated about 14 miles from Ennis, seven miles from Ennistymon, four from the wave-washed battlements of Lyhinch, 15 from the famous Spa Wells of Lisdoonvarna, and 12 and 15 miles respectively from Kilrush and Kilkee. The barony is called Ibricken. The land around the town is very fertile, and is chiefly used for cattle-grazing, potato, and turnip growing, and meadowing — the yield of hay being often as much as four tons to the acre. The Atlantic Ocean breaks on the shore about two miles to the west of the town, and the wild roar of the 'many sounding seas' is heard there and far around. The seaside is a favourite and charming resort in summer-time, and many splendid mansions and charming villas are built, facing the blue waters. In addition to the always entrancing broad Atlantic, Mutton Island and, the far-famed. Islands of Arran can be seen. About five miles to the eastward of the town, and on the road to Ennis, *is Slieve Collaun*. Here is. the colossal tomb of Diarmid and Grania, a gentleman and lady of the gigantic race of the contemporaries of Brian Boru. This, place supplies turf or peat to the farmers in the vicinity, and the deposits, of this fuel are regarded as being as yaluable by the people, there as a, coal mine would be in this country. Large numbers of brooms are made out of the heather that flourishes in profusion in the vicinity of *Slieve Callaun*.

The Catholic church in Milltown Malbay is one of the finest that any of the inland towns of Munster, or probably of Ireland, can boast. It is capable of containing 7000 worshippers, and is often taxed beyond its utmost capacity, many having to kneel on the green sward outside during Mass. The church is built of green stone, with a steeple towering about 150 feet high, from the belfrey of which hangs one of the most notable bells in Munster, which can be heard on a fine summer's day a distance of fully ten miles. Had Father Mahony visited this place, he might have rendered the bell as famous as,

'The bells of Shandon   
That sounds' so great on   
The pleasant waters   
Of the river Lee.'

Miltown-Malbay has had many priests who have been famed, loved and revered. One of the most notable was the Rev. Patrick White (now Dr. White), and who is at present stationed at Nenagh, County Tipperary. Father White was for many years here, where he built a splendid parochial residence, mostly by the aid of the labour of his flock, who not only worked at the edifice, but provided horses and carts to convey the material to the building. Father White took a prominent part in the battles of the Land League, and whenever it became known that he intended to speak in public, the people flocked to hear him from far and wide. In addition to being an eloquent and telling public speaker, Father White was a powerful and impressive preacher. It is a matter for wonder in all the country round that he was not made a Bishop long ago. His curate for many years was the Rev, Father Stewart, who was beloved by all classes, and who died a comparatively young man some time ago.

Father Kingsly, P.P. has charge, of the parish at the present. Another notable young curate was stationed in the parish of Kilmurry, which is situated some four miles away, about twelve years ago. His name was Father Meagher. He was a brilliant preacher, and many predicted that he would rival the famous Father Tom Burke, but he died, to the great sorrow of the people, when quite a young man probably not more than thirty years of age. He attracted hundreds occasionally from Miltown Malbay to hear his discourse on the Gospel of the day. The Rev. Father Cahir was parish priest of Mullaugh and Kilmurry, each of which parishes had a splendid chapel. The system of religious instruction in this part of the country was very complete. The National schools were under the direction of the parish priests, and a portion of the school hours was daily devoted to religious instruction. The Catechism was, of course, the feature of this instruction, and it was astonishing how quickly the children committed the contents of the little book to memory. Sunday religious instruction was also systematically carried out under the supervision of the clergy after last Mass in the churches. Classes were also formed in the churches under the school-teachers and the pupils who had passed their examinations — the school staff being often insufficient in number to instruct the large crowds of children of both sexes who congregated. A prominent feature of these Sunday classes was the number of overgrown youths whom necessity had compelled to leave school at too early an age, and who were consequently backward in their Catechism and other things. These eagerly took advantage of the Sunday classes to repair their deficiencies. The parish priest and his curate, previous to the classes breaking up, always took a tour around, and, causing the scholars to close their Catechisms, questioned them closely to ascertain the progress they were making. The praises often bestowed on some bright boy or girl caused a feeling of friendly rivalry to spring up, and instigated numbers to energetically study at home so as to merit commendation some following Sunday. It was really marvellous how quickly, by the system adopted, the juveniles mastered their lessons. Of those who were instructed in the schools mentioned and in the manner described, many thousands departed from their native home to seek their fortunes in the 'beautiful land of the West.' or in this fair continent of the Southern Cross, strong in the faith of their fathers, staunch to their early teachings, and as proof against the tide of modern infidelity as the very rock of St. Peter itself.

It was among scenes like these that the saintly Father Dan first saw the light, and when his friends, who still dwell among them, see the account of his death in the Sydney Freeman's Journal (which largely circulates in Clare), together with Father Watson's poem, in which he describes the ' Cliffs of Mohur,' deep and painful as the shock must be, it will afford them the highest consolation to observe that neither his friends nor the Sydney Freeman's Journal forgot him when he passed to his reward in this land so far from his birthplace, and in which he laboured so faithfully until the imperative summons came for him.

I almost forgot to mention that about three miles from Miltown-Malbay, towards the south, there is a holy well called after St. Brigid. Thousands of people assemble here periodically to partake of the cool, beautiful, spring water, and to walk round the well barefoot a certain number of times. Prayers are repeated during these 'rounds,' consisting of so many ' Our Fathers' and so many ' Hail Marys.'' It is a magnificent sight to see the peasantry, who have gathered from the most remote parts, going round the well one after the other in a circle, each solemnly abstracted in turning over his or her beads, which are used to count the number of the appropriate prayers. Many spiritual blessings are believed by the people to spring from these devotional exercises by the intercession of St. Brigid in Heaven, and many temporal blessings are confidently stated to have been conferred thereby. At the time I write of, viz., about 12 years ago, his Eminence Cardinal Moran was stationed in, the Diocese of Ossory, having his headquarters in the city of Kilkenny. His Eminence's reputation as a classical scholar and, as an eminent divine had spread far and wide among all classes of the Irish people, and, if, I remember rightly, the Catechisms used in the Munster and Connaught schools, and which proved to be admirably suited to then purpose, were compiled by him,.

The Plan of Campaign was yigorously enforced in the locality under note, but only, however, on one estate— that of, Mrs. Moroney, situated; near Miltown -Malbay. Mr. James Clancy, a, relative of the. Miltown-Malbay Clancys,, was the victim. He. was a well-to-.do, farmer but fought for, a reduction of rent, the result being that he was evicted. He fought implacably in the Land League and Home Rule ranks, but just as he was about to be reinstated in his farm, he died at Dunsalla, near *Slieve Collaun*. His remains were followed to their last resting-place by an immense number of mourners.

The principal landlords around Miltown are Lord Leconfield (who resides in England), Lord Inchiquin, Messrs. Stackpool and Cunningham, Captain Ellis, Colonel Synge, the Studdarts, and others. Lord Leconfield is represented by Mr. John W. Scott, a good, humane agent.

There is a Presbyterian church in Miltown, which is attended by a fashionable congregation, as “ Brother *Albanach*” has, in many cases, forsaken his beloved ' Land o' Cakes' and settled down here, The Catholics, though numbering 90 per cent. of the population, live in very harmonious relations with their Scottish fellow- citizens, who are always excellent neighbours and very friendly to those among whom they dwell, although they are of a different nationality and creed. No religious differences of any kind have strained the relations between Catholics and Protestants here, and the same may be said, truthfully, of the three Catholic Provinces of Ireland. It is only in parts of the 'Black North' that racial and credal bickerings break out,, and these are caused, as everybody knows, by the irritating barkings of the 'Yellow Pup,' which, after all, are to be deplored in a spirit of pity, for ignorance and petty feeling evolves them. An illustration of the praiseworthy spirit that prevails in Miltown Malbay was to be seen every Sunday, when a rich Scottish landowner drove his Catholic, wife to the church of her fathers, and, after she descended, drove off to the ' Kirk.' After the service at the ' Kirk' was over, he drove back to the chapel gates, where his wife joined him in the carriage, and they drove home together.

This part of Munster, and the region a little distance away, has been the birthplace of many who have made their mark beneath the Southern Cross.

Amongst those may be mentioned Sir Bryan O'Loghlen, Bart., of Victoria, who hails from near Ennis; Judge Casey, of Victoria, who landed on this sphere near Miltown; Mr. John Meagher, of Bathurst (the Anthony Hordern of the West); Father Cahill, of Bourke (I hope yet to see him a Bishop) ; Mr. Patrick Hayes, Botany-road, Waterloo (a relative of O'Dwyer-Aglauna's); Mr. O'Grady, the genius of Byrock, who unsuccessfully contested the Bourke electorate at the time of the labour upheaval; Mr. M. C. O'Halloran, the editor and proprietor of the Cobar Leader, who hails from Bodyke. Among others may be mentioned Tom Malone (whose father-in-law, Mr. Mitchell O'Brien, keeps the Commercial Hotel in Miltown-Malbay), the great and straight runner; Mr. John Curtin, of the George Hotel, Sydney, not far from the Freeman's Journal office. Last, but by no means least, is Mr. Patrick MacMahon, of Circular Quay, Sydney. Many more might be mentioned, but I am afraid that the mere enumeration of their names would pretty nearly fill the Freeman up, so I call a halt. I must not, however, forget one of the celebrities of the place, who was a great friend of mine, and who, I am sure, many Claremen will recollect. I allude to Patrick O'Connor, who died by the sea-shore, and who was a local bard of wide fame and popularity. He was likewise a fervid, fluent, and frequent orator, and some of his speeches, I venture to say, would eclipse many of the Demosthenic utterances our own and only Dan O'Connor ever delivered when he was most inspired by the ancient Greeks and Romans.

No doubt your readers perused at the time the account of the great Clare election, when Sir Bryan O'Loghlen, although in Victoria, was elected to the House of Commons against the veteran O'Gorman Mahon. The great name of the O'Loghlen family — which was one to charm with in Clare — carried Sir Bryan through without an effort on his part. He, however, preferred to remain in the Cabbage Garden, and the great twenty-eighter and supporter of O'Connell was subsequently elected for the county, which he represented until the day of his death.

The late general election in West Clare was fought very bitterly. The constituency was previously held by a Redmondite. The people, however strongly attached as they undoubtedly were to Charles Stewart Parnell, seeing the folly of encouraging factionists, who, they felt assured, were only ruining the cause most dear to their hearts, 'closed up their ranks,' and hoisted the flag of unity. They saved the reputation of the grand old electorate which has for centuries fought in the van for liberty and freedom. And they are sworn never to halt or falter by the way until the old banner floating triumphantly over the legislative halls by the shining Liffey proclaims that the nation's inborn right to enact its own laws has been recognized and acknowledged.

Yours truly,

JOHN O'DWYER— AGLAUNA.

‘Backblocks.'