

DEATH OF A PIONEER HIBERNIAN.

MR. THOMAS CLEARY.

ON Tuesday evening of last week, at 100 Crown-street, Woolloomooloo, there passed peacefully away, in the person of Mr. Thomas Cleary, the last of the pioneers of the Hibernian-Australasian Catholic Benefit Society in New South Wales. Born in 1837 near Cashel, County Tipperary, he came at a very early age to Australia, and identified himself with every National movement. When, in 1870, Mr. Byrnes, the delegate of the newly-formed Hibernian Society of Victoria, called here on his way from New Zealand, whither he had gone to form a branch, Mr. Cleary, with about a dozen other Sydney Irishmen, asked him to form one here. The new society was destined to meet with many difficulties. Only a short time before this the unhappy O'Farrell affair had occurred, which caused a cloud of suspicion to rest on all Irish matters. Hence the little party found it impossible to procure a Catholic hall wherein to initiate the new movement. As a last resource, they rented a room in a hotel in Lower George-street, and in this room was born the present powerful and far-reaching Hibernian Society of New South Wales. Needless to say, Mr. Cleary, true Celt that he was, took an active part in its formation and working. As can be readily understood, this was an arduous task, for, although after a while, they were allowed to meet at St. Mary's school-room, by the influence of some underground engineering they were put out. But the success of the society was assured, for it appealed to the Irish citizens, not only as a friendly society, but also as a patriotic body, as evidenced by the active and consistent part it has always taken in the great Irish struggle. It was thus these few poor but devoted men, who a little over twenty years ago were branded as Fenian conspirators, saw in the fulness of time the realization of their fondest dream. By their pertinacity and perseverance the society has become strong, powerful, and vigorous, spreading out its branches in all directions, from Broken Hill to Byron Bay, presenting a roll-call of 2500 members, and a capital of over £12,000. Towards bringing about this very satisfactory result the late Mr. Cleary played an important part, and at his funeral on Thursday last, notwithstanding it was a busy day, over 50 members of the society walked in procession to the Mortuary—a circumstance which showed the high esteem in which good blunt, honest "Tom" was held. At the usual meeting of St. Patrick's branch on the same evening a vote of condolence was passed to his widow, and a motion regretting the great loss the whole society had suffered was carried. The deceased was an active member of the Irish National League and had a hand in the St. Patrick's Day

deceased was an active member of the Irish National League, and had a hand in the St. Patrick's Day celebrations in Sydney for more than a quarter of a century.
