

## SAINT PATRICK'S

### Dublin's Ancient Cathedral

#### ITEMS IN ITS HISTORY

(By SEAN FHEAR)

The offer of a last resting place for the late Mr. W. B. Yeats in St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, has drawn public attention to that ancient edifice, and, this being so, a brief historical sketch of a church that has close associations with St. Patrick cannot fail to be interesting.

The cathedral was built on the site of a church dedicated, at a very early period, to St. Patrick, who in 448 converted to the Christian faith Alphin Mac Eochaid, King of Dublin, and his subjects, who were baptised at a fountain called, after the National Apostle, St. Patrick's Well, near the place where the cathedral now stands.

The prevailing architectural character of the exterior is that of the early pointed style, with occasional innovations, not sufficiently numerous to render the edifice incongruous.

#### INTERIOR AND MEASUREMENTS OF THE BUILDING.

The interior is divided into a nave, with side aisles and south transept, comprising the chapter house, choir; it has lateral side aisles, and St. Mary's Chapel to the eastward of the choir and chancel.

The building measures 308 feet from the west gate to the east wall of St. Mary's Chapel—once known as the Chapel of the Blessed Virgin Mary; the breadth of the nave is 67 feet, and that of the transept 157; the height of the square tower is 120 feet, and of the spire a further 101 feet.

It may be mentioned that a large statue of St. Patrick was discovered in clearing away some of the ruins when the church was being restored, and it was placed at the northern wall of the nave.

An English writer, referring to St. Patrick's, says:—"This edifice, although inferior in grandeur and dimension to many of the cathedral structures of England, is an extensive, commanding, and an interesting fabric."

The history of St. Patrick's is, of course, linked up with that of Ireland as a whole; but there are many episodes peculiar to this Metropolitan cathedral.

#### VISIT OF SCOTTISH KING.

It is related, for instance, that in 890 Gregory, King of Scotland, in an expedition to Ireland, made a solemn procession to perform his devotions in the church; that in a Bull of Pope Alexander IV in 1179, the church is particularly named, and that it was then "insulated by two streams of the Poddle River."

In 1190, from being a parish church, it was erected by Archbishop Comyn into a "Sacred College," and consecrated by him and the Papal Legate, Mgr. O'Heeny, commissioned by Pope Celestine III, with great pomp and ceremony in the following year; and in 1219 Archbishop Comyn established the Deanery and Chapter.

The remains of two Anglo-Norman Archbishops were deposited in the Chapel of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the thirteenth century; they were the brothers Fulke de Saunford and his brother, John, and to the last named the English King, the first of the Edwards, gave lands called wastes in Connacht, for which he was to pay into the Treasury in Dublin 24 pence annuum.

#### ECHO OF THE CRUSADES.

There is an echo of the Crusades in the statement that in 1921 Pope Nicholas IV wrote to the Bishop of Meath and the Dean of St. Patrick's, directing them to collect the tithes of the ecclesiastical revenues which had been granted for six years, to King Edward towards his expedition to the Holy Land.

English monarchs claimed monetary assistance from St. Patrick's as early as the fourteenth century.

For instance, it is recorded that in 1306 the prebendaries of the cathedral were revalued for the purpose of being taxed one-tenth for service of the State; and that in 1322 the Dean and Chapter were "commanded to levy two years' tenths of all ecclesiastical beneficiaries, as imposed for the service of the King."

Education occupied the attention of the ecclesiastical authorities in those far-off days, as history records that in 1311 Archbishop Lech procured a Bull from Clement V, confirming his establishment of a University within the cathedral.

#### REPRESENTATION IN THE LEGISLATURE.

The Church was represented in those days in the legislature, as the Dean and Chapter of St. Patrick's were summoned in 1315 to attend a Parliamentary assembly in Dublin, which is described as "the greatest that, for rank and quality, had ever met in Ireland."

The spire of the church was destroyed in a tempest in 1316, and in the same year the edifice was set on fire by the Mayor and Commons of the City of Dublin "on account of the advance of Edward Bruce, whose army then lay at Castleknock," and it is added that some robbers, in the confusion, "despoiled the edifice of its treasures and ornaments."

In 1382 St. Patrick's was burned down, "by the negligence of the sexton."

Nothing of note occurred until the so-called "Reformation"; in 1559, the first year of the reign of "Good Queen Bess," English Bibles (of the revised version, of course) were placed in St. Patrick's, and also in Christ Church, not far away.

#### WILLIAM OF ORANGE.

In 1690 William of Orange attended divine service in the cathedral and returned thanks for his victory at the battle of the Boyne.

Coming down to the last century, it may be noted that St. Patrick's was renovated in 1865 by Sir Benjamin Lee Guinness, then head of the famous porter firm, at a cost of £150,000, and some years later a "flying buttress" of the building collapsed, killing several children who were playing close by.

Such, in brief outline, is the story of St. Patrick's, which has been linked with the story of Ireland through so many centuries.

## Limerick Corporation Of Over a Century Ago

### "A SELF-ELECTED AND IRRESPONSIBLE BODY"

#### Total Disregard For City's Interests

The old Limerick Corporation of over a hundred years ago was an exceedingly corrupt body. This is shown in the instalment given below of the account of the Limerick Chamber of Commerce written by Mr. D. P. O'Connor, B. Comm., M. Econ. Sc., Limerick. According to the Municipal Corporation Commission of 1835-'36, the Limerick Corporation of that time functioned with a total disregard for the interests and welfare of the city. The proceedings were carried on in secret, and there was "an apparent devotion to the interests of a particular family and studied exclusion of the general body of citizens from their proper municipal station." Mr. O'Connor writes:—

The Limerick Chamber of Commerce did not confine its activities to commerce alone, but also took an active interest in the civic affairs of the city. It did so to such an extent that it eventually found itself in opposition to the corporation of the city and led the way in bringing about its reform.

The Charter conceded to Limerick in 1199 superimposed on that town not merely an English system of political government but also an English system for the regulation of industries and commerce. Moreover, the privileges conferred on the citizens were confined solely to English colonists. A charter of 1291, to explain the charter of 1199, granted to the citizens of Limerick the power of choosing a mayor annually for the government of the city. A charter of 1413 granted to the mayor and commonalty of that city the power of meeting and making ordinances and statutes for the advantage of the city. Among other things granted to Limerick by its first charter was leave to have all reasonable guilds as the burgesses of Bristol had. These guilds, when established, aimed at a definite monopoly of industry and their influence increased so much that they practically ruled the Common Council or Corporation as it was later called. A person requiring election had to be a member of a guild. Lenihan, in his "History of Limerick," says that about 1731 "the policy of securing the co-operation of the guilds in Parliamentary elections, was universal at the time. A Society of Merchants of the Staple incorporated in 1609 was allowed to elect the mayor and two constables and to make bye-laws. This society, with the guilds, held sway over civic and industrial affairs until the establishment of the Chamber of Commerce. In fact the Society of Staple Merchants had become extinct and an attempt to re-establish it failed in 1824." Gross puts it thus: "The onerous self-destructive restrictions of guilds were now being superseded by the stimulating measures of chambers of commerce."

#### GUILDS GRADUALLY OUSTED.

While the Chamber of Limerick was at first composed of many guildsmen, and its first vice-president was a member of the Common Council it gradually broke away from the guilds, and later opposed them, and their monopoly of industry. We have already seen how the Chamber took over the tolls on potatoes and corn, etc. from the Corporation; and in other ways gradually ousted the guilds from their position of controlling industry. The next work to be undertaken by the Chamber was the breaking of the political monopoly of the Corporation, which was depriving the citizens of Limerick of the rights of freedom and proving very wasteful in its management of finances. In 1820 the Chamber spent about £1,200 in opposition to the Corporation, before the committee of Appeal, on the rights to freedom. The Municipal Corporation Commission 1835-'36 gives the following account of the corruptness of the Corporation:—

"It is to be regretted that the contest so long maintained by the Common Council against the rights of the citizens of Limerick, and the strong feeling of jealousy and hostility thereby created on both sides have hitherto retarded the improvement of this important city. The usurpations of the Council, for a long series of years, were defended at all hazards, and a fruitless waste of corporate revenue took place in the endeavours of that powerful body to preserve uncontrolled its political superiority and exclusive management of the corporate affairs, with apparently a total disregard of the interests and welfare of the large community for whose benefit the public institutions were created and those revenues designed. Their improvident neglect, and still more censurable disposal of the corporate estates, the secrecy of their proceedings, their apparent devotion to the interests of a particular family and studied exclusion of the general body of citizens from their proper municipal station have afforded just causes of complaint against the Common Council, and strongly demonstrate the impolicy of resting the sole management of public concerns in a self-elected and irresponsible body."

#### OF A SECTARIAN CHARACTER.

This Common Council was of a sectarian character and oligarchic rule prevailed in it. It was not likely to ensure public confidence when it contained no Roman Catholics even though nine-tenths of the community were such. The Council did not contain a member of the Chamber of Commerce, nor did any such hold office under the Corporation. In 1841 the Corporation was dissolved under the Municipal Reform Bill and a new Corporation, elected on a popular basis, was set up.

Ever since then the Chamber and the Corporation have worked together for the common benefit of Limerick. The Mayor of Limerick was an ex officio member of the Chamber and attended some of the weekly meetings. In concluding this chapter I think I may say that the Chambers of Commerce not alone of Limerick, but of Dublin and Waterford also, played a big part in bringing about the reform of the municipal authority in their respective cities. Mr. Prenderville in his essay on "History of Dublin Chamber of Commerce" says: "With increasing prosperity of the town of Limerick and the equally rapid decay of the old archaic corporate bodies conflicting interests arose and manifested themselves in various hostile acts on the part of the Municipal Corporation of Limerick, towards the new institution and the new progressive spirit. Like the other Chambers of Commerce the Limerick Chamber in its contests with the municipal body always supported the progressive independent section of the town."

#### PROTECTION OF SHIPPING.

While the Chamber encouraged and helped industry and trade, it also protected shipping. As late as the middle of the last century the Chamber maintained a watch from the tower of St. Mary's, who, on sighting a ship aground in the "Narrows" (a shallow portion of the river when the tide was low) in-

formed the Chamber, who sent a military guard down from Limerick to guard the ship from the attacks of the wild mountaineers of Cratloe.

Prior to the introduction of railways into Ireland, coaches were the mode of conveyance for mails and people. Communication was necessarily slow, and in 1803 the Chamber requested that the mails be dispatched between Limerick and Cork every day of the week. In 1811 the Chamber resolved that the new road from Tipperary to Limerick be made shorter, and more level, and that the establishment of a mail coach from Clonmel to Limerick would materially promote the trade of the city.

With the coming of the steam engine the railways began to oust the coaches; yet in 1825 we find the Limerick Chamber showing an unpardonable lack of foresight in objecting to a proposal for the establishment of railroads from Limerick to Waterford and Cork because it might prove injurious to the trade of the port. The body, therefore, declined to participate in any measure for the establishing of such railroads. This would seem to show that the members of the Chamber were much more concerned with the development of the port and their own interests than the development of Limerick generally. It is another instance of the failure of the laissez faire theory so ardently supported by the Chamber, where the interest of the individual and community does not coincide.

#### ESTABLISHMENT OF THE RAILROADS.

Despite the objections of the chamber, however, the railroads were established and became of increasing importance to the farming and industrial community, by bringing their produce to the markets economically and speedily. In 1875 the chamber requested the directors of the Waterford and Limerick Railway to order the Ennis train to start one hour earlier so as to arrive in Limerick at 9.30, instead of at 10.30, whereby many country dealers and farmers could have their produce in the markets, who formerly could not attempt to bring their corn or other produce by rail. In 1889 we have another instance of the self interest clashing with the interest of the community, for in that year the chamber thought that it would be injurious to the merchants and traders of Limerick to establish a light railway between Newcastle West and Buttevant. In the same year the chamber registered its strong protest against the transfer of the Waterford-Limerick and Western Railway Company, Ltd., to the Great Southern and Western, as creating a monopoly fatal to the trade of Limerick and the development of the west coast of Ireland, as it had been undeniably proved that no commercial progress was possible where healthy competition does not exist. Thus there existed in the nineteenth century for the Chamber of Commerce of Limerick the question that faces the statesmen of the world to-day. Which is the better—monopoly or competition? Now, whereas competition is beneficial and right in many instances, it is not practical or economic in the case of railroads, where a monopoly subject to the State is the best system. Again, the Chamber has been found guilty of taking the narrow, rather than the broad view.

#### BANKRUPTCY COURT SET UP IN LIMERICK.

The Bankruptcy Laws and the setting up of a Bankruptcy Court, in Limerick also came within the Chamber's field of activities. In 1811 the Chamber sent a petition to the Knights, Citizens and Burgesses in the Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland to revise and amend the bankruptcy laws which were detrimental to trade. The year 1880 saw the Chamber petitioning Parliament for the establishment of local bankruptcy courts in Limerick City and County as well as in Cork and Belfast. The petition stated that whereas there were one hundred and thirty-one local courts in England and fifty-four in Scotland, there were none in Ireland; and that this inequality of the law ought no longer be allowed to exist, to the disadvantage of the poorer country; that, therefore, jurisdiction in local cases of bankruptcy ought to be extended to other County Courts in Ireland, and especially to that of Limerick, which was the third provincial city of Ireland in commercial importance. Some years later the petition was answered by the setting up of a local bankruptcy court in Limerick.

Besides interfering with the Corporation in the matter of the rights of freedom, the Chamber also interested itself in other civic matters. For example, in 1814 it resolved to purchase a fire engine. In 1902 it condemned in the strongest manner the complete absence of organisation and competence in the Limerick Fire Brigade. It pointed out that this lack of organisation and competence constituted a most serious danger to the citizens and their property and that a committee of the Chamber be appointed to represent these views to the Borough Council and to urge early and adequate measures to effect the necessary improvement.

#### MEMORIAL FOR ERECTION OF COLLEGE.

In 1845 a memorial for the erection of a college in Limerick City, which with the suburbs contained 65,000 inhabitants, was presented to the authorities by the Chamber. Their request was not granted, the College being established in Cork. In 1902 the Chamber requested the Corporation to keep the streets traffic-free during fairs; because the practice of showing and selling horses in the streets not only impeded traffic and caused inconvenience and loss to traders and citizens but also constituted grave danger to life and limb. Opinion is divided to-day as to the appropriateness of holding such fairs in the streets. Horse fairs are still held in the streets of Limerick and that, in my opinion, is not proper nor keeping with the present day. It would be far better if a special place on the outskirts of the town or city were set aside for such fairs.



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