

The Irish Builder.

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St. Finn Barr's Cathedral, Cork.



enabled to present with the present number a lithographic view* of the south-east of this building, which has recently been consecrated, and is now being used for divine service, although the workmen are still engaged on it, and it will most probably be some years before it will be completely finished; but we trust that the citizens of Cork—who deserve well, not only the praise, but the thanks, of the country—will not rest satisfied with what has already been done, but will further exert themselves to complete this noble structure and to improve the locality surrounding it, which at present is not quite the sweetest spot in "the Beautiful City." However, the Cathedral is erected on the site of the old church, which possessed historical associations that were quite sufficient to overrule any objections which might be made as to its immediate surroundings; besides, the site is elevated, and otherwise admirable, and it only requires a little energy on the part of the inhabitants and their representatives in the Corporation to make it all that could be desired.

The new Cathedral is cruciform on plan, consisting of nave, aisles, and transepts of comparatively slight projection, with tower and spire at the intersection; a splendid circular apse to the east, with ambulatory concentric with same, and two towers at the west end of aisles. The length of nave is 1130 ft., and the width, including aisles, 52 ft. The style adopted by the architect—William Burges, Esq., of London—is the Early French, but freed from all extravagancies;—in fact the treatment is the simplest imaginable, and the effect produced by the admirable proportion of the several parts, and the plain, bold roll molding chamfer repeated throughout, is excellent. As an architectural *monument*, nothing could possibly be better; the least experienced in such matters comes away after an inspection with the most pleasurable feelings, and the art critic does not find much with which he can reasonably find fault; indeed the only thing that occurred to us in looking at the exterior of the building was, that it had not sufficient length, and we fear this defect will be apparently increased when the towers are erected; but on entering the building this feeling is removed, the proportions are so very good and height so vast that the length really appears more than it is. We fancy also that the *detail* is a little too heavy for the extent of the church, but in this also allowance should be made for the change which the execution of the "carving" will produce.

The internal fittings appear to be all of a temporary kind, but even in their plain simplicity they are strikingly in character with the surroundings.

Such of the sculpture as has already been done is remarkably effective, particularly that in the tympanum of the doorway to north transept, representing the "Measuring of the new Jerusalem," as described in the Revelations: this is the gift of the Messrs. Cockburn, the contractors, and the subject has been most happily chosen, and reflects the highest credit on the sculptor, Mr. C. W. Harrison, of Great Brunswick-street, Dublin. The church is also indebted to the architect for a very handsome and appropriate gift: this is a figure—the archangel surrounding the last trumpet; it is above life size, formed of copper and gilt, and placed on a foliated pedestal on the apex of the chancel roof.

As there are no funds to complete the three towers, they have been temporarily roofed over, the walls sustaining which and the arrangement of these roofs seem as if made purposely as *ugly* as possible, no doubt with the view of inducing some wealthy patron and the public to contribute towards their speedy removal and the substitution of the structures necessary for the completion of the design. When this is done, Cork City will possess a church which, aesthetically speaking, will be unsurpassed in Ireland; and it is only to be regretted that a building which has been designed with such unusual artistic merit, and constructed with such skill and solidity of the imperishable local lime: stone, should be so deficient in the most essential requirement—that of affording accommodation to a congregation; unfortunately it is found that all those (with the exception of about a dozen) who may be seated in the aisles are completely shut out from a view of the chancel and choir, and from all participation in the services of the church; and we should certainly say that the favoured few who could be accommodated with seats in the nave would not exceed three hundred. This would appear to us to be absurdly inadequate for the Cathedral of the important Diocese of Cork.

[The organ, a very fine instrument, is from the manufactory of Messrs. Telford, St. Stephen's-green, in this city.

We have learned, with regret, that an order for a very expensive organ to be placed in the Catholic Cathedral, Cork, has been entrusted to a French firm. We must question the propriety, of such doings; the pounds and pence collected from the people should, when possible, be spent in this country.—ED. I. B.]

[Taken from *Irish Builder*, Vol. XIII, 1871, p.15]