

LECTURE ON OLD LIMERICK.

BY REV. J. DOWD, B.A.

In opening his lecture on the previous occasion, the Rev. Mr. Dowd stated that he had been asked by the Committee to strengthen the Archæological Section of the Field Club by an address on some subject suitable to that section, and that he could depend for assistance on what the Photographic department of the Club could do. It seemed to him that Old Limerick would fulfil the requirements of both sections, and accordingly a rough list of objects of interest was drawn up and divided amongst the members of the photographic section, for them to deal with as they thought best, and produce a series of lantern slides which would illustrate the lecture. During the summer months of 1898, the photographers worked steadily, and plates began to multiply so fast that Mr. Dowd saw he could not do justice to them in one evening, and that consequently a division had to be made and two nights at least devoted to the subject. The first lecture was occupied with St. Mary's Cathedral. The history of the fabric was briefly sketched, and then the slides were so arranged as to conduct the audience round the interior of the sacred building, and exhibit the various objects of interest which were to be found within its precincts.

The second lecture differed from the first in the fact that, on this occasion, the subject was not as it were confined within a ringed fence, but that it was necessary to conduct the audience from place to place, and describe the "bits of Old Limerick" as they happened to be met with. The tour of the city was resumed for the place where the previous lecture stopped, and the first series of slides illustrated the remains of the great Dominican Abbey, which are to be found within the grounds of the present Convent of Mercy. The abbey was founded in the thirteenth century by Donogh Cairbreagh O'Brien, and appears to have had a second founder in James, Earl of Desmond, who died and was buried within its walls in 1462. The abbey grounds covered a space of one and a quarter acres within the walls of the city. Amongst the posses-

sions of the abbey were the weir at St. Thomas's Island, and the lands of Corbally. At the suppression of the monasteries, the site was granted by Henry VIII. to the Earl of Desmond, and on the attainder of the last earl, they passed into other hands. In the eighteenth century a tanyard was erected on one portion of the grounds and a large barrack on another, and it may be supposed that the materials for both these were provided by the abbey buildings. At present there is standing a wall of considerable height and length, pierced with lancet-shaped windows and covered with a growth of ivy. There are other walls not so lofty containing archways joining on to what was a portion of the old city wall. In one corner of the ruins a rockery has been formed where are preserved some few portions of the carved stone work of the abbey that have escaped destruction. There are half-a dozen stoups, many portions of shafts of columns with spiral flutings; several cannon balls which had been dug up in the grounds are suspended. One piece of ornamental stonework especially seems as sharp in the outline of its tracery as if carved but yesterday. A small square slab bears the initials "S. F. A." Close beside the rockery is a slab of limestone, eight or nine feet long and two and a-half feet wide—probably an old chimney-piece. At either end are carved shields bearing the initials "W. M. C." between tracery, with stars at the top corners. It was suggested that these letters might be the initials of William and Martin Creagh who were sheriffs of the city in 1651 and 1650, respectively. There is also preserved by being embedded in a wall a stone slab bearing an inscription in contracted Latin. The letters are in relief and unfortunately the slab has been mutilated, so that the whole of the inscription cannot be read. The most interesting and beautiful slides were those of the celebrated mitre and crozier of Bishop O'Dea, who was bishop of Limerick from 1400 to 1426, permission to photograph them having been kindly given by the ecclesiastical authorities. The crozier bears an inscription—" *Me fieri fecit Corneli Odeagh eps Limericens aº do Mccccxviii et Consecrationis sue ann xviii.*" The maker of the crozier was probably Thomas O'Carryd, whose name occurs on the mitre, in an inscription, which reads—" *Me fieri fecit Cornelius O'Deaygh episcopus . . . Anno domini mille . . . Thomas O'Carryd, artifex faciens.*" The photograph gives a better idea of the crozier than can be conveyed in words. It is only necessary to say that it is of silver gilt, ornamented round the curve with vine leaves and

pearls, and down the shaft with crowns. Within the curve are statuettes of the Blessed Virgin and the Angel Gabriel, and between them a miniature vase to hold a lily. The curve is supported by the figure of a pelican feeding her young—a very ancient emblem of our Blessed Lord. There are enamelled figures of St. John and five female saints and on the boss are six statuettes under canopies. Its weight is about ten pounds. The mitre is of thin silver gilt and is ornamented with large numbers of precious stones. The sides are jewelled in a broad band along the sloping sides, the base, and up the centre, the middle being occupied with a large precious crystal. The interspaces are occupied with a foliated ornament of pearls.

A number of photographs were exhibited showing King John's Castle, Thomond Bridge, the City Walls, the Treaty Stone, and the City generally, as they appear to-day to a visitor standing on the Clare side of the Shannon, near Thomond Bridge. These were preliminary to a series of views and plans, showing what the city was like in former days. The curious sketches made by Dineley who visited the city about 1680 were re-produced by photography, and included Thomond Bridge, the Castle, St. Mary's Cathedral, St. John's Church, the Exchange and the Custom House, as they appeared in his time.

The plan of the city, which was made under the direction of Carew at the close of Queen Elizabeth's reign, attracted great attention. It represented the English and Irish towns enclosed within walls surrounded by a moat, and connected by Ball's Bridge only. The quay was where the potato market stands to-day, and was defended by castles at either side of the entrance, across which extended a strong chain for further defence. The two towns consisted of one long street stretching from Island Gate to Kilmallock Gate, with two streets in the English town, crossing right and left. The wall of the English town was strengthened with fifteen towers, each mounting one or two small cannon. There appears to have been two most imposing gates in the Irishtown, the Kilmallock Gate, and one situated near the end of Ball's Bridge. A map of the siege operations of 1691, a plan of the city in 1786, and a view of Ball's Bridge in 1823, completed the series. The audience was then conducted to St. John's Gate—the citadel—and portions of the old city wall, which are to be seen preserved in the buildings of St. John's Hospital. Several photographs showed clearly the marks of the cannonading to which this part of the fortifications was

subjected during the operations preceding the final attempt to capture the city by King William in 1690. The stump of the famous Black Battery which blew up during the heat of the engagement, and portions of the walls with sally-port, also attracted much attention.

The next series of slides illustrated some of the old fortified residences of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, portions of which fortunately remain, as well as specimens of the architecture of subsequent dates. Amongst these included were the building popularly known as Ireton's House, lately taken down; the house in the Englishtown popularly known as Sarsfield's Castle, with its brick front and Dutch gables and remarkably elegant cut-stone doorway, which was most probably the mansion of the Arthur family. The stone side walls are of a much earlier date than the brick fronts. All has recently been swept away. That the photographer had not been engaged too soon in the work of preserving some of the ancient features of this historic city was shown by the fact that some slides exhibited the workmen being actually engaged in demolishing those houses on the area which is being cleared for the erection of artisans' cottages.

The attention of the audience was then directed to some carved stones which exist as memorials of past times. One of the most striking of these was the large slab in St. John's churchyard, on which are carved the instruments connected with the Crucifixion. The slab is divided into four panels under semi-circular arches. In the first panel may be observed—(1) scourge, (2) pillar, (3) cords, (4) cock. In the second—(5) palm branch, (6) ewer and basin in which Pilate washed his hands, (7) the hand that smote Christ, (8) St. Peter's sword. In the third panel may be discovered—(9) the lantern? (10) St. Veronica's handkerchief, (11) the seamless robe or coat, (12) the dice with which the soldiers gambled for the coat, (13) the thirty pieces of silver, (14) the sponge on the reed? The fourth panel is somewhat mutilated, but the following may be observed—(15) cross, (16) crown of thorns, (17) nails, (18) pin-cers, (19) hammer, (20) ladders, (21) spears, (22) reed. Thus, there are at least twenty-two instruments of the Passion to be discovered on the stone. In the same churchyard is an ancient tombstone with an inscription running round the edges which cannot be fully made out. The following however, is clear—*Philipus filius . . . Hoc monumentum condidit suis. . . Deus. Amen.* The letters of the surname are very much defaced. Within the lines of the inscription there appear

what looks like a footprint or sole of a shoe and an axe. Some suggest that what seems a footprint is a roach, and that this may commemorate Philip Roche who was Mayor in 1602. Here, also, are to be found the stone inscribed John Foorde, Esq., Mayor, 1693, above a skull and cross-bones; and also, a stone recording the restoration of the walls in 1693, "after the recent slaughter of the war."

Embedded in the front of Plassy Mills is a stone inscribed *Carolo Rege Regnante Petro Creagh, Pretore, Anno Dmi, 1643*. This stone originally stood over Mungret Gate, as Dineley records. It was placed there at the strengthening of the fortifications when the city was in the hands of the Confederate Catholics, 1641-1651. In the front wall of St. John's Hospital in another stone commemorating the efforts of the citizens to make their city secure in view of coming dangers. The inscription is imperfect, but the following may be read—"John Creagh, Mayor, 18 May, 1650, David Rochfort and James Bousfield, Sheriffs; citie freely bestowed two hundred pounds . . . outworks of . . ." On the bridge at Parteen, is an inscription, in relief, stating that the bridge and roadway (Long Pavement) were made by Peter Creagh, Mayor, at the expense of the citizens, in 1632. In Broad Street, the keystone of the arch of what was formerly the "Old Bear Inn," has the inscription—Built in 1640, by Piers Creagh; rebuilt 1767, by John Creagh.

From these bits of history in stone the audience was conducted to St. Patrick's Well, where the Patron Saint of Ireland baptised Carthen, Prince of Thomond, about the year 460. A series of views depicted the "bed," the well, and its surroundings, and a number of persons gathered around this remarkable link connecting the nineteenth century with the remote past. Amongst survivals of other days were the medal struck by William III. to commemorate the fall of the city in 1691, the Colooney Medal, and a copy of *The Limerick Chronicle* of the date Monday, July 27, 1772.

Although the lecturer did not aim at exhausting the subject, the audience carried away the impression that there are very few places more interesting from the point of view of the historian and archæologist than the old and dilapidated parts of the city of Limerick.

Too much credit cannot be given to the members of the Photographic Section for the zeal with which they threw themselves into the work of illustrating the two lectures and the excellence of their slides.



Photo. by

INSCRIBED STONE.

Miss Ebrill.

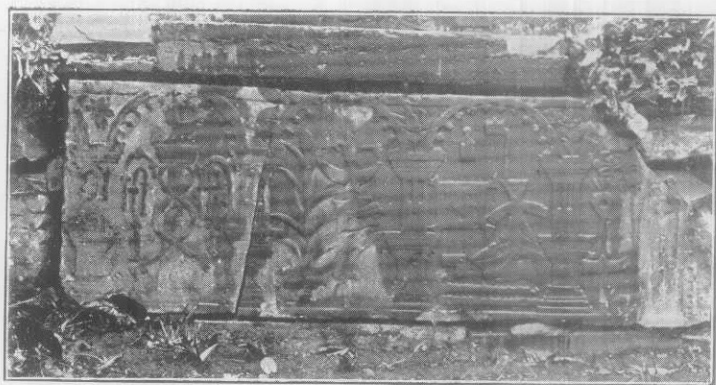


Photo. by

INSTRUMENTS OF THE PASSION.

C. Mercier.