Building and Related Activities in Limerick, 1859-1899

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The following is an account of new building projects, the reconstruction and alteration of established ones, and the introduction of new developments in the life of the City of Limerick during the second half of the nineteenth century. All information is taken from The Dublin Builder, which was first published in January, 1859, to cover material relating to “archaeology, engineering, sanitation, arts and handicrafts”; in 1867 the name was changed to The Irish Builder, and in March 1903 it became The Irish Builder and Engineer under which title it is still published fortnightly. Despite the changes in title, the publication maintained continuity throughout, and the volume numbers run consecutively without break.

The progress of building and development in the city from 1859 to 1899 as reported in these publications is by no means comprehensive. For instance, no mention is made of the Redemptorist Church, the Jesuit Church, the Franciscan Church, or of the entire re-building of St. Michael’s Catholic Church in 1882. Neither is any reference made to the various housing projects to provide homes for the poor, nor to the growth of the City beyond The Crescent towards Ballinacurra, not to mention several other similar undertakings.

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1859-1869

The first entry in these publications relating to Limerick appears in 1859 and gives a few general comments on the architecture of the city before going on to deal, in greater detail, with the premises of Cannocks’ department store.

The public buildings of any artistic excellence are not very numerous, though its cathedral is, perhaps, one of the most venerable and noble ecclesiastical structures in Ireland, and the recently-erected St. John’s Church, after a design by Mr. Welland, and the now nearly completed Roman Catholic cathedral of St. John, designed by Mr. Hardwick, R.A., are edifices of a very important character, and contribute greatly to the beautification of the city. (Vol. I, no. 2, p. 17; 1/2/1859.)

The store of Messrs Cannock, Tait & Co., as it was then called, occupied a plot of ground 210 feet long by 121 feet at its widest point; the frontage on the main street (George’s Street) being 66 feet in length. Mr. Peter Tait, the contractor for army clothing, and later Mayor, had recently entered the ownership of the company and the re-building would seem to be, in some measure, his brain child. Most of the building was one story in height “roofed with lantern lights towards the north as in the large Dublin house of Cannock, White & Co., of Henry Street” (ibid.). The front and some of the rear buildings were of two or three stories, the upper stories being used as a kitchen, dining and sitting rooms, library and sleeping rooms for the assistants. The entrance for them was on Honan’s Quay; the entrance to the shop itself was through two doors with large glazed porches and mahogany swing-doors.
The front is divided by pilasters and engaged columns into eight bays or upright divisions, and is of three storeys in height, there being a “mezzanine” or “entresol” immediately over the shop windows, and included under the shop cornices. Six of the groundfloor bays, between the pilasters, are glazed with single panes of plate-glass, each pane being nearly 13 feet by 7 feet—the remaining two forming the entrances. The whole are protected by Bennett’s patent interlocking revolving shutters. The horizontal transom over the shop and under the entresol windows is divided into a series of eight panels, illuminated and glazed over the colouring, the name and initials of the firm and various floral devices being introduced. The two extreme pieces are boldly rusticated, and the shop entablature enriched with consoles, panels, lions’ heads &c.

The upper portion of the front is treated after the Venetian manner, with engaged Ionic and Corinthian columns and arced fenestration, the main cornice being of considerable projection, and an arched balustrade, with large vases and terminals, at the top. The two flanks are treated in a corresponding style with the front, as they rise considerably over the adjoining houses, and the chimney-shafts are panelled and corniced, so as to form effective features. The whole of the front is executed in Portland cement; and the windows throughout glazed with plate-glass. (Ibid.).

The architects were Mr. Gridbon of Dublin and Mr. W. Fogerty of Limerick; the contractor was Mr. Quin of Dublin. Most of the work was completed between 1st February and 1st May, 1858; great efforts were made to complete it in time for the spring season. The total cost was estimated at £9,000.

Mr. W. Fogerty was also responsible for the remodelling of the premises of Messrs James Hogg & Co., next door to Cannock, Tait & Co.; and the premises of Thomas Revington & Co., on the opposite side of the street.

At this time also the Guardians of the Limerick Union had contracted “for the formation of a chapel for the use of the inmates of the workhouse by increasing the length of one of the large school-rooms, with open timbered roof, and fittings, &c.” (Ibid.). Mr. Fogerty was again the architect, the contractor was Mr. Day and the alterations cost £540.

St. John’s Roman Catholic cathedral was the biggest building project in Limerick at this time and an account of the structure was given on 1st January, 1860. The design was by Philip Hardwick from London. When the idea of the cathedral was first put forward a competition was set in motion and plans were received from various Irish professionals but the prize was not awarded; no reason for this is suggested by the journal.

The style of the building, as executed, is early Gothic, and the plan consists of nave, 30 ft., in width, aisles, transept, chancel, 4 side chapels, 2 sacristies, tower and porch. The dimensions in clear are 168 ft.—including chancel—by 74 ft.; the breath across transepts being 114 ft. On both the western and eastern elevations the nave and aisles present gabled ends terminated by crosses, and in the latter especially their grouping with the addition of the six extra gables formed by the side chapels and sacristies, is peculiarly effective.
The great windows are 5-light tall lancets under a single arch, but wheel traceryed lights are introduced into gables, and double and single lancets with trefoil heads into other portions. The tower—which is on the northern flank at the junction with transept—is square, flanked with buttresses, surmounted with an embattled parapet, and divided into three stages, the belfry windows being louvred and traceryed; a crocketed spire rising from a kind of broach on which an open octangular superstructure rests, will cap the whole, and form a pleasing composition. The external walls are of a superior class of masonry, and the dressings are of finely-wrought limestone. (II: 13, p. 178; 1/1/1860).

The issue of 15th September, 1861, carried a very detailed description of works undertaken at St. Mary’s cathedral. When Mr. Augustus O’Brien Stafford died in 1857, some of his friends expressed the idea that a memorial should be erected in his honour. So a committee was formed and it was decided to erect a stained glass window and a Mr. Slater of London was employed as architect to examine the cathedral. The east window was selected as the location for the new stained glass. At the request of the Dean, Mr. Slater reported that it would be necessary to remove the modern perpendicular window and that a portion of the roof, which was decayed, must also be removed. Mr. Slater’s suggestions were adopted and the committee made a contract with Messrs. Ryan & Son for a new roof over the chancel and new stone work in the window. Messrs Clayton & Bell, were given the contract for the stained glass window. These works were begun at Easter, 1859, and completed the following September.

The ceiling over the rest of the nave then caused concern, for it was found to be in a dangerous state. It was removed and then it was seen that the roof was in a rather decayed condition. In October, 1859, enough money was available to extend a roof, the same as that over the chancel, as far as the tower. Mr. Slater was requested to submit designs and specifications for the roof and Messrs Ryan & Son were given a contract for the work involved.

The reredos under the east window had not been completed at the time the Stafford memorial committee was dissolved, because of the lack of finance, but now further subscriptions were obtained in London, enough to cover the cost of the work.

The Dean had contracted for new seats in the choir and when the old ones were removed it was found that the floors of the chancel and choir were in a very bad state. The trustees agreed with Mr. Ryan to replace the floors; they also agreed to open the clerestory which had been blocked up in the choir but open to the nave.

In August, 1860, the Bishop agreed to have the organ gallery removed; the Dean undertook the removal of the galleries, and opened up the arches which had been blocked with brickwork and sashes, and he also opened a new organ gallery. He also gave new stoves and new seats in the transepts and seats for soldiers; he removed all the monument tablets into the north chapel and cleaned the walls of the whole building. He also erected an entrance door in the south porch.

Work continued and the floor of the choir was extended; twelve new oak stall seats and a dean’s and precentor’s seat in carved oak were also provided. The carved oak canopies over the stalls were continued and oak backing for the stalls was provided.

The damp limestone flags of the aisles were replaced with brickwork and Minten’s
tiles set in cement. Three rows of red marble steps from Co. Clare were laid at the entrance to the choir.

The increased height of the roof required more heating so gas pipes were laid as far as the chancel. A fireplace and flue, with an arrangement for conveying warm air into the chancel, was built to replace the stove which heated the vestry with a pipe passed through the window.

It was found that the water from the street passed in under the foundations of the east gable and that consequently, the soil under the chancel floor was quite damp; therefore the foundations were flagged over and secured. One credence arch, with a circular window in the chancel, which had been blocked up and a stove placed in it, was opened, the window was glazed and Mr. J. Peacocke replaced a marble slab which had been broken away.

The Earl of Limerick found that one of the peal of eight bells was broken, and the gear of all the others in such a decayed state that they could not be rung, had the broken bell recast, and the whole properly remounted, and has fitted up a neat room for the bell-ringers, with substantial floors. He also incurred considerable expense in having the bell-ringers taught by a professional man. A corps of young men have gratuitously undertaken the service, and the pleasant sounds of the bells so famed in poetry, may now be heard after many years' silence. The Rev. Maurice De Burgh and Rev. Frederick Hamilton, in addition to liberal subscriptions, presented a carved oak altar table, chairs, and stools, at a cost of £50. The cost of the altar rail, steps, and encaustic tiles laid on brick floors in cement, has been given as an aid to the restoration. Mrs. C. Mansell, in addition to presenting an altar cover and altar linen, has, with Miss O'Brien, presented two gas standards for the chancel. Miss Baker collected a sum of money to purchase and present alms' dishes. Lady Limerick has presented a kneeling carpet for the chancel.

Some members of the Arthur family have restored the arches of the tomb in the north transept, which were broken and heretofore concealed by wooden panels. Miss Selina Maunsell collected a sum of money to provide new books for the church. The family of the late Archdeacon of Limerick have obtained a design for a stone pulpit, which they are about to present as a memorial of their father. Mrs. Westropp has directed her nephew, Mr. Ralph Westropp, to erect a memorial to the Westropp family in the south transept, to include a new roof, and new stone window filled with stained glass, and the complete fitting up of the transept, for which designs have been prepared by Mr. Slater, and approved of by the Dean and Chapter. Some ladies, desirous to make a special gift to the cathedral have agreed to raise a fund, by subscriptions of £1 each, to present a font, &c. It is also in contemplation to erect, by subscription, a stained glass window in memory of the late Sir Matthew Barrington, Bart., to whose exertions the development of the railway system in Ireland is mainly attributable. (III: 42, pp. 633-634; 15/9/1861.)

On 1st March, 1865, the Dublin Builder carried an article taken from the Limerick Chronicle, which showed that churches were not the only buildings undergoing changes. The County Jail also came in for alterations. Originally the jail consisted of a
central tower, with five detached wings; between the tower and the wings were open areas. The spaces between the wings were divided into ten yards, each surrounded by a wall in which the prisoners exercised and worked; this meant that male prisoners of all kinds were confined together. The association thus forced upon them lead, in the opinion of the authorities, to a worsening of the attitudes, conduct and anti-social tendencies of the prisoners. In order to counteract this a plan to remodel the prison was requested by advertisement. The plans accepted were submitted by Messrs Atkins of Cork, and the contractors were Messrs Ryan & Son of Limerick and Waterford.

The plan for the reconstruction of this prison are as follows. The wing No. 5 has been altogether taken down, the S.E., and S.W., wings have been lengthened and connected with the central tower by arches. The cells and walls on the south side have been all pulled down, and an open hall formed throughout the entire length—the cells on the north side have been enlarged for the purposes of separate confinement, and are all open into the hall. The N.E. and N.W., wings have been connected with the others by covered passages, and in these are the school-room and hospital, debtors' quarters, reception and additional cells—all these wings heretofore isolated, now open into the same hall, and can be patrolled by one watchman at night, without ever coming from under lock and key, and, if necessary, the man on guard can communicate almost instantaneously with the chief warder, and the assistant warders can give assistance at a moment's notice. In the basement storey the heating of the whole institution is carried out by means of hot-water pipes, which are conveyed through all the cells. There are now only four yards instead of ten—viz., one for the debtors, one for the females, one hard-labour yard, and one exercising yard, with stalled compartments for stone-breakers, and a six-handled rachet pump, of curious construction. This pump is worked by manual labour, and the water raised by it will be distributed by means of tanks over the whole establishment. If a prisoner relaxes his labour a rachet clicks and gives notice that he is idle, and thus discipline is enforced even by machinery. The tread-mill is also in this yard. The hospital is connected with the main prison. At the female side there is a laundry, with stalled partitions; also water closets, lavatory &c. The cells on the ground floor contain each about 950 cubic feet—those on the second floor about 850 feet, and those on the third about 750. All the cells open into the main hall, in which are also placed water closets and partitioned lavatories. In these closets the prisoners will not have control over the water supply, which is regulated by machinery; the lavatories are supplied by pressure on a valve, and the water stops flowing when the pressure ceases. (VII: 121, p. 58; 1/3/1865.)

Nor was the Limerick City Jail lagging behind current thinking in penal reform. Large alterations and additions were carried out there also, to introduce the “separate system”. The architect was Mr. W. E. Corbett, the builder was Mr. Clayton and the cost was estimated at approximately £4,500.

Another building which underwent reconstruction was the Dominican Church in Baker Place.

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The new chancel, built about three years ago, has been the point which has
called for their earliest care and attention, and a high altar and reredos, and
stained glass eastern window, with some rich decorative colouring in the
roof and walls are the features of new interest. The whole of the altar, reredos,
tabernacle and throne, are executed in various marbles, statuary and Sicilian
forming the principal material. The altar is panelled in front with three
equisite bas-reliefs from the chisel of Mr. Bolton, of Worcester, representing
the Good Shepherd drawing from brambles the strayed sheep; Our Lord
raising Lazarus from the tomb, and Mary Magdalene at the feet of the Lord.
Running quite across the chancel, but considerably detached from the eastern
wall, the reredos is composed of an elegant open arcade with green shafts,
having basis capitals of Carrara marble with arches and cornice in Sicilian.
The tabernacle, containing an iron safe lined with cedar and silk, with highly
gilt and engraved doors, set with crystals, occupies the centre of the altar.
The throne above it rises up to a considerable elevation; but yet not so as to
interfere with the window beyond and terminates in a rich group of pinnacles
and gablets, borne on, and inlaid with various coloured marbles and supporting
as a terminal an angelic statuette. This work has been executed in the most
credible manner by Mr. P. Scannell of Cork Marble Works, under the direction
and from the carefully detailed drawings of the architect, Mr. G. Goldie, of
London. The great eastern window, which consists of five lights, with elaborate
tracery, is filled in with a stained glass representation of Our Lord’s Trans-
figuration. This is a work of unrivalled excellence by Wailes, of Newcastle.
The decoration reflects the highest credit on the artist, Mr. Hodkinson, of
Cork. (VIII: 148, p. 53, 15/2/1866.)

At the same time as the adornment of St. Saviour’s, the erection of the clock tower,
as a testimonial to Peter Tait, was taking place just outside in the street at Baker
Place. The architect was Mr. W. E. Corbett, City Surveyor and Mr. John Connolly
was the builder. The height of the tower was 65 feet; the cost was £750. The choice
of design for the tower was undertaken by means of a competition and the Dublin
Builder suggests there was a less than honest method and priority in choosing the
winners. They did point out, however, that this version was merely rumour and the
authenticity could not be guaranteed. As in the case of the Belfast Albert Memorial
(which was built around the same time) where the three prizes went to three Belfast
men, in the Limerick competition the prizes were awarded to three Limerickmen.
The first prize went to Mr. Corbett; the second and third prizes were awarded by
drawing two names from a hat into which the names of all the remaining competitors
were placed. Second prize was thus granted to Mr. W. Fogerty, and third prize was
given to a man whose name is forgotten, who worked in the office of Mr. Paine,
architect.

The police barracks in William Street underwent alterations in 1868; it was so
arranged as to accommodate, not only men but the horses of the mounted police.
The parade ground was enlarged by the removal of the old guard-house and Messrs
Ryan & Son, were the contractors.

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1870-1879

The Dominican Church was again, in December, 1870, the focus of much work. This time it was the turn of the main body of the building to be altered; on previous occasions the chancel and its contents claimed all the attention. A brief description is given of the church before the alterations took place. The exterior was considered squat and weather-beaten. Inside, the supporting columns were old wooden uprights; the ceiling was plain and flat and seemed to rest on the apex of the chancel arch. A large awkward gallery darkened the western end of the church. The changes were described as follows:

Aberdeen red granite columns support the arcade and divide the church into nave and aisles. They are each of two single pieces, resting on a moulded base of Portland stone, which overlays an octagonal block of pure white native limestone; then at mid-height an ornamental band is introduced, and crowning all is an elaborately moulded cap, also of Portland stone. From off this cap—at either side making five bays—spring the gracefully moulded arches of the arcade, over the apices of which are the clerestory windows—simple coupled lights deeply recessed, with light pointed drop-arches in front. From the foot of those windows, sloping downwards and outwards, are the aisle roofs, whose graceful design, curved ribbed principals resting on corbels, the entire surface being sheeted over, and without substantially slated, whilst within it is broken up into panels, whose rich and warm tone produced by its permanent oil stain, and the cathedral proportions of those side chapels, make them a study in themselves, and well worthy of the universal admiration they have exacted. But the nave roof is the chef d’oeuvre, and one must see before he can appreciate those slender columns resting on corbelled bases, and supporting moulded caps, from off which spring, the legs and curved ribs of the main trusses; then the intermediate principals and massive purlins break up the open sheeted surface, as in aisle roofs; and the delighted eye, as it gradually steals up to the distant apex—now deepened in shade—is lost in the solemn and thrilling effect which has been produced. A most unique light and elegant organ tribune of wrought and stained and varnished red pine, supported by pierced and carved oak columns, happily replaces the old gallery and occupies such little space at the west end of the church as not to interfere with a single feature of the interior, but, on the contrary adds much by its beauty. On this the grand old organ is fixed, whose rich tones are now heard to so much advantage. Then above and beyond all, one is struck by the internal appearances of the rose window (which develops in its tracery a cross, the angular and other spaces being filled up with trefoils, quatrefoils, &c.), which so appropriately lights and furnishes that intermediate storey. In the corresponding space between the apex of the chancel arch and framing of roof, preparation has been made for the introduction of roof figures, which will tend considerably to enliven this portion of the church. Evident care has been bestowed on the arrangement of the seats &c. Now the principal entrance by the great west doorway, which opens on the uninterrupted sweeping nave, the beautiful encaustic tiled passage through which leads direct to the com-
munion rail; and then at either side are the benches or seats. The aisles are similarly treated, the passages being along side walls, by which means the greatest amount of accommodation is obtained, and a simplicity of access established, which is so essential in all public buildings.

The acoustic properties of the church are very perfect, as also the ventilation. In the north aisle a large radiating stove has been erected. Thus much has been accomplished; but, in order to give the last stroke to this already beautiful church, the erection of a triple porch advancing some 14 ft., or 15 ft., is deemed a matter of necessity.

We understand that the greatest need of praise in carrying out this noble undertaking is due to the Very Rev. J. Carbery, Prior of the Dominican Order under whose charge the religious establishment connected therewith is maintained. We are glad to hear that all liabilities so far are cleared off—much to the credit of Limerick.

Mr. M. A. Hennessy, C.E., of Upper Mallow Street, Limerick, had the entire supervision of the works from their commencement until their satisfactory completion by the contractors, Messrs McCarthy and Guerin. (XII: 264, p. 301; 15/12/1870.)

This remodelling of the church was completed from plans by and under the direction of Messrs Goldie and Child, architects, of London.

A new graving dock was inaugurated in May, 1873, by the Lord Lieutenant, Earl Spencer. It was formed of solid limestone rock and measured 450 feet in length by 60 feet in breadth. An address from the Harbour Board was read by Mr. James Spaight, President of the Chamber of Commerce.

Buildings for industrial purposes also claimed notice. In the edition for October, 15th, 1874, detailed coverage was given of Messrs Bannatyne's new building. The building was 135 feet in length and 60 feet in width; the materials used for the building were limestone and rubble masonry "with chiselled limestone strings, and dressings". The external arches were of white Scotch fire-brick and Killaloe slates were used for the roof. In one corner of the building, facing the river, there was a tower 100 feet in height, at the top of which was "an elaborate vane". A clock with four dials, which was to be supplied by the firm of Mr. J. W. Benson, Ludgate Hill, London, was to be placed in the upper storey of the tower. The machinery of the clock was so arranged that the gas was to be lighted and put out automatically at specified times. In the basement of this tower was the boiler and the engine-room was on the first floor. This latter room was entered "through a massive doorway moulded in chiselled limestone". The contents of this department were supplied by Messrs Johnston of Chester.

That portion of the roof which is seen from the docks is admirably broken up by gables and dormers, by which is protected the hoisting machinery to be used in conveying the corn aloft.

Viewing the building from the Dock Road, one is struck with the appearance of the blank windows. This is considered the most singular feature in the entire structure, and the explanation of the matter is found in the fact that here are situated eight large bins, extending from the basement to the top
floor, each one is capable of holding 300 tons of corn. The machinery is constructed so as to permit of raising the corn from the basement to the top floor by means of elevators, whence it can be distributed to the various floors, as required. Having been properly cooled by machinery, the corn is next placed in the bins referred to. (XVI: 356, p. 285; 15/10/1874.)

The building was six storeys high and excavations were begun in the Spring of 1873. So many springs were found during the digging, it was necessary to employ men day and night in getting rid of them.

In some instances it was found necessary to go 25 feet deep, before reaching the solid strata of rock, and at no part of the excavations was the depth of cutting less than 13 feet. At this portion of the work it was found necessary to use a large quantity of concrete, upon which a foundation, 6 feet, in thickness, was laid. (Ibid.)

The basement contained the machinery to collect the corn; this was a very unusual machine for there was none other like it in Ireland and there was only one of its kind in England. The corn was received on the ground floor and from there it was distributed by the machinery. The first floor was finished with cut stone dressing and like the basement the ceiling of this floor was “vaulted and groined in brick”. The pillars here were of cast iron, and the planking was connected with iron tonguing. The basement was reached from the first floor by means of a cut stone stairs.

The work is being executed from the plans of Mr. William Sidney Cox, C.E., architect; the builders are the local firm of Messrs McCarthy and Guerin; and Mr. Hawney is the clerk of works. (Ibid.)

It was reported in July, 1874, that Limerick was likely soon to have a free park. At a meeting of the Corporation, Mr. Connolly, law agent, said he had received from the solicitor of the Earl of Limerick, the memorandum in reference to the grant of Pery Square and the surrounding grounds to the Corporation for the purpose of converting them into a peoples’ park. A five hundred year lease was granted to the Corporation, subject to certain conditions. These included that the Corporation was to make a new street extending from Mallow Street, to Newpark; no political or religious meetings should be held in the park and that bands should not play there on Sundays.

The park was opened on 20th August, 1877, by the Mayor, Mr. Spaight. It was enclosed by iron railings along the streets on three sides and by a wall on the other side; “it is intersected by walks varying from 15 feet to 6 feet, and is ornamented with pleasure grounds and a beautiful drinking fountain erected by the employees of Messrs Russell” (XIX: 425, p. 252; 1/9/1877). Mr. W. Barrington, M.Inst., C.E., 84 George Street, Limerick, was the engineer under whose direction the works were carried out. The trustees were: John Vanderkiste Esq., agent to the Earl of Limerick; the Mayor of Limerick, and Thompson Russell Esq.

On 18th November, 1877, St. Michael’s Protestant church, was re-opened after the completion of improvements. The architects for this work were Messrs Fogerty & Son, Henry Street, Limerick. The height of the tower was increased and pinnacles were added. Mr. Robert Hunt, J.P., gave as gifts, stone cut piers in front of the building, ornamental railings and a tiled entrance floor. A new chancel, at a cost of
£2,000, was also added. The chancel window was one removed from St. Mary's cathedral, which by the ingenuity of the architects, was reduced in size so that it might fit the smaller church. The roof was of varnished pitch pine and the flooring was laid with encaustic tiles. The columns were of Cork red marble, with Portland caps and bases, while the seats, which were of pitch pine, were painted by Mr. Cusack of George's Street, Limerick.

Mr. James Bannatyne has presented a number of brass coronae of ornate character, manufactured by the well-known firm of Jones & Willis of Birmingham. A handsome lectern, by the same firm, is the gift of Mr. J. M. Smallman, as a memorial to his wife. A richly carved oak pulpit and prayer-desk are the gift of Mr. Thomas Revington. (XIX: 431, p. 357; 1/12/1877.)

Further improvements in this church took place in 1878. In the publication dated 15th, November, 1878, the erection of a large stained glass window, which was the gift of Messrs James Spaight, J.P., Joseph Matterson, J.P., William Matterson (of London), Richard Norris Russell (Plassy) and Messrs J. N. Russell & Sons, was reported.

The subjects of the window are designed to illustrate the Parables, the five lights composing the lower portion being divided by beautiful canopied work, and taken in order from the left, the Parables are: "The Prodigal Son", "The Pharisee and Publican", "The Talents", "The Labourers in the Vineyard", and "The Pearl of Great Price". Returning to the left, the subjects of the lower portion are: "The Sower", "The Good Samaritan", "The Wise and Foolish Virgins", "The Unmerciful Servant", and "The Rich Man and Lazarus". The tracery head is filled with rich coloured glass with scrolls and flowers, and in the centre division is "Abraham's Sacrifice", and on either side a figure of "Moses with the Tables of the Law" and "Brazen Serpent". The emblems of the Four Evangelists are represented, viz: The Angels of St. Matthew, the winged Lion of St. Mark, the winged Bull of St. Luke, and the Eagle of St. John, all combining to form, without exception, one of the most pleasing and artistic windows in the south of Ireland. (XX: 454, p. 335; 15/11/1878.)

On the 15th April, 1879, it was reported that the tower and spire of St. John's Catholic cathedral was begun by Mr. P. Kenna, who was the contractor. Messrs M. & S. Hennessy, of Limerick and Cork, were the architects; Mr. J. > 'D. Birmingham, Dublin, was the surveyor, and the cost was estimated at £8,000.

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1880-1889

An incident at a meeting of the Limerick Port and Harbour Commissioners on the 6th February, 1882, reveals that advancing technology and the new discoveries of the age sometimes plunged the leaders of the community into deep quandaries. The discussion centred around the electric light at the docks and whether or not it was as economical as gaslight. The electricity, it was reported, by Mr. W. Hall, Harbour Engineer, cost 2/- an hour to light the two lamps at the docks.
The Chairman (facetiously)—"Gentlemen, this is really ‘The battle of the lights’. Electricity will eventually, I suppose eclipse the farthing rushlight. The House of Commons has tried the light, and I believe with success, as it was found most luminous; but they do not require much light there.” (XXIV: 532, p. 63; 15/2/1882.)

The matter was then dropped, pending further reports from the Harbour Engineer and Corporation Gas Manager.

St. John's cathedral figured again on 15th August, 1883, as a portion of the spire had been damaged by the great storm of the previous winter and its repair accomplished by the contractor, Mr. T. Massingham. On the 4th August, a large richly gilt cross was placed in position on the apex stone, under the supervision of Mr. M. A. Hennessy, C.E., architect, Cecil Street, Limerick.

It was reported on 15th January, 1885, that the scheme for the waterworks of Limerick city, which was submitted to the Town Council in September, 1880, by Messrs G. E. Nichols & Son, Civil Engineers, 59 Colmore Road, Birmingham, and Albert Buildings, Queen Victoria Street, London, was shown by means of drawings at the Exhibition of the Sanitary Institute of Great Britain, held at Ballsbridge.

The engineers decided to use the waters of Lough Derg, drawing it from a point 200 feet from "the foot of Bulbom Fort", at a depth of 10 feet below the surface, thereby it was hoped, ensuring the purity of the water at all times. The water would enter the filtering beds at the rate of 2,500 gallons of water per minute.

The site of the proposed works contains an area of 13 acres, and the position is remarkably favourable, having the advantage of being bounded on the west by the road from Killaloe to Scariff, and on the east by the river. (XXVII: 602, p. 19, 15/1/1885.)

At a meeting of the Limerick Harbour Board, on the 5th March, 1888, a report from a committee was considered, recommending the acceptance of the tender from Mr. John Henry, Belfast, for reconstructing the dock wall that failed sometime previously, and the tender was accepted without discussion. Messrs John Ryan & Son, Limerick, submitted the highest tender at £25,317. 16s. 0d., while the lowest was given by Messrs John Henry, Belfast, at £13,500. The large discrepancy between the highest and lowest tenders quoted was queried, but no final explanation was offered.

* * * *

1890-1899

The south aisle, chapels and tower of St. Mary's cathedral, Limerick, are now being restored, under the directions of the architect Mr. R. Fogerty, C.E., Limerick. (XXXIII: 758, p. 758; 15/7/1891.)

The tender of Messrs Ryan & Son, was accepted and the cost was estimated at £2,540.

A description of the Baptist church, then in the course of erection, was given on 1st April, 1894.

It is of red brick, with limestone dressings. Under the church itself is a fine lecture-room, several classrooms, and other minor apartments. The church
will seat 300, and will be heated by a Grundy's apparatus. (XXXVI: 823, p. 79; 1/4/1894.)

The contractor was Mr. P. Kennedy, 3 Military Road Limerick; the clerk of works was Mr. James Henderson of Dublin. The architect was also from Dublin; Mr. George P. Beater, F.R.I.A.I., of Lower Sackville Street. The cost was estimated at "considerably over £2,000".

In June of the same year St. John's cathedral was finally consecrated by Cardinal Logue. The nave was 97 feet long by 30 feet wide, and was separated by piers and arches from the aisles which were 19 feet wide. The length of the transepts from north to south were 116 feet, the chancel was 30 feet wide and 43 feet deep from end to end of the transepts, and the total length of the building was 168 feet.

Several contracts had to be entered into for the completion of the various works. Messrs Ryan, builders, of Limerick, were entrusted with the masonry; Messrs P. McCarthy & Sons upholsterers, Limerick, with the benches and confessionals; Messrs Beakey, of Dublin, with the stalls; Mr. Hodkinson, Limerick, with the mural decorations; Mr. W. Doolin, Westland-row, Dublin, with the high altar, and a Belgian firm with the execution of the throne. One of the most remarkable features of the beautiful edifice is the noble spire, which was completed in the year 1883, and which rises to a height of 280 feet. It was constructed from designs by the Messrs Hennessy. Its appearance, rising over the vast cathedral, is very impressive, and it is said by many experts to be the most beautiful work of its kind in all Ireland. (XXXVI: 829, p. 157; 1/7/1894.)

Trinity church, Catherine Street, was the church attached to the asylum for blind females, and in November, 1895, it underwent some improvements. The old gas fittings were removed and "beautiful specimens of art metal work, in iron and brass, take their place" (XXXVII: 862, p. 274; 15/11/1895). A brass corona, with forty lights was hung from the chancel arch and a brass lectern, bearing "a suitable inscription" was placed in front of the chancel. This latter was presented by the widow and family of the late Mr. Charles Evans. All this metalwork was manufactured by Messrs Jones and Willis of Birmingham. Mr. Robert Fogerty, architect, designed the alterations and the work was carried out under his supervision.

A proposed electric tramway for the city was, in 1899, estimated to cost £67,000. A committee of the Limerick Borough Council was investigating the project and in October of that year it had decided to recommend acceptance. However, for some reason, not clearly discussed by the journal, this tramway never materialized.

The foundation stone of a new Presbyterian church in Limerick, was laid by the Moderator, the Rev. D. A. Taylor, M.A., The site is at the north side of Lower Mallow Street, where the thoroughfare is intersected by Henry Street. (XLI: 955, p. 170; 1/11/1899.)

The church was built of brick and Portland stone dressings was used for the arches, windows and aisles. The width was 46 feet and the length, including nave and choir, was 88 feet; the height was 48 feet and the two aisles were each 9 1/2 feet high. At either side of the apse, vestaries for the minister and choir were proposed. Columns of polished Aberdeen granite separated the nave from the aisles. It was planned that
the church would be faced with Ruabon brick, have a rose window and a tower rising to 80 feet, at the eastern side of the facade. The builders were Messrs Ryan & Son, Limerick; the clerk of works was Mr. James Henderson and the cost was estimated at £6,000.

The idea of introducing electricity to light the city also made news around this time. A meeting of the committee, set up to enquire into the matter was held at the Town Hall to see what steps were to be taken to implement the Provisional Order obtained from the Board of Trade in 1892. A Professor Kennedy, from London, was engaged to carry out the scheme and he estimated that the cost would be £18,000. However, because of pressure of work in connection with the London tramways, Professor Kennedy, abandoned the Limerick project. He was requested to engage another engineer to continue with the electricity venture, and it was decided to ask the Local Government Board to sanction the granting of a loan of £18,000, for the purpose of carrying out the Provisional Order of 1892.