

ST. MARY'S CATHEDRAL BELLS.

In the foregoing report reference is made to the extensive work carried out during 1937/8 in the renovation of the bell-frames and bells, and the Committee of Management desires to briefly set forth the following details concerning this work for the information of the "Friends of St. Mary's."

The bell-frames carrying the bells (probably about 250 years old) are of a very massive type, consisting of oak beams averaging about 10 inches by 8 inches in section. These frames are supported by similar beams spanning the tower transversely, their ends resting upon off-sets, or ledges in the tower walls. In some places these ledges are very shallow, and consequently the beams had not much bearing surface in proportion to their great weight. Moreover, the ends of the beams where they rested upon the ledges had in several places decayed away, and it was only a matter of time (probably not very long) until the whole structure must inevitably collapse. To meet this danger two massive steel girders have been erected, spanning the tower from North to South, the ends of which are deeply embedded in the tower walls. These two joists now take the entire weight of the bells and bell-frames and render them safe for practically all time.

As regards the bells, three have been recast and remodelled, viz., the Treble, Second, and Seventh. It was necessary to add to the latter bell no less than $\frac{3}{4}$ cwt. of fresh metal in order to bring its weight and tone into accord with the remainder of the peal. In addition, all the bells have been fitted with new gudgeons and bearings of the most up-to-date ball-bearing oil-retaining type, and the entire ring will, when completed, take a foremost place—both musically and mechanically—amongst Irish peals. It should be added that a modern chiming apparatus has also been installed which will enable the bells to be chimed when a team of ringers is not available.

The expense involved has necessarily been heavy, and were it not for the great generosity of Mr. W. E. G. Hewson, of Castle Hewson, Co. Limerick, who is personally bearing the cost of the recasting of the three bells, and the new fittings for the entire peal, such a complete and thorough renovation could not have been undertaken. The Cathedral authorities are under a debt of deep gratitude to Mr. Hewson for his munificence.

For particulars regarding the history of the bells we would refer our readers back to the article thereon embodied in our Report for 1936.