

and Brittany. Those who visit the west coast of Ireland see the outward and visible signs of this system in the sixth and seventh centuries. At a distance of twelve miles from the westernmost point of land on the Coast of Kerry, stand the islands of the Greater and Lesser Skellig. The first of these is a rock dedicated to St. Michael, and the church of St. Michael with its group of monastic cells, is built upon its northern summit. This is a striking and most wonderful sight which is seen at some distance out at sea, and which, when viewed in summer and sunlight, cannot be exceeded in loveliness. At nearer approach the great masses of black slate rock grow terrible in their aspects. A narrow road is seen cut out of the face of the rock. There are now six hundred and twenty steps from a point in the cliff up to the monastery. This island, on which is a small and simple building, is the scene of annual pilgrimages for many centuries, and the services of the Way of the Cross is still celebrated here.

In the next period of Irish architecture a very perceptible advance takes place, the marked features of which are the gradual growth of the choir, the modelling of the structure was attempted by Sir Benjamin Guinness. It must have been originally a building of exquisite beauty. There were many beautiful specimens of the carver's art than Cong. The order of Augustinians, to whom it belonged, was very rich, and had vast possessions in the province. In the monastery were kept deeds, books, records and many other precious things, all of which have disappeared save the marvellously beautiful cross now to be seen in the Dublin Museum. The fact that such a priceless relic and gem of art, having been kept in the Abbey of Cong, show that it was considered by the most important and secure place in the province.

The banks of the River Moy, which empties its waters into the Bay of Killybegs, had been the scene of many an episode in early Irish history and traces of a greater past are visible on all sides. The romantic ruins of Roskerk, Belleek and Moy; the towers and high walls of the abbey of Belleek, the Killybegs and Ballina, attest to the artistic and architectural glories of a generation, unfettered by the chains of the conqueror. In short, nature and history have combined to add to the poetry impregnated in the very air of this most Celtic section of the Green Isle.

Another strange, weird and romantic spot is the ruins of Glendaloch, in which we find St. Kevin's kitchen. The lake was the scene of the remarkable legend of St. Kevin and a maiden named Kathleen. Glendaloch probably was a large monastic city in the days before the Danes began their raids on Ireland. The ruins of the Fair Hills of Ireland tell us of the two great monasteries whose ruins are found in the Boyne Valley. Not precisely in the valley, but on the long slope of a high ground rising northward, down which King William of England marched his army in the last days of June 1690. One of them, the Abbey of Mellifont, the name of which is Latin, and means "Honey Fountain," represents a type of Irish monastery, which shows the advent of a stricter ecclesiastical discipline, while that of the other, Monasterboice, is a superb type of the absolutely Irish religious community, and was for more than five hundred years the great seat of purely Celtic Irish literature and art. It stands some three miles east of Mellifont, and one sees there all the characteristic features of one of the old Irish monasteries. The spot where these monasteries stood, with the clear rushing river flowing through the valley, is supremely beautiful in summer time, and charming even in winter. The origin of the name of the abbey is not known, but it is believed to have been traced to St. Baileor Boetius, a disciple of St. Patrick, about the close of the fifth century. Here is the great Bell Tower, one of the hundred castles throughout Ireland. This one rises 110 feet in height, but its top has been shattered, and under this great pillar were the monastic buildings. The buildings are of course, all gone, but the remains of the churches are to be seen.

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Those who visit the ruins of Clonmacnoise find that they form by far the most interesting architectural remains on the river Shannon. The ecclesiastical remains of ancient Ireland seem to have been preserved in an extraordinary amount of detail in the ruins of Clonmacnoise. The first thing that strikes the visitor is the wonderful view over the largest extent of callow meadows to be seen in any part of Ireland. The monastery was founded by St. Kieran, who died in the year 549. There are ruins of a cathedral, a nunnery, three churches, round towers and oratories. It is certain that it was one of the most important ecclesiastical establishments in Ireland, for it is more frequently mentioned in ancient Irish history and annals than any other place of its kind in the country. It is hard to believe now that Clonmacnoise "was a true and living centre of European culture." We know this was a fact from the extent of its influence. Clonmacnoise, Alen, after a distinguished career in Britain, came attached to the court of Charlemagne as a kind of director of religious studies, and chief professor in the great school of learning at Clonmacnoise, which flourished among the buildings, whose grey ruins now stand on the banks of the river. The fame of the monastery was all pre-Norman, and it is pitiful to record that Clonmacnoise was destroyed by violence between the years 890 and 1190. A. D., no less than twenty-five times.

As we have seen the renaissance of Irish ecclesiastical architecture in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, comes after the cessation of the Danish plun-

dering. The Irish then began to erect large and costly structures in place of the small and often severely plain buildings of the earlier period. But during the last half of the twelfth century, the developments of architecture and almost everything else that tended to benefit the country was arrested by the invasion of the English.

In this connection there was enacted a drama during which "The Emerald Gem of the Western World was set in the crown of a stranger." The cause of the invasion by the Anglo-Normans is assigned by some writers to the culmination of the quarrel between the Irish chieftains, in an event which belongs to the same romantic order as the story of Helen and the War of Troy. It seems that one of the Irish nobles, O'Rourke, Prince of Brefni, had a beautiful wife who attracted the admiration of Dermot MacMurrough, the King of Leinster. MacMurrough was a type of the royal savage, as we have known him through all legend and history—a reckless warrior, loving the battle-field and the chase, enjoying revelry of every kind, and utterly selfish in gratifying his desires. The fair Devorgilla yielded herself only too readily to the appeal of her lover, and was carried off by him. The immediate result was civil war! Brefni took up arms against the chieftain who had so deeply wronged him and MacMurrough fled the country, going to England to throw himself on the mercy of the monarch Henry II. Henry took up the cause of the Irish chieftain, and as we shall see later, gathered together a great army, went into Ireland, crushed all resistance and made Ireland a part of his dominions. Here is yet another instance, of which we find no more in history, when we can apply the saying, "Cherchez la femme." Thomas Moore has founded on this incident one of his greatest poems. He tells of O'Rourke's lament on finding that his wife had left him for the King of England, and that he had gone on a pilgrimage, and on his return he searches in vain for his wife Devorgilla. In the last two verses of the poem, O'Rourke laments the dishonor she has brought, not only on him, but on her country.

"Oh degenerate daughter
Of Erin, how falsest of thy fame!
And thro' thy ages of bondage and
slaughter,
Our country shall bleed for thy
name."

And in the two last lines he cries:
"On our side is virtue and Erin,
"On our side is the Saxon and guilt."

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