

GLASS, AND ITS USES.

On the evening of the 20th ult., a highly-interesting lecture was delivered in the Rotundo by Mr. Frederick S. Barff, M.A., Cambridge (who is favourably known in the artistic world for his church decorations), of which the following is the substance:—

The lecturer, after observing that however simple the subject of his discourse might appear, it had much more in it than was apparent, proceeded to give the various derivations from which the word "glass" is supposed to come. He next brought under the notice of the audience the antiquity of glass. The Egyptians were the first known manufacturers of glass. Small figures of Egyptian deities, composed of vitrified material—turquoise coloured—were found in unrotting mummies now in the royal museums of France and England. And there was evidence existing to show that the Egyptians were acquainted with both the component parts of glass and the method of working it in several ways. It was asserted that the Israelites discovered how to make glass in the wilderness; others held that it was the Phœnicians who discovered the process through the action of their fires on the sands of the river Belas, near which they had encamped after shipwreck. In iron manufacture the substance of glass was necessarily produced, and if Tubal Cain, who was the first artificer in iron, smelted the substance, he certainly must have made glass. In the burned city of Nineveh, Mr. Layard, who conducted the excavations there, found lenses of glass such as are used in telescopes and opera glasses. The celebrated Portland vase, of date 230 years before Christ, was composed of blue glass transparent, and in the city of Thebes, of antiquity of 3,000 years ago, glass articles were used. In the Christian era St. Jerome mentions the use of glass, and in the eleventh century the article was in general use for domestic purposes in these countries. Glass was, however, before that period known and used in France, where the patents for its manufacture were given only to noblemen and gentry, whose sons actually worked as artificers of glass. About this time Venice took a decided lead in the manufacture of the article, excelling all other countries in the value of the material, the beauty of the colour, and perfection of translucency. The first mirrors were made of Venetian glass. In 1665 plate glass was manufactured at Tour le Ville, near Cherbourg, under the patronage of the Minister Colbert, who invited to France Venetian artificers. Flint glass was introduced into England in 1557. From that time it had gradually improved in quality, and at the present time British flint glass was equal to any manufactured in the world. The purest and best glass was made out of white sand. In the North of Ireland were two mountains supplying white sand of unequalled quality for glass, but he regretted to say that the owners of these mountains were not yet liberal enough to allow the sand to be carted away by some enterprising parties who would manufacture it into Irish glass of unrivalled superiority. The lecturer described the various kinds of plain and coloured glass now in general use, and the different processes of manufacture, dwelling specially upon the manufacture of glass invented and carried out by Mr. Hartly, of Sunderland. He then proceeded with the second part of his discourse, which treated of glass painting. There were three styles of this art, the first commencing in the year 1230, the second in 1380, and the third in 1530. The first style was the Mosaic, the second the enamel Mosaic, and the third of enamel altogether. There really was no mystery about the art of painting glass, however certain parties might try to make people believe there was. The colour might be put on glass as any other substance, and when burned in, or fused, the work was permanent. The great object of painting glass for churches was to preserve harmony of colouring and secure the dim religious light. This pleasing and solemn effect was admirably produced by the artists in the first period of the art, in the second not so well, and in the third, least successfully of all, owing to the introduction of figures. Painting on glass and painting on walls were entirely different things; and he regretted that the distinction was not as well observed as it ought to be in the present period of the art of glass staining. There should be no attempt at perspective in glass painting for churches; every figure and ornament should be set in plain and level, as it were, taking care that the harmony of the colours should be preserved. This was the practice of our forefathers, and it ought to be followed now. Ireland possessed few remains of ancient stained glass, nearly all were destroyed, as in England, by Cromwell. Beautiful specimens, however, were in the cathedrals of Canterbury and York Minster—the colours rich and flowing, and in perfect harmony, producing a magnificent effect. The lecturer criticised with some severity the present style of art followed in glass painting for churches, particularly in reference to the attempts at perspective, and the introduction and drawing of figures. He held that there was no reason why we should follow the grotesque drawing and drapery of the figures in the ancient style, and that it would be well that artists would depict things as they really are. The lecturer gave a brief sketch of opaque painted glass, mentioning the fine specimens that existed in the roofs of St.

Peter's church at Rome, and St. Mark's at Venice. He concluded by expressing a hope that Ireland, which possessed in such abundance the materials for the manufacture of the best glass, would yet be distinguished for the produce of that article, and that Irish artists might be found to adorn churches with stained windows, exemplifying the true principles of art, and consequently becoming worthy of the religious purposes to which they would be applied.

OPENING OF THE STREET TRAMWAYS AT BIRKENHEAD.

On Thursday, the 30th ult., the new street railway, connecting Woodside Ferry with the Park at Birkenhead, was opened, and the event inaugurated by a magnificent banquet, at which some 400 persons were present. Mr. George Francis Train, the proprietor and patentee, occupied the chair, and amongst the company were, Mr. John Laird, the eminent ship-builder; Mr. William Dargan, Aldermen Kinahan and Mackey, Mr. Frith, C.E., and Mr. Bower, C.E., from Dublin. The English press was represented by numerous gentlemen, and the Irish likewise by Dr. Maunsell, of the *Evening Mail*; Mr. J. J. Lyons, proprietor and editor of the DUBLIN BUILDER; some gentlemen from the *Freeman*, *Morning News*, &c. The Editor of the *Melbourne Argus* also attended, and acknowledged briefly, but suitably, the toast of "the Press." During a period of six hours—viz., from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m.—a very animated discussion upon certain interesting and substantial topics, in which "the glorious vintage of champagne" occupied not the least important position, took place, and a few excellent speeches were delivered, amongst which the truly brilliant oration of Mr. Train shone resplendent. Some 5,000 passengers travelled in the cars over the route, and the greatest enthusiasm prevailed. During the short period of 60 days this road, about 2 miles in length, has been completed, and the cars are commodiously and suitably constructed. We shall revert to the details of the principle fully in next number.

CHARLESTOWN CHURCH, MAYO.

A new church has sprung up with a new town, entitled Charlestown, in a wild part of the county of Mayo, thanks to the energy and liberality of Charles Strickland, Esq., of Lough Glyn; and recently passing through this locality we were not a little astonished to find an edifice of such correct ecclesiastical character in so remote a district. The building is a spacious one, capable of accommodating a very large congregation, and is planned on the usual arrangement of nave, aisles, chancel, sacristy, and porch. Its total internal length is 103 feet by a width of 53 feet. The nave is divided from the aisles by arcades of arches, five on either hand carried on simple chamfered masses of masonry, with a square base in front, such as we find in ancient examples of Irish ecclesiastical architecture, e.g., the old cathedral at Limerick. A lofty arch opens into the chancel, which has an eastern window of four lights, with simple "plate tracery." The clerestory is composed of cinque foiled circles, and the aisles are lit by coupled lights, all of the simplest description. A triplet of lancets under an enclosing arch forms the composition of the western gable, which is crowned by a bell gable—a prominent object for many miles. The chancel window is filled with stained glass representing the Blessed Virgin, St. Patrick, St. Bridget, and St. Charles Borromeo, the patron saint of the Church. The total cost of the building was under £2,000, the work having been constructed in the most solid and substantial manner. The architects were Messrs. Hadfield and Goldie, of Sheffield and Westminster; the builder Mr. Wm. Doolin. We also understand an identical structure has been built at some few miles distance in same county.

Ardgillan Castle, the residence of Colonel Taylor, M.P., has been lighted with gas by Messrs. Edmondson of this city.

The *Art Journal* directs attention to the frescoes of the Houses of Parliament, and says, that some of those beautiful works are completely destroyed, and all partially injured, their total destruction being only a matter of time.

An organ has been constructed at Vienna for the Sultan, which is the great wonder of the day. It cost fourteen thousand florins, and is a complete orchestra of fifty musicians, equal to the same in power and expression.

It appears from the account of the police valuator, handed in on the 1st August, that 198 new houses have been occupied for the first time since 1st January last in the town of Belfast.

The cornice of the Turkish baths, now being erected in Donegal-street, Belfast, fell last week, fortunately in the absence of the workmen, carrying with it the scaffolding.