

NEW ALTAR AT ST. FINBARR'S CHURCH.

The high altar recently erected in the parish church of St. Finbarr, to which we referred briefly at Christmas, claims some more detailed notice, not only for account of its intrinsic merits as a work of art, but also as being yet another of the oft-recurring instances of the noble and generosity of our Catholic people. Not long since the venerated pastor (Very Rev. Dean Murphy) of the South parish, which comprises a very large section of the city and liberties of Cork, recognised the necessity of extending and improving the accommodation and general condition of the parish church, whose antiquity and associations made it especially dear to the parishioners and the citizens generally, and whose limits were often found scarcely adequate for the large number of persons frequenting it. Amongst the works then carried out under the sanction of the Dean was the addition of a chancel, and a considerable sum was subsequently expended in its decoration. The high altar, however, was temporary till the execution of the work now to be noticed. A design was procured from Mr. George Goldie, of London, the eminent ecclesiastical architect, to whose classic and versatile taste and acknowledged skill Catholics in Cork and the South of Ireland are not strangers. A contract was entered into with Mr. Earp, a well-known London sculptor, to whom works of this nature in all parts of the kingdom are frequently entrusted, and by him and his assistants the new altar has, under the personal supervision of the architect, been expeditiously and satisfactorily completed for a sum admitted to be extremely moderate. Its erection, just accomplished in time for the Christmas Day celebration, supplied a very manifest want. Its general character, without being what might be considered too elaborate for a church with architectural pretensions so slight, is sufficiently rich and stately, and a close inspection reveals simple beauties that do not at first sight strike the beholder. Pure Italian in style, its conception and treatment are not unworthy of Mr. Goldie. The design comprises altar, super-altar, reredos, tabernacle and throne, with a small table for altar requisites at either side. The altar table of Sicilian white marble is supported at the extremities on neatly carved piers of Caen stone, which is the principal material employed, and in the deep recess formed by these is deposited the exquisite work of the great Irish sculptor, Hogan, the "Dead Christ," for which this is the first attempt to provide a suitable setting. Enriched with so rare a production of pure devotional art, the plainest of structures might be deemed wealthy in artistic merit. At either sides of the altar proper large panels of red and green marbles are inlaid, and the little side tables, already referred to, are supported on carved brackets. The super-altar of alabaster rises above a narrow line of red marble inlaid, and rests upon a neat moulding of the chief material. The reredos is inlaid with large panels of alternating red and green marbles highly polished; is enriched above these with delicately sculptured festoons of flowers and foliage, and is flanked at each end by a pier in relief, which has a moulded niche containing the figure of an angel with the flowing drapery of the early Tuscan school of the 16th century sculpture. A neatly moulded cornice completes the reredos. The tabernacle is bold and effective, its sides inlaid with panels of red marble, and around the door the same deep-hued material contrasts strikingly with the soft tone of the Caen stone. The door of the iron safe, with which the tabernacle is fitted, is a handsome specimen of engraved metal-work gilt, displaying the sacred monogram on a centre of blue enamel, and is ornamented with precious stones. In the arched head of the doorway a representation of the Crucifixion is finely carved. Above the tabernacle rises the throne of exposition, which is perhaps the most beautiful as it is the most prominent feature in the whole work. It is in the form of a small domed temple, carried by four square columns of red marble, the dome crowning neatly moulded pediments, and itself surmounted by a cross—all in the creamy-tinted Caen stone. These are the general features of a work which is creditable alike to architect and artist. The safe and door of the tabernacle (not included in the contract for the altar) were supplied by M. Chastier, of Paris, and some illuminated ornaments are by Mr. Hodgkinson, of Sunday's Well, Cork. Not the least gratifying circumstance about the execution of the new altar is its moderate actual cost, which is far below what seems to be generally believed in the city. Altar and tabernacle have been erected for £250, and the contributors to the fund subscribed for this purpose a short time since by parishioners and others will admit that they are good value for the money. A sum of over £60 was expended in the decoration of the sanctuary, and an ornamental communion-rail was also provided. A further sum of £100 is required to pay the balance of the contract for the altar, to suitably furnish the altar, and to defray the cost of illuminating the new railing. There ought to be no difficulty in procuring this small amount in so extensive and populous a parish, for a purpose which so nearly concerns the honour of religion, and the service of the sanctuary; nor can we suppose that a people proverbially zealous for the glory of God, in the decent and becoming maintenance of the Church's ministrations, will be slow to respond to so reasonable a demand.

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