

ST. COLMAN'S NEW CATHOLIC
CATHEDRAL,
DIOCESE OF CLOYNE.

THE corner-stone of this important building was laid by the Rt. Rev. Dr. Keane, bishop of the diocese, at Queenstown, on Wednesday, the 30th ult.

The site upon which the cathedral is being erected is that lately occupied by the old church, and is one of the grandest in Europe, its position being an elevation of some 100 ft. above the level of the sea, and about 300 ft. from the water's edge, commanding in full the picturesque beauty and grandeur of Cork Harbour. The whole range of elevated ground for by which the harbour is surrounded is of rocky formation, and in some places it enters of the water at very abrupt angles, whilst in others its descent is much more gradual. These circumstances render it oftentimes difficult, as well as expensive, to prepare uniform levels upon which to erect buildings of even moderate extent, and consequently for a building of such magnitude as the new cathedral, the preparation of the site was a heavy undertaking, and one upon which much time and labour was expended before it was ready for the masonry.

The old church was pulled down in February last, and from that time the excavations were pushed on with as much vigour as the peculiarities of the locality would admit of. An idea may be formed of the extent of the excavations from the fact that the rock had to be cut into at the level of the yard surface for the foundations on the north side, whilst for those on the south side excavations to a depth of 24 ft. had to be made before even a tolerable bearing stratum was obtained. The whole of the spaces to be occupied by the great and minor towers, as well as the trenches for the south aisle, transept, and side chapel foundations, were excavated to this depth. In all cases the rock was reached, and stepped, so as to counteract any sliding tendency that might arise from the natural inclination of its surface. The excavations were then filled up with Portland cement concrete to a height of 10 ft., to maintain the resisting qualities of the rock, and as much as possible to equalise the depth of masonry in the trenches.

The first stone of the building was laid on the 15th day of July, by the Right Rev. Dr. Keane, and from that time the works progressed steadily; so that on the 30th of September the south-west quoin of the tower reached the level on which the superstructure is to commence—a height of 24 feet from the bottom of the excavation.

The preparation of the design for the cathedral was entrusted to Messrs. Pugin and Ashlin, and the result has been most satisfactory.

From the inclined surface of the site, as well as its confined position—its extent being marked on three sides by roads, and one by private property—it was a matter of some difficulty to design a structure at once commensurate with the requirements of a cathedral, and within the limits of the prescribed outlay; but in the treatment of this, as well as of the general features of the designs, the architects have been eminently successful.

The design is Gothic, of a continental type. The plan comprises nave, with aisles and transepts north and south, three side chapels, chancel, apse, baptistry, organ gallery, towers and sacristies. The length is 190 feet in the clear by 106 feet across the transepts, and 70 feet in the clear between the aisle walls. The nave will be separated from the aisles and transepts by an arcade of seven arches on each side, extending to the chancel piers and from these to the apse; the chancel will be separated from the side chapels by arcades of three arches springing from couplet pillars.

The apse is a semi-decagon, of the full width of the nave, and each of its sides will be recessed to form supplementary chapels, and contain the bishop's throne. Confessionals will be formed in the thickness of the aisle walls—five in each,—their terminations forming a prominent feature in the external elevation of the building.

One great tower and spire, nearly 300 feet high, will occupy the south-west angle, and six small towers or turrets will run up the quoins of the transepts and the terminations of the nave walls at the west end. Triforiums will be formed over the aisles, and will be reached by stairs carried up through the turrets. The triforiums will be open to the nave by pillared couplets in continuation of the clerestory windows. The west ends and ends of transepts will have one window each, occupying their entire width, of most elaborate and novel design. The windows of the aisles, chancel, apse, baptistry, and clerestory are tastefully got up, and display much power in their arrangement. Generally, the whole design is one that, when carried out, will form one of the best examples of ecclesiastical architecture in the United Kingdom.

The works, up to the present, have been carried out under the architects by Mr. C. G. Doran, clerk of works; but when the foundations are levelled, a contractor will be named.

Taken from *Irish Builder*, Vol. X, 1868, p.247]