

THE WORLD'S DEBT TO THE IRISH

however as was pointed out to me a painting of blue over a ground of green that is very effective."

After the Book of Kells, to paraphrase an expression of Professor Saintsbury of Edinburgh with regard to the great Latin hymn the *Dies Irae*, no artist could say that any effect of illumination was as far as color goes unattainable, though few could have hoped to equal it and perhaps no one except Giotto and Raphael has fully done so. This is the acknowledged masterpiece of book illumination. The secret of its unquestionable power lies in the fact that it is a decoration of the copy of the Scriptures to which a great artist lent all the power of his genius caring neither for time nor pains, ready to spend all his inventive talent in order to produce an overwhelming effect. He succeeded marvelously in accomplishing this because of the fortunate combination of a great subject worthy of the highest efforts of human artistry, worked out with surpassing effectiveness, with a great artist or perhaps a group of artists, though probably it would be better to say with a great artistic people just at the height of its genius for expression in art. As it is, it remains the most surprising monument of a time and people so often supposed to be lacking in the powers needed for its accomplishment.