

## NOTES

town were despoiled by a united force of Danes and Leinster people; while in 996 the Danes of Dublin made yet another pillaging raid on both the town and Abbey. How the Gospels of St. Columba survived this century of violence and spoliation it is impossible to say: we only know that they were preserved in the church at Kells in the year 1006, when, according to the earliest historical reference to the Manuscript itself, 'the large Gospel of Colum Cille' in its cover of gold studded with precious stones, 'the chief relic of the western world' was stolen by night from the greater church at Kells, and found, after a lapse of some months, concealed under sods, destitute of its gold-covered binding. It is not unlikely that most of the leaves now missing from the Manuscript disappeared at the same time."

<sup>15</sup> It might easily be thought that this old-fashioned mode of decoration which was developed so charmingly in the Book of Kells and other old Irish manuscripts would now be entirely out of date and would seem in our day to be too primitive or even elementary to be used for decorative purposes. The English poet said, "A thing of beauty is a joy forever," and this remains as true as when Keats said it. The truth of it is exemplified by the fact that the decorations of the Book of Kells can still be used very effectively and the charm of line and color so delightfully elaborated by the old Irish artists, still have the strongest kind of appeal to the aesthetic sense of mankind. The Irish mode of decoration has been revived in the modern time with wonderful effect not only for books but for churches and halls and for tapestries, stained glass and other decorative adjuncts. A typical example of this is to be seen in old St. Patrick's Church in Chicago. This is the oldest church in Chicago down near the new Union Station in one of the grimeiest, busiest parts of the city. I remember it as it used to be in the old days because when one landed in Chicago on Sunday morning that was the nearest place to go to Mass. I shall never forget the delightful surprise I had when, wandering into old St. Patrick's one day, I found that it had been transformed into a veritable thing of beauty. An architect with genuine decorative sense had put in windows containing the motifs from the Book of Kells and had tinted the walls to correspond and had renewed the youth of what seemed an almost impossibly old church into something deserving to be seen for the very charm of it. I was not surprised to hear that the services on Sunday, even the Vespers, were well attended and that the mid-day Masses on week-days during Lent had to be held in both the upper and lower churches, because business people crowded so much to Mass in the deeply impressive old church. Neither was I surprised to learn that the music was of a character appropriate to the newly decorated church and that all Chicago had been attracted by it. After 1,200 years the charm of the old decorator of the Book of Kells was still a very living attraction, proving that humanity does not change so far as our sense of beauty is concerned, and a thing of beauty is indeed a joy forever. The same architect (Mr. Thomas O'Shaughnessy of Chicago) has applied similar wizardry to the details of the decoration of St. Catherine's Church at Spring Lake, New Jersey, though in this there was less scope for the application of Irish motifs. Very charming effects have been produced however and a striking demonstration of how modern are even the oldest of Gaelic ideas is made, because the Marquis Maloney

