

DERRALOSSARY.

REV. WM STOKES.

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THE RECTORY,
ANNAMOE,
CO. WICKLOW.

DEAR SIR,

We earnestly desire your kind help towards preserving the two Churches of Derrylossory or Glendalough Parish. A recent report of the eminent architect—Mr. Thomas Drew, M.R.I.A., states “this (Derrylossory) Church is in a deplorable condition . . . it has now reached a stage of structural decay and dilapidation, within a few years of absolute ruin.” (This is owing not to neglect but to its age).

The Parish is in the heart of the Wicklow Mountains, is very extensive and but thinly populated. The people are devoted to their Church and have always managed to keep the Parochial Funds in a satisfactory condition. £800 was the sum originally required; of this £120 has already been raised in the parish and applied. But to provide the balance is beyond the parishioners power, especially as this year urgent repairs to the glebe house are also necessary.

We are endeavouring to preserve a Church in this historic parish, where Divine Service has been continuously held for 1,400 years, and we would feel most thankful for any assistance in this good work which you may be so kind as to give.

Yours truly,

WM. STOKES, *Rector*,
JOHN FREEMAN, *Churchwarden*,
W. R. COLEMAN, *Parochial Treasurer*

Letter from the Archbishop of Dublin.

THE PALACE,
ST. STEPHEN'S GREEN,
DUBLIN, May 31st, 1898.

DEAR MR. STOKES,—

I am glad to hear that steps are being taken to raise funds for the repair of Derrylossory and Laragh Churches.

It appears plain from Mr. Drew's report that, in the case of Derrylossory Church, these repairs should be carried out with as little delay as possible. It would be a great pity that this old church which has so many memories of the past clinging to it, should be suffered to fall into a state of decay. The parishioners, I am aware, have been doing what they could to help, but the outlay for even necessary work will be considerable, and unless friends outside the parish come forward with liberal aid, it will be impossible to provide the amount required.

I heartily wish you and your people success in this undertaking, and in the appeal you are issuing.

Yours very truly,

J. F. DUBLIN.

Extract from IRISH ECCLESIASTICAL GAZETTE, November 5th, 1897.

The Rev. W. Stokes is endeavouring to execute repairs in both the churches—Laragh and Derrylossory, and also his schoolhouse.

How much it would cheer the heart of a worker in such a lonely parish as that of Derrylossory if Churchmen in Ireland would hold out a helping hand by assisting the work of restoration. We are proud of the Seven Churches (which lie in the parish. We love to reconstruct the Church life of the past in imagination, but can we not likewise build up the Church of the present with something more solid than imagination.

Short Sketch of Derrylossory Church, Parish of Glendalough (The Seven Churches), Co. Wicklow.



Derrylossory Church in 1820. From a drawing by Geo. Petrie.

EIGHT overwhelming waves of Danish hordes quenched the light which the Seminary and Churches of Glendalough shed among and far beyond the Wicklow Mountains in the early days of Celtic christianity. The city's subsequent fate was a sad one, "truly righteousness lodged in it, but now murderers;" for "more murders," says an old bishop, "were now committed in this valley than in any other place in Ireland, and it soon became a den of robbers and the resort of thieves." "*Spelunca latronum et fovea furum.*" But God left not Himself without witness. The locality never sank into quite unrelieved gloom. He suffered not the light to be put out in what was even then the ancient mother church of Derrylossory—while the defenced city passed into a ruinous heap, and the worship of its churches into a memory of the past; here, throughout the centuries,

The voice of prayer was never silent,
Nor died the strain of praise away.

There is something suitable in the druidic title Derrylossory, "Doire lasrach" "the oak grove of the flame." The flame ages have not quenched. Originally pagan, as when the priestesses of the heathen goddess Brigit fed the sacred fire, it changed to the gospel light in the days of S. Kevin in the Fifth Century, when the druid priestesses were formed into a christian sisterhood, and the heathen shrine into a missionary centre. Thus Derrylossory became "the principal and mother church in all our territory of the Fertyr." (Vartry, at the mouth

of which river Palladius and Patrick landed)—Some years ago one of her "daughters" Knock-a-Tempul (the Church on the hill) yeilded a rich find to the spade of a local antiquarian—An oblong Patrick's Bell, cased in gold, the carved head of an ecclesiastic, the tonsure is Irish; oyster shells painted with mineral paint like the paint in the catacombs, a glass chalice on the breast of a skeleton; kistvaens or stone coffins were among the treasures unearthed. Some coins scattered about showed approximately the date of this "daughter's" destruction, while bodies in a row under a fallen wall suggested the probable cause—a midnight raid and a hasty burial.

In Norman days on the Pope granting St. Patrick's Church, then outside the diocese of Dublin and the city walls, to Glendalough as its Cathedral, Derrylossory entered on a new lease of life, passing into the keeping of the chancellor along with her appendant chapel of Villa Citharæ or Harpystown, now Clara Vale or the Valley of the Harp. Sometimes the Archbishops, sometimes the Chancellors, sometimes the O'Tooles, appropriated the tithes down to 1728, when good Archbishop King handed them over to the Rector; Dean Swift bearing a benevolent part in the transaction. Could "Stella" have had any thing to do with it?—she owned property in the parish then. Curiously about this time also another celebrity was at the glebe—Sterne, who was nearly lost in a mill stream hard by, and if what the country folk thought to be a miracle had not intervened, Tristram Shandy would never have been written.

Luke (fourth Norman Archbishop) also stood our Church's good friend. An oolite stone from Montacute in Somerset was then greatly used; it built most old Bristol Churches and the castles on our own east coast. Luke employed it to beautify Christ Church, and with the same stone carried down on horses backs he restored Derrylossory.

The Archbishops while at their hunting seat of Castlekevin hard by, probably often officiated at the church. The garrison left at the castle too amply protected it, for the State paper entries of supplies point to a large force always kept there. These entries are quaintly dated, *sic*: "In the time of Fulke the archbishop from the finding of the Holy Cross to the Feast of St. Peter ad vincula." Then follow lists of cross bows, etc. On the castle passing over to the Tooles they became de facto patrons of the living, but, though a wild and lawless race they were ever good sons of the Church, and so at their hands Derrylossory received no harm. Subsequently in the days of the confiscations, arrived the Temple family (Lord Palmerston's ancestors). In the new comers Derrylossory once more found friends. They owned considerable property in the parish and were generously inclined towards the old church. The vestry under the chancel was their family vault, and a silver chalice still in use was the gift of Mrs. Mary Temple to the parish church of Durlosser.

Exactly 100 years ago the church again fell upon evil times, but again escaped. Her somewhat strange guardians this time were

Joseph Holt the noted rebel leader of '98, a protestant, and a parishioner, and his compatriot Luke O'Toole the blacksmith of Annamoe, a Roman Catholic but nevertheless churchwarden of Derrylosscry.

The "eternal flame" of the druid virgins has long ages ceased the oak wood vanished centuries ago to satisfy a Pope's enormous fine. Some stone mills around the graveyard walls alone keep pagan memories green, but still trimmed and burning. Derrylossory's solitary light shines on amid the beautiful Wicklow hills, and as it has long burned through the centuries that have gone, so may its sacred flame still live and glow through the centuries that shall be.

Authorities—G. T. Stokes, D.D. ; Canon O'Hanlon, O'Donovan (Ord. Survey), P. W. Joyce, LL.D. ; O'Higgins (on Druids), T. Drew, Esq., Repertorium Viride ; 4 Masters, Cotton's Fasti, etc.



Head of Ecclesiastic, excavated by H. Keogh, Esq., at Knock-a-Tempull Church.

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