

THE KELLS DRAGON.

THE KELLS EMBROIDERIES.

It is not improbable that many of the readers of the G.O.P. have had the opportunity of inspecting already at the "International Health Exhibition" the latest efforts to benefit the impoverished Irish, both gentle and simple, made by the founder of the "Donegal Industrial Fund." This endeavour owes its origin to a visit paid by Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Hart to Ireland, in 1883, when, finding so much poverty amongst the peasants of Donegal, and seeing their anxiety to have work, especially within the range of their cottage industries—spinning, knitting, weaving, and embroidery—Mrs. Hart considered that she would be helping them best by giving orders for knitted socks and stockings, for which she would endeavour to find a market in

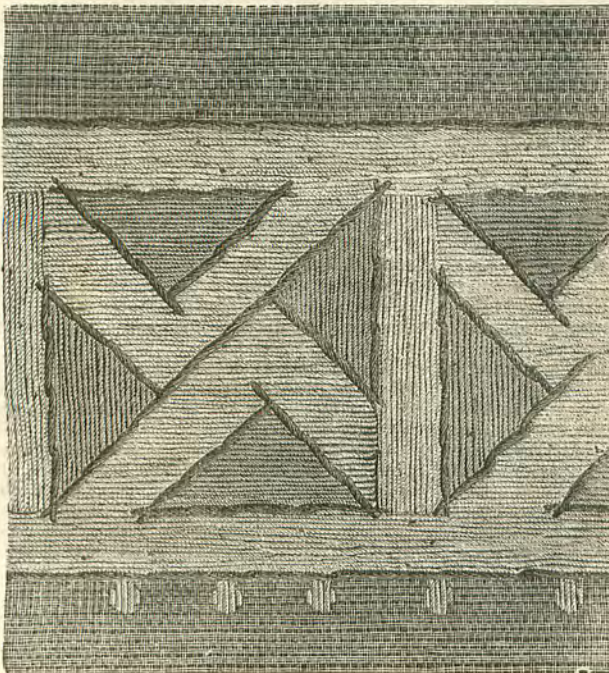
London. So well did the experiment succeed, that the foundress of the fund next turned her thoughts to the revival and extension of the manufacture of Irish homespun tweeds, produced in the cottages of Donegal. Both of these have been commercially successful ventures, many first-class firms in the West-end and wholesale manufacturers having given orders for the hand-knitted socks and stockings, and the demand for the homespun tweeds, dyed with vegetable dyes, far exceeding the present supply. In both these industries Mrs. Hart's own energy has trained her peasant workers to find their own dyes in the bogs and fields; and the hues, in consequence, are the perfection of beauty, in the ancient classic colours, not the modern shades of blues, golds, and yellows, terracottas, pinks, reds, and greens. She has also trained them to spin a two and three ply yarn, of great firmness and durability. The knitting, for which the peasant women of Donegal and the north have always been famous, is of the very best and most even quality; so much so, that it is difficult to convince many people that it is really hand-work, and not that by machine. The socks and stockings are knitted both in silk and wool, and range from the finest in both to the strongest and thickest, the dyes used being purely vegetable, and thus both safe and innocuous.

employing from 500 to 600 knitters in Donegal. The holdings there are small, from about five to ten acres; and the people are Irish-speaking and poor in the extreme. The Donegal mountain sheep are like the small Shetland sheep, the wool being of an exceedingly fine kind, and far superior to the Scotch variety.

These homespun tweeds form a very prominent branch of the work of the fund. They are one of the oldest of the Irish cottagers' industries, and though ill-made, rough, and loose in texture, their wearing qualities were something approaching the marvellous, eight years being thought a proper time for a coat of the "Claddagh-cloth" to last by an Irish peasant wearer.

When Mrs. Hart took up the subject, she gave special attention to the selection, stapling, carding, washing, spinning, and weaving of the wool, with such good results, that at the present time these homespun tweeds are being turned out from the old-fashioned hand-looms of the Irish mountain villages which can compete with the Scotch productions in pattern and colour, but even excel them in the quality of the wool. These flannels are quite new to the majority of English people, though well known to the visitors to Connemara and Galway, and the long coat of the peasant and the double cloak of the Irish girl have been immortalised by many a pen and brush.

The other old-time industry pertaining to the Irish cottage which it was hoped to revive was white embroidery, or "sprigging," on linen, cotton, and muslin; but, alas! the cheap Swiss or Madeira work has closed the market to this—at present, at least; and Mrs. Hart then originated the idea of the "Kells embroidery," in order to utilise the skill in embroidery for which Irish women have always been remarkable in all ranks of life. This seems almost the greatest effort of the clever foundress, for all ranks can contribute to this embroidery, as the cottage gives spinning and weaving, and the poor and sadly-impoorished Irish women of a high class can eke out slender incomes by the use of their clever hands. The idea of these embroideries is thoroughly Irish in design and materials, and at the Healtheries they were awarded the distinction of a gold medal when exhibited at the sign of "Ye Rose and Shamrock," in "Old London."



DESIGN FROM CELTIC MISSAL.

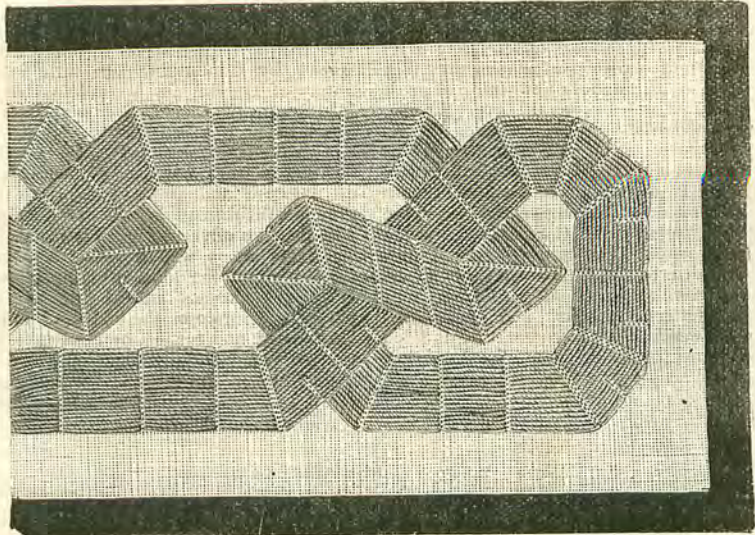
The result of these efforts has been that from September, 1884, to September, 1885, £700 has been paid to the Donegal workers for knitting, spinning, weaving, and embroidery, Mrs. Hart now

The special product of Ireland is flax, and this is acknowledged to be unrivalled in its purity and brilliancy. The next thing was to endeavour to dye the polished linen threads to make them approach the durability and beauty of tint so apparent in old embroidery worked in the East, as well as in France and Sicily. The success which has attended these efforts has been remarkable, the threads shining like silk, and the colouring at once delicate in tint and "old" in the best sense of the word.

I feel quite sure that Penelope and the fair Andromache never clothed themselves, in the old days of Greece, in more lovely shades of blue, red, and gold-colour than can be seen in these Irish dyes. The selection of designs, too, is most happy, as the stitches needed to carry them out are such that the gleam of the polished linen is admirably shown. A great variety of stitches is used, but they are mainly those that can be carried out on the surface of the material; and by this means broad and effective results are obtained, the expenditure of labour being relatively small and the cost of the materials rendered insignificant. The credit of this is attributed by Mrs. Hart to the able assistance of her friend Miss Aimée Carpenter, of Croydon, who has shown much happy inventive ability and artistic skill in adapting the Celtic designs and keeping up the Irish character of the work by selecting from such sources as the "Book of Kells," the "Durrow Bible," and other Celtic MSS. of the seventh century.

The "Kells embroidery" is divided into two branches—the "flax on flax" and the woollen embroideries. As regards the latter, block-printed flannels are used, an example being shown at the dépôt, 43, Wigmore-street, W., which is entirely the product of hand labour—hand-spun, hand-woven, and hand-embroidered, the design being hand-block-printed by the peasantry in their cottage homes.

We have illustrated four of the best and most remarkable designs from this embroidery, *i.e.*, the "Runic cable," the "Celtic missal," the "Kells dragon," and the "Kells beastie." The first is worked entirely in darned work, the second in darned work and outlining, the "Kells dragon" in blanket or button-hole stitch—*point croisé*, that kind of backstitch which forms a crossed pattern on one side of the material and two rows of back-



THE RUNIC CABLE.

stitches on the other. The body of the dragon is filled in with a description of lace-stitch called *point de Bruxelles*, which is really successive rows of buttonhole stitches. The "Kells beastie" is worked entirely in flat "couching," with an outline of gold thread, the colours used being yellow in two shades, and a brown of yellow hue. The "Runic cable" is worked throughout in one colour, and in this way is, I think, most effective.

But before I leave this most interesting subject, I must, I think, for the better understanding of it, say a few words about the "Book of Kells" and the Celtic designs which have been illustrated, for probably many of my readers have never heard of the first, and never seen nor thought of the last, yet both belong to a time when our history was most interesting. Kells is an ancient town of Ireland, co. Meath, and is thirty-nine miles from Dublin by railway. It was a royal residence down to the sixth century, when King Dermot MacKerval granted it to St. Columba, after which it became a great

Christian ecclesiastical centre. It was then called Ceanannus, which was shortened into Kenlis, and then into Kells. St. Columba was the great apostle of the Picts and Scots in the seventh century, and I daresay most of my readers will remember him as the founder of the great monastery at Iona, which, for nearly three centuries, was the centre of Christian life in the north of Great Britain. From this religious centre were planted nearly one hundred monasteries in Europe, as far south as Italy, and from it went out Celtic Christian missionaries to all parts, no less than fifty of them sealing their testimony to Christ with their blood. Eight of these suffered in Norway and Iceland.

When driven from Iona by those cruel invasions of the Danes which brought desolation to England also, the family or order of Columba moved to Kells, and there, for three centuries more, a successor of Columba resided. During these days Ireland was regarded as the centre of Christian knowledge and piety in Europe, and



THE KELLS BEASTIE.

in the immense monasteries all kinds of arts and languages were cultivated. Each monastery, in fact, was a great school, and amongst the things for which they were famous were the numbers of manuscripts they wrote—copies of the Holy Scriptures, of great beauty, which were dispersed over Europe, some of which still form the treasures of Continental libraries. St. Columba himself is said to have written three hundred manuscript copies of the New Testament with his own hand. Nothing could be more beautiful than some of these MSS., which were ornamented after entirely original patterns, peculiar to the early Irish Church, and different from all other MSS. of the time—initial letters, borders, and tessellated pages, by means of small compartments filled with diagonal lines, spirals, interlaced ribbons, knots, and a great variety of animals and birds.

Gold is sparingly used, and there are no body-colour pictures. This style, of which the "Book of Kells" and the Durham book are the finest specimens, was extensively spread by Columba. The first is in the library of Dublin the second in the British Museum. There are also some fine Celtic MSS. in the Lambeth library.

This Runic art is so independent and peculiar that we regard the designs with the keenest interest, and to the eye of the learned they tell their own tale. The involved serpent was the sign of their original faith, no doubt, and later on is wound round a peculiarly-shaped cross, the sign of their conversion. It was sometimes altered into the dragon or beast of our copy, the body and tail being lengthened, and twined, or even split, to vary the pattern. These designs are said to be Indo-Chinese, and mark the Aryan origin of the Celts. In these Celtic designs there are

no flowers or leaves; all designs are animal, or the peculiar strings or chords, knitted or plaited, probably borrowed from textiles or metal work, but in all cases peculiar, and not to be mistaken.

And in looking at them we shall be doubly interested if we remember that we are largely Celtic by descent, and if we may believe Mr. Matthew Arnold, it is only the Celtic mixture in us that enabled German England to produce such a poet as Shakespeare. From it we derive our sentiment and wit, our strength of imagination, and reverence for sacred things, our fondness for poetry and music, and our national bravery.

And as it will be seen that success depends on the unity of purpose in work, we may well long for the day when national differences shall cease and love and goodwill prevail.

DORA DE BLAQUIÈRE.

ONLY A GIRL-WIFE.

By RUTH LAMB, Author of "Her Own Choice," &c.

CHAPTER XXIV.



BEATRICE, Miss Pelham is dead."

Lord Carnelly was the speaker, and his wife the only listener to the news thus conveyed.

"At last," was her response. "Now there will be an end of the miserable pinching and cheeseparing which I have had to practise through all my married life. The money to which I am absolutely entitled will secure this result, and the children will be well provided for. I wonder whether my aunt will have left her savings to them or to me. She

has lived on next to nothing. She was too penurious either to spend on herself or to give to others. She never made me a present of anything that was worth a 'thank you' in her whole life. I suppose there can be no mistake about the news," added Lady Carnelly, turning quickly to her husband. "How did you hear it?"

"From Miss Pelham's lawyers. They wrote to me, thinking that I should break the tidings of your lamented aunt's decease less abruptly than could be done by a direct written communication addressed to yourself. The precaution was perhaps scarcely necessary."

"You need not be satirical, Lindsay. I am no hypocrite, and it is scarcely likely that I should be much distressed by the death of a relative who cared nothing for me, and who kept me out of all she could and as long as she could."

"Miss Pelham could scarcely be expected to die before her time in order

to accommodate you, Beatrice," said Lord Carnelly.

"Who ever insinuated anything so ridiculous?" replied his wife, whose sense of approaching wealth rendered her more than usually lofty in tone and manner. "She might have helped us from her hoards if she had chosen, but people of my aunt's miserly disposition never can appreciate those of more generous natures than their own."

Sadly as Lord Carnelly listened to his wife's hard words, he could not help feeling that they had a ludicrous side. For a woman like Lady Carnelly, with whom self had always been pre-eminent, to talk of generous natures was almost too absurd. Her lavish expenditure which had brought no home enjoyment, but involved her husband in debt and caused him to live in perpetual dread of importunate creditors, was dignified as generosity by the lips of her who had indulged in it.

Lord Carnelly hardly dared to hope that Miss Pelham's death would bring much relief to him. The money was strictly secured to his wife, and he feared that she might refuse to free him from his embarrassments.

Whilst he mused, Lady Carnelly was silent for a short time, then, turning a triumphant face towards her husband, she said, "Lindsay, I have been calculating how much Miss Pelham must have saved during the last forty years, for she came into her mother's property so long since. I shall very likely get—"

The interruption was abrupt and stern. "You had much better give up calculating on anything beyond what is absolutely certain. I do not think Miss Pelham would add a penny to it," said Lord Carnelly.

"She might have passed me by if there had been anyone else for it. But I am her nearest relative, and the children come next. My aunt had a good deal of family pride, which would, I think, prevent her from overlooking her own flesh and blood."

"Well, Beatrice, you knew Miss Pelham better than I did. The fact of her wealth often kept me from paying her the attentions that I should have liked to render to the solitary old woman. I did not wish to be misunderstood. If you do get the large savings you spoke of, I trust you will dedicate a few thousands of them to paying our debt to my sister. Poor Ida! The thought that her little fortune went because we were living beyond our means is a perpetual trouble to me."

"Our debt!" exclaimed Lady Carnelly. "You surely do not consider that I have any share in that. Have you forgotten that, when in India, you reminded me that you were Ida's guardian, not I. The idea that I shall find money to replace the fortune for which you are accountable is a little too much."

Lady Carnelly might have considered herself a deeply injured woman, to judge by the expression of her face as she spoke. It quickly changed as, glancing towards the window, she exclaimed, "The blinds have not been drawn down. What will people think of us, if there is a notice of Miss Pelham's death in the *Times*? There may be if the lawyers inserted it at once. Why did you not order the blinds to be pulled down?"

"As the bereavement was on your side of the house, I deemed it better to leave all melancholy details to you, Beatrice. However, I will ring if you wish it," was Lord Carnelly's reply.

It was sarcastic enough, and spoken in the bitterness of his heart, as he thought of the way in which his one request for help had been answered.

The refusal of Lady Carnelly to relieve him from the weight of responsibility on account of Ida's fortune meant more than the continuance of the burden.

What were his troubles and anxieties to her? And yet he had brought them upon himself sooner than refuse her even an unreasonable indulgence, for he had loved this selfish woman who