“Early Christian Art in Ireland.”

Not long since Messrs. Chapman & Hall published a work under the above title, which contained much valuable information, and many highly interesting illustrations to the book-lover. After elaborate reference to the renowned “Book of Kells,” the work continues:—“From the school in which such work as this was produced, it is natural to suppose many branches sprang. In Ireland we have the ‘Book of Durrow,’ in King’s Co., a fragment of the Gospels, also said to be in the handwriting of Columba, and in which there are illuminations of the same style of art, though inferior in beauty of execution.* In this manuscript, at the close of the first and apparently the oldest portion, we find the usual request of the Irish scribe for a prayer from the reader, which when translated runs thus:—

“I pray thy blessedness, O holy presbyter, Patrick, that whosoever shall take this book into his hands may remember the writer, Columba, who have myself written this Gospel in the space of twelve days, by the grace of our Lord.’

“There are fewer varieties of design in this book than in the ‘Book of Kells,’ but those it does display belong to the most characteristic and archaic style of Irish Christian art. Such are the patterns of right lines described.

* The specimen accompanying this article is the page preceding the Epistle of Jerome in this volume, and offers a fine example of the Celtic design called trumpet pattern, or divergent spiral.
Amateurs and Bookbinding.

In his introduction to "Bookbinding for Amateurs," Mr. W. J. E. Crane says: "Bookbinding is comparatively a modern art. The books of the ancient and classic nations were, as most people are aware, long rolls of skins or of Egyptian papyrus, which, when not in use, were rolled up and kept each in a species of circular box. When wanted, the roll had simply to be drawn out of its case and unrolled. The Jews use to this day, in their synagogue services, similar rolls of vellum, whereon is written the Pentateuch in Hebrew characters.

"Doubtless, the earliest specimens of bookbinding were those produced in the Eastern branch of the Roman dominions, usually called the Byzantine Empire. These were generally of metal—gold, silver, or gilt copper. Of course, this kind of binding was produced by the goldsmith, silversmith, and jeweller, the part of the bookbinder proper being confined to fastening the leaves together and securing them in the metal cover. Of these ancient bindings, some few specimens are still extant.

"It is difficult to trace the transition of the parchment from the roll form to that of leaves.

"In the reign of Charlemagne the art of bookbinding made rapid strides. Italian designers and artificers were employed, and we read of the caskets in which books were preserved as being of solid gold, and covered with precious stones.

"The next great step in the history of bookbinding was the general adoption of leather as a covering. It is not known precisely who introduced leather binding, nor the date of its introduction. It would seem to us to follow naturally on the use of vellum. To Matthias Corvinus, the celebrated literary and chivalrous King of Hungary, the first use of morocco is credited. This may be true of the dressed skin of the goat (morocco), but deerskin had been employed long previous in the monastic binderies. Richard Chandos, Bishop of Chichester, mentions, in his will, as early as the year 1253, a 'Bible with a rough cover of skins;' and the 'Accounts of the Households of Edwards I. and II.,' contained in four MS. volumes, presented to the Society of Antiquaries by Sir Ashton Lever, were in the original binding of calf-skin, dressed like parchment, but with the hair on, except where it had been removed to give space for the written inscription.

"Soon after the introduction of vellum, it came into general use (circa 1460), almost ousted velvet, except for livres de luxe. Very soon we find the sides of such vellum books covered with an elaborate stamping of various designs—sometimes crowded and without merit; at others, so sharp, clear, and well defined, that they have never been excelled, and scarcely rivalled, by any modern workmen. When we consider that these early binders could not have the aid of the powerful arming presses of to-day, we may well wonder how they managed to impress the large and elaborate blocks with the success to which they attained.