

The Pattern of Mullinakill

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It is a characteristic of every Irishman that he loves his native parish with a devotion and loyalty that to strangers must seem fanaticism. And there is no aspect of parish interest so near to his heart as veneration for its Patron Saint, more particularly if a Pattern Day survives. It is extraordinary that so many of these old Pattern Days still do survive in a world of ever shifting materialistic attractions. Their observance should be fostered for, because they keep those at home and abroad united in spirit in their love for their native parish.

In the South of Co. Kilkenny, in the parish of Rosbercon, one of these "patterns" still flourishes. This is the pattern of Mullinakill.

The Saint venerated here is Saint Molaing, who is, in every sense a local Saint. He was born, it is believed in Listerlin and later lived the life of a recluse in the hills of Mullinakill. Of the early Celtic Saints little of authentic data has come down to us, but tradition has, of course, made St. Molaing a very tangible reality even to this day.

In Butler's "Lives of the Irish Saints we get the outline of his life. He lived in the 7th Century. From the solitary life of a hermit in Mullinakill he went to found a monastery on the banks of the Barrow, and gave his name to that place — St. Mullins. And later on he became Bishop of Ferns. These are the established truths concerning St. Molaing, so far as we know them. But what Irishman or woman is content with bare facts? Generations of imaginative Celts have given us a much more homely picture of their Patron. It is a healer and a simple man of God that he is remembered among his native hills — as one who is approachable and who will not fail to present to God the petitions of his neighbours.

Tradition tells us that St. Molaing left Listerlin and retired to a cave in the hills at Mullinakill. There he

communed with God and led the life of prayer and contemplation. This cave can still be pointed out. Further down in the Valley is Tobar Molaing — the Saints holy well over Crann Molaing — reputed to have been planted by the Saint. It has renewed itself over and over again as can be plainly seen. The wood of this tree is regarded as a talisman against fire, and people take twigs off its hallowed branches to guard their property against fire. The water of the well is reputed to contain a cure for ulcers. Tradition tells us that the Saint suffered from them himself, and used the water of the well to heal them.

Beside the well is a huge, flat rock which is roughly like an altar, over it Crann Molaing spreads a protective canopy, and it was on this slab that Mass was often celebrated. Long years after St. Molaing's death Mass was celebrated here by the Cistercian Monks from Jerpoint Abbey. Mullinakill was under the jurisdiction of Jerpoint, and because the Cistercians celebrated Mass in Mullinakill on the feast of their own St. Bernard (20th August) in time it came to pass that the 20th August was accepted as the pattern day of St. Molaing too.

At another point lower down in the Valley is a most authentic and interesting ruin of a little Church. This Church is included in the observance of St. Molaing Pattern. A visit is paid here and prayers said. The ruin is under the care of the R.A.S. It is rectangular in shape, $44\frac{1}{2}'$ x $18\frac{1}{2}'$. The ogee-shaped windows are faced with granite, and in the south wall is a granite-faced sacarium. An old graveyard once surrounded this ruin, but it was at some stage, unfortunately uprooted. There are, however, some graves in the interior of the ruin. Ivy covers it protectively now, as if in reverence for the sanctity of its past; and within its precincts the sighful thoughts of a bye gone age whisper evocatively to us.

These then are the relics for which generations of good Mullinakill faith have based their Pattern Day. Recently the local people undertook a scheme of recon-

struction on the Site. From an overgrown hillside they have made a Shrine and erected a Statue of St. Moling which was commissioned at their own expense. But these beneficial works have in no way interfered with the atmosphere of peace.

This is holy ground. Who can stand here and scoff? Spread before the eye lies a lonely valley, over which Molaing must have looked thousands of times, and praised God for its loveliness. And in the glorious harvest days of August, as the pilgrims look over the same valley, they will realise that God has not been outdone in generosity — that He has given them in the harvest His thanks for what they have done to honour His Saint. And as they look at the Altar Slab, where so often Mass was celebrated in the peace of the hills, let them pray for a very weary and storm-racked world, the age old prayer of the Church "Da pacem Domine in diebus nostris".

The Parade

MARY KENEALY

Up to the 17th century the Parade was known as Castle Street. By the time of Rocque's Map, 1758, it was officially called the Parade but the old name was still used at least up to the end of the century. The locality was from an early time associated with the theatre and dramatic performances of all kinds. As a result many of the early Inns and Taverns were also situated here. Mr. J. G. A. Prim records "The Goat's Beard" where the players who performed in Owenson's Theatre used to stay and at an earlier date "The Smulkin Tavern" also in Castle Street. (1)

I would like to say a few words about the environs of the Castle before dealing with the individual houses. In 1766 Walter Butler of Garryricken, succeeded to the title of de jure 16th Earl of Ormond. He found the castle a ruin and immediately set about restoring it. In