

CONSECRATION OF ST. JOSEPH'S CHURCH BOYLE.

We extract the following from the report of Rev. J. Healy's sermon, which appeared in the "Roscommon Herald." It will be read with deep interest and great profit:—

Few spots in Ireland can vie in natural beauty with the rich valley that meets the stranger's eye as the train sweeps into the station at Boyle. Nothing is wanting that can lend a charm to the rich and various landscape—fertile plain and frowning mountain, sun-lit lake and glancing river, stately woods and arbour islands, fields that are rich with the maturity of harvest, cottages that tell of an industrious people, and ruins that speak of a glorious past. There was just one thing wanting—something to remind us of God—something worthy of the rich beauty of this glorious landscape—something that would bear the Cross upon its summit—something that would speak as eloquently of the faith and piety of the present as yonder ivy mantled ruins testify to the religion of the past, but now that want has been supplied, that work has been nobly done. A new feature has been added to the landscape—a thing of beauty has grown up that attracts the gaze of every passer-by, even this stately edifice with its fair proportions, and massive walls, and pictured windows, and colonnaded aisles, and marble altars. This house has not been built by a people whose faith is dead; these strong walls bear witness that they have no fear for the future: these rich marbles proclaim that they love the beauty of God's House, and that the labour of their lives is sweetened and the burden of their hearts is lightened by the spirit of immortal hope. Ah, me, what memories throng my mind to-day when I look back on the past, standing here as it were in the midst of the memorials that recall the early saints of Ireland—beside the graves of the holy and the brave and the wise within the hearing of that river whose waters were blessed by their hands, whose murmurs made music in their ears, and will mingle with their names for ever. It is recorded in the Tripartite life of Saint Patrick that he came "from Sligo through Tirrerrill to visit the territory of Moylurg, and arriving at the river which flows from Lough Gara, he tried to cross over in his chariot or car. But the ford was deep and rough, and the chariot was overturned, and the saint himself fell into the stream at a spot thenceforth called the ford of the chariot near the spot where the railway now crosses the river at the old churchyard of Assylun. When the saint got out of the river he told the bystanders that the eastern part of the river thenceforward should not produce much fish, but that the western part of the stream towards Gara should be fishful as before. "And why?" said the bystanders. "Because," replied the Saint, "In after days a son of life shall come, for whose sake the water will be fruitful in that place." This son of life was the great Saint Columcille, who loved much the beauty and repose of this sweet valley and its pleasant waters. His biographer, St Adamnan, tells how on one occasion when the saint was sitting with his religious brethren near the spot where the river enters the lake, he foretold the death of a poor poet named Cronanus, who was shortly afterwards killed by his enemies. He founded the monastery at Eus MacNeirc, afterwards called Assylun, so early as 560-3, before his departure for Iona. It seems to have been founded at the very spot where St Patrick's chariot was overturned, which was thus doubly sanctified by the two greatest of our Irish saints. Columcille seems to have loved especially the pleasant islets of Lough Key. He seems to have sojourned near the lake for a considerable time and fished in the river. More than once he foretold his brethren when and where they would find salmon in the stream. He founded also a house of his order on Inchmacerin whose ruins still exist. Like many other saints of the period, they loved the quiet beauty of these islands which at once afforded them security and peace, where they might dwell with God above, singing his praises in harmony with the wavelets that washed the borders of their island homes. He seems, too, for he loved the music of his native land, to have a bard amongst the brethren, and loved to hear the strains of the harp borne over the calm waters, for they reminded him of the angels whose sweet strains are heard in the heavenly city. All through the evil centuries of the Dane's invasions, Columba's houses at Assylun and Inchmacerin seem to have continued to be the peaceful retreats of holy souls who practised the virtues of their holy founder on the banks of this river and on the lovely island in the lake. But the days were evil, disorders grew up in the Church, the spirit of charity had grown cold. Then God raised up a reformer in the spirit of St Malachi, and St Malachi made use of the children of St Bernard to effect his purpose. On his way to Rome he stopped at Clairvaux, and was so edified by the zeal, piety, and humility which he saw there that he left some of his companions behind him to be trained in that great school of holiness. These were the men who were sent to found the great convent of Mellifont in 1133. From Mellifont the sons of St Bernard came to Boyle about the year 1148, and first established themselves at Grelloch. Shortly afterwards in 1161, that magnificent building whose ruins are the wonder of every stranger and the pride of every Boyle man, was founded through the munificence of the great family of the MacDermots who then ruled over Moylurg, Artieb, and Terthuail. It needs no words of mine to describe it, the ruin speaks for itself, and proclaims the skill of our native workmen, the munificence of our native princes, and the piety of the Celtic people before any Norman flag ever floated on the free air of Ireland. Our native annalists record the solemn dedication of the Church as having taken place in 1220, for a work so vast, so richly decorated, and so expensive, required several years for its completion. Just six hundred and sixty-two years ago and yonder cloisters were thronged with an imposing array of monks and prelates and nobles and people for the dedication of the monastic Church, was always a great event with the Cistercians. The details of the ceremony are not handed down to us, but we know what it was like from the description which have of the dedication of the Abbey Church of Mellifont some sixties years before. And we may be sure that the chiefs and ladies and vassals of the O'Connors, MacDermots, and MacDouglas, in attendance of the princes who were assembled at the dedication of Mellifont. On that occasion Morogh O'Loghlin, the High King of Ireland, who was present at the ceremony, made an offering of 140 cows, sixty ounces of gold, and a townland near Drogheda. Dowd O'Carroll, Prince of Oriel, gave sixty ounces of gold also, and the Lady Der-vorgilla, the "degenerate daughter of Erin," gave in her own name sixty ounces of gold, a golden chalice for the high altar, and vestments for nine other altars. Yet the falsest of women in spite of her treason did not lose her reward. After her flight with MacMorogh she came as a penitent before that high altar of the Church, where in 1193 she died in peace, and was buried in its cloister. Such was the liberality of king and ladies princes and people in the old time. We need no history to tell us their works remain, and while there is a stone in yonder stately arches, neither voice nor pen need proclaim the piety and liberality of our fathers. And I am told that ancient spirit has not departed from amongst us, that there have been children of this parish whose offerings made to this new church have been as splendidly liberal as anything that is recorded in our annals, and they were not princes and nobles with large estates and revenues but they were the children of people who acquired a competence by honourable enterprise, and with large liberality made their thanks-offerings to the Giver of all good gifts. If living, may they prosper long, and may their names be long remembered at these altars which their right hands have built up to the Lord. In old times it was one of the greatest privileges of the benefactors of religious houses that they were buried in the church or the cloisters amongst the members of the community, and were sharers in all the prayers and the masses that were offered for their souls. Ah, what a long list our annals give of the prelates, and priests, and scholars, and chiefs and ladies, who sleep in yonder abbey. I may not tell them all, nor a tithe of them, but what we read of in one single year will help us to judge. On the 24th of April, 1244, died Donogh O'Conor, Bishop of Elphin, in pilgrimage in the island of Innisclothraun, in Lough Ree, but his remains were brought hither, no doubt at his own desire, and were buried in the monastery at Boyle. In the same year, 1244, died Donogh Mor O'Daly, whom the annalists styled the Virgil of the Gael—a man who was never surpassed, they tell us, and never will be surpassed in poetry, and he was buried in the same monastery, where he was buried in the harvest of the year, after triumphing over the devil and the world. A few weeks later died the wife of Mac-Costello, the daughter of the Ultonian Earl, in whose veins was the royal blood of England, and she, too, was buried in the monastery of Boyle. May their souls rest in peace. With all their faults they had strong hands and noble hearts; they were faithful, brave, and generous, and so God forgave them their faults, and gave them the victory of penance and unction at their death. Centuries rolled up, and England lost the faith, and the children of St Bernard were driven from their quiet cloister, and the broad acres which they tilled, and which their labour had made fertile was given to the conquering stranger. The profane and pillaged church became the garrison for the foe, and their horses were stabled in its courtyard and cloisters. It was the will of Heaven, and I will not this day say one bitter word; but I cannot help telling you how bravely and nobly the Cistercians of Boyle Abbey died in defence of their faith. The account has not been published; I found it in an old MS.

of our College. St. Gelasius O'Ullinan, Abbot of Boyle, was the eldest of seven brothers who belonged to a noble family in Ulster. His second brother, Eugene, afterwards became abbot of Boyle; the third brother, James, became abbot of Assaroe, near Ballyshannon; the fourth was called Cormac; the fifth, Bernard, became abbot of Boyle after his two brothers. He died in 1630, and it was he told this story to the writer of this account. The sixth, Nicholas, succeeded to the family property; the seventh, John, became Bishop of Raphoe. Gelasius, Abbot of Boyle, was apprehended for preaching and defending the Catholic faith. He was first tortured, but rack, and wheel, and thumbscrew failed to make him deny his faith. Then they tried promises—rewards, honours, and dignities were offered if he only consented to deny the Pope's supremacy. But he remained unmoved. Then he was condemned in the city of Dublin to be hanged, drawn, and quartered. On his way to the scaffold he converted no less than 500 bystanders who had denied their faith; yet the horrid sentence was executed outside St. Mary's gate by order of the Viceroy, De Grey. In the year 1680, another Cistercian, Eugene O'Mucharan, Abbot of the Holy Trinity, was executed along with him, but not quartered. The people eagerly crowded round the scaffold in spite of their sufferings; every drop of the martyr's blood was soaked up by handkerchiefs and other clothes which were treasured up as relics. Yet two of his brothers afterwards became Abbots of Boyle, ready if needed to give their lives for Christ. In 1685, brothers Malachy and Patrick, both Cistercian Monks of Boyle Abbey, were hanged in Dublin; one of them was quartered and disembowelled whilst he was alive, and a lance driven through the body of the other from neck to groin. Rather let us rejoice that the night is passed and the day is come. The quickening breath of Heaven has passed over all the land. It is radiant with the bloom of a second spring. There has been a resurrection of the dead. The dry bones have been gathered together, flesh has grown over them and skin has covered them. You have won the victory of patient endurance. You have cast off our bonds, and risen to your feet and felt that you are strong and free. The martyrs' blood has not been shed in vain, the prayers of a long-suffering people have been heard. Heaven thus strengthened our weakness, and blessed our labours. There is evidence of it in everything in the churches, schools, and convents, that cover all the land, but nowhere have we more striking proof of this awakened life and youthful energy than in this parish. When the Jews who had returned from their captivity, and were laying the foundations of their temple which had been overthrown, many of the ancients who had seen the glory of the former temple wept when they compared it with that which they were now about to build; but all the people shouted with a great shout of joy, and praised the Lord because the foundations of the temple were laid. You, my brothers, have not only laid the foundations but completed the work, and completed it so nobly that no elder amongst you need weep when he contrasts it even with the splendid ruins of yonder stately Abbey. No, your hearts should be filled with pure joy and thanksgiving—the hearts of the pastors and of all the people. From my heart I congratulate all those who helped to do this good work, but especially I congratulate the venerable Pastor who has for so many years ruled over the good people of this parish. His joy this day should be complete, whenever it shall please God to call him, he will not go before his Master empty-handed. Like Holy Simeon he can say "nunc dimittes servum tuum, Domine, secundum verbum tuum in pace." His eyes have seen the glory of the Lord enthroned on this altar, and his happiness is now complete. His reward is before him, and his work will long remain after him. And now just one word of warning, my brethren. When the Lord appeared to King Solomon after the dedication of the temple, he warned him—if you and your children revolting, shall turn away from following me, and will not keep my commandments and my ceremonies which I have set before you, I will take away Israel from the face of the land, and the temple which I have sanctified to my name, I will cast out of my sight, and Israel shall become a by-word amongst all the people." That threat, too, has been accomplished, and has been frequently accomplished, when the people forgot their God, and kept not his law. God grant that it may never be accomplished in your case; may the Lord with his own right hand keep you from evil advisers, and guide you in the right path; may His holy word be always a lamp to your feet; may you continue to keep His pastors as your counsellors, and so may your children unto latest generations continue to worship the Lord in the glorious temple which their fathers have built to His name.

A BEAUTIFUL LEGEND,

According to an old, old story, there was a day when the Holy Apostle St. Peter passed along the golden streets of the Heavenly City with a look of pain on his face, as if he was sorely troubled, and St. John meeting him, thus inquired what ailed him.

"Hast thou not seen here the faces of many who seem scarcely fitted for so glorious a home?" replied St. Peter sadly. "Little has it cost me to enter here, and yet we know that Heaven must be gained by many a battle bravely won, by many a struggle and pain and temptation conquered."

"But dost thou guard the keys of Heaven?" said St. John.

"I do. But though such is my post, it is St. Joseph who causes me this distress. No matter how sinful his life may be, if in death a person cries to him in faith and love, he brings them here. How they enter I can scarcely tell, for they do not pass the gate at which I stand; but I see them here, and it perplexes me, and I must speak to our Divine Master, lest he might think me careless in my guarding the entrance to the Heavenly City."

St. John smiled. "Thou art Peter, and the Lord Jesus loves thee well," he said, "and yet I tell thee if St. Joseph plead against thee thy cause is lost."

The great Apostle betought then of the night upon which St. John had rested his head upon the Sacred Heart of Jesus when he was on earth. Surely the love of the Lord for John was as great as He would feel for His foster-father.

"Come with me," he said, "thou hast ever been called the Beloved Apostle; no fear but the Master will listen to me if thou art by my side."

Together they stood before Jesus, who had Mary and Joseph on either side of Him.

"What is it, Peter?" said the gentle voice.

"I am troubled, dear Lord," replied the Apostle, raising his eyes to the Divine face. "It seems to me scarce just to those who serve Thee well on earth if so many who spend their life in sin gain Heaven after all. And yet it is St. Joseph who does this. All who call to him when they have to die are sure of his protection, and he brings them here among Thy martyrs and Thy saints."

"O Peter! dost thou not yet know that when I pardon the greatest sinner he wins life eternal? No soul is brought to Heaven by St. Joseph which has not first sought Me, and been cleansed by the blood which flowed on Calvary for the salvation of the world."

"Lord, I know that those who die in Thy grace shall surely see Thee," replied St. Peter. "I know that thus the dying thief found an entrance here, and many many more. Yet, surely, it is not well for the Church on earth that St. Joseph should so easily gain admittance for all who cry to him. How, then, will sinners believe in the punishment of sin, and the judgment severe and just, which follows death?"

"True, Peter," said my Master. "yet what can I refuse my Father, who guarded my childhood on earth, who worked and suffered for Me when I was a weak and helpless babe?"

The Apostle bowed his head, still but half convinced, and seeing this, the sweetest smile illumined the face of the Saviour.

"Ah, Peter, Peter," He said, "thou wouldst have none here but my chosen few, who gain Heaven by true and faithful service. Dearly I prize this service, justly I reward it; but know also that I give Heaven for love, that I, who suffered so much to save mankind, will have here in glory every sinner who dies contrite; nor do I wish that one should be shut out, however guilty, however miserable, who has turned in his last moments to Me, the lover of sinners. Does this mercy, indeed, displease thee? Wouldst thee choose a company of thine own, and not admit those who cry, 'Jesus, Mary, Joseph, as they pass from earth?'"

Then the Apostle bowed low at the feet of his Saviour and King—

"Lord, Thou knowest best," he murmured; "Thy Will I bend, and to that Will I bend?"