

**MONACELLA:
A POEM**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649651245

Monacella: A Poem by Agnes Stonehewer

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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HENRY S. KING & CO., LONDON.

1876.

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The Legend of St. Monacella.

IN a very retired spot on the banks of the Tanat is Pennant Melangell—the shrine of St. Monacella, or, as the Welsh style her, Melangell. Her legend relates that she was the daughter of an Irish monarch, who had determined to marry her to a nobleman of his Court. The Princess had vowed celibacy. She fled from her father's dominions, and took refuge in this place, where she lived fifteen years without seeing the face of man. Brochmail, Prince of Powys (see p. 459), being one day hare-hunting, pursued his game till he came to a thicket, when he was amazed to find a virgin of surprising beauty, engaged in deep devotion, with the hare he had been pursuing under her robe, boldly facing the dogs, who had retired to a distance howling, notwithstanding all the efforts of the sportsman

THE LEGEND OF ST. MONACELLA.

to make them seize their prey. Even when the huntsman blew his horn, it stuck to his lips. Brochmail heard her story, and gave to God and to her a parcel of lands to be a sanctuary to all that fled there. He desired her to found an Abbey on the spot; she did so, and died abbess, at a good old age. She was buried in a neighbouring church, called Pennant. Her hard bed is shown in a cleft of a neighbouring rock. The legend is perpetuated within the church by some rude wooden carvings of the Saint, with numbers of hares scuttling to her for protection. They were called St. Monacella's Lambs. Until the seventeenth century no one would kill a hare in the parish, and much later, when one was pursued by dogs, it was firmly believed that if any one cried "God and St. Monacella be with thee!" it was sure to escape. In the churchyard are two mutilated recumbent effigies, representing St. Monacella and Jorwerth Drwyndwm, or "Edward with the broken nose."—*Cliffe's "North Wales."*—*Timbs' "Abbeys and Castles."*

MONACELLA.

A^{ODH} was king long since across the seas,
Where life was slowly smouldered out amongst
A lonely race, to whom the outer world—
Whence few returned who ever ventured out—
Was twinned with Death : tho' he, the king, had come,
From long and weary wanderings, home to rule.

A withered, lean, and dwindling man, whose soul
And frame, seemed thrust within the narrowing bonds
Of too much wealth ; starved with the great excess,
Crushed with his gold, and with his love of it,
And holding life but scarcely worth his coin.

Not his the gathering of the golden hoard,
For only late in life he reached the throne :
The last and most rebellious of four sons,
He left the parent roof in early years,
And wandering, hardly pittance, hard of heart,
Pushed on a restless way through life, and lost,
Nor cared to seek, intelligence of home.

At length a sickness of the land through which
He passed, clave to him. Long and hard he fought
The gathering force of fever in the blood :
He tarried not, tho' men seemed trees, and trees,
As drunken men, swayed with his reeling brain :
He grasped, with great despair he grasped his staff,
And staggered on, and lastly, staggering, fell.

The world is wide, life's path is wide, and men

In various domino pass to and fro,
Each far from other, till there be great need :
Then is the mask forsworn, and man with man
Clasps hands, and finds the brotherhood of race.
Joy separates a crowd ; each goes his way,
At most, with his few folk to have his jest
And wear his pleasure out : but woe bands men
Together, for the one who trips and falls
Draws many a wandering herd to watch and help,
Whilst he who saunters safe, wins no regard,—
Thus chanced the stricken pilgrim on a friend.

'Twas passing sweet that spot where he fell down,
Sweet with the blowing fragrance of the wind,
Which, gathering store of perfume from each flower,
Breaks like the sea-shore waves upon the land.