

The Children of Fochlut Wood.

AMONG the many poems from the pen of that eminent Irish Catholic poet, Aubrey De Vere, none stand forth with greater pre-eminence than the one entitled "The Children of Fochlut Wood." Whoever has become acquainted with the writings of this distinguished author, must have noticed that he is imbued with a deep love for his race, his country and his God. Especially does he show this in the present legend and by combining the beauties of poetry with the various incidents and tales which arise, he makes this subject a suitable one for brief consideration.

The story is briefly as follows: St. Patrick makes way into Fochlut wood by the sea, the oldest of Erin's forests, whence there had been borne unto him, then in a distant land, the Children's Wail from Erin. He meets there two young virgins, who sing a dirge of man's sorrowful condition. Afterwards they lead him to the fortress of the king, their father. There are sung two songs, a song of vengeance and a song of lament; which ended, St. Patrick makes proclamation of the Advent and of the Resurrection. The king and all his chiefs believe with full contentment and the maidens go to a convent where they live a life of sacrifice.

In the beginning of the Legend De Vere makes a most beautiful comparison, by comparing Fochlut Wood to the life of man. After dwelling on the darkness, density and gloom of Fochlut Wood he goes on to say,

"O life of man, how dark a wood art thou!
Erring how many track thee till despair,
Sad host, receives them in his crypt-like porch at nightfall."

St. Patrick travelled many days through the wood, being continually haunted by a doleful wail, which he says is the cry of the Irish race, calling forth to him for Christian faith. The Saint immediately advances towards the wailing and

"Ere long they came to where a river broad,
Swiftly amid the dense trees winding, brimmed
The flower-enamelled marge, and onward bore
Green branches 'mid its eddies.