

This Legend has been justly called one of the most pathetic pieces of poetry in our language. Again, if we look for simplicity of description and real elegance of narrative, the piece entitled, *The Founding of Armagh Cathedral*, stands unsurpassed. If, however, we are seeking the magnificent and the sublime, the Strivings of Saint Patrick on Mount Cruachan will satisfy our desires. This poem is a mysteriously tinted word-picture that cannot be surpassed, as to dramatic delineation and force of expression, by anything of the kind in the English tongue. Here is an extract that speaks poetic power.

Again from all sides burst
Tenfold the storm ; and as it waxed, the Saint
Waxed in strong heart ; and, kneeling with
stretch'd hands,
Made for himself a panoply of prayer,
And wound it round his bosom twice and thrice,
And made a sword of comminating psalm,
And smote at them that mocked him. Day by
day,
Till now the second Sunday's vesper bell
Gladde'n'd the little churches round the isle,
That conflict rag'd : then, maddening in their ire,
Sudden the Princedoms of the dark, that rode
This way and that through the tempest, brake
Their sceptres. and with one great cry it fell :
At once o'er all was silence : sunset lit
The world, that shone as though with face
upturn'd
It gazed on heavens by angel faces throng'd
And answer'd light with light. A single bird
Caroll'd ; and from the forest skirt down fell,
Gemlike, the last drops of the exhausted storm.

Such a charm of description is but a legitimate outcome of Mr. De Vere's great spirit of Faith. He makes all nature a majestic mirror in which the beauty of God's countenance is revealed to men.

The limits allotted our essay forbid us to enter into a more extended analysis of *The Legends of Saint Patrick*. In order to be duly appreciated they must be carefully read from beginning to end. The short extracts we have given are very inadequate to show their excellence. At least every Irishman should possess a copy of a work that tells so eloquently and with such charming sweetness how generously our forefathers embraced the Faith.

Some critics have accused Mr. De Vere of being a little too diffuse in his *Legends*, and of occasionally manifesting a decided incongruity in the use of metaphors. True enough these faults are sometimes noticeable in the writings of our poet ; still they

are only minor spots that impede but imperceptibly the brilliancy of his sunshine. When dealing with great and good men who have done, and are still doing, so much to raise up and hold aloft the lovely standard of Christian excellence, we must not submit their works to a "microscopic examination." Even the immortal Shakespeare, under such a searching scrutiny, could never stand unscathed. Whatever the minor faults in Mr. De Vere's *Legends*, they are more than amply made up for by the wealth of moral thought and lofty aspiration which pervades his every line. His dignity of conception places him upon a mountain summit where everlasting sunshine reigns and where the majority of modern poets, weighed down as they are with worldly cares, and bereft of the climbing-staff called Faith, can hardly hope to ascend.

As we began our paper with a brief but charming extract from *The Confession of Saint Patrick*, so let us close with another passage, no less beautiful, taken from the same source. Our venerable poet concludes his *Legends* with these words containing the last advice of Patrick to his dearly cherished Irish children.

" Wrongs if they endure
In after years, with fire of pardoning love
Sin-slaying bid them crown the head that err'd :
For bread denied let them give Sacraments,
For darkness light, and for the House of
Bondage
The glorious freedom of the Sons of God :
This is my last Confession ere I die."

Everyone is well aware how faithfully the loyal sons of Erin have followed the parting advice herein contained. For centuries they suffered under the merciless lash of persecution but still, even in the midst of torture most cruel, the cry once uttered on Calvary's Cross, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do," proclaimed that nation's charity. Strikingly indeed has her Apostle's prediction been verified :

" This nation of my love, a priestly house,
Beside that Cross shall stand, fate firm, like him
That stood beside Christ's Mother."

Emerald Hibernia has been deprived of her rights as a nation, but in return she offers her oppressor the right to an unending participation in God's eternal glory.

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