

Aubrey de Vere.

THE more I read that monumental work of Aubrey de Vere, "The Legends of St. Patrick," the more I admire the cheerfulness of the poet,—a cheerfulness that brooks no melancholy and that surmounts all sorrow. Here is a true poet—not a trafficker in mere poetic expressions, but the dispenser of a bounty of truly poetic thoughts which he never fails to endow with Gaelic optimism and which he expresses with beauty and spirit.

There is such a multitude of ways in which this poet and his works may be considered that it is rather bewildering to be granted a free hand in choosing one's theme. However, I have chosen for mine de Vere's ever-present cheerfulness, a theme sufficient to prove the poet's worth, though disclosing but a fraction of his many claims to recognition and distinction.

There is a spirit in de Vere's "Legends" which refuses to submit to sorrow and sadness. Not one of the poems ends in a sad strain. Even in the doleful tale of Milcho's disbelief, St. Patrick's sorrow for the death of his former master is brightened, towards the end of the poem, by the conversion of Milcho's two daughters, their happy death and the beneficent effect of their relics. So it is with all the legends, each is endued with that gladness which comes of the knowledge of some good accomplished, some stubborn soul is softened by baptism, some clan is won to Christ. It is impossible to read de Vere's stirring account of the marvellous conversion of our fore-fathers to the True Faith without suffering a slight quickening of the pulse and a slight sense of joy and pride in one's ancestry.

Both by narrative and description does the poet maintain the happy tone of his work. Narrative is, of course, his principal means as the tale of the Island's conversion is, necessarily, a joyful one. And de Vere has used this means with undoubted skill. Each cloud of sadness is dispelled by the relation of some happy incident flashing forth its ray of hope or of joy, each tale of the barbaric struggles 'twixt rival clans before the coming of Patrick is followed by a statement of their happy and peaceful union in the Church. An excellent example of this plan of narrative is found in the legend entitled "St. Patrick and King Laeghaire." Here de Vere pictures with admirable the implacable hatred entertained by Laeghaire for the rival clan of Lagenians. This