

to the opposite extreme in contending that it is altogether inconsistent with that air of reality which should pervade this kind of writing. But whatever may be the merits of the discussion, it can hardly amount to a difficulty in the present case. The practice of employing machinery is sanctioned by custom. Homer, the first and greatest of epic poets set the example, and all his successors, with the single exception of Lucan, have imitated their great prototype. The ancients, very wisely, took advantage of the popular superstitions of antiquity to embellish and sublime their stories by making gods and demi-gods take part with the human actors. Of course at other times, and in other circumstances, machinery of a different type is naturally to be expected. The Portuguese Camões, under the mistaken notion that no machinery can be perfect without some concession to the gods of pagan mythology, rendered himself ridiculous, and his "*Lusiad*", otherwise a most laudable effort, absurd, by introducing Jupiter, Venus and Bacchus in a work in which God, and The Blessed Virgin are also represented as taking part. Tasso and Milton, though they have been more happy in this matter, are yet far from faultless; neither of them has produced that sort of machinery which one would wish to find in a great Christian writer. De Vere, it would seem, has come nearer the ideal than any of his predecessors. The essentially religious nature of the enterprise he relates gives ample scope for a grand display of machinery, and the author does not fail to take the fullest advantage of it. The spirit of religion permeates the whole work, and yet human characters and the exploits of men are always kept prominently to view; the appearance of probability being thus preserved throughout, even in the narration of the most marvellous and incredible events.

A few instances of the machinery to be found in "*The Legends*" may not be out of place. All through the narrative, the idea which appeals most forcibly to the thoughtful reader is the wonderful way St. Patrick seems to command the omnipotence of the Most High. God so readily hearkening to the prayers of His apostle, and on many occasions, interposing on his behalf, to grant him power of performing such