

then the Receiver-General of the Customs, and afterwards Professor of Poetry at Oxford, illustrated the unhappy ignorance of early Irish history which the poems had to encounter, by inquiring: "But who *is* the Sugane Earl? Because he speaks of the Sugane Earl as if it was the Chairman of the Board of Customs and everobody *must* know who he is." This is a bit of just criticism pleasantly expressed. Tennyson in his Arturian poems assumes even more intelligence in his readers than does De Vere with hardly more reason, but Tennyson had no racial prejudices to run against. Again, De Vere depends upon the reader to discover for himself the particular doctrine which lies latent in a long series of religious poems. In all such cases the poet is much too complimentary to his readers. But he spares us from the torture of foot-notes; for which exceeding charity much should be forgiven him.

It will at once be perceived, I apprehend, that such a fault as exuberance, springing as it does from linguistic affluence, limitless wealth of language and illustration, and the other fault of over-much contemplation, the natural weakness of a thoughtful soul, are after all no more than the natural foils of the surpassing virtues of the great poet, who must be, above all, a deep thinker and a master of diction. As to the obscurity which is caused, not by any involution of the text, or complex denseness of the thought, as in Browning, or defect in the expression, as in so many of the *Di Minores* of English poetry, but rather by want of rudimentary knowledge in the reader—surely it becomes the duty of the latter to remove a cause which reflects not on the author but himself. By Irish readers, at least, a knowledge of Irish history should not be, one would think, considered *recondite*. "I have found you a reason, sir; I am not bound to find you an understanding," the mighty Dr. Samuel Johnson is reported to have shouted on a memorable occasion. Aubrey de Vere might be excused for paraphrasing that same thoroughly rational objection, did his innate gentleness allow him to affirm anything of the sort.

But I am forgetting the role I have assigned myself of *Advocatus Diaboli*, and so I must return to the attack. As a matter of fact, the most serious fault of all remains to be named. This I shall call upon a friendly critic to do. In a letter to the Irish