

status of the legend out of which Aubrey de Vere drew his materials. Although it was the master-romance of its cycle, that is to say, of the second great cycle of Irish legendary history, the foray of Queen Meave in quest of the Bull of Louth, was a tale familiar in the Irish under the title of "The Cattle Spoiling of Colony," no more than that.

Although our poet has added to the original tale, and exemplified many portions he found lean enough, and there is certainly much in his treatment that left the materials he used more essentially epical than they were before he remodelled them, and most epics are founded on some merely local circumstance, I am, nevertheless more disposed to class the poem with Romantic Epics, like "Orlando Furioso," the "Divine Comedy," the "Færie Queen," the "Idylls of the King," than with Classical Epics, such as the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey," the "Æneid," the "Paradise Lost," the "Luciad" and "Jerusalem Delivered." Yet "The Foray of Queen Meave" has many qualities in common with grand epic, and numerous commendable qualities of its own—vivacity and directness, for instance—that some immortal epics lack, composed as they sometimes are of huge masses of words which are too ponderous for poetry and too respectable for absurdity. The essentials of an epic are unity and progression, and our poet's narrative is, indeed, perfectly straightforward; the action is single and entire, having, as Aristotle describes the requirements of this part of epic, a beginning, a middle, and an end; it deals almost exclusively with great actors, mythical and mythopoetic beings, and, within their limitations, portentuous events; it is characterized by perspicuity and facility of construction; it has proportion and sustained style, there are few poems so transparently clear; and, more than all, the incidents are brought out and their importance insisted upon in the canonical manner of Classical Epic, apropos of which the reader will recall that the actions of the "Iliad" and the "Æneid" were in themselves short and insignificant but are so beautifully extended and diversified by the invention of episodes, and the machinery of gods, and the other poetic devices, that they make up a lengthy story. Although the undertaking that forms the burden of the "Foray" can hardly be termed dignified, being, when deprived of its modern embellish-