

unity in the subject itself ; and thus combining the apparently distinct poems into one grand whole, the story of a nation's conversion to Christianity. Of the second rule under this head, which claims greatness and splendor as necessary features of the epic action, little need be said. De Vere has undoubtedly chosen for his subject an event, not only well worthy to be dressed out in all the grandeur of epic pomp, but one which is by far the most noble, and dignified of any that has yet been commemorated in a similar way. The anger of Achilles, the establishment of Aeneas in Italy, though they be events sufficiently important to fix our attention, and excite our interest, are scarcely worthy to be thought of in comparison with such a grand, far reaching achievement as is the action which is celebrated by De Vere. The third requisite of the subject of an epic is that it be interesting. Discussing this point Blair says "much will depend on the happy choice of some subject, which shall, of its nature, be pleasing to the public, as when the poet selects for his hero one who is the founder, or the deliverer, or the favourite of his nation". The celebrated rhetorician could not possibly have spoken more to the present purpose ; for St. Patrick, the hero of "The Legends," combines the three above-mentioned virtues, being at once the founder, deliverer and favourite of his nation. Moreover the work derives special interest from the lofty character of the action related—an action fraught with such great consequence to the welfare, not only of a single country and nation, but even of the whole of Christendom. Surely no subject could be more intensely interesting, or better suited the magnificent apparatus the poet bestows on it !

The high standard of epic composition justifies the demand for characterization of the most unexceptionable variety. Hence we find another set of rules in the light of which the actors or characters of the poem must be scrutinized. In the first place every epic, to be worthy of the name, must have a hero. In this respect "The Legends" could hardly be improved on. As already stated, St. Patrick is the hero, distinguished, above all the other characters, not only as the central figure of the whole narrative, but in an especial manner, even apart from the poem, as one of the grandest and most heroic of all historical