

world! Is it on this that we are to bestow the high-sounding name of Epic? Aye, and wherefore not? An epic poem is generally defined as "the poetical recital of some great, and important enterprise, of a nature to excite universal interest, and command universal admiration." Strange as it may seem, this definition describes with minute exactness the scope, and character of De Vere's *Legends*; which, to state it with more precision, is the poetical history of what is, by long odds, the greatest and most important enterprise ever carried by a single man,—the Baptism of a pagan nation; than which it is difficult to imagine anything more calculated to interest and excite the admiration of all mankind. But then there is a great multiplicity of critical rules to which all epics must be conformed. What of these? Has not De Vere disregarded them? On the contrary he has submitted gracefully, and with a patience truly admirable, though scarcely common to all great minds.

These rules are of three classes, according as they regard, the action, the actors, or the narration of the story. Those that concern the action, or subject, all embodied in the above-cited definition, are three in number. The first which makes for the unity of the story is the most important, as it is also the only one our author would seem to have violated. "It must be one action or enterprise which the poet chooses for his subject." It may be objected that the work under consideration is not sufficiently connected to satisfy the requirements of this rule. But the unity which Aristotle here insists upon, as essential to the nature of epic poetry, is not so much the unity of outward form as the oneness of the story itself, all the incidents of which should be sensibly connected, and made to hang on one another, in such a manner as to evidently conspire in the achievement of a single great undertaking. It is precisely in this way that the different parts of "the *Legends of St. Patrick*" are united. Though each may, in a certain sense, be regarded as distinct from the others, and independent with respect to its own peculiar set of characters; yet none of them is really complete in itself; for through them all runs the character of St. Patrick, the hero of the whole as he is of each part, producing essential