

# The Legends of St. Patrick.

## A SKETCH OF THE Apostle and His Work.

(By a Regular Contributor.)



No matter how deeply interesting, how hopefully inspiring, or how gravely important are the details of the celebration of Ireland's national festival, in our day, still the mind, with an irresistible impulse, rushes back upon the hills of time, and perching upon some lofty eminence of the by-gone, loves to contemplate the glorious era of Ireland's story—the ages when the light of faith first flashed upon the Island, and when the legends that are drawn from the mists of other days are woven into the more solid texture of authentic history. On Tuesday last, both in pulpit and in hall, the glories of St. Patrick were told, and the inspiring facts connected with his evangelization of Erin were revived and repeated for the edification of all who participated in the day's celebration. It is only necessary to read our report of all that transpired, here and elsewhere, to have a clear idea of the fidelity with which every glory of the race has been preserved and with which each cherished memory is transmitted to the custody of the coming generations.

Turning, then, from the cold, yet ever inspiring, details of a history that is so magnificent, it may not be inappropriate to touch upon the wonderful Legends of St. Patrick. Remember, however, that the word legend must be accepted in a different sense from that of fable. All these legends are historical facts, but looking the full confirmation that calm history demands. Into stately verse has Aubrey De Vere woven these legends, and the reading of his almost epic production is a veritable education in Irish history. When he had completed that work, than which there is no more praiseworthy in our language, and before giving it to the public, as an heirloom, he penned a preface that deserves to be repeated on every renewal of the 17th March. Consequently we will devote a column to that instructive essay. It is thus De Vere writes:

"The ancient records of Ireland abound in legends respecting the greatest man and the greatest benefactor that ever trod her soil; and of these the earlier are at once the more authentic and the nobler." (We omitted to say that Aubrey De Vere was still a Protestant when he wrote this composition.) "Not a few have a character of the sublime; many are pathetic; some have a profound meaning under a strange disguise; but their predominant character is their brightness and gladness. A large tract of Irish history is dark; but the time of St. Patrick, and the three centuries which succeeded it, were her time of joy. That chronicle is a song of gratitude and hope, as better the story of a nation's conversion to Christianity, and in it the bird and the brook blend their carols with those of angels and men. It was otherwise with the later legends connecting Ossian with Saint Patrick. A poet once remarked, while studying the frescoes of Michael Angelo in the Sistine Chapel, that the Sibyls are always sad, while the prophets alternated with them are joyous. In the legends of the Patrician Cycle the chief-joying old Bard is ever mournful, for his face is turned to the past glories of his country, while the saint is always bright, because his eye was set on the glory that lay in store."

of Saint Patrick, the most valuable of which is the 'Tripartite Life,' ascribed by Colgan to the century after the saint's death, though it has not escaped later interpolations. The work was long lost, but two copies of it were re-discovered, one of which has been recently translated by that eminent Irish scholar, Mr. Hennessy. Whether regarded from the religious or the philosophic point of view, few things can be more instructive than the picture which it delineates of human nature at a point of critical transition, and the dawning of the Religion of Peace upon a race barbaric, but far indeed from savage. That wild race regarded it doubtless as a notable cruelty when the new Faith discouraged an amusement so popular as battle; but in many respects they were in sympathy with the Faith. It was one in which the nobler affections, as well as the passions, retained an unblunted ardor; and where Nature is strongest and least corrupted it most feels the need of something higher than itself, its interpreter and its supplement. It prized the family ties, like the Germans recorded by Tacitus; and it could not but have been drawn to Christianity, which consecrated them. Its morals were pure, and it had not lost that simplicity to which so much of spiritual insight belongs. Admiration and wonder were among its chief habits; and it would not have been repelled by mysteries in what professed to belong to the Infinite. Lawless as it was, it abounded also in loyalty, generosity, and self-sacrifice; it was not, therefore, untouched by the records of martyrs, examples of self-sacrifice, or the doctrine of a great sacrifice. It loved children and the poor; and Christianity made the former the exemplars of faith, and the latter the eminent inheritors of the Kingdom. On the other hand, all the vices of the race ranged themselves against the new religion.

"In the main the institutions and traditions of Ireland were favorable to Christianity. She had preserved in a large measure the patriarchal system of the East. Her clans were families, and her chiefs were patriarchs, who led their households to battle, and seized or recovered the spoil. To such a people the Christian Church announced herself as a great family—the family of man. Her genealogies went up to the first parent, and her rule was paternal. The Kingdom of Christ was the household of Christ, and its children in all lands formed the tribes of a larger Israel. Its laws were living traditions; and for traditions the Irish had ever retained the Eastern reverence."

"In the Druids no formidable enemy was found. It was the Bards who wielded the predominant social influence. As in Greece, where the ancestral power was small, the Bards were the priests of the national imagination, and round them all novel influences had gathered themselves. They were jealous of their rivals; but those rivals won them by degrees. Secknell and Fiace were Christian Bards, trained by St. Patrick, who is said to have also brought a bard with him from Ireland. The beautiful legend in which the saint bestowed the tongue of the raven, while was an emblem of the power of his teaching, is a natural and not a mythical story. Christianity in Ireland was not introduced by force, but by the power of the word."

they had made use of the Pagan temples, purifying them first. The Christian religion looked with a genuine kindness upon whatever was human, except so far as the stain was on it. As legislator St. Patrick waged no needless war against the ancient laws of Ireland. He purified them, and he amplified them, discarding only what was unfit for a nation made Christian. Thus was produced the great 'Book of the Law,' or 'Senchus Mohr,' compiled A.D., 439.

"The Irish received the Gospel gladly. The great and the learned, in other nations the last to believe, among them commonly set the example. With the natural disposition of the race an appropriate culture had concurred. That culture, without removing the barbaric, had blended it with the refined. It had created among the people an appreciation of the beautiful, the pathetic, and the pure. The early Irish chronicles, as well as songs, show how strong among them that sentiment had ever been. The Borrowean Tribute, for so many ages the source of relentless wars, had been imposed in vengeance for an insult offered to a woman; an unprovoked insult was regarded as a grave moral offence; and severe punishments were ordained, not only for detraction, but for a word, though uttered in jest, which brought a blush to the cheek of a listener. It was not that laws were wanting; a code, minute in its justice, had proportioned a penalty to every offence, and specified the Eric which was to wipe out a stain. It was not that hearts were hard—there was at least as much pity for others as for self. It was that anger was implacable, and that where fear was unknown, the war field was what among us the hunting field is."

"The rapid growth of learning as well as piety in the three centuries succeeding the conversion of Ireland, prove that the country had not been till then without a preparation for the gift. It had been the special skill of Saint Patrick to build the good which was lacking upon that which existed. Even the material arts of Ireland he had pressed into the service of the Faith; and Irish craftsmen had assisted him, not only in the building of his churches, but in casting his church bells, and in the adornment of his chalices, croziers, and ecclesiastical vestments. Once elevated by Christianity, Ireland's early civilization was a memorable thing. It sheltered a high virtue at home, and evangelized a great part of Northern Europe; and amidst many confusions it held its own till the true time of barbarism had set in—those two disastrous centuries when the Danish invasions trod down the sanctuaries, dispersed the libraries, and laid waste the colleges to which distant kings had sent their sons."

"Perhaps nothing human had so large an influence in the conversion of the Irish as the personal character of her Apostles. Where others, as Palladius, had failed, he succeeded. By nature, by grace, and by providential training, he had been specially fitted for the task. We can still see plainly even the finer traits of that character, while of his early history we know little, except that he was of noble birth, that he was carried to Ireland by pirates at the age of sixteen, and that after five years of bondage he escaped thence, in return a Christian, and a man of letters."

ty-five years old; belonging thus to the great age of the Church which was made illustrious by the most eminent of its Fathers, and tasked by the most critical of its trials. In him a great character had been built on the foundations of a devout childhood, and a youth ennobled by adversity. Everywhere we trace the might and the sweetness which belonged to it, the versatile mind—yet the simple heart, the varying tact yet the fixed resolve, the large design taking counsel for all, yet the minute solicitude for each, the fiery zeal yet the gentle temper, the skill in using means yet the reliance on God alone, the readiness in action with the willingness to wait, the habitual self-possession yet the outbursts of an inspiration which raised him above himself, the abiding consciousness of authority—an authority in him, but not of him—and yet the ever-present humility. Above all, there burned in him that boundless love, which seems the main constituent of the Apostolic character. It was love for God; but it was love for man also, an impassioned love, and a parental compassion. It was not for the spiritual weal alone of man that he thirsted. Wrong and injustice to the poor he resented as an injury to God. His vehement love for the poor is illustrated by his 'Epistle to Coroticus,' reproaching him with his cruelty, as well as by his denunciation of slavery, which piracy had introduced into parts of Ireland. No wonder that such a character should have exercised a talismanic power over the ardent and sensitive race among whom he labored, a race 'easy to be drawn, but impossible to be driven, and drawn more by sympathy than even by benefits. That character can only be understood by one who studies, and in a right spirit, that account of his life which he bequeathed to us shortly before its close—the 'Confession of Saint Patrick.'"

No wonder the man who wrote the foregoing, as a preface to the 'Legends of Saint Patrick,' died a Catholic. He must have been one in all, except the name, when he penned such an appreciation of Ireland's patron saint.

The 'Tripartite Life' thus ends:—"After these great miracles, therefore, after resuscitating the dead, after healing lepers, and the blind, and the deaf, and the lame, and all diseases; after ordaining bishops and priests, and deacons, and people of all orders in the Church; after teaching the men of Erin, and after baptizing them; after founding churches and monasteries; after destroying idols and images and Druidical arts, the hour of death for Saint Patrick approached. He received the body of Christ from the Bishop Tassach, according to the counsel of the Angel Victor. He resigned his spirit afterwards to Heaven, in the one hundred and twentieth year of his age. His body is still here in the earth, with honor and reverence. Though great his honor here, greater honor will be to him in the Day of Judgment, when judgment will be given on the fruit of his teaching, as of every great Apostle, in the union of the Apostles and Disciples of Jesus; in the union of the Nine Orders of Angels, which cannot be surpassed; in the union of the Divinity and Humanity of the Son of God; in the union, which is higher than all unions, of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

## Knew Fifteen Languages.

The late Rev. William Gleeson, pastor of St. Anthony's Church, East Oakland, Cal., would have enjoyed the recent celebration of the Papal Jubilee in Cleveland. According to the "Sacred Heart Review," he was well acquainted with fifteen languages. He regularly received, and read as a recreation, periodicals not only in French, Spanish, Italian, German, and Portuguese, but in Hindostani and Arabic. In his early life as a priest he had labored ten years in India, where he became familiar with certain languages of Asia; but when over sixty years of age he was studying Hebrew and Chaldee in this country, enthusiastically, and added to these the study of Irish. Yet he attended to the needs of his parish as though he had nothing else on his thoughts; church, schools, hall, and parish residence were all his work; and his scrupulous conscience gave an excuse for his linguistic studies that they were his "recreation." Among his familiar expressions were these: "How grateful one should be to God that he has reserved no special talents," and "What credit is it for a man to do his duty?" The veteran of seventy-six, and two continents found one thing difficult, says the "Review," and that was to be grateful for his death.



## ST. JOSEPH, PRAY FOR ME.

When hope and strength are failing,  
And, with each passing day,  
The sun of life is palling  
With fast-declining ray;  
My spirit fortifying,  
Though I unworthy be,  
Dear Patron of the dying,  
St. Joseph pray for me!

A sweet and blessed shielding  
In which our trust may rest,  
Thy strong protection yielding,  
To him who loves thee best,  
A pilotage to Jesus  
Across life's stormy sea,  
When earth's last struggle ceases,  
Do you remember me!  
Amadeus, C. S. F., St. Anthony's Messenger.

## Happenings in Scotland

A NOTABLE JUBILEE.—From the column of the Scottish correspondence of the London "Universe," we take the following interesting items of Catholic happenings in Scotland. The silver jubilee of the restoration of the Scottish Hierarchy falls in this month, and will be celebrated in St. Mary's Cathedral, Broughton street, Edinburgh, on the 5th inst., when High Mass will be celebrated by His Grace Archbishop Smith, the Metropolitan, assisted by the Bishops of Dunkeld, Aberdeen, Argyll and Isles, and Galloway.

The jubilee will also be celebrated in the cathedral churches of the various dioceses, in presence of their respective prelates. The date fixed for the Glasgow celebration is Sunday, March 15th, in St. Andrew's pro-Cathedral, the preacher being Canon Mackintosh.

It is interesting to note that of the original prelates appointed to the various dioceses in 1878 not one survived. Edinburgh has lost three archbishops since that time, Aberdeen two bishops, Galloway one, Dunkeld one by death and one by promotion to the Metropolitan See, Glasgow being the last to feel the hand of death, when, on March 27th, 1902, the venerable Archbishop Eyre (who was the doyen of the episcopate in Scotland) was called away to his last account. Argyll and the Isles, so far, has lost none of its prelates by death, its first ruler, Bishop Macdonald, having been transferred to the Metropolitan See of Edinburgh before his death.

The re-establishment of the hierarchy here did not give rise to the same display of ignorant indignation that the similar event caused in England. The prelates of the Episcopal Church protested, against Rome usurping their titles, but the "Glasgow Herald" voiced the feelings of the community when it said it was a question whether they had not stolen their titles from Rome. There was also a demonstration of Orangemen on Glasgow Green, where one Godfrey burned the paper containing the announcement of the establishment of the hierarchy, but these were about the only hostile demonstrations at the time. Needless to say, the Church has advanced during this time, notably in the West of Scotland, where for some years past almost every other week sees the opening of a new mission.

ST. PATRICK'S, GLASGOW.—When St. Patrick's new church was opened some five years ago, it was thought that there would be ample accommodation for the congregation for generations to come. This has proved, however, not to be the case, and consequently the old church in Oak street is being renovated, with the view of being once again opened for worshippers in the lower reaches of the parish. We believe that the ecclesiastical authorities have it under their serious consideration whether or not they will have a new mission, with the old church as its base.

A NEW PARISH.—Another striking evidence of the progress of Catholicity in Glasgow is the fact that a new mission, comprising parts of SS. John and Francis' parish will shortly be opened on the South Side, in Govan street. This announcement was made by Canon MacIntyre recently.

SWEET CHARITY'S BAKE.—An

evidence of what may be achieved through the co-operation of the laity in charitable work may be inferred from the following:—

At the public annual meeting of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, held in the Diocesan Hall, Glasgow, presided over by His Grace the Archbishop, the annual report for the year was submitted. The income was £5,421, being an increase of £144 over the previous year, made up as follows:—Church door collections, £2,517; subscribers, £273; secret collections, £428; charity sermons, £788; concerts, etc., £323; legacies and donations, £481; other concerts, £112. The outlay totalled £5,494, £2,811 of this being given in cash, and over £1,000 in provisions. Grants were given to refuges, homes, and asylums, whilst £98 went to pay rents, £83 in assisting the poor to help themselves, £46 in free dinners, and £12 18s. in funeral expenses, the expenditure being £70 above the income. There are 27 more active and 61 less honorary members than last year. Families relieved, 4,677, numbering 20,746 persons; visits at homes, 50,109; 12,568 free dinners supplied and 130 poor people sent to hospital comprised the rest of the report, which was adopted on the motion of Canon MacIntyre, seconded by Father Stewart.

His Grace at the close of the proceedings congratulated the society on its work. He wished he could see a conference in every parish, and that the society would go on and prosper.

ARCHBISHOP ILL.—Several alarming reports as to the state of Archbishop Maguire's health have lately been in circulation throughout the city of Glasgow. Happily, however, says the "Universe" correspondent, there is no immediate cause for alarm. His Grace has never been very robust in health, and having overworked himself has been ordered a rest. We may state that it is His Grace's intention to join the great Scottish pilgrimage which goes to Rome a few months hence.

MUCH IN LITTLE SPACE.—From the following brief much food for thought for Catholic minds is available.

"Canon McCay, of Coatbridge, has had a relapse at Rothsay.—Missions by Redemptorist Fathers were opened on Sunday last at Hamilton, and by Vincentians at Partick. They last for a fortnight.—Father O'Reilly, St. Alphonsus', Glasgow, celebrates his golden jubilee this year, and already preparations are being made for the event.—£300 remains to be subscribed to the Canon O'Keefe memorial altar recently opened.—The Vincentian Fathers who conducted a fortnight's retreat in Springburn were, at its close, presented with gold-mounted umbrellas by the congregation. An impostor has been going about Glasgow lately collecting for the Genoa Sailors' (Catholic) Mission. Ground has been bought in Tradeston, on which a chapel will be built. The congregation will consist of the outlying members of St. John's and St. Margaret's, Kinning Park parishes.

## ENGLISH CATHOLICS IN ROME.

The Duke of Norfolk, accompanied by seventy pilgrims, reached Rome recently, and were met at the station by His Grace Mar. Stonor, Archbishop of Trevisano, the Right Rev. Dr. Bourne, Bishop of Southwark, and several English gentlemen.