

# THE LEGENDS OF SAINT PATRICK

AUBREY DE VERE\*

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### INTRODUCTION BY HENRY MORLEY.

Once more our readers are indebted to a living poet for wide circulation of a volume of delightful verse. The name of Aubrey de Vere is the more pleasantly familiar because its association with our highest literature has descended from father to son. In 1822,

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sixty-seven years ago, Sir Aubrey de Vere, of Curragh Chase, by Adare, in the county of Limerick—then thirty-four years old—first made his mark with a dramatic poem upon "Julian the Apostate." In 1842 Sir Aubrey published Sonnets, which his friend Wordsworth described as "the most perfect of our age;" and in the year of his death he completed a dramatic poem upon "Mary Tudor," published in the next year, 1847, with the "Lamentation of Ireland, and other Poems." Sir Aubrey de Vere's "Mary Tudor" should be read by all who have read Tennyson's play on the same subject.

The gift of genius passed from Sir Aubrey to his third son, Aubrey Thomas de Vere, who was born in 1814, and through a long life has put into music only noble thoughts associated with the love of God and man, and of his native land. His first work, published forty-seven years ago, was a lyrical piece, in which he gave his sympathy to devout and persecuted men whose ways of thought were not his own. Aubrey de Vere's poems have been from time to time revised by himself, and they were in 1884 finally collected into three volumes, published by Messrs. Kegan Paul. Left free to choose from among their various contents, I have taken this little book of "Legends of St. Patrick," first published in 1872, but in so doing I have unwillingly left many a piece that would please many a reader.

They are not, however, inaccessible. Of the three volumes of collected works, each may be had separately, and is complete in itself. The first contains "The Search after Proserpine, and other Poems—Classical and Meditative." The second contains the "Legends of St. Patrick, and Legends of Ireland's Heroic Age," including a version of the "Tain Bo." The third contains two plays, "Alexander the Great," "St. Thomas of Canterbury," and other Poems.

For the convenience of some readers, the following extract from the second volume of my "English Writers," may serve as a prosaic summary of what is actually known about St. Patrick.

H. M.

ST. PATRICK.

FROM "ENGLISH WRITERS."

The birth of St. Patrick, Apostle and Saint of Ireland, has been generally placed in the latter half of the fourth century; and he is said to have died at the age of a hundred and twenty. As he died in the year 493—and we may admit that he was then a very old man—if we may say that he reached the age of eighty-eight, we place his birth in the year 405. We may reasonably believe, therefore, that he was born in the early part of the fifth century. His birthplace, now known as Kilpatrick, was at the junction of the Leven with the Clyde, in what is now the county of Dumbarton. His baptismal name was Succath. His father was Calphurnius, a deacon, son of Potitus,

who was a priest. His mother's name was Conchessa, whose family may have belonged to Gaul, and who may thus have been, as it is said she was, of the kindred of St. Martin of Tours; for there is a tradition that she was with Calphurnius as a slave before he married her. Since Eusebius spoke of three bishops from Britain at the Council of Arles, Succath, known afterwards in missionary life by his name in religion, Patricius (pater civium), might very reasonably be a deacon's son.

In his early years Succath was at home by the Clyde, and he speaks of himself as not having been obedient to the teaching of the clergy. When he was sixteen years old he, with two of his sisters and other of his countrymen, was seized by a band of Irish pirates that made descent on the shore of the Clyde and carried him off to slavery. His sisters were taken to another part of the island, and he was sold to Milcho MacCuboin in the north, whom he served for six or seven years, so learning to speak the language of the country, while keeping his master's sheep by the Mountain of Slieve Miss. Thoughts of home and of its Christian life made the youth feel the heathenism that was about him; his exile seemed to him a punishment for boyish indifference; and during the years when young enthusiasm looks out upon life with new sense of a man's power-growing for man's work that is to do—Succath became filled with religious zeal.

Three Latin pieces are ascribed to St. Patrick: a "Confession," which is in the Book of Armagh, and in three other manuscripts; 10a a letter to Coroticus, and a few "Dieta Patricii," which are also in the Book of Armagh. 10b There is no strong reason for questioning the authenticity of the "Confession," which is in unpolished Latin, the writer calling himself "indoctus, rusticissimus, imperitus," and it is full of a deep religious feeling. It is concerned rather with the inner than the outer life, but includes references to the early days of trial by which Succath's whole heart was turned to God. He says, "After I came into Ireland I pastured sheep daily, and prayed many times a day. The love and fear of God, and faith and spirit, wrought in me more and more, so that in one day I reached to a hundred prayers, and in the night almost as many, and stayed in the woods and on the mountains, and was urged to prayer before the dawn, in snow, in frost, in rain, and took no harm, nor, I think, was there any sloth in me. And there one night I heard a voice in a dream saying to me, 'Thou hast well fasted; thou shalt go back soon to thine own land;' and again after a little while, 'Behold! thy ship is ready.'" In all this there is the passionate longing of an ardent mind for home and Heaven.

At the age of twenty-two Succath fled from his slavery to a vessel of which the master first refused and finally consented to take him on board. He and the sailors were then cast by a storm upon a desert shore of Britain, possibly upon some region laid waste by

ravages from over sea. Having at last made his way back, by a sea passage, to his home on the Clyde, Succath was after a time captured again, but remained captive only for two months, and went back home. Then the zeal for his Master's service made him feel like the Seafarer in the Anglo-Saxon poem; and all the traditions of his home would have accorded with the rise of the resolve to cross the sea, and to spread Christ's teaching in what had been the land of his captivity.

There were already centres of Christian work in Ireland, where devoted men were labouring and drew a few into their fellowship. Succath aimed at the gathering of all these scattered forces, by a movement that should carry with it the whole people. He first prepared himself by giving about four years to study of the Scriptures at Auxerre, under Germanus, and then went to Rome, under the conduct of a priest, Segetius, and probably with letters from Germanus to Pope Celestine. Whether he received his orders from the Pope seems doubtful; but the evidence is strong that Celestine sent him on his Irish mission. Succath left Rome, passed through North Italy and Gaul, till he met on his way two followers of Palladius, Augustinus and Benedictus, who told him of their master's failure, and of his death at Fordun. Succath then obtained consecration from Amathus, a neighbouring bishop, and as Patricius, went straight to Ireland. He landed near the town of Wicklow, by the estuary of the River Varty, which had been the landing-place of Palladius. In that region he was, like Palladius, opposed; but he made some conversions, and advanced with his work northward that he might reach the home of his old master, Milcho, and pay him the purchase-money of his stolen freedom. But Milcho, it is said, burnt himself and his goods rather than bear the shame of submission to the growing power of his former slave.

St. Patrick addressed the ruling classes, who could bring with them their followers, and he joined tact with his zeal; respecting ancient prejudices, opposing nothing that was not directly hostile to the spirit of Christianity, and handling skilfully the chiefs with whom he had to deal. An early convert—Dichu MacTrighim—was a chief with influential connections, who gave the ground for the religious house now known as Saul. This chief satisfied so well the inquiries of Laeghaire, son of Niall, King of Erin, concerning the stranger's movements, that St. Patrick took ship for the mouth of the Boyne, and made his way straight to the king himself. The result of his energy was that he met successfully all the opposition of those who were concerned in the maintenance of old heathen worship, and brought King Laeghaire to his side.

Then Laeghaire resolved that the old laws of the country as established by the judges, whose order was named Brehon, should be revised, and brought into accord with the new teaching. So the Brehon laws of Ireland were revised, with St. Patrick's assistance,

and there were no ancient customs broken or altered, except those that could not be harmonised with Christian teaching. The good sense of St. Patrick enabled this great work to be done without offence to the people. The collection of laws thus made by the chief lawyers of the time, with the assistance of St. Patrick, is known as the "Senchus Mor," and, says an old poem -

"Laeghaire, Corc Dairi, the brave;  
Patrick, Beuen, Cairnech, the just;  
Rossa, Dubtach, Fergus, the wise;  
These are the nine pillars of the Senchus Mor."

This body of laws, traditions, and treatises on law is found in no manuscript of a date earlier than the fourteenth century. It includes, therefore, much that is of later date than the fifth century.

St. Patrick's greatest energies are said to have been put forth in Ulster and Leinster. Among the churches or religious communities founded by him in Ulster was that of Armagh. If he was born about the year 405, when he was carried to Ireland as a prisoner at the age of sixteen the date would have been 421. His age would have been twenty-two when he escaped, after six or seven years of captivity, and the date 427. A year at home, and four years with Germanus at Auxerre, would bring him to the age of twenty-seven, and the year 432, when he began his great endeavour to put Christianity into the main body of the Irish people. That work filled all the rest of his life, which was long. If we accept the statement, in which all the old records agree, that the time of Patrick's labour in Ireland was not less than sixty years; sixty years bring him to the age of eighty-eight in the year 493. And in that year he died.

The "Letter to Coroticus," ascribed to St. Patrick, is addressed to a petty king of Brittany who persecuted Christians, and was meant for the encouragement of Christian soldiers who served under him. It may, probably, be regarded as authentic. The mass of legend woven into the life of the great missionary lies outside this piece and the "Confession." The "Confession" only expresses heights and depths of religious feeling haunted by impressions and dreams, through which, to the fervid nature out of which they sprang heaven seemed to speak. St. Patrick did not attack heresies among the Christians; he preached to those who were not Christians the Christian faith and practice. His great influence was not that of a writer, but of a speaker. He must have been an orator, profoundly earnest, who could put his soul into his voice; and, when his words bred deeds, conquered all difficulties in the way of action with right feeling and good sense.

HENRY MORLEY.

TO THE MEMORY

OF  
WORDSWORTH.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO "THE LEGENDS OF SAINT PATRICK."

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. 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 Saint Patrick, and the three centuries which succeeded it, were her time of joy. That chronicle is a song of gratitude and hope, as befits 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 of 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-loving 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 eyes are set on to the glory that has no end.

These legends are to be found chiefly in several very ancient lives 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 period 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 that Faith. It was one in which the nobler affections, as well as the passions, retained an unblunted ardour; 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 favourable 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 parental rule. 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 sacerdotal power was small, the Bards were the priests of the national Imagination, and round them all moral influences had gathered themselves. They were jealous of their rivals; but those rivals won them by degrees. Secknall and Fiacc were Christian Bards, trained by St. Patrick, who is said to have also brought a bard with him from Italy. The beautiful legend in which the Saint loosened the tongue of the dumb child was an apt emblem of Christianity imparting to the Irish race the highest use of its natural faculties. The Christian clergy turned to account the Irish traditions, as they had made use of the Pagan temples, purifying them first. The Christian religion looked with a genuine kindness on whatever was human, except so far as the stain was on it; and while it resisted to the face what was unchristian in spirit, it also, in the Apostolic sense, "made itself all things to all men." As legislator, Saint 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. It was one which at least did not fail to develop the imagination, the affections, and a great part of the moral being, and which thus indirectly prepared ardent natures, and not less the heroic than the tender, to seek their rest in spiritual things, rather than in material or conventional. 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 Borromean Tribute, for so many ages the source of relentless wars, had been imposed in vengeance for an insult offered to a woman; and a discourtesy shown to a poet had overthrown an ancient dynasty. The education of an Ollambh occupied twelve years; and in the third century, the time of Oiseen and Fionn, the military rules of the Feine included provisions which the chivalry of later ages might have been proud of. It was a wild, but not wholly an ungentle time. An unprovoked affront 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 on the cheek of a listener. Yet an injury a hundred years old could meet no forgiveness, and the life of man was war! 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 the bloodstain in case the injured party renounced his claim to right his own wrong. 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 lacked 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, crosiers, and ecclesiastical vestments. Once elevated by Christianity, Ireland's early civilisation was a memorable thing. It sheltered a high virtue at home, and evangelised 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 Apostle. Where others, as Palladius, had failed, he succeeded. By nature, by grace, and by providential training, he had been specially fitted for his task. We can still see plainly even the finer traits of that character, while the land of his birth is a matter of dispute, and 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, to return A.D. 432, when about forty-five years old; belonging thus to that 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 of 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 genial 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 denunciations 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 laboured, 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." The last poem in this series embodies its most characteristic portions, including the visions which it records.

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 baptising them; after founding churches and monasteries; after destroying idols and images and Druidical arts, the hour of death of 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 honour and reverence. Though great his honour here, greater honour 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."

A. DE VERE.

## THE LEGENDS OF SAINT PATRICK.

### THE BAPTISM OF ST. PATRICK.

"How can the babe baptised be  
Where font is none and water none?"  
Thus wept the nurse on bended knee,  
And swayed the Infant in the sun.

"The blind priest took that Infant's hand:  
With that small hand, above the ground  
He signed the Cross. At God's command  
A fountain rose with brimming bound.

"In that pure wave from Adam's sin  
The blind priest cleansed the Babe with awe;  
Then, reverently, he washed therein  
His old, unseeing face, and saw!

"He saw the earth; he saw the skies,  
And that all-wondrous Child decreed  
A pagan nation to baptise,  
To give the Gentiles light indeed."

Thus Secknall sang. Far off and nigh  
The clansmen shouted loud and long;  
While every mother tossed more high  
Her babe, and glorying joined the song.

### THE DISBELIEF OF MILCHO, OR, SAINT PATRICK'S ONE FAILURE.

#### ARGUMENT.

Fame of St. Patrick goes ever before him, and men of goodwill believe gladly; but Milcho, a mighty merchant, and one given wholly to pride and greed, wills to disbelieve. St. Patrick sends him greeting and gifts; but he, discovering that the prophet welcomed by all had once been his slave, hates him the more. Notwithstanding, he fears that when that prophet arrives, he, too, may be forced to believe, though against his will. He resolves to set fire to his castle and all his wealth, and make new fortunes in far lands. The doom of Milcho, who willed to disbelieve.

When now at Imber Dea that precious bark  
Freighted with Erin's future, touched the sands  
Just where a river, through a woody vale

Curving, with duskiest current cleave the sea,  
Patrick, the Island's great inheritor,  
His perilous voyage past, stepped forth and knelt  
And blessed his God. The peace of those green meads  
Cradled 'twixt purple hills and purple deep,  
Seemed as the peace of heaven. The sun had set;  
But still those summits twinned, the "Golden Spears,"  
Laughed with his latest beam. The hours went by:  
The brethren paced the shore or musing sat,  
But still their Patriarch knelt and still gave thanks  
For all the marvellous chances of his life  
Since those his earlier years when, slave new-trapped,  
He comforted on hills of Dalaraide  
His hungry heart with God, and, cleansed by pain,  
In exile found the spirit's native land.  
Eve deepened into night, and still he prayed:  
The clear cold stars had crowned the azure vault;  
And, risen at midnight from dark seas, the moon  
Had quenched those stars, yet Patrick still prayed on:  
Till from the river murmuring in the vale,  
Far off, and from the morning airs close by  
That shook the alders by the river's mouth,  
And from his own deep heart a voice there came,  
"Ere yet thou fling'st God's bounty on this land  
There is a debt to cancel. Where is he,  
Thy five years' lord that scourged thee for his swine?  
Alas that wintry face! Alas that heart  
Joyless since earliest youth! To him reveal it!  
To him declare that God who Man became  
To raise man's fall'n estate, as though a man,  
All faculties of man unmerged, undimmed,  
Had changed to worm and died the prey of worms,  
That so the mole might see!"

Thus Patrick mused  
Not ignorant that from low beginnings rise  
Oftenest the works of greatness; yet of this  
Unweeting, that his failure, one and sole  
Through all his more than mortal course, even now  
Before that low beginning's threshold lay,  
Betwixt it and that Promised Land beyond  
A bar of scandal stretched. Not otherwise  
Might whatsoever was mortal in his strength  
Dying, put on the immortal.

With the morn  
Deep sleep descended on him. Waking soon,  
He rose a man of might, and in that might  
Laboured; and God His servant's toil revered;  
And gladly on that coast Erin to Christ

Paid her firstfruits. Three days he preached his Lord:  
The fourth embarking, cape succeeding cape  
They passed, and heard the lowing herds remote  
In hollow glens, and smelt the balmy breath  
Of gorse on golden hillsides; till at eve,  
The Imber Domnand reached, on silver sands  
Grated their keel. Around them flocked at dawn  
Warriors with hunters mixed, and shepherd youths  
And maids with lips as red as mountain berries  
And eyes like sloes, or keener eyes, dark-fringed  
And gleaming like the blue-black spear. They came  
With milk-pail, and with kid, and kindled fire  
And spread the genial board. Upon that shore  
Full many knelt and gave themselves to Christ,  
Strong men, and men at midmost of their hopes  
By sickness felled; old chiefs, at life's dim close  
That oft had asked, "Beyond the grave what hope?"  
Worn sailors weary of the toilsome seas,  
And craving rest; they, too, that sex which wears  
The blended crowns of Chastity and Love;  
Wondering, they hailed the Maiden-Motherhood;  
And listening children praised the Babe Divine,  
And passed Him, each to each.

Ere long, once more  
Their sails were spread. Again by grassy marge  
They rowed, and sylvan glades. The branching deer  
Like flying gleams went by them. Oft the cry  
Of fighting clans rang out: but oftener yet  
Clamour of rural dance, or mart confused  
With many-coloured garb and movements swift,  
Pageant sun-bright: or on the sands a throng  
Girdled with circle glad some bard whose song  
Shook the wild clan as tempest shakes the woods.  
Still north the wanderers sailed: at evening, mists  
Cumbered the shore and on them leaned the blast,  
And fierce rain flashed mingling with dim-lit sea.  
All night they toiled; next day at noon they kened  
A seaward stream that shone like golden tress  
Severed and random-thrown. That river's mouth  
Ere long attained was all with lilies white  
As April field with daisies. Entering there  
They reached a wood, and disembarked with joy:  
There, after thanks to God, silent they sat  
In thought, and watched the ripples, dusk yet bright,  
That lived and died like things that laughed at time,  
On gliding 'neath those many-centuried boughs.  
But, midmost, Patrick slept. Then through the trees,  
Shy as a fawn half-tamed now stole, now fled  
A boy of such bright aspect faery child

He seemed, or babe exposed of royal race:  
 At last assured beside the Saint he stood,  
 And dropped on him a flower, and disappeared:  
 Thus flower on flower from the great wood he brought  
 And hid them in the bosom of the Saint.  
 The monks forbade him, saying, "Lest thou wake  
 The master from his sleep." But Patrick woke,  
 And saw the boy, and said, "Forbid him not;  
 The heir of all my kingdom is this child."  
 Then spake the brethren, "Wilt thou walk with us?"  
 And he, "I will:" and so for his sweet face  
 They called his name Benignus: and the boy  
 Thenceforth was Christ's. Beneath his parent's roof  
 At night they housed. Nowhere that child would sleep  
 Except at Patrick's feet. Till Patrick's death  
 Unchanged to him he clave, and after reigned  
 The second at Ardmacha.

Day by day

They held their course; ere long the hills of Mourne  
 Loomed through sea-mist: Ulidian summits next  
 Before them rose: but nearer at their left  
 Inland with westward channel wound the wave  
 Changed to sea-lake. Nine miles with chant and hymn  
 They tracked the gold path of the sinking sun;  
 Then southward ran 'twixt headland and green isle  
 And landed. Dewy pastures sunset-dazed,  
 At leisure paced by mild-eyed milk-white kine  
 Smiled them a welcome. Onward moved in sight  
 Swiftly, with shadow far before him cast,  
 Dichu, that region's lord, a martial man  
 And merry, and a speaker of the truth.  
 Pirates he deemed them first and toward them faced  
 With wolf-hounds twain that watched their master's eye  
 To spring, or not to spring. The imperious face  
 Forbidding not, they sprang; but Patrick raised  
 His hand, and stone-like crouched they chained and still:  
 Then, Dichu onward striding fierce, the Saint  
 Between them signed the Cross; and lo, the sword  
 Froze in his hand, and Dichu stood like stone.  
 The amazement past, he prayed the man of God  
 To grace his house; and, side by side, a mile  
 They clomb the hills. Ascending, Patrick turned,  
 His heart with prescience filled. Beneath, there lay  
 A gleaming strait; beyond, a dim vast plain  
 With many an inlet pierced: a golden marge  
 Girdled the water-tongues with flag and reed;  
 But, farther off, a gentle sea-mist changed  
 The fair green flats to purple. "Night comes on;"  
 Thus Dichu spake, and waited. Patrick then

Advanced once more, and Sabhall soon was reached,  
 A castle half, half barn. There garnered lay  
 Much grain, and sun-imbrowned: and Patrick said,  
 "Here where the earthly grain was stored for man  
 The bread of angels man shall eat one day."  
 And Patrick loved that place, and Patrick said,  
 "King Dichu, give thou to the poor that grain,  
 To Christ, our Lord, thy barn." The strong man stood  
 In doubt; but prayers of little orphaned babes  
 Reared by his hand, went up for him that hour:  
 Therefore that barn he ceded, and to Christ  
 By Patrick was baptised. Where lay the corn  
 A convent later rose. There dwelt he oft;  
 And 'neath its roof more late the stranger sat,  
 Exile, or kingdom-wearied king, or bard,  
 That haply blind in age, yet tempest-rocked  
 By memories of departed glories, drew  
 With gradual influx into his old heart  
 Solace of Christian hope.

With Dichu bode  
 Patrick somewhere, intent from him to learn  
 The inmost of that people. Oft they spake  
 Of Milcho. "Once his thrall, against my will  
 In earthly things I served him: for his soul  
 Needs therefore must I labour. Hard was he;  
 Unlike those hearts to which God's Truth makes way  
 Like message from a mother in her grave:  
 Yet what I can I must. Not heaven itself  
 Can force belief; for Faith is still good will."  
 Dichu laughed aloud: "Good will! Milcho's good will  
 Neither to others, nor himself, good will  
 Hath Milcho! Fireless sits he, winter through,  
 The logs beside his hearth: and as on them  
 Glimmers the rime, so glimmers on his face  
 The smile. Convert him! Better thrice to hang him!  
 Baptise him! He will film your font with ice!  
 The cold of Milcho's heart has winter-nipt  
 That glen he dwells in! From the sea it slopes  
 Unfinished, savage, like some nightmare dream,  
 Raked by an endless east wind of its own.  
 On wolf's milk was he suckled not on woman's!  
 To Milcho speed! Of Milcho claim belief!  
 Milcho will shrivel his small eye and say  
 He scorns to trust himself his father's son,  
 Nor deems his lands his own by right of race  
 But clutched by stress of brain! Old Milcho's God  
 Is gold. Forbear him, sir, or ere you seek him  
 Make smooth your way with gold."

Thus Dichu spake;  
And Patrick, after musings long, replied:  
"Faith is no gift that gold begets or feeds,  
Oftener by gold extinguished. Unto God,  
Unbribed, unpurchased, yearns the soul of man;  
Yet finds perforce in God its great reward.  
Not less this Milcho deems I did him wrong,  
His slave, yet fleeing. To requite that loss  
Gifts will I send him first by messengers  
Ere yet I see his face."

Then Patrick sent  
His messengers to Milcho, speaking thus:  
"If ill befell thy herds through flight of mine  
Fourfold that loss requite I, lest, for hate  
Of me, thou disesteem my Master's Word.  
Likewise I sue thy friendship; and I come  
In few days' space, with gift of other gold  
Than earth concedes, the Tidings of that God  
Who made all worlds, and late His Face hath shown,  
Sun-like to man. But thou, rejoice in hope!"

Thus Patrick, once by man advised in part,  
Though wont to counsel with his God alone.

Meantime full many a rumour vague had vexed  
Milcho much musing. He had dealings large  
And distant. Died a chief? He sent and bought  
The widow's all; or sold on foodless shores  
For usury the leanest of his kine.  
Meantime, his dark ships and the populous quays  
With news still murmured. First from Imber Dea  
Came whispers how a sage had landed late,  
And how when Nathi fain had barred his way,  
Nathi that spurned Palladius from the land,  
That sage with levelled eyes, and kingly front  
Had from his presence driven him with a ban  
Cur-like and craven; how on bended knee  
Sinell believed, the royal man well-loved  
Descending from the judgment-seat with joy:  
And how when fishers spurned his brethren's quest  
For needful food, that sage had raised his rod,  
And all the silver harvest of blue streams  
Lay black in nets and sand. His wrinkled brow  
Wrinkling yet more, thus Milcho answer made:  
"Deceived are those that will to be deceived:  
This knave has heard of gold in river-beds,  
And comes a deft sand-groper; let him come!  
He'll toil ten years ere gold enough he finds  
To make a crooked torque."

From Tara next

The news: "Laeghaire, the King, sits close in cloud  
Of sullen thought, or storms from court to court,  
Because the chiefest of the Druid race  
Locru, and Luchat prophesied long since  
That one day from the sea a Priest would come  
With Doctrine and a Rite, and dash to earth  
Idols, and hurl great monarchs from their thrones;  
And lo! At Imber Boindi late there stept  
A priest from roaring waves with Creed and Rite,  
And men before him bow." Then Milcho spake:  
"Not flesh enough from thy strong bones, Laeghaire,  
These Druids, ravens of the woods, have plucked,  
But they must pluck thine eyes! Ah priestly race,  
I loathe ye! 'Twixt the people and their King  
Ever ye rub a sore!" Last came a voice:  
"This day in Eire thy saying is fulfilled,  
Conn of the 'Hundred Battles,' from thy throne  
Leaping long since, and crying, 'O'er the sea  
The Prophet cometh, princes in his train,  
Bearing for regal sceptres bended staffs,  
Which from the land's high places, cliff and peak,  
Shall drag the fair flowers down!'" Scoffing he heard:  
"Conn of the 'Hundred Battles!' Had he sent  
His hundred thousand kernes to yonder steep  
And rolled its boulders down, and built a mole  
To fence my laden ships from spring-tide surge,  
Far kinglier pattern had he shown, and given  
More solace to the land."

He rose and turned

With sideway leer; and printing with vague step  
Irregular the shining sands, on strode  
Toward his cold home, alone; and saw by chance  
A little bird light-perched, that, being sick,  
Plucked from the fissured sea-cliff grains of sand;  
And, noting, said, "O bird, when beak of thine  
From base to crown hath gorged this huge sea-wall,  
Then shall that man of Creed and Rite make null  
The strong rock of my will!" Thus Milcho spake,  
Feigning the peace not his.

Next day it chanced

Women he heard in converse. Thus the first:  
"If true the news, good speed for him, my boy!  
Poor slaves by Milcho scourged on earth shall wear  
In heaven a monarch's crown! Good speed for her  
His little sister, not reserved like us  
To bend beneath these loads." To whom her mate:

"Doubt not the Prophet's tidings! Not in vain  
The Power Unknown hath shaped us! Come He must,  
Or send, and help His people on their way.  
Good is He, or He ne'er had made these babes!"  
They passed, and Milcho said, "Through hate of me  
All men believe!" And straightway Milcho's face  
Grew bleaker than that crab-tree stem forlorn  
That hid him, wanner than that sea-sand wet  
That whitened round his foot down-pressed.

Time passed.

One morn in bitter mockery Milcho mused:  
"What better laughter than when thief from thief  
Pilfers the pilfered goods? Our Druid thief  
Two thousand years hath milked and shorn this land;  
Now comes the thief outlandish that with him  
Would share milk-pail and fleece! O Bacrach old,  
To hear thee shout 'Impostor!'" Straight he went  
To Bacrach's cell hid in a skirt wind-shav'n  
Of low-grown wood, and met, departing thence,  
Three sailors sea-tanned from a ship late-beached.  
Within a corner huddled, on the floor,  
The Druid sat, cowering, and cold, and mazed:  
Sudden he rose, and cried, by conquering joy  
Clothed as with youth restored: "The God Unknown,  
That God who made the earth, hath walked the earth!  
This hour His Prophet treads the isle! Three men  
Have seen him; and their speech is true. To them  
That Prophet spake: 'Four hundred years ago,  
Sinless God's Son on earth for sinners died:  
Black grew the world, and graves gave up their dead.'  
Thus spake the Seer. Four hundred years ago!  
Mark well the time! Of Ulster's Druid race  
What man but yearly, those four hundred years,  
Trembled that tale recounting which with this  
Tallies as footprint with the foot of man?  
Four hundred years ago—that self-same day -  
Connor, the son of Nessa, Ulster's King,  
Sat throned, and judged his people. As he sat,  
Under clear skies, behold, o'er all the earth  
Swept a great shadow from the windless east;  
And darkness hung upon the air three hours;  
Dead fell the birds, and beasts astonished fled.  
Then to his Chief of Druids, Connor spake  
Whispering; and he, his oracles explored,  
Shivering made answer, 'From a land accursed,  
O King, that shadow sweeps; therein, this hour,  
By sinful men sinless God's Son is slain.'  
Then Ulster's king, down-dashing sceptre and crown,  
Rose, clamouring, 'Sinless! shall the sinless die?'

And madness fell on him; and down that steep  
He rushed whereon the Emanian Palace stood,  
And reached the grove, Lambraidhe, with two swords,  
The sword of battle, and the sword of state,  
And hewed and hewed, crying, 'Were I but there  
Thus they should fall who slay that Sinless One;'  
And in that madness died. Old Erin's sons  
Beheld this thing; nor ever in the land  
Hath ceased the rumour, nor the tear for him  
Who, wroth at justice trampled, martyr died.  
And now we know that not for any dream  
He died, but for the truth: and whensoever  
The Prophet of that Son of God who died  
Sinless for sinners, standeth in this place,  
I, Bacrach, oldest Druid in this Isle,  
Will rise the first, and kiss his vesture's hem."

He spake; and Milcho heard, and without speech  
Departed from that house.

A later day  
When the wild March sunset, gone almost ere come,  
By glacial shower was hustled out of life,  
Under a blighted ash tree, near his house,  
Thus mused the man: "Believe, or Disbelieve!  
The will does both; Then idiot who would be  
For profitless belief to sell himself?  
Yet disbelief not less might work our bane!  
For, I remember, once a sickly slave  
Ill shepherded my flock: I spake him plain;  
'When next, through fault of thine, the midnight wolf  
Worries my sheep, on yonder tree you hang.'  
The blear-eyed idiot looked into my face,  
And smiled his disbelief. On that day week  
Two lambs lay dead. I hanged him on a tree.  
What tree? this tree! Why, this is passing strange!  
For, three nights since, I saw him in a dream:  
Weakling as wont he stood beside my bed,  
And, clutching at his wrenched and livid throat,  
Spake thus, 'Belief is safest.'"

Ceased the hail  
To rattle on the ever barren boughs,  
And friendlier sound was heard. Beside his door  
Wayworn the messengers of Patrick stood,  
And showed the gifts, and held his missive forth.  
Then learned that lost one all the truth. That sage  
Confessed by miracles, that prophet vouched  
By warnings old, that seer by words of might  
Subduing all things to himself—that priest,

None other was than the uncomplaining boy  
Five years his slave and swineherd! In him rage  
Burst forth, with fear commixed, as when a beast  
Strains in the toils. "Can I alone stand firm?"  
He mused; and next, "Shall I, in mine old age,  
Byword become—the vassal of my slave?  
Shall I not rather drive him from my door  
With wolf hounds and a curse?" As thus he stood  
He marked the gifts, and bade men bare them in,  
And homeward signed the messengers unfed.

But Milcho slept not all that night for thought,  
And, forth ere sunrise issuing, paced a moor  
Stone-roughened like the graveyard of dead hosts,  
Till noontide. Sudden then he stopt, and thus  
Discoursed within: "A plot from first to last,  
The fraudulent bondage, flight, and late return;  
For now I mind me of a foolish dream  
Chance-sent, yet drawn by him awry. One night  
Methought that boy from far hills drenched in rain  
Dashed through my halls, all fire. From hands and head,  
From hair and mouth, forth rushed a flaming fire  
White, like white light, and still that mighty flame  
Into itself took all. With hands outstretched  
I spurned it. On my cradled daughters twain  
It turned, and they were ashes. Then in burst  
The south wind through the portals of the house,  
Tempest rose-sweet, and blew those ashes forth  
Wide as the realm. At dawn I sought the knave;  
He glossed my vision thus: "That fire is Faith -  
Faith in the God Triune, the God made Man,  
Sole light wherein I walk, and walking burn;  
And they that walk with me shall burn like me  
By Faith. But thou that radiance wilt repel,  
Housed through ill-will, in Error's endless night.  
Not less thy little daughters shall believe  
With glory and great joy; and, when they die,  
Report of them, like ashes blown abroad,  
Shall light far lands, and health to men of Faith  
Stream from their dust.' I drave the impostor forth:  
Perjured ere long he fled, and now returns  
To reap a harvest from his master's dream" -  
Thus mused he, while black shadow swept the moor.  
So day by day darker was Milcho's heart,  
Till, with the endless brooding on one thought,  
Began a little flaw within that brain  
Whose strength was still his boast. Was no friend nigh?  
Alas! what friend had he? All men he scorned;  
Knew truly none. In each, the best and sweetest  
Near him had ever pined, like stunted growth

Dwarfed by some glacier nigh. The fifth day dawned:  
 And inly thus he muttered, darkly pale:  
 "Five days; in three the messengers returned:  
 In three—in two—the Accursed will be here,  
 Or blacken yonder Sleemish with his crew  
 Descending. Then those idiots, kerne and slave -  
 The mighty flame into itself takes all -  
 Full swarm will fly to meet him! Fool! fool! fool!  
 The man hath snared me with those gifts he sent;  
 Else had I barred the mountains: now 'twere late,  
 My people in revolt. Whole weeks his horde  
 Will throng my courts, demanding board and bed,  
 With hosts by Dichu sent to flout my pang,  
 And sorer make my charge. My granaries sacked,  
 My larder lean as ship six months ice-bound,  
 The man I hate will rise, and open shake  
 The invincible banner of his mad new Faith,  
 Till all that hear him shout, like winds or waves,  
 Belief; and I be left sole recusant;  
 Or else perhaps that Fury who prevails  
 At times o'er knee-joints of reluctant men,  
 By magic impeded, may crumble into dust  
 By force my disbelief."

He raised his head,  
 And lo, before him lay the sea far ebb'd  
 Sad with a sunset all but gone: the reeds  
 Sighed in the wind, and sighed a sweeter voice  
 Oft heard in childhood—now the last time heard:  
 "Believe!" it whispered. Vain the voice! That hour,  
 Stirred from the abyss, the sins of all his life  
 Around him rose like night—not one, but all -  
 That earliest sin which, like a dagger, pierced  
 His mother's heart; that worst, when summer drouth  
 Parched the brown vales, and infants thirsting died,  
 While from full pail he gorged his swine with milk  
 And flung the rest away. Sin-walled he stood:  
 God's Angels could not pierce that cincture dread,  
 Nor he look through it. Yet he dreamed he saw:  
 His life he saw; its labours, and its gains  
 Hard won, long-waited, wonder of his foes;  
 The manifold conquests of a Will oft tried;  
 Victory, Defeat, Retrieval; last, that scene  
 Around him spread: the wan sea and grey rocks;  
 And he was 'ware that on that self-same ledge  
 He, Milcho, thirty years gone by, had stood,  
 While pirates pushed to sea, leaving forlorn  
 On that wild shore a scared and weeping boy,  
 (His price two yearling kids and half a sheep)  
 Thenceforth his slave.

Not sole he mused that hour.  
The Demon of his House beside him stood  
Upon that iron coast, and whispered thus:  
"Masterful man art thou for wit and strength;  
Yet girl-like standst thou brooding! Weave a snare!  
He comes for gold, this prophet. All thou hast  
Heap in thy house; then fire it! In far lands  
Build thee new fortunes. Frustrate thus shall he  
Stare but on stones, his destined vassal scaped."

So fell the whisper; and as one who hears  
And does, the stiff-necked man obsequious bent  
His strong will to a stronger, and returned,  
And gave command to heap within his house  
His stored up wealth—yea, all things that were his -  
Borne from his ships and granaries. It was done.  
Then filled he his huge hall with resinous beams  
Seasoned for far sea-voyage, and the ribs  
Of ocean-sundering vessels deep in sea;  
Which ended, to his topmost tower he clomb,  
And therein sat two days, with face to south,  
Clutching a brand; and oft through clenched teeth hissed,  
Hissed long, "Because I will to disbelieve."  
But ere the second sunset two brief hours,  
Where comfortless leaned forth that western ridge  
Long patched with whiteness by half melted snows,  
There crept a gradual shadow. Soon the man  
Discerned its import. There they hung—he saw them -  
That company detested; hung as when  
Storm-boding cloud on mountain hangs half way  
Scarce moving, and in fear the shepherd cries,  
"Would that the worse were come!" So dread to him  
Those Heralds of fair Peace! He gazed upon them  
With blood-shot eyes; a moment passed: he stood  
Sole in his never festal hall, and flung  
His lighted brand into that pile far forth,  
And smiled that smile men feared to see, and turned,  
And issuing faced the circle of his serfs  
That wondering gathered round in thickening mass,  
Eyeing that unloved House.

His place he chose  
Beside that blighted ash, fronting those towers  
Palled with red smoke, and muttered low, "So be it!  
Worse to be vassal to the man I hate,"  
With hueless lips. His whole white face that hour  
Was scorched; and blistered was the dead tree's bark;  
Yet there he stood; and in that fiery light  
His life, no more triumphant, passed once more

In underthought before him, while on spread  
The swift, contagious madness of that fire,  
And muttered thus, not knowing it, the man,  
"The mighty flame into itself takes all,"  
Mechanic iteration. Not alone  
Stood he that hour. The Demon of his House  
By him once more and closer than of old,  
Stood, whispering thus, "Thy game is now played out;  
Henceforth a byword art thou—rich in youth -  
Self-beggared in old age." And as the wind  
Of that shrill whisper cut his listening soul,  
The blazing roof fell in on all his wealth,  
Hard-won, long-awaited, wonder of his foes;  
And, loud as laughter from ten thousand fiends,  
Up rushed the fire. With arms outstretched he stood;  
Stood firm; then forward with a wild beast's cry  
He dashed himself into that terrible flame,  
And vanished as a leaf.

Upon a spur  
Of Sleemish, eastward on its northern slope,  
Stood Patrick and his brethren, travel-worn,  
When distant o'er the brown and billowy moor  
Rose the white smoke, that changed ere long to flame,  
From site unknown; for by the seaward crest  
That keep lay hidden. Hands to forehead raised,  
Wondering they watched it. One to other spake:  
"The huge Dalriad forest is afire  
Ere melted are the winter's snows!" Another,  
"In vengeance o'er the ocean Creithe or Pict,  
Favoured by magic, or by mist, have crossed,  
And fired old Milcho's ships." But Patrick leaned  
Upon his crosier, pale as the ashes wan  
Left by a burned out city. Long he stood  
Silent, till, sudden, fiercelier soared the flame  
Reddening the edges of a cloud low hung;  
And, after pause, vibration slow and stern  
Troubling the burthened bosom of the air,  
Upon a long surge of the northern wind  
Came up—a murmur as of wintry seas  
Far borne at night. All heard that sound; all felt it;  
One only know its import. Patrick turned;  
"The deed is done: the man I would have saved  
Is dead, because he willed to disbelieve."

Yet Patrick grieved for Milcho, nor that hour  
Passed further north. Three days on Sleemish hill  
He dwelt in prayer. To Tara's royal halls  
Then turned he, and subdued the royal house  
And host to Christ, save Erin's king, Laeghaire.

But Milcho's daughters twain to Christ were born  
In baptism, and each Emeria named:  
Like rose-trees in the garden of the Lord  
Grew they and flourished. Dying young, one grave  
Received them at Cluanbrain. Healing thence  
To many from their relics passed; to more  
The spirit's happier healing, Love and Faith.

#### SAINT PATRICK AT TARA.

The King is wroth with a greater wrath  
Than the wrath of Nial or the wrath of Conn!  
From his heart to his brow the blood makes path,  
And hangs there, a red cloud, beneath his crown.

Is there any who knows not, from south to north,  
That Laeghaire to-morrow his birthday keeps?  
No fire may be lit upon hill or hearth  
Till the King's strong fire in its kingly mirth  
Up rushes from Tara's palace steeps!

Yet Patrick has lighted his Paschal fire  
At Slane—it is holy Saturday -  
And blessed his font 'mid the chaunting choir!  
From hill to hill the flame makes way;  
While the king looks on it his eyes with ire  
Flash red, like Mars, under tresses grey.

The chiefs and the captains with drawn swords rose:  
To avenge their Lord and the Realm they swore;  
The Druids rose and their garments tore;  
"The strangers to us and our Gods are foes!"  
Then the king to Patrick a herald sent,  
Who spake, 'Come up at noon and show  
Who lit thy fire and with what intent:  
These things the great king Laeghaire would know."

But Laeghaire had hid twelve men by the way,  
Who swore by the sun the Saint to slay.

When the waters of Boyne began to bask  
And fields to flash in the rising sun  
The Apostle Evangelist kept his Pasch,  
And Erin her grace baptismal won:  
Her birthday it was: his font the rock,  
He blessed the land, and he blessed his flock.

Then forth to Tara he fared full lowly:  
The Staff of Jesus was in his hand:  
Twelve priests paced after him chaunting slowly,

Printing their steps on the dewy land.  
It was the Resurrection morn;  
The lark sang loud o'er the springing corn;  
The dove was heard, and the hunter's horn.

The murderers twelve stood by on the way;  
Yet they saw nought save the lambs at play.

A trouble lurked in the monarch's eye  
When the guest he counted for dead drew nigh:  
He sat in state at his palace gate;  
His chiefs and nobles were ranged around;  
The Druids like ravens smelt some far fate;  
Their eyes were gloomily bent on the ground.  
Then spake Laeghaire: "He comes—beware!  
Let none salute him, or rise from his chair!"

Like some still vision men see by night,  
Mitred, with eyes of serene command,  
Saint Patrick moved onward in ghostly white:  
The Staff of Jesus was in his hand;  
Twelve priests paced after him unafraid,  
And the boy, Benignus, more like a maid;  
Like a maid just wedded he walked and smiled,  
To Christ new plighted, that priestly child.

They entered the circle; their anthem ceased;  
The Druids their eyes bent earthward still:  
On Patrick's brow the glory increased  
As a sunrise brightening some sea-beat hill.  
The warriors sat silent: strange awe they felt:  
The chief bard, Dubtach, rose and knelt:

Then Patrick discoursed of the things to be  
When time gives way to eternity,  
Of kingdoms that fall, which are dreams not things,  
And the Kingdom built by the King of kings.  
Of Him he spake who reigns from the Cross;  
Of the death which is life, and the life which is loss;  
How all things were made by the Infant Lord,  
And the small hand the Magian kings adored.  
His voice sounded on like a throbbing flood  
That swells all night from some far-off wood,  
And when it ended—that wondrous strain -  
Invisible myriads breathed "Amen!"

While he spake, men say that the reflux tide  
On the shore by Colpa ceased to sink:  
They say that the white stag by Mulla's side  
O'er the green marge bending forbore to drink:

That the Brandon eagle forgot to soar;  
That no leaf stirred in the wood by Lee:  
Such stupor hung the island o'er,  
For none might guess what the end would be.

Then whispered the king to a chief close by,  
"It were better for me to believe than die!"

Yet the king believed not; but ordinance gave  
That whoso would might believe that word:  
So the meek believed, and the wise, and brave,  
And Mary's Son as their God adored.  
And the Druids, because they could answer nought,  
Bowed down to the Faith the stranger brought.  
That day on Erin God poured His Spirit:  
Yet none like the chief of the bards had merit,  
Dubtach! He rose and believed the first,  
Ere the great light yet on the rest had burst.

#### SAINT PATRICK AND THE TWO PRINCESSES.

#### FEDELM "THE RED ROSE," AND ETHNA "THE FAIR."

Like two sister fawns that leap,  
Borne, as though on viewless wings,  
Down bosky glade and ferny steep  
To quench their thirst at silver springs,  
From Cruachan palace through gorse and heather,  
Raced the Royal Maids together.  
Since childhood thus the twain had rushed  
Each morn to Clebach's fountain-cell  
Ere earliest dawn the East had flushed  
To bathe them in its well:  
Each morn with joy their young hearts tingled;  
Each morn as, conquering cloud or mist,  
The first beam with the wavelet mingled,  
Mouth to mouth they kissed!

They stand by the fount with their unlooped hair -  
A hand each raises—what see they there?  
A white Form seated on Clebach stone;  
A kinglike presence: the monks stood nigh:  
Fronting the dawn he sat alone;  
On the star of morning he fixed his eye:  
That crozier he grasped shone bright; but brighter  
The sunrise flashed from Saint Patrick's mitre!  
They gazed without fear. To a kingdom dear  
From the day of their birth those Maids had been;  
Of wrong they had heard; but it came not near;  
They hoped they were dear to the Power unseen.

They knelt when that Vision of Peace they saw;  
Knelt, not in fear, but in loving awe:  
The "Red Rose" bloomed like that East afar;  
The "Fair One" shone like that morning star.

Then Patrick rose: no word he said,  
But thrice he made the sacred Sign:  
At the first, men say that the demons fled;  
At the third flocked round them the Powers divine  
Unseen. Like children devout and good,  
Hands crossed on their bosoms, the maidens stood.

"Blessed and holy! This land is Eire:  
Whence come ye to her, and the king our sire?"

"We come from a Kingdom far off yet near  
Which the wise love well, and the wicked fear:  
We come with blessing and come with ban,  
We come from the Kingdom of God with man."

"Whose is that Kingdom? And say, therein  
Are the chiefs all brave, and the maids all fair?  
Is it clean from reptiles, and that thing, sin?  
Is it like this kingdom of King Laeghaire?"

"The chiefs of that kingdom wage war on wrong,  
And the clash of their swords is sweet as song;  
Fair are the maids, and so pure from taint  
The flash of their eyes turns sinner to saint;  
There reptile is none, nor the ravening beast;  
There light has no shadow, no end the feast."

"But say, at that feast hath the poor man place?  
Is reverence there for the old head hoar?  
For the cripple that never might join the race?  
For the maimed that fought, and can fight no more?"

"Reverence is there for the poor and meek;  
And the great King kisses the worn, pale cheek;  
And the King's Son waits on the pilgrim guest;  
And the Queen takes the little blind child to her breast:  
There with a crown is the just man crowned;  
But the false and the vengeful are branded and bound  
In knots of serpents, and flung without pity  
From the bastions and walls of the saintly City."

Then the eyes of the Maidens grew dark, as though  
That judgment of God had before them passed:  
And the two sweet faces grew dim with woe;  
But the rose and the radiance returned at last.

"Are gardens there? Are there streams like ours?  
Is God white-headed, or youthful and strong?  
Hang there the rainbows o'er happy bowers?  
Are there sun and moon and the thrush's song?"

"They have gardens there without noise or strife,  
And there is the Tree of immortal Life:  
Four rivers circle that blissful bound;  
And Spirits float o'er it, and Spirits go round:  
There, set in the midst, is the golden throne;  
And the Maker of all things sits thereon:  
A rainbow o'er-hangs him; and lo! therein  
The beams are His Holy Ones washed from sin."

As he spake, the hearts of the Maids beat time  
To music in heaven of peace and love;  
And the deeper sense of that lore sublime  
Came out from within them, and down from above;  
By degrees came down; by degrees came out:  
Who loveth, and hopeth, not long shall doubt.

"Who is your God? Is love on His brow?  
Oh how shall we love Him and find Him? How?"  
The pure cheek flamed like the dawn-touched dew:  
There was silence: then Patrick began anew.  
The princes who ride in your father's train  
Have courted your love, but sued in vain; -  
Look up, O Maidens; make answer free:  
What boon desire you, and what would you be?"

"Pure we would be as yon wreath of foam,  
Or the ripple which now yon sunbeams smite:  
And joy we would have, and a songful home;  
And one to rule us, and Love's delight."

"In love God fashioned whatever is,  
The hills, and the seas, and the skiey fires;  
For love He made them, and endless blis  
Sustains, enkindles, uplifts, inspires:  
That God is Father, and Son, and Spirit;  
And the true and spotless His peace inherit:  
And God made man, with his great sad heart,  
That hungers when held from God apart.  
Your sire is a King on earth: but I  
Would mate you to One who is Lord on high:  
There bride is maid: and her joy shall stand,  
For the King's Son hath laid on her head His hand."  
As he spake, the eyes of that lovely twain  
Grew large with a tearful but glorious light,

Like skies of summer late cleared by rain,  
When the full-orbed moon will be soon in sight.

”That Son of the King—is He fairest of men?  
That mate whom He crowns—is she bright and blest?  
Does she chase the red deer at His side through the glen?  
Does she charm Him with song to His noontide rest?”

”That King’s Son strove in a long, long war:  
His people He freed; yet they wounded Him sore;  
And still in His hands, and His feet, and His side,  
The scars of His sorrow are ’graved, deep-dyed.”

Then the breasts of the Maidens began to heave  
Like harbour waves when beyond the bar  
The great waves gather, and wet winds grieve,  
And the roll of the tempest is heard afar.

”We will kiss, we will kiss those bleeding feet;  
On the bleeding hands our tears shall fall;  
And whatever on earth is dear or sweet,  
For that wounded heart we renounce them all.

”Show us the way to His palace-gate:” -  
”That way is thorny, and steep, and straight;  
By none can His palace-gate be seen,  
Save those who have washed in the waters clean.”

They knelt; on their heads the wave he poured  
Thrice in the name of the Triune Lord:  
And he signed their brows with the Sign adored.  
On Fedelm the ”Red Rose,” on Ethna ”The Fair,”  
God’s dew shone bright in that morning air:  
Some say that Saint Agnes, ’twixt sister and sister,  
As the Cross touched each, bent over and kissed her.

Then sang God’s new-born Creatures, ”Behold!  
We see God’s City from heaven draw nigh:  
But we thirst for the fountains divine and cold:  
We must see the great King’s Son, or die!  
Come, Thou that com’st! Our wish is this,  
That the body might die, and the soul, set free,  
Swell out, like an infant’s lips, to the kiss  
Of the Lover who filleth infinity!”

”The City of God, by the water’s grace,  
Ye see: alone, they behold His Face,  
Who have washed in the baths of Death their eyes,  
And tasted His Eucharist Sacrifice.”

"Give us the Sacrifice!" Each bright head  
Bent toward it as sunflowers bend to the sun:  
They ate; and the blood from the warm cheek fled:  
The exile was over: the home was won:  
A starry darkness o'erflowed their brain:  
Far waters beat on some heavenly shore:  
Like the dying away of a low, sweet strain,  
The young life ebbed, and they breathed no more:  
In death they smiled, as though on the breast  
Of the Mother Maid they had found their rest.

The rumour spread: beside the bier  
The King stood mute, and his chiefs and court:  
The Druids dark-robed drew surlily near,  
And the Bards storm-hearted, and humbler sort:  
The "Staff of Jesus" Saint Patrick raised:  
Angelic anthems above them swept:  
There were that muttered; there were that praised:  
But none who looked on that marvel wept.

For they lay on one bed, like Brides new-wed,  
By Clebach well; and, the dirge days over,  
On their smiling faces a veil was spread,  
And a green mound raised that bed to cover.  
Such were the ways of those ancient days -  
To Patrick for aye that grave was given;  
And above it he built a church in their praise;  
For in them had Eire been spoused to heaven.

#### SAINT PATRICK AND THE CHILDREN OF FOCHLUT WOOD.

#### ARGUMENT.

Saint Patrick makes way into Fochlut wood by the sea, the oldest of Erin's forests, whence there had been borne unto him, then in a distant land, the Children's Wail from Erin. He meets there two young Virgins, who sing a dirge of man's sorrowful condition. Afterwards they lead him to the fortress of the king, their father. There are sung two songs, a song of Vengeance and a song of Lament; which ended, Saint Patrick makes proclamation of the Advent and of the Resurrection. The king and all his chiefs believe with full contentment.

One day as Patrick sat upon a stone  
Judging his people, Pagan babes flocked round,  
All light and laughter, angel-like of mien,  
Sueing for bread. He gave it, and they ate:  
Then said he, "Kneel;" and taught them prayer: but lo!

Sudden the stag hounds' music dinned the wind;  
They heard; they sprang; they chased it. Patrick spake;  
"It was the cry of children that I heard  
Borne from the black wood o'er the midnight seas:  
Where are those children? What avails though Kings  
Have bowed before my Gospel, and in awe  
Nations knelt low, unless I set mine eyes  
On Fochlut Wood?" Thus speaking, he arose,  
And, journeying with the brethren toward the West,  
Fronted the confine of that forest old.

Then entered they that darkness; and the wood  
Closed as a cavern round them. O'er its roof  
Leaned roof of cloud, and hissing ran the wind,  
And moaned the trunks for centuries hollowed out  
Yet stalwart still. There, rooted in the rock,  
Stood the huge growths, by us unnamed, that frowned  
Perhaps on Partholan, the parricide,  
When that first Pagan settler fugitive  
Landed, a man foredoomed. Between the stems  
The ravening beast now glared, now fled. Red leaves,  
The last year's phantoms, rattled here and there.  
The oldest wood that ever grew in Eire  
Was Fochlut Wood, and gloomiest. Spirits of Ill  
Made it their palace, and its labyrinths sowed  
With poisons. Many a cave, with horrors thronged  
Within it yawned, and many a chasm unseen  
Waited the unwary treader. Cry of wolf  
Pierced the cold air, and gibbering ghosts were heard;  
And o'er the black marsh passed those wandering lights  
That lure lost feet. A thousand pathways wound  
From gloom to gloom. One only led to light:  
That path was sharp with flints.

Then Patrick mused,  
"O life of man, how dark a wood art thou!  
Erring how many track thee till Despair,  
Sad host, receives them in his crypt-like porch  
At nightfall." Mute he paced. The brethren feared;  
And fearing, knelt to God. Made strong by prayer  
Westward once more they trod that dark, sharp way  
Till deeper gloom announced the night, then slept  
Guarded by angels. But the Saint all night  
Watched, strong in prayer. The second day still on  
They fared, like mariners o'er strange seas borne,  
That keep in mist their soundings when the rocks  
Vex the dark strait, and breakers roar unseen.  
At last Benignus cried, "To God be praise!  
He sends us better omens. See! the moss  
Brightens the crag!" Ere long another spake:

"The worst is past! This freshness in the air  
Wafts us a welcome from the great salt sea;  
Fair spreads the fern: green buds are on the spray,  
And violets through the grass."

A few steps more  
Brought them to where, with peaceful gleam, there spread  
A forest pool that mirrored yew trees twain  
With beads like blood-drops hung. A sunset flash  
Kindled a glory in the osiers brown  
Encircling that still water. From the reeds  
A sable bird, gold-circled, slowly rose;  
But when the towering tree-tops he outsoared,  
Eastward a great wind swept him as a leaf.  
Serenely as he rose a music soft  
Swelled from afar; but, as that storm o'ertook him,  
The music changed to one on-rushing note  
O'ertaken by a second; both, ere long,  
Blended in wail unending. Patrick's brow,  
Listening that wail, was altered, and he spake:  
"These were the Voices that I heard when stood  
By night beside me in that southern land  
God's angel, girt for speed. Letters he bare  
Unnumbered, full of woes. He gave me one,  
Inscribed, 'The Wailing of the Irish Race;'  
And as I read that legend on mine ear  
Forth from a mighty wood on Erin's coast  
There rang the cry of children, 'Walk once more  
Among us; bring us help!'" Thus Patrick spake:  
Then towards that wailing paced with forward head.

Ere long they came to where a river broad,  
Swiftly amid the dense trees winding, brimmed  
The flower-enamelled marge, and onward bore  
Green branches 'mid its eddies. On the bank  
Two virgins stood. Whiter than earliest streak  
Of matin pearl dividing dusky clouds  
Their raiment; and, as oft in silent woods  
White beds of wind-flower lean along the earth-breeze,  
So on the river-breeze that raiment wan  
Shivered, back blown. Slender they stood and tall,  
Their brows with violets bound; while shone, beneath,  
The dark blue of their never-tearless eyes.  
Then Patrick, "For the sake of Him who lays  
His blessing on the mourners, O ye maids,  
Reveal to me your grief—if yours late sent,  
Or sped in careless childhood." And the maids:  
"Happy whose careless childhood 'scaped the wound:"  
Then she that seemed the saddest added thus:  
"Stranger! this forest is no roof of joy,

Nor we the only mourners; neither fall  
 Bitterer the widow's nor the orphan's tears  
 Now than of old; nor sharper than long since  
 That loss which maketh maiden widowhood.  
 In childhood first our sorrow came. One eve  
 Within our foster-parents' low-roofed house  
 The winter sunset from our bed had waned:  
 I slept, and sleeping dreamed. Beside the bed  
 There stood a lovely Lady crowned with stars;  
 A sword went through her heart. Down from that sword  
 Blood trickled on the bed, and on the ground.  
 Sorely I wept. The Lady spake: 'My child,  
 Weep not for me, but for thy country weep;  
 Her wound is deeper far than mine. Cry loud!  
 The cry of grief is Prayer.' I woke, all tears;  
 And lo! my little sister, stiff and cold,  
 Sat with wide eyes upon the bed upright:  
 That starry Lady with the bleeding heart  
 She, too, had seen, and heard her. Clamour vast  
 Rang out; and all the wall was fiery red;  
 And flame was on the sea. A hostile clan  
 Landing in mist, had fired our ships and town,  
 Our clansmen absent on a foray far,  
 And stricken many an old man, many a boy  
 To bondage dragged. Oh night with blood redeemed!  
 Upon the third day o'er the green waves rushed  
 The vengeance winged, with axe and torch, to quit  
 Wrong with new wrong, and many a time since then.  
 That night sad women on the sea sands toiled,  
 Drawing from wreck and ruin, beam or plank  
 To shield their babes. Our foster-parents slain,  
 Unheeded we, the children of the chief,  
 Roamed the great forest. There we told our dream  
 To children likewise orphaned. Sudden fear  
 Smote them as though themselves had dreamed that dream,  
 And back from them redoubled upon us;  
 Until at last from us and them rang out -  
 The dark wood heard it, and the midnight sea -  
 A great and bitter cry."

"That cry went up,  
 O children, to the heart of God; and He  
 Down sent it, pitying, to a far-off land,  
 And on into my heart. By that first pang  
 Which left the eternal pallor in your cheeks,  
 O maids, I pray you, sing once more that song  
 Ye sang but late. I heard its long last note:  
 Fain would I hear the song that such death died."

They sang: not scathless those that sing such song!

Grief, their instructress, of the Muses chief  
To hearts by grief unvanquished, to their hearts  
Had taught a melody that neither spared  
Singer nor listener. Pale when they began,  
Paler it left them. He not less was pale  
Who, out of trance awaking, thanked them thus:  
"Now know I of that sorrow in you fixed;  
What, and how great it is, and bless that Power  
Who called me forth from nothing for your sakes,  
And sent me to this wood. Maidens, lead on!  
A chieftain's daughters ye; and he, your sire,  
And with him she who gave you your sweet looks  
(Sadder perchance than you in songless age)  
They, too, must hear my tidings. Once a Prince  
Went solitary from His golden throne,  
Tracking the illimitable wastes, to find  
One wildered sheep, the meanest of the flock,  
And on His shoulders bore it to that House  
Where dwelt His Sire. 'Good Shepherd' was His Name.  
My tidings these: heralds are we, footsore,  
That bring the heart-sore comfort."

On they paced,  
On by the rushing river without words.  
Beside the elder sister Patrick walked,  
Benignus by the younger. Fair her face;  
Majestic his, though young. Her looks were sad  
And awe-struck; his, fulfilled with secret joy,  
Sent forth a gleam as when a morn-touched bay  
Through ambush shines of woodlands. Soon they stood  
Where sea and river met, and trod a path  
Wet with salt spray, and drank the clement breeze,  
And saw the quivering of the green gold wave,  
And, far beyond, that fierce aggressor's bourn,  
Fair haunt for savage race, a purple ridge  
By rainy sunbeam gemmed from glen to glen,  
Dim waste of wandering lights. The sun, half risen,  
Lay half sea-couched. A neighbouring height sent forth  
Welcome of baying hounds; and, close at hand,  
They reached the chieftain's keep.

A white-haired man  
And long since blind, there sat he in his hall,  
Untamed by age. At times a fiery gleam  
Flashed from his sightless eyes; and oft the red  
Burned on his forehead, while with splenetic speech  
Stirred by ill news or memory stung, he banned  
Foes and false friend. Pleased by his daughters' tale,  
At once he stretched his huge yet aimless hands  
In welcome towards his guests. Beside him stood

His mate of forty years by that strong arm  
From countless suitors won. Pensive her face:  
With parted youth the confidence of youth  
Had left her. Beauty, too, though with remorse,  
Its seat had half relinquished on a cheek  
Long time its boast, and on that willowy form,  
So yielding now, where once in strength upsoared  
The queenly presence. Tenderest grace not less  
Haunted her life's dim twilight-meekness, love -  
That humble love, all-giving, that seeks nought,  
Self-reverent calm, and modesty in age.  
She turned an anxious eye on him she loved;  
And, bending, kissed at times that wrinkled hand,  
By years and sorrows made his wife far more  
Than in her nuptial bloom. These two had lost  
Five sons, their hope, in war.

That eve it chanced  
High feast was holden in the chieftain's tower  
To solemnise his birthday. In they flocked,  
Each after each, the warriors of the clan,  
Not without pomp heraldic and fair state  
Barbaric, yet beseeming. Unto each  
Seat was assigned for deeds or lineage old,  
And to the chiefs allied. Where each had place  
Above him waved his banner. Not for this  
Unhonoured were the pilgrim guests. They sat  
Where, fed by pinewood and the seeded cone,  
The loud hearth blazed. Bathed were the wearied feet  
By maidens of the place and nurses grey,  
And dried in linen fragrant still with flowers  
Of years when those old nurses too were fair.  
And now the board was spread, and carved the meat,  
And jests ran round, and many a tale was told,  
Some rude, but none opprobrious. Banquet done,  
Page-led the harper entered, old, and blind:  
The noblest ranged his chair, and spread the mat;  
The loveliest raised his wine cup, one light hand  
Laid on his shoulder, while the golden hair  
Commingled with the silver. "Sing," they cried,  
"The death of Deirdre; or that desolate sire  
That slew his son, unweeting; or that Queen  
Who from her palace pacing with fixed eyes  
Stared at those heads in dreadful circle ranged,  
The heads of traitor-friends that slew her lord  
Then mocked the friend they murdered. Leal and true,  
The Bard who wrought that vengeance!" Thus he sang:

THE LAY OF THE HEADS.

The Bard returns to a stricken house:  
What shape is that he rears on high?  
A withe of the Willow, set round with Heads:  
They blot that evening sky.

A Widow meets him at the gates:  
What fixes thus that Widow's eye?  
She names the name; but she sees not the man,  
Nor beyond him that reddening sky.

"Bard of the Brand, thou Foster-Sire  
Of him they slew—their friend—my lord -  
What Head is that—the first—that frowns  
Like a traitor self-abhorred?"

"Daughter of Orgill wounded sore,  
Thou of the fateful eye serene,  
Fergus is he. The feast he made  
That snared thy Cuchullene."

"What Head is that—the next—half-hid  
In curls full lustrous to behold?  
They mind me of a hand that once  
I saw amid their gold."

"'Tis Manadh. He that by the shore  
Held rule, and named the waves his steeds:  
'Twas he that struck the stroke accursed -  
Headless this day he bleeds."

"What Head is that close by—so still,  
With half-closed lids, and lips that smile?  
Methinks I know their voice: methinks  
HIS wine they quaffed erewhile!"

"'Twas he raised high that severed head:  
Thy head he raised, my Foster-Child!  
That was the latest stroke I struck:  
I struck that stroke, and smiled."

"What Heads are those—that twain, so like,  
Flushed as with blood by yon red sky?"  
"Each unto each, HIS Head they rolled;  
Red on that grass they lie."

"That paler twain, which face the East?"  
"Laegar is one; the other Hilt;  
Silent they watched the sport! they share  
The doom, that shared the guilt."

"Bard of the Vengeance! well thou knew'st  
Blood cries for blood! O kind, and true,  
How many, kith and kin, have died  
That mocked the man they slew?"

"O Woman of the fateful eye,  
The untrembling voice, the marble mould,  
Seven hundred men, in house or field,  
For the man they mocked, lie cold."

"Their wives, thou Bard? their wives? their wives?  
Far off, or nigh, through Inisfail,  
This hour what are they? Stand they mute  
Like me; or make their wail?"

"O Eimer! women weep and smile;  
The young have hope, the young that mourn;  
But I am old; my hope was he:  
He that can ne'er return!

"O Conal! lay me in his grave:  
Oh! lay me by my husband's side:  
Oh! lay my lips to his in death;"  
She spake, and, standing, died.

She fell at last—in death she fell -  
She lay, a black shade, on the ground;  
And all her women o'er her wailed  
Like sea-birds o'er the drowned.

Thus to the blind chief sang that harper blind,  
Hymning the vengeance; and the great hall roared  
With wrath of those wild listeners. Many a heel  
Smote the rough stone in scorn of them that died  
Not three days past, so seemed it! Direful hands,  
Together dashed, thundered the Avenger's praise.  
At last the tide of that fierce tumult ebbed  
O'er shores of silence. From her lowly seat  
Beside her husband's spake the gentle Queen:  
"My daughters, from your childhood ye were still  
A voice of music in your father's house -  
Not wrathful music. Sing that song ye made  
Or found long since, and yet in forest sing,  
If haply Power Unknown may hear and help."  
She spake, and at her word her daughters sang.

"Lost, lost, all lost! O tell us what is lost?  
Behold, this too is hidden! Let him speak,  
If any knows. The wounded deer can turn  
And see the shaft that quivers in its flank;

The bird looks back upon its broken wing;  
But we, the forest children, only know  
Our grief is infinite, and hath no name.  
What woman-prophet, shrouded in dark veil,  
Whispered a Hope sadder than Fear? Long since,  
What Father lost His children in the wood?  
Some God? And can a God forsake? Perchance  
His face is turned to nobler worlds new-made;  
Perchance his palace owns some later bride  
That hates the dead Queen's children, and with charm  
Prevails that they are exiled from his eyes,  
The exile's winter theirs—the exile's song.

”Blood, ever blood! The sword goes raging on  
O'er hill and moor; and with it, iron-willed,  
Drags on the hand that holds it and the man  
To slake its ceaseless thirst for blood of men;  
Fire takes the little cot beside the mere,  
And leaps upon the upland village: fire  
Up clambers to the castle on the crag;  
And whom the fire has spared the hunger kills;  
And earth draws all into her thousand graves.

”Ah me! the little linnet knows the branch  
Whereon to build; the honey-pasturing bee  
Knows the wild heath, and how to shape its cell;  
Upon the poisonous berry no bird feeds;  
So well their mother, Nature, helps her own.  
Mothers forsake not;—can a Father hate?  
Who knows but that He yearns—that Sire Unseen -  
To clasp His children? All is sweet and sane,  
All, all save man! Sweet is the summer flower,  
The day-long sunset of the autumnal woods;  
Fair is the winter frost; in spring the heart  
Shakes to the bleating lamb. O then what thing  
Might be the life secure of man with man,  
The infant's smile, the mother's kiss, the love  
Of lovers, and the untroubled wedded home?  
This might have been man's lot. Who sent the woe?  
Who formed man first? Who taught him first the ill way?  
One creature, only, sins; and he the highest!

”O Higher than the highest! Thou Whose hand  
Made us—Who shaped'st that hand Thou wilt not clasp,  
The eye Thou open'st not, the sealed-up ear!  
Be mightier than man's sin: for lo, how man  
Seeks Thee, and ceases not: through noontide cave  
And dark air of the dawn-unlighted peak  
To Thee how long he strains the weak, worn eye  
If haply he might see Thy vesture's hem

On farthest winds receding! Yea, how oft  
Against the blind and tremulous wall of cliff  
Tormented by sea surge, he leans his ear  
If haply o'er it name of Thine might creep;  
Or bends above the torrent-cloven abyss,  
If falling flood might lisp it! Power unknown!  
He hears it not: Thou hear'st his beating heart  
That cries to Thee for ever! From the veil  
That shrouds Thee, from the wood, the cloud, the void,  
O, by the anguish of all lands evoked,  
Look forth! Though, seeing Thee, man's race should die,  
One moment let him see Thee! Let him lay  
At least his forehead on Thy foot in death!"

So sang the maidens: but the warriors frowned;  
And thus the blind king muttered, "Bootless weed  
Is plaint where help is none!" But wives and maids  
And the thick-crowding poor, that many a time  
Had wailed on war-fields o'er their brethren slain,  
Went down before that strain as river reeds  
Before strong wind, went down when o'er them passed  
Its last word, "Death;" and grief's infection spread  
From least to first; and weeping filled the hall.  
Then on Saint Patrick fell compassion great;  
He rose amid that concourse, and with voice  
And words now lost, alas, or all but lost,  
Such that the chief of sight amerced, beheld  
The imagined man before him crowned with light,  
Proclaimed that God who hideth not His face,  
His people's King and Father; open flung  
The portals of His realm, that inward rolled,  
With music of a million singing spheres  
Commanded all to enter. Who was He  
Who called the worlds from nought? His name is Love!  
In love He made those worlds. They have not lost,  
The sun his splendour, nor the moon her light:  
THAT miracle survives. Alas for thee!  
Thou better miracle, fair human love,  
That splendour shouldst have been of home and hearth,  
Now quenched by mortal hate! Whence come our woes  
But from our lusts? O desecrated law  
By God's own finger on our hearts engraved,  
How well art thou avenged! No dream it was,  
That primal greatness, and that primal peace:  
Man in God's image at the first was made,  
A God to rule below!

He told it all -  
Creation, and that Sin which marred its face;  
And how the great Creator, creature made,

God—God for man incarnate—died for man:  
 Dead, with His Cross he thundered on the gates  
 Of Death's blind Hades. Then, with hands outstretched  
 His Holy Ones that, in their penance prison  
 From hope in Him had ceased not, to the light  
 Flashed from His bleeding hands and branded brow  
 Through darkness soared: they reign with Him in heaven:  
 Their brethren we, the children of one Sire.  
 Long time he spake. The winds forbore their wail;  
 The woods were hushed. That wondrous tale complete,  
 Not sudden fell the silence; for, as when  
 A huge wave forth from ocean toiling mounts  
 High-arched, in solid bulk, the beach rock-strewn,  
 Burying his hoar head under echoing cliffs,  
 And, after pause, reflux to sea returns  
 Not all at once is stillness, countless rills  
 Or devious winding down the steep, or borne  
 In crystal leap from sea-shelf to sea-well,  
 And sparry grot replying; gradual thus  
 With lessening cadence sank that great discourse,  
 While round him gazed Saint Patrick, now the old  
 Regarding, now the young, and flung on each  
 In turn his boundless heart, and gazing longed  
 As only Apostolic heart can long  
 To help the helpless.

"Fair, O friends, the bourn  
 We dwell in! Holy King makes happy land:  
 Our King is in our midst. He gave us gifts;  
 Laws that are Love, the sovereignty of Truth.  
 What, sirs, ye knew Him not! But ye by signs  
 Foresaw His coming, as, when buds are red  
 Ye say, 'The spring is nigh us.' Him, unknown,  
 Each loved who loved his brother! Shepherd youths,  
 Who spread the pasture green beneath your lambs  
 And freshened it with snow-fed stream and mist?  
 Who but that Love unseen? Grey mariners,  
 Who lulled the rough seas round your midnight nets,  
 And sent the landward breeze? Pale sufferers wan,  
 Rejoice! His are ye; yea, and His the most!  
 Have ye not watched the eagle that upstirs  
 Her nest, then undersails her falling brood  
 And stays them on her plumes, and bears them up  
 Till, taught by proof, they learn their unguessed powers  
 And breast the storm? Thus God stirs up His people;  
 Thus proves by pain. Ye too, O hearths well-loved!  
 How oft your sin-stained sanctities ye mourned!  
 Wives! from the cradle reigns the Bethel Babe!  
 Maidens! henceforth the Virgin Mother spreads  
 Her shining veil above you!

"Speak aloud,  
 Chieftains world-famed! I hear the ancient blood  
 That leaps against your hearts! What? Warriors ye!  
 Danger your birthright, and your pastime death!  
 Behold your foes! They stand before you plain:  
 Ill passions, base ambitions, falsehood, hate:  
 Wage war on these! A King is in your host!  
 His hands no roses plucked but on the Cross:  
 He came not hand of man in woman's tasks  
 To mesh. In woman's hand, in childhood's hand,  
 Much more in man's, He lodged His conquering sword;  
 Them too His soldiers named, and vowed to war.  
 Rise, clan of Kings, rise, champions of man's race,  
 Heaven's sun-clad army militant on earth,  
 One victory gained, the realm decreed is ours.  
 The bridal bells ring out, for Low with High  
 Is wed in endless nuptials. It is past,  
 The sin, the exile, and the grief. O man,  
 Take thou, renewed, thy sister-mate by hand;  
 Know well thy dignity, and hers: return,  
 And meet once more Thy Maker, for He walks  
 Once more within thy garden, in the cool  
 Of the world's eve!"

The words that Patrick spake  
 Were words of power, not futile did they fall:  
 But, probing, healed a sorrowing people's wound.  
 Round him they stood, as oft in Grecian days,  
 Some haughty city sieged, her penitent sons  
 Thronging green Pnyx or templed Forum hushed  
 Hung listening on that People's one true Voice,  
 The man that ne'er had flattered, ne'er deceived,  
 Nursed no false hope. It was the time of Faith;  
 Open was then man's ear, open his heart:  
 Pride spurned not then that chiefest strength of man  
 The power, by Truth confronted, to believe.  
 Not savage was that wild, barbaric race:  
 Spirit was in them. On their knees they sank,  
 With foreheads lowly bent; and when they rose  
 Such sound went forth as when late anchored fleet  
 Touched by dawn breeze, shakes out its canvas broad  
 And sweeps into new waters. Man with man  
 Clasped hands; and each in each a something saw  
 Till then unseen. As though flesh-bound no more,  
 Their souls had touched. One Truth, the Spirit's life,  
 Lived in them all, a vast and common joy.  
 And yet as when, that Pentecostal morn,  
 Each heard the Apostle in his native tongue,  
 So now, on each, that Truth, that Joy, that Life

Shone forth with beam diverse. Deep peace to one  
Those tidings seemed, a still vale after storm;  
To one a sacred rule, steadying the world;  
A third exulting saw his youthful hope  
Written in stars; a fourth triumphant hailed  
The just cause, long oppressed. Some laughed, some wept:  
But she, that aged chieftain's mournful wife  
Clasped to her boding breast his hoary head  
Loud clamouring, "Death is dead; and not for long  
That dreadful grave can part us." Last of all,  
He too believed. That hoary head had shaped  
Full many a crafty scheme: -behind them all  
Nature held fast her own.

O happy night!  
Back through the gloom of centuries sin-defaced  
With what a saintly radiance thou dost shine!  
They slept not, on the loud-resounding shore  
In glory roaming. Many a feud that night  
Lay down in holy grave, or, mockery made,  
Was quenched in its own shame. Far shone the fires  
Crowning dark hills with gladness: soared the song;  
And heralds sped from coast to coast to tell  
How He the Lord of all, no Power Unknown  
But like a man rejoicing in his house,  
Ruled the glad earth. That demon-haunted wood,  
Sad Erin's saddest region, yet, men say,  
Tenderest for all its sadness, rang at last  
With hymns of men and angels. Onward sailed  
High o'er the long, unbreaking, azure waves  
A mighty moon, full-faced, as though on winds  
Of rapture borne. With earliest red of dawn  
Northward once more the winged war-ships rushed  
Swift as of old to that long hated shore -  
Not now with axe and torch. His Name they bare  
Who linked in one the nations.

On a cliff  
Where Fochlut's Wood blackened the northern sea  
A convent rose. Therein those sisters twain  
Whose cry had summoned Patrick o'er the deep,  
Abode, no longer weepers. Pallid still,  
In radiance now their faces shone; and sweet  
Their psalms amid the clangour of rough brine.  
Ten years in praise to God and good to men  
That happy precinct housed them. In their morn  
Grief had for them her great work perfected;  
Their eve was bright as childhood. When the hour  
Came for their blissful transit, from their lips  
Pealed forth ere death that great triumphant chant

Sung by the Virgin Mother. Ages passed;  
And, year by year, on wintry nights, THAT song  
Alone the sailors heard—a cry of joy.

#### SAINT PATRICK AND KING LAEGHAIRE.

”Thou son of Calphurn, in peace go forth!  
This hand shall slay them whoe’er shall slay thee!  
The carles shall stand to their necks in earth  
Till they die of thirst who mock or stay thee!

”But my father, Nial, who is dead long since,  
Permits not me to believe thy word;  
For the servants of Jesus, thy heavenly Prince,  
Once dead, lie flat as in sleep, interred:  
But we are as men that through dark floods wade;  
We stand in our black graves undismayed;  
Our faces are turned to the race abhorred,  
And at each hand by us stand spear or sword,  
Ready to strike at the last great day,  
Ready to trample them back into clay!

”This is my realm, and men call it Eire,  
Wherein I have lived and live in hate  
Like Nial before me and Erc his sire,  
Of the race Lagenian, ill-named the Great!”

Thus spake Laeghaire, and his host rushed on,  
A river of blood as yet unshed: -  
At noon they fought: and at set of sun  
That king lay captive, that host lay dead!

The Lagenian loosed him, but bade him swear  
He would never demand of them Tribute more:  
So Laeghaire by the dread ”God-Elements” swore,  
By the moon divine and the earth and air;  
He swore by the wind and the broad sunshine  
That circle for ever both land and sea,  
By the long-backed rivers, and mighty wine,  
By the cloud far-seeing, by herb and tree,  
By the boon spring shower, and by autumn’s fan,  
By woman’s breast, and the head of man,  
By Night and the noonday Demon he swore  
He would claim the Boarian Tribute no more.

But with time wrath waxed; and he brake his faith:  
Then the dread ”God-Elements” wrought his death;  
For the Wind and Sun-Strength by Cassi’s side  
Came down and smote on his head that he died.  
Death-sick three days on his throne he sate;

Then died, as his father died, great in hate.

They buried their king upon Tara's hill,  
In his grave upright—there stands he still:  
Upright there stands he as men that wade  
By night through a castle-moat, undismayed;  
On his head is the crown, the spear in his hand;  
And he looks to the hated Lagenian land.

Such rites in the time of wrath and wrong  
Were Eire's: baptised, they were hers no longer:  
For Patrick had taught her his sweet new song,  
"Though hate is strong, yet love is stronger."

SAINT PATRICK AND THE IMPOSTOR;

OR, MAC KYLE OF MAN.

Mac Kyle, a child of death, dwells in a forest with other  
men like unto himself, that slay whom they will.  
Saint Patrick coming to that wood, a certain Impostor  
devises how he may be deceived and killed; but God  
smites the Impostor through his own snare, and he  
dies. Mac Kyle believes, and demanding penance is  
baptised. Afterwards he preaches in Manann 77 Isle,  
and becomes a great Saint.

In Uladh, near Magh Inis, lived a chief,  
Fierce man and fell. From orphaned childhood he  
Through lawless youth to blood-stained middle age  
Had rushed as stormy morn to stormier noon,  
Working, except that still he spared the poor,  
All wrongs with iron will; a child of death.  
Thus spake he to his followers, while the woods  
Snow-cumbered creaked, their scales of icy mail  
Angered by winter winds: "At last he comes,  
He that deceives the people with great signs,  
And for the tinkling of a little gold  
Preaches new Gods. Where rises yonder smoke  
Beyond the pinewood, camps this Lord of Dupes:  
How say ye? Shall he track o'er Uladh's plains,  
As o'er the land beside, his venomous way?  
Forth with your swords! and if that God he serves  
Can save him, let him prove it!"

Dark with wrath  
Thus spake Mac Kyle; and all his men approved,  
Shouting, while downward fell the snows hard-caked Loosened by shock  
of forest-echoed hands,  
Save Garban. Crafty he, and full of lies,

That thing which Patrick hated. Sideway first  
Glancing, as though some secret foe were nigh,  
He spake: "Mac Kyle! a counsel for thine ear!  
A man of counsel I, as thou of war!  
The people love this stranger. Patrick slain,  
Their wrath will blaze against us, and demand  
An ERIC for his head. Let us by craft  
Unravel first HIS craft: then safe our choice;  
We slay a traitor, or great ransom take:  
Impostors lack not gold. Lay me as dead  
Upon a bier: above me spread yon cloth,  
And make your wail: and when the seer draws nigh  
Worship him, crying, 'Lo, our friend is dead!  
Kneel, prophet, kneel, and pray that God thou serv'st  
To raise him.' If he kneels, no prophet he,  
But like the race of mortals. Sweep the cloth  
Straight from my face; then, laughing, I will rise."

Thus counselled Garban; and the counsel pleased;  
Yet pleased not God. Upon a bier, branch-strewn,  
They laid their man, and o'er him spread a cloth;  
Then, moving towards that smoke behind the pines,  
They found the Saint and brought him to that bier,  
And made their moan—and Garban 'neath that cloth  
Smiled as he heard it—"Lo, our friend is dead!  
Great prophet kneel; and pray the God thou serv'st  
To raise him from the dead."

The man of God  
Upon them fixed a sentence-speaking eye:  
"Yea! he is dead. In this ye have not lied:  
Behold, this day shall Garban's covering be  
The covering of the dead. Remove that cloth."

Then drew they from his face the cloth; and lo!  
Beneath it Garban lay, a corpse stone-cold.

Amazement fell upon that bandit throng,  
Contemplating that corpse, and on Mac Kyle  
Grief for his friend, remorse, and strong belief,  
A threefold power: for she that at his birth,  
Her brief life faithful to that Law she knew,  
Had died, in region where desires are crowned  
That hour was strong in prayer. "From God he came,"  
Thus cried they; "and we worked a work accursed,  
Tempting God's prophet." Patrick heard, and spake;  
"Not me ye tempted, but the God I serve."  
At last Mac Kyle made answer: "I have sinned;  
I, and this people, whom I made to sin:  
Now therefore to thy God we yield ourselves

Liegemen henceforth, his thralls as slave to Lord,  
 Or horse to master. That which thou command'st  
 That will we do." And Patrick said, "Believe;  
 Confess your sins; and be baptised to God,  
 The Father, and the Son, and Holy Spirit,  
 And live true life." Then Patrick where he stood  
 Above the dead, with hands uplifted preached  
 To these in anguish and in terror bowed  
 The tidings of great joy from Bethlehem's Crib  
 To Calvary's Cross. Sudden upon his knees,  
 Heart-pierced, as though he saw that Head thorn-pierced,  
 Fell that wild chief, and was baptised to God;  
 And, lifting up his great strong hands, while still  
 The waters streamed adown his matted locks,  
 He cried, "Alas, my master, and my sire!  
 I sinned a mighty sin; for in my heart  
 Fixed was my purpose, soon as thou hadst knelt,  
 To slay thee with my sword. Therefore judge thou  
 What ERIC I must pay to quit my sin?"  
 Him Patrick answered, "God shall be thy Judge:  
 Arise, and to the seaside flee, as one  
 That flies his foe. There shalt thou find a boat  
 Made of one hide: eat nought, and nothing take  
 Except one cloak alone: but in that boat  
 Sit thou, and bear the sin-mark on thy brow,  
 Facing the waves, oarless and rudderless;  
 And bind the boat chain thrice around thy feet,  
 And fling the key with strength into the main,  
 Far as thou canst: and wheresoe'er the breath  
 Of God shall waft thee, there till death abide  
 Working the Will Divine." Then spake that chief,  
 "I, that commanded others, can obey;  
 Such lore alone is mine: but for this man  
 That sinned my sin, alas, to see him thus!"  
 To whom the Saint, "For him, when thou art gone,  
 My prayer shall rise. If God will raise the dead  
 He knows: not I."

Then rose that chief, and rushed  
 Down to the shore, as one that flies his foe;  
 Nor ate, nor drank, nor spake to wife or child,  
 But loosed a little boat, of one hide made,  
 And sat therein, and round his ankles wound  
 The boat chain thrice; and flung the key far forth  
 Above the ridged sea foam. The Lord of all  
 Gave ordinance to the wind, and, as a leaf  
 Swift rushed that boat, oarless and rudderless,  
 Over the on-shouldering, broad-backed, glaucous wave  
 Slow-rising like the rising of a world,  
 And purple wastes beyond, with funeral plume

Crested, a pallid pomp. All night the chief  
 Under the roaring tempest heard the voice  
 That preached the Son of Man; and when the morn  
 Shone out, his coracle drew near the surge  
 Reboant on Manann's Isle. Not unbeheld  
 Rose it, and fell; not unregarded danced  
 A black spot on the inrolling ridge, then hung  
 Suspense upon the mile-long cataract  
 That, overtoppling, changed grass-green to light,  
 And drowned the shores in foam. Upon the sands  
 Two white-haired Elders in the salt air knelt,  
 Offering to God their early orisons,  
 Coninri and Romael. Sixty years  
 These two unto a hard and stubborn race  
 Had preached the Word; and gaining by their toil  
 But thirty souls, had daily prayed their God  
 To send ere yet they died some ampler arm,  
 And reap the ill-grown harvest of their youth.  
 Ten years they prayed, not doubting, and from God,  
 Who hastens not, this answer had received,  
 "Ye shall not die until ye see his face."  
 Therefore, each morning, peered they o'er the waves,  
 Long-watching. These through breakers dragged the man,  
 Their wished-for prize, half-frozen, and nigh to death,  
 And bare him to their cell, and warmed and fed him,  
 And heaped his couch with skins. Deep sleep he slept  
 Till evening lay upon the level sea  
 With roses strewn like bridal chamber's floor;  
 Within it one star shone. Rested, he woke  
 And sought the shore. From earth, and sea, and sky,  
 Then passed into his spirit the Spirit of Love;  
 And there he vowed his vow, fierce chief no more,  
 But soldier of the cross.

The weeks ran on,  
 And daily those grey Elders ministered  
 God's teaching to that chief, demanding still,  
 "Son, understandst thou? Gird thee like a man  
 To clasp, and hold, the total Faith of Christ,  
 And give us leave to die." The months fled fast:  
 Ere violets bloomed, he knew the creed; and when  
 Far heathery hills purpled the autumnal air,  
 He sang the psalter whole. That tale he told  
 Had power, and Patrick's name. His strenuous arm  
 Labouring with theirs, reaped harvest heavy and sound,  
 Till wondering gazed their wearied eyes on barns  
 Knee-deep in grain. At last an eve there fell,  
 When, on the shore in commune, with such might  
 Discoursed that pilgrim of the things of God,  
 Such insight calm, and wisdom reverence-born,

Each on the other gazing in their hearts  
Received once more an answer from the Lord,  
"Now is your task completed: ye shall die."

Then on the red sand knelt those Elders twain  
With hands upraised, and all their hoary hair  
Tinged like the foam-wreaths by that setting sun,  
And sang their "Nunc Dimittis." At its close  
High on the sandhills, 'mid the tall hard grass  
That sighed eternal o'er the unbounded waste  
With ceaseless yearnings like their own for death  
They found the place where first, that bark descried,  
Their sighs were changed to songs. That spot they marked,  
And said, "Our resurrection place is here:"  
And, on the third day dying, in that place  
The man who loved them laid them, at their heads  
Planting one cross because their hearts were one  
And one their lives. The snowy-breasted bird  
Of ocean o'er their undivided graves  
Oft flew with wailing note; but they rejoiced  
'Mid God's high realm glittering in endless youth.

These two with Christ, on him, their son in Christ  
Their mantle fell; and strength to him was given.  
Long time he toiled alone; then round him flocked  
Helpers from far. At last, by voice of all  
He gat the Island's great episcopate,  
And king-like ruled the region. This is he,  
Mac Kyle of Uladh, bishop, and Penitent,  
Saint Patrick's missionary in Manann's Isle,  
Sinner one time, and, after sinner, Saint  
World-famous. May his prayer for sinners plead!

SAINT PATRICK AT CASHEL;

OR, THE BAPTISM OF AENGUS.

ARGUMENT.

Saint Patrick goes to Cashel of the Rings to celebrate the Feast of the Annunciation. Aengus, who reigns there, receives him with all honour. He and his people believe, and by Baptism are added unto the Church. Aengus desires to resign his sovereignty, and become a monk. The Saint suffers not this, because he had discovered by two notable signs, both at the baptism of Aengus and before it, that the Prince is of those who are called by God to rule men.

When Patrick now o'er Ulster's forest bound,

And Connact, echoing to the western wave,  
 And Leinster, fair with hill-suspended woods,  
 Had raised the cross, and where the deep night ruled,  
 Splendour had sent of everlasting light,  
 Sole peace of warring hearts, to Munster next,  
 Thomond and Desmond, Heber's portion old,  
 He turned; and, fired by love that mocks at rest  
 Pushed on through raging storm the whole night long,  
 Intent to hold the Annunciation Feast  
 At Cashel of the Kings. The royal keep  
 High-seated on its Rock, as morning broke  
 Faced them at last; and at the selfsame hour  
 Aengus, in his father's absence lord,  
 Rising from happy sleep and heaven-sent dreams  
 Went forth on duteous tasks. With sudden start  
 The prince stept back; for, o'er the fortress court  
 Like grove storm-levelled lay the idols huge,  
 False gods and foul that long had awed the land,  
 Prone, without hand of man. O'er-awed he gazed;  
 Then on the air there rang a sound of hymns,  
 And by the eastern gate Saint Patrick stood,  
 The brethren round him. On their shaggy garb  
 Auroral mist, struck by the rising sun,  
 Glittered, that diamond-panoplied they seemed,  
 And as a heavenly vision. At that sight  
 The youth, descending with a wildered joy,  
 Welcomed his guests: and, ere an hour, the streets  
 Sparkled far down like flowering meads in spring,  
 So thronged the folk in holiday attire  
 To see the man far-famed. "Who spurns our gods?"  
 Once they had cried in wrath: but, year by year,  
 Tidings of some deliverance great and strange,  
 Some life more noble, some sublimer hope,  
 Some regal race enthroned beyond the grave,  
 Had reached them from afar. The best believed,  
 Great hearts for whom nor earthly love sufficed  
 Nor earthly fame. The meaner scoffed: yet all  
 Desired the man. Delay had edged their thirst.

Then Patrick, standing up among them, spake,  
 And God was with him. Not as when loose tongue  
 Babbles vain rumour, or the Sophist spins  
 Thought's air-hung cobwebs gay with Fancy's dews,  
 Spake he, but words of might, as when a man  
 Bears witness to the things which he has seen,  
 And tells of that he knows: and as the harp  
 Attested is by rapture of the ear,  
 And sunlight by consenting of the eye  
 That, seeing, knows it sees, and neither craves  
 Inferior demonstration, so his words

Self-proved, went forth and conquered: for man's mind,  
Created in His image who is Truth,  
Challenged by truth, with recognising voice  
Cries out "Flesh of my flesh, bone of my bone,"  
And cleaves thereto. In all that listening host  
One vast, dilating heart yearned to its God.  
Then burst the bond of years. No haunting doubt  
They knew. God dropped on them the robe of Truth  
Sun-like: down fell the many-coloured weed  
Of error; and, re clothed ere yet unclothed,  
They walked a new-born earth. The blinded Past  
Fled, vanquished. Glorious more than strange it seemed  
That He who fashioned man should come to man,  
And raise by ruling. They, His trumpet heard,  
In glory spurned demons misdeemed for gods:  
The great chief had returned: the clan enthralled  
Trod down the usurping foe.

Then rose the cry,  
"Join us to Christ!" His strong eyes on them set,  
Patrick replied, "Know ye what thing ye seek  
Ye that would fain be house-mates with my King?  
Ye seek His cross!" He paused, then added slow:  
"If ye be liegeful, sirs, decree the day,  
His baptism shall be yours."

That eve, while shone  
The sunset on the green-touched woods, that, grazed  
By onward flight of unalighting spring,  
Caught warmth yet scarcely flamed, Aengus stood  
With Patrick in a westward-facing tower  
Which overlooked far regions town-besprent,  
And lit with winding waters. Thus he spake:  
"My Father! what is sovereignty of man?  
Say, can I shield yon host from death, from sin,  
Taking them up into my breast, like God?  
I trow not so! Mine be the lowliest place  
Following thy King who left his Father's throne  
To walk the lowliest!" Patrick answered thus:  
"Best lot thou choosest, son. If thine that lot  
Thou know'st not yet; nor I. The Lord, thy God,  
Will teach us."

When the day decreed had dawned  
Loud rang the bull-horn; and on every breeze  
Floated the banners, saffron, green, and blue;  
While issuing from the horizon's utmost verge  
The full-voiced People flocked. So swarmed of old  
Some migratory nation, instinct-urged  
To fly their native wastes sad winter's realm;

So thronged on southern slopes when, far below,  
 Shone out the plains of promise. Bright they came!  
 No summer sea could wear a blithsomer sheen  
 Though every dancing crest and milky plume  
 Ran on with rainbows braided. Minstrel songs  
 Wafted like winds those onward hosts, or swayed  
 Or stayed them; while among them heralds passed  
 Lifting white wands of office. Foremost rode  
 Aileel, the younger brother of the prince:  
 He ruled a milk-white horse. Fluttered, breeze-borne  
 His mantle green, while all his golden hair  
 Streamed back redundant from the ring of gold  
 Circling his head uncovered. Loveliest light  
 Of innocence and joy was on that face:  
 Full well the young maids marked it! Brighter yet  
 Beamed he, his brother noting. On the verge  
 Of Cashel's Rock that hour Aengus stood,  
 By Patrick's side. That concourse nearer now  
 He gazed upon it, crying, with clasped hands,  
 "My Father, fair is sunrise, fair the sea,  
 The hills, the plains, the wind-stirred wood, the maid;  
 But what is like a People onward borne  
 In gladness? When I see that sight, my heart  
 Expands like palace-gates wide open flung  
 That say to all men, 'Enter.'" Then the Saint  
 Laid on that royal head a hand of might,  
 And said, "The Will of God decrees thee King!  
 Son of this People art thou: Sire one day  
 Thou shalt be! Son and Sire in one are King.  
 Shepherd for God thy flock, thou Shepherd true!"  
 He spake: that word was ratified in Heaven.

Meantime that multitude innumerable  
 Had reached the Rock, and, now the winding road  
 In pomp ascending, faced those fair-wrought gates  
 Which, by the warders at the prince's sign  
 Drawn back, to all gave entrance. In they streamed,  
 Filling the central courtway. Patrick stood  
 High stationed on a prostrate idol's base,  
 In vestments of the Vigil of that Feast  
 The Annunciation, which with annual boon  
 Whispers, while melting snows dilate those streams  
 Purer than snows, to universal earth  
 That Maiden Mother's joy. The Apostle watched  
 The advancing throng, and gave them welcome thus;  
 "As though into the great Triumphant Church,  
 O guests of God, ye flock! Her place is Heaven:  
 Sirs! we this day are militant below:  
 Not less, advance in faith. Behold your crowns -  
 Obedience and Endurance."

There and then  
 The Rite began: his people's Chief and Head  
 Beside the font Aengus stood; his face  
 Sweet as a child's, yet grave as front of eld:  
 For reverence he had laid his crown aside,  
 And from the deep hair to the unsandalled feet  
 Was raimented in white. With mitred head  
 And massive book, forward Saint Patrick leaned,  
 Stayed by the gem-wrought crosier. Prayer on prayer  
 Went up to God; while gift on gift from God,  
 All Angel-like, invisibly to man,  
 Descended. Thrice above that princely brow  
 Patrick the cleansing waters poured, and traced  
 Three times thereon the Venerable Sign,  
 Naming the Name Triune. The Rite complete,  
 Awestruck that concourse downward gazed. At last  
 Lifting their eyes, they marked the prince's face  
 That pale it was though bright, anguished and pale,  
 While from his naked foot a blood-stream gushed  
 And o'er the pavement welled. The crosier's point,  
 Weighted with weight of all that priestly form,  
 Had pierced it through. "Why suffer'dst thou so long  
 The pain in silence?" Patrick spake, heart-grieved:  
 Smiling, Aengus answered, "O my Sire,  
 I thought, thus called to follow Him whose feet  
 Were pierced with nails, haply the blissful Rite  
 Bore witness to their sorrows."

At that word  
 The large eyes of the Apostolic man  
 Grew larger; and within them lived that light  
 Not fed by moon or sun, a visible flash  
 Of that invisible lightning which from God  
 Vibrates ethereal through the world of souls,  
 Vivific strength of Saints. The mitred brow  
 Uptowered sublime: the strong, yet wrinkled hands,  
 Ascending, ceased not, till the crosier's head  
 Glittered above the concourse like a star.  
 At last his hands disparting, down he drew  
 From Heaven the Royal Blessing, speaking thus:  
 "For this cause may the blessing, Sire of kings,  
 Cleave to thy seed forever! Spear and sword  
 Before them fall! In glory may the race  
 Of Nafrach's sons, Aengus, and Aileel,  
 Hold sway on Cashel's summit! Be their kings  
 Great-hearted men, potent to rule and guard  
 Their people; just to judge them; warriors strong;  
 Sage counsellors; faithful shepherds; men of God,  
 That so through them the everlasting King

May flood their land with blessing." Thus he spake;  
And round him all that nation said, "Amen."

Thus held they feast in Cashel of the Kings  
That day till all that land was clothed with Christ:  
And when the parting came from Cashel's steep  
Patrick the People's Blessing thus forth sent:  
"The Blessing fall upon the pasture broad,  
On fruitful mead, and every corn-clad hill,  
And woodland rich with flowers that children love:  
Unnumbered be the homesteads, and the hearths: -  
A blessing on the women, and the men,  
On youth, and maiden, and the suckling babe:  
A blessing on the fruit-bestowing tree,  
And foodful river tide. Be true; be pure,  
Not living from below, but from above,  
As men that over-top the world. And raise  
Here, on this rock, high place of idols once,  
A kingly church to God. The same shall stand  
For aye, or, wrecked, from ruin rise restored,  
His witness till He cometh. Over Eire  
The Blessing speed till time shall be no more  
From Cashel of the Kings."

The Saint fared forth:  
The People bare him through their kingdom broad  
With banner and with song; but o'er its bound  
The women of that People followed still  
A half day's journey with lamenting voice;  
Then silent knelt, lifting their babes on high;  
And, crowned with two-fold blessing, home returned.

#### SAINT PATRICK AND THE CHILDLESS MOTHER.

#### ARGUMENT.

Saint Patrick finds an aged Pagan woman making great lamentation above a tomb which she believes to be that of her son. He kneels beside her in prayer, while around them a wondrous tempest sweeps. After a long time, he declares unto her the Death of Christ, and how, through that Death, the Dead are blessed. Lastly, he dissuades her from her rage of grief, and admonishes her to pray for her son on a tomb hard by, which is his indeed. The woman believes, and, being consoled by a Sign of Heaven, departs in peace.

Across his breast one hundred times each day  
Saint Patrick drew the Venerable Sign,  
And sixty times by night: and whensoe'er

In travel Cross was seen far off or nigh  
 On lonely moor, or rock, or heathy hill,  
 For Erin then was sown with Christian seed,  
 He sought it, and before it knelt. Yet once,  
 While cold in winter shone the star of eve  
 Upon their board, thus spake a youthful monk:  
 "Three times this day, my father, didst thou pass  
 The Cross of Christ unmarked. At morn thou saw'st  
 A last year's lamb that by it sheltered lay,  
 At noon a dove that near it sat and mourned,  
 At eve a little child that round it raced,  
 Well pleased with each; yet saw'st thou not that Cross,  
 Nor mad'st thou any reverence!" At that word  
 Wondering, the Saint arose, and left the meat,  
 And, wondering, went to venerate that Cross.

Dark was the earth and dank ere yet he reached  
 That spot; and lo! where lamb had lain, and dove  
 Had mourned, and child had raced, there stood indeed  
 High-raised, the Cross of Christ. Before it long  
 He prayed, and kneeling, marked that on a tomb  
 That Cross was raised. Then, inly moved by God,  
 The Saint demanded, "Who, of them that walked  
 The sun-warmed earth lies here in darkness hid?"  
 And answer made a lamentable Voice:  
 "Pagan I lived, my own soul's bane: —when dead,  
 Men buried here my body." Patrick then:  
 "How stands the Cross of Christ on Pagan grave?"  
 And answered thus the lamentable Voice:  
 "A woman's work. She had been absent long;  
 Her son had died; near mine his grave was made;  
 Half blind was she through fleeting of her tears,  
 And, erring, raised the Cross upon my tomb,  
 Misdeeming it for his. Nightly she comes,  
 Wailing as only Pagan mothers wail;  
 So wailed my mother once, while pain tenfold  
 Ran through my bodiless being. For her sake,  
 If pity dwells on earth or highest heaven,  
 May it this mourner comfort! Christian she,  
 And capable of pity."

Then the Saint  
 Cried loud, "O God, Thou seest this Pagan's heart,  
 That love within it dwells: therefore not his  
 That doom of Souls all hate, and self-exiled  
 To whom Thy Presence were a woe twice told.  
 Eternal Pity! pity Thou Thy work; -  
 Sole Peace of them that love Thee, grant him peace."  
 Thus Patrick prayed; and in the heaven of heavens  
 God heard his servant's prayer. Then Patrick mused

"Now know I why I passed that Cross unmarked;  
It was not that it seemed."

As thus he knelt,  
Behold, upon the cold and bitter wind  
Rang wail on wail; and o'er the moor there moved  
What seemed a woman's if a human form.  
That miserable phantom onward came  
With cry succeeding cry that sank or swelled  
As dipped or rose the moor. Arrived at last,  
She heeded not the Saint, but on that grave  
Dashed herself down. Long time that woman wailed;  
And Patrick, long, for reverence of her woe  
Forbore. At last he spake low-toned as when  
Best listener knows not when the strain begins.  
"Daughter! the sparrow falls not to the ground  
Without his Maker. He that made thy son  
Hath sent His Son to bear all woes of men,  
And vanquish every foe—the latest, Death."  
Then rolled that woman on the Saint an eye  
As when the last survivor of a host  
Glares on some pitying conqueror. "Ho! the man  
That treads upon my grief! He ne'er had sons;  
And thou, O son of mine, hast left no sons,  
Though oft I said, 'When I am old, his babes  
Shall climb my knees.' My boast was mine in youth;  
But now mine age is made a barren stock  
And as a blighted briar." In grief she turned;  
And as on blackening tarn gust follows gust,  
Again came wail on wail. On strode the night:  
The jagged forehead of that forest old  
Alone was seen: all else was gloom. At last  
With voice, though kind, upbraiding, Patrick spake:  
"Daughter, thy grief is wilful and it errs;  
Errs like those sad and tear-bewildered eyes  
That for a Christian's take a Pagan's grave,  
And for a son's a stranger's. Ah! poor child,  
Thy pride it was to raise, where lay thy son,  
A Cross, his memory's honour. By thee close  
All dewed and glimmering in yon rising moon,  
Low lies a grave unhonoured, and unknown:  
No cross stands on it; yet upon its breast  
Graved shalt thou find what Christian tomb ne'er lacks,  
The Cross of Christ. Woman, there lies thy son."

She rose; she found that other tomb; she knelt;  
And o'er it went her wandering palms, as though  
Some stone-blind mother o'er an infant's face  
Should spread an agonising hand, intent  
To choose betwixt her own and counterfeit;

She found that cross deep-grav'n, and further sign  
 Close by, to her well known. One piercing shriek -  
 Another moment, and her body lay  
 Along that grave with kisses, and wild hands  
 As when some forest beast tears up the ground,  
 Seeking its prey there hidden. Then once more  
 Rang the wild wail above that lonely heath,  
 While roared far off the vast invisible woods,  
 And with them strove the blast, in eddies dire  
 Whirling both branch and bough. Through hurrying clouds  
 The scared moon rushed like ship that naked glares  
 One moment, lightning-lighted in the storm,  
 Anon in wild waves drowned. An hour went by:  
 Still wailed that woman, and the tempest roared;  
 While in the heart of ruin Patrick prayed.  
 He loved that woman. Unto Patrick dear,  
 Dear as God's Church was still the single Soul,  
 Dearest the suffering Soul. He gave her time;  
 He let the floods of anguish spend themselves:  
 But when her wail sank low; when woods were mute,  
 And where the skiey madness late had raged  
 Shone the blue heaven, he spake with voice in strength  
 Gentle like that which calmed the Syrian lake,  
 "My sister, God hath shown me of thy wound,  
 And wherefore with the blind old Pagan's cry  
 Hopeless thou mourn'st. Returned from far, thou found'st  
 Thy son had Christian died, and saw'st the Cross  
 On Christian graves: and ill thy heart endured  
 That tomb so dear should lack its reverence meet.  
 To him thou gav'st the Cross, albeit that Cross  
 Inly thou know'st not yet. That knowledge thine,  
 Thou hadst not left thy son amerced of prayer,  
 And given him tears, not succour." "Yea," she said,  
 "Of this new Faith I little understand,  
 Being an aged woman and in woe:  
 But since my son was Christian, such am I;  
 And since the Christian tomb is decked with Cross  
 He shall not lack his right."

Then Patrick spake:  
 "O woman, hearken, for through me thy son  
 Invokes thee. All night long for thee, unknown,  
 My hands have risen: but thou hast raised no prayer  
 For him, thy dearest; nor from founts of God,  
 Though brimful, hast thou drawn for lips that thirst.  
 Arise, and kneel, and hear thy loved one's cry:  
 Too long he waiteth. Blessed are the dead:  
 They rest in God's high Will. But more than peace,  
 The rapturous vision of the Face of God,  
 Won by the Cross of Christ—for that they thirst

As thou, if viewless stood thy son close by,  
Wouldst thirst to see his countenance. Eyes sin-sealed  
Not yet can see their God. Prayer speeds the time:  
The living help the dead; all praise to Him  
Who blends His children in a league of help,  
Making all good one good. Eternal Love!  
Not thine the will that love should cease with life,  
Or, living, cease from service, barren made,  
A stagnant gall eating the mourner's heart  
That hour when love should stretch a hand of might  
Up o'er the grave to heaven. O great in love,  
Perfect love's work: for well, sad heart, I know,  
Hadst thou not trained thy son in virtuous ways,  
Christian he ne'er had been."

Those later words  
That solitary mourner understood,  
The earlier but in part, and answered thus:  
"A loftier Cross, and farther seen, shall rise  
Upon this grave new-found! No hireling hands -  
Mine own shall raise it; yea, though thirty years  
Should sweat beneath the task." And Patrick said:  
"What means the Cross? That lore thou lack'st now learn."

Then that which Kings desired to know, and seers  
And prophets vigil-blind—that Crown of Truths,  
Scandal of fools, yet conqueror of the world,  
To her, that midnight mourner, he divulged,  
Record authentic: how in sorrow and sin  
The earth had groaned; how pity, like a sword,  
Had pierced the great Paternal Heart in heaven;  
How He, the Light of Light, and God of God,  
Had man become, and died upon the Cross,  
Vanquishing thus both sorrow and sin, and risen,  
The might of death o'erthrown; and how the gates  
Of heaven rolled inwards as the Anointed King  
Resurgent and ascending through them passed  
In triumph with His Holy Dead; and how  
The just, thenceforth death-freed, the selfsame gates  
Entering, shall share the everlasting throne.  
Thus Patrick spake, and many a stately theme  
Rehearsed beside, higher than heaven, and yet  
Near as the farthest can alone be near.  
Then in that grief-worn creature's bosom old  
Contentions rose, and fiercer fires than burn  
In sultry breasts of youth: and all her past,  
Both good and evil, woke, in sleep long sealed;  
And all the powers and forces of her soul  
Rushed every way through darkness seeking light,  
Like winds or tides. Beside her Patrick prayed,

And mightier than his preaching was his prayer,  
Sheltering that crisis dread. At last beneath  
The great Life-Giver's breath that Human Soul,  
An inner world vaster than planet worlds,  
In undulation swayed, as when of old  
The Spirit of God above the waters moved  
Creative, while the blind and shapeless void  
Yearned into form, and form grew meet for life,  
And downward through the abysses Law ran forth  
With touch soul-soft, and seas from lands retired,  
And light from dark, and wondering Nature passed  
Through storm to calm, and all things found their home.

Silence long time endured; at last, clear-voiced,  
Her head not turning, thus the woman spake:  
"That God who Man became—who died, and lives, -  
Say, died He for my son?" And Patrick said,  
"Yea, for thy son He died. Kneel, woman, kneel!  
Nor doubt, for mighty is a mother's prayer,  
That He who in the eternal light is throned,  
Lifting the roseate and the nail-pierced palm,  
Will make in heaven the Venerable Sign,  
For He it is prays in us, and that Soul  
Thou lov'st pass on to glory."

At his word  
She knelt, and unto God, with help of God,  
Uprushed the strength of prayer, as when the cloud  
Uprushes past some beetling mountain wall  
From billowy deeps unseen. Long time she prayed;  
While heaven and earth grew silent as that night  
When rose the Saviour. Sudden ceased the prayer:  
And rang upon the night her jubilant cry,  
"I saw a Sign in Heaven. Far inward rolled  
The gates; and glory flashed from God; and he  
I love his entrance won." Then, fair and tall,  
That woman stood with hands upraised to heaven  
The dusky shadow of her youth renewed,  
And instant Patrick spake, "Give thanks to God,  
And speed thee home, and sleep; and since thy son  
No children left, take to thee orphans twain  
And rear them, in his honour, unto Christ;  
And yearly, when the death-day of thy son  
Returns, his birth-day name it; call thy friends;  
Give alms; and range the poor around thy door,  
So shall they feast, and pray. Woman, farewell:  
All night the dark upon thy face hath lain;  
Yet shall we know each other, met in heaven."

Then blithe of foot that Mother crossed the moor;

And when she reached her door a zone of white  
Loosening along a cloud that walled the east  
Revealed the coming dawn. That dawn ere long  
Lay, unawaking, on a face serene,  
On tearless lids, and quiet, open palms,  
On stormless couch and raiment calm that hid  
A breast if faded now, yet happier far  
Than when in prime its youthful wave first heaved  
Rocking a sleeping Infant.

SAINT PATRICK AT THE FEAST OF KNOCK CAE;  
OR, THE FOUNDING OF MUNGRET.

ARGUMENT.

Saint Patrick, being bidden to a feast, discourses  
on the way against the pride of the Bards, for whom  
Fiacc pleads. Derball, a scoffer, requires the Saint  
to remove a mountain. He kneels down and prays, and  
Derball avers that the mountain moved.  
Notwithstanding, Derball believes not, but departs.  
The Saint declares that he saw not whether the  
mountain moved. He places Nesson over his convent at  
Mungret because he had given a little wether to the  
hungry. Nesson's mother grudged the gift; and Saint  
Patrick prophesies that her grave shall not be in her  
son's church.

In Limneach, 101 ere he reached it, fame there ran  
Of Patrick's words and works. Before his foot  
Aileel had fallen, loud wailing, with his wife,  
And cried, "Our child is slain by savage beasts;  
But thou, O prophet, if that God thou serv'st  
Be God indeed, restore him!" Patrick turned  
To Malach, praised of all men. "Brother, kneel,  
And raise yon child." But Malach answered, "Nay,  
Lest, tempting God, His service I should shame."  
Then Patrick, "Answer of the base is thine;  
And base shall be that house thou build'st on earth,  
Little, and low. A man may fail in prayer:  
What then? Thank God! the fault is ours not His,  
And ours alone the shame." The Apostle turned  
To Ibar, and to Ailbe, bishops twain,  
And bade them raise the child. They heard and knelt:  
And Patrick knelt between them; and these three  
Upheaved a wondrous strength of prayer; and lo!  
All pale, yet shining, rose the child, and sat,  
Lifting small hands, and preached to those around,  
And straightway they believed, and were baptized.

Thus with loud rumour all the land was full,  
 And some believed; some doubted; and a chief,  
 Lonan, the son of Eire, that half believed,  
 Willing to draw from Patrick wonder and sign,  
 By messengers besought him, saying, "Come,  
 For in thy reverence waits thy servant's feast  
 Spread on Knock Cae." That pleasant hill ascends  
 Westward of Ara, girt by rivers twain,  
 Maigue, lily-lighted, and the "Morning Star"  
 Once "Samhair" named, that eastward through the woods  
 Winding, upon its rapids earliest meets  
 The morn, and flings it far o'er mead and plain.

From Limneach therefore Patrick, while the dawn  
 Still dusk, its joyous secret kept, went forth,  
 O'er dustless road soon lost in dewy fields,  
 And groves that, touched by wakening winds, began  
 To load damp airs with scent. That time it was  
 When beech leaves lose their silken gloss, and maids  
 From whitest brows depose the hawthorn white,  
 Red rose in turn enthroning. Earliest gleams  
 Glimmered on leaves that shook like wings of birds:  
 Saint Patrick marked them well. He turned to Fiacc -  
 "God might have changed to Pentecostal tongues  
 The leaves of all the forests in the world,  
 And bade them sing His love! He wrought not thus:  
 A little hint He gives us and no more.  
 Alone the willing see. Thus they sin less  
 Who, if they saw, seeing would disbelieve.  
 Hark to that note! O foolish woodland choirs!  
 Ye sing but idle loves; and, idler far,  
 The bards sing war-war only!"

Answered thus  
 The monk bard-loving: "Sing it! Ay, and make  
 The keys of all the tempests hang on zones  
 Of those cloud-spirits! They, too, can 'bind and loose.'  
 A bard incensed hath proved a kingdom's doom!  
 Such Aidan. Upon cakes of meal his host,  
 King Aileach, fed him in a fireless hall:  
 The bard complained not-ay, but issuing forth,  
 Sang in dark wood a keen and venomous song  
 That raised on the king's countenance plague-spots three;  
 Who saw him named them Scorn, Dishonour, Shame,  
 And blighted those three oak trees nigh his door.  
 What next? Before a month that realm lay drowned  
 In blood; and fire went o'er the opprobrious house!"  
 Thus spake the youth, and blushed at his own zeal  
 For bardic fame; then added, "Strange the power  
 Of song! My father, do I vainly dream

Oft thinking that the bards, perchance the birds,  
 Sing something vaster than they think or know?  
 Some fire immortal lives within their strings:  
 Therefore the people love them. War divine,  
 God's war on sin—true love-song best and sweetest -  
 Perforce they chaunt in spirit, not wars of clans:  
 Yea, one day, conscious, they shall sing that song;  
 One day by river clear of south or north,  
 Pagan no more, the laurelled head shall rise,  
 And chaunt the Warfare of the Realm of Souls,  
 The anguish and the cleansing, last the crown -  
 Prelude of songs celestial!"

Patrick smiled:

"Still, as at first, a lover of the bards!  
 Hard task was mine to win thee to the cowl!  
 Dubtach, thy master, sole in Tara's hall  
 Who made me reverence, mocked my quest. He said,  
 'Fiacc thou wouldst?—my Fiacc? Few days gone by  
 I sent the boy with poems to the kings;  
 He loves me: hardly will he leave the songs  
 To wear thy tonsure!' As he spake, behold,  
 Thou enter'dst. Sudden hands on Dubtach's head  
 I laid, as though to gird with tonsure crown:  
 Then rose thy clamour, 'Erin's chief of bards  
 A tonsured man! Me, father, take, not him!  
 Far less the loss to Erin and the songs!  
 Down knelt'st thou; and, ere long, old Dubtach's floor  
 Shone with thy vernal locks, like forest paths  
 Made gold by leaves of autumn!"

As he spake,

The sun, new-risen, flashed on a breast of wood  
 That answered from a thousand jubilant throats:  
 Then Fiacc, with all their music in his face,  
 Resumed: "My father, upon Tara's steep  
 Patient thou sat'st whole months, sifting with care  
 The laws of Eire, recasting for all time,  
 Ill laws from good dissevering, as that Day  
 Shall sever tares from wheat. I see thee still,  
 As then we saw—thy clenched hand lost in beard  
 Propping thy chin; thy forehead wrinkle-trenched  
 Above that wondrous tome, the 'Senchus Mohr,'  
 Like his, that Hebrew lawgiver's, who sat  
 Throned on the clouded Mount, while far below  
 The Tribes waited in awe. Now answer make!  
 Three bishops, and three brehons, and three kings.  
 Ye toiled—who helped thee best?" "Dubtach, the bard,"  
 Patrick replied—"Yea, wise was he, and knew  
 Man's heart like his own strings." "All bards are wise,"

Shouted the youth, "except when war they wage  
 On thee, the wisest. In their music bath  
 They cleanse man's heart, not less, and thus prepare,  
 Though hating thee, thy way. The bards are wise  
 For all except themselves. Shall God not save them,  
 He who would save the worst? Such grace were hard  
 Unless, death past, their souls to birds might change,  
 And in the darksomest grove of Paradise  
 Lament, amerced, their error, yet rejoice  
 In souls that walked obedient!" "Darksomest grove,"  
 Patrick made answer; "darksome is their life;  
 Darksome their pride, their love, their joys, their hopes;  
 Darksome, though gleams of happier lore they have,  
 Their light! Seest thou yon forest floor, and o'er it,  
 The ivy's flash-earth-light? Such light is theirs:  
 By such can no man walk."

Thus, gay or grave,  
 Conversed they, while the Brethren paced behind;  
 Till now the morn crowded each cottage door  
 With clustered heads. They reached ere long in woods  
 A hamlet small. Here on the weedy thatch  
 White fruit-bloom fell: through shadow, there, went round  
 The swinging mill-wheel tagged with silver fringe;  
 Here rang the mallet; there was heard remote  
 The one note of the love-contented bird.  
 Though warm the sun, in shade the young spring morn  
 Was edged with winter yet, and icy film  
 Glazed the deep ruts. The swarthy smith worked hard,  
 And working sang; the wheelwright toiled close by;  
 An armourer next to these: through flaming smoke  
 Glared the fierce hands that on the anvil fell  
 In thunder down. A sorcerer stood apart  
 Kneading Death's messenger, that missile ball,  
 The Lia Laimbhe. To his heart he clasped it,  
 And o'er it muttered spells with flatteries mixed:  
 "Hail, little daughter mine! 'Twixt hand and heart  
 I knead thee! From the Red Sea came that sand  
 Which, blent with viper's poison, makes thy flesh!  
 Be thou no shadow wandering on the air!  
 Rush through the battle gloom as red-combed snake  
 Cleaves the blind waters! On! like Witch's glance,  
 Or forked flash, or shaft of summer pest,  
 And woe to him that meets thee! Mouth blood-red  
 My daughter hath: -not healing be her kiss!"  
 Thus he. In shade he stood, and phrensy-fired;  
 And yet he marked who watched him. Without word  
 Him Patrick passed; but spake to all the rest  
 With voice so kindly reverent, "Is not this,"  
 Men asked, "the preacher of the 'Tidings Good?'"

"What tidings? Has he found a mine?" "He speaks  
To princes as to brothers; to the hind  
As we to princes' children! Yea, when mute,  
Saith not his face 'Rejoice'?"

At times the Saint  
Laid on the head of age his strong right hand,  
Gentle as touch of soft-accosting eyes;  
And once before an open door he stopped,  
Silent. Within, all glowing like a rose,  
A mother stood for pleasure of her babes  
That—in them still the warmth of couch late left -  
Around her gambolled. On his face, as hers,  
Their sport regarding, long time lay the smile;  
Then crept a shadow o'er it, and he spake  
In sadness: "Woman! when a hundred years  
Have passed, with opening flower and falling snow,  
Where then will be thy children?" Like a cloud  
Fear and great wrath fell on her. From the wall  
She snatched a battle-axe and raised it high  
In both hands, clamouring, "Wouldst thou slay my babes?"  
He answered, "I would save them. Woman, hear!  
Seest thou yon floating shape? It died a worm;  
It lives, the blue-winged angel of spring meads.  
Thy children, likewise, if they serve my King,  
Death past, shall find them wings." Then to her cheek  
The bloom returned, and splendour to her eye;  
And catching to her breast, that larger swelled,  
A child, she wept, "Oh, would that he might live  
For ever! Prophet, speak! thy words are good!  
Their father, too, must hear thee." Patrick said,  
"Not so; nor falls this seed on every road;"  
Then added thus: "You child, by all the rest  
Cherished as though he were some infant God,  
Is none of thine." She answered, "None of ours;  
A great chief sent him here for fosterage."  
Then he: "All men on earth the children are  
Of One who keeps them here in fosterage:  
They see not yet His face; but He sees them,  
Yea, and decrees their seasons and their times:  
Like infants, they must learn Him first by touch,  
Through nature, and her gifts—by hearing next,  
The hearing of the ear, and that is Faith -  
By Vision last. Woman, these things are hard;  
But thou to Limneach come in three days' time,  
Likewise thy husband; there, by Sangul's Well,  
Thou shalt know all."

The Saint had reached ere long  
That festal mount. Thousands with bannered line

Scaled it light-hearted. Never favourite lamb  
 In ribands decked shone brighter than that hour  
 The fair flank of Knock Cae. Heath-scented airs  
 Lightened the clambering toil. At times the Saint  
 Stayed on their course the crowds, and towards the Truth  
 Drew them by parable, or record old,  
 Oftener by question sage. Not all believed:  
 Of such was Derball. Man of wealth and wit,  
 Nor wise, nor warlike, toward the Saint he strode  
 With bubble-seething brain, and head high tossed,  
 And cried, "Great Seer! remove yon mountain blue,  
 Cenn Abhrat, by thy prayer! That done, to thee  
 Fealty I pledge." Saint Patrick knelt in prayer:  
 Soon Derball cried, "The central ridge descends; -  
 Southward, beyond it, Longa's lake shines out  
 In sunlight flashing!" At his word drew near  
 The men of Erin. Derball homeward turned,  
 Mocking: "Believe who will, believe not I!  
 Me more imports it o'er my foodful fields  
 To draw the Mague's rich waters than to stare  
 At moving hills." But certain of that throng,  
 Light men, obsequious unto Derball's laugh,  
 Questioned of Patrick if the mountain moved.  
 He answered, "On the ground mine eyes were fixed;  
 Nought saw I. Haply, through defect of mine,  
 It moved not. Derball said the mountain moved;  
 Yet kept he not his pledge, but disbelieved.  
 'Faith can move mountains.' Never said my King  
 That mountains moved could move reluctant faith  
 In unbelieving heart." With sad, calm voice  
 He spake; and Derball's laughter frustrate died.

Meantime, high up on that thyme-scented hill  
 By shadows swept, and lights, and rapturous winds,  
 Lonan prepared the feast, and, with that chief,  
 Mantan, a deacon. Tables fair were spread;  
 And tents with branches gay. Beside those tents  
 Stood the sweet-breathing, mournful, slow-eyed kine  
 With hazel-shielded horns, and gave their milk  
 Gravely to merry maidens. Low the sun  
 Had fallen, when, Patrick near the summit now,  
 There burst on him a wandering troop, wild-eyed,  
 With scant and quaint array. O'er sunburnt brows  
 They wore sere wreaths; their piebald vests were stained,  
 And lean their looks, and sad: some piped, some sang,  
 Some tossed the juggler's ball. "From far we came,"  
 They cried; "we faint with hunger; give us food!"  
 Upon them Patrick bent a pitying eye,  
 And said, "Where Lonan and where Mantan toil  
 Go ye, and pray them, for mine honour's sake,

To gladden you with meat." But Lonan said,  
 And Mantan, "Nay, but when the feast is o'er,  
 The fragments shall be yours." With darkening brow  
 The Saint of that denial heard, and cried,  
 "He cometh from the North, even now he cometh,  
 For whom the Blessing is reserved; he cometh  
 Bearing a little wether at his back:"  
 And, straightway, through the thicket evening-dazed  
 A shepherd—by him walked his mother—pushed,  
 Bearing a little wether. Patrick said,  
 "Give them to eat. They hunger." Gladly then  
 That shepherd youth gave them the wether small:  
 With both his hands outstretched, and liberal smile,  
 He gave it, though, with angry eye askance  
 His mother grudged it sore. The wether theirs,  
 As though earth-swallowed, vanished that wild tribe,  
 Fearing that mother's eye.

Then Patrick spake  
 To Lonan, "Zealous is thy service, friend;  
 Yet of thy house no king shall sit on throne,  
 No bishop bless the people." Turning then  
 To Mantan, thus he spake, "Careful art thou  
 Of many things; not less that church thou raisest  
 Shall not be of the honoured in the land;  
 And in its chancel waste the mountain kine  
 Shall couch above thy grave." To Nessian last  
 Thus spake he: "Thou that didst the hungry feed,  
 The poor of Christ, that know not yet His name,  
 And, helping them that cried to me for help,  
 Cherish mine honour, like a palm, one day,  
 Shall rise thy greatness." Nessian's mother old  
 For pardon knelt. He blessed her hoary head,  
 Yet added, mournful, "Not within the Church  
 That Nessian serves shall lie his mother's grave."  
 Then Nessian he baptized, and on him bound  
 Ere long the deacon's grade, and placed him, later,  
 Priest o'er his church at Mungret. Centuries ten  
 It stood, a convent round it as a star  
 Forth sending beams of glory and of grace  
 O'er woods Teutonic and the Tyrrhene Sea.  
 Yet Nessian's mother in her son's great church  
 Slept not; nor where the mass bell tinkled low:  
 West of the church her grave, to his—her son's -  
 Neighbouring, yet severed by the chancel wall.

Thus from the morning star to evening star  
 Went by that day. In Erin many such  
 Saint Patrick lived, using well pleased the chance,  
 Or great or small, since all things come from God:

And well the people loved him, being one  
 Who sat amid their marriage feasts, and saw,  
 Where sin was not, in all things beauty and love.  
 But, ere he passed from Munster, longing fell  
 On Patrick's heart to view in all its breadth  
 Her river-flood, and bless its western waves;  
 Therefore, forth journeying, to that hill he went,  
 Highest among the wave-girt, heathy hills,  
 That still sustains his name, and saw the flood  
 At widest stretched, and that green Isle 111 hard by,  
 And northern Thomond. From its coasts her sons  
 Rushed countless forth in skiff and coracle  
 Smiting blue wave to white, till Sheenan's sound  
 Ceased, in their clamour lost. That hour from God  
 Power fell on Patrick; and in spirit he saw,  
 Invisible to flesh, the western coasts,  
 And the ocean way, and, far beyond, that land  
 The Future's heritage, and prophesied  
 Of Brendan who ere long in wicker boat  
 Should over-ride the mountains of the deep,  
 Shielded by God, and tread—no fable then -  
 Fabled Hesperia. Last of all he saw  
 More near, thy hermit home, Senanus;—'Hail,  
 Isle of blue ocean and the river's mouth!  
 The People's Lamp, their Counsel's Head, is thine!"  
 That hour shone out through cloud the westering sun  
 And paved the wave with fire: that hour not less  
 Strong in his God, westward his face he set,  
 Westward and north, and spread his arms abroad,  
 And drew the blessing down, and flung it far:  
 "A blessing on the warriors, and the clans,  
 A blessing on high field, and golden vales,  
 On sea-like plain and on the showery ridge,  
 On river-ripple, cliff, and murmuring deep,  
 On seaward peaks, harbours, and towns, and ports;  
 A blessing on the sand beneath the ships:  
 On all descend the Blessing!" Thus he prayed,  
 Great-hearted; and from all the populous hills  
 And waters came the People's vast "Amen!"

SAINT PATRICK AND KING EOCHAID.

ARGUMENT.

King Eochaid submits himself to the Christian Law because  
 Saint Patrick has delivered his son from bonds, yet  
 only after making a pact that he is not, like the  
 meaner sort, to be baptized. In this stubbornness he  
 persists, though otherwise a kindly king; and after  
 many years, he dies. Saint Patrick had refused to

see his living face; yet after death he prays by the death-bed. Life returns to the dead; and sitting up, like one sore amazed, he demands baptism. The Saint baptizes him, and offers him a choice either to reign over all Erin for fifteen years, or to die. Eochaid chooses to die, and so departs.

Eochaid, son of Crimther, reigned, a King Northward in Clochar. Dearer to his heart Than kingdom or than people or than life Was he, the boy long wished for. Dear was she, Keine, his daughter. Babyhood's white star, Beauteous in childhood, now in maiden dawn She witched the world with beauty. From her eyes A light went forth like morning o'er the sea; Sweeter her voice than wind on harp; her smile Could stay men's breath. With winged feet she trod The yearning earth that, if it could, like waves Had swelled to meet their pressure. Ah, the pang! Beauty, the immortal promise, like a cheat If unwed glides into the shadow land, Childless and twice defeated. Beauty wed To mate unworthy, suffers worse eclipse - "Ill choice between two ills!" thus spleenfull cried Eochaid; but not his the pensive grief: He would have kept his daughter in his house For ever; yet, since better might not be, Himself he chose her out a mate, and frowned, And said, "The dog must have her." But the maid Wished not for marriage. Tender was her heart; Yet though her twentieth year had o'er her flown, And though her tears had dewed a mother's grave, In her there lurked, not flower of womanhood, But flower of angel texture. All around To her was love. The crown of earthly love Seemed but its crown of mockery. Love Divine - For that she yearned, and yet she knew it not; Knew less that love she feared.

She walked in woods  
While all the green leaves, drenched by sunset's gold,  
Upon a shower-bespangled sycamore  
Shivered, and birds among them choir on choir  
Chanted her praise-or spring's. "Ill sung," she laughed,  
"My dainty minstrels! Grant to me your wings,  
And I for them will teach you song of mine:  
Listen!" A carol from her lip there gushed  
That, ere its time, might well have called the spring  
From winter's coldest cave. It ceased; she turned.  
Beside her Patrick stood. His hand he raised

To bless her. Awed, though glad, upon her knees  
 The maiden sank. His eye, as if through air,  
 Saw through that stainless soul, and, crystal-shrined  
 Therein, its inmate, Truth. That other Truth  
 Instant to her he preached—the Truth Divine—  
 (For whence is caution needful, save from sin?)  
 And those two Truths, each gazing upon each,  
 Embraced like sisters, thenceforth one. For her  
 No arduous thing was Faith, ere yet she heard  
 In heart believing: and, as when a babe  
 Marks some bright shape, if near or far, it knows not,  
 And stretches forth a witless hand to clasp  
 Phantom or form, even so with wild surmise  
 And guesses erring first, and questions apt,  
 She chased the flying light, and round it closed  
 At last, and found it substance. "This is He."  
 Then cried she, "This, whom every maid should love,  
 Conqueror self-sacrificed of sin and death:  
 How shall we find, how please Him, how be nigh?"  
 Patrick made answer: "They that do His will  
 Are nigh Him." And the virgin: "Of the nigh,  
 Say, who is nighest?" Thus, that winged heart  
 Rushed to its rest. He answered: "Nighest they  
 Who offer most to Him in sacrifice,  
 As when the wedded leaves her father's house  
 And cleaveth to her husband. Nighest they  
 Who neither father's house nor husband's house  
 Desire, but live with Him in endless prayer,  
 And tend Him in His poor." Aloud she cried,  
 "The nearest to the Highest, that is love; -  
 I choose that bridal lot!" He answered, "Child,  
 The choice is God's. For each, that lot is best  
 To which He calls us." Lifting then pure hands,  
 Thus wept the maiden: "Call me, Virgin-born!  
 Will not the Mother-Maid permit a maid  
 To sit beside those nail-pierced feet, and wipe,  
 With hair untouched by wreaths of mortal love,  
 The dolorous blood-stains from them? Stranger guest,  
 Come to my father's tower! Against my will,  
 Against his own, in bridal bonds he binds me:  
 My suit he might resist: he cannot thine!"

She spake; and by her Patrick paced with feet  
 To hers accordant. Soon they reached that fort:  
 Central within a circling rath earth-built  
 It stood; the western tower of stone; the rest,  
 Not high, but spreading wide, of wood compact;  
 For thither many a forest hill had sent  
 His wind-swept daughter brood, relinquishing  
 Converse with cloud and beam and rain forever

To echo back the revels of a Prince.  
 Mosaic was the work, beam laced with beam  
 In quaint device: high up, o'er many a door  
 Shone blazon rich of vermeil, or of green,  
 Or shield of bronze, glittering with veined boss,  
 Chalcedony or agate, or whate'er  
 The wave-lipped marge of Neagh's broad lake might boast,  
 Or ocean's shore, northward from Brandon's Head  
 To where the myriad-pillared cliffs hang forth  
 Their stony organs o'er the lonely main.  
 And trembles yet the pilgrim, noting at eve  
 The pride Fomorian, and that Giant Way 116  
 Trending toward eastern Alba. From his throne  
 Above the semicirque of grassy seats  
 Whereon by Brehons and by Ollambs girt  
 Daily be judged his people, rose the king  
 And bade the stranger welcome.

Day to day  
 And night to night succeeded. In fit time,  
 For Patrick, sometimes sudden, oft was slow,  
 He spoke his Master's message. At the close,  
 As though in trance, the warriors circling stood  
 With hands outstretched; the Druids downward frowned,  
 Silent; and like a strong man awed for once,  
 Eochaid round him stared. A little while,  
 And from him passed the amazement. Buoyant once more,  
 And bright like trees fresher for thunder-shower,  
 With all his wonted aspect, bold and keen,  
 He answered: "O my prophet, words, words, words!  
 We too have Prophets. Better thrice our Bards;  
 Yet, being no better these than trumpet's blast,  
 The trumpet more I prize. Had words been work,  
 Myself in youth had led the loud-voiced clan!  
 Deeds I preferred. What profit e'er had I  
 From windy marvels? Once with me in war  
 A seer there camped that, bending back his head,  
 Fit rites performed, and upward gazing, blew  
 With rounded lips into the heaven of heavens  
 Druidic breath. That heaven was changed to cloud,  
 Cloud that on borne to Claire's hated bound  
 Down fell, a rain of blood! To me what gain?  
 Within three weeks my son was trapped and snared  
 By Aodh of Hy Brinin, king whose hosts  
 Number my warriors fourfold. Three long years  
 Beyond those purple mountains in the west  
 Hostage he lies." Lightly Eochaid spake,  
 And turned: but shaken chin betrayed that grief  
 Which lived beneath his lightness.

Sudden thronged  
 High on the neighbouring hills a jubilant troop,  
 Their banners waving, while the midway vale  
 With harp and horn resounded. Patrick spake:  
 "Rejoice! thy son returns! not sole he comes,  
 But in his hand a princess, fair and good,  
 A kingdom for her dowry. Aodh's realm,  
 By me late left, welcomed MY King with joy:  
 All fire the mountains shone. 'The God I serve,'  
 Thus spake I, Aodh pointing to those fires,  
 'In mountains of rejoicing hath no joy  
 While sad beyond them sits a childless man,  
 His only son thy captive. Captive groaned  
 Creation; Bethlehem's Babe set free the slave.  
 For His sake loose thy thrall!' A sweeter voice  
 Pled with mine, his daughter's 'mid her tears.  
 'Aodh,' I said, 'these two each other love!  
 What think'st thou? He who shaped the linnet's nest,  
 Indifferent unto Him are human loves?  
 Arise! thy work make perfect! Righteous deeds  
 Are easier whole than half.' In thought awhile  
 Old Aodh sat; then to his daughter turned,  
 And thus, imperious even in kindness, spake:  
 'Well fought the youth ere captured, like the son  
 Of kings, and worthy to be sire of kings:  
 Wed him this hour: and in three days, at eve,  
 Restore him to his father!' King, this hour  
 Thou know'st if Christ's strong Faith be empty words,  
 Or truth, and armed with power."

That night was passed  
 In feasting and in revel, high and low  
 Rich with a common gladness. Many a torch  
 Flared in the hand of servitors hill-sent,  
 That standing, each behind a guest, retained  
 Beneath that roof clouded by banquet steam  
 Their mountain wildness. Here, the splendour glanced  
 On goblet jewel-chased and dark with wine,  
 Swift circling; there, on walls with antlers spread,  
 And rich with yew-wood carvings, flower or bud,  
 Or clustered grape pendent in russet gleam  
 As though from nature's hand. A hall hard by  
 Echoed the harp that now nor kindled rage,  
 Nor grief condoled, nor sealed with slumber's balm  
 Tempestuous spirits, triumphs three of song,  
 But raised to rapture, mirth. Far shone that hall  
 Glowing with hangings steeped in every tinct  
 The boast of Erin's dyeing-vats, now plain,  
 Now pranked with bird or beast or fish, whate'er  
 Fast-flying shuttle from the craftsman's thought

Catching, on bore through glimmering warp and woof,  
A marvellous work; now traced by broiderer's hand  
With legends of Ferdiadh and of Meave,  
Even to the golden fringe. The warriors paced  
Exulting. Oft they showed their merit's prize,  
Poniard or cup, tribute ordained of tribes  
From age to age, Eochaid's right, on them  
With equal right devolving. Slow they moved  
In mantle now of crimson, now of blue,  
Clasped with huge torque of silver or of gold  
Just where across the snowy shirt there strayed  
Tendrils of purple thread. With jewelled fronts  
Beauteous in pride 'mid light of winsome smiles,  
Over the rushes green with slender foot  
In silver slipper hid, the ladies passed,  
Answering with eyes not lips the whispered praise,  
Or loud the bride extolling—"When was seen  
Such sweetness and such grace?"

Meantime the king  
Conversed with Patrick. Vexed he heard announced  
His daughter's high resolve: but still his looks  
Went wandering to his son. "My boy! Behold him!  
His valour and his gifts are all from me:  
My first-born!" From the dancing throng apart  
His daughter stood the while, serene and pale,  
Down-gazing on that lily in her hand  
With face of one who notes not shapes around,  
But dreams some happy dream. The king drew nigh,  
And on her golden head the sceptre staff  
Leaning, but not to hurt her, thus began:  
"Your prophets of the day, I trust them not!  
If sent from God, why came they not long since?  
Our Druids came before them, and, belike,  
Shall after them abide! With these new seers  
I count not Patrick. Things that Patrick says  
I oft-times thought. His lineage too is old -  
Wide-browed, grey-eyed, with downward lessening face,  
Not like your baser breeds, with questing eyes  
And jaw of dog. But for thy Heavenly Spouse,  
I like not Him! At least, wed Cormac first!  
If rude his ways, yet noble is his name,  
And being but poor the man will bide with me:  
He's brave, and likeliest soon in fight may fall!  
When Cormac dies, wed next—" a music clash  
Forth bursting drowned his words.

Three days passed by:  
To Patrick, then preparing to depart,  
Thus spake Eochaid in the ears of all:

"Herald Heaven-missioned of the Tidings Good!  
 Those tidings I have pondered. They are true:  
 I for that truth's sake, and in honour bound  
 By reason of my son set free, resolve  
 The same, upon conditions, to believe,  
 And suffer all my people to believe,  
 Just terms exacted. Briefly these they are:  
 First, after death, I claim admittance frank  
 Into thy Heavenly Kingdom: next, till death  
 For me exemption from that Baptism Rite,  
 Imposed on kerne and hind. Experience-taught,  
 I love not rigid bond and written pledge:  
 'Tis well to brand your mark on sheep or lamb:  
 Kings are of lion breed; and of my house  
 'Tis known there never yet was king baptized.  
 This pact concluded, preach within my realm  
 Thy Faith; and wed my daughter to thy God.  
 Not scholarly am I to know what joy  
 A maid can find in psalm, and cell, and spouse  
 Unseen: yet ever thus my sentence stood,  
 'Choose each his way.' My son restored, her loss  
 To me is loss the less." Thus spake the king.

Then Patrick, on whose face the princess bent  
 The supplication softly strong of eyes  
 Like planets seen through mist, Eochaid's heart  
 Knowing, which miracle had hardened more,  
 Made answer, "King, a man of jests art thou,  
 Claiming free range in heaven, and yet its gate  
 Thyself close barring! In thy daughter's prayers  
 Belike thou trustest, that where others creep  
 Thou shalt its golden bastions over-fly.  
 Far otherwise than in that way thou ween'st,  
 That daughter's prayers shall speed thee. With thy word  
 I close, that word to frustrate. God be with thee!  
 Thou living, I return not. Fare thee well."

Thus speaking, by the hand he took the maid,  
 And led her through the concourse. At her feet  
 The poor fell low, kissing her garment's hem,  
 And many brought their gifts, and all their prayers,  
 And old men wept. A maiden train snow-garbed,  
 Her steps attending, whitened plain and field,  
 As when at times dark glebe, new-turned, is changed  
 To white by flock of ocean birds alit,  
 Or inland blown by storm, or hunger-urged  
 To filch the late-sown grain. Her convent home  
 Ere long received her. There Ethembria ruled,  
 Green Erin's earliest nun. Of princely race,  
 She in past years before the font of Christ

Had knelt at Patrick's feet. Once more she sought him:  
 Over the lovely, lovelier change had passed,  
 As when on childish girlhood, 'mid a shower  
 Of lilies earthward wafted, maidenhood  
 In peacefuller state assumes her spotless throne;  
 So, from that maiden, vestal now had risen: -  
 Lowlier she seemed, more tender, soft, and grave,  
 Yet loftier; hushed in quiet more divine,  
 Yet wonder-awed. Again she knelt, and o'er  
 The bending queenly head, till then unbent,  
 He flung that veil which woman bars from man  
 To make her more than woman. Nigh to death  
 The Saint forgot not her. With her remained  
 Keine; but Patrick dwelt far off at Saul.

Years came and went: yet neither chance nor change,  
 Nor war, nor peace, nor warnings from the priests,  
 Nor whispers 'mid the omen-mongering crowd,  
 Might from Eochaid charm his wayward will,  
 Nor reasonings of the wise that still preferred  
 Safe port to victory's pride. He reasoned too,  
 For confident in his reasonings was the king,  
 Reckoning on pointed fingers every link  
 That clenched his mail of proof. "On Patrick's word  
 Ye tell me Baptism is the gate of Heaven:  
 Attend, Sirs! I have Patrick's word no less  
 That I shall enter Heaven. What need I more?  
 If, Death, truth-speaker, shows that Patrick lied,  
 Plain is my right against him! Heaven not won,  
 Patrick bare hence my daughter through a fraud:  
 He must restore her fourfold-daughters four,  
 As fair and good. If not, the prophet's pledge  
 For honour's sake his Master must redeem,  
 And unbaptized receive me. Dupes are ye!  
 Doomed 'mid the common flock, with branded fleece  
 Bleating to enter Heaven!"

The years went by;  
 And weakness came. No more his small light form  
 To reverent eyes seemed taller than it was:  
 No more the shepherd watched him from the hill  
 Heading his hounds, and hoped to catch his smile,  
 Yet feared his questions keen. The end drew near.  
 Some wept, some railed; restless the warriors tramped;  
 The Druids conned their late discountenanced spells;  
 The bard his lying harpstrings spurned, so long  
 Healing, unhelpful now. But far away,  
 Within that lonely convent tower from her  
 Who prayed for ever, mightier rose the prayer.

Within the palace, now by usage old  
To all flung open, all were sore amazed,  
All save the king. The leech beside the bed  
Sobbed where he stood, yet sware, "The fit will pass:  
Ten years the King may live." Eochaid frowned:  
"Shall I, to patch thy fame, live ten years more,  
My death-time come? My seventy years are sped:  
My sire and grandsire died at sixty-nine.  
Like Aodh, shall I lengthen out my days  
Toothless, nor fit to vindicate my clan,  
Some losel's song? The kingdom is my son's!  
Strike from my little milk-white horse the shoes,  
And loose him where the freshets make the mead  
Greenest in springtide. He must die ere long;  
And not to him did Patrick open Heaven.  
Praise be to Patrick's God! May He my sins,  
Known and unknown, forgive!"

Backward he sank  
Upon his bed, and lay with eyes half closed,  
Murmuring at times one prayer, five words or six;  
And twice or thrice he spake of trivial things;  
Then like an infant slumbered till the sun,  
Sinking beneath a great cloud's fiery skirt,  
Smote his old eyelids. Waking, in his ears  
The ripening cornfields whispered 'neath the breeze,  
For wide were all the casements that the soul  
By death delivered hindrance none might find  
(Careful of this the king); and thus he spake:  
"Nought ever raised my heart to God like fields  
Of harvest, waving wide from hill to hill,  
All bread-full for my people. Hale me forth:  
When I have looked once more upon that sight  
My blessing I will give them, and depart."

Then in the fields they laid him, and he spake.  
"May He that to my people sends the bread,  
Send grace to all who eat it!" With that word  
His hands down-falling, back once more he sank,  
And lay as dead; yet, sudden, rising not,  
Nor moving, nor his eyes unclosing, said,  
"My body in the tomb of ancient kings  
Inter not till beside it Patrick stands  
And looks upon my brow." He spake, then sighed  
A little sigh, and died.

Three days, as when  
Black thunder cloud clings fast to mountain brows,  
So to the nation clung the grief: three days  
The lamentation sounded on the hills

And rang around the pale blue meres, and rose  
 Shrill from the bleeding heart of vale and glen,  
 And rocky isle, and ocean's moaning shore;  
 While by the bier the yellow tapers stood,  
 And on the right side knelt Eochaid's son,  
 Behind him all the chieftains cloaked in black;  
 And on his left his daughter knelt, the nun,  
 Behind her all her sisterhood, white-veiled,  
 Like tombstones after snowstorm. Far away,  
 At "Saul of Patrick," dwelt the Saint when first  
 The king had sickened. Message sent he none  
 Though knowing all; and when the end was nigh,  
 And heralds now besought him day by day,  
 He made no answer till o'er eastern seas  
 Advanced the third fair morning. Then he rose,  
 And took the Staff of Jesus, and at eve  
 Beside the dead king standing, on his brow  
 Fixed a sad eye. Aloud the people wept;  
 The kneeling warriors eyed their lord askance;  
 The nuns intoned their hymn. Above that hymn  
 A cry rang out: it was the daughter's prayer;  
 And after that was silence. By the dead  
 Still stood the Saint, nor e'er removed his gaze.  
 Then—seen of all—behold, the dead king's hands  
 Rose slowly, as the weed on wave upheaved  
 Without its will; and all the strengthless shape  
 In cerements wrapped, as though by mastering voice  
 From the white void evoked and realm of death,  
 Without its will, a gradual bulk half rose,  
 The hoar head gazing forth. Upon the face  
 Had passed a change, the greatest earth may know;  
 For what the majesty of death began  
 The majesties of worlds unseen, and life  
 Resurgent ere its time, had perfected,  
 All accidents of flesh and sorrowful years  
 Cancelled and quelled. Yet horror from his eyes  
 Looked out as though some vision once endured  
 Must cling to them for ever. Patrick spake:  
 "Soul from the dead sent back once more to earth  
 What seek'st thou from God's Church?" He answer made,  
 "Baptism." Then Patrick o'er him poured the might  
 Of healing waters in the Name Triune,  
 The Father, and the Son, and Holy Spirit;  
 And from his eyes the horror passed, and light  
 Went from them, as the light of eyes that rest  
 On the everlasting glory, while he spake:  
 "Tempest of darkness drave me past the gates  
 Celestial, and, a moment's space, within  
 I heard the hymning of the hosts of God  
 That feed for ever on the Bread of Life

As feed the nations on the harvest wheat.  
 Tempest of darkness drave me to the gates  
 Of Anguish: then a cry came up from earth,  
 Cry like my daughter's when her mother died,  
 That stayed the on-rushing whirlwind; yet mine eyes  
 Perforce looked in, and, many a thousand years,  
 Branded upon them lay that woful sight  
 Now washed from them for ever." Patrick spake:  
 "This day a twofold choice I give thee, son;  
 For fifteen years the rule o'er Erin's land,  
 Rule absolute, Ard-Righ o'er lesser kings;  
 Or instant else to die, and hear once more  
 That hymn celestial, and that Vision see  
 They see who sing that anthem." Light from God  
 Over that late dead countenance streamed amain,  
 Like to his daughter's now-more beauteous thrice -  
 Yet awful, more than beauteous. "Rule o'er earth,  
 Rule without end, were nought to that great hymn  
 Heard but a single moment. I would die."

Then Patrick, on him gazing, answered, "Die!"  
 And died the king once more, and no man wept;  
 But on her childless breast the nun sustained  
 Softly her father's head.

That night discourse  
 Through hall and court circled in whispers low.  
 First one, "Was that indeed our king? But where  
 The sword-scar and the wrinkles?" "Where," rejoined,  
 Wide-eyed, the next, "his little cranks and girds  
 The wisdom, and the whim?" Then Patrick spake:  
 "Sirs, till this day ye never saw your king;  
 The man ye doted on was but his mask,  
 His picture-yea, his phantom. Ye have seen  
 At last the man himself." That night nigh sped,  
 While slowly o'er the darkling woods went down,  
 Warned by the cold breath of the up-creeping morn  
 Invisible yet nigh, the August moon,  
 Two vestals, gliding past like moonlight gleams,  
 Conversed: one said, "His daughter's prayer prevailed!"  
 The second, "Who may know the ways of God?  
 For this, may many a heart one day rejoice  
 In hope! For this, the gift to many a man  
 Exceed the promise; Faith's invisible germ  
 Quickened with parting breath; and Baptism given,  
 It may be, by an angel's hand unseen!"

SAINT PATRICK AND THE FOUNDING OF ARMAGH CATHEDRAL.

ARGUMENT.

Saint Patrick repairs to Ardmacha, there to found the chief church of Erin. For that purpose he demands of Daire, the king, a certain woody hill. The king refuses it, and afterwards treats him with alternate scorn and reverence; while the Saint, in each event alike, makes the same answer, "Deo Gratias." At last the king concedes to him the hill; and on the summit of it Saint Patrick finds a little white fawn asleep. The men of Erin would have slain that fawn; but the Saint carries it on his shoulder, and restores it to its dam. Where the fawn lay, he places the altar of his cathedral.

At Cluain Cain, in Ross, unbent yet old,  
Dwelt Patrick long. Its sweet and flowery sward  
He to the rock had delved, with fixed resolve  
To build thereon Christ's chiefest church in Eire.  
Then by him stood God's angel, speaking thus:  
"Not here, but northward." He replied, "O, would  
This spot might favour find with God! Behold!  
Fair is it, and as meet to clasp a church  
As is a true heart in a virgin breast  
To clasp the Faith of Christ. The hinds around  
Name it 'the beauteous meadow.'" "Fair it is,"  
The angel answered, "nor shall lack its crown.  
Another's is its beauty. Here, one day  
A pilgrim from the Britons sent shall build,  
And, later, what he builds shall pass to thine;  
But thou to Macha get thee."

Patrick then,  
Obedient as that Patriarch Sire who faced  
At God's command the desert, northward went  
In holy silence. Soon to him was lost  
That green and purple meadow-sea, embayed  
'Twixt two descending woody promontories,  
Its outlet girt with isles of rock, its shores  
Cream-white with meadow-sweet. Not once he turned,  
Climbing the uplands rough, or crossing streams  
Swoll'n by the melted snows. The Brethren paced  
Behind; Benignus first, his psalmist; next  
Secknall, his bishop; next his brehon Erc;  
Mochta, his priest; and Sinell of the Bells;  
Rodan, his shepherd; Essa, Bite, and Tassach,  
Workers of might in iron and in stone,  
God-taught to build the churches of the Faith  
With wisdom and with heart-delighting craft;  
Mac Cairthen last, the giant meek that oft  
On shoulders broad bare Patrick through the floods:

His rest was nigh. That hour they crossed a stream;  
'Twas deep, and, 'neath his load, the giant sighed.  
Saint Patrick said, "Thou wert not wont to sigh!"  
He answered, "Old I grow. Of them my mates  
How many hast thou left in churches housed  
Wherein they rule and rest!" The Saint replied,  
"Thee also will I leave within a church  
For rule and rest; not to mine own too near  
For rarely then should we be seen apart,  
Nor yet remote, lest we should meet no more."  
At Clochar soon he placed him. There, long years  
Mac Cairthen sat, its bishop.

As they went,  
Oft through the woodlands rang the battle-shout;  
And twice there rose above the distant hill  
The smoke of hamlet fired. Yet, none the less,  
Spring-touched, the blackbird sang; the cowslip changed  
Green lawn to green and golden; and grey rock  
And river's marge with primroses were starred;  
Here shook the windflower; there the blue-bells gleamed,  
As though a patch of sky had fallen on earth.

Then to Benignus spake the Saint: "My son,  
If grief were lawful in a world redeemed  
The blood-stains on a land so strong in faith,  
So slack in love, might cloud the holiest brow,  
Yea, his whose head lay on the breast of Christ.  
Clan wars with clan: no injury is forgiven;  
Like to the joy in stag-hunts is the war:  
Alas! for such what hope!" Benignus answered  
"O Father, cease not for this race to hope,  
Lest they should hope no longer! Hope they have;  
Still say they, 'God will snare us in the end  
Though wild.'" And Patrick, "Spirits twain are theirs:  
The stranger, and the poor, at every door  
They meet, and bid him in. The youngest child  
Officious is in service; maids prepare  
The bath; men brim the wine-cup. Then, forth borne,  
Cities they fire and rich in spoil depart,  
Greed mixed with rage—an industry of blood!"  
He spake, and thus the younger made reply:  
"Father, the stranger is the brother-man  
To them; the poor is neighbour. Septs remote  
To them are alien worlds. They know not yet  
That rival clans are men."

"That know they shall,"  
Patrick made answer, "when a race far off  
Tramples their race to clay! God sends abroad

His plague of war that men on earth may know  
 Brother from foe, and anguish work remorse."  
 He spake, and after musings added thus:  
 "Base of God's kingdom is Humility -  
 I have not spared to thunder o'er their pride;  
 Great kings have I rebuked and signs sent forth,  
 And banned for their sake fruitful plain, and bay;  
 Yet still the widow's cry is on the air,  
 The orphan's wail!" Benignus answered mild,  
 "O Father, not alone with sign and ban  
 Hast thou rebuked their madness. Oftener far  
 Thy sweetness hath reproved them. Once in woods  
 Northward of Tara as we tracked our way  
 Round us there gathered slaves who felled the pines  
 For ship-masts. Scarred their hands, and red with blood,  
 Because their master, Trian, thus had sworn,  
 'Let no man sharpen axe!' Upon those hands  
 Gazing, they wept soon as thy voice they heard,  
 Because that voice was soft. Thou heard'st their tale;  
 Straight to that chieftain's castle went'st thou up,  
 And bound'st him with thy fast, beside his gate  
 Sitting in silence till his heart should melt;  
 And since he willed it not to melt, he died.  
 Then, in her arms two babes, came forth the queen  
 Black-robed, and freed her slaves, and gave them hire;  
 And, we returning after many years,  
 Filled was that wood with homesteads; plots of corn  
 Rustled around them; here were orchards; there  
 In trench or tank they steeped the bright blue flax;  
 The saw-mill turned to use the wanton brook;  
 Murmured the bee-hive; murmured household wheel;  
 Soft eyes looked o'er it through the dusk; at work  
 The labourers carolled; matrons glad and maids  
 Bare us the pail head-steadied, children flowers:  
 Last, from her castle paced the queen, and led  
 In either hand her sons whom thou hadst blest,  
 Thenceforth to stand thy priests. The land believed;  
 And not through ban, or word, sharp-edged or soft,  
 But silence and thy fast the ill custom died."

He answered, "Christ, in Christ-like life expressed,  
 This, this, not words, subdues a land to Christ;  
 And in this best Apostolate all have part.  
 Ah me! that flower thou hold'st is strong to preach  
 Creative Love, because itself is lovely;  
 But we, the heralds of Redeeming Love,  
 Because we are unlovely in our lives,  
 Preach to deaf ears! Yet theirs, theirs too, the sin."  
 Benignus made reply: "The race is old;  
 Not less their hearts are young. Have patience with them!"

For see, in spring the grave old oaks push forth  
 Impatient sprays, wine-red: their strength matured,  
 These sober down to verdure." Patrick paused,  
 Then, brooding, spake, as one who thinks, not speaks:  
 "A priest there walked with me ten years and more;  
 Warrior in youth was he. One day we heard  
 The shock of warring clans—I hear it still:  
 Within him, as in darkening vase you note  
 The ascending wine, I watched the passion mount: -  
 Sudden he dashed him down into the fight,  
 Nor e'er to Christ returned." Benignus answered;  
 "I saw above a dusky forest roof  
 The glad spring run, leaving a track sea-green:  
 Not straight she ran; and yet she reached her goal:  
 Later I saw above green copse of thorn  
 The glad spring run, leaving a track foam-white:  
 Not straight she ran; yet soon she conquered all!  
 O Father, is it sinful to be glad  
 Here amid sin and sorrow? Joy is strong,  
 Strongest in spring-tide! Mourners I have known  
 That, homeward wending from the new-dug grave,  
 Against their will, where sang the happy birds  
 Have felt the aggressive gladness stir their hearts,  
 And smiled amid their tears." So babbled he,  
 Shamed at his spring-tide raptures.

As they went,  
 Far on their left there stretched a mighty land  
 Of forest-girdled hills, mother of streams:  
 Beyond it sank the day; while round the west  
 Like giants thronged the great cloud-phantoms towered.  
 Advancing, din they heard, and found in woods  
 A hamlet and a field by war unscathed,  
 And boys on all sides running. Placid sat  
 The village Elders; neither lacked that hour  
 The harp that gently tranquillises age,  
 Yet wakes young hearts with musical unrest,  
 Forerunner oft of love's unrest. Ere long  
 The measure changed to livelier: maid with maid  
 Danced 'mid the dancing shadows of the trees,  
 And youth with youth; till now, the strangers near,  
 Those Elders welcomed them with act benign;  
 And soon was slain the fatted kid, and soon  
 The lamb; nor any asked till hunger's rage  
 Was quelled, "Who art thou?" Patrick made reply,  
 "A Priest of God." Then prayed they, "Offer thou  
 To Him our sacrifice! Belike 'tis He  
 Who saves from war this hamlet hid in woods:  
 Unblest be he who finds it!" Thus they spake,  
 The matrons, not the youths. In friendly talk

The hours went by with laughter winged and tale;  
But when the moon, on rolling through the heavens,  
Showered through the leaves a dew of sprinkled light  
O'er the dark ground, the maidens garments brought  
Woven in their quiet homes when nights were long,  
Red cloak and kirtle green, and laid them soft,  
Still with the wearers' blameless beauty warm,  
For coverlet upon the warm dry grass,  
Honouring the stranger guests. For these they deemed  
Their low-roofed cots too mean. Glad-hearted rose  
The Christian hymn, not timid: far it rang  
Above the woods. Ere long, their blissful rites  
Fulfilled, the wanderers laid them down and slept.

At midnight by the side of Patrick stood  
Victor, God's Angel, saying, "Lo! thy work  
Hath favour found and thou ere long shalt die:  
Thus therefore saith the Lord, 'So long as sea  
Girdeth this isle, so long thy name shall hang  
In splendour o'er it, like the stars of God.'"  
Then Patrick said, "A boon! I crave a boon!"  
The angel answered, "Speak;" and Patrick said,  
"Let them that with me toiled, or in the years  
To come shall toil, building o'er all this land  
The Fortress-Temple and great House of Christ,  
Equalled with me my name in Erin share."  
And Victor answered, "Half thy prayer is thine;  
With thee shall they partake. Not less, thy name  
Higher than theirs shall rise, and wider spread,  
Since thus more plainly shall His glory shine  
Whose glory is His justice."

With the morn  
Those pilgrims rose, and, prime entoned and lauds,  
Poured out their blessing on that woodland clan  
Which, round them pressing, kissed them, robe and knee;  
Then on they journeyed till at set of sun  
Shone out the roofs of Macha, and that tower  
Where Daire dwelt, its lord.

Saint Patrick sent  
To Daire embassy, vouchsafing prayer  
As sire might pray of son; "Give thou yon hill  
To Christ, that we may build His church thereon."  
And Daire answered with a brow of storms  
Bent forward darkly, and long, sneering lips,  
"Your master is a mighty man, we know.  
Garban, that lied to God, he slew through prayer,  
And banned full many a lake, and many a plain,  
For trespass there committed! Let it be!

A Chief of souls he is! No signs we work,  
Rulers earth-born: yet somewhat are we here -  
Depart! By others answer we will send."

So Daire sent to Patrick men of might,  
Fierce men, the battle's nurslings. Thus they spake:  
"High region for high heads! If build ye must,  
Build on the plain: the hill is Daire's right:  
Church site he grants you, and the field around."  
And Patrick, glancing from his Office Book,  
Made answer, "Deo Gratias," and no more.

Upon that plain he built a little church  
Ere long, a convent likewise, girt with mound  
Banked from the meadow loam, and deftly set  
With stone, and fence, and woody palisade,  
That neither warring clans, far heard by day,  
Might hurt his cloistered charge, nor wolves by night,  
Howling in woods; and there he served the Lord.

But Daire scorned the Saint, and grudged his gift,  
Though small; and half in spleen, and half in greed,  
Sent down two stately coursers all night long  
To graze the deep sweet pasture round the church:  
Ill deed: -and so, for guerdon of that sin,  
Dead lay the coursers twain at the break of dawn.

Then fled the servants back, and told their lord,  
Fearing for negligence rebuke and scath,  
"Thy Christian slew the coursers!" and the king  
Gave word to slay or bind him. But from God  
A sickness fell on Daire nigh to death  
That day and night. When morning brake, the queen,  
A woman leal with kind barbaric heart,  
Her bosom from the sick man's head withdrew  
A moment while he slept; and, round her gazing,  
Closed with both hands upon a liegeman's arm,  
And sped him to the Saint for pardon and peace.  
Then Patrick, dipping in the inviolate fount  
A chalice, blessed the water, with command  
"Sprinkle the stately coursers and the king; "  
And straightway as from death the king arose,  
And rose from death the coursers.

Daire then,  
His tall frame boastful with that life renewed,  
Took with him men, and down the stone-paved hill  
Rode from his tower, and through the woodlands green,  
And bare with him an offering of those days,  
A brazen cauldron vast. Embossed it shone

With sculptured shapes. On one side hunters rode:  
Low stretched their steeds: the dogs pulled down the stag  
Unseen, except the branching horns that rose  
Like hands in protest. Feasters, on the other,  
Raised high the cup pledging the safe return.  
This offering Daire brought, and, entering, spake:  
"A gift for guerdon and for grace, O Priest!"  
And Patrick, upward glancing from his book,  
Made answer, "Deo Gratias!" and no more.

King Daire, homeward riding with knit brow  
Muttered, "Churl's welcome for a kingly boon!"  
And, drinking late that night the stormy breath  
Of others' anger blent with his, commanded,  
"Ride forth at morn and bring me back my gift!  
Spurn it he shall not, though he prize it not."  
They heard him, and obeyed. At noon the king  
Demanded thus, "What answer made the Saint?"  
They said, "His eyes he raised not from his book,  
But answered, 'Deo Gratias!' and no more."

Then Daire stamped his foot, like war-horse stung  
By gadfly: musing next, and mute he sat  
A space, and lastly roared great laughter peals  
Till roared in mockery back the raftered roof,  
And clashed his hands together shouting thus:  
"A gift, and 'Deo Gratias!'—gift withdrawn,  
And 'Deo Gratias!' Sooth, the word is good!  
Madman is this, or man of God? We'll know!"  
So from his frowning fortress once again  
Adown the resonant road o'er street and bridge  
Rode Daire, at his right the queen in fear,  
With dumbly pleading countenance; close behind,  
With tangled locks and loose-hung battle-axe  
Ran the wild kerne; and loud the bull-horn blew.  
The convent reached, King Daire from his horse  
Flung his great limbs, and at the doorway towered  
In gazing stern: the queen beside him stood,  
Her lustrous violet eyes all lost in tears:  
One hand on Daire's garment lay like light  
Wandering on dusky ripple; one, upraised,  
Held in the high-necked horse that champed the bit,  
His head near hers. Within, the man of God,  
Sole-sitting, read his office book unmoved,  
And ending fixed his keen eye on the king,  
Not rising from his seat.

Then fell from God  
Insight on Daire, and aloud he cried,  
"A kingly man, of mind unmovable

Art thou; and as the rock beneath my tower  
Shakes not in storm so shakes not heart of thine:  
Such men are of the height and not the plain:  
Therefore that hill to thee I grant unsought  
Which whilome I refused. Possession take  
This day, lest hostile demon warp my mood;  
And build thereon thy church. The same shall stand  
Strong mother-church of all thy great clan Christ!"

Thus Daire spake; and Patrick, at his word  
Rising, gave thanks to God, and to the king  
High blessing heard in heaven; and making sign  
Went forth, attended by his priestly train,  
Benignus first, his dearest, then the rest.  
In circuit thrice they girt that hill, and sang  
Anthem first heard when unto God was vowed  
That House which David offered in his heart  
His son in act, and hymn of holy Church  
Hailing that city like a bride attired,  
From heaven to earth descending. With them sang  
An angel choir above them borne. The birds  
Forbore their songs, listening that angel strain,  
Ethereal music and by men unheard  
Except the Elect. The king in reverence paced  
Behind, his liegemen next, a mass confused  
With saffron standard gay and spears upheld  
Flashing through thickets green. These kept not line,  
For Alp was still recounting battles old,  
Aodh of wizards sang, and Ir of love;  
While bald-pate Conan, sharpening from his eye  
The sneering light, shot from his plastic mouth  
Shrill taunt and biting gibe. The younger sort  
Eyed the dense copse and launched full many a shaft  
Through it at flying beast. From ledge to ledge  
Clomb Angus, keen of sight, with hand o'er brow,  
Forth gazing on some far blue ridge of war  
With nostril wide outblown, and snorting cried,  
"Would I were there!"

Meantime, the man of God  
Had reached the fair crown of that sacred hill,  
A circle girt with woodland branching low,  
And roofed with heaven. Beyond its tonsure fringe,  
Birch trees and oaks, there pushed a thorn milk-white,  
And close beside it slept in shade a fawn  
Whiter. The startled dam had left its side,  
And through the dark stems fled like flying gleam.  
Minded they were, the kernes, to kill that fawn,  
And all the priests stood silent; but the Saint  
Put forth his hand, and o'er her signed the Cross,

And, stooping, on his shoulder placed her firm,  
 And bade the brethren mark with stones her lair  
 Dewless and dusk: then, singing as he went  
 "Like as the hart desires the water brooks,"  
 He walked, that hill descending. Light from God  
 O'ershone his face. Meantime the awakened fawn  
 Now rolled her dark eye on the silver head  
 Close by, now turning licked the wrinkled hand,  
 Unfearing. Soon, with little whimpering sob,  
 The doe drew near and paced at Patrick's side.  
 At last they reached a little field low down  
 Beneath that hill: there Patrick laid the fawn.

King Daire questioned Patrick of that deed,  
 Incensed; and scornful asked, "Shall mitred man  
 Play thus the shepherd and the forester?"  
 And Patrick answered, "Aged men, O king,  
 Forget their reasons oft. Benignus seek,  
 If haply God has shown him for what cause  
 I wrought this thing." Then Daire turned him back  
 And faced Benignus; and with lifted hand,  
 Pure as a maid's, and dimpled like a child's,  
 Picturing his thoughts on air, the little monk  
 Thus glossed that deed. "Great mystery, king, is Love:  
 Poets its worthiness have sung in lays  
 Unread by ruder ones like me; and yet  
 Thus much the simplest and the rudest know,  
 Dear is the fawn to her that gave it birth,  
 And to the sceptred monarch dear the child  
 That mounts his knee. Nor here the marvel ends;  
 For, like yon star, the great Paternal Heart  
 Through all the unmeted, unimagined years,  
 While yet Creation uncreated hung,  
 A thought, a dawn-streak on the verge extreme  
 Of lonely Godhead's inner Universe,  
 Panted and pants with splendour of its love,  
 The Eternal Sire rejoicing in the Son  
 And Both in Him Who still from Both proceeds,  
 Bond of their love. Moreover, king, that Son  
 Who, Virgin-born, raised from the ruinous gulf  
 Our world, and made it footstool to God's throne,  
 The same is Love, and died for Love, and reigns:  
 Loveless, His Church were but a corpse stone-cold;  
 Loveless, her creed were but a winter leaf  
 Network of barren thoughts, the cerement wan  
 Of Faith extinct. Therefore our Saint revered  
 The love and anguish of that mother doe,  
 And inly vowed that where her offspring couched  
 Christ's chiefest church should stand, from age to age  
 Confession plain 'mid raging of the clans

That God is Love;—His worship void and vain  
Disjoined from Love that, rising to the heights  
Even to the depths descends.”

Conversing thus,  
Macha they reached. Ere long where lay the fawn  
Stood God’s new altar; and, ere many years,  
Far o’er the woodlands rose the church high-towered,  
Preaching God’s peace to still a troubled world.  
The Saint who built it found not there his grave  
Though wished for; him God buried elsewhere,  
Fulfilling thus the counsels of His Will:  
But old, and grey, when many a winter’s frost  
To spring had yielded, bent by wounds and woes  
Upon that church’s altar looked once more  
King Daire; at its font was joined to Christ;  
And, midway ’twixt that altar and that font,  
Rejoined his beauteous mate a later day.

#### THE ARRAIGNMENT OF SAINT PATRICK.

#### ARGUMENT.

Secknall, the poet, brings, in sport, three heavy charges against Saint Patrick, who, supposing them to be serious, defends himself against them. Lastly Secknall sings a hymn written in praise of a Saint. Saint Patrick commends it, affirming that for once Fame has dispensed her honours honestly. Upon this, Secknall recites the first stave, till then craftily reserved, which offers the whole homage of that hymn to Patrick, who, though the humblest of men, has thus arrogated to himself the saintly Crown. There is laughter among the brethren.

When Patrick now was old and nigh to death  
Undimmed was still his eye; his tread was strong;  
And there was ever laughter in his heart,  
And music in his laughter. In a wood  
Nigh to Ardmacha dwelt he with his monks;  
And there, like birds that cannot stay their songs  
Love-touched in Spring, or grateful for their nests,  
They to the woodsmen preached of Christ, their King,  
To swineherds, and to hinds that tended sheep,  
Yea, and to pilgrim guests from distant clans;  
His shepherd-worshipped birth when breath of kine  
Went o’er the Infant; all His wondrous works  
Or words from mount, or field, or anchored boat,  
And Christendom upreared for weal of men  
And Angel-wonder. Daily preached the monks

And daily built their convent. Wildly sweet  
The season, prime of unripe spring, when March  
Distils from cup half gelid yet some drops  
Of finer relish than the hand of May  
Pours from her full-brimmed beaker. Frost, though gone,  
Had left its glad vibration on the air;  
Laughed the blue heavens as though they ne'er had frowned,  
Through leafless oak-boughs; limes of kindlier grace  
And swifter to believe Spring's "tidings good"  
Took the sweet lights upon a breast bud-swoll'n,  
And crimson as the redbreast's; while, as when  
Clear rings a flute-note through sea-murmurs harsh,  
At intervals ran out a streak of green  
Across the dim-hued forest.

From their wood  
The strong arms of the monks had hewn them space  
For all their convent needed; farmyard stored  
With stacks that all the winter long had clutched  
Their hoarded harvest sunshine; pasture green  
Whitened with sheep; fair garden fenceless still  
With household herbs new-sprouting: but, as oft  
Some conquered race, forth sallying in its spleen  
When serves the occasion, wins a province back,  
Or flouts at least the foe, so here once more  
Wild flowers, a clan unvanquished, raised their heads  
'Mid sprouting wheat; and where from craggy height  
Pushed the grey ledge, the woodland host recoiled  
As though in Parthian flight; while many a bird,  
Barbaric from the inviolate forest launched  
Wild warbled scorn on all that life reclaimed,  
Mute garth-still orchard. Child of distant hills,  
A proud stream, swollen by midnight rains, down leaped  
From rock to rock. It spurned the precinct now  
With airy dews silvering the bramble green  
And redd'ning more the beech-stock.

'Twas the hour  
Of rest, and every monk was glad at heart,  
For each had wrought with might. With hands upheld,  
Mochta, the priest, had thundered against sin,  
Wrath-roused, as when some prince too late returned  
Stares at his sea-side village all in flames,  
The slave-thronged ship escaped. The bishop, Erc,  
Had reconciled old feuds by Brehon Law  
Where Brehon Law was lawful. Boys wild-eyed  
Had from Benignus learned the church's song,  
Boys brightened now, yet tempered, by that age  
Gracious to stripling as to maid, that brings  
Valour to one and modesty to both

Where youth is loyal to the Virgin-born.  
 The giant meek, Mac Cairthen, on bent neck  
 Had carried beam on beam, while Criemther felled  
 The oaks, and from the anvil Laeban dashed  
 The sparks in showers. A little way removed,  
 Beneath a pine three vestals sat close-veiled:  
 A song these childless sang of Bethlehem's Child,  
 Low-toned, and worked their Altar-cloth, a Lamb  
 All white on golden blazon; near it bled  
 The bird that with her own blood feeds her young:  
 Red drops affused her holy breast. These three  
 Were daughters of three kings. The best and fairest,  
 King Daire's daughter, Erenait by name,  
 Had loved Benignus in her Pagan years.  
 He knew it not: full sweet to her his voice  
 Chaunting in choir. One day through grief of love  
 The maiden lay as dead: Benignus shook  
 Dews from the font above her, and she woke  
 With heart emancipate that outsoared the lark  
 Lost in blue heavens. She loved the Spouse of Souls.  
 It was as though some child that, dreaming, wept  
 Its childish playthings lost, awaked by bells,  
 Bride-bells, had found herself a queen new wed  
 Unto her country's lord.

While monk with monk  
 Conversed, the son of Patrick's sister sat,  
 Secknall by name, beside the window sole  
 And marked where Patrick from his hill of prayer  
 Approached, descending slowly. At the sight  
 He, maker blithe of songs, and wild as hawk  
 Albeit a Saint, whose wont it was at times  
 Or shy, or strange, or shunning flattery's taint,  
 To attempt with mockery those whom most he loved,  
 Whispered a brother, "Speak to Patrick thus:  
 'When all men praised thee, Secknall made reply  
 "A blessed man were Patrick save for this,  
 Alms deeds he preaches not."'" The brother went:  
 Ere long among them entered Patrick, wroth,  
 Or, likelier, feigning wrath:—"What man is he  
 Who saith I preach not alms deeds?" Secknall rose:  
 "I said it, Father, and the charge is true."  
 Then Patrick answered, "Out of Charity  
 I preach not Charity. This people, won  
 To Christ, ere long will prove a race of Saints;  
 To give will be its passion, not to gain:  
 Its heart is generous; but its hand is slack  
 In all save war: herein there lurks a snare:  
 The priest will fatten, and the beggar feast:  
 But the lean land will yield nor chief nor prince

Hire of two horses yoked to chariot beam.”  
 Then Secknall spake, ”O Father, dead it lies  
 Mine earlier charge against thee. Hear my next,  
 Since in our Order’s equal Brotherhood  
 Censure uncensured is the right of all.  
 You press to the earth your converts! gold you spurn;  
 Yet bind upon them heavier load than when  
 Conqueror his captive tasks. Have shepherds three  
 Bowed them to Christ? ’Build up a church,’ you cry;  
 So one must draw the sand, and one the stone  
 And one the lime. Honouring the seven great Gifts,  
 You raise in one small valley churches seven.  
 Who serveth you fares hard!” The Saint replied,  
 ”Second as first! I came not to this land  
 To crave scant service, nor with shallow plough  
 Cleave I this glebe. The priest that soweth much  
 For here the land is fruitful, much shall reap:  
 Who soweth little nought but weeds shall bind  
 And poppies of oblivion.” Secknall next:  
 ”Yet man to man will whisper, and the face  
 Of all this people darken like a sea  
 When pipes the coming storm.” He answered, ”Son,  
 I know this people better. Fierce they are  
 In anger; neither flies their thought direct;  
 For some, though true to Nature, lie to men,  
 And others, true to men, are false to God:  
 Yet as the prince’s is the poor man’s heart;  
 Burthen for God sustained no burden is  
 To him; and those who most have given to Christ  
 Largeliest His fulness share.”

Secknall replied,  
 ”Low lies my second charge; a third remains,  
 Which, as a shaft from seasoned bow, not green,  
 Shall pierce the marl. With convents still you sow  
 The land: in other countries sparse and small  
 They swell to cities here. A hundred monks  
 On one late barren mountain dig and pray:  
 A hundred nuns gladden one woodland lawn,  
 Or sing in one small island. Well-’tis well!  
 Yet, balance lost and measure, nought is well.  
 The Angelic Life more common will become  
 Than life of mortal men.” The Saint replied,  
 ”No shaft from homicidal yew-tree bow  
 Is thine, but winged of thistle-down! Now hear!  
 Measure is good; but measure’s law with scale  
 Changeth; nor doth the part reflect the whole.  
 Each nation hath its gift, and each to all  
 Not equal ministers. If all were eye,  
 Where then were ear? If all were ear or hand,

Where then were eye? The nation is the part;  
 The Church the whole"—But Criemther where he stood,  
 Old warrior, shouted like a chief war-waked,  
 "This land is Eire! No nation lives like her!  
 A part! Who portions Eire?" The Saint, with smile  
 Resumed: "The whole that from the part receives,  
 Repaying still that part, till man's whole race  
 Grow to the fulness of Mankind redeemed.  
 What gift hath God in eminence given to Eire?  
 Singly, her race is feeble; strong when knit:  
 Nought knits them truly save a heavenly aim.  
 I knit them as an army unto God,  
 Give them God's War! Yon star is militant!  
 Its splendour 'gainst the dark must fight or die:  
 So wars that Faith I preach against the world;  
 And nations fitted least for this world's gain  
 Can speed Faith's triumph best. Three hundred years,  
 Well used, should make of Eire a northern Rome.  
 Criemther! her destiny is this, or nought;  
 Secknall! the highest only can she reach;  
 Alone the Apostle's crown is hers: for this,  
 A Rule I give her, strong, yet strong in Love;  
 Monastic households build I far and wide;  
 Monastic clans I plant among her clans,  
 With abbots for their chiefs. The same shall live,  
 Long as God's love o'errules them."

Secknall then  
 Knelt, reverent; yet his eye had in it mirth,  
 And round the full bloom of the red rich mouth,  
 No whit ascetic, ran a dim half smile.  
 "Father, my charges three have futile fallen,  
 And thrice, like some great warrior of the bards,  
 Your conquering wheels above me you have driven.  
 Brought low, I make confession. Once, in woods  
 Wandering, we heard a sound, now loud, now low,  
 As he that treads the sand-hills hears the sea  
 High murmuring while he climbs the seaward slope,  
 Low, as he drops to landward. 'Twas a throng  
 Awed, yet tumultuous, wild-eyed, wondering, fierce,  
 That, standing round a harper, stave on stave  
 Acclaimed as each had ending. 'War, still war!  
 Thou saidst; 'the bards but sing of War and Death!  
 Ah! if they sang that Death which conquered Death,  
 Then, like a tide, this people, music-drawn,  
 Would mount the shores of Christ! Bards love not us,  
 Prescient that power, that power wielded elsewhere  
 By priest, but here by them, shall pass to us:  
 Yet we love them for good one day their gift.'  
 Then didst thou turn on me an eye of might

Such as on Malach, when thou had'st him raise  
 By miracle of prayer that babe boar-slain,  
 And said'st, 'Go, fell thy pine, and frame thy harp,  
 And in the hearing of this people sing  
 Some Saint, the friend of Christ.' Too long the attempt  
 Shame-faced, I shunned; at last, like him of old,  
 That better brother who refused, yet went,  
 I made my hymn. 'Tis called 'A Child of Life.'"  
 Then Patrick, "Welcome is the praise of Saints:  
 Sing thou thy hymn."

From kneeling Secknall rose  
 And stood, and singing, raised his hand as when  
 Her cymbal by the Red Sea Miriam raised  
 While silent stood God's hosts, and silent lay  
 Those host-entombing waters. Shook, like hers,  
 His slight form wavering 'mid the gusts of song.  
 He sang the Saint of God, create from nought  
 To work God's Will. As others gaze on earth,  
 Her vales, her plains, her green meads ocean-girt,  
 So gazed the Saint for ever upon God  
 Who girds all worlds—saw intermediate nought -  
 And on Him watched the sunshine and the storm,  
 And learned His Countenance, and from It alone,  
 Drew in upon his heart its day and night.  
 That contemplation was for him no dream:  
 It hurled him on his mission. As a sword  
 He lodged his soul within the Hand Divine  
 And wrought, keen-edged, God's counsel. Next to God  
 Next, and how near, he loved the souls of men:  
 Yea, men to him were Souls; the unspiritual herd  
 He saw as magic-bound, or chained to beast,  
 And groaned to free them. For their sakes, unfearing,  
 He faced the ravening waves, and iron rocks,  
 Hunger, and poniard's edge, and poisoned cup,  
 And faced the face of kings, and faced the host  
 Of demons raging for their realm o'erthrown.  
 This was the Man of Love. Self-love cast out,  
 The love made spiritual of a thousand hearts  
 Met in his single heart, and kindled there  
 A sun-like image of Love Divine. Within  
 That Spirit-shadowed heart was Christ conceived  
 Hourly through faith, hourly through Love was born;  
 Sole secret this of fruitfulness to Christ.  
 Who heard him heard with his a lordlier Voice,  
 Strong as that Voice which said, "Let there be light,"  
 And light o'erflowed their beings. He from each  
 His secret won; to each God's secret told:  
 He touched them, and they lived. In each, the flesh  
 Subdued to soul, the affections, vassals proud

By conscience ruled, and conscience lit by Christ,  
 The whole man stood, planet full-orbed of powers  
 In equipoise, Image restored of God.  
 A nation of such men his portion was;  
 That nation's Patriarch he. No wrangler loud;  
 No sophist; lesser victories knew he none:  
 No triumph his of sect, or camp, or court;  
 The Saint his great soul flung upon the world,  
 And took the people with him like a wind  
 Missioned from God that with it wafts in spring  
 Some winged race, a multitudinous night,  
 Into new sun-bright climes.

As Secknall sang,  
 Nearer the Brethren drew. On Patrick's right  
 Benignus stood; old Mochta on his left,  
 Slow-eyed, with solemn smile and sweet; next Erc,  
 Whose ever-listening countenance that hour  
 Beyond its wont was listening; Criemther near  
 The workman Saint, his many-wounded hands  
 Together clasped: forward each mighty arm  
 On shoulders propped of Essa and of Bite,  
 Leaned the meek giant Cairthen: twelve in all  
 Clustering they stood and in them was one soul.  
 When Secknall ceased, in silence still they hung  
 Each upon each, glad-hearted since the meed  
 Of all their toils shone out before them plain,  
 Gold gates of heaven—a nation entering in.  
 A light was on their faces, and without  
 Spread a great light, for sunset now had fallen  
 A Pentecostal fire upon the woods,  
 Or else a rain of angels streamed o'er earth.  
 In marvel gazed the twelve: yea, clans far off  
 Stared from their hills, deeming the site aflame.  
 That glory passed away, discourse arose  
 On Secknall's hymn. Its radiance from his face  
 Had, like the sunset's, vanished as he spake.  
 "Father, what sayst thou?" Patrick made reply,  
 "My son, the hymn is good; for Truth is gold;  
 And Fame, obsequious often to base heads,  
 For once is loyal, and its crown hath laid  
 Where honour's debt was due." Then Secknall raised  
 In triumph both his hands, and chaunted loud  
 That hymn's first stave, earlier through craft withheld,  
 Stave that to Patrick's name, and his alone,  
 Offered that hymn's whole incense! Ceasing, he stood  
 Low-bowed, with hands upon his bosom crossed.  
 Great laughter from the brethren came, their Chief  
 Thus trapped, though late—he meekest man of men -  
 To claim the saintly crown. First young, then old,

Later the old, and sore against their will,  
That laughter raised. Last from the giant chest  
Of Cairthen forth it rolled its solemn bass,  
Like sea-sound swallowing lighter sounds hard by.  
But Patrick laughed not: o'er his face there passed  
Shade lost in light; and thus he spake, "O friends  
That which I have to do I know in part:  
God grant I work my work. That which I am  
He knows Who made me. Saints He hath, good store:  
Their names are written in His Book of Life;  
Kneel down, my sons, and pray that if thus long  
I seem to stand, I fall not at the end."

Then in a circle kneeling prayed the twelve.  
But when they rose, Secknall with serious brow  
Advanced, and knelt, and kissed Saint Patrick's foot,  
And said, "O Father, at thy hest that hymn  
I made, long labouring, and thy crown it stands:  
Thou, therefore, grant me gifts, for strong thy prayer."

And Patrick said, "The house wherein thy hymn  
Is sung at morn or eve shall lack not bread:  
And if men sing it in a house new-built,  
Where none hath dwelt, nor bridegroom yet, nor bride,  
Nor hath the cry of babe been heard therein,  
Upon that house the watching of the Saints  
Of Eire, and Patrick's watching, shall be fixed  
Even as the stars." And Secknall said, "What more?"

Then Patrick added, "They that night and morn  
Down-lying and up-rising, sing that hymn,  
They too that softly whisper it, nigh death,  
If pure of heart, and liegeful unto Christ,  
Shall see God's face; and, since the hymn is long,  
Its grace shall rest for children and the poor  
Full measure on the last three lines; and thou  
Of this dear company shalt die the first,  
And first of Eire's Apostles." Then his cheek  
Secknall laid down once more on Patrick's foot,  
And answered, "Deo Gratias."

Thus in mirth,  
And solemn talk, and prayer, that brother band  
In the golden age of Faith with great free heart  
Gave thanks to God that blissful eventide,  
A thousand and four hundred years and more  
Gone by. But now clear rang the compline bell,  
And two by two they wended towards their church  
Across a space for cloister set apart,  
Yet still with wood-flowers sweet, and scent beside

Of sod that evening turned. The night came on;  
 A dim ethereal twilight o'er the hills  
 Deepened to dewy gloom. Against the sky  
 Stood ridge and rock unmarked amid the day:  
 A few stars o'er them shone. As bower on bower  
 Let go the waning light, so bird on bird  
 Let go its song. Two songsters still remained,  
 Each feebler than a fountain soon to cease,  
 And claimed somehow across the dusking dell  
 Rivals unseen in sleepy argument,  
 Each, the last word: –a pause; and then, once more,  
 An unexpected note: –a longer pause;  
 And then, past hope, one other note, the last.  
 A moment more the brethren stood in prayer:  
 The rising moon upon the church-roof new  
 Glimmered; and o'er it sang an angel choir,  
 "Venite Sancti." Entering, soon were said  
 The psalm, "He giveth sleep," and hymn, "Laetare;"  
 And in his solitary cell each monk  
 Lay down, rejoicing in the love of God.

The happy years went by. When Patrick now  
 And all his company were housed with God  
 That hymn, at morning sung, and noon, and eve,  
 Even as it lulled the waves of warring clans  
 So lulled with music lives of toil-worn men  
 And charmed their ebbing breath. One time it chanced  
 When in his convent Kevin with his monks  
 Had sung it thrice, the board prepared, a guest,  
 Foot-sore and hungered, murmured, "Wherefore thrice?"  
 And Kevin answered, "Speak not thus, my son,  
 For while we sang it, visible to all,  
 Saint Patrick was among us. At his right  
 Benignus stood, and, all around, the Twelve,  
 God's light upon their brows; while Secknall knelt  
 Demanding meed of song. Moreover, son,  
 This self-same day and hour, twelve months gone by,  
 Patrick, our Patriarch, died; and happy Feast  
 Is that he holds, by two short days alone  
 Severed from his of Hebrew Patriarchs last,  
 And Chief. The Holy House at Nazareth  
 He ruled benign, God's Warder with white hairs;  
 And still his feast, that silver star of March,  
 When snows afflict the hill and frost the moor,  
 With temperate beam gladdens the vernal Church -  
 All praise to God who draws that Twain so near."

THE STRIVING OF SAINT PATRICK ON MOUNT CRUACHAN.

ARGUMENT.

Saint Patrick, seeing that now Erin believes, desires that the whole land should stand fast in belief till Christ returns to judge the world. For this end he resolves to offer prayer on Mount Cruachan; but Victor, the Angel who has attended him in all his labours, restrains him from that prayer as being too great. Notwithstanding, the Saint prays three times on the mountain, and three times all the demons of Erin contend against him, and twice Victor, the Angel, rebukes his prayers. In the end Saint Patrick scatters the demons with ignominy, and God's Angel bids him know that his prayer hath conquered through constancy.

From realm to realm had Patrick trod the Isle;  
And evermore God's work beneath his hand,  
Since God had blessed that hand, ran out full-sphered,  
And brighter than a new-created star.  
The Island race, in feud of clan with clan  
Barbaric, gracious else and high of heart,  
Nor worshippers of self, nor dulled through sense,  
Beholding, not alone his wondrous works;  
But, wondrous more, the sweetness of his strength  
And how he neither shrank from flood nor fire,  
And how he couched him on the wintry rocks,  
And how he sang great hymns to One who heard,  
And how he cared for poor men and the sick,  
And for the souls invisible of men,  
To him made way—not simple hinds alone,  
But chiefly wisest heads, for wisdom then  
Prime wisdom saw in Faith; and, mixt with these,  
Chieftains and sceptred kings. Nigh Tara, first,  
Scorning the king's command, had Patrick lit  
His Paschal fire, and heavenward as it soared,  
The royal fire and all the Beltaine fires  
Shamed by its beam had withered round the Isle  
Like fires on little hearths whereon the sun  
Looks in his greatness. Later, to that plain  
Central 'mid Eire, "of Adoration" named,  
Down-trampled for two thousand years and more  
By erring feet of men, the Saint had sped  
In Apostolic might, and kenned far off  
Ill-pleased, the nation's idol lifting high  
His head, and those twelve vassal gods around  
All mailed in gold and shining as the sun,  
A pomp impure. Ill-pleased the Saint had seen them,  
And raised the Staff of Jesus with a ban:  
Then he, that demon named of men Crom-dubh,  
With all his vassal gods, into the earth

That knew her Maker, to their necks had sunk  
While round the island rang three times the cry  
Of fiends tormented.

Not for this as yet  
Had Patrick perfected his strength: as yet  
The depths he had not trodden; nor had God  
Drawn forth His total forces in the man  
Hidden long since and sealed. For this cause he,  
Who still his own heart in triumphant hour  
Suspected most, remembering Milchoe's fate,  
With fear lest aught of human mar God's work,  
And likewise from his handling of the Gael  
Knowing not less their weakness than their strength,  
Paused on his conquering way, and lonely sat  
In cloud of thought. The great Lent Fast had come:  
Its first three days went by; the fourth, he rose,  
And meeting his disciples that drew nigh  
Vouchsafed this greeting only: "Bide ye here  
Till I return," and straightway set his face  
Alone to that great hill "of eagles" named  
Huge Cruachan, that o'er the western deep  
Hung through sea-mist, with shadowing crag on crag,  
High-ridged, and dateless forest long since dead.

That forest reached, the angel of the Lord  
Beside him, as he entered, stood and spake:  
"The gifts thy soul demands, demand them not;  
For they are mighty and immeasurable,  
And over great for granting." And the Saint:  
"This mountain Cruachan I will not leave  
Alive till all be granted, to the last."

Then knelt he on the shrouded mountain's base,  
And was in prayer; and, wrestling with the Lord,  
Demanded wondrous things immeasurable,  
Not easy to be granted, for the land;  
Nor brooked repulse; and when repulse there came,  
Repulse that quells the weak and crowns the strong,  
Forth from its gloom like lightning on him flashed  
Intelligential gleam and insight winged  
That plainlier showed him all his people's heart,  
And all the wound thereof: and as in depth  
Knowledge descended, so in height his prayer  
Rose, and far spread; nor roused alone those Powers  
Regioned with God; for as the strength of fire  
When flames some palace pile, or city vast,  
Wakens a tempest round it dragging in  
Wild blast, and from the aggression mightier grows,  
So wakened Patrick's prayer the demon race,

And drew their legions in upon his soul  
 From near and far. First came the Accursed encamped  
 On Connact's cloudy hills and watery moors;  
 Old Umbhall's Heads, Iorras, and Arran Isle,  
 And where Tyrawley clasps that sea-girt wood  
 Fochlut, whence earliest rang the Children's Cry,  
 To demons trump of doom. In stormy rack  
 They came, and hung above the invested Mount  
 Expectant. But, their mutterings heeding not,  
 When Patrick still in puissance rose of prayer,  
 O'er all their armies round the realm dispersed  
 There ran prescience of fate; and, north and south,  
 From all the mountain-girdled coasts—for still  
 Best site attracts worst Spirit—on they came,  
 From Aileach's shore and Uladh's hoary cliffs,  
 Which held the aeries of that eagle race  
 More late in Alba throned, "Lords of the Isles" -  
 High chiefs whose bards, in strong transmitted line,  
 Filled with the name of Fionn, and thine, Oiseen,  
 The blue glens of that never-vanquished land -  
 From those purpureal mountains that o'ergaze  
 Rock-bowered Loch Lene broidered with sanguine bead,  
 They came, and many a ridge o'er sea-lake stretched  
 That, autumn-robed in purple and in gold,  
 Pontific vestment, guard the memories still  
 Of monks who reared thereon their mystic cells,  
 Finian and Kieran, Fiacre, and Enda's self  
 Of hermits sire, and that sea-facing Saint  
 Brendan, who, in his wicker boat of skins  
 Before that Genoese a thousand years  
 Found a new world; and many more that now  
 Under wind-wasted Cross of Clonmacnoise  
 Await the day of Christ.

So rushed they on  
 From all sides, and, close met, in circling storm  
 Besieged the enclouded steep of Cruachan,  
 That scarce the difference knew 'twixt night and day  
 More than the sunless pole. Him sought they, him  
 Whom infinitely near they might approach,  
 Not touch, while firm his faith—their Foe that dragged,  
 Sole-kneeling on that wood-girt mountain's base,  
 With both hands forth their realm's foundation stone.  
 Thus ruin filled the mountain: day by day  
 The forest torment deepened; louder roared  
 The great aisles of the devastated woods;  
 Black cave replied to cave; and oaks, whole ranks,  
 Colossal growth of immemorial years,  
 Sown ere Milesius landed, or that race  
 He vanquished, or that earliest Scythian tribe,

Fell in long line, like deep-mined castle wall,  
At either side God's warrior. Slowly died  
At last, far echoed in remote ravines,  
The thunder: then crept forth a little voice  
That shrilly whispered to him thus in scorn:  
"Two thousand years yon race hath walked in blood  
Neck-deep; and shall it serve thy Lord of Peace?"  
That whisper ceased. Again from all sides burst  
Tenfold the storm; and as it waxed, the Saint  
Waxed in strong heart; and, kneeling with stretched hands,  
Made for himself a panoply of prayer,  
And wound it round his bosom twice and thrice,  
And made a sword of comminating psalm,  
And smote at them that mocked him. Day by day,  
Till now the second Sunday's vesper bell  
Gladdened the little churches round the isle,  
That conflict raged: then, maddening in their ire,  
Sudden the Princedoms of the Dark, that rode  
This way and that way through the tempest, brake  
Their sceptres, and with one great cry it fell:  
At once o'er all was silence: sunset lit  
The world, that shone as though with face upturned  
It gazed on heavens by angel faces thronged  
And answered light with light. A single bird  
Carolled; and from the forest skirt down fell,  
Gem-like, the last drops of the exhausted storm.

Then bowed the Saint his forehead to the ground  
Thanking his God; and there in sacred trance,  
Which was not sleep, abode not hours alone  
But silent nights and days; and, 'mid that trance,  
God fed his heart with unseen Sacraments,  
Immortal food. Awaking, Patrick felt  
Yearnings for nearer commune with his God,  
Though great its cost; and gat him on his feet,  
And, mile by mile, ascended through the woods  
Till stunted were its growths; and still he clomb  
Printing with sandalled foot the dewy steep:  
But when above the mountain rose the moon  
Brightening each mist, while sank the prone morass  
In double night, he came upon a stone  
Tomb-shaped, that flecked that steep: a little stream  
Dropped by it from the summits to the woods:  
Thereon he knelt; and was once more in prayer.

Nor prayed unnoticed by that race abhorred.  
No sooner had his knees the mountain touched  
Than through their realm vibration went; and straight  
His prayer detecting back they trooped in clouds  
And o'er him closed, blotting with bat-like wing

And inky pall, the moon. Then thunder pealed  
 Once more, nor ceased from pealing. Over all  
 Night ruled, except when blue and forked flash  
 Revealed the on-circling waterspout or plunge  
 Of rain beneath the blown cloud's ravelled hem,  
 Or, huge on high, that lion-coloured steep  
 Which, like a lion, roared into the night  
 Answering the roaring from sea-caves far down.  
 Dire was the strife. That hour the Mountain old,  
 An anarch throned 'mid ruins flung himself  
 In madness forth on all his winds and floods,  
 An omnipresent wrath! For God reserved,  
 Too long the prey of demons he had been;  
 Possession foul and fell. Now nigh expelled  
 Those demons rent their victim freed. Aloft,  
 They burst the rocky barrier of the tarn  
 That downward dashed its countless cataracts,  
 Drowning far vales. On either side the Saint  
 A torrent rushed—mightiest of all these twain -  
 Peeling the softer substance from the hills  
 Their flesh, till glared, deep-trenched, the mountain's bones;  
 And as those torrents widened, rocks down rolled  
 Showering upon that unsubverted head  
 Sharp spray ice-cold. Before him closed the flood,  
 And closed behind, till all was raging flood,  
 All but that tomb-like stone whereon he knelt.

Unshaken there he knelt with hands outstretched,  
 God's Athlete! For a mighty prize he strove,  
 Nor slacked, nor any whit his forehead bowed:  
 Fixed was his eye and keen; the whole white face  
 Keen as that eye itself, though—shapeless yet -  
 The infernal horde to ear not eye addressed  
 Their battle. Back he drave them, rank on rank,  
 Routed, with psalm, and malison, and ban,  
 As from a sling flung forth. Revolt's blind spawn  
 He named them; one time Spirits, now linked with brute,  
 Yea, bestial more and baser: and as a ship  
 Mounts with the mounting of the wave, so he  
 O'er all the insurgent tempest of their wrath  
 Rising rode on triumphant. Days went by,  
 Then came a lull; and lo! a whisper shrill,  
 Once heard before, again its poison cold  
 Distilled: "Albeit to Christ this land should bow,  
 Some conqueror's foot one day would quell her Faith."  
 It ceased. Tenfold once more the storm burst forth:  
 Once more the ecstatic passion of his prayer  
 Met it, and, breasting, overbore, until  
 Sudden the Princedoms of the dark that rode  
 This way and that way through the whirlwind, dashed

Their vanquished crowns of darkness to the ground  
With one long cry. Then silence came; and lo!  
The white dawn of the fourth fair Day of God  
O'erflowed the world. Slowly the Saint upraised  
His wearied eyes. Upon the mountain lawns  
Lay happy lights; and birds sang; and a stream  
That any five-years' child might overleap,  
Beside him lapsed crystalline between banks  
With violets all empurpled, and smooth marge  
Green as that spray which earliest sucks the spring.

Then Patrick raised to God his orison  
On that fair mount, and planted in the grass  
His crozier staff, and slept; and in his sleep  
God fed his heart with unseen Sacraments,  
Manna of might divine. Three days he slept;  
The fourth he woke. Upon his heart there rushed  
Yearning for closer converse with his God  
Though great its cost; and on his feet he gat,  
And high, and higher yet, that mountain scaled,  
And reached at noon the summit. Far below  
Basking the island lay, through rainbow shower  
Gleaming in part, with shadowy moor, and ridge  
Blue in the distance looming. Westward stretched  
A galaxy of isles, and, these beyond,  
Infinite sea with sacred light ablaze,  
And high o'erhead there hung a cloudless heaven.

Upon that summit kneeling, face to sea  
The Saint, with hands held forth and thanks returned,  
Claimed as his stately heritage that realm  
From north to south: but instant as his lip  
Printed with earliest pulse of Christian prayer  
That clear aerial clime Pagan till then;  
The Host Accursed, sagacious of his act,  
Rushed back from all the isle and round him met  
With anger seven times heated, since their hour,  
And this they knew, was come. Nor thunder din  
And challenge through the ear alone, sufficed  
That hour their rage malign that, craving sore  
Material bulk to rend his bulk—their foe's -  
Through fleshly strength of that their murder-lust  
Flamed forth in fleshly form phantoms night-black  
Though bodiless yet to bodied mass as nigh  
As Spirits can reach. More thick than vultures winged  
To fields with carnage piled, the Accursed thronged  
Making thick night which neither earth nor sky  
Could pierce, from sense expunged. In phalanx now,  
Anon in breaking legion, or in globe,  
With clang of iron pinion on they rushed

And spectral dart high-held. Nor quailed the Saint,  
 Contending for his people on that Mount,  
 Nor spared God's foes; for as old minster towers  
 Besieged by midnight storm send forth reply  
 In storm outrolled of bells, so sent he forth  
 Defiance from fierce lip, vindictive chaunt,  
 And blight and ban, and maledictive rite  
 Potent on face of Spirits impure to raise  
 These plague-spots three, Defeat, Madness, Despair;  
 Nor stinted flail of taunt—"When first my bark  
 Threatened your coasts, as now upon the hills  
 Hung ye in cloud; as now, I raised this Cross;  
 Ye fled before it and again shall fly!"  
 So hurled he back their squadrons. Day by day  
 The hurricanes of war shook earth and heaven:  
 Till now, on Holy Saturday, that hour  
 Returned which maketh glad the Church of God  
 When over Christendom in widowed fanes  
 Two days by penance stripped, and dumb as though  
 Some Antichrist had trodd'n them down, once more  
 Swells forth amid the new-lit paschal lights  
 The "Gloria in Excelsis:" sudden then  
 That mighty conflict ceased, save one low voice  
 Twice heard before, now edged with bitterer scoff,  
 "That race thou lov'st, though fierce in wrath, is soft:  
 Plenty and peace will melt their Faith one day:"  
 Then with that whisper dying, died the night:  
 Then forth from darkness issued earth and sky:  
 Then fled the phantoms far o'er ocean's wave,  
 Thence to return not till the day of doom.

But he, their conqueror wept, upon that height  
 Standing; nor of his victory had he joy,  
 Nor of that jubilant isle restored to light,  
 Nor of that heaven relit; so worked that scoff  
 Winged from the abyss; and ever thus the man  
 With darkness communed and that poison cold:  
 "If Faith indeed should flood the land with peace,  
 And peace with gold, and gold eat out her heart  
 Once true, till Faith one day through Faith's reward  
 Or die, or live diseased, the shame of Faith,  
 Then blacker were this land and more accursed  
 Than lands that knew no Christ." And musing thus  
 The whole heart of the man was turned to tears,  
 A fount of bale and chalice brimmed with death -  
 For oft a thought chance-born more racks than truth  
 Proven and sure-and, weeping, still he wept  
 Till drenched was all his sad monastic cowl  
 As sea-weed on the dripping shelf storm-cast  
 Latest, and tremulous still.

As thus he wept  
 Sudden beside him on that summit broad,  
 Ran out a golden beam like sunset path  
 Gilding the sea: and, turning, by his side  
 Victor, God's angel, stood with lustrous brow  
 Fresh from that Face no man can see and live.  
 He, putting forth his hand, with living coal  
 Snatched from God's altar, made that dripping cowl  
 Dry as an Autumn sheaf. The angel spake:  
 "Rejoice, for they are fled that hate thy land,  
 And those are nigh that love it." Then the Saint  
 Upraised his head; and lo! in snowy sheen  
 Cresting high rock, and ridge, and airy peak,  
 Innumerable the Sons of God all round  
 Vested the invisible mountain with white light,  
 As when the foam-white birds of ocean throng  
 Sea-rock so close that none that rock may see.  
 In trance the Living Creatures stood, with wings  
 That pointing crossed upon their breasts; nor seemed  
 As new arrived but native to that site  
 Though veiled till now from mortal vision. Song  
 They sang to soothe the vexed heart of the Saint -  
 Love-song of Heaven: and slowly as it died  
 Their splendours waned; and through that vanishing light  
 Earth, sea, and heaven returned.

To Patrick then,  
 Thus Victor spake: "Depart from Cruachan,  
 Since God hath given thee wondrous gifts, immense,  
 And through thy prayer routed that rebel host."  
 And Patrick, "Till the last of all my prayers  
 Be granted, I depart not though I die: -  
 One said, 'Too fierce that race to bend to faith.'  
 Then spake God's angel, mild of voice, and kind:  
 "Not all are fierce that fiercest seem, for oft  
 Fierceness is blindfold love, or love ajar.  
 Souls thou wouldst have: for every hair late wet  
 In this thy tearful cowl and habit drenched  
 God gives thee myriads seven of Souls redeemed  
 From sin and doom; and Souls, beside, as many  
 As o'er yon sea in legioned flight might hang  
 Far as thine eye can range. But get thee down  
 From Cruachan, for mighty is thy prayer."  
 And Patrick made reply: "Not great thy boon!  
 Watch have I kept, and wearied are mine eyes  
 And dim; nor see they far o'er yonder deep."  
 And Victor: "Have thou Souls from coast to coast  
 In cloud full-stretched; but, get thee down: this Mount  
 God's Altar is, and puissance adds to prayer."

And Patrick: "On this Mountain wept have I;  
 And therefore giftless will I not depart:  
 One said, 'Although that People should believe  
 Yet conqueror's heel one day would quell their Faith.'"

To whom the angel, mild of voice, and kind:  
 "Conquerors are they that subjugate the soul:  
 This also God concedes thee; conquering foe  
 Trampling this land, shall tread not out her Faith  
 Nor sap by fraud, so long as thou in heaven  
 Look'st on God's Face; nay, by that Faith subdued,  
 That foe shall serve and live. But get thee down  
 And worship in the vale." Then Patrick said,  
 "Live they that list! Full sorely wept have I,  
 Nor will I hence depart unsatisfied:  
 One said; 'Grown soft, that race their Faith will shame;'  
 Say therefore what the Lord thy God will grant,  
 Nor stint His hand; since never scanted grace  
 Fell yet on head of nation-taming man  
 Than thou to me hast portioned till this hour."

Then answer made the angel, soft of voice:  
 "Not all men stumble when a Nation falls;  
 There are that stand upright. God gives thee this:  
 They that are faithful to thy Faith, that walk  
 Thy way, and keep thy covenant with God,  
 And daily sing thy hymn, when comes the Judge  
 With Sign blood-red facing Jehosaphat,  
 And fear lays prone the many-mountained world,  
 The same shall 'scape the doom." And Patrick said,  
 "That hymn is long, and hard for simple folk,  
 And hard for children." And the angel thus:  
 "At least from 'Christum Illum' let them sing,  
 And keep thy Faith: when comes the Judge, the pains  
 Shall take not hold of such. Is that enough?"  
 And Patrick answered, "That is not enough."  
 Then Victor: "Likewise this thy God accords:  
 The Dreadful Coming and the Day of Doom  
 Thy land shall see not; for before that day  
 Seven years, a great wave arched from out the deep,  
 Ablution pure, shall sweep the isle and take  
 Her children to its peace. Is that enough?"  
 And Patrick answered, "That is not enough."

Then spake once more that courteous angel kind:  
 "What boon demand'st then?" And the Saint, "No less  
 Than this. Though every nation, ere that day  
 Recranted from creed and Christ, old troth forsworn,  
 Should flee the sacred scandal of the Cross  
 Through pride, as once the Apostles fled through fear,  
 This Nation of my love, a priestly house,

Beside that Cross shall stand, fate-firm, like him  
That stood beside Christ's Mother." Straightway, as one  
Who ends debate, the angel answered stern:  
"That boon thou claimest is too great to grant:  
Depart thou from this mountain, Cruachan,  
In peace; and find that Nation which thou lov'st,  
That like thy body is, and thou her head,  
For foes are round her set in valley and plain,  
And instant is the battle." Then the Saint:  
"The battle for my People is not there,  
With them, low down, but here upon this height  
From them apart, with God. This Mount of God  
Dowerless and bare I quit not till I die;  
And dying, I will leave a Man Elect  
To keep its keys, and pray my prayer, and name  
Dying in turn, his heir, successive line,  
Even till the Day of Doom."

Then heavenward sped  
Victor, God's angel, and the Man of God  
Turned to his offering; and all day he stood  
Offering in heart that Offering Undeiled  
Which Abel offered, and Melchisedek,  
And Abraham, Patriarch of the faithful race,  
In type, and which in fulness of the times  
The Victim-Priest offered on Calvary,  
And, bloodless, offers still in Heaven and Earth,  
Whose impetration makes the whole Church one.  
Thus offering stood the man till eve, and still  
Offered; and as he offered, far in front  
Along the aerial summit once again  
Ran out that beam like fiery pillar prone  
Or sea-path sunset-paved; and by his side  
That angel stood. Then Patrick, turning not  
His eyes in prayer upon the West close held  
Demanded, "From the Maker of all worlds  
What answer bring'st thou?" Victor made reply:  
"Down knelt in Heaven the Angelic Orders Nine,  
And all the Prophets and the Apostles knelt,  
And all the Creatures of the hand of God  
Visible, and invisible, down knelt,  
While thou thy mighty Mass, though altarless,  
Offeredst in spirit, and thine Offering joined;  
And all God's Saints on earth, or roused from sleep  
Or on the wayside pausing, knelt, the cause  
Not knowing; likewise yearned the Souls to God  
In that fire-clime benign that clears from sin;  
And lo! the Lord thy God hath heard thy prayer,  
Since fortitude in prayer—and this thou know'st," -  
Smiling the Bright One spake, "is that which lays

Man's hand upon God's sceptre. That thou sought'st  
 Shall lack not consummation. Many a race  
 Shrivelling in sunshine of its prosperous years,  
 Shall cease from faith, and, shamed though shameless, sink  
 Back to its native clay; but over thine  
 God shall extend the shadow of His Hand,  
 And through the night of centuries teach to her  
 In woe that song which, when the nations wake,  
 Shall sound their glad deliverance: nor alone  
 This nation, from the blind dividual dust  
 Of instincts brute, thoughts driftless, warring wills  
 By thee evoked and shapen by thy hands  
 To God's fair image which confers alone  
 Manhood on nations, shall to God stand true;  
 But nations far in undiscovered seas,  
 Her stately progeny, while ages fleet  
 Shall wear the kingly ermine of her Faith,  
 Fleece uncorrupted of the Immaculate Lamb,  
 For ever: lands remote shall raise to God  
 HER fanes; and eagle-nurturing isles hold fast  
 HER hermit cells: thy nation shall not walk  
 Accordant with the Gentiles of this world,  
 But as a race elect sustain the Crown  
 Or bear the Cross: and when the end is come,  
 When in God's Mount the Twelve great Thrones are set,  
 And round it roll the Rivers Four of fire,  
 And in their circuit meet the Peoples Three  
 Of Heaven, and Earth, and Hell, fulfilled that day  
 Shall be the Saviour's word, what time He stretched  
 Thy crozier-staff forth from His glory-cloud  
 And sware to thee, 'When they that with Me walked  
 Sit with Me on their everlasting thrones  
 Judging the Twelve Tribes of Mine Israel,  
 Thy People thou shalt judge in righteousness.'

Thou therefore kneel, and bless thy Land of Eire."

Then Patrick knelt, and blessed the land, and said,  
 "Praise be to God who hears the sinner's prayer."

EPILOGUE.

THE CONFESSION OF SAINT PATRICK.

ARGUMENT.

Before his death, Saint Patrick makes confession to his  
 brethren concerning his life; of his love for that  
 land which had been his House of Bondage; of his  
 ceaseless prayer in youth: of his sojourn at Tours,

where St. Martin had made abode, at Auxerres with  
St. Germanus, and at Lerins with the Contemplatives:  
of that mystic mountain where the Redeemer Himself  
lodged the Crozier Staff in his hand; of Pope  
Celestine who gave him his Mission; of his Visions; of  
his Labours. His last charge to the sons of Erin is  
that they should walk in Truth; that they should put  
from them the spirit of Revenge; and that they should  
hold fast to the Faith of Christ.

At Saul then, by the inland-spreading sea,  
There where began my labour, comes the end:  
I, blind and witless, willed it otherwise:  
God willed it thus. When prescience came of death  
I said, "My Resurrection place I choose" -  
O fool, for ne'er since boyhood choice was mine  
Save choice to subject will of mine to God -  
"At great Ardmacha." Thitherward I turned;  
But in my pathway, with forbidding hand,  
Victor, God's angel stood. "Not so," he said,  
"For in Ardmacha stands thy principedom fixed,  
Age after age, thy teaching, and thy law,  
But not thy grave. Return thou to that shore  
Thy place of small beginnings, and thereon  
Lessen in body and mind, and grow in spirit:  
Then sing to God thy little hymn and die."

Yea, Lord, my mouth would praise Thee ere I die,  
The Father, and the Son, and Holy Spirit  
Who knittest in His Church the just to Christ:  
Help me, my sons—mine orphans soon to be -  
Help me to praise Him; ye that round me sit  
On those grey rocks; ye that have faithful been,  
Honouring, despite dishonour of my sins,  
His servant: I would praise Him yet once more,  
Though mine the stammerer's voice, or as a child's;  
For it is written, "Stammerers shall speak plain  
Sounding Thy Gospel." "They whom Christ hath sent  
Are Christ's Epistle, borne to ends of earth,  
Writ by His Spirit, and plain to souls elect:"  
Lord, am not I of Thine Apostolate?

Yea, by abjection Thine, by suffering Thine!  
Till I was humbled I was as a stone  
In deep mire sunk. Then, stretched from heaven, Thy hand  
Slid under me in might, and lifted me,  
And fixed me in Thy Temple where Thou wouldst.  
Wonder, ye great ones, wonder, ye the wise!  
On me, the last and least, this charge was laid  
This crown, that I in humbleness and truth

Should walk this nation's Servant till I die.

Therefore, a youth of sixteen years, or less,  
With others of my land by pirates seized  
I stood on Erin's shore. Our bonds were just;  
Our God we had forsaken, and His Law,  
And mocked His priests. Tending a stern man's swine  
I trod those Dalaraida hills that face  
Eastward to Alba. Six long years went by;  
But—sent from God—Memory, and Faith, and Fear  
Moved on my spirit as winds upon the sea,  
And the Spirit of Prayer came down. Full many a day  
Climbing the mountain tops, one hundred times  
I flung upon the storm my cry to God.  
Nor frost, nor rain might harm me, for His love  
Burned in my heart. Through love I made my fast;  
And in my fasts one night I heard this voice,  
"Thou fastest well: soon shalt thou see thy Land."  
Later, once more thus spake it: "Southward fly,  
Thy ship awaits thee." Many a day I fled,  
And found the black ship dropping down the tide,  
And entered with those Gentiles by Thy grace  
Vanquished, though first they spurned me, and was free.  
It was Thy leading, Lord; the Hand was Thine!  
For now when, perils past, I walked secure,  
Kind greetings round me, and the Christian Rite,  
There rose a clamorous yearning in my heart,  
And memories of that land so far, so fair,  
And lost in such a gloom. And through that gloom  
The eyes of little children shone on me,  
So ready to believe! Such children oft  
Ran by me naked in and out the waves,  
Or danced in circles upon Erin's shores,  
Like creatures never fallen! Thought of such  
Passed into thought of others. From my youth  
Both men and women, maidens most, to me  
As children seemed; and O the pity then  
To mark how oft they wept, how seldom knew  
Whence came the wound that galled them! As I walked,  
Each wind that passed me whispered, "Lo, that race  
Which trod thee down! Requite with good their ill!  
Thou know'st their tongue; old man to thee, and youth,  
For counsel came, and lambs would lick thy foot;  
And now the whole land is a sheep astray  
That bleats to God."

Alone one night I mused,  
Burthened with thought of that vocation vast.  
O'er-spent I sank asleep. In visions then,  
Satan my soul plagued with temptation dire.

Methought, beneath a cliff I lay, and lo!  
Thick-legged demons o'er me dragged a rock,  
That falling, seemed a mountain. Near, more near,  
O'er me it blackened. Sudden from my heart  
This thought leaped forth: "Elias! Him invoke!"  
That name invoked, vanished the rock; and I,  
On mountains stood watching the rising sun,  
As stood Elias once on Carmel's crest,  
Gazing on heaven unbarred, and that white cloud,  
A thirsting land's salvation.

Might Divine!

Thou taught'st me thus my weakness; and I vowed  
To seek Thy strength. I turned my face to Tours,  
There where in years gone by Thy soldier-priest  
Martin had ruled, my kinsman in the flesh.  
Dead was the lion; but his lair was warm:  
In it I laid me, and a conquering glow  
Rushed up into my heart. I heard discourse  
Of Martin still, his valour in the Lord,  
His rugged warrior zeal, his passionate love  
For Hilary, his vigils, and his fasts,  
And all his pitiless warfare on the Powers  
Of darkness; and one day, in secrecy,  
With Ninian, missioned then to Alba's shore,  
I peered into his branch-enwoven cell,  
Half-way between the river and the rocks,  
From Tours a mile and more.

So passed eight years  
Till strengthened was my heart by discipline:  
Then spake a priest, "Brother, thy will is good,  
Yet rude thou art of learning as a beast;  
Fare thee to great Germanus of Auxerres,  
Who lightens half the West!" I heard, and went,  
And to that Saint was subject fourteen years.  
He from my mind removed the veil; "Lift up,"  
He said, "thine eyes!" and like a mountain land  
The Queenly Science stood before me plain,  
From rocky buttress up to peak of snow:  
The great Commandments first, Edicts, and Laws  
That bastion up man's life: -then high o'er these  
The forest huge of Doctrine, one, yet many,  
Forth stretching in innumerable aisles,  
At the end of each, the self-same glittering star: -  
Lastly, the Life God-hidden. Day by day,  
With him for guide, that first and second realm  
I tracked, and learned to shun the abyss flower-veiled,  
And scale heaven-threatening heights. This, too, he taught,  
Himself long time a ruler and a prince,

The regimen of States from chaos won  
To order, and to Christ. Prudence I learned,  
And sagemess in the government of men,  
By me sore needed soon. O stately man,  
In all things great, in action and in thought,  
And plain as great! To Britain called, the Saint  
Trode down that great Pelagian Blasphemy,  
Chief portent of the age. But better far  
He loved his cell. There sat he vigil-worn,  
In cowl and dusky tunic hued like earth  
Whence issued man and unto which returns;  
I marvelled at his wrinkled brows, and hands  
Still tracing, enter or depart who would,  
From morn to night his parchments.

There, once more,  
O God, Thine eye was on me, or my hand  
Once more had missed the prize. Temptation now  
Whispered in softness, "Wisdom's home is here:  
Here bide untroubled." Almost I had fallen;  
But, by my side, in visions of the night,  
God's angel, Victor, stood as one that hastes,  
On travel sped. Unnumbered missives lay  
Clasped in his hands. One stretched he forth, inscribed  
"The wail of Erin's Children." As I read  
The cry of babes, from Erin's western coast  
And Fochlut's forest, and the wintry sea,  
Shrilled o'er me, clamouring, "Holy youth, return!  
Walk then among us!" I could read no more.

Thenceforth rose up renewed mine old desire:  
My kinsfolk mocked me. "What! past woes too scant!  
Slave of four masters, and the best a churl!  
Thy Gospel they will trample under foot,  
And rend thee! Late to them Palladius preached:  
They drave him as a leper from their shores."  
I stood in agony of staggering mind  
And warring wills. Then, lo! at dead of night  
I heard a mystic voice, till then unheard,  
I knew not if within me or close by  
That swelled in passionate pleading; nor the words  
Grasped I, so great they seemed and wonderful,  
Till sank that tempest to a whisper:—"He  
Who died for thee is He that in thee groans."  
Then fell, methought, scales from mine inner eyes:  
Then saw I—terrible that sight, yet sweet—  
Within me saw a Man that in me prayed  
With groans unutterable. That Man was girt  
For mission far. My heart recalled that word,  
"The Spirit helpeth our infirmities;

That which we lack we know not, but the Spirit  
 Himself for us doth intercession make  
 With groanings which may never be revealed."  
 That hour my vow was vowed; and he approved,  
 My master and my guide. "But go," he said,  
 "First to that island in the Tyrrhene Sea,  
 Where live the high Contemplatives to God:  
 There learn perfection; there that Inner Life  
 Win thou, God's strength amid the world's loud storm:  
 Nor fear lest God should frown on such delay,  
 For Heavenly Wisdom is compassionate:  
 Slowly before man's weakness moves it on;  
 Softly: so moved of old the Wise Men's Star,  
 Which curbed its lightning ardours and forbore  
 Honouring the pensive tread of hoary Eld,  
 Honouring the burthened slave, the camel line  
 Long-linked, with level head and foot that fell  
 As though in sleep, printing the silent sands."  
 Thus, smiling, spake Germanus, large in lore.

So in that island-Eden I sojourned,  
 Lerins, and saw where Vincent lived, and his,  
 Life fountained from on high. That life was Love;  
 For all their mighty knowledge food became  
 Of Love Divine, and took, by Love absorbed,  
 Shape from his flame-like body. Hard their beds;  
 Ceaseless their prayers. They tilled a sterile soil;  
 Beneath their hands it blossomed like the rose:  
 O'er thymy hollows blew the nectared airs;  
 Blue ocean flashed through olives. They had fled  
 From praise of men; yet cities far away  
 Rapt those meek saints to fill the bishop's throne.  
 I saw the light of God on faces calm  
 That blended with man's meditative might  
 Simplicity of childhood, and, with both  
 The sweetness of that flower-like sex which wears  
 Through love's Obedience twofold crowns of Love.  
 O blissful time! In that bright island bloomed  
 The third high region on the Hills of God,  
 Above the rock, above the wood, the cloud: -  
 There laughs the luminous air, there bursts anew  
 Spring bud in summer on suspended lawns;  
 There the bell tinkles while once more the lamb  
 Trips by the sun-fed runnel: there green vales  
 Lie lost in purple heavens.

Transfigured Life!  
 This was thy glory, that, without a sigh,  
 Who loved thee yet could leave thee! Thus it fell:  
 One morning I was on the sea, and lo!

An isle to Lerins near, but fairer yet,  
 Till then unseen! A grassy vale sea-lulled  
 Wound inward, breathing balm, with fruited trees,  
 And stream through lilies gliding. By a door  
 There stood a man in prime, and others sat  
 Not far, some grey; and one, a weed of years,  
 Lay like a withered wreath. An old man spake:  
 "See what thou seest, and scan the mystery well!  
 The man who stands so stately in his prime  
 Is of this company the eldest born.  
 The Saviour in His earthly sojourn, Risen,  
 Perchance, or ere His Passion, who can tell,  
 Stood up at this man's door; and this man rose,  
 And let Him in, and made for Him a feast;  
 And Jesus said, 'Tarry, till I return.'  
 Moreover, others are there on this isle,  
 Both men and maids, who saw the Son of Man,  
 And took Him in, and shine in endless youth;  
 But we, the rest, in course of nature fade,  
 For we believe, yet saw not God, nor touched."  
 Then spake I, "Here till death my home I make,  
 Where Jesus trod." And answered he in prime,  
 "Not so; the Master hath for thee thy task.

## **Parting, thus spake He: 'Here for Mine Elect**

Abide thou. Bid him bear this crozier staff;  
 My blessing rests thereon: the same shall drive  
 The foes of God before him." Answer thus  
 I made, "That crozier staff I will not touch  
 Until I take it from that nail-pierced Hand."  
 From these I turned, and clomb a mountain high,  
 Hermon by name; and there was this, my God,  
 In visions of the Lord, or in the flesh? -  
 I spake with Him, the Lord of Life, Who died;  
 He from the glory stretched the Hand nail-pierced,  
 And placed in mine that crozier staff, and said:  
 "Upon that day when they that with Me walked  
 Sit with Me on their everlasting Thrones,  
 Judging the Twelve Tribes of Mine Israel,  
 Thy People thou shalt judge in righteousness."

Forthwith to Rome I fled; there knelt I down  
 Above the bones of Peter and of Paul,  
 And saw the mitred embassies from far,  
 And saw Celestine with his head high held

As though it bore the Blessed Sacrament;  
 Chief Shepherd of the Saviour's flock on earth.  
 Tall was the man, and swift; white-haired; with eye  
 Starlike and voice a trumpet clear that pealed  
 God's Benediction o'er the city and globe;  
 Yea, and when'er his palm he lifted, still  
 Blessing before it ran. Upon my head  
 He laid both hands, and "Win," he said, "to Christ  
 One realm the more!" Moreover, to my charge  
 Relics he gave, unnumbered, without price;  
 And when those relics lost had been, and found,  
 And at his feet I wept, he chided not;  
 But, smiling, said, "Thy glorious task fulfilled,  
 House them in thy new country's stateliest church  
 By cresset girt of ever-burning lamps,  
 And never-ceasing anthems."

Northward then  
 Returned I, missioned. Yet once more, but once,  
 That old temptation proved me. When they sat,  
 The Elders, making inquest of my life,  
 Sudden a certain brother rose, and spake,  
 "Shall this man be a Bishop, who hath sinned?"  
 My dearest friend was he. To him alone  
 One time had I divulged a sin by me  
 Through ignorance wrought when fifteen years of age;  
 And after thirty years, behold, once more,  
 That sin had found me out! He knew my mission:  
 When in mine absence slander sought my name,  
 Mine honour he had cleared. Yet now—yet now -  
 That hour the iron passed into my soul:  
 Yea, well nigh all was lost. I wept, "Not one,  
 No heart of man there is that knows my heart,  
 Or in its anguish shares."

Yet, O my God!  
 I blame him not: from Thee that penance came:  
 Not for man's love should Thine Apostle strive,  
 Thyself alone his great and sole reward.  
 Thou laid'st that hour a fiery hand of love  
 Upon a faithless heart; and it survived.

At dead of night a Vision gave me peace.  
 Slowly from out the breast of darkness shone  
 Strange characters, a writing unrevealed:  
 And slowly thence and infinitely sad,  
 A Voice: "Ill-pleased, this day have we beheld  
 The face of the Elect without a name."  
 It said not, "Thou hast grieved," but "We have grieved;"  
 With import plain, "O thou of little faith!"

Am I not nearer to thee than thy friends?  
Am I not inlier with thee than thyself?"  
Then I remembered, "He that touches you  
Doth touch the very apple of mine eye."  
Serene I slept. At morn I rose and ran  
Down to the shore, and found a boat, and sailed.

That hour true life's beginning was, O Lord,  
Because the work Thou gav'st into my hands  
Prospered between them. Yea, and from the work  
The Power forth issued. Strength in me was none,  
Nor insight, till the occasion: then Thy sword  
Flamed in my grasp, and beams were in mine eyes  
That showed the way before me, and nought else.  
Thou mad'st me know Thy Will. As taper's light  
Veers with a wind man feels not, o'er my heart  
Hovered thenceforth some Pentecostal flame  
That bent before that Will. Thy Truth, not mine,  
Lightened this People's mind; Thy Love inflamed  
Their hearts; Thy Hope upbore them as on wings.  
Valiant that race, and simple, and to them  
Not hard the godlike venture of belief:  
Conscience was theirs: tortuous too oft in life  
Their thoughts, when passionate most, then most were true,  
Heart-true. With naked hand firmly they clasped  
The naked Truth: in them Belief was Act.  
A tribe from Thy far East they called themselves:  
Their clans were Patriarch households, rude through war:  
Old Pagan Rome had known them not; their Isle  
Virgin to Christ had come. Oh how unlike  
Her sons to those old Roman Senators,  
Scorn of Germanus oft, who breathed the air  
Fouled by dead Faiths successively blown out,  
Or Grecian sophist with his world of words,  
That, knowing all, knew nothing! Praise to Thee,  
Lord of the night-time as the day, Who keep'st  
Reserved in blind barbaric innocence,  
Pure breed, when boastful lights corrupt the wise,  
With healthier fruit to bless a later age.

I to that people all things made myself  
For Christ's sake, building still that good they lacked  
On good already theirs. In courts of kings  
I stood: before mine eye their eye went down,  
For Thou wert with me. Gentle with the meek,  
I suffered not the proud to mock my face:  
Thus by the anchors twain of Love and Fear,  
Since Love, not perfected, gains strength from Fear,  
I bound to thee This nation. Parables  
I spake in; parables in act I wrought

Because the people's mind was in the sense.  
 At Imbher Dea they scoffed Thy word: I raised  
 Thy staff, and smote with barrenness that flood:  
 Then learned they that the world was Thine, not ruled  
 By Sun or Moon, their famed "God-Elements:"  
 Yea, like Thy Fig-tree cursed, that river banned  
 Witnessed Thy Love's stern pureness. From the grass  
 The little three-leaved herb, I stooped and plucked,  
 And preached the Trinity. Thy Staff I raised,  
 And bade—not ravening beast—but reptiles foul  
 Flee to the abyss like that blind herd of old;  
 Then spake I: "Be not babes, but understand:  
 Thus in your spirit lift the Cross of Christ:  
 Banish base lusts; so God shall with you walk  
 As once with man in Eden." With like aim  
 Convents I reared for holy maids, then sought  
 The marriage feast, and cried, "If God thus draws  
 Close to Himself those virgin hearts, and yet  
 Blesses the bridal troth, and infant's font,  
 How white a thing should be the Christian home!"  
 Marvelling, they learned what heritage their God  
 Possessed in them! how wide a realm, how fair.

Lord, save in one thing only, I was weak -  
 I loved this people with a mother's love,  
 For their sake sanctified my spirit to thee  
 In vigil, fast, and meditation long,  
 On mountain and on moor. Thus, Lord, I wrought,  
 Trusting that so Thy lineaments divine,  
 Deeplier upon my spirit graved, might pass  
 Thence on that hidden burthen which my heart  
 Still from its substance feeding, with great pangs  
 Strove to bring forth to Thee. O loyal race!  
 Me too they loved. They waited me all night  
 On lonely roads; and, as I preached, the day  
 To those high listeners seemed a little hour.  
 Have I not seen ten thousand brows at once  
 Flash in the broad light of some Truth new risen,  
 And felt like him, that Saint who cried, flame-girt,  
 "At last do I begin to be a Christian?"  
 Have I not seen old foes embrace? Seen him,  
 That white-haired man who dashed him on the ground,  
 Crying aloud, "My buried son, forgive!  
 Thy sire hath touched the hand that shed thy blood?"  
 Fierce chiefs knelt down in penance! Lord! how oft  
 Shook I their tear-drop sparkles from my gown!  
 'Twas the forgiveness taught them all the debt,  
 Great-hearted penitents! How many a youth  
 Contemned the praise of men! How many a maid -  
 O not in narrowness, but Love's sweet pride

And love-born shyness—jealous for a mate  
 Himself not jealous—spurned terrestrial love,  
 Glorifying in heavenly Love's fair oneness! Race  
 High-dowered! God's Truth seemed some remembered thing  
 To them; God's Kingdom smiled, their native haunt  
 Prophesied then their daughters and their sons:  
 Each man before the face of each upraised  
 His hand on high, and said, "The Lord hath risen!"  
 Then, like a stream from ice released, forth fled  
 And wafted far the tidings, flung them wide,  
 Shouted them loud from rocky ridge o'er bands  
 Marching far down to war! The sower sowed  
 With happier hope; the reaper bending sang,  
 "Thus shall God's Angels reap the field of God  
 When we are ripe for heaven." Lovers new-wed  
 Drank of that water changed to wine, thenceforth  
 Breathing on earth heaven's sweetness. Unto such  
 More late, whate'er of brightness time or will  
 Infirm had dimmed, shone back from infant brows  
 By baptism lit. Each age its garland found:  
 Fair shone on trustful childhood faith divine:  
 Eld, once a weight of wrinkles now upsoared  
 In venerable lordship of white hairs,  
 Seer-like and sage. Healed was a nation's wound:  
 All men believed who willed not disbelief;  
 And sat in that oppugnancy steel-mailed:  
 They cried, "Before thy priests our bards shall bow,  
 And all our clans put on thy great Clan Christ!"

For your sake, O my brethren, and my sons  
 These things have I recorded. Something I wrought:  
 Strive ye in loftier labours; strive, and win:  
 Your victory shall be mine: my crown are ye.  
 My part is ended now. I lived for Truth:  
 I to this people gave that truth I knew;  
 My witnesses ye are I grudged it not:  
 Freely did I receive, freely I gave;  
 Baptising, or confirming, or ordaining,  
 I sold not things divine. Of mine own store  
 Ofttimes the hire of fifteen men I paid  
 For guard where bandits lurked. When prince or chief  
 Laid on God's altar ring, or torque, or gold,  
 I sent them back. Too fortunate, too beloved,  
 I said, "Can he Apostle be who bears  
 Such scanty marks of Christ's Apostolate,  
 Hunger, and thirst, and scorn of men?" For this,  
 Those pains they spared I spared not to myself,  
 The body's daily death. I make not boast:  
 What boast have I? If God His servant raised,  
 He knoweth—not ye—how oft I fell; how low;

How oft in faithless longings yearned my heart  
For faces of His Saints in mine own land,  
Remembered fields far off. This, too, He knoweth,  
How perilous is the path of great attempts,  
How oft pride meets us on the storm-vexed height,  
Pride, or some sting its scourge. My hope is He:  
His hand, my help so long, will loose me never:  
And, thanks to God, the sheltering grave is near.

How still this eve! The morn was racked with storm:  
'Tis past; the skylark sings; the tide at flood  
Sighs a soft joy: alone those lines of weed  
Report the wrath foregone. Yon watery plain  
Far shines, a mingled sea of glass and fire,  
Even as that Beatific Sea outspread  
Before the Throne of God. 'Tis Paschal Tide; -  
O sorrowful, O blissful Paschal Tide!  
Fain would I die on Holy Saturday;  
For then, as now, the storm is past—the woe;  
And, somewhere 'mid the shades of Olivet  
Lies sealed the sacred cave of that Repose  
Watched by the Holy Women. Earth, that sing'st,  
Since first He made thee, thy Creator's praise,  
Sing, sing, thy Saviour's! Myriad-minded sea,  
How that bright secret thrills thy rippling lips  
Which shake, yet speak not! Thou that mad'st the worlds,  
Man, too, Thou mad'st; within Thy Hands the life  
Of each was shapen, and new-wov'n ran out,  
New-willed each moment. What makes up that life?  
Love infinite, and nothing else save love!  
Help ere need came, deliverance ere defeat;  
At every step an angel to sustain us,  
An angel to retrieve! My years are gone:  
Sweet were they with a sweetness felt but half  
Till now;—not half discerned. Those blessed years  
I would re-live, deferring thus so long  
The Vision of Thy Face, if thus with gaze  
Cast backward I might SEE that guiding hand  
Step after step, and kiss it.

Happy isle!  
Be true; for God hath graved on thee His Name:  
God, with a wondrous ring, hath wedded thee;  
God on a throne divine hath 'stablished thee: -  
Light of a darkling world! Lamp of the North!  
My race, my realm, my great inheritance,  
To lesser nations leave inferior crowns;  
Speak ye the thing that is; be just, be kind;  
Live ye God's Truth, and in its strength be free!

This day to Him, the Faithful and the True,  
 For Whom I toiled, my spirit I commend.  
 That which I am, He knoweth: I know not now:  
 But I shall know ere long. If I have loved Him  
 I seek but this for guerdon of my love  
 With holier love to love Him to the end:  
 If I have vanquished others to His love  
 Would God that this might be their meed and mine  
 In witness for His love to pour our blood  
 A glad stream forth, though vultures or wild beasts  
 Rent our unburied bones! Thou setting sun,  
 That sink'st to rise, that time shall come at last  
 When in thy splendours thou shalt rise no more;  
 And, darkening with the darkening of thy face,  
 Who worshipped thee with thee shall cease; but those  
 Who worshipped Christ shall shine with Christ abroad,  
 Eternal beam, and Sun of Righteousness,  
 In endless glory. For His sake alone  
 I, bondsman in this land, re-sought this land.  
 All ye who name my name in later times,  
 Say to this People, since vindictive rage  
 Tempts them too often, that their Patriarch gave  
 Pattern of pardon ere in words he preached  
 That God who pardons. Wrongs if they endure  
 In after years, with fire of pardoning love  
 Sin-slaying, bid them crown the head that erred:  
 For bread denied let them give Sacraments,  
 For darkness light, and for the House of Bondage  
 The glorious freedom of the sons of God:  
 This is my last Confession ere I die.

#### NOTES.

10a Cotton MSS., Nero, E.7; Codex Salisburiensis; and a MS. in the Monastery of St. Vaast.

10b The Book of Armagh, preserved at Trinity College, Dublin, contains a Life of St. Patrick, with his writings, and consists in chief part of a description of all the books of the New Testament, including the Epistle of Paul to the Laodiceans. Traces found here and there of the name of the copyist and of the archbishop for whom the copy was made, fix its date almost to a year as 807 or 811-812.

77 The Isle of Man.

101 Now Limerick.

111 Foynes.

116 The Giant's Causeway.

