

**THE FORAY OF QUEEN
MEAVE, AND
OTHER LEGENDS OF
IRELAND'S HEROIC AGE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649586103

The Foray of Queen Meave, and Other Legends of Ireland's Heroic Age by Aubrey de Vere

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

AUBREY DE VERE

**THE FORAY OF QUEEN
MEAVE, AND
OTHER LEGENDS OF
IRELAND'S HEROIC AGE**

LEGENDS
OF
IRELAND'S HEROIC AGE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

Alexander the Great : a Dramatic Poem. Small crown 8vo. cloth, price 5s.

The Infant Bridal, and other Poems. A New and enlarged Edition. Fcp. 8vo. cloth, price 7s. 6d. (*A selection from the Author's Poems.*)

The Legends of St. Patrick, and other Poems. Small crown 8vo. cloth, price 5s.

St. Thomas of Canterbury : a Dramatic Poem. Large fcp. 8vo. cloth, price 5s.

Legends of the Saxon Saints. Small crown 8vo. cloth, price 6s.

Antar and Zara : an Eastern Romance. INISFAIL, and other Poems Meditative and Lyrical. Fcp. 8vo. price 6s.

The Fall of Rora, the Search after Proserpine, and other Poems Meditative and Lyrical. Fcp. 8vo. price 6s.

KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, & Co., 1 Paternoster Square.

May Carols. Third Edition, enlarged.

BURNS & OATES.

BY THE LATE SIR AUBREY DE VERE, BART.

Mary Tudor : an Historical Drama.

Julian the Apostate, and the Duke of Mercia.

A Song of Faith, Devout Exercises and Sonnets.

B. M. PICTERING.

THE FORAY
OF
QUEEN MEAVE

AND OTHER

LEGENDS OF IRELAND'S HEROIC AGE

BY

AUBREY DE VERE



LONDON

KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, & CO., 1 PATERNOSTER SQUARE

1882

280. 0. 843.

(The rights of translation and of reproduction are reserved)

P R E F A C E.

THE 'Foray of Queen Meave,' the longest of the following poems, is founded on and in substance represents the far-famed 'Tain bo Cuailgné,' a tale regarded by many Irish scholars as the great Irish epic of ancient times, by others as a part only of some larger epic of which numerous portions remain, but which unhappily found no Pisistratus to combine them into a whole. The lamented Professor Eugene O'Curry has expressed his opinion that 'in the time of Senchan and St. Columba' (that is in the sixth century) 'it was generally believed that Fergus was the original writer of the tale.'¹ 'On this supposition it must have existed in a rudimental form a little before the Christian Era. It was lost for several centuries, but recovered in the sixth, when, according to the legend recorded by Professor O'Curry, St. Kieran wrote down the tale "in a book which he had made from the hide of

¹ *Lectures on the MS. Materials of Ancient Irish History*, p. 41.

his pet cow—a book called the *Leabhar na h-Uidré*.¹ Elsewhere that great authority states that a large portion of this work is preserved in a copy 'written at the same Clonmacnoise by a famous scribe named Maelmire, who was killed there in 1106.² That copy of St. Kieran's version is still extant in the Royal Irish Academy, as well as a copy of a later version included in the 'Book of Leinster,' a collection compiled about 1150. Translations of both these versions have been made by Professor O'Looney, and to both I have had access through his kindness. These two versions differ much from each other, the earlier being the simpler and stronger, while the later is the richer in detail. To the sixth century belong not a few Irish works of unquestioned authenticity, such as the elegy written by Dallan Forgaill on the death of St. Columba, A.D. 592, found also in the *Leabhar na h-Uidré*. To an earlier period, the fifth century, belongs the tract entitled the 'Battle of Magh Tuireadh,' or Moytura. Several poems are confidently referred to Dubthach, chief Bard of King Laeghaire, St. Patrick's earliest convert at the Royal Court; and to the same century belongs the *Senchas Mor*, or Compilation of Laws. The 'Tripartite Life of St. Patrick'

¹ *Lectures on the MS. Materials of Ancient Irish History*, p. 30.

² *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish*, vol. iii. p. 403.

is attributed by Colgan and others to the sixth century, because it mentions as still living many persons known to have died before the close of that age. Books are recorded as having been in the hands of the Druids before St. Patrick's time, or soon after, such as the 'Cuilmenn,' the 'Sailtair of Tara,' attributed to the third century, the 'Book of St. Mochta,' one of St. Patrick's early disciples, the 'Book of Cuana,' &c. There is consequently nothing to surprise us in the circumstance that the 'Tain bo Cuailgné' belongs to a period so early. The following poem, written of course in the character of an old Irish bard, is not a translation except as regards some passages which occur chiefly in Fragment III. It is not in the form of translation that an ancient Irish tale of any considerable length admits of being rendered in poetry. What is needed is to select from the original such portions as are at once the most essential to the story, and the most characteristic, reproducing them in a condensed form, and taking care that the necessary additions bring out the idea, and contain nothing that is not in the spirit, of the original.

An attempt to introduce to modern readers a work so ancient, and connected with allusions so unfamiliar, seems to call for some remarks on the character of that work, and on the age which produced it. The 'Tain bo