

JEREMIAH CURTIN.

Jeremiah Curtin, the world's most famous linguist of the last century, was born at Milwaukee, U.S.A., in the year 1838, a year or two after his parents had emigrated from the County Clare. With the traditions of the MacCurtins, hereditary poets to the O'Briens, and particularly of Andrew and Aodh Buidhe, behind him, it is no wonder that Jeremiah's scholarship earned for him the encomium of Theodore Roosevelt, "that his death had robbed America of one of her two or three foremost scholars."

He was educated at Carroll College and at Harvard University, where he startled his tutors by learning enough Latin and Greek in eight weeks to pass his final examinations. He graduated in 1863 and set out with the avowed object of learning all the Aryan languages together with their philology, mythology and folklore. Not only did he achieve his object, but, later in life, he also learned half the languages of Asia, Turkish, Arabic, Persian, Chinese, Japanese, and a host of other little known dialects. He was as much at home with the peasants of Poland, the gypsies of Bohemia, or the Finns and Lapps as with the Irish-speaking natives of the Dingle Peninsula or the Redskins of North America. What an achievement for one man!

In 1864, he was appointed to the American Embassy in Russia and while there devoted his spare time to the study of Russian and Polish literature and mythology. He translated many of the classics of the latter language, including the great writer, Sienkiewitz's *Quo Vadis?* into English.

In 1887 he came to Ireland and, having made a collection of folk-tales from Dingle to Donegal, he published twenty of them in 1890 under the title *Myths and Folklore of Ireland*. This was followed in 1894 by *Hero Tales of Ireland*, and later by *Tales of the Famine and of the Ghost World, collected from oral traditions in South-West Munster*. He also collected and published folk tales and legends from Russia and the Slav countries, North America, Mexico and South America.

Having gained a knowledge of most of the languages of Asia, Curtin set to work on his magnum opus, a history of the famous Mongolian Empire which ruled half the world from the ninth to the sixteenth century. He completed his task in two works:—*The Mongols, a History*, published in 1908, and *The Mongols in Russia*.

In a foreword to the former, published after the author's death in 1906, Theodore Roosevelt wrote: "The Mongol Empire was at the time so prodigious a phenomenon, fraught with such dire and vast possibilities, that a full knowledge of the history

of the Mongol people is imperatively necessary to all who would understand the development of Asia and Eastern Europe. No other writer of English was so well fitted to tell this history as Jeremiah Curtin."

SIR AUBREY DE VERE.

Sir Aubrey de Vere, poet and dramatist, only child of Sir Vere Hunt, Bart., by his wife, Eleanor Pery, daughter of Lord Glentworth, the Protestant Bishop of Limerick, was born at Curragh Chase on 28th August, 1788. His real name was Aubrey de Vere Hunt, but after he had succeeded to the baronetcy on the death of his father in 1818, he dropped the surname Hunt in favour of De Vere, in order to show his descent from the De Veres of Oxford.

De Vere was educated first by private tuition at home and at Ambleside, in the lake district, and later at Harrow, where he was a contemporary of Byron. On his return to Ireland he made a mild attempt to enter politics, and for a time was Sheriff of the County Limerick, but, on being defeated in an attempt to represent the county in Parliament, he desisted and devoted his life to travel and poetry, as well as to the care of his large estates at Curragh Chase and Glangoole, County Tipperary. He rebuilt the family house at the former place and made it one of the county's glories by employing John Flaxman, the celebrated sculptor, to work a frieze in the main hall.

During his lifetime the poet published *Julian The Apostate : A Dramatic Poem*, 1822 ; *The Duke of Mercia : An Historical Drama, Etc.*, 1823, and *The Song of Faith, Etc.*, 1842. He was, like his son, Aubrey Thomas, a great admirer of William Wordsworth, whom he had met in the lake district of England, and the latter described De Vere's sonnets as "the most perfect of our age."

In the year 1844 De Vere was confined to bed with a painful disease and while here composed his greatest work, *Mary Tudor : An Historical Drama*. He completed it in September of the same year and Cardinal Manning wrote : "Perhaps my feeling may be tinged by a sympathy, but Gladstone's is not, and we agree in considering *Mary Tudor* the finest drama since Shakespeare's time."

He recovered in 1845 and paid a visit to England and France in the company of his beloved wife and son, Aubrey, but the change did not improve his health, and he died on the 5th July, 1846. Dr. John Jebb, the Protestant Bishop, wrote on him an epitaph that cannot be bettered—"How deeply subservient he made his highly-gifted intellect to the best purposes of morality and Christianity; and this pious inclination increased with his years. His surely was a happy life in the best sense of the word"