

surely reminded that "the mills of God grind slow but exceeding small".

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* THE DE VERES OF CURRAGHCHASE *

Related by marriage to the Spring Rice family, the De Veres were blessed with an unique literary ability. Their surname was originally Hunt but it was always a great source of pride to them that they were descended from the distinguished Norman family, De Vere, and so at the beginning of the last century, John Hunt took the surname De Vere for himself and his descendants.

Curraghchase remained De Vere property until recently when it was purchased by the Land Commission. The grounds of Curraghchase are really magnificent and since they are now open to the public, well worth a visit. Indeed, should you go to Curraghchase, you might reflect that these same grounds were hallowed places during the Penal Days where refuge was always granted to Catholic priests at great peril to the owners and where a Bishop came at least once to ordain priests and confirm the faithful. The splendid heroism and generosity of the De Vere family during this difficult period of Irish history should not be forgotten.

John Hunt De Vere's son Aubrey was both poet and scholar. Some of his poems were published in the Dublin Penny Journal 1832-1834 appearing with some poems translated from German by another young poet of the time, writing under the name 'Clarence' - James Clarence Mangan. His life story is a sad one, but out of the sadness came poems of great and tender beauty

O my Dark Rosaleen,
Do not sigh, do not weep!
The priests are on the ocean green,
They march along the deep.
There's wine from the royal Pope
Upon the ocean green;
And Spanish ale shall give you hope
My Dark Rosaleen,
My own Rosaleen.
Shall glad your heart, shall give you hope,
Shall give you health, and help, and hope,
My Dark Rosaleen.

His poetry brought fame but not prosperity to James Clarence Mangan. His father came from Shanagolden and I'm happy to say some of his relatives still reside in the parish.

Aubrey De Vere had two sons, Stephen and Aubrey Thomas. Stephen, the elder son, inherited the family property and in the true De Vere vein was an excellent landlord. During the Famine, the two brothers did all in their power to alleviate the suffering of the poor in the district. Stephen was so concerned with the plight of those forced to emigrate that he himself made the journey in one of the infamous coffin ships and saw for himself

the squalid conditions on board and the filthy unsanitary over-crowded lodgings that awaited the majority of the unfortunate emigrants on reaching their Promised Land. When he returned, he wrote to The Times exposing the horrors he had witnessed:

"Hundreds of poor people, men, women and children of all ages huddled together without light, without air, wallowing in filth and breathing a fetid atmosphere, sick in body, dispirited in heart, the fevered patients lying beside the sound, in sleeping places so narrow as almost to deny them a change of position".

He was aided in his campaign by Charlotte Grace O'Brien, daughter of William Smith O'Brien of Cahermoyle. They were two of the very few voices raised at the time to protest the shameful exploitation by the coffin-ship owners of a beaten and demoralised people; thousands of whom left starvation and pestilence behind them and found in the New World only a grave.

It was the same Stephen de Vere who was the main contributor towards the building of the Catholic Church in Foynes, which has recently been extended, and the monument in front of Aras Ide was erected in his honour.

Though Stephen was a man of some literary distinction, who translated the Odes of Horace into English, it was his younger brother Aubrey who was the more widely acclaimed and considered by many to be the best Anglo-Irish poet of his time. He was deeply interested in Irish history and this is reflected in poems like 'King Malachy', 'The Faithful Norman', 'The Dirge of Athunree', 'The March to Kinsale' and 'A Ballad of Athlone'. One cannot read his poetry without sensing the stirring patriotism -

"'Twas a holy time when the Kings, long foemen,
Fought side by side to uplift the serf;
Never triumphed in old time Greek or Roman
As Brian and Malachy at Clontarf".

referring to O'Neill and O'Donnell

"Lo, these are they that year by year
Rolled back the tide of England's war ;
Rejoice Kinsale! thy help is near !
That wondrous winter march is o'er.
And thus they said, "Tomorrow morn
Our eyes shall rest upon the foe.
Roll on, swift night, in silence borne,
And blow, thou breeze of sunrise, blow".

Aubrey de Vere was converted to Catholicism and when Cardinal Newman became Chancellor of University College, Dublin, one of the first Professors he appointed was none other than Aubrey de Vere. Aubrey lived to a great age and died in 1902. His memoirs make fascinating reading and in them we find frequent references to another gifted local poet, Gerald Griffin, who often visited Curraghchase to discuss literary matters with Aubrey.

I have noted for some years now that it has become fashionable for publishers of English text-books for Primary schools to devote almost their entire anthology of poems to little known and, I respectfully submit, insignificant works. While there is, of course, some place for such modern poetry, surely it is far more important to maintain a literary balance and the works of our Anglo-Irish and, yes, also famous English poets, should be included in children's text-books. Some of Aubrey de Vere's, James Clarence Mangan's or Gerald Griffin's poetry, for instance, would not go amiss in any English text-book and much of the poetic material one presently finds could be relegated to the obscurity from whence it came.