

## CHAPTER XI

### St. Patrick

**T**HERE is one man to whom more than any other all this literary and artistic development among the Irish in those early centuries of the Middle Ages when other nations were decadent, can be traced. This is the man since known in history as St. Patrick. The Irish for all the dozen centuries ever since his death have celebrated his fame and lifted up his name in heartiest acclaim as the years went round and brought the recurring 17th of March, the birthday of their patron saint. Theirs is no merely conventional homage of a grateful people intent on enthusiastically praising their national patron saint with some expectation that the very sublimity of their exaltation of him will reflect back some glory on themselves. Their tendency to hero worship has not carried them beyond all the bounds of reality as the people of other nations often think but has been founded on the firm basis of fact in the historical records that we have of St. Patrick's life. Its significance not only for the Irish themselves but also for the people of many other countries through the Irish missionary sons of St. Patrick's spirit who proved messengers of good tidings throughout western Europe, amply justifies all their enthusiastic homage.