AN IRISH EPIC.

"Cours de Littérature celtique." Par M. H. d'Arbois de Jubainville. Tome V.—I. Epopée Celtique en Irlande. (Paris: Ernest Thorin.)

We welcome in this work the fifth instalment of M. d'Arbois de Jubainville's series of Celtic literature—to which must be added his extra volume, the first of which, by the way, is to the student, namely, his "Essai d'un Catalogue de la Littérature épique de l'Irlande," which is a detailed and arranged account of the fragments still extant, and the names of such lost pieces as have come down to us, the "Essai" being regarded as the broken epic of the Irish people.

The first volume, which appeared nine years ago, was introductory. It treated of the Celtic inhabitants of Gaul, of the druid classes among those who spoke them, the Bardic, the Druidic, and the Filé—the latter the professional Irish poet. The second volume (1884) dealt with the sources of Irish mythology, which the author compared with the Zend-Avesta and the Vedas and those of Greece in particular, dividing them into three cycles: first, the mythologic cycle, comprising the gods of Danu and Conchobar Connor, and Cuculainn; third, the second epic cycle, or that known as the "Ossianic." The third and fourth volumes (1889) were taken up by a scholarly translation of the Welsh "Mabinogion" (M. J. Loth. The fifth and most recent (1892) is occupied by translations into French—by the editor himself and his colleagues, M. G. Dottin, who has recently been studying modern Irish in Galway—of fragments of the epic which have been edited by the professors Kuno Meyer and Windisch and Dr. Whitley Stokes, but several of which have never even yet appeared in an English version.

There would be, indeed, work in plenty for Sir Gavan Duffy's proposed Irish Publishing Society, to which we wish every success, if it could do, it would only devote itself to the translation and publication of the most valuable portions of these unattractive rough drawings made on the unapproached, and to many of us unapproachable. There is a story told by O'Curry of Thomas Moore, shortly after the completion of his "History of Ireland," happening to be with his friend Petrie in his library at Kilmainham Irish Academy, he was shown the formidable array of time-worn manuscripts, which he could not similarly plead ignorance. The fact is patent that at the close of the last century there were actually so-called learned men, in England and Ireland alike, who were promising to discuss and to publish volumes of remote antiquity not one word of which they could read. Moreover, in the earlier years of the present century, Irish scholars were only with a knowledge of modern Irish, were making laudable attempts to translate their ancient manuscripts, but were stopped by mere guesswork. They lacked the root-knowledge of the language, which has since been supplied by the labours of Zeuss, of Ebel, of Thurneysen, of Windisch, of Zimmer, of Ascoli, of Kuno Meyer, and last, but not least, of the greatest native Goidelist whom Ireland has yet produced, Dr. Whitley Stokes.

We will also leave out of the consideration of whether our author is justified in separating what he calls the "mythological epic" from the rest of the Irish epic, and will merely pass it by with the remark that to us the two portions appear to be intrinsically bound up together, and definitely given to the "invasion" of Parthalan, Nemed, the Fenbolg, the Tuatha De Danann, and the rest being merely the result of the euhemeristic tendencies of those who, in the Middle Ages, had reduced mythology to place in chronological order the broken fragments ready to their hand. Thus, when, with regard to the Fenian epic, he says (vol. ii., p. 9) that they are the gods of Death and Night, transformed by Christian euhemerism into pirates, who ravaged Ireland, we are inclined to invert the proposition, and to say that the Irish, having preserved the memory of the long lines of Scandinavian sea-rovers, who were called Fomorians—that is to say, "outlaws—in people," just as we say "over-the-sea," in the sense of beyond it—came, as time went on, and as history fell into the mists of mythos, to associate them with giants, and demons, and death-gods, who were opposed to bright, good deities of light and life.

The work before us is naturally full of Cuculainn. He is not the centre of the epic, for that is the "Bull-Feast of Cooley," but, like Hercules, whose attributes he combines with those of Apollo, he is the champion of his country. Indeed, he is a deity there can be no mistake. He is never a young man, like Finn MacCumhail. The author of the glossary ascribed to Cormac, a composition of the ninth century, calls him "a noble god." Nothing in Ireland was divine also, as was his foster-father, Sualtam. Dedivine, his mother, was a goddess. As with Hercules, his birth was the daughter of a god of darkness, Emer, a Fomorian's child. He is the Apollo, the sun-god, of the Celtic Gaelic-speaking tribes. Like Apollo, he was a beardless youth—the Magnus, the boy-god of the Britons, who, when they left Rome, set into the Irish form, Magonus, has sometimes tempted us to think that Patrick, who is called Magonus, was a Roman, just as, in Gaul, at a period almost contemporary, Amatius, the god of Ammonius, whose name meant priest of Amun, and Phaëtus, priest of Phoëbus Apollo. In this connection it is curious to notice that Patrick and Cuchulainn shared the same gesa or tabos, a thing forbidden to be done, a thing that bore. That he was regarded as a deity there can be no mistake. He is never a young man, like Finn MacCumhail. The author of the glossary ascribed to Cormac, a composition of the ninth century, calls him "a noble god." Nothing in Ireland was divine also, as was his foster-father, Sualtam. Dedivine, his mother, was a goddess. As with Hercules, his birth was the daughter of a god of darkness, Emer, a Fomorian's child. He is the Apollo, the sun-god, of the Celtic Gaelic-speaking tribes. Like Apollo, he was a beardless youth—the Magon