

**THE THANE OF FIFE;
A POEM, IN SIX
CANTOS**

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The Thane of Fife; a poem, in six cantos by William Tennant

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WILLIAM TENNANT

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A POEM,
IN SIX CANTOS.

BY
WILLIAM TENNANT,
AUTHOR OF ANSTER FAIR, &c.

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PREFACE.

THE following Poem is founded upon an incident of Scottish History, which is thus related by Buchanan, Lib. vi. c. 8.

“ About these times the Danes, of all the Germans then the most flourishing and powerful people, yielded to the importunity of the Picts, who solicited their aid against the Scots; and as their youthful population was then exuberant in numbers, and adventurous in spirit, they willingly consented to cross over to Britain with a great fleet. They landed on the coast of Fife; and there, instigated by their hatred of the Christian name, slew all without discrimination that fell within the sphere of their ravage. They then, dividing their army into two parts, spread a wide havoc and devastation throughout the district. King Constantine, in his march to encounter them, lighted first upon that division of the army which was headed by Hubba, brother of the Danish monarch. These,

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being prevented from re-joining their countrymen by a sudden overflow of the river Leven, were easily vanquished, and all fell on the field, saving a few who were enabled, by their skill in swimming, to rejoin Humber (or Hungar) their other leader. When the abated river again became passable, Constantine leading his army confidently forward, as if to the spoil, and not to the battle, met the enemy in the neighbourhood of Crail (or Carrail), where he had strongly fortified himself. For the Dane, taught by the unfortunate issue of last battle, to be more wary and provident against all contingencies, had piled up, above a low ridge of rocks that stretched winding up near the shore, immense piles of the stones there lying, so as to present the appearance of a rampart. There Constantine injudiciously attacking them, met a determined resistance, and the almost despairing Danes, being now aided by their situation, inflicted upon him for his temerity a grievous punishment, in the loss of a great part of his army. He himself was taken, dragged into a small cave, and slain. In that place are yet pointed out, as monuments of the battle, the cave and the winding enclosure of the camp, which is not measured out into exact and regular spaces, but follows the flexure of the ridge of rocks.

Some writers impute the misfortune of that affair to the treachery of the Picts, who, after being re-admitted to trust by Constantine, and enlisted to fight under his banner, were the first to desert him in battle, and drew aside with them a great part of the army. The Danes, after having collected the spoils, retired to their ships. The King's body was found next day, and committed to the burial-ground of his ancestors, in the island of Iona. Constantine reigned 16 years. He was slain in the year 874."

The affair is also described by Boethius in his usual inelegant and diffuse manner. It is surprising that in the Danish historian, Saxo Grammaticus, no mention whatever is made of an occurrence so glorious to his countrymen as the discomfiture and slaughter of the Scottish Monarch; an omission which can only be accounted for by the supposition of a gap in the narrative of his history for the space of several hundred years. In his work I have not been able to find even the names of Hungar and Hubba.

In selecting for the foundation of my Poem such an incident, and of such a period, accompanied necessarily with a machinery of suitable and coeval Gods and Spiritual-

ties, I do not know whether I shall be acquitted by the Critics of temerity and indiscretion. There is a peril in the experiment, of which I am well aware. I shall, however, willingly and humbly submit myself to the judgment of my Readers. Should they disapprove of the following effort, little is lost;—for I have never allowed the writing of verses to interfere either with my professional duties or my more solid and nutritive studies,—and, moreover, I shall gain, by their disapproval, a lesson to abstain in future from all such perilous enterprises. Should any encouragement be given me by their applause, I shall be happy to employ what leisure hours may be henceforth allowed me in the prosecution and completion of the Poem whose first Cantos are now, with the utmost diffidence, presented to the Public.

DOLLAR ACADEMY,
3d December 1821.

THE
THANE OF FIFE.
CANTO I.