

**CLONTARF,  
A POEM**

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Clontarf, a Poem by William Hamilton Drummond

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**WILLIAM HAMILTON DRUMMOND**

**CLONTARF,  
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CLONTARF,

Poem.

WITH

*By De Burmann*

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DUBLIN:

ARCHER; HODGES AND M'ARTHUR.

1822.

## PREFACE.

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CLONTARR, the village which gives a title to the following Poem, stands on a low promontory, about three miles distant from the city of Dublin, on the northern side of the bay. It derives its name from the Irish, *Cluain Taridh*,\* the recess or bay of the Bull.† It is composed of one street, running at right angles to the shore, and unlike the majority of Irish villages, is distinguished by its neatness, cleanliness, and regularity. The church, the castle,

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\* Walsh's History of Dublin.

† This is the name given to a sand bank of considerable extent, lying in a direction from West to East, along the Liffey. During the prevalence of southerly or easterly storms, it presents a very formidable appearance to the mariner. It has been the scene of many shipwrecks, as the remains of vessels yet to be seen on its banks at low water, too plainly demonstrate. The loud bellowing of the waves, naturally suggested the appellation by which this sand bank is known. A promontory in the island of Rathlin, on the coast of Antrim, has the name of *Taridh Raghana* from the same circumstance; and its propriety can be justified by the highest classical authority.

Οὗτις Σηλασσεως κυμα ΒΟΑΑ πρῶτι Χερσῶ

Il. II. 394.

and many of the houses, being embosomed in trees, have a pleasing and romantic appearance.

The "Sheds of Clontarf" is the name given to a village prettily situated on the shore, about a quarter of a mile farther east. It is so named from some temporary huts or sheds, which were formerly erected in it for the convenience of curing fish. The neighbouring country is intersected by roads, appropriately denominated the "Green Lanes," on account of their verdant and umbrageous foliage, and also thickly studded with cottages and villas. The prospect is every where beautiful and extensive. The eye reposes with pleasure on highly cultivated fields, or roves delighted over a magnificent expanse of aquatic and mountain scenery. On one side it surveys a long sweep of level coast, the romantic little island of Ireland's Eye, and the bold promontory of Howth; and on the other, Dalkey Isle, the

Βῆρυχι μίγν κῶμα ποτὶ γαίῃ ἀμφὶ δὲ τ' ἀκρῶν  
 Ἥλιος βόσκει

P. 265.

—*reboant sylvaque et longus Olympus.*

VIRG.

The bank is said to be increasing in height. The Author has been informed, that some years ago not a blade of grass was to be seen on it. It now affords a scanty provender for a few cattle, during the summer months. A narrow channel called Crab's Lake, which children can wade across at low water, separates it from the main land. It abounds in cockles, razors, and other shell-fish; among its vegetable productions are the *salicornia* and *eryngo*, or sea-bolly. The present pier was not commenced when the poem was written.

Rochestown hills, covered with obelisk and telegraph, and the pyramidal mountains of Wicklow. These objects form the outline of a circle, which comprehends much to gratify a taste for natural beauty. A capacious bay, girdled by a shore adorned with hamlets and groves to the water's edge; the light-house, rising fair and majestic from the azure surface of the deep; the pigeon-house, with its piers and fortifications, almost insulated by the tide; the vessels spreading their sails to the wind, and the city of Dublin in the distance, with its spires and domes illumined by the rising sun;—all together form a picture whose richness and variety being seldom equalled, may well excite the enthusiastic admiration which it is frequently known to elicit.

During the bathing season, the shores are greatly frequented, and the scene is full of animation. Vehicles of all descriptions, from the curricule of the peer to the *jingle* of the plebeian, are seen passing rapidly along the road; and numerous groups of bathers are enjoying the refreshing coolness of the waves. Few cities, indeed, are more happily circumstanced than Dublin, with respect to the health and recreation of their inhabitants, or more disposed to avail themselves of the pleasure and advantage, which the vicinity of an inviting bay presents.

An abbey was founded here A.D. 550, the site of which is now occupied by the village church, as was also a commandery for knights hospitallers, in the reign of Henry II. In 1594, Allen, Archbishop of Dublin, the implacable enemy of the Geraldines, in endeavouring to make his escape to England, was stranded on these shores, and having fled to Artaigne, was inhumanly butchered by the vassals of Thomas Fitzgerald. Clontarf was also the scene of



a desperate conflict between this Fitzgerald and a party of troops under the command of two valiant leaders, named Hamerton, one of whom wounded Fitzgerald on the head. In 1641, the village was burned, under the orders of the Duke of Ormond, by Sir Charles Coote, who is justly described as a "hot-headed and bloody man."\* This severe chastisement was inflicted for the alleged participation of the villagers in the plunder of an English bark which had been cast upon the beach.

Clontarf derives its chief interest from being the scene of the battle in which the Danes received their most signal overthrow. They had drawn out all their forces, with auxiliaries from the isles of Man, the Hebrides, and the Orkneys, marshalled in three columns, under the command of Sitricus, a valiant son of the King of Denmark, Carrol and Anrud, sons of the King of Norway, Dolatus, Conmolau, and Broder, admiral of the fleet. The last brought into the field 1,000 men covered with coats of brass. Maolmordha, the rebel King of Leinster, joined their standard.

Brian Boroihme, the Monarch of Ireland, led his forces from Kilmashinham, where he had been encamped, to give them battle. Having observed the enemy's array, he divided his troops into three corresponding columns. The first was composed of Dalcassians, under the command of Morthagh and his other sons, Connor, Flaun, Tiege, and Donnal. The second division consisted of the Conatians, under the command of Teige, son of Cathal, son of Connor, principal King of Connaught. The third division was formed of the Eugenians and

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\* See Carte's *Life of Ormond*.

Desians, with the forces of Ulster, led by Cian and Carrol.

While Brian was employed in marshalling his troops, he employed all his eloquence to stimulate their courage. He reminded them of the wrongs they had suffered, and exhorted them to improve the opportunity now presented to them of freeing their country for ever from the yoke of a relentless foe. He called in the aid of religion to kindle their valour, and told them that Providence itself seemed to have ordained that that day, the anniversary of the Saviour's crucifixion, should witness the extirpation of his sacrilegious enemy. At the same time he displayed the crucifix, and waving his sword, gave the signal of battle.

Malschy and the forces of Meath, instead of obeying the signal, retired from the field. This base desertion might have proved fatal to the cause of Ireland. But it only animated Brian and his warriors to more heroic daring. The conflict, which was long and bloody, terminated, according to the most popular accounts, in the complete overthrow of the Danes. Their principal leaders fell, with 11,000 of their troops. Many of the Irish also were slain, and among them, their revered and patriotic king,

*Ἀμφότεροι βασιλεὺς τ' ἀγῶνας, κεντρεὶς τ' ἀιχμητῆς.*

IL. III. l. 179.

After many acts of valour, he was struck down by the battle-axe of Broder; not however till he had inflicted a mortal wound on his antagonist. But Morthagh, or Murchad, his son, was the hero of the field. He slew Carrol, and cleft Sitricius from the head to the waist, by a single blow of his battle-

xxx. Being engaged with Anrad, and his hand disabled by the repeated blows which he had given, he seized him in his arms, shook him out of his mail, and placing his breast on the hilt of his sword, transfixed the Norwegian to the ground. But this was not effected with impunity; Anrad in his fall snatched the dirk which hung by the side of his foe, and gave him a deadly wound.

“The monks of the Abbey of Swords, as soon as they were informed of the melancholy event, came and took the bodies of Brian Boroinhe and Murchad his son, with the heads of Conaing his nephew, and of Mothlan prince of the Desies, and carried them to the Abbey of Daleck (Donlough) and there committed them to the care of the religious of St. Cienain, who conveyed them with great funeral pomp to Swords and thence to Armagh. The king was interred on the north side of the great church, in a stone coffin by itself, and Murchad and the head of Conaing, in another coffin on the south. The clergy were for twelve nights waking the corpses, with reading of psalms and prayers, and chanting hymns for their souls. Brian's other son Doncha returning to Kilmainham with great prey, sent a large treasure with jewels and other offerings to the successor of St. Patrick, and to the Clergy of Armagh.”\*

In the hurry with which the good monks bore away the dead, it seems they left part of the regalia behind them, for “Brian Boroinhe's sceptre was found near Clontarf by Thomas Cornwall, as he was digging in his garden, a few years after the battle of the Boyne. It remained in his possession till his death, and afterwards in that of his son John. About the

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\* Archdell's Monasticon, pp. 21—256.