

Kinkora

James Clarence Mangan

(FROM THE IRISH.)

[This poem is ascribed to the celebrated poet Mac-Liag, the secretary of the renowned monarch Brian Boru, who, as is well known, fell at the battle of Clontarf, in 1014, and the subject of it is a lamentation for the fallen condition of Kinkora, the palace of that monarch, consequent on his death. The decease of Mac-Liag is recorded in the "Annals of the Four Masters," as having taken place in 1015. A great number of his poems are still in existence, but none of them have obtained a popularity so widely extended as his "Lament." The palace of Kinkora, which was situated on the banks of the Shannon, near Killaloe, is now a heap of ruins.]

O, WHERE, Kinkora ! is Brian the Great ?
And where is the beauty that once was thine ?
O, where are the princes and nobles that sate
At the feast in thy halls, and drank the red wine !
Where, O Kinkora ?

O, where, Kinkora ! are thy valourous lords ?
O, whither, thou Hospitable ! are they gone ?
O, where are the Dalcassians of the golden swords ? [1]
And where are the warriors Brian led on ?
Where, O Kinkora ?

And where is Morrogh, the descendant of kings ;
The defeater of a hundred — the daringly brave —
Who set but slight store by jewels and rings —
Who swam down the torrent and laughed at its wave ?
Where, O Kinkora ?

And where is Donogh, King Brian's worthy son ?
And where is Conaing, the beautiful chief ?
And Kian and Corc ? Alas ! they are gone —
They have left me this night alone with my grief !
Left me, Kinkora !

And where are the chiefs with whom Brian went forth,
The never-vanquished sons of Erin the brave.
The great King of Onaght, renowned for his worth,
And the hosts of Baskinn from the western wave?
Where, O Kinkora ?

O, where is Duvlann of the Swift-footed Steeds ?
And where is Kian, who was son of Molloy ?
And where is King Lonergan, the fame of whose deeds
In the red battle-field no time can destroy ?
Where, O Kinkora ?

And where is that youth of majestic height.
The faith-keeping Prince of the Scots ? Even he,
As wide as his fame was, as great as was his might,

Was tributary, O Kinkora, to thee !
Thee, Kinkora !

They are gone, those heroes of royal birth.
Who plundered no churches, and broke no trust ;
'Tis weary for me to be living on earth
When they, O Kinkora, lie low in the dust !
Low, O Kinkora !

O, never again will Princes appear.
To rival the Dalcassians [2] of the Cleaving Swords ;
I can never dream of meeting afar or anear,
In the east or the west, such heroes and lords !
Never, Kinkora!

O, dear are the images my memory calls up
Of Brian Boru ! — how he never would miss
To give me at the banquet, the first bright cup !
Ah ! why did he heap on me honour like this ?
Why, O Kinkora ?

I am Mac-Liag, and my home is on the Lake :
Thither often, to that palace whose beauty is fled,
Came Brian, to ask me, and I went for his sake,
O, my grief! that I should live, and Brian be dead !
Dead, O Kinkora!

[1] *Colg n-or*, or the swords of *Gold*, i. e. of the *Gold-hilted* Swords.

[2] The Dalcassians were Brian's body guard.

James Clarence Mangan : His life, Poetry and Death

Amongst the literary people of that *provincial* metropolis of Dublin (so I must call it, though I may gnash my teeth, if that be any comfort) were two or three who not only understood and appreciated Clarence Mangan, but would have served and saved him, if he had permitted. Of these I may name Dr. Anster, one of the innumerable translators of "*Faust*;" Petrie, well known both as an exquisite artist, and also for his great work on the *Ecclesiastical Antiquities of Ireland* ; Dr. Todd, Fellow of Trinity College, and Librarian of the magnificent Library of that University. By their aid and influence the solitary, half-conscious dreamer and opium-eater obtained employment in the great University Library, on the preparation of a new and improved catalogue of that vast repository ; for which his varied and polyglot studies eminently qualified him.

The first time the present biographer saw Clarence Mangan, it was in this wise — Being in the college library, and having occasion for a book in that gloomy apartment of the institution called the "Fagel Library," which is the innermost recess of the stately building, an acquaintance pointed out to me a man perched on the top of a ladder, with the whispered information that the figure was Clarence Mangan. It was an unearthly and ghostly figure, in a brown garment ; the same garment (to all appearance) which lasted till the day of his death. The blanched hair was totally unkempt ; the corpse-like features still as marble ; a large book was in his arms, and all his soul was in the book. I had never heard of Clarence Mangan before,

and knew not for what he was celebrated ; whether as a magician, a poet, or a murderer ; yet took a volume and spread it on a table, not to read, but with pretence of reading to gaze on the spectral creature upon the ladder.

Here Mangan laboured mechanically, and dreamed, roosting on a ladder, for certain months, perhaps years ; carrying the proceeds in money to his mother's poor home, storing in his memory the proceeds which were not in money, but in another kind of ore, which might feed the imagination indeed, but was not available for board and lodging. All this time he was the bond-slave of opium.

And now it almost repents me that I undertook to narrate the events of this man's outer and visible life, even to gratify the natural interest which his loving, worshipping readers cannot but feel in all that concerns him— an interest, however, which is deeper and higher than mere curiosity. No purer and more benignant spirit ever alighted upon earth— no more abandoned wretch ever found earth a purgatory and a hell. There were, as I have said, two Mangans : one well known to the Muses, the other to the police ; one soared through the empyrean and sought the stars — the other lay too often in gutters of Peter-street and Bride-street. I have read the lives and sufferings of Edgar Poe and of Richard Savage. Neither was so consummate a poet, neither so miserable a mortal. Yet in one respect poor Mangan compares favorably with them both ; he had no malignity, sought no revenge, never wrought sorrow and suffering to any human being but himself. In his deadly struggle with the cold world he wore no defiant air and attitude ; was always humble, affectionate, almost prayerful. He was never of the "Satanic school," never devoted mankind to the infernal gods, nor cursed the sun ; but the cry of his spirit was ever, Miserable man that I am, who will deliver me from the wrath to come !

To proceed with the few and meagre records of his remaining days. It was the time of "Penny Journals." There were the *London* and the *Dublin Penny Journal*, and the *Irish Penny Journal*. To the two latter Mangan made frequent contributions ; but he never sent a line of his verses for publication in any London periodical ; perhaps through diffidence ; not feeling confident that any production of his could satisfy the critical taste of the step-sister island. Afterwards he became a regular contributor to the *Dublin University Magazine* ; in whose pages appeared the most and best of his beautiful translations ; and other pieces purporting to be translations, from the German, Irish, Persian, Spanish, "Coptic," and so forth.

In 1842 commenced the *Nation*, weekly newspaper ; and as national poems, especially ballads, were to be a regular feature of that publication, and no man in Ireland knew all moods of the Irish harp save Mangan, a large number of his finest compositions for five years appeared in the columns of the *Nation*. It was in the office of that journal his present biographer made his acquaintance ; a feat not easily accomplished ; for Mangan had a morbid reluctance to meet new people, or to be "introduced." The thing was accomplished, however, and when, in the end of the year 1847, I thought proper to break off my connection with the *Nation* Mangan, and also Reilly, attached themselves to me, and followed my fortunes, or to speak more accurately, misfortunes. Clarence Mangan never wrote another line for the *Nation* nor during the short career of the *United Irishman* for any other publication than this.

— *from* Biographical Introduction by **John Mitchel**.

Poems (1859)

Author: Mangan, James Clarence, 1803-1849; Mitchell, John, 1815-1875. [from old catalog]

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