

Classic Poetry Series

James Bernard Dollard
- poems -

Publication Date:
2012

Publisher:
Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

James Bernard Dollard(30 August 1872 - 1946)

James Bernard Dollard was a Canadian poet and priest.

Life

Dollard was born at Mooncoin, County Kilkenny, Ireland, the youngest child of Anastasia Quinn and Michael Dollard. He studied Classics at Kilkenny College, and then sailed to Canada, where he studied for the priesthood, graduating from Laval University as a Bachelor of Theology and Bachelor of Canon Law. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1896, and served as a parish priest in Toronto and Uptergrove, Ontario.

He published his first collection of poetry, *Irish Mist and Sunshine* in 1906, and a second collection, *Poems*, in 1910.

Writing

The Globe (Toronto): "The poems of Father Dollard have long been appreciated for their high literary quality, spirituality and Celtic insight. To the scholarly touch of the classicist he adds the magic and vision of the true Celt. Born under the shadow of Slieve-na-mon, dreamful of mystical lore, Father Dollard was early inspired by the beauty and charm and tender melancholy of his native land. Though with a versatile pen he touches many themes, his supreme gift is that of an Irish lyrist."

Recognition

Laval University made him an honorary Doctor of Letters in 1916.

At Dead O' The Night, Alanna

At dead o' the night, alanna, I wake and see you there,
Your little head on the pillow, with tossed and tangled hair;
I am your mother, acushla, and you are my heart's own boy,
And wealth o' the world I'd barter to shield you from annoy.

At dead o' the night, alanna, the heart o' the world is still,
But sobbing o' fairy music comes down the haunted hill;
The march o' the fairy armies troubles the peace o' the air,
Blest angels shelter my darling for power of a mother's pray'r!

At dead o' the night, alanna, the sleepless Banshee moans,
Wailing for sin and sorrow, by the Cairn's crumbling stones,
At dead o' the night, alanna, I ask of our God above,
To shield you from sin and sorrow, and cherish you in His love.

At dead o' the night, alanna, I wonder o'er and o'er,
Shall you part from our holy Ireland, to die on a stranger shore?
You'll break my heart in the leaving like many a mother I know—
Just God look down upon Erin and lift her at last from woe!

At dead o' the night, alanna, I see you in future years,
Grand in your strength, and noble, facing the wide world fears;

Though down in the mossy churchyard my bones be under the sod,
My spirit shall watch you, darling, till you come to your rest in God!

James Bernard Dollard

Ballad Of The Banshee

Back thro' the hills I hurried home,
Ever my boding soul would say:
'Mother and sister bid thee come,
Long, too long has been thy stay.'

Stars shone out, but the moon was pale,
Touched by a black cloud's ragged rim,
Sudden I heard the Banshee's wail
Where Malmor's war-tower rises grim.

Quickly I strode across the slope,
Passed the grove and the Fairy Mound
(Gloomy the moat where blind owls mope)
Scarcely breathing, I glanced around.

Mother of mercy! there she sat,
A woman clad in a snow-white shroud,
Streamed her hair to the damp moss-mat,
White the face on her bosom bowed!

'Spirit of Woe' I eager cried,
'Tell me none that I love has gone,
Cold is the grave'—my accents died—
The Banshee lifted her face so wan.

Pale and wan as the waning moon,
Seen when the sun-spears herald dawn.
Ceased all sudden her dreary croon,
Full on my own her wild eyes shone,

Burned and seared my inmost soul.
(When shall sorrow depart from me?)
Black-winged terror upon me stole,
Blindly gaping, I turned to flee!

Back by the grove and haunted mound,
O'er the lone road I know not how,

Harkened afar my baying hound

Home at last at the low hill's brow!

Lone the cottage—the door flung wide,
Four lights burned—oh, sight of dread!
Breathing a prayer, I rushed inside,
'Mercy, God!' 'twas my mother, dead!

Dead and white as the fallen leaf,
(Kneeling, my sister prayed near by),
Wild as I wrestled with my grief,
Far and faint came the Banshee's cry!

James Bernard Dollard

Niagara Falls

I look below B Niagara torrent white
Is eager hurrying to the dread abyss;
I hear its thunder as the waters hiss
Over the awful brink, to plunge from sight
In seething spray! Confusion at its height
 Is pictured there; B but even on convent walls
 The radiant glow of even gently falls
And all is harmony and holy quiet!

Like some blest soul on Heaven that ever dreams,
 Bending its chastened look beyond the skies,
 Regardless of the tumults of the world B
So, crowned with peace this cloistered abbey seems,
 And on its peerless heights serene doth rise,
 While deep below the raging floods are hurled!

James Bernard Dollard

Ould Kilkinny

I'm sick o' New York City an' the roarin' o' the thrains
That rowl above the blessed roofs an' undernaith the dhrains;
Wid dust an' smoke an' divilmint I'm moidhered head an' brains,
An' I thinkin' o' the skies of ould Kilkinny!

Bad luck to Owen Morahan that sint the passage-note
'Tis he's the cause, the omadhaun, I ever tuk the boat;
'Tis he's the cause I'm weepin' here, a dhrayman on a float,
When I should be savin' hay in ould Kilkinny!

The sorra bit o' grassy field from morn till night I see,
Nor e'er a lark or linnet—not to mind a weeshy bee!
Och! an' honest Irish mountain now would lift the heart o' me,—
Will I ever see the hills of ould Kilkinny?

The rattle on the pavement-blocks is fit to make you cry,
A hundhert snortin' carriages like fire an' brimstone fly;
Tin thousand people tearin' wild, black sthrangers pass me by,
An' to think I left me frinds in ould Kilkinny!

'Tis well me lovin' parents all are in their coffin-shrouds,
'Twould break their hearts to see their boy half-smothered in these crowds,
Wid buildin's all around that high they're berrid in the clouds,
When the little cot would suit him in Kilkinny!

Bad luck to Owen Morahan, if I'd the passage back,
'Tis shortly I'd be home agin across the ocean thrack;
I'd not delay in Queenstown, an' I'd fly through Ballyhack,
For to greet the neighbours kind in ould Kilkinny!

James Bernard Dollard

Rupert Brooke

Slain by the arrows of Apollo, lo,
The well-belovèd of the Muses lies
On Lemnos' Isle 'neath blue and classic skies,
And hears th' Ægean waters ebb and flow!
How strange his beauteous soul should choose to go
Out from its body in this hallowed place,
Where Poesy and Art's undying grace
Still breathe, and pipes of Pan still murmur low!

Here shall he rest untroubled, knowing well
That faithful hearts shall hold his memory dear,
Moved to affection weak words cannot tell
By his short, splendid life that knew no fear;
Belovèd of the gods, the gods have ta'en
Their Ganymede, by bright Apollo slain!

James Bernard Dollard

The Fairy Harpers

As I walked the heights of Meelin on a tranquil autumn day,
The fairy host came stealing o'er the distant moorland gray.
I heard like sweet bells ringing,
Or a grove of linnets singing,
And the haunting, wailful music that the fairy harpers play!

Like thunder of deep waters when vast-heaving billows break,
Like souging of the forest when ten thousand branches shake,
 Like moaning of the wind,
 When the night falls bleak and blind,
So wild and weird the melodies the fairy minstrels make.

The sunbeams flecked the valley, and the cloud-shades ranged the hill,
The thistle-down scarce drifted in the air so calm and still.
 But along the slopes of Meelin
 Came the ghostly music pealing,
With sad and fitful cadences that set my soul a-thrill!

Then wan and wistful grew the sky o'er Meelin's summit lone,
And weeping for the days gone by, my heart grew cold as stone,
 For I heard loved voices calling
 Beyond the sunlight falling
On Meelin's mournful mountain where the magic harps make moan!

James Bernard Dollard

The Haunted Hazel

Adown a quiet glen where the gowan-berries glisten
And the linnet, shyest bird of all, his wild note warbles free;
Where the scented woodbine-blossoms, o'er the brooklet, bend to listen,
There stands upon a mossy bank, a white-hazel tree.

Oh! fair it is to view, when the zephyr rustles lightly,
And warm sunlight glances back from polished bole and branch;
For then like wavelets on a rill the pendent leaves flash brightly,
And daisies nod in concert, round the column straight and staunch.

But when the day is ended, and the solemn moon is shining,
And shadows grim and ghostly, fall on grove and glen and lea,
Then godless elves their fairy paths with glow-worm lamps are lining,
And potent spells of magic bind this white-hazel tree!

For from their gorgeous palaces the fairy bands come stealing,
To dance in sportive circles on the never bending moss;
And the velvet-soft caressing of their finger-touches healing,
Brings to the sere white-hazel bark again its youthful gloss.

And round and round they skip and glide, in strange fantastic measure,
To weird, unhallowed melodies of fairy minstrelsy,
Yet mortal ear may never hear those sounds of elfin pleasure,
And no whisper of its secrets gives the white-hazel tree!

But should the peasant wander nigh that baleful bower, unthinking,
And sudden feel the chilling of the haunted hazel's shade,
A nameless horror seizes on his spirit, bowed and shrinking,
And making oft the Holy Sign, he hurries home dismayed.

For maid that treads the path of doom beneath the hazel's shadow,
Shall be the bride of Death, they say, before a month has flown;
And laughing swain, in pride of strength, who crossed at eve the meadow,
Shall moulder 'neath the matted moss, e'er yet that mead is mown!

So, in the solemn hours of night the fairies dance unharmed,
Till thro' gray dawn the haggard moon her waning span doth dree,
Then from the blessed sunbeam flies the evil power that charmed,
And fairy spell is lifted from the white-hazel tree!

James Bernard Dollard

The Passing Of The Sidhe

There is weeping on Cnoc-Aulin and on hoary Slieve-na-mon,
There's a weary wind careering over haggard Knocknaree;
 By the broken mound of Almhin
 Sad as death the voices calling,
Calling ever, wailing ever, for the passing of the Sidhe.

Where the hunting-call of Ossian waked the woods of Glen-na-mar,
Where the Fianna's hoarse cheering silenced noisy Assaroe,
 Like the homing swallows meeting,
 Like a beaten host retreating,
Hear them sobbing as they hurry from the hills they used to know!

There's a haunted hazel standing on a grim and gloomy scaur,
Tossing ceaselessly its branches like a keener o'er the dead;
 Deep around it press the masses
 Of the Sluagh-shee * that passes
To the moan of fairy music timing well their muffled tread.

Came a wail of mortal anguish o'er the night-enshrouded sea,
Sudden death o'ertook the aged while the infant cried in fear,
 And the dreamers on their pillows
 Heard the beat of bursting billows,
And the rumble and the rhythm of an army passing near.

They have left the unbelieving-past and gone their gentle sway,
Lonely now the rath enchanted, eerie glen and wild crannoge;
 But the sad winds, unforgetting,
 Call them back with poignant fretting,
Snatching songs of elfin sorrow from the streams of Tir-na-n'Og.

James Bernard Dollard