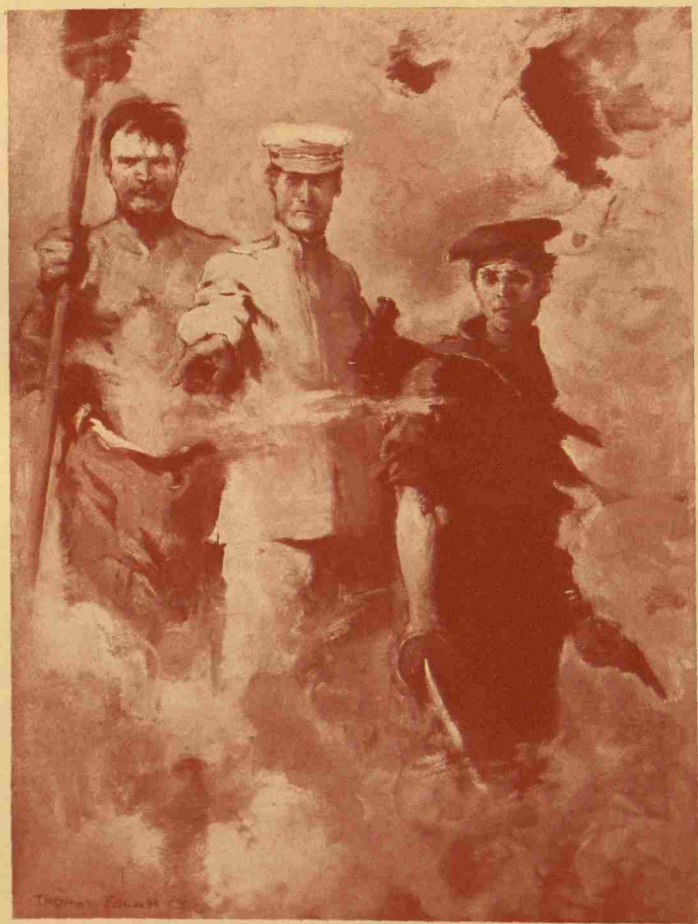


THE FIGHTING RACE

and other Poems and

 Ballads 

JOSEPH I. C. CLARKE



*"Wherever fighting's the game,
Or a spice of danger in grown man's work,"
Said Kelly—*

The Fighting Race

AND

Other Poems and Ballads

By

JOSEPH I. C. CLARKE

Author of "Robert Emmet, a Tragedy," "Malmorda,"
"Lady Godiva," Etc.

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WHEN SHERIDAN HURLED THE DISCUS.

“Pinch me; ay, punch me, for fear I’m not sitting
here reading the paper.
Sure as the sun in the morning lights Mangerton
Mountain in Kerry;
Sure as I’m Shea, and ye’re Kelly and Burke, my
boys; sure as we’re Irish,
There in the land of the Greeks, at the scratch in the
games of Olympus,
Sheridan’s swing from the shoulder has landed him
Champion at Athens.”

“Champion of what?” cried out Kelly. “Why,
champion at hurling the discus.”

“Holy St. Patrick!” said Burke, “’twas the game
of the splendid Greek heroes.

Read every word of it; lilt it in music like Homer’s
hexameters.”

“Sheridan, slantha!” said Shea, who, wiping his
lips, began reading:

“(Cable from Athens by way of Parnassus to Mul-
ligan’s Journal.)

“Lastly came Sheridan, Irish-American, throwing
the discus.

Taking his stand in the stadium under the shade of
Pentelicus,
Broad of chest, sinewy, long-armed and supple—a
Gael of Old Mayo.
Thousands and thousands of living spectators are
waving and cheering.
Hovering over them, lo, too, a myriad silent and
ghostly,
Out of the past when the Parthenon's pillars first
rose in the sunlight:
Pallas, the Goddess of Athens, is bending her black
brows upon him,
Phœbus Apollo, the sun god, leans from his chariot
gazing,
Ares, the god of the sword, and Hephæstus, the god
with the hammer,
Smile on the Gael who is stripping his arms, and
uplifting the discus.

“Sages and poets and rulers, whose names are as
planets forever,
Dim eyed and mistlike look down on the pageant:
Pericles brooding,
Socrates dreaming, and Sophocles seeing new
dramas unrolling,
Sheridan standing the while as he takes a full
breath from th' Ægean.

“Up where the violet turreted city looks over the
water,
Soldiers of Salamis, heroes of Marathon, helmeted,
sworded,

Seeing the muscle-free grace of the Gael, and the
mould of his torso,
Look from the clouds in a shadowy phalanx, asking
each other :—
“Comes back to earth our Androsthene, greatest at
hurling the discus?”

“Hushed now the judges and thousands of on-
lookers packed on the benches.
Sheridan poises his body, and glances along to the
skyline.
Slowly he raises the discus, and, balanced an in-
stant, seems pausing.
Swift as a panther, then, whirling his arm and his
body and bending,
Hurls the broad discus that rises and sweeps thro’
the blue like an eagle,
On, ever on, till it seems it would never more touch
the green sod of Athene.

“Silence! A pause, then a shout like the thunder
that rolls on Olympus.
Never in Greece of the pagan has cast of the discus
outreached it;
Never in Greece of the Christian has cast of the
discus come near it!
Thousands are shouting the praise of the victor,
and hymning his glory.
Green flag and gold harp are floating above the
green turf of old Hellas.

Sheridan! Sheridan! Erinn in Mikla will love
 you and cheer you:—
 Feast of the Greeks, you have made their Olympic
 the goal of the Gael.’”

“Thunder an’ turf!” sang out Burke. “It is great!
 Rise, Kelly, and holler!
 Gaelic and Greek may go dancing and laughing
 along through the ages,
 Singing a pœan together, while Latin, Dutch,
 Saxon and Russian
 Pipe into whistle-sticks fit for small children. So
 Kelly, come holler!”

“Holler!” said Kelly. “It’s not so surprising to beat
 out them dagoes.
 Sheridan’s great, but our fathers broke records
 when Greece was barbarian.
 Mind you the story of Lia Lamh Laich by the ford
 of the Shannon:
 Twenty men dead at one swoop of the stone that
 was flung by young Finn.

Think of the spear cast of mighty Cuchullin, and
 twenty more like it,
 Telling the world that the Gael asks no favor in
 sport or in battle.
 Not where three men or three hundred sit drinking
 the health of the hero,
 Sounds the true bellnote that booms for the fame
 that’s immortal.

There—look you upward—to-night 'twiil be heard
in a chime and full measure,
Ringing the glory of Ireland, the mother of men of
live muscle;
Heard when great Herakles, rising and throwing
his club on his shoulder,
Crosses the star spangled pavement of heaven, and,
pointing to Athens,
Shouts in good Irish that wakes up St. Peter:
'Shake hands, Finn MacCool.'