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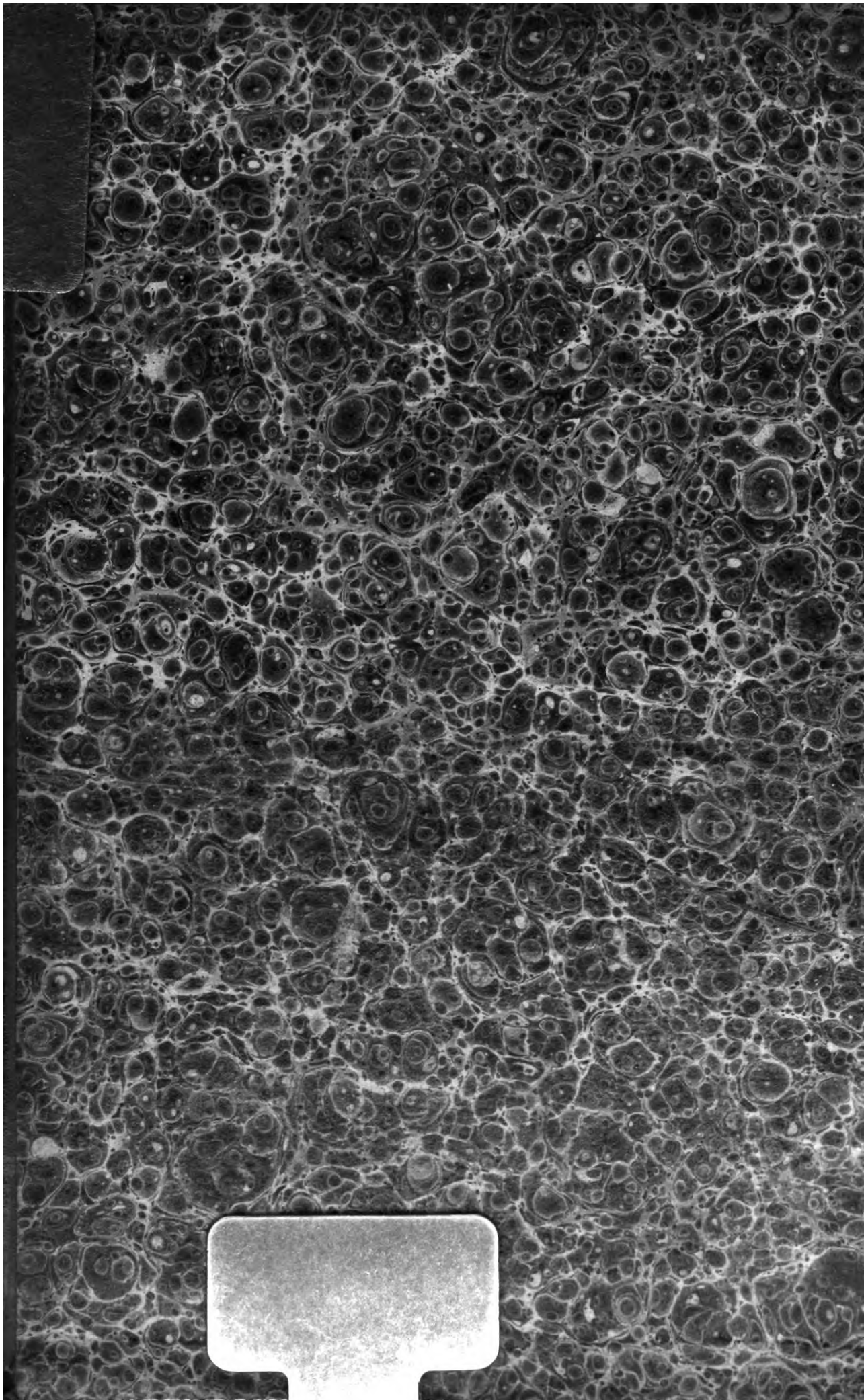
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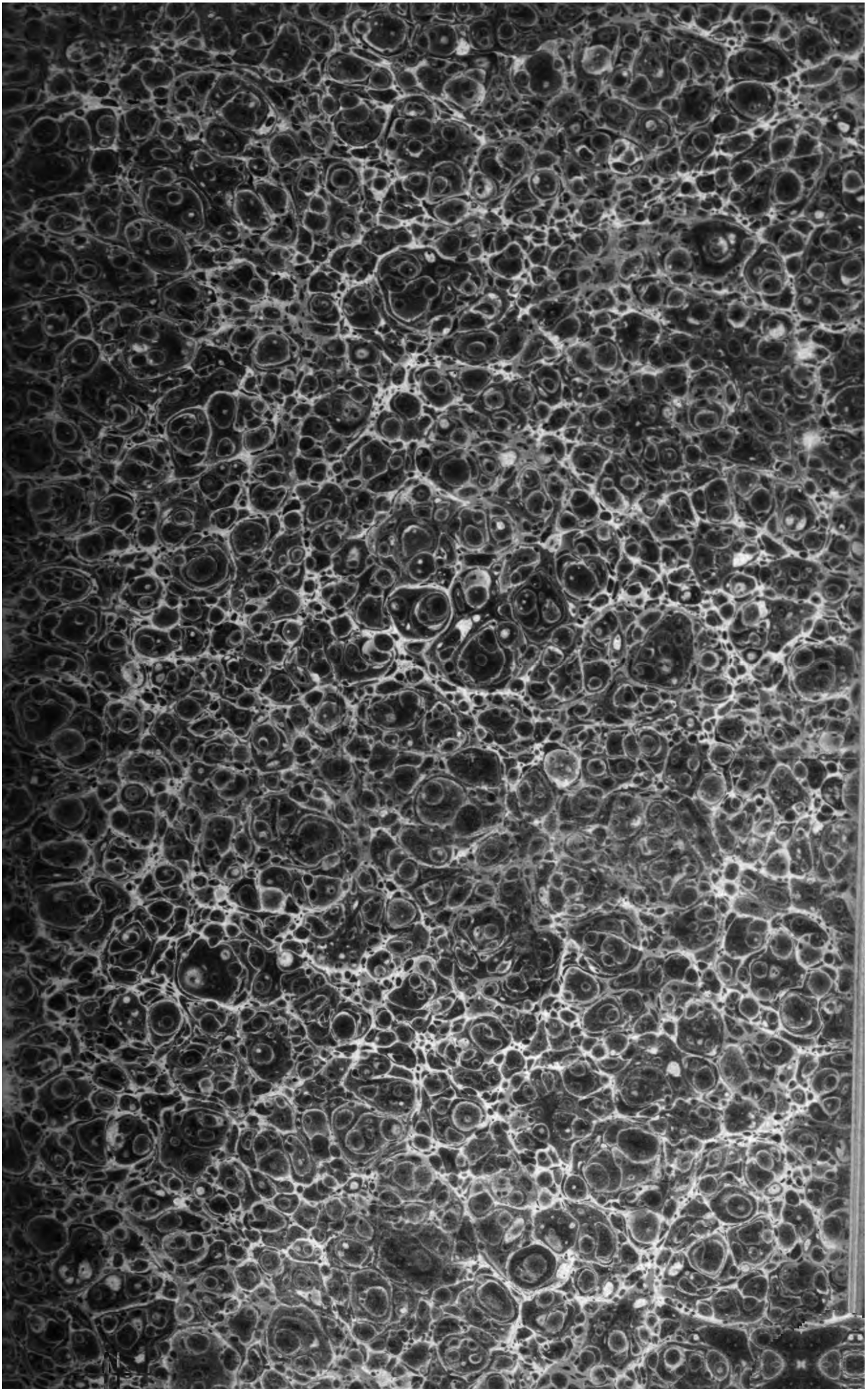
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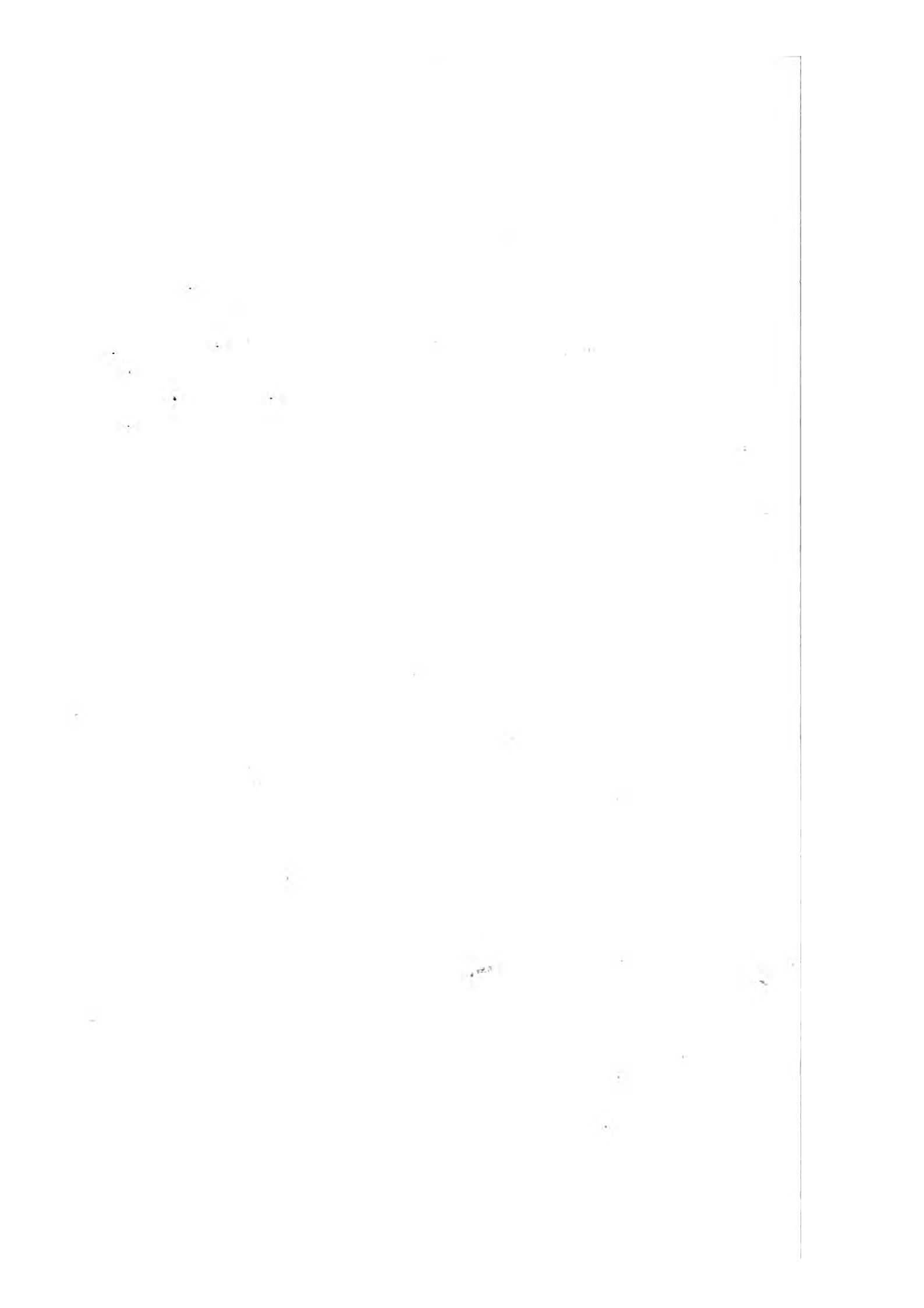


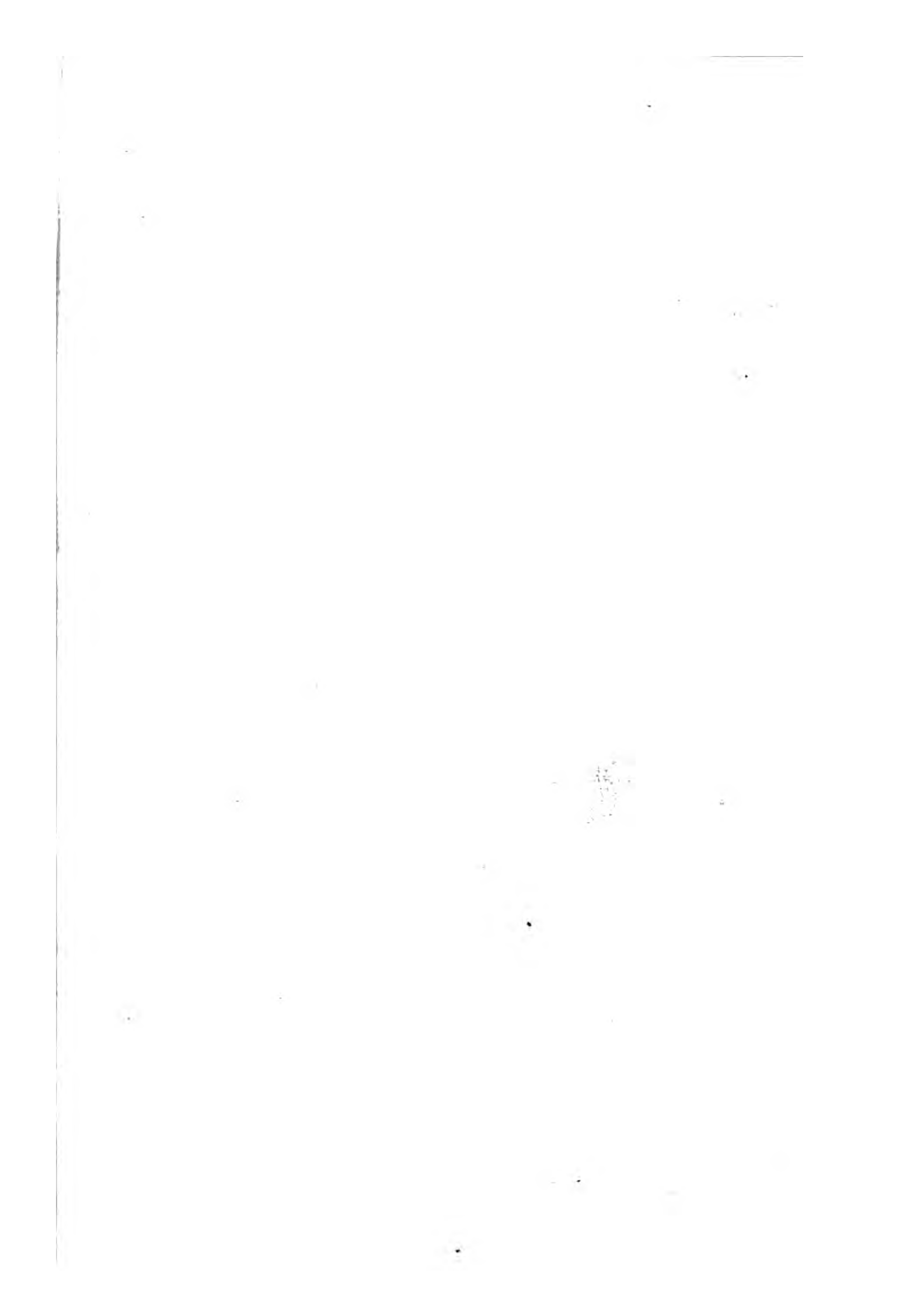


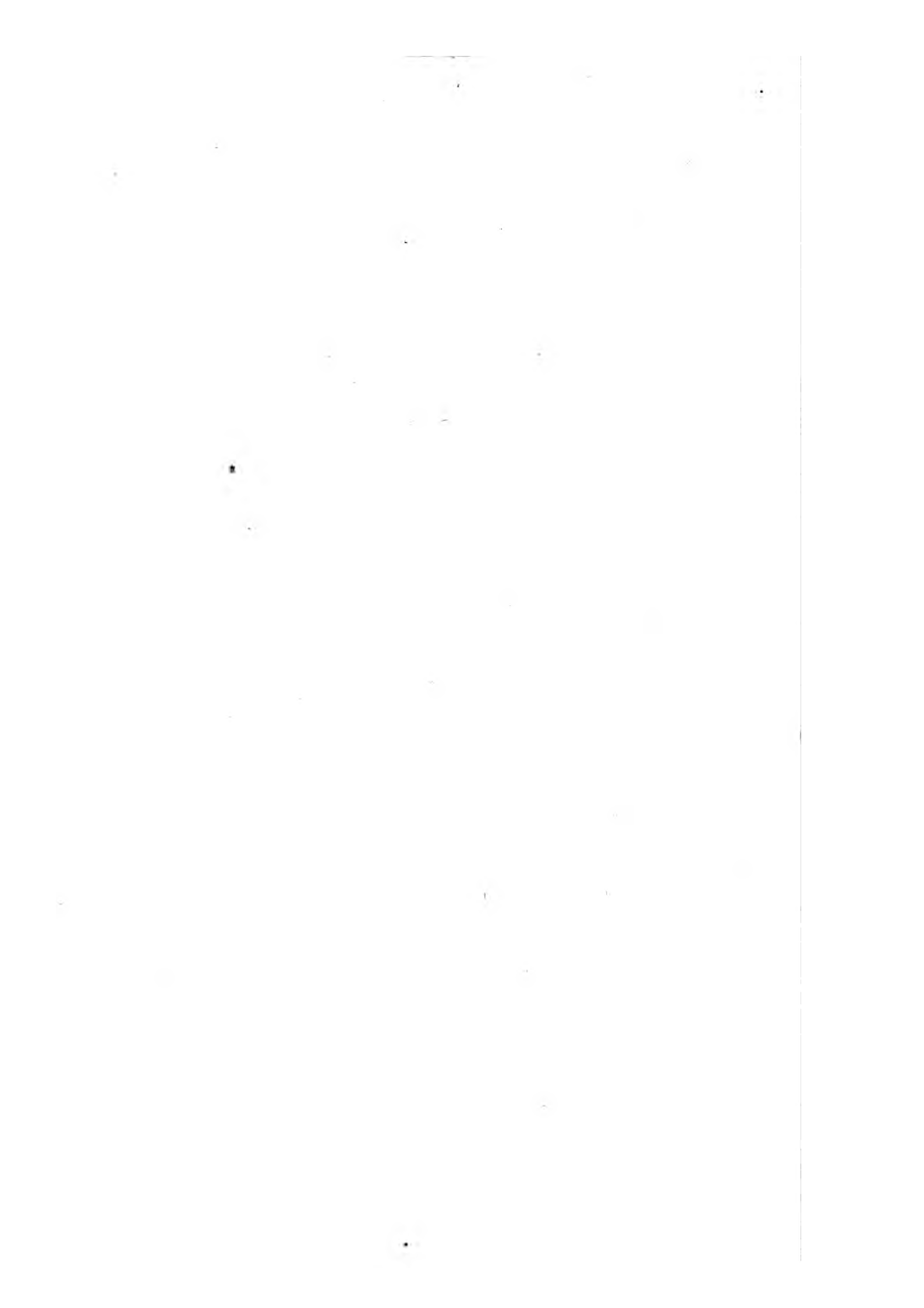




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Painted by Sir J. Reynolds.

Engraved by C. Kneller.

JAMES MACPHERSON ESQ^R

Published by Lawington, Allen & Co. Oct 17 1765.

THE
POEMS
OF
OSSIAN.

TRANSLATED
BY JAMES MACPHERSON, Esq.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

A NEW EDITION.

Containing
DR. BLAIR'S THREE CELEBRATED CRITICAL DISSERTATIONS;
and
A PRELIMINARY DISCOURSE,
Or Review of the recent Controversy relative to the Authenticity of
the Poems, in which the Opinions of *David Hume, Mr. Laing,*
Mr. Macdonald, the Highland Society, Mr. Knight, &c. &c.
are considered.

VOL. I.

London:
PRINTED BY DEWICK AND CLARKE,
FOR LACKINGTON, ALLEN, AND CO.
Temple of the Muses, Finsbury-square.

1806.



ADVERTISEMENT.

IT may appear an invidious task, but it is no more than the justice which is due to ourselves, as well as the duty that we owe to the Public, to make some remarks on another edition of *THE POEMS OF OSSIAN*, recently issued from the Scotch Press. The edition alluded to is printed by *JAMES BALLANTYNE*, of Edinburgh, with Notes and Illustrations by *MALCOLM LAING*, Esq. Whilst it professes the greatest accuracy, it is perpetually guilty of the most slovenly errors, and not rarely of what would, from *MR. LAING*'s main object, seem to be something more than negligence. The numerous literals we shall pass over unnoticed, and merely point out enough of the grosser blunders, to shew that the text of the edition from *MR. BALLANTYNE*'s press is not to be depended upon; and that, however *MR. MACPHERSON* might have laid himself open to *MR. LAING*'s intemperate attack, he certainly in no way deserved the treatment which, in this particular, he has at his hands experienced.

We shall, in the first place, exhibit several specimens of carelessness, and then proceed to *MR. LAING*'s mode of stultifying *MR. MACPHERSON*, and making him write utter nonsense.

“ In the course,” *Vol. I. p. 106*, for, *In his course*.

“ Returns to Cona's heath,” *p. 110*, instead of, from.

“ Where is my friend, but Aldo ?” *p. 289*, for, *Who is my friend ?*

“ I stretched my buckler over him : but my breast was seen,” *p. 391*. It should be, *heaving breast*.

“ Erin,” three times for *Etha*, *p. 395-8-400*.

“ Fell in the midst of his battles,” *p. 477*, for, *in the first of his battles*.

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“ He rolls his darkening eyes on Fillan, and, silent, shades their friends,” p. 151, Vol. 2, for, his friends.

We shall now exemplify MESSIEURS LAING and BALLANTYNE'S happy method of converting evident sense into exquisite nonsense.

“ I hear the noise of their fear,” Vol. 1, p. 113, for, the noise of their feet.

“ Green-shaded bushes,” p. 157, for, green-headed.

“ Shews me her face of cloud,” p. 166, for, her face of love.

“ They brighten with dark-brown sides,” p. 377. A new way of brightening! Read, brighten their dark-brown sides.

“ For never before had we fought alone, on the battles of the spear,” p. 562, for, in battles of the spear.

“ Silent murmurs rise” Vol. 2. p. 56. These must have been murmurs, “ not loud, but deep !” read, sullen murmurs.

“ Trathal came forth before his fame,” p. 276. Ingeniously for, before his father.

“ By Furthor's cave a stream is dark, the dwelling of Conban-carglas,” p. 334. The right reading will take poor Conban-carglas out of this watery dwelling: read, stream a cave.

These are not one half of the disgraceful blemishes which we have noticed in a cursory perusal of this edition, but they are sufficient to prove its value. We shall waste no more time on this thankless office.

DR. BLAIR'S Critical Dissertation, MR. LAING has thought it prudent entirely to omit.

A

PRELIMINARY DISCOURSE.

As SWIFT has, with some reason, affirmed that all sublunary happiness consists in being *well deceived*, it may possibly be the creed of many, that it had been wise, if, after DR. BLAIR'S ingenious and elegant dissertation on "the venerable OSSIAN," all doubts respecting what we have been taught to call his works had for ever ceased; since there appears cause to believe, that numbers who listened with delight to "the voice of CONA," would have been happy, if, seeing their own good, they had been content with these Poems accompanied by DR. BLAIR'S judgment, and sought to know no more. There are men, however, whose ardent love of truth rises on all occasions paramount to every other consideration; and though the first step in search of it should dissolve the charm, and turn a fruitful Eden into a barren wild, they would pursue it. For these, and for the idly curious in literary problems, added to the wish of making this new edition of "*The Poems of OSSIAN*" as well informed as the hour would allow, we have here thought it proper to insert some account of a renewal of the controversy relating to the genuineness of this rich treasure of poetical excellence.

Nearly half a century has elapsed since the publication of the poems ascribed by MR. MACPHERSON to OSSIAN, which poems he then professed to have collected in the original Gaelic during a tour through the Western Highlands and Isles; but a doubt of their authenticity nevertheless obtained, and from their first appearance to this day has continued in various degrees to agitate the literary world. In the present year, "A REPORT,"* springing from an inquiry instituted for the purpose of leaving, with regard to this matter, "no hinge nor loop to hang a doubt on," has been laid before the public. As the COMMITTEE, in this investigation, followed, in a great measure, that line of conduct chalked out by DAVID HUME to DR. BLAIR, we shall, previously to stating their precise mode of proceeding, make several large and interesting extracts from the historian's two letters on this subject.

"I live in a place," he writes, "where I have the pleasure of frequently hearing justice done to your dissertation, but never heard it mentioned in a company, where some one person or other did not express his doubts with regard to the authenticity of the poems which are its subject, and I often hear them totally rejected with disdain and indignation, as a palpable and most impudent forgery. This opinion has, indeed, become very prevalent among the men of letters in London; and I can foresee, that in a few years the poems, if they continue to stand on their present footing, will be thrown aside, and will fall into final oblivion.

"The absurd pride and caprice of MACPHERSON

* "A REPORT of the Committee of the Highland Society of Scotland, appointed to enquire into the nature and authenticity of the POEMS OF OSSIAN. Drawn up, according to the directions of the Committee, by Henry Mackenzie, Esq. its convener or chairman. With a copious Appendix, containing some of the principal documents on which the Report is founded. Edinburgh, 1805." 8vo. Pages 343.

himself, who scorns, as he pretends, to satisfy any body that doubts his veracity, has tended much to confirm this general scepticism; and I must own, for my part, *that though I have had many particular reasons to believe these poems genuine, more than it is possible for any Englishman of letters to have*, yet I am not entirely without my scruples on that head. You think, that the internal proofs in favour of the poems are very convincing: *so they are*; but there are also internal reasons against them, particularly from the manners, notwithstanding all the art with which you have endeavoured to throw a vernish* on that circumstance, and the preservation of such long and such connected poems, by oral tradition alone, during a course of fourteen centuries, is so much out of the ordinary course of human affairs, that it requires the strongest reasons to make us believe it. My present purpose, therefore, is to apply to you, in the name of all the men of letters of this, and I may say, of all other countries, to establish this capital point, and to give us proofs that these poems are, I do not say, so ancient as the age of Severus, but that they were not forged within these five years by JAMES MACPHERSON. These proofs must not be arguments, but testimonies: people's ears are fortified against the former; the latter may yet find their way, before the poems are consigned to total oblivion. Now the testimonies may, in my opinion, be of two kinds. MACPHERSON pretends that there is an ancient manuscript of part of FINGAL in the family, I think, of CLANRONALD. Get that fact ascertained by more than one person of credit; let these persons be acquainted with the Gaelic; let them compare the original and the translation; and let them testify the fidelity of the latter.

* So in MS.

“ But the chief point in which it will be necessary for you to exert yourself, will be, to get positive testimony from many different hands that such poems are vulgarly recited in the Highlands, and have there long been the entertainment of the people. This testimony must be as particular as it is positive. It will not be sufficient that a Highland gentleman or clergyman say or write to you that he has heard such poems: nobody questions that there are traditional poems in that part of the country, where the names of OSSIAN and FINGAL, and OSCAR and GAUL, are mentioned in every stanza. The only doubt is, whether these poems have any farther resemblance to the poems published by MACPHERSON. I was told by BOURKE,* a very ingenious Irish gentleman, the author of a tract on the sublime and beautiful, that on the first publication of MACPHERSON’S book, all the Irish cried out, *We know all those poems. We have always heard them from our infancy.* But when he asked more particular questions, he could never learn that any one had ever heard or could repeat the original of any one paragraph of the pretended translation. This generality, then, must be carefully guarded against, as being of no authority.

“ Your connections among your brethren of the clergy may be of great use to you. You may easily learn the names of all ministers of that country who understand the language of it. You may write to them, expressing the doubts that have arisen, and desiring them to send for such of the bards as remain, and make them rehearse their ancient poems. Let the clergymen then have the translation in their hands, and let them write back to you, and inform you, that they heard such a one (naming him), living in such a place, rehearse the original of such a passage, from

* So in MS.

such a page to such a page of the English translation, which appeared exact and faithful. If you give to the public a sufficient number of such testimonies you may prevail. But I venture to foretel to you, that nothing less will serve the purpose; nothing less will so much as command the attention of the public.

“BECKET tells me, that he is to give us a new edition of your Dissertation, accompanied with some remarks on *Temora*. Here is a favourable opportunity for you to execute this purpose. You have a just and laudable zeal for the credit of these poems. They are, if genuine, one of the greatest curiosities in all respects that ever was discovered in the commonwealth of letters; and the child is, in a manner, become yours by adoption, as MACPHERSON has totally abandoned all care of it. These motives call upon you to exert yourself; and I think it were suitable to your candour, and most satisfactory also to the reader, to publish all the answers to all the letters you write, even though some of those letters should make somewhat against your own opinion in this affair. We shall always be the more assured, that no arguments are strained beyond their proper force, and no contrary arguments suppressed, where such an entire communication is made to us. BECKET joins me heartily in that application; and he owns to me, that the believers in the authenticity of the poems diminish every day among the men of sense and reflection. Nothing less than what I propose can throw the balance on the other side.”

Lisle Street, Leicester Fields.

19th Sept. 1763.

The second letter contains less matter of importance; but what there is that is relevant deserves not to be omitted.

“ I am very glad,” he writes on the 6th of October, 1763, “ you have undertaken the task which I used the freedom to recommend to you. Nothing less than what you propose will serve the purpose. You need expect no assistance from MACPHERSON, who flew into a passion when I told him of the letter I had wrote to you. But you must not mind so strange and heteroclite a mortal, than whom I have scarce ever known a man more perverse and unamiable. He will probably depart for Florida with Governor Johnstone, and I would advise him to travel among the Chickisaws or Cherokees, in order to tame and civilize him.

* * * * *
* * * * *

“ Since writing the above, I have been in company with MRS. MONTAGUE, a lady of great distinction in this place, and a zealous partizan of OSSIAN. I told her of your intention, and even used the freedom to read your letter to her. She was extremely pleased with your project; and the rather, as the DUC DE NIVERNIS, she said, had talked to her much on that subject last winter; and desired, if possible, to get collected some proofs of the authenticity of these poems, which he proposed to lay before the Academie de Belles Lettres at Paris. You see, then, that you are upon a great stage in this enquiry, and that many people have their eyes upon you. This is a new motive for rendering your proofs as complete as possible. I cannot conceive any objection which a man even of the gravest character could have to your publication of his letters, which will only attest a plain fact known to him. Such scruples, if they occur, you must endeavour to remove, for on this trial of yours will the judgment of the public finally depend.” * * * * *

Without being acquainted with HUME's advice to DR. BLAIR, the COMMITTEE, composed of chosen persons, and assisted by the best Celtic scholars, adopted, as it will be seen, a very similar manner of acting.

It conceived the purpose of its nomination to be, to employ the influence of the society, and the extensive communication which it possesses with every part of the Highlands, in collecting what materials or information it was still practicable to collect, regarding the authenticity and nature of the poems ascribed to OSSIAN, and particularly of that celebrated collection published by MR. JAMES MACPHERSON.

For the purpose above-mentioned, the COMMITTEE, soon after its appointment, circulated the following set of Queries, through such parts of the Highlands and Islands, and among such persons resident there, as seemed most likely to afford the information required.

QUERIES.

1. Have you ever heard repeated, or sung, any of the poems ascribed to OSSIAN, translated and published by MR. MACPHERSON? By whom have you heard them so repeated, and at what time or times? Did you ever commit any of them to writing? or can you remember them so well as now to set them down? In either of these cases, be so good to send the Gaelic original to the COMMITTEE.

2. The same answer is requested concerning any other ancient poems of the same kind, and relating to the same traditionary persons or stories with those in MR. MACPHERSON's collection.

3. Are any of the persons from whom you heard any such poems now alive? or are there, in your part of the country, any persons who remember and cau

repeat or recite such poems? If there are, be so good as to examine them as to the manner of their getting or learning such compositions; and set down, as accurately as possible, such as they can now repeat or recite; and transmit such their account, and such compositions as they repeat, to the COMMITTEE.

4. If there are, in your neighbourhood, any persons from whom MR. MACPHERSON received any poems, enquire particularly what the poems were which he so received, the manner in which he received them, and how he wrote them down; shew those persons, if you have an opportunity, his translation of such poems, and desire them to say if the translation is exact and literal; or, if it differs, in what it differs from the poems, as they repeated them to MR. MACPHERSON, and can now recollect them.

5. Be so good to procure every information you conveniently can, with regard to the traditionary belief, in the country in which you live, concerning the history of FINGAL and his followers, and that of OSSIAN and his poems; particularly those stories and poems published by MR. MACPHERSON, and the heroes mentioned in them. Transmit any such account, and any proverbial or traditionary expression in the original Gaelic, relating to the subject, to the COMMITTEE.

6. In all the above enquiries, or any that may occur to _____ in elucidation of this subject, he is requested by the COMMITTEE to make the enquiry, and to take down the answers, with as much impartiality and precision as possible, in the same manner as if it were a legal question, and the proof to be investigated with a legal strictness.

See the "REPORT."

It is presumed, as undisputed, that a traditionary history of a great hero or chief, called *Fion*, *Fion na*

Gael, or, as it is modernized, FINGAL, exists, and has immemorially existed, in the Highlands and islands of Scotland, and that certain poems or ballads containing the exploits of him and his associate heroes, were the favourite lore of the natives of those districts. The general belief of the existence of such heroic personages, and the great poet OSSIAN, the son of FINGAL, by whom their exploits were sung, is as universal in the Highlands as the belief of any ancient fact whatsoever. It is recorded in proverbs, which pass through all ranks and conditions of men. *Ossian dall*, blind OSSIAN,* is a person as well known as strong SAMSON or wise SOLOMON. The very boys in their sports cry out for fair play, *Cothram na feine*, the equal combat of the Fingalians. OSSIAN, “*an deigh nam fiann*,” OSSIAN, the last of his race, is proverbial, to signify a man who has had the misfortune to survive his kindred; and servants returning from a fair or wedding, were in use to describe the beauty of young women whom they had seen there, by the words, “*Tha i cho boidheach reh Agandecca, nighean ant sneachda*,” she is as beautiful as Agandecca, daughter of the Snow.†

All this will be readily conceded, and MR. MACPHERSON'S being at one period an “indifferent proficient in the Gaelic language,” may seem an argument of some weight against his having himself composed these Ossianic Poems. Of his inaccuracy in the Gaelic, a ludicrous instance is related in the declaration of MR. EWAN MACPHERSON, at Knock, in Sleat, Sept. 11, 1800. He declares, that he, “COLONEL MACLEOD, of Talisker, and the late MR. MACLEAN, of Coll, embarked with MR. MACPHERSON for Uist on the same pursuit: that they landed

* Τυφλος γ' Ὀμηρος.
Luscaris Const.

† Report, p 15.

at Lochmaddy, and proceeded across the Muir to Benbecula, the seat of the younger CLANRONALD: that on their way thither, they fell in with a man whom they afterwards ascertained to have been MAC CODRUM, the poet: that MR. MACPHERSON asked him the question, ‘ *A bheil dad agad air an Fhéinn?*’ by which he meant to enquire, whether or not he knew any of the poems of OSSIAN relative to the Fingalians; but that the term in which the question was asked, strictly imported whether or not the Fingalians owed him any thing; and that MAC CODRUM being a man of humour, took advantage of the incorrectness or inelegance of the Gaelic in which the question was put, and answered, that really if they had owed him any thing, the bonds and obligations were lost, and he believed any attempt to recover them at that time of day would be unavailing. Which sally of MAC CODRUM’s wit seemed to have hurt MR. MACPHERSON, who cut short the conversation, and proceeded on towards Benbecula. And the declarant being asked whether or not the late MR. JAMES MACPHERSON was capable of composing such poems as those of OSSIAN, declares most explicitly and positively that he is certain MR. MACPHERSON was as unequal to such compositions as the declarant himself, who could no more make them than take wings and fly.” p. 96.

We would here observe, that the sufficiency of a man’s knowledge of such a language as the Gaelic, for all the purposes of composition, is not to be questioned, because he does not speak * it accurately or elegantly, much less is it to be quibbled into sus-

* We doubt not that Mr. Professor PORSON could, if he pleased, forge a short poem in Greek, and ascribing it, for instance, to Theocritus, maintain its authenticity with considerable force and probability; and yet, were it possible for him to speak to the simplest shepherd of ancient Greece, he would quickly afford as good reason as Mr. M. to be suspected of being “ an indifferent proficient ” in the language.

picion by the pleasantry of a *double entendre*. But we hold it prudent, and it shall be our endeavour in this place, to give no decided opinion on the main subject of dispute. For us the contention shall still remain *sub judice*.

To the QUERIES circulated through such parts of the Highlands as the COMMITTEE imagined most likely to afford information in reply to them, they received many answers, most of which were conceived in nearly similar terms; that the persons themselves had never doubted of the existence of such poems as MR. MACPHERSON had translated: that they had heard many of them repeated in their youth: that listening to them was the favourite amusement of Highlanders in the hours of leisure and idleness; but that, since the Rebellion in 1745, the manners of the people had undergone a change so unfavourable to the recitation of these poems, that it was now an amusement scarcely known, and that very few persons remained alive who were able to recite them. That many of the poems which they had formerly heard were similar in subject and story, as well as in the names of the heroes mentioned in them, to those translated by MR. MACPHERSON: that his translation seemed, to such as had read it, a very able one; but that it did not by any means come up to the force or energy of the original to such as had read it; for his book was by no means universally possessed, or read among Highlanders, even accustomed to reading, who conceived that his translation could add but little to their amusement, and not at all to their conviction, in a matter which they had never doubted. A few of the COMMITTEE's correspondents sent them such ancient poems as they possessed in writing, from having formerly taken them down from the oral recitation of the old Highlanders who were in use to recite them, or as they now took them down from some

person, whom a very advanced period of life, or a particular connection with some reciter of the old school, enabled still to retain them in his memory; * but those, the COMMITTEE'S correspondents said, were generally less perfect, and more corrupted, than the poems which they had formerly heard, or which might have been obtained at an earlier period. †

Several *collections* came to them, by present as well as by purchase, and in these are numerous "shreds and patches" that bear a strong resemblance to the materials of which "OSSIAN'S Poems" are composed. These are of various degrees of consequence. One of them we are the more tempted to give, for the same reason as the COMMITTEE was the more solicitous to procure it, because it was one which some of the opposers of the authenticity of OSSIAN had quoted as evidently spurious, betraying the most convincing marks of its being a close imitation of the Address to the Sun in MILTON.

"I got," says MR. MAC DIARMID, ‡ "the copy of these poems," (OSSIAN'S Address to the Sun in *Carthon*, and a similar address in *Carrickthura*) "about thirty years ago, from an old man in Glenlyon. I took it, and several other fragments, now, I fear, irrecoverably lost, from the man's mouth. *He had learnt them in his youth* from people in the same glen, which must have been long before MACPHERSON was born.

* The Rev. Mr SMITH, who has published translations of many Gaelic poems, accompanied by the originals, assures us, that near himself, in the parish of Klimnver, lived a person named M'PHEAL, *whom he has heard, for weeks together, from five till ten o'clock at night, rehearse ancient poems, and many of them OSSIAN'S.* Two others, called M'DUGAL and M'NEIL, could entertain their hearers in the same manner for a whole winter season. It was from persons of this description, undoubtedly, that MACPHERSON recovered a great part of the works of OSSIAN."

A. MACDONALD'S PRELIM. DISC. p. 76.

† See REPORT.

‡ Date, April 9, 1801. p. 71.

*Literal translation of OSSIAN'S Address to
the Sun in CARTHON.*

“ O! thou who travellest above, round as the full-orbed hard shield of the mighty! whence is thy brightness without frown, thy light that is lasting, O Sun? Thou comest forth in thy powerful beauty, and the stars hide their course; the moon, without strength, goeth from the sky, hiding herself under a wave in the west. Thou art in thy journey alone; who is so bold as to come nigh thee? The oak falleth from the high mountain; the rock and the precipice fall under old age; the ocean ebbeth and floweth, the moon is lost above in the sky; but thou alone for ever in victory, in the rejoicing of thy own light. When the storm darkeneth around the world, with fierce thunder, and piercing lightnings, thou lookest in thy beauty from the noise, smiling in the troubled sky! To me is thy light in vain, as I can never see thy countenance; though thy yellow golden locks are spread on the face of the clouds in the east; or when thou tremblest in the west, at thy dusky doors in the ocean. Perhaps thou and myself are at one time mighty, at another feeble, our years sliding down from the skies, quickly travelling together to their end. Rejoice then, O Sun! while thou art strong, O King! in thy youth. Dark and unpleasant is old age, like the vain and feeble light of the moon, while she looks through a cloud on the field, and her grey mist on the sides of the rocks; a blast from the north on the plain, a traveller in distress, and he slow.”

The comparison may be made, by turning to the end of MR. MACPHERSON'S version of “*Carthon*,” beginning “*O thou that rollest above.*”

*x A PRELIMINARY DISCOURSE.

But it must not be concealed, that after all the exertions of the COMMITTEE, it has not been able to obtain any one poem, the same in title and tenor with the poems published by him. We therefore feel that the reader of "OSSIAN'S Poems," until grounds more relative be produced, will often, in the perusal of Mr. M.'s translations, be induced, with some shew of justice, to exclaim with him, when he looked over the manuscript copies found in CLANRONALD'S family, "*D—n the scoundrel, it is he himself that now speaks, and not OSSIAN!*"*

To this sentiment the COMMITTEE has the candour to incline, as it will appear by their summing up. After producing or pointing to a large body of mixed evidence, and taking for granted the existence, at some period, of an abundance of Ossianic poetry, it comes to the question, "How far that collection of such poetry, published by MR. JAMES MACPHERSON, is genuine?" To answer this query decisively, is, as they confess, difficult. This, however, is the ingenuous manner in which they treat it.

"The COMMITTEE is possessed of no documents, to shew how much of his collection MR. MACPHERSON obtained in the form in which he has given it to the world. The poems and fragments of poems which the COMMITTEE has been able to procure, contain, as will appear from the article in the Appendix (No. 15.) already mentioned, often the substance, and sometimes almost the literal expression, (the *ipsisima verba*,) of passages given by MR. MACPHERSON, in the poems of which he has published the translations. But the COMMITTEE has not been able to obtain any one poem the same in title or tenor with the poems published by him. It is inclined to believe, that he was in use to supply chasms, and

* REPORT, p. 44.

to give connection, by inserting passages which he did not find, and to add what he conceived to be dignity and delicacy to the original composition, by striking out passages, by softening incidents, by refining the language, in short, by changing what he considered as too simple or too rude for a modern ear, and elevating what, in his opinion, was below the standard of good poetry. To what degree, however, he exercised these liberties, it is impossible for the COMMITTEE to determine. The advantages he possessed, which the COMMITTEE began its enquiries too late to enjoy, of collecting from the oral recitation of a number of persons now no more, a very great number of the same poems on the same subjects, and then collating those different copies or editions, if they may be so called, rejecting what was spurious or corrupted in one copy, and adopting from another something more genuine and excellent in its place, afforded him an opportunity of putting together what might fairly enough be called an original whole, of much more beauty, and with much fewer blemishes, than the COMMITTEE believe it *now* possible for any person, or combination of persons, to obtain." p. 152—3.

Some Scotch critics, who should not be ignorant of the strong holds and fastnesses of the advocates for the authenticity of these poems, appear so convinced of their insufficiency, that they pronounce the question put to rest for ever. But we greatly distrust that any literary question, possessing a single inch of debatable ground to stand upon, will be suffered to enjoy much rest in an age like the present. There are as many minds as men, and of wranglers there is no end. Behold another and "another yet," and, in our imagination, he—

" bears a glass,
Which shews us many more."

The first of these is MR. LAING, who has recently published "*The Poems of OSSIAN, &c. containing the Poetical Works of JAMES MACPHERSON, ESQ. in Prose and Rhyme: with Notes and Illustrations. In Two Volumes, 8vo. Edinburgh, 1805.*" In these "Notes and Illustrations," we foresee, that OSSIAN is likely to share the fate of SHAKESPEARE; that is, ultimately to be loaded and oppressed by heavy commentators until his immortal spirit groan beneath vast heaps of perishable matter. The object of MR. LAING'S commentary, after having elsewhere* endeavoured to shew that the poems are spurious, and of no historical authority, "is," says he, "not merely to exhibit parallel passages, much less instances of a fortuitous resemblance of ideas, but to produce the precise originals from which the similies and images are indisputably derived."† And these he pretends to find in Holy Writ, and in the classical poets, both of ancient and modern times. MR. LAING, however, is one of those detectors of plagiarisms and discoverers of coincidences whose exquisite penetration and acuteness can find any thing any where. DR. JOHNSON, who was shut against conviction with respect to OSSIAN, even when he affected to seek the truth in the heart of the Hebrides, may yet be made useful to the *Ossianites* in canvassing the merits of this redoubted stickler on the side of opposition. "Among the innumerable practices," says the Rambler,‡ "by which interest or envy have taught those who live upon literary fame to disturb each other at their airy banquets, one of the most common is the charge of plagiarism. When the excellence of a new composition can no longer be contested, and malice is

* In his Critical and Historical Dissertation on the Antiquity of Ossian's Poems.

† Pref. p. vii. -

‡ No. 143.

compelled to give way to the unanimity of applause, there is yet this one expedient to be tried, by which the author may be degraded, though his work be revered; and the excellence which we cannot obscure, may be set at such a distance as not to overpower our fainter lustre. This accusation is dangerous, because, even when it is false, it may be sometimes urged with probability."

How far this just sentence applies to MR. LAING, it does not become us, nor is it our business, now to declare; but we must say, that nothing can be more disingenuous or groundless than his frequent charges of plagiarism of the following description: because, in *the War of Caros*, we meet with these words: "It is like the field, when darkness covers the hills around, and the shadow grows slowly on the plain of the sun," we are to believe, according to MR. L. that the idea was stolen from VIRGIL'S—

Majoresque cadunt altis de montibus umbræ.
For see yon sunny hills the shade extend.

Dryden.

As well might we credit that no one ever beheld a natural phænomenon, except the Mantuan bard.* The book of nature is open to all, and in her pages there are no new readings. "Many subjects," it is well said by JOHNSON, "fall under the consideration of an author, which being *limited by nature*, can admit only of slight and accidental diversities. All definitions of the same thing must be nearly the same; and descriptions, which are definitions of a more lax and fanciful kind, must always have, in some degree, that resemblance to each other which they all have to their object."

It is true, however, if we were fully able to admit that MACPHERSON could not have obtained these

* This is not so good, because not so amusing in its absurdity as an attempt formerly made to prove the *Æneid* Earse, from "*Arma virumque cano*," and "*Airm 's am fear canam*," having the same meaning, and nearly the same sound.

ideas where he professes to have found them, MR. LAING has produced many instances of such remarkable coincidence as would make it probable that MACPHERSON frequently translates, not the Gaelic, but the poetical lore of antiquity. Still this is a battery that can only be brought to play on particular points; and then with great uncertainty. The mode of attack used by MR. KNIGHT, could it have been carried on to any extent, would have proved much more effectual. We shall give the instance alluded to. In his "*Analytical Enquiry into the Principles of Taste*, 1805, he makes these remarks:

"The untutored, but uncorrupted feelings of all unpolished nations, have regulated their fictions upon the same principles, even when most rudely exhibited. In relating the actions of their gods and deceased heroes, they are licentiously extravagant: for there falsehood could amuse, because it could not be detected: but in describing the common appearances of nature, and all those objects and effects which are exposed to habitual observation, their bards are scrupulously exact; so that an extravagant hyperbole, in a matter of this kind, is sufficient to mark as counterfeit any composition attributed to them. In the early stages of society, men are as acute and accurate in practical observation as they are limited and deficient in speculative science; and in proportion as they are ready to give up their imaginations to delusion, they are jealously tenacious of the evidence of their senses. JAMES MACPHERSON, in the person of his blind bard, could say, with applause, in the eighteenth century, 'Thus have I seen in Cona; but Cona I behold no more: thus have I seen two dark hills removed from their place by the strength of the mountain stream. They turn from side to side, and their tall oaks meet one another on high. Then they fall together with all their rocks and trees.'

"But had a blind bard, or any other bard, presumed

to utter such a rhapsody of bombast in the hall of shells, amid the savage warriors to whom OSSIAN is supposed to have sung, he would have needed all the influence of royal birth, attributed to that fabulous personage, to restrain the audience from throwing their shells at his head, and hooting him out of their company as an impudent liar. They must have been sufficiently acquainted with the rivulets of Cona or Glen-Coe to know that he had seen nothing of the kind; and have known enough of mountain torrents in general to know that no such effects are ever produced by them, and would, therefore, have indignantly rejected such a barefaced attempt to impose on their credulity."

The best defence that can be set up in this case will, perhaps, be to repeat, "It is he himself that now speaks, and not OSSIAN."

MR. LAING had scarcely thrown down the gauntlet, when MR. ARCHIBALD M'DONALD * appeared

* *Ready, eye ready, † for the field.*

The opinion of the colour of his opposition, whether it be that of truth or error, will depend on the eye that contemplates it. Those who delight to feast with MR. LAING *on the limbs of a mangled poet*, will think the latter unanswered; while those † who continue to indulge the animating thought, "that FINGAL lived, and that OSSIAN sung," will entertain a different sentiment. After successfully combating several old positions, || MR. M'DONALD terminates his discussion of the point at issue with these words:

* "Some of OSSIAN'S lesser poems, rendered into verse with a preliminary discourse, in answer to Mr. Laing's Critical and Historical Dissertation on the Antiquity of OSSIAN'S Poems. 8vo. p. 234. Liverpool, 1805."

† Thirlestane's motto. See Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel*.

‡ A Professor in the University of Edinburgh, the amiable and learned Dr. Gregory, is on the side of the believers in OSSIAN. His judgment is a tower of strength. See the Preface, p. vi to xii, and p. 146 of his "*Comparative View of the State and Faculties of Man with those of the Animal World.*"

|| Such as the silence of OSSIAN in respect to religion; his omission of wolves and bears, &c. See also, in the *Literary Journal*, August, 1801, a

“ He (MR. LAING) declares, that ‘ if a single poem of OSSIAN in MS. of an older date than the present century, (1700,) be procured and lodged in a public library, I (LAING) shall return among the first to our national-creed.’

“ This is reducing the point at issue to a narrow compass. Had the proposal been made at the outset, it would have saved both him and me a great deal of trouble : not that in regard to ancient Gaelic manuscripts I could give any more satisfactory account than has been done in the course of this discourse. There the reader will see, that though some of the poems are confessedly procured from oral tradition, yet several gentlemen of veracity attest to have seen among MACPHERSON’S papers several MSS. of a much older date than MR. LAING requires to be convinced. Though not more credulous than my neighbours, *I cannot resist facts so well attested ; there are no stronger for believing the best established human transactions.*

“ I understand the originals are in the press, and expected daily to make their appearance. When they do, the public will not be carried away by conjectures, but be able to judge on solid grounds. Till then, let the discussion on this subject be at rest.”
p. 193—4.

It is curious to remark, and, in this place, not unworthy of our notice, that whilst the controversy is imminent in the decision, whether these poems are to be ascribed to a Highland bard long since gone “ *to the hall of his fathers,*” or to a Lowland muse of the last century, it is in the serious meditation of some controversialist to step in and place the disputed wreath on the brows of Hibernia. There is no doubt that Ireland was in ancient times so much connected with

powerful encounter of many of Mr. L.’s other arguments in his “ *Dissertation*” against the authenticity of these poems. His ignorance of the Gaelic, and the consequent fatuity of his etymological remarks, are there ably exposed.

the adjacent coast of Scotland, that they might almost be considered as one country, having a community of manners and of language, as well as the closest political connection. Their poetical language is nearly, or rather altogether the same. These coinciding circumstances, therefore, independent of all other ground, afford to ingenuity, in the present state of the question, a sufficient basis for the erection of an hypothetical superstructure of a very imposing nature.

In a small volume published at Dusseldorf in 1787 by EDMOND, BARON DE HAROLD, an Irishman, of endless titles,* we are presented with what are called "*Poems of OSSIAN lately discovered.*" †

"I am interested," says the Baron in his Preface, "in no polemical dispute or party, and give these poems such as they are found *in the mouths of the people*; and do not pretend to ascertain what was the native country of OSSIAN. I honour and revere equally a bard of his exalted talents, were he born in Ireland or in Scotland. It is certain, that the Scotch and Irish were united at some early period. That they proceed from the same origin is indisputable; nay, I believe that it is proved beyond any possibility of negating it, that *the Scotch derive their origin from the Irish.* This truth has been brought in question but of late days; and all ancient tradition, and the general consent of the Scotch nation, and of their oldest historians, agree to confirm the certitude of this assertion. If any man still doubts of it, he will find,

* "Colonel Commander of the regiment of Konigsfeld, Gentleman of the Bed-Chamber of His most Serene Highness the Elector Palatin, Member of the German Society of Manheim, of the Royal Antiquarian Society of London, and of the Academy of Dusseldorf."

† In some lines in these poems we find the lyre of OSSIAN called "the old *Hibernian Lyre.*" The idea is not new. See Burke's Observation in Hume's first Letter to Dr. Blair. Also the Collections by Miss BROOKE and Mr. KENNEDY. Compare the story of *Conloch* with that of *Carthon* in MACPHERSON.

in MACGEOGEHAN'S History of Ireland, an entire conviction established by the most elaborate discussion, and most incontrovertible proofs." pp. v. vi.

We shall not stay to quarrel about "Sir Archy's great-grandmother,"* or to contend that FINGAL, the Irish giant, † did not one day go "over from Carrickfergus, and people all Scotland with his own hands," and make these sons of the north "*illegitimate*," but we may observe, that from the inclination of the Baron's opinion, added to the internal evidence of his poems, there appears at least as much reason to believe their author to have been a native of Ireland as of Scotland. The success with which MACPHERSON'S endeavours had been rewarded, induced the Baron to enquire whether any more of this kind of poetry could be obtained. His search, he confesses, would have proved fruitless, had he expected to find

* See Macklin's *Love a-la-mode*.

† "Selma is not at all known in Scotland. When I asked, and particularly those who were possessed of any poetry, songs, or tales, who FIONN was? (for he is not known by the name of FINGAL by any) I was answered, that he was an *Irishman*, if a man; for they sometimes thought him *a giant*, and that he lived in Ireland, and sometimes came over to hunt in the Highlands.

"Like a true Scotchman, in order to make his composition more acceptable to his countrymen, Mr. MACPHERSON changes the name of FIONN MAC CUMHAL, the Irishman, into FINGAL; which, indeed, sounds much better, and sets him up a Scotch king over the ideal kingdom of Morven in the west of Scotland. It had been a better argument for the authenticity, if he had allowed him to be an Irishman, and made Morven an Irish kingdom, as well as make Ireland the scene of his battles; but, as he must need make the hero of an epic poem a great character, it was too great honour for any other country but Scotland to have given birth to so considerable a personage. All the authentic histories of Ireland give a full account of FINGAL, or FION MAC CUMHAL'S actions; and any one who will take the trouble to look at Dr. KEATING, or any other history of that country, will find the matter related as above: whereas, in the *Chronicon Scotorum*, from which the list of the Scotch kings is taken, and the pretended MSS. they so much boast of to be seen in the Hebrides, there is not one syllable said of such a name as FINGAL."—*An Enquiry into the Authenticity of the Poems of Ossian*. By W. SHAW, A.M. F. S. A. Author of the *Gaelic Dictionary and Grammar*. London, 1781.

Mr. SHAW crowns his want of faith in MACPHERSON'S OSSIAN with this piece of information. "A gentleman promised to ornament a scallop shell with silver, if I should bring him one from the Highlands, and to swear it was the identical shell out of which FINGAL used to drink."—*A gentleman!*

complete pieces; “ for certainly,” says he, “ none such exist. But,” he adds, “ in seeking with assiduity and care, I found, by the help of my friends, several fragments of old traditionary songs, which were very sublime, and particularly remarkable for their simplicity and elegance.” p. iv.

“ From these fragments,” continues BARON DE HAROLD, “ I have composed the following poems. They are all founded on tradition; but the dress they now appear in is mine. It will appear singular to some, that OSSIAN, at times, especially in the songs of Comfort, *seems rather to be an Hibernian* than a Scotchman, and that some of these poems formally contradict passages of great importance in those handed to the public by MR. MACPHERSON, especially that very remarkable one of EVIR-ALLEN, where the description of her marriage with OSSIAN is essentially different in all its parts from that given in the former poems.” p. v.

We refer the reader to the opening of the fourth book of FINGAL, which treats of OSSIAN’S courtship of EVIR-ALLEN. The EVIR-ALLEN of BARON DE HAROLD is in these words :

EVIR - ALLEN :

A POEM.

THOU fairest of the maids of Morven, young beam of streamy Lutha, come to the help of the aged, come to the help of the distressed. Thy soul is open to pity. Friendship glows in thy tender breast. Ah come and soothe away my woe. Thy words are music to my soul.

Bring me my once lov'd harp. It hangs long neglected in my hall. The stream of years has borne me away in its course, and roll'd away all my bliss. Dim and faded are my eyes; thin strewed with hairs my head. Weak is that nervous arm once the terror of foes. Scarce can I grasp my staff, the prop of my trembling limbs.

Lead me to your craggy steep. The murmur of the falling streams; the whistling winds rushing thro' the woods of my hills; the welcome rays of the bounteous sun will soon awake the voice of song in my breast. The thoughts of former years glide over my soul like swift shooting meteors o'er Arden's gloomy vales.

Come ye friends of my youth, ye soft sounding voices of Cona, bend from your gold-ting'd clouds, and join me in my song. A mighty blaze is kindled in my soul. I hear a powerful voice. It says, "Seize thy beam of glory, O bard! for thou shalt soon depart. Soon shall the light of song be faded. Soon thy tuneful voice forgotten."—"Yes, I obey, O powerful voice, for thou art pleasing to mine ear.

O Eir-allen! thou boast of Erin's maids, thy thoughts come streaming on my soul. Hear, O Malvina! a tale of my youth, the actions of my former days.

Peace reign'd over Morven's hills. The shell of joy resounded in our halls. Round the blaze of the oak sported in festive dance the maids of Morven. They shone like the radiant bow of heaven, when the fiery rays of the setting sun brighten its varied sides. They wooed me to their love, but my heart was silent, cold. Indifference, like a brazen shield, cover'd my frozen heart.

Fingal saw, he smil'd and mildly spoke: "My son, the down of youth grows on thy cheek. Thy arm has wielded the spear of war. Foes have felt thy force.

Morven's maids are fair, but fairer are the daughters of Erin. Go to that happy isle; to Branno's grass-cover'd fields. The daughter of my friend deserves thy love. Majestic beauty flows round her as a robe, and Innocence as a precious veil heightens her youthful charms. Go take thy arms, and win the lovely fair."

Straight I obey'd. A chosen band follow'd my steps. We mounted the dark-bosomed ship of the king, spread its white sails to the winds, and plough'd thro' the foam of ocean. Pleasant shone the fire-eyed Ull-Erin.* With joyful songs we cut the liquid way. The moon, regent of the silent night, gleamed majestic in the blue vault of heaven, and seemed pleased to bathe her side in the trembling wave. My soul was full of my father's words. A thousand thoughts divided my wavering mind.

Soon as the early beam of morn appeared, we saw the green-skirted sides of Erin advancing in the bosom of the sea. White broke the tumbling surges on the coast.

Deep in Larmor's woody bay we drove our keel to the shore, and gained the lofty beach. I enquired after the generous Branno. A son of Erin led us to his halls, to the banks of the sounding Lego. He said, "Many warlike youths are assembled to gain the dark-haired maid, the beauteous Evir-allen. Branno will give her to the brave. The conqueror shall bear away the fair. Erin's chiefs dispute the maid, for she is destined for the strong in arms.

These words inflamed my breast, and roused courage in my heart. I clad my limbs in steel. I grasped a shining spear in my hand. Branno saw our approach. He sent the grey-haired Snivan to invite us to his feast, and know the intent of our course. He came with the solemn steps of age, and gravely spoke the words of the chief.

* The guiding star to Ireland.

“ Whence are these arms of steel? If friends ye come, Branno invites ye to his halls; for this day the lovely Evir-allen shall bless the warrior’s arms whose lance shall shine victorious in the combat of valour.”

“ O venerable bard,” I said, “ peace guides my steps to Branno. My arm is young, and few are my deeds in war, but valour inflames my soul: I am of the race of the brave.”

The bard departed. We followed the steps of age, and soon arrived to Brauno’s halls.

The hero came to meet us. Manly serenity adorned his brow. His open front shewed the kindness of his heart. “ Welcome,” he said, “ ye sons of strangers; welcome to Branno’s friendly halls, partake his shell of joy. Share in the combat of spears. Not unworthy is the prize of valour, the lovely dark-haired maid of Erin; but strong must be that warrior’s hand that conquers Erin’s chiefs; matchless his strength in fight.”

“ Chief,” I replied, “ the light of my father’s deeds blazes in my soul. Though young, I seek my beam of glory foremost in the ranks of foes. Warrior I can fall, but I shall fall with renown.”

Happy is thy father, O generous youth! more happy the maid of thy love. Thy glory shall surround her with praise; thy valour raise her charms. O were my Evir-allen thy spouse, my years would pass away in joy. Pleased I would descend into the grave: contented see the end of my days.”

The feast was spread: stately and slow came Evir-allen. A snow-white veil covered her blushing face. Her large blue eyes were bent on earth. Dignity flowed round her graceful steps. A shining tear fell glittering on her cheek. She appeared lovely as the mountain flower when the ruddy beams of the rising sun gleam on its dew-covered sides. Decent she sate. High beat my fluttering heart. Swift through my

veins flew my thrilling blood. An unusual weight oppressed my breast. I stood, darkened, in my place. The image of the maid wandered over my troubled soul.

The sprightly harp's melodious voice arose from the strings of the bards. My soul melted away in the sounds, for my heart, like a stream, flowed gently away in song. Murmurs soon broke upon our joy. Half unsheathed daggers gleamed. Many a voice was heard abrupt. " Shall the son of the strangers be preferred? Soon shall he be rolled away, like mist, by the rushing breath of the tempest. Sedate I rose, for I despised the boaster's threats. The fair one's eye followed my departure. I heard a smothered sigh burst from her breast.

The horn's harsh sound summoned us to the doubtful strife of spears. Lothmar, fierce hunter of the woody Galmal, first opposed his might. He vainly insulted my youth, but my sword cleft his brazen shield, and cut his ashen lance in twain. Straight I withheld my descending blade. Lothmar retired confused.

Then rose the red-haired strength of Sulin. Fierce rolled his deep-sunk eye. His shaggy brows stood erect. His face was contracted with scorn. Thrice his spear pierced my buckler. Thrice his sword struck on my helm. Swift flashes gleamed from our circling blades. The pride of my rage arose. Furious I rushed on the chief, and stretched his bulk on the plain. Groaning he fell to earth. Lego's shores echoed from his fall.

Then advanced Cormac, graceful in glittering arms. No fairer youth was seen on Erin's grassy hills. His age was equal to mine: His port majestic; his stature tall and slender, like the young shooting poplar in Lutha's streamy vales; but sorrow sate upon his brow: languor reigned on his cheek. My heart inclined to

the youth. My sword oft avoided to wound; often sought to save his days: but he rushed eager on death. He fell. Blood gushed from his panting breast. Tears flowed streaming from mine eyes. I stretched forth my hand to the chief. I proffered gentle words of peace. Faintly he seized my hand. "Stranger," he said, "I willingly die, for my days were oppressed with woe. Evirallen rejected my love. She slighted my tender suit. Thou alone deservest the maid, for pity reigns in thy soul, and thou art generous and brave. Tell her, I forgive her scorn. Tell her I descend with joy into the grave, but raise the stone of my praise. Let the maid throw a flower on my tomb, and mingle one tear with my dust, this is my sole request. This she can grant to my shade."

I would have spoken, but broken sighs issuing from my breast, interrupted my faltering words. I threw my spear aside. I clasped the youth in my arms: but, alas! his soul was already departed to the cloudy mansions of his fathers.

Then thrice I raised my voice, and called the chiefs to combat. Thrice I brandished my spear, and wielded my glittering sword. No warrior appeared. They dreaded the force of my arm, and yielded the blue-eyed maid.

Three days I remained in Branno's halls. On the fourth he led me to the chambers of the fair. She came forth attended by her maids, graceful in lovely majesty, like the moon, when all the stars confess her sway, and retire respectful and abashed. I laid my sword at her feet. Words of love flowed faltering from my tongue. Gently she gave her hand. Joy seized my enraptured soul. Branno was touched at the sight. He closed me in his aged arms.

"O wert thou," said he, "the son of my friend, the son of the mighty Fingal, then were my happiness complete."

A PRELIMINARY DISCOURSE. xxxv

“ I am, I am the son of thy friend,” I replied, “ Ossian, the son of Fingal,” then sunk upon his aged breast. Our flowing tears mingled together. We remained long clasped in each other’s arms.

Such was my youth, O Malvina! but alas I am now forlorn. Darkness covers my soul. Yet the light of song beams at times on my mind. It solaces awhile my woe.

Bards, prepare my tomb. Lay me by the fair Evirallen. When the revolving years bring back the mild season of spring to our hills, sing the praise of Cona’s bard, of Ossian, the friend of the distressed.



THE difference, in many material circumstances, between these two descriptions of, as it would seem, the same thing, must be very apparent. “ I will submit,” says the Baron, “ the solution of this problem to the public.” We shall follow his example.

The Honourable HENRY GRATTAN, Esq. to whom the Baron dedicates his work, has said, that the poems which it contains are calculated to inspire “ valour, wisdom, and virtue.” It is true, that they are adorned with numerous beauties both of poetry and morality. They are still farther distinguished and illumined by noble allusions to the Omnipotent, which cannot fail to strike the reader as a particular in which they remarkably vary from those of MR. MACPHERSON. “ In his,” says our author, “ there is no mention of the Divinity. In these, the chief characteristic is, the many solemn descriptions of the Almighty Being, which give a degree of elevation to them unattainable by any other method. It is worthy of observation how the Bard gains in sublimity by his magnificent display of the power, bounty, eternity, and justice, of God: and every reader must rejoice

to find the venerable old warrior occupied in descriptions so worthy his great and comprehensive genius, and to see him freed from the imputation of atheism, with which he had been branded by many sagacious and impartial men." p. vi.

We could willingly transcribe more of these poems, but we have already quoted enough to shew the style of them, and can spare space for no additions. LAMOR, a poem, is, the Baron thinks, of a more ancient date than that of OSSIAN, and "the model, perhaps, of his compositions." Another, called "SITRIC," King of Dublin, which throws some light on the history of those times, he places in the ninth century. What faith, however, is to be put in the genuineness of the "*Fragments*,"* which BARON DE HAROLD assures us furnished him with the ground work of these poems, we leave it to others to ascertain. Our investigation is confined within far narrower limits.

It has, without doubt, been observed, that in noticing what has transpired on this subject since our last edition, we have carefully avoided any dogmatism on the question collectedly; and having simply displayed a torch to shew the paths which lead to the labyrinth, those who wish to venture more deeply into its intricacies, may, when they please, pursue them.

* If Mr. LAING should chuse to take the trouble of passing them through his alembic, they may easily be disposed of. For instance: "LARNUL, or the Song of Despair."

"The dreary night Owl screams in the solitary retreat of his mouldering ivy-covered Tower," p. 163. Taken from the Persian poet quoted by Gibbon.

"The Owl hath sung her watch-song in the Towers of Afrasiab."

"All nature is consonant to the horrors of my mind." LARNUL, p. 163. Evidently from the *Rhythmas* of the Portuguese poet. One in despair calls the desolation of nature,

"----- lugar conforme a meu cuidado."

Obras de Camoens, t. iii. p. 115.

Mr. LAING may pronounce this learned, but it is at any rate as foolish as it is learned.

A PRELIMINARY DISCOURSE xxxvii

We must acknowledge, before we depart, that we cannot see without indignation, or rather pity, the belief of some persons that these poems are the offspring of MACPHERSON'S genius, so operating on their minds as to turn their admiration of the ancient poet into contempt of the modern. We ourselves love antiquity, not merely however on account of its antiquity, but because it deserves to be loved. No; we honestly own with QUINTILIAN, *in quibusdam antiquorum vix risum, in quibusdam autem vix somnum tenere.** The songs of other times, when they are, as they frequently are, supremely beautiful, merit every praise, but we must not therefore despise all novelty. In the days of the Theban bard, it would seem to have been otherwise, for he appears to give the preference to old wine, but *new songs*—

αινεῖ δὲ παλαιὸν
 μέν οἶνον, ἀνδρα δ' ὕμνων
 νεωτέρων.

PIND. OI. Od. IX.

With respect to age in wine we are tolerably agreed, but we differ widely in regard to novelty in verse. Though warranted in some measure, yet all inordinate prepossessions should be moderated, and it would be well if we were occasionally to reflect on this question, If the ancients had been so inimical to novelty as we are, what would now be old?†

We shall not presume to affirm that these poems were originally produced by MACPHERSON, but admitting it, for the sake of argument, it would then perhaps be just to ascribe all the mystery that has hung about them to the often ungenerous dislike of novelty, or, it may be more truly, the efforts of our contemporaries, which influences the present day. This might have stimulated him to seek in the garb of

* Quintilian or Tacitus *de Oratoribus*.

† See Horace.

xxxviii A PRELIMINARY DISCOURSE.

“*th’ olden time*” that respect which is sometimes despitefully denied to drapery of a later date. Such a motive doubtlessly swayed the designs both of CHATTERTON and IRELAND, whose names we cannot mention together without DRYDEN’S comment on SPENSER and FLECKNOE, “that is, from the top to the bottom of all poetry.” In ushering into the world the hapless, but beautiful muse of CHATTERTON, as well as the contemptible compositions of IRELAND, it was alike thought necessary, to secure public attention, to have recourse to “quaint Inglis,” or an antique dress. And to the eternal disgrace of prejudice, the latter, merely in consequence of their disguise, found men blind enough to advocate their claims to that admiration which, on their eyes being opened, they could no longer see, and from the support of which they shrunk abashed.

But we desist. It is useless to draw conclusions as it is vain to reason, with certain people who act unreasonably; since, if they were, in these particular cases, capable of reason, they would need no reasoning with. By some, the Poems here published will be esteemed in proportion as the argument for their antiquity prevails; but with regard to the general reader, and the unaffected lovers of “heaven-descended poesy,” let the question take either way, still

The harp in SELMA was not idly strung,
And long shall last the themes our poet sung.
BERRATHON,

FEBRUARY 1,
1806.

P R E F A C E.

WITHOUT encreasing his genius, the Author may have improved his language, in the thirteen years that the following Poems have been in the hands of the Public. Errors in diction might have been committed at twenty-four, which the experience of a riper age may remove; and some exuberances in imagery may be restrained, with advantage, by a degree of judgment acquired in the progress of time. Impressed with this opinion, he ran over the whole with attention and accuracy; and, he hopes, he has brought the work to a state of correctness which will preclude all future improvements.

The eagerness with which these Poems have been received abroad are a recompence for the coldness with which a few have affected to treat them at home. All

the polite nations of Europe have transferred them into their respective languages ; and they speak of him, who brought them to light, in terms that might flatter the vanity of one fond of fame. In a convenient indifference for a literary reputation, the Author hears praise without being elevated, and ribaldry without being depressed. He has frequently seen the first bestowed too precipitately ; and the latter is so faithless to its purpose, that it is often the only index to merit in the present age.

Though the taste, which defines genius by the points of the compass, is a subject fit for mirth in itself, it is often a serious matter in the sale of a work. When rivers define the limits of abilities, as well as the boundaries of countries, a writer may measure his success by the latitude under which he was born. It was to avoid a part of this inconvenience that the Author is said, by some, who speak without any authority, to have ascribed his own pro

ductions to another name. If this was the case, he was but young in the art of deception. When he placed the Poet in antiquity, the Translator should have been born on this side of the Tweed.

These observations regard only the frivolous in matters of literature; these, however, form a majority in every age and nation. In this country, men of genuine taste abound; but their still voice is drowned in the clamours of a multitude, who judge by fashion of poetry as of dress. The truth is, to judge aright requires almost as much genius as to write well; and good critics are as rare as great poets. Though two hundred thousand Romans stood up when Virgil came into the Theatre, Varius only could correct the *Æneid*. He that obtains fame must receive it through mere fashion, and gratify his vanity with the applause of men of whose judgment he cannot approve.

The following Poems, it must be confessed, are more calculated to please per-

sons of exquisite feelings of heart, than those who receive all their impressions by the ear. The novelty of cadence, in what is called a prose version, though not destitute of harmony, will not to common readers supply the absence of the frequent returns of rhyme. This was the opinion of the Writer himself, though he yielded to the judgment of others in a mode which presented freedom and dignity of expression instead of fetters, which cramp the thought, whilst the harmony of language is preserved. His intention was to publish in verse. The making of poetry, like any other handicraft, may be learned by industry; and he had served his apprenticeship, though in secret, to the Muses.

It is, however, doubtful, whether the harmony which these Poems might derive from rhyme, even in much better hands than those of the Translator, could atone for the simplicity and energy which they would lose. The determination of this point shall be left to the readers of this

Preface. The following is the beginning of a Poem, translated from the Norse to the Gaelic language, and from the latter transferred into English. The verse took little more time to the writer than the prose; and even he himself is doubtful (if he has succeeded in either) which of them is the most literal version.

FRAGMENT
OF
A NORTHERN TALE.

WHERE Harold, with golden hair, spread
o'er Lochlin* his high commands; where,
with justice, he ruled the tribes, who sunk,
subdued, beneath his sword; abrupt rises
Gormal† in snow! The tempests roll dark
on his sides, but calm, above, his vast
forehead appears. White-issuing from the
skirt of his storms, the troubled torrents
pour down his sides. Joining, as they

* The Gaelic name of Scandinavia, or Scandinia.

† The mountains of Sevo.

roar along, they bear the Torno, in foam, to the main.

Grey on the bank, and far from men, half covered, by ancient pines, from the wind, a lonely pile exalts its head, long shaken by the storms of the north. To this fled Sigurd, fierce in fight, from Harold the leader of armies, when fate had brightened his spear with renown: when he conquered in that rude field, where Lulan's warriors fell in blood, or rose in terror on the waves of the main. Darkly sat the grey-haired chief; yet sorrow dwelt not in his soul. But when the warrior thought on the past, his proud heart heaved again his side: Forth flew his sword from its place, he wounded Harold in all the winds.

One daughter, and only one, but bright in form and mild of soul, the last beam of the setting line, remained to Sigurd of all his race. His son, in Lulan's battle slain, beheld not his father's flight from his foes.

Nor finished seemed the ancient line !
The splendid beauty of bright-eyed Fithon
covered still the fallen king with renown.
Her arm was white like Gormal's snow ;
her bosom whiter than the foam of the
main, when roll the waves beneath the
wrath of the winds. Like two stars were
her radiant eyes, like two stars that rise
on the deep, when dark tumult embroils
the night. Pleasant are their beams aloft,
as stately they ascend the skies.

Nor Odin forgot, in aught, the maid.
Her form scarce equalled her lofty mind.
Awe moved around her stately steps. He-
roes loved—but shrunk away in their
ears. Yet midst the pride of all her
charms, her heart was soft, and her soul
was kind. She saw the mournful with
tearful eyes. Transient darkness arose in
her breast. Her joy was in the chace.
Each morning, when doubtful light wan-
dered dimly on Lulan's waves, she roused
the resounding woods, to Gormal's head of
snow. Nor moved the maid alone, &c.

THE SAME VERSIFIED.

WHERE fair-hair'd Harold, o'er Scandinavia reign'd,
And held, with justice, what his valour gain'd,
Sevo, in snow, his rugged forehead rears,
And, o'er the warfare of his storms, appears
Abrupt and vast.—White-wandering down his side
A thousand torrents, gleaming as they glide,
Unite below; and, pouring thro' the plain,
Hurry the troubled Torno to the main.

Grey, on the bank, remote from human kind,
By aged pines half-shelter'd from the wind,
A homely mansion rose, of antique form,
For ages batter'd by the polar storm.
To this fierce Sigurd fled, from Norway's lord,
When fortune settled on the warrior's sword,
In that rude field where Suecia's chiefs were slain,
Or forced to wander o'er the Bothnic main.
Dark was his life, yet undisturb'd with woes,
But when the memory of defeat arose,
His proud heart struck his side; he grasp'd the spear,
And wounded Harold in the vacant air.

One daughter only, but of form divine,
The last fair beam of the departing line,
Remain'd of Sigurd's race. His warlike son
Fell in the shock which overturn'd the throne.
Nor desolate the house! Fionia's charms
Sustain'd the glory which they lost in arms.
White was her arm, as Sevo's lofty snow,
Her bosom fairer than the waves below,
When heaving to the winds. Her radiant eyes,
Like two bright stars, exulting as they rise,

O'er the dark tumult of a stormy night,
And gladd'ning heav'n with their majestic light.

In nought is Odin to the maid unkind,
Her form scarce equals her exalted mind,
Awe leads her sacred steps where'er they move,
And mankind worship where they dare not love.
But, mix'd with softness, was the virgin's pride,
Her heart had feelings which her eyes deny'd.
Her bright tears started at another's woes,
While transient darkness on her soul arose.

The chace she lov'd; when morn, with doubtful
beam
Came dimly wandering o'er the Bothnic stream,
On Sevo's sounding sides she bent the bow,
And rous'd his forests to his head of snow.
Nor mov'd the maid alone, &c.

One of the chief improvements on this edition is the care taken in arranging the Poems in the order of time, so as to form a kind of regular history of the age to which they relate. The Writer has now resigned them for ever to their fate. That they have been well received by the Public, appears from an extensive sale; that

they shall continue to be well received, he may venture to prophecy without the gift of that inspiration, to which poets lay claim. Through the medium of version upon version, they retain, in foreign languages, their native character of simplicity and energy. Genuine poetry, like gold, loses little, when properly transfused ; but when a composition cannot bear the test of a literal version, it is a counterfeit which ought not to pass current. The operation must, however, be performed with skilful hands. A Translator, who cannot equal his original, is incapable of expressing its beauties.

LONDON,
AUG. 15, 1773.

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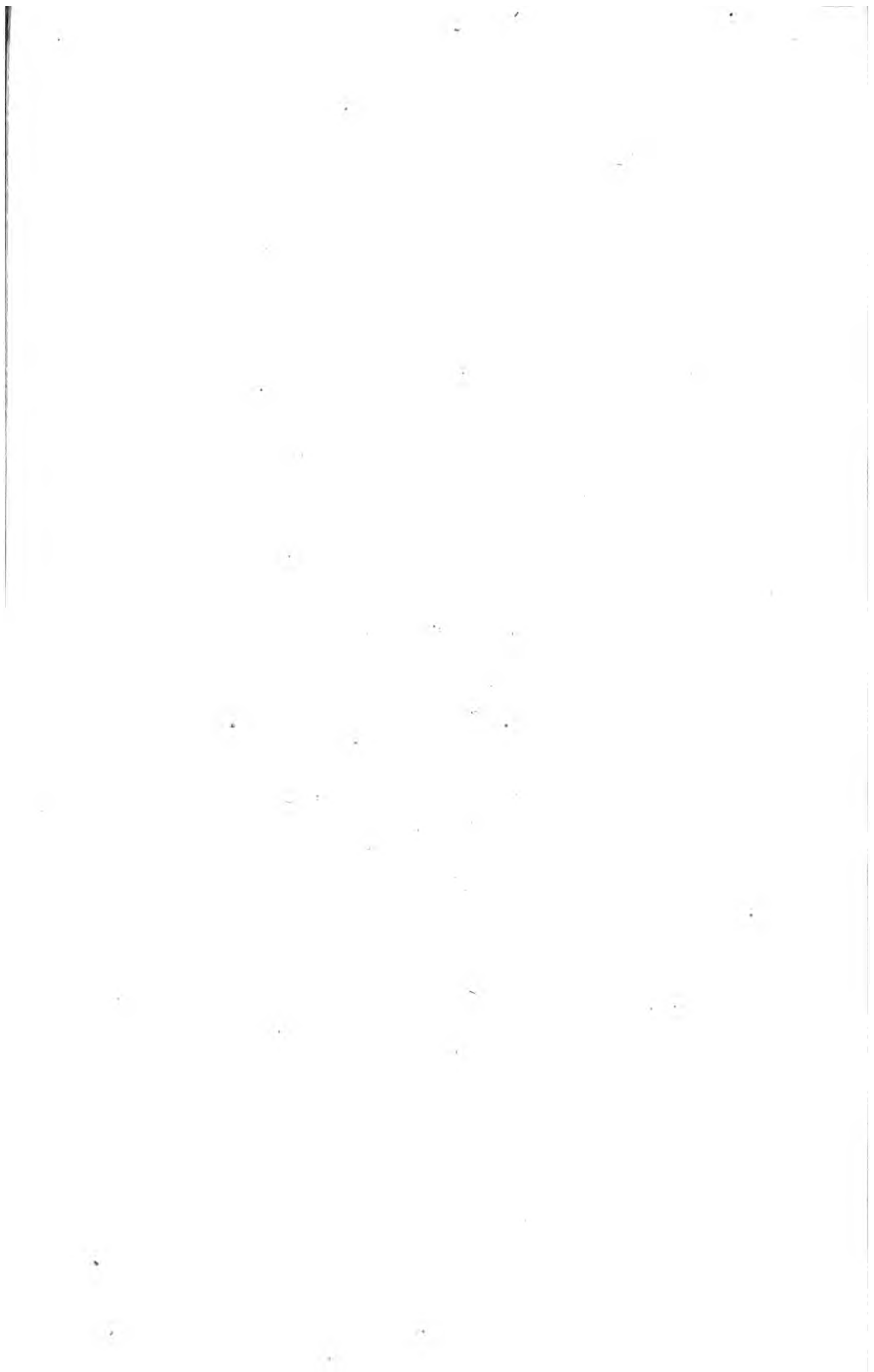
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A DISSERTATION
CONCERNING
THE ÆRA OF OSSIAN.

VOL. I.

B



A DISSERTATION

CONCERNING

THE ÆRA OF OSSIAN.

INQUIRIES into the antiquities of nations afford more pleasure than any real advantage to mankind. The ingenious may form systems of history on probabilities and a few facts; but at a great distance of time, their accounts must be vague and uncertain. The infancy of states and kingdoms is as destitute of great events, as of the means of transmitting them to posterity. The arts of polished life, by which alone facts can be preserved with certainty, are the production of a well-formed community. It is then historians begin to write, and public transactions to be worthy remembrance. The actions of former times are left in obscurity, or magnified by uncertain traditions. Hence it is that we find so much of the marvellous in the origin of every nation; posterity being always ready to believe any thing, however fabulous, that reflects honour on their ancestors.

The Greeks and Romans were remarkable for this weakness. They swallowed the most absurd fables concerning the high antiquities of their respective nations. Good historians, however, rose very early amongst them, and transmitted, with lustre, their great actions to posterity. It is to them that they owe that unrivalled fame they now

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enjoy, while the great actions of other nations are involved in fables, or lost in obscurity. The Celtic nations afford a striking instance of this kind. They, though once the masters of Europe from the mouth of the river Oby,* in Russia, to Cape Finisterre, the western point of Galicia in Spain, are very little mentioned in history. They trusted their fame to tradition and the songs of their bards, which, by the vicissitude of human affairs, are long since lost. Their ancient language is the only monument that remains of them; and the traces of it being found in places so widely distant from each other, serves only to shew the extent of their ancient power, but throws very little light on their history.

Of all the Celtic nations, that which possessed old Gaul is the most renowned; not perhaps on account of worth superior to the rest, but for their wars with a people who had historians to transmit the fame of their enemies, as well as their own, to posterity. Britain was first peopled by them, according to the testimony of the best authors; † its situation in respect to Gaul makes the opinion probable; but what puts it beyond all dispute, is, that the same customs and language prevailed among the inhabitants of both in the days of Julius Cæsar. ‡

The colony from Gaul possessed themselves, at first, of that part of Britain which was next to their own country; and spreading northward, by degrees, as they increased in numbers, peopled the whole island. Some adventurers passing over from those parts of Britain that are within sight of Ireland, were the founders of the Irish nation: which is a more probable story than the idle fables of Milesian and Gallician colonies. Diodorus Siculus§ mentions it as a thing well known in his time, that the inhabitants of Ireland were originally Britons, and his testimony is unquestionable, when we consider that, for many ages, the language and customs of both nations were the same.

Tacitus was of opinion that the ancient Caledonians were of German extract; but even the ancient Germans themselves were Gauls. The present Germans, properly

* Plin. l. 6.

+ Cæs. l. 5. Tac. Agric. c. 2.

‡ Cæsar. Pomp. Mel. Tacitus.

§ Diod. Sic. l. 5.

so called, were not the same with the ancient Celtæ. The manners and customs of the two nations were similar; but their language different. The Germans* are the genuine descendants of the ancient Scandinavians, who crossed, in an early period, the Baltic. The Celtæ,† anciently, sent many colonies into Germany, all of whom retained their own laws, language, and customs, till they were dissipated, in the Roman empire; and it is of them, if any colonies came from Germany into Scotland, that the ancient Caledonians were descended.

But whether the Caledonians were a colony of the Celtic Germans, or the same with the Gauls that first possessed themselves of Britain, is a matter of no moment at this distance of time. Whatever their origin was, we find them very numerous in the time of Julius Agricola, which is a presumption that they were long before settled in the country. The form of their government was a mixture of aristocracy and monarchy, as it was in all the countries where the Druids bore the chief sway. This order of men seems to have been formed on the same principles with the Dactyli Idæ and Curetes of the ancients. Their pretended intercourse with heaven, their magic and divination were the same. The knowledge of the Druids in natural causes, and the properties of certain things, the fruit of the experiments of ages, gained them a mighty reputation among the people. The esteem of the populace soon increased into a veneration for the order; which these cunning and ambitious priests took care to improve, to such a degree, that they, in a manner, ingrossed the management of civil, as well as religious, matters. It is generally allowed that they did not abuse this extraordinary power; the preserving their character of sanctity was so essential to their influence, that they never broke out into violence or oppression. The chiefs were allowed to execute the laws, but the legislative power was entirely in the hands of the Druids.‡ It was by their authority that the tribes were united, in times of the greatest danger, under one head. This temporary king, or Vergobretus,§ was chosen by them, and generally laid

* Strabo, l. 7.

† Cæs. l. 6. Liv. l. 5. Tac. de mor. Germ.

‡ Cæs. l. 6.

§ Fer-gubreth, *the man to judge*,

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down his office at the end of the war. These priests enjoyed long this extraordinary privilege among the Celtic nations who lay beyond the pale of the Roman empire. It was in the beginning of the second century that their power among the Caledonians begun to decline. The traditions concerning Trathal and Cormac, ancestors to Fingal, are full of the particulars of the fall of the Druids: a singular fate, it must be owned, of priests, who had once established their superstition.

The continual wars of the Caledonians against the Romans hindered the better sort from initiating themselves, as the custom formerly was, into the order of the Druids. The precepts of their religion were confined to a few, and were not much attended to by a people inured to war. The Vergobretus, or chief magistrate, was chosen without the concurrence of the hierarchy, or continued in his office against their will. Continual power strengthened his interest among the tribes, and enabled him to send down, as hereditary to his posterity, the office he had only received himself by election.

On occasion of a new war against the *King of the World*, as tradition emphatically calls the Roman emperor, the Druids, to vindicate the honour of the order, began to resume their ancient privilege of choosing the Vergobretus. Garmal, the son of Tarno, being deputed by them, came to the grandfather of the celebrated Fingal, who was then Vergobretus, and commanded him, in the name of the whole order, to lay down his office. Upon his refusal, a civil war commenced, which soon ended in almost the total extinction of the religious order of the Druids. A few that remained, retired to the dark recesses of their groves, and the caves they had formerly used for their meditations. It is then we find them in *the circle of stones*, and unheeded by the world. A total disregard for the order, and utter abhorrence of the Druidical rites ensued. Under this cloud of public hate, all that had any knowledge of the religion of the Druids became extinct, and the nation fell into the last degree of ignorance of their rites and ceremonies.

It is no matter of wonder then, that Fingal and his son Ossian disliked the Druids, who were the declared

enemies to their succession in the supreme magistracy. It is a singular case, it must be allowed, that there are no traces of religion in the poems ascribed to Ossian; as the poetical compositions of other nations are so closely connected with their mythology. But gods are not necessary, when the poet has genius. It is hard to account for it to those who are not made acquainted with the manner of the old Scottish bards. That race of men carried their notions of martial honour to an extravagant pitch. Any aid given their heroes in battle, was thought to derogate from their fame; and the bards immediately transferred the glory of the action to him who had given that aid.

Had the poet brought down gods, as often as Homer hath done, to assist his heroes, his work had not consisted of eulogiums on men, but of hymns to superior beings. Those who write in the Galic language seldom mention religion in their profane poetry; and when they professedly write of religion, they never mix with their compositions the actions of their heroes. This custom alone, even though the religion of the Druids had not been previously extinguished, may, in some measure, excuse the author's silence concerning the religion of ancient times.

To allege, that a nation is void of all religion, would betray ignorance of the history of mankind. The traditions of their fathers, and their own observations on the works of nature, together with that superstition which is inherent in the human frame, have, in all ages, raised in the minds of men some idea of a superior being. Hence it is, that in the darkest times, and amongst the most barbarous nations, the very populace themselves had some faint notion, at least, of a divinity. The Indians, who worship no God, believe that he exists. It would be doing injustice to the author of these poems, to think, that he had not opened his conceptions to that primitive and greatest of all truths. But let his religion be what it will, it is certain he has not alluded to Christianity, or any of its rites, in his poems; which ought to fix his opinions, at least, to an æra prior to that religion. Conjectures, on this subject, must supply the place of proof. The persecution begun by Dioclesian, in the year 303, is the most probable time in which the first dawning of Christi-

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anity in the north of Britain can be fixed. The humane and mild character of Constantius Chlorus, who commanded then in Britain, induced the persecuted Christians to take refuge under him. Some of them, through a zeal to propagate their tenets, or through fear, went beyond the pale of the Roman empire, and settled among the Caledonians; who were ready to hearken to their doctrines, if the religion of the Druids was exploded long before.

These missionaries, either through choice, or to give more weight to the doctrine they advanced, took possession of the cells and groves of the Druids; and it was from this retired life they had the name of *Culdees*,* which in the language of the country signified *sequestered persons*. It was with one of the *Culdees* that Ossian, in his extreme old age, is said to have disputed concerning the Christian religion. This dispute, they say, is extant, and is couched in verse, according to the custom of the times. The extreme ignorance on the part of Ossian of the Christian tenets, shews, that that religion had only been lately introduced, as it is not easy to conceive, how one of the first rank could be totally unacquainted with a religion that had been known for any time in the country. The dispute bears the genuine marks of antiquity. The obsolete phrases and expressions peculiar to the times, prove it to be no forgery. If Ossian then lived at the introduction of Christianity, as by all appearance he did, his epoch will be the latter end of the third, and beginning of the fourth century. Tradition here steps in with a kind of proof.

The exploits of Fingal against Caracul, † the son of the *King of the World*, are among the first brave actions of his youth. A complete poem, which relates to this subject, is printed in this collection.

In the year 210 the emperor Severus, after returning from his expedition against the Caledonians, at York fell into the tedious illness of which he afterwards died. The Caledonians and Maiatæ, resuming courage from his in-

* Culdich.

† Carac'huil, *terrible eye*. Carac-'healla, *terrible look*. Carac-challamh, *a sort of upper garment*.

disposition, took arms in order to recover the possessions they had lost. The enraged emperor commanded his army to march into their country, and to destroy it with fire and sword. His orders were but ill executed, for his son, Caracalla, was at the head of the army, and his thoughts were entirely taken up with the hopes of his father's death, and with schemes to supplant his brother Geta.—He scarcely had entered the enemy's country, when news was brought him that Severus was dead.—A sudden peace is patched up with the Caledonians, and, as it appears from Dion Cassius, the country they had lost to Severus was restored to them.

The Caracul of Fingal is no other than Caracalla, who, as the son of Severus, the Emperor of Rome, whose dominions were extended almost over the known world, was not without reason called the *Son of the King of the World*. The space of time between 211, the year Severus died, and the beginning of the fourth century, is not so great, but Ossian the son of Fingal, might have seen the Christians whom the persecution under Dioclesian had driven beyond the pale of the Roman empire.

In one of the many lamentations on the death of Oscar, a battle which he fought against Caros, king of ships, on the banks of the winding Carun,* is mentioned among his great actions. It is more than probable, that the Caros mentioned here, is the same with the noted usurper Carausius, who assumed the purple in the year 287, and seizing on Britain, defeated the emperor Maximinian Herculius, in several naval engagements, which gives propriety to his being called the *King of Ships*. The *winding Carun* is that small river retaining still the name of Carron, and runs in the neighbourhood of Agricola's wall, which Carausius repaired to obstruct the incursions of the Caledonians. Several other passages in traditions allude to the wars of the Romans; but the two just mentioned clearly fix the epocha of Fingal to the third century; and this account agrees exactly with the Irish histories, which place the death of Fingal, the son of Comhal, in the year 283, and that of Oscar and their own celebrated Cairbre, in the year 296.

* Car-avon, *winding river*.

Some people may imagine, that the allusions to the Roman history might have been derived by tradition, from learned men, more than from ancient poems. This must then have happened at least three ages ago, as these allusions are mentioned often in the compositions of those times.

Every one knows what a cloud of ignorance and barbarism overspread the north of Europe three hundred years ago. The minds of men, addicted to superstition, contracted a narrowness that destroyed genius. Accordingly we find the compositions of those times trivial and puerile to the last degree. But let it be allowed, that, amidst all the untoward circumstances of the age, a genius might arise, it is not easy to determine what could induce him to allude to the Roman times. We find no fact to favour any designs which could be entertained by any man who lived in the fifteenth century.

The strongest objection to the antiquity of the poems now given to the public under the name of Ossian, is the improbability of their being handed down by tradition through so many centuries. Ages of barbarism some will say, could not produce poems abounding with the disinterested and generous sentiments so conspicuous in the compositions of Ossian; and could these ages produce them, it is impossible but they must be lost, or altogether corrupted in a long succession of barbarous generations.

These objections naturally suggest themselves to men unacquainted with the ancient state of the northern parts of Britain. The bards, who were an inferior order of the Druids, did not share their bad fortune. They were spared by the victorious king, as it was through their means only he could hope for immortality to his fame. They attended him in the camp, and contributed to establish his power by their songs. His great actions were magnified, and the populace, who had no ability to examine into his character narrowly, were dazzled with his fame in the rhimes of the bards. In the mean time, men assumed sentiments that are rarely to be met with in an age of barbarism. The bards who were originally the disciples of the Druids, had their minds opened, and their ideas enlarged, by being initiated in the learning of

that celebrated order. They could form a perfect hero in their own minds, and ascribe that character to their prince. The inferior chiefs made this ideal character the model of their conduct, and by degrees brought their minds to that generous spirit which breathes in all the poetry of the times. The prince, flattered by his bards, and rivalled by his own heroes, who imitated his character as described in the eulogies of his poets, endeavoured to excel his people in merit, as he was above them in station. This emulation continuing, formed at last the general character of the nation, happily compounded of what is noble in barbarity, and virtuous and generous in a polished people.

When virtue in peace, and bravery in war, are the characteristics of a nation, their actions become interesting, and their fame worthy of immortality. A generous spirit is warmed with noble actions, and becomes ambitious of perpetuating them. This is the true source of that divine inspiration, to which the poets of all ages pretended. When they found their themes inadequate to the warmth of their imaginations, they varnished them over with fables, supplied by their own fancy, or furnished by absurd traditions. These fables, however ridiculous, had their abettors; posterity either implicitly believed them, or through a vanity natural to mankind, pretended that they did. They loved to place the founders of their families in the days of fable, when poetry, without the fear of contradiction, could give what characters she pleased of her heroes. It is to this vanity that we owe the preservation of what remain of the more ancient poems. Their poetical merit made their heroes famous in a country where heroism was much esteemed and admired. The posterity of those heroes, or those who pretended to be descended from them, heard with pleasure the eulogiums of their ancestors; bards were employed to repeat the poems, and to record the connection of their patrons with chiefs so renowned. Every chief in process of time had a bard in his family, and the office became at last hereditary. By the succession of these bards, the poems concerning the ancestors of the family were handed down from generation to generation; they were repeated to the

whole clan on solemn occasions, and always alluded to in the new compositions of the bards. This custom came down to near our own times; and after the bards were discontinued, a great number in a clan retained by memory, or committed to writing, their compositions, and founded the antiquity of their families on the authority of their poems.

The use of letters was not known in the north of Europe till long after the institution of the bards: the records of the families of their patrons, their own, and more ancient poems were handed down by tradition. Their poetical compositions were admirably contrived for that purpose. They were adapted to music; and the most perfect harmony was observed. Each verse was so connected with those which preceded or followed it, that if one line had been remembered in a stanza, it was almost impossible to forget the rest. The cadences followed in so natural a gradation, and the words were so adapted to the common turn of the voice, after it is raised to a certain key, that it was almost impossible, from a similarity of sound, to substitute one word for another. This excellence is peculiar to the Celtic tongue, and is perhaps to be met with in no other language. Nor does this choice of words clog the sense or weaken the expression. The numerous flexions of consonants, and variation in declension, make the language very copious.

The descendants of the Celtæ, who inhabited Britain and its isles, were not singular in this method of preserving the most precious monuments of their nation. The ancient laws of the Greeks were couched in verse, and handed down by tradition. The Spartans, through a long habit, became so fond of this custom, that they would never allow their laws to be committed to writing. The actions of great men, and the eulogiums of kings and heroes, were preserved in the same manner. All the historical monuments of the old Germans were comprehended in their ancient songs! * which were either hymns to their gods, or elegies in praise of their heroes, and were intended to perpetuate the great events in their nation which were carefully interwoven with them. This species

* Tacitus de mor, Germ.

of composition was not committed to writing, but delivered by oral tradition.* The care they took to have the poems taught to their children, the uninterrupted custom of repeating them upon certain occasions, and the happy measure of the verse, served to preserve them for a long time uncorrupted. This oral chronicle of the Germans was not forgot in the eighth century, and it probably would have remained to this day, had not learning, which thinks every thing that is not committed to writing fabulous, been introduced. It was from poetical traditions that Garcillasso composed his account of the Yncas of Peru. The Peruvians had lost all other monuments of their history, and it was from ancient poems which his mother, a princess of the blood of the Yncas, taught him in his youth, that he collected the materials of his history. If other nations then, that had been often overrun by enemies, and had sent abroad and received colonies, could for many ages preserve, by oral tradition, their laws and histories uncorrupted, it is much more probable that the ancient Scots, a people so free of intermixture with foreigners, and so strongly attached to the memory of their ancestors, had the works of their bards handed down with great purity.

What is advanced, in this short dissertation, it must be confessed, is mere conjecture. Beyond the reach of records, is settled a gloom, which no ingenuity can penetrate. The manners described, in these poems, suit the ancient Celtic times, and no other period, that is known in history. We must, therefore, place the heroes far back in antiquity; and it matters little, who were their cotemporaries in other parts of the world. If we have placed Fingal in his proper period, we do honour to the manners of barbarous times. He exercised every manly virtue in Caledonia, while Heliogabalus disgraced human nature at Rome.

* *Abbe de la Bletterie Remarques sur la Germaine.*

A DISSERTATION

CONCERNING

THE POEMS OF OSSIAN.



A DISSERTATION

CONCERNING

THE POEMS OF OSSIAN.



THE history of those nations, who originally possessed the north of Europe, is less known than their manners. Destitute of the use of letters, they themselves had not the means of transmitting their great actions to remote posterity. Foreign writers saw them only at a distance, and described them as they found them. The vanity of the Romans induced them to consider the nations beyond the pale of their empire as barbarians; and consequently their history unworthy of being investigated. Their manners and singular character were matters of curiosity, as they committed them to record. Some men, otherwise of great merit among ourselves, give into confined ideas on this subject. Having early imbibed their idea of exalted manners from the Greek and Roman writers, they scarcely ever afterwards have the fortitude to allow any dignity of character to any nation destitute of the use of letters.

Without derogating from the fame of Greece and Rome, we may consider antiquity beyond the pale of their empire worthy of some attention. The nobler passions of the mind never shoot forth more free and unrestrained than in the times we call barbarous. That irregular manner of

life, and those manly pursuits from which barbarity takes its name, are highly favourable to a strength of mind unknown in polished times. In advanced society the characters of men are more uniform and disguised. The human passions lie in some degree concealed behind forms, and artificial manners; and the powers of the soul, without an opportunity of exerting them, lose their vigor. The times of regular government, and polished manners, are therefore to be wished for by the feeble and weak in mind. An unsettled state, and those convulsions which attend it, is the proper field for an exalted character, and the exertion of great parts. Merit there rises always superior; no fortuitous event can raise the timid and mean into power. To those who look upon antiquity in this light, it is an agreeable prospect; and they alone can have real pleasure in tracing nations to their source.

The establishment of the Celtic states, in the north of Europe, is beyond the reach of written annals. The traditions and songs to which they trusted their history, were lost, or altogether corrupted in their revolutions and migrations, which were so frequent and universal, that no kingdom in Europe is now possessed by its original inhabitants. Societies were formed, and kingdoms erected, from a mixture of nations, who, in process of time, lost all knowledge of their own origin. If tradition could be depended upon, it is only among a people, from all time, free from intermixture with foreigners. We are to look for these among the mountains and inaccessible parts of a country: places, on account of their barrenness, uninviting to an enemy, or whose natural strength enabled the natives to repel invasions. Such are the inhabitants of the mountains of Scotland. We, accordingly, find, that they differ materially from those who possess the low and more fertile part of the kingdom. Their language is pure and original, and their manners are those of an ancient and unmixed race of men. Conscious of their own antiquity, they long despised others, as a new and mixed people. As they lived in a country only fit for pasture, they were free from that toil and business, which engross the attention of a commercial people. Their amusement consisted in hearing or repeating their songs.

and traditions, and these intirely turned on the antiquity of their nation, and the exploits of their forefathers. It is no wonder, therefore, that there are more remains of antiquity among them, than among any other people in Europe. Traditions, however, concerning remote periods are only to be regarded, in so far as they coincide with cotemporary writers of undoubted credit and veræcity.

No writers began their accounts from a more early period, than the historians of the Scots nation. Without records, or even tradition itself, they give a long list of ancient kings, and a detail of their transactions, with a scrupulous exactness. One might naturally suppose, that, when they had no authentic annals, they should, at least, have recourse to the traditions of their country, and have reduced them into a regular system of history. Of both they seem to have been equally destitute. Born in the low country, and strangers to the ancient language of their nation, they contented themselves with copying from one another, and retailing the same fictions, in a new colour and dress.

John Fordun was the first who collected those fragments of the Scots history, which had escaped the brutal policy of Edward I. and reduced them into order. His accounts, in so far as they concerned recent transactions, deserved credit: beyond a certain period, they were fabulous and unsatisfactory. Some time before Fordun wrote, the king of England, in a letter to the pope, had run up the antiquity of his nation to a very remote æra. Fordun, possessed of all the national prejudice of the age, was unwilling that his country should yield, in point of antiquity, to a people, then its rivals and enemies. Destitute of annals in Scotland, he had recourse to Ireland, which, according to the vulgar errors of the times, was reckoned the first habitation of the Scots. He found, there, that the Irish bards had carried their pretensions to antiquity as high, if not beyond any nation in Europe. It was from them he took those improbable fictions, which form the first part of his history.

The writers that succeeded Fordun implicitly followed his system, though they sometimes varied from him in their relations of particular transactions, and the order of

succession of their kings. As they had no new lights, and were, equally with him, unacquainted with the traditions of their country, their histories contain little information concerning the origin of the Scots. Even Buchanan himself, except the elegance and vigour of his style, has very little to recommend him. Blinded with political prejudices, he seemed more anxious to turn the fictions of his predecessors to his own purposes than to detect their misrepresentations, or investigate truth amidst the darkness which they had thrown round it. It therefore appears, that little can be collected from their own historians, concerning the first migration of the Scots into Britain.

That this island was peopled from Gaul admits of no doubt. Whether colonies came afterwards from the north of Europe is a matter of mere speculation. When South Britain yielded to the power of the Romans, the unconquered nations to the north of the province were distinguished by the name of Caledonians. From their very name, it appears, that they were of those Gauls, who possessed themselves originally of Britain. It is compounded of two *Celtic* words, *Caël* signifying *Celts*, or *Gauls*, and *Dun* or *Don*, *a hill*; so that *Caël-don*, or Caledonians, is as much as to say, the *Celts of the hill country*. The Highlanders, to this day, call themselves *Caël*, their language *Caëlic*, or *Galic*, and their country *Caëldoch*, which the Romans softened into *Caledonia*. This, of itself, is sufficient to demonstrate, they are the genuine descendants of the ancient Caledonians, and not a pretended colony of *Scots*, who settled first in the north, in the third or fourth century.

From the double meaning of the word *Caël*, which signifies *strangers*, as well as *Gauls*, or *Celts*, some have imagined, that the ancestors of the Caledonians were of a different race from the rest of the Britons, and that they received their name upon that account. This opinion, say they, is supported by Tacitus, who, from several circumstances, concludes, that the Caledonians were of German extraction. A discussion of a point so intricate, at this distance of time, could neither be satisfactory nor important.

Towards the latter end of the third, and beginning of the fourth century, we meet with the *Scots* in the north. Porphyrius * makes the first mention of them about that time. As the *Scots* were not heard of before that period, most writers supposed them to have been a colony, newly come to Britain, and that the *Picts* were the only genuine descendants of the ancient Caledonians. This mistake is easily removed. The Caledonians, in process of time, became naturally divided into two distinct nations, as possessing parts of the country, intirely different in their nature and soil. The western coast of Scotland is hilly and barren; towards the east the country is plain, and fit for tillage. The inhabitants of the mountains, a roving and uncontroled race of men, lived by feeding of cattle, and what they killed in hunting. Their employment did not fix them to one place. They removed from one heath to another, as suited best with their convenience or inclination. They were not, therefore, improperly called, by their neighbours, *Scuite*, or *the wandering nation*; which is evidently the origin of the Roman name of *Scoti*.

On the other hand, the Caledonians, who possessed the east coast of Scotland, as the division of the country was plain and fertile, applied themselves to agriculture, and raising of corn. It was from this, that the Galic name of the *Picts* proceeded; for they are called, in that language, *Cruithnich*, i. e. *the wheat or corn-eaters*. As the *Picts* lived in a country so different in its nature from that possessed by the *Scots*, so their national character suffered a material change. Unobstructed by mountains, or lakes, their communication with one another was free and frequent. Society, therefore, became sooner established among them, than among the *Scots*, and, consequently, they were much sooner governed by civil magistrates and laws. This, at last, produced so great a difference in the manners of the two nations, that they began to forget their common origin, and almost continual quarrels and animosities subsisted between them. These animosities, after some ages, ended in the subversion of the Pictish kingdom, but not in the total extirpation of the nation, according to most of the *Scots* writers, who seemed to

* St. Hierom. ad Ctesiphon,

think it more for the honour of their countrymen to annihilate, than reduce a rival people under their obedience. It is certain, however, that the very name of the Picts was lost, and those that remained were so completely incorporated with their conquerors, that they soon lost all memory of their own origin.

The end of the Pictish government is placed so near that period, to which authentic annals reach, that it is matter of wonder, that we have no monuments of their language or history remaining. This favours the system I have laid down. Had they originally been of a different race from the Scots, their language of course would be different. The contrary is the case. The names of places in the Pictish dominions, and the very names of their kings, which are handed down to us, are of Galic original, which is a convincing proof, that the two nations were, of old, one and the same, and only divided into two governments, by the effect which their situation had upon the genius of the people.

The name of Picts is said to have been given by the Romans to the Caledonians, who possessed the east coast of Scotland, from their painting their bodies. The story is silly and the argument absurd. But let us revere antiquity in her very follies. This circumstance made some imagine, that the Picts were of British extract, and a different race of men from the Scots. That more of the Britons, who fled northward from the tyranny of the Romans, settled in the low country of Scotland, than among the Scots of the mountains, may be easily imagined, from the very nature of the country. It was they who introduced painting among the Picts. From this circumstance, affirm some antiquaries, proceeded the name of the latter, to distinguish them from the Scots, who never had that art among them, and from the Britons, who discontinued it after the Roman conquest.

The Caledonians, most certainly, acquired a considerable knowledge in navigation, by their living on a coast intersected with many arms of the sea, and in islands, divided, one from another, by wide and dangerous firths. It is, therefore, highly probable, that they, very early, found their way to the north of Ireland, which is within

sight of their own country. That Ireland was first peopled from Britain is, at length, a matter that admits of no doubt. The vicinity of the two islands; the exact correspondence of the ancient inhabitants of both, in point of manners and language, are sufficient proofs, even if we had not the testimony of * authors of undoubted veracity to confirm it. The abettors of the most romantic systems of Irish antiquities allow it; but they place the colony from Britain in an improbable and remote æra. I shall easily admit, that the colony of the *Firbolg*, confessedly the *Belgæ* of Britain, settled in the south of Ireland, before the *Caël*, or Caledonians, discovered the north: but it is not at all likely, that the migration of the *Firbolg* to Ireland happened many centuries before the christian æra.

The poem of Temora throws considerable light on this subject. The accounts given in it agree so well with what the ancients have delivered, concerning the first population and inhabitants of Ireland, that every unbiassed person will confess them more probable, than the legends handed down, by tradition, in that country. It appears, that, in the days of Trathal, grandfather to Fingal, Ireland was possessed by two nations; the *Firbolg* or *Belgæ* of Britain, who inhabited the south, and the *Cael*, who passed over from Caledonia and the Hebrides to Ulster. The two nations, as is usual among an unpolished and lately settled people, were divided into small dynasties, subject to petty kings, or chiefs, independent of one another. In this situation, it is probable, they continued long, without any material revolution in the state of the island, until Crothar, Lord of Atha, a country in Connaught, the most potent chief of the *Firbolg*, carried away Conlama, the daughter of Cathmin, a chief of the *Cael*, who possessed Ulster.

Conlama had been betrothed some time before to Turloch, a chief of their own nation. Turloch resented the affront offered him by Crothar, made an irruption into Connaught, and killed Cormul, the brother of Crothar, who came to oppose his progress. Crothar himself then took arms, and either killed or expelled Turloch. The war, upon this, became general, between the two nations:

* Dio. Sic. l. 5.

and the Cael were reduced to the last extremity. In this situation, they applied, for aid, to Trathal king of Morven, who sent his brother Conar, already famous for his great exploits, to their relief. Conar, upon his arrival in Ulster, was chosen king, by the unanimous consent of the Caledonian tribes, who possessed that country. The war was renewed with vigour and success; but the *Firbolg* appear to have been rather repelled than subdued. In succeeding reigns, we learn from episodes in the same poem, that the chiefs of Atha made several efforts to become monarchs of Ireland, and to expel the race of Conar.

To Conar succeeded his son Cormac, who appears to have reigned long. In his latter days he seems to have been driven to the last extremity, by an insurrection of the *Firbolg*, who supported the pretensions of the chiefs of Atha to the Irish throne. Fingal, who then was very young, came to the aid of Cormac, totally defeated Colculla, chief of Atha, and re-established Cormac in the sole possession of all Ireland. It was then he fell in love with, and took to wife, Roscrana, the daughter of Cormac, who was the mother of Ossian.

Cormac was succeeded in the Irish throne by his son, Cairbre; Cairbre by Artho, his son, who was the father of that Cormac, in whose minority the invasion of Swaran happened, which is the subject of the poem of *Fingal*. The family of Atha, who had not relinquished their pretensions to the Irish throne, rebelled in the minority of Cormac, defeated his adherents, and murdered him in the palace of Temora. Cairbar, lord of Atha, upon this, mounted the throne. His usurpation soon ended with his life; for Fingal made an expedition into Ireland, and restored, after various vicissitudes of fortune, the family of Conar to the possession of the kingdom. This war is the subject of *Temora*; the events, though certainly heightened and embellished by poetry, seem, notwithstanding, to have their foundation in true history.

Temora contains not only the history of the first migration of the Caledonians into Ireland, it also preserves some important facts, concerning the first settlement of the *Firbolg* or *Belgæ of Britain*, in that kingdom, under their leader Larthon, who was ancestor to Cairbar and

Cathmor, who successively mounted the Irish throne, after the death of Cormac, the son of Artho. I forbear to transcribe the passage, on account of its length. It is the song of Fonar, the bard; towards the latter end of the seventh book of Temora. As the generations from Lathon to Cathmor, to whom the episode is addressed, are not marked, as are those of the family of Conar, the first king of Ireland, we can form no judgment of the time of the settlement of the Firbolg. It is, however, probable, it was some time before the *Cael*, or Caledonians, settled in Ulster. One important fact may be gathered from this history, that the Irish had no king before the latter end of the first century. Fingal lived, it is supposed, in the third century; so Conar, the first monarch of the Irish, who was his granduncle, cannot be placed farther back than the close of the first. To establish this fact, is to lay, at once, aside the pretended antiquities of the Scots and Irish, and to get quit of the long list of kings which the latter give us for a millennium before.

Of the affairs of Scotland, it is certain, nothing can be depended upon, prior to the reign of Fergus, the son of Erc, who lived in the fifth century. The true history of Ireland begins somewhat later than that period. Sir James Ware*, who was indefatigable in his researches after the antiquities of his country, rejects, as mere fiction and idle romance, all that is related of the ancient Irish, before the time of St. Patrick, and the reign of Leogaire. It is from this consideration, that he begins his history at the introduction of Christianity, remarking, that all that is delivered down, concerning the times of paganism, were tales of late invention, strangely mixed with anachronisms and inconsistencies. Such being the opinion of Ware, who had collected with uncommon industry and zeal, all the real and pretendedly ancient manuscripts, concerning the history of his country, we may, on his authority, reject the improbable and self-condemned tales of Keating and O'Flaherty. Credulous and puerile to the last degree, they have disgraced the antiquities they meant to establish. It is to be wished, that some able Irishman, who understands the language and records of his country, may re-

* War. de antiq. Hybern. præ. p. 1.

deem, ere it is too late, the genuine antiquities of Ireland, from the hands of these idle fabulists.

By comparing the history in these poems with the legends of the Scots and Irish writers, and, by afterwards examining both by the test of the Roman authors, it is easy to discover which is the most probable. Probability is all that can be established on the authority of tradition, ever dubious and uncertain. But when it favours the hypothesis laid down by cotemporary writers of undoubted veracity, and, as it were, finishes the figure of which they only drew the out-lines, it ought, in the judgment of sober reason, to be preferred to accounts framed in dark and distant periods, with little judgment, and upon no authority.

Concerning the period of more than a century, which intervenes between Fingal and the reign of Fergus, the son of Erc or Arcath, tradition is dark and contradictory. Some trace up the family of Fergus to a son of Fingal of that name, who makes a considerable figure in Ossian's poems. The three elder sons of Fingal, Ossian, Fillan, and Ryno, dying without issue, the succession, of course, devolved upon Fergus, the fourth son, and his posterity. This Fergus, say some traditions, was the father of Congal, whose son was Arcath, the father of Fergus, properly called the first king of Scots, as it was in his time the *Cael*, who possessed the western coast of Scotland, began to be distinguished, by foreigners, by the name of *Scots*. From thence-forward, the Scots and Picts, as distinct nations, became objects of attention to the historians of other countries. The internal state of the two Caledonian kingdoms has always continued, and ever must remain, in obscurity and fable.

It is in this epoch we must fix the beginning of the decay of that species of heroism, which subsisted in the days of Fingal. There are three stages in human society. The first is the result of consanguinity, and the natural affection of the members of a family to one another. The second begins when property is established, and men enter into associations for mutual defence, against the invasions and injustice of neighbours. Mankind submit, in the third, to certain laws and subordinations of government,

to which they trust the safety of their persons and property. As the first is formed on nature, so, of course, it is the most disinterested and noble. Men, in the last, have leisure to cultivate the mind, and to restore it, with reflection, to a primæval dignity of sentiment. The middle state is the region of complete barbarism and ignorance. About the beginning of the fifth century, the Scots and Picts were advanced into the second stage, and, consequently, into those circumscribed sentiments, which always distinguish barbarity. The events which soon after happened did not at all contribute to enlarge their ideas, or mend their national character.

About the year 426, the Romans, on account of domestic commotions, entirely forsook Britain, finding it impossible to defend so distant a frontier. The Picts and Scots, seizing this favourable opportunity, made incursions into the deserted province. The Britons, enervated by the slavery of several centuries, and those vices, which are inseparable from an advanced state of civility, were not able to withstand the impetuous, though irregular, attacks of a barbarous enemy. In the utmost distress, they applied to their old masters, the Romans, and (after the unfortunate state of the empire could not spare aid) to the Saxons, a nation equally barbarous and brave, with the enemies of whom they were so much afraid. Though the bravery of the Saxons repelled the Caledonian nations for a time, yet the latter found means to extend themselves, considerably, towards the south. It is, in this period, we must place the origin of the arts of civil life among the Scots. The seat of government was removed from the mountains to the plain and more fertile provinces of the South, to be near the common enemy, in case of sudden incursions. Instead of roving through unfrequented wilds, in search of subsistence, by means of hunting, men applied to agriculture, and raising of corn. This manner of life was the first means of changing the national character. The next thing which contributed to it was their mixture with strangers.

In the countries which the Scots had conquered from the Britons, it is probable that most of the old inhabitants remained. These incorporating with the conquerors,

taught them agriculture, and other arts, which they themselves had received from the Romans. The Scots, however, in number as well as power, being the most predominant, retained still their language, and as many of the customs of their ancestors, as suited with the nature of the country they possessed. Even the union of the two Caledonian kingdoms did not much affect the national character. Being originally descended from the same stock, the manners of the Picts and Scots were as similar as the different natures of the countries they possessed permitted.

What brought about a total change in the genius of the Scots nation, was their wars, and other transactions with the Saxons. Several counties in the south of Scotland were alternately possessed by the two nations. They were ceded, in the ninth age, to the Scots, and, it is probable, that most of the Saxon inhabitants remained in possession of their lands. During the several conquests and revolutions in England, many fled, for refuge, into Scotland, to avoid the oppression of foreigners, or the tyranny of domestic usurpers; in so much, that the Saxon race formed perhaps near one half of the Scottish kingdom. The Saxon manners and language daily gained ground, on the tongue and customs of the ancient Caledonians, till, at last, the latter were entirely relegated to inhabitants of the mountains, who were still unmixed with strangers.

It was after the accession of territory which the Scots received, upon the retreat of the Romans from Britain, that the inhabitants of the Highlands were divided into clans. The king, when he kept his court in the mountains, was considered, by the whole nation, as the chief of their blood. Their small number, as well as the presence of their prince, prevented those divisions, which, afterwards, sprung forth into so many separate tribes. When the seat of government was removed to the south, those who remained in the Highlands were, of course, neglected. They naturally formed themselves into small societies, independent of one another. Each society had its own *regulus*, who either was, or in the succession of a few generations, was regarded as chief of their blood. The nature of the country favoured an institution of this

sort. A few valleys, divided from one another by extensive heaths and impassable mountains, form the face of the Highlands. In these valleys the chiefs fixed their residence. Round them, and almost within sight of their dwellings, were the habitations of their relations and dependents.

The seats of the Highland chiefs were neither disagreeable nor inconvenient. Surrounded with mountains and hanging woods, they were covered from the inclemency of the weather. Near them generally ran a pretty large river, which, discharging itself not far off, into an arm of the sea, or extensive lake, swarmed with variety of fish. The woods were stocked with wild-fowl; and the heaths and mountains behind them were the natural seat of the red-deer and roe. If we make allowance for the backward state of agriculture, the valleys were not unfertile; affording, if not all the conveniencies, at least the necessaries of life. Here the chief lived, the supreme judge and lawgiver of his own people; but his sway was neither severe nor unjust. As the populace regarded him as the chief of their blood, so he, in return, considered them as members of his family. His commands, therefore, though absolute and decisive, partook more of the authority of a father, than of the rigour of a judge. Though the whole territory of the tribe was considered as the property of the chief, yet his vassals made him no other consideration for their lands than services, neither burdensome nor frequent. As he seldom went from home, he was at no expence. His table was supplied by his own herds, and what his numerous attendants killed in hunting.

In this rural kind of magnificence, the Highland chiefs lived, for many ages. At a distance from the seat of government, and secured, by the inaccessibleness of their country, they were free and independent. As they had little communication with strangers, the customs of their ancestors remained among them, and their language retained its original purity. Naturally fond of military fame, and remarkably attached to the memory of their ancestors, they delighted in traditions and songs, concerning the exploits of their nation, and especially of their own particular families. A succession of bards was retained in every

clan, to hand down the memorable actions of their forefathers. As Fingal and his chiefs were the most renowned names in tradition, the bards took care to place them in the genealogy of every great family. They became famous among the people, and an object of fiction and poetry to the bards.

The bards erected their immediate patrons into heroes, and celebrated them in their songs. As the circle of their knowledge was narrow, their ideas were confined in proportion. A few happy expressions, and the manners they represent, may please those who understand the language; their obscurity and inaccuracy would disgust in a translation. It was chiefly for this reason, that I have rejected wholly the works of the bards in my publications. Ossian acted in a more extensive sphere, and his ideas ought to be more noble and universal; neither gives he, I presume, so many of those peculiarities, which are only understood in a certain period or country. The other bards have their beauties, but not in this species of composition. Their rhimes, only calculated to kindle a martial spirit among the vulgar, afford very little pleasure to genuine taste. This observation only regards their poems of the heroic kind; in every inferior species of poetry they are more successful. They express the tender melancholy of desponding love, with simplicity and nature. So well adapted are the sounds of the words to the sentiments, that, even without any knowledge of the language, they pierce and dissolve the heart. Successful love is expressed with peculiar tenderness and elegance. In all their compositions, except the heroic, which was solely calculated to animate the vulgar, they give us the genuine language of the heart, without any of those affected ornaments of phraseology, which, though intended to beautify sentiments, divest them of their natural force. The ideas, it is confessed, are too local, to be admired, in another language; to those who are acquainted with the manners they represent, and the scenes they describe, they must afford pleasure and satisfaction.

It was the locality of their description and sentiment, that, probably, has kept them hitherto in the obscurity of an almost lost language. The ideas of an unpolished

period are so contrary to the present advanced state of society, that more than a common mediocrity of taste is required, to relish them as they deserve. Those who alone are capable of transferring ancient poetry into a modern language, might be better employed in giving originals of their own, were it not for that wretched envy and meanness which affects to despise cotemporary genius. My first publication was merely accidental. Had I then met with less approbation, my after-pursuits would have been more profitable; at least I might have continued to be stupid, without being branded with dulness.

These poems may furnish light to antiquaries, as well as some pleasure to the lovers of poetry. The first population of Ireland, its first kings, and several circumstances, which regard its connection of old with the south and north of Britain, are presented in several episodes. The subject and catastrophe of the poem are founded upon facts, which regarded the first peopling of that country, and the contests between the two British nations, who originally inhabited that island. In a preceding part of this Dissertation, I have shown how superior the probability of this system is to the undigested fictions of the Irish bards, and the more recent and regular legends of both Irish and Scottish historians. I mean not to give offence to the abettors of the high antiquities of the two nations, though I have all along expressed my doubts, concerning the veracity and abilities of those who deliver down their ancient history. For my own part, I prefer the national fame, arising from a few certain facts, to the legendary and uncertain annals of ages of remote and obscure antiquity. No kingdom now established in Europe can pretend to equal antiquity with that of the Scots, inconsiderable as it may appear in other respects, even according to my system, so that it is altogether needless to fix its origin a fictitious millennium before.

Since the first publication of these poems, many insinuations have been made, and doubts arisen, concerning their authenticity. Whether these suspicions are suggested by prejudice, or are only the effects of malice, I neither know nor care. Those who have doubted my veracity have paid a compliment to my genius; and were

even the allegation true, my self-denial might have atoned for my fault. Without vanity I say it, I think I could write tolerable poetry; and I assure my antagonists, that I should not translate what I could not imitate.

As prejudice is the effect of ignorance, I am not surprized at its being general. An age that produces few marks of genius ought to be sparing of admiration. The truth is, the bulk of mankind have ever been led, by reputation more than taste, in articles of literature. If all the Romans, who admired Virgil, understood his beauties, he would have scarce deserved to have come down to us, through so many centuries. Unless genius were in fashion, Homer himself might have written in vain. He that wishes to come with weight, on the superficial, must skim the surface, in their own shallow way. Were my aim to gain the many, I would write a madrigal sooner than an heroic poem. Laberius himself would be always sure of more followers than Sophocles.

Some who doubt the authenticity of this work, with peculiar acuteness appropriate them to the Irish nation. Though it is not easy to conceive how these poems can belong to Ireland and to me, at once, I shall examine the subject, without further animadversion on the blunder.

Of all the nations descended from the ancient *Celtæ*, the Scots and Irish are the most similar in language, customs, and manners. This argues a more intimate connection between them, than a remote descent from the great Celtic stock. It is evident, in short, that at some one period or other, they formed one society, were subject to the same government, and were, in all respects, one and the same people. How they became divided, which the colony, or which the mother nation, I have in another work amply discussed. The first circumstance that induced me to disregard the vulgarly-received opinion of the Hibernian extraction of the Scottish nation, was my observations on their ancient language. That dialect of the Celtic tongue, spoken in the north of Scotland, is much more pure, more agreeable to its mother language, and more abounding with primitives, than that now spoken, or even that which has been written for some centuries back, amongst the most unmixed part of the

Irish nation. A Scotchman, tolerably conversant in his own language, understands an Irish composition, from that derivative analogy which it has to the Galic of North Britain. An Irishman, on the other hand, without the aid of study, can never understand a composition in the *Galic* tongue. This affords a proof, that the *Scotch Galic* is the most original, and, consequently, the language of a more ancient and unmixed people. The Irish, however backward they may be to allow any thing to the prejudice of their antiquity, seem inadvertently to acknowledge it, by the very appellation they give to the dialect they speak. They call their own language *Caelic*, *Eirinach*, i. e. *Caledonian Irish*, when, on the contrary, they call the dialect of North Britain a *Chuelic*, or the *Caledonian tongue*, emphatically. A circumstance of this nature tends more to decide which is the most ancient nation, than the united testimonies of a whole legion of ignorant bards and senachies, who, perhaps, never dreamed of bringing the Scots from Spain to Ireland, till some one of them, more learned than the rest, discovered, that the Romans called the first *Iberia*, and the latter *Hibernia*. On such a slight foundation were probably built the romantic fictions concerning the Milesians of Ireland.

From internal proofs it sufficiently appears, that the poems published under the name of Ossian, are not of Irish composition. The favourite chimæra, that Ireland is the mother-country of the Scots, is totally subverted and ruined. The fictions concerning the antiquities of that country, which were forming for ages, and growing as they came down, on the hands of successive *senachies* and *fileas*, are found, at last, to be the spurious brood of modern and ignorant ages. To those who know how tenacious the Irish are, of their pretended *Iberian* descent, this alone is proof sufficient, that poems so subversive of their system, could never be produced by an Hibernian bard. But when we look to the language, it is so different from the Irish dialect, that it would be as ridiculous to think, that Milton's *Paradise Lost* could be wrote by a Scottish peasant, as to suppose, that the poems ascribed to Ossian were writ in Ireland.

The pretensions of Ireland to Ossian proceed from another quarter. There are handed down in that country, traditional poems, concerning the *Fiona*, or the heroes of *Fion Mac Comnal*. This Fion, say the Irish annalists, was general of the militia of Ireland, in the reign of Cormac, in the third century. Where Keating and O'Flaherty learned, that Ireland had an embodied militia so early, is not easy for me to determine. Their information certainly did not come from the Irish poems, concerning Fion. I have just now, in my hands, all that remain of those compositions; but, unluckily for the antiquities of Ireland, they appear to be the work of a very modern period. Every stanza, nay almost every line, affords striking proofs, that they cannot be three centuries old. Their allusions to the manners and customs of the fifteenth century, are so many, that it is matter of wonder to me, how any one could dream of their antiquity. They are entirely writ in that romantic taste, which prevailed two ages ago. Giants, enchanted castles, dwarfs, palfreys, witches, and magicians, form the whole circle of the poet's invention. The celebrated Fion could scarcely move from one hillock to another, without encountering a giant, or being entangled in the circles of a magician. Witches, on broomsticks, were continually hovering round him, like crows; and he had freed enchanted virgins in every valley in Ireland. In short, Fion, great as he was, passed a disagreeable life. Not only had he to engage all the mischiefs in his own country, foreign armies invaded him, assisted by magicians and witches, and headed by kings, as tall as the main-mast of a first rate. It must be owned, however, that Fion was not inferior to them in height.

A chos air Cromleach, druim-ard,
 Chos eile air Crom-meal dubh,
 Thoga Fion le lamh mhoir
 An d'uisge o Lubhair na fruth.

With one foot on Cromleach his brow,
 The other on Crommal the dark,
 Fion took up with his large hand
 The water from Lubar of the streams.

Cromleach and Crommal were two mountains in the neighbourhood of one another, in Ulster, and the river Lubar ran through the intermediate valley. The property of such a monster as this Fion, I should never have disputed with any nation. But the bard himself, in the poem, from which the above quotation is taken, cedes him to Scotland.

Fion o Albin, siol nan laoich!
Fion from Albion, race of heroes!

Were it allowable to contradict the authority of a bard, at this distance of time, I should have given as my opinion, that this enormous Fion was of the race of the Hibernian giants, of Ruanus, or some other celebrated name, rather than a native of Caledonia, whose inhabitants, now at least, are not remarkable for their stature. As for the poetry, I leave it to the reader.

If Fion was so remarkable for his stature, his heroes had also other extraordinary properties. In weight, all the sons of strangers yielded to the celebrated Ton-iosal; and for hardness of skull, and, perhaps, for thickness too, the valiant Oscar stood unrivalled and alone. Ossian himself had many singular and less delicate qualifications, than playing on the harp; and the brave Cuthullin was of so diminutive a size, as to be taken for a child of two years of age, by the gigantic Swaran. To illustrate this subject, I shall here lay before the reader, the history of some of the Irish poems, concerning Fion Mac Comnal. A translation of these pieces, if well executed, might afford satisfaction, in an uncommon way, to the public. But this ought to be the work of a native of Ireland. To draw forth, from obscurity, the poems of my own country, has wasted all the time I had allotted for the muses; besides, I am too diffident of my own abilities, to undertake such a work. A gentleman in Dublin accused me to the public, of committing blunders and absurdities, in translating the language of my own country, and that before any translation of mine appeared.* How the gen-

* In Faulkner's Dublin Journal, of the 1st of December, 1761, appeared the following Advertisement: two weeks before my first publication appeared in London.

tleman came to see my blunders before I committed them, is not easy to determine; if he did not conclude, that, as a Scotsman, and of course descended of the Milesian race, I might have committed some of those oversights, which, perhaps very unjustly, are said to be peculiar to them.

From the whole tenor of the Irish poems, concerning the Fiona, it appears, that Fion Mac Comnal flourished in the reign of Cormac, which is placed, by the universal consent of the senachies, in the third century. They even fix the death of Fingal in the year 286, yet his son Ossian is made cotemporary with St. Patrick, who preached the gospel in Ireland about the middle of the fifth age. Ossian, though, at that time, he must have been two hundred and fifty years of age, had a daughter young enough to become wife to the saint. On account of this family connection, *Patrick of the Psalms*, for so the apostle of Ireland is emphatically called in the poems, took great delight in the company of Ossian, and in hearing the great actions of his family. The saint sometimes threw off the austerity of his profession, drunk freely, and had his soul properly warmed with wine, to receive with becoming enthusiasm, the poems of his father-in-law. One of the poems begins with this piece of useful information.

Lo don rabh Padric na mhúr,
 Gun Saim air uidh, ach a gól,
 Ghluais é thigh Ossian mhic Fhion,
 O san leis bu bhinn a ghloir.

The title of this poem is *Teantach mor na Fiona*. It appears to have been founded on the same story with the

Speedily will be published, by a gentleman of this kingdom, who hath been, for some time past, employed in translating and writing historical Notes to

FINGAL, A POEM,

Originally wrote in the Irish or Erse language. In the preface to which, the translator, who is a perfect master of the Irish tongue, will give an account of the manners and customs of the ancient Irish or Scotch; and, therefore, most humbly intreats the public, to wait for his edition, which will appear in a short time; as he will set forth all the blunders and absurdities in the edition now printing in London, and shew the ignorance of the English translator, in his knowledge of Irish grammar, not understanding any part of that accidence.

Battle of Lora. The circumstances and catastrophe in both are much the same; but the Irish Ossian discovers the age in which he lived by an unlucky anachronism. After describing the total route of Erragon, he very gravely concludes with this remarkable anecdote, that none of the foe escaped, but a few, who were permitted to go on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. This circumstance fixes the date of the composition of the piece some centuries after the famous croisade; for, it is evident, that the poet thought the time of the croisade so ancient, that he confounds it with the age of Fingal. Erragon, in the course of this poem, is often called,

Riogh Lochlin an do shloigh,
King of Denmark of two nations,

which alludes to the union of the kingdoms of Norway and Denmark, a circumstance which happened under Margaret de Waldemar, in the close of the fourteenth age. Modern, however, as this pretended Ossian was, it is certain, he lived before the Irish had dreamed of appropriating Fion, or Fingal, to themselves. He concludes the poem, with this reflection :

Na fagha se comhthróm nan n' arm,
Erragon Mac Annir nan lánn glas
'San n' Albin ni n' abairtair Triath
Agus ghlaoite an n' Fhiona as.

“ Had Erragon, son of Annir of gleaming swords, avoided the equal contest of arms (single combat), no chief should have afterwards been numbered in Albion, and the heroes of Fion should no more be named.”

The next poem that falls under our observation is *Cath-cabhru*, or *The death of Oscar*. This piece is founded on the same story which we have in the first book of *Temora*. So little thought the author of *Cath-cabhra* of making Oscar his countryman, that, in the course of two hundred lines, of which the poems consist, he puts the following expression thrice in the mouth of the hero:

Albin an sa d' roina m' arach.—
Albion where I was born and bred.

The poem contains almost all the incidents in the first book of Temora. In one circumstance the bard differs materially from Ossian. Oscar, after he was mortally wounded by Cairbar, was carried by his people to a neighbouring hill, which commanded a prospect of the sea. A fleet appeared at a distance, and the hero exclaims with joy,

Loingeas mo shean-athair at' án
'S iad a tiächd le cabhair chugain,
O Albin na n' ioma stuagh.

“It is the fleet of my grandfather, coming with aid to our field, from Albion of many waves!”—The testimony of this bard is sufficient to confute the idle fictions of Keating and O'Flaherty; for, though he is far from being ancient, it is probable, he flourished a full century before these historians. He appears, however, to have been a much better christian than chronologer; for Fion, though he is placed two centuries before St. Patrick, very devoutly recommends the soul of his grandson to his Redeemer.

Duan a Gharibh Mac-Starn is another Irish poem in high repute. The grandeur of its images, and its propriety of sentiment, might have induced me to give a translation of it, had I not some expectations, which are now over, of seeing it in the collection of the Irish Ossian's poems, promised twelve years since, to the public. The author descends sometimes from the region of the sublime to low and indecent description; the last of which, the Irish translator, no doubt, will choose to leave in the obscurity of the original. In this piece Cuthullin is used with very little ceremony, for he is oft called, the *dog of Tara*, in the county of Meath. This severe title of the *redoubtable Cuthullin*, the most renowned of Irish champions, proceeded from the poet's ignorance of etymology. *Cu*, *voice*, or commander, signifies also a *dog*. The poet chose the last, as the most noble appellation for his hero.

The subject of the poem is the same with that of the epic poem of Fingal. *Caribh Mac-Starn* is the same with Ossian's Swaran, the son of Starno. His single combats with, and his victory over all the heroes of Ireland, excepting the *celebrated dog of Tara*, i. e. Cuthullin, afford

matter for two hundred lines of tolerable poetry. *Caribh's* progress in search of Cuthullin, and his intrigue with the gigantic Emir-bragal, that hero's wife, enables the poet to extend his piece to four hundred lines. This author, it is true, makes Cuthullin a native of Ireland; the gigantic Emir-bragal he calls *the guiding star of the women of Ireland*. The property of this enormous lady I shall not dispute with him, or any other. But, as he speaks with great tenderness of the *daughters of the convent*, and throws out some hints against the English nation, it is probable he lived in too modern a period to be intimately acquainted with the genealogy of Cuthullin.

Another Irish Ossian, for there were many, as appears from their difference in language and sentiment, speaks very dogmatically of *Fion Mac Comnal*, as an Irishman. Little can be said for the judgment of this poet, and less for his delicacy of sentiment. The history of one of his episodes may, at once, stand as a specimen of his want of both. Ireland, in the days of Fion, happened to be threatened with an invasion, by three great potentates, the kings of Lochlin, Sweden, and France. It is needless to insist upon the impropriety of a French invasion of Ireland; it is sufficient for me to be faithful to the language of my author. Fion, upon receiving intelligence of the intended invasion, sent Ca-olt, Ossian, and Oscar, to watch the bay, in which, it was apprehended, the enemy was to land. Oscar was the worst choice of a scout that could be made, for, brave as he was, he had the bad property of falling very often asleep on his post, nor was it possible to awake him, without cutting off one of his fingers, or dashing a large stone against his head. When the enemy appeared, Oscar, very unfortunately, was asleep. Ossian and Ca-olt consulted about the method of waking him, and they, at last, fixed on the stone, as the less dangerous expedient.

Gun thog Caoilte a chlach, nach gán,
 Agus a n' aighai' chiean gun bhuail;
 Tri mil an tulloch gun chri', &c.

“Ca-olt took up a heavy stone, and struck it against the hero's head. The hill shook for three miles, as the stone

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rebounded and rolled away." Oscar rose in wrath, and his father gravely desired him to spend his rage on his enemies, which he did to so good purpose, that he singly routed a whole wing of their army. The confederate kings advanced, notwithstanding, till they came to a narrow pass, possessed by the celebrated Ton-iosal. This name is very significant of the singular property of the hero who bore it. Ton-iosal, though brave, was so heavy and unwieldy, that when he sat down, it took the whole force of an hundred men to set him upright on his feet again. Luckily for the preservation of Ireland, the hero happened to be standing when the enemy appeared, and he gave so good an account of them, that Fion, upon his arrival, found little to do, but to divide the spoil among his soldiers.

All these extraordinary heroes, Fion, Ossian, Oscar, and Ca-olt, says the poet, were

Siol Erin na gorm lánn.
The sons of Erin of blue steel.

Neither shall I much dispute the matter with him : He has my consent also to appropriate to Ireland the celebrated Ton-iosal. I shall only say, that they are different persons from those of the same name, in the Scotch poems ; and that, though the stupendous valour of the first is so remarkable, they have not been equally lucky with the latter, in their poet. It is somewhat extraordinary, that Fion, who lived some ages before St. Patrick, swears like a very good christian :

Air an Dia do chum gach case.
By God, who shaped every case.

It is worthy of being remarked, that, in the line quoted, Ossian, who lived in St. Patrick's days, seems to have understood something of the English, a language not then subsisting. A person, more sanguine for the honour of his country than I am, might argue, from this circumstance, that this pretended Irish Ossian was a native of Scotland ; for my countrymen are universally allowed to have an exclusive right to the second-sight.

From the instances given, the reader may form a complete idea of the Irish compositions concerning the Fiona. The greatest part of them make the heroes of Fion,

Siol Albin a n'nioma caoile.
The race of Albion of many firths.

The rest make them natives of Ireland. But, the truth is, that their authority is of little consequence on either side. From the instances I have given, they appear to have been the work of a very modern period. The pious ejaculations they contain, their allusions to the manners of the times, fix them to the fifteenth century. Had even the authors of these pieces avoided all allusions to their own times, it is impossible that the poems could pass for ancient, in the eyes of any person tolerably conversant with the Irish tongue. The idiom is so corrupted, and so many words borrowed from the English, that the language must have made considerable progress in Ireland before the poems were written.

It remains now to shew, how the Irish bards began to appropriate the Scottish Ossian and his heroes to their own country. After the English conquest, many of the natives of Ireland, averse to a foreign yoke, either actually were in a state of hostility with the conquerors, or, at least, paid little regard to their government. The Scots, in those ages, were often in open war, and never in cordial friendship with the English. The similarity of manners and language, the traditions concerning their common origin, and above all, their having to do with the same enemy, created a free and friendly intercourse between the Scottish and Irish nations. As the custom of retaining bards and senachies was common to both; so each, no doubt, had formed a system of history, it matters not how much soever fabulous, concerning their respective origin. It was the natural policy of the times, to reconcile the traditions of both nations together, and, if possible, to reduce them from the same original stock.

The Saxon manners and language had, at that time, made great progress in the south of Scotland. The ancient language, and the traditional history of the nation, became

confined entirely to the inhabitants of the Highlands, then fallen, from several concurring circumstances, into the last degree of ignorance and barbarism. The Irish, who, for some ages before the conquest, had possessed a competent share of that kind of learning, which then prevailed in Europe, found it no difficult matter to impose their own fictions on the ignorant Highland senachies. By flattering the vanity of the Highlanders, with their long list of Heremonian kings and heroes, they, without contradiction, assumed to themselves the character of being the mother-nation of the Scots of Britain. At this time, certainly, was established that Hibernian system of the original of the Scots, which afterwards, for want of any other, was universally received. The Scots of the low-country, who, by losing the language of their ancestors, lost, together with it, their national traditions, received, implicitly, the history of their country, from Irish refugees, or from Highland senachies, persuaded over into the Hibernian system.

These circumstances are far from being ideal. We have remaining many particular traditions, which bear testimony to a fact, of itself abundantly probable. What makes the matter incontestible is, that the ancient traditional accounts of the genuine origin of the Scots, have been handed down without interruption. Though a few ignorant senachies might be persuaded out of their own opinion, by the smoothness of an Irish tale, it was impossible to eradicate, from among the bulk of the people, their own national traditions. These traditions afterwards so much prevailed, that the Highlanders continue totally unacquainted with the pretended Hibernian extract of the Scots nation. Ignorant chronicle writers, strangers to the ancient language of their country, preserved only from falling to the ground, so improbable a story.

This subject, perhaps, is pursued further than it deserves; but a discussion of the pretensions of Ireland, was become in some measure necessary. If the Irish poems, concerning the Fiona, should appear ridiculous, it is but justice to observe, that they are scarcely more so than the poems of other nations, at that period. On other subjects, the bards of Ireland have displayed a genius for

poetry. It was, alone, in matters of antiquity, that they were monstrous in their fables. Their love-sonnets, and their elegies on the death of persons worthy or renowned, abound with simplicity, and a wild harmony of numbers. They become more than an atonement for their errors, in every other species of poetry. But the beauty of these species, depends so much on a certain *curiosa felicitas* of expression in the original, that they must appear much to disadvantage in another language.

A CRITICAL
DISSERTATION
ON THE
POEMS OF OSSIAN,

BY HUGH BLAIR, D.D.

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AMONG the monuments remaining of the ancient state of nations, few are more valuable than their poems or songs. History, when it treats of remote and dark ages, is seldom very instructive. The beginnings of society, in every country, are involved in fabulous confusion; and though they were not, they would furnish few events worth recording. But, in every period of society, human manners are a curious spectacle; and the most natural pictures of ancient manners are exhibited in the ancient poems of nations. These present to us, what is much more valuable than the history of such transactions as a rude age can afford—the history of human imagination and passion. They make us acquainted with the notions and feelings of our fellow-creatures in the most artless ages; discovering what objects they admired, and what pleasures they pursued, before those refinements of society had taken place, which enlarge indeed, and diversify the transactions, but disguise the manners of mankind.

Besides this merit, which ancient poems have with philosophical observers of human nature, they have another with persons of taste. They promise some of the

highest beauties of poetical writing. Irregular and unpolished we may expect the productions of uncultivated ages to be; but abounding, at the same time, with that enthusiasm, that vehemence and fire, which are the soul of poetry. For many circumstances of those times which we call barbarous, are favourable to the poetical spirit. That state, in which human nature shoots wild and free, though unfit for other improvements, certainly encourages the high exertions of fancy and passion.

In the infancy of societies, men live scattered and dispersed, in the midst of solitary rural scenes, where the beauties of nature are their chief entertainment. They meet with many objects, to them new and strange; their wonder and surprize are frequently excited; and by the sudden changes of fortune occurring in their unsettled state of life, their passions are raised to the utmost—their passions have nothing to restrain them: their imagination has nothing to check it. They display themselves to one another without disguise: and converse and act in the uncovered simplicity of nature. As their feelings are strong, so their language, of itself, assumes a poetical turn. Prone to exaggerate, they describe every thing in the strongest colours; which of course renders their speech picturesque and figurative. Figurative language owes its rise chiefly to two causes; to the want of proper names for objects, and to the influence of imagination and passion over the form of expression. Both these causes concur in the infancy of society. Figures are commonly considered as artificial modes of speech, devised by orators and poets, after the world had advanced to a refined state. The contrary of this is the truth. Men never have used so many figures of style, as in those rude ages, when, besides the power of a warm imagination to suggest lively images, the want of proper and precise terms for the ideas they would express, obliged them to have recourse to circumlocution, metaphor, comparison, and all those substituted forms of expression, which give a poetical air to language. An American chief, at this day, harangues at the head of his tribe, in a more bold metaphorical style, than a modern European would adventure to use in an Epic poem.

In the progress of society, the genius and manners of men undergo a change more favourable to accuracy than to sprightliness and sublimity. As the world advances, the understanding gains ground upon the imagination; the understanding is more exercised; the imagination, less. Fewer objects occur that are new or suprising. Men apply themselves to trace the causes of things; they correct and refine one another; they subdue or disguise their passions; they form their exterior manners upon one uniform standard of politeness and civility. Human nature is pruned according to method and rule. Language advances from sterility to copiousness, and at the same time, from fervour and enthusiasm, to correctness and precision. Style becomes more chaste; but less animated. The progress of the world in this respect resembles the progress of age in man. The powers of imagination are most vigorous and predominant in youth; those of the understanding ripen more slowly, and often attain not to their maturity, till the imagination begin to flag. Hence, poetry, which is the child of imagination, is frequently most glowing and animated in the first ages of society. As the ideas of our youth are remembered with a peculiar pleasure on account of their liveliness and vivacity; so the most ancient poems have often proved the greatest favourites of nations.

Poetry has been said to be more ancient than prose: and however paradoxical such an assertion may seem, yet, in a qualified sense, it is true. Men certainly never conversed with one another in regular numbers; but even their ordinary language would, in ancient times, for the reasons before assigned, approach to a poetical style; and the first compositions transmitted to posterity, beyond doubt, were, in a literal sense, poems; that is, compositions in which imagination had the chief hand, formed into some kind of numbers, and pronounced with a musical modulation or tone. Music or song has been found coæval with society among the most barbarous nations. The only subjects which could prompt men, in their first rude state, to utter their thoughts in compositions of any length, were such as naturally assumed the tone of poetry; praises of their gods, or of their ancestors; commemorations of their own war-like exploits; or lamentations over their misfortunes. And

before writing was invented, no other compositions, except songs or poems, could take such hold of the imagination and memory, as to be preserved by oral tradition, and handed down from one race to another.

Hence we may expect to find poems among the antiquities of all nations. It is probable too that an extensive search would discover a certain degree of resemblance among all the most ancient poetical productions, from whatever country they have proceeded. In a similar state of manners, similar objects and passions operating upon the imaginations of men, will stamp their productions with the same general character. Some diversity will, no doubt, be occasioned by climate and genius. But mankind never bear such resembling features, as they do in the beginnings of society. Its subsequent revolutions give rise to the principal distinctions among nations; and divert, into channels widely separated, that current of human genius and manners, which descends originally from one spring. What we have been long accustomed to call the oriental vein of poetry, because some of the earliest poetical productions have come to us from the East, is probably no more oriental than occidental; it is characteristic of an age rather than a country; and belongs, in some measure, to all nations at a certain period. Of this the works of Ossian seem to furnish a remarkable proof.

Our present subject leads us to investigate the ancient poetical remains, not so much of the east, or of the Greeks and Romans, as of the northern nations; in order to discover whether the Gothic poetry has any resemblance to the Celtic or Galic, which we are about to consider. Though the Goths, under which name we usually comprehend all the Scandinavian tribes, were a people altogether fierce and martial, and noted, to a proverb, for their ignorance of the liberal arts, yet they too, from the earliest times, had their poets and their songs. Their poets were distinguished by the title of Scalders, and their songs were termed Vyses.* Saxo Grammaticus, a Danish his-

* Olaus Wormius, in the appendix to his *Treatise de Literatura Runica*, has given a particular account of the Gothic poetry, commonly called Runic, from Runes, which signifies the Gothic letters. He informs us that there were no fewer than one hundred and thirty six different kinds of measure or verse used in their vyses; and though we are accustomed to

torian of considerable note who flourished in the thirteenth century, informs us that very many of these songs, containing the ancient traditionary stories of the country, were found engraven upon rocks in the old Runic character; several of which he has translated into Latin, and inserted into his History. But his versions are plainly so paraphractical, and forced into such an imitation of the style and the measures of the Roman poets, that one can form no judgment from them of the native spirit of the original. A more curious monument of the true Gothic poetry is preserved by Olaus Wormius in his book de Literatura Runica. It is an Epicedium, or funeral song, composed by Regner Lodbrog; and translated by Olaus, word for word from the original. This Lodbrog was a king of Denmark, who lived in the eighth century, famous for his wars and victories; and at the same time an eminent Scald or poet. It was his misfortune to fall at last into the hands of one of his enemies, by whom he was

call rhyme a Gothic invention, he says expressly, that among all these measures, rhyme, or correspondence of final syllables, was never employed. He analyses the structure of one of these kinds of verse, that in which the poem of Lodbrog, afterwards quoted, is written; which exhibits a very singular species of harmony, if it can be allowed that name, depending neither upon rhyme nor upon metrical feet, or quantity of syllables, but chiefly upon the number of the syllables, and the disposition of the letters. In every stanza was an equal number of lines: in every line six syllables. In each distich, it was requisite that three words should begin with the same letter; two of the corresponding words placed in the first line of the distich, the third, in the second line. In each line were also required two syllables, but never the final ones, formed either of the same consonants, or same vowels. As an example of this measure, Olaus gives us these two Latin lines, constructed exactly according to the above rules of Runic verse:

Christus caput nostrum
Coronet te bonis

The initial letters of Christus, Caput, and Coronet, make the three corresponding letters of the distich. In the first line, the first syllables of Christus and of nostrum; in the second line, the on in coronet and in bonis make the requisite correspondence of syllables. Frequent inversions and transpositions were permitted in this poetry; which would naturally follow from such laborious attention to the collocation of words.

The curious on this subject, may consult likewise Dr. Hicks's *Thesaurus Linguarum Septentrionalium*; particularly the 23d chapter of his *Grammatica Anglo-Saxonica & Mæso-Gothica*; where they will find a full account of the structure of the Anglo-Saxon verse, which nearly resembled the Gothic. They will find also some specimens both of Gothic and Saxon poetry. An extract, which Dr. Hicks has given from the work of one of the Danish Scalds, entitled, *Hervarer Saga*, containing an evocation from the dead, may be found in the sixth volume of *Miscellany Poems*, published by Mr. Dryden.

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thrown into prison, and condemned to be destroyed by serpents. In this situation he solaced himself with rehearsing all the exploits of his life. The poem is divided into twenty nine stanzas, of ten lines each; and every stanza begins with these words, *Pugnavimus Ensibus*, We have fought with our swords. Olaus's version is in many places so obscure as to be hardly intelligible. I have subjoined the whole below, exactly as he has published it; and shall translate as much as may give the English reader an idea of the spirit and strain of this kind of poetry.*

* I.

*Pugnavimus Ensibus
Haud post longum tempus
Cum in Gotlandia accessimus
Ad serpentis immensi necem
Tunc impetravimus Thoram
Ex hoc vocarunt me virum
Quod serpentem transfodi
Hirsutam braccam ob illam cedem
Cuspide ictum intuli in colubrum
Ferro lucidorum stupendorum.*

II.

*Multum juvenis fui quando acquisivimus
Orientem versus in Oreonico freto
Vulnerum amnes avidæ feræ
Et flavipedi avi
Accepimus ibidem sonuerunt
Ad sublimes galeas
Dura ferra magnam escam
Omnis erat oceanus vulnus
Vadavit corvus in sanguine Cæсорum.*

III.

*Alte tulimus tunc lanceas
Quando viginti annos numeravimus
Et celebrem laudem comparavimus passim
Vicimus octo barones
In oriente ante Dimini portum
Aquilæ impetravimus tunc sufficientem
Hospitii sumptum in illa strage
Sudor decidit in vulnere
Oceano perdidit exercitus ætatem*

IV.

*Pugnæ facta copia
Cum Helsingianos postulavimus
Ad aulam Odini
Naves direximus in ostium Vistulæ
Mucro potuit tum mordere
Omnis erat vulnus unda
Terra rubefacta Calido
Frendebat gladius in loricas
Gladius findebat Clypeos.*

“ We have fought with our swords. I was young,
 “ when, towards the east, in the bay of Oreon, we made
 “ torrents of blood flow, to gorge the ravenous beast of
 “ prey, and the yellow-footed bird. There resounded the

V.

Memini neminem tunc fugisse
 Priusquam in navibus
 Heraudus in bello caderet
 Non findit navibus
 Alius baro præstantior
 Mare ad portum
 In navibus longis post illum
 Sic attulit princeps passim
 Alacre in bellum cor.

VI.

Exercitus abjecit Clypeos
 Cum hasta volavit
 Ardua ad virorum pectora
 Momordit Scarforum cautes
 Gladius in pugna
 Sanguineus erat Clypeus
 Antequam Rafno rex caderet
 Fluxit ex virorum capitibus
 Calidus in loricas sudor.

VII.

Habere potuerunt tum corvi
 Ante Indirorum insulas
 Sufficientem prædam dilaniandam
 Acquisivimus feris carnivoris
 Plenum prandium unico actu
 Difficile erat unius facere mentionem
 Oriente sole
 Spicula vidi pungere
 Propulerunt arcus ex se ferra.

VIII.

Altum mugierunt enses
 Antequam in Laneo campo
 Eislinus rex cecidit
 Processimus auro ditati
 Ad terram prostratorum dimicandum
 Gladius secuit Clypeorum
 Picturas in galearum conventu
 Cervicum mustum ex vulneribus
 Diffusum per cerebrum fissum.

IX.

Tenuimus Clypeos in sanguine
 Cum hastam unximus
 Ante Boring holmum
 Telorum nubes dirumpunt clypeum
 Extrusit arcus ex se metallum
 Voluir cecidit in conflictu
 Non erat illo rex major
 Cæsi dispersi late per littora
 Feræ amplectebantur escam.

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“ hard steel upon the lofty helmets of men. The whole
“ ocean was one wound. The crow waded in the blood
“ of the slain. When we had numbered twenty years,
“ we lifted our spears on high, and every where spread

X.

Pugna manifeste crescebat
Antequam Freyr rex caderet
In Flandrorum terra
Cæpit cæruleus ad incidendum
Sanguine illitus in auream
Loricam in Pugna
Durus armorum mucro olim
Virgo deploravit matutinam lanienam
Multa præda dabatur feris.

XI.

Centies centenos vidi jacere
In navibus
Ubi Ænglanes vocatur
Navigavimus ad pugnam
Per sex dies antequam exercitus caderet
Transegimus mucronum missam
In exortu solis
Coactus est pro nostris gladiis
Valdiofur in bello occumbere.

XII.

Ruit pluvia sanguinis de gladiis
Præceps in Bardafyrde
Pallidum corpus pro accipitribus
Murmuravit arcus ubi mucro
Acriter mordebat Loricæ
In conflictu
Odini Pileus Galea
Cucurrit arcus ad vulnus
Venenate acutus conspersus sudore sanguineo.

XIII.

Tenuimus magica scata
Alte in pugnae ludo
Ante Hiadningum sinum
Videre licuit tum viros
Qui gladiis lacerarunt Clypeos
In gladiatorio murmure
Galeæ attritæ virorum
Erat sicut splendidam virginem
In lecto juxta se collocare.

XIV.

Dura venit tempestas Clypeis
Cadaver cecidit in terram
In Nortumbria
Erat circa matutinum tempus
Hominibus necessum erat fugere
Ex prælio ubi acute
Cassidis campos mordebant gladii
Erat hoc veluti Juvenem viduam
In primaria sede osculari.

“ our renown. Eight barons we overcame in the east,
 “ before the port of Diminum; and plentifully we feasted
 “ the eagle in that slaughter. The warm stream of
 “ wounds ran into the ocean. The army fell before

XV.

Herthiofe evasit fortunatus
 In Australibus Orcadibus ipse
 Victoriæ in nostris hominibus
 Cogebatur in armorum nimbo
 Rogvaldus occumbere
 Iste venit summus super accipitres
 Luctus in gladiatorum ludo
 Strenue jactabat concussor
 Galeæ sanguinis teli.

XVI.

Quilibet jacebat transversim supra alium
 Guadebat pugna lætus
 Accipiter ob gladiatorum ludum
 Non fecit aquilam aut aprum
 Qui Irlandiam gubernavit
 Conventus fiebat ferri & Clypei
 Marstanus rex jejunis
 Fiebat in vedræ sinu
 Præda data corvis.

XVII.

Bellatorem multum vidi cadere
 Mante ante machæram
 Virum in mucronum dissidio
 Filio meo incidit mature
 Gladius juxta cor
 Egillus fecit Agnerum spoliatum
 Impertertitum virum vita
 Sonuit lancea prope Hamdi
 Griseam lorica splendebant vexilla.

XVIII.

Verborum tenaces vidi dissecare
 Haut minutim pro lupis
 Endili maris ensibus
 Erat per Hebdomadæ spacium
 Quasi mulieres vinum apportarent
 Rubefactæ erant naves
 Valde in strepitu armorum
 Scissa erat lorica
 In Scioldungorum prælio.

XIX.

Pulchricomum vidi crepusculascere
 Virginis amatorem circa matutinum
 Et confabulationis amicum viduarum
 Erat sicut calidum balneum
 Vinei vasis nympa portaret
 Nos in llæ freto
 Antiquam Orn rex caderet
 Sanguineum Clypeum vidi ruptum
 Hoc invertit virorum vitam.

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“ us. When we steered our ships into the mouth of the
“ Vistula, we sent the Helsingians to the Hall of Odin.
“ Then did the sword bite. The waters were all one
“ wound. The earth was dyed red with the warm streams

XX.

Egimus gladiatorum ad cædem
Ludum in Lindis insula
Cum regibus tribus
Pauci potuerunt inde letari
Cecidit multus in rictum ferarum
Accipiter dilaniavit carnem cum lupo
Ut satur inde discederet
Hybernorum sanguis in oceanum
Copiose decedit per mactationis tempus.

XXI.

Alte gladius mordebat Clypeos
Tunc cum aurei coloris
Hasta fricabat loricas
Videre licuit in Onlugs insula
Per secula multum post
Ibi fuit ad gladiatorum ludos
Reges processerunt
Rubicundum erat circa insulam
Ar volans Draco vulnerum.

XXII.

Quid est viro forti morte certius
Etsi ipse in armorum nimbo
Adversus collocatus sit
Sæpe deplorat ætatem
Qui nunquam premitur
Malum ferunt timidum incitare
Aquilam ad gladiatorum ludum
Meticulosus venit nuspian
Cordi suo usui.

XXIII.

Hoc numero æquum ut procedat
In contactu gladiatorum
Juvenis unus contra alterum
Non retrocedat vir a viro.
Hoc fuit viri fortis nobilitas diu
Semper debet amoris amicus virginum
Audax esse in fremitu armorum.

XXIV.

Hoc videtur mihi re vera
Quod fata sequimur
Rarus transgreditur fata Parcarum
Non destinavi Ellæ
De vitæ exitu meæ
Cum ego sanguinem semimortuus tegerem
Et naves in aquas protrusi
Passim impetravimus tum feris
Escam in Scotiæ sinibus.

“ The sword rung upon the coats of mail, and clove the
 “ bucklers in twain. None fled on that day, till among
 “ his ships Heraudus fell. Than him no braver baron
 “ cleaves the sea with ships; a chearful heart did he ever

XXV.

Hoc ridere me facit semper
 Quod Balderi patris scamna
 Parata scio in aula
 Bibemus cerevisiam brevi
 Ex concavis crateribus craniorum
 Non gemit vir fortis contra mortem
 Magnifici in Odini domibus
 Non venio desperabundis
 Verbis ad Odini aulam.

XXVI.

Hic vellent nunc omnes
 Filii aslaugæ gladiis
 Amarum bellum excitare
 Si exacte scirent
 Calamitates nostras
 Quem non pauci angues
 Venenati me discernunt
 Matrem accepi meis
 Filiis ita ut corda valeant.

XXVII.

Valde inclinatur ad hæreditatem
 Crudele stat nocumentum a vipera
 Anguis inhabitat aulam cordis
 Speramus alterius ad Othini
 Virgam in Ellæ sanguine
 Filiis meis livescet
 Sua ira rubescet
 Non acres juvenes
 Sessionem tranquillam facient.

XXVIII.

Habeo quinquagies
 Prælia sub signis facta
 Ex belli invitatione & semel
 Minime putavi hominum
 Quod me futurus esset
 Juvenis didici mucronem rubefacere
 Alius rex præstantior
 Nos Asæ invitabunt
 No est lugenda mors.

XXIX.

Fert animus finire
 Invitant me Dysæ
 Quas ex Othini aula
 Othinus mihi misit
 Lætus cerevisiam cum Asis
 In summa sede bibam
 Vitæ elapsæ sunt horæ
 Ridens mortar.

“ bring to the combat. Then the host threw away their
 “ shields, when the uplifted spear flew at the breasts of
 “ heroes. The sword bit the Scarfian rocks; bloody was
 “ the shield in battle, until Rafno the king was slain.
 “ From the heads of warriors the warm sweat streamed
 “ down their armour. The crows around the Indirian
 “ islands had an ample prey. It were difficult to single
 “ out one among so many deaths. At the rising of the
 “ sun I beheld the spears piercing the bodies of foes, and
 “ the bows throwing forth their steel-pointed arrows.
 “ Loud roared the swords in the plains of Lano.—The
 “ virgin long bewailed the slaughter of that morning.”—
 In this strain the poet continues to describe several other
 military exploits. The images are not much varied: the
 noise of arms, the streaming of blood, and the feasting
 the birds of prey, often recurring. He mentions the death
 of two of his sons in battle; and the lamentation he de-
 scribes as made for one of them is very singular. A
 Grecian or Roman poet would have introduced the virgins
 or nymphs of the wood, bewailing the untimely fall of a
 young hero. But, says our Gothic poet, “ When Rog-
 “ valdus was slain, for him mourned all the hawks of hea-
 ven,” as lamenting a benefactor who had so liberally sup-
 plied them with prey; “ for boldly,” as he adds, “ in the
 “ strife of swords, did the breaker of helmets throw the
 “ spear of blood.”

The poem concludes with sentiments of the highest
 bravery and contempt of death. “ What is more cer-
 “ tain to the brave man than death, though amidst the
 “ storm of swords, he stands always ready to oppose it?
 “ He only regrets this life who hath never known distress.
 “ The timorous man allures the devouring eagle to the
 “ field of battle. The coward, wherever he comes, is
 “ useless to himself. This I esteem honourable, that the
 “ youth should advance to the combat fairly matched one
 “ against another; nor man retreat from man. Long
 “ was this the warrior’s highest glory. He who aspires to
 “ the love of virgins, ought always to be foremost in the
 “ roar of arms. It appears to me of truth, that we are
 “ led by the Fates. Seldom can any overcome the
 “ appointment of destiny. Little did I foresee that

“Ella* was to have my life in his hands, in that day when
 “fainting I concealed my blood, and pushed forth my
 “ships into the waves; after we had spread a repast for
 “the beasts of prey throughout the Scottish bays. But
 “this makes me always rejoice that in the halls of our
 “father Balder [or Odin] I know there are seats prepared,
 “where, in a short time, we shall be drinking ale out of
 “the hollow skulls of our enemies. In the house of the
 “mighty Odin, no brave man laments death. I come
 “not with the voice of despair to Odin’s hall. How
 “eagerly would all the sons of Aslauga now rush to war
 “did they know the distress of their father, whom a
 “multitude of venomous serpents tear! I have given to
 “my children a mother who hath filled their hearts with
 “valour. I am fast approaching to my end. A cruel death
 “awaits me from the viper’s bite. A snake dwells in the
 “midst of my heart. I hope that the sword of some of
 “my sons shall yet be stained with the blood of Ella.
 “The valiant youths will wax red with anger, and will
 “not sit in peace. Fifty and one times have I reared the
 “standard in battle. In my youth I learned to dye the
 “sword in blood: my hope was then, that no king
 “among men would be more renowned than me. The
 “goddesses of death will now soon call me; I must not
 “mourn my death. Now I end my song. The god-
 “desses invite me away; they whom Odin has sent to
 “me from his hall. I will sit upon a lofty seat, and drink
 “ale joyfully with the goddesses of death. The hours of
 “my life are run out. I will smile when I die.”

This is such poetry as we might expect from a barbarous nation. It breathes a most ferocious spirit. It is wild, harsh, and irregular; but at the same time animated and strong; the style, in the original, full of inversions, and as we learn from some of Olaus’s notes, highly metaphorical and figured.

But when we open the works of Ossian, a very different scene presents itself. There we find the fire and the enthusiasm of the most early times, combined with an amazing degree of regularity and art. We find tenderness, and even delicacy of sentiment, greatly predominant

* This was the name of his enemy who had condemned him to death.

over fierceness and barbarity. Our hearts are melted with the softest feelings, and at the same time elevated with the highest ideas of magnanimity, generosity, and true heroism. When we turn from the poetry of Lodbrog to that of Ossian, it is like passing from a savage desert, into a fertile and cultivated country. How is this to be accounted for? Or by what means to be reconciled with the remote antiquity attributed to these poems? This is a curious point, and requires to be illustrated.

That the ancient Scots were of Celtic original, is past all doubt. Their conformity with the Celtic nations in language, manners, and religion, proves it to a full demonstration. The Celtæ, a great and mighty people, altogether distinct from the Goths and Teutones, once extended their dominion over all the west of Europe; but seem to have had their most full and complete establishment in Gaul. Wherever the Celtæ or Gauls are mentioned by ancient writers, we seldom fail to hear of their Druids and their Bards; the institution of which two orders, was the capital distinction of their manners and policy. The Druids were their philosophers and priests; the bards, their poets and recorders of heroic actions: And both these orders of men seem to have subsisted among them, as chief members of the state, from time immemorial.* We must not, therefore, imagine the Celtæ to have been altogether a gross and rude nation. They possessed from very remote ages a formed system of discipline and manners, which appears to have had a deep and lasting influence. Ammianus Marcellinus gives them this express testimony, that there flourished among them the study of the most laudable arts; introduced by the Bards, whose office it was to sing in heroic verse, the gallant actions of illustrious men; and by the Druids, who lived together in colleges or societies, after the Pythagorean manner, and philosophizing upon the highest subjects, asserted the im-

* Τρία φύλα τῶν τιμωμένων διαφερόντως ἔσι. Βαρδοὶ τε καὶ βαται, καὶ Δρυΐδαι. Βαρδοὶ μὲν ὕμνηται καὶ ποιηταί. Strabo. lib. iv.

Ἔσι παρ' αὐτοῖς καὶ ποιηταὶ μελῶν, ἧς Βαρδοὺς ὀνομαζέουσιν, ἔτι δὲ μετ' ἐργάνων, ταῖς λυραῖς ὁμοίων, ἧς μὲν ὕμνοισι ἧς δὲ βλασφημῶσι. Diod. Sic. l. 5.

Τὰ δὲ ἀκροσμάτα αὐτῶν εἰσὶν οἱ καλούμενοι βαρδοὶ. ποιηταὶ δ' ἔτι τυχευοῦσιν μετ' ᾠδῆς ἐπαινός λεγογτες. Posidonius ap. Athenæum, l. 6.

mortality of the human soul.* Though Julius Cæsar, in his account of Gaul, does not expressly mention the Bards, yet it is plain that under the title of Druids, he comprehends that whole college or order; of which the bards, who, it is probable, were the disciples of the Druids, undoubtedly made a part. It deserves remark, that, according to his account, the Druidical institution first took rise in Britain, and passed from thence into Gaul; so that they who aspired to be thorough masters of that learning were wont to resort to Britain. He adds, too, that such as were to be initiated among the Druids, were obliged to commit to their memory a great number of verses, insomuch that some employed twenty years in this course of education; and that they did not think it lawful to record these poems in writing, but sacredly handed them down by tradition from race to race.†

So strong was the attachment of the Celtic nations to their poetry and their bards, that amidst all the changes of their government and manners, even long after the order of the Druids was extinct, and the national religion altered, the bards continued to flourish; not as a set of strolling songsters, like the Greek ῥαψοδοὶ or Rhapsodists, in Homer's time, but as an order of men highly respected in the state, and supported by a public establishment. We find them, according to the testimonies of Strabo and Diodorus, before the age of Augustus Cæsar; and we find them remaining under the same name, and exercising the same functions as of old, in Ireland, and in the north of Scotland, almost down to our own times. It is well known that in both these countries, every *regulus*, or chief, had his own bard, who was considered as an officer of rank in his court; and had lands assigned him, which descended to his family. Of the honour in which the bards were

* Per hæc loca (speaking of Gaul) hominibus paulatim excultis viguere studia laudabilium doctrinarum; inchoata per Bardos & Euhages & Druidas. Et Bardi quidem fortia virorum illustrium facta heroicis composita versibus cum dulcibus lyræ modulis cantarunt. Euhages vero scrutantes serium & sublimia naturæ pandere conabantur. Inter hos, Druidæ ingeniis celsiores, ut auctoritas Pythagoræ decrevit, sodalitiis adstricti consortiis, quæstionibus altarum occultarumque rerum erecti sunt; & despectantes humana pronuntiarunt animas immortales. Amm. Marcellinus l. 15. cap. 9.

† Vid. Cæsar de bello. Gall. lib. 6.

held, many instances occur in Ossian's poems. On all important occasions, they were the ambassadors between contending chiefs; and their persons were held sacred. "Cairbar feared to stretch his sword to the bards, though his soul was dark. Loose the bards, said his brother Cathmor, they are the sons of other times. Their voice shall be heard in other ages, when the kings of Temora have failed."

FROM all this, the Celtic tribes clearly appear to have been addicted in so high a degree to poetry, and to have made it so much their study from the earliest times, as may remove our wonder at meeting with a vein of higher poetical refinement among them, than was at first sight to have been expected among nations, whom we are accustomed to call barbarous. Barbarity, I must observe, is a very equivocal term; it admits of many different forms and degrees; and though, in all of them, it excludes polished manners, it is, however, not inconsistent with generous sentiments and tender affections*. What degrees of friendship, love, and heroism, may possibly be found to prevail in a rude state of society, no one can say. Astonishing instances of them we know, from history, have sometimes appeared: and a few characters, distinguished by those high

* Surely among the wild Laplanders, if any where, barbarity is in its most perfect state. Yet their love songs, which Scheffer has given us in his Lapponia, are a proof that natural tenderness of sentiment may be found in a country, into which the least glimmering of science has never penetrated. To most English readers these songs are well known by the elegant translations of them in the Spectator, No. 366 and 400. I shall subjoin Scheffer's Latin version of one of them, which has the appearance of being strictly literal:

Sol, clarissimum emitte lumen in paludem Orra. Si enisus in summa picearum cacumina scirem me visurum Orra paludem, in ea eniterer, ut viderem inter quos amica, mea esset flores; omnes suscinderem frutices ibi enatos, omnes ramos præsecarem, hos virentes ramos. Cursum nubium essem se cutus, quæ iter suum instituunt versus paludem Orra, si ad te volare possem alis, cornicum alis. Sed mihi desunt alæ, alæ querquedulæ, pedesque, anserum pedes plantæve bonæ, quæ deferre me valeant ad te. Satis expectasti diu; per tot dies, tot dies tuos optimos, oculis tuis jucundissimis, corde tuo amicissimo, Quod si longissime velles effugere cito tamen te consequerer. Quid firmiter validiusve esse potest quam contorti nervi, catenæve ferreæ, quæ durissime ligant? Sic amor contorquet caput nostrum, mutat cogitationes & sententias. Puerorum voluntas, voluntas venti; juvenum cogitationes, longæ cogitationes. Quos si audirem omnes, a via, a via justa declinarem. Unum est consilium quod capiam; Ita scio viam rectiorem me reperturum. Schefferi Lapponia, cap. 25.

qualities, might lay a foundation for a set of manners being introduced into the songs of the bards, more refined, it is probable, and exalted, according to the usual poetical licence, than the real manners of the country. In particular, with respect to heroism: the great employment of the Celtic bards, was to delineate the characters, and sing the praises of heroes. So Lucan;

Vos quoque qui fortes animos, belloque peremptos,
Laudibus in longum vates diffunditis ævum
Plurima securi fudistis carmina bardi.

PHARS. l. 1.

Now when we consider a college or order of men, who cultivating poetry throughout a long series of ages, had their imaginations continually employed on the ideas of heroism; who had all the poems and panegyrics, which were composed by their predecessors, handed down to them with care; who rivalled and endeavoured to outstrip those who had gone before them, each in the celebration of his particular hero; is it not natural to think, that at length the character of a hero would appear in their songs with the highest lustre, and be adorned with qualities truly noble? Some of the qualities indeed which distinguish a Fingal, moderation, humanity, and clemency, would not probably be the first ideas of heroism occurring to a barbarous people: but no sooner had such ideas begun to dawn on the minds of poets, than, as the human mind easily opens to the native representations of human perfection, they would be seized and embraced; they would enter into their panegyrics; they would afford materials for succeeding bards to work upon, and improve; they would contribute not a little to exalt the public manners. For such songs as these, familiar to the Celtic warriors from their childhood, and throughout their whole life, both in war and in peace, their principal entertainment, must have had a very considerable influence in propagating among them real manners nearly approaching to the poetical; and in forming even such a hero as Fingal. Especially when we consider that among their limited objects of ambition, among the few advantages which in a savage state, man could obtain over man, the chief was Fame, and that im-

mortality which they expected to receive from their virtues and exploits, in the songs of bards*.

HAVING made these remarks on the Celtic poetry and bards in general, I shall next consider the particular advantages which Ossian possessed. He appears clearly to have lived in a period which enjoyed all the benefit I just now mentioned of traditionary poetry. The exploits of Trathal, Trenmor, and the other ancestors of Fingal, are spoken of as familiarly known. Ancient bards are frequently alluded to. In one remarkable passage, Ossian describes himself as living in a sort of classical age, enlightened by the memorials of former times, which were conveyed in the songs of bards; and points at a period of darkness and ignorance which lay beyond the reach of tradition. "His words," says he, "came only by halves to our ears; they were dark as the tales of other times, before the light of the song arose." Ossian, himself, appears to have been endowed by nature with an exquisite sensibility of heart; prone to that tender melancholy which is so often an attendant on great genius; and susceptible equally of strong and of soft emotions. He was not only a professed bard, educated with care, as we may easily believe, to all the poetical art then known, and connected, as he shews us himself, in intimate friendship with the other contemporary bards, but a warrior also; and the son of the most renowned hero and prince of his age. This formed a conjunction of circumstances, uncommonly favourable towards exalting the imagination of a poet. He relates expeditions in which he had been engaged; he sings of battles in which he had fought and overcome; he had beheld the most illustrious scenes which that age could exhibit, both of heroism in war, and magnificence in peace. For however rude the magnificence of those times may seem to us, we must remember that all ideas of magnificence are comparative; and that the age of Fingal was an æra of distinguished splendor in that part of the world. Fingal reigned over a considerable territory; he was en-

* When Edward I. conquered Wales, he put to death all the Welch bards. This cruel policy plainly shews, how great an influence he imagined the songs of these bards to have over the minds of the people; and of what nature he judged that influence to be. The Welch bards were of the same Celtic race with the Scottish and Irish.

riched with the spoils of the Roman province; he was ennobled by his victories and great actions; and was in all respects a personage of much higher dignity than any of the chieftains, or heads of clans, who lived in the same country, after a more extensive monarchy was established.

The manners of Ossian's age, so far as we can gather them from his writings, were abundantly favourable to a poetical genius. The two dispiriting vices, to which Longinus imputes the decline of poetry, covetousness and effeminacy, were as yet unknown. The cares of men were few. They lived a roving indolent life; hunting and war their principal employments; and their chief amusements, the music of bards and "the feast of shells." The great object pursued by heroic spirits, was "to receive their fame," that is, to become worthy of being celebrated in the songs of bards; and "to have their name on the four grey stones." To die unlamented by a bard, was deemed so great a misfortune, as even to disturb their ghosts in another state. "They wander in thick mists beside the reedy lake; but never shall they rise, without the song, to the dwelling of winds." After death, they expected to follow employments of the same nature with those which had amused them on earth; to fly with their friends on clouds, to pursue airy deer, and to listen to their praise in the mouths of bards. In such times as these, in a country where poetry had been so long cultivated, and so highly honoured, is it any wonder that among the race and succession of bards, one Homer should arise; a man who, endowed with a natural happy genius, favoured by peculiar advantages of birth and condition, and meeting, in the course of his life, with a variety of incidents proper to fire his imagination, and to touch his heart, should attain a degree of eminence in poetry worthy to draw the admiration of more reïned ages?

The compositions of Ossian are so strongly marked with characters of antiquity, that although there were no external proof to support that antiquity, hardly any reader of judgment and taste, could hesitate in referring them to a very remote æra. There are four great stages through which men successively pass in the progress of society.

The first and earliest is the life of hunters; pasturage succeeds to this, as the ideas of property begin to take root; next agriculture; and lastly, commerce. Throughout Ossian's poems, we plainly find ourselves in the first of these periods of society; during which, hunting was the chief employment of men, and the principal method of their procuring subsistence. Pasturage was not indeed wholly unknown; for we hear of dividing the herd in the case of a divorce; but the allusions to herds and to cattle are not many; and of agriculture, we find no traces. No cities appear to have been built in the territories of Fingal. No arts are mentioned except that of navigation and of working in iron*. Every thing presents to us the most simple and unimproved manners. At their feasts, the heroes prepared their own repast; they sat round the light of the burning oak; the wind lifted their locks, and whistled through their open halls. Whatever was beyond the necessaries of life was known to them only as the spoil of the Roman province; "the gold of the stranger; the lights of the stranger; the steeds of the stranger, the children of the rein."

This representation of Ossian's times, must strike us the more, as genuine and authentic, when it is compared with a poem of later date, which Mr. Macpherson has preserved in one of his notes. It is that wherein five bards are represented as passing the evening in the house of a chief, and each of them separately giving his description

* Their skill in navigation need not at all surprize us. Living in the western islands, along the coast, or in a country which is every where intersected with arms of the sea, one of the first objects of their attention, from the earliest time, must have been how to traverse the waters. Hence that knowledge of the stars, so necessary for guiding them by night, of which we find several traces in Ossian's works: particularly in the beautiful description of Cathmor's shield in the 7th book of Temora. Among all the northern maritime nations, navigation was very early studied. Piratical incursions were the chief means they employed for acquiring booty; and were among the first exploits which distinguished them in the world. Even the savage Americans were, at their first discovery, found to possess the most surprizing skill and dexterity in navigating their immense lakes and rivers.

The description of Cuthullin's chariot, in the 1st book of Fingal, has been objected to by some, as representing greater magnificence than is consistent with the supposed poverty of that age. But this chariot is plainly only a horse-litter; and the gems mentioned in the description, are no other than the shining stones or pebbles, known to be frequently found along the western coast of Scotland.

of the night. The night scenery is beautiful; and the author has plainly imitated the style and manner of Ossian: but he has allowed some images to appear which betray a later period of society. For we meet with windows clapping, the herds of goats and cows seeking shelter, the shepherd wandering, corn on the plain, and the wakeful hind rebuilding the shocks of corn which had been overturned by the tempest. Whereas in Ossian's works, from beginning to end, all is consistent; no modern allusion drops from him; but every where, the same face of rude nature appears; a country wholly uncultivated, thinly inhabited, and recently peopled. The grass of the rock, the flower of the heath, the thistle with its beard, are the chief ornaments of his landscapes. "The desert," says Fingal, "is enough for me, with all its woods and deer."

The circle of ideas and transactions, is no wider than suits such an age: nor any greater diversity introduced into characters, than the events of that period would naturally display. Valour and bodily strength are the admired qualities. Contentions arise, as is usual among savage nations, from the slightest causes. To be affronted at a tournament, or to be omitted in the invitation to a feast, kindles a war. Women are often carried away by force; and the whole tribe, as in the Homeric times, rise to avenge the wrong. The heroes show refinement of sentiment indeed on several occasions, but none of manners. They speak of their past actions with freedom, boast of their exploits, and sing their own praise. In their battles, it is evident that drums, trumpets, or bagpipes, were not known or used. They had no expedient for giving the military alarms but striking a shield, or raising a loud cry: and hence the loud and terrible voice of Fingal is often mentioned, as a necessary qualification of a great general; like the *βοὴν ἀγαθὸς Μενελάος* of Homer. Of military discipline or skill, they appear to have been entirely destitute. Their armies seem not to have been numerous; their battles were disorderly; and terminated, for the most part, by a personal combat, or wrestling of the two chiefs; after which, "the bard sung the song of peace, and the battle ceased along the field."

The manner of composition bears all the marks of the greatest antiquity. No artful transitions; nor full and extended connection of parts; such as we find among the poets of later times, when order and regularity of composition were more studied and known; but a style always rapid and vehement; in narration concise even to abruptness, and leaving several circumstances to be supplied by the reader's imagination. The language has all that figurative cast, which, as I before shewed, partly a glowing and undisciplined imagination, partly the sterility of language and the want of proper terms, have always introduced into the early speech of nations; and in several respects, it carries a remarkable resemblance to the style of the Old Testament. It deserves particular notice, as one of the most genuine and decisive characters of antiquity, that very few general terms or abstract ideas, are to be met with in the whole collection of Ossian's works. The ideas of men, at first, were all particular. They had not words to express general conceptions. These were the consequence of more profound reflection, and longer acquaintance with the arts of thought and of speech. Ossian, accordingly, almost never expresses himself in the abstract. His ideas extended little farther than to the objects he saw around him. A public, a community, the universe, were conceptions beyond his sphere. Even a mountain, a sea, or a lake, which he has occasion to mention, though only in a simile, are for the most part particularized; it is the hill of Cromla, the storm of the sea of Malmor, or the reeds of the lake of Lego. A mode of expression, which whilst it is characteristic of ancient ages, is at the same time highly favourable to descriptive poetry. For the same reasons, personification is a poetical figure not very common with Ossian. Inanimate objects, such as winds, trees, flowers, he sometimes personifies with great beauty. But the personifications which are so familiar to later poets of Fame, Time, Terror, Virtue, and the rest of that class, were unknown to our Celtic bard. These were modes of conception too abstract for his age.

All these are marks so undoubted, and some of them too so nice and delicate, of the most early times, as put the high antiquity of these poems out of question. Espe-

cially when we consider, that if there had been any imposture in this case, it must have been contrived and executed in the Highlands of Scotland, two or three centuries ago ; as up to this period, both by manuscripts, and by the testimony of a multitude of living witnesses, concerning the uncontrovertible tradition of these poems, they can clearly be traced. Now this is a period when that country enjoyed no advantages for a composition of this kind, which it may not be supposed to have enjoyed in as great, if not in a greater degree, a thousand years before. To suppose that two or three hundred years ago, when we well know the Highlands to have been in a state of gross ignorance and barbarity, there should have arisen in that country a poet, of such exquisite genius, and of such deep knowledge of mankind, and of history, as to divest himself of the ideas and manners of his own age, and to give us a just and natural picture of a state of society ancients by a thousand years ; one who could support this counterfeited antiquity through such a large collection of poems, without the least inconsistency ; and who, possessed of all this genius and art, had at the same time the self-denial of concealing himself, and of ascribing his own works to an antiquated bard, without the imposture being detected ; is a supposition that transcends all bounds of credibility.

There are, besides, two other circumstances to be attended to, still of greater weight, if possible, against this hypothesis. - One is, the total absence of religious ideas from this work ; for which the translator has, in his preface, given a very probable account, on the footing of its being the work of Ossian. The druidical superstition was, in the days of Ossian, on the point of its final extinction ; and for particular reasons, odious to the family of Fingal ; whilst the Christian faith was not yet established. But had it been the work of one to whom the ideas of Christianity were familiar from his infancy ; and who had superadded to them also the bigoted superstition of a dark age and country ; it is impossible but in some passage or other, the traces of them would have appeared. The other circumstance is, the entire silence which reigns with respect to all the great clans or families, which are now established

in the Highlands. The origin of these several clans, is known to be very ancient: and it is as well known, that there is no passion by which a native Highlander is more distinguished, than by attachment to his clan, and jealousy for its honour. That a Highland bard in forging a work relating to the antiquities of his country, should have inserted no circumstance which pointed out the rise of his own clan, which ascertained its antiquity, or increased its glory, is, of all suppositions that can be formed, the most improbable; and the silence on this head, amounts to a demonstration that the author lived before any of the present great clans were formed or known.

Assuming it then, as we well may, for certain, that the poems now under consideration, are genuine venerable monuments of very remote antiquity, I proceed to make some remarks upon their general spirit and strain. The two great characteristics of Ossian's poetry are, tenderness and sublimity. It breathes nothing of the gay and cheerful kind; an air of solemnity and seriousness is diffused over the whole. Ossian is perhaps the only poet who never relaxes, or lets himself down into the light and amusing strain; which I readily admit to be no small disadvantage to him, with the bulk of readers. He moves perpetually in the high region of the grand and the pathetic. One key note is struck at the beginning, and supported to the end; nor is any ornament introduced, but what is perfectly concordant with the general tone or melody. The events recorded, are all serious and grave; the scenery throughout, wild and romantic. The extended heath by the sea-shore; the mountain shaded with mist; the torrent rushing through a solitary valley; the scattered oaks, and the tombs of warriors overgrown with moss; all produce a solemn attention in the mind, and prepare it for great and extraordinary events. We find not in Ossian, an imagination that sports itself, and dresses out gay trifles, to please the fancy. His poetry, more perhaps than that of any other writer, deserves to be styled, *The Poetry of the Heart*. It is a heart penetrated with noble sentiments, and with sublime and tender passions; a heart that glows, and kindles the fancy; a heart that is full, and pours itself forth. Ossian did not write, like modern poets, to please

readers and critics. He sung from the love of poetry and song. His delight was to think of the heroes among whom he had flourished ; to recal the affecting incidents of his life ; to dwell upon his past wars and loves and friendships ; till, as he expresses it himself, “ there comes “ a voice to Ossian and awakes his soul. It is the voice “ of years that are gone ; they roll before me with all their “ deeds ;” and under this true poetic inspiration, giving vent to his genius, no wonder we should so often hear, and acknowledge in his strains, the powerful and ever-pleasing voice of nature.

—-Arte, natura potentior omni.—-

Est Deus in nobis, agitante calescimus illo.

It is necessary here to observe, that the beauties of Ossian’s writings cannot be felt by those who have given them only a single or a hasty perusal. His manner is so different from that of the poets, to whom we are most accustomed ; his style is so concise, and so much crowded with imagery ; the mind is kept at such a stretch in accompanying the author ; that an ordinary reader is at first apt to be dazzled and fatigued, rather than pleased. His poems require to be taken up at intervals, and to be frequently reviewed ; and then it is impossible but his beauties must open to every reader who is capable of sensibility. Those who have the highest degree of it, will relish them the most.

As Homer is, of all the great poets, the one whose manner, and whose times come the nearest to Ossian’s, we are naturally led to run a parallel in some instances between the Greek and the Celtic bard. For though Homer lived more than a thousand years before Ossian, it is not from the age of the world, but from the state of society, that we are to judge of resembling times. The Greek has, in several points, a manifest superiority. He introduces a greater variety of incidents ; he possesses a larger compass of ideas ; has more diversity in his characters ; and a much deeper knowledge of human nature. It was not to be expected that in any of these particulars, Ossian could equal Homer. For Homer lived in a country where society was much farther advanced ; he had beheld many more objects ; cities built and flourishing ; laws instituted ; order,

discipline, and arts begun. His field of observation was much larger and more splendid; his knowledge, of course, more extensive; his mind also, it shall be granted, more penetrating. But if Ossian's ideas and objects be less diversified than those of Homer, they are all, however, of the kind fittest for poetry: the bravery and generosity of heroes, the tenderness of lovers, the attachments of friends, parents, and children. In a rude age and country, though the events that happen be few, the undissipated mind broods over them more; they strike the imagination, and fire the passions in a higher degree; and of consequence become happier materials to a poetical genius, than the same events when scattered through the wide circle of more varied action, and cultivated life.

Homer is a more cheerful and sprightly poet than Ossian. You discern in him all the Greek vivacity; whereas Ossian uniformly maintains the gravity and solemnity of a Celtic hero. This too is in a great measure to be accounted for from the different situations in which they lived, partly personal, and partly national. Ossian had survived all his friends, and was disposed to melancholy by the incidents of his life. But besides this, cheerfulness is one of the many blessings which we owe to formed society. The solitary wild state is always a serious one. Bating the sudden and violent bursts of mirth, which sometimes break forth at their dances and feasts, the savage American tribes have been noted by all travellers for their gravity and taciturnity. Somewhat of this taciturnity may be also remarked in Ossian. On all occasions he is frugal of his words; and never gives you more of an image or a description, than is just sufficient to place it before you in one clear point of view. It is a blaze of lightning, which flashes and vanishes. Homer is more extended in his descriptions; and fills them up with a greater variety of circumstances. Both the poets are dramatic; that is, they introduce their personages frequently speaking before us. But Ossian is concise and rapid in his speeches, as he is in every other thing. Homer, with the Greek vivacity, had also some portion of the Greek loquacity. His speeches indeed are highly characteristic; and to them we are much indebted for that admirable display he has given of

human nature. Yet if he be tedious any where, it is in these; some of them trifling; and some of them plainly unseasonable. Both poets are eminently sublime; but a difference may be remarked in the species of their sublimity. Homer's sublimity is accompanied with more impetuosity and fire; Ossian's with more of a solemn and awful grandeur. Homer hurries you along; Ossian elevates, and fixes you in astonishment. Homer is most sublime in actions and battles; Ossian, in description and sentiment. In the pathetic, Homer, when he chuses to exert it, has great power; but Ossian exerts that power much oftener, and has the character of tenderness far more deeply imprinted on his works. No poet knew better how to seize and melt the heart. With regard to dignity of sentiment, the pre-eminence must clearly be given to Ossian. This is indeed a surprising circumstance, that in point of humanity, magnanimity, virtuous feelings of every kind, our rude Celtic bard should be distinguished to such a degree, that not only the heroes of Homer, but even those of the polite and refined Virgil, are left far behind by those of Ossian.

After these general observations on the genius and spirit of our author, I now proceed to a nearer view, and more accurate examination of his works: and as *Fingal* is the first great poem in this collection, it is proper to begin with it. To refuse the title of an epic poem to *Fingal*, because it is not, in every little particular, exactly conformable to the practice of Homer and Virgil, were the mere squeamishness and pedantry of criticism. Examined even according to Aristotle's rules, it will be found to have all the essential requisites of a true and regular epic; and to have several of them in so high a degree, as at first view to raise our astonishment on finding Ossian's composition so agreeable to rules of which he was entirely ignorant. But our astonishment will cease, when we consider from what source Aristotle drew those rules. Homer knew no more of the laws of criticism than Ossian. But guided by nature, he composed in verse a regular story, founded on heroic actions, which all posterity admired. Aristotle, with great sagacity and penetration, traced the causes of this general admiration. He observed what it

was in Homer's composition, and in the conduct of his story, which gave it such power to please; from this observation he deduced the rules which poets ought to follow, who would write and please like Homer; and to a composition formed according to such rules, he gave the name of an epic poem. Hence his whole system arose. Aristotle studied nature in Homer. Homer and Ossian both wrote from nature. No wonder that among all the three, there should be such agreement and conformity.

The fundamental rules delivered by Aristotle concerning an epic poem, are these: That the action which is the ground-work of the poem, should be one, complete, and great; that it should be feigned, not merely historical; that it should be enlivened with characters and manners, and heightened by the marvellous.

But before entering on any of these, it may perhaps be asked, what is the moral of Fingal? For, according to M. Bossu, an epic poem is no other than an allegory contrived to illustrate some moral truth. The poet, says this critic, must begin with fixing on some maxim, or instruction, which he intends to inculcate on mankind. He next forms a fable, like one of Æsop's, wholly with a view to the moral; and having thus settled and arranged his plan, he then looks into traditionary history for names and incidents, to give his fable some air of probability. Never did a more frigid, pedantic notion, enter into the mind of a critic. We may safely pronounce, that he who should compose an epic poem after this manner, who should first lay down a moral and contrive a plan, before he had thought of his personages and actors, might deliver indeed very sound instruction, but would find few readers. There cannot be the least doubt that the first object which strikes an epic poet, which fires his genius, and gives him any idea of his work, is the action or subject he is to celebrate. Hardly is there any tale, any subject a poet can chuse for such a work, but will afford some general moral instruction. An epic poem is by its nature one of the most moral of all poetical compositions: but its moral tendency is by no means to be limited to some common-place maxim, which may be gathered from the story. It arises from the admiration of heroic actions, which such a com-

position is peculiarly calculated to produce ; from the virtuous emotions which the characters and incidents raise, whilst we read it ; from the happy impression which all the parts separately, as well as the whole taken together, leave upon the mind. However, if a general moral be still insisted on, Fingal obviously furnishes one, not inferior to that of any other poet, viz. That Wisdom and Bravery always triumph over brutal force : or another, nobler still ; That the most complete victory over an enemy is obtained by that moderation and generosity which convert him into a friend.

The unity of the epic action, which, of all Aristotle's rules, is the chief and most material, is so strictly preserved in Fingal, that it must be perceived by every reader. It is a more complete unity than what arises from relating the actions of one man, which the Greek critic justly censures as imperfect ; it is the unity of one enterprise, the deliverance of Ireland from the invasion of Swaran : an enterprise, which has surely the full Heroic dignity. All the incidents recorded bear a constant reference to one end ; no double plot is carried on ; but the parts unite into a regular whole : and as the action is one and great so it is an entire or complete action. For we find, as the Critic farther requires, a beginning, a middle, and an end ; a Nodus, or intrigue in the poem ; difficulties occurring through Cuthullin's rashness and bad success ; those difficulties gradually surmounted ; and at last the work conducted to that happy conclusion which is held essential to epic poetry. Unity is indeed observed with greater exactness in Fingal, than in almost any other epic composition. For not only is unity of subject maintained, but that of time and place also. The autumn is clearly pointed out as the season of the action ; and from beginning to end the scene is never shifted from the heath of Lena, along the sea-shore. The duration of the action in Fingal, is much shorter than in the Iliad or Æneid, but sure there may be shorter as well as longer Heroic Poems ; and if the authority of Aristotle be also required for this, he says expressly that the epic composition is indefinite as to the time of its duration. Accordingly the action of the Iliad lasts only forty-seven days, whilst that of the Æneid is continued for more than a year.

Throughout the whole of Fingal, there reigns that grandeur of sentiment, style, and imagery, which ought ever to distinguish this high species of poetry. The story is conducted with no small art. The poet goes not back to a tedious recital of the beginning of the war with Swaran; but hastening to the main action, he falls in exactly, by a most happy coincidence of thought, with the rule of Horace.

Semper ad eventum festinat, & in medias res,
 Non secus ac notas, auditorem rapit——
 Nec gemino bellum Trojanum auditur ab ovo.

De Arte Poet.

He invokes no muse, for he acknowledged none; but his occasional addresses to Malvina, have a finer effect than the invocation of any muse. He sets out with no formal proposition of his subject; but the subject naturally and easily unfolds itself; the poem opening in an animated manner, with the situation of Cuthullin, and the arrival of a scout who informs him of Swaran's landing. Mention is presently made of Fingal, and of the expected assistance from the ships of the lonely isle, in order to give further light to the subject. For the poet often shows his address in gradually preparing us for the events he is to introduce; and in particular the preparation for the appearance of Fingal, the previous expectations that are raised, and the extreme magnificence fully answering these expectations, with which the hero is at length presented to us, are all worked up with such skilful conduct as would do honour to any poet of the most refined times. Homer's art in magnifying the character of Achilles has been universally admired. Ossian certainly shews no less art in aggrandizing Fingal. Nothing could be more happily imagined for this purpose than the whole management of the last battle, wherein Gaul the son of Morni, had besought Fingal to retire, and to leave to him and his other chiefs the honour of the day. The generosity of the king in agreeing to this proposal; the majesty with which he retreats to the hill, from whence he was to behold the engagement, attended by his bards, and waving the lightning of his sword; his perceiving the chiefs overpowered by numbers, but from unwillingness to deprive them

of the glory of victory by coming in person to their assistance, first sending Ullin, the bard, to animate their courage; and at last, when the danger becomes more pressing, his rising in his might, and interposing, like a divinity, to decide the doubtful fate of the day; are all circumstances contrived with so much art as plainly discover the Celtic Bards to have been not unpractised in heroic poetry.

The story which is the foundation of the Iliad is in itself as simple as that of Fingal. A quarrel arises between Achilles and Agamemnon concerning a female slave; on which Achilles, apprehending himself to be injured, withdraws his assistance from the rest of the Greeks. The Greeks fall into great distress, and beseech him to be reconciled to them. He refuses to fight for them in person, but sends his friend Patroclus; and upon his being slain, goes forth to revenge his death, and kills Hector. The subject of Fingal is this: Swaran comes to invade Ireland: Cuthullin, the guardian of the young king, had applied for assistance to Fingal, who reigned in the opposite coast of Scotland. But before Fingal's arrival, he is hurried by rash counsel to encounter Swaran. He is defeated; he retreats; and desponds. Fingal arrives in this conjuncture. The battle is for some time dubious; but in the end he conquers Swaran; and the remembrance of Swaran's being the brother of Agandecca, who had once saved his life, makes him dismiss him honourably. Homer, it is true, has filled up his story with a much greater variety of particulars than Ossian; and in this has shewn a compass of invention superior to that of the other poet. But it must not be forgotten, that though Homer be more circumstantial, his incidents however are less diversified in kind than those of Ossian. War and bloodshed reign throughout the Iliad; and notwithstanding all the fertility of Homer's invention, there is so much uniformity in his subjects, that there are few readers, who, before the close, are not tired of perpetual fighting. Whereas in Ossian, the mind is relieved by a more agreeable diversity. There is a finer mixture of war and heroism, with love and friendship, of martial, with tender scenes, than is to be met with, perhaps, in any other poet. The Episodes too, have

great propriety; as natural, and proper to that age and country: consisting of the songs of bards, which are known to have been the great entertainment of the Celtic heroes in war, as well as in peace. These songs are not introduced at random; if you except the Episode of Duchommar and Morna, in the first book, which though beautiful, is more unartful, than any of the rest; they have always some particular relation to the actor who is interested, or to the events which are going on; and, whilst they vary the scene, they preserve a sufficient connection with the main subject, by the fitness and propriety of their introduction.

As Fingal's love to Agandecca, influences some circumstances of the poem, particularly the honourable dismissal of Swaran at the end; it was necessary that we should be let into this part of the hero's story. But as it lay without the compass of the present action, it could be regularly introduced no where, except in an episode. Accordingly the poet, with as much propriety, as if Aristotle himself had directed the plan, has contrived an episode for this purpose in the song of Carril, at the beginning of the third book.

The conclusion of the poem is strictly according to rule; and is every way noble and pleasing. The reconciliation of the contending heroes, the consolation of Cuthullin, and the general felicity that crowns the action, sooth the mind in a very agreeable manner, and form that passage from agitation and trouble, to perfect quiet and repose, which critics require as the proper termination of the epic work. "Thus they passed the night in song, and brought back the morning with joy. Fingal arose on the heath; and shook his glittering spear in his hand. He moved first towards the plains of Lena; and we followed like a ridge of fire. Spread the sail, said the king of Morven, and catch the winds that pour from Lena.—We rose on the wave with songs; and rushed with joy through the foam of the ocean." So much for the unity and general conduct of the epic action in Fingal.

With regard to that property of the subject which Aristotle requires, that it should be feigned, not historical,

he must not be understood so strictly as if he meant to exclude all subjects which have any foundation in truth. For such exclusion would both be unreasonable in itself, and, what is more, would be contrary to the practice of Homer, who is known to have founded his Iliad on historical facts concerning the war of Troy, which was famous throughout all Greece. Aristotle means no more than that it is the business of a poet not to be a mere annalist of facts, but to embellish truth with beautiful, probable, and useful fictions ; to copy nature, as he himself explains it, like painters, who preserve a likeness, but exhibit their objects more grand and beautiful than they are in reality. That Ossian has followed this course, and building upon true history, has sufficiently adorned it with poetical fiction for aggrandizing his characters and facts, will not, I believe, be questioned by most readers. At the same time, the foundation which those facts and characters had in truth, and the share which the poet himself had in the transactions which he records, must be considered as no small advantage to his work. For truth makes an impression on the mind far beyond any fiction ; and no man, let his imagination be ever so strong, relates any events so feelingly as those on which he has been interested ; paints any scene so naturally as one which he has seen ; or draws any characters in such strong colours as those which he has personally known. It is considered as an advantage of the epic subject to be taken from a period so distant, as by being involved in the darkness of tradition, may give licence to fable. Though Ossian's subject may at first view appear unfavourable in this respect, as being taken from his own times, yet when we reflect that he lived to an extreme old age ; that he relates what had been transacted in another country, at the distance of many years, and after all that race of men who had been the actors were gone off the stage ; we shall find the objection in a great measure obviated. In so rude an age, when no written records were known, when tradition was loose, and accuracy of any kind little attended to, what was great and heroic in one generation, easily ripened into the marvellous in the next.

The natural representation of human characters in an epic poem is highly essential to its merit : and in re-

spect of this there can be no doubt of Homer's excelling all the heroic poets who have ever wrote. But though Ossian be much inferior to Homer in this article, he will be found to be equal at least, if not superior, to Virgil; and has indeed given all the display of human nature, which the simple occurrences of his times could be expected to furnish. No dead uniformity of character prevails in Fingal; but on the contrary, the principal characters are not only clearly distinguished, but sometimes artfully contrasted, so as to illustrate each other. Ossian's heroes are, like Homer's, all brave; but their bravery, like those of Homer's too, is of different kinds. For instance, the prudent, the sedate, the modest and circumspect Connal, is finely opposed to the presumptuous, rash, overbearing, but gallant and generous Calmar. Calmar hurries Cuthullin into action by his temerity; and when he sees the bad effect of his counsels, he will not survive the disgrace. Connal, like another Ulysses, attends Cuthullin to his retreat, councils, and comforts him under his misfortune. The fierce, the proud, and high-spirited Swaran is admirably contrasted with the calm, the moderate, and generous Fingal. The character of Oscar is a favourite one throughout the whole poems. The amiable warmth of the young warrior; his eager impetuosity in the day of action; his passion for fame; his submission to his father; his tenderness for Malvina, are the strokes of a masterly pencil; the strokes are few; but it is the hand of nature, and attracts the heart. Ossian's own character, the old man, the hero, and the bard, all in one, presents to us through the whole work a most respectable and venerable figure, which we always contemplate with pleasure. Cuthullin is a hero of the highest class; daring, magnanimous, and exquisitely sensible to honour. We become attached to his interest, and are deeply touched with his distress; and after the admiration raised for him in the first part of the poem, it is a strong proof of Ossian's masterly genius that he durst adventure to produce to us another hero, compared with whom, even the great Cuthullin, should be only an inferior personage; and who should rise as far above him, as Cuthullin rises above the rest.

Here indeed, in the character and description of Fingal, Ossian triumphs almost unrivalled: for we may boldly

defy all antiquity to shew us any hero equal to Fingal. Homer's Hector possesses several great and amiable qualities; but Hector is a secondary personage in the Iliad, not the hero of the work. We see him only occasionally; we know much less of him than we do of Fingal; who not only in this epic poem, but in Temora, and throughout the rest of Ossian's works, is presented in all that variety of lights, which give the full display of a character. And though Hector faithfully discharges his duty to his country, his friends, and his family, he is tinctured, however, with a degree of the same savage ferocity, which prevails among all the Homeric heroes. For we find him insulting over the fallen Patroclus, with the most cruel taunts, and telling him, when he lies in the agony of death, that Achilles cannot help him now; and that in a short time his body, stripped naked, and deprived of funeral honours, shall be devoured by the Vultures.* Whereas in the character of Fingal, concur almost all the qualities that can ennoble human nature; that can either make us admire the hero, or love the man. He is not only unconquerable in war, but he makes his people happy by his wisdom in the days of peace. He is truly the father of his people. He is known by the epithet of "Fingal of the mildest look;" and distinguished, on every occasion, by humanity and generosity. He is merciful to his foes †; full of affection to his children; full of concern about his friends; and never mentions Agandecca, his first love, without the utmost tenderness. He is the universal protector of the distressed; "None ever went sad from Fingal." "O Oscar! bend the strong in arms; but spare the feeble hand. Be thou a stream of many tides against the foes of thy people; but like the gale that moves the grass, to those who ask thine aid. So Trenmor lived; such Trathal was; and such has

* Iliad xvi. 830. II xvii. 127.

† When he commands his sons, after Swaran is taken prisoner, to "pursue the rest of Lochlin, over the heath of Lena; that no vessel may hereafter bound on the dark-rolling waves of Inistore;" he means not assuredly, as some have misrepresented him, to order a general slaughter of the foes, and to prevent their saving themselves by flight; but, like a wise general, he commands his chiefs to render the victory complete, by a total rout of the enemy; that they might adventure no more for the future, to fit out any fleet against him or his allies.

“ Fingal been. My arm was the support of the injured ; “ the weak rested behind the lightning of my steel.”— These were the maxims of true heroism, to which he formed his grandson. His fame is represented as every where spread ; the greatest heroes acknowledge his superiority ; his enemies tremble at his name ; and the highest encomium that can be bestowed on one whom the poet would most exalt, is to say, that his soul was like the soul of Fingal.

To do justice to the poet's merit, in supporting such a character as this, I must observe, what is not commonly attended to, that there is no part of poetical execution more difficult, than to draw a perfect character in such a manner, as to render it distinct and affecting to the mind. Some strokes of human imperfection and frailty, are what usually give us the most clear view, and the most sensible impression of a character ; because they present to us a man, such as we have seen ; they recall known features of human nature. When poets attempt to go beyond this range, and describe a faultless hero, they, for the most part, set before us a sort of vague undistinguishable character, such as the imagination cannot lay hold of, or realize to itself, as the object of affection. We know how much Virgil has failed in this particular. His perfect hero, Æneas, is an unanimated, insipid personage, whom we may pretend to admire, but whom no one can heartily love. But what Virgil has failed in, Ossian, to our astonishment, has successfully executed. His Fingal, though exhibited without any of the common human failings, is nevertheless a real man ; a character which touches and interests every reader. To this it has much contributed, that the poet has represented him as an old man ; and by this has gained the advantage of throwing around him a great many circumstances, peculiar to that age, which paint him to the fancy in a more distinct light. He is surrounded with his family ; he instructs his children in the principles of virtue ; he is narrative of his past exploits ; he is venerable with the grey locks of age ; he is frequently disposed to moralize, like an old man, on human vanity and the prospect of death. There is more art, at least more felicity, in this, than may at first be imagined. For

youth and old age, are the two states of human life, capable of being placed in the most picturesque lights. Middle age is more general and vague; and has fewer circumstances peculiar to the idea of it. And when any object is in a situation, that admits it to be rendered particular, and to be clothed with a variety of circumstances, it always stands out more clear and full in poetical description.

Besides human personages, divine or supernatural agents are often introduced into epic poetry; forming what is called the machinery of it; which most critics hold to be an essential part. The marvellous, it must be admitted, has always a great charm for the bulk of readers. It gratifies the imagination, and affords room for striking and sublime description. No wonder, therefore, that all poets should have a strong propensity towards it. But I must observe, that nothing is more difficult, than to adjust properly the marvellous with the probable. If a poet sacrifice probability, and fill his work with extravagant supernatural scenes, he spreads over it an appearance of romance and childish fiction; he transports his readers from this world, into a fantastic, visionary region; and loses that weight and dignity which should reign in epic poetry. No work, from which probability is altogether banished, can make a lasting or deep impression. Human actions and manners, are always the most interesting objects which can be presented to a human mind. All machinery, therefore, is faulty which withdraws these too much from view; or obscures them under a cloud of incredible fictions. Besides being temperately employed, machinery ought always to have some foundation in popular belief. A poet is by no means at liberty to invent what system of the marvellous he pleases; he must avail himself either of the religious faith, or the superstitious credulity of the country wherein he lives; so as to give an air of probability to events which are most contrary to the common course of nature.

In these respects, Ossian appears to me to have been remarkably happy. He has indeed followed the same course with Homer. For it is perfectly absurd to imagine, as some critics have done, that Homer's mythology

was invented by him, in consequence of profound reflections on the benefit it would yield to poetry. Homer was no such refining genius. He found the traditionary stories on which he built his *Iliad*, mingled with popular legends concerning the intervention of the gods; and he adopted these, because they amused the fancy. Ossian, in like manner, found the tales of his country full of ghosts and spirits: it is likely he believed them himself; and he introduced them, because they gave his poems that solemn and marvellous cast, which suited his genius. This was the only machinery he could employ with propriety; because it was the only intervention of supernatural beings, which agreed with the common belief of the country. It was happy; because it did not interfere in the least with the proper display of human characters and actions; because it had less of the incredible, than most other kinds of poetical machinery; and because it served to diversify the scene, and to heighten the subject by an awful grandeur, which is the great design of machinery.

As Ossian's mythology is peculiar to himself, and makes a considerable figure in his other poems, as well as in *Fingal*, it may be proper to make some observations on it, independent of its subserviency to epic composition. It turns, for the most part, on the appearances of departed spirits. These, consonantly to the notions of every rude age, are represented not as purely immaterial, but as thin airy forms, which can be visible or invisible at pleasure; their voice is feeble; their arm is weak; but they are endowed with knowledge more than human. In a separate state, they retain the same dispositions which animated them in this life. They ride on the wind; they bend their airy bows; and pursue deer formed of clouds. The ghosts of departed bards continue to sing. The ghosts of departed heroes frequent the fields of their former fame. "They rest together in their caves, and talk of mortal men. Their songs are of other worlds. They come sometimes to the ear of rest, and raise their feeble voice." All this presents to us much the same set of ideas, concerning spirits, as we find in the eleventh book of the *Odyssey*, where Ulysses visits the regions of the dead. And in the twenty-third book of the *Iliad*, the ghost of

Patroclus, after appearing to Achilles, vanishes precisely like one of Ossian's, emitting a shrill, feeble cry, and melting away like smoke.

But though Homer's and Ossian's ideas concerning ghosts were of the same nature, we cannot but observe, that Ossian's ghosts are drawn with much stronger and livelier colours than those of Homer. Ossian describes ghosts with all the particularity of one who had seen and conversed with them, and whose imagination was full of the impression they had left upon it. He calls up those awful and tremendous ideas which the

———*Simulacra modis pallentia miris,*
are fitted to raise in the human mind; and which, in Shakespear's style, "harrow up the soul." Crugal's ghost, in particular, in the beginning of the second book of Fingal, may vie with any appearance of this kind, described by any epic or tragic poet whatever. Most poets would have contented themselves with telling us, that he resembled, in every particular, the living Crugal; that his form and dress were the same, only his face more pale and sad; and that he bore the mark of the wound by which he fell. But Ossian sets before our eyes a spirit from the invisible world, distinguished by all those features, which a strong astonished imagination would give to a ghost. "A dark-
" red stream of fire comes down from the hill. Crugal sat
" upon the beam; he that lately fell by the hand of Swa-
" ran, striving in the battle of heroes. His face is like
" the beam of the setting moon. His robes are of the
" clouds of the hill. His eyes are like two decaying
" flames. Dark is the wound of his breast.—The stars
" dim-twinkled through his form; and his voice was like
" the sound of a distant stream." The circumstance of the stars being beheld, "dim-twinkling through his form," is wonderfully picturesque; and conveys the most lively impression of his thin and shadowy substance. The attitude in which he is afterwards placed, and the speech put into his mouth, are full of that solemn and awful sublimity, which suits the subject. "Dim, and in tears, he
" stood and stretched his pale hand over the hero. Faintly,
" he raised his feeble voice, like the gale of the reedy
" Lego.—My ghost, O Connal! is on my native hills;

“ but my corse is on the sands of Ullin. Thou shalt never
 “ talk with Crugal, or find his lone steps in the heath.
 “ I am light as the blast of Cromla ; and I move like the
 “ shadow of mist. Connal, son of Colgar ! I see the dark
 “ coud of death. It hovers over the plains of Lena. The
 “ sons of green Erin shall fall. Remove from the field
 “ of ghosts.—Like the darkened moon he retired in the
 “ midst of the whistling blast.”

Several other appearances of spirits might be pointed out, as among the most sublime passages of Ossian's poetry. The circumstances of them are considerably diversified ; and the scenery always suited to the occasion. “ Oscar slowly ascends the hill. The meteors of night set on the heath before him. A distant torrent faintly roars. Unfrequent blasts rush through aged oaks. The half-enlightened moon sinks dim and red behind her hill. Feeble voices are heard on the heath. Oscar drew his sword.”-----Nothing can prepare the fancy more happily for the awful scene that is to follow. “ Tremor came from his hill, at the voice of his mighty son. A cloud, like the steed of the stranger, supported his airy limbs. His robe is of the mist of Lano, that brings death to the people. His sword is a green meteor, half-extinguished. His face is without form, and dark. He sighed thrice over the hero : and thrice, the winds of the night roared around. Many were his words to Oscar. He slowly vanished, like a mist that melts on the sunny hill.” To appearances of this kind, we can find no parallel among the Greek or Roman poets. They bring to mind that noble description in the book of Job : “ In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face. The hair of my flesh stood up. It stood still ; but I could not discern the form thereof. An image was before mine eyes. There was silence ; and I heard a voice. Shall mortal man be more just than God* ?”

As Ossian's supernatural beings are described with a surprising force of imagination, so they are introduced

* Job, iv. 13—17.

with propriety. We have only three ghosts in Fingal: that of Crugal, which comes to warn the host of impending destruction, and to advise them to save themselves by retreat; that of Evirallin, the spouse of Ossian, which calls him to rise and rescue their son from danger; and that of Agandecca, which, just before the last engagement with Swaran, moves Fingal to pity, by mourning for the approaching destruction of her kinsmen and people. In the other poems, ghosts sometimes appear when invoked to foretel futurity; frequently, according to the notions of these times, they come as forerunners of misfortune or death, to those whom they visit; sometimes they inform their friends at a distance, of their own death; and sometimes they are introduced to heighten the scenery on some great and solemn occasion. "A hundred oaks
 "burn to the wind; and faint light gleams over the
 "heath. The ghosts of Ardven pass through the beam;
 "and shew their dim and distant forms. Comala is half
 "unseen on her meteor; and Hidallan is sullen and dim."
 "The awful faces of other times, looked from the clouds
 "of Crona." Fercuth! I saw the ghost of night. Silent
 "he stood on that bank: his robe of mist flew on the
 "wind. I could behold his tears. An aged man he
 "seemed, and full of thought."

The ghosts of strangers mingle not with those of the natives. "She is seen; but not like the daughters of the
 "hill. Her robes are from the strangers' land; and she
 "is still alone." When the ghost of one whom he had formerly known is introduced, the propriety of the living character is still preserved. This is remarkable in the appearance of Calmar's ghost, in the poem entitled *The Death of Cuthullin*. He seems to forebode Cuthullin's death, and to beckon him to his cave. Cuthullin reproaches him for supposing that he could be intimidated by such prognostics. "Why dost thou bend thy dark
 "eyes on me, ghost of the car-borne Calmar? Would'st
 "thou frighten me, O Matha's son! from the battles
 "of Cormac? Thy hand was not feeble in war; neither
 "was thy voice for peace. How art thou changed, chief
 "of Lara! if thou dost advise to fly! Retire thou to thy
 "cave: thou art not Calmar's ghost: he delighted in
 "battle; and his arm was like the thunder of heaven."

Calmar makes no return to this seeming reproach: but, "He retired in his blast with joy; for he had heard the voice of his praise." This is precisely the ghost of Achilles in Homer; who, notwithstanding all the dissatisfaction he expresses with his state in the region of the dead, as soon as he had heard his son Neoptolemus praised for his gallant behaviour, strode away with silent joy to rejoin the rest of the shades.*

It is a great advantage of Ossian's mythology, that it is not local and temporary, like that of most other ancient poets; which of course is apt to seem ridiculous, after the superstitions have passed away on which it was founded. Ossian's mythology is, to speak so, the mythology of human nature; for it is founded on what has been the popular belief, in all ages and countries, and under all forms of religion, concerning the appearances of departed spirits. Homer's machinery is always lively and amusing; but far from being always supported with proper dignity. The indecent squabbles among his gods, surely do no honour to epic poetry. Whereas Ossian's machinery has dignity upon all occasions. It is indeed a dignity of the dark and awful kind; but this is proper, because coincident with the strain and spirit of the poetry. A light and gay mythology, like Homer's, would have been perfectly unsuitable to the subjects on which Ossian's genius was employed. But though his machinery be always solemn, it is not, however, always dreary or dismal; it is enlivened, as much as the subject would permit, by those pleasant and beautiful appearances, which he sometimes introduces, of the spirits of the hill. These are gentle spirits; descending on sun-beams; fair-moving on the plain; their forms white and bright; their voices sweet; and their visits to men propitious. The greatest praise that can be given, to the beauty of a living woman, is to say, "She is fair as the ghost of the hill; when it moves in a sun-beam at noon, over the silence of Morven." "The hunter shall hear my voice from his booth. He shall fear, but love my voice. For sweet shall my voice be for my friends; for pleasant were they to me."

Besides ghosts, or the spirits of departed men, we find in Ossian some instances of other kinds of machinery.

* Olyss. Lib. 11.

Spirits of a superior nature to ghosts are sometimes alluded to, which have power to embroil the deep; to call forth winds and storms, and pour them on the land of the stranger; to overturn forests, and to send death among the people. We have prodigies too; a shower of blood; and when some disaster is befalling at a distance, the sound of death heard on the strings of Ossian's harp: all perfectly consonant, not only to the peculiar ideas of northern nations, but to the general current of a superstitious imagination in all countries. The description of Fingal's airy hall, in the poem called Berrathon, and of the ascent of Malvina into it, deserves particular notice, as remarkably noble and magnificent. But above all, the engagement of Fingal with the spirit of Loda, in Carric-thura, cannot be mentioned without admiration. I forbear transcribing the passage, as it must have drawn the attention of every one who has read the works of Ossian. The undaunted courage of Fingal, opposed to all the terrors of the Scandinavian God; the appearance and the speech of that awful spirit; the wound which he receives, and the shriek which he sends forth, "as rolled into himself, he rose upon the "wind;" are full of the most amazing and terrible majesty. I know no passage more sublime in the writings of any uninspired author. The fiction is calculated to aggrandize the hero; which it does to a high degree; nor is it so unnatural or wild a fiction, as might at first be thought. According to the notions of those times, supernatural beings were material, and, consequently, vulnerable. The spirit of Loda was not acknowledged as a deity by Fingal; he did not worship at the stone of his power; he plainly considered him as the God of his enemies only; as a local deity, whose dominion extended no farther than to the regions where he was worshipped; who had, therefore, no title to threaten him, and no claim to his submission. We know there are poetical precedents of great authority for fictions fully as extravagant; and if Homer be forgiven for making Diomed attack and wound in battle, the gods whom that chief himself worshipped, Ossian surely is pardonable for making his hero superior to the god of a foreign territory.*

* The scene of this encounter of Fingal with the spirit of Loda is laid in Inistore, or the islands of Orkney; and in the description of Fingal's

Notwithstanding the poetical advantages which I have ascribed to Ossian's machinery, I acknowledge it would have been much more beautiful and perfect, had the author discovered some knowledge of a Supreme Being. Although his silence on this head has been accounted for by the learned and ingenious translator in a very probable manner, yet still it must be held a considerable disadvantage to the poetry. For the most august and lofty ideas that can embellish poetry are derived from the belief of a divine administration of the universe : and hence the invocation of a Supreme Being, or at least of some superior powers who are conceived as presiding over human affairs, the solemnities of religious worship, prayers preferred, and assistance implored on critical occasions, appear with great dignity in the works of almost all poets, as chief ornaments of their compositions. The absence of all such religious ideas from Ossian's poetry, is a sensible blank in it ; the more to be regretted, as we can easily imagine what an illustrious figure they would have made under the management of such a genius as his ; and how finely they would have been adapted to many situations which occur in his works.

After so particular an examination of Fingal, it were needless to enter into as full a discussion of the conduct of Temora, the other epic poem. Many of the same observations, especially with regard to the great characteristics of heroic poetry, apply to both. The high merit, however, of Temora, requires that we should not pass it by without some remarks.

The scene of Temora, as of Fingal, is laid in Ireland ;

landing there, it is said, " A rock bends along the coast with all its echoing wood. On the top is the circle of Loda, with the mossy stone of power." In confirmation of Ossian's topography, it is proper to acquaint the reader, that in these islands, as I have been well informed, there are many pillars and circles of stones, still remaining, known by the name of the stones and circles of Loda, or Loden ; to which some degree of superstitious regard is annexed to this day. These islands, until the year 1468, made a part of the Danish dominions. Their ancient language, of which there are yet some remains among the natives, is called the Norse ; and is a dialect, not of the Celtic, but of the Scandinavian tongue. The manners and the superstitions of the inhabitants are quite distinct from those of the Highlands and western isles of Scotland. Their ancient songs, too, are of a different strain and character, turning upon magical incantations and evocations from the dead, which were the favourite subjects of the old Runic poetry. They have many traditions among them, of wars in former times with the inhabitants of the western islands.

and the action is of a posterior date. The subject is, an expedition of the hero, to dethrone and punish a bloody usurper, and to restore the possession of the kingdom to the posterity of the lawful prince; an undertaking worthy of the justice and heroism of the great Fingal. The action is one, and complete. The poem opens with the descent of Fingal on the coast, and the consultation held among the chiefs of the enemy. The murder of the young prince Cormac, which was the cause of the war, being antecedent to the epic action, is introduced with great propriety as an episode in the first book. In the progress of the poem, three battles are described, which rise in their importance above one another; the success is various, and the issue for some time doubtful; till at last, Fingal brought into distress, by the wound of his great general Gaul, and the death of his son Fillan, assumes the command himself, and having slain the Irish king in single combat, restores the rightful heir to his throne.

Temora has perhaps less fire than the other epic poem; but in return it has more variety, more tenderness, and more magnificence. The reigning idea, so often presented to us of "Fingal in the last of his fields," is venerable and affecting; nor could any more noble conclusion be thought of, than the aged hero, after so many successful achievements, taking his leave of battles, and with all the solemnities of those times resigning his spear to his son. The events are less crowded in Temora than in Fingal; actions and characters are more particularly displayed; we are let into the transactions of both hosts; and informed of the adventures of the night as well as of the day. The still pathetic, and the romantic scenery of several of the night adventures, so remarkably suited to Ossian's genius, occasion a fine diversity in the poem; and are happily contrasted with the military operations of the day.

In most of our author's poems, the horrors of war are softened by intermixed scenes of love and friendship. In Fingal, these are introduced as episodes; in Temora, we have an incident of this nature wrought into the body of the piece; in the adventure of Cathmor and Sulmalla. This forms one of the most

conspicuous beauties of that poem. The distress of Sulmalla, disguised and unknown among strangers, her tender and anxious concern for the safety of Cathmor, her dream, and her melting remembrance of the land of her fathers; Cathmor's emotion when he first discovers her, his struggles to conceal and suppress his passion, lest it should unman him in the midst of war, though "his soul poured forth in secret, when he beheld her fearful eye." and the last interview between them, when overcome by her tenderness, he lets her know he had discovered her, and confesses his passion; are all wrought up with the most exquisite sensibility and delicacy.

Besides the characters which appeared in Fingal, several new ones are here introduced; and though, as they are all the characters of warriors, bravery is the predominant feature, they are nevertheless diversified in a sensible and striking manner. Foldath, for instance, the general of Cathmor, exhibits the perfect picture of a savage chieftain: bold, and daring, but presumptuous, cruel, and overbearing. He is distinguished, on his first appearance, as the friend of the tyrant Cairbar; "his stride is haughty; his red eye rolls in wrath." In his person and whole deportment, he is contrasted with the mild and wise Hiddalla, another leader of the same army, on whose humanity and gentleness he looks with great contempt. He professedly delights in strife and blood. He insults over the fallen. He is imperious in his counsels, and factious when they are not followed. He is unrelenting in all his schemes of revenge, even to the length of denying the funeral song to the dead; which, from the injury thereby done to their ghosts, was, in those days, considered as the greatest barbarity. Fierce to the last, he comforts himself in his dying moments, with thinking that his ghost shall often leave its blast to rejoice over the graves of those he had slain. Yet Ossian, ever prone to the pathetic, has contrived to throw into his account of the death, even of this man, some tender circumstances; by the moving description of his daughter Dardulena, the last of his race.

The character of Foldath tends much to exalt that of Cathmor, the chief commander, which is distinguished

by the most humane virtues. He abhors all fraud and cruelty, is famous for his hospitality to strangers; open to every generous sentiment, and to every soft and compassionate feeling. He is so amiable as to divide the reader's attachment between him and the hero of the poem; though our author has artfully managed it so as to make Cathmor himself indirectly acknowledge Fingal's superiority, and to appear somewhat apprehensive of the event, after the death of Fillan, which he knew would call forth Fingal in all his might. It is very remarkable, that although Ossian has introduced into his poems three complete heroes, Cuthullin, Cathmor, and Fingal, he has, however, sensibly distinguished each of their characters. Cuthullin is particularly honourable; Cathmor particularly amiable; Fingal wise and great, retaining an ascendant peculiar to himself in whatever light he is viewed.

But the favourite figure in *Temora*, and the one most highly finished, is Fillan. His character is of that sort, for which Ossian shews a particular fondness; an eager, fervent young warrior, fired with all the impatient enthusiasm for military glory, peculiar to that time of life. He had sketched this in the description of his own son Oscar; but as he has extended it more fully in Fillan, and as the character is so consonant to the epic strain, though, so far as I remember, not placed in such a conspicuous light by any other epic poet, it may be worth while to attend a little to Ossian's management of it in this instance.

Fillan was the youngest of all the sons of Fingal; younger, it is plain, than his nephew Oscar, by whose fame and great deeds in war, we may naturally suppose his ambition to have been highly stimulated. Withal, as he is younger, he is described as more rash and fiery. His first appearance is soon after Oscar's death, when he was employed to watch the motions of the foe by night. In a conversation with his brother Ossian, on that occasion, we learn that it was not long since he began to lift the spear. "Few are the marks of my sword in battle; but my soul is fire." He is with some difficulty restrained by Ossian from going to attack the enemy; and complains to him, that his father had never allowed him

any opportunity of signalizing his valour. "The king
 " hath not remarked my sword ; I go forth with the croud ;
 " I return without my fame." Soon after, when Fingal,
 according to custom, was to appoint one of his chiefs to
 command the army, and each was standing forth, and
 putting in his claim to this honour, Fillan is presented in
 the following most picturesque and natural attitude. " On
 " his spear stood the son of Clatho, in the wandering of
 " his locks. Thrice he raised his eyes to Fingal: his
 " voice thrice failed him as he spoke. Fillan could not
 " boast of battles, at once he strode away. Bent over a
 " distant stream he stood ; the tear hung in his eye. He
 " struck, at times, the thistle's head, with his inverted
 " spear." No less natural and beautiful is the description
 of Fingal's paternal emotion on this occasion. " Nor is
 " he unseen of Fingal. Side-long he beheld his son.
 " He beheld him with bursting joy. He hid the big tear
 " with his locks, and turned amidst his crouded soul."
 The command, for that day, being given to Gaul, Fillan
 rushes amidst the thickest of the foe, saves Gaul's life, who
 is wounded by a random arrow, and distinguishes himself
 so in battle, that " the days of old return on Fingal's mind,
 " as he beholds the renown of his son. As the sun
 " rejoices from the cloud, over the tree his beams have
 " raised, whilst it shakes its lonely head on the heath, so
 " joyful is the king over Fillan." Sedate however and
 wise, he mixes the praise which he bestows on him with
 some reprehension of his rashness, " My son, I saw thy
 " deeds, and my soul was glad. Thou art brave, son of
 " Clatho, but headlong in the strife. So did not Fingal
 " advance, though he never feared a foe. Let thy people
 " be a ridge behind thee ; they are thy strength in the field.
 " Then shalt thou be long renowned, and behold the
 " tombs of thy fathers."

On the next day, the greatest and the last of Fillan's
 life, the charge is committed to him of leading on the host
 to battle. Fingal's speech to his troops on this occasion
 is full of noble sentiment ; and where he recommends
 his son to their care, extremely touching. " A young
 " beam is before you ; few are his steps to war. They
 " are few, but he is valiant ; defend my dark-haired son:

“Bring him back with joy; hereafter he may stand alone. His form is like his father’s; his soul is a flame of their fire.” When the battle begins, the poet puts forth his strength to describe the exploits of the young hero; who, at last encountering and killing with his own hand Foldath the opposite general, attains the pinnacle of glory. In what follows, when the fate of Fillan is drawing near, Ossian, if any where, excels himself. Foldath being slain, and a general rout begun, there was no resource left to the enemy but in the great Cathmor himself, who in this extremity descends from the hill, where, according to the custom of those princes, he surveyed the battle. Observe how this critical event is wrought up by the poet. “Wide spreading over echoing Lubar, the flight of Bolga is rolled along. Fillan hung forward on their steps; and strewed the heath with dead. Fingal rejoiced over his son.—Blue-shielded Cathmor rose. Son of Alpin, bring the harp! Give Fillan’s praise to the wind; raise high his praise in my hall, while yet he shines in war. Leave, blue-eyed Clatho! leave thy hall; behold that early beam of thine! The host is withered in its course. No farther look—it is dark—light—trembling from the harp, strike, virgins! strike the sound.” The sudden interruption, and suspense of the narration on Cathmor’s rising from his hill, the abrupt bursting into the praise of Fillan, and the passionate apostrophe to his mother Clatho, are admirable efforts of poetical art, in order to interest us in Fillan’s danger; and the whole is heightened by the immediately following simile, one of the most magnificent and sublime that is to be met with in any poet, and which if it had been found in Homer, would have been the frequent subject of admiration to critics; “Fillan is like a spirit of heaven, that descends from the skirt of his blast. The troubled ocean feels his steps, as he strides from wave to wave. His path kindles behind him; islands shake their heads on the heaving seas.”

But the poet’s art is not yet exhausted. The fall of this noble young warrior, or, in Ossian’s style, the extinction of this beam of heaven, could not be rendered too interesting and affecting. Our attention is naturally drawn to-

wards Fingal. He beholds from his hill the rising of Cathmor, and the danger of his son. But what shall he do? " Shall Fingal rise to his aid, and take the sword of Luno? What then should become of thy fame, son of white-bosomed Clatho? Turn not thine eyes from Fingal, daughter of Inistore! I shall not quench thy early beam. No cloud of mine shall rise, my son, upon thy soul of fire." Struggling between concern for the fame, and fear for the safety of his son, he withdraws from the sight of the engagement; and dispatches Ossian in haste to the field, with this affectionate and delicate injunction: " Father of Oscar!" addressing him by a title which on this occasion has the highest propriety, " Father of Oscar! lift the spear; defend the young in arms. But conceal thy steps from Fillan's eyes: he must not know that I doubt his steel." Ossian arrived too late. But unwilling to describe Fillan vanquished, the poet suppresses all the circumstances of the combat with Cathmor; and only shews us the dying hero. We see him animated to the end with the same martial and ardent spirit; breathing his last in bitter regret for being so early cut off from the field of glory. " Ossian, lay me in that hollow rock. Raise no stone above me, lest one should ask about my fame. I am fallen in the first of my fields; fallen without renown. Let thy voice alone, send joy to my flying soul. Why should the bard know where dwells the early-fallen Fillan." He who after tracing the circumstances of this story, shall deny that our bard is possessed of high sentiment and high art, must be strangely prejudiced indeed. Let him read the story of Pallas in Virgil, which is of a similar kind; and after all the praise he may justly bestow on the elegant and finished description of that amiable author, let him say which of the two poets unfold most of the human soul. I wave insisting on any more of the particulars in Temora; as my aim is rather to lead the reader into the genius and spirit of Ossian's poetry, than to dwell on all his beauties.

The judgment and art discovered in conducting works of such length as Fingal and Temora, distinguish them from the other poems in this collection. The smaller pieces, however, contain particular beauties no less emi-

nent. They are historical poems, generally of the elegiac kind; and plainly discover themselves to be the work of the same author. One consistent face of manners is every where presented to us; one spirit of poetry reigns; the masterly hand of Ossian appears throughout; the same rapid and animated style; the same strong colouring of imagination, and the same glowing sensibility of heart. Besides the unity which belongs to the compositions of one man, there is moreover a certain unity of subject, which very happily connects all these poems. They form the poetical history of the age of Fingal. The same race of heroes whom we had met with in the greater poems, Cuthullin, Oscar, Connal, and Gaul, return again upon the stage; and Fingal himself is always the principal figure, presented on every occasion, with equal magnificence, nay rising upon us to the last. The circumstances of Ossian's old age and blindness, his surviving all his friends, and his relating their great exploits to Málvina, the spouse or mistress of his beloved son Oscar, furnish the finest poetical situations that fancy could devise for that tender pathetic which reigns in Ossian's poetry.

On each of these poems, there might be room for separate observations, with regard to the conduct and disposition of the incidents, as well as to the beauty of the descriptions and sentiments. Carthon is a regular and highly finished piece. The main story is very properly introduced by Clessammor's relation of the adventure of his youth; and this introduction is finely heightened by Fingal's song of mourning over Moina; in which Ossian, ever fond of doing honour to his father, has contrived to distinguish him, for being an eminent poet, as well as warrior. Fingal's song upon this occasion, when "his thousand Bards leaned forwards from their seats, to hear the voice of the king," is inferior to no passage in the whole book; and with great judgment put in his mouth, as the seriousness, no less than the sublimity of the strain, is peculiarly suited to the Hero's character. In Darthula, are assembled almost all the tender images that can touch the heart of man; friendship, love, the affections of parents, sons, and brothers, the distress of the aged, and the unavailing bravery of the young. The beautiful ad-

dress to the moon, with which the poem opens, and the transition from thence to the subject, most happily prepare the mind for that train of affecting events that is to follow. The story is regular, dramatic, interesting to the last. He who can read it without emotion may congratulate himself, if he pleases, upon being completely armed against sympathetic sorrow. As Fingal had no occasion of appearing in the action of this poem, Ossian makes a very artful transition from his narration, to what was passing in the halls of Selma. The sound heard there on the strings of his harp, the concern which Fingal shows on hearing it, and the invocation of the ghosts of their fathers, to receive the heroes falling in a distant land, are introduced with great beauty of imagination to increase the solemnity, and to diversify the scenery of the poem.

Carric-thura is full of the most sublime dignity; and has this advantage of being more cheerful in the subject, and more happy in the catastrophe than most of the other poems: though tempered at the same time with episodes in that strain of tender melancholy, which seems to have been the great delight of Ossian and the Bards of his age. Lathmon is peculiarly distinguished, by high generosity of sentiment. This is carried so far, particularly in the refusal of Gaul, on one side, to take the advantage of a sleeping foe; and of Lathmon, on the other, to overpower by numbers the two young warriors, as to recall into one's mind the manners of chivalry; some resemblance to which may perhaps be suggested by other incidents in this collection of poems. Chivalry, however, took rise in an age and country too remote from those of Ossian, to admit the suspicion that the one could have borrowed any thing from the other. So far as chivalry had any real existence, the same military enthusiasm, which gave birth to it in the feudal times, might, in the days of Ossian, that is, in the infancy of a rising state, through the operation of the same cause, very naturally produce effects of the same kind on the minds and manners of men. So far as chivalry was an ideal system existing only in romance, it will not be thought surprising, when we reflect on the account before given of the Celtic Bards, that this imaginary refinement of heroic manners should be found among them, as

much, at least, as among the Trobadores, or strolling Provençal Bards, in the 10th or 11th century; whose songs, it is said, first gave rise to those romantic ideas of heroism, which for so long a time enchanted Europe.* Ossian's heroes have all the gallantry and generosity of those fabulous knights, without their extravagance; and his love scenes have native tenderness, without any mixture of those forced and unnatural conceits which abound in the old romances. The adventures related by our poet which resemble the most those of romance, concern women who follow their lovers to war disguised in the armour of men; and these are so managed as to produce, in the discovery, several of the most interesting situations; one beautiful instance of which may be seen in Carric-thura, and another in Calthon and Colmal.

Oithona presents a situation of a different nature. In the absence of her lover Gaul, she had been carried off and ravished by Dunrommath. Gaul discovers the place where she is kept concealed, and comes to revenge her. The meeting of the two lovers, the sentiments and the behaviour of Oithona on that occasion, are described with such tender and exquisite propriety, as does the greatest honour both to the art and to the delicacy of our author: and would have been admired in any poet of the most refined age. The conduct of Croma must strike every reader as remarkably judicious and beautiful. We are to be prepared for the death of Malvina, which is related in the succeeding poem. She is therefore introduced in person; "she has heard a voice in a dream; she feels the fluttering of her soul;" and in a most moving lamentation addressed to her beloved Oscar, she sings her own death song. Nothing could be calculated with more art to sooth and comfort her, than the story which Ossian relates. In the young and brave Fovargormo, another Oscar is introduced; his praises are sung; and the happiness is set before her of those who die in their youth, "when their renown is around them; before the feeble behold them in the hall, and smile at their trembling hands."

But no where does Ossian's genius appear to greater advantage, than in Berrathon, which is reckoned the conclusion of his songs, "The last sound of the voice of "Cona."

* Vid. Hueius de origine fabularum Romanensium.

Qualis olor noto positurus littore vitam,
 Ingemit, et mæstis mulcens concentibus auras
 Præsago quæritur venientia funera cantu.

The whole train of ideas is admirably suited to the subject. Every thing is full of that invisible world, into which the aged Bard believes himself now ready to enter. The airy hall of Fingal presents itself to his view; "he sees the cloud that shall receive his ghost; he beholds the mist that shall form his robe when he appears on his hill;" and all the natural objects around him seem to carry the presages of death. "The thistle shakes its beard to the wind. The flower hangs its heavy head; it seems to say, I am covered with the drops of heaven; the time of my departure is near, and the blast that shall scatter my leaves." Malvina's death is hinted to him in the most delicate manner by the son of Alpin. His lamentation over her, her apotheosis, or ascent to the habitation of heroes, and the introduction to the story which follows from the mention which Ossian supposes the father of Malvina to make of him in the hall of Fingal, are all in the highest spirit of poetry. "And dost thou remember Ossian, O Toscar son of Comloch? The battles of our youth were many; our swords went together to the field." Nothing could be more proper than to end his songs with recording an exploit of the father of that Malvina, of whom his heart was now so full; and who, from first to last, had been such a favourite object throughout all his poems.

The scene of most of Ossian's poems is laid in Scotland, or in the coast of Ireland opposite to the territories of Fingal. When the scene is in Ireland, we perceive no change of manners from those of Ossian's native country. For as Ireland was undoubtedly peopled with Celtic tribes, the language, customs, and religion of both nations were the same. They had been separated from one another by migration, only a few generations, as it should seem, before our poet's age; and they still maintained a close and frequent intercourse. But when the poet relates the expeditions of any of his heroes to the Scandinavian coast, or to the islands of Orkney, which were then part of the Scandinavian territory, as he does in Carric-thura, Sulmalla of Lumon, and Cathloda, the case is quite altered.



Those countries were inhabited by nations of the Teutonic descent, who in their manners and religious rites differed widely from the Celtæ; and it is curious and remarkable, to find this difference clearly pointed out in the poems of Ossian. His descriptions bear the native marks of one who was present in the expeditions which he relates, and who describes what he had seen with his own eyes. No sooner are we carried to Lochlin, or the islands of Inistore, than we perceive that we are in a foreign region. New objects begin to appear. We meet every where with the stones and circles of Loda, that is, Odin, the great Scandinavian deity. We meet with the divinations and enchantments, for which it is well known those northern nations were early famous. "There, mixed with the
"murmur of waters, rose the voice of aged men, who
"called the forms of night to aid them in their war;" whilst the Caledonian chiefs who assisted them, are described as standing at a distance, heedless of their rites. That ferocity of manners which distinguished those nations, also becomes conspicuous. In the combats of their chiefs there is a peculiar savageness; even their women are bloody and fierce. The spirit, and the very ideas of Regner Lodbrog, that northern scald whom I formerly quoted, occur to us again. "The hawks," Ossian makes one of the Scandinavian chiefs say, "rush from all
"their winds; they are wont to trace my course. We re-
"joiced three days above the dead, and called the hawks
"of heaven. They came from all their winds, to feast
"on the foes of Annir."

Dismissing now the separate consideration of any of our author's works, I proceed to make some observations, on his manner of writing, under the general heads of Description, Imagery, and Sentiment.

A poet of original genius is always distinguished by his talent for description.* A second-rate writer discerns nothing new or peculiar in the object he means to describe. His conceptions of it are vague and loose; his expressions feeble; and of course the object is presented to us indistinctly

* See the rules of poetical description excellently illustrated by Lord Kaim, in his *Elements of Criticism*, vol. iii. chap. 21, of narration and description.

and as through a cloud. But a true poet makes us imagine that we see it before our eyes : he catches the distinguishing features ; he gives it the colours of life and reality ; he places it in such a light that a painter could copy after him. This happy talent is chiefly owing to a lively imagination, which first receives a strong impression of the object ; and then, by a proper selection of capital picturesque circumstances employed in describing it, transmits that impression in its full force to the imaginations of others. That Ossian possesses this descriptive power in a high degree, we have a clear proof from the effect which his descriptions produce upon the imaginations of those who read him with any degree of attention and taste. Few poets are more interesting. We contract an intimate acquaintance with his principal heroes. The characters, the manners, the face of the country become familiar : we even think we could draw the figure of his ghosts : in a word, whilst reading him we are transported as into a new region, and dwell among his objects as if they were all real.

It were easy to point out several instances of exquisite painting in the works of our author. Such, for instance, as the scenery with which *Temora* opens, and the attitude in which *Cairbar* is there presented to us ; the description of the young prince *Cormac*, in the same book ; and the ruins of *Balclutha* in *Cartho*. “ I have seen the
 “ walls of *Balclutha*, but they were desolate. The fire
 “ had resounded in the halls ; and the voice of the people
 “ is heard no more. The stream of *Clutha* was removed
 “ from its place by the fall of the walls. The thistle shook
 “ there its lonely head : the moss whistled to the wind.
 “ The fox looked out from the windows ; the rank grass
 “ of the wall waved round his head. Desolate is the
 “ dwelling of *Moina* ; silence is in the house of her fathers.” Nothing also can be more natural and lively than the manner in which *Carthon* afterwards describes how the conflagration of his city affected him when a child :
 “ Have I not seen the fallen *Balclutha* ? And shall I
 “ feast with *Comhal*’s son ? *Comhal* ! who threw his
 “ fire in the midst of my father’s hall ! I was young, and
 “ knew not the cause why the virgins wept. The columns

“ of smoke pleased mine eye, when they rose above my
“ walls : I often looked back with gladness, when my
“ friends fled above the hill. But when the years of my
“ youth came on, I beheld the moss of my fallen walls.
“ My sigh arose with the morning ; and my tears de-
“ scended with night. Shall I not fight, I said to my
“ soul, against the children of my foes ? And I will fight,
“ O Bard ! I feel the strength of my soul.” In the same
poem, the assembling of the chiefs round Fingal, who
had been warned of some impending danger by the ap-
pearance of a prodigy, is described with so many pictur-
esque circumstances, that one imagines himself present in
the assembly. “ The king alone beheld the terrible sight,
“ and he foresaw the death of his people. He came in
“ silence to his hall, and took his father’s spear ; the
“ mail rattled on his breast. The heroes rose around.
“ They looked in silence on each other, marking the eyes
“ of Fingal. They saw the battle in his face. A thou-
“ sand shields are placed at once on their arms ; and they
“ drew a thousand swords. The hall of Selma bright-
“ ened around. The clang of arms ascends. The grey
“ dogs howl in their place. No word is among the mighty
“ chiefs. Each marked the eyes of the king ; and half as-
“ sumed his spear.”

It has been objected to Ossian, that his descriptions of
military actions are imperfect, and much less diversified
by circumstances than those of Homer. This is in some
measure true. The amazing fertility of Homer’s inven-
tion is no where so much displayed as in the incidents of
his battles, and in the little history pieces he gives of the
persons slain. Nor indeed, with regard to the talent of
description, can too much be said in praise of Homer.
Every thing is alive in his writings. The colours with
which he paints are those of nature. But Ossian’s genius
was of a different kind from Homer’s. It led him to
hurry towards grand objects, rather than to amuse him-
self with particulars of less importance. He could dwell
on the death of a favourite hero ; but that of a private
man seldom stopped his rapid course. Homer’s genius
was more comprehensive than Ossian’s. It included a
wider circle of objects ; and could work up any incident

into description. Ossian's was more limited; but the region within which it chiefly exerted itself was the highest of all, the region of the pathetic and sublime.

We must not imagine, however, that Ossian's battles consist only of general indistinct description. Such beautiful incidents are sometimes introduced, and the circumstances of the persons slain so much diversified, as show that he could have embellished his military scenes with an abundant variety of particulars, if his genius had led him to dwell upon them. "One man is stretched in the dust of his native land; he fell, where often he had spread the feast, and often raised the voice of the harp," The maid of Inistore is introduced, in a moving apostrophe, as weeping for another; and a third, "as rolled in the dust he lifted his faint eyes to the king," is remembered and mourned by Fingal as the friend of Agandecca. The blood pouring from the wound of one who is slain by night, is heard "hissing on the half-extinguished oak," which had been kindled for giving light: another, climbing a tree to escape from his foe, is pierced by his spear from behind; "shrieking, panting he fell; whilst moss and withered branches pursue his fall, and strew the blue arms of Gaul." Never was a finer picture drawn of the ardour of two youthful warriors than the following: "I saw Gaul in his armour, and my soul was mixed with his: for the fire of the battle was in his eyes; he looked to the foe with joy. We spoke the words of friendship in secret; and the lightning of our swords poured together. We drew them behind the wood, and tried the strength of our arms on the empty air."

Ossian is always concise in his descriptions, which adds much to their beauty and force. For it is a great mistake to imagine, that a crowd of particulars, or a very full and extended style, is of advantage to description. On the contrary, such a diffuse manner for the most part weakens it. Any one redundant circumstance is a nuisance. It encumbers and loads the fancy, and renders the main image indistinct. "Obstat," as Quintilian says with regard to style, "quicquid nun adjuvat." To be concise in description, is one thing; and to be general, is another. No description that rests in generals, can possibly be good;

it can convey no lively idea ; for it is of particulars only that we have a distinct conception. But at the same time, no strong imagination dwells long upon any one particular ; or heaps together a mass of trivial ones. By the happy choice of some one, or of a few that are the most striking, it presents the image more complete, shows us more at one glance, than a feeble imagination is able to do ; by turning its object round and round into a variety of lights. Tacitus is of all prose writers the most concise. He has even a degree of abruptness resembling our author. Yet no writer is more eminent for lively description. When Fingal, after having conquered the haughty Swaran, proposes to dismiss him with honour : “ Raise to-morrow “ thy white sails to the wind, thou brother of Agandecca ! ” He conveys, by thus addressing his enemy, a stronger impression of the emotions then passing within his mind, than if whole paragraphs had been spent in describing the conflict between resentment against Swaran and the tender remembrance of his ancient love. No amplification is needed to give us the most full idea of a hardy veteran, after the few following words : “ His shield is marked “ with the strokes of battle ; his red eye despises danger.” When Oscar, left alone, was surrounded by foes, “ he “ stood,” it is said, “ growing in his place, like the flood “ of the narrow vale ; ” a happy representation of one, who, by daring intrepidity in the midst of danger, seems to increase in his appearance, and becomes more formidable every moment, like the sudden rising of the torrent hemmed in by the valley. And a whole crowd of ideas, concerning the circumstances of domestic sorrow occasioned by a young warrior’s first going forth to battle, is poured upon the mind by these words : “ Calmar leaned on his “ father’s spear ; that spear which he brought from Lara’s “ hall, when the soul of his mother was sad ”

The conciseness of Ossian’s descriptions is the more proper on account of his subjects. Descriptions of gay and smiling scenes may, without any disadvantage, be amplified and prolonged. Force is not the predominant quality expected in these. The description may be weakened by being diffuse, yet, notwithstanding, may be beautiful still. Whereas, with respect to grand, solemn, and

pathetic subjects, which are Ossian's chief field, the case is very different. In these, energy is above all things required. The imagination must be seized at once, or not at all; and is far more deeply impressed by one strong and ardent image, than by the anxious minuteness of laboured illustration.

But Ossian's genius, though chiefly turned towards the sublime and pathetic, was not confined to it: in subjects also of grace and delicacy, he discovers the hand of a master. Take for an example the following elegant description of Agandecca, wherein the tenderness of Tibullus seems united with the majesty of Virgil. "The daughter of the snow overheard, and left the hall of her secret sigh. She came in all her beauty; like the moon from the cloud of the east. Loveliness was around her as light. Her steps were like the music of songs. She saw the youth and loved him. He was the stolen sigh of her soul. Her blue eyes rolled on him in secret: and she blest the chief of Morven." Several other instances might be produced of the feelings of love and friendship painted by our author with a most natural and happy delicacy.

The simplicity of Ossian's manner adds great beauty to his descriptions, and indeed to his whole poetry. We meet with no affected ornaments; no forced refinement; no marks either in style or thought of a studied endeavour to shine and sparkle. Ossian appears every where to be prompted by his feelings; and to speak from the abundance of his heart. I remember no more than one instance of what can be called quaint thought in this whole collection of his work. It is in the first book of Fingal, where from the tombs of two lovers two lonely yews are mentioned to have sprung, "whose branches wished to meet on high." This sympathy of the trees with the lovers, may be reckoned to border on an Italian conceit; and it is somewhat curious to find this single instance of that sort of wit in our Celtic poetry.

The "joy of grief," is one of Ossian's remarkable expressions, several times repeated. If any one shall think that it needs to be justified by a precedent, he may find it twice used by Homer; in the Iliad, when Achilles is

visited by the ghost of Patroclus ; and in the *Odyssey*, when Ulysses meets his mother in the shades. On both these occasions, the heroes, melted with tenderness, lament their not having it in their power to throw their arms round the ghost, “ that we might,” say they, “ in a mutual embrace, enjoy the delight of grief.”

—Κρυεροῖο τεταρπιμεσθα γόοιο.*

But in truth the expression stands in need of no defence from authority ; for it is a natural and just expression ; and conveys a clear idea of that gratification, which a virtuous heart often feels in the indulgence of a tender melancholy. Ossian makes a very proper distinction between this gratification, and the destructive effect of overpowering grief. “ There is a joy in grief, when peace dwells in the breasts of the sad. But sorrow wastes the mournful, O daughter of Toscar, and their days are few.” To “ give the joy of grief,” generally signifies to raise the strain and soft and grave music ; and finely characterises the taste of Ossian’s age and country. In those days, when the songs of bards were the great delight of heroes, the tragic muse was held in chief honour ; gallant actions, and virtuous sufferings, were the chosen theme ; preferably to that light and trifling strain of poetry and music, which promotes light and trifling manners, and serves to emasculate the mind. “ Strike the harp in my hall,” said the great Fingal, in the midst of youth and victory. “ Strike the harp in my hall, and let Fingal hear the song. “ Pleasant is the joy of grief ! It is like the shower of spring, when it softens the branch of the oak and the young leaf lifts its green head. Sing on, O bards ! To-morrow we lift the sail.”

Personal epithets have been much used by all the poets of the most ancient ages : and when well chosen, not general and unmeaning, they contribute not a little to render the style descriptive and animated. Besides epithets founded on bodily distinctions, a-kin to many of Homer’s, we find in Ossian several which are remarkably beautiful and poetical. Such as, Oscar of the future fights, Fingal of the mildest look, Carril of other times, the mildly blushing

* *Odys.* 11. 211. *Iliad.* 23. 98.

Evirallin; Bragela, the lonely sun-beam of Dunscaich; a Culdee, the son of the secret cell.

But of all the ornaments employed in descriptive poetry, comparisons or similies are the most splendid. These chiefly form what is called the imagery of a poem: And as they abound so much in the works of Ossian, and are commonly among the favourite passages of all poets, it may be expected that I should be somewhat particular in my remarks upon them.

A poetical simile always supposes two objects brought together, between which there is some near relation or connection in the fancy. What that relation ought to be, cannot be precisely defined. For various, almost numberless, are the analogies formed among objects, by a sprightly imagination. The relation of actual similitude, or likeness of appearance, is far from being the only foundation of poetical comparison. Sometimes a resemblance in the effect produced by two objects, is made the connecting principle: sometimes a resemblance in one distinguishing property or circumstance. Very often two objects are brought together in a simile, though they resemble one another, strictly speaking, in nothing, only because they raise in the mind a train of similar, and what may be called, concordant ideas; so that the remembrance of the one, when recalled, serves to quicken and heighten the impression made by the other. Thus, to give an instance from our poet, the pleasure with which an old man looks back on the exploits of his youth has certainly no direct resemblance to the beauty of a fine evening; farther than that both agree in producing a certain calm, placid joy. Yet Ossian has founded upon this, one of the most beautiful comparisons that is to be met with in any poet. "Wilt thou not listen, son of the rock, to the song of Ossian? My soul is full of other times; the joy of my youth returns. Thus the sun appears in the west, after the steps of his brightness have moved behind a storm. The green hills lift their dewy heads. The blue streams rejoice in the vale. The aged hero comes forth on his staff; and his grey hair glitters in the beam." Never was there a finer group of objects. It raises a strong conception of the old man's joy and elation of heart, by dis-

playing a scene, which produces in every spectator, a corresponding train of pleasing emotions; the declining sun looking forth in his brightness after a storm; the cheerful face of all nature; and the still life finely animated by the circumstance of the aged hero, with his staff and his grey locks; a circumstance both extremely picturesque in itself, and peculiarly suited to the main object of the comparison. Such analogies and associations of ideas as these, are highly pleasing to the fancy. They give opportunity for introducing many a fine poetical picture. They diversify the scene; they aggrandize the subject; they keep the imagination awake and sprightly. For as the judgment is principally exercised in distinguishing objects, and remarking the differences among those which seem like; so the highest amusement of the imagination is to trace likenesses and agreements among those which seem different.

The principal rules which respect poetical comparisons are, that they be introduced on proper occasions, when the mind is disposed to relish them; and not in the midst of some severe and agitating passion, which cannot admit this play of fancy; that they be founded on a resemblance neither too near and obvious, so as to give little amusement to the imagination in tracing it, nor too faint and remote, so as to be apprehended with difficulty; that they serve either to illustrate the principal object, and to render the conception of it more clear and distinct; or at least, to heighten and embellish it, by a suitable association of images.*

Every country has a scenery peculiar to itself; and the imagery of a good poet will exhibit it. For as he copies after nature, his allusions will of course be taken from those objects which he sees around him, and which have often struck his fancy. For this reason, in order to judge of the propriety of poetical imagery, we ought to be, in some measure, acquainted with the natural history of the country where the scene of the poem is laid. The introduction of foreign images betrays a poet, copying not from nature, but from other writers. Hence so many lions, and tygers, and eagles, and serpents, which we meet with in the similes of modern poets; as if these animals had acquired some right to a place in poetical comparisons for

* See Elements of Criticism, ch. 19. vol 3.

ever, because employed by ancient authors. They employed them with propriety, as objects generally known in their country; but they are absurdly used for illustration by us, who know them only at second-hand, or by description. To most readers of modern poetry, it were more to the purpose to describe lions or tygers by similes taken from men, than to compare men to lions. Ossian is very correct in this particular. His imagery is, without exception, copied from that face of nature, which he saw before his eyes; and by consequence may be expected to be lively. We meet with no Grecian or Italian scenery; but with the mists, and clouds, and storms of a northern mountainous region.

No poet abounds more in similes than Ossian. There are in this collection as many, at least, as in the whole Iliad and Odyssey of Homer. I am indeed inclined to think, that the works of both poets are too much crowded with them. Similes are sparkling ornaments; and like all things that sparkle, are apt to dazzle and tire us by their lustre. But if Ossian's similes be too frequent, they have this advantage of being commonly shorter than Homer's; they interrupt his narration less; he just glances aside to some resembling object, and instantly returns to his former track. Homer's similes include a wider range of objects. But in return, Ossian's are, without exception, taken from objects of dignity, which cannot be said for all those which Homer employs. The sun, the moon, and the stars, clouds, and meteors, lightning and thunder, seas and whales, rivers, torrents, winds, ice, rain, snow, dews, mist, fire and smoke, trees and forests, heath and grass and flowers, rocks and mountains, music and songs, light and darkness, spirits and ghosts; these form the circle, within which Ossian's comparisons generally run. Some, not many, are taken from birds and beasts; as eagles, sea fowl, the horse, the deer, and the mountain bee; and a very few from such operations of art as were then known. Homer has diversified his imagery by many more allusions to the animal world; to lions, bulls, goats, herds of cattle, serpents, insects; and to the various occupations of rural and pastoral life. Ossian's defect in this article, is plainly owing to the de-

sert, uncultivated state of his country, which suggested to him few images beyond natural inanimate objects, in their rudest form. The birds and animals of the country were probably not numerous; and his acquaintance with them was slender, as they were little subjected to the uses of man.

The great objection made to Ossian's imagery, is its uniformity, and the too frequent repetition of the same comparisons. In a work so thick sown with similes, one could not but expect to find images of the same kind sometimes suggested to the poet by resembling objects; especially to a poet like Ossian, who wrote from the immediate impulse of poetical enthusiasm, and without much preparation of study or labour. Fertile as Homer's imagination is acknowledged to be, who does not know how often his lions and bulls and flocks of sheep recur with little or no variation; nay, sometimes in the very same words? The objection made to Ossian is, however, founded in a great measure, upon a mistake. It has been supposed by inattentive readers, that wherever the moon, the cloud, or the thunder, returns in a simile, it is the same simile, and the same moon, or cloud, or thunder, which they had met with a few pages before. Whereas very often the similes are widely different. The object, whence they are taken, is indeed in substance the same; but the image is new; for the appearance of the object is changed; it is presented to the fancy in another attitude; and clothed with new circumstances, to make it suit the different illustration for which it is employed. In this, lies Ossian's great art; in so happily varying the form of the few natural appearances with which he was acquainted, as to make them correspond to a great many different objects.

Let us take for one instance the moon, which is very frequently introduced into his comparisons; as in northern climates, where the nights are long, the moon is a greater object of attention, than in the climate of Homer; and let us view how much our poet has diversified its appearance. The shield of a warrior is like "the darkened moon when it moves a dun circle through the heavens." The face of a ghost, wan and pale, is like "the beam of the setting moon." And a different appearance of a ghost,

thin and indistinct, is like "the new moon seen through the gathered mist, when the sky pours down its flaky snow, and the world is silent and dark;" or in a different form still, is like "the watery beam of the moon, when it rushes from between two clouds, and the midnight-shower is on the field." A very opposite use is made of the moon in the description of Agandecca: "She came in all her beauty, like the moon from the cloud of the east." Hope, succeeded by disappointment, is "joy rising on her face, and sorrow returning again, like a thin cloud on the moon." But when Swaran, after his defeat, is cheered by Fingal's generosity, "his face brightened like the full moon of heaven, when the clouds vanish away, and leave her calm and broad in the midst of the sky." Venvela is "bright as the moon when it trembles o'er the western wave;" but the soul of the guilty Uthal is "dark as the troubled face of the moon, when it foretels the storm." And by a very fanciful and uncommon allusion, it is said of Cormac, who was to die in his early years, "nor long shalt thou lift the spear, mildly shining beam of youth! Death stands dim behind thee, like the darkened half of the moon behind its growing light."

Another instance of the same nature may be taken from mist, which, as being a very familiar appearance in the country of Ossian, he applies to a variety of purposes, and pursues through a great many forms. Sometimes, which one would hardly expect, he employs it to heighten the appearance of a beautiful object. The hair of Morna is "like the mist of Cromla, when it curls on the rock, and shines to the beam of the west."—"The song comes with its music to melt and please the ear. It is like soft mist, that rising from a lake pours on the silent vale. The green flowers are filled with dew. The sun returns in its strength, and the mist is gone."*—But, for the

* There is a remarkable propriety in this comparison. It is intended to explain the effect of soft and mournful music. Armin appears disturbed at a performance of this kind. Carmor says to him, "Why bursts the sigh of Armin? Is there a cause to mourn? The song comes with its music to melt and please the ear. It is like soft mist, &c." that is such mournful songs have a happy effect to soften the heart, and to improve it by tender emotions, as the moisture of the mist refreshes and nourishes the

most part, mist is employed as a similitude of some disagreeable or terrible object. "The soul of Nathos was sad like the sun in the day of mist, when his face is watery and dim." "The darkness of old age comes like the mist of the desert." The face of a ghost is "pale as the mist of Cromla." "The gloom of battle is rolled along as mist that is poured on the valley, when storms invade the silent sun-shine of heaven." Fame suddenly departing, is likened to "mist that flies away before the rustling wind of the vale." A ghost, slowly vanishing, to "mist that melts by degrees on the sunny hill." Cairbar, after his treacherous assassination of Oscar, is compared to a pestilential fog. "I love a foe like Cathmor," says Fingal, "his soul is great; his arm is strong; his battles are full of fame. But the little soul is like a vapour that hovers round the marshy lake. It never rises on the green hill, lest the winds meet it there. Its dwelling is in the cave; and it sends forth the dart of death." This is a simile highly finished. But there is another which is still more striking, founded also on mist, in the 4th book of Temora. Two factious chiefs are contending; Cathmor the king interposes, rebukes, and silences them. The poet intends to give us the highest idea of Cathmor's superiority; and most effectually accomplishes his intention by the following happy image. "They sunk from the king on either side; like two columns of morning mist, when the sun rises between them, on his glittering rocks. Dark is their rolling on either side; each towards its reedy pool." These instances may sufficiently shew with what richness of imagination Ossian's comparisons abound, and at the same time, with what propriety of judgment they are employed. If his field was narrow, it must be admitted to have been as well cultivated as its extent would allow.

As it is usual to judge of poets from a comparison of their similes more than of other passages, it will perhaps be agreeable to the reader, to see how Homer and Ossian have conducted some images of the same kind. This

flowers; whilst the sadness they occasion is only transient, and soon dispelled by the succeeding occupations and amusements of life; "The sun returns in its strength, and the mist is gone."

might be shewn in many instances. For as the great objects of nature are common to the poets of all nations, and make the general store-house of all imagery, the ground-work of their comparisons must of course be frequently the same. I shall select only a few of the most considerable from both poets. Mr. Pope's translation of Homer can be of no use to us here. The parallel is altogether unfair between prose, and the imposing harmony of flowing numbers. It is only by viewing Homer in the simplicity of a prose translation, that we can form any comparison between the two bards.

The shock of two encountering armies, the noise and the tumult of battle, afford one of the most grand and awful subjects of description; on which all epic poets have exerted their strength. Let us first hear Homer. The following description is a favourite one, for we find it twice repeated in the same words.* “When now the conflicting hosts joined in the field of battle, then were mutually opposed shields, and swords, and the strength of armed men. The bossy bucklers were dashed against each other. The universal tumult rose. There were mingled the triumphant shouts and the dying groans of the victors and the vanquished. The earth streamed with blood. As when winter torrents, rushing from the mountains, pour into a narrow valley, their violent waters. They issue from a thousand springs, and mix in the hollowed channel. The distant shepherd hears on the mountain, their roar from afar. Such was the terror and the shout of the engaging armies.” In another passage, the poet, much in the manner of Ossian, heaps simile on simile, to express the vastness of the idea, with which his imagination seems to labour. “With a mighty shout the hosts engage. Not so loud roars the wave of ocean, when, driven against the shore by the whole force of the boisterous north; not so loud in the woods of the mountain, the noise of the flame, when rising in its fury to consume the forest; not so loud the wind among the lofty oaks, when the wrath of the storm rages; as was the clamour of the Greeks and Trojans, when roaring terrible, they rushed against each other.”†

Iliad, iv. 446. and Iliad, viii. 60.

+ Iliad, xiv. 393.

To these descriptions and similes, we may oppose the following from Ossian, and leave the reader to judge between them. He will find images of the same kind employed; commonly less extended; but thrown forth with a glowing rapidity which characterises our poet. “As autumn’s dark storms pour from two echoing hills, towards each other, approached the heroes. As two dark streams from high rocks meet and mix, and roar on the plain; loud, rough, and dark in battle, meet Lochlin and Inisfail. Chief mixed his strokes with chief, and man with man. Steel clanging, sounded on steel. Helmets are cleft on high; blood bursts and smoaks around.—As the troubled noise of the ocean, when roll the waves on high; as the last peal of the thunder of heaven, such is the noise of battle.”—“As roll a thousand waves to the rock, so Swaran’s host came on; as meets a rock a thousand waves, so Inisfail met Swaran. Death raises all his voices around, and mixes with the sound of shields.—The field echoes from wing to wing, as a hundred hammers that rise by turns on the red son of the furnace.”—“As a hundred winds on Morven; as the streams of a hundred hills; as clouds fly successive over heaven; or as the dark ocean assaults the shore of the desert; so roaring, so vast, so terrible, the armies mixed on Lena’s echoing heath.” In several of these images, there is a remarkable similarity to Homer’s; but what follows is superior to any comparison that Homer uses on this subject. “The groan of the people spread over the hills; it was like the thunder of night, when the cloud bursts on Cona; and a thousand ghosts shriek at once on the hollow wind.” Never was an image of more awful sublimity employed to heighten the terror of battle.

Both poets compare the appearance of an army approaching, to the gathering of dark clouds. “As when a shepherd,” says Homer, “beholds from the rock a cloud borne along the sea by the western wind; black as pitch it appears from afar sailing over the ocean, and carrying the dreadful storm. He shrinks at the sight, and drives his flock into the cave: such, under the Adjaces, moved on, the dark, the thickened phalanx to the war.”*————

* *Iliad*, iv. 275.

“ They came,” says Ossian, “ over the desert like stormy
 “ clouds, when the winds roll them over the heath ; their
 “ edges are tinged with lightning ; and the echoing groves
 “ foresee the storm.” The edges of the cloud tinged with
 lightning, is a sublime idea ; but the shepherd and his flock
 render Homer’s simile more picturesque. This is frequently
 the difference between the two poets. Ossian gives no
 more than the main image, strong and full. Homer adds
 circumstances and appendages, which amuse the fancy by
 enlivening the scenery.

Homer compares the regular appearance of an army, to
 “ clouds that are settled on the mountain top, in the day
 “ of calmness, when the strength of the north wind
 “ sleeps.”* Ossian, with full as much propriety, com-
 pares the appearance of a disordered army, to “ the moun-
 “ tain cloud, when the blast hath entered its womb ; and
 “ scatters the curling gloom on every side.” Ossian’s clouds
 assume a great many forms ; and, as we might expect from
 his climate, are a fertile source of imagery to him. “ The
 “ warriors followed their chiefs, like the gathering of the
 “ rainy clouds, behind the red meteors of heaven.” An
 army retreating without coming to action, is likened to
 “ clouds, that having long threatened rain, retire slowly
 “ behind the hills.” The picture of Oithona, after she
 had determined to die, is lively and delicate. “ Her soul
 “ was resolved, and the tear was dried from her wildly-
 “ looking eye. A troubled joy rose on her mind, like the
 “ red path of the lightning on a stormy cloud.” The
 image also of the gloomy Cairbar, meditating, in silence,
 the assassination of Oscar, until the moment came when
 his designs were ripe for execution, is extremely noble, and
 complete in all its parts. “ Cairbar heard their words in si-
 “ lence, like the cloud of a flower ; it stands dark on Cromla
 “ till the lightning bursts its side. The valley gleams with
 “ red light ; the spirits of the storm rejoice. So stood
 “ the silent king of Temora ; at length his words are
 “ heard.”

Homer’s comparison of Achilles to the Dog Star, is
 very sublime. “ Priam beheld him rushing along the
 “ plain, shining in his armour, like the star of autumn ;
 “ bright are its beams, distinguished amidst the multitude

* Iliad, v, 522.

“ of stars in the dark hour of night. It rises in its splendor; but its splendor is fatal; betokening to miserable men, the destroying heat.”* The first appearance of Fingal, is, in like manner, compared by Ossian, to a star or meteor. “ Fingal, tall in his ship, stretched his bright lance before him. Terrible was the gleam of his steel; it was like the green meteor of death, setting in the heath of Malmor, when the traveller is alone, and the broad moon is darkened in heaven.” The hero’s appearance in Homer, is more magnificent; in Ossian, more terrible.

A tree cut down, or overthrown by a storm, is a similitude frequent among poets for describing the fall of a warrior in battle. Homer employs it often. But the most beautiful, by far, of his comparisons, founded on this object, indeed one of the most beautiful in the whole Iliad, is that on the death of Euphorbus. “ As the young and verdant olive, which a man hath reared with care in a lonely field, where the springs of water bubble around it; it is fair and flourishing; it is fanned by the breath of all the winds, and loaded with white blossoms; when the sudden blast of a whirlwind descending, roots it out from its bed, and stretches it on the dust.”† To this, elegant as it is, we may oppose the following simile of Ossian’s, relating to the death of the three sons of Usnoth. “ They fell, like three young oaks which stood alone on the hill. The traveller saw the lovely trees, and wondered how they grew so lonely. The blast of the desert came by night, and laid their green heads low. Next day he returned; but they were withered, and the heath was bare.” Malvina’s allusion to the same object, in her lamentation over Oscar, is so exquisitely tender, that I cannot forbear giving it a place also. “ I was a lovely tree in thy presence, Oscar! with all my branches round me. But thy death came, like a blast from the desert, and laid my green head low. The spring returned with its showers; but no leaf of mine arose.” Several of Ossian’s similes taken from trees, are remarkably beautiful, and diversified with well chosen circumstances; such as that upon the death of Ryno and Orla: “ They

* Iliad, xxii, 2 .

† Iliad, xvii. 53.

“ have fallen like the oak of the desert ; when it lies across
 “ a stream, and withers in the wind of the mountains :”
 Or that which Ossian applies to himself ; “ I, like an
 “ ancient oak in Morven, moulder alone in my place ; the
 “ blast hath lopped my branches away ; and I tremble at
 “ the wings of the north.”

As Homer exalts his heroes by comparing them to gods, Ossian makes the same use of comparisons taken from spirits and ghosts. Swaran “ roared in battle, like the
 “ shrill spirit of a storm that sits dim on the clouds of
 “ Gormal, and enjoys the death of the mariner.” His people gathered around Erragon, “ like storms around the
 “ ghost of night, when he calls them from the top of
 “ Morven, and prepares to pour them on the land of the
 “ stranger.”—“ They fell before my son, like groves in the
 “ desert, when an angry ghost rushes through night, and
 “ takes their green heads in his hand.” In such images, Ossian appears in his strength ; for very seldom have supernatural beings been painted with so much sublimity, and such force of imagination, as by this poet. Even Homer, great as he is, must yield to him in similes formed upon these. Take, for instance, the following, which is the most remarkable of this kind in the Iliad. “ Meriones
 “ followed Idomeneus to battle, like Mars the destroyer
 “ of men, when he rushes to war. Terror, his beloved
 “ son, strong and fierce, attends him ; who fills with dis-
 “ may the most valiant hero. They come from Thrace,
 “ armed against the Ephyrians and Phlegians ; nor do they
 “ regard the prayers of either ; but dispose of success at
 “ their will.”* The idea here is undoubtedly noble : but observe what a figure Ossian sets before the astonished imagination, and with what sublimely terrible circumstances he has heightened it. “ He rushed in the sound
 “ of his arms, like the dreadful spirit of Loda, when he
 “ comes in the roar of a thousand storms, and scatters
 “ battles from his eyes. He sits on a cloud over Lochlin’s
 “ seas. His mighty hand is on his sword. The winds
 “ lift his flaming locks. So terrible was Cuthullin in the
 “ day of his fame.”

Homer’s comparisons relate chiefly to martial subjects,

* Iliad, xiii. 298.

to the appearances and motions of armies, the engagements and death of heroes, and the various incidents of war. In Ossian, we find a greater variety of other subjects illustrated by similes; particularly, the songs of bards, the beauty of women, the different circumstances of old age, sorrow, and private distress; which give occasion to much beautiful imagery. What, for instance, can be more delicate and moving, than the following simile of Oithona's, in her lamentation over the dishonour she had suffered? "Chief of Strumon," replied the sighing maid, "why didst thou come over the dark blue wave to Nuath's mournful daughter? Why did not I pass away in secret, like the flower of the rock, that lifts its fair head unseen, and strews its withered leaves on the blast?" The music of bards, a favourite object with Ossian, is illustrated by a variety of the most beautiful appearances that are to be found in nature. It is compared to the calm shower of spring; to the dews of the morning on the hill of roes; to the face of the blue and still lake. Two similes on this subject I shall quote, because they would do honour to any of the most celebrated classics. The one is; "Sit thou on the heath, O bard! and let us hear thy voice; it is pleasant as the gale of the spring that sighs on the hunter's ear when he awakens from dreams of joy, and has heard the music of the spirits of the hill." The other contains a short, but exquisitely tender image, accompanied with the finest poetical painting. "The music of Carril was like the memory of joys that are past pleasant and mournful to the soul. The ghosts of departed bards heard it from Slimora's side. Soft sounds spread along the wood; and the silent valleys of night rejoice." What a figure would such imagery and such scenery have made, had they been presented to us, adorned with the sweetness and harmony of the Virgilian numbers!

I have chosen all along to compare Ossian with Homer, rather than Virgil, for an obvious reason. There is a much nearer correspondence between the times and manners of the two former poets. Both wrote in an early period of society; both are originals; both are distinguished by simplicity, sublimity, and fire. The correct elegance of Virgil, his artful imitation of Homer, the

Roman stateliness which he every where maintains, admit no parallel with the abrupt boldness, and enthusiastic warmth of the Celtic bard. In one article, indeed, there is a resemblance. Virgil is more tender than Homer; and thereby agrees more with Ossian; with this difference, that the feelings of the one are more gentle and polished, those of the other more strong; the tenderness of Virgil softens, that of Ossian dissolves and overcomes the heart.

A resemblance may be sometimes observed between Ossian's comparisons, and those employed by the sacred writers. They abound much in this figure, and they use it with the utmost propriety.* The imagery of Scripture exhibits a soil and climate altogether different from those of Ossian; a warmer country, a more smiling face of nature, the arts of agriculture and of rural life much farther advanced. The wine press, and the threshing floor, are often presented to us, the Cedar and the Palm-tree, the fragrance of perfumes, the voice of the Turtle, and the beds of Lilies. The similes are, like Ossian's, generally short, touching on one point of resemblance, rather than spread out into little episodes. In the following example may be perceived what inexpressible grandeur poetry receives from the intervention of the Deity. "The nations shall rush like the rushings of many waters; but God shall rebuke them, and they shall fly far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like the down of the thistle before the whirlwind."†

Besides formal comparisons, the poetry of Ossian is embellished with many beautiful metaphors: such as that remarkably fine one applied to Deugala: "She was covered with the light of beauty; but her heart was the house of pride." This mode of expression, which suppresses the mark of comparison, and substitutes a figured description in room of the object described, is a great enlivener of style. It denotes that glow and rapidity of fancy, which, without pausing to form a regular simile, paints the object at one stroke. "Thou art to me the beam of the east, rising in a land unknown." "In peace, thou

* See Dr. Lowth, de Sacra Poesi Hebræorum.

† Isaiah, xvii. 13.

" art the gale of spring; in war, the mountain storm."
 " Pleasant be thy rest, O lovely beam, soon hast thou
 " set on our hills! The steps of thy departure were
 " stately, like the moon on the blue trembling wave.
 " But thou hast left us in darkness, first of the maids of
 " Lutha!---Soon had thou set, Malvina! but thou risest,
 " like the beam of the east, among the spirits of thy friends,
 " where they sit in their stormy halls, the chambers of
 " the thunder." This is correct and finely supported.
 But in the following instance, the metaphor, though very
 beautiful at the beginning, becomes imperfect before it
 closes, by being improperly mixed with the literal sense.
 " Trathal went forth with the stream of his people; but
 " they met a rock; Fingal stood unmoved; broken they
 " rolled back from his side. Nor did they roll in safety;
 " the spear of the king pursued their flight."

The hyperbole is a figure which we might expect to
 find often employed by Ossian; as the undisciplined
 imagination of early ages generally prompts exaggeration,
 and carries its objects to excess; whereas longer experi-
 ence, and farther progress in the arts of life, chasten mens'
 ideas and expressions. Yet Ossian's hyperboles appear
 not to me, either so frequent or so harsh as might at first
 have been looked for; an advantage owing no doubt to
 the more cultivated state, in which, as was before shewn,
 poetry subsisted among the ancient Celtæ, than among
 most other barbarous nations. One of the most exagge-
 rated descriptions in the whole work, is what meets us
 at the beginning of Fingal, where the scout makes his re-
 port to Cuthullin of the landing of the foe. But this is
 so far from deserving censure that it merits praise, as being
 on that occasion, natural and proper. The scout arrives,
 trembling and full of fears; and it is well known; that no
 passion disposes men to hyperbolize more than terror. It
 both annihilates themselves in their own apprehension,
 and magnifies every object which they view through the
 medium of a troubled imagination. Hence all those in-
 distinct images of formidable greatness, the natural marks
 of a disturbed and confused mind, which occur in Moran's
 description of Swaran's appearance, and in his relation of
 the conference which they held together; not unlike the

report, which the affrighted Jewish spies made to their leader of the land of Canaan. "The land through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it, are men of a great stature: and there saw we giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants; and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so were we in their sight."*

With regard to personifications, I formerly observed that Ossian was sparing, and I accounted for his being so. Allegorical personages he has none; and their absence is not to be regretted. For the intermixture of those shadowy beings, which have not the support even of mythological or legendary belief, with human actors, seldom produces a good effect. The fiction becomes too visible and phantastic; and overthrows that impression of reality, which the probable recital of human actions is calculated to make upon the mind. In the serious and pathetic scenes of Ossian especially, allegorical characters would have been as much out of place, as in Tragedy; serving only unseasonably to amuse the fancy, whilst they stopped the current, and weakened the force of passion.

With apostrophes, or addresses to persons absent or dead, which have been, in all ages, the language of passion, our poet abounds; and they are among his highest beauties. Witness the apostrophe, in the first book of Fingal, to the maid of Inistore, whose lover had fallen in battle; and that inimitably fine one of Cuthullin to Bragela at the conclusion of the same book. He commands the harp to be struck in her praise; and the mention of Bragela's name, immediately suggesting to him a crowd of tender ideas; "Dost thou raise thy fair face from the rocks," he exclaims, "to find the sails of Cuthullin? The sea is rolling far distant, and its white foam shall deceive thee for my sails." And now his imagination being wrought up to conceive her as, at that moment, really in this situation, he becomes afraid of the harm she may receive from the inclemency of the night; and with an enthusiasm, happy and affecting, though beyond the cautious strain of modern poetry, "Retire," he proceeds, "retire, for it

* Numbers, xiii. 32, 33.

“ is night, my love, and the dark winds sigh in thy hair.
“ Retire to the hall of my feasts, and think of the times
“ that are past ; for I will not return till the storm of war
“ has ceased. O ! Connal, speak of wars and arms, and
“ send her from my mind ; for lovely with her raven hair
“ is the white-bosomed daughter of Sorglan.” This
breathes all the native spirit of passion and tenderness.

The addresses to the sun, to the moon, and to the evening star, must draw the attention of every reader of taste, as among the most splendid ornaments of this collection. The beauties of each are too great, and too obvious to need any particular comment. In one passage only of the address to the moon, there appears some obscurity. “ Whither dost thou retire from thy course, when the
“ darkness of thy countenance grows ? Hast thou thy
“ hall like Ossian ? Dwellest thou in the shadow of
“ grief ? Have thy sisters fallen from Heaven ? Are they
“ who rejoiced with thee at night, no more ? Yes, they
“ have fallen, fair light ! and thou dost often retire to
“ mourn.” We may be at a loss to comprehend, at first view, the ground of these speculations of Ossian, concerning the moon ; but when all the circumstances are attended to, they will appear to flow naturally from the present situation of his mind. A mind under the dominion of any strong passion, tinctures with its own disposition, every object which it beholds. The old bard, with his heart bleeding for the loss of all his friends, is meditating on the different phases of the moon. Her waning and darkness, presents to his melancholy imagination the image of sorrow ; and presently the idea arises, and is indulged, that, like himself, she retires to mourn over the loss of other moons, or of stars, whom he calls her sisters, and fancies to have once rejoiced with her at night, now fallen from heaven. Darkness suggested the idea of mourning, and mourning suggested nothing so naturally to Ossian, as the death of beloved friends. An instance precisely similar of this influence of passion, may be seen in a passage which has always been admired of Shakespeare’s *King Lear*. The old man on the point of distraction, through the inhumanity of his daughters, sees Edgar appear disguised like a beggar and a madman.

Lear. Didst thou give all to thy daughters? And art thou come to this?
 Couldst thou leave nothing? Didst thou give them all?

Kent. He hath no daughters, Sir.

Lear. Death, traitor! nothing could have subdued nature,
 To such a lowness, but his unkind daughters.

KING LEAR, ACT III, SCENE V.

The apostrophe to the winds, in the opening of *Darthula*, is in the highest spirit of poetry. "But the winds deceive thee, O *Darthula*: and deny the woody *Etha* to thy sails. These are not thy mountains, *Nathos*, nor is that the roar of thy climbing waves. The halls of *Cairbar* are near, and the towers of the foe lift their head.--Where have ye been, ye southern winds; when the sons of my love were deceived? But ye have been sporting on plains, and pursuing the thistle's beard. O that ye had been rustling in the sails of *Nathos*, till the hills of *Etha* rose! till they rose in their clouds, and saw their coming chief." This passage is remarkable for the resemblance it bears to an expostulation with the wood nymphs, on their absence at a critical time; which, as a favourite poetical idea, *Virgil* has copied from *Theocritus*, and *Milton* has very happily imitated from both.

Where were ye, nymphs! when the remorseless deep
 Clos'd o'er the head of your lov'd *Lycidas*?
 For neither were ye playing on the steep
 Where your old bards, the famous *Druids*, lie;
 Nor on the shaggy top of *Mona*, high,
 Nor yet where *Deva* spreads her wizard stream.*

Having now treated fully of *Ossian's* talents, with respect to description and imagery, it only remains to make

* *Milton's Lycidas.* See *Theocrit.* Idyll. I.
 Πᾶ ποικ' ἀρ' ἠσθ' ἕκα Λαφνίς ἰτακτο; πᾶ πικα, Νυμφαι, &c.
 And *Virg.* *Eclog.* 10.

Q æ nemora, aut qui vos saltus habuere, puellæ, &c.

some observations on his sentiments. No sentiments can be beautiful without being proper; that is, suited to the character and situation of those who utter them. In this respect, Ossian is as correct as most writers. His characters, as above observed, are in general well supported; which could not have been the case, had the sentiments been unnatural or out of place. A variety of personages of different ages, sexes, and conditions, are introduced into his poems; and they speak and act with a propriety of sentiment and behaviour, which it is surprising to find in so rude an age. Let the poem of Darthula, throughout, be taken as an example.

But it is not enough that sentiments be natural and proper. In order to acquire any high degree of poetical merit, they must also be sublime and pathetic.

The sublime is not confined to sentiment alone. It belongs to description also; and whether in description or in sentiment, imports such ideas presented to the mind, as raise it to an uncommon degree of elevation, and fill it with admiration and astonishment. This is the highest effect either of eloquence or poetry: and to produce this effect, requires a genius glowing with the strongest and warmest conception of some object awful, great, or magnificent. That this character of genius belongs to Ossian, may, I think, sufficiently appear from many of the passages I have already had occasion to quote. To produce more instances, were superfluous. If the engagement of Fingal with the spirit of Loda, in Carric-thura; if the encounters of the armies, in Fingal; if the address to the sun, in Carthon; if the similes founded upon ghosts and spirits of the night, all formerly mentioned, be not admitted as examples, and illustrious ones too, of the true poetical sublime, I confess myself entirely ignorant of this quality in writing.

All the circumstances, indeed, of Ossian's composition, are favourable to the sublime, more perhaps than to any other species of beauty. Accuracy and correctness; artfully connected narration; exact method and proportion of parts, we may look for in polished times. The gay and the beautiful, will appear to more advantage in the midst of smiling scenery and pleasurable themes. But amidst

the rude scenes of nature, amidst rocks and torrents, and whirlwinds and battles, dwells the sublime. It is the thunder and the lightning of genius. It is the offspring of nature, not of art. It is negligent of all the lesser graces, and perfectly consistent with a certain noble disorder. It associates naturally with that grave and solemn spirit, which distinguishes our author. For the sublime, is an awful and serious emotion; and is heightened by all the images of trouble, and terror, and darkness.

Ipse pater, media nimborum in nocte, coruscâ
Fulmina molitur dextrâ; quo maxima motu
Terra tremit; fugere feræ; & mortalia corda
Per gentes, humilis stravit pavor; ille, flagranti
Aut Atho, aut Rhodopen, aut alta Ceraunia telo
Dejicit. ————— VIRG. Georg. I.

Simplicity and conciseness, are never-failing characteristics of the style of a sublime writer. He rests on the majesty of his sentiments; not on the pomp of his expressions. The main secret of being sublime, is to say great things in few, and in plain words: for every superfluous decoration degrades a sublime idea. The mind rises and swells, when a lofty description or sentiment is presented to it, in its native form. But no sooner does the poet attempt to spread out this sentiment or description, and to deck it round and round with glittering ornaments, than the mind begins to fall from its high elevation; the transport is over; the beautiful may remain, but the sublime is gone. Hence the concise and simple style of Ossian, gives great advantage to his sublime conceptions; and assists them in seizing the imagination with full power.*

* The noted saying of Julius Cæsar, to the pilot in a storm; "Quid times? Cæsarem vehis;" is magnanimous and sublime. Lucan, not satisfied with this simple conciseness, resolved to amplify and improve the thought. Observe how every time he twists it round, it departs farther from the sublime, till, at last, it ends in tumid declamation.

Sperne minas, inquit, Pelagi, ventoque furenti
Trade sinum. Italiam, si cælo auctore, recusas,
Me, pete. Sola tibi causa hæc est justa timoris
Vectorem non nosse tuum; quem numina nunquam
Destituunt; de quo male tunc fortuna meretur,
Cum post vota venit; medias per rumpe procellas
Tutela secure mea. Cæli iste fretique,
Non puppis nostræ, labor est. Hanc Cæsare pressam

Sublimity as belonging to sentiment, coincides in a great measure with magnanimity, heroism, and generosity of sentiment. Whatever discovers human nature in its greatest elevation; whatever bespeaks a high effort of soul; or shews a mind superior to pleasures, to dangers, and to death, forms what may be called the moral or sentimental sublime. For this, Ossian is eminently distinguished. No poet maintains a higher tone of virtuous and noble sentiment, throughout all his works. Particularly in all the sentiments of Fingal, there is a grandeur and loftiness proper to swell the mind with the highest ideas of human perfection. Wherever he appears, we behold the hero. The objects which he pursues, are always truly great; to bend the proud; to protect the injured; to defend his friends; to overcome his enemies by generosity more than by force. A portion of the same spirit actuates all the other heroes. Valour reigns; but it is a generous valour, void of cruelty, animated by honour, not by hatred. We behold no debasing passions among Fingal's warriors; no spirit of avarice or of insult; but a perpetual contention for fame; a desire of being distinguished and remembered for gallant actions; a love of justice; and a zealous attachment to their friends and their country. Such is the strain of sentiment in the works of Ossian.

But the sublimity of moral sentiments, if they wanted the softening of the tender, would be in hazard of giving a hard and stiff air to poetry. It is not enough to admire. Admiration is a cold feeling, in comparison of that deep interest, which the heart takes in tender and pathetic scenes; where, by a mysterious attachment to the objects of compassion, we are pleased and delighted, even whilst we mourn. With scenes of this kind Ossian abounds; and his high merit in these, is incontestable. He may be blamed for drawing tears too often from our eyes; but that he has the power of commanding them, I believe no man, who has the least sensibility, will question. The general character of his poetry, is the heroic mixed with

A fluctu defendit onus.
 ————Quid tanta strage paratur,
 Ignoras? Quærit pelagi cœlique tumultu
 Quid præstet fortuna mihi.———

Pharsal. V. 578.

the elegiac strain ; admiration tempered with pity. Ever fond of giving, as he expresses it, " the joy of grief," it is visible, that on all moving subjects, he delights to exert his genius ; and accordingly, never were there finer pathetic situations, than what his works present. His great art in managing them lies in giving vent to the simple and natural emotions of the heart. We meet with no exaggerated declamation ; no subtle refinements on sorrow ; no substitution of description in place of passion. Ossian felt strongly himself ; and the heart when uttering its native language never fails, by powerful sympathy, to affect the heart. A great variety of examples might be produced. We need only open the book to find them every where. What, for instance, can be more moving, than the lamentations of Oithona, after her misfortune ? Gaul the son of Morni, her lover, ignorant of what she had suffered, comes to her rescue. Their meeting is tender in the highest degree. He proposes to engage her foe, in single combat, and gives her in charge what she is to do, if he himself shall fall. " And shall the daughter of Nuath live ?" she replied with a bursting sigh. " Shall I live in Tromathon " and the son of Morni low ? My heart is not of that " rock ; nor my soul careless as that sea, which lifts its " blue waves to every wind, and rolls beneath the storm, " The blast, which shall lay thee low, shall spread the " branches of Oithona on earth. We shall wither together, " son of car-borne Morni ! The narrow house is pleasant " to me ; and the grey stone of the dead ; for never more " will I leave thy rocks, sea-surrounded Tromathon !— " Chief of Strumon, why camest thou over the waves to " Nuath's mournful daughter ? Why did not I pass away " in secret, like the flower of the rock, that lifts its fair " head unseen, and strews its withered leaves on the blast ? " Why didst thou come, O Gaul ! to hear my departing " sigh ?—O had I dwelt at Duvranna, in the bright beams " of my fame ! Then had my years come on with joy ; " and the virgins would bless my steps. But I fall in " youth, son of Morni, and my father shall blush in his " hall."

Oithona mourns like a woman ; in Cuthullin's expressions of grief after his defeat, we behold the sentiments of

a hero, generous but desponding. The situation is remarkably fine. Cuthullin, roused from his cave, by the noise of battles, sees Fingal victorious in the field. He is described as kindling at the sight. "His hand is on the sword of his fathers; his red rolling eyes on the foe. He thrice attempted to rush to battle; and thrice did Connal stop him;" suggesting, that Fingal was routing the foe; and that he ought not, by the show of superfluous aid, to deprive the king of any part of the honour of a victory, which was owing to him alone. Cuthullin yields to this generous sentiment; but we see it stinging him to the heart with the sense of his own disgrace. "Then, Carril, go," replied the chief, "and greet the king of Morven. When Lochlin falls away like a stream after rain, and the noise of the battle is over, then be thy voice sweet in his ear, to praise the king of swords. Give him the sword of Caithbat; for Cuthullin is worthy no more to lift the arms of his fathers. But, O ye ghosts of the lonely Cromla! Ye souls of chiefs that are no more! Be ye the companions of Cuthullin, and talk to him in the cave of his sorrow. For never more shall I be renowned among the mighty in the land. I am like a beam that has shone: like a mist that has fled away; when the blast of the morning came, and brightened the shaggy side of the hill. Connal! talk of arms no more: Departed is my fame. My sighs shall be on Cromla's wind: till my footsteps cease to be seen. And thou, white bosomed Bragela! mourn over the fall of my fame; for vanquished, I will never return to thee, thou sun-beam of Dunscaich!"

Æstuat ingens

Uno in corde pudor, luctusque, & conscia virtus.

Besides such extended pathetic scenes, Ossian frequently pierces the heart by a single unexpected stroke. When Oscar fell in battle, "No father mourned his son slain in youth; no brother, his brother of love; they fell without tears, for the chief of the people was low." In the admirable interview of Hector with Andromache, in the sixth Iliad, the circumstance of the child in his nurse's arms, has often been remarked, as adding much to the tenderness of the scene. In the following passage relating

to the death of Cuthullin, we find a circumstance that must strike the imagination with still greater force. "And "is the son of Semo fallen?" said Carril with a sigh. "Mournful are Tura's walls, and sorrow dwells at Dun-scaich. Thy spouse is left alone in her youth; the son of thy love is alone. He shall come to Bragela, and ask her why she weeps. He shall lift his eyes to the wall, and see his father's sword. Whose sword is that? he will say; and the soul of his mother is sad." Soon after Fingal had shewn all the grief of a father's heart for Ryno, one of his sons, fallen in battle, he is calling, after his accustomed manner, his sons to the chase. "Call," says he, "Fillan and Ryno---But he is not here---My son rests on the bed of death."---This unexpected start of anguish is worthy of the highest tragic poet,

If she come in, she'll sure speak to my wife---
My wife!---my wife---What wife? ---I have no
wife---

Oh insupportable! Oh heavy hour!

OTHELLO, ACT V. SCENE 7.

The contrivance of the incident in both poets is similar; but the circumstances are varied with judgment. Othello dwells upon the name of wife, when it had fallen from him, with the confusion and horror of one tortured with guilt. Fingal, with the dignity of a hero, corrects himself, and suppresses his rising grief.

The contrast which Ossian frequently makes between his present and his former state, diffuses over his whole poetry, a solemn pathetic air, which cannot fail to make impression on every heart. The conclusion of the songs of Selma, is particularly calculated for this purpose. Nothing can be more poetical and tender, or can leave upon the mind, a stronger, and more affecting idea of the venerable aged bard. "Such were the words of the bards in "the days of the song; when the king heard the music "of harps, and the tales of other times. The chiefs gathered from all their hills, and heard the lovely sound. "They praised the voice of Cona;* the first among a "thousand bards. But age is now on my tongue, and

* Ossian himself is poetically called the voice of Cona.

“ my soul has failed. I hear, sometimes, the ghosts of
“ bards, and learn their pleasant song. But memory fails
“ on my mind; I hear the call of years. They say, as
“ they pass along, Why does Ossian sing? Soon shall
“ he lie in the narrow house, and no bard shall raise his
“ fame. Roll on, ye dark-brown years! for ye bring no
“ joy in your course. Let the tomb open to Ossian, for
“ his strength has failed. The sons of the song are gone
“ to rest. My voice remains, like a blast, that roars lonely
“ on a sea-surrounded rock, after the winds are laid. The
“ dark moss whistles there, and the distant mariner sees
“ the waving trees.”

Upon the whole; if to feel strongly, and to describe naturally, be the two chief ingredients in poetical genius, Ossian must, after fair examination, be held to possess that genius in a high degree. The question is not, whether a few improprieties may be pointed out in his works; whether this, or that passage, might not have been worked up with more art and skill, by some writer of happier times? A thousand such cold and frivolous criticisms, are altogether indecisive as to his genuine merit. But, has he the spirit, the fire, the inspiration of a poet? Does he utter the voice of nature? Does he elevate by his sentiments? Does he interest by his descriptions? Does he paint to the heart as well as to the fancy? Does he make his readers glow, and tremble, and weep? These are the great characteristics of true poetry. Where these are found, he must be a minute critic indeed who can dwell upon slight defects. A few beauties of this high kind transcend whole volumes of faultless mediocrity. Uncouth and abrupt, Ossian may sometimes appear by reason of his conciseness. But he is sublime, he is pathetic, in an eminent degree. If he has not the extensive knowledge, the regular dignity of narration, the fulness and accuracy of description, which we find in Homer and Virgil, yet in strength of imagination, in grandeur of sentiment, in native majesty of passion, he is fully their equal. If he flows not always like a clear stream, yet he breaks forth often like a torrent of fire. Of art too, he is far from being destitute; and his imagination is remarkable for delicacy as well as strength. Seldom or never is he either

trifling or tedious ; and if he be thought too melancholy yet he is always moral. Though his merit were in other respects much less than it is, this alone ought to entitle him to high regard, that his writings are remarkably favourable to virtue. They awake the tenderest sympathies, and inspire the most generous emotions. No reader can rise from him, without being warmed with the sentiments of humanity, virtue, and honour.

Though unacquainted with the original language, there is no one but must judge the translation to deserve the highest praise, on account of its beauty and elegance. Of its faithfulness and accuracy, I have been assured by persons skilled in the Galic tongue, who, from their youth, were acquainted with many of these poems of Ossian. To transfuse such spirited and fervid ideas from one language into another ; to translate literally, and yet with such a glow of poetry ; to keep alive so much passion, and support so much dignity throughout, is one of the most difficult works of genius, and proves the translator to have been animated with no small portion of Ossian's spirit.

The measured prose which he has employed, possesses considerable advantages above any sort of versification he could have chosen. Whilst it pleases and fills the ear with a variety of harmonious cadences, being at the same time, freer from constraint in the choice and arrangement of words, it allows the spirit of the original to be exhibited with more justness, force, and simplicity. Elegant, however, and masterly as Mr. Macpherson's translation is, we must never forget, whilst we read it, that we are putting the merit of the original to a severe test. For we are examining a poet stripped of his native dress : divested of the harmony of his own numbers. We know how much grace and energy the works of the Greek and Latin poets receive from the charm of versification in their original languages. If then, destitute of this advantage, exhibited in a literal version, Ossian still has power to please as a poet ; and not to please only, but often to command, to transport, to melt the heart ; we may very safely infer, that his productions are the offspring of true and uncommon genius ; and we may boldly assign him a place among those, whose works are to last for ages.

CATH-LODA;

A POEM.



DUAN FIRST.

ARGUMENT.

Fingal, when very young, making a voyage to the Orkney islands, was driven, by stress of weather, into a bay of Scandinavia, near the residence of Starno, king of Lochlin. Starno invites Fingal to a feast. Fingal, doubting the faith of the king, and mindful of a former breach of hospitality, refuses to go.—Starno gathers together his tribes: Fingal resolves to defend himself.—Night coming on, Duthmaruno proposes to Fingal, to observe the motions of the enemy.—The king himself undertakes the watch. Advancing towards the enemy, he, accidentally, comes to the cave of Turthor, where Starno had confined Conbancarglas, the captive daughter of a neighbouring chief.—Her story is imperfect, a part of the original being lost.—Fingal comes to a place of worship, where Starno and his son, Swaran, consulted the spirit of Loda, concerning the issue of the war.—The encounter of Fingal and Swaran.—Duan first concludes with a description of the airy hall of Cruth-loda, supposed to be the Odin of Scandinavia.

CATH-L O D A.

DUAN* FIRST.

A TALE of the times of old!

Why, thou wanderer unseen; thou bender of the
thistle of Lora; why, thou breeze of the valley, hast
thou left mine ear? I hear no distant roar of streams!

* The bards distinguished those compositions, in which the narration is often interrupted, by episodes and apostrophes, by the name of Duan. Since the extinction of the order of the bards, it has been a general name for all ancient compositions in verse. The abrupt manner in which the story of this poem begins, may render it obscure to some readers; it may not therefore be improper, to give here the traditional preface, which is generally prefixed to it. Two years after he took to wife Ros-crana, the daughter of Cormac, King of Ireland, Fingal undertook an expedition into Orkney, to visit his friend Cathulla, king of Inistore. After staying a few days at Caric-thura, the residence of Cathulla, the king set sail, to return to Scotland; but, a violent storm arising, his ships were driven into a bay of Scandinavia, near Gormal, the seat of Starno king of Lochlin, his avowed enemy. Starno, upon the appearance of strangers on his coast, summoned together the neighbouring tribes, and advanced, in a hostile manner, towards the bay of U-thorno, where Fingal had taking shelter. Upon discovering who the strangers were, and fearing the valour of Fingal, which he had, more than once, experienced before, he resolved to accomplish by treachery, what he was afraid he should fail in by open force. He invited therefore, Fingal to a feast, at which he intended to assassinate him. The king prudently declined to go, and Starno betook himself to arms. The sequel of the story may be learned from the poem itself.

No sound of the harp, from the rock! Come, thou huntress of Lutha, Malvina, call back his soul to the bard. I look forward to Lochlin of lakes, to the dark, billowy bay of U-thorno, where Fingal descends from Ocean, from the roar of winds. Few are the heroes of Morven, in a land unknown!

Starno sent a dweller of Loda, to bid Fingal to the feast; but the king remembered the past, and all his rage arose. "Nor Gormal's mossy towers, nor Starno, shall Fingal behold. Deaths wander, like shadows over his fiery soul! Do I forget that beam of light, the white handed daughter* of kings? Go, son of Loda! his words are wind to Fingal: wind, that, to and fro, drives the thistle, in autumn's dusky vale. Duth-maruno,† arm of death! Crommaglas, of iron shields! Struthmor, dweller of battle's wing! Cormar, whose ships bound on seas, careless as the course of a meteor, on dark rolling clouds! Arise round me, children of heroes, in a land unknown! Let each look

* Agandecca, the daughter of Starno, whom her father killed, on account of her discovering to Fingal, a plot laid against his life. Her story is related at large, in the third book of Fingal.

† Duth-maruno is a name very famous in tradition. Many of his great actions are handed down, but the poems, which contained the detail of them, are long since lost. He lived, it is supposed, in that part of the north of Scotland, which is over against Orkney. Duth-maruno. Cromma-glas, Struthmor, and Cormar, are mentioned, as attending Comhal, in his last battle against the tribe of Morni, in a poem, which is still preserved. It is not the work of Ossian: the phraseology betrays it to be a modern composition. It is something like those trivial compositions, which the Irish bards forged, under the name of Ossian, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Duthmaruno signifies, black and steady; Cromma-glas, bending and swarthy; Struthmor, roaring stream; Cormar, expert at sea.

on his shield, like Trenmor the ruler of wars. "Come down, thus Trenmor said, thou dweller between the harps! Thou shalt roll this stream away, or waste with me in earth."

Around the king they rise in wrath. No words come forth: they seize their spears. Each soul is rolled into itself. At length the sudden clang is waked, on all their echoing shields. Each takes his hill, by night; at intervals, they darkly stand. Unequal bursts the hum of songs, between the roaring wind!

Broad over them rose the moon!

In his arms, came tall Duth-maruno; he from Croma of rocks, stern hunter of the boar! In his dark boat he rose on waves, when Crumthormo* awaked its woods. In the chace he shone, among foes: No fear was thine, Duthmaruno!

"Son of daring Comhal, shall my steps be forward through night! From this shield shall I view them over their gleaming tribes? Starno, king of lakes, is before me, and Swaran, the foe of strangers. Their words are not in vain, by Loda's stone of power.—Should Duthmaruno not return; his spouse is lonely at home, where meet two roaring streams, on Crathmo-craulo's plain. Around are hills, with echoing woods, the ocean is rolling near. My son looks on screaming sea-fowl, a young wanderer on the field.

* Crumthormoth, one of the Orkney or Shetland islands. The name is not of Galic original. It was subject to its own petty king, who is mentioned in one of Ossian's poems.

Give the head of a boar to Can-dona,* tell him of his father's joy, when the bristly strength of I-thorno rolled on his lifted spear. Tell him of my deeds in war! Tell where his father fell!"

"Not forgetful of my fathers," said Fingal, "I have bounded over the seas. Theirs were the times of danger, in the days of old. Nor settles darkness on me, before foes, though, youthful in my locks

* Cean-daona, head of the people, the son of Duth-maruno. He became afterwards famous, in the expeditions of Ossian, after the death of Fingal. The traditional tales concerning him are very numerous, and, from the epithet, in them, bestowed on him (Candona of boars) it would appear, that he applied himself to that kind of hunting, which his father, in this paragraph, is so anxious to recommend to him. As I have mentioned the traditional tales of the Highlands, it may not be improper here to give some account of them. After the expulsion of the bards, from the houses of the chiefs, they, being an indolent race of men, owed all their subsistence to the generosity of the vulgar, whom they diverted with repeating the compositions of their predecessors, and running up the genealogies of their entertainers to the family of their chiefs. As this subject was, however, soon exhausted, they were obliged to have recourse to invention, and form stories, having no foundation in fact, which were swallowed, with great credulity, by an ignorant multitude. By frequent repeating the fable grew upon their hands, and, as each threw in whatever circumstance he thought conducive to raise the admiration of his hearers, the story became at last, so devoid of all probability, that even the vulgar themselves did not believe it. They, however, liked the tales so well, that the bards found their advantage in turning professed tale-makers. They then launched out into the wildest regions of fiction and romance. I firmly believe there are more stories of giants, enchanted castles, dwarfs, and palfreys in the Highlands, than in any country in Europe. These tales, it is certain, like other romantic compositions, have many things in them unnatural, and consequently, disgusting to true taste, but, I know not how it happens, they command attention more than any other fictions I ever met with. The extreme length of these pieces is very surprising, some of them requiring many days to repeat them, but such hold they take of the memory, that few circumstances are ever omitted by those who have received them only from oral tradition: what is still more amazing, the very language of the bards is still preserved. It is curious to see, that the descriptions of magnificence, introduced in these tales, is even superior to all the pompous oriental fictions of the kind.

Chief of Crathmo-craulo, the field of night is mine." Fingal rushed, in all his arms, wide-bounding over Turthor's stream, that sent its sullen roar, by night, through Gormal's misty vale. A moon-beam glittered on a rock; in the midst, stood a stately form; a form with floating locks, like Lochlin's white-bosomed maids. Unequal are her steps, and short. She throws a broken song on wind. At times she tosses her white arms: for grief is dwelling in her soul.

"Torcul-torno,* of aged locks"! she said, where now are thy steps, by Lulan? Thou hast failed, at thine own dark streams, father of Conban-cargla! But I behold thee, chief of Lulan, sporting by Loda's hall, when the dark skirted night is rolled along the sky.—Thou, sometimes, hidest the moon with thy

* Torcul-torno, according to tradition, was king of Crathlun, a district in Sweden. The river Lulan ran near the residence of Torcul-torno. There is a river in Sweden, still called Lula, which is probably the same with Lulan. The war between Starno and Torcul-torno, which terminated in the death of the latter, had its rise at a hunting party. Starno being invited, in a friendly manner, by Torcul-torno, both kings, with their followers, went to the mountains of Stivamore to hunt. A boar rushed from the wood before the kings, and Torcul-torno killed it. Starno thought this behaviour a breach upon the privilege of guests, who were always honoured, as tradition expresses it with the danger of the chase. A quarrel arose, the kings came to battle, with all their attendants, and the party of Torcul-torno were totally defeated, and he himself slain. Starno pursued his victory, laid waste the district of Crathlun, and, coming to the residence of Torcul-torno, carried off, by force, Conbancarglas, the beautiful daughter of his enemy. Her he confined in a cave, near the palace of Gormal, where, on account of her cruel treatment, she became distracted.

The paragraph, just now before us, is the song of Conbancarglas, at the time she was discovered by Fingal. It is in Lyric measure, and set to music, which is wild and simple, and so inimitably suited to the situation of the unhappy lady, that few can hear it without tears.

shield. I have seen her dim, in heaven. Thou kindest thy hair into meteors, and sailest along the night. Why am I forgot, in my cave, king of shaggy boars? Look, from the hall of Loda, on thy lonely daughter."

"Who art thou," said Fingal, "voice of night?"

She, trembling, turned away.

"Who art thou, in thy darkness?"

She shrunk into the cave.

The king loosed the thong from her hands. He asked about her fathers.

"Torcul-torno," she said, "once dwelt at Lulan's foamy stream: he dwelt—but, now, in Loda's hall, he shakes the sounding shell. He met Starno of Lochlin, in war; long fought the dark-eyed kings. My father fell, in his blood, blue-shielded Torcul-torno! By a rock, at Lulan's stream, I had pierc'd the bounding roe. My white hand gathered my hair, from off the rushing winds. I heard a noise. Mine eyes were up. My soft breast rose on high. My step was forward, at Lulan, to meet thee, Torcul-torno! It was Starno, dreadful king! His red eyes rolled on me in love. Dark waved his shaggy brow, above his gathered smile. Where is my father; I said, he that was mighty in war? Thou art left alone among foes, O daughter of Torcul-torno! He took my hand. He raised the sail. In this cave he placed

me dark. At times, he comes, a gathered mist. He lifts, before me, my father's shield. But often passes a beam* of youth, far distant from my cave. The son of Starno moves in my sight. He dwells lonely in my soul."

"Maid of Lulan," said Fingal, "whitehanded daughter of grief! a cloud, marked with streaks of fire, is rolled along thy soul. Look not to that dark-robed moon; look not to those meteors of heaven. My gleaming steel is around thee, the terror of thy foes! It is not the steel of the feeble, nor of the dark in soul! The maids are not shut in our † caves of streams. They toss not their white arms alone. They bend, fair within their locks, above the harps of Selma. Their voice is not in the desert wild. We melt along the pleasing sound!"

* * * * *
* * * * *

Fingal, again, advanced his steps, wide through the bosom of night, to where the trees of Loda shook amid squally winds. Three stones, with heads of moss, are there; a stream, with foaming course: and

* By the beam of youth, it afterwards appears, that Conhancarglas means Swaran, the son of Starno, with whom, during her confinement, she had fallen in love.

† From this contrast, which Fingal draws, between his own nation, and the inhabitants of Scandinavia, we may learn, that the former were much less barbarous than the latter. This distinction is so much observed throughout the poems of Ossian, that there can be no doubt, that he followed the real manners of both nations in his own time. At the close of the speech of Fingal, there is a great part of the original lost.

dreadful, rolled around them, is the dark-red cloud of Loda. High from its top looked forward a ghost half formed of the shadowy smoke. He poured his voice, at times, amidst the roaring stream. Near, bending beneath a blasted tree, two heroes received his words: Swaran of lakes, and Starno foe of strangers. On their dun shields, they darkly leaned: their spears are forward through night. Shrill sounds the blast of darkness, in Starno's floating beard.

They heard the tread of Fingal. The warriors rose in arms. "Swaran, lay that wanderer low," said Starno, in his pride. "Take the shield of thy father. It is a rock in war."—Swaran threw his gleaming spear. It stood fixed in Loda's tree. Then came the foes forward, with swords. They mixed their rattling steel. Through the thongs of Swaran's shield rushed the blade* of Luno. The shield fell rolling on earth. Cleft, the helmet† fell down. Fingal stopt the lifted steel. Wrathful stood Swaran, unarmed. He rolled his silent eyes; he threw his sword on earth. Then, slowly stalking over the stream, he whistled as he went.

Nor unseen of his father is Swaran. Starno turns away in wrath. His shaggy brows wave dark, above his gathered rage. He strikes Loda's tree, with his

* The sword of Fingal, so called from its maker, Luno of Lochlin.

† The helmet of Swaran. The behaviour of Fingal is always consistent with that generosity of spirit which belongs to a hero. He takes no advantage of a foe disarmed.

spear. He raises the hum of songs. They come to the host of Lochlin, each in his own dark path; like two foam-covered streams, from two rainy vales!

To Turther's plain Fingal returned. Fair rose the beam of the east. It shone on the spoils of Lochlin in the hand of the king. From her cave came forth in her beauty, the daughter of Torcul-torno. She gathered her hair from wind. She wildly raised her song. The song of Lulan of shells, where once her father dwelt. She saw Starno's bloody shield. Gladness rose, a light, on her face. She saw the cleft helmet of Swaran.* She shrunk, darkened, from Fingal.— “ Art thou fallen, by thy hundred streams, O love of the mournful maid?”

U-Thorno, that risest in waters! on whose side are the meteors of night! I behold the dark moon descending, behind thy resounding woods. On thy top dwells the misty Loda: the house of the spirits of men! In the end of his cloudy hall, bends forward Cruth-loda of swords. His form is dimly seen, amid his wavy mist. His right-hand is on his shield. In his left is the half-viewless shell. The roof of his dreadful hall is marked with nightly fires!

* Conban-carglas, from seeing the helmet of Swaran bloody in the hands of Fingal, conjectured that that hero was killed. A part of the original is lost. It appears, however, from the sequel of the poem, that the daughter of Torcul-torno did not long survive her surprise, occasioned by the supposed death of her lover. The description of the airy hall of Loda (which is supposed to be the same with that of Odin, the deity of Scandinavia) is more picturesque and descriptive, than any in the Edda, or other works of the northern Scalders.

The race of Cruth-loda advance, a ridge of formless shades. He reaches the sounding shell, to those who shone in war. But between him and the feeble, his shield rises, a darkened orb. He is a setting meteor to the weak in arms. Bright, as a rainbow on streams, came Lulan's white-bosomed maid.

CATH-LODA.

DUAN SECOND.

ARGUMENT.

Fingal returning with day, devolves the command on Duth-maruno, who engages the enemy, and drives them over the stream of Turthor. Having recalled his people, he congratulates Duth-maruno on his success, but discovers, that that hero had been mortally wounded in the action.—Duth-maruno dies. Ulin, the bard, in honour of the dead, introduces the episode of Colgorm and Strinadona, which concludes this duän.

“WHERE art thou, son of the king?” said dark haired Duth-maruno. “Where hast thou failed, young beam of Selma? He returns not, from the bosom of night! Morning is spread on U-thorno. In his mist is the sun, on his hill. Warriors, lift the shields, in my presence. He must not fall, like a fire from heaven, whose place is not marked on the ground. He comes, like an eagle, from the skirt of his squally wind! In his hand are the spoils of foes. King of Selma, our souls were sad!”

“Near us are the foes, Duth-maruno. They come forward, like waves in mist, when their foamy tops are seen, at times, above the low sailing vapour. The traveller shrinks on his journey; he knows not whither to fly. No trembling travellers are we! Sons of heroes call forth the steel. Shall the sword of Fingal arise, or shall a warrior lead?”

* The deeds of old, said Duth-maruno, are like paths to our eyes, O Fingal! Broad shielded Trenmor, is still seen, amidst his own dim years. Nor feeble was the soul of the king. There no dark deed wandered in secret. From their hundred streams came the tribes, to grassy Colgran-crona. Their chiefs were before them. Each strove to lead the war. Their swords were often half-unsheathed. Red rolled

* In this short episode we have a very probable account given us, of the origin of monarchy in Caledonia. The Cael or Gauls, who possessed the countries to the north of the Frith of Edinburgh, were, originally, a number of distinct tribes, or clans, each subject to its own chief, who was free and independent of any other power. When the Romans invaded them, the common danger might, perhaps, have induced those reguli to join together, but, as they were unwilling to yield to the command of one of their own number, their battles were ill-conducted, and, consequently unsuccessful. Trenmor was the first who represented to the chiefs, the bad consequences of carrying on their wars in this irregular manner, and advised, that they themselves should alternately lead in battle. They did so, but they were unsuccessful. When it came to Trenmor's turn, he totally defeated the enemy, by his superior valour and conduct, which gained him such an interest among the tribes, that he, and his family after him, were regarded as kings; or, to use the poet's expression, the words of power rushed forth from Selma of kings. The regal authority, however, except in time of war, was but inconsiderable; for every chief, within his own district, was absolute and independent. From the scene of the battle in this episode (which was in the valley of Crona a little to the north of Agricola's wall), I should suppose, that the enemies of the Caledonians were the Romans, or provincial Britons.

their eyes of rage. Separate they stood, and hummed their surly songs. "Why should they yield to each other? Their fathers were equal in war." Trenmor was there, with his people, stately in youthful locks. He saw the advancing foe. The grief of his soul arose. He bade the chiefs to lead, by turns: they led, but they were rolled away. From his own mossy hill, blue-shielded Trenmor came down. He led wide-skirted battle, and the strangers failed. Around him the dark-browed warriors came: they struck the shield of joy. Like a pleasant gale, the words of power rushed forth from Selma of kings. But the chiefs led, by turns, in war, till mighty danger rose: then was the hour of the king to conquer in the field.

"Not unknown," said Cromma-glass* of shields,

* In tradition, this Cromma-glass makes a great figure in that battle, which Comhal lost, together with his life, to the tribe of Morni. I have just now, in my hands, an Irish composition, of a very modern date, as appears from the language, in which all the traditions, concerning that decisive engagement, are jumbled together. In justice to the merit of the poem, I should have here presented to the reader a translation of it, did not the bard mention some circumstances very ridiculous, and others altogether indecent. Morna, the wife of Comhal, had a principal hand in all the transactions previous to the defeat and death of her husband; she, to use the words of the bard, Who was the guiding star of the women of Erin. The bard, it is to be hoped, misrepresented the ladies of his country, for Morna's behaviour was, according to him, so void of all decency and virtue, that it cannot be supposed, they had chosen her for their guiding star. The poem consists of many stanzas. The language is figurative, and the numbers harmonious; but the piece is so full of anachronisms, and so unequal in its composition, that the author, most undoubtedly, was either mad, or drunk, when he wrote it. It is worthy of being remarked, that Comhal is, in this poem, very often called, Comhal na h'Albin, or Comhal of Albion, which sufficiently demonstrates, that the allegations of Keating and O'Flaherty, concerning Fion Mac Comhal, are but of late invention.

“are the deeds of our fathers. But who shall now lead the war, before the race of kings? Mist settles on these four dark hills: within it let each warrior strike his shield. Spirits may descend in darkness, and mark us for the war.”

They went, each to his hill of mist. Bards, marked the sounds of the shields. Loudest rung thy boss, Duth-maruno. Thou must lead in war!

Like the murmur of waters, the race of U-thorno came down. Starno led the battle, and Swaran of stormy isles. They looked forward from iron shields like Cruth-loda fiery-eyed, when he looks from behind the darkened moon, and strews his signs on night. The foes met by Turthor's stream. They heaved like ridgy waves. Their echoing strokes are mixed. Shadowy death flies over the hosts. They were clouds of hail, with squally winds in their skirts. Their showers are roaring together. Below them Swells the dark-rolling deep.

Strife of gloomy U-thorno, why should I mark thy wounds! Thou art with the years that are gone; thou fadest on my soul!

Starno brought forward his skirt of war, and Swaran his own dark wing. Nor a harmless fire is Duth-maruno's sword. Lochlin is rolled over her streams. Thee wrathful kings are lost in thought. They roll their silent eyes, over the flight of their land. The horn of Fingal was heard; The sons of woody Albion

returned. But many lay, by Turthor's stream, silent in their blood.

"Chief of Crathmo," said the king, "Duth-maruno, hunter of boars! not harmless returns my eagle from the field of foes! for this white-bosomed Lanul shall brighten, at her streams; Candona shall rejoice, as he wanders in Crathmo's fields."

"Colgorm,"* replied the chief, "was the first of my race in Albion; Colgorm, the rider of ocean, through its watry vales. He slew his brother in I-thorno:† he left the land of his fathers. He chose his place, in silence, by rocky Crathmo-craulo. His race came forth, in their years; they came forth, to war, but they always fell. The wound of my fathers is mine, king of echoing isles!

"He drew an arrow from his side! He fell pale, in a land unknown. His soul came forth to his fathers, to their stormy isle. There they pursued boars of mist, along the skirts of winds. The chiefs stood silent around, as the stones of Loda on their hill. The traveller sees them, through the twilight, from his

* The family of Duth-maruno, it appears, came originally from Scandinavia, or, at least, from some of the northern isles, subject, in chief, to the kings of Lochlin. The Highland senachies, who never missed to make their comments on, and additions to, the works of Ossian, have given us a long list of the ancestors of Duth-maruno, and a particular account of their actions, many of which are of the marvellous kind. One of the tale-makers of the north has chosen for his hero, Starnmor, the father of Duth-maruno, and, considering the adventures through which he has led him, the piece is neither disagreeable, nor abounding with that kind of fiction, which shocks credibility.

† An island of Scandinavia.

lonely path. He thinks them the ghosts of the aged, forming future wars.

“ Night came down, on U-thorno. Still stood the chiefs in their grief. The blast whistled, by turns, through every warrior’s hair. Fingal, at length, broke forth from the thoughts of his soul. He called Ullin, of harps, and bade the song to rise. “ No falling fire that is only seen, and then retires in night; no departing meteor was he that is laid so low. He was like the strong-beaming sun, long rejoicing on his hill. Call the names of his fathers, from their dwellings old!”

I-thorno,* said the bard, that risest midst ridgy seas! Why is thy head so gloomy, in the ocean’s mist? From thy vales came forth a race, fearless as thy strong-winged eagles; the race of Colgorm of iron shields, dwellers of Loda’s hall.

In Tormoth’s resounding isle, arose Lurthan, streamy hill. It bent its woody head over a silent vale. There, at foamy Cruruth’s source, dwelt Rurmar, hunter of boars! His daughter was fair as a sun-beam, white-bosomed Strina-dona!

* This episode is, in the original, extremely beautiful. It is set to that wild kind of music, which some of the Highlanders distinguish, by the title of *Fon Oi-marra*, or, the Song of mermaids. Some part of the air is absolutely infernal, but there are many returns in the measure, which are inexpressibly wild and beautiful. From the genius of the music, I should think it came originally from Scandinavia, for the fictions delivered down concerning the *Oi-marra* (who are reputed the authors of the music), exactly correspond with the notions of the northern nations, concerning their *diræ*, or goddesses of death—Of all the names in this episode, there is none of a Galic original, except *Strina-dona*, which signifies the strife of heroes.

Many a king of heroes, and hero of iron shields;
many a youth of heavy locks came to Rurmar's echo-
ing hall. They came to woo the maid, the stately
huntress of Tormoth wild. But thou lookest careless
from thy steps, high bosomed Strina-dona!

If on the heath she moved, her breast was whiter
than the down of Cana;* if on the seabeat shore,
than the foam of the rolling ocean. Her eyes were
two stars of light. Her face was heaven's bow in
showers. Her dark hair flowed round it, like the
streaming clouds. Thou wert the dweller of souls
white-handed Strina-dona!

Colgorm came, in his ship, and Corcul-Suran, king
of shells. The brothers came, from I-thorno, to woo
the sun-beam of Tormoth wild. She saw them in
their echoing steel. Her soul was fixed on blue-eyed
Colgorm. Ul-lochlin's† nightly eye looked in, and
saw the tossing arms of Strina-dona.

Wrathful the brothers frowned. Their flaming
eyes, in silence, met. They turned away. They
struck their shields. Their hands were trembling on
their swords. They rushed into the strife of heroes
for long-haired Strina-dona.

* The Cana is a certain kind of grass, which grows plentiful in the heathy morasses of the north. Its stalk is of the reedy kind, and it carries a tuft of down, very much resembling cotton. It is excessively white, and consequently, often introduced by the bards, in their similes concerning the beauty of women.

† Ul-lochlin, the guide to Lochlin; the name of a star.

Corcul-Suran fell in blood. On his isle, raged the strength of his father. He turned Colgorm, from Ithorno, to wander on all the winds. In Crathmo-craulo's rocky field, he dwelt by a foreign stream. Nor darkened the king alone, that beam of light was near, the daughter of echoing Tormoth, white-armed Strina-dona.*

* The continuation of this episode is just now in my hands; but the language is so different from, and the ideas so unworthy of, Ossian, that I have rejected it, as an interpolation by a modern bard.

CATH-LODA:

DUAN THIRD.

ARGUMENT.

Ossian, after some general reflections, describes the situation of Fingal, and the position of the army of Lochlin.—The conversation of Starno and Swaran.—The episode of Corman-trunar and Foinar-bragal.—Starno, from his own example, recommends to Swaran, to surprise Fingal, who had retired alone to a neighbouring hill. Upon Swaran's refusal, Starno undertakes the enterprize himself, is overcome and taken prisoner, by Fingal.—He is dismissed, after a severe reprimand for his cruelty.

WHENCE is the stream of years? Whither do they roll along? Where have they hid, in mist, their many-coloured sides?

I look into the times of old, but they seem dim to Ossian's eyes, like reflected moon-beams, on a distant lake. Here rise the red beams of war! There, silent, dwells a feeble race! They mark no years with their deeds, as slow they pass along. Dweller between the shields! thou that awakest the failing soul! descend from thy wall, harp of Cona, with thy voices three!

Come with that which kindles the past: rear the forms
of old, on their own dark-brown years!

* U-thorno, hill of storms, I behold my race on thy
side. Fingal is bending, in night, over Duth-maruno's
tomb. Near him are the steps of his heroes, hunters
of the boar. By Turthor's stream the host of Loch-
lin is deep in shades. The wrathful kings stood on
two hills; they looked forward from their bossy shields.
They looked forward to the stars of night, red-wander-
ing in the west. Cruth-loda bends from high, like a
formless meteor in clouds. He sends abroad the
winds, and marks them, with his signs. Starno fore-
saw, that Morven's king was not to yield in war.

* The bards who were always ready to supply what they thought defi-
cient in the poems of Ossian, have inserted a great many incidents be-
tween the second and third duan of Cathloda. Their interpolations are
so easily distinguished from the genuine remains of Ossian, that it took me
very little time to mark them out, and totally to reject them. If the mo-
dern Scotch and Irish bards have shewn any judgment, it is in ascribing
their own compositions to names of antiquity, for, by that means, they
themselves have escaped that contempt, which the authors of such futile
performances must, necessarily, have met with, from people of true taste.
I was led into this observation, by an Irish poem, just now before me. It
concerns a descent made by Swaran, king of Lochlin, on Ireland, and is
the work, says the traditional preface prefixed to it, of Ossian Mac-Fion.
It however appears, from several pious ejaculations, that it was rather the
composition of some good priest, in the fifteenth or sixteenth century, for
he speaks, with great devotion, of pilgrimage, and more particularly, of
the blue-eyed daughters of the convent. Religious, however, as this poet
was, he was not altogether decent, in the scenes he introduces between
Swaran and the wife of Congcullion, both of whom he represents as giants.
It happening, unfortunately, that Congcullion was only of a moderate
stature, his wife, without hesitation, preferred Swaran, as a more adequate
match for her own gigantic size. From this fatal preference proceeded
so much mischief, that the good poet altogether lost sight of his principal
action, and he ends the piece, with advice to men, in the choice of their
wives, which however good it may be, I shall leave concealed in the ob-
scurity of the original.

He twice struck the tree in wrath. He rushed before his son. He hummed a surly song; and heard his hair in wind. Turned* from one another, they stood, like two oaks, which different winds had bent; each hangs over its own loud rill, and shakes its boughs in the course of blasts.

“ Annir,” said Starno of lakes, “ was a fire that consumed of old. He poured death from his eyes along the striving fields. His joy was in the fall of men. Blood to him was a summer stream, that brings joy to withered vales, from its own mossy rock. He came forth to the lake Luth-cormo, to meet the tall Corman-trunar, he from Urlor of streams, dweller of battle’s wing.”

The chief of Urlor had come to Gormal, with his dark-bosomed ships. He saw the daughter of Annir, white-armed Foina-bragal. He saw her! Nor careless rolled her eyes, on the rider of stormy waves. She fled to his ship in darkness, like a moon-beam thro’ a nightly vale. Annir pursued along the deep; he called the winds of heaven. Nor alone was the king! Starno was by his side. Like U-thorno’s young eagle, I turned my eyes on my father.

* The surly attitude of Starno and Swaran is well adapted to their fierce and uncompliyng dispositions. Their characters, at first sight, seem little different; but, upon examination, we find that the poet has dexterously distinguished between them. They were both dark, stubborn, haughty and reserved; but Starno was cunning, revengeful, and cruel, to the highest degree; the disposition of Swaran, though savage, was less bloody, and somewhat tinctured with generosity. It is doing injustice to Ossian, to say, that he has not a great variety of characters.

We rushed into roaring Urlor. With his people came tall Corman-trunar. We fought; but the foe prevailed. In his wrath my father stood. He lopped the young trees, with his sword. His eyes rolled red in his rage. I marked the soul of the king, and I retired in night. From the field I took a broken helmet: a shield that was pierced with steel: pointless was the spear in my hand. I went to find the foe.

On a rock sat tall Corman-trunar, beside his burning oak; and near him, beneath a tree, sat deep-bosomed Foina-bragal. I threw my broken shield before her. I spoke the words of peace. Beside his rolling sea, lies Annir of many lakes. The king was pierced in battle; and Starno is to raise his tomb. Me, a son of Loda, he sends to white-handed Foina, to bid her send a lock from her hair, to rest with her father, in earth. And thou king of roaring Urlor, let the battle cease, till Annir receive the shell, from fiery-eyed Cruth-loda.

* Bursting into tears, she rose, and tore a lock from her hair; a lock, which wandered, in the blast, along her heaving breast. Corman-trunar gave the shell; and bade me to rejoice before him. I rested in the shade of night; and hid my face in my helmet deep.

* Ossian is very partial to the fair sex. Even the daughter of the cruel Annir, the sister of the revengful and bloody Starno, partakes not of those disagreeable characters so peculiar to her family. She is altogether tender and delicate. Homer, of all ancient poets, uses the sex with least ceremony. His cold contempt is even worse than the downright abuse of the moderns; for to draw abuse implies the possession of some merit.

Sleep descended on the foe. I rose, like a stalking ghost. I pierced the side of Cormac trunar. Nordid Foinabragal escape. She rolled her white bosom in blood.

Why then, daughter of heroes, didst thou wake my rage.

Morning rose. The foe were fled, like the departure of mist. Annir struck his bossy shield. He called his dark-haired son. I came, streaked with wandering blood: thrice rose the shout of the king, like the bursting forth of a squall of wind, from a cloud, by night. We rejoiced, three days, above the dead, and called the hawks of heaven. They came, from all their winds, to feast on Annir's foes. Swaran! Fingal is alone,* on his hill of night. Let thy spear pierce the king in secret; like Annir my soul shall rejoice.

"Son of Annir," said Swaran, "I shall not slay in shades. I move forth in light: the hawks rush from all their winds. They are wont to trace my course: it is not harmless thro' war."

Burning rose the rage of the king. He thrice raised his gleaming spear. But, starting, he spared his son; and rushed into the night. By Turthor's stream a cave is dark, the dwelling of Conban-carglas. There he laid the helmet of kings, and called the maid of Lulan; but she was distant far, in Loda's resounding hall.

* Fingal, according to the custom of the Caledonian kings, had retired to a hill alone, as he himself was to resume the command of the army the next day. Starvo might have some intelligence of the king's retiring, which occasions his request to Swaran, to stab him; as he foresaw, by his art of divination that he could not overcome him in open battle.

Swelling in his rage, he strode, to where Fingal lay alone. The king was laid on his shield, on his own secret hill.

Stern hunter of shaggy boars! no feeble maid is laid before thee. No boy, on his ferny bed, by Turthor's murmuring stream. Here is spread the couch of the mighty, from which they rise to deeds of death. Hunter of shaggy boars, awaken not the terrible!

Starno came murmuring on. Fingal arose in arms. "Who art thou, son of night?" Silent he threw the spear. They mixed their gloomy strife. The shield of Starno fell, cleft in twain, He is bound to an oak. The early beam arose. It was then Fingal beheld the king. He rolled awhile his silent eyes. He thought of other days, when white-bosomed Agandecca moved like the music of songs. He loosed the thong from his hands. Son of Annir, he said, retire. Retire to Gormal of shells; a beam that was set returns. I remember thy white-bosomed daughter; dreadful king away! Go to thy troubled dwelling, cloudy foe of the lovely! Let the strangers shun thee, thou gloomy in the hall.

A tale of the times of old!

COMALA:

A

DRAMATIC POEM.

ARGUMENT.

This poem is valuable on account of the light it throws on the antiquity of Ossian's compositions. The Caracul mentioned here is the same with Caracalla the son of Severus, who in the year 211 commanded an expedition against the Caledonians. The variety of the measure shews that the poem was originally set to music, and perhaps presented before the chiefs upon solemn occasions. Tradition has handed down the story more complete than it is in the poem. "Comala, the daughter of Sarno king of Inistore or Orkney islands, fell in love with Fingal the son of Comhal at a feast, to which her father had invited him, [Fingal, B. III.] upon his return from Lochlin, after the death of Agandecca. Her passion was so violent, that she followed him, disguised like a youth who wanted to be employed in his wars. She was soon discovered by Hidallan the son of Lamor, one of Fingal's heroes, whose love she had slighted some time before. Her romantic passion and beauty recommended her so much to the king, that he had resolved to make her his wife; when news was brought him of Caracul's expedition. He marched to stop the progress of the enemy, and Comala attended him. He left her on a hill, within sight of Caracul's army, when he himself went to battle, having previously promised, if he survived, to return that night." The sequel of the story may be gathered from the poem itself.

COMALA.

THE PERSONS.

FINGAL.	MELILCOMA,	} DAUGHTERS } OF MORNI.
HIDALLAN.	DERSAGRENA,	
COMALA.	BARDS.	

DERSAGRENA.

The chace is over. No noise on Ardven but the torrent's roar! Daughter of Morni, come from Crona's banks. Lay down the bow and take the harp. Let the night come on with songs, let our joy be great on Ardven.

MELILCOMA.*

Night comes apace, thou blue-eyed maid! grey night grows dim along the plain. I saw a deer at Crona's stream; a mossy bank he seemed through the gloom, but soon he bounded away. A meteor played round his branching horns! the awful faces† of other times looked from the clouds of Crona!

DERSAGRENA.‡

These are the signs of Fingal's death. The king of shields is fallen! and Caracul prevails. Rise,

* Melilcoma,—*soft-rolling eye.*

† *Apparent diræ facies, inimicaque Trojæ
Numina magna deum*

VIRG.

-----dreadful sounds I hear,
And the dire form of hostile gods appear.

DRYDEN.

‡ Dersagrena, *the brightness of a sun-beam.*



Atkinson del.

Heath sculp.

COMALA.

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Comala,* from thy rock; daughter of Sarno, rise in tears! The youth of thy love is low; his ghost is on our hills.

MELILCOMA.

There Comala sits forlorn! two grey dogs near shake their rough ears, and catch the flying breeze. Her red cheek rests upon her arm, the mountain wind is in her hair. She turns her blue eyes toward the fields of his promise. Where art thou, O Fingal? the night is gathering around!

COMALA.

O Carun† of the streams! why do I behold thy waters rolling in blood? Has the noise of the battle been heard; and sleeps the king of Morven? Rise, moon, thou daughter of the sky! look from between thy clouds, rise that I may behold the gleam of his steel, on the field of his promise. Or rather let the meteor, that lights our fathers through the night, come, with its red beam, to shew me the way to my fallen hero. Who will defend me from sorrow? Who from the love of Hidallan? Long shall Comala look before she can behold Fingal in the midst of his

* Comala, the maid of the pleasant brow.

† Carun or Cara'on, a winding river.—This river retains still the name of Caron, and falls into the Forth some miles to the North of Falkirk.

—Gentesque alias cum pelleret armis
Sedibus, aut victas vilem servaret in usum
Servitii, hic contenta suos defendere fines
Roma securigeris præterdit mænia Scotis:
Hic spe progressus posita, Caronis ad undam
Terminus Ausonii signat divortia regni.

Buchanan.

host; bright as the coming forth of the morning, in the cloud of an early shower.

HIDALLAN.*

Dwell, thou mist of gloomy Crona, dwell on the path of the king! Hide his steps from mine eyes, let me remember my friend no more. The bands of battle are scattered, no crowding tread is round the noise of his steel. O Carun! roll thy streams of blood, the chief of the people is low.

COMALA.

Who fell on Carun's sounding banks, son of the cloudy night? Was he white as the snow of Ardven? Blooming as the bow of the shower? Was his hair like the mist of the hill, soft and curling in the day of the sun? Was he like the thunder of heaven in battle? Fleet as the roe of the desert?

HIDALLAN.

O that I might behold his love, fair-leaning from her rock! Her red eye dim in tears, her blushing cheek half hid in her locks! Blow, O gentle breeze! lift thou the heavy locks of the maid, that I may behold her white arm, her lovely cheek in her grief.

COMALA.

And is the son of Comhal fallen, chief of the

* Hidallan was sent by Fingal to give notice to Comala of his return; he, to revenge himself on her for slighting his love some time before, told her that the king was killed in battle. He even pretended that he carried his body from the field to be buried in her presence; and this circumstance makes it probable that the poem was presented of old.

mournful tale? The thunder rolls on the hill! The lightning flies on wings of fire! They frighten not Comala; for Fingal is low. Say, chief of the mournful tale, fell the breaker of the shields?

HIDALLAN.

The nations are scattered on their hills! they shall hear the voice of the king no more.

COMALA:

Confusion pursue thee over thy plains! Ruin overtake thee, thou king of the world! Few be thy steps to thy grave; and let one virgin mourn thee! Let her be like Comala, tearful in the days of her youth! Why hast thou told me, Hidallan, that my hero fell? I might have hoped a little while his return; I might have thought I saw him on the distant rock; a tree might have deceived me with his appearance; the wind of the hill might have been the sound of his horn in mine ear. O that I were on the banks of Carun! that my tears might be warm on his cheek!

HIDALLAN.

He lies not on the banks of Carun: on Ardven heroes raise his tomb. Look on them, O moon! from thy clouds; be thy beam bright on his breast; that Comala may behold him in the light of his armour!

COMALA.

Stop, ye sons of the grave, till I behold my love! He left me at the chace alone. I knew not that he

went to war. He said he would return with the night; the king of Morven is returned! Why didst thou not tell me that he would fall, O trembling dweller of the rock!* Thou sawest him in the blood of his youth; but thou didst not tell Comala!

MELILCOMA.

What sound is that on Ardven? Who is that bright in the vale? Who comes like the strength of rivers, when their crowded waters glitter to the moon?

COMALA.

Who is it but the foe of Comala, the son of the king of the world! Ghost of Fingal! do thou, from thy cloud, direct Comala's bow. Let him fall like the hart of the desert. It is Fingal in the crowd of his ghosts. Why dost thou come, my love, to frighten and please my soul?

FINGAL.

Raise, ye bards, the song; raise the wars of the streamy Carun! Caracul has fled from our arms along the fields of his pride. He sets far distant like a meteor, that incloses a spirit of night, when the winds drive it over the heath, and the dark woods are gleaming around. I heard a voice, or was it the breeze of my hills? Is it the huntress of Ardven, the white-handed daughter of Sarno? Look

* By the dweller of the rock she means a druid. It is probable that some of the order of the druids remained as late as the beginning of the reign of Fingal; and that Comala had consulted one of them concerning the event of the war with Caracul.

from thy rocks, my love; let me hear the voice of
Comala!

COMALA.

Take me to the cave of thy rest, O lovely son of
death!

FINGAL.

Come to the cave of my rest. The storm is past,
the sun is on our fields. Come to the cave of my
rest, huntress of echoing Ardven!

COMALA.

He is returned with his fame! I feel the right
hand of his wars! But I must rest beside the rock
till my soul returns from my fear! O let the harp be
near! raise the song, ye daughters of Morni!

DERSAGRENA.

Comala has slain three deer on Ardven, the fire
ascends on the rock; go to the feast of Comala, king
of the woody Morven!

FINGAL.

Raise, ye sons of song, the wars of the streamy
Carun; that my white-handed maid may rejoice:
while I behold the feast of my love.

BARDS.

Roll, streamy Carun, roll in joy, the sons of battle
fled! The steed is not seen on our fields; the wings*
of their pride spread in other lands. The sun will
now rise in peace, and the shadows descend in joy.

* Perhaps the poet alludes to the Roman eagle.

The voice of the chace will be heard: the shields hang in the hall. Our delight will be in the war of the ocean, our hands shall grow red in the blood of Lochlin. Roll, streamy Carun, roll in joy, the sons of battle fled!

MELILCOMA.

Descend, ye light mists from high! Ye moon-beams, lift her soul! Pale lies the maid at the rock! Comala is no more!

FINGAL.

Is the daughter of Sarno dead; the white-bosomed maid of my love? Meet me, Comala, on my heaths, when I sit alone at the streams of my hills!

HIDALLAN.

Ceased the voice of the huntress of Ardven? Why did I trouble the soul of the maid? When shall I see thee, with joy, in the chace of the dark-brown hinds?

FINGAL.

Youth of the gloomy brow! no more shalt thou feast in my halls. Thou shalt not pursue my chace, my foes shall not fall by thy sword.* Lead me to the place of her rest that I may behold her beauty. Pale she lies at the rock, the cold winds lift her hair. Her bow-string sounds in the blast, her arrow was broken in her fall. Raise the praise of the daughter of Sarno! give her name to the winds of heaven!

* The sequel of the story of Hidallan is introduced in another poem.

BARDS.

See! meteors gleam around the maid! See! moon-beams lift her soul! Around her, from their clouds, bend the awful faces of her fathers; Sarno* of the gloomy brow; the red-rolling eyes of Fidallan! When shall thy white hand arise? When shall thy voice be heard on our rocks? The maids shall seek thee on the heath, but they shall not find thee. Thou shalt come, at times, to their dreams, to settle peace in their soul. Thy voice shall remain in their ears, they shall think with joy on the dreams of their rest. Meteors gleam around the maid, and moon-beams lift her soul!

* Sarno, the father of Comala, died soon after the flight of his daughter. Fidallan was the first king that reigned in Inistore.

CARRIC-THURA:

A POEM.

ARGUMENT.

Fingal, returning from an expedition which he had made into the Roman province, resolved to visit Cathulla, king of Inistore, and brother to Comala, whose story is related, at large, in the preceding dramatic poem. Upon his coming in sight of Carric-thura, the palace of Cathulla, he observed a flame on its top, which, in those days, was a signal of distress. The wind drove him into a bay, at some distance from Carric-thura, and he was obliged to pass the night on the shore. Next day he attacked the army of Frothal, king of Sora, who had besieged Cathulla in his palace of Carric-thura, and took Frothal himself prisoner, after he had engaged him in a single combat. The deliverance of Carric-thura is the subject of the poem; but several other episodes are interwoven with it. It appears from tradition, that this poem was addressed to a Culdee, or one of the first Christian missionaries, and that the story of the Spirit of Loda, supposed to be the ancient Odin of Scandinavia, was introduced by Ossian in opposition to the Culdee's doctrine. Be this as it will, it lets us into Ossian's notions of a superior being; and shews that he was not addicted to the superstition which prevailed all the world over, before the introduction of Christianity.

HAST* thou left thy blue course in heaven, golden-haired son of the sky! The west has opened its gates;

* The song of Ullin, with which the poem opens, is in a lyric measure. It was usual with Fingal, when he returned from his expeditions, to send his bards singing before him. This species of triumph is called, by Ossian, the song of victory.

the bed of thy repose is there. The waves come to behold thy beauty. They lift their trembling heads. They see thee lovely in thy sleep; they shrink away with fear. Rest, in thy shadowy cave, O sun! let thy return be in joy.

But let a thousand lights arise to the sound of the harps of Selma: let the beam spread in the hall, the king of shells is returned! The strife of Carun is past,* like sounds that are no more. Raise the song, O bards! the king is returned, with his fame!

Such were the words of Ullin, when Fingal returned from war: when he returned in the fair blushing of youth, with all his heavy locks. His blue arms were on the hero; like a light cloud on the sun, when he moves in his robes of mist, and shews but half his beams. His heroes follow the king: the feast of shells is spread. Fingal turns to his bards, and bids the song to rise.

Voices of echoing Cona! he said, O bards of other times! Ye, on whose souls the blue hosts of our fathers rise! strike the harp in my hall; and let me hear the song. Pleasant is the joy of grief! it is like the shower of spring, when it softens the branch of the oak, and the young leaf rears its green head. Sing on, O bards! to-morrow we lift the sail. My

* Ossian has celebrated the strife of Crona, in a particular poem. This poem is connected with it, but it was impossible for the translator to procure that part which relates to Crona, with any degree of purity.

blue course is through the ocean, to Carric-thura's walls; the mossy walls of Sarno, where Comala dwelt. There the noble Cathulla spreads the feast of shells. The boars of his woods are many; the sound of the chace shall arise!

Cronnan,* son of the song! said Ullin, Minona, graceful at the harp! raise the tale of Shilric, to please the king of Morven. Let Vinvela come in her beauty, like the showery bow, when it shews its lovely head on the lake, and the setting sun is bright. She comes, O Fingal! her voice is soft but sad.

VINVELA.

My love is a son of the hill. He pursues the flying deer. His grey dogs are panting around him; his bow-string sounds in the wind. Dost thou rest by the fount of the rock, or by the noise of the mountain-stream? The rushes are nodding to the wind, the mist flies over the hill. I will approach my love unseen; I will behold him from the rock. Lovely I saw thee first by the aged oak of Branno; † thou wert returning tall from the chace; the fairest among thy friends.

* One should think that the parts of Shilric and Vinvela were represented by Cronnan and Minona, whose very names denote that they were singers who performed in public. Cronnan signifies a mournful sound, Minona, or Min'-onn, soft air. All the dramatic poems of Ossian appear to have been presented before Fingal, upon solemn occasions.

† Bran, or Branno, signifies a mountain-stream: it is here some river known by that name, in the days of Ossian. There are several small rivers in the north of Scotland still retaining the name of Bran; in particular one which falls into the Tay at Dunkeld.

SHILRIC.

What voice is that I hear? that voice like the summer-wind! I sit not by the nodding rushes; I hear not the fount of the rock. Afar, Vinvela,* afar, I go to the wars of Fingal. My dogs attend me no more. No more I tread the hill. No more from on high I see thee, fair moving by the stream of the plain; bright as the bow of heaven; as the moon on the western wave.

VINVELA.

Then thou art gone, O Shilric! I am alone on the hill! The deer are seen on the brow; void of fear they graze along. No more they dread the wind; no more the rustling tree. The hunter is far removed: he is in the field of graves. Strangers! sons of the waves! spare my lovely Shilric!

SHILRIC.

If fall I must in the field, raise high my grave, Vinvela. Grey stones, and heaped-up earth, shall mark me to future times. When the hunter shall sit by the mound, and produce his food at noon, "Some warrior rests here," he will say; and my fame shall live in his praise. Remember me, Vinvela, when low on earth I lie!

VINVELA.

Yes! I will remember thee; alas! my Shilric will

* Bhin bheul, a woman with a melodious voice. Bh, in the Galic language, has the same sound with the v in English.

fall! What shall I do, my love! when thou art for ever gone? Through these hills I will go at noon: I will go through the silent heath. There I will see the place of thy rest, returning from the chace. Alas! my Shilric will fall; but I will remember Shilric.

And I remember the chief, said the king of woody Morven; he consumed the battle in his rage. But now my eyes behold him not. I met him, one day, on the hill; his cheek was pale; his brow was dark. The sigh was frequent in his breast: his steps were towards the desert. But now he is not in the crowd of my chiefs, when the sounds of my shields arise. Dwells he in the narrow house,* the chief of high Carmora?†

Cronnan! said Ullin of other times, raise the song of Shilric; when he returned to his hills, and Vinvela was no more. He leaned on her grey mossy stone; he thought Vinvela lived. He saw her fair moving‡ on the plain: but the bright form lasted not: the sun-beam fled from the field, and she was seen no more. Hear the song of Shilric, it is soft but sad!

I sit by the mossy fountain; on the top of the hill of winds. One tree is rustling above me. Dark waves roll over the heath. The lake is troubled below. The deer descend from the hill. No hunter at a dis-

* The grave.

† Carn-mor, high rocky hill.

‡ The distinction which the ancient Scots made between good and bad spirits, was, that the former appeared sometimes in the day-time in lonely unfrequent places, but the latter never but by night, and in a dismal gloomy scene.

tance is seen. It is mid-day: but all is silent. Sad are my thoughts alone. Didst thou but appear, O my love! a wanderer on the heath! thy hair floating on the wind behind thee; thy bosom heaving on the sight; thine eyes full of tears for thy friends, whom the mist of the hill had concealed! Thee I would comfort, my love, and bring thee to thy father's house!

But is it she that there appears, like a beam of light on the heath? bright as the moon in autumn, as the sun in a summer-storm, comest thou, O maid, over rocks, over mountains to me? She speaks: but how weak her voice! like the breeze in the reeds of the lake.

“Returnest thou safe from the war? Where are thy friends, my love? I heard of thy death on the hill; I heard and mourned thee, Shilric! Yes, my fair, I return; but I alone of my race. Thou shalt see them no more: their graves I raised on the plain. But why art thou on the desert hill? Why on the heath alone?”

“Alone I am, O Shilric! alone in the winter-house. With grief for thee I fell. Shilric, I am pale in the tomb.”

She fleets, she sails away; as mist before the wind! and, wilt thou not stay, Vinvela? Stay and behold my tears! fair thou appearest, Vinvela! fair thou wast, when alive!

By the mossy fountain I will sit; on the top of the hill of winds. When mid-day is silent around, O talk

with me, Vinvela! come on the light-winged gale! on the breeze of the desert, come! Let me hear thy voice, as thou passest, when mid-day is silent around!

Such was the song of Cronnan, on the night of Selma's joy. But morning rose in the east; the blue waters rolled in light. Fingal bade his sails to rise; the winds came rustling from their hills. Inistore rose to sight, and Carric-thura's mossy towers! But the sign of distress was on their top: the warning flame edged with smoke. The king of Morven struck his breast: he assumed, at once, his spear. His darkened brow bends forward to the coast: he looks back to the lagging winds. His hair is disordered on his back. The silence of the king is terrible!

Night came down on the sea; Rotha's bay received the ship. A rock bends along the coast with all its echoing wood. On the top is the circle* of Loda, the mossy stone of power! A narrow plain spreads beneath, covered with grass and aged trees, which the midnight winds, in their wrath, had torn from the shaggy rock. The blue course of a stream is there! the lonely blast of ocean pursues the thistle's beard. The flame of three oaks arose: the feast is spread around: but the soul of the king is sad, for Carric-thura's Chief distrest.

The wan, cold moon, rose in the east. Sleep de-

* The circle of Loda is supposed to be a place of worship among the Scandinavians, as the spirit of Loda is thought to be the same with their god Odin.

scended on the youths! Their blue helmets glitter to the beam; the fading fire decays. But sleep did not rest on the king: he rose in the midst of his arms, and slowly ascended the hill, to behold the flame of Sarno's tower.

The flame was dim and distant; the moon hid her red face in the east. A blast came from the mountain, on its wings was the spirit of Loda. He came to his place in his terrors,* and shook his dusky spear. His eyes appear like flames in his dusky spear. His eyes appear like flames in his dark face; his voice is like distant thunder. Fingal advanced his spear in night, and raised his voice on high.

Son of night, retire: call thy winds, and fly! Why dost thou come to my presence, with thy shadowy arms? Do I fear thy gloomy form, spirit of dismal Loda? Weak is thy shield of clouds: feeble is that meteor, thy sword! The blast rolls them together: and thou thyself art lost. Fly from my presence, son of night! call thy winds and fly!

Dost thou force me from my place, replied the hollow voice? The people bend before me. I turn the battle in the field of the brave. I look on the nations, and they vanish: my nostrils pour the blast of death. I come abroad on the winds: the tempests are before my face. But my dwelling is calm, above the clouds; the fields of my rest are pleasant.

* He is described, in a simile, in the poem concerning the death of Cuthullin.

Dwell in thy pleasant fields, said the king: Let Comhal's son be forgot. Do my steps ascend, from my hills, into thy peaceful plains? Do I meet thee, with a spear, on thy cloud, spirit of dismal Loda? Why then dost thou frown on me? Why shake thine airy spear? Thou frownest in vain: I never fled from the mighty in war. And shall the sons of the wind frighten the king of Morven? No: he knows the weakness of their arms!

Fly to thy land, replied the form: receive the wind, and fly! The blasts are in the hollow of my hand: the course of the storm is mine. The king of Sora is my son, he bends at the stone of my power. His battle is around Carric-thura; and he will prevail! Fly to thy land, son of Comhal, or feel my flaming wrath!

He lifted high his shadowy spear! He bent forward his dreadful height. Fingal, advancing, drew his sword; the blade of dark-brown Luno.* The gleaming path of the steel winds through the gloomy ghost. The form fell shapeless into air, like a column of smoke, which the staff of the boy disturbs, as it rises from the half-extinguished furnace.

The spirit of Loda shrieked, as, rolled into himself, he rose on the wind. Inistore shook at the sound. The waves heard it on the deep. They stopped, in their course, with fear: the friends of Fingal started, at once; and took their heavy spears. They missed the king; they rose in rage; all their arms resound!

* The famous sword of Fingal, made by Lun, or Luno, a smith of Lochlin.

The moon came forth in the east. Fingal returned in the gleam of his arms. The joy of his youth was great, their souls settled, as a sea from a storm. Ullin raised the song of gladness. The hills of Inistore rejoiced. The flame of the oak arose; and the tales of heroes are told.

But Frothal, Sora's wrathful king, sits in sadness beneath a tree. The host spreads around Carric-thura. He looks towards the walls with rage. He longs for the blood of Cathulla, who, once overcame him in war. When Annir reigned* in Sora, the father of sea-borne Frothal, a storm arose on the sea, and carried Frothal to Inistore. Three days he feasted in Sarno's halls, and saw the slow rolling eyes of Comala. He loved her, in the flame of youth, and rushed to seize the white-armed maid. Cathulla met the chief. The gloomy battle rose. Frothal was bound in the hall; three days he pined alone. On the fourth, Sarno sent him to his ship, and he returned to his land. But wrath darkened in his soul against the noble Cathulla. When Annir's stone† of fame arose, Frothal came in his strength. The battle burned round Carric-thura, and Sarno's mossy walls.

Morning rose on Inistore. Frothal struck his dark brown shield. His chiefs started at the sound; they

* Annir was also the father of Erragon, who was king after the death of his brother Frothal. The death of Erragon is the subject of the battle of Lora, a poem in this collection.

† That is, after the death of Annir. To erect the stone of one's fame, was, in other words, to say that the person was dead.

stood, but their eyes were turned to the sea. They saw Fingal coming in his strength; and first the noble Thubar spoke. "Who comes like the stag of the desert, with all his herd behind him? Frothal, it is a foe! I see his forward spear. Perhaps it is the king of Morven, Fingal the first of men. His deeds are well known in Lochlin; the blood of his foes is in Starno's halls. Shall I ask the peace* of kings? His sword is the bolt of heaven!"

Son of the feeble hand, said Frothal, shall my days begin in a cloud? Shall I yield before I have conquered, chief of streamy Tora? The people would say in Sora, Frothal flew forth like a meteor; but a darkness has met him; and his fame is no more. No, Thubar, I will never yield; my fame shall surround me like light. No, I will never yield, chief of streamy Tora!

He went forth with the stream of his people, but they met a rock: Fingal stood unmoved, broken they rolled back from his side. Nor did they safely fly; the spear of the king pursued their steps. The field is covered with heroes. A rising hill preserved the foe. Frothal saw their flight. The rage of his bosom rose. He bent his eyes to the ground, and called the noble Thubar. Thubar! my people are fled. My fame has ceased to arise. I will fight the king; I feel my burning soul! Send a bard to demand the combat, Speak not against Frothal's words. But, Thubar! I

* Honourable terms of peace.

love a maid: she dwells by Thanó's stream, the white-bosomed daughter of Herman, Utha with soft-rolling eyes. She feared the low-laid Comala; her secret sighs rose when I spread the sail. Tell to Utha of harps, that my soul delighted in her!

Such were his words, resolved to fight. The soft sigh of Utha was near! She had followed her hero, in the armour of a man. She rolled her eye on the youth, in secret, from beneath her steel. She saw the bard as he went; the spear fell thrice from her hand; Her loose hair flew on the wind. Her white breast rose, with sighs. She raised her eyes to the king. She would speak, but thrice she failed.

Fingal heard the words of the bard; he came in the strength of his steel. They mixed their deathful spears: They raised the gleam of their arms. But the sword of Fingal descended and cut Frothal's shield in twain. His fair side is exposed; half bent he foresees his death. Darkness gathered on Utha's soul. The tear rolled down her cheek. She rushed to cover the chief with her shield; but a fallen oak met her steps. She fell on her arm of snow; her shield, her helmet flew wide. Her white bosom heaved to the sight: her dark-brown hair is spread on earth.

Fingal pitied the white-armed maid! he stayed the uplifted sword. The tear was in the eye of the king, as, bending forward, he spoke. " King of streamy Sora! fear not the sword of Fingal. It was never stained with the blood of the vanquished; it never

pierced a fallen foe. Let thy people rejoice by thy native streams. Let the maids of thy love be glad. Why shouldst thou fall in thy youth, king of streamy Sora?" Frothal heard the words of Fingal, and saw the rising maid: they* stood in silence, in their beauty, like two young trees of the plain, when the shower of spring is on their leaves, and the loud winds are laid.

Daughter of Herman, said Frothal, didst thou come from Tora's streams; didst thou come, in thy beauty, to behold thy warrior low? But he was low before the mighty, maid of the slow-rolling eye! The feeble did not overcome the son of car-borne Annir! Terrible art thou, O king of Morven! in battles of the spear. But, in peace, thou art like the sun, when he looks through a silent shower: the flowers lift their fair heads before him; the gales shake their rustling wings. O that thou wert in Sora! that my feast were spread! The future kings of Sora would see thy arms and rejoice. They would rejoice at the fame of their fathers, who beheld the mighty Fingal!

Son of Annir, replied the king, the fame of Sora's race shall be heard! When chiefs are strong in war, then does the song arise! But if their swords are stretched over the feeble: if the blood of the weak has stained their arms; the bard shall forget them in the song, and their tombs shall not be known. The

* Frothal and Utha.

stranger shall come and build there, and remove the heaped-up earth. An half-worn sword shall rise before him; bending above it, he will say, "These are the arms of the chiefs of old, but their names are not in song." Come thou, O Frothal! to the feast of Inistore; let the maid of thy love be there; let our faces brighten with joy!

Fingal took his spear, moving in the steps of his might. The gates of Carric-thura are opened wide. The feast of shells is spread. The soft sound of music arose. Gladness brightened in the hall. The voice of Ullin was heard; the harp of Selma was strung. Utha rejoiced in his presence, and demanded the song of grief; the big tear hung in her eye, when the soft* Crimora spoke. Crimora the daughter of Rinval, who dwelt at Lotha's† roaring stream! The tale was long, but lovely; and pleased the blushing Utha.

CRIMORA.‡

Who cometh from the hill, like a cloud tinged with the beam of the west? Whose voice is that, loud as the wind, but pleasant as the harp of Carril?§

* There is a propriety in introducing this episode, as the situations of Crimora and Utha were so similar.

† Lotha was the ancient name of one of the great rivers in the north of Scotland. The only one of them that still retains a name of a like sound is Lochly, in Invernesshire; but whether it is the river mentioned here, the translator will not pretend to say.

‡ Cri-mora, a woman of a great soul.

§ Perhaps the Carril mentioned here is the same with Carril the son of Kinfena, Cuchullin's bard. The name itself is proper to any bard, as it signifies a sprightly and harmonious sound.

It is my love in the light of steel: but sad is his darkened brow! Live the mighty race of Fingal? Or what darkens in Connal's soul?*

CONNAL.

They live. They return from the chace, like a stream of light. The sun is on their shields. Like a ridge of fire they descend the hill. Loud is the voice of the youth! the war, my love, is near! Tomorrow the dreadful Dargo comes to try the force of our race. The race of Fingal he defies; the race of battle and wounds!

CRIMORA.

Connal, I saw his sails like grey mist on the dark-brown wave. They slowly came to land. Connal, many are the warriors of Dargo!

CONNAL.

Bring me thy father's shield; the bossy, iron shield of Rinval; that shield like the full-orbed moon, when she moves darkened through heaven.

CRIMORA.

That shield I bring, O Connal! but it did not defend my father. By the spear of Gormar he fell. Thou may'st fall, O Connal!

CONNAL.

Fall I may! But raise my tomb, Crimora! Grey

* Connal, the son of Diaran, was one of the most famous heroes of Fingal; he was slain in a battle against Dargo a Briton; but whether by the hand of the enemy, or that of his mistress, tradition does not determine.

stones, a mound of earth, shall send my name to other times. Bend thy red eye over my grave, beat thy mournful heaving breast. Though fair thou art, my love, as the light ; more pleasant than the gale of the hill ; yet I will not here remain. Raise my tomb, Crimora !

CRIMORA.

Then give me those arms that gleam ; that sword and that spear of steel. I shall meet Dargo with Connal, and aid him in the fight. Farewel, ye rocks of Ardven ! ye deer ! and ye streams of the hill ! We shall return no more. Our tombs are distant far !

“ And did they return no more ? ” said Utha’s bursting sigh. “ Fell the mighty in battle, and did Crimora live ? Her steps were lonely ; her soul was sad for Connal. Was he not young and lovely ; like the beam of the setting sun ? ” Ullin saw the virgin’s tear, he took the softly-trembling harp : the song was lovely, but sad, and silence was in Carric-thura.

Autumn is dark on the mountains ; grey mist rests on the hills. The whirlwind is heard on the heath. Dark rolls the river through the narrow plain. A tree stands alone on the hill, and marks the slumbering Connal. The leaves whirl round with the wind, and strew the grave of the dead. At times are seen here the ghosts of the departed, when the musing hunter alone stalks slowly over the heath.

Who can reach the source of thy race, O Connal !

who recount thy fathers? Thy family grew like an oak on the mountain, which meeteth the wind with its lofty head. But now it is torn from the earth. Who shall supply the place of Connal? Here was the din of arms! here the groans of the dying. Bloody are the wars of Fingal, O Connal! it was here thou didst fall. Thine arm was like a storm; thy sword a beam of the sky; thy height, a rock on the plain; thine eyes, a furnace of fire. Louder than a storm was thy voice, in the battles of thy steel. Warriors fell by thy sword, as the thistle by the staff of a boy. Dargo the mighty came on, darkening in his rage. His brows were gathered into wrath. His eyes like two caves in a rock. Bright rose their swords on each side: loud was the clang of their steel.

The daughter of Rinval was near; Crimora bright in the armour of man; her yellow hair is loose behind, her bow is in her hand. She followed the youth to the war, Connal her much-beloved. She drew the string on Dargo; but erring she pierced her Connal. He falls like an oak on the plain; like a rock from the shaggy hill. What shall she do, hapless maid? He bleeds; her Connal dies! All the night long she cries, and all the day, "O Connal, my love, and my friend!" With grief the sad mourner dies! Earth here incloses the loveliest pair on the hill. The grass grows between the stones of the tomb; I often sit in the mournful shade. The wind sighs through the

grass; their memory rushes on my mind. Undisturbed you now sleep together; in the tomb of the mountain you rest alone!

And soft be their rest, said Utha, hapless children of streamy Lotha! I will remember them with tears, and my secret song shall rise; when the wind is in the groves of Tora, when the stream is roaring near. Then shall they come on my soul, with all their lovely grief.

Three days feasted the kings: on the fourth their white sails arose. The winds of the north drove Fingal to Morven's woody land. But the spirit of Loda sat, in his cloud, behind the ships of Frothal. He hung forward with all his blasts, and spread the white-bosomed sails. The wounds of his form were not forgot; he still feared* the hand of the king!

* The story of Fingal and the spirit of Loda, supposed to be the famous Odin, is the most extravagant fiction in all Ossian's poems. It is not, however, without precedents in the best poets; and it must be said for Ossian, that he says nothing but what perfectly agreed with the notions of the times, concerning ghosts. They thought the souls of the dead were material, and consequently susceptible of pain. Whether a proof could be drawn from this passage, that Ossian had no notion of a divinity, I shall leave to others to determine: It appears, however, that he was of opinion, that superior beings ought to take no notice of what passed among men.

CARTHON:

A POEM.

ARGUMENT.

This poem is complete, and the subject of it, as of most of Ossian's compositions, tragical. In the time of Comhal, the son of Trathal, and father of the celebrated Fingal, Clessammor, the son of Thaddu, and brother of Morna, Fingal's mother, was driven by a storm into the river Clyde, on the banks of which stood Balclutha, a town belonging to the Britons between the walls. He was hospitably received by Reuthamir, the principal man in the place, who gave him Moina his only daughter in marriage. Reuda, the son of Cormo, a Briton who was in love with Moina, came to Reuthamir's house, and behaved haughtily towards Clessammor. A quarrel ensued, in which Reuda was killed; the Britons, who attended him, pressed so hard on Clessammor, that he was obliged to throw himself into the Clyde, and swim to his ship. He hoisted sail, and the wind being favourable, bore him out to sea. He often endeavoured to return, and carry off his beloved Moina by night; but the wind continuing contrary, he was forced to desist.

Moina, who had been left with child by her husband, brought forth a son, and died soon after.—Reuthamir named the child Carthon, i. e. the murmur of waves, from the storm which carried off Clessammor his father, who was supposed to have been cast away. When Carthon was three years old, Comhal, the father of Fingal, in one of his expeditions against the Britons, took and burnt Balclutha. Reuthamir was killed in the attack: and Carthon was carried safe away by his nurse, who fled farther into the country of the Britons. Carthon, coming to man's estate, was resolved to revenge the fall of Balclutha on Comhal's posterity. He set sail, from the Clyde, and, falling on the coast of Morven, defeated two of Fingal's heroes, who came to oppose his progress. He was, at last, unwittingly killed by his father Clessammor, in a single combat. This story is the foundation of the present poem, which opens on the night preceding the death of Carthon, so that what passed before is introduced by way of episode. The poem is addressed to Malvina, the daughter of Toscar.

CARTHON:

A POEM.

A TALE of the times of old! The deeds of days
of other years!

The murmur of thy streams, O Lora! brings back
the memory of the past. The sound of thy woods,
Garmallar, is lovely in mine ear. Dost thou not be-
hold, Malvina, a rock with its head of heath? Three
aged pines bend from its face; green is the narrow
plain at its feet; there the flower of the mountain
grows, and shakes its white head in the breeze. The
thistle is there alone, shedding its aged beard. Two
stones, half sunk in the ground, shew their heads of
moss. The deer of the mountain avoids the place,
for he beholds a dim ghost standing there.* The
mighty lie, O Malvina! in the narrow plain of the
rock.

A tale of the times of old! the deeds of days of
other years!

* It was the opinion of the times, that deer saw the ghosts of the dead. To this day, when beasts suddenly start without any apparent cause, the vulgar think that they see the spirits of the deceased.

Who comes from the land of strangers, with his thousands around him? The sun-beam pours its bright stream before him; his hair meets the wind of his hills. His face is settled from war. He is calm as the evening beam that looks from the cloud of the west, on Cona's silent vale. Who is it but Comhal's son,* the king of mighty deeds! He beholds his hills with joy, he bids a thousand voices rise. "Ye have fled over your fields, ye sons of the distant land! The king of the world sits in his hall, and hears of his people's flight. He lifts his red eye of pride; he takes his father's sword. Ye have fled over your fields, sons of the distant land!"

Such were the words of the bards, when they came to Selma's halls. A thousand lights† from the stranger's land rose, in the midst of the people. The feast is spread around; the night passed away in joy. Where is the noble Clessammor,‡ said the fair-haired Fingal? Where is the brother of Morna, in the hour of my joy? Sullen and dark he passes his days in the vale of echoing Lora: but, behold, he comes from the hill, like a steed in his strength, who finds his companions in the breeze; and tosses his bright mane in the wind. Blest be the soul of Clessammor, why so long from Selma?

* Fingal returns here, from an expedition against the Romans, which was celebrated by Ossian in a poem called the strife of Crona.

† Probably wax-lights; which are often mentioned as carried, among other booty, from the Roman province.

‡ Clessamb-mor, mighty deeds.

Returns the chief, said Clessammor, in the midst of his fame? Such was the renown of Comhal in the battles of his youth. Often did we pass over Carun to the land of the strangers: our swords returned, not unstained with blood: nor did the kings of the world rejoice. Why do I remember the times of our war? My hair is mixed with grey. My hand forgets to bend the bow: I lift a lighter spear. O that my joy would return, as when I first beheld the maid; the white-bosomed daughter of strangers, Moina,* with the dark-blue eyes!

Tell, said the mighty Fingal, the tale of thy youthful days. Sorrow, like a cloud on the sun, shades the soul of Clessammor. Mournful are thy thoughts, alone, on the banks of the roaring Lora. Let us hear the sorrow of thy youth and the darkness of thy days!

“It was in the days of peace,” replied the great Clessammor, “I came, in my bounding ship, to Balclutha’s† walls of towers. The winds had roared behind my sails, and Clutha’s‡ streams received my dark-bosomed ship. Three days I remained in Reuthamir’s halls, and saw his daughter, that beam of

* Moina, soft in temper and person. We find the British names in this poem derived from the Gaelic, which is a proof that the ancient language of the whole island was one and the same.

† Balclutha, i. e. the town of Clyde, probably the Alcluth of Bede.

‡ Clutha, or Cluath, the Gaelic name of the river Clyde, the signification of the word is bending, in allusion to the winding course of that river. From Clutha is derived its Latin name, Glotta.

light. The joy of the shell went round, and the aged hero gave the fair. Her breasts were like foam on the wave, and her eyes like stars of light: her hair was dark as the raven's wing: her soul was generous and mild. My love for Moina was great: my heart poured forth in joy.

“ The son of a stranger came; a chief who loved the white-bosomed Moina. His words were mighty in the hall; he often half-unsheathed his sword. Where, said he, is the mighty Comhal, the restless wanderer* of the heath? Comes he, with his host, to Balclutha, since Clessammor is so bold? My soul, I replied, O warrior! burns in a light of its own. I stand without fear in the midst of thousands, though the valiant are distant far. Stranger! thy words are mighty, for Clessammor is alone. But my sword trembles by my side, and longs to glitter in my hand. Speak no more of Comhal, son of the winding Clutha!”

“ The strength of his pride arose. We fought; he fell beneath my sword. The banks of Clutha heard his fall; a thousand spears glittered around. I fought: the strangers prevailed: I plunged into the stream of Clutha. My white sails rose over the waves, and I bounded on the dark-blue sea. Moina came to the shore, and rolled the red eye of her tears: her loose

* The word in the original here rendered by restless wanderer, is *Scuta*, which is the true origin of the *Scoti* of the Romans; an opprobrious name imposed by the Britons, on the Caledonians, on account of the continual incursions into their country.

hair flew on the wind : and I heard her mournful, distant cries. Often did I turn my ship ; but the winds of the east prevailed. Nor Clutha ever since have I seen, nor Moina of the dark brown hair. She fell in Balclutha, for I have seen her ghost. I knew her as she came through the dusky night along the murmur of Lora: she was like the new moon, seen through the gathered mist ; when the sky pours down its flaky snow, and the world is silent and dark."

Raise,* ye bards, said the mighty Fingal, the praise of unhappy Moina. Call her ghost, with your songs to our hills ; that she may rest with the fair of Morven, the sun-beams of other days, the delight of heroes of old. I have seen the walls of Balclutha, but they were desolate. The fire had resounded in the halls: and the voice of the people is heard no more. The stream of Clutha was removed from its place, by the fall of the walls. The thistle shook there its lonely head: the moss whistled to the wind. The fox looked out from the windows, the rank grass of the wall waved round its head. Desolate is the dwelling of Moina, silence is in the house of her fathers. Raise the song of mourning, O bards! over the land of strangers. They have but fallen before

* The title of this poem, in the original, is Duan na nlaoi, i. e. The Poem of the Hymns: probably on account of its many digressions from the subject, all which are in lyric measure, as this song of Fingal. Fingal is celebrated by the Irish historians for his wisdom in making laws, his poetical genius, and his foreknowledge of events. O'Flaherty goes so far as to say, that Fingal's laws were extant in his own time.

us: for, one day, we must fall. Why dost thou build the hall, son of the winged days? Thou lookest from thy towers to-day; yet a few years, and the blast of the desert comes; it howls in thy empty court, and whistles round thy half-worn shield. And let the blast of the desert come! we shall be renowned in our day! The mark of my arm shall be in battle; my name in the song of bards. Raise the song; send round the shell: let joy be heard in my hall. When thou, sun of heaven, shalt fail! if thou shalt fail, thou mighty light! if thy brightness is for a season, like Fingal; our fame shall survive thy beams!

Such was the song of Fingal, in the day of his joy. His thousand bards leaned forward from their seats, to hear the voice of the king. It was like the music of harps on the gale of the spring. Lovely were thy thoughts, O Fingal! why had not Ossian the strength of thy soul? But thou standest alone, my father! Who can equal the king of Selma?

The night passed away in song; morning returned in joy. The mountains shewed their grey heads; the blue face of ocean smiled. The white wave is seen tumbling round the distant rock; a mist rose, slowly, from the lake. It came, in the figure of an aged man, along the silent plain. Its large limbs did not move in steps; for a ghost supported it in mid air. It came towards Selma's hall, and dissolved in a shower of blood.

The king alone beheld the sight; he foresaw the death of the people. He came, in silence, to his hall; and took his father's spear. The mail rattled on his breast. The heroes rose around. They looked, in silence, on each other, marking the eyes of Fingal. They saw battle in his face: the death of armies on his spear. A thousand shields, at once, are placed on their arms; they drew a thousand swords. The hall of Selma brightened around. The clang of arms ascends. The grey dogs howl in their place. No word is among the mighty chiefs. Each marked the eyes of the king; and half assumed his spear.

Sons of Morven, begun the king, this is no time to fill the shell. The battle darkens near us; death hovers over the land. Some ghost, the friend of Fingal, has forwarned us of the foe. The sons of the stranger come from the darkly-rolling sea. For, from the water came the sign of Morven's gloomy danger. Let each assume his heavy spear, each gird on his father's sword. Let the dark helmet rise on every head; the mail pour its lightning from every side. The battle gathers like a storm; soon shall ye hear the roar of death.

The hero moved on before his host, like a cloud before a ridge of green fire; when it pours on the sky of night, and mariners foresee a storm. On Cona's rising heath they stood; The white-bosomed maids beheld them above like a grove; they foresaw

the death of the youth, and looked towards the sea with fear. The white wave deceived them for distant sails; the tear is on their cheek! The son rose on the sea, and we beheld a distant fleet. Like the mist of ocean they came: and poured their youth upon the coast. The chief was among them, like the stag in the midst of the herd. His shield is studded with gold; stately strode the king of spears. He moved towards Selma; his thousands moved behind.

Go, with a song of peace, said Fingal; go, Ullin, to the king of swords. Tell him that we are mighty in war; that the ghosts of our foes are many. But renowned are they who have feasted in my halls! they shew the arms* of my fathers in a foreign land: the sons of the strangers wonder, and bless the friends of Morven's race; for our names have been heard afar; the kings of the world shook in the midst of their host.

Ullin went with his song. Fingal rested on his spear: he saw the mighty foe in his armour: he blest the stranger's son. "How stately art thou, son of the sea! said the king of woody Morven. Thy sword is a beam of fire by thy side: thy spear is a pine that defies the storm. The varied face of the moon is not broader than thy shield. Ruddy is thy face of

* It was a custom among the ancient Scots, to exchange arms with their guests, and those arms were preserved long in the different families, as monuments of the friendship which subsisted between their ancestors.

youth! soft the ringlets of thy hair! But this tree may fall; and his memory be forgot! The daughter of the stranger will be sad, looking to the rolling sea: the children will say, "We see a ship; perhaps it is the king of Balclutha." The tear starts from their mother's eye. Her thoughts are of him who sleeps in Morven!

Such were the words of the king, when Ullin came to the mighty Carthon; he threw down the spear before him; he raised the song of peace. "Come to the feast of Fingal, Carthon, from the rolling sea! partake of the feast of the king, or lift the spear of war! The ghosts of our foes are many: but renowned are the friends of Morven! Behold that field, O Carthon; many a green hill rises there, with mossy stones and rustling grass: these are the tombs of Fingal's foes, the sons of the rolling sea!"

"Dost thou speak to the weak in arms!" said Carthon, "bard of the woody Morven? Is my face pale for fear, son of the peaceful song? Why, then, dost thou think to darken my soul with the tales of those who fell? My arm has fought in battle; my renown is known afar. Go to the feeble in arms, bid them yield to Fingal. Have not I seen the fallen Balclutha? And shall I feast with Comhal's son? Comhal! who threw his fire in the midst of my father's hall! I was young, and knew not the cause, why the virgins wept. The column of smoke

pleased mine eye, when they rose above my walls! I often looked back, with gladness, when my friends fled along the hill. But when the years of my youth came on, I beheld the moss of my fallen walls: my sigh arose with the morning, and my tears descended with night. Shall I not fight, I said to my soul, against the children of my foes? And I will fight, O bard! I feel the strength of my soul."

His people gathered around the hero, and drew, at once, their shining swords. He stands, in the midst, like a pillar of fire; the tear half-starting from his eye; for he thought of the fallen Balclutha; the crowded pride of his soul arose. Sidelong he looked up to the hill, where our heroes shone in arms; the spear trembled in his hand; bending forward, he seemed to threaten the king.

Shall I, said Fingal to his soul, meet, at once, the youth? Shall I stop him, in the midst of his course, before his fame shall arise? But the bard, hereafter, may say, when he sees the tomb of Carthon; Fingal took his thousands to battle, before the noble Carthon fell. No: bard of the times to come! thou shalt not lessen Fingal's fame. My heroes will fight the youth, and Fingal behold the war. If he overcomes, I rush, in my strength, like the roaring stream of Cona. Who, of my chiefs, will meet the son of the rolling sea? Many are his warriors on the coast: and strong is his ashen spear!

Cathul* rose, in his strength, the son of the mighty Lormar: three hundred youths attend the chief, the race† of his native streams. Feeble was his arm against Carthon, he fell; and his heroes fled. Connal‡ resumed the battle, but he broke his heavy spear: he lay bound on the field: Carthon pursued his people.

Clessammor! said the king|| of Morven, where is the spear of thy strength? Wilt thou behold Connal bound; thy friend, at the stream of Lora? Rise, in the light of thy steel, companion of valiant Comhal! Let the youth of Balclutha feel the strength of Morven's race. He rose in the strength of his steel, shaking his grizly locks. He fitted the shield to his side; he rushed, in the pride of valour.

Carthon stood on a rock; he saw the hero rushing on. He loved the dreadful joy of his face: his strength, in the locks of age! "Shall I lift that spear, he said, that never strikes, but once, a foe? Or shall I, with the words of peace, preserve the warrior's life? Stately are his steps of age! lovely the remnant of his years! Perhaps it is the husband of Moina; the father of car-borne Carthon. Often

* Cath-'huil, *the eye of battle*.

† It appears, from this passage, that clanship was established, in the days of Fingal, though not on the same footing with the present tribes in the north of Scotland.

‡ This Connal is very much celebrated, in ancient poetry, for his wisdom and valour: there is a small tribe still subsisting, in the North, who pretend they are descended from him.

|| Fingal did not then know that Carthon was the son of Clessammor.

have I heard, that he dwelt at the echoing stream of Lora."

Such were his words, when Clessammor came, and lifted high his spear. The youth received it on his shield, and spoke the words of peace. "Warrior of the aged locks! Is there no youth to lift the spear? Hast thou no son, to raise the shield before his father, to meet the arm of youth? Is the spouse of thy love no more? or weeps she over the tombs of thy sons? Art thou of the kings of men? What will be the fame of my sword shouldst thou fall?"

It will be great, thou son of pride! begun the tall Clessammor. I have been renowned in battle; but I never told my name* to a foe. Yield to me, son of the wave, then shalt thou know, that the mark of my sword is in many a field. "I never yielded, king of spears! replied the noble pride of Carthon: I have also fought in war; I behold my future fame. Despise me not, thou chief of men! my arm, my spear is strong. Retire among thy friends, let younger heroes fight." Why dost thou wound my soul, replied Clessammor with a tear? Age does not tremble on my hand; I still can lift the sword. Shall I fly in Fingal's sight; in the sight of him I

* To tell one's name to an enemy was reckoned, in those days of heroism, a manifest evasion of fighting him; for if it was once known, that friendship subsisted, of old, between the ancestors of the combatants, the battle immediately ceased; and the ancient amity of their forefathers was renewed. *A man who tells his name to his enemy, was of old an ignominious term for a coward.*



love? Son of the sea! I never fled: exalt thy pointed spear.

They fought, like two contending winds, that strive to roll the wave. Carthon bade his spear to err; he still thought that the foe was the spouse of Moina. He broke Clessammor's beamy spear in twain: he seized his shining sword. But as Carthon was binding the chief, the chief drew the dagger of his fathers. He saw the foe's uncovered side; and opened there a wound.

Fingal saw Clessammor low: he moved in the sound of his steel. The host stood silent, in his presence; they turned their eyes to the king. He came, like the sullen noise of a storm, before the winds arise: the hunter hears it in the vale, and retires to the cave of the rock. Carthon stood in his place: the blood is rushing down his side: he saw the coming down of the king; his hopes of fame arose;* but pale was his cheek: his hair flew loose, his helmet shook on high: the force of Carthon failed; but his soul was strong.

Fingal beheld the hero's blood; he stopt the uplifted spear. "Yield, king of swords! said Comhal's son; I behold thy blood. Thou hast been mighty in battle; and thy fame shall never fade." Art

* This expression admits of a double meaning, either that Carthon hoped to acquire glory by killing Fingal; or to be rendered famous by falling by his hand. The last is the most probable, as Carthon is already wounded.

thou the king so far renowned, replied the carborne Carthon? Art thou that light of death, that frightens the kings of the world? But why should Carthon ask? for he is like the stream of his hills; strong as a river, in his course: swift as the eagle of heaven. O that I had fought with the king; that my fame might be great in song! that the hunter, beholding my tomb, might say, he fought with the mighty Fingal. But Carthon dies unknown; he has poured out his force on the weak."

But thou shalt not die unknown, replied the king of woody Morven: my bards are many, O Carthon! their songs descend to future times. The children of years to come shall hear the fame of Carthon; when they sit round the burning oak,* and the night is spent in songs of old. The hunter, sitting in the heath, shall hear the rustling blast; and, raising his eyes, behold the rock where Carthon fell. He shall turn to his son and shew the place where the mighty fought; "There the king of Balclutha fought, like the strength of a thousand streams."

Joy rose in Carthon's face: he lifted his heavy eyes. He gave his sword to Fingal, to lie within his hall, that the memory of Balclutha's king might remain in Morven. The battle ceased along the

* In the north of Scotland, till very lately, they burnt a large trunk of an oak at their festivals; it was called *the trunk of the feast*. Time had so much consecrated the custom, that the vulgar thought it a kind of sacrilege to disuse it.

field, the bard had sung the song of peace. The chiefs gathered round the falling Carthon; they heard his words, with sighs. Silent they leaned on their spears, while Balclutha's hero spoke. His hair sighed in the wind, and his voice was sad and low.

“ King of Morven, Carthon said, I fall in the midst of my course. A foreign tomb receives, in youth, the last of Reuthamir's race. Darkness dwells in Balclutha: the shadows of grief in Crathmo. But raise my remembrance on the banks of Lora: where my fathers dwelt. Perhaps the husband of Moina will mourn over his fallen Carthon.” His words reached the heart of Clessammor: he fell, in silence, on his son. The host stood darkened around: no voice is on the plain. Night came; the moon, from the east, looked on the mournful field: but still they stood, like a silent grove that lifts its head on Gormal, when the loud winds are laid, and dark autumn is on the plain.

Three days they mourned above Carthon; on the fourth his father died. In the narrow plain of the rock they lie; a dim ghost defends their tomb. There lovely Moina is often seen; when the sun-beam darts on the rock, and all around is dark. There she is seen, Malvina! but not like the daughters of the hill. Her robes are from the stranger's land; and she is still alone.

Fingal was sad for Carthon; he commanded his bards to mark the day, when shadowy autumn returned: And often did they mark the day and sing the hero's praise. "Who comes so dark from ocean's roar, like autumn's shadowy cloud? Death is trembling in his hand! his eyes are flames of fire! Who roars along dark Lora's heath? Who but Carthon, king of swords! The people fall! see! how he strides, like the sullen ghost of Morven! But there he lies a goodly oak, which sudden blasts overturned! When shalt thou rise, Balclutha's joy? When, Carthon, shalt thou arise? Who comes so dark from ocean's roar, like autumn's shadowy cloud?" Such were the words of the bards, in the day of their mourning: Ossian often joined their voice; and added to their song. My soul has been mournful for Carthon; he fell in the days of his youth: and thou, O Clessammor! where is thy dwelling in the wind? Has the youth forgot his wound? Flies he, on clouds, with thee? I feel the sun, O Malvina! leave me to my rest. Perhaps they may come to my dreams; I think I hear a feeble voice! The beam of heaven delights to shine on the grave of Carthon: I feel it warm around!

O thou that rollest above, round as the shield of my fathers! Whence are thy beams, O sun! thy everlasting light? Thou comest forth, in thy awful

beauty; the stars hide themselves in the sky; the moon, cold and pale, sinks in the western wave. But thou thyself movest alone: who can be a companion of thy course! The oaks of the mountains fall: the mountains themselves decay with years; the ocean shrinks and grows again: the moon herself is lost in heaven; but thou art for ever the same; rejoicing in the brightness of thy course. When the world is dark with tempests; when thunder rolls, and lightning flies; thou lookest in thy beauty, from the clouds, and laughest at the storm. But to Ossian, thou lookest in vain; for he beholds thy beams no more; whether thy yellow hair flows on the eastern clouds, or thou tremblest at the gates of the west. But thou art perhaps, like me, for a season; thy years will have an end. Thou shalt sleep in the clouds, careless of the voice of the morning. Exult then, O sun! in the strength of thy youth! Age is dark and unlovely; it is like the glimmering light of the moon, when it shines through broken clouds, and the mist is on the hills; the blast of the north is on the plain, the traveller shrinks in the midst of his journey.

OINA-MORUL:

A POEM.

ARGUMENT.

After an address to Malvina, the daughter of Toscar, Ossian proceeds to relate his own expedition to Fuärfed, an island of Scandinavia. Mal-orchol, king of Fuärfed, being hard pressed in war, by Ton-thormod, chief of Sar-dronlo (who had demanded, in vain, the daughter of Mal-orchol in marriage), Fingal sent Ossian to his aid. Ossian, on the day after his arrival, came to battle with Ton-thormod, and took him prisoner. Mal-orchol offers his daughter Oina-morul to Ossian; but he, discovering her passion for Ton-thormod, generously surrenders her to her lover, and brings about a reconciliation between the two kings.

As flies the inconstant sun, over Larmon's grassy hill; so pass the tales of old, along my soul, by night! When bards are removed to their place; when harps are hung in Selma's hall; then comes a voice to Ossian, and awakes his soul! It is the voice of years that are gone! they roll before me, with all their deeds! I seize the tales, as they pass, and pour them forth in song. Nor a troubled stream is the song of the king, it is like the rising of music from Lutha of the strings. Lutha of many strings, not silent are thy streamy rocks, when the white hands of Malvina move upon the harp! Light of the

shadowy thoughts, that fly across my soul, daughter of Toscar of helmets, wilt thou not hear the song? We call back, maid of Lutha, the years that have rolled away!

It was in the days of the king, while yet my locks were young, that I marked Con-cathlin,* on high, from ocean's nightly wave. My course was towards the isle of Fuärfed, woody dweller of seas! Fingal had sent me to the aid of Mal-orchol, king of Fuärfed wild; for war was around him, and our fathers had met, at the feast.

In Col-coiled, I bound my sails; I sent my sword to Mal-orchol of shells. He knew the signal of Albion, and his joy arose. He came from his own high hall, and seized my hand in grief. "Why comes the race of heroes to a falling king? Ton-thormod of many spears is the chief of wavy Sardonlo. He saw and loved my daughter, white-bosomed Oina-morul. He sought; I denied the maid; for our fathers had been foes. He came,

* Con-cathlin, *mild beam of the wave*. What star was so called of old is not easily ascertained. Some now distinguish the pole-star by that name. A song, which is still in repute, among the sea-faring part of the Highlanders, alludes to this passage of Ossian. The author commends the knowledge of Ossian in sea affairs, a merit, which, perhaps, few of us moderns will allow him, or any in the age in which he lived. One thing is certain, that the Caledonians often made their way through the dangerous and tempestuous seas of Scandinavia; which is more, perhaps, than the more polished nations, subsisting in those times, dared to venture. In estimating the degree of knowledge of arts among the ancients, we ought not to bring it into comparison with the improvements of modern times. Our advantages over them proceed more from accident, than any merit of ours.

with battle, to Fuärfed; my people are rolled away.
Why comes the race of heroes to a falling king?"

I come not, I said, to look, like a boy, on the strife. Fingal remembers Mal-orchol, and his hall for strangers. From his waves, the warrior descended, on thy woody isle. Thou wert no cloud before him. Thy feast was spread with songs. For this my sword shall rise; and thy foes perhaps may fail. Our friends are not forgot in their danger, though distant is our land.

"Descendant of the daring Trenmor, thy words are like the voice of Cruth-loda, when he speaks, from his parting cloud, strong dweller of the sky! Many have rejoiced at my feast; but they all have forgot Mal-orchol. I have looked towards all the winds; but no white sails were seen. But steel* resounds in my hall; and not the joyful shells. Come to my dwelling, race of heroes! dark-skirted

* There is a severe satire couched in this expression, against the guests of Mal-orchol. Had his feast been still spread, had joy continued in his hall, his former parasites would not have failed to resort to him. But as the time of festivity was past, their attendance also ceased. The sentiments of a certain old bard are agreeable to this observation. He, poetically, compares a great man to a fire kindled in a desert place. "Those that pay court to him, says he, are rolling large around him, like the smoke about the fire. Th's smoke gives the fire a great appearance at a distance, but it is but an empty vapour itself, and varying its form at every breeze. When the trunk, which fed the fire, is consumed, the smoke departs on all the winds. So the flatterers forsake their chief, when his power declines." I have chosen to give a paraphrase, rather than a translation, of this passage, as the original is verbose and frothy, notwithstanding of the sentimental merit of the author. He was one of the less ancient bards, and their compositions are not nervous enough to bear a literal translation.

night is near. Hear the voice of songs, from the maid of Fuärfed wild.

We went. On the harp arose the white hands of Oina-morul. She waked her own sad tale, from every trembling string. I stood in silence; for bright in her locks was the daughter of many isles! Her eyes were two stars, looking forward through a rushing shower. The mariner marks them on high, and blesses the lovely beams. With morning we rushed to battle, to Tormul's resounding stream: the foe moved to the sound of Ton-thormod's bossy shield. From wing to wing the strife was mixed. I met Ton-thormod in fight. Wide flew his broken steel. I seized the king in war. I gave his hand, bound fast with thongs, to Mal-orchol, the giver of shells. Joy rose at the feast of Fuärfed, for the foe had failed. Ton-thormod turned his face away, from Oina-morul of isles!

Son of Fingal, begun Mal-orchol, not forgot shalt thou pass from me. A light shall dwell in thy ship, Oina-morul of slow-rolling eyes. She shall kindle gladness, along thy mighty soul. Nor unheeded shall the maid move in Selma, through the dwelling of kings!

In the hall I lay in night. Mine eyes were half-closed in sleep. Soft music came to mine ear: it was like the rising breeze, that whirls, at first, the

thistle's beard; then flies, dark shadowy, over the grass. It was the maid of Fuärfed wild! she raised the nightly song; she knew that my soul was a stream, that flowed at pleasant sounds. "Who looks," she said, "from his rock, on ocean's closing mist? His long locks, like the raven's wing, are wandering on the blast. Stately are his steps in grief! The tears are in his eyes! His manly breast is heaving over his bursting soul! Retire, I am distant far; a wanderer in lands unknown. Though the race of kings are around me, yet my soul is dark. Why have our fathers been foes, Ton-thormod love of maids!"

"Soft voice of the streamy isle," I said, "why dost thou mourn by night? The race of daring Trenmor are not the dark in soul. Thou shalt not wander, by streams unknown, blue-eyed Oina-morul! Within this bosom is a voice; it comes not to other ears: it bids Ossian hear the hapless, in their hour of woe. Retire, soft singer by night! Ton-thormod shall not mourn on his rock!"

With morning I loosed the king. I gave the long-haired maid. Mal-orchol heard my words, in the midst of his echoing halls. "King of Fuärfed wild, why should Ton-thormod mourn? He is of the race of heroes, and a flame in war. Your fathers have been foes, but now their dim ghosts rejoice in death. They stretch their hands of mist to the

same shell in Loda. Forget their rage, ye warriors!
it was the cloud of other years."

Such were the deeds of Ossian, while yet his locks
were young: though loveliness, with a robe of
beams, clothed the daughter of many isles. We
call back, maid of Lutha, the years that have rolled
away!

COLNA-DONA:

A POEM.

ARGUMENT.

Fingal dispatches Ossian and Toscar, the son of Conloch and father of Malvina, to raise a stone, on the banks of the stream of Crona, to perpetuate the memory of a victory, which he had obtained in that place. When they were employed in that work, Car-ul, a neighbouring chief, invited them to a feast. They went: and Toscar fell desperately in love with Colna-dona, the daughter of Car-ul. Colna-dona became no less enamoured of Toscar. An incident, at a hunting party, brings their loves to a happy issue.

*COL-AMON of troubled streams, dark wanderer of distant vales, I behold thy course, between trees, near Car-ul's echoing halls! There dwelt bright Colna-dona, the daughter of the king. Her eyes were rolling stars; her arms were white as the foam of streams. Her breast rose slowly to sight, like

* Colna-dona signifies *the love of heroes*. Col-amon, *narrow river*. Car-ul, *dark eyed*. Col-amon, the residence of Car-ul, was in the neighbourhood of Agricola's wall, towards the south. Car-ul seems to have been of the race of those Britons, who are distinguished by the name of Maiatæ, by the writers of Rome. Maiatæ is derived from two Galic words, *Moi, a plain*, and *Aitich, inhabitants*; so that the signification of Maiatæ is *the inhabitants of the plain country*; a name given to the Britons, who were settled in the Lowlands, in contradistinction to the Caledonians (i. e. Cael-don, *the Gauls of the hills*) who were possessed of the more mountainous division of North-Britain.

ocean's heaving wave. Her soul was a stream of light. Who, among the maids, was like the love of heroes?

Beneath the voice of the king, we moved to Crona* of the streams, Toscar of grassy Lutha, and Ossian, young in fields. Three bards attended with songs. Three bossy shields were borne before us: for we were to rear the stone, in memory of the past. By Crona's mossy course, Fingal had scattered his foes: he had rolled away the strangers, like a troubled sea. We came to the place of renown: from the mountains descended night. I tore an oak from its hill, and raised a flame on high. I bade my fathers to look down, from the clouds of their hall; for, at the fame of their race, they brighten in the wind.

I took a stone from the stream, amidst the song of bards. The blood of Fingal's foes hung curdled in its ooze. Beneath, I placed, at intervals, three bosses from the shields of foes, as rose or fell the sound of Ullin's nightly song. Toscar laid a dagger in earth, a mail of sounding steel. We raised the

* Crona, *murmuring*, was the name of a small stream, which discharged itself in the river Carron. It is often mentioned by Ossian, and the scenes of many of his poems are on its banks. The enemies, whom Fingal defeated here, are not mentioned. They were, probably, the provincial Britons. That tract of country between the Friths of Forth and Clyde has been, through all antiquity, famous for battles and rencounters between the different nations, who were possessed of North and South Britain. Stirling, a town situated there, derives its name from that very circumstance. It is a corruption of the Galic name, *Strila*, i. e. *the hill, or rock, of contention*.

mould around the stone, and bade it speak to other years.

Oozy daughter of streams, that now art reared on high, speak to the feeble, O stone! after Selma's race have failed! Prone, from the stormy night, the traveller shall lay him, by thy side: thy whistling moss shall sound in his dreams; the years that were past shall return. Battles rise before him, blue-shielded kings descend to war: the darkened moon looks from heaven, on the troubled field. He shall burst, with morning, from dreams, and see the tombs of warriors round. He shall ask about the stone, and the aged shall reply, "This grey stone was raised by Ossian, a chief of other years!"

* From Col-amon came a bard, from Car-ul, the friend of strangers. He bade us to the feast of kings, to the dwelling of bright Colna-dona. We went to the hall of harps. There Car-ul brightened between his aged locks, when he beheld

*The manners of the Britons and Caledonians were so similar, in the days of Ossian, that there can be no doubt, that they were originally the same people, and descended from those Gauls who first possessed themselves of South-Britain, and gradually migrated to the North. This hypothesis is more rational than the idle fables of ill-informed senechies, who bring the Caledonians from distant countries. The bare opinion of Tacitus (which, by-the-by, was only founded on a similarity of the personal figure of the Caledonians to the Germans of his own time), though it has staggered some learned men, is not sufficient to make us believe, that the ancient inhabitants of North-Britain were a German colony. A discussion of a point like this might be curious, but could never be satisfactory. Periods so distant are so involved in obscurity, that nothing certain can be now advanced concerning them. The light which the Roman writers hold forth is too feeble to guide us to the truth, through the darkness which has surrounded it.

the sons of his friends, like two young branches before him.

“ Sons of the mighty,” he said, “ ye bring back the days of old, when first I descended from waves, on Selma’s streamy vale! I pursued Duthmocarglos, dweller of ocean’s wind. Our fathers had been foes, we met by Clutha’s winding waters. He fled along the sea, and my sails were spread behind him. Night deceived me, on the deep. I came to the dwelling of kings, to Selma of high-bosomed maids. Fingal came forth with his bards, and Conloch, arm of death. I feasted three days in the hall, and saw the blue eyes of Erin, Ros-crana, daughter of heroes, light of Cormac’s race. Nor forgot did my steps depart: the kings gave their shields to Car-ul: they hang, on high, in Col-amon, in memory of the past. Sons of the daring kings, ye bring back the days of old!”

CAR-UL kindled the oak of feasts. He took two bosses from our shields. He laid them in earth, beneath a stone, to speak to the hero’s race. “ When battle,” said the king, “ shall roar, and our sons are to meet in wrath. My race shall look, perhaps, on this stone, when they prepare the spear. Have not our fathers met in peace, they will say, and lay aside the shield?”

Night came down. In her long locks moved the daughter of Car-ul. Mixed with the harp arose the

voice of white-armed Colna-dona. Toscar darkened in his place, before the love of heroes. She came on his troubled soul, like a beam to the dark-heaving ocean: when it bursts from a cloud, and brightens the foamy side of a wave.*

* * * * *
* * * * *

With morning we awaked the woods; and hung forward on the path of the roes. They fell by their wonted streams. We returned through Crona's vale. From the wood a youth came forward, with a shield and pointless spear. "Whence, said Toscar of Lutha, is the flying beam? Dwells there peace at Col-amon, round bright Colna-dona of harps?"

"By Col-amon of streams," said the youth, "bright Colna-dona dwelt. She dwelt; but her course is now in deserts, with the son of the king; he that seized with love her soul as it wandered through the hall." "Stranger of tales," said Toscar, "hast thou marked the warrior's course? He must fall, give thou that bossy shield!" In wrath he took the shield. Fair behind it rose the breasts of a maid, white as the bosom of a swan, rising graceful on swift-rolling waves. It was Colna-dona of harps, the daughter of the king! Her blue eyes had rolled on Toscar, and her love arose!

* Here an episode is entirely lost; or, at least, is handed down so imperfectly, that it does not deserve a place in the poem.

O I T H O N A :

A POEM.

ARGUMENT.

Gaul, the son of Morni, attended Lathmon into his own country, after his being defeated in Morven, as related in the preceding poem. He was kindly entertained by Nuäth, the father of Lathmon, and fell in love with his daughter Oithona. The lady was no less enamoured of Gaul, and a day was fixed for their marriage. In the mean time Fingal, preparing for an expedition into the country of the Britons, sent for Gaul. He obeyed, and went; but not without promising to Oithona to return, if he survived the war, by a certain day. Lathmon too was obliged to attend his father Nuäth in his wars, and Oithona was left alone at Dunlathmon, the seat of the family. Dunrommath, lord of Uthal, supposed to be one of the Orkneys, taking advantage of the absence of her friends, came and carried off, by force, Oithona, who had formerly rejected his love, into Tromathon, a desert island, where he concealed her in a cave.

Gaul returned on the day appointed; heard of the rape, and sailed to Tromathon, to revenge himself on Dunrommath. When he landed, he found Oithona disconsolate, and resolved not to survive the loss of her honour. She told him the story of her misfortunes, and she scarce ended, when Dunrommath, with his followers, appeared at the further end of the island. Gaul prepared to attack him, recommending to Oithona to retire, till the battle was over. She seemingly obeyed; but she secretly armed herself, rushed into the thickest of the battle, and was mortally wounded. Gaul pursuing the flying enemy, found her just expiring on the field: he mourned over her, raised her tomb, and returned to Morven. Thus is the story handed down by tradition; nor is it given with any material difference in the poem, which opens with Gaul's return to Dunlathmon, after the rape of Oithona.

O I T H O N A :

A POEM.

DARKNESS dwells around Dunlathmon, though the moon shews half her face on the hill. The daughter of night turns her eyes away; she beholds the approaching grief. The son of Morni is on the plain: there is no sound in the hall. No long-streaming beam of light comes trembling through the gloom. The voice of Oithona* is not heard amidst the noise of the streams of Duvranna. "Whither art thou gone in thy beauty, dark-haired daughter of Nuäth? Lathmon is in the field of the valiant, but thou didst promise to remain in the hall; thou didst promise to remain in the hall till the son of Morni returned. Till he returned from Strumon, to the maid of his love! The tear was on thy cheek at his departure; the sigh rose in secret in thy breast. But thou dost not come forth with songs, with the lightly-trembling sound of the harp?"

Such were the words of Gaul, when he came to Dunlathmon's towers. The gates were open and dark. The winds were blustering in the hall. The trees strowed the threshold with leaves ;

* Oi-thona, *the virgin of the weave.*

the murmur of night was abroad. Sad and silent, at a rock, the son of Morni sat; his soul trembled for the maid; but he knew not whither to turn his course? The son* of Leth stood at a distance, and heard the winds in his bushy hair. But he did not raise his voice, for he saw the sorrow of Gaul!

Sleep descended on the chiefs. The visions of night arose. Oithona stood, in a dream, before the eyes of Morni's son. Her hair was loose and disordered: her lovely eye rolled deep in tears. Blood stained her snowy arm. The robe half hid the wound of her breast. She stood over the chief, and her voice was feebly heard. "Sleeps the son of Morni, he that was lovely in the eyes of Oithona? Sleeps Gaul at the distant rock, and the daughter of Nuäth low? The sea rolls round the dark isle of Tromathon. I sit in my tears in the cave! Nor do I sit alone, O Gaul! the dark chief of Cuthal is there. He is there in the rage of his love. What can Oithona do?"

A rougher blast rushed through the oak. The dream of night departed. Gaul took his aspen spear. He stood in the rage of his soul. Often did his eyes turn to the east. He accused the lagging light. At length the morning came forth. The hero lifted

* Morlo, the son of Leth, is one of Fingal's most famous heroes. He and three other men attended Gaul on his expedition to Tromathon.

up the sail. The winds came rustling from the hill; he bounded on the waves of the deep. On the third day arose Tromathon,* like a blue shield in the midst of the sea. The white wave roared against its rocks; sad Oithona sat on the coast! She looked on the rolling waters, and her tears came down. But when she saw Gaul in his arms, she started, and turned her eyes away. Her lovely cheek is bent and red; her white arm trembles by her side. Thrice she strove to fly from his presence; thrice her steps failed her as she went!

“ Daughter of Nuäth,” said the hero, “ why dost thou fly from Gaul? Do my eyes send forth the flame of death? Darkens hatred in my soul? Thou art to me the beam of the east, rising in a land unknown. But thou coverest thy face with sadness, daughter of car-borne Nuäth! Is the foe of Oithona near? My soul burns to meet him in fight. The sword trembles by the side of Gaul, and longs to glitter in his hand. Speak, daughter of Nuäth! dost thou not behold my tears?”

“ Young chief of Strumon,” replied the maid, “ why comest thou over the dark-blue wave, to Nuäth’s mournful daughter? Why did I not pass away in secret, like the flower of the rock, that lifts its fair head unseen, and strows its withered leaves on the blast? Why didst thou come, O Gaul! to

* Trom-thon, *heavy or deep-sounding wave.*

hear my departing sigh? I vanish in my youth; my name shall not be heard. Or it will be heard with grief; the tears of Nuäth must fall. Thou wilt be sad, son of Morni! for the departed fame of Oithona. But she shall sleep in the narrow tomb, far from the voice of the mourner. Why didst thou come, chief of Strumon! to the sea-beat rocks of Tromathon?"

"I came to meet thy foes, daughter of car-borne Nuäth! the death of Cuthal's chief darkens before me; or Morni's son shall fall! Oithona! when Gaul is low, raise my tomb on that oozy rock. When the dark-bounding ship shall pass, call the sons of the sea! call them, and give this sword, to bear it hence to Morni's hall. The grey-haired chief will then cease to look towards the desert, for the return of his son!"

"Shall the daughter of Nuäth live?" she replied with a bursting sigh. "Shall I live in Tromathon, and the son of Morni low? My heart is not of that rock; nor my soul careless as that sea, which lifts its blue waves to every wind, and rolls beneath the storm! The blast which shall lay thee low, shall spread the branches of Oithona on earth. We shall wither together, son of car-borne Morni! The narrow house is pleasant to me, and the grey stone of the dead: for never more will I leave thy rocks, O sea-surrounded Tromathon! Night* came on with her

* Oithona relates how she was carried away by Dunrommath.

clouds, after the departure of Lathmon, when he went to the wars of his fathers, to the moss-covered rock of Duthormoth. Night came on. I sat in the hall at the beam of the oak! The wind was abroad in the trees. I heard the sound of arms. Joy rose in my face. I thought of thy return. It was the chief of Cuthal, the red-haired strength of Donrommath. His eyes rolled in fire: the blood of my people was on his sword. They who defended Oithona fell by the gloomy chief! What could I do? My arm was weak. I could not lift the spear. He took me in my grief; amidst my tears he raised the sail. He feared the returning Lathmon, the brother of unhappy Oithona! But behold he comes with his people! the dark wave is divided before him! Whither wilt thou turn thy steps, son of Morni? Many are the warriors of thy foe!"

"My steps never turned from battle," Gaul said, and unsheathed his sword. "Shall I then begin to fear, Oithona, when thy foes are near? Go to thy cave, my love, till our battle cease on the field. Son of Leth, bring the bows of our fathers! the sounding quiver of Morni! Let our three warriors bend the yew. Ourselves will lift the spear. They are an host on the rock! our souls are strong in war!"

Oithona went to the cave. A troubled joy rose on her mind, like the red path of lightning on a

stormy cloud! Her soul was resolved; the tear was dried from her wildly-looking eye. Dunrommath slowly approached. He saw the son of Morni. Contempt contracted his face, a smile is on his dark-brown cheek; his red eye rolled, half-concealed, beneath his shaggy brows!

“Whence are the sons of the sea?” begun the gloomy chief. “Have the winds driven you on the rocks of Tromathon? Or come you in search of the white-handed maid? The sons of the unhappy, ye feeble men, come to the hand of Dunrommath! His eye spares not the weak; he delights in the blood of strangers. Oithona is a beam of light, and the chief of Cuthal enjoys it in secret; wouldst thou come on its loveliness, like a cloud, son of the feeble hand! Thou mayst come, but shalt thou return to the halls of thy fathers?” “Dost thou not know me,” said Gaul, “red-haired chief of Cuthal? Thy feet were swift on the heath, in the battle of carborne Lathmon; when the sword of Morni’s son pursued his host, in Morvin’s woody land. Dunrommath! thy words are mighty, for thy warriors gather behind thee. But do I fear them, son of pride? I am not of the race of the feeble!”

Gaul advanced in his arms; Dunrommath shrunk behind his people. But the spear of Gaul pierced the gloomy chief; his sword lopped off his head, as it bended in death. The son of Morni shook it

thrice by the lock; the warriors of Dunrommath fled. The arrows of Morven pursued them: ten fell on the mossy rocks. The rest lift the sounding sail, and bound on the troubled deep. Gaul advanced towards the cave of Oithona. He beheld a youth leaning on a rock. An arrow had pierced his side; his eye rolled faintly beneath his helmet. The soul of Morni's son was sad, he came and spoke the words of peace.

“ Can the hand of Gaul heal thee, youth of the mournful brow? I have searched for the herbs of the mountains; I have gathered them on the secret banks of their streams. My hand has closed the wound of the brave, their eyes have blessed the son of Morni. Where dwelt thy fathers, warrior? Were they of the sons of the mighty? Sadness shall come, like night, on thy native streams. Thou art fallen in thy youth!”

“ My fathers,” replied the stranger, “ were of the race of the mighty; but they shall not be sad; for my fame is departed like morning mist. High walls rise on the banks of Duvranna; and see their mossy towers in the stream; a rock ascends behind them with its bending pines. Thou mayst behold it far distant. There my brother dwells. He is renowned in battle: give him this glittering helm.”

The helmet fell from the hand of Gaul. It was the wounded Oithona! She had armed herself in the

cave, and came in search of death. Her heavy eyes are half closed ; the blood pours from her heaving side. " Son of Morni!" she said, " prepare the narrow tomb. Sleep grows, like darkness, on my soul. The eyes of Oithona are dim! O had I dwelt at Duvranna, in the bright beam of my fame! then had my years come on with joy; the virgins would then bless my steps. But I fall in youth, son of Morni! my father shall blush in his hall!"

She fell pale on the rock of Tromathon. The mournful warrior raised her tomb. He came to Morven; we saw the darkness of his soul. Ossian took the harp in the praise of Oithona. The brightness of the face of Gaul returned. But his sigh rose, at times, in the midst of his friends; like blasts that shake their unfrequent wings, after the stormy winds are laid!

C R O M A :

A POEM.

ARGUMENT.

Malvina, the daughter of Toscar, is overheard by Ossian lamenting the death of Oscar her lover. Ossian, to divert her grief, relates his own actions in an expedition which he undertook, at Fingal's command, to aid Crother the petty king of Croma, a country in Ireland, against Rothmar who invaded his dominions. The story is delivered down thus in tradition: Crothar king of Croma being blind with age, and his son too young for the field, Rothmar the chief of Tromlo resolved to avail himself of the opportunity offered of annexing the dominions of Crothar, to his own. He accordingly marched into the country subject to Crothar, but which he held of Arth or Artho, who was, at the time, supreme king of Ireland.

Crothar being, on account of his age and blindness, unfit for action, sent for aid to Fingal king of Scotland; who ordered his son Ossian to the relief of Crothar. But before his arrival, Fovargormo, the son of Crothar, attacking Rothmar, was slain himself, and his forces totally defeated. Ossian renewed the war; came to battle, killed Rothmar, and routed his army. Croma being thus delivered of its enemies, Ossian returned to Scotland.

“ It was the voice of my love! seldom art thou in the dreams of Malvina! Open your airy halls, O fathers of Toscar of shields! Unfold the gates of

your clouds: the steps of Malvina are near. I have heard a voice in my dream. I feel the fluttering of my soul. Why didst thou come, O blast! from the dark-rolling face of the lake? Thy rustling wing was in the tree; the dream of Malvina fled. But she beheld her love, when his robe of mist flew on the wind. A sun-beam was on his skirts, they glittered like the gold of the stranger. It was the voice of my love! seldom comes he to my dreams!"

“ But thou dwellest in the soul of Malvina, son of mighty Ossian! My sighs arise with the beam of the east; my tears descend with the drops of night. I was a lovely tree, in thy presence, Oscar, with all my branches round me; but thy death came like a blast from the desert, and laid my green head low. The spring returned with its showers; no leaf of mine arose! The virgins saw me silent in the hall; they touched the harp of joy. The tear was on the cheek of Malvina: the virgins beheld me in my grief. Why art thou sad? they said; thou first of the maids of Lutha! Was he lovely as the beam of the morning, and stately in thy sight?"

Pleasant is thy song in Ossian's ear, daughter of streamy Lutha! Thou hast heard the music of departed bards, in the dream of thy rest, when sleep fell on thine eyes, at the murmur of Moruth.* When thou didst return from the chase, in the day of

* Mór'-ruth, great stream.

the sun, thou hast heard the music of bards, and thy song is lovely! It is lovely, O Malvina! but it melts the soul. There is a joy in grief when peace dwells in the breast of the sad. But sorrow wastes the mournful, O daughter of Toscar! and their days are few! They fall away, like the flower on which the sun hath looked in his strength after the mildew has passed over it, when its head is heavy with the drops of night. Attend to the tale of Ossian, O maid! He remembers the days of his youth!

The king commanded; I raised my sails, and rushed into the bay of Croma; into Croma's sounding bay in lovely Inisfail.* High on the coast arose the towers of Crothar king of spears; Crothar renowned in the battles of his youth; but age dwelt then around the chief. Rothmar had raised the sword against the hero; and the wrath of Fingal burned. He sent Ossian to meet Rothmar in war, for the chief of Croma was the friend of his youth. I sent the bard before me with songs. I came into the hall of Crothar. There sat the chief amidst the arms of his fathers, but his eyes had failed. His grey locks waved around a staff, on which the warrior leaned. He hummed the song of other times, when the sound of our arms reached his ears. Crothar rose, stretched his aged hand, and blessed the son of Fingal.

* Inisfail, one of the ancient names of Ireland.

“Ossian!” said the hero, “the strength of Crothar’s arm has failed. O could I lift the sword, as on the day that Fingal fought at Strutha! He was the first of men! but Crothar had also his fame. The king of Morven praised me; he placed on my arm the bossy shield of Calthar, whom the king had slain in his wars. Dost thou not behold it on the wall, for Crothar’s eyes have failed? Is thy strength, like thy fathers, Ossian? let the aged feel thine arm!”

I gave my arm to the king; he felt it with his aged hands. The sigh rose in his breast, and his tears came down. “Thou art strong, my son,” he said, “but not like the king of Morven! But who is like the hero among the mighty in war! Let the feast of my hall be spread; and let my bards exalt the song. Great is he that is within my walls, ye sons of echoing Croma! The feast is spread. The harp is heard; and joy is in the hall. But it was joy covering a sigh, that darkly dwelt in every breast. It was like the faint beam of the moon spread on a cloud in heaven. At length the music ceased, and the aged king of Croma spoke; He spoke without a tear, but sorrow swelled in the midst of his voice.

“Son of Fingal! behold’st thou not the darkness of Crothar’s joy? My soul was not sad at the feast, when my people lived before me. I rejoiced in the presence of strangers, when my son shone in the

hall. But, Ossian, he is a beam that is departed. He left no streak of light behind. He is fallen, son of Fingal! in the wars of his father. Rothmar the chief of grassy Tromlo heard that these eyes had failed; he heard that my arms were fixed in the hall, and the pride of his soul arose! He came towards Croma; my people fell before him. I took my arms in my wrath, but what could sightless Crothar do? My steps were unequal; my grief was great. I wished for the days that were past. Days! wherein I fought; and won in the field of blood. My son returned from the chace; the fair-haired Fovar-gormo.* He had not lifted his sword in battle, for his arm was young. But the soul of the youth was great; the fire of valour burned in his eyes. He saw the disordered steps of his father, and his sigh arose. "King of Croma," he said, "is it because thou hast no son; is it for the weakness of Fovar-gormo's arm that thy sighs arise? I begin, my father, to feel my strength! I have drawn the sword of my youth; and I have bent the bow. Let me meet this Rothmar, with the sons of Croma: let me meet him, O my father! I feel my burning soul!' And thou shalt meet him, I said, son of the sightless Crothar! But let others advance before thee, that I may hear the tread of thy feet at thy return; for my eyes behold thee not, fair-haired Fovar-gormo! He

* Faobhar-gorm, the blue point of steel.

went, he met the foe; he fell. Rothmar advances to Croma. He who slew my son is near, with all his pointed spears."

This is no time to fill the shell, I replied, and took my spear; My people saw the fire of my eyes; they all arose around. Through night we strode along the heath. Grey morning rose in the east. A green narrow vale appeared before us; nor wanting was its winding stream. The dark host of Rothmar are on its banks, with all their glittering arms. We fought along the vale. They fled. Rothmar sunk beneath my sword; day had not descended in the west, when I brought his arms to Crothar. The aged hero felt them with his hands; and joy brightened over all his thoughts.

The people gather to the hall. The shells of the feast are heard. Ten harps are strung; five bards advance, and sing by turns * the praise of Ossian;

* Those extempore compositions were in great repute among succeeding bards. The pieces extant of that kind shew more of the good ear, than of the poetical genius of their authors. The translator has only met with one poem of this sort, which he thinks worthy of being preserved. It is a thousand years later than Ossian, but the author seems to have observed his manner, and adopted some of his expressions. The story of it is this: Five bards, passing the night in the house of a chief, who was a poet himself, went severally to make their observations on, and returned with an extempore description of, night. The night happened to be one in October, as appears from the poem, and in the north of Scotland; it has all that variety which the bards ascribe to it in their descriptions.

FIRST BARD.

Night is dull and dark. The clouds rest on the hills. No star with green trembling beam; no moon looks from the sky. I hear the blast in

they poured forth their burning souls, and the string answered to their voice. The joy of Croma was great: for peace returned to the land. The night came on with silence; the morning returned

the wood; but I hear it distant far. The stream of the valley murmurs; but its murmur is sullen and sad. From the tree at the grave of the dead the long-howling owl is heard. I see a dim form on the plain! It is a ghost! it fades, it flies. Some funeral shall pass this way: the meteor marks the path.

The distant dog is howling from the hut of the hill. The stag lies on the mountain moss: the hind is at his side. She hears the wind in his branchy horns. She starts, but lies again.

The roe is in the cleft of the rock; the heath-cock's head is beneath his wing. No beast, no bird is abroad, but the owl and the howling fox. She on a leafless tree; he in a cloud on the hill.

Dark, panting, trembling, sad, the traveller has lost his way. Through shrubs, through thorns, he goes along the gurgling rill. He fears the rock and the fen. He fears the ghost of night. The old tree groans to the blast; the falling branch resounds. The wind drives the withered burs, clung together, along the grass. It is the light tread of a ghost! He trembles amidst the night.

Dark, dusky, howling is night, cloudy, windy, and full of ghosts! The dead are abroad! my friends, receive me from the night.

SECOND BARD.

The wind is up. The shower descends. The spirit of the mountain shrieks. Woods fall from high. Windows flap. The growing river roars. The traveller attempts the ford. Hark! that shriek! he dies! The storm drives the horse from the hill, the goat, the lowing cow. They tremble as drives the shower, beside the mouldering bank.

The hunter starts from sleep, in his lonely hut. He wakes the fire decayed. His wet dogs smook around him. He fills the chinks with heath. Loud roar two mountain streams which meet beside his booth.

Sad on the side of a hill the wandering shepherd sits. The tree resounds above him. The stream roars down the rock. He waits for the rising moon to guide him to his home.

Ghosts ride on the storm to-night. Sweet is their voice between the squalls of wind. Their songs are of other worlds.

The rain is past. The dry wind blows. Streams roar and windows flap. Cold drops fall from the roof. I see the starry sky. But the shower gathers again. The west is gloomy and dark. Night is stormy and dismal; receive me, my friends, from night.

with joy. No foe came in darkness, with his glittering spear. The joy of Croma was great; for the gloomy Rothmar had fallen!

I raised my voice for Fovar-gormo, when they

THIRD BARD.

The wind still sounds between the hills : and whistles through the grass of the rock. The firs fall from their place. The turfy hut is torn. The clouds, divided, fly over the sky, and shew the burning stars. The meteor, token of death! flies sparkling through the gloom. It rests on the hill. I see the withered fern, the dark-browed rock, the fallen oak. Who is that in his shroud beneath the tree, by the stream?

The waves dark-tumble on the lake, and lash its rocky sides. The boat is brimful in the cove; the oars on the rocking tide. A maid sits sad beside the rock, and eyes the rolling stream. Her lover promised to come. She saw his boat, when yet it was light, on the lake. Is this his broken boat on the shore? Are these his groans on the wind?

Hark! the hail rattles around. The flaky snow descends. The tops of the hills are white. The stormy winds abate. Various is the night and cold; receive me, my friends, from night.

FOURTH BARD.

Night is calm and fair; blue, starry, settled is night. The winds, with the clouds, are gone. They sink behind the hill. The moon is up on the mountain. Trees glisten; streams shine on the rock. Bright rolls the settled lake; bright the stream of the vale.

I see the trees overturned; the shocks of corn on the plain. The wakeful hind rebuilds the shocks and whistles on the distant field.

Calm, settled, fair is night! Who comes from the place of the dead? That form with the robe of snow! white arms and dark-brown hair! It is the daughter of the chief of the people: She that lately fell! Come, let us view thee, O maid! thou that hast been the delight of heroes! The blast drives the phantom away; white, without form, it ascends the hill.

The breezes drive the blue mist, slowly, over the narrow vale. It rises on the hill, and joins its head to heaven. Night is settled, calm, blue, starry, bright with the moon. Receive me not, my friends, for lovely is the night.

FIFTH BARD.

Night is calm, but dreary. The moon is in a cloud in the west. Slow moves that pale beam along the shaded hill. The distant wave is heard. The torrent murmurs on the rock. The cock is heard from the booth.

laid the chief in earth. The aged Crothar was there, but his sigh was not heard. He searched for the wound of his son, and found it in his breast. Joy rose in the face of the aged. He came and spoke to Ossian. "King of spears!" he said, "My son has not fallen without his fame. The young warrior did not fly; but met death, as he went forward in his strength. Happy are they who die in youth, when their renown is heard! The feeble will not be-

More than half the night is past. The house-wife, groping in the gloom, rekindles the settled fire. The hunter thinks that day approaches, and calls his bounding dogs. He ascends the hill, and whistles on his way. A blast removes the cloud. He sees the starry plough of the north. Much of the night is to pass. He nods by the mossy rock.

Hark! the whirlwind is in the wood! A low murmur in the vale! It is the mighty army of the dead returning from the air.

The moon rests behind the hill. The beam is still on that lofty rock. Long are the shadows of the trees. Now it is dark over all. Night is dreary, silent, and dark; receive me, my friends, from night.

THE CHIEF.

Let clouds rest on the hills: spirits fly, and travellers fear. Let the winds of the woods arise, the sounding storms descend. Roar streams and windows flap, and green-winged meteors fly! rise the pale moon from behind her hills, or inclose her head in clouds! night is alike to me; blue, stormy, or gloomy the sky. Night flies before the beam, when it is poured on the hill. The young day returns from his clouds, but we return no more.

Where are our chiefs of old? Where our kings of mighty name? The fields of their battles are silent, scarce their mossy tombs remain. We shall also be forgot. This lofty house shall fall. Our sons shall not behold the ruins in grass. They shall ask of the aged, "Where stood the walls of our fathers?"

Raise the song, and strike the harp; send round the shells of joy. Suspend a hundred tapers on high. Youths and maids begin the dance. Let some grey bard be near me to tell the deeds of other times; of kings renowned in our land, of chiefs we behold no more. Thus let the night pass untill morning shall appear in our halls. Then let the bow be at hand, the dogs, the youths of the chase. We shall ascend the hill with day; and awake the deer.

hold them in the hall ; or smile at their trembling hands. Their memory shall be honoured in song ; the young tear of the virgin will fall. But the aged wither away, by degrees, the fame of their youth, while yet they live, is all forgot. They fall in secret. The sigh of their son is not heard. Joy is around their tomb ; the stone of their fame is placed without a tear. Happy are they who die in youth, when their renown is around them!"

CALTHON AND COLMAL:

A POEM.

ARGUMENT.

This piece, as many more of Ossian's compositions, is addressed to one of the first Christian missionaries. The story of the poem is handed down, by tradition, thus: In the country of the Britons between the walls, two chiefs lived in the days of Fingal, Dunthalmo, lord of Teutha, supposed to be the Tweed; and Rathmor, who dwelt at Clutha, well known to be the river Clyde. Rathmor was not more renowned for his generosity and hospitality, than Dunthalmo was infamous for his cruelty and ambition. Dunthalmo, through envy, or on account of some private feuds, which subsisted between the families, murdered Cathmore at a feast; but being afterwards touched with remorse, he educated the two sons of Rathmor, Calthon and Colmar, in his own house. They growing up to man's estate, dropped some hints that they intended to revenge the death of their father, upon which Dunthalmo shut them up in two caves on the banks of Teutha, intending to take them off privately. Colmal, the daughter of Dunthalmo, who was secretly in love with Calthon, helped him to make his escape from prison, and fled with him to Fingal, disguised in the habit of a young warrior, and implored his aid against Dunthalmo. Fingal sent Ossian with three hundred men to Colmar's relief. Dunthalmo having previously murdered Colmar, came to a battle with Ossian; but he was killed by that hero, and his army totally defeated.

Calthon married Colmal, his deliverer; and Ossian returned to Morven.

PLEASANT is the voice of thy song, thou lonely dweller of the rock! It comes on the sound of the

stream, along the narrow vale. My soul awakes, O stranger! in the midst of my hall. I stretch my hand to the spear, as in the days of other years. I stretch my hand, but it is feeble; and the sigh of my bosom grows. Wilt thou not listen, son of the rock! to the song of Ossian? My soul is full of other times; the joy of my youth returns. Thus the sun appears in the west, after the steps of his brightness have moved behind a storm; the green hills lift their dewy heads: the blue streams rejoice in the vale. The aged hero comes forth on his staff; his grey hair glitters in the beam. Dost thou not behold, son of the rock! a shield in Ossian's hall? It is marked with the strokes of battle; and the brightness of its bosses has failed. That shield the great Duntharmo bore, the chief of streamy Teutha. Duntharmo bore it in battle, before he fell by Ossian's spear. Listen, son of the rock! to the tale of other years!

Rathmor was a chief of Clutha. The feeble dwelt in his hall. The gates of Rathmor were never shut; his feast was always spread. The sons of the stranger came. They blessed the generous chief of Clutha. Bards raised the song, and touched the harp: joy brightened on the face of the sad! Duntharmo came, in his pride, and rushed into the combat of Rathmor. The chief of Clutha overcame: the rage of Duntharmo rose. He came, by night with his warriors; the mighty Rathmor fell. He fell

in his halls, where his feast was often spread for strangers.

Colmar and Calthon were young, the sons of carborne Rathmor. They came, in the joy of youth, into their father's hall. They behold him in his blood; their bursting tears descend. The soul of Dunthalmo melted, when he saw the children of youth. He brought them to Alteutha's* walls; they grew in the house of their foe. They bent the bow in his presence: and came forth to his wars. They saw the fallen walls of their fathers; they saw the green thorn in the hall. Their tears rushed forth in secret. At times their faces were sad. Dunthalmo beheld their grief: his darkening soul designed their death. He closed them in two caves, on the echoing banks of Teutha. The sun did not come there with his beams; nor the moon of heaven by night. The sons of Rathmor remained in darkness, and foresaw their death.

The daughter of Dunthalmo wept in silence, the fair-haired, blue-eyed Colmal.† Her eye had rolled in secret on Calthon; his loveliness swelled in her soul. She trembled for her warrior; but what

* Al-teutha, or rather Balteutha, the town of Tweed, the name of Dunthalmo's seat. It is observable that all the names in this poem are derived from the Galic language; which is a proof that it was once the universal language of the whole island.

† Caol-mhal, a woman with small eye-brows; small eye-brows were a distinguishing part of beauty in Ossian's time; and he seldom fails to give them to the fine women of his poems.

could Colmal do? Her arm could not lift the spear; nor was the sword formed for her side. Her white breast never rose beneath a mail. Neither was her eye the terror of heroes. What canst thou do, O Colmal! for the falling chief? Her steps are unequal; her hair is loose: her eye looks wildly through her tears. She came, by night, to the hall.* She armed her lovely form in steel; the steel of a young warrior, who fell in the first of his battles. She came to the cave of Calthon, and loosed the thong from his hands.

“Arise, son of Rathmor,” she said, “arise, the night is dark! Let us fly to the king of Selma,† chief of fallen Clutha! I am the son of Lamgal, who dwelt in thy father’s hall. I heard of thy dark dwelling in the cave, and my soul arose. Arise, son of Rathmor, arise, the night is dark!” “Blest voice!” replied the chief, “comest thou from the clouds to Calthon? The ghosts of his fathers have often descended in his dreams, since the sun has retired from his eyes, and darkness has dwelt around him. Or art thou the son of Lamgal, the chief I often saw in Clutha? But shall I fly to Fingal, and Colmar my brother low? Will I fly to Morven, and the hero

* That is, the hall where the arms taken from enemies were hung up as trophies. Ossian is very careful to make his stories probable; for he makes Colmal put on the arms of a youth killed in his first battle, as more proper for a young woman, who cannot be supposed strong enough to carry the armour of a full-grown warrior.

† Fingal.

closed in night? No: give me that spear, son of Lamgal, Calthon will defend his brother!"

"A thousand warriors," replied the maid, "stretch their spears round car-borne Colmar. What can Calthon do against a host so great? Let us fly to the king of Morven, he will come with war. His arm is stretched forth to the unhappy; the lightning of his sword is round the weak. Arise, thou son of Rathmor! the shadows will fly away. Arise, or thy steps may be soon, and thou must fall in youth!"

The sighing hero rose; his tears descend for car-borne Colmar. He came with the maid to Selma's hall; but he knew not that it was Colmar. The helmet covered her lovely face. Her bosom heaved beneath the steel. Fingal returned from the chace, and found the lovely strangers. They were like two beams of light, in the midst of the hall of shells. The king heard the tale of grief; and turned his eyes around. A thousand heroes half-rose before him; claiming the war of Teutha. I came with my spear from the hill; the joy of battle rose in my breast: for the king spoke to Ossian in the midst of a thousand chiefs.

"Son of my strength," began the king, "take thou the spear of Fingal. Go to Teutha's rushing stream, and save the car-borne Colmar. Let thy fame return before thee like a pleasant gale; that my soul may rejoice over my son, who renews the

renown of our fathers. - Ossian! be thou a storm in war; but mild when the foe is low! It was thus my fame arose; O my son! be thou like Selma's chief. When the haughty come to my halls, my eyes behold them not. But my arm is stretched forth to the unhappy. My sword defends the weak."

I rejoiced in the words of the king, I took my rattling arms. Diaran* rose at my side, and Dargo† king of spears. Three hundred youths followed our steps: the lovely strangers were at my side. Dunthalmo heard the sound of our approach. He

* Diaran, father of that Connal who was unfortunately killed by Crimora, his mistress.

† Dargo, the son of Collath, is celebrated in other poems by Ossian. He is said to have been killed by a boar at a hunting party. The lamentation of his mistress, or wife, Mingala, over his body, is extant; but whether it is of Ossian's composition, I cannot determine. It is generally ascribed to him, and has much of his manner; but some traditions mention it as an imitation by some later bard. As it has some poetical merit, I have subjoined it.

The spouse of Dargo comes in tears: for Dargo was no more! The heroes sigh over Lartho's chief: and what shall sad Mingala do? The dark soul vanished like morning mist, before the king of spears: but the generous glowed in his presence like the morning star.

Who was the fairest and most lovely? Who but Collath's stately son?
Who sat in the midst of the wise, but Dargo of the mighty deeds?

Thy hand touched the trembling harp: Thy voice was soft as summer-winds. Ah me! what shall the heroes say? for Dargo fell before a boar. Pale is the lovely cheek; the look of which was firm in danger!
Why hast thou failed on our hills? thou fairer than the beams of the sun

The daughter of Adonfion was lovely in the eyes of the valiant; she was lovely in their eyes, but she chose to be the spouse of Dargo.

But art thou alone, Mingala! the night is coming with its clouds; where is the bed of thy repose? Where but in the tomb of Dargo?

Why dost thou lift the stone, O bard! why dost thou shut the narrow house? Mingala's eyes are heavy, bard! She must sleep with Dargo.

Last night I heard the song of joy in Lartho's lofty hall, But silence dwells around my bed. Mingala rests with Dargo.

gathered the strength of Teutha. He stood on a hill with his host. They were like rocks broken with thunder, when their bent trees are singed and bare, and the streams of their clinks have failed. The stream of Teutha rolled, in its pride, before the gloomy foe. I sent a bard to Dunthalmo, to offer the combat on the plain; but he smiled in the darkness of his pride. His unsettled host moved on the hill; like the mountain-cloud, when the blast has entered its womb, and scatters the curling gloom on every side.

They brought Colmar to Teutha's bank, bound with a thousand thongs. The chief is sad, but stately. His eye is on his friends; for we stood, in our arms, whilst Teutha's waters rolled between. Dunthalmo came with his spear, and pierced the hero's side: he rolled on the bank in his blood. We heard his broken sighs. Calthon rushed into the stream: I bounded forward on my spear. Teutha's race fell before us. Night came rolling down. Dunthalmo rested on a rock, amidst an aged wood. The rage of his bosom burned against the car-borne Calthon. But Calthon stood in his grief; he mourned the fallen Colmar; Colmar slain in youth, before his fame arose!

I bade the song of woe to rise, to sooth the mournful chief; but he stood beneath a tree, and often threw his spear on earth. The humid eye of

Colmal rolled near in a secret tear: she foresaw the fall of Dunthalmo, or of Clutha's warlike chief. Now half the night had passed away. Silence and darkness were on the field. Sleep rested on the eyes of the heroes: Calthon's settling soul was still. His eyes were half-closed; but the murmur of Teutha had not yet failed in his ear. Pale, and shewing his wounds, the ghost of Colmar came: he bent his head over the hero, and raised his feeble voice!

"Sleeps the son of Rathmor in his night, and his brother low? Did we not rise to the chace together? Pursued we not the dark-brown hinds? Colmar was not forgot till he fell; till death had blasted his youth. I lie pale beneath the rock of Lona. O let Calthon rise! the morning comes with its beams; Dunthalmo will dishonour the fallen." He passed away in his blast. The rising Calthon saw the steps of his departure. He rushed in the sound of his steel. Unhappy Colmal rose. She followed her hero through night, and dragged her spear behind. But when Calthon came to Lona's rock, he found his fallen brother. The rage of his bosom rose; he rushed among the foe. The groans of death ascend. They close around the chief. He is bound in the midst, and brought to gloomy Dunthalmo. The shout of joy arose; and the hills of night replied.

I started at the sound: and took my father's spear. Diaran rose at my side; and the youthful

strength of Dargo. We missed the chief of Clutha, and our souls were sad. I dreaded the departure of my fame. The pride of my valour rose! "Sons of Morven!" I said, "it is not thus our fathers fought. They rested not on the field of strangers, when the foe was not fallen before them. Their strength was like the eagles of heaven; their renown is in the song. But our people fall by degrees. Our fame begins to depart. What shall the king of Morven say, if Ossian conquers not at Teutha? Rise in your steel, ye warriors! follow the sound of Ossian's course. He will not return, but renowned, to the echoing walls of Selma."

Morning rose on the blue waters of Teutha, Colmal stood before me in tears. She told of the chief of Clutha: thrice the spear fell from her hand. My wrath turned against the stranger; for my soul trembled for Calthon. "Son of the feeble hand!" I said, "do Teutha's warriors fight with tears? The battle is not won with grief; nor dwells the sigh in the soul of war. Go to the deer of Carmun, to the lowing herds of Teutha. But leave these arms, thou son of fear! A warrior may lift them in fight.

I tore the mail from her shoulders. Her snowy breast appeared. She bent her blushing face to the ground. I looked in silence to the chiefs. The spear fell from my hand; the sigh of my bosom rose! But when I heard the name of the maid, my

crowding tears rushed down. I blessed the lovely beam of youth, and bade the battle move!

Why, son of the rock, should Ossian tell how Teutha's warriors died? They are now forgot in their land; their tombs are not found on the heath. Years came on with their storms. The green mounds are mouldered away. Scarce is the grave of Dunthalmo seen, or the place where he fell by the spear of Ossian. Some grey warrior, half blind with age sitting by night at the flaming oak of the hall, tells now my deeds to his sons, and the fall of the dark Dunthalmo. The faces of youth bend sidelong towards his voice. Surprise and joy burn in their eyes! I found Calthon bound to an oak; my sword cut the thongs from his hands. I gave him the white-bosomed Colmal. They dwelt in the halls of Teutha.

THE WAR OF CAROS,

A POEM.

ARGUMENT.

Caros is probably the noted usurper Carausius, by birth a Menapian, who assumed the purple in the year 284: and, seizing on Britain, defeated the emperor Maximian Herculius in several naval engagements, which gives propriety to his being called in this poem the king of ships. He repaired Agricola's wall, in order to obstruct the incursions of the Caledonians; and when he was employed in that work, it appears he was attacked by a party under the command of Oscar the son of Ossian. This battle is the foundation of the present poem, which is addressed to Malvina the daughter of Toscar.

BRING, daughter of Toscar! bring the harp! the light of the song rises in Ossian's soul! It is like the field, when darkness covers the hills around, and the shadow grows slowly on the plain of the sun. I behold my son, O Malvina! near the mossy rock of Crona.* But it is the mist of the desert, tinged with the beam of the west! Lovely is the mist that assumes the form of Oscar! turn from it, ye winds, when ye roar on the side of Ardven.

Who comes towards my son, with the murmur of a song? His staff is in his hand, his grey hair loose

* Crona is the name of a small stream which runs into the Carron.

on the wind. Surely joy lightens his face. He often looks back to Caros. It is Ryno* of songs, he that went to view the foe. "What does Caros king of ships?" said the son of the now mournful Ossian, "spreads he the wingst of his pride, bard of the times of old!" "He spreads them, Oscar," replied the bard, "but it is behind his gathered heap.† He looks over his stones with fear. He beholds thee terrible, as the ghost of night, that rolls the wave to his ships!"

"Go, thou first of my bards!" says Oscar, "take the spear of Fingal. Fix a flame on its point. Shake it to the winds of heaven. Bid him, in songs, to advance, and leave the rolling of his wave. Tell to Caros that I long for battle; that my bow is weary of the chace of Cona. Tell him the mighty are not here; and that my arm is young."

He went with the murmur of songs. Oscar reared his voice on high. It reached his heroes on Ardden, like the noise of a cave, when the sea of Togorma rolls before it, and its trees meet the roaring winds. They gather round my son like the streams of the hill; when, after rain, they roll in the pride of their course. Ryno came to the mighty Caros. He struck his flaming spear. Come to the battle of

* Ryno is often mentioned in the ancient poetry. He seems to have been a bard, of the first rank, in the days of Fingal.

† The Roman eagle.

‡ Agricola's wall, which Carausius repaired.

Oscar, O thou that sittest on the rolling of waves !
Fingal is distant far; he hears the songs of bards in
Morven: the wind of his hall in his hair. His terri-
ble spear is at his side; his shield that is like the
darkened moon! Come to the battle of Oscar; the
hero is alone!

He came not over the streamy Carun.* The bard
returned with his song. Grey night grows dim on
Crona. The feast of shells is spread. A hundred
oaks burn to the wind; faint light gleams over the
heath. The ghosts of Ardven pass through the
beam, and shew their dim and distant forms. Co-
mala† is half unseen on her meteor; Hidallan is
sullen and dim, like the darkened moon behind the
mist of night.

“ Why art thou sad?” said Ryno; for he alone be-
held the chief. “ Why art thou sad, Hidallan! hast
thou not received thy fame? The songs of Ossian
have been heard; thy ghost has brightened in wind,
when thou didst bend from thy cloud, to hear the
song of Morven’s bard!” “ And do thine eyes,”
said Oscar, “ behold the chief, like the dim meteor
of night? Say, Ryno, say, how fell Hidallan, the re-
nowed in the days of my fathers? His name remains

* The river Carron.

† This is the scene of Comala’s death, which is the subject of the drama-
tic poem. The poet mentions her in this place in order to introduce the
sequel of Hidallan’s story, who, on account of her death, had been ex-
pelled from the wars of Fingal.

on the rocks of Cona. I have often seen the streams of his hills!"

Fingal, replied the bard, drove Hidallan from his wars. The king's soul was sad for Comala, and his eyes could not behold the chief. Lonely, sad along heath, he slowly moved, with silent steps. His arms hang disordered on his side. His hair flies loose from his brow. The tear is in his down-cast eyes; a sigh half-silent in his breast! Three days he strayed unseen, alone, before he came to Lamor's halls: the mossy halls of his fathers, at the stream of Balva.* There Lamor sat alone beneath a tree; for he had sent his people with Hidallan to war. The stream ran at his feet, his grey head rested on his staff. Sightless are his aged eyes. He hums the song of other times. The noise of Hidallan's feet came to his ear: he knew the tread of his son.

"Is the son of Lamor returned; or is it the sound of his ghost? Hast thou fallen on the banks of Carun, son of the aged Lamor? Or if I hear the sound of Hidallan's feet; where are the mighty in the war? Where are my people, Hidallan! that were wont to return with their echoing shields? Have they fallen on the banks of Carun?"

"No:" replied the sighing youth, "the people of Lamor live. They are renowned in war, my father!"

* This is perhaps that small stream, still retaining the name of Balva, which runs through the romantic valley of Glentivar, in Stirlingshire. Balva signifies a silent stream; and Glentivar, the sequestered vale.

but Hidallan is renowned no more. I must sit alone on the banks of Balva, when the roar of the battle grows."

"But thy fathers never sat alone," replied the rising pride of Lamor. "They never sat alone on the banks of Balva, when the roar of battle rose. Dost thou not behold that tomb? My eyes discern it not; there rests the noble Garmallon, who never fled from war! Come, thou renowned in battle, he says, come to thy father's tomb. How am I renowned, Garmallon? my son has fled from war!"

"King of the streamy Balva!" said Hidallan with a sigh, "why dost thou torment my soul? Lamor, I never fled. Fingal was sad for Comala; he denied his wars to Hidallan. Go to the grey streams of thy land, he said; moulder like a leafless oak, which the winds have bent over Balva, never more to grow!"

"And must I hear," Lamor replied, "the lonely tread of Hidallan's feet? When thousands are renowned in battle, shall he bend over my grey streams? Spirit of the noble Garmallon! carry Lamor to his place; his eyes are dark; his soul is sad; his son has lost his fame!"

"Where," said the youth, "shall I search for fame to gladden the soul of Lamor? From whence shall I return with renown, that the sound of my arms may be pleasant in his ear? If I go to the chase of hinds, my name will not be heard. Lamor

will not feel my dogs, with his hands, glad at my arrival from the hill. He will not enquire of his mountains, or of the dark-brown deer of his deserts!"

"I must fall," said Lamor, "like a leafless oak: it grew on a rock! it was overturned by the winds! My ghost will be seen on my hills, mournful for my young Hidallan. Will not ye, ye mists! as ye rise, hide him from my sight? My son! go to Lamor's hall: there the arms of our fathers hang. Bring the sword of Garmallon; he took it from a foe!"

He went and brought the sword with all its studded thongs. He gave it to his father. The grey-haired hero felt the point with his hand.

"My son! lead me to Garmallon's tomb: it rises beside that rustling tree. The long grass is withered; I hear the breezes whistling there. A little fountain murmurs near, and sends its water to Balva. There let me rest; it is noon: the sun is on our fields."

He led him to Garmallon's tomb. Lamor pierced the side of his son. They slept together: their ancient halls moulder away. Ghosts are seen there at noon: the valley is silent, and the people shun the place of Lamor.

"Mournful is thy tale," said Oscar, "son of the times of old! My soul sighs for Hidallan; he fell in the days of his youth. He flies on the blast of the desert, his wandering is in a foreign land. Sons of

the echoing Morven! draw near to the foes of Fingal. Send the night away in songs; watch the strength of Caros. Oscar goes to the people of other times; to the shades of silent Ardden; where his fathers sit dim in their clouds, and behold the future war. And art thou there, Hidallan, like a half-extinguished meteor? Come to my sight, in thy sorrow, chief of the winding Balva!"

The heroes move with their songs. Oscar slowly ascends the hill. The meteor of night set on the heath before him. A distant torrent faintly roars. Unfrequent blasts rush through aged oaks. The half-enlightened moon sinks dim and red behind her hill. Feeble voices are heard on the heath. Oscar drew his sword!

"Come," said the hero, "O ye ghosts of my fathers! ye that fought against the kings of the world! Tell me the deeds of future times; and your converse in your caves; when you talk together, and behold your sons in the fields of the brave."

Trenmor came, from his hill, at the voice of his mighty son. A cloud, like the steed of the stranger, supported his airy limbs. His robe is of the mist of Lano, that brings death to the people. His sword is a green meteor half-extinguished. His face is without form, and dark. He sighed thrice over the hero! thrice the winds of night roared around! Many were his words to Oscar; but they only came by halves to

our ears: they were dark as the tales of other times, before the light of the song arose. He slowly vanished, like a mist that melts on the sunny hill. It was then, O daughter of Toscar! my son began first to be sad. He foresaw the fall of his race. At times he was thoughtful and dark; like the sun when he carries a cloud on his face, but again he looks forth from his darkness on the green hills of Cona.

Oscar passed the night among his fathers; grey morning met him on Carun's banks. A green vale surrounded a tomb which arose in the times of old. Little hills lift their heads at a distance; and stretch their old trees to the wind. The warriors of Caros sat there, for they had passed the stream by night. They appeared, like the trunks of aged pines, to the pale light of the morning. Oscar stood at the tomb, and raised thrice his terrible voice. The rocking hills echoed around; the starting roes bounded away: And the trembling ghosts of the dead fled, shrieking on their clouds. So terrible was the voice of my son, when he called his friends!

A thousand spears arose around; the people of Caros rose. Why daughter of Toscar, why that tear? My son, though alone, is brave. Oscar is like a beam of the sky; he turns around and the people fall. His hand is the arm of a ghost, when he stretches it from a cloud; the rest of his thin form is unseen; but the people die in the vale! My son

beheld the approach of the foe; he stood in the silent darkness of his strength. "Am I alone," said Oscar, "in the midst of a thousand foes? Many a spear is there! many a darkly-rolling eye! Shall I fly to Ardden? But did my fathers ever fly? The mark of their arm is in a thousand battles. Oscar too shall be renowned! Come, ye dim ghosts of my fathers, and behold my deeds in war! I may fall; but I will be renowned like the race of the echoing Morven." He stood, growing in his place, like a flood in a narrow vale! The battle came, but they fell: bloody was the sword of Oscar!

The noise reached his people at Crona; they came like a hundred streams. The warriors of Caros fled; Oscar remained like a rock left by the ebbing sea. Now dark and deep, with all his steeds, Caros rolled his might along: the little streams are lost in his course; the earth is rocking round. Battle spreads from wing to wing: ten thousand swords gleam at once in the sky. But why should Ossian sing of battles? For never more shall my steel shine in war. I remember the days of my youth with grief; when I feel the weakness of my arm. Happy are they who fell in their youth, in the midst of their renown! They have not beheld the tombs of their friend: or failed to bend the bow of their strength. Happy art thou, O Oscar, in the midst of thy rushing blast. Thou often goest to the fields

of thy fame, where Caros fled from thy lifted sword.

Darkness comes on my soul, O fair daughter of Toscar! I behold not the form of my son at Carun; nor the figure of Oscar on Crona. The rustling winds have carried him far away; and the heart of his father is sad. But lead me, O Malvina! to the sound of my woods; to the roar of my mountain streams. Let the chace be heard on Cona; let me think on the days of other years. And bring me the harp, O maid! that I may touch it, when the light of my soul shall arise. Be thou near, to learn the song; future times shall hear of me! The sons of the feeble hereafter will lift the voice on Cona; and, looking up to the rocks, say, "Here Ossian dwelt." They shall admire the chiefs of old, the race that are no more! while we ride on our clouds, Malvina! on the wings of the roaring winds. Our voices shall be heard, at times, in the desert; we shall sing on the breeze of the rock.

CATHLIN OF CLUTHA:

A POEM.

ARGUMENT.

AN address to Malvina, the daughter of Toscar. The poet relates the arrival of Cathlin in Selma, to solicit aid against Duth-carmor of Cluba, who had killed Cathmol, for the sake of his daughter Lanul. Fingal declining to make a choice among his heroes, who were all claiming the command of the expedition; they retired each to his hill of ghosts; to be determined by dreams. The spirit of Trenmor appears to Ossian and Oscar: they sail, from the bay of Carmona, and, on the fourth day, appear off the valley of Rathcol, in Inis-huna, where Duth-carmor had fixed his residence. Ossian dispatches a bard to Duth-carmor to demand battle. Night comes on. The distress of Cathlin of Clutha. Ossian devolves the command on Oscar, who, according to the custom of the kings of Morven, before battle, retired to a neighbouring hill. Upon the coming on of day, the battle joins. Oscar and Duth-carmor meet. The latter falls. Oscar carries the mail and helmet of Duth-carmor to Cathlin, who had retired from the field. Cathlin is discovered to be the daughter of Cathmol, in disguise, who had been carried off, by force, by, and had made her escape from, Duth-carmor.

* COME, thou beam that art lonely, from watching in the night! The squally winds are around thee, from all their echoing hills. Red, over my hundred

* The traditions, which accompany this poem, inform us, that it went of old under the name of *Laoi-Oi-lutha*; i. e. the hymn of the maid of Lutha. They pretend also to fix the time of its composition, to the third

streams, are the light-covered paths of the dead. They rejoice on the eddying winds, in the season of night. Dwells there no joy in song, white hand of the harps of Lutha? Awake the voice of the string; roll my soul to me. It is a stream that has failed. Malvina, pour the song.

I hear thee from thy darkness, in Selma, thou that watchest, lonely, by night! Why didst thou withhold the song, from Ossian's failing soul? As the falling brook to the ear of the hunter, descending from his storm-covered hill; in a sun-beam rolls the echoing stream; he hears, and shakes his dewy locks: such is the voice of Lutha, to the friend of the spirits of heroes. My swelling bosom beats high. I look back on the days that are past. Come, thou beam that art lonely, from watching in the night!

In the echoing bay of Carmona* we saw, one day,

year after the death of Fingal; that is during the expedition of Fergus the son of Fingal, to the banks of Uisca-duthon. In support of this opinion, the Highland senachies have prefixed to this poem, an address of Ossian, to Congal the young son of Fergus, which I have rejected, as having no manner of connection with the rest of the piece. It has poetical merit; and, probably, it was the opening of one of Ossian's other poems, though the bards injudiciously transferred it to the piece now before us.

"Congal, son of Fergus of Durath, thou light between thy locks, ascend to the rock of Selma, to the oak of the breaker of shields. Look over the bosom of night, it is streaked with the red paths of the dead; look on the night of ghosts, and kindle, O Congal! thy soul. Be not, like the moon on a stream, lonely in the midst of clouds: darkness closes around it; and the beam departs. Depart not, son of Fergus! ere thou markest the field with thy sword. Ascend to the rock of Selma; to the oak of the breaker of shields."

* Car-mona, bay of the dark-brown hills, an arm of the sea, in the neighbourhood of Selma. In this paragraph are mentioned the signal

the bounding ship. On high, hung a broken shield; it was marked with wandering blood. Forward came a youth, in arms, and stretched his pointless spear. Long over his tearful eyes, hung loose his disordered locks. Fingal gave the shell of kings. The words of the stranger arose. "In his hall lies Cathmol of Clutha, by the winding of his own dark streams. Duth-carmor saw white-bosomed Lanul,* and pierced her father's side. In the rushy desert were my steps. He fled in the season of night. Give thine aid to Cathlin to revenge his father. I sought thee not as a beam in a land of clouds. Thou, like the sun art known, king of echoing Selma!

presented to Fingal, by those who came to demand his aid. The suppliants held, in one hand, a shield covered with blood, and, in the other, a broken spear; the first a symbol of the death of their friends, the last an emblem of their own helpless situation. If the king chose to grant succours, which generally was the case, he reached to them the shell of feasts, as a token of his hospitality and friendly intentions towards them.

It may not be disagreeable to the reader to lay here before him the ceremony of the Cran-tara, which was of a similar nature, and, till very lately, used in the Highlands. When the news of an enemy came to the residence of the chief, he immediately killed a goat with his own sword, dipped the end of an half-burnt piece of wood in the blood, and gave it to one of his servants, to be carried to the next hamlet. From hamlet to hamlet this tessera was carried with the utmost expedition, and, in the space of a few hours, the whole clan were in arms, and convened in an appointed place; the name of which was the only word that accompanied the delivery of the Cran-tara. This symbol was the manifesto of the chief, by which he threatened fire and sword to those of his clan, that did not immediately appear at his standard.

* Lanul, *full-eyed*, a surname which, according to tradition, was bestowed on the daughter of Cathmol, on account of her beauty; this tradition, however, may have been founded on that partiality, which the bards have shewn to Cathlin of Clutha; for, according to them, no falshood could dwell in the soul of the lovely.

Selma's king looked around. In his presence we rose in arms. But who should lift the shield? for all had claimed the war. The night came down; we strode, in silence; each to his hill of ghosts: that spirits might descend in our dreams, to mark us for the field. We struck the shield of the dead: we raised the hum of songs. We thrice called the ghosts of our fathers. We laid us down in dreams: Trenmor came, before mine eyes, the tall form of other years! His blue hosts were behind him in half-distinguished rows. Scarce seen is their strife in mist, or their stretching forward to deaths. I listened; but no sound was there. The forms were empty wind!

I started from the dream of ghosts. On a sudden blast flew my whistling hair. Low-sounding, in the oak, is the departure of the dead. I took my shield from its bough. Onward came the rattling of steel. It was Oscar of Lego.* He had seen his fathers. "As rushes forth the blast, on the bosom of whitening waves: so careless shall my course be, through ocean, to the dwelling of foes. I have seen the dead, my father! My beating soul is high! My fame

* Oscar is here called Oscar of Lego, from his mother being the daughter of Branno, a powerful chief, on the banks of that lake. It is remarkable that Ossian addresses no poem to Malvina, in which her lover Oscar was not one of the principal actors. His attention to her, after the death of his son, shews that delicacy of sentiment is not confined, as some fondly imagine, to our own polished times.

is bright before me, like the streak of light on a cloud, when the broad sun comes forth, red traveller of the sky !”

“ Grandson of Branno,” I said ; “ not Oscar alone shall meet the foe. I rush forward, through ocean, to the woody dwelling of heroes. Let us contend, my son, like eagles, from one rock ; when they lift their broad wings, against the stream of winds.” We raised our sails in Carmona. From three ships, they marked my shield on the wave, as I looked on nightly Tonthena,* red traveller between the clouds. Four days came the breeze abroad. Lumun came forward in mist. In winds were its hundred groves. Sun-beams marked, at times, its brown side. White, leapt the foamy streams, from all its echoing rocks.

A green field, in the bosom of hills, winds silent with its own blue stream. Here, midst the waving of oaks, were the dwellings of kings of old. But silence, for many dark-brown years, had settled in grassy Rath-col;† for the race of heroes had failed,

* Ton-thena, fire of the wave, was the remarkable star mentioned in the seventh book of Temora, which directed the course of Larthon to Ireland. It seems to have been well known to those, who sailed on that sea, which divides Ireland from South-Britain. As the course of Ossian was along the coast of Inis-huna, he mentions with propriety, that star which directed the voyage of the colony from that country to Ireland.

† Rath-col, woody field, does not appear to have been the residence of Duth-carmor : he seems rather to have been forced thither by a storm ; at least I should think that to be the meaning of the poet, from his expression, that Ton-thena had hid her head, and that he bound his white-bosomed sails ; which is as much as to say, that the weather was stormy, and that Duth-carmor put into the bay of Rath-col for shelter.

along the pleasant vale. Duthcarmor was here, with his people, dark rider of the wave. Tonthena had hid her head in the sky. He bound his white-bosomed sails. His course is on the hills of Rath-col, to the seats of roes. We came. I sent the bard, with songs, to call the foe to fight. Duthcarmor heard him, with joy. The king's soul was like a beam of fire ; a beam of fire marked with smoke, rushing, varied, through the bosom of night. The deeds of Duth-carmor were dark, though his arm was strong.

Night came, with the gathering of clouds. By the beam of the oak we sat down. At a distance stood Cathlin of Clutha. I saw the changeful* soul of the stranger. As shadows fly over the field of grass, so various is Cathlin's cheek. It was fair, within locks, that rose on Rath-col's wind. I did not rush, amidst his soul, with my words. I bade the song to rise.

“Oscar of Lego,” I said, “be thine the secret hill,†

* From this circumstance, succeeding bards feigned that Cathlin, who is here in the disguise of a young warrior, had fallen in love with Duthcarmor at a feast, to which he had been invited by her father. Her love was converted into detestation for him, after he had murdered her father. But as those rain-bows of heaven are changeful, say my authors, speaking of women, she felt the return of her former passion, upon the approach of Duth-carmor's danger. I myself, who think more favourably of the sex, must attribute the agitation of Cathlin's mind to her extreme sensibility to the injuries done her by Duth-carmor: and this opinion is favoured by the sequel of the story.

† This passage alludes to the well-know custom among the ancient kings of Scotland, to retire from their army on the night preceding a

to-night. Strike the shield, like Morven's kings. With day thou shalt lead in war. From my rock, I shalt see thee, Oscar, a dreadful form ascending in fight, like the appearance of ghosts, amidst the storms they raise. Why should mine eyes return to the dim times of old, ere yet the song had bursted forth, like the sudden rising of winds? But the years, that are past, are marked with mighty deeds. As the nightly rider of waves looks up to Ton-thena of beams: so let us turn our eyes to Trenmor, the father of kings."

" Wide, in Caracha's echoing field, Carmal had poured his tribes. They were a dark ridge of waves. The grey-haired bards were like moving foam on their face. They kindled the strife around, with their red-rolling eyes. Nor alone were the dwellers of rocks; a son of Loda was there; a voice, in his own dark land, to call the ghosts from high. On his hill, he had dwelt, in Lochlin, in the midst of a leafless grove. Five stones lifted, near, their heads. Loud roared his rushing stream. He often raised his voice to the winds, when meteors marked their nightly wings; when the dark-robed moon was rolled

battle. The story which Ossian introduces in the next paragraph, concerns the fall of the Druids. It is said in many old poems, that the Druids, in the extremity of their affairs, had solicited and obtained aid from Scandinavia. Among the auxiliaries there came many pretended magicians, which circumstance Ossian alludes to, in his description of the son of Loda. Magic and incantation could not, however, prevail; for Trenmor, assisted by the valour of his son Trathal, entirely broke the power of the Druids.

behind her hill. Nor unheard of ghosts was he!
They came with the sound of eagle wings. They
turned battle, in fields, before the kings of men.

“ But, Trenmor, they turned not from battle.
He drew forward the troubled war; in its dark
skirt was Trathal, like a rising light. It was dark;
and Loda’s son poured forth his signs, on night.
The feeble were not before thee, son of other
lands*! Then rose the strife of kings, about the
hill of night; but it was soft as two summer gales,
shaking their light wings, on a lake. Trenmor
yielded to his son; for the fame of the king had
been heard. Trathal came forth before his father,
and the foes failed, in echoing Caracha. The years
that are past, my son, are marked with mighty
deeds.”†

In clouds rose the eastern light. The foe came
forth in arms. The strife is mixed on Rath-col,
like the roar of streams. Behold the contending of
kings! They meet beside the oak. In gleams of
steel the dark forms are lost; such is the meeting of
meteors, in a vale by night: red light is scattered
round, and men foresee the storm! Duth-carmor is

* Trenmor and Trathal. Ossian introduced this episode, as an example
to his son, from ancient times.

† Those who deliver down this poem in tradition, lament that there is
great part of it lost. In particular they regret the loss of an episode,
which was here introduced, with the sequel of the story of Carmal and his
Druids. Their attachment to it was founded on the descriptions of magical
enchantments which it contained.

low in blood! The son of Ossian overcame! Not harmless in battle was he, Malvina hand of harps!

Nor, in the field, were the steps of Cathlin. The stranger stood by a secret stream, where the foam of Rath-col skirted the mossy stones. Above, bends the branchy birch, and strews its leaves, on wind. The inverted spear of Cathlin touched, at times, the stream. Oscar brought Duth-carmor's mail: his helmet with its eagle wing. He placed them before the stranger, and his words were heard. "The focs of thy father have failed. They are laid in the field of ghosts. Renown returns to Morven, like a rising wind. Why art thou dark, chief of Clutha? Is there cause for grief?"

"Son of Ossian of harps, my soul is darkly sad. I behold the arms of Cathmol, which he raised in war. Take the mail of Cathlin, place it high in Selma's hall; that thou may'st remember the hapless in thy distant land." From white breasts descended the mail. It was the race of kings; the soft-handed daughter of Cathmol, at the streams of Clutha! Duth-carmor saw her bright in the hall, he had come, by night, to Clutha. Cathmol met him, in battle, but the hero fell. Three days dwelt the foe, with the maid. On the fourth she fled in arms. She remembered the race of kings, and felt her bursting soul!

Why, maid of Toscar of Lutha, should I tell how Cathlin failed? Her tomb is at rushy Lumon, in a distant land. Near it were the steps of Sul-malla, in the days of grief. She raised the song, for the daughter of strangers, and touched the mournful harp.

Come, from the watching of night, Malvina, lonely beam!

SUL-MALLA OF LUMON:

A POEM.

ARGUMENT.

This poem, which, properly speaking, is a continuation of the last, opens with an address to Sul-malla, the daughter of the king of Inis-huna, whom Ossian met, at the chace, as he returned from the battle of Rath-col. Sul-malla invites Ossian and Oscar to a feast, at the residence of her father, who was then absent in the wars. Upon hearing their name and family, she relates an expedition of Fingal into Inis-huna. She casually mentioning Cathmor, chief of Atha (who then assisted her father against his enemies), Ossian introduces the episode of Culgorm and Suran-dronlo, two Scandinavian kings, in whose wars Ossian himself and Cathmor were engaged on opposite sides. The story is imperfect, a part of the original being lost. Ossian, warned in a dream, by the ghost of Trenmor, sets sail from Inis-huna.

* WHO moves so stately, on Lumon, at the roar
of the foamy waters? Her hair falls upon her heav-

* The expedition of Ossian to Inis-huna happened a short time before Fingal passed over into Ireland, to dethrone Cairbar the son of Borbar-duthul. Cathmor, the brother of Cairbar, was aiding Conmor, king of Inis-huna, in his wars, at the time that Ossian defeated Duth-carmor, in the valley of Rath-col. The poem is more interesting, that it contains so many particulars concerning those personages who make so great a figure in Temora.

The exact correspondence in the manners and customs of Inis-huna, as here described, to those of Caledonia, leaves no room to doubt, that the

ing breast. White is her arm behind, as slow she bends the bow. Why dost thou wander in deserts, like a light through a cloudy field? The young roes are panting, by their secret rocks. Return, thou daughter of kings! the cloudy night is near! It was the young branch of green Inis-huna, Sul-malla of blue eyes. She sent the bard from her rock, to bid us to her feast. Amidst the song we sat down, in Cluba's echoing hall. White moved the hands of Sul-malla, on the trembling strings. Half-heard amidst the sound, was the name of Atha's king: he that was absent in battle for her own green land. Nor absent from her soul was he; he came midst her thoughts by night. Ton-thena looked in, from the sky, and saw her tossing arms.

The sound of shells had ceased. Amidst long locks, Sul-malla rose. She spoke with bended eyes, and asked of our course through seas; "for of the kings of men are ye, tall riders of the wave*." "Not unknown," I said, "at his streams

inhabitants of both were originally the same people. Some may allege, that Ossian might transfer, in his poetical descriptions, the manners of his own nation to foreigners. This objection is easily answered. Why has he not done this with regard to the inhabitants of Scandinavia? We find the latter very different in their customs and superstitions from the nations of Britain and Ireland. The Scandinavian manners are remarkably barbarous and fierce, and seem to mark out a nation much less advanced in a state of civilization, than the inhabitants of Britain were in the times of Ossian.

* Sul-malla here discovers the quality of Ossian and Oscar, from their stature and stately gait. Among nations, not far advanced in civilization, a superior beauty and stateliness of person were inseparable from nobility

is he, the father of our race. Fingal has been heard of at Cluba, blue-eyed daughter of kings. Nor only, at Cona's stream, is Ossian and Oscar known. Foes trembled at our voice, and shrunk in other lands."

"Not unmarked," said the maid, "by Sul-malla, is the shield of Morven's king. It hangs high, in my father's hall, in memory of the past; when Fingal came to Cluba, in the days of other years. Loud roared the boar of Culdarnu, in the midst of his rocks and woods. Inis-huna sent her youths, but they failed; and virgins wept over tombs. Careless went Fingal to Culdarnu. On his spear rolled the strength of the woods. He was bright, they said, in his locks, the first of mortal men. Nor at the feast were heard his words. His deeds passed from his soul of fire, like the rolling of vapours from the face of the wandering sun. Not careless looked the blue eyes of Cluba on his stately steps. In white bosoms rose the king of Selma, in the midst of their thoughts

of blood. It was from these qualities, that those of family were known by strangers, not from tawdry trappings of state injudiciously thrown round them. The cause of this distinguishing property, must, in some measure, be ascribed to their unmixed blood. They had no inducement to intermarry with the vulgar: and no low notions of interest made them deviate from their choice, in their own sphere. In states, where luxury has been long established, beauty of person is, by no means, the characteristic of antiquity of family. This must be attributed to those enervating vices, which are inseparable from luxury and wealth. A great family (to alter a little the words of the historian), it is true, like a river, becomes considerable from the length of its course, but, as it rolls on, hereditary distempers, as well as property, flow successively into it.

by night. But the winds bore the stranger to the echoing vales of his roes. Nor lost to other lands was he, like a meteor that sinks in a cloud. He came forth, at times, in his brightness, to the distant dwelling of foes. His fame came, like the sound of winds, to Cluba's woody vale*."

" Darkness dwells in Cluba of harps: the race of kings is distant far; in battle is my father Conmor: and Lormar † my brother, king of streams. Nor darkening alone are they; a beam from other lands, is nigh; the friend of strangers ‡ in Atha, the troubler of the field. High, from their misty

* Too partial to our own times, we are ready to mark out remote antiquity, as the region of ignorance and barbarism. This, perhaps, is extending our prejudices too far. It has been long remarked, that knowledge, in a great measure, is founded on a free intercourse between mankind; and that the mind is enlarged in proportion to the observations it has made upon the manners of different men and nations. If we look, with attention, into the history of Fingal, as delivered by Ossian, we shall find that he was not altogether a poor ignorant hunter, confined to the narrow corner of an island. His expeditions to all parts of Scandinavia, to the north of Germany, and the different states of Great Britain and Ireland, were very numerous, and performed under such a character, and at such times, as gave him an opportunity to mark the undisguised manners of mankind. War and an active life, as they call forth, by turns, all the powers of the soul, present to us the different characters of men: in times of peace and quiet, for want of objects to exert them, the powers of the mind lie concealed, in a great measure, and we see only artificial passions and manners. It is from this consideration I conclude, that a traveller of penetration could gather more genuine knowledge from a tour of ancient Gaul, than from the minutest observation of all the artificial manners and elegant refinements of modern France.

† Lormar was the son of Conmor, and the brother of Sul-malla. After the death of Conmor, Lormar succeeded him in the throne.

‡ Cathmor, the son of Borbar-duthul. It would appear, from the partiality with which Sul-malla speaks of that hero, that she had seen him, previous to his joining her father's army; though tradition positively asserts, that it was after his return that she fell in love with him.

hills, look forth the blue eyes of Erin; for he is far away, young dweller of their souls! Nor harmless, white hands of Erin! is Cathmor in the skirts of war; he rolls ten thousand before him, in his distant field."

"Not unseen by Ossian," I said, "rushed Cathmor from his streams, when he poured his strength on I-thorno,* isle of many waves! In strife met two kings in I-thorno, Culgorm and Suran-dronlo: each from his echoing isle, stern hunters of the boar!

"They met a boar, at a foamy stream: each pierced him with his spear. They strove for the fame of the deed; and gloomy battle rose. From isle to isle they sent a spear, broken and stained with blood, to call the friends of their fathers, in their sounding arms. Cathmor came, from Erin, to Culgorm, red-eyed king: I aided Suran-dronlo, in his land of boars.

"We rushed on either side of a stream, which roared through a blasted heath. High broken rocks were round, with all their bending trees. Near were two circles of Loda, with the stone of

* I-thorno, says tradition, was an island of Scandinavia. In it, at a hunting party, met Culgorm and Suran-dronlo, the kings of two neighbouring isles. They differed about the honour of killing a boar; and a war was kindled between them. From this episode we may learn, that the manners of the Scandinavians were much more savage and cruel than those of Britain. It is remarkable, that the names, introduced in this story, are not of Galic original, which circumstance affords room to suppose, that it had its foundation in true history.

power ; where spirits descended, by night, in dark-red streams of fire. There, mixed with the murmur of waters, rose the voice of aged men, they called the forms of night, to aid them in their war.

“ * Heedless I stood, with my people, where fell the foamy stream from rocks. The moon moved red from the mountain. My song at times arose. Dark, on the other side, young Cathmor heard my voice ; for he lay, beneath the oak, in all his gleaming arms. Morning came ; we rushed to fight : from wing to wing is the rolling of strife. They fell, like the thistle’s head, beneath autumnal winds.

“ In armour came a stately form : I mixed my strokes with the chief. By turns our shields are pierced : loud rung our steely mails. His helmet fell to the ground. In brightness shone the foe. His eyes, two pleasant flames, rolled between his wandering locks. I knew Cathmor of Atha, and threw my spear on earth. Dark, we turned, and silent passed to mix with other foes.

“ Not so passed the striving kings. † They mixed in echoing fray : like the meeting of ghosts, in the

* From the circumstance of Ossian not being present at the rites, described in the preceding paragraph, we may suppose that he held them in contempt. This difference of sentiment, with regard to religion, is a sort of argument that the Caledonians were not originally a colony of Scandinavians, as some have imagined. Concerning so remote a period, mere conjecture must supply the place of argument and positive proofs.

† Culgorm and Suran-dronlo. The combat of the kings and their attitude in death are highly picturesque, and expressive of that ferocity of manners, which distinguished the northern nations.

dark wing of winds. Through either breast rushed the spears; nor yet lay the foes on earth! A rock received their fall; half reclined they lay in death. Each held the lock of his foe; each grimly seemed to roll his eyes. The stream of the rock leapt on their shields, and mixed below with blood.

“ The battle ceased in I-thorno. The strangers met in peace: Cathmor from Atha of streams, and Ossian, king of harps. We placed the dead in earth. Our steps were by Runar’s bay. With the bounding boat, afar, advanced a ridgy wave. Dark was the rider of seas, but a beam of light was there, like the ray of the sun, in Stromlo’s rolling smoak. It was the daughter * of Suran-dronlo, wild in brightened looks. Her eyes were wandering flames,

* Tradition has handed down the name of this princess. The bards call her Runo-forlo, which has no other sort of title for being genuine, but its not being of Galic original; a distinction which the bards had not the art to preserve, when they feigned names for foreigners. The highland senachies, who very often endeavoured to supply the deficiency, they thought they found in the tales of Ossian, have given us the continuation of the story of the daughter of Suran-dronlo. The catastrophe is so unnatural, and the circumstances of it so ridiculously pompous, that, for the sake of the inventors, I shall conceal them.

The wildly beautiful appearance of Runo-forlo, made a deep impression on a chief, some ages ago, who was himself no contemptible poet. The story is romantic, but not incredible, if we make allowances for the lively imagination of a man of genius. Our chief sailing, in a storm, along one of the islands of Orkney, saw a woman, in a boat, near the shore, whom he thought, as he expresses it himself, *as beautiful as a sudden ray of the sun, on the dark-heaving deep*. The verses of Ossian, on the attitude of Runo-forlo, which was so similar to that of the woman of the boat, wrought so much on his fancy, that he fell desperately in love. The winds, however, drove him from the coast, and, after a few days, he arrived at his residence in Scotland. There his passion increased to such a degree, that two of his friends, fearing the consequence, sailed to the Orkneys, to carry

amidst disordered locks. Forward is her white arm, with the spear; her high-heaving breast is seen, white as foamy waves that rise, by turns, amidst rocks. They are beautiful, but terrible, and mariners call the winds!"

"Come, ye dwellers of Loda!" she said, "come, Carchar, pale in the midst of clouds! Sluthmor, that stridest in airy halls! Corchtur, terrible in winds! Receive, from his daughter's spear, the foes of Suran-dronlo. No shadow, at his roaring streams; no mildly-looking form was he! When he took up his spear, the hawks shook their sounding wings: for blood was poured around the steps of dark-eyed Suran-dronlo. He lighted me, no harmless beam, to glitter on his streams. Like meteors, I was bright, but I blasted the foes of Suran-dronlo." * * * * *

* * * *

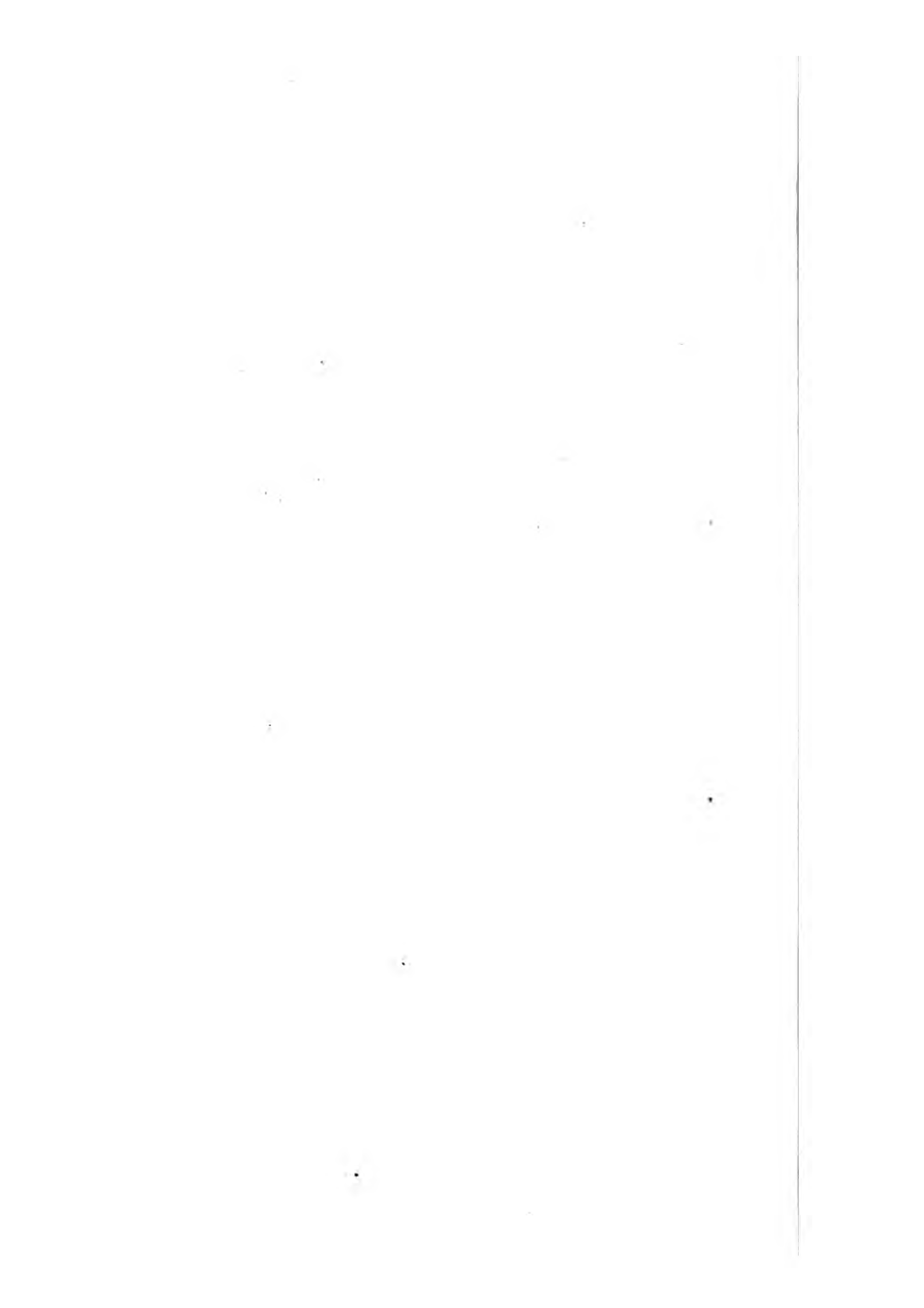
Nor unconcerned heard Sul-malla, the praise of Cathmor of shields. He was within her soul, like a fire in secret heath, which awakes at the voice of the blast, and sends its beam abroad. Amidst the song removed the daughter of kings, like the voice of a summer breeze; when it lifts the heads of flowers, and curls the lakes and streams. The rust-

to him the object of his desire. Upon enquiry they soon found the nymph, and carried her to the enamoured chief; but mark his surprize, when, instead of a ray of the sun, he saw a skinny fisherwoman, more than middle-aged, appearing before him. Tradition here ends the story: but it may be easily supposed that the passion of the chief soon subsided.

ling sound gently spreads o'er the vale, softly-pleasing
as it saddens the soul.

By night came a dream to Ossian; formless
stood the shadow of Trenmor. He seemed to strike
the dim shield, on Selma's streamy rock. I rose, in
my rattling steel; I knew that war was near, before
the winds our sails were spread; when Lumon shewed
its streams to the morn.

Come from the watching of night, Malvina, lonely
beam!



THE
WAR OF INIS-THONA:
A POEM.

ARGUMENT.

Reflections on the poet's youth. An apostrophe to Selma. Oscar obtains leave to go to Inis-thona, an island of Scandinavia. The mournful story of Argon and Ruro, the two sons of the king of Inis-thona. Oscar revenges their death, and returns in triumph to Selma. A soliloquy by the poet himself.

OUR youth is like the dream of the hunter on the hill of heath. He sleeps in the mild beams of the sun; he awakes amidst a storm; the red lightning flies around: trees shake their heads to the wind! He looks back with joy, on the day of the sun; and the pleasant dreams of his rest! When shall Ossian's youth return? When his ear delight in the sound of arms? When shall I, like Oscar, travel in the light of my steel? Come, with your streams, ye hills of Cona! listen to the voice of Ossian. The song rises, like the sun, in my soul. I feel the joys of other times!

I behold thy towers, O Selma! the oaks of thy shaded wall: thy streams sound in my ear; thy he-

roes gather around. Fingal sits in the midst. He leans on the shield of Trenmor: his spear stands against the wall; he listens to the song of his bards. The deeds of his arm are heard; the actions of the king in his youth! Oscar had returned from the chace, and heard the hero's praise. He took the shield of Branno* from the wall; his eyes were filled with tears. Red was the cheek of youth. His voice was trembling, low. My spear shook its bright head in his hand: he spoke to Morven's king.

“ Fingal! thou king of heroes! Ossian, next to him in war! ye have fought in your youth; your names are renowned in song. Oscar is like the mist of Cona; I appear and I vanish away. The bard will not know my name. The hunter will not search in the heath for my tomb. Let me fight, O heroes, in the battles of Inis-thona. Distant is the land of my war! ye shall not hear of Oscar's fall! Some bard may find me there; some bard may give my name to song. The daughter of the stranger shall see my tomb, and weep over the youth, that came from afar. The bard shall say, at the feast, “ hear the song of Oscar from the distant land!”

“ Oscar,” replied the king of Morven; “ thou

* This is Branno, the father of Everallin, and grandfather to Oscar; he was of Irish extraction, and lord of the country round the lake of Lego. His great actions are handed down by tradition, and his hospitality has passed into a proverb.

shalt fight, son of my fame! Prepare my dark-bosomed ship to carry my hero to Inis-thona. Son of my son, regard our fame; thou art of the race of renown! Let not the children of strangers say, feeble are the sons of Morven! Be thou, in battle, a roaring storm: mild as the evening sun in peace! Tell, Oscar, to Inis-thona's king, that Fingal remembers his youth; when we strove in the combat together, in the days of Agandecca."

They lifted up the sounding sail; the wind whistled through the thongs * of their masts. Waves lash the oozy rocks: the strength of ocean roars. My son beheld, from the wave, the land of groves. He rushed into Runa's sounding bay, and sent his sword to Annir of spears. The grey-haired hero rose, when he saw the sword of Fingal. His eyes were full of tears; he remembered his battles in youth. Twice had they lifted the spear, before the lovely Agandecca: heroes stood far distant, as if two spirits were striving in winds.

"But now," began the king, "I am old; the sword lies useless in my hall. Thou, who art of Morven's race! Annir has seen the battle of spears; but now he is pale and withered, like the oak of Lano. I have no son to meet thee with joy, to bring thee to the halls of his fathers. Argon is pale in the tomb, and Ruro is no more. My daughter is in the

* Leather thongs were used among the Celtic nations, instead of ropes.

hall of strangers: she longs to behold my tomb,
Her spouse shakes ten thousand spears; he comes * a
cloud of death from Lano. Come, to share the feast
of Annir, son of echoing Morven!"

Three days they feasted together; on the fourth
Annir heard the name of Oscar. They rejoiced in
the shell.† They pursued the boars of Runa. Be-
side the fount of mossy stones, the weary heroes
rest. The tear steals in secret from Annir: he broke
the rising sigh. "Here darkly rest," the hero said,
"the children of my youth. This stone is the tomb
of Ruro; that tree sounds over the grave of Argon.
Do ye hear my voice, O my sons, within your narrow
house? Or do ye speak in these rustling leaves, when
the winds of the desert rise?"

"King of Inis-thona," said Oscar, "how fell the
children of youth? The wild boar rushes over their
tombs, but he does not disturb their repose. They
pursue deer ‡ formed of clouds, and bend their airy

* Cormalo had resolved on a war against his father-in-law, Annir, king of Inis-thona, in order to deprive him of his kingdom: the injustice of his designs was so much resented by Fingal, that he sent his grandson, Oscar, to the assistance of Annir. Both armies came soon to a battle, in which the conduct and valour of Oscar obtained a complete victory. An end was put to the war by the death of Cormalo, who fell in a single combat, by Oscar's hand. Thus is the story delivered down by tradition; though the poet, to raise the character of his son, makes Oscar himself propose the expedition.

† *To rejoice in the shell*, is a phrase for feasting sumptuously and drinking freely.

‡ The notion of Ossian concerning the state of the deceased, was the same with that of the ancient Greeks and Romans. They imagined that the souls pursued, in their separate state, the employments and pleasures of their former life.

bow. They still love the sport of their youth; and mount the wind with joy."

"Cormalo," replied the king, "is a chief of ten thousand spears. He dwells at the waters of Lano,* which sends forth the vapour of death. He came to Runa's echoing halls, and sought the honour of the spear.† The youth was lovely as the first beam of the sun; few were they who could meet him in fight! My heroes yielded to Cormalo: my daughter was seized in his love. Argon and Ruro returned from the chase; the tears of their pride descend: they roll their silent eyes on Runa's heroes, who had yielded to a stranger. Three days they feasted with Cormalo: on the fourth young Argon fought. But who could fight with Argon! Cormalo is overcome. His heart swelled with the grief of pride; he resolved, in secret, to behold the death of my sons. They went to the hills of Runa; they pursued the dark-brown hinds. The arrow of Cormalo flew in secret; my children fell in blood. He came to the maid of his love; to Inis-thona's long-haired maid. They fled over the desert. Annir remained alone. Night came on and day appeared: nor Argon's voice, nor

* Lano was a lake of Scandinavia, remarkable, in the days of Ossian, for emitting a pestilential vapour in autumn. And thou, O valiant Duchomah! like the mist of marshy Dano; when it sails over the plains of autumn, and brings death to the host. Fingal, B. I.

† By *the honour of the spear*, is meant the tournament practised among the ancient northern nations.

Ruro's came. At length their much-loved dog was seen; the fleet and bounding Runar. He came into the hall and howled; and seemed to look towards the place of their fall. We followed him: we found them here: we laid them by this mossy stream. This is the haunt of Annir, when the chase of the hinds is past. I bend like the trunk of an aged oak; my tears for ever flow!"

"O Ronnan!" said the rising Oscar, "Ogar king of spears! call my heroes to my side, the sons of streamy Morven. To-day we go to Lano's water, that sends forth the vapour of death. Cormalo will not long rejoice: death is often at the point of our swords!"

They came over the desert like stormy clouds, when the winds roll them along the heath: their edges are tinged with lightning; the echoing groves foresee the storm! The horn of Oscar's battle is heard; Lano shook over all its waves. The children of the lake convened around the sounding shield of Cormalo. Oscar fought, as he was wont in war. Cormalo fell beneath his sword: the sons of dismal Lano fled to their secret vales! Oscar brought the daughter of Inis-thona to Annir's echoing halls. The face of age is bright with joy; he blest the king of swords!

How great was the joy of Ossian, when he beheld the distant sail of his son! it was like a cloud of

light that rises in the east, when the traveller is sad in a land unknown; and dismal night, with her ghosts, is sitting around in shades! We brought him, with songs, to Selma's halls. Fingal spread the feast of shells. A thousand bards raised the name of Oscar: Morven answered to the sound. The daughter of Toscar was there; her voice was like the harp; when the distant sound comes, in the evening, on the soft-rustling breeze of the vale!

O lay me, ye that see the light, near some rock of my hills! let the thick hazels be around, let the rustling oak be near. Green be the place of my rest; let the sound of the distant torrent be heard. Daughter of Toscar, take the harp, and raise the lovely song of Selma; that sleep may overtake my soul in the midst of joy; that the dreams of my youth may return, and the days of the mighty Fingal. Selma! I behold thy towers, thy trees, thy shaded wall! I see the heroes of Morven; I hear the song of bards! Oscar lifts the sword of Cormalo; a thousand youths admire its studded thongs. They look with wonder on my son: They admire the strength of his arm. They mark the joy of his father's eyes; they long for an equal fame. And ye shall have your fame, O sons of streamy Morven! My soul is often brightened with song; I remember the friends of my youth. But sleep descends, in the sound of the harp! pleasant dreams begin to rise!

Ye sons of the chace, stand far distant, nor disturb
my rest. The bard of other times holds discourse
with his fathers, the chiefs of the days of old! Sons
of the chace, stand far distant! disturb not the
dreams of Ossian!

THE
SONGS OF SELMA.

ARGUMENT.

Address to the evening star. An apostrophe to Fingal and his times. Minona sings before the king the song of the unfortunate Colma; and the bards exhibit other specimens of their poetical talents; according to an annual custom established by the monarchs of the ancient Caledonians.

STAR of descending night! fair is thy light in the west! thou liftest thy unshorn head from thy cloud: thy steps are stately on thy hill. What dost thou behold in the plain? The stormy winds are laid. The murmur of the torrent comes from afar. Roaring waves climb the distant rock. The flies of evening are on their feeble wings; the hum of their course is on the field. What dost thou behold, fair light? But thou dost smile and depart. The waves come with joy around thee: they bathe thy lovely hair. Farewel, thou silent beam! let the light of Ossian's soul arise!

And it does arise in its strength! I behold my departed friends. Their gathering is on Lora, as in the days of other years. Fingal comes like a watry column of mist; his heroes are around; And see the

bards of song, grey-haired Ullin! stately Ryno!
Alpin,* with the tuneful voice! the soft complaint of
Minona! How are ye changed, my friends, since
the days of Selma's feast? when we contended, like
gales of spring, as the fly along the hill, and bend
by turns the feebly-whistling grass.

Minona† came forth in her beauty; with down-
cast look and tearful eye. Her hair flew slowly on
the blast, that rushed unfrequent from the hill. The
souls of the heroes were sad when she raised the
tuneful voice. Often had they seen the grave of
Salgar,‡ the dark dwelling of white-bosomed Colma.||
Colma left alone on the hill, with all her voice of
song! Salgar promised to come: but the night de-
scended around. Hear the voice of Colma, when she
sat alone on the hill!

COLMA.

It is night; I am alone, forlorn on the hill of
storms. The wind is heard in the mountain. The
torrent pours down the rock. No hut receives me
from the rain; forlorn on the hill of winds!

* Alpin is from the same root with Albion, or rather Albin, the ancient name of Britain; Alp, *high Island*, or *country*. The present name of our island has its origin in the Celtic tongue; so that those who derived it from any other, betrayed their ignorance of the ancient language of our country. *Brait* or *Braid*, extensive; and *in*, land.

† Ossian introduces Minona, not in the ideal scene in his own mind, which he had described, but at the annual feast of Selma, where the bards repeated their works before Fingal.

‡ Seagl-'er, a *hunter*.

|| Cul-math, a *woman with fine hair*.

Rise, moon! from behind thy clouds. Stars of the night arise! Lead me, some light, to the place, where my love rests from the chase alone! his bow near him, unstrung: his dogs panting around him. But here I must sit alone, by the rock of the mossy stream. The stream and the wind roar aloud. I hear not the voice of my love! Why delays my Salgar, why the chief of the hill, his promise? Here is the rock, and here the tree! here is the roaring stream! Thou didst promise with night to be here. Ah! whither is my Salgar gone? With thee I would fly from my father; with thee from my brother of pride. Our race have long been foes; we are not foes, O Salgar!

Cease a little while, O wind! stream, be thou silent awhile! let my voice be heard around. Let my wanderer hear me! Salgar! it is Colma who calls. Here is the tree, and the rock. Salgar, my love! I am here. Why delayest thou thy coming? Lo! the calm moon comes forth. The flood is bright in the vale. The rocks are grey on the steep. I see him not on the brow. His dogs come not before him, with tidings of his near approach. Here I must sit alone!

Who lie on the heath beside me? Are they my love and my brother? Speak to me, O my friends! To Colma they give no reply. Speak to me: I am alone! My soul is tormented with fears! Ah! they

are dead! Their swords are red from the fight. O my brother! my brother! why hast thou slain my Salgar? why, O Salgar! hast thou slain my brother? Dear were ye both to me! what shall I say in your praise? Thou wert fair on the hill among thousands! he was terrible in fight. Speak to me; hear my voice; hear me, sons of my love! They are silent; silent for ever! Cold, cold are their breasts of clay! Oh! from the rock on the hill; from the top of the windy steep, speak, ye ghosts of the dead! speak, I will not be afraid! Whither are ye gone to rest? In what cave of the hill shall I find the departed? No feeble voice is on the gale: no answer half-drowned in the storm!

I sit in my grief! I wait for morning in my tears! Rear the tomb, ye friends of the dead. Close it not till Colma come. My life flies away like a dream: why should I stay behind? Here shall I rest with my friends, by the stream of the sounding rock. When night comes on the hill; when the loud winds arise; my ghost shall stand in the blast, and mourn the death of my friends. The hunter shall hear from his booth. He shall fear but love my voice! For sweet shall my voice be for my friends: pleasant were her friends to Colma!

Such was thy song, Minona, softly-blushing daughter of Torman. Our tears descended for Colma, and our souls were sad! Ullin came with his harp;

he gave the song of Alpin. The voice of Alpin was pleasant: the soul of Ryno was a beam of fire! But they had rested in the narrow house: their voice had ceased in Selma. Ullin had returned, one day, from the chace, before the heroes fell. He heard their strife on the hill; their song was soft but sad! They mourned the fall of Morar, first of mortal men! His soul was like the soul of Fingal; his sword like the sword of Oscar. But he fell, and his father mourned: his sister's eyes were full of tears. Minona's eyes were full of tears, the sister of car-borne Morar. She retired from the song of Ullin, like the moon in the west, when she foresees the shower, and hides her fair head in a cloud. I touched the harp, with Ullin; the song of mourning rose!

RYNO.

The wind and the rain are past: calm is the noon of day. The clouds are divided in heaven. Over the green hills flies the inconstant sun. Red through the stony vale comes down the stream of the hill. Sweet are thy murmurs, O stream! but more sweet is the voice I here. It is the voice of Alpin, the son of song, mourning for the dead! Bent is his head of age; red his tearful eye. Alpin, thou son of song, why alone on the silent hill? Why complainest thou, as a blast in the wood; as a wave on the lonely shore?

ALPIN.

My tears, O Ryno! are for the dead; my voice for those that have passed away. Tall thou art on the hill; fair among the sons of the vale. But thou shalt fall like Morar;* the mourner shall sit on thy tomb. The hills shall know thee no more; thy bow shall lie in the hall, unstrung!

Thou wert swift, O Morar! as a roe on the desert; terrible as a meteor of fire. Thy wrath was as the storm. Thy sword in battle, as lightning in the field. Thy voice was a stream after rain; like thunder on distant hills. Many fell by thy arm; they were consumed in the flames of thy wrath. But when thou didst return from war, how peaceful was thy brow! Thy face was like the sun after rain; like the moon in the silence of night; calm as the breast of the lake when the loud wind is laid.

Narrow is thy dwelling now! dark the place of thine abode! With three steps I compass thy grave, O thou wast so great before! Four stones, with their heads of moss, are the only memorial of thee. A tree with scarce a leaf, long grass, which whistles in the wind, mark to the hunter's

* Mor-cr, *great man*.

eye the grave of the mighty Morar. Morar! thou art low indeed. Thou hast no mother to mourn thee; no maid with her tears of love. Dead is she that brought thee forth. Fallen is the daughter of Morglan.

Who on his staff is this? Who is this, whose head is white with age? whose eyes are red with tears? who quakes at every step? It is thy father,* O Morar! the father of no son but thee. He heard of thy fame in war; he heard of foes dispersed. He heard of Morar's renown; why did he not hear of his wound? Weep, thou father of Morar! weep; but thy son heareth thee not. Deep is the sleep of the dead; low their pillow of dust. No more shall he hear thy voice; no more awake at thy call. When shall it be morn in the grave, to bid the slumberer awake? Farewel, thou bravest of men! thou conqueror in the field! but the field shall see thee no more; nor the dark wood be lightened with the splendor of thy steel. Thou hast left no son. The song shall preserve thy name. Future times shall hear of thee; they shall hear of the fallen Morar!

The grief of all arose, but most the bursting sigh of Armin †. He remembers the death of his son, who fell in the days of his youth. Carmor ‡ was

* Torman, the son of Carshul, lord of I-mora, one of the western isles.
 † Armin, a hero. He was chief or petty king of Gorma, i. e. *the blue island*, supposed to be one of the Hebrides.

‡ Cear-mor, a tall dark-complexioned man.

near the hero, the chief of the echoing Galmal. Why bursts the sigh of Armin, he said? Is there a cause to mourn? The song comes, with its music, to melt and please the soul. It is like soft mist, that, rising from a lake, pours on the silent vale; the green flowers are filled with dew, but the sun returns in his strength, and the mist is gone. Why art thou sad, O Armin! chief of sea-surrounded Gorma?

Sad I am! nor small is my cause of woe! Carmor, thou hast lost no son; thou hast lost no daughter of beauty. Colgar the valiant lives; and Annira, fairest maid. The boughs of thy house ascend, O Carmor! but Armin is the last of his race. Dark is thy bed, O Daura! deep thy sleep in the tomb! When shalt thou awake with thy songs? with all thy voice of music?

Arise, winds of autumn, arise; blow along the heath! streams of the mountains roar! roar, tempests, in the groves of my oaks! walk through broken clouds, O moon! show thy pale face, at intervals! bring to my mind the night, when all my children fell; when Arindal the mighty fell; when Daura the lovely failed! Daura, my daughter! thou wert fair; fair as the moon on Fura;* white as the driven snow; sweet as the breathing gale. Arindal, thy bow was strong. Thy spear was swift in the field. Thy look was like mist on the wave: thy shield, a red cloud in

* Fuar-a, a cold island.

a storm. Armar, renowned in war, came, and sought Daura's love. He was not long refused: fair was the hope of their friends!

Erath, son of Odgal, repined: his brother had been slain by Armor. He came disguised like a son of the sea: fair was his skiff on the wave; white his locks of age; calm his serious brow. Fairest of women, he said, lovely daughter of Armin! a rock not distant in the sea, bears a tree on its side; red shines the fruit afar! There Armor waits for Daura. I come to carry his love! She went; she called on Armar. Nought answered, but the son * of the rock, Armor, my love! my love! why tormentest thou me with fear? Hear, son of Arnart, hear: it is Daura who calleth thee! Erath the traitor fled laughing to the land. She lifted up her voice; she called for her brother and her father. Arindal! Armin! none to relieve your Daura!

Her voice came over the sea. Arindal my son descended from the hill; rough in the spoils of the chase. His arrows rattled by his side; his bow was in his hand: five dark grey dogs attend his steps. He saw fierce Erath on the shore: he seized and bound him to an oak. Thick wind the thongs † of the hide

* By the son of the rock the poet means the echoing back of the human voice from a rock. The vulgar were of opinion, that this repetition of sound was made by a spirit within the rock; and they, on that account, called it *mac talla*; *the son who dwells in the rock*.

† The poet here only means that Erath was bound with leathern thongs.

around his limbs; he loads the wind with his groans: Arindal ascends the deep in his boat, to bring Daura to land. Armar came in his wrath, and let fly the grey-feathered shaft. It sung; it sunk in thy heart, O Arindal my son! for Erath the traitor thou diedst. The oar is stopped at once; he panted on the rock and expired. What is thy grief, O Daura, when round thy feet is poured thy brother's blood! The boat is broken in twain. Armar plunges into the sea, to rescue his Daura, or die. Sudden a blast from the hill came over the waves. He sunk, and he rose no more.

Alone, on the sea-beat rock, my daughter was heard to complain. Frequent and loud were her cries. What could her father do? All night I stood on the shore. I saw her by the faint beam of the moon. All night I heard her cries. Loud was the wind; the rain beat hard on the hill. Before morning appeared, her voice was weak. It died away, like the evening-breeze among the grass of the rocks. Spent with grief she expired; and left thee, Armin, alone. Gone is my strength in war! fallen my pride among women! When the storms aloft arise: when the north lifts the wave on high; I sit by the sounding shore, and look on the fatal rock. Often by the setting moon, I see the ghosts of my children. Half-viewless, they walk in mournful conference together. Will none of you speak in pity? They do not regard

their father. I am sad, O Carmor, nor small is my cause of woe!

Such were the words of the bards in the days of song; when the king heard the music of harps, the tales of other times! The chiefs gathered from all their hills, and heard the lovely sound. They praised the voice * of Cona! the first among a thousand bards! But age is now on my tongue; my soul has failed! I hear, at times, the ghosts of bards, and learn their pleasant song. But memory fails on my mind. I hear the call of years! They say, as they pass along, why does Ossian sing? Soon shall he lie in the narrow house, and no bard shall raise his fame! Roll on, ye dark-brown years; ye bring no joy on your course! Let the tomb open to Ossian, for his strength has failed. The sons of song are gone to rest. My voice remains, like a blast, that roars, lonely, on a sea-surrounded rock, after the winds are laid. The dark moss whistles there; the distant mariner sees the waving trees!

* Ossian is sometimes poetically called *the voice of Cona*.

END OF VOL. I.





