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## **The poems of Ossian**

in two volumes ; to which are prefixed dissertations on the æra and  
poems of Ossian

**Macpherson, James**

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The Battle of Lora

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THE BATTLE OF LORA.

It flew in the south sea of sound, then  
was caught in battle. The strength was  
the strength of a stream, the speed like  
the speed of a bird. The path was  
the path of a hero, the heart the heart  
of a hero. The soul was the soul  
of a hero. The hand was the hand  
of a hero. The word was the word  
of a hero.

THE

# BATTLE OF LORA:

A

## POEM.

THE BATTLE OF LORA  
WAS FIGHTED ON THE 15TH OF  
MAY 1557. IT WAS ONE OF  
THE MOST IMPORTANT BATTLES  
OF THE REFORMATION PERIOD.  
THE PROTESTANT ARMY, LEADED  
BY JOHN CALVIN, WON A  
DECISIVE VICTORY OVER THE  
CATHOLIC FORCES. THIS  
BATTLE WAS A MAJOR STEP  
TOWARDS THE ESTABLISHMENT  
OF THE REFORMED CHURCH  
IN SWITZERLAND.

## ARGUMENT.

FINGAL, on his return from Ireland, after he had expelled Swaran from that kingdom, made a feast to all his heroes; he forgot to invite Ma-ronnan and Aldo, two chiefs who had not been along with him in his expedition. They resented his neglect; and went over to Erragon, king of Sora, a country of Scandinavia, the declared enemy of Fingal. The valour of Aldo soon gained him a great reputation in Sora; and Lorma, the beautiful wife of Erragon, fell in love with him. He found means to escape with her and come to Fingal, who resided then in Selma on the western coast. Erragon invaded Scotland, and was slain in battle by Gaul the son of Morni, after he had rejected terms of peace offered him by Fingal. In this war Aldo fell, in a single combat, by the hands of his rival Erragon, and the unfortunate Lorma afterwards died of grief.

THE  
BATTLE OF LORA:

A POEM.

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SON of the distant land, who dwellest in the secret cell! do I hear the sound of thy grove? or is it thy voice of songs? The torrent was loud in my ear; but I heard a tuneful voice. Dost thou praise the chiefs of thy land; or the spirits<sup>a</sup> of the wind? But, lonely dweller of rocks! look thou on that heathy plain. Thou seest green tombs, with their rank, whistling grass; with their stones of mossy heads. Thou seest them, son of the rock; but Ossian's eyes have failed!

A mountain-stream comes roaring down, and sends its waters round a green hill. Four mossy stones, in the midst of withered grass, rear their heads on the top. Two trees, which the storms have bent, spread their whistling branches

<sup>a</sup> Alluding to the religious hymns of the Culdees.

around. This is thy dwelling, Erragon;<sup>b</sup> this thy narrow house: the sound of thy shells have been long forgot in Sora. Thy shield is become dark in thy hall. Erragon, king of ships! chief of distant Sora! how hast thou fallen on our mountains? how is the mighty low? Son of the secret cell! dost thou delight in songs? Hear the battle of Lora. The sound of its steel is long since past. So thunder on the darkened hill roars and is no more. The sun returns with his silent beams. The glittering rocks, and green heads of the mountains smile.

The bay of Cona received our ships<sup>c</sup> from Erin's rolling waves. Our white sheets hung loose to the masts. The boisterous winds roared behind the groves of Morven. The horn of the king is sounded; the deer start from their rocks. Our arrows flew in the woods. The feast of the hill is spread. Our joy was great on our rocks, for the fall of the terrible Swaran. Two heroes were forgot at our feast. The rage of their bosoms burned. They rolled their red eyes in secret. The sigh bursts from their breasts. They were seen to talk together, and

<sup>b</sup> Erragon, or Ferg-thonn, signifies *the rage of the waves*; probably a poetical name given him by Ossian himself; for he goes by the name of Annir in tradition.

<sup>c</sup> This was at Fingal's return from his war against Swaran.

to throw their spears on earth. They were two dark clouds in the midst of our joy; like pillars of mist on the settled sea. They glitter to the sun, but the mariners fear a storm.

“Raise my white sails,” said Ma-ronnan, “raise them to the winds of the west. Let us rush, O Aldo! through the foam of the northern wave. We are forgot at the feast: but our arms have been red in blood. Let us leave the hills of Fingal, and serve the king of Sora. His countenance is fierce. War darkens around his spear. Let us be renowned, O Aldo! in the battles of other lands.”

They took their swords, their shields of thongs. They rushed to Lumar’s resounding bay. They came to Sora’s haughty king, the chief of bounding steeds. Erragon had returned from the chase. His spear was red in blood. He bent his dark face to the ground; and whistled as he went. He took the strangers to his feasts: they fought and conquered in his wars.

Aldo returned with his fame towards Sora’s lofty walls. From her tower looked the spouse of Erragon, the humid, rolling eyes of Lorma. Her yellow hair flies on the wind of ocean. Her white breast heaves, like snow on heath; when the gentle winds arise, and slowly move it in the light. She saw young Aldo, like the beam of Sora’s setting sun. Her soft heart

sighed. Tears filled her eyes. Her white arm supported her head. Three days she sat within the hall, and covered her grief with joy. On the fourth she fled with the hero, along the troubled sea. They came to Cona's mossy towers, to Fingal king of spears.

"Aldo of the heart of pride!" said Fingal, rising in wrath: "shall I defend thee from the rage of Sora's injured king? who will now receive my people into their halls? Who will give the feast of strangers, since Aldo, of the little soul, has dishonoured my name in Sora? Go to thy hills, thou feeble hand! Go: hide thee in thy caves. Mournful is the battle we must fight, with Sora's gloomy king. Spirit of the noble Trenmor! When will Fingal cease to fight? I was born in the midst of battles,<sup>d</sup> and my steps must move in blood to the tomb. But my hand did not injure the weak, my steel did not touch the feeble in arms. I behold thy tempests, O Morven! which will overturn my halls! when my children are dead in battle, and none remains to dwell in Selma. Then will the feeble come; but they will not know my tomb.

<sup>d</sup> Comhal, the father of Fingal, was slain in battle, against the tribe of Morni, the very day that Fingal was born; so that he may, with propriety, be said to have been *born in the midst of battles*.

My renown is only in song. My deeds shall be as a dream to future times!"

His people gathered around Erragon, as the storms round the ghosts of night; when he calls them from the top of Morven, and prepares to pour them on the land of the stranger. He came to the shore of Cona. He sent his bard to the king; to demand the combat of thousands; or the land of many hills! Fingal sat in his hall, with the friends of his youth around him. The young heroes were at the chase, far distant in the desert. The grey-haired chiefs talked of other times; of the actions of their youth; when the aged Nartmor<sup>e</sup> came, the chief of streamy Lora.

"This is no time," said Nartmor, "to hear the songs of other years: Erragon frowns on the coast, and lifts ten thousand swords. Gloomy is the king among his chiefs! he is like the darkened moon amidst the meteors of night; when they sail along her skirts, and give the light that has sailed o'er her orb." "Come," said Fingal, "from thy hall; come, daughter of my love: come from thy hall, Bosmina,<sup>f</sup> maid of streamy Morven! Nartmor, take the steeds

<sup>e</sup> Neart-mór, *great strength*. Lora, *noisy*.

<sup>f</sup> Bos-mhina, *soft and tender hand*. She was the youngest of Fingal's children.

of the strangers. Attend the daughter of Fingal! Let her bid the king of Sora to our feast, to Selma's shaded wall. Offer him, O Bosmina! the peace of heroes, and the wealth of generous Aldo. Our youths are far distant. Age is on our trembling hands!"

She came to the host of Erragon, like a beam of light to a cloud. In her right hand was seen a sparkling shell. In her left an arrow of gold. The first, the joyful mark of peace! The latter, the sign of war. Erragon brightened in her presence, as a rock before the sudden beams of the sun; when they issue from a broken cloud, divided by the roaring wind!

"Son of the distant Sora," began the mildly-blushing maid, "come to the feast of Morven's king, to Selma's shaded walls. Take the peace of heroes, O warrior! let the dark sword rest by thy side. Chooseth thou the wealth of kings? Then hear the words of generous Aldo. He gives to Erragon an hundred steeds, the children of the rein: an hundred maids from distant lands: an hundred hawks with fluttering wing, that fly across the sky. An hundred girdles<sup>g</sup> shall also be thine, to bind high-bo-

<sup>g</sup> Sanctified girdles, till very lately, were kept in many families in the north of Scotland; they were bound about women in labour, and were supposed to alleviate their pains,

somed maids. The friends of the births of heroes. The cure of the sons of toil. Ten shells studded with gems, shall shine in Sora's towers: the bright water trembles on their stars, and seems to be sparkling wine. They gladdened once the kings of the world,<sup>h</sup> in the midst of their echoing halls. These, O hero! shall be thine; or thy white-bosomed spouse. Lorma shall roll her bright eyes in thy halls; though Fingal loves the generous Aldo: Fingal, who never injured an hero, though his arm is strong!"

"Soft voice of Cona!" replied the king, "tell him, he spreads his feast in vain. Let Fingal pour his spoils around me. Let him bend beneath my power. Let him give me the swords of his fathers: the shields of other times: that my children may behold them in my halls, and say, "These are the arms of Fingal!" "Never shall they behold them in thy halls!" said the rising pride of the maid. "They are in the hands of heroes, who never yielded in war. King of echoing Sora! the storm is ga-

and to accelerate the birth. They were impressed with several mystical figures, and the ceremony of binding them about the woman's waist, was accompanied with words and gestures which shewed the custom to have come originally from the Druids.

<sup>h</sup> The Roman emperors.

thering on our hills. Dost thou not foresee the fall of thy people, son of the distant land?"

She came to Selma's silent halls. The king beheld her down-cast eyes. He rose from his place, in his strength. He shook his aged locks. He took the sounding mail of Trenmor. The dark-brown shield of his fathers. Darkness filled Selma's hall, when he stretched his hand to his spear: the ghosts of thousands were near, and foresaw the death of the people. Terrible joy rose in the face of the aged heroes. They rushed to meet the foe. Their thoughts are on the deeds of other years: and on the fame that rises from death!

Now at Trathal's ancient tomb the dogs of the chase appeared. Fingal knew that his young heroes followed. He stopped in the midst of his course. Oscar appeared the first; then Morni's son, and Némi's race. Fercuth<sup>1</sup> shewed his gloomy form. Dermid spread his dark hair on wind. Ossian came the last. I hummed the song of other times. My spear supported my steps over the little streams. My thoughts were of mighty men. Fingal struck his bossy shield; and gave the dismal sign of war. A thousand swords at once unsheathed, gleam on

<sup>1</sup> Fear-cuth, the same with Fergus, *the man of the word*, or a commander of an army.

the waving heath. Three grey-haired sons of song raise the tuneful mournful voice. Deep and dark, with sounding steps, we rush, a gloomy ridge, along: like the shower of a storm, when it pours on a narrow vale.

The king of Morven sat on his hill. The sun-beam of battle flew on the wind. The friends of his youth are near, with all their waving locks of age. Joy rose in the hero's eyes when he beheld his sons in war: when he saw us amidst the lightning of swords, mindful of the deeds of our fathers. Erragon came on, in his strength, like the roar of a winter stream. The battle falls around his steps: death dimly stalks along by his side!

"Who comes," said Fingal, "like the bounding roe? like the hart of echoing Cona? His shield glitters on his side. The clang of his armour is mournful. He meets with Erragon in the strife! Behold the battle of the chiefs! It is like the contending of ghosts in a gloomy storm. But fallest thou, son of the hill! and is thy white bosom stained with blood? Weep, unhappy Lorma, Aldo is no more!" The king took the spear of his strength. He was sad for the fall of Aldo. He bent his deathful eyes on the foe: but Gaul met the king of Sora. Who can relate the fight of the chiefs? The mighty stranger fell!

“Sons of Cona!” Fingal cried aloud; “stop the hand of death. Mighty was he that is low. Much is he mourned in Sora! The stranger will come towards his hall, and wonder why it is so silent. The king is fallen, O stranger. The joy of his house is ceased. Listen to the sound of his woods. Perhaps his ghost is murmuring there! But he is far distant, on Morven, beneath the sword of a foreign foe.” Such were the words of Fingal, when the bard raised the song of peace. We stopped our uplifted swords. We spared the feeble foe. We laid Erragon in a tomb. I raised the voice of grief. The clouds of night came rolling down. The ghost of Erragon appeared to some. His face was cloudy and dark; an half-formed sigh is in his breast. “Blest be thy soul, O king of Sora! thine arm was terrible in war!”

Lorma sat in Aldo's hall. She sat at the light of a flaming oak. The night came down, but he did not return. The soul of Lorma is sad! “What detains thee, hunter of Cona! Thou didst promise to return. Has the deer been distant far? Do the dark winds sigh round thee on the heath? I am in the land of strangers; who is my friend, but Aldo? Come from thy sounding hills, O my best beloved!”<sup>b</sup>

Her eyes are turned toward the gate. She listens to the rustling blast. She thinks it is

Aldo's tread. Joy rises in her face! But sorrow returns again, like a thin cloud on the moon. "Wilt thou not return, my love? Let me behold the face of the hill! The moon is in the east. Calm and bright is the breast of the lake! When shall I behold his dogs, returning from the chase? When shall I hear his voice, loud and distant on the wind? Come from thy sounding hills, hunter of woody Cona!" His thin ghost appeared, on a rock, like a watry beam of feeble light: when the moon rushes sudden from between two clouds, and the midnight shower is on the field! She followed the empty form over the heath. She knew that her hero fell. I heard her approaching cries on the wind, like the mournful voice of the breeze, when it sighs on the grass of the cave!

She came. She found her hero! Her voice was heard no more. Silent she rolled her eyes. She was pale and wildly sad! Few were her days on Cona. She sunk into the tomb. Fingal commanded his bards; they sung over the death of Lorma. The daughters of Morven mourned her, for one day in the year, when the dark winds of autumn returned!

Son of the distant land!<sup>k</sup> Thou dwellest in the field of fame! O let thy song arise, at times,

<sup>k</sup> The poet addresses himself to the Caldee.

in praise of those who fell. Let their thin  
ghosts rejoice around thee; and the soul of  
Lorma come on a feeble beam:<sup>1</sup> when thou  
liest down to rest, and the moon looks into thy  
cave. Then shalt thou see her lovely; but the  
tear is still on her cheek!

<sup>1</sup> Be thou on a moon-beam, O Morna, near the window  
of my rest; when my thoughts are of peace; and the din of  
arms is past. FINGAL, Book I.