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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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Temora, Book III.

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TEMORA:

AN EPIC POEM.

BOOK III.

## A R G U M E N T

### TO BOOK III.

MORNING coming on, Fingal, after a speech to his people, devolves the command on Gaul, the son of Morni; it being the custom of the times, that the king should not engage, till the necessity of affairs required his superior valour and conduct. The king and Ossian retire to the rock of Cormul, which overlooked the field of battle. The bards sing the war-song. The general conflict is described. Gaul, the son of Morni, distinguishes himself; kills Tur-lathon, chief of Moruth, and other chiefs of lesser name. On the other hand, Foldath, who commanded the Irish army, (for Cathmor, after the example of Fingal, kept himself from battle), fights gallantly; kills Connal, chief of Dun-lora, and advances to engage Gaul himself. Gaul, in the mean time, being wounded in the hand by a random arrow, is covered by Fillan, the son of Fingal, who performs prodigies of valour. Night comes on. The horn of Fingal recalls his army. The bards meet them, with a congratulatory song, in which the praises of Gaul and Fillan are particularly celebrated. The chiefs sit down at a feast; Fingal misses Connal. The episode of Connal and Duth-caron is introduced; which throws further light on the ancient history of Ireland. Carril is dispatched to raise the tomb of Connal. The action of this book takes up the second day from the opening of the poem.

TEMORA:  
AN EPIC POEM.

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BOOK III.

WHO is that at blue-streaming Lubar? Who, by the bending hill of roes? Tall, he leans on an oak, torn from high by nightly winds. Who but Comhal's son, brightening in the last of his fields? His grey hair is on the breeze. He half-unsheaths the sword of Luno. His eyes are turned to Moi-lena, to the dark moving of foes. Dost thou hear the voice of the king? It is like the bursting of a stream in the desert, when it comes, between its echoing rocks, to the blasted field of the sun!

“Wide-skirted comes down the foe! Sons of woody Selma, arise! Be ye like the rocks of our land, on whose brown sides are the rolling of streams. A beam of joy comes on my soul. I see the foe mighty before me. It is when HE is feeble, that the sighs of Fingal are heard: lest death should come without renown, and darkness dwell on his tomb. Who shall lead the war, against the host of Alnecma? It is

only when danger grows, that my sword shall shine. Such was the custom, heretofore, of Trenmor, the ruler of winds! and thus descended to battle the blue-shielded Trathal!"

The chiefs bend toward the king. Each darkly seems to claim the war. They tell, by halves, their mighty deeds. They turn their eyes on Erin. But far before the rest, the son of Morni stands. Silent he stands; for who had not heard of the battles of Gaul? They rose within his soul. His hand, in secret, seized the sword. The sword which he brought from Strumon,<sup>c</sup> when the strength of Morni failed.

<sup>c</sup> Strumon, *stream of the hill*, the name of the seat of the family of Gaul, in the neighbourhood of Selma. During Gaul's expedition to Tromathon, mentioned in the *poem of Oithona*, Morni his father died. Morni ordered the *sword of Strumon* (which had been preserved, in the family, as a relique, from the days of Colgach, the most renowned of his ancestors) to be laid by his side in the tomb: at the same time, leaving it in charge to his son, not to take it from thence, till he was reduced to the last extremity. Not long after, two of his brothers being slain in battle, by Coldaronnan, chief of Clutha, Gaul went to his father's tomb to take the sword. His address to the spirit of the deceased hero, is the subject of the following short poem.

## GAUL.

Breaker of echoing shields, whose head is deep in shades;  
hear me from the darkness of Clora, O son of Colgach, hear!  
No rustling, like the eagle's wing, comes over the course

On his spear leans Fillan of Selma,<sup>d</sup> in the wandering of his locks. Thrice he raises his

of my streams. Deep bosomed in the midst of the desert, O king of Strumon, hear!

Dwellest thou in the shadowy breeze, that pours its dark wave over the grass? Cease to strew the beard of the thistle; O chief of Clora, hear!

Or ridest thou on a beam, amidst the dark trouble of clouds? Pourest thou the loud wind on seas, to roll their blue waves over isles? Hear me, father of Gaul; amidst thy terrors, hear!

The rustling of eagles is heard, the murmuring oaks shake their heads on the hills: dreadful and pleasant is thy approach, friend of the dwelling of heroes.

MORNI.

Who awakes me, in the midst of my cloud, where my locks of mist spread on the winds? Mixed with the noise of streams, why rises the voice of Gaul?

GAUL.

My foes are around me, Morni: their dark ships descend from their waves. Give the sword of Strumon; that beam which thou hidest in thy night.

MORNI.

Take the sword of resounding Strumon: I look on thy war, my son; I look, a dim meteor, from my cloud. Blue-shielded Gaul, destroy.

<sup>d</sup> Clatho was the daughter of Cathulla, king of Inistore. Fingal, in one of his expeditions to that island, fell in love with Clatho, and took her to wife, after the death of Roscrana, the daughter of Cormac, king of Ireland.

Clatho was the mother of Ryno, Fillan, and Bosmina,

eyes to Fingal: his voice thrice fails him as he speaks. My brother could not boast of battles: at once he strides away. Bent over a distant stream he stands: the tear hangs in his eye. He strikes, at times, the thistle's head, with his inverted spear. Nor is he unseen of Fingal. Sidelong he beholds his son. He beholds him, with bursting joy; and turns, amid his crowded soul. In silence turns the king toward Mora of woods. He hides the big tear with his locks. At length his voice is heard.

“First of the sons of Morni! Thou rock that defiest the storm! Lead thou my battle, for the race of low-laid Cormac. No boy's staff is thy spear: no harmless beam of light thy sword. Son of Morni of steeds, behold the foe! Destroy! Fillan, observe the chief! He is not calm in strife: nor burns he, heedless, in battle. My son, observe the chief! He is strong as Lubar's stream, but never foams and roars. High on cloudy Mora, Fingal shall behold the war. Stand, Ossian,<sup>e</sup> near thy father, by the falling stream. Raise the voice, O bards! Selma, move

mentioned in the *Battle of Lora*. Fillan is often called the son of Clatho, to distinguish him from those sons which Fingal had by Ros-crana.

<sup>e</sup> Ullin being sent to Morven with the body of Oscar, Ossian attends his father, in quality of chief bard.

beneath the sound. It is my latter field. Clothe it over with light."

As the sudden rising of winds; or distant rolling of troubled seas, when some dark ghost, in wrath, heaves the billows over an isle; an isle, the seat of mist, on the deep, for many dark-brown years! So terrible is the sound of the host, wide-moving over the field. Gaul is tall before them. The streams glitter within his strides. The bards raise the song by his side. He strikes his shield between. On the skirts of the blast, the tuneful voices rise.

"On Crona," said the bards, "there bursts a stream by night. It swells in its own dark course, till morning's early beam. Then comes it white from the hill, with the rocks and their hundred groves. Far be my steps from Crona. Death is tumbling there. Be ye a stream from Mora; sons of cloudy Morven!"

"Who rises, from his car, on Clutha? The hills are troubled before the king! The dark woods echo round, and lighten at his steel. See him amidst the foe, like Colgach's<sup>f</sup> sportful

<sup>f</sup> There are some traditions, but, I believe, of late invention, that this Colgach was the same with the Galgacus of Tacitus. He was the ancestor of Gaul, the son of Morni, and appears, from some really ancient traditions, to have been King, or Vergobret, of the Caledonians; and hence proceeded the pretensions of the family of Morni to the throne, which

ghost; when he scatters the clouds, and rides the eddying winds! It is Morni<sup>g</sup> of bounding steeds! Be like thy father, O Gaul!"

"Selma is opened wide. Bards take the trembling harps. Ten youths bear the oak of the feast. A distant sun-beam marks the hill. The dusky waves of the blast fly over the fields of grass. Why art thou silent, O Selma? The king returns with all his fame. Did not the battle roar? Yet peaceful is his brow? It roared, and Fingal overcame. Be like thy father, O Fillan!"

They move beneath the song. High wave their arms, as rushy fields, beneath autumnal

created a good deal of disturbance, both to Comhal and his son Fingal. The first was killed in battle, by that tribe; and it was after Fingal was grown up, that they were reduced to obedience. Colgach signifies *fiercely-looking*, which is a very proper name for a warrior, and is probably the origin of Galgacus; though I believe it a matter of mere conjecture, that the Colgach here mentioned was the same with that hero. I cannot help observing, that the song of the bards is conducted with propriety. Gaul, whose experience might have rendered his conduct cautious in war, has the example of his father, just rushing to battle, set before his eyes. Fillan, on the other hand, whose youth might make him impetuous and unguarded in action, is put in mind of the sedate and serene behaviour of Fingal upon like occasions.

<sup>g</sup> The expedition of Morni to Clutha, alluded to here, is handed down in tradition.

winds. On Mora stands the king in arms. Mist flies round his buckler abroad; as, aloft it hung on a bough, on Cormul's mossy rock. In silence I stood by Fingal, and turned my eyes on Cromla's<sup>h</sup> wood; lest I should behold the host, and rush amid my swelling soul. My foot is forward, on the heath. I glittered, tall, in steel: like the falling stream of Tromo, which nightly winds bind over with ice. The boy sees it, on high, gleaming to the early beam: toward it he turns his ear, and wonders why it is so silent!

Nor bent over a stream is Cathmor, like a youth in a peaceful field. Wide he drew forward the war, a dark and troubled wave. But when he beheld Fingal on Mora, his generous pride arose. "Shall the chief of Atha fight, and no king in the field? Foldath, lead my people forth. Thou art a beam of fire."

Forth issues Foldath of Moma, like a cloud, the robe of ghosts. He drew his sword, a flame, from his side. He bade the battle move. The tribes, like ridgy waves, dark pour their strength around. Haughty is his stride before them.

<sup>h</sup> The mountain Cromla was in the neighbourhood of the scene of this poem; which was nearly the same with that of Fingal.

His red eye rolls in wrath. He calls Cormul, chief of Dun-ratho;<sup>1</sup> and his words were heard.

“Cormul, thou beholdest that path. It winds green behind the foe. Place thy people there; lest Selma should escape from my sword. Bards of green-valleyed Erin, let no voice of yours arise. The sons of Morven must fall without song. They are the foes of Cairbar. Hereafter shall the traveller meet their dark thick mist on Lena, where it wanders with their ghosts, beside the reedy lake. Never shall they rise, without song, to the dwelling of winds.”

Cormul darkened as he went. Behind him rushed his tribe. They sunk beyond the rock. Gaul spoke to Fillan of Selma, as his eye pursued the course of the dark-eyed chief of Dun-ratho. “Thou beholdest the steps of Cormul! Let thine arm be strong! When he is low, son of Fingal, remember Gaul in war. Here I fall forward into battle, amid the ridge of shields.”

<sup>1</sup> Dun-ratho, *a hill with a plain on its top*. Cormuil, *blue eye*. Foldath dispatches here, Cormul, to lie in ambush behind the army of the Caledonians. This speech suits with the character of Foldath, which is, throughout, haughty and presumptuous. Towards the latter end of this speech, we find the opinion of the times, concerning the unhappiness of the souls of those who were buried without the funeral song. This doctrine was inculcated by the bards, to make their order respectable and necessary.

The sign of death ascends: the dreadful sound of Morni's shield. Gaul pours his voice between. Fingal rises on Mora. He saw them, from wing to wing, bending at once in strife. Gleaming on his own dark hill, stood Cathmor of streamy Atha. The kings were like two spirits of heaven, standing each on his gloomy cloud, when they pour abroad the winds, and lift the roaring seas. The blue-tumbling of waves is before them, marked with the paths of whales. They themselves are calm and bright. The gale lifts slowly their locks of mist!

What beam of light hangs high in air? What beam, but Morni's dreadful sword! Death is strewed on thy paths, O Gaul! Thou foldest them together in thy rage. Like a young oak falls Tur-lathon,<sup>k</sup> with his branches round him. His high-bosomed spouse stretches her white arms, in dreams, to the returning chief, as she sleeps by gurgling Moruth, in her disordered locks. It is his ghost, Oichaoma. The chief is lowly laid. Hearken not to the winds for Tur-lathon's echoing shield. It is pierced, by his streams. Its sound is past away.

<sup>k</sup> Tur-lathon, *broad trunk of a tree*. Móruth, *great stream*. Oichaoma, *mild maid*. Dun-lora, *the hill of the noisy stream*. Duth-caron, *dark-brown man*.

Not peaceful is the hand of Foldath. He winds his course in blood. Connal met him in fight. They mixed their clanging steel. Why should mine eyes behold them! Connal, thy locks are grey! Thou wert the friend of strangers, at the moss-covered rock of Dun-lora. When the skies were rolled together; then thy feast was spread. The stranger heard the winds without; and rejoiced at thy burning oak. Why, son of Duth-caron, art thou laid in blood! The blasted tree bends above thee. Thy shield lies broken near. Thy blood mixes with the stream; thou breaker of the shields!

Ossian took the spear, in his wrath. But Gaul rushed forward on Foldath. The feeble pass by his side: his rage is turned on Moma's chief. Now they had raised their deathful spears: unseen an arrow came. It pierced the hand of Gaul. His steel fell sounding to earth. Young Fillan came,<sup>1</sup> with Cormul's shield! He stretched it large before the chief. Foldath sent his shouts abroad, and kindled all the field;

<sup>1</sup> Fillan had been dispatched by Gaul to oppose Cormul, who had been sent by Foldath to lie in ambush behind the Caledonian army. It appears that Fillan had killed Cormul, otherwise, he could not be supposed to have possessed himself of the shield of that chief.

as a blast that lifts the wide-winged flame over Lumon's echoing groves.<sup>m</sup>

"Son of blue-eyed Clatho," said Gaul, "O Fillan! thou art a beam from heaven; that, coming on the troubled deep, binds up the tempest's wing. Cormul is fallen before thee. Early art thou in the fame of thy fathers. Rush not too far, my hero. I cannot lift the spear to aid I stand harmless in battle: but my voice shall be poured abroad. The sons of Selma shall hear, and remember my former deeds."

His terrible voice rose on the wind. The host bends forward in fight. Often had they heard him, at Strumon, when he called them to the chase of the hinds. He stands tall, amid the war, as an oak in the skirts of a storm, which now is clothed on high, in mist; then shews its broad, waving head. The musing hunter lifts his eye, from his own rushy field!

My soul pursues thee, O Fillan! through the path of thy fame. Thou rolledst the foe before thee. Now Foldath, perhaps, may fly: but night comes down with its clouds. Cathmor's horn is heard on high. The sons of Selma hear the voice of Fingal, from Mora's gathered mist.

<sup>m</sup> Lumon, *bending hill*; a mountain in Inis-huna, or that part of South-Britain which is over against the Irish coast.

The bards pour their song, like dew, on the returning war.

“Who comes from Strumon,” they said, “amid her wandering locks? She is mournful in her steps, and lifts her blue eyes toward Erin. Why art thou sad, Evir-choama?” Who is like thy chief in renown? He descended dreadful to battle; he returns, like a light from a cloud. He raised the sword in wrath: they shrunk before blue-shielded Gaul!

“Joy, like the rustling gale, comes on the soul of the king. He remembers the battles of old; the days wherein his fathers fought. The days of old return on Fingal’s mind, as he beholds the renown of his son. As the sun rejoices, from his cloud, over the tree his beams have raised, as it shakes its lonely head on the heath; so joyful is the king over Fillan!

“As the rolling of thunder on hills, when Lara’s fields are still and dark, such are the steps of Selma, pleasant and dreadful to the ear. They return with their sound, like eagles to their dark-brown rock, after the prey is torn on the field, the dun sons of the bounding hind.

<sup>n</sup> Evir-chóama, *mild and stately maid*; the wife of Gaul. She was the daughter of Casdu-conglass, chief of I-dronlo, one of the Hebrides.

Your fathers rejoice from their clouds, sons of streamy Selma!"

Such was the nightly voice of bards, on Mora of the hinds. A flame rose, from an hundred oaks, which winds had torn from Cormul's steep. The feast is spread in the midst: around sat the gleaming chiefs. Fingal is there in his strength. The eagle-wing<sup>o</sup> of his helmet sounds. The rustling blasts of the west, unequal rush through night. Long looks the king in silence round: at length his words are heard.

"My soul feels a want in our joy. I behold a breach among my friends. The head of one tree is low. The squally wind pours in on Selma. Where is the chief of Dun-lora? Ought Connal to be forgot at the feast? When did he forget the stranger, in the midst of his echoing hall? Ye are silent in my presence! Connal is then no more. Joy meet thee, O warrior! like a stream of light. Swift be thy course to thy fathers, along the roaring winds! Ossian, thy soul is fire: kindle the memory of the king. Awake the battles of Connal, when first he shone in war. The locks of Connal were grey.

<sup>o</sup> The kings of Caledonia and Ireland had a plume of eagle's feathers, by way of ornament, in their helmets. It was from this distinguished mark that Ossian knew Cathmor in the second book.

His days of youth<sup>p</sup> were mixed with mine. In one day Duthcaron first strung our bows, against the roes of Dun-lora."

"Many," I said, "are our paths to battle, in green-vallied Erin. Often did our sails arise, over the blue tumbling waves; when we came, in other days, to aid the race of Conar. The strife roared once in Alnecma, at the foam-covered streams of Duth-úla.<sup>q</sup> With Cormac descended to battle Duthcaron from cloudy Selma. Nor descended Duthcaron alone, his son was by his side, the long-haired youth of Connal, lifting the first of his spears. Thou didst command them, O Fingal! to aid the king of Erin.

"Like the bursting strength of ocean, the

<sup>p</sup> After the death of Comhal, and during the usurpation of the tribe of Morni, Fingal was educated in private by Duthcaron. It was then he contracted that intimacy with Connal, the son of Duthcaron, which occasions his regretting so much his fall. When Fingal was grown up, he soon reduced the tribe of Morni; and, as it appears from the subsequent episode, sent Duthcaron and his son Connal, to the aid of Cormac, the son of Conar, king of Ireland, who was driven to the last extremity, by the insurrections of the Firbolg. This episode throws farther light on the contests between the Cael and Firbolg.

<sup>q</sup> Duth-úla, a river in Connaught; it signifies *dark-rushing water*.

sons of Bolgar rushed to war. Colc-ulla<sup>r</sup> was before them, the chief of blue-streaming Atha. The battle was mixed on the plain. <sup>s</sup>Cormac shone in his own strife, bright as the forms of his fathers. But, far before the rest, Duthcaron hewed down the foe. Nor slept the arm of Connal, by his father's side. Colc-ulla prevailed

<sup>r</sup> Colc-ulla, *firm look in readiness*; he was the brother of Borbar-duthul, the father of Cairbar and Cathmor, who, after the death of Cormac, the son of Artho, successively mounted the Irish throne.

<sup>s</sup> Cormac, the son of Conar, the second king of Ireland, of the race of the Caledonians. This insurrection of the Firbolg happened towards the latter end of the long reign of Cormac. He never possessed the Irish throne peaceably. The party of the family of Atha had made several attempts to overturn the succession in the race of Conar, before they effected it, in the minority of Cormac, the son of Artho. Ireland, from the most ancient accounts concerning it, seems to have been always so disturbed by domestic commotions, that it is difficult to say, whether it ever was, for any length of time, subject to one monarch. It is certain, that every province, if not every small district, had its own king. One of these petty princes assumed, at times, the title of king of Ireland, and, on account of his superior force, or in cases of public danger, was acknowledged by the rest as such; but the succession from father to son, does not appear to have been established. It was the divisions amongst themselves, arising from the bad constitution of their government, that, at last, subjected the Irish to a foreign yoke.

on the plain: like scattered mist, fled the people of Cormac.<sup>†</sup>

“Then rose the sword of Duthcaron, and the steel of broad-shielded Connal. They shaded their flying friends, like two rocks with their heads of pine. Night came down on Duth-ula: silent strode the chiefs over the field. A mountain-stream roared across the path, nor could Duthcaron bound over its course. “Why stands my father?” said Connal. “I hear the rushing foe.”

“Fly, Connal,” he said. “Thy father’s strength begins to fail. I come wounded from battle. Here let me rest in night.” “But thou shalt not remain alone,” said Connal’s bursting sigh. “My shield is an eagle’s wing, to cover the king of Dun-lora.” He bends dark above his father. The mighty Duthcaron dies.

“Day rose, and night returned. No lonely bard appeared, deep-musing on the heath: and could Connal leave the tomb of his father, till he should receive his fame? He bent the bow against the roes of Duth-ula. He spread the

<sup>†</sup> The inhabitants of Ullin or Ulster, who were of the race of the Caledonians, seem, alone, to have been the firm friends to the succession in the family of Conar. The Firbolg were only subject to them by constraint, and embraced every opportunity to throw off their yoke.

lonely feast. Seven nights he laid his head on the tomb, and saw his father in his dreams. He saw him rolled, dark, in a blast, like the vapour of reedy Lego. At length the steps of Colgan<sup>u</sup> came, the bard of high Temora. Duth-

<sup>u</sup> Colgan, the son of Cathmul, was the principal bard of Cormac, king of Ireland. The following dialogue, on the loves of Fingal and Ros-crána, may be ascribed to him:

## ROS-CRANA.

By night, came a dream to Ros-crána; I feel my beating soul. No vision of the forms of the dead came to the blue eyes of Erin. But, rising from the wave of the north, I beheld him bright in his locks. I beheld the son of the king. My beating soul is high. I laid my head down in night: again ascended the form. Why delayest thou thy coming, young rider of stormy waves?

But there, far distant, he comes; where seas roll their green ridges in mist! Young dweller of my soul; why dost thou delay?

## FINGAL.

It was the soft voice of Moi-lena! the pleasant breeze of the valley of roes! But why dost thou hide thee in shades? Young love of heroes, rise. Are not thy steps covered with light? In thy groves thou appearest, Ros-crána, like the sun in the gathering of clouds. Why dost thou hide thee in shades? Young love of heroes, rise.

## ROS-CRANA.

My fluttering soul is high! Let me turn from the steps of the king. He has heard my secret voice, and shall my blue eyes roll in his presence? Roe of the hill of moss, toward thy dwelling I move. Meet me, ye breezes of Mora! as I move

caron received his fame, and brightened, as he rose on the wind."

"Pleasant to the ear," said Fingal, "is the praise of the kings of men; when their bows are strong in battle; when they soften at the sight of the sad. Thus let my name be renowned, when bards shall lighten my rising soul. Carril, son of Kinfena! take the bards and raise a tomb. To-night let Connal dwell within his narrow house. Let not the soul of the valiant wander on the winds. Faint glimmers the moon on Moi-lena, through the broad-headed groves of the hill! Raise stones, beneath its beam, to all the fallen in war. Though no chiefs were they, yet their hands were strong in fight. They were my rock in danger: the

through the valley of winds. But why should he ascend his ocean? Son of heroes, my soul is thine! My steps shall not move to the desert; the light of Ros-crána is here.

FINGAL.

It was the light tread of a ghost, the fair dweller of eddying winds. Why deceivest thou me with thy voice? Here let me rest in shades. Shouldst thou stretch thy white arm from thy grove, thou sun-beam of Cormac of Erin!

ROS-CRANA.

He is gone; and my blue eyes are dim; faint-rolling, in all my tears. But, there, I behold him, alone: king of Selma, my soul is thine. Ah me! what clanging of armour! Colc-ulla of Atha is near!

mountain from which I spread my eagle-wings. Thence am I renowned. Carril, forget not the low!"

Loud, at once, from the hundred bards, rose the song of the tomb. Carril strode before them; they are the murmur of streams behind his steps. Silence dwells in the vales of Moilena, where each, with its own dark rill, is winding between the hills. I heard the voice of the bards, lessening, as they moved along. I leaned forward from my shield; and felt the kindling of my soul. Half-formed, the words of my song burst forth upon the wind. So hears a tree, on the vale, the voice of spring around. It pours its green leaves to the sun. It shakes its lonely head. The hum of the mountain bee is near it; the hunter sees it, with joy, from the blasted heath.

Young Fillan at a distance stood. His helmet lay glittering on the ground. His dark hair is loose to the blast. A beam of light is Clatho's son! He heard the words of the king with joy. He leaned forward on his spear.

"My son," said car-borne Fingal; "I saw thy deeds, and my soul was glad. The fame of our fathers, I said, bursts from its gathering cloud. 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. They are thy strength in the field. Then shalt thou be long renowned, and behold the tombs of the old. The memory of the past returns; my deeds in other years: when first I descended from ocean on the green-vallied isle."

We bend towards the voice of the king. The moon looks abroad from her cloud. The grey-skirted mist is near: the dwelling of the ghosts!