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The poems of Ossian

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

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F I N G A L,

AN ANCIENT EPIC POEM.

BOOK V.

VOL. II.

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ARGUMENT

TO BOOK V.

CUTHULLIN and Connal still remain on the hill. Fingal and Swaran meet; the combat is described. Swaran is overcome, bound, and delivered over as a prisoner to the care of Ossian and Gaul the son of Morni; Fingal, his younger sons, and Oscar, still pursue the enemy. The episode of Orla, a chief of Lochlin, who was mortally wounded in the battle, is introduced. Fingal, touched with the death of Orla, orders the pursuit to be discontinued; and, calling his sons together, he is informed that Ryno, the youngest of them, was slain. He laments his death, hears the story of Lamderg and Gelchossa, and returns towards the place where he had left Swaran. Carril, who had been sent by Cuthullin to congratulate Fingal on his victory, comes in the mean time to Ossian. The conversation of the two poets closes the action of the fourth day.

F I N G A L,
AN ANCIENT EPIC POEM.
IN SIX BOOKS.

BOOK V.

ON Cromla's resounding side, Connal spoke to the chief of the noble car. "Why that gloom, son of Semo? Our friends are the mighty in fight. Renowned art thou, O warrior! many were the deaths of thy steel. Often has Bragela met, with blue-rolling eyes of joy: often has she met her hero, returning in the midst of the valiant; when his sword was red with slaughter; when his foes were silent in the fields of the tomb. Pleasant to her ears were thy bards, when thy deeds arose in song.

"But behold the king of Morven! He moves, below, like a pillar of fire. His strength is like the stream of Lubar, or the wind of the echoing Cromla; when the branchy forests of night are torn from all their rocks! Happy are thy people, O Fingal! thine arm shall finish their wars. Thou art the first in their dangers: the wisest in the days of their peace. Thou speakest, and

thy thousands obey: armies tremble at the sound of thy steel. Happy are thy people, O Fingal! king of resounding Selma! Who is that so dark and terrible, coming in the thunder of his course? who but Starno's son, to meet the king of Morven? Behold the battle of the chiefs! it is the storm of the ocean, when two spirits meet far distant, and contend for the rolling of waves. The hunter hears the noise on his hill. He sees the high billows advancing to Ardven's shore!"

Such were the words of Connal; when the heroes met in fight. There was the clang of arms! there, every blow like the hundred hammers of the furnace! Terrible is the battle of the kings; dreadful the look of their eyes. Their dark-brown shields are cleft in twain. Their steel flies, broken, from their helms. They fling their weapons down. Each rushes to his hero's grasp: their sinewy arms bend round each other; they turn from side to side, and strain and stretch their large spreading limbs below. But when the pride of their strength arose, they shook the hill with their heels. Rocks tumble from their places on high; the green-headed bushes are overturned. At length the strength of Swaran fell: the king of the groves is bound. Thus have I seen on Cona; but Cona I behold no more! thus have I seen two dark hills, removed from their place,

by the strength of the bursting stream. They turn from side to side in their fall; their tall oaks meet one another on high. Then they tumble together with all their rocks and trees. The streams are turned by their side. The red ruin is seen afar.

“Sons of distant Morven,” said Fingal; “guard the king of Lochlin! He is strong as his thousand waves. His hand is taught to war. His race is of the times of old. Gaul, thou first of my heroes; Ossian, king of songs, attend. He is the friend of Agandecca; raise to joy his grief. But Oscar, Fillan, and Ryno, ye children of the race! pursue Lochlin over Lena! that no vessel may hereafter bound on the dark-rolling waves of Inistore!”

They flew sudden across the heath. He slowly moved, like a cloud of thunder, when the sultry plain of summer is silent and dark! His sword is before him as a sun-beam; terrible as the streaming meteor of night. He came toward a chief of Lochlin. He spoke to the son of the wave. “Who is that so dark and sad, at the rock of the roaring stream? He cannot bound over its course: how stately is the chief! His bossy shield is on his side; his spear, like the tree of the desert! Youth of the dark-red hair, art thou of the foes of Fingal?”

“I am a son of Lochlin,” he cries, “strong

is my arm in war. My spouse is weeping at home. Orla shall never return!" "Or fights or yields the hero?" said Fingal, of the noble deeds; "foes do not conquer in my presence: my friends are renowned in the hall. Son of the wave, follow me, partake the feast of my shells: pursue the deer of my desert: be thou the friend of Fingal." "No:" said the hero, "I assist the feeble. My strength is with the weak in arms. My sword has been always unmatched, O warrior! let the king of Morven yield!" "I never yielded, Orla! Fingal never yielded to man. Draw thy sword, and chuse thy foe. Many are my heroes!"

"Does then the king refuse the fight?" said Orla of the dark-brown shield. "Fingal is a match for Orla; and he alone of all his race! But, king of Morven; if I shall fall, as one time the warrior must die; raise my tomb in the midst: let it be the greatest on Lena. Send over the dark-blue wave, the sword of Orla to the spouse of his love; that she may shew it to her son, with tears, to kindle his soul to war." "Son of the mournful tale," said Fingal, "why dost thou awaken my tears? One day the warriors must die, and the children see their useless arms in the hall. But, Orla, thy tomb shall rise. Thy white-bosomed spouse shall weep over thy sword."

They fought on the heath of Lena. Feeble was the arm of Orla. The sword of Fingal descended, and cleft his shield in twain. It fell and glittered on the ground, as the moon on the ruffled stream. "King of Morven," said the hero, "lift thy sword and pierce my breast. Wounded and faint from battle, my friends have left me here. The mournful tale shall come to my love, on the banks of the streamy Lota; when she is alone in the wood, and the rustling blast in the leaves!"

"No;" said the king of Morven, "I will never wound thee, Orla. On the banks of Lota let her see thee, escaped from the hands of war. Let thy grey-haired father, who, perhaps, is blind with age: let him hear the sound of thy voice, and brighten within his hall. With joy let the hero rise, and search for his son with his hands!" "But never will he find him, Fingal;" said the youth of the streamy Lota. "On Lena's heath I must die: foreign bards shall talk of me. "My broad belt covers my wound of death. I give it to the wind!"

The dark blood poured from his side; he fell pale on the heath of Lena. Fingal bent over him as he died, and called his younger chiefs. "Oscar and Fillan, my sons, raise high the memory of Orla. Here let the dark-haired hero rest, far from the spouse of his love. Here let

him rest in his narrow house, far from the sound of Lota. The feeble will find his bow at home, but will not be able to bend it. His faithful dogs howl on his hills; his boars, which he used to pursue, rejoice. Fallen is the arm of battle! the mighty among the valiant is low! Exalt the voice, and blow the horn, ye sons of the king of Morven! Let us go back to Swaran, to send the night away on song. Fillan, Oscar, and Ryno, fly over the heath of Lena. Where, Ryno, art thou, young son of fame? Thou art not wont to be the last to answer thy father's voice!"

"Ryno," said Ullin, first of bards, "is with the awful forms of his fathers. With Trathal king of shields; with Trenmor of mighty deeds. The youth is low, the youth is pale, he lies on Lena's heath!" "Fell the swiftest in the race," said the king, "the first to bend the bow? Thou scarce hast been known to me? why did young Ryno fall? But sleep thou softly on Lena, Fingal shall soon behold thee. Soon shall my voice be heard no more, and my footsteps cease to be seen. The bards will tell of Fingal's name: the stones will talk of me. But, Ryno, thou art low indeed! thou hast not received thy fame. Ullin, strike the harp for Ryno; tell what the chief would have been. Farewell, thou first in every field! No more shall I direct

thy dart! Thou that hast been so fair! I behold thee not. Farewell!" The tear is on the cheek of the king, for terrible was his son in war. His son! that was like a beam of fire by night on a hill; when the forests sink down in its course, and the traveller trembles at the sound! But the winds drive it beyond the steep. It sinks from sight, and darkness prevails.

"Whose fame is in that dark-green tomb?" begun the king of generous shells: "Four stones, with their heads of moss, stand there! They mark the narrow house of death. Near it let Ryno rest. A neighbour to the brave let him lie. Some chief of fame is here, to fly, with my son, on clouds. O Ullin! raise the songs of old. Awake their memory in their tomb. If in the field they never fled, my son shall rest by their side. He shall rest, far distant from Morven, on Lena's resounding plains."

"Here," said the bard of song, "here rest the first of heroes. Silent is Lamdergⁿ in this place: dumb is Ullin, king of swords. And who, soft-smiling from her cloud, shews me her face of love? Why, daughter, why so pale art thou, first of the maids of Cromla? Dost thou sleep with the foes in battle, white-bosomed

ⁿ Lamh-dhearg signifies *bloody hand*. Gelchossa, *white legged*. Tuathal, *surlly*. Ulfadda, *long beard*. Ferchios, *the conqueror of men*.

daughter of Tuathal? Thou hast been the love of thousands; but Lamderg was thy love. He came to Tura's mossy towers, and, striking his dark buckler, spoke: "Where is Gelchossa, my love, the daughter of the noble Tuathal? I left her in the hall of Tura, when I fought with great Ulfada. Return soon, O Lamderg! she said; for here I sit in grief. Her white breast rose with sighs. Her cheek was wet with tears. But I see her not coming to meet me; to sooth my soul after war. Silent is the hall of my joy! I hear not the voice of the bard. ° Bran does not shake his chains at the gate, glad at the coming of Lamderg. Where is Gelchossa, my love, the mild daughter of the generous Tuathal?"

"Lamderg!" says Ferchios, son of Aidon, "Gelchossa moves stately on Cromla. She and the maids of the bow, pursue the flying deer." "Ferchios!" replied the chief of Cromla, "no noise meets the ear of Lamderg! No sound is in the woods of Lena. No deer fly in my sight. No panting dog pursues. I see not Gelchossa, my love, fair as the full moon setting on the

° Bran is a common name of grey-hounds to this day. It is a custom in the north of Scotland, to give the names of the heroes mentioned in this poem, to their dogs; a proof that they are familiar to the ear, and their fame generally known.

hills. Go, Ferchios, go to Allad,^p the grey-haired son of the rock. His dwelling is in the circle of stones. He may know of the bright Gelchossa."

"The son of Aidon went. He spoke to the ear of age. "Allad! dweller of rocks: thou that tremblest alone! what saw thine eyes of age?" "I saw," answered Allad the old, "Ullin, the son of Cairbar. He came, in darkness, from Cromla. He hummed a surly song; like a blast in a leafless wood. He entered the hall of Tura. "Lamderg," he said, "most dreadful of men, fight, or yield to Ullin." "Lamderg," replied Gelchossa, "the son of battle, is not here. He fights Ulfada, mighty chief. He is not here, thou first of men! But Lamderg never yields. He will fight the son of Cairbar." "Lovely art thou," said terrible Ullin, "daughter of the generous Tuathal. I carry thee to Cairbar's halls. The valiant shall have Gelchossa. Three days I remain on Cromla, to wait that son of battle, Lamderg. On the fourth Gelchossa is mine; if the mighty Lamderg flies."

^p Allad is a druid: he is called the son of the rock, from his dwelling in a cave; and the circle of stones here mentioned, is the pale of the druidical temple. He is here consulted as one who had a supernatural knowledge of things; from the druids, no doubt, came the ridiculous notion of the second sight, which prevailed in the highlands and isles.

“Allad,” said the chief of Cromla, “peace to thy dreams in the cave. Ferchios, sound the horn of Lamderg, that Ullin may hear in his halls.” Lamderg, like a roaring storm, ascended the hill from Tura. He hummed a surly song as he went, like the noise of a falling stream. He darkly stood upon the hill, like a cloud varying its form to the wind. He rolled a stone, the sign of war. Ullin heard in Cairbar’s hall. The hero heard, with joy, his foe. He took his father’s spear. A smile brightens his dark-brown cheek, as he places his sword by his side. The dagger glittered in his hand. He whistled as he went.

“Gelchossa saw the silent chief, as a wreath of mist ascending the hill. She struck her white and heaving breast; and silent, tearful, feared for Lamderg. “Cairbar, hoary chief of shells,” said the maid of the tender hand, “I must bend the bow on Cromla. I see the dark-brown hinds!” She hasted up the hill. In vain! the gloomy heroes fought. Why should I tell to Selma’s king, how wrathful heroes fight? Fierce Ullin fell. Young Lamderg came, all pale, to the daughter of generous Tuathal!” “What blood, my love,” she trembling said; “what blood runs down my warrior’s side?” “It is Ullin’s blood,” the chief replied, “thou fairer than the snow! Gelchossa, let me rest here a

little while." The mighty Lamderg died! "And sleepest thou so soon on earth, O chief of shady Tura?" Three days she mourned beside her love. The hunters found her cold. They raised this tomb above the three. Thy son, O king of Morven! may rest here with heroes."

"And here my son shall rest," said Fingal. "The voice of their fame is in mine ears. Fillan and Fergus! bring hither Orla; the pale youth of the stream of Lota! Not unequalled shall Ryno lie in earth, when Orla is by his side. Weep, ye daughters of Morven! ye maids of the streamy Lota, weep! Like a tree they grew on the hills. They have fallen like the oak of the desert; when it lies across a stream, and withers in the wind. Oscar! chief of every youth! thou seest how they have fallen. Be thou like them, on earth renowned: like them, the song of bards. Terrible were their forms in battle; but calm was Ryno in the days of peace. He was like the bow of the shower, seen far distant on the stream, when the sun is setting on Mora; when silence dwells on the hill of deer. Rest, youngest of my sons! rest, O Ryno! on Lena. We too shall be no more. Warriors one day must fall!"

Such was thy grief, thou king of swords, when Ryno lay on earth. What must the grief of Ossian be; for thou thyself art gone! I hear

not thy distant voice on Cona. My eyes perceive thee not. Often forlorn and dark I sit at thy tomb, and feel it with my hands. When I think I hear thy voice, it is but the passing blast. Fingal has long since fallen asleep; the ruler of the war!

Then Gaul and Ossian sat with Swaran, on the soft green banks of Lubar. I touched the harp to please the king. But gloomy was his brow. He rolled his red eyes towards Lena. The hero mourned his host. I raised mine eyes to Cromla's brow. I saw the son of generous Semo. Sad and slow, he retired from his hill, towards the lonely cave of Tura. He saw Fingal victorious, and mixed his joy with grief. The sun is bright on his armour. Connal slowly strode behind. They sunk behind the hill, like two pillars of the fire of night; when winds pursue them over the mountain, and the flaming heath resounds! Beside a stream of roaring foam, his cave is in a rock. One tree bends above it. The rushing winds echo against its sides. Here rests the chief of Erin; the son of generous Semo. His thoughts are on the battles he lost. The tear is on his cheek. He mourned the departure of his fame, that fled like the mist of Cona. O Bragela! thou art too far remote, to cheer the soul of the hero. But let him see thy bright form in his mind: that

his thoughts may return to the lonely sun-beam of his love!

Who comes with the locks of age? It is the son of songs. "Hail, Carril of other times! Thy voice is like the harp in the halls of Tura. Thy words are pleasant as the shower which falls on the sunny field. Carril, of the times of old, why comest thou from the son of the generous Semo?"

"Ossian, king of swords," replied the bard, "thou best can raise the song. Long hast thou been known to Carril, thou ruler of war! Often have I touched the harp to lovely Everallin. Thou too hast often joined my voice in Branno's hall of generous shells. And often, amidst our voices, was heard the mildest Everallin. One day she sung of Cormac's fall, the youth who died for her love. I saw the tears on her cheek, and on thine, thou chief of men. Her soul was touched for the unhappy, though she loved him not. How fair among a thousand maids, was the daughter of generous Branno!"

"Bring not, Carril," I replied, "bring not her memory to my mind. My soul must melt at the remembrance. My eyes must have their tears. Pale in the earth is she, the softly-blushing fair of my love! But sit thou on the heath, O bard! and let us hear thy voice. It is plea-

sant as the gale of 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!"