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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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Comala

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COMALA:

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DRAMATIC POEM.

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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, Book 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 Hiddallan 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:

A DRAMATIC POEM.

THE PERSONS.

FINGAL.	MELILCOMA,	} Daughters of Morni.
HIDALLAN.	DERSAGRENA,	
COMALA.	BARDS.	

DERSAGRENA.

THE chase 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.^c

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

^c Melilcoma,—*soft-rolling eye.*

away. A meteor played round his branching horns! the awful faces^d of other times looked from the clouds of Cróna!

DERSAGRENA.^e

These are the signs of Fingal's death. The king of shields is fallen! and Caracul prevails. Rise, Comala,^f 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 towards the fields of his promise. Where art thou, O Fingal? the night is gathering around!

^d *Apparent diræ facies, inimicaque Trojæ
Numina magna deûm.* VIRGIL.

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

^e Dersagrena, *the brightness of a sun-beam.*

^f Comala, *the maid of the pleasant brow.*

COMALA.

O Cárun^g 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 host; bright as the coming forth of the morning in the cloud of an early shower.

HIDALLAN.^h

Dwell, thou mist of gloomy Crona, dwell on

^g Carun or Cara'on, a winding river.—This river retains still the name of Carron, 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 mœnia Scotis:
Hic spe progressus posita, Caronis ad undam
Terminus Ausonii signat divortia regni.* BUCHANAN.

^h Hidallan was sent by Fingal to give notice to Comala of his return; he, to revenge himself on her for slighting his

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.

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.

COMALA.

And is the son of Comhal fallen, chief of the 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 chase 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 ¹rock ! 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 ?

¹ 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.

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 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 are fled! The steed is not seen on our fields; the wings^k of their pride spread in other lands. The sun will now rise in peace, and the shadows descend in joy. The voice of the chase will be heard; the shields hang in the hall. Our delight will be in the war of the ocean, our

^k Perhaps the poet alludes to the Roman eagle.

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 chase of the
dark-brown hinds?

FINGAL.

Youth of the gloomy brow! no more shalt
thou feast in my halls. Thou shalt not pursue
my chase, my foes shall not fall by thy 'sword.
Lead me to the place of her rest, that I may

¹ The sequel of the story of Hidallan is introduced in another poem.

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.

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^m 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!

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