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THOMAS PATTENSON,  
*MELMERBY.*















OSSIAN at his Father's Tomb relates to MALVINA  
the Adventures of his former days.

H. Waller

del. & sculp.

T H E  
F I N G A L  
O F  
O S S I A N,  
A N A N C I E N T  
E P I C P O E M  
I N S I X B O O K S.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL GALIC LANGUAGE,

By MR. JAMES MACPHERSON;

AND NOW RENDERED INTO

H E R O I C V E R S E,

By EWEN CAMERON.

VOS QUOQUE QUI FORTES ANIMAS, BELLOQUE PEREMTAS  
LAUDIBUS IN LONGUM VATES PIMITTITIS EVUM,  
PLURIMA SECURI FUDISTIS CARMINA BARDI.

LUCAN.

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MDCCLXXVI.





THE ATTESTATIONS OF SEVERAL GENTLEMEN IN  
THE *HIGHLANDS* AND *WESTERN ISLANDS* OF  
*SCOTLAND*, IN TESTIMONY OF THE POEMS  
PUBLISHED BY MR. *JAMES MACPHERSON*, BEING  
A TRANSLATION OF GENUINE *HIGHLAND*  
POEMS.

THESE ATTESTATIONS were collected by Dr. HUGH BLAIR, one of the Ministers of the High Church, and Professor of Rhetoric and *Belles Lettres* in the University of EDINBURGH.

AS the Degree of Antiquity belonging to the Poems of *Osſian*, appeared to be a Point which might bear Dispute, I endeavoured, from internal Evidence, to ſhew that theſe Poems muſt be referred to a very remote Period, without pretending to aſcertain precisely the Date of their Composition. I had not the leaſt Suſpicion, when the Diſſertation on the Poems of *Osſian* was firſt publiſhed, that there was any Occaſion for ſupporting their Authenticity, as genuine Productions of the *Highlands* of *Scotland*, as Tranſlations from the *Galic* Language, not Forgeries of a ſuppoſed Tranſlator. In *Scotland*, their Authenticity was never called in Queſtion. I myſelf had particular Reaſons to be fully ſatiſfied concerning it.

My Knowledge of Mr. *Macpherson's* personal Honour and Integrity, gave me full Assurance of his being incapable of putting such a gross Imposition, first upon his Friends, and then upon the Public; and if this had not been sufficient, I knew, besides, that the Manner in which these Poems were brought to Light, was entirely inconsistent with any Fraud. An accidental Conversation with a Gentleman distinguished in the literary World, gave Occasion to Mr. *Macpherson's* translating literally one or two small Pieces of the old *Galic* Poetry. These being known to me and some others, rendered us very desirous of becoming more acquainted with that Poetry. Mr. *Macpherson*, afraid of not doing Justice to Compositions which he admired in the Original, was very backward to undertake the Task of Translating; and the Publication of the Fragments of ancient Poems, was with no small Importunity extorted from him. The high Reputation which these presently acquired, made it, he thought, unjust that the World should be deprived of the Possession of more, if more of the same Kind could be recovered: And Mr. *Macpherson* was warmly urged by several Gentlemen of Rank and Taste, to disengage himself from other Occupations, and to undertake a Journey through the *Higblands* and *Islands*, on Purpose to make a Collection of those curious Remains of ancient Genius. He complied with their Desire, and spent several Months in visiting those remote Parts of the Country; during which Time he corresponded frequently with his Friends in *Edinburgh*, informed them of his Progress, of the Application which he made in different Quarters, and of the Success which he met with. Several Letters of his, and of those who assisted him in making Discoveries, passed through my Hands. His Undertaking

Undertaking was the Object of considerable Attention : and returning at last, fraught with the poetical Treasures of the North, he set himself to translate, under the Eye of some who were acquainted with the *Galic* Language, and looked into his Manuscripts ; and by a large Publication made an Appeal to all the Natives of the *Highlands* and *Islands* of *Scotland*, whether he had been faithful to his Charge, and done Justice to their well known and favourite Poems.

Such a Transaction certainly did not afford any favourable Opportunity for carrying on an Imposture. Yet in *England*, it seems, an Opinion has prevailed with some, that an Imposture has been carried on ; that the Poems which have been given to the World are not Translations of the Works of any old *Galic* Bard, but modern Compositions, formed, as it is said, upon a higher Plan of Poetry and Sentiment, than could belong to an Age and a Country reputed barbarous : And I have been called upon and urged to produce some Evidence for satisfying the World that they are not Compositions of Mr. *Macpherson* himself, under the borrowed Name of *Ossian*.

If the Question had been concerning Manuscripts brought from some distant or unknown Region, with which we had no Intercourse ; or concerning a Translation from an *Asiatic* or *American* Language, which scarce any Body understood ; Suspicions might naturally have arisen, and an Author's Assertions have been anxiously and scrupulously weighed. But in the Case of literal Translation, professed to be given of old traditionary Poems of our own Country ; of Poems asserted to be known in

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the Original to many thousand Inhabitants of *Great Britain*, and illustrated too by many of their current Tales and Stories concerning them, such extreme Scepticism is altogether out of Place. For who would have been either so hardy or so stupid, as to attempt a Forgery which could not have failed of being immediately detected? Either the Author must have had the Influence to engage, as Confederates in the Fraud, all the Natives of the *Highlands* and *Islands*, dispersed as they are throughout every Corner of the *British* Dominions; or, we should long ere this Time, have heard their united Voice exclaiming, "These are not our Poems, nor what we were ever accustomed to hear from our Bards or our Fathers." Such Remonstrances would, at least, have reached those who dwell in a Part of the Country which is adjacent to the *Highlands*; and must have come loud to the Ears of such, especially, as were known to be Promoters of Mr. *Macpherson's* Undertaking. The Silence of a whole Country in this Case; and of a Country, whose Inhabitants are well known to be attached, in a remarkable Degree, to all their own Antiquities; is of as much Weight, as a thousand positive Testimonies. And surely no Person of common Understanding would have ventured, as Mr. *Macpherson* has done in his Dissertation on *Temora*, to engage in a Controversy with the whole *Irish* Nation concerning these Poems, and to insist upon the Honour of them being due to *Scotland*, if they had been mere Forgeries of his own, which the *Scots*, in Place of supporting so ridiculous a Claim, must have instantly rejected.

But as Reasoning alone is apt not to make much Impression, where Suspicions have been entertained concerning a Matter of  
Fact,



Fact, it was thought proper to have Recourse to express Testimonies. I have accordingly applied to several Persons of Credit and Honour, both Gentlemen of Fortune, and Clergymen of the established Church, who are Natives of the *Highlands* or *Islands* of *Scotland*, and well acquainted with the Language of the Country, desiring to know their real Opinion of the Translations published by Mr. *Macpherson*. Their original Letters to me, in Return, are in my Possession. I shall give a fair and faithful Account of the Result of their Testimony: And I have full Authority to use the Names of those Gentlemen for what I now advance.

I must begin with affirming, that though among those with whom I have corresponded, some have had it in their Power to be more particular and explicit in their Testimony than others; there is not, however, one Person, who insinuates the most remote Suspicion that Mr. *Macpherson* has either forged, or adulterated any one of the Poems he has published. If they make any Complaints of him, it is on Account of his having omitted other Poems, which they think of equal Merit with any which he has published. They all, without Exception, concur in holding his Translations to be genuine, and proceed upon their Authenticity as a Fact acknowledged throughout all those northern Provinces; assuring me that any one would be exposed to Ridicule among them, who should call it in Question. I must observe, that I had no Motive to direct my Choice to the Persons to whom I applied for Information, preferably to others, except their being pointed out to me, as the Persons in their  
different

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different Counties who were most likely to give Light on this Head.

With regard to the Manner in which the Originals of these Poems have been preserved and transmitted, which has been represented as so mysterious and inexplicable, I have received the following plain Account: That until the present Century, almost every great Family in the *Highlands* had their own Bard, to whose Office it belonged to be Master of all the Poems and Songs of the Country; that among these Poems the Works of *Ossian* are easily distinguished from those of later Bards, by several Peculiarities in his Style and Manner; that *Ossian* has been always reputed the *Homer* of the *Highlands*, and all his Compositions held in singular Esteem and Veneration; the whole Country is full of traditionary Stories derived from his Poems, concerning *Fingal* and his Race of Heroes, of whom there is not a Child but has heard, and not a District in which there are not Places pointed out, famous for being the Scene of some of their Feats of Arms; that it was wont to be the great Entertainment of the *Highlanders*, to pass the Winter Evenings in discoursing of the Times of *Fingal*, and rehearsing these old Poems, of which they have been all along enthusiastically fond; that when assembled at their Festivals, or on any of their public Occasions, Wagers were often laid who could repeat most of them; and to have Store of them in their Memories, was both an honourable and a profitable Acquisition, as it procured them Access into the Families of their great Men; that with regard to their Antiquity, they are beyond all Memory or Tradition; infomuch

infomuch that there is a Word commonly used in the *Higblands* to this Day, when they would exprefs any Thing which is of the moft remote or unknown Antiquity, importing, that it belongs to the Age of *Fingal*.

I am farther informed, that after the Ufe of Letters was introduced into that Part of the Country, the Bards and others began early to commit feveral of thefe Poems to Writing; that old Manuscripts of them, many of which are now destroyed or loft, are known and attested to have been in the Poffeffion of fome great Families; that the moft valuable of thofe which remained, were collected by Mr. *Macpherfon* during his Journey through that Country \*; that though the Poems of *Offian*, fo far as they were handed down by oral Tradition, were, no Doubt, liable to be interpolated, and to have their Parts difjoined and put out of their natural Order, yet by comparing together

\* When I was in *Scotland* in 1772, feveral of the Gentlemen, who had fupplied Mr. *Macpherfon* with thefe Manuscripts, complained of his ftill keeping them, notwithstanding he had folemnly promifed, and even given fome his Note of Hand to return them again. I do not mention this to injure Mr. *Macpherfon*'s Character, but to remind him of his Engagements, and induce him to reftore the Papers intrufted to him; to put it in the Power of thofe they belonged to, to oblige others who may hereafter go among them. As I only traversed a fmall Part of the Country, and had no Intention then of publishing any of *Offian*'s Poems, I made no Inquiries about them. One Mr. *Macnab* indeed, who has a Farm under the Earl of *Breadalbane*, recited to me a Verfe or two, which, when tranflated, I found to be that Paffage in the Firft Book of *Temora*, where *Oſcar* kills *Cairbar*. He told me that not many Years back, a Set of idle People (as he termed them) got a Livelihood by finging the Poems of *Oſſian*. I likewife took Notice that in the *Higblands* many Dogs went by the Names of *Toſcar*, *Oſcar*, and other Heroes frequent in *Oſſian*'s Poems; a certain Sign they were Names well known and familiar to the People of the Country.

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gether the different oral Editions of them (if we may use that Phrase) in different Corners of the Country, and by comparing these also with the Manuscripts which he obtained, Mr. *Macpherson* had it in his Power to ascertain, in a great Measure, the genuine Original, to restore the Parts to their proper Order, and to give the Whole to the Public in that Degree of Correctness, in which it now appears.

I am also acquainted, that if Inquiries had been made fifty or threescore Years ago, many more Particulars concerning these Poems might have been learned, and many more living Witnesses have been produced for attesting their Authenticity; but that the Manners of the Inhabitants of the *Highland* Counties, have of late undergone a great Change. Agriculture, Trades, and Manufactures, begin to take Place of Hunting, and the Shepherd's Life. The Introduction of the busy and laborious Arts, has considerably abated that poetical Enthusiasm, which is better suited to a vacant and indolent State. The Fondness of reciting their old Poems decays; the Custom of teaching them to their Children is fallen into Desuetude; and few are now to be found, except old Men, who can rehearse from Memory any considerable Parts of them.

For these Particulars, concerning the State of the *Highlands*, and the Transmission of *Offian's* Poems, I am indebted to the Reverend and very learned and ingenious Mr. *John Macpherson*, Minister of *Slate*, in the Island of *Sky*; and to the Reverend Mr. *Donald Macqueen*, Minister of *Kilmuir*, in *Sky*; Mr. *Donald Macleod*, Minister of *Glenelg*, in *Invernessshire*; Mr. *Lewis Grant*,

*Grant*, Minister of *Duthel*, in *Invernesshire*; Mr. *Angus Macneil*, Minister of the *Island* of *South Uist*; Mr. *Neil Macleod*, Minister of *Rogf*, in the *Island* of *Mull*; and Mr. *Alexander Macaulay*, Chaplain to the 88th Regiment.

The Honourable Colonel *Hugh Mackay*, of *Bigbouse*, in the Shire of *Sutherland*; *Donald Campbell*, of *Airds*, in *Argyleshire*, Esq. *Eneas Mackintosh*, of *Mackintosh*, in *Invernesshire*, Esq. and *Ronald Macdonnell*, of *Keappoch*, in *Lochaber*, Esq. Captain in the 87th Regiment, commanded by Colonel *Frazer*; all concur in testifying that Mr. *Macpherson's* Collection consists of genuine *Highland* Poems; known to them to be such, both from the general Report of the Country where they live, and from their own Remembrance of the Originals. Colonel *Mackay* asserts very positively, upon personal Knowledge, that many of the Poems published by Mr. *Macpherson*, are true and faithful Translations. Mr. *Campbell* declares that he has heard many of them; and Captain *Macdonell* that he has heard Parts of every one of them, recited in the original Language.

*James Grant*, of *Rotliemurchus*, Esq. and *Alexander Grant*, of *Delrachny*, Esq. both in the Shire of *Inverness*, desire to be named as Vouchers for the Poem of *Fingal* in particular. They remember to have heard it often in their younger Days, and are positive that Mr. *Macpherson* has given a just Translation of it.

*Lauchlan Macpherson*, of *Strathmaschie*, in *Invernesshire*, Esq. gives a very full and explicit Testimony, from particular Knowledge, in the following Words: That in the Year 1760, he ac-



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accompanied Mr. *Macpherson* during some Part of his Journey through the *Highlands*, in Search of the Poems of *Ossian*; that he assisted him in collecting them; that he took down from oral Tradition, and transcribed from old Manuscripts, by far the greatest Part of those Pieces Mr. *Macpherson* has published; that since the Publication, he has carefully compared the Translations with the Copies of the Originals in his Hands; and that he finds it amazingly literal, even to such a Degree as often to preserve the Cadence of the *Galic* Versification. He affirms, that among the Manuscripts which were at that Time in Mr. *Macpherson's* Possession, he saw one of as old a Date as the Year 1410.

Sir *James Macdonald*, of *Macdonald*, in the *Island of Sky*, Bart. assured me, that after having made, at my Desire, all the Inquiries he could in his Part of the Country, he entertained no Doubt that Mr. *Macpherson's* Collection consisted entirely of authentic *Highland* Poems; that he had lately heard several Parts of them repeated in the Original, in the *Island of Sky*, with some Variations from the printed Translation, such as might naturally be expected from the Circumstances of oral Tradition; and some Parts, in particular the Episode of *Finnasöllis* in the Third Book of *Fingal*, which agree literally with the Translation; and added, that he had heard Recitations of other Poems not translated by Mr. *Macpherson*, but generally reputed to be of *Ossian's* Compositions, which were of the same Spirit and Strain with such as are translated, and which he esteemed not inferior to any of them in Sublimity of Description, Dignity of Sentiment, or any other of the Beauties of Poetry. This last Particular

Particular must have great Weight; as it is well known how much the Judgment of Sir *James Macdonald* deserves to be relied upon, in every Thing that relates to Literature and Taste.

The late Reverend Mr. *Alexander Macfarlane*, Minister of *Arrachar*, in *Dumbartonshire*, who was remarkably eminent for his profound Knowledge in *Galic* Learning and Antiquities, wrote to me soon after the Publication of Mr. *Macpherson's* Work, terming it, a masterly Translation; informing me that he had often heard several of these in the Original, and remarked so many Passages so particularly striking, beyond any Thing he had ever read in any human Composition, that he never expected to see a Strength of Genius able to do them that Justice in a Translation, which Mr. *Macpherson* has done.

*Norman Macleod, of Macleod, in the Island of Sky, Esq. Walter Macfarlane, of Macfarlane, in Dumbartonshire, Esq. Mr. Alexander Macmillan, Deputy Keeper of his Majesty's Signet; Mr. Adam Ferguson, Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh; and many other Gentlemen, Natives of the Highland Counties, whom I had Occasion to converse with upon this Subject, declare, that though they cannot now repeat from Memory any of these Poems in the Original, yet from what they have heard in their Youth, and from the Impression of the Subject still remaining on their Minds, they firmly believe those which Mr. Macpherson has published, to be the old Poems of Ossian current in the Country.*

Desirous, however, to have this Translation particularly  
b 2 compared

compared with the oral Editions of any who had Parts of the Original distinctly on their Memory, I applied to several Clergymen to make Inquiry in their respective Parishes concerning such Persons; and to compare what they rehearsed with the printed Version. Accordingly, from the Reverend Mr. *John Macpherson*, Minister of *Slate*, in *Sky*; Mr. *Neil Macleod*, Minister of *Ross*, in *Mull*; Mr. *Angus Macneil*, Minister of *South Uist*; Mr. *Donald Macqueen*, Minister of *Kilmuir*, in *Sky*; and Mr. *Donald Macleod*, Minister of *Glenelg*; I have had Reports on this Head, containing distinct and explicit Testimonies to almost the whole Epic Poem of *Fingal*, from Beginning to End, and to several also of the lesser Poems, as rehearsed in the Original, in their Presence, by Persons whose Names and Places of Abode they mention, and compared by themselves with the printed Translation. In some Places they found Variations from it, and Variations even among different Rehearers of the same Poem in the Original; as Words and Stanzas omitted by some, which others repeated, and the Order and Connection in some Places changed. But they remark, that these Variations are on the Whole not very material; and that Mr. *Macpherson* seemed to them to follow the most just and authentic Copy of the Sense of his Author. Some of these Clergymen, particularly Mr. *Neil Macleod*, can themselves repeat from Memory several Passages of *Fingal*; the Translation of which they assure me is exact. Mr. *Donald Macleod* acquaints me, that it was in his House Mr. *Macpherson* had the Description of *Cuthullin's* Horses and Chariot, in the First Book of *Fingal*, given him by *Allan Macaskill*, Schoolmaster. Mr. *Angus Macneil* writes, that Mr. *Macdonald*, a Parishioner of his, declares, that he has often seen  
and

and read a great Part of an ancient Manuscript, once in the Possession of the Family of *Clanronald*, and afterwards carried to *Ireland*, containing many of these Poems ; and that he rehearsed before him several Passages out of *Fingal*, which agreed exactly with Mr. *Macpherson's* Translation ; that *Neil Macmurrich*, whose Predecessors had for many Generations been Bards to the Family of *Clanronald*, declared also in his Presence, that he had often seen and read the same old Manuscript ; that he himself gave to Mr. *Macpherson* a Manuscript, containing some of the Poems which are now translated and published ; and rehearsed before Mr. *Macneil*, in the Original, the Whole of the Poem entitled *Dar-thula*, with very little Variation from the printed Translation. I have received the same Testimony concerning this Poem, *Dar-thula*, from Mr. *Macpherson*, Minister of *Slate* ; and in a Letter communicated to me, from Lieutenant *Duncan Macnicol*, of the 88th Regiment, informing me of its being recited in the Original, in their Presence, from Beginning to End : On which I lay the more Strefs, as any Person of Taste who turns to that Poem will see, that it is one of the most highly finished in the whole Collection, and most distinguished for poetical and sentimental Beauties ; infomuch, that whatever Genius could produce *Dar-thula*, must be judged fully equal to any Performance contained in Mr. *Macpherson's* Publication. I must add here, that though they who have compared the Translation with what they have heard rehearsed of the Original, bestow high Praises both upon Mr. *Macpherson's* Genius and his Fidelity ; yet I find it to be their general Opinion, that in many Places he has not been able to attain to the Strength and Sublimity of the Original which he copied.

I have

I have Authority to say, in the Name of Lieutenant Colonel *Archibald Macnab*, of the 88th Regiment, or Regiment of *Highland* Volunteers, commanded by Colonel *Campbell*, that he has undoubted Evidence of Mr. *Macpherson's* Collection being genuine, both from what he well remembers to have heard in his Youth, and from his having heard very lately a considerable Part of the Poem of *Temora* rehearsed in the Original, which agreed exactly with the printed Version.

By the Reverend Mr. *Alexander Pope*, Minister of *Reay*, in the Shire of *Caithness*, I am informed, that twenty-four Years ago, he had begun to make a Collection of some of the old Poems current in his Part of the Country; on comparing which, with Mr. *Macpherson's* Work, he found in his Collection the Poem entitled *the Battle of Lora*, some Parts of *Lathmon*, and the Account of the Death of *Oscar*. From the above mentioned Lieutenant *Duncan Macnicol*, Testimonies have been also received to a great Part of *Fingal*, to Part of *Temora*, and *Garrichtbura*, as well as to the Whole of *Dar-thula*, as recited in his Prefence in the Original, compared, and found to agree with the Translation.

I myself read over the greatest Part of the *English* Version of the Six Books of *Fingal*, to Mr. *Kenneth Macpherson*, of *Stornoway*, in the *Island of Lewis*, Merchant, in Prefence of the Reverend Mr. *Alexander Macaulay*, Chaplain to the 88th Regiment. In going along, Mr. *Macpherson* vouched what was read to be well known to him in the Original, both the Descriptions and the Sentiments. In some Places, though he remembered the



the Story, he did not remember the Words of the Original; in other Places, he remembered and repeated the *Galic* Lines themselves, which, being interpreted to me by Mr. *Macaulay*, were found, upon Comparifon, to agree often literally with the printed Verfion, and fometimes with flight Variations of a Word or an Epithet. This Testimony carried to me, and muft have carried to any other who had been prefent, the higheft Conviction; being precifely a Testimony of that Nature, which an *Englifhman* well acquainted with *Milton*, or any favourite Author, would give to a Foreigner, who fhewed him a Verfion of this Author in his own Language, and wanted to be fatisfied, from what the *Englifhman* could recollect of the Original, whether it was really a Tranflation of *Paradiſe Loſt*, or a ſpurious Work under that Title which had been put into his Hands.

The above mentioned Mr. *Alexander Macaulay*; Mr. *Adam Ferguſon*, Profeſſor of Moral Philoſophy; and Mr. *Alexander Fraſer*, Governor to *Francis Stuart*, Eſq. inform me, that at ſeveral different Times they were with Mr. *Macpherson*, after he had returned from his Journey through the *Highlands*, and whiſt he was employed in the Work of Tranſlating; that they looked into his Manuſcripts, ſeveral of which had the Appearance of being old; that they were fully ſatisfied of their being genuine *Highland* Poems; that they compared the Tranſlation in many Places with the Original; and they attelt it to be very juſt and faithful, and remarkably literal.

It has been thought worth while to beſtow this Attention on eſtabliſhing the Authenticity of the Works of *Oſſian*, now in Poſſeſſion

Possession of the Public : Because, whatever Rank they are allowed to hold as Works of Genius ; whatever different Opinions may be entertained concerning their poetical Merit ; they are unquestionably valuable in another View, as Monuments of the Taste and Manners of an ancient Age, as useful Materials for enlarging our Knowledge of the human Mind and Character ; and must, beyond all Dispute, be held as, at least, one of the greatest Curiosities, which have at any Time enriched the Republic of Letters. More Testimonies to them might have been produced, by a more enlarged Correspondence with the *Highland* Counties : But, I apprehend, if any Apology is necessary, it is for producing so many Names in a Question, where the consenting Silence of a whole Country was, to every unprejudiced Person, the strongest Proof that spurious Compositions, in the Name of that Country, had not been obtruded upon the World.

# P R E F A C E.

**B**EFORE Mankind became acquainted with the Art of Writing, all the Transactions, worthy of being preserved, were couched in Verse, which Bards repeated on solemn Occasions, and sent down from one another by oral Tradition from Generation to Generation. We have *Cicero's* Authority (*Tusculan Questions*, L. IV. No. 3. and 4.) that at *Roman* Festivals anciently, the Virtues and Exploits of their great Men were sung. *Tacitus* says, (*De mor. Germ.* Cap. II.) that the Songs of the *German* Bards were their only Annals: And *Joannes Magnus*, Archbishop of *Upsal*, acknowledges, that in compiling his History of the *Goths*, he had no other Records but the Songs of Bards. *Strabo* (Lib. IV.) gives a very particular Account of the *Gallic* Bards: And *Ammianus Marcellinus* (L. XV. C. 9.) informs us, that they sung in heroic Verse, the gallant Actions of illustrious Men \*. When the Use of Letters

\* The same Custom prevailed in *Peru* and *Mexico*, as we learn from *Garcilassô* and other Authors. We are likewise told by Father *Gobien*, that even the illiterate Inhabitants of the *Marian Islands* have Bards, who are greatly admired, because in their Songs are celebrated

Letters became known, these Songs were undoubtedly the first Compositions, upon which that valuable Invention was employed; for as they were the only Repositories of the Laws, religious Ceremonies, and memorable Actions of their Forefathers, Mankind would be naturally solicitous to have them carefully collected and preserved in Writing \*. But this more accurate and commodious Method of recording Events proved fatal to the Bards; for their Profession, becoming useless as Writing gained Ground, decayed by Degrees, and sunk at length into Oblivion.

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celebrated the Feats of their Ancestors. There are Traces of the same Kind among the *Apalachites in North America*. The first Seal that a young *Greenlander* catches, is made a Feast for the Family and Neighbours. The young Champion, during the Repast, descants upon his Address in catching the Animal: The Guests admire his Dexterity, and extol the Flavour of the Meat. Their only Music is a Sort of Drum, which accompanies a Song in Praise of Seal-catching, in Praise of their Ancestors, or in welcoming the Sun's Return to them. Take the following Example.

The welcome Sun returns again,  
Amna ajah, ajah, ah-hu!  
And brings us Weather fine and fair,  
Amna ajah, ajah, ah-hu!

The Bard sings the first and third Lines, accompanying it with a Drum, and with a Sort of Dance. The other Lines, termed the Burden of the Song, are sung by the Guests. Here are the Rudiments of the Bard Profession.

\* After the Invention of Letters, many continued still to compose in Verse. Some Parts of the Old Testament are wrote originally in Verse. In like Manner the Four Books of the *Cbatab Bbade*, which is the sacred Book of *Hindoostan*, are composed in Verse Stanzas. The first Greek who wrote in Prose, was *Pherecides Syrus*: The first Roman, was *Appian Cæcus*, who composed a Declamation against *Pyrrhus*.

The *Scots* of the *Highlands* and *Western Islands* being, by their Situation and Language, an unmixed People, the Sciences for many Generations made little or no Progress among them. This is the Reason that the Bard Profession was there supported, long after it had been forgot among the neighbouring Nations: And to this Circumstance we owe the Preservation of *Offian's* Works, who was the most celebrated Bard of *Caledonia*, as *Homer* was of *Greece*.

Those who are acquainted with the *Earse*, assure us his Poems, by the Manner of their Diction, appear far more ancient than any to be met with in that Language. Obsolete Words, and uncommon Expressions, must be expected in such a Performance; but, in general, it is astonishing what Purity and Simplicity of Style prevails over all the Compositions of this poetical Hero. While many *Galic* Poems of the last Century are obscure, affected, and confused, those of *Offian* are easily understood by every one, who has a competent Knowledge of the *Earse* Tongue\*.

The judicious Dr. *Blair*, in his Critical Dissertation on the Poems of *Offian*, has, from the Manners therein represented, and the artless Method of the Compositions, evidently shewn their undoubted Title to the remotest Antiquity. Throughout the Works of *Offian*, says that eminent Critic, we plainly find ourselves in the earliest Periods of Society; during which,  
Hunting

\* See the Rev. Dr. *John Macpherson* on the Antiquities of *Caledonia*. Dissert. XIV. Of the Bards.

Hunting was the chief Employment of Men, and the principal Means of their procuring Subsistence. Pasturage, indeed, appears not wholly unknown; but the Allusions to Herds and Cattle are very few; and of Agriculture we find no Traces. No Cities appear to have been built; 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. In *Osſian*, from Beginning to End, all is consistent; no modern Allusion drops from him; but every where, the same Face of rude Nature is represented: 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.

Again, the Method peculiar to *Osſian's* Compositions bears all the Marks of the greatest Antiquity. We find in him no artful Transitions,

\* In like Manner *Homer's* Heroes kill and dress their own Victuals. *Achilles* entertaining *Priam*, when he went to redeem the Body of his Son, slew a snow-white Sheep; and his two Friends flead and dressed it: *Iliad*, XXIV. The Joiner who made the bridal Bed of *Ulyſſes*, was *Ulyſſes* himself: *Odyssey*, XXIII. *Telemachus* yokes his own Car: *Odyssey*, XV. Queens, and even Female Deities, are employed in Spinning: *Odyssey*, X. The Princess *Nausicaa* washes the Family Cloaths; and the Princes her Brothers, upon her Return, unyoke the Car, and carry in the Cloaths: *Odyssey*, VI. and VII. So likewise in the Old Testament, *Rebecca*, *Rachel*, and the Daughters of *Jeſebro*, tended their Fathers Flocks; and young Women of high Rank drew Water from the Well with their own Hands. A thousand other Instances might be brought to shew the simple Manner in which People lived in early Times, and their total Ignorance of the Pomp and Pride introduced by the Luxury of after Ages.



Transitions, no full and extended Connection of Parts, but a Style always rapid and vehement; in Narration concise even to Abruptness, he leaves several Circumstances to be supplied by the Reader's Imagination. His Expressions have all that figurative Cast, which partly a glowing and undisciplined Fancy, partly the Sterility of Language and the Want of proper Terms, have introduced into the early Speech of Nations; so that he bears in every Respect a remarkable Resemblance to the Poetry of the Eastern Countries; especially the Old Testament, and the Writings of *Homer* \*.

But though these characteristical Marks are strong Proofs of the Antiquity of the Poems, yet it is not easy to ascertain exactly the Period of Time in which the Poet himself flourished. The ingenious Translator fixes it to the latter End of the Third and Beginning of the Fourth Century. This Opinion would bear no Dispute, if the Facts, brought to support it, agreed with each other in Point of Time. There is every Reason to believe that *Caracul*, called *the Son of the King of the World*, is *Caracalla* the

\* This is the Reason why in the Notes to the Poem of *Fingal*, we have all along chosen to compare *Osſian* with *Homer* rather than *Virgil*. For, as Dr. Blair observes, 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.

the Son of *Severus* the Emperor, who, in 211, undertook an Expedition against the Barbarians of the North, whilst his Father lay dying at *York*: For the precipitate Retreat of that Prince, upon the Death of his Father; the sudden Peace patched up on the Occasion, and the *Caledonians* recovering the Country they had before lost to the *Romans*, seem to agree perfectly with the Successes ascribed to *Fingal* by his Son *Ossian*. But this being admitted, it appears to me hardly possible, that *Carausius*, who assumed the Purple in 284, could be the *Caros* King of Ships, with whom *Oscar* fought near the River *Carun*. According to Tradition, *Fingal* died in 283; and it is an undoubted Fact, that both *Oscar* and *Cairbre* were killed in the Battle of *Cabhra* before his Death\*. Suppose then *Fingal* to have been Seventeen Years old, the least he could be†, when he conquered *Caracalla* in 211; the Battle of *Cabhra* must have happened in 250, at which, from Mr. *Macpherson's* own Account, the King was only Fifty-six Years of Age. Now between 250 and 284 there being a Space of Thirty-four Years, the *Caros* defeated by *Oscar* must have been some other than *Carausius*, unless we suppose that he commanded in an Expedition against the *Scots* above Thirty-four Years before he seized  
on

\* See *Temora*, B. I.

† We are sure, from the Story of *Comala*, that the King was not married before his Encounter with *Caracalla*; for that Princess was to be espoused to him upon his Return from the Field, but a false Report being brought her of his having been killed in the Battle, she died of Grief. *Fingal* therefore could not then be above Seventeen, since after this he took to Wife *Ros-crana*, and had by her *Ossian*, at whose Birth he was not above Eighteen Years of Age. See Note to the 61st Verse of the 5th Book.

on *Britain*, and became so formidable to the Emperor *Maximian* by Sea\*.

But in whatever Age *Offian* lived, it was most probably before the Light of Christianity reached his Country†. For, as Dr. *Blair* very well remarks, had these Poems been composed by one, to whom the Ideas of Christianity were familiar from his Infancy, it is impossible but in some Passage or other, the Traces of them would have appeared.

Another Circumstance which argues for the remote Antiquity of these Pieces is, the entire Silence which reigns throughout them with Respect to all the great *Clans* or Families now established in the *Higblands*. The Origin of these is allowed to be very

\* If the Epoch be fixed by *Caracalla's* Expedition into *Scotland* in 211; the Assertion of the *Irisb* Historians, who place the Death of *Oscar* and their own *Cairbre* in 296, must be evidently a Mistake. For suppose *Fingal* to have been Seventeen at the Battle of *Carun*, he could not be less than Ninety-nine at the Invasion of *Swaran*, and a Hundred and Two at the Death of his Grandson; a Thing morally impossible, when we consider the great Achievements he performs on both those Occasions.

† Mr. *Macpherson* mentions a Dispute which *Offian* is said to have had, in his extreme old Age, with a *Culdee* (a Name given to the first Missionaries) concerning the *Christian* Religion. This Dispute is still extant, and is couched in Verse, according to the Custom of the Times. The great Ignorance on the Part of *Offian*, 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 genuine Marks of Antiquity. The obsolete Phrases and Expressions peculiar to the Age, prove it to be no Forgery. Upon the Strength of this Poem the learned Translator contends, that *Offian* lived to the Beginning of the Fourth Century, and might have conversed with some of the *Christians*, which the Persecution of *Dioclesian* in 303, drove beyond the Pale of the *Roman* Empire.

very ancient : And it is well known, that there is no Passion by which a native *Highlander* is more distinguished, than by an 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 very unaccountable. But that a Poet should arise of such exquisite Genius, and of such deep Knowledge of Mankind, and 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 ascribing his own Works to an antiquated Bard, without the Imposture being detected; is a Supposition that transcends all Bounds of Credibility.

Yet, notwithstanding, there have been some, (and such were never wanting to oppose the plainest Truths) who, from the Beginning, denied them to be genuine Productions of the *Highlands* of *Scotland*, but only Forgeries of a supposed Translator. To satisfy the Public fully in this Point, Dr. *Blair* applied to several Clergymen and Gentlemen of the *Highlands* and *Islands*: From them he received the Attestations placed before this Preface, which will ever remain undeniable Proofs of these Compositions being real Translations from the *Galic* Tongue.

The

The Names of ſo many credible Witneſſes ſilenced for a Time the Enemies of *Oſſian*; till Dr. *Johnſon's* Journey to the *Western Iſlands* of *Scotland* coming out laſt Year, renewed the Diſpute, and ſet again all the Scribblers in an Uproar; who, under their worthy Leader, aſperſed not only the Tranſlator, but likewiſe his Countrymen, with every illiberal Taunt that Envy and Malice could invent. We ſhall leave the Doctor to enjoy the Satisfaction ariſing from the Applauſe of ſuch Admirers, and proceed to examine his Arguments againſt the Authenticity of *Oſſian's* Poems.

Our Adverſary introduces the Debate with acquainting us, that he made particular Inquiries, in the *Iſlands*, concerning the Claſs of People called *Bards*, “ and was informed by a Gentle-  
“ man, who is generally acknowledged the greateſt Maſter of  
“ *Hebridian* Antiquities, that there has indeed once been *Bards*  
“ and *Senachies*; and that *Senachi* ſignified *the Man of Talk*, or  
“ of Converſation; but that neither *Bard* nor *Senachi* had  
“ exiſted for ſome Centuries.” On this Information, and the Notion of the *Earſe* being an unwritten Tongue, *Johnſon* chiefly grounds his Diſbelief of the Works of *Oſſian*; but we do not deſpair of producing Reaſons that will convince the Reader of the Falſity of both.

As *Johnſon* conceals the Name of this boated Antiquarian, the whole Weight of the Aſſertion reſts upon his own Word; now, what Degree of Credit is due to that, will be ſeen hereafter: But we can ſhew that the *Bards* exiſted within this fifty Years, from an unexceptionable Authority. There are here

before me the *Letters of a Gentleman from the North of Scotland, to a Friend in London*, which were wrote the 26th, and published the 54th Year of the present Century. This Author, enumerating the different Persons, in his Time, that composed the Retinue of a *Highland* Chief, particularly mentions his Bard. A little after, explaining this Attendant's Employ, he tells us; "The Bard is skilled in the Genealogy of all the "*Highland* Families, sometimes Preceptor to the young Laird; "celebrates in Verse the Original of the Tribe, the famous "warlike Actions of the successive Heads, and sings his own "Lyrics as an Opiate to the Chief, when disposed to sleep."

These are exactly our own Ideas of a *Highland* Bard; nor can the Testimony of the Author be questioned: He was an *English* Officer, who resided in the different Garrisons of the *Highlands* for several Years; was well acquainted with the Customs and Manners of the People, and, as appears from the whole Tenour of his Writings, no Way inclined to favour or flatter them. What is here related, he himself was an Eye-Witness of; being in the House of a Chief, where two of these Bards were kept. "After some little Time," says he, "the Chief ordered one "of them to sing me a *Highland* Song. The Bard readily obeyed, and with a hoarse Voice, and in a Tune of few various "Notes, began, as I was told, one of his own Lyrics; and "when he had proceeded to the fourth or fifth Stanza, I perceived by the Names of several Persons, Glens and Mountains, which I had known or heard before, that it was an "Account of some Clan Battle. But in his going on, the "Chief (who piques himself upon his School-Learning) at  
" some



“ some particular Passage, bid him cease, and cried out to me, “ *Ther’s nothing like that in Virgil or Homer.*” This Relation will convince the Reader, that some Remains of the Bard Profession were, till very lately, to be found in the North of *Scotland*: For, though the general Encouragement formerly given to that Order of Men was much abated, yet many from Idleness would still pursue an Occupation, at once beneficial to themselves and entertaining to their Hearers.

The Author of the Letters now quoted, not only mentions the Orthography of the *Highlanders*, but even gives us the Alphabet, and Appellation of their Letters. He remarks, it is true, that but few of the Natives can write these Characters. However, it is plain that some can; and that, consequently, they have had Writing among them. A very imperfect Orthography, with the Help of the Bards, was fully sufficient to preserve, what of their Traditions and Poetry have come down to us.

Having, by Way of Preamble, observed thus much with regard to the Bards and Orthography of the *Highlanders*, I shall proceed to the rest of *Johnson’s* Arguments, and taking Paragraph by Paragraph, answer each with as much Order and Precision, as the crowded and confused Manner in which he has arranged them will admit.

“ Of the *Earſe* Language,” says he, “ as I understand nothing, I cannot say more than I have been told. It is the “ rude Speech of a barbarous People, who had few Thoughts

“ to exprefs, and were content, as they conceived grofsly, to  
 “ be grofsly underftood. After what has been lately talked of  
 “ *Highland Bards*, and *Highland Genius*, many will ftartle  
 “ when they are told, that the *Earfe* never was a written Lan-  
 “ guage; that there is not in the World an *Earfe* Manuscript  
 “ a hundred Years old; and that the Sounds of the *Highlanders*  
 “ were never expreffed by Letters, till fome little Books of  
 “ Piety were tranflated, and a metrical Version of the Pſalms  
 “ was made by the Synod of *Argyle*. Whoever therefore now  
 “ writes in this Language, ſpells according to his own Percep-  
 “ tion of the Sound, and his own Idea of the Power of the  
 “ Letters. The *Welſh* and *Iriſh* are cultivated Tongues. The  
 “ *Welſh*, two hundred Years ago, infulted their *Engliſh* Neigh-  
 “ bours for the Inſtability of their Orthography; while the  
 “ *Earfe* merely floated in the Breath of the People, and could  
 “ therefore receive little Improvement.”

Though *Johnſon*, at the firſt ſetting out, confeſſes he knows nothing of the *Earfe*, yet this daring ſelf-ſufficient Man, in the ſame Breath, pronounces it *the rude Speech of a barbarous People* \*. But as he brings no Authority to ſupport his Opinion,

let

\* Notwithſtanding the *Greeks*, and after them the *Romans*, had the Vanity to call other Nations Barbarians; it muſt appear very ridiculous in a Deſcendant of the *Saxons*, a Branch of the ſavage *Sarmatæ*, to ſigmatize with that Appellation the undoubted Remains of the *Celtæ*, a celebrated People, who once poſſeſſed all the Kingdoms from the Pillars of *Hercules* to the Banks of the *Viſtula*, and from the *Helleſpont* to the Shores of the *Baltic*. With reſpect to the *Highlanders*, we boldly aſſert the Imputation to be injurious and falſe: The ſhort Account given of their Manners, from Sir *John Dalrymple's* Memoirs, at the End of the Third Book, ſhews them to have been as much civilized as any of their Neighbours.

let us adhere to the Accounts of Persons that are better versed in the Language, and who assure us, “ that the numerous Flections of Consonants, and Variation in Declension, make it “ very copious.” \*

We have already seen, that the Natives are acquainted with the Use of Letters; and it is probable they have been so for many Generations. But as, of all the polite Arts, they only cultivated Poetry, which was chiefly handed down to Posterity by a Succession of Bards maintained for that Purpose; we must not expect that any Number or Variety of Manuscripts can be found among them. However, there have been some much older than Dr. *Johnson* would make us believe.

*Martin*, who was a Native of *Sky*, and wrote in the last Century, mentions several ancient Manuscripts, in the Characters of the Country, which he himself met with; as *Avicenna*, *Averroes*, *Joannes de Vigo*, *Bernardus Gordonus*, and several Volumes of *Hippocrates*, in the Possession of one *Fergus Beaton*, in the Island of *South-Vist*. He takes Notice of having seen the Life of *St. Columbus*, at Mr. *John Macneil's*, in the *Isle of Barray*; and another Copy of the same, at Mr. *Macdonald's* of *Benbecula*. For a Proof of what he relates, concerning the Quarrel and Battle at Sea, between *John* Earl of *Ross* and *Aeneas* his Son, he cites the Manuscripts of *Macvurich* and *Hugh Macdonald*, two ancient Genealogists. In another Place, giving an Account of Customs that prevailed long before his own Time,  
he

\* See the Dissertation concerning the *Æra of Ossian*.

he mentions some Offices, formerly in great Families, to which the Possessors held an hereditary Right in Writing. These last mentioned Manuscripts and Writings, must have been not only in the Character, but also in the Language of the Country, since no other was understood by the Generality of the People\*. From which it is evident, that the Sounds of the *Highlanders* were expressed by Letters, long before some little Books of Piety; and a Version of the *Psalms* was made by the Synod of *Argyle*: There was even a Version of the *Psalms* long before that just mentioned; for *Gilbert Murray*, who lived in the Twelfth Century, is said to have translated the *Psalms* and *Gospels* into the *Irish* Language, or *Scots Galic*. See the Description of *Cathness*, by the Rev. Mr. *Alexander Pope*, Minister of *Reay*, in Mr. *Pennant's Tour in Scotland* in 1769 †.

But

\* This same Author tells us, that Bards were retained in every considerable Family; that many of the Natives were addicted to Poetry; *which, to use his own Words, powerfully affects the Fancy: And in my Judgment (which is not singular in this Matter) with as great Force as that of any ancient or modern Poet I ever read.* We have therefore Mr. *Martin's* Testimony (whom *Johnson* himself allows to have been a literate Man\*) that there have been *Highland Bards*; nor were they destitute of Genius, if we believe what is here said of them, or peruse the Remains of *Ossian's* Compositions.

† Besides the above Authorities, we see several others in the Attestations, particularly that of *Lauchlan Macpherson*, of *Strathmasbie*, Esq. who accompanied Mr. *Macpherson* in 1760 through a Part of the *Highlands*, when in Search of the Poems of *Ossian*, positively declares, that among the Manuscripts he saw at that Time in his Possession, there was one of as old a Date as the Year 1410. This alone is sufficient to confute Dr. *Johnson*, whose whole Argument is grounded on Hearsay, which, without any Evidence, is of little Avail in Matters of Fact, when an Eye-Witness publicly sets his Name to what he avers.

\* See his Journey to the *Western Islands*, p. 144.

But had we no Authorities to alledge on this Occasion, Reason alone would furnish Arguments sufficient to prove that the *Earſe* has been a written Language for Ages. The Use of Letters, wherever it was not known before, always accompanied the Introduction of the *Chriſtian* Religion; now we are certain that the *Higblanders*, and Inhabitants of the *Western Iſles* of *Scotland*, were converted to the Faith in the Sixth Century; ſince which Time they muſt have been acquainted with the Art of Writing: That they ſhould not, we muſt ſuppoſe their Paſtors, and the ſeveral Communities of religious People, who for a thouſand Years ſubſiſted among them, were either ignorant of, or never endeavoured to adapt to Letters, the vulgar Tongue. This Hypotheſis outrages Probability, and has not a Parallel in the Annals of Mankind. Beſides, as the Doctor himſelf allows the *Iriſh* to be a cultivated Tongue, I cannot conceive how he can reſuſe ſome Degree of Improvement to the *Earſe*, ſince it is a Dialect of the ſame Language, and there has been always an intimate and conſtant Intercourſe between the Natives\*.

“ When a Language begins to teem with Books, it is tending to Refinement; as thoſe who undertake to teach others  
 “ muſt have undergone ſome Labour in improving themſelves,  
 “ they ſet a proportionate Value on their own Thoughts, and  
 “ with.

\* As to the Orthography of the *Earſe*, *Johnſon* knows nothing of the Matter: But allowing it even to be in the unfettled State he repreſents, I ſee no advantageous Conſequence he can draw from thence, ſince a Language may arrive at no ſmall Degree of Perfection, and be unfettled in its Orthography. Witneſs the *Engliſh*, which, notwithstanding the Number of Diſtionaries that have been compiled to fix its Orthography, has ſtill many Words that are ſpelled according to the Caprice and Liking of Writers.

“ wish to enforce them by efficacious Expressions; Speech becomes embodied and permanent; different Modes and Phrases are compared, and the best obtains an Establishment. By Degrees one Age improves upon another. Exactness is first obtained, and afterwards Elegance. But Diction, merely vocal, is always in its Childhood. As no Man leaves his Eloquence behind him, the new Generations have all to learn. There may possibly be Books without a polished Language, but there can be no polished Language without Books.”

In advanced Society, no Doubt, a Language improves, acquires a greater Number of Phrases and Turns of Expression by the Multiplicity of Works composed in it; but too much Refinement only enervates a Language, and makes it unfit for poetical Compositions. In the barren State of an uncultivated Tongue, the Want of peculiar Words to convey certain Thoughts, forces Men to employ those high-flown Metaphors and Figures, which animate and distinguish Poetry from the common Modes of Speech; and it is this makes the Writings of Antiquity so poetical\*.

No

\* Men have never used so many Figures of Style, as in those rude Ages, when, besides the Power of warm Imagination to suggest lively Images, the Want of proper and precise Terms for the Ideas they would express, obliges 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 venture to use in an heroic Poem. In the Progress of Society, the Genius and Manners of Men undergo



No Person can imagine that the *Hebrew* teemed with Books when *Moses* wrote, and yet the two Songs that go in that Lawgiver's Name are in the highest Strain of Poetry. The same may be said of *Homer*: Though the *Greek*, in his Time, was in its Infancy, his Productions have never yet been equalled by the greatest Geniuses of the most refined and polished Ages. *Ossian*, like *Homer*, lived in an early Period. As Music and the Songs of Bards were the favourite Amusements of his Countrymen, as well as of all the *Celtic Nations*, the Language must have been sufficiently polished for poetical Composition; yet not so much so, as to render it quite effeminate like most of our modern Tongues \*, which are so full of abstract Terms; that no Poet of our Days can rise to that unaffected Strength of Expression so remarkable in the Compositions of primitive Times :

undergo a Change more favourable to Accuracy than to Sprightliness and Sublimity.—Language advances from Sterility to Copiousness, and at the same Time from Fervour and Enthusiasm, to Correctness and Precision. The Progress of the World in this Respect resembles the Progress of Age in Man. The Powers of the 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 begins 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. Dr. *Blair's* Critical Dissertation on the Poems of *Ossian*.

\* The *French* has been at the Height of its Perfection better than a hundred Years, and the *Italian* three hundred; yet it is remarkable, that neither of these Tongues are pithy enough to bear a Composition in blank Verse. We may likewise observe, that notwithstanding *England* can boast of many celebrated Poets since the Time of *Shakspear* and *Milton*, yet which of them has attained to the Eminence of these mentioned? I think the Change the Language has suffered within this Century past, may be as much the real Reason, as Want of Genius in the Moderns.

Times: Of these the *old Scripture*, *Homer*, and *Offian*, will remain the Patterns of Style and Sublimity to every succeeding Generation.

“ That the Bards could not read more than the rest of their  
 “ Countrymen, it is reasonable to suppose; because, if they  
 “ had read, they could probably have written; and how high  
 “ their Compositions may reasonably be rated, an Inquirer may  
 “ best judge by considering what Stores of Imagery, what  
 “ Principles of Ratiocination, what Comprehension of Know-  
 “ ledge, and what Delicacy of Elocution he has known any  
 “ Man attain who cannot read. The State of the Bards was  
 “ yet more hopeless. He that cannot read, may now converse  
 “ with those that can; but the Bard was a Barbarian among  
 “ Barbarians, who, knowing nothing himself, lived with others  
 “ that knew no more.”

That the Bards could neither write nor read, till such Time as the Use of Letters was introduced with the Christian Religion, we are here willing to allow\*: That therefore their Compositions and Elocution could arrive at no Degree of Perfection, is no just Consequence. The ancient *Scots* were undoubtedly

\* Though I have granted that the Bards might not know the Use of Letters till the Introduction of Christianity, the contrary might be easily proved. We learn from *Cæsar*, that the Druids of *Gaul*, upon many Occasions, made Use of the *Greek* Alphabet. Now as these, according to the same noble Author, derived their Discipline from *Britain*, it is most likely the latter could not be ignorant of the *Greek* Letters, which in Time degenerated into the old *British* Characters, these having a great Affinity in Make to the *Greek*, as may be seen in Sir *James Ware's* *Antiquities of Ireland*, translated by *Walter Harris*, Esq. Chap. III. p. 22.

doubtedly of *Celtic* Extraction: Every one knows that the *Celtæ* were far from being a gross and ignorant People: We have the Testimony of *Ammianus Marcellinus*, that they had among them Bards \*, whose Office it was to sing in heroic Verse the gallant Actions of illustrious Men, and their Songs on those Subjects were accompanied by the sweet Modulations of the Harp. Though *Cæsar* does not expressly mention the Bards, yet, as they were Disciples of the Druids, he meant certainly to include them in that Order of Men. According to him, the Druidical Institution took its Rise in *Britain*; so that those of the *Gauls*, who aspired to be thorough Masters in that Worship, usually resorted thither for that Purpose. He particularly remarks, that their Scholars committed to Memory a great Number of Verses, in learning of which they often employed twenty Years: Nor did they commit these Verses to Writing, but handed them down by Tradition from Generation to Generation †.

By which it is evident, no Parity can be made between those among us that cannot read, and the ancient Bards. Those among us that cannot read, are generally the lowest of the Vulgar, who, had they otherwise ever such good natural Parts, yet being wholly neglected and unimproved, can acquire no Stores of Imagery, no Principles of Ratiocination, no Comprehension of Knowledge, nor any Delicacy of Elocution. But the Case was quite different with regard to the Bards; they had a regular Education; their Youth was spent in learning, under  
proper

\* *Et Bardī quidem fortia virorum illustrium facta heroicis composita versibus cum dulcibus Lyre modulis cantitarunt.* Lib. XV. Cap. 9.

† *De Bello Gall.* Lib. VI.

proper Masters, the best Productions of those that went before: A close Application of many Years stored their Minds with a vast Fund of Thought and Imagery; and an intimate Acquaintance with the most elegant Authors must have made them perfect in their Mother Tongue\*. That Time was given to enlarging the Ideas and acquiring Knowledge, which we spend in the Study of the dead and modern Languages. Knowing so much by Heart was another apparent Advantage, as it must have struck their Imaginations more lively than the faint Remembrance of Things from Books. All this considered, it is not surprising they should sing in a Strain worthy the Notice of Posterity: The cotemporary Geniuses of *Rome* itself seem to have admired their heroic Poetry. Thus *Lucan*.

*Vos quoque qui fortes animos, belloque peremptos,  
Laudibus in longum Vates diffunditis ævum  
Plurima securi fuditis Carmina Bardi.*

Phar. L. I.

“ There has been lately in the *Islands* one of those illiterate  
“ Poets,

\* Though Writing must be owned a great Help in acquiring a thorough Knowledge of the Arts and Sciences, yet Men may obtain some Degree of Perfection without it. The *Mexicans*, before the Arrival of the *Spaniards*, made Landscapes and other Imitations of Nature with Feathers, so artfully mixed as to bestow both Life and Colouring; of which Sort of Work, there were Instances no less extraordinary for Patience than for Skill.— They were not ignorant either of Music or Poetry; and one of their capital Amusements was Songs set to Music, upon the Atchievements of their Kings and Ancestors. Notwithstanding, the Art of Writing was no farther advanced than the using Figures composed of painted Feathers, by which they made a Shift to communicate some simple Thoughts; and in this Manner was *Montezuma* informed of the *Spanish* Invasion.

“ Poets, who hearing the Bible read at Church, is said to have  
 “ turned the sacred History into Verse. I heard Part of a Dia-  
 “ logue, composed by him, translated by a young Lady in  
 “ *Mull*, and thought it had more Meaning than I expected  
 “ from a Man totally uneducated ; but he had some Opportu-  
 “ nities of Knowledge ; he lived among a learned People. Af-  
 “ ter all that has been done for the Instruction of the *Highland-*  
 “ *ers*, the Antipathy between their Language and Literature  
 “ still continues ; and no Man that has learned only *Earfe* is,  
 “ at this Time, able to read.”

What the Doctor here relates of the modern *Galic* Bard, makes much stronger against himself than us. If an illiterate Person could handle a difficult and foreign Subject, like the Bible, better than could be expected from one of no Education ; where is the Impossibility that a Succession of People, who made it their sole Study for many Generations, should compose on Topics become familiar by the Observations of such as went before, and heighten their Narrations by Comparisons drawn from the natural Objects the Country they inhabited daily presented\*? What is afterwards advanced with Regard to the present contemptible and forlorn State of the *Earfe* Tongue, is  
 an

\* *Ossian* frequently alludes to ancient Bards. The Exploits of *Trenmor*, *Trathal*, and the other Ancestors of *Fingal*, are spoken of as familiarly known. In one remarkable Passage, he describes himself as living in a Sort of classical Age, which were conveyed in the Songs of Bards ; and points at a Period of Darknefs 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.” *The War of Caras*.

an Insult that may please a malignant Disposition, but proves nothing detrimental to the Point in Question. Of the *Greek* and *Roman* Languages, there now remain only the Works of some particular Authors \*. After the Downfal of two Languages, to which the Numbers of eminent Men that embellished them by their Labours, and the Power of the Nations by whom they were spoke, promised a much longer Duration; what Wonder that the *Earsè*, a Tongue confined for many Centuries past to an obscure Corner of the Globe, should be now disused? Nothing could have supported it so long, but the violent Passion which the *Scotch* have always had for the Customs and Manners of their remote Ancestors. But this patriotic Spirit has been visibly decreasing for some Years; and such a Rage for emigrating, and bettering their Fortunes, now universally prevails, that nothing is studied or considered, but what conduce to accomplish these interested Views. To this, and not to the invidious Reasons given by *Johnson*, must be assigned

\* The Preservation of these we owe chiefly to the *Monks*; a Service, which would entitle them to the Gratitude of Mankind in general, if Society derived no other Benefit from their Institution. Mr. *Warton* (Diff. II. prefixed to his *History of English Poetry*) observes, with an Impartiality which does him Honour, that it is common to pass an undistinguishing Censure on these People, and to suppose their Foundations to have been the Retreats of illiterate Indolence; when at the same Time it is certain, that the most eminent Scholars which *England* produced, both in Philosophy and Humanity, before and even below the Twelfth Century, were educated in the religious Houses. The Encouragement given in the *English* Monasteries for transcribing Books, was very considerable. In every great Abbey there was an Apartment called the *Scriptorium*, where many Writers were constantly busied in transcribing not only the Service-Books for the Choir, but Books for the Library.—This was also a Practice in the Monasteries abroad, in which not only the Monks of mature Age, but likewise Novices and even Boys were employed. See *Monast. Anglic.* II. 726.



signed that general Neglect of the *Earſe*, which is now confined to the moſt ignorant of the People, and will, probably, in a Century or two longer be totally extinct. We have therefore great Reaſon to rejoice, that ſuch valuable Monuments of Antiquity as the Poems of *Oſſian*, ſhould be brought to Light in the laſt Breath of this expiring Language.

“ The *Earſe* has many Dialects, and the Words uſed in ſome  
“ Iſlands are not always known in others. In literate Nations,  
“ though the Pronunciation, and ſometimes the Words of  
“ common Speech may differ, as now in *England*, compared  
“ with the South of *Scotland*, yet there is a written Diction,  
“ which pervades all Dialects, and is underſtood in every Pro-  
“ vince. But where the whole Language is colloquial, he that  
“ has only one Part, never gets the reſt, as he cannot get it  
“ but by Change of Reſidence.”

The *Earſe*, as well as every other Language uſed by People ſpread over an Extent of Territory, might in ſome Diſtricts be ſpoke with greater Purity than in others; there might have been too cant Words or Phraſes particular to ſome certain Places; but theſe little Peculiarities no Way affected the ſtanding Diction common to all the Provinces. The Compoſitions of the Bards ſupplied the Place of Books; for though their Songs were only common to Memory, yet, as it was the Cuſtom to repeat them publickly at Feaſts, and on all ſolemn Occaſions, they were as univerſally known, and more ſo to the Maſs of the People, than if they had been in Print. Books, which are the Repositories of good Language, are confined wholly to the

*Literati*;

*Literati*; so that those who dwell remote in the Country, differ so much in Pronunciation and Mode of Expression from the more polished Inhabitants of large Cities, as scarcely to be understood by one another. But this was not the Case in the *Higblands*; there the common People spoke the *Earfe* with an Elegance little inferior to the Gentry, or even the Bards themselves. As no other Language was known, and no Intercourse kept up with Foreigners, their Diction continued always the same; whilst those of their Neighbours, though abounding much more in Books, was always varying. It is to the Knowledge of, and the foolish Passion of adopting new Words from the dead and modern Languages, that the *English* owes its Mutability: Though the Nation has not been over-run by Strangers since the Conquest, yet *Chaucer*, who wrote in the Thirteenth Century, is now almost unintelligible; while *Ossian's* Compositions (who was born a thousand Years before him) are easily understood by every *Higblander* competently conversant in his native Tongue.

“ In an unwritten Speech, nothing that is not very short is  
“ transmitted from one Generation to another. Few have Op-  
“ portunities of hearing a long Composition often enough to  
“ learn it, or have Inclination to repeat it so often as is neces-  
“ sary to retain it; and what is once forgotten is lost for ever.  
“ I believe there cannot be recovered, in the whole *Earfe* Lan-  
“ guage, five hundred Lines of which there is an Evidence to  
“ prove them an hundred Years old. Yet I hear that the Father  
“ of *Ossian* boasts of two Chests more of ancient Poetry, which  
“ he suppresses, because they are too good for the *English*.”

We

We have already shewn that the Transactions of all Nations, before the Introduction of Letters, were couched in Verse, and handed down to Posterity by Persons who made it their sole Study to learn these Compositions themselves, and teach them to others. This was the first Origin of Poetry: hence the *Greek* *ῥαψῳδοὶ* or *Rhapsodists*, of whom *Homer* himself was one; hence the *Scalds* or *Scalders* of *Scandinavia*; hence the *Euhages* or *Bardi* of *Gaul*; hence the *Senachies* and *Ferdan* of the *Irish* and *Scotch*. The great Number that lived by this Profession, whose whole Time was taken up in repeating them in Public, and teaching them to others, made them not only Masters of the longest Compositions, but rendered it impossible that any worth preserving should be lost\*.

That some of these Songs were of considerable Length, we may judge by what *Tacitus* relates of the *Germans*, whose whole History, he says, was recorded in ancient Poems delivered down by oral Tradition†. We are assured that *Garcillaffo* composed the

\* Besides that *Offian's* Poems were set to Music, the Method in which they were composed greatly facilitated the Memory of them; for 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 hardly possible, 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. See Mr. *Macpherson's* Dissertation concerning the Antiquity of *Offian's* Poems.

† *Celebrant carminibus antiquis, quod unum apud illos memorie et annalium genus est.*  
Lib. II.

the History of *Peru*, from old Songs which his Mother, a Princess descended from the *Incas*, had taught him in his Youth. Now, Poems could not be very short, that contained all the Actions of a warlike People, or from which the Materials of a History could be collected.

The Druids of *Gaul* could not confine within very narrow Limits their Disquisitions of the Stars and their Motions; the Magnitude of the Heavens and the Earth; the Nature of Things; the Transmigration of Souls; the Greatness and Power of the immortal Gods: yet all they delivered on these different Subjects were entrusted only to Memory, and so sent down from Father to Son\*. After these undoubted Facts, will *Johnson* still contend, *that in an unwritten Speech nothing that is not very short is transmitted from one Generation to another?*

What he afterwards advances, *that there is not in the Earle Language, five hundred Lines of which there is any Evidence to prove them a hundred Years old*, is equally erroneous and absurd. Besides the Works of *Ossian*, whose Authenticity is attested by so many credible Witnesses, and Antiquity undeniable, there are many other Compositions in the *Galic* Tongue, which might be proved much older than the Term he speaks of. If Mr. *Macpherson* has confined himself to the Poems of *Ossian*, it was not that he thought the rest too good for the *English*, but, on the contrary, “ was afraid the Ideas they contained were too  
“ local to be admired in another Language, and that their  
“ Obscurity

\* Vid. *Cæsar de bello Gall.* Lib. VI.

“ Obscurity and Inaccuracy might disgust in a Translation.” \*  
 Had Dr. *Johnson* any Candour, he would have preferred these  
 Reasons to uncertain Hearsay, and the illiberal Misrepresenta-  
 tions of Mr. *Macpherson*’s Enemies.

“ He that goes into the *Higblands* with a Mind naturally  
 “ acquiescent, and a Credulity eager for Wonders, may come  
 “ back with an Opinion very different from me ; for the Inha-  
 “ bitants, knowing the Ignorance of all Strangers in their Lan-  
 “ guage and Antiquities, perhaps are not very scrupulous Ad-  
 “ herents to Truth ; yet I do not say that they deliberately  
 “ speak studied Falschhood, or have a settled Purpose to deceive.  
 “ They have inquired and considered little, and do not always  
 “ feel their own Ignorance. They are not much accustomed  
 “ to be interrogated by others ; and seem never to have thought  
 “ upon interrogating themselves ; so that if they do not know  
 “ what they tell to be true, they likewise do not distinctly per-  
 “ ceive it to be false.”

By what the Doctor says in the Beginning of this Paragraph,  
 it evidently appears that many gave him very different Accounts  
 from those he has delivered to the Public. But *Johnson* hates  
 the *Scotch* ; accordingly, his Journey among them was not to  
 give a fair and impartial Relation of the People and their Man-  
 ners, but only to vilify the Nation in general, and to contradict  
 in particular all that had been advanced with regard to the  
 Poems published by Mr. *Macpherson* : This being certainly his  
 Design,

\* See Mr. *Macpherson*’s Dissertation concerning the Poems of *Offian*.

Design, it is no Way surprising that a Man of his known Abilities should make Persons, not prepared for Objections, give contradictory Answers to Questions purposely put to puzzle and embarrass; but though in a Strain of insolent Pedantry he upbraids them with Ignorance, yet he is not quite so abandoned as to charge them with any open Breach of Sincerity.

“ Mr. *Boswell* was very diligent in his Inquiries, and the Result of his Investigations was, that the Answer to the second Question was commonly such as nullified the first.

“ We were awhile told, that they had an old Translation of the Scriptures; and told it till it would appear Obstinacy to inquire again. Yet by continued Accumulation of Questions we found, the Translation meant, if any Meaning there were, was nothing else than an *Irish* Bible.

“ We heard of Manuscripts that were, or that had been in the Hands of somebody's Father, or Grandfather; but at last we had no Reason to believe they were any other than *Irish*. *Martin* mentions *Irish*, but never any *Earle* Manuscripts, to be found in the *Islands* in his Time.”

Mr. *Boswell*, whom, from his being obliged to be back before the Courts of Justice were opened, as *Johnson* informs us in another Place, I take to be of the Law, was a very proper Person to cross-question the poor ignorant *Hebridians*. Though I think if they had travelled with an Intention, not of contradicting, but of learning the Truth, they should have consulted the

Gentlemen,



Gentlemen, especially the Clergy of the Country, of whom the Doctor himself gives a very favourable Character \*. This would have given their Reports some Weight, but *Johnson's* Hearsay has too much the Appearance of Prejudice, not to say Falshood, to be credited by the better and wiser Part of Mankind.

We may in particular safely conclude, that the old Translation of the Scripture, and the Manuscripts here alluded to, were really, as they were informed, wrote in the *Earfe* Language; 1st, because we have already seen, that the Natives had a Translation of the Scripture, as far back as the latter End of the Twelfth Century; 2dly, because we are sure that there have been *Earfe* Manuscripts, and can moreover prove that those mentioned by *Martin*, though he calls them *Irish*, were undoubtedly *Earfe*. *Irish* and *Earfe* are synonymous Terms, derived from *Iar* or *Ear*, West †, and signify the Western or *Galic* Language. Accordingly in this Sense we find them used by *Scottish* Authors: Thus the Rev. Mr. *Alexander Pope*, Minister of *Reay*, speaking of *Gilbert Murray*, Bishop of *Cathness*, as above quoted, says, *he translated the Psalms and Gospels into*  
*the*

\* These are *Johnson's* own Words; " I never was in any House of the *Islands*, where I did not find Books in more Languages than one, if I staid long enough to want them, except one from which the Family was removed. Literature is not neglected by the higher Rank of the *Hebridians*." And speaking of the Pastors, he says; " I saw not one in the *Islands*, whom I had Reason to think either deficient in Learning, or irregular in Life. But found several with whom I could not converse without wishing, as my Respect increased, that they had not been *Presbyterian*s." *Journey to the Western Islands*.

† See a Note to the 215th Verse of the First Book of the following Poem.

*the Irish Language, or Scots Galic.* That Mr. *Martin* called the Manuscripts in Question *Irish* in the same Sense, appears evident from his using it invariably throughout his whole Book, to express the Tongue of the *Western Islanders*, who are by all allowed to speak the *Scots Galic* \*. *Johnson*, who has read *Martin*, could not be ignorant of this, and must therefore have made the above Objection in Contradiction to his own Conviction: but our Antagonist sticks at nothing, however false, to attain his Ends, as will manifestly appear in the Course of this Dispute.

“ I suppose my Opinion of the Poems of *Ossian* is already  
 “ discovered. I believe they never existed in any other Form  
 “ than that which we have seen †. The Editor, or Author,  
 “ never

\* When *Martin's* Authority was brought above in Support of ancient *Earle* Manuscripts, we forgot to observe, that he likewise makes Mention of the famous *Fin-mac-coul*: *The Natives*, says he, *have many Stories of this General and his Army, with which I shall not trouble the Reader. He is mentioned in Bishop Leslie's History.* In *Arran*, *Martin* was shewn a Cave, large enough to hold a hundred Men, in which *Fin-mac-coul* lodged during his Residence in that *Island*. There was likewise a Stone, to which, they told him, he usually tied his Hunting Dog *Bran*. These, and other Accounts common to the Vulgar, however fabulous and extravagant, are convincing Proofs of the Existence of such a Personage formerly in those Parts.

† An anonymous Person, who, in the *St. James's Chronicle*, signed himself *W. Cambrensis*, has fully confuted Dr. *Johnson* with respect to all he advances in this Place: I shall therefore take the Liberty to transcribe a Part of his Letter. “ Dr. *J.* says, that the Poems of *Ossian* never existed in any other Form than that in which we have seen them. I beg Pardon for contradicting so respectable an Author, but must think what he affirms is a Mistake; for I have often seen and heard them repeated in another Form, and in another Language, in that of the *Irish*; and though I am neither an *Irish* nor a *Scots-man*,  
 yet

“ never could shew the Original; nor can it be shewn by any other; to revenge reasonable Incredulity, by refusing Evidence, is a Degree of Insolence, with which the World is not yet acquainted; and stubborn Audacity is the last Refuge of Guilt. It would be easy to shew it if he had it; but where could it be had? It is too long to be remembered, and the Language formerly had nothing written. He has doubtless inserted Names that circulate in popular Stories, and may have translated some wandering Ballads, if any can be found; and the Names, and some of the Images being recollected, make an inaccurate Auditor imagine, by the Help of *Caledonian* Bigotry, that he has formerly heard the Whole.”

## The

yet I understand sufficiently of both Dialects to prevent any Imposition that might be attempted to deceive me, on such an Occasion. I say I have seen poetical *Mss.* in the *Irish* Language, and have taken Extracts from them, which contained the Exploits of *Finn-mac-combhal*, and his Heroes, though not exactly the same, yet like as to the Matter, with the Poems attributed to *Ossian*. These are written in the *Irish* Characters, but certainly not so ancient as some there would have them to be; but I may venture to say long before Mr. *Macpherson*, and Dr. *Johnson* were born, and therefore to be seen before the Form Mr. *Becket* has given us of them. In regard to what the Doctor affirms of their being too long to be remembered, surely that also must be a Mistake. They are separate Books, or distinct Parts, and there are many still living in the North of *Ireland* who can repeat them Word for Word. I presume the Doctor must remember Boys at School who could repeat one or all the *Eclagues*, or a *Georgic* of *Virgil*. I can with Truth aver, and what many will affirm, that there are several Persons in *Wales* who can repeat the Transactions (however fabulous) of *Arthur*, and his *MIL-WYR*, i. e. *his thousand Heroes*, which are as long as the Poems of *Ossian*.—We have still extant in the same Manner, some of the Poems of *TALISCYN PEN. BRYDD*, i. e. *the Chief of Poets*, in the *Welsh* Language, and they are not inferior to modern Poetry of high Estimation. *Taliscyn* flourished in the Year Five Hundred.

The Evidence of the anonymous Author in the Note, plainly proves the Existence of the Poems, in another Form, long before they were translated by Mr. *Macpherson*. That the Editor never could shew the Original, is asserted directly in the Face of Facts. Mr. *Macpherson*, even before the Translation made its Appearance, published Proposals for printing by Subscription the Originals \*; but finding no Encouragement, he contented himself with leaving a Copy of the Archetype some Months in the Bookseller's Shop, for the Inspection of the Curious: And when *Temora* came out, the Original of the Seventh Book was given as a Specimen of the *Galic* Language †. I cannot devise what other Methods, than these mentioned, the Editor could have possibly taken, to convince the Public in general of the Authenticity of the Poems.

The Doctor's Objections of *Ossian* being too long to be remembered, and of the Language having had formerly nothing written; have been already fully answered, by what was said on  
the

\* Last Year he (*Macpherson*) published Proposals for printing by Subscription the Originals, in order to convince the Critics of their Authenticity; but as no Subscription was received, he took it for granted that the Public required no such Testimonies: Nevertheless, he still intends to print the Originals, or, at least, to deposit Copies of them in some public Library. See the Critical Review, No. 71, for December 1761. We hope Mr. *Macpherson* has, or will fulfil one of these Promises, not for the Authenticity of the Poems, which cannot be doubted; but that the World may have left a complete Copy of *Ossian's* original Works, from the Hands of a Person so well versed in the *Galic* Language.

† This Advertisement was prefixed by the Author: It is thought proper to give a Specimen of the original *Galic*, for the Satisfaction of those who doubt the Authenticity of *Ossian's* Poems. The Seventh Book of *Temora* is fixed on, for that Purpose, not from any  
other

the early Orthography of the *Earſe* Tongue, and the Practice common to all Nations of preſerving paſt Events by oral Tradition, before they were acquainted with the Uſe of Letters. As for the Editor paſſing his own Compoſitions for ancient Poems, by inserting Names that circulate in popular Stories and wandering Ballads; the Impoſſibility of ſuch a Fraud appears, by the Pains taken to compare Mr. *Macpherson's* Verſion with the original Songs, ſtill remembered by many of the Natives, as well as with written Copies to be found in the Hands of ſome Gentlemen of Taſte and Learning. Upon the neareſt Examination the Tranſlations were allowed to be amazingly literal, even ſo much ſo, as often to preſerve the Cadence of the *Galic* Verſification.

“ I aſked a very learned Miniſter in *Sky*, who had uſed all  
 “ Arts to make me believe the Genuinenefs of the Book, whe-  
 “ ther at laſt he believed it himſelf? But he would not answer.  
 “ He wiſhed me to be deceived, for the Honour of his Coun-  
 “ try;

other ſuperior Merit, than the Variety of its Verſification. To print any Part of the former Collection was unneceſſary, as a Copy of the Originals lay, for many Months, in the Bookſeller's Hands, for the Inſpection of the Curious \*. Though the erroneous Orthography of the Bards is departed from, in many Inſtances, in the following Specimen, yet ſeveral quieſcent Conſonants are retained, to ſhew the Derivation of the Words. This Circumſtance may give an uncouth Appearance to the Language, in the Eyes of thoſe who are Strangers to its Harmony. They ought, however, to conſider, that a Language is put to the ſevereſt Teſt, when it is ſtripped of its own proper Characters; eſpecially when the Power of *one* of them requires, ſometimes, a Combination of two or three *Roman* Letters to expreſs it.

\* And this Mr. *Becker* has ſolemnly avowed in the public Papers,

“ try ; but would not directly and formally deceive me. Yet  
 “ has this Man’s Testimony been publickly produced, as of one  
 “ that held *Fingal* to be the Work of *Ossian*.”

Allowing this Account, notwithstanding the dubious Aspect it bears \*, to be exactly true ; a very different Inference may be drawn from it, than that which our Antagonist alledges. The Contest, we may presume, was carried on in the imperious (and I might add abusive) Strain natural to *Johnson* ; who at length putting such an impertinent Question to the Minister, as asking if he believed what he was all the while contending for, the reverend Gentleman, justly offended at his doubting of it, agreeable to the Rules of Politeness bridled his Resentment ; and probably finding the strongest Arguments urged in vain, dropped the Dispute. This to have been really the Case is more consonant to Reason, than to suppose a Man of the Minister’s Cloth and Learning capable of imposing upon another what he did not believe himself : Nor does it look at all consistent, that he would hesitate to tell a Lie, at the Instant he was obtruding the grossest Imposture upon the Doctor.

“ It is said, that some Men of Integrity profess to have heard  
 “ Parts of it, but they all heard them when they were Boys ;  
 “ and

\* This was sent to the Press before I had read the *Letters from Edinburgh, written in the Years 1774 and 1775*. The Author of these assures us, that a Person of Credit, who was present during the Conversation here alluded to, informed him, that there is not a Word of Truth in this Relation of Dr. *Johnson*. As the Gentleman’s Letter is too long to be quoted in a Note, and yet too interesting to be entirely omitted, it shall be printed at Length at the End of the Preface.



“ and it was never said that any of them could recite six Lines.  
 “ They remember Names, and perhaps some proverbial Sentiments; and, having no distinct Ideas, coin a Resemblance without an Original. The Persuasion of the *Scots*, however, is far from being universal; and in a Question so capable of Proof, why should Doubt be suffered to continue? The Editor has been heard to say, that Part of the Poem was received by him, in the *Saxon* Character. He has then found by some peculiar Fortune, an unwritten Language, written in a Character which the Natives probably never beheld.”

It really amazes me to hear *Johnson* advance, that all those Gentlemen who set their Names to the Authenticity of *Osian's* Poems, heard them only when they were Boys. To expose the barefaced Falstiy of his Assertion, we have only to turn back to the Testimonies prefixed to this Preface.

“ Dr. *Hugh Blair*, desirous to have the Translation compared with the oral Editions of any who had Parts of the Original distinctly on their Memory, applied to several Clergymen to make Inquiry in their respective Parishes concerning such Persons; and to compare what they rehearsed with the printed Version. Accordingly, from the Rev. Mr. *John Macpherson*, Minister of *Slate*, in *Sky*; Mr. *Neil Macleod*, Minister of *Ross*, in *Mull*; Mr. *Angus Macleod*, Minister of *South Vist*; Mr. *Donald Macqueen*, Minister of *Kilmuir*, in *Sky*; and Mr. *Donald Macleod*, Minister of *Glenelg*; he had Reports on this Head, containing distinct and explicit Testimonies to almost the whole Epic Poem of *Fingal*, from Beginning to End, and several also

of the lesser Poems, as rehearsed in the Original, in their Presence, by Persons whose Names and Places of Abode they mention, and compared by themselves with the printed Translation. They affirm that in many Places, what was rehearsed in their Presence agreed literally and exactly with the Translation. In some Places they found Variations from it, and Variations even among different Rehearers of the same Poem in the Original; as Words and Stanzas omitted by some which others repeated, and the Order and Connection in some Places changed. But they remarked, that these Variations are on the Whole not very material; and that Mr. *Macpherson* seemed to them to follow the most just and authentic Copy of the Sense of his Author. Some of these Clergymen, particularly Mr. *Neil Macleod*, can themselves repeat from Memory several Passages of *Fingal*; the Translation of which they assure me is exact."----

“ Mr. *Alexander Macaulay*, Chaplain to the 88th Regiment; Mr. *Adam Ferguson*, Professor of Moral Philosophy; and Mr. *Alexander Fraser*, Governor to *Francis Stuart*, Esq. informed him, that at several different Times they were with Mr. *Macpherson*, after he had returned from his Journey through the *HIGHLANDS*, and whilst he was employed in the Work of Translating; that they looked into his Manuscripts, several of which had the Appearance of being old; that they were fully satisfied of their being genuine *HIGHLAND* Poems; that they compared the Translation in many Places with the Original, and they attest it to be very just and faithful, and remarkably literal.”

I have

I have transcribed these few Instances, from among many, to shew how false it is to pretend that all those who gave their Testimony of the Authenticity of the Translation, had only heard the Poems when they were Boys, and remembered but Names and some proverbial Sentiments, by which, without any distinct Ideas, they coined a Resemblance without an Original: On the contrary, we see, some of these Gentlemen could themselves recite a great Part of the Poems; and moreover compared the Translation with what others rehearsed, who knew the Whole. Several make Affidavit that they saw Mr. *Macpherson's* Manuscripts, and, comparing his Translation with those Originals, found it remarkably literal. Are not these Proofs as full as the Nature of the Thing can possibly admit? Therefore to require any others is absurd; and if *Johnson* still pretends a Doubt, it is because he is obstinate, and resolved to oppose the clearest Evidence.

As for the Editor being heard to say, that Part of the Poem was received by him in the *Saxon* Character, there is not the least Impossibility in that, since the Character, which goes by the Name of *Saxon*, is the same with that made Use of by the ancient *Britons*. For Sir *James Ware* (in the *Antiquities of Ireland*, C. III.) informs us, that the *Saxons*, having no Alphabet of their own, borrowed the old *British* Letters from the *Irish*; when, after their Conversion, they flocked to that Kingdom for Education. *Camden* (p. 1318) inclines to the same Opinion. What seems to put it beyond a Doubt is, that the *Saxon* Character is similar with that used in *Ireland* and *Scotland*  
at

at this Day \*. *Johnson* therefore discovers his Ignorance in upbraiding *Macpherson* with finding an unwritten Language in a Character which the Natives never beheld, since it was the common, if not the only one they were acquainted with †.

“ I have

\* What is here said gives an additional Strength to the Supposition made in another Place, that the *Scotch* and *Irish* were acquainted with the Use of Letters before the Introduction of Christianity.

I shall here, for the Satisfaction of the Reader, give the Letters, vulgarly called *Saxon*, with the *Galic* Appellations of them.

A a	Æ a	Ailim.	L l	L l	Luis.
B b	B b	Beith.	M m	ᄡ m	Muin.
C c	L c	Coll.	N n	N n	Nuin.
D d	D d	Duir.	O o	O o	Oun.
E e	€ e	Eadha.	P p	P p	Peithboc.
F f	F f	Fearn.	R r	R r	Ruis.
G g	Ʒ g	Gort.	S s	S s	Suil.
H h	Þ h	Uath.	T t	T t	Tinne.
I i	I i	Jogha.	U u	U u	Uir.

Some Tables add three more Letters, viz. *CP* or *Q*, called *Queirt*; *nƷ*, called *Ngedal*; and *Z*, called *Ztraif*. But these are excluded the modern Alphabet as superfluous Consonants: For *Q* and *K* are pronounced as *c*; and *nƷ*, and *Z* are never used.

† Notwithstanding the Doctor's boasted Pretension to universal Knowledge, he appears very deficient in Antiquity. Being told in the *Isle of Sky*, that Urns are frequently found in the Cairns; regardless of *Scotch* Information, he is of Opinion the Custom of burning the Dead never reached those Parts: But our Note at the End of the Second Book, will convince the Reader of the contrary; and *Olaus Wormius* evidently proves that this Practice prevailed among the Northern Nations.

“ I have yet supposed no Imposture but in the Publisher,  
 “ yet am far from Certainty, that some Translations have not  
 “ been lately made, that may now be obtruded as Parts of the  
 “ original Work. Credulity on one Part is a strong Tempta-  
 “ tion to Deceit on the other, especially to Deceit of which no  
 “ personal Injury is the Consequence, and which flatters the  
 “ Author with his own Ingenuity. The *Scots* have something  
 “ to plead for their easy Reception of an improbable Fiction :  
 “ They are seduced by their Fondness for their supposed An-  
 “ cestors. A *Scotchman* must be a very sturdy Moralist, who  
 “ does not love *Scotland* better than Truth ; he will always  
 “ love it better than Inquiry : And if Falsehood flatters his  
 “ Vanity, will not be very diligent to detect it. Neither ought  
 “ the *English* to be much influenced by *Scotch* Authority ; for  
 “ of the past and present State of the whole *Earſe* Nation, the  
 “ *Lowlanders* are at least as ignorant as ourselves. To be ig-  
 “ norant is painful ; but it is dangerous to quiet our Uneasiness  
 “ by the delusive Opiate of hasty Credulity.”

Doctor *Johnson*, after every Attempt to overthrow the Au-  
 thenticity of *Ossian*, here maliciously endeavours to invalidate  
 whatever may hereafter be produced in his Favour. But the  
 Supposition that some have been employed in making an *Earſe*  
 Version to obtrude upon the Public for the Original, is as  
 groundless as it is invidious. The Translator produced the  
 Original, and, had he met with any Encouragement, would  
 have printed it, when the first Publication made its Appearance.  
 Though *Johnson* is ignorant of the *Galic* Language, all in the  
 Kingdom are not : *W. Cambrensis*, already quoted, professes to  
 know

know enough to detect any Forgery that might be attempted. The same Gentleman declares, he had both seen and heard the Poems sung in the North of *Ireland*, long before he saw the Form in which they were given by Mr. *Becket*.

The Acquaintance of the *Irish* with these Poems, puts their Authenticity beyond a Doubt, and destroys at once the extravagant Notion, that the *Lowlanders* as well as *Highlanders* (*from a Love to their Country, and a Fondness for their supposed Ancestors*) have combined to palm the grossest Forgeries upon the learned World. No one except *Johnson*, who has stuck at nothing to satisfy his private Antipathy, would have had the Temerity to accuse them of a Thing so evidently impracticable and absurd. But however such wanton Attacks upon the Character of a wise and respectable Nation may please the malignant Spirit of some of his Countrymen, they will never, with the better Part, gain him any Credit either as a Philosopher or a Man.

“ But this is the Age in which those who could not read,  
 “ have been supposed to write; in which the Giants of antiquated Romance have been exhibited as Realities. If we  
 “ know little of the ancient *Highlanders*, let us not fill the  
 “ Vacuity with *Offian*. If we have not searched the *Magellanic*  
 “ Regions, let us however forbear to people them with *Pata-*  
 “ *gons*.”

That a Person, who can neither write nor read, may still compose in a Tongue with which he is well acquainted, we  
 have



have proved very possible both from Reason and ancient Practice; but Doctor *Samuel Johnson* is the first, and will probably be the last, that travelled in Search of Records which he could not read, and criticised a Language of which he never understood a Syllable: However, we are confident the Public will not let themselves be deceived by the Misrepresentations of one, who was too ungenerous to judge with Candour, and too ignorant to discover a Fraud, if any such had been intended. I am really surpris'd that a Man of his literary Reputation, would venture it in a Contest for which he was every Way so very improper; the Editor is a Person of great Abilities, *Johnson's* Equal on any, but far his Superior on the Ground he has chosen to engage him. I expected before this he would have chastized the Doctor's Insolence, and vindicated his own Character from the Injuries openly offer'd to it. But the following Sheets being actually in the Press, oblig'd me, in the mean Time, to step forth in Defence of the Bard, and to confront, though with the utmost Diffidence, this *Colossus* of *English* Learning: And though, I presume, the Futility of his Arguments has been already sufficiently shewn, as a farther Confutation of the same, I shall here subjoin certain Considerations tending to evince, that the Manners described by *Ossian* must have been real, and not the counterfeit Invention of a modern Author\*. If they will peruse with Attention these Considerations, I do not despair of bringing over even the most incredulous to my Opinion.

It

\* The following Arguments are taken from Lord *Kames*, a greater Critic, and one who has a much better Title to the Name of Philosopher than Dr. *Johnson*. See *Sketches of the History of Man*,—*Appetite for Society*.—*Origin of National Society*.

It is a noted and well-founded Observation, that Manners are never painted to the Life by any one to whom they are not familiar. It is not difficult to draw the Outlines of imaginary Manners; but to fill up the Picture with all the Variety of Tints that Manners assume in different Situations, uniting all in one entire Whole, *Hic labor, hoc opus est*. Yet the Manners here supposed to be invented, are delineated in a Variety of Incidents, of Sentiments, of Images, and of Allusions, making one entire Picture, without once deviating into the slightest Incongruity. Every Scene in *Osſian* relates to Hunting, to Fighting, and to Love; the ſole Occupations of Men in the original State of Society: There is not a ſingle Image, Simile, or Alluſion, but what is borrowed from that State, without a jarring Circumſtance. Suppoſing all to be mere Invention, is it not amazing to find no Mention of *Highland Clans*, nor of any Name now in Uſe? Is it not ſtill more amazing, that there is not the ſlighteſt Hint of the Chriſtian Religion, not even in a Metaphor or Alluſion? Is it not equally amazing, that in a Work where Deer's Fleſh is frequently mentioned, and a curious Method of roaſting it, there ſhould not be a Word of Fiſh as Food, which is ſo common in later Times? Very few *Highlanders* know that their Forefathers did not eat Fiſh; and ſuppoſing it to be known, it would require Attention more than human, never once to mention it. Can it be ſuppoſed, that a modern Writer could be ſo conſtantly on his Guard, as never to mention Corn, nor Cattle? In a Story ſo ſcanty of poetical Images, the ſedentary Life of a Shepherd, and the Induſtry of a Huſbandman would make a capital Figure: The cloven Foot would ſomewhere appear. And yet in all the  
Works

Works of *Osſian*, there is no Mention of Agriculture; and but a ſlight Hint of a Herd of Cattle in one or two Alluſions. I willingly give all Advantages to the Unbeliever: Suppoſing the Author of *Osſian* to be a late Writer, embellished with every Refinement of modern Education; yet even upon that Suppoſition he is a Miracle, far from being equalled by any other Author ancient or modern.

But the remote Antiquity of the Bard muſt be admitted, when we conſider that his Works cannot have exiſted leſs than three or four Centuries back. The Tranſlator ſaw in the *Iſle of Sky* the firſt four Books of the Poem of *Fingal*, written in a fair Hand on Vellum, and bearing Date in the Year 1403. The Natives believe that Poem to be very ancient: Many have Paſſages of it by Heart, tranſmitted by Memory from their Forefathers. Their Dogs bear commonly the Name of *Luath*, *Bran*, &c. mentioned in theſe Poems, as our Dogs do of *Pompey* and *Cæſar*. Many other Particulars might be brought; but theſe are ſufficient to prove that the Poem has ſubſiſted at leaſt theſe three or four hundred Years. Taking this for granted, I argue thus: The *Highlanders* at preſent are rude and illiterate, and could not in Fact be much better at the above Period. Now to hold the Manners deſcribed in *Osſian* to be imaginary, is in Effect to hold, that they were invented by an ignorant *Highlander*, acquainted with the rude Manners of his own Country, but utterly unacquainted with every other System of Manners. From what Source did he draw the refined Manners ſo deliciously painted by him? Suppoſing him to have been a Traveller, of which we have not the ſlighteſt Hint, the

Manners of *France*, of *Italy*, and of other neighbouring Nations, were at that Time little less barbarous than those of our own Country. I can therefore discover no other Source than direct Inspiration, unless we allow them to be real.

But further : The uncommon Talents of *Ossian* will readily be acknowledged by every Reader of Taste : He certainly was a great Master in his Way. Now, whether his Works be late, or composed four Centuries ago, a Man of such Parts inventing an historical Fable, and laying the Scene of Action among Savages in the Hunter-State, would naturally frame a System of Manners the best suited in his Opinion to that State. What then could tempt him to adopt a System of Manners so opposite to any Notion he could frame of savage Manners ? The Absurdity is so gross, that we are forced, however reluctantly, to believe, that these Manners are not fictitious, but in Reality the Manners of his Country, coloured perhaps, or a little heightened, according to the Privilege of an Epic Poet. And once admitting that Fact, there can be no Hesitation in ascribing the Work to *Ossian*, Son of *Fingal*, whose Name it bears : We have no better Evidence for the Authors of several *Greek* and *Roman* Books. Upon the same Evidence we must believe, that *Ossian* lived in the Reign of the Emperor *Caracalla*, of whom Mention is made under the Designation of *Caracul the King of the World* ; at which Period the Shepherd-State was scarce known in *Caledonia*, and Husbandry not at all. Had he lived so late as the Twelfth Century, when there were Flocks and Herds in that Country, and some Sort of Agriculture, a Poet of Genius, such as *Ossian* undoubtedly was, would have drawn from these his first Images.

We

We have now only to account for the pure and elevated Manners to be found in a Bard, who certainly lived in the first Stage of Society, and the foregoing Arguments are conclusive.

The *Caledonians* were not an original Tribe, to found a Supposition that they might have Manners peculiar to themselves : They were a Branch of the *Celtæ*, and had a Language common to them with the Inhabitants of *Gaul*, and of *England*. The Manners probably of all were the same, or nearly so ; and if we expect any Light for explaining *Caledonian* Manners, it must be from that Quarter : We have indeed no other Resource. *Diodorus Siculus* (Lib. V.) reports of the *Celtæ*, that, though warlike, they were upright in their Dealings, and far removed from Deceit and Duplicity. *Cæsar* says, (*De Bello Africo*) the *Gauls* are of an open Temper, not at all insidious ; and in Fight they rely on Valour, not on Stratagem. And though cruel to their Enemies, yet *Pomponius Mela* (Lib. III.) observes, that they were kind and compassionate to the suppliant and unfortunate. *Strabo* describes the *Gauls* (Lib. IV.) as studious of War, and of great Alacrity in Fighting ; otherwise an innocent People, altogether void of Malignity. He says, that they had three Orders of Men, Bards, Priests, and Druids ; that the Province of the Bards was to study Poetry, and to compose Songs in Praise of their deceased Heroes ; that the Priests presided over divine Worship ; and that the Druids, beside studying Moral and Natural Philosophy, determined all Controversies, and had some Direction even in War. *Cæsar*, less attentive to Civil Matters, comprehends these three Orders under the Name of Druid ; and observes that the Druids teach their Disciples a  
vast

vaſt Number of Verſes, which they muſt get by Heart. The *Celts* (ſays *Ælian*, Var. Hiſt.) are the moſt enterpriſing of Men : They make thoſe Warriors who die bravely in Fight the Subject of Songs. And *Diodorus Siculus*, already quoted, informs us, that the *Gauls* had Poets termed Bards, who ſung Airs accompanied with the Harp, in Praise of ſome, and Diſpraiſe of others.

Now, it is not to be doubted but the *Gallic Celtæ* carried with them their Manners and Customs to *Britain*, and ſpread them gradually from South to North. And as the *Caledonians*, inhabiting a mountainous Country in the Northern Parts of the Iſland, had little Commerce with other Nations, they preſerved long in Purity many *Celtic* Customs, particularly that of retaining Bards \*. All the Chieftains had Bards in their Pay, whoſe Province

\* Our preſent *Highlanders* are but a ſmall Part of the Inhabitants of *Britain*; and they have been ſinking in their Importance, from the Time that Arts and Sciences made a Figure, and peaceable Manners prevailed. And yet in that People are diſcernible many remaining Features of their Forefathers the *Caledonians*. They have to this Day a Diſpoſition to War, and when diſciplined make excellent Soldiers, ſober, active, and obedient. They are eminently hoſpitable; and the Character given by *Strabo* of the *Gallic Celtæ*, that they were innocent, and devoid of Malignity, is to them perfectly applicable. That they have not the Magnanimity and Heroiſm of the *Caledonians*, is eaſily accounted for. The *Caledonians* were a free and independent People, unawed by any ſuperior Power, and living under the mild Government of their Chieftains. Compared with their Forefathers, the preſent *Highlanders* make a very inconfiderable Figure: Their Country is barren, and at any Rate is but a ſmall Part of a potent Kingdom; and their Language deprives them of Intercourſe with their poliſhed Neighbours. But what chiefly affected the Manners, as well as the Power of the *Hebridian Scots*, was the Violence of the Reformation. This not only overthrew the national Church, but moreover deſtroyed almoſt every Veſtige of Magnificence, whether religious or ſecular, that adorned the Face of thoſe Countries.

Architecture



Province it was to compose Songs in Praise of their Ancestors, and to accompany those Songs with the Harp. This Entertainment inflamed their Love for War, and at the same Time softened their Manners, *which were naturally innocent and void of Malignity*. It had beside a wonderful Influence in forming virtuous Manners. The Bards, in praising the deceased Heroes, would naturally select virtuous Actions, which make the best Figure in heroic Poetry, and the most proper to illustrate the Hero of the Song\*: Vice may be flattered; but Praise is never willingly

Architecture is one of the polite Arts, and the constant Companion of Letters and Civilization; some Idea therefore may be formed of the Injury done to both, on the above Occasion, by considering the despicable State to which that Art has been ever since reduced in the North-West Parts of *Scotland*: And notwithstanding it is now again reviving, and great Improvements have been lately made, yet it will be many Years, if not Centuries, before the *Western Isles* will boast of Structures comparable to those superb Ruins to be still met with in *Jona*.

\* The *Highland 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 a People, whom we are accustomed to call barbarous. Barbarity, I must observe, is a very equivocal Term; it admits of many 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 Qualities, might

\* 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 406.

willingly nor successfully bestowed upon any Atchievement but what is virtuous and heroic. It is accordingly observed by *Amnianus Marcellinus*, (Lib. XV.) that the Bards inculcated in their Songs Virtue and Actions worthy of Praise. The Bards, who were in high Estimation, became great Proficients in Poetry; of which we have a conspicuous Instance in the Works of *Offian*. Their capital Compositions were diligently studied by those of their own Order, and much admired by all. The Songs of the Bards, accompanied with the Harp, made a deep

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 Bards, was to delineate the Characters, and sing the Praises of Heroes. 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 Natives 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 an early State, Man could obtain over Man, the chief was Fame, and that Immortality which they expected to receive from their Virtues and Exploits, in the Songs of

deep Impression on the young Warrior, elevated some into Heroes, and promoted Virtue in every Hearer\*. Another Circumstance concurred to form *Caledonian* Manners, common to them with every Nation in the first Stage of Society ; which is, that Avarice was unknown among them. People in that Stage, ignorant of habitual Wants, and having a ready Supply of all that Nature requires, have little Notion of Property, and not the slightest Notion of accumulating the Goods of Fortune ; and for that Reason are always found honest and disinterested. With respect to the Female Sex, who make an illustrious Figure in *Offian's* Poems, if they were so eminent both for Courage and Beauty as they are represented by the best Authors, it is no Wonder that they are painted by *Offian* as Objects of Love the most pure and refined. Nor ought it to be overlooked, that the soft and delicate Notes of the Harp have a Tendency to purify Manners, and to refine Love.

Thus, if Reason and authentic History are to be relied on, we can entertain no Doubt, but the Manners of the *Galic* and *British*

of the Bards. When *Edward* the First conquered *Wales*, he put to Death all the *Welsh* 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 *Welsh* Bards were of the same *Celtic* Race with the *Scottish* and *Irish*. Dr. *Blair's* Critical Dissertation on the Poems of *Offian*.

\* Love of Fame is a laudable Passion, which every Man values himself upon. Fame in War is acquired by Courage and Candour, which are esteemed by all : It is not acquired by fighting for Spoil, because Avarice is despised by all. The Spoils of an Enemy were displayed at a *Roman* Triumph not for their own Sake, but as a Mark of Victory. When Nations at War degenerate from Love of Fame to Love of Gain ; Stratagem, Deceit, Breach of Faith, and every Sort of Immorality, are the never-failing Consequences.

*tish Celtæ*, including the *Caledonians*, were such as are above related. And as the Manners ascribed by *Ossian* to his Countrymen, are in every Particular conformable to those now mentioned, it clearly follows, that he was no Inventor, but drew his Picture of Manners from real Life. This is made highly probable from intrinsic Evidence, the same that has been urged above: and now by authentic History that Probability is so much heightened as not to leave the least Room for a Doubt.

The Poems of *Ossian* being long known in *Ireland*, the Natives of that Country, upon their first Appearance, laid Claim to the Merit of them; but as Mr. *Macpherson* has fully confuted their Pretensions,\* I shall here content myself with only transcribing his Arguments on the Subject.

“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 vulgar-received Opinion of the *Hibernian* Extraction of the *Scottish* Nation, was my Observations on their ancient Language. That Dialect of the *Celtic* Tongue,

\* See his Dissertation concerning the Poems of *Ossian*.

† See his Introduction to the History of *Great Britain* and *Ireland*.

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 GAELIC EIRINACH, i. e. *Caledonian Irish*, when, on the contrary, they call the Dialect of *North Britain* A CHAELIC, or *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 united 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 *Milefians* of *Ireland*."

"From internal Proofs it sufficiently appears, that the Poems published under the Name of *Ossian*, are not of *Irish* Composition.

on. 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* proceeded 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 these 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



their Antiquity. They are entirely wrote 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 Broom-Sticks, 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 inferiour to them in Height.

ACHOS 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 *Ulfster*, 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

the Bard himself, in the Poem, from which the above Quotation is taken, cedes him to *Scotland*.

FION O ALBIN, SIOL NAN LAVICH!

*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 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-issal*; 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

ting Blunders and Absurdities, in translating the Language of my own Country, and that before any Translation of mine appeared.\* How the Gentleman came to see my Blunders before I committed them, is not easy to determine; if he did not conclude, that, as a *Scotchman*, and, of Course descended of the *Milesian* Race, I might have committed some of those Overights, 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 Connal* 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 283, 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

\* In *Faulkner's Dublin Journal* of the 1st December 1761, appeared the following Advertisement: Two Weeks before my first Publication appeared in *London*.

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

## F I N G A L, A P O E M,

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 entreats 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 the *Irish* Grammar, not understanding any Part of that Accidence.

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.

LON DON RABH PADRIC NA MHUR,  
 GUN SAILM AIR NIDH, ACH A GOL  
 GHLUAIS E' THIGH OSSIAN MHIC FHION,  
 O SAN LEIS BU BHINN A GHLOIR.

The Title of this Poem is *Teantach mir na Fiona*. It appears to have been founded on the same Story with the *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 Rout 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

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 Clofe 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 C'OMHTHRO'M NAN N'ARM,

ERRAGON MAC ANNIR NAN LANN GLAS

'SAN N' *Albin* NI N' AB AIRTAIR TRIATH

AGUS GHLAOITE AN N THIONA 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-cabbra*, 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-cabbra* of making *Oscar* his Countryman, that, in the Course of two hundred Lines, of which the Poem consists, 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' AN  
 'S IAD A TIACHD LE CABHAIR CHUGAIN,  
 O ALBIN NA N'IOMA STUAGH.

“ I see 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 GHARIBN 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 not I 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;



tion; the last of which, the *Irish* Translator, no Doubt, will choofe to leave in the Obscurity of the Original. In this Piece *Cuthbullin* is used with very little Ceremony, for he is oft called, the *Dog of Tura*, in the County of *Meath*. This severe Title of the *redoubtable Cuthbullin*, the most renowned of *Irish* Champions, proceeded from the Poet's Ignorance of Etymology. *Cu*, *Voice*, or *Commander*, fignifies alfo a *Dog*. The Poet chofe the laft, as the moft noble Appellation for his Hero."

" The Subject of the Poem is the fame with that of the Epic Poem of *Fingal*. *Caribb Mac-Starn* is the fame with *Ossian's Swaran*, the Son of *Starno*. His fingle Combat with, and his Victory over all the Heroes of *Ireland*, excepting the celebrated *Dog of Tura*, i. e. *Cuthbullin*, afford Matter for two hundred Lines of tolerable Poetry. *Caribb's* Progress in Search of *Cuthbullin*, and his Intrigue with the gigantic *Emir-bragal*, that Hero's Wife, enables the Poet to extend his Piece to four hundred Lines. The Author, it is true, makes *Cuthbullin* 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 fhall not difpute with him, or any other. But, as he fpeaks with great Tendernefs of the *Daughters of the Convent*, and throws out fome Hints againft the *Englifh* Nation, it is probable he lived in too modern a Period to be intimately acquainted with the Genealogy of *Cuthbullin*."

" Another *Irish Ossian*, for there were many, as appears from their Difference of Language and Sentiment, fpeaks very dogmatically of *Fion Mac Comnal*, as an *Irifhman*. 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 *Löchlin*, *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 wakening him, and they, at last, fixed on the Stone, as the less dangerous Expedient.

GUN THONG CAOILTE A CHLACH, NACH GAN,  
 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 re-  
 " bounded 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, not-  
 withstanding,

withstanding, 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 bare 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 LANN.

*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 something 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 compleat 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

“ It remains now to shew, how the *Irish* Bards begun 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 traditionary 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 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 Lists of *Heremonian* Kings and Heroes, they,

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 incontestable 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 *Scotch* 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 farther 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



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 Pieces depends so much on a certain *curiosa felicitas* of Expression in the Original, that they must appear much to Disadvantage in another Language."

Having thus established the Authenticity of *Ossian*, and sufficiently proved him to be no Native of *Ireland*, it is high Time to put an End to this Preface, which, by the tedious Discussion of the above, has been spun to a greater Length than was at first intended. I shall only here just forewarn the Reader, now entering upon the Poem, not to be disgusted with the wild and undisciplined Method of our *Highland* Bard. For, as the judicious Dr. *Blair* observes, "the Question is not, whether a few Improproprieties 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 undecisive 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 Characteristicks 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 full 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 ever 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."

THE RECEPTION DR. JOHNSON'S TOUR MET WITH  
IN SCOTLAND; FROM THE AUTHOR OF THE LET-  
TERS FROM EDINBURGH, WRITTEN IN THE YEARS  
1774 and 1775.

LETTER THE SEVENTEENTH.

To R. D. Esq.

S I R,

EDINBURGH, *January 24, 1775.*

DR. *Johnson's* Account of his Tour into *Scotland* has just made its Appearance here; and has put the Country into a Flame. Every Body finds some Reason to be affronted. A thousand People, who know not a single Creature in the *Western Isles*, interest themselves in their Cause, and are offended at the Accounts that are given of them. But let this unfortunate Writer say what he will, it must be confessed they return it with Interest: Newspapers, Magazines, Pamphlets, all teem with Abuse of the Doctor: while one Day some very ingenious Criticisms shew how he might have wrote such a Thing better; the next, others equally ingenious prove, that he had better never have wrote such a Thing at all. In this general Uproar, amidst this Strife of Tongues, it is impossible that a dispassionate

Man should be heard; so I sit down a quiet Spectator of what passes, and enjoy the Storm in Tranquillity.

Though I cannot say I am a Friend to this Method of Revenge, or to seeing these great Men descend to abuse one another, like mere common Mortals, I must confess, at the same Time, that Dr. *Johnson* has deserved the Treatment he meets with. He was received with the most flattering Marks of Civility by every one; and his Name had opened to him an Acquaintance, which his most sanguine Wishes could scarce have hoped for; but which his Manners would certainly never have obtained. He was indeed looked upon as a Kind of Miracle in this Country; and almost carried about for a Shew. Every one desired to have a Peep at this Phenomenon; and those who were so happy as to be in his Company, were silent the Moment he spoke, lest they should interrupt him, and lose any of the good Things he was going to say. It was expected that he should speak by Inspiration. But the Doctor, who never said any Thing that did not convey some gross Reflection upon themselves, soon made them sick of Jokes which were at their own Expence. Indeed, from all the Accounts I have been able to learn, he repaid all their Attention to him with Ill-breeding; and when in the Company of the ablest Men in this Country, and who are certainly his Superiors in Point of Abilities, his whole Design was to shew them how contemptibly he thought of them. But those, who make Gods, and then fall down and worship them, should not be disappointed at the Stupidity of their own Idols. The *Scotch*, who looked up to Dr. *Johnson* as something supernatural, should not have been surpris'd at finding him quite the Reverse.

Reverse. Admiration and Acquaintance, you know, are generally said to be incompatible: with him, they must always be so: he has neither the Ambition to desire, nor the Manners to engage, Attention. Had the *Scotch* been more acquainted with Dr. *Johnson's* private Character, they would have expected nothing better. A Man of illiberal Manners and surly Disposition, who all his Life long had been at Enmity with the *Scotch*, takes a sudden Resolution of Travelling amongst them; not, according to his own Account, “to find a People of liberal and refined Education, but to see wild Men and wild Manners.” Confined to one Place, and accustomed to one Train of Ideas; incapable of acquiescing in all the different Tempers he might meet with, and mingling with different Societies, he descends from his Study, where he had spent his whole Life, to see the World in the *Highlands*, and *Western Isles* of *Scotland*. Behold this extraordinary Man on his Journey, in Quest of Barbarism! and at length sitting down, wearied, and discontented, because he has met with some Degree of Civility in the most desert Parts; or, to speak more properly, because he has found nothing more barbarous than himself.

Poor *Johnson*, who, probably, had never travelled more than a few Miles from *London*, before he came there, must naturally be astonished at every Thing he saw, and would dwell upon every common Occurrence as a Wonder. One cannot, therefore, be surpris'd at his observing ‘that the Windows in some ‘of the little Hovels in *Scotland*, do not draw up, as his own ‘do in *London*; or that such a Spot of Ground does not produce Grass, but is very fertile in Thistles.’ He found himself

self in a new World: his Sensations were those of a Child just brought forth into Day-Light; whose Organs are confus'd with the numerous Objects that surround him; and who discovers his Surprise at every Thing he sees. Men of the World would not have descend'd to such Remarks. A petty and frivolous Detail of trifling Circumstances are the certain Signs of Ignorance or Inexperience. The *Scotch* should have treated them in this Manner, and disregarded them. For my own Part, to say the best of it, I look upon all his Observations in regard to Men and Manners, to be those of a Man totally unacquainted with Mankind.

Most of his Information, I know to have been received from the meanest and most ignorant of the People. During his Stay at *St. Andrew's*, he resid'd in the House of a Professor of that University, a very ingenious Man, and capable of giving him all the Information he could have wish'd; but he never inquired one Word about the Matter: and yet, after this, does Dr. *Johnson* sit down, and give you a long, circumstantial Account of *St. Andrew's*, with scarce three Words of Truth in the Whole of it. But this might be forgiven. In regard, however, to Facts, to Conversation, and to Affairs of Literature, one might reasonably have expected from the Doctor more Candour, and more Veracity. But here again we are to be disappointed: he has his own Maxims, and he never moves from them. He had taken a Resolution not to believe *Fingal* to be the Work of *Ossian*, but an Imposition on the Public by Mr. *Macpherson*: and, after various Observations almost unintelligible from the Language they are convey'd in, he is so kind as to say, " I ask-

" ed



“ ed a very learned Minister in the *Isle of Sky*, (who had used all Arts to make me believe the Genuineness of the Book) whether at last, he believed it himself? But he would not answer: he wished me to be deceived for the Honour of his Countrymen; but would not directly and formally deceive me. Yet has this Man’s Testimony been produced publicly, as of one who held *Fingal* to be the Work of *Ossian*.” This is a plain, simple Tale, that I own staggered me: I have only to regret for the Doctor’s Sake, that not one Word of it is true. “ Of all the Lies in the Catalogue,” as *Touchstone* says, “ one ought to be most cautious of giving the Lie direct:” in some Cases it is unfortunately necessary. In a Conversation with the *Laird of Macleod*, who was present at the Time, and whose Word, I am bold to say, I can depend upon, I asked him whether this was the Truth or not? His Reply was this, “ Quite the contrary, I assure you: Doctor *Johnson* was very overbearing, and laughed at the Minister for giving Credit to such an Imposition. At last he asked him, whether he seriously did believe it? The Gentleman’s Answer was, that he did.”

Now what Degree of Attention ought one to pay to a Man who can misrepresent Facts so grossly, and interpret them to his own Purposes? “ A *Scotchman*,” Dr. *Johnson* says, “ must be a very sturdy Moralist, who does not love *Scotland* better than Truth:” But what Country or what Attachment is it that makes the Doctor himself regard Truth so little?

On many other Subjects his Observations are equally ingenious,

ous, novel, and entertaining. In spite of the many able Men this Country has produced, and whose Works are an Honour to every Part of Science, the Doctor finds out the *Scotch* are no Scholars, but that they possess a middle State betwixt profound Learning and profound Ignorance. Thus you see how we have been hitherto imposed upon. Some People have thought that Dr. *Robertson*, Mr. *Hume*, and Dr. *Beattie*, were ingenious Men: but quite the contrary; they are only a few Degrees above profound Ignorance. Suppose one should ask, At what Line of this literary Barometer the Doctor places himself? whether it is at profound Knowledge, at Perfection itself, or whether he is contented with being only a little above Mr. *Hume*, or even Dr. *Beattie*? How much are the World obliged to Dr. *Johnson*, for rectifying the wrong Opinion they entertained of the *Scotch* Nation! They have, however, one Consolation in all this Dearth of Learning, that they have no Pedantry; that they never brandish their Knowledge in your Face, but keep it contentedly in their Pockets; that they express themselves in a natural, plain Way, and to the best of their Abilities; that they seek for no Distinctions in Words, nor pride themselves upon Phrases; that they are not fond of those pompous Descriptions, which “amaze the unlearned, and make the learned smile;” but content themselves with that humble Road which the Mediocrity of their Understandings points out to them; happy in giving no Offence but to the learned Dr. *Johnson*, who visits them for the Benefit of their Ignorance, and insults them with his Superiority.

I have the Honour to be, &c.

F I N G A L,

A N

E P I C P O E M

I N

S I X B O O K S.

B Y

O S S I A N,

AN OLD HIGHLAND BARD.

B



# T H E

## A R G U M E N T.

**CUTHULLIN**, sitting alone at the Gate of *Tura*, is informed of the Landing of *Swaran*. Upon which, calling his Chiefs, Disputes run high about giving Battle. *Connal* is for retreating, till the Arrival of *Fingal*. But *Calmar* is for engaging the Enemy immediately. *Cuthullin*, inclined to War, follows the Opinion of *Calmar*. *Fergus*, that Instant arriving, tells him of the Death of *Duchomar* and *Catbbat*, which introduces the Episode of *Morna*. *Cuthullin*, notwithstanding, resolves to attack the Enemy. The Son of *Arno*, who had been sent by *Swaran* to observe the *Irish* Forces, returning, warns the King of their Approach, gives him a particular Account of *Cuthullin's* Chariot, and the terrible Appearance of that Hero. The two Armies engage, but Night coming on, leaves the Victory undecided. *Cuthullin* sends a Bard to invite *Swaran* to a Feast, but that haughty Monarch refuses to come. *Carril*, after Supper, relates the Story of *Grudar* and *Brassolis*. A Party, by *Connal's* Advice, is sent to observe the Enemy; which closes the Action of the first Day.

# F I N G A L,

A N

## E P I C P O E M.

### B O O K I.

**B**Y *Tura's lofty Wall Cutbullin* lay,  
Beneath the Shadow of the rustling Tree.

Against

V. 1. *By Tura's lofty Wall Cutbullin lay.*] *Cutbullin* the Son of *Semo*, and Grandson to *Catbbait*, a Druid celebrated in Tradition for his Wisdom and Valour. *Cutbullin*, when very young, married *Bragéla* the Daughter of *Sorglan*, and passing over into *Ireland*, lived for some Time with *Connal*, Grandson, by a Daughter, to *Congal* the petty King of *Ulster*. His Wisdom and Valour in a short Time gained him such Reputation, that in the Minority of *Cormac*, the supreme King of *Ireland*, he was chosen Guardian to the young King, and sole Manager of the War against *Swaran* King of *Lochlin*. After a Series of great Actions he was killed in Battle somewhere in *Connaught*, in the Twenty-seventh Year of his Age. He was so re-

Against a moss-grown Rock reclin'd his Spear,  
His bossy Shield upon the Grass lay near.

On

markable for his Strength, that to describe a strong Man it has pass'd into a Proverb, *He has the Strength of Cuthullin*. By *Bragéla* he had a Son, named *Conloch*, who was afterwards famous for his Exploits in *Ireland*. He was so dexterous in handling the Javelin, that when a good Marksman is described, it is common to say in the North of *Scotland*, *He is unerring as the Arm of Conloch*.

V. 1. *By Tura's lofty Wall, &c.*] 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 with the Rule of *Horace* :

*Semper ad eventum festinat, et in medias res  
Non secus ac notas, auditorem rapit.  
Nec gemino bellum Trojanum orditur ab ovo.*

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 farther Light to the Subject.

V. 5.



5 On *Carbar* were his Thoughts, a valiant Knight,  
Whom, Hand to Hand, he lately flew in Fight;  
When *Moran*, One commission'd to explore  
The distant Seas, came running from the Shore,

And

V. 5. On *Carbar*, &c.] *Cairbar*, or *Cairbre*, signifies a strong Man. Before the Introduction of Christianity, a Name was not imposed upon any Person, till he had distinguished himself by some remarkable Action, from which his Name should be derived. It was the Custom of the Eastern Nations to give Names to their Children expressive of the most remarkable Accident of their Birth. Thus *Simoïsus* in *Homer* received his Name from the River *Simoïs*, on whose Banks he was born. The *Trojans* called the Son of *Hector*, *Astyanax* (though by his Parents called *Scamandrus*, from the River *Scamander*) because his Father defended the City. The Old Testament is likewise full of Examples of this Kind, particularly the Thirtieth Chapter of *Genesis*, where the Names given to *Jacob's* Children, and the Reasons of those Names, are enumerated. Almost all *Ossian's* Names have Significations; an undoubted Mark of the Antiquity of his Works.

V. 7. When *Moran*, One commission'd to explore The distant Seas.] *Moran* signifies many. *Cuthullin*, having previous Intelligence of the Invasion intended by *Swaran*, sent Scouts all over the Coasts of *Ullin* or *Ulster*, to give early Notice of the Appearance of the Enemy, at the same Time that he sent *Munan* the Son of *Stirmal* to implore the Assistance of *Fingal*, King of those *Caledonians* who inhabited the North-West Coast of *Scotland*. He himself collected the Flower of the *Irish* Youth to *Tura*, a Castle on the Coast, to stop the Progress of the Enemy till *Fingal* should arrive from  
*Scotland*.

And thus exclaim'd --- *Cuthbullin* rife ! The Ships  
 10 Of snowy *Lochlin* hide the rolling Deeps.  
 Innumerable Foes the Land invade,  
 And *Swaran* seems determin'd to succeed.

To

*Scotland.* Mr. *Macpherson* concludes from this early Application of *Cuthbullin* for Aid, that the *Irish* could not have been very numerous in those Days. But he certainly did not consider, that *Swaran* was only opposed by the *Cael*, or *Caledonian Irish*, who emigrated from *Scotland*, and inhabited the North of *Ireland*. The *Fir-bolg*, or Colonies settled in the Southern Parts, and which seem to have been by far the most powerful, being the inveterate Enemies of the *Caledonians*, did not join them on this Occasion. What he quotes from *Tacitus*, viz. that one Legion only was thought sufficient, in the Time of *Agricola*, to reduce the whole Island, carries with it greater Weight; as such a Force could not have subdued the Natives, had they been any Way numerous, or the Island peopled for many Centuries before.

V. 12. And *Swaran* seems determin'd to succeed.] *Swaran* King of *Lochlin*, the *Galic* Name for *Scandinavia* or *Scandinia*. His Father was *Starno*, and Grandfather *Annir*, both of them Princes of a most ferocious Spirit, a Vice which this their Descendant inherited, as the Reader will perceive in the Course of the Poem. The *Scandinavian* Manners in general are described as very barbarous, and seem to mark out a Nation much less advanced in Civilization, than the Inhabitants of *Britain* and *Ireland* were in the Times of *Ossian*.

V. 15.

To him the Chief unmov'd: Thy Fears are great,  
 They make thee magnify the hostile Fleet.  
 15 Perhaps the King of *Morven*, o'er the Main,  
 Is come to aid me on green *Ullin's* Plain.

I saw

V. 15. *Perhaps the King of Morven.*] *Fingal* the Son of *Combal* and *Morna*. His Grandfather was *Trathal*, and great Grandfather *Trenmor*, both of whom are often mentioned in the Poem. When very young, he married *Ros-crana* the Daughter of *Cormac* King of *Ireland*. In succeeding Times, the Beauty of that Princess passed into a Proverb; and the highest Compliment that could be paid to a Woman, was to compare her Person with the Daughter of *Cormac*.

'S tu fein an *Ros-crana*  
 Siol *Chormac* na n'ioma lan.

*Fingal* is said to have never been overcome in Battle. From this proceeded that Title of Honour which is always bestowed on him in Tradition, *FIÖN GAL NA BUAI*, *Fingal* of Victories. He seems to have been very knowing in the Virtue of Plants, for they fable concerning him that he was in Possession of a Cup, containing the Essence of Herbs, which instantaneously healed Wounds. He is likewise much 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. According to their Accounts, he died in 283, about the Ninetieth Year of his Age.

I saw the Son of *Starno* on the Shores,  
 Tall as a glitt'ring Rock amidst his Pow'rs.  
 Like yonder blasted Pine the Spear he held ;  
 20 Broad as the rising Moon his shining Shield !

He

V. 17. *I saw the Son of Starno on the Shores, &c.*] Where the Scout here makes his Report to *Cutbullin* of the Landing of the Foe, is one of the most exaggerated Descriptions in the whole Work. But this is so far from deserving Censure, that it merits Praise, as being on this 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 indistinct 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 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." *Numb.* Chap. XIII. V. 33, 34.

The Comparisons brought to heighten the Appearance of *Swaran*, are the same that *Milton* uses on the first Appearance of *Satan*.

— His

He sat upon a Rock beside the Main,  
As dark as Clouds around him roll'd his Train.  
“ O thou ! I said, who rul’st the stormy Sea,  
“ How many valiant Chiefs thy Words obey ?  
25 “ Who heads in Battle such a num’rous Host,  
“ Unrival’d may the pompous Title boast  
“ Of mighty Man ! for many mighty Men,  
“ Are now from *Tura*’s airy Turrets seen.”

He answer’d, and his Voice was as the Roar  
30 Of Surges breaking on a rocky Shore,  
What Warrior has the Courage to oppose  
In all this Land, the matchless King of Snows ?

The

—— His pond’rous Shield  
Ethereal Temper, massive, large and round,  
Behind him cast ; the broad Circumference  
Hung on his Shoulders like the Moon. ----  
His Spear, to equal which the tallest Pine  
Hewn on *Norwegian* Hills, to be the Mast  
Of some great Ammiral, were but a Wand.

The greatest dare not in our Prefence stand,  
 Or if they dare, they fall beneath our Hand.  
 35 *Fingal* the King of Hills, and only he  
 Of mortal Men, in Prowess equals me.  
 We wrestled once in *Malmor* \*; as we strove  
 Our rapid Heels o'erturn'd the crackling Grove,  
 Rocks from their Places torn, with dreadful Sound,  
 40 Came bounding, whirling, thund'ring to the Ground.  
 The frightened Streams forsook their wonted Course,  
 And, adverse murm'ring, fled to shun our Force.

Three

V. 41. *The frightened Streams, &c.*] VIRGIL, in the 8th Book, where *Hercules* is described throwing a great Rock to burst open the Cavern of *Cacus*, makes Use of the like bold Expression.

*Diffultant ripæ, refluitque exeritus amnis.* V. 249.

----- On either Side  
 The Banks leap backward, and the Streams divide.  
 The Sky shrunk upward with unusual Dread:  
 And trembling *Tiber* div'd beneath his Bed.

DRYDEN.

\* *Malmor*, a great Hill.

V. 53.



Three Days successive we the Strife renew'd,  
While Heroes trembling at a Distance view'd.  
45 Upon the fourth, the Monarch of the Flood  
Fell, (says *Fingal*) but *Swaran* says he stood.  
Let dark *Cuthullin* yield to him, whose Arm  
Is stronger than the Rage of *Malmor's* Storm.

I yield? The blue-ey'd Chief of *Erin* said ;  
50 No, Youth ! *Cuthullin* will be great or dead.  
Take, Son of *Fili* \*, take my Spear, and fly  
To *Tura's* rustling Gate, where, plac'd on high,  
The Shield of *Cathbait* hangs, and through the Land,  
With thund'ring Strokes, proclaim the Foe at Hand.  
My

V. 53. *The Shield of Cathbait hangs.*] *Cathbait*, Grandfather to the Hero, was so remarkable for his Valour, that his Shield was made Use of to alarm his Posterity to the Battles of the Family. We find *Fingal* making the same Use of his own Shield in the Fourth Book. A Horn was the most common Instrument to call the Army together.

\* *Fili*, an inferior Bard.

55 My Heroes on the Hill shall hear afar  
 The well-known Sound, the Signal of the War.  
 He went and struck the bossy Shield : Around  
 The Rocks and Hills repeat again the Sound ;  
 Along

V. 58. *The Rocks and Hills repeat again the Sound, &c.*] The Sound of *Aleho's* Horn has the same Effect in the Seventh *Æneis*.

----- *Quâ protinus omne*  
*Contremuit nemus, et Sylvæ intonuerunt profundæ.*  
*Audiit et Triviæ longe lacus, audiit amnis*  
*Sulfurea Nar albus aqua, fontesque Velini.*

----- The Rocks and Woods around,  
 And Mountains, tremble at th' infernal Sound.  
 The sacred Lake of *Trivia* from afar,  
 The *Veline* Fountains, and sulphureous *Nar*  
 Shake at the baleful Blast the Signal of the War. }

DRYDEN.

The Lines almost immediately preceding these, when the Country People are described running at the Cries of young *Sylvia* upon the Death of her favourite Stag, bear a near Resemblance to the Haste and Terror caused among the *Irish* Chiefs upon hearing the Sound of *Cuthullin's* Shield.

OLL

Along the Wood the deaf'ning Clangor goes,  
 60 The frightened Deer start at the Lake of *Roes*.  
*Curach*\* alarm'd leapt from the sounding Rock,  
 And *Connal*, rushing up, his Jav'lin took.

The

Olli -----

*Improvisti adsunt, his torre armatus obusto,  
 Stipitis hic gravidi nodis. Quod cuique repertum  
 Rimanti, telum ira facit. Vocat agmina Tyrrhus,  
 Quadrifidam quercum cuneis ut forte coactis  
 Scindebat, raptâ spirans immane securi.*

One with a Band, yet burning from the Flame;  
 Arm'd with a knotty Club, another came:  
 Whate'er they catch or find, without their Care,  
 Their Fury makes an Instrument of War.  
*Tyrrhus*, the Foster-father of the Beast,  
 Then clench'd a Hatchet in his horny Fist,  
 But held his Hand from the descending Stroke  
 And left his Wedge within the cloven Oak,  
 To whet their Courage, and their Rage provoke.

DRYDEN.

\* *Curach* signifies the Madness of Battle.

The snowy Breast of *Crugal*\* beat through Fear,  
The Son of *Fawi* left the dark-brown Deer.

- 65 The Shield of War, cried *Ronmar*, calls to Arms ;  
*Cutbullin*'s Spear, said *Lugar*, strikes th' Alarms.  
Son of the Sea, put on thy shining Mail !  
Haste, *Calmar*, brandish high thy founding Steel !  
Rife, *Puno*, horrid Chief ! repel the Foe ;

- 70 Let *Cairbar* from the Tree of *Cromla* go.  
Bend thy white Knee as thou descend'st, O *Etb* !  
From the bright Streams of *Lena*'s echoing Heath :  
And, as o'er *Mora*'s whistling Brow you stride,  
*Caolt*, expose to View thy beauteous Side ;  
75 Thy Side far whiter than the Foam that's tost,  
By angry Winds, on *Cutbon*'s † murn'ring Coast.

Now I behold the Heroes, moving on  
In all the Glory of their past Renown.

Fir'd

\* *Cruth-geal*, fair-complexioned.

† *Cutbon*, the mournful Sound of Waves.

Fir'd with the Battles of the Times of old,  
80 Their Steps are careless, and Demeanor bold ;  
Their Hands are on their Swords, their Eyes, that glow,  
Like Flames of Fire, roll searching for the Foe.  
Bright from their Sides of Steel a thousand Beams  
Incessant flashing, set the Heath on Flames.

As

V. 81. *Their Hands are on their Swords, &c.*] A Poet of original Genius is always distinguished by his Talent for Description. A second-rate Writer discerns nothing new or particular 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 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 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 Imagination 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 Imagination. In reading the above Lines, for Example, do we not think that we see his Heroes marching before us, with their Hands on their Swords, and their Eyes turned towards the Enemy. This is in the highest Strain of Poetry, and cannot fail of awakening the Attention of the Reader, and interesting him in the Event.

V. 96.

- 85 As from the Mountains, noisy in their Course,  
 Pour many Currents with resistless Force ;  
 So rush the Chiefs --- each, from his native Hill,  
 Impetuous hast'ning, like a rapid Rill.  
 While following close, and deluging the Plain,  
 90 Their Men advance ; like threat'ning Clouds of Rain,  
 That dark behind the fiery Meteors low'r,  
 Ere yet the Fields have felt the rattling Show'r.  
 Mean Time ascends the crashing Din of Arms,  
 The gray Dogs howl amidst the loud Alarms ;  
 95 Unequal bursts the Song of War ; the Sound  
 Spreads o'er the Hills, and *Cromla* echoes round.  
 At length on *Lena's* dusky Heath they stand,  
 Like Autumn's Mists, when rising from the Land,  
 They

V. 96. *And Cromla echoes round.*] *Crom-lach* signified a Place of Worship among the Druid. It is here the proper Name of a Hill on the Coast of *Ullin* or *Ulfster*.

V. 98. *Like Autumn's Mists, &c.*] There is in the Fifth Iliad of *Homer* a Comparison nearly resembling this.



They shade the Hills, and broken, dark, uneven,  
 100 They settle high, and lift their Heads to Heav'n.

The Son of *Semo* here the Army meets,  
 And courteous thus the valiant Heroes greets.  
 Hail Warriors all ! Hail Hunters of the Deer !  
 Chiefs of the narrow Vales, there now draws near,  
 105 Far other Sport than what began the Day ;  
 'Tis like the Tempests of yon rolling Sea.  
 Ye Sons of Battle ! shall we fight the Foe,  
 Or yield green *Ullin* to the King of Snow ?  
 O *Connal*, first of Men ! thy Mind declare,  
 110 Wilt thou in Battle lift thy Father's Spear ?

Thou

— νεφέλῃσιν ἑοικότες ὥς τε Κρόνων,  
 Νηνεμῆς, ἔστησεν ἐπ' ἀμροπόλοισιν ὄρεσσιν  
 Ἀτρέμας.

V. 522.

So when th' embattled Clouds in dark Array,  
 Along the Skies their gloomy Lines display ;  
 The low-hung Vapours motionless and still  
 Rest on the Summits of the shaded Hill.

POPE.

D

V. 113.

Thou oft haft met with *Locblin* in the Field ;  
 Speak, Son of *Caithbat*, fhall we fight or yield ?

When *Connal* flow to ſpeak : Know, Prince of Men,  
 My Heart is fearless, and my Spear is keen.

115 It loves to ſhine, where loud the Battle roars,  
 And mix where thickeſt fall the fanguine Show'rs.  
 Yet, though my Hand delights in War, my Mind  
 Is for the Peace of *Inisfail* inclin'd.

Thou Guardian of our infant Prince ! ſurvey  
 120 The fable Fleet of *Swaran* on the Sea.

His

V. 113. *When Connal flow to ſpeak.*] *Connal*, the Friend of *Cutbullin*, was the Son of *Caithbat* Prince of the *Tongorma*, or the *Iſland of blue Waves*, probably one of the *Hebrides*. His Mother was *Fioncoma*, the Daughter of *Congal*. He had a Son by *Foba* of *Conackarneſſer*, who was afterwards petty King of *Ulſter*. For his Services in the War againſt *Swaran*, he had Land conferred on him, which, from his Name, were called *Tir-chonnail*, or *Tir-connel*, i. e. the Land of *Connal*.

V. 119. *Is for the Peace of Inisfail.*] *Ireland*, ſo called from a Colony that ſettled there called *Falans*, the *Iſland of the Fail* or *Falans*.

V. 128.

His Mafts upon our Coaft as crouded ftand,  
As Reeds along the Side of *Lego's* Strand ;  
And to and fro, innumerable move  
Above the Billows ; like a lofty Grove,  
125 Half-cloath'd in Mift, when fqually Winds defcend,  
And force by Turns the lab'ring Trees to bend.  
Be cautious then ; And Terms of Peace propofe,  
Ere you in Fight engage the King of Snows.  
A Strength like his, *Fingal* might fear to meet,  
130 *Fingal*, the firft of Men, fupremely great,  
By whom in Battle Armies are o'erthrown,  
Like scatter'd Heath before a Tempeft blown,  
When *Conna* echoes to the falling Rills,  
And Night in all her Clouds fits difmal on the Hills.

This

V. 128. *The King of Snows.*] *Swaran*, fo called on Account of the great Quantities of Snow, that fall in his Territory during the Winter Seafon.

- 135 This timid Counſel *Calmar* could not brook ;  
But, fierce advancing, thus diſdainful ſpoke.  
Hence, recreant Warrior ! to the Hills be gone,  
Where never yet the Spear of Battle ſhone.  
Inglorious there, remote from War's Alarms,  
140 Employ in *Cromla's* Chafe a Huntsman's Arms ;  
And, aiming Arrows from your crooked Bow,  
With ſudden Death arreſt the bounding Roe.  
But, thou *Cuthullin* ! mount thy rapid Car,  
And bid this Moment to commence the War.

Roar

V. 135. *This timid Counſel Calmar could not brook.*] *Calmar* (a ſtrong Man) was the Son of *Malba*, and Lord of *Lara* in the Neighbourhood of *Lego*. Though gallant and generous, he appears to have been of a raſh, preſumptuous, and overbearing Temper ; a Character well contraſted with the prudent, ſedate, modeſt and circumſpect *Connal*. Their Speeches, though artleſs, are bold and expreſſive. The Ideas of the Speakers, indeed, ſeem not very extenſive, but they are as much ſo, as the Events of that early Period could naturally diſplay. Valour and bodily Strength were the admired Qualities of *Offian's* Age. His Heroes expreſs Refinement of Sentiment on ſeveral Occaſions, but not of Manners. For they ſpeak of their paſt Actions with Freedom, and boaſt of their own Exploits.

145 Roar through the Pride of *Lochlin's* thick Array,  
And routed drive them headlong to the Sea ;  
That thus their hostile Fleets may bound no more,  
On the dark-rolling Waves of *Inis-tore*.

Exert your utmost Rage, contentious Winds,  
150 And point the Storm at *Lara* of the Hinds !

Snatch'd

V. 145. *Roar through the Pride of Lochlin's thick Array.*] The Rev. Mr. *John Macpherson* is of Opinion, that *Lochlin* and *Scandinavia* are synonymous Terms, *Harold Harfagar*, and *Magnus* the barefooted, were *Norwegian* Princes, and the Islanders give no other Appellation to those great Conquerors, nor to other *Normans*, who held their Ancestors under Subjection for many Ages, than that of *Lochlinich*. In the *Galic* Language, *Loch* signifies a great Collection of Water, whether salt or fresh, and *lan* full. *Lun* is the Name of a certain Bird remarkably voracious. The *Baltic* might have been very properly called *Lochlan*, if it neither ebbs nor flows; and many different Countries, particularly *Scotland* and *Ireland*, experienced that from this Sea swarmed an immense Number of Pirates, who, by an easy and just Metaphor, might have been compared to Birds of Prey and Passage. But whatever the Etymon of the Word *Lochlin* may be, it is certain that all the Adventurers who came from the *Baltic*, or from the Northern Seas, or the Countries bordering upon them, whether *Norwegians*, *Swedes*, *Finnlanders*, *Frieslanders*, or *Icelanders*, were by the *Irish* and *Hebridian Scots* called *Lochlinich*.

Snatch'd by the sudden Hurricane on high,  
 Amidst the furious Tempest let me die;  
 Torn by the angry Ghosts of Men, and hurl'd,  
 The Sport of giddy Blasts, around the World,  
 155 If *Calmar* at the Chase e'er found Delight,  
 To be compar'd to what he felt in Fight,  
 When clashing Bucklers, and the mingled Cries  
 Of Armies met in Conflict rent the Skies.

Thus madly he; and *Connal* made reply:  
 160 The Son of *Matba* never saw me fly.  
 None can upbraid me with inglorious Flight,  
 I with my Friends was always first in Fight.  
 Yet small is my Renown!---I must not claim  
 A Warrior's Title to my Share of Fame,  
 165 While others in the Field acquire a Name.

*Cutbullin!*

V. 163. *Yet small is my Renown! &c.*] *CONNAL* speaks here ironically,  
 and as if he had said; I, who have always been the foremost in Battle,  
 must



*Cuthullin* ! be not rashly hurried on,  
 To act against the Good of *Cormac*'s Throne.  
 Give Wealth, and proffer Half the Land for Peace,  
 Till we are join'd by *Morven*'s hardy Race.

170 So I advise : But, if thy daring Mind  
 Is bent on War, I shall not stay behind ;

My

must now retire, and be an idle Spectator, while *Calmar*, and such like redoubted Heroes, perform Wonders in War.

V. 167. *The Good of Cormac's Throne.*] *Cormac* the young King of *Ireland*; his Father was *Artbo*, his Grandfather *Cairbar*, his great Grandfather *Cormac*, and great great Grandfather *Conar*, the Son of *Trenmor*, who was the great Grandfather of the famous *Fingal*. This was the Reason why *Fingal* assisted him and his Family on this and other Occasions. The Reign of *Cormac* was turbulent, and his End untimely. *Cuthullin* being killed in Battle, he himself was murdered soon after by *Cairbar*, who usurped his Crown. This *Cairbar* was of the Family of *Atha*, and Chief of the *Fir-bolg* or *Belgæ* of *Britain*, who under *Laribon* planted a Colony in the Southern Parts of *Ireland*, some Time before the *Cael* or *Scots* settled in *Ulster*. The *Fir-bolg* had many Wars with their Northern Neighbours, which were carried on with various Success, till *Fingal*, at length, put an End to them by the entire Extirpation of the House of *Atha*; and established *Fernard-Artho*, the last of the Line of *Conar*, on the Throne of *Ireland*. This is the Subject of the Heroic Poem of *Temora*.

My Spear shall fly, my Sword shall swift descend,  
Where Thousands raging in the Field contend,  
And all shall see, that *Connal's* Soul grows bright,  
175 Amidst the Gloom and Horrour of the Fight.

*Cutbullin* then : I too am void of Fear ;  
The Noise of Arms is pleasant to my Ear ;  
More pleasant than the Thunder's distant Sound,  
Before the Show'rs of Spring refresh the Ground.  
180 No longer then the glorious Strife delay,  
All here assembled hope the bloody Day.  
Haste, Warriors ! Bid the Tribes advance in Form,  
Bright as the Sun-shine which precedes the Storm ;  
When

V. 183. *Bright as the Sun-shine which precedes the Storm.*] The Appearance of an Army glittering in Battle Array, before it is broke and deformed by an Engagement, is finely compared to a Gleam of Sun-shine, that is soon to be followed by the Gloom and Noise of an approaching Storm. The Works of *Offian* are full of these short and beautiful Similes. The Reader may have remarked several in the little he has already seen of him ; as the March of an Army, to dark and stormy Clouds ; with the Leaders  
shining

- When from the West the Clouds collected low'r,  
 185 And *Morven's* Oaks resound along the Shore.  
 But where are those, in Battle often try'd,  
 Who us'd in Danger to be near my Side ?  
 Among the rest I do not *Cathbat* see ;  
 The first in War, *Duchomar* \*, where is he ?  
 190 When Foes invade, does *Fergus* † likewise stay,  
 And leave me single this important Day ?

Not

shining conspicuous in Front, like Lightning flashing at Intervals as the Tempest draws nearer. What a picturesque and striking Resemblance between the Masts of a Fleet moving upon the Waves, and the Trees of a Forest, covered with Mist, bending backward and forward to the Winds ! It is necessary to observe, that the Beauties of *Ossian's* Compositions, 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, 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.

\* *Duchomar*, a black well-made Man.

† *Fear-guth*, the Man of the Word ; or a Commander of an Army.

Not thus the Chieftain vaunted, when carefs'd,  
 He shar'd the Banquet, a distinguish'd Guest.  
 But yonder *Fergus* comes, the Arm of Death  
 195 With hasty Strides swift traverses the Heath :  
 So bounds a Hart from *Malmor's* Hills afar,  
 Hail, *Rossa's* Son ! What shades the Soul of War ?

*Cathbat,*

V. 196. *So bounds a Hart from Malmor's Hills afar.*] “ Be thou like a Roe or young Hart on the Mountains of *Bether*.” *Solomon's* Song. A Resemblance may be sometimes observed between *Offian's* Comparisons, and those employed by the sacred Writers. The Imagery, indeed, of Scripture exhibits a Soil and Climate altogether different from those of *Offian*; 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 Thrashing 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 *Offian's*, generally short, touching on one Point of Resemblance, rather than spread out into little Episodes. Take the following from the 18th Chapter of *Isaiab* for an Example, by which may be perceived what inexpressible Grandeur Poetry receives from the Intervention of the Deity. “ The Nations shall make a Noise like “ the Noise of Waters overflowing, but he shall rebuke them, and they “ shall flee afar off: And they shall be carried away as the Dust of the “ Mountains before the Wind, and as a Whirlwind before the Tempest.”

V. 199.

*Catbbat*, the Hero cried, is in the Ground ;  
 Four mossy Stones his verdant Tomb surround !  
 200 *Duchomar* too, that Cloud in War, is dead !  
 These Hands in Earth the mighty Chief have laid.  
 White-bosom'd *Catbbat*, *Torman's* \* youthful Son,  
 Bright as a Sun-beam on the Mountains shone.  
 But great *Duchomar*, more for Arms renown'd,  
 205 Was like the deadly Mist of *Lano's* Ground ;

Which

V. 199. *Four mossy Stones his verdant Tomb surround.*] This Passage alludes to the Manner of Burial among the ancient *Scots*. They opened a Grave six or eight Feet deep : The Bottom was lined with fine Clay ; and on this they laid the Body of the deceased, and, if a Warrior, his Sword, and the Heads of twelve Arrows by his Side. Above they laid another Stratum of Clay, in which they placed the Horn of a Deer, the Symbol of Hunting. The Whole was covered with a fine Mould, and four Stones placed on an End to mark the Extent of the Grave. These are the four Stones alluded to here.

V. 205. *The deadly Mist of Lano's Ground.*] The Lake of *Lano*, in *Scandinavia*, was remarkable, in the Days of *Offian*, for emitting a pestilential Vapour, in Autumn, which destroyed the Inhabitants. Mention is made of it, with the same noxious Property, in the Wars of *Inis-thona*, and the Wars of *Caros*.

\* *Torman*, Thunder. This is the true Origin of the *Jupiter Taramis* of the Ancients.

Which o'er the marshy Meads of Autumn fails,  
And breathes Contagion in the tainted Gales.

Thee *Morna* \* too a like untimely Death,  
In *Tura*'s rocky Cave, depriv'd of Breath !

210 Thy Days were short, thou vanish'd as a Light,  
That shoots athwart the Defart in the Night ;  
When wand'ring sad, the Trav'ler is alone,  
And mourns the transient Beam has set so soon.

To him the blue-ey'd Hero : Dost thou know  
215 What laid the valiant Chiefs of *Erin* low ?  
Were they cut off by *Lochlin*'s hostile Hand,  
Contending bravely for their native Land ?

Or

V. 215. *What laid the valiant Chiefs of Erin low.*] *Erin*, a Name for *Ireland*; from *ear* or *iar* West, and *in* an Island. This Name was not always confined to *Ireland*, for there is the highest Probability that the *Ierne* of the Ancients was *Britain* to the North of the *Forth*. For *Ierne* is said to be to the North of *Britain*, which could not be meant of *Ireland*. *Strabo*, L. 2. and 4. *Casaub.* Lib. 1.

\* *Morna*, or *Muirne*, a Woman beloved of all.

V. 218.



Or if not thus, oh Son of *Roffa* tell,  
Why in the dark and narrow House they dwell?

- 220 Where high the Oak its verdant Branches spreads,  
And, hoarsely gurgling o'er their pebbly Beds,  
The Streams have mark'd the Hill's indented Side,  
The Heroes fought, and *Cathbat* vanquish'd died.  
His Rival left him by the purling Wave,  
225 And hasten'd back to *Tura*'s silent Cave ;

Where

V. 218. *Oh Son of Roffa tell, &c.*] The Story of *Duchomar* and *Morna* is introduced with Propriety before the Hurry of a general Action comes on. Being nearly connected with the Subject, so it naturally rises from it, a Conduct the Poet constantly observes with regard to all his Episodes, which adds much to their Beauty. This here is particularly introduced to vindicate the Prudence of *Connal*, in Opposition to the precipitate Measures of *CUTHULLIN*; who, at the Instigation of *Calmar*, resolv'd to give Battle. But when he comes to view his Forces, he finds them much weaker and less numerous than was at first expected ; he particularly misses three of his bravest Heroes, in whose Courage he most confided. One of these soon after arriving, informs him of the Death of the other two, and the Manner of it. Notwithstanding which, *Cuthullin* adheres inflexibly to his first Resolution, and rashly engages in a War, which proves the total Destruction of the *Irisb* Army, and his own Disgrace.

V. 237.

Where beauteous *Morna* for her Lover staid.

*Duchomar* ent'ring, thus address'd the Maid :

Why, strong-arm'd *Cormac's* Daughter, sit you here?

Why in the Cave alone, divinely fair ?

230 Yon falling Waters brawl among the Stones,

To the loud Blast the aged Forest groans,

The troubled Surges of the Lake arise,

And gath'ring Tempests blacken in the Skies ;

While, fair as Snow upon the desert Waste,

235 You here in solitary Silence rest ;

Thy graceful Locks behind dishevell'd flow,

So looks a Wreath of Mist on *Cromla's* Brow,

That

V. 237. *So looks a Wreath of Mist on Cromla's Brow.*] It deserves particular Notice, that very few general Terms, or abstract Ideas, are to be met with in the whole Collection of *Ossian's* Works. The Ideas, 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 Speech. *Ossian*, accordingly,  
scarcely

That to the milder Beam of Ev'ning shines,  
When in the West the setting Sun declines.

- 240 Thy Breasts (beneath thy Bosom gently heaves)  
Are smooth as Rocks by *Branno's* frothy Waves :  
Thy Arms are white, as Pillars in the Hall  
Of *Morven's* mighty King ; the great *Fingal*.

- From whence, (the fair-hair'd Virgin Answer gave)  
245 From whence the Chief to *Tura's* lonely Cave ?

How

scarcely ever 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 Mist, a Rock, 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 Mist of *Cromla*, the Rock of *Branno*, the Storm of the Sea of *Malmor*, or the Reeds of the Lake of *Lego*. A Mode of Expression, which while it is characteristical 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 *Offian*. Inanimate Objects, such as Winds, Trees, Flowers, he sometimes personifies with great Beauty. But the Personifications which are so familiar with later Poets, of Fame, Time, Terror, Virtue, and the rest of that Class, were unknown to our Bard. These were Modes of Conception too abstract for his Age.

How terrible thy Looks ! a fable Brow  
Low'rs o'er an Eye, that rolls in Fire below.  
Has *Swaran* on the Coast as yet appear'd,  
What of the Foe has dark *Duchomar* heard ?

250    Fatigu'd, reply'd the Chief, I stepp'd in here,  
Returning from the Hill of dark-brown Deer.  
Three my unerring Bow stretch'd on the Plain,  
As many my swift-bounding Dogs have slain ;  
And mindful of the Maid I love, for you  
255 A stately Buck upon the Fells I slew.  
High rose his branchy Head, his Feet of Wind  
Left no Impression of their Tread behind.

*Duchomar* ! calm the blushing Maid began,  
I love thee not, thou fierce and gloomy Man !  
260 For unrelenting is thy Heart of Rock,  
Dark is thy Brow, and terrible thy Look.

How

How diff'rent are the Looks of *Torman's* Son ?

Him *Morna* loves, and loves but him alone !

Who as a Sun-beam on the Hill is fair,

265 When stormy Clouds are thick'ning in the Air.

Ah dark *Duchomar* ! tell me, in your Way

Upon the desert Mountains, did you see

My

V. 267. *Upon the desert Mountains, &c.*] Wherever we dip into the Works of *Offian*, we find ourselves in the first Periods of Society, when the Cares of Men are few, and Hunting the Amusement, as well as the principal Means of Subsistence. Though *Homer* lived more than a thousand Years before the *Scottish* Bard, yet he was born in a Country where Society was much farther advanced ; he had many more Objects ; Cities were built and flourishing ; Laws instituted ; Order, Discipline, and Arts begun. The *Greek* in these Points has a manifest Superiority ; accordingly he introduces a greater Variety of Incidents. He possesses a larger Compass of Ideas ; has more Diversity in his Characters ; and as he had a more splendid Field of Observation, he shows, of Course, a more extensive and deeper Knowledge of Human Nature. But if *Offian's* Ideas and Objects are 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.

My *Cathbat* lovely on his Hill of Deer ?  
For his Return I wait impatient here.

270 And long shall *Morna* wait, the Warrior said,  
Long shall she wait, his Blood is on my Blade.  
He lies where *Branno's* tumbling Waters foam,  
On *Cromla* I design to raise his Tomb ;  
But on *Duchomar* now thy Love bestow,  
275 His Arm is stronger than the Storms that blow.

Then is my Lover dead ! (the Fair replies)  
And must he never greet again these Eyes ?  
Upon his echoing Heath is *Cathbat* low,  
The active Hunter with his Breast of Snow,  
280 The first, when Danger summon'd, to oppose  
The Depredations of invading Foes ?  
*Duchomar* ! thou art dark indeed \*, thy Hand  
Has cruel prov'd to me and all the Land.

My

\* She alludes to his Name, *the dark Man*.



My *Catbbat* --- Ah ! He lies at *Branno's* Flood :

285 But let me have that Sword --- I love his Blood !

The Virgin said and wept : At her Request,  
He gave the Sword --- She pierc'd his manly Breast.

The wounded Warrior down unwieldy came,  
(So falls a Bank fapp'd by the Mountain Stream)

290 And stretching forth his Arm, o'ercome with Pain,

Thus doleful spoke. *Duchomar* you have slain,  
Inhuman --- Oh ! the Blade is cold, I feel

The frozen Hand of Death upon the Steel.

When from these Lips the vital Breath has fled,

295 To *Moina* \* let my Body be convey'd ;

Who soft of Temper, as bespeaks her Name,

*Duchomar* lov'd ; he was her nightly Dream.

She to my Memory a Tomb will raise,

Which on the lonely Heath, in after Days,

300 The Hunter shall behold, and give me Praise.

}  
But,

\* *Moina*, soft in Temper and Person.

But, oh!--The Sword is cold : My shorten'd Breath  
Begins to fail---I find approaching Death.

Ah *Morna* ! grant a dying Man's Request,  
And draw the cruel Sword---It chills my Breast.

- 305 His Words with Pity touch'd the tender Maid,  
In all her Tears she came, and drew the Blade.  
But as she turn'd away, he pierc'd with Steel  
Her snowy Side ; she shriek'd, and reeling fell.  
The ample Growth of Locks the Virgin bore,  
310 With Dust dishonour'd now, bestrew'd the Floor ;  
And, like a Fountain, gushing from her Side,  
The luke-warm Blood her Arm in purple dy'd.  
She struggling lay on Earth, and as she mourn'd,  
Her dying Sobs the echoing Cave return'd.

- 315 Peace to the Heroes Souls, cried *Semo*'s Son,  
Their Deeds were great, their Worth in Danger known.

Let

Let them propitious now on Clouds descend,  
And hover round to animate their Friend ;  
That strong as theirs his Arm, at ev'ry Blow,  
320 May fall like Thunder on th' astonish'd Foe.  
Then when the Hurry of the Day is o'er,  
And to the Conflict's fierce tumultuous Roar  
Repose succeeds ; let *Morna* to my Dream  
Be present on the Moon's refulgent Beam.  
325 But now, ye valiant Leaders of our Host !  
Collect the Tribes, and hasten to the Coast.  
Our sounding Chariot shall in Front proceed,  
And through the hostile Ranks Confusion spread.  
Here fix three shining Jav'lines at my Side.---  
330 Now shall the Fury of this Arm be try'd !

Where

V. 317. *Let them propitious now on Clouds descend, &c.*] It was the Opinion then, as indeed it is to this Day, of some of the *Highlanders*, that the Souls of the deceased hovered round their living Friends ; and sometimes appeared to them when they were about to enter on any great Undertaking.

V. 331.

Where midst the thickest War my fiery Horse  
 Impetuous charge, pursue their rapid Course ;  
 That strengthen'd in your Aid I may prevail,  
 When Battle darkens round my beamy Steel.

335 As when a Stream of Foam down headlong sweeps  
 From airy *Cromla's* black impending Steeps ;  
 While

V. 331. *Where midst the thickest War my fiery Horse, &c.*] *Cuthullin*, being sensible that he had not Forces sufficient to fight a pitched Battle with *Swaran*, resolves to charge at the Head of his Men ; and therefore orders the *Irish* to follow his Chariot as near as possible, hoping by the sudden Violence of the first Onset to break into, and discompose the Enemy. And indeed, as he was so much inferior in Numbers, such an Attack was the only Thing that could promise him any Probability of Success.

V. 335. *As when a Stream of Foam down headlong sweeps, &c.*] The abrupt Manner and enthusiastic Air in which the Poet breaks out here, greatly heightens the Image in general, while it seems to transport him beyond the Limits of an exact Comparison. But he soon returns to his usual Accuracy, and presents, in that incomparable Simile of the Whale, pursued by the Waves of the Ocean, the *Irish* Army marching before us, in the most perfect and fullest Point of View that Words could possibly describe.

*Homer,*

While Thunders roar above in broken Peals,  
 And Half the Hill the Shade of Night conceals:  
 At Intervals appear the awful Forms  
 340 Of passing Ghosts, dim riding on the Storms.  
 The Signal giv'n, thus terrible and strong,  
 The Sons of *Erin* move with Shouts along.  
*Cuthullin* in his Chariot leads the Way,  
 Like some large Whale; when tempesteing the Sea,

He

*Homer*, Iliad the Fourth, compares the Noise of the *Greeks* and *Trojans* engaged in Battle, to Torrents pouring down the Hills.

Ὡς δ' ὅτε χεῖμαρ' ῥοὶ ποταμοί, κατ' ὄρεσφι ῥέοντες V. 452.  
 Ἐς μισγάμειαν συμβάλλετον ὄρεμον ὕδωρ,  
 Κρενῶν ἐκ μεγάλων, κοίλης ἔντοσθε χαράδρης.

As Torrents roll increas'd by numerous Rills  
 With Rage impetuous down the echoing Hills;  
 Rush to the Vales, and pour'd along the Plain,  
 Roar through a thousand Channels to the Main.

POPE.

*Virgil,*

345 He rushes in his Might : The Waves divide,  
 And flow in Ridges down on either Side,  
 Till meeting they return in a circumfluent Tide. }  
 So mov'd the Chief, so swift behind the Car,  
 Like Billows, rush'd his Thousands to the War.

350 Like wint'ry Torrents pouring o'er the Ground,  
 The *Scandinavians* heard the coming Sound.  
 His bossy Shield the King of Ocean struck,  
 And calling to the Son of *Arno*, spoke :

What

*Virgil*, in the Twelfth *Æneis*, has copied, and, I think, equalled this Comparison.

*Aut ubi decursu rapido de montibus altis,  
 Dant sonitum spumosi amnes, et in æquora currunt,  
 Quisque suum populatus iter.*

Or as two neighb'ring Torrents fall from high,  
 Rapid they run ; the foaming Waters fry :  
 They roll to Sea with unresisted Force,  
 And down the Rocks precipitate their Course.

DRYDEN.



What Clamours echo'd by the Hills draw near ?

355 Not Ev'ning Flies that murmur on the Ear.

The Sons of *Inis-fail* to Battle move,

Or rustling Winds roar in the distant Grove.

Such is the furly Noise of *Gormal's* Trees

Before in Mountains roll my stormy Seas.

360 Haste, climb the steep Ascent of yonder Height,

Thence, Son of *Arno*, with unbounded Sight,

Survey the Face of *Lena's* Heath around,

And learn the Cause of this alarming Sound.

. He vanish'd swift ; but soon again appear'd :

365 His Heart beat thick ; he shook and wildly star'd.

The Words he spoke were fault'ring, broken, flow :

Rise, King of *Lochlin* rise ! I see the Foe.

The Strength of *Erin's* Tribes, in firm Array

Deep-moving, rolls the Tide of War this Way !

- 370 The Car of Battle, like the Flame of Death,  
 Before them rapid bounds along the Heath :  
 It forms behind a concave Arch, and looks  
 Like some huge Billow dash'd against the Rocks ;  
 Or like a shining Wreath of Mist, that fails
- 375 Upon the Pinions of the passing Gales.  
 The Sides, emboss'd with Stones, reflect a Light,  
 Like Ocean sparkling round the Boat of Night.

The

V. 370. *The Car of Battle, &c.*] Chariots were in great Repute among the ancient Britains. *Julius Cæsar*, in his Invasion of the Island, mentions this Particular, and describes the Natives as very expert in the Management of them in their Battles. *Pomponius Mela* asserts the same: *Britanni dimicant non equitatu modo, aut pedite, verum et Bigis et Curribus.* L. 3. In Times of Peace they used them for the Convenience of Travelling, as we do Post-Chaises : but some of the Cars were much more expensive than our tawdry Equipages ; for the Chariots in which their petty Kings fought in Battle, were frequently of solid Silver. Though *Offian* gives the Epithet of *Car-borne* to several of his Heroes, yet *Cuthullin* is the only Chief he describes employing his in War ; probably because *Ulfster* was more favourable to such Vehicles, than the North-West Parts of *Scotland*.

V. 376. *The Sides, emboss'd with Stones, &c.*] These, and the Jewels mentioned hereafter, with which the Horses Harness are ornamented ; are

no

The Beam is made of polish'd Yew ; the Throne  
(Where fits the Hero) of the smoothest Bone.

380 Within the Chariot's Sides stands up a Wood  
Of glitt'ring Spears, that thirst for hostile Blood.

Upon the Right, before the rapid Wheel,  
Is seen the snorting Courser of the Hill.

Bright shine his Sides, proportion'd is his Make,  
385 And like a Rainbow arch'd appears his Neck :  
His Hoofs resound as, hast'ning to the Fleet,  
He beats the trembling Ground with nimble Feet.  
As yonder Stream of Smoke above the Plain,  
Waves the large Growth of his redundant Mane :

The

no other than the shining Stones or Pebbles, known to be frequently found along the Western Coast of *Scotland*. So that there is no greater Magnificence represented in this Description, than is consistent with the supposed Poverty of that Age.

390 The stormy Sons of Battle call the Steed  
*Sulin-sifadda* \*, from his matchless Speed.

Upon the Left, before the rapid Wheel,  
Is seen the snorting Courser of the Hill.  
He rears his Head, dark-colour'd looks his Mane,  
395 Strong are his Hoofs, they shake the solid Plain :  
He springs along, his Nostrils blow a Flame ;  
Among the Chiefs *Dufronnal* is his Name.  
A thousand Thongs on high the Car sustain,  
Hard polish'd Bits the foaming Horse restrain :  
400 Thin Thongs, set thick with Jewels, sparkle round  
Their Necks and studded Harness, as they bound,  
And swifter than the Mist of Heav'n can sail,  
The rattling Chariot whirls along the Vale.  
Not Harts pursu'd o'er Mountains shoot away,  
405 Or Eagles headlong dart upon their Prey,

With

\* *Sifadda*, i. e. long Stride.

With greater Noise, Velocity, or Force,  
Than the far-stretching, leaping, active Horse.  
Like Winter's Blast on *Gormal's*\* Head of Snow,  
The Heath resounds beneath them as they go.

410 Within is seen a formidable Knight,  
The first in Strength, the Leader of the Fight :  
*Cutbullin* is his Name ; whose Cheek in Hue,  
Is of the Colour of my polish'd Yew ;  
Whose large blue-rolling Eyes terrific glow,  
415 Beneath the threat'ning Arches of his Brow :  
And as a Flame flies back his flowing Hair,  
While forward bent, he brandishes the Spear.

Fly,

V. 407. *Than the far-stretching, &c.*] *Offi:n*, like *Homer*, abounds in compound Epithets ; blue-eyed, white-armed, dark-rolling, and such like frequently occur. Here in the beautiful Description of *Cutbullin's* Horses we meet with many others ; as high-maned, broad-breasted, high-headed, far-leaping, and strong-hoofed. The greatest Part of these we have retained ; and expressed, as well as we could, in the Verse, the sounding accelerated Motion of the Horses, which seems to have been the Intention of the Original in heaping so many compound Words together.

\* A Hill of *Lochlin*.

Fly, King of Ocean fly ! with loosen'd Reins,  
He like a Tempest sweeps along the Plains.

420 To this the haughty Ruler of the Sea ---  
A Thought so mean dar'st thou suggest to me,  
Thou Chief of little Soul ? When did I shun  
The Strife of Heroes, or from Danger run ?

In

V. 421. *A Thought so mean dar'st thou suggest to me, &c.*] The Scandinavians, according to all Accounts, were remarkably brave. Love of Fame was their darling Passion. Olave, King of Norway, placing three of his Scalds or Bards around him in Battle, "You shall not relate," said he, "what you have only heard, but what you are Eye-witnesses of." Upon every Occasion we find them insisting upon Glory, Honour, and Contempt of Death, as leading Principles. The bare Suspicion of Cowardice, was attended with universal Contempt. A Man who lost his Buckler, or received a Wound behind, durst never again appear in Public. Frotho King of Denmark, taken Captive in Battle, obstinately refused either Liberty or Life. "To what End," says he, "should I survive "the Disgrace of being made a Captive? Should you even restore "me to my Sister, my Treasure and my Kingdom, would these Benefits "restore me to my Honour? Future Ages will always have it to say, "that Frotho was taken by his Enemy." Saxo Grammaticus.

V. 430.



In *Gormal's* Woods when Winds were heard to roar,  
425 Have I not often boldly put from Shore,  
And through the boist'rous Ocean dauntless rode  
Although in Mountains rose the whiten'd Flood ?  
And shall I now a mortal Hero fly,  
Who have not fear'd the Terrors of the Sky ?  
430 No ! Did the great *Fingal* himself appear,  
My Soul undaunted would await him here.  
Be not discourag'd then, my gallant Train,  
But gather round me like the echoing Main ;

About

V. 430. *No ! did the great Fingal himself appear, &c.*] *Ossian*, from Time to Time, makes honourable Mention of *Fingal* ; and though that Hero has not yet made his Appearance, he finds Ways of celebrating his Valour, even in his Absence. Here *Swaran*, to shew his Intrepidity, declares that was it *Fingal* himself, who, instead of *Cuthullin*, advanced to give him Battle, *his Soul would not darken before him*. On his first Landing he is made to boast, that none durst meet him in Fight but the King of stormy Hills ; and though too proud to own himself overcome, he plainly enough intimates that the latter had the better in the Trial of Strength they had together on the Heath of *Malmor*. When *Connal* would persuade *Cuthullin* not to venture a Battle, he represents the Enemy so numerous, and the personal Courage of *Swaran* so great, that even *Fingal would shun*  
*his*

About your Monarch resolutely stand,  
 435 Firm as the Rocks that guard his native Land;  
 Whose lofty Forests, waving in the Sky,  
 Oppose the Winds and all their Rage defy.

As when the Storms of Autumn adverse frown,  
 And from two echoing Hills come pouring down;  
 440 To meet each other swift the Armies flew,  
 And less and less the Space between them grew,  
 Till now dark, rough and loud, (like Streams that throw  
 Themselves from Rocks, and mix and roar below)  
 Encount'ring fiercely, they together ran,  
 445 Chief mixing Strokes with Chief, and Man with Man.

In

*his Arm, the first of mortal Men: Fingal that scatters the mighty, as stormy Winds the Heath.* Praises so artfully drawn from the Mouths of others, greatly raise the Curiosity of the Reader, and make him impatient to be acquainted with a Personage of whom he has already conceived the highest Opinion.

V. 444. *Encount'ring fiercely, they together ran, &c.*] The Shock of two encountering Armies, the Noise and Tumult of Battle, afford one  
 of

In flaming Circles the broad Faulchions wheel,  
Steel clanging meets the temper'd Edge of Steel,

A jar-

of the most grand and awful Subjects of Description; on which all Epic Poets have exerted their Strength. The Reader may compare this here with a similar one in *Homer, Iliad* 4th.

Οἱ δ' ὅτε δὴ ῥ' ἐς χῶρον ἓνα ξυνόντες ἵκοντο,  
Σὺν ῥ' ἔβαλον ῥίους, σὺν δ' ἔγχεα, καὶ μένε' ἀνδρῶν  
Χαλκιοθωρηκῶν ἅτ' ἀσπίδες ὁμοαλοεσσαι  
Ἐπλυντ' ἀλλήλησι, πολὺς δ' ὀρυμαγδὸς ἑρώρει.  
Ἐῖθ' αὖ οἰμωγῇ τε καὶ εὐχῶλῃ πέλεν ἀνδρῶν,  
Ὀλλύντων τε, καὶ ὀλλυμένων ῥίε δ' αἵματι γαῖα.

V. 446.

Now Shield with Shield, with Helmet Helmet clos'd,  
To Armour Armour, Lance to Lance oppos'd,  
Host against Host, with shadowy Squadrons drew,  
The founding Darts in Iron Tempest flew;  
Victors and Vanquish'd join promiscuous Cries,  
And shrilling Shouts and dying Groans arise;  
With streaming Blood the flipp'ry Fields are dy'd,  
And slaughter'd Heroes swell the dreadful Tide.

POPE.

In *Offian's* Description we find many Images resembling those of *Homer*; commonly, indeed, less extended; but thrown forth with a glowing Rapidity which characterizes our Poet. *Statius* has very happily imitated *Homer*.

*Jam clypeus clypeis, umbone repellitur umbo,  
Ense minax ensis, pede pes, et cuspidē cuspis. &c.*

H

--- Now

A jarring Sound the batter'd Helmets yield,  
 With mingled Cries incessant rings the Field ;  
 450 The Bow-strings twang, the winged Arrows soar  
 To Heav'n in Clouds, then fall an Iron Show'r ;  
 Spears hissing pass along, like Rays of Light  
 Which streak with Fire the stormy Face of Night.

The

----- Now stormy Fury rose,  
 And Clamour, such as heard in Heav'n till now  
 Was never ; Arms on Armour clashing bray'd  
 Horrible Discord, and the madding Wheels  
 Of brazen Chariots rag'd. Dire was the Noise  
 Of Conflict ! Over Head the dismal Hiss  
 Of fiery Darts in flaming Vories flew ;  
 And flying, vaulted either Host with Fire.  
 So under fiery Cope together rush'd  
 Both Battles Main, with ruinous Assault  
 And inextinguishable Rage : All Heav'n  
 Refounded : And had Earth been then, all Earth  
 Had to her Centre shook. -----

MILTON, 6th Book.

This Description as much excels the former, as the heavenly Spirits the  
 Poet celebrates, surpasses in Prowess the Strength of mortal Men.

V. 464.

The Discord grows : Not Half so loud the Waves  
455 Tumultuous roar, when angry Ocean raves ;  
Not louder bursts the Crack that Thunder makes,  
When the last Peal with Noise redoubled breaks.  
Though *Cormac*'s hundred Bards (a numerous Train)  
Were there to celebrate the Warriors slain,  
460 They prov'd too few, a hundred could not tell  
The Deaths to future Times, such Numbers fell !  
In Floods of Gore the reeking Fields are drown'd,  
And Heaps of slaughter'd Heroes swell the Ground.

*Sithallin's* \* Fate remember in the Strain !

465 Let sad *Fiona* weep her *Ardan* slain !

Pierc'd,

V. 464. *Sithallin's Fate remember in the Strain.*] *Offian* here addresses himself to the Bards, who, though (as mentioned above) they could not remark the Deaths of all the Heroes, on Account of the Numbers slain, are however desir'd not to pass over unnoticed that of *Sithallin* ; he being

\* *Sithallin*, a handsome Man — *Fiona*, a fair Maid — *Ardan*, Pride.

Pierc'd, like two beauteous Hinds upon the Hill,  
They fall beneath the King of *Lochlin's* Steel,

As

probably a Person of great Distinction. It was the special Business of the Bards, who were present on these Occasions, to sing the martial Exploits of the Leaders. They were particularly to exert the whole Force of their Genius in perpetuating the Memory of departed Heroes, in exciting the Nobles to walk in the same Paths of Activity and Glory, and in rousing up their Nation to support its Dignity and to cultivate the generous and manly Virtues. Praise throws around Virtue attractive Charms. Nothing tends more to raise Sentiments of Magnanimity in the Heart, than the nervous and glowing Exhortation of the Poet. It follows, therefore, that the Bard was the great and successful Instructor of the Barbarian, and had in some Measure a Right to be held sacred.

History informs us, that Men of that Character have done the most important Services to States overpowered by a victorious Enemy, or enslaved by Tyrants. *Tyrtaeus*, though a very despicable Person in his Appearance, saved *Lacedæmon* from utter Ruin, by the Strength of his poetical Abilities; and *Alcaeus*, by employing the same Talent, rescued his Country from the Hands of cruel Usurpers.

We are told by *Quintilian*, that *Alcaeus* was rewarded with a golden Plectrum for his great Services. *Horace*, for the same Reason, assigns him a Place of distinguished Honour in the *Elysian* Fields: and to give us a just Idea of this patriot Poet's Merit, he throws around him a numerous Crowd of Ghosts, attentively hearing those spirited War-Songs which contributed so much to expel the Enemies of Liberty out of *Lesbos*. *Plato*, who was a declared Enemy to the Order in general, gives the Title of a  
most



As in his Fury he the War deforms ;  
Like the dire Spirit of the midnight Storms,  
470 That dim upon the Clouds of *Gormal* flies,  
And swells the Tempest with his hideous Cries,

Till

most divine Poet to *Tyrtæus*, and pronounces him at the same Time a wise and good Man, because he had in a very excellent Manner celebrated the Praises of those who excelled in War. There is something in the Character of *Tyrtæus* which seems to resemble that of a Celtic Bard. He was a Poet and Musician at once. The Instruments on which he played were the Harp, and that Kind of martial Pipe which the *Lacedæmonians* used instead of the Trumpet of other Nations.

V. 469. *Like the dire Spirit of the midnight Storms, &c.*] As *Homer* exalts his Heroes by comparing them to Gods, *Offian* makes Use of Comparisons taken from Spirits and Ghosts. In such Images *Offian* 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. In the Poem entitled the Death of *Cuthullin*, *Offian* describes that Hero in the last of his Battles thus: "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 in 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." Even *Homer*, great as he is, must yield to him in Similes formed upon these.

Till he the shipwreck'd Mariner surveys,  
A floating Corse upon the roaring Seas.

Nor does the Son of *Semo* idle stand,  
475 Nor by his Side unactive sleeps his Hand ;  
Where loud the Shouts, and agonizing Sounds,  
There is he seen inflicting deadly Wounds ;  
And through the Ranks his Sword far-beaming flies,  
Destructive as the Lightning of the Skies,  
480 When blasted the Inhabitants expire,  
And all the neighb'ring Mountains seem on Fire.  
*Dufrommal*\* snorting through the Carnage springs,  
And proud *Sifadda* in the Blood of Kings  
His Fetlock bathes. Behind the rolling Car,  
485 Like Groves o'erturn'd, appears the prostrate War,  
When<sup>c</sup>

\* One of *Cuthullin's* Horses, *Dubhfron-gheal*. Black, with a white-starred Face.

When loaded with the Ghosts of Night, the Blast  
Has o'er the barren Heights of *Cromla* past.

Upon the Rocks of roaring Winds deplore,  
Bent o'er the Waves, sad Maid of *Inistore* !  
490 The Air with thy distressful Clamours fill,  
Thou fairer than the Spirit of the Hill,  
That radiant, passing in the Light of Day,  
At Noon, o'er *Morven* silent glides away.

Thy

V. 492. *That radiant, &c.*] The Ideas of the Times, concerning the Spirits of the deceased, were not so gloomy and disagreeable, as those of succeeding Ages. The Spirits of Women, it was supposed, retained that Beauty which they possessed while living, and transported themselves from Place to Place; with that gliding Motion, which *Homer* ascribes to the Gods. The Descriptions which Poets, less ancient than *Offian*, have left of those beautiful Figures, that appeared sometimes on the Hills, are elegant and picturesque. They compare them to *the Rainbow on Streams*; or, *the gliding of Sun-beams on the Hills*. The Distinction which they made between good and bad Spirits, was, that the former appeared sometimes in the Day-time in lonely unfrequented Places, but the latter never but by Night, and in a dismal gloomy Scene.

Thy Youth lies pale, and breathless on the Ground,  
495 The Arm of strong *Cutbullin* gave his Wound !  
He never must again recross the Tide,  
Or, rais'd by Valour, seek a royal Bride.  
Weep on, weep on, thou Maid of *Inistore*,  
For *Trenar*, lovely *Trenar* is no more.  
500 His Dogs at Home perceive their Master's Soul  
Borne on the Winds, and melancholy howl ;

Against

V. 498. *Weep on, thou Maid of Inistore.*] The Maid of *Inistore* was the Daughter of *Gorlo* King of *Inistore*, or *Orkney* Islands. *Trenar* was Brother to the King of *Iniscon*, supposed to be one of the Islands of *Sbetland*. The *Orkneys* and *Sbetland*, were at that Time subject to the King of *Lochlin*. We find that the Dogs of *Trenar* are sensible at Home of the Death of their Master, the very Instant he is killed. It was the Opinion of the Times, that the Souls of Heroes went immediately after Death to the Hills of their Country, and the Scenes they frequented the most happy Time of their Life. It was thought that not only Dogs, but Deer and Horses likewise 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. It was likewise supposed, that the Arms which Warriors left at Home, became bloody when they fell in Battle.

Against the Wall unstrung his polish'd Bow  
Neglected hangs ; its mighty Owner low,  
Shall make no more the sylvan Sport his Care :  
505 No Sounds are in his lonely Heath of Deer.

As when a thousand Waves the Shores assail,  
The *Scandinavians* rush on *Inisfail* :  
These in close Order, like a Ridge of Rocks,  
Immoveable sustain their fiercest Shocks.  
510 The dying Groans, the Shouts, the thrilling Cries  
And Clash of Shields redoubled rend the Skies.  
The gloomy Warriors stand oppos'd in Fight,  
Their gleaming Falchions wave like Rays of Light ;  
And rise and fall, as, where some Furnace burns,  
515 An hundred Hammers echoing strike by Turns.  
Blood flows in Streams, they die by mutual Wounds,  
And loud from Wing to Wing the Battle sounds.

But who are these, so dark ! that forward stride  
 To meet each other, eager to decide  
 520 The doubtful Day ? Like stormy Clouds they move,  
 Their circling Swords like Lightning flash above :  
 The Mountains nod, the Forests wave around,  
 Beneath their Footsteps groans the solid Ground.  
 Both Armies wait th' Event with anxious Looks ;  
 525 Expecting soon to see, with thund'ring Strokes,  
*Cutbullin* and the Monarch of the Sea,  
 On *Lena's* Heath, engag'd in horrid Fray.

But,

V. 520. *Like stormy Clouds they move, &c.*] In the Second Book of *Paradise Lost*, where *Satan* and *Sin* are on the Point of Fighting, the Description bears some Resemblance to this of *Offian*.

----- Such a Frown  
 Each cast at th' other ; as when two black Clouds  
 With Heav'n's Artill'ry fraught, come rattling on  
 Over the *Caspian*. -----

V. 528.



But, rushing sudden o'er the darken'd Field,  
Night in her Clouds th' approaching Chiefs conceal'd.

The

V. 528. *But, rushing sudden &c.*] It was not proper these two Heroes should engage each other, as thereby the Catastrophe would have been brought on too soon. The abrupt Manner therefore of ending the Battle just at this Conjunction, was necessary, as well as remarkably judicious. Many, I am persuaded, would have been glad it had continued longer; but nothing could be added to heighten the Description already given, and a protracted Scene of Carnage is both tedious and disgusting. *Homer*, according to Lord *Kames*, is in nothing more faulty than in this very Particular. An Account of a single Battle employs the whole Fifth Book of the *Iliad*, and a great Part of the Sixth. Yet in the Whole there is no general Action; but unknown Warriors, whom we never heard of before, killed at a Distance with an Arrow or a Javelin; and every Wound described with anatomical Accuracy. The whole Seventeenth Book is employed in the Contest about the dead Body of *Patroclus*, stuffed with minute Circumstances below the Dignity of an Epic Poem. In such Scenes the Reader is fatigued with endless Particulars; and has nothing to support him but the Melody of *Homer's* Versification. Gratitude would prompt one to apologize for an Author who affords so much Pleasure. The only Apology I can think of, is, that *Homer* had no good Models to copy after; and that without good Models it is in vain to expect Maturity of Judgment. In a Word, *Homer* was a blazing Star, and the more to be admired, because he blazed in an obscure Age. But that he should in no Degree be tainted with the Imperfections of such an Age, is a wild Thought: it is scarce possible, but by supposing him to be more than Man.

- 530 The Conflict ceas'd ; the Sov'reign of the Deeps,  
 Leads back the Pow'rs of *Lochlin* to their Ships.  
 And *Erin's* Sons to *Cromla's* Side repair,  
 Where *Dorglas* left behind the branchy Deer,  
 That fell, the Fortune of the early Day,  
 535 Before the Shield to Battle call'd away.  
 These now they dress ; a hundred gather Heath,  
 And heap it high ; ten labour with their Breath

To

V. 536. *These now they dress, &c.*] The ancient Manner of preparing Feasts after Hunting, is handed down by Tradition. A Pit lined with smooth Stones was made ; and near it stood a Heap of smooth flat Stones of the Flint Kind. The Stones, as well as the Pit, were properly heated with Heath. Then they laid some Venison in the Bottom, and a Stratum of the Stones above it ; and thus they did alternately till the Pit was full. The Whole was covered over with Heath, to confine the Steam. Some Pits are shewn, which the vulgar say, were used in that Manner. However improbable this Account may seem to some of our Readers, it agrees exactly with the Description Captain *Wallis*, and others, give us of the Manner in which some of the Inhabitants of the Southern Hemisphere, particularly the *Otaheites*, dress their Food. I shall transcribe it here, as an Instance of the Custom of those People, and a curious Elucidation of this Passage of our Author.

“ They

To fire the smoaking Pile : three hundred Hands

Select the Stones, and range them in the Sands.

540 So toil the Chiefs, nor cease their diff'rent Cares,

Till breathing fav'ry Fumes the Feast appears.

Mean

“ They kindle a Fire,” says the Captain, “ by rubbing the End of one Piece of dry Wood upon the Side of another, in the same Manner as our Carpenters whet a Chissel ; then they dig a Pit about Half a Foot deep, and two or three Yards in Circumference : they pave the Bottom with large Pebble Stones, which they lay down very smooth and even, and then kindle a Fire in with dry Wood, Leaves, and the Husks of the Cocoa-Nut. When the Stones are sufficiently heated, they take out the Embers, and rake up the Ashes on every Side ; then they cover the Stones with a Layer of green Cocoa-Nut-Tree Leaves, and wrap up the Animal that is to be dressed in the Leaves of the Plantain ; if it is a small Hog, they wrap it up whole, if a large one they split it. When it is placed in the Pit, they cover it with hot Embers, and lay upon them Bread-Fruit and Yams, which are also wrapped up in the Leaves of the Plantain ; over these they spread the Remainder of the Embers, mixing among them some of the hot Stones, with more Cocoa-Nut-Tree Leaves upon them, and then close all up with Earth, so that the Heat is kept in. After a Time proportioned to the Size of what is dressing, the Oven is opened, and the Meat taken out, which is tender, full of Gravy, and better in every Respect than when it is dressed any other Way.---It is impossible to describe the Astonishment they expressed, when they saw the Gunner, who, while he kept the Market, used to dine on Shore, dress his Pork and Poultry by boiling them in a Pot ; having themselves no Vessel that could bear the Fire, they had no Idea of hot Water, or its Effects.”

Mean Time *Cutbullin* had resum'd his Mind ;  
He stood upon a beamy Spear reclin'd,  
And *Carril* call'd, *Kinfena*'s \* gray-hair'd Son,  
545 The venerable Bard of Ages gone.  
To him the Chief : Shall I the Banquet spread,  
While he, by whom *Scandivia*'s Host is led,  
Must pass the Night, expos'd to squally Winds,  
Far from his Halls of Shells and Hills of Hinds ?  
550 It shall not be : Arise, the King invite  
To share the Feast amidst our Groves this Night ;  
For cold and bleak th' uncomfortable Breeze,  
Comes whistling o'er the Surface of his Seas.  
Here let him praise the Harps harmonious Strain  
555 (A Concert sweeter than his roaring Main)  
And hear our Bards, responsive to their Strings,  
Record the martial Deeds of ancient Kings.

Without

\* *Cean-feana*, i. e. the Head of the People.

Without Reply the aged Bard obey'd,  
He reach'd the Shore, on *Swaran* call'd, and said :  
560 Redoubted Sov'reign of the boundless Tides,  
Quit that uneasy Bed compos'd of Hides,  
And pass with *Erin's* car-borne Chief the Night,  
Where sound the Groves of *Cromla's* neighb'ring Height.  
For there the Hero spreads the genial Feast,  
565 And sends his Bard thy Presence to request.

The

V. 565. *And sends his Bard thy Presence to request.*] The Bards were the Heralds of ancient Times ; and their Persons were sacred on account of their Office. Old *Carril* was chief Bard to young *Cormac* King of *Ireland* ; and never did any Nation encourage or indulge the Profession with a more friendly Partiality. Their Nobility and Gentry, their Kings, both provincial and supreme, patronized, caressed, and revered them. The Bards of a distinguished Character had Estates in Land settled on themselves and their Posterity. Even amidst all the Ravages and Excesses of War, these Lands were not to be touched ; the Poet's own Person was sacred, and his House was esteemed a Sanctuary. Every principal Bard was in the *Irish* Tongue called *Filea*, or *Allamb Redan*, that is to say, a *Doffor* in Poetry. Each of the great *Filiars* or Graduates had thirty Bards of inferior Note constantly about his Person, and every Bard of the second Class was attended by a Retinue of fifteen poetical Disciples.

If

The hoary Herald scarce these Words had done,  
When thus the Monarch, in a furlly Tone,

That

If any Faith can be given to *Keating*, many other extraordinary Advantages and Immunities were annexed to the Office of Bard, besides those which arose from the extravagant Munificence of private Persons. It was ordained by Law, that all Bards should live at the public Expence for six Months in the Year. By the Authority of this Law, they quartered themselves upon the People throughout the Island from *All-Hallow Tide* till *May*. This heavy annual Tribute was of a very old standing, and for that Reason the Bards who were authorized to exact it, were in the Language of the Country called *Clear-ben-chaine*, that is, the Songsters of the ancient Tax.

The very ample Privileges conferred on the Bards, and the blind Respect paid to their Persons, made them at last intolerably insolent. Their Avarice also kept Pace with their Pride. Their haughty Behaviour and endless Exactions became an insupportable Grievance to the Nations. The Numbers of those Strollers increased daily. Such as inclined to spend their Time in Idleness and Luxury, joined themselves to the Fraternity, and passed under the Character of Bards. In the Reign of *Hugh ain Mearach*, says *Keating*, that is, in the latter End of the Sixth Century, a third Part of the People of *Ireland* went under that Title, and claimed the Privileges annexed to the Order. These Abuses in latter Times drew the Attention of Parliament, which passed several Laws against them and their Entertainers. Till at length, in the Sixth of *Elizabeth*, 1563, an effectual Stop was put to their illicit Practices.



- That founded like a hollow Gust of Wind,  
On echoing *Cromla* when a Storm's behind :
- 570 Though all thy Daughters, *Ullin* ! bright in Charms,  
Should heave the Breast, extend their snowy Arms,  
And languishingly roll their Eyes of Love,  
I would not from my Station here remove ;  
But fix'd, as *Lochlin*'s thousand Rocks, will stay,
- 575 Till clad in youthful Beams the new-born Day  
Shall tinge the Eastern Hills with early red,  
And light my Arm to lay *Cutbullin* dead.  
Delightful to my Ears are *Lochlin*'s Blasts ;  
They found like Music in my lofty Mafts,
- 580 And bring the Hills of *Gormal* to my Mind,  
And stately Trees that echo'd to the Wind,  
When the wild Boar, swift traversing the Wood,  
I close pursu'd, and bath'd my Spear in Blood.  
Then these my Words report to *Semo*'s Son ;
- 585 Unless he yields me *Cormac*'s ancient Throne,

The Streams that down the Mountains foaming pour,  
Shall crimfon flow To-morrow with his Gore.

The Bard returning, *Erin's* Chief inform'd,  
How threat'ning *Swaran* fpoke, and how he ftorm'd.

- 590 To which the Chief --- If fuch the Tyrant's Pride,  
There let him toft upon the Billows ride ;  
None but himfelf will fuffer by the Choice.  
Then, aged Bard, exalt thy tuneful Voice ;  
Some Deed renown'd of ancient Times recite,  
595 And fpend in Song a Portion of the Night.  
You know of Chiefs and Maidens, worthy Praise,  
Who *Inisfail* adorn'd in former Days ;  
The Grief unhappy Lovers fuffer, fhew,  
And give the melancholy Joy of Woe.

On

V. 599. *And give the melancholy Joy of Woe.*] *The Joy of Grief*, is one of *Offian's* remarkable Expreffions, feveral Times repeated in his Works.

If

600 On *Albion's* Rocks, how ravish'd is the Ear  
 With Tales of Love, when from the Hills of Deer  
 The Hunters late return, and *Cona's* Streams  
 Reverberate the Sound of *Offian's* Themes.

The

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." 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. *Offian*, in another Place, makes a very proper Distinction between this Gratification, and the destructive Effect of over-powering 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 of soft and grave Music; and finely characterizes the Taste of *Offian'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 Themes; preferable to the light and trifling Strain of Poetry and Music, which promotes light and trifling Manners, and serves to enfeeble the Mind.

V. 603. *Reverberate the Sound of Offian's Themes.*] *Offian*, the Author of the Poem, and eldest Son of *Fingal* by *Ros-crana* the Daughter of

The Bard obedient fung --- In Times of Yore,

605 The Sons of Ocean touch'd upon our Shore :

A thou-

*Cormac* King of *Ireland*. 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 himself, in intimate Friendships 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 the 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. While yet young, he took to Wife *Everallin* the Daughter of *Branno*, an *Irish* Chieftain, and Lord of the Country about the Lake of *Lego*. She did not live long, and left him no Children but *Oscar*. When *Ossian* himself died, is not ascertained. He seems to have lived to an extreme old Age, towards the latter End of which he lost his Eye-Sight; this, and the Circumstance of his surviving all his Friends, he frequently laments in the most moving and pathetic Manner.

V. 605. *The Sons of Ocean, &c.*] Not only from the Invasion of *Swaran*, but from many other Passages of the Poem, we learn, that those Northern Adventurers, who so frequently infested the Coasts of *Great Britain* and *Ireland*, till the Thirteenth Century, began these piratical Depredations even before the Days of *Ossian*. Their religious Tenets, as well as their extreme Poverty, infligated the old *Scandinavians* to these unprovoked Hostilities. It was an Article of their Creed, that those who died in Battle, fighting bravely, were instantly translated to the Hall of *Odin*, to drink Beer out of the Skull of an Enemy. "The Philosophy of the *Cimbri*,"

A thousand Vessels bounding o'er the Main,  
To lovely *Ullin* bore their warlike Train.  
In Arms the Tribes of *Inisfail* arose,  
The Chiefs of dark-brown Bucklers to oppose ;  
610 And stately *Grudar*, equal in Command  
With *Cairbar*, first of Men ! led on the Band.  
They had been Foes, each claiming as his Right  
The spotted Bull of *Golbun's* echoing Height.

About

*Cimbri*," says *Valerius Maximus*, " is gay and resolute: They leap for Joy  
" in a Battle, hoping for a glorious End: in Sickness they lament, for  
" Fear of the contrary." Other ancient Authors give the same Account  
of them. " Happy in their Mistake," says *Lucan*, " are the People  
" who live near the Pole. Persuaded that Death is only a Passage to long  
" Life, they are undisturbed by the most grievous of all Fears, that of  
" dying: they eagerly run to Arms, and esteem it Cowardice to spare a  
" Life they shall soon recover in another World." Such was their Mag-  
nanimity, that they scorned to snatch Victory by Surprise. Even in their  
piratical Expeditions, Instances are recorded of setting aside all the Ships  
that exceeded those of the Enemy, lest the Victory should be attributed to  
Superiority of Numbers. It was held unmanly to decline a Combat,  
however unequal; for Courage, it was thought, rendered all Men equal.  
The shedding Tears was unmanly, even for the Death of Friends.

About this Beast arose such fierce Debate,  
 615 That often Sword in Hand the Heroes met.  
 But then, their private Enmities forgot,  
 They Side by Side to save their Country fought :  
 This Unanimity obtain'd the Day,  
 And *Lochlin's* Sons or died or ran away.  
 620 No Names are in our Annals to be found,  
 Than *Grudar's* or than *Cairbar's* more renown'd ;  
 Two fairer Hunters never trod the Hill,  
 Nor show'd in Battle a superiour Skill.  
 But, ah ! why did the Bull of *Golbun* \* low ?  
 625 They saw him leaping white as Winter Snow  
 Upon

V. 617. *They Side by Side to save their Country fought, &c.*] This Epifode is introduced with great Art and Propriety. *Calmar* and *Connal*, two of the *Irish* Heroes, had disputed warmly before the Battle about engaging the Enemy. *Carril* endeavours to reconcile them with the Story of *Cairbar* and *Grudar*; who, though Enemies before, fought *Side by Side* in the War to expel the common Enemy. The Poet obtained his Aim, for we find *Calmar* and *Connal* perfectly reconciled in the Third Book.

\* *Golb-bean*, as well as *Cromleach*, signifies a crooked Hill. It is here the Name of a Mountain in the Country of *Sligo*.

V. 629.



Upon the echoing Heath. Again return'd  
Their former Claims, again their Fury burn'd.

Where through the verdant Meadows *Lubar*\* flows,  
They met in Arms to try decisive Blows ;  
630 And *Grudar*, beauteous as a Beam of Light,  
By *Cairbar* vanquish'd, fell in single Fight.  
To *Tura*'s Vale the Victor back return'd,  
Where *Brassolis* † his fairest Sister mourn'd ;

Who

V. 629. *They met in Arms to try decisive Blows.*] Some Readers will be surprized to see two Heroes fall out, and fight about so trivial a Thing as a Bull. But they should reflect that in those early Days Cattle were very scarce, and consequently in much higher Estimation than with us, when such useful Articles of Life are become more common. Besides, it is probable that several other Circumstances contributed to aggravate the Quarrel. Were we to trace back the original Causes of the Duels, in which so many lose their Lives, in these more polished Times, we should find them, in general, fully as frivolous, as what occasioned the Debate of *Cairbar* and *Grudar*.

\* *Lubar*, a River in *Ulster*. *Labbar*, loud, noisy.

† *Brassolis* signifies a Woman with a white Breast.

- Who to Distraction lov'd the fallen Chief,  
635 And fearful for him rais'd the Song of Grief.  
That Day she saw him to the Field depart,  
She saw, and Anguish rack'd her boding Heart.  
Some Intervals of Hope reliev'd her Pain,  
But soon relapsing, she complain'd again.  
640 Beneath the thin Contexture of her Vest,  
Were seen the Heavings of her snowy Breast :  
So looks the Moon (imperial Queen of Night)  
When passing Clouds obscure her heav'nly Light.  
Soft as the Harp, her plaintive Voice was sweet,  
645 When tuneful Bards some tragic Tale repeat.  
Fix'd in her Soul young *Grudar's* Image lay ;  
She dreaded much the Reason of his Stay,  
And tow'rd's the Heath impatient gave a Look,  
Then wrung her Hands, and thus lamenting spoke :  
650 " When, clad in shining Armour, will appear  
" My gallant Youth ?" --- Her Brother, ent'ring here;

Cut short her Speech. Before the Maid he stood,  
And cried, take *Brassolis* this Shield of Blood !  
Suspend it in my Hall ; the haughty Foe,  
655 Who own'd it once, by *Cairbar's* Arm lies low.  
The Target of her Love the Virgin knew,  
And rising, silent, pale, distracted flew.  
No sooner in his Blood she saw the Chief,  
Than, sinking on the Heath, she died of Grief.  
660 There rests their Dust, *Cuthullin*, in the Grave,  
And those two lonely Yews, that yonder wave,  
Spring from their verdant Tombs, and o'er them form  
A lasting Shade impervious to the Storm.

She

V. 662. *Spring from their verdant Tombs, &c.*] In the first Editions, this Passage stood thus: " Here rests their Dust, *Cuthullin* ; and these " two lonely Yews, sprung from their Tombs, wish to meet on high." This Sympathy of the Trees with the Lovers, seems to have been added by the Translator ; for in the last Edition I find it corrected. Probably, because Dr. *Blair* censures it as bordering upon an *Italian* Conceit, and the only Instance of that Sort of Wit to be found in our *Celtic* Bard, who has no affected Ornaments, no Marks either in Style or Thought of a

She was the fairest of the Virgin Train,  
 665 And he, of all the Youth, the loveliest Swain :  
 The Bard shall speak their Names to future Days,  
 And in the Song commemorate their Praise.

Thus having sung, the old Musician ceas'd :  
 When *Semo's* Son his Transports thus express'd :  
 670 Harmonious Bard ! delightful are thy Lays,  
 And lovely found the Tales of other Days.  
 So, when the Sun gleams faint upon the Plains,  
 In balmy Spring descend refreshing Rains,

And

studied Endeavour to shine and sparkle. *Offian* appears every where to be prompted by his Feelings, to speak from the Abundance of the Heart; and the Simplicity of his Manner adds great Beauty to his Descriptions, and indeed to his whole Poetry. The last Edition contains several other Emendations and Improvements, some of which may have escaped my Notice, as it was only hastily compared to this Version just before it was sent to the Press.

V. 672. *So, when the Sun gleams faint upon the Plains, &c.*] There is in the 32d Chapter of *Deuteronomy* a Passage very like this. " Let my  
 " Doctrine

And calm on Earth their genial Warmth distil,  
 675 While light the Cloud flies o'er the shadowy Hill.  
 Oh take again the Harp you touch so well,  
 And to the Sound *Bragela's* Praises tell,  
 The Spouse of *Semo's* Son, divinely fair,  
 Who in the Isle of *Mist*, far, far from here !

Indulges

“ Doctrine gather as Rain, let my Speech distil as the Dew, as a Shower  
 “ upon the Herb, and as Drops upon the Grass.” *Homer* compares the  
 Eloquence of *Ulysses* to the Fall of Winter Snows.

— ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα χεῖμαρ ἵκνου. *Iliad*, III. V. 222.

But when he speaks, what Elocution flows !  
 Like the soft Fleeces of descending Snows.

POPE.

V. 679. *Who in the Isle of Mist.*] The Isle of *Sky*, not improperly called the Isle of *Mist*, as its high Hills, which catch the Clouds from the Western Ocean, occasion almost continual Rains. In this Island the Ruins of the Castle of *Dunscraith*, upon an unaccessible Rock hanging over the Sea, are still visible. The Castle, as vouched by Tradition, belonged to *Cutbullin*. Upon the Green before the Castle there is a great Stone, to which, they say, his Dog *Lualb* was chained.

680 Indulges at *Dunscaitb* her secret Woes,  
 And of her absent Lord no Tidings knows.  
 Methinks, e'en now, I see thy beauteous Face,  
 Shine like a Sun-beam on the wat'ry Space;  
 While anxious looking for *Cuthbullin's* Ship,  
 685 Before thee rolls the vast tempestuous Deep.  
 The Foam that whitens on the breaking Waves,  
 At Distance, for his Sails, thy Eye deceives.

But

V. 682. *Methinks, e'en now, I see thy beauteous Face, &c.*] With Apostrophes, or Addresses to Persons absent or dead, which has been, in all Ages, the Language of Passion, our Poet abounds, and they are among his highest Beauties. The Reader, without Doubt, has remarked that fine one to the Maid of *Inistore*, when her Lover was killed in the foregoing Battle. This of *Cuthbullin* here to *Bragela* is inimitable. He commands the Harp to be struck in her Praise, and the very Mention of her Name immediately suggesting a Crowd of tender Ideas, he thus passionately breaks out; *Methinks, e'en now, I see thy beauteous Face, &c.* and 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, he proceeds, *But Night her Influence spreads! retire, &c.* Such Poetry as this, breathes all the native Spirit of Passion and Tendernefs.



But Night her Influence spreads ; retire, my Dear,  
The Winds are cold, they lift thy raven Hair.  
690 The Hall of Shells is near, there ease thy Mind,  
With Thoughts of other Times, and be resign'd ;  
For to the Isle of *Mist* I shall not fail,  
Till War's fierce Tumults cease in *Inisfail*.  
Of Battle, *Colgar's* gray-hair'd Son, discourse,  
695 And from my Mind the fair Seducer force ;  
While Honour calls, Affection pleads in vain,  
White-bosom'd Dame of *Sorglan's* noble Strain.

*Tongorman, Connal* slow to speak replied,  
Against the Craft of Ocean's Sons provide :  
700 Let straight a Corps of active Men be sent,  
To watch their Motions, and Surprise prevent.

*Cutbullin !* still I am to Peace inclin'd,  
Till by the Race of *Morven* we are join'd ;  
Till great *Fingal* his Sword in Battle wields,  
705 And like a Sun-beam sets on Flame the Fields.

As

As he advis'd, the Son of *Semo* chose  
A Guard, to watch the Motion of the Foes.  
He struck his bossy Shield, and to the Sound  
They all march'd off, and took their Stations round.  
710 Laid in the Heath, the lonely Haunt of Hinds,  
The rest repose, amid the dusky Winds.  
The Souls of those, who lately fell in Fight,  
Come swimming on the murky Clouds of Night ;  
But make no Noise : A deadly Silence reigns,  
715 O'er all the Face of *Lena's* darken'd Plains ;  
Except at Intervals, along the Coasts,  
The feeble Shrieks of death-foretelling Ghosts.

V. 717. *The feeble Shrieks of death-foretelling Ghosts.*] It was long the Opinion of the ancient *Scots*, that a Ghost was heard shrieking near the Place where a Death was to happen soon after. The Accounts given, to this Day, among the vulgar, of this extraordinary Matter, are very poetical. The Ghost comes mounted on a Meteor, and surrounds twice or thrice the Place destined for the Person to die ; and then goes along the Road through which the Funeral is to pass, shrieking at Intervals ; at last, the Meteor and Ghost disappear above the Burial Place.

F I N G A L,

F I N G A L,

A N

E P I C P O E M

I N

S I X B O O K S.

B O O K II.

T H E

A R G U M E N T.

THE Ghost of *Crugal*, one of the *Irish* Heroes who was killed in the Battle, appearing to *Connal*, foretels the Defeat of *Cutbullin* in the next Battle; and earnestly advises him to make Peace with *Swaran*. *Connal* communicates the Vision; but *Cutbullin* remains inflexibly resolved to continue the War. Morning comes; *Swaran* proposes dishonourable Terms to *Cutbullin*, which are rejected. The Battle begins, and is obstinately fought for some Time, until, upon the Flight of *Grumal*, the whole *Irish* Army give Way. *Cutbullin* and *Connal* cover their Retreat: *Carril* leads them to a neighbouring Hill, whither they are soon followed by *Cutbullin* himself, who descries the Fleet of *Fingal* making towards the Shore; but, Night coming on, he loses Sight of it again. *Cutbullin*, dejected after his Defeat, attributes his ill Success to the Death of *Ferda* his Friend, whom he had killed some Time before. *Carril*, to shew that ill Success did not always attend those who innocently killed their Friends, introduces the Episode of *Comal* and *Galbina*.

THE Action of this Book begins about the Middle of the first Night, and lasts till towards the Middle of the second. The Scene lies on the Side of the Mountain of *Cromla*, and the Heath of *Lena*.

# F I N G A L,

A N

## E P I C P O E M.

### B O O K II.

WHERE from the broken Cliffs, down head-  
long leap'd

The Mountain Stream, the Son of *Colgar* slept ;

Beneath the Shelter of an aged Oak,

His Head supported by a moss-grown Rock.

The

V. 2. *The Son of Colgar slept.*] *Connal*, so called from one of that Name who was the Founder of his Family. The Scene here described will appear natural to those who have been in the *Higblands* of *Scotland*. The Poet removes him to a Distance from the Army, to add more Horror to the Description of *Crugal's* Ghost by the Loneliness of the Place.

M

V. 10.

5 The Voice of Night thrill founded in his Ear,  
 And *Scandinavia's* Host encamp'd lay near ;  
 Yet fearless, from the rest he slept apart,  
 His surest Guard a firm and dauntless Heart.

But scarce to soft Repose had clos'd his Sight,  
 10 When Heav'n wide op'ning flash'd with sudden Light ;  
 And

V. 10. *When Heav'n wide op'ning flash'd with sudden Light, &c.*] The Marvellous, it must be admitted, has always a great Charm with 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; 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 draws 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



And from the Hill shot down a sparkling Stream  
Of dark-red Fire, and *Crugal* on the Beam;  
(A Chief for Valour fam'd, of *Irish* Strain,  
Who was by *Swaran* in the Battle slain.)

15 His melancholy Face, more pale than bright,  
Shone like the Western Moon's departing Light;  
His Eyes were like two dying Flames; the Shroud,  
Which form'd his Robe, was of the Mountain Cloud:  
Dark

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, *Offian* appears to have been remarkably happy. He found the Tales of his Country full of Ghosts and Spirits: it is likely he believed them himself, and 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.

Dark look'd his wounded Breast. The well-known Man,  
20 As soon as *Connal* saw, he thus began.

O Son of *Dedgal* ! on the Hill of Deer  
So far renown'd ; why doth thy Face appear  
Thus pale and sad ? For never in the Fields  
Look'd pale through Fear the Breaker of the Shields.  
25 Can Sorrow after Death the Mind molest ?  
I thought in Heav'n the Souls of Heroes blest.

Bedew'd with Tears, the visionary Shade,  
Drew nearer to the Place where he was laid ;  
And stretching his dim Hand above the Chief,  
30 Thus answer'd in a Voice half drown'd with Grief ;  
Resembling the low Noise the Sedges make  
Along the murm'ring Banks of *Lego's* Lake.

O Son

V. 32. *Along the murm'ring Banks of Lego's Lake.*] The Mist which  
rose from this Lake, as well as that of *Lano*, mentioned in the First Book,  
occasionally

O Son of *Colgar*! on the Hills of Hind,  
This Form immortal wanders unconfin'd ;

35 But dead on *Ullin's* Shore, in open Air,

My Body lies a Prey for Birds to tear.

You'll

occasioned Diseases and Death ; therefore the Bards feigned that it was the Residence of the Ghosts of the deceased, during the Interval between their Death, and the pronouncing of the Funeral Elegy over their Tombs ; for it was not allowable, unless that Ceremony was performed, for the Spirits of the dead to mix with their Ancestors *in their airy Halls*. This Circumstance will add a farther Beauty to the Comparison, as the Sedges or Reeds, which grew upon the Borders of *Lego*, often sounded to the Voices of the Ghosts, that were supposed to dwell amidst the Fogs, which brooded constantly upon the Surface of that Lake.

V. 34. *This Form immortal wanders unconfin'd.*] The Immortality of the Soul was a capital Article in the *Celtic* Creed, inculcated by the *Druids* (*Pomp. Mel. Amm. Mar.*) And in *Valerius Maximus* we find the following Passage (Lib. 2.) *Gallos, memorie proditum est, pecunias mutuas, quæ sibi apud inferos redderentur, dare : quia persuasum habuerint, animas hominum immortales esse. Dicrem stultos, nisi idem braccati sensissent quod palliatus Pythagoras sentit.* All Savages have an Impression of Immortality ; but few, even of the most enlightened, before Christianity prevailed, had the least Notion of any Occupations in another Life, but what they were accustomed to in this. Even *Virgil*, with all his poetical Invention, finds no Amusements for his departed Heroes, but what they were fond of when alive ; the same Love for War, the same Taste for Hunting, and the same Affection for their Friends. As we have no Reason to expect more Invention in *Osian*, the Observation may serve as a Key to the Ghosts introduced by him, and to his whole Machinery.

You'll talk no more with *Crugal* Face to Face,  
Or on the Waste his lonely Footstep trace !  
For light as shadowy Mist, or *Cromla's* Wind,  
40 I swiftly pass, and leave no Trace behind.  
But though no Evils now affect my State,  
Yet must I mourn my Friend's approaching Fate !  
Yes, *Connal* ! I behold the Cloud of Death ;  
It dark and threat'ning hangs o'er *Lena's* Heath.  
45 There, lovely *Ullin* ! there it is decreed,  
The best and bravest of thy Sons shall bleed.  
For sake these Plains, they haunted are by Ghosts,  
And bid the Tribes move farther from the Coasts.  
He said, and like the darken'd Moon from View,  
50 Amidst the Whistling of the Blast withdrew.

Stay, *Crugal*, stay, the Chief awaking cried,  
Son of the windy *Cromla* ! lay aside

Those

Those sky-red tinctur'd Beams ; far, far too bright  
To be endur'd by Man's imperfect Sight.

- 55 What mossy Grotto, or green-headed Hill,  
Do you resort to, when the Winds are still ?  
Shall we not hear you in the Tempest scream,  
And know your Murmur in the Mountain Stream,  
When with your Brother-Ghosts you rush from high,  
60 And in a Whirlwind o'er the Desert fly ?

So spoke the soft-voic'd Chief, but quick as Thought  
The Spirit pass'd away, and answer'd nought.  
On which from Earth the frightened Warrior sprung  
Upon his Feet : around his Armour rung.

- 65 He struck his Shield above *Cuthullin's* Head,  
Who, starting at the Sound, arose and said :  
Why *Connal* this Alarm ? You should have spoke,  
And not so near your bossy Buckler struck,

Left

Left turning to the Noise, a sudden Wound  
70 My Spear had aim'd, and fix'd you on the Ground.  
Thy Death would have dejected *Erin's* Train,  
And I the fatal Blow bewail'd in vain !  
But tell the Reason of this hasty Call,  
The Wisdom of thy Counfel governs all.

75 *Cutbullin* ! said the Hero with a Sigh,  
The Ghost of *Crugal*, from his Cave on high,  
Shot

V. 76. *The Ghost of Crugal.*] As *Offian'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 upon 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 Fame. All this presents to us much the same Set of Ideas, concerning Spirits, as we find in the Eleventh Book of the *Odyssy*, where  
*Ulysses*



Shot as a Lightning through the op'ning Skies,  
And stood an awful Form before my Eyes.

The

*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 *Crugal*, emitting a shrill and feeble Cry, and melting away like Smoke.

— ψυχὴ δὲ κατὰ χθονος, ἥντε καπνος,  
ὦχεται τετριγυῖα.

*Iliad*, XXIII. V. 100.

Like a thin Smoke he sees the Spirit fly,  
And hears a feeble lamentable Cry.

POPE.

But though *Homer's* and *Offian's* Ideas concerning Ghosts were of the same Nature, we cannot but observe, that *Offian's* Ghosts are drawn with much stronger and livelier Colours than those of *Homer*. *Offian* 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 *Shakespeare's* Style, "harrow up the Soul." *Crugal's* Ghost here, in particular, 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

N

the

The Stars dim-tinkled through his airy Frame,  
80 His feeble Voice was like a distant Stream.

He

the Mark of the Wound by which he fell. So *Homer* and *Virgil* describe their Ghosts. Thus the former, in the Twenty-third Book of the *Iliad*.

Ἦλθε δ' ἐπὶ ψυχὴ Πατροκλῆος δειλοῖο,  
Πάντ' αὐτῷ μέγεθός τε καὶ ὄμματα κάλ' εἰκυῖα,  
Καὶ φωνὴν καὶ τοῖα περὶ χροῖ εἴματα ἔγο.

V. 65.

When lo ! the Shade, before his closing Eyes,  
Of sad *Patroclus* rose, or seem'd to rise ;  
In the same Robe he living wore he came ;  
In Stature, Voice, and pleasing Look the same.

POPE.

*Virgil*, in the Second Book of the *Æneis*, thus represents the Ghost of *Hector*.

*In somnis ecce ante oculos mœstissimus Hector*  
*Visus adesse mihi, largosque effundere fletus,*  
*Raptatus bigis, ut quondam, aterque cruento*  
*Pulvere, perque pedes trajeetus lora tumentes. ----*  
*Squalentem barbam, et concretos sanguine crines,*  
*Vulneraque illa gerens, quæ circum plurima muros*  
*Accepit patrios. ----*

When *Hector's* Ghost before my Sight appears :  
A bloody Shroud he seem'd, and bath'd in Tears.

Such

He is a Messenger of Death come down,  
 Talks of the narrow House and lonely Stone.  
 Oh sue for Peace ! or with the sad Remains  
 Of *Erin's* Sons, retreat from *Lena's* Plains.

85 To this the Chief --- The Ghost of *Crugal* came,  
 And spoke tho' Stars dim-twinkled thro' his Frame !

A Story

Such as he was, when, by *Pelides* slain,  
*Theſſalian* Courſers dragg'd him o'er the Plain.  
 Swoln were his Feet, as when the Thongs were thruſt  
 Through the bor'd Holes, his Body black with Duſt. ---  
 His Hair and Beard ſtood ſtiffen'd with his Gore ;  
 And all the Wounds he for his Country bore.

DRYDEN.

But *Offian* ſets before our Eyes a Spirit from the inviſible World, diſtinguiſhed by all thoſe Features, which a ſtrong aſtoniſhing Imagination would give to a Ghost. The Circumſtance of the Stars being beheld, “ dim-twinkling through his airy Frame,” is wonderfully pictureſque ; and conveys the moſt lively Impreſſion of his thin and ſhadowy Subſtance. The Attitude in which he is placed, and the Speech put into his Mouth, are full of that ſolemn and awful Sublimity which ſuits the Subject.

V. 82. *Talks of the narrow Houſe.*] The Grave — “ The Houſe appointed for all living.” *Job*.

A Story so absurd who will believe ?  
 Has not some Gust of Wind, in *Lena's* Cave,  
 With sudden Noise your nightly Slumber broke,  
 90 And you the Bluster for a Voice mistook ?  
 Or if a heav'nly Form, array'd in Light,  
 Did visibly descend ; why to my Sight  
 Was not the Spectre brought ? Have you inquir'd  
 To what sequester'd Rock he has retir'd ?

If

V. 88. *Has not some Gust of Wind, &c.*] Though *Cutbullin* might have been censured by *Ossian*, for not giving Credit to the Appearance of *Crugal's* Ghost, especially as he was assured of it by a Person of *Connal's* known Probity and Veracity ; however, in his Answer, he accounts very naturally for the Reason why his Countrymen gave such universal Belief to Apparitions of that Kind. For as their Journeys lay over wide and unfrequented Heaths, where often they were obliged to sleep in the open Air, amidst the Whistling of Winds, and Roar of Water-falls ; the Gloominess of the Scenes around them was apt to beget that melancholy Disposition of Mind, which most readily receives Impressions of the extraordinary and supernatural Kind. Falling asleep in this gloomy Mood, and their Dreams being disturbed by the Noise of the Elements around, it is no Matter of Wonder, that they thought they heard *the Voice of the dead*. This Voice, however, was no more than a shriller Whistle of the Winds in an old Tree, or in the Chinks of a neighbouring Rock, as *Cutbullin* tells *Connal* in this Place. It is to this Cause must be ascribed those many and incredible Tales of Ghosts, which we meet with in the *Higblands* ; for, in other Respects, the Inhabitants are no more credulous than their Neighbours.

95 If yonder neighb'ring Grot I thought the Place,  
My Sword would quickly there disturb his Peace ;  
Yes, I would force him from that lonely Cell,  
And make him all his boasted Knowledge tell :  
Which, *Connal*, is but small : For since in War  
100 The Chief so lately fell, he could not far  
Beyond the Summit of our Mountains fly ;  
And who has then inform'd him we should die ?

*Tongorman*, *Connal* wifely thus replied :  
Departed Souls upon the Tempests ride ;  
105 They meet together in their Caves, and know  
What Destiny prepares for Men below.

The boding Threats of feeble Ghosts above,  
Shall not *Cutbullin* from his Purpose move ;  
Who is determin'd, blame it as they may,  
110 Still to oppose the Monarch of the Sea.

If

If I must fall, so let it be ! my Tomb  
Shall rise amidst the Fame of Times to come ;  
The mossy Stone shall on the Heath appear,  
And there the Hunter shed a friendly Tear !

115 The fair *Bragela* will be told my Death,  
And Sorrow cloud the Sun-beam of *Dunscraith* !

But better nobly to expire with Praise,  
Than buy with Ignominy Length of Days :

*Fingal*, who saw me conquer, shall not hear,

120 That from the King of Snow I fled through Fear.

No ! feeble Shadow of the windy Storm !

No ! though resplendent in a heavenly Form

You

V. 116. *And Sorrow cloud the Sun-beam of Dunscraith.*] 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, akin to many of *Homer's*, we find in *Offian* several which are remarkably beautiful and poetical, such as this here, *Bragela*, the lonely Sun-beam of *Dunscraith* ; *Oscar* of the future Fights ; *Fingal* of the mildest Look ; *Carril* of other Times ; the mildly blushing *Everallin* ; a *Culdee*, the Son of the secret Cell.



You should descend, commission'd from the Sky,  
And prove it certain Death, I would not fly.

- 125 My Soul on Fire, impels me to the Field :  
Go, Son of *Colgar* ! strike on *Caithbat*'s Shield ;  
Between the Spears it hangs : at the first Blow,  
Our Friends will rise, and boldly face the Foe.  
For, since the King of stormy Hills delays,  
130 With *Morven*'s hardy Race to cross the Seas,  
We will ourselves our native Land defend,  
And Liberty and Life together end.

The Sound spread wide ; tumultuous rose the Bands,  
Like Waves blue-rolling on the levell'd Sands,

And

V. 133. *The Sound spread wide.*] The Sound of *Caithbat*'s Shield, which *Cutkullin* ordered *Connal* to strike. From this and several other Passages of the Poem, it is evident that neither Drums, Trumpets, or Bagpipes were known or used in their Battles. They had no Expedient of giving the Military Alarms, but striking a Shield, founding a Horn, or raising a loud Cry : hence the loud and terrible Voice of *Fingal* is often mentioned, as a necessary Qualification of a great General ; like the

135 And on the dusky Heath in Order stood,  
 With Spears erected, like a lofty Wood  
 Of aged Oaks, that shake along the Coast,  
 And murmur hoarsely to the Streams of Frost ;  
 When Winter binds in Ice the rigid Waves,  
 140 And withers with his Breath the rustling Leaves.

Now dawning in the East came on the Day,  
 And lofty *Cromla's* Head of Clouds look'd gray.

It

*βονυ ἀγαθός Μεγέλαος* of *Homer*. Of Military Discipline or Skill, they appear to have been entirely destitute. Their Armies seem not to have been very 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.

V. 136. *Like a lofty Wood, &c.*] This is a just and noble Comparison. *Milton*, in the First Book of *Paradise Lost*, has a beautiful Simile of this Kind.

----- As when Heav'n's Fire  
 Hath scath'd the Forest Oaks, or Mountain Pines,  
 With singed Tops, their stately Growth tho' bare  
 Stands on the blasted Heath.

It hazy prov'd, the Sun with sickly Rays,  
Pale trembled on the half-enlighten'd Seas.

145 The Fog condensing, which the Deeps exhal'd,  
Pass'd slowly by, and *Erin's* Host conceal'd.

The King of dark-brown Shields, who thought  
them fled,

Alarm'd his Pow'rs, and thus exulting said :  
To Arms, all ye that come o'er *Lochlin's* Seas,

150 This Day will crown you with immortal Praise.  
The Tribes of *Ullin*, favour'd by the Night,  
Have tow'rs the Mountains turn'd their hasty Flight.  
A second Field they had not Heart to stand ;  
O'er *Lena's* Heath pursue the flying Band :

155 And *Morla*, to the Halls of *Cormac* go ;  
Command them to obey the King of Snow,  
Or all the People in his Rage will fall,  
And universal Ruin silence all.

He said ; and as a Flock of Sea-Fowl soar,  
 160 When rising Waves expel them from the Shore,

They

V. 159. *As a Flock of Sea-Fowl soar, &c.*] To remark all the Beauty and Propriety of *Offian's* Similes, would be to multiply Notes without End. No Poet abounds more in this Figure than he. There are in this Poem of *Fingal* alone, as many as in the whole *Iliad* of *Homer*. I am inclined to think, 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 *Offian's* Similes be too frequent, they have this Advantage of being commonly shorter than *Homer's* ; they interrupt his Narration less, he but 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, *Offian's* are, without Exception, taken from Objects of Dignity, which cannot be said for all those *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, Flowers, Rocks and Mountains, Music and Songs, Light and Darkness, Spirits and Ghosts ; these form the Circle within which *Offian's* Comparisons generally run. Some, not many, are taken from Birds and Beasts ; as Eagles, Sea-Fowl, the Deer, and the Mountain Roe ; and a very few from such Operations of Art as were then known, as the Hammering of Iron. *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. *Offian's* Defect in this Article, is plainly owing to the desert, uncultivated State of his Country, which suggested to him few Images beyond natural inanimate Objects, in their rudest Form. The

Birds

They rush'd at once to Arms ; the deaf'ning Sound  
 Was like the Noise of Waters brawling round,  
 When after nightly Storms, a thousand Rills  
 Pour down the rocky Sides of *Cona's* Hills,  
 165 And mixing in the Vales, their Eddies turn,  
 Beneath the Beams of the pale rising Morn.

As to the Light succeeding, swiftly pass  
 The Shades of Autumn o'er the Hills of Grass ;  
 So gloomy, dark, successive march the Pow'rs  
 170 Of *Lochlin's* echoing Woods along the Shores.  
 Tall as the branchy Stag of *Morven*, moves  
 Before the rest the haughty King of Groves,  
 With ample Strides. His Shield, refulgent bright,  
 Shines like a Flame upon the Heath at Night ;

When

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.

V. 173. *His Shield, &c.*] The Poet informed us, that the Mist blown from the Sea, only covered the *Irish* Army ; so that the Side of the Heath

175 When not a Star is kindled in the Skies,  
And the still Gloom the Trav'ler terrifies ;

Who

occupied by the *Scandinavian* Forces was free from it, and therefore the Shield of *Swaran* might have shone as here described. The Comparison which follows is beautifully imagined, especially the Circumstance of the Traveller bewildered in the Night, and frightened by a supernatural Appearance, gives a lively Idea of the awful and terrible Sensation, with which the *Irish* may be supposed to be filled at the Sight of the Hero. I think the Description of *Achilles's* Shield in the 19th Book of the *Iliad* inferior to it.

— Αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα σάκος μέγα τε, τιβαρόν τε,  
Εἶλετο, τοῦ δ' ἀπάνευθε σελας γένετ', ἥυτε μήνης.  
Ὡς δ' ὅταν ἐκ πόντοιο σελας ναύτησι φανείη  
Καιομένοιο πυρὸς, τὸ δὲ καίεται ὑψόθ' ὄρεσφι,  
Σταλμῷ ἐν οἰοπόλῳ τοὺς δ' οὐκ ἐθέλοντας ἄελλαι  
Πόντον ἐπ' ἰχθυόεντα φίλων ἀπάνευθε φέρουσιν·

V. 373.

And, like the Moon, the broad refulgent Shield  
Blaz'd with long Rays, and gleam'd athwart the Field.  
So to night-wand'ring Sailors, pale with Fears,  
Wide o'er the wat'ry Waste, a Light appears,  
Which on the far-seen Mountain blazing high,  
Streams from the lonely Watch-tow'r to the Sky:  
With mournful Eyes they gaze, and gaze again,  
Loud howls the Storm, and drives them o'er the Main.

POPE.

The



Who lonely wand'ring fees, or thinks he fees  
Some airy Phantom sporting in the Blaze.

And now a sudden Blast from Ocean blew,  
180 Dispers'd the Mist, and brought again to View

The

The Splendor of *Diomede's* Shield, in the Beginning of the Fifth Book of the *Iliad*, is likewise very finely described. *Virgil*, in the Tenth Book of the *Æneis*, has imitated these, and even surpassed them.

*Ardet apex capiti, cristisque ac vertice flamma  
Funditur, et vastos umbo vomit aureus ignes.  
Non secus ac liquida, si quando nocte cometæ  
Sanguinei lugubre rubent: aut Sirius ardor,  
Ille sitim morbosque ferens mortalibus ægris  
Nascitur, et lævo contristat lumine cælum.*

The *Latians* saw from far, with dazzl'd Eyes,  
The radiant Crest that seem'd in Flames to rise,  
And dart diffusive Fire around the Field;  
And the keen Glitt'ring of the golden Shield.  
Thus threat'ning Comets, when by Night they rise,  
Shoot sanguine Streams, and sadden all the Skies:  
So *Sirius*, flashing forth sinister Lights,  
Pale Human-kind with Plagues, and with dry Famine frights.

DRYDEN.

The Sons of *Inisfail*; who rang'd before,  
Stood like a Ridge of Rocks along the Shore.  
When *Swaran* thus --- Step, *Morla*, forth to those,  
Perhaps now any Terms may please our Foes ;  
185 E'en such we give when vanquish'd in the Field,  
Proud Kings are humbled, and the Nations yield ;  
When all the valiant are in Battle slain,  
And helpless Virgins, a lamenting Train !  
Run out to weep them on the sanguine Plain. }

190 Such Hopes possess'd the Ruler of the Flood :  
The Son of *Swart* majestic forward strode,  
To where the *Irisb* stood array'd, and found  
*Cuthbullin* with his lesser Heroes round.  
To them the Chief: With Joy, ye Peers, embrace  
195 The happy Moment ! *Swaran* offers Peace,  
And only stipulates that you will own  
His just Pretention to the *Irisb* Throne ;

And

And that *Cuthullin* (who, in open Field,  
Has daringly oppos'd the same) will yield  
200 His Spouse, the fairest of the Female Kind,  
And fav'rite Dog that overtakes the Wind.  
If you to these Conditions will agree,  
Your Lives and Properties are left you free.

To this *Cuthullin*, fir'd with just Disdain ;  
205 Go tell the haughty Tyrant of the Main,  
That I reject his proffer'd Terms with Scorn,  
Nor yield to him or any Man yet born.

Then

V. 198. *And that Cuthullin, &c.*] *Morla*, in requiring *Cuthullin* to give up his Wife, and his favourite Dog, goes beyond his Commission, unless we suppose, that these Conditions were virtually included in *Swaran's* Instruction to the Herald: he told him in general Terms, they must yield on such Conditions as were usually given to People overcome in Battle; which, perhaps, according to the common Practice of those Times, might presuppose these Concessions to be made on the Part of the Leader of the vanquished Party. Conformable to this Opinion, I have ventured to omit the Repetition of *Swaran's* Words to *Morla*, being in the Sense I have mentioned, only an Anticipation of the Conditions specified afterwards.

Then let him with his People plough the Waves,  
Or here on *Lena* shall arise their Graves.

210 But never, while this Arm can lift the Sword,  
Shall bright *Bragela* own a foreign Lord ;  
Or over *Gormal's* lofty Hills of Snow,  
Swift-footed *Luath* chace the bounding Roe.

The Herald then : Vain Ruler of the Car !

215 What will you, madly bent upon a War,  
Withstand a Prince, whose Ships of many Sail,  
Would even carry off your *Inisfail* ?  
Such is thy Pow'r compar'd to his, whose Sway  
Extends o'er *Lochlin*, and the boundless Sea.

220 To this the Leader of the *Irish* Host ;  
Your Master can of vast Dominions boast :  
But yet this trusty Sword, which yields to none,  
Shall still support young *Cormac* on the Throne,

And

And in despite of him, maintain his Pow'r,  
225 Till *Connal* and *Cuthbullin* are no more.  
O Son of *Colgar* ! Breaker of the Shields,  
And first of *Erin's* Race in martial Fields ;  
Have not the Words of *Morla* reach'd your Ear,  
And can you after this for Peace declare ?  
230 Why, fallen *Crugal*, Rider of the Winds,  
Did you descend to terrify our Minds  
With formal Threats of Death ? Amidst the Light  
Of fair Renown let me expire in Fight,  
And in the narrow House of Death be laid,  
235 Before I will to such a Peace accede.---

Ye

V. 226. O Son of Colgar ! &c.] *Cuthbullin* seems always to pay the utmost Deference to *Connal's* Judgment ; and nothing, but an ardent Love of Glory, could ever make him dissent from his Opinion. The ignominious Terms proposed here by the Enemy, give *Cuthbullin* an Opportunity to justify his own Conduct, in acting contrary to the Advice of his Friend, who has been all along for pacific Measures ; and *Connal*, by his Silence on the Occasion, thinks, no Doubt, the Terms offered too ignominious for a Person of Courage and Honour to accept.

P

V. 242.

Ye Sons of *Ullin* ! let your Arrows fly,  
And hissing Jav'lins intercept the Sky :  
Then wrapt in Darknefs, furious rush to Fight,  
Dire as the howling Ghosts of stormy Night,  
240 That midst the Roaring of the Winds descend,  
And in their Rage the crashing Forests rend.

As Mists, that blown before the northern Blast,  
Fill all the Valley, and the Sun o'ercaft,  
When sudden Storms invade the Calm ferene ;  
245 So dark, and instant, deluging the Plain,  
The Gloom of Battle dreadful roll'd along,  
Rank behind Rank indiffolubly strong.

The

V. 242. *As Mists, &c.*] *Milton* has a beautiful Comparifon of this Nature.

----- As Evening Mift  
Ris'n from a River o'er the Marifh glides,  
And gathers round faft at the Lab'rer's Heel  
Homeward returning.

V. 257.



The great *Cuthullin* leads himself the Host  
Clad in bright Armour ; like an angry Ghost  
250 Before a Cloud, while Thunders roll on high,  
And fiery Meteors brighten all the Sky :  
Amidst furrounding Flames the Spirit stands,  
And the dark Winds of Heav'n are in his Hands.  
No less resplendent, in the Front of War,  
255 The Hero looks ; while on the Heath afar,  
Old *Carril* bids the Horn of Battle sound,  
And pours his Soul into the Warriors round.

Where,

V. 257. *And pours his Soul into the Warriors round.*] The chief Bards of the *Celtic*, and other Northern Nations, followed their Patrons into the Field, and were frequently of signal Service. It was their Business and Custom, upon the Eve of a Battle, to harangue the Army in a War-Song composed in the Field. This Species of Song was in the *Earse* called *Brosnuba Cath*, that is to say, *an Inspiration to War*. The Poet addressed a Part of this Song to every distinct Tribe, shewing them the Rewards of a glorious Death, and reminding them of the great Actions performed by their Ancestors. He began with a warm Exhortation to the whole Army, and ended with the same Words. The Exhortation turned principally on the Love of Fame, Liberty, and their Prince. “ The *Germans*,” (says

Where, fings the Bard, is fallen *Crugal* now ?

Forgot on Earth the valiant Chief lies low !

But

*Tacitus, de mor. Germ. cap. 3.*) “ have Poems that are rehearsed in the  
 “ Field, and kindle the Soul into a Flame. The Spirit with which these  
 “ Songs are sung, predicts the Fortune of the approaching Fight ; nor is  
 “ their Manner of Singing on these Occasions so much a Concert of Voices  
 “ as of Courage. In the Composition they study a Roughness of Sound,  
 “ and a certain broken Murmur. They lift their Shields to their Mouths,  
 “ that the Voice, being rendered full and deep, may swell by Repercussion.”  
 The Fate of Battles depended not a little on the Encomiums and Invectives  
 of the Bards. To be declared incapable of serving the Sovereign in any  
 Military Station, is now deemed an indelible Reproach. To incur the  
 Satire of the Bard, by a cowardly Behaviour, was reckoned in former Times  
 the last Degree of Infamy and Misfortune.

We are told by *Torfaeus*, a *Norwegian* Historian, that in Time of Sea  
 Engagements, if near the Coast, the Scalds of *Norway* were sometimes  
 landed in a secure and convenient Place, and ordered to mark every Event  
 distinctly, so as to be afterwards able to relate them in Verse. The same  
 Author informs us, that *Olaus*, the Saint, had in a Day of Action ap-  
 pointed strong Guards for his three principal Poets, after giving them  
 Instructions of the same Kind.

In like Manner in *Britain*, when a great and decisive Battle was fought,  
 the Bards were employed in doing Honour to the Memory of those gallant  
 Men, who had sacrificed their Lives in Defence of their Country, and in  
 extolling the Heroes who had survived the Slaughter of the Day. In the  
 Year 1314, *Edward* the Second, of *England*, invaded *Scotland* at the Head  
 of

260 But though his Soul the passing Tempest swells,  
 No Sounds are in the silent Hall of Shells.  
 A Stranger from a foreign Land his Wife,  
 Become a Widow in the Bloom of Life,

And

of a very great Army, having, according to all human Appearance, Reason to expect an absolute Conquest of that Kingdom. Full of this Imagination, he ordered the Prior of *Scarborough*, a celebrated Rhimer, according to the Taste of those Times, to follow his Troops all the Way to *Bannockburn*. He intended to employ this eminent Poet in immortalizing his Victory; but Fortune declared for the Enemy, and the Prior was found among the immense Number of Prisoners which the *Scots* had made. The Ransom demanded for his Liberty was, a Poem on the Battle in Praise of the Conqueror. He gave a Specimen of his Skill, but it was *invita Minerva*, as appears by the following Lines.

*Hic capit, hic rapit, hic terit, hic ferit, ecce dolores;  
 Vox tonat; æsonat; hic ruit; hic luit; arcto modo res.  
 Hic secat, hic necat; hic docet; hic nocet; iste fugatur:  
 Hic latet, hic patet; hic premit, hic gemit; hic superatur.*

V. 261. *No Sounds are in the silent Hall of Shells.*] The ancient *Scots*, like the present *Highlanders*, drank in Shells; hence it is that we so often meet, in *Ossian's* Poems, with the *Chief of Shells*, and the *Halls of Shells*.

V. 262. *A Stranger from a foreign Land his Wife.*] *Crugal* had married *Degrena* (or *Des-grena*, i. e. a Sun-beam) but a little Time before the Battle, consequently she may with Propriety be called a Stranger in the Hall of her Sorrow.

V. 274.

And left alone, disconsolate remains,  
265 Without a Friend to mitigate her Pains.  
But who is she, that like a Sun-beam goes  
Before the black Battalions of the Foes ?  
It is that Light of Beauty, *Crugal's* Love,  
The fair *Degrena* to Distraction drove !  
270 Upon the Wind her Hair dishevel'd flies,  
Her Voice is shrill, and red her streaming Eyes :  
She seeks in vain her fallen Lord to find !  
An empty Form he rides upon the Wind ;  
Or on the barren Mountain lonely keeps,  
275 In some green Grotto, while the Tempest sleeps ;  
Thence

V. 274. *Or on the barren Mountain lonely keeps, &c.*] *Offian* here gives us an Account of the Situation of Souls in a separate State; which, if not entirely happy, is at least more agreeable to Reason than the Notions of the ancient *Greeks* and *Romans* concerning their departed Heroes. Mr. *Macpherson*, in his Introduction to the History of *Great Britain* and *Ireland*, says that our Ancestors feigned the Residence of the Blessed to be in a Place surrounded with Tempests, in the Western Ocean, called *Flath-innis*, or *Noble Island*. This Assertion he grounds upon an ancient *Highland* Tale.  
That

Thence to the Ear of Rest, swift gliding down,  
He comes, and whispers in a feeble Tone,

Like

That Part of it that describes this Paradise, I shall here transcribe. “ The Light in this happy Region, was not a Light that dazzled, but a pure, distinguishing, and placid Light, which called forth every Object to View in their most perfect Form. The Isle spread far before him, like a pleasing Dream of the Soul; where Distance fades not on the Light; where Nearness fatigues not the Eye. It had its gentle-sloping Hills of Green; nor did they wholly want their Clouds; but the Clouds were bright and transparent; and each involved in its Bosom the Source of a Stream; a beautiful Stream, which, wandering down the Steep, was like the faint Notes of a half-touched Harp to the distant Ear. The Valleys were open, and free to the Ocean; Trees loaded with Leaves, which scarcely waved to the light Breeze, were scattered on the green Declivities and rising Grounds. The rude Winds walked not on the Mountains; no Storm took its Course through the Sky. All was calm and bright; the pure Sun of Autumn shone from his blue Sky on the Fields. He hastened not to the West for Repose; nor was he seen to rise from the East. He sits in his mid-day Height, and looks obliquely on the *Noble Isle*. In each Valley is its slow-moving Stream. The pure Waters swell over the Banks, yet abstain from the Fields. The Showers disturb them not; nor are they lessened by the Heat of the Sun. On the rising Hill are the Halls of the Departed---the high-roofed Dwellings of the Heroes of old.”

The Employments of the Blessed in their fortunate Island differ, in no Respect, from the Amusements of the most uncultivated Inhabitants of a mountainous Country. The Bodies with which the Bard clothes his dead Heroes have more Grace, and are more active, than those they left behind  
them

Like the faint Humming of the Mountain Bee,  
Or Flies collected at the Eve of Day.

But

them in this World; and he describes with peculiar Elegance the Beauty of the Women. According to the Tale, the Departed retained in the Midst of their Happiness a warm Affection for their Country and living Friends. They sometimes visited the first; and by the latter, as the Bard expresses it, they were transiently seen in the Hour of Peril, and especially on the near Approach of Death. It was then that at Midnight the Death-devoted were suddenly awakened by a strange Knocking at their Gates; it was then that they heard the undistinct Voices of their departed Friends calling them away to the *Noble Isle*. "A sudden Joy," continues the Author of the Tale, "rushed in upon their Minds; and that pleasing Melancholy, which looks forward to Happiness in a distant Land." It is worthy of being remarked, that, though those who died a natural Death were not excluded from the *Celtic* Paradise, the more pleasant Divisions of the *Flatb-innis*, were assigned to Men who fell in War.

Mr. *Macpherson* farther observes, that the animated Descriptions which the Druids and Bards gave of the *Flatb-innis*, rendered the *Celtic* Nations careless about a transitory Life which must terminate in Happiness. They threw away with Indifference the Burden when it galled them, and became in some Measure independent of Fortune in her worst Extreme. They met Death in the Field with Elevation and Joy of Mind; they sought after him with Eagerness when oppressed with Disease, or worn out with Age. To the same Cause, and not to a Want of Docility of Disposition and Temper, we ought to ascribe their small Progress in the Arts of Civil Life, before the *Phœnicians* and *Greeks*, with their Commerce, and the *Romans*, with their Arms, introduced a Taste for Luxury into the Regions of the West and North.



280 But lo! *Degrena*, like a Morning Cloud,  
Sinks on the Heath, and welters in her Blood.  
Thy lovely Daughter, *Cairbar*, is no more,  
The Pride and Glory of thy youthful Hour!  
Pierc'd in the Side by *Lochlin's* Sword she falls,  
285 The cruel Deed for Vengeance loudly calls.

Thus

V. 284. *Pierc'd in the Side by Lochlin's Sword she falls.*] Women, in the Days of *Offian*, were not chained to the Distaff, or confined to the trivial Cares of Domestic Life. They entered into the active Scenes of Public Affairs, and, with a masculine Spirit, shared the Dangers and Fatigues of the Field with their Husbands and Friends. They unmanned not their Countrymen in the Hour of Peril with vain Terrors and Complaints; they animated them to Action with Exhortation, and confirmed their Valour with Examples of personal Courage. Routed Armies have been known to return to the Charge at their Entreaty, Battles have been gained by their timely Interposition. Strangers to the acquiescing Disposition of other Women, they scorned to survive the Defeat of their Friends; they snatched the Triumphs of Victory from the Hands of the Enemy, and rescued themselves from Slavery by a voluntary Death. Instead of soothing the untractable Minds of their Husbands into Concessions that might procure Safety, they encouraged them to lose their Lives rather than their Liberty and Independence. This Character of the *Celtic* Women accounts for the Death of *Degrena* in this Place; who, inconsolable for the Loss of her Husband, and resolved not to outlive him, throws herself in a Fit of Despair upon the Swords of the Enemy.



Thus fung the Bard : Sad *Cairbar* heard the Song,  
And like the Whale of Ocean rush'd along.  
He saw his Daughter fall before his Eyes,  
And midst a thousand, shouting to the Skies,  
290 Discharg'd his eager Jav'lin at the Foe,  
Which reach'd and laid a mighty Warrior low.  
This as a Signal both the Armies took,  
And fierce encounter'd, with a dreadful Shock,  
From Wing to Wing ; resounding clash'd their Shields,  
295 And copious Slaughter died the slipp'ry Fields.

As when in *Gormal's* Wood the Tempest roars,  
Or Mountain Firs the crackling Flame devours ;  
So loud, so ruinous, with thund'ring Sound,  
Whole Ranks at once come groaning to the Ground.  
300 Two tow'ring Chiefs above the rest appear,  
There gloomy *Swaran*, great *Cuthullin* here ;  
This,

This, down the sable War of *Lochlin* mows,  
And that, the Sons of *Erin* overthrows :  
Unhappy *Curach* would his Fury stand,  
305 And fell an instant Victim to his Hand.  
He left him there, and with a single Blow,  
Laid *Cairbar* of the bossy Buckler low.  
Again his brandish'd Faulchion dealt a Wound,  
And *Morglan* breathless press'd the sanguine Ground.  
310 *Caolt* succeeded him ; upon the Plain  
He quiv'ring lies in Agonies of Pain ;

With

V. 310. *Caolt succeeded him ; upon the Plain, &c.*] It has been objected to *Offian*, 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* Invention 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 *Offian's* Genius was of a different Kind from *Homer's*. It led him to hurry towards grand Objects, rather than to amuse himself 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

- With streaming Blood is stain'd his Bosom fair,  
And, trampled in the Dust, his yellow Hair  
Bestrews the very Place, where in the Vale  
315 He formerly had often spread his Meal :  
There has he heard the Harp's melodious Lay,  
While joyful round his Dogs have leapt in Play,  
And his Companions, eager of the Chace,  
Prepar'd their Bows to wound the savage Race.
- 320 As when a Torrent, swollen by heavy Show'rs,  
Descends impetuous from the higher Moors ;

The

Course. *Homer's* Genius was more comprehensive than *Offian's*. It included a wider Circle of Objects ; and could work up any Incident into a Description. *Offian'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. However, we see that his Battles do not always consist of general indistinct Description ; for such beautiful Incidents are sometimes introduced, and the Circumstances of the Persons slain so much diversified, as in the Death of *Caolt* here, and in several other Places ; which 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.

V. 320.

The roaring Deluge, with destructive Sway,  
Before it sweeps the lesser Hills away ;

The

V. 320. *As when a Torrent, &c.*] We may compare this Comparison, with the following one of *Homer* upon the same Subject.

Ποταμῷ πλήθοντι εοικώς,  
Χειμάρρῳ, ὅς' ὥκα ρέων ἐκέδασσε γεφύρας·  
Τὸν δ' οὐτ' ἄρ' τε γέφυραι ἐεργμέναι ἰσχανόωσιν,  
Οὐτ' ἄρα ἔρκεα ἰσχει ἀλωάων ἐρίθλων,  
Ἐλθόντ' ἐξαπίνης, ὅτ' ἐπιβρίσῃ Διὸς ὄμβρος·  
Πελλὰ δ' ὑπ' αὐτοῦ ἔργα κατήριπε κἀλ' αἰζηῶν

*Iliad*, V. V. 87.

Thus from high Hills the Torrents swift and strong  
Deluge whole Fields, and sweep the Trees along,  
Thro' ruin'd Moles the rushing Wave resounds,  
O'erwhelms the Bridge, and bursts the lofty Bounds ;  
The yellow Harvests of the ripen'd Year,  
And flatted Vineyards, one sad Waste appear !  
While *Jove* descends in sluicy Sheets of Rain,  
And all the Labours of Mankind are vain.

POPE.

*Homer*, it must be owned, has introduced more Circumstances than *Offian*, such as bursting and overwhelming the Bridges, laying the Corn, spoiling the Country ; all which represent the dreadful Devastations of a violent Flood. But *Offian*'s Silence in these Particulars is plainly owing to the wild uncultivated State of his Country, which supplied him with none of the

The Rocks half-funk, can scarce the Weight sustain  
 325 Of rapid Waters rushing to the Main :  
 The Monarch thus resistless wastes the Field ;  
 Where-e'er he turns the Sons of *Erin* yield ;  
 All but *Cuthullin*, who undaunted still  
 Stood on his Car before him, like a Hill,

Abrupt

the forementioned Incidents. *Virgil*, in the Second Book of the *Æneis*, has inserted an Imitation of *Homer*.

*Non sic aggeribus ruptis cum spumeus ammis  
 Exiit, oppositasque evicit gurgite moles,  
 Fertur in arva furcens cumulo, camposque per omnes  
 Cum stabulis armenta trahit. -----*

Not with so fierce a Rage, the foaming Flood  
 Roars when he finds his rapid Course withstood ;  
 Bears down the Dams with unresisted Sway,  
 And sweeps the Cattle and the Colts away.

DRYDEN.

V. 329. *Stood on his Car before him, like a Hill, &c.*] *Virgil* and *Milton* have made Use of a Comparison similar to this. I shall lay both before the Reader, and let him judge for himself which of these great Poets have best succeeded.

*Quantus*

- 330 Abrupt and huge, that shoots into the Sky,  
 And intercepts the Tempests as they fly ;  
 Though rattling Show'rs of pointed Hail descend,  
 Though angry Spirits on the Winds contend,  
 Though even Thunders burst in frequent Peals,  
 335 It stands unmov'd, and shelters *Cona's* Vales.  
 So brave *Cuthullin*, now by all assail'd,  
 Opposing to a thousand Swords his Shield,

The

*Quantus Atbos, aut quantus Erix, aut ipse coruscis,  
 Cum fremit ilicibus quantus, gaudetque nivali  
 Vertice se attollens pater Appeninus ad auras.*

Like *Erix* or like *Atbos* great he shows,  
 Or Father *Appenine* when white with Snows ;  
 His Head divine obscure in Clouds he hides,  
 And shakes the sounding Forests on his Sides.

DRYDEN.

On the other Side *Satan* alarm'd  
 Collecting all his Might, dilated stood  
 Like *Teneriff* or *Atlas* unremov'd :  
 His Stature reach'd the Sky.

MILTON.

V. 346.



The Onset of an Army singly stands,  
And from Destruction saves the vanquish'd Bands.  
340 As Water from a Rock, from Heroes round  
The Blood distils, and purples wide the Ground.

But, in the Centre, while he checks the King,  
The *Irish*, overpow'r'd on either Wing,  
Yield to superior Force, and fall away,  
345 Like Snows that melt before the Beams of Day.  
When *Grumal*, seeing all Resistance vain,  
Address'd the few who yet the Fight maintain.

“ Forc'd

V. 346. *When Grumal, &c.*] The Brevity of *Grumal's* Speech is very suitable to the Hurry of the Occasion. This and the Speech of *Cutbullin* a little after, are the only two, in the whole Poem, spoke in the Heat of Battle. When a Man's Attention is supposed to be taken up amidst the Confusion of a general Engagement, it is not a Time to be employed in Words, except something of the highest Consequence absolutely requires it. For which Reason the frequent Taunts and Insults uttered by the Heroes of *Homer* in the very Midst of an Action are ill timed, and unnatural, considering the violent Agitation of Mind as well as Body, the Speakers may be supposed to have been in upon such perilous Conjectures.

Another

“ Forc’d back, like Reeds that to the Tempest bend,

“ Why will you longer with the Foe contend ?

350 “ Hastel gain the Hills of dark-brown Deer.” He said,

And, like the Stag of *Morven*, swiftly fled

Along the Plain ; his Jav’lin shining bright,

Behind him trembled like a Beam of Light.

Some into *Grumal*’s timid Counsel came,

355 And fled like him, forgetful of their Fame :

But most, to shameful Flight preferring Death,

O’erwhelm’d by Numbers died on *Lena*’s Heath.

*Cutbullin*

Another Particular is his Digressions without End, which draw our Attention from the principal Subject. I shall only instance one. *Agamemnon*, Iliad, XIV. desiring Advice how to resist the *Trojans*, *Diomedes* springs forward, but before he offers Advice, gives the History of all his Progenitors, and of their Characters, in a long Train. And after all, what was the sage Advice that required such a Preface ? It was that *Agamemnon* should exhort the *Greeks* to fight bravely. At any Rate, was *Diomedes* so little known, as to make it proper to suspend the Action at so critical a Conjecture for a genealogical History ?

*Cutbullin* stood upon his flaming Car  
Of many Gems, amidst the hopeless War.  
360 He laid a mighty Chief of *Lochlin* dead,  
And turning round, in Haste to *Connal* said :  
To wield the Sword, O first of mortal Men !  
You taught this Arm of Death, nor taught in vain.  
Though

V. 362. *To wield the Sword, &c.*] From this we learn that *Connal* had been *Cutbullin's* Preceptor, and taught him the Use of Arms ; which accounts for that Hero's respectful Deference towards him on all Occasions, though the Intrepidity of Youth makes him sometimes deviate from his prudent Counsels. *Cutbullin's* taking the old Man into his Chariot, when in evident Danger of perishing amidst the Enemy, is like where *Diomed*, in the 8th Book of the *Iliad*, rescues *Nestor* from the Fury of the *Trojans*. *Homer*, indeed, in saying that had not *Jupiter* interposed, *Tydidēs* alone had driven the whole Army of *Troy* to their Walls, is what may be termed the Bombast in Fiction, it being impossible for one Man to rout a whole Army, where there were several Heroes of equal Strength and Valour with himself, without the immediate Interposition of some Deity. The first Time I read this Passage, it struck me in the same Light, though then at an Age when the most incredible Fictions are apt to go down. It may not be improper to acquaint the Reader, that the Remarks already made, or any others I may make hereafter upon *Homer*, are not done with any invidious Design of depreciating the much-admired Works of that celebrated and amazing Genius ; but only to point out such Blemishes, as are incident to all human Performances, and from which his, great as he was, are not exempt.

- Though *Inisfail* dispirited retires,  
365 Yet boasts thy manly Soul its wonted Fires ?  
If so, let *Carril* to the Hills convey  
The few Survivers of this fatal Day ;  
While firm as Rocks, we two the Charge sustain  
Of *Lochlin's* Host, and save the flying Train.  
370 *Tongorman Connal* mounts the Car of Light :  
Mean Time the *Irish* Tribes, dispers'd in Flight,  
Are chas'd along. The Heroes interpose ;  
Dark round their Shields the hostile Squadrons close,  
Like Clouds that round the Moon a Circle form,  
375 When dim through Heav'n she passës in a Storm.  
Again, emerging from an Iron Show'r  
Of Darts that thick from every Quarter pour,  
The Chiefs appear : *Sithfadda* panting goes,  
*Dufromnal*, haughty Steed ! beside him blows ;  
380 Fatigu'd, the steep Ascent they climb but slow,  
As Waves behind a Whale behind them rush the Foe.

Now on the rising Side of *Cromla* stood  
 The few sad Sons of *Erin*, like a Wood,  
 Through which the rapid Flame of Heav'n hath pass'd,  
 385 Urg'd by the Fury of the nightly Blast.  
 A little distant from the routed Bands,  
 Beside an Oak the Son of *Semo* stands.  
 His fiery Eyes, made wilder by Despair,  
 Roll silent round ; and in his bushy Hair  
 390 The Winds are heard ; when *Fili's* Son arriv'd,  
 And joyful thus the Hero's Soul reviv'd.  
 The Ships, the Ships we look'd for long, appear !  
*Fingal*, the King of lonely Hills, draws near.  
 The first of Men, the Breaker of the Shields,  
 395 Will shortly join you on green *Ullin's* Fields.

The

V. 393. *Fingal, the King of lonely Hills, draws near.*] *Ossian* often shews 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 worked up with such skilful Conduct, as would do Honour to any Poet of the most refined Times.

The Sea, divided by his fable Prows,  
On either Side in frothy Furrows flows;  
Like Groves in Clouds, his Masts with many Sails,  
Nod to each Breath of the inconstant Gales.

400     *Cuthullin* rais'd his eager Hands on high,  
And call'd upon the Spirits of the Sky.  
Immortal Ghosts, Inhabitants of Air!  
Swift from my native Isle of *Mists* repair;  
Distend his Canvass with a prosp'rous Gale,  
405 And urge his rapid Course to *Inisfail*.  
Haste, glorious King of *Morven*, haste to Land!  
The Death of Thousands here awaits thy Hand.  
With Joy I view thy long-expected Ships,  
With Sails like Clouds, o'ershading wide the Deeps;  
410 And thou thyself, in Arms superior bright,  
Like a red Pillar of the Fire of Night,

Which

Which on some Mountain blazing to the Skies,  
 With Light the wand'ring Traveller supplies.

What Pleasure, *Connal*, to behold our Friends!

415 But lo! the gath'ring Night her Gloom extends:

In Absence of the Sun, which now has set,

My Eyes in vain explore the distant Fleet.

Here till the Dawn of Morning let us stay,

And wish the Moon of Heav'n may light the Sea.

420 Down on the Woods the Winds hoarse murmur'ring blow,  
 From echoing Rocks the noisy Torrents flow,

A Show'r

V. 420. *Down on the Woods, &c.*] The two great Characteristics of *Offian's* Poetry are, Tendernefs and Sublimity. It breathes nothing of the cheerful Kind. An Air of Solemnity and Seriousnefs is diffused over the Whole. *Offian* is perhaps the only Poet who never relaxes, or lets himself down into the light and amusing Strain. He moves perpetually in the high Region of the Grand and 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



A Show'r of Rain the Head of *Cromla* shrouds,  
The Stars red-tremble through the flying Clouds ;  
While on a purling Riv'let's windy Side,  
425 Whose furly Sound a neighb'ring Tree replied,  
The Chief of *Erin* sat, with *Colgar*'s Son,  
And hoary *Carril*, Bard of Ages gone.  
A Pause ensu'd, and none the Silence broke,  
Till with a Sigh, at length *Cuthullin* spoke.

430 Success will not that impious Man attend,  
Who has in single Combat kill'd his Friend !  
Thou noble Son of *Damman*, I can swear,  
That as my very Life, I held thee dear.

Here

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.

Here *Connal* interrupting ask'd ; How fell  
 435 The Breaker of the Shields ? I knew full well  
 The Son of *Damman* : he was tall, and fair  
 As the bright Rainbow of the Hill of Deer.

From

V. 436. *He was tall, and fair, &c.*] The *Celtic* Nations, under whatever Climate they were placed, were tall, robust, and lusty ; of a ruddy Complexion, with yellow Hair and large blue Eyes. But of all the Branches of the *Celtæ*, the ancient *Britons*, the *Germans* not even excepted, were the greatest in the Height of their Bodies \*. They generally exceeded by Half a Foot the tallest *Romans*, and even rose beyond the Standard of the *Gauls*, whose Persons (as *Florus* expresses it †) were of more than human Size. *Cæsar*, speaking of the *Germans*, attributes their great Stature to the gross Food with which they were nourished, and to the continual Exercise which was the natural Attendant on the two Occupations of Hunting and depredatory War. He likewise ascribes it in Part to the uninterrupted Freedom of Action they enjoyed in their Youth ; to the Want of Application to Study ; and to the consequent Absence of Correction when Boys. The superior Stature of the ancient *Britons* may, in some Degree, be ascribed to the Humidity of the Climate under which they lived. The same Temperature of Air which favours the extraordinary Growth of Vegetables, may contribute to increase the Size of the human Body, where it is not checked by that Mode of Life and hard Labour, which civil Improvements have introduced into modern *Europe*. The Inhabitants of

\* *Procerissimi Celtarum sunt Britanni. Strabo, Lib. IV. Caledoniam habitantium magni artus Germanicum originem asseverant. Tacit. Lib. II.*

† *Gallis Infubribus corpora plusquam humana erant. Lib. II.*

cloudy

From distant *Albion* *Ferda* cross'd the Sea,  
Where many a barren Mountain own'd his Sway.

In

cloudy Regions and swampy Countries, even at this Day, exceed in Stature those who live under a serene Sky and on a dry and light Soil. The *Germans*, who possess the Fens between the *Scheld* and the *Elbe*, rise beyond the Standard of the Inhabitants of the *Upper Germany*; and the *English* of the Morasses of *Lincoln*, exceed in Size the Inhabitants of the Downs in *Hampshire*.

The *Sarmatæ*, who, upon the Decline of the *Roman* Empire, advanced into the Regions of the West, were a very different Race of Men from the *Celtæ*, and they sent down their low Size, with their Blood, to the present Inhabitants of *Europe*, who are, in a great Measure, their Posterity. The general Use of Spirits, which has much prevailed of late in *Europe*, may have likewise contributed to lessen the Size of the present Race. Distilled Liquors certainly check the Growth of the human Body; neither is Wine itself favourable. This is certain, that the present Inhabitants of the Mountains of *Scotland* have fallen short of the Stature and robust Habit of Body of their Ancestors, within this last Century, during which they have been acquainted with the Still. Ale was their common and favourite Beverage from all Antiquity, as well as of all the *Celtic* Nations. Luxury, early Venery, and the interested Views with which all Ranks of People marry, are other Causes of the Degeneracy of the human Species. Gentlemen, who spare neither Labour nor Money to improve their Breed of Dogs and Horses, use no Precaution to prevent the Deformity of Body, or Imbecillity of Mind, they themselves are likely to entail upon their Posterity.

440 In *Muri*'s Hall, drawn by the common Fame  
Of *Ulyster*'s School, to learn the Sword he came.  
'Twas there the youthful Stranger first I knew,  
And our Acquaintance soon to Friendship grew :  
Together at the Chace we pass'd the Day,  
445 And in the Heath at Night together lay.

*Cairbar* was now of *Ullin*'s Plains possesst,  
With num'rous Droves of lowing Cattle blest :  
*Deugala* was his Spouse, who, with the Light  
Of Beauty cover'd, shone divinely bright ;  
450 But then her Heart was vain, the House of Pride,  
A Vice to Beauty ever near allied.  
She lov'd with Ardour *Damman*'s stately Son,  
Who in the Bloom of Youth a Sun-beam shone :

Her

V. 448. *Who with the Light Of Beauty cover'd.*] Besides formal Comparisons, the Poetry of *Ossian* is embellished with many of these beautiful Metaphors. This Mode of Expression, which suppresses the Mark of Comparison, and substitutes a figured Description in the Room of the  
Object

- Her Soul on Fire, and Mischief her Intent,  
455 The white-arm'd Woman to her Husband went,  
And thus address'd him. *Cairbar* gives me Pain,  
I will no longer in his Halls remain.  
His Soul is dark, his Countenance severe ;  
Divide the Herd, and let me have my Share.
- 460 If such thy Purpose, mildly he replied,  
The Son of *Semo* shall my Herds divide.  
To his impartial Judgment we may trust  
Our mutual Int'rests ; for I know him just,  
And pledge my Honour he will do you Right.
- 465 Then must we part ? --- Adieu, thou Beam of Light.

I went, and shar'd their Herds upon the Hill :  
One snow-white Bull remain'd ungiven still.

This

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.

This on the injur'd *Cairbar* I bestow'd ;  
*Deugala* saw, and with Resentment glow'd.

- 470 From that Day forward, studious of my Death,  
She labour'd to bring on me *Ferda's* Wrath.  
I hate *Cutbullin*, she would often say,  
Oh might I hear that cold on Earth he lay !  
Destroy this fell Tormentor of my Soul,  
475 Or o'er *Deugala Lubar's* Stream shall roll.  
My wand'ring Ghost will haunt thee from the Grave,  
And mourn the fatal End Resentment gave.  
What unresolv'd ? Or grant the dear Request,  
Or, cruel ! pierce with Steel this heaving Breast.

The

V. 466. *I went and shar'd their Herds upon the Hill.*] From this Story, and the Contest of *Cairbar* and *Grudar* about the beautiful Bull of *Golbin's* Heath, in the First Book ; we may gather, that Pasturage was not wholly unknown in the Days of *Offian*. But these are the only Allusions to Herds, in the whole Poem ; and of Agriculture we find no Traces. No Cities appear to have been built in the Territories of *Fingal* himself ; nor are any Arts mentioned, except that of Navigation and Working of Iron.

480 The fair-hair'd Youth this Answer always made,  
To fight *Cutbullin* you in vain persuade ;  
The Son of *Semo* is my Bosom Friend,  
And shall I with the Man I love contend ?

No Measure then the furious Woman kept ;  
485 She three successive Days before him wept,  
Till, on the fourth revolving Sun's Return,  
The Youth consenting bid her cease to mourn,  
And rising said : Relentless Heart of Pride,  
By Murder only to be satisfied !

490 At your Command to fight my Friend I go,  
But wish his righteous Hand may lay me low.  
For, should I perpetrate thy wicked Will,  
I never after must ascend the Hill,  
Without reflecting on *Cutbullin's* Death,  
495 When I his Tomb behold upon the Heath.



On *Muri's* lofty Hills our Swords we drew,  
Which glitt'ring o'er our Heads at Random flew ;  
Now round the Helms of Steel in Circles fung,  
Now on the slipp'ry Bucklers faintly rung.  
500 *Deugala* saw we did not mean to fight,  
And with a Smile insulted thus her Knight.  
Cease *Ferda*, Beam of Beauty, thou art young,  
That tender Arm is not in Battle strong ;  
Submit to *Semo's* Son, you may provoke  
505 The matchless Chief ; he stands like *Malmor's* Rock.

At

V. 496. On *Muri's* lofty Hills.] *Muri* was a Military Academy in *Ulyster*, and seemingly very much resorted to by the *Caledonian* Youth in *Ossian's* Days. *Ireland* being at that Time the Theatre of frequent Wars, between the *Fir-bolg*, who inhabited to the South of the Island, and the *Scots* who were settled to the North, made it much in Vogue. Accordingly we are told that *Ferda* went thither to learn the Military Art. And in the Poem of *Darbula*, old *Ufnobh* sent his three Sons, *Nathos*, *Altos*, and *Ardan*, to learn the Use of Arms, under their Uncle *Cutbullin* ; and no Doubt but many of the most distinguished Families sent their Children for the same Purpose.

At this, while from his Eyes the Tears descend,  
He fault'ring cried, *Cuthullin* ! we must end  
This boyish Play, and boldly come to Blows ;  
It is the fair *Deugala* makes us Foes.

510 Raife then thy Shield, my hostile Thrusts put by ;  
There is no Mean, for you or I must die.  
As Wind imprison'd in some hollow Rock,  
My lab'ring Bosom groan'd, when thus he spoke.  
I brandish'd high the Lightning of my Steel ;  
515 The lovely Sun-beam of the Battle fell.  
So died the dearest of *Cuthullin*'s Friends,  
Since which Success no more his Arm attends.

The Hero ceas'd, and melted into Tears ;  
When thus the aged Bard of other Years.

Son

V. 519. *When thus the aged Bard of other Years.*] *Cuthullin*, dejected by his Defeat, superstitiously attributes his ill Success to the Death of his Friend ; *Carril*, to avert his Mind from such gloomy and prejudicial Notions,

520 Son of the Car, with Reason you bewail,  
 Sad are thy Words, and forrowful the Tale  
 Of *Damman's* Son ! The Youth's unhappy Fate  
 Sends back my Soul to Times of ancient Date :  
 For I a valiant Chief nam'd *Comal* knew,  
 525 Who inadvertently his Mistress flew ;  
 Yet after that, successful in the Field  
 The Hero prov'd, and made the mighty yield.

This *Comal* also was of *Albion* Strain,  
 An hundred Hills compos'd his vast Domain :

His

tions, introduces another Story of a similar Nature, purposely to shew that his Misfortunes did not arise from thence, as ill Success did not always attend those who innocently killed their Friends.

V. 528. *This Comal also was of Albion Strain.*] *Alba*, or *Albin*, according to Mr. *Macpherson*, is the Name by which the ancient *Scots*, in their native Language, have from all Antiquity distinguished their own Division of *Britain*, and seems to be the Fountain from which the *Greeks* deduced their *Albion*. *Alb* or *Alp*, in the *Celtic*, signifies High, and *In*, invariably, a Country. *Britain* he derives, in the same Manner, from the *Celtic* Word, *Brait*, High, and *An* or *In*, a Country.

The

530 His branchy Deer drank of a thousand Brooks,  
 His Dogs were echo'd by a thousand Rocks.  
 With ev'ry Beauty that adorns the young,  
 His Hand in Battle could subdue the strong.  
 One was his Love, and she was heav'nly fair,  
 535 *Conloch's* Daughter, with the raven Hair ;

Who

The Rev. Mr. *Whitaker*, in his genuine History of the *Britons* asserted against Mr. *Macpherson*, contends, that this Name was never imposed by any of the Residents in the Country ; but that, as the *Gauls* (who inhabited along the Coast of *Calais*) beheld the chalky Cliffs, and Heights appearing on the other Side of the Water, they naturally distinguished them by a Name, that was expressive only of the sensible Appearance which they formed to the Eye, and called them *Albion* or Heights. *Alb*, continues this learned and accurate Writer, in the Singular, lengthens into *Alb-an*, *Alb-on*, *Alb-ain*, or *Alb-ion* in the Plural. And we have the same Word in the *Gallic* Appellation, of the Mountains that divide *Italy* from *Gaul*. The Name therefore, was the natural *Celtic* Term for Heights, or Eminences. As such it was applied to the Cliffs of *Britain* ; and, as such, it is retained by the present *Higblanders* for their own very mountainous Division of *Britain*. Mr. *Whitaker* likewise gives a quite different Etymology of the Word *Britain*. But which of these ingenious Etymologists is in the Right, I shall leave others to determine.

V. 534. *One was his Love, and she was heav'nly fair.*] I have, in a former Note, described the superiour Size of the *Celtic* Men. The Women,

T

it

Who in the Bloom of Beauty, like the Sun,  
Amidst a thousand Maids, superiour shone.

Well-

it seems, did not yield to them in Stature, and they almost equalled them in Strength of Body and in Vigour of Mind. They were fair, blooming, and stately; just and full in the Proportions of their Limbs; active, high-spirited, and bold. Their long yellow Hair flowed careless down their Shoulders, and their large blue Eyes animated their Looks into a Kind of Ferocity less apt to kindle Love than to command Respect and Awe. In modern *Europe* a fictitious Respect is paid to Women, in the ancient they possessed real Consequence and Power. The most unpolished *Germans*, according to *Tacitus*, thought that something divine dwelt in Female Minds: Women were admitted to their public Deliberations, and they did not despise their Opinions, or neglect to follow their Advice. To such a Pitch had some Branches of the *Celtæ* carried their Veneration for the Fair Sex, that, even in their Life Time, a Kind of divine Honours was paid to some distinguished Women. The ancient *Britons* were particularly fond of the Government of Women. Succession, where it was established at all, went in the Female as well as in the Male Line; and they convened with no less Ardour round the Standard of a Princess, than they followed with Eagerness their petty Kings and Chiefs to the Field. *Boadicea* is recorded in *Roman Annals* as a Queen of a warlike Spirit. She led on a great Army against the *Romans*; and in exhorting her People to behave with Courage, she observed that it was not unusual to see a *British* Army led on to Battle by a Woman; to which *Tacitus* adds his Testimony: *Solitum quidem Britannis feminarum ductu bellare*. Annal. Lib. 14. No Doubt, that Whiteness of Skin, for which the *British* Women were so remarkably distinguished, might, in some Measure, be ascribed to that moist Atmosphere, which still clothes our Fields with a Kind of perpetual Green.

After

Well-practis'd in the Chace, her clam'rous Hounds  
The bounding Roe pursu'd o'er barren Mounds ;  
540 Her Arm expert the stubborn Yew Tree bent,  
And founding on the Wind, the Arrow sent.  
Her Soul was fix'd on *Comal*, and with Sighs,  
In secret often met their conscious Eyes.  
Oft at the Chace they commun'd in the Grove,  
545 And there in private breath'd their mutual Love.

But *Grumal*, who in gloomy *Ardven* sway'd,  
Beheld, admir'd, and sought for Wife the Maid :  
He watch'd her lonely Footstep on the Heath,  
And vow'd to be unhappy *Comal*'s Death.

550 One Day fatigu'd, and lagging on the Plain,  
While hazy Mist conceal'd the Hunter-train ;  
Tir'd

After what has been said, the Reader will not be surprized at the uncommon Regard *Offian* always expresses for the Fair Sex, and the superlative Beauty with which they glow in his Descriptions,

Tir'd of the Chace, and seeking a Retreat,  
In *Ronnan's* Cave the youthful Lovers met.  
This lone Recefs young *Comal* often fought,  
555 And here the choicest of his Arms had brought ;  
Which round the Walls, in shining Order plac'd,  
The spacious Inside of the Cavern grac'd :  
Twice fifty Shields, with tough Bull-hides made strong,  
Hung up, each fasten'd on a Leather Thong ;  
560 As many Helms of Steel suspended shone,  
Lighting with glimm'ring Rays the rugged Stone.

Now had the Noon-day Beams dispers'd the Mist,  
When *Comal* rising thus the Fair address'd.  
Stay here awhile, my Love, and be a Light  
565 In *Ronnan's* Cave ; I see on *Mora's* Height  
A straggling Deer ; as soon as that is slain,  
I shall return, and join you here again.

Dark



Dark *Grumal*, said the fearful Maid, I dread ;  
His hostile Footsteps often haunt this Shade.  
570 Behind these Heaps of Armour I will stay,  
Till you return, but be not long away.

He went : The Daughter of *Conloch*, to prove  
(The fatal Spring of all their Woes) his Love ;

Her

V. 572. *The Daughter of Conloch.*] This *Conloch* was likewise Father to *Toscar*, who was Father to the celebrated *Malvina*, the Wife of *Oscar*. Particular Mention is made of this *Toscar* in the Poem entitled *Berrathon*, where he is sent with *Offian* to the Relief of *Lathmor*. *Fingal*, it seems, in his Voyage to *Lochlin*, whither he had been invited by *Starno*, as we shall see in the next Book, touched at *Berrathon*, an Island of *Scandinavia*, where he was kindly entertained by *Lathmor*, who was a Vassal of the supreme Kings of *Lochlin*. The Hospitality of *Lathmor* gained him *Fingal's* Friendship, which that Hero manifested, when dethroned and imprisoned by his own Son, he sent *Offian* and *Toscar* to punish the unnatural Behaviour of *Uthal*. *Uthal* was handsome, and much admired by the Ladies. *Ninathoma*, the Daughter of a neighbouring Prince, fell in Love and fled with him. He proved inconstant, and left her on a desert Island. From thence she was relieved by *Offian*, who, in Company with *Toscar*, landing on *Berrathon*, defeated the Forces of *Uthal*, and killed him in single Combat. *Ninathoma*, whose Love not all the ill Usage of *Uthal* could erase, died of Grief. In the mean Time *Lathmor* is restored, and *Offian* and *Toscar* return triumphant to *Fingal*.

Her snowy Sides in heavy Armour drest,  
575 And, snatching up a Shield and Spear, in Haste  
To meet her Lover took a diff'rent Road,  
And boldly tow'rds him like a Warrior strode.  
He thought it was his Foe : his Heart beat high,  
His Colour chang'd, and Darknefs dimm'd his Eye.  
580 In that ill-fated Hour, the Bow he drew,  
Swift to the Mark the Shaft unerring flew.  
*Galbina* fell. With Wildnefs in his Speed,  
He forward ran, and call'd upon the Maid ---  
He call'd again ; the loud refounding Cave  
585 Return'd her Name, but she no Answer gave.  
“ Where art thou, oh my Love !” He cried once more :  
He faw at length where, gasping in her Gore,  
She speechlefs lay, with his own cruel Dart,  
That gave the Wound, deep rooted in her Heart.  
590 “ Ah ! is it thou ?” By violent Grief fuppreft,  
Here fail'd his Voice ; he funk upon her Breaft.

By

By Chance the Hunters past that Way, and found  
The hapless Pair extended on the Ground.

Perceiving Signs of Life in *Comal* still,

595 They rais'd him up : he after walk'd the Hill,  
But always sad, and melancholy rov'd,  
Round the dark Dwelling of his best belov'd.  
The Sons of Ocean came ; the Foe he met,  
And routed drove them headlong to their Fleet.

600 For Death, not Victory, the Hero fought,  
And try'd to meet the glorious End he fought ;  
But who could make the mighty *Comal* yield ?  
At last he threw away the dark-brown Shield,  
And fought unarm'd : a wand'ring Arrow found  
605 His manly Breast, and stretch'd him on the Ground.

With

V. 603. *At last he threw away the dark-brown Shield.*] *Comal*, as we have seen, had gained a complete Victory over the Enemy, and his being afterwards slain, was entirely voluntary, and in Consequence of a determined Resolution not to survive any longer his beloved Mistress.

V. 608.

With his *Galbina* on the Coast he sleeps,  
 Fast by the Surges of the sounding Deeps :  
 Afar the Mariner beholds their Graves,  
 As swift he bounds along the northern Waves.

V. 608. *Afar the Mariner beholds their Graves.*] Though many Authors make the Age of Burning the first Æra of Time; yet certainly the earliest Manner of disposing of the dead was in the Earth; which seems to have been enjoined by God himself immediately after the Lapse of *Adam*. *Dust thou art, and into Dust shalt thou return.* Accordingly, *Gen.* Chap. XXIII. *Abraham* refused the Sepulchres of the Sons of *Heb*, and purchased from *Ephron* a Place of Burial for his Wife *Sarah*. That the *Egyptians* buried in the Earth, is manifest from their Custom of embalming the dead. Burning was first introduced to prevent the Outrages committed by Enemies on the Bodies of the slain, as is confirmed in the Instance of *Saul*, whose dead Body (being abused by the *Philistines*) was carried away by the valiant Men of *Jabesh-gilead* and burnt. Agreeable to which is the Example of *Sylla*, who ordered his Body to be burnt, lest the Cruelties he had exercised upon the Corps of *Marius* should be retaliated on his own. Some think that it was at this Time that Burning the Dead first took its Rise among the *Romans*; which is countenanced by *Pliny* (*Hist. Lib. 5.*) who asserts, “ that the Custom of Burning was not introduced, till they had discovered that their Enemies dug up and exposed the Bodies of their Soldiers.” But this is again contradicted by *Plutarch*, who tells us, that *Numa* expressly forbid them by his Testament to burn his Body. From these two Authorities therefore may be gathered, that both Customs prevailed, and that the *Romans* buried or burned their Dead, as Inclination led them. There is no Doubt but both these Customs were likewise in Use  
 among

among the Northern Nations. *Olaus Wormius* proves it from an old M. S. where one is called *Iltiid*, *i. e.* the Age of Burning, and the other *Hoieftiid*, *i. e.* the Age of Sepulchres or Hillocks. Burning, being never mentioned by *Ossian*, has no Business to be discussed in this Place. But this Note falling at the End of a Book, gives me an Opportunity to extract, from the Rev. Mr. *John Macpherson*, an Account of the Hillocks or Cairns, which seem to have been the universal Method of Burial in *Ossian's* Age and Country.

Those large Heaps of Stones which are called *Cairns* in *Scotland*, *Ireland*, and *Wales*, are very numerous in the *Higblands* and *Hebrides*. There are no less than seven such Piles within the Confines of a little Village in the Isle of *Sky*. All Cairns are not of a similar Construction. Those which depart most from the common Form are called *Barpinin*, in the Language of the Country; these resemble the Barrows of *England*. The Word *Barp* or *Barrow* is originally *Norwegian*. *Cairn* is a *British* Word, which signifies a Heap of Stones, either lying together in the greatest Confusion, or piled up in some Sort of Order. I have seen some of these Heaps that are three hundred Feet in Circumference at the Base, and about twenty Feet perpendicular in Height\*. They are formed conically, and consist of Stones of almost all Sizes, as Chance or the Materials of the Place directed. They lie generally near small Arms of the Sea which run into the Land and receive Rivers. They are always placed near the common Road, and upon rising Grounds. The Motives which induced the Builders to rear up these Piles in such Places, were the Advantage of the Stones, and a Desire of exciting the Traveller's Admiration and Devotion. Various have been the Opinions of the Learned concerning the Intention of those *Cairns*, and concerning the People by whom they were collected. Some will have

\* *Walter Harris*, Esq. *Antiq. of Ireland*, mentions some to be seen in that Country still larger than these, which measure from 10 to 18 Yards in Height, and from 77 to 180 Yards in Circumference.

them to have been made by Way of Trophies, or with a View of perpetuating the Memory of Heroes slain in Battle. Some conjecture that they were Monuments erected by way-faring Men in Honour of *Mercury*, the Protector of Travellers. Others fancy that they were Seats of Judicature for the old *Brecons*: and others are of Opinion that they were the Eminences on which our old Kings stood after their Election; so as to exhibit themselves to the Multitude. One or two Critics have imagined that they were no more than Boundaries which divided the Estate of one great Lord from that of another; and many have thought that they were intended only for Burial Places.

The last of these Opinions is undoubtedly the justest. The sepulchral Urns always found in every *Cairn* that has been hitherto examined, are sufficient to demonstrate the Truth of it. These Urns are deposited in large Stone Coffins, which lie in the Centre of the Barrow. The Coffin consists of six rude flat Stones; one in the Bottom, two on the Sides, two more in the Ends, and another larger one above. There is sometimes a Kind of Obelisk which overtops the Barrow, and stands at the Head of the Coffin. The Coffins are generally no more than six Feet long, and the Urns which they contain are half full of Ashes and Bones. The Workmanship of these Vessels is rather coarse than otherwise\*.

It

\* It is not above fifty Years since the Islanders understood that the Barrows were the Repositories of the Dead. Much about that Time a Gentleman in one of the Isles having Occasion for Stones to build a House, broke down one of these old Fabrics, and coming to the Bottom of it, near the Centre, lighted on the large flat Stone which formed the Cover of the Coffin. Upon comparing a current Tradition with the Contrivance of the Stones, and the Sound emitted by them, he immediately concluded that here was a Stone Chest which contained a Quantity of hidden Treasure. Full of this agreeable Fancy, and dreading much at the same Time that a Person of much greater Authority in the Country would infallibly deprive him of the Treasure, if the Secret should once transpire, he obliged the Workmen, by the Interposition of a most solemn Oath, to conceal the happy Discovery. After this Point was settled, and a reasonable Dividend promised to every



It is a Question whether the *Cairns* were reared by the *Norwegians* or old *Britains* of *Caledonia*: there are *Cairns* in the different Parts of the Continent of *Scotland*, particularly in the Highland Districts of the Counties of *Aberdeen* and *Inverness*, into which neither the *Norwegians* nor *Danes* ever penetrated. Besides, the Mountains of *Caernarvonshire* have many Monuments of the same Kind. It is therefore evident, that the old *Britains* erected some of these Fabrics; nor can it be affirmed that the *Norwegians* were Strangers to the same Art. We are told by *Pomponius Mela* (*de situ orb.* Lib. 3. Cap. 2.) that the *Druids* burned and interred the Bodies of their departed Friends. And Sir *James Ware* quotes a Passage from an  
ancient

one of the Workmen, the Coffin was opened with due Care: but the Treasure found in it gave very little Satisfaction, being no more than a small Quantity of Ashes contained in a yellow-coloured earthen Vessel.

At *Kil-Hillock*, or the Hill of Burial, near *Glossaugh*, in *Barryshire*, a very remarkable *Cairn* was demolished about sixteen Years ago. The Diameter was sixty Feet, the Height sixteen; formed entirely of Stones brought from the Shore, as appears by the Limpets, Muscles, and other Shells mixed with them. The Whole was covered with a Layer of Earth four Feet thick, and that finished with a very nice Coat of green Sod, inclosing the Whole. It seems to have been originally formed by making a deep Trench round the Spot, and flinging the Earth inwards: then other Materials brought to complete the Work, which must have been that of a whole Army. On breaking open this *Cairn*, on the Summit of the stony Heap beneath the Integument of Earth, was found a Stone Coffin formed of long Flags, and in it the complete Skeleton of a human Body, laid at full Length with every Bone in its proper Place: and with them a Deer's Horn, the Symbol of the favourite Amusement of the Deceased.

About seven Years ago another *Cairn* was broke open near the same Place; and in it was found another Coffin about six Feet long, with a Skeleton, an Urn, and some Charcoal: a considerable Quantity of Charcoal was also met with, intermixed every where among the Stones of the *Cairn*. By this it appears that the Mode of Interment was various at the same Period; for one of these Bodies must have been placed entire in its Cemetery, the other burnt and the Ashes collected in the Urn.



ancient Book of Canons, from which it appears that the old *Irish* buried their Dead in the same Manner.

We learn from the Epitaph of the Robber *Baliffa*, and from several Passages in other ancient Authors, that Malefactors were sometimes buried under Heaps of Stones. It is certain that the Barrows in the *Highlands* and *Isles* were intended for illustrious Persons, or those of the highest Dignity among the People. The Expence of Time and Labour, to which these huge Piles must have subjected the Builders, together with the Coffins and Urns found within them, leave no Room for a Doubt in this Matter. In one of these Barrows, which the Rev. Mr. *John Macpherson* saw himself

A third *Cairn* on the Farm of *Brankaentim*, near *Kil-Hillock*, was opened very lately; and in the Middle was found a Coffin only two Feet square, made of Flag-Stones set on their Edge, and another by Way of Cover. The Urn was seated on the Ground, filled with Ashes, and was surrounded in the Coffin with Charcoal and Bones, probably Bones belonging to the same Body, which had not been reduced to Ashes like the Contents in the Urn.

A fourth Urn was discovered in a *Cairn* on the Hill of *Dowry*, overlooking the River *Deveron* and Town of *Banff*. This was also placed in a Coffin of flat Stones, with the Mouth downwards standing on another Stone. The Urn was ornamented; but round it were placed three others, smaller and quite plain. The Contents of each were the same; Ashes, burnt Bones, Flint Arrow-Heads with almost vitrified Surfaces, and a Piece of Flint of an oval Shape flatted, two Inches long, and an Inch and a Half thick. There was also in the larger Urn and one of the lesser, a small slender Bone four Inches long, and somewhat incurvated and perforated at the thicker End: it is apparently not human; but the Animal it belonged to, and the Use, are unknown.

The Materials of the Urns appear to have been found in the Neighbourhood; and consist of a coarse Clay mixed with small Stones and Sand, and evidently have been only dried and not burnt. By the Appearance of the Inside of the larger Urn, it is probable that it was placed over the Bones while they were hot and full of Oil; the whole Inside being blackened with the Steam; and where it may have been supposed to have been in Contact with them, the Stain pervades the entire Thickness.

broke

broke open, there were four different Coffins placed at some Distance from a larger one in the Centre. Each of these contained an Urn with Ashes and some half-burnt Bones. The Coffin or Chest in the Middle was certainly the Repository of a great Chieftain or King, and those around belonged to Persons who were either his near Relations, or Heroes of a less exalted Character.

There is a proverbial Expression common in the *Highlands* and *Islands* to this Day, from which we may form a Conjecture of the Manner of erecting these Piles, and the Use for which they were intended. The Expression is, *I shall add a Stone to your Cairn*; that is to say, I shall do your Memory all the Honour in my Power, when you are no more. I shall contribute to raise your Monument. This is the Language of Petitioners, when sensible the Favours they ask cannot in all Probability be sufficiently acknowledged till after the Benefactor's Death. The religious Belief of those Times obliged every pious Traveller to add a Stone to the Pile of the Dead. The larger the Stone, the more to the Honour of the departed Spirit, which was thought to hover round his Heap, and to rejoice over the Piety of the Traveller. If the *Cairn* belonged to a Man of distinguished Merit, who died in the Cause of his Tribe, or was reared in Memory of a famous Bard, the whole Community came on appointed Days to increase the Pile, and send it down with Lustre to Posterity. Hence we may account for the Bulk of those little Hills, though reared in Times when Carriages and mechanical Engines of all Kinds were little known.



F I N G A L,

A N

E P I C P O E M

I N

S I X B O O K S.

B O O K III.

# T H E

## A R G U M E N T.

**CARRIL**, at the Request of *Cuthullin*, relates the Actions of *Fingal* in *Lochlin*, and the Death of *Agandecca*. He had scarce finished, when *Calmar* came wounded from the Field, and told them of *Swaran's* Design to surprize the Remains of the *Irisb* Army. He himself proposes to withstand the Enemy, in a narrow Pass, till his Countrymen should make good their Retreat. *Cuthullin* resolves to accompany *Calmar*, and orders *Carril* to carry off the few that remained of the *Irisb*. Morning comes. The Ships of the *Caledonians* appearing, *Swaran* gives over the Pursuit, and returns to oppose *Fingal*. *Cuthullin* retires to the Cave of *Tura*. *Fingal* engages the Enemy, and puts them to Flight; but Night coming on, makes the Victory not decisive. The King, who had observed the gallant Behaviour of *Oscar*, gives him Advice concerning his Conduct in Peace and War; this introduces the Epifode of *Fainafollis*. *Fillan* and *Oscar* are then sent to observe the Motions of the Enemy by Night. *Gaul* desires the Command of the Army in the next Battle, and is promised to have it. Some general Reflections of the Poet close the Third Day.

THE Action of this Book opens towards the Middle of the Second Night, and closes with the Night of the Third Day. The Scene lies on the Side of *Cromla*, the Sea Shore, and the Heath of *Lena*.

F I N G A L,

A N

E P I C P O E M.

B O O K III.

**S**O *Carril* sung where roar'd the Mountain Stream,  
And thus the Chief in Raptures prais'd his Theme.  
Instructive Bard, delightful are thy Rhymes,  
And lovely found the Tales of other Times !

5 Not half so pleasant to the ravish'd View,  
Appears the Mountain bright with Morning Dew,

Its

V. 5. *Not half so pleasant to the ravish'd View, &c.*] A poetical Simile  
always supposes two Objects brought together, between which there is some  
X near

Its blushing Side when early Sun-beams streak,

And blue beneath extends the glassy Lake.

The Eye may Pleasure in such Prospects find,

10 But Songs like yours with Transports fill the Mind.

Oh

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 likewise 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 in the present Comparison, a Hill glistening with Dew, as soon as the Morning Sun first glances upon it, with a smooth Lake winding about the Foot of it, is a Landscape both extremely picturesque in itself, and well suited to give the same Pleasure to the Eye, as the Incidents of a pathetic Story do to the Mind. 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.



Oh *Carril*! raise again thy Voice, and sing  
The Verse you made in Praise of *Morven*'s King,  
In *Tura*'s Halls of Joy, when at the Feast,  
And that illustrious Hero was our Guest ;  
15 Who at his Father's Deeds seem'd all on Fire,  
When in their Praise you swept the tuneful Wire.

Thus *Carril* sung --- *Fingal*, that Man divine !  
In martial Perils soon began to shine ;  
And seem'd a beardless Youth, when fir'd by Love  
20 He first with *Lochlin*'s Sons in Battle strove.  
The Fair with Smiles admir'd his ruddy Charms,  
But he was strong as *Lora*'s Stream in Arms.

Loud

V. 13. *In Tura's Halls of Joy.*] *Tura* was a Castle on the Coast of *Ulster*, where *Cuthullin* dwelt, before he undertook the Management of the Affairs of *Ireland*, in the Minority of *Cormac* ; and from this Place *Cuthullin* is sometimes called the King of *Tura*. 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

Loud as the Sound a thousand Waters yield,  
His bold Companions pour'd along the Field ;  
25 They took in Fight the Monarch of the Main,  
But to his Ships restor'd him safe again.  
The haughty King, who could not brook this Fall,  
Resolv'd to wreak his Vengeance on *Fingal* :  
(For none, before he met that Son of Fame,  
30 The Strength of mighty *Starno* overcame)  
But finding open Force would not succeed,  
He doom'd by Treachery the Youth should bleed.

In *Scandinavia's* Hall of Shells arriv'd ;  
The Place, and secret Manner there contriv'd  
35 To act this horrid Deed, he *Snivan* calls ;  
(An aged Priest, who round the lonely Walls

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 the Purpose in the Beginning of the present Book.

Of *Loda's* Circle sung, and to whose Pray'r  
 The Stone of Pow'r has often lent an Ear,  
 Revers'd the Fate of Armies in the Field,  
 40 And made the Mighty to the Weaker yield.)

Go,

V. 36. *An aged Priest, &c.*] This Passage alludes to the Religion of *Lochlin*: the Singing round the Circle of *Loda* or *Odin*, means the Incantations used in their superstitious Worship; and the Stone of Power here mentioned, must have been the Image of the Deity. As the religious Rites of the *Scandinavians* differed widely from those of the *Celts*, so did likewise their Notions of a future State. The *Valballa* was the Receptacle of Felicity which received the Souls of the *Scandinavians* at the Hour of Death. This happy Mansion was dignified with many Names expressive of its Beauty, Magnificence, and Splendour. It was called the Dwelling of the Gods, the Residence of the *Æsæ*, the Palace of Friends, the Place of Gladness, the World of Joy. Though the Souls of Men were admitted into the *Valballa*, it was reckoned a Place of more Dignity than the other Mansions in Heaven which were appropriated to the inferior Gods. The *Alfheimur*, or World of Spirits, was less splendid; *Breiddablic* yielded to it in Beauty; and though the Walls of *Glitner* and its Pillars were of solid Gold, it was inferior in Magnificence. *Kiminbiorg* stood, as the farthest distant, at the End of the heavenly Bridge, where *Bifrosta*, or the Rainbow, touches the Verge of the Sky. *Odin* himself presided in the *Valballa*. An inexhaustible wild Boar, which, though boiled every Morning for Dinner, remained at Night entire, supplied his Table. Ale, the favourite Beverage of the North, went round in the Skulls of the Enemies of his Followers and Friends; the God himself being only indulged with the Juice of the Grape. Though *Odin* was well supplied with Wine, he  
 partook

Go, says the King, to where the Billows roar  
On defart *Ardven's* rock-surrounded Shore.  
And tell *Fingal* (in Strength and manly Grace  
Surpassing all the Youth of *Morven's* Race)

I will

partook not of the rest of the Feast. Two Wolves, which stood by his Side, dispatched his Share of the Lard of the Boar. The Heroes, in the Order of the Time of their Admission, sat around a Table in his Presence. They drank with Conviviality and Joy, Ale of the best Kind, and the strongest Mead. The latter was produced by the Goat *Hiedrun*, which stood above the *Valkalla*, fed on the Leaves of the celebrated Tree called *Lerader*, and from her Udder supplied every Day a Quantity sufficient for all the Heroes. In this State of daily Festivity, the Warriors were served at Table by beautiful Virgins called *Valkyr*. But the Happiness derived by the Friends of *Odin* from these young Damsels, was not altogether confined to their Ministration at the Feast. War and Arms, which were the Delight of the Northern Nations in this Life, continued to be their Amusements in another World. Battle was the daily Pastime, Slaughter itself the Recreation of the Blessed. "A Cock, with a Crest of Gold," says the *Volupsa*, "crows every Morning in the Presence of the Gods. He awakes the Heroes to Battle before *Odin* the Father of Armies." They rush armed and clothed to the Field, and slay one another with mutual Wounds. These Deaths however are only temporary. The Power of *Odin* revives the Slain. At the Approach of Dinner, they start up as if nothing had happened, ride into the *Valkalla*, sit down together in the most friendly Manner, and indulge themselves with copious Draughts of Mead and Beer. ----- These were the Joys which the *Scandinavians* provided for departed Souls, in the intermediate Time between Death and the Twilight of the Gods.

- 45 I will on him the loveliest Maid bestow,  
That ever yet has heav'd a Breast of Snow.  
Her Arms are whiter than the Foam that flows  
On troubled Ocean when a Tempest blows ;  
To ev'ry Charm of Person there is join'd
- 50 A noble Soul superior to her Kind.  
If these Accomplishments the Prince can please,  
Let him to wed her speedy cross the Seas,  
And bring along the bravest of his Knights,  
To be Spectators of the nuptial Rites.
- 55 To lofty *Selma Snivan* pass'd the Main :  
The fair-hair'd Hero, with a chosen Train,  
For *Lochlin* sails ; his Soul transported leaps,  
With eager Joy, as swift he cleaves the Deeps.

The

V. 57. *For Lochlin sails.*] The Navigation of the ancient *British* Nations was despicable, if compared with the Improvements of modern Times. They, however, ventured into the Ocean (which is more than the more polished

The dark-brown *Starno* (who with outward Smiles  
60 Of seeming Friendship cloak'd his secret Wiles)  
At his Arrival took him by the Hand,  
And said, Thrice welcome to our woody Land :  
And ye his brave Companions welcome too !  
You all shall meet with every Honour due :

Three

polished Nations, subsisting in those Days, durst have done) in small Craft of rude Construction, which they managed with great Dexterity. The Keels and Kelsons of their Long-boats, for their Vessels deserved not the Name of Ships, were formed of slight Materials: the Hull was made of Wicker covered with raw Hides. Each End of the Vessel terminated in a sharp Beak, and it was rowed indiscriminately either Way. They used Oars for the most Part, though they were not unacquainted with the Sail; and they skimmed along the Water with amazing Facility and Expedition. The Size of those Vessels must have been greater than is generally supposed, for the *Saxon* Auxiliaries of *Vortigern* transported themselves in three of them from *Germany* to *Britain*; and as it would have been otherwise impossible for them to live at Sea, it is probable some of those Boats were accommodated with slight Decks. It is highly probable that the Northern Inhabitants of *Europe* sailed, in a very early Period, in Vessels of a larger Size and better Construction than those we have been here describing. The *Siciones*, or ancient *Scandinavians*, had their Fleets in the Days of *Tacitus*; and before the Time of the elder *Pliny*, the Northern Nations not only ventured into the tempestuous Seas of *Norway*, but even passed over into *Thule*, which the Learned suppose to be the same with the modern

65 Three Days of Rest shall recreate your Souls,  
 With splendid Banquets, and with flowing Bowls ;  
 When these are past, you shall as many more,  
 With Hound and Horn pursue the tusky Boar ;  
 That blaz'd abroad, the youthful Stranger's Fame,  
 70 May recommend him to the Fair's Esteem.

The fraudulent King, who with this Welcome kind,  
 Conceal'd the mighty Mischief he design'd,  
 A sumptuous Banquet order'd in the Hall,  
 And there perfidiously had murder'd all,

Had

modern *Iceland*. These Voyages could not have been performed in open Boats, nor in Hulls of Wicker covered with raw Hides. The Art of Ship-building, though perhaps in its rudest State, was known in the North, when the first feeble Light of History rose on its Nations. Men who sailed to *Thule* could scarcely be unacquainted with *Britain*; and had the Inhabitants of the latter neglected an Art which their maritime Situation must have naturally suggested to them, they must have certainly adopted it from the *Scandinavians*. Rivers, narrow Arms of the Sea, even the *British* and *Irish* Channels might be navigated in open Skiffs by the Inhabitants of the Western Shores of *Britain*; but those on the *German* Ocean, may be supposed to have known as much of Navigation as the Natives of the opposite Continent.



75 Had not *Fingal* (who *Starno's* Projects fear'd)  
 In glitt'ring Arms of Steel, kept on his Guard.  
 Th' Assassins disconcerted saw dismay'd,  
 Nor durst attempt their meditated Deed,  
 But daunted in the Hero's Presence shook  
 80 With inward Awe, and even fled his Look.

Now with the sprightly Voice of Music rung  
 The gilded Roofs, the Harps of Joy are strung.

Some

V. 81. *Now with the sprightly Voice of Music rung, &c.*] The *Scandinavians* had their Bards, who were called *Scalds*, or *Scalders*. The Propensity of that People to War, the Love of Glory, their undaunted Courage, their great Exploits, naturally produced elevated Sentiments, and an elevated Tone of Language, both of which were displayed in celebrating heroic Deeds. The Spirit and Strain of their Poetry appears in the *Epicedium*, or Funeral Song, composed by *Regner Lodbrog*. *Regner Lodbrog* was King of *Denmark* in the Eighth Century; he was famous for his Wars and Victories, and at the same Time an eminent *Scalder* or Poet. It was his Misfortune to fall at last into the Hands of one of his inveterate Enemies, by whom he was 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 Enfibus*,

Some sing of Battles on the sanguine Plain,  
Some of the Pains of Love, a softer Strain ;

Till

*Enfibus*, We have fought with our Swords. This curious Monument of true Gothic Poetry is preserved by *Olaus Wormius*, in his Book *de Literatura Runica*. *Saxo Grammaticus*, a Danish Historian, informs us, that a great many of these Songs, containing the ancient traditionary Stories of the Country, were found engraved 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 paraphrastical, 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. The sacred Book of the Scandinavians, termed *Edda*, thus accounts for the Origin of Poetry. "The Gods formed *Cuafer*, who traversed the Earth, teaching Wisdom to Men. He was treacherously slain by two Dwarfs, who, mixing Honey with his Blood, composed a Liquor that renders all who drink of it Poets. These Dwarfs having incurred the Repentment of a certain Giant, were exposed by him upon a Rock, surrounded on all Sides with the Sea. They gave for their Ransom the said Liquor, which the Giant delivered to his Daughter *Gunloda*. The precious Potion was eagerly sought for by the Gods; but how were they to come at it? *Odin*, in the Shape of a Worm, crept through a Crevice into the Cavern where the Liquor was concealed. Then resuming his natural Shape, and obtaining *Gunloda*'s Consent to take three Draughts, he sucked up the Whole; and, transforming himself into an Eagle, flew away to *Asgard*. The Giant, who was a Magician, flew with all Speed after *Odin*, and came up with him near the Gate of *Asgard*. The Gods issued out of their Palaces to assist their Master; and presented to him all the Pitchers they could lay Hands on, which he instantly filled with the precious Liquor. But in the

85 Till *Ullin*, the sweet Voice of *Cona*'s Hill,  
 The Subject varying, with superior Skill,  
 To *Agandecca*'s Praises sweeps the Strings,  
 And *Morven*'s high-descended Chief, who springs  
 From a long Race of famous ancient Kings.

Him

Hurry of discharging his Load, *Odin* poured only Part of the Liquor through his Beak, the rest being emitted through a less pure Vent. The former is bestowed by the Gods upon good Poets, to inspire them with divine Enthusiasm. The latter, which is in much greater Plenty, is bestowed liberally on all who apply for it; by which Means the World is pestered with an endless Quantity of wretched Verses."

V. 85. *Till Ullin*, &c.] *Offian* here, by his artful Praise of *Ullin*, would plainly give the Preference to the Bards and Poetry of his own Country. Nor seems his Partiality unjust; for though the *Scandinavian* War-Songs have a peculiar Energy, yet they are wild, harsh, and irregular, breathing the most ferocious Spirit. But when we open the Works of *Offian*, 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 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 *Offian*, it is like passing from a savage Desert, into a fertile, and cultivated Country.

Olaus

90 Him *Starno's* lovely Daughter overheard,  
 And from her Hall of secret Sighs repair'd.

In

*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 are no fewer than 136 different Kinds of Measure or Verse used in their *Vyses*, the Name which their Songs go by; and though we are accustomed to 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* 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, nor 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 likewise 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*

In all the Light of blooming Youth she came,  
 Bright as the rising Moon's refulgent Beam,  
 When first emerging from the Clouds of Night,  
 95 She shines serene, and blesses Man with Light.

No

*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 et 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 6th Volume of Miscellany Poems, published by Mr. Dryden.

V. 92. *In all the Light of blooming Youth she came, &c.*] *Offian'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. His elegant Description here of *Agandecca*, has the Tenderness of *Tibullus* united with the Majesty of *Virgil*. 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

No less resplendent, with an easy Grace,  
The Virgin ent'ring brighten'd all the Place ;  
And pass'd with Dignity of Gait along,  
As if her Steps kept Measure to the Song.  
100 She saw the Youth who to her Love aspir'd,  
She saw, and much his princely Mien admir'd.  
Involuntary on him roll'd her Eyes,  
Her snowy Bosom rose with frequent Sighs,  
And often in her secret Soul express'd  
105 Her Approbation of the Stranger Guest.

The third expected Morn, now rising bright,  
Shed on the Wood of Boars the roseate Light.

When

may be weakened by being diffuse, yet notwithstanding, may be beautiful still. Whereas with respect to grand, solemn, and pathetic Subjects, which are *Offian'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 it is far more deeply impressed by one strong and ardent Image, than by the anxious Minuteness of laboured Illustration.

V. 106.



When dark-brow'd *Starno* issu'd to the Fields,  
 Attended by his Guest the King of Shields :

- 110 There, till the Sun had measur'd half his Race,  
 And gain'd the Zenith, they pursu'd the Chace.  
*Fingál*, whose Jav'lin stream'd with savage Blood,  
 Was on the Point of ent'ring *Gormal's* Wood ;  
 When *Agandecca*, overwhelm'd with Grief,  
 115 Approach'd, and thus forewarn'd the vent'rous Chief.

Oh

V. 106. *The third expected Morn, now rising bright.*] The *Edda*, mentioned above, accounts thus for the Succession of Day and Night. " The Giant *Nor* had a Daughter named *Night*, of a dark Complexion. She was wedded to *Daglingar*, of the Family of the Gods. They had a Male Child, which they named *Day*, beautiful and shining like all his Father's Family. The Universal Father took *Night* and *Day*, placed them in Heaven, and gave them two Horses and two Cars, that they might travel round the World, the one after the other. *Night* goes first, upon her Horse named *Reinfaxe* (frosty Mane), who moistens the Earth with the Foam that drops from his Bit, which is the Dew. The Horse belonging to *Day* is named *Skinfaxe* (shining Mane), who by his radiant Mane illuminates the Air and the Earth."

V. 113. *Gormal's Wood.*] *Gormal* is the Name of a Hill in *Lochlin*, in the Neighbourhood of *Starno's* Palace.



Oh high-descended King of Hills ! beware,  
For *Starno's* Heart of Pride is not sincere :  
He bears thee in his Mind a deadly Hate,  
And, eager to revenge his late Defeat,  
120 Has plac'd his bravest Chiefs in Ambuscade,  
To set upon you in yon gloomy Shade.  
Tempt not too near the formidable Band,  
And ah ! protect me from my Father's Hand,  
Or, in th' ungovern'd Madness of his Ire,  
125 For saving yours, he will my Life require.  
These Words, which shortly prov'd no groundless  
Fears,  
The Virgin utter'd with a Flood of Tears.  
But young *Fingal*, not to be terrified,  
Went boldly on, his Heroes at his Side.  
130 Within the Wood the Sons of Death he found ;  
He fought, they fell, and *Gormal* echo'd round.

- Scar'd by the Din, and Thunder of the Fight,  
The Hunter Train precipitate their Flight,  
And prefs in Crowds to gain the Palace Gates ;  
135 Here their Arrival angry *Starno* waits :  
His knitted Brows like low'ring Clouds appear,  
His fiery Eyes like nightly Meteors glare.  
Let *Agandecca*, he exclaims, be fought,  
And to the Presence of her Lover brought ;  
140 His Hands are purpled with my People's Blood ---  
This was her secret Counsel in the Wood.

- The weeping Fair is led before the King ;  
Her Locks, the Colour of the Raven's Wing,  
Disorder'd flow : like Foam on *Lubar's* Waves,  
145 With crowded Sighs her snowy Bosom heaves.  
Yet the Barbarian, dead to Nature's Feel,  
His Dagger drew, and pierc'd her Side with Steel.

Shrieking

Shrieking she fell --- So from the rugged Brow  
Of lofty *Ronan* slides a Wreath of Snow,  
150 When white with Frost appear the Forest Boughs,  
And deep'ning through the Vale the Echo goes.

*Fingal* that Instant ey'd his Men, who drew  
Their shining Swords, and shouting forward flew.  
Once more the dismal Noise of Battle spread,  
155 Nor ceas'd till *Lochlin* vanquish'd died or fled.

The

V. 152. *Fingal that Instant ey'd his Men.*] *Fingal* here making a Sign to his Men to fall upon the Enemy, with a sudden Glance of his Eyes, is a very natural and lively Representation of one struck dumb, as it were, with the united Passions of Surprise, Grief, Rage, and Resentment. We could wish he had, and indeed wonder he did not prevent *Agandecca* from falling into the Hands of her inhuman Father. *Ossian*, after his usual Manner, is so concise in the Relation of this Transaction, that nothing certain can be gathered from it; unless by saying, that *the Youth went on with Unconcern*, after the Princess had warned him of his imminent Danger, the Poet would intimate, that carried on by the Ardour of Youth, he had acted rashly. But however faulty *Fingal* may have been in that Respect, it is most likely he thought it impossible that *Starno* could be so barbarous, as to imbrue his Hands in the Blood of his own Child; and this alone will be sufficient to exculpate him on this Occasion.

The breathless Maid then closing in his Ship,  
To *Ardven* he convey'd her o'er the Deep ;  
And there interr'd, the roaring Surges come,  
And round the Tomb of *Agandecca* foam.

- 160 So *Carril* sung, who had no sooner done,  
Than *Erin's* Chief delighted thus begun.  
Blest be her Soul ! May Blessings too, O Bard !  
The heav'nly Sweetness of thy Voice reward.  
What more than mortal Strength his Arm endu'd,  
165 Who almost singly a whole Host subdu'd ?  
And now again to Vengeance urg'd, his Hand  
Will drench with *Lochlin's* Blood a foreign Land.  
Show thy bright Face, fair Daughter of the Night,  
Dart from between the Clouds thy silver Light ;  
170 And guide his white-sail'd Ships with friendly Ray,  
Expos'd to all the Perils of the Sea :

And

And if some Spirit, sporting in his Blasts,  
Directs yon low-hung Cloud which Heav'n o'ercasts;  
Refrain from Tempests ; and his Vessels steer  
175 From latent Rocks, thou Rider of the Air !

Thus,

V. 172. *And if some Spirit, &c.*] This is the only Passage in the Poem that has the Appearance of Religion. But *Cuthbullin's* Apostrophe to this Spirit is accompanied with a Doubt ; so that it is not easy to determine whether the Hero meant a Superior Being, or the Ghosts of deceased Warriors, who were supposed, in those Times, to rule the Storms, and transport themselves in a Gust of Wind from one Country to another. The latter seems the most probable. Notwithstanding the poetical Advantages of *Offian's* Machinery, we must 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 *Offian's* Poetry, is an obvious 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.

Thus, where the Mountain Stream a Passage forc'd  
Between two Rocks, the mournful Chiefs discours'd.  
When *Calmar* up the Hill (by all thought dead)  
Ascending slow approach'd them through the Shade.  
180 Spent with the Wounds he had receiv'd in Fight,  
Against his bending Spear he lean'd his Weight.

O Son of *Matba*, (*Connal* joyful cries)  
185 Thrice welcome to thy Friends desiring Eyes!  
From whence that plaintive Groan? Then heave the Breast  
Of him who never yet has Fear express'd?

And never, Warrior of the pointed Spear!  
Shall he debase his former Deeds by Fear.  
190 My kindled Soul the Sight of Danger warms,  
It leaps exulting at the Noise of Arms.  
I love the Fight, my Fathers did the same,  
They never trembled in the Field of Fame.

Know

Know my Progenitors their Lineage trace,  
 195 As high as *Cormar*, Author of the Race ;  
 Who bounding o'er the Billows, fearless past  
 The roughest Seas, Companion of the Blast.  
 A Spirit once embroil'd the Night ; around  
 The Waves in Mountains roll, the Rocks resound :  
 200 Clouds heap'd on Clouds are blown along the Sky,  
 On Wings of Fire the vivid Lightnings fly.  
 Astonish'd at the wild tumultuous Roar  
 Of warring Elements, he made to Shore ;

But

V. 198. *A Spirit once embroil'd the Night, &c.*] Besides Ghosts, or Spirits of departed Men, we find in *Offian* some Instances of other Kinds of Machinery. Spirits of a superior Nature to Ghosts are sometimes alluded to, which have Power to call forth Winds and Storms ; to overturn Forests, and to embroil the Deeps, as in this Place. The Fiction here introduced is calculated to aggrandize the Ancestors of *Calmar*, which it does by showing his Forefather *Cormar*'s Contempt of Danger ; nor is that Hero's wounding the Spirit so unnatural or so wild a Fiction as might be at first imagined, since, according to the Notions of those Times, supernatural Beings were material, and consequently vulnerable. There is only one more Instance of this Kind to be found in the Works of *Offian*, and that is the Engagement of *Fingal* with the Spirit of *Loda* in *Carrec-thura*.

I forbear



But scarce tow'rds Land the Ship began to steer,  
205 Than blushing at the Thought that he could fear,  
He chang'd again his Course, resolv'd to find  
Amidst his Storms the Spirit of the Wind.  
Where white with Foam ran high the bellowing Tide,  
Three hardy Youths the tilting Vessel guide ;  
210 While Sword in Hand advent'rous *Cormar* stood,  
Observing as it pass'd the low-hung Cloud ;  
Which one Hand seizing by the curling Head,  
He with the other rais'd the daring Blade,

And

I forbear to transcribe the Passage, as it must have drawn the Attention of every one who has read that Poem. The undaunted Courage of *Fingal*, opposed to the Terrors of the *Scandinavian* God ; the Appearance and Speech of that awful Spirit, the Wound which he receives, and the Shriek which he sends, “ 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. As for the Fiction itself, there are poetical Precedents full as extravagant ; for if *Homer* be forgiven for making *Diomed* attack and wound in Battle, the Gods whom that Chief himself worshipped, *Offian* surely is pardonable for making his Hero superior to the God of a foreign Territory.

And fought its Womb. --- The Spirit put to Flight,  
 215 Shot up in Air, and peaceful left the Night.  
 The Moon look'd forth, the Stars return'd again,  
 And *Cormar* unmolested plough'd the Main.  
 Such was the Father of our ancient Line,  
 Like him in Peril *Calmar* loves to shine :  
 220 Who dares in Danger, always best succeeds,  
 For Danger from the lifted Sword recedes.  
 I say not this our Heroes to upbraid,  
 What Courage could has bravely been essay'd.  
 Retire then now from *Lena's* fatal Plain,  
 225 And sacrifice no more of Blood in vain :

But

V. 224. *Retire then now, &c.*] *Calmar*, who was the chief Promoter of the War, sensible at length of the ill Consequence of such Measures, advises his Countrymen to retire, although he himself resolv'd not to survive the public Calamities, of which he had been the principal Occasion. He seems to have been a Man of a high Spirit, and warmly attached to the Interests of *Cormac*; the more to be wondered at, as he was descended of the *Fir-bolg*, the declared Enemies of the Posterity of *Conar*. *Calmar* was the only Chief of that Race of People, who joined the *Caël*, or *Irish Caledonians*, during the Invasion of *Swaran*. Upon which Account he

A a

was

- But save the Relicks of the vanquish'd Bands,  
To join the King of *Morven* when he lands.  
I heard the clashing Arms of *Lochlin's* Pow'rs !  
They were this Way advancing from the Shores.
- 230 Consult your Safety, while I singly wait  
The Foe's Approach, and cover your Retreat ;  
My Voice shall thunder through the Shades of Night,  
As if an Army boldly stood the Fight.  
But, *Semo's* Son ! when *Calmar* is a Ghost,
- 235 Inter his lifeless Body on the Coast ;  
And when *Fingal* has *Swaran* overcome,  
Erect upon the Heath his verdant Tomb,

By

was mortally hated by the *Fir-bolg*. So much so, that *Borbar-Duthul*, the Father of the famous *Catmor*, feasted three Days, when informed of his Death ; and when the Spear was brought to him, with which, it was pretended, *Calmar* had been killed, he took a savage Satisfaction in feeling it often with his Hand ; for the old Man's Eye-Sight had failed. This indecent Joy for the Death of a Foe, however shocking to the Humanity of our Times, is well suited with that Spirit of Revenge, which subsisted universally in every Country where the feudal System was established.

By some moss-cover'd Stone, which may proclaim  
To Generations yet unborn his Name.

240 *Alcletha* shall rejoice to see her Son  
Recorded, for asserting *Cormac's* Throne,  
By everlasting Monuments of Stone.

Thus he; and *Erin's* gallant Chief replied :  
*Cutbullin* will with thee the War divide ;

Like

V. 240. *Alcletha shall rejoice, &c.*] *Alcletha* (decaying Beauty) the Mother of *Calmar*. Her Lamentation over him is introduced in the Poem concerning the Death of *Cutbullin*.

V. 244. *Cutbullin will with thee the War divide.*] The Character of *Cutbullin* is admirably sustained. Ever fond of Glory, he seems always ready to undertake the most hazardous Adventures. The more arduous, the more worthy he deems it to be attempted. *Calmar* no sooner proposes to oppose the Enemy's Army alone, than *Cutbullin*, as if jealous any one should signalize his Courage in a desperate Attempt without him, insists upon being a Partner in the Danger. He might probably be conscious to himself, that, by following *Calmar's* Advice, he had been the Cause of the Army's present Distress, and that he could not therefore do less than venture his Life with the other, to extricate it if possible.

245 Like *Matba's* Son his Soul in Danger grows,  
He loves the Fight when many are the Foes.  
Let *Connal* then, and *Carril* lead the Host,  
From *Lena's* Heath, to some securer Post.  
But when the Strife is over, come and look  
250 For our pale Bodies near this lonely Oak,  
Where Nature forms a Pass, for few to stand  
The fierce Encounter of a num'rous Band.  
Here we can check a-while the hostile Train,  
Though from an iron Cloud their Arrows rain.

O Son

V. 251. *Where Nature forms a Pass, &c.*] However *Offian* exalts the Courage and Intrepidity of his Heroes, he is always careful to adhere strictly to the Rules of Probability. He does not make *Cutbullin* and *Calmar* engage the Enemy in open Field, which would have been rash and presumptuous to the highest Degree. From *Cutbullin's* own Words it plainly appears, that they only proposed to check their March in some narrow Pass, till their Friends should have Time to get off; a Thing not only feasible, but likewise recorded in authentic History as performed, not only by a Handful of Men, but even a single Man, as by *Cocles*, who is said to have stopped the whole Army of *Perfenna*, while his Party cut down the *Sublician* Bridge.

- 255 O Son of *Fili* ! swifter than the Breath  
Of airy Spirits, fly o'er *Lena's* Heath.  
Inform *Fingal*, the Monarch of the Waves  
Will *Erin* overpow'r and make them Slaves,  
Unless he hastens forward to their Aid ;
- 260 In him our last and only Hope is laid !  
Oh that he set the Fields of Fight on Flame,  
Bright as the welcome Sun's returning Beam,  
When after wintry Storms, and Floods of Rain,  
He shines upon the Hills of Grass serene.
- 265 While thus they argu'd, the approaching Day  
Dawn'd in the East, and *Gromla's* Head look'd gray.  
The *Scandinavians*, favour'd by the Night,  
Had gain'd th' Ascent, and now advanc'd in Sight.  
When *Matba's* Son, recruiting all his Force,
- 270 Rose in his kindled Soul to check their Course :

But

But pale and languid look'd the Warrior's Face,  
 His Father's Spear could scarce support his Pace ;  
 (The Spear from *Lara's* Hall the Hero bore,  
 While piercing Grief his Mother's Bosom tore.)  
 275 Till faint, and quite deserted by his Strength,  
 He stopp'd ; and reeling, slowly sunk at length.  
 So falls an Oak, on *Cona's* silent Field,  
 Through Time decay'd ; to Time what must not yield ?

The blue-ey'd Chief of *Erin* yet remains,  
 280 And the whole Weight of War unmov'd sustains ;  
 As some firm Rock, amidst the sandy Bay,  
 Expos'd to all the Fury of the Sea ;

When

V. 281. *As some firm Rock, &c.]* Homer, in the 15th Book of the Iliad, has this same Comparison, where the Grecian Phalanx, battered on every Side, resists the repeated Attacks of  *Hector*  and his  *Trojans* .

Ἡὐτε πέτρῃ

V. 618.

Ἥλαστος, μεγάλη, πολλῆς ἀλὸς ἐγγὺς εὐρύτα·

Ἥτε μένει λιγέων ἀνέμων λαίφηρα κέλευθα,

Κύματά τε τρῶσεντα, τα τε προσερέγεται αὐτήν·

So



When mountain-high the rolling Billows come,  
 And dashing on its Sides, eject their Foam :  
 285 Loud roars the Tempest from the vast Profound ;  
 The neighb'ring Hills along the Coast resound. .  
 So stands the Chief, a Man against a Host,  
 Whom not an Army can expel his Post.

Now

So some tall Rock o'erhangs the hoary Main,  
 By Winds assail'd, by Billows beat in vain,  
 Unmov'd it hears above, the Tempests blow,  
 And sees the wat'ry Mountain break below.

POPE.

*Virgil* has imitated this in the 10th Book of the *Æneis*, where *Mezentius*, assaulted by his *Tuscan* Subjects, is represented thus.

*Ille velut rupes vastum quæ prodit in æquor,  
 Obvia ventorum furiis, expositaque ponto,  
 Vim cunctam, atque minas perfert cælique marisque,  
 Ipsa immota manens.*

He, like a solid Rock by Seas inclos'd,  
 To raging Winds and roaring Waves oppos'd ;  
 From his proud Summit looking down, disdains  
 Their empty Menace, and unmov'd remains.

DRYDEN,

There

Now from the early Mist the Seas exhale,  
 290 Appear'd the *Caledonians* under Sail :  
 Like Groves in Clouds stand thick their nodding Masts,  
 With Canvass Wings extended to the Blasts.  
 When *Swaran* saw them bearing in from Sea,  
 He ceas'd th' Assault, and call'd his Pow'rs away.

As

There is likewise a beautiful Comparison of this Kind in the 7th Book, where old *Latinus* is described beset by his People, who are urgent and clamorous for a War with the *Trojans*.

*Ille, velut pelagi rupes, immota resistit :  
 Ut pelagi rupes, magno veniente fragore,  
 Quæ sese, multis circumlatrantibus undis,  
 Mole tenet : scopoli nequicquam et spumea circum  
 Saxa fremunt, laterique illisa refunditur alga.*

But like a Rock unmov'd, a Rock that braves  
 The raging Tempest and the rising Waves,  
 Propp'd on himself he stands: his solid Sides  
 Wash off the Sea-Weeds, and the sounding Tides.

DRYDEN.

V. 293. *When Swaran saw them bearing in from Sea, &c.*] The unexpected Manner in which the Poet extricates *Cutbullin*, by the sudden Appearance of the *Caledonian Fleet*, is more natural and pleasing, than if the Interposition

295 As through the hundred Isles of *Inifore*,

The roaring Tides retreating leave the Shore ;

So

Interposition of some Deity had been employed on the Occasion. It was the constant Practice of the ancient *Highland* Bards never to mention Religion in their profane Poetry, much less to bring any heavenly Assistance to the Support of their Heroes : For that Race of Men, says Mr. *Macpherson*, carried the Notions of martial Honour to an extravagant Pitch. Any Aid given to their Heroes in Battle, was thought to derogate from their Fame ; and the Glory of the Action was immediately transferred to him that had given the Aid. *Homer*, by a contrary Conduct, reduces his Heroes to be little better than Puppets. Not one of them performs any Action of *Eclat*, but with the Assistance of some Deity : even *Achilles* himself is every where aided by superior Powers. It is *Jupiter* who inspires *Heſtor* with Boldness to perform the illustrious Actions that are so finely described in the 15th Book ; and it is *Jupiter* who, changing Sides, fills his Heart with Dismay. *Glaucus*, desperately wounded, supplicates *Apollo*, is miraculously healed, and returns to the Battle perfectly sound. *Heſtor*, struck to the Ground with a Stone, and at the Point of giving up the Ghost, is cured by *Apollo*, and sent back to the Battle with redoubled Vigour. No one can be so blind as not to perceive the bad Tendency of such Machinery \*. Notwithstanding therefore all the Pains which the Critics have taken to justify the Gods of *Homer*, and in spite of the Magnificence and Sublimity with which the Poet has described their Councils and their Conduct ; we must think, upon the Whole, they served only to outrage Probability ; to detract from the principal Characters of the Poem ; to disgrace the Religion of *Greece* ; and corrupt the Morals of Mankind.

\* See *Critical Review* for December 1761. No. 71.

So vast, immense and loud descend the Foe,  
 To meet the King of desert Hills below.  
 But bending, weeping, slow, depress'd in Mind,  
 300 And dragging his long Lance on Earth behind,  
 The Son of *Semo* mov'd from where he stood,  
 And sunk disconsolate in *Cromla's* Wood.  
 Asham'd at his Defeat, he would not join  
 The King of *Morven* (who had seen him shine

In

Though the Gods of *Virgil* avoid squabbling in the same indecent Manner they do in *Homer*, yet they interfere too much with the Action of the Poem. A Pilot, spent with watching, cannot fall asleep and drop into the Sea by natural Means. *Aeneas* cannot escape unhurt in Battle, unless *Venus* is at Hand to turn aside the Darts that are aimed at him. But what principally lets down the Heroes of the *Aeneis*, is, that *Aeneas*, the Hero of it, was only a secondary Character for Valour in the *Iliad*, which the Reader always bearing in Mind, must greatly lessen in his Opinion the Strength and Prowess of those he conquers; at least, it has always had that Effect upon me.

V. 301. *The Son of Semo mov'd from where he stood.*] As *Fingal* is now immediately to enter upon Action, *Cuthullin* is made to retire. The latter being a Hero of the highest Class; daring, magnanimous, and exquisitely sensible to Honour; we become attached to his Interests, and are deeply touched

305 In former Wars, and hail'd him from the Field,  
 When he successful made the Mighty yield)  
 But to avoid him, fought the lone Retreat  
 A Cave bestow'd, and thus bewail'd his Fate.

What Defolation ! What a People lost !  
 310 The hostile Sword has wasted *Ullin's* Host.  
 Where are my chearful Comrades at the Feast ?  
 On bloody Beds they lie in endless Rest.  
 I shall not in the Heath their Footsteps trace,  
 Or hear their Voices at the Mountain Chace.  
 315 Ghosts of departed Warriors ! mount the Winds,  
 And meet *Cutbullin* on his Hill of Hinds ;

Attend

touched with his Distress : and after all the Admiration raised for him in the first Part of the Poem, it is a strong Proof of *Offian's* masterly Genius, that he durst adventure to produce to us another Hero, compared with whom, even the great *Cutbullin* should be only an inferior Personage ; and who should rise as far above him, as *Cutbullin* rises above the rest.

Attend his Complaints, when murm'ring thro' the Grove,  
You make the mossy Trees of *Tura* move.

- For there obscure shall pass my future Days,  
320 Remote from Battles, and the Voice of Praise ;  
Where not a Bard my Deeds will celebrate,  
Nor monumental Stone my Name repeat.  
O fair *Bragela* ! mourn me with the Dead,  
My Dreams of Glory are for ever fled.  
325 Thus for himself and Friends, the Chief complain'd,  
When lofty *Cromla*'s silent Woods he gain'd.

- Mean Time to Land the Fleet of *Morven* steers ;  
Tall in his Ship the great *Fingal* appears ;  
His mighty Spear, far blazing like a Star,  
330 Is pointed tow'ards the Shore, a Sign of War.

Not

V. 326. *His mighty Spear, &c.*] If a Man, upon his first landing in a strange Country, kept the Point of his Spear forward, it denoted, in those Days, that he came in a hostile Manner, and accordingly he was treated

Not half so dreadful looks the Flame of Death,  
 At Midnight setting green on *Malmor's* Heath :  
 The Moon shrinks back with all the heav'nly Host ;  
 The Trav'ler sees, and yields himself for lost.

When

treated as an Enemy ; if he kept the Point behind him, it was a Token of Friendship, and he was immediately invited to the Feast, according to the Hospitality of the Times.

V. 331. *Not half so dreadful looks the Flame of Death, &c.*] *Homer's* Comparifon of *Achilles* to the Dog-Star, is very fublime.

Τὸν δ' ὁ γερῶν Πρίαμος πρῶτος ἶδεν ὀφθαλμοῖσι,  
 Παμφαίνεσθ', ὥς ἀστὲρ, ἐπεσσύμενον πεδίοιο  
 "Ὅς ῥά τ' ὀπώρας εἰσὺν ἀρίζηλοι δέ οἱ αὐγαὶ  
 Φαίνονται πολλοῖσι μετ' ἄστρασι νυκτὸς ἀμολγῶ  
 "Ὅν τε κύν' Ὀρίωνος ἐπὶ κλησὶν καλεοῦσι.  
 Λαμπρότατος μὲν ὄγ' ἐστὶ, κακὸν δέ τε σῆμα τετυκται,  
 Καί τε φέρεται πολλὸν πυρετὸν δειλοῖσι βροτῶσιν.

*Iliad*, XXII. V. 25.

Him, as he blazing shot across the Field,  
 The careful Eyes of *Priam* first beheld.  
 Not half so dreadful rises to the Sight,  
 Thro' the thick Gloom of some tempestuous Night,  
*Orion's* Dog, (the Year when Autumn weighs)  
 And o'er the feeble Stars exerts his Rays ;  
 Terrific Glory ! for his burning Breath  
 Taints the red Air with Fevers, Plagues, and Death.

POPE. *Iliad*, XXII.

The



- 335 When thus the King --- We are arriv'd too late !  
Our Friends already have the Battle met ;  
I see their Blood. --- Sad, *Lena* ! are thy Plains ;  
In *Cromla*'s Oaks a mournful Silence reigns :  
For there the Hunters in their Strength have bled,  
340 And brave *Cutbullin* lies among the Dead.  
Haste, *Fillan* and fair *Ryno* ! call to Arms,  
Sound on my Horn of War the loud Alarms ;

On

The Hero's Appearance in *Homer* is more magnificent, in *Offian* more terrible; and this is the Distinction between the Sublimity of these two Poets. *Homer*'s Sublimity is accompanied with more Impetuosity and Fire; *Offian*'s with more of a solemn and awful Grandeur. The former hurries you along; the latter elevates, and fixes you in Astonishment. *Homer* is most sublime in Actions and Battles; *Offian*, in Description and Sentiment. In the Pathetic, *Homer*, when he chuses to exert it, has great Power; but *Offian* exerts that Power much oftener, and has the Character of Tendernefs 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 *Offian*. This is indeed a surprizing Circumstance, that in Point of Humanity, Magnanimity, and virtuous Feelings of every Kind, our rude *Celtic* Bard should be distinguished to such a Degree, as not only the Heroes of *Homer*, but even those of the polite and refined *Virgil*, are left far behind by those of *Offian*.

- On yonder Rock's ærial Summit stand,  
And let it echo through the Sea and Land,  
345 From *Lamdarg's* Tomb, the Chief of other Days,  
Defy the gloomy Monarch of the Seas.  
Be not dismay'd, but like your Father speak,  
When at his Voice encount'ring Armies shake.  
This dark and gloomy Man I long to meet !  
350 I here impatient his Arrival wait ;  
And let him with his Thousands come along,  
The Friends of *Erin* are in Battle strong.  
Swift *Ryno* like a Gleam of Lightning sped,  
And *Fillan* follow'd like an Autumn Shade.  
355 Around the Heath the Horn of War they blew,  
Nor ceas'd to blow, till *Lochlin* came in View.

As

V. 341. *Haste, Fillan and fair Ryno.*] These two were Sons to *Fingal*: for after the Death of *Roscrana*, the Daughter of *Cormac* King of Ireland, and Mother of *Offian*, *Fingal* in one of his Expeditions to *Inistore*, fell in Love with *Clatbo*, Daughter of *Catbulla*, King of that Island, and took her to Wife. *Clatbo* was the Mother of *Fillan*, *Fergus*, and *Ryno*, and a Daughter named *Bosmina*, mentioned in the Poem entitled *the Battle of Lora*.

V. 357.

As swift returning from the Land of Snow,  
The eddy Waves of rapid Ocean flow ;  
So vast, so loud, the Foes descending pour  
360 From *Lena's* Heath to meet us on the Shore.

In

V. 357. *As swift returning from the Land of Snow, &c.*] *Ossian* here probably means the boisterous Sea between the *Orcades* and *Caitkness*, called the *Pentland Frith*, of which *Buchanan* (in his *History of Scotland*, Lib. 1.) gives the following Account. " The Sea is there very raging and tempestuous, which is caused, not only by the Violence of the Winds, and the Position of the heavenly Constellations, but also by the Meeting of contrary Tides, raised up, and flowing in from the Western Ocean, and making such a Conflict between the Streights of the Land, that the Surges, occasioned thereby, sometimes meeting opposite one to another, and being all impetuously whirled together, cannot be passed, neither by Oars nor Sails. If any Mariners dare come too near, one of these three Mischiefs befalls them. They are either driven back, with a forcible Violence, into the Sea ; or else, by the Rapidity of the foaming Waves, they are dashed upon Shelves and Rocks ; or, lastly, are swallowed up by the rolling Vortices of the ingulphing Waters. There are only two Seasons, wherein these Streights are passable ; either when upon the falling back of the Tides, the Conflict of the Waters ceasing, the Sea is thereby calmed ; or else when it comes in a full Channel, to the Height of its Increase at Spring Tides, that Force languishing on both Sides, which raised and made the Waters tempestuous and stormy ; the Ocean, as it were, sounding a Retreat to its Storms, and thereupon the mountainous Surges do retire into their own proper Caverns and Recesses."

In shining Arms the Sov'reign of the Tides,  
To Combat hastens with gigantic Strides :  
His dark-brown Cheeks with kindled Fury glow,  
His Eyes in Sparkles lighten on the Foe.

- 365 *Fingal* beheld him, and awhile resign'd  
To tender Pity all his mighty Mind.  
He recollected all what pass'd that Day,  
When cold on Earth his *Agandecca* lay ;  
What Lamentations youthful *Swaran* made,  
370 When his white-bosom'd Sister he saw dead.  
The dear Remembrance of the Maid he lov'd,  
And Brother's Grief, the gen'rous Hero mov'd,  
To send his Bard to call him to the Feast.  
Old *Ullin* went, and thus the King address'd.

- 375 Oh thou ! whom *Lochlin's* many Realms obey,  
With Rocks encircled by the sounding Sea ;

The King of *Morven* calls thee to the Feast,  
His Banquet share, and pass the Day in Rest.  
As soon as Morning has renew'd the Light,  
380 Then shine in Arms, and break the Shields in Fight.

To him the brutal Tyrant in a Rage ---  
The People shall without Delay engage ;  
The Taste of Food my Palate shall not know,  
Till pale on Earth your hateful King lies low ;  
385 Then will my Feast be spread upon the Field,  
But now I break in War the echoing Shield.

*Fingal*, when told the Monarch of the Tide  
Disdain'd his Offer, with a Smile replied,  
Let the Barbarian then abstain from Food,  
390 Till he has satisfied his Thirst for Blood.  
Come on, my Sons ! with Courage charge the Foe,  
Break the resounding Shield at ev'ry Blow.

Let

Let *Offian* to his Father's Side be near,  
 Let *Gaul* his dreadful Fauchion wave in Air ;  
 395 The twanging Bow let eager *Fergus* bend,  
 And *Fillan*, swift thro' Heav'n the Jav'lin send.  
 Beneath the moon-broad Shield let each advance,  
 And like a Meteor dart the fiery Lance.  
 Ourself to Victory shall show the Way,  
 400 And rush the foremost on yon thick Array.  
 O'er dying Ranks to Fame my Path pursue,  
 And emulate the Actions you shall view.

As

V. 395. *The twanging Bow let eager Fergus bend.*] This *Fergus*, according to some Traditions, was the Ancestor of *Fergus*, the Son of *Erc* or *Arcath*, commonly called *Fergus* the Second in the *Scotch* Histories. The Beginning of the Reign of *Fergus* over the *Scots* is placed, by the most approved Annals of *Scotland*, in the fourth Year of the fifth Age; a full Century after the Death of *Offian*. The Genealogy of his Family is recorded thus by the *Highland Senachies*: *Fergus Mac-Areath*, *Mac-Chongael*, *Mac-Fergus*, *Mac-Fion-Gael na buai*; i. e. *Fergus* the Son of *Arcath*, the Son of *Congal*, the Son of *Fergus*, the Son of *Fingal* the Victorious.

As when a Hundred diff'rent Winds contend,  
 Or from a hundred Hills the Streams descend ;  
 405 As gloomy Clouds encounter in the Sky,  
 Or o'er the Rocks the foaming Surges fly,

With

V. 403. *As when a hundred diff'rent Winds contend, &c.*] There is, in the 14th Book of the Iliad, a very noble Description of a general Engagement, which nearly resembles this.

Οὔτε θάλασσης κύμα τῶσον βοᾶα προτὶ χέρσιν,  
 Ποντόθεν ὀρνύμενον πνοιῇ βορέω ἀλεγεινῇ  
 Οὔτε πυρὸς τοσσος γε ποτὶ βρόμος αἰθόμενοιο,  
 Οὔρεος ἐν βήσσης, ὅτε τ' ἄρετο καίμεν ὕλην  
 Οὔτ' αἶεμος τοσσον γε ποτὶ δρυὸν ὑψικόμεισιν  
 Ἦπύει, ὅτε μαλιστα μέγα βρεμεται χαλεπαίνων  
 Ὅσση ἄρα Τρώων καὶ Ἀχαιῶν ἔπλετο φωνή,  
 Δεινὸν αὖσαντων, ὅτ' ἐπ' ἀλληλοῖσιν ὄρουσαν.

V. 394.

Not half so loud the bellowing Deeps resound,  
 When stormy Winds disclose the dark Profound ;  
 Less loud the Winds, that from th' *Æolian* Hall  
 Roar through the Woods, and make whole Forests fall ;  
 Less loud the Woods, when Flames in Torrents pour,  
 Catch the dry Mountain, and its Shades devour.  
 With such a Rage the meeting Hosts are driv'n,  
 And such a Clamour shakes the sounding Heav'n.

POPE.

*Homer*



With such a dreadful Roar, despising Death,  
 The shouting Armies clos'd on *Lena's* Heath.  
 The mingled Cries of Nations met in Fight,  
 410 Spread o'er the Hills, like Thunder in the Night,  
 When burst the Clouds, and with a hideous Yell,  
 A thousand Ghosts the howling Tempest swell.

As from the frozen Regions of the North,  
 The shadowy Form of *Trenmor* rushing forth,

Intimidates

*Homer* here, much in the Manner of *Offian*, heaps Simile on Simile, to express the Vastness of the Idea with which his Imagination seems to labour. But the Circumstance of the Cries of the Combatants, in *Offian*, being likened to the Shrieks of Ghosts amidst a Tempest, is superior to any Comparison *Homer* uses, and is an Image of more awful Sublimity than was ever employed to heighten the Terror of Battle. It presents Ideas so uncommon to the Mind, as fill it with the utmost Admiration, and fix it in Astonishment. This is the highest Effect of the Sublime, and to produce it, requires a Genius glowing with the strongest and warmest Conception of some Object awful, great, or magnificent.

V. 414. *The shadowy Form of Trenmor rushing forth.*] It was long thought, in the North of *Scotland*, that Storms were raised by the Ghosts  
 of

- 415 Intimidates with Storms his native Shore,  
And bids a sudden Blast on *Morven* roar ;  
Which in its rapid Course o'erturns the Rocks,  
And strews the echoing Heath with fallen Oaks :  
From Hill to Hill the stalking Spectre treads,  
420 His dire Approach convulsive Nature dreads.  
So mov'd *Fingal*, nor less Destruction makes,  
As through the *Scandinavian* Ranks he breaks.  
Where-e'er the Lightning of his Fauchion flames,  
The Heroes fall, the Blood descends in Streams :  
425 For, as if Youth again his Arm had brac'd,  
He mows down Hosts, and lays the Battle waste.

Young *Ryno*, emulous to match his Sire,  
Rush'd to the Conflict like a Beam of Fire.

The

of the Deceased. This Notion is still entertained by the Vulgar, for they think that Whirlwinds and sudden Squalls of Wind are occasioned by Spirits, who transport themselves, in that Manner, from one Place to another.

The Son of *Morni*, with contracted Brow,  
430 Wav'd high his Sword, and plung'd amidst the Foe :  
Him *Fergus* follow'd swifter than the Wind,  
And *Fillan* like a Mist pursu'd behind.

As from some Mountain, by an Earthquake shook,  
Impetuous falls the Fragment of a Rock ;  
435 *Offian*, exulting in his Father's Might,  
Broke through the Phalanx, and let in the Light.  
My furious Blows stretch'd many on the Plain,  
My Sword gleam'd dismal o'er the Heaps of Slain.

At

V. 435. *Offian, exulting in his Father's Might, &c.*] The Share which *Offian* himself had in the Transactions which he records, must be considered as no small Advantage to the 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 in 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

At that Time Age had not my Locks turn'd gray,  
440 Nor from my Eyes debarr'd the Light of Day !  
My Arm was not too weak to bear the Shield,  
Nor in the Race had then my Swiftnefs fail'd.

Who can relate how fierce the Battle form'd,  
The many Feats of Arms by Chiefs perform'd ;  
445 Or count the mighty Numbers of the Dead,  
When great *Fingal* himself to Slaughter led,  
And shouting to the Skies, on *Lochlin* flew,  
Consum'd their Strength, and all that met him flew ?

Repeated

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 every Kind little attended to, what was great and heroic in one Generation, easily ripened into the marvellous in the next.

Repeated Groans were heard from Hill to Hill !

- 450 But flush'd with Conquest, and insatiate still,  
His bloody Sword the King of *Morven* wav'd,  
Till from his Fury Night the Vanquish'd fav'd.  
Pale, staring like a Herd of hunted Deer,  
The routed *Scandinavians* smit with Fear,  
455 Fled diverse to escape impending Death,  
And join'd their Friends on *Lena's* gloomy Heath.

- Where *Lubar's* Stream meander'd o'er the Ground,  
We sat, and heard the Harp's harmonious Sound.  
Sweet on the passing Gales the Numbers flow,  
460 And reach *Fingal*, who station'd next the Foe,  
Could hear the Bards, responsive to their Strings,  
Record the Race of *Morven's* ancient Kings.  
He sat attentive on his Shield reclin'd,  
His aged Locks white waving in the Wind,  
465 While Thoughts of other Years engross'd his Mind.

Lean'd on his Spear, in a like thoughtful Mood,  
The Pride of Youths, my lovely *Oscar* stood.  
Upon the King uninterrupted roll'd  
His gazing Eyes, astonish'd to behold  
470 A mortal Man endu'd with so much Might  
As was exerted by *Fingal* in Fight.  
The King perceiving, when the Music ceas'd,  
Embrac'd the Boy, and thus his Joy express'd.

Son of my Son! I saw in Battle shine  
475 Thy lifted Sword, and gloried in our Line.  
Go on, and equal your Forefathers Deeds,  
Their great Example to true Glory leads.  
The Name of *Trenmor*, Author of our Birth,  
And mighty *Trathal*, fill the spacious Earth:

They

V. 478. *The Name of Trenmor.*] *Trenmor* was the great Grandfather of *Fingal*. He is the most remote Ancestor that *Ossian* commemorates of his own Family; but the Genealogists of the North have traced his Family  
far

- 480 They fought the Battle in their youthful Days,  
The Songs of Bards now celebrate their Praise.  
Be what they were ; against Oppression stand,  
Resist the strong, but spare the feeble Hand.  
On the Invader of the People's Rights,  
485 Rush like a Torrent roaring from the Heights ;

But

far back, and given a List of his Ancestors to *Cuanmor nan lan*, or *Connor* of the Swords, who, according to them, was the first that crossed the *Great Sea* to *Caledonia*, from which Circumstance his Name proceeded, which signifies *Great Ocean*. Genealogies of so ancient a Date, however, are little to be depended on. Though few of the Actions of *Trenmor* are mentioned, he was the most renowned Name of Antiquity. He was the first who united the Tribes of the *Caledonians*, and commanded them, in chief, against the Incurfions of the *Romans*. The *Caël* 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 his 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



But to the Vanquish'd, like the Southern Gale  
 Of Spring, be gentle when thy Arms prevail.  
 So *Trenmor* liv'd ; so *Trathal* rose to Fame ;  
 And thus *Fingal* has signaliz'd his Name :  
 490 The Lightning of my Steel the Weak reliev'd,  
 And from Oppression hath the Feeble sav'd.

These

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. *Trenmor* left behind him two Sons, *Trathal* here mentioned, who succeeded him ; and *Conar*, who passing over into *Ireland*, gave a Race of Monarchs to that Nation.

V. 490. *The Lightning of my Steel the Weak reliev'd.*] The Character of *Fingal* is the greatest imaginable : to do Justice to the Poet's Merit, in supporting such a Character, 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

These Virtues then my youthful Breast inflam'd,  
When *Fainafollis* my Protection claim'd.

Mild Beam of Love ! She cross'd alone the Main  
495 From *Craca*, where her Father held his Reign.

I then

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, *Aeneas*, is an unanimated, insipid Personage, whom we may pretend to admire, but whom no one can heartily love. But what *Virgil* has failed in, *Osian*, 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 distinguished 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 gray 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 a poetical Description.

I then from *Cona's* Heath was coming Home,  
And few were with me, when on Ocean's Foam  
We saw a distant Boat : the white-sail'd Mast  
Flew, like a Mist, before the whistling Blast.  
500 We stood awhile, till now approaching near,  
We could perceive that Sun-beam, *Craca's* Fair.  
She seem'd affected with uncommon Woes ;  
With frequent Sighs her snowy Bosom rose,  
The Wind was in her dark dishevell'd Hair,  
505 And on her rosy Check appear'd the Tear.

Bright Sun of Beauty ! (mildly I address'd  
The weeping Maid) what Sigh is in that Breast ?  
Say, lovely Stranger ! can I give Relief,  
Or mitigate the Violence of thy Grief ?  
510 Though not the oldest on the List of Fame,  
Among the Mighty stands enroll'd my Name ;

I have

I have a Heart that knows not what is Fear,  
An Arm devoted to protect the Fair.

I said ; the Virgin gave me this Reply,  
515 O King of Shells ! to thee distress'd I fly ;  
Renown'd Defender of the helpless Maid !  
Now one in Misery implores thy Aid.

No

V. 516. *Renown'd Defender of the helpless Maid.*] The Fame of *Fingal's* Character for Equity and Valour, made him the universal Patron of the Injured. He was frequently applied to by the Oppressed, and *Ossian* relates many Expeditions undertaken by himself, or some of his Chieftains by his Orders, purposely to redress their Grievances. In the Poem of *Catblin* of *Chulka*, are mentioned the Signals 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 Intention towards them.

It may not be disagreeable to the Reader to lay 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

No vulgar Wretch before thee stands : I spring,  
Though here a Suppliant come, from *Craca's* King.  
520 A thousand Lovers sought me for a Bride,  
*Cromala's* Hills have to their Groans replied.  
But *Sora's* Chief, more haughty than the rest,  
Pretending Love, his hateful Suit address'd.  
Proud of the Sword, which like the Lightning's Beam  
525 Shone on his Side, he boldly spoke his Flame.  
Two low'ring Brows his swarthy Face deform,  
His boist'rous Soul is always in a Storm :

I loath'd

dipped the End of a half-burned 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 *Teffera* 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.

V. 519. *From Craca's King.*] What the *Craca* here mentioned was, is not, at this Distance of Time, easy to determine. The most probable Opinion is, that it was one of the *Shetland* Isles. There is a Story concerning a Daughter of the King of *Craca* in the Sixth Book.

I loath'd the Man, but left to open Force,  
When disappointed, he might have Recourse,  
530 To seek Relief, I fail'd before the Wind,  
But he pursues, and is not far behind.

Thou Beam of Light! I answer'd, come and rest  
Behind my Shield, it shelters the Distrest.  
Fear not the gloomy Chief, he cannot stand,  
535 In single Fight, the Prowess of my Hand,  
If, in this early Trial, it obeys  
The active Fury which my Soul conveys.  
I could conceal thee, Daughter of the Wave!  
In the recess of some sequester'd Cave;  
540 But, bred to Battle from his infant Years,  
*Fingal* rejoices in the Storm of Spears.  
While thus I spoke, I saw the crystal Tear  
Roll down her Cheek, and pitied *Craca's* Fair.

Now, like a distant Billow foaming white,  
 545 The Ship of haughty *Borbar* comes in Sight.  
 His lofty Masts, behind their Sheets of Snow,  
 Bend o'er the curling Waves that roll below.  
 The Strength of Ocean sounds: on either Side,  
 Before the sable Prow, the Waves divide,  
 550 And to the Stern in frothy Furrows glide.  
 I hail'd the Chief, and cried, Forsake thy Ship,  
 Thou fearless Rider of the roaring Deep!  
 Come share the Feast; my hospitable Door  
 Receives the Stranger from the distant Shore.

At

V. 553. *My hospitable Door, &c.*] No Nation in the World carried their Hospitality to a greater Length than the ancient *Scots*. It was even infamous, for many Ages, in a Man of Condition, to have the Door of his House shut at all, *lest*, as the Bards expressed it, *the Stranger should come and behold his contracted Soul*. Some of the Chiefs were possessed of this hospitable Disposition to an extravagant Degree; and the Bards, perhaps, upon a private Account, never failed to recommend it in their Eulogiums. *Cean-nia na dai*, or, *the Point to which all the Roads of the Stranger leads*, was an invariable Epithet given by them to the Chiefs; on the Contrary, they distinguished the inhospitable by the Title of *the Cloud which the*

*Strangers*



- 555 At this the Warrior leap'd upon the Strand ;  
The fearful Virgin trembling held my Hand ;  
Fierce *Borbar* saw, and kindling at the View,  
Produc'd his Bow ; an Arrow sounding flew :  
She fell ! --- Thy Hand unerring draws the Bow,  
560 Enrag'd I cried, but feeble was the Foe !  
Now try a stronger Arm. He answer'd not :  
I rush'd along --- upon the Coast we fought,

Nor

*Strangers shun.* The last, however, was so uncommon, that in all the old Poems (says Mr. *Macpherson*) I have ever met with, I found but one Man branded with this ignominious Appellation, and that, perhaps, only founded upon a private Quarrel, which subsisted between him and the Patron of the Bard who wrote the Poem.

We have a Story of this hospitable Nature, handed down by Tradition, concerning one of the first Earls of *Argyle*. This Nobleman, hearing that an *Irishman*, of great Quality, intended to make him a Visit, with a very numerous Retinue of his Friends and Dependents, burnt the Castle of *Dunora*, the Seat of his Family, lest it should be too small to entertain his Guests, and received the *Irish* in Tents on the Shore. Extravagant as this Behaviour might seem in our Days, it was admired and applauded in those Times of Hospitality, and the Earl acquired considerable Fame by it, in the Songs of the Bards.

Nor feeble was the Strife ! At length he lay  
Beneath my Shield, and breath'd his Soul away.  
565 The usual Honours to the Dead we paid,  
And in two Tombs of Stone the Lovers laid.  
Such Proof of Courage in my Youth I gave ---  
'Tis Moderation proves us greatly brave.  
Be not the first thy Valour to display,  
570 But when defied, then all thy Might essay.

Now *Oscar* rise, and swift with *Fillan* go  
O'er *Lena's* windy Heath to view the Foe.  
Afar the Noise of their distracted Fears,  
Like *Cona's* Storm, comes louder on my Ears.  
575 Perhaps, beneath the Shadow of the Night,  
They will attempt to save themselves by Flight ;  
But haughty *Swaran* should not yet display  
His swelling Sails, or plough the Northern Sea ;

Not

Not till his People's Blood hath fully paid

580 The Devastation here in *Ullin* made,

Whose bravest Warriors, stretch'd upon the Shore,

Extended lie defac'd with Wounds and Gore :

The Sons of *Cromla* now are empty Forms !

In Silence sleep the Children of the Storms.

585 The Monarch ceas'd, the Youths, without Delay,

Tow'rs where encamp'd the Sons of *Lochlin* lay,

O'er gloomy *Lena* swiftly pass'd away ;

Like two black Clouds, that angry Ghosts convey,

When Air's dark Children, mounted on the Wind,

590 Descend in Storms, and terrify Mankind.

'Twas then that *Gaul* the Son of *Morni* spoke :

The tow'ring Chief look'd stately as a Rock ;

His

V. 591. 'Twas then that *Gaul* the Son of *Morni* spoke.] *Gaul*, the Son of *Morni*, was Chief of a Tribe that disputed long the Pre-eminence with the Family

His Spear bright glitter'd to the starry Frame ;

His Voice refounded like a falling Stream.

595 Thou Son of Battle ! whose superior Worth

Is known through all the Kingdoms of the North,

Let now the Host, while Night involves the Skies,

With needful Rest refresh their heavy Eyes ;

And bid a hundred Bards harmonious sweep

600 Their tuneful Harps, till thine are clos'd in Sleep :

But when the Morning tips the Hills with Light,

Keep sheath'd the Sword, and let thy People fight.

O'er-

Family of *Fingal*. *Combal*, his Father, was killed in Battle against them the very Day *Fingal* came into the World ; but he, being educated in private by *Dulbearon*, when grown up, by his Valour and Conduct reduced the Tribe of *Morni* at last to Obedience, and *Gaul*, from an Enemy, became *Fingal*'s best Friend and greatest Hero. His Character is something like that of *Ajax* in the *Iliad* ; a Hero of more Strength than Conduct in Battle. He was very fond of military Fame, and here he demands the next Battle to himself, which *Fingal* grants, an Instance of Generosity the more remarkable, on Account of the forementioned Feuds between their Families. The Poet, by an Artifice, removes the King, that his Return may be the more magnificent.

O'ershadow'd by the Greatness of thy Name,  
 We pass away defrauded of our Fame,  
 605 And are but mere Spectators in the Field,  
 While our Commander breaks the echoing Shield :  
 Then breathe awhile, and at a Distance view  
 The Sons of *Morven* led by *Gaul* subdued.  
 In *Cormac's* Cause let *Lochlin* feel this Sword,  
 610 That future Bards my Actions may record.  
 Such was the Practice of your noble Line,  
 Such, King of Swords ! in former Wars was thine, }  
 Pleas'd you behold your Chiefs in Battle shine.

To him the King --- *Fingal* is still the same,  
 615 He loves thee *Gaul*, and glories in thy Fame.

To-

V. 615. *He loves thee Gaul, &c.* It is a vulgar Error, that the common *Highlanders* lived in abject Slavery under their Chiefs. Their high Idea of, and Attachment to, the Heads of their Families, probably, led the unintelligent into this Mistake. When the Honour of the Tribe was concerned, the Commands of the Chief were obeyed, without Restriction :

But,

To-morrow then conduct my martial Bands,  
And may the Battle prosper in thy Hands.  
Myself shall view thee from some neighb'ring Hill,  
And wave in Air the Lightning of my Steel.

Join

But, if Individuals were oppressed, they threw themselves into the Arms of a neighbouring Clan, assumed a new Name, and were encouraged and protected. The Fear of this Desertion, no doubt, made the Chiefs cautious in their Government, as their Consequence, in the Eyes of Others, was in Proportion to the Number of their People, they took Care to avoid every Thing that tended to diminish it.

It was but very lately that the Authority of the Laws extended to the *Highlands*. Before that Time the Clans were governed, in civil Affairs, not by the verbal Commands of the Chief, but by what they called *Clecbda*, or the traditional Precedents of their Ancestors. When Differences happened between Individuals, some of the oldest Men in the Tribe were chosen Umpires between the Parties, to decide according to the *Clecbda*. The Chief interposed his Authority, and, invariably, enforced the Decision. In their Wars, which were frequent, on Account of Family Feuds, the Chief was less reserved in the Execution of his Authority; and even then he seldom extended it to the taking the Life of any of his Tribe. No Crime was Capital, except Murder; and that was very unfrequent in the *Highlands*. No corporal Punishment, of any Kind, was inflicted. The Memory of an Affront of this Sort would remain, for Ages, in a Family, and they would seize every Opportunity to be revenged, unless it came immediately from the Hands of the Chief himself; in that Case it was taken, rather as a fatherly Correction, than a legal Punishment for Offences.

- 620 Join all in Concert now ye tuneful Quire,  
Awake each Harp, and strike each sounding Lyre ;  
Lull'd by the Symphony my Eyes shall close,  
While Night's inconstant Squall around me blows.  
And if my lovely *Agandecca's* Ghost  
625 Attends her Brother from his native Coast ;  
If now aloft, on *Lochlin's* crowded Masts,  
She sits rejoicing in the roaring Blasts ;  
Array'd in Beauty, on a heav'nly Beam,  
Descend, thou fair One ! to my nightly Dream ;  
630 The past Ideas of my Youth renew,  
And let these Eyes thy bright Perfections view.

He said ; and straight a hundred Harps are strung,  
A hundred Bards at once begin the Song,

And

V. 624. *And if my lovely Agandecca's Ghost, &c.*] The Poet here prepares us for the Dream of *Fingal* in the next Book.



And Poetry and Mufic both unite,  
To fill the Soul with Raptures of Delight !  
635 Some fweep the String, fome in heroic Verfe  
The late Atchievements of the King rehearfe :

Nor

V. 633. *A hundred Bards at once begin the Song.*] Not only the King, but every petty Chief, had anciently their Bards attending them in the Field; and thofe Bards, in Proportion to the Power of the Chiefs who retained them, had a Number of inferiour Bards in their Train. Upon folemn Occafions, all the Bards in the Army would join in one Chorus; either when they celebrated their Victories, or lamented the Death of a Perfon, worthy and renowned, flain in War. The Words were of the Composition of the Arch-bard, retained by the King himfelf, who generally attained to that high Office on Account of his fuperiour Genius in Poetry. As the Perfons of the Bards were facred, and the Emoluments of their Office confiderable, the Order in fucceeding Times became very numerous and infolent. They became, at laft, a public Nuiſance; for, taking Advantage of their facred Character, they went about in great Bodies, and lived at Difcretion in the Houfes of the Chiefs; till another Party of the ſame Order drove them away by mere Dint of Satire. Some of the indelicate Difputes of theſe worthy poetical Combatants are handed down by Tradition, and ſhew how much the Bards at laft abuſed the Privileges, which the Admiration of their Countrymen had conferred on the Order. It was this infolent Behaviour that induced the Chiefs to retrench their Number, and to take away thoſe Privileges which they were no longer worthy to enjoy. Their Infolence and Diſpoſition to lampoon, extinguifhed all the poetical Fervour, which diſtinguiſhed their Predeceſſors, and makes us the leſs regret the Exinction of the Order.

V. 647.

Nor was the Valour of his Sons forgot,  
Who had that Day such splendid Actions wrought ;  
640 Among the rest, immortaliz'd to Fame,  
The lofty Song recorded *Offian's* Name.

When Vigour strung my Arm, in former Years,  
I often triumph'd in the Fight of Spears !  
But now, with Age and many Sorrows worn,  
645 Depriv'd of Sight, I pass a Life forlorn,  
Among a feeble Race, degenerate grown,  
And far behind their Fathers in Renown.

The

V. 647. *And far behind their Fathers in Renown.*] Tradition is entirely silent concerning what passed in the North immediately after the Death of *Fingal* and all his Heroes ; by which it would seem that there was some Ground for the Bard's Complaint in this Place, and that their Successors were not to be compared with those of the renowned *Fingalians*. However that might be, their Posterity have been always considered as a brave Race of Men. Untouched by the *Roman*, or *Saxon* Invasions on the South, and those of the *Danes* on the East and West, they have remained the unmixed Relicks of those *Celtic* Nations, which once stretched from the Pillars of

The great *Fingal* has long in Earth been laid,  
The Mountain Roes on his Sepulchre feed.  
650 The Mighty in the War with him have pass'd,  
Of all his Heroes *Ossian* is the last !  
Bless'd be thy Soul, O King of Swords ! thy Praise  
On *Cona's* Hills shall last for Length of Days.

*Hercules to Archangel.* As their Manners till of late were the most singular in *Europe*, and hereafter may be found no where but upon Record, I shall here subjoin a Description of them from Sir *John Dalrymple's* Memoirs, the best wrote History in this, or, perhaps any other Language.

THE MANNERS OF THE HIGHLANDERS, WITH THEIR  
DRESS, ARMS, AND MANNER OF FIGHTING.

THE *Highlanders* were composed of a Number of Tribes called Clans, each of which bore a different Name, and lived upon the Lands of a different Chieftain. The Members of every Tribe were tied one to another, not only by the Feudal, but by the Patriarchal Bond: for, while the Individuals which composed it were Vassals or Tenants of their own hereditary Chieftain, they were also descended from his Family, and could count exactly the Degree of their Descent: and the Right of Primogeniture, together with the Weakness of the Laws to reach inaccessible Countries, and more inaccessible Men, had in the Revolution of Centuries, converted these natural Principles of Connection between the Chieftain and his People, into the most sacred Ties of human Life \*. The Castle of the Chieftain was a Kind of Palace,  
to

\* It was the Junction of the Feudal and Patriarchal Authority, passing by the Right of Primogeniture from Chieftain to Chieftain, in a narrow Country, and where the Divisions of Land-property were ascertained, which has distinguished the *Highland Tribes* from all others known in the History of Mankind. The *Hebrews* had Tribes founded on the Connection of Relation; but the Patriarchal Idea was soon lost in the Want of a successive Patriarch, and the Love of the Tribe in the too great Number of Individuals who composed it. The *Greeks* and *Romans* had Tribes; but the only Lines by which they were distinguished,

to which every Man of his Tribe was made welcome, and where he was entertained according to his Station, in Time of Peace, and to which all flocked at the Sound of War. Thus the meanest of the Clan, knowing himself to be as well-born as the Head of it, revered in his Chieftain his own Honour; loved in his Clan his own Blood; complained not of the Difference of Station into which Fortune had thrown him; and respected himself: the Chieftain in Return bestowed a Protection, founded equally on Gratitude, and the Consciousness of his own Interest. Hence the *Highlanders*, whom more savage Nations called savage, carried, in the outward Expression of their Manners, the Politeness of Courts without their Vices; and, in their Bosoms, the high Point of Honour without its Follies.

In Countries where the Surface is rugged, and the Climate uncertain, there is little Room for the Use of the Plough; and,

distinguished, were the Quarters of the City in which they happened to live. The ancient *Germans* had Tribes in their own Country; but these were Associations of Fellow-Soldiers, under a Commander they chose; not of Relations, under a common Head of the Family, to whom their Obedience was thought due. The ancient *Seythians* and modern *Tartars* were divided into Tribes of Relations; but as they continually shifted their Habitations, they wanted those Arts of Life and Civilization, which are connected with the Establishment of Property in Land, and with the regular Tradition of it from Father to Son. None of the barbarous Bands, which made violent Settlements in the *Roman* Provinces, when the Empire fell, had Names common to the Individuals of the Band; because they were Parts of Nations, and not of Families. The *Irish* had Tribes, distinguished by a common Name borne by the Individuals, and connected by a common Relation; but the Rule of Thanistry in Succession, which gave the Election of the Heir to the Lord, broke all Reverence for Primogeniture, and was a continual Source of Discord among the Members. The native *Americans* live in Tribes, in a Manner resembling the Patriarchal Life; but while, from their common Relation, every Member is bound to another, the Whole, from a Want of the Feudal Subordination, and from the excessive Independence of the Individuals, are not bound to one Head.

where

where no Coal is to be found, and few Provisions can be raised, there is still less for that of the Anvil and Shuttle. As the *Highlanders* were, upon these Accounts, excluded from extensive Agriculture and Manufacture alike, every Family raised just as much Grain, and made as much Raiment, as sufficed for itself; and Nature, whom Art cannot force, destined them for the Life of Shepherds. Hence they had not that Excess of Industry which reduces Man to a Machine, nor that Want of it, which sinks him into a Rank of Animals below his own.

They lived in Villages built in Vallies, and by the Sides of Rivers. At two Seasons of the Year they were busy; the one in the End of Spring and Beginning of Summer, when they put the Plough in the little Land they had capable of receiving it, sowed their Grain, and laid in their Provision of 'Turf for the Winter's Fuel; the other just before Winter, when they reaped their Harvest: the rest of the Year was all their own, for Amusement or for War. If not engaged in War, they indulged themselves in the most delicious of all Pleasures, to Men in a cold Climate, and a romantic Country, the Enjoyment of the Sun, and of the Summer-Views of Nature; never in the House during the Day, even sleeping often at Night in the open Air, among the Mountains and Woods. They spent the Winter in the Chase, while the Sun was up; and, in the Evening, assembling round a common Fire, they entertained themselves with the Song, the Tale, and the Dance: but they were ignorant of sitting Days and Nights at Games of Skill or Hazard; Amusements which keep the Body in Inaction, and the Mind in a State of vicious Activity.



The Want of a good, and even a fine Ear for Music, was almost unknown amongst them ; because it was kept in continual Practice, among the Multitude from Passion, but by the wiser Few, because they knew that the Love of Music both heightened the Courage, and softened the Tempers of their People. Their vocal Music was plaintive, even to the Depth of Melancholy ; their instrumental either lively for brisk Dances, or martial for the Battle. Some of their Tunes even contained the great, but natural Idea of a History described in Music : the Joys of a Marriage, the Noise of a Quarrel, the Sounding to Arms, the Rage of a Battle, the broken Disorder of a Flight, the Whole concluding with a solemn Dirge and Lamentation for the Slain. By the Loudness and artificial Jarring of their War Instrument, the Bagpipe, which played continually during the Action, their Spirits were exalted to a Phrensy of Courage in Battle.

They joined the Pleasures of History and Poetry to those of Music, and the Love of classical Learning to both. For, in order to cherish high Sentiments in the Minds of all, every considerable Family had a Historian who recounted, and a Bard who sung, the Deeds of the Clan, and of its Chieftain : and all, even the lowest in Station, were sent to School in their Youth ; partly because they had nothing else to do, at that Age, and partly because Literature was thought the Distinction, not the Want of it the Mark, of good Birth.

The Severity of the Climate, the Height of their Mountains, the Distance of their Villages from each other, their Love of the Chace and of War, with their Desire to visit and be visited, forced  
them



them to great bodily Exertions. The Vastness of the Objects which surrounded them, Lakes, Mountains, Rocks, Cataracts, extended and elevated their Minds: for they were not in the State of Men who only know the Way from one Market-Town to another. Their Want of regular Occupation led them, like the ancient *Spartans*, to Contemplation, and the Powers of Conversation; Powers which they exerted in striking out the original Thoughts which Nature suggested, not in languidly repeating those which they had learned from other People.

They valued themselves, without undervaluing other Nations. They loved to quit their own Country to see and to hear, adopted easily the Manners of others, and were attentive and insinuating where-ever they went: but they loved more to return Home, to repeat what they had observed; and among other Things, to relate with Astonishment, that they had been in the Midst of great Societies, where every Individual made his Sense of Independence to consist in keeping at a Distance from one another. Yet they did not think themselves intitled to hate or despise the Manners of Strangers, because they differed from their own. For they revered the great Qualities of other Nations: and only made their Failings the Subject of an inoffensive Merriment.

When Strangers came amongst them, they received them, not with a Ceremony which forbids a second Visit, not with a Coldness which causes Repentance of the first, not with an Embarrassment which leaves both the Landlord and his Guest in equal Misery; but with the most pleasing of all Politeness, the Simplicity and Cordiality of Affection, proud to give that Hospitality which

they had not received, and to humble the Persons who had thought of them with Contempt, by shewing how little they deserved it.

Having been driven from the Low Countries of *Scotland* by an Invasion, they, from Time inmemorial, thought themselves intitled to make Reprisals upon the Property of their Invaders; but they touched not that of each other: so that in the same Men there appeared, to those who did not look into the Causes of Things, a strange Mixture of Vice and of Virtue. For, what we call Theft and Rapine, they termed Right and Justice. But, from the Practice of these Reprisals, they acquired Habits of being enterprising, artful and bold.

An Injury done to one of the Clan, was held to be an Injury done to all, on Account of the common Relation of Blood. Hence the *Highlanders* were in the habitual Practice of War: and hence their Attachment to their Chieftain, and to each other, was founded upon the two most active Principles of human Nature, Love of their Friends, and Resentment against their Enemies.

But the Frequency of War tempered its Ferocity. They bound up the Wounds of their Prisoners, while they neglected their own; and in the Person of an Enemy, respected and pitied the Stranger.

They went always completely armed: a Fashion which, by accustoming them to the Instruments of Death, removed the Fear of Death itself; and which, from the Danger of Provocation,  
made

made the common People as polite, and as guarded in their Behaviour, as the Gentry of other Countries.

From these combined Circumstances, the higher Ranks and the lower Ranks of the *Highlanders* alike, joined that Refinement of Sentiment, which in all other Nations is peculiar to the former, to that Strength and Hardiness of Body, which in other Countries is possessed only by the latter.

To be modest as well as brave; to be contented with the few Things which Nature requires; to act and to suffer without complaining; to be as much ashamed of doing any Thing insolent or injurious to others, as of bearing it when done to themselves; and to die with Pleasure, to revenge the Affronts offered to their Clan or their Country: these they accounted their highest Accomplishments.

Their Christianity was strongly tinged with Traditions derived from the ancient Bards of their Country. For they were Believers in Ghosts: they marked the Appearances of the Heavens, and by the Forms of the Clouds, which in their variable Climate were continually shifting, were induced to guess at present, and to predict future Events; and they even thought, that to some Men the Divinity had communicated a Portion of his own Prescience. From this Mixture of System, they did not enter much into the Disputes concerning the particular Modes of Christianity; but every Man followed with Indifference of Sentiment, the Mode which his Chieftain had assumed. Perhaps to the same Cause it is owing, that their Country is the only one in *Europe*, into which Persecution never entered.

Their Dress, which was the last Remains of a *Roman* Habit in *Europe*, was well suited to the Nature of their Country, and still better to the Necessities of War. It consisted of a Roll of light Woollen, called a Plaid, six Yards in Length, and two in Breadth, wrapped loosely around the Body, the upper Lappet of which rested on the left Shoulder, leaving the right Arm at full Liberty; a Jacket of thick Cloth, fitted tightly to the Body; and a loose short Garment of light Woollen, which went round the Waist and covered the Thigh. In Rain, they formed the Plaid into Folds, and, laying it on the Shoulders, were covered as with a Roof. When they were obliged to lie abroad in the Hills, in their Hunting Parties, or tending their Cattle, or in War, the Plaid served them both for Bed and for Covering; for, when three Men slept together, they could spread three Folds of Cloth below, and six above them. The Garters of their Stockings were tied under the Knee, with a View to give more Freedom to the Limb; and they wore no Breeches, that they might climb Mountains with the greater Ease. The Lightness and Looseness of their Dress, the Custom they had of going always on Foot, never on Horse-back, their Love of long Journeys, but above all, that Patience of Hunger, and every Kind of Hardship, which carried their Bodies forward, even after their Spirits were exhausted, made them exceed all other *European* Nations in Speed and Perseverance of March. *Montrose's* Marches were sometimes sixty Miles in a Day, without Food or Halting, over Mountains, along Rocks, through Morasses. In Encampments, they were expert in forming Beds in a Moment, by tying together Bunches of Heath, and fixing them upright in the Ground: an Art which, as the Beds were

were both soft and dry, preserved their Health in the Field, when other Soldiers lost theirs.

Their Arms were a broad Sword, a Dagger called a Durk, a Target, a Musket, and two Pistols: so that they carried the long Sword of the *Celts*, the *Pugio* of the *Romans*, the Shield of the Ancients, and both Kinds of modern Fire Arms. In Battle they threw away the Plaid and under Garment, and fought in their Jackets, making thus their Movements quicker, and their Strokes more forcible. Their Advance to Battle was rapid, like the Charge of Dragoons: when near the Enemy, they stopped a little to draw Breath and discharge their Muskets, which they then dropped on the Ground; advancing they fired their Pistols, which they threw almost at the same Instant, against the Heads of their Opponents; and then rushing into their Ranks with the broad Sword, threatening, and shaking the Sword as they ran on, so as to conquer the Enemy's Eye, while his Body was yet unhurt. They fought, not in long and regular Lines, but in separate Bands, like Wedges condensed and firm; the Army being ranged according to the Clans which composed it, and each Clan according to its Families; so that there arose a Competition in Valour of Clan with Clan, of Family with Family, of Brother with Brother. To make an Opening in regular Troops, and to conquer, they reckoned the same Thing; because in close Engagements, and in broken Ranks, no regular Troops could withstand them. They received the Bayonet in the Target, which they carried on the left Arm; then turning it aside, or twisting it in the Target, they attacked with the broad Sword the Enemy incumbered and defenceless; and, where they could not wield the broad Sword, they stabbed



stabbed with the Durk. The only Foes they dreaded were Cavalry; to which many Causes contributed: the Novelty of the Enemy; their Want of the Bayonet to receive the Shock of the Horse; the Attack made upon them with their own Weapons, the broad Sword; the Size of Dragoon Horses appearing larger to them, from a Comparison with those of their Country; but above all, a Belief entertained universally among the lower Class of *Highlanders*, that a War-Horse is taught to fight with his Feet and Teeth.

Notwithstanding all these Advantages, the Victories of the *Highlanders* have always been more honourable to themselves, than of Consequence to others. A River stopped them, because they were unaccustomed to swim: a Fort had the same Effect, because they knew not the Science of Attack: they wanted Cannon, Carriages, and Magazines, from their Poverty and Ignorance in the Arts: they spoke an unknown Language; and therefore could derive their Resources only from themselves. Although their Respect for their Chieftains gave them, as long as they continued in the Field, that exact Habit of Obedience, which only the excessive Rigour of Discipline can secure over other Troops; yet, as soon as the Victory was gained, they accounted their Duty, which was to conquer, fulfilled, and ran many of them Home to recount their Feats, and store up their Plunder; and, in Spring and Harvest, more were obliged to retire, or leave their Women and Children to die of Famine: their Chieftains too were apt to separate from the Army, upon Quarrels and Points of Honour among themselves and with others.

F I N G A L,

F I N G A L,

A N

E P I C P O E M

I N

S I X B O O K S.

B O O K IV.



# T H E

# A R G U M E N T.

*OSSIAN* relates his own Actions at the Lake of *Lego*, and his Courtship of *Everallin*. Her Ghost appears to him, and tells him that *Oscar*, who had been sent, the Beginning of the Night, to observe the Enemy, was engaged with an advanced Party, and almost overpowered. *Ossian* relieves his Son. *Fingal* rises, calls his Army together, and devolves the Command on *Gaul*, while he himself, after charging his Sons to behave gallantly, retires to a Hill, from whence he could have a View of the Battle. The Armies join with great Fury, and wonderful Deeds of Prowess are performed. But while *Ossian* and *Oscar* conquer in one Wing, *Gaul*, who is attacked by *Swaran* in Person, is on the Point of Retreating in the other. *Fingal* sends *Ullin* his Bard to encourage him; but notwithstanding *Swaran* prevails; and *Gaul* and his Army are obliged to give Way. *Fingal*, descending from the Hill, rallies them again. *Swaran* possesses himself of a rising Ground, restores the Ranks, and waits his Approach. The King, having encouraged his Men, renews the Battle. *Cuthullin*, hearing the Noise, comes to the Brow of the Hill, and sees *Fingal* engaged with the Enemy. Being hindered by *Connal* from joining, he sends *Carril* to congratulate him on his Victory.

THE Action of this Book begins towards the Morning of the Fourth Day, and ends in the Evening of the same. The Scene lies on the Heath of *Lena*, and the Side of *Cromla*.

# F I N G A L,

A N

## E P I C P O E M.

### B O O K IV.\*

**B**UT who is this, melodious with her Song,  
That haft'ning from the Mountain comes along,  
Like

\* *Fingal* being asleep, and the Action suspended by Night, the Poet introduces the Story of his own Courtship of *Everallin*, the Daughter of *Branno*, and Mother of *Oscar*, who had died some Time before the Expedition of *Fingal* into *Ireland*. The Episode is necessary to clear up several Passages that follow in the Poem; at the same Time that it naturally brings on the Action of the Book, which, like many of *Ossian's* other Compositions, is addressed to the beautiful *Malvina*, the Daughter of *Toscar*. She appears to have been in Love with *Oscar*, and to have affected the Company of the Father after the Death of the Son.

Like show'ry *Lena's* many-colour'd Bow ?

*Malvina* by her lovely Voice I know.

5 While *Ossian* sung thou often hast sat by,

The Tear of Beauty shining in thy Eye :

And still, will *Toscar's* Daughter come again,

To hearken to the Bard's heroic Strain ;

To hear the Battles of her native Land,

10 And Deeds of Valour done by *Oscar's* Hand ?

Ah ! when shall cease my melancholy Themes,

By rapid *Cona's* hoarse descending Streams ?

My

V. 12. *By rapid Cona's hoarse descending Streams.*] The *Cona* here mentioned is thought to be that small River that runs through *Glen-co* in *Argyle-shire*, known for the cruel Massacre perpetrated there in King *William's* Reign. The Scenery of this Valley is the most picturesque of any in the *Highlands*, being so wild and uncommon, as never fails to attract the Eye of every Stranger of the least Degree of Taste or Sensibility. The Entrance into it is strongly marked by the craggy Mountain of *Buachal-ety*, a little West of the King's House. All the other Mountains of *Glen-co* resemble it, and are evidently but naked and solid Rocks, rising on each Side perpendicularly to a great Height from a flat narrow Bottom ; so that in many Places they seem to hang over, and make Approaches, as they aspire,  
towards

My youthful Days have pass'd in War and Strife,  
Now many Evils cloud the Eve of Life.

15 *Makvina*, Daughter of the Hand of Snow !

I was not fightless and forlorn as now,  
When beauteous *Everallin* thought me fair ;  
(The Maid of *Lego* with the dark-brown Hair)  
Whose Heart the graceful *Cormac* could not move,

20 Though he was brave, and worthy of her Love.

A thousand others fought her for a Bride,  
But to a thousand she her Hand denied :

To

towards each other. The Tops of the Ridge of Hills on one Side are irregularly ferrated for three or four Miles, and shot in Places into Spires, which form the most magnificent Part of the Scenery above *Ken-loch-leven*. In the Middle of the Valley is a small Lake, from which flows the River *Coan* or *Cona* above-mentioned. One of the neighbouring Hills is still called *Scorna-fena*, or the Hill of *Fingal's* People.

This Note is mostly taken from Mr. *Pennant's Tour in Scotland*. It is a Pity this Gentleman should forfeit the Impartiality and Candour he professes to display through that Work, by the illiberal Epithets he generally bestows upon an unfortunate Princess, whose Character has been lately justified to

To *Ossian* all confign'd the heav'nly Prize,  
For only he found Favour in her Eyes.

- 25 To woo the Virgin, with a slender Train,  
I cross'd to *Lego's* fable Surge the Main ;  
Twice six redoubted Knights compos'd the Band,  
All valiant Chiefs of *Morven's* streamy Land.  
Confiding in their Strength I hoisted Sail,  
30 And came to *Branno* of the sounding Mail ;  
Who soon the Reason of our Visit guess'd,  
And friendly thus prevented the Request.

To

the World in a masterly and satisfactory Manner. Neither will the Representation he gives of the Transactions of 1745, do Honour to Truth, or the Goodness of his Heart; for if, as he himself says, a Veil should be flung over the Barbarities exercised after the Battle of *Culloden*, why should not the same Indulgence be shown those unhappy People, who experienced every Species of Cruelty that the Revenge of an exasperated Enemy could inflict?

----- *Quis talia fando*  
*Myrmidonum, Dolopumve, aut duri Miles Ulyssæi,*  
*Temperet a lacrymis?*

V. 37.

To court my Daughter have you pass'd the Seas?

The haughty Fair is difficult to please!

35 The first Nobility of *Erin's* Land,

Have long in vain solicited her Hand.

But, gallant Son of Fame! (addressing me)

Thrice happy is the Maid design'd for thee!

Did twelve bright Daughters in my Palace shine,

40 Of all the twelve the choicest should be thine.

He spoke: Then traversing the spacious Dome,

Conducted us to *Everallin's* Room,

And forcing back the founding Valves, display'd

The rich Apartments of the dark-hair'd Maid.

Joy

V. 37. *But, gallant Son of Fame! &c.*] *Branno* here pays a high Compliment to *Offian*, and shews his Family to have been very much respected. *Fingal* was a Prince of the greatest Merit. He reigned over a considerable Territory; he was enriched by the Spoils of the *Roman* Province; he was ennobled by his Victories and great Actions; and was in all Respects a Person 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. These Things considered, it is no Way to be wondered at, that his Alliance should be courted by the neighbouring Potentates.

45 Joy kindled in our manly Breasts, while pleas'd  
We on the bright Perfection wond'ring gaz'd,  
And with uplifted Hands and Eyes express'd  
Our Admiration, and her Beauties blest'd.

*Cormac*, enrag'd a Stranger should obtain  
50 Whom he and *Erin's* Sons had woo'd in vain,  
Conven'd his People on a neighb'ring Height,  
Resolv'd by Force to vindicate his Right.  
Seven of his bravest Knights, in rich Attire,  
Flam'd on the Hill, and set the Heath on Fire.  
55 The first was *Colla*, *Durra* near him stood,  
Who often bath'd his Sword in hostile Blood;  
Next *Tago* shone in Arms, and at his Side  
The mighty *Toscar*, long in Battle try'd;  
Great *Frestal* the victorious then appear'd,  
60 And *Dairo* for his happy Deeds rever'd:

*Dala*



*Dala* came laſt of the heroic Band,  
Who in the narrow Way himſelf a Hoſt could ſtand.  
Such were the Chiefs my youthful Rival led,  
Who in Bravado wav'd on high his Blade,  
65 And ſtately moving on, with graceful Mien,  
Deſcended with his Champions to the Plain.

          Theſe mighty Men of *Cormac* to oppoſe,  
Seven of his ſtouteſt Heroes *Oſſian* choſe.  
Tall *Ullin*, ſtormy Son of War ! was one,  
70 And *Mullo*, fam'd for gen'rous Actions done :  
With theſe the noble *Scelacba* appear'd,  
And *Oglan* for his Bravery preferr'd.  
The next was *Cerdal*, dreadful in his Wrath !  
And *Duma-riccan*'s horrid Brows of Death :  
75 And why ſhould fearleſs *Ogar* laſt be nam'd,  
So loud by Fame on *Ardven*'s Hills proclaim'd ?

He

He first encounter'd *Dala* Hand to Hand,  
The strongest Warrior of the adverse Band ;

Foot

V. 77. *He first encounter'd Dala, &c.*] Here the Poet executes exactly like an able Painter, who in a Landscape represents the greater Part of Objects at a Distance, and delineates only a few with all their minutest Particularities, Shadowings, and middle Colours. In the Action here before us, the Heroes, on each Side, are enumerated; and form, as it were, a general Group on the Back-ground. But *Dala*, *Ogar*, *Cermac* and *Ossian*, are produced on the Fore-ground just before our Eyes; we not only see them detached from the rest, but think we discern their Gestures, Blows, and Manner of Fighting; and all this in a few and masterly Strokes; a Method, though difficult, absolutely necessary. A minute Detail of every single Circumstance, would be extremely tedious: *Ossian* therefore leaves something for the Mind of the Reader to discover, which, if expressed, would only crowd and overcharge the Description; and this, strictly speaking, is the Art of poetical Painting. In a Collection of ancient historical Monuments of the North, published by *Biørner*, a learned *Swede*, there is a Description which very much resembles this here of *Ossian*. “*Grunder*, perceiving *Grymer* rushing furiously through opposing Battalions, cries aloud, *Thou alone remainest to engage with me in single Combat. It is now thy Turn to feel the Keenness of my Sword.* Their Sabres, like dark and threatening Clouds, hang dreadful in Air. *Grymer's* Weapon darts down like a Thunder-bolt: their Swords furiously strike: they are bathed in Gore. *Grymer* cleaves the Casque of his Enemy, hews his Armour in Pieces, and pours the Light into his Bosom. *Grunder* sinks to the Ground; and *Grymer* gives a dreadful Shout of Triumph.” This Picture is done with a masterly Hand. The capital Circumstances are judiciously selected; and the Narration is compact and rapid.

Foot fet to Foot, and Shield to Shield oppos'd,  
80 With clashing Swords the wrathful Champions clos'd :  
So meet the Waves when diff'rent Winds descend,  
And for the Empire of the Seas contend.  
The Dagger in the Hand of *Ogar* flam'd,  
(A Weapon he in single Fight esteem'd)  
85 With this he wounded in the Side his Foe,  
And rushing forward, close pursu'd the Blow,  
Till with repeated Stabs he laid him low. }

The stormy Battle turn'd : I took the Field,  
And drove my Jav'lin thrice through *Cormac's* Shield ;  
90 Thrice on my echoing Shield he likewise struck,  
And thrice his Spear repell'd in Shivers broke.  
At length on Earth my Rival vanquish'd lay,  
I with my Fauchion lopp'd his Head away ;  
And by a curling Lock, still dropping Blood,  
95 Aloft in Air the ghastly Trophy shew'd.

His Followers saw, and turning from the View,  
With Terror struck, precipitately flew.  
Ah fair *Malvina* ! when I fought that Day,  
Who durst have told me that a Time would be,  
100 When sad, forsaken, and depriv'd of Sight,  
I should in Sorrow waste the tedious Night ?  
Who thus had prophecy'd, his harden'd Mail  
Must have been Proof against the Force of Steel ;  
And not his Match in Battle to be found,  
105 Or *Offian*'s Arm had stretch'd him on the Ground.

On *Lena*'s Heath now died away the Sound  
Of warbling Harps, and all in Sleep were drown'd.

The

V. 98. *Ah fair Malvina! when I fought that Day, &c.*] *Offian* here boasts of his former Prowess, but does it in such a Manner as not to displease. As the Mention of the great Actions of his Youth immediately suggested to him the helpless Situation of his Age ; so we cannot here despise him for selfish Praise, but feel for his Misfortunes.

V. 106.

The Blast inconstant blew : A neighb'ring Oak,  
 Lash'd by the Wind, its lofty Branches shook,  
 110 And strew'd me o'er with Leaves. I dozing lay,  
 With *Everallin* in my Thought, when she,  
 In all the Bloom of heav'nly Beauty bright,  
 Stood on a Cloud confest before my Sight ;  
 The crystal Tears fast rolling down her Cheek,  
 115 She call'd upon me with a tender Shriek.

Oh

V. 106. *On Lena's Heath, &c.*] The Poet returns to his Subject. If one could fix the Time of the Year in which the Action of the Poem happened, from the Scene described here, I should be tempted to place it in Autumn. The Trees shed their Leaves, and the Winds are variable, both which Circumstances agree with that Season of the Year.

V. 115. *She call'd upon me with a tender Shriek.*] As *Offian's* supernatural Beings are described with a surprising Force of Imagination, so are they introduced 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 a Retreat: That of *Everallin*, in this Place, which calls upon *Offian* to rise and rescue their Son from Danger: And that of *Agandecca* hereafter, which appears in order to move *Fingal* to Pity, by mourning for the approaching Destruction of her Kinsmen and People. In other Poems, Ghosts sometimes appear, when invoked, to

Oh *Ossian* rise! and save my lovely Boy;  
 Save *Oscar* Prince of Men, our mutual Joy!  
 Near the red Oak, where frothy *Lubar* flows,  
 He fights encompass'd by a Host of Foes.  
 She said, and sunk into her Cloud: With Fear  
 Up-springing, I that Moment grasp'd my Spear,  
 And strode in rattling Arms along the Plains,  
 Rehearsing, as I went, heroic Strains.  
 Like distant Thunder *Lochlin* heard, and flew  
 125 Before I reach'd them, for the Voice they knew.

Young

foretel Futurity; frequently, according to the Notions of the Times, they came as Fore-runners of Misfortune or Death, to those whom they visited; sometimes they informed their Friends, at a Distance, of their own Death; and sometimes they are introduced to heighten the Scenery on some great and solemn Occasion.

V. 124. *Like distant Thunder Lochlin heard, and flew.*] *Ossian* gives the Reader a high Idea of himself. His very Song frightens the Enemy. The same Situations will suggest the same Images to Bards, who could not possibly have the least Communication with each other. Rattling Arms, convey

Young *Oscar* follow'd through the gloomy Shade,  
And in their Rear a dreadful Carnage made.

I call'd aloud --- Forbear, my Son, forbear,  
Nor venture farther, though you know me near.  
130 He heard my Call, (which founded like the Roar  
Of wint'ry Floods that from the Mountains pour)  
And check'd his Course, obedient to Command,  
Though youthful Ardour urg'd his conqu'ring Hand.  
As swift in clanging Steel approach'd the Boy,  
135 My beating Bosom felt a Parent's Joy.

Why

convey the same Idea as the ἀράωνται δὲ τευχὰ ἐπ' αὐτῷ of *Homer*. His re-hearing, in Time of Danger, heroic Strains, is altogether conformable to the Practice of the *Greeks*, who sung the Hymn to Battle, as they moved to charge the Enemy. These Hymns, like the War-Songs so frequently met with in *Offian's* Compositions, recommended Valour by the Example of ancient Times, encouraged the generous Feelings of the Mind with Panegyric, and animated the Living to noble Deeds, by celebrating the great Actions of the Dead. The best calculated Subjects to inspire the Breast of a Soldier with enthusiastic Bravery.



Why would you, Father, (he began) restrain  
 My slaught'ring Sword, till headlong to the Main  
 I chas'd the Foe, and heap'd with Dead the Plain?  
 Where, thund'ring from the Rocks, the Stream falls down,  
 140 They fierce encounter'd *Fillan* and thy Son;  
 And more in Number, press'd us hard in Fight,  
 Till by thy Voice dismay'd they took to Flight.  
 But as, when Winds descend by Night and sweep,  
 In giddy Squalls, the vast tempestuous Deep,  
 145 The Billows roll o'er *Mora's* level Sand,  
 In seeming Order, to assault the Strand:  
 O'er *Lena* thus the Sons of *Lochlin* throng;  
 Rank follows Rank, and Man drives Man along.

The

V. 136. *Why would you, Father, &c.*] *Offan* never fails to give a fine Character of his beloved Son. His Speech to his Father is that of a Hero; it contains the Submission due to a Parent, and the Warmth that becomes a young Warrior. There is a Propriety in dwelling here, and in the following Battle, on the Actions of *Oscar*; as the beautiful *Malvina*, to whom the Book is addressed, was in Love with that Hero.

V. 161.

The frequent Shrieks of death-foreboding Ghosts,  
150 Resound o'er all the solitary Coasts ;  
And angry Meteors, blazing from afar,  
Prognosticate the wasteful Rage of War.  
I must these Tidings to the King unfold,  
Who is in Danger more than Mortal bold.  
155 His great Example will the rest excite,  
Where he appears no Terrors can affright !  
So, midst furrounding Storms, the Sun serene  
Looks calm in Heav'n, and cheers the hopeless Swain.

He went ; but found *Fingal* upon the Field  
160 Already wak'd, and leaning on his Shield :  
(The same which *Trenmor* in his Battles bore,  
And his Successors in the regal Pow'r.)

He

V. 161. *The same which Trenmor in his Battles bore, &c.*] *Trenmor* was so renowned a Warrior, that his Successors ever after made Use of his Shield in their Wars. *Fingal* seems to have had a particular Veneration for  
it.

He had in Sleep to *Agandecca* spoke,  
And her Departure had his Slumbers broke :

She

it. When he prepared for an Expedition, the usual Ceremonies were, a Bard at Midnight went to the Hall, where the Tribes feasted upon solemn Occasions, raised the War-Song, and thrice called the Spirits of their deceased Ancestors to come, on their Clouds, to behold the Actions of their Children. He then fixed the Shield of *Trenmor* on a Tree, on the Rock of *Selma*, striking it, at Times, with the blunt End of a Spear, and singing the War-Song between. Thus he did for three successive Nights, and, in the mean Time, Messengers were dispatched to call together the Tribes ; or, to use an ancient Expression, *to call them from all their Streams*. This Phrase alludes to the Situation of the Residence of the Clans, which were generally fixed in Valleys, where the Torrents of the neighbouring Mountains were collected into one Body, and became large Streams, or Rivers. *The Lifting of the Shield*, was the Phrase for beginning a War.

V. 163. *He had in Sleep to Agandecca spoke.*] It is a great Advantage to *Offian'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. *Offian'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 *Offian's* Machinery has Dignity on 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

165 She came to mourn the People of her Land,  
 Who were that Day to perish by his Hand.

Sad, lonely, slow, before the Break of Day,  
 O'er *Lena's* Heath she journey'd from the Sea.  
 The Cloud that bore her was of desert Mist,  
 170 Which, folding like a Garment round her Waist, }  
 At once sustain'd, and serv'd her for a Vest.  
 Her melancholy Face was pale to Sight,  
 As dewy Vapours edg'd with adverse Light :

Tears

the Poetry. A light and gay Mythology, like *Homer's*, would have been perfectly unsuitable to the Subjects on which *Offian'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 Sunbeams; fair-moving on the Plain; their Forms white and bright; their Voices sweet; and their Visits to Men propitious. "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." *The Songs of Selma.*

Tears dimm'd her Cheek; she mournful took her Stand  
 175 Beside the King, and rais'd her shadowy Hand  
 In Act to speak; but failing Heart to say,  
 In Silence turn'd her weeping Eyes away.

To

V. 176. *But failing Heart to say, &c.*] The Embarrassment of *Agandecca* is very natural. She came to plead in Behalf of her Countrymen, and her Brother *Swaran* in particular; but what could be said in Favour of a Prince who unjustly invaded the Territory of another, and had already, in a haughty Manner, refused the civil Offer made him by *Fingal*? The raising her dim Hand over the King, the turning away her Eyes, and afterwards departing suddenly on the Winds, are Circumstances well-imagined and affecting. Several other Appearances of Spirits might be pointed out, as among the most picturesque and sublime Passages of *Ossian's* Poetry. The Circumstances of them are considerably diversified; and the Scenery always suited to the Occasion. Could a human Imagination conceive any Thing more awful than the following Vision? “*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 could prepare the Fancy more happily, than the Scene described, for the Introduction of an Apparition. “*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 sigh'd thrice over the Hero; and thrice the Winds of Night roared

To her (deep sighing) thus began the Chief ---

Why, *Agandecca*, dost thou hide thy Grief?

180 What makes the Daughter of the Clouds look pale!

Ah! wilt thou not to me the Cause reveal?

While yet he spoke, without Reply, she pass'd

Upon the Pinions of a sounding Blast,

That instantaneous snatch'd her from his Sight,

185 And left him wailing midst the Shades of Night.

*Fingal,*

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* and *Roman* Poets. They bring to Mind that noble Description in the Book of *Job*, IV. Verse 13. "In the Horror of a Vision by Night, when deep Sleep is wont to hold Men, Fear seized upon me, and Trembling, and all my Bones were affrighted: And when a Spirit passed before me, the Hair of my Flesh stood up. There stood One, whose Countenance I knew not, an Image before my Eyes; and I heard the Voice, as it were, of a gentle Wind, saying, Shall Man be justified in Comparison of God?"

\* *The War of Carols.*

*Fingal*, awaken'd by the Gust of Wind,  
Up-starting, still beheld her in his Mind ;  
And then was musing on his nightly Dream,  
When youthful *Oscar* to alarm him came.

- 190 He heard his Footsteps, as he nearer drew,  
And turning to the Sound, his Grandson knew :  
(For then the blushing Morn, o'er *Ullin's* Streams,  
Had horizontal shed its early Beams.)  
Him thus the Monarch question'd as he arm'd ---  
195 Are *Lochlin's* vanquish'd Heroes much alarm'd ?  
Or through the Foam of Ocean do they fly ?  
Or dare they yet a second Battle try ?  
But why inquire ! for now approaching near,  
Upon the Wind their threat'ning Shouts I hear.  
200 Haste ! over *Lena* spread the dire Alarms,  
Awake our Friends, and bid them stand to Arms.

The King himself at *Lubar's* Stone appear'd,  
And thrice his dreadful Voice like Thunder rear'd.

The



The frighted Deer from *Cromla's* Fountains bound,  
 205 And trembling on their Hills the Rocks resound.

Dark

V. 202. *The King himself at Lubar's Stone appear'd.*] The Stone here mentioned was, probably, one of those rude Columns, or unshapely Pillars, frequently to be met with in the North of *Scotland*. They are thought to have been Druidical Altars, or set up as Memorials to perpetuate the Remembrance of Persons or Things in old inaccurate Times. Thus, *Gen.* XXXV. Verse 19. "*Rachel* died; and was buried in the Highway that leadeth to *Ephrata*, this is *Bethlehem*. And *Jacob* erected a Pillar over her Sepulchre: This is the Pillar of *Rachel's* Monument to this Day." Again, *2 Sam.* XVIII. Verse 18. "*Absalom* in his Life Time had taken and reared up for himself a Pillar, which is in the King's Dale; for he said, I have no Son to keep my Name in Remembrance: And he called the Pillar after his own Name, and it is called to this Day *Absalom's Place*." It is probable also, that the Pillars of the Sons of *Seth*, mentioned by *Josephus*, (*Antiq.* Lib. 1. c. 2.) were of this Sort. The Pillars to be still found in *Scotland*, might have been likewise Places of Worship upon private Occasions; of which there are also Instances in Scripture. *Gen.* XXVIII. Verse 18. "And *Jacob* arising in the Morning, took the Stone which he had laid under his Head, and set it up for a Monument, pouring Oil upon the Top of it. And he called the Name of the City *Bethel*, (*i. e.* the House of God) which before was called *Luz*." From this Passage it plainly appears, that *Jacob's* Stone was erected for a double Purpose; one temporary, as a Libation of Thanksgiving; and the other perpetual, as a Monument of his Vision to remain to Posterity. There is therefore great Reason to believe that the Children of the Dispersion carried with them the same Observances into the several Quarters of the World in which they settled; since we yet find such Numbers of these Stones in different Parts, corresponding

Dark as the show'ry Clouds that Westward rise,  
Before a Storm, and blacken Half the Skies ;

Loud

sponding to the Description given by the Scripture, of those in *Syria* and *Palestine* ; which, in the patriarchal Times, were the approved Modes of divine Worship ; the sacred Writings being full of local Consecrations, of Oblations, of Sacrifices offered, and of Covenants stipulated, in this Manner, between God and Man. In Process of Time, the Use of them, as Memorials of Things sacred, was forgot ; for Mankind converted them into Objects of Superstition, and by Degrees planted Groves on high Places, and built Temples for the Purposes of idolatrous Worship. Wherefore God, even in the Days of *Moses*, gives positive Order to the *Jews*, not to adore those Pillars. (*Levit. XXVI. Verse 1.*) “ You shall not make to yourselves any Idol or graven Thing, neither shall you erect *Pillars*, or set up a remarkable *Stone* in your Land to adore it, for I am the Lord your God.” See *Antiquit. of Ireland, translated by Walter Harris, Esq. Chap. 16 and 17.*

V. 206. *Dark as the show'ry Clouds, &c.*] 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 Compositions for ever,  
because

Loud as a hundred Mountain Currents pour,  
That tumbling down the Rocks confus'dly roar ;  
210 Around *Fingal*, his Summons when they heard,  
The *Caledonian* Forces swift repair'd.  
His well-known Voice was pleasant to their Ears ;  
Oft had it call'd them to the Fight of Spears,  
When he himself, the Partner of their Toils,  
215 To Conquest led them, and enrich'd with Spoils.

Charm'd with the gen'rous Ardour they exprefs'd,  
The King advancing thus the Host address'd.

Ye

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 and mountainous Region.

- Ye Children of the Storm ! to Battle pour,  
 Now unconstrain'd, and bathe your Swords with Gore.
- 220 The Glory of this Day to *Gaul* I yield ;  
 Beneath his Conduct boldly take the Field,  
 While I, a Witness of your matchless Might,  
 Shall view the Conflict from yon neighb'ring Height ;  
 And brandishing in Air my glitt'ring Blade,
- 225 Be near to help you in the Hour of Need.  
 But may you want no Help, while *Morni's* Son,  
 The first of mighty Warriors, leads you on ;  
 Who is this Day to conquer in my Right,  
 That future Bards his Actions may recite.
- 230 But O ye Ghosts of ancient Chiefs, that dwell  
 On lofty *Cromla*, and the Tempests swell !  
 Convey with Joy to your empyreal Hall,  
 Those of my People that are doom'd to fall ;

And

V. 232. *Convey with Joy to your empyreal Hall, &c* ] The *Celtic* Nations  
 had some Ideas of Rewards, and perhaps of Punishments after Death.  
 Those

And let them peaceful on your Mountains stay,  
235 Till *Lena's* Blast can waft them o'er the Sea ;  
That, bright descending from the Clouds of Air,  
They may hereafter to my Dreams repair.

Young *Fillan ! Oscar* of the dark-brown Hair !  
And beauteous *Ryno* with the pointed Spear !  
240 This Day with *Gaul* to War I fend you forth ;  
His Deeds behold, and imitate his Worth.

Like

Those who behaved, in Life, with Bravery and Virtue, were received with Joy, in the airy Halls of their Fathers ; *but the dark in Soul*, to use the Expression of the Poet, *were spurned away from the Habitations of Heroes, to wander on all the Winds*. From what *Fingal* says here, we may likewise gather, that the Souls of those who fell, or died in a foreign Land, were in an unsettled State, till such Time as a favourable Wind transported them into their own Country. Another Opinion which prevailed in those Times, tended not a little to make Individuals emulous to excel one another in martial Atchievements. It was thought, that, in *the Hall of Clouds*, every one had a Seat, raised above others, in Proportion as he excelled them in Valour when he lived.

Like his in Battle let your Swords descend,  
Like him Destruction through yon Host extend :  
Your Father's Friends preserve from hostile Rage,  
245 And chiefly those enfeebled now by Age.  
Should here in *Inisfail* my Sons be slain,  
*Fingal* behind them will not long remain ;  
For soon must come the Time, when cold and pale,  
We shall together on the Tempest fail,  
250 And o'er the barren Hills of *Cona* fly,  
By rapid Whirlwinds borne along the Sky.

Thus having bid them *Morni*'s Son obey,  
He strode majestic from the Field away.  
As, dark receding from the rising Morn,  
255 A Cloud of Thunder to the West is borne,  
Surrounded

V. 254. *As, dark receding from the rising Morn, &c.*] The King's Retreat from the Field is no less glorious than his first Appearance and Advance

Surrounded with the Lightnings of the Sky,  
 That shoot by Fits their fiery Beams from high ;  
 So clad in Arms, that cast a dreadful Light,  
 The King of *Morven* now retires from Fight.  
 260 Two Spears are in his Hand, while, white as Snow,  
 Upon the Winds his Locks incumbent flow :  
 Three Bards, selected from the tuneful Train,  
 With aged Steps, attend him from the Plain :  
 The King precedes, and anxious for his Friends,  
 265 Looks often back as he the Hill ascends ;  
 Till, plac'd aloft on *Cromla's* rocky Brow,  
 Which far o'erlook'd th' extended Heath below,

He

Advance to War. The Comparifon introduced is noble and sublime ; in the whole Circle of Nature another could not be found, that impreffes a better Idea of the Splendour of his Armour, and the majestic Manner of his going off. His looking fo often back, fhews the tender Regard he had for his People ; and the glittering of his Sword, raifes Sensations of Terror in a Mind already agitated with the Thought of feeing two warlike Nations on the Point of meeting in Battle.



He stood, and wav'd his Sword, which, as he turn'd,  
In flaming Circles, like a Light'ning burn'd.

270 Joy rose in *Oscar's* Face, when he beheld  
*Fingal* to *Morni's* Son resign the Field :

The

V. 270. *Joy rose in Oscar's Face, &c.*] In the natural Representation of human Characters, there can be no Doubt but *Homer* excels 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 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 *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, over-bearing, but gallant and generous *Calmar*. *Calmar* hurries *Cutbullin* 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 *Cutbullin* to his Retreat, counsels 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. The amiable Warmth of the young Warrior in this Place; his eager Impetuosity in the Day of Action; his Passion for Fame; his Submission to his Father;

The ardent Transport of a martial Heart,  
Glow'd on his Cheek, and made the Tears to start :  
While like a Beam of Fire the Sword he shook,  
275 His Sire he fought in Haste, and smiling spoke.

O Ruler of the stormy Fight of Spears !  
Lo ! where on *Cromla's* Side the King appears !  
He leaves the War to *Gaul*, do thou the same,  
Retire like him, and give me *Ossian's* Fame.  
280 But should I, vanquish'd in a foreign Land,  
Enhance the Glory of some stronger Hand,  
Let *Toscar's* Daughter the sad Story know ;  
And should Affliction rack her Breast of Snow,

A. kind

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.

A kind Protector, and a Parent prove,  
 285 To that dear lonely Sun-beam of my Love :  
 Who now perhaps, impatient of Delay,  
 Looks from some Rock that overhangs the Sea ;  
 And, while the Blast divides her flowing Hair,  
 For absent *Oscar* sheds a tender Tear.  
 290 Appease the Anguish of her troubled Mind ;  
 Inform her that I ride the passing Wind,  
 A pensive, lonely, melancholy Form,  
 Till she hereafter meets me in the Storm.

So

V. 286. *Who now perhaps, &c.*] The Apostrophe, or bestowing a momentary Presence to a Person absent, or dead, is a Figure frequently to be met with in *Ossian*. At the End of the First Book, I remarked a very beautiful One of *Cuthullin* to *Bragela*. This of *Oscar* to his beloved *Malvina* is likewise very fine. Just ready to engage the Enemy, and uncertain whether he shall ever return, he, in the most pathetic Manner, recommends to his Father the Care of his Mistress; but the Moment he mentions her Name, he immediately fancies he beholds her on the Sea Coast looking towards *Ireland*, and weeping for his Absence. When, as if already slain, he begs of *Ossian* to console her, to inform her that his Ghost wanders in the Air, where he shall remain forlorn till she shall join him.

V. 306.

So spoke the mournful Youth --- I then begun ---

295 Let no such gloomy Thoughts alarm my Son :

For him are yet decreed a Length of Days,

And he shall live his Father's Tomb to raise ;

Yet dare I not alone (forgive my Fears)

Expose to *Lochlin's* Rage thy tender Years,

300 Unless myself attend, with Sword and Shield,

To guard thee through the Dangers of the Field ;

That thus instructed by a Father's Hand,

Thou may'st be taught to combat and command.

But should I fall, in Battle overcome !

305 Remember to deposite in my Tomb,

This Bow, this Fauchion, and this Horn ; then raise

A Stone to mark the Place in after Days.

I leave

V. 306. *Then raise A Stone to mark the Place in after Days.*] There are still some Stones to be seen in the North, which were erected as Memorials of some remarkable Transactions of the ancient Chiefs. There are generally found, beneath them, some Piece of Arms, and a Bit of half-burned Wood. The Cause of placing the last there is not mentioned in Tradition. The Custom

I leave behind no helpless Wife, to share  
The pious Duties of thy filial Care,

For

Custom of raising a Stone, in Places where Persons of Distinction fell, has come down to our Days. I am told there is yet to be seen, near the Pass of *Killicrankie*, one erected for the gallant *Viscount Dundee*, who was killed in the Moment of Victory. Doctor *Pittairn*, one of the first of modern *Latin* Poets, wrote the following Epitaph upon him.

*Ultime Scotorum, potuit quo sospite solo  
Libertas patriæ salva fuisse tue :  
Te moriente, novos accepit Scotia cives,  
Accepitque novos, te moriente, Deos.  
Illa tibi supereffe negat, tu non potes illi :  
Ergo Caledoniæ nomen inane vale.  
Tuque vale, gentis prisæ fortissime ductor,  
Ultime Scotorum, atque ultime Grame, vale.*

Translated thus by Mr. *Dryden*, one of the best, if not the very best, of *English* Poets.

Oh last and best of *Scots* ! who didst maintain  
Thy Country's Freedom from a foreign Reign.  
New People fill the Land, now thou art gone,  
New Gods the Temples, and new Kings the Throne.  
*Scotland* and thou did in each other live ;  
Nor couldst thou her, nor could she thee survive.  
Farewel, who dying didst support her State,  
And couldst not fall but in thy Country's Fate.

310 For her I brought from *Lego's* fable Wave,  
Has now, long since, been in the silent Grave.

Such were our Words, and more we had rejoin'd,  
But *Gaul's* loud Voice came growing on the Wind.  
His dazzling broad Sword brandishing in View,  
315 To Death and Wounds the Hero forward flew.

We

V. 313. *But Gaul's loud Voice came growing on the Wind.*] It was the Custom of the *Celtæ* to attack with loud and terrible Outcries, in order to intimidate the Enemy; a Practice prompted by Nature, and formerly used by many Nations. It was not despised even by the *Romans*; for *Cato* the Elder was wont to say, that he had obtained more Victories by the Throats of his Soldiers, than by their Swords; and *Cæsar* applauds his own Soldiers, above those of *Pompey*, for their warlike Shouts. Eagerness to engage is vented in loud Cries: And the Effects are excellent: They redouble the Ardour of those who attack, at the same Time that they strike Terror into the Enemy.

V. 314. *His dazzling broad Sword brandishing in View.*] It was the constant Practice of the *Higblanders* to rush upon the Enemy, threatening, and shaking their Swords, to terrify them, as they ran on. This Method made their Onsets in 1745, very formidable to the *English*. "As an Army cannot consist of Philosophers, a Panic is easily excited by any unwonted Mode of Annoyance. New Dangers are naturally magnified; and Men

M m

accustomed



We swiftly follow'd, pouring o'er the Plain,  
And rush'd with Shouts upon the hostile Train.

As round an oozy Rock's obdurate Sides,  
Dash with tremendous Roar the stormy Tides ;  
320 The Rock remains immoveable, and braves  
The ineffectual Fury of the Waves.

So

accustomed only to exchange Bullets at a Distance, and rather to hear their Enemies than see them, are discouraged and amazed when they find themselves encountered Hand to Hand, and catch the Gleam of Steel flashing in their Faces." *Johnson's Journey to the Western Islands.*

V. 218. *As round an oozy Rock's obdurate Sides, &c.*] This is a noble Comparifon, and greatly heightens the Defcription immediately following, which is remarkably fublime, collecting together in the fewest Words all the Circumftances the moft interefting, and beft calculated to give the Subject an Air of Grandeur. Lord Kames, in the *Elements of Criticifm*, (Chap. IV. *On Grandeur and Sublimity.*) fays, that the capital Rule for reaching the Sublime is, to prefent thofe Parts or Circumftances only which make the greateft Figure, keeping out of View every Thing low or trivial ; for the Mind, elevated by an important Subject, cannot, without Reluctance, be forced down to beftow any Share of its Attention upon Trifles. *Longinus* exemplifies this Rule, by a Comparifon of two Paffages. As many Readers are unacquainted with the dead Languages, and the Originals would



So these attack'd, so those the Charge sustain'd,  
 And hissing Darts an iron Tempest rain'd ;  
 Swords wav'd in Air, or met with clanging Sound,  
 325 Heaps fell on Heaps, and Slaughter bath'd the Ground;  
 For

would swell this Note too much, I shall here give them only in *English*.  
 The first is a Fragment of an old Poem, thus translated by *Pope*.

Ye Pow'rs, what Madness ! how on Ships so frail,  
 (Tremendous Thought !) can thoughtless Mortals fail ?  
 For stormy Seas they quit the pleasing Plain,  
 Plant Woods in Waves, and dwell amidst the Main.  
 Far o'er the Deeps (a trackless Path) they go,  
 And wander Oceans, in Pursuit of Woe.  
 No Ease their Hearts, no Rest their Eyes can find,  
 On Heav'n their Looks, and on the Waves their Mind;  
 Sunk are their Spirits, while their Arms they rear,  
 And Gods are weary'd with their fruitless Pray'r.

The other, from *Homer*, is thus translated by the same.

Bursts as a Wave that from the Cloud impends,  
 And swell'd with Tempests on the Ship descends ;  
 White are the Decks with Foam ; the Winds aloud  
 Howl o'er the Masts, and sing through every Shroud :  
 Pale, trembling, tir'd, the Sailors freeze with Fears,  
 And instant Death on ev'ry Wave appears.

*Iliad*, XV.

For Foot to Foot, and Man with Man engag'd,  
 From Wing to Wing at once the Battle rag'd.  
 Not with more Noife a hundred Hammers light  
 Upon the sparkling Steel with all their Weight,  
 330 Than fell the Strokes ; loud rung the batter'd Shields,  
 And mutual Clamours fill'd the echoing Fields.

*Gaul*, like a Whirlwind that on *Arden* blows,  
 Plunging amidst the thickest of the Foes,  
 Bore down opposing Ranks, the Phalanx tore,  
 335 And steep'd the Heath in Deluges of Gore.  
 No less impetuous, *Swaran* in his Ire  
 Laid *Morven* waste, destructive as a Fire,

That

In the latter Passage, the most striking Circumstances are selected to fill the Mind with Terror and Astonishment. The former is a Collection of minute and low Circumstances, which scatter the Thought, and make no Impression : it is at the same Time full of verbal Antitheses, and low Conceits, extremely improper in a Scene of Distress.

That loudly roaring spreads before the Breeze,  
 Consumes the Desert, fires the crackling Trees,  
 340 And sets the Heath of *Gormal* in a Blaze.

So

V. 337. *Destruitive as a Fire, &c.*] *Homer* has many Similes of this Kind; I shall take the Liberty to transcribe two remarkably beautiful and grand. The first is from the 20th, the second from the 21st Book of the *Iliad*.

Ὡς δ' ἀναμαιμάει βαθεῖ ἄγχεα θεσπιδᾶες πῦρ  
 Οὔρεος ἀζαλέοιο, βαθεῖα δὲ καίεται ὕλη,  
 Πάντη τε κλονέων ἄνεμος φλόγα εἰλυφάζει·  
 Ὡς ὅγε πάντα θύνη σὺν ἔγχρῃ. —

V. 490.

As when a Flame the winding Valley fills,  
 And runs on crackling Shrubs between the Hills,  
 Then o'er the Stubble up the Mountain flies,  
 Fires the high Woods, and blazes to the Skies,  
 This Way and that, the spreading Torrent roars;  
 So sweeps the Hero through the wafted Shores.

POPE.

Ὡς δ' ὅτε καπνὸς ἰὼν εἰς οὐρανὸν εὐρύν ἱκανεῖ  
 Ἀγέος αἰθομένοιο, θεῶν δ' ἐμηνῆς αἰγῆς·  
 Πᾶσι δ' ἔθηκε πόνον, πολλοῖσι δ' ἐκὼς ἐφῆκεν·

V. 522.

As when avenging Flames, with Fury driv'n  
 On guilty Towns exert the Wrath of Heav'n,  
 The pale Inhabitants, some fall, some fly;  
 And the red Vapours purple all the Sky.

POPE.

V. 352.

So these undaunted Chiefs --- No Tongue can tell  
What mighty Numbers in their Fury fell.

Where rag'd the Tumult of the wild Discord,  
Amidst a thousand rose and fell my Sword ;  
345 While youthful *Oscar*, ardent at my Side,  
Dealt Blow for Blow, and spread the Slaughter wide.  
My Soul rejoic'd in Secret, as his Blade  
Flam'd o'er the growing Mountains of the Dead.  
What Valour could, we both perform'd that Day,  
350 And broke at length through *Lochlin's* deep Array, }  
Who routed fled before us in Dismay.  
Loud as the Roar the Voice of Thunder makes,  
When thro' the Clouds the forky Lightning breaks ;

With

V. 352. *Loud as the Roar, &c.*] *Osian*, to give the Idea of an Army in Flight, brings three Comparisons all in a Breath. Stones rushing down a steep Declivity ; the Noise Axes make in a Wood ; and the Echoing of Thunder among the Hills. Though the Poet, in the Heat of Imagination,  
heaps

With such a Noise along the Heath they flew ;  
 355 So flam'd our Fauchions, and the hindmost flew.  
 As in a Forest found the Wood-Men's Strokes,  
 When their broad Axes fell the groaning Oaks :  
 As Stones that riven from some Cliff on high,  
 From Rock to Rock with Force resistless fly :

Thus

heaps all the three indiscriminately together, he certainly meant them to represent different Things. Thunder, the Noise made by the Enemy in their Flight; Stones bounding from Rock to Rock, the Swiftneſs with which they followed them; and the Sound of the Axes, the Force and Echo of their Blows in the Purſuit. I have endeavoured to preſerve the ſame Senſe in the Verſion; but was obliged to tranſpoſe the Similes. A Perſon fettered by Rhyme, without ſome ſuch Liberties, cannot in any Degree keep up to the Spirit of his Original. *Homer* compares the Clashing of Swords in Battle, to the Noiſe made by Labourers cutting down Wood.

Τῶν δ' ὥστε δρυτόμων ἀνδρῶν ὀρυμαγδὸς ὄρυρεν  
 Οὐρεὸς ἐν βήσσηϊ, ἑκάθεν δέ τε γίνετ' ἀκούῃ·

*Iliad*, XVI. V. 633.

As through the shrilling Vale, or Mountain-Ground,  
 The Labours of the Wood-Man's Axe reſound;  
 Blows following Blows are heard re-echoing wide,  
 While crackling Forests fall on every Side.

POPE.

360 Thus swiftly we purfu'd them o'er the Heath,  
Wound follow'd Wound, and Death fucceeded Death.

But, while the Battle prosper'd in our Wing,  
The *Scandinavians*, headed by their King,  
Surrounded *Gaul*, and like the fwelling Tides  
365 Of *Iniftore*, came pouring from all Sides.  
*Fingal* the Hero's Peril view'd with Fear,  
And half arofe, and half affum'd his Spear ;  
But fill in Hopes the Chief without his Aid  
Might overcome, he call'd his Bard and faid ;  
370 *Ullin !* to yon defponding Warrior go,  
Try what the Force of Eloquence can do ;  
Awake to Fame the drooping Heart of *Gaul*,  
The glorious Actions of his Race recal,  
And animate the yielding Fight with Song ;  
375 Song fires the brave, and makes the Soldier ftrong.

The

The hoary Bard obey'd, and in these Words  
 Urg'd to heroic Deeds the King of Swords.  
 Son of the Chief of gen'rous Steeds ! be brave ;  
 High-bounding King of Spears ! thy People save ;  
 380 Strong Arm in ev'ry Peril of the Field !  
 Undaunted Heart that knows not how to yield !  
 Commander of the pointed Arms of Death !  
 Or fell yon Ranks, or drive them o'er the Heath :

Let

V. 378. *Son of the Chief of gen'rous Steeds ! &c.*] The War-Song of *Ullin* varies (says Mr. *Macpherson*) from the rest of the Poem, in the Versification. It runs down like a Torrent, and consists almost entirely of Epithets. The Custom of encouraging Men in Battle with extempore Rhymes, has been carried down almost to our own Days. Several of these War-Songs are extant ; but the most of them are only a Group of Epithets, without Beauty or Harmony, utterly destitute of poetical Merit. The *Scandinavians* had likewise the same Practice ; their *Scalds* were frequently employed in animating the Troops before a Battle. *Hacon*, Earl of *Norway*, in his famous Engagement against the Warriors of *Jomsburg*, had five celebrated Poets, each of whom sung an Ode to the Soldiers ready to engage. *Saxo Grammaticus*, describing a Battle between *Waldemar* and *Sveno*, mentions a *Scald* belonging to the former, who, advancing to the Front of the Army, reproached the latter in a pathetic Ode as the Murderer of his own Father.



Let no white Sail of *Lochlin's* Fleet escape,  
 385 To bound on *Inistore's* dark-rolling Deep.  
 Bright as the Flame of Death, above the Field,  
 Display the blazing Terror of thy Shield ;

Dire

V. 385. *To bound on Inistore's dark-rolling Deep.*] The *Orkney* Islands. These, until the Year 1648, 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 the *Western Isles* of *Scotland*. Their ancient Songs too, are of a different Strain and Character, turning upon magical Incantations and the Evocations of 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 Isles*. There are some Ruins and circular Pales of Stone still remaining, to which a Degree of superstitious Regard is annexed, and which retain, to this Day, the Name of *Loda* or *Loden*. They seem to have differed materially, in their Construction, from those Druidical Monuments which remain in *Britain*, and the *Western Isles*. The Places of Worship among the *Scandinavians* were originally rude and unadorned. In after Ages, when they opened a Communication with other Nations, they adopted their Manners and built Temples. That at *Upsal*, in *Sweden*, was amazingly rich and magnificent. *Harquin*, of *Norway*, built one near *Drontheim*, little inferior to the former ; and it went always under the Name of *Loden*.

Dire as the sparkling Meteor of the Night,  
Whirl round thy Sword, and strike with all thy Might;  
390 Then raise thy Arm, like Thunder be each Stroke,  
Thine Eyes like Fire, thy Heart of solid Rock :  
Son of the Chief of gen'rous Steeds ! employ  
Thy utmost Strength, cut down the Foe --- destroy.

The Hero, animated by this Song,  
395 Once more rush'd furious midst the hostile Throng.  
But *Swaran* came with Battle o'er the Field,  
He aim'd at *Gaul*, and cut in two his Shield :  
The Chief repuls'd, stept back ; the Host he led,  
With Terror struck, precipitately fled.

400 Now dreadful in his Wrath *Fingal* arose,  
And shouting thrice, advanc'd to meet the Foes ;

His

V. 401. *And shouting thrice, advanc'd to meet the Foes.*] The Circum-  
stance of *Fingal's* shouting thrice, with the Effect it had upon the two  
N n 2 Armies,

His Voice, repeated thrice by *Cromla's* Hill,  
 Made *Lochlin* start, and *Morven's* Sons stand still ;  
 Who, conscious of their ignominious Flight,  
 405 Glow'd at the Thought, and fixt on Earth their Sight.

As from the Mountains, to the silent Plain,  
 Slow sails a Cloud in Summer's sultry Reign ;  
 When spent with Heat appear the drooping Flow'rs,  
 And Earth burnt up expects refreshing Show'rs :  
 410 So came the Monarch to relieve his Train,  
 And render'd *Swaran's* Hopes of Conquest vain :

Who,

Armies, has something similar to the Consternation and Confusion of the  
*Trojans* when they heard the Voice of *Achilles*, after the Death of *Patroclus*.

Τρὶς μὲν ὑπὲρ τάφρου μεγάλ' ἔαχε δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς·      Iliad, XVIII. V. 228.  
 Τρὶς δ' ἐνυκλήσαν Τρῶες κλειτοὶ τ' ἐπικούρῃ.

Thrice from the Trench his dreadful Voice he rais'd ;  
 And thrice they fled, confounded and amaz'd.

POPE.

V. 410. *So came the Monarch to relieve his Train.*] *Homer's* Art in mag-  
 nifying the Character of *Achilles* has been universally admired. *Offian*  
 certainly

Who, when he saw the mighty Chief advance,  
 Ceas'd to pursue, and leaning on his Lance,  
 Seem'd unresolv'd awhile. Like some tall Oak,  
 415 That had of old its Head by Lightning struck,  
 And

certainly shews no less Art in aggrandizing *Fingal*. Nothing could be more happily imagined for the Purpose than the whole Management of this last Battle, wherein *Gaul* the Son of *Morni* beseeches *Fingal* to retire, and leave to him and the 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 an 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. Let it be likewise remembered, for the Honour of *Offian*, that *Swaran* on this Occasion makes a much better Figure than *Hector*, who fairly takes to his Heels at the Approach of *Achilles*; and thus not only vilifies his own Character, but, in so doing, detracts from the Merit of his Conqueror. We may also observe, that *Fingal* in this Attitude is compared to a Beam of Heaven; and *Achilles* to a blazing Fire, or the rising Sun.

V. 414. *Like some tall Oak, &c.*] *Homer*, in the 12th Book of the *Iliad*, has a Comparison of this Nature. Speaking of *Polypetes* and *Leonteus*, he says:

And stands o'er *Lubar's* noisy Stream reclin'd,  
Its gray Moss whistling to the passing Wind :

So

—— Ως ὅτε τε ὄρεες οὔρεσιν ὑψικάρηνοι,  
Αἰτ' ἄνεμον μίμουσι καὶ ὑετὸν ἡμάτα πάντα,  
Ρίζησιν μεγάλησι διηνεκέσσ' ἀραρυῖαι·

V. 132.

As two tall Oaks, before the Wall they rise ;  
Their Roots in Earth, their Heads amidst the Skies :  
Whose spreading Arms with leafy Honours crown'd,  
Forbid the Tempest, and protect the Ground ;  
High on the Hills appears their stately Form ;  
And their deep Roots for ever brave the Storm.

POPE.

This Simile has been imitated by *Virgil*, in the Ninth Book of the *Æneis*.

*Quales aëriæ liquentia flumina circum,  
Sive Padi ripis, Athefim seu propter amœnum,  
Confurgunt geminæ quercus, intonsaque cælo  
Attollunt capita, et sublimi vertice nutant.*

Thus two tall Oaks, that *Padus'* Ranks adorn,  
Lift up to Heav'n their leafy Heads unshorn ;  
And overpress'd with Nature's heavy Load,  
Dance to the whistling Winds, and at each other nod.

DRYDEN.

V. 427.

So look'd the King ; till slowly wheeling round,  
He led his Troops to *Lena's* rising Ground :  
420 There he again their broken Ranks restor'd ;  
And on the Hill the Gloom of Battle lower'd.

Meanwhile *Fingal* amidst his People shines  
Bright as a Beam from Heav'n, and all the Lines  
Swift traversing, encourages each Band,  
425 And to the Ensigns issues this Command :  
Without Delay the royal Standards rear ;  
Like Flames that on a hundred Hills appear,  
Let them conspicuous wave on *Lena's* Wind,  
And of th' approaching Fight the Troop remind.

Ye

V. 427. *Like Flames that on a hundred Hills appear.*] Milton, in the First Book of *Paradise Lost*, compares the Standard of *Satan* to a Meteor.

Th' imperial Ensign, which full high advanc'd, V. 536.  
Shone like a Meteor streaming to the Wind.

V. 439.

- 430 Ye Sons of stormy Hills ! my Words obey,  
And we from *Lochlin* yet shall win the Day.  
*Gaul*, strongest Arm of Death ! be not dismay'd ;  
Once more, brave *Connal* ! brandish *Sora*'s Blade ;  
Young *Oscar* of the future Fights proceed,  
435 And prove thy Actions worthy *Trenmor*'s Seed ;  
But *Dermid*, more in martial Dangers tried,  
And *Ossian*, King of Songs, keep near my Side.

- While thus his bravest Chiefs the Monarch cheer'd,  
The Flag of *Morven* wide display'd appear'd.  
440 Emboss'd with Stars of Gold, it shone on high,  
Like the blue Concave of the nightly Sky ;

And

V. 439. *The Flag of Morven wide display'd appear'd.*] *Fingal*'s Standard was distinguished by the Name of *Sun-beam* ; probably on Account of its bright Colour, and its being studded with Gold. To begin a Battle is expressed, in old Composition, by *lifting of the Sun-beam*.

V. 456.



And founding on the Wind, redundant flew,

The joyful Bands exulting at the View.

Nor were the royal Colours spread alone,

445 The diff'rent Tribes rais'd Pennons of their own,

Which now unfurl'd refulgent stream'd in Sight;

While dark behind the Nations move to Fight.

*Fingal*, observing that the Foe possess'd

The higher Grounds, his Heroes thus address'd :

450 Behold how *Lochlin's* gloomy Ranks divide !

Like broken Clouds they line the Mountain's Side.

So when the rapid Flames, by Tempests drove,

Have damag'd in their wasteful Course the Grove,

The Skies are seen between the naked Boughs,

455 And red behind the passing Meteor glows.

But of my Friends, let each in War defy

A Chief of those, who frown so stern on high ;

Then

V. 456. *But of my Friends, let each in War defy, &c.*] *Fingal* displays

O o

every

Then shall of yonder Host but few remain,  
To bound o'er *Inistore's* dark Waves again.

- 460 When *Morni's* Son --- Myself will undertake  
The sev'n tall Chiefs from *Lano's* misty Lake.  
Let *Inistore's* dark Tyrant, *Oscar* said,  
Come on, and prove the Son of *Ossian's* Blade :  
If he's thy Choice, cried *Connal* Heart of Steel !  
465 The King of *Iniscon* this Arm shall feel :  
Then black-hair'd *Dermid* --- *Mudan's* Chief or I,  
On *Lena's* Heath this Day shall vanquish'd lie.

My

every Talent of a great and wise Commander. He no sooner joins the Army, than we see him immediately passing from Rank to Rank, turning them from Flight, and restoring their Order. He bids his Standard to be advanced against the Enemy, and calling the principal Officers by Name, promises, if they will only behave gallantly, still to recover the Day. Nothing could more effectually contribute to insure Success, than making the Chieftains attack separately at the Head of their own Divisions ; whereby the Valour of each becoming conspicuous, all out of Emulation would be sure to perform their utmost.

My Choice, though now so weak and void of Sight !

Was to encounter *Torman's* King in Fight ;

470 I promis'd to extend him on the Field,

And bear triumphant off his dark-brown Shield.

When ev'ry Chief had singled out his Man,

The chearful Monarch with a Smile began.

May all my People to their Wish succeed,

475 And by their Hands the hostile Squadrons bleed.

*Fingal* shall meet the King of Ocean's Rage :

He said, and gave the Signal to engage.

Now, like a hundred diff'rent Winds that pour

Swift from their Caves, and in the Valleys roar ;

At

V. 476. *Fingal shall meet the King of Ocean's Rage.*] None of the Heroes, in their Choice, durst presume to oppose *Swaran* ; by which *Offian* pays a much higher Compliment to the Valour of *Fingal*, than is done to that of *Achilles* by *Homer*, who makes several of his Heroes equal, if not even superior to *Heſtor*.

480 At once, divided, dark, with deaf'ning Sound,  
       We all rush'd on, and *Cromla* echo'd round.  
       What Tongue can tell the Number of the Slain,  
       When fierce in Fight we charg'd the adverse Train ?  
       Our Arms prevail'd, the *Scandinavian* Ranks  
 485 Before us fell, like *Cona's* tumbling Banks.  
       To Vengeance fir'd, in Blood we bath'd our Hands,  
       And gave no Quarter to the routed Bands,  
       But slaughter'd all ; till every Chief fulfill'd  
       The Promise giv'n, and his Opponent kill'd.

490 As we have sat conversing, lovely Dame !  
       By rapid *Branno's* hoarse-refounding Stream,

My

V. 490. *As we have sat conversing, lovely Dame ! &c.*] The Poet addresses himself here to *Malvina*. The sudden Transition from the Hurry and Carnage of Battle, to the peaceful placid Scene here described, is superlatively beautiful ; and gives as much Pleasure, as when in Music there is a sudden Transition from rough and noisy, to soft and tender Accords. Besides, the Reader, by this Pause, is more sensibly struck with the grand Comparison of the violent Storm of Rain, Thunder, and Lightning which immediately follows.

V. 498.

My Eyes have often on thy Bosom dwell'd  
 With secret Pleasure, as it gently swell'd,  
 And match'd the Whiteness of the Plumes that deck  
 495 The silver-breasted Swan ; when on the Lake  
 Above the curling Waves she sidelong sails,  
 And in her ruffled Wing blows fresh the Gales.  
 What Time thou hast beheld the Sun, like Fire,  
 (A Sign of Storms) behind his Cloud retire ;

The

V. 498. *What Time thou hast beheld the Sun, like Fire.*] This Description of the setting Sun, shews the *Celtic* Bard to have been versed in the malignant Aspects of that Luminary before a Tempest. *Virgil*, observing the different Signs that forebode Changes of Weather, remarks the same.

*Sol quoque et exorians, et cum se condet in undas,  
 Signa dabit : ----*

----- *Nam sæpe videmus*

*Ipsus in vultu varios errare colores :*

*Cæruleus pluviæ denunciat, igneus euros,*

*Sin macule incipient rutilo immiscerier igni,*

*Omnia tunc pariter vento, nimisque videbis*

*Fervere. -----*

Georgic. Lib. 1.

Above

500 The Skies look wild, and o'er the Mountain's Head  
 The starless Night her fable Mantle spread ;  
 While in the Desert hollow Gusts of Wind,  
 Unfrequent blowing, tell the Storm's behind.

And

Above the rest, the Sun, who never lies,  
 Foretels the Change of Weather in the Skies : ---  
 For oft we find him finishing his Race,  
 With various Colours erring on his Face ;  
 If fiery red his glowing Globe descends,  
 High Winds and furious Tempests he portends.  
 But if his Cheeks are swoln with livid blue,  
 He bodes wet Weather by his wat'ry Hue.  
 If dusky Spots are vary'd on his Brow,  
 And, streak'd with red, a troubled Colour show ;  
 That fullen Mixture shall at once declare  
 Winds, Rain, and Storms, and elemental War.

DRYDEN.

V. 502. *While in the Desert hollow Gusts of Wind, &c.*] This is exactly the same, and might have been a Translation of the *Latin* Poet.

*Continuo ventis surgentibus aut freta ponti  
 Incipiunt agitata tumescere, et aridus altis  
 Montibus audiri fragor, aut resonantia longe  
 Littora misceri, et nemorum increbrescere murmur.*

Georgic. Lib. 1.

For

And now at once the rushing Show'rs descend,  
 505 Loud Claps of Thunder the vast Concave rend,  
 The

For ere the rising Winds begin to roar,  
 The working Seas advance to wash the Shore;  
 Soft Whispers run along the leafy Wood,  
 And Mountains whistle to the murm'ring Flood.

DRYDEN.

V. 504. *And now at once the rushing Show'rs descend, &c.*] This sudden bursting of the Storm has a fine Effect. All the Circumstances of *Ossian's* Compositions are favourable to the Sublime, more perhaps than to any other Species of Beauty. Accuracy and Correctness; artful 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 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.

----- *Ruit arduus æther,  
 Et pluvia ingenti sata læta boumque labores  
 Diluit. Implentur fossæ, et cava flumina crescunt  
 Cum sonitu, fervetque fretis spirantibus æquor.  
 Ipse Pater, media nimborum in nocte, coruscâ*

*Fulmina*



The distant Rocks with livid Lightnings glare,  
On Beams of Fire the Spirits dart through Air,

And

*Fulmina molitur dextrâ. Quo maxima motu  
Terra tremit : Fugère feræ ! et mortalia corda  
Per gentes humilis stravit pavor. Ille flagranti  
Aut Atho, aut Rhodopen, aut alta Ceraunia telo  
Dejicit : Ingeminant austri, et densissimus imber :  
Nunc nemora ingenti vento, nunc littora plangunt.*

Georgic. Lib. 1.

The lofty Skies at once come pouring down,  
The promis'd Crop and golden Labours drown.  
The Dikes are fill'd, and with a roaring Sound  
The rising Rivers float the nether Ground ;  
And Rocks the bellowing Voice of boiling Seas rebound.  
The Father of the Gods his Glory shrouds,  
Involv'd in Tempests, and a Night of Clouds.  
And from the middle Darknefs flashing out,  
By Fits he deals his fiery Bolts about.  
Earth feels the Motions of her angry God,  
Her Entrails tremble, and her Mountains nod ;  
And flying Beasts in Forests seek Abode :  
Deep Horror seizes every human Breast,  
Their Pride is humbled, and their Fear confess'd ;  
While he from high the rolling Thunder throws,  
And fires the Mountains with repeated Blows :  
The Rocks are from their old Foundations rent ;  
*The Winds redouble, and the Rains augment :*

*The*

And swoln to Torrents down their echoing Hills  
With Rage impetuous burst the roaring Rills.  
510 Such was the Noise and Tumult of the Fight,  
When overthrown we put the Foe to Flight.  
Why fights the Dame? Let *Lochlin's* Maids complain.  
That Day the People of their Land were slain ;  
Our bloody Swords wav'd o'er them as they fled,  
515 And strew'd the Heath with ghastly Heaps of Dead.  
But what avails the melancholy Thought,  
That I in Battle then the foremost fought ;

Since

*The Waves on Heaps are dash'd against the Shore,  
And now the Woods, and now the Billows roar.*

DRYDEN.

The Tone of Mind produced by the Image of *Jupiter*, throwing down huge Mountains with his Thunderbolts, (which is hyperbolically sublime, and even above any Thing *Osian* says on the Subject) is so discordant to the Idea of Winds growling and Rains pouring down, which immediately follows, that *Virgil* has been censured for letting the Mind of the Reader fall by too sudden a Transition ; a Fault often attending a strained Elevation, it being somewhat difficult, after such a Flight, to descend sweetly and easily to the ordinary Strain of the Subject. See *Elements of Criticism*. Chap. IV. *Grandeur and Sublimity*.

Since now, of Kindred and of Sight depriv'd,  
I have the Vigour of those Days surviv'd ?  
520 *Malvina* cease, on me thy Tears bestow,  
To weep is all that *Offian* can do now.

On *Lena* still the Work of Death proceeds,  
By great *Fingal* an aged Warrior bleeds ;

Gray-

V. 523. *By great Fingal an aged Warrior bleeds, &c.*] The Incidents which *Offian* has chosen to diversify his Battles, are interesting, and never fail to awaken our Attention. Want of Particularity in the Wounds, and Diversity in the Fall of those that are slain, have been among the Objections started to the poetical Merit of his Poems. The Criticism is unjust, for he has introduced as great Variety of this Sort, as he with Propriety could within the Compass of so short a Work. It is confessed, that *Homer* has a greater Variety of Deaths than any other Poet that ever appeared. His great Knowledge in Anatomy can never be disputed ; but I am far from thinking that his Battles, even with all their Novelty of Wounds, are the most beautiful Parts of his Poems. The human Mind dwells with Disgust upon a protracted Scene of Carnage ; and though the Introduction of the Terrible is necessary to the Grandeur of heroic Poetry, yet it is evident, that a Medium ought to be observed. Besides, there is a particular Reason for the Poet's not specifying many Deaths in this Battle ; because *Malvina* is supposed to be present during the Recital of it, and a minute Detail of such bloody Events could not possibly be agreeable to a Female Ear.

- Gray-hair'd, extended in the Dust he lies,  
525 And dying fixes on the King his Eyes.  
The Son of *Comhal*, at a nearer View,  
Too late the Features of the Vanquish'd knew ;  
And stopping said : My *Agandecca*'s Friend !  
From him who lov'd her hast thou met thy End ?  
530 I saw thee weep when, deaf to Nature's Call,  
Her cruel Father stabb'd her in the Hall :  
Thou wast a Foe to him who slew the Maid,  
But thy Benevolence is ill repaid.  
Raife, *Ullin* raife, the Son of *Mathon*'s Grave,  
535 Give all the Honours which the Dead can have ;  
The loftiest Numbers of thy Harp awake,  
And sing his Praise for *Agandecca*'s Sake !  
For still my faithful Soul the Maid adores,  
Who darkly dwells on *Ardven*'s desert Shores.  
540 Mean Time *Cuthullin*, by the Shouts of Fight  
Alarm'd, forfook his Cave to view the Sight.

He *Connal* call'd and *Carril* as he pass'd,  
Who hearing, took their aspen Spears in Haste,  
And join'd the Chief on *Cromla*'s rugged Brow ;  
545 From whence they saw the mingled War below,  
Disturb'd like Ocean, when the Winds prevail,  
And roll the Billows through the sandy Vale.

The Sight of Battle made *Cuthullin* glow ;  
A sudden Darknefs gather'd on his Brow ;  
550 Upon the Foe he fix'd his fiery Eye,  
And brandishing his Father's Sword on high,  
That Instant to the Charge had furious ran ;  
But *Connal* held him back, and thus began.  
Where, Son of *Semo*, would you madly go ?  
555 *Fingal* already has subdu'd the Foe.  
He wants no Aid, himself the routed Host  
Drives like a Tempest scatter'd to the Coast.

The

The Hero, by these Arguments with-held,  
Gave Way to Reason, and his Fury quell'd.  
560 Then thus to *Carril*--- Go! the Monarch meet,  
And let thy Praises in his Ear be sweet.  
When *Lochlin*, like a Torrent after Rain,  
Has fall'n away, and headlong fought the Main;  
From me before the glorious Victor stand,  
565 And put the Sword of *Caithbat* in his Hand:  
For overcome, no more *Cuthullin* wields  
His Father's Arms, or shines in martial Fields.

But,

V. 565. *And put the Sword of Caithbat in his Hand.*] As it was probably at the Instigation of *Fingal* that *Cuthullin* took upon him the Administration of Affairs during the Minority of *Cormac*, it was not proper he should quit that Station without informing the King of it. Now sending his Sword, might possibly in those Times, have been the Ceremony upon a Person's retiring from public Business; in the same Manner as it was the Custom of every Warrior at a certain Age, or when he became unfit for the Field, to fix his Arms in the great Hall, where the Tribe feasted upon joyful Occasions. He was afterwards never to appear in Battle; and this Stage of Life was called *the Time of fixing the Arms*.

But, oh ! ye Ghosts of Warriors slain ! whose Forms  
Here dwell on *Cromla*, and direct the Storms !

- 570 Be my Companions, when I weep alone  
In *Tura's* Cave, and echo Groan for Groan :  
For I no more must hold the first Command,  
Or from invading Foes protect the Land :  
My Fame hath vanish'd, like a Beam that's past,  
575 Like Mists that fly before the Morning Blast,  
When issuing from the East looks forth the Day,  
And tips the Mountain with a golden Ray.

Ah !

V. 568. *But, oh ! ye Ghosts of Warriors slain ! &c.*] In *Cuthullin's* Expressions of Grief, in this Place, we behold the Sentiments of a Hero, generous but desponding. The Situation is remarkably fine. Roused from his Cave by the Noise of Battle, he sees *Fingal* on the Point of obtaining a complete Victory. He is described as kindling at the Sight, and ready to rush on the Enemy, did not *Connal* stop him, by suggesting, that *Fingal* had routed them already ; and that he ought not, by the Show of superfluous Aid, to deprive the King of any Part 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 Disgrace.

----- *Æſuat ingens*  
*Imo in corde pudor, luctusque, et conscia virtus.*



Ah! *Connal*, name not Arms; the very Name  
Is hateful now ----- Departed is my Fame.

580 Remote from Wars, my Sorrows here shall flow,  
Till Death has put a Period to my Woe.  
Mourn, fair *Bragela*! for *Cuthullin* mourn,  
Who to *Dunscath* must never more return.

FINGAL,



F I N G A L,

A N

E P I C P O E M

I N

S I X B O O K S.

B O O K V. :

# T H E

# A R G U M E N T.

**C**UTHULLIN 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*. *Fingal*, his younger Sons, and *Oscar*, still pursue the Enemy. The Episode of *Orla*, a Chief of *Lochlin*, is introduced. *Fingal*, touched with his Death, orders the Pursuit to be discontinued; and calling his Sons together, is informed that *Ryno*, the youngest of them, was killed. He laments his Death, hears the Story of *Lamderg* and *Gelchoffa*, and returns towards the Place where he had left *Swaran*. *Carril*, who had been sent by *Cuthullin* to congratulate *Fingal*, 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,

A N

## E P I C P O E M.

### B O O K V.

**S**O wail'd in Bitterness of Soul the Chief;  
When *Connal* answ'ring, thus allay'd his Grief.  
Why this Affliction, Ruler of the Car!  
When our Allies successful are in War?

Thou

V. 2. *When Connal answ'ring, &c.*] The Poet, by putting the Narration in the Mouth of *Connal*, who still continued with *Cuthullin* on the Side of *Cromla*, gives Propriety to the Praises of *Fingal*. The Beginning of this Book, in the Original, says Mr. *Macpherson*, is one of the most beautiful Parts of the Poem. The Versification is regular and full, and agrees

5 Thou haft been likewise brave, thy deathlefs Name  
 Shall be in future Times the Talk of Fame.

*Bragela* often has her Hero hail'd,  
 Returning back victorious from the Field,  
 Amidst the Clamours of the Host he led ;

10 When fresh from Slaughter, his destructive Blade  
 Was stain'd with Blood of mighty Warriors slain,  
 Whose Tombs unnumber'd mark the silent Plain.

What

very well with the sedate Character of *Connal*. No Poet, continues the same, has adapted the Cadence of his Verse more to the Temper of his Speaker, than *Offian* has done. It is more than probable that the whole Poem was originally designed to be sung to the Harp, as the Versification is so various, and so suited to the different Passions of the human Mind.

V. 7. *Bragela often has her Hero hail'd, &c.*] Though the Defeat of *Cuthullin* was entirely owing to his swerving from *Connal's* pacific Advice, yet the latter, generously passing over that, represents Affairs as on the Point of being reinstated by the Valour and Abilities of *Fingal*; then raises his Spirits by calling to Mind the Number and Greatness of his former Victories; which were the best Arguments that could be made use of, to dissipate the Melancholy of a Person, whose too great Sense of Honour occasioned his Despondency and Grief.

What must have been her Transports, when thy Praise  
The tuneful Bards recorded in their Lays?

- 15 But see, *Cuthullin*! where the King below,  
Bright as a Beam of Fire, consumes the Foe.  
His Strength the Force of *Lubar's* Stream excels,  
Or midnight Winds, that howling from the Fells,  
Among the Hills of echoing *Cromla* blow,  
20 And in their Course the branchy Wood lay low.  
Illustrious King of *Trenmor's* noble Line!  
O'er all the Rulers of the North you shine:

The

V. 22. *O'er all the Rulers of the North you shine, &c.*] In the Character of *Fingal*, *Offian* triumphs unrivalled: for we 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 *Offian's* Works, is represented in 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



The Sons of *Morven* bleſs your happy Reign ;  
When Battle calls, you lead them to the Plain,  
25 And firſt in Danger as the firſt in Sway,  
Your ſingle Valour often turns the Day.  
To you remoteſt Realms Obedience yield,  
And Armies tremble when the Sword you wield.

## Illuſtrious

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 his Humanity and Generoſity. He is merciful to his Foes ; full of Affection to his Children, and full of Concern about his Friends. He is the univerſal Protector of the Diſtreſſed. 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*.

Illustrious King of *Trenmor's* noble Line !

30 O'er all the Rulers of the North you shine.

But who so dark, of more than mortal Force,

Now tow'rd's him bends the Thunder of his Course ?

It must be *Swaran* ; who but him durst stand

The dang'rous Trial of so strong a Hand ?

35 The dreadful Combat of the Kings survey !

Such is the Tossing of a stormy Sea,

When two dark Spirits from their Clouds descend,

And for the rolling of the Waves contend.

The frighted Hunter hears the Noise they make,

40 And sees on *Ardven's* Coast the Surges break.

He scarce had said, when fierce in Arms oppos'd,

With threat'ning Cries, the Chiefs tremendous clos'd

Amidst

V. 42. *With threat'ning Cries, the Chiefs tremendous clos'd, &c.*] In this Encounter of *Fingal* and *Swaran*, the Poet exerts himself in a very extraordinary

Amidst their falling Men --- Swift to and fro,  
Their flashing Swords dealt many a furious Blow,  
45 Which louder fell, than when with all their Weight,  
The hundred Hammers of the Furnace light :  
The Clang of Armour echo'd to the Skies,  
And Fire in Sparkles darted from their Eyes.

Such

ordinary Manner\*. In reading the former Descriptions of Exploits achieved by secondary Characters, we can hardly conceive in what Manner the Poet will support the Pre-eminence of his chief Hero, when he is introduced on the Scene: but when he makes his Appearance, we see with Astonishment, that the Bard has reserved his chief Strength for the important Occasion, and raised such a Climax as all Antiquity cannot parallel. We would desire the implicit Admirers of *Homer*, to compare the Battle between *Achilles* and *Heſtor*, with the Description of this Combat between *Fingal* and *Swaran*. *Achilles* throws his Spear at *Heſtor*, whom it miſſes; and it is brought back to him by *Minerva*. *Heſtor* launches his Spear at *Achilles*, but cannot penetrate his Shield. Then he draws his Sword, in order to attack the *Grecian* Hero, who kills him at one Thrust, by directing the Point of his Spear to that Part of the Neck which was left uncovered at the Joining of the Armour. These are the *Minutiæ* of *Homer's* Combat; which, in our Opinion, are much inferior, in Variation and Dignity, to these before us of the *Scottish* Bard.

\* See the *Critical Review*, No. 72. for *January* 1762.

- Such forceful Strokes unable to sustain,  
 50 At length their dark-brown Shields are cleft in twain,  
 And broken Swords, unfaithful to their Hands,  
 Bound from the Helms in Pieces o'er the Sands.  
 Though left unarm'd, enrag'd they forward flew,  
 And grasp'd each other as if one they grew.  
 55 Lock'd Arm in Arm, and panting Breast to Breast,  
 With their large Limbs beneath at Distance plac'd,  
 They struggling stood: But soon, neglecting Skill,  
 Essay'd their utmost Strength.---Then shook the Hill;

Rocks

V. 55. *Lock'd Arm in Arm, and panting Breast to Breast, &c.*] This Passage resembles one in the Twenty-third Book of the Iliad, where *Ajax* and *Ulysses* wrestle at the Funeral Games, given by *Achilles* in Honour of *Patroclus*.

Ἀγκᾶς δ' ἀλλήλων λαβέτην χερσὶ σιβαρήσιν·  
 Τετρίγει δ' ἄρα νῦτα, θρασειᾶν ἀπὸ χείρῳ  
 Ἐλκόμενα στερῶς, κατὰ δὲ νότιος ῥέεν ἰδρώς·  
 Πικναὶ δὲ σμῦδιγγες ἀνὰ πλευράς τε καὶ ὤμους  
 Αἵματι φονιμύεσσαι ἀνέδραμον·

V. 711.

Rocks from their Places torn, came tumbling down,  
 60 And the green-headed Bushes fell o'erthrown.  
 At last *Fingal's* superior Force prevail'd,  
 And *Swaran* bound lay vanquish'd on the Field.

Thus

Cloſe lock'd above, their Heads and Arms are mix'd;  
 Below, their planted Feet, at Diſtance fix'd;  
 Now to the Graſp each manly Body bends,  
 The humid Sweat from ev'ry Pore deſcends:  
 Their Bones reſound with Blows: Sides, Shoulders, Thighs,  
 Swell to each Gripe, and bloody Tumours riſe.

POPE.

V. 61. *At laſt Fingal's ſuperior Strength prevail'd.*] If it ſhould be aſked, whether it is probable that *Fingal* could perform ſuch Actions as are here aſcribed to him, at an Age when his Grandſon, *Oſcar*, appears fit to bear Arms? we answer, that *Fingal* was but very young (*Temora*, Book the Fourth) when he took to Wife *Ros-crana*, who ſoon after became the Mother of *Oſſian*. *Oſſian* was alſo very young when he married *Everallin* (Book the Fourth) the Mother of *Oſcar*. Tradition relates, that *Fingal* was but Eighteen Years old at the Birth of his Son *Oſſian*; and that *Oſſian* was much about the ſame Age when *Oſcar*, his Son, was born. Now if we ſuppoſe *Oſcar* to be about Sixteen, the Age of *Fingal*, at the Time of his conquering *Swaran*, could not be more than Fifty-two Years. In thoſe of Activity and Health, the natural Strength and Vigour of Man was little or nothing abated at ſuch an Age; ſo that there is nothing improbable in the Actions of *Fingal*, as here related by *Oſſian*.

Thus have I seen on *Cona* heretofore,  
(For *Cona* now these Eyes behold no more !)

65 Thus have I seen two shaggy Mounds up torn,  
From their Foundations, and to Distance borne  
By the resistless Fury of the Floods :  
With all their moss-grown Rocks and nodding Woods  
Forc'd down the rapid Stream ; they often met,  
70 Till having reach'd the Vale, both overfet,  
And stopp'd, there fix :---For Ages to be seen  
A mighty Heap of Ruin on the Plain ;  
Where falling from the Hills, the Streams divide,  
And hoarsely murm'ring pass on either Side.

75 The Son of *Comhal*, of his Conquest proud,  
High o'er him stood, and call'd his Sons aloud.  
Approach, said he, and see upon the Ground,  
The haughty King of *Scandinavia* bound.

Fame boasts not of the Hero's Strength in vain,  
 80 'Tis like the thousand Billows of his Main ;  
 His Hand is taught to War, and proves his Birth  
 Deriv'd from Monarchs once renown'd on Earth.  
 With thee, great *Gaul*, the bravest of the brave,  
 And *Ossian* King of Songs, I *Swaran* leave :  
 85 Be to the Friend of *Agandecca* kind,  
 And dissipate the Sorrows of his Mind.

But

V. 85. *Be to the Friend of Agandecca kind, &c.*] The Manner in which *Fingal* speaks here of *Swaran*, and his generous Behaviour towards him, is much more pleasing and commendable than that of *Achilles* on the like Occasion. When the dying *Hector* adjures him, by all that is dear to him, to accept of a Ransom for his breathless Body, he not only refuses his Request, in the most insulting Terms, but even expresses a Wish, that his Stomach was strong enough to allow him to eat the Corse of his Enemy.

Αἱ γὰρ πῶς αὐτὸν με μένος καὶ θυμὸς ἀνείη  
 "Ὡμ' ἀποταμιζόμενον κρέα ἐδμεναι. —

Iliad, XXII. V. 346.

No Savages are more cruel than the *Greeks* and *Trojans* were, as generally described by *Homer*; Men butchered in cold Blood, Towns reduced to Ashes, Sovereigns exposed to the most humbling Indignities, no Respect paid to Age or to Sex. The young *Adrastus* (Iliad, VI.) thrown from his Car,



But *Oscar*, *Fillan*, and young *Ryno*, you,  
Who yet are swift of Foot, the Foe pursue ;  
For unmolested they shall not retreat,  
90 Not till the Victory is quite compleat ;  
That thus their daring Fleets may bound no more,  
On the dark-rolling Waves of *Inistore*.

The Sov'reign spoke --- His Sons without Delay,  
O'er *Lena* swift as Lightning haste away.

He,

Car, and lying on his Face in the Dust, obtained Quarter from *Menelaus*. *Agamemnon* upbraided his Brother for Lenity: " Let none from Destruction escape, not even the lisping Infant in the Mother's Arms: All her Sons must with *Ilium* fall, and on her Ruins unburied remain." He pierced the Suppliant with his Spear, and setting his Foot on the Body, pulled it out.

V. 89. *For unmolested they shall not retreat, &c.*] When *Fingal* here commands his Sons to pursue the Enemy, he means not assuredly, as some may misrepresent him, to order a general Slaughter of the Foes, and to prevent their saving themselves by Flight; but, like a wise General, he commanded his Chiefs to render the Victory complete, by a total Rout of their Army; that they might adventure no more for the future, to fit out any Fleet against him, or his Allies.

V. 101.

95 He, like a Cloud of Thunder big with Rain,  
 When Summer Heats are sultry on the Plain,  
 Mov'd flow behind : His Sword, a Beam of Light,  
 Shone like the streaming Meteor of the Night.  
 The routed Army saw, and seiz'd with Dread,  
 100 In Heaps on Heaps before confus'dly fled.  
 All fled but *Orla*, who devoid of Fear,  
 Beheld the King of stormy Hills draw near.

To whom *Fingal* --- Who by the falling Brook,  
 Stands like a Cloud ? Dejected seems his Look !

Vast

V. 101. *All fled but Orla, &c.*] Mr. *Macpherson* informs us, that the Story of *Orla* is so beautiful and affecting in the Original, that many are in Possession of it in the North of *Scotland*, who never heard a Syllable more of the Poem. It varies the Action, and awakes the Attention of the Reader when he expected nothing but Languor in the Conduct of the Poem, as the great Action was over in the Conquest of *Swaran*.

V. 103. *To whom Fingal, &c.*] Lord *Kames*, in the Elements of Criticism, remarks, that Dialogue makes a deeper Impression than Narration. For in Dialogue, Persons express their own Sentiments ; in Narration, Sentiments

105 Vaft on his Side the boſſy Shield appears,  
And like the Deſert Tree the Lance he bears.  
Though tall the Chief, and manly is his Stride,  
He ſtops, afraid to croſs the rapid Tide.  
Youth of the dark-brown Hair, are you of thoſe  
110 Who follow *Swaran*, and *Fingal* oppoſe ?

Thus he --- the Stranger anſwer'd --- I belong  
To *Lochlin's* Sons, and once my Arm was ſtrong !

But

Sentiments are related at ſecond Hand. For that Reaſon, *Ariſtotle*, the Father of Critics, lays it down as a Rule, that, in an Epic Poem, the Author ought to take every Opportunity of introducing his Actors, and of confining the narrative Part within the narroweſt Bounds. *Homer* underſtood perfectly the Advantage of that Method ; and his Poems are both of them in a great Meaſure Dramatic. *Lucan* runs into the oppoſite Extreme ; and is guilty of a ſtill greater Fault, in ſtuffing his Work with cold and languid Reflections, the Merit of which he aſſumes to himſelf, and deigns not to ſhare with his Actors. Nothing can be more injudiciouſly timed, than a Chain of ſuch Reflections, which ſuſpend the Battle of *Pharſalia* after the Leaders had made their Speeches, and the two Armies are ready to engage.

But now my Confort may her Lord deplore,  
Who never must behold his native Shore.

To

V. 114. *Who never must behold his native Shore.*] Though Mr. Macpherson makes *Orla* here mention his Name, I have purposely avoided it, as more consonant to ancient Custom. He himself remarks, in another Place, that 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 known that Friendship had 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.

The same was usual among the ancient *Greeks*; for in *Homer* (*Iliad*, VI.) *Diomed* and *Glaucus* no sooner become acquainted, though in the Heat of Battle, than they embrace each other with the greatest Marks of Friendship; and agree not to be Enemies during the whole Course of the War, only because their Grandfathers had been mutual Guests. Now I am speaking of the Interview of *Diomed* and *Glaucus*, I cannot but observe the ineffectual Manner in which Mr. *Pope* endeavours to excuse *Homer*, for introducing the long Conversation of these two Heroes in the Middle of an Engagement; by pretending that the Battle relaxed during the Absence of *Heſtor*. Had that Chief been really victorious, a Relaxation would have been the natural Consequence of his Absence; but since we are informed the *Grecian Army* prevailed, and that *Heſtor's* Return to the City, was in order to appoint a solemn Procession of the Queen and *Trojan* Matrons to the Temple of *Minerva*, to entreat her to remove *Diomed* from the Fight; why were the Victors to remain all that Time inactive? Or, if the *Trojans* were not to quit the Field, why was not some Deity (with whose Agency  
the

To this *Fingal* --- Say, Youth of Ocean's Race,  
 Or stand you there resolv'd on War or Peace?  
 Before you answer, well the Matter weigh,  
 Nor hope in vain my Conquest to delay.  
 The strongest by this Arm are taught to bend;  
 120 Be then more wise, submit, and as a Friend,  
 In *Selma's* Hall of Shells the Banquet share,  
 And on the desert Hills pursue my Deer.

No!

the Poet makes free upon less important Occasions) brought down to their Assistance? It would have answered the End as well, and been less exceptionable than the untimely Colloquy of *Diomed* and *Glaucus*.

V. 121. *In Selma's Hall.*] *Selma*, the Palace of *Fingal*, signifies *beautiful to behold*, or a Place with a pleasant or wide Prospect. In early Times, they built their Houses upon Eminences, to command a View of the Country, and to prevent being surprised: Many of them, on that Account, were called *Selma*.

V. 121. *In Selma's Hall of Shells the Banquet share, &c.*] Those among the *Scots* of former Generations who possessed the Wealth of the Times, maintained Dignity of Character, without Pageantry. Their Houses were accessible to the Stranger and the Distressed. Though void of superb Decorations and a dazzling Splendor, they were adorned with numerous Bands

No ! *Orla* cried, thy Proffer I disdain,  
 This Hand will still the weak in Arms sustain ;  
 125 My bleeding Country now, and captive Lord,  
 Implore the Intervention of this Sword,  
 Which has through Armies often cut a Way,  
 And found no Equal till this fatal Day.

But

of bold Warriors, who passed their Time in the Amusements and Exercises that delight an active martial People. Their Tables, however ill supplied with exotic Delicacies, abounded with the true Pleasure of Entertainment. The real Generosity and unaffected Complaisance of the open-hearted Host, appeared conspicuously in every Circumstance, and gave the highest Seasoning to the Repast. Next to the Glory arising from martial Exploits, the Reputation acquired by Acts of Hospitality was, in those Ages, esteemed the highest Honour. The Bards displayed the whole Power of their poetical Abilities, in celebrating the Hero and beneficent Man ; and they, in meriting the Praises bestowed by those Heralds of Fame. The great Men emulously strove to outvie one another in manly Virtues. A Portion of the same noble Ambition fell to the Share of every Individual, according to his Rank in Life. That is possibly the happiest Period of a Nation, when the Practice of the generous and martial Virtues become the Amusement and Object of every Member of a Community, in Proportion to their respective Situations. In the old *Galic*, there is but one Word for a brave and good Man, and but one for a Land-holder and an hospitable Man ; which sufficiently demonstrates the Ideas the ancient *Caledonians* entertained concerning Bravery and Hospitality.



But why despond? For it may conquer yet,

130 Yes, even you, though eminently great.

Presumptuous Youth! the King of Hills began,  
*Fingal* was never conquer'd yet by Man.

But, if resolv'd to rush on certain Death,

My Heroes here are many on the Heath;

135 Turn to the Right or Left, and chuse thy Foe,

A meaner Hand may serve to give the Blow.

And is it thus the Monarch would deny  
The single Combat? *Orla* made Reply.

Know, Son of *Comhal*, of your num'rous Host,

140 A Strength that equals mine alone you boast;

Then

V. 139. *Know, Son of Comhal.*] It is remarkable, that of all the Ancestors of *Fingal*, Tradition makes the least Mention of *Comhal*, his Father; which, probably, proceeded from the unfortunate Life and untimely Death of that Hero. From some Passages concerning him, we learn, indeed, that he was brave, but wanted Conduct.



Then let us not employ the Time in Words,  
 But bravely meet in Fight with clashing Swords.  
 Grant only this ; if I should press the Field,  
 (For all are mortal, and one Day must yield !)

145 That o'er my Grave a lofty Monument  
 May here be rais'd ; and let my Sword be sent,  
 With *Lochlin's* Sons, to sooth a Comfort's Woe ;  
 She to her Son the Father's Arms will show,

That

V. 146. *Let my Sword be sent, &c.*] *Orla* here desires his Sword may be sent to his Wife, though it was the constant Practice of the *Scandinavians* to have their Arms buried with them. For as Tradesmen are generally peaceable, they were not often intitled by a violent Death to the Mansion of *Odin*. This Circumstance induced the Friends of the Heroes to deposite in the Graves of the Slain, defensive and offensive Arms ; and above all, the Sword \*, to serve them in the daily Battles of the *Valballa*. The favourite Horse of the Dead was also burnt on the same Pile with his Master, and this Animal carried him to the Regions of Heroes. On him the Warrior issued to the Battles which were the Pastime of the Blessed ; on him he rode into the *Valballa* when the Hour of Dinner came. The poorer Soldier, who was not provided with a Horse, was obliged to walk on Foot from the Grave to the *Valballa*. To facilitate his Journey along the *Bifrústa* or

\* *Gladius vivis charissima suppellex ante omnia mortuos debebat comitari.* *Keyser Antiq. Sæc. 3æ.*

Rainbow,

That at the Sight his Bosom set on Flame,  
150 May feel an early Call to martial Fame.

Why, said the Monarch, will you call to Mind  
The certain Lot ordain'd for all Mankind?  
This sad Reflection makes my Eyes o'erflow;  
*The greatest Warriors must one Day lie low,*  
155 *And in the Hall their Children shall behold*  
*The rusty Arms their Fathers us'd of old.*  
Son of the mournful Tale! shouldst thou be slain,  
Thy Monument shall rise on *Lena's* Plain;  
And *Lochlin's* Sons shall likewise have thy Sword,  
160 That thy white-bosom'd Spouse may weep her Lord.

These

Rainbow, called the Bridge of the Gods, the Shoes of Death \* were bound fast to his Feet by his surviving Friends. These were made of Wood. Few of the Gods themselves were provided with Leathern Shoes. *Solus Deus Vidarus calceis ex corio superbiebat. Edda. Mythol. XXI.*

\* *Mos est calceos letales hominibus alligare, quibus Iter ad Valhallam calcent. Gifla Surjonar Sogu de Vesteini exequiis.*

These Matters settled, now commence the Strife,  
And let us here decide on Death and Life.

This said ; they fought --- But *Orla's* feeble Hand  
Could not *Fingal's* unequall'd Force withstand ;  
165 Whose Sword descending cut in two his Shield,  
Which founding fell, and glisten'd on the Field,  
As when the silver Moon's reflected Light  
Gleams on the undulating Stream of Night.

When thus the Chief --- *Fingal!* your Blow pursue,  
170 My whole Ambition was to fall by you,  
Since my Companions, dead, or struck with Fear,  
Have all dispers'd, and left me wounded here.  
The melancholy News will reach my Love,  
On *Loda's* Banks, while musing in the Grove,  
175 She hears the Rustling of th' unfrequent Squall,  
And loud at Times the distant Torrent's Fall.

No !

No ! said the noble King, I never will,  
Disabled and unarm'd, a Warrior kill :  
Return to *Loda* Home again with Life,  
180 And glad the Sight of an afflicted Wife.  
You may, perhaps, have likewise left behind,  
An aged Father, now gray-hair'd and blind,  
Who

V. 177. *No ! said the noble King, &c.*] 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, *Offian* is eminently distinguished. No Poet maintains a higher Tone of virtuous and noble Sentiments 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 *Offian*.

Who when he hears thy Voice, with eager Joy,  
Will rise, and stretch his Hands to find his Boy.

185 The vanquish'd Warrior, with a Sigh replied,  
To him and me those Transports are denied !  
For far from *Loda* here my Days must fail,  
Let foreign Bards record the mournful Tale :  
This Belt conceals my Wound ; but since I find  
190 I cannot live, will give it to the Wind.  
He said, and drawing the broad Belt aside,  
' Expos'd the Wound, which pour'd a purple Tide :  
The Hero fainting, dropp'd upon the Ground,  
Death wrapt his Senses in a Sleep profound.

195 *Fingal* awhile stood silent o'er the Dead ;  
Then, calling round his youthful Warriors, said ;  
On the majestic Form of *Orla* gaze !  
And, to perpetuate the Hero's Praise,

Let

Let here his Monument erected stand,  
200 Far from his widow'd Wife, and native Land !  
A feeble Progeny his Bow shall view,  
But not have Strength to draw the stubborn Yew ;  
His faithful Dogs will run, with doleful Yells,  
To find their Master on the wonted Fells ;  
205 But from their Enemy the Boars now freed,  
Shall fear no longer by his Arms to bleed ;

For

V. 197. *On the majestic Form of Orla gaze! &c.*] To mourn over the Fall of their Enemies, was a Practice universal among the *Celtic* Heroes. This is much more agreeable to Humanity, than the shameful insulting of the Dead, so common in *Homer*. The *Greeks* (*Iliad*, XXII.) are represented one after another stabbing the dead Body of *Heſtor*. "Nor stood an *Argive* near the Chief, who inflicted not a Wound. Surely now, they said, more easy of Access is *Heſtor* than when he launched on the Ships Brands of devouring Fire." But as Cruelty is inconsistent with Heroism, so very little of the latter is discoverable in any of *Homer's* Heroes. So much did they retain of the Savage Character, as, even without blushing, to fly from an Enemy superior in bodily Strength. *Diomedes*, who makes an illustrious Figure in the Fifth Book of the *Iliad*, retires when *Heſtor* appears. "He beheld the Chief, and shuddered to his inmost Soul." *Antilochus*, Son of *Nestor*, having slain *Melanippus* (*Iliad*, XV.) rushed forward, eager to seize his bright Arms: but seeing *Heſtor*, he fled like a Beast of Prey who shuns the gathering Hinds. And the great *Heſtor* him-

T t

self,



For he, who was their greatest Dread before,  
 Here breathless lies upon a distant Shore,  
 The great, the brave, the mighty now no more.

210 My Sons, exalt the Voice, and blow the Horn;  
 Victorious let us back again return,  
 To where we left the Monarch of the Sea,  
 And send the Night in Mirth and Song away.

Dark

self, as has been already observed, shamefully turns his Back upon the near Approach of *Achilles*. "*Periphetes*," (*Iliad*, XV.) "endowed with every Virtue, renowned in the Race, great in War, in Prudence excelling his Fellows, gave Glory to *Hector*, covering the Chief with Renown." One would expect a fierce Combat between these two bold Warriors. Not so. *Periphetes* stumbling, fell on the Ground; and *Hector* was not ashamed to transfix with his Spear the unresisting Hero. When such were the Warriors at the Siege of *Troy*, it is no Wonder that the Heroes on both Sides were not less intent on stripping the Slain, than on Victory. They are every where represented as greedy of Spoil. Though these barbarous Practices disgust us in reading the *Iliad*, yet *Homer* himself is not to be censured, for he describes faithfully the Manners of the Times. But the same cannot be said of those, who have servilely copied these Enormities after him, (the humane *Virgil* not excepted) and been more successful in borrowing the Imperfections of that great Poet, than in their Imitations of his Beauties.



Dark *Fillan*, *Oscar*, and young *Ryno*, haste  
215 O'er *Lena's* Heath, and call off all the rest.  
But *Ryno* has not answer'd to his Name!  
Why Silence keeps the youngest Son of Fame?

The Youth, cried *Ullin*, is in Battle slain,  
His lifeless Body lies on *Lena's* Plain!  
220 Whilst on the Winds his Soul, amidst the Forms  
Of his Forefathers, rides the cloudy Storms;  
With warlike *Tratbal*, King of shining Shields,  
And *Trenmor* the renown'd in martial Fields.

Then is my Son (exclaim'd the Monarch) low,  
225 The swift of Foot, the first to bend the Bow;

Ere

V. 225. *The swift of Foot.*] *Ryno* was remarkable for his Swiftnefs, and the Beauty of his Person. *Minvanc*, the Daughter of *Morni*, and Sister to the celebrated *Gaul*, was in Love with him. Her Lamentation for his Death, is all that remains of a longer Composition wrote by *Ossian*; and which, for its poetical Merit, Mr. *Macpherson* has inserted, in a Note, at the End of the Poem intitl'd *Berrathon*.

Ere he was known, in Youth's first early Bloom  
 Snatch'd to the cold Embraces of the Tomb ?  
 Why could not Destiny his Life prolong,  
 Till riper Years had knit his Frame more strong ?  
 230 But gentle be thy Rest on *Lena's* Heath,  
 The bravest cannot shun the Stroke of Death !  
 I too must follow ; stretch'd upon the Bier,  
 My Voice shall fail, my Footsteps disappear !  
 Yet why regret ? Of me the Bards will sing,  
 235 The very Stones will talk of *Morven's* King.

But

V. 234. *Yet why regret ? Of me the Bards will sing.*] The Compositions of the Bards comprehended the Religion, the Laws, and History of the *Celtic Nations* \*. The *Irish* and *Scots* had their *Ferlaoi*, or Hymnists, who reduced the Tenets of Religion into Verse ; and their *Senachies*, or Chronologists, who comprehended the fabulous History of their Ancestors in a Kind of unpoetical Stanza ; and their *Ferdan*, who sung the Praises of Men who had made a great Figure in War. Each of these Classes kept their

\* *Celebrant carminibus antiquis, quod unum apud illos memorie et annalium genus est. Tac. Germ. Lib. II.*

*Bardi quidem fortia virorum facta, heroicis composita versibus, cum dulcibus lyre modulis cantitarunt. Ann. Marcell. Lib. V.*

But thou, my Son, art low indeed --- thy Name  
Will be forgot, thou hast acquir'd no Fame!  
Strike, *Ullin*, strike the Harp in *Ryno's* Praise!  
Tell what he would have been, if Length of Days  
240 His Fate allow'd, and had not envious Time  
Thus cut him off; long, long before his Prime.  
To thee, too forward in the dire Alarms,  
Has fatal prov'd thy first Essay in Arms.  
No more shall I instruct thee in the Art  
245 To bend the Bow, or aim the missile Dart!

No,

own Province entire. They interfered not in the least with one another: the *Ferlaoi* descended not into the Region of the *Senachy*, nor did the *Senachy* rise to the Sublimity of the *Ferdan*, who derived from his poetical Genius his only Title to the Name of Bard. The Hymns of the *Ferlaoi* were lost by the Introduction of a new Religion; and the Works of the *Senachies* expired in their natural Dulness. A few of the Compositions of the *Ferdan* have triumphed over the Ravages of Time; and prove that the Bards inculcated the purest Morals on their Countrymen, and comprehended in their Songs all those Virtues which render a Man truly great, and deservedly renowned.

No, now for ever ravish'd from my View,  
Those pleasing Cares are o'er --- my Son adieu.

Thus, while the gushing Tears in copious Show'rs  
Ran down his Cheeks, the King his Son deplores.  
250 That Son ! whose Course was rapid in the Fight,  
As on some Mountain's Top the Flames of Night ;  
When

V. 250. *That Son ! whose Course was rapid in the Fight, &c.*] I have given the Simile this Turn, as most consonant both to Probability and the Sense of the Poet. *Ryno* being young, the Slaughter made by his Hand could not, with so much Propriety, be compared to the Destruction caused by a Fire in the Trees of the Forest, as his Swiftnefs, for which he was remarkable. There is a Comparison of this Kind in the Tenth Book of the *Æneis*, where the *Arcadians*, after being rallied by *Pallas*, are described rushing on the Enemy.

*Ac velut optato ventis Æstate coortis  
Dispersa immittit Sylvæ incendia Pastor ;  
Correptis subito mediis extenditur una  
Horrida per latos acies Vulcania campos :  
Ille sedens victor flammas dispelat ovantes.*

As, when in Summer welcome Winds arise,  
The watchful Shepherd to the Forest flies,

And

When swift before the Wind, the spreading Blaze  
Rolls like a Deluge through the lofty Trees.

The frighted Trav'ler hears amaz'd the Sound

255 Of falling Woods in Conflagration round :

But lasts not long, for soon this Splendour fails ;

Borne down the Steep, it sinks --- and Night prevails.

Thus spoke once more the gen'rous King of Shells---

What Chief whose Fame in yon Sepulchre dwells,

260 Where, overgrown with Moss amidst the Heath,

Four Stones erected mark the House of Death ?

Perhaps some Hero known in War lies there,

To fly with *Ryno* on the Clouds of Air.

Raise,

And fires the midmost Plants ; Contagion spreads,

And catching Flames infect the neighb'ring Heads ;

Around the Forest flies the furious Blast,

And all the leafy Nation sinks at last ;

And *Vulcan* rides in Triumph o'er the Waste ;

The Pastor, pleas'd with his dire Victory,

Beholds the fatiate Flames in Sheets ascend the Sky..

DRYDEN.

V. 270..

- Raise, *Ullin*, raise the Song, and bring to Light  
265 Things now long buried in Oblivion's Night.  
If he was one for martial Deeds renown'd,  
My Son shall sleep beside the verdant Mound ;  
And here interr'd, repose in foreign Earth,  
Far from his Friends, and Land that gave him Birth.
- 270 The Bard replied---Where you these Stones behold,  
Lie two fam'd Warriors of the Times of old.

There

V. 270. *The Bard replied, &c.*] *Homer*, it is true, has filled his Story with a much greater Variety of Particulars than *Offian*; 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 *Offian*. 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 *Offian*, 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 a great Propriety; as natural and proper to that Age and Country; consisting of the Songs of Bards, which are known to be the great Entertainment of the *Celtic* Heroes in

War,

There *Lamderg* sleeps in Silence on the Shore,  
With *Ullin* King of Swords, now Foes no more ;  
And she, soft smiling on the Clouds above,  
275 For whom the rival Chiefs in Battle strove.  
But Sorrow shades the Lustre of her Face ;  
*Gelchoffa* ! first of *Erin's* beauteous Race,  
Do you not with the valiant Champions rest ?  
I thought no Grief could after Death subsist.

You

War, as well as in Peace. These Songs are not introduced at Random ; 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.

V. 278. *Do you not with the valiant Champions rest ?* ] The Bard seeing, or rather pretending he saw *Gelchoffa* weep, wonders at the Cause of her Grief : For it was the Opinion of the Times, that the Soul left all Unhappiness behind it when it took its Flight from this World. Such was their Ignorance of what we call Hell, that, as Mr. *Macpherson* assures us, they had no Name for any such Place in their Language. But the *Scandinavian* Mythology prepared a Habitation of Pain and Sorrow, for all such as did not die a violent Death. Even the softer Sex were precipitated into the Dominion of *Hela* ; and it was to prevent Brawls and Contention in the Seats of the Blessed, that they excluded their Wives from the *Valkalla*.

U u

The



280 You in the Eyes of Thousands lovely shone,  
But youthful *Lamderg* was your Love alone.

The

The Descriptions given in the *Edda*, of the Dominions and Person of *Hela*, are full of Fancy. "On the Shores of dead Bodies, remote from the Sun, there is a spacious and dismal Hall, with its Gates wide open to the Northern Winds. The Walls are watted with Snakes, whose Heads look inward and vomit Poison. Rivers of this Poison rush through the Hall, which the Unhappy are forced to ford. But in the worst Condition are those who are precipitated into the inmost Regions. They are tormented by the evil Demon, who dwells in the farthest Darknefs. *Hela*, who presides over these baleful Regions, is herself a Figure expressive of suitable Horror. One half of her Frame is blue, the other bears the Colour of the human Skin. Her Aspect is fierce and terrible; her Temper unrelenting and cruel." *Torva et truculenta Hela. Edda My.*

These People professed another Article of Faith unknown to the *Celtæ*; which was, that the Universe should one Day be destroyed by Fire. "The whole Body of Nature was not the only Object of Destruction; *Odin* himself was to perish amid the Ruins of his own Works. The inferior *Intelligences* were also to fall; and the dark Period, called the *Twilight of the Gods*, was to succeed the departed World. This dreadful Calamity was to have been ushered in by various Signs. The Seasons were to change; a stormy Winter was to possess all the Year. Crimes were to increase among Mankind; they were to be armed against one another in most cruel and bloody Wars. Two Wolves were at last to issue forth to devour the Sun and the Moon. The Stars were to be shaken from the Sky; the Earth to stagger in its Orbit. Then the Monster *Fenrin*, born for the Destruction of the Gods, was to break his Chains. *Bifrosta* or the Rainbow, which had hitherto

The Warrior to the Hall of *Selma* came,  
And striking his dark Buckler call'd the Dame ;

But

therto been the High-road to Heaven, was to fall broken to the Ground. The Gods, in the Midst of Darknefs and Confusion, with all the Heroes, were then to rush armed into the Field. But it was only to encounter Misfortune ; for *Odin* himself was to be devoured by *Fenrir*. Fire then was to fall on every Quarter of the World ; and all Nature was to be consumed." Such are the romantic Accounts of the Dissolution of the Universe in the *Islandic Edda*. They are not destitute of Imagination, though absurd. In the Prophecies distinguished by the Name of *Volupsa*, the same romantic Fable is poetically foretold. " The Sun grows dark above ; the Earth sinks under the Ocean. The bright Stars are thrown headlong from Heaven. Fire rages through the ancient Fabric of the World ; and the Flames ascending, touch the very Skies." The Silence and Darknefs which were to succeed the Dissolution of the World, were not to be of long Continuance. The old Earth, reduced into Ashes, had sunk under the Ocean. A new Earth, green, beautiful, and pleasant, over all its Regions, will afterwards rise gradually from the Sea. The Fields, without being sown with Seed, will, of their own Accord, produce every Sort of Grain. *Leichtkrafer* and his Wife *Lif*, having by some Means or other escaped from the general Calamity, will again people the Earth with a new Race of Men. A new Sun will rise over the World ; the Daughter of the former Sun, devoured by the Wolf. This Daughter will not be less splendid, beautiful, or less lovely than her Parent ; and she will follow the Path of her Mother through the Sky. Some of the inferior *Intelligences* will likewise escape the universal Ruin, and with the Souls of the Brave indulge every Happiness and Joy in *Gimlé*, the new Mansion, described with romantic Enthusiasm in the *Volupsa* and the *Islandic Edda*.

But no one Answer gave. She is not here!

285 Exclaim'd the Youth --- Where shall I find the Fair?

I left her safe in these sequester'd Tow'rs,

When I against *Ulfadda* led my Pow'rs;

At parting thus she spoke --- " Ah soon return,

And leave me not disconsolate to mourn!"

290 She utter'd more, but mixt with Sobs, the rest

I could not hear, for Grief her Voice suppress'd:

Her snowy Bosom heav'd. I cried adieu,

Then fallied forth --- She bath'd in Tears withdrew.

But now, returning late from fierce Alarms,

295 She rushes not impatient to my Arms;

To banish by her Smiles, the toilsome Pain,

And tedious Absence of a long Campaign.

No! she has left these solitary Walls,

And hears, or heeds not my repeated Calls.

300 The menial Train, the Bard our Banquets fed,

Have all dispers'd, or with their Mistress fled:

*Bran*

*Bran* at the Portal does not shake his Chain,  
Nor meets his Master coming from the Plain.

'Tis

V. 300. *The Bard our Banquets fed.*] In a Note towards the End of the Third Book, the Reader was informed, that every Chief had anciently his Bard. There he may see how their Numbers came to be retrenched, and the whole Order at length disgraced. After their Expulsion from the Houses of the Chiefs, being an indolent Race of Men, they 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; and we are told by Mr. *Macpherson*, that 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 they are said, at the same Time, to command more Attention than any other Fictions to be 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

'Tis Silence all ! *Gelchoffa* is not here !

305 Where shall I find *Tuäthal*'s lovely Heir ?

Thy blameless Confort is not distant gone,  
Cried *Ferchios* the Son of *Aidon* ;  
She with the other Sisters of the Bow,  
May o'er the Hills have chas'd the flying Roe.

310 Ah flatter not ! the plaintive Chief rejoin'd.  
No Noise of Hunters comes upon the Wind,  
In *Lena*'s neighb'ring Woods I hear no Sound,  
A dead and solemn Silence reigns around !  
My Eye beholds no Deer swift bounding by,  
315 No panting Dogs pursuing in full Cry ;

*Tuäthal*'s

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, are even superior to all the pompous oriental Fictions of the Kind.

*Tuäthal's* Daughter, than the Moon more bright,  
When in full Glory, does not come in Sight.  
Haste, *Ferchios* ! to *Allad's* Cave repair,  
The aged Druid with the hoary Hair ;

Cut

V. 318. *Haste, Ferchios ! to Allad's Cave repair, &c.*] *Allad* is plainly one of the Druids. This Body of Men was in such Estimation among the *Celtic* Nations, that they, in a Manner, engrossed the Management of Civil, as well as Religious Concerns. It is generally allowed that they did not abuse this extraordinary Power; the preserving their Character of Integrity 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 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* began to decline. The Traditions concerning *Trathal* and *Cormac*, Ancestors to *Fingal*, are full of the Particulars of the Fall of the Druids.

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



320 Cut in the living Rock you'll find his Cell,  
He may perhaps of fair *Gelchoffa* tell.

The Offspring of *Aidon* went, and spoke  
To the gray Dweller of the lonely Rock.

O! thou that lov'st, encircled here in Stone,  
325 Remote from Men to meditate alone!

Say

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 their Order, began to resume their ancient Privilege of chusing the *Vergobretus*. *Gormal*, 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. When we consider the singular Fate of these People, and the total Disregard which ensued of their Rites, no Wonder *Offian* never mentions them, as they were the declared Enemies of his Family in their Succession to the supreme Magistracy.



Say what has pass'd before thy aged Sight,  
Since we against *Ulfadda* march'd to fight?

- Thus he --- and thus again the wrinkled Seer ---  
The haughty Son of *Cairbar* has been here ;  
330 He like a Cloud from *Cromla* came and pass'd,  
Humming a furly Song, like the hoarse Blast  
Of snowy Winter, when from North it blows,  
And through the leafless Forest murm'ring goes.  
He enter'd *Tura's* Hall, and thus began ---  
335 *Lamderg*, most dreadful of the Race of Man !  
I heard thy Strength much boasted in the Field,  
And come to prove it --- either fight or yield.

- The Chief, (replied *Gelchoffa*) hence afar,  
Is gone against *Ulfadda* to the War.  
340 At his Return an Answer you will hear,  
For *Lamderg* never yet was known to fear.

- Tuäthal's* Daughter, cried th' enamour'd Knight,  
 You shine in Beauty like a Beam of Light !  
 Such finish'd Graces, such attractive Charms,  
 345 Are only worthy of the first in Arms.  
 Three Days on *Cromla* I propose to stay,  
 Should *Lamderg* longer his Return delay,  
 Upon the fourth, I shall conclude he flies,  
 And bear away to *Cairbar's* Hall my Prize.  
  
 350 Said *Cromla's* Chief --- Old *Allad*, may'st thou have  
 A peaceful Train of Visions in thy Cave.

Now,

V. 347. *Should Lamderg longer his Return delay.*] *Lamb-dbearg* signifies bloody Hand. The Significations of the other proper Names in this Episode are; *Gelchoffa*, white-legged: *Tuatbal*, furly: *Ulfadda*, long Beard: *Ferchios*, the Conqueror of Men.

V. 350. *Said Cromla's Chief.*] That is, *Lamderg*. *Offian* is sometimes so abrupt, that unless the Reader be very attentive, he may easily mistake the Person who speaks. Here, when one would naturally expect that *Ferchios* would bring old *Allad's* Answer to *Lamderg*, this Hero, as if he had been present at their Conversation, thanks the Druid for his Information,

Now, *Fercbios*, the Horn of *Lamderg* blow,  
 That *Ullin* may the Sound to Battle know.  
 He spoke, and like a Storm, without Delay,  
 355 From *Tura's* Hall up *Cromla* took the Way  
 With hasty Strides; and as he mov'd along,  
 He mutter'd to himself a warlike Song;  
 Which founded like the distant hollow Roar  
 Of Waters, when in Cataracts they pour  
 360 Down headlong.---On the Mountain, like a Cloud  
 That varies to each Wind that blows, he flood.

Then

tion, and immediately commands his Horn to be sounded. *Homer*, generally, makes his Messengers deliver their Commissions in the very same Terms in which they were given. This, as consonant to Eastern Practice, and the Custom of his Time, may be allowable; but is certainly more tedious than the concise Method of the *Scottish* Bard, which has even a particular Beauty in the Passage before us, as it expresses the Hurry and Eagerness of *Lamderg* to engage his Enemy. The Poet makes *Fingal* answer in the same Manner when *Swaran*, in the Third Book, refuses his Invitation.

V. 360. *Like a Cloud That varies to each Wind that blows.*] Many object to *Offian*, 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

Then heaving in his Hand a weighty Stone,  
In Token of Defiance roll'd it down.

In

same Kind sometimes suggested to the Poet by resembling Objects ; especially to a Poet like *Offian*, 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 *Offian's* Imagery, is however founded, in a great Measure, upon a Mistake. It has been supposed by inattentive Readers, that whenever 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 met with a few Pages before. Whereas very often the Similes are widely different. The Object, whence they are taken, is indeed the same ; but the Image is new ; for the Appearance of the Object is changed ; it is represented to the Fancy in another Attitude ; and cloathed with new Circumstances, to make it suit the different Illustration for which it is employed. In this, lies *Offian'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. His Clouds in particular assume a great many Forms, and are a fertile Source of Imagery to him. Here *Lamderg* stands “ like a Cloud on the Hill, that varies its Form to the Wind.” In the First Book, “ the Warriors followed their Chiefs, like the gathering of the rainy Clouds, behind the red Meteors of Heaven.” In the Fourth Book, “ like a dark and stormy Cloud, edged round with the red Lightning of Heaven, and flying Westward from the Morning Beams, the King of Hills removed.” Two Armies rushing to engage each other, are like “ Clouds that fly successive over Heaven.” An Army retreating without  
coming

In *Cairbar's* Hall when mighty *Ullin* heard  
365 The hostile Signal, he for War prepar'd :  
For by the Noise he knew some Foe was near,  
And starting up, assum'd his Father's Spear.  
He smil'd with secret Joy, while he applied  
The Belt that hung the Fauchion to his Side.  
370 A glitt'ring Dagger arm'd his better Hand ;  
He whistled as he stalk'd along the Land.

*Gelchossa,*

coming to Action, is likened to Clouds " that having long threatened Rain, retire slowly behind the Hills." An Army disordered, to the " Mountain Cloud when the Blast hath entered its Womb, and scatters the curling Gloom on every Side." 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 Silence, like the Cloud of a Shower ; 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 King of *Temora* ; at length his Words are heard."

*Gelchoffa*, as she saw him march to fight,  
 And like a Mist ascending *Cromla's* Height,  
 Her snowy Bosom beat, and told her Fears  
 375 For youthful *Lamderg* in a Flood of Tears.  
 Ah! *Cairbar*, Chief of Shells, I must demand  
 (Began the Woman of the tender Hand)

### Permission

V. 373. *And like a Mist ascending Cromla's Height.*] Mist, being a very familiar Appearance in the *Higblands*, *Offian* applies it to a Variety of Purposes, and pursues it through a great many Forms. "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." The Face of a Ghost is "pale as the Mist of *Cromla*." A Ghost slowly vanishes like "Mist that melts by Degrees on the sunny Hill." 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 Rocks, 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 his Strength, and the Mist is gone." These, with many other Instances which might be brought, sufficiently shew, with what Richness of Imagination *Offian'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.

Permission on the Hills to bend my Yew ;  
There feeds a Herd of dark-brown Deer in View.

- 380 She said, and up the Mountain speedy went,  
But not in Time the Combat to prevent ;  
The Chiefs had fought ! one breathless on the Ground,  
The other at the Point of Death she found.  
Why should I to the King of *Morven* tell  
385 How jealous Lovers fight ? Fierce *Ullin* fell.  
Nor did young *Lamderg* long survive the Fight :  
Before *Gelchoffa* pale, a ghastly Sight,  
He wounded stood. The soft-hair'd Woman cried,  
From whence the Blood that stains my Warrior's Side ?  
390 He answer'd --- Fairer than the Mountain Snows !  
From *Ullin's* Wounds the sanguine Current flows ;  
That Ruffian dead, my Vengeance is compleat,  
And I expire without the least Regret.

While



While yet he spoke, deserted of his Force,  
395 He sunk to Earth a dead and senseless Corse.  
“ Ah Chief of shady *Cromla*, art thou gone ;  
“ And sleeps my *Lamderg* cold on Earth so soon ? ”  
Thus moan'd the weeping Fair, as o'er him hung,  
In Agonies of Grief her Hands she wrung.  
400 Three Days lamenting by the Corpse she staid,  
Upon the fourth the Hunters found her dead !  
The lonely Monument you yonder see,  
With four gray Stones, they rais'd above the three ;  
And here your Son, beside the lofty Mound,  
405 Will rest with Heroes once in Arms renown'd.

And here, replied the Monarch, he shall rest,  
Since by the Brave I know the Place possess'd.  
Here likewise bring the Chief of *Loda's* Wave,  
And let a Hill be heap'd above his Grave ;

For

410 For not unequal'd in the Tomb shall lie

My Son, when that redoubted Knight is by.

Oh

V. 409. *And let a Hill be heap'd above his Grave.*] The old Scripture often mentions the Practice of raising Monuments over the Dead. As in the Instance of *Achan*: (*Joshua*, VII. 26.) “And they gathered together upon him a great Heap of Stones, which remaineth until this present Day.” Again of *Aisalom*: (*2. Sam.* XVIII. 17.) “They cast him into a great Pit in the Forest, and they laid an exceeding great Heap of Stones upon him.” As Mankind in their several Dispersions, after the Confusion at *Babel*, conveyed with them some Share of the original Language, especially of the radical Words; so it is not to be doubted but that many of the Customs and Ceremonies, both religious and civil, of the People from whom they separated, adhered to them in their Progressions to the various Parts of the World. This seems to be the most rational Way of accounting for the many patriarchal Customs heretofore practised in different Nations. In particular, with regard to Funerals, both Poets and Historians make the Method universal. Thus *Homer* (*Iliad*, XXIII.) describes the Sepulchre of *Patroclus*.

Τορνώσαντο δὲ σῆμα, θεμειλιά τε προβαλοντο  
Ἄμφι πυρὴν· εἶθαρ δὲ χυτὴν ἐπὶ γαῖαν ἔχρυναν.

V. 255.

And  *Hector's* Funeral, at the End of the Twenty-fourth Book of the *Iliad*, is described thus.

Αἰψα δ' ἄρ' ἐς κόλην καπετον θέσαν· αὐτὰρ ὕπερθε  
Πικνοῖσιν λάεσσι κατεόρεσαν μεγάλοισι.

V. 797.

Y y

*Plutarch,*

Oh Maids of *Morven* ! raise the Voice of Woe,  
And weep, ye Fair, where *Loda*'s Waters flow.

These

*Plutarch*, in the Life of *Alexander*, relates the Funeral of *Damaratus* the *Corinthian*. "The old Man," says he, "making a Visit to the King, then in *Asia*, fell sick in the Camp and died; and had a most magnificent Funeral, the whole Army raising over him a Monument of Earth, four-score Cubits high, and of a vast Circumference." *Herodotus* describes the Tombs raised by the *Scythians* for their Kings in the same Manner. "They laboured earnestly to raise as high a Mount of Earth for them as possible." *Adam Olearius*, (Lib. V. p. 297.) in his Travels through *Muscovy* and *Persia*, speaks of such a Sepulchre on the Banks of the *Volga*. And *George Keisler*, in his Northern Antiquities, tells us; "That in such Parts where there were no Stones, as about *Bremen* in *Westphalia*, and in *Friesland*, they made these Mounts of Earth and Turf, and of a vast Size." And *Johannes Cypreus*, an old *Danish* Writer, says; "The *Danes*, when they had no Abilities to build Pyramids and Obelisks, anciently raised, to the Memory of their Kings and Heroes, vast Moles of Earth as high as Mountains, and for the most Part in Places through which Men commonly travelled, as in High-roads; that they might by such Means consecrate to Posterity the Memory of their most renowned Men, and in some Measure make them immortal." Thus *Virgil*, in the Eleventh Book of the *Æneis*, describes the Tomb of *Dercennus*.

----- *Fuit ingens monte sub alto*  
*Regis Dercenni terreno ex aggere bustum,*  
*Antiqui Laurentis. ---*

And

These hopeful Youths were stately to the Sight,  
 415 As some tall Oak upon the Mountain's Height,  
 That

And *Lucan* (Pharf. Lib. VIII.) alludes to the same Kind of Monuments, where he says;

*Et regum cineres extructo Monte quiescunt.*

This Kind of Funeral was called by *Quintilian*, *Sepultura Collatitia*, to which many contributed, in Allusion to the *Cæna Collatitia*, where every Guest brought a Dish. For in this Sort of Interments, every Soldier contributed his Helmet full of Earth, till the whole Army had raised a sufficient Mount over their Commander, or over their Fellow-Soldiers slain in Battle, and cast together in a Heap. Of these Mounts or Tombs, many are yet to be seen in *Scotland*. They are raised on a large Basis, and gradually diminish as they advance upwards, till at length they terminate at Top in a flat Surface, and in the Whole have the Appearance of a Cone. See at the End of the Second Book, an Account of the *Cairns* commonly found in the *Highlands* and *Western Islands* of *Scotland*.

V. 412. *Oh Maids of Morven! raise the Voice of Woe, &c.*] This alludes to a very ancient Custom, which still prevails in Parts of the *Highlands* and *Hebrides*, of having at their Funerals a great Number of Female Mourners, who keep as near the Coffin as possible, and make the most lamentable Howlings; tearing their Hair, and beating their Breasts. Some of these, after the Paroxysm of their Zeal or affected Grief is in a Measure subsided, sing the Praises of the Dead in extemporary Rhimes. The Male Relations think it unmanly to shed Tears, or at least indecent to betray their Want of Fortitude in Public. Ceremonies similar to these are yet in

That lonely grows ; till suddenly a Storm  
Invades the Plant, and spreads on Earth its Form.

Acrofs

Use among the *Irish*. No sooner has the Person expired, than they clap their Hands, and set up a hideous Scream. When the Corpse is carried forth, the Conclamation is redoubled by this numerous Band of Females, who attend the Hearse, and pay the last Tribute of their Voices in the most doleful and frightful Manner imaginable. Mr. *Pennant* (who happened to be present at one of these Funerals) says, the Habit of this forrowing Train, and the Neglect of their Persons, are admirably suited to the Occasion : their Robes are black and flowing ; their Feet naked, and their Hair long and dishevelled. We find many Instances of the like Practice among other Nations, particularly the *Romans* ; till it was prohibited by the Law of the twelve Tables in these Words : “ Let not Women tear their Cheeks, nor scratch their Faces, nor raise a Howling in their Attendance upon Burials.”

V. 415. *As some tall Oak upon the Mountain's Height, &c.]* Homer has a Simile exquisitely beautiful of this Kind, where the Fall of *Euphorbus*, in the Seventeenth Book of the *Iliad*, is likened to a young Olive, overturned by a sudden Blast of Wind.

Οἶον δὲ τρέφει ἔξνος ἀνὴρ ἐριθηλὲς ἐλαίης  
Χώρῳ ἐν οἰοπόλῳ, ὃς ἅλῃς ἀναβέβρυχεν ὕδαρ,  
Καλὸν, τηλεθάον, τό δὲ τε πνοιαὶ δονέουσιν  
Παντοίων ἀνέμων, καὶ τε βρῦναι ἀνθεὶ λευκῷ  
Ἐλθὼν δ' ἐξαπίνης ἄνεμος, σὺν λαίλαπι πολλῇ,  
Βόβρου τ' ἐξέστρεψε καὶ ἐξετάωυσ' ἐπὶ γαίῃ·

V. 53.

As

Acroſs the Stream the fallen Trunk remains,  
There left to periſh in the wintry Rains !

420 While loud above the whiffling Tempeſts blow,  
And white beneath the frothy Waters flow.  
So theſe, cut off by an untimely Death,  
Now here neglected lie on *Lena's* Heath.

Oh *Oſcar*, of the riſing Race the Pride,  
425 Behold how theſe in early Youth have died !

Like

As the young Olive, in ſome ſylvan Scene,  
Crown'd by freſh Fountains with eternal Green,  
Lifts the gay Head, in ſnowy Flow'rets fair,  
And plays and dances to the gentle Air ;  
When lo ! a Whirlwind from high Heav'n invades  
The tender Plant, and withers all its Shades ;  
It lies uprooted from its genial Bed,  
A lovely Ruin, now defac'd and dead.

POPE.

It is ſaid *Pythagoras* had ſuch a particular Paſſion for theſe Verſes of *Homer*, that he ſet them to Muſic for the Harp, and uſed to repeat them as his own *Epicedion*. Perhaps it was his Fondneſs for them (ſays Mr. *Pope*) which put it into his Head, that his Soul tranſmigrated to him from *Euphorbus*.

V. 432.

Like them in Danger tread the Path to Fame,  
 Then future Bards will celebrate thy Name.  
 Both shone terrific in the Ranks of Fight,  
 The same their blooming Years, the same their Might.

430 My Son alone in Elegance of Face,  
 Surpass'd the noble Youth of *Lochlin's* Race.  
 He glow'd in Beauty like the show'ry Bow,  
 That bright reflects upon the Waves below,  
 As vast it bends above the glassy Tide ;

435 When setting in the West, on *Mora's* Side

The

V. 432. *He glow'd in Beauty like the show'ry Bow, &c.*] 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 of 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. Thus the Charms of *Ryno's* Person, though bearing no immediate Resemblance to a Rainbow, is admirably impressed on the Mind by the Idea of so beautiful an Object; and the Equality of his Temper is finely pictured by the pleasant Calm of a delightful Evening.



The Sun-beams slope, and not a Breath of Air  
Disturbs the Silence of the Hill of Deer.

Such was the placid Sweetness of my Child ;  
In Manners gentle, in Comportment mild !

440 But now on *Lena* here his Tomb must stand,  
Far from his weeping Friends, and native Land.  
We too shall be no more : Perhaps the Day  
Is not remote when Death will call away.  
If he imperious summons to the Grave,

440 Nor Strength, nor Valour can the Warrior save.

Such was, *Fingal*, thy lamentable Strain,  
When pale on Earth thy youngest Hope lay slain ----  
But what can paint th' Affliction of thy Son ?  
For thou, O ! best of Fathers ! now art gone :

450 Thy Form upon our Hills has disappear'd,  
Thy Voice on *Cona* is no longer heard !

Here.

Here left alone ; dejected and forlorn,  
 I sit beside thy Monument to mourn,  
 And feeling with my Hand the mossy Stone,  
 455 Repeat afresh some melancholy Moan.

When

V. 453. *I sit beside thy Monument to mourn, &c.*] The Manner in which the old Bard represents himself here lamenting at his Father's Tomb ; feeling it with his Hand, and mistaking the Noise of the passing Winds for a Voice in the Sepulchre, is inexpressibly moving. We often profess to admire the Sublimity of moral Sentiments, but here it is not enough to admire. Admiration is a cold Feeling, in Comparison of that deep Interest, which the Heart must take in such 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, no Man, who has the least Sensibility, will question. The general Character of his Poetry is, the heroic mixed with 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.

When in the Defert firs a sudden Squall,  
I start surpris'd, and think it is your Call :  
But in the Grave, unconscious of my Woes,  
The King of Swords enjoys a calm Repose.

460 Mean Time, where *Lubar's* rapid Waters flow,  
Sat *Gaul* and *Ossian* with the King of Snow.  
I touch'd the Harp ; but obstinate in Grief,  
The Son of *Starno* to the Sound was deaf ;  
And rolling his red Eyes tow'rds *Lena's* Plain,  
465 Bewail'd in fullen Mood his People flain.

I rais'd by Chance my Eye to *Cromla's* Side,  
And saw from thence the Son of *Semo* stride :  
(Where he and *Connal* long the Sight enjoy'd  
Of *Swaran* vanquish'd, and his Host destroy'd)  
470 Again he mov'd to *Tura's* lone Retreat,  
There to lament his own disastrous Fate.

Bright to the setting Sun his Armour shone ;  
And flow behind him follow'd *Caithbat's* Son.  
The Summit gain'd, they vanish'd out of Sight,  
475 Like two red Pillars of the Fire of Night,  
When Winds pursue them o'er the lofty Mounds,  
And as they pass the flaming Heath resounds.

Where fell the Waters of a gurgling Brook  
By Nature form'd, a Cave stood in the Rock.  
480 One solitary Tree above it grew,  
Which nodded to each whistling Wind that blew.  
There *Semo's* Son, abandon'd to Despair,  
Wip'd from his humid Cheek the flowing Tear ;  
While,

V. 483. *Wip'd from his humid Cheek the flowing Tear.*] One cannot but observe the Contrast *Offian* makes between the Grievs of *Swaran* and *Cutbullin*. The Grief of *Swaran* partakes of the gloomy, haughty, and inflexible Disposition, which characterises that Hero ; he is not only regardless of *Offian's* Music, who endeavours to console him, but even in a sulky Mood turns away to indulge his Sorrows. Whereas *Cutbullin*,  
though

While, in dark Order crowding on his Thought,  
485 The unsuccessful Battles he had fought,  
Recall'd afresh the Loss of his Renown,  
Like Mist, by Winds dispers'd, for ever flown.  
The fair *Bragéla* was not near the Chief,  
To cheer his Mind, and mitigate his Grief;  
490 Had she a Moment but her Form display'd,  
Her Presence would have all his Cares allay'd.

But lo! some Bard, or venerable Seer,  
White in the hoary Locks of Age draws near.  
Hail! *Carril*, is it you, whose Voice renown'd  
495 Is sweeter than the Harp of *Tura's* Sound;

Whose

though he desponds through too nice a Sense of Honour, always pays the highest Deference to such as administer Consolation to him. At the Persuasion of *Connal*, in the last Book, he lays aside the Resolution he had taken of falling upon the Enemy; and here the Poet assures us, that the Presence of his beloved *Bragéla*, would have hushed all his present Complaints.

Whose Words are pleasant as a Show'r of Rain,  
 When Summer's fultry Heats have parch'd the Plain?  
 But, tuneful Bard of other Times, declare  
 What from the Son of *Semo* brings thee here.

500 To which the prudent Herald --- Why this Praise  
 From him who all excels in lofty Lays?  
 Thou valiant Ruler in the Strife of Spears,  
 We have been now acquainted many Years!  
 When *Branno's* Hall of Shells with Music rung,  
 505 You often have accompanied my Song;

And

V. 504. *When Branno's Hall of Shells with Music rung, &c.*] 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 Sentiment, 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 flourished; to recal the affecting Incidents of his Life; to dwell upon his past Wars, and Loves, and Friendships.

And *Everallin* too would sometimes join  
 Her Voice with ours in Harmony divine.  
 I heard her once the Death of *Cormac* tell,  
 The Youth who for her Love in Battle fell,  
 510 And saw the Tears fast trickle from her Eye,  
 While thou, O Chief! sat sympathizing by.  
 Her tender Heart was with Compassion mov'd,  
 Although th' unhappy Youth she never lov'd :

But

Friendships. 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.*

V. 512. *Her tender Heart was with Compassion mov'd, &c.*] The Female Sex make always an illustrious Figure in *Ossian's* Works. However amazing it may be to find such delicate Sentiments in so early a Period of Society, there can be no Doubt, but that the Poet represents the genuine Manners of his Times. For, as Lord *Kames* observes, had the *Caledonians* made Slaves of their Women, and thought as meanly of them as Savages commonly do, it would never have entered the Imagination of *Ossian*, to ascribe to them those numerous Graces that exalt the Fair Sex, and render  
 many



But none in Goodness could with her compare,  
515 Who was among a thousand Women fair.

Ah ! name her not, I said, or Tears will start,  
And Pangs of Anguish rend afresh my Heart.  
Depriv'd of her I held supremely dear,  
Remembrance only heightens the Despair,  
520 Since she the softly-blushing Dame asleep,  
Nor hears her *Ossian* groan, nor sees him weep.  
But here on *Lubar's* Banks repose awhile,  
And let sweet Conference the Time beguile !  
Unless you choose to raise your Voice and sing ;  
525 I know it pleasant as the Gale of Spring,

That

many of them Objects of pure and elevated Affection. Without the Aid of Inspiration, such refined Manners could never be conceived by a Savage. I say more: Supposing a Savage had been divinely inspired, Manners so inconsistent with their own, would not have been relished, nor even comprehended by his Countrymen. And yet that they were highly relished is certain, having been universally diffused among all Ranks, and preserved for many Ages by Memory alone, without Writing.

V. 525.

That gently sighs ; when after heav'nly Themes,  
The Hunter wakes delighted from his Dreams,  
And list'ning to the Sound, imagines still  
He hears th' harmonious Spirits of the Hill.

V. 525. *I know it pleasant as the Gale of Spring, &c.*] Homer's Comparisons relate chiefly to martial Objects, to the Appearances and Motions of Armies, the Engagements and Death of Heroes, and the various Accidents of War. In *Osſian*, we find a greater Variety of other Subjects illustrated by Similes ; particularly the Beauty of Women, the different Circumstances of old Age, Sorrow, and private Distress ; which give Occasion to much beautiful Imagery. 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 upon the Hill of Roes ; to the Face of the blue and still Lake ; and here to the Sighing of a Morning Breeze upon the Hunter's Ear. I shall quote one more, which 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." If this Comparison had been handed down to us in some *Greek* or *Latin* Author, what Eulogiums would the Critics have bestowed upon it ?

FINGAL,



F I N G A L,

A N

E P I C P O E M

I N

S I X B O O K S.

B O O K VI.

A a a

# T H E

## A R G U M E N T.

NIGHT comes on. *Fingal* gives a Feast to his Army, at which *Swaran* is present. The King commands *Ullin*, his Bard, to give the Song of Peace. *Ullin* relates the Actions of *Trenmor*, great Grandfather to *Fingal*, in *Scandinavia*; and his Marriage with *Inibaca*, the Daughter of a King of *Lochlin*, who was Ancestor to *Swaran*: which Consideration, together with his being the Brother of *Agandecca*, induced the King to permit him, with the rest of his Army, to return Home, upon his Promise of never invading *Ireland* again in a hostile Manner. The rest of the Night is spent in the Songs of Bards, and in a Conversation in which the Story of *Grumal* is introduced by *Fingal*. Morning comes. *Swaran* departs. *Fingal* goes on a Hunting Party, and finding *Cuthbullin* in the Cave of *Tura*, comforts him; and sets Sail, the next Day, for *Scotland*; which concludes the Poem.

THIS Book opens with the Fourth Night, and ends on the Morning of the Sixth Day. The Time of Five Days, Five Nights, and a Part of the Sixth Day, is taken up in the Poem. The Scene lies in the Heath of *Lena*, and the Mountain of *Cromla*, on the Coast of *Ulster*.

F I N G A L,

A N

E P I C P O E M.

B O O K VI.

THE Clouds of Night, swift rolling Westward.  
spread  
Their dewy Wings on *Cromla's* dark-brown Head ;  
And rising in the North, the Stars display  
Their twinkling Lights o'er *Ullin's* glimm'ring Sea :  
5 Sometimes, as bright as Fire, serene they blaze,  
Sometimes the flying Mists obscure their Rays.

A sudden Blast descending from the Hills,  
The distant Forest with hoarse Murmurs fills :  
But not a Breath disturbs the neighb'ring Heath,  
10 And dark, and silent is the Plain of Death.

Still in my Ear the Voice of *Carril* rung ;  
The Expeditions of our Youth he sung,  
And the Companions of our former Days ;  
When we to *Erin* cross'd the stormy Seas,  
15 And where the Waves on *Lego's* Banks resound,  
Assembled made the Strength of Shells go round.

The

V. 16. *Assembled made the Strength of Shells go round.*] By the Strength of Shells is meant the Liquor that was drunk on these Occasions. It is a great Question, even with the present *Higlanders*, what Liquors were drunk at the Feasts of their Predecessors. They find them frequently mentioned in their old Songs under various Names; but it is universally allowed that they were of an intoxicating Kind. We are told by *Dioscorides*, that the ancient *Britons* drank a strong Liquor made of Barley, which they called *Curmi*. This surely was the Drink used by the *Albanian Britons*, and old *Hebridian Scots*; for in their Language, to this Day, every great Feast is called *Curme*, as in their Apprehension Drink is the very Life of  
such



The Strain melodious, wafted to the Sky,  
Made *Cromla* and the neighb'ring Rocks reply.

The

such Entertainments. The *Gauls* used their *Cerevisia*; (*Plin.* Nat. Hist. Lib. XXII. Cap. 35.) the *Germans* their *Humor ex Hordeo*; and all these Liquors are evidently of the same Origin, and made perhaps of the same Materials\*. But however that may have been, it is certain that the *Scotch* were furnished with strong Drink in a very early Period; nor were they sparing of it at their public Entertainments, whether of a festal or funereal Kind. Whenever the Guest was placed in his Seat, he was obliged by the Fashion of the Land, to drink off a Draught of their *Water of Life*, out of a large Family Cup or Shell. This Draught, in their Language, was called a Drink of *Ujkebai*: And the Guest had no sooner finished that Potion, than he was presented with a crooked Horn, containing about an *English* Quart of Ale. If he was able to drink all that off at a Time, he was rather highly extolled, than condemned in the least of Intemperance. Dr. *Johnson* (in his Journey to the *Western Islands*) saw at *Dunvegan* in the Isle of *Sky*, an Ox's Horn, hollowed so as to hold two Quarts, which the Heir of *Macleod* was expected to swallow at one Draught, as a Test of his Manhood, before he was permitted to bear Arms, or could claim a Seat among the Men.

\* The Translator asserts, that he has met with several ancient Poems, which mention Wax-lights and Wine as common in the Halls of *Fingal*. The Names of both are borrowed from the *Latin*, which shews that our Ancestors had them from the *Romans*. The *Caledonians*, in their frequent IncurSIONS to the Province, might become acquainted with those Conveniences of Life, and introduce them into their own Country, among the Booty which they carried from *South Britain*.

The Ghosts of those recorded in his Lays,  
 20 Borne on the Pinions of the rustling Breeze,  
 Resort with Joy to hear him sing their Praise.

Harmonious *Carril!* may thy Soul possess,  
 Amidst the eddying Winds, eternal Bliss.  
 Ah! how would such enchanting Airs delight,  
 25 While now forlorn I pass the tedious Night!  
 And oft, O Bard! in Pity to thy Friend,  
 Thou dost to mitigate my Grievs descend;  
 For on the Wall my Harp spontaneous plays,  
 And the light Touches of thy Hand conveys.  
 30 Why will you not converse, and let me know  
 How long detain'd, (in Banishment below)

Among

V. 22. *Harmonious Carril! &c.*] This Apostrophe to the Spirit of the Bard, is a most affecting Stroke of poetical Enthusiasm! And indeed nothing can convey a more favourable Idea of *Carril's* Character, and of *Ossian's* Heart, than these Expressions of Love and Admiration; so little was the Son of *Fingal* tainted with the jealous Envy that now prevails among the Children of the Muse. *Critical Review.*

Among ignoble Men, I here must pine,  
 Before allow'd my kindred Souls to join ?

But while I commune, silent on the Wind,

35 You fly away, and leave me sad behind !

The

V. 34. *But while I commune, silent on the Wind, &c.*] Mr. Macpherson is of Opinion, that the ridiculous Notion of the *Second Sight*, which prevailed in the *Highlands* and *Isles*, came from the Remains of Druidism. But as their Worship was not peculiar to those Parts alone, and as that Order of Men (according to his own Account) fell into Disrepute, in the *Highlands*, as far back as the Days of *Trenmor*; there appears no Reason why any of their Superstitions should be retained longer in those Places, than the neighbouring Countries, where the Druidical Rites subsisted for many Years after. It seems therefore more natural to suppose, that the *Second Sight* took its Rise from such fanciful and figurative Descriptions of the Bards, as this here before us of *Ossian*. The Poet and the Prophet are congenial Souls. Their Professions are nearly allied. The Claim to supernatural Knowledge and Inspiration is common to both: And certainly without a large Portion of Enthusiasm, taking that Word in its original Sense, neither of them could succeed so well as they have done. The Conceptions of both rise to the Grand, Marvellous, and Pathetic; their Language is strong, animated, magnificent, full of Tropes, and every Way removed from prosaic Diction. As the Prophet's Business is to utter Predictions, so the Poet assumes the same Character occasionally, and asserts that he speaks the Language of the Gods. It was for this Reason that the *Romans* gave the Name of *Vates* indiscriminately to Prophets and Poets. This emphatical Word, like many more, they borrowed from the old *Celtic*. For *Oðárus*, *Vates*, *Eubates*, *Eubages*, and *Eubages*, are Words of exactly

The sudden Gust that snatches you through Air,  
 Sounds as you pass, in *Ossian's* ruffled Hair.

Mean Time on *Mora's* Side, the Heroes plac'd  
 In Order round, partake the kingly Feast.

A thou-

exactly the same Meaning; and diversified only in the Orthography by the vicious Pronunciation of original Authors, or the Blunders of Transcribers. Those to whom the Name belonged were a *Celtic* Order of Priests, Philosophers, and Poets, thought to have been prophetically inspired. Though the Office is no more, the Title has been hitherto preserved both in *Scotland* and *Ireland*; for among the old *Irish* Families of Note in the County of *Mayo*, *Cambden* reckons that of *Macvadus*, and in the *Western Isles* of *Scotland* are some called *Macfaid*. In the *Galic* and *Irish* Languages, *Faid* signified a Prophet.

Dr. *Johnson*, in his Journey to the *Western Islands*, professes to have been particularly curious in his Inquiries about the *Second Sight*. From a Man of his Penetration, something certain might have been expected; but, as usual, after saying a great Deal, he concludes the Subject in this indefinite Manner. "To collect sufficient Testimonies for the Satisfaction of the Public, or of ourselves, would require more Time than we could bestow. There is, against it, the seeming Analogy of Things confusedly seen, and little understood; and for it, the indistinct Cry of national Persuasion, which may be perhaps resolved at last into Prejudice and Tradition. I never could advance my Curiosity to Conviction, but came away at last only willing to believe." It is something extraordinary, that a Person who affects to discredit the Authenticity of *Ossian's* Poems, should nevertheless seem inclined to believe the Reality of the *Second Sight*.

- 40 A thousand Mountain Oaks, cut down entire,  
Blaze to the Wind, and crackle in the Fire.  
From Hand to Hand the copious Goblet flows,  
And ev'ry Soul with Joy elated glows ;  
All but the haughty Ruler of the Tide,  
45 Who silent sat, indulging still his Pride,  
And never tow'rd's the Heath of *Lena* turn'd,  
But his red Eye with Indignation burn'd.

*Fingal* upon his Father's Shield reclin'd,  
While slowly waving in the passing Wind,  
50 His aged Locks shone to the Beam of Night,  
By Length of Years grown venerably white.  
He saw the fullen Humour of his Guest,  
He saw, and thus the first of Bards address'd :

As

V. 40. *A thousand Mountain Oaks, &c.*] In the North of *Scotland*, till very lately, they burnt the 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 Sacrilege to disuse it.

As usual after Battle, *Ullin*, raise  
 55 The Song of Peace, and with sonorous Lays  
 Compose my Soul, distracted by the Jar,  
 And horrid Clangours of tumultuous War.  
 And let a hundred Minstrels sweep the String,  
 To sooth the Ear of *Lochlin's* captive King :  
 60 Before we part, his Mind must be appeas'd,  
 None from our Presence ever went displeas'd.

The

V. 61. *None from our Presence ever went displeas'd.*] The Assertion, which *Ossian* here puts into his Father's Mouth, is truly worthy of *Fingal*; who seems to have excelled in every Virtue of his Time, especially Hospitality. Hospitality is one of those Virtues, which, if not peculiar to, is most commonly met with in a State of Barbarity. It is after Property has taken absolute Possession of the Mind, that the Door is shut against the Stranger. The *Highlanders* of our own Time are beyond Comparison more hospitable to Strangers, and more ready to receive them into their Houses, than their more civilized Countrymen. Their Manner of shewing this generous Disposition may carry along with it, in the Eyes of the polite Part of Mankind, a Degree of Rudeness; but it is an honest Rudeness, and expressive of that primeval Simplicity and Goodness of Heart which they derive from their Ancestors the old *Caledonians*. It was once universally a Custom among them, nor is it yet totally discontinued, to accompany their Guest to their next Neighbour's House, without any previous Invitation.

The Weak I spare, the Mighty only feel,  
 When insolent, Correction from my Steel ;  
 But when they yield, again into the Sheath

65 I plunge the Sword, and stop the Hand of Death.

Tall

tion. This Intrusion was so far from giving Offence, that they were both received with the greatest Frankness and Civility. There was no Distinction made between the Acquaintance and Stranger, as far as the Laws of Hospitality were concerned. The old *Highlanders* even thought it inconsistent with the Rules of Honour and Hospitality, to ask the Stranger abruptly from what Quarter of the World he came, or what his Business was. This Question could not be decently put till the Year's End, if the Family in which he sojourned was opulent, and the Guest chose to stay so long.

V. 65. *I plunge the Sword.*] The famous Sword of *Fingal*, was made by *Luno*, a Smith of *Lochlin*, and after him poetically called sometimes the Son of *Luno*. It is said of this Sword, that it killed a Man at every Blow ; and that the King never used it but in Times of the greatest Danger. This Fable, probably, took its Rise from the uncommon Strength of *Fingal*. In the same Manner, something supernatural was thought to be in the Sword of the famous *Scanderbeg*. Of this *Mahomet* was so convinced, that he desired *Scanderbeg* would make him a Present of it. Which being granted, he returned it soon after, with a Complaint that the King had imposed upon him, in sending a Weapon which no Way answered the prodigious Things reported of it. *Scanderbeg* answered, that he had sent the Sword which he always made Use of in Battle ; but had not sent the Arm, that was wont to wield it upon those Occasions.



Tall *Ullin* struck his Harp, and thus began ---  
In other Days liv'd *Trenmor*, fearless Man !  
Who o'er the Northern Waves light-bounding flew,  
Companion of each stormy Blast that blew,  
70 Till dim through Mist he *Lochlin's* Coast descried,  
And Forests murmur'ing by the Water's Side.  
Assisted by a favourable Gale,  
The Port he gain'd, and bound his snowy Sail.  
His first Adventure, on this foreign Shore,  
75 Was to encounter with a furious Boar  
Of monstrous Size, grown fierce with human Blood,  
That long infested *Gormal's* neighb'ring Wood ;

Full

V. 67. *In other Days liv'd Trenmor, &c.*] *Trenmor* was the great Grandfather of *Fingal*. The Poet, in order to reconcile the Generosity of the King with the Affections of Nature and the Events of Probability, introduces very artfully this Song of *Ullin* ; by which it appears that *Swaran* was not only the Brother of *Fingal's* beloved *Agandecca*, but also related to the King of the lonely Hills, whose great Grandmother was *Inibaca*, Sister to a King of *Lochlin*.

V. 79.

Full many a gallant Chief his Rage had fled,  
But *Trenmor's* forceful Jav'lin stretch'd him dead.

80 Three Chiefs who saw him act this hardy Deed,  
And at his Feet beheld the Savage bleed,  
To *Lochlin's* Sov'reign carried the Report,  
And magnified his Strength to all the Court.  
They said, that like a Fire his Armour flam'd,  
85 That something more than mortal Man he seem'd.

The King commanded Supper in the Hall,  
And sent them forth the Stranger Youth to call.  
The blooming *Trenmor* went at their Request,  
And was in *Gormal's* Tow'rs three Days a Guest.

And

V. 79. *But Trenmor's forceful Jav'lin stretch'd him dead.*] Ullin might think that *Trenmor's* killing a Boar on his first landing in *Lochlin*, was a good Omen of his future Success in that Country. Be that as it will, the present *Highlanders* look, with a Degree of Superstition, upon the Success of their first Action, after they have engaged in any desperate Undertaking.

V. 90.

90 And when, in Tournaments to break the Spear,  
The Strong arose, and met with full Career ;

There

V. 90. *And when, in Tournaments to break the Spear, &c.*] These Combats recall into one's Mind the Manners of Chivalry ; some Resemblance to which may be suggested by other Incidents in *Offian's* Poems. Chivalry, however, took Rise in an Age and Country too remote from those of *Offian*, 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 *Offian*, 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 Accounts 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 provincial Bards, in the Tenth or Eleventh Century, whose Songs are said first to have given Rise to those romantic Ideas of Heroism, which for so long a Time enchanted *Europe* \*. *Offian'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 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. Besides that of *Inibaca* in this Place, two other beautiful Instances may be seen in *Carric-thura*, and in *Caliben* and *Colmal*.

\* *Vid. Huetius de origine fabularum romanensium.*

There was not found among them all a Knight,  
That yielded not to his superior Might.

Again the Shell went round, and ev'ry Mouth  
95 Proclaim'd the Praifes of the Stranger Youth,  
Who from the distant Land o'er Ocean came,  
The first of Men in Valour, and in Fame.

When the fourth Morn with Blushes ting'd the East,  
The Prince departing launch'd his Bark in Haste ;  
100 And walk'd along the solitary Sea,  
Waiting a Wind to waft him on his Way.  
And now he heard it in the neighb'ring Grove,  
And could perceive the rustling Branches move ;  
Whencloath'd in Arms, that flash'd like Lightning bright,  
105 A Son of shady *Gormal* came in Sight.  
Red look'd his Cheek, in Ringlets hung his Hair,  
His Skin was like the Snow of *Morven* fair :

Mild

Mild roll'd his Eye, and Tendernefs exprefs'd,  
Though thus the Chief he boastfully addrefs'd.

110 Stay, *Trenmor*, stay, delay awhile thy Flight;  
The Son of *Lorval* braves thee to the Fight.  
His Sword has conquer'd many a valiant Foe,  
His Arrows fly unerring from the Bow.

The Hero heard, and answer'd with Disdain;  
115 To raise my Anger your Attempts are vain.

Thou

V. 113. *His Arrows fly unerring from the Bow.*] The Bow is as ancient and universal a Weapon of Annoyance, as any upon Record. It seems to have been particularly so in the North of *Scotland*; for, if Dr. *Johnson's* Account can be depended on, in the Island *Raasay*, the Stone Heads of Arrows are frequently, to this Day, picked up. The People call them *Elf-bolts*, and believe that the *Fairies* shoot them at the Cattle. They nearly resemble those which Mr. *Banks* has lately brought from the savage Countries in the *Pacifick Ocean*, and must have been made by a Nation to which the Use of Metals was unknown, and consequently long before the Age of *Ossian*, in whose Time the Use of Iron seems to have been universal.

Thou fair-hair'd Youth! thy Beauty proves thee young;  
Those snowy Arms cannot in War be strong.  
Go! chase the dark-brown Deer of *Gormal's* Hill,  
And give thy vaunted Arrows Wings to kill.

120 To this the Son of *Lornval* in a Rage :

Though you contemptuous treat my Want of Age,  
Yet, I may make the lofty *Trenmor* yield,  
And bear his Sword triumphant from the Field.

A Deed so glorious would exalt my Name,

125 Above the greatest of the Sons of Fame ;

Would make the Virgins gather round, to view  
The mighty Man who *Trenmor* could subdue ;  
And use each tender, each endearing Art,  
To raise the Sigh, and captivate the Heart.

130 They will admire thy Spear's unusual Length,  
And be astonish'd at the Victor's Strength,

C c c

When,

When, midst the shouting Crowds, he shall advance,  
And brandish to the Sun the glitt'ring Lance.

Insulting Youth, th' offended Prince replied,  
135 You will provoke me to chastise your Pride !  
Vain

V. 130. *They will admire thy Spear's unusual Length.*] It is well known that the *Caledonians*, and their Descendants, had a particular Dexterity in managing Darts of every Kind. The *Scottish* Spearmen were famous, like the Archers of *England*. The Battles fought by these two Nations, while in a State of mutual Hostility, were often decided either by the superior Skill of a Body of Spearmen of the former, or that of the Archers of the latter. Their Dexterity in handling those Weapons, must have descended to both Nations from their remotest Ancestors. We are told by *Herodian* and *Dion*, that the Inhabitants of *North Britain* used the Spear more than any other Weapon. The latter adds a Circumstance, omitted by every ancient Author : He says, that there was a Piece of Brass in Form of an Apple, fixed to one End of their Spears, which they shook, to terrify the Enemy with its Noise. Dr. *John Macpherson* assures us, that he himself had conversed with old *Highlanders*, who had seen Spears of that Construction. The Name they gave them was *Triniframna*. The Critics are at a Loss to find out what the *Framea* of the *Germans* may have been \*. *Tacitus* shews that it was a Spear ; and it is highly probable that it was contrived like those used by the ancient *Caledonians*. The *Galic* Name justifies this Opinion. *Dion's* *brazen Apple* was called *Cnap-sarra* in the Language of the ancient *Scots*, that is, a Boss, like that in the Middle of a Shield, studded with Nails of Brass.

\* *Lipsius*, in his Notes on *Tacitus de mor. Germ. Cap. VI.*



Vain Hopes of Praise intoxicate your Brain ;  
Your weeping Mother here will find you slain,  
And far from Shore behold his Vessel gone,  
Whose vengeful Hand destroy'd her darling Son.

140 He said, and poiz'd his dreadful Lance in Air ;  
The Stripling answer'd, touch'd with secret Fear,  
My Arm is yet too weak the Spear to throw ;  
It has been only practis'd in the Bow.  
Besides, impenetrable Arms of Steel,  
145 From Head to Foot, secure you from my Skill.

But

V. 144. *Besides, impenetrable Arms of Steel, &c.*] Sir James Ware (Ant. of Irel. Chap. XXI. Sect. 2.) affirms, that the military Arms of the *Irish* and old *Britons* were made of Brasses, like those of the ancient *Greeks* and *Trojans*. This is likewise corroborated by *Cambden*, (*Brit.* p. 14.) who gives many Instances of Spear-heads, Axes, and Swords of Brasses, dug up in several Parts of *England*, which he supposes to be Weapons used by the *Britons*. If this was really so, it must have been before the Days of *Ossian*, who mentions no Arms, either defensive or offensive, but what seem apparently made of Steel. *Cuthullin*, the same Hero that is so much celebrated in this Poem, is said to have killed his Friend *Ferda* in a Mistake, with a

But if you dare that heavy Load forego,  
 And boldly meet on equal Terms your Foe,  
 I first will lay aside the shining Mail ---  
 Now Prince come on, and fierce the Foe assail.

150 The burnish'd Breastplate, and the Helm remov'd,  
 The beauteous Sister of the King it prov'd ;

Who,

Dart *kindled into a devouring Flame by the Strength of Wind*: that is, by a Blacksmith's Bellows. The Words in the *Galic* Original are, *Gatbbulig* and *Craosach-dbearg*, Words of the same Import with *Cæsar's* *Jaculum fervens*, and *Virgil's* *Cateia* or *Ga-tie*, i. e. *Gath* or *Cath*, a Dart, and *Tei* of Fire. The only Difference is, that the *Galic* Words are more poetically turned. *Quintilian* remarks, that *Virgil* was peculiarly fond of old Words, when proper and expressive : And as that admirable Poet was born and educated in the *Cisalpine Gaul*, he therefore must have been much better acquainted with the *Celtic* Language than any Writer of his Time.

Dr. *John Macpherson* is of Opinion, that the *Caledonians* used neither Helmets nor Coats of Mail, till the *Danes* and *Norwegians* began to infest the Coasts of *Britain* and *Ireland*. If the Invasions alluded to are meant of a Period later than the Poems before us are supposed to have been wrote in, they entirely destroy the Conjecture ; for *Offian* not only describes the Heroes of his own Time completely armed, but likewise shews them to have been the same as far back as the Days of *Trenmor*, the great Grandfather

Who, smit by *Trenmor's* Youth, and blooming Charms,  
From Court had follow'd him disguis'd in Arms.

The Chief astonish'd, when he saw the Fair,

155 Dropp'd harmless from his Hand the lifted Spear ;

And by her Presence aw'd, reclin'd his Head,

And hid his Cheek that glow'd Vermilion Red.

Thus from the gloomy Cavern, where he lay,

The Hunter, issuing forth again to Day,

160 Turns from the blazing Sky his aching Sight,

To shun the Sun's intolerable Light.

O King

father of *Fingal*, who is here said to be *covered all over with a heavy Mail of Steel*. When therefore *Herodian*, in his Account of the barbarous Nations of *Britain*, who fought against *Severus*, takes Occasion to observe, that they reckoned Helmets and Coats of Mail absolute Incumbrances, the Country they inhabited (being full of Lakes, Morasses, and inaccessible Fastnesses) rendering them indifferent to such Instruments of Defence ; he did not certainly mean to deprive our Ancestors of the Knowledge of these Arms, but only that they did not use them generally in their Wars, at least the common Men, for the Reasons above given. For had they been entirely unknown, *Ossian* would never have mentioned them in his Compositions, being always very consistent and exact with regard to the Customs he has left upon Record.

O King of Hills ! (an humble Suppliant now)  
Begun the Virgin with the Arms of Snow ;  
Allow me in your Ship a safe Retreat,  
165 Far from the Love of *Corlo* whom I hate.  
As Thunderbolts that strike the desert Hills,  
He *Inibaca*'s Soul with Terror fills ;  
And in the Violence of his gloomy Pride,  
Has ev'ry base, and wicked Measure tried,  
170 To work upon a feeble Woman's Fears,  
Pretending he can raise ten thousand Spears.

So spoke the Fair. The Hero made Reply :  
Contemn his Threats, and on my Aid rely ;  
I shall not from the boastful *Corlo* fly,  
175 Although ten thousand Spears he lifts on high.  
The Chief, three Days postponing his Return,  
Staid on the Coast, and sent abroad his Horn

To

To challenge *Corlo*; but appal'd with Fear,  
That recreant Warrior never durst appear.

180 The King of Snow descending to the Main,  
With *Trenmor* feasted, and his martial Train,  
There for a Wife he *Inibaca* gave,  
Then wish'd them Happiness, and took his Leave. }  
The Prince to *Morven* joyful plough'd the Wave.

185 So sung the Bard, then ceas'd to touch the String;  
When thus *Fingal* address'd the mournful King:  
The Tale related, Ruler of the Tide,  
Proves that our Families are near allied.

Its

V. 182. *There for a Wife he Inibaca gave.*] The *Caledonians* of *Ossian's* Time, as well as their Posterity, seem to have contented themselves with one Wife, and the Laws of Wedlock were observed with the greatest Strictness. The nuptial Bed was defended on the Female's Side by an unconquerable Modesty, which neither public Assemblies, nor private Entertainments, nor Love Epistles, had any Opportunities of corrupting. Among the Men, no one made a Jest of Vice; nor were matrimonial Infidelities called the Way of the World. It is only when Luxury prevails, that Irregularities

It's true, they often have engag'd in Fight,  
190 Because such Contests were their stern Delight.  
But as they fought for Glory, not through Hate,  
Both Parties after amicably met,  
And in the Hall of Shells, while Pleasure reign'd,  
Together plac'd, the foaming Goblet drain'd.  
195 The great Example of those Worthies trace ;  
Let Gladness brighten up again your Face,  
And let the Harmony of soft Accords  
Succeed the harsher Sounds of clashing Swords.  
Outrageous as the Billows of the Sea,  
200 You furious broke through Ranks in firm Array ;  
And

gularities of this Kind transcend the Bounds prescribed by Nature. Chastity is one of the great Virtues of rude Life : When the Soul is active, it seldom sinks into shameful Enormities. *Horace* has given a very lively Picture of those Impurities which prevailed in his own Time, and takes Occasion to remark, that such criminal Gallantries were very far from being fashionable among those *Romans* who defeated *Pyrrhus*, *Hannibal*, and *Antiochus* the Great.

And like the Noise contending Thousands yield,  
 Your Voice in Thunder echo'd round the Field.  
 Such Deeds perform'd, now let thy Anger cease,  
 And with To-morrow's Light depart in Peace.

205 For *Agandecca's* Sake this Grace you find,  
 Who, like a noon-day Beam, still haunts my Mind !  
 In *Starno's* Hall I saw thee weep the Maid,  
 And from thy Youth in Pity turn'd my Blade ;

When,

V. 205. *For Agandecca's Sake this Grace you find.*] By this one Line, *Fingal* conveys a stronger Impression of the Emotions then passing within his Mind, than if whole Paragraphs had been spent in describing the Conflict between Resentment to *Swaran*, and the tender Remembrance of his ancient Love. 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. Any one redundant Circumstance is a Nuisance. It encumbers and loads the Fancy, and renders the main Image indistinct. *Quintilian* says with regard to Style, "*Obstat quicquid non 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 can 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,



When, in the Transport of unbounded Rage,  
 210 Revenge I fought, and spar'd nor Sex nor Age.  
 But, King of *Lochlin*! if thy daring Mind  
 Is still to shew thy martial Skill inclin'd;  
 Those Honours shall be thine, thy Fathers gave  
 To youthful *Trenmor*, when he pass'd the Wave;  
 Myself

or of a few that are the most striking, it presents the Image more complete, shews 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.

V. 213. *Those Honours shall be thine, thy Fathers gave, &c.*] Here *Fingal* plainly proposes to meet *Swaran* once more in Arms; by which it would appear that the ancient *Caledonians* had public Games. It is certain that their Descendants used Exercises perfectly similar to those of the *Greek Pentatla*: such as Wrestling, Leaping, Throwing the Stone, and Darting the Lance, as was said above. All these Diversions were peculiarly subservient to a martial Life. And if to these Exercises we add that of Hunting, it is plain, that though they wanted Academies, their military Talents were cultivated to very good Purpose; and must have been considerably improved, before they had any Opportunities of engaging an Enemy. In *Homer* and *Virgil*, we see the Champions of *Greece*, *Phrygia*, and *Italy*, sometimes deciding their single Combats, and the Fate of Battles, by  
 throwing

215 Myself will rise, and meet thee in the List,  
That like the Sun descending to the West,  
Thou, to thy native Realms again renown'd  
May'st hence depart with deathless Glory crown'd.

He ceas'd---When thus the Monarch of the Flood :  
220 O first of mortal Men, supremely good !  
No more shall *Swaran* vie with thee in War,  
He owns thy Strength to his superior far.  
When but a beardless Boy, in *Starno's* Hall  
I saw thee bravely venge my Sister's Fall ;  
225 I saw, and inly said : “ When, void of Fear,  
Shall I like yonder Stranger lift the Spear ? ”

There

throwing rocky Fragments. The old *Scots* had Recourse to the same Expedient on many Occasions. To fit them for this Method of Fighting, a large round Stone was placed near the Gate of every Chieftain's House. The Stranger who happened to lodge there, or, if a Man of Rank, the strongest Man of his Retinue, was regularly invited by the Host to try the Power of his Skill and Strength on that Sort of Quoit.

There needs no farther Proof : On *Malmor's* Side

We have sufficiently our Prowess tried :

(What Time to *Morven* with a gallant Train,

230 From *Lochlin's* woody Land I cross'd the Main ;

And in thy Halls a hearty Welcome found,

While at the Feast a thousand Shells went round.)

But

V. 228. *We have sufficiently our Prowess tried.*] *Swaran* alludes here to the Trial of Strength he and *Fingal* had, in the Presence of their People, upon the Heath of *Malmor*, as mentioned before in the Beginning of the First Book ; which seems to have ended at last in Wrestling, as did their late Combat in the Battle. Wrestling was their great and favourite Exercise in the North of *Scotland*. Boys were inured to it early, and stimulated by Prizes suited to their Taste and Passions. When one Chieftain paid a Visit to another, after the first Civilities were over, the Wrestlers retained by each came first to a Trial of Skill, and sometimes even to Blows, unless their Masters interposed. There were declared Combatants of this Profession, who went about in Quest of Adventures, like *Amycus*, *Castor*, and *Pollux* : They no sooner arrived at a Hamlet, than they challenged all the Inhabitants, demanding a Tribute to be immediately paid, or a fair Battle, *without any Favour*, as they always expressed themselves. There are some Men now living in the *Higblands*, who have seen these Knights Errant ; and we are told, that one of the most considerable Chieftains in the *Islands*, at the Distance of a few Ages back, lost his Life in fighting a Champion of this Order. The Wrestler had affronted his whole Clan : To vindicate  
the

But whose the Victory, or whose the Praise,  
That let the Bards proclaim in after Days ;  
235 Men yet unborn shall listen with Delight,  
When they are told of *Malmor's* famous Fight.  
But many of my Ships their Men have lost,  
Who gash'd with Wounds lie pale on *Lena's* Coast !  
Accept of these, thou first of *Morven's* Race,  
240 In Sign of Friendship, and a lasting Peace.  
I promise likewise, if in after Times  
Thy Sons should visit *Lochlin's* frosty Climes,

To

the Honour of his Name, the Chief encountered and overcame him ; but by too violent an Exertion of his Strength, he broke a Blood Vessel, and instantly expired.

V. 241. *I promise likewise, if in after Times, &c.*] This was a very necessary Declaration on the Part of *Swaran* ; for his Father had so often broke through the Laws of Hospitality, that neither *Fingal*, or any of his Posterity, would care to have ventured themselves in his Territories. Besides attempting the Death of the King, as related in the Beginning of the Third Book, *Starvo* behaved very treacherously on another Occasion. For two Years after *Fingal* had taken to Wife *Ros-crana*, he undertook an Expedition into *Orkney*, to visit his Friend *Catbulla*, King of *Inistore*. After  
staying

To *Gormal's* mossy Tow'rs they shall be led,  
And have the Feast of Shells before them spread ;  
245 And should they love the noble Strife of Steel,  
The Combat shall be offer'd in the Vale.

To him *Fingal* --- Commander of the Deeps !  
Provided with a Fleet, I want no Ships ;

Nor

staying a few Days at *Caric-thura*, the Residence of *Catbulla*, 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 taken Shelter. Upon discovering who the Strangers were, 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 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 ; but being worsted in the Field, he endeavoured to surprize the King, who as usual had retired to a neighbouring Hill to pass the Night. In this Enterprize he was overcome, and taken Prisoner by *Fingal* ; who dismissed him next Morning, with this severe Reprimand for his treacherous Cruelty. " Son of *Annir*, retire. Retire to *Gormal* of Shells : A Beam that was fet returns. I remember thy white-bosomed Daughter ; --- Dreadful King away ! --- Go to thy troubled Dwelling, cloudy Foe of the Lovely ! Let the Stranger shun thee, thou gloomy in the Hall ! " *Catb-loda*.

V. 253.

Nor have Ambition to extend my Reign,  
250 Or to usurp the Empire of the Main.  
While *Cona*'s desert Hills of Deer afford  
Sufficient Plenty to supply my Board,  
I ask no more : Then at the Dawn of Day,  
Thy snowy Canvass to the Winds display ;

And

V. 253. *I ask no more.*] With whatever Degree of Truth the old *Caledonians* were accused of being addicted to Robbery and Plunder ; *Fingal* here gives an uncommon Instance of Moderation and Disinterestedness. He only makes War to repel Invaders, and protect his Allies ; without any Design of increasing his Power, or enlarging his Territory, as long as it supplied what was sufficient for the Maintenance of himself and his People. It is hardly necessary to observe, that Luxury was utterly unknown to these ancient Inhabitants. Their Food was the natural Produce of an uncultivated Country, such as its Hills, Forests, Rivers, Lakes and Seas yielded in every Kind. They had no Appetites of their own Creation to gratify : Happy in their Ignorance of Refinements, and by Nature Philosophers enough to rest satisfied with a Competency. If their Fare was at some Times scanty, that Disadvantage was rendered easy to them by Parsimony and Patience, or was sufficiently compensated by the Absence of Luxury in all Seasons. Want and Toil could never enfeeble their Bodies, or shorten their Lives, so much as the Excesses arising from Affluence have done elsewhere. The Severity of the Climate, and the rugged Face of the Country, tended to strengthen the Body, and inure the Mind to Hardships. All the Accounts of Antiquity allow, that they were among the strongest, and healthiest, and bravest Men in the World.

V. 267.

255 And tilting o'er the Waves, thy Course pursue,  
Till *Gormal's* echoing Hills appear in View.

These Words the Cloud on *Swaran's* Brow dispers'd,  
Who thus in Raptures --- May thy Soul be blest,  
Thou gen'rous King of Shells ! Thy matchless Might  
260 Is dreadful as the mountain Storm in Fight ;  
But like the vernal Gales that gently blow,  
Thy peaceful Accents sooth the vanquish'd Foe.  
Now doubly conquer'd, my Resentment ends ;  
Here, take my Hand, and let us hence be Friends.  
265 Command thy Bards to sing in doleful Strain,  
The Elegy of those in Battle slain.  
Let *Erin*, as the Rites require, inhume,  
And over *Lochlin's* Sons erect a Tomb ;

That

V. 267. *Let Erin, as the Rites require, inhume, &c.*] The Manner of Sepulture alluded to here, was of the Kind *Wormius* calls *Valcofter*, (mentioned likewise by *Saxo Grammaticus*, Discourse on *Danish* Mounts, p. 197.) which



That our Posterity may there behold

270 Where their Forefathers fought in Times old.

The

which was to throw all those slain in Battle into one Pit; and then to raise a Heap of Earth, or Stones, or a Mixture of both over them. Many of these Monuments (in *Scotch* called *Cairns*, in *English*, *Barrows*) are still to be seen in several Parts of *Great Britain* and *Ireland*. One of them being opened for Gravel, some Years ago, near *Forrest*, in the Barony of *Coolock*, and County of *Dublin*; Numbers of human Bones were found lying promiscuously together. Some curious Gentlemen discovered among the rest a Skeleton of a monstrous Size, which measured from the Ankle Bone to the Top of the *Cranium* Eight Feet, Four Inches; so that allowing a proportionable Distance from the Ankle to the Soal of the Foot, and for the Skin and Flesh covering the *Cranium*, as well as for the Space occupied by the Cartilages between the several Bones in a living Body, the Person to whom this Skeleton belonged could not have been far short of Nine Feet high. The Scull in the most solid Part was better than a Quarter of an Inch thick; and the Bones of the great Toe were, each of them, Two Inches long, and Three Inches and a Quarter in Circumference. The *Dentes molares*, or Grinders, were also enormously big, and the *Tibia* above Twenty Inches long. The Position of the Head was to the North, and of the Feet to the South. All the Bones, except the Teeth, were in a crumbling and decaying Condition. This Account is taken from Gentlemen of Veracity, who measured the Skeleton. *Walter Harris*, Esq. from whom the whole of this Narration is extracted, adds, that he himself, on the 17th of *April* 1764, took out of the same Mount, lying about Three Feet under the Surface, an entire Scull and two Thigh Bones, considerably less than those before mentioned; and all the other Bones of the Skeleton were there, but much decayed. He supposes that these Bodies were deposited there

The Hunter, leaning on a mossy Stone,  
 Will say sometimes, when musing here alone ;  
 “ *Fingal* and *Swaran*, with their martial Pow’rs,  
 In bloody Conflict met upon these Shores.  
 275 Thus shall he meditate in after Days,  
 And down to latest Ages hand our Praise.

*Fingal* made Answer --- Ruler of the Sea !  
 Life like a Vision passes soon away.  
 To-day victorious, our full Honours blow ;  
 280 To-morrow Death unplumes, and lays us low !

No

in the Year 1014, after the celebrated Battle then fought on the Plains of *Clontarfe*, not far from that Neighbourhood. Two other Mounts of the same Kind lie each within Half a Mile of the former, which, if opened, might afford fresh Discoveries.

V. 278. *Life like a Vision passes soon away.*] *Fingal* is not more eminent for Prowess and Valour, than he is for Goodness of Heart, and Sublimity of moral Sentiment. His Reflections here on the Shortness of Life, and the Vanity of human Greatness, are not unlike those of *Job*, Chap. XIV. Ver. 1. and 2. “ Man born of a Woman, living but a short Time, is filled with many Miseries. He cometh forth like a Flower, and is destroyed ; and fleeth as a Shadow, and never continueth in the same State.”

V. 287.

No Traces then will of our Wars be found,  
The silent Fields will not retain their Sound ;  
Nor will the Hunter our Sepulchres trace,  
Which a few Years must totally efface !

285 Our very Names will not be mention'd long,  
Unless the Bards preserve them in the Song :  
The Praises they bestow unfullied last,  
When we, and all our boasted Strength have past.

Old

V. 287. *The Praises they bestow unfullied last, &c.*] Every one must be sensible of the Truth of this Assertion, it being evident, that of all the Monuments which Ambition is able to raise, or the Gratitude of Mankind willing to bestow, that reared by the Muse of a genuine Poet is the most expressive, the most durable, and consequently the most to be desired. The Works of *Phidias* and *Praxiteles*, once thought everlasting, are now no more. The faintest Traces of the magnificent *Babylon* cannot now be investigated. The famous *Egyptian* Pyramids, though still extant, have not been able to preserve the Names of the vain Monarchs by whom they were constructed. But the Structures which *Homer* has built, and the Monuments which *Virgil* has raised to the Memory of illustrious Men, to *Gallus*, to *Mecænas*, and *Augustus*, will perish only together with the World. Therefore, it is no Matter of Wonder that the *Celtic* Kings and *Celtic* Lords should have patronized the Poets of their own Times ; a Race of Men whose Compositions, however rough and unpolished, kindled the Soul of the Warrior to attempt great Actions, and promised the Hero a Perpetuity of Fame.

Old *Ullin*, *Ossian*, and *Kinfena's* Son,  
290 (The most intelligent in Ages gone)  
The valiant Deeds of many Chiefs rehearse,  
Whose Names are only to be found in Verse.  
Strike then, ye tuneful Bards, your trembling Strings,  
Record the famous Deeds of ancient Kings,  
295 And in soft Numbers joyful send away  
The tedious Hours, till Morn restores the Day.

The Monarch spoke, and straight we all obey'd,  
While to the Song a hundred Harpers play'd  
In Concert sweet : Till *Swaran's* Face grew bright  
300 As the full Moon, (fair Daughter of the Night !)  
When her Approach the passing Vapours fly,  
And leave her calm, and broad amidst the Sky.

When now the Sounds of Melody had ceas'd,  
The King of *Morven Carril* thus address'd :

Hail,

305 Hail, aged Bard ! where distant from the Coast  
Has *Semo's* Son retir'd with *Erin's* Host !  
Say, like a deadly Meteor did you leave  
The vanquish'd Chief in *Tura's* dreary Cave ?

To this the hoary Seer --- O'erwhelm'd with Grief,  
310 In *Tura's* dreary Cave remains the Chief.  
The Thoughts of Glory past, and present Shame,  
By Turns revolving so his Mind inflame,  
That his own Hand, did not his Friends oppose,  
Would long ere this have ended all his Woes.

Prosperity

V. 304. *The King of Morven Carril thus address'd.*] At the End of the Fourth Book, *Carril* had been sent by *Cutbullin* to compliment *Fingal* upon his Victory. Lighting upon *Offian*, (who with *Gaul* was left to guard *Swaran*) he engaged him to sit down, where they then were, till *Fingal* should return from the Pursuit of the Enemy. We left the two Bards in close Conversation at the Beginning of the present Book. Either *Carril* had not hitherto come into the Presence of *Fingal*, or the King, employed in consoling *Swaran*, had not Time to take Notice of him sooner : 'But the Moment he is at Liberty, he immediately inquires after *Cutbullin*, gives the highest Commendation to his Bravery, and afterwards effectually removes his Grief.

- 315 Prosperity has ever constant smil'd  
On all the Hero undertook, and spoil'd  
His Soul, elated with Success, to bear  
This adverse Stroke, which drives him to Despair.  
Resolv'd no more the Chance of War to try,  
320 He sends his Sword to rest upon thy Thigh ;  
Whose Arm destructive, as the Storms that blow  
On lofty *Morven*, hath dispers'd the Foe.  
Accept, O King, the Sword of *Semo's* Son !  
He now concludes his Fame for ever gone,  
325 Like Vapours blown, and scatter'd by the Wind,  
That leave no Vestige on the Hills behind.

*Cutbullin's* Sword I never will receive,  
His Arm is strong, his Soul in Danger brave ;  
(Replied *Fingal*) inform the Chief his Name  
330 Will be repeated by the Voice of Fame.

Like

Like him there have been many overthrown,  
Who after like the Sun of Heav'n have shone.  
Great Son of *Starno*! whose imperial Sway  
Extends o'er *Lochlin*, give thy Griefs away.

- 335 The Brave sometimes may be compell'd to bend,  
But Virtue always conquers in the End.  
The Sun of Heav'n, thus clouded for a Space,  
To southern Regions flies, and hides his Face ;  
But, bursting forth in Majesty serene;  
340 Soon smiles upon the Hills of Grays again.

From

V. 333. *Great Son of Starno*!] *Fingal* here addresses himself to *Swaran*, whose Grief, as well as *Cuthullin's*, proceeded from having been defeated. What therefore was said to one, was equally suitable to the other. Besides, the Story of *Grumal*, though in its general Moral applicable to both, in some Circumstances agrees better with the Situation of *Swaran*; for that Prince, like *Swaran*, had unjustly attacked the Territories of another; like him, he was conquered and taken Prisoner. But by supporting his Misfortunes with Courage, he afterwards proved successful, and became worthy of being celebrated, in the Songs of the Bards, among the greatest Heroes of Antiquity. His Patience in suffering, is what *Fingal* would point out, both to *Swaran* and *Cuthullin*, as the proper Pattern of their Imitation.

V. 351.



From streamy *Gona Grumal* drew his Birth,  
His brave Atchievements fill the spacious Earth !  
Insatiable of War from Shore to Shore,  
The restless Spirit of Discord he bore.  
345 His Heart delighted in the Strife of Spears,  
The Clash of Arms was Music to his Ears.  
To *Craca's* sounding Isle he cross'd the Main,  
And pour'd upon the Coast his hostile Train.  
The King of *Craca*, from a neighb'ring Wood  
350 Advancing, met him near the briny Flood.  
(For then he spoke to *Brumo's* Stone of Pow'r,  
Whose Circle rose not distant from the Shore.)

Fierce

V. 351. *For then he spoke to Brumo's Stone of Pow'r, &c.*] The Scene of most of *Ossian's* Poems is laid in *Scotland*, or in the Coast of *Ireland* opposite the Territories of *Fingal*. When the Scene is in *Ireland*, we perceive no Change of Manners from those of *Ossian's* native Country. For *Ireland* was undoubtedly peopled with *Celtic* Tribes; the Language, the 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.

Fierce was the Battle of the Chiefs : Each strove  
Who should possess the snowy Breast of Love.

355 “ (The Fame of *Craca*’s beauteous Daughter came  
“ To *Grumal*, where he sat at *Cona*’s Stream :  
“ To win the snowy-bosom’d Maid he swore,  
“ Or lose his Life on *Craca*’s echoing Shore.) ”

### Three

Intercourse. But when the Poet relates the Expeditions of any of his Heroes to the *Scandinavian* Coast, or the Islands of *Shetland*, which were then Part of the *Scandinavian* Territory, 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 *Offian*. 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 *Locklin* 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. 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*, preserved by *Olaus Wormius*, occur to us. *Offian* makes one of the *Scandinavian* Chiefs say; “ The Hawks rush from all their Winds; they are wont to trace my Course. We rejoiced three Days above the Dead, and called the Hawks of Heaven; they came from all their Winds, to feast on the Foes of *Amir*.” *Cath-loda*.

Three Days they fought, and bath'd in Blood the Ground,  
360 But *Grumal* vanquish'd on the fourth was bound.  
Far from his Friends in Chains, they left alone  
The Prince confin'd at *Brumo's* horrid Stone ;  
Where 'twas pretended Spectres walk'd their Rounds,  
And fill'd the midnight Air with fearful Sounds.  
365 Yet he surviv'd, and all these Suff'rings past,  
Shone glorious as the Beam of Heav'n at last ;  
They fell beneath his Hand, and now his Name  
We have recorded with the first in Fame.

Ye Bards, strike up in Chorus, and unfold  
370 The warlike Actions of the Kings of old.

In

V. 369. *Ye Bards, strike up in Chorus, &c.*] The Bards held a conspicuous Place at public Entertainments ; and a great Part of the Amusement of our Ancestors was derived from their Songs. They repeated their Compositions in every Branch of Poetry ; the heroic, the elegiac, the ludicrous, the severe. The Words were set to Music ; the Bard recited nothing where the Voice was not sustained by some Instrument. The Harp was appropriated

In Tournaments their fierce Rencounters tell,  
That on their Fame I may delighted dwell ;  
And *Starno's* Son, invited by your Lays,  
May yield to Sleep, and set his Mind at Ease.

In

appropriated to the serious ; a Flute or Pipe accompanied the comic and lively. That Species of Dancing which the *Greeks* distinguished by the Name of *Pyrrhic*, was an universal Amusement among the *Celtic* Nations. A Number of young Men in complete Armour rushed in suddenly before the Guests, at a certain Period of the warlike Music, danced with great Agility, and kept Time by striking their Swords against their Shields. When the Spectators were, for a short Time, amused with this Show, the Music suddenly changed, and a Band of young Women entered, tripping Hand in Hand to a merry Air. They too, at a certain Period of the Music, vanished at once ; the young Men entered again as if engaged in Action, and to the Sound of the accompanying Instrument exhibited all the Incidents of a real Battle. Neither were the Guests at *Celtic* Entertainments gratified with fictitious Battles only ; the young Warriors frequently challenged one another to single Combat to shew their Bravery. The gladiatorial Spectacles at *Rome* proceeded from this characteristic Custom of the *Barbarians* of the North of *Europe*, who, contrary to the Opinions of all other Nations, placed Death itself in the Number of their Amusements. This Peculiarity they carried to such an extravagant Pitch, that a Stranger, if renowned for his Valour, thought himself dishonoured, should his Host neglect to give him an Opportunity of breaking a Spear with some brave Man among his Friends.

- 375 In *Mora's* Heath they slept: The furly Blast  
Of dusky Night loud whistling o'er them pass'd.  
Now from a hundred Mouths the Song aspires,  
A hundred Minstrels strike at once their Lyres.  
The Tale was ancient, and contain'd the Praise  
380 Of mighty Warriors famous in their Days.  
When shall I hear the Bard's harmonious Voice,  
Or at the Praise of *Morven's* Kings rejoice?

In

V. 381. *When shall I hear the Bard's harmonious Voice, &c.*] The Contrast which *Ossian* frequently makes between his present and former State, diffuses over his whole Poetry, a solemn pathetic Air, which cannot fail of making Impression on every Heart. These melancholy Reflections are owing to the personal and national Situation in which he lived. He had survived all his Friends, and was disposed to Melancholy by the Incidents of his Life. Besides this, Chearfulness 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.

In *Selma* now no more the Harp is strung,  
The Voice of Music has been silent long !  
385 The Bard is with the great in Battle dead,  
And all Renown has from our Mountains fled.

Mean Time the saffron Morn her Light displays,  
And *Cromla* glimmers to her early Rays :  
When *Lochlin's* King, impatient to return,  
390 Bid them o'er *Lena* wind his bugle Horn.  
The Sons of Ocean, waken'd by the Sound,  
Rise on the Heath ; and silent gath'ring round,  
Dejected mount the Wave, and to the Gales,  
That rush from *Ullin*, spread their snowy Sails.  
395 Like *Morven's* Mift their Vessels float away,  
And mark with frothy Paths the rolling Sea.

As soon as *Swaran's* Fleet had disappear'd,  
The King of *Morven* to the Chace repair'd.

White-



White-breasted *Bran*, (the Favourite of *Fingal*)

400 And *Luath's* furly Strength he bid them call.

Let *Ryno* --- But alas! upon the Heath,

He slumbers silent in the Bed of Death.

Let *Fillan* then, and *Fergus* blow my Horn;

Hail with the Music of the Chace the Morn,

405 That *Cromla's* Deer may hear the sudden Sound,

And from the Lake of *Roes* affrighted bound.

Along

V. 401. *Let Ryno --- But alas! upon the Heath, &c.*] This unexpected Start of Anguish is worthy of the highest tragic Poet.

If she comes 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.



Along the Wood the piercing Clangors spread,  
The Sons of echoing *Cromla* rising fled.  
A thousand Dogs, let off at once pursue,  
410 And through the waving Heath gray-bounding flew.  
By ev'ry Dog was slain a spotted Buck ;  
And three the matchless Speed of *Bran* o'ertook.  
The King with Joy (succeeded soon by Pain !)  
Beheld them all extended on the Plain.  
415 One lay at *Ryno's* Tomb : The Father view'd,  
And gushing Tears afresh his Cheeks bedew'd.  
He visited, once more, the lonely Place,  
Where silent slept the swiftest at the Chace,

And

V. 418. *Where silent slept the swiftest at the Chace.*] The Chace was the favourite Amusement of the ancient *Caledonians*. A particular Attachment to the Pleasures and Advantages arising from such a Course of Life, gave them an uncommon Degree of Agility, Vigour, and Patience to bear Fatigue. *Dio* says, that they ran with extraordinary Swiftnefs; and sustained Cold, Hunger, and Toil, with an amazing Constancy. *Ryno* was remarkable for his Activity; and therefore the Epithet *Swift* is generally given him by *Ossian*, which was reckoned one of the most considerable Accomplishments

And fighting said : No more shalt thou awake,  
420 The joyful Feast of *Cromla* to partake !  
The Hand of Time will soon thy Tomb deface,  
And rank luxuriant Grass conceal the Place !  
The Sons of feeble Men will pass it by,  
Nor know that there forgot the Mighty lie.  
425 Then to his Sons --- Ye Children of my Might,  
And *Gaul*, Commander of the Swords in Fight !  
Come, let us now to *Tura's* Cave repair,  
Where *Erin's* Chief remains absorpt in Care.  
Are yonder *Tura's* Walls before our Eyes,  
430 That gray, and lonely on the Heath arise ?  
The King of Shells avoids the Sight of Men,  
While sad, and desolate his Halls are seen.  
Haste !

plishments a Person could possess. Nor was that Manner of Thinking peculiar to the ancient *Caledonians* : *Homer* seldom forgets to mark out this characteristic Quality of his Hero : And another eminent Poet, in his Lamentations over *Saul* and *Jonathan*, gives a particular Praise to those Princes, on Account of their Swiftness. “ *Saul* and *Jonathan* lovely, and comely in their Life, even in Death they were not divided : they were swifter than Eagles, stronger than Lions.”

Haste ! let us find the melancholy Chief,  
And pacify with Words of Joy his Grief.

435 But is that he, O *Fillan*, or a Wreath  
Of curling Smoke ascending from the Heath ?  
Too far the Object to discern aright,  
The Winds of *Cromla* dim thy Father's Sight.

He said ; the Youth made Answer---We draw near  
440 To *Semo's* Son, who with a frantic Air,  
Holds half unsheath'd the Sword upon his Thigh,  
As if irresolute to live or die.---  
Hail to the first of Men in martial Fields !  
Hail brave *Cuthullin*, Breaker of the Shields !

445 Hail (he return'd again) to thee my Friend !  
And hail to all that on thy Steps attend  
The Sons of *Morven*. --- Great *Fingal* ! thy Sight  
Gives to my troubled Soul unfeign'd Delight.

So joys the Hunter, when the Sun return'd  
 450 On *Cromla* shines ; if, after he has mourn'd  
 Its Absence long, he sees it heav'nly bright  
 Dart from between the Clouds again its Light.  
 Your Sons, like Stars, attend your happy Course,  
 They shine in War, and are in Age your Force.  
 455 It was not thus, returning from the Field,  
 You have in former Days *Cutbullin* hail'd ;

When

V. 449. *So joys the Hunter, &c.*] Lord Kames, in the Elements of Criticism, Chap. XIX. distinguishes two Kinds of Comparisons; one common and familiar, as where a Man is compared to a Lion in Courage, or to a Horse in Speed; the other more distant and refined, where two Things that have in themselves no Resemblance or Opposition, are compared with Respect to their Effects. Thus, there is no Resemblance between a Warrior and the Sun; and yet they are here very well compared with Respect to their Effects, the Emotions they produce in the Mind being extremely similar. There is as little Resemblance between fraternal Concord and precious Ointment; and yet observe how successfully they are compared with Respect to the Impressions they make. "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for Brethren to dwell together in Unity. It is like the precious Ointment on the Head, that ran down upon the Beard, the Beard of *Aaron*, which ran down to the Skirt of his Garment: As the Dew of *Hermon*, or that which descendeth upon Mount *Sion*." *Psalms* CXXXIII.

V. 457.

When Earth's proud Tyrants vanquish'd fled his Spear,  
And all was Joy upon the Hills of Deer.

Thus *Erin's* Chief. When *Connan* stepping forth,  
460 (Of *Morni's* Tribe a Man of little Worth)  
Insulting said --- These boastful Strains forbear,  
Had you been valiant we had not come here.  
When *Connan* to assist you cross'd the Wave,  
You like a Woman fled to *Tura's* Cave,  
465 And there sat weeping ; till this single Hand  
Subdu'd, and sav'd from foreign Foes the Land.

Those

V. 457. *When Earth's proud Tyrants vanquish'd fled his Spear.*] This is the only Passage in the Poem, wherein the Wars of *Fingal* with the *Romans* are alluded to. The *Roman* Emperor is distinguished in old Compositions by the Title of *King of the World*.

V. 465. *And there sat weeping ; till this single Hand, &c.*] These Boasts of *Connan* are not unlike those of *Thersites* in *Homer*. He is mentioned, says *Mr. Macpherson*, in several other Poems, and always appears with the same Character. The Poet pass'd him over in Silence till now, and his Behaviour here deserves no better Usage.

Those Arms of Light, thou Son of *Erin*, yield  
To one who dares employ them in the Field.

The Hero answer'd, by just Wrath inflam'd :  
470 *Cuthbullin's* Arms no Warrior ever claim'd ;  
And had a thousand, such as thee, aspir'd  
To win the same, they had without retir'd ;  
And so shalt thou.---An Enemy to Truth,  
Thou hast traduc'd my Fame, malicious Youth !  
475 Till *Ullin's* bravest Heroes press'd the Plain,  
I never shunn'd the Monarch of the Main.

He said : *Fingal* then interposing spoke,  
And silenc'd *Connan* with this short Rebuke.  
Youth of the feeble Arm, how dares thy Tongue  
480 Offend a Chief, whose Hand in War is strong ?  
Yes, stormy Son of Battle, the Renown  
Thou hast acquir'd, to me has long been known :  
And

And might a faithful Friend's Advice prevail,  
 Thou to the Isle of *Mist* shouldst instant fail ;  
 485 Where fair *Bragela*, leaning from the Rocks,  
 Oft tow'rd's the rolling Sea lamenting looks !  
 While bath'd in Tears her tender Eyes appear,  
 Upon the Winds dishevell'd plays her Hair,  
 And blown aside, exposes to the Sight  
 490 Her agitated Bosom snowy white.  
 On thy Return still meditates her Mind,  
 She listens to each passing Breath of Wind,  
 In hopes it may thy Rowers Voices bring ;  
 Who ply in equal Time their Oars and sing, }  
 495 While the sweet Bard melodious sweeps the String.

To him *Cuthullin* --- And she long must mourn,  
 The Son of *Semo* never will return.

Repuls'd,

V. 494. *Who ply in equal Time their Oars and sing.*] The Practice of  
 Singing when they row, is universal among the Inhabitants of the North-  
 West Coast of *Scotland* and the *Isles*. It deceives Time, and inspirits the  
 Rowers.



Repuls'd, and vanquish'd by a foreign Foe,  
My Presence only will augment her Woe ;  
500 Who, till this last unfortunate Campaign,  
Victorious always us'd to cross the Main.

And thou shalt still (replied *Fingal*) succeed  
In future Wars, and make the Mighty bleed.  
Like *Cromla's* Tree, far shooting to the Skies,  
505 The growing Fame of *Erin's* Chief shall rise :  
Then cease to grieve.---Here *Oscar* bring the Deer,  
And for our Friends the Feast of Shells prepare ;  
That after Danger we may glad their Souls,  
In genial Banquets, and o'erflowing Bowls.

The

V. 508. *That after Danger we may glad their Souls, &c.* When the *Highland* Chiefs returned Home after a successful Expedition, they summoned their Friends and Clients to a grand Entertainment. Bards and Senachies flocked in from every Quarter ; Pipers and Harpers had an undisputed Right to appear on such public Occasions. These Entertainments were wild and cheerful, nor were they unattended with the Pleasures of the Sentiments and unrefined Taste of the Times. The Bards sung, and the  
young

510 The Monarch spoke---We feasted on the Ground,  
Sung jovial Songs, and high the Goblet crown'd.  
*Cuthbullin's* Soul arose, its usual Might  
His Arm recover'd, and his Face grew bright.  
Old *Carril* fung, tall *Ullin* struck the Lyre,  
515 I rais'd my Voice, and join'd the tuneful Choir.  
We fung, (while all attentive lent an Ear)  
In lofty Strains, the Battles of the Spear :

Of

young Women danced. The old Warrior related the gallant Actions of his Youth, and struck the young Men with Ambition and Fire. The whole Tribe filled the Chieftain's Hall. The Trunks of Trees covered with Moss were laid in the Form of a Table from one End of the Hall to the other. Whole Deer and Beeves were roasted and laid before them on rough Boards or Hurdles of Rods wove together. Their Pipers played while they sat at Table, and Silence was observed by all. After the Feast was over, they had ludicrous Entertainments, of which some are still acted in the *Higblands*. Then the Females retired, and the old and young Warriors sat down in Order from the Chieftain, according to their Proximity in Blood to him. The Harp was then touched, the Song was raised, and the *Sliga-creekin*, or the Drinking Shell, went round.

V. 514. *Old Carril fung, tall Ullin struck the Lyre.*] I have here, and in some other Places, used the Word *Lyre*: Yet, whether that musical Instrument called a Harp, was the *Cithara* or *Lyra* of the Ancients, has  
afforded

Of Battles where I fought in former Years,  
 But now engage no more : worn out with Cares,  
 520 And many Woes ! Forgot is all the Praise,  
 And warlike Actions of my youthful Days !

My

afforded Matter of great Controversy to the Learned ; though most Gram-  
 marians have confounded them, which is enough to justify the poetical  
 Licence I have taken. *Venantius Fortunatus* (Lib. VII. Carm. 8.) seems  
 to make a Distinction between the *Lyra* and the *Harpa*.

*Romanusque Lyrà plaudat, Barbarus Harpa,  
 Græcus Achilliaca, Crotta Britanna canat.*

Nor is the Difference to be wondered at : For it is most certain, that the  
*Lyra* of the Ancients hath received great Alterations both in the Shape and  
 Number of Strings. *Gruter*, (p. 38. No. 10.) in his Inscriptions, gives  
 us the Figure of an ancient *Lyra* to be seen at *Rome*, in the Gardens of  
*Cardinal Cæsius*, placed in the Hand of a Statue of *Apollo* ; and *Philip  
 Cluverius* (*Sicilia Antiqua*, p. 93.) exhibits also a Cut of an ancient Greek  
 Coin, one Side of which represents *Apollo Archagetas*, and the other his  
*Lyra*, but something different from the former *Lyra*. Of the *Lyra* of  
*Orpheus*, which some contend was a Tetrachord, others an Heptachord,  
 see *Selden's* Notes on the *Arundelian Marble*, p. 87. The great Antiquity  
 of the Harp may be seen in the 4th Chapter of *Genesis*, where the Inven-  
 tion of it is attributed to *Jubal* ; and there is a very ancient Example of  
 the Use of the Timbrel in the 15th Chapter of *Exodus*. See Sir *James  
 Ware's* Antiquities of *Ireland*, translated by *Walter Harris*, Esq. Chap.  
 XXV. Sect. 3.

V. 524.

My Friends are with the Dead, and I forlorn  
 Sit at their Tombs, and o'er their Ashes mourn.

In Harmony thus joyful pass'd the Night,  
 525 Till Break of Day restor'd the beamy Light.  
 Then rose *Fingal*, and brandishing in Hand  
 A shining Jav'lin, strode along the Strand  
 To where our Vessels lay: In Arms we came  
 Behind him glitt'ring, like a Ridge of Flame.

The

V. 524. *In Harmony thus joyful pass'd the Night, &c.*] It is allowed by the best Critics, that an Epic Poem ought to end happily. This Rule, in its most material Circumstances, is observed by the three most deservedly celebrated Poets, *Homer*, *Virgil*, and *Milton*; yet, I know not how it happens, the Conclusions of their Poems throw a melancholy Damp on the Mind. One leaves his Reader at a Funeral; another at the untimely Death of an Hero; and the third in the solitary Scenes of an unpeopled World. In this Respect *Osian* is much more fortunate: The Conclusion of his Poem is strictly according to Rule; and is every Way noble and pleasing. The Reconciliation of the contending Heroes, the Consolation of *Cutbullen*, 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.

H h h

530 The Troops on Board, he bid us quick unbind  
The spacious Sheets, and give them to the Wind  
That pour'd from *Inisfail*. We straight obey'd,  
And to the whistling Blasts our Sails display'd ;  
Then sat and sung, while the swift tilting Ships  
535 For hilly *Morven* plough'd the foamy Deeps.

N. B. TO the greatest Part of the Notes, no other Merit is claimed, but ranging them in their present Order. Most of the critical are taken from Dr. *Blair's* Dissertation upon the Poems of *Ossian*. Those of Mr. *Macpherson* on *Fingal* are all retained; and many more extracted from the other Poems, as well as from his Introduction to the History of *Great Britain* and *Ireland*. Not a few have been collected from the Rev. Dr. *John Macpherson's* Critical Dissertations on the Origin, Antiquities, &c. of the ancient *Caledonians*; and some likewise from Lord *Kames's* Sketches of the History of Man. As what has been borrowed in this Manner, is not only sometimes interlarded with Additions of our own, but moreover frequently intermixed together; it would have required an uncommon Degree of Care and Labour in the Transcription, as well as afterwards in the Printing, to have distinguished properly what belonged to each. We thought it therefore the shortest Way, to acquaint the Reader in this Place, with the general Freedom taken with the Remarks of the above-mentioned Authors, whenever they suited our Purpose.

F I N I S.



# E R R A T A.

Page 5. Line 18. in the Attestations, *read* not the &c.—Ibid. L. 28. *r.* a literal &c.—  
P. 19. V. 133. *r.* *Cona*.—P. 34. V. 279. *r.* the Breaſt.—P. 77. V. 698. dele the  
Comma after *Tongorman*.—Ditto, P. 93. V. 103.—P. 285. V. 497. *r.* blow.—P. 307.  
V. 69. *r.* meet.—P. 13. L. 7. in the Notes, *r.* Brand.—P. 16. N. 1. L. 2. *r.*  
Druids.—P. 18. N. 1. L. 6. *r.* Lands.—P. 61. N. L. 6. *r.* in it &c.—P. 109. N. 1.  
L. 12. *r.* *arſta*.—P. 118. N. 1. L. 10. *r.* Cotts.—P. 162. N. L. 3. *r.* their Love &c.  
P. 224. N. L. 8. a Comma wanting after *Idea*.—P. 278. N. L. 15. *r.* Banks.—P.  
306. N. 2. L. 11. *r.* thoſe Times &c.—P. 323. N. L. 2. *r.* *Minvane*.













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