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Fingal, An Ancient Epic Poem, In Six Books

Macpherson, James

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Comala: A Dramatic Poem.

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C O M Á L A :

A

DRAMATIC POEM*.



The PERSONS.

FINGAL.	MELILCOMA,	} daughters of Morni.
HIDALLAN.	DERSAGRENA,	
COMÁLA.	BARDS.	

DERSAGRENA.

THE chace is over.—No noise on Ardven but the torrent's roar!
—Daughter of Morni, come from Crona's banks. Lay down the bow and take the harp. Let the night come on with songs, and our joy be great on Ardven.

MELILCOMA.

* This poem is valuable on account of the light it throws on the antiquity of Ossian's compositions. The Caracul mentioned here is the same with Caracalla the son of Severus, who in the year 211 commanded an expedition against the Caledonians.—The variety of the measure shews that the poem was originally set to music, and perhaps presented before the chiefs upon solemn occasions.—Tradition has handed down the story more complete than it is in the poem —“ Comala, the daughter of Sarno king of Inistore or Orkney islands, fell in love with Fingal the son of Comhal

at



MELILCOMA *.

AND night comes on, thou blue-eyed maid, gray night grows dim along the plain. I saw a deer at Crona's stream; a mossy bank he seemed through the gloom, but soon he bounded away. A meteor played round his branchy horns; and the awful faces † of other times looked from the clouds of Crona.

DERSAGRENA ‡.

THESE are the signs of Fingal's death.—The king of shields is fallen!—and Caracul prevails. Rise, Comala ||, from thy rocks; daughter of Sarno, rise in tears. The youth of thy love is low, and his ghost is already on our hills.

MELILCOMA.

THERE Comala sits forlorn! two gray dogs near shake their rough ears, and catch the flying breeze. Her red cheek rests on her arm, and the mountain wind is in her hair. She turns her blue-

at a feast, to which her father had invited him, [Fingal, B. III.] upon his return from Lochlin, after the death of Agandecca. Her passion was so violent, that she followed him, disguised like a youth, who wanted to be employed in his wars. She was soon discovered by Hidallan the son of Lamor, one of Fingal's heroes, whose love she had slighted some time before—Her romantic passion and beauty recommended her so much to the king, that he had resolved to make her his wife; when news was brought him of Caracul's expedition. He marched to stop the progress of the enemy, and Comala attended him.—

He left her on a hill, within sight of Caracul's army, when he himself went to battle, having previously promised, if he survived, to return that night." The sequel of the story may be gathered from the poem itself.

* Melilcoma,—*soft-rolling eye.*

† *Apparent diræ facies, inimicæque Trojæ
Numina magna deùm.* VIRG.

——dreadful sounds I hear,

And the dire forms of hostile gods appear.
DRYDEN.

‡ Dersagrena, *the brightness of a sun-beam.*

|| Comala, *the maid of the pleasant brow.*



rolling eyes toward the fields of his promise.—Where art thou, O Fingal, for the night is gathering around?

COMALA.

O CARUN* of the streams! why do I behold thy waters rolling in blood? Has the noise of the battle been heard on thy banks; and sleeps the king of Morven?—Rise, moon, thou daughter of the sky! look from between thy clouds, that I may behold the light of his steel, on the field of his promise.—Or rather let the meteor, that lights our departed fathers through the night, come, with its red light, to shew me the way to my fallen hero. Who will defend me from sorrow? Who from the love of Hidallan? Long shall Comala look before she can behold Fingal in the midst of his host; bright as the beam of the morning in the cloud of an early shower.

HIDALLAN †.

ROLL, thou mist of gloomy Crona, roll on the path of the hunter. Hide his steps from mine eyes, and let me remember my friend no more. The bands of battle are scattered, and no crowding steps are round the noise of his steel. O Carun, roll thy streams of blood, for the chief of the people fell.

* Carun or Cara'on, a winding river.— This river retains still the name of Carron, and falls into the Forth some miles to the North of Falkirk.

— *Gentesque alias cum pelleret armis
Sedibus, aut victas vilem servaret in usum
Servitii, hic contenta suos defendere fines
Roma securigeris prætendit mœnia Sæctis:
Hic spe progressus posita, Caronis ad undam
Terminus Ausonii signat divortia regni.*

BUCHANAN.

† Hidallan was sent by Fingal to give notice to Comala of his return; he, to revenge himself on her for slighting his love some time before, told her that the king was killed in battle. He even pretended that he carried his body from the field to be buried in her presence; and this circumstance makes it probable that the poem was presented of old.

N

COMALA.



COMALA.

Who fell on Carun's grassy banks, son of the cloudy night? Was he white as the snow of Ardven? Blooming as the bow of the shower? Was his hair like the mist of the hill, soft and curling in the day of the sun? Was he like the thunder of heaven in battle? Fleet as the roe of the desert?

HIDALLAN.

O THAT I might behold his love, fair-leaning from her rock! Her red eye dim in tears, and her blushing cheek half hid in her locks! Blow, thou gentle breeze, and lift the heavy locks of the maid, that I may behold her white arm, and lovely cheek of her sorrow!

COMALA.

AND is the son of Comhal fallen, chief of the mournful tale? The thunder rolls on the hill!—The lightening flies on wings of fire! But they frighten not Comala; for her Fingal fell. Say, chief of the mournful tale, fell the breaker of the shields?

HIDALLAN.

THE nations are scattered on their hills; for they shall hear the voice of the chief no more.

COMALA.

CONFUSION pursue thee over thy plains; and destruction overtake thee, thou king of the world. Few be thy steps to thy grave; and let one virgin mourn thee. Let her be, like Comala, tearful in the days of her youth.—Why hast thou told me, Hidallan, that my hero fell? I might have hoped a little while his return, and have thought I saw him on the distant rock; a tree might have deceived me with his appearance; and the wind of the hill been the sound
of



of his horn in mine ear. O that I were on the banks of Carun!
that my tears might be warm on his cheek!

HIDALLAN.

HE lies not on the banks of Carun: on Ardven heroes raise his
tomb. Look on them, O moon, from thy clouds; be thy beam
bright on his breast, that Comala may behold him in the light of
his armour.

COMALA.

STOP, ye sons of the grave, till I behold my love. He left me
at the chace alone. I knew not that he went to war. He said he
would return with the night; and the king of Morven is returned.
Why didst thou not tell me that he would fall, O trembling son of
the rock*! Thou hast seen him in the blood of his youth, but
thou didst not tell Comala!

MELILCOMA.

WHAT sound is that on Ardven? Who is that bright in the
vale? Who comes like the strength of rivers, when their crowded
waters glitter to the moon?

COMALA.

WHO is it but the foe of Comala, the son of the king of the
world! Ghost of Fingal! do thou, from thy cloud, direct Comala's
bow. Let him fall like the hart of the desert.—It is Fingal in
the crowd of his ghosts.—Why dost thou come, my love, to frighten
and please my soul?

* By *the son of the rock* she means a beginning of the reign of Fingal; and that
druid. It is probable that some of the Comala had consulted one of them con-
cerning the event of the war with Caracul.



FINGAL.

RAISE, ye bards of the song, the wars of the streamy Carun. Caracul has fled from my arms along the fields of his pride. He fets far distant like a meteor that incloses a spirit of night, when the winds drive it over the heath, and the dark woods are gleaming around.

I HEARD a voice like the breeze of my hills. Is it the huntress of Galmal, the white-handed daughter of Sarno? Look from thy rocks*, my love; and let me hear the voice of Comala.

COMALA.

TAKE me to the cave of thy rest, O lovely son of death!—

FINGAL.

COME to the cave of my rest.—The storm is over †, and the sun is on our fields. Come to the cave of my rest, huntress of echoing Cona.

COMALA.

HE is returned with his fame; I feel the right hand of his battles.—But I must rest beside the rock till my soul settle from fear.—Let the harp be near; and raise the song, ye daughters of Morni.

DERSAGRENA.

COMALA has slain three deer on Ardven, and the fire ascends on the rock; go to the feast of Comala, king of the woody Morven!

* O my dove *that art* in the clefts of the rock, in the secret *places* of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice.

† The winter is past, the rain is over and gone.

SOLOMON'S SONG.

SOLOMON'S SONG.

FINGAL.



FINGAL.

RAISE, ye fons of the fong, the wars of the streamy Carun; that my white-handed maid may rejoice: while I behold the feast of my love.

BARDS.

ROLL, streamy Carun, roll in joy, the fons of battle fled. The steed is not seen on our fields; and the wings* of their pride spread in other lands. The sun will now rise in peace, and the shadows descend in joy. The voice of the chace will be heard; and the shields hang in the hall. Our delight will be in the war of the ocean, and our hands be red in the blood of Lochlin. Roll, streamy Carun, roll in joy, the fons of battle fled.

MELILCOMA.

DESCEND, ye light mists from high; ye moon-beams, lift her soul.—Pale lies the maid at the rock! Comala is no more!

FINGAL.

Is the daughter of Sarno dead; the white-bosomed maid of my love? Meet me, Comala, on my heaths, when I sit alone at the streams of my hills.

HIDALLAN.

CEASED the voice of the huntress of Galmal? Why did I trouble the soul of the maid? When shall I see thee, with joy, in the chace of the dark-brown hinds?

FINGAL.

YOUTH of the gloomy brow! no more shalt thou feast in my halls. Thou shalt not pursue my chace, and my foes shall not fall

* Perhaps the poet alludes to the Roman eagle.

by



by thy sword*.—Lead me to the place of her rest that I may behold her beauty.—Pale she lies at the rock, and the cold winds lift her hair. Her bow-string sounds in the blast, and her arrow was broken in her fall. Raise the praise of the daughter of Sarno, and give her name to the wind of the hills.

BARD'S.

SEE! meteors roll around the maid; and moon-beams lift her soul! Around her, from their clouds, bend the awful faces of her fathers; Sarno † of the gloomy brow; and the red-rolling eyes of Fidallan. When shall thy white hand arise, and thy voice be heard on our rocks? The maids shall seek thee on the heath, but they will not find thee. Thou shalt come, at times, to their dreams, and settle peace in their soul. Thy voice shall remain in their ears ‡, and they shall think with joy on the dreams of their rest. Meteors roll around the maid, and moon-beams lift her soul!

* The sequel of the story of Hidallan is allan was the first king that reigned in introduced, as an episode, in the poem Inifore.

which immediately follows in this collection.

† Sarno the father of Comala died soon after the flight of his daughter.—Fid-

‡ The angel ended, and in Adam's ear So charming left his voice, that he a while Thought him still speaking, still stood fix'd to hear. MILTON.

THE

