

CALTHON and COLMAL:

A P O E M *.

PLEASANT is the voice of thy song, thou lonely dweller
of the rock. It comes on the sound of the stream, along the
narrow vale. My soul awakes, O stranger! in the midst of my hall.
I stretch my hand to the spear, as in the days of other years.—I

* This piece, as many more of Ossian's compositions, is addressed to one of the first Christian missionaries.—The story of the poem is handed down, by tradition, thus—In the country of the Britons between the walls, two chiefs lived in the days of Fingal, Duntharmo, lord of Teutha, supposed to be the Tweed; and Rathmor, who dwelt at Clutha, well known to be the river Clyde.—Rathmor was not more renowned for his generosity and hospitality, than Duntharmo was infamous for his cruelty and ambition.—Duntharmo, thro' envy, or on account of some private feuds, which subsisted between the families, murdered Cathmor at a feast; but being afterwards touched with remorse, he educated the two sons of Rathmor, Calthon and Colmar, in his own house.—They grow-

ing up to man's estate, dropped some hints that they intended to revenge the death of their father, upon which Duntharmo shut them up in two caves on the banks of Teutha, intending to take them off privately.—Colmal, the daughter of Duntharmo, who was secretly in love with Calthon, helped him to make his escape from prison, and fled with him to Fingal, disguised in the habit of a young warrior, and implored his aid against Duntharmo.—Fingal sent Ossian with three hundred men, to Colmar's relief.—Duntharmo having previously murdered Colmar, came to a battle with Ossian; but he was killed by that hero, and his army totally defeated.

Calthon married Colmal, his deliverer; and Ossian returned to Morven.

stretch my hand, but it is feeble ; and the sigh of my bosom grows.
—Wilt thou not listen, son of the rock, to the song of Ossian ?
My soul is full of other times ; the joy of my youth returns. Thus
the sun † appears in the west, after the steps of his brightness have
moved behind a storm ; the green hills lift their dewy heads : the
blue streams rejoice in the vale. The aged hero comes forth on his
staff, and his grey hair glitters in the beam.

DOST thou not behold, son of the rock, a shield in Ossian's hall ?
It is marked with the strokes of battle ; and the brightness of its
bosses has failed. That shield the great Dunthalmo bore, the chief
of streamy Teutha.—Dunthalmo bore it in battle, before he
fell by Ossian's spear. Listen, son of the rock, to the tale of
other years.—

RATHMOR was a chief of Clutha. The feeble dwelt in his hall.
The gates of Rathmor were never closed ; his feast was always
spread. The sons of the stranger came, and blessed the generous
chief of Clutha. Bards raised the song, and touched the harp :
and joy brightened on the face of the mournful.—Dunthalmo came,
in his pride, and rushed into the combat of Rathmor. The chief
of Clutha overcame : the rage of Dunthalmo rose—He came, by
night, with his warriors ; and the mighty Rathmor fell. He fell
in his halls, where his feast was often spread for strangers.—

† If chance the radiant sun with farewell
sweet
Extend his evening beam, the fields revive,
The birds their notes renew, and bleating
herds
Attest their joy, that hill and valley rings.

MILTON.

—The fair sun-shine in summer's day ;

—When a dreadful storm away is flit
Through the broad world doth spread his
goodly ray ;
At sight whereof each bird that sits on spray,
And every beast that to his den was fled,
Come forth afresh out of their late dismay,
And to the light lift up their drooping head.

SPENCER.

COLMAR and Calthon were young, the sons of car-borne Rathmor. They came, in the joy of youth, into their father's hall. They behold him in his blood, and their bursting tears descend.—The soul of Dunthalmo melted, when he saw the children of youth; he brought them to Alteutha's ‡ walls; they grew in the house of their foe.—They bent the bow in his presence; and came forth to his battles.

THEY saw the fallen walls of their fathers; they saw the green thorn in the hall. Their tears descended in secret; and, at times, their faces were mournful. Dunthalmo beheld their grief: his darkening soul designed their death. He closed them in two caves, on the echoing banks of Teutha. The sun did not come there with his beams; nor the moon of heaven by night. The sons of Rathmor remained in darkness, and foresaw their death.

THE daughter of Dunthalmo wept in silence, the fair-haired, blue-eyed Colmal ||. Her eye had rolled in secret on Calthon; his loveliness swelled in her soul. She trembled for her warrior; but what could Colmal do? Her arm could not lift the spear; nor was the sword formed for her side. Her white breast never rose beneath a mail. Neither was her eye the terror of heroes. What canst thou do, O Colmal! for the falling chief?—Her steps are unequal; her hair is loose: her eye looked wildly through her tears.—She

‡ Al-teutha, or rather Balteutha, *the town of Tweed*, the name of Dunthalmo's feat. It is observable that all the names in this poem, are derived from the Galic language; which, as I have remarked in a preceding note, is a proof that it was once

the universal language of the whole island.

|| Caol-mhal, *a woman with small eye-brows*; small eye-brows were a distinguishing part of beauty in Ossian's time: and he seldom fails to give them to the fine women of his poems.

came, by night, to the hall *; and armed her lovely form in steel; the steel of a young warrior, who fell in the first of his battles.—She came to the cave of Calthon, and loosed the thong from his hands.

ARISE, son of Rathmor, she said, arise, the night is dark. Let us fly to the king of Selma †, chief of fallen Clutha! I am the son of Lamgal, who dwelt in thy father's hall. I heard of thy dark dwelling in the cave, and my soul arose. Arise, son of Rathmor, for the night is dark.—

BLEST voice! replied the chief, comest thou from the darkly-rolling clouds? for often the ghosts of his fathers descend to Calthon's dreams, since the sun has retired from his eyes, and darkness has dwelt around him. Or art thou the son of Lamgal, the chief I often saw in Clutha? But will I fly to Fingal, and Colmar my brother low? Will I fly to Morven, and the hero closed in night? No: give me that spear, son of Lamgal, Calthon will defend his brother.

A THOUSAND heroes, replied the maid, stretch their spears round car-borne Colmar. What can Calthon do against a host so great? Let us fly to the king of Morven, he will come with battle. His arm is stretched forth to the unhappy; the lightning of his sword is round the weak.—Arise, thou son of Rathmor; the shadows will fly away. Duntharmo will behold thy steps on the field, and thou must fall in thy youth.

* That is, the hall where the arms taken from enemies were hung up as trophies. Ossian is very careful to make his stories probable; for he makes Colmal put on the arms of a youth killed in his first battle,

as more proper for a young woman, who cannot be supposed strong enough to carry the armour of a full-grown warrior.

† Fingal.

THE fighting hero rose; his tears descend for car-borne Colmar. He came with the maid to Selma's hall; but he knew not that it was Colmal. The helmet cover'd her lovely face; and her breast rose beneath the steel. Fingal returned from the chace, and found the lovely strangers. They were like two beams of light, in the midst of the hall.

THE king heard the tale of grief; and turned his eyes around. A thousand heroes half-rose before him; claiming the war of Teutha.—I came with my spear from the hill, and the joy of battle rose in my breast: for the king spoke to Ossian in the midst of the people.

SON of my strength, he said, take the spear of Fingal; go to Teutha's mighty stream, and save the car-borne Colmar.—Let thy fame return before thee like a pleasant gale; that my soul may rejoice over my son, who renews the renown of our fathers.—Ossian! be thou a storm in battle; but mild when the foes are low!—It was thus my fame arose, O my son; and be thou like Selma's chief.—When the haughty come to my halls, my eyes behold them not. But my arm is stretched forth to the unhappy. My sword defends the weak.

I REJOICED in the words of the king: and took my rattling arms.—Diaran * rose at my side, and Dargo † king of spears.—
Three

* Diaran, father of that Connal who was unfortunately killed by Crimora, his mistress. The lamentation of his

† Dargo, the son of Collath, is celebrated in other poems by Ossian. He is generally ascribed to him, and has much of his manner; but some traditions mention

Three hundred youths followed our steps : the lovely strangers were at my side. Dunthalmo heard the sound of our approach ; he gathered the strength of Teutha.—He stood on a hill with his host ; they were like rocks broken with thunder, when their bent trees are finged and bare, and the streams of their chinks have failed.

THE stream of Teutha rolled, in its pride, before the gloomy foe. I sent a bard to Dunthalmo, to offer the combat on the plain ; but he smiled in the darkness of his pride.—His unsettled host moved on the hill ; like the mountain-cloud, when the blast has entered its womb, and scatters the curling gloom on every side.

THEY brought Colmar to Teutha's bank, bound with a thousand thongs. The chief is sad, but lovely, and his eye is on his friends ; for we stood, in our arms, on the opposite bank of Teutha. Dun-

it as an imitation by some later bard. ly cheek ; the look of which was firm in —As it has some poetical merit, I have danger !—Why hast thou failed on our hills, thou fairer than the beams of the sun? subjoined it.

THE spouse of Dargo comes in tears : for Dargo was no more ! The heroes sigh over Lartho's chief : and what shall sad Mingala do ? The dark soul vanished like morning mist, before the king of spears : but the generous glowed in his presence like the morning star.

Who was the fairest and most lovely ? Who but Collath's stately son ? Who sat in the midst of the wise, but Dargo of the mighty deeds ?

Thy hand touched the trembling harp : Thy voice was soft as summer-winds.— Ah me ! what shall the heroes say ? for Dargo fell before a boar. Pale is the love-

The daughter of Adonfion was lovely in the eyes of the valiant ; she was lovely in their eyes, but she chose to be the spouse of Dargo.

But thou art alone, Mingala ! the night is coming with its clouds ; where is the bed of thy repose ? Where but in the tomb of Dargo ?

Why dost thou lift the stone, O bard ! why dost thou shut the narrow house ? Mingala's eyes are heavy, bard ! She must sleep with Dargo.

Last night I heard the song of joy in Lartho's lofty hall. But silence dwells around my bed. Mingala rests with Dargo.

thalmo came with his spear, and pierced the hero's side : he rolled on the bank in his blood, and we heard his broken sighs.

CALTHON rushed into the stream : I bounded forward on my spear. Teutha's race fell before us. Night came rolling down. Dunthalmo rested on a rock, amidst an aged wood. The rage of his bosom burned against the car-borne Calthon.—But Calthon stood in his grief ; he mourned the fallen Colmar ; Colmar slain in youth, before his fame arose.

I BADE the song of woe to rise, to sooth the mournful chief ; but he stood beneath a tree, and often threw his spear on earth.—The humid eye of Colmal rolled near in a secret tear : she foresaw the fall of Dunthalmo, or of Clutha's battling chief.

Now half the night had passed away. Silence and darkness were on the field ; sleep rested on the eyes of the heroes : Calthon's settling soul was still. His eyes were half-closed ; but the murmur of Teutha had not yet failed in his ear.—Pale, and shewing his wounds, the ghost of Colmar came : he bended his head over the hero, and raised his feeble voice.

SLEEPS the son of Rathmor in his night, and his brother low ? Did we not rise to the chace together, and pursue the dark-brown hinds ? Colmar was not forgot till he fell ; till death had blasted his youth. I lie pale beneath the rock of Lona. O let Calthon rise ! the morning comes with its beams ; and Dunthalmo will dishonour the fallen.

He passed away in his blast. The rising Calthon saw the steps of his departure.—He rushed in the sound of his steel ; and unhappy Colmal rose. She followed her hero through night, and dragged

her spear behind.—But when Calthon came to Lona's rock, he found his fallen brother—The rage of his bosom rose, and he rushed among the foe. The groans of death ascend. They close around the chief.—He is bound in the midst, and brought to gloomy Dunthalgo.—The shout of joy arose; and the hills of night replied.—

I started at the sound: and took my father's spear. Diaran rose at my side; and the youthful strength of Dargo. We missed the chief of Clutha, and our souls were sad.—I dreaded the departure of my fame; the pride of my valour rose.

SONS of Morven, I said, it is not thus our fathers fought. They rested not on the field of strangers, when the foe did not fall before them.—Their strength was like the eagles of heaven; their renown is in the song. But our people fall by degrees, and our fame begins to depart.—What shall the king of Morven say, if Ossian conquers not at Teutha? Rise in your steel, ye warriors, and follow the sound of Ossian's course. He will not return, but renowned, to the echoing walls of Selma.

MORNING rose on the blue waters of Teutha; Colmal stood before me in tears. She told of the chief of Clutha: and thrice the spear fell from her hand. My wrath turned against the stranger; for my soul trembled for Calthon.

SON of the feeble hand, I said, do Teutha's warriors fight with tears? The battle is not won with grief; nor dwells the sigh in the soul of war.—Go to the deer of Carmun, or the lowing herds of Teutha.—But leave these arms, thou son of fear; a warrior may lift them in battle.—

I TORE

I tore the mail from her shoulders. Her snowy breast appeared. She bent her red face to the ground.—I looked in silence to the chiefs. The spear fell from my hand ; and the sigh of my bosom rose.— But when I heard the name of the maid, my crowding tears descended. I blessed the lovely beam of youth, and bade the battle move.—

WHY, son of the rock, should Ossian tell how Teutha's warriors died ? They are now forgot in their land ; and their tombs are not found on the heath.—Years came on with their tempests ; and the green mounds mouldered away.—Scarce is the grave of Dunthalmo seen, or the place where he fell by the spear of Ossian.—Some gray warrior, half blind with age, sitting by night at the flaming oak of the hall, tells now my actions to his sons, and the fall of the dark Dunthalmo. The faces of youth bend sidelong towards his voice ; surprize and joy burn in their eyes.—

I FOUND the son * of Rathmor bound to an oak ; my sword cut the thongs from his hands. And I gave him the white-bosomed Colmal.—They dwelt in the halls of Teutha ; and Ossian returned to Selma.

* Calthon.