

sible manner in which Laing proceeded to account for the origin of the various poems ascribed to Ossian, was calculated to do immense injury to MacPherson. The reader has reason to suppose that the poems bearing the name of Ossian are forgeries, and that Laing was by some means acquainted with the manner in which MacPherson prepared them. Laing's reading must have been very extensive; and hence it is that with wonderful assurance he sought to account for the origin of the several poems which bear the name of Ossian. So unqualified are his opinions and so confident is his judgment, that the reader may be pardoned for imagining that Laing himself acted a prominent part in the fabrication of those poems which he ascribes to MacPherson. According to him, Milton, Virgil, Pope, and the Holy Scriptures furnished MacPherson with his most pleasing ideas and comparisons. He must have forgotten that no poems are truer to nature than the poems of Ossian. The ideas of the poet were very circumscribed indeed. Nature in her manifold phases: sun, moon and stars; the roaring streams and loud blasts of winter; the towering trees and solitary moss-covered rocks—furnished the grandest ideas which are found in the poems of Ossian. There is in them an absence of everything that would betray any great advancement in enlightenment and civilization, or any acquaintance with the literature and customs of other countries. It is surely not too much to expect that the many observers of nature's beauties can, irrespective of mutual aid, discover her most pleasing as well as her most melancholy features. May it not be asked, Why could not Ossian and MacPherson discover for themselves those beautiful comparisons which nature offers to every attentive observer? Laing further affirms that, because MacPherson knew nothing about the religion which prevailed in Scotland in the era he assigns to Ossian, he studiously avoided every reference to the religious opinions of that time. Led away by the English version of certain Gaelic words, Laing sought to detect anachronisms in the writings of Ossian. Tura's wall, to which allusion is made in Fingal, was in his opinion open to the objection, that towers or castles were not erected in Ireland for nine centuries subsequent to the date assigned by MacPherson to Ossian. Laing could not have known that in Gaelic no word is commoner or more ancient than *tùr*, the equivalent of tower. It means a heap of stones, however rudely and irregularly they may be arranged. With regard to the objection that no pointed